Background and Significance

**Background**
- Social support is defined as an external resource that helps individuals deal with stressful life experiences (Bovier, Chamot, and Perneger, 2004).
- Low social support has been related to decreased mental health which has also shown to be negatively related to academic outcomes and performance (Bovier, Chamot, and Perneger, 2004; DeSocio and Hootman, 2004; Rosenfeld, Richman, and Bowen, 2000).
- There are cultural differences in the perceived quality within these friendships and romantic relationships for ethnic minorities due to parental regulations, cultural expectations, and economic and behavioral factors, which can also have a substantial influence on mental health (Barr, Culatta, and Simons, 2013; Way and Chen, 2000).
- However, there is less focus on how social support from various types of relationships may relate to academic aspirations within African American and Latinx communities.
- The purpose of this study was to investigate if quality of relationships with friends and romantic partners were associated with Latinx and African American young adults’ mental health and academic aspirations.

**Hypotheses**
- H1: Higher friendship quality would be related to lower depressive and anxiety symptoms and higher academic aspirations and academic commitment.
- H2: Higher romantic relationship satisfaction would be related to lower depressive and anxiety symptoms and higher academic aspirations and academic commitment.

Method

**Participants:**
- Latino and African American college students (N = 145) attending a Predominantly White University (PWI) in the Midwest.
- Participants completed an initial 1.5-hour assessment on a computer in the laboratory.
- Participants were paid $10

**Sample characteristics**
- Race/Ethnicity: African American: (n = 91) and Latinx (n = 54)
- Gender: Female: 69.0%; Male: 31.0%
- Age: 20 years old (SD = 1.32)
- Nativity: 96% U.S.-Born

**Measures**

**Friendship Quality.** Participants completed the Intimate Friendship Scale (Sharabany, 1974). Participants were asked to describe their relationship with their best friend
- 12 items on a 5-point Likert scale.
  - “I feel free to talk to my friend about almost anything.”
  - Responses ranged from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 5 (“strongly agree”).

**Romantic Relationship Satisfaction.** Participants completed the Perceived Relationship Quality Component Inventory (Fletcher, Simpson, & Thomas, 2000) for current or past romantic relationships.
- 3 items total, 5-point Likert scale.
  - “How satisfied are you with your relationship?”
  - Responses ranged from 1 (“not at all”) to 5 (“extremely”).

**Anxiety Symptoms.** Participants completed an inventory for measuring anxiety (Beck, Epstein, Brown, & Steer, 1988). Participants reported symptoms in the past month.
- 20 items total - 4 subscales using a 4-point Likert scale.
  - Responses ranged from 1 (“rarely or none of the time”) to 4 (“most of the time”).

**Academic Aspirations.** Participants completed 1 question regarding their academic goals.
  - “How far would you like to go in school?”

**Academic Commitment.** Participants completed questions about their academic commitment (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980).
- 6 items on a 5-point Likert scale.
  - “It is important for me to graduate from college.”
  - Responses ranged from 1 (“Strongly Disagree”) to 5 (“Strongly Agree”).

**Results**

- Multiple regression analyses were conducted in order to investigate if relationship satisfaction and friendship quality predicted mental health, academic aspirations and commitment.

**Conclusions and Implications**

- For academic aspirations, neither romantic relationship satisfaction nor friendship quality were significant.
- For academic commitment, however, romantic relationship satisfaction predicted greater commitment.
- This indicated that as romantic relationship satisfaction increased, individuals were more committed to their academic goals; college students were more likely to get better grades and believe in the importance of graduating.
- For depressive symptoms, friendship quality emerged as a marginally significant predictor; greater friendship quality related to fewer depressive symptoms.
- For anxiety symptoms, romantic relationship satisfaction and friendship quality were not significant.