



Fostering Resilience in Young People with Additional Support Needs Using a 'Settings' Approach

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NCR – National Centre for Resilience

UoG – University of Glasgow

TUP – The Usual Place

ASN – Additional support needs

Executive Summary

Purpose: People with additional support needs currently face many health challenges. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has most likely exacerbated such challenges, placing a significant amount of stress on this already socially excluded group. It is therefore vital to shed light on the nature of 'settings' that promote resilience and more generally, wellbeing among those with additional support needs.

Methodology/Methods: We adopted a qualitative exploratory case study approach formed around the local social enterprise community café 'The Usual Place' - an organisation that specifically aims at increasing the employability and wellbeing of those with additional support needs. Both internal (staff members) and external (Third sector employees/parents) stakeholders took part in the study, alongside trainees from within the organisation. Semi-structured interviews were used for data collection, after which the data was thematically analysed.

Findings: Our work shows that TUP provides an effective organisational context in which trainees can negotiate a number of different tensions that ultimately foster resilience. The organisational ethos and tenacity that TUP displayed during the pandemic in maintaining wellbeing and resilience was a particularly significant asset in the organisation. We have also started to understand how in applied 'on-the-ground' circumstances, practitioners successfully negotiate the constructive tension between 'exposure' and 'support' in fostering resilience. Finally, we have found that TUP showed particular organisational strength during the acute crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated lockdown, in helping trainees cope with anxiety, fear and loneliness.

Conclusion: Our research suggests that The Usual Place as a setting helps facilitate resilience amongst its trainees by providing them with a series of resources, and although some limitations surrounding generalisability and transferability are present, key insights gained from this study can be applied further throughout the Scottish context.

Building from these findings, we suggest a series of further lines of potential research:

- a more detailed examination of how TUP as a potentially 'agile' organisation nurture and enact such a culture,
- a more detailed examination of the specifics of this form of practice,
- an exploration of the extent to which these resources and approaches have the potential to be translated into other types of organisational settings – for example, schools, workplaces,
- and an examination of the extent to which TUP's COVID-19 specific responses might be translated for emergency responders and other emergency responses.

Background and Research Questions

Within a general interest in fostering individual resilience (Macedo *et al*, 2014), particular attention has been paid to the significance of young people (Chandler *et al*, 2015), and within this group, those with additional support needs [ASN] (Panicker and Chelliah, 2016; Harðardóttir, *et al*, 2015). This ground contains a series of observations on the broad nature of ‘resilience’, some general precursors for its attainment and a series of possible practical strategies for its promotion (Macedo *et al*, 2014). Much of this literature tends to focus on how *individuals themselves* can be resilient. However, an emerging feature of this ground points to a series of (related) wider possibilities – for example, the utility of various ‘*ecological*’ (Ungar and Theron, 2020), ‘*whole system*’ (Cefai, 2021) and ‘*settings*’ (Stewart *et al*, 2004) based approaches. All see the attainment of *individual* resilience to be strongly influenced by wider social and organisational determinants.

In this context, this report is based on research that was conducted by *the University of Glasgow* (School of Interdisciplinary Studies) and *the National Centre for Resilience* [NCR], in collaboration with the Dumfries-based community café social enterprise, *The Usual Place* [TUP], examining how such a setting might promote resilience amongst its trainees with ASN. As an exploratory case study, TUP was selected due to its existing organisational ethos and structure; being a social enterprise community café, it specifically aims to promote the employability, wellbeing, and social inclusion of those with ASN (who are ‘trainees’ in the café). This is achieved through a complex mix of café work placements, intensive needs-led support and externally accredited vocational qualifications (Scottish Vocational Qualifications - SVQs). In this sense, TUP as an organisation reflects the themes set out above – a workplace/ education setting that seeks to deploy a wider ecological approach in promoting resilience. We addressed the following questions:

- 1) *How is ‘resilience’ broadly conceptualised within the setting?*
- 2) *What features of TUP as an organisation are significant in promoting resilience and what barriers exist?*
- 3) *What has been the specific effect of COVID-19 related circumstances on the potential for TUP to promote resilience within its young people?*

Understanding Resilience

Before setting out our findings, it is worth briefly drawing attention to some of the theoretical ground that underpins this project and played a role in interpreting our findings. As this project is rooted in an ecological framing of resilience, we decided to build on the work of Michael Ungar, whose approach is geared towards focusing on the person and the context they inhabit, rather than solely individual level factors. As such, Ungar (2008) proposes the following definition of resilience:

“In the context of exposure to significant adversity, whether psychological, environmental, or both, resilience is both the capacity of individuals to navigate their way to health-sustaining resources, including opportunities to experience feelings of well-being, and a condition of the individual’s family, community and culture to provide these health resources and experiences in culturally meaningful ways” (Ungar, 2008; 225).

This definition expressed the notion that the places people inhabit (like workplaces or schools) are central in overcoming challenges when life gets difficult, in that these contexts can provide critical resources that individuals can use to become more resilient.

In more detail, Ungar's (2007; 2008; 2020) notions of 'navigation', 'negotiation', and 'tensions' are also significant. *Navigation* refers to how young people find their way to resources that promote wellbeing and therefore resiliency. *Negotiation* is a concept more concerned with highlighting the importance of providing such health-related resources in a 'horses for courses' approach - that is, a bespoke shaping of support to meet particular needs. Without taking into consideration the concept of negotiation in promoting resilience, resources that otherwise may have improved wellbeing may hinder its development. Building on these concepts, various '*tensions*' described below in Table 1, are theoretical constructs that further clarify the important interconnection between culture, context and individual agency in manifesting resilience. These tensions become particularly significant in our later description and analysis of the data generated by trainees from TUP.

Table 1 - Ungar's seven tensions from Ungar (2008)

Tension	Example
1. Access to material resources	Availability of financial, educational, medical and employment assistance and/or opportunities, as well as access to food, clothing and shelter
2. Relationships	Relationships with significant others, peers and adults within one's family and community
3. Identity	Personal and collective sense of purpose, self-appraisal of strengths and weaknesses, aspirations, beliefs and values, spiritual and religious identification
4. Power and control	Experiences of caring for one's self and others; the ability to effect change in one's social and physical environment in order to access health resources
5. Cultural adherence	Adherence to one's local and/or global cultural practices, values and beliefs
6. Social justice	Experiences related to finding a meaningful role in community and social equality
7. Cohesion	Balancing one's personal interests with a sense of responsibility to the greater good; feeling a part of something larger than one's self socially and spiritually

The tensions associated with resilience were developed by Ungar and colleagues based on research they conducted across eleven countries with young people, concluding with the proposal of the existence of '*unique pathways*'. The impact that wider cultural and contextual factors have shape how resources are utilised and experienced, this idea of 'unique pathways' highlights how complex the development of resilience is. For example, although personal support (relationship tension) is vital for developing resilience, cultural expectations relating to gender may influence how such a resource is actually utilised and experienced (negotiation).

Although it is important to reflect on such complexity, fundamentally from Ungar’s perspective, if a young person is to be classed as resilient they must successfully navigate through such tensions according to their own strengths and the contextual resources available to them. It is from this theoretical position that we approached this project, especially in regard to understanding how TUP promotes resilience among its trainees with ASN.

Methodology

Adopting an exploratory case study approach (Hesse-Biber, 2017), the research was conducted within TUP between December 2021 and March 2022. Table 2 below sets out the nature of participants who took part in this project.

Table 2 - Participants within and outside the case context

Sub-unit	N. of participants	Occupation/role breakdown
External stakeholders (parents, external professionals connected to TUP)	5 (2 took part in a group interview)	2 parents, 3 external associated professionals
Internal stakeholders (staff members)	5 (2 took part in a group interview)	3 senior staff members, 2 mentors
Trainees	7	All trainees at TUP

In total, 14 interviews were conducted (13 individual interviews and 1 group interview). For both trainees and stakeholders (stakeholders being mentors, parents, senior management and other external professionals who have a stake within the organisation) semi structured interviews were used to collect data. For trainees, a narrative centred approach was taken in structuring the interview guide, building from previous research on this topic area (Theron and Theron, 2014). Some examples of questions used included ‘how was your life before coming to TUP’ and ‘how has TUP helped you to do well at times when you felt that life was difficult’. The trainee interview guide was also amended and approved by both TUPs Autism Awareness and Early Enablement Officers.

For stakeholders, the interview guide revolved around Ungar’s concept of tensions, as described in the previous section. Therefore, questions asked included ‘what does it mean to be resilient’ and ‘what features of TUP do you feel help the trainees develop a sense of identity’. As the data from both stakeholder and trainee interviews were being transcribed and thematically analysed, an open group interview was also conducted (in March) with senior management/officers at TUP and the NCR in exploring and confirming our initial findings. Questions asked during the group interview were derived from themes generated during the latter initial analysis stage.

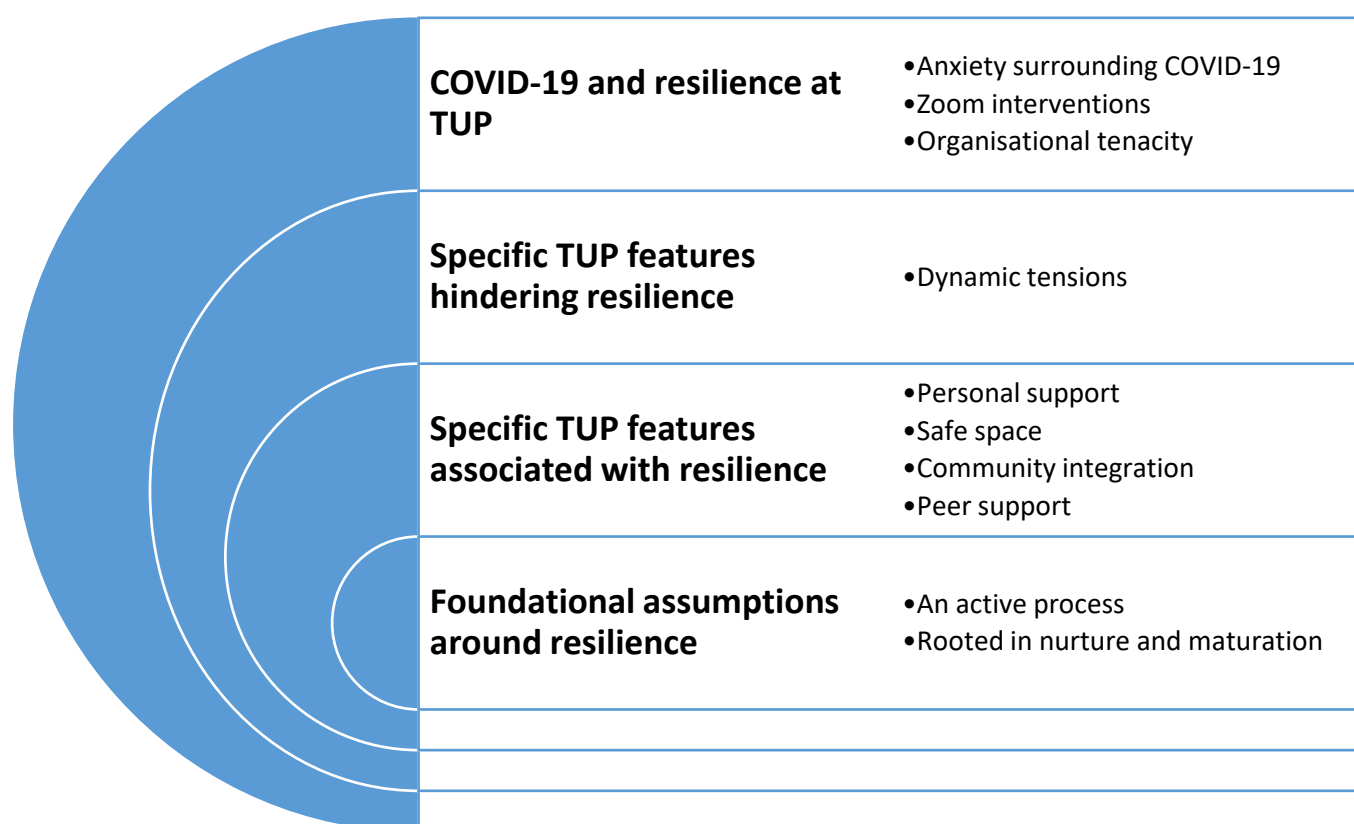
Key Findings

Following data collection and analysis, we identified 4 *main themes* (reflecting aspects of our overarching research questions) related to resilience and its manifestation at TUP. These themes were – ‘foundational assumptions around resilience’; ‘specific TUP features associated with resilience’; ‘specific TUP features hindering resilience’; and ‘COVID-19 and resilience at TUP’. From these broader themes, 10 *sub themes* were generated and are set out in figure 1 below.

The sub-headings in this chapter will explore each finding in more detail, making use of ‘primary’ data.

Foundational assumptions around resilience

FIGURE 1 – EMBEDDED THEMES (AND SUBTHEMES) IDENTIFIED THROUGH THEMATIC ANALYSIS RELATING TO RESILIENCE AND ITS MANIFESTATION WITHIN THE SETTING.



For stakeholders, resilience was conceptualised as being both a flexible and active process, whereby an individual perseveres despite facing difficult challenges, as well as an inevitable form of “challenge” and wider “adversity” - a “part of life” in a “big bad world” and the need to “stand up” and “react” to challenges. An internal stakeholder captured this ground as,

“it’s...about trauma....and just challenges that you actually face every day...how you deal with them”
(Internal senior TUP).

In articulating such a framing, some specific analogies were offered; for example, that human beings are like trees or elastic bands, which need to bend rather than break when exposed to external stress:

"I always visualised resilience as being a kind of bendy tree in a big storm, so when the storm comes, your being battered about but actually afterwards you're still standing" (External stakeholder, Third Sector Employee)

"I suppose to me it kind of means that they have the ability to bounce back in adversity" (External stakeholder, Parent of Trainee).

This dynamic orientation was complemented by stakeholders with notions of resilience being associated with "flexibility", "coping", "confidence", "self-esteem" and more practically "not panicking". Coupled with such conceptualisations was the view that resilience was more deeply rooted in a maturation process - transitioning from adolescence into a form of "independent" adulthood.

This was seen as not only an internalised concept (focussing on the self), but also a consequence of 'nurture' (and therefore an individuals' setting). Stakeholders emphasised that such a transition is critical if one is to face the inevitable challenges of life, articulated here by a mentor as a crucial aspect that helped facilitate such a process:

"I think that's a self, an inner thing that builds up resilience. And I think in a way some of the youngsters have to learn a coping mechanism [...] and we are here to help them face the big world if you like. So, we go on to try and build that and give them encouragement to be able to do that. Do you know yeah you make a mistake; you're allowed to make a mistake" (Internal stakeholder, TUP Mentor).

Specific TUP features associated with resilience

Personal support

From the perspective of both the trainees and stakeholders, a number of crucial resources within TUP relating to the fostering of resilience were identified. For trainees, personal support was seen as vital in helping them through difficult times, and also in overcoming practical challenges within the setting itself (such as dealing with difficult customers). This was often associated with the development of confidence, which trainees felt helped them with tasks they had previously found challenging (like for example, gaining vocational qualifications), and more daunting tasks that they previously thought impossible, such as gaining employment or taking part in community events alongside elected politicians:

"The fact that they stood, stood in and still believed in me when I was going through a difficult time helped" (Male Trainee at TUP)

"It was my first time on drinks and cakes, and I was like, I'm not coming back here, but [my mentor] kept putting me on it and she was like, 'I know you don't like it but it's training', and then I just like it, and it's alright now ... I'm getting used to it" (Female Trainee at TUP)

"She's [mentor] been helping me to get my nerves out the way and talk more" (Female Trainee at TUP).

For internal/external stakeholders, the narrative surrounding personal support was slightly different, with varying constructions being advanced. For instance, some made it clear that such personal support was *not* centred on "molly-coddling", "smothering" or being "wrapped in cotton wool", but on a more robust approach. They cautioned that many parents may be overprotective and that in

the long term, this may hinder the development of the trainee by discouraging exposure to risk. From their perspective, personal support should provide a basis for trainees to extend beyond self-perceived boundaries. For example, it was suggested that:

“you are trying to protect somebody but actually do you know what if they are going to scold themselves because they are not holding the teapot right, are we going to allow it to happen because they need to learn or are we actually going to take them off the job and they just don’t learn”

(Internal stakeholder, TUP Management)

“Trainees may have ambition’s but sometimes they’ll be quite secret ambitions. They wouldn’t want to say to others because they would be shouted down” (External stakeholder, Third Sector Employee)

“I think resilience is when you are told ‘oh you can do it, you can do something if you really try, and you build that up” (Internal stakeholder, TUP Mentor).

Safe space

From the trainee perspective, this notion of personal support was also associated with the idea that TUP is a ‘safe space’. Certain trainees made it clear that within the setting they genuinely “felt safe”, and that compared to previous workplaces, “they could breathe more”. This very much chimed with seeing TUP as a ‘whole system’ nurturing community, described by an Internal stakeholder (TUP Management) as involving a “total sense of belonging”. Here, seeing the ‘the organisation’ as the core unit rather than the individual is evident, expressed by an Internal stakeholder (TUP Management) as,

*“rather than it’s an argument to you **personally**, it’s about an argument to **the situation** that they find themselves in...and you just happen to be that person there taking the brunt of that argument”.*

Furthermore, some pointed out that due to confidence issues, they initially could not work in certain parts of the café when first joining TUP. However, adopting the bespoke ‘horses for courses’ approach mentioned earlier, they were allowed to choose where they wanted to work, which gave them the opportunity to undertake roles which met their immediate capabilities/needs.

This ‘safe’ orientation existed alongside a narrative developed by certain stakeholders that emphasised the importance of helping trainees understand and foster their *potential* to extend them *beyond* their boundaries and limits. This was articulated as a notion of “breaking through their comfort zones” within the “naturalistic” and “front facing” real world setting of the community café. In other words, the crucial element of such a process was the experiential nature of tasks within the café where trainees were experiencing a degree of stress, flux and unpredictability that allowed them to experience and manage real life uncertainty. According to some stakeholders, by being exposed to these new and novel situations on the job through “tailored exposure”, trainees learn how to negotiate risk and uncertainty in a controlled yet authentic environment, for example:

“There is no reason why, why they shouldn’t be put out of their comfort zone if they’re, they’re human, every human should be given the tools to, to be able to cope with going out of your comfort zone, you can’t just say ‘oh well they’ve got a learning disability, so let’s not” (External stakeholder, Third Sector Employee)

“The mentors are there for support and advice to help through the workbooks, but they don’t do all the work for the young person because they would not then have the skills or developed the skills or

developed the experiences that we want for them to be able to go on and then put these experiences into paid work environments” (External stakeholder, Parent of Trainee).

One additional feature of this realistic context was the notion of the trainees being set high standards and the expectancy of “professionalism” around the work that they did – captured by an Internal stakeholder, when they described their TUP Mentor as being “good strict”. The ability to maintain this position was again felt to be supported by the fact that being a ‘front facing’ café, there were expectations that service would be similar to any other commercial café.

In nurturing resilience as a dynamic and on-going *process*, all of this work was seen to be crucially located in a long term progressive approach with a variety of specific features: trainees being given regular and tailored 1-1 support; having sufficient time; and the creating a context where they could *gradually* progress at their own speed.

Community integration

One feature that was specifically important for both internal and external stakeholders was the way in which TUP integrates its trainees into the wider community, something which they attributed to the fact that it is a functioning café that can host a variety of events. Such a naturalistic setting not only provides more opportunity for personal and professional development, but also educates the general public by showing them that those with an ASN can work in a stressful ‘real world’ context, thus raising awareness surrounding the important contribution those with ASN can have in society:

“They’re going in there because it’s a space where they can have a lovely coffee. And as a result, they then get to learn that people with learning disabilities are perfectly capable of doing anything, and they’re human beings and therefore they can connect with them and vice versa. And so, its integrating into the community, it’s not segregating” (External stakeholder, Third Sector Employee)

“we are talking about a couple hundred people at a wedding, and they get on amazingly well. It’s daunting at first but then they fair enjoy it, and they want to do another one. So, to me that is kind of bringing in acceptance and their social circle” (Internal stakeholder, TUP Mentor).

Peer Support

Friendship and being able to simply have “a bit of banter” was deemed important by certain trainees and stakeholders. This theme was particularly highlighted by trainees working in the kitchen area and it was clear that for some trainees joining TUP this was the first opportunity they ever had to develop friendships in a professional environment, for example:

“it’s just loads of fun, and meeting pals”; “TUP is a bit different, when I worked somewhere else, obviously you can’t have a laugh like you can here” (Male Trainee at TUP)

“the same with friends though, a lot of these youngsters come here and have no friends. So, and friendships build for them here as well. And that’s kind of, you know they have a wee social side to it” (Internal stakeholder, TUP Mentor).

COVID-19 and resilience at TUP

Anxiety surrounding COVID-19

For trainees, COVID-19 and the resultant lockdown had a significant impact on their wellbeing. The virus itself was often associated with the loss of 'normality', with life before the virus "never coming back". Such anxiety and fear caused distress for trainees, resulting in a sense of uncertainty and "feeling lost". Isolation was experienced by most trainees during these lockdown periods, although this did vary depending on individual circumstances. Nevertheless, not being able to come into work (at TUP) or engage in meaningful interaction was a major issue for trainees and stakeholders alike, for example:

"I thought that everything I knew of before was dead and gone" (Male Trainee at TUP)

"I just felt like, I felt isolated because I couldn't go to work. All I had to do was go on walks, I was pacing a lot" (Male Trainee at TUP).

Zoom interventions

A key intervention developed by staff at TUP was weekly zoom meetings, in which a variety of tasks were undertaken with the trainees and contact and communication were maintained. These zoom sessions varied in terms of assignments undertaken, examples ranging from the development of a cookbook to practical tasks that involved discussing positive events that occurred throughout the week. For many trainees, the zoom sessions helped address feelings of isolation by providing basic contact and communication, and was something they could look forward to, for example:

"I was happy once I had zoom on my phone, I know it was only once a week but at least it was something to keep me going until we re-opened" (Male Trainee at TUP)

"We were doing the zoom calls and that was quite good actually, that was quite funny hearing about the weather" (Female Trainee at TUP).

However, it is important to note that for some trainees, only news of the vaccine helped tackle fear and anxiety surrounding the virus, indicating that the effectiveness of the online zoom sessions possibly depended on a number of pre-existing individual-based factors, such as level of perceived anxiety surrounding the virus.

From the perspective of stakeholders, such zoom sessions were an example of how even during such a challenging time, the organisation still prioritised the wellbeing of its trainees. Wider critiques were also made relating to the fact that many forms of external support received by trainees (like personal home care) were discontinued during the pandemic, whereas TUP displayed organisational resilience in continuing to provide online support despite having to close its doors – simply "being there":

"I had to do everything by myself, I didn't get support for a lengthy time over the first lockdown" (Male Trainee at TUP)

"I think that the tenacity, you know another organization could have said we're closing our doors, we'll let you know when we're open again, we're all going to look after ourselves, we're all on furlough, see you later – and they didn't. And so, they were massively valuable in that sense because they already have a relationship with them, so they were able to keep everything going" (External stakeholder, Third Sector Employee)

“So that break in our service I think was massive. I’m not sure if it was a backwards step but it was certainly a step. And the way that we had managed to continue working with people on zoom each week and keeping the relationships going allowed 100% of our people to come back” (Internal stakeholder, TUP Management).

Discussion

This discussion section is structured in line with the main aims outlined at the start of this report and the data presented above; namely how resilience is conceptualised within TUP, how it is facilitated (building from the work of Ungar), possible barriers, and the impact of COVID-19 related circumstances. Building from this discussion, a series of recommendations for research and practice are then provided.

Conceptualising resilience

As illustrated within the findings section, stakeholders both from within and out with TUP emphasised that resilience is an active process, one that is rooted in maturing and developing into an adult. Referring back to Ungar’s definition, such a conceptualisation, suggested by stakeholders, seems to support his framing of resilience. For example, this idea of resilience requiring nurture and growth from one’s social context connects to Ungar’s notion of navigation and negotiation. Taking a practical example from TUP, an instance of successful negotiation would be how trainees were allowed to choose which part of the café they wanted to work in, depending on how confident or reserved they initially felt when joining the organisation. Thus, compared to other workplaces which may deny such flexibility, trainees at TUP were able to still access a variety of support networks and learn new skills in a ‘safer’ (although still challenging) part of the setting.

Accordingly, this finding implies that good conceptual alignment exists throughout the stakeholder level of TUP regarding what exactly is meant by resilience and how it is developed throughout the setting.

Facilitating resilience within the setting - Ungar’s tensions

In terms of contrasting and comparing Ungar’s tensions in our empirical work, it should be noted that many of the themes overlap and interconnect with a variety of tensions, and therefore should be interpreted more as an inter-related system than distinct entities.

Overall, findings constructed within this project theoretically mirror many of Ungar’s tensions as outlined at the beginning of this report. For instance, in terms of access to material resources our findings suggest that TUP played a key role in facilitating engagement with such tensions in both tangible and intangible interpersonal fashions and that the existence of them can be considered as natural, inevitable and ultimately constructive.

Practically speaking, structural resources relating to educational and employment opportunities are clearly provided by the organisation. One distinct example is how trainees have the opportunity to undertake personalised educational training within the setting, something which many previously had never experienced. Additionally, access to support from mentors proved to be a significant resource in itself, which helped the trainees utilise such resources in a culturally meaningful way

(power and control tension). Evidently, such tensions relate to themes like personal support and community integration, which account for both structural and interpersonal support provided by the organisation.

Focusing on personal support in more detail, this theme clearly connects to the relationship tension as identified by Ungar. Similar to his findings, it became clear in our analysis that personal support (and therefore relationships) played an important role in helping trainees navigate and access critical resources. Furthermore, negotiation with such a tension also had a number of associated outcomes, specifically related to improved confidence and self-esteem for trainees. This change in confidence and ultimately how trainees came to perceive themselves (identity tension), had a key role in facilitating behaviour change (that is, seeking out *new* challenges). Thus, personal support as a key finding of our work has theoretical significance in terms of understanding how identity/behaviour change (and consequently resilience) can be facilitated within the organisation through varying relationships.

Another key finding of note is this idea of community integration, which again relates to numerous tensions related to resiliency. As noted, due to the nature of TUP being a 'front facing' café, trainees have to interact with 'real' customers in a potentially stressful environment. Stakeholders made it clear that this not only leads to greater personal development, but also raises awareness among the general public that those with ASN *can* function highly effectively in workplace situations. As such, in terms of tensions, a critical connection here is how doing such work provides trainees with a culturally meaningful role they can fulfil within their local social context (cultural adherence tension). This even extends more widely to fulfilling cultural expectations typically adhered to in the West, such as gaining employment and providing services within a market-based economy.

Such interaction with people in the wider community was also associated with challenging more historic forms of exclusion, still experienced by those with ASN (Thorn *et al*, 2009). Clearly, such integration ties into wider critiques relating to social injustice and segregation, and the importance of integration for those with ASN. By giving trainees an opportunity to engage with the wider community and each other by means of personal support, longstanding prejudices are challenged which potentially contributes to a sense of solidarity within the organisation (connecting to cohesion and social justice tensions) (Ungar *et al*, 2007).

In summary, our findings suggest that TUP facilitates resiliency by providing trainees with the opportunity to interact with a variety of critical tensions in culturally meaningful ways. As outlined, such tensions interconnect with a variety of different resources embedded within the organisation. From access to basic resources to the development of confidence through relationships, some trainees at TUP have utilised such resources in overcoming adversity. As such, it appears that practitioners at TUP are aware of each trainees' strengths and personal vulnerabilities, making sure that internal and external resources related to the setting are tailored towards their individual needs.

Dynamic tensions within TUP

This ground above is beginning to suggest that the fostering of resilience involved striking intricate balances between what might be consider opposing stances and approaches at various levels that

negotiate the boundaries between freedom, choice, agency, expectation and responsibility. These are expressed in Table 3 below.

TABLE 3 – DYNAMIC TENSIONS IN THE DELIVERY OF SUPPORT ASSOCIATED WITH RESILIENCE WITHIN TUP

'Protective' features	'Challenging' features
Active, interventionist support (when needed)	Fostering independence and taking responsibility (and the notion of 'stand back mentoring');
Tailored individualised approach	Recognising the collective needs of the whole organisation as a working café
Providing consistency and security through regularity and routines	Recognising the important of uncertainty and unpredictability as a pre-requisite of resilience
Creating safe and secure spaces	Allowing and enabling spaces to be unpredictable where trainees go outside their comfort zone

These features clearly exist in a form of dynamic interplay, being assessed and negotiated by mentors and trainees almost on an ongoing, minute-to-minute basis. It was clear that this was successfully achieved within TUP, though some stakeholders cautioned that due to the nature of the organisation and the values it upholds, mentors might sometimes become overprotective. This contrasts with the overarching 'tough love' approach advocated by key stakeholders within the organisation:

"because we are a value-based organisation and we have value-based people here, I think naturally people have an instinct to help, and I think sometimes that instinct kicks in when it shouldn't"
(Internal stakeholder, TUP Mentor).

Following the latter discussion, here it is important to reflect on a particularly distinct finding within this report - that of dynamic tensions. Perhaps unlike other domains such as the promotion of 'wellbeing' where intervention orientation tends to be one-dimensional and wholly positive/constructive, this notion of needing *some* degree of antagonistic ingredient as a necessary pre-determinant of fostering resilience sets this area apart from others. This is perhaps best located in relation to the notion of 'salutogenesis' where 'health' is expressed through coping with flux and stress, specifically a, "life experience of bringing resources to bear on coping with stressors that shapes the sense of coherence" (Mittelmark and Bauer, 2016; 8).

This ground clearly poses significant questions over the ethics, legitimacy and enactment of such a principle. As outlined above, such tensions here relate to aspects of the organisation that contrast both in a conceptual and experiential sense; that is, a safe space, but also a place to break through 'comfort zones' and how social responsibility and altruism interact with the pragmatic need to be 'demanding' in meeting the needs of a working café.

Although such tensions were expressed in different aspects of the organisation (highlighted by the flexible and adaptive nature of TUP as an 'agile' organisation), it is clear that they were

constructively and effectively managed and therefore have the potential to have a profound impact on the fostering of resilience.

TUP – COVID-19 considerations

Another key aim of the project was to explore the impact of COVID-19 related circumstances on the potential for TUP to promote resilience within its young people. The discussion here will specifically focus on the following themes: fear surrounding the virus, isolation amongst trainees during lockdowns, the possible use of zoom in tackling such isolation, and the organisational tenacity TUP displayed during the pandemic.

As raised within the findings section, the virus was feared by most trainees interviewed. This finding aligns with similar work conducted on this topic area both on the general public (Petzold *et al*, 2020) and also those with a disability (Shakespeare *et al*, 2021), suggesting that such fear may be a wider public health problem innate to viral outbreaks, rather than one specifically faced by those with ASN (Hewlett, 2016). Nevertheless, although we shed some light on this, future research is needed to document how those with ASN experience such fear, and what buffering factors may discourage the development of such an emotion during a pandemic scenario.

Often raised alongside such a fear was a strong sense of loneliness due to the lack of human contact experienced during the pandemic. As highlighted, this was a particular problem for trainees at TUP. Again, this finding is also reflected in other research (Embregts *et al*, 2020), though it should be noted that ambiguity still exists regarding how exactly the pandemic and corresponding public health measures impacted those with ASN (Bailey, Hastings, Totsika, 2021). However, in our project we presented primary evidence that for some trainees the online zoom sessions buffered the impact of lockdowns by providing vital social interaction. Such a finding is also reflected in other work (Scheffers, Moonen and van Vugt, 2021), and although some risks exist surrounding the use of online communication, evidence is emerging which shows its unique role in increasing social connectiveness during pandemics (Greenwood-Hickman *et al*, 2021).

Lastly, the organisational resilience exhibited by TUP itself is noteworthy. During the pandemic, health and social care services faced many challenges relating to service delivery and safety (Sriram, Jenkinson and Peters, 2021). As our research highlighted, it was within this context in which many vital care networks were lost, leaving some trainees without any support. Yet, staff at TUP took the initiative to maintain some form of interaction, offering (online) practical tasks which trainees could undertake in their own time.

This flexibility and commitment shown towards their trainees during the pandemic is a key asset of TUP that could serve as a model for other organisations in preparation for future health emergencies. The organisation managed to adapt quickly, and despite facing closure, they still managed to find a way to support their trainees. However, before transferring such an organisational model, more research would have to explore why staff at TUP chose to continue delivering (online) services, and what sociological and individual level factors were at play (i.e., organisational ethos/culture or altruism). From this, suggestions could be made regarding how such an operational strategy could be transferred into another setting.

Key points and related implications for further research and practice

The report has covered a significant amount of ground, and here, we summarise in *Table 4* below a series of key points with related implications for further research and practice from this pilot project.

Table 4 – Key points and future implications

Key point	Potential future work
1. Our work shows that TUP provides an effective organisational context in which trainees can negotiate a number of different tensions that ultimately foster resilience. The organisational ethos and tenacity that TUP displayed in during the pandemic in maintaining wellbeing and resilience was a particularly significant asset in the organisation.	A more detailed examination of <i>how</i> TUP as a potentially 'agile' organisation nurture and enact such a culture would be valuable.
2. We have started to understand how in applied 'on-the -ground' circumstances, practitioners successfully negotiate the constructive tension between 'exposure' and 'support' in fostering resilience.	A more detailed examination of the <i>specifics</i> of this form of practice would be constructive
3. These insights are highly specific to the particular organisational context of TUP and young people with ASN.	There is scope to explore the extent to which these resources and approaches have the potential to be translated into other types of organisational settings – for example, schools, workplaces.
4. TUP showed particular organisational strength during the acute crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated lockdown in helped trainees cope with anxiety, fear and loneliness.	There is scope to explore the extent to which this specific response might be translated into other emergency responders and responses.

Project limitations

Although this preliminary case study has produced some promising initial insights and findings, some limitations need to be considered. First, due to our qualitative case study approach, some issues regarding generalisability and translation are evident. Considering these issues, although our project is limited in that wider population level inferences cannot be made, theoretical generalisability was still reached (Carminati, 2018). This means that from our specific case study context, wider (theoretical) abstractions can still be made (Carminati, 2018) – building from the particular to the general (Simons, 2015). For instance, our findings suggest that TUP provides an effective space where trainees can negotiate through a number of different tensions in becoming more resilient.

Second, another possible limitation relates to our case study design that explored the manifestation of resilience predominantly from within the organisational setting, so it is unclear how resources stemming from outside the context may actually influence how resources are navigated and utilised within the organisation – this inverse relationship was not fully explored. Yet, this also connects to a key strength of this study, namely that our qualitative approach shed light on the complexity involved in this topic area – especially through the narrative semi-structured interviews used with the trainees. Such complexity would have been undermined by adopting more quantitative forms of empirical investigation, which would have failed to capture the heterogeneous nature of resilience and its manifestation for trainees at TUP.

Finally, it should be noted that some interviews had to be excluded due to the fact that they were not thematically rich. This was possibly due to language or anxiety difficulties (Verseghy, Attack and Maher, 2020), which in some instances seemed to limit contribution to the interview process. However, in light of this, two issues should be considered. First, it is important to reflect on the courage and commitment shown by all participants who took part, even if their transcript was not incorporated into the analysis. Second, a key strength of our study relating to this weakness is how both TUP's Autism Awareness and Early Enablement officers played a critical role during data collection, actually assisting with the interviews. This ensured that for the most part, trainees were able to clearly articulate and communicate what was on their mind.

Conclusion

In conclusion, within this report we have outlined and discussed our initial findings from qualitative research conducted in TUP between December 2021 and March 2022. Our overarching research theme revolved around investigating how TUP as an organisation helps its trainees get through difficult times during their lives. From this, we sought to answer 3 key questions related to the latter theme. The first question centred on exploring how resilience is broadly conceptualised within the setting. Following this, we also sought to identify what features of TUP as an organisation are significant in actually promoting or hindering resilience. Lastly, given the recent COVID-19 pandemic, we also decided to investigate the possible impact of COVID-19 related circumstances on promoting resilience at TUP.

Building from these, it was found that in terms of framing resilience, stakeholders appeared to agree with Ungar's definition by drawing attention to how it is a process of growth rooted both within the individual and their environment. In actually promoting resilience within the setting, personal support, the setting being perceived as safe, community integration and peer support were identified as being vital by both stakeholders and trainees alike. The centrality of dynamic tensions in navigating 'exposure' and 'support' was also clear. Although in theory such tensions can have the potential to hinder resiliency, we found here that they actually facilitated its development.

Lastly, important insights were gained in terms of how trainees experienced the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically in terms of fear and isolation. Zoom sessions were found to be a vital asset, which further connects to the broader organisational tenacity displayed by TUP during such a challenging time. In reflecting on these findings, in theoretical terms, there is potential to enhance our understanding of this interface by examining it through the lens of 'enablement' (fostering autonomy as a means of promoting wellbeing) and 'embodiment' (the centrality of doing and undergoing situational experiences in this context). There is also scope to explore more grounded

expressions - how these theoretical aspirations and the inherent tensions that exist within them are actually enacted on the ground.

More practically, we would suggest the following further pieces of work 'next possible steps':

- a more detailed examination of *how* TUP specifically nurtures and enacts such a culture that fosters resilience,
- a more detailed examination of the *specifics* of a form of practice that successfully negotiates the constructive tension between 'exposure' and 'support' in fostering resilience,
- an exploration of the extent to which TUP specific resources and approaches have the potential to be translated into other types of organisational settings – for example, schools, workplaces,
- and an examination of the extent to which TUP's COVID-19 specific responses might be translated for emergency responders and other emergency responses.

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