An Exploration of Occupational Therapy Faculty Perceptions of Student Behaviors

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Abstract

Occupational therapy (OT) graduate students may demonstrate behaviors in their learning that faculty perceive as unprofessional or resistant. Faculty often attribute these behaviors to personality traits or other qualities residing within the student rather than seeing them as a result of a confluence of intrinsic and extrinsic factors, as Tolman and Kremling proposed in the *Integrated Model of Student Resistance* (IMSR). This study examined the perceptions of student resistance to learning by surveying OT faculty teaching in entry-level masters and doctoral programs. Participants completed an anonymous, online survey that used a Likert scale rating to collect data about the frequency of active and passive forms of resistance observed in the classroom. Participants also completed open-ended textual questions about what they believed the cause of these behaviors to be. Fifty-one participants completed the survey. We analyzed the data using descriptive statistics and a qualitative analysis of textual responses was conducted. Results showed that OT faculty did encounter behaviors from students that suggested the presence of resistance to learning as described in Tolman and Kremling's (2017) model. Active and passive behaviors were reported almost equally by participants. Most participants attributed these behaviors to intrinsic factors among students, with few recognizing the role of extrinsic and systemic level factors in causing students to resist learning. While the results of the study affirmed that resistance to learning is present among OT graduate students, OT faculty showed limited awareness of the varied and transactional causes for resistive behaviors. Based on these results, the authors discuss implications for faculty to recognize, prevent, and remediate factors contributing to resistance at the individual, program, and institutional levels. Doing so could better support students and decrease student resistance to learning.

Keywords

Student resistance, classroom management, student behaviors, professionalism, motivation

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ABSTRACT

Occupational therapy (OT) graduate students may demonstrate behaviors in their learning that faculty perceive as unprofessional or resistant. Faculty often attribute these behaviors to personality traits or other qualities residing within the student rather than seeing them as a result of a confluence of intrinsic and extrinsic factors, as Tolman and Kremling proposed in the *Integrated Model of Student Resistance* (IMSR). This study examined the perceptions of student resistance to learning by surveying OT faculty teaching in entry-level masters and doctoral programs. Participants completed an anonymous, online survey that used a Likert scale rating to collect data about the frequency of active and passive forms of resistance observed in the classroom. Participants also completed open-ended textual questions about what they believed the cause of these behaviors to be. Fifty-one participants completed the survey. We analyzed the data using descriptive statistics and a qualitative analysis of textual responses was conducted. Results showed that OT faculty did encounter behaviors from students that suggested the presence of resistance to learning as described in Tolman and Kremling's (2017) model. Active and passive behaviors were reported almost equally by participants. Most participants attributed these behaviors to intrinsic factors among students, with few recognizing the role of extrinsic and systemic level factors in causing students to resist learning. While the results of the study affirmed that resistance to learning is present among OT graduate students, OT faculty showed limited awareness of the varied and transactional causes for resistive behaviors. Based on these results, the authors discuss implications for faculty to recognize, prevent, and remediate factors contributing to resistance at the individual, program, and institutional levels. Doing so could better support students and decrease student resistance to learning.

Introduction

In occupational therapy (OT) programs and throughout the higher education system, educators encounter behaviors from students that they might label as resistance. At times, these actions - such as not preparing for class, asking for additional points or extra credit, and taking over or withdrawing from group work (Tolman, Sechler, & Smart, 2017a) - may be perceived by faculty as unprofessional and associated with students' lack of readiness or knowledge of the expectations of graduate school (Falk-Kessler, 2019; Tolman, Sechler, & Smart, 2017b). Other times, faculty recognize that students may have outside responsibilities that make it difficult for them to approach learning differently, but they stop there in their analysis, concluding it is up to the student to change their behavior to engage more productively in their learning (Tolman, Sechler, & Smart, 2017b). In both of these interpretations, faculty view the resistance as residing within the student. Consequently, they often address it as such - with advising meetings, feedback focused on professionalism, and even the use of professional behavior plans (Falk-Kessler, 2019; Reiter et al., 2018).

In their 2017 book, editors Tolman and Kremling proposed a model for understanding student behaviors differently. Titled the *Integrated Model of Student Resistance* (IMSR; see Figure 1), this model defined student resistance as "the outcome or result of a confluence of forces, including institutional context, faculty attitudes and behaviors, faculty reactions to student behaviors, and powerful forces that drive and shape student expectations and reactions" (Tolman, Sechler, & Smart, 2017a, p. 2). Rather than a collection of misbehaviors, resistance can be considered to be a motivational state resulting from the dynamic interaction of these forces (Tolman, Sechler, & Smart, 2017a). From this more transactional perspective, resistance may be viewed as a signal to the instructor to look for systemic factors that can be addressed to better support and engage students, rather than being an obstacle to learning that exists within the student. In other words, resistance is seen as a *state* caused by the interaction of many factors rather than as a *trait* existing within a student (Tolman, Sechler, & Smart, 2017a).

According to the IMSR as described by Tolman, Sechler, and Smart (2017a), students may express resistance in both active and passive forms. Active resistance uses more direct action that can be seen as assertive or even confrontational. Passive resistance does not involve direct interaction with the faculty member, but instead involves attempts to assert autonomy or preserve the self through pushing back against external forces. The form that students use to express resistance may depend "on the student's background or possibly the institutional culture, including the classroom" (p. 7).

The IMSR details five factors that interact to contribute to student resistance (Tolman, Sechler, & Smart, 2017a). These factors are identified as either intrinsic or extrinsic to the student, with the recognition that resistance does not arise from just one place, but rather from a dynamic interaction between students' internal characteristics and the external contexts in which they live and learn. The internal factors are metacognition and cognitive development. Factors external to the student such as environmental and cultural forces (such as work, family, disabilities, and bias and discrimination), institutional practices, and students' own negative classroom experiences "may interact

with student characteristics or may directly shape student expectations, generate or create stress, and/or compete for student attention and resources" (p. 12). There is a growing body of literature available suggesting that all of these factors exist within the lives and learning environments of students enrolled in graduate-level healthcare programs. In fact, this student population has unique needs and challenges that faculty and administrators must consider as part of a holistic approach to understanding, reducing, and addressing resistance to learning.

Figure 1

Diagram of the Integrated Model of Student Resistance (IMSR)
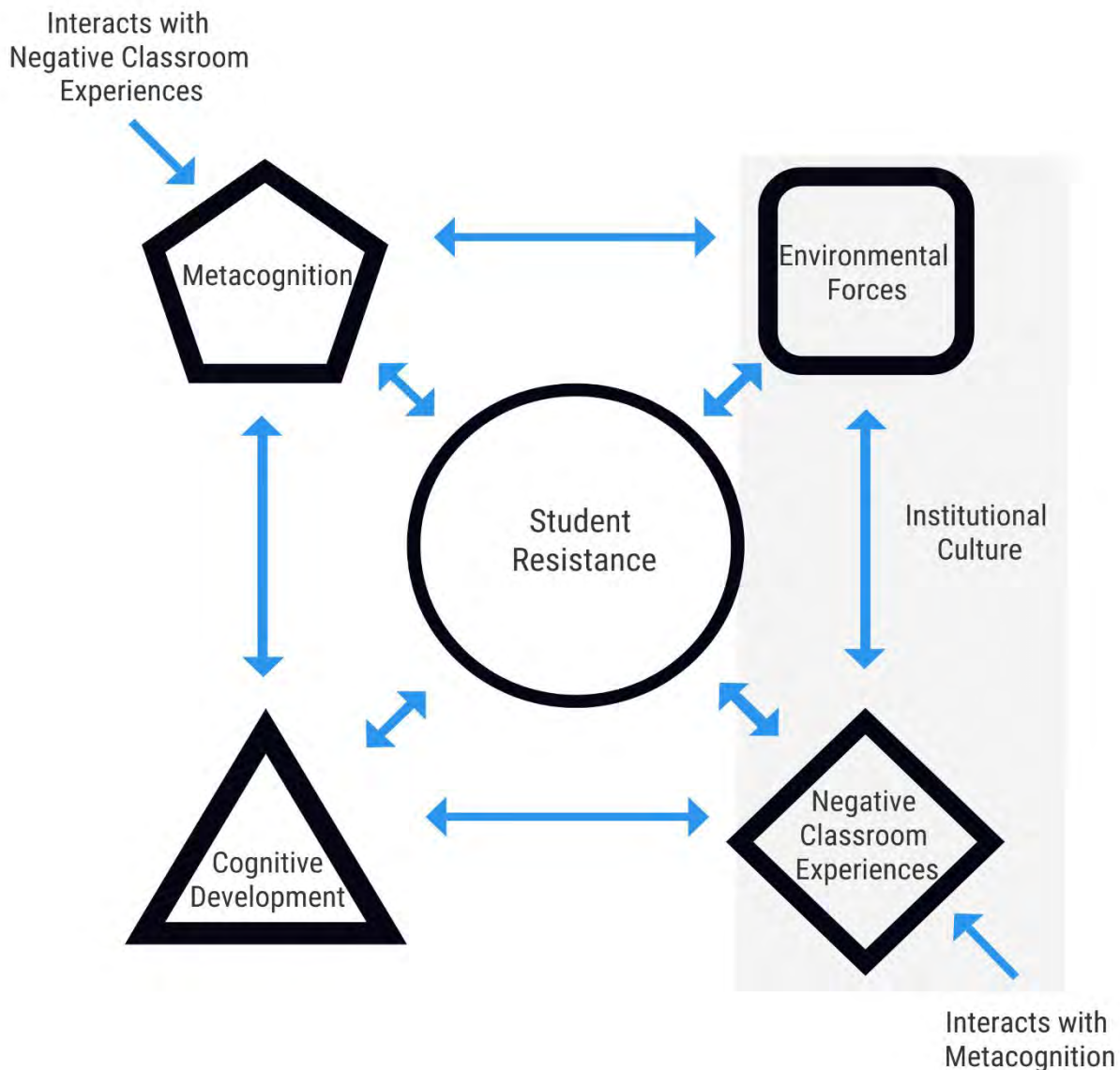
Adapted from *Why Students Resist Learning: A Practical Model for Understanding and Helping Students,* by Anton O. Tolman and Janine Kremling, p. 13. Copyright 2017 by Stylus Publishing. Reprinted with permission.

Therefore, this study explores the different forms of resistance that serve as barriers to student learning in this student population and seeks to understand OT faculty members' perceptions of the reasons why students exhibit behaviors suggestive of resistance. Determining the frequency that faculty observe these student behaviors, as well as if this resistance is most often expressed in active or passive forms, may offer insight into the typical presentation and level of resistance to learning present within this student population. Exploring faculty's perceptions of the reasons for these behaviors may provide an understanding of their awareness of the complex processes and contributors to resistance. With that improved understanding, students, faculty, and institutions can then work to minimize resistance and increase learning for OT students.

Literature Review

The concept of student resistance has not been explored among OT graduate students nor students within other graduate-level healthcare programs. Therefore, no information is available regarding the frequency or type of behaviors suggestive of resistance exhibited by OT students and/or observed by OT faculty. Despite this, many of the factors identified by Tolman, Sechler, and Smart (2017a) in the IMSR have been well-documented in literature pertaining to healthcare students, suggesting that contributors to resistance exist within this population and their learning contexts.

External Factors

Environmental Forces

The first external factor identified in the IMSR is environmental forces (Tolman, Sechler, & Smart, 2017a), which involves the students' cultural and family background and identities, as well as outside obligations such as needing to work or care for others. In addition, students' experiences of racism, microaggressions, and other forms of discrimination both in and out of the school setting are considered environmental forces within the IMSR, as are disabilities and other health-related issues. Literature on adult students in healthcare graduate programs confirms that students often experience competing life roles and mental health challenges (Benshoff et al., 2015; El-Awaisi et al., 2021). Benshoff et al. (2015) identified that role strain is especially prevalent for some adult students, and El-Awaisi et al. (2021) found that graduate healthcare students may experience language, information, and gender barriers.

Negative Classroom Experiences

The second external factor within the IMSR is negative classroom experiences (Tolman, Sechler, & Smart, 2017a). In the chapter from Tolman and Kremling's edited book, Kremling et al. (2017) described negative classroom experiences as involving "poor student-teacher interaction" (p. 129), teacher non-immediacy (e.g., teachers who do not respond to students' questions or appear absent-minded) and teacher misbehavior (e.g., being disorganized or unprepared, or offending one or more students), and/or students' past negative experiences with an instructor's selected teaching methods (such as collaborative work). Such experiences are not well-documented in the OT education literature, though Malek-Ismail and Krajnik (2018) mentioned "faculty barriers" (p. 1) as a contributing factor to OT student stress during the transition to graduate

school. One example the authors provide is the students' belief that "faculty intentionally planned for many assignments to be due at the same time" (Malek-Ismail & Krajnik, 2018, p. 10). Such a perception - even if unfounded - could be considered a negative classroom experience by students. Malek-Ismail and Krajnik (2018) also reported that the OT students they interviewed cited group work as a distractor causing excessive worry and stress.

Institutional Culture

In the IMSR, environmental forces and negative classroom experiences interact with and occur within institutional culture, which is identified as the third external factor contributing to student resistance (Tolman, Sechler, & Smart, 2017a). Institutional culture relates to institutional values, practices, and priorities, all of which may impact students in direct and indirect ways (Kremling & Brown, 2017). When considering the institutional culture of healthcare programs, it is important to note that students in healthcare education experience a particularly high stakes learning environment with stressful and often unpredictable working conditions (Rusticus et al., 2021). Specific to OT, Malek-Ismail and Krajnik (2018) studied entry-level OT students to understand their adjustment to graduate school in the first semester, and identified social and environmental barriers as causes of students' stress and anxiety. These barriers include high workload within the program and the challenges of learning a new discipline.

Internal Factors

Cognitive Development

Cognitive development is considered to be an internal factor in the IMSR (Tolman, Sechler, & Smart, 2017). This factor relates to students' development of the ability to think flexibly and to use critical thinking and reasoning skills. In a 2015 study, Benshoff et al. identified that approaches to learning and time management that might have worked well for students in undergraduate studies may need to be reexamined and relearned for success at the graduate level, requiring students to both identify this need and creatively problem-solve to develop new approaches. In a study examining the development of clinical reasoning in a doctor of physical therapy (DPT) program, Furze et al. (2015) found that at the beginning of the program, students demonstrated rigid and compartmentalized thinking, and by the end of the program, most had become entry-level practitioners capable of dynamic, creative, flexible, integrated thinking. However, the authors noted that some outlier cases persisted with beginner thinking even at the end of the program, suggesting that not all students develop these abilities at the same rate. Those students who do not move away from the rigid and compartmentalized thinking they entered the program with may be those whose cognitive development contributes to resistance to learning consistent with the IMSR.

Metacognition

Metacognition, the final internal factor in the IMSR, involves self-awareness and regulation of one's thinking (Blair et al., 2017). Tolman and Kremling's work linked mindset to metacognition with the recognition that mindset is influenced by "a large number of factors, all of which are part of the [IMSR]" (Blair et al., 2017, p. 168).

Although difficult to pinpoint in the literature regarding healthcare students, a review of the literature regarding mindset in students in health professions programs "showed variability in growth and fixed mindsets across participants" (Wolcott et al., 2021, p. 433). Given the fact that adjusting to graduate-level learning requires cognition, metacognition, and a growth mindset, that healthcare students show variability in growth mindset suggests that this adjustment process may result in resistance in some students. Metacognition is also described as "people's abilities to predict their performances on various tasks and to monitor their current levels of mastery and understanding" (Bransford et al., 2000, as cited in Blair et al., 2017, p. 165). Therefore, it is required for students to accurately self-reflect and assess their own learning and performance. Gabbard and Romanelli's 2021 systematic review suggested few correlations between self-perception and competence in health professions students, suggesting that metacognition may not be fully developed in these students as evidenced by their inability to accurately assess their own performance.

Methodology

Study Design
The study design involved the use of a confidential online survey. The purpose of the survey was to collect information from OT educators about the different forms and frequency of student behaviors that they observed in the classroom with entry-level graduate OT students, as well as faculty perceptions of the causes of these behaviors. The student behaviors examined represent active and passive forms of student resistance that instructors face in the course of their teaching, as defined by Tolman, Sechler, and Smart (2017a). The study was approved by Pacific University's Institutional Review Board. Participants who met eligibility criteria completed a modified informed consent form before answering survey questions.

Participants
We disseminated the survey to OT faculty members across the country, sending an invitation to complete the survey to OT programs using American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) professional community forums (CommunOT), professional social media groups on Facebook and LinkedIn, and the Program Director listserv with a request to distribute the survey to OT faculty. We designed the invitation in the form of a digital handout that contained the link to the survey along with an easy-access QR code.

The eligibility criteria for participation included faculty members teaching entry-level masters or entry-level doctorate OT students in the United States. Faculty members with at least one year of teaching experience and whose job duties included at least 50 percent of teaching responsibilities were included in the study. Since faculty members whose primary responsibilities include fieldwork or capstone coordination face student resistance stemming from sources unique to the clinical nature of those positions, we excluded them from this particular study. To maintain homogeneity of the data collected, we also excluded faculty teaching post-professional OT students or in OT assistant programs.

Instrument
We created the survey instrument using the online survey tool, Qualtrics. The survey included demographic information, 16 close-ended Likert-scale questions and 2 open-ended questions. Demographic information collected included information related to faculty status such as academic title, number of years in academia, type of institution (public, private non profit, private for profit) and type of program (primarily online, primarily in-person or hybrid). In addition, we collected demographic data around ethnicity and gender identity with an option to opt out of answering the same. Information collection was anonymous, and we obtained no personally-identifying information.

The survey prompted participants to reflect on the most recent semester in which they taught at least one course and to indicate how often they had encountered the particular behavior on a Likert scale of increasing frequency, ranging from 'Did not encounter at all' to 'Encountered daily or several times a week'. The questions related to behaviors encountered were divided into active resistance items (9) and passive resistance items (7). These items were derived from the 'Forms of Student Resistance Matrix' (Table 1.1; p. 6) in *Why Students Resist Learning: A Practical Model for Understanding and Helping Students* by editors Tolman and Kremling (2017), and were used with permission from Dr. Anton Tolman and the publisher. In addition, using text boxes, the survey asked participants to reflect upon the factors to which they attributed these active and passive behaviors.

Prior to distribution, we asked IMSR creator Dr. Anton Tolman and an OT faculty colleague familiar with the IMSR to review the survey for face validity and accuracy. In addition, we involved several current OT faculty in reviewing the survey to ensure that directions were clear and items were understandable. Please refer to Appendix A for a copy of the instrument, titled 'Faculty Perceptions of Student Behaviors.'

Data Collection
Data collection commenced as soon as Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained, with the survey link and QR code posted on aforementioned avenues. We obtained informed consent from participants undertaking the survey and estimated that participants would need 10-15 minutes to complete the questionnaire. We reposted the survey at the one-month mark to serve as a reminder and to recruit additional participants. The survey was open for a total of 2 months.

Data Analysis
We entered quantitative data from the survey in an Excel spreadsheet for analysis, and conducted the analysis primarily using descriptive statistics. To facilitate analysis, we collapsed the Likert-scale categories to create frequency distribution tables for active and passive behavior items respectively. Each table represents information about the percentage of participants who 'Did not encounter,' 'Encountered less frequently (1-5

times a semester),' or 'Encountered more frequently (1-5 times a week)' for each of the items. In addition, we calculated the mean and standard deviations scores for each of the active and passive behavior items. We then analyzed the data trends to answer the research question.

Regarding the open-ended comments that participants entered into the text boxes, each author reviewed these separately, then we compared our codes to reach consensus in determining trends in reasoning presented by participants to what they attributed student resistance to learning.

Results

Participant Demographics

51 participants completed the entire survey questionnaire, with a few missing data points in the demographics section which has been accounted for and represented in Tables 1, 2 and 3.

Table 1

Personal Demographic Characteristics of the Participants Including Gender and Ethnicity

Gender	N=50*	Percentage
Male	2	4
Female	48	96
Ethnicity	**N=51**	**Percentage**
White	46	90.2
Black AA	2	3.92
Prefer not to answer	3	5.88

*Missing data point for gender for 1 participant

Table 2

Professional Demographics of the Participants Including Number of Years in Academia, Professional Background, and Faculty Status

Faculty status	N=50[*]	Percentage
Full time	44	88
Part time	2	4
Adjunct	4	8
Highest Education Level	**N=50[*]**	**Percentage**
Master's	5	10
OTD (entry level)	7	14
OTD (post prof)	17	34
EdD	2	4
DHSc	1	2
PHD	18	36
Current Academic Title	**N=51**	**Percentage**
Assistant Professor	17	33.33
Clinical Assistant Professor	12	23.53
Associate Professor	6	11.76
Clinical Associate Professor	4	7.84
Professor	4	7.84
Lecturer/ Instructor	3	5.88
Adjunct	2	3.92
No answer	3	5.88
Years in academia	**N=51**	**Percentage**
1-3	12	23.53
4-6	13	25.5
7-10	8	15.69
10 <	18	35.3

[#]Missing data point for faculty status and highest level of education for 1 participant

Table 3

Characteristics of the Participants' Institutions

Institution Type	N=51	Percentage
Private not profit	20	39.22
Private for profit	11	21.57
State	19	37.25
Other	1	1.96
Program Format	**N=51**	**Percentage**
Online	1	1.96
In person	44	86.27
Hybrid	6	11.76

This is consistent with the faculty make-up across the country reported by the Academic Programs Annual Data Report for the academic year 2020-21 (AOTA, 2022).

Quantitative Analysis

Active Resistance Items
Tolman, Sechler, and Smart (2017a), defined active resistance as a motivational strategy demonstrated by students to express their frustrations and anxieties using assertive or direct actions, including confrontations. The survey asked participants to respond to their experience with different active resistance behaviors using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Did not encounter to 5 = Encountered daily or several times a week. We created frequency distribution tables by merging ratings of 2 and 3 to be represented by 'Less frequent' (1-5 times a semester) and merging 4 and 5 ratings to 'More frequent' (1-5 times a week) in the table below (see Table 4).

Table 4

Participants' Responses to The Items on the Active Resistance Items
(N=51)

Active Resistance Items	Not Encountered (%)	Less frequent (%)	More frequent (%)	Mean Score (S.D)
Students arguing or disagreeing with the professor.	41.18	56.86	1.96	1.78 (0.77)
Students repeatedly asking for the rationale for assignments.	37.25	56.86	7.84	1.96 (0.97)
Students saying they paid for the class and want it taught how they like.	80.39	17.65	1.96	1.27 (0.63)
Students inciting other students; disrupting class activities.	66.67	29.41	3.92	1.47 (0.78)
Students complaining to higher authority.	47.06	52.94	0	1.59 (0.6)
Students repeatedly asking for detailed clarification of grading criteria.	13.73	62.74	23.53	2.63 (1.1)
Students taking over group assignments to ensure an adequate grade.	13.73	78.43	7.84	2.51 (0.87)
Students arguing with the professor over grades received.	15.69	72.54	11.54	2.29 (0.87)
Students focusing on surface approach to learning.	7.84	49.02	43.14	3.25 (1.08)

The items that scored high include 'Students focusing on surface approach to learning' with an average score of 3.25 and 43.14% of the participants indicating they encountered it frequently. In this context, surface learning refers to an attempt to simply avoid failure or get through a course by memorizing or focusing only on what the instructor wants rather than using intrinsic motivation in an attempt to actively understand and apply course content in meaningful and relevant ways (Tolman & Kremling, 2017, see Appendix). Items related to assignments and grades such as

'Students repeatedly asking for detailed clarification of grading criteria' had a mean score of 2.63 and 23.53% of the participants indicating they had encountered it more frequently. Item 'Students arguing with the professor over grades received; seeking additional points or consideration' also had 11.54% of the participants indicating they encountered it more frequently. 'Students saying they paid for the class and want it taught how they like' was the item least encountered by participants with 80.39% of the participants indicating they did not encounter it at all.

Passive Resistance Items
Passive resistance is the motivational state where students may not engage in confrontation but instead withdraw from the learning environment in order to assert their autonomy or preserve self (Tolman, Sechler, & Smart, 2017a).

Similar to the Active Resistance Items, we created frequency distribution tables by merging ratings of 2 and 3 to be represented by 'Less frequent' (1-5 times a semester) and merging 4 and 5 to 'More frequent' (1-5 times a week) in Table 5.

Table 5

Participants' Responses to the Items on the Passive Resistance Items (N=51)

Passive Resistance Items	Not Encountered (%)	Less Frequent (%)	More Frequent (%)	Mean Score (S.D)
Students refusing to come to class.	80.39	17.65	1.96	1.25 (0.59)
Students refusing to participate during in-class exercises.	68.63	27.45	3.92	1.43 (0.75)
Students failing to turn in or being consistently late with assignments.	31.37	64.7	3.92	1.86 (0.74)
Students complaining about the professor to other students.	31.37	62.75	5.88	2.06 (0.89)
Students expressing concerns about working with others.	9.8	88.24	1.96	2.31 (0.67)
Students avoiding conflicts and refusing to resolve situations.	25.49	68.63	3.92	2.1(0.89)
Students minimally participating in class.	7.84	50.98	41.18	3.16 (1.19)

Some of the items that scored higher included 'Students minimally participating in class,' with a mean score of 3.16 and 41.18% of the participants indicating they encountered it more frequently and only 7.48% indicating they had never encountered it. Other items such as 'Students failing to turn in or being consistently late with assignments' (64.7%), 'Students complaining about the professor to other students' (62.75) were reported by participants as having experienced about 1-5 times a semester. Other behaviors related to group work such as 'Students expressing concerns about working with others' (88.24%) and 'Students avoiding conflicts and refusing to resolve situations or bring them to the professor's awareness' (68.63%) were also reported by participants as having experienced 1-5 times a semester. The item that scored the lowest was 'Students refusing to come to class' with a mean score of 1.25 and 80.39% of the participants indicating they had never encountered it.

Overall, participants reported passive resistance behaviors to a slightly lesser degree than active resistance behaviors as an average of 8.96% participants reported observing these behaviors 'more frequently' as compared to 11.30% of participants reporting active behaviors 'more frequently.' Figure 2 shows a comparison of the frequency totals between active and passive behaviors.

Figure 2

Comparison Between Active and Passive Behaviors Encountered by Participants
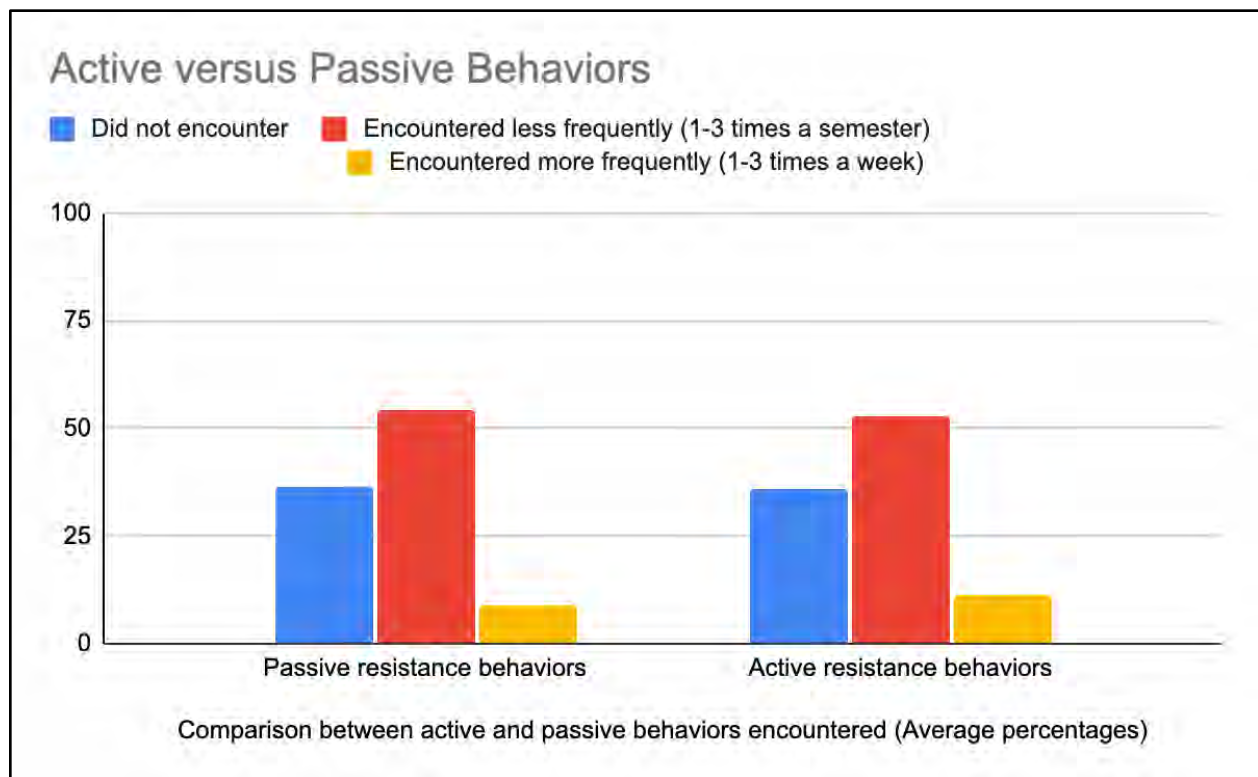
Themes from Open-Ended Questions
Following the items addressing active and passive resistance behaviors, the survey asked participants to provide textual answers to the question, 'When you observe students engaging in the behaviors addressed in the survey, to what do you typically attribute them? Please list the top 3 factors that you believe contribute to these behaviors.' This question targeted faculty members' experience of resistance in general, and did not specify whether the resistance was actively or passively expressed.

In response to this question, stress and anxiety were the most commonly encountered factors to which participants attributed resistant behaviors. Other factors that were mentioned by multiple participants included inadequate undergraduate preparation, lack of maturity and entitlement, and being too focused on grades. In addition, some responses cited inadequate faculty support in the form of unclear assignment expectations and burnout among faculty members themselves. Other factors that participants described include large class sizes, "ever expansion of ACOTE [Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education] standards of required content," disinterest in the subject matter, lack of motivation, and students being used to "instant gratification." A few comments also attributed increased negative behaviors due to a shift to remote learning during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Discussion
The primary focus of the study was to determine OT faculty's perceptions of student resistance in the classroom. The results from the survey clearly indicate that OT faculty do encounter forms of both active and passive student resistance to learning in the course of their teaching. Responses to the open-ended questions suggest that faculty tend to attribute resistance to either intrinsic or extrinsic factors, but not both, failing to reflect the dynamic nature of resistance as proposed within the IMSR.

Discussion of Quantitative Results
Quantitative analysis showed that relative to other behaviors, participants indicated that students demonstrated higher incidences of resistive behaviors related to grades and assignment clarification. Items related to group work and resolving conflicts also scored higher on the survey. That student behaviors and attitudes suggesting resistance would focus on these topics appears consistent with previous literature identifying that grades, assignments, and group work are sources of stress for OT students, especially in the beginning of a program (Malek-Ismail & Krajnik, 2018).

Connections Between Quantitative Results and Open-Ended Responses
While participants reported higher levels of behaviors focused on grades and assignments, many of the reasons faculty gave as causes of student resistance did not adequately express the root cause of the issue. For example, the response that students are used to "instant gratification" does not clearly account for why this is the case or how this might lead to such a focus on grades and assignments. While the need

for "instant gratification" could be considered to be related to students' cognitive development (Tolman, Sechler, & Smart, 2017a), it is possible that faculty members who observe this in students do not realize that their cognitive development may not have allowed them to develop more delayed gratification.

The results suggesting that resistance is related to collaborative work and active learning strategies are consistent with previous studies, including Shekhar et al. in 2015 and Stover and Holland in 2018. However, participants' responses to our open-ended questions failed to capture what is likely a dynamic interaction between intrinsic and extrinsic factors that leads to this resistance. For example, student biases and negative experiences with collaborative work are discussed in the IMSR, with the recognition that this factor interacts with institutional culture and environmental forces such as student-to-student microaggressions (Kremling et al., 2017). None of these factors or anything similar to them were identified in the analysis of participants' open-ended responses.

Discussion of Open-Ended Responses
Further examination of participants' open-ended responses yielded a somewhat more holistic but still incomplete view of the possible reasons for resistance in entry-level OT students as determined by faculty. Responses appeared primarily consistent with one of the following themes: 1) personal factors residing within students, 2) concrete factors resulting from but not directly related to factors identified in the IMSR, and 3) individual factors within the IMSR. As identified above, all of these fail to reflect the dynamic nature of resistance as proposed within the IMSR.

Theme 1: Personal Factors Residing within Students
While individual responses cannot be clearly categorized into the five factors identified with the IMSR due to the transactional nature of resistance, it does appear that a fair number of the comments received indicated that OT faculty commonly assumed that resistance arose from more intrinsic factors, such as lack of maturity and motivation, entitlement, and focus on grades. This is consistent with Tolman, Sechler, and Smart's (2017) assertion that faculty often believe that resistance emerges from internal sources and "the choice to resist is grounded in an individual decision by a student for personal reasons" (p. 9). However, "this interpretation omits contextual factors that may also be influencing the student[s'] behavior, including the influence of [their] peers, the institutional context of [their] college, and the instructor[s'] own behaviors" (p. 9).

Theme 2: Concrete Factors
Responses indicated that entry-level OT faculty did recognize the stress and anxiety that OT students face, many of whom were often juggling multiple responsibilities while attending graduate school (Benshoff et al., 2015). However, responses did not identify the varied and dynamic causes of stress and anxiety reflected within the IMSR. Notably, the IMSR labels the multiple roles and responsibilities as environmental forces, with the stress and anxiety that students experience actually arising from an interaction between these extrinsic forces and the students' intrinsic cognitive development and metacognitive abilities. In fact, the transactional nature of the IMSR makes it nearly impossible to separate these factors into distinct categories, as it is only when the

demands of the student's environment interact with their internal traits and abilities that resistance is generated and then expressed. Open-ended responses did not reflect that resistance occurs as a result of this dynamic interaction.

Theme 3: Individual Factors within the IMSR

Some participants did appear to consider extrinsic factors impacting student behavior in the classroom, such as large class sizes, ACOTE content requirements, unclear assignment directions, and faculty burnout. While this demonstrates that some OT faculty do recognize the important impact that forces outside the students themselves may have on student learning and resistance, this interpretation still falls short in that it does not take into account how these extrinsic factors interact with individual students' metacognition and cognitive development in complex and transactional ways.

General Discussion

Overall, it would appear that OT faculty members' views of resistance as identified by this survey were limited in several ways. First, the assumption that students resist learning simply because of intrinsic factors fails to account for the fact that OT students' experiences likely include many factors outside of their control, including role strain (Benshoff et al., 2015), racial bias, stereotype threat, and "social, environmental, and faculty barriers" (Malek-Ismail & Krajnik, 2018, p. 1). In addition, even consideration of extrinsic factors requires a more holistic view of how and why resistance occurs to include intrinsic factors, which can explain why one student with certain lived experience and classroom context may resist learning while another in a similar situation does not. Lastly, faculty may be stopping prematurely in their analysis of factors that may contribute to student resistance to learning, identifying factors that may actually be the result of a cause rather than the cause itself. Seeking to understand why students are focused on grades, lack motivation, or seem entitled may assist faculty in recognizing the true contributors to student resistance.

Implications for OT Education

Tolman, Sechler, and Smart (2017a) asserted that "student resistance to learning is possibly the greatest challenge to the effectiveness of institutions of higher education" (p. 52) and go on to claim that "if students are not learning, then the financial, moral, and emotional costs of higher education have no value" (p. 52). The results of our survey indicated that OT faculty encounter student resistance on a regular basis, and given the claims made by Tolman and his colleagues (2017), Tagg (2003), and others regarding the repercussions of resistance, it is critical that OT educators identify, understand, and work to prevent or minimize its effects.

Identify Resistance

It is important to note that some behaviors suggestive of student resistance could be viewed by OT faculty as unprofessional and may therefore be addressed as such by individual faculty members as well as program administrators. Interestingly, in the chapter addressing professionalism in *Willard and Spackman's Occupational Therapy* (13th ed.), one of OT's seminal texts, author Falk-Kessler (2019) outlined several student behaviors that may be viewed as unprofessional based on generational

expectations. Sample scenarios depicting these behaviors include, "A student earned a 94 on a case study. She made an appointment with her professor to complain because she felt she deserved a higher grade" and "A student complained to the administration that faculty won't let them redo assignments for a better grade" (p. 561). In this context, both of these behaviors are attributed to students' generational backgrounds and are labeled as unprofessional actions for students to take in an academic context, similar to the views of Reiter et al. (2018) in their article addressing professionalism in relation to generational groups.

When faculty view these and other behaviors in this way, it seems likely they will then be addressed as individual issues arising from within individual students, perhaps in advising or other such processes focused on developing professional behaviors. Tolman, Sechler, and Smart (2017a) pointed out that "adopting a self-action explanation might lead the instructor to respond in such a way that the student's resistance may continue or even increase" (p. 9), as it can contribute to students' negative feelings toward faculty (negative classroom experiences) and ignores the reality that some students experience systemic and institutional discrimination and other barriers. Thus, it is critical that OT educators recognize both active and passive behaviors that may suggest resistance, being careful to avoid mis-labeling them as unprofessional or taking action that suggests that the behaviors are independent from the context in which they arise.

Understand Resistance

Recognize that Resistance is a Signal
When faculty view behaviors suggesting resistance as unprofessional and/or arising from within individual students, they fail to recognize that the behaviors serve as communication rather than as a barrier to communication (Tolman, Sechler, & Smart, 2017a). Explaining resistance as a barrier to learning that resides within students can lead to it being addressed at the individual level or not at all. Instructors who respond to resistance in a way that omit consideration of the extrinsic factors at play, and their responses may actually serve to continue or even increase the level of resistance demonstrated by students. Thus, it is critical that instructors recognize that resistance is a signal to evaluate and address the existence of underlying factors interacting in a dynamic way to contribute to students resisting learning opportunities.

Recognize that Factors Contributing to Resistance are Dynamic and Transactional
Rather than thinking about individual factors in students' lives and personalities that may contribute to barriers to learning, the IMSR prompts faculty to recognize that the individual elements of the model interact in dynamic and transactional ways. This means that "all elements of the IMSR…interact to either generate student resistance or to reduce it" (Tolman, Sechler, & Smart, 2017a, p. 12). Faculty who understand resistance in this more complex way are better able to assess the elements of the system in students in order to select effective strategies for intervention (Tolman, Sechler, & Smart, 2017a).

Recognize that Resistance is Inevitable

The IMSR also prompts faculty to recognize that resistance is inevitable and to plan for how to respond to it when it is encountered. Rather than being a fatalistic view of this phenomenon, this proactive and realistic approach leaves room for faculty to acknowledge - and even account for - the fact that students have complex lives and learning needs, and factors beyond their control affect the student experience and student outcomes. Approached in this way, efforts to reduce resistance can be targeted at structural and systemic factors rather than individual students, which is often more time-efficient and cost-effective. Such efforts and their resulting decrease in the sometimes-problematic behaviors associated with resistance have been shown to boost faculty motivation and joy in teaching (Barr & Tagg, 1995), effectively avoiding or reducing faculty burnout.

Prevent and Respond to Resistance

Target Select Elements with Interventions

While it is not possible for faculty to modify each and every systemic factor that leads to resistance, the good news is that this is not required to effect change. Tolman, Sechler, and Smart (2017a) wrote, "Because systemic or transactional interactions are interdependent, interventions do not need to target every single element in the system to achieve a change" (p. 13). Instead, faculty and administrators who understand the IMSR can assess the elements that may contribute to resistance in students, recognize the factors that may be at play for each student and within their student population at large, and can intentionally target select elements for intervention (Tolman, Sechler, & Smart, 2017a).

Intervention Examples

For example, faculty may provide activities, resources, and support to influence intrinsic factors such as metacognition in order to decrease the incidence of resistance among their students. Alternatively, faculty may choose to look at extrinsic factors affecting more than just individual students to create a program climate that reduces resistance by lessening the impact of the IMSR's extrinsic factors (Tolman, Kremling, & Radmall, 2017). Interventions addressing these factors include updating program policies and practices to acknowledge and account for the role strain that many students experience; adopting anti-racist, student-centered policies that mitigate the effect of implicit bias on student outcomes; developing an orientation and/or advising process that develops student-faculty relationships and prepares students to adjust to more active, student-centered instruction (Barnes & Parish, 2017; Dulek et al., 2023; Kranzow & Hyland, 2016); and providing support for faculty development, including supportive, non-punitive peer reviews of teaching to improve rapport and classroom practices (Kremling & Brown, 2017; Kremling et al., 2017).

Changing Perceptions of Student Behavior: An Example

To illustrate how the IMSR may assist faculty and administrators in identifying and responding to student resistance, we have developed a sample case based on the results of our survey. One response to the open-ended question indicated that students

"lack motivation," suggesting that it is the students themselves choosing to resist learning due to their personality traits or other internal factors. The IMSR prompts us to interpret the situation in a more nuanced way.

Consider a situation in which a student provides superficial responses on an assignment, and the faculty member first perceives this as a lack of motivation. However, knowledge of the IMSR then prompts them to view the lack of motivation as the expression of resistance rather than its cause, and perhaps they identify that the assignment instructions were somewhat unclear. Understanding the dynamic nature of resistance as depicted by the IMSR, the faculty member might then realize that it is unlikely that unclear assignment instructions alone would cause this student to resist learning in this way. But for a student who has a busy schedule that includes work and family responsibilities, and who lacks understanding about the relevance of the assignment to their future practice (which requires metacognition), those unclear assignment instructions would certainly be more likely to contribute to resistance.

More likely is a situation similar to what is depicted in Figure 3, in which a student does not see the value of an assignment or course due to a combination of the student's own lack of metacognition and perhaps the faculty member's failure to clearly describe the purpose or value of the assignment. Understanding the factors contributing to the student's lack of motivation could help the faculty member understand the student's needs and potentially prevent subsequent resistance from occurring.
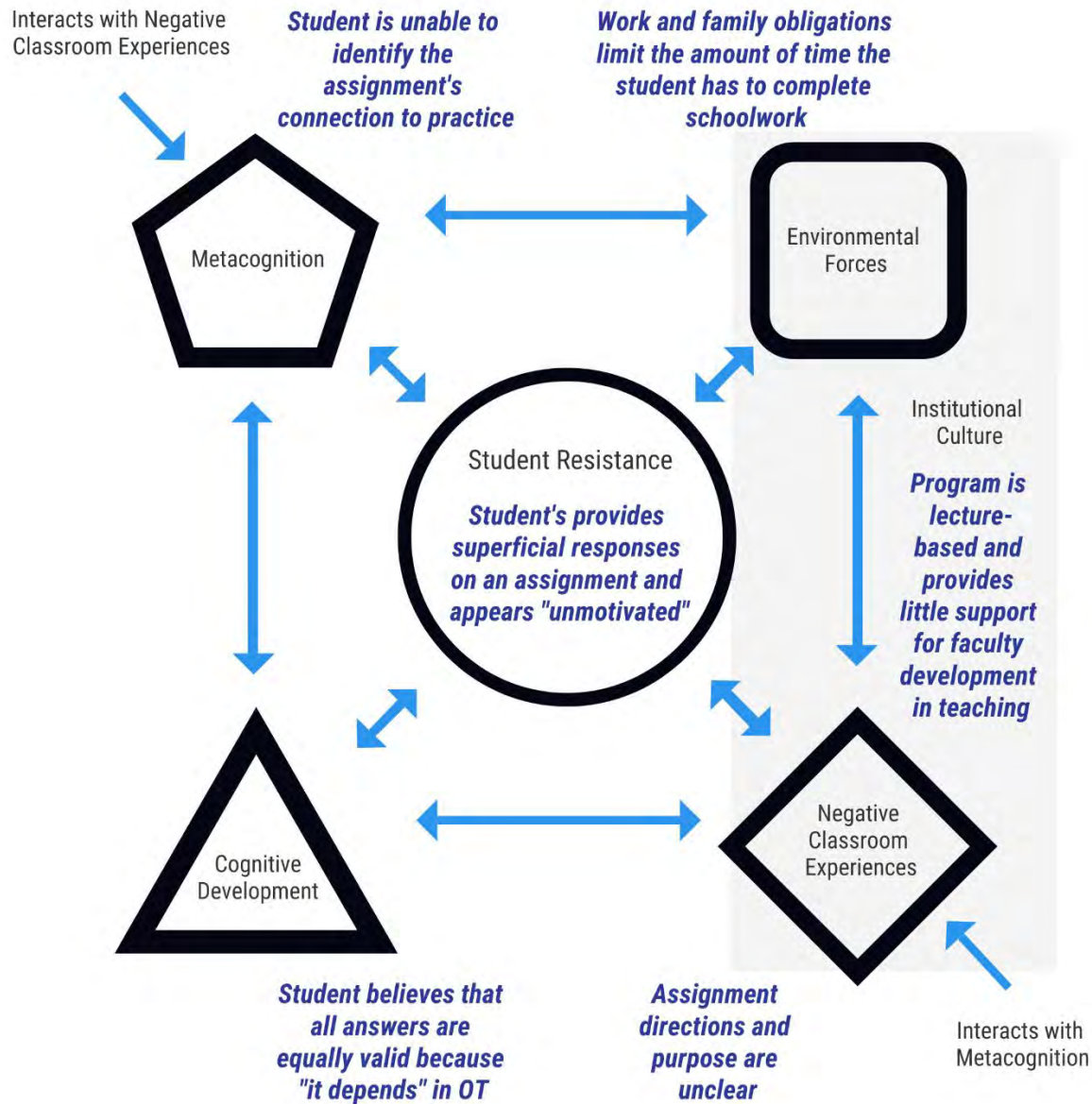
Limitations
The primary limitation of our study was the small sample size. However, the sample was representative of the OT faculty make-up in the country (AOTA, 2022). More than 75% of the participants had more than four years of experience in academia with 35% of them having more than 10 years of experience, which could have skewed the results towards lesser incidences of student behaviors suggesting resistance. The textual responses obtained were short in length with quite a few participants writing down one to two word responses, making it difficult to find data trends and conduct effective qualitative analysis of the data. Another limitation of the study is the method used for data collection. Although total anonymity of participants was ensured, self-reporting has an inherent social desirability bias (Lillehoj et al., 2004), which might have led participants to underreport the frequency of behaviors encountered.

Lastly, this survey was completed by participants between October 2021 and March 2022 while many OT programs were still fluctuating between online and in person learning due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The uncertainty around learning that was a result of the pandemic could have contributed to different forms of student behaviors that would normally not have been observed among graduate students.

Figure 3

Diagram of the IMSR with an Illustrative Example

Interacts with Negative Classroom Experiences

Student is unable to identify the assignment's connection to practice

Work and family obligations limit the amount of time the student has to complete schoolwork

Metacognition

Environmental Forces

Student Resistance

Student's provides superficial responses on an assignment and appears "unmotivated"

Institutional Culture

Program is lecture-based and provides little support for faculty development in teaching

Cognitive Development

Negative Classroom Experiences

Student believes that all answers are equally valid because "it depends" in OT

Assignment directions and purpose are unclear

Interacts with Metacognition

Adapted from Why Students Resist Learning: A Practical Model for Understanding and Helping Students, by Anton O. Tolman and Janine Kremling, p. 13. Copyright 2017 by Stylus Publishing. Reprinted with permission.

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Future Research
While the survey provides initial information about the presence of resistance to learning among graduate OT students, further research is needed to determine the nature of resistance and the impact that it has on OT education overall. The second phase of this project involves an in-depth qualitative inquiry through focus group discussions with OT faculty and students to understand the experience of resistance through the lens of the IMSR as well as the impact of resistance on the present and future of OT education.

Conclusion
The results of this study suggest that resistance to learning is encountered in OT graduate programs. Faculty and program administrators need to recognize not just intrinsic but also extrinsic factors, and the dynamic interaction between these that might be contributing to student resistance. By recognizing student resistance as a communicative signal, instructors can create a more engaging and positive classroom environment. Solutions implemented by instructors and administrators should address the systemic level issues to decrease resistance, rather than placing the onus on students alone.

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Appendix A: Survey Instrument

Active Student Behaviors
Think about the last semester in which you taught at least one course. Then, please indicate how often you encountered the following student behaviors during that semester. Please use the following items (Tolman & Kremling, 2017; used with permission) and indicate your answer in the space provided.

1 = Did not encounter
2 = Encountered once or twice in the semester
3 = Encountered at least once a month
4 = Encountered at least once weekly
5 = Encountered daily or several times a week

Students arguing or disagreeing with the professor in the classroom.
Students repeatedly asking for the rationale for assignments.
Students saying they paid for the class and want it taught how they like.
Students inciting other students to rebel or not collaborate; disrupting class activities.
Students complaining to a higher authority.
Students repeatedly asking for detailed clarification of grading criteria.
Students taking over group assignments to ensure an adequate grade.
Students arguing with the professor over grades received; seeking additional points or consideration.
Students focusing on surface approach to learning.

Passive Student Behaviors
Think about the last semester in which you taught at least one course. Then, please indicate how often you encountered the following student behaviors during that semester. Please use the following items (Tolman & Kremling, 2017; used with permission) and indicate your answer in the space provided.

1 = Did not encounter
2 = Encountered once or twice in the semester
3 = Encountered at least once a month
4 = Encountered at least once weekly
5 = Encountered daily or several times a week

Students refusing to come to class.
Students refusing to participate during in-class exercises (do not get into groups; do not comply with assignment tasks).
Students failing to turn in or being consistently late with assignments.
Students complaining about the professor to other students.
Students expressing concerns about working with others.
Students avoiding conflicts and refusing to resolve situations or bring them to the professor's awareness.

Students minimally participating in class (withdrawn, do not speak or give feedback, lets others make all decisions).

Behavior Attributions
When you observe students engaging in the behaviors addressed within this survey, to what do you typically attribute them? Please list the top three factors that you believe contribute to these behaviors.