

**A GOOD MENTOR IS HARD TO FIND: EXAMINING THE FREQUENCY,  
DEPTH AND CONDITIONAL EFFECTS OF MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS  
IN A FACULTY-IN-RESIDENCE PROGRAM**

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## **Abstract**

Student-faculty interaction is thought to be an important factor in students' engagement with their post-secondary institution, but the benefit to students usually correlates with the quality of the relationship. Faculty-in-residence programs have been championed as a way to encourage both intentional and casual out-of-the-classroom interactions between students and faculty. McGill University's Faculty-Mentor-In-Residence program was designed to provide conditions for meaningful connections between students and faculty to take place, but the frequency and depth of interactions had not been evaluated. Using Cox and Orehovec's (2007) typology of student-faculty interaction to analyze participant responses, this study sought to determine whether the program increased meaningful mentoring relationships, and for whom. Most participants interacted with faculty, but the students who formed the deepest relationships were white and cis-gendered, while students who hold systemically marginalized identities experienced more superficial interactions.

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## **Chapter One: Introduction**

Faculty-in-residence programs are not a new idea. Faculty have lived in community with students almost since the advent of the university, with records of co-habitation arrangements dating back to the 12th century (Healea, Scott & Dhillia, 2015). At their best, these programs provide increased opportunities for students and faculty to build mutually-beneficial relationships, and offer each other insight into the vocation and experience of the other within the context of their shared campus community. At their worst, these programs can be false advertising, enacted to demonstrate that a large, impersonal post-secondary institution is making efforts toward being an intimate and integrative community, meanwhile plonking students and faculty in the same physical spaces with little to no thoughtful planning or intended outcomes. While student-faculty interaction is thought to be an essential element to successful student engagement, some critics charge that student engagement research has not been adequately interrogated (Barnacle & Dall’Alba, 2017; Zepke, 2014). As post-secondary credentials become the new minimum precursors to even middling options in the job market, more and more students are enrolling as a necessary step rather than for the lofty pursuit of advanced education. As such, the tenets of successful student engagement, including student-faculty interaction, must be re-evaluated with a new, more diverse student population in mind.

Several decades’ worth of research has demonstrated the many benefits to students and to faculty of interaction with each other, both inside and outside of classroom settings. Student residences have become a site on many campuses where programs and structures are initiated so that these beneficial interactions can occur. However, some researchers have

begun to challenge and re-examine the seemingly unassailable conclusion that student-faculty interaction is equally beneficial to all students. Students attending college and university in Canada are more diverse in terms of race, gender, place of origin and socioeconomic status than ever before, and all previously-held beliefs about how and why students are successful must be questioned in light of these changes.

### **Faculty-In-Residence Programs**

Faculty-in-residence programs have long been promoted as an effective way to provide for both intentional and casual out-of-the-classroom interactions between students and faculty (Baier, 2014; Benjamin & Griffin, 2013; Brower & Inkelas, 2010; Browne, Headworth & Saum, 2009; Cotten & Wilson, 2006; Cox, McIntosh, Terenzini, Reason & Lutovsky Quaye, 2010; Cox & Orehovec, 2007; Delaney, 2008; Einarson & Clarkberg, 2004; Frazier & Eighmy, 2012; Golde & Pribbenow, 2000; Haynes & Janosik, 2012; Healea et al. 2015; Holland, 1999; Inkelas, 2007; James, 2010; Kuh, Pace & Vesper, 1997; O'Hara, 2001; Schroeder & Mable, 1994; Shushok, Scales, Sriram & Kidd, 2011; Sriram & McLevain, 2016; Terenzini, Pascarella & Blimling, 1996; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005). Research findings have demonstrated the benefits to students and to faculty of such programs, improving engagement with the post-secondary experience for both groups. Faculty-in-residence programs usually consist of academic personnel who have made a commitment to spend time with students living in campus housing, over and above their teaching, research and administrative service duties at the institution. The time spent with resident students can and often does have an academic component, such as advising, explicit teaching and/or other types of curricular or professional guidance. These kinds of

interactions may be connected to a specific program offered in residence (writing clinics, courses taught as part of a formalized learning community), or they may be more casual. Faculty-in-residence are also sometimes charged with planning activities and events for students that may be loosely tied to their own area of academic expertise, such as political salons or excursions to museums or other events. The interactions between faculty-in-residence and students may also extend into personal, social and specifically extra-curricular activities. Faculty who participate in these programs are usually remunerated via a package of benefits which often includes lodging inside a student residence and/or meals at the dining hall. The benefits to faculty of participating in faculty-in-residence programs has been shown to include improved motivation in their teaching and administrative duties (Baier, 2014; Humphrey, Callahan & Harrison, 2015), better understanding of students they teach (Shushok, Henry, Blalock & Sriram, 2009), and a deeper understanding of the functioning of the institution (Mara & Mara, 2011). Benefits to students can include enhanced academic achievement, decreased attrition and increased well-being (Inkelas, Daver, Vogt, & Leonard, 2007; Terenzini et al., 1996; Sriram & McLevain, 2016). However, many of these findings, over more than 30 years of study, were based on the student aggregate. There is a contemporary call to researchers to begin to look at these widely-accepted outcomes with an eye toward the diversity of the student population. Recent studies have looked at conditional effects of student-faculty interaction based on gender, race, sexual orientation, socioeconomic class, and other factors (Hall & Warner, 2009; Inkelas et al., 2007; Kim & Sax, 2009; Linley, Nguyen, Brazelton, Becker, Renn & Woodford, 2016; Sax, 2009).

The recruitment of faculty to these programs is a daunting challenge at most institutions, due to faculty members' academic commitments and lack of clarity around the live-in aspect of the role. In a climate of changing expectations, faculty are increasingly called upon to participate in student affairs programming (Golde & Pribbenow, 2000; O'Meara, Kaufman & Kuntz, 2003), for which they have little time in addition to academic priorities. Research findings indicate that student affairs professionals should take a lead role in designing programs that feature student-faculty interaction (Benjamin & Griffin, 2013; Delaney, 2008; Kuh, 2009); however, it is obvious that willing faculty are an indispensable component. In order for meaningful connections between students and faculty to take place, they must exist in the same space and find a common ground for their interactions (Cotten & Wilson, 2006). The quality of these interactions is as important, if not more important than quantity, and the factors determining quality are still under investigation.

### **Faculty-In-Residence at McGill.**

McGill University recently undertook the re-development and implementation of a new faculty-in-residence model that would build upon the long history of faculty living in McGill's residences.

McGill University is a large, urban, public, medical-doctoral university in Montreal, Quebec. Although under Royal Charter since 1821, McGill University only began accepting students in 1829 ("A University is Born", n.d.). At the time, the campus consisted of one building surrounded by the farmland bequeathed by James McGill, and it was quite far from what was central Montreal at that time (the riverfront area now known as Old

Montreal or Old Port). Students (all men), lived and studied in a single building under the supervision of the faculty who taught them. In the 1860s, an additional wing was added to the now-iconic central building to house the Principal and his family (“Flourishing Under Sir John William Dawson”, n.d.).

In the 1880s, Donald Alexander Smith, later known as Lord Strathcona, financed and established the Royal Victoria College (RVC) adjacent to the main campus, where female students could live and study for the first time at McGill (McDonald, 2002). The women of RVC were overseen by a Warden, a position akin to the Deans of Women appointed at other institutions. The Warden was usually a faculty member in the School of Nursing, one of few departments that hired women to teach at that time (Gillet, 1981).

As the campus grew, several residences designated for male students were also established. Each one built up until the 1960s had quarters designed to house a faculty member (and his family, as applicable). From at least the late-1960s onward, the live-in faculty members were known as the Residence Directors for their residence hall. Minutes from the University Residence Council, established in 1968, indicate that these individuals were responsible for the community life of their hall, including disciplinary measures as necessary. Most residence halls also had a Tutor, an advanced graduate student responsible for academic activities, and graduate and senior undergraduate students known as Fellows or Dons, who would assist residents with personal needs and social integration (McGill University Residences, 1968). This support infrastructure closely resembles the “house systems” of traditional British universities such as Oxford and Cambridge, and their American Ivy League descendants such as Harvard and Yale (O’Hara, 2001; Ryan, 2001).

From the 1990s until 2012, several more residence halls were established at McGill to accommodate larger and larger numbers of first-year undergraduate students. Unlike previous, purpose-built residences, these were usually renovated hotels in the downtown core as the campus became increasingly land-locked. An apartment designated for a faculty Residence Director was always a part of the re-design of the building. However, by the new millennium, it was becoming more and more difficult to recruit faculty for the positions. Reasons cited for the reticence mirrors the research on the topic: the overwhelming demands to participate in service activities, the need to focus on research, the stress of the tenure-track path, and concerns about appropriate setting of boundaries with students (Healea et al., 2015; Sax, 2009). By 2010, the majority of the positions were filled not by faculty, but by student- and academic affairs administrators, who were performing the part-time role of Residence Director on top of full-time 9-to-5 professional roles. (This is not to say that faculty are not working full-time, but their schedules tend to be more flexible).

In light of the difficulty recruiting, a decision was made to revise the live-in role for faculty, removing the administrative and supervisory aspects and assigning those purposefully to student affairs professionals. It was thought that by inviting faculty to participate in a scaled-back role focussed only on co-curricular, social and personal involvement with students, that the positions might be more attractive to faculty. And so, McGill's Faculty-Mentor-in-Residence program was born.

Using a qualitative approach that utilizes Cox and Orehovec's 2007 typology of student-faculty interaction, the goal of this study was to determine whether the re-designed faculty-in-residence model at McGill provided the desired fertile ground for enhanced

faculty-student interactions within McGill's residences, and further, whether students from a diverse subset of the population were able to equitably derive benefit from these interactions.

### **Significance of the Study**

Much of the research examining student-faculty relationships has been quantitative. There are or have been many instruments administered by institutions measuring student persistence and engagement. The National Survey of Student Engagement is the most pervasive, having bested its closest competitor, the College Student Experiences Questionnaire, into folding in 2014. There are others, including the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) Freshman Survey and CIRP College Student Survey. There are some that look exclusively at engagement and persistence outcomes for students living in campus housing (Association of College and University Housing Officers-International (ACUHO-I) Resident Assessment, ACUHO-I Canadian Resident Assessment, Campus Residential Experience Survey, Study of Integrated Living-Learning Programs (SILLP)). Recently, Sriram and McLevain (2016) developed a psychometric instrument specifically to measure the effectiveness of faculty-in-residence programs.

While quantitative data collection and synthesis has been crucial to the advancement of knowledge on this topic, one primary impetus for Cox and Orehovec's (2007) study was to create a tool by which researchers could qualitatively evaluate the relationships that develop between students and faculty. Qualitative methods allow participants' subjective telling of their experiences to remain intact and for participants and



researchers to contribute together to making sense of a particular phenomenon (Merriam, 2016).

The typology resulting from Cox and Orehovec's (2007) work is utilized in the current study. One of Cox and Orehovec's (2007) recommendations for further research is the examination of the conditional effects of student-faculty interaction for students identifying as minorities. Some researchers have taken up this challenge (Hall & Warner, 2009; Kim & Sax, 2009; Linley et al., 2016; Sax, 2009). Others have looked at the conditional effects of faculty-involved residence programming via quantitative methods (Brower & Inkelas, 2010; Inkelas et al., 2007). Overall, there are very few studies that examine the conditional effects of programming initiatives on students with marginalized and non-marginalized identities, and this study is the first, to date, on the conditional effects of faculty-in-residence programs using a qualitative approach. This kind of analysis is increasingly necessary as the study body across North America continues to diversify. Long-held assumptions about the way that students become engaged with the post-secondary experience must be tested to ensure that students with systemically marginalized identities have equitable access to programs that promise an enhanced post-secondary experience.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Student-faculty interaction is thought to be an important factor in students' engagement with their academic institution, but the benefit to students usually correlates with the quality of the mentoring relationship. McGill University's Faculty-Mentor-In-Residence program aimed to increase meaningful student-faculty relationships, but the

frequency and quality of these interactions has not been evaluated. Faculty-in-residence programs have been championed as a successful way to provide for both intentional and casual out-of-the-classroom interactions between students and faculty (Cox et al., 2010; Einarson & Clarkberg, 2004; Holland, 1999; Kuh et al., 1997). McGill's program was designed to provide the appropriate conditions for meaningful connections between students and faculty to take place, namely, that they must exist in the same space and find a common ground for their interactions (Cotten & Wilson, 2006). It has not been determined whether McGill's program was effective in providing opportunities for meaningful mentoring relationships to develop between students and faculty. Additionally, if these opportunities were created, it is important to determine whether they were available to all students.

### **Purpose & Research Questions**

The purpose of this research is to determine whether McGill's Faculty-Mentor-In-Residence program was effective in providing opportunities for the development of meaningful mentoring relationships between students and faculty, and whether those opportunities were equally accessible to all students. Using Cox and Orehovec's 2007 typology of student-faculty interaction, this study will determine whether the program is increasing meaningful mentoring relationships, and for whom.

The following questions will be addressed in this study:

1. Did the Faculty-Mentor-In-Residence program increase student-faculty interaction?
2. What type(s) of interactions were increased?
3. Did some students benefit from increased interactions more than others?

## **Overview of Methodology**

This study utilized qualitative data, with one-on-one interviews providing rich, first-hand experiences. First-year, on-campus resident students were canvassed via residence-wide listserv emails for participation in one-on-one phone interviews with the primary researcher. Non-probability quota sampling was used in selecting interview participants. Only students living in residence Halls with an active Faculty-Mentor were canvassed for participation. Potential participants were asked to complete an online, anonymous questionnaire to ensure that all participants could provide a specific and unique perspective based on their membership in the residence hall community where Faculty-Mentors were also members. Additionally, because there was a concern for determining whether some students benefited more than others from the Faculty-Mentor-In-Residence program according to their gender, race and/or ethnicity, potential participants were also asked to provide information about these identity markers. A more detailed breakdown of the demographic composition of the resident population is provided in the third chapter. This information was collected as part of the pre-screening in order to ensure that the group of interview participants would be inclusive of diverse identities so as to be able to evaluate differences in the experiences of students based on their self-identified identity markers.

Interviews were conducted over the phone, and recorded locally using an iPad. Following the interview, the primary researcher transcribed the audio recording and destroyed the audio file. During the interview, participants were asked questions about their experience with Faculty-Mentors. The questions were meant to bring about descriptions of

the quality of interaction that participants had with Faculty-Mentors so that responses could be coded according to Cox and Orehovec's typology of student-faculty interaction (see Table 1).

### **Limitations**

This study has several limitations. The scope is clearly limited to the Faculty-Mentor-In-Residence program at McGill University, and results are not necessarily generalizable to programs at other institutions, since the program was designed specifically to meet the needs of McGill's residence community and culture. However, if other institutions are seeking examples and recommendations for establishing their own similar programs, this research could provide helpful insight.

This study is considering only student-participant perspectives in determining the effectiveness of this program. While the perspectives of Faculty involved in the program would surely have been interesting, the focus of this study is the opportunities created for students that may lead to improved engagement with the post-secondary experience. Other researchers have examined the experiences of and benefits to faculty involved with Faculty-in-residence programs (Baier, 2014; Haynes & Janosik, 2014; Humphrey et al., 2015; Mara & Mara, 2011; Sriram, 2015).

This was the primary researcher's first experience conducting formal, participatory research. According to Yin (2015), the chance of bias in qualitative research is higher with an inexperienced researcher.

## **Conclusion**

Research findings of the past 40 years have concluded that student-faculty interaction is an important component of post-secondary student success. These long-held beliefs are undergoing critical re-examination in light of the diversification and internationalization of the post-secondary student population across North America.

Faculty-in-residence programs are a popular method of encouraging student-faculty interaction outside of the classroom. As such, these kinds of programs must be reviewed to ensure their effectiveness in helping students holding systematically marginalized identities succeed in post-secondary environments, as has been the case for their peers who belong to dominant identity groups.

This case study of a faculty-in-residence program examines the effectiveness of the program in increasing student-faculty interactions and the quality of those interactions. Unlike most studies that have used the same typology, it also considers the effectiveness of the program in terms of participants' identity markers, making apparent the conditional effects of the program on its student participants.

Chapter Two summarizes the relevant extant research on student engagement, student-faculty interaction, faculty-in-residence programs, and conditional effects of programming designed to increase student engagement on students from systemically marginalized backgrounds. Chapter Three provides a detailed overview of the study's methodology and also outlines the researcher's relationship to the study. Chapters Four and Five present the results of the study and recommendations for future research and practice.

## **Chapter Two: Review of Literature**

### **Introduction**

This chapter will provide helpful context to the current research by situating faculty-in-residence programs within the broader concern of student-faculty interaction, and, even more broadly, student engagement. The examination of the conditional effects of programs encouraging student-faculty interaction is essential to this study; students do not necessarily share the same experience across a rapidly diversifying student body. The historical precursors to contemporary faculty-in-residence programs will be outlined; this overview will illustrate that many of the same issues that made the undertaking challenging in the past are still concerns in the present.

There is no lack of data to employ in the analysis of the frequency and effect of student-faculty interaction from a quantitative perspective. Hundreds of post-secondary institutions across North America engage in routine data collection in the form of student experience surveys. However, there are few qualitative studies examining student engagement, student-faculty interaction, and even fewer that investigate student-faculty interaction in a residential setting, even as faculty-in-residence programs grow in popularity. Cox and Orehovec's (2007) typology of student-faculty interaction was developed in a residential setting, and thus is a highly suitable tool to use in the qualitative investigation of faculty-in-residence programs.

### **Student Engagement & Student-Faculty Interaction**

Since the 1950s, a large body of research has examined the benefits of what is now commonly referred to as *student engagement* in the context of North American post-secondary institutions. Kuh's definition of student engagement is the cornerstone of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), the most widely-used measure of student engagement levels across North America. Kuh (2009) defines student engagement as "the time and effort students devote to activities that are empirically linked to desired outcomes of college *and* what institutions do to induce students to participate in these activities" (p. 683). A correlation between student achievement (grades, persistence, graduation) and student engagement has been demonstrated, and so a constant struggle of post-secondary institutions is to provide opportunities and activities that keep their students highly engaged (Pascarella, 2006).

Student engagement, as an intentionally implemented practice, is not without its detractors. Critics charge that desired outcomes of student engagement are in some ways tied to neoliberalism (Barnacle & Dall'Alba, 2017; Zepke, 2014), putting an emphasis on the individual economic benefit to students of participating in initiatives that will bring them the most success as participants in higher education, and presumably, the world of work thereafter. Survey tools that measure student engagement, such as the NSSE, are scanning for conformity to widely-held assumptions and may fail to detect crucial differences in the experiences of students that are marginalized (Lawson & Lawson, 2013).

Popular practices among institutions that strive for high levels of student engagement include the "high-impact practices" measured by the National Survey of Student Engagement, an annual survey of over 1500 North American institutions, and

Chickering and Gamson's (1999) Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education:

**Figure 1: High Impact Practices (Kuh, 2008)<sup>1</sup>**

<b>High impact practices:</b>
• Learning communities (students share two or more classes)
• Service learning as part of a course
• Undergraduate research project
• Experiential learning (e.g. internship, field/clinical placement)
• Study abroad

**Figure 2: Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education (Chickering & Gamson, 1999)<sup>2</sup>**

<b>Seven principles for good practice in undergraduate education:</b>
• Encourage student-faculty contact
• Encourage cooperation among students
• Encourage active learning
• Give prompt feedback
• Communicate high expectations
• Respect diverse talents and ways of learning
• Emphasize time on task

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Kuh (2008)

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from Chickering and Gamson (1999)



These widely-used frameworks place a strong emphasis on the relationships that are built between students and faculty, and how these affect students' engagement with the post-secondary experience. As illustrated above, while the lecture hall or lab is the most obvious site of student-faculty interaction, contact between parties outside of traditional learning environments can also play an important role in students' learning and social development (Cotten & Wilson, 2006; Tinto, 1993; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2004). Faculty can also derive benefits from their co-curricular involvement with students, enhancing their teaching approach, reputation, and institutional commitment (Benjamin & Griffin, 2013; Cotten & Wilson, 2006; Kuh et al., 1991; Willms & Flanagan, 2003).

Despite the positive correlations associated with student-faculty interactions, students have been found to be largely unaware of the benefits of interacting with faculty outside of class (Benjamin & Griffin, 2013; Cotten & Wilson, 2006; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2004). Moreover, faculty have been discouraged from extensively interacting with students outside the classroom due to constraints associated with duties and responsibilities that lead to tenure, namely published research and teaching hours, and a trend away from the value once placed on contributions to institutional community leadership (Cotten & Wilson, 2006; O'Meara et al., 2003). Results of ten recent years of the NSSE (2006-2016) indicate that levels of student-faculty interaction are lowest among undergraduates at large, research-intensive, doctoral universities across North America.

While there is general agreement that student-faculty interaction is beneficial to students overall, there is some debate as to the type of interaction that benefits students, as well as whether all students benefit equally. Browne et al. (2009) and Terenzini et al. (2006)

concluded that interactions based around structured academic pursuits were clearly the most valuable, while others have emphasized the importance of informal interactions to open doors to deeper and more multi-variant connections (Cotten & Wilson, 2006; Cox & Orehovec, 2007).

### **Conditional Effects of Student Engagement and Student-Faculty Interaction.**

Student-faculty interaction itself is a condition for other structures and practices that benefit students. Institutions must be careful then, as efforts to connect students and faculty are expanded, to make sure that the broadest possible number and type of students are included in these efforts. Some studies have demonstrated that engagement can be a self-perpetuating cycle where students who are already engaged with the institution are more likely to seek out faculty, who encourage their participation in other high-impact practices and educationally productive activities, thus increasing their level of engagement and connected benefits (Cotten & Wilson, 2006; Kuh & Hu, 2001). The challenge to institutions is to engage students who are not as inclined to be engaged. Those with lower or undefined expectations for their post-secondary experience are particularly important, such as students from lower socio-economic backgrounds and first-generation students; both of these categories overlap disproportionately with students who are also racialized (Inkelas, et al., 2007). According to data from the NSSE (2008), these students might not have the same confidence to approach faculty of their own accord. Minority-serving institutions (MSIs) in the US by definition have very high concentrations of marginalized students. At MSIs, a high degree of student-faculty interaction is common, and serves as one of the pre-conditions for student and academic affairs units to be able to sponsor mandatory

programming that has been shown to be enormously effective in compensating for minority students' less robust academic preparation for post-secondary study (relative to white students) (Kuh, 2009). Taking a cue from MSIs and knowing what we do about the positive impact that student-faculty interaction can have, mainstream institutions (e.g. colleges and universities without a specific mandate to serve marginalized students) must make efforts to engage these same students among their own populations.

Kim and Sax (2009) emphasize the need to reexamine all of the results of the past 40 years of research on student-faculty interaction through new eyes, since many of the frameworks that have been developed were based on research that considered students as a homogenous group. According to Kuh (2009), who conducted a meta-analysis on student-faculty interaction, students falling into most demographic categories have been shown to benefit from interaction with faculty, across gender, race, ethnicity and socio-economic status. However, other researchers have examined the different benefits and degree of derived benefits according to students' gender, race, social class and other factors (Hall & Warner, 2009; Inkelas et al., 2007; Kim & Sax, 2009; Linley et al., 2016; Sax, 2009), and found that the benefits are not even across all demographic profiles.

## **Faculty-In-Residence Programs**

### **Early Origins of Faculty-In-Residence.**

In Canada and the United States, a number of different kinds of programs bring together faculty and students in a residential setting. These can be called faculty-in-residence (FIR), residential colleges, or living-learning programs/communities (LLPs/LLCs). Different names usually indicate different intentions, but what is common to

these programs is the presence of faculty who have contractually agreed to take part in the academic and/or social life of the residence community, in addition to their other institutional roles and responsibilities. All of these kinds of programs are at least loosely modeled on the residential colleges that originated at Cambridge and Oxford in the 14th century (Ryan, 2001). A traditional residential college would have students who study in the same subject discipline, such as history or philosophy, living in shared quarters under the supervision and guidance of an academic head. Although they were often given the name “tutor”, the faculty member overseeing the college would also tend to students’ social and personal needs, providing advice and support on a range of issues, and also meting out disciplinary measures as need arose. As universities were established in North America, many built facilities for application of this model from the start, with generous living quarters for academic heads built into the campus dormitories. Harvard, Yale, the University of Toronto and McGill were all built with the assumption that a faculty member would live with students. Faculty members living in community with students were the figureheads of residential life on the campus, hosting teas in their receiving rooms and often presiding over the dining hall during meals from a “high table”, literally elevated at the front of the room.

### **Fading Interest in Faculty-In-Residence.**

In North America, with the vast majority of universities established in the middle- and later twentieth century, the practice of inviting faculty to take on these roles appears to have fallen out of fashion. With a strong emphasis on faculty members’ responsibilities to research and formal teaching, activities that were seen to be taking time and energy away

from these now-core pursuits became superfluous (Healea et al., 2015). No university established in Canada between 1940 and 1960 appears to have implemented a faculty-led residential model. Trent University in Peterborough, Ontario is the only university to have done so between 1960 and the end of the millennium, as they specifically sought to recreate the traditional residential college model. Despite the apparent opportunity to develop more academically-driven post-secondary environments, few twentieth century Canadian universities seemed to have been convinced of the benefits of tying residence life to the academic life of the institution.

### **Resurgence of Interest in Faculty-In-Residence.**

In light of research findings by Astin (1977, 1993), Chickering and Gamson (1987, 1999), Kuh (2001, 2009) and others promoting the benefits of faculty-student interaction, many institutions re-examined or examined for the first time, programs that bring together students and faculty outside the classroom. Astin (1977) planted the seed for the renaissance of these programs, reporting at the time that more than any other single variable, student-faculty interaction outside the classroom correlated most strongly to student satisfaction with their post-secondary experience. In the 1990s, purveyors of student-experience assessment created a significant market in a very short time period. The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), the National Student Survey, and the Association of College and University Housing Officers-International (ACUHO-I) Residential Assessment were all established in the 1980s and 1990s; all of these surveys collect and benchmark students' perceived satisfaction with their experience while studying at university. High rates of student satisfaction are translated as institutional success at

engaging students. These surveys were largely developed by academics in the context of developing their own research agendas in the area of student development theory. Once demonstrated to be useful assessment tools, they were commodified and marketed to institutions seeking to measure their own efforts at student engagement, as well as benchmark against other North American institutions. The adoption of these surveys by hundreds of institutions put a new emphasis on the student experience, and, by extension, the relationship between students and faculty (Schroeder & Mable, 1994). Astin's 1977 finding was reified over and over again, with faculty-student interaction emerging as one of the most significant correlates to student success, and out of the classroom interaction as one of the most important factors in student satisfaction (Kuh et al., 1991). While interface between faculty and students can and does occur across many settings, including labs and other research centres, "meeting students where they're at" has become an ever-more frequent refrain; encouraging, and indeed finding reasons for faculty to be in spaces that students already occupy has made residence halls obvious sites to implement programming.

### **Student-Faculty Interaction via Faculty-In-Residence Programs**

Research findings indicate that student-faculty interaction can contribute to student engagement in a multitude of ways. Engagement with faculty is positively correlated with students' academic achievement, retention, satisfaction (Astin, 1993; Delaney, 2008; Kinzie, 2014; Kuh, 2009; Kuh et al., 1997) and post-graduate success in the workplace (Lumina Foundation, 2014). Speaking more directly to the criticism that student engagement promotes an individualistic and even neoliberal worldview, student-faculty interaction particularly is positively correlated with intellectual and personal development

(Pascarella, 2006) and increased tolerance of racial difference among White and Asian-American students (Kim, 2006). Participation in faculty-led learning communities can give participants a “clearer sense about what it means to be a citizen of and contributor to a fundamental social form, a community” (Geri, Kuehn & MacGregor, 1999, p. 203).

According to Barr and Tagg (1995), in an attempt to enhance student success, many post-secondary institutions of higher learning shifted to a learning-centered model in the 1980s and 1990s. In this model, learning has moved away from an exclusive emphasis on formal instruction and toward an emphasis on the production of learning both inside and outside the classroom (Barr & Tagg, 1995). Some institutions took the opportunity to extend the learning model to their campus housing, by creating programming that extended the reach of academic learning. Compelling and consistent data from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) over the past decade has also suggested that students’ experience is enhanced by participation in residential living-learning communities, study clusters, and other types of programs that combine social interactions with academic activities (Kinzie, 2014). A learning model for residences is in opposition to a “sleep-and-eat” model, wherein the campus housing department functions simply as a landlord, or the competitive “market” model, where the institution seeks to provide attractive and even luxurious facilities more akin to a resort than a dormitory (Shushok et al., 2011, p. 16). Most institutions have a residence system that comprises elements of all of these models, but those that invite faculty participation in programming are most aligned with the learning model.

James (2010) describes partnerships between academic affairs and student affairs, such as faculty-in-residence (FIR), First-Year-Interest-Groups (FIGs) and Living-Learning Communities (LLCs), as the “gold standard” (p. 214) in Canada for programming that effectively engages students. However, a primary consideration in building any program to bring together students and faculty is available and appropriate space. Lack of physical space is a concern on many campuses, and also, students and faculty are often segregated on campuses into spaces designed for the exclusive use of each group. Cotten and Wilson (2006) found that students perceived both tangible and intangible barriers to interacting with faculty, rarely seeing them on campus outside of class or assuming that they were too busy. A seemingly obvious recommendation arising from the same study was to consider that in order to interact, students and faculty must exist in the same space. Residence halls have often been identified as fertile ground for the integration of social and academic spheres (Cotten & Wilson, 2006; Healea et al., 2015; Schroeder & Mable, 1994; Sriram, 2015). Residence halls attract undergraduates because they provide a more intimate iteration of the wider campus culture where students can more comfortably grapple with their personal and social needs. When faculty enter residence halls, they have crossed a barrier, demonstrated an interest in students beyond the classroom, and created opportunities to establish connections that shrink the vastness of the university experience to a more manageable size (Golde & Pribbenow, 2000; Inkelas, 2007). Golde & Pribbenow (2000) describe the way that students and faculty can find common ground within residence halls: “When faculty enter residence halls... they cross an unofficial cultural divide between faculty-controlled academic time and space and student-controlled social time and space” (para. 5).



Student-faculty interaction can be particularly challenging to cultivate among first-year students at large, public, research-intensive institutions. The instance of student-faculty interaction on these kinds of campuses is typically the lowest of all of the high-impact practices measured by the NSSE, right up to and including very recent results (2016). Class sizes, especially for first-year classes, are often large, and students are not yet attuned to the value of strong mentorship relationships in their preparation for post-university life (Cotten & Wilson, 2006; Delaney, 2008). In Cotten & Wilson's 2006 study of student-faculty mentorship programs:

Many of the students interviewed, freshmen and sophomores in particular, do not seek out interactions with faculty because they fail to recognize a need to do so... students do not realize that faculty are available to do more than help them with homework... students seem to understand that faculty may have a lot to offer, but are unsure whether it is appropriate to take advantage of the resource. (p. 497)

First-year residence halls are seen to be a potentially very productive site of interaction between young students and faculty. Once the two factions are in the same physical space, the idea of "common ground" must be extended to interests not limited to classroom material. According to Cotten & Wilson (2006), students who have strong relationships with faculty members have usually been co-implicated in at least a semi-structured program that provides this commonality (e.g. mentoring tied to a scholarship). They describe the revelation that students experience when they develop a supportive relationship with faculty: "many students are unaware of the importance of interactions

with faculty, but once they become involved with a faculty member they clearly perceive that the relationship is beneficial” (p. 499).

Given the positive research on student-faculty interactions, the housing departments at some post-secondary institutions have attempted to attract faculty to their programs by offering a faculty member a home. In exchange for living quarters, faculty have shared common space with students and have sought to cultivate an environment that is prone to psychological and/or intellectual development (Cotten & Wilson, 2006). Research has shown that faculty are not easily recruited into such living-learning programs due to the limits of specialized research agendas, the pressures of the promotion and tenure process, and the perceived burdens of getting caught up in students’ personal lives (Golde & Pribbenow, 2000; Haynes & Janosik, 2012; Humphrey et al., 2015; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2004).

Interestingly, studies have demonstrated that students do not necessarily have to be participating in the events and programming offered through residential colleges or living-learning communities to derive benefits. While students who actively participate in these programs derive the most benefits, students living in the same residence hall where intentional living-learning programs are carried out have been shown to have higher levels of engagement and satisfaction than students living in residence halls at the same institution without living-learning programs (Frazier & Eighmy, 2012).

This review of the foundations of faculty-in-residence programs illustrates the historical precedent for their contemporary iterations. It also shows why institutional

planners have come around to considering these kinds of residence-based programs anew as institutions are expected to implement measurable and impactful programming that keeps students engaged in the pursuit of higher education. The current study is a contribution to the existing body of research specifically examining faculty-in-residence programs.

### **Typical Methodologies**

The widely-accepted view that student-faculty interaction is beneficial to students is largely based on correlations to positive indicators of student success such as grades, degree completion, and personal and career development. Thanks to the wide employment of student experience surveys such as the NSSE, ACUHO-I Resident Assessment and the Study of Integrated Living-Learning Programs (SILLP), there is no shortage of quantitative data with which to explore the effectiveness of faculty-in-residence programs as a subset of programs bringing students and faculty together. Survey tools can include questions on student-faculty interaction in terms of frequency and circumstances (e.g. classroom versus out-of-the-classroom). However, qualitative assessment is more effective at bringing out the “why” and the “how” of the development of relationships between students and faculty. Qualitative methods, such as interviews and focus groups, allow people to consider and explain their experiences and provide insight into the way that people interpret their circumstances and the world.

The ways that student-faculty relationships develop is important to understand on a deep and subjective level so that conditions that have successfully brought about effective mentoring relationships can be replicated and accessed by a greater number of students.

### **Typology of Student-Faculty Interaction**

Cox and Orehovec (2007) developed a typology of student-faculty interaction within a residential college setting. Typically, a residential college is an on-campus setting where students live but also engage in academic or para-academic activities to support their curricular learning. The purpose of the typology was to have a tool to measure the quality of interactions that occur between students and faculty, and also to be able to further investigate how interactions of a higher-quality come to pass. The typology separates student-faculty interactions into hierarchical order of five distinct types:

**Table 1: Typology of Student Faculty Interaction (Cox & Orehovec, 2007)<sup>3</sup>**

<b>Interaction Type</b>	<b>Description</b>
Disengagement	No substantive interactions outside of the classroom. Even when sharing space, students and faculty do not mix.
Incidental contact	Superficial or unintentional interactions, e.g. casual elevator conversation, exchange of greetings in the dining hall.
Functional interaction	Specific, institutionally-related interaction, directly or indirectly related to academic activities/concerns, e.g. working on a project together, students seeking academic guidance from faculty
Personal interaction	Purposeful, related to a personal interest of the student and/or faculty, e.g. talk about life stories/concerns over a shared meal/coffee
Mentoring	Role-modelling AND assistance with career/professional development AND personal/emotional support, e.g. a sustained relationship that combines functional and personal interaction

<sup>3</sup> Adapted from Cox and Orehovec (2007)

In Cox and Orehovec's view, these also occur in diminishing order, with disengagement being the most common, and mentoring being the most rare. The middle category, functional interaction, occurs when students and faculty are brought into contact via an out-of-the-classroom academic activity sponsored by their institution, such as office hours for a course, tutorials, research projects, or academically-related conversations that occur in the context of an otherwise social interaction. They consider functional interaction to be particularly critical as they believe this type of contact has strong potential to open doors to the higher orders of interaction if the conditions are right (e.g. the student and faculty member discover a topic or activity of common interest). A crucial aspect of functional interaction between students and faculty is that it is facilitated by the institution; this is especially important for students from marginalized communities who need more confirmation that their presence at the institution is deserved and legitimate (Inkelas et al., 2007).

In developing this typology, Cox and Orehovec have created a tool that enables qualitative research on student-faculty interaction. Researchers have applied the typology and answered their implicit call to engage in more qualitative assessment (Baier, 2014; Mara & Mara, 2011). Cox and Orehovec (2007) also made an explicit recommendation to use their typology to further examine the conditional effects of student-faculty interaction based on identity markers of both students and faculty. The current study seeks to answer to both of these recommendations.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has outlined the history of faculty-in-residence programs and placed them within the wider efforts to encourage students and faculty to interact outside of the classroom. The particular history of faculty-in-residence at McGill University, the site of the study, has also been reviewed in order to provide context to the current study. The importance of considering conditional effects of the post-secondary experience on students with different race and gender identities has also been explored. The next chapter will explain the methodology chosen for this study in light of the existing corpus of research in this area.

## **Chapter Three: Methodology**

### **Introduction**

Owing to the popularity of student engagement and student satisfaction surveys, there is an abundance of quantitative data on students' experience. However, it has been relatively rare to pursue qualitative research investigating post-secondary student experience in general, and even more uncommon to look at faculty-in-residence programs. Some studies have recommended that more qualitative research in this area be undertaken to provide more depth to the existing findings (Baier, 2014; Benjamin & Griffin, 2013; Cox et al., 2010), even providing tools with which to do so, such as Cox and Orehovec's (2007) typology of student-faculty interaction.

Qualitative research is generally more common in examining the experiences of people who belong to marginalized groups (van den Hoonaard, 2008). However, few qualitative research studies exist that have looked specifically at the experiences of students participating in faculty-in-residence programming who are also marginalized. This study was devised, in part, to contribute to filling that gap in the literature.

### **Qualitative Research**

Qualitative research methods allow participants to describe the ways in which they experience the world, and to participate with researchers in "meaning-making" (Hunter, Lusardi, Zucker, Jacelon & Chandler, 2002; Krauss, 2005). The vast majority of research on student engagement has been quantitative, possibly because of the availability of survey

data. However, qualitative data collection and analysis can open the researcher to nuances not communicable via survey instruments (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Qualitative methods are more commonly used in the study of phenomena affecting marginalized populations. According to van den Hoonaard (2008), marginalization is the process through which members of some segments of society find themselves out of the mainstream based on their membership in socially meaningful groups. Groups may become marginalized based on a variety of characteristics such as religion, social class, ethnicity, visible racial characteristics, gender, age, and sexual orientation. People's social status related to these characteristics is based on an interpretation of their meaningfulness rather than on any innate qualities they might have. (p. 491)

Particular care must be taken not to further exploit a participant or group of participants by virtue of their participation in the study.

## **Research Design**

This study is designed around a case study. Case studies typically examine one location, program, institution, community or group, allowing for “in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 37). Case studies are purposefully chosen because of their potential to be “information-rich” (Patton, 1990, p. 169). There is normally pre-existing knowledge that the case under review will provide useful insight in answering the research questions. The study was conducted at McGill University, a large, urban, public, medical-doctoral university in Montreal, Quebec. It was so chosen because it had an existing faculty-in-residence program, and certainly because



of the primary researcher's affiliation to the site at the time the research was proposed. Permission for data collection and access to in-house data was obtained from the department responsible for student residences, Student Housing and Hospitality Services (Appendix A).

This study utilized qualitative data, with one-on-one interviews providing rich, first-hand descriptions of students' experiences with McGill's Faculty-Mentors-in-Residence. First-year, on-campus resident students were canvassed via residence-wide listserv emails for participation in one-on-one phone interviews with the primary researcher. Given that the researcher was employed at the research site at the time of the data collection, the invitation made a clear distinction that the study comprised the researcher's academic activities and that only the final thesis would be shared with the purveyors of the research site. All participants who joined this study gave informed consent by agreeing to the terms set out in an Informed Consent Form (Appendix D). The study was conducted with the approval of Memorial University's Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (Appendix B) and secondary approval by McGill University's Research Ethics Board (Appendix C). Non-probability quota sampling was used in selecting interview participants. Only students living in residence Halls with an active Faculty-Mentor were canvassed for participation. Volunteers were asked to complete an online, anonymous questionnaire to ensure that all participants could provide a specific and unique perspective based on their membership in the residence hall community where Faculty-Mentors were also members. Additionally, because there was a concern for determining whether some students benefitted more than others from the Faculty-Mentor-In-Residence program according to their gender and/or sexuality and/or race and/or ethnicity, volunteers were also

asked to self-describe their identity. This information was collected as part of the pre-screening in order to ensure that the group of interview participants would be inclusive of diverse identities so as to be able to evaluate differences in the experiences of students based on their self-described identity markers.

Interviews were conducted over the phone, and recorded locally using an iPad. Following the interview, the primary researcher transcribed the audio recording and destroyed the audio file. During the interview, participants were asked questions about their experience with Faculty-Mentors. The questions were meant to bring about descriptions of the quality of interaction that participants had with Faculty-Mentors so that responses could be coded according to Cox and Orehovec's typology of student-faculty interaction (Table 1). The research process will be explained in detail in the sections that follow.

### **Site of the Study**

In 2014, McGill University had a faltering faculty-in-residence model. Traditionally, university faculty had served as Hall Directors in the on-campus residences, a practice dating back at least a century. Hall Directors were remunerated for a part-time position on top of their full-time appointment, and for decades, it was possible to attract faculty to these roles on the promise of lodgings in proximity to campus and a chance to build meaningful relationships with students, student leaders, and colleagues. By 2014 though, it was becoming more and more difficult to attract faculty to these roles (Rombough & Johnson, 2015). The pressures of research agendas and the tenure-track, combined with the unpredictable nature of the Hall Director role scared away faculty members, even those

who were suggested by students and colleagues who thought they would be suitable to the role.

Administrators in the Residence Life area of the Residences and Student Housing department could see that carrying on with the Hall Director model was untenable. Over the previous decade, there had never been more than five faculty members to fill ten Hall Director positions. The balance were filled by other kinds of “student-friendly” personnel, mostly full-time managers from other student life areas. Those faculty members who served as Hall Directors complained that too much of their time was spent liaising on operational issues and managing crises; even if they wanted to interact with students on the basis of shared interests or introduce them to their own areas of expertise, there was no time, designated or otherwise, to do so. These issues, added to the legitimate possibility that taking on a Hall Director role would interfere with faculty members’ academic agendas, made recruitment extremely difficult. The concerns articulated by faculty are consistent with findings in the extant research about faculty members’ reluctance get involved with activities that promote out-of-the-classroom interaction (Golde & Pribbenow, 2000; Holland, 1999; Humphrey et al., 2015).

Researchers have concluded that student affairs professionals are best placed to design and implement programming that promotes student engagement inside and outside of residences, as well as manage the day-to-day operations (Benjamin & Griffin, 2013; Cotten & Wilson, 2006; James, 2010; Kinzie, 2014). Student affairs professionals also play a crucial role in supporting students in difficulty. Faculty members are also critical contributors to student support, and the best case scenario is that student affairs and

academic affairs work as partners. When McGill sought to overhaul its live-in support structure for residences, Residence Life administration decided upon a structure that they hoped would provide the best formula for partnership between student affairs and faculty. Full-time Residence Life Managers were charged with day-to-day management of the residence communities and the student staff, logistical and crisis support, and the design and implementation of training and programming for students and student leaders. These roles would be complimented by live-in faculty members who would “build academic community through mentoring, activities, and intentional interactions with students” (Rombough & Johnson, 2015, p. 511).

There were five active Mentors in the Faculty-Mentor-In-Residence program during the 2015-16 academic year. Three lived in community with students (i.e. in a residence hall) and two lived out. Three Mentors had a teaching role, one was an advanced graduate student who had previously worked as an academic advisor, and one was a senior administrator. Mentors were responsible for programming associated with the shared-interest Living-Learning Community in their hall, as well as building community in other ways associated with their area of academic study or expertise.

### **Participants**

The participants were students who had lived in an on-campus residence at McGill University during the previous academic year. Only students who had lived in a residence where a Faculty-Mentor was active (living in or living out) were invited to participate in the study.

According to the most recent Association of College and University Housing Officers-International (ACUHO-I) Resident Assessment carried out at McGill in 2016, students living in residence at McGill are typically in their first year (93.3%) (“Survey Snapshot: McGill University”). Three percent are from Quebec and 45% are from elsewhere in Canada; the majority (52%) of resident students are considered international students. Half of the international students are from the United States, and the rest are from more than 80 countries around the world (Rombough, 2016).

The institutional data collected on students’ race is limited to what is self-reported on surveys (DiGenova, 2016; “Survey Snapshot: McGill University”, 2016). According to the latest ACUHO-I survey administered in the spring of 2016, 62% of McGill resident students identify as white. 35.1% identify as one of many non-white racial identities or national identities where non-white residents make up the vast majority of inhabitants (e.g. China)<sup>4</sup>. About three percent (2.9%) chose not to respond. The most common racial or national identities were Chinese (12.5%), South Asian (6.1%), and Multiracial (5.4%). Nearly ten percent (9.4%) of respondents identified with nine other racial or national identities, and 1.9% selected “Other”.

In terms of gender- and sexual identity, in 2016, 69% of benchmarking survey respondents were women, 29.7% were men, and 1.3% selected “Other”. No respondents identified as trans on the institutional survey, although one participant in this study did. On the benchmarking survey, respondents identified as heterosexual or straight (79.5%),

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<sup>4</sup> Mixing racial identity and national identity is not ideal, but this is how the question of ‘race’ was presented to participants of the ACUHO-I Resident Survey, which is where this data comes from.

unsure/questioning/other (6.7%), bisexual (6.1%), gay or lesbian (3.8%), and 3.2% preferred not to answer.

### **Data Collection**

This study utilized qualitative methods, with one-on-one interviews providing rich, first-hand experiences. On-campus resident students were canvassed via residence-wide listserv emails for participation in one-on-one phone interviews with the primary researcher. Non-probability quota sampling was used in selecting interview participants. Only students living in residence Halls with an active Faculty-Mentor were canvassed for participation. The letter of invitation (Appendix E) to participate went out via email listserv to 922 students who had lived in one of these residence Halls during the academic year that had just ended. Two email reminders were sent after the initial invitation. A link to an online, anonymous pre-selection questionnaire was provided in the email invitation (Appendix F). Respondents were asked to complete the questionnaire to ensure that all participants fit these criteria:

1. Age of majority in Quebec (18)
2. Recent completion of first year at McGill university
3. Lived in the same on-campus residence Hall for at least six months
4. Lived in a residence hall where a Faculty-Mentor was active

These criteria were applied to establish that participants could provide a specific and unique perspective based on their membership in the residence hall community where Faculty-Mentors were also members. Additionally, because there was a concern for determining whether some students derived more benefit than others from the Faculty-Mentor-In-Residence program according to their gender, race and/or ethnicity, respondents were also asked to provide information about these identity markers. This information was collected as part of the pre-screening in order to ensure that the group of interview participants would be inclusive of diverse identities so as to be able to evaluate differences in the experiences of students based on their self-declared identity markers. Fourteen students completed the pre-selection questionnaire, yielding a 1.5% response rate. None were excluded based on the pre-selection criteria, but some could not be contacted during the interview phase.

### **Interview Protocol.**

Eleven interviews were conducted during July-August 2016. Interviews were conducted over the phone, and recorded locally using an iPad. Following the interview, the audio recording was transcribed and the audio file was deleted. The interviews were semi-structured. In semi-structured interviews, open-ended questions are pre-designed by the researcher (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Unstructured interviews are more akin to a conversation, but rely on the experience and training of the interviewer (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Given the researcher's lack of experience with interviewing, a semi-structured format was used. During the interview, all participants were asked the same predetermined questions about their experience with Faculty-Mentors in near-identical order. In some interviews, clarifying questions were asked if the interviewer did not understand the

response to the question or felt that the participant did not understand the question. The questions were meant to bring about discussion about the quality of interaction that participants had with Faculty-Mentors so that responses could be categorized according to Cox and Orehovec's (2007) typology of student-faculty interaction (see Table 1).

### **Deception.**

Cox and Orehovec's (2007) typology includes "Disengagement", wherein a student has little to no interaction with a faculty member serving as a mentor. They clarify that this might mean a complete lack of engagement, wherein the student is not even aware that the faculty member is present or serves any purpose in their experience. To allow fully for this lowest-order interaction type to manifest, participants were not informed at the time of recruitment that the study was specifically about the Faculty-Mentor-In-Residence program, or that only students who had lived in residence halls with Faculty-Mentors had been canvassed. Instead they were informed that the study was simply about mentorship. The interviews began with questions that did not specifically name the Faculty-Mentor so that it was possible for participants to acknowledge if the Faculty-Mentor was not a part of their experience in residence at all. This is also the reason that participants were not pre-screened for previous interaction with Faculty-Mentors.

Employing deception as a part of research requires special care, as it tests the boundaries of informed consent. Participants are entitled to know as much as possible about what they will be subjected to in the course of a study. The poor application of deception



can compromise individual and public faith in research activities, which is to the detriment of society as a whole. Usually, the justification for employing a deception in a study is that the data could not be otherwise collected (O'Neill, 2008). In this instance, if participants were informed of the exact nature of the study (i.e. that it was evaluating the quality of interactions between students and the Faculty-Mentors), potential participants who had not interacted with the Mentors may have opted out of participating if they thought they had nothing to contribute. One possibility would have been to collect data about students' interactions with the Faculty-Mentors within a larger study looking at mentorship more generally, thereby rendering the recruitment messaging accurate, but that was out of the scope of this thesis.

The deception built into this study was approved by the Memorial University Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) prior to the data collection phase of the study, and it was deemed to have a low risk of harm to the participants (see Appendix A). An ICEHR-imposed condition to including such a deception is that participants were informed of the deception as soon as possible. Respecting this tenet, the interview questions were asked in two parts. Participants were asked the following questions:

1. Who were the people who both lived and worked in your residence Hall?
2. Of these people, who did you interact with most?
3. Were you a Floor Fellow in your residence Hall?

4. How involved were you with the Living-Learning Community in your residence Hall this year?

5. (If they have not come up in the discussion) Who was the Mentor in your Hall / for your LLC?

These questions provided the opportunity for participants to demonstrate whether they were aware of the Faculty-Mentor in their residence hall. At this point in the interview, the participant was made aware of the inherent deception in the study by way of a deception debriefing script read by the interviewer:

Thank you for answering my questions so far. I want to inform you at this point that this study is actually about students' engagement specifically with the live-in Mentor for your Hall, and not about mentorship more generally. I did not tell you this from the start because it is important to establish the full range of possibilities for engagement, including a lack of engagement. Do you understand what I've explained? (If yes) The rest of the questions pertain specifically to your experience with the live-in Mentor. Do you feel comfortable continuing with the interview?

All participants elected to continue with the questions from this point, although one participant asked for confirmation that the study was not an attempt to "spy" on the Mentors (interview 8, p. 6). The rest of the interview questions were as follows:

6. What role did you see the Mentor playing in your Hall? Can you provide one or two specific examples?

7. How did you interact with your Mentor? Can you provide one or two specific examples?

8. What could the Mentor have done that they were not already doing? Can you provide one or two specific examples?

Participants were offered the option to be entered in a draw for movie passes. The draw was carried out after the completion of all interview recordings in September 2016.

### **Data Analysis**

Interviews were transcribed by hand. Following transcription of the interviews, participants' responses were analyzed for indicators of their level of interaction with their Faculty-Mentors, as described by Cox and Orehovec's (2007) typology. The interview questions were meant to bring about discussion about the quality of interaction that participants had with Faculty-Mentors so that responses could be coded according to Cox and Orehovec's (2007) typology of student-faculty interaction.

The interviews were read and analyzed one by one, allowing for complete immersion in each participant's described experience. However, patterns across participants' experiences were easily detectable, especially among participants from the same residence hall (and so sharing the same Faculty-Mentor).

Cox and Orehovec's (2007) typology was relatively easy to apply to the participants' described experiences. Most participants' interaction type fell directly into one category or another, as described in Cox and Orehovec's (2007) study, especially the lowest-order interaction types (Disengagement, Incidental). However, in some cases, it was

difficult to discern whether, if a participant had been party to frequent functional interaction with a Faculty-Mentor, whether it these interactions had crossed the barrier into Personal or Mentoring interaction. In a few cases, participants sought frequent academic assistance from a particular Mentor who was a teacher in their area of study. A participant described the Mentor as “the centre of our universe” (interview 4, p. 2). Despite her effusive description of the Faculty-Mentor, their interactions never went beyond the Functional Interaction type, since this was the explicit purpose for which he had been assigned to that residence.

Another coding challenge arose when, in another interview, a participant had a single interaction with a Mentor wherein he received relevant and specific career advice that made such an impact that he was considering a change in course of study to match that of the Mentor. However, the participant never encountered the Faculty-Mentor again.

The litmus test applied to code the interactions in the less clear cases was to determine whether a) the relationship between the participant and the Mentor was *sustained*, and also b) whether the relationship encompassed more dimensions than only that which was explicitly stated as a function of the Mentor’s presence in the residence hall.

Once the coding of the interviews were complete, participants were grouped according to type of interaction so that the relative frequency could be considered. Cox and Orehovec (2007) contend that the interaction types occur in diminishing order, from Disengagement through Mentoring, which did not prove to be exactly the case among these participants.

Participants' were then also grouped according to their self-declared identity markers, which comprised race, ethnicity and gender. According to the most recent Association of College and University Housing Officers-International (ACUHO-I) Resident Assessment carried out at McGill in 2016, the overwhelming majority identities of students in McGill's residences are white (62%), straight (79.5%), and cis-gendered (98.7%) ("Survey Snapshot: McGill University", 2016). Only race and gender were considered because no participants self-described their sexuality as an identity marker. Although there are vastly more women (69%) than men (29.7%) in the residence population, making them a numerical majority, women are considered a marginalized group for the purposes of this study as in the world at large (van den Hoonaard, 2008). Due to the small size of this study, comparisons in terms of quality of interaction based on identity markers were done on a majority/minority basis (e.g. White vs. racialized/ethnic minority, male vs. female/non-binary). This study seeks to respond to calls from other researchers who have recommended more examination of the ways that traditionally marginalized populations experience student engagement programming, including racialized, queer, trans and women students. Comparing marginalized students' experiences to the way that majority-identity students experience the same programs is essential, since student engagement programming has largely been designed based on theories that were developed based on research of majority-identity students.

### **Researcher's Relationship to Study**

As the primary researcher, I was very involved in the research site, having been one of the last part-time Hall Directors at McGill University, as well as a senior manager in the

Residence Life department. I was somewhat involved in developing the Faculty-Mentor-in-Residence program, serving as a consultant for the working group that oversaw the transition from part-time Hall Directors to the new, two-position structure (i.e. full-time administrators and part-time Faculty-Mentors). My spouse served as a Mentor for the pilot year of the program as we transitioned out of living on campus, but he was not a Mentor not during the year under consideration in this study. During the course of the research proposal, ethics approval and data collection, I was employed in the department that served as the research site, although not overseeing the Faculty-Mentor-In-Residence program or the Mentors (an administrative decision that was made in part to avoid conflict of interest with my own research). As such, I have highly subjective knowledge about the development of the program and the day-to-day functioning of Mentors in the role, as well as a collegial relationship with some of the Mentors. My professional role in Residence Life brought me into frequent and essential contact with students. There is no doubt that I knew at least one, if not more, of the study's participants personally. For example, one participant stated that she was a Floor Fellow during the academic year (interview 9, p. 3); I knew all 68 of the Floor Fellows by name and at least well enough to say hello when crossing paths on campus. It is possible that I knew others, although given the anonymity of the data collection, it would be impossible to confirm. My familiarity with the participant population was mitigated somewhat by the choice to conduct interviews over the phone and not face-to-face. I was no longer employed at the research site at the time that data analysis and final report writing was taking place. However, I feel fondness for former colleagues at the research site, and had to take care to avoid bias in the final reporting of results, wherein I may have been reluctant to report on findings that could be perceived as

negative. This being said, having been peripherally involved in establishing this particular program, I may still feel biased toward the success of the program and toward the value of faculty-in-residence programs in general.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has described the methodology of the data collection and analysis used to conduct this case study. A qualitative approach was chosen because qualitative research methods are less common in examining student-faculty interaction and faculty-in-residence programs student experience and engagement. Qualitative methods are also thought to be suited to research investigating phenomena that affects marginalized people, which is the case for this study. The next chapter will describe the results of the data analysis.

## **Chapter Four: Results**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to determine whether McGill's Faculty-Mentor-In-Residence program had resulted in the development of meaningful mentoring relationships between students and faculty. The study was guided by three research questions:

1. Did the Faculty-Mentor-In-Residence program increase student-faculty interaction?
2. What type(s) of interaction were increased?
3. Do some students benefit from increased interactions more than others?

Data were gathered through eleven interviews with students who lived in McGill's student residences where the Faculty-Mentor-In-Residence program was active. This chapter presents the data, addressing each of the research questions in turn. First though, the reader may appreciate a descriptive glimpse into life in residence for first-year students, and how the Faculty-Mentor-In-Residence program fits within the context.

### **Life in Residence**

Campus residences are a ubiquitous aspect of the post-secondary experience in North America. There are few colleges and universities in Canada that do not offer campus housing of some kind. Usually, the accommodation provided is exclusive to students, and depending on the size of the institution, sometimes students are further grouped according to level or program of study. It is not uncommon for first-year students to live in accommodations designated only for them.



The first year of post-secondary study is replete with transitional challenges; many post-secondary institutions have resources attributed specifically to deal with the particular needs of new students. Depending on the institution, residence life departments sometimes function as an extension of those resources, whether formally or informally. The challenges of adjusting to the post-secondary environment can be exacerbated by the additional challenge of living away from home for the first time. Residences are often seen as an intermediate step to living completely on one's own (i.e. something between living at home and living in a dwelling rented from a private landlord). Usually, students live in shared rooms or shared suites of rooms (connected by bathrooms or sitting rooms), and often students dine in a cafeteria using a meal plan rather than self-catering. Residence halls are purported to be more than just buildings; residences are presented to students as communities where they will easily meet friends who share their interests, course of study and station in life.

While it might seem like this kind of personal relationship-building would just occur on its own with a large group of demographically similar young people, campus residences usually employ an entire support staff to oversee and facilitate activities among resident students. The steadfast stalwarts of life in residences are the student facilitators known as Residence Assistants or Residence Advisors (commonly called RAs). At McGill, for a variety of reasons, these upper-year student positions are known as Floor Fellows (FFs). RAs/FFs are upper-year students trained in community-building, emergency response and campus resources so that they can facilitate, help and refer the students in their charge as needed. They live in the residence hall with their peers, and are visible via

the hosting of weekly or bi-weekly activities, and a rotational duty schedule where they are a first contact for emergencies or troubleshooting, including overnight.

Residence Advisors/Floor Fellows usually report to a manager who oversees and supports them in their roles, and is also responsible for the administrative oversight of the building, and the safety and wellbeing of its residents. The manager also meets with students regularly, but often those that are either struggling (e.g. getting into trouble for violating rules) or thriving (e.g. student council members). The community manager is usually also responsible for the logistics and budgeting for activities and events that take place in the community.

In a given week, a student living in residence would have various options for extra-curricular, residence-based activities. Student staff plan activities for their floors, such as tea times, movie nights, and group outings to campus and off-campus events and activities. The elected student council for the residence hall plans events on at least a monthly basis, such as talent nights, pancake breakfasts, clothing swaps, and of course, parties. Sometimes, these student-run academic have an academic flavour to them, such as providing study snacks, or arranging group tutoring for students co-enrolled in the same, large first-year classes. Various student support offices partner with residence managers to offer workshops in residence halls and cafeterias. Some examples might include sessions on time management skills or summer jobs by the Career and Planning service.

In residence halls with living-learning programs, there is another strata of activities. At McGill, these programs were called Living Learning Communities, or LLCs, and they

were “shared-interest” groups. This means that there was no explicit academic component to participation in the LLC, and becoming a member was not limited by academic discipline. However, the themes were seen as complementary to students’ academic paths, and the Faculty Mentors were assigned to lead the LLCs according to a mixture of academic and personal interest in the LLC themes. For example, the “Green” and “Fine Arts” LLCs were headed by Mentors who were completing PhDs in, respectively, green chemistry and music sound recording. The Health and Wellness LLC was headed by a graduate student in Social Work who was also an avid triathlete. The Social Impact LLC was headed by a lecturer and consultant in social entrepreneurship. Depending on the LLC, participants met formally on a weekly, monthly or semesterly basis to plan projects or attend events, and also sometimes informally (i.e. open hours in the Mentor’s apartment).

One might wonder how a student would have time to manage a full slate of courses and take advantage of all of these extra activities, but a typical turnout for any of these would be a dozen or less (except the parties). An internal survey of residence students at McGill in 2015 also indicated that students who were engaged in one way (e.g. a member of residence council or a living-learning community) were more likely to attend other kinds of planned activities (e.g. their floor’s tea time or workshops hosted by student services). So there is a kind of pile-on effect, where some students will engage over and over again with community offerings, while others might never participate in any of the additional opportunities (DiGenova, 2015).

The preceding section has provided a snapshot of residence life which is meant to provide some helpful context to the results of this study.

## **Presentation of Results**

### **Increased Interaction.**

The Faculty-Mentor-In-Residence program was devised as part of an overhaul of the staffing structure in McGill's residences. In the previous model, there were some faculty acting as part-time Hall Directors. When it was determined that a change to full-time Residence Life Managers would better serve the administrative oversight of the students and student staff, faculty Hall Directors were offered the opportunity to stay on under the new Faculty-Mentor-In-Residence program. For a variety of reasons, only one Mentor persisted through the structural change and was still a part of the program when it was examined for the current study. The rest of the Mentors were recruited to the program under the new conditions.

The primary issue leading to the structural change from part-time faculty Hall Directors to full-time professional Managers was recruitment (Rombough & Johnson, 2015). It was very challenging to attract faculty to the Hall Director role, as it was administrative and supervisory. These roles were not deemed to be of value in the academic context of faculty work; they were not recognized for course remission or service responsibilities. While still not formally recognized in terms of tenure or promotion consideration, the Faculty-Mentor-In-Residence program was meant to be more enticing to faculty; Mentors had few organizational responsibilities and were mandated to engage with students within their own self-defined area of interest and study. A goal of the program was to make more effective use of faculty's time in a role more in line with their primary duties (teaching and research) rather than as administrators and supervisors of student staff. This being said, under the previous structure, Hall Directors were in contact with students very

regularly. The difference was that the nature of that contact was almost entirely limited to functions connected to the daily functioning of the residences. This is not to say that these interactions were not without value, but the current study is not evaluating the previous state of affairs. Some researchers have concluded that purely non-academic interaction (e.g. a rock-climbing outing, attending a movie) between students and faculty has less value than academic or academically-related contact (e.g. office hours, attending a guest lecture, assistance with research) (Kuh & Hu, 2001; Umbach, Padgett, & Pascarella, 2010).

Leaving aside the nature of the interactions (administrative vs academic), it is possible that the frequency of interactions between faculty Hall Directors and students was the same or even more. However, faculty were being utilized in that context as administrative staff and not as faculty. Although it was an outgrowth or evolution of the previous structure, the Faculty-Mentor-In-Residence program was a new and separate initiative in the sense that it was meant to utilize faculty in a way that was connected to their role as academics and teachers, even if the activities were not strictly curricular.

The Faculty-Mentor-In-Residence program was intended to increase interactions between participating faculty Mentors and students living in the residences where the program was active. Given the difficulty in recruiting faculty to the previous Hall Director staffing model, and given that in that role, they were not really operating as faculty but rather as administrative officers, it could be said that before the advent of the Faculty-Mentor-In-Residence program, students' contact with faculty *as such* inside residences was limited. For example, there is a series of talks organized roughly once a month known as "Faculty-In-Residence", where faculty from across the University would come in for a 1-2 hour period to one residence hall to discuss their research or career path with students,

usually in the form of a lecture. However, it can not necessarily be surmised that interactions between students and faculty were increased with the Faculty-Mentor-In-Residence program. Of the five Mentors active during the year of the current study, only two were actual faculty, with primary responsibility for credit courses at McGill. Two were advanced graduate students and teaching assistants responsible for their own tutorials, and so had a teaching role, but were not strictly faculty. One Mentor had no teaching role at all; harkening back to the challenges of filling Hall Director roles with actual faculty, this Mentor was a non-faculty Hall Director, and took over one of the planned Mentor positions at the last minute when no faculty member could be found to fill it.

Even with a loose application of the title “faculty” to describe the four people with teaching roles, this does not even match the number of people who were acting as Hall Directors previously who were “faculty” under the same loose application. In the last year that there were Hall Directors in McGill’s residences, there were three tenured or tenure-track professors, two adjunct faculty, and an advanced graduate student teaching assistant. So, while the interactions under the Faculty-Mentor-In-Residence program were certainly more focused on academic or academically supportive activities, it is not possible to conclude that there were more interactions with faculty than in under the faculty Hall Director model.

### **Interaction Types.**

The next section uses the responses from the study participants to illustrate how interactions with Mentors shaped their experience living in residence. A summary table

presents the interaction types, as defined by Cox and Orehovec (2007), by frequency as reported by study participants:

**Table 2: Participant Interaction Types According to Cox and Orehovec’s (2007)**

**Typology**

<b>Interaction Type</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>
Disengagement	4
Incidental	1
Functional	3
Personal	0
Mentoring	3

Each of the categories in Cox and Orehovec’s (2007) typology of student-faculty interaction will be examined in more detail.

***Disengagement.***

According to Cox and Orehovec (2007), the lowest order of interaction, Disengagement, is the most common. The data in this study confirm this; four out of eleven participants described Disengagement, and there were more disengaged participants than any other single category.

Other studies using Cox and Orehovec’s (2007) typology have not deeply explored Disengagement (Baier, 2014; Mara & Mara 2011). Since Cox and Orehovec (2007) establish it as a common phenomenon, it is easy to dismiss it since it might stand to reason that students who are not engaged with a program or a mentor would have little to contribute to the evaluation of performance or quality. However, since this study was concerned with

the accessibility of the Faculty-Mentor-In-Residence program across the student population (“did some students benefit from increased interactions more than others?”), it was crucial to explore Disengagement.

In line with the guidelines set out in the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans, a deception was used in the recruitment and partial interviews of participants to allow for the inclusion of Disengaged participants. Recent resident students were recruited via an email listserv message inviting them to participate in a study on effective mentorship. The email did not mention the Faculty-Mentor-In-Residence program, and potential participants were not told that only students who had lived in residence halls with a Mentor were being invited to respond. In the interview, the first half of the questions in each interview were asked before the deception was revealed to the participant, and the full impetus for the study (i.e. to evaluate the effectiveness of this particular mentorship initiative) was explained.

According to Cox and Orehovec (2007), Disengagement is characterized by “the absence of interaction” (p. 50), even when faculty and students share space. This leaves open the possibility that within the category of Disengagement, students could be aware of the Mentor, but still never have any interactions. It also could mean that the student has no knowledge of the Mentor or the program to which they were connected.

The participants were asked to name all of the people they could think of who lived and worked in the hall where they had lived, and who, of these people, they had interacted with the most. Three of the Disengaged participants did not name the Mentor for their hall at this point. One participant did seem to be indicating knowledge of the Mentor when she said there was “a live-in resident, like grad student, who did things... but I wasn’t a part of



that” (interview 11, p. 2)<sup>5</sup>. Participants were then asked if they were involved with the Living-Learning Community (LLC) in their hall. One participant said that he had “zero” involvement with the LLC (interview 10, p. 2), based on the fact that he thought it was focused on music, and that he himself was not musical. Another remembered getting emails about activities related to the LLC, but didn’t read them. The two other participants indicated that they knew it existed, and expressed some regret about not getting involved. One participant even chose her residence hall at least in part because of the LLC. However, as she explained:

when I actually sort of, got into my own little system of studies, extracurricular and then work on the side, I just never really got around to it unfortunately. Like I got all the emails, I read them all, but I just couldn’t... didn’t really have the time really I guess, to really participate in the events or commit, in a sense with the community?  
(interview 1, p. 2)

The last question participants were asked before the deception was revealed was whether they knew who the Mentor was for their hall. Two participants did not know at all, and one stated that she knew the name, but could not remember just then. The same participant who described a live-in person “who did things” (interview 11, p. 2) was eventually able to recall the Mentor’s first name, but further stated that her name was all she knew about her.

After the deception was revealed and the purpose of the study was clarified, participants were asked whether they were comfortable continuing with the interview. All

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<sup>5</sup> Participant quotes have been used verbatim to include expressions and pauses.

consented to continuing, although two expressed that they had no interactions with the Mentor, indicating that they did not feel they would have much to contribute. However, their comments were still compelling. When asked if they felt that the Mentor in their hall could have done anything differently, none of the participants were willing to assign responsibility to the Mentor for their own lack of engagement. One participant assigned blame to himself for not being more involved with the Mentor's activities: "I got emails from them that I did not respond to or really read fully to be honest... It was just my lazy bum that wasn't reading the emails, so" (interview 2, p. 3). Three participants gave the benefit of the doubt to the Mentor that they were doing a great job: "I think they did everything they could have" (interview 2, p. 3).

Um, I think to my knowledge she could have been doing her job perfectly, I, I don't really know what her job was supposed to be, so I can't really critique on whether it was done well or not. (interview 11, p. 6)

...whoever was doing the mentoring in our building definitely did something right. I mean... everyone was sort of on the same page? And like, in general we had a pretty... happy building... Because like, when I first went in I was really scared about... we were only going to talk to everyone in our floor, but you know, I think that shows that something with mentorship was done right in our building. (interview 1, p. 4)

Two participants suggested that the Mentor could have made an appearance at the start of the school year to introduce themselves, but one qualified that by saying the Mentor “may have done that and I may have just ignored it” (interview 10, p. 4). The other participant suggested that the Mentor could have been present more often:

So it could just be me, buuuut, I mean, perhaps maybe could be more up front? Like how the floor fellows did, I guess, during frosh or just on a weekly basis. They were very, y’know, how are you today, uh, how was your classes, you know, they were, they really made a presence? Perhaps the Mentor could have done that more? Then again, I’m not exactly sure. (interview 1, p. 4)

This participant’s description of what they would have wanted the Mentor to do more fits snugly with Cox and Orehovec’s (2007) characterization of Incidental interaction, the next-highest order interaction type in their typology, and the first interaction type that involves actual contact between students and faculty. As such, it is a very modest demand, helping to illustrate why even the lower-order interaction types can be meaningful.

***Incidental.***

According to Cox and Orehovec (2007), Incidental interaction consists of superficial or unintentional contact, such as casual elevator conversations or an exchange of greetings in shared spaces, such as the lobby or dining hall. These interactions only take place when students and faculty are in the same place at the same time. Cox and Orehovec (2007) are careful to point out that incidental interaction can lead to higher orders of interaction type, but not always. They suggest that the way that a faculty member behaves

during these kinds of interactions is important, and may be the key to whether or not these superficial interactions lead to higher orders of interaction. For example, if a Mentor uses a student's name or is simply friendly, this is more encouraging of future interactions than if the contact is awkward or dismissive.

One study participant was coded as having had Incidental interaction with the Mentor in their<sup>6</sup> hall. Aaradhya<sup>7</sup> did not name the Mentor when first asked to describe all of the people who lived and worked in their residence hall, but indicated that they knew who the Mentor was when asked more specifically. They were not able to provide the Mentor's name, but not because they didn't know it, rather that they had just "blanked out" (interview 6, p. 4) on the name. Instead, they provided a unique identifying detail to indicate that they knew who the Mentor was.

Aaradhya described an interaction with their Mentor that fits very well with Cox and Orehovec's description of Incidental interaction: "... hello! How are you? Um, like we didn't... we didn't really have, you know, a relationship beyond that" (interview 6, p. 5).

Aaradhya was not involved with the Living-Learning Community, and assumed that the Mentor was specifically connected to that initiative, rather than a Mentor to the students in the hall. They only interacted briefly at an event in the residence hall. Similarly to Disengaged participants, Aaradhya took personal responsibility for not engaging more with their Mentor, saying that "maybe I didn't make enough of an effort to be present around him as other students might have done?" (interview 6, p. 6)

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<sup>6</sup> 'They' and 'their' are used as the pronouns for the participant who identified as trans.

<sup>7</sup> All participants' and Mentors' names have been changed.

Also similar to some of the Disengaged participants, Aaradhya attributed value to the Mentor being present in the hall, with no other agenda than to be visible: “Um, well sometimes he’d just be around? Um, which I guess is just like, you know, a presence in and of itself, and it’s valuable” (interview 6, p. 6).

### ***Functional.***

The middle category of Cox and Orehovec’s (2007) typology is Functional interaction. This type of interaction is a cornerstone of any program with increased student-faculty interaction as a primary goal. Functional interaction is specific, institutionally-facilitated contact between actors in a formal relationship such as teacher-student, employer-employee, advisor-advisee or co-members of a committee. Any time students and faculty come together in the context of a program or activity that aims to bring them together, that interaction could be categorized as Functional.

Three participants were coded as having experienced Functional interaction with their Mentors, as the contact was rooted firmly in the context that brought them together. However, as the interview transcripts were examined more closely, it became clear that there could be additional sub-types of Functional interaction to clarify and complement the established interaction types in Cox and Orehovec’s (2007) typology. For example, one participant, Issa, was a Floor Fellow who had elected to be assigned to live with the students who had elected to participate in the Living-Learning Community. As such, she attended Living-Learning Community events with her students, and she felt she had some responsibility to encourage and facilitate their experience with the LLC and the Mentor. All of her interactions with the Mentor took place in the context of the LLC, an

institutionally-devised program. However, her interactions with the Mentor were minimal and unsubstantial. This experience could be sub-categorized as “shallow-Functional” interaction.

In contrast, Laura, also coded as Functional, came to think of the Mentor in her residence hall, Janraj, as “the centre of our universe” (interview 4, p. 2), listing him first among individuals who lived and worked in her residence hall. While her superlative description immediately suggests that Laura and Janraj had developed a deep relationship, according to the typology, their interactions still fell squarely into the Functional category. She sought his assistance often in his capacity as a chemistry instructor, and benefitted from the community that developed among other first-year science students in her residence hall. She identified and described that her priority while living in residence was academic community:

I think personally, the main thing that I got from living in Rez [residence] was the academic support of having kids that lived near me in my classes? And working together with them and feeding off each other when we were studying? And so - I switched dorms. My first dorm was... everyone was just sort of like, sleeping with each other and partying? No one was in any of my classes, so I was like, this sucks. So I switched to (another dorm) and people were all of sudden like, really friendly and open and talking about this assignment and that and whatever... (interview 4, p. 6)

and that Janraj encouraged and facilitated that community:

...everybody knew they could always come to Janraj. First he always had his door open, you know, all day all night right before exams, and if you needed help with a lab, and if you needed help with... whatever, you don't understand how fluorine could possibly behave this way, whatever? Like he was always there... he was a huge deal for everyone in chemistry, which I don't know what percentage of the building that was, but I think it was a lot. (interview 4, p. 6)

While this was clearly a relationship of Functional interaction, in contrast to the previous example, Laura and Janraj's interaction could be sub-categorized as "deep-Functional". Although their interactions were entirely in the context of academics, Laura spoke effusively about the impact that Janraj had on her experience living in residence and as a student, saying that Janraj had been "the best (Mentor) that any person could possibly ever ask for and that he just - everybody could really come to him at any time and he was really helpful" (interview 4, p. 6).

The final example of Functional interaction also needed multiple reviews to ensure that it was coded correctly, as the contact between the student and the Mentor had aspects of several interaction types. The participant, Kai, was a member of the Living-Learning Community in his hall, and so met the Mentor, Reed, in that context. Kai did not keep up participation in the LLC as he got busier with his studies, and said he only attended the first few activities. At one event, however, Kai and Reed spoke about how they both engaged in the same artistic pursuit and the significant challenges of pursuing that art professionally. Reed shared his career path with Kai and how he had transitioned into a career that was still supportive of artistic pursuits. Kai said, "that kind of like encouraged me to do the

same, and he also gave me, uh, some tips on how to do that” (interview 7, p. 4). In this single interaction, Reed provided both career development advice and emotional support, which are both characteristic of the Mentoring interaction type. However, although this was a helpful experience for Kai, it was a singular experience, and not sustained across multiple interactions. According to the typology, Mentoring relationships comprise more than one instance of contact.

### *Personal.*

Personal interactions, as categorized by Cox and Orehovec’s (2007) typology, are defined by what makes them different from the other interaction types. Personal interactions can arise from Incidental or Functional interactions, but are different from these in important ways. Personal interaction occurs when a student and a faculty member find a common interest or spend time together beyond the institutional context that brought them together (which is what would make them Functional interactions). Students and faculty might find their common ground in the context of Incidental contact, but what differentiates Personal interaction from Incidental interaction is that it is purposeful. Cox and Orehovec (2007) cast doubt that Personal interactions, taken on their own, necessarily bring about the same benefits to students that are credited to Mentoring (persistence, academic success), but they state the importance of Personal interaction in making students feel like an included member of a community (p. 360).

There are two challenges to separating out purely Personal interactions, especially in the residence context. First of all, residence life is meant to be extra-curricular. While it wouldn’t exist without the context of a post-secondary institution, students are not graded



for living in campus housing. As such, resident students and other community members are encouraged to engage in activities that are outside of the academic realm, and encouraged to share these activities with others in the community. Oftentimes, specifically non-academic activities are facilitated by the institution in the context of residence life, in the interest of promoting healthy work-life balance. It could be deduced then, that within the context of a faculty-in-residence program, all activities in which students and faculty take part together are Functional interactions. In the context of the McGill program however, each Mentor had a mandate for their Living-Learning Community that was tied to their area of academic expertise. And so a line could be drawn between Functional and Personal if interactions with a student fall outside the realm of the assigned mandate.

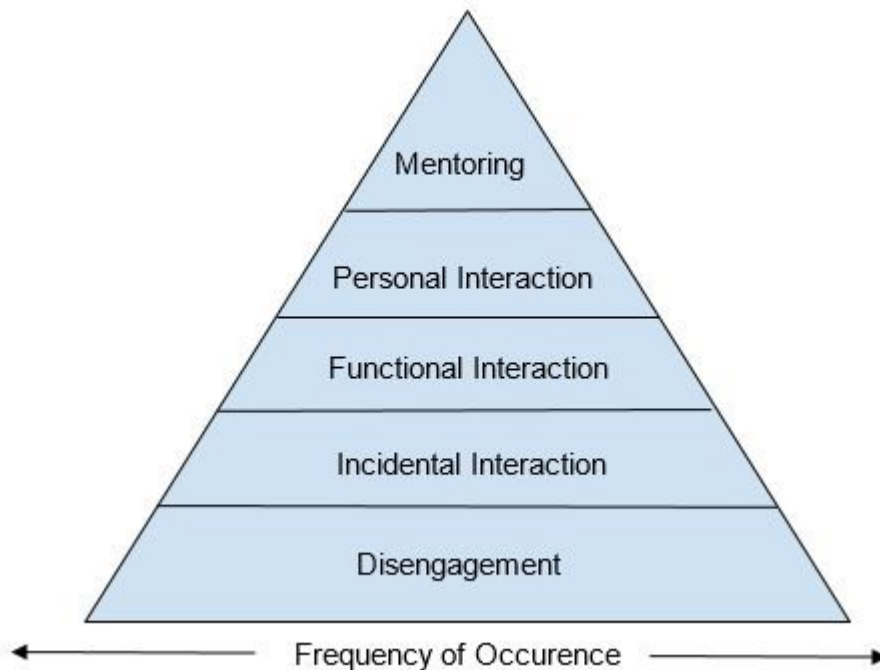
Another challenge is to differentiate Personal interactions from Mentoring interactions. Mentoring relationships can be a convergence of Functional and Personal interactions over a sustained period. Since Functional interactions are thought to open the door to the highest-order interaction types, and since the interactions examined in this study were borne of an intentional institutional initiative, it would be difficult to find a relationship that was Personal and not Functional. So the only factor differentiating Personal interaction from Mentoring interaction was whether the relationship was sustained over several instances of contact between a student and a Mentor.

While Cox and Orehovec delineate Personal interaction as its own type, this study had no participants who reported purely Personal interaction with Mentors. While discrete Personal interactions definitely took place, in all cases where Personal interactions were reported, these were combined with Functional interaction over a sustained period, and therefore constituted Mentoring relationships.

***Mentoring.***

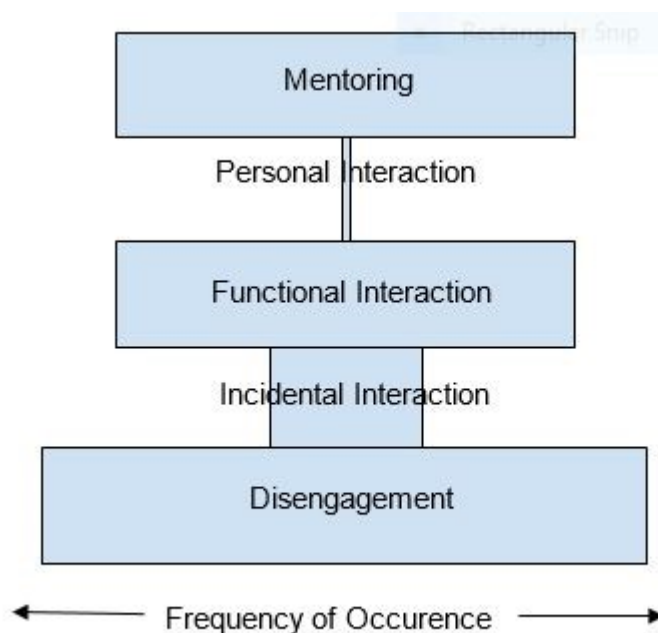
In Cox and Orehovec’s (2007) typology of student-faculty interaction, Mentoring interactions are the most complex, the most elusive, and are thought to be the most beneficial to students. According to the typology, Mentoring consists of a sustained relationship between a student and faculty member, wherein the student is receiving multi-faceted support (academic and/or personal and/or professional).

In collecting responses for this study, it turned out that Mentoring was not as rare as suggested by Cox and Orehovec (2007). They describe their taxonomy as a pyramid, with Disengagement at the bottom and Mentoring at the top:



**Figure 3: Cox and Orehovec’s (2007) Predicted Interaction Type Frequency (p. 351)**

If this study had collected more responses from a larger population of students, this might have borne out, but out of the eleven participants interviewed, three described relationships with their Mentors that were determined to fit with the Mentoring interaction type. This ended up being as many as fell into the Functional interaction category, and only one less than the Disengagement category, resulting in a much less uniform shape:



**Figure 4: Actual Interaction Type Frequency**

In reading and re-reading the participants interviews, it was not necessarily obvious on first look that some experiences would ultimately be coded as Mentoring interactions. As with the Functional interaction type, there could be sub-categories within the Mentoring type. In one case, the Mentoring relationship between a student, Jay, and the Mentor, Grace, exemplified what Cox and Orehovec (2007) strived for in their study, which was “the

highest end on a continuum of helping relationships” (Jacobi, 1991, p. 511). The relationship was clearly described by Jay thusly:

I interacted with her - with her a lot, um, like a lot a lot. Cause there was the interactions with her that were based on the work we were doing?... So anything from like, should I contact this person, to like does this email sound right, or you know, like very, like, things that she had experience with that I was doing that she could help with.... I would even say there were two roles because she was also my professor. So there's the added thing that like, she taught me, and like, literally in the classroom, um like I'd email her assignments and stuff, um, and then also she helped like, I mean, I've talked to her a lot just about stuff, and like, you know, what my career would be, and like, things like that, um, so for example she got me into a meeting where I met [Nobel laureate] Muhammad Yunus?... She helped me get a summer job, or a summer internship... we've interacted a lot and she's, she's helped me a lot. (interview 8, p. 8)

For Jay, Grace provided multi-faceted and holistic support as a Mentor: role-modelling, academic stewardship and career advice. Jay also alludes to personal development: “I've talked to her a lot just about stuff” (interview 8, p. 9). It is clear that Grace made an impact on Jay's experience living in residence, but also beyond. The Living-Learning Community in the hall developed a Skype-based English tutoring program for Syrian refugees, and Jay and his peers planned to continue the initiative past their stay in residence and outside of the confines of the LLC under Grace's purview. Also, Jay's academic path changed under Grace's guidance to one more aligned with her own research agenda and activities. Jay was very happy with the outcomes of his relationship with Grace,

concluding the interview by saying, “she did a lot for me, and I’m, I’m completely satisfied... More than satisfied” (interview 8, p. 9).

In the other instances determined to constitute Mentoring, the categorization was less clear. In these instances, both occurring with the Mentor Janraj, the relationships were less holistic, and more elemental. While Cox and Orehovec (2007) appear to idealize the kind of all-encompassing support described by Jay, they leave room that a Mentoring relationship could consist of Functional *plus* Personal contact, if sustained over multiple interactions. In the cases of Kendra and Troy, both were first-year science students, and both sought Janraj for his expertise in chemistry, participating in the academic community described by Laura under Functional interaction. As Troy describes:

...any time there was a test or a quiz or I had questions about the material or anything like that, he was always willing to help people out. And quite often he would just leave his door open, I’d go in there and there’d be three or four people. (interview 5, p. 4)

As Troy described asking Janraj for help with chemistry, he follows by describing Personal interactions that he indicates happened more than once:

...like I said, when I had questions about chemistry I would go down there and say, hey, you got a minute? Or whatever it was, and I would ask my questions, he would answer quite thoroughly, he would explain things, and sometimes that was it, sometimes I’d be like okay, thanks, I’ll leave you alone, etcetera, etcetera... um, there were times his door would be open and I’d just go in, hang out, pet the cat, stuff like that. (interview 5, p. 5)

Kendra also describes Janraj as filling a dual role for her and for others:

...Janraj was kind of like another mentor to us, like, academically, um, because of the science focus - um, as well as kind of just like, another like, friend in Rez [residence]?... Um, so... yeah, and he would have his door open a lot so you could just pop in, say hi to him, Toby his cat, um, and yeah, it was just kind of like hang out... yeah (interview 3, p. 4).

Aside from the time spent with students on their science assignments and unstructured hang-out time, Janraj went beyond his explicit mandate as a Mentor by hosting gatherings at the time of important political events, such as debates and election results. Both Kendra and Troy recounted having attended a “viewing party” for the Canadian election results that evolved into something more. As Kendra explains:

...Janraj loves politics, like, so he would always do like, the debates, uh, the American debates, um, for the Canadian elections, the results, he did, um, a viewing party, which then we ended up going to um, Trudeau’s - acceptance speech in downtown Montreal with him? (interview 3, p. 4)

Troy also attended this gathering, and more explicitly pegs Janraj’s efforts to engage with students on a level consistent with the Personal interaction type:

...probably more specific to him as a person than his role in (the hall) was around the election time... he’s very engaged in politics, and as a result he had his room open a lot for that, and discussions about that kind of stuff as well.... Um, so I think it was the night we were watching the Canadian election, and we were all - well, not all obviously, but a good number of us were hanging out in Jim’s room, and towards the end when it became clear that the Liberal Party was gonna win, Janraj said something about uh, who wants to go, cause Trudeau’s riding was in Montreal,

so - so, who wants to go see if we can get into the post-election thing and see Trudeau. We all looked at him like, yeah, that'd be cool, but that's never gonna happen, he said, let's try! So there was a group of about 25 of us that walked over there, and Janraj talked to some of the people at the doors, and we went in, and yeah, uh, that was a really cool night for me, and a lot of the other people. We actually had a chance to be pretty well within 20 feet of the new prime minister when he gave his speech and everything else... (interview 5, p. 4)

There is little doubt that the students who accompanied Janraj on this expedition will not soon forget this experience, and it stemmed from his willingness to bring them into something that was a personal interest, outside of the mandate of his role of his Mentor. From the description provided in interview 5, it seemed like all 25 of the students present experienced Personal interaction with their Mentor that night. However, added to the ongoing academic support and casual time spent in his living space, Troy and Kendra (and possibly others) were building what Cox and Orehovec (2007) would classify as a Mentoring relationship.

### **Conditional Effects.**

The final research question was "Do some students benefit from increased interactions more than others?" Researchers have suggested that students belonging to marginalized identity groups experience and respond to student engagement initiatives differently than peers who occupy majority identity groups, inviting further study. While this study had a very limited participant group and was not intended to be a sample, the

results are still telling. Only students who self-identified as white and cis-gendered were the beneficiaries of Mentoring relationships, while students who self-identified as minority racial, ethnic, and sexual groups experienced only lower-order interactions with Mentors (Incidental and Functional) or none at all (Disengagement). The following table lists the anonymized participants by self-identified race/ethnicity and gender and their interaction type:

**Table 3: Interaction Types According to Participants’ Self-Described Identity Markers**

<b>Participants’ Self-identified Race and Gender</b>	<b>Described Interaction Type</b>
Racialized (e.g. non-white) Woman	Disengagement
White Woman	Disengagement
White Woman	Mentoring
Ethno-cultural (e.g. religious or linguistic) minority Woman	Functional
White Man	Mentoring
Racialized Trans (e.g. non-binary)	Incidental
Racialized Man	Functional
White Man	Mentoring
Racialized Woman	Functional
Ethno-cultural minority Man	Disengagement
Ethno-cultural minority Woman	Disengagement

In terms of self-described racial and ethno-cultural identity, three out of four white participants experienced the highest order of interaction (Mentoring). Four out of seven



minority participants experienced the lower orders of interaction (Incidental, Disengagement), and the other three reached Functional interaction with their Mentors. No participants with marginalized racial or ethnic identities experienced Personal or Mentoring interactions.

In terms of self-described gender identity, of the participants who were able to establish Mentoring relationships, two were cis-gendered men and one was a cis-gendered woman. This is the only example of a participant with a marginalized identity involved in a Mentoring relationship, and it is important to note that she is also white. Although for the purposes of this study, as in the world at large, white women are included in marginalization, they are clearly the least marginalized group among those under consideration here. They constitute a large numerical majority in residence, and, at a largely white institution in a major Canadian city, enjoy many of the same privileges as their male counterparts.

## **Conclusion**

While it is not clear if the Faculty-Mentor-In-Residence program increased interactions with faculty over what was present in the former faculty Hall Director model, the substance of the interactions was more clearly related to the Mentors' primary role at the University as teachers and relative experts in their field of inquiry.

The frequency of interaction types did not follow Cox and Orehovec's (2007) prediction that Disengagement would be far and away the most common category type; in fact the results here indicate more of an hourglass shape, with a few Mentoring relationships

(three out of eleven participants experienced Mentoring). There was an equal number of Functional relationships between students and Mentors, and Cox and Orehovec (2007) stress the importance of these, as they can open the door to higher-order interactions.

While some Mentoring relationships were developed, all of these involved white, cis-gendered students. No racial- or ethnic minority-identified students were able to access the higher orders of interaction types (Personal, Mentoring). The next chapter will link these findings to current literature and make recommendations for future research and practice.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this research was to determine whether McGill's Faculty-Mentor-In-Residence program was effective in providing opportunities for the development of meaningful mentoring relationships between students and faculty, and whether those opportunities were equitably accessible to all students. Cox and Orehovec's (2007) typology of student-faculty interaction was used to categorize the interactions described by students and to determine whether the program increased meaningful mentoring relationships, and for whom.

The following questions guided this study:

1. Did the Faculty-Mentor-In-Residence program increase student-faculty interaction?
2. What type(s) of interactions were increased?
3. Did some students benefit from increased interactions more than others?

Eleven recent resident students were interviewed, with each interview lasting between six and twenty-three minutes. Interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed by the researcher. Responses were then coded according to Cox and Orehovec's (2007) typology. This chapter discusses the results from the previous chapter and makes recommendations for practice and future research.

### **Summary of Results**

Eleven participants were interviewed about their interactions with Mentors in their residence communities. Four students had no interactions at all with Mentors

(Disengagement). One student was categorized as having had Incidental contact with a Mentor, which is very surface interaction of the “hi-how-are-you” variety. Three students experienced the Functional interaction type, wherein they interacted with their Mentor in the context of a defined event or activity (e.g. academic assistance, students attend an event hosted by the Mentor). No students reported discrete instances of the next-level type, Personal interaction. True Mentoring relationships, according to Cox and Orehovec’s (2007) definitions, were experienced by three students. In Cox and Orehovec’s view, Mentoring can be either a combination of Functional and Personal interactions over a sustained period, and/or a relationship where a faculty member provides role-modelling, professional and personal support to a student.

Participants’ experiences were not evenly distributed across the typology’s hierarchy according to their race and gender. Students who self-identified as racial and/or ethno-cultural and/or gender minorities fell into the three lower interaction categories (Disengagement, Incidental, Functional). The three participants who experienced Mentoring were all white and cis-gendered.

## **Discussion**

Extant research has examined the impact of living-learning programs on students (Astin, 1993; Brower & Inkelas, 2010; Browne et al., 2009; Frazier & Eighmy, 2012; Inkelas, 2007; Inkelas et al., 2007; Inkelas, Soldner, Longerbeam & Leonard, 2008; Ryan, 2001; Schroeder & Mable, 1994), and the widely-held view is that participating in these produces positive academic and social outcomes for students. Some studies have even found that students benefit from living in proximity to a living-learning program (e.g. in

the same residence hall) but not participating themselves; these proximate students have more positive opinions of the residence community and may even perform better academically than students living in a residence hall without a living-learning program (Frazier & Eighmy, 2012; Inkelas et al., 2008). Faculty-in-residence programs are not always tied explicitly to living-learning programs, but in the McGill case, the Faculty-Mentors-In-Residence (faculty-in-residence) were responsible for the activities associated with the Living-Learning Communities (living-learning program). However, one participant in this study who was living in a residence hall that also housed a Mentor expressed that they did not feel they had access to the Mentor because they had concluded the Mentor was only for the students connected to the Living-Learning Community (LLC). This is explicitly an access problem, because it meant that students who were members of the LLC had access to two elements thought to be beneficial to students (student-faculty interaction and living-learning programs), while others, the vast majority, did not.

In contrast, a different Mentor took it upon himself to expand his role beyond the LLC in his hall, because the LLC efforts were falling flat. Instead, he adapted his role to be more focused on academic help and hosting political salons, which were both very popular with students. These activities allowed him to connect with a broader variety of students than those who would have been part of the LLC.

This study was based on a limited number of interviews with students, and the group of participants were not intended as a representative sample of the residence population at large. However, it is significant that more than half of the eleven students interviewed had clearly memorable interactions with their Mentors, even if not fully-realized Mentoring relationships according to Cox and Orehovec's (2007) definition. Three of the participants

did experience sustained Mentoring relationships, where Mentors acted as role models for their academic and professional careers, advocated for students to get summer internships and provided much-needed support in their transition to the rigours of university life. In two other instances, participants described interactions with their Mentors as essential to their experience as first-year students. In one instance, a participant described being very grateful for the frequent academic assistance sought from her Mentor, who happened to teach in the same academic discipline that she was studying. She described the Mentor as “the centre of our universe” (interview 4, p. 2) . In the other instance, in a single interaction, a Mentor was able to provide illuminating academic and career advice to a participant who was now considering following that Mentor’s career path. It seems clear that all of these interactions were meaningful, even if they did not conform strictly to the parameters for Mentoring set out by Cox and Orehovec (2007). With nearly half of the participants in this study reporting substantive connections with Mentors, it is reasonable to conclude that the program was meeting or even exceeding expectations in terms of building meaningful relationships between Mentors and students. However, given that the resident population is so highly diverse at McGill, the fact that the students who experienced these meaningful interactions were disproportionately white and cis-gendered indicates that the program did not reach its potential to be accessible to all students equally, and possibly to those who need it more.

Some participants, although having only experienced the lower orders of interaction types according to Cox and Orehovec’s (2007) typology, still expressed positive views of the Mentor or of the Faculty-Mentor-In-Residence program. One resident attributed credit to the Mentor or to the program for the positive community feeling in her residence hall,

going on to make the modest suggestion that the Mentor could have had a more visible presence in the residence hall:

...perhaps they maybe could have been, I guess, the role of the Mentor could have been, not necessarily more obvious, that's the wrong word, but just, I guess, more put out there, more at the front? Like how the floor fellows did, I guess, during frosh or just on a weekly basis. They were very, y'know, how are you today, uh, how was your classes, you know, they were they really made a presence. Perhaps the Mentor could have done that more. (interview 1, p. 4)

There is some dissent in the literature as to whether this kind of shallow contact, characterized by Cox and Orehovec (2007) as Incidental interaction, is in and of itself, valuable. Cox and Orehovec (2007) posit that this kind of interaction is a potential gateway to higher-order interaction types, and that it contributes to an overall feeling of shared community between faculty and students. Cotten and Wilson (2006) conclude in their study that interactions between faculty and students must be more substantive to make an impact on students' academic success. Still others (Ku & Hu, 2001; Umbach et al., 2010) believe that student-faculty interaction that is based in academics promotes student success, and that interaction based on non-academic shared interests or activities have relatively less value. When it comes to students with marginalized identities, there is general agreement that it is very important that these students interact in any capacity (e.g. academic or non-academic) with faculty who share their identities (Kim, 2006; Linley et al., 2016; Sax, 2009). Multiple participants in this study who experienced lower-order interaction with Mentors suggested that Mentors could have enhanced their performance in their roles

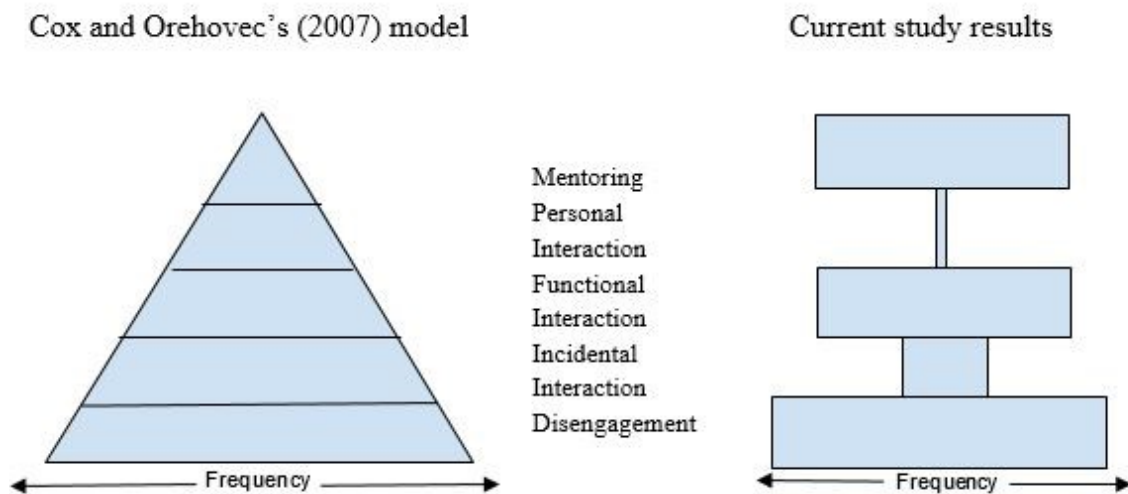
simply by being around more, by being a “presence” (interview 1, p. 4; interview 6, p. 5; interview 7, p. 5). This strongly suggests that these students found Incidental interaction to be valuable in and of itself. It is not surprising then, that the Mentors who lived in the residence halls with students appeared to have had an easier time establishing the aforementioned “presence”. All of the participants who suggested that Mentors could have been present more often had live-out Mentors.

When asked to name the people they interacted with most in their residence halls, participants named people with a lot of other roles besides the Mentors. For example, most participants named their Floor Fellow or the staff at the front desk first. Cleaning staff, food services staff, security staff and Residence Life Managers were also mentioned. Of eleven participants, only four mentioned their Mentor at all when posed this open question. It should not be discounted that interactions with these other people matter to students as well. Residence life staff (Floor Fellows and Residence Life Managers) receive training in crisis management, campus resources and effective communication, but other types of employees do not, or do not as a matter of course.

Cox and Orehovec’s (2007) typology of student-faculty interaction was a highly useful tool in evaluating the relationships between students and Mentors in this study. The typology was developed in the context of a residence-based faculty-in-residence program, and so has been applied in other studies of residence-based programming (Baier, 2014; Mara & Mara, 2011; Sriram, 2015). Cox and Orehovec’s (2007) findings are also frequently cited by researchers examining student-faculty interactions in non-residence-based programs and activities such as office hours (Li & Pitts, 2009), advising (Museus & Ravello, 2010), undergraduate research (Bangera & Brownell, 2014). However useful, the



results in this study were not as closely aligned with the outcomes predicted by Cox and Orehovec (2007). For example, rather than the pyramid suggested in their study, where Disengagement would be, by far the most common experience of students and Mentorship the most rare, this study had nearly equal numbers of participants reporting Disengagement, Functional Interaction and Mentoring:



**Figure 5: Comparison of Predicted vs Actual Interaction Type Frequency**

This study was not designed to capture a representative sample of the residence population at large. If it had, it is possible the results would have looked more like Cox and Orehovec's (2007) predictive model. However, participants were subjected to a deception in the study wherein they were initially told that the study was about mentorship more generally and not about the Faculty-Mentor-In-Residence program and their experience with it. Therefore, it is not likely that students who experienced higher-orders of the typology's interaction types were overrepresented among the participants. This leaves open the possibility that this program actually performed beyond expectations.

Cox and Orehovec's (2007) interaction types are well-defined and easy to understand. However, they posed some challenges in the application of the typology. In this study, there were three instances of Functional Interaction. In each situation, the student accessed the Mentor for the express reason that they were a Mentor. In Interview 4, the student went to her Mentor over and over again for help with first-year science courses, something he had advertised to students as part of his role. In Interview 7, the student had a conversation with his Mentor at an event organized by the Mentor about the student's academic path and the Mentor's similar beginnings as a music student, culminating in the student looking to the Mentor for guidance about possible career paths. In Interview 9, the student was a Floor Fellow in charge of the students in the Living-Learning Community, so had to interact with the Mentor in the context of their shared connection to the Living-Learning Community. Cox and Orehovec (2007) would define all of these as Functional interactions, and yet, they were all very different from one another. One interaction was sustained and so meaningful to the student that she called her Mentor "the centre of our universe" (interview 4, p. 2). One interaction was the only time the student and the Mentor ever spoke. And the third Functional interaction was entirely obligatory and of no benefit to the student at all. Meanwhile, where there were multiple participants assigned to other interaction types (Disengagement and Mentoring), there were strong similarities to the experiences across different participants. Teasing out the Functional interaction category into more sub-types might make it easier for future researchers to use the typology.

## **Significance of the Research**

To date, an evaluation had not been completed on this program, so it seemed important to assess it before deciding on its future. Unfortunately, the program was cancelled following the academic year that the data was collected for this study due to resource constraints and lack of clarity about the compensation for the Mentor role.

Too little is known about the ways that students with marginalized identities experience student-faculty interaction, and whether programs to encourage this heretofore valued “high-impact practice” (NSSE, 2008) are actually impactful for these students in equal measure to their non-marginalized counterparts. Programs bringing together students and faculty appear largely to be implemented based on the empirical generalization that it is good for students to interact with faculty. Not only does this not apply across all students, the relationship has only been shown to be correlative; more qualitative research is needed to demonstrate a causal relationship. Institutions would be better serving students if they examined the specific needs of their internal communities, in terms of their own unique student populations.

## **Recommendations for Practice**

In a study of faculty outcomes of participating in faculty-in-residence programs, Baier (2014) recommends that faculty co-plan events with student staff and find ways of “creating opportunities to be with students” (p. 101). This speaks to the desire expressed by participants in this study to have some Mentors provide more of a presence in the residence halls. It also confirms the approach of one Mentor who changed his modus operandi to intensively assisting with first-year science courses and hosting political salons

when his efforts to get a Green Living-Learning Community going were falling flat. The indicators for success of a faculty-in-residence program should be according to the richness of the interactions with students rather than whether specific programs were carried out.

This study has found that students with marginalized identities were not able to access the Mentors to the same extent as their white, cis-gendered counterparts. One possible means to improve this state of affairs is by providing better training for Mentors and other participants in faculty-in-residence programs on cultural competency and inclusivity. More universities are asking or requiring faculty to engage in this kind of training, so if faculty are serving as faculty-in-residence, this need might be met through other channels. However, where faculty-in-residence participants are not provided with training in their other institutional roles, it may be the responsibility of the residence life department to provide this. A training provided by residence life or other campus student life partners may be preferable if resources allow, since specific training on the role that faculty play in residence is essential as well.

Another way to improve the access for students with marginalized identities is to remove barriers to participation. At McGill, students applied to be members of Living-Learning Communities (led by Mentors) before arriving at university. Recruiting participants this way may present a barrier to students who don't have a pre-developed understanding of the realities and expectations of residence life. The benefits of participating in Living-Learning Communities should be made more explicit to students, to allow them to make a more informed choice to participate. Some effort to include students after they have moved in may also help. Finally, expanding the role of a faculty-in-residence position beyond membership-based Living Learning Communities would

ensure that not only students who are LLC-involved are experiencing a pile-on effect of opportunities that have been shown to give them a better chance at student success and engagement.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

In this study, the Mentors who lived in the residence halls with the students were able to establish Mentoring relationships. No fully-fledged Mentoring relationships were reported by participants who had a live-out Mentor. A future study could determine whether there are models where faculty are engaging with students in residence from a live-out vantage and experiencing more success in the development of mentoring relationships, or whether the proximity of a live-in presence makes an appreciable difference.

Although the identity markers of student participants were collected for this study, the identity markers of the Mentors were not. Future research should consider the identity markers of faculty participating in residence programming and how students from the same or different identities interact with them.

A replication of this study at other institutions might provide different outcomes depending on a number of factors. For example, it would be interesting to see if the quality of student-faculty interaction is better in a program that is not new (i.e. the Mentors are more experienced, the students' expectations are better defined).

While this study was not designed to include a representative sample, a larger number of participants would have made it more feasible to detect trends in the findings. This study's call for participants was made in the summer, when many resident students are relatively disengaged from the institution (e.g. not checking their institutional email as

frequently). If replicating this study, a different timeframe for participant engagement is recommended so as to generate more participants.

## **Conclusion**

This study supports the conclusion that the Faculty-Mentor-In-Residence program was a limited success in the short time it was part of the residence life programming at McGill. More students than expected (three out of eleven participants) met the criteria set out by Cox and Orehovec (2007) for fully-fledged Mentoring relationships, and even more than that had an experience with a Mentor that impacted their experience in residence in what could be described as a “meaningful” and clearly positive way. With clearer directives for the Mentors about how to steward the kinds of relationships that are meaningful to students, this program could have been even more successful, with more students impacted. One area for improvement is definitely in engaging students who belong to marginalized identity groups. It cannot be assumed that all students will understand the importance of mentoring relationships to their post-secondary experience. There is evidence to support the idea that students from majority populations are better prepared for the post-secondary experience than marginalized students, including the value of connecting with faculty. Faculty are teachers and can provide academic stewardship to students, but also concrete opportunities, such as internships and reference letters for jobs and graduate school. It is essential that all students have multiple access points to faculty and the resultant benefits that can emerge from these interactions.

This study is one of very few to look at the conditional effects of programming initiatives on students with systemically marginalized and non-marginalized identities. As

the post-secondary student body continues to diversify, more of this kind of analysis is essential. The widely-held assumptions about effective student engagement must be questioned and tested in light of internationalization and diversification of institutions' student populations. Student affairs practitioners should approach program design and development with cultural humility, taking steps to determine whether their initiatives to engage students are meeting the needs of all students, or better yet, the needs of those who need them more.

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## Appendix A: McGill Data Collection and Access Permission Letter



**McGill**

Student Housing and  
Hospitality Services

Service de logement  
étudiant et d'hôtellerie

April 4, 2016

To the Research Ethics Board of Memorial University of Newfoundland

Permission to access data

Rectangular Snip

I am writing this letter to verify that Ria Rombough (student number 201299351) has permission to access to data owned by McGill University pertaining to Residence Life programming for the purposes of her Master's thesis project. This includes:

- Data from the 2013-14 and 2015-16 Resident Assessment benchmarking surveys, administered by Skyfactor
- Data from all surveys designed by Student Housing and Hospitality Services and administered to resident students in 2014-15 and 2015-16

Further, I verify that Ms. Rombough has permission to recruit participants and administer interviews to students who lived in McGill's residences in the 2015-16 academic year and who agree to participate in the study. We will facilitate recruitment for this project by sending listserv messages via departmental channels and granting Ms. Rombough permission to table in the residences during high traffic hours.

We look forward to engaging with the results of Ms. Rombough's project.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or need further information.

Kind regards,

**Janice Johnson**, B.A.(McGill), DES (HEC)  
Managing Director, Residence Life and Customer Relations  
Student Housing and Hospitality Services  
McGill University

Office of the Managing Director, Residence Life and Customer Relations  
Bureau de la Directrice générale, Vie en résidence et relations avec la clientèle  
T: 514.398.6363 | janice.johnson@mcgill.ca

475 rue Sherbrooke ouest, suite #301 | Carrefour Sherbrooke | Montréal (Québec) H3A 2L9



## Appendix B: Memorial University ICEHR Approval



### Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR)

St. John's, NL, Canada A1C 5S7  
Tel: 709 864-2561 icehr@mun.ca  
www.mun.ca/research/ethics/human/icehr

ICEHR Number:	20170201-ED
Approval Period:	June 22, 2016 – June 30, 2017
Funding Source:	N/A
Responsible Faculty:	Dr. Cecile Badenhorst Faculty of Education
Title of Project:	<i>Engaging Mentorship: Investigating the Development of Mentoring Relationships with First-Year Resident Students</i>

June 22, 2016

Ria Rombough  
Faculty of Education  
Memorial University of Newfoundland

• Rectangular Snip

Dear Ria Rombough:

Thank you for your correspondence of June 15, 2016 addressing the issues raised by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) concerning the above-named research project.

The ICEHR has re-examined the proposal with the clarification and revisions submitted, and is satisfied that the concerns raised by the Committee have been adequately addressed. In accordance with the *Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2)*, the project has been granted *full ethics clearance* to June 30, 2017. ICEHR approval applies to the ethical acceptability of the research, as per Article 6.3 of the *TCPS2*. Researchers are responsible for adherence to any other relevant University policies and/or funded or non-funded agreements that may be associated with the project.

If you need to make changes during the course of the project, which may raise ethical concerns, please submit an amendment request, with a description of these changes, via your Researcher Portal account for the Committee's consideration.

Additionally, the *TCPS2* requires that you submit an annual update to the ICEHR before June 30, 2017 to request renewal of your clearance, if you plan to continue the project, or closure when the project no longer requires contact with human participants, is completed and/or terminated.

Annual updates and amendment requests can be submitted from your Researcher Portal account by clicking the *Applications (Submitted – Post Review)* quick link on your Portal homepage.

We wish you success with your research.

Yours sincerely,

Kelly Blidook, Ph.D.  
Vice-Chair, Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research

KB/lw

cc: Supervisor – Dr. Cecile Badenhorst, Faculty of Education  
Associate Dean, Graduate Programs, Faculty of Education

## Appendix C: McGill University REB Approval



**Research Ethics Board Office**  
James Administration Bldg.  
845 Sherbrooke Street West, Rm 429  
Montreal, QC H3A 0G4

Tel: (514) 398-6831  
Fax: (514) 398-4644  
Website: [www.mcgill.ca/research/researchers/compliance/human/](http://www.mcgill.ca/research/researchers/compliance/human/)



### Certificate of Ethical Acceptability of Research Involving Humans

**McGill REB File #:** 88-0716 (Memorial University #20170201-ED)

**Project Title:** Engaging Mentorship: Investigating the Development of Mentoring Relationships with First-Year Resident Students

**Principal Investigator:** Ria Rombough

**Department:** Education (Memorial University)

**Status:** Master's Student

**Supervisor:** Prof. Cecile Badenhorst

**Approval Period:** July 18, 2016 to June 30, 2017

The REB-I reviewed and approved this project by delegated review in accordance with the requirements of the McGill University Policy on the Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Human Participants and the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct For Research Involving Humans.

Deanna Collin  
Ethics Review Administrator, REB I & II

- 
- \* All research involving human participants requires review on at least an annual basis. A Request for Renewal form should be submitted 2-3 weeks before the above expiry date. Research cannot be conducted without a current ethics approval.
  - \* When a project has been completed or terminated, a Study Closure form must be submitted.
  - \* Unanticipated issues that may increase the risk level to participants or that may have other ethical implications must be promptly reported to the REB. Serious adverse events experienced by a participant in conjunction with the research must be reported to the REB without delay.
  - \* Modifications must be reviewed and approved by the REB before they can be implemented.
  - \* The REB must be promptly notified of any new information that may affect the welfare or consent of participants.
  - \* The REB must be notified of any suspension or cancellation imposed by a funding agency or regulatory body that is related to this project.
  - \* The REB must be notified of any findings that may have ethical implications or may affect the decision of the REB.

## **Appendix D: Informed Consent Form**

### **Informed Consent Form**

#### **Study Name**

Engaging Mentorship: Investigating the Development of Mentoring Relationships with First-Year Resident Students

#### **Researchers**

Primary Investigator: Ria Rombough, Masters Candidate in the Masters of Education – Post-Secondary Studies program at Memorial University of Newfoundland

Email address: [ragr57@mun.ca](mailto:ragr57@mun.ca) Contact phone number: (514) 398-3408

Supervisor: Dr. Cecile Badenhorst, Associate Professor, Faculty of Education, Memorial University of Newfoundland

Email address: [cbadenhorst@mun.ca](mailto:cbadenhorst@mun.ca) Contact phone number: (709) 864-7654

You are invited to take part in a research study entitled 'Engaging Mentorship: Investigating the Development of Mentoring Relationships with First-Year Resident Students'.

This form is part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. It also describes your right to withdraw from the study. In order to decide whether you wish to participate in this research study, you should understand enough about its risks and benefits to be able to make an informed decision. This is the informed consent process. Take time to read this carefully and to understand the information given to you. Please contact the primary investigator, Ria Rombough, if you have any questions about the study or for more information not included here before you consent.

It is entirely up to you to decide whether to take part in this research. If you choose not to take part in this research or if you decide to withdraw from the research once it has started, there will be no negative consequences for you, now or in the future. Professors, mentors, administrators, and other students will not know who does or does not participate in this study. You are free not to answer any questions or provide any personal information that you are not comfortable with.

#### **Introduction**

I work at McGill University in Residence Life, and am also a graduate student at Memorial University of Newfoundland in the Faculty of Education. As part of my Masters thesis, I am conducting research under the supervision of Dr Cecile Badenhorst.

#### **Purpose of the study**

Mentoring relationships can contribute measurably and positively to students' engagement and overall experience while at university. The purpose of this study is to determine whether students living in McGill's residences have experienced meaningful mentoring relationships while living on campus and whether these relationships have enhanced their engagement and experience during their first year.

Student Housing and Hospitality Services will use these findings to improve opportunities for meaningful mentorship in the future, for example, to inform training for staff and students in mentoring roles.

### **What you will be asked to do in the study**

Participants will complete a 10-question online intake survey (approximately 5 minutes) and a one-on-one phone interview (approximately 15 minutes). The survey includes a short demographic profile as well as scheduling options for the one-on-one interview. In the interview, you will be asked questions about your experience living in residence, and specifically about relationships that developed with other members of their residence Hall communities while you were living there.

All participants will be entered in a draw for a gift certificate for Cineplex cinemas (value \$25).

### **Risks and discomforts**

Because this data collection involves asking participants to reflect on the nature and quality of your relationships with other people living in a community setting, it is possible that you may disclose information that is intimate, sensitive, and/or personal. The likelihood of experiencing extreme stress or anxiety from completing this survey is highly unlikely. However, if you feel anxious or stressed because of your participation in this study, you are encouraged to register for an appointment at McGill's Counselling Services (514-398-6801) or seek the support of your preferred mental health professional.

In particular, participants who are employed as live-in student staff by Student Housing and Hospitality Services may feel uncomfortable participating in the study because the primary researcher is a staff member ultimately overseeing live-in staff. Due to the power relationship between us, student staff may feel unable to share, in an unmitigated way, your fully honest opinions with me as the primary researcher. I am including this acknowledgement to ensure it is in the open. If you do not feel comfortable participating due to your employment relationship with SHHS, you can choose not to volunteer to participate. Your decision not to volunteer will not influence the relationship you may have with the researchers or your relationship with Student Housing and Hospitality Services or McGill University, either now, or in the future.

### **Benefits of the research and benefits to you**

There are no known personal benefits guaranteed for participating in this study; through the interview process, you are offered the opportunity to reflect on your recent experience in residence, and how some relationships developed therein may have shaped and/or enhanced your experience.

Participation in this study contributes to the scholarly research on resident student engagement; much of the literature on resident student engagement is quantitative - it relies on surveys and/or secondary data to draw conclusions. Few studies utilize qualitative data, such as interviews and focus groups, as this project does.

### **Voluntary participation**

Your participation in the study is completely voluntary and you may choose to stop participating at any time while data is being collected from you. Your decision not to

volunteer will not influence the relationship you may have with the researchers or the nature of your relationship with McGill University either now, or in the future.

### **Withdrawal from the study**

If you choose to participate in the study, you will be instructed to print off a copy of this informed consent form for your own records. You will then be asked to complete the online intake survey, where you will select a unique identifier that can be provided to the researcher if you choose to withdraw after your survey and/or interview are complete. You can stop participating in the study at any time, for any reason, if you so decide, up until August 31, 2016. Your decision to stop participating, or to refuse to answer particular questions, will not affect your relationship with the researchers, McGill University, or any other group associated with this project. In the event you withdraw from the study before August 31, 2016, your intake survey and audio file of your interview will be destroyed, immediately wherever possible. If you decide to stop participating, you will still be eligible for the draw for the Cineplex gift certificate. If you would like to withdraw from the study after submitting the survey and/or participating in the interview, you should contact the primary researcher using the email or phone number supplied above, and provide the unique identifier code that you assigned to yourself. Your data will only be identified by the unique identifier, so at no time will your identity be known to the primary researcher.

### **Confidentiality**

Participation in this study is anonymous. At no time will the identity of the participants be linked to survey responses. Confidentiality is ensuring that identities of participants are accessible only to the researchers. Your participation in this study will be kept strictly confidential. Anything that you say on the survey and in the interview that could potentially identify you will be stricken from the data. The information gathered will be seen solely by the researchers involved in this study, and will be used solely for research purposes. Data will be identified only by a unique identifier known only to you. The data from this research project may be published and/or presented at conferences; however, your identity will be kept confidential. Although direct quotations from the interview may be used in the final report, you will be assigned a pseudonym and all identifying information (e.g. the residence Hall in which you lived, etc.) will be removed from the report.

### **Anonymity**

Anonymity refers to not disclosing participant's identifying characteristics, such as name or description of physical appearance. Every reasonable effort will be made to ensure anonymity. Participants will not be identified by name in any reports and publications without their explicit permission.

### **Recording of Data**

The interviews will be recorded locally using a smartphone. At the start of the interview, you will be asked twice to confirm your consent to being recorded – once before the recording function is switched on, and once after.

### **Storage of the data**

All of the data will be collected and recorded electronically. The intake survey responses will be collected via Survey Monkey, which is located in the United States and as such is

subject to U.S. laws. The US Patriot Act allows authorities to access the records of internet service providers. Therefore, anonymity and confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. If you choose to participate in this survey, you understand that your responses to the survey questions will be stored and may be accessed in the USA. The security and privacy policy for the web survey company can be found at the following link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/policy/privacy-policy/>.

The interviews will be recorded locally using a smartphone, and transferred within 48 hours to a personal laptop computer. This data will be backed up on a physical (e.g. not Cloud storage) hard drive. Once the interview files have been transferred, they will be immediately deleted from the smartphone. The audio files of the interviews will be transcribed within one month of recording and then the audio files deleted. The transcripts of interviews will be kept for a minimum for five years, as required by Memorial University policy on Integrity in Scholarly Research. Only researchers involved in the project will have access to the data. When the data is no longer required, all data will be appropriately destroyed and/or deleted.

### **Reporting of Results**

Results will be shared with all members of the research team. Data from this study will be used in a final thesis report and may be used at conference presentations or presented to university administration. The data will be reported in both summarized form and by using direct quotations.

### **Sharing of Results**

The final thesis report will be shared with McGill University's Student Housing and Hospitality Services for their own records and use to plan future programs and trainings. Should you wish to obtain a copy of the final report, please contact the primary researcher or Janice Johnson, Managing Director of Residence Life and Customer Relations for Student Housing and Hospitality Services, at (514) 398-6363 or [janice.johnson@mcgill.ca](mailto:janice.johnson@mcgill.ca).

### **Questions about the research?**

You are welcome to ask questions at any time during your participation in this research. If you would like more information about this study, please contact Ria Rombough at (514) 398-3408 or [ragr57@mun.ca](mailto:ragr57@mun.ca) or Cecile Badenhorst at (709) 864-7654 or [cbadenhorst@mun.ca](mailto:cbadenhorst@mun.ca). The School of Graduate Studies at Memorial University may also be contacted at (709) 864-2445 or [sgs@mun.ca](mailto:sgs@mun.ca).

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research at Memorial University, and the Research Ethics Board – II at McGill University and found to be in compliance with Memorial University's ethics policy and in compliance to the standards of the Canadian Tri-Council Research Ethics guidelines. If you have ethical concerns about the research, such as the way you have been treated or your rights as a participant in the study, you may contact the Chairperson of the ICEHR at [icehr@mun.ca](mailto:icehr@mun.ca) or by telephone at (709) 864-2861.

## Appendix E: Letter of Introduction

Hello,

My name is Ria Rombough. I am the Senior Advisor of Residence Life Programs, which is part of Student Housing and Hospitality Services at McGill. I am also a Masters student in the Faculty of Education at Memorial University of Newfoundland. I am working on a research project that looks at effective mentorship in higher education. I am hoping to gather information about your recent experience living in residence.

Your participation in this project is anonymous and involves reading over the informed consent form attached to this e-mail and participating in a short recorded phone interview. Please keep a copy of the informed consent form for your own records. Your participation in the phone interview indicates your consent to participate in this research project.

A mechanism is in place to protect your anonymity should you choose to withdraw from the research after you have participated in the interview. When you sign up for a date and time for your phone interview, you will be asked to create a unique identifier. This identifier will be connected to your interview recording. Please retain this identifier. You, and only you, will know which interview is connected to this unique identifier. Should you decide to withdraw please call 514-398-3408, and provide the unique identifier. Another staff member in Residence Life will delete the recording of the interview connected to the identifier. You can withdraw from the study no later than August 31, 2016.

Please click on the link below to register for a date and time for the recorded phone interview:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/CX6XRTN>

Thank you for your valued participation in my research. Your voluntary participation in this project will aid in the evaluation and continued development of residence life programs that support first-year students in their pursuit of personal growth and learning. Findings from the project will be submitted as a Masters-level thesis and may be presented to university administration, at student life conferences, or submitted for publication.

Thank you very much for your time!

Sincerely,

Ria Rombough

Email: [ria.rombough@mcgill.ca](mailto:ria.rombough@mcgill.ca) or [raqr57@mun.ca](mailto:raqr57@mun.ca)

The proposal for this research has been reviewed by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research and found to be in compliance with Memorial University's ethics policy. If you have ethical concerns about the research, such as the way you have been treated or your rights as a participant, you may contact the Chairperson of the ICEHR at [icehr@mun.ca](mailto:icehr@mun.ca) or by telephone at 709-864-2861.

## Appendix F: Participant Intake Questionnaire

Engaging Mentorship: Investigating the Development of Mentoring Relationships with First-Year Resident Students - Ria Rombough MEd Thesis project

Thank you for taking part in this research project. By completing this survey you agree that:

- You have read the information about the research.
- You have been able to ask questions about this study.
- You are satisfied with the answers to all your questions.
- You understand what the study is about and what you will be doing.
- You understand that you are free to withdraw from the study, without having to give a reason, and that doing so will not affect you now or in the future.

You can end your participation by simply closing your browser or navigating away from this page.

However, once you complete this survey and click submit, your data can only be removed by providing the unique identifier you will create within the survey. You can withdraw from the study after your data has been collected, for any reason, until August 31, 2016.

By consenting to this online survey, you do not give up your legal rights and do not release the researchers from their professional responsibilities.

Please retain a copy of this consent information for your records.

1. Choosing 'I accept' below and submitting this survey constitutes consent and implies your agreement to the above stipulations.

*Dropdown menu – Select One*

I accept

I do not accept

2. Are you at least 18 years old?

*Multiple choice radio buttons - select one*

Yes



No

3. Please describe your gender identity.

*Text box*

4. Please describe your race/ethnicity.

*Text box*

5. Which residence Hall did you live in during the 2015-16 academic year?

*Text box*

6. Did you live in the same residence Hall for 6 months or more?

*Multiple choice radio buttons - select one*

Yes

No

7. Please choose the best date and time for your recorded phone interview. The interview will last approximately 15 minutes.

*Multiple choice radio buttons - select one*

Monday 1

Monday 2

Monday 3

8. Please enter a phone number where you can be reached, including applicable area code.

*Text box*

9. You will now create a unique phrase by which your data can be identified should you choose to withdraw from the study. First, choose one of the following prompts from the dropdown menu:

*Dropdown menu – Select One*

The second word of a book you are reading + your favourite colour

Your eye colour + the last vegetable you ate

Your sibling's middle name + any mammal

10. Now provide the answer to the prompt above, and keep it for your own records.

*Text box*

Done