

Research Statement

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I have authored and co-authored more than two dozen peer-reviewed journal articles and presented and co-presented over 50 professional presentations nationally and internationally. My research has primarily focused on technology integration in the higher education classroom, mainly distance and doctoral, to improve the learning process and to inform program policy, and ultimately, student success (e.g. community, academic achievement, and retention) for all students. This research focus has been motivated by the fact that online education in higher learning institutions has grown significantly over the past 10 years (see Allen & Seaman, 2014). At the graduate and doctoral level, distance programs have changed degree access from a privileged few to include availability for all demographics and most countries. While this trend is positive, the outcomes for programs, especially for women, minorities, and international students, are not as positive. For example, while the average traditional, doctoral attrition rate has hovered around 50% for decades (see Council of Graduate Schools, 2009), attrition in distance programs, which are composed of more women, minorities, and international students, are 10-50% higher. In describing attrition issues, Lovitts and Nelson (2000) state “that the real problem is with the character of graduate *programs* rather than the character of their students” (p. 49, emphasis added). Thus, I have spent significant time examining program designs and technology integration to improve students’ community and learning, which ultimately leads to persistence.

Persistence, namely doctoral persistence, has also been and will continue to be a salient theme in my research, technology focused and otherwise. I have focused on understanding higher education experiences (beyond merely program design) to provide more equitable opportunities to those who are less likely to persist. Last year, I conducted a grounded theory study investigating the role of poverty as a resilience mechanism in doctoral student persistence. This year, grounded in female identity theory, I have focused on the development of female candidates’ research identity that gives rise to persistence despite the sometimes uninviting environment of higher academia. In 2014, a mainstream publisher published my co-edited book, *Navigating the Doctoral Journey: A Handbook of Strategies for Success*, which included discussions about special populations. This book received the 2015 Finalist, AERA SIG 168 Outstanding Publication Award for its contribution to the knowledge base of doctoral education practices and policies. During the 2015 American Educational Research Association, Annual Meeting, I was invited, given my research on online doctoral mentorship and persistence, on the SIG 168 and CPED co-sponsored panel to discuss innovative research and doctoral education around the world. I also have published several quantitative studies examining associations among personality, self-directedness, standardized test scores, online interactions, and doctoral candidate persistence. Additional current and future research projects that I have planned include:

- Exploring the Intersection between Female Faculty Members' Identities as Mothers and Scholars (Phenomenology)
- Online Doctoral Persistence Questionnaire (Instrument Validation)
- A Model to Predict Online Doctoral Persistence (SEM)
- Exploring Higher Education as a Resilience Mechanism for Women, Nationally and Internationally