

Abstract: Generally speaking, women across all races outperform men when it comes to college graduation. Across all races, women on average graduate with a bachelor's degree with a ratio of 58%. The contrary is true when it concerns STEM. Across the races, women earn STEM degrees at an average ratio of 33% in comparison to males (Snyder & Dillow, 2015). Thus, Latinas who enter STEM fields are a minority within a minority. Considering Hispanics are the ethnicity least likely to earn a Bachelor's degree (Ryan, 2016), Latinas truly overcome great obstacles when earning a STEM degree. Latinas graduate from college at a 60% ratio (above the average ratio for women of other races), but they enter STEM at a 31% ratio (below the average when taking into account women of other races). The purpose of this study is to synthesize Social Cognitive Theory and Latino Critical Race Theory to provide a theoretical framework that describes the reasons why Latinas choose to go into or not go into STEM fields.

Culturally, Hispanics have certain strengths and abilities that enable them to be resilient and persist through problems, however, they also have certain qualities that can hinder them in their educational progress. Furthermore, certain social and cultural aspects of the educational system can also thwart their progress through high school and beyond. LatCrit (Latino Critical Race Theory) is a framework that explains the experiences of Hispanics living in the US. This framework states that issues concerning migration, immigration, socioeconomic status, culture, and language barriers can be obstacles when earning a degree. Social Cognitive Theory is a theory that describes how personal, environmental and behavioral experiences influence people.

Key words: Hispanics, Latinos/as, persistence, STEM, graduation rate, LatCrit, Social Cognitive Theory

References

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