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Research informs practice and practice frames research inquiries. I entered my doctoral studies with a broad research base, which has shaped my current research endeavors. In my previous educational experiences, I was involved in targeted research projects that each had a common theme of academic achievement and social-emotional development. First, I worked with Dr. Christine Malecki researching participants' perceived social support and how that was related to their adjustment and academic achievement, assessed with curriculum-based measurements (CBM). Next, I began my work with Dr. Elise Masur in her research study of parent-child interactions and its effects on acquisition and development of cognitive, language, and communication skills in infants and preschoolers. I became involved with theory development to better define the nature in which individuals communicate. This work led to the formation of the Synergetic Collaborative Learning Model (SCL) with Dr. Larry Tinnerman. The SCL Model provides an expanded view of how individuals engage in active learning and make meaning out of interpersonal interactions, emphasizing affective, social, active, and cognitive domains.

Based upon my training and prior research experiences, my own research emphasizes elements of learning, social-emotional development, and culture. I am particularly interested in research that broadens our understanding of the impact of societal expectations, social interactions, and societal educational expectations. My dissertation, for example, investigated the relationship between self-esteem, cultural context (i.e., individualist or collectivist), level of acculturation, and individuals' vulnerability to body image disturbance. Problems with body image disturbance have existed for decades, yet predictors for the problem have not been concluded in a generalizable fashion. Moreover, although body image has been previously evaluated across a few cultures, there has not been a framework to understand cultural characteristics of body image. Triandis (1998) introduced a novel approach to defining individualism and collectivism, and this research applies his framework to investigate the development of body image disturbance from a cultural perspective. It is my opinion that screeners and health promotion programs for individuals with body image disturbances and eating disorders currently wait for individuals to present extensive problems. A systematic method to universally screen for vulnerabilities to predict body image disturbances and eating disorders could prevent continued options of waiting for individuals to present severe problems.

Each of my research experiences has influenced my current and ongoing research with Dr. Linda Sperry. We have collaboratively developed multiple research presentations focused on ethnographic investigation of parents' socializations and interactions with their children. We are currently working on a manuscript for publication on parents' conflicts with their young children. We continue to collaborate on research projects exploring how young children interact with parents/peers, learn, and grow in their environments.