

## ARTICLE

## Resistances and Resiliencies in Pedagogical Partnership: Student Partners' Perspectives

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## ABSTRACT

In this article, we explore forms of psychological resistance that 10 female students perceived in their faculty partners and in themselves in the context of a pedagogical partnership program in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. Positioning these students as “holders and creators of knowledge” (Delgado-Bernal, 2002, p. 106), our analysis draws on literature in academic development and psychology and on student responses to research questions to discuss how these student partners built resiliencies through the approaches they took to engaging the resistances they perceived. We first present the resistances these student partners perceived in their faculty partners and what factors they think might have contributed to such resistances. Next, we describe the approaches the student partners took to working through the resistances they perceived and the resistances they experienced in themselves. Finally, we analyze the ways that student partners developed resiliencies through productively engaging these forms of resistance.

## KEYWORDS

resistance, resilience, student partners, pedagogical partnership

When college faculty engage in classroom-focused pedagogical partnership with undergraduate students, they embark upon a vulnerable-making and potentially transformative experience. Many feel wary of the role student partners play as observers as well as cautious about entering into conversation with their student partners regarding personal insecurities, worries, or moments of joy in the classroom. As one faculty member put it, the prospect of entering partnership “produced the anxious expectancy of classroom observation as a (real or perceived) form of benevolent surveillance” (Reckson, 2014). Once they enter into pedagogical partnership, most faculty find that their student partners offer “observation without judgment—a rare gift—and along with it, a sense of camaraderie and shared purpose” (Reckson, 2014). Yet it is common for faculty to feel initial trepidation.

In addition to this general sense of anxiety and vulnerability that pedagogical partnership raises for some faculty, from the student partner perspective, faculty members' biases and previous experiences can also prompt forms of faculty resistance. These include resistance to being openly vulnerable about their work with their student partners, resistance to trying new pedagogical strategies, and resistance to simply asking for their

student partners' perspectives on classroom practice. Regardless of what form the resistance takes, striving to understand resistance and where it stems from opens the space to confront issues that may feel uncomfortable, unfamiliar, and filled with prior biases. If these issues are not addressed, partnerships may not be productive, and they most certainly will not be transformative.

Student partners also experience partnership as a vulnerable-making and potentially transformative experience. In an essay co-authored by a student and faculty member who had worked in partnership, the student partner described how she "initially felt anxious" about her new role as a consultant and partner because of "misconceptions students and professors have about the role(s) they play in the college setting (e.g., many students are taught to not question authority figures, in this context, their professors)" (Reyes & Adams, 2017, p. 2). Like the faculty member quoted above, this student partner found that, as the partnership unfolded, her faculty partner's "openness and honesty" showed the student partner "how invested, committed, and comfortable" the faculty member was. Her faculty partner's engagement made the student partner "better able to open up herself to the partnership as well" (Reyes & Adams, 2017, p. 2).

In the role of pedagogical partner, students must develop approaches to managing their own uncertainties, the forms of resistance they perceive in their faculty partners, and the forms of resistance they sometimes experience themselves in response. In this discussion we do not claim that what student partners perceive captures what faculty partners experience or feel. Our focus is on the experiences and perspectives of a group of 10 student partners who participated in a pedagogical partnership program and the approaches they developed to manage their perceptions. These approaches included striving to build trust and relationships; taking further steps toward their faculty partners (or a kind of leaning in) in an effort to realize the transformative potential of partnership; and, conversely, withdrawing (or taking a step back) out of self-protection.

The focus of this discussion emerged as a result of questions formulated by Anita, first author of this article and an experienced student partner in the Students as Learners and Teachers (SaLT) program. SaLT is based in the Teaching and Learning Institute at Bryn Mawr and Haverford Colleges, two selective, liberal arts colleges in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. Over her three years as a student partner, she had experienced and observed the complexities of faculty and student uncertainties and resistances in pedagogical partnership. These experiences and observations informed her interest in student partners' perspectives on forms of resistance they might have perceived in their faculty partners, why these forms of resistance were present, and how student partners worked through these resistances. Similarly, she wanted to understand the resistance student partners felt based on their faculty partners' level of receptivity towards the partnership. If faculty partners demonstrate lack of trust and communication as well as other forms of disengagement, student consultants can feel resistant to moving forward in their partnership—a kind of resistance in response to resistance.

Anita clarified her questions about these resistances through dialogue with the group of student partners with which she was working one semester, and Alison, second author of this article, saw connections between the questions Anita raised and a study already underway that focused on the experiences of student partners who claim membership in equity-seeking groups (e.g., students who are racialized, LGBTQ+ students, and first-generation students). Building on Anita's linking of resistance and resilience, we

decided to conduct a mini-study within the larger study focused on the perceptions and experiences of resistance identified by this particular group of student partners with whom Anita worked and how engaging those forms of resistance could build forms of resilience. Our use of the plural forms of resistance and resilience is intended to capture the multiplicity of experiences of these phenomena.

To frame our exploration and analysis, we invoke several arguments from the academic development and psychology literature regarding resistance and resilience. We then describe our methods. Next, we present the forms of resistance the 10 female student partners felt they encountered in their faculty partners and what factors they think might have contributed to such resistances. After that, we describe the approaches the student partners took to working through the forms of resistance they perceived and that they experienced themselves. Finally, we analyze the ways that student partners developed resiliencies through engaging these forms of perceived resistance.

## RESISTANCE AND RESILIENCE IN THE ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PSYCHOLOGY LITERATURE

Faculty resistance to academic development has been analyzed from a number of angles. Sheth and Stellner (1979) argue that resistance to innovation is influenced by two basic factors: “habit toward an existing practice and perceived risks associated with the innovation” (p. 1). Trowler and Cooper (2002) note that faculty assumptions regarding the “nature of students in higher education (including their abilities and preferences)” (p. 229) and “what is, and is not, appropriate practice in teaching and learning situations” (p. 230) can influence their receptivity to innovation. Resistance to change and innovation can result from cultural forces such as academics’ own experiences as students, inherited practices from colleagues, and expectations of current students (Hughes & Barrie, 2010).

Quinn (2012) has analyzed numerous discourses consistent with those described above that are evoked to explain faculty members’ resistance to engaging in activities aimed at professionalizing academic practice. She also suggests developing ways of analyzing such resistance that are more enabling of faculty engagement in professionalization. Likewise, Deaker, Stein, and Spiller (2016) point to the tendency of faculty to resist forms of professionalization that they may experience as oppressive, focusing in particular on commonalities they found between discourses about resistance to teaching development and faculty views about teaching and learning as captured in their comments on student evaluations of teaching. In relation to student-faculty partnership work in particular, Bovill, Cook-Sather, Felten, Millard, and Moore-Cherry (2016) suggest that “custom and common practices alongside the perceived personal and institutional risks of redefining traditional staff-student roles and relationships inform the challenges staff and students experience in co-creating learning and teaching” (p. 199).

These arguments from the academic development literature provide some context for our analysis of student partners’ perceptions of faculty resistance in pedagogical partnership and also affirm student partners’ efforts to find productive ways of engaging the resistances they perceive. Definitions of resistance from the field of psychology provide a different conceptual frame for analyzing the resistance student partners experienced in response to perceived faculty resistances.

In the psychology literature, resistance has traditionally been cast as “an impediment to the creation of a working therapeutic relationship” (Gilligan, Rogers, &

Tolman, 2014, p. 1). More recently, however, Gilligan et al. (2014) have “reframed” resistance in young women “as a psychological strength, as potentially healthy and a mark of courage” (p. 2). Such a reframing suggests that resistance can be seen as a manifestation of young women having the strength and courage “to know what they know and speak about their thoughts and feelings” (p. 1). Although this theory focuses on resistance in young women, it provides a framework for understanding the approaches college-age, female, student consultants used in their pedagogical partnerships.

The reframing of resistance Gilligan et al. (2014) offer is consistent with the hypothesis Anita generated on her own, based on her studies as a psychology major and her practice as a student partner, regarding strategies student partners develop in the face of perceived resistance on the part of their faculty partners. Furthermore, the reframed notion of resistance intersects with resilience as Anita conceptualized it and as it is defined in the literature. Summarizing the findings of Abiola and Udofia (2011), Cassidy (2015) describes resilience in terms of “inner strength, competence, optimism, flexibility, and the ability to cope effectively when faced with adversity.” Cassidy (2015) also highlights how resilience can both minimize “the impact of risk factors, such as stressful life events,” and enhance “the protective factors, such as optimism, social support, and active coping, that increase people’s ability to deal with life’s challenges.” Johnson, Taasobshirazi, Kestler, and Cordova (2015) also suggest that social supports may influence “how students develop their own sense of resilience and how they persist through academic challenges” (p. 869)—an important point to consider in relation to the cohort within which the 10 student partners worked.

Linking the reframed notion of resistance and these definitions of resilience, we focus on the healthy, productively assertive sense of agency drawn on and developed when female student partners “know what they know and speak about their thoughts and feelings” (Gilligan et al., 2014, p. 1). We attend in particular to how students from equity-seeking groups build resiliencies from engaging perceived resistances and are thus “holders and creators of knowledge” (Delgado-Bernal, 2002, p. 106). Cook-Sather and Agu (2013) and de Bie, Marquis, Cook-Sather, and Luqueño (under review) bring a similar perspective to their work, arguing for the importance of ensuring the equitable participation of traditionally marginalized knowers and knowledge in knowledge production.

## CONTEXT

In 2006, Alison developed the SaLT program in her role as Director of the Teaching and Learning Institute at Bryn Mawr and Haverford Colleges. SaLT invites undergraduate students to take up the paid position of pedagogical consultant to faculty, and student-faculty pairs work in semester-long partnerships to analyze, affirm, and, where appropriate, revise the faculty member’s pedagogical approaches in a course as s/he teaches it. Since the advent of the program, Alison has supported over 230 faculty members and 145 student consultants in a total of more than 280 partnerships. She has also engaged in partnership with students in course design and facilitation (Cook-Sather, Des-Ogugua, & Bahti, 2017). Anita has worked as a student partner since 2015, collaborating with four different faculty partners and co-facilitating partnership forums. She has also presented on her work in international venues (Ntem, 2017). During the summer of 2017 she conducted research on partnership as a Fellow of the Teaching and Learning Institute.

All incoming faculty members are invited to participate in SaLT as part of a first-year pedagogy seminar in which they have the option to enroll in exchange for a reduced teaching load (Cook-Sather, 2016). Stand-alone partnerships (not linked to a seminar) are also available to all faculty. SaLT employs student consultants from across disciplines and from diverse backgrounds who may not be enrolled in the course to which they are assigned as consultants. They spend six hours per week conducting weekly observations of their faculty partners' classrooms, expanding upon and delivering their observation notes to their partners, and meeting weekly with their partners to discuss what is working well and what might be revised. In addition, they meet weekly with other consultants and Alison to discuss how best to collaborate with faculty in the work of developing productively challenging, inclusive, and engaging classrooms and courses (see Cook-Sather, 2014, 2015).

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS, METHODS, AND LIMITATIONS

Every year since the advent of SaLT, Alison has received approval from Bryn Mawr College's ethics review board for studies of the experiences of student participants in the program. As part of a larger study focused on how student partners from equity-seeking groups (e.g., students who are racialized, LGBTQ+, first generation) experience student-faculty partnership in educational development, we formulated a set of questions that Anita posed to the cohort of 10 female student partners with whom she was working during one of her semesters as a student partner. The questions were:

1. What kinds of resistance, if any, have you experienced or encountered in your partnership(s)?
2. What factors contribute to resistance?
3. How do you as a consultant tackle resistance you experience or encounter?
4. In what ways, if any, do you see any of the forms of resistance you and faculty have practiced as forms of resilience?

The 10 student partners offered written responses to these questions. Consistent with the methods used in all of the studies of SaLT student experiences in which Alison has engaged, we used constant comparison/grounded theory (Creswell, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to identify themes and trends in the experiences and perspectives of respondents. Themes were generated through the first step in the constant comparison method, which involved identifying a phenomenon (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), followed by open coding, or "the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 61).

Once we had developed a preliminary set of categories and analyses of student partners' responses, we shared the draft of our analysis with those student partners, inviting their responses to our interpretations and their own further analysis. We also asked several experienced faculty partners to respond to the draft. The discussion we offer in this article is, therefore, the result of an iterative process of reflection and analysis by the student partners who responded to the questions, several faculty partners, and the two of us.

We want to reiterate that we focus in this discussion on a set of perspectives offered by a small number of student partners in a single pedagogical partnership program during a single semester. These perspectives reflect these individuals' experiences of and perspectives on resistances and their active development of resiliencies. We do not claim to be speaking for faculty, nor are our analyses meant to criticize faculty. Furthermore, we do

not argue that student partners in other contexts would perceive these same forms of resistance and resilience. Rather, our goal was to invite this group of student partners to identify, analyze, and learn from the forms of resistance they perceived in their faculty partners and experienced within themselves.

Consistent with our insistence on recognizing students, particularly those claiming membership in equity-seeking groups, as “holders and creators of knowledge” (Delgado-Bernal, 2002, p. 106), our focus is on what students perceived based on the verbal and non-verbal signals they received from faculty. Guided by the students’ perceptions, we reflect on what we can learn from these analyses that might inform our own work and be of use to colleagues on other campuses who experience resistances in partnership.

#### STUDENT PARTNERS’ PERCEPTIONS OF RESISTANCES AND RESILIENCIES

In the following sections we combine results and discussion of the 10 student partners’ perceptions of resistances and resiliencies. We focus first on forms of resistance student partners perceived in their faculty partners and what factors they think might contribute to these resistances. Next, we turn to how student partners worked through both these perceived resistances and the resistances they themselves experienced toward partnership. Finally, we analyze how the student partners built resiliencies through the ways they engaged with these resistances.

##### **Kinds and sources of perceived faculty resistance to pedagogical partnership**

Student partner responses to the questions, “What kinds of resistance, if any, have you experienced or encountered in your partnership(s)?” and “What factors contribute to resistance?,” surfaced what student partners perceived to be problematic assumptions made by their faculty partners and a range of fears that student partners believed their faculty partners were experiencing.

Student partners identified perceptions faculty seemed to have of students’ behavior and capacities as potentially contributing to faculty resistance to partnership. One student partner wrote that her faculty partner appeared to assume that “[students] don’t talk [during class discussions] because they are concerned about being politically correct.” In her analysis of this apparent assumption about student behavior, the student partner wrote: “This makes it very difficult for [my faculty partner] to take feedback from me or her students.” From this student’s perspective, this totalizing judgment of student behavior, which she perceived in her faculty partner’s comment, was a source of her faculty partner’s resistance.

Student partners also perceived faculty members making problematic assumptions about student capacity. One student identified this type of assumption about student capacity as “‘misguided/traditional’ views or assumptions about students and their ability.” A particular manifestation of these kinds of assumptions, according to one student partner, focused on her capacity as a partner in pedagogical exploration: “I’ve encountered resistance when it comes to recognition of expertise. My [faculty] partner was very resistant to let me into her pedagogical thinking space.” This student partner highlights the resistance she felt on the part of her faculty partner to recognize her as a “holder and creator of knowledge” (Delgado-Bernal, 2002, p. 106) about pedagogical practice. As Bovill et al. (2016) point out, faculty often “under-estimate student abilities to contribute meaningfully” (p. 200). Such under-estimation, student partners suggested, led to a lack of communication

regarding principles and practices that might have been guiding the faculty partner's notion of expected classroom practices.

From the perspective of the student partners, sweeping judgments about students' behaviors and capacities constitute a form of faculty resistance to working in partnership with students—both with student partners in educational development and with students enrolled in the faculty members' courses. These student partners' perceptions are consistent with scholarship in educational development that points to the tacit assumptions some faculty make that are part of "typificatory schemes" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 58) concerning the "nature of students in higher education (including their abilities and preferences)" (Trowler & Cooper, 2002, p. 229).

In addition, student partners named a range of fears they perceived their faculty partners to be experiencing that the student partners thought might be contributing to resistance. Some of these had to do with relationships between students and faculty, some had to do with institutional pressures faculty seem to feel, and some had to do with pedagogical commitments or habits.

In relation to fear regarding student-faculty relationships, one student partner described her perception of faculty members' "fear of their students not liking them/not thinking they are competent professors." Another student partner reflected on her perception of her faculty partner's "fears of connecting with his students." In relation to institutional pressures students perceive that faculty feel, the second kind of fear identified, student partners mentioned "fear of job stability" and "pressures related to tenure/promotion." One student partner elaborated that faculty positions, "while rooted in an established discipline, are very insecure and unstable, and I think they fear losing their job constantly. This creates a mood of defensiveness." These student perceptions are consistent with scholarship documenting the "despair of isolation, insecurity, and busyness" (Boice, 1992, p. 2) many new faculty experience (Simmons, 2011) as well as the risks faculty may associate with innovation (Bovill et al., 2016; Sheth & Stellner, 1979).

In relation to pedagogical commitments or habits, the third kind of fear identified, student partners perceived in some of their faculty partners a fear of deviating from traditional ways of teaching and of engaging with students. These student partners' perceptions are consistent with what Trowler and Cooper (2002) call "rules of appropriateness"—rules based on "tacit assumptions [that] set out what is, and is not, appropriate practice in teaching and learning situations and are usually only manifested when practices are proposed which contravene them: that is, by 'deviance'" (p. 230). These are among the cultural forces (Hughes & Barrie, 2010) and the customs and common practices (Bovill et al., 2016) scholars identify as contributing to faculty resistance. Regarding one student's perception of faculty resistance to suggestions student partners made for possible revisions of pedagogical practices, one student partner pointed to her faculty partner's "fear of taking class time away from moving through course material." Another mentioned her sense that faculty "fear they are overwhelming students." A third student partner described her perception of her faculty partner's "fear of giving up long-held beliefs." Yet another student partner identified "fear of change" as a perceived source of resistance.

Some student partners linked some perceived faculty fears and resulting resistance to particular dimensions of identity. One student partner, who identifies as a person of color (POC) herself, reflected:

New POC faculty have trouble letting go of their perceived all-encompassing control. My partner had very specific ideas about how she wanted everything to go, which led to inflexibility. I think sometimes new faculty insecurities get the best of them and lead them to a very defensive/resistant attitude.

Another student partner, who identifies as a POC, wrote: “Many people, faculty included, are unused to checking their privileged identities regularly. When student partners ask this of them it can be overwhelming and again lead to defensiveness.” These speculations connect to how faculty of color can experience particular pressures and costs as they strive to “establish ‘home’ and a sense of belonging” (Mayo & Chhuon, 2014, p. 227).

The first form of perceived faculty resistance identified above, that born of apparent assumptions about students, elicited frustration from student partners not only because it hinders the development of partnership but also because it underestimates students. The various fears student partners attributed to their faculty partners certainly led, in student partners’ minds, to faculty resistance, but they also elicited empathy from student partners—an important sense of shared uncertainty and vulnerability that might have been key to some of the approaches student partners took to working through perceived resistances.

### **Approaches to working through perceived resistances**

Student partner responses to the question, “How do you as a consultant tackle resistance you experience or encounter?,” yielded a range of strategies that cluster around trust and relationship-building, persisting or leaning in, and withdrawal or taking a step back for self-protection.

A primary strategy student partners used to work through resistances they perceived in their faculty partners was to endeavor to build trust and relationship. One student partner explained how she responded to resistance she perceived from her faculty partner:

I jump back to building a community and trust. People need positive reinforcement to carry out change. I have had more personal check-ins when faced with resistance because I always think there is something more past the surface. I try to build a space for this multiplicity.

Another student partner asserted simply that “building trust is a HUGE part of it.” A strategy many student partners used to build trust, as one explained, is taking time to get to know each other. In her words: “I usually take the first few minutes of our meeting to ask my partner how he is doing.” These examples of striving to build trust and relationship reflect an empathetic approach to addressing perceived resistances.

A second strategy student partners used to work through perceived resistances was “leaning in” to whatever form of resistance they perceived by continuing to try to connect with their faculty partners. Student partners described how they worked through resistances they perceived “by continuing to give feedback and pushing to meet with her despite her resistance to meeting with me.” Another student partner described how she cultivated an approach characterized by respectful assertiveness: “Being extremely clear about how I feel. Not pushing faculty but at the same time making sure they know how I

feel about a certain issue.” A variation on this theme of persistence is articulating reasons why they might be making a particular suggestion. One student partner described this as: “Give a clear rationale for why I think my idea is a good one”; another wrote: “Back up my opinions with my experience as a student.” Complementing these efforts to ground their perspectives in their lived experiences and lean in to their faculty partners’ resistance, student partners also described making efforts to link to their faculty partners’ priorities: “Try to appeal to things I know my partner wants for his classes.”

A final strategy student partners identified regarding how they worked through perceived resistances was stepping back or letting go out of self-protection. One student partner explained:

I have learned to let things go (for my own sanity) and also the beauty of readjustment. We spent weeks reframing our relationship/what she wants me to do for her, which has led to a much more fruitful partnership.

Another student partner wrote: “I tackled resistance by stepping back. I had to remove all personal feelings from the partnership. I then checked myself and named my own resistance.” This approach is a manifestation of student partners’ “psychological strength” and “courage” (Gilligan et al., 2014, p. 2)—knowing themselves well enough both to care for themselves and to find ways to persist in partnership.

Illustrating how all these strategies can be combined, another student partner reflected:

Sometimes I am patient and spread out my feedback over time, or soften it. Other times I push back and resist my partner’s resistance, especially re students’ abilities, giving affirmation to my partners, the importance of feedback—these are all areas where I have strong beliefs.

Demonstrating a deep awareness of the complexity of being in partnership and of learning, another student partner wrote: “I try to meet my partner where they’re at, push them to understand/question, but not over the edge.”

These approaches to working through perceived resistances illustrate student partners “know[ing] what they know and speak[ing] about their thoughts and feelings” (Gilligan et al., 2014, p. 1) with the goal of strengthening both themselves and their faculty partners. By employing these approaches, student partners built their resilience through complex weavings of persistence and self-preservation, both deepening the capacity to assert what is within themselves, and deepening understanding of and working with respect for what is encountered in others.

### **How working through resistances builds resiliencies**

Student partner responses to the question, “In what ways, if any, do you see any of the forms of resistance you and faculty have practiced as forms of resilience?,” illuminated various relationship- and self-building processes through which student partners built resiliencies.

About relationship building, one student partner described being in a process of “continuing to try to reach a partnership.” Another explained: “As a way of practicing resilience, my partner and I have worked to re-see our relationship, our roles, and our mutual obligations, and that flexibility is most definitely a process of resilience.” Another student partner wrote: “We are both able to be sure of how we feel but also listen to each other.” These statements illustrate how relationship and reciprocity are as central to developing resiliencies as they are to developing partnership itself: both require and build a give-and-take between partners, an exchange that is mutually affirming and enhancing. The language of “continuing to try to reach,” of “working to re-see,” and of “listen[ing] to each other” is the language of relationship.

Regarding the strengthening of the self that student partners also identified as a form of resilience, one student partner emphasized both the strength she drew from within herself and the strength she drew from her fellow student partners: “We continue to, day by day, pick ourselves up and move. To resist is tiring work. We must find the inner strength to keep moving. Our weekly meetings and commitments to continue moving forward are resilience.” These assertions echo the findings in the research literature that social supports may influence how students develop resilience and persistence (Johnson et al., 2015), and they show how productive approaches to resistance build resilience.

The strength student partners’ develop through claiming and enacting what they know is part of what builds their resilience: “For me to keep pushing what I believe, time and time again, is resilience.” Echoing these sentiments, another student partner reflected: “I think my refusal to back down and my willingness to pursue certain ideas over time, repeatedly, is a form of resilience. I have some confidence to stand up for these strong beliefs.” Illustrating at the same time how this kind of personal strength is also relational and reciprocal, this same student partner wrote: “I think my partner’s willingness to hear me and to hear students and adjust/take in that information shows resilience as well.” Striving to put resistance and resilience into a productive relationship with one another, one student partner argued: “The resistance can be seen as self protection. And yet faculty resist against their inner obstacles every time they agree to meet with me and that is resilience.”

As we analyzed student feedback and considered the conversations that evolved over the course of the semester regarding resistances and resiliencies, we began to see patterns in student partners building resiliencies from resistances. The first tendency for many student partners was to question or doubt themselves. As Anita put it: “What am I doing wrong? What is going on here? Like, is it me? Do I not have the capabilities of being a student consultant?” Another aspect of the process was stopping, retreating, readjusting, recalibrating, or reconsidering. This piece of the pattern is captured in a quote we used above:

I have learned to let things go (for my own sanity) and also the beauty of re-adjustment. We spent weeks reframing our relationship/what she wanted me to do for her, which has resulted in a much more fruitful partnership.

And a third aspect is a kind of reconstituting process: revisiting and clarifying one’s own beliefs and commitments and drawing on some combination of the strategies mentioned above, such as: “Give a clear rationale for why I think my idea is a good one,

back up my opinions with my experience as a student, try to appeal to things I know my faculty partner wants for their classes.”

Building resiliencies from resistances, then, has multiple dimensions. It includes recognizing that both faculty and students experience resistances. It requires getting comfortable with uncertainty. It necessitates understanding and accepting that you do not need a single direction: you can be flexible and malleable. It requires pushing each other to open up to more perspectives, even those with which you disagree. It demands that you consistently revise, revisit, and reconstruct your own pedagogy and find common themes across partners to build on and be productive. All of the approaches student partners describe support the redefinition of resistance as “a health-sustaining process” (Gilligan et al., 2014, p. 1), “a psychological strength” (p. 2), and “a mark of courage” (p. 2). These approaches are also consistent with resilience as “inner strength, competence, optimism, flexibility, and the ability to cope effectively when faced with adversity” (Cassidy, 2015). The patience, empathy, and generosity student partners display further illustrate the ways resistance and resilience are intertwined.

The emotional labor of students of color in partnership, whether with faculty of color or white faculty, is a particularly important component of this discussion of building resiliencies through engaging with resistances. As one student partner who is an international student and person of color explained:

We’ve seen in the consultant meetings how emotionally vulnerable some of my peers are willing to be in our partnerships in order to think about justice [and] racial or gender equality. It’s very moving to see my peers give themselves so much, give so much of themselves in their partnerships to make professors understand, to give professors perspective on their experience.

This giving of themselves with the support of others demonstrates how students from equity-seeking groups, in their positions as “holders and creators of knowledge” (Delgado-Bernal, 2002, p. 106), build resiliencies from perceived resistances. It is a manifestation of the healthy, productively assertive sense of agency drawn on and developed when female student partners “know what they know and speak about their thoughts and feelings” (Gilligan et al., 2014, p. 1).

As their reflections illuminate, student partners reject easy ways of thinking, being, and interacting; they meet the various kinds of resistances they perceive in faculty with a wide array of thoughtful and empathetic responses; and they work on their own, with other student partners, to turn their own resistances into resiliencies.

## IMPLICATIONS

There are numerous implications of this study of students’ perceptions of resistances in pedagogical partnership. These include the potential to forge positive outcomes from initial vulnerabilities and perceived incompatibilities, increased capacity to navigate power dynamics always present in student-faculty partnership, and the development of flexible approaches to working through perceived resistances.

Both resistance and resilience as student partners perceive them are implicitly or explicitly tangled with power dynamics, which are thrown into stark relief in pedagogical partnership (Crawford, 2012; Mihans, Long, & Felten, 2008). In both the relationships

themselves and the ways in which they provide forums for examining pedagogical practice, student-faculty partnerships not only illuminate the complexities of power dynamics but also the norms and values students and faculty bring to analyses and enactments of teaching and learning. As Brookfield (1995) has argued:

When we become aware of the pervasiveness of power, we start to notice the oppressive dimensions to practices that we thought were neutral or even benevolent . . . (many of which reflect an unquestioned acceptance of values, norms and practices defined for us by others). . . . [This] is often the first step in working more democratically and cooperatively with students and colleagues. (p. 9)

This suggests that when student partners choose approaches to respond to what they perceive to be “pervasive power,” these approaches influence the forms of resilience they develop.

The approaches student partners took to working through the resistances they perceived endeavored to build trust and affirm the work of everyone involved as teachers and as learners. The student partners described how working through resistances pushed them to be clear and explicit in articulating what they know, as well as to know when to let things go in order to regroup. Through these approaches, student partners developed resiliencies in re-evaluating their role, built strength to understand the biases that come with teaching and education, and understood their courage not only in challenging their partners but also in challenging themselves to make meaning from what is present.

## CONCLUSION

While this article highlights student partners’ interpretations of their experiences of resistances and resiliencies, further research might explore other challenges and conflicts in partnership (see Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017) and might delve in particular into how faculty partners experience resistances and resiliencies within the context of pedagogical partnership. Additional areas of inquiry could include how these findings might impact the way in which student partners respond to and navigate perceived faculty resistance within subsequent partnerships. Further research could also explore how faculty resistance might differ among early career faculty and experienced instructors involved in partnerships. Finally, while we use the reframed notion of resistance Gilligan et al. (2014) offer in relation to female student partners’ forms of engagement, the “loudly silent” construct of gender in the literature on partnership is another area for further exploration (Matthews et al., under review).

Rogers (2001) notes that where new learning is “perceived to be a threat to identity” (p. 10) one should expect to encounter anxiety in the learner “because real learning involves change, and that’s difficult stuff for most of us” (p. 12). Student-faculty partnership demands learning that might be perceived to constitute a threat to one’s identity for both students and faculty, and the threat to one’s identity at stake in such partnerships looks different if one has developed resistance as a tool for moving through spaces in which one is often marginalized. Examining resistances, resiliencies, and their relationship to one another offers insight into seemingly negative or problematic reactions that can actually be re-understood as positive and empowering.

*This study is part of a larger study approved by Bryn Mawr College's ethics review board focused on the experiences of student partners from equity-seeking groups.*

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many thanks to the student partners who participated in and contributed to this research and to Sophia Abbot, Melanie Bahti, Lucy Mercer-Mapstone, Lindsay Reckson, Laurel Peterson, Joel Schlosser, and two anonymous reviewers for their helpful feedback on drafts of this article.

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