

**Toward a Deeper Understanding of the Nature of Resistant Behaviors by Adult  
Learners in Graduate Education**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This research was conducted to develop a richer understanding of resistant behavior displayed by adults in the adult learning environment. Resistant behavior occurs when a student declines the learning opportunity by mentally withdrawing, or by co-opting the instructor's agenda, or by attacking the instructor directly. This research addressed two questions. The first was, "How do instructors perceive the underlying dynamics, or causes they cite, of the hostile resistant behavior they have observed and experienced in the learning environment?" The second question was "How do instructors interpret episodes of hostile resistant behavior?" This qualitative research provides an in depth exploration of the experiences of the participating instructors with hostile resistant behavior in adult graduate education. The participants were veteran teachers accustomed to handling resistant behavior, yet this experience stopped them in their tracks. The hostile resistant behaviors may represent a subcategory of resistance not previously researched, and could happen to anyone. This could be challenging for the most seasoned professional. Interviews were guided by grounded theory concepts as described by Strauss and Corbin. Open-ended interviews were modeled on the work of Seidman. The selected instructors had a minimum of twenty years experience in higher education. They were professionally adept, seasoned educators of adults. Key findings were that: participants were unable to anticipate the onset of resistant behavior; the behavior was persistent and intense; the instructors were unable to isolate causes or develop effective coping strategies; the instructors' emotional reactions included a pattern of surprise, confusion, and cynicism; the emotional impact on the participants was often strong and lasting. The dissertation provided recommendations for further research in instructor-centric; student-centric; and institution-centric categories. Instructor-centric recommendations included: expansion into additional academic disciplines and the training world; effect of on-line delivery methods; impact on instructors' professional reputations; and transformational experience. Student-centric recommendations addressed changes that might be associated with the make up of the student body, such as age and culture; and the effect of the resistant behavior on other members of the class. Institution-centric recommendations included suggestions regarding hostile work environment; protective measures for instructors; and institutionalized support networks.

## Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my loving family. My husband Steve has been my strength and inspiration for over 40 years. He has listened to my thoughts and through his keen intellect often heard what I was saying when others did not. Throughout what seems like a lifetime of study, he has offered me continual encouragement. Without his support this dissertation would never have seen completion. My son Steve said that when I finished my dissertation “ours would sit side-by-side in the Library of Congress for eternity.” I did not want to let either of you down.

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## Chapter I: The Problem

Under certain circumstances, and with appropriate trigger mechanisms, adult learners may indulge in hostile classroom behaviors through which they resist learning, encourage others to do the same, and even engage in a direct, intentional, hostile attack upon the instructor. Initial investigations into this phenomenon focused on dramatic, but narrowly based, aspects of resistance. During the early 1980's Giroux, Kriesberg, and others were engaged in a movement for emancipatory education (Apple, 1982; Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985; Giroux, 1983; Kriesberg, 1985, 1992; Willis, 1977). This led other theorists to address feminist issues (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Foucault, 1980; Diamond & Quinby, 1988; Welch, 1985) and social reform education issues (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Bowles & Gintis, 1986; Diamond & Quinby, 1988; Foucault, 1980; Freire, 1993; Giroux, 1983; Katz, 1986; Shor & Freire, 1987; Welch, 1985). In the 1990s a body of literature dealing with resistance to self-directed learning emerged, led by people such as Bandura and Hiemstra, (Bandura & Adams, 1977; Candy, 1991; Confessore & Confessore, 1994; Grow, 1991; Hiemstra & Sisco, 1990; Kriesberg, 1992; Long, 1994). None of these theorists addressed the more fundamental issue of resistant behaviors to learning itself. Instead, they focused on resistance to politics, processes, and structures. For example, Kriesberg was interested in applying democratic principles to the classroom; the resistance he described was not a resistance to learning per se, but rather to the manner in which it was administered. This work regarding resistance to self-directed learning is equally focused on resistance to process, both by students and by instructors. This dissertation research does not address these matters. Rather, this research adds to the body of knowledge by focusing on the more fundamental, elusive, and largely ignored question of hostile, overt resistant behaviors during learning experiences by adults. While individuals could be resistant to a process, hostile, overt resistant behaviors are often directed at the instructor as a personal attack, which is extreme in nature and generally out of bounds. This is not what any instructor expects to have happen in the classroom. A preliminary investigation revealed that such events are more common than the literature suggests.

Researchers within the field of adult learning, including Atherton, Brookfield, and Argyris, have identified resistance to learning as a significant problem (Argyris, 1993; Atherton, 1999; Brookfield, 1995; Brookfield & Preskill, 1999). They note that it has received scant direct attention in the literature, despite its prevalence and clear relevance within the field of adult education. These researchers characterize resistance to learning as widespread, and have called for additional research into the topic. Such research is meaningful to furtherance of the adult education community's understanding of the phenomenon, and is useful for policy and practice because the problem occurs often and can be costly. Atherton points out "...resistance is very prevalent, and ...different in kind from lack of motivation" (Atherton, 1999, p.77). Argyris demonstrates that "hostile resistance to learning is encountered even among highly motivated professionals" (Argyris, 1991, p. 100).

Although the beginnings of a dialogue had emerged in the early 1980s, with the publication of Pickhardt's initial, and later Brookfield's, efforts, it was first subsumed by the reformists, and then preempted by today's current preoccupation with motivation

theory (Brookfield, 1989; Pickhardt, 1980). This study was intended to produce new knowledge that might stimulate resumption of an interrupted dialogue among practitioners concerning the causative factors of adult, overt hostile resistant behaviors during the learning process, by exploring the practitioners' level of understanding, feelings, coping strategies, and techniques during incidences of resistant behavior.

The study explored the concept of resistant behaviors within the context of the adult graduate education learning community, providing a detailed qualitative examination of the perceptions, feelings and experiences of instructors of adults who demonstrated hostile resistant behaviors during learning. The research examined how practitioners recognized and described resistance to learning, and how they were supported or not supported by the learning community. Through examination of the experience of individual practitioners as they worked to understand and prevent or manage hostile resistant incidents, the study illuminated larger issues. Resistant behaviors are sometimes attached to content, sometimes to process, but at other times represent an enigma for which the education community lacks common terminology. This was a dialogue that did not mature; it was only alluded to in earlier literature. The knowledge generated by this study provides a deeper understanding of the broader issues of practitioner understanding of the causes of resistant behaviors during the learning process, and of the efficacy of the instructors' support network in helping instructors deal with these issues. The study offers the potential to improve practice through better understanding of complex interactions, tacit processes, and often-hidden beliefs and values. The findings yield valuable explanations of processes, described with depth and richness.

### Background of the Problem

The interactions among instructors and adult students in classroom learning environments are complex and dynamic. Yet the complexity of the interactions should not inhibit their exploration. Efforts to describe, explore, and generate deeper understandings are essential. As Brookfield observed,

Viewing teaching as a process of unfathomable mystery removes the necessity to think about what we do. It works against the improvement of the practice. The teaching as mystery idea also closes down the possibility of teachers sharing knowledge, insights, and informal theories of practice, since mystery is, by definition, incommunicable (Brookfield, 1995, p. 6).

Visualizing the dynamic interactions between instructor and students in the form of a process flow diagram is useful. These interactions are shown in Figure 1. Although the interactions are complex and as varied in their detail, as are human beings, there are certain trends and themes that consistently recur. The figure is annotated to identify thematically the major issues at play, which will be discussed in subsequent paragraphs.

In this flow chart, the instructor plays the role of change agent, delivering the instructional material within the confines of curriculum, institutional policies, and his/her own background. This information as well as the interactions among all participants are viewed and interpreted through the perceptual filters employed by each individual. These filters are employed as mechanisms to interpret meaning and select appropriate responses. They vary by such factors as race (Cushner & Trifonovitch, 1989; Ogbu, 1992), culture (Hall, 1989), gender (Belenky et al., 1986), and life experiences

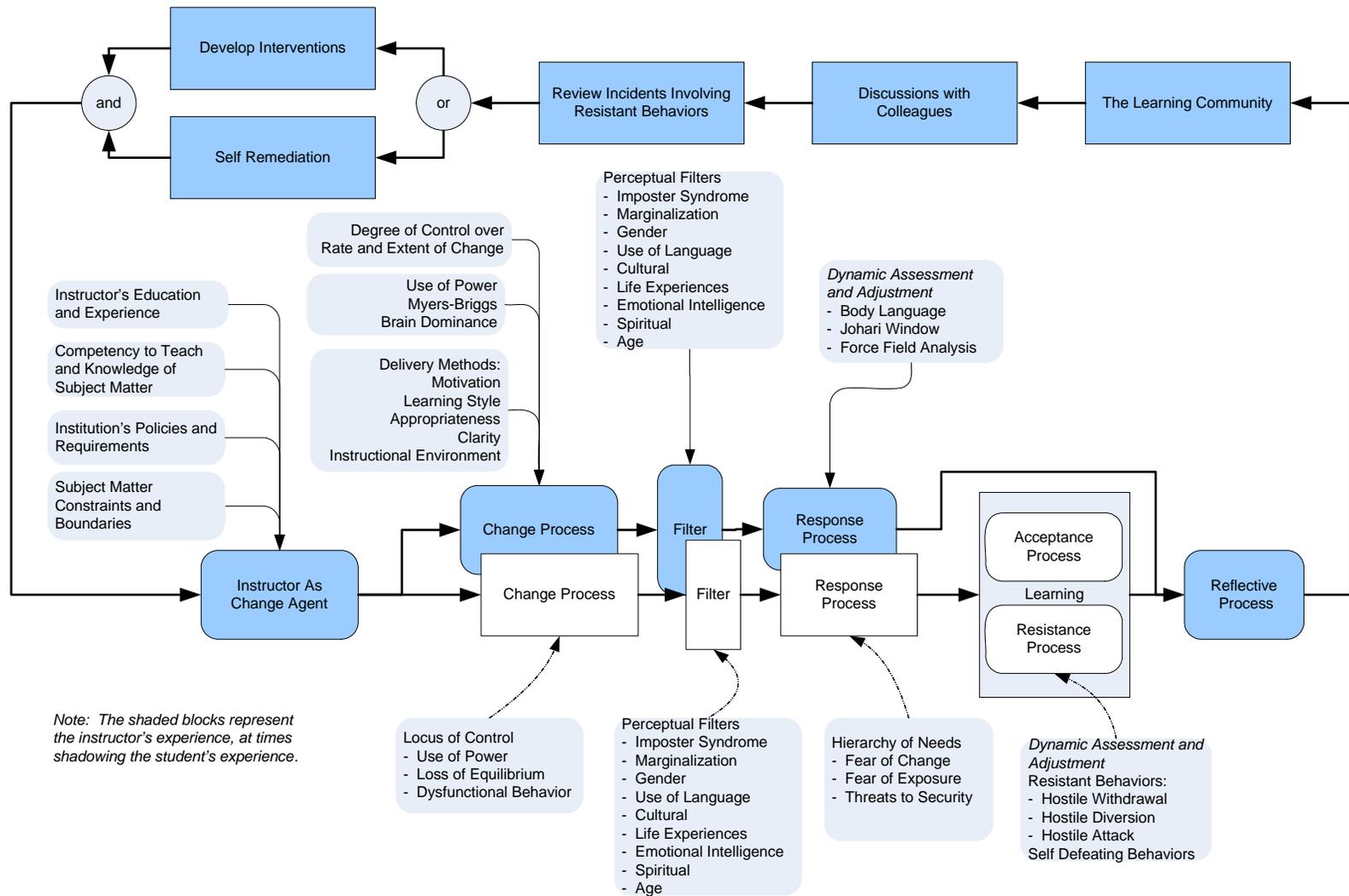


Figure 1. Framework for understanding the dynamic interchange between instructor and student.

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(Cushner & Trifonovitch, 1989; Giroux, 1997; Hall, 1989; Ogbu, 1992). The participants react to the challenge of learning, in ways consistent with their behavioral predispositions, the degree of threat they perceive, and their personal views regarding their responsibility and ability to control their own life events (Bandura, 1994; Bandura & Adams, 1977; Baumeister, 1994; Carter, 1989; Chance, 1988; Curtis, 1994; Harris, 1998; Keirsey & Bates, 1984; Lowrey, 1973; Palmer, 1995). Participants' responses often include hostile, overt refusal to assimilate or even consider the learning material (Argyris, 1991; Atherton, 1999; Brookfield, 1995; Pickhardt, 1980). The practitioner will be engaging in a dynamic assessment of the learning experience as it unfolds, gauging results through such mechanisms as body language and the Johari Window<sup>1</sup>, to adjust factors under the instructor's control, such as pace and style. The process does not end there, as the practitioner continuously engages in a reflective process of self-questioning concerning the progress and status of the learning activity. Often the practitioner will wish to draw upon the support of the professional learning community; to engage in discussions with colleagues; to research the current literature; and to review incidents involving resistant behaviors that may have occurred (Brookfield, 1995; DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Nevis, 1987). The practitioner will do this to improve their practice, by developing a deeper understanding, in order to generate interventions and/or self-remediation. The cycle then begins again.

#### Instructor as Change Agent

Change agents are people who act as catalysts and assume the responsibility for managing change activities (Osland, Kolb, & Rubin, 2001). In the world of adult education, the instructor is the change agent. Brookfield describes teachers as change agents working in what may often be "... hostile environments" (Brookfield, 1995, p. xvii). The instructor is responsible to ensure that course objectives are met; and that the participants achieve their objectives. These objectives may stem from the personal and professional objectives of the learners, or the objectives of the manager who enrolled them. In either case the instructor is responsible to ensure that the requisite new, or changed, knowledge is available to the learner. Typically, the instructor is also assigned the responsibility for ensuring that the student actually masters the course material. As the obvious authority figure, the instructor - the change agent - is the natural target for both blame and praise that may be offered by the course participants and other stakeholders.

The instructor is tasked with organizing and delivering instructional material, and with ensuring a reasonable transfer of knowledge to or among the students. The instructor operates within a series of boundaries and constraints, some of which are externally imposed, while others are part of the instructor's background. The instructor must satisfy the institution's policies and meet its requirements. The instructor must remain within the boundaries and constraints of the subject matter, and often, the organization's view of the subject matter.

The instructor operates within the limits of his or her own education and experience, knowledge of the subject matter, and competency to teach. Unlike adult education instructors who are grounded in their knowledge of how adults learn, instructors of adults

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<sup>1</sup> Johari Window is more fully described in chapter II.

are rarely trained in the skills and understandings needed for effective teaching of adults. While K-12 schools have licensing requirements that are intended to ensure that the instructors have some knowledge of curriculum design and instructional methods, no such universal requirement is imposed on all instructors of adults. Instructors of adults are typically subject area experts, and their education is generally in their area of subject matter expertise. When they are first assigned as instructors of adults, they naturally look back to their own student experiences, which generally reflect a pedagogical model for teaching techniques. The pedagogical model primarily emphasizes dominance and power, setting up an inclination toward an environment in which resistant behaviors may be expected from adults (Kreisberg, 1992).

### Change Process

Learning is a process of change. Learning is a process in which new information, or updated information, is acquired and assimilated to enhance an individual's skills or to satisfy an individual's educational goals. Learning is unlike instinctive behavior because it involves change. The organism has no ready-made response available, and must develop one based on exposure to the learning situation. The transition from "an absence of effective behavior to emergence of effective behavior" is called learning (Goldberg, 2001, p. 44). Learning provides information that may cause the learners to modify their understanding of their world, or of their roles within their world (Morison, 1966). Among adults, learning is very likely to be supplantive, rather than additive, in that it replaces or updates material that previously had been mastered, thus creating situations that may be characterized by fear, uncertainty, and ambiguity within the minds of the participants (Atherton, 1999). Conner and Nevis agree, and also point out that the learning situation itself may be the proximate result of a situation in which the adult's knowledge has become obsolete, a circumstance likely to be accompanied by trepidation (Conner, 1992; Nevis, 1987).

The rate and extent of change experienced today is unprecedented throughout history. Thus people find that they must frequently refresh their stock of knowledge, or risk becoming unable to function within society. The systems of ideas and technology we use today have become so complex that man's ability to remain in control of them is questionable (Morison, 1966). People are required to process information today in ever-greater rates and quantities. Individuals find that much of the new information, when compared with their current knowledge, is ambiguous, inconsistent, or contradictory. This compounds the difficulty associated with the learning process (Coutu, 2002; Deutschman, 2005). As the gap between what is known and what must be learned – or relearned – increases, people become less able to function with their accustomed degree of ease and effectiveness. They become frustrated, angry, upset. They react defensively, in the ways they are by nature inclined to react (Fischer, 1999; Vygotsky, 1962). Resistance to change is a defensive behavior that is at times and in certain circumstances totally appropriate. This research acknowledges this possibility but does not explore such issues.

### Perceptual Filters

People understand and assess situations, interactions, and information through the lens of a set of perceptual filters. These filters are developed and tested over a lifetime.

Many of them are instilled by the culture in which each individual is nurtured. While each individual is unique, people tend to share similar perceptual filters with members of the same group. Thus people who share a common gender, age, spiritual beliefs, set of life experiences, and socio-economic status tend to apply predictable, and similar filters. These filters provide both a means of interpreting information, and a set of heuristics for selecting the appropriate response. Cultural filters are of growing importance in the United States, as immigrants are increasingly less likely to adopt traditional American cultural values as they did in the past. Instead, in our multi-cultural society, immigrants are relying on their own heritage to provide the rules for behavioral norms, attitudes, and the roles people assume. Thus misunderstandings and communication problems arise (Foucault, 2001; Marquardt & Engel, 1993). Cultural values significantly influence the individual's perception regarding the appropriateness of independence, self-reliance, and personal initiative. While Western cultures place great store on such attributes, the collectivist societies from which many of our recent immigrants are drawn, do not. Thus while the American tradition views change, learning, and advancement, as both necessary and desirable, collectivist cultures prefer to hold to the traditions of the past, living in perpetually static conditions (Brislin, Yoshida, & Cushner, 1994). These cultural perceptions have obvious implications for classroom behavior and attitudes toward learning.

Gender differences are of equal magnitude. While men value autonomy and individuality, women place more stress on relationships and responsibilities toward others. Deborah Tannen, researcher and professor at Georgetown University, uses the words "...women often have a relatively greater need for involvement, and men a relatively greater need for independence" and "...they [women] are more focused on involvement, that is, on relationships among people" (Tannen, 1987, p.126, 128). Gilligan (1982) researched differences in men and women's ethical perceptions; Tannen has focused her research on differences in use of language and consequent difficulties in male-female relationships. While women tend to be nurturing, Richard Wrangham, professor of biological anthropology at Harvard, states that "men in particular are systematically violent.... violent by temperament" (Wrangham & Peterson, 1996, p108). These gender differences claims Wrangham are ingrained from birth and reinforced during maturation. Gender-based perceptual filters are insidious in that members of the opposite sex, otherwise sharing similar backgrounds, do not necessarily recognize these perceptual differences (Belenky et al., 1986; Gilligan, 1982; Lerner, 1994; Mann, 1983; J. R. Martin, 1985; Picard, 2003; Tannen, 1987, 1991). Not all males and females fit this extreme profile, as the literature on androgyny illuminates.

Age provides another major filter. As people mature they modify the assumptions, values, perceptions, and the beliefs they employ as paradigms to interpret their worlds. "Younger adults tend to adopt an external locus of control and responsibility, which includes destructive acting out and self absorption. As they mature, these same people become more internally motivated, and seek additional learning activities" (O'Conner & Wolfe, 1991, p. 331).

Use of language is an important aspect of the learning experience. People from different regions, or from different ethnic, social, and cultural backgrounds use different words, and apply different meanings to their words. Thus people from different

backgrounds are likely to experience difficulty in precisely understanding one another. Further, people with an inadequate vocabulary will be significantly handicapped in terms of understanding and expression (Wilson, 1960). In cross-cultural situations, words and phrases meaningful in one culture have no counterpart in another. This use of language is particularly noticeable when concepts common to one culture are not found in another. For example, the notion of individual rights is sacred to Americans, but utterly baffling to much of the traditional minded Japanese, as it is alien to their culture (Takeyoshi, 1973; Tannen, 1987).

Given the range of possibilities that emerge when perceptual filters are considered, together with the diversity of a typical student body, and the likely complexity of subject matter, it is not unlikely that some individuals may begin to feel they are imposters in the classroom. The term "Imposter," initially applied in the field of psychotherapy and used in a study of high achieving women by Clance and Imes (1978), was later employed by Brookfield (1995) to describe the situation that exists when a participant in the learning process concludes that he or she is out of place, due to lack of academic preparation, abilities, ethnic, gender, or cultural differences (Brookfield, 1995; Clance & Imes, 1978). In such circumstances, the imposter is uncomfortable, and does not wish to be revealed as a fraud. He develops defensive strategies to avoid being unmasked. He does not participate in the discussion; he withdraws; he feels demeaned and voiceless. Both Brookfield and Preskill contend that this is the most common reason for resistance to learning (Brookfield & Preskill, 1999).

### Response Process

Student responses to the learning experience typically vary among individuals. Factors important to their choice of response include their assessment of whether the activity is threatening, and their behavioral predispositions. The instructor dynamically assesses the on-going learning experience as it evolves, and adjusts to achieve greater effectiveness. The participants may accept the material offered, or they may refuse the material and the learning opportunity as well.

### *Threats to security*

Psychologists, educators, and organizational consultants agree that people resist situations in which they are faced with problems that differ from their capabilities. This form of resistance has been covered abundantly (Argyris, 1993; Block, 2000; Bridges, 1991; Conner, 1992; Gibb, 1974; Kolb, 1974; Nadler & Nadler, 1991; Nevis, 1987; Osland et al., 2001; Shaw, 1971). Such situations are threatening. People fear and try to avoid situations where their knowledge and skills are irrelevant or inadequate. When faced with situations involving changes they cannot control, people undergo a predictable sequence of actions, including an initial state of immobilization, denial, and anger, followed by bargaining, depression, testing and acceptance (Conner, 1992). People are more willing to accept change, and more able to assimilate change, if they are allowed a degree of control over the rate and extent of change (Osland et al., 2001). Resistance to change represents a reaction to perceived loss of control, loss of familiarity, and lack of time to make appropriate adjustments. The degree to which a situation rife with uncertainty and ambiguity is resisted depends upon the degree to which people feel that the situation threatens their fundamental needs. As described by Maslow (1970), human

needs may be viewed as a hierarchy. The lower level needs must be adequately met before the next level may be addressed, and once met, people are naturally inclined to advance to the next level. The most fundamental needs are those related to survival and safety, found at the bottom of the hierarchy. Higher up are the more abstract needs, including belonging, recognition, achievement and self-actualization. People react defensively when these needs are threatened, with the lowest level needs being most aggressively protected (Maslow, 1970). Although the threats to be found in a classroom are intellectual rather than physical, threats to an individual's security exist, particularly when current knowledge is devalued, and loss of stature is risked (Atherton, 1999). This perceived threat could lead to hostile resistant behavior, expressed in a way consistent with the individual's temperament and values. Resistance to change is an emotional, high-energy response. People, having chosen to resist, adhere to their resistant behavior with tenacity (Lewin, 1951; Nevis, 1987).

#### *Personality type and behavioral predisposition*

Although people vary significantly in the ways in which they interpret and understand their environment, evaluate situations and events, and express themselves, several broad descriptive trends are apparent. Beginning at least as far back as Jung in the 1920s, researchers have undertaken efforts to "type" people in ways that allow insight into their thought processes and likely behaviors. At the present time there is a considerable body of knowledge in this area, and an effective typing system is in widespread use (Briggs-Myers, 1980; Jung, 1971; Keirsey & Bates, 1984). The Myers-Briggs personality typing system includes four basic classifications, each of which is expressed as a continuum between two extremes, such as, extraversion versus introversion. Under the Myers-Briggs scheme, people may be described as tending towards either end of each continuum, and thus grouped into sixteen categories. Each of these categories is described in terms of personality types.

Keirsey and Bates (1984) assert that the Myers-Briggs (1956) method is an effective way to predict people's behavior and likely responses to varied situations (Briggs-Myers, 1980; Keirsey & Bates, 1984). The Myers-Briggs approach is consistent with research into locus of control issues (Baumeister, 1994; Briggs-Myers, 1980; Lefcourt, 1976; Phares, 1976). This research indicates that people vary in the degree to which they derive their motivation toward actions from internal resources, as opposed to reliance on external motivations. This is closely linked to the individual's view of personal responsibility for achieving a given outcome. Some people variously described as proactive or self sufficient, attribute their failures to their own deficiencies, while others are prone to cite someone or something else as the reason for failure.

#### *Locus of control, aggression, and self-defeating behavior*

People who feel that the life events they experience are largely the result of choices they have made are internally motivated and are more likely to view change as a positive matter. These people tend to see change as a challenge and an opportunity. Externally motivated people – those who do not feel a sense of responsibility for their own circumstances, or recognize their ability to influence events – are more likely to view change with fear, as a problem to be avoided (Cheng, 1994; Covey, 1989; Kolb, 1974; Lefcourt, 1976; Phares, 1976; Rotter, 1966).

Research by Baumeister (1994) and others also indicates that people who believe themselves to be externally controlled, rely on external sources for confirmation of their worth. This dependence upon external sources for one's self-esteem creates situations in which strong, even violent defensive reactions are undertaken. His research further suggests that people with low self-esteem tend routinely to react defensively as a normal response. People with high but unstable self-esteem are pre-disposed towards aggressive and violent responses when they perceive a threat to their self-esteem. High but unstable self-esteem results when people hold favorable but fluctuating views of themselves; this is a characteristic of bullies who seek to dominate others. Such learned aggression becomes an automatic response (Bandura, 1994; Baumeister, 1994; Mehrabian, 1970; Rotter, 1966).

People may engage in self-defeating behaviors that include aggression, withdrawal, and dependence on others as primary means to protect themselves from humiliation (Curtis, 1994). These behaviors may occur in reaction to situations where they feel that they have been insufficiently recognized for their accomplishments. Similar self-handicapping behavior may occur in which individuals suffering from low self-esteem create barriers to their own success, thus providing an excuse for failure. This is accompanied by feelings of stress and deprivation. Personal perceptions of the degree to which the individual is able to exercise control over events that affect him are of considerable importance in determining whether the person views a challenge as an opportunity to be embraced, or a problem to be avoided. People who tend to view themselves as externally controlled, and are then confronted with evidence that they are not able to overcome obstacles, will quickly either reduce their efforts or give up entirely (Bandura, 1994; Baumeister, 1994; Curtis, 1994).

These observations strongly suggest that potential hostile behaviors may be brought into the classroom by the participants in a learning program, as part of their normal human responses to situations that may be perceived - or remembered - as threatening. Incidences of hostile behavior may be triggered by events that take place outside the classroom, or are associated with factors well beyond the instructor's control. In such cases, if the practitioner is unaware of the potential causative factors of resistance to learning, and not supported by the benefits of an effective dialogue, the practitioner may wrongly attribute the hostile behavior to their own inadequate preparation. The victimized instructor will have difficulty in recognizing the problem, and developing an effective remediation or coping strategy.

### *Dynamic assessment and adjustment<sup>2</sup>*

The instructor, or leader of the learning process, is of course also using perceptual filters to interpret the classroom situation and the participants' response to the learning activity. Regardless, the instructor will be performing a dynamic assessment of the learning environment, and will routinely adjust the methods of delivery and other aspects under the instructor's control to improve the apparent effectiveness of the process. The instructor will employ a number of methods to gauge the effect of instruction in the classroom. Prime among these may be the ability to: interpret body language; assess

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<sup>2</sup> I am defining dynamic assessment as the activity taken by the instructor to assess the effectiveness of the presentation and content of instruction and adjust in real time for better effect as used in other fields.

reactions through the glass of the Johari Window; and to apply in real time the concepts of force field analysis.

Body language refers to the fact that people unconsciously communicate a great deal of information concerning their emotional state, and their level of understanding of the information being presented, through gestures, facial expressions, posture choices, and tone of voice. Interpreting body language is an intuitive capability that long predates recorded history, though it may be refined and reinforced through formal training (Nierenberg & Calero, 1979, 2001). The instructor becomes, as it were, a classroom detective, ferreting out the participants' hidden responses through exploitation of body language.

The instructor may also recognize that, while behavior is to a large degree driven by perceptions, some perceptions occur at an unconscious level. The Johari Window is a useful construct to use when attempting to judge a student's state of mind. The underlying research postulates that an individual's perception of self may be divided into four quadrants. Thus, from the individual's point of view, there is some personal information known to others as well as the self; some known only to the self; some perceived by others but not by the self; and some known to no one. The individual will act to protect private information that is not already known to others, and will worry about things known to others but not to the self (Luft, 1970). The associated fear of exposure (imposter syndrome) may result in establishment of a defensive barrier, by withdrawing or otherwise overtly resisting learning (Brookfield & Preskill, 1999).

Force field analysis is an analytic construct developed by Kurt Lewin (1951) in an effort to understand and explain the relationships among perception, motivation, and action. The construct visualizes the forces acting to alter the current situation as driving or constraining pressures exerted on the status quo. As soon as the pressures become unbalanced, the situation changes. The instructor may visualize the classroom flow, and note or recall when the flow was interrupted, then ask why. This model provides a useful conceptual tool to the practitioner for assessment of the dynamic influences and changes within the classroom environment (Lewin, 1951).

### *Resistance*

The participants in the learning process may choose to accept the learning experience and assimilate the new knowledge, or they may find it threatening and choose to resist. Resistant behaviors have been described in many ways, but they may be effectively categorized as: hostile withdrawal; hostile diversion; and hostile attack. Researchers have drawn similar observations (Allard, 1991; Altorfer, 1992; Argyris, 1991; Atherton, 1999; Laus & Champagne, 1993; Lewis & Dunlop, 1991; Millar, 1998; Pickhardt, 1980). Hostile withdrawal refers to the situation in which the student refuses to participate; he shuts out the learning; he "tunes out" and presents a stony-faced silence. This is the most benign manifestation of resistance. Hostile diversion takes this a step further, where the resistor recruits others to impose their own agenda on the class. This may involve whispering, snickering, and passing notes among themselves, or perhaps takes the form of an effort to co-opt and derail the instructor's agenda. The final and most severe means is the hostile attack. When a participant directly challenges the instructor's authority or credibility, challenges the instructor's directions or rejects the instructor's message, a

hostile attack has occurred. This is the most destructive of the three hostile resistant behaviors to the learning environment (Pickhardt, 1980).

### Reflective Process

Professional practitioners engage in a process of assessment and evaluation to improve their practice. The depth and breadth of their knowledge of their field bounds their ability to make effective evaluations. It is their in-depth awareness that allows practitioners to formulate the questions to ask themselves regarding the progress of their efforts. This awareness identifies the observations that should be made, and suggests strategies for intervention or remediation (Argyris, Putnam, & Smith, 1985; Block, 2000; Brookfield, 1989, 1995; M. C. Clark, 1993; DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Mezirow, 1990; Nevis, 1987; Schon, 1983).

The effectiveness with which practitioners are able to accomplish the objectives of their reflective activities is limited by the richness of the critical dialogue among them. If a perplexing topic is not critically examined in the cold light of day by a college of practitioners, the awareness of the community is not advanced. Further, the practitioner who experiences a hostile attack may interpret the attack as evidence of the instructor's own deficiency, hide the experience because it was an embarrassment, and feel badly about the whole situation. Change agents require a supporting network (Osland et al., 2001).

### Statement of the Problem

Practitioners in the field of adult learning encounter overt, hostile resistant behaviors within their graduate education classrooms. This widespread phenomenon negatively impacts participants, yet is rarely mentioned in the adult education literature. Instructors are not supported and informed by an effective, on-going dialogue that illuminates this issue. As a result, practitioners are not necessarily prepared to prevent, recognize, or cope with overt, hostile resistant behavior in their classrooms.

Research studies under the general topic of resistant behaviors in the learning environment do not, almost without exception, address resistance to learning; rather, they address resistance to an undesirable administrative process or environmental context. Resistance theorists have addressed inhibiting processes and contexts that include authoritarian structures, feminist andragogy, political constraints, and objections to self-direction in learning. Atherton, Argyris, Brookfield and Preskill are the exception; they identify hostile resistance to learning as very different from resistance to these constraining processes, different from motivation, relevant to the field, and largely unexplored in the research (Argyris, 1991; Atherton, 1999; Brookfield, 1995; Brookfield & Preskill, 1999). This study addressed these gaps in the body of knowledge through an exploration of practitioners' experiences with resistant behavior in the adult learning environment.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to discover the ways in which practitioners who teach adults in graduate education perceived and interpreted incidents of hostile resistance to learning that occurred within their classrooms. The study employed interview techniques

for data collection, in a grounded-theory study design. The phenomenon explored is defined generally as the basis for the practitioners' reflective examination of incidences of resistant behavior in the learning environment.

### Questions Guiding the Inquiry

The specific questions addressed are as follows:

1. How do instructors feel about and perceive the underlying dynamics, or causes they cite, of the hostile resistant behavior they have observed and experienced in the learning environment? (As a selection criterion participants must have personally experienced incidents of overt hostile resistance to learning. Other selection criteria are described in Chapter III.)
2. How do instructors interpret episodes of hostile resistant behavior?

### Importance of the Study

This study is significant for a number of reasons. It responds to calls by Atherton, Argyris, and Brookfield for further research into the issue of adult resistance to learning. The study addresses a topic that is at best only sketchily mentioned in the research literature. The issue of resistance to learning lies outside the current community focus on such matters as motivation theory, emotional intelligence, and learning style. It provides another way of thinking about the problem. It advances the level of current knowledge. The fruit of this effort is intended to spark an energetic discussion and provide a collective resource supporting the efforts of practitioners in the field.

This research deals with an area important to both policy and practice because the problem occurs, and can be costly in both human and monetary terms. In this age of rapid change and global competition, it is critical that people be able to develop proficiency and maintain currency in the areas that are important to their livelihood and personal well-being. People entering the workforce or entering college today have a greater mutual similarity in the skills they require to succeed than was the case in the past. A continuous updating of knowledge is due to today's pervasive need for the ability to acquire and work with information. This is largely due to the fact that the technology that makes more information available also makes the availability of information necessary. The result is that people are delaying their entry into the workforce to spend more time in school, and are returning to school again and again over the course of their careers. Hiring managers expect job applicants to arrive with ever more education. Corporations are spending more time and money training their employees. Training and education have become increasingly essential to the success of more people across a broader range of endeavors than ever before. More time in class also means more potential incidences of resistance to learning, as people are sometimes sent to class without understanding why (Ricks, 1994). If, as Brookfield and Atherton suggest, adult resistance to learning were the product of a need for supplantive learning to update skills and knowledge, and the creation of imposters in the process, then one would expect resistant behaviors to be a growing problem.

If people with private but hostile agendas impede the instructors' efforts, the learning opportunities for the other participants are diminished. The entire learning environment

is affected by a single hostile event, as is the instructor's ability to focus on the requisite learning task. All move off task at the whim of the hostile student. The tone of the learning experience is forever marred. A positive learning experience has been compromised by the need of one student. The skills needed to properly manage a classroom, to keep the learning experience flowing smoothly, to sense and avoid or quickly manage disruptive events are not necessarily intuitive. Thus information allowing an instructor to avoid or recognize and mitigate hostile behaviors will be an important addition to the instructor's repertoire of delivery and classroom management skills.

### Definition of Terms

**Classroom:** A room where students meet to engage in learning activities.

**Hostile Resistant Behaviors:** Three forms of hostile resistant behaviors are defined as follows (Brookfield, 1995; Pickhardt, 1980):

1. **Hostile withdrawal:** Describes participants who refuse the instructor's both verbal and nonverbal response. "If you can't reach us you will fail to teach us."
2. **Hostile diversion:** Describes participants who initiate their own social interaction independent of that which the instructor is orchestrating for the larger group. "If we can secede from your control<sup>3</sup>, we can encourage others to do likewise."
3. **Hostile attack:** Describes participants who directly challenge the instructor's authority, oppose his/her directions or criticize his/her message. "If we refuse to go along with you, that rejection will undermine your confidence and destroy your poise as a leader."

**Instructor:** A person considered fully qualified by an institution to deliver instruction to adult students; or, a person employed by a corporation or public organization for the purpose of training their employees.

**Resistance:** Any behavior that undercuts the dominant agenda (Grantham, 2000).

**Resistance to learning:** A refusal to entertain or assimilate information offered as learning material in a formal classroom environment (Atherton, 1999).

**Student:** An adult person assumed to have full time employment and to have voluntarily selected, or was assigned to, courses for educational or professional enhancement reasons.

A Glossary of relevant terms is provided as an appendix.

### Scope and Delimitations of the Study

#### Assumptions

Assumptions are described here, some of which are also reflected in the selection criteria described in Chapter III. It is assumed that the instructors who volunteered and were selected to participate in this study are reasonably skilled in course delivery and

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<sup>3</sup> During the 1950s Malcolm Knowles provided an andragogical perspective. Knowles was exploring the troublesome issue of respect and control in the classroom.

content. They exhibit qualities of teachers who have fundamental subject knowledge. They are able to employ a range of instructional strategies to support student learning and engage the interests and abilities of students as evidenced by course evaluations. They respond flexibly and opportunistically to students' needs. They have taught often enough to have positive course evaluations on record at their respective universities or sites of business. They have experienced one or more events of resistant behavior in their classrooms. The students are assumed to have full time employment and to have voluntarily selected the courses in question for professional enhancement reasons. The courses are taught during the day or in evening and weekend formats. Class sizes were appropriately limited and classrooms were physically conducive to learning. All classes were offered for graduate credit, or in the case of corporate training, were provided to improve the student's job-related knowledge and skills.

### Delimitations

All participants were volunteers.

The study focused on the experience of individual practitioners with hostile resistant behaviors in the learning environment: how they perceive feel, experience, and interpret the phenomenon.

It was not intended to investigate students' knowledge of resistant behaviors, or emotional issues of a personal nature. The study was limited to observations by instructors of their students, and the instructor's assessment of the nature and effectiveness of actions taken in response.

The study's scope was limited to perceived behavior experiences, not subsequent cures or solutions to resistant behaviors in the classroom. The study was limited to traditional adult learning settings with one instructor, not on the job training or group projects and did not include distance-learning formats for the purpose of this study.

### Outline of The Research

This study is presented in five chapters, as follows:

Chapter I, The Problem; provides a background for the study and a statement of the problem and presentation of the material necessary to understand the study, including its purpose, scope, limitations, and the questions it addressed. It provides the theoretical framework, necessary background information, and identifies and overviews the major themes that are reviewed in greater detailed in Chapter II. These themes are discussed using the model of the Instructor - Student dynamic interchange developed by the researcher to provide context.

Chapter II, Review of Related Literature; provides a comprehensive review of related literature, divided into five sections. Section one discusses the change process, including human reactions to change. Section two addresses perception issues. Section three discusses resistance to learning. Section four explores the reflective process in the context of resistance to learning. The final section provides a summary of the literature reviewed and offers an understanding of the gap addressed by the present study and where the findings may fit in the current body of knowledge.

Chapter III, Method; describes the research method and research design. Discussed are the selection of participants and procedures, including a description of data collection, and data processing and analysis. Assumptions and limitations are identified. The chapter includes a summary of the background information, collected over a year's time to ascertain the extent of the problem and the need for the study. This background is presented in Appendix A.

Chapter IV, Findings; addresses the results of the study, first presenting a profile of the participants, including collected demographic data. Findings are reported with respect to each question posed guiding the inquiry. The discussion of findings includes analysis and evaluation of results.

Chapter V, Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations; presents a summary of the first three chapters, and of the analysis of findings. The chapter further presents conclusions developed through analysis of the experiences of the participating instructors, and recommendations for additional research.

## Chapter II: Review of Related Literature

Hostile resistant behaviors in the learning environment are a phenomenon whose apparent causes span multiple bodies of theory. There is little research within the field of adult education fully focusing on the causes of such resistance. The literature review suggests that possible causes may derive from behaviors born of natural human concerns for security, reluctance to change, power issues, and instinctive protectiveness. This chapter is structured to summarize relevant results in the broad categories of Change Process, Power Issues, Intelligence and Emotion, Perception Issues, Behavioral Habits, Models for Dynamic Assessment and Adjustment, Resistance to Learning, and Reflective Process. Each section is introduced with a brief discussion of the relevance of the topic to this research. The chapter concludes with a summary of the literature reviewed and a chart organizing the significant researchers in the fields of emancipatory, feminist, and social reform education. The chart also includes those whose research has contributed to the body of knowledge regarding training; resistance to learning, and resistance to self directed learning.

### Change Process

This section of the literature review explores the topic of change. It discusses material dealing with the rate and extent of change in today's world, and the pressures on people to keep pace with change. It describes the reactions of people to change, and the stages in the response process.

In earlier times, changes to the human social structure and the technologies we employed occurred sufficiently slowly that they were readily assimilated. However, as the rate and extent of change accelerated and broadened it became evident that change carries significant negative issues as well. Change upsets existing balances and introduces new factors into previously understood situations. This creates ambiguity and uncertainty, and requires that individuals devote time and effort to make sense of the changes and reestablish order. People who are in such situations often experience feelings of fear and uncertainty. This is particularly the case when people are faced with problems that differ significantly from their capabilities (Conner, 1992; Nevis, 1987).

### Relevance to the Research Study

Change is the essence of learning. The knowledge people acquire through learning provides them with new or modified ways in which to understand and interpret their world, and their role within it. If the knowledge is ambiguous or contradicts previous knowledge, the difficulty - or intellectual cost - associated with its accommodation is compounded (Coutu, 2002). In some cases, learning is a threatening experience. New knowledge may displace old information that has become invalidated through the passage of time and changes that ensued during that time. The adult learner may be left with feelings of fear, uncertainty, and inadequacy as a result (Atherton, 1999; Conner, 1992; LeDoux, 2003; Morison, 1966; Toffler, 1970). These feelings, deriving from the individuals' reaction to change, may underlie hostile resistant behaviors in the learning environment.

## Change

In *Future Shock*, Toffler demonstrates that change is “avalanching upon our heads” (Toffler, 1970, p. 22). He contends that we are experiencing an enormous amount of change; that the rate of change is accelerating; that change is in many ways destructive; and that at a minimum change is overturning institutions, altering values, and disconnecting us from our foundations.

Elting Morison of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, in 1966 published a book derived from a series of lectures he had given over the preceding fifteen years. His preoccupation and a major theme over those years was the nature of technological change, the effect on society of such change, and the reaction of society to the change. Morison contends that

The system of ideas, energy, and machinery we have created to serve some essential human needs...may have acquired a mass and scale and intricacy and internal rate of change that make it increasingly difficult for human beings to live comfortably and fully within it. Or, to put it yet another way, we may be caught in the irony that at the very moment when by our wit we have developed the means to give us considerable control over our resistant natural environment we find we have produced in the means themselves an artificial environment of such complication that we cannot control it (Morison, 1966 p.209).

Dealing with the scope and rate of change we are experiencing today requires individuals to process information at faster rates than ever before. For each bit of new information, the individual must assess how it fits within the store of previous knowledge, whether it is credible, and whether it is good or bad in terms of its impact on the individual (Coutu, 2002; Deutschman, 2005). A high rate of change requires this to be accomplished frequently, and potentially creates a gap between truth and perception, between what is believed to be true and what actually is true. If the gap widens too far, people become unable to cope, they become ineffective, frustrated, and fearful. This widening gap causes people to resist changes to their body of knowledge.

Conner (1992) notes that people have a limited capacity to absorb change, and that they need to be able to assimilate one change before they are able to move to the next. People have different attitudes toward change; some see change as opportunity; others see change as something to be avoided. To a significant extent, which viewpoint is taken depends on the degree to which the affected individual experiences loss of control (Bandura, 1994; Cheng, 1994; Lefcourt, 1976).

Michael Fullan (2001) provides some insightful observations about the nature of change. He states that all change involves loss, anxiety, and struggle. New experiences and materials are interpreted in the context of the old familiar reality. Fullan emphasizes that people need time and opportunity to assimilate the meaning of the new information, to relate it to the current structures, before they are ready to proceed. Fullan notes that all change involves uncertainty, and ambiguity. These findings reinforce Schon's (1983) observation that people experiencing change frequently express the feeling that they are faced with more information than they can assimilate. This highlights the intellectual stresses associated with change, which are the same stresses associated with learning.

The ability to keep pace with change is viewed as essential to success in twenty-first century America. This perception and the associated environmental pressure not only bring adults back to the classroom, it also hovers within the classroom to impose a sense of urgency and source of stress to the students (Jennings & Haughton, 2000).

### Instructor as Change Agent

The instructor is an agent of change. In Brookfield's words: "The teacher is a change agent in a hostile environment," and "We teach to change the world" (Brookfield, 1995, p. 1). The instructor brings the student to new knowledge, levies new demands, imposes new challenges, and reveals new opportunities. The explosion of information in our society requires that individuals assess and update their stock of knowledge at a rate that corresponds to the rate of change, or risk becoming obsolete. If people cannot keep up with the new knowledge, their responses to circumstances become inappropriate, and the people themselves become thwarted and ineffective. Thus there is significant pressure on individuals to maintain their pace of knowledge assimilation; to match the rate of change (Atherton, 1999; Conner, 1992; LeDoux, 2003; Morison, 1966).

### Human Responses

Adjusting to change requires significant effort, and is typically accompanied by reduced mental energy, increased stress, and diminished physical stamina. The more directly the individual is affected by the change, the more likely the individual is to feel these effects (Block, 2000; Conner, 1992; Morison, 1966).

People resist knowledge, especially knowledge that might affect self-esteem or self-image. Whenever people are faced with problems that differ significantly from their capabilities, they feel threatened; they lose their "psychological equilibrium." The loss of equilibrium stimulates dysfunctional behavior, which is in turn "related in duration and intensity to the degree of mismatch between the problem and the person's ability to solve the problem" (Conner, 1992, p. 126). The degree of resistance to change is related to the individual's perception concerning the extent of the change: one person may view a change as only a small alteration to the current circumstance, while another may see the same change as a significant matter. The key is the frame of reference, or the set of perceptual filters, applied by the individual. Change will be resisted when the individual perceives that the change is not minor, and the individual's capabilities to deal with the change are insufficient (Morison, 1966).

Nevis (1987) identifies key reasons people resist change as including: a desire not to give up something of value; misunderstanding of the change and its implications; belief that the change does not make sense. He notes that while the change agent views resisters as defensive, the resisters themselves see their actions as protective reactions to prevent damage to themselves. Lewin (1951) states that all resistance is a mobilization of energy; resisters hold on to their resistant behavior with remarkable firmness.

Conner (1992) postulates an eight-stage Negative Response Model of human reaction to change. Conner's model is based on the earlier Kubler-Ross (1969) model of stages in the grieving process. Conner's model describes the typical sequence of human reactions, and level of emotional activity associated with these reactions, that may occur as a result of inevitable change. The model identifies the stages as: Stability, Immobilization,

Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, Testing and Acceptance. Conner's key point is that people must work their way through the stages of the Negative Response Model. If they cannot do so, their dysfunctional behavior usually escalates. Conner's model predicts types of behaviors associated with the three forms of resistance to learning (withdrawal, diversion, and attack).

Nevis (1987) observes that people who experience resistance see it as an expression of emotion, and in return it generates emotional responses. In describing resistance as a power struggle, Nevis identifies the manifestation of the struggle as: intense conflict, passive aggression, and sabotage. These correspond nicely with the hostile attack, hostile withdrawal, and hostile diversion behaviors described by Pickhardt (1980). Nevis goes on to note that resistance can only occur where there are power differentials among the participants. If the participants are peers, with roughly equal power, one can simply say 'no' to the other. Where that is not possible, the side with the least power will employ the less direct tactics of resistance.

In discussing planning for change, and dealing with its effects, Fullen (2001) insists that conflict and disagreement are inevitable, and are valuable in forcing dissenters and promoters to work through a process of clarification. He also notes that reasons for resistance include rejection of the values that underlie the change.

#### Power Issues

The dynamic social relationships that exist among groups of people may be viewed in terms of the controlling pressures that some members may exert, or attempt to exert, over others. These pressures are a reflection of efforts to establish individual power, expressed as dominance, influence, and control. Kelly defines power as: "the [assumed] right to persuade, manipulate, or coerce others in order to achieve the objectives associated with the power-wielder's superior official status, profession, or role in the informal organization. Power includes a presumption of superiority" (Kelly, 1988, p. 25). Many people are enticed by power; they seek to acquire power in order to dominate and control others. People who have no claim to power based on position may still exert themselves to acquire power through manipulation (Simon, 1996; Steiner, 1981). Kayden (1990) argues that those who have power like to think they have it by virtue of birth, background, talent, intelligence, or accomplishment. They want to believe they are legitimately one of the powerful elite; that they belong there. They believe that they have the right to direct the actions or thoughts of others. This assurance of virtue is a point rejected by those who lack power; they expect equality. Attempts to manipulate people will occasion a strong will to resist, and counter-maneuvers to resist manipulation. The person resisting manipulation will develop feelings of fear and anxiety toward the person attempting to establish control (Simon, 1996; Steiner, 1981).

#### Relevance to the Research

Episodes of resistant behavior may take the form of a power struggle. An adult who is told that his or her current skills are no longer as valuable as they once were has by definition been devalued. That individual has lost stature, authority, and power due to loss of expertise. The individual may act to restore the lost position through exercise of one or more of the power plays described in subsequent paragraphs.

## Power and Power Plays

Under certain circumstances, human beings are aggressive by nature. The human practice of seeking to dominate and control both circumstances and other people, through the exercise of power and influence, is innate and is supported by an abundance of research (Aronson, 1992; Gould, 1977, 1980; Morris, 1967; Ridley, 1993; Wrangham, 2003; Wrangham & Peterson, 1996).

In some cases, individuals hold power on the basis of their authority within a formal organization. Some people naturally assume a leadership role; others shirk from it, while still others seek the power associated with position, but not the responsibility. The impact of power rests on the relationship between the power holder and the powerless. An individual who holds power on the basis of position may employ such power wisely and productively. Conversely, he or she may abuse their power. Authority gives one the opportunity to exercise power, for better or worse (Kayden, 1990).

Kelly (1988) describes five prevalent corporate management styles that vary in the way in which the manager employs power. He identifies a destructive style in which the manager is committed primarily to his/her own short-term success, regardless of the cost to the organization or subordinates. He or she uses power in ways that destroy trust, suppress innovation, and damage people. The Destructive Achiever relies on his skills to manipulate and coerce in order to maintain his control. He guards against his vulnerabilities. He is aggressively defensive if threatened, or if he senses a loss of control. He employs intimidation; he views problem solving as secondary to maintaining control. He does not exercise self-restraint, feeling that his only obligation is to advance his own agenda; leaving it to others to defend themselves if they can. The Destructive Achiever is a strong, charismatic, egocentric individual, who idealizes power and feels no compunction about abusing it to achieve his or her personal objectives. Kelly's description of this behavior suggests an individual who could comfortably engage in a hostile attack.

Where power does not accrue to an individual on the basis of position, the individual may still attempt to establish control over others. Lacking formal authority, their efforts to establish control, or influence, over others is necessarily based on less direct foundations. These foundations include aggressive, manipulative behavior intended to establish oneself in a position of control over others. Simon (1996) describes aggressive personalities whose main objective is always to win, regardless of the means or cost. They ambitiously seek positions of power and dominance over others, and use it to overcome, to crush, any barriers to winning. They are driven to be in control. These tendencies may be innate in all of us, but in aggressive people they become extreme (Greene, 1998; N. H. Martin & Sims, 1974; McClelland, 1974; Simon, 1996; Steiner, 1981).

Steiner (1981) observes that, often people attempting to establish control will work in subtle ways, particularly relying on our sense of obedience, unwillingness to challenge authority, and desire to be polite and accommodating. Power abusers rely on these human characteristics to get others to do things or accept situations that are unreasonable. They know that the people they abuse are unlikely to ask for proof of the needs for the things they are asked to tolerate.

Power plays are primary tools used to establish control. Power plays are designed to take advantage of other people's weaknesses, or their habit of courtesy (Greene, 1998; Simon, 1996; Steiner, 1981).

### Intelligence and Emotion

The literature review revealed four relevant themes. These are:

1. Emotions and cognitive processing take place in parallel, and the initial response is based on the emotional reaction that may occur. Emotions can override cognition, and have a strong, lasting effect on subsequent actions.
2. People exhibit multiple kinds of capabilities, variously described as minds, intelligences, talents, or aptitudes.
3. Synaptic connections within the human brain are not fully completed at birth. This allows the human baby to more fully develop focused capabilities in areas that are important to success within its environment.
4. The ability to exercise self-restraint is a significant differentiator between humans and other species. This capability develops late in the human growth process, and is critical to successful employment of individual capabilities.

Over the past two decades or so there have been a number of technological advances enabling more rigorous investigation and sophisticated understanding of brain functioning, on both cognitive and emotional levels of operation. These advanced techniques enable direct observation of the patterns of physiological activity in the brain as emotions are generated and cognitive tasks are performed. Coupled with more traditional methods, the new technology has enabled fruitful research providing new or greater insight into the ways our minds develop and work (Goldberg, 2001).

### Relevance to the Research

Emotional experiences persist in memory, and color an individual's perspective and response when similar circumstances arise in the future. If the individual disliked learning experiences in the past, the memory of that dislike will predispose the individual to react adversely to the current learning experience. This emotional reaction will be stronger than a reasoned understanding that may include a different conclusion.

Human abilities exist in multiple, discrete, and independent forms. These abilities reside in different locations within the brain, and exercise different neural pathways. To the extent they are coordinated, the prefrontal cortex performs such coordination. The capabilities of the frontal lobes do not mature until adulthood - and if maturity is not reached, or if they are damaged, the individual will not be able to function at acceptable social levels, even if otherwise brilliant. Current research in brain development and function has added much to our understanding (Damasio, 1999; Goldberg, 2001; LeDoux, 2003; Ornstein, 1991). This failure to develop a capacity for appropriate control over one's behavior could lead to aggressive resistant behaviors in the classroom.

### Emotions

LeDoux (1996; LeDoux, 1997) views emotions as biological functions of the brain, though noting that a more traditional view holds emotions to be psychological states, as if

a psychological state could exist somewhere outside the mind. He has dedicated his research efforts to establishing a better understanding of the physical basis for, and the role of, emotion in the human mind. He notes that there are many emotion systems in the brain, each established for a different functional purpose. Many emotions are the product of evolutionary wisdom. LeDoux's views regarding emotions as biological functions are shared by other prominent scientists in the field, including Damasio, Goldstein, and Ornstein (Damasio, 1999; Goldberg, 2001; LeDoux, 1996, 2003; Ornstein, 1991).

Roughly five million years ago man's earliest ancestors were forced to leave the trees in Africa's thinning forests in favor of the grasslands, due to natural cyclic climate change. Their evolving skill sets included the ability to plan, communicate, and cooperate, skills that foreshadowed the ability to think, reason, speak, and develop cultures. Mental routines initially developed for quick action and enhancement of survival possibilities were later co-opted for use in forming mental judgments. Perhaps 100,000 years ago modern humans appeared (Gould, 1977; Morris, 1967; Ornstein, 1991; Ridley, 1993; Wrangham & Peterson, 1996).

Emotions are systems adapted to short-circuiting deliberation, allowing the organism to make an immediate correct decision in circumstances involving life or death. Emotions become paramount when a rational approach is not working, or not working quickly enough. The body's automatic reactions to emotional stimuli are mechanisms such as the "fight or flight" response, and underlie most strong feelings (Damasio, 1999; LeDoux, 1996). Fear is a response to a threat, and the threat may be relatively abstract. Responses to fear include a limited number of strategies: flight; immobility; fighting back, or submission. Organisms quickly become conditioned to respond to fear stimuli; and this conditioning remains active for a long time, possibly forever. Even if the biting dog never reappears, the bitten person is likely to react with a fear response every time the conditioned stimulus is observed (Goldberg, 2001; LeDoux, 1996, 2003; Ornstein, 1991; Pert, 1992).

Anxiety is a more broadly based emotion than fear, and deals with an anticipated threat that may exist in the future, including threats that are only psychological in nature. When fear and anxiety are persistent and unresolved, they lead to disorders in which the individual is subject to periods of such intense anxiety that they become dysfunctional. Emotions are powerful motivators of future behaviors. Thus a threat to a person's self-esteem will generate an emotional response, and the emotional response will take effect before rational deliberation can be accomplished. Even abstract threats are able to generate defensive emotional responses, and condition the person to similar responses in future situations (Baumeister, 1994; LeDoux, 1996; Ornstein, 1991).

Mental processes are organized around emotional ideals: how we feel we want something to be. The emotions act as the driver for the human system, defining the desired end state, and ruling on the acceptability of actions to achieve the desired goal. Damasio (1999) explains that people rationally evaluate a number of options, assign an emotional value to each alternative, and make a decision by choosing the one that feels best (Damasio, 1999; LeDoux, 1997; Ornstein, 1991).

Emotions happen; they are not willed to occur. People have little control over emotional reactions. Emotions can preclude awareness of routine events, but non-

emotional events or thoughts do not displace emotions from the center of our attention. Emotional reactions are accompanied by strong cortical arousal, which makes it difficult for a person to concentrate on other things when in an emotional state. This provides a biological basis for Goleman's (1997) observation that people in an emotional condition "can't think straight." Events that are associated with emotions are particularly strongly etched in memory, and may be automatically recalled under similar circumstances. This may be significant in a learning situation, since it predisposes the adult learner to unconsciously recall his or her prior learning experiences, and associate the same emotional reactions to the current situation. Laus and Champagne describe this as seeing "classroom ghosts" (Damasio, 1999; Laus & Champagne, 1993; LeDoux, 1996, 2003; Ornstein, 1991; Pert, 1992).

### Multiple Intelligences

Goldberg (2001) notes that over the past twenty years a significant departure from the notion of a single "genius factor" in favor of "multiple intelligences" has occurred. Gardner (1983) suggests domain-specific "intelligences," generally corresponding to the variables studied by cognitive neuroscientists and neuropsychologists. Goleman (1997) brought to further awareness Gardner's views (Gardner, 1983, 1993; Goleman, 1997). Goldberg is in general agreement, and notes that his research and clinical experience shows that the variables, or skills, are dissociable in both healthy and ill people. LeDoux (2003), considered by his peers to be on the cutting edge of neuroscience, believes that there is no single specific, genetically coded innate capacity for human intelligence, and notes that scientists are in general agreement on this point.

Goldberg's (2001) work established that the functional mapping of activities of the brain is not the same in all individuals, as previously supposed. Rather, they vary and are affected by such factors as education, vocation, and life experience. They are further differentiated by the degree of novelty associated with the task, which means that the mapping - the roles of the two brain hemispheres in cognitive tasks - varies dynamically within individuals as tasks become routinized, and individually as people develop individual familiarities through their life experiences. Goldberg's point is that the location of cognitive control over a task gradually shifts from the right hemisphere to the left, as the novelty of the task diminishes. The response has been demonstrated in multiple cognitive domains. Goldberg's findings are in keeping with the research done by LeDoux, Damasio, Ornstein, and others (Atherton, 1999; Damasio, 1999; Goldberg, 2001; LeDoux, 1996; Ornstein, 1991).

Ornstein (1991) describes the mind as consisting of isolated sections, usually uncoordinated, with a restricted set of available knowledge. Coordination occurs through the frontal lobes, which are able to evaluate threats and develop quick responses. These actions can be overridden through conscious effort, but they are initiated as a result of an emotional appraisal of the external environment. This appraisal is focused on the identification of threats that may require an action in response. Goldberg and LeDoux make generally similar observations (Atherton, 1999; Damasio, 1999; Goldberg, 2001; LeDoux, 1996; Ornstein, 1991).

Ornstein (1991) describes as "talents" the fundamental abilities each human possesses, to a greater or lesser degree, such as the ability to speak fluently or move

gracefully. These talents are centered in the cortex, and exist as mental, behavioral, and anatomical units. Ornstein notes the existence of different centers of mind in the brain, and that control of our actions may shift among these centers. His observations echo Goldberg's findings regarding task novelty. Ornstein recounts a narrative by a Formula 1 race car driver to illustrate his point, where the driver was performing beyond his own limits, under control of one of his minds operating independently. The mental capability described by the race car driver - flow- is the subject of recent best selling books, and is considered by the psychologist Csikszentmihalyi as one of the most promising areas for expanded psychological research (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Gladwell, 2005).

The idea of multiple intelligences was introduced into the field of education by Gardner in the 1980's (Gardner, 1983, 1993). Gardner postulates a view of intelligence that includes multiple dimensions, and argues that people have different cognitive strengths, and with that, different learning styles. He believes that it is important that each intelligence be recognized and nurtured.

Gardner has organized the results of his research into seven groupings, which he refers to as "intelligences". These seven intelligences include: Linguistic, Logical-mathematical, Spatial, Musical, Bodily Kinesthetic, Interpersonal, and Intrapersonal. Gardner describes his notion of intelligence as raw biological potential, which may change over time, and which is more or less emphasized in different individuals. Typically, a person uses all of these intelligences, but tends to be more proficient in some than others. Each of these intelligences is independent of the others; thus a person may be particularly strong in some areas but weak in others (Gardner, 1993, 1995a, 1995b; Jacobs-Connell, 2000). LeDoux, (2003) however, cautions that the current trend toward "brain-based education" may be premature, as it involves broad generalizations from a few instances.

#### Environmental Adaptation

Ornstein (1991) notes that when a child is very young, it has many capabilities that often disappear by adolescence. This is due to a process of biological, cultural, and linguistic selections made early in life. During infancy, the millions of brain cells uncommitted at birth form the connections that define the individual's specific capabilities. Ornstein describes this as "...our early environment selects the specific minds to survive" (Ornstein, 1991, p.128). By "minds" he means the abilities and mechanisms that contribute to survival within the organism's specific local environment. Thus a child who is treated violently is likely to be much more aggressive as an adult than he otherwise would be, because he has been taught that violence is important to success within his local environment.

Ornstein (1991) is not arguing in favor of the "blank slate" theory, which supposes that all capabilities are a product of environment. Pinker (2003) reviews a number of disciplines in which recent research findings have undermined and generally discredited the blank slate theory: these include behavioral genetics; evolutionary psychology, anthropology, cognitive science, and neuroscience. Pinker asserts that development of individual capabilities is influenced by both environment and genetics. He describes today's intellectuals as fearful of any explanation of the mind that involves genetics, despite the overwhelming evidence presented by the sciences.

LeDoux (2003) discusses the issue at some length. He explains that “pretty much everyone” agrees that the transition from the immature brain of a young person to the mature brain of an adult is accomplished through neural activity occasioned by environmental stimulation. There is some debate of the question “is the self sculpted from a preexisting set of synaptic choices, or does experience instruct and add to the synaptic basis of the self as we go through early life?” (LeDoux, 2003, p. 72). LeDoux concludes that both activities are involved. Thus instruction through environmental activity, and selection from among preexisting (genetic) alternatives, are both accomplished as complementary means by which circuits in the brain are constructed.

### Volitional Control

Goleman (1997) embellished research by Salovey and Mayer on Emotional Intelligence, and by Gardner on multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1983; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Goleman contends that “Emotional intelligence is a master aptitude, a capacity that profoundly affects all other abilities, either facilitating or interfering with them” (Goleman, 1997, p.80). He includes self-awareness, self-discipline, and empathy in measures of intelligence - standard measures of IQ ignore these factors. Essentially, Goleman believes “we have two minds; one that thinks and one that feels. Ordinarily, there is a balance between emotional and rational minds...” (Goleman, 1997, p.8). However, in some cases an individual’s emotional intelligence does not keep pace with chronological age, leading to situations in which the individual’s emotional response is not appropriately dampened by the rational.

Ornstein (1991) describes the frontal lobes as the location of our perception of self. If damaged, there is nothing left to oversee the sources of voluntary action. Goldberg (2001) describes the role of the frontal lobes as intentionality, purposefulness, complex decision-making, and morality. The frontal lobes mature biologically at the beginning of adulthood. If the frontal lobes do not develop properly, or are damaged, the affected individual may be unable to govern himself within the bounds of socially acceptable behavior. In such cases, individuals experience a variety of symptoms that include an inability to maintain task focus; mental inertia; an inability to deal with ambiguity; inability to make decisions; inability to coordinate cognitive skills; inability to conceive and perform goal directed actions. The frontal lobes provide the capacity for volitional control over one’s actions. Such control is not innate, but emerges gradually as the individual develops (Damasio, 1999; LeDoux, 1996, 2003). This suggests a possible neurobiological confirmation of Goleman’s Emotional IQ as a master ability.

### Perception Issues

This section of the literature review explores research concerning patterns of thinking and responding. It explores information concerning use of language; male-female conversational styles; cultural differences within the United States; individual differences driven by age and gender; and cultural pressures toward resistant behaviors.

All human experiences are perceived through a set of perceptual filters unique to each individual. These filters take shape from all of the forces that bear upon people, and are of major importance in determining how people interpret events, actions, and words - in

short, all perceived stimuli. Further, these filters provide behavioral norms used by each individual to determine the appropriate response to each situation they encounter.

### Relevance to the Research

Character and temperament provide an indication of how people generally react to a given set of circumstances, including their predisposition toward accepting or fighting change; whether they react emotionally or objectively; and whether they tend to respond to reasoned explanations. Patterns of thinking and responding are significant to the topic of resistance in several ways. Material presented in a manner contrary to the student's preferred learning style may be met with frustration. Information presented at too rapid a pace may lead to a sense of disorientation and exhaustion. People who view challenges, as obstacles to be avoided rather than opportunities, are more likely to react in a resistant manner. Language and cultural differences compound the difficulties associated with the learning process; in particular cultural issues may include situations in which learning is not valued, or even discouraged. Gender differences affect interpretations, communications, and social/interpersonal values to an extent that could affect willingness or ability to succeed in a given learning environment. Any of these factors, coupled with the actual learning environment, are capable of contributing to a situation in which the individual's needs are threatened, which will create a reaction likely to be protective, or perceived to be resistant.

### Patterns of Thinking and Responding

One of the ways people differ is in their perception of their surroundings or situations as matters of similarity, or of dissimilarity. Some people routinely pick out similarities - matches - noting the ways in which the characteristics of different items, places, situations, or people, are alike. Others mismatch, that is, they perceive the ways in which things differ. Their attention is naturally and immediately drawn to the differences. An individual's natural thinking pattern, and the way information is presented, affects the efficiency with which the individual assimilates the material (Dastoor, 1993; Ornstein, 1991). These are not mutually exclusive approaches; some people are able to do both.

Goldberg (2001) investigated cognitive strategies employed by people, and found significant differences between left-handed and right-handed individuals. The left-handed people appear to be novelty seekers. Goldberg notes that other tests attempting to correlate cognitive aspects of right handed versus left handed people failed.

Traditional intelligence measures were determined to be ineffective in measuring creativity and unconventional problem solving capabilities, in studies involving English schoolboys (Hudson, 1967). Hudson concluded that two different thinking processes were involved, which he termed convergent and divergent. Convergent thinking is more directly measured on standardized tests, and as it is supportive of problem solving activities, is more typical of successful students. It also tends to be a thinking style more commonly found in science and technology. Divergent thinking, however, is more concerned with creativity than with problem solving.

Learning may be modeled as a cycle in which two dimensions are involved: the first ranges from concrete experience to abstract conceptualization; and the second between experimentation and reflection (Kolb, 1974). Kolb sees people engaged in the process of

learning as moving along these two axes. However, the extremes are polar opposites and exert a tension: between action and reflection, between experience and conceptualization. People tend to develop a learning style that resolves the tensions and emphasizes some learning abilities over others. Each learning style has associated with it a preferred way in which the individual will approach the learning situation. Individuals learn most efficiently when material is presented in a comparable fashion (MacKeracher, 1997).

Individuals are limited in the amount of information they can receive, store in working memory, rehearse, and transfer to long-term memory. Miller (1956) suggested that working memory is limited to only seven items, plus or minus two, where the items are meaningful units such as words. Schunk (2004) built on Miller's work to address questions of attention and cognitive overload. Cognitive Overload refers to the situation in which a learner has reached the limits of his working memory. This may occur because the information has been provided at a rate in excess of that which the learner can absorb, or in such quantity that it is simply overwhelming in the limited time provided for assimilation (LeDoux, 1996). When this occurs the learner develops a sense of demoralization, frustration, and mental and physical exhaustion. People cannot learn under such circumstances. Worse, the emotional strain may trigger hostility and resistant behavior in the student (R. C. Clark & Taylor, 1994; Schunk, 2004).

People respond to challenges, changes, and learning situations along a continuum that has been described as moving toward a goal, or conversely, moving away from a problem (Dastoor, 1993). Dastoor notes that while all people generally endeavor to reach desirable goals, and avoid undesirable situations, they also demonstrate a predominant motivational strategy. People who are goal oriented - "toward" people - are motivated by rewards associated with achievements. Conversely, "away from" people see the world in terms of potential problems to be avoided. "Away from" people describe their activities in terms of avoidance, such as "steering clear," "dodging," and "avoiding," (Bandura, 1994; Brislin et al., 1994).

Proactive and reactive describe opposite ends of an action continuum. Proactive people are "self-starters" who initiate actions intended to accomplish an objective. These people believe they are responsible for their own successes and failures; they do not blame circumstances or conditions. Conversely, reactive people are people who believe themselves to be controlled by external circumstances (Covey, 1989; Dastoor, 1993).

Covey (1989) describes proactive people as individuals who assume initiative and responsibility, who base their behavior on their own values and conscious choices. Proactive people behave in the way they do because they have chosen to do so. Reactive people base their behavior on the feelings they generate in reaction to external conditions. Reactive people are driven by feelings, by circumstances, by conditions, by their environment. When their environment is positive, they feel positive; when praised they glow, whether or not the praise is warranted. When people do not treat them well reactive people become defensive and protective. Proactive people subordinate their impulses to their values; they are driven by their own internalized values and choices.

Options and procedures refer to the degree to which an individual tends to employ specific predefined problem-solving methods and processes in preference to more ad hoc approaches (Dastoor, 1993; Fisher & Ury, 1991; Goldberg, 2001).

## Use of Language

Discovery of the solutions to mankind's most important problems depends on the use of language (McCrum, Cran, & MacNeil, 1986). A good understanding of language is essential to the ability to communicate thoughts, ideas, and meanings; yet our words are frequently abused, misused, misunderstood. An inability to use words, and to use them correctly, or the lack of words due to an inadequate vocabulary, is a significant handicap to understanding and expression (Wilson, 1960).

People from different regions of the country, or from different ethnic, social, economic backgrounds, or disciplinary ideologies, use different words and mean different things by their words. It is likely that speakers from such different backgrounds will have difficulty communicating precisely with one another (Grinker, 1967; McCartan-Welch, 1997; Tannen, 1987).

While differences in the use of language are expected and anticipated by people who routinely deal with others from different backgrounds, similar differences exist in male-female communications. Men and women employ different conversational styles, use different words, and the words carry different meanings, sometimes making male - female understanding difficult (Tannen, 1991). In a mixed sex classroom, applying the male style to deal with a women, and vice versa, may lead to a situation in which one side or the other becomes annoyed, or discouraged, and then resistant (Belenky et al., 1986; Gilligan, 1982; Lerner, 1994; J. R. Martin, 1985; Tannen, 1991).

## Cultural Differences

Cultural differences have always existed in the United States, however, two important changes that exacerbate cultural issues have occurred in recent years. First, immigration to the United States in the nineteenth and most of the twentieth centuries originated primarily in European countries, with cultures similar to the dominant American culture; today's immigrants are primarily Hispanic and Asian. Immigration from Europe has steadily declined; immigration from Africa and the Pacific islands has increased somewhat, but immigration from Latin America and Asia has risen sharply (Gibson & Lennon, 1999).

Secondly, previous immigrants made deliberate efforts to become Americans, by learning English, adopting traditional American values, and seeking citizenship. Today, this is no longer the case. According to the U. S. census data, the percentage of the foreign-born population that becomes a naturalized citizen has dropped from 80% to 40% since 1950 (Gibson & Lennon, 1999). Since 1970 however, the number of foreign born doubled, while the number obtaining citizenship rose only slightly (Gibson & Lennon, 1999). Immigrants are encouraged not to assimilate into the mainstream through an emphasis on diversity, and ready availability of public services, including education, in their native tongues. As a result there has been a radical increase in the number of people living in the United States who do not speak English. Between 1980 and 1990 this number increased by about 60%, while the number of foreign-born who chose to speak English remained flat (Gibson & Lennon, 1999).

As a result of these demographic trends, students and instructors often are required to deal with cultural differences in order to achieve an understanding across cultural gulfs.

People often think of culture as the visible external symbols, such as clothing, food, and holiday traditions. More meaningful are the subjective components, including attitudes, values, behavioral norms, and roles that people assume. Most intercultural misunderstandings and communication problems arise out of these subjective components (Foucault, 2001; Marquardt & Engel, 1993). Cultural values may include the explicit rejection of values held by other cultures, which has the effect of retarding or preventing assimilation of immigrant groups into the broader population. These values may be very strongly held and their violation severely penalized by the group (Barnett & Njama, 1982; Ogbu, 1992).

Cultural norms serve as filters to make meaning of our perceptions, or heuristics to define the appropriate response. Different cultures dictate different responses to the same stimuli (Brislin et al., 1994; Cushner & Trifonovitch, 1989; Giroux, 1988, 1997; Hicks, 1990; Ogbu, 1992).

### Gender Differences

Men and women are different. Some of the differences are very significant in the way they affect an individual's way of interpreting circumstances, events, and communications, and in the cognitive strategies they employ in making choices (Goldberg, 2001). Men and women interpret events, information, and communications differently. Men tend to stress values of separatism, autonomy, individuality, and individual rights as appropriate for adult people. Women are more concerned with personality traits such as connections, relationships, context, and their responsibilities toward others. Conversational styles differ: men tend to converse in order to acquire or deliver information, while women are also interested in the social interaction involved (Kelly, 1988; Picard, 2003; Tannen, 1987, 1990, 1991; Taylor, Tisdell, & Hanley, 2000; Tisdell, 1993; West, 2000).

Goldberg (2001) conducted studies designed to explore the cognitive processes involved in resolving ambiguity. He wanted to know how people make choices, and identify what accounts for the differences in the way they make their choices. Goldberg was looking at decision-making style, not correctness of response; all responses were correct. He focused on identifying the method the individuals applied to arrive at the response. Goldberg noted significant and robust differences based on gender. He observed that two distinct patterns emerged from the data. Some participants employed a context dependent strategy, while others applied a stable preference, regardless of circumstance. Female participants used a more context independent strategy, while the males employed a context dependent response. Goldberg notes that individuals do not generally apply a single strategy in its pure form. Most people adopt a mix of strategies, or are able to switch between strategies. However, he notes that his research indicates that females tend to have a subtle preference towards context independence, and males toward context dependence.

### Age Differences

Jung (1920) described four stages of life, and demonstrated that the concerns and solutions developed in one stage differ from those of another. Perhaps acknowledging Shakespeare's Seven Ages of Man, Jung explained, "We cannot live in the afternoon of

life according to the program on one's morning; for what in the morning was true will in the evening become a lie" (Jung, 1971, p. 17). O'Conner and Wolfe described a mid-life transition that occurs as people mature, developed a model of such transitions, and populated the model with quantitative data to explore mid-life transitions. They found that "people in each stage varied significantly in several systematic ways" (O'Conner & Wolfe, 1987, p. 331). They consider these paradigms as analogous to cultures, and describe them as central to one's ability to form meaning. As people age and gain additional experiences, they begin to modify their current paradigms until a palpable shift has occurred.

### Cultural and Peer Pressures toward Resistance

Studies specifically focused on adult learning situations demonstrate the existence of strong pressures, based in cultural norms and exerted through peer pressure, encouraging resistance to education (McFarland, 1999; Merriam & Caffarella, 1991; Millar, 1998; H. L. Miller, 1967; Taylor et al., 2000). Through his research, Miller identified a number of factors for three socio-economic classes that potentially impact attitudes towards learning. Some of the negative factors he identified here may contribute to establishing a framework (combination of perceptual filters, cultural values, and peer pressures) that actually encourages hostile resistant behaviors (H. L. Miller, 1967).

### Marginalization

Marginalization is the process through which people's contributions or qualifications are discounted and by implication the people themselves devalued, and moved to the periphery. Marginal people are "those outside the mainstream of social life and elude the established classifications of a particular society" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 175).

The psychiatrist Anna Fels (2004) describes the marginalization of women as a result of an "overpowering combination of cultural and sociological factors." She contends that a pervasive lack of recognition for women's accomplishments has discouraged many from pursuing their goals. Fels notes that without recognition and "earned affirmation, long term learning and performance goals are rarely reached" (Fels, 2004, p. 23).

Belenky (1986) and colleagues' research indicates that, compared to men, women have more difficulty: asserting their authority; publicly expressing themselves in a forceful manner; gaining respect for their intellectual abilities; and fully utilizing their abilities in the working world. Belenky and colleagues note the habitual use of male experiences as the standard model. They state, "The mental processes that are involved in considering the abstract and the impersonal have been labeled 'thinking,' and are attributed primarily to men, while those that deal with the personal and the interpersonal fall under the rubric of 'emotions' and are largely relegated to women" (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 7).

Hochschild and Machung (1989) performed phenomenological research on gender ideology to document a comparison of how women think they should behave and how society sees women's marital roles. They concluded that women's work is under rated by society, and by women themselves. Further, they concluded that this devaluing creates stress and self-esteem issues. Even though women may have professional jobs from nine a.m. to five p.m., they still come home and perform devalued tasks.

A popular song catches a bit of this:

*When you're trying hard to be your best  
Could you be a little less*

*When you open up your mouth to speak  
Could you be a little weak*  
(Madonna & Sigsworth, 2005)

For a specific example, consider the recent ascension of Judge Lisa Kemler to the Alexandria, Virginia Circuit Court. She is the first woman to hold the position.



Figure 2. Judge Lisa Kemler sworn in at Alexandria Circuit Court.

Note: from “Kemler takes seat on circuit court,” by M. L. Pope, 24 March 2005, *Alexandria Gazette Packet*, p.1. Copyright 2005 by Connection Group. Reprinted with permission.

The front-page of the Alexandria Gazette-Packet featured a photograph Figure 2 of Judge Kemler being sworn-in to the office. The full article was continued in a later section of the paper, which featured a photograph Figure 3 of Virginia Delegate Moran congratulating Tom Kemler (the judge’s husband) while Judge Kemler stands in the background as the dutiful little woman. The 3,000-word article devotes only three sentences to Judge Kemler, two of which simply identify the high school she attended. The balance of the article describes the political infighting that preceded her appointment, with the democrats favoring one man and the Republicans another.

The article explains that no one wanted Lisa Kemler. During a legislative recess, the Governor appointed Judge Kemler as “his second choice.” The article concludes by highlighting Delegate Moran’s observation that he considers his failure to place his own favorite – not Lisa Kemler – “one of the biggest disappointments of his legislative career” (Pope, 2005, p. 14) (Emphasis added).

Clearly marginalization is associated with strong emotions and potentially frightening situations, which could lead to dysfunctional and resistant behavior (Mezirow, 1990, 1991).

## Kemler Takes Seat on Circuit Court



Figure 3. Delegate Moran greets Tom Kemler on his wife's appointment.

Note: from "Kemler takes seat on circuit court," by M. L. Pope, 24 March 2005, *Alexandria Gazette Packet*, p.14. Copyright 2005 by Connection Group. Reprinted with permission.

### Behavioral Habits

This section of the literature review explored research concerning behavioral preferences or habits. In particular, research dealing with locus of control and responsibility was discussed, as is material concerning defensive and self-defeating behavior, and the imposter syndrome.

People share a common set of needs, ranging from the most basic requirements for safety, to more abstract needs such as recognition. When these needs are threatened, people tend to react defensively. In addition to these underlying needs and the effect they have on stimulating behavior, people tend also to have preferred ways of behaving, which may be described as character or temperament. People tend also to differ in the extent to which they assume personal responsibility for achieving an outcome, or believe that events are under their control.

### Relevance to the Research

The material reviewed in this section describes human behavioral preferences, or habits. These preferences are a characteristic of the individual, and while they may be triggered by circumstance, they are owned by the person. These less productive habits include behaviors that attempt to deny responsibility and place blame elsewhere; or to create barriers to success that may then be used as excuses for failure. These behaviors may be observed as resistant behaviors in the classroom.

### Hierarchy of Needs

People share some common physical and emotional needs. Human needs may be described as varying in degree of importance; the most fundamental are those related to survival and safety (Maslow, 1970). Other needs are more abstract, covering belonging, recognition, achievement, self-actualization and self-transcendence. Maslow asserts that

threats to survival or safety elicit the strongest defensive responses. In learning situations, presentation and assimilation of new knowledge, or more especially of knowledge that modifies or replaces existing knowledge, may be perceived as a threat to an individual's security. The higher needs include such factors as belonging, recognition, and achievement – factors that are even more clearly exercised in the classroom (Lowrey, 1973). People react defensively when these needs are challenged, and the reaction is stronger and more visceral when the threat is to the most basic needs.

Nevis (1987) contends that people respond to their perception of their environment, and of the other people with whom they interact, by acting in ways designed to achieve stability and need-satisfaction. People are self-regulating; when faced with unstable situations they undertake actions to regain stability, such as eating when they are hungry, or resting when they are tired. However, this extends to more than relieving deficiencies, it includes growth, learning, and other creative behaviors.

When students are challenged in the areas of safety, belonging, and recognition their willingness to learn is diminished as they react in a self-protective manner. Students require a level of comfort before they are in a position to learn, and if they are absorbed with issues of intellectual safety they are likely to regress to protective resistant behaviors.

### Character and Temperament

Although people vary significantly in the ways in which they interpret and understand their environment, evaluate situations and events, and express themselves, several broad descriptive trends are apparent. Beginning at least as far back as Jung in the 1920s, researchers have undertaken efforts to “type” people in ways that allow insight into their thought processes and likely behaviors. Myers and Briggs (1954) developed the MBTI personality types indicator basing their research on Jung. Keirsey and Bates (1984) that the Myers-Briggs method is an effective way to predict people's behavior and likely responses to varied situations. Keirsey and Bates document fundamental ways in which people's temperaments differ from each other: their wants, motives, values, drives, impulses, and urges. Further, they established that people function differently: their means of thinking, conceptualizing, perceiving, and understanding differ. They believe that behavior is just as inborn as is body build, and contend that variations in behavior and attitude trigger others to view these people as flawed or afflicted. They note that people who fall into different Myers – Briggs personality types experience difficulty in understanding one another, and in valuing each other's contribution to the effort at hand (Jung, 1971 p. 2; Keirsey & Bates, 1984). This is important, because an effect would be to marginalize the dissimilar students. The Myers-Briggs approach is consistent with research into locus of control issues, discussed in the next section (Baumeister, 1994; Lefcourt, 1976; Phares, 1976).

### Locus of Control

People respond to challenges based on their personal views of control and responsibility. The terms “Locus of Control” and “Locus of Responsibility” refer to an individual's view of the extent of influence a person exerts over the outcome of their life events, and the degree to which the individual is responsible for achieving those

outcomes (Lefcourt, 1976; Phares, 1976; Rotter, 1966). Locus of control and responsibility is expressed in two dimensions: Internal and External. Internal Control/Internal Responsibility describes those people who feel that outcomes in their lives are largely the results of decisions they make, such as a decision to seek an education, and that their failures are due to their own deficiencies or choices. At the other extreme are people who feel that their life choices are irrelevant, fate, not they, will decide the outcome, and that the individuals have no responsibility for their actions (Cheng, 1994).

The students' viewpoints regarding locus of control and locus of responsibility have a significant bearing on the attitudes and filters they bring to class, and how they react when faced with challenges. Their viewpoints are culturally influenced; those whose heritage derives from collectivist social structures are likely to feel more externally controlled (Brislin et al., 1994; Mehrabian, 1981).

### Imposter Syndrome

Research into the "imposter syndrome" first began in 1978 by two psychotherapists, Pauline Clance and Suzanne Imes, who studied a group of successful, high-achieving women (Clance & Imes, 1978). Stephen Brookfield borrowed the term imposter syndrome from the field of psychology to describe a situation that could be operational in a classroom environment (Brookfield, 1995; Brookfield & Preskill, 1999; Clance & Imes, 1978). Some students believe, for a variety of reasons, they do not belong in a given classroom. The reasons span ethnic, cultural, and gender differences; socio-economic background differences; and differences in ability and academic preparation. In some cases affirmative action programs have inadvertently placed people in situations in which they perceive themselves ill equipped to compete, thus making them believe they are imposters. People whose parents were highly successful, famous, or wealthy are expected to be no less successful, again setting up the potential of an imposter situation.

### Defensive Reasoning

Chris Argyris (1991), of the Harvard graduate schools of business and education, contends that professionals avoid learning. He explains that many professionals rarely experience failure, and thus have not learned how to learn from failure. Argyris takes issue with the assumption that getting people to learn is a matter of motivation. Argyris cites "defensive reasoning" as a cause of resistance to learning, even when the individual's commitment to learning is high.

Argyris (1991) focused his research over fifteen years on management consultants, highly educated, well paid troubleshooters invited into corporations to identify problems, solutions, and train their people how to implement the solutions. He assumed that these professionals would embrace learning, but determined that when their own activities toward continuous improvement were examined, they were embarrassed. They felt threatened by the prospect of critical examination. They reacted defensively to deflect blame elsewhere. Their defensive reactions were persistent; they had become reflexive. Argyris identified a strong predisposition against learning.

## Self-Defeating Behaviors

Baumeister (1994) identifies the self-defeating behavior he terms “self-handicapping.” He defines self-handicapping as “creating a barrier or obstacle to one’s own performance, so that future, anticipated failure can be attributed to the obstacle rather than to lack of ability” (Baumeister, 1994, p. 87). He notes that if the need for self-esteem is not satisfied, the affected individual will show signs of stress and deprivation. This reaction is most prevalent in western countries, while people whose culture derives from non-western societies, will develop stress over issues of class honor and family lineage. Curtis (1994) also notes that people may practice self-defeating behaviors. These behaviors include aggression, withdrawal, and dependence on others as primary means to protect oneself from humiliation. People may practice such self-defeating behaviors when they feel that they have been insufficiently recognized for their accomplishments.

People are able to retain high levels of self-esteem despite repeated failures. Circumstances that reflect badly on the self are often attributed to external factors so that the individual can isolate their self-worth through denial. In this way people avoid the discomfort associated with criticism and the attendant implications regarding one’s worth. Members of stigmatized groups maintain high levels of self-esteem by attributing their failures to external causes. Refusing to acknowledge one’s own responsibility for attaining a desirable outcome also means that the individual is unlikely to take corrective action, but instead indulge in extreme defensive reactions.

Aggression is related to an individual’s perception of self-esteem, and to the degree to which that perception is stable. Baumeister (1994) states that:

People with unstable high self-esteem show unusually strong tendencies toward anger and hostility, presumably because they feel vulnerable and sensitive to threats from others. Thus, aggressors and bullies are most likely to be people with favorable but fluctuating views of themselves, who seek to attack and dominate others. (p. 85)

He is describing a contributing factor to the hostile attack as defined by Pickhardt (1980). He notes that people with low self-esteem are more often likely to react in a defensive manner; yet people with high self-esteem show more extreme levels of defensive reactions. Mehrabian (1970) reports that learned aggression becomes a reflex-like response that is engaged in automatically and indiscriminately when a threat is perceived. Such aggression is directed toward anything or anyone within range.

Some people are both aggressive, have a craving for dominance, and have a need for others to recognize that they are dominant. These people are subject to behavior in which they act aggressively, in a face-to-face, confrontational manner (Lowrey, 1973).

Bandura (1994) provides insights concerning the effect of people’s beliefs concerning their abilities to exercise control over events that affect their lives, a quality he terms “self-efficacy.” Internally motivated, self-assured people approach a task as a challenge to be mastered. They are willing to exert personal effort to achieve their goals, and, if they fall short, they attribute their failures to their own shortcomings. Conversely, externally motivated people see their tasks not as challenges, but as threats to be avoided.

When faced with evidence that they are not able to overcome obstacles or failures, they quickly either give up, or reduce their efforts.

### Models for Dynamic Assessment and Adjustment

A variety of means are typically employed by the instructor to dynamically assess the effectiveness of the learning environment and delivery method. Three models are discussed here: the Johari Window, which deals with an individual's perception of self; force field analysis, which provides a means of assessing the dynamics of the classroom, and body language, which provides clues to an individual's state of mind.

### Relevance to the Research

The material reviewed in this section describes tools and techniques that may be employed by the practitioner to understand, describe, or assess events that transpire in the classroom. These tools potentially provide a means to support critical reflection and discussion of resistant episodes within the learning community and among practitioners.

### Johari Window

Student and instructor perceptions are central to the occurrence, or non-occurrence, of overt resistant behaviors. These perceptions are not necessarily at the conscious level. Neither student nor instructor may be fully aware of the dynamics in the learning environment. Ornstein, a Stanford neuropsychologist, describes this as "We see ourselves through a selective filter, the conscious self. But, like shining a spotlight in a dark area, everything we see is illuminated by our own spotlight. We can't see where we have no illumination" (Ornstein, 1991, p. 154).

The Johari Window research (Luft, 1970) shows the importance of perception. It divides perceptions into four categories: Area of Free Activity; Blind Area; Avoided or Hidden Area; and Area of Unknown Activity. Each of the four areas reveals perceptions from the viewpoint of self or others. The first, Area of Free Activity, is how we function daily. The information known about a person in this quadrant is known both by the person and known by others. The second quadrant, known as the Blind Area, represents knowledge known to others but not known to the person. Often instructors have information about a student (such as test scores, or advancement opportunity) that the instructor needs to have but which should be kept private. This may cause anxiety for students who wonder just what and how much information concerning them the instructor holds, but the student does not. Such anxiety may be expressed as a resistant behavior. Psychologists often work in the third area of Avoided or Hidden Knowledge. The knowledge in this square is not known by others, but is known to the self. This knowledge must be protected at all costs. Fear of exposure relating to this knowledge causes much aberrant behavior. Four, the last quadrant, is the Area of Unknown Activity. Knowledge in this area is not known to the self or to others. Dangerous or stressful situations elicit responses drawn from this quadrant. Neither the self nor others truly know what the action will be.

### Force Field Analysis

Lewin (1951) was interested in addressing the relationship between perceptions and motivation. He expanded the then-current understanding of perception as a process of

figure formation<sup>4</sup>, by adding the concepts of energy and tension systems. Lewin described a person's understanding of their environment and relationship to their environment as governed by intentions that act in the same way as needs. The intentions create a tension system in the individual, which provides energy to move toward a goal (Lewin, 1951; Lewin & Grabbe, 1945; Nevis, 1987).

Lewin described intentions as quasi-needs, and the process of developing tension systems and movement toward goals as very similar to the process of meeting fundamental human needs. Nevis describes this as "activity aroused by need tension systems is guided by perception, and psychological behavior was seen as depending upon energy coming from tension systems" (Nevis, 1987, p. 11). Nevis explains that Lewin showed that needs influence perception in terms of what is seen and what kind of action then follows to satisfy a need. Thus, a person experiencing a need allows that need to color his perception of reality, and is drawn toward objects that can satisfy this need. Lewin also determined that people attending the same meeting, or in the same situation are in different "Life spaces" and will define their experiences differently.

Lewin's Force Field Analytic Model provides a means of representing the forces acting to alter the current situation. Until the relative forces on one side or the other change, the current conditions will persist.

### Body Language

Body language refers to the notion that enormous quantities of information related to feelings and emotions are routinely communicated by the postures, expressions, and gestures people adopt, often unconsciously. An ability to read body language, with care and caveats, is useful to the instructor who wishes to know what the students are thinking. Attitudes, feelings, and intentions may be understood from nonverbal communications, and from neutral (no obvious emotional content) verbal communications (Beier, Smock, Izard, & Tougas, 1957; Block, 2000; Boothman, 2000; Brookfield & Preskill, 1999; Ho, Palmer, & O'Brien, 1986; Mehrabian, 1967, 1970, 1981; Sork, 1991a; Trumble, 2004).

Human understanding of body language is often attributed to an intuitive ability long predating recorded history. Deborah Tannen noted that there is a gender difference in the reliance on interpreting meaning by assessing body language (Tannen, 1991). Men have a tendency to be less reliant on that form of communication. Some meanings expressed in body language are impervious to cultural change. However, others can change significantly in a few generations as immigrants are assimilated. Marsh cites a study conducted in New York with Italian and Jewish immigrants, noting that there were strong differences between assimilated and non-assimilated groups (Marsh, 1988).

The importance of body language as a means of expressing intent or perception is reflected in literature, with nearly endless references to the subject. A common aphorism states "Actions speak louder than words." Blake refers to "the eyes are the windows of the soul" (collected works in (Noyes, 1956)). Shakespeare (1564-1616) captures Brutus'

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<sup>4</sup> Figure formation is a term from Gestalt psychology; meaning the process by which people first see the whole figure, then begin to isolate the parts. This is the ability to differentiate objects in a rich varied background, even when the image is incomplete.

true feelings by saying he “has a lean and hungry look” (Shakespeare, 1978). Hostile withdrawal can often be detected, with cautious interpretations, through an observation of the messages provided by body language.

Authorities in communications and body language argue that most of the message received by a listener comes from the person’s body language, and the next largest amount is conveyed by tone of voice (Marsh, 1988 p. 47). The tonal component of the spoken message carries a disproportionately large amount of the information communicated. Facial expressions are even more important (Beier et al., 1957; Weiner & Mehrabian, 1968).

The instructor needs to become a detective in the classroom, constantly reading body language messages in order to assess teaching effectiveness. Resistant student behaviors can be identified by physical actions expressed as body language. Positive body language is an effective way to convey the instructor’s involvement and acceptance of students (Torrence, 1993). The nonverbal signs students perceive from their teacher are also very important. “In a classroom, a teacher can inadvertently exclude some of her students from participation, by simply looking more in the direction of those who sit up front...” (Mehrabian, 1981, p. 95).

Defensive behavior occurs when an individual anticipates or perceives a threat. An appreciable portion of energy is devoted to defensive behaviors thus preventing the listener from fully concentrating on the message. “Defensive behavior, in short, engenders defensive listening, and this in turn produces postural, facial, and verbal cues which raise the defensive level of the original communication” (Gibb, 1974, p. 237). As people become progressively more defensive they distort the information as well as the motives, values, and emotions of the sender. The receiver then reacts by not hearing the message, by forgetting it, by competing with the sender, or by becoming jealous of him. Conversely, as defenses are reduced, the receiver is better able to concentrate on the structure, content, and cognitive meanings of the message.

### Resistance to Learning

This section of the literature review explored resistance to learning, as described by theorists and practitioners. It discusses research-based results as well as the observations of corporate trainers and training managers. It identified forms of hostile resistant behaviors, and signs that indicate resistance is occurring.

Learning is a process of change, and is subject to many of the positive and negative aspects of the change processes (LeDoux, 2003). People have different attitudes regarding change and learning; some view it as an opportunity, others as a threat to be avoided (Bandura, 1994). If the material is ambiguous or contradicts previous learning, assimilation is difficult and requires additional energy to reconcile the dissonance (Atherton, 1999; Conner, 1992; Coutu, 2002). The act of learning challenges the learner. It may produce a feeling of loss as current knowledge and skills are devalued, and may be accompanied by feelings of frustration and anger. The new knowledge may invalidate previous knowledge and thus be perceived as a threat to the learner. This is a destabilizing factor and a source of stress. People will often take steps to protect themselves from the effects of such changes.

People employ perceptual filters to help them evaluate situations, and to select the response they will employ. Application of these filters may result in the perceived message being different from the intended message. This is particularly likely to be the case when interacting across racial, cultural, age, and gender barriers (Baumeister, 1994; Cushner & Trifonovitch, 1989; Dodd & Montalvo, 1987; Foucault, 2001; Tannen, 1990, 1991; Tisdell, 1993). The reactions of people exposed to learning, and the actions taken by them, are all subject to the filtering process. In particular, the individual's temperament and views regarding locus of control, discussed earlier, are important in establishing the individual's response.

#### Nature and Prevalence of Resistance to Learning

A greater exploration of the issue of resistance to learning has been made among trainers, than among academic educators. Carl Pickhardt, a Texas-based consulting psychologist, observes "every trainer eventually encounters an audience determined to resist" (Pickhardt, 1980, p. 6). "Resistance is a predictable, natural, and necessary part of the learning process" (Block, 2000, p. 139). Allard describes corporate training classes as including three kinds of students: "...vacationers, prisoners, and sponges." Allard describes these as "The prisoners and vacationers do not want to be there at all, or feel they have no need of the training and hence do not plan to learn anything. These are resisters" (Allard, 1991, p. 58). Atherton states "Resistance to learning is common and well known among trainers of adults, but has received remarkably little attention in the literature" (Atherton, 1999, p. 77).

Candace Pert (1992) who has done pioneering research in the area of mind and body chemistry, discusses state-dependent memory, or dissociated states of learning. She has demonstrated that an emotional state stimulates recall of material learned previously, under the same emotional state. Further, not only memory is affected by emotional state, actual performance or behavior is similarly affected. Emotions and learning are closely coupled. As people experience bad outcomes in a learning situation they become predisposed to assume that other learning experiences will also have negative effects. Pert's observations are supported by other experts in the field (Damasio, 1999; Goldberg, 2001; LeDoux, 1996; Ornstein, 1991; Pert, 1992).

Atherton (1999) argues that resistance to learning is very prevalent, and is not the same as lack of motivation. The evidence is sufficiently strong that the issue should be taken seriously, and is likely to be a component of many educational and training programs, including undergraduate education. Atherton's research reveals that resistance is more prominently seen when the material to be learned is supplantive, rather than additive. This is in turn an attribute of the learner, not of the material taught. Most learning involves adding information to the student's body of knowledge, hence the new knowledge is "additive." When the new information is to replace knowledge or skills already held by the learner, it is termed "supplantive." Atherton's research indicates that the single most defining characteristic of resisted learning is its supplantive character. He interprets the results of his research to indicate that this is because the supplantive knowledge threatens the skills and expertise the student already holds. During his research, Atherton found that the resistant students articulated a loss of certainty, a loss of confidence in their skills and abilities, and that this was triggered by the experience of the

course. The uncertainty and ambiguity created in the student's minds when their current knowledge bank was devalued caused the new knowledge to be resisted.

Aronson (1992) argues that if an adult has a history of success with the set of skills and knowledge he owns, but is told that those skills are no longer adequate, and offered new replacement knowledge, he is most likely to respond by distorting the evidence to fit his preconceived facts. Aronson stated:

He will try not to think about any evidence of inadequate skills; he will remember how well they have served in the past, and will recollect only the flimsiest arguments in favor of the new knowledge. This is irrational; it is also characteristic of human behavior.(Aronson, 1992, p.183)

Atherton (1999) discusses models of change in the context of resistance to learning. He notes that Knowles' approach to adult learning could be interpreted in terms of reduction to situational resistance. He cites Lewin's stages of change<sup>5</sup>, which include the notion of "unfreezing" before change could occur, and is consistent with Mezirow's view of perspective transformation (Lewin & Grabbe, 1945; Mezirow, 1991). Atherton states that unfreezing is not however, an element of Knowles' self-directed learning, and may be incompatible with it. Lewin and Mezirow contend that a process of alienation or destabilization is necessary to establish the conditions under which an individual will be receptive to supplantive learning. Such destabilization normally accompanies crisis situations – Mezirow cites death, divorce, being passed over for promotion, laid off from work, retirement – as events followed by emotional disorientation. The circumstances that create a need for supplantive learning are not likely to be of this order of magnitude. However, the process of supplantive learning will create confusion, frustration, and uncertainty, and the learner will be sorely tempted to hold on to the familiarity of the old knowledge.

Resistance to learning is frequently observed in corporate training programs. Kaeter quotes corporate officials from Franklin Quest, Caterpillar Training Institute, Motorola, Shipley Associates, Onan Corporation, Zenger-Miller, and others; each describes a similar experience (Kaeter, 1994). Kaeter's observations are supported by many other reports of corporate training experiences (Guglielmino & Guglielmino, 1994; Hanson, 1991; Lewis & Dunlop, 1991; Long, 1994; Maurer, 1996; Simerly, 1991; Sork, 1991b).

#### Overt Hostile Resistant Behaviors

Carl Pickhardt (1980) identified three overt hostile resistant behaviors. He describes the most benign expression of resistance, hostile withdrawal, as "participants who refuse you both verbal and nonverbal responses" (Pickhardt, 1980, p. 18). The same behavior is variously described as "stony faced silence" or "as if I were talking to the row behind them" or "crossed arms and glaring (expression)..." or "tuning out" (Pickhardt, 1980, p. 20). Pickhardt goes on to offer a vernacular description of hostile withdrawal as "If you can't reach us, you can't teach us" (Pickhardt, 1980, p. 18). This form of resistance is subtle and often overlooked by instructors (Allard, 1991; Altorfer, 1992; Atherton, 1999; Laus & Champagne, 1993; Lewis & Dunlop, 1991; Millar, 1998).

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<sup>5</sup> The stages are unfreezing, then the change process, then refreezing.

During a hostile diversion, participants initiate their own social interactions independent of that which the instructor is orchestrating for the larger group. The student imposes another's agenda on the classroom. Pickhardt characterizes this resistance by the statement "If we secede from your control, we can encourage others to do likewise" (Pickhardt, 1980, p. 18). The hostile diversion is not necessarily recognized by the instructor as a resistant behavior. A student may entice the class and the instructor with a change of topic, thereby diverting the teacher from his/her objective, diluting the teacher's control, and wasting instructional time.

Pickhardt (1980) explains that the participant who directly challenges the instructor's authority, opposes the instructor's directions, or belligerently criticizes the instructor's message has staged a hostile attack. This form of resistance is obvious to all, both students and instructor, and often causes loss of instructor authority and credibility, creating a schism between the class and the instructor. Pickhardt's vernacular version states: "If we refuse to go along with you, that rejection will undermine your confidence and destroy your poise as a leader" (Pickhardt, 1980, p. 18). This is by far the most destructive form of overt resistance in the classroom.

Other researchers have made similar categorizations: Kreisberg (1992) describes examples of all three behaviors occurring within institutions employing hierarchic power structures, which he attributes to students' effort to gain control over their circumstances. Allard uses the evocative terms "vacationers," and "prisoners" to describe resistant students (Allard, 1991). Block (2000) identifies a number of symptoms that indicate resistance is occurring, including a hostile attack with angry words; or silence, where the client is passive, with no particular response at all. DeValk (1994) describes students who display resistance in obvious ways: such as by folding their arms and glaring at the instructor; or choosing to read novels in class; or chatting among themselves about unrelated topics. Maurer (1996) identifies several signs of resistance, immediate criticism, denial, sabotage, silence, and others. Silberman (1990) describes a series of negative behaviors that are used to attack the instructor and/or the course itself, such as monopolizing, withdrawing, arguing excessively, and continually complaining.

### Reflective Process

This section of the literature review noted previous work dealing with aspects of resistance, generally associated with social or reform issues. It reviewed practitioners' observations concerning means of understanding and dealing with resistant behavior.

One of the differences between professionals and non-professionals or novices is the depth and breadth of their awareness within their field. Such awareness equips the practitioner with an understanding of the questions to ask her or himself concerning the progress or status of on-going professional efforts. The questioning process may be explicit, or perhaps only intuitive, but all skilled practitioners engage in such self-questioning (Argyris et al., 1985; Block, 2000; Brookfield, 1989, 1995; M. C. Clark, 1993; Mezirow, 1990; Nevis, 1987; Schon, 1983). Nevis emphasizes the importance of the practitioner's level of "awareness" before critical reflection, and the behavioral choices the practitioner has to work with to address the responses to the questions.

*Relevance to the Research*

This research is focused on an examination of how instructors perceive the underlying dynamics of the hostile resistant behavior they have observed in the learning environment, and interpret episodes of hostile resistant behavior within the bounds of their knowledge and experience. The reflective process is important to isolating the problem and facilitating change.

*An Interrupted Chautauqua*

There is very little material in the literature of education dealing directly with resistance to learning. Many researchers began to explore the issue of resistance to learning in the 1980s. Malcolm Knowles (1950) had begun investigating adult education issues much earlier than that. The problem was first noted by the training community and initially discussed in training journals as early as 1980 (Pickhardt, 1980). It attracted the attention of the academic community in 1985 (Argyris et al., 1985). About the same time, a number of resistance theorists advocating Social Reform and Emancipatory Education emerged, as shown in Figure 4. These included Giroux and Kriesberg, as principal speakers for empowerment (Giroux, 1983; Kreisberg, 1985). The social reformers included Welch, Bowles, Shor, and, of course, the radical Brazilian expatriate, Friere (Bowles & Gintis, 1986; Shor & Freire, 1987). These writers co-opted the embryonic and more general topic of resistance to learning, diverting its critical energy into narrow special-interest bands, specifically Social Reform, Emancipation, and Feminism. The Feminists piled-on in the late 1980s (Belenky et al., 1986; Diamond & Quinby, 1988; Foucault, 1980; Kreisberg, 1992).

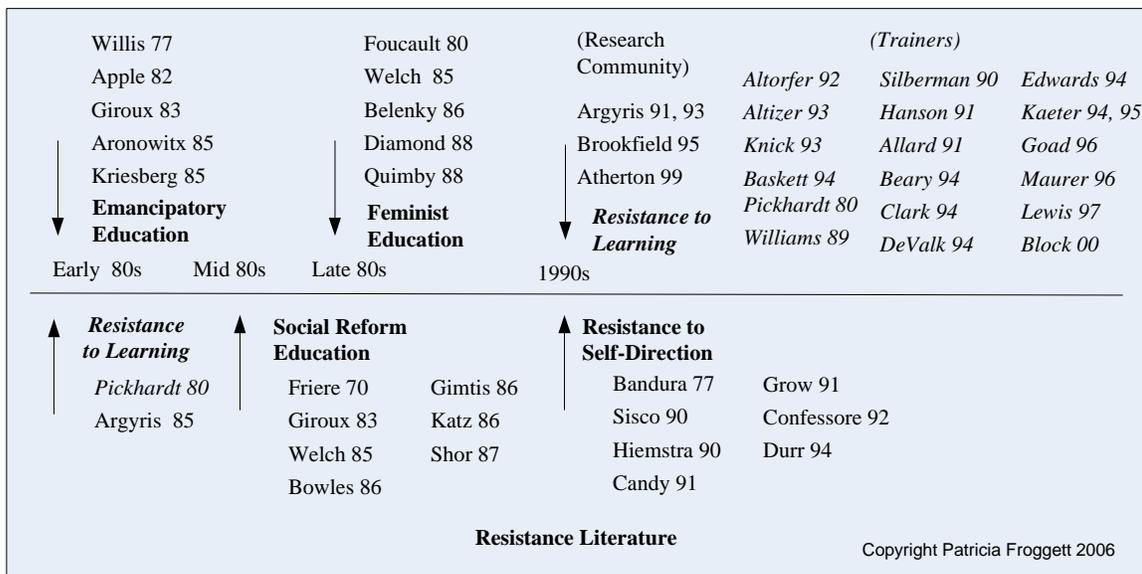


Figure 4. Major contributors to the literature on resistance.

In the 1990s considerable resistance to self-directed learning developed among organizations, educators, trainers, and learners. This resistance was generally attributed to fear of the unknown, accompanied by a sufficient level of satisfaction with traditional practices (Bandura, 1994; Blackwood, 1994; Brockett, 1994; Caffarella, 1993;

Confessore & Confessore, 1994; Guglielmino & Guglielmino, 1994; Hiemstra & Brockett, 1994; Knowles, 1975; Long, 1994; Merriam, 1993; Merriam & Caffarella, 1991; Pilling-Cormick, 1994; Pratt, 1993; Slusarski, 1994).

The theorists cited in Figure 4 all dealt with resistance to a process. Resistance to learning itself has received scant attention in the literature (Atherton, 1999). The paucity of information, theories, and reported experience available to support a dialogue among practitioners inhibits the effectiveness of the reflective process. The information that is available in the literature is predominately contributed by members of the training community. This may represent action research or first-person experience, and is important to furtherance of community understanding.

### *Reflecting on Resistance*

Conner (1992) notes that resistance to change may be expressed overtly, or covertly. Conner suggests that open resistance is healthy. He contends that understanding the ways in which people resist, and the reasons for the resistance, are essential to achieving the desired effect.

Fullan's (2001) thoughts regarding the change process are consistent with those expressed by Conner, and extend them in several areas. He indicates that both pressure for the change, and support of the participants, are necessary for success. As the change is implemented, interaction among the participants may serve to integrate both support for the participants, and pressure to continue. He identifies this as one of the reasons professional learning communities are successful. Fullan notes that if pressure for change is provided without support, the result will be alienation and resistance.

A number of authors and practitioners from the training community have offered suggestions to avoid or cope with incidents of hostile resistant behavior in the classroom. They describe both situational and ulterior resistance. They describe hostile resistant behaviors in terms much as does Pickhardt. They cite many tactical responses or preemptive actions to deal with episodes of resistant behavior (Allard, 1991; Altizer, 1993; Altorfer, 1992; Atherton, 1999; Beary, 1994; Blackwood, 1994; Block, 2000; Chance, 1988; DiMattina, 1980; Gross, 2005a, 2005b; Kaeter, 1994, 1995; Knick, 1993; Laus & Champagne, 1993; Leeds, 1993; Maurer, 1996; Nevis, 1987; Osland et al., 2001; Pickhardt, 1980; Simerly, 1991; Sork, 1991a, 1991b).

### *Summary of Literature Reviewed*

The literature reviewed in support of this study spans a wide range of topical areas and disciplines necessary to identify and place in perspective the complex interactions of the learning process that underlie the problem of resistance to learning. These do not lie wholly or even substantially within a single discipline. A survey of the research and trends in these disciplines in order to establish a common understanding of the topics was required, rather than an exhaustive review of each topic. A multi-disciplinary approach was necessitated by the complexity of the adult person functioning in the learning environment. The broad trends investigated include the major issues of change, power, learning, behavioral tendencies, perceptions and interpretations, small group dynamics, and human interactions. Subject matter includes adult education, psychology, learning theories, change management, power and control, communications (verbal and non-

verbal), linguistics, cultural anthropology, evolutionary biology, cognitive neuroscience, and neurobiology. This interdisciplinary approach was intentional and is needed to provide the foundation for productive discussions among instructors of adults regarding resistant behaviors. This approach also draws upon the authoritative disciplines to provide the vocabulary and understanding needed to form a bridge between classroom events and discussions within the professional learning community. Without a vocabulary to describe the events that occur within the classroom, discussions are necessarily limited.

Review of theory and literature demonstrates that there is considerable evidence that hostile resistance to learning occurs routinely. The review also indicates that such resistance potentially could be understood by an interdisciplinary application of the body of theory within the related fields of psychology, human behavior, change, motivation and personality, as well as learning theory. Regardless, there is scant discussion of resistance to learning among researchers in adult education, and little information in the body of knowledge directly supporting instructors of adults and their learning community. Yet, while the topic of resistance to learning is almost unmentioned in the research within the field of education (excepting discussions of resistance to process, such as self-directed learning), training journals are routinely populated with anecdotal discussions of trainers' experiences, and prescriptions for tactical responses. These anecdotal descriptions typically make no attempt to tie the observed behavior to any body of theory. The effect is that professional practitioners have little real support of their efforts to understand what is happening when they experience hostile resistant behavior, and to develop strategies for remediation or intervention. New knowledge is required. This study will contribute to the body of theory through a qualitative analysis to gain greater depth and richness of understanding.

## Chapter III: Method

This chapter describes the research method. It identified the research questions that guided the study, and discussed the research participants, including selective sampling rationale and criteria for selection, providing as well a summary assessment of background information presented in Appendix A, and a description of how that information was applied to the research method. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the approach to analysis.

The purpose of this study was exploratory: to investigate practitioners' perceptions of hostile resistant behaviors to learning, the causes they cite, and the ways in which they interpret the experience. The literature review revealed that very little information is available to answer the research questions. The exploratory nature of the research questions, and the absence of existing knowledge, led to selection of a qualitative approach. The research purpose included discovery of important questions, processes and relationships, but not the testing of such processes. Since a substantial body of knowledge does not exist, the variables are largely unknown, and a focus on context and human interaction was desired; a qualitative research approach was clearly most appropriate.

### Research Design and Method

#### Design

The qualitative approach permits examination of the complexities and processes involved and supports an understanding of how people define the situations in which they find themselves. Creswell, Marshall and Rossman, among others, suggest the qualitative approach is preferred when the research explores complexities; examines issues about which relatively little is known and the relevant variables have not been identified; or examines informal and unstructured linkages and interactions in social and organizational systems (Creswell, 1994; Marshall & Rossman, 1989). That was clearly the situation in this study.

This research was guided by the grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998). The grounded theory approach involves inductive derivation of the theory from a study of the observed phenomenon. In this approach, the theory emerges from systematic collection and analysis of the pertinent data. Strauss and Corbin describe techniques and provide guidelines for the conduct of research employing a grounded theory approach.

#### Data Collection

The research relied upon interviews for data collection. The technique employed was in-depth interviewing, using open-ended questions that allow the research phenomenon to be studied. The researcher explored the participants' responses with the objective of having the subject reconstruct her or his experience. The Strauss and Corbin system was central to this research and is amplified by the work of Seidman (1991) as well as Glaser

and Strauss. An interview method espoused by Seidman that is referred to as in-depth, phenomenological interviewing provided direction (further elaborated below). The approach has successfully provided a direction for a number of educational research projects. The use of interviews allowed practitioners to reflect on their experiences with hostile resistant behavior. This approach provided the latitude essential to permit an open-ended exploration of the topic, and it allowed the participants to speak for themselves. The loosely structured interview provided a way of capturing the participants' views in the ways in which they were expressed. Where needed to ensure full exploration, additional probing or exploratory questions were used as prompts to the participant. Seidman points out that this approach – an open-ended narrative recounting – has been the major way people throughout history have communicated their experiences, and their understanding of the meaning of the experiences. The open-ended interview approach permitted capture of detailed data from which to inductively develop theory, providing a deeper understanding of the broader issues of hostile resistance to learning. See Appendix D for questions that guided the interview process.

Data verification and validation techniques were employed to ensure credibility of the data and its interpretation. These techniques included: review of the transcribed interview by the participant to ensure the participant's meaning was accurately captured, and internal consistency checks. One interview of each subject was performed. A roughly two-week period of time between interview and follow up was selected to permit the participants time to reflect on what was previously said, yet retain a fresh memory from interview to follow up, thus enhancing credibility of the data. The interviews were recorded and transcribed, and the material in each interview checked for internal consistency with other comments by the same participant. The internal consistency checks are to identify possible misstatements or misunderstandings, and help ensure clarity in the data. These verification and validation techniques are consistent with those advocated by Seidman, and by Strauss and Corbin (Seidman, 1991; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998). See Appendix D (“Questions to Guide the Interview Process”) for the interview guide and goals for each of the two interviews.

#### Data Analysis.

The approach described by Strauss and Corbin was central to this research. Seidman and Glaser and Strauss have informed my way of thinking as well. The data were coded through a process of decomposition, in which phenomena were identified within the data, named, and assigned to categories and subcategories. The codes and categories emerged from the data, as appropriate for grounded theory. The coded data were sorted and sifted, to identify similarities, differences, and relationships. Information and insights developed during data analysis were captured in notes and memos attached to the appropriate data segments. In addition, coded but unsorted data were examined in their original context to identify patterns, and nests of patterns as they occurred. Data were examined for discovery of threads that were not reducible to codes, or discernible through examination of coded segments. These processes were intended to allow the voice of the participants to emerge, shedding light on their perceptions regarding the phenomenon of resistant behavior in the learning environment.

The iterative, recursive process of coding, sorting, and rereading the data, led to revisions in the coding scheme, and identification of new insights or relationships in the

data. Discoveries, such as patterns, sequences, processes, properties and dimensions emerged from the sorting and sifting process, or from direct examination of the coded transcripts. Data analysis was facilitated through use of a software tool developed for the purpose of supporting qualitative research, Ethnograph™ by Qualis Research, and customized spreadsheets. This approach provided electronic support for development of a database of codes, memos, data files, and other critical data, information, and analytic product. Chapter IV contains an expanded discussion of the analytic process, including codebook development and data analysis methods.

The subsequent section discusses the results of a preliminary investigation conducted by the researcher, followed by a more in-depth discussion of method, as informed by the results of the preliminary investigation.

## Background Information

### Purpose

A year-long preliminary investigation was conducted to develop insight into the frequency with which adult educators personally experience resistance to learning in their classrooms, and to estimate their familiarity with a set of potentially causative factors identified by researchers in education, psychology, and other related fields. A description of the preliminary investigation is provided in Appendix A. A summary and assessment of results are provided in this section.

### Data Collection

The researcher met with multiple groups of professional instructors of adults and trainers over the course of more than a year to present material concerning adult resistance to learning. These sessions typically ran from two to four hours in duration. During the sessions, the researcher began by presenting information to define hostile resistance to learning, and to describe the overt behaviors that are characteristic of hostile resistance to learning. Subsequently, the researcher presented overviews of critical topics associated with, and potentially causative of, hostile adult resistance to learning.

The preliminary investigation employed a survey questionnaire to collect self-reported data concerning the participants' experience of resistance to learning, and familiarity with potentially causative factors. The survey was completed by the participants under general guidance of the researcher, in small groups during the course of professional development workshops on resistance to learning. At appropriate intervals during the presentation and discussions, the researcher paused the activities to have the participants complete applicable portions of the survey form. The survey was designed to be an integral part of the presentation. Its questions are brief and enhanced by the presentation context. This method avoids the situation in which participants may be familiar with a given phenomenon, but not with the terminology.

### Summary and Assessment of Results

The collected data indicated that resistance to learning is frequently experienced by the practitioners. The participants (124 instructors and trainers of adults) unanimously reported that they had personally experienced resistance to learning within their

classroom. The most often experienced form of resistance is the hostile withdrawal, followed with slightly less reported frequency by the hostile diversion. Hostile attacks on the instructor occur least often, though were experienced by 82% of the participants. All of the participants reported experiencing hostile withdrawal, and 96% reported hostile diversion. These results are consistent with the findings of Brookfield and Atherton, who consider resistance to be widespread, and Pickhardt, who observed the same sequence – withdrawal most often, attack least often (Atherton, 1999; Brookfield, 1995; Brookfield & Preskill, 1999; Pickhardt, 1980).

The degree of familiarity of the participants with the concepts associated with the causes of resistance (identified during the literature review) varied, but of the nineteen underlying concepts identified during the literature search, a majority of the participants had formal knowledge of only five of them. These five included Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Myers-Briggs personality typing, Emotional Intelligence, Self Directed Learning, and Body Language. Only 8% of the participants reported formal knowledge of the concept of Additive versus Supplative learning, which Atherton considers to be the major factor underlying resistance to learning in adults (Atherton, 1999). Fewer than 20% claimed formal knowledge of the Imposter Syndrome, which Brookfield identifies as the single major cause of resistance, and which could logically ensue in situations where supplative learning was required (Atherton, 1999; Brookfield, 1995). The concepts of Marginality (Mezirow, 1991), and Classroom Ghosts (Pert, 1992) were unfamiliar to 82% of the respondents. These results suggest that, although instructors reported that they frequently experienced hostile resistant behaviors, they generally lacked formal knowledge of the probable underlying causes of such behavior. Lack of such knowledge, and the associated vocabulary, is likely to inhibit effective reflection, discussion, understanding, and informed strategy development (Lewis & Dunlop, 1991; Maurer, 1996; Nevis, 1987).

#### Application of Findings to Research Methodology

The preliminary investigation provided two immediate, direct results: First, the investigation confirmed that practitioners routinely experience hostile resistance to learning within their classrooms. The participants were in unanimous agreement on this point. Second, the participants' responses indicated very limited familiarity with research concerning the resistant behaviors they observed in their classrooms. Experts – most of whom work in disciplines other than adult education – who study adult behavior offer insight into such a phenomenon (Argyris, 1991; Aronson, 1992; Bandura, 1994; Baumeister, 1994; Belenky et al., 1986; Block, 2000; Bormann & Bormann, 1988; Bridges, 1992; Brislin et al., 1994; Conner, 1992; Covey, 1989; Curtis, 1994; Deutschman, 2005; Drucker, 1986; Dyer, 1987; Fisher & Ury, 1991; Fullan, 2001; Gibb, 1974; Jennings & Haughton, 2000; Jung, 1971; Keirse & Bates, 1984; Kelly, 1988; Kolb, 1974; Kreisberg, 1992; Lefcourt, 1976; Maslow, 1970; Nevis, 1987; O'Conner & Wolfe, 1987, 1991; Osland et al., 2001; Pert, 1992; Phares, 1976; Rotter, 1966; Senge, 1990; Shaw, 1971; Silberman, 1990; Tannen, 1987, 1990, 1991; Vygotsky, 1962). The investigation suggests that adult education theory could be expanded in this area.

Participants in the preliminary investigation consistently showed a "Eureka!" response to the associated workshop's content, which, in an anecdotal way, encourages further research in this direction. They discovered that they were not alone in their

experience of resistant behaviors. The workshops seemed to open a floodgate that when released stimulated a rush of conversations among participants concerning their experiences with resistance. Often the participants were delighted to have their observed experiences validated and named so they could discuss the phenomenon. Thus the preliminary investigation reinforced the notion that an active, vibrant, sustained, dialogue about this phenomenon is needed in order to enhance theory building in the area of resistance.

The preliminary investigation served to help crystallize the research questions toward a focus on how practitioners explain resistance, and how they learn from their experience. These two areas of exploration were the foundation on which to begin the research regarding resistance behaviors in the field of adult learning. Proper exploration of such matters suggested that qualitative methods be employed, and pointed to the use of interview techniques for data collection.

## Dissertation Research Questions

### Introduction

The preliminary investigation was valuable in narrowing the scope of the research questions, and helping to refine the research focus. The preliminary investigation indicated that more than 50% of the participants were familiar with only five of the nineteen surveyed areas of research in adult education. Conversely, the background information indicated that very few of the participants had formal knowledge of the research topics mentioned by Argyris, Brookfield, and Atherton as specific causative factors. These results beg closer exploration regarding how instructors experience, express, and understand hostile resistant behaviors.

### Research Questions

This research was guided by these questions:

1. How do instructors perceive the underlying dynamics of the hostile resistance to learning they have observed and experienced in the learning environment?
2. How do instructors interpret episodes of hostile resistant behavior?

The objectives of the participant interviews, together with interview questions and exploratory probes, are contained in Appendix D.

### Participants

#### Sampling Rationale

The sampling objective was to provide the greatest opportunity to gather the most relevant data concerning the research questions. At the same time, the research was a purposeful exploration, and thus participants were chosen based on criteria related to each participant's ability to provide relevant data. This approach is consistent with the suggestions of Seidman, as well as Strauss and Corbin (Seidman, 1991; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998).

## Participant Selection

Participant selection was critical to this study because the chosen participants were the source of the research data. Participants met qualifications concerning their experience as instructors of adults, experience with hostile resistant behaviors, and ability and willingness to describe their experience to the researcher. Participant selection considered the following specific criteria:

1. Participants are seasoned practitioners. They must be experienced instructors of adults on the post graduate or corporate training level.
2. Participants are recognized as well-experienced, highly credible, content authorities in their own right, who teach adults taking graduate level courses. This qualification was established through academic degree (three with doctorates, one with a Master's), by respect accorded from peers, and by the individual's professional reputation as indicated by student evaluations and by referral validation.
3. Participants must have personally experienced incidents of overt hostile resistance to learning. This experience is self-assessed.
4. Participants were selected from among practitioners in the United States.
5. The researcher did not select as participants anyone over whom she has hiring/firing authority, or performs any role in the candidate's performance evaluation, or performs any role in setting the person's salary.

## Participants' Role, Trust and Ethics

The participants were responsible for constructing their experiences and perceptions as framed by the research questions, revealing detailed information to the researcher that was used to develop grounded theory. They recorded additional observations or recollections that occurred to them after the interview, and, if applicable, reported them to the researcher. They reviewed the transcripts of their interview to ensure accuracy. The researcher reciprocated this trust by protection of participant confidentiality as discussed in subsequent paragraphs.

## Analysis Concerns

The researcher recognized several issues that could cause problems during the research. These include the interviewing method, theoretical sensitivity, and issues of confidentiality and privacy.

### *Interviewing method*

The selected data collection method was the in-depth, open-ended interview. Such interviews unfold more as conversations than structured inquiries. This research allowed the interviewee to freely describe her or his experience and thoughts. The researcher provided a few general topics, or probes, to help uncover the participant's meaning and perspective, but otherwise the participant framed his/her responses (Marshall & Rossman, 1989; Seidman, 1991). Take-away questions (Appendix D) were provided to research participants for further reflection, which they could use when they reviewed their transcribed interview.

In-depth interviews are distinguished in that they were intended to allow and encourage the participants to describe their perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and assumptions on which they based their actions and understandings. The interviews were loosely structured in that the research questions provided a starting framework. The questions are open-ended, because the purpose was to encourage the participant to accurately and fully recount relevant experiences. The questions are neutral; that is, great care was taken to avoid suggesting a desired response within the question itself.

Interviewing as a means of data collection has both strengths and weaknesses. On the plus side, the technique provides flexibility to the researcher, and thus permits a greater depth of exploration of the topic and greater clarity of understanding. Interviewing allows the researcher to collect large amounts of data quickly. It permits immediate clarifications, and follow-on questions. It is a powerful way to gain insight through another's experiences (Marshall & Rossman, 1989; Merriam & Simpson, 1995; Seidman, 1991).

However, a weakness of the unstructured interview is its very lack of structure – in a sense, the interviewer becomes the research instrument, and success in eliciting pertinent information depends to some extent on the skill of the interviewer (McCracken, 1988; Merriam & Simpson, 1995). Interviews involve personal interactions, and thus require that the interviewee be cooperative and willing to share the information he or she possesses. The researcher may be unable to frame appropriate questions, or to fully understand the responses, in highly technical areas or fields obscured by specialized jargon (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). However, in this research, the subject areas are not excessively specialized or arcane and are very familiar to the researcher, thus obviating these potential drawbacks.

A shortcoming identified by Seidman (1991) of any inter-personal communications method is that it is never possible for people to understand one another perfectly. A mitigation strategy for this is to place the behavior that is being described in context. In-depth interviewing provides the opportunity to capture context with which to understand the meaning of the behavior. In addition, the participants reviewed transcripts of their interviews to ensure their meaning was accurately captured.

### *Theoretical sensitivity*

Theoretical sensitivity is defined by Strauss and Corbin as “the attribute of having foresight, the ability to give meaning to data, the capacity to understand, and capability to separate the pertinent from that which is not. All this is done in conceptual rather than concrete terms”(Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 42). Strauss and Corbin go on to identify the sources of theoretical sensitivity as familiarity with the relevant literature, which includes writings on theory, research results, and a variety of other documentation; professional experience acquired through years of practice within the field; personal experience that sensitizes the researcher to relevant concepts; and the analytic method, which allows development of insights through interaction with the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Theoretical sensitivity allows the researcher to see the connections between what is known and what is being developed as new knowledge. Strauss and Corbin (1990) observe that theoretical sensitivity is the creativity needed for discovery yet, the researcher must maintain a balance between creativity and reality. It is essential that the

researcher not read more into the data than are there, or inadvertently distort the meaning of the data. Strauss and Corbin offer three suggestions to help maintain this balance:

1. Ensure the reality of the data is visible in any interpretation that is made.
2. Be skeptical; regard explanations as provisional; ensure explanations are supported by the data and thus are found to fit the situation.
3. Adhere to the analytic procedures of the study; this provides rigor and avoids bias.

The researcher applied these three considerations as she worked to interpret the data.

#### *Participant confidentiality*

The privacy of the participants was ensured through study protocols emphasizing confidentiality. These study protocols were explained and mutually agreed upon by the researcher and the participants prior to the interview. Provisions to ensure confidentiality were:

1. Pseudonyms were substituted in the transcripts for all names of people and schools.
2. Every effort has been made to protect the participants' identity and the name of their employer and work location. This information will not be provided to anyone other than the researcher herself.
3. The transcripts, recordings, and consent forms are retained in a secure location with access limited to the researcher.
4. Transcripts were prepared by the researcher. Tapes for transcription do not contain nor are they marked with information directly identifying the participant.

#### Conclusion

This study employed qualitative research methods to explore complexities and examined issues about resistance to learning. Relatively little is known about how instructors of adults perceive, interpret, or explain the resistance to learning they encounter in their classrooms. In such situations, experts in research methods suggest that qualitative approaches be applied (Creswell, 1994; Marshall & Rossman, 1989).

The research was guided by two key questions:

1. How do instructors perceive and experience the underlying dynamics of the hostile resistance to learning they have observed in the learning environment?
2. How do instructors interpret episodes of hostile resistant behavior?

This qualitative research employed in-depth interviews for data collection, accomplishing an open-ended exploration of the research questions in which the participants expressed their experience in their own words. The interviews were recorded and transcribed by the researcher, and the participants checked their transcripts for accuracy. The research was conducted with grounded theory methods, in which theory emerged from systematic collection and analysis of relevant data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Participants were selected by the researcher from candidates that met a set of criteria qualifying them as experienced, respected instructors of adults. The relationships and

interactions between participants and researcher during the study were governed by an agreed protocol to ensure that privacy and ethical considerations were satisfied.

## Chapter IV: Findings

Chapter IV is organized into an introduction and two major sections, providing the research Findings, followed by an Analysis of the research findings. Findings are reported with respect to the questions identified in the research proposal:

1. How do instructors perceive the underlying dynamics, or causes they cite, of the hostile resistant behavior they have observed and experienced in the learning environment?
2. How do instructors interpret episodes of hostile resistant behavior?

This section contains new data resulting from the research, deliberately isolated from interpretation, inference, and analysis by the researcher. The final section of this chapter provides an analysis to tie together findings in relation to theory and the review of literature.

### Findings

#### Approach

As described in Chapter III, a qualitative research approach, involving the collection of participants' thoughts through open-ended interviews, was taken. Transcripts were made from the recorded interviews, and reviewed by the participants to ensure their meaning was correctly captured. The transcripts were then analyzed through a process of open coding<sup>6</sup>, in which the concepts (including incidents, events, actions, and ideas) expressed by the participants were identified and annotated in the transcript. Each concept that emerged from the data was assigned a name to represent the generalized phenomena described by the participant. The concepts are also organized into categories (shown in Figure 5) that group together similar concepts pertaining to the same phenomenon, such as "Feeling," or "Strategy."

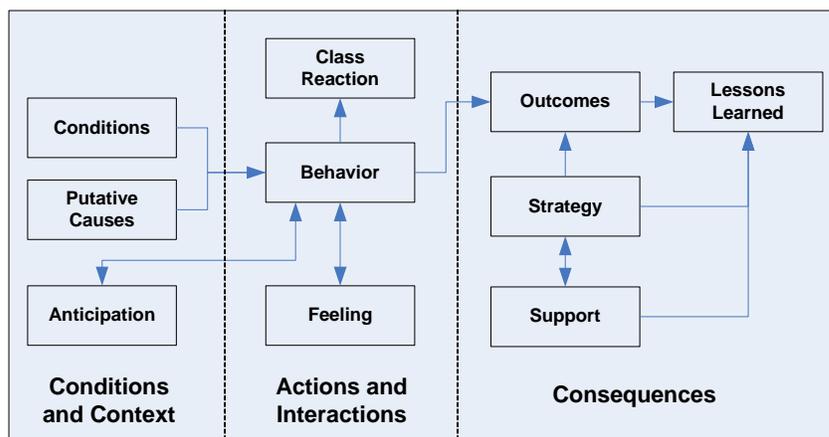


Figure 5. Categories of phenomena identified in the data.

<sup>6</sup> An analytic process to identify phenomena and assign code words representing the phenomena and associated attributes (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Figure 5 also indicates a further organization of the categories into essentially temporal views, including: Conditions and Context, Actions and Interactions, and Consequences. This construct allows each instructor’s experience to be consistently described, in so far as the data permit, thus facilitating derivation of meaningful threads and patterns.

Through a process of axial coding<sup>7</sup>, categories were divided into subcategories, where the subcategories are the attributes associated with the phenomena represented by the category. Thus “Feeling” includes as subcategories the types of emotions described by the participants, such as “Fear,” and “Anger.” Subcategories provide details about the observed phenomenon, such as when, where, why, and how. These subcategory details are used to help identify the processes by which the players interact. Figure 6 identifies the categories and their subcategories, used during data analysis.

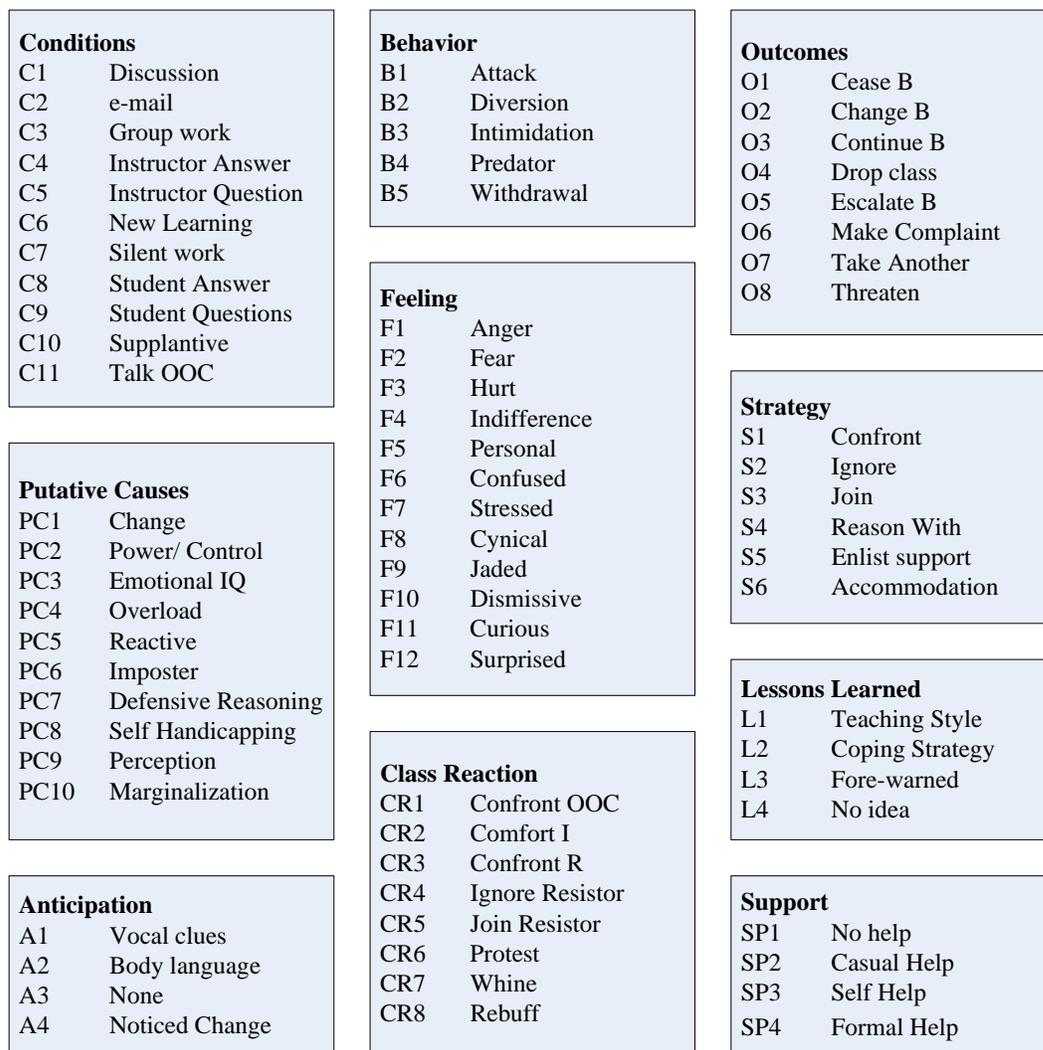


Figure 6. Categories and subcategories of phenomena identified in the data.

<sup>7</sup> An analytic process in which observed phenomena are organized into categories and subcategories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

The findings that resulted from these analytic processes were synthesized and presented as a set of interrelated concepts, with relational descriptions and supporting diagrams used to generally explain the overall process.

Each category is briefly defined in Table 1. Subcategory definitions are provided as Appendix E.

Table 1. *Category Definitions.*

Category	Definition
Feeling	The instructor’s emotional response to the hostile behavior.
Behavior	The behavior exhibited by the resistant student.
Conditions	The immediate circumstances under which the phenomenon of interest occurred.
Outcomes	The proximate results of taking the action indicated by the selected strategy.
Class Reaction	The reaction of the class to the resistant behavior that occurs in the classroom.
Strategy	Action taken by the instructor to deal with resistant behavior.
Putative Causes	Potential underlying reasons for resistant student behavior.
Anticipation	What hints did the instructor observe that facilitated prediction that resistant behavior was likely to occur?
Lessons Learned	What did the instructor learn from the experience?
Support	What support did the instructor seek or employ to deal with the immediate or ancillary problems?

Figure 7 provides a step-by-step, graphical depiction of the data coding process. The process began with identification of the concepts – such as incidents, events, ideas, and actions – found in the data. The concepts were given generalized names, or code words, to identify the phenomenon. The code words were collected in the codebook, which provided a dictionary of codes as they were developed. Maintaining such a dictionary helped ensure consistency in coding conventions.

The interview transcripts were colored coded and marked to indicate code categories and subcategories, and further annotated with brief memos to record insights developed during the data analysis process. Sentences or phrases that indicate the concepts in the data were copied and pasted into data base tables, together with any associated memos and code words. Categories, such as Behavior, Strategy, and Outcomes, were represented as fields (columns) within the data tables, while each extracted bit of text was collected as a record (row) within the data table. When applicable, additional files related to the data or its analysis was hyperlinked to the data tables. Using electronic data files and tables in this way allowed the data to be filtered and sorted as needed to support the

analysis. For example, this allowed simultaneous display of the codes and text extracts associated with multiple categories, such as both strategy and outcome.

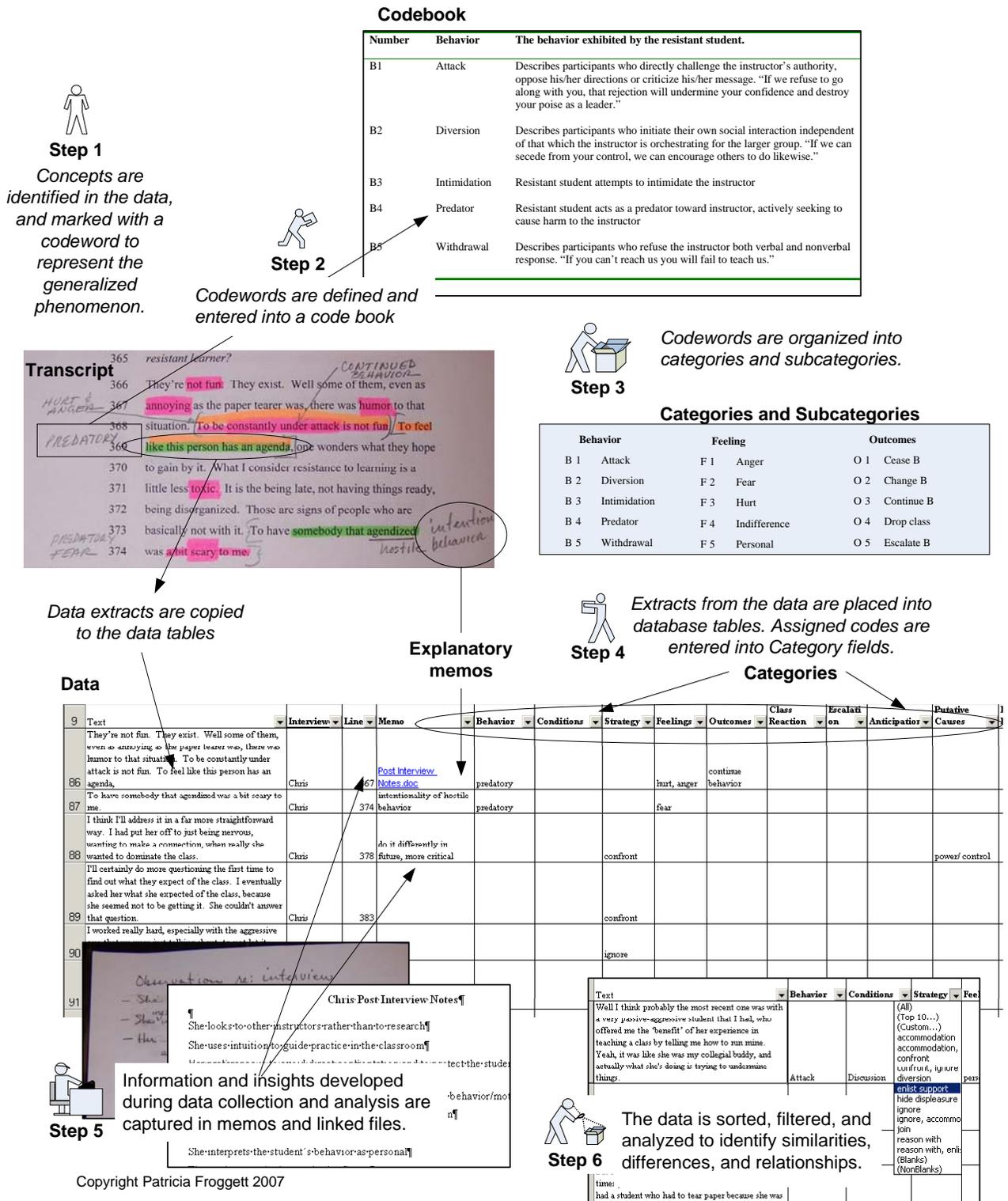


Figure 7. Data coding and sorting process during data analysis.

## Research Results: Instructor Perception and Interpretation

The next several pages present descriptions of instructors' perceptions and interpretations of instances of resistant behavior they observed in their classrooms. The descriptions are organized to address the general areas of Conditions and Context, Actions and Interactions, and Consequences, using the categories that emerged during the individual interviews. Details addressed within the areas include: the observed behavior; the conditions under which this behavior was displayed; the strategy applied by the instructor to deal with the circumstance; the results of applying the strategy; the emotions experienced by the instructor; the instructor's perception of the cause of the resistant behavior; the reactions of the other students in the classroom; the instructor's ability to anticipate the resistant behavior; the support available to the instructor; and the lessons learned by the instructor as a result of this experience. Following the presentation of individual instructor perceptions, a synthesis of the instructors' experience is presented to provide a composite view.

A short digression to recall the characteristics held in common by each of the participating instructors is in order here:

1. All have 25 – 40 years teaching experience.
2. Their advanced degrees are in the subject area they were teaching.
3. All have terminal degrees in their subject.
4. None have formal knowledge of resistant behavior in the adult learning environment.
5. They all have a consistent history of positive student evaluations as provided by each instructor.
6. All participating instructors are female<sup>8</sup>.

Each instructor selected an occurrence of resistant behavior that took place in a standard graduate classroom environment. The students were all adults seeking to enhance or change their careers through formal graduate education. The classes included both male and female students. The students had a history of employment, and were motivated to take these courses through personal career goals. They represented a diverse ethnic background. All had a minimum of a Bachelor degree.

### *Alex: Instructor Perception and Interpretation*

The first interview required advance planning, since the participant lived quite a distance away. A hotel equidistant from our respective locations was selected to meet for the interview. We were both eager to be able to formally talk about a topic we found of great interest. Alex was delighted to share her experience with someone who understood the activity of teaching from a hands-on, experiential level as well as a theoretical level. She was pleased that I would spend time to hear her particular story.

Alex was a little late for our appointed meeting time. This was not a problem. It afforded me more time to check that the recording equipment was working properly, review my prepared questions, and gather the necessary papers that I planned to share.

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<sup>8</sup> Male instructors were considered for this research, but were unavailable due to time constraints.

Some needed a release signature from her for my records, and several other pages explained the research goals as well as the set of questions. The take-away questions (see Appendix D) were for further consideration by Alex. She was encouraged to continue our interview in her mind and share additional thoughts at a later time.

Alex was in her usual cheerful mood when she arrived. Polite apologies were mixed with her words of anticipation and excitement regarding the interview and a successful breakthrough with an art project she had been developing over several months. She presented me with a small, brightly colored drawing as a gift to mark our meeting and a talisman of good fortune for both our ventures.

We set to work quickly, moving tables and chairs to suit our needs and to be sure the recording equipment was able to capture both our voices. Once settled and pleased with our arrangement, I explained the research project and measures to ensure confidentiality.

#### *Brief portrait of interviewee*

Alex has a doctorate in Curriculum and Instruction, and has been teaching and researching for over 35 years. She is a personable, caring, knowledgeable, full time tenured instructor of graduate students. Her style of interaction with her students over the years is best characterized as compassionate. Alex described herself as “I am an inclusive, friendly kind of person,” and continued, “I don’t want anyone in the room left out.” She explained how she plans carefully in order to make her classes interesting, model the information in a varied format, and respect the needs of each individual in her classes. This ability to teach effectively causes most of her students to become colleagues or friends for life. This is one of the reasons I felt Alex would be a valuable voice to hear regarding resistant behaviors in a graduate class. I had not anticipated what I was about to hear.

#### *Synopsis of interview*

Alex described a particularly destructive experience with a resistant student. Initially, the student had been a positive contributor to the class, a model student, “sitting in the front row, raising his hand, getting all the right answers.” This behavior changed, very suddenly, early in the program. Alex described the new behavior as “...he avoided eye contact, was brusque, he appeared not to want to be involved in any way with what we were doing in the class.” The behavior was more than a simple withdrawal into nonparticipation; it was hostile as well. When directly asked a question by the instructor, the student’s typical response was “well, whatever,” in an angry, insulting tone. The student’s hostile behavior continued, and escalated, throughout the semester. The instructor noticed that despite his refusal to participate in the class, the student consistently took copious notes. Subsequently the instructor learned that the student’s notes were not regarding course material, but instead were lists of the instructor’s perceived transgressions against the student. The student used these notes to attack the instructor through the instructor’s supervisor, and through threats of litigation for alleged discrimination. Alex described this as, “It was an intimidation. It was the overt and covert threat of a discrimination complaint that made [my supervisor] walk so gently and coddle him through the entire year’s experience.”

The student's resistant behavior was observed in a variety of circumstances. Initial conditions included class discussions, silent work, instructor questions, and student questions. At the time, the instructor was unable to identify any particular event or set of conditions that seemed to operate as a trigger for the student's behavior.

The instructor, being unable to diagnose the underlying cause of the behavioral problem, was also unsure of the appropriate strategy to resolve the issue. Alex initially tried to engage the student privately in a discussion to identify the problem, but was rebuffed. Subsequently, Alex tried and discarded several strategies. Noting that the student appeared to be attentive and was taking notes, and believing that the student felt the matter was somehow private, Alex resolved to ignore his behavior. This was unsuccessful, as the behavior itself became disruptive to the class. Alex adopted an approach centered on reasoning with the student to encourage participation, and calling upon the student to answer questions to which the instructor believed the student knew the answer. This strategy was also unsuccessful, as the outcome was even more hostility, which ultimately included direct attacks on the instructor. Eventually an appeasement strategy was adopted. For example, Alex was told not to observe him in the field as she did for the other students. Alex stated, "We'd made all kinds of adjustments to accommodate this individual's demands." Even this strategy was unsuccessful in resolving the behavioral issues. The instructor described the situation as, "It had been pretty tenuous, and fragile, and difficult to get to the end of the 180 days." Alex noted the extent of the special accommodations made by the school, saying, "He absolutely insisted, and [the instructor's supervisor] allowed him to basically have a different way of doing it – a different standard."

The instructor's feelings during this period ranged from an initial period of confusion to feelings of personal hurt, severe stress, fear, and some cynicism toward the institution. The student's hostile behavior had no apparent cause within the classroom, and was immune to each remediation the instructor applied. The perceived irrationality of the behavior confused the instructor, "I was totally puzzled. I could not figure it out." The student's unwillingness to respond occasioned irritation and a hint of anger in the instructor, "I remember thinking I'm not going to let him get away with just not answering the questions, as if I'm not supposed to be asking questions." As the student escalated his hostile behavior to an attack on the instructor through her supervisor, the instructor experienced shock, fear, and a sense of personal assault. The student presented a list of his complaints to the supervisor. Alex explained, "They all absolutely surprised me. They were things that he [the student] felt were offensive, like 'she stood by me.' I was quite surprised when I heard the list."

The continued and escalating hostile behavior placed great stress on the instructor. Alex notes, "I had a great deal more time [remaining in the course] to be with this student, and that became very difficult... I felt like I was always being watched." Alex continued, "I felt extraordinarily judged, and incompetent, and emotionally attacked – and I shut down. I felt extraordinarily self-conscious, as if I couldn't be myself." Alex described a fear of "having brought some sort of shadow on my work." Alex continued to describe the impact of this experience, "This man stays with me to this day as a sort of nightmare kind of experience. Because of the threat of making a charge of discrimination against me."

The class reacted to the resistant student's behavior by ignoring or rebuffing the resistor, offering encouragement to the instructor, and ultimately ridiculing the resistant student. Alex explained that, "I noticed and sensed that everybody had sort of just begun to tolerate him," and continued, "...some of the students just kind of rolled their eyes. There wasn't any discussion of it, but a tolerance among the class as if, 'Well that's just [student name]'." Other students noticed the deleterious effect the situation was having on the instructor's state of mind, and attempted to comfort the instructor. Alex recalled that, "a student that was comfortable with me said "I hope whatever's going on in your personal life gets resolved soon because I can tell you've got something on your mind." Subsequently, some of the resistant student's classmates were heard to be "laying bets on how soon [the resistant student] would be gone," [dismissed from the program.]

The instructor was unsuccessful in anticipating the onset and severity of the resistant student's behavior. The instructor admitted, "I hadn't noticed anything unusual... I could tell he was ticked at something though I couldn't figure out what it was." The instructor noted that, "It was like he had this chip on his shoulder," and, "I was out to lunch and never picked up the clues." The student's behavior did not relate to classroom activities, topics, or instructional methods.

The institution did not provide a support network to assist Alex's effort to resolve the problems being experienced. Alex commented, "I didn't feel that I had anybody who could listen to me or who could help me make sense of it." Alex expressed an opinion that a supporting mechanism would have been helpful, "...something I wish that could've been in place – it would be a place maybe like counseling, or a resource where someone would hear my voice and guide me professionally through this." Alex was additionally reluctant to speak with the institution's formal organization for dealing with workplace diversity issues, "... I wasn't so sure what would happen with that record, or what was really confidential."

After much reflection, Alex developed a few "lessons learned" that could help in avoiding similar problems in the future. Alex's lessons focus on early warning, and could be summed up with the phrase "be forewarned." Alex noted that there were things in the student's application package, and comments the student had made during interviews, that could have raised caution flags. Alex recalled, "In this particular case it was like a flag we missed. He had had many, many, many jobs of only a year or so," and "He had told us a story of his former employer and some of the disparaging remarks that his employer had made." Alex added, "We noticed ... that his letter of recommendation had not come from an employer. We realized there must have been some reason he didn't get an employer's recommendation." Instead, these preliminary warnings were not recognized.

Alex, although more aware of the destructive possibilities of hostile resistant behavior in the classroom, was not able to devise an effective strategy to remedy the situation. "I have not a clue as to what I could have done differently with this student."

Alex's interview began with an academic tone, capturing events and setting the stage for her experience with resistant behavior. She freely shared both words describing the events and her personal reflections on the experience. It was evident through her words and facial expressions that she easily recounted an event that she had experienced more

than a year previously. As the description proceeded, the extent of Alex's emotional involvement became more evident. She relived the experience. Her descriptions became halting. She evaluated her emotions and thinking at the time of the event. At one point she even said this was a valuable experience, "...to describe the event from a more distant perspective in order for me to better understand my own meaning." Her surprise regarding the student's change of behavior and relationship, the student's personal attack and continued vendetta have haunted Alex. Not being able to make sense of the event, not being able to find a reasonable context for the resistant behavior bothers Alex to this day. She stated, "What drove me most bananas was trying to reconcile why this was happening to me when it had never happened before." Since her experience lacked closure, it lingers, threatening replication at some future time. It gnaws at Alex's self-confidence in the classroom. She "reads" the room differently now, as a place that can be emotionally and professionally threatening at any moment.

#### *Chris: Instructor Perception and Interpretation*

Chris and I met at her office building on a Sunday afternoon. After she let us into the building, we established ourselves in a small conference room with a round table. It looked to be an area used for lunch or snacking during the workweek. Things were moved to make room for the recording equipment and laptop computer. Equipment tests were completed. With the technical preliminaries completed, I moved on to describe the research process and overview, followed by signature gathering.

#### *Brief portrait of interviewee*

Chris was relaxed and comfortable with the interview goals. She too had a story she wanted to share. My interest was heightened because her academic training was in the discipline of psychology. Would she have a more clear assessment of the resistant behavior she experienced? Chris had no formal training in adult education, but her study of psychology could have provided some sensitivity to the needs of adult learners and their characteristics. For example, in her interview she alludes to power issues and change issues. Chris stated regarding the resistant student, "...she wanted to dominate the class," and described her behavior as "...fear of change." She elaborated, "It was just a way to obstruct fear over the new."

Chris' teaching experience spans more than 25 years. She had been hired as an adjunct professor because of her master's degree and experience in the field. She began a clinical description of her experience with resistant behavior. Her dispassionate description was laced with wry humor and understatement. At no time did I sense personal emotion from Chris. Her account voiced displeasure on a professional level, but no hint of personal investment in the student's behavior. I assessed her dispassionate description as a way to maintain sufficient distance for self-protection. Her years of positive student evaluations of her teaching, which she shared with me, provide her a sense of self worth. She stated that, "The students appreciate and enjoy my use of humor to add depth to the curriculum." Chris was not disturbed by the experience of resistant behavior. She recognizes that there are many types of people who express their needs in a variety of ways. Some behaviors are socially appropriate and others are not appropriate. Chris is resigned to the fact that she cannot control her students' behavioral choices.

### *Synopsis of interview*

Chris experienced a passive aggressive attack during the initial class meeting. The resistant student questioned the instructor's qualifications to teach the material, while simultaneously stating that she – the student – had taught a course on the graduate level. Chris explained, "The very first class she was very quick to mention her own teaching credentials, and question mine." This student indulged in frequent hostile attacks on the instructor throughout the duration of the course. Chris described the situation as "...she offered me the 'benefit' of her experience in teaching a class by telling me how to run mine. Yeah, it was like she was my collegial buddy, and actually what she's doing is trying to undermine things." The student would frequently challenge the material being presented when it conflicted with her own opinions, and although unable to substantiate the challenge, would in Chris's words respond with "But I still think they're poor practices." The student would take class time to tell Chris how to conduct the class in obvious efforts to undermine the instructor's authority. "She was very quick to mention that she had also taught one graduate course for another institution, and implied because she had done that she knew more about the situation than I did. She was definitely going to help me learn to be a better instructor." This student continued the hostile, resistant behavior for nearly every class session during the entire semester. Chris described this as "being under constant attack." She further explained, "By the third class I realized she really had an agenda. She was just there to find out how wrong it [the course] could be." Chris noted, "I get the feeling [that] she had already decided, before she even came to the first class, that she wasn't going to like it. She was not going to learn anything."

During class breaks, the resistant student attempted to organize others into joining her in challenging the instructor's authority and expertise, as well as the course content. In Chris's words, "She would attempt to organize things during break, among her old set of friends." Her efforts were unsuccessful. Eventually the student escalated these aggressive behaviors with the perceived intent of increasing the student's level of control, or even of harming the instructor. The student lodged a complaint with her employer, who was paying for the course. The employer in turn passed the complaint to the university. It was the student's apparent expectation that adverse action would be taken against the instructor. The student did not discuss this with the instructor or the university, clearly more interested in harm than resolution of an issue. Subsequently the employer notified the instructor and university of the student's complaint. Rather than reinforce the complaint, the employer actually apologized to the university for the student's behavior during the course, with a voluntary comment that the student had a history of inappropriate behavior.

The student demonstrated these behaviors under a variety of conditions. The behavior was evident during class discussions, questions for the instructor, during out of classroom discussions with fellow classmates, and during group work. The instructor did not identify any particular event or unique circumstance that triggered the resistant behavior. Chris stated, "Her resistance seemed to come out of left field." However, Chris did note that presentation of supplantive material would elicit this behavior. Chris described this as, "It is not only controlling, but it's also just fear of change." Chris noted that the student, despite her claim of expertise, was actually taking the course as part of her transition to a new specialty within the field. The instructor commented that such

transitions could be difficult, “It’s worrisome to me when you have people coming out of certain fields...that find the open-endedness of [this specialty] a little hard to deal with.”

Chris’s initial strategy was to accept at face value the student’s claims of expertise, and to treat the student as a peer. It was clear that the student was concerned with issues of power, and Chris felt that a coping strategy that acknowledged the student’s power issues could be effective. Chris explained, “I began to treat her more collaboratively – in other words I would include her in the discussions as if she would already know this. She found that irritating.” This strategy did not succeed. Chris explained, “I found that kind of funny because normally when people have a control issue, that’s the way to calm them down.” Chris reasoned, “I realized more was going on here than just needing control of the class. I was offering partial control in recognition of her [self proclaimed] abilities, and she definitely declined. She found that embarrassing.” In many cases the student did not have the familiarity with the material that she had claimed, and had difficulty with some of the concepts presented during the course. This triggered aggressive defensive reactions by the student. Chris described one instance as, “So when I suggested to her, that wasn’t what the author meant, she got very offended.” Chris revised the strategy to emphasize explanations and coaching. The revised strategy was no more successful than the original: the student was habitually, reflexively, argumentative. Chris described one situation, “... it was a minor point that I really didn’t want to put that much emphasis on. The rest of the class just basically got it. I said to her that we will have to discuss it at break, it was such a minor point I don’t remember it well enough, trying not to put her down.” Chris eventually found it most effective to simply ignore the student’s behavior in order to move forward with the content for the rest of the class.

Chris experienced a cascade of emotions during the semester. Initially Chris was indifferent toward the student, but the indifference grew to annoyance as the resistant behavior continued. Chris realized that the student “...had an agenda. She definitely felt secure in what she was doing, therefore I was not going to bring on any change, and having to face that every class was getting annoying.” Chris continued to feel annoyance as the student’s behavior continued, “The fact that she just was going to persist was annoying – not upsetting – just annoying to me.” The student continued these daily assaults on the instructor, until “after a while I decided she was in there with an idea as to what was going to happen, so she was in some ways trying to make it happen; questioning things and stressing me.” Chris became convinced that the student’s purpose was to harm the instructor in some way. Chris developed a level of hopelessness, “I think probably the hardest part was to actually let go on my own part, and realize the student was not going to change. This was not a confused person I could help.” Eventually the situation became very personal to the instructor. Chris began to feel stressed, angry, and hurt as a result of the constant public attacks. The end of the term saw Chris most jaded and resigned to the student’s continued aggressive behavior, “I simply got to a place where I was deaf to her criticisms.”

The class was aware of this student’s behavior and responded in ways supportive of the instructor. At one point the students were so annoyed with this behavior that they confronted the student both in and out of the classroom. Chris explained that the resistant student had begun to, “disturb the class with questions that were not relevant. Other people were beginning to look like ‘so what?’” Chris recalled that a member of the class

confronted the resistant student outside the classroom with, “ ‘you shouldn’t be asking those kind of questions,’ she basically said she can. She had a right to do that.” The resistant student’s response was to continue her behavior.

The instructor recognized that the resistant student felt a need to establish her control over the instructor and the course content. The instructor also recognized a fear of change within the student, and attributed that to the supplantive nature of much of the course content. The instructor made significant efforts to identify an approach that would resolve the student’s behavioral problems. The instructor did not change the way in which material was presented, or modify the content of the course to fit the student’s notions. Chris recalled thinking, while preparing a lesson plan, “This will really thrill so-and-so.” Chris commented that the student’s resistant behavior “...didn’t change how I did things. I just knew that I was going to have to spend three more minutes on this topic.”

The instructor sought the advice of others, including other instructors and supervisors, in dealing with this experience. Chris asked, “Am I reading this situation right? What are some things that I might want to try?” Chris evaluated their support as, “Good, and actually it was very comforting to find out that there are a lot of people who face the same issue.” However, Chris went on to say that the coping strategies she had discussed with others did not seem to apply to [her specialty]. In any event, Chris was not able to devise a strategy that was effective with this student. Chris commented that in the future, “I think I’ll address it [resistance] in a far more straightforward way. I had put her off to just being nervous, wanting to make a connection, when really she wanted to dominate the class.

#### *Dale: Instructor Perception and Interpretation*

We met at a university library at the end of our respective workdays. We used a small conference room that afforded quiet and privacy. Again the equipment was set, the overview completed, and the formal signature obtained. Dale was soft-spoken during the entire interview.

#### *Brief portrait of interviewee*

Dale has a doctorate and 30 years experience in teaching. Her course work includes formal Adult Education studies. She currently works as an adjunct for several universities, teaching at the graduate level. She also is involved in a variety of consulting activities.

Dale is proud that she “has always been an advocate for the student.” Her students have commented that she is sensitive to and respectful of their individual personalities and needs. She is a listener. She makes it a practice in her classes to be sure everyone’s voice is heard. She displays infinite patience as students work through a thought.

Her experience with resistant behavior was unnerving to her. As she told her story of the event, she expressed a depth of emotion unusual for her soft-spoken style. Her voice cracked at times when the more trying moments of the experience were revisited.

### *Synopsis of interview*

Dale experienced hostile diversions and a direct hostile attack in the classroom, both delivered by the same student. This student, both before and after the attack episode, and routinely throughout the semester made comments during class that can reasonably be described as sniping. Dale described these diversions as “He was always making somewhat disparaging responses or raw comments to things said,” and “He could almost be relied on to be somewhat controversial or anti-whatever-had-been-said. He was very negative.” Dale summarized, “...he just had a sort of a rude comment for everything.” These comments were delivered in a heckling manner, as if from the sideline, with no response expected, rather than as part of a larger discussion. Dale added, “When he commented on anything, it was always not very nice.” Dale said that the student was always throwing out “rude little comments,” during class discussions or lecture.

The student’s behavior that most affected the instructor, however, was a loud, lengthy, verbal attack. Dale described the incident as “...this gentleman just absolutely blew up. He just absolutely lost it.” “He stood up and he just gave a huge dissertation on the subject in a very attacking sort of way.” Dale continued, “He went on and on.” “It was an oratory or harangue.” Dale described the situation as intimidating. Dale explained, “It was a real big explosion. He was a large man and he had a large voice, which he raised quite effectively. He was a lot bigger than me. I think the louder he got, the softer I got.” Dale stated, “It was extremely intimidating. It was downright scary.”

The hostile attack occurred during a class discussion of theorist Vygotsky’s socio-cultural theory of education. During the semester the class read and discussed each of the major theorists. The student’s explosion occurred as the instructor was “...talk[ing] about the communistic portions of Vygotsky.” While the explosion was tied to a particular topic, the conditions under which the hostile diversions occurred were more general. These occurred routinely, either during class discussion or during lecture periods. Dale explained, “He would make inappropriate remarks about everything.”

Dale was unable to identify the cause of the student’s resistant behavior, beyond noting his extreme sensitivity to discussing a communist theorist. Dale explained, “He wasn’t terribly impressed with much of anything. He just didn’t explode to that degree on any other topic.” Dale did note other oddities, “...he told me that he had a Ph.D. I think it was in the sciences. Yet when another asked him about his academic background, he said he had not gone beyond his undergraduate degree.” On another occasion the student brought a young child to class, without any prior mention to the instructor. He “...felt for some reason he had to explain the existence of the child, and he said he had been married three times and that this was his child.”

A major portion of each student’s course grade was associated with a research topic and presentation. The resistant student deferred this work until well past its due date, and finally delivered it only when warned by the instructor that the alternative was failure. The work was poorly done and was graded accordingly. When the instructor provided this feedback to the student, he responded, “I did this between like two and three in the morning.” He said he was “...very busy at work that week.”

Dale did not anticipate the hostile behavior. She described the attack as “...very out of the blue.” In retrospect, the instructor admitted that “There were bits and pieces,

maybe there were rumbles before the actual episode,” that might possibly have provided an early warning. Still, the instructor could not anticipate the student’s actions, “He really puzzled me. I didn’t know what he was going to do.”

Dale employed two strategies to deal with the student’s resistant behavior. The diversions were generally ignored, before and especially after the hostile attack. In the beginning, “I was just trying to ignore his sort of rude little comments that he was throwing out.” After the attack, the instructor was even more reluctant to restrain the student’s hostile diversions: “I gave him the floor if he wanted it so that it wouldn’t appear that I was ignoring him or not paying attention to him.” Dale explained, “I was just afraid of another outburst. I just let him have his little inappropriate remark every once in a while.” The instructor considered that the student’s diversions and disruptions were at least “...short and you could kind of get through those. They didn’t affect me as much.” Dale’s main concern was to avoid another attack. The outcome of this strategy, in which the student’s inappropriate remarks were simply ignored, was that the diversionary behavior continued for the duration of the course, and shortly escalated into an attack on the instructor.

Dale dealt with the attack somewhat differently. Initially, Dale was stunned and intimidated by the ferocity of the verbal assault. “I wasn’t sure how to handle it. I just really didn’t know what to do. I don’t remember what I did.” Eventually though, the instructor recovered control of the situation, by first allowing the student to vent his fury, then by turning to a different subject. Dale explained, “I just let him have his say. But then it got to the point where I thought, you know, that was enough. Let’s move on. He just was extremely persistent.” When Dale attempted to change the topic, the student persisted, “accusing me of not letting him have an opinion. If I had allowed him to, he would have kept going throughout the rest of the class.” Eventually the instructor succeeded in diverting the discussion. “However after he had [exploded] he still mumbled and grumbled through the rest of the class.” At the end of the period, “He just sort of stormed out. When the class was finished he just up and was out the door in a heartbeat.” That evening Dale sent the student an e-mail, believing that he would have calmed down by then. In response, “He wrote back a very nasty e-mail. He certainly didn’t appear to have calmed down. He wrote his e-mail back in all capital letters, and used a big font to boot, and bold. It was meant to be very intimidating.”

Dale’s emotional responses to these behaviors included surprise, fear, stress, worry, and confusion. The suddenness of the attack was such that Dale was initially frozen with surprise. As the assault continued, Dale was intimidated by the attacking student’s physical size and the big, booming voice he used to deliver the attack. He was much taller, heavier, and more muscular than the instructor. Dale reported that “During that time my heart was going about a million beats a minute. It was upsetting. I tried not to let it show as best I could, but that rattled me, definitely.” Dale was worried about returning to the classroom, wondering “What was I going to face the next day?” and “I’m not sure I want to go back there tomorrow.” Dale feared another attack. “I was just afraid of another outburst.”

The class reacted to the student’s outburst with the same stunned silence that initially gripped the instructor. Dale explained, “...no one said anything, you could have heard a pin drop. I think everyone was equally as floored [as I].” The other students appeared to

be startled and perhaps embarrassed, “I do remember glancing at a few of the other students, and many of them were just either looking down or – I think they just didn’t even know where to put their eyes or how to appear.” After the class ended, many of the students remained behind to offer support and encouragement to the instructor, “I was so comforted by the fact that so many students stopped by and expressed to me how well I handled the situation.” With an obvious tone of emotion, Dale continued, “They made me feel so much better.”

The other students tended to avoid or rebuff the resistant student. The class had formed into self-selected groups for a research project. However, Dale explains, the resistant student “...was not with a group. He presented by himself.” During his presentation, the other students, fully aware that their participation was part of his grade, did not comment or ask questions regarding his presentation. Their silence caused his grade to be lower because he did not gain points for initiating a discussion. This did not happen for any other student.

Dale had little support in dealing with this incident. A former student prior to the start of the course casually warned the instructor “You’ve got somebody in your class that you are going to have a really hard time with. I just had a class with him.” Even so, Dale “...never expected anything so violent to happen.” Dale reported the incident to management after it occurred, but did not discuss it with colleagues. Dale explained, “I would never have thought of exploring this,” during reflective discussions with peers prior to the incident.

As upsetting as this experience was to Dale, it had a silver lining – a brighter side. Because she is so caring and nurturing of her students, they instinctively rallied around her at the end of class. They too were broadsided by the display of resistant behavior and wanted to staunch her emotional wound. Most students are appropriately polite and respectful of others’ thoughts in a classroom environment. Dale’s students did what they could, given conventional parameters. They offered compassion to her. They offered physical protection as she left the building. They eschewed the resistant student during his belated presentation, causing a lowered grade due to lack of initiating class participation. Dale needed and graciously accepted the outpouring of student concern. She closed her description of this unpleasant experience with a recollection of the compassion expressed by the others in her class.

#### *Morgan: Instructor Perception and Interpretation*

It was a cold and rainy autumn afternoon when Morgan and I met for her interview. She had spent the day working, but was coming down with a cold and did not feel well. We met at her office at the end of the workday. Though not overly luxurious, the office was quiet and large enough to include a small table, which we used after clearing away a project that was spread out.

#### *Brief portrait of interviewee*

Morgan’s doctorate is in administration. She has functioned in the capacity of a senior administrator for the past 15 years. Her teaching experience spans more than 30 years. She has taught successfully as an adjunct for several colleges and universities, and continues teaching to this day.

The experience Morgan chose to share was from one of her first graduate teaching experiences. It took place easily twenty years ago. It was an interesting choice, since our preliminary discussion indicated that there had been a more recent encounter. Morgan is unique because of her technique of journaling the events of each class that she has taught. She feels that the discipline of journaling helps her better evaluate and prepare for the next class.

It became evident during the interview that Morgan's years as a successful senior administrator had taught her to choose her words carefully. She prepares her statements as if the press will quote them, and tends to repress her personal feelings regarding an event. This style of response to questions caused her interview to be shorter, crisper, and to sound less personal than the others. There is a tone of detachment that could be attributed to Morgan's terse speaking style, natural caution, or the fact that this event happened years ago, when she first began teaching adults.

Her story is interesting because the dynamics are different from the others, though she is sparing of emotional description. Despite her cold, Morgan spoke briskly and with confidence. She tended to keep her descriptions brief and narrowly focused. Naturally circumspective, Morgan required occasional prompting to elaborate.

#### *Synopsis of interview*

Morgan described an experience in which the resistant student withdrew from active participation in classroom activities. Morgan described the student's behavior as "it manifested itself more in just being passive, in not getting involved. When I pushed [the student] for involvement, then it came out [he responded] in terms of 'Why are we doing this? This is stupid.'" The student refused participation. The student's resistance was consistently displayed whenever the instructor directed that the students work in groups, or engage in other cooperative learning activities. The student questioned these techniques. He consistently asked, whenever the instructor specified group-work, "What's the purpose of this? Where is the content?" The instructor described the behavior as "...a resistance to wanting to participate in that kind of learning."

Morgan consistently applied a single strategy in dealing with the resistant behavior. "My strategy was to go back and talk about the importance of modeling what we value." The instructor would, on each occasion, reason with the resistant student. In Morgan's words, "I just kept redirecting this person back to the idea that you can't lecture for 90 minutes to students. You have to have a series of activities." The instructor did not directly address the student's stated concern that the teaching style – group-work, cooperative learning- sacrificed substance in favor of style. This is reflected in student comments such as, "This is too touchy-feely. How do you get to the content?"

The outcome of the instructor's coping strategy was that the student's resistant behavior persisted through most of the semester. Morgan explained, "Eventually the resistant student did start to participate, but I think it was clear that the student was not on board."

Morgan attributed the resistant behavior to three possible causes: learning style; difficulty in dealing with change; and a possible perception on the part of the student that he had nothing valuable to contribute to the class. Regarding teaching/learning styles, the

instructor explained, “I think that other people... in the class were much more comfortable... with a cooperative learning type of classroom, whereas this person was probably more of a solitary learner.” The teaching style Morgan employed was consistently collectivist and group-focused, “...most of the activities in the class were group-based,” while the instructor’s perception of the student’s position was that he felt “learning could only be serious if it was coming through the modality of a lecture.” Morgan perceived that the student was uncomfortable with the ambiguity and processes of change associated with learning, “I really think it had to do with ... that person really didn’t have any tolerance at all for ambiguity.” “He was just not comfortable with the ambiguity of the activity, and also with whether or not he would get out of the activity what he was supposed to get from it.” Finally, Morgan also suspected that “there was some insecurity in terms of, perhaps, what the person had to offer to the group,” and that “acting out can be a sign of insecurity on the part of the student.” Morgan explained, “I think a lot of times resistant behavior... comes from feeling that you are not going to be able to meet the expectations...”

Morgan felt annoyance, or even a degree of anger, when the resistant behavior was first displayed. Morgan’s initial reaction was described as the thought “Why is this person being such a jerk?” This reaction was soon replaced with a feeling of indifference, in which Morgan “...didn’t really take it personally.” After repeated instances of the resistant behavior, Morgan’s emotional reaction became one of curiosity, “I was curious to find out... what’s at the bottom of this behavior? What’s the [student’s] concern? After the initial feeling of annoyance, Morgan was able to remain emotionally detached from the experience as it continued throughout the semester. Morgan concluded “It just made me see that I had a lot of work to do in terms of [preparing the class].”

The other members of the class reacted to the resistant student’s behavior quietly, though with some frowns or other silent expressions of displeasure. They did not overtly join the resistant student. In Morgan’s words: “There certainly wasn’t a lot of what I call ‘piling on.’” Morgan interpreted the body language of the other students to mean, “this person is really slowing us down. He is distracting us. We need to move forward.” Morgan repeated the justification for collective work each time the resistant student objected, while making some effort to enlist the support of the class. Morgan reported, regarding the repeated explanations, “I don’t think that that made that person particularly happy...” Morgan went on to describe the other students’ reactions as follows, “...it caused the peers within the classroom to kind of say, ‘Well, I don’t quite understand what your problem is with this.’” Morgan described other students as either comforting the instructor, after the class period ended, or shunning the resistant student: “Students will come up afterwards and say, ‘I’m sorry this happened, I don’t quite understand what was going on,’ or they just move on, and try to avoid that person [the resistant student].”

#### Synthesis of participating instructor experience

This section synthesizes into a composite picture the individual experiences reported by the instructors during the interview process. Although a composite, it remains a straightforward perception as described by the participating instructors.

### *Resistant behavior*

The participants described experiences with resistant behavior in the learning environment that included attack, diversion, and withdrawal (a criterion for participation in this research was that the instructor must have experienced resistant behavior in the learning environment). During hostile attack, the resistant students directly and forcefully challenged the instructor's authority, competency, choice of subject matter (content), and delivery methods. The attacks ranged in intensity from a strongly aggressive verbal assault accompanied by shouting, threatening body language, and use of physical size and positioning to intimidate; to a constant, nagging criticism and rejection of nearly everything presented during the course in a perceived effort to undermine the instructor. Dale described the most intense attack, using the terms "blow up," "intimidating," "shocking," and "shout at me" to describe the student's behavior. Chris described a less intense but perhaps more insidious version of attack as "...what she's doing is trying to undermine things," and "...telling me how to teach my class." In two cases, the attacks included apparent efforts by the resistant student to use the institution's mechanisms to cause professional harm to the instructor. Chris noted, "She went outside my classroom to lodge a complaint with [her employer]...about me." Alex described a student who threatened, through the Dean, a charge of discrimination "I was being charged, if you will... But I knew nothing about what the offense was." In each case it was clear to the instructor that the student was not interested in resolving a problem, because the student rejected overtures made by the instructor to discuss and resolve the issue. Instead, the instructors perceived that the resistant students wished to damage the instructor. Alex recounted, "It was an intimidation. It was the overt and covert threat of a discrimination complaint...[it] was the antithesis of everything that I would like to think would describe me. It really took my breath away."

The participants described hostile diversions, in which the resistant student attempted to replace the instructor's agenda with one of his or her own, to distract from and discredit the instructor's program, or to divert the class's attention from the instructor, and to recruit others to do the same. Diversionary tactics described by three of the participants included the relentless tearing of paper, frequent rude or otherwise inappropriate comments during lecture or discussion, and asking irrelevant questions with sufficient frequency and persistence as to create a classroom disturbance.

The participants described hostile withdrawal, in which the student refused participation in the class, accompanied by an attitude that could be described, as 'I won't learn.' Alex described a student who "...avoided eye contact, he was brusque..." he did not "want to be involved in any way..." Alex continued, "I remember distinctly the first time [I asked him a question] – 'Well whatever' was his literal response...he was insulted that I had asked him a question," and that "I had somehow done something wrong to ask him to be involved in the classroom." Morgan, as well, described "...a resistance to wanting to participate." The resistant student refused participation, especially if group work were involved, frequently asking, "Why are we doing this? What's the purpose of this?"

### *Conditions*

With one exception, the resistant behaviors described by the participants occurred under a wide range of conditions. These included class discussions, lectures, student responses to questions, instructor responses to questions, student to student communications outside of class, student – instructor e-mail exchanges, group work, and silent (individual) work. The exception was one resistant student whose withdrawal was triggered every time the instructor assigned collective learning activities to the class members. Notably, the resistant behaviors described by the instructors persisted throughout the duration of the semester, regardless of the instructors' reactions.

### *Strategy and outcome*

The instructors employed a similar series and sequence of strategies to deal with the resistant behavior. Each instructor's initial response, typically after a period of shock, was to make a direct effort to identify the student's problem, explain the instructor's position, and reason with the student. This strategy for direct problem confrontation is described by participating instructors' comments such as, "When we took a break, I went up and asked her what it was about." "...I was trying to see what her motivation was..." "I did write him an e-mail that evening." "I meant that to be an invitation for him to approach me and tell me what the issue was." "Try to find out what is at the core of the person's concern." Instructor descriptions of efforts to reason with the resistant student included: "My strategy was to go back and talk about the importance of modeling what we value." "I basically had to point that [the student's misinterpretation of subject matter] out to her in the class..." In one case, the resistant behavior was so exceptionally aggressive that it literally halted classroom activities. In that case the instructor drew upon the authority of position to defuse the immediate situation. Dale, in stunned silence, listened to the student's tirade until "It got to the point where I thought, you know, that was enough. Let's move on," and "...I diverted the conversation." In every case, this initial strategy neither corrected nor prevented recurrence of the resistant behavior.

When explanations failed and the resistant behavior continued, most of the instructors after trial and error turned to a strategy of accommodation. Chris explained, "So I was offering partial control [of the learning environment] in recognition of her [the student's self-claimed] abilities..." and "I began to treat her more collaboratively." Alex described significant special accommodations, "He absolutely insisted, and the Dean allowed him to basically have a ...different standard,"<sup>9</sup> and Dale explained, "I just let him have his say." Accommodation did not work either. In Chris' words: "I eventually realized I wasn't going to appease her."

Eventually each instructor reached the point where all coping strategy options they had identified were exhausted, yet the student's resistant behavior continued. Each instructor had become jaded, had lost their self-confidence that the resistant behavior could be corrected, and finally adopted a hands-off, ignore the behavior strategy. The participants expressed their final strategies as follows: Dale "I was just trying to ignore his [behavior]," and "I'm going leave it alone;" Alex "I just put up with listening to her,"

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<sup>9</sup> The institution modified the course requirements regarding the scope and nature of the coursework to be performed, the manner of its accomplishment, and the way in which it was evaluated, for this specific student alone.

Chris “She just was going to persist [in the resistant behavior]” and “I simply got to a place where I was deaf to her criticisms.” Morgan “It was clear that the student was not on board.”

### *Perceived cause*

The instructors struggled to identify the causes of the resistant behavior they observed, and were unable to confidently identify the reasons. Alex commented, “Well, I was totally puzzled – totally. I could not figure it out.” At the same time, Alex felt that the source was something internal to the student: “It was like he had this chip on his shoulder,” and “I was obviously triggering something in him.” Chris was similarly puzzled, and admitted, “I never could figure out exactly what was going on,” and “I couldn’t really place what was going on.” Chris associated the student’s behavior with issues of power and control, stating that the student needed “...control of the class.” Chris also noted that there was something else as well, that “...she [the resistant student] had an agenda,” and that “After a while I decided she was in there [the class] with an idea as to what was going to happen, so she was in some way trying to make it happen; questioning things and stressing me.” Chris concluded that the student, “...decided before she even came to the first class that she wasn’t going to like it. She was not going to learn anything.” Dale stated that the attack “...came out of the blue and floored me.” Dale could not identify the cause of the behavior, and commented, “I didn’t know what he was going to do.” Dale continued, “That was the worst part – the soul searching to find out what I might have said that really upset him, and how I could’ve perhaps prevented it.” Morgan explained the observed behavior as “...a resistance to wanting to participate in that kind of learning.” Morgan conjectured that the resistant behavior could be “...a sign of insecurity on the part of the student,” or perhaps that the student believed he had little “...to offer to the group,” and that the student was, “...just not comfortable with the ambiguity” associated with the learning experience.

### *Feelings*

The instructors’ experienced similar emotional reactions – most of them negative – to their experiences with resistant behavior. Each expressed their initial surprise and confusion, followed by a trace of anger, growing stress, feelings of fear and apprehension, and finally, a feeling of cynicism or hopelessness. Alex described the sequence as “I think at first it went from something like confusion and surprise, to me being angry, to being ‘Well I’ll be darned if you’re going to get away with not being [treated] like everybody else,’ to sort of figuring out that that was just exacerbating the issue. So I let him alone.” Dale recounted, “The attack was very out of the blue. I wasn’t sure how to handle it. Dale continued, “It disturbed me so much that I [informed the institution’s management] just in case some horrid thing happened.” Alex stated that up until the time of the resistant behavior, “I hadn’t noticed anything unusual.”

Each instructor developed and applied a strategy to address the resistant behavior. Each searched for indications of the effectiveness of the selected strategy and engaged in significant soul-searching regarding the cause of the behavior and the best way to achieve resolution. This was generally a difficult and emotionally intense activity. Alex described the situation, “What drove me most bananas was trying to reconcile why was this happening to me when it had never happened before.” Dale explained, “I was

upset... I soul searched to see if there were anything that I could have done to prevent it.” Morgan explained, “I have really thought about this quite a bit.” A sense of isolation intensified their reflective process since only one of the instructors spoke with colleagues regarding the experience.

Each instructor was unsuccessful in resolving the resistant student’s behavioral issues. After the failure of successive corrective strategies, the instructors began to experience greater degrees of annoyance, exasperation, and a little anger. The things they tried just did not work. Chris described this as, “The fact that she just was going to persist [with the resistant behavior] was annoying – not upsetting – just annoying to me.” When Alex’s actions were clearly ineffective, and the student reacted with increased levels of resistance including attitude-laden, antagonistic, vocal responses, Alex explained “...my instant reaction was anger,” thinking, “What’s so different about you that you don’t get included like everybody else?” The inability to isolate and resolve the resistant behavior caused the instructors to question their competence, and hence undermined their self-esteem. They were denied the professional pleasure of analyzing and resolving the students’ negative response to the instructor or the class.

Each of the instructors was emotionally affected by the experience, although the degree of impact varied. Alex noted of the incident, “...it attacked my soul,” and “...it was such an emotional trauma for me.” Alex described the continuing impact as, “It caused me to withdraw and become very introspective and even very depressed, and very overwhelmed. It was that extreme.” Alex noted the continuing memory, despite the passage of time; “This man stays with me to this day as a sort of a nightmare kind of experience.” Dale also felt the effects very strongly, stating, “I was very apprehensive going to school the next day,” and “This experience was a really big deal.” Chris was more laconic, noting, “To be constantly under attack is not fun.” Morgan, alone of the participating instructors, did not appear to express a strong emotional aspect of the experience. By the end of the course, the instructors had reached an emotional state in which they were either somewhat cynical and indifferent, or lived in a state of constant apprehension. Chris describes the former situation, realizing that “she was not going to change. She was an unchangeable event. This was not a confused person I can help... having to face that every class was getting annoying.” And “I simply got to a place where I was deaf to her criticisms.” Dale ignored the student’s routine misbehaviors – his habit of taking potshots from the sidelines – because, “I was just afraid of another outburst.”

Several of the instructors experienced fear and apprehension during the incidents they described. In Dale’s case, this included fears for physical safety, “It [the attack] was extremely intimidating. It was downright scary. [I realized] this guy might have an anger management issue.” Dale reported, “I felt apprehensive about [what might happen in] the next class.” Alex was similarly apprehensive concerning the potential damage to her professional reputation that could be inflicted by the resistant student, regardless of any actual merit to the threatened complaint. Alex described this as, “...that fear of...having brought some sort of shadow on my work...was a part of what was shutting me down and what was so horrible about the whole experience.”

There was a second aspect of fear more commonly experienced by the instructors – the fear that the resistant behavior would damage the learning experience for the other students in the class. In Dale’s words, “...it was the worry that the class was going to fall

apart.” Feelings of comfort and affirmation from other students in the class were unsolicited by the instructors yet were a spontaneous student response. These were the only positive feelings provided to several of the instructors.

### *Class reaction*

Each of the instructors indicated that the other members of the class did not support the resistant student, and that although the resistant students attempted to recruit others, these efforts failed. The other members of the class protested the resistant student’s behavior, though mildly. Most often their protest was an unwillingness to work in groups with the resistant student or to support the student’s class work. In some cases other members of the class directly confronted the resistant student. In each case members of the class specifically offered support and encouragement to the instructor.

Chris described the other student’s unwillingness to support the resistor as, “There certainly wasn’t a lot of what I call ‘piling on.’” Chris also noted, regarding the resistant student, that “...she would attempt to organize things during break, among her old set of friends,” although the student was unsuccessful in these recruiting activities. Alex described the resistant student’s solicitation of his classmates support, stating, “I wondered if his running to other students at break time was real or a façade.” She explained that the other member of the class rebuffed these overtures, and “...just kind of rolled their eyes.” Alex concluded that the class soon tired of the resistant student, “I noticed and sensed that everybody had sort of just begun to tolerate him.”

Chris described the class’s silent protest over the irrelevant questions from the resistant student as, “Other people were beginning to look like ‘So what?’” One of Chris’s other students confronted the resistant student during a break, saying, “You shouldn’t be asking those kind of questions.” Morgan described the class reaction to the resistant student as, “Well, I don’t quite understand what your problem is with this.” Morgan characterized the class response as; “This person is really slowing us down. He is distracting us. We need to move forward.”

Morgan described class members comforting the instructor and avoiding the resistor, saying, “Students will come up afterwards and say, ‘I’m sorry this happened, I don’t quite understand what was going on,’ or they just move on, and try to avoid that person.” Dale found the support of the class to be very valuable, stating, “I realized that I have the support of the other students, and that we were on terra firma,” and “I knew that the class was behind me. That was very settling. They helped me, so much, I appreciated that.”

### *Anticipation*

The participants did not anticipate the occurrence of the behavioral incidents they described. Chris sounded a common theme, “...she took me by surprise,” and “...her resistance seemed to come out of left field.” Alex explained, “I...never picked up the clues,” and “From my perception everything seemed fine,” while Dale said “...it came out of the blue.” However, the instructors also indicated their belief that they should have been able to predict the behavior issue. Morgan, speaking in general terms, argued that, “You can usually see it [resistance] in the body language.” Relevant comments of other participants included, “...perhaps if I had read his body language,” and “[with hindsight]...there were rumbles before the actual episode.

### *Lessons learned and support*

Three of the participating instructors stated that the experience with resistant behavior had caused them to alter their approach to teaching. Dale adopted a defensive style after experiencing the hostile attack. “I was just afraid of another outburst,” Dale explained. Several of the instructors indicated they would be more cautious or skeptical concerning their student’s statements and behavior. Alex admitted that, “It kind of makes you gun shy” while Chris state, “I definitely would examine the person’s comments from the get go. I won’t put it off to just nervousness.” Alex spoke of a need to be forewarned, realizing that the experience could have been avoided; “We weren’t anticipating that somebody would have a bad track record – difficulties – emotionally or what ever they might be.” Alex stated, “I guess what I learned is how vulnerable I am – or had been – to students’ stuff.”

A common theme among the instructors was that they still do not understand why the resistance and hostile behaviors they experienced occurred, or how it could have been avoided or resolved. Alex admitted, “I have not a clue as to what I could have done differently with this student, ” while Morgan stated, “There is nothing I could have done” and Chris explained, “I never did figure out what was really driving her.”

None of the instructors consulted the adult education literature in an effort to find an explanation for the experience they were having yet each sought advice from someone – a friend or spouse, colleague, or supervisor. None of the instructors felt that effective professional support and advice had been available to them. Alex explained, “I probably would have not been hurt as much if I could’ve felt that I was heard.” Alex continued, “It was probably through some sympathetic friends and just a lot of tears that I finally made some sense out of it.” Chris stated, “I actually talked to other instructors...[asking] am I reading this situation right? What were some things that I might want to try? So I did look for help.” Although Chris did not find answers, “...it was very comforting to find out that there are a lot of [other] people who face the same issue.” Dale reported the hostile attack to the institution’s management, for fear that “something horrid” might happen. Dale had never previously discussed hostile resistant behavior in the learning environment with colleagues, saying simply, “I would never have thought of exploring this.”

## Analysis

### Themes Within the Findings

The instructors’ descriptions of their experiences with resistant behavior, while unique, share many similarities, including:

1. The instructors were unable to anticipate the onset of the resistant behavior.
2. The resistant behavior was generally intense and persistent.
3. The instructors found it difficult, or impossible, to even speculate on causes of the resistant behavior.
4. The instructors’ strategies to deal with the behavior consistently, repeatedly, failed.

5. The instructors' emotional reactions began with surprise and confusion, and concluded with cynicism accompanied by a degree of hopelessness.
6. The emotional impact of resistant behavior on the participating instructors was often strong and lasting.

These experiences were the logical end result of each instructor's evaluation of the student, and the student's behavior, within the context of their classroom situation. The instructors called upon their years of education in their field of expertise, and their teaching experience to make this evaluation. That same education and experience allowed them to develop coping strategies to apply to the perceived problem, strategies that in the past had been successful in dealing with other classroom issues. These strategies had previously proven themselves effective with students engaged in a positive learning activity focused on content, but they did not work in the cases described, leaving the instructors confused. The confusion is appropriate because the strategies had a successful track record, albeit when dealing with a different problem. According to the literature and these instructors, resistant behavior is often agenda-driven and not initiated by the instructor (Pickhardt, 1980). These strategies did not seem to work when applied, hence leading to confusion on the part of the instructors.

Logically, the instructors' ability to develop effective solutions is critically dependent upon their ability to correctly identify the underlying problems. They were unable to develop effective solutions in any of the cases described herein, and admitted that they were also unable to identify the underlying problems. The strategies the instructors applied were focused on areas under their direct control, i.e., content and delivery. These strategies consistently failed, suggesting a mismatch between the chosen corrective strategy and the actual cause of the problem.

#### Findings in Relation to the Literature

Alex described a resistant student, which will be referred to as student A, who initially behaved almost as a model student. He was engaged, participative, interested in the learning program. However, his behavior abruptly changed, immediately following a conversation in class with the instructor. In that conversation, the student volunteered that he was an American Indian. The instructor was a little surprised, since the student had none of the visible physical attributes associated with Native Americans, and asked, "What percent?" The student seemed taken aback, and replied, "If you have an ounce of blood you are full Indian." From that point on, the student withdrew into hostile non-participation. Beginning at that point he recorded in a journal a detailed running account of the instructor's activities, which he perceived to be in some way unforgivable transgressions. Subsequently, the student launched a personal attack on the instructor, through the Dean, presenting eight typewritten pages detailing the instructor's sins. The attack was clearly meant to cause harm to the instructor, rather than to resolve an issue. The attack was strong, personal, in a credible format, and sustained throughout the entire course. The student was on a quest to avenge a perceived injustice.

Alex's description of the student's behavior is consistent with the behavior identified by Pickhardt (1980) as hostile withdrawal. Pickhardt classifies the behavior as withdrawal because the student refuses participation in the learning activity, and characterizes it as hostile because it includes a determination not to be taught. Both

aspects are clearly reflected in student A's behavior. This is particularly evident in the student's response to Alex's direct questions: "Well, whatever," in a tone dripping with disgust. In addition to the withdrawal, the student was also engaged in a hostile attack, delivered through the Dean.

Alex was at a loss to explain the student's behavior, but did note a clue: he acted "...as if he had a chip on his shoulder." This suggests that the cause lay within the student, not the instructor, though the instructor, or a classmate, or some external event could trigger the behavior inadvertently. Although unable to postulate a cause for the student's behavior, Alex noted the suddenness and extremity of the change. This could reasonably be interpreted as behavior associated with an imposter (Brookfield & Preskill, 1999; Clance & Imes, 1978). An imposter is one who has asserted claims he secretly knows or believes to be false. The imposter, having made such assertions, fears exposure. The imposter's need to defend the false claims may result in strong, exaggerated, defensive actions. In this case, student A may have viewed the innocently intended, even encouraging, response to his claim of American Indian heritage as a challenge requiring an aggressive defensive reaction. In addition, the student may have perceived the instructor's question as marginalizing his minority status.

Chris's description of the student's behavior includes each of the characteristics mentioned by Pickhardt (1980) in his discussion of the hostile attack. Specifically, the student directly challenged the instructor's qualifications and credibility, and doggedly voiced unsubstantiated criticisms of the instructor's message. Chris perceived the student's apparent purpose was to create a schism between the instructor and the students, and to substitute herself as the expert and authority figure. The classroom attack was reinforced by the extracurricular attack through the institutions involved.

Chris described an experience with resistant student B. Student B, at the first class meeting, made claims of expertise both in the subject matter of the course, and in the practice of teaching on the graduate level. Student B questioned the instructor's qualifications, and made it clear that if the instructor paid proper attention, she would make the instructor a better teacher. Throughout the semester, Student B made a habit of routinely, persistently, questioning both the material presented in the course, and the manner in which it was presented. Yet when the instructor treated her as a colleague, student B became offended. The instructor assessed the student's behavior as a power play based on a claim of expertise. The instructor responded by treating the student as more or less a peer, asking simple questions to which the student would be expected to already know the answer, if her claims were true. Each time, the student became irritated and was silent regarding content. This student continued her low level, sustained attacks on the instructor while in class, and simultaneously, covertly launched an assault through her employer, who was paying for her class. Again, this was a personal attack, the purpose of which, the instructor believes, was to cause professional harm to the instructor. The student also attempted (unsuccessfully) to persuade other members of the class to join her resistant behavior.

Chris identified a need for power and control as issues for the resistant student, and certainly the student demonstrated such needs. The student engaged in continued efforts to establish control over the instructor and the classroom, exploiting the instructor's habit of courtesy and desire to further the learning process. These behaviors are consistent

with power seeking behavior described by several authors (Greene, 1998; Simon, 1996; Steiner, 1981). Yet when Chris applied a strategy based on acceptance of the student's claims of expertise, it failed. There were additional factors Chris observed but did not consider. First, Chris noted that the student was taking the course as part of the process of changing her specialization within her career field. Chris also noted that many of the techniques that were applicable within the student's original specialty, were not transferable to the new specialty. This describes a situation in which the material to be learned is supplantive – it replaces the old. The student, who may have been an expert in the past, suddenly finds her earlier expertise is no longer applicable, no longer valuable. Atherton's (1999) research indicates that the single most defining characteristic of resisted learning is its supplantive character. He believes that this is because the supplantive knowledge threatens the skills and expertise the student already holds. When Chris called upon the student to answer simple questions or provide insights in areas she should have been familiar with, if her claims of expertise were true, the student could not answer and became annoyed. This suggests that, again, the Imposter Syndrome is in play (Brookfield & Preskill, 1999; Clance & Imes, 1978).

Dale described student C, who engaged in a continuous running battle with the instructor throughout the semester, punctuated with an intense, intimidating, verbal assault. This student seemed to always have a rude, negative response for anything said in the classroom, and was quick to launch these barbs at each opportunity. This constant sniping was targeted against course content, rather than the instructor or other students, aimed to belittle the material and concepts presented.

On the occasion of his major outburst, which the instructor called a “real big explosion,” the students were discussing the Russian theorist Vygotsky. Dale explained, “The students were presenting on Vygotsky and this gentleman just absolutely blew up. He just absolutely lost it. He said that we were condoning communism ...in a very attacking sort of way.” Student C used that as an opportunity to attack the instructor, in an e-mail sent after class, as a communist sympathizer; he personalized the attack. The instructor countered by saying this is not me, it is the theory – but that was meaningless to the student; he continued with the personal attack. This particular outburst was a clear and powerful example of the hostile attack described by Pickhardt (1980).

Student C routinely presented himself as more knowledgeable than the others in the room. He claimed to hold a Ph.D. in a science, and was always quick to criticize material presented during the course, though in general, his own work lacked scholarship. His class presentation was brief, shallow, tardy, and badly received by his classmates. He intentionally chose to speak about an obscure theorist that not even the instructor had heard, rather than one from the list provided by the syllabus. This obscure choice afforded him the opportunity to play the role of unchallenged authority on the topic. The student delayed his presentation (which had been due early in the course) until the next to last class meeting. He acknowledged that the quality of the presentation was poor, but excused that by explaining that he was so busy with his work, he did not have an opportunity to begin the project until 2 a.m. that morning.

A number of likely causal factors for the resistance are identifiable in the instructor's description of the student's behavior. First, student C made a claim of expertise that appears to have been false – the doctoral degree – but subsequently must be defended.

This is the same imposter syndrome seen previously. Secondly, the violence of the student's verbal attack on the instructor, triggered by mention of a communist theorist, is clearly a situation in which the individual's emotional response is not appropriately dampened by the rational mind; this may be described as an instance of inadequate emotional IQ (Goleman, 1997). Further, this type of insufficiently controlled response may have a physical basis. As Goldberg's (2001) research suggests, this may be indicative of an individual whose frontal lobes have failed to mature normally, or have been damaged, leaving the individual unable to govern himself within the bounds of acceptable behavior. Student C's behavior is consistent with that expected of a "self-handicapper" – one who creates barriers to his own success, and attributes his failure to those barriers. This self imposed handicap allows the person to avoid the discomfort associated with criticism and the attendant implications regarding one's worth (Baumeister, 1994; Curtis, 1994). "Self-handicapping" is associated with people who have high but unstable self-esteem. Curtis (1994) identifies other associated self-defeating behaviors to include a high degree of aggression, withdrawal, and dependence on others as means to avoid humiliation through disclosure of one's shortcomings. Baumeister (1994) describes aggression as related to an individual's perception of self-esteem, and the degree to which that perception is stable. He further notes that people with favorable but fluctuating views of themselves tend to indulge in hostility and anger, and show the most extreme levels of defensive reaction. Aggressors and bullies who seek to attack and dominate others are, according to Baumeister, most likely to be people with favorable but fluctuating views of themselves. Mehrabian (1970) reports that learned aggression becomes a reflex-like response that is engaged in automatically and indiscriminately when a threat is perceived. Such aggression is directed toward anything or anyone within range. These are possible underlying causes of the aggressive behavior displayed by student C in Dale's classroom.

Morgan described resistant student D, who argued against and refused to participate in collective class activities (group work), whenever a collective activity was assigned. Student D invariably questioned collective activities, made disparaging remarks regarding their perceived lack of value, and after an argument would withdraw from participation. This persisted throughout the semester. The instructor explained, again and again, why this was being done, yet the student refused to accept the explanations. This became a ritual that obstructed the smooth flow of the lesson.

The student's objections may indicate that the student has learned through personal experience that he does not respond well to group activities, that group work is not an effective learning mechanism for him. He appears to believe that since this method is ineffective for him, it is ineffective for others as well. This is a learning style issue, or more precisely, a mismatch between teaching and learning styles. Each learning style has associated with it a preferred way in which the individual will approach the learning situation. Individuals learn most efficiently when material is presented in a comparable fashion (MacKeracher, 1997). The instructor chose not to present the information in the manner preferred by the student, but rather to insist the student make the accommodation. The instructor justified this insistence on a collective style by insisting that the student, a future teacher, would be required to present course material in this manner. The instructor even went a little further than that, insisting that group work was the teaching

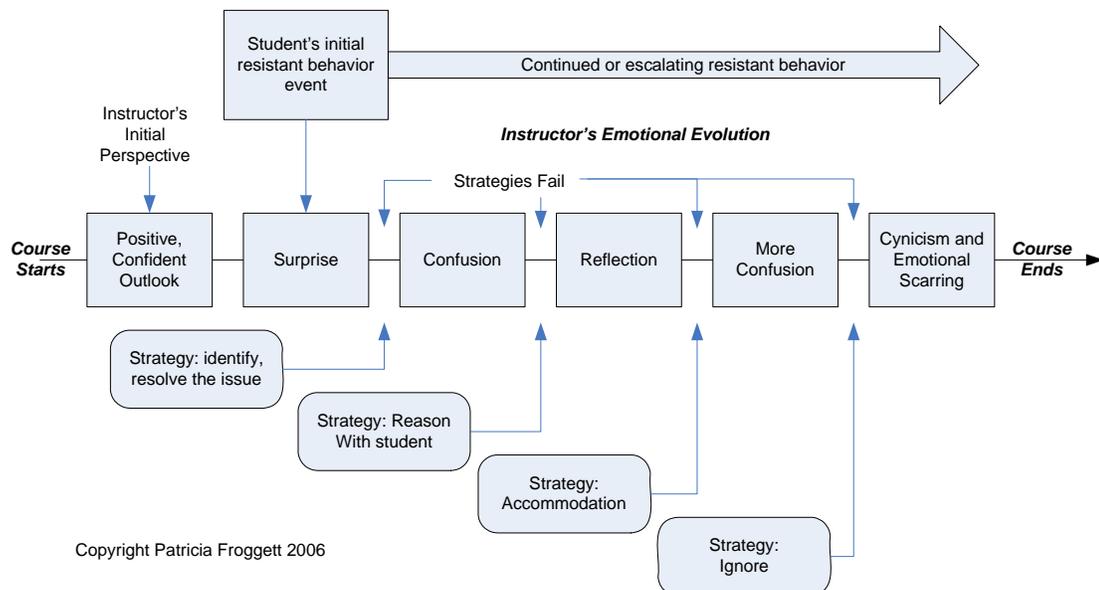
method valued by the teaching community. Morgan explained, “We model what we value.”

The student was unwilling (or unable) to adjust his learning style to the instructor’s preferred style of teaching. The student’s continued resistance and withdrawal into non-participation, in spite of the instructor’s repeated explanations and refusal to change, may also represent a degree of emotional immaturity on the part of the student, or an effort to establish a degree of control over the situation.

### Emotional Aspects

Hostile resistant behavior often has a strong emotional impact on the instructor, which may include lingering emotional scars. The experience may impact the instructor’s subsequent teaching and classroom management approaches, by encouraging the instructors to wrap themselves in a protective armor. This is a likely result of multiple factors, including the instructors’ inability to anticipate, and hence emotionally steel themselves for, the onslaught that follows; the intensity, persistence, and perceived irrationality of the hostile behavior; the focusing of the behavior directly and personally at the instructor; the instructors’ inability to resolve the issues despite their best efforts.

The participants in this study described a similar sequence of events, and similar emotional responses, to their individual experiences of resistant behavior. As indicated in Figure 8, the instructors began the course with a positive, confident outlook, but were very soon surprised by the initial display of resistant behavior. Much of their surprise was due to their inability to anticipate the behavior, and the lack of apparent connection with classroom events. The situation did not develop gradually. There was no buildup of the student’s displeasure to an observable aggravation that the instructor could see while “reading the class” during teaching, as is normally the case. Each of the instructors devised and applied a strategy intended to deal with the behavior. Initially, the instructors’ strategies aimed to identify and directly address the student’s issue.



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Figure 8. Instructor’s emotional evolution during experience with resistant behavior.

These strategies failed. Each instructor repeatedly modified her strategy and made subsequent attempts to resolve. They moved through strategies based on logic, reason, and accommodation, to their final capitulation and decision to ignore the hostile behavior. All of their strategies failed to resolve the resistant behavior, probably because the behavior was not based on a classroom or course-related issue subject to correction; rather, the behavior reflected the student's way of accomplishing his personal agenda. Instead of resolving the problems, the behavior not only continued throughout the duration of the course, it usually escalated as well. The instructors' initial surprise turned to confusion as they discovered that the approaches they found successful in the past each failed, and in fact even yielded results entirely contrary to expectations. Ultimately the instructors became defeated, and somewhat cynical regarding their ability to reach the student. Some of the instructors also expressed cynicism regarding the lack of institutional support to them in their effort to deal with this experience, leaving them with a sense of isolation.

The internal emotional experiences described by all but one of the participating instructors, and diagrammed in Figure 8, are similar to the "stages of dying" or "stages of grief" model introduced in the seminal work *On Death and Dying* (Kubler-Ross, 1969). Dr. Kubler-Ross identified a series of stages that a dying person may experience, after learning of their terminal illness. In this model, the patient experiences, in progression<sup>10</sup>, stages of denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. Kubler-Ross explains that impending death, imposed by a force not under the control of the patient, is frightening. Denial provides a way to buy time in order to develop a defense to the unwelcome bad news. Subsequently anger is experienced, as a way of expressing resentment when denial is no longer possible. The bargaining stage occurs as the patient looks for a second chance, perhaps in the form of an alternate approach leading to a different result. When bargaining fails, the patient enters a period of severe depression, reflecting the severity of the impending loss. Ultimately, the patient may develop a feeling of acceptance. This state of acceptance includes the patient's assessment that there is nothing they can do to achieve a more desirable conclusion.

The participating instructors expected to be able to interact successfully with each and every student in their classes, an expectation fostered by their previous experiences. Their failure to do so led them to experience an emotional cycle similar to the Kubler-Ross cycle. It is possible that if the instructors were willing to let go of their expectation of success with each and every student, and accepted the concept that they "cannot help all students" as Chris stated, they might be better able to deal with classroom occurrences of resistant behavior.

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<sup>10</sup> Kubler-Ross noted that not all patients experience all stages; it is possible for a patient to become "stuck" in one of the stages.

## Chapter V: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This research was conducted with the objective of discovering the ways in which experienced practitioners who teach adults perceive and interpret incidents of resistant behavior that occur within their classrooms.

The questions guiding the inquiry were:

1. How do instructors perceive and experienced the underlying dynamics, or causes they cite, of the hostile resistant behavior they have observed in the learning environment?
2. How do instructors interpret episodes of hostile resistant behavior?

The research found that, in their narratives of their particular experience, the participating instructors were unable to anticipate the onset of resistant behavior; found it difficult to postulate likely causes of the behavior; and were unable to develop effective coping strategies. The instructors themselves often experienced strong and lasting negative emotional reactions, which included the initial shock, followed by a period of confusion as they searched for answers, culminating in a final sense of hopelessness regarding their ability to resolve the behavioral problems.

This chapter presents a concise series of conclusions derived from the instructors' descriptions of their experiences and analysis of the findings in relation to theory and the literature reviewed. The chapter includes insights and suggestions for future research and exploration of resistant behavior in the adult learning environment.

### Summary

This section provides a brief summary of material covered in the first three chapters, and in the final portion of Chapter IV.

### The Problem

Adult learners may engage in hostile classroom behavior through which they resist learning, encourage others to join them in such resistance, and may even directly attack the instructor. The resistant behavior includes situations in which the resistant student refuses classroom participation; creates a diversion to subvert the instructor's agenda; or challenges the instructor's authority or competency. Researchers in adult education have identified this behavior as a significant problem (Argyris, 1993; Atherton, 1999; Brookfield, 1995; Brookfield & Preskill, 1999).

This study explored the concept of resistance and its attributes within the context of the adult learning environment. The study provided a detailed qualitative examination of the perceptions and experiences of instructors who have had adult learners who demonstrated hostile resistant behaviors during learning. It examined how practitioners recognize and describe resistance to learning, their actions in dealing with resistance, and the impact the hostile behavior had on the instructor.

## Review of Related Literature

A substantial cross-disciplinary body of literature, spanning a wide range of topical areas and disciplines, was reviewed as an element of this research. The interdisciplinary approach was necessary to identify and place in perspective the complex interactions of the learning process that underlie the problem of resistant behavior in the learning environment. The broad trends investigated include the major issues of change, power, learning, behavioral tendencies, perceptions and interpretations, small group dynamics, and human interactions. Topical areas included adult education, psychology, learning theories, change management, power and control, communications (verbal and non-verbal), linguistics, cultural anthropology, evolutionary biology, cognitive neuroscience, and neurobiology. This interdisciplinary approach was intentional and was needed to provide the foundation for productive discussions among instructors of adults regarding resistant behaviors. The approach also draws upon the preceding to provide the vocabulary and understanding needed to form a bridge between classroom events and discussions within the professional community of practice. Without a vocabulary to describe the events that occur within the classroom, discussions are necessarily limited.

Table 2 identifies the major areas researched during the literature review, and the principal factors discussed in Chapter II of this paper.

Table 2. *Summary of Chapter II Literature Review Topical Areas.*

<b>Area</b>	<b>Factors</b>
Change	Resistance to change; feelings of fear, uncertainty, inadequacy associated with change; human response to change; negative behaviors
Power	Loss of control; loss of prestige; destructive achiever; covert aggressive behavior; manipulation to win; seeking dominance
Emotional IQ	Control over emotional life, appropriateness of behavior; self-restraint, volitional control; environmental adaptation; multiple intelligences
Perception	Perceptual filters for interpretation of events and behavioral norms; filters associated with cultural values
Patterns of thinking and responding	Matching/miss-matching; convergent/divergent; cognitive overload; moving away/toward; options/procedures
Use of language	Male-female; cultural perspectives; ability to express self
Cultural differences	Immigration/integration; collectivist versus individualist orientation; changing patterns; adoption of language, pursuit of citizenship
Gender differences	Behavior; cognitive bias; language/meaning

<b>Area</b>	<b>Factors</b>
Age	Stages of life; changes in assumptions, values, beliefs, over time
Cultural and peer pressures	Effect on encouraging resistant behaviors
Marginalization	Treating or perceiving members of certain groups as on the fringe; unimportant
Behavioral habits	Hierarchy of needs; character and temperament; control; perception of responsibility and capability.
Locus of control and responsibility	Internal versus external; reaction to challenge or difficulties; willingness to act
Imposter syndrome	The individual does not belong; is faking qualifications claimed; fears being unmasked; aggressive defensive reactions
Defensive reasoning	Remain in control; avoid potential threats; avoid public disclosure of weakness
Self defeating behaviors	Self handicapping; create a barrier to success; blame the barrier for failure; aggression; withdrawal; dependence on others
Self esteem/self efficacy	Attribute failure to external factors; refuse to acknowledge one's responsibility to achieve a favorable outcome
High, fluctuating self esteem	Craving for dominance; aggressive confrontations; extreme defensive reactions
Dynamic Models	Johari window; force field analysis, body language
Resistance to learning	Nature and prevalence; resistant behaviors; coping strategies
Resistance to process and conditions	Emancipatory education; Feminist education; Social reformers; self-direction in learning; perceptions of the training community

### Method

A qualitative analysis approach was selected for this study, because the purpose was exploratory; there is little existing information available to answer the research questions; and a focus on context and human interaction was desired. The research design employed the in-depth interview method, using open-ended questions to explore the research phenomenon. This approach allowed the participants to reflect upon their

experiences, and permitted the researcher to capture the participant's views in the way in which they were expressed. The interviews were recorded and transcribed, and the participants reviewed the transcriptions for accuracy. Data analysis was performed by a process of decomposition and coding, in which phenomena were identified within the data, named, and assigned to categories and subcategories. The coded data was sorted and sifted to identify similarities, differences, and relationships. Coded but unsorted data were examined in original context to identify patterns and threads not reducible to codes. In this way the voices of the participants were allowed to emerge, illuminating the phenomenon of resistant behavior in the adult learning environment.

A preliminary investigation was conducted to develop insights into the frequency with which educators of adults personally experienced resistance to learning in their classrooms, and to estimate their familiarity with a set of potentially causative factors identified by researchers in education, psychology, and other related fields. The preliminary investigation served to help crystallize the research questions toward a focus on how practitioners observe and experience resistant behaviors, and how they interpret resistance. These two areas of exploration were a foundation on which to begin the research regarding resistance behaviors in the field of adult learning. The preliminary investigation provided two immediate, direct results: First, the investigation confirmed that the participating practitioners<sup>11</sup> experienced resistant behaviors within their classrooms. The participants were in unanimous agreement on this point. Second, the participants' responses indicated very limited familiarity with research concerning the resistant behaviors they observed in their classrooms.

#### Analysis of Findings

The participants' experiences were quite similar in significant aspects. The initial conditions present at the onset of the hostile behavior varied widely, suggesting that in general the specific circumstances were not important. The instructors were unable to anticipate the onset of the resistant behavior, instead expressing their shock and surprise when it occurred. The instructors did not have an effective response to deploy in the face of the resistant behavior. Although they tried multiple strategies as the course went on, the instructors were unable to devise successful coping mechanisms. The strategies the instructors did apply, consistently and repeatedly failed. The resistant students sustained their resistant behavior throughout the duration of the course, regardless of the instructor's response. The instructors were unable to explain the likely causes of the observed behavior; instead they expressed bafflement.

The participants described student actions and responses that are consistent with dysfunctional behavior patterns identified by professionals in other fields as discussed in Chapter II, such as: self-defeating behaviors; refusal to acknowledge one's own responsibility for attaining a positive outcome; defensive reasoning; emotional immaturity; and inability to exercise self restraint. They described the imposter

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<sup>11</sup> The participants in the preliminary investigation were professional instructors of adults. They were either instructors within institutional training programs, or educators at the post graduate level. Few had been formally exposed to the principles of adult learning. The preliminary investigation included 124 participants; personal experience of hostile withdrawal was reported by all participants; hostile diversion by 96%, and hostile attack by 82% of the participants. Preliminary investigation results are reported in Appendix A.

syndrome, and extreme defensive reactions in cases of supplantive learning. The participants described the behaviors, but they generally did not name the behavior or even begin to suggest a cause. Some of the participants did, however, indicate their suspicions that something they did not recognize was occurring, by mentioning a "...chip on his shoulder," and "...had an agenda."

### Conclusions

The following conclusions were developed through analysis of the experiences, perceptions, and emotions reported by the participating instructors. While these conclusions provide significant qualitative insight into the nature of resistant behavior in the adult learning environment experienced and interpreted by the participants, no broader claim of applicability is made since this study is grounded in the data.

The conclusions are organized in two groups, each associated with a research question, which is restated prior to listing the conclusions.

Question one: How do instructors perceive and experience the underlying dynamics, or causes they cite, of the hostile resistant behavior they have observed in the learning environment?

1. The participating instructors found it difficult to identify likely causes of hostile resistant behavior. They did not understand why it happened.
2. Inability to diagnose the causes led the instructors to apply corrective actions that were not appropriate to address the actual cause. The corrective actions they chose, while they may have been effective in dealing with motivational issues or other problems with instruction, were not relevant to the hostile behavior. Thus the instructors' attempts to resolve the issues consistently failed, the hostile behavior continued, and even escalated.
3. Students who indulged in hostile resistant behavior did so with energy and persistence; the behavior was important to them for reasons that often appeared to have little to do with curriculum or delivery. Their behavior was not corrected by applying fixes that were curriculum or delivery-based.
4. These instructors lacked an effective support network that could help prepare them for an experience of hostile resistant behavior, and help them effectively deal with such behavior when it occurs.
5. These instructors lacked the specific vocabulary to identify and discuss student resistant behavior or to analyze underlying causes of that behavior.

Question two: How do instructors interpret episodes of hostile resistant behavior?

1. The hostile resistant behavior in the learning environment described in these interviews was perceived as an attribute of the student, not the instructor. The student brought this behavior, or the potential for such behavior, to the classroom. Instructors may interpret this as an attitudinal issue.
2. Hostile resistant behavior in the learning environment experienced by these instructors was not the same phenomenon as learning or motivation to learn. Students

who appeared to be well motivated and able to demonstrate learning may exhibit resistant behavior. Most students in this study received high grades.

3. In these instances, the students' hostile resistant behavior was directed personally at the instructor. Although the instructor did not knowingly cause the behavior, the instructor was the obvious target for a student engaging in aggressive defensive actions. This personalization of the student's hostile behavior was perceived by the instructor as damaging.
4. These instructors were not equipped to anticipate the occurrence of hostile resistant behavior. Their inability to anticipate the actions that followed left them surprised, even stunned, when the behavior occurred. This placed the instructors at a disadvantage in either avoiding or swiftly and effectively dealing with hostile behavior.

These instructors experienced a pattern of emotional distress that began with shock and ended with something akin to despair. This sequence of emotional reactions was very similar to the stages of grieving identified by Kubler-Ross (1969), in situations involving death. Substantially the same set of reactions is associated with situations involving change, where the change is undesirable and unavoidable (Conner, 1992). The participants in this research described their feelings in terms strongly reminiscent of Kubler-Ross and Conner.

#### Recommendations For Additional Research

This research emphasized the instructors: their perspectives, their interpretations, and reactions. The instructors who participated in this research shared several characteristics in common. These shared characteristics included: they had not previously been formally exposed to information regarding resistance to learning behaviors; they were teaching on the graduate level; and they were all female. This suggests additional research that expands the participant base to include trainers and instructors with other characteristics. Recommendations are organized into categories of topics with similar focus, using three groupings: instructor-centric, student-centric, and institution-centric.

#### Instructor Centric Research Recommendations

1. The participants in this research were not formally exposed to knowledge regarding resistant behaviors. Future research would benefit from focusing on how instructors who were formally exposed to such material experience resistant behaviors.
2. The experiences with resistant behavior analyzed during this research were those of instructors teaching in graduate education programs. Future research could focus on how trainers perceive and assess their experience with resistant behavior.
3. Since this study did not find variation on this point, how does the instructor's experience with resistant behavior change in relation to the academic discipline/subject matter being taught?
4. How do male instructors perceive resistance compared to female instructors? How do resistant students respond to male or female instructors?

5. In what ways do instructors who employ on-line instructional delivery methods have a different experience with resistant behavior, compared to face-to-face instruction?
6. How are instructors' professional reputations harmed by hostile students' accusations? What repercussions do instructors experience?
7. Once sensitized by a hostile resistant event, how do instructors recognize such behaviors more readily? How does their ability to take effective corrective action change?
8. Do a hostile student and instructor ever reach a common ground of acceptance? What are the circumstances that bring about this change?
9. How lasting is the impact of the experience from the student or instructor perspective?
10. What skills or behaviors do instructors who are more tolerant of, or more able to recognize, hostile resistant behavior than others, employ?
11. In what ways has resistant behavior changed in nature or frequency over time.
12. How would knowledge of potential causative factors afford instructors a better ability to diagnose hostile resistant behaviors leading to more effective coping strategies?
13. What coping strategies are effective in dealing with hostile resistant behavior?
14. In what way can the experience of resistant behavior, which includes an emotional response by the instructor, be considered a sustained transformational experience?

#### Student Centric Research Recommendations

This research was instructor-focused; it did not "follow the student," nor did it assess the students' view regarding resistant behavior. However, one of the conclusions was that the student brought the resistant behavior described by the participating instructors to the classroom; the behavior was an attribute of the student. This suggests further examination of resistant behavior with a student-centric focus.

1. How does the instructor's experience with resistant behavior change in relation to changes in the makeup of the student body, considering such factors as gender, race, age, culture, and size of class?
2. Do students who exhibit resistant behavior have a history of such behavior? Does it start early in their learning experience? Does a student who exhibits resistant behavior during one course also engage in resistant behavior in other courses?
3. What, and how long lasting, is the impact of the hostile resistant behavior on the other students in the class? Are other students reluctant to take additional courses with someone who has demonstrated resistant behavior?
4. How do other student perceive and interpret the hostile behavior?
5. How does the hostile student perceive and interpret his/her own behavior?
6. In what ways are these experiences of resistant behavior applicable to K-12 students, to undergraduates, to those in the business/training environment?

### Institution Centric Recommendations

The experiences described by the participating instructors in this research raise interesting questions and suggest further examination in areas focused on the institution. These questions have to do with the responsibilities of the institution toward their employees, and the institutions' interpretation of resistant behavior.

1. What legal structures do institutions of learning have in place to bar hostile resistant students from classrooms or attacks against instructors or fellow classmates?
2. How do institutions view or define hostile resistant behavior?
3. Considering Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) guidelines and Title 5 guidelines, how does resistant behavior contribute to a hostile work environment? What are the implications for institutions of learning?
4. The instructors that participated in this research reported that they had little in the way of a support network in which the instructors' privacy and rights are protected. Do instructors at institutions with strong instructor support networks have a different experience? Are they better able to anticipate, avoid, or resolve resistant behavior issues?

Further research in this fertile area of investigation could provide useful strategies for instructors of adults engaged in graduate level coursework that may help them recognize, address, and avoid incidences of hostile attacks, diversions, and withdrawals. The instructors who participated in this research were very experienced, very capable veterans who were accustomed to successfully handling any situation that occurred in their classrooms. Yet the experiences described during this research were different. What was unearthed may be a subset of resistant behavior that could beset even the most seasoned professionals. The hostile behavior experienced by these instructors walked into the classroom with their students. Their trigger mechanisms were subtle, hence difficult or perhaps impossible for the instructors to anticipate. The instructors became victims of their students' dysfunctional behavior, targets of their hostility. The experience had a profound impact on the instructors. Since there was little logic and no closure to the experiences shared by these instructors, the impact continues to linger. Why would these seasoned, competent, successful, caring professionals have at least one such experience producing a cataclysmic internal response? Those responsible for adult learning need to come to terms with this anomalous hostile student behavior. Are these students simply adult schoolyard bullies? If so, how can instructors and universities set constructive policies that are designed to protect instructors and the other students in a class from a cascade of hostile behaviors? Hopefully additional research will reveal an equitable path for all involved in a quality learning experience.

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## Appendix A: Background Information

### Introduction

The objectives of the preliminary investigation, conducted between October 2004 and November 2005, were to ascertain the extent of the problem as perceived by instructors, and to develop insight into the frequency with which educators of adults personally experienced hostile resistance to learning, and to estimate their degree of familiarity with a selected set of potentially causative factors. The preliminary investigation confirmed Atherton's (1999) and Pickhardt's (1980) observations regarding the prevalence of hostile resistance to learning. It generated a participant-focused conversation of the topic that helped clarify the questions for research. The research questions were developed as a result of interaction with the preliminary investigation participants. The preliminary investigation identified a large gap between knowledge available in related disciplines, and knowledge owned by the practitioners.

### Method

The researcher met with multiple groups of professional instructors of adults and trainers over the course of more than a year, to present material concerning adult resistance to learning. These sessions typically ran from two to four hours in duration, although on one occasion an entire day was devoted to the material. During the sessions, the researcher began by presenting information to define hostile resistance to learning, and to describe the overt behaviors that are characteristic of hostile resistance to learning. Subsequently, the researcher presented overviews of critical topics associated with, and potentially causative of, hostile adult resistance to learning.

The preliminary investigation employed a survey questionnaire to collect self-reported data concerning the participants' experience of resistance to learning, and familiarity with potentially causative factors. The survey was completed by the participants under general guidance of the researcher, in small groups during the course of professional development workshops on resistance to learning. At appropriate intervals during the presentation and discussions, the researcher paused the activities to have the participants complete applicable portions of the survey form. The survey was designed to be an integral part of the presentation. Its questions are brief and enhanced by the presentation context.

### Participants

The participants in the preliminary investigation were professional instructors of adults, working within either graduate education programs, or professional development programs. One hundred and twenty-four participants voluntarily participated in the program; all responded, and none declined to participate. The participants were drawn from several groups, including: educators associated with the University of Virginia's Graduate Education programs; trainers for the Federal Bureau of Investigation and other national law enforcement training programs; trainers of public school teachers for the Virginia public schools Gifted and Talented Education Program; participants in the Virginia Staff Development Conference (VSDC), and the Association for Continuing and Higher Education (ACHE) conference.

The participants represent a diverse sampling of background, experience, subject matter expertise, and training/education applications. Their teaching experience ranged from less than 1 year to over 40 years, broken down as shown in Figure 9:

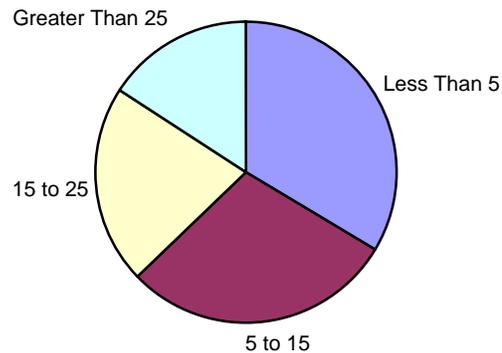


Figure 9. Participants' teaching experience in years.

Just over half of the 124 participants (54%) identified themselves as trainers. The balance of the participants (46%) identified themselves as graduate-level educators. The participants' own education level was self-reported, and indicates that nearly three-quarters of them (74%) hold a master's or doctoral degree. Figure 10 and Figure 11 break these factors out individually.

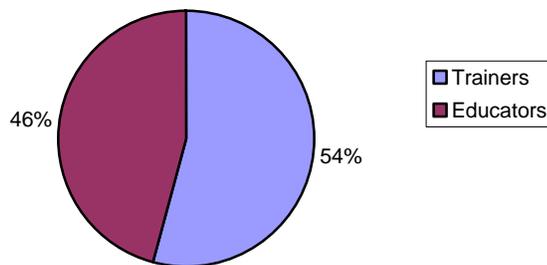


Figure 10. Participants' education/training activity.

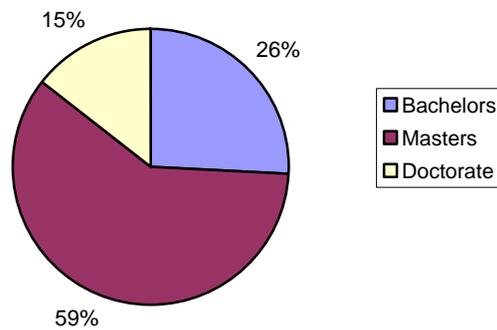


Figure 11. Participants' education level.

### Instrumentation

The instrument used for data collection was a survey form, self-executed under the general guidance of the researcher, during the presentation. The researcher chose to conduct a survey as a way to relatively quickly sample a large number of participants. This helped establish an understanding of the scale of the issue of resistant behavior observed by practitioners. The results also led to the choice to follow up with an open-ended interview method to gain greater depth of understanding.

The completed survey form provided basic information regarding gender, experience, education, and level taught. It provided Likert scale forms for the participant to indicate the degree to which he/she had experienced hostile resistance behavior, ranging from “never” to “frequently.” The range of responses on the Likert scale ran from 1 through 7, to allow the participants an opportunity to express their experiences with a greater level of detail than the 1 to 5 scale offers.

The form contains a matrix of nineteen topical areas derived from the literature search, together with a check-block to indicate degree of familiarity, using the categories: Formal knowledge; Experiential/ Intuitive Knowledge; or New Knowledge. The researcher defined these terms as:

Formal knowledge – material learned through formal educational or training courses.

Experiential/ intuitive knowledge – knowledge acquired through experience, or knowledge that the subject holds instinctively.

New knowledge – concepts with which the subject is completely unfamiliar.

The preliminary investigation questionnaire was designed in accordance with the recommendations for effective survey questionnaires successfully employed in other research efforts (Rea & Parker, 1997).

An example of the data collection form is contained in Appendix B.

## Procedures

The participants were voluntary participants in presentations/seminars, which they selected to attend on the subject of adult resistance to learning and training. The researcher presented material describing resistance and briefly overviewed a series of topics fundamental to an understanding of the dynamics of, and potential reasons for, resistance to learning by adults. The dynamics and reasons discussed were drawn from research performed and reported by multiple sources in several related fields, all of which are fully discussed in Chapter II. After presenting the material on resistance, the participants were asked to self-assess and complete the Likert scales on their forms to indicate the degree to which they had personally experienced hostile resistant behavior in their classrooms. The researcher then resumed the presentation of critical topical information. At the end of each topical section, the participants were asked to complete that section of the form, by checking the blocks to indicate their level of familiarity with the material.

The concise, one-page survey form employs closed-ended questions, which was successful because the researcher was available for clarification or elaboration, permitting the participant to provide a thoughtfully considered response, while focusing on the information needed by the researcher. The survey questions began with easily answered, non-sensitive, demographic information. As the presentation moved forward appropriate pauses were structured into the delivery to accommodate survey responses while the content was fresh in the minds of the participants. Practice applications were last in the structure of the survey, when the respondents had gained a comprehensive familiarity with the content and could apply it to their teaching experience. The survey ends with a venting question. These characteristics are in accordance with effective survey practices (Rea & Parker, 1997).

## Data Processing

The survey forms from each session were collected and the information contained entered into a database of questions and responses. The paper survey forms were retained for archive purposes. The Likert scale responses identifying the degree to which each participant (self-rated) has experienced resistance were tabulated for each type of resistant behavior. Additionally, a frequency chart was developed to indicate the percentage of times each Likert scale value was selected, for each type of behavior. Participant responses indicating degree of familiarity with each topic were collated and plotted.

## Limitations

Limitations of the preliminary investigation include the following:

1. The data are the product of a self-assessment.

As in any self-assessment, each participant may interpret the behavior and standard of measurement somewhat differently. This could be expected to lead to some “fuzziness” in the results, potentially making small differences difficult to discern.

2. The data use Likert scales to indicate the extent to which resistance was observed.

The primary significance of this limitation is that observations of events recorded with a Likert scale can be expected to vary in degree from individual to individual. The Likert scale is structured but remains essentially a subjective measure. However, the effect of individual variations is somewhat mitigated by the sample size. In any event, the absolute values of the factors measured are much less important than the practitioners' assessment of the relative frequency of occurrence.

## Results

Preliminary investigation results are addressed in terms of the reported frequency of occurrence of hostile resistant behavior, and the participants' degree of familiarity with potential causative factors.

### *Frequency of perceived hostile resistant behavior.*

The participants unanimously reported personal experience with hostile resistant behavior in one or more forms. When viewed by type of behavior hostile; withdrawal was reported by all participants, hostile diversion by 96%, and hostile attack by 82% of the participants.

This is consistent with the literature, which indicates that hostile withdrawal is most common, and hostile attack is experienced least often (Pickhardt, 1980). Figure 12 shows the distribution of participant responses indicating frequency of occurrence for each resistant behavior.

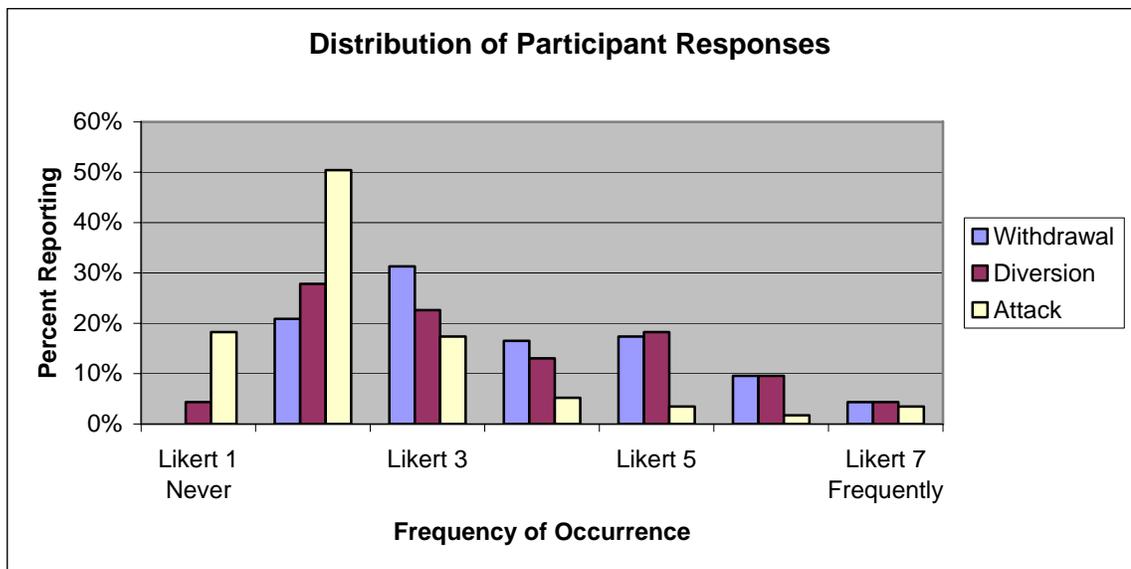


Figure 12. Distribution of participant responses.

*Basis for familiarity with critical topics*

The participants reported their degree of familiarity with the nineteen topic areas by recording the source of their knowledge as formal, experiential/intuitive, or new knowledge. The results are shown in Figure 13. The areas with which participants expressed greatest familiarity are those who have become venerable with age, such as Maslow’s Hierarchy, or have been recently popularized as topical issues for in-service training sessions. The results imply that the participants generally lacked formal education in the art of teaching and learning.

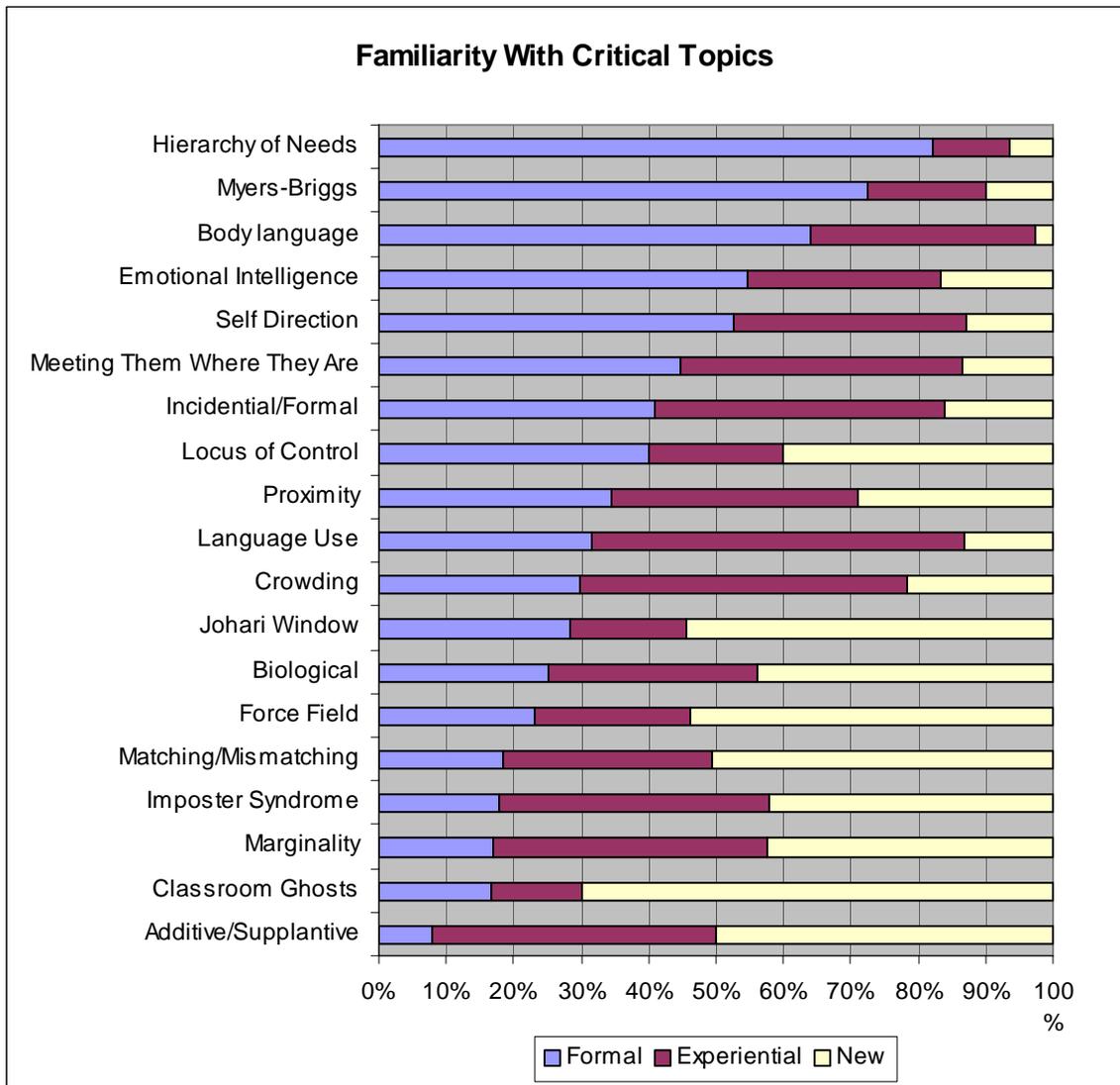


Figure 13. Participants’ familiarity with critical topics.

## Assessment of Results

The collected data indicate that resistance to learning was frequently experienced by the practitioners. The most often experienced form of resistance is the hostile withdrawal, followed with slightly less reported frequency by the hostile diversion. Hostile attacks on the instructor occur least often, though were experienced by 82% of the participants. All of the participants reported experiencing hostile withdrawal, and 96% reported hostile diversion. These results are consistent with the findings of Brookfield and Atherton, who consider resistance to be widespread, and Pickhardt, who observed the same sequence – withdrawal most often, attack least often (Atherton, 1999; Brookfield, 1995; Brookfield & Preskill, 1999; Pickhardt, 1980).

The degree of familiarity of the participants with the concepts associated with the causes of resistance varied, but of the nineteen underlying concepts identified, a majority of the participants had formal knowledge of only five of them. These five included Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Myers-Briggs personality typing, Emotional Intelligence, Self Direction and Body Language. Only 8% of the participants reported formal knowledge of the concept of Additive versus Supplantive learning, which Atherton (1999) considers to be the major factor underlying resistance to learning in adults. Fewer than 20% claimed formal knowledge of the Imposter Syndrome, which Brookfield (1995) identifies as the single major cause of resistance, and which could logically ensue in situations where supplantive learning was required. The concepts of Marginality (Mezirow, 1991), and Classroom Ghosts (Pert, 1992) were unfamiliar to 82% of the respondents. These results suggest that, although instructors frequently experience hostile resistant behaviors, they generally lack formal knowledge of the probable underlying causes of such behavior. Lack of such knowledge, and the associated vocabulary, is likely to inhibit effective reflection, discussion, understanding, and informed strategy development.

## Data Collection Instrument

**Please provide the following information:**

Gender: Male\_\_\_ Female\_\_\_ Height: Feet\_\_\_Inches\_\_\_ Number of years teaching: \_\_\_years

Highest academic degree that you hold: Bachelor\_\_\_ Master's\_\_\_ Doctorate\_\_\_

What level do you teach? (mark all that apply) K-12\_\_\_ Bachelor\_\_\_ Master's\_\_\_ Doctoral\_\_\_ Trainer\_\_\_

**Use the Likert scale below to indicate the extent to which you have experienced resistance to learning in your classroom in the past, for each of the resistant behaviors:**

Withdrawal	Diversion	Attack																					
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Never <span style="margin-left: 100px;">Frequently</span>	Never <span style="margin-left: 100px;">Frequently</span>	Never <span style="margin-left: 100px;">Frequently</span>																					

**Please indicate your degree of familiarity with each of the below topical areas:**

Topic	Formal Knowledge	Experiential/Intuitive Knowledge	New Knowledge
1. Hierarchy of Needs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Johari Window	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Imposter Syndrome	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Classroom Ghosts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Myers-Briggs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Locus of Control	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Force Field Analysis	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Emotional Intelligence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Body Language	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Language Use	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Marginality Issue	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Additive/Supplative	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. Self-Direction	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. Meeting them where they are	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. Incidental/Formal Learning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. Matching/Mismatching	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. Crowding Issue	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. Proximity Issue	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19. Biological Issue	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**In the past, when experiencing resistance to learning in your classroom, have you chosen to:**

	Never	Frequently							
Maintain a clear focus	<table border="1" style="display: inline-table; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">1</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">2</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">3</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">4</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">5</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">6</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">7</td> </tr> </table>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
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Embrace resistance	<table border="1" style="display: inline-table; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">1</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">2</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">3</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">4</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">5</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">6</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">7</td> </tr> </table>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
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Respect those who resist	<table border="1" style="display: inline-table; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">1</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">2</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">3</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">4</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">5</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">6</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">7</td> </tr> </table>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
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Relax	<table border="1" style="display: inline-table; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">1</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">2</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">3</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">4</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">5</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">6</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">7</td> </tr> </table>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
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**Please share a relevant experience (write on the back of the page)**

**VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY**  
**Informed Consent for Participants**  
**in Research Projects Involving Human Subjects**

**Title of Project:** Toward a Deeper Understanding of the Nature of Resistant Behaviors by Adult Learners in Graduate Education

Investigator: Patricia Dowling Froggett

**I The Purpose of this Research**

The purpose of this research is to discover the ways in which adult education practitioners perceive, interpret, and discuss with their colleagues, incidents of adult hostile resistance to learning that occur within their classrooms. The study will employ interview techniques as the primary means of data collection, in a grounded-theory study design. The central concept being explored is defined generally as the basis for the reflective examination with which practitioners explore incidents during which students, with overt hostility, withdraw from or seek to disrupt the learning activity, or directly challenge the instructor's authority or credibility.

**II Procedures**

Participants provide the raw data for this study, through an interview process in which the participants describe their experience of hostile resistant behavior in the classroom to the researcher. The researcher will ask only a few very broad questions to encourage the participant's to recount and freely explore their experiences.

One or two interviews of each participant will be conducted, each lasting approximately 60 to 90 minutes. Digital audio recordings of the interviews will be made, so that they can be accurately transcribed to support subsequent analysis. The transcripts will be provided to the interviewed participant, to verify accuracy or edit to ensure the transcript accurately reflects the participant's meaning. Participants will be identified on the transcript and recording only through a self-selected pseudonym.

The interview will take place at a mutually agreed private location. The research will use a small digital audio recorder and a laptop computer during the interview. The conditions will similar to a private office setting.

**III Risks**

There are no physical risks, but some possibility of emotional distress due to recall of experiences of resistant behavior, which could be considered unpleasant.

Protection against these risks will be carefully followed and includes your right to refuse to answer any question and to withdraw from the study at any time. Your exercise of these rights will be respected.

#### IV Benefits

Your participation as co-researcher in this study is important, and allows the researcher to investigate practitioners' understanding of hostile resistance to learning; their ability, opportunity, and willingness to discuss it with colleagues; and to explore how practitioners develop responses to deal with hostile resistance to learning. Your experience will be the starting point for resumption of a critical dialogue among practitioners concerning these issues. This may be expected to lead to discovery of important questions, processes and relationships, in an area where a substantial body of knowledge does not exist.

You will not receive any tangible benefits such as compensation of any form for participation in this study, nor is there any promise or guarantee of any benefits to encourage your participation.

If you would like a summary of research results at a later date, please contact Patricia Froggett.

#### V Extent of Confidentiality

The design of this study promises confidentiality to participants. The following procedures will apply:

Audio recording of the interviews will be done only with your permission. The purpose of the recording is for convenience in data collection and to ensure an accurate record of what was said.

Before any interviews are conducted, you will select a pseudonym for yourself and your organization. All references to you and your organization will be disguised.

Recordings will be promptly transcribed by the researcher. Neither the recording nor the transcription will contain any information directly identifying the participant.

As participant, you will also review transcripts for accuracy and anonymity. Identifying information will be excised.

Digital recordings and transcripts will be retained in a safe with access limited to the researcher for seven years. After seven years, the digital recordings and transcripts will be destroyed. No one but the researcher will have access to recordings or transcripts.

The researcher promises not to divulge the actual identity of participants.

It is possible that the Institutional Review Board (IRB) may view this study's collected data for auditing purposes. The IRB is responsible for the oversight of the protection of human subjects involved in research.

In some situations, it may be necessary for an investigator to break confidentiality. If a participant is believed to be a threat to him/herself or others, the investigator will notify the appropriate authorities.

#### VI Compensation

No form of compensation is to be earned for participating in this study.

#### VII Freedom to Withdraw

Participants are free to withdraw from a study at any time. Participants are free not to answer a question or respond to experimental situations that they choose.

VIII Participant's Responsibilities

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I have the following responsibilities:

Participate in one or two interviews.

Read and edit transcripts of interviews.

Participants may choose to journal or make notes of other aspects of the experience that might emerge between interviews.

X. Participant's Permission

I have read and understand the informed Consent and conditions of this project. I have had all my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent.

---

Signature      Date

Should I have any pertinent questions about this research or its conduct, and research subjects' rights, and whom to contact in the event of a research-related injury to the subject, I may contact:

<u>Patricia D. Froggett</u>	<u>703 536 1141/Froggett@virginia.edu</u>
Investigator	Phone

<u>Marcie Boucouvalas</u>	<u>703 538 8469/marcie@vt.edu</u>
Faculty Advisor	Phone

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Departmental Reviewer/Department Head      Phone

---

David M. Moore      (540) 231-4991/moored@vt.edu  
Chair, Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects  
Office of research Compliance – CVM Phase II (0442)  
Research Division

## Appendix C: Questions Guiding the Interview Process

### Introduction

This appendix describes the objectives of each interview, and lists the questions explored. Each of the questions was associated with a series of probes, or exploratory prompts, that was used as needed to encourage the participant to fully describe and discuss their experience. During interview I:

### Preliminary Activities

Prior to beginning the first recorded interview, the following was explained to the participant:

1. Describe the purpose of the research.
2. Describe the participant's role in the research.
3. Describe the study method and confidentiality parameters.
4. Establish pseudonyms for the participant and the organizations.
5. Complete the Informed Consent Form

### *Questions*

To develop a conversational rapport with the participant ask them to respond to the below questions.

1. Tell me about the organization you work for.
2. Tell me about the work you are doing.

### *Exploratory Probes*

If needed to ensure a full response, prompt the participant as necessary:

- How large is your organization?
- How long have you worked for the organization?
- How long have you taught?
- Please describe how you became a teacher.
- Please describe your teaching qualifications through education and training.
- What do you like about teaching adults?
- Please describe your teaching experience.

### Interview Goals

#### *Interview I Goals*

The research objectives and method was explained. Trust was established. A greater familiarity with the participant was developed.

Participant's experiences with hostile resistance to learning in their classroom were explored.

#### Interview II Goals

Continued to explore participant's experiences with hostile resistance to learning.

#### Interview Questions<sup>12</sup>

##### *Questions for Exploration of Resistance*

1. Describe the incident(s) of hostile resistance to learning you have experienced.
2. Explain what you think may have caused this behavior.
3. What did you do or think about after your experience with resistance to learning?
4. What did you learn from your experience with resistance to learning?

##### *Exploratory Probes*

- What form did the resistant behavior take? (attack, diversion, withdrawal)
- What happened/What was it like? How would you describe the events?
- What did you do? (wisdom, understanding, empathy, caring)
- How did it feel from your perspective? (emotions, self-perception, self-confidence)
- How did you react? (assertiveness, authenticity, spontaneity)
- What was most difficult for you?
- What do you think caused the resistant behavior?
- Describe the classroom dynamics before and during the episode. How did you realize that hostile resistance was occurring?
- Describe the duration of the incident, or related occurrences.
- Why do you believe the student(s) chose to behave in a hostile resistant manner?
- How did you explore the issue of resistance to learning?
- What information did you share with a colleague?
- Describe any discussions with your colleagues concerning resistance to learning.
- How do your colleagues describe their experiences? What conversations do you have with your colleagues?
- How could you be better prepared for this experience?
- Could you see this (resistance) building before it happened?
- What do you wish you could have known before you experienced resistance to learning?

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<sup>12</sup> Interview questions were provided in take-away format for further reflection and use by the interviewees during their reviews of interview transcripts.

- What would you have done differently to prevent or ameliorate the hostile behavior?
- Is there anything that has not been discussed that you would like to add, or other comments you would like to make regarding this research?

## Appendix D: Category and Subcategory Code Definitions

Table 3. *Category – Feeling.*

<b>Number</b>	<b>Feeling</b>	<b>The Instructor's emotional response to the hostile behavior.</b>
F1	Anger	The instructor was angered by the hostile behavior.
F2	Fear	The instructor was fearful or felt unsafe, as a result of the hostile behavior
F3	Hurt	The instructor felt emotionally hurt by the hostile behavior
F4	Indifference	The instructor was indifferent; had no particular emotional reaction to the hostile incident.
F5	Personal	Instructor feels the resistant behavior is directed personally at the instructor.
F6	Confused	The instructor felt confused as a result of the resistant behavior, did not understand what was going on.
F7	Stressed	The instructor felt stressed as a result of the resistant behavior.
F8	Cynical	The instructor developed feelings of cynicism toward the resistant student.
F9	Jaded	The instructor felt worn down, hopeless.
F10	Dismissive	The instructor felt no longer invested in finding a solution.
F11	Curious	The instructor found the behavior or reaction curious, unusual, unexpected.
F12	Surprised	The instructor was surprised by the behavior or reaction.

Table 4. *Category – Behavior.*

<b>Number</b>	<b>Behavior</b>	<b>The behavior exhibited by the resistant student.</b>
B1	Attack	Describes participants who directly challenge the instructor's authority, oppose his/her directions or criticize his/her message. "If we refuse to go along with you, that rejection will undermine your confidence and destroy your poise as a leader."
B2	Diversion	Describes participants who initiate their own social interaction independent of that which the instructor is orchestrating for the larger group. "If we can secede from your control, we can encourage others to do likewise."
B3	Intimidation	Resistant student attempts to intimidate the instructor
B4	Predator	Resistant student acts as a predator toward instructor, actively seeking to cause harm to the instructor
B5	Withdrawal	Describes participants who refuse the instructor both verbal and nonverbal response. "If you can't reach us you will fail to teach us."

Table 5. *Category – Conditions.*

<b>Number</b>	<b>Conditions</b>	<b>The immediate circumstances under which the phenomena of interest occurred.</b>
C1	Discussion	Class is engaged in class discussion when the resistant behavior is noted.
C2	e-mail	Resistant behavior is noticed in apparent association with e-mail communications.
C3	Group work	Class is engaged in group-work when the resistant behavior is noted.
C4	Instructor Answer	Resistant behavior is noted in conjunction with the instructor's answer to student questions.
C5	Instructor Question	Resistant behavior is noted in conjunction with instructor questions.
C6	New Learning	Class is engaged in new learning when the resistant behavior is noted.
C7	Silent work	Class is engaged in silent work (desk work) when the resistant behavior is noted.
C8	Student Answer	Resistant behavior is noted in conjunction with student answers to questions.
C9	Student Questions	Resistant behavior is noted in conjunction with student questions.
C10	Supplative	Class is engaged in supplative learning when the resistance occurs.
C11	Talk OOC	Resistant student solicits others to join in resistant behavior through talk outside the classroom; unknown to the instructor.

Table 6. *Category – Outcomes.*

<b>Number</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>The proximate results of taking the action indicated by the selected strategy.</b>
O1	Cease B	Resistant student terminates the resistant behavior as an apparent result of the instructor's mitigating strategy.
O2	Change B	Resistant student changes the resistant behavior as an apparent result of the instructor's mitigating strategy.
O3	Continue B	Resistant student continues the resistant behavior despite the instructor's mitigating strategy.
O4	Drop class	Resistant student drops the class as an apparent result of the instructor's mitigating strategy.
O5	Escalate B	Resistant student escalates the resistant behavior as an apparent response to the instructor's mitigating strategy.
O6	Make Complaint	Resistant student complains to external authority as an apparent result of the instructor's mitigating strategy.
O7	Take Another	Resistant student takes more classes from the same instructor despite, or perhaps as an apparent result of the instructor's mitigating strategy.

<b>Number</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>The proximate results of taking the action indicated by the selected strategy.</b>
O8	Threaten	Resistant student threatens the instructor, e.g., threatens to escalate the action, as an apparent result of the instructor's mitigating strategy.

Table 7. *Category - Class Reaction.*

<b>Number</b>	<b>Class Reaction</b>	<b>The reaction of the class to the resistant behavior that occurs in the classroom.</b>
CR1	Confront OOC	The class reacts to the resistant behavior by confronting the resistor outside the classroom.
CR2	Comfort I	The class reacts to the resistant behavior by expressing support for, or otherwise comforting the instructor.
CR3	Confront R	The class reacts to the resistant behavior by confronting the resistor in the classroom.
CR4	Ignore Resistor	The class reacts to the resistant behavior by ignoring the resistor's behavior.
CR5	Join Resistor	The class reacts to the resistant behavior by joining the resistor in the negative behavior.
CR6	Protest	The class reacts to the resistant behavior by complaining about the resistor's behavior to the instructor or other authority.
CR7	Whine	The class reacts to the resistant behavior by complaining among themselves, about the resistor's behavior.
CR8	Rebuff	The class reacts to the resistor by rebuffing the resistor's overtures

Table 8. *Category – Strategy.*

<b>Number</b>	<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Action taken by the instructor to deal with hostile resistant behavior.</b>
S1	Confront	Strategy to deal with hostile resistant behavior by using the power of the instructor's position to roll over the resistance.
S2	Ignore	Strategy is to ignore the hostile behavior as if it were not occurring.
S3	Join	Strategy to deal with resistance by joining, i.e., exploring the reason for resistance and resolving or mitigating the problem so that the class may continue.
S4	Reason With	Deal with the resistant behavior by attempting to reason

<b>Number</b>	<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Action taken by the instructor to deal with hostile resistant behavior.</b>
		with the student. This is actually dealing with a symptom rather than directly with the behavior. Used because the instructor does not recognize he/she is under attack.
S5	Enlist support	Instructor solicits the aid of the other members of the class to deal with the resistant behavior.
S6	Accommodation	The instructor or organization goes out of their way to accommodate the student's demands

Table 9. *Category - Putative Causes.*

<b>Number</b>	<b>Putative Causes</b>	<b>Potential underlying reasons for resistant student behavior</b>
PC1	Change	Student resists the change represented by learning and the feelings of fear, uncertainty, and inadequacy associated with change.
PC2	Power/Control	The resistant student attempts to exert controlling pressures over the instructor or the class. These pressures are a reflection of efforts to establish individual power, expressed as dominance, influence, and control.
PC3	Emotional IQ	Resistant student displays inadequate levels of self-awareness, self-discipline, or empathy, resisting in inappropriate volitional control.
PC4	Overload	The situation in which a learner has reached the limits of his working memory, due to: information provided at a rate in excess of that which the learner can absorb, or in such quantity that it is simply overwhelming in the limited time provided for assimilation. Student develops a sense of demoralization, frustration, and mental and physical exhaustion, which may trigger hostility and resistant behavior in the student.
PC5	Reactive	Resistant student believes him/herself to be controlled by external circumstances; views each task as a barrier; refuses to acknowledge his/her own responsibility to achieve a given outcome.
PC6	Imposter	The resistant student appears to believe he/she does not belong in a given classroom; reasons include inadequate qualifications or cultural/socio economic issues.
PC7	Defensive Reasoning	Resistant student seeks always to deflect blame elsewhere, to avoid critical examination and thus the possibility of failure.
PC8	Self-Handi-	Resistant student creates a barrier or obstacle to his or her

<b>Number</b>	<b>Putative Causes</b>	<b>Potential underlying reasons for resistant student behavior</b>
	capping	own performance, so that future, anticipated failure can be attributed to the obstacle rather than to lack of ability.
PC9	Perception	Perceptual issues related to culture, gender, age, patterns of think, or other issues contribute to a situation in which the individual's needs are threatened, which will create a reaction likely to be protective, or perceived to be resistant.
PC10	Marginalization	The process through which people's contributions or qualifications are discounted and by implication the people themselves devalued, and moved to the periphery; reactions include resistant behavior.

Table 10. *Category – Anticipation.*

<b>Number</b>	<b>Anticipation</b>	<b>What hints did the instructor observe that allowed prediction of the resistant behavior?</b>
A1	Vocal clues	The instructor was able to anticipate the student's hostile behavior through the student's vocal clues.
A2	Body language	The instructor was able to anticipate the student's hostile behavior through the student's body language.
A3	None	The instructor did not anticipate the hostile behavior.
A4	Noticed Change	The instructor noticed a change in behavior

Table 11. *Category - Lessons Learned.*

<b>Number</b>	<b>Lessons Learned</b>	<b>What did the instructor learn from the experience?</b>
L1	Teaching Style	The instructor has altered teaching style as a result of the experience.
L2	Coping Strategy	The instructor will adopt different strategies for dealing with the resistant student.
L3	Forewarned	The instructor feels forewarned, and will make a specific effort to anticipate the hostile behavior.
L4	No Idea	The instructor, after reflection, does not know what he/she could have done differently to achieve a more favorable outcome.

Table 12. *Category – Support.*

<b>Number</b>	<b>Support</b>	<b>What support did the instructor seek or employ to deal with the immediate or ancillary problems?</b>
SP1	No help	The instructor was unable to find any useful assistance.
SP2	Casual Help	The instructor sought assistance of friends or colleagues.
SP3	Self-Help	The instructor sought assistance by research literature on the subject.
SP4	Formal Help	The instructor was supported by formal processes available through the institution

## Appendix E: Copyright Permissions

16 Wharf St  
Alexandria Va 22314  
22 September 2006

Alexandria Gazette Packet  
104 King St  
Alexandria VA 22314

Re: Request for permission to use copyrighted material

Dear Sir:

I am preparing my doctoral dissertation in the area of Adult Education. I wish to include in the dissertation a copy of two photographs that appeared in the Alexandria Gazette Packet on 24 March 2005. The photographs were contained in an article entitled "Kemler takes seat on circuit court" by M. L. Pope (Pope, 2005) on.

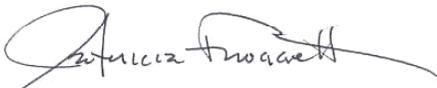
Copyright credit will be acknowledged in a note following each photograph, as shown below, together with the bibliographic citation.

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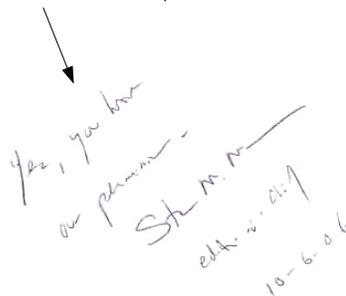
Pope, M. L. (2005, 24 March). Kemler takes seat on circuit court. *Gazett Packet*, pp. 1, 14.

Request your permission to include this material in my dissertation, as described above.

Sincerely,

  
Patricia Froggett

Permission obtained. See  
handwritten note below,  
signed by Steven Mauren,  
Editor in Chief, dated 10/6/06

  
Yes, you have  
our permission -  
Steve M. Mauren  
Editor in Chief  
10-6-06

## Appendix F: Glossary

<b>Term</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
Additive learning	Information that is added, as new information, to the student's body of knowledge (Atherton, 1999).
Awareness	Awareness is a "growing consciousness stemming from the use of all senses..." and "...awareness is the spontaneous sensing of what arises or becomes figural, and it involves direct immediate experience. Introspection, by contrast, is a searching, evaluative process in which parts of the experience are held up for examination – usually with the aim of studying or changing the experience" (Nevis, 1987).
Axial coding	An analytic process in which observed phenomena are organized into categories and subcategories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).
Blank slate	The theory that we have no inherent talents or temperaments because the mind is shaped completely by the environment (Pinker, 2003).
Cognitive overload	Cognitive Overload refers to the situation in which a learner has reached the limits of his working memory (Schunk, 2004).
Convergent/Divergent	<p>Convergent and divergent thinking refers to cognitive styles that may be defined as:</p> <p>Convergent – multiple facts or principles are arrayed against a single topic to determine the correct answer.</p> <p>Divergent – multiple creative concepts are generated and explored (Kolb, 1974).</p>
Defensive behavior	Actions taken when an individual perceives a threat.
Defensive listening	The situation that exists when individuals, feeling threatened, distort the information they are receiving, as well as the motives, values, and emotions of the sender. The receiver then reacts by not hearing the message, by forgetting it, by competing with the sender, or by becoming jealous of him (Gibb, 1974).
Defensive reasoning	A response that screens out criticism, placing blame for failure somewhere else (Argyris, 1991). Attribution of circumstances that reflect badly on the self to external factors so the individual can isolate his self worth through denial (Baumeister, 1994).
Destructive Achiever	A person who employs a corporate management style in which he/she relies on his skills to manipulate and coerce in order to maintain his control. He guards against his vulnerabilities. He is aggressively defensive if threatened, or if he senses a loss of control (Kelly, 1988).
Dynamic assessment	The activity taken by the instructor to assess the effectiveness of the presentation and content of instruction and adjust in real time for better effect.
Educator	A practitioner whose efforts in adult learning are focused on theoretical knowledge, expected to be of use to the student at some future time.

<b>Term</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
Experiential/ intuitive knowledge	Knowledge acquired through experience, or knowledge that the individual holds instinctively.
Fear System (of the brain)	A mechanism that detects danger and produces responses that maximize the probability of surviving a dangerous situation in the most beneficial way (LeDoux, 1996, 2003).
Force Field	An analytic model providing a means of representing the forces acting to alter the current situation (Lewin, 1951).
Formal knowledge	Material learned through formal educational or training courses.
Hostile attack	Describes participants who directly challenge the instructor's authority, oppose your directions or criticize your message. "If we refuse to go along with you, that rejection will undermine your confidence and destroy your poise as a leader" (Pickhardt, 1980).
Hostile diversion	Describes participants who initiate their own social interaction independent of that which the instructor is orchestrating for the larger group. "If we can secede from your control, we can encourage others to do likewise"(Pickhardt, 1980).
Hostile resistance to learning	Behavior in which the learner takes actions to avoid learning, or to prevent others from learning, or to discredit the instructor, or to disrupt the instructors' learning agenda.
Hostile withdrawal	Describes participants who refuse the instructor both verbal and nonverbal response. "If you can't reach us you will fail to teach us" (Pickhardt, 1980).
Imposter Syndrome	A student's belief that he/she does not belong in the classroom in which he has been placed (Brookfield & Preskill, 1999).
Instructor	A person considered fully qualified by an institution to deliver instruction to students; or, a person employed by a corporation or public organization for the purpose of training their employees.
Intelligence (see also Talent)	The ability to solve problems, or to fashion products, that are valued in one or more cultural or community settings (Gardner, 1983).
Locus of control	The terms "Locus of Control" and "Locus of Responsibility" refer to an individual's view of the extent of influence a person exerts over the outcome of their life events, and the degree to which the individual is responsible for achieving those outcomes (Rotter, 1966).
Locus of Responsibility	
Marginalization	Marginalization is the process through which people's contributions or qualifications are discounted and by implication the people themselves devalued, and moved to the periphery (Mezirow, 1991).
Matching/Mismatching	A thinking style that observes similarities (matching), or differences (mismatching) (Dastoor, 1993).
Minds	The abilities and mechanisms that contribute to survival within the organism's specific local environment (Ornstein, 1991).
Moving toward/moving away	Alternate views of human response: moving toward refers to people who work to attain a goal; moving away describes people

<b>Term</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
	who seek to avoid problems (Dastoor, 1993).
New knowledge	Concepts with which the individual is completely unfamiliar.
Open coding	An analytic process to identify phenomena and assign code words representing the phenomena and associated attributes. (Strauss & Corbin, 1998)
Oppositional Defiant Disorder	A current term often applied to hostile resistant behavior (Kohn, 2004).
Options/procedures	Options and procedures refer to the degree to which an individual tends to employ specific predefined problem-solving methods and processes in preference to more ad hoc approaches (Fisher & Ury, 1991).
Power	The right to persuade, manipulate, or coerce others in order to achieve the objectives associated with the power-wielder's superior official status, profession, or role in the informal organization. Power includes a presumption of superiority (Kelly, 1988).
Power Play	A conscious transaction or series of transactions in which one person attempts to control another's behavior (Steiner, 1981).
Practitioner	One who engages in the formal instruction of adults. Synonymous with Instructor.
Proactive/reactive	Opposite ends of the spectrum of action: Proactive people are "self-starters" who initiate actions intended to accomplish an objective. Reactive people believe themselves to be controlled by external circumstances (Covey, 1989; Dastoor, 1993).
Resistance	Any behavior that undercuts the dominant agenda (Grantham, 2000).
Resistance to learning	A refusal to entertain or assimilate information offered as learning material in a formal classroom environment (Atherton, 1999).
Self defeating behavior	Use of counter-productive behaviors such as aggression, withdrawal, and dependence on others as means to protect oneself from humiliation (Curtis, 1994).
Self efficacy	People's beliefs concerning their abilities to exercise control over events that affect their lives (Bandura, 1994).
Self handicapping	Self handicapping is the practice of "creating a barrier or obstacle to one's own performance, so that future, anticipated failure can be attributed to the obstacle rather than to lack of ability" (Baumeister, 1994).
Situational resistance	A reaction provoked by the immediate situation, such as poor physical facilities, course administration, delivery means and teaching methods (Atherton, 1999).
Student	An adult person assumed to have full time employment and to have voluntarily selected, or was assigned to, courses for educational or professional enhancement reasons.
Supplantive learning	Information that replaces knowledge or skills already held (Atherton, 1999).

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<b>Term</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
Talents	The fundamental abilities each human possesses, to a greater or lesser degree, such as the ability to speak fluently or move gracefully (Ornstein, 1991).
Trainer	A practitioner whose efforts in adult learning focus on learning that is directly and immediately applied to the work environment of the student.
Ulterior resistance	Resistance to supplantive learning (Atherton, 1999).

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## VITAE

### Patricia Froggett

16 Wharf Street ♦ Alexandria, VA 22314 ♦ (703) 535-6708

#### Education:

Ph.D., Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Adult Education/HRD. Dissertation: Toward a Deeper Understanding of the Nature of Resistant Behaviors by Adult Learners in Graduate Education. Dissertation defense 4/4/07

M. A., Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Curriculum and Instruction

M. A., Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Administration

Masters Studies, American University, Film and Video Production

B. A., Kean University, Union, New Jersey. Dual majors in English and Education; minor in History

Notary Public for the Commonwealth of Virginia at Large, commission date 12/22/04 to 2/29/08

#### Employment History:

- **University of Virginia, School of Continuing and Professional Studies (SCPS), *Faculty member and Program Director***

Ms. Froggett is a member of the UVA faculty, holding the position of Program Director within SCPS. Ms. Froggett plans, coordinates, and directs the activities of the Northern Virginia Center of UVA within the area of education graduate programs. She manages 74 courses with an enrollment of over 1300 students. She is responsible for courses leading to endorsement in Administration, initial teacher licensure, and Gifted Education, and manages the Administration and Leadership doctoral program. Ms. Froggett develops new programs, initiatives, and business opportunities. She designs courses, develops curriculum, selects instructors, and coordinates interactions with the Curry School of Education in Charlottesville.

- **George Mason University, Office of Adult Learning and Professional Development (OALDP), *Faculty member and Program Development Specialist***

Ms. Froggett was a member of the George Mason University faculty, serving as Program Development Specialist for the Office of Adult Learning and Professional Development (OALDP). Ms. Froggett consulted, coordinated, and collaborated with the public and private schools of the Northern Virginia area, as well as the local Community Services Boards, to meet their graduate education needs. She developed programs of study to meet traditional education needs of the public and private schools, as well as more specialized courses for graduate credit delivered in conjunction with conferences, training projects, and intensified self-study project teams. The magnitude of this activity was such that Ms. Froggett administered the implementation and delivery of over 200 individualized courses of study to approximately seven thousand graduate students annually. She designed task forces from various school systems in order to review and create new courses for mutually identified needs. The course developments she oversaw generally cover the full range of primary and secondary school instruction topics, professional practice for teachers, and certification needs of councilors and drug rehabilitation practitioners. Ms. Froggett designed or reviewed each syllabus, assessing them for rigor of content, adherence to adult learning principles, and credit-worthiness under regional post-graduate college accreditation standards. While the overall flow of activity follows a defined pattern, day-to-day operations were often chaotic, requiring that Ms. Froggett be flexible, agile, capable of effective multi-tasking, and able to make fluid readjustments within the normal work environment.

Ms. Froggett recruited adjunct instructors for George Mason University, and evaluated their capabilities, interests, and suitability for the adult education programs. She collected and maintained basic Human Resource documents. She observed course presentations as they were delivered, evaluated and remediated adjunct instructors as needed. Ms. Froggett provided advice to adjunct instructors regarding George Mason University policy in both academic and legal/ADA contexts. She helped adjunct instructors develop better teaching practices and cope with problematic situations in their classes. Ms. Froggett

monitored office operations in order to ensure the timeliness and accuracy of official documents to and from adjunct instructors.

She taught for the Graduate School of Education in the disciplines of Adult Learning and Instructional Technology.

- **George Mason University and Mary Washington College, *Adjunct Faculty***
- ***Producer and Director Of Edit for a series of nationally televised Public Service Announcements sponsored by the Virginia Literacy Council featuring the Washington Redskins NFL football team.***
- **Central Virginia Educational Telecommunications Corporation, PBS - WNVT 53, *Distance Education Utilization Supervisor***

Ms. Froggett coordinated fourteen school districts in the northern Virginia area with the Public Broadcasting Station (PBS) affiliate WNVT 53. She designed and conducted educational programs for 22,500 teachers in all subject areas and grade levels. She was the regional director for the annual National Teacher Training Institute (NTTI), as well as The Northern Virginia Professional Staff Development Institute for the Humanities. She was a presenter at numerous state and national conventions, speaking primarily in the areas of Instructional Television use and Film and Video production in the public schools.

◆ **Prince William County Schools, Woodbridge, Virginia, *Secondary School Teacher***

Ms. Froggett holds a Virginia Post Graduate Professional Collegiate secondary teaching certifications with endorsements in secondary English, Speech and Drama, Reading, and History. She taught grades 9-12 at northern Virginia High Schools. She developed the Video Production curriculum for Prince William County, provided the necessary documentation for county approval, identified course prerequisites and course material, and taught the initial course within Prince William County. She taught approximately 150 students each day. She was selected Teacher of the Year in 1982. She was awarded a National Endowment of the Arts Fellowship in 1988.

◆ **Prince William County Federation of Teachers, *President***

Ms. Froggett served as President of a professional organization representing the interests and concerns of Prince William County teachers to the County School Board and the school system's senior managers. She planned, organized, and directed the activities of the Federation of Teachers, managed a seventy person volunteer staff, and controlled an annual budget exceeding \$100,000.00. Ms. Froggett conducted an analysis of county educational activities and resources, and developed a detailed report identifying recommended actions for improvement in the areas of technology, information handling, students, staff, safety, and compensation. All but one of the recommendations were adopted by management.

◆ **School Board Selection Committee, *Member representing Supervisors; Cadigan (R), McMannus (D), McQuigg (R), and Jenkins (D)***

Ms. Froggett was requested to provide advice to the Prince William County Supervisors on matters concerning the administration and operation of the County school system. She interviewed candidates for appointment to the Prince William County School Board, assessed their qualifications, and made recommendations for selection.

◆ **Prince William County Commission on Social Services Review, *Member***

At Prince William County government's request, Ms. Froggett served as a member of a commission established to review all social services and social service organizations within Prince William County. In this capacity, she received reports from social service organizations established within the county, reviewed their activities to determine their value, effectiveness, and responsiveness, and located areas of duplication

among the organizations.

◆ **Channel 30 Community Access Television, *Access Director***

Ms. Froggett established and operated the Columbia Cable System Community Access Channel, from its inception through its first five years of operation.

- Developed the rules, regulations, procedures, and other administrative details governing its operation;
- Set up the equipment and facility, including studio, editing, and classroom facilities;
- Expanded the initial equipment outfit with appropriate additional broadcasting, camera, recording and graphic editing equipment, including selection, procurement, and setup of the new hardware and software;
- Developed a comprehensive training curriculum for community users;
- Coordinated, and in most cases taught, the training courses;
- Established a user group, trained them, and coordinated their activities;
- Coordinated with local government agencies, service organizations, community groups, and individual citizens to provide support for their video production requests.

Ms. Froggett established and directed the activities of a video production team, completing over 150 video productions during this five-year period. The team's activities were recognized in regional and national newspapers and professional journals, including the *Washington Post* and the trade journal *Animation*. A promotional short for the *Potomac News* was recognized as the best entry in a statewide news media symposium. A video produced for ORINCON Corporation, dealing with clean up of the Chesapeake Bay, was presented to the Governor of Maryland and later distributed widely within the U.S. Coast Guard and the Environmental Protection Agency.

◆ **Navy Campus for Achievement, Yokosuka, Japan, *Acting Director, Education Specialist***

Ms. Froggett developed policies, procedures, and served as an education counselor for the Navy's program to bring college education opportunities to the personnel attached to approximately one hundred ships operating within the Western Pacific and Indian Oceans. Ms. Froggett identified appropriate curriculum, assigned Department of Defense teachers, presented workshops about education opportunities and counseled active duty Navy personnel concerning this program. She was the Acting Director during the extended absence of the Director.

◆ **Sweetwater Union School System, Chula Vista, California; Middletown Township School System, Middletown Township, New Jersey, *Secondary school teacher***

Ms. Froggett was formally certified to teach, and taught at secondary schools within New Jersey and California.

◆ **Dowling Personnel, Perth Amboy, New Jersey, *Personnel Interviewer and Placement Specialist***

Ms. Froggett conducted interviews of personnel seeking employment, and matched the applicant's qualifications to employment opportunities.

