

Finding Success in Life: The Voices of At-Risk Youth

by

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A dissertation submitted to the
School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in Criminology and Social Justice

Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities
University of Ontario Institute of Technology

Oshawa, Ontario, Canada

April 2020

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Thesis Examination Information
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Doctor of Philosophy in Criminology and Social Justice

Thesis title: Finding Success in Life: The Voices of At-Risk Youth

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Abstract

The aim of this dissertation is to rethink and broaden the understanding of success from the perspectives of at-risk youth. Current conceptualizations of success commonly found in criminological literature are based on life course, middle-class standards of success, are problematic and marginalizing in nature, and lack youth voice. This study investigates the need for a more diverse theoretical framework for explaining the complex concept of success with the inclusion of youth perspectives. I attempt to answer how at-risk youth construct and characterize their own success and how SNAP Boys – Youth Leadership Services (a community-based program) helps youth achieve their ideas of success. Using in-depth, qualitative interviews and a visual mapping exercise, I show that youth express subjective, non-traditional ideas and experiences of success that move beyond only traditional, well-accepted ideas and markers of success. Youth in this study expressed a combination of traditional and non-traditional ideas and experiences of success and attributed some of their success to participation in SNAP Boys – Youth Leadership Services. This study contributes to criminological literature by offering a theoretical framework for understanding non-traditional, subjective ideas of success as valuable and important, especially for at-risk youth. Importantly, the significance and further contributions of this research are that it enables youth to express their unbounded ideas and experiences of success, highlights the complexity of the concept of success, and challenges criminologists and other stakeholders to push the conversation of success forward through consideration of alternative, individualized ideas of success that represent complex social identities and contexts.

Keywords: success; markers of success; at-risk youth; youth voice; life course theory

Author's Declaration

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KAITLIN FREDERICKS

Statement of Contributions

I hereby certify that I am the sole author of this thesis and that no part of this thesis has been published or submitted for publication. I have used standard referencing practices to acknowledge ideas, research techniques, or other materials that belong to others. Furthermore, I hereby certify that I am the sole source of the creative works and/or inventive knowledge described in this thesis.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the amazing, inspiring youth who engage in SNAP Boys – Youth Leadership Services.

Acknowledgements

First, I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Carla Cesaroni, as completing my PhD would not be possible without her. A special thanks to Dr. Cesaroni for her dedication, support, expertise, and passion for helping me succeed. I am thankful for Dr. Cesaroni's care in understanding me as a person and ensuring that my needs are always met. From ensuring I could partner with a community organization, to *always* lending an ear when I needed support, to making sure that I had my favourite foods after a long day of research in prison, Dr. Cesaroni always made sure my well-being was taken care of. Undoubtedly, many of my achievements and opportunities would not be possible without Dr. Cesaroni. Dr. Cesaroni's drive, passion, strength, and care are qualities I hope to emulate. I am forever grateful for Dr. Cesaroni's guidance, endless encouragement, and unwavering support.

I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Shahid Alvi and Dr. Christopher O'Connor. I would like to thank Dr. Alvi for continuously pushing me outside of my comfort zone and helping me find confidence. I am thankful for all of our conversations that helped me grow, think, and to be inspired. I once feared Dr. Alvi's "tell me more" response. Now, I'm still terrified of this response, but accept it as a challenge to explore unbounded ideas of thinking. I would like to thank Dr. O'Connor for tirelessly working with me to help me overcome challenges and bumps in the road and bravely answering all of the (many, many) questions I threw at him. I benefited greatly from Dr. O'Connor's ability to break down a complex problem in ways I could understand. Dr. O'Connor's humour, honesty, and relatability are qualities that I am grateful for and that helped make this PhD process manageable and enjoyable.

I consider myself lucky to be mentored, inspired, and supported by Dr. Cesaroni, Dr. Alvi, and Dr. O'Connor. Through countless meetings, revisions, feedback, and pieces of advice,

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all credit is due to my supervisory committee for helping me make this dissertation a contribution that I can be proud of. Above all, I'd like to thank each member of my supervisory team for believing in me and pushing me to new heights I thought I'd never see.

Thank you to the Child Development Institute for allowing me to carry out my research at this incredible agency. I would like to thank Dr. Leena Augimeri, Margaret Walsh, Abdi Mohamud, and Karen Sewell for helping guide my research, supporting me unconditionally, and allowing me to witness the unique impact that they have made on youth. I am also extremely grateful for the youth who engage in SB-YLS and participated in this research. Watching these youth grow, play, and develop over the last four years has been nothing short of inspiring. I am grateful for all that I have learned from these youth. I am privileged to be able to act as an avenue for them to share their successes.

Getting through a PhD would be near impossible without the support of fellow colleagues, who understand what it's like to take on this animal of a project, celebrate anti-climactic accomplishments, and remind you that you are not allowed to quit (even after the 8th threat). I am extremely thankful for their support, company, and friendship.

Last but certainly not least, I am eternally grateful for my family and friends who have supported me every step of my PhD, especially my parents. Without all of their unconditional and unwavering love, support, encouragement, and belief I would have never, *ever*, been able to get through this PhD. There are not enough words to describe how truly appreciative I am for each one of my family members and friends. I owe everything to you.

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List of Abbreviations

CDI	Child Development Institute
SB-YLS	SNAP Boys – Youth Leadership Services
SNAP	Stop Now And Plan
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
SYLS	SNAP Youth Leadership Services

Chapter 1: Introduction

Context

The current conceptualizations of success are narrowly defined and are unjustly based on middle-class standards which becomes problematic for marginalized populations, like youth who are at risk for offending, negative outcomes, or anti-social behaviour. Success is a complex concept that is often discussed in simple terms, especially in criminological literature. Furthermore, success is a socially constructed term which presumably can change meaning depending on the context in which it is used and thus should not be bound by a narrow perspective. Therefore, it can be argued that success should be considered a much more multi-faceted, layered, and complex concept than previously portrayed in criminological literature; this warrants an in-depth exploration. A critical interrogation of success is especially needed when considering the successes of at-risk youth¹.

Criminologists have long explored the risks that leave youth vulnerable to negative outcomes, criminality, and/or antisocial behaviours (e.g., Assink, van der Put, Hoeve, de Vries, Stams, & Oort, 2015; Farrington, 1989, 2005; Farrington, Gaffney, & Ttofi, 2017; Garmezy, 1983, 1987; Loeber & Farrington, 2000; Rutter, 1983). As this research has developed, scholars have discovered various factors that contribute to the protection or resilience of these youth from experiencing negative outcomes (e.g., Farrington, Ttofi, & Piquero, 2016; Garmezy, 1991; Masten, 2001; Masten, Garmezy, Tellegen, Pellegrini, Larkin, & Larsen, 1988; Loeber & Farrington, 2000; Rutter, 2012; Ungar, 2004, 2012). Although the research on protective factors

¹ The term youth and the different constructions of this concept are discussed in further detail in Chapter 2: Literature Review.

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and resilience is important, so too is knowing how youth themselves discuss and define success, which has been largely left out of criminological literature.

Criminological literature typically discusses success in terms of traditional, middle-class markers and life course perspectives (see Elder, 1975, 1994, 1995). Previous literature has alluded to the negative impact that the middle-class measuring rod used to define success can have on those who are unable to achieve these standards (Cohen, 1955). Individuals from marginalized groups start off in a disadvantaged position compared to their middle-class peers, yet are still expected to meet middle-class norms and standards (Cohen, 1955). Middle-class, traditional markers of success may not be of value or attainable by all populations because of structural inequalities that permeate society. Yet, criminological literature (and society as a whole) still casts a blanket prescription of what success is or should be, leaving little room for alternative ideals.

Additionally, the previous research on success that follows a life course perspective lacks a critical account from youth that enables them to voice their opinions on and experiences of success. The current conceptualizations of success for at-risk youth are limiting, marginalizing, and problematic. Therefore, this study challenges current conceptualizations of success that are framed through life course perspectives and invites readers to rethink success through non-traditional, subjective ideas and experiences of success from the perspectives of at-risk youth.

This chapter outlines the focus of this dissertation and provides context on the issues with the current conceptualizations of success. A brief overview of the main insights from life course theory that guide current conceptualizations of success is presented, followed by a theoretical challenge to these traditional notions of success. Additionally, a short description of the methodology is discussed, highlighting the importance of including youth voice in the discussion

of success (something that is currently missing in criminological literature). Essentially, this chapter provides the reader with a roadmap to this dissertation. This chapter ends with an overview of the subsequent chapters in this dissertation.

Overview of the Theoretical Framework and Challenge

Life course theory has been traditionally used to explain success throughout an individual's life. The current conceptualizations of success for at-risk youth (albeit limited) also follow a life course perspective. Life course theorists argue that individuals progress through a linear pathway from birth to death, marked by age-graded transitions that are based on grand social roles and middle-class ideals (Elder, 1975, 1995). Traditional markers of life events, transitions, and success include graduating post-secondary school, getting married, and buying a house, among others (Elder, 1975). According to life course theory, disruptions or deviations from the prescribed timing of life events and transitions play a crucial role in experiencing negative outcomes and trajectories (Elder 1975, 1994, 1995). If someone experiences risks or challenges and does not reach the 'appropriate' prescribed timing of certain transitions, it is believed that they will experience disadvantage or negative outcomes later in life. Thus, the levels of risk experienced by a youth could impact his or her successes or ability to achieve success across the life course.

More recently, research on success of/for at-risk youth has focused on predictors of success and academic success (Benner & Wang, 2014; Oberle et al., 2014; Randolph, Rose, Fraser, & Orthner, 2004; Wang & Eccles, 2011). However, this literature still follows life course perceptions of success and neglects conceptualizations or experiences of success or success as an outcome – especially from youth themselves. Life course perceptions and subsequent literature

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on success also often ignores the power relations and social and structural inequalities that permeate society and impact an individual's ability to achieve middle-class notions of success.

To remedy this gap in the literature, this study presents an alternative framework for understanding success that challenges and interrogates the linear life course model of success. Instead of focusing on traditional, middle-class markers of and linear pathways to success, insights from intersectionality, individualization, and youth transition literature work together to provide a holistic framework for discussing ideas and experiences of success. This framework attempts to challenge the way criminologists (and other stakeholders, such as practitioners) think about success to expand ideas of this concept beyond traditional, well-accepted conceptualizations.

Insights from intersectionality suggest that social identities should be considered as overlapping and intersecting (Crenshaw, 1989). Intersectional perspectives demonstrate how power systems and social structures play a role in shaping identities and experiences (Burgess-Proctor, 2006; Potter, 2013). Based on these structural inequalities, an individual's identities overlap and increase the oppression or privilege that they experience in any given context (Potter, 2013). Thus, an individual's multiple, intersecting social identities should be considered together within time, space, and context and should be considered fluid in nature (Bell, 2013; Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013; Collins, 1993; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991).

Presumably, an individual's social location and identities can impact whether or not he or she is able to achieve traditional, middle-class markers of success, and will inevitably impact how he or she experiences certain situations. Therefore, the aforementioned dominant ideas of success may become an inappropriate measure of success for some individuals (e.g., youth who experience risk) given their social location, the context, and their unique intersecting identities.

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Rather, success should be considered in a context-specific way, taking into account complex identities and individual experiences.

In conjunction with perspectives from intersectionality, concepts from individualization literature can also help create a framework for reconceptualizing success in alternative, subjective ways. Individualization perspectives suggest that youth are navigate risky, changing social contexts at an individual, subjective level (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997, 2007). This highlights the importance of considering agency and individual difference in examining social experiences and development. Individualization argues that youth are active agents in controlling their lives and strive to achieve agency, choice, and subjectivity in shaping their identities and experiences (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997; Rudd & Evans, 1998; Wyn & Woodman, 2006).

As youth experience more choice and agency as a result of development and personal experiences, risk and uncertainties increase (Côté, 2000; Evans & Furlong, 1997; Goodwin & O'Connor, 2005; Vickerstaff, 2003). Youth are also expected to take responsibility for the consequences of their choices and find appropriate pathways for development and experiences (Côté, 2000; Furlong & Cartmel, 2007). Within this context, youth may still be able to achieve positive outcomes despite risks and challenges. In connection with the agency and consideration of individualized experiences, youth transition literature and how youth navigate development is the other element included in the alternative framework or lens for understanding success.

Contrary to the linear nature of transitions discussed in life course theory, the literature on youth transitions discusses the diverse and complex nature of transitions (Côté, 2000; Furlong & Cartmel, 1997; Furlong, Woodman, & Wyn 2011). Developmental transitions for youth are marked by periods of breaks, extended or accelerated transitions, fluidity, and ultimately, non-linearity (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997; te Riele, 2004). At times, differences in transitions or

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experiences in development can be beneficial for youth to gain new experiences (te Riele, 2004). The non-linearity and fluidity embedded in youth transitions are regarded as part of identity-exploration (Evans & Furlong, 1997; Furlong & Cartmel, 2007). Identity-related factors (rather than only large social roles) are important markers of development for young people (Evans & Furlong, 1997; Furlong & Cartmel, 1997; te Riele, 2004). Arguably, identity-related factors may be important markers of success as well. Therefore, the focus on individuality, complexity, and diversity in youth transitions sheds light on the different context in which youth are navigating their experiences, as well as their successes.

Intersectionality, individualization, and youth transition perspectives present a holistic framework for accepting and viewing subjective, individualized ideas of success that take into account power relations, social locations and identities, agency and choice, and changing social contexts. Viewing success in this way would move past only focusing on well-accepted, middle-class markers of success outlined in life-course theory. Instead, this framework would seek to provide a foundation for understanding why individual, subjective ideas and experiences of success should be accepted. Thus, the theoretical model used in this study presents two pathways to success: one which follows a linear, life course theory pathway to success, where failure, risk, or challenges are said to lead to negative outcomes, and another which considers social location, agency, structural inequalities, and individual identities, and invites a non-linear pathway to success, accepting that individuals can still achieve positive outcomes or success despite risks and challenges.

Participants and Methodology

To explore how at-risk youth discuss and experience success, this study involves youth participating in a continued-care community-based program, SNAP Boys – Youth Leadership

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Services (SB-YLS). SB-YLS extends its welcome to at- and/or high-risk youth aged 12-18 facing continued challenges at home, school, or in the community (SNAP Boys – Youth Leadership Services Guide, in preparation). The program seeks to help youth through developmental challenges, develop pro-social skills and plans, and build relationships with caring adults and other peers. Thus, this study also attempts to determine whether youth see this program as having a role in achieving their successes.

Through the use of a mixed-method approach that is mainly qualitative in nature, this research seeks to elicit the stories of at-risk youth for discovering perspectives and experiences of success. To bring their stories to life, youth also engaged in a mapping exercise to include a visual representation of their successes. The use of visual methods sought to compliment interview data and mitigate power imbalances between myself and the youth. As youth are competent social actors who have the right to participate in research, they should be given the power to shape and express ideas and experiences of success in ways that feel true and meaningful to them (Carter, 2009; Checkoway, 2011; Grover, 2004; Skelton, 2008). In doing so, scholars are able to learn about what youth value as success and why their perceptions of success are shaped this way. This not only pushes the conversation of success forward, but also has the potential to increase the well-being and self-esteem of at-risk youth through being able to share their ideas and experiences of success. By only focusing on middle-class markers of success (i.e., as found in current criminological literature), it may become difficult to build up (e.g., increase self-esteem or self-efficacy) young people who experience challenges. Engaging with youth to have their voices heard potentially enables youth to feel a sense of validation and affirmation about their beliefs and experiences of success and to hopefully feel a sense of empowerment and self-worth. To carry out this research, the two overarching research questions used in this study

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were: 1) How do at-risk youth construct and characterize their own success?; and 2) To what degree do at-risk youth believe their engagement in SNAP Boys – Youth Leadership Services contributes to their success? The following chapters seek to guide and answer the overarching research questions.

A Roadmap to Subsequent Chapters

This chapter has pointed to the problem in criminological literature regarding success; that is, current conceptualizations of success for at-risk youth follow a life course model, focusing mainly on middle-class, traditional standards of success. However, the insights from intersectionality, individualization, and youth transition literature provide an alternative, non-traditional perspective for understanding success. Through the use of qualitative methods, this study seeks to explore the two aforementioned frameworks of success and, importantly, how at-risk youth conceptualize success from their own perspectives.

Chapter two includes a review of relevant literature. This chapter begins by defining ‘youth’ and ‘at-risk youth’ for the purposes of this dissertation. An extensive review of the literature on risk and resilience (as it pertains to youth) is presented. The common risk and protective factors are discussed to provide context into the lives of the youth under study. Although not the main focus of this dissertation, a discussion on risk is necessary to frame the subsequent discussion on success. Following a discussion of risks and resilience, the theoretical framework is presented. First, life course theory and subsequent conceptualizations of success from youth literature is explained. Then, a theoretical challenge to current conceptualizations of success is put forward using the main insights from intersectionality, individualization, and youth transition literature. This chapter ends with a full recap of the theoretical framework and a short explanation of the current inquiry.

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Chapter three details the methodology used to carry out this research. This chapter provides a description of the host agency (Child Development Institute) and an overview of the program under study, SNAP Boys – Youth Leadership Services. Next, the sample of participants are discussed with justification of the length of data collection, the ages of participants, and the recruitment process. A detailed description of the interview process is outlined in this chapter. In particular, the main components of the interview schedule are explored in detail and ethical considerations are highlighted. Finally, this chapter includes an explanation of the data analysis process used in this study. Coding and thematic analysis used to analyze the qualitative data is thoroughly explained.

In chapter four, the main results of this study are presented under the main sections of: 1) Demographics and background; 2) Risks and challenges; 3) Success; and 4) The role of SB-YLS in achieving success. The risks and challenges experienced by youth in this study are presented to provide insight into the lives of these youth. The results on success are broken into four main subsections: traditional measures of success, non-traditional measures of success, influences on measures of success, and tools for achieving success. In these sections, verbatim quotes and images of success maps are used to illustrate the main findings regarding ideas and experiences of success. Finally, the main themes regarding SB-YLS are presented and the connection between SB-YLS and achieving success are presented.

Finally, chapter five includes a discussion of the main findings and key take away points from this study. An in-depth discussion of the main themes that arose from this study are related to and embedded in previous literature. The three overarching findings elaborated on in this chapter are: the complexity of ideas and experiences of success of at-risk youth, SB-YLS as a tool for achieving success, and main take away points. The main themes from the reflections that

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the youth engaged in after completing their interviews are discussed in this chapter to demonstrate the unique, provocative impact that the success maps can have. The main contributions of this study are highlighted in this chapter. Following a discussion of the results, the implications of this study are explained and focused on practice, theory, and research. The limitations and suggestions for future research are discussed. Last, final conclusions and key insights from this study are provided.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This section discusses the relevant literature on risk, resilience, life course theory, success, intersectionality, individualization, and youth transitions. To begin, a brief discussion of the concepts of ‘youth’ and ‘at-risk youth’ and how these terms are used in this dissertation is explained. Relevant literature on risk and resilience is then outlined, noting common risk domains impacting youth and the facets of resilience that play a role in mitigating these risks and protecting youth. This literature is included in this dissertation to describe the common experiences that may lead a youth to be labeled at-risk as outlined in previous literature. Essentially, the aforementioned topics attempt to provide background on the experiences of at-risk youth.

Following the background literature, the theoretical challenge to and framing of success used to guide this dissertation is presented. Life course theory is explained in detail, discussing the markers of success outlined in this theory. Additionally, the current literature that does exist on success for at-risk youth is discussed, noting gaps in this research. The limitations of viewing success through traditional, life course perspectives are presented in order to illuminate the inadequacy of viewing success only through this linear lens. Through the use of intersectionality, individualization, and research on youth transitions, the linear life course model of success is challenged. The use of these three perspectives highlights the need to rethink success through considering complex identities and experiences, non-linear pathways, agency, and fluidity. The insights from intersectionality, individualization, and youth transition literatures provide the framework for considering success through non-traditional and subjective ideas and experiences.

Defining Youth and At-Risk Youth

The term 'youth' has been contested in academic literature for two reasons. The first reason for discrepancy of the term 'youth' is that there are many definitions and understandings of this concept. The terms 'youth' and 'adolescence' have been used interchangeably, yet carry different meanings in some disciplines. However, conceptualizations of adolescence can shed light regarding the term youth. For example, in talking about adolescence, the beginning of this development group is usually defined by entrance into puberty, but the end is less clearly defined (Burt et al., 1998; Furlong & Cartmel, 2007). The end of adolescence is typically marked by cognitive and emotional development and independence (Burt et al., 1998). In simple terms, adolescence is defined as a time between childhood and adulthood (Arnett & Galambous, 2003).

According to Kelly (2007), 'youth' consists of the diverse ways of thinking about behaviours and experiences of those who have moved past childhood, but are not yet an adult. Likewise, Furlong and Cartmel (2007) describe youth as an intermediary stage within the life cycle, holding social semi-dependency framed by social and cultural norms. Therefore, there is evidence to suggest that 'youth' and 'adolescence' are similar in definition. 'Youth' is a stage of development mainly about 'becoming', in that youth seek to become adults, autonomous, responsible, and so on (Kelly, 2007). It should be mentioned that not everyone will reach a state of 'adulthood', and it may take longer for some people to reach adulthood (Arnett, 2007). Reaching adulthood consists of varying definitions, where some people do not believe they have reached a full state of adulthood if they have not reached certain markers associated with being an 'adult' (Arnett, 2000; Arnett & Galambous, 2003). Arnett (2000) suggests that individual qualities of character regarding accepting one's self and the ability to make independent

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decisions are markers found to be associated with ‘adulthood’. Other traditional markers of adulthood include stable work, getting married, and parenthood (Arnett, 2007).

In terms of discrepancy in definitions of ‘youth’ between disciplines, sociologists state that ‘youth’ and ‘adolescence’ are socially constructed concepts (Feld, 1999; Furlong & Cartmel, 2007; Rôdo-de-Zárate, 2017; see Skelton, 2008). Where some psychologists believe adolescence is a developmentally different age group, sociologists believe that the term adolescence was socially constructed to give a label to a category of young people who fit between children and adults, based on the changing nature of work, living, school, and families (Feld, 1999). The term adolescence represents a belief that a specific range of young people constitute a special category, with specific needs based on social, legal, and cultural assumptions (Feld, 1999). The label of youth and adolescence was used to distinguish those between children and adults who were subjected to compulsory school attendance, where they could be supervised, controlled, and socially moulded (Feld, 1999). This constructed category of adolescence creates a youth culture that identifies them as different and irresponsible, prolongs young people’s dependence, and disconnected from adults (Feld, 1999). In accordance with this, Feld (1999) suggests that the term ‘youth’ is constantly being reconstructed based on the social structural changes that occur within a given society. The term ‘youth’ is considered more than just including a certain biological age, and usually has social markers that accompany the meanings and experiences of age (Rôdo-de-Zárate, 2017).

In some instances, especially in social sciences, youth are often problematized (Kelly, 2007). Youth are often conceptualized and perceived as irresponsible and different than adults, leading to the perceived oppositional character of youth culture. This conceptualization of youth prolongs their dependence on adults and social structures, leaving them to be disengaged and

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disconnected (Feld, 1999). Therefore, the first discrepancy around the term ‘youth’ lies in whether it encompasses biological and developmental stages or if it is socially constructed.

The second issue with the term ‘youth’ is that it has come to encompass a variety of ages in its definition, leaving it subject to multiple interpretations. Many scholars use the term ‘youth’ to discuss a wide variety of ages, such as 12-18 (Schelbe, Chanmugam, Moses, Saltzburg, Williams, & Letendre, 2015) or 12-24 (Head, 2011). The diversity and heterogeneity embedded in youth studies exacerbates the discrepancies in definitions (Kelly, 2007). Arguably, the lack of a succinct definition of the term ‘youth’ means a lack of agreement across studies of young people.

Evidently, a number of factors can be included in determining what ages, experiences, or period of life the term ‘youth’ incorporates. I argue that this term should combine all of the above factors and include individuals aged 12-18. I support the notions that there are legal, developmental, and social changes that occur within this time that would make these individuals distinct from children and adults. For example, the age of criminal responsibility in Canada is 12, making the stakes of antisocial behaviour and criminality higher for those who have progressed through childhood and are 12 or over (Youth Criminal Justice Act, 2002). Within a legal context, the *Youth Criminal Justice Act* in Canada considers a young person to be those who are between 12-17 and considers ‘youth justice courts’ to serve individuals between those ages (Youth Criminal Justice Act, 2002).

Along with legal changes, there are several biological, developmental, and social changes that occur between the ages of 12-18. For example, a number of youth in this age group are at risk for developing or experiencing mental health challenges, such as depression, suicidal ideation, or schizophrenia (Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2013; Patel, Flisher, Hetrick,

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& McGorry, 2007). In connection with these challenges, youth face new social experiences, including, for example, transitioning to high-school, new relationships, influences from peers for substance use, employment, and exploration of sexuality (Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry 2015; Morris & Wagner 2007). Including individuals who are 12-18 years old in the term 'youth' includes individuals experiencing these developmental and social changes (likely) for the first time, making them different from children and young adults.

'Youth at-risk' are considered distinct from other groups of youth as they are more vulnerable to negative outcomes based on their experiences and a number of other factors (Russell, 2005). In risk discourse, the development of youth and future of adulthood are often jeopardized by a range of risk factors (Kelly, 2007). 'At-risk youth' in this dissertation are those considered to be at-risk for antisocial behaviour, negative outcomes, and/or criminality based on experiencing aspects of the following risk domains.

Risk and Resilience

The concepts of risk and resilience have been applied to different populations in the social sciences for many years, calling attention to risk domains and ways of mitigating and overcoming risks through the development of resilience and exercising of protective factors. Individuals may be exposed to risk factors that lead to disorder or other negative outcomes, which in some instances may be overcome through positive adaptive behaviour (resilience) (Haggarty, Sherrod, Garmezy, & Rutter, 1994). In more general terms, risk has been used to detail the possibility of experiencing harm or negative outcomes (Russell, 2005). Risk factors have been described as variables that predict a higher probability of offending and other negative outcomes but may not necessarily be the causes of these outcomes (Farrington et al., 2016). Risk factors can be classified as variable (i.e., subject to change) or fixed (e.g., race) (Kraemer,

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Kazdin, Offord, Kessler, Jensen, & Kupfer, 1997). Of importance, risk factors are characteristics that precede a negative outcome and are associated with an increase of the likelihood of experiencing negative outcomes (Kazdin et al., 1997; Kraemer et al., 1997). Therefore, the temporal precedence of the risk factor for producing an outcome is significant (Kazdin et al., 1997). Negative outcomes that may arise as a result of the accumulation of risk for youth are usually discussed in the areas of delinquency and anti-social behaviour, mental health issues, substance abuse issues, and/or risky sexual behaviour (Assink et al., 2015; Bernstein, Graczyk, Lawrence, Bernstein, & Strunin, 2011; Farrington, Gaffney, & Ttofi, 2017; Felitti et al., 1998; Jackson, Henderson, Frank, & Haw, 2012; Jones, 2012; Morrison, Nikolajski, Borrero, & Zickmund, 2014; Pollard, Hawkins, & Arthur, 1999; Resnick et al., 2004; Saner & Ellickson, 1996).

In the field of developmental psychology, Norman Garmezy and Michael Rutter (1983) began the conversation of risk and vulnerabilities through examining the stress, coping, and development experienced by children. Children may be exposed to a number of different stressors, including abuse, neglect, lack of support, separation or loss, powerless social roles, and psychological disruptions (Garmezy, 1983). Rutter (1983) noted that as in adult life, the stress events experienced in childhood could provoke short-term disturbances in an individual's life. Further, there are factors that create differences and impact the way an individual perceives and responds to a stressful event (Rutter, 1983).

Rutter (1983) examined three main types of stress events experienced by children: hospitalization, the birth of a sibling, and parental divorce. In regard to hospitalization, the separation from the people he or she is attached to, being in a new environment, and seeing their parent's reaction to the hospitalization can be the cause of stress for the child (Rutter, 1983). The

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birth of a sibling may cause stress to a child through the changing dynamic of family interactions (Rutter, 1983). Similarly, a child may incur stress through parental separation, dependent on the relationships maintained (or not) between the child and each parent (Rutter, 1983). In these three significant life events, the actual effect of stress on a child was found within the patterns of family interactions and relationships (Rutter, 1983). However, although there was little evidence at the time of his writing, Rutter (1983) suggested that different events (stress) could lead to several outcomes and prior experiences could impact the outcome of stress events.

Garnezy (1983) found several cases involving children undergoing a stressful event with different outcomes, with some children functioning adaptively, while others experience heightened disruption in their behaviour. As also noted in Rutter's (1983) findings, Garnezy (1983) pointed to the importance of considering both individual and environmental factors that can influence vulnerability to stress events. Specific interactions between a child and a parent are significant determinants of social, emotional, and cognitive development of a child; however, when a child experiences lack of support, separation, neglect, or abuse, his or her adaptation to a stress event can be jeopardized (Garnezy, 1983).

Importantly, Garnezy (1983) and Rutter (1983) both note that the risk of psychiatric disorder and later negative outcome becomes heightened in the presence of cumulative stressors. For example, Rutter (1983) explained that two or more hospital admissions increased risk for disorder. However, it is not the additive effect of two stress events that creates a heightened risk for disorder. Rather, the first stress event may predispose the child to experience adversity after the second stressor (e.g., after the second hospitalization) (Rutter, 1983). There could also be other factors at play, such as coming from a marginalized home (Rutter, 1983). Thus, although the presence of one risk may not increase the likelihood of psychopathology, risk of negative

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outcomes or psychopathology may increase as risk accumulates (Garmezy, 1983,1987; Rutter, 1983).

As an example of the impact of the accumulation of risks, Masten, Garmezy, Tellegen, Pellegrini, Larkin, and Larson (1988) discussed that disadvantaged school-aged children (i.e., those with lower IQ, lower SES, and fewer positive family characteristics) were considered to be at-risk for lower competence in school. In this case, perhaps the risk of possessing lower intelligence alone would not increase the chance of negative outcomes at school, but the accumulation of low IQ, low SES, and having less positive family factors may increase the possibility of negative outcomes at school. Following the seminal findings of Garmezy and Rutter, several scholars have studied and explored the impact of the accumulation of risks on negative outcomes, antisocial behaviour, or criminality, and have sought to examine this and the concepts and domains of risk in further detail (e.g., Assink et al., 2015; Beam, Gil-Rivas, Greenberger, & Chen, 2002; Derzon, 2010; Evans, 2003; Evans, Kim, Ting, Teshler, & Shannis, 2007; Herrenkohl et al., 2012; Kazdin et al., 1997; Masten, 2001; Newsome & Sullivan, 2014; Sanders, Munford, Thimasarn-Anwar, Liebenberg, & Ungar, 2015; Stouthamer-Loeber et al., 2002; Tiet, Huizinga, & Brynes., 2010).

Exposure to risk and related experiences resulting from that risk may differ across individuals (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005). However, as evidenced through important research studies and findings (e.g., the ACE study [Felitti et al., 1998]), many reputable scholars have agreed on several common categories of risk experienced by youth that lead to antisocial behaviour, criminality, and/or other negative outcomes, including: a) personal/individual characteristics; b) familial factors and background; c) peers; d) school; and, e) community and neighbourhood factors (Byrd, Kahle, Peguero, & Popp, 2015; Farrington, 2005; Farrington et al.,

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2016; Felitti et al., 1998; Ingoldsby & Shaw, 2002; Loeber & Farrington, 2000; Murray & Farrington, 2010; O'Brien et al., 2008; Vanfossen et al., 2010).

The first category of risk potentially leading to negative outcomes for youth is personal or individual characteristics. Early antisocial behaviour has come to be one of the most predominant risk factors leading to later delinquency (Loeber & Farrington, 2000; Wasserman et al., 2003).

Antisocial behaviour in early childhood usually consists of oppositional rule violation or aggression, such as theft or fighting (Farrington, 2005; Loeber & Farrington, 2000; Wasserman et al., 2003). Additionally, emotional factors or characteristics associated with an individual can play a role in increasing risk experienced by youth (Wasserman et al., 2003). For example, youth who exhibit sensation-seeking, under-controlled temperament, poor emotion regulation, impulsivity, troublesomeness, and aggression are considered to be at-risk of later negative outcomes (Byrd et al., 2015; Farrington, 1989, 2005; Farrington et al., 2016; Loeber & Hay, 1997; Moffitt, 1990; Murray & Farrington, 2010; Wasserman et al., 2003). Hyperactivity and attention deficit issues in children or youth can also lead to a high risk of delinquency or negative outcomes (Farrington, 1989, 2005; Farrington, Gaffney, & Ttofi, 2017; Herrenkohl et al., 2012; Loeber & Hay, 1997; Moffitt, 1990; Murray & Farrington, 2010; Wasserman et al., 2003). Those who exhibit disruptive behaviours may be at-risk for antisocial behaviour, negative outcomes, or criminality.

Poor cognitive development is another personal characteristic commonly discussed as leaving youth at-risk of delinquency or negative outcomes (Loeber & Hay, 1997; Moffitt, 1990; Wasserman et al., 2003). Evidence suggests that cognitive deficiencies could increase early development of delinquency that continues over time and could further be associated with impaired social cognitive processes (Wasserman et al., 2003). Low intelligence is considered a

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risk factor for antisocial behaviour, offending, and/or negative outcomes (Farrington, 2005; Murray & Farrington, 2010; Wassermen et al., 2003). Other work finds that youth with mental health concerns increases the risk of antisocial behaviours or negative outcomes for youth (Baglivio, Jackowski, Greenwald, & Howell, 2014; Moffitt, 1990). For example, boys displaying higher levels of conduct disorder symptoms in adolescence were likely to exhibit persistent delinquency (Byrd, Loeber & Pardini, 2012).

There are several possible family risk factors that may increase the likelihood of negative outcomes, antisocial behaviour, or delinquency. Previous research has noted that there are parental practices that can lead to behaviour problems or negative outcomes that may continue into later years, such as parent-child or family conflict, poor or lack of supervision, lack of parental support, and low levels of positive parent involvement (Cernkovich & Giordano, 1987; Derzon, 2010; Farrington, 1989, 2005; Farrington et al., 2017; Herrenkohl et al., 2012; Hoeve et al., 2009; Loeber & Hay, 1997; Moffitt, 1990; Murray & Farrington, 2010; Saner & Ellickson, 1996; Wassermen et al., 2003). Family violence and child abuse have also been noted as risk factors that lead to offending and negative outcomes for youth (Hoeve et al., 2009; Loeber & Hay, 1997; Wassermen et al., 2003). As discussed earlier by Rutter (1983), more scholars continue to acknowledge the impact of divorce on children and youth, as this risk is usually recognized with co-occurring risks, such as decreases in socioeconomic status, increased family conflict, individual factors, and other stress events (see Kazdin et al., 1997; Theobald, Farrington, & Piquero, 2013; Wasserman et al., 2003). Therefore, in this instance, it would be the cumulative nature of these risks that would potentially leave youth at-risk for negative outcomes, antisocial behaviour, or delinquency.

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In terms of the background and makeup of a family, low parental education, parental psychopathy, and/or antisocial behaviours by parents or siblings can also be risk factors that can impact the likelihood of negative outcomes or antisocial behaviours (Farrington, 2005; Farrington et al., 2017; Farrington et al., 2016; Kazdin et al., 1997; Loeber & Hay, 1997; Murray & Farrington, 2010; Wasserman et al., 2003). As with other risks, the cumulative nature of risks that come with problems associated with family structure and family size also play a role in increasing the likelihood of negative outcomes and antisocial behaviour for youth (Baglivio et al., 2014; Farrington et al., 2017; Farrington et al., 2016; Wasserman et al., 2003). To elaborate, single-parent households or larger number of children in the household leave youth at increased risk for poor behavioural outcomes, but this could be the result of a combination of this risk and decreased economic resources or poor parental supervision (Kazdin et al., 1997; Wasserman et al., 2003). In their meta-analytic review of studies of adolescence-limited and life course persistent offenders, Assink and colleagues (2015) explain that static family factors are more influential as a risk for youth than dynamic factors, as dynamic factors can be mitigated through intervention.

Peer related risk factors usually appear later in developmental years than family and/or individual influences (Wasserman et al., 2003). Several scholars have identified association with deviant peers as a risk factor for offending and antisocial behaviour for youth (Gardner et al., 2008; Ingoldsby & Shaw, 2002; Murray & Farrington, 2010; O'Brien et al., 2013; Wasserman et al., 2003). There are cases where non-delinquent youth are influenced by delinquent youth, and some where youth who have engaged in minor offences are influenced by their peers to participate in higher-risk delinquency, possibly leading to gang-related activities (Ingoldsby & Shaw, 2002; O'Brien et al., 2008; Wasserman et al., 2003). Additionally, aggressive children

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who are rejected by their peers are at an increased risk of later chronic antisocial behaviours and negative outcomes (Wassermen et al., 2003). This rejection may cause youth to have fewer pro-social options or turn to more delinquent peers for acceptance (Ingoldsby & Shaw, 2002; Wassermen et al., 2003).

Another set of risks falls under the category of school factors. Previous scholars have found that failure to bond to school, or low school commitment can lead to delinquency, negative outcomes, and/or antisocial behaviour (Herrenkohl et al., 2012; Wasserman et al., 2003). Moreover, many scholars agree that poor academic performance and achievement present as risk factors for negative outcomes, delinquency, and antisocial behaviour for youth (Farrington, 1989, 2005; Saner & Ellickson, 1996; Wassermen et al., 2003). For example, poor attendance (i.e., skipping school), being suspended or expelled, or poor grades may leave youth susceptible to negative outcomes. However, some scholars would argue that schools contribute to the risk of youth, as once youth are labeled as academically low the school may do little to help youth increase their academic achievements (see Wishart et al., 2006).

Lastly, in conjunction with all of the above risk domains, community factors can also impact or increase the likelihood of antisocial behaviour, criminality, or negative outcomes for youth. Growing up in a poor, impoverished neighbourhood may place youth at more risk for negative outcomes than those growing up in affluent areas (Baglivio et al., 2014; Ingoldsby & Shaw, 2002; Murray & Farrington, 2010; Vanfossen et al., 2010; Wassermen et al., 2003). In some cases, risk lies in the fact that a neighbourhood is made up of multiple families experiencing unstable family structuring or practices, leading to the possibility of prolonged aggression in youth over time (Vanfossen et al., 2010). Additionally, schools with low academic achievement rates are often situated in areas with low socioeconomic status or economic

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resources, creating an accumulation of risks of antisocial behaviours or negative outcomes for young people (Wishart et al., 2006).

Previous research has found that exposure to or living in a high-crime or violent neighbourhood can also have a significant effect on youth (Herrenkohl et al., 2012; Ingoldsby & Shaw, 2002; Loeber & Hay, 1997; Vanfossen et al., 2010; Wassermen et al., 2003).

Alternatively, Carey and Richards (2014) found that exposure to violence may not be a risk factor for antisocial behaviour, as repeated exposure may become normalized for youth, and thus youth adapt to these situations and may not experience negative outcomes as a result. These contradictory findings illuminate the complexity in determining which factors will present as risks for antisocial behaviour or negative outcomes for youth.

Arguably, individual and family risk factors are often the most significant risks for youth and are exacerbated by school, peer, and community/neighbourhood factors, leading to an increased risk of antisocial behaviours, criminal activity, or other negative outcomes (Ingoldsby & Shaw, 2002). More risk in multiple domains can lead to increased offending, antisocial behaviour, and/or negative outcomes (Baglivio et al., 2014; Derzon, 2010; Felitti et al., 1998; Saner & Ellickson, 1996). Thus, as mentioned above, it is important to consider the impact of multiple risks together (Loeber & Hay, 1997).

However, it is noteworthy that even though some youth experience one or more of the aforementioned risk factors, they may not experience these factors as risks and may not be negatively impacted or experience negative repercussions. Therefore, just because an individual experiences risk does not guarantee that they will be subject to negative outcomes. In this sense, other factors may mitigate the experience and impact of risk (i.e., protective factors or resilience). For example, youth who grow up in a violent neighbourhood may not experience

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negative outcomes because their neighbourhood may have a higher level of collective efficacy, mitigating the impact of witnessing violence (e.g., Hipp & Wo, 2015; Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls, 1997; Yuan & McNeeley, 2017). As stated by Kazdin and colleagues (1997), risk factors can influence the *likelihood* of an outcome rather than actually determining or causing the outcome. Alternatively, some youth engage in lower levels of deviance based on their levels of risk, while some youth display more deviance. The difference between these youth depends on their levels and resources of resilience (Newsome & Sullivan, 2014). Young people are exposed to new risks as they move into adolescence, but also develop more resilience or new protective factors (Stouthamer-Loeber et al., 2002).

There are close connections between resilience, protective, and promotive factors. In addition, there exists a lot of overlap and discrepancy in social science literature regarding language and interpretation of resilience, protective, and promotive factors (Farrington et al., 2016; Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005; Hutcheon & Lashewicz, 2014). Essentially, resilience explains individual variation in responses to risk (Rutter, 1987). On the other hand, protective factors can be described as those that interact with a risk to mitigate its effect or as a variable that predicts a decreased probability of offending or negative outcomes among those at-risk (Farrington et al., 2016). Promotive factors are described as variables that predict low probability of offending or anti-social behaviour (see Farrington et al., 2016). For the purposes of this dissertation, the main focus is placed on the concept of resilience as resilience can be exercised and built, which is important for youth experiencing the aforementioned. Resilience does not reside within an individual, but is rather looked at as a process of active interactions between an individual and the environment he or she experiences (Schoon & Bynner, 2003). Since resilience is a dynamic concept, it is constructed within an individual overtime through relationships and

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experiences. If resilience were innate to an individual, he or she would be able to exercise resilience in any circumstance, which is not always the case. Although the focus in this dissertation is on resilience, both resilience and protective factors are discussed and outlined below, highlighting connections and differences.

Rutter (1983) suggested that stress, coping, and development should be considered together. According to Rutter (1983), coping refers to an individual's attempt to alter a threatening situation. There is no one effective coping mechanism, as the best method for coping will change based on the type of stress experienced (Rutter, 1983). Adaptation and coping are considered to be a process that extends over time and should be considered within the context and recognition of individual differences (Rutter, 1983). Rutter (1983) describes several characteristics that an individual brings with them to a stress event that can impact how an individual may cope with a stress event, including age, sex, intelligence, temperament, genetics, psychosocial adversity, protective factors, and social relationships. Interestingly, after examining other research, evidence suggested that boys were more vulnerable to stress events than girls, possibly due to their tendency to withdrawal or lack of support after a stressful event (Rutter, 1983).

Inevitably, the severity of the long-term outcomes caused by stress will depend on how the stresses were dealt with at the time of the event (Rutter, 1983). Therefore, previous research highlights the need and importance of considering risk and resilience together (Garmezy, 1983, 1987, 1991; Garmezy, Masten, & Tellegen, 1984; Masten et al., 1988). Individuals with fewer assets appeared to be more disruptive after experiencing risk and stress (Garmezy, 1987). However, children with greater assets (e.g., higher intelligence, higher family SES, and increased

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positive family attributes) appeared to be more competent under stress (Garmezy, 1987; Masten et al., 1988).

According to Garmezy (1983), regardless of the name of the concept (i.e., resilience, protective factors, stress-resistance), resilience-type research focuses on individuals who have experienced significant stressors (emphasized by individual, familial, or environmental deprivations) and are exposed to the chance of negative outcomes; but these outcomes are not actualized in children who are able to exercise adaptation and competence. However, resilience is not synonymous with coping, adaptation, or developmental assets (Ungar, 2012), and thus warrants further consideration.

Rutter (1987) refers to resilience as a concept used to describe the positive side of individual differences in responses to adversity and stress. Resilience should be considered as a dynamic, context-specific concept, as some people who cope successfully in one situation may still react negatively in the face of risk in another situation (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005; Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013; Herrman, Stewart, Diaz-Grandos, Berger, Jackson, & Yuen, 2011; Khanlou & Wray, 2014; Rutter, 1987, 2006, 2012; Southwick, Bonanno, Masten, Panter-Brick, Yehuda, 2014; Ungar, 2012). This highlights the impact of changing circumstances on resilience.

Additionally, resilience focuses on understanding healthy development despite exposure to risk and threats to development (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005; Lösel & Farrington, 2012; Masten, Hubbard, Gest, Tellegen, Garmezy, & Ramirez, 1999; Southwick et al., 2014). An individual is identified as resilient once he or she has overcome exposure to risk, or achieved a good outcome despite experiences of risk (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005; Masten, 2001; Rutter, 2012). Resilience is not an individual trait, but rather a process defined by context, the individual, risk, protection, and outcomes (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005; Khanlou & Wray, 2014;

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Robertson & Cooper, 2013; Rutter, 2012). In this manner, resilience is a process that can be developed over time, and is an interactive, complex interplay of individual attributes and social contexts (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013; Herrman et al., 2011; Robertson & Cooper, 2013). In order for someone to exercise resilience, they need both assets, which reside within the individual, and resources, which are external to the individual (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005; Masten et al., 1999). However, good resources are often lacking for youth growing up in disadvantaged and adverse contexts (Masten et al., 1999). Resilience should be considered and understood in a nuanced way, in order to validate and highlight the multiple ways that individuals navigate their adversity, risk, and challenges (Hutcheon & Lashewicz, 2014; Ungar, 2012).

Rutter (1987) explains that the concept of protective factors stems out of the concept of resilience. It is also noteworthy to mention that some factors that may be protective in one instance may function as a risk or vulnerability in another (Masten et al., 1988). However, protective factors are not just the opposite of a risk factor (Farrington et al., 2016; Garmezy, 1991; Pollard et al., 1999). Protective factors are able to modify the negative effects of risk, but will not always eliminate problem behaviours or negative outcomes after being exposed to risk (Pollard et al., 1999). Protective factors have been studied extensively in research and usually fall within the domains of individual characteristics, family milieu, and external (social) factors (Carr & Vandiver, 2001; Garmezy, 1983, 1987; Jolliffe, Farrington, Loeber, & Pardini, 2016; Smokowski, Reynolds, & Bezruczko, 2000).

In terms of individual characteristics, Garmezy (1991) and Lösel and Farrington (2012) described temperament and cognitive skills as important factors in protecting against and modifying the impact of stress events. Carr and Vandiver (2001) found that feeling happy with oneself and having higher self-esteem protected against continued antisocial and offending

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behaviour (see also Dumont & Provost, 1999). Further, high self-regulation, low attention problems, personal agency, future outlook, decreased risk taking, and refusal skills also protect in the presence of risk and adversity (Berzin, 2010; Gardner et al., 2008; Herrenkohl et al., 2012; Lösel & Farrington, 2012).

The relationships between parents and youth also serve as a protective factor in the face of risk. For example, warmth, family cohesion, positive family relationships, and the presence of a caring adult all contribute to an individual's life as protective factors (Berzin, 2010; Garmezy, 1991; Lösel & Farrington, 2012; Resnick et al., 2004; Tiet et al., 2010). Further, having structure and rules in a household, family support and guidance, good parental supervision, and fewer siblings also served as protective factors for youth (Carr & Vandiver, 2001; Farrington et al., 2016; Herrenkohl et al., 2012).

Lastly, external support can act as a domain of protection. The presence of external support from a teacher, pro-social peers, community member, or other significant adult can help young people in adverse situations (Carr & Vandiver, 2001; Garmezy, 1991; Lösel & Farrington, 2012; Smokowski et al., 2000; Tiet et al., 2010). Additionally, being engaged and committed in school, and increased school achievement have also been discussed as an important protective factor (Carr & Vandiver, 2001; Farrington et al., 2016; Herrenkohl et al., 2012; Lösel & Farrington, 2012; Resnick et al., 2004). There is significant power in providing positive role modeling, supportive relationships, and motivational support for at-risk youth (Dumont & Provost, 1999; Hartling, 2008; Smokowski et al., 2000). Therefore, within interventions that seek to help at-risk youth, risk and resilience should be targeted and addressed together (Loeber & Farrington, 2000; Stouthamer-Loeber et al., 2002; Resnick et al., 2004; Khanlou & Wray, 2014; Sanders et al., 2015).

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Although there has been a shift in research focusing more on resilience rather than vulnerabilities of youth (see Rutter, 1987), there still remains a gap in research focusing on successes of youth. Similarly, much of the research on risk and resilience posits that researchers need to identify youth who have overcome disadvantage so future researchers can determine the underlying processes of resilience and protective factors (e.g., Garmezy, 1991). Equally important to identifying at-risk youth who exercise resilience is the need for determining the successes experienced by at-risk or disadvantaged youth in order for future researchers to map and track the successes experienced by these youth, despite exposure to risk. In order to explore ideas and experience of success in more detail, the following section explores current conceptualizations of success and a theoretical challenge that can be used to frame the discussion of expanding our ideas of success.

Conceptualizations of Success

In the literature pertaining to youth, success is often captured in terms of achieving grand social roles, rather than in nuanced, individualized successes, strengths, and/or accomplishments. Success can be considered a socially constructed term which likely changes meaning depending on the context and people under study. In this dissertation, the term success is used to encompass nuanced ideas, definitions, and experiences of success as outlined by youth, as well as achievements, strengths, or things that at-risk youth are proud of as starting points. Ultimately, this dissertation calls for youth to discuss success whichever way they please without boundaries on their perceptions and opinions. In doing so, this research can help youth recognize their various successes, despite their experiences with risk and negative outcomes, antisocial behaviour, and/or criminality. Conceptualizing success for at-risk youth in this way could potentially help foster their self-esteem, empowering youth to recognize their own self-efficacy.

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Presumably, as we would want negative outcomes, antisocial behaviour, and engagement in criminality to decrease for youth, these concepts of success should be pro-social in nature but could include anything the youth deem as a success. Ideas and experiences of success in this study are determined by at-risk youth themselves in order to bring youth voice to the discussion of success, and to ensure that this concept includes subjective beliefs of what success means.

As it stands, the literature that focuses on success seems to neglect a meaningful inclusion of youth voice. Ideas of success should not be prescribed to youth, but rather generated by youth themselves. Youth should be given the opportunity to discuss, conceptualize, and think about certain concepts in their own terms, including ideas that are relevant to them. Therefore, I believe it is important to obtain qualitative responses from youth to capture the essence and richness of their perspectives on this topic. Youth should have stake in matters that impact them, especially those that could potentially encourage an increase in their well-being. Thus, bringing youth voice to the discussion of rethinking success for at-risk youth is important for thoroughly and thoughtfully examining nuanced views and conceptualizations of success.

However, in terms of the literature on life success in general, most of these conceptualizations assume a life course theory perspective, focusing on grand social roles and middle-class standards someone should achieve as the individual passes through age-graded transitions. Accordingly, the literature that does exist on the successes of at-risk youth is also framed through a life course theory perspective and the middle-class measuring rod.

Cohen's (1955) depiction of the middle-class measuring rod can provide context for the proceeding discussion on middle-class ideals of success. Although dated, Cohen's (1955) work is significant for understanding the middle-class measuring rod in which youth are judged and subsequent repercussions of this standard. Cohen's (1955) work expands on the insights from

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Merton's (1938) strain theory. In his discussion of delinquent boys and subcultures, Cohen (1955) explains that all children are assessed and judged based on the same standards, regardless of their background or class. He continues to explain that the standards and norms that signify status and achievement align with middle-class values are shaped through politics, religion, and education (Cohen, 1955). The middle-class standard or measuring rod are representations of the dominant American value system that favours people in power and who have property (Cohen, 1955). Lower-class youth are at a disadvantage; yet, they internalize dominant, middle-class values and norms as a frame of reference for achievement and status. Lower-class youth must come to terms with the fact that they are judged by middle-class standards and norms. Cohen (1955) explains that by way of the middle-class measuring rod, disadvantaged youth are likely to be seen as failures and may feel frustration as they are unable to achieve these culturally transmitted goals. Delinquency and other negative outcomes is a result of this 'failed' adaptation to achieving middle-class markers of success through legitimate means. According to Cohen (1955), lower-class youth are trying to attain values that are attached to status rather than need.

Therefore, the middle-class measuring rod is not something that can be measured, but rather is a set of culturally transmitted goals and values that youth are judged against. The concept of the middle-class measuring rod used to judge achievement, status, and arguably, success, reinforces power relations and further marginalizes disadvantaged groups. Inevitably, the middle-class measuring rod and standards imposed on all groups of individuals becomes problematic. The middle-class values embedded in the norms and standards used to measure success as discussed by Cohen (1955) provide context to well-accepted, traditional ideas of success discussed in life course theory and current notions of success.

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However, Cohen (1955) also suggests that changing a frame of reference can change perceptions of a problem. Thus, if scholars and other stakeholders change the way that success is viewed (i.e., beyond middle-class norms and standards), youth who are unable to attain well-accepted, middle-class markers of success would not be presumed failures. Rather, youth (or other populations of individuals) may create different avenues of success for themselves that should be rewarded and appreciated. Therefore, Cohen's (1955) discussion provides the groundwork for illuminating two ways of understanding success: through the middle-class measuring rod that reinforces power inequalities and disadvantages marginalized groups, or through changing the frame of reference for success to one that accepts non-traditional, subjective ideas and experiences of success.

The following section details life course theory and success as prescribed by life course theory. Then, the literature pertaining to the success of at-risk youth is discussed. The literature on life course theory and youth success reinforces the use of middle-class values and norms as the standard to measure success. The limitations of these views are examined to provide grounds for critiquing the literature that focuses on middle-class values and measures of success, and why it is important to do so. An alternative, non-traditional lens for understanding success is then offered to challenge the way that success has been discussed for many years.

Life course theory. Life course theory has been highly influential in sociological and criminological research (see for example Elder, 1994, Moffitt, 1993, Sampson & Laub, 1990). Life course theory is used within the field of criminology to explain transitions and trajectories throughout the life course, as well as changes and continuity in development and behaviour (e.g., the role of childhood behaviours on later outcomes) (Elder, 1995; Moffitt, 1993; Sampson & Laub, 1990, 1992, 2016). Conceptually, life course perspectives have roots in theoretical studies

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beginning in the 1960s and consisted of literature from sociocultural theories and cultural-historical theories (Elder, 1975, 1994). Life course theory was also shaped by social, behaviour, and biological sciences (Elder, 1995). In its infancy, life course perspectives presented a major change to the way scholars understood and studied human lives and development (Elder, 1994).

Elder began studying pathways in the life course and focused on social change, life pathways, and individual development within the context of continuity and change through studying archival records of children growing up during the Great Depression (see Elder, 1998). Life transitions through social trajectories allowed individuals to achieve and pass through social roles related to education, work and family (Elder, 1998). The examination of children of the Great Depression led Elder (1998) to take note of the differences in life events of these children and the impact that early transitions into social roles had on the individual's life. Crucial to understanding life course theory, Elder (1988) brought attention to the developmental impact of life transitions or events on when they actually occur over the life course.

Elder (1994) described his perspective of life course as a multi-level phenomenon, including structured, individual, and interdependent developmental pathways. This socio-criminological theory examines age-graded transitions to determine how individuals develop and progress linearly through life from birth to death, while recognizing that life events matter (Elder, 1975, 1995; Sampson & Laub, 1990). According to Elder (1995), life course perspectives emphasize social pathways of human lives, their sequences of events, transitions, and social roles. Life course perspectives focus mainly on the duration, timing, and ordering of life events and consequences for later development (Elder, 1975, 1998; Sampson & Laub, 1992).

In this respect, time, process, and context emerge as critical components of this theory and analysis (Elder, 1994). Life course perspectives focus on the whole lifetime with special

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attention on aging from birth to death, social time and patterns of social roles, and historical timing and processes (Elder, 1975). The interplay of human lives, timing of lives, interdependent lives, and human agency are all important aspects of life course theory (Elder, 1994). The historical timing underscores the importance of social impacts and dynamic features of life course theory (Elder, 1994). Additionally, the timing of lives refers to the social meaning of age, relating further to duration and sequences of social roles based on age expectations (Elder, 1994).

Elder's (1994, 1995) focus on life course highlights the social forces that shape life course and developmental negative outcomes. Life course research attempts to explore the influences of childhood experiences on adolescent and adult development (Laub & Sampson, 2008). The belief here is that developmental processes are interrelated (Laub & Sampson, 2008). Trajectories are the long-term pathways or line of development that exists over the life course (Sampson & Laub, 1992). Transitions are marked by short-term, specific life events (Sampson & Laub, 1992). According to life course theory, transitions are embedded within social trajectories that individuals are expected to follow, which inevitably shape developmental outcomes (Elder, 1994).

Life course theory recognizes age-normative expectations as situated in social and historical contexts, based on birth cohorts and social forces (Elder, 1975). To elaborate, the social timetable of life is based on age expectations and social roles that one must achieve as he or she passes through various developmental stages (i.e., childhood to adolescence to adulthood) (Elder, 1975). Development and life success are based on social meanings of age and contextual variations between different cohorts of individuals (Elder, 1975). As individuals pass through age-graded, normative sequences of transitions, members from similar historical and social

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contexts (i.e., with similar developmental trajectories) are compared and grouped together (Elder, 1994, 1995).

Social change and contexts would have different consequences for different age groups and would be related to variations in social roles, adaptive resources, exposure to change, and options (Elder, 1975). For example, differences in birth years can expose individuals to different constraints and options for transitions (Elder, 1994). Thus, a core principle in this theory sheds light on the interplay of human lives with historical times or places (Elder, 1995). Transitions and trajectories occurring over the life course are embedded in the lives of significant others and illuminate the interactive social worlds and linked lives over the life span (Elder, 1995).

Specific markers and life events are situated within the sequence of transitions and indicate whether someone has reached a point in development or achieved success along the life course trajectory (Elder, 1975, 1994, 1995). These markers normally include graduating from school, obtaining a full-time job, owning a house, marriage, and having children (Elder, 1975, 1998; Sampson & Laub, 1992; Sampson & Laub, 2015). Age expectations lend understanding to the fact that there are appropriate ages and timing for leaving home, getting married, having children, and retirement (Elder, 1975). Therefore, individuals are made acutely aware of being on time, early, or late in achieving social roles, and are regulated through an informal system of awards or disadvantages and negative sanctions (Elder, 1975, 1998). In this sense, adverse outcomes are associated with deviations from prescribed timing of life events (Elder, 1975).

To elaborate on the timing of life events, early or late transitions are thought to cause consequence or an accumulation of disadvantages in later adult years (Elder, 1998). For example, if an adolescent gives birth to a child, she may leave school early, which may have a negative impact on employment opportunities (Elder, 1998). As another example, if an individual joins

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the military later in life (i.e., late employment change), he or she will be pulled out of ‘adult’ roles, disrupting his or her life course (Elder, 1998). Therefore, the timing of transitions and achieving social markers are pertinent to life course theory, as achieving social roles on time would lead to later advantages and benefits across the life course and being early or late would cause consequences to an individual’s life trajectory and other transitions.

The age-specific markers are regulated through social control, relationships, and interdependent lives (Elder, 1995; Sampson & Laub, 1990). Therefore, explanations of continuity of antisocial behaviour across the life course should be analyzed in the context of the social control and the impact of interpersonal environments (Sampson & Laub, 1992). Perceptions of life stages and social roles reflect the variance in options, role sequences, and events over the life course (Elder, 1975). Elder (1995) explains that individuals can exercise agency and choice over the life course, but notes that variations in pace or sequencing of transitions can have several negative outcomes for individuals. However, these choices are not made in a vacuum, and are rather contingent on opportunities and constraints of social structures and specific contexts (Elder, 1998).

Significant turning points in the lives of individuals have the ability to alter their trajectory (Elder, 1995, 1995; Sampson & Laub, 1990, 2016). Marked deviations from the usual life timetable can lead to negative (social and psychological) outcomes, ranging from loss opportunities to life disorder (Elder, 1995). As another example, an individual’s life trajectory may be altered by engagement in criminal behaviour, thereby possibly not reaching a marker of development or success (e.g., completing school) (see Elder, 1995; Sampson & Laub, 2016). This would be considered a failed transition, negatively impacting the individual’s later outcomes in their adult life. On the other hand, those who have stable patterns of behaviours and

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transitions will develop and age favourably, eventually becoming competent adults (Elder, 1995). Therefore, risks play a critical role in determining how someone will develop over the life course (Sampson & Laub, 1992). Presumably, the level of risk accumulated and experienced by an individual will impact their transitions and achievement of life success. The extent of change and stability in behaviour and individual characteristics across the life course has been considered one of the most complex aspects of life course theory (Sampson & Laub, 1992). Yet, life course theory still presumes a linear pathway of development throughout the life span.

Further research on risk over the life course indicates that those born into disadvantaged families are more likely to accumulate risks throughout their life compared to those born into privileged families (Schoon & Bynner, 2003). The consequences of risks can begin in an individual's early life, and continue into adult life (Schoon & Bynner, 2003). These authors found that the experience of early disadvantage and risk weakened individual adaptation over the life course (Schoon & Bynner, 2003). Thus, Schooner and Bynner (2003) conclude that cumulative adversity has effects beyond their consequences at the time of risk. This research sheds light on the fact that transitions and development within someone's life course has a critical role in shaping their future, and resilience can play in shaping these events (Schooner & Bynner, 2003).

In addition, Laub and Sampson (2008) agree in their criminological conception of life course that critical life events and social bonds in later life can counteract, or mitigate, the trajectories of childhood development. The pathways to antisocial or pro-social behaviour can potentially be modified through important social institutions (marriage, employment) as people transition into adulthood (Laub & Sampson, 2008). In discussing the future directions in life course theory for criminological research, Laub and Sampson (2008) discuss the need to

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incorporate human agency into the crime and life course equation. In this regard, Laub and Sampson (2008) highlight the importance of cross-disciplinary inclusions when studying life course theory.

Sampson (2015) and Sampson and Laub (2016) also highlight the need for research on life course theory to expand and focus meaningfully on changing social contexts. For instance, changing labour markets, technological advancements, heightened inequality and disadvantage, decline in crime rates, as well as declining marriage rates may all impact development and life course trajectories and transitions (Laub & Sampson, 2016). Sampson (2015) and Sampson and Laub (2016) call attention to the fact that turning points and trajectories are not static, but rather dynamic in nature, changing as the world develops. One key insight noted by these scholars was that life course trajectories could shape future criminal or antisocial trajectories, and conversely, the life course could be modified by criminal behaviour and its negative outcomes (Sampson & Laub, 2016). However, life course trajectories are also impacted and shaped by structures and changes within society (Sampson & Laub, 2016). Thus, Sampson (2015) maintains that life course theories should not only focus on age, but also how individuals age in different social worlds.

Criminological researchers should seek to rediscover the challenges of linking individuals to macro-level change (Sampson, 2015). As Elder (1998) argues in his study of children of the Great Depression, people work out their pathways and transitions as best they can, given the opportunities or disadvantages they face. Therefore, the social context and structures within society play a role in shaping the developmental pathway of an individual over his or her life course. However, in conceptualizing success for young people, there is still a lack of consideration of dynamic social context and structures that may impact ideas and experiences of

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success. Consideration of the gaps in life course theory pointed out by Sampson (2015) and Sampson and Laub (2016) need to be considered and addressed.

Overall, life successes and development are mapped through linear transitions and trajectories over an individual's life course. These markers of success and development are based on grand social roles, in the domains of academic achievement, employment, and relationships. However, if transitions are not met in a specific sequence, or are made too early or too late, it is theorized that an individual will experience myriad negative outcomes later in the life course. Thus, the timing of lives, social context, and interdependent lives all come into play when discussing the trajectory of someone's life course. Having to pass through a prescribed sequence of developmental, age-graded transitions alludes to the structured, linear nature of transitions and markers of development and success described in life course theory. Although life course scholars propose that agency plays a role in transitions, this agency appears to be consequential for those who seek to divert from the linear path of developmental, age-graded transitions and social markers of success. Moreover, as Sampson and Laub (2016) point out, the social forces that inevitably privilege or disadvantage members of society need to be taken into greater consideration when examining successful development or transitions over the life course.

Taken together, the transitions, trajectories, and markers of success outlined and discussed in life course theory appear to neglect the fact that these prescribed transitions may not be suitable for all populations of individuals. Additionally, the life course perspective suggests that if one does not follow a linear pathway, they will likely experience negative outcomes, rather than success. The use of the non-traditional, subjective theoretical framing and challenge presented below seeks to address these gaps and narrow conceptualizations of success. First, however, it is also noteworthy to mention more recent literature that discusses the success of at-

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risk youth. The research on success of at-risk youth also focuses on life course prescriptions or middle-class markers of development and success. The following subsection outlines the literature that exists on the successes of at-risk youth, noting once again that this literature neglects a nuanced, individualized perspective of success from at-risk youth themselves.

Successes of at-risk youth. Although previous research discusses and uses the term success, it appears that little research actually discusses what is meant by success, possibly because this term is nuanced and subjective. As mentioned, success is generally marked and measured in previous literature by achievements in completing school, finding a job, buying a house, staying away from criminal or antisocial behaviour, getting married, and maintaining positive mental health (Gregory, 1995; Iselin et al., 2012; Kay, Shane, & Heckhausen, 2017; Mercer, Farrington, Ttofi, Keijsers, Branje, & Meeus, 2016; Morimoto & Friedland, 2013; Wang & Eccles, 2011; Wiebold & Spiller, 2017).

For example, Iselin and colleagues' (2012) work focuses on adolescent offenders obtaining a positive possible self and future success through having a job and staying out of trouble with the law. Another study focusing on the success of youth reported on the social successes of youth and determined that although young people continue to endorse social characteristics that may have negative consequences, pro-social characteristics were considered equally or more important for social success (Kiefer & Ryan, 2011). Mercer and colleagues (2016) also characterized general life success as finding adequate accommodation, satisfactory employment, a stable intimate relationship, and having generally satisfactory mental health. Again, this study focuses on general life successes, rather than the individualized successes of the adolescent delinquents used in their study.

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In terms of achieving life success, recent youth literature has examined whether success is gained through merit or external causes, while examining the role of socioeconomic status (Kay et al., 2017). Youth in this study who had lower socioeconomic status and attended a lower level high school reported that success was more commonly due to external and uncontrollable factors (Kay et al., 2017). In Kay's et al. (2017) study, youth designated career attainment as the marker of success, maintaining the idea that success is related to social roles. Similarly, Phinney et al. (2001) examined whether internal or external factors contributed to youth's expected achievement of goals and success. In Phinney's et al. (2001) study, goals and success were directed at what type of career or educational pathway youth would ideally like to obtain. Regardless of their belief in their future attainment, youth in Phinney's et al. (2001) study saw effort as the most predominant factor influencing their future success.

Other predictors of success expressed in youth literature relate to supporting relationships and civic activities (Haggis, 2017; Morimoto & Friedland, 2013; Shade, 1983; Smith, Newman-Thomas, & Stormont, 2015). The support of appropriate role models and caring adults has been reported to help at-risk youth improve social skills and develop appropriate visions for the future, leading to a development of resilience and life successes (Haggis, 2017; Smith et al., 2015). A significant adult can also help individuals reach educational and occupational aspirations (Shade, 1983). Additionally, youth recognize that civic activity (school achievement and volunteering) and socioeconomic status can place them in a better position for life success (Morimoto & Friedland, 2013). In Morimoto and Friedland's (2013) study, youth were engaging in civic activities to better situate themselves in college admission pools, highlighting educational attainment as a form of success. Although important, the aforementioned studies focused on predictors of success, rather than asking youth to define or share actual experiences of success.

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The majority of the literature pertaining to the successes of youth focuses on increasing the amount of academic success achieved by this population. In current literature, academic success for youth is often measured quantitatively through achievement, grades, aspirations, and school engagement and connectedness (e.g., Wang & Eccles, 2011). Increases in school participation and engagement, as well as self-regulated learning were associated with increases in grades and future educational aspirations (Tucker, Herman, Pedersen, Vogel, & Reinke, 2000; Wang & Eccles, 2011). Other research has identified that self-control techniques, avoiding problem peers, managing problem behaviour, and increasing social and emotional competency can also increase the academic success of youth (Oberle et al., 2014; Tucker et al., 2000). Again, this research points to predictors that can help youth achieve academic success rather than explaining what success is to them.

When studying at-risk youth, Randolph, Rose, Fraser, and Orthner (2004) noted that grade retention or being held back impacts a youth's risk of dropping out in high school. Similar to the above, attachment and commitment to pro-social opportunities at school are linked to higher educational aspirations and outcomes (Randolph et al., 2004). However, committing to opportunities at school is often met with challenges by at-risk youth as they have additional responsibilities at home, therefore encountering barriers to increase their educational outcomes (Randolph et al., 2004). The research on educational success also indicates that youth with lower socioeconomic status and other risks experience decreases in school attachment, loneliness, and subsequently, a decrease in grades and educational attainment (Benner & Wang, 2014). These studies highlight barriers for at-risk youth in achieving academic success (Benner & Wang, 2014; Randolph et al., 2004).

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Similarly, self-concept and behavioural self-concept of at-risk youth have been found to impact their academic success (Gregory, 1995; Ogle, Frazier, Nicholas-Lopez, & Capella, 2016). Some authors suggest that self-concept and beliefs about oneself could predict school outcomes and success, especially in terms of mental health (Ogle et al., 2016). For example, in one particular study, it was found that youth who believe they behave well also believe that they are competent in school and will exhibit less symptoms related to anxiety, depression, and disruptive behaviours (Ogle et al., 2016). Further research illuminates the importance of positive relationships with peers and teachers in contributing to a youth's academic success (Gregory, 1995; Haggis, 2017). Family cohesion and parental monitoring have also been found as significant predictors of educational engagement (Annunziata, Hogue, Faw, & Liddle, 2006).

Researchers who discuss the academic success of youth often also hypothesize that school success is important for future successes, as academic success is a significant protective factor for negative outcomes (see Gregory, 1995; Ogle et al., 2016). In this sense, academic success may be viewed as a predictor for life success. However, a heavy focus on academic success of youth (measuring it quantitatively through grades, engagement, or aspirations) marginalizes a number of youth who may not achieve top grades, have high aspirations, or be particularly engaged in school but still achieve successes. Conversely, there are a number of youth who do well in school but still experience negative outcomes, possibly due to other risk factors. Additionally, the research on youth success focuses on factors that would predict success, rather than actual ideas, conceptualizations, and experiences from the voices of at-risk youth themselves. Particularly for marginalized or at-risk youth, using mainly academic or middle-class standards of success presents a number of issues and thus warrants a careful critique of these literatures and conceptualizations. This is not to say that school behaviours do not play

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any role in predicting the success of at-risk youth, but rather to highlight the need to move beyond this narrow focus of success. Thus, a gap in current literature on success as it pertains to at-risk youth is that it neglects the nuanced, individualized experiences of success for at-risk youth, especially when considering obtaining this data in a qualitative manner from at-risk youth themselves.

Therefore, the traditional, life course perspective of success is problematic and needs to be questioned in further detail. Prescribed transitions and markers of success may not be suitable for all populations of individuals and should be considered more context-specific and non-traditional than current research and theories allows. Utilizing middle-class markers of success would seem unjust for certain groups of people. This is not to say that marginalized groups cannot achieve the social roles and markers of success prescribed in life course theory or perpetuated by societal norms, but rather to discuss the fact that these may not be of value to all populations. There should not be benchmark standards of success. Individuals should not be considered subject to negative outcomes if they do not achieve societal perceptions of success. Instead, perceptions of transitions and success should be considered fluid, changing, and context-specific to allow for subjective experiences to be considered and celebrated. Moving beyond only holding traditional ideas of success as valuable would allow for a range of experiences and ideas to be considered *as* successes, especially for those who live complex, challenging lives based on their social locations and identities. The concept of success needs to be reconsidered to generate a more realistic view of what this term means to different individuals.

Therefore, scholars must rethink the way they discuss success, especially for at-risk and marginalized populations. In doing so, the linear pathways and transitions outlined in life course theory and markers of success should be challenged, bringing to light individual variations and

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differences in transitions and trajectories. The next section of this literature review examines the proposed critique to life course theory and current conceptualizations of success, drawing on the existing literature and perspectives from intersectionality, individualization, and research on youth transitions. These three perspectives provide the grounding to consider non-linear, non-traditional, and fluid ideas and experiences as accepted forms of success.

Critiquing life course theory and existing conceptualizations of success. Arguably, the markers of success discussed above seem to be based on middle-class values and focus more on societal perceptions of life success and development rather than examining the nuanced explanations of success. Further, the linearity assumed in transitions and sequences of social roles in life course theory becomes problematic when discussing success over the duration of someone's life. The use of research on intersectionality, individualization, and youth transitions presents an argument for the consideration that perhaps the life course model is not the only theoretical framework through which to examine and define success. Thus, this section examines the literature pertaining to interlocking identities, individual agency and choice, and non-linear transitions to create a more realistic framework to discuss the successes of at-risk youth. Through an alternative, non-traditional lens, it becomes apparent that individuals may take different paths to reach their own ideas of success, making these markers of success individualized and unconventional, especially for at-risk youth.

Intersectionality. Intersectionality is used to critically analyze the ways in which power systems and social structures shape social experiences and identities (Burgess-Proctor, 2006; Potter, 2013). Although criminologists have been incorporating gender, class, and race within their theoretical analyses for many years, very few scholars had previously thought of how the intersections of these factors impacted criminal behaviour or victimization (Davis, 2008; Paik,

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2017). With origins in feminist theories, Crenshaw (1989, 1991) first used the term intersectionality to explain the fact that social identities cannot be separated into distinct categories, but rather should be considered as overlapping and intersecting. In examining experiences of rape and domestic violence of Black women, Crenshaw (1989) exposed that the courts were not acknowledging claims brought on the basis of sex and racial discrimination, neglecting to see how these two social positions were related. This discovery revealed that gender needed to be analyzed alongside and within the context of other social inequalities, like race (Burgess-proctor, 2006; Crenshaw, 1989).

Following this work, Crenshaw (1991) continued to expand on intersectionality by detailing differences in structural, political, and representational intersectionality in relation to violence against women of colour. Crenshaw's (1991) work revealed that racial and sexual subordination are mutually reinforcing. Again, she highlights the importance of accounting for multiple dimensions of identity and power when considering how the social world is constructed and created (Crenshaw, 1991). This work provides the means for understanding other marginalization and subordination across different identities (Crenshaw, 1991).

Although there is some confusion in the literature regarding whether intersectionality is a theory, concept, or perspective, the vagueness and open-ended nature of intersectionality can be used to an advantage, giving way to its use across various populations and contexts (Davis, 2008). Perhaps then, intersectionality should be used as a heuristic device. When examining the use and conceptualization of intersectionality, it is more beneficial to examine what intersectionality does and its application, rather than what it is defined as (Paik, 2017). In this way, intersectionality invites an element of discovery for those who use it as a critical analysis (Davis, 2008).

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Nonetheless, intersectionality highlights that idea that social locations of inequality are dynamic, historically rooted, and socially constructed power relations that exist within structural levels of society (Anthias, 2012a; Bell, 2013; Burgess-Proctor, 2006; Gillborn, 2015; Hulko, 2009; Potter, 2013). Intersectionality allows researchers to critically analyze individuals or groups of people based on their social positions. The social identities people hold, in combination with structural inequalities, overlap and multiply the oppression or disadvantage faced by certain people in a given context (Potter, 2013).

A central acknowledgement in intersectionality is that every person belongs to more than one social category; thus, explanations of experiences should include how these multiple social categories work together in space and time to create a specific outcome (Collins, 1993; Samuels & Ross-Sherif, 2008; Shields, 2008; Windsong, 2016). Intersectional perspectives explain that people will experience multiple, interlocking inequalities that occur within a power matrix at multiple levels of social life (Anthias, 2012b; Burgess-Proctor, 2006; Potter, 2013). Power is situated in relationships and complexities of identities (Potter, 2013). Therefore, considering social categories and identities together, within time, space, and context creates a holistic, critical analysis of oppression and privilege (Paik, 2017; Potter, 2013; Samuels & Ross-Sherif, 2008; Shields, 2008; Windsong, 2016).

Anthias (2012b) highlights the mutual composition of social categories, in that they are affected by and affect one another. Intersectionality further outlines that as systems of power intersect and overlap, they produce effects on individuals that would not have occurred if the power systems had not overlapped in the first place (Bright, Malinsky, Thompson, 2015). An important distinction within intersectionality is that the magnitude of intersections would be more impactful on the individual than the sum of the individual categories of social identities

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added together (Bell, 2013; Bright et al., 2015). Those using intersectionality in their scholarly work maintain that oppressions and identities should not be considered as additive (Bell, 2013; Collins, 1993). The saliency of one type of social identity in an individual's life should not be understated in the face of intersectionality. Several social identities may all be prevalent in a given situation, but the individual may not perceive all of these social identities as important when regarding or analyzing their own experiences (Collins, 1993; see Shields, 2008). Thus, much like risk, interlocking identities carry a cumulative effect on the lives of individuals (Bright et al., 2015; Collins, 1993).

One of the main uses of intersectionality is to address the problems of sameness and difference in relation to power (Cho et al., 2013). Further, both privileges and oppressions can be taken into consideration through the use of an intersectional analysis (Samuels & Ross-Sherif, 2008; Shields, 2008). Although everyone is subjected to privilege and oppression, different combinations of social identities would create different experiences for individuals within a particular social context. To elaborate, some individuals may hold more social identities that would lead to disadvantage than others, or vice versa; thus, two individuals with different social identities will have different experiences even if situated in the same context.

Therefore, there is a need to not only consider the fluidity of intersections, but also the importance of context, place, and time in intersectional explanations of crime and victimization (Anthias, 2012a; Hulko, 2009; Samuels & Ross-Sherif, 2008; Shields, 2008; Windsong, 2016). The social identities assumed by individuals that interact are fluid because the meanings attached to the identity and power given or denied from certain social categories are largely based on the sociocultural context in which these experiences occur (Anthias, 2012b; Hulko, 2009; Marecek, 2016). Something that may be a privilege in one context could become a disadvantage or

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problem in another (Anthias, 2012a; Samuels & Ross-Sherif, 2008; Shields, 2008). For example, a minority woman may be disadvantaged because of her race, but having an educational degree could give her advantage in a different social context (see Anthias, 2012a). By including a contextual analysis, scholars are able to position social identities in specific social places and times, which may account for the prevalence of privilege or oppression that the social experience for that individual (Cho et al., 2013; Rodó-de-Zárate, 2017). In essence, intersectionality refers to the way in which social identities or categories interact, whereas social location indicates the results of these interactions as privileges or disadvantages (Hulko, 2009).

As mentioned, an important concept within intersectionality is that gender matters; although, this has been largely used to discuss the positions of females. While males are often considered to be more privileged than women, assuming a male identity can leave individuals at-risk for different reasons. In this sense, being male in certain contexts or situations would position these individuals at-risk, or subject them to different experiences, and even more so if they hold other oppressive social identities (see Rogers, Scott & Way, 2015). For example, being male would be a privilege in one context, but being a visible-minority male might be oppressive in another context. Quite often when boys get into trouble or display antisocial behaviour, people dismiss this behaviour as 'boys being boys'. However, people rarely recognize this behaviour as a result of both their gender and their visible-minority identity (for example), not either or. Likewise, males could experience more risk or oppression from the combination of assuming a sexuality-minority identity and being male, or their age and being male, not only their sexuality or age or gender. Therefore, the interlocking social identities assumed by young males (in combination with other social identities) could presumably contribute to their risk, vulnerability, or social experiences.

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In part, intersectionality could assume a social constructionist perspective. Berger and Luckmann (1996) explained that social worlds are constantly being constructed and interpreted, and these constructions and interpretations become social reality. According to social constructionists, identities are determined through social structure and emerge through a dialect between an individual and society (Berger & Luckmann, 1996). Context plays a large role in socialization, as what may be considered successful in one context would be viewed as unsuccessful in another. Realities and identities remain largely unintelligible unless situated within a specific context or social world (Berger & Luckmann, 1996). Change in perceptions and acceptance of identities occur when identities are viewed and interpreted as problematic (Berger & Luckmann, 1996). Social identities are thus dynamic, changing constructions of social reality, rather than objective reality (Anthias, 2012b; Bell, 2013; Gillborn, 2015; Pincus & Sokoloff, 2008; Windsong, 2016). Situating identities in the interpretations of socially constructed realities provides for an understanding of how certain social identities or categories are given meaning, how they intersect, and how they are perceived as oppressive or dominant (see Anthias, 2012b; Gillborn, 2015; Pincus & Sokoloff, 2008). However, a strength of using intersectionality is that it not only considers structural analysis and factors, but also pays close attention to individual experience.

Thus, by taking an intersectional approach, we are able to understand individuals in a holistic manner (Potter, 2013; Samuels & Ross-Sherif, 2008), recognizing the ways his or her identities intersect within certain contexts and structures of power to create different social experiences. Within this context, one can determine how the context, location, and social identities intersect to disadvantage someone, potentially resulting in criminal or antisocial behaviours, negative outcomes, or oppression. These intersecting identities are given meaning

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through social means for determining and shaping which social characteristics are presented as oppression or privilege. The meanings, characteristics, and stereotypes attributed to particular social identities reinforce and maintain the social structures that exert dominance over some groups or strata (Collins, 1993; Gillborn, 2015; Ghavami & Peplau, 2012).

Social location shifts as identities develop and change overtime, altering the amount of privilege or oppression an individual may experience (Hulko, 2009). Essentially, different combinations and intersections of identities can produce different effects on an individual's life (Bright et al., 2015). Several of the risk categories described above can add to an individual's social location, contributing to the interlocking, complex identities of youth (e.g., Byrd et al., 2015; Glennon, 2016; Lahlah, Lens, Bogaerts, & van der Knapp, 2013). For example, low cognitive ability and low emotion regulation, conflict with parents, and living in an inner-city, violent neighbourhood all may contribute to the social identity of a youth. Bell (2013) found that as youth move across the early stages of the life course, the effects of intersectionality become critical in their impact on criminal offending. Again, this literature stresses the importance of the interaction of social identities.

As intersectionality has developed over the years, more scholars have begun applying the central claims of intersectionality to different populations of individuals across different contexts (Byrd et al., 2015; Glennon, 2016; Nadan, Spilsbury, & Korbin, 2015; Paik, 2017; Potter, 2013; Rodó-de-Zárate, 2017; Shields, 2008). Therefore, intersectionality can arguably be used to explain the lives of at-risk youth and their success. The theoretical application of intersectionality in the discussion of success allows researchers to consider how interlocking identities impact experiences and perceptions of success and pathways to success. Therefore, the recognition of

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interlocking social identities and inclusion of power and structural inequalities are important for the discussion of transitions, development, and success.

As Ghavami and Peplau (2012) point out, people's experiences need to be grounded and understood in the context of power relations embedded within society. Additionally, the use of intersectionality can assist in capturing the complexity of interlocking identities and how these multiple positions impact youth (Rôdo-de-Zárate, 2017) as they navigate their transitions and seek success. Youth are subjected to different experiences based on their interlocking social positions, and further based on the role of place and time (Rôdo-de-Zárate, 2017). The consideration of multiple social identities can be useful for understanding why some youth experience diversions from 'normal' developmental trajectories (Glennon, 2016). In other words, the experiences of youth related to their identities (adversity and risk included) should not be separated from their developmental transitions and their constructions of success.

Thus, the privileges, oppressions, and social location of an individual may impact an individual's ability to meet the traditional markers of development and life success. Marginalized groups may be unable to obtain the middle-class markers of development and success outlined in life course theory. Alternatively, depending on the social meanings constructed within society and a given context, the prescribed markers set out in life course theory may not be of value or importance to all people. There must be recognition of the barriers set up by power structures impacting the development and success of those with interlocking social identities (see Collins, 1993).

In summary, this body of research on intersectionality would prove particularly useful for the population of at-risk youth. The detailed analysis social identities described in intersectionality (e.g., in terms of privilege and oppression within time and space) seems to be a

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necessary contribution to the discussion of success, as this would provide context to what an individual may perceive as success. More specifically, the youth involved in this study may assume a variety of complex social identities (e.g., low SES families, male, visible minorities, age/youth status), which will likely impact their conceptualizations of success. An intersectional analysis, focusing on examining the dynamics of difference (Cho et al., 2013), as well as power and agency (Anthias, 2012a) allows us to consider the individualized nature of transitions and success for at-risk youth. The central tenants of individualization perspectives can be considered alongside intersectionality to discuss alternative, subjective perspectives of success.

Individualization. Previously, linear transitions (i.e., those outlined in life course theory) were left mostly unchallenged, as previous scholars had yet to meaningfully incorporate individualized pathways into their analysis (Goodwin & O'Connor, 2005). However, due to the constant changing nature of social contexts, a number of scholars started to examine the role of agency, choice, and individualization in the process of developmental transitions (Côté, 2000; Devadason, 2006; Evans & Furlong, 1997; Furlong & Cartmel, 1997; Rudd & Evans, 1998). This changing nature of society has made society a risky place, with new challenges and risks, as well as opportunities, embedded within social structures (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997). A riskier social context has left youth to negotiate this world at an individual level (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997). The different circumstances and changes met by youth warrant the reconceptualization of transitions and social processes (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997).

Transitions have become more individualized based on how youth perceive their situations of risk and uncertainty (Côté, 2000; Furlong & Cartmel, 2007; Vickerstaff, 2003). The integration of intersectionality would be appropriate here, in that the interlocking identities outlined in intersectionality would make these transitions more individualized dependent on an

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individual's oppression and privileges (potentially adding to risk or uncertainty). Viewing transitions as individualized allows one to observe that risks and opportunities are not evenly distributed, making transitions fluid and complex (te Riele, 2004).

Individualization embraces the individual differences that occur within development and social experiences. Accordingly, the individualization literature highlights that individuals are active agents in constructing and creating meaning for their lives and subjective identities (Arnett & Galambos, 2003; Evan & Furlong, 1997; Furlong & Cartmel, 1997; Rudd & Evans, 1998; Wyn & Woodman, 2006). Through the process of reflexivity, individuals are able to modify their subjective identities (Brannen & Nilsen, 2002; Côté, 2000; Devadason, 2007; Farrigua, 2013; Furlong & Cartmel, 2007; Furlong et al., 2011; O'Connor, 2006; Threadgold & Nilan, 2009).

Changing youth identities are related to the changing social structures found within modern society; thus, reflexivity becomes important for understanding new inequalities (Farrigua, 2013; O'Connor, 2006). Some disadvantaged youth (e.g., perhaps those with interlocking oppressive social locations) may have a hard time actively engaging in reflexivity (Farrigua, 2013). Nonetheless, through reflexivity, youth seek to renegotiate core values that promote the ongoing framing of markers of transitions and success (Côté, 2000; Furlong et al., 2011). The restructuring of lives allows for the subsequent restructuring or reshaping of inequalities (Furlong et al., 2011).

Therefore, young people see their development, transitions, and arguably success, as based on personal criteria and identity formation (e.g., self-sufficiency, independence) rather than on social roles (e.g., employment, marriage) (Arnett, 2000; Arnett & Galambos, 2003; Arnett & Tanner, 2006; Evans & Furlong, 1997; Shanahan et al., 2005), rendering traditional, social markers as possibly less important in the discussion of development, transitions, and

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arguably, success. The prescribed social transitions have undergone changes for youth (Brannen & Nilsen, 2002). The linear life course model has been de-standardized, and youth may ignore some stages or return to stages as they develop (Brannen & Nilsen, 2002; Furlong et al., 2011). Time has become less linear, with the future being highly unpredictable (Brannen & Nilsen, 2002; Vickerstaff, 2003).

Accordingly, individuals now have a number of available choices during their transitions and life trajectory (e.g., prolonged education, travelling) (Arnett & Tanner, 2006; Arnett & Galambous, 2003; Furlong & Cartmel, 1997; te Riele, 2004). Furlong and Cartmel (2007) explained that the choices in various transitions made by youth are determined by an individual's social location and available opportunities. In this context, the life course becomes less of a collective experience and becomes more nuanced and individualized (Brannen & Nilsen, 2002; Devadason, 2006).

Although individualization leads to greater autonomy and choices in pathways increasing different life options, risk and uncertainty also become heightened (Côté, 2000; Evans & Furlong, 1997; Goodwin & O'Connor, 2005; Hendry & Kloep, 2007; Vickerstaff, 2003). An increase in choices and constraints creates changes in transitional patterns, where marginalized youth may continue to be disadvantaged and excluded from particular choices (Evans & Furlong, 1997; Furlong & Cartmel, 2007; Rudd & Evans, 1998; Threadgold & Nilan, 2009). An increase in choice may further lead to new risks and vulnerability (Furlong & Cartmel, 2007; Vickerstaff, 2003). These risks and vulnerabilities can lead to myriad outcomes, such as mental health issues or substance use (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997). Youth are encouraged to take individual responsibility for their choices and to assess appropriate pathways (Côté, 2000; Furlong & Cartmel, 2007). In doing so, it is possible that youth are able to overcome risk and uncertainty

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and still achieve positive outcomes. Although youth exercise agency, this period of the life course is still somewhat structured, where experiences are regulated by social structures (as discussed in literature about intersectionality) (Brannen & Nilsen, 2002; Devadason, 2006; Furlong & Cartmel, 1997; Rudd & Evans, 1998). While exercising their agency, youth attempt to resolve collective or structured problems through individual action (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997).

Therefore, being afforded choice allows success to be determined by an individual (see Rudd & Evans, 1998). Those exposed to interlocking and intersecting identities can use their known social categories to map ideas of success in ways and terms that suit them. As youth create distinctive ways of giving meaning to their lives, researchers should seize and grasp the experiences of these subjective realities (Goodwin & O'Connor, 2005; Wyn & Woodman, 2006). The ideas explained within the individualization literature would prove useful in contesting the linear life course perspectives of transitions and success as this research highlights agency and choice (with less consequences than explained in life course theory) in transitions and success. The use of individualization allows for nuanced markers of success to be explored, aiding in the reconceptualization of success for at-risk youth. The literature on youth transitions is highly interrelated with individualization and further serves to explain non-linear transitions and nuanced markers of success.

Youth transitions. Youth transitions have come to be conceived very differently than previously theorized. The studies of youth transitions and cultures can provide rich insight into how young people construct their lives (Furlong et al., 2011). Arguably, insights from youth transition literature can be further related to the success of individuals. The changing nature of transitions has created more diverse, complex transitions (Côté, 2000; Evans & Furlong, 1997;

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Farrigua, 2013; Furlong & Cartmel, 1997; Furlong et al., 2011; Goodwin & O'Connor, 2005; Reynolds, Stewart, MacDonald, Sisco, 2006).

The diversity, fluidity, heterogeneity, and complexity of youth transitions highlight the non-linearity of these transitions. Periods of backtracking, breaks or moves, extended, shortened, or accelerated transitions are embraced and accepted as appropriate (Brannen & Nilsen, 2002; Evan & Furlong, 1997; Furlong & Cartmel, 1997; Goodwin & O'Connor, 2005; Reynolds et al., 2006; te Riele, 2004; Vickerstaff, 2003; Wyn & Woodman, 2006). For example, the changing labour market made school to work transitions much more complex, making routes into work more diverse than before, with breaks before transitioning to work or periods of unemployment or unpaid work (Furlong & Cartmel, 2007).

Likewise, the linear transition from leaving home to owning a house has also become more complex, where youth experience a variety of living arrangements with friends, family, or partners (Furlong & Cartmel, 2007). There is no longer a sequence of living arrangements that would describe a 'normal' transition (Furlong & Cartmel, 2007). Youth actively negotiate their living transitions to fit with the complexity of their lives and transitions (Furlong & Cartmel, 2007; Vickerstaff, 2003). Shortened, extended, or a combination of both types of transitions should not be considered a guaranteed prerequisite for negative outcomes later in life, but rather as a complex youth transition. The de-sequencing and extensions of transitions allow youth to experiment and establish their own self-identity (Evans & Furlong, 1997; Furlong & Cartmel, 2007). As a result, the timing and patterns of traditional markers of development and success are no longer as valued by youth as they once were. Instead, identity-related, psychological, and individualized ideas of development and transitions are made more important to youth (Arnett &

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Galambos, 2003; Evans & Furlong, 1997; Furlong & Cartmel, 1997; te Riele, 2004; Shanahan et al., 2005).

According to Arnett (in Arnett & Tanner, 2006), coming of age has developed over time, weakening social institutions and increasing the amount of freedom experienced by individuals. In terms of emerging adulthood (18-24), transitions and success are marked by identity exploration, instability, self-focus, self-sufficiency (Arnett, 2000; Tanner in Arnett & Tanner, 2006). For example, ego development or independence are markers of success within this time period, rather than focusing on strict social roles (Tanner in Arnett & Tanner, 2006; Shanahan et al., 2005). Furthermore, youth transitions are also marked by increases in cognitive and emotional functioning (Labouvie-Vief in Arnett & Tanner, 2006). This exploration can solidify mature structures of thought or exacerbate vulnerability to distortive ways of thinking (Labouvie-Vief in Arnett & Tanner, 2006). During the period of being a youth, it is socially acceptable to stay young and seek out identity exploration in a variety of ways, such as in school, love, passions, work, and worldviews (Côté in Arnett & Tanner, 2006; Phinney in Arnett & Tanner, 2006). Trajectories and transitions for youth are based on choice and individual preference (Côté in Arnett & Tanner, 2006). Overall, youth transitions are marked by diversity, instability, change, and exploration (Arnett, 2000).

However, the increased complexity in youth transitions is not met without challenges, and those who are unable to adapt to the changing social contexts may experience mental health issues (Schulenberg & Zarrett in Arnett & Tanner, 2006). Maladaptation over the life course and in youth transitions may occur if an individual's characteristics do not meet the standards of a changing society (Schulenberg & Zarrett in Arnett & Tanner, 2006). As a result, youth may need to be supported through transitions in order to navigate their complex pathways (Devadason,

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2006; Masten et al. in Arnett & Tanner, 2006). In order to increase the likelihood of positive transitions and success, youth are encouraged to increase their competence, future orientation, motivation, and positive engagement in age-salient tasks (Masten et al. in Arnett & Tanner, 2006). However, Bynner (2005) asserts that traditional routes to adulthood and markers of success are still relevant and should not be overlooked. Rather, the literature on youth transitions and success should be inclusive and comprehensive of both traditional and non-traditional pathways and markers of success, involving a combination of social roles and personal qualities (Bynner, 2005; Shanahan et al., 2005).

In sum, the literature on youth transitions suggests that most youth now experience non-linear pathways and transitions and still manage to achieve positive outcomes afterwards (Devadason, 2007; te Riele, 2004). Youth transitions are no longer viewed as straightforward, linear pathways (Goodwin & O'Connor, 2005). Therefore, non-linear pathways and subjective markers should not be equated to failure, as uncommon experiences have now become normalized (Goodwin & O'Connor, 2005). te Riele (2004) explains that breaks in pathways or transitions can sometimes be advantageous for gaining new or different experiences. Contrary to the life course theory perspectives, linearity in youth transitions should not be assumed, as a variety of transitions can highlight role negotiation within the context of risks and interlocking oppressions experienced by youth (Devadason, 2007; te Riele, 2004). Development is an ongoing, cumulative process, where early functioning does not always predict later outcomes (Schulenberg & Zarrett in Arnett & Tanner, 2006), as outlined in life course theory. Therefore, it seems crucial to consider the diversity of different pathways and markers of success. Non-linear transitions can still lead to experiences of success and therefore it should not be automatically assumed that negative outcomes will occur if someone deviates from the linear life course path.

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Importantly, the insights from intersectional, individualization and youth transition literature work together to call attention to the changing contexts young people find themselves living in, marked by more challenges, choices, and opportunities. Therefore, youth now experience a time where fluidity, exploration, and instability are accepted and encouraged. Periods of transitioning and accomplishing success have become complex, non-linear, and nuanced based on the circumstances available to an individual. However, even in the uncertain times youth are left to navigate, young people who experience risk, challenges, exploration, accomplishments and struggles, or changes to their identities are still able to achieve positive outcomes, contrary to the beliefs of life course theory (te Riele, 2004).

With this in mind, the aforementioned theoretical critique challenges linear life course perspectives of success and transitions. Intersectionality, individualization, and youth transition literature build a holistic lens to view success as less centered around social roles and instead focuses on the complex, subjective experiences of young people. Transitions should not be immediately considered failed or consequential if an individual does not meet the age expectations as prescribed in life course theory. The diversity, agency, choice, and fluidity embedded in non-linear transitions and development should be celebrated and recognized in discussing markers of development and success. The recognition of non-linear, individualized transitions provides the foundation for unique understandings of nuanced, subjective developmental markers and success experienced in the complex lives of at-risk youth, challenging prescribed societal perspectives of these topics.

Intersectionality, individualization, and youth transition literatures all draw attention to the complex, diverse nature of transitions and success across the life course, especially when considering those involving youth. Instead of focusing on rigid, linear pathways through the life

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course and problematizing deviations from ‘normal’ life trajectories, these literatures recognize and embrace the complex experiences of individuals based on their social categories and changing social contexts. The literature on intersectionality, individualization, and youth transitions can thus be used to highlight nuanced, subjective transitions and markers of success, rather than focusing solely on social roles as markers.

This is not to say that the social roles and markers of development outlined in life course theory are not at all important. Instead, these markers could be considered alongside individual markers of development and success for youth. Equal or more weight and significance could be given to individual, diverse, non-linear markers of success that take into consideration the complexity of people’s identities and experiences. Thus, based on the complex, intersecting social identities assumed by individuals, the agency and choice explained in individualization research and the diversity and fluidity described in youth transitions, markers of success need to be reconsidered for at-risk youth, taking into consideration the elements of the aforementioned bodies of literature. Challenging current conceptualizations of success in general and those specific to at-risk youth would provide a more realistic, nuanced, context-specific view of success, while considering the importance of different viewpoints and opinions on this concept.

Recap of the theoretical framework. Based on the above review of relevant scholarly literature, the theoretical framework guiding this study has been drawn from the literatures regarding life course theory, intersectionality, individualization, and youth transitions. As discussed, the risks accumulated by youth may leave them exposed to negative outcomes, antisocial behaviour, and/or criminality, rendering it necessary for youth to develop and exercise resilience. Life course theory suggests that there are markers of development that individuals should achieve as they pass through linear developmental stages and factors that impact whether

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an individual will achieve success along the life trajectory. In accordance with life course theory, the level of risk (high or low) accumulated by an individual will not only impact an individual's ability to achieve success, but also his or her levels of success. Current conceptualizations of success for at-risk youth also put limits on ideas and experiences of success, as this literature mainly focuses on middle-class, well-accepted values and ideals of success or on academic success. Arguably, in many cases, youth who experience risk would be deemed failures or unable to attain success and largely left out of the conversation of success.

However, insights drawn from intersectionality, individualization, and youth transition literature alert us to why scholars should consider non-traditional, alternative ideas of success in combination with the above traditional ideas of success. Specifically, through the consideration of social identities and structures that exist in society, context, agency, and non-linear transitions, it becomes evident that the linear life course model of success warrants interrogation. Individuals may take different paths to reach their own ideas of success, making these markers of success individualized, nuanced, and complex, especially for at-risk youth.

A parallel can be drawn here. Given that the term 'youth' is highly contested in some literature (i.e., that it is based on social constructions shaped by human experiences, culture, and social structures, rather than biological, linear progressions and processes), the conceptualization of success should be too – especially for this population of youth. Thus, challenging the linear life course model and well-accepted middle-class standards that shape the current narrative of success for at-risk youth seems necessary to bring to light the complexity of this concept, much like the concept of 'youth'. Thinking of success in this manner and through more than just traditional, middle-class perspectives allows criminologists to embrace and consider the fluidity, complexity, and subjectivity of this concept.

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In sum, the theoretical framework used in this dissertation considers two discussions of success: one that follows a traditional, linear life course perspective that focuses on middle-class ideas, and another illuminates a non-traditional, non-linear pathway centered around taking into consideration insights from intersectionality, individualization, and youth transition literature. These pathways to and ideas of success need not be separate, and may need to be considered together. However, I would argue that the traditional life course perspective of success alone is limiting, marginalizing, and neglects an in-depth consideration of context, social identities, social inequalities, agency, and the changing nature of youth transitions. Thus, the theoretical framework discussed above interrogates life course perspectives and current notions of success and brings to light the need to rethink how we frame the discussions of success for at-risk youth.

Current Inquiry

This research attempts to challenge life course and current perspectives of success for at-risk youth by interviewing these youth about their ideas and experiences of success. As evidenced in the literature review, there has been little research on the actual ideas and experiences of successes for at-risk youth, as most of the literature to date has focused on predictors, quantitative measures, or life course, middle-class perspectives of success. Ultimately, this research attempts to understand how youth discuss and characterize success and their personal experiences of success in order to question whether the current criminological conceptualizations and prescriptions of success are limiting and narrow in scope. The present phenomenological study investigates the need for a more diverse theoretical framework for explaining success and the complexity of this concept. Additionally, this study examines the role of SNAP Boys – Youth Leadership Services in providing at-risk youth with the support and

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opportunities necessary to overcome risk associated with criminogenic or antisocial lifestyles and achieve their ideas of success (SB-YLS is explained in detail in Chapter 3: Methodology).

As will be discussed in the next chapter, this study attempts to address two overarching research questions in exploring perceptions and experiences of success for at-risk youth: 1) How do at-risk youth construct and characterize their own success?; and 2) To what degree do at-risk youth believe their engagement in SNAP Boys – Youth Leadership Services contributes to their success? Of primary importance is obtaining rich data on how youth conceptualize and think about success and their experiences of success so that criminologists can begin reconsidering current views of success and practitioners can be better equipped to help youth achieve success. The two research questions also provide insight into whether youth experience and discuss a mix of traditional and non-traditional ideas of success or rather follow only either traditional or non-traditional ways of thinking about success. Furthermore, the second research question allows for an understanding of whether a community-based program provides a supportive environment for youth to realize and build on their achievements and successes. Lastly, this research attempts to shed light on and draw connection between having youth explore and discuss their successes in a meaningful way and increasing their well-being through doing so.

In answering these questions, this research will attempt to: a) determine whether at-risk youth define success beyond life course perspectives; b) broaden the understanding of success in criminological literature; c) explore self-reported success; d) understand the role of community-based programs in assisting youth in achieving success; and e) continue to push the strengths-based narrative and conversation around at-risk youth forward with the inclusion of their ideas and experiences of success.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This section focuses on the methods used to carry out this research and the subsequent analysis of data. First, the location, context, and community-based partnership built in this study are outlined. The bulk of this chapter describes the data collection process and elaborates on the mixed-method approach used in this study. The general themes that made up the interview schedule are presented, along with how success maps were used. Ethical considerations and benefits of this research and methodology are discussed. Last, thematic coding used in the analysis of this data is explained.

Data Collection - Location and Context

This research was developed and conducted in partnership with Dr. Leena Augimeri, Director of Scientific and Program Development at the Child Development Institute (CDI). The participants of this study were youth involved in programming at CDI, specifically SNAP Boys – Youth Leadership Services (SB-YLS). All of the components of this study have been developed under the supervision of my doctoral supervisory committee and have been discussed with a group of individuals with stakes in SNAP Boys – Youth Leadership Services, including Dr. Leena Augimeri, the Research and Evaluation Manager, the former SNAP Boys Early Intervention Manager, and the SNAP Youth Leadership Services Coordinator.

CDI is a highly recognized mental health organization for children aged 0-18 in the Greater Toronto Area, Ontario. As part of their Early Intervention Services, CDI uses SNAP (Stop Now and Plan), an evidence-based, gender-specific behaviour model to teach children with serious behavioural problems emotion regulation, self-control, and problem-solving skills (Augimeri, Farrington, Koegl, & Day, 2007; Augimeri et al., 2014; Augimeri, Walsh, Donato, Blackman, & Piquero, 2018; Burke & Loeber 2015, 2016). Ultimately, SNAP seeks to help

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children stay in school and out of trouble (Augimeri, Walsh, Levene, Sewell, & Rajca, 2014). Specific to this research, SNAP Boys – Youth Leadership Services (SB-YLS) provides support for youth aged 12-18 who have completed the core SNAP program but continue to be at- or high-risk and in need of support during the transition from latency age to adolescence (SNAP Boys – Youth Leadership Services Guide, in preparation). This program is part of a continued care model. SB-YLS offers youth and their families the following: individual counselling and mentoring, leadership clubs and programs, employment opportunities, family counselling, parent/caregiver support and workshops, school advocacy and teacher support, crisis intervention, victim restitution, and homework club and academic tutoring (SNAP Boys – Youth Leadership Services Guide, in preparation).

Of particular importance to this study are the SB-YLS club group nights facilitated by the SNAP Youth Leadership Services Coordinator. These group nights seek to address challenges that youth experience at home, in school, and/or in the community (SNAP Boys – Youth Leadership Services Guide, in preparation) and include components of the evidence-based core SNAP programming. This group provides youth with positive and safe environments to explore various youth-related issues. The group nights run twice a week during the school year, for approximately two and a half hours each night. A typical club night begins with youth and staff playing sports, games, or engaging in an art-based activity. The youth and the staff prepare and eat a family-style meal together. As this group is largely youth-lead, the time at the dinner table is used to discuss and explore various issues that the youth may currently be facing or other current events. Following the family-style dinner, the youth and staff stay gathered at the table and engage in a mindfulness activity with their dessert for the youth to relax, let go of stressors that occurred during their day, and to feel calm before leaving the group for the night (SNAP

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Boys – Youth Leadership Services Guide, in preparation). Therefore, the group is semi-structured, but very organic in nature. Former SB-YLS youth also co-facilitate the group (acting as peer mentors) and provide further positive peer role modelling for the youth.

Another component of SB-YLS worth noting is the summer Leaders in Training program. As part of SB-YLS, youth engage in the employment continuum, where they can volunteer and work toward gaining employment in several different SNAP programs (SNAP Boys – Youth Leadership Services Guide, in preparation). As part of the employment continuum, youth progress through various positions, including Leaders in Training (LITs), counsellors, peer mentors, and co-facilitators of SB-YLS (SNAP Boys – Youth Leadership Services Guide, in preparation). Not only are these youth gaining employment skills, but they also act as role models and leaders and are able to relate to younger SNAP kids through sharing their similar experiences from being a part of this programming. Thus, youth engaging in SB-YLS are provided with opportunity for civic engagement throughout the year and summer while attending club nights and receiving other support.

I have been volunteering with SB-YLS since October 2016. I have been involved in the SB-YLS club nights and the summer Leaders in Training program. In doing so, I have been able to engage in some of the core facets of the program, learn about the dynamics of the program, and build relations and rapport with the staff and youth involved in this program. However, youth were made aware and understand that I am not employed at CDI. This enabled me to be positioned as someone they could trust, but also as an external volunteer. Youth were ensured that participation in this study would not impact their participation in SB-YLS or any programming at CDI. My position as a trusted external researcher allowed youth to be open and vulnerable with me during the interview process. The intimate nature of qualitative research does

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not warrant the researcher to be a complete outsider, and because of the role of the researcher, they are unable to be true insiders either (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). Under these circumstances, it becomes almost natural for a qualitative researcher to occupy an insider-outsider role, especially within an interview setting.

Data Collection – Sample and Procedure

Participants. This dissertation included 26 male youth aged between 12-20 who engage in SB-YLS or previously engaged in SB-YLS when the study started. The inclusion of youth who were not currently attending the program at the time of data collection allowed me to capture the stories and perspectives of youth who have: a) been in the program for a number of years but have recently gained employment (which prevents them from coming to group nights), b) decided to stop coming to group nights but are still involved in other components of the program (i.e., summer Leaders in Training program, counselling), and/or c) decided to stop coming to the program for personal reasons. Since the leadership club component of SB-YLS is a drop-in group night, some youth may stop coming to that particular component of SB-YLS for a period of time, but may come back to the group at some point in their future.

Further, extending the age range to 20 years of age allowed me to interview youth who have aged out of the program, but were between 12 and 18 when I started the study and are now working at CDI as peer mentors or group facilitators. Due to the nature of this study and participants involved, this is a purposive sample because of the personal qualities of the participants and their ability to add rich information to the study (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). Etikan et al. (2016) explain that purposive sampling focuses on saturation of a topic, rather than generalizability. Simply put, participants in this study were chosen because they are considered at-risk and were engaged (to varying capacities) in a community-based leadership

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program. The partnership with CDI and Dr. Leena Augimeri provided me with access to this population of youth. This sample is based on cases that look to explain part of a larger phenomenon, rather than representative of a population (Luker, 2008).

In order to recruit participants, I gave a brief recruiting pitch to youth about the study during group nights or during the summer LIT program (see Appendix A for the recruiting pitch). The interview process and ethical considerations were explained to the youth so that they understood the parameters of questions and voluntary, confidential participation. The SYLS coordinator also used the pitch to reach out to youth who did not currently attend group nights to arrange interviews. Where accessible, I was able to speak to youth on the phone (through facilitation from the SYLS coordinator) to ask them if they wanted to be interviewed. All youth were told that they would receive a \$15.00 gift card to McDonald's or Tim Hortons to show appreciation for their participation.

The sample size was concluded based on the number of youth attending the program at the time of data collection and reaching data saturation. Since SB-YLS is mainly drop-in based and participation is voluntary, the number of youth able to participate in this study was dependent on the amount of youth in the program during the time of data collection. As mentioned, the SYLS coordinator was able to contact some youth who were not actively present in the group nights or summer component; however, most youth who participated in this study were those who currently engage in SB-YLS.

Another factor contributing to the sample size was data saturation. There is much variability in sample sizes of qualitative research (Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, & Fontenot, 2013; Saunders et al., 2017; Weller et al., 2018). In grounded theory research, Glaser and Strauss (1967) explain data saturation as a point where no new or additional data is being drawn from

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conducting research with more participants, as well as seeing similar instances of a theme over and over again. Reaching data saturation has been found to be a credible way of determining sample sizes in qualitative research (Marshall et al., 2013; Saunders et al., 2017). After examining a number of qualitative studies, Marshall and colleagues (2013) found that for studies using grounded theory, data saturation was reached by between 20 and 30 interviews and studies with over 30 interviews did not yield significantly more impact on data saturation. In single case studies (similar to the nature of this study), data saturation was reached with 15 to 30 cases (Marshall et al., 2013). Similarly, Mason's (2010) research focusing solely on sample sizes in qualitative doctoral research studies concluded that the most common sample sizes for research involving qualitative interviews were 20 to 30 interviews.

Therefore, following definitions and uses of saturation, once themes had been adequately represented in the data, and new insights were no longer being gained or adding significant value to the data (Saunders et al., 2017), data saturation was presumed to be reached. Since this study is interested in exploring ideas and nuances in responses, rather than looking for quantity of responses, salience in saturation was also taken into consideration. Therefore, both data saturation and the number of youth in SB-YLS were factors considered in ending data collection.

Interview schedule. The interview schedule included mixed-methods questions that aid in answering the overarching questions. In general, interview questions address the broad areas of success, risk and challenges, and the role of SB-YLS in achieving success (see Appendix B for the interview schedule). In using a mixed-methods design, a more complete understanding can be gathered from the interview data. Arguably, mixed-methods designs provide a stronger understanding of the research questions compared to the use of solely quantitative or qualitative methods, hopefully minimizing the limitations of each type of method (Creswell, 2003).

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Quantitative questions were used to obtain context and background information on the youth being studied, while qualitative interview questions and methods were used to obtain more detailed accounts of perceptions and experiences from the participants (Creswell, 2003).

The mixed-methods interviews were predominantly exploratory and qualitative in nature, as qualitative methods allow for discovery of a topic and a context-specific, subjective, nuanced understanding of the people involved in that study (Creswell, 2003; Luker, 2008; Mason, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The quantitative questions attempted to obtain self-reported risk and challenges. The use of predominantly qualitative questions and methods for topics related to success sought to fill a current gap in criminological literature. With the exception of quantitative questions for the markers of success, all questions pertaining to success were open-ended, qualitative questions and methods. This study also includes the use of a visual method: the success map.

The following details the mixed-method approach to the in-depth interviews and some of the key concepts and themes that were discussed with the youth. Data were collected between March 2019 and August 2019. Most interviews lasted between 40 minutes and two hours. Within this time frame, the time dedicated to the success map varied between two minutes and 56 minutes. The one-on-one interviews were conducted in a private room at CDI during group nights or the summer LIT program so that the SYLS coordinator was on-site in case a youth became upset or uncomfortable during the interview. I typed the youth's answers into a laptop-based instrument. As I sat next to each youth, they were able to watch as I typed their answers into the laptop. This allowed youth to see that I was typing in their responses correctly, added visual stimulation to the interview, and enabled youth to follow along with the interview

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schedule as the interview proceeded. As will become apparent in Chapter 4: Results, I was able to capture detailed answers from youth through the laptop-based interview schedule.

The interview schedule began with questions about demographic characteristics. Demographic questions included age, race/ethnicity, gender and sexual identities, and start dates in SNAP programs. After this, the interview turned to questions related to success. The section on success started with open ended questions about how youth discussed and defined success in general. Youth were asked to describe different people who they considered as successes and why. Ideas about factors that influence success were gathered from youth during this part of the interview. Youth were then asked a series of quantitative questions (based on a five-point Likert scale) to report how much they agree or disagree with each statement being a good marker of success for individuals their age. These markers of success included ideas taken from life course theory and middle-class standards of success and included markers that would be more individualized and intrinsic.

After general ideas of success were asked, youth were asked several questions about their personal successes. Youth were asked what they are proud of, what their strengths are, what they can do better than other people, and what kind of skills or behaviours they have that they are happy or thankful for. Youth were then asked what kind of tools or skills would help them achieve success and whether or not their ideas about success have changed as they have grown up. These questions are open-ended and semi-structured allowing youth to provide as much or as little information as they want about each question. It was my hope that the nature of these questions would elicit youth perspectives on the topic of success and encourage youth to shape their answers in ways of their choosing. Youth were given the opportunity at the end of these questions to voice any other opinions or ideas about success or their own experiences of success.

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The next set of questions sought to explore various risk domains from the aforementioned literatures and studies. The categories of these questions pertain to school, jobs and volunteer work, peers, criminal justice contact, substance use, family, as well as community factors². These questions were quantitative, based on four- or five-point Likert scales (more explanation below). Although not the main focus of this study, it was important to collect data on risks and challenges to provide background and context to these youth and ideas of success. Understanding different challenges and risks experienced by these youth could also provide valuable insight into why they define and conceptualize success in a particular way. Since risk factors and domains have been well-established and extensively studied in previous research endeavours, this part of the study was based on risks that were identified in previous literature. However, youth were given the space to elaborate on their answers if desired.

After the risk questions, youth were asked to engage in an activity to express their thoughts in a visual way, through the use of a success map. Previous literature on visual methods has outlined the effectiveness of these tools for research with youth to allow them to be collaborators through the research process (Allan & Tinkler, 2015). Further, the use of visuals allows for new perspectives and knowledge to be gathered in a rich, unique, contextualized way (Allan & Tinkler, 2015; Edmonson et al., 2018; Lyons, Goodwin, McCreanor, & Griffen, 2015; Rafter, 2014; Ravn & Duff, 2015). When used with traditional qualitative methods (i.e., in-depth interviews), a more detailed, nuanced analysis of data can take place, as these methods work in a

² In initial drafts of the interview schedule, trauma related questions were included as previously included in other studies involving risk and vulnerabilities (see Cesaroni & Peterson-Badali, 2016). However, these questions have been removed as the host organization (CDI) thought that these questions could cause harm to the youth's psychological and emotional well-being during the interview. Given that this study is mainly interested in ideas and experiences of success, I removed these questions to mitigate risk to the youth during and after the interview.

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complimentary way (Sopcak et al., 2015; Stevenson et al., 2019; Triandafilidis, Ussher, Perz, & Huppertz, 2018).

Given the advantages of visual methods and the need for continued and increased use of visual and participant-led methods in criminological research (see Cambre, 2019; Rafter, 2014; Sopcak et al., 2015), the success maps were also used to mitigate the power imbalance within the interview setting. Shifting the power to youth during this process could increase their status within the interview setting and allow them creative freedom over this exercise to express themselves in a different way. Ultimately, the data gathered in the success maps were to be complimentary to interview data. Mapping exercises used in previous literature have seemed to be effective for eliciting rich data with young people (e.g., Martson, 2019; Ravn & Duff, 2015). However, to my knowledge, there have not been mapping exercises used to gain more knowledge about youth's perceptions of their own experiences of success.

Therefore, the youth were asked to map out their successes on a piece of chart paper and were given the opportunity to draw, use stickers, or write about certain ideas, behaviours, experiences, or actions that they would consider as personal successes. This activity provided youth the freedom to conceptualize the activity however they choose, which also added to the subjectivity included in experiences of success. In some cases, youth dictated their ideas to me (i.e., design, content) and I wrote their success maps for them. For example, one youth is dyslexic and found it difficult to continue writing, so I finished the writing as he dictated to me. Youth were asked to include anything that they considered as personal successes on their map. Youth were told:

In this part of the interview, we are going to do an activity together. You can share as little or as much as you want, but the more the better! I'm going to ask you to draw or

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map out your successes (based on your ideas we just discussed or anything else you can think of that might make you feel successful). You can talk about any ideas, behaviours, experiences, or actions that you consider personal successes. Anything you decide is a success of yours can be drawn or written onto your success map.

Mapping out their successes was an interactive component in the interview and hopefully made the interview process more enjoyable for the youth. This activity helped characterize and construct markers of success from the perspectives of at-risk youth, providing much-needed youth voice on this topic through a different form of data collection.

After the youth mapped out their successes, the last set of questions sought to explore program components and to address the role of SB-YLS in relation to success. These questions were used to determine whether or not SB-YLS has helped them achieve their ideas and experiences of success. This section involved questions about the environment, social connections, benefits and challenges related to attending SB-YLS, the role of mentors, and whether the program has helped youth achieve their ideas of success.

To conclude the interview, I revisited the success map drawn by the youth and engaged in a reflection with the youth. In hopes of ending the interview on a positive note, I asked the youth to describe what he would say about a guy who has achieved all of these successes, and how it makes him feel thinking and recognizing all of his successes. Again, leaving these questions open-ended enabled the youth to give their own opinion and reflective thoughts on their experiences of success, and hopefully engage in self-validation. The idea of ending the interview this way was also to empower these at-risk youth to celebrate their individualized experiences of success despite any challenges they may have faced in their lives because of their social location or experiences.

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Anecdotally, through facial reactions and participant responses it was my belief that youth were able to have a moment of pride during this reflection. Once I asked youth to tell me what they would say about a guy who had achieved all of these successes, they often took a minute to respond. Youth would then present as shocked and happy, coupled with big smiles. Even if only for a short period of time, it is my perception that most youth were able to recognize their self-worth and their successes as important and valuable. Although reflexivity was not explored in-depth in this exercise and study, previous literature has pointed to the potential increase in self-empowerment and the ability of visual methods to draw attention to feelings and sensory-focused representations from participants (Martson, 2019; Sopcak et al., 2015).

The exploration of the themes and topics outlined above were used to answer the overarching research questions guiding this dissertation. In doing so, the use of qualitative methods attempted to highlight the perspectives and voice of youth in the discussion of experiences and markers of success for at-risk youth. As requested by the host agency, the interview schedule was piloted with approximately three of the youth in order to see if the language in the instrument was easily understood by participants. No changes were made to the instrument after these pilot interviews.

Materials. Close-ended questions about markers of success were created based on traditional markers of success discussed in previous literature (e.g., Elder, 1975, 1995; Gregory, 1995; Iselin et al., 2012; Mercer et al., 2016; Wang & Eccles, 2011) Sampson & Laub, 1992) and non-traditional ideas of success drawn out of the insights from the proposed alternative theoretical framework. All of these questions were posed to youth by stating, “how much do you agree with the following being a marker of success for people around your age?”. Traditional markers of success included questions pertaining to living, school, education, and staying out of

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trouble (e.g., living by yourself, getting good grades in school, finishing high school, have a job, staying out of trouble, have a lot of money). Non-traditional, alternative markers of success were measured through questions pertaining to self-worth and relationships (e.g., being good at sports, having supportive relationships, feeling good about yourself/being happy with who you are, being able to take care of yourself). These questions were based on a Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 5 (*strongly disagree*).

To explore risks and challenges, quantitative questions in the interview schedule were created based on risk factors previously identified in risk literature (e.g., Assink et al., 2015; Farrington, 2005; Farrington et al., 2016; Garmezy, 1987; Felitti et al., 1998; Loeber & Farrington, 2000; Rutter, 1983). These measures included items related to education, substance use, peer related factors, employment and volunteer work, extra-curricular activities, contact with the criminal justice system, and family related factors. Responses were scaled, and where necessary, follow up questions were left open-ended. Appendix B. Interview Schedule details full questions, responses, and scales for each area of risk. Examples of questions, measures, and responses are provided below.

Education related measures included questions to probe for academic success, engagement, and experience. For example, “have you ever been suspended or expelled from school?”. Responses ranged from 1 (*never*) to 4 (*5 or more times*). Questions pertaining to substance use were used to probe for use and frequency of use (e.g., “have you had an alcoholic drink in the past month?” Responses ranged from 1 (*never*) to 4 (*almost every day or every day*). In terms of measuring peer related risks, items assessed strength of relationships and peer delinquency. For example, one question asked, "do you ever get into any trouble with your friends - at home, school, or in the community?”. Responses ranged from 1 (*never*) to 4 (*always*).

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Contact with the criminal justice system was measured through prior contact with police (for issues with youth or issues external to youth – family, school), arrests, and court appearances. For example, “have you ever had police contact for your own misbehaviour?”. Responses ranged from 1 (*never*) to 4 (four or more times). Family related risk factors were asked to assess family dynamic, relationship with parents/guardian, and social-economic status. These questions were prefaced by the youth telling me who raises them most of the time, and all questions were asked in terms of support from that person. For instance, youth were asked “how often do they praise you for things you do (tell you you’re doing a good job)?”. Responses for this item ranged from 1 (*almost always*) to 4 (*never*). Since items were created in accordance to previously identified risks, pilot testing was not completed on the measures. The risks and challenges faced by youth have already been well established, so these measures were used in this study to provide background on the youth through the use of descriptive statistics. No further statistical analysis was done on the quantitative measures of risk and challenges. Throughout the interview process, ethical considerations were upheld.

Ethical considerations. Consent and assent were obtained before the interviews started (see Appendix C for the participant consent form for youth aged 16 and over). For those under the age of 16, parental or guardian consent was obtained for each participant (see Appendix D for the participant assent form for youth under 16; see Appendix E for the consent letter for the parent/guardian). The consent form was read allowed to youth at the beginning of the interview to ensure that the youth did not feel forced and were voluntarily choosing to participate. The interviewee also received an information letter that explained the details and purpose of the study and included the researcher’s contact information (see Appendix F for the information for the participant).

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As the youth in this study were young and considered vulnerable, there were a number of ethical considerations to address. Participants were not anonymous to the research, but their responses were kept confidential. Confidentiality was maintained through: a) assigning a number to each interview instead of recording the participant's name; b) not recording any identifying information during the interview; c) blacking out identifying information on the success maps; and d) keeping interview data on a password protected computer and on an encrypted USB stick in which only I have access. Success maps were stored in a locked filing cabinet.

In order to reduce harm caused to the youth during the interview, youth were constantly reminded that they do not have to answer any question that they do not want to and were able to choose to end the interview at any point. Ensuring that the youth feels like they are in control of the interview is not only important for reducing harm, but also decreasing the power imbalance that may arise in an interview setting. Youth were reminded that they are the experts on themselves and should feel safe, comfortable, and free to discuss the topics considered and to avoid any question they do not want to discuss. The semi-structured nature of the interview schedule allowed the youth to give as much or as little information as they desire. All of the youth completed all of the components of the interview.

Youth were given a \$15.00 gift card for their participation in the study and were told they would receive the gift card regardless if they finished the interview or not. Youth engaging in SB-YLS understand that they will be involved in research to further the program and body of knowledge around youth. They were also used to receiving honorariums for participating in other research conducted at CDI. Therefore, although this is an incentive for participation, the benefits of giving youth a gift card for participating in my study outweighed the risks. It was my belief

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(shared with the host agency) that it was important and meaningful to give back to the youth for their participation in my study.

As mentioned, one-on-one interviews were conducted on-site at CDI so that the SYLS coordinator or group facilitator was available to meet with youth who felt uneasy, upset, or disturbed during or after the interview. The SYLS coordinator was the point of contact for interviews as he works closely with the youth and their families and thus had already established a trusting relationship with the youth. Therefore, although I conducted a debrief with youth after the interview finished, the SYLS coordinator was available for further debriefing and discussion, if necessary. None of the youth needed to meet with staff after our interview.

In mitigating the assumed power imbalance between the youth and myself, ensuring anonymity and confidentiality, and reducing potential harm to participants, the benefits of this study outweighed the potential risk evoked through the interview process. As the youth who participate in SB-YLS regularly talk about mental health concerns, risks, and protective factors (either in group settings or during counselling or mentoring), these youth did not experience any heightened risk or vulnerability as a result of participating in these interviews. The SNAP team at CDI administers and collects risk measures annually or semi-annually with the youth, which presumably allows youth to be familiar with self-report measures. Not only did this study encourage youth to conceptualize and share experiences of success, youth also provided valuable, rich insight into the effectiveness of SB-YLS. Youth perspective on the program is beneficial for the youth themselves and for future youth interested in engaging in SB-YLS. Arguably most important, the series of questions regarding success and mapping out their successes sought to bring benefits to each youth, potentially empowering the youth, helping them

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recognize their strengths and achievements, and may act as a positive experience for increasing their self-esteem.

The benefits of this study include, but are not limited to: a) understanding and operationalizing success, markers of success, and experiences of success from the perspectives of at-risk youth; b) assessing the effectiveness of SB-YLS at helping at-risk youth achieve success; c) understanding non-linear pathways from the perspectives of at-risk youth and how these youth navigate their own lives to reach success; d) exploring the use of a visual, mapping exercise; and e) gaining insight into a non-traditional, subjective framework for understanding success. Most significantly, this research is important for giving voice to at-risk youth to discuss what success means to them, further celebrating the achievements of these youth, despite the risks, adversity, and negative outcomes they have previously or currently experience.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using components of both deductive and inductive approaches. Themes were drawn from codes that arose from the data. However, as this research followed a theoretical framework, results are ultimately connected back to (in support or against) the main components of the aforementioned theoretical framework. Four overarching sections were developed: demographics and background, risks and challenges, success (including both traditional and non-traditional ideas and experiences of success), and the role of SB-YLS in achieving success.

The quantitative data were analyzed using a statistical analysis software, SPSS. The quantitative data were inputted into a new datasheet and descriptive statistics were run on all quantitative questions (i.e., demographics, risks and challenges, and markers of success). For quantitative questions pertaining to markers of success, all agree responses (i.e., agree and

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strongly agree) were grouped. Similarly, all disagree responses were grouped (i.e., disagree and strongly disagree). Responses were grouped this way in order to focus on agreement, rather than strength of agreement. No further statistical analysis was conducted on the quantitative responses as this data were only to provide background on the youth and to identify agreement with markers of success noted in previous literature.

As the risk-based questions were not the main focus of my dissertation, I did not report all of the responses from various questions of risks. The risks and challenges that were reported were chosen if they were discussed in previous literature, pose significant challenges to the youth, or if they could impact ‘normative’ success. For example, although opinions about teacher fairness were gathered from youth, these responses were not included in the findings below. Further, analysis of the quantitative data focused less on the quantity of or variance within risks, and instead sought to highlight the fact that these youth *do* experience risks and challenges. Some of the descriptive statistics are highlighted in table format in the results section for a more in-depth picture of responses. Explanations of responses are offered and connected to literature where possible. This process followed a deductive approach.

The analysis of qualitative data used an inductive approach, where themes were created from the meaning and interpretation of the data (Creswell, 2003). An inductive approach was used to look for broad patterns and themes that arose from the data. Emergent themes were analyzed using thematic coding structure outlined in Nowell, Norris, White, and Moules (2017). First, the interview transcripts and success maps were reviewed several times to familiarize myself with the data. During this process, I made notes on initial ideas for themes and codes. Once I was familiar with the data, qualitative responses within the interview transcripts were first coded by hand, using different colour markers to code by subtheme. Each code was given a label

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and was represented by a different colour. All of the qualitative responses were coded. Codes were created in terms of relevance to the overarching research topic, rather than only focusing on responses that were commonly discussed by youth (in order to quantify responses) (see Nowell et al., 2017). Even though all of the data were coded, data were regarded as important or of good quality if it answered part of the research questions or created a narrative around the topic of success. For example, phrases or statements considered important or of good quality also provided some sort of insight into the youth's perception of success as a concept or as an experience of a personal success. Additionally, responses and phrases regarding SB-YLS were considered important if they provided insight into the youth's perception of the program or whether it has contributed to their successes. Individual statements or phrases were coded into more than one theme, as relevant and necessary.

Following this initial round of coding, interview transcripts were uploaded into a qualitative analysis software, NVivo. The transcripts were re-coded in NVivo following the same process outlined above. Once all of the qualitative data were coded in NVivo, I compared the coding done by hand to the coding done within NVivo. Data that was not relevant to the overarching research questions was not further analyzed. An audit trail of the coding process was documented.

Success maps were coded in a similar way and used to support data drawn from the interview questions. Photos were taken of each success map for coding in order to preserve the original copy. Although the success maps elicited different information within a specific interview, the themes across success maps were generally the same as those drawn from the interviews. Thus, the same codes drawn from interviews were used to code success maps. Star stickers were used by youth on the success maps to highlight successes. Initially, this technique

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was used to identify the quantity of successes. However, rather than quantifying the number of successes experienced by youth, the analysis focused on expressions of ideas and experiences of success.

It is interesting to mention here that the success map exercise was useful in eliciting different and additional information from youth. Although similar themes across youth arose in the success maps, most youth discussed additional successes (to interview data) in their success maps. Of particular importance, the success maps gave youth the opportunity to creatively express their ideas of success. Although some maps were difficult to follow at times (commonly reported in the previous literature with this type of exercise – see Martson, 2019), this activity allowed youth the freedom to conceptualize how they think about success visually, adding to the richness of data. Thus, the data from the success maps were regarded as an additional narrative to the interview data, but combined in the results and analysis for added richness (see Ravn & Duff, 2015).

The coded statements, phrases, and illustrations were grouped together to reflect patterns in the data that represented part of the theoretical framework and topics under study (i.e., success and SB-YLS). For example, the codes used to categorize the data on success were grouped into themes that represented ideas of success as a concept and personal experiences of success (e.g., emotion regulation). In regard to the data about SB-YLS, data were coded to reflect various characteristics of SB-YLS and the connection between the youth's success and SB-YLS. The main themes were general ideas of success, personal experiences of success, SB-YLS, and reflections from success maps. Themes arose naturally through the analysis of the data and the sections of the interview questions.

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After this initial thematic grouping, emergent patterns and themes from the data about success were re-organized to follow the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 2: Literature Review. Thus, final themes pertaining to success included traditional measures of success (including ideas of success as a concept and subjective experiences of success) and non-traditional measures of success (including ideas of success as a concept and subjective experiences of success). The themes and data were re-organized this way so that the themes were easily compared to current conceptualizations of traditional, life course perspectives of success or non-traditional ideas of success that consider insights from intersectionality, individualization, and youth transition literature. The influences that shape perceptions of success and tools for achieving success were categorized as separate themes. The themes from success maps are reported in the results when discussing the youth's personal experiences of success.

In summary, through the analysis of data and main findings, this dissertation attempts to answer and shed light on the following main research questions: 1) How do at-risk youth construct and characterize their own success?; and 2) To what degree do at-risk youth believe their engagement in SNAP Boys – Youth Leadership Services contributes to their success? The following section details the responses from youth to answer the two overarching research questions. All responses are primarily reported in the aggregate under overarching themes while preserving the subjective perspectives and experiences of success where appropriate and possible.

Chapter 4: Results

The findings from the interviews with at-risk youth are presented under the main sections of demographics, risks and challenges, success (traditional measures of success and non-traditional measures of success), and the role of SB-YLS in achieving success. Responses are drawn from both interview data and the success maps, where applicable. Each section begins with a brief reminder of the theoretical framework to situate the findings in criminological literature (an in-depth discussion of findings is reserved for Chapter 5: Discussion).

As outlined in the literature review, the theoretical framework presented in this dissertation challenges the criminological literature that focuses on traditional, life course perspectives of success. Life course perspectives suggest that there is one, linear path for individuals to take to reach traditional, middle-class markers of development (i.e., finishing school, getting a job, owning a house) (see Elder, 1975). It is argued that if an individual experiences risks and challenges and deviates from this linear pathway, he or she will experience consequences and negative outcomes instead of success (Elder, 1994, 1995). This linear pathway to success, embedded with middle-class standards, is problematic for marginalized groups. Middle-class, traditional measures of success are problematic for at-risk youth because they may not be attainable by or not valued by these youth. However, when insights from intersectionality, individualization, and youth transition literature are considered together, an alternative, non-traditional framework for understanding and conceptualizing success can be studied. The three aforementioned perspectives challenge typical life course conceptualizations of success and allow for the acceptance of subjective, individualized ideas of success, which consider identities, social locations, agency, and changing social contexts for youth (Bell, 2013; Burgess-Proctor, 2006; Côté, 2000; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Furlong & Cartmel, 2007; Furlong, Woodman, & Wyn

2011; te Riele, 2004; Wyn & Woodman, 2006). Thinking of success through this framework enables us to consider success as a fluid, context-specific concept, layered with subjective experiences. The following results are representative of the group of at-risk youth interviewed in this study. The demographics of the young people interviewed are presented in the following section.

Demographics and Background

A total of 26 youth were interviewed for this study. The average age of the youth in this study was 15 years old and the median was 14.5 years old. All of the youth identified as straight (96.2%, n = 25), except for one youth who identified as bisexual. All of the youth said their gender identity was male. Most youth identified as Black (42.3%, n = 11), followed by White (26.9%, n = 7), Hispanic-Latino (15.4%, n = 4), mixed background (11.5%, n = 3), and Native-Canadian (3.8%, n = 1). Participation in SB-YLS varied in length, with some youth being in their first year, and some in their 8th year of participation in SB-YLS in some capacity (see Appendix G, *Table 7.1. Descriptive statistics for demographics*)³. The following section includes themes and responses from youth pertaining to risks and challenges, traditional and non-traditional measures and experiences of success, and the role of SB-YLS in helping youth achieve their perceptions of success.

³ During the time of data collection (March 2019-August 2019), there were a total of 29 youth participating in SB-YLS. The total number of youth engaging in SB-YLS includes youth participating in the group nights or LIT program and peer mentors. As of August 2019, the average age of these clients was 15 and ages ranged from 12-19 years old. In 2017, a follow-up sample was drawn to assess outcomes of SB-YLS that included the self-reported ethnicities of 57 youth serviced in SB-YLS between 2011 and 2016 (Mohamud, Fredericks, Sewell, Gregg, & Webster, 2017). The majority of youth identified as Canadian (20%), Caribbean (24%), European (19%), Mixed background (8%), Asian-Canadian (6%), African (4%), South/West Asian (4%), Aboriginal (2%), Hispanic-Latin American (2%), other (2%), and not reported (9%). Although the data on the ethnicity of previous youth is dated, it can provide insight into the diversity of youth supported in SB-YLS.

Risks and Challenges

The data related to risks and challenges were broken into different subthemes based on challenges that could impact a youth's ability to reach normative ideas of success or previously identified risks from past literature (see Chapter 2: Literature Review). Responses are drawn from the following areas of risks and challenges: difficulties in school, work and volunteer, substance use, peers, criminal justice contact, and family factors. As mentioned, these questions were quantitative and based on four- or five-point Likert scales. Where applicable, possible explanations for risks and challenges are explained.

Difficulties in school. Most of the youth in this study (96.2%, n= 25) reported going to school every day or most of the time. Notably, 69.2% (n = 18) of youth reported being suspended or expelled, with 26.9% (n = 7) of those youth stating they were suspended or expelled five or more times. Youth reported being suspended or expelled for various reasons including, fighting, their behaviour, bad temper, drugs and/or firearm-related reasons. The amount of suspensions faced by these youth is important for a number of reasons that could lead to negative outcomes, such as breaks in learning that could put youth at a disadvantage, being labeled as a youth with poor behaviour, feelings of disconnection from school, damages to peer relationships and/or could impede their growth and success at school (Cameron & Sheppard, 2006; Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010; Haight, Gibson, Kayama, Marshall, & Wilson, 2014).

The majority of youth said that they had moved schools at least once, with some youth (23.1%, n = 6) saying that they had moved schools five or more times in their lifetime. This finding is significant because if youth are constantly moving between schools, they may be unable to build healthy attachments at school, which may cause youth to suffer academically and socially (Felmlee, McMillin, Rodis, & Osgood, 2018). For example, when youth were asked how

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they felt starting a new school, one youth stated, “*I hated it. The first time wasn’t so bad, but the second time I hated it, I didn’t want to be in school at all. That was when they transferred me...*” (Participant 2). Other youth said that they were “*nervous*”, “*anxious*”, and “*flustered*” when starting new schools (related to interacting with new people), or saw switching schools as a personal challenge to see how long they could go before getting in trouble again.

Most youth said that they are not bullied at school, but 38.5% (n = 10) of youth stated they are bullied to various degrees. Nonetheless, most youth (61.5%, n = 16) said that they enjoy school and had positive experiences at school (96.2%, n = 25). Despite the challenges that these youth face, they say that they still go to school regularly, seem to enjoy school, and are doing well in their courses. A possible explanation for this could be linked to the overall goals of SB-YLS of encouraging youth to stay in school, and group discussions and components centered around school support, teacher advocacy, and tutoring. Nonetheless, it is still significant that these youth have also experienced suspensions, bullying, and school transitions (see Appendix G, *Table 7.2. Descriptive statistics for education related factors*).

Work and volunteer experiences. The majority of youth (69.2%, n = 18) said that they have had or currently have a part-time job. All of the youth said that they do volunteer work, primarily at CDI. Higher employment and volunteer rates among these youth could be explained by a component of SB-YLS, the Employment Continuum. Youth start out as Leaders in Training (LIT) and after demonstrating and working towards proving they can be leaders to younger kids, they can obtain employment in other SNAP programs or during CDI’s summer camp.

Substance use. Most of the youth (84.6%, n = 22) reported that they did not drink alcohol in the last year. Similarly, only 3.8% (n = 1) of youth said that they used drugs once or twice a month and only 3.8% (n = 1) of youth reported using drugs every day or almost every

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day. In both cases, youth were referring to marijuana. Appendix G, *Table 7.3. Descriptive statistics for substance use* outlines more findings. Contrary to previous literature (Bernstein et al., 2011; Farrington, Gaffney, & Ttofi, 2017; Felitti et al., 1998), substance use and abuse was not discussed as a risk factor by youth in this study. A possible explanation for this would be that youth are made aware of the risks associated with substance use during engagement in SB-YLS. However, there is a possibility that youth underreported their substance use. This and other possible explanations are discussed further in the discussion chapter.

Peers. All of the youth said that they had at least two close friends. Almost all of the youth (96.2%, n = 25) reported that they could talk to their friends about issues or if they were happy or upset, which is a significant area of support for youth. A minority of youth (30.8%, n = 8) said that they get into trouble at school or in the community with their friends. Even though youth reported low substance use, 34.6% (n = 9) of youth had at least one friend who used drugs and/or alcohol (see Appendix G, *Table 7.4. Descriptive statistics for peer related factors* for more details). Thus, even though youth were able to feel supported by their friends, these friends may present as challenges for those youth who do get into trouble with their friends, or whose friends have been involved with the criminal justice system, reinforcing risk factors identified in previous literature (Ingoldsby & Shaw, 2002; O'Brien et al., 2008; Wasserman et al., 2003).

Criminal justice contact. Youth reported criminal justice contact to varying degrees. For example, 34.6% (n = 9) of youth indicated that they had been involved in crime but not caught for it. Additionally, 42.3% (n = 11) of youth reported that they have been stopped by the cops or talked to by the cops at times when they perceived that they were not doing anything wrong at least once. Approximately 38.5% (n = 10) of youth reported having police contact for their own behaviour at least one time and 19.2% (n = 5) of youth reported being arrested. Appendix G,

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Table 7.5. Descriptive statistics for youth's contact with the criminal justice system provides a breakdown of these statistics. Evidently, the majority of youth reported that they had not been in contact with the police for their behaviour, arrested, or been to court. However, there are still a fair number of youth who claimed they had been in contact with the criminal justice system in some capacity.

Family factors. Most youth reported living with both or one parent (84.6%, $n = 22$). However, 34.6% ($n = 9$) of youth stated that they moved at least once in the last few years, with 11.5% ($n = 3$) of youth moving four or more times. When asked who raised them most of the time, the majority of youth (53.8%, $n = 14$) stated it was their mom, while 19.7% ($n = 5$) of youth stated they were raised by both parents, 19.7% ($n = 5$) said that they were raised by their grandparents, and 7.7% ($n = 2$) stated that they were raised by another relative.

Strikingly, 61.5% ($n = 16$) of youth stated that the Children's Aid Society (CAS) has been involved with their families before. Of those youth, 62.5% ($n = 10$) discussed that they were separated from their parents/caregivers and 90% ($n = 9$) of these youth lived in foster care or a group home, ranging from one month to two years in length of time. Unstable or insufficient family structures could impact a youth's likelihood of experiencing challenges related to their aggression, mental health, and behavioural challenges (Mok et al., 2018; Vanfossen et al., 2010), all of which could impact their ability to achieve 'normative' successes. This instability in family structure can also increase the maladaptive social climate in a neighbourhood, which can also weigh heavily on youth (Vanfossen et al., 2010). The social economic status of a family can also be related to neighbourhood factors and risks for youth. Living in lower income neighbourhoods or deprived neighbourhoods (characterized by frequent moves in and out and disadvantaged social climate) can impact a youth's likelihood of behavioural problems or psychopathology

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(Kalff et al., 2001). Further, youth may be exposed to more risks if living in a group home setting (Chow, Mettrick, Stephan, & Von Waldner, 2014).

However, most youth expressed having supportive relationships from their parents or caregivers. For instance, 65.4% (n = 17) of youth said that their parents almost always praise them for things they have done. The majority of youth (61.5%, n = 16) stated that they do not wish they were closer with their parent/caregiver because they already had a good relationship; but, 34.5% (n = 10) of youth sometimes or almost always wished they were closer with their parents/caregivers. Even though youth expressed feelings of support from their parent/caregiver, youth reported experiencing familial related challenges, such as multiple moves, having CAS involvement, or living in care for some period of their lives. Appendix G, *Table 7.6. Descriptive statistics related to family factors* details more descriptive statistics on family related factors.

Overall, youth reported that they experienced risks and challenges to varying degrees within the domain of school, peers, criminal justice involvement, and family factors. Substance use and work and/or volunteer experiences were not described as a source of risk or challenge by the youth in this study. As mentioned, this could be due in part to their participation in SB-YLS. Understanding the background of these youth is critical in understanding the identities and social locations (following insights from intersectionality) that youth assume. Presumably, a youth's identity, risk, and challenges may impact their ability to achieve normative success and/or impact what they value as success. However, contrary to the beliefs outlined in life course theory, although these risks or challenges may play a role in their ideas and experiences of success, it does not mean that they will not achieve success. Therefore, it is important to obtain youth voice on their ideas and experiences of success. The following section includes the results from youth on their opinions, perspectives, and experiences of success.

Success

This section details how at-risk young people in this study described and discussed success as a concept and their experiences of success. Following the structure of the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 2: Literature Review, the overarching themes that arose within the data were traditional measures of success and non-traditional measures of success. In each theme, youth spoke about ideas and conceptualizations of success in general (i.e., as a concept), and then spoke about subjective experiences of success (i.e., pertaining to themselves, specifically). The quantitative responses about markers of success are presented first, and then qualitative responses are outlined to expand and provide more description of ideas of success. Results are situated within previous literature and theoretical perspectives where appropriate; however, a more in-depth analysis of the results is analyzed in Chapter 5: Discussion. Influences that shape perceptions of success and the tools needed for achieving success are discussed after the conceptualizations and experiences of success.

Traditional measures of success. As outlined in the theoretical framework, current criminological focus on success is discussed through life course perspectives of success or traditional, middle-class markers of success. Life course theory suggests that individuals progress linearly through the life course, with specific markers and life events situated along this trajectory (Elder, 1975, 1994). Traditional markers of success include getting married, finishing post-secondary school, obtaining a full-time job, or owning a house (Elder, 1975, 1998). Additionally, more recent literature on success of youth expands on these markers and also identifies staying out of trouble and academic success as primary markers or predictors of success, including areas such as achievement, good grades, school engagement (Iselin et al., 2012; Mercer et al., 2016; Ogle et al., 2016; Wang & Eccles, 2011). The markers of success used

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in this study were derived in part from these traditional markers of success identified in literature.

Ideas of success as a concept. Most of the youth neither agreed or disagreed (50%, n = 13) or disagreed (30.8%, n = 8) with living alone being a good marker of success. The majority of youth agreed (80.8%, n = 21) that getting good grades in school was a good marker of success. Similarly, 92.3% (n = 24) of youth thought that finishing high school was a good marker of success for youth around their age. In terms of employment, 88.5% (n = 23) of youth agreed that having a job was a good marker of success. Youth were split in their perception of having a lot of money as a marker of success. However, 42.3% (n = 11) of youth agreed that having a lot of money was a good marker of success. Last, 76.9% (n = 20) of youth agreed that staying out of trouble signified a marker of success. See *Table 4.1. Descriptive statistics for traditional markers of success* for more details. Evidently, youth do perceive traditional markers of success as valuable.

Table 4.1. Descriptive statistics for traditional markers of success

Variable	Frequency (%) (n=26)		
	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree
Living alone	19.2% (5)	50% (13)	30.8% (8)
Getting good grades in school	80.8% (21)	15.4% (4)	3.8% (1)
Staying out of trouble	76.9% (20)	15.4% (4)	7.7% (2)
Having a lot of money	42.3% (11)	26.9% (7)	30.8% (8)
Having a job	88.5% (23)	7.7% (2)	3.8% (1)

In addition to the discussion on markers of success, some youth discussed the concept of success in ways that follow traditional ideas of success. One youth defined success as, “*graduating high school, getting a scholarship to a university or college, like a really nice one*”

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(Participant 5). Likewise, other youth described success as finishing school or passing at school, getting a good paying job and working, or having a lot of money. When asked why certain people were considered successes, the youth mentioned reasons like having educational degrees, making a lot of money, owning a house and car, and having a job. Youth also discussed traditional tools to reaching ideas of success, stating ideas such as, *“I dunno, well money, and getting a job”* (Participant 15). Another youth described needing an,

...idea and you want this thing if you go do that and you want to buy something you could do what you want and make money and save for tuition or something you want to buy.

Working hard to get whatever you want. (Participant 18)

This youth included traditional ideas of achieving success through monetary and material means, as well as working hard to reach ideas of success.

Often, youth discussed working hard to achieve or accomplish whatever goal someone was trying to obtain. For instance, one youth stated, *“I would say success is something that you strive to achieve, something that you work hard for and other people cheer you on to accomplish”* (Participant 8). Another youth expressed success as, *“achieving things that you work hard towards”* (Participant 24). When describing why youth thought a particular person or celebrity was successful, they added sentiments of working hard to accomplish something. These included ideas like work ethic, determination, trying your best, putting your mind to something, managing more than one priority at a time, and completing tasks.

To elaborate, one youth stated that an athlete was successful because of *“his progression, his work ethic. He had to work really hard to get where he is”* (Participant 2). Similarly, in discussing why he views his mom as successful, one youth described determination toward achieving her goals:

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She wanted to become a real estate agent and she ended up having me and my sister and things switched, and she ended up working. So, when things started settling down, she went back to school for real estate, and then my dad had a tumor in his neck. So, my mom dropped out, saved the money for him to do the surgery, and it's been eight years now and he's good and my mom went back, and now she's a real estate agent. (Participant 24)

Although it is possible that working hard, determination, and putting your mind to something may represent individualized, non-traditional ideas of success, these can be considered as traditional means of achieving success. When discussing personal experiences of success, youth discussed similar themes of traditional measures of success.

Subjective experiences of success. Some of the youth in this study discussed personal experiences of success related to education and employment. In terms of education, youth expressed personal successes such as graduating high school or elementary school, integrating back into regular classes (from behaviour classes), or attending school. Other youth discussed being good in certain subjects (primarily math) or achieving higher grades than they used to. For example, one youth stated, “...*my grades and how I've been doing in school*” (Participant 17) as a success.

A minority of youth spoke about having a job as a success. Some youth talked about work at CDI, where they were mentors and leaders to younger kids, while others talked about outside employment. One youth gave an example of how his own business was a success for him. He explained, “*starting my own business as a small kid; I started in grade two. I got a chance to sell them [removed]*” (Participant 18). Another youth reported, “*I'm proud that I work here and that I have a consistent job contract...I'm already working in the field I study for*”

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(Participant 1). In sum, youth discussed part-time employment and academic achievements and engagements as personal experiences of success.

However, if these results are examined closely, youth often discussed traditional ideas and experiences of success in conjunction with non-traditional, subjective ideas and experiences of success. For example, a small amount of youth talked about avoiding trouble and harms as a personal success, which can be thought of as a traditional marker of success. Essentially, youth spoke about not getting into any trouble, avoiding dangerous situations, or avoiding a criminal record. As a success, one youth shared, *“managing to avoid having a criminal record, which is big for black people in my area, and staying away from drugs for the most part of my life”* (Participant 3). Similarly, another youth stated that, *“[I am] proud of myself for being who I am, I don’t like getting in trouble or being a part of wrongs, so I’m proud of myself for that”* (Participant 26). Although staying out of trouble may present as a traditional marker of success, these examples also possibly demonstrate the importance of considering the intersecting identities youth assume given their background and experience in determining how youth understand and express ideas of success.

Evidently, youth conceptualized success in according to middle-class standards at times (i.e., employment, education). Arguably, although traditional markers of success outlined in previous literature are still discussed and valued by youth, it may still be important to consider and acknowledge expanding definitions and experiences of success to include non-traditional, subjective conceptualizations and experiences, too. The following section outlines non-traditional measures of success as perceived by at-risk youth.

Non-traditional measures of success. As an alternative framework for viewing and understanding success, the insights from intersectionality, individualization, and youth transition

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literature were considered together in Chapter 2: Literature review. Rather than viewing success solely through linear, life course perspectives or middle-class ideals, the three aforementioned literatures provide an alternative lens for understanding success. Due to structural inequalities, unique social locations and identities, agency, autonomy, choice, and changing social contexts and transitions for youth (Bell, 2013; Burgess-Proctor, 2006; Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013; Côté, 2000; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Furlong & Cartmel, 2007; Furlong, Woodman, & Wyn 2011; te Riele, 2004; Rudd & Evans, 1998; Wyn & Woodman, 2006), success for certain populations may not be traditional or linear in nature. Perspectives from intersectionality, individualization, and youth transition literature allow for the consideration of non-traditional, alternative perspectives and experiences of success, in that ideas and experiences of success may be subjective, non-linear, fluid, and context-specific in nature. The responses from youth in this study about success as a concept and personal ideas of success reflect non-traditional, subjective ideas of success.

Ideas of success as a concept. Given the above, youth were asked if they agree or disagree with non-traditional markers of success in addition to the traditional ideas of success. Almost all of the youth (96.1%, n = 25) agreed that having supportive relationships was a good marker of success. In terms of identity, 88.4% (n = 23) of youth agreed that feeling good or happy about yourself was a good marker of success. Similarly, 96.1% (n = 25) of youth agreed that being able to take care of yourself was also a good marker of success. *Table 4.2. Descriptive statistics for non-traditional markers of success* provides more detail on the alternative markers of success.

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Table 4.2. Descriptive statistics for non-traditional markers of success

Variable	Frequency (%) (n=26)		
	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree
Being good at sports	53.8% (14)	30.8% (8)	15.4% (4)
Having supportive relationships	96.2% (25)	3.8% (1)	0% (0)
Feeling happy or good about yourself	88.5% (23)	7.7 (2)	3.8% (1)
Being able to take care of yourself	96.2% (25)	3.8% (1)	0% (0)

Evidently, youth do see value in more personal, intrinsic, and interpersonal ideas of success as good markers of success, similar to the insights from individualization literature in the alternative framework presented in this dissertation. The qualitative responses from youth expand on their non-traditional, subjective ideas of success as a concept and add more description, explanation, and nuance to non-traditional, subjective ideas of success as a concept.

In the broadest terms, youth discussed alternative ideas of success that were unbounded by traditional standards and left open for interpretation. One youth began his definition of success by stating, *“success to me is whatever you want it to be...if you’ve acquired something you’ve been longing for, I would classify that as success”* (Participant 1). Another youth started his discussion by saying, *“...my definition of success is always changing...”* (Participant 14). Another youth stated that success meant, *“...to accomplish a goal, um, set by yourself or someone else. It could be anything, academic, social, financial, it could be everything”* (Participant 4). Although this youth expressed traditional ideas of success, he also identified the fluidity and ambiguity in this concept.

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Youth also discussed success as recognizing where someone started and where they ended up. Definitions of success as progression included ideas related to something that someone does or achieves over time. To illustrate, one youth said that success is, “*progression, start small and make your way up. [Success] happens over a period of time*” (Participant 2). This same youth elaborated, “*[success is] what you started with or what you came from, knowing where they start to where they end up*” (Participant 2). Another youth stated,

...my definition of success is always changing. So, like, one day I might think it is reaching some sort of pinnacle and another day it might be something else. As I grow older, my thoughts and beliefs on what success looks like changes. As I get older, it's more about the road it takes to achieve success. How you attain success rather than looking for things that make you successful. (Participant 14)

These ideas of perseverance and progression can arguably represent non-traditional ideas of success. These sentiments were echoed when youth were discussing why they considered or perceived a particular person or celebrity to be successful. One youth discussed the SYLS coordinator as someone he considers successful. He stated,

Since I've been here he's someone I look up to. He started where I started, now he's successful. He started getting in trouble and everything and he switched things around, and now he doesn't get into trouble and has a job and everything. (Participant 2)

Likewise, another youth discussed his brother as a success,

...because of where he started off. When he was my age, things were more difficult but being able to see him grow up and mature and evolve, I like seeing that. I think he is successful, and he is a role model to me even though we don't always see eye to eye, he is definitely a mentor. (Participant 14)

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Evidently, the youth in this study perceived progression and perseverance as important markers of success which was similar to their conceptualization of success as overcoming a challenge or risk.

The theme of overcoming a challenge, barrier, or risk was predominant in how youth discussed success as a concept. For example, one youth discussed overcoming a challenge as part of an explanation of success in stating that an actor, *“had to overcome so many challenges over his life. From being dyslexic to losing his parents, he’s been through so much in his life, but he is still one of the most successful actors”* (Participant 4). This youth later discussed overcoming challenges as success in more general terms, and stated,

...It really just comes in my mind; it comes from overcoming struggles...Like finance you can overcome. But like, depression is harder to overcome. If I knew someone who was severely overweight, [and lost it through hard work], I’d be proud, but if they lost it through liposuction, it’s not the same. Take the hard route and taking the hard way makes someone successful rather than taking the easy route... (Participant 4)

To further demonstrate the complexities of the term success, this quote illustrates both hard work and overcoming challenges as success. However, for Participant 4, overcoming challenges is part of the pathway to success and embraced as an attribute of success. Other youth discussed celebrities or family members who overcame poverty, getting into trouble, or being in a hard place and ultimately achieving a goal.

Other conceptualizations of success identified by youth in this study included interpersonal connections. In discussing definitions of success, youth defined success as being able to care for, support, or mentor and lead others. Thus, youth considered aspects and levels of meaningful relationships as important components of success. For example, one youth stated,

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“what I value as success is someone who can take care of themselves to an extremely satisfactory degree, enough that they could take care of another person. That is a successful person: connecting with others” (Participant 1). As a concept, this youth said he would describe success as centered around relationships. When asked what success meant, another youth stated, *“to be a role model and a leader”* (Participant 21). These sentiments echo the importance of expanding our understanding and conceptualization of success to subjective perspectives, including deep relationships and supporting others as part of the definition of success. This was further represented in discussing why youth thought a particular person was successful.

In terms of someone in their lives that they would consider as successful, youth indicated the SYLS coordinator as successful because, *“he leads this group, he is a parent, he is a husband, he’s making money, he’s a good father, and he’s a good husband – not really that he’s just a husband, but that he’s a good husband”* (Participant 15). Although this youth did mention a traditional marker of success (i.e., money) in his explanation of success, the youth spoke more about relation-based reasons for his success. This finding could represent traditional or non-traditional ideas of success, pointing to the complexity of this concept and the need to consider success in a holistic way (to be discussed in the following chapter). Here, it could be more than just being married that indicates success, instead with more emphasis on the strength and quality of these relationships. Digging deeper into these perceptions of success could work to consider success in more nuanced ways.

Youth also explained simple, but impactful, ideas of describing success as supporting others. For example, one youth said a friend was successful because, *“they’re there for me”* (Participant 20). Additionally, one youth shared, *“I could say I look up to you actually because you guys help us to push us to succeed, to [be] good in life, and all that”* (Participant 26). In

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discussing why an athlete was successful, Participant 6 explained, *“because he shows how to be more than an athlete in his work with kids and youth”*. Thus, being able to support someone when they need help is an important component of success to these youth.

Lastly, self-satisfaction or a focus on identity was another way in which youth constructed success as a concept. To elaborate, focusing on something personal, internal characteristics or satisfaction, or being happy with yourself were components of how youth described success. For example, one youth defined success as, *“ummm success I guess would be more like satisfaction within yourself. So, like if you were doing something and you feel really good about it and your satisfied with your work, that’s success right there”* (Participant 3). In addition, another youth stated, *“I think success means like what you want to be in your life, [it’s] personal”* (Participant 7). It is possible that these quotes hint at success as more than traditional markers, including ideas of individual, subjective feelings.

Similarly, several youth discussed being good at what you do as success, especially in discussing why someone would be considered successful. In contrast to focusing on traditional values of success, one youth stated that a basketball player was successful because,

... from what I know about him and how he acts on and off the court, and how he spends his money, that to me is success – when you reach the point of not being bothered by material things, but more focused on longevity, he’s reaching that point and I aspire to reach a point like that too. (Participant 14)

Rather than focusing on materialistic items as success, this youth explains that he recognizes the importance of the holistic individual as success.

In sum, youth discussed success as a concept through ideas that may reflect non-traditional ideas that highlight the importance of viewing and discussing success in subjective

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ways. These findings also support the need to view success in alternative ways through insights from individualization perspectives that focus on building identity and agency, rather than social roles or middle-class values as indications of success. After explaining ideas of success as a concept, youth gave their opinions on personal, subjective ideas of success.

Subjective experiences of success. Perhaps not surprisingly, subthemes found within personal experiences of success followed youth's ideas of non-traditional success in general terms. They often shared experiences that coincided with their definitions of success. Although youth also expressed traditional experiences of success, non-traditional experiences seem to be emphasized on their success maps, especially when discussing the non-linearity and fluidity of success. There were four instances where youth were unable to articulate various degrees of their own success, such as expressing something they were proud of or something that they can do better than other people. However, all of the youth were able to articulate other areas of personal successes in the interviews, and all of the youth drew or wrote a success map.

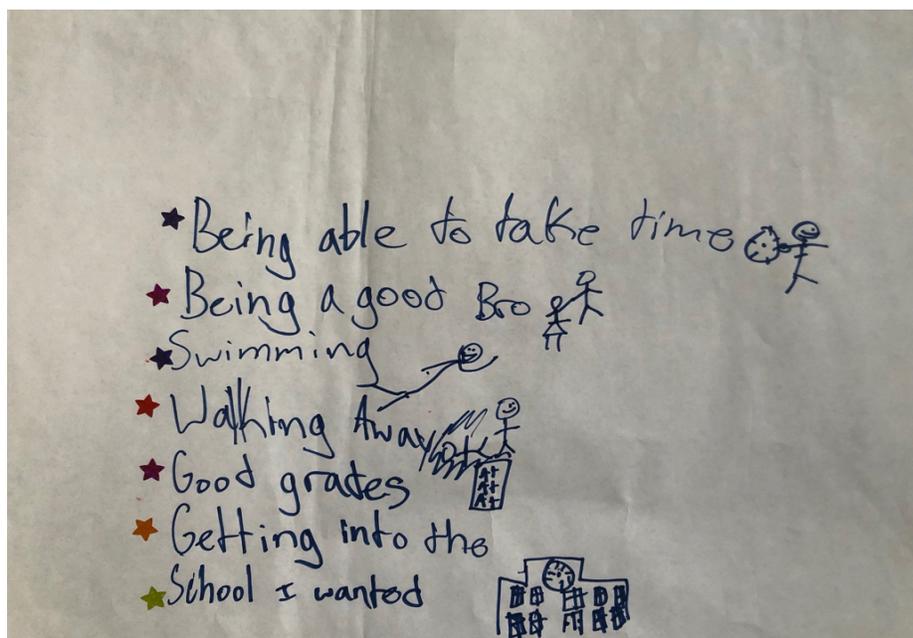
Building on experiences of success as identity-related, many of the youth shared personal experiences of success related to emotion regulation, self-development, and self-satisfaction. Just over half of the youth discussed some sort of emotion regulation as a personal success. Responses ranged from just general responses of "*self-control*" to more detailed responses about controlling anger, feeling positive emotions, and regulating their emotions. For example, one youth suggested that he was thankful to have, "*the ability to switch from hyper to calm quite quickly. I don't feel negative emotions for extended periods of time, it just fades very quickly, and I go back to neutral*" (Participant 1). Another youth shared, "*I used to get in a lot of trouble and was a hot head. And [I'm] really calm and stay out of trouble now. Emotion regulation*"

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(Participant 2). These findings draw our attention to focusing on identity-related experiences as success, rather than just social roles or traditional, middle-class markers of success.

Another youth shared his personal success as emotion regulation and self-control by stating, “*definitely my ability to slow down, think about stuff more logically, and after, think about what’s best for my future*” (Participant 4). Similarly, Participant 3 said, “*being able to walk away, being able to take time*” was a personal success. In direct relation to emotion regulation, one youth explained that, “*my behaviour has improved since I was a little kid. I know how to control my ADHD and anger easier...always being able to stay positive and have a smile on my face*” (Participant 19). Other youth briefly stated that personal successes included “*positivity*”, “*stay cool*”, “*self-control*”, and “*controlling my anger*”. For example, one youth drew on his success map that being able to take time and walking away were successes for him (see *Figure 4.1*).

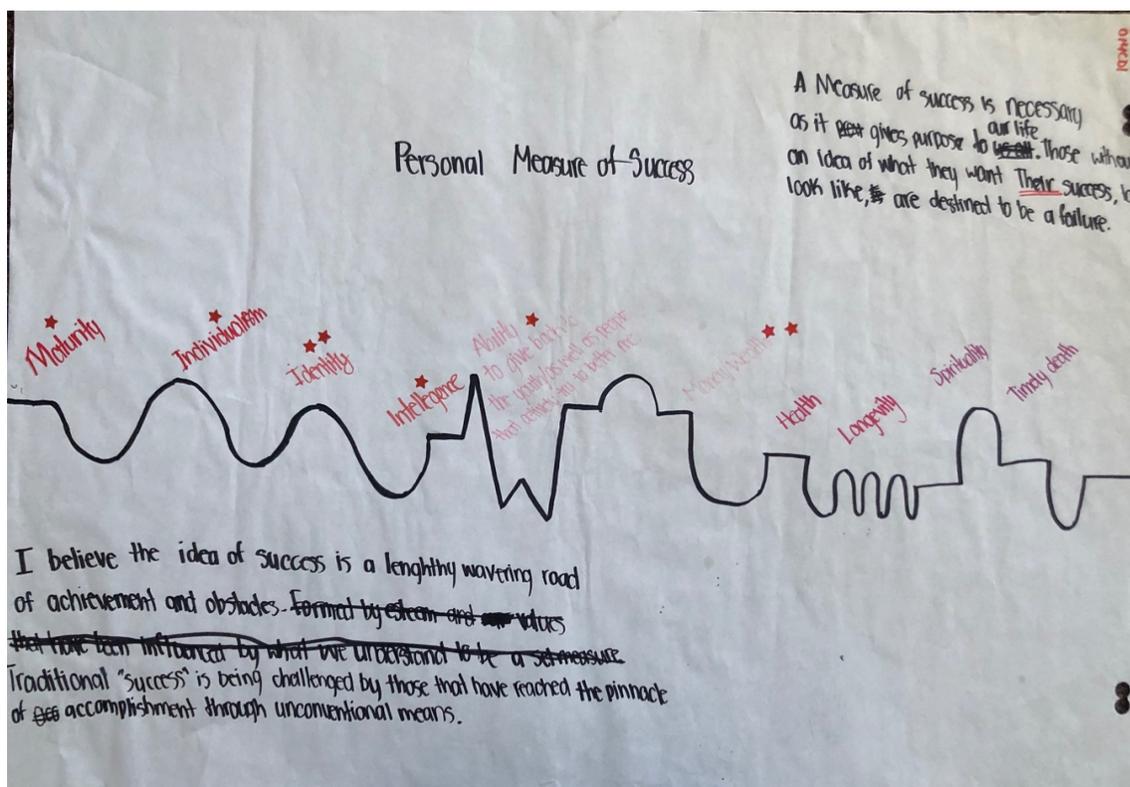
Figure 4.1. Success map from Participant 13



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Other personal experiences of success given by the youth in this study were related to character development or identity formation. Responses ranged from their intelligence, to being responsible, to their maturity. For example, one youth said, “*I think since I started high school I’ve matured a fair amount and appreciate the life that I have and I think that’s something to be proud of because I don’t think people know how lucky they are*” (Participant 9). This youth explained his self-satisfaction in appreciating his life and maturity were personal successes. Similarly, personal successes related to their character and identity for these youth were expressed as being “*polite*”, “*independent*”, “*generous*”, “*respectful*”, “*kind*”, “*caring*”, or “*trust worthy*”. Several other qualities listed as personal successes by youth included, “*honesty*”, “*reliability*”, “*thought process*”, “*persistence*”, “*love*”, “*perseverance*”, and their “*intelligence*” or “*smarts*”. As an example, one youth wrote about maturity, individualism, identity, and intelligence as important personal successes (see Figure 4.2).

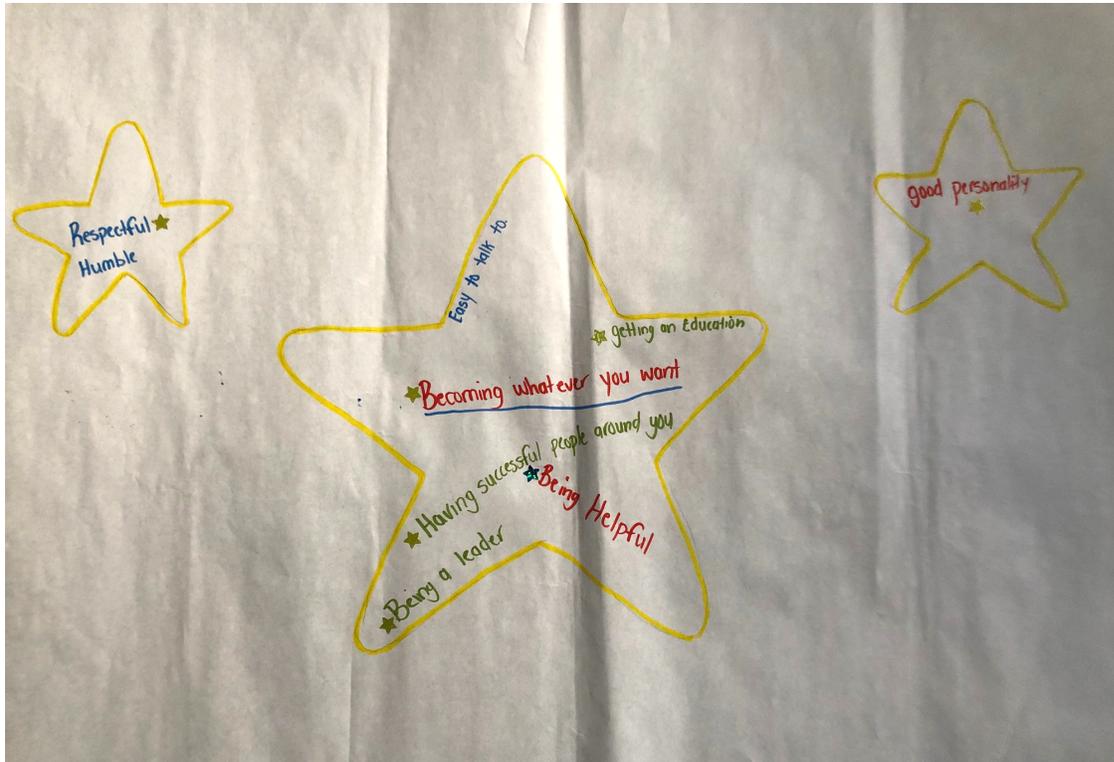
Figure 4.2. Success map from Participant 14



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Another youth drew about self-satisfaction or character development on his success map (see Figure 4.3) by writing that part of his success was being respectful, humble, and having a good personality.

Figure 4.3. Success map from Participant 26



Another youth said a success for him was his “*resilience, being able to push through and stuff like that*” (Participant 19), which could depict the importance of understanding individual identities, experiences, and backgrounds when considering conceptualizations of success.

Another youth stated, “*I can make important decisions and do critical thinking and I prioritize the important things in life*” (Participant 3). This youth saw his ability and strength to recognize what is important to him as a success, lending possible evidence of an alternative, nuanced experience of success. As an expression of self-satisfaction as a success, one youth shared, “*...don’t follow anybody. Just stay me*” (Participant 12).

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Similarly, a few of the youth spoke about their awareness and intuitiveness as a success. As an example, two different youth explained, “*being able to understand a lot for my age*” (Participant 7). This was related to experiences of maturity as a personal success. For example, one youth explained,

Maturity. Coming from a very interesting background, I’m proud of my maturity. I can always say I feel like I’m better than individuals my age. Being able to act and see how they behave, and that’s not my vibration. So, I’m definitely proud of my maturity.

(Participant 14)

Youth in this study also spoke about their leadership qualities or roles as mentors as personal successes. As with general definitions of success discussed above, youth often combined a number of different experiences of personal successes. In discussing his leadership qualities as a success, one youth stated,

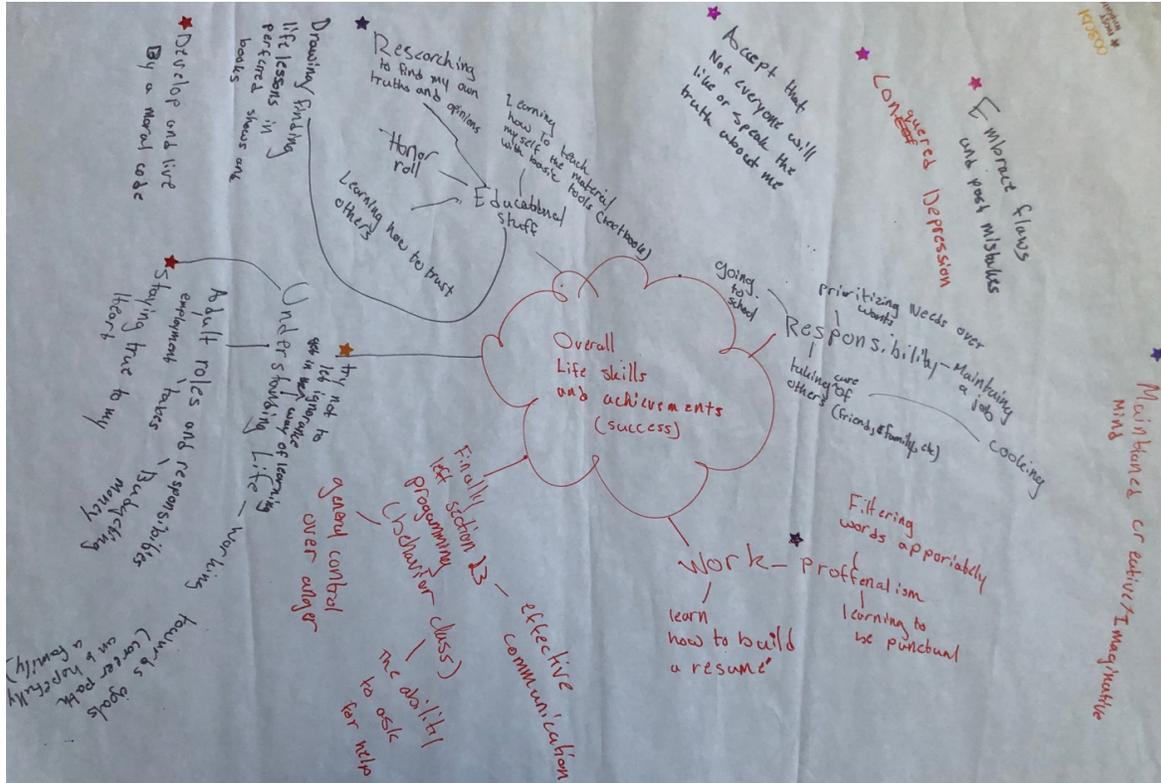
...joining the CDI group...starting off in SNAP then joining the boy’s leadership program, it kinda helped me grow and laid out the person I want to be over the course of time I’ve been here. Another thing I’m also proud of is when I was 15 I was working here as a junior counsellor trying to save up money to save for the [removed]. They’re known for going to poor cities to help build houses and shelters and stuff. And I also raised money to go and I was there for a week and a half... and once I was finished there I was happy I decided to do it. (Participant 8)

Thus, Participant 8 explained that success resonated in his progression as a leader and hard work to achieve things and give back to different communities. The success maps below provide a visual representation of some of the individual, internal qualities that youth discuss as successes. For example, this youth discussed various personal successes as conquering depression,

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embracing flaws and past mistakes, general control over anger, staying true to my heart, developing and living by a moral code, responsibility, and more (see *Figure 4.4*).

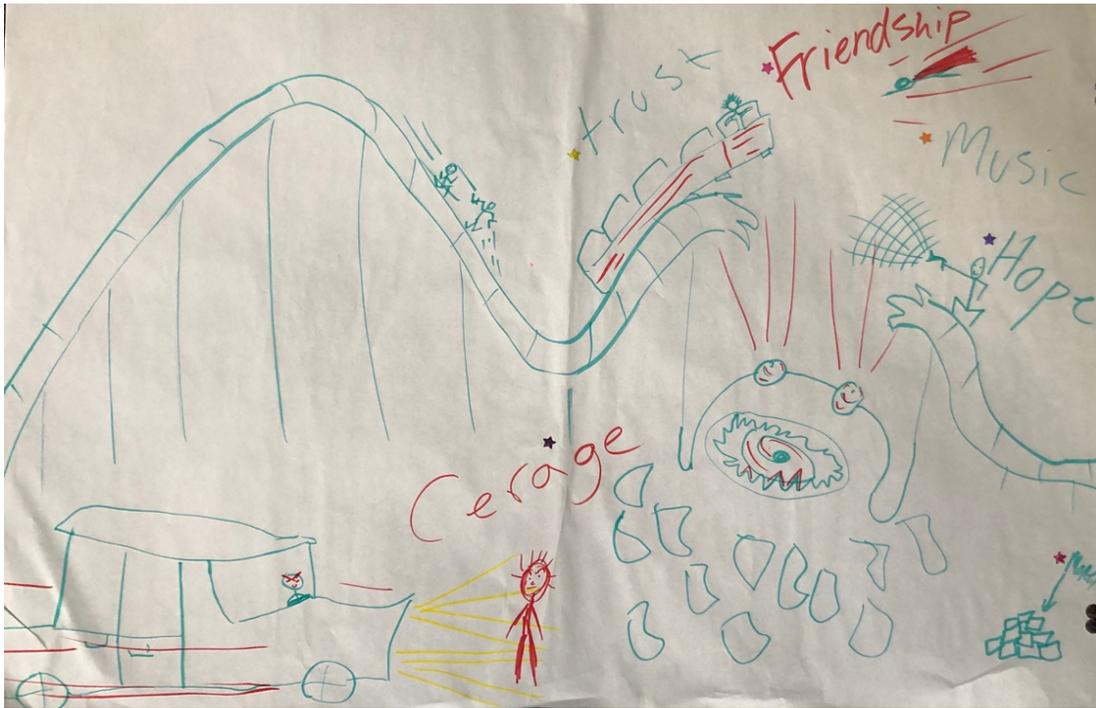
Figure 4.4. Success map from Participant 3



Similar to Participant 3, one youth discussed other characteristics or attributes not discussed in the interviews on his success map, including courage and hope (see *Figure 4.5*)

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Figure 4.5. Success map from Participant 15



Another youth's personal qualities that he saw as successes for himself was love, compassion, the way he feels, his smarts, and his kindness (see Figure 4.6).

Figure 4.6. Success map from Participant 5



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Related to experiences of identity-related successes were tangible examples of personal successes. Youth expressed their abilities to play video games, speak different languages, drawing, music, and digital arts as personal successes. Six of the youth discussed their cooking abilities as a personal success. Further, more than half of the youth spoke about playing sports or being good at sports as personal experiences of success. Although some youth discussed material things, like buying shoes, they discussed this in the context of working hard and progressing towards a goal, rather than focusing on materialistic items as success as a form of status. Beyond experiences of success related to their identities, youth discussed experiences of success related to interpersonal connections.

Almost all of the youth shared some sort of experience of success related to interpersonal connections, through communication with others, impact on younger kids, relationships, social skills, or support. Just over half of the youth in this study said that their communication skills (to different capacities) were personal successes. Most of these youth attributed this to their ability to make conversation with people. For example, one youth said a personal success was, “*communication, like thoughtful in what I want to say*” (Participant 19). Another youth said that he is, “*personable and can talk to anybody*” (Participant 12). Communication skills as an area of success could represent subjective, nuanced experiences of success, not typically found as part of traditional markers of success.

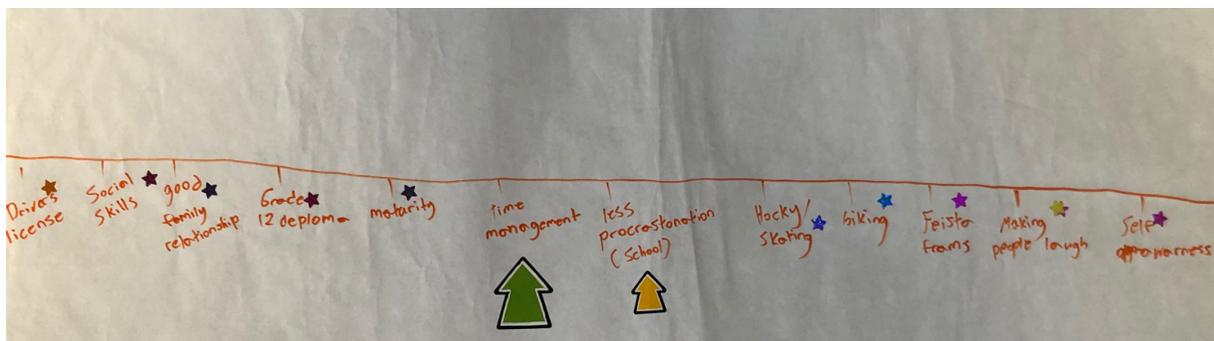
In relation to communication skills, youth talked about social skills more generally. Some shared the fact that personal successes were being fun to be around, being social and talking to people, getting along with new groups, and connecting with people in general. One youth explained that a success for him was being, “*less antisocial. For example, being comfortable in group*” (Participant 7).

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Additionally, some of the youth said that making an impact on younger kids was a success for them. Youth reported being able to relate to younger kids, working with kids, being a mentor to younger kids, and interacting with younger kids as successes. For example, one youth stated that one of his personal successes was “...being a leader to the boys and connecting with younger boys” (Participant 26). Another youth stated that a success for him was connecting with younger kids: “showing the kids I’ve been in the same shoes as you, and this can lead you to success” (Participant 19). This focus of connecting and making an impact on younger kids could also support the need to move away from focusing solely on traditional markers of success, and instead focus on alternative ideas and experiences.

Youth also discussed relationships as personal successes. This came in the form of having different relationships with family or friends, as well as being able to support other people in their lives (e.g., mothers and siblings). Some youth shared that their relationship successes were making connections with people, making friends easily, and recognizing the importance of family and friends. Among other things, one youth pointed to “...realizing the importance of family” (Participant 9) in his interview, and also put on his success map that good family relationship was a success he wanted to highlight (see *Figure 4.7*).

Figure 4.7. Success map from participant 9

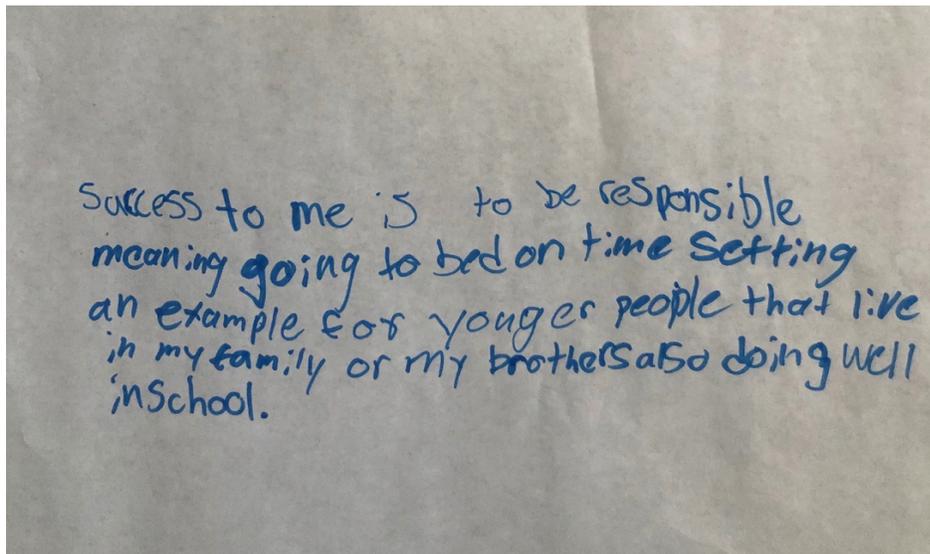


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As discussed above, relationships are another measure of success that can seemingly be marked as a traditional or non-traditional experience of success. This, again, highlights the complexity in conceptualizing success, which is discussed in the next chapter.

Many of the youth shared experiences of success related to helping and supporting a family member. For instance, one youth shared, “*being able to take care of my little sister before she goes to preschool...*” (Participant 19). Likewise, another youth said a success for him was, “*helping my mom, helping my brothers*” (Participant 21). Further, this specific youth expanded on his experience of helping his family on his success map by stating that success for him is “*...setting an example for younger people that live in my family or my brothers...*” (see Figure 4.8).

Figure 4.8. Success map from Participant 21



In speaking in compassionate terms, one youth shared that, “*the way I hug people...*” was a personal success (Participant 5). This youth continued to share that his compassion towards others is a personal experience success. He elaborated on what his compassion looks like:

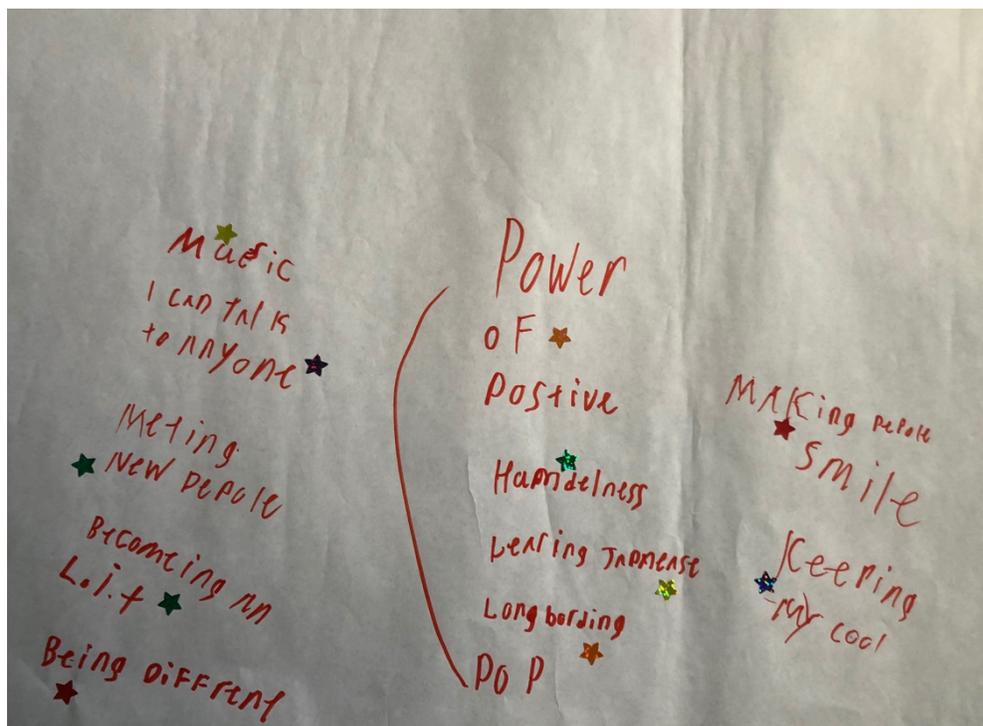
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...the way I was raised it's like, let's say a kid comes up to me and gives me a cookie. Am I going to be greedy or thankful? I was raised to take the cookie and share it with others. I'm using a cookie as an example, but like what I really mean is, I see people that are sad all the time... it's tough seeing others in pain, especially people I am close with. Let's take my cousin, basically he's basically a brother now, and if I see him in pain, I would feel pain as well. I'm more compassionate with closer people. (Participant 5)

This youth discussed that supporting family and friends meant being compassionate to their feelings and emotions, which he considered as a personal experience of success.

Additionally, one of the participants also gave an example of a relationship-based success in stating he considers a personal success to be, “*looking out for people I care about*” (Participant 12). This same youth wrote on his success map that his successes included talking to anyone, meeting new people, and making people smile (see *Figure 4.9*).

Figure 4.9. Success map from Participant 12



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Similarly, another youth voiced that one of his successes was, “*being a people person and being able to interact with others easily, and helping them with any bad situations that they’re having trouble with*” (Participant 8). Evidently, caring and compassion towards others were perceived as important experiences of success for these youth.

Nearly all of the youth saw their own personal successes as fluid, changing, and evolving in some capacity. This was shown in youth’s non-linear maps of success and expressions of progression and fluidity in the interviews. As mentioned above, some of the youth expressed their progression in identity, relationships, or in school as part of their successes, combining both non-traditional and traditional experiences of success together. For instance, when asked if his ideas of success have changed as he’s grown up, one youth stated,

Yes. Social skills and relationships with family – I took my house and parents for granted until there was talk of me moving out and getting myself in lots of trouble, and doing things I wouldn’t do now, like taking a car out and things like that. Goes back to maturity. And having my dad’s brother passing let me know that my parents won’t be around forever, and [I] should make the most with them now. (Participant 9)

Similarly, another youth shared sentiment of progression in his personal experiences of success: “*definitely me over coming a lot of my problems. I went from being a kid who gets bullied by everyone and couldn’t defend, to being bullied but having close friends*” (Participant 4). This youth discussed struggles that he partly overcame through building relationships, which he considered a success.

Beyond overcoming challenges and seeing progression in different aspects of their lives and successes, some of the youth stated that success is a process that is fluid and changing in

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nature. Several youth shared detailed descriptions of how their personal ideas of success have changed or were fluid and developing. For example, one youth explained,

I think it's [success] an evolution. As a kid, everything is oversimplified, and you don't understand the complexities of life. We tend to value the little and big things, so like things that are trivial to an adult are really important to a kid. But we also value the bigger things, but what I mean is that is what you're told you're supposed to value, like what society wants us to and thinks we should do, like finishing school. Or things their parents think or your friends or things that everyone has at home because everyone has it at school. But as you get older, you start to understand things and how things work, and see for yourself what to value. Because you start to realize what you have put value into doesn't mean that much, and the things you didn't put a lot of value into mean more than you thought they did. (Participant 1)

This youth said he was able to recognize that some things he used to value as success were prescribed by society, rather than defined by himself, which he now realizes needs to be taken into consideration when deciding what success is.

Another youth explained that his views and experiences of success have shifted over time. He explained that his thoughts on success:

Shifted, because when I was younger I loved running, I never liked basketball, I loved hitting. But I don't do that anymore. I had swearing problems around the age of seven, and I grew out of that. And I also used to cry a lot and used to get angry. I had emotion problems, and I realized I could listen to music and that helped me. I have a lot of things I do that people wouldn't realize that help keep my problems smaller. (Participant 19)

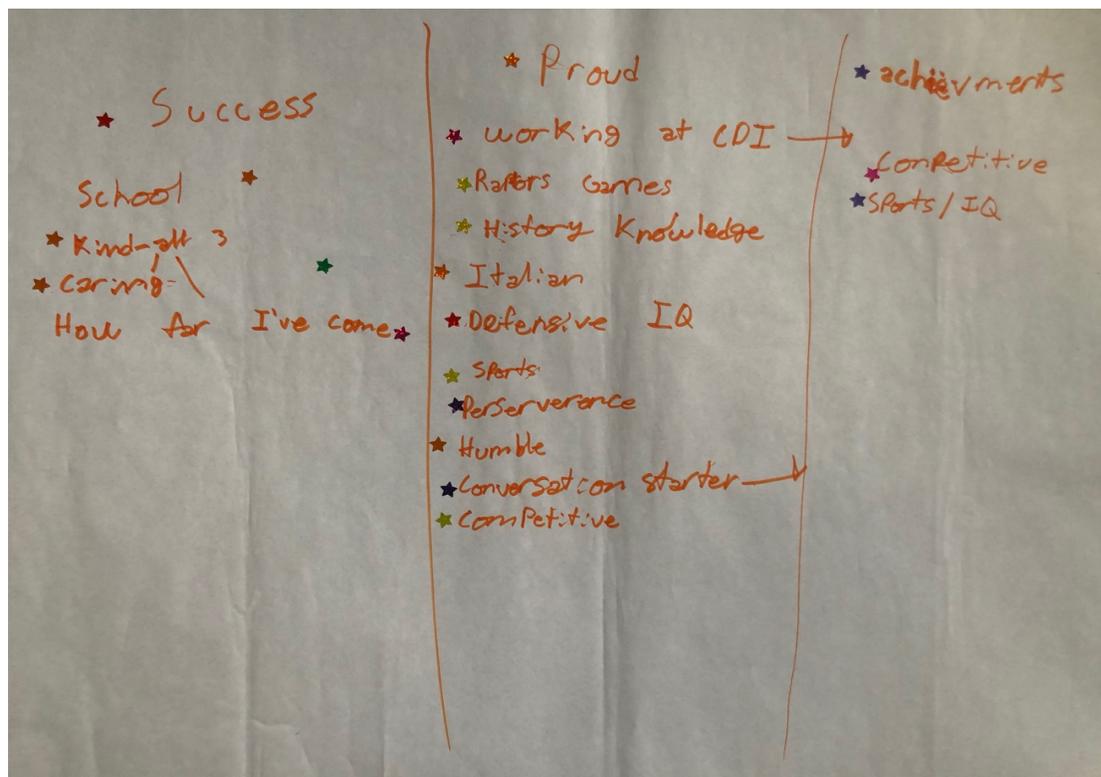
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Through this statement, it appears that his experiences of success changed once he was able to regulate his emotions – a theme identified as an important component of success.

Further, another youth said that his ideas and experiences of success shifted from focusing just on him, to including others. He stated, “*yes, when I was younger, my achievements were only focused on me. But now as I’m older, if they affect just me they’re not that good, but if they affect or involve others, that’s more important*” (Participant 4). This youth described his experiences of success shifting from focusing on himself to including an interpersonal focus when discussing or thinking about success. Therefore, youth identified that there is not only one way to view success, one pathway to reach success, or one way to experience success. The quotes from youth amplify the need to consider subjective ideas of success as important, valid, and valuable.

The experiences of success as fluid and changing, coupled with the need to overcome challenges or obstacles, embedded in a non-linear pathway became alive and apparent in the success maps. When youth were asked to draw their success maps, many of the youth drew, articulated, and/or wrote about success in a way that showed progression, overcoming challenges, and/or non-linearity. As youth were able to conceptualize this activity in their own way, this fluidity and changing nature of success was shown in various ways. This highlights the nuance embedded in understanding and conceptualizing success. To demonstrate, one youth (see *Figure 4.10*) simply included in his success map that a personal success was how far he had come.

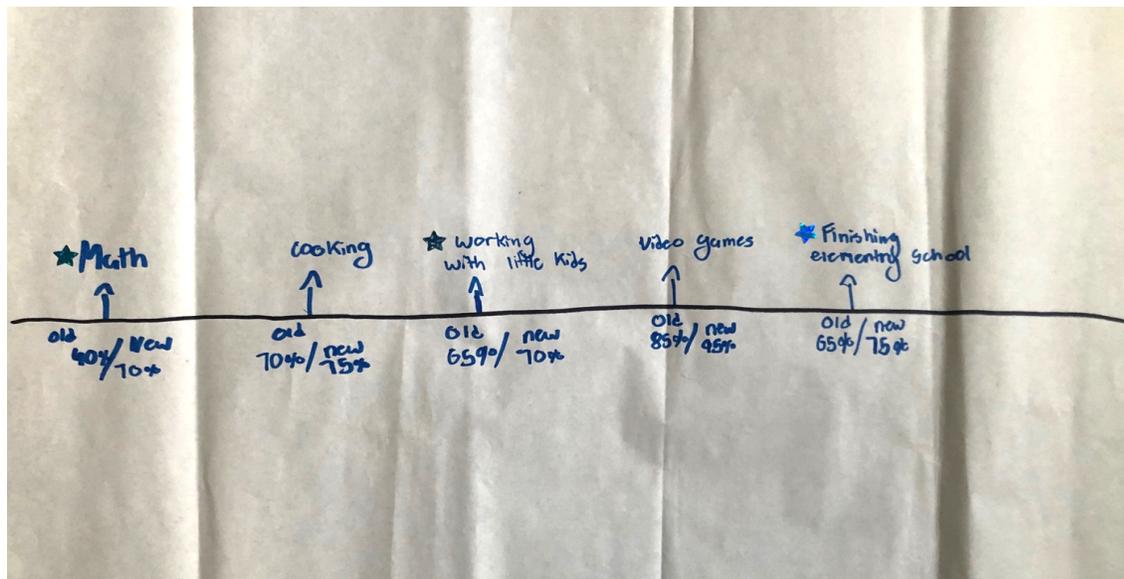
Figure 4.10. Success map from Participant 16



Another youth showed progression in his successes by including percentages of how much he has improved in a certain area, showing that his successes are improving and changing (see *Figure 4.11*). Although this youth included traditional experiences of success on his success map, the progression and improvement seen in his markers of success would lend more to the non-linearity discussed in the theoretical framework for alternative perceptions of success, where growth despite challenges is valued.

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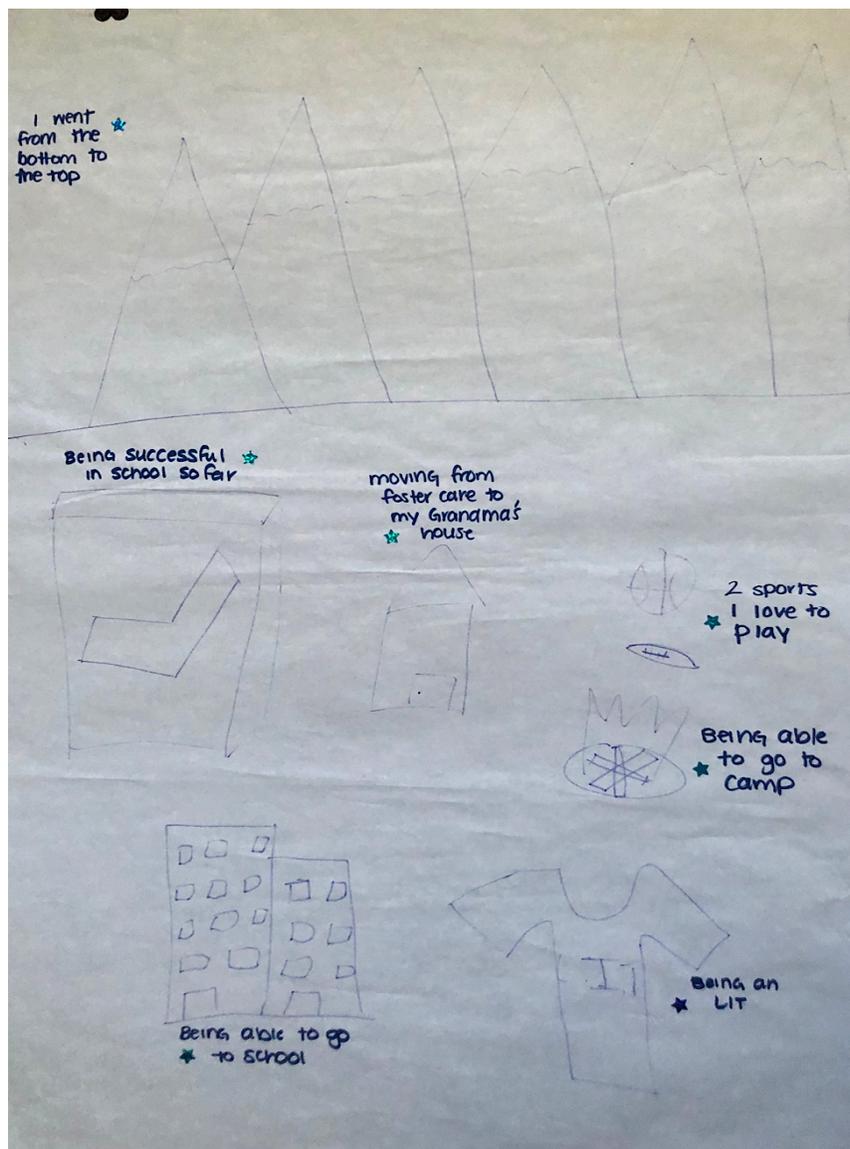
Figure 4.11. Success map from Participant 25



Other youth showed progression by depicting an increase in successes, or through the depiction of moving up to the top of a mountain. This could be interpreted as also having to possibly overcome challenges in reaching achievements and successes, but working up to reaching those successes. For example, one youth drew mountains and wrote, “*I went from the bottom to the top*” (see Figure 4.12).

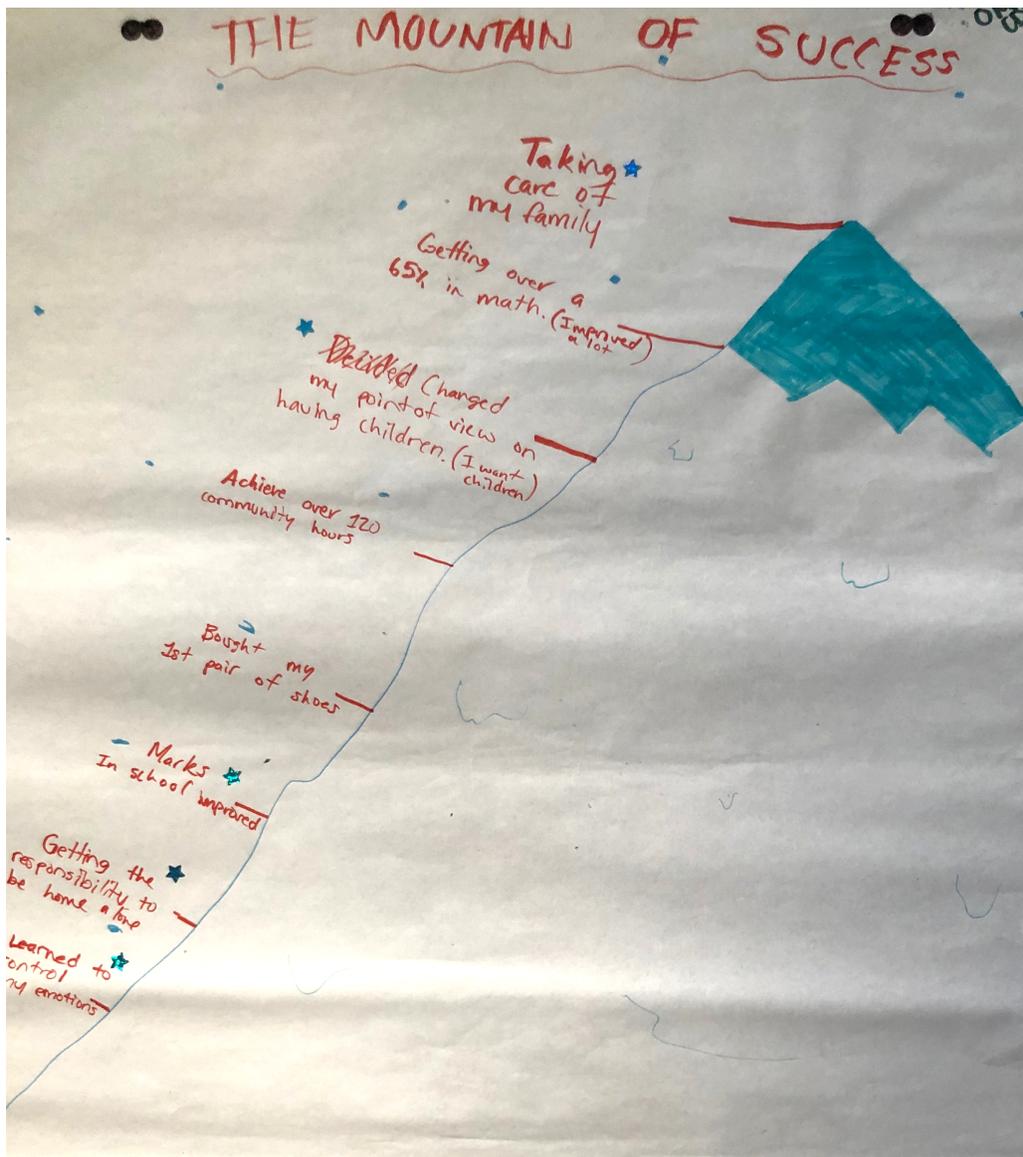
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Figure 4.12. Success map from Participant 6



Additionally, one youth labelled their success map, “*The Mountain of Success*” (see Figure 4.13) and pointed to different successes he achieved on his way to the pinnacle of his successes.

Figure 4.13. Success map from Participant 19



Likewise, another youth took a similar approach and showed his road to success with road blocks, supports, and challenges along the way to the top of the mountain (see *Figure 4.14*). This youth's success map shows that he must overcome challenges, with the support of family and friends, to reach his personal successes and goals.

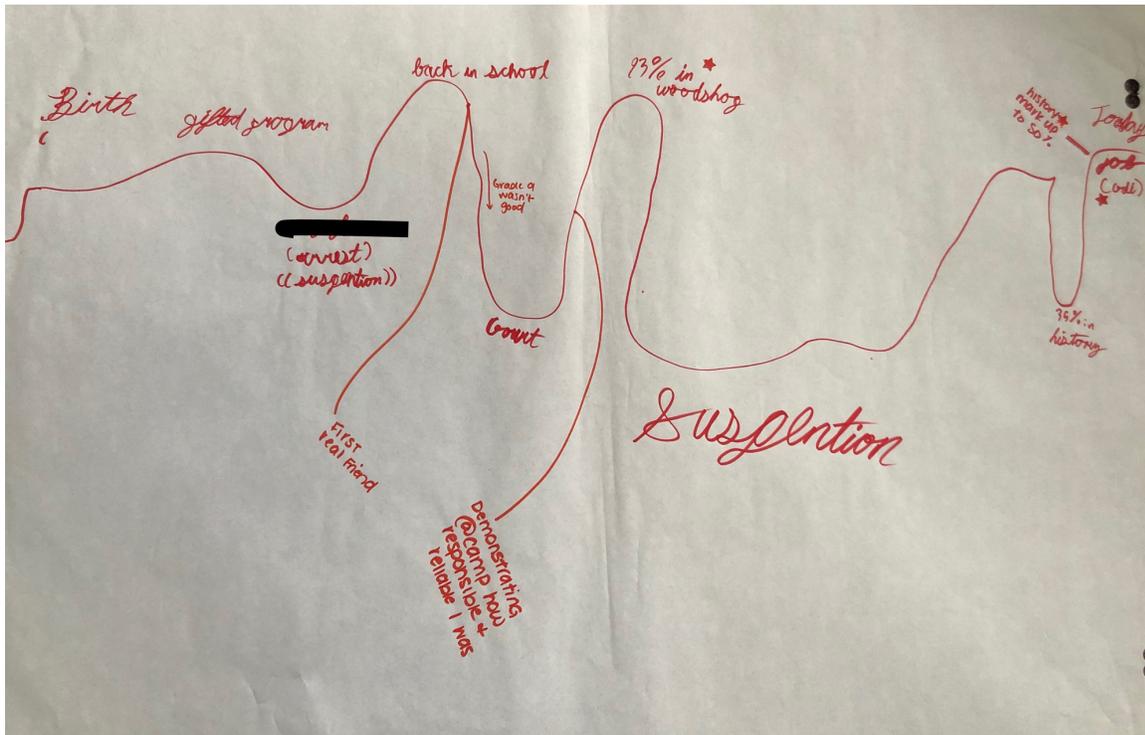
Figure 4.14. Success map from Participant 8



As a way to show progression, one youth charted both his successes and challenges. As the youth moved to the top of his charted line, he began to note more successes (highlighted with star stickers), depicting the progression he described in his interview. Interestingly, this youth had some materialistic items on his success map (e.g., buying shoes), but provided context for this want and explained that he was bullied for his appearance when he was younger (see *Figure*

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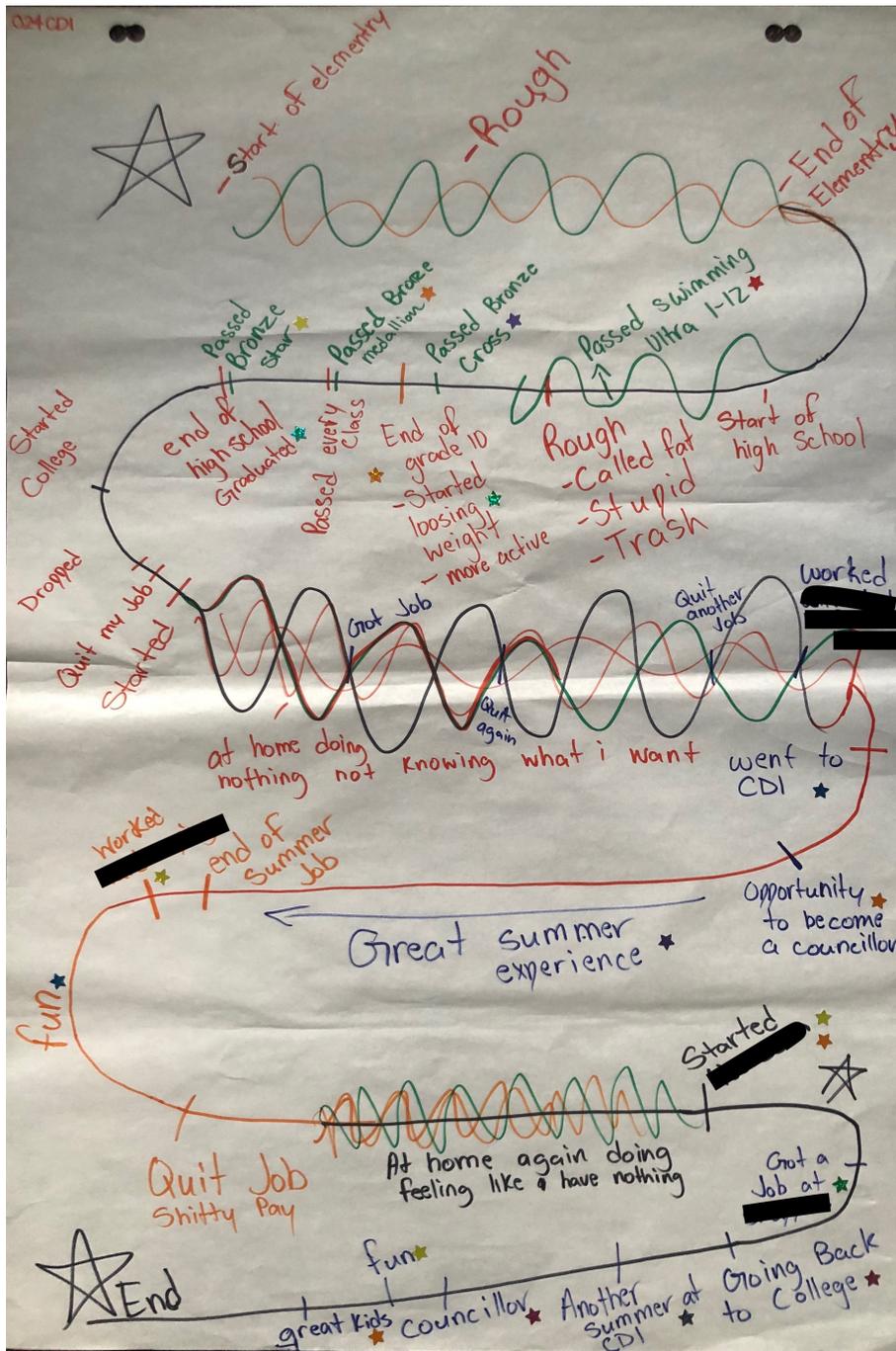
Figure 4.16. Success map from Participant 4



This youth's winding road from 'birth' to 'today' with notes about challenges and successes delineates the non-linear nature of his pathway to success.

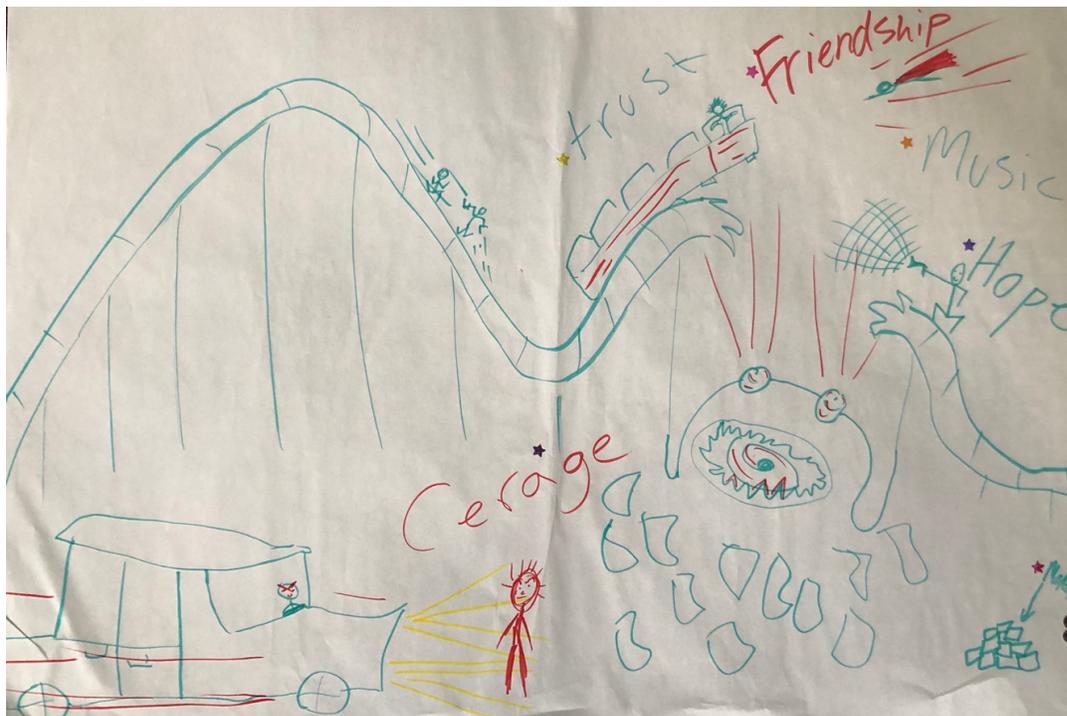
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Figure 4.17. Success map from Participant 24



Similar to Participant 4, this youth drew challenges and successes on a winding path, with periods of more intense areas of ups and downs.

Figure 4.18. Success map from Participant 15

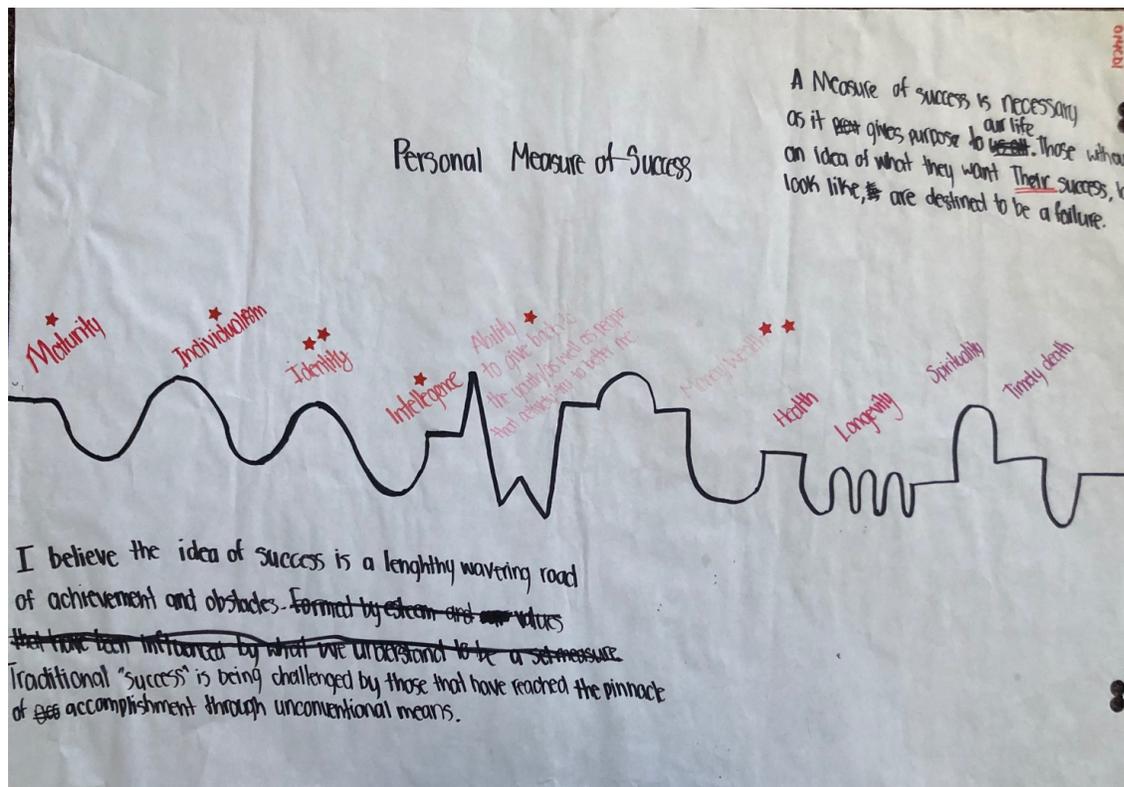


In a more unique depiction of his successes, this youth drew a broken rollercoaster as the trajectory of success to represent the non-linear nature of success. Interestingly, this youth's success map also includes "hope" and "friendship" necessary to help mitigate the effect of the broken rollercoaster.

Last, *Figure 19.0* shows another winding, non-linear pathway to success.

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Figure 4.19: Success map from Participant 14



Of particular interest, not only does this youth's description of success demonstrate a non-linear pathway, but also wrote that traditional ideas of success are being "challenged" by "unconventional" experiences of success (Participant 14). Further, this youth points out the subjective nature of his conceptualization of success through explaining that without individualized markers of success that are subjective in nature, individuals are destined to be deemed failures. He emphasizes the individual nature of ideas of success by underlining "their" in this description (Participant 14). As illustrated, responses from youth point to the idea that achieving success may not be a linear pathway as explained in life course theory. Importantly, calling on youth themselves to express their experiences of success in different ways is important for our understanding of this complex concept.

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For these youth, experiences and ideas of success also included developing their sense of self and identity and building and keeping meaningful relationships, rather than focusing only on middle-class values and markers of success. These findings underscore the importance of talking to youth themselves about ideas of success, rather than prescribing and telling them what success should be or look like. The youth's fluid, changing ideas of success highlight the need to view success from a non-traditional, subjective perspective, considering different pathways in reaching success. These pathways can be full of challenges, progression, and periods of backtracking, all while considering the identity of individuals (in this case, at-risk youth) and their experiences and background. As highlighted in responses from youth, challenges and risks do not automatically lead to negative outcomes, as discussed in life course perspectives. Rather, the process of overcoming challenges, navigating different contexts, and perseverance seem to be embedded in concepts and experiences of success described by these youth. Together, intersectionality, individualization, youth transition literature could provide a helpful framework for understanding how ideas and experiences of success are more subjective, nuanced, and individualized than prescribed, traditional ideas of success. With knowledge of how youth experience and discuss success, this study also sought to explore influences on shaping perceptions of success, as well as the tools that would help them reach their ideas and experiences of success.

Influences that shape perceptions of success. Youth stated that their ideas of success were shaped through their family, teachers, peers, experiences, and the media. To illustrate the importance of understanding how ideas are shaped, it is useful here to revisit Participant 5's definition of success as graduating high school and going to a good university or college. When asked how his ideas of success are shaped, this youth stated, "*my dad talks to me a lot about how*

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are you going to be successful and what are you going to do in your life, like what are you going to do in high school" (Participant 5). In his success map, this youth described his "compassion", "love", and "kindness" as his personal successes. One could assume that conversations with his dad potentially impact his defining success based around school, but when able to express success for himself, he expressed subjective, non-traditional experiences of success. Therefore, although understanding how youth define and characterize success is salient, so too is gaining knowledge about *how* these ideas are shaped.

Some of the youth discussed teachers as a source of influence on their ideas of success. These youth discussed teachers very briefly, with only one youth expanding and stating, "*because we spend a lot of time in school*" (Participant 3). Similarly, several youth stated that their ideas were shaped by family. One youth said, "*um, my mom, if you put your mind to it you'll achieve anything that you want to achieve – that's what my mom tells me. Just gotta work hard*" (Participant 24).

In terms of ideas of success being shaped by experiences, youth discussed these ideas deriving from childhood experiences, accomplishing something, or overcoming something. For example, one youth explained,

Experiences shaped these ways. I was always ahead of the class in math and science so when I saw I did well it didn't mean a lot. But when I did good in English or French, I was really proud of myself because I really struggle. So, it's things that I struggle with, if I do well in them I feel like I'm succeeding... It comes down to my personal experiences as a child. (Participant 4)

Again, these ideas of overcoming challenges are linked to their conceptualizations of success. Another youth stated something that would shape the idea of self-satisfaction as success: "*I think*

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it was on my own, I kinda realized because when you accomplish something you feel happy, and that's another way to feel success" (Participant 16).

Often, experiences were coupled with another source of influence when youth were describing how their ideas of success were shaped. For example, one youth stated,

When you think of success your mind kinda wanders, and trying to find who to be successful for, and you kinda pick it up from the people you're around. Like it could be your family or friends, or someone you look up to. It's not just by knowing them, it's by sharing ideas of what could be accomplished, and once you find something that you want to accomplish, that's when you start to strive for that success. (Participant 8)

Similarly, another youth explained that his experiences and his family dynamic shape his ideas of success,

I think more experiences, because, I've um, hanged out with bad people in the past, a lot of people who call themselves hood and stuff, and they were just about money. But not in the sense they were working for money, but betray and stab people in the back to go farther in life. And when I was really young, my mom and dad hated each other and we got sent to foster care, and not so good things happened to me in foster care. And when I came back here, it wasn't a sense of family, it was hatred toward people in the family. And if there was a different view, there was an argument. And when my dad was at the house, verbal abuse and screaming. So, it would be like that and I didn't want to be like my dad, but I wanted to be like my dad because from what I heard he didn't come from anything. Also, my mom – they grew up impoverished and stuff and stories of her feeling spoiled because her mom bought her milk and clothes – and my dad said the same thing, because his mom would give him five cents. I wanted to be like my dad to force myself

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and get up, but didn't want to be like my dad because he wanted to save so much he forgot what family is. So, I want to have success with relationships, with family, but doesn't have to be my blood family – with my friends and stuff. (Participant 15)

This youth described success to include a conversation about family and relationships because he has learned from his negative experiences and wanted to move beyond them.

Lastly, some of the youth discussed the media and social media as a means of influence that shapes their ideas of success. However, the undertone of their responses gave a possible indication that this is more of a negative influence that would drive them to reinforce their own ideas and perspectives of alternative successes. To explain, one youth said that, “*the media has quite an opinion on success and what success is*” (Participant 9). In a similar vein, another youth stated,

Before it used to be a lot of media, used to be on social media and the things I seen on it. I used that [as] a scale of success. But now, as time goes on, I see things in different perspectives, and I see that media is not an accurate representation of what success looks like. (Participant 14)

Evidently, this youth said that he used to submit to traditional, socially prescribed ideas of success until he was able to determine alternative, individualized ideas of success for himself.

Although all of the youth discussed how their ideas were shaped, most youth did not elaborate on how family, peers, teachers, experiences and the media influenced their ideas of success. But, there are valuable insights embedded in the above responses from those who did elaborate. Thus, with context, youth provided insight into why they discuss and define success in non-traditional and/or traditional ways, further outlining the importance of considering social locations and contexts. Most youth suggested that their ideas of success were shaped or

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influenced at least in part by adults (teachers, family, and media) which may shed light on why they may accept traditional ideas of success or deviate towards alternative conceptualizations of success. To attempt to understand this further, youth were also asked to discuss their views on prescribed ideas of success, primarily from people older than them.

Views on prescribed ideas of success. More than half of the youth reported that how adults discuss success was wrong, confusing, too traditional, or different from how they would define success. Youth who identified the problematic nature of how adults discuss success highlighted that adults only see one pathway to achieving success. This finding would align with the importance of considering alternative, non-traditional conceptualizations of success, which accept different pathways, nuances, and ideas of success as valid and valuable.

To illustrate, one youth stated that adults “*see things differently. When I buy shoes and stuff my dad doesn’t like it. But to me it’s like success because it shows that I’ve worked for it. Materialistic things they see differently*” (Participant 2). This youth discussed the discrepancy between his dad and his views, as he sees his shoes as a sign of progression and hard work, whereas his dad sees it as spending money and materialistic. Similarly, another youth explained differences in values of the gaming industry,

I think that it’s different, like when we think about success most people think of success as in the gaming industry, and adults think the gaming industry is a whole bunch of crap. So, like I guess, I think there has to be a balance. I don’t think a parent should say - like I heard stories of kids who wanted to get into the gaming industry get kicked out of their house, but I don’t think that’s fair. I think parents should give them the opportunity to try to do something big. Right now, if you think of Fortnite, people are winning thousands of dollars for placing top ten in regions. (Participant 16)

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In this quote, differences in values between parents and youth would also create differences in what they consider as success. However, to this youth's point, he perceived success as still about working hard and achieving something, which he thinks remains unrecognized by his parents because of the stigma attached to video games. Another youth shared a similar problem about prescribed ideas of success being wrong or confusing: *"in a sense... because they're thinking back to when you had to go to university to be successful, but now there's the internet and you can get so much money for YouTube..."* (Participant 18).

Another example of this discrepancy can be seen in a youth explaining, *"it's misleading how they imply and force it, the way they want success to be instead of someone's success being their own. It has to be their way or nothing"* (Participant 12). In line with this comment, another youth stated,

I've always grown up with it being old fashion thinking, and adults are set in their ways. It's up to kids in the end to decide how the future is. But they [adults] should be respectful on their viewpoints on success... (Participant 15)

These responses from youth show the discrepancy between ideas and experiences of success and highlight the need to at least consider alternative pathways and experiences of success as valid or important.

Likewise, other youth did not find it wrong or confusing, but continued to highlight the differences in perceptions. One youth stated, *"I don't find it wrong or confusing, because each person has a different view of what success is. It doesn't matter how old or young, it's what they think success really is to them"* (Participant 8). This youth depicts the subjective, individualized nature of success. Another alternative, subjective understanding of success was discussed by a youth who stated,

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I don't think it's wrong or confusing, it's more just the older you get, the more you think about things logically or numerically. But the younger you are, it's more about how you feel. Adults think success is about money or tangible things. But when you're younger it's like about things like I jumped a flight of stairs! [It's] more about how you feel.

(Participant 4)

Similar to definitions of success as a concept, this youth discussed the idea that success also includes internal feelings, something that is not considered by adults as success.

Additionally, some youth indicated that adults do not consider the fact that there is more than just one path to reaching success. For instance, one youth explained,

The only thing I find wrong is insisting there is only one path to take to become successful. A lot of people will say you have to go to university to be successful, but there are many paths you can take in life that don't include university. (Participant 3)

Another youth stated,

Yeah, well, I don't think it's wrong, because the traditional ways of thinking about success are not wrong. Like it's not wrong to go to school and go that route, but the idea of what success looks like is definitely changing. I think it's important for people older than me to understand that that's not the only way to be successful. It's not traditional anymore, there's more than one way to reach success. (Participant 14)

Further to other sentiments from youth, this particular youth shared the idea that traditional ideas and markers of success still hold some weight, but other ideas of success are also in need of recognition.

Arguably, some of the youth in this study are able to differentiate between the value of alternative conceptualizations of success, especially when compared to those prescribed by

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adults. Youth seem to recognize the importance of understanding that there are different pathways to achieving success. Further, these findings point to several examples of how youth discuss, define, and conceptualize success in subjective, individualized ways. In order to determine how to best support individuals in achieving ideas of success outlined above, youth were asked what tools or resources would be useful in achieving their ideas of success.

Tools for achieving success. Perhaps not surprisingly, based on the above findings, youth discussed support, relationships, and individual factors as important tools for achieving success, regardless of whether youth were discussing traditional or non-traditional ideas or experiences of success. First, in terms of support and relationships one youth stated,

Having people around you that support you, but are also able to tell you what needs to be done without sugar coating. It's good to have people who support you and understand you and feed you, but it's also important to have people who don't give you watered-down bullshit because you have to have people to give you criticism to mould you into your successes. (Participant 14)

This youth said he values honest relationships and support as a tool for reaching success.

Another youth expressed a similar idea, *"I think that they have to have a supportive family, a good friend group as well. I think they also have to have a certain amount of help to do what they want"* (Participant 16). Again, supportive relationships from family, peers, and other adults were discussed as tools that would help youth reach success.

The majority of youth discussed individual tools to help someone achieve success. Mainly, internal motivation, determination, planning, and overcoming challenges were discussed as the most important tools for achieving success. For example, one youth stated, *"knowing what you're working for and really putting your mind to it"* (Participant 2). Another youth stated,

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“even a little bit of love for what you want to do. It helps you thrive further even when you want to quit” (Participant 19). Like discussing success as working hard and persevering, these youth discussed perseverance and passion as important tools for achieving success. Similarly, one youth discussed that achieving success is, *“just trial and error. If you have success from the get-go it’s not success. It’s overcoming obstacles”* (Participant 4). Other individual qualities described as tools for achieving success included *“respect”, “self-care”, “maturity”, “self-awareness”,* and *“self-control”*.

Some youth bridged both individual and relation-based ideas of tools together to describe a combination of self-drive and support from others as important tools for achieving success. As evidence, one youth explained that someone needs,

A very strong supporting cast. Someone who will help you achieve your goal, stand beside you. And plan as much as possible, like not to predict things way ahead of the future, but short, immediate goals. Try to view many things as if it was a job, that way there is a certain level of seriousness that you will carry. (Participant 3)

Like this youth, another youth shared that someone could achieve success by,

Probably put your mind to it and don’t let anyone say you can’t do it. If you’re trying to make a company, save your money, try to be nice to people, and make more friends so they can support you. (Participant 18)

Echoing what they value as success, these youth reported internal motives and relationships as tools for achieving success. The responses from youth about tools for achieving success seem to align with non-traditional, alternative perceptions of success; however, it is still noteworthy that youth still mentioned traditional ideas and middle-class markers of success.

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Overall, youth discussed both traditional and non-traditional ideas of success. Across experiences and conceptualizations of success, youth noted the importance of employment, school, avoiding harm and trouble, identity-related factors, interpersonal factors, fluidity, non-linearity, progression, perseverance, and overcoming challenges in explaining measures of success. These results support the need for viewing and considering ideas of success through more than just traditional, middle-class values and regarding non-traditional, alternative ideas and experiences of success as significant. Youth also discussed several instances that would point to the complexity, fluidity, and non-linearity of their ideas, experiences, and pathways to success. Youth in this study discussed different influences that shape their ideas of success, including teachers, peers, experiences, parents, and the media. In order to achieve these ideas of success, youth stated that they would need both individual and interpersonal tools and resources. This study also sought to explore the role of SNAP Boys – Youth Leadership Services in helping youth achieve their ideas of success. Arguably, this program could be an avenue of support or a tool to help youth achieve success. The next section explains youth's responses to group components and whether or not they perceived SB-YLS as having a role in their successes.

The Role of SNAP Boys – Youth Leadership Services in Achieving Success

Previous scholars have highlighted the need for intervention and prevention community-based programs for at- and/or high-risk youth to mitigate negative outcomes and criminal justice contact (Loeber & Farrington, 2000). Community-based programs that service youth are often centred around or include strengths-based approaches in their delivery (Aronowitz, 2005; Jones & Deutsch, 2013; Kethineni & Braithwaite, 2011; Kingston, Mihalic, & Sigel, 2016). However, little research has focused on how community-based programs impact at-risk youth's experiences of success from the perspective of youth. Accordingly, the results of this study shed

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light on whether or not youth feel a specific community-based program, SNAP Boys – Youth Leadership Services (SB-YLS), has contributed to their successes.

As mentioned, all participants in this study were engaged in SB-YLS at the time of the study. The majority of the youth actively participated in SB-YLS and attended group at least once a week. A few of the youth were peer mentors or were previously actively engaged in the group, but stopped coming to group as frequently because of work or sports. During the interviews, it was evident that the youth enjoyed responding to the questions pertaining to SB-YLS. Youth spoke highly of the program, the environment created in the group, and the staff involved. The youth shared positive experiences of their time in SB-YLS.

Positive environment and connection to SB-YLS. Youth shared various reasons as to why they keep coming back to the program and group nights. The responses were centred around the activities (i.e., sports and swimming), environment, food, and opportunities (i.e., work, learning). Additionally, youth attributed their participation in group to their connection to the group and the people in the group.

To elaborate, several youth suggested that the environment created in SB-YLS was the reason they came back weekly. All of the youth spoke about the positive environment that is facilitated throughout SB-YLS. For example, youth discussed SB-YLS as a second home: *“I just love it here. It’s like my second home”* (Participant 10). Another youth said he describes the group as,

...a bunch of people that come together once or twice a week, we meet, we have fun, we cook, we eat, we laugh, and we tell each other what’s on our minds. I find because we do all of these, we are a family. (Participant 8)

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Similarly, *“I think it is nice, homey. It’s a good space to be in, and there is definitely a lot of family style components to group”* (Participant 14). These youth said that the group environment was like a space where they felt included and like they were a part of a family. Almost all of the youth also said that the environment in SB-YLS was safe and positive. Others reported that the group was welcoming. One youth elaborated on this by saying, *“...[I] just feel safe, like whenever I come, I feel welcome and like I belong”* (Participant 10). All except two of the youth said that they can be their true self in SB-YLS. The youth reported that they feel comfortable in SB-YLS, which also facilitates their connection to the group.

Some of the youth suggested that they come back to the group because of the connection they have to the program. One of the youth shared, *“...the attachment I’ve naturally grown towards the group”* (Participant 3) was a reason he came back each week. Likewise, one of the other participants who had been attending the program for many years shared, *“I guess there’s a bit of nostalgia, been in and out of the building since I was eight”* (Participant 9). This youth continued, *“it’s fun to be here. Some people are a bit much, but it’s fun to play sports, make food together, sit around the table and talk about goals and stuff. And, I have a lot of respect for the SYLS Coordinator”* (Participant 9). Similarly, one of the older participants shared, *“I like to come back to be a role model to the LITs (Leaders in Training) and to show them that if you work hard enough, you can end up becoming a counsellor like me...”* (Participant 24). These youth described their connection to the group and wanting to give back to the group and younger boys as a reason why they attended regularly. This program follows a continued-care model to support youth long term, which is evidently valued by these youth.

Almost all of the youth said they felt like they were a part of something by attending SB-YLS, with some saying that it felt like they were a part of a family, a community, or just

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generally supported for various reasons. To illustrate, one youth said that engaging in SB-YLS, “...makes me feel a part of an organization that’s helping youth and their mental health struggles and anger issues. It’s fun to be a part of that” (Participant 9). Therefore, the environment and connection to the group itself allows youth to feel like they are a part of something larger than just receiving support for themselves.

Connection to staff and peers. The majority of youth said that they come back to the group because of the people in the group (both staff and other youth). Some of the youth simply stated that they like the people here [in group], while others expanded on why they enjoyed the people. One of these youth expressed,

The people. Both staff and youth. [It’s] nice to interact with the staff and the kids...I’ve seen some of the younger guys mature a bit and it’s really nice to see them mature and stuff. I’m really proud of them and see them grow with the group. (Participant 4)

Another youth stated,

I find that each time I come back here, there’s new stories to be told and new lessons that could be learned – not just for the boys, but also for me. Because I learn what they are going through and the other ways of solving the solution they come up with, and knowing that I can help them makes me a lot happier. (Participant 8)

This participant said that being a part of the program meant learning from other boys and being able to share his knowledge back with them. These connections were echoed by other youth as reasons to continue coming back, as they said that they are able to talk and connect about things that are going on in their lives. Another youth stated, “because I have a lot of friends here and if I have trouble about anything I know I can talk to people about SNAP” (Participant 21).

Evidently, the connections built within SB-YLS were meaningful and important to these youth.

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The majority of youth stated that they have made connections with their peers through attending group. A minority of the youth who have made connections to other youth hang out outside of group together, chat online while playing video games together, and have built close connections. Nonetheless, they are willing and open to share challenges and struggles with each other during group nights and feel that they are in a safe environment to do so. Thus, not only does the environment created in SB-YLS motivate youth to come back to group each week, but youth stated that the program also facilitates connections between youth-youth and youth-staff. The importance of the connections and positive space maintained in SB-YLS follows important program components reported in previous literature as significant for building capacity and resilience in youth (Dawes & Larson 2011; Jones & Deutsch 2011; Povilaitis and Tamminen, 2018). The relationships and connections built in SB-YLS also led to different mentoring opportunities.

Mentorship. Mentorship from staff or other youth was a prevalent theme throughout the responses from youth. Previous literature has outlined the importance of mentors for youth (see Aronowitz 2005; Garroway & Pistrang, 2010; Jones & Perkins 2006). Nearly all of the youth felt that mentors play a role in achieving success. In terms of mentorship from other youth, one youth shared,

I remember when I first started here. I really looked up to two of the peer mentors, because they were also fairly young, but they seemed mature, and I wanted to get to their level. Which I guess I have now, which is really cool for me because one of them was a senior counsellor this summer and I was with him and I got to learn from them but got to do it with them and it's cool because we've followed similar paths. (Participant 1)

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This youth expressed that having someone relatable to look up to was an experience of mentorship that he gained from this program.

Half of the youth directly noted that the SYLS Coordinator was someone who emulated their ideal mentor. However, some youth expanded on this idea. For example, one youth explained that the SYLS Coordinator's support and mentorship had an impact on him for the better:

...I don't think the mentors or staff have directly helped me achieve my goals, but I remember when I was suspended I talked to SYLS Coordinator [name removed] and he said something about my reputation. And it really hit me. Like, I was known as a bad kid and that was when I turned around my act. So, he has definitely changed me for the better. (Participant 4)

This youth continued,

He's very supportive but he isn't dictatorial. He'll tell you but doesn't say DO THIS! Like, he provides us suggestions but won't make you do it. More guidance, gently pushing someone in the right direction instead of shoving them into the right path. (Participant 4)

Similarly, one participant expressed, “... I think having SYLS Coordinator [name removed] there is something that collides with what I think, and he feels what I feel, so he understands from a higher standpoint” (Participant 19). These responses from youth provide powerful examples of how the SYLS Coordinator has been a positive mentor for them. Youth also expanded on other qualities that they look for in mentors, more generally.

Youth identified a few qualities that they look for in a mentor, including a mentor who is supportive, relatable, has a good personality, and whether or not they can learn something from

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them. In terms of having a good personality, youth described that they look for a mentor who is “caring”, “positive”, “skillful and responsible”, “laid back”, “fun to be around”, “able to give constructive criticism”, has “leadership qualities”, and “faith” in those they are working with. In terms of being relatable, youth expressed that mentors need to be able to share similarities and connect with the people they are working with. For example, one youth illustrated this:

...for me it's people who have been through what I want to be. If you look up to them – like SYLS Coordinator [name removed], I want to end up like he is now and that's why I look up to him. I looked up to the counsellors and juniors and I wanted to be them and now I'm a counsellor... (Participant 24)

Youth stated the importance of being able to relate to their mentor, to share similar experiences, and to seek support and guidance from them.

In more general terms, youth reported that they value when a mentor supports them. For example, one youth said, “so what I look for is someone that can help me on my way to becoming a great person, help me with my problems I may have, and show me different ways to go about life” (Participant 8). Likewise, another youth explained support as, “someone that could support me and show me what's right and how to do certain things” (Participant 11). A few of the youth said they look for a mentor that can help them in general, with one youth focusing on achieving goals: “...they like, they push you to think and achievement and goals, they give you goals and it helps me” (Participant 17). Therefore, generally, youth expressed that they look for a mentor who can support them, help them, and be someone that they can relate to.

Self-development. Further, youth identified common ways that their participation in SB-YLS has helped with their self-development and assisted them in learning something about themselves. Two common areas that youth built upon through participating in SB-YLS were

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self-development and emotion regulation. Youth stated that their participation in SB-YLS has helped them learn or strengthen certain personal qualities. For instance, one youth shared,

I've definitely learned that I'm way more responsible than I thought I was. I thought I would drop out of high school and go to prison. If I really try I can do what I want, and I realized that. And all the positions I've had in the summer and mentor, it's made me think of how much I can actually impact other people's lives. (Participant 4)

This youth continued to say,

... I think the program has taught me that it's okay to ask for help. My family, it's like solve it yourself, and if you can't solve it, too bad. I wasn't taught to ask for help. It's, 'try to fix it yourself'. But this program taught me if I can't solve something on my own, ask for help. It really shows the humanity in someone if they can admit that they need help. (Participant 4)

This participant stated that coming to the group has showed him his potential, and that it is okay to seek support on that journey. Another youth shared, *"I've learned how to control my emotions for the most part, and how to be more humble and stuff like that. And leadership skills as well"* (Participant 16). Other youth attributed their developing communication skills to their participation in group. Whether it be responsibility, determining their potential, or communication, youth were able to identify how SB-YLS has helped them learn more about themselves.

Some of the youth shared that they were able to gain new perspectives through participation in SB-YLS, namely through discussing issues with other peers at the table during family-style dinners. One youth described, *"I didn't do all the things I've done that I coulda looked at differently. Say we got into trouble at school, and we talk about it at table in group, we*

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talk about things we could have done instead of it" (Participant 2). Another youth shared that, *"talking to some of the other guys and seeing what they've gone through and seeing what they've done"* (Participant 4) was how he gained new perspectives through participating in SB-YLS. Thus, connecting with other youth who experience similar situations allowed youth to expand their thinking and perspectives and learn more about themselves.

Just under half of the youth noted emotion regulation as something that they learned about themselves in SB-YLS. Emotion regulation developed through participating in SB-YLS was discussed as controlling anger, taking time, controlling themselves, calming down, and staying out of trouble. For example, one youth commented, *"well, for one, that I did have pretty bad anger issues when I started coming. And I learned that I could overcome that and self-regulate and calm myself down in situations that didn't need all that anger"* (Participant 9). As one of the main foci of this program is to help with emotion regulation, it is important and significant that these youth actually express and feel changes in their ability to regulate themselves.

Further, almost all of the youth said that they have been given advice for overcoming challenges through participating in SB-YLS. Youth said that they were given tools or advice through support from staff, learning SNAP and emotion regulation, and from family-style dinner discussions. Therefore, youth explained that this program has helped in various ways, including building self-development and emotion regulation, building connections to other youth and staff, and being mentored and feeling a part of something. However, their participation in SB-YLS also came with some challenges.

Difficulties and challenges in attending SB-YLS. Youth discussed difficulties or anything that they felt challenging about coming to SB-YLS. Less than half of the youth

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experienced challenges or difficulties in relation to SB-YLS. Youth attributed this difficulty to travel time, weather, or not liking certain sports. A few of the older youth stated that sometimes the activities are geared for the younger boys, but they recognize that is because of the needs of the group and are still able to be mentors in these cases. For example, one youth said,

Sometimes it's annoying because I am older than them, so we do kiddie games, like dodgeball – I'm not allowed to be aggressive like I like more action and trying. It almost feels like instead of being in it [SB-YLS], I'm almost taking care. But it's still good because I can show them rights from wrongs and get a little older and focus on what we're here for. (Participant 19)

Thus, even when youth found that the program can be difficult because of age differences, this youth was still able to find positives for themselves, like being a leader or mentor. The fact that these youth feel this way and have experienced strengths-based support is significant for helping youth improve their well-being, self-efficacy, keeping youth safe, and mitigating negative outcomes and/or criminal justice contact. In addition to knowing about the effectiveness of the program, it was an important goal of this study to determine whether or not youth feel that SB-YLS has contributed to their ideas and experiences of success.

Connection between engaging in SB-YLS and achieving success. Youth found that participation in SB-YLS was connected to their experiences of success. All except two of the youth reported this connection. The majority of youth said that the connection between their successes and engagement in SB-YLS was facilitated through the support they receive while in SB-YLS. Although most youth discussed being supported in general terms, some shared that they were supported in school or overcoming challenges; again, some of these youth directly stated that this support came from the SYLS Coordinator or other staff. One youth explained,

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“yeah, I’ve been supported a lot by SYLS Coordinator, I only had one year to become a LIT and I made that happen” (Participant 17). Another youth, in more general terms, said, *“yeah – SYLS Coordinator and staff have helped support me achieve those things”* (Participant 12). As explained, youth connect the support they received in SB-YLS to their successes.

Other youth expressed connections to success from learning, opportunities, and sharing experiences in SB-YLS. For example, one youth stated, *“I mean, looking at my board [success map], a lot of my successes were achieved here. If I wasn’t here, they wouldn’t be possible. It’s not something I can do elsewhere”* (Participant 1). Like this youth, another said,

I would have to say that a portion of success has been within the SNAP program.

Leadership opportunities, jobs, and a lot of my successes have been here alone. Now I have had two paid jobs here, and that shows me I am capable of something... (Participant 4)

Not only did engaging in SB-YLS present this youth with new opportunities, but he said that it also gave him the ability to realize his worth, which adds to the identity building discussed in personal ideas of success.

In regard to identity building, another youth shared, *“yeah, well it’s [SB-YLS] helped me control my anger in different situations, and it’s helped me know when to do something and not, like situational awareness”* (Participant 16). In more general terms, another youth expressed that, *“just coming to group and talking about what it is to succeed and push yourself to do that”* connects his personal successes to his participation in SB-YLS (Participant 24).

Therefore, youth perceive their participation in SB-YLS as contributing to their successes in some capacity. This connection was drawn by youth in terms of learning new things, sharing experiences with each other, being supported, or being given different opportunities. This is an

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important finding as it allows us to consider the need for community programs to aid in helping youth achieve success, so scholars and other stakeholders know how to better support at-risk youth. Youth discussed being given several opportunities to learn, grow, share perspectives, develop their identity, and work through attendance in SB-YLS. Youth also expressed feeling supported through their experiences of success. SB-YLS was able to provide youth the skills and support needed for them to facilitate achievement of successes.

Overall, the risks and challenges, evidence of traditional and non-traditional measures, ideas, and experiences of success, and youth's experiences in SB-YLS all provide interesting insight into exploring the facets of success and how youth can be supported to reach success. Attempting to understand how at-risk youth understand and experience success is not only important for expanding the way criminologists and other stakeholders shape and measure success, but also for building youth up and helping to increase their self-esteem and self-worth. The next chapter includes an in-depth discussion of these results and how the responses connect to the literature and guiding theoretical framework. Implications, limitations, and future directions are also discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This study suggests that there should not be a blanket statement of what success is, nor should there be markers based on only one standard. Life is complex – and arguably, our conceptualizations of success should be, too. The research conducted here has two key findings. First, there is more to the conceptualization of success than traditional and current criminological literature suggests. The linear life course perspective of success should not be the *only* measure of success, especially for at-risk youth. Although youth still adhere to some traditional ideas outlined in life course theory and middle-class markers of success, these at-risk youth discussed different, subjective markers and experiences of success. Thus, success should be discussed through *both* traditional and non-traditional ideas and experiences. The consideration of the structural inequalities, social locations, different identities, agency, choice, and changing social contexts (outlined in intersectionality, individualization, and youth transition literature) provide a lens and foundation for criminologists to view and accept non-traditional, subjective ideas and experiences of success. The results of this study reflect the notion that even when youth experience challenges and risks, they are *not* deemed failures (as prescribed in life course theory), but rather are still able to achieve subjective ideas of success. Rethinking success in these ways would presumably impact the overall well-being of youth.

Second, criminological research should involve more youth voice on matters that impact them. At-risk youth should be given the power to construct and express their experiences and ideas in meaningful ways. When asked, at-risk youth have very interesting things to say and should be considered as the experts on themselves. Using methodological tools that would allow participants to express their thoughts in multiple ways is not only useful for eliciting rich data, but also for the youth.

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This section highlights the main findings from the two guiding research questions used in this study. In doing so, this chapter discusses the complexity of ideas and experiences of success for at-risk youth, SB-YLS as a tool in achieving success, main take-away points, reflections from at-risk youth on their experiences of success, as well as implications, limitations, future directions, and final conclusions.

The Complexity of the Ideas and Experiences of Success of At-Risk Youth

The most important finding of this research is that youth discuss and experience success in complex ways, often bridging both traditional and non-traditional ideas and experiences of success. This finding answers the first research question. Perhaps not surprisingly, youth in this study still embraced perspectives of success discussed by Elder. The markers of success discussed through life course perspectives are still important, powerful, and relevant. But, given the results of this study, these markers need to be expanded. Despite the traditional ideas held by these youth, they have created their own perceptions and ideas of success that invite nuance to the meaning of success and challenge linear, middle-class measures of success. As alluded to, the insights from intersectional, individualization, and youth transition perspectives provide a helpful framework for understanding why at-risk youth may experience and perceive success in non-traditional ways. The perspectives of the youth in this study that resonate with both traditional and non-traditional ideas provide valuable insight into the complexity of the concept and experience of success.

Traditional measures and experiences of success. Traditional ideas and markers of success that were in line with those prescribed in life course theory and recent literature on youth success (see Benner & Wang, 2014; Elder, 1975; Mercer et al., 2014; Wang & Eccles, 2011) included finishing high school, having or getting a job, and avoiding trouble and harm. Youth in

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this study discussed getting good grades in school, doing better in some of their subjects, and holding part-time employment at CDI or elsewhere as successes.

In SB-YLS, school and work are discussed quite regularly with youth, which could lead to their inclusion of school and work in their conceptualizations of success. As some of the main foci of the program are to keep youth engaged in school, out of trouble, and progressing through SB-YLS's employment continuum, it would make sense that these youth consider school, work, and avoiding trouble as successes. Interestingly, the program has outcomes and objectives that reinforce traditional markers of success (i.e., work and school). Thus, it is apparent that youth buy into traditional ideas of success, but possibly because that is what they are exposed to (i.e., in their engagement in SB-YLS). Youth presented as being able to express themselves through experiences of non-traditional successes in addition to the traditional program outcomes and objectives. A possible explanation here is that youth use traditional means or tools to obtain their own subjective, non-traditional experiences or navigate non-linear pathways of success. This illuminates an interesting marriage of traditional and non-traditional conceptualizations and experiences of success to draw a more holistic picture of this concept.

Another explanation for youth discussing traditional markers of success is as youth are between 12 and 20, they are in the developmental time of their lives to be in school or seeking part-time jobs, especially when considering development and success through a linear pathway. For these youth, academic and employment success would follow age-graded transitions discussed by Elder (1975, 1995). It could also be noted that responses were often said in relation to achievements, rather than seeking to meet traditional markers of success. For example, recall that these youth did experience some challenges in school, and therefore, school could be considered successes for these youth possibly in part due to development and progression or

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reaching different achievements despite these challenges. Therefore, these findings lead to the important point that criminological literature need not disregard traditional markers of success completely, as youth buy into attaining some of the grand social roles outlined in life course theory (see Elder, 1994, 1995). Thus, Elder's life course perspectives are still relevant, and possibly fundamental as groundwork to understanding success. Elder's discussion of timing and context are important, but these theoretical ideals need to be updated to embrace modern ideas of success and should consider changing social contexts. Criminologists should also at least accept and understand that there is more to success than just prescribed, middle-class markers noted in current literature. Youth may use traditional tools to discuss or achieve non-traditional markers and experiences of success.

Non-traditional measures and experiences of success. Youth discussed elements of success as a concept and personal experiences through achievements, progression, overcoming challenges, intrinsic factors, and interpersonal connections. The inclusion of achievements (i.e., reaching and achieving goals), progression (consideration of where someone started and where they are at), and overcoming challenges (managing to achieve something despite risks and challenges) as markers or conceptualizations of success may be shaped by the emerging youth culture created by social media. Wiggins and Konetes (2010) point to the idea that social networking sites are changing the way which youth develop, mature, and construct their identities and relationships. However, although there is an increasing amount of research on youth's use of social media, there is little research on the emerging youth culture that has risen out of social media. More research is needed on this to determine the impact on the emerging youth culture on perceptions and experiences of success.

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Additionally, the data collected in this study does not provide enough information to fully accept this as an explanation of why youth consider progression or overcoming challenges as part of success. Further, only a few of the youth discussed the impact of social media as a negative influence on success. However, it could be assumed that these youth see progression and overcoming challenges as success because of their personal experiences with risk and challenges (e.g., transitions between schools and section classrooms, CAS and foster care involvement, frequent housing moves, among others). Given their behavioural challenges, environmental factors, and risk for criminal involvement, at-risk youth in particular may value the effort, resilience, perseverance, and progression of an individual as success. If considering the main insights from intersectionality, individualization, and youth transition literature (Burgess-Proctor, 2006; Côté, 2000; Crenshaw, 1989; Evans & Furlong, 1997; Furlong & Cartmel, 1997; Potter, 2013; Rudd & Evans, 1998; Wyn & Woodman, 2006), the risks embedded in changing social contexts, different social locations and identities, and the role of agency, achievements, progression, and overcoming challenges may be particularly important for marginalized youth who experience risk and adversity. Intersectional perspectives alert us to the need to consider an individual's intersecting social identities together within time, space, and context and provide a lens to critically understand an individual's position and perceptions of success (see Bell, 2013; Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013; Collins, 1993; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991). Thus, there is great importance in considering the experiences of an individual and how this would shape his or her perceptions of success.

Contrary to life course theory and linear pathways to success, overcoming challenges and progression are seen as *part* of success, rather than as failure or negative outcomes (as explained by Elder 1975, 1994, 1995). Youth are expected to take responsibility for the consequences of

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their choices and find appropriate pathways for development and experiences (Côté, 2000; Furlong & Cartmel, 2007). Youth are still able to achieve positive outcomes despite risks and challenges. Thus, it can be argued that the youth in this study embrace the non-linearity, fluidity, and complexity of their lives as non-traditional measures of and pathways to success. Although external factors may play a role in shaping these ideas (i.e., social media), it is possible that progression and overcoming challenges should be taken for what they are worth as significant experiences and important markers of success.

Youth discussed intrinsic factors as non-traditional measures and conceptualizations of success as different characteristics and personal qualities, satisfaction with yourself, being able to take care of yourself, and being happy with who you are. These findings would support the use of individualization literature as a lens for viewing success (rather than life course perspectives) as it considers the importance of identity formation rather than only focusing on large social roles in development, which could arguably be said for success as well (Evans & Furlong, 1997; Furlong & Cartmel, 1997; te Riele, 2004). Viewing success through this lens (i.e., considering agency and focusing on identity building) allows criminologists to understand why youth would conceptualize success in individualized, intrinsic ways.

Finally, related to non-traditional measures and conceptualizations of success, youth discussed success in terms of interpersonal connections. They shared sentiments of success as being able to care for, support, mentor or lead other individuals. Although previous literature discusses support as an important factor in helping youth achieve success (e.g., Iselin et al., 2012), constructs of success lack a meaningful recognition of these connections and support as a marker of success or part of success as an outcome. Similarly, there is an argument to be made that these results would actually be identified as traditional markers of success according to life

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course theory, as this literature discusses marriage as a life event/marker. However, youth in this study discussed more nuance in their ideas of relationships and interpersonal connections as success (e.g., discussing the strength of relationships, what relationships involve, and depths of different connections). This adds another example of the complexity of success. Arguably, criminologists should, then, include more nuance, subjective measures when defining and discussing the concept and experiences of success. Thus, in rethinking and reconceptualizing success, it becomes important to consider nuances in interpersonal connections and support as a form of success, especially for at-risk youth.

Subjective, non-traditional experiences of success shared by at-risk youth echoed the themes from their general conceptualizations of success. Personal experiences of success were related to individual factors (e.g., emotion regulation, self-control, self-development, identity formation, and character development) and interpersonal connections (communication and other social skills, impact on younger kids, relationships, and support). It is noteworthy to mention here that although the youth in this study discussed success in agentic and individualized ways (following the central tenants of individualization perspectives), these youth also recognized the importance of social structures in their experiences of success. Youth in this study were able to recognize and insightfully attribute some of their experiences of success to the support and mentorship they have received. They also include support, relationships, and mentorship as part of their perceptions of success as a concept. Again, connecting the insights from intersectionality (i.e., understanding social locations and structures and how these shape experiences) and individualization (i.e., youth as having agency and choice) creates a holistic picture of how these youth perceive and experience success. This finding underscores the importance of considering success through subjective lenses that reflect the multi-faceted, complex nature of individual

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experiences and lives. In conjunction with interview data on experiences of success, the success maps were particularly useful for eliciting more information and different articulations of similar themes from youth.

In particular, the success maps highlighted the non-linearity and fluidity embedded in experiences and conceptualizations of success. Similar to the descriptions of youth transitions discussed in youth transition literature that recognize and accept fluidity, diversity and non-linearity (Côté, 2000; Furlong & Cartmel, 1997; Furlong, Woodman, & Wyn 2011; Te Riele, 2004), youth identified ups and downs, breaks, and non-linearity when drawing visual representations of their successes. Depending on different points in their life (arguably making success context-specific), these youth were able to identify periods of uncertainty and change in their conceptualizations and experiences of success. Contrary to life course theory explanations of success which follow a linear pathway to reach success with deviations from this linear pathway resulting in negative outcomes, youth described success as having multiple pathways, non-linearity, and subjective ideas embedded within experiences of success. This finding is reflective of insights from intersectionality, individualization, and youth transition literature that beg for the consideration of context, fluidity, uncertain and changing social contexts, agency and choice, and diversity and non-linearity in transitions (Bell, 2013; Cho et al., 2013; Collins, 1993; Côté, 2000; Crenshaw, 1989; Furlong & Cartmel, 1997; Furlong, Woodman, & Wyn 2011; Goodwin & O'Connor, 2005; Vickerstaff, 2003). Inevitably, social contexts and what youth have experienced impact how they understand and go through life. Although Elder (1995; 1998) includes attention to choice, timing, and context in his life course theory, these perspectives should be elaborated on to include more diversity in these experiences, expectations, and changing social contexts. Elder's analysis focused on age-graded transitions and context in terms

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of historical places and time, which grouped birth cohorts together and presumably subjected them to the same, prescribed markers of success. However, within these cohorts, context and experiences needs to be interrogated in more detail to expose differences between individuals and broaden our understanding of how subjective experiences shape ideas and experiences of success. The alternative framework presented in this dissertation that includes insights from intersectionality, individualization, and youth transition literature would present the opportunity to consider diversities in how youth make sense of their experiences and ideas of success.

Influences on success. The main influences that shape youth's ideas of success in this study were family, teachers, peers, experiences, and the media. However, most of these youth discussed the fact that perceptions of success held by adults were wrong, confusing, too traditional, or different than how the youth would discuss and define success. Rather, participants expressed that success can include ideas about how you feel, working hard, and subjective ideas of success, and believed ideas and experiences of success are changing. These youth also said that there is more than one pathway to reach success. Youth explained that adults only see one pathway to success, rather than accepting different or subjective pathways to success. This finding depicts the need to interrogate traditional perspectives of success through the use and integration of other perspectives to create an alternative, holistic framework for success (as argued in this dissertation). Instead of only viewing success through traditional, middle-class means embedded in a linear pathway to success (e.g., Elder, 1994, 1995; Ogle et al., 2016; Wang & Eccles, 2011), the youth in this study highlight the significance and worth of non-linear pathways to success. Additionally, some youth expressed perceived differences in values from adults.

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For instance, one youth shared that he sees the gaming industry as an avenue of success, whereas adults do not. The discrepancy here is that adults often view video games as an unproductive, waste of time with little positive impact on a youth. Some previous research outlines several negative outcomes of playing video games (e.g., Ferguson, 2015). On the other hand, youth see this often as a way to develop different skills, demonstrating hard work and achievements, and a viable way to gain employment and money. To support this, Adachi and Willoughby (2017) indicate that there could be positive outcomes of video game play for youth that promote problem solving, intrinsic motivation, relationships, and well-being.

Therefore, although promoting the benefits of playing video games could be part of an emerging youth culture, an argument can be made in support of the youth. If youth are still developing skills such as determination, perseverance, and work-ethic, are we imposing middle-class, traditional, benchmark standards of success upon them by telling them that video games are not a positive outlet? Presumably here, the important thing would be that they are developing different skills in a way that suits them. Again, it is important to look past standards and prescribed markers of success and accept non-traditional, subjective experiences and ideas of success, especially for at-risk youth. For these youth, it is possible that middle-class markers of success and traditional pathways for achieving success are unattainable.

Thus, alternative avenues to success should also be taken into consideration when discussing and constructing conceptualizations of success and should be recognized as being able to lead to positive outcomes for youth. This and other findings resemble Merton's (1938) perspectives on the unavailability to achieve culturally assigned aspirations and ideals and the resulting strain that individuals experience (see Einstadter & Henry 2006), as well as the delinquent subcultures discussed by Cohen (1955) caused by the frustration and inability to reach

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middle-class standards of status. Alternative means of success need not be criminogenic as explained by Merton or Cohen, nor should they be assumed to result in negative outcomes as explained by Elder (1975). Instead, alternative experiences and ideas of success should be celebrated, rewarded, and valued for their subjectivity. As discussed at the outset of this dissertation, changing the frame of reference for success would allow criminologists and other stakeholders to change their perception of well-accepted ideals of success (see Cohen, 1955). These findings challenge criminologists and other stakeholders to consider the need for rethinking success in non-traditional, subjective ways to account for nuances that result in positive outcomes and success, like those discussed by youth in this study. In addition to influences on success, youth discussed tools that would help them achieve success.

Tools to achieve success. Youth discussed several tools to help them achieve their ideas of success. Primarily, youth discussed support, relationships, and individual factors as the most important resources they would need to reach success. This is in line with previous research that identifies external factors (e.g., socioeconomic status), effort, relationships, and civic activities as *predictors* of success (e.g., Haggis, 2017; Kay et al., 2017; Morimoto & Friedland, 2013; Phinney et al., 2001; Shade, 1983; Smith et al., 2015). Acknowledging and understanding the tools and resources that youth need to reach their ideas of success could help scholars and practitioners meaningfully support youth. One avenue of support that these youth have already seemingly reaped the benefits from is engagement in community programs. Accordingly, the second overarching research question sought to determine the role of SB-YLS in helping at-risk youth achieve their ideas of success.

SB-YLS as a Tool for Achieving Success

This section addresses the second research question. The majority of at-risk youth in this study did report a connection between SB-YLS and their successes. Primarily, youth explained that being supported and having opportunities through participating in SB-YLS played a role in achieving their ideas and experiences of success. To elaborate, youth discussed engagement and support, learning from other youth and adults, sharing experiences, and having new opportunities was how SB-YLS contributed to their experiences of success. Presumably, the different components of the group would allow for the facilitation or environment for youth to feel supported in achieving success. Youth described the positive, family-like environment, connections to other youth, staff, and the group itself, and saw the importance of mentorship as playing a significant role in achieving their ideas of success. In keeping with themes from their ideas of success, the program provided them with positive mentorship and relationships, which they valued and discussed in detail.

Similarly, the youth in this study recognized that they have been able to improve themselves by participating in the program by strengthening personal qualities, emotion regulation, and receiving advice on positive development. The most common, and arguably the most important, theme that youth identified when talking about SB-YLS was the importance of having a role model, a mentor, and someone they could connect with, especially to help them achieve their subjective ideas of success. Evidently, youth recognize the role SB-YLS has played in their experiences of success. The program has outcomes and objectives that are in line with both traditional and non-traditional markers and conceptualizations of success.

Helping at-risk youth achieve subjective ideas of success should be a critical component of community-based programs, as it is in SB-YLS. Directly or indirectly, community-based

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programs should seek to support youth in their experiences of success, but also discuss ideas of success with youth so they can work towards building youth up in these ways. Previous research has pointed to the effectiveness of multifaceted community-based programs in focusing on strengths-based approaches and helping youth overcome adversity and experience positive outcomes (Aronowitz, 2005; Jones & Deutsch, 2013; Kethineni & Braithwaite, 2011; Kingston, Mihalic, & Sigel, 2016); but little research has identified ways in which these programs help youth achieve success. This research fills a small gap in this literature by exploring one community-based program and its role in assisting at-risk youth achieve success.

Main Take-Away Points

The results in this study call attention to the need to conceptualize and understand experiences of success in alternative, subjective ways. Instead of viewing youth as failure if they experience risk, do poorly in school, or deviate from linear pathways, criminologists should lift youth up and focus on ideas and experiences *youth* consider as successes. Overall, youth construct and characterize their successes through individual, interpersonal, and subjective ways, while still maintaining some traditional markers of success. The results from youth point to the importance of recognizing a holistic picture of success, to include more than only traditional markers and accept nuanced, non-linear, fluid, context-specific, subjective ideas and experiences of success. Rather than starkly only choosing between non-traditional and traditional measures of success, criminological literature should consider both ‘types’ of success in conceptualizations of this concept. Being deemed a failure by societal standards can be detrimental to the health and well-being of youth who experience risk, especially when considering the adversity that they have already experienced. Therefore, as a whole, scholars, society, practitioners, and others

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should be accepting of subjective ideas of success and welcoming to different conceptualizations of this complex construct.

Through the consideration of intersecting identities and social locations (see Bell, 2013; Burgess-Proctor, 2006; Potter, 2003), the acceptance of choice, autonomy, and subjectivities of experiences leading to positive outcomes (see Côté, 2000; Evans and Furlong, 1997; Goodwin and O'Connor, 2005; Vickerstaff, 2003), and the exploration of different pathways that include backtracking, veering, and non-linearity across experiences and development (see Furlong & Cartmel, 1997), non-traditional measures of success can be recognized, appreciated, and be held in high regard, just as traditional ideas of success have been for many years. A holistic understanding of a youth can provide insight into the way that he or she thinks about and experiences life. The theoretical framework presented in this dissertation to challenge and expand on the criminological literature that centers around traditional, life course perspectives of success attempts to achieve this holistic approach to understanding success, rethinking, and re-conceptualizing success. The contribution to literature and the significance of this framework is that it takes into account and considers the complexities and intricacies embedded in an individual's identity and context, which inevitably impacts their experiences.

The theoretical framework presented in this dissertation can be used to gain an understanding of how these at-risk youth conceptualize and think about their successes. A supplementary, or complimentary, theoretical framework for considering the successes of youth is Positive Youth Development (PYD). PYD approaches bring to light the idea that all young people have the potential for success and healthy development (Lerner et al., 2005). A PYD approach considers young people as resources to be developed (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003a) and centres its beliefs in the idea that young people require opportunities that aid in personal

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growth (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2016). PYD is a developmental, strengths-based approach used to promote and foster assets in young people (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003a). The PYD approach considers physical, emotional, social, and intellectual development as necessary assets for young people (Benson, Scales, Hamilton, & Sesma, 2006).

PYD is an important, effective approach for understanding how to support youth in fostering and building developmental assets to increase their overall well-being. However, I would argue that the alternative theoretical perspective outlined in this dissertation is still necessary as a first step in theorizing success for at-risk youth as it presents an analysis for understanding *how* youth think about success and *why* they think about success in both traditional and non-traditional ways. In other words, the alternative framework would help stakeholders to first identify and understand how youth conceptualize and experience success, then PYD perspectives would help stakeholders to understand how to help youth *achieve* those success outcomes. PYD is a good framework for programs to use in supporting youth (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003b). Within the context of this dissertation, the ideas from intersectionality, individualization, and youth transition literature present a criminological and sociological framework for understanding success, rather than a psychological, developmental approach. Paired together, the proposed alternative framework and PYD could create a multidisciplinary approach to understanding how young people think about success and how to best support these youth in achieving success and positive outcomes.

In talking to youth directly about success, using more than one mode of communication (i.e., visual methods), scholars can continue to try to understand how youth make sense of the world. Importantly, scholars can portray youth's opinions and experiences so that others can learn from their insights. For at-risk youth, the challenges and risks, autonomy, and choice that

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they are faced with directs them to consider their pathways to and conceptualizations of success differently than other populations (e.g., non-marginalized groups). Their social location positions them to understand and value subjective experiences of success as possibly more important than traditional, well-accepted ideas of success. Instead of solely focusing on traditional ideas and pathways of success as the be-all-to-end-all, scholars need to rethink and reconsider how we talk about success, and accept subjective ideas of success as valuable. In addition, asking youth about their personal successes helps youth to recognize their experiences as success and contributes to focusing on strengths-based approaches in supporting youth. Expanding our conceptualizations of success could potentially lead to an increase in self-esteem, self-efficacy, and well-being as youth would feel as though their ideas and experience of success are valuable. This contributes to building strength-based narratives for at-risk youth. If youth do view traditional ideas of success as valuable, it is important to know why or how these ideas are shaped.

The thoughtfulness in responses given by these youth draws attention to the fact that these youth have the ability to consider different ideas of success as significant and important to their lives, experiences, what they have been through, and what they want in the future. The youth in this study demonstrated that they are able to articulate success for themselves – without having prescriptions of success forced on them. Doing so allows youth to find worth in experiences and ideas that matter to them. Asking youth to share their experiences and ideas of success has been neglected in criminological literature.

That is, at-risk youth have been largely left out of the conversation about success for this group of individuals. Anecdotally, it is worth mentioning an observation from the interviews here. Most youth seemed to enjoy sharing their experiences of success and seemed to demonstrate that they were proud of the experiences they have had so far. Interestingly, when

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asked some of these questions, some of the youth responded with “I don’t want to be cocky”. This was striking, as sharing strengths, accomplishments, and proud moments were misunderstood as something that would make them come across as conceited. When the difference between being conceited and recognizing your strengths and successes was explained, youth were happy to share their successes with me. This was an indication that youth are not given the opportunity to discuss their successes enough.

However, as evidenced, youth have well-articulated, thoughtful ideas that they *want* to share, but are rarely given the chance to do so. It could be argued that there were times when youth expressed naïve pathways for reaching success (e.g., making a lot of money from YouTube and video games); but, these youth were still articulating what *they* thought success was. Even though these ideas may be naïve, it is still important to know that youth think about success in this way. Therefore, if researchers recognize the desire of youth to share their ideas and see youth as collaborators in research projects, researchers can act as an avenue to help youth express their ideas so stakeholders can learn how best to support youth in their needs and their paths to success. Of note, asking youth to express their ideas and experiences of success verbally and creatively proved effective in eliciting more data from each youth. Their articulation and thoughtfulness in answers tell a vivid story of their experiences and how they see the world. As criminologists, we need ask youth about their experiences and listen to what they have to say.

Reflections from At-Risk Youth on their Experiences of Success

As part of this study, youth were asked to engage in a reflection based on their experiences of success. At the end of the interview, I had youth look at their success maps and posed two questions: 1) If I were to tell you about a guy who achieved (reiterate successes), what would you say about him?; and 2) How does it make you feel looking back at all of your

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successes? Based on the responses from youth, it can be assumed that this exercise served to increase their self-esteem (even if only in that moment). This speaks to the importance of having youth verbally reflect on their successes and the need to do this more often. Youth expressed varying emotions when asked these questions, ranging from shock, disbelief, happiness, and surprise, evidenced not only by their facial reactions, but also in their answers.

Themes from responses from the reflection questions included feelings of accomplishments, disbelief, happiness, impressed, sentiments of ‘more to come’, surprise, intelligence, increase in self-esteem, and progression. One youth responded to the first question by saying, “...*I would say he sounds like a really cool dude. He seems he would be a very good role model for younger youth and with his positivity, he could put a lot of change out there*” (Participant 19). Another youth shared, “*I would say nice job. I would say he seems successful in his own right so far. He’s definitely showed himself to be very capable*” (Participant 4). Youth were able to reflect on their strengths and successes in various ways. The potential increase in self-esteem and well-being was notable in how youth answered the second question, about how reflecting on their successes makes them feel.

With the exception of three youth, youth in this study spoke positively in their reflections on their personal successes. One youth stated, “*it makes me feel pretty wicked! Like, over all of these years, I’ve been able to accomplish all of this!*” (Participant 18). Likewise, another youth said,

I feel happy, I’ve achieved a lot and I’ve worked hard to get where I am, and I know I have a lot to do before I can achieve my ultimate goal, but I have no doubt I’ll achieve it.

(Participant 8)

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Highlighting the significance and impact of actually talking to youth about their successes and obtaining youth voices, one youth expressed, “...*I still don't believe it. When you say it like you did all that, I'm like, whoa, that's really me. I've done all that. It didn't feel like I did all that. Not to me*” (Participant 1, 2019). Similarly, another youth said,

I guess looking back it's really overwhelming, because I didn't pay attention to the things I was gaining and learning until you told me to map it. I didn't know I accomplished so much until I had to map it out. (Participant 3)

These two quotes specifically not only speak to the effectiveness of the success map as a tool for allowing youth to express themselves creatively, but also implies the benefits of having at-risk youth talk about their own successes. Importantly, the success map provided youth with an opportunity to reflect on their lives in a systematic, unique way that they were able to choose and control. Thus, the success maps are a different technique that can be used to elicit self-reflection in a critical way. Not only is it essential to discuss successes in programming, but also in other areas of young people's lives (e.g., at school, home). In order to build youth up, increase their self-esteem and self-worth, and contribute to their strengths-based narrative, it seems critical to have youth explicitly talk about and reflect on their successes.

Therefore, this study challenges and expands on linear, life course perspectives of success currently found in criminological literature with a non-traditional, subjective theoretical framework for understanding success. At-risk youth, and presumably other populations of individuals, do not need to adhere to normative, middle-class markers of success to experience success. Rather, conceptualizations of success should seek to include a variety of ideas and experiences that consider context, social locations and identities, and agency. Subjective measures and experiences of success allow us to consider an individual in a holistic manner,

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rather than limiting them to societal standards. This research advances the criminological literature by challenging current conceptualizations of success and pushing this conversation forward by including youth perspectives on success. The theoretical framework that includes intersectional, individualization, and youth transition literature and results from this study provide the foundation for rethinking and reconceptualizing success, especially from the perspective of at-risk youth. As evidenced, at-risk youth in this study discussed success in complex ways. Therefore, achieving success for these youth is not as clear cut as prescribed in life course theory and current conceptualizations of success, but rather emphasizes and combines both non-traditional and traditional measures and experiences of success. Evidently, success should be considered through a multidisciplinary approach to holistically understand the complex lives of youth and their related ideas and experiences of success.

Implications

There are several reasons why the results of this study are important for practice, theory, and research. First, understanding how at-risk youth think about and experience success is helpful to know in order to continue to support these youth in community-based programs. This study is useful in informing how criminologists and practitioners work with at-risk youth. The descriptions and experiences discussed by at-risk youth in this study can be incorporated into community-based programs in order to support youth in experiencing success. Finding ways to help youth work on character and identity development and relationship building, as well as providing at-risk youth with the space, environment, and resources to help them overcome challenges would seek to help youth reach subjective ideas of success. Importantly, a group component should include providing youth with a safe space where they can discuss and talk about their successes so practitioners can play a role in helping youth achieve success. As

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evidenced by youth in this study, positive adult-youth relationships and support are seen as components of success. Povilaitis and Tamminen (2018) report that positive adult-youth relationships and safe spaces provides the structure for youth to explore their development, well-being, and new opportunities. Therefore, merging findings from previous literature and this study allows for the consideration of the significance of giving youth the space to feel heard and to have their successes viewed as such. As mentioned above, understanding how young people think about and experience success (following the alternative framework in this study) is important to inform the way practitioners work with youth. After identifying ideas and experiences of success, a positive youth development approach in programming would be an effective developmental framework to achieve the above, and the following successes and positive outcomes in programming.

Further, the youth in this study repeatedly talked about the need for interpersonal connections, social support, and mentorship as markers of success and in SB-YLS. As a result, strength-based programs should adopt a strong focus on mentorship and support in deep and *meaningful* ways. To elaborate, community-based programs could approach their programming through a continued-care model, like SB-YLS. The data presented in this study reinforces the need for impactful mentorship, a welcoming environment, and social connections in community-based programs that has been identified in previous research and in PYD approaches (de Anda, 2001; Jones & Deutsch, 2013; Loeber & Farrington, 2000; Noam & Fiore, 2004; Ramey et al., 2018; Resnick, Ireland, & Borowsky, 2004; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2016; Salusky et al., 2014). However, as mentioned, the alternative framework guiding this research takes a criminological and sociological approach to understanding success and how to help youth achieve success.

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Second, the theoretical implications of this research invites scholars to critically analyze the traditional, middle-class theoretical framing of success. This study does not suggest that linear, life course, middle-class markers of success are wrong or that this theoretical foundation should be dismantled. Rather, the argument here (supported by results) is that middle-class standards of success may not be the *only* measures of value or attainable to at-risk youth. Therefore, we must challenge well-accepted notions of success and expand our thinking and understanding of success to include non-traditional, subjective constructs and experiences of success that consider the insights from intersectionality, individualization, and youth transition literature. The proposed alternative framework for understanding success pushes the criminological conversation of success forward by filling a theoretical gap in literature and offering a new, holistic lens to be used to understand success. Through the use of this theoretical lens, youth's non-traditional, alternative ideas and experiences of success should be rewarded and celebrated.

Last but not least, this study has implications for criminological research methods. As alluded to, this research calls attention to the importance of including youth voice in research. Currently, there are often a number of ethical limitations, considerations, and restrictions that create barriers to doing research with young people and are 'adultist' in nature (see Skelton, 2008). For instance, obtaining consent can often act as a barrier to youth participation in research, which is contradictory to the right of the young person to be seen as competent social actors able to participate in the research and to have a say in issues that impact their lives (see Skelton, 2008 for a critical analysis of ethical guidelines in social science research following the rights documents in the UN Convention for the Rights of the Child 1989).

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This becomes problematic for seeing youth as collaborators or subjects of research, rather than how they are often currently viewed, as objects of research (Bassett, Beagan, Ristovski-Slijepcevic, & Chapman, 2008; Grover, 2004; Mishna, Antle, & Regehr, 2004). Because of ethical restrictions, although it is possible to do research with young people, it is increasingly difficult to reach this population. This leads to adults speaking *for* young people, rather than speaking *with* young people. Young people need to be consulted and should be considered as experts on matters that impact them and have the right to be included in research as competent social actors (Carter, 2009; Skelton, 2008). Although ethical considerations are of course necessary, this research sheds light on the powerful, insightful, and thoughtful views of young people. As criminological researchers, we should seek to make youth active agents in the research process to understand how at-risk youth view the world.

This research also offers a methodological tool that can be used in research (or practice) with young people. The use of the success map can help researchers on similar endeavors elicit additional information from youth and help youth see themselves in a different light. The visual representation of the interview discussion could prove helpful to youth in expressing their views and recognizing their successes, accomplishments, and life in a holistic manner. In addition to collecting rich data from youth, this tool also provides an avenue for self-reflection. Previous literature points to the effectiveness and use of art-based exercises and visual methods to collect data (see Cambre, 2019; Edmondson, Brennan, & House, 2018; Ravn & Duff, 2015). Criminologists should be more open to using a variety of tools with at-risk youth as it provides a different way for youth to express themselves, enhances data, and can act as an avenue for youth to recognize their self-worth (as it is often easier to see things visually than only verbally discussing them). For particular groups of youth, this type of methodological tool may be more

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age appropriate or may be easier for youth to articulate what they want to say, especially in creative ways. Above all, allowing at-risk youth to define success in their own terms and to see their experiences as success can prove useful for their overall well-being. Although this study has salient implications for the field of criminology and social justice, it is not without limitations.

Limitations

There were several limitations in this study. First, this was a self-selected group of youth who have been through cognitive-behavioural prevention programming, focused on helping youth with behavioural challenges, emotion regulation, and helping youth stay out of trouble and in school. Therefore, these youth have discussed their strengths and positive outcomes in group settings, which could impact the framing of their ideas and experiences of success. In other words, the youth's experience in SB-YLS which takes a strengths-based approach could be why youth view success the way that they do. Moreover, since the interviews were conducted at CDI, they were in an environment where they are reminded of strength-based approaches and tools for self-development. Thus, the location of interviews could impact the way they shape their answers about success. Due to the nature of this study, the sample size in this study was small. However, because I was only interviewing youth in SB-YLS, I was limited to the number of youth who attended/engaged in SB-YLS over the time of data collection.

Additionally, since I volunteered during group nights and the summer program at CDI, youth were quite familiar with me. Although youth understood that I was a student volunteer and not a staff at CDI, they still may have felt that they needed to give me socially desirable answers. For example, only a few youth in this study reported very occasional drug use and little alcohol use. Youth in this study may have been underreporting or telling me what they think I wanted to

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hear because of my position of authority or status with respect to these youth. However, the pillars of SB-YLS center around family style dinners, sports, mentorship, and an employment continuum, all of which would act as protective factors for helping youth avoid frequent risks to some extent (Hartmann & Depro, 2006). In particular, previous research on family-style dinners have shown that group discussions that have a prosocial foundation can impact risk factors (see Eisenberg, Olson, Newmark-Sztainer, story, & Bearinger, 2004). Every week youth engage in a family-style dinner and talk about issues they are experiencing. Through table conversations, these youth are made aware of the impact and repercussions of substance use or other negative outcomes. Further, participants may have been more willing to talk to me because they trust me, leading to richer data. However, my insider role may have been a limitation in this study.

Additionally, as SB-YLS is part of a continued care model, staff have sought to intervene and engage youth in programming before the age of 12, and then help youth navigate the turbulence of youthhood. Intervening early and continuously across development for avoiding risk factors such as substance use has been noted in previous literature (Bogenschneider, 1996; Murthey et al., 2009; Tait, Hulse, & Robertson, 2004). Thus, it can be argued that through the continued-care nature of SB-YLS, the youth engaging in this program have the right supports to help them avoid drug/alcohol abuse. Therefore, it is possible that youth do not use drugs and alcohol, even though high-risk youth in this age group typically do. My insider/outsider role allowed youth to feel safe to open up and be expressive in the interview, but also may have impacted youth's answers about their risks and challenges.

Further, this study only focused on at-risk male youth and their conceptualizations and experiences of success. Therefore, the results of this study are not generalizable to other populations of youth, nor is it generalizable to girls. There would need to be a gender-specific

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interview schedule for exploring success with girls. It was outside the scope of this dissertation to focus on multiple groups of youth. Presumably, though, other groups of youth would also discuss both traditional and non-traditional ideas and experience of success to create a holistic understanding of success. To speculate, youth who are not considered to be 'at-risk' may readily accept, embrace and aspire to achieve traditional markers of success. Conversely, high-risk youth may be more inclined to reject middle-class, traditional markers of success because they believe they cannot achieve them. However, I would speculate that, to some degree, it is likely that different groups of youth would discuss both traditional and non-traditional ideas and experiences of success. This point is further addressed in suggestions for future research.

There are a few methodological limitations in regard to the use of the success maps. First, it would have been beneficial to explore more about the process and experience of the mapping exercise. Determining more detail on reflexivity from youth would have potentially allowed more information to be drawn regarding the impact of the exercise on the youth. Additionally, digging into feeling and affect around the mapping exercise would have also potentially lent more insight into whether or not discussing success in different ways actually helped increase the well-being and self-esteem of at-risk youth. However, as the focus of this study was not on the use of different methods with youth, eliciting more information on the success map would have made the interview longer than it already was and is outside the scope of this dissertation. Exploring this method in further detail should be reserved for a study where this method is the center and primary method of data collection. The limitations of this study could be addressed through future research.

Future Directions

Given the limitations and implications of this study, future research should attempt to explore conceptualizations of success with different populations of youth. As this study involved a self-selected group of youth in programming, it might be interesting to involve a group of youth who have not participated in prevention or intervention programming or with youth with active criminal justice involvement/contact. A comparison of ideas and experiences of success between youth in programming and youth who have not been involved in community-based or clinical programming could continue to push this conversation forward to understand success in a variety of contexts. A comparison of ideas and experiences of success between youth in programming and youth who do not engage in programming may also provide helpful insight into the potential efficacy of community-based programs. This study provides evidence of different ways of experiencing and talking about success for marginalized youth, but future research could explore if this is similar across youth (possibly connected to an emerging youth culture). Likewise, examining perceptions of success across populations of individuals (i.e., adults) would also seek to expand our understanding of non-traditional, subjective ideas and experiences of success.

Additionally, a deeper exploration of the non-traditional theoretical framework would be another avenue to explore. For example, questionnaires could include more in-depth questions that attempt to explore whether or how intersecting identities relate to experiences of success. In this study, evidence of youth transitions and individualization themes were evident through participant responses. However, there was less evidence of intersectionality insights in the youth's responses. Future studies should consider how to bring about experiences of intersectionality through youth responses. Similarly, future research could also seek to explore

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more about how ideas of success are shaped and what influences an individual's idea and experience of success. As discussed above, it would be particularly useful to have some insight into the potentially new emerging youth culture that rises through the use of social media.

Scholars could also look into the role of masculinity in shaping ideas of success. The youth in this study were fairly open, honest, and vulnerable in their definitions of success. For example, youth were open about expressing identity, emotion, and support related ideas and experiences as successes, instead of responding in ways that would align with stereotypical, 'masculine' ideas of success (e.g., having a lot of money or nice cars). Although it was out of the scope of this dissertation to explore the influence of hegemonic masculinity on perceptions of success, it is a note-worthy and important area to consider. In a more general sense, exploring gendered ideas of success would be an interesting avenue to pursue.

Importantly, future research should look to continue including youth voice in this discussion. As outlined above, the inclusion of youth voice can add rich perspectives to research and enables youth to exercise their rights to participate in research (see Beazley et al., 2009; Checkoway, 2011; Curtin & Murtagh, 2007; Lundy & McEvoy, 2011). Using tools like the success map used in this study may be a valuable way to elicit different information from youth. It would be worthwhile for researchers to use this method as the only source of data collection to have youth engage in reflexivity to determine more about the process of doing the exercise and to dig deeper into the way this exercise makes youth feel. Researchers are encouraged to use similar tools in collecting data with youth.

Conclusions

As mentioned at the outset of this dissertation, criminological literature (and society as a whole) still continues to put benchmarks on notions, experiences, and ideas of success.

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Attempting to understand success only through life course perspectives is perhaps a good starting point for considering success, but inevitably works to disadvantage the already disadvantaged and perpetuates systemic inequalities that permeate society. Similarly, narrowly focusing success for young people primarily on academic success has important elements, but neglects a whole picture of what a youth values, can accomplish, or considers as success. This becomes increasingly problematic for marginalized, at-risk youth who see and experience success in a different way.

Therefore, the use of the combination of intersectionality, individualization, and youth transition literature as a framework for understanding success helps criminologists analyze why an individual may conceptualize success through subjective ideas and experiences. Readers should not only care about this research for expanding our ways of thinking and defining success for at-risk young people, but also for other populations of individuals. The truth is, success is not a simple idea. It is a complex idea, with multiple layers and intricacies that can only begin to be unpacked in a single dissertation. It is a concept in need of further exploration with collaboration of youth and different populations of individuals. This dissertation has sought to fill a small gap in understanding the complex phenomenon of success and to illuminate the need to think deeper and differently about this concept in criminological literature, especially from the perspectives of at-risk young people. More broadly, Western societies should also move past embracing only middle-class, normative measures and standards of success. As demonstrated in this dissertation, the reality is that success is much different than the middle-class, traditional standards would suggest. Thus, expanding the conceptualization of success should not only be a concern for criminologists, but should also be raised as a societal concern. In order to continuously work to build youth up, increase their self-esteem and self-worth, and to add to the strengths-based

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narrative of at-risk youth, criminologists (and society as a whole) need to look past traditional conceptualizations of success and rethink how success is discussed, measured, and experienced by at-risk youth.

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Appendices

Appendix A. Recruiting Pitch

Recruiting Pitch

Principal Investigator: Kaitlin Fredericks, B.A.
Research Supervisor: Dr. Carla Cesaroni, PhD

University of Ontario Institute of Technology
(905) 409-7658 (Kaitlin Fredericks) or (905) 721-8668 (Research Services)
Kaitlin.fredericks@uoit.ca or compliance@uoit.ca REB file #: 15-103

As you know, I am a student at the University of Ontario Institute of Technology looking to do interviews with youth ages 12-20 who are currently participating in SNAP Boys – Youth Leadership Services. I am trying to study how youth describe and discuss success. For example, what you think success means, things you are proud of, your strengths, and your accomplishments. I am also interested in discussing different topics regarding SNAP Boys – Youth Leadership Services. I will ask you a variety of questions about success and the related topics already mentioned. Then, I will ask some questions about your experiences, challenges, and your personal life. These questions will involve discussing experiences like friends, activities, school, family, any criminal justice/authority contact, and other aspects about your life growing up. During our time together, we will conduct an activity that will help create a map of experiences related to successes we discussed earlier. The last set of questions will include questions about SNAP Boys – Youth Leadership Services.

Everything we talk about will be completely confidential. That means that I will never record your name, so no one will be able to trace your answers back to you. These interviews will be conducted in a room with just you and me, so I will be the only one with access to your answers. When I write about this study, responses will be reported in a group manner. The information will be written in an academic journal, but never in a way where you could be identified. You don't have to talk to me if you don't want to. If you do choose to talk to me, you are free to stop the interview at any time if you are uncomfortable and don't want to finish. Or, if there are questions you don't want to answer, you can choose to skip those questions. To show my appreciation, you will get a \$15.00 Tim Horton's gift card for participating in this study.

If you are interested in participating, you can talk to me or Abdi, and we will set up an interview time and day.

Appendix B. Interview Schedule

Interview Questions

Principal Investigator: Kaitlin Fredericks
Research Supervisor: Dr. Carla Cesaroni, PhD

University of Ontario Institute of Technology
(905) 409-7658 (Kaitlin Fredericks) or (905) 721-8668 x 3693 (Ethics Compliance Officer)
Kaitlin.fredericks@uoit.ca or compliance@uoit.ca REB File #: 15-103

Participant ID number:

Date of Interview:

Study Name: Finding Success in Life: The Voices of At-Risk Youth

(After completing the informed consent form) I am going to begin by asking you a little bit about your personal life and your life growing up. I just want to remind you that if you don't want to answer any of the questions, that's okay and you can just let me know. If anything is not clear or you don't know what I am talking about, please let me know and I will try to explain it better. You can watch as I type in the answers to ensure that I am documenting what you say correctly, and that everything is typed and documented the way you want. All of your answers will be kept anonymous, which means that no one except me will know who you are. I never write down your name. All of your answers will also be kept confidential, that means that no one will have access to this information and your answers except for me and my supervisors. Your perspectives and answers will be brought together and shared in a paper – however, no one will know that you specifically gave a certain answer.

Please tell me as much as you possibly can and be as honest as you can, as your answers will be very helpful to me and this project. I just want to remind you once again that none of this information can be traced back to you, and you won't get in any trouble by answering my questions. The only answers I have to tell someone about would be if you tell me you are harming yourself or someone else is harming you.

1) How old are you?

2) How would you describe your racial/ethnic background (i.e. would you describe yourself as ...)?

1) Black

Probe for next two questions: I am going to ask you two questions about your sexual orientation and your gender identity. In case you are unfamiliar with these terms, when I say sexual orientation I mean your attraction to another person. When I ask you about your gender identity, I mean how you feel on the inside and how you express yourself through your clothes, personal appearance, and behaviour.

FINDING SUCCESS IN LIFE: THE VOICES OF AT-RISK YOUTH

3) How would you describe your sexual orientation (*Probe: Would you say you are straight, gay, or something else?*)

4) How would you describe your gender identity? (*Probe: Would you say you are male, or describe your gender differently?*)

5) How old were you when you started in SNAP programs (*Probe: under 12-program*)?

1) 6

6) How old were you when you started in SNAP Boys – Youth Leadership Services? (Also indicate number of years in SB-YLS program)

1) 11

SUCCESS

Now we are going to move to questions about success, and your ideas of success. It is important here for you to express your opinions in your own words, based on what you believe to be true about success. Again, you can tell me as much or as little information as you would like, but more information will be helpful in getting youth perspective on this topic to help people your age.

7) If someone were to ask you what success meant, what would you tell them? What do you think it means?

8) Who is a person(s) you would consider as successful? Why? (*Probe: someone you look up to or are inspired by*)

8 b) What do you think makes them successful?

9) Who is a celebrity you would consider successful? Why?

10 b) What do you think makes them successful?

11) Where do you think ideas about who is a success come from (e.g., media, peers, teachers, family)?

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12) How much do you agree with the following being a marker of success for people around your age?

- a) Living by yourself
 - 1) Strongly agree
- b) Getting good grades in school
 - 1) Strongly agree
- c) Being good at sports
 - 1) Strongly agree
- d) Finishing high school
 - 1) Strongly agree
- e) Having supportive relationships
 - 1) Strongly agree
- f) Feeling good about yourself/ being happy with who you are
 - 1) Strongly agree
- g) Being able to take care of yourself (i.e., cooking for yourself, doing your laundry, getting yourself to school)
 - 1) Strongly agree
- h) Staying out of trouble
 - 1) Strongly agree
- i) Have a lot of money
 - 1) Strongly agree
- j) Have a job
 - 1) Strongly agree

13) Is there anything wrong or confusing about how adults talk about success?

14) What are some things that you are proud of?

15) What are some of your achievements?

16) What are some of your strengths?

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- 17) What kind of things can you do better than other people?
- 18) What kind of skills or behaviours do you have that you are happy or thankful for?
- 19) Have your ideas of what you're proud of, your achievements, your strengths, or things you are happy for changed as you have grown up?
- 20) What kind of skills or tools would help you reach your ideas of success? In other words, how would someone achieve success?
- 21) If you were to write a letter to yourself about how to be successful when you were 10 years old, what would you say?
- 22) Is there anything about success or your ideas and markers of success that you want to tell me that I haven't asked you about?

Now, I am going to ask you the questions about your personal life, some potential challenges you might have faced, and your life growing up. Please remember – if you do not want to answer a specific question, just let me know and we can move to the next question.

SCHOOL

- 23) Do you go to school?
1) daily
- 23 b) If yes, what grade are you currently enrolled in?
1) Grade 6
- 24) How are you doing in school?
1) doing well in all subjects
- 25) Does your teacher(s) ever have to talk to you during class because of your behaviour?
1) Never
- 25 b) If yes, why?
- 26) Is there any way your teacher treats you that you don't think is fair? (*Probe: what do you think fairness is at school? Can you give me an example?*)

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27) Are there any teachers that support you in a positive way? (*Probe: What does being positively supported by a teacher mean to you? Can you give me an example?*)

28) Have you ever been suspended or expelled from school (Note how many times)?

1) never

28 b) If you were sent home, suspended, or expelled, what was it for? (*Probe: Do you think it was a fair consequence?*)

29) Have you ever had to change schools before?

1) Never

29 b) If yes, why? (*Probe: Do you think it was fair that you had to change schools? How did it make you feel to start at a new school?*)

30) Do your peers ever bully or tease you for the way you look, behave, speak, or dress?

1) Never

30 b) If yes, can you give me an example?

31) What do you think makes school harder (*Probe: going to school, participating, succeeding, interactions, and environment*)

32) What do you think makes school easier? (*Probe: going to school, participating, succeeding, interactions, and environment*)

33) Do you like going to school? Why or why not?

1) Yes

34) How would you rate your overall experience at school?

1) positive

34 b) Why is that?

EMPLOYMENT

35) Have you ever had a job?

1) Yes

FINDING SUCCESS IN LIFE: THE VOICES OF AT-RISK YOUTH

36) If yes, how many different places have you worked?

1) one or two

36 b) If yes, what type of work have you done? *Note how long worked in each place (Probe: What did you like/dislike about this work?)*

37) Have you ever been let go or fired from a job?

1) No

37 b) If yes, for what reason?

37 c) How did that make you feel?

37 d) What is it that made this hard for you?

VOLUNTEER

38) Have you done any volunteer work?

1) Yes

38 b) If yes, how many different types of volunteer work have you done? *Note how long volunteer in each place (Probe: What did you like/dislike about this work?)*

1) one or two

39) What type of volunteer work have you done? *(Probe: What did you like/dislike about this work?)*

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

40) Do you play any organized/team sports? *Note if in the past or present (Note: Examples given by youth like playing basketball with friends will be recorded under hobbies)*

1) Yes

40 b) If yes, how often?

1) daily

40 c) What type of organized/teams sports do you play?

40 d) How long do you play for when you do play?

1) more than 2 hours

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40 e) How important is playing sports to you?

1) Very important

40 f) How competitive are you when you play sports?

1) Very competitive

40 g) Compared to other people your age, do you play organized/team sports...

1) more often than others

41) Do you engage in any other activities or hobbies?

1) Yes

41 b) If yes, how often?

1) daily

41c) What type of activities or hobbies do you engage in?

41 d) How long do you do these activities or hobbies when you do engage in them?

1) more than 2 hours

41 e) How important are the activities or hobbies to you?

1) Very important

41 f) Compared to other people your age, do you engage in activities or hobbies...

1) More often than others

42) Do you belong to any clubs, organizations, or groups other than SNAP?

1) Yes

42 b) If yes, what kind?

DRUGS AND ALCOHOL

In the next few questions, a drink will be an alcoholic drink like for example beer, a shot of liquor like vodka or rum, a glass of wine, a cocktail like a rum and coke or vodka and soda. Just to remind you, all of your answers will be kept completely anonymous and confidential.

43) Have you had an alcoholic drink in the last 12 months?

1) never

44) How old were you the first time you had an alcoholic drink?

1) 18 or over

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45) Approximately how many drinks would you have when you do drink? (*Probe for binge drinking*)

1)1-3

46) In the past 12 months, have you ever gone to school after you've been drinking?

1)never

46) In the past 12 months have you ever been to work or volunteering after you've been drinking?

1) Never

47) Have you done any drugs in the past 12 months?

1)never

47 b) If yes, what kind of drugs do you do (*Probe for recreational use of prescription drugs or illegal drugs*)?

48) How often would you do these drugs? (Enter drug and corresponding time if multiple drug use – otherwise question 27 is fine).

49) How old were you the first time you tried drugs (*Note what drug they tried at that age*)?

1)18 or over

50) In the past 12 months have you ever gone to school high?

1) never

51) In the past 12 months have you ever gone to work or volunteering high?

1)Never

FRIENDS AND RELATIONSHIPS

52) How many friends do you have (you can talk about people you would consider close friends)?

1) more than 5

53) If you were upset or happy about something, are your friends people you can trust to talk to?

1) Yes

54) Do you ever get into any trouble with your friends – at school, at home, or in the community? (Indicate which location they get into trouble)

1) Never

55) Have any of your friends ever had any contact with the criminal justice system? (Police, probation officers, etc.)?

1) None

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56) Do your friends use drugs or alcohol?

1) None

CRIMINAL JUSTICE CONTACT

57) Were you ever involved in crime but not necessarily caught?

1) No **NOTE NOT FOLLOW UP**

58) If yes, how old were you?

1) 18 and over

59) Have you ever been stopped or talked to by the cops for something you did, even when you weren't necessarily doing something wrong? (*Probe: How did it make you feel to be treated this way?*)

1) never

60) Have you ever had police contact for your own misbehaviour?

1) Never

61) Have the police ever come to your house for something other than your own behaviour? (*Probe for what type of behaviour*)

1) Never

62) Have you ever had any positive police contact? (*Probe: Been supported by the police, guest talks at school or elsewhere, positive interactions*)

1) No

63) Have you ever been arrested in your life?

1) No

63 b) If yes, how many times?

1) once

64) Have you ever been to court before?

1) No

65) How old were you the first time you went to court? (*Note whether they were in court for something they did or for another reason*)

1) 18 or over

66) In total, how many times have you gone to court? (*Note whether they were going for something they did or for another reason*)

1) once

FAMILY

FINDING SUCCESS IN LIFE: THE VOICES OF AT-RISK YOUTH

67) Who do you live with?

1) with both parents

68) Have you moved in the last two or three years?

1) never

69) While you've been growing up, who has raised you most of the time?

1) both parents

70) When you are not home how often do your parents/caregivers know where you are?

1) almost always

71) How many of your friends do your parents/caregivers know?

1) most of them

72) How often do your parents/caregivers ask you about school?

1) almost always

73) How often do they praise you for things you do (tell you you're doing a good job)?

1) almost always

74) Do you ever wish you were closer to your parents/guardians than you are?

1) Almost never

75) Can you talk to your parents/guardians about how you are feeling?

1) yes

76) Have you had any big disagreements or fights with your parent/guardians before?

1) Never

77) Do you have any brothers or sisters?

1) none

77 b) If yes, do you get along with your sibling(s)?

1) always

78) Has your family ever received financial assistance?

1) never

79) To your knowledge, has the Children's Aid Society (CAS) ever been involved with your family? (*Indicate in which way or why, if willing to share*)

1) No

80 b) If yes, has CAS ever separated you from your family or parents?

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1)No

81) Did you ever live in foster care or a group home? *(Note how long, if yes)*

1)No

SUCCESS MAP

82) In this part of the interview, we are going to do an activity together. You can share as little or as much as you want, but the more the better! I'm going to ask you to draw or map out your successes (based on your ideas we just discussed or anything else you can think of that might make you feel successful). You can talk about any ideas, behaviours, experiences, or actions that you consider personal successes. Anything you decide is a success of yours can be drawn or written onto your success map. *(Probes to be reflected or noted on map: experiences that changed or developed, how they achieved their successes, who/if anyone supported them to achieve the success discussed, if these successes help them through difficult times)*

SNAP BOYS - YOUTH LEADERSHIP SERVICES

Now I am going to ask you some questions about your engagement in SB-YLS. I just want you to remember that everything we talk about is completely confidential. So, no one will know it is you that said any of these answers, and your answers will not impact your participation in SNAP.

83) How often do you attend SNAP Boys – Youth Leadership Services (SB-YLS)?

84) What keeps you coming back to SB-YLS?

85) How would you describe the environment in SB-YLS? *(Follow up: is it a safe space?)*

86) Has there been anything uncomfortable or difficult about coming to SB-YLS?

87) Have you made any connections with peers through attending SB-YLS?

87 b) If yes, are these guys that you can talk to about any difficulties you're having, or anything good that happens to you? *(Follow up: Do you hang out with these guys outside of the program?)*

88) Do you think mentors or other adults play a role in helping you achieve success?

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88 b) If yes, what kind of characteristics do you look for in a mentor (*Probe if needed: age, gender, race, skills*)?

89) Does attending SB-YLS make you feel a part of something?

90) Can you be your true self at CDI or in SB-YLS? (*Probes: Why do you think that is? Can you be your true self in other places, like at school or in the community?*)

91) What have you learned about yourself during your time in SNAP programs?

92) Have you been given any advice or tools to help you overcome challenges, barriers, or difficult experiences by attending SB-YLS?

93) Is there anything you wish was different about SB – YLS?

94) We've talked a lot about success and things you've been able to accomplish in your life so far, and about your time in SB-YLS. Has SB-YLS contributed to your successes in any way – either in achieving your success, or supporting you during your experiences of success?

REFLECTION

For the last part of the interview, we're going to take another look at the success map that you created earlier.

95) I know a guy who can (*reiterate successes*), what would you say about a guy your age who has achieved these things?

96) How does it make you feel reflecting and looking back on your successes and accomplishments?

97) I have asked you a lot of questions, but I'm wondering if there is something important that I may have left out that you want to talk about. Is there anything else like this that you would like to mention now?

DEBRIEF AND CONCLUSION

Thank you for talking with me today. I appreciate all of the information and experiences you shared with me today. There were a number of topics that we discussed that you may have found upsetting, or made you feel uncomfortable. How are you feeling right now? Do you feel that you are okay to leave? Would you like to speak with someone, or can I call anyone else for you? If you feel distraught, Abdi Mohamud is available on-site to support you immediately.

Appendix C. Participant Consent Form for Youth Aged 16 and Over

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM (YOUTH AGED 16 and OVER)

Study Name: Finding Success in Life: The Voices of At-Risk Youth

Principal Investigator: Kaitlin Fredericks, B.A.

Research Supervisor: Dr. Carla Cesaroni, PhD

University of Ontario Institute of Technology

(905) 409-7658 (Kaitlin Fredericks) or (905) 721-8668 (Research Services)

Kaitlin.fredericks@uoit.ca or compliance@uoit.ca REB file #: 15-103

You have been asked to participate in a study called, “Finding Success in Life: The Voices of At-Risk Youth”. This form is provided to assist you in making an informed decision on whether or not you would like to participate in this study. If you have any questions about the information presented in this form, please do not hesitate to ask.

Researcher

This study is being carried out by Kaitlin Fredericks. If necessary, you can contact me at the above email address or phone number. The telephone number for our research services (compliance) office is also listed above, should any ethical concerns be raised.

Reason for Study

This study is being conducted in an attempt to understand how youth discuss success, things they are proud of, their strengths and accomplishments, as well as whether SNAP Boys – Youth Leadership Services helps youth achieve their ideas of success. Further, this study will seek to address some questions about SNAP Boys – Youth Leadership Services.

What’s Involved

This study will involve an interview that will last approximately one hour. The interview will be recorded manually on a laptop by the researcher (Kaitlin Fredericks). At no point will the interview be tape-recorded. The questions will be asked in three related sections, starting with questions related to success, things you are proud of, and your strengths and accomplishments, followed by questions relating to your personal background, challenges, and life experiences, ending with questions about SNAP Boys – Youth Leadership Services.

Confidentiality

I (Kaitlin Fredericks) do not work for SNAP Boys – Youth Leadership Services or the Child Development Institute. No one other than me will have direct access to information you provide. This information will not prevent you from participating in SNAP Boys – Youth Leadership Services or other programs at the Child Development Institute. Your privacy will be protected, and you can be sure that the information you provide can never be traced back to you. The information entered into the laptop will not include your name, nor will your name be recorded in any way that can be linked back to the information recorded on the computer. The information collected will be reported as a group. The information you provide may be included in scientific research journals or scientific conferences, but never in a way in which you could be identified.

Statement of Disclosure

I (the participant) understand that the information I provide is confidential and will never be revealed to anyone, except under the following circumstances: if I disclose information that reveals my plans to harm myself or others, if someone else is harming me, or information about any unknown emotional, physical, or sexual abuse to children. If revealed, the researcher (Kaitlin Fredericks) is required to report this information to the appropriate authorities.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal

It is your choice to participate in this study. At any time, you may feel free to refuse to continue to participate, or stop the interview at any time without explanation, and the answers you have given will be deleted. You can also choose not to answer any particular question. Your refusal to participate will not impact your participation in SNAP Boys – Youth Leadership Services, or other programs offered by the Child Development Institute.

Potential Risks

Some of the questions the researcher (Kaitlin Fredericks) asks during the interview are personal and may make you feel uncomfortable or distressed. If you experience any sense of unease or discomfort, the researcher (Kaitlin Fredericks) will stop the interview and you can exit the study any time without penalty. The researcher, Kaitlin Fredericks, does not anticipate that you will become distraught during the interview process; however, if you do feel uncomfortable or upset, there is a protocol in place by which Abdi Mohamud, your SNAP Youth Leadership Services Coordinator, will be available on site to support you immediately.

Potential Benefits

Your help could provide understanding and insight into how youth experience and discuss success and things they are proud of, their strengths, and accomplishments in their own words, as well as how effective SNAP Boys – Youth Leadership Services is at helping you achieve your ideas of success. This discussion may also help you realize some of your successes, achievements, and strengths. Your help can also potentially lead to the continuation or improvements in SNAP Boys – Youth Leadership Services for youth attending programs at the Child Development Institute and partner sites. You will be given a Tim Horton’s gift card for \$15.00 in appreciation of your time and feedback.

I am voluntarily choosing whether or not to participate in this study. My signature certifies that the information presented in this consent form has been explained to me and understood, and that I have decided to participate in this study. My signature also confirms that all of my questions regarding the information in this consent form have been answered to my satisfaction. I will be given a copy of this consent form to keep. By giving consent, I do not waive any legal right or recourse.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

DATE

In my judgement, the participant is voluntarily and knowingly giving informed consent.

FINDING SUCCESS IN LIFE: THE VOICES OF AT-RISK YOUTH

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCHER

DATE

Appendix D. Participant Assent Form for Youth Under 16

PARTICIPANT ASSENT FORM (UNDER 16 YEARS OLD)

Study Name: Finding Success in Life: The Voices of At-Risk Youth

Principal Investigator: Kaitlin Fredericks, B.A.

Research Supervisor: Dr. Carla Cesaroni, PhD

University of Ontario Institute of Technology

(905) 409-7658 (Kaitlin Fredericks) or (905) 721-8668 (Research Services)

Kaitlin.fredericks@uoit.ca or compliance@uoit.ca REB file #: 15-103

You have been asked to participate in a study called, “Finding Success in Life: The Voices of At-Risk Youth”. This form is provided to assist you in making an informed decision on whether or not you would like to participate in this study. If you have any questions about the information presented in this form, please do not hesitate to ask.

Researcher

This study is being carried out by Kaitlin Fredericks. If necessary, you can contact me at the above email address or phone number. The telephone number for our research services (compliance) office is also listed above, should any ethical concerns be raised.

Reason for Study

This study is being conducted in an attempt to understand how youth discuss success, things they are proud of, their strengths and accomplishments, as well as whether SNAP Boys – Youth Leadership Services helps youth achieve their ideas of success. Further, this study will seek to address some questions about SNAP Boys – Youth Leadership Services.

What’s Involved

This study will involve an interview that will last approximately one hour. The interview will be recorded manually on a laptop by the researcher (Kaitlin Fredericks). At no point will the interview be tape-recorded. The questions will be asked in three related sections, starting with questions related to success, things you are proud of, and your strengths and accomplishments, followed by questions relating to your personal background, challenges, and life experiences, ending with questions about SNAP Boys – Youth Leadership Services.

Confidentiality

I (Kaitlin Fredericks) do not work for SNAP Boys – Youth Leadership Services or the Child Development Institute. No one other than me will have direct access to information you provide. This information will not prevent you from participating in SNAP Boys – Youth Leadership Services or other programs at the Child Development Institute. Your privacy will be protected, and you can be sure that the information you provide can never be traced back to you. The information entered into the laptop will not include your name, nor will your name be recorded in any way that can be linked back to the information recorded on the computer. The information collected will be reported as a group. The information you provide may be included in scientific research journals or scientific conferences, but never in a way in which you could be identified.

Statement of Disclosure

I (the participant) understand that the information I provide is confidential and will never be revealed to anyone, except under the following circumstances: if I disclose information that reveals my plans to harm myself or others, if someone else is harming me, or information about any unknown emotional, physical, or sexual abuse to children. If revealed, the researcher (Kaitlin Fredericks) is required to report this information to the appropriate authorities.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal

It is your choice to participate in this study. At any time, you may feel free to refuse to continue to participate, or stop the interview at any time without explanation, and the answers you have given will be deleted. You can also choose not to answer any particular question. Your refusal to participate will not impact your participation in SNAP Boys – Youth Leadership Services, or other programs offered by the Child Development Institute.

Potential Risks

Some of the questions the researcher (Kaitlin Fredericks) asks during the interview are personal and may make you feel uncomfortable or distressed. If you experience any sense of unease or discomfort, the researcher (Kaitlin Fredericks) will stop the interview and you can exit the study any time without penalty. The researcher, Kaitlin Fredericks, does not anticipate that you will become distraught during the interview process; however, if you do feel uncomfortable or upset, there is a protocol in place by which Abdi Mohamud, your SNAP Youth Leadership Services Coordinator, will be available on site to support you immediately.

Potential Benefits

Your help could provide understanding and insight into how youth experience and discuss success and things they are proud of, their strengths, and accomplishments in their own words, as well as how effective SNAP Boys – Youth Leadership Services is at helping you achieve your ideas of success. This discussion may also help you realize some of your successes, achievements, and strengths. Your help can also potentially lead to the continuation or improvements in SNAP Boys – Youth Leadership Services for youth attending programs at the Child Development Institute and partner sites. You will be given a Tim Horton’s gift card for \$15.00 in appreciation of your time and feedback.

I am voluntarily choosing whether or not to participate in this study. My signature certifies that the information presented in this consent form has been explained to me and understood, and that I have decided to participate in this study. My signature also confirms that all of my questions regarding the information in this consent form have been answered to my satisfaction. I will be given a copy of this consent form to keep. By giving consent, I do not waive any legal right or recourse.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

DATE

In my judgement, the participant is voluntarily and knowingly giving informed consent.

FINDING SUCCESS IN LIFE: THE VOICES OF AT-RISK YOUTH

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCHER

DATE

Appendix E. Consent Letter for the Parent/Guardian

CONSENT LETTER FOR THE PARENT/GUARDIAN

**Principal Investigator: Kaitlin Fredericks, M.A.
Research Supervisor: Dr. Carla Cesaroni, Ph.D.**

**University of Ontario Institute of Technology
(905) 409-7658 (Kaitlin Fredericks) or (905) 721-8668 x 3693 (Ethics Compliance Officer)
Kaitlin.fredericks@uoit.ca or compliance@uoit.ca REB file #: 15-103**

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I am a student at the University of Ontario Institute of Technology. I am doing a study to help shed light on how youth discuss and experience success and things they are proud of, their strengths, and accomplishments, and the role of SNAP Boys – Youth Leadership Services in helping these youth achieve their ideas of success. I am therefore asking for your consent to interview your son. Although the Child Development Institute is allowing me to interview your son, none of the staff here or anyone from the Child Development Institute will have access to the interview data. Most importantly, your son's participation in this study will not impact his involvement in SNAP Boys – Youth Leadership Services or any other programs at the Child Development Institute.

I would like to first ask your son a variety of questions pertaining to success, and related topics mentioned above. I will then ask some questions about his personal life and potential challenges. This part of the interview would involve your son filling out a questionnaire with me, answering questions about his friends, activities, school, family, any criminal justice /authority contact, and other personal experiences. During our time together, we will conduct an activity that will help create a map of experiences related to successes we discussed earlier. The interview will also include questions about SNAP Boys – Youth Leadership Services.

All of the information I collect will be anonymous and confidential. I will not be taking down his name or any information that could identify him. Your son also does not have to talk to me if he does not want to. He may stop answering questions at any time during the interview, and is free to skip or not answer any question he does not want to answer. The interview will take about an hour and will take place while your son is at the Child Development Institute while Abdi Mohamud, the SNAP Youth Leadership Services Coordinator, is on-site.

A potential benefit of your son's participation in this study is that his opinions could provide an understanding and insight into how youth experience and discuss things success and markers of success from their perspective. It could also potentially lead to the continuation or improvements in SNAP – Boys Youth Leadership Services for youth attending programs at the Child Development Institute and partner sites. Your son will receive a \$15.00 Tim Horton's gift card as compensation for his time and feedback.

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The only foreseeable risk to your son is that some of the questions that I ask are personal and may make your son feel uncomfortable or distressed. However, if your son experiences any unease or discomfort, I will stop the interview at any time without any repercussions. I do not anticipate that your son will become distraught during the interview process; however, if your son does feel uncomfortable or upset, there is a protocol in place in which Abdi Mohamud will be available on site to support your son immediately. Also, if your son chooses to withdraw from the interview at any time, there will be no repercussions and the data given during the duration of the interview will be deleted.

I am the only person who will have direct access to the answers your son gives to my questions. The information your son and other youth give me will be analyzed as a group, so no participants' names will ever be identified in the results. Nothing that can identify any youth or family will be published or reported. The information from the study will be stored at a locked location. This study has been reviewed by the Research Ethics Board at the University of Ontario Institute of Technology. After completion, you are able to view the results of the study, if desired.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at 905-409-7658 or at Kaitlin.fredericks@uoit.ca. You can also contact our Research Services Department/Compliance Officer information at 905-721-8668 ex. 3693 & compliance@uoit.ca.

Consent received from parent/guardian _____ Date Received _____

SIGNATURE OF PARENT/GUARDIAN

DATE

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCHER

DATE

Appendix F. Information for the Participant

INFORMATION FOR THE PARTICIPANT

**Principal Investigator: Kaitlin Fredericks, M.A.
Research Supervisor: Dr. Carla Cesaroni, Ph.D.**

**University of Ontario Institute of Technology
(905) 409-7658 (Kaitlin Fredericks) or (905) 721-8668 x 3693 (Ethics Compliance Officer)
Kaitlin.fredericks@uoit.ca or compliance@uoit.ca REB file #: 15-103**

Dear Participant:

I am a student at the University of Ontario Institute of Technology studying how youth discuss and experience success. I would like to talk to youth about how they perceive success and identify related topic (e.g., experiences in SNAP Boys – Youth Leadership Services. The interview should take about an hour. I would like to ask you a variety of questions pertaining to success, things you may be proud of, your strengths, and your accomplishments. As part of this exploration, the interview would involve questions about your experiences regarding about your friends, activities, school, family, any criminal justice/authority contact, and other personal experiences. During our time together, we will conduct an activity that will help create a map of experiences related to successes we discussed earlier. The interview will also include questions about SNAP Boys – Youth Leadership Services.

Please note, none of the staff at Child Development Institute will have access to your interview. This study will be conducted in private, with only you and myself in the room. I will never record your name or any information that could identify you. It will be completely anonymous and confidential, which means that no one will be able to trace your answers back to you. Your answers may be used in scientific research papers and conference presentations, but will be reported in a group manner and never in a way in which you could be identified. Most importantly, none of your answers will impact your participation in SNAP Boys – Youth Leadership Services or other programs at the Child Development Institute. During the interview, you are free to refuse to answer any questions I ask, and are free to stop the interview at anytime. Your participation is on a volunteer basis; however, you will receive a \$15.00 Tim Horton's gift card as compensation for your time and feedback.

If you have any questions about the study, or you would like to hear about the results of the study, please feel free to contact myself, the researcher, Kaitlin Fredericks, at **905-409-7658** or Kaitlin.fredericks@uoit.ca. You can also contact my research supervisor, Dr. Carla Cesaroni, at Carla.cesaroni@uoit.ca for study information. The study should be completed by June 2020.

Appendix G. Descriptive Statistics for Risks and Challenges

Table 7.1. Descriptive statistics for demographics

Variable	Frequency (%) (n = 26)
How old are you?	
12	15.4% (4)
13	19.2% (5)
14	15.4% (4)
15	7.7% (2)
16	3.8% (1)
17	23.1% (6)
18	0% (0)
19	7.7% (2)
20	7.7% (2)
How would you describe your racial and/or ethnic background?	
Black	42.3% (11)
Native-Canadian	3.8% (1)
White	26.9% (7)
Hispanic-Latino	15.4% (4)
Mixed background	11.5% (3)
How would you describe your sexual orientation?	
Straight	96.2% (25)
Bisexual	3.8% (1)
How would you describe your gender identity?	
Male	100% (26)
How old were you when you started in SNAP under 12 programs?	
6	
7	11.5% (3)
8	3.8% (1)
9	15.4% (4)
10	23.1% (6)
11	3.8% (1)
12 or over	15.4% (4)
Don't know/not sure	7.7% (2)
Not applicable	7.7% (2)
	11.5% (3)
How old were you when you started SB-YLS?	
11	34.6% (9)
12	50% (13)
13	7.7% (2)
14	0% (0)
15	7.7% (2)
Length of time in SB-YLS at time of the interview (years)	
Less than 1 year	7.7% (2)
1	19.2% (5)
2	23.1% (6)
3	11.5% (3)
4	11.5% (3)
5	7.7% (2)
6	7.7% (2)
7	0% (0)
8	11.5% (3)

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Table 7.2. Descriptive statistics for education related factors

Variable	Frequency (%) (n=26)
How are you doing in school	
Doing well in all subjects	30.8% (8)
Passing all	53.8% (14)
Passing some	11.5% (3)
Failing all	3.8% (1)
Ever been suspended or expelled from school?	
Never	30.8% (8)
1-2 times	23.1% (7)
3-4 times	5.4% (4)
5 or more times	26.9% (7)
Ever changed schools before?	
Never	42.3% (11)
1-2 times	19.2% (5)
3-4 times	15.4% (4)
5 or more times	63.1% (6)

Table 7.3. Descriptive statistics for substance use

Variable	Frequency (%) (n=26)
Have you had an alcoholic drink in the last 12 months?	
Never	84.6% (22)
Once or twice a month	15.4% (4)
At least once a week	0% (0)
Every day or almost every day	0% (0)
How old were you when you tried your first drink?	
18 or over	7.7% (2)
17	0% (0)
15-16	7.7% (2)
13-14	7.7% (2)
12	0% (0)
Under 12	3.8% (1)
Not applicable	73.1% (19)
How many drinks do you have when you drink?	
1-3	15.4% (4)
4-6	7.7% (2)
7-12	3.8% (1)
13-19	0% (0)
Not applicable	73.1% (19)
Have you used drugs (non-prescription) in the last 12 months?	
Never	88.5% (23)
Once or twice a month	3.8% (1)
At least once a week	0% (0)
Every day or almost every day	3.8% (1)
Don't know/not sure	3.8% (1)
How old were you when you first tired drugs?	
18 or over	11.5% (3)
17	0%
15-16	7.7% (2)
13-14	7.7% (2)
12	0% (0)
Under 12	0 % (0)
Don't know/not sure	3.8% (1)
Not applicable	69.2% (18)

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Table 7.4. Descriptive statistics for peer related factors

Variable	Frequency (%) (n=26)
Do you ever get into trouble with your friends (at school, home, or in the community)?	
Never	69.2% (18)
Sometimes	30.8% (8)
Often	0% (0)
All of the time	0% (0)
Have any of your friends been in trouble with the criminal justice system?	
None	
One	57.7% (15)
A few (2-3)	15.4% (4)
Many (4 +)	19.2% (5)
Don't know/not sure	0% (0)
	7.7% (2)
Do your friends use drugs and/or alcohol?	
None	61.5% (16)
One	3.8% (1)
A few (2-3)	23.1% (6)
Many (4 +)	7.7% (2)
Don't know/not sure	3.8% (1)

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Table 7.5. Descriptive statistics for youth's contact with the criminal justice system

Variable	Frequency (%) (n=26)
Were you ever involved in crime but not caught for it?	
No	65.4% (17)
Yes	34.6% (9)
If yes, how old were you?	
18 or over	0% (0)
17	0% (0)
15-16	15.4% (4)
13-14	0% (0)
12	3.8% (1)
Under 12	34.6% (4)
Not applicable	65.4% (17)
Have you ever been stopped by or talked to by the cops for something you were doing, but you weren't doing anything wrong?	
Never	
Once or twice	53.8% (14)
3 or 4 times	30.8% (8)
5 or more times	7.7% (2)
More times than I can count	0% (0)
Don't know/not sure	3.8% (1)
	3.8% (1)
Have you ever had police contact for your own behaviour?	
Never	61.5% (16)
Once	23.1% (6)
Two or three times	11.5% (3)
4 or more times	3.8% (1)
Have you ever been arrested?	
No	80.8% (21)
Yes	19.2% (5)
If yes, how many times have you been arrested?	
Once	11.5% (3)
A couple of times	7.7% (2)
3-4 times	0% (0)
5 or more times	0% (0)
Not applicable	80.8% (21)
Have you ever been to court?	
No	80.8% (21)
Yes	19.2% (5)
If yes, how many times have you been to court?	
Once	11.5% (3)
A couple of times	7.7% (2)
3-4 times	0% (0)
5 or more times	0% (0)
Not applicable	80.8% (21)

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Table 7.6. Descriptive statistics for family related factors

Variable	Frequency (%) (n=26)
How many times have you moved in the past 2-3 years?	
None	61.5% (16)
Once	15.4% (4)
2-3 times	7.7% (2)
4 or more times	11.5% (3)
Don't know/not sure	3.8% (1)
Does your family receive financial assistance?	
Almost never	34.6% (9)
Occasionally	30.8% (8)
Frequently	0% (0)
Almost always	3.8% (1)
Don't know/not sure	30.8% (8)
Has CAS ever been involved with your family?	
No	34.6% (9)
Yes	57.7% (15)
Don't know/not sure	7.7% (2)
If yes, has CAS ever taken you from your parents/family?	
No	30.8% (8)
Yes	38.5% (10)
Not applicable	30.8% (8)
If yes, have you ever lived in foster care or a group home?	
No	15.4% (4)
Yes	34.6% (9)
Don't know/not sure	3.8% (1)
Not applicable	46.2% (12)
If yes, for how long?	
1 month	7.7% (2)
6 months	7.7% (2)
12 months	11.5% (3)
18 months	3.8 (1)
24 months	3.8% (1)
Don't know/not sure	3.8% (1)
Not applicable	61.5% (16)