

# Strong Family, Peer Relations Strengthen Latino College Experience

March 2, 2012

---

Young Latinos are less likely than their non-Latinos peers to go to college or earn a degree; their relationships with family and peers can influence their success in college, according to a study published in the *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* and [reported](#) by the University of Missouri News Bureau.

Researchers found that Mexican-American students who maintained strong, positive relationships with family members and with their peers were less likely to be physically aggressive and more likely to exhibit empathy, with both trends being associated with improved college success.

"The combination of students' attachment to their parents and their peers seems to best predict their developmental outcomes," said study coauthor Gustavo Carlo, PhD, Millsap Professor of Diversity at the University of Missouri's Department of Human Development and Family Studies. "Even though the students aren't living with their parents, there's clearly still a connection there, especially for Mexican-American women. Since peers tend to have a significant influence on Latino men, we need to pay attention to the nature of their peer groups."

The study authors noted that college administrators should use this information to help Latino students. This can be accomplished by encouraging parents to stay involved in their children's lives and by exposing the students to positive peer environments. But Latino students can take advantage of this information themselves by staying in touch with family and maintaining strong friendships within the college community.

---