

## Article

# Navigation and Negotiation towards School Success at Upper Secondary School: The Interplay of Structural and Procedural Risk and Protective Factors for Resilience Pathways

Albert Dueggeli <sup>1,\*</sup>, Maria Kassis <sup>1</sup> and Wassilis Kassis <sup>2</sup> <sup>1</sup> School of Education, FHNW, 4132 Muttenz, Switzerland; alma.kassis@fhnw.ch<sup>2</sup> School of Education, FHNW, 5210 Windisch, Switzerland; wassilis.kassis@fhnw.ch

\* Correspondence: albert.dueggeli@fhnw.ch; Tel.: +41-61-228-5989

**Abstract:** Young male migrants, in particular, are at higher risk of not completing upper secondary education and do not have the same opportunities to put their educational resources to use in existing educational contexts. This work examines how socially and structurally disadvantaged male adolescents (migration biography and low SES) can be supported in attaining educational success at the upper secondary level by applying the resilience concept of navigation and negotiation. Within the framework of grounded theory and by a qualitative coding paradigm, we applied an exploratory heuristical approach in order to understand school success under a micro-sociological passage. Data were collected in German-speaking Switzerland as part of the programme's evaluation, which show, firstly, that inter-individual processes of navigation and negotiation differ depending on the specific people involved and their objectives. Secondly, different forms of development of navigation and negotiation are seen within a single individual, and thirdly, the importance of institutional flexibility becomes apparent when adolescents experience successful processes of navigation or negotiation. The findings are discussed in the context of questions of justice and to their classification within the context of educational and psychological aspects for promoting resilience and on the basis of their overall significance for education policy.

**Keywords:** upper secondary education; migration; intersectionality; success at school; resilience; youth; VET education



**Citation:** Dueggeli, A.; Kassis, M.; Kassis, W. Navigation and Negotiation towards School Success at Upper Secondary School: The Interplay of Structural and Procedural Risk and Protective Factors for Resilience Pathways. *Educ. Sci.* **2021**, *11*, 395. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci11080395>

Academic Editor: Fred Dervin

Received: 14 June 2021

Accepted: 27 July 2021

Published: 2 August 2021

**Publisher's Note:** MDPI stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.



**Copyright:** © 2021 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

## 1. Introduction

It has been known for several years that failure to complete upper secondary education is highly problematic for social prosperity in the long run [1]. It is, therefore, hardly surprising that qualifications achieved at this educational level are closely monitored internationally in terms of quality and quantity [2]. Currently, an average of around 84% of 20–24-year-olds in Europe have completed upper secondary education [3]. This leaves an average of about 16% of young people who have not completed any upper secondary education by this age, with significant and astonishing variations between countries. While in Germany, for example, around 20% of students are without an upper secondary qualification, the respective percentage in Spain is up to 25%, and it is around 12% in Switzerland [3,4]. Without qualifications at this level, there is a significantly higher risk of having fewer contextual skills, being unemployed, and generating lower income [2].

In the EU area in 2019, the share of 25–54-year-olds with a lower upper secondary qualification is more than twice as high among non-EU-born people than among those born in the Member States (nationals or native born) [5]. It is, therefore, not surprising that the risk of poverty or social exclusion is twice as high for people (20–64 years old) with a migration history than for so-called nationals.

NEETs, i.e., young people who are neither in education nor in employment (NEET) at the corresponding age for upper secondary education [2], in a certain way carry a

high risk of social exclusion, and additionally, the development of their professional identity [6] is profoundly negatively influenced by their confrontation of exclusion and disintegration [7]. Furthermore, all over Europe, migrants are significantly more often in the NEETs statistics of their respective countries than native students, and it is suggested that they are one of the most vulnerable social groups when it comes to attaining an upper secondary school education [8]. Young male migrants, in particular, are at a higher risk of not completing upper secondary education and do not have the same opportunities to put their educational resources to use in existing educational contexts [9]. This holds for all OECD countries, with women having higher completion rates than men in upper secondary education. Even if this gender gap decreases with time, as men take longer to complete their educational programmes, the question of the extent to which young male migrants are in a specific situation that allows them to make the transition from school, through vocational training, to the world of work cannot be ignored. Stahl [10] points out that young men with experience of migration, in particular, attain important biographical experiences with regard to their integration through transitioning into vocational training. Additionally, in Switzerland, not only are migrant students underrepresented in upper secondary education, but they also bear a significantly higher risk of dropping out [11]. What has been observed in the Swiss context since 2018—namely, that there is a need for action in connection with the issue of migration and certification levels—thus, seems to hold true [12].

#### **An intersectional view on migrant students' success at school at upper secondary level**

It is increasingly being recognised that treating migrant adolescents as a homogeneous group when it comes to the topic of success at school inadequately describes their situation and does not do justice to the various challenges they face, all of which may affect their success pathways [6,13]. In our reading of the literature, recognising this heterogeneity is central to formulating and applying effective prevention or intervention and might show a far more differential picture of young people's resilience patterns and pathways [14,15]. While some research does distinguish among resilience pathways in terms of gender, migration/ethnicity, and SES, a separate development in this body of research has been the recognition of intersectionality [16], which shows that being in more than one disadvantaged position can lead to additional disadvantages not captured by simply summing the separate disadvantages, even if the discussion or problem is not new in itself [17]. Intersectional analysis is commonly done for interactions between gender and migration/ethnicity; however, increasingly, other divisions, such as SES, are being incorporated into these kinds of analysis.

As a single factor, SES has a significant but not an overreaching effect on levels of success at school [18]. Male gender [19], low SES [20], and migration [21,22] are known risk patterns that are connected with lower rates of success at school [15]. Thus, in the context of migration at school, we are able to identify enormous variety in terms of those who attain enough success at school to complete upper secondary education [8,14]. One difficulty when analysing success at school is the task of identifying students as migrants or natives and clarifying this, because ethnicity, nationality, and a migration background are constructed terms that implicitly constitute the groups they seem to describe [23]. We, therefore, understand the notion of a migration background as referring to the combination of three variables: country of birth, nationality at birth, and country of birth of both parents [4].

Research has provided vast evidence that risks for failure at school and dropping out of school [8,9] for migrant students—and, here, especially for male students [24]—often co-occur, and that an accumulation of individual and social risks is strongly related to rising risks for poor school outcomes [13] at the upper secondary level. Thus, our research topic is characteristic for intersectionality perspectives. However, it is obvious that the characteristics considered in our explorative qualitative study only represent some of the possible influencing factors.

However, one limitation of the existing research on migrant students' failure at school at the upper secondary level is that, while the cited studies demonstrate clearly established associations between adolescent students' SES, migration, and success at school, far fewer studies have examined resilience pathways out of the school failure cycle [25]. A second limitation is that, while studies state the especially high risk for not completing upper-secondary-level education that male migrant students have, the role of the schools or school systems in question that are connected to this educational failure is very seldom problematized. This is especially true because, as Ungar, Connelly, Liebenberg, and Theron [18] state, schools should influence the resilience of their students. Therefore, future research with schools is needed that also gathers data on both individual and ecological factors within the same study. We need to ask, "Which factors nurture and sustain resilience? For which children, and in which contexts? When are they exposed to what threats to their psychosocial development?" (p. 9). Therefore, resilience outcomes do not apply generally [18], as there is no such thing as an indiscriminate resilience process, no guaranteed safe-way. In our case, we aim on understanding school success at secondary school under particular intersectional conditions: intertwined gender, SES, and migration of the respective students.

Studies on school resilience have overturned the almost unavoidable negative assumptions and deficit-focused models about migrant students growing up under the multi-layered threats of adversity, but, so far, we do not have evidence-based knowledge about school resilience in upper secondary education. Following in the line of Masten's ordinary magic [26], we would propose that not only resilience in general, but also school resilience, consists of ordinary rather than extraordinary processes and school practices. In terms of migrant students' development during upper secondary education, we needed specific insights into school adaptation systems that would not just be focused on fostering positive individual or social practices, but also on reducing the still existing threats that compromise migrant students' positive development. Nevertheless, no single agreed definition of resilience exists as of yet [26–28]. Masten's [28] insights, starting from the notion that resilience refers first of all to "... positive adaptation in the context of risk or adversity" (p. 9) in upper secondary education, clearly lead the way and relate in a subtle way to Eccles' established expectancy-value models [29] or Seidel's [30] insights into effective teaching, by indicating the necessity of adapting students' individual obligations to institutional, multifaceted responsibilities for success at school. An intersectional approach helps us focus on learning and teaching conditions under specific but not unique individual and institutional risks and challenges.

One of the main insights, which is a research "pillar" for our analysis, is Masten's evidence-based understanding [28] that, in most cases, resilience appears as a result of the operation of adaptational systems during upper secondary education. This means that, in the context of our study, it is not simply an individual's "just do it mentality", despite the existing odds.

### **Navigation and negotiation towards resilience**

Resilience has been described as the process of achieving positive adjustment despite adversity [31], but it has also been noted that determining the presence of resilience requires clear, agreed criteria to be set that describe what positive adjustment and good outcomes look like, for example, success at school, in the face of a specific risk [28].

In order to apply these insights, we would like to introduce the topic of school resilience in upper secondary education, adapting studies on resilience originally relating to child and youth services to gain an understanding into turning points for achieving resilience in high-risk adolescents. Ungar [32] developed the question of how children and adolescents "travel" towards resilience for social service delivery systems. In particular, very much like Masten [28], he enquired into the processes within a dynamic system for promoting resilience pathways and, thereby, allowing developmental turning points for children and adolescents to unfold.

Ungar [32–34] defines the qualities needed for successful resilience patterns as an interplay between navigation—that is, the individual’s capacity to navigate their way to resources—and negotiation, which is seen as the interaction—in a child-focused way, so as to sustain positive outcomes—between the specific environment that provides services and the concrete individual. Applying Ungar’s insights from social services [32] to school resilience, the resilience turning points in schools would consist in resilience pathways, fostered by proactive actions on the part of the students in question, in combination with child-focused interactions with the specific school that are non-institutional and not focused on the provision of interventions. While following Ungar’s suggestions, we got the opportunity to learn from social services studies by not forgetting the children, and the chance to translate this fruitful knowledge into school settings. Masten’s [28] suggestion, which we endorse and which leads our paper, defines resilience as follows: “The capacity of a dynamic system to adapt successfully to disturbances that threaten system function, viability, or development” (p. 10).

## 2. The Intervention for Sustaining Learners’ Resilience

The intervention took place in an upper secondary school in German-speaking Switzerland and started in 2016 (mid-way through the school year). This type of school leads learners to a vocational qualification and also gives them the opportunity to complete the Swiss Federal Vocational Baccalaureate (FVB). It is, thus, a higher-qualification form of school-based vocational training [24] in which, in recent years, an average of around 25% of young women and around 75% of young men have been enrolled [35]. Seventy-one percent of the intervention participants were not born in Switzerland. Interventions can, therefore, be used in a special way in this type of training to ensure that learners with migration biographies do not fail higher-qualification forms of training programmes at the upper secondary level. This is compatible with the school’s overall goal of reducing the high dropout rate in the years to come.

### *Structural- and content-specific framing*

The present support and stabilisation programme was built on this global objective and implemented as a two-year support programme. In terms of content, an attempt was made to react to more recent findings in learning-related migration research, which show that the opportunities to learn OTL are particularly important for learning success, especially for learners from a weaker socio-economic background (SES of families of origin) [36]. Attendance of this programme was, therefore, compulsory for those learners who were interested. They also had to attend it regularly upon being admitted. This move helped increase the amount of time learners spent engaged with content. This deliberately led to a requirement for negotiation between the young people, and the project was intended to promote interaction and connect both needs and demand with the possibilities of an adaptive project. However, this increase in learning time that was implemented was not organised as usual classroom teaching, that is, steered and regulated by the teachers; for instance, rather, the learners had to structure the time themselves. Teachers were available to them on site as support persons in every session, but they did not actively determine the learning process. The participants in the programme had to take on this task themselves. In this respect, the programme was deliberately set apart from the usual teaching and learning formats and, in a certain way, was even set in opposition to them. The OTL options were formally increased due to the request for participation to be mandatory. They had to be used proactively by learners. Use of this learning opportunity was based on the learners’ self-governed dedication and, thus, on navigation processes. The focus of the intervention was on learners identifying their problems and bringing them into the classroom. They had to use the formal structure offered to them—on the one hand, the time and, on the other hand, the personal resources of the teachers that were available to them—while organising themselves, and with a view to working on their problems.

### *Target areas*

Overall, the intervention addresses three target areas: firstly, performance (grades), secondly, organisation of oneself as a navigation process with regard to learning content and learning processes (preparation and organisation during the support units), and thirdly, the design of social learning relationships as negotiation towards mutual adaptation of participants and project offerings [37]. As a result, the content of the intervention was steered from within, and so, the direction of the subject matter could change over a certain period of time depending on the demands of the learners. At the beginning of the funding programme, for example, the learners asked intensively about the subject German. History and French were taken up somewhat less extensively during this phase. Over time, and based on the demands of the learners, other subjects such as mathematics and economics and law were gradually offered. The question focused on here is how young men fill out this learning offering as a creative task, that is, how they navigate through it. Negotiation is, therefore, to be reflected upon against this background.

### **3. Methodology and Materials**

On the basis of the intervention model outlined above, we used a qualitative exploratory design to longitudinally examine resilience pathways out of the school failure cycle for male migrant students with a low socio-economic status [38] at upper secondary school in order to identify specific school-resilience processes called navigation and negotiation [32]. The focus is on the following questions specifically: What kind of navigation and negotiation can be found in the school context being investigated? By which means do young men try to encounter them? What strategies are developed by which different actors? And with what consequences?

So far, we still do not know if the dynamics of navigation and negotiation can be translated into educational sciences. We also have still to explore if the terms navigation and negotiation, developed for social work, are just to be addressed generally or needed specifications related to peers, teachers, and parents.

The programme was evaluated based on the aforementioned target dimensions of performance, self-organisation, and social reference system in a longitudinal design. This was, on the one hand, done quantitatively using questionnaires and, on the other, qualitatively using topic-focused interviews [39] and on the basis of classroom observations (1 to 2 times a month for 2–3 h a time). The latter included in vivo conversations with the adolescents and their teachers. The field notes were sorted by theme and drawn up as reports with a view to a systematic analysis. The reporting and analyses were methodically based on an ethnographic fieldwork approach, beginning with the translation of the observations into language, followed by a detailed presentation of events with specifics and contextual information, as well as concrete statements. The observers' concrete impressions were also included [40,41].

It is the first two measurement times that the analysis of the questions focuses on here. The first of these was four months after the start of the programme (2016), and the second, then a year later, i.e., at the end of June 2017. These data show how the young people organise themselves in the intervention directly after its start, or to what extent they change how they are organised over the course of a year and develop against the background of the objectives of the intervention. In addition, the breadth of material enabled acts of navigation or negotiation that were used for regulating the young people's actions and interactions to be represented in a nuanced and differentiated way.

### *Sampling and Cases*

Eighteen adolescents were supported throughout the entire duration of the intervention (March 2016 to June 2018, about one year before the COVID-19 outbreak). Work was carried out with three cohorts (starting in January 2016, October 2016, and September 2017) made up of young people from the first and second years of middle school. The intervention took place once a week and lasted for between two and three hours each time. Eleven young people were on board (first cohort). After six months, in June 2016, two

young people left the school and four more dropped out of the programme, despite the fact that participation was mandatory. Three of the remaining five young people successfully passed both VET qualification levels—first of all, the qualification at an intermediate level, and, secondly, the one at a higher level (i.e., ISCED 2011, level 3 category 35; subcategories 353 and 354, respectively) [38]. However, two of them had to retake the final exam a year later (June 2018). The two cases examined here were part of this first group. The focus on two cases and not on the whole sample [18] aimed at offering more detailed information. Although a standardization was aimed at for the implementation of the project, namely, to reach the most vulnerable young people of this school (those with low SES and migration as risk patterns that are connected with lower rates of success at school). Nevertheless, the data analyses showed that further internal differentiations of the target group could be relevant. For example, we identified that within our sample there were young people who had lived in Switzerland since birth and had attended Swiss school (including kindergarten) from the beginning. Still others were lateral entrants into the Swiss education system, i.e., they came to Switzerland after having attended primary or early high-school level in their home country. The linguistic and socio-cultural orientation of the pupils also showed differences. For example, there were first languages that were national languages in the multilingual context of Switzerland (e.g., French) and others with a more distant background (e.g., Romanian). We, therefore, focussed on two young people who, despite a structural–theoretical predefinition, were able to reveal further representational aspects over the research process.

#### **Case descriptions: Histories of migration within the field of tension between curriculum vitae and school biographies**

The data were examined by two young men who do not speak German as their home language and whose families of origin are of a lower socio-economic status. They are outlined as examples and are, therefore, not to be understood as extreme cases. In addition, the analyses are not primarily designed to be used for comparing cases, but rather for reconstructing individual cases. Additionally, although procedural differences in their school socialization so far are visible between the two cases, these appear to be insufficiently selective to enable a contrastive view. In the discussion part, however, an attempt is nevertheless then made to deal with the differences that became evident on the basis of the data analysis, and not through structural differences between cases that are set a priori. As singular phenomena, they enable a more nuanced understanding of how, during critical educational phases of upper secondary school, young men who do not speak German as their first language or home language, and who are of a low socio-economic status, both use resources that are open to them as part of an offer of support, but then also successfully handle risks—risks that find their way into the educational process of these people by virtue of who they are, their family experiences, and their previous socialisation at school. This focus entails an empirical limitation that must be taken into account in the further course of the discussion. The analyses take as their starting point two exemplary cases that attended the first run of the programme. They are described below, tracing their migration history and against the background of the course their lives took at school.

##### **Case 1 (Eron)**

Eron, 19 years old, was born in Switzerland as the youngest son of an immigrant family from south-eastern Europe and is passing through the local education system in full. His school career is not always linear. He reports rather little of positive events. Upon starting kindergarten, the Swiss dialect is used more intensively, such as the standard German language, which he does not speak. He tries to learn the languages well and reports of situations in which he understands the teachers' questions but answers in his first language. After transferring to middle school (grade 5–7), he is placed at the lowest level in all subjects except English. In secondary school (grade 7–9), he is then placed in the higher level (E) because he tries hard and because he has also managed to obtain a sufficient grade in French. Overall, however, his academic achievements are not

outstanding; he describes himself as an “average student”, which is why he repeatedly visits the school’s support centre, especially for German. His first goal is to start with a commercial apprenticeship, and, focusing on this, he starts a preparatory course. However, he does not obtain an apprenticeship position, not even after sending off 30 applications. In spite of good enough grades, he is unable to start the vocational training he wants to embark on. On the recommendation of his father, and so that he does not remain disconnected from school for a year, he enrolls at this upper secondary school that has a commercial focus, but which he did not choose himself. Given that his grades were sufficient at the time (he is starting without any provisional arrangement), he is currently aiming for a Federal Vocational Baccalaureate (FVB), the higher of the two final diplomas of school. However, then, he has to repeat a class because of bad grades at the end of the first semester of the second year. The new class seems to be a positive turning point for him. All in all, he finds everyday school life very stressful and reports very long days at school, which trigger headaches and visual disorders for him. Eron also reports several times of financial difficulties in his family. He has two older brothers, one of whom is doing an apprenticeship (paver), while the other is a graduate of the commercial middle school. Both still live at home. He remembers how his mother being insulted used to put him in fits of rage. Over the course of time, he had to learn to deal with this constructively, and he seems, in his stories, to not be spared feelings of shortcomings that go hand in hand with a difficult migration biography. The death of his beloved uncle, which occurred at the time of his unsuccessful applications, puts him in a personal crisis, and so he has to visit a school psychologist. During this time, he undergoes psychological treatment outside of the school.

#### Case 2 (Ricardo)

After Ricardo’s parents had lived and worked in Switzerland for twenty years, they re-emigrated to southern Europe to attempt a new start in their home country. Ricardo was born in his homeland as the fourth and last child in the family. When he turned 15—at the time, he was attending a high school for sciences, with a focus on mathematics—his father’s business was in crisis. His brother, who worked as an independent craftsman in Switzerland, again offers him the opportunity to return to Switzerland and work for him. Having arrived in Switzerland, without any knowledge of German, Ricardo joins a languages high school (called “Gymnasium” in Switzerland) with a focus on Italian and is able to hold out for two whole years. German causes him great difficulties. He receives insufficient grades and, ultimately, has to leave this school after two years. Ricardo signs up for a commercial secondary upper school and is provisionally accepted. He soon feels very comfortable in his new school environment, including in his year group. He also gets along better with the young people at this school. Back then, in the secondary school that he left, he noticed the socio-economic difference between himself and a large part of the learners. Here, he feels more of a social connection; most learners come from a migrant background, like himself. His goal is to have a good command of German. A good command of the language is particularly relevant to him when it comes to future applications as part of an internship. Ricardo thinks he sees that not all teachers understand that people like him do not understand the language so well, and they then say that the reason for their poor grades is not paying attention. Mathematics and French are strong subjects for him, and he receives good to very good grades. Additionally, subject “Economics and Law”—a main subject at that school—really appeals to him. At the beginning of the interview already, he proudly emphasises that he was the “*only one*” of his four schoolmates with provisional status who did not have to repeat the year. In this context, Ricardo seems to experience self-efficacy, which is able to compensate for his experience of moving down from high-school to this upper secondary school to a vocational qualification. At the end of Year Two, having just turned 19, Ricardo seems to be convinced that only the good and motivated students have made it into the third and final year of school, and he is one of them.

The family's financial situation is tight, which is one reason why he rejects his parents' suggestion to pay for extra tuition for certain subjects. Ricardo works on the weekends for his pocket money and learns a lot in the process—most of all, how to assert himself as a responsible person in critical situations. At the same time, he wants a certain level of financial independence and does not want to be an additional burden for his family. He sees his multicultural biography as an advantage. Thanks to this, he has an advantage compared to others his age and is a little further along than others. His migration background is in no way perceived as a negative stamp or burden. Italian, an official language of his country, also seems to be an important skill for him.

#### 4. Results

The research questions are analysed on the basis of the two individual cases. In order to gain and map visible and intra-individual changes and developments, the two cases are introduced separately based on the time of the respective data collection.

##### Case 1: Eron, 2016 (four months after starting to take part in the support project)

Eron gets to know the support project through a teacher at school. He sees it as an opportunity at school to improve his performance in particular subjects. By participating, he navigates towards the possibility of encountering weaknesses in specific subjects. *"And because I know that I have weaknesses in German and French (...). But still I try to get a handle on that, so to speak, here during the programme"* (Eron June 2016 #00:06:05–6#). He describes working through shortcomings in particular subjects as his central goal, thus citing a significant reason for his navigation towards this option of resource use. Initially, his statements show that he finds the open way of structuring the learning time and the different types of supporting offers from the teachers to be particularly important. *"Here...here, you just have time to yourself, so (...) I can too (...) now if there's something I haven't understood in class (...) and the lesson is over, (...) then I can't really do anything (...). Here, I can sit down and say, 'OK, I didn't understand that,' and then someone will explain it to me"* (Eron June 2016 #00:34:51–6#). Eron experiences the direct availability of the teachers and the lived responsibility they bear for him to succeed as something new. Problems and approaches to solutions are identified largely synchronously during the programme and not diachronically (as otherwise experienced in class).

When first attending the programme, the request from a German teacher for him to prepare more of his own topics and questions and then bring them with him to the support programme puts him under a fair bit of pressure. *"... My opinion, therefore, is simply that (.) it is far too stressful for me and (.) I still don't know what I can't yet do and what I can do. (.) And (.) That's just the problem that I..."* (Eron, June 2016 #00:58:21–6#). He is unable to integrate this reference to a possible extension of the negotiations on the part of the German teacher into his learning activities at this point in time. He prefers to discuss the current course content directly on site, that is, as ad hoc work. Practising in the presence of a teacher who intervenes directly to make corrections and explains the content in detail seems to give Eron the security he needs at the moment.

As observational reports show, Eron was often seen in learning interactions with his two colleagues Ricardo and Daniel during this time. This situational problem-solving culture determines how the learning is negotiated during the first phase and, thus, how he uses the offer for subject-specific matters. In addition to use at the subject level, further statements also reveal his shortcomings in terms of his expected effectiveness in general. *"I think the problem is that (2) I am (2)—well, (2) this is how I see it—(.) I am not self-confident. So I don't just simply think, 'I can do it!', and then manage to do it. Rather, I tend more to think that I can't do it, and then I withdraw, don't even try. (2) That is also a reason why I always get very nervous during lectures, because I think, "Uh, I (2)—I don't know, can I say that?—I will fail anyway, and then there is no desire either, and then no motivation either"* (Eron 2016 #00:08:33–8#). Obviously, being public in class inhibits his expectations when it comes to being effective in performance situations. This is different in the programme, because, here, he does not have to make his questions and difficulties public. Rather, he can discuss and



solve his learning hurdles or problems dyadically, with a teacher, or with peers selected by him. Through the form of negotiation of learning mentioned above, he also seems to be able to balance the pressure of being socially exposed.

After four months, Eron reports on the progress in his French performance as a clear gain. This progress is also confirmed by the French teachers during his regular class. Additionally, the fact that Eron passed the DELF exam (Le Diplôme d' Etudes en Langue Française) and attained a good grade in his written language testifies, in his mind, to the positive effect had on him by the support he received. His oral performance, on the other hand, brings him down as a result of his weak self-confidence. In German, on the other hand, he did not notice any learning progress. Additionally, this was despite the fact that, according to his own statements, he has very good teachers as part of the support programme as well as in regular lessons.

The project seems to support him at first in partially stabilising his shortcomings in specific subjects and identifying his difficulties when it comes to self-efficacy. With a view to these two areas, he seems to have found a stable formal place of support overall. Additionally, he is increasingly beginning to reflect on this in the context of "responsibility". It is an understanding of responsibility that can be understood as an equivalence in effort between him and the teachers. *"How should I put it...the responsibility of doing something, because the teachers also have to take time for it ( . . . ) they stay here, they help us. ( . . . ) You don't have that in class."* (Eron June 2016 #00:37:55–1#).

#### **Eron 2017 (one year later)**

After a year and, therefore, at the time of the second interview, Eron knows that he has failed the final exam. He received several grades that did not meet the mark, including in subjects that he particularly wanted to improve as part of the support programme. Nevertheless, he rates his language skills, for example, as increasing over the course of the support programme. This was due, on the one hand, to the targeted support provided by the programme teachers, and, on the other, to his own motivation to learn: *"I also did my bit because I wanted a better grade"*. Self-doubts become evident again, especially with regard to his concept of himself in the subject of German, and a certain level of despair becomes noticeable at the time of the second interview. *"Everything"* was somehow for nothing. Eron questions the final exams as a system he does not quite understand. In particular, the teachers' statements that *"you are always half a grade worse in the final exams"* (Eron 2017 00:33:04–8) strips him of any motivation to learn. Additionally, his motivation to set goals has also dropped significantly. The project head prompts him to formulate his requests in terms of support, a form of negotiation process on the part of the intervention. After three months, he comes back to the programme with the specific wish of receiving personalised support in the subject of economics and law. He is encouraged to negotiate here by the project head. A year later, he passes the exams.

Nevertheless, he sees changes in himself that he regards as success. He talks about having *"become a little more confident"*. During the last year, he also frequently heard that he *"can talk well"*, from both the young people present and the teachers. His personal accounting is clear. He no longer sees himself as *"the extremely shy person"* that he used to be. Apparently, this also has an effect in the regular class, where he and a colleague were discussing an unjust situation, and the class teacher saw him as being in the right, to the surprise of all his school peers present. This reveals a public performance that expresses self-assurance—a self-assurance that was not able to be seen in him last year.

This year, Eron is most often in exchange with Ricardo and Daniel within the context of the support programme. All three often studied together for upcoming exams and projects. Again, when looking for an internship, the three of them write application letters that are proofread before the teachers do the final correction. Generally speaking, Eron experiences the entire third year of school as *"a great burden"*. Searching for an internship in parallel with preparing for the exams does not just create *"stress"* for him, but for all learners. The teachers, on the other hand, seem *"more comfortable"* for Eron than they did in the last school year. However, he also points to the major differences that exist between

them, for example, in terms of exam preparation. Eron describes some of these as utterly senseless things, for example, in the form of writing summaries or solving tasks for which he hardly receives any substantive feedback.

In retrospect, Eron describes himself as active during the second year of the programme. He prepares in a much more targeted way than just a year before. His knowledge of himself as a result of reflection, his desire for success at school, and his willingness to go to an extensive, additional effort for school are what control his self-efficacy. There is an interaction here from navigation to resources and his negotiation with these. As mentioned, this takes place against the background of the experience that learning within this form of support is also a social requirement. It is important for the teacher's attention to be divided, and, at the same time, to be able to make use of the divided attention efficiently. He seems to expand this social level of learning by also being there for others. During the period of the support programme, he also begins to negotiate by staging himself as a helper in a certain way, but without then receiving a lot of help in return from Ricardo and Daniel, especially—his closest colleagues. *"Well, it wasn't a problem for me if someone came up to me and said, 'Hey, can you help me?' (2) Unfortunately, I'm the kind of person who can't say no. (.) Unfortunately @(.).@."* (Eron 2017 #00:06:33–0#). Over the course of the third school year, it is interesting how Eron seems to gradually overcome his shyness. He is found again and again in interactions with younger learners to provide clarification, and so, in a certain way, he takes on an active (teaching) role with respect to them. This is exemplified when he sits on the table next to Li-Ming, who has just joined the project and who is learning economics and law. Eron explains an example and asks Li-Ming questions. Then, he gives him two tasks to solve, which he then corrects. *"Do a few more,"* he then says, and moves away from him. (Report 6 April 2017, AK)

These kinds of subject-specific negotiations among peers within the programme allow Eron to experiment with a new performance of himself. In such situations, he seems very present and confident in his actions. Eron moves more freely within the support project compared to a year ago and seems to feel "at home". Eron can be called a receiver from the project's very start, as he asks others (teachers and peers) for their opinions and support in relation to the what and the how. He needed one year to gain acceptance among his teachers and peers as well as self-confidence before he then started to himself be a supporter of others and, thereby, to be more of a giver and, thus, also a significant other for his peers. He is experimenting with the notion of justice through mutual support and develops strong social relations to Ricardo, in particular, but also to other students: he is receiving support in one school subject from his peers and is himself supporting them in school subjects where they need his help. Interestingly, when he does not pass the final exam, he develops the externalising attributional narrative of himself as an extensive giver who did not get as much support from others in return.

The fundamental "group dynamics" that he experiences with both the young people and the teachers is felt to be an extremely positive experience. They offer a helpful learning climate that enables the young people to mutually support each other, especially Ricardo and Daniel. *"( . . . ) We could all say, OK, (.) After that, it's over. After the first, after the question—we even argued about who asked the first question. (.) Because then some other person comes along, and we then thought it would go on too long. And then we would always say, 'No, no!' I would ask the question briefly and then I would think about it, and so that's what it was like, like a pact between us."* (Eron 2017 #00:27:46–4#). Eron also seems to find new meaning in "prepared" content. *"( . . . ) But also the last thing I said earlier, that I have now prepared, for example, that is, I've read through the book and then went there, that is, I went to the discussion. That really, really helped."* (Eron 2017, # 00:43:34–3#). This is a change compared to how he used things a year ago, and he sees that he can then react even better to his difficulties and deal with them. During the support lessons, Eron discusses the German books he has selected for the final exam with the same German teacher who caused him "stress" a year earlier. Over time, he has left what were initially hurdles to his support behind. He even recognises new opportunities for learning. When asked what helped him the most during

the support programme, Eron emphasises two learning activities. First, the books they read and prepared, which he then discussed in the programme with the German teacher, and then also *“the spontaneous way of things”* as he puts it. He is also positively surprised by what his colleagues do from a substantive point of view, and he follows suit. *“Hey, I find what you do exciting. I want to do it too”* (Eron 2017 #00:44:00–3#).

Summing up: Eron navigates his way to the programme with the aim of improving his German and French skills. Four months later, he notices a growing motivation to learn French, which can be explained by his rising grades. In German, on the other hand, he does not notice any positive change, despite good teachers. The recommendations of one of the German teachers—to prepare before attending the programme and to bring specific questions with him—are stressful for him at this point in time. He generally rates the additional learning time he receives in the programme as positive. Here, he can clarify any questions he has, which he cannot do in regular lessons. During the programme, he experiences teachers who want to support him in his performance. A year later, although he fails the final exams, Eron reports on his increasing self-confidence. He often hears from teachers and learners how he can speak well. This time, Eron also reports positively about his growing language skills in French and German. Compared to a year ago, when he turned up with a learning attitude that primarily prioritised clarifying his ad hoc questions, just a year later, he is now showing a certain degree of expansion of his activities. He is opening up his attitude to learning by coming to the support programme increasingly prepared and is able to recognise the gains in learning for himself. Eron seems to mature into more efficient negotiation over time.

#### **Case 2: Ricardo (June 2016, four months after the start)**

Ricardo was put on the list of registered young people by a teacher. He agrees to this gentle duress. His goal is to work on his German language skills from the very beginning so as *“not to speak like a 5-year-old foreigner. It’s not professional, and people can’t take me seriously”* (Ricardo 2016, 00:20:16–5). Ricardo’s strong will to improve his German skills can also be linked to the upcoming internship. He must be able to speak German, according to his overall assessment as a partial motive for the focus of his performance in this regard. His German teacher in the regular class sees his progress in German, but gives him an unsatisfactory grade. Italian, on the other hand, which he speaks very well, is of great help to him, as well as for learning French. He achieves good grades and also passes the DELF exam (Le Diplôme d’Études en Langue Française) without any effort, as he reports.

Class observations reveal Ricardo to be a very motivated and active student during the first few months of the support programme. Either he learns alone, is in contact with his two colleagues, Eron and Daniel, or he clarifies his questions directly with the teachers present. Ricardo focuses on the following protocol in this first phase of the support project. The following observation shows an example of this:

Shortly after the support programme started, the German teacher wants to know what is coming up that day. As Eron talks about the upcoming discussion in German, the German teacher asks about the topics that were to be prepared. Eron announces his topic: *“Whether young people need guardians”*. *“And you?”* she asks Ricardo. *“If someone has problems at home,”* Ricardo says, *“so: ‘Homes for Youth—yes or no?’ Instead of sending young people to homes, my suggestion would be to bring them into a shared flat,”* he adds. This is followed by a substantial discussion between Ricardo and the teacher on the topic of the advantages of and the need for homes for young people. After a while, the teacher takes up the steering question again by asking: *“And what do you want to do now?”* *“When is it ‘der’ and when ‘dem’ after the comma?”* asks Ricardo. The teacher stands up, fetches a few grammar books from her desk, opens one, and shows him a page. *“OK, I’ll try it,”* says Ricardo, and shortly afterwards, begins to write in his notebook. The teacher moves away (recording position 20/05/2016 AK). The use of learning resources in the interests of navigating is shown to be multi-layered for Ricardo and appears in a kind of synchronicity. The topic changes from an opinion-based exchange with the teacher about the topic to be worked on dialectically to questions of grammar, to which the teacher reacts not as a partner in discussion and for

argumentation, but as a supplier of appropriate books in which he can find solutions to his problem himself.

With a view to himself, Ricardo has noticed that the teachers in the school building approach him differently since he started attending the programme “(...) *They notice that I (.) make an effort, because they, they can see that. Because sometimes (.) you can do that, (.) you can make an effort, but the others don't see it. ( . . . ) And, and yes. (.) The teachers (.) talk to each other. And they see 'Yes R. is there, yes he is doing a support project, he is making an effort', that's why.*” (Ricardo 2016, #00:27:06–5#). This positive perception, and the fact that his German grades are getting better, seems to stabilise his self-efficacy in the subject of German. He notices how he gradually understands German better. “*You just understand,*” says Ricardo. This can be interpreted as the result of his negotiation in that specific subject, which he realises during the first phase of the project, as he describes things.

With a view to the management of his actions, Ricardo also experiences the challenge of how to orient himself within the openness of the support project. He needs more structure, he says. “*Yes, yes, structure, yes. For me, it is very important. I have almost no structure in my life actually. But I think it's very important at school. I am a very spontaneous person.*” (Ricardo 2016, #00:28:42–5#). From his point of view, the current openness of the support project calls for self-discipline on the part of the learners, which is not constantly available. Sometimes, Ricardo allows himself to be infected by the demotivation of other young people, the cause of which is to be found in the stresses of everyday school life. In such moments, Ricardo cannot distinguish himself from a certain group dynamic that simply arises and which can be understood as giving structure in a negative way “(...) *It's like, (.) for example, (.) one of the three... (.) one of the bunch of them says, 'OK, come on, let's not do anything to today', and then (.) the other thinks, OK, 'Mhh, come on, let's not do anything'. And there is simply—(.) it happens quickly, that you quickly get there, to it's nothing to me.*” (Ricardo 2016 #00:33:50–4#). This spontaneously arising negative dynamic of action does not seem to be compatible with his motivation to participate. However, he realises that he needs a form of guidance that gives structure and regulates him, so that he can learn more efficiently. “(...) *well, I am a person who, when I see something... (.) I can do what I want sometimes. Then I don't play along at all. That's that. Sometimes... For example, if you've had a tough week and have run out of steam (.) ( . . . )*” (Ricardo 2016 #00:29:51–4#). On the basis of self-reflective considerations of this kind, he begins to actively think about how the programme could be designed for the coming school year so that he can benefit even more. He suggests three hours of support, with a clear division of time between subjects. Nevertheless, you can also start to like having several teachers present who offer support in their subjects at the same time. Here, Ricardo seems to show a structure-seeking kind of navigation and, at the same time, a negotiation of avoidance that gives itself structure. By searching for structures from the outside, his form of negotiation rejects his avoidance of giving himself structures. The reason that is given for this is a possible increase in efficiency, which he would see in this way for the future design of the programme.

Looking ahead to the next and final school year, Ricardo said at the end of June 2016: “*Well, now that I'm in the third year, yes. (.) I would just be (.) I have (.) I'm very, very motivated and I have already... (.) So, I'm going on holiday on 13th July, and I've already got everything organised now until 13th July. Because of a CV, for example, because of applications, because of an internship*” (Ricardo 2016, #00:48:01–2#). At the end of June 2016, Ricardo is aiming to pass the final exams, which are due in a year, with the highest possible qualification (FVB) and to find an internship at the beginning of the third school year already.

#### **Ricardo in 2017 (one year later)**

At the time of the second interview, Ricardo knows that he has passed both exams. He is proud of that and receives recognition for it from his family. However, a new challenge for him is to find an internship. He only manages to find an internship shortly before the final exams. From his memory, however, the second year seems to have been “*more stressful*” for him compared to the third year: “(...) *the most difficult year is, uh, the most difficult year is the second year, because in the second year you do more interdisciplinary project*”

work, and more projects, and that stretches into the first semester of the third year. This means that, unless you are on provisional status for moving into the third year, you're already in the final exams. (3) (.) Because of that." (Ricardo 2017, #00:02:17–2#). From a social point of view, the second year is also negatively characterised for him with ambivalent experiences within group work. He reports on graded project work in which there were profiteers who let themselves be carried through at the expense of others. However, even under these rather difficult conditions, Ricardo seems to learn something, as he tells in his retrospective account: "I learned something that sometimes... (2) well, now maybe I am a little bit\_ it's exaggerated, but...how should I say this? (2) Sometimes you have to work in bad situations and, although you give everything, (.) you still can't\_ you are unlucky anyway." (Ricardo 2017, #00:08:21–5#). Additionally, "That was unfair for me, very unfair. (3) But you also have to accept it and move on. Because if I\_ if I had said, 'No, that doesn't work,' then I would be so angry with the teachers (.) Then that would only be a disadvantage for me. (2) I said thank you and kept at it anyway, and now I've done it." (Ricardo 2017#00:09:27–1#).

In addition, the programme has developed further in this third year, in that the structure he required has, at least in part, been implemented. Teachers from different subject areas are now present at each meeting, and a subject-matter-based rota is available. German is still a subject in which he needs support, even if his competence has developed positively in the last year. He no longer stutters, as he says, and the numerous books he had to read for the final exams have helped him in his linguistic development. In general, it can be seen that he is expanding his learning strategies and also that he evaluates social learning experiences as positive results of his progress. This is shown by an incident when he and a colleague from school studied for an exam together. He reflects on what happened and can consciously integrate it into his actions. "It all started with my schoolmate. (.) We said it like... I suggested it to her like, 'Hey, shall we study together?' And she said, 'No, let's not study together. You study it alone, I will study it alone, we'll meet tomorrow, and (.) we'll talk about it.' I got a fail on this test. (.) And since then, I have understood that this is the only way to go. It's exciting and faster—it's just faster. ( . . . ) And because she wanted to carry on, I wanted to stay, and it just takes longer, but if you read a little on your own first, and check and research it, it is then faster, because\_ it is part of a conversation. (.)" (Ricardo 2017, #00:28:51–4#). Ricardo also uses subject-based negotiations based on pre-learning for his negotiations with the teachers in the programme. At the same time, Ricardo discovers that preparation makes it possible to have "conversations on an equal footing". "Well, I noticed that when I am already learning on my own and then come into the project, (.) and ask (.) an (.) opinion (.) a stance (.) in any case, (.) then it\_ is not learning in that way, it is like a conversation. For example, I had an experience where I had to read the books, and Mr R. had also read these—I think he read them especially for me—and because we could just talk about them—and, for example, I had information that he did not know and vice versa—it was like an exchange. And that's why, I think, you don't just have to go into a support project and say, "I have to learn". You have to\_ you have to have already done something at home (...). Because that way, it's just\_ it's exciting for teachers and also for students, that's what I've learned." (Ricardo 2017, #00:27:20–5#). Ricardo continues and laughs in the interview about how he cannot slow down the teacher when he's talking and is not able to get a word in himself. "( . . . ) Because the teachers also say, 'Ah, yes, he did some research. He really wants to know something about this'. And, as well, you think... I think it's a psychological, I think it's a psychological game, how should I put it @(. )@ Yes, so: oh, and then\_ and then\_ I just noticed how at a certain point Mr. R. just @spoke@ (.)@ @He just wanted to teach more, more, more @. @Simply more@. @Simply more@. @And I just had to stop him like that; I want to speak too @. @. It was like a competition, how should I put it @." (Ricardo 2017, # 00:30:25–1 #). It seems that he uses the structure of the offer, as it existed 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  years after the start of the support programme, to control his own learning processes in a more autonomous manner and, at the same time, to encounter the teachers with greater emancipation when it comes to the specifics of the subjects. As a result, he experiences not only gains in his learning in the specific subjects, but also recognition on the part of the teachers, and it opens him up to the interactive experience of being meaningful as a learner who not only processes the content

to learn, but also shapes it. His experience is that preparation not only makes learning more exciting, but he also makes progress faster. This discovery is able to keep his motivation to learn high. Ricardo also wants to transform the learning communities among the peers, above all, those with Eron and Daniel. Preparation has become important to him, because otherwise, the group will not make good progress. It is about the experience that fellow students should also have expectations for their own learning and progress, and that one, therefore, has to prepare well so that everyone can benefit from everyone else (efficiency negotiation). At this point, Ricardo changes his negotiation of the subject with his peers and focuses on only learning with those who prepare. If Eron does not come prepared, he says, Ricardo will not study with him. For this reason, the relationship between them within the support programme becomes a bit more unstable overall towards the end of the training.

In general, Ricardo's learning behaviour seems to have become more targeted and focused over the course of the third year, and, at the same time, more autonomous and flexible. Whereas, a year ago, he asked for structure in the support project, a year later, he is ready to disregard project structures that seem useless to him. For example, he tilts away from sticking to daily goals when he pauses a while in the project to learn, a goal that the project teachers introduced when he stated that it was of no use to him. In order to achieve his goal of passing the final exams, he navigates to various learning opportunities (OTLs; also outside the project) and invests in preparation as a negotiation figuration. In retrospect, he appreciates the support he received very much and sees it as a very good opportunity to develop further "(2) to properly consider what exactly it is you want to do (3) and (.) and, how should I put it, (5) mmm. I don't know how to put it. @(. )@ (5) So, (3) for example, (.) for example you can study different subjects and you can concentrate on one, um (2) the teachers help you (.) and if you are in a bad financial situation (.) then it is very good, because it's free. (.) And it's also a kind of responsibility, because you yourself have to know that you can't be absent. Like that, for example. (3) I would have told it like that." (#00:54:31–2#). You can see that he appreciates and makes use of the openness of the programme as the basis for his work performance.

At this point, Ricardo begins to design new prospects for his training. After his internship year, a further condition of the school regulations for obtaining a FVB, he wants to enrol at a university to study economics. Other general goals also come into being at this point; for example, he resolves to improve his English skills.

In summary: as a lateral entrant into the Swiss school system, Ricardo mainly reports difficulties with German as the language of education. This is the reason why he comes to the programme. He quickly notices that he can learn and understand there, and do so in an atmosphere that is conducive to learning. Four months after starting, Ricardo would like more structure and rules within the programme in order to achieve his goal of successfully passing the final exams. The structure that the programme then develops suits him very well for the third year of school. At the same time, he develops a new figuration of negotiation than the one he has tried and tested so far, and he increasingly practices this with both teachers and the young people present with a view to the final exams. Ricardo prepares the content before attending the programme and discovers how he can learn more quickly and in a more substantiated way. Not all young people appear more willing to learn together; they come unprepared.

## 5. Discussion

We analysed the interplay of structural and procedural risk and protective factors for resilience pathways by combining gender, SES, and migrant background of the respective students. Male migrant students with low SES are internationally seen as at risk when it comes to successfully completing upper secondary school [2,6,8,9].

Even if the knowledge that failure to complete upper secondary education is highly problematic for individual, social, and financial prosperity is internationally validated [2], it is surprising that EU-wide more than 16 percent of young people aged 20–24 still have

not completed any upper secondary education [3]. Interestingly, the heterogeneity between the different young adults in terms of their success levels for completing upper secondary education is enormous, with male migrant students having the highest risk for poor school outcomes [9] at the upper secondary level. With the three categories “gender”, “migration”, and “low SES”, the present work focuses on three dimensions that are widely and comprehensively analysed and discussed as causes of social discrimination and inequality at upper secondary school. For this reason, this research is also situated and discussed in the context of intersectionality. This differentiates existing knowledge by providing deeper insights into new ways of applying educational interventions. The present research is to be seen as a beginning, which must be followed by further research, for example, by studies that focus on young women under similar conditions. It is also conceivable, however, to conduct research that expands the analytical perspective longitudinally, i.e., that takes a closer look at biographical trajectories.

Picking up on these insights, we used a qualitative exploratory design to longitudinally examine resilience pathways out of the school failure cycle by applying an intersectional approach for male migrant students with a low socio-economic status at upper secondary school in order to overturn the almost unavoidable negative assumptions and deficit-focused models about migrant students growing up under the multi-layered threats of adversity. Proceeding from Masten’s [26,28] insights—that resilience refers to the positive adaptation of a system, not just an individual, in the context of risk or adversity—we asked what this resilience-oriented adaptation of systems in upper secondary education might look like when it comes to fostering success of male migrant students with a low socio-economic status at school. In the context of our study, this not only means an individual’s “just do it mentality”, nourished by Hollywood misconceptions of migrant students being “invincible” or “invulnerable” despite existing odds.

The material (interviews, field notes, and reports) was openly coded in a first evaluative run (initial coding), with the aim of recording the thematic case structure of the interviews. The codes were developed into categories for the specific interviews. This was followed by differentiation in terms of content, which increasingly resulted in more theoretical and more targeted foci. These methodological considerations, to be situated within the framework of grounded theory, were relevant in order to develop categories that reflect the viewpoint of those concerned and, at the same time, open up targeted perspectives that help break down the ties between structural conditions and individual explanations [42]. We also followed the qualitative approach of Strauss’ and Corbin’s (1996) “coding paradigm” [43], which directed our data analysis in order to understand and explain human action under a micro-sociological approach. We followed contemporary epistemological discussions and used the theoretical knowledge Ungar’s, especially his concepts of “navigation” and “negotiation” relating to child and youth services in order to outline their perspectivation for the school context. Therefore, the concepts of “navigation” and “negotiation” were used as heuristics, not as a model to be applied on [44].

Masten’s resilience model was enriched by Ungar’s [32,45] insights from social services to school resilience. The resilience turning points in schools would consist in resilience pathways fostered by proactive actions of the students in question, called navigation, in correspondence to students-focused interventions by the respective schools sustaining positive school outcomes, called negotiation. Following these insights, we performed an exploratory analysis of the turning points for success at school in two “cases” of young male adolescents with a migration background and low socio-economic status at upper secondary level. Very much like Masten [28] and Ungar et al. [18], we specifically asked about the processes within a dynamic school system for fostering resilience pathways and, thereby, allowing turning points in the development of success at school to unfold.

Even when resources were provided to Eron, his path into accepting them and adapting them to his school practices, and into becoming performative for school success, did not take the course of a straight line, but was much rather a meandering endeavour. His teachers and peers in the project first had to make positive relations and experiences possi-

ble, and by that, overturning former negative school experiences because of his migrant background and low SES before Eron started to engage in navigation-oriented actions approximately one year into the programme. He developed his own priorities and goals for achieving success at upper secondary school and took action to lead to accomplishing the “how” and the “what”. We conclude that, again, in school settings at upper secondary level, you cannot force resilience upon anyone; you have to apply the knowledge that a student’s resilience “ . . . is as dependent on what is built inside them as what is built around them.” [32] (p. 425). For Eron, especially the associations between his gender, his family’s low SES, and his migrant background had first to be taken into account when aiming on success at secondary school. Especially, but by far not just for him, the role of the specific schools and the respective teachers involved [18] had to be connected to this former educational failure experiences.

Even at the very end of the project when Eron had successfully passed the two final examinations, he needed external support to adapt and successfully pass. Contrary to former situations of failure, and the period before the intervention at school, this time, he merely knew what had to be learned content-wise, knew how to achieve this goal, and showed proactive navigation. He just needed social support and, thus, additional negotiation in order to make it happen.

Eron can be called a *receiver* from the project’s very start, as he asks others (teachers and peers) for their opinions and support in relation to the what and the how. He needed one year to gain acceptance among his teachers and peers as well as self-confidence before he then started to himself be a supporter of others and, thereby, to be more of a giver and, thus, also a significant other for his peers. He is experimenting with the notion of justice through mutual support and develops strong social relations to Ricardo, in particular, but also to other students: he is receiving support in one school subject from his peers and is himself supporting them in school subjects where they need his help.

One of the most challenging results identified from Ricardo’s interviews was the fact that teachers working on the project were also not “just” teaching in a very general way, but also adjusting their approach to their students to the particular students in question. Additionally, for Ricardo, it was very important that the negotiation by the teacher also took into consideration the individual needs expressed by the students, as well as the specific competence requirements of the student in question. As an example, because of the lack of Ricardo’s family to support him academically, the teacher involved started offering Ricardo reinforcement in German as a second language, in particular, but moved on to self-regulation and social relationships with peers, and to learning techniques and effective planning of one’s week.

It became evident for both students that their own personalities and school histories represented an apparent socialisation paradigm for their success at school at upper secondary level. Eron’s low self-esteem, his depressive symptoms, his still low-level language skills, and his experiences that teachers have not been able to teach him how (procedural knowledge) and what (declarative knowledge) to learn in order to feel and be successful at school represented a failure pattern, as far as success at upper secondary school can be predicted. Due to this quite dense arrangement of negative experiences, his performativity in proactive navigation was very low. He first needed negotiation-oriented structures and—here, especially—a teacher to push him. It was obvious that waiting for Eron to drag himself out of the downward spiral—following the popular but still not evidence-based individualistic mantra of resilience “of being the architect of your own future”—would have been the wrong choice. Ungar calls it “professional myopia” [32] (p. 425) when interventions in schools or social services are primarily focused on provision and neglect and, therefore, on the perspective of the children as agentic consumers of a service. This way, school resilience in upper secondary education moves us beyond studies of how individual students overcome academic problems. Instead, successful resilience pathways at school are understood as dependent upon the service ecologies and result from “ . . . the interaction between what is provided to at-risk children, children’s access to health resources on



their own terms, and how well the resources that are provided address children's unique constellations of problem behaviours and psychopathology" [32] (p. 425).

In order to identify possible long-term effects of the described navigation and negotiations processes, a project representative met the two young men one year after they completed secondary school. Ricardo was following a long-term goal and started studying at the university, showing a clear and distinctive navigation regarding his professional development. Even if the exams seemed very demanding to him, he was making his way. Right after leaving school, he had first started a one-year internship, and he reported being very well prepared by the project for the demands of the internship. His high levels of language skills and the knowledge he had acquired on how to learn more effectively and push himself—even if a specific school subject is, for the most part, not fun—were very supportive factors. He even halved his summer holidays and gave himself more time to learn for the upcoming exams at the university, both individually and in a group setting with fellow students. At the time of the interview, just few weeks before the exams, he was very much looking forward to this challenge, because he felt very optimistic and was very well prepared.

One year later, Eron has completed a one-year internship in the commercial field, which he provides a very critical report of. During this time, he often undergoes pointless activities and, at the same time, feels bored, which is also because he rules out a future professional career in this field. The specific choice of internship was made more for reasons of practicality; it was the only internship position that was still open. Following the internship and the associated 4-month military service, however, he is aiming to start studying business psychology.

The available findings can, moreover, be classified in educational offer-benefit models as well as in theoretical concepts of the expectancy value [29] of action control. While the former were widely used in studies for analysing educational decisions, the latter were more likely to be discussed in the context of process-product (–effect) models of lesson design [30]. Due to the openness of the support programme examined here, the learners were, on the one hand, able to shape their learning in a differentiated way, as shapers of the process, as a form of individual negotiation. To a certain extent, they were, therefore, able to help shape the aspect of their learning that was to do with the offering itself. At the same time, value-specific valences or moments of expectation played into how they controlled their actions, which shaped their navigation and negotiation activities. This was the case, for example, when the two learners noticed that they would profit more from the programme if they prepared for it and were, thus, able to make use of the open opportunities to learn as learning resources in a more effective manner.

Navigating towards school resilience at upper secondary level requires a high level of individual strength, according to our insights. Our intention was to identify these aspects of personal strength that lead to resilience, e.g., self-efficacy and self-acceptance. We expect that these aspects of personal strength, called individual supportive factors in resilience theory, will have to be adjusted to resilience factors that come in the form of academic and personal support from the teacher. This process of connecting individual and social supporting factors still has to be explored and empirically validated.

In addition, against the backdrop of these theoretical discussions, we may now think further about the extent to which the dynamics of a socio-ecological-oriented concept of resilience can be differentiated. In both cases, one could see at the beginning of the programme that the focus of the negotiation is strongly teacher-centred. Eron and Ricardo immediately look to the teacher to see if they are available to help solve their problems. Over time, however, they begin to prepare at home, and so, they are familiar with the questions or problems before the session. Moreover, during the programme, they both begin to collaborate with their peers as a form of self-directed social learning, initially, as support receivers, then also as support givers. Their negotiations seem to move from a situational, teacher-centred problem-solving focus in two directions. One is internally oriented, a kind of negotiation of shortfalls in preparation, and one is outwardly oriented,

as a kind of navigation of competence among social peers. Perhaps this expresses an increasing sense of efficiency regarding their efforts at self-directed stabilisation.

Following Masten [28], when analysing our data, we addressed the interplay of structural and procedural risk and protective factors for resilience pathways. As we know from the initial work of Aisenberg and Herrenkohl [46] and Ungar and Liebenberg [15], resilience is better understood if protective and risk factors are modelled not only on individual factors, but also on contextual factors, such as at the family and school class [45,47] levels. If we continue to structure our analysis of protective and risk factors only in terms of individual traits and characteristics in upper secondary education, we continue to run the risk of victim blaming, that is, turning back to the individual as the sole source of explanations for why resilience is not achieved.

When positively framed and viewed from a content perspective, we emphasise that a male migrant student's school resilience status in upper secondary education could also be influenced by minimising contextual risk factors and supporting contextual protective factors in their everyday lives [45]. If we knew which of these factors make a sustainable difference—especially those concerning family's low SES and school class—they could be named "resilience factors" and used to support students, families and schools. We must, of course, also support students' personalities, thereby combining external and internal factors.

Following Tashakkori and Teddlie [48,49] when applying an exploratory (not explanatory) heuristical approach, we need first a deeper qualitative understanding of the specific processual patterns and their meanings for the respective adolescents. We applied the heuristic approach not as a speculative formulation but serving as a guide in the investigation of school success in upper secondary school. It constituted an approach in which methodological and theoretical learning took place. Therefore, case studies would best achieve these insights to deepen the understanding of how school success is socially enacted in adolescence during upper secondary school.

Another problematic aspect of the advanced intervention that needs to be discussed is the relationship of responsibilities between subject and society, as noted at various points, especially in the context of questions of equal opportunities [47]. In this regard, there is a kind of ambivalence associated with navigation- or negotiation-based promotion of resources. On the one hand, one must rule out the possibility of learners being disadvantaged in the education system due to characteristics of their background. This responsibility lies with the system and must not be passed on to individuals. On the other hand, programmes, and, above all, the resilience concept, signal that people can overcome experienced adversities and are, thus, considered a beacon for individual responsibility and for personal strength in proving oneself. To make matters worse, this is a circumstance that, for everyone else, is then often declared a heroic excessive elevation towards the goal that also has to be achieved. The programme in question and the findings presented here wish to show, in the context of this discussion, that, for one thing, when the state uses programmes such as these, it is paying for unpleasant effects that it has evoked itself. Additionally, the fact that the discourse on systemic success carried out elsewhere is legitimised here by individually sustained selection mechanisms that pose problems in terms of justice does not need to be elaborated further.

## 6. Limitations

By endorsing Ungar's navigation and negotiation social-work approach [32] to educational psychology, we tested the possibility of an interdisciplinary avenue. We applied an exploratory qualitative analysis to two cases in order to understand processual and structural dynamics of success at school at the upper secondary level. Even though our results detect the interwoven effects of individual and institutional responsibilities and the interrelatedness of navigation and negotiation towards school success in a very distinctive way, we still have to confirm our point by using larger samples.

A further extension of this work, which is needed in order to understand these resilience processes in a more immersed way, would be to apply a mixed-methods design with qualitative and quantitative research tools and also use data from the teachers involved. So far, we have only used the students' data. Using a mixed-methods design [48,49] would be highly recommended in order to understand the interdependence of navigation and negotiation processes in a more future-oriented way. Therefore, we additionally needed a quantitative exploration of the structure, function, and dynamics of navigation and negotiation. For example, we still have to understand if navigation and negotiation processes are connected unmediated.

By using an intersectional approach, we were able to underline the specific relevance of school interventions at upper secondary level for male students with a migration background and low socio-economic status, as they are the most vulnerable group internationally for failure at school [18]. The possibly differing effects of the intervention upon the female students with a migration background and low socio-economic status who also attended the programme, and the respective processes for them, still have to be identified.

Regarding the analyses of the two case studies, it can be stated that even though the intervention's effects point clearly towards the desired directions of school development, the sample remains too small to generalize these insights. Therefore, a central concern for a future intervention should be to increase the number of students and to accompany them constantly over the entire school period of three years (first to third grade of upper secondary school). A design with comparison and control groups should bring an additional important extension to the current design. Furthermore, the respective school classes as a relevant contextual factor should be taken into account, and we should specifically ask for class not only individual effects by a multilevel analytical approach. By this approach, we could also focus on the development of the teachers running the program.

Finally, in the future, we would like to add a control group design to similar analyses in order to test the validity of the navigation and negotiation approach and, in so doing, also the longitudinal effects of the intervention that are identified. We hope that, in the meantime, with our revision of the existing approaches, we have made a good start towards understanding resilience at school at upper secondary level.

**Author Contributions:** Conceptualization W.K., A.D. and M.K.; methodology, M.K.; formal analysis, M.K. and A.D.; writing—original draft preparation, W.K., A.D. and M.K.; writing—review and editing, A.D., M.K. and W.K. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

**Funding:** This research was funded by the Foundation-Group ChagAll Zurich, Switzerland, the Department of Education BS/CH and the Forberg Foundation. Grant number (intern P276-2108-2-PS.f2), and the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) through the NCCR—on the move, grant number 51NF40-182897.

**Institutional Review Board Statement:** The study was conducted according to the guidelines of the Declaration of Helsinki, and approved by the Institutional Review Board of the School of Education FHNW.

**Informed Consent Statement:** Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

**Data Availability Statement:** The datasets for this study are still not available to the public.

**Acknowledgments:** The implementation of this project was also supported and promoted by the teaching staff and the school principal.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

## References

1. Sassen, S. *Expulsions, Brutality and Complexity in the Global Economy*; Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA, USA, 2014.
2. OECD. *Education at a Glance 2018: OECD Indicators*; OECD: Paris, France, 2018. [CrossRef]
3. Eurostat. 2020. Available online: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tps00186/default/table?lang=de> (accessed on 22 May 2021).

4. BfS. Bildungsabschluesse. 2020. Available online: <https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/de/home/statistiken/bildung-wissenschaft/bildungsabschluesse/sekundarstufe-II.html> (accessed on 22 May 2021).
5. Eurostat. 2020. Available online: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Migrant\\_integration\\_statistics\\_-\\_at\\_risk\\_of\\_poverty\\_and\\_social\\_exclusion](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Migrant_integration_statistics_-_at_risk_of_poverty_and_social_exclusion) (accessed on 22 May 2021).
6. Papadakis, N.E.; Drakaki, M.; Kyridis, A.; Papargyris, A. Between a frightening Present and a disjoined Future. Recession and social vulnerability in the case of Greek Neets: Socio-demographics, facets of the Crisis' Impact and the revival of the intergenerational transmission of poverty. *Adv. Soc. Sci. Res. J.* **2017**, *4*, 8–20. [[CrossRef](#)]
7. Alieva, A.; Hildebrand, V.; van Kerm, P. *How Does the Achievement Gap between Immigrant and Native-Born Pupils Progress from Primary to Secondary Education?* Working Paper Series 2018-20; Luxembourg Institute of Socio-Economic Research (LISER): Luxembourg, 2018. [[CrossRef](#)]
8. Papadakis, N.; Amanaki, E.; Drakaki, M.; Saridaki, S. Employment/unemployment, education and poverty in the Greek Youth, within the EU context. *Int. J. Educ. Res.* **2020**, *99*, 101503. [[CrossRef](#)]
9. OECD. *Education at a Glance 2020: OECD Indicators*; OECD: Paris, France, 2020. [[CrossRef](#)]
10. Stahl, G. 'My little beautiful mess': A longitudinal study of working-class masculinity in transition. *NORMA: Int. J. Masc. Stud.* **2020**, *15*, 145–161. [[CrossRef](#)]
11. Becker, R.; Schoch, J. *Soziale Selektivität. Empfehlungen des Schweizerischen Wissenschaftsrates SWR*; Schweizerischer Wissenschaftsrat SWR: Bern, Switzerland, 2018.
12. SKBF. *Bildungsbericht Schweiz 2018*; Schweizerische Koordinationsstelle für Bildungsforschung: Aarau, Switzerland, 2018; Available online: <https://www.skbf-csre.ch/bildungsbericht/> (accessed on 22 May 2021).
13. Theron, L.C. Black students' recollections of pathways to resilience: Lessons for school psychologists. *Sch. Psychol. Int.* **2013**, *34*, 527–539. [[CrossRef](#)]
14. Ungar, M.; Theron, L. Resilience and mental health: How multisystemic processes contribute to positive outcomes. *Lancet Psychiatry* **2020**, *7*, 441–448. [[CrossRef](#)]
15. Collie, R.J.; Martin, A.J.; Bottrell, D.; Armstrong, D.; Ungar, M.; Liebenberg, L. Social support, academic adversity and academic buoyancy: A person-centred analysis and implications for academic outcomes. *Educ. Psychol.* **2017**, *37*, 550–564. [[CrossRef](#)]
16. McCall, L. The complexity of intersectionality. *J. Women Cult. Soc.* **2005**, *30*, 1771–1800. [[CrossRef](#)]
17. Brah, A.; Phoenix, A. Ain't I a woman? Revisiting intersectionality. *J. Int. Women's Stud.* **2004**, *5*, 75–86.
18. Ungar, M.; Connelly, G.; Liebenberg, L.; Theron, L. How schools enhance the development of young people's resilience. *Soc. Indic. Res.* **2019**, *145*, 615–627. [[CrossRef](#)]
19. Cullen, F.T.; Unnever, J.D.; Hartman, J.L.; Turner, M.G.; Agnew, R. Gender, bullying victimization, and juvenile delinquency: A test of general strain theory. *Vict. Offenders* **2008**, *3*, 346–364. [[CrossRef](#)]
20. Rebellon, C.J.; Leeper Piquero, N.; Piquero, A.R.; Thaxton, S. Do frustrated economic expectations and objective economic inequity promote crime? A randomized experiment testing Agnew's General Strain Theory. *Eur. J. Criminol.* **2009**, *6*, 47–71. [[CrossRef](#)]
21. Murray, J.; Farrington, D.P.; Eisner, M. Drawing conclusions about causes from systematic reviews of risk factors. *J. Exp. Criminol.* **2009**, *5*, 1–23. [[CrossRef](#)]
22. Pauwels, L.; Svensson, R. Adolescent lifestyle risk by gender and ethnic background. *Eur. J. Criminol.* **2009**, *6*, 5–24. [[CrossRef](#)]
23. Brubaker, R. Ethnicity, race, and nationalism. *Annu. Rev. Sociol.* **2009**, *35*, 21–42. [[CrossRef](#)]
24. BfS. International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 2011). 2020. Available online: <https://www.bfs.admin.ch/asset/de/do-d-15.01-isced-01> (accessed on 22 May 2021).
25. Van der Put, C.; Van der Laan, P.; Stams, G.-J.; Deković, M.; Hoeve, M. Promotive Factors during Adolescence: Are there Changes in Impact and Prevalence during Adolescence and how does this relate to risk Factors? *Int. J. Child Youth Fam. Stud.* **2011**, *2*, 119–141. [[CrossRef](#)]
26. Masten, A.S. Ordinary Magic. *Am. Psychol.* **2001**, *56*, 227–238. [[CrossRef](#)]
27. Masten, A.S. Regulatory Processes, Risk, and Resilience in Adolescent Development. *Ann. N. Y. Acad. Sci.* **2004**, *1021*, 310–319. [[CrossRef](#)]
28. Masten, A.S. *Ordinary Magic: Resilience in Development*; Guilford Press: New York, NY, USA, 2014.
29. Eccles, J.; Wigfield, A. Motivational Beliefs, Values, and Goals. *Annu. Rev. Psychol.* **2002**, *53*, 109–132. [[CrossRef](#)]
30. Seidel, T. Angebots-Nutzungs-Modelle in der Unterrichtspsychologie. Integration von Struktur- und Prozessparadigma. *Z. Fuer Pädagogik* **2014**, *60*, 850–866.
31. Luthar, S.S.; Cicchetti, D.; Becker, B. The construct of resilience: A critical evaluation and guidelines for future work. *Child Dev.* **2000**, *71*, 543–562. [[CrossRef](#)]
32. Ungar, M. Pathways to resilience among children in Child Welfare, Corrections, Mental Health and Educational settings: Navigation and Negotiation. *Child Youth Care Forum* **2005**, *34*, 423–444. [[CrossRef](#)]
33. Ungar, M. Putting resilience theory into action: Five principles for intervention. In *Resilience in Action*; Liebenberg, L., Ungar, M., Eds.; University of Toronto Press: Toronto, ON, Canada, 2008; pp. 17–36.
34. Ungar, M. The social ecology of resilience. Addressing contextual and cultural ambiguity of a nascent construct. *Am. J. Orthopsychiatry* **2011**, *81*, 1–17. [[CrossRef](#)] [[PubMed](#)]

35. Statistisches Amt des Kantons Basel-Stadt. Berufsfachschulen. 2021. Available online: <https://www.statistik.bs.ch/zahlen/tabellen/15-bildung-wissenschaft/berufsfachschulen.html> (accessed on 22 May 2021).
36. Schmidt, W.; Burroughs, N.; Zoido, P.; Houang, R. The Role of Schooling in Perpetuating Educational Inequality: An International Perspective. *Educ. Res.* **2015**, *44*, 371–386. [CrossRef]
37. Dueggeli, A. Direkter oder verzögerter Uebertritt? In *Bildungsverläufe von der Einschulung bis in den Ersten Arbeitsmarkt. Theoretische Ansätze, Empirische Befunde und Beispiele*; Neuenschwander, M., Nägele, C., Eds.; Springer VS: Wiesbaden, Germany, 2017; pp. 163–177. [CrossRef]
38. UNESCO. *International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 2011)*; Unesco Institute for Statistics UIS: Montreal, QC, Canada, 2012.
39. Witzel, A. The Problem-Centered Interview. *Forum Qual. Soc. Res.* **2000**, *1*, 22.
40. Breidenstein, G. Ethnographisches Beobachten. In *Beobachtung in der Schule—Beobachten Lernen*; Springer VS: Wiesbaden, Germany, 2012; pp. 27–44.
41. Reh, S. Beobachten und aufmerksames Wahrnehmen. In *Beobachtung in der Schule—Beobachten Lernen*; de Boer, H., Reh, S., Eds.; Springer VS: Wiesbaden, Germany, 2012; pp. 3–25.
42. Charmaz, K. *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis*; Sage: London, UK; Thousand Oaks, CA, USA; New Delhi, India, 2006.
43. Strauss, A.; Corbin, J. *Grounded Theory: Grundlagen Qualitativer Sozialforschung*; Belz: Weinheim, Germany, 1996.
44. Kelle, U. Emergence vs forcing of empirical data question: A crucial problem of grounded theory reconsidered. *Qual. Soc. Res.* **2005**, *2*, 1–18.
45. Ungar, M. Which counts more? The differential impact of the environment or the differential susceptibility of the individual? *Br. J. Soc. Work* **2017**, *47*, 1279–1289. [CrossRef]
46. Aisenberg, E.; Herrenkohl, T. Community Violence in Context. Risk and Resilience in Children and Families. *J. Interpers. Violence* **2008**, *23*, 296–315. [CrossRef]
47. Loeber, R.; Slot, W.; Stouthamer-Loeber, M. A cumulative developmental model of risk and promotive factors. In *Tomorrow's Criminals: The Development of Child Delinquency and Effective Interventions*; Loeber, R., Koot, H.M., Slot, N.W., Van der Laan, P.H., Hoeve, M., Eds.; Ashgate Publishing: Hampshire, UK, 2008; pp. 133–161.
48. Tashakkori, A.; Teddlie, C.B. *Mixed Methodology: Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*; Sage Publications: Thousand Oaks, CA, USA, 2008.
49. Tashakkori, A.; Teddlie, C.B. *Sage Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social & Behavioral Research*; Sage Publications: Los Angeles, CA, USA, 2010.