Introduction
- Over 70% of youth report having non-parental adults in their lives who are important to them (Dubois & Silverthorn, 2005; Beam, Chen & Greenberger, 2002).
- Quality of the youth adult relationship (YAR) is associated with positive youth development (Chu, Sauier & Haffier, 2010).
- Quality of the relationship has been shown to positively affect outcomes such as completing high school, attending college, and obtaining a job that pays well (Dubois & Silverthorn, 2005).
- In addition to the outcomes noted above, youth’s interests, plans, and beliefs about the future are learned in social interactions with other people (Nurius, 1991). Possible selves, one’s personalized representation of one’s self in future states is one such construct (Cross & Markus, 1991). Yet the quality of the YAR and its association on perceptions of youth’s possible selves and internal future aspirations has not been examined.

Objective: To examine possible association between the quality of YARs and youth’s possible selves (in the form of future aspirations).

Hypothesis: It is expected that there will be a positive relationship between the quality of the YAR and youth’s future aspirations.

Methods and Materials
- Longitudinal, mixed methods study
- A screening survey was distributed to a community sample of youth (N=289) through after-school programs, schools, and other community-based locations.
- From this sample, a longitudinal sample (N=41) was drawn through a combination of stratified random and purposeful sampling.
- Youth were surveyed and interviewed twice, approximately 6 months to one year apart.
- Surveys included quantitative scales focused on psychosocial and relational characteristics. Interviews were semi-structured and included open ended questions about youth’s relationships with important adults.
- The data for this paper includes survey and interview data from youth from the longitudinal sample who had complete data for both T1 and T2 (N=36).
- Female: 21; Male: 15
- Mean Age T1: 14.08, Mean Age T2: 15.56
- Grade: 10th – Undergraduate Freshman

Likert Scales:
- 6 items: (Not at all important – Very important) “You will go to college.”
- Reliability: (α = .717)
- Youth were asked to nominate a significant non-parental adult (herein called “VIP”) and filled out the Strength of Relationship (SoR) scale for their VIP (Rhodes et al., 2005).
- 10 items: (Not at all true – Always true) “I feel close to [VIP].” Reliability: (α = .655)
- Quantitative Analysis: Linear Regression
- Independent Variable: Strength of Relationship for VIP at Time 1
- Dependent Variable: Future Aspirations Average at Time 2

- Qualitative Analysis:
- Transcripts were analyzed for themes related to the constructs in the future aspirations scale, for example, discussions of going to college or future career choices.
- Themes: Graduating High School, College, Future Self/Community, and Job
- Developed from themes on the Future Aspirations Scale
- Purpose of Qualitative Data: Expand quantitative findings to understand the process and content of conversations youth had with VIPs about future aspirations.

Quantitative Results
- Fail to reject the null hypothesis
- p = .635
- No association between the quality of the YAR and perceptions of youth possible selves regarding internal future aspirations

Unstandardized Standardized Coefficients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>3.218</td>
<td>918</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.506</td>
<td>0.001</td>
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Strength of Relationship for VIP at Time 1
- a. Dependent Variable: Future Aspirations Average at Time 2
- Table 1. Regression Analysis

Qualitative Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Example</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graduating High School</td>
<td>“Well she’s an architect so she likes knowing about that stuff so she helps me with like my AP environmental science because she took that and like math because she’s pretty good at math. If she helps us I mean we’re happy about it because we know how to do it after she helps us.” – Katherine</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“Yeah, Robin helps me a lot just because I think she majored in English so she, in like writing, I’m not that good of a writer, so she’ll always help me in that. So, she’s helped me a lot over the past couple years just because writing is getting more and more a big part of school.” – Coli</td>
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<td>College</td>
<td>“We talk about like the future like college and stuff like that’s a big stressor right now in my life so we talk about that and she’s always like wherever you end up, you’re supposed to be there so it’s okay.” – Rachel</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“She’ll help with academics, like when we were talking about referrals for next year. She talked about how it would impact my GPA and 11th and 12th Grade and how it would carry on.” – Carrie</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“Yes, I find that especially true. He’s done so many things for me this year, like in regards to writing, just helping me out with the whole college process too. It’s great.” – Conner</td>
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Discussion
- Although the results were not significant quantitatively, there was qualitative evidence from the in depth interviews that youth are engaging in conversations related to their future aspirations with their VIPs. Additionally, the majority of youth in this study already reported having high aspirations. It seems from the interviews that VIPs might not be influencing the youths future aspirations but they are providing them with concrete information for how to achieve their aspirations.

Limitations:
- Small sample size
- There may not have been enough time between time points to reflect changes in their aspirations
- Used variables that were not what the original study intended to study
- The future aspiration scale measured internal aspirations whereas past studies examined youths external outcomes (e.g. attended college; Dubois & Silverthorn, 2005)
- Majority of sample started with high aspirations so it explains why no relationship was found

Future Research:
- Develop a more suitable internal future aspirations scale
- Using longitudinal data, first measure the internal future aspirations of youth and then later examine their external outcomes
- Bigger sample size
- Larger time frame between time points

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Acknowledgements
The research reported here was supported by the Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, through Grant #R305B090002 to the University of Virginia. Funding for this project is also provided by the William T. Grant Foundation (Grant # 181357). The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not represent views of the institute, the U.S. Department of Education, or the W.T. Grant Foundation.