**Gemma Molyneux EDT7003: Academic Paper**

How does mentoring influence the lived experience of resilience in trainee teachers?

MA in Education: Coaching and Mentoring

Regnum: 2206456 Word Count 11,648

**Abstract**

This research explores the impact of mentoring on trainee teachers' lived experiences of resilience. It examines the nature of mentor support and the relational aspects of mentoring encountered by trainees during school placements. Addressing a gap in recruitment and retention strategies, this study aims to deepen understanding of how mentoring affects resilience. A critical interpretative literature review concludes that recent policy guidance on developing trainee resilience overlooks the social dimensions of learning to teach and their variable impact on resilience. Using a hermeneutic phenomenological methodology, in-depth interviews were conducted with four recently qualified teachers. Findings indicate that mentoring positively impacts resilience when it allows space for holistic identity development. Three themes emerged: Power, Care, and Belonging, elucidating the complex social dynamics of the influence of the mentoring relationship on resilience. These insights can help mentors support trainee teachers’ resilience through identity development, contributing to their sustained commitment to the profession.

**Key Words**: Resilience, Mentoring, Trainee, Identity

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**List of Abbreviations**

ITT: Initial Teacher Training

QTS: Qualified Teacher Status

DFE: Department for Education

EEF: Education Endowment Foundation

ECF: Early Career Framework

CCF: Core Content Framework

SCITT: School-Centred Initial Teacher Training

# 1. Introduction to the paper

This research paper presents the findings of a hermeneutic phenomenological study on the influence of mentoring on the lived experiences of resilience in trainee teachers who completed their training year with a school-based provider in 2021 and 2022.

The research presents a rationale which is contextualised within recent policies for Initial Teacher Training (ITT) and teacher recruitment and retention (2.2). The literature is reviewed critically with a focus on the concept of resilience in teaching and teacher training (3). This includes examining relevant studies within the context of recent policy changes, aiming to identify gaps in the current approach to mentoring and resilience development for trainees. My ontology and epistemology are outlined (5.1) to foreground the methodology and methods applied for this study, leading to the presentation of findings (7). A policy proposal is provided in response to the findings (8) and considerations are made for future orientations of the research (9). I reflect on my learning journey throughout the MA programme and its impact on my professional practice (11) before conclusions are drawn (12).

# 2. Introduction to the research

## 2.1 MRQ

How does mentoring influence the lived experience of resilience in trainee teachers?

**Subsidiary questions**

1. What research has been carried out concerning resilience and mentor support in trainee teachers?
2. How does mentor support impact resilience?
3. How do the relational conditions between the mentor and the trainee promote or hinder resilience?

## 2.2 Context and Rationale

The rationale for this study stems from the wider context of the recruitment and retention challenges prevalent in England; and the priorities of the ITT provider I work for.

The recruitment crisis is evidenced by the DFE census data for trainee teachers which continues to reflect declining numbers of entrants to the profession in relation to targets. The most recent data from 2023 reveals that 62% of the recruitment target was met in 2023-24, with secondary recruitment being significantly below target. Adding further to the problem, 93% of trainees are awarded Qualified Teacher Status (QTS), with just 75% of those going on to work in state-funded education upon completion (Department for Education (DFE), 2023). This research aims to contribute to the wider context by focusing on the lived experience of trainee resilience, taking a nuanced approach to what supports or hinders trainees in continuing their commitment to teaching.

Teacher workload, often cited as the primary cause of teacher attrition, has garnered significant attention in government policy (Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), 2023). In the ITT context, the focus has primarily revolved around reducing and managing the quantity of work (Carter, 2015; DFE, 2018). This approach neglects to address the qualitative aspects of teachers' work, which increasingly emphasise performativity and accountability as significant factors for teacher attrition in the first five years (Perryman and Calvert, 2020). Yet better support in school placements has the potential to make a positive difference to trainee-teacher resilience concerning this aspect of their work (Perryman and Calvert, 2020).

Mentoring has been reported to have a positive impact on teacher attrition (Hobson, 2009; EEF, 2023). Recent policy has recognised this by further centring the role of the school-based mentor through the introduction of the Early Career Framework (ECF) (DFE, 2019), extending this vital support to three years. Yet, in recent inspections, the quality of mentoring was found to vary across schools and partnerships in relation to time available; poor training; and lack of knowledge and expertise to provide trainees with high-quality support (Ofsted, 2020). The emphasis on mentoring provision overlooks support for well-being, instead prioritising the development of teaching expertise (DFE, 2024). Nevertheless, mentors are known to have significant positive and negative effects on the well-being of beginning teachers (Kutsyuruba, Godden and Bosica, 2019; Squires, 2019; Hobson, 2016).

The well-being of teachers has emerged as a pressing concern in contemporary educational discourse (Education Support, 2023). Contextual factors such as school culture and feelings of isolation within the workplace have been identified as significant contributors to the reported decline in teacher well-being, often culminating in burnout (Education Support, 2023). The prevailing policy shift towards school-based ITT programmes immerses trainee teachers in these potentially challenging environments. This highlights the need to consider in more depth the contextual factors that impact trainee attrition as opposed to concentrating on general coping strategies that trainees can adopt.

This rationale highlights a gap in the recruitment and retention strategy for trainee teachers. This study aims to illuminate understanding of the contextual influence of mentoring on resilience to enhance relational aspects of mentor training.

## 2.3 Researcher Positionality

My background in education, with a focus on teacher training and mentoring, motivates this study. I started with a teacher training programme in 2011 and later became an English teacher, middle leader and mentor for trainee teachers, gaining valuable insights into the mentoring process.

Currently, I hold the position of a link tutor, responsible for overseeing the quality and efficacy of mentoring practices within a school-based provider setting. Through these roles, I have developed a nuanced understanding of the complexities inherent in mentoring relationships within the education field. I have encountered a range of experiences, witnessing not only diversity in mentoring approaches but also variations in mentees' responses to these interventions. This diverse exposure has contributed significantly to my understanding of the varying nature of mentoring interactions within educational contexts.

The research question was conceived from my researcher positionality as a person in the field of education and aimed to give voice to the possible variability in trainees’ experiences of mentoring. In hermeneutic phenomenology, the researcher’s contextually situated positionality in interpreting literature and refining the research question is regarded as a vital contextual aspect of the study (Dibley Dickerson, Duffy and Vandermause, 2020). This will be explained further in Section 6.

# 3. Literature Review

This review takes a critical interpretative stance on the literature concerning teacher resilience by considering the interplay between relevant studies and the recent policy context. This approach aligns with Gadamer’s perspective on literature which is that ‘to understand does not mean primarily to reason one’s way back to the past, but to have a present involvement in what is said’ (Gadamer, 2013, p.410). Therefore, this approach to reviewing the literature involves contexualisation regarding how mentoring and resilience are conceptualised in current policy.

## 3.1 Resilience

The main challenge for researchers investigating resilience is that no agreed definition of the concept exists. Resilience has been applied to multiple contexts (Kaplan, 2013) each with its specific challenges (Southwick, Bonanno, Masten, Panter-Brick and Yehuda, 2014). This section will critically consider the common definitions of resilience and the problems that may arise when applying these to the experiences of trainee teachers.

Much of what is known about resilience is based on studies of children from the psychological field. In this area of research, risk factors are identified, and resilience is measured by the positive adaptations to adverse conditions (Masten, 2014). Contextual factors, including social support, have been identified as significant in a child’s ability to positively adapt (Masten, 2014) suggesting that resilience is context-dependent instead of relying solely on internal factors. Such approaches, however, may be reductionist, particularly if attempting to take the same approach in another context, such as teacher training, as Johnson and Down, (2013) argue in their critique of individualist notions of resilience. Indeed, there is a risk in applying longitudinal studies into childhood positive adaptation, that resilience will be treated as a concrete aspect of behaviour as opposed to a way of understanding how people interact with their surroundings (Johnson and Down, 2013).

In positive psychology, research suggests that drawing upon positive emotions can be a resource to protect against stress or adversity (Frederickson, 2004). Frederickson’s research conceptualises resilience as the ability of an individual to ‘bounce back’ from stress or suffering (Fredrickson, 2004, p.1371). Yet, critics argue that positive psychology's emphasis on individual agency in achieving happiness overlooks the complex interplay of environmental factors and societal contexts (van Zyl, Gaffaney, Van der Vaart, Dik and Donaldson, 2023). Indeed, Frederickson’s research is experimental and not conducted within the contexts where resilience is applied. This may lead to developing activities that aim to cultivate positive attitudes towards increasingly demanding workloads (Price, Mansfield and McConney, 2012). Indeed, the suggestion in the Carter Review (2015) that ‘ITT should include explicit content on resilience and time management’ (Carter, 2015, p.24) under the heading of professionalism, implies that resilience can be taught as a set of knowledge and behaviours that support trainees to prevent and recover from the stressors common for teachers (Carter, 2015). Yet, it is not considered how deeply practices, values and beliefs around these behaviours may be embedded in teachers’ work in schools and how trainees may negotiate their working practices in these contexts.

Perhaps the most reliable way to gain clarity on the meaning of resilience to trainee teachers is to consider what outcomes are associated with resilience. Gu and Day’s definition provides this clarity by defining resilience as teachers ‘everyday capacity to sustain their educational purposes and successfully manage the unavoidable uncertainties which are inherent in the practices of being a teacher.’ (Gu and Day, 2013. p.22). Gu and Day (2013) move beyond the reductionist notions of bouncing back from adversity to consider the influence of the school context in creating the conditions for resilience.

Nevertheless, Gu and Day’s concept of resilience requires further scrutiny through the lens of current education policy. In their article, based on their seminal VITAE study (Day, Stobart, Sammons, Kington, Gu, Smees and Mujtaba, 2006), they highlight the moral and vocational nature of teaching. Drawing on the seminal work of Palmer (2017), they suggest that the strength of a teacher’s inner ‘vocation or calling’ (Gu and Day, 2013, p.35) can be a predictor of resilience. Price, *et al.,* (2012) urge those who study teacher resilience to consider how the concept of the resilient teacher might influence how ‘teacher identity and the nature of teachers’ work’ (Price, 2012, p.81) may be constructed around these notions. In a neoliberal education policy context, the effectiveness of teachers is heavily linked to pupil outcomes. The updated teacher standards are introduced by stating that ‘teachers make the education of their pupils their first concern and are accountable for achieving the highest possible standards in work and conduct’ (DFE, 2021, p.10). This positions the work of teachers as the central factor affecting student outcomes and is followed by the codification of what constitutes effective teaching and professional behaviour to meet this aim. The Carter Review emphasises the ‘relentless focus on pupil outcomes’ (Carter, 2015, p.6.) further characterising this notion of the moral purpose of teachers as directly linked to pupil outcomes (Mutton, Burn and Menter, 2017). Thus, in a neoliberal policy context, moral purpose is intertwined with the aims of a competitive market (such as improving league tables and Ofsted ratings). This notion differs from Palmer’s holistic view of teaching which combines ‘intellect, emotions and spirit’ (Palmer, 2017, p.5). Therefore, if research is to associate moral purpose with resilience, it is important to consider how this is experienced by trainee teachers in the context of recent policy.

This study is sensitive to the challenges of teacher recruitment and retention within today's neoliberal educational context. To understand resilience in this environment, it is beneficial to use a methodology that captures the lived experiences of trainee teachers. This prevents research outcomes from adding to the burden on trainees in demanding, performance-oriented environments.

## 3.2 Mentor Support

The focus on the management of trainee resilience in recent policy overlooks robust evidence for the impact of relationships and workplace contexts in both supporting and hindering resilience. This section considers the findings of recent and influential studies of teacher resilience and whether policy guidelines for mentors align with these findings.

The DFE has recognised the significance of mentor support as a key contributor to teacher recruitment and retention; the development of the ECF, which includes two years of mentor support, is a significant part of this strategy for the retention of teachers in the first five years of their careers. However, the ECF aims to develop ‘knowledge, practices and working habits’ (DFE, 2019, p.4) focusing on developing the competence and professional behaviours of new entrants to the profession as a preventative measure against attrition.

This approach is supported by studies focused on preventing teacher attrition. An influential study of Norwegian teachers by Skaalvik and Skaalvik, (2016) highlighted how supportive relationships were a predictive factor in perceived competence, having a positive impact on teachers’ motivation and self-concept (Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2016). Similarly, a large-scale study of trainee teachers in Germany found that mentors were the most common source of support. (Kärner, Weiß and Heinrichs, 2021). Notably, the significance of mentoring on resilience was highlighted by revealing that negative mentor support hindered resilience more strongly than negative personal support (Kärner, *et al.,* 2021). This evidence suggests that high-quality mentor support could be a strong predictor of teacher resilience. However, focusing on mentors as a resource for teacher development solely based on competency standards may not fully capture the nature of mentor support and its impact on resilience. Notably, the relational dynamics between the mentor and the trainee may significantly influence how trainees experience this support.

Qualitative studies may provide a deeper understanding of how relational factors influence resilience. For example, Le Cornu (2013) highlights that ECT’s relationships with colleagues had a positive impact on resilience when trainees felt embraced and accepted within their professional circles. This validation played a pivotal role in strengthening their confidence in their teaching abilities (Le Cornu, 2013). Moreover, Gu and Day’s (2013) phenomenological research report found that establishing supportive relationships with colleagues played a crucial role in enabling teachers to uphold their initial commitment to teaching and effectively navigate challenges in their professional environment (Gu and Day, 2013). Notably, relationships which were characterised by ‘trust, shared values, and visions amongst staff were perceived by these teachers as having fostered the strength of a collective capacity for joint work’ (Gu and Day, 2013, p.37).

Nevertheless, these influential studies are broad in scope. Le Cornu’s (2013) findings point mainly to peer relationships as a source of resilience. This can perhaps be attributed to the variability of mentor support provided to new teachers in Australia (Gordon, 2020). Furthermore, Gu and Day’s (2013) report investigated resilience in teachers across all career stages and findings on relationships do not specifically focus on mentor support where resilience may be experienced differently than that provided by other colleagues.

The quality and consistency of mentor support has been addressed through the introduction of non-assessed mentor standards (Teaching Schools Council, 2016). Yet, comparisons between ITT mentor standards and other professional standards revealed that there is less clarity on how ITT mentors can establish effective working relationships with trainee teachers (Jerome and Brook, 2020). Whilst this gap in defining mentoring does not reflect the reality of how mentoring is enacted, it does highlight that the complexity of the mentoring relationship has not been fully considered by recent policy. The authors suggest that research focuses on this deficit, in particular, how mentors manage the ‘power dynamics’ (Jerome and Brook, 2020, p.130) in these relationships in context.

Indeed, unclear power dynamics may perpetuate the practice of ‘judgementoring’ (Hobson and Malderez, 2013 p. 1), a mentor-led approach which reduces the role to identifying weaknesses in trainee practice and providing steps to improve (Hobson and Malderez, 2013). This can create a relational dynamic which erodes trust and makes it difficult for trainees to be open in seeking developmental opportunities for fear of further judgement (Hobson, 2013).

The evidence suggests that mentor support that impacts resilience may be more complex than current policy has considered. In particular, the relational factors between mentors and trainees can be of particular significance during the trainees’ initial integration into the profession. Detailed qualitative data may provide a more nuanced understanding of these complexities to support the training and quality assurance of mentors in supporting trainee resilience.

## 3.3 Teacher Identity

Whilst it is beyond the scope of this study to explore the complexity of the concept of teacher identity, this theme arose from the initial analysis of this study, indeed influential studies of teacher resilience have identified significant links between identity and resilience (Day and Kington, 2008; Le Cornu, 2013.; Johnson, Down, Le Cornu, Peters, Sullivan, Pearce and Hunter, 2014). To address the research question *how does mentoring influence the lived experience of resilience in trainee teachers?* It is therefore relevant to briefly consider the literature on the relevance of social aspects in the construction of identity to bring clarity to this discussion.

Based on the findings from the aforementioned VITAE study (Day*, et al.*, 2006), Day and Kington (2008) posit that identity is a composite of components constructed by the social roles and communities we engage with (Day and Kington, 2008). These identities may experience tension during periods of change, impacting one’s resilience (Day and Kington, 2008). Resilience, therefore, entails effectively managing the stability of identity through changing situations (Day and Kington, 2008). Arguably, trainee teachers, as learners, are by this definition experiencing significant instability in their sense of identity; thus managing their resilience is part of the learning process. Day and Kington (2008) highlight the influence of external factors from the social world on their ability to manage their identities through the learning process (Day and Kington, 2008).

This focus on instability of identities is echoed by Garner and Kaplan, (2019) who also suggest that managing stability between domains of identity can maintain one’s commitment to teaching. However, they further illuminate the process of identity formation in the early stages of a teacher’s career by emphasising the combination of ‘social interactions’ and ‘the agency of the teacher’ (Garner and Kaplan, 2019,p.12) in identity development, highlighting the importance of the trainee teacher’s intentional engagement in their own identity development as part of the process. However, the systems, processes and environment may limit trainee teacher agency in school contexts, particularly where compliance and uniformity of approach are prioritised to achieve accountability demands, neglecting the trainee teacher’s status as a learner (Murray and Passey, 2014; Steadman, 2024).

Whilst these conceptualisations of teacher identity highlight the dynamic interplay between different dimensions of identity, they potentially promote a fragmented view of teacher identity development. Wenger-Trainer offers a compatible perspective that conceptualises learning as an integration of identities (Farnsworth, Kleanthous and Wenger-Trayner, 2016). Wenger-Trayner’s theory conceptualises identity formation as a process by which one shapes and is shaped by the communities they engage in (Farnsworth, *et al*., 2016). This distinction emphasises the impact becoming a teacher might have on the constitution of the trainee’s identity more generally and raises questions about whether identity congruence, rather than stability, is the goal for fostering their resilience.

Notably, Wenger-Trainer (2016) criticises prescriptive definitions of knowledge defined outside of the community of practice as detrimental to identity formation from a learning perspective, he argues:

*‘if you limit expressibility and you narrow accountability so much that people have to almost forget who they are in order to belong there, it is no wonder that the experience does not carry much into the rest of their life’*

(Farnsworth, Kleanthous and Wenger-Trayner, 2016, p.156).

This challenges the idea that a transfer of the knowledge outlined in the Core Content Framework (CCF) from the mentor to the trainee is supporting competence and reveals this can be a barrier to learning and the development of teacher identity. The notion of becoming a teacher from this perspective suggests that who one already is must be integrated into an emerging teacher identity to sustain commitment to the profession.

Indeed, the absence of identity work in the CCF and ECF has attracted criticism from prominent scholars (Steadman, 2024). Others recognise that developing teachers’ pedagogical competence is insufficient for sustaining their commitment to the profession (Schaefer and Clandinin, 2019). Nevertheless, solutions overlook the potentially negative influence of mentoring relationships in developing identity. For example, Steadman (2024) suggests that the prescriptive nature of the new competency frameworks leaves little time for critical reflection in mentoring conversations (Steadman, 2024). However, this fails to address the variation in mentoring quality reported before the CCF and ECF were introduced. Hobson, Ashby, Malderez, and Tomlinson (2009) highlight in their review, which draws upon a breadth of mentoring research, significant variations in the psychosocial impact of mentoring. They report some negative effects such as lack of support, increased workloads that cause anxiety, and instances of bullying (Hobson *et al.*, 2009). Thus, a deeper focus on the social dynamics of mentor-trainee relationships may uncover more nuanced influences of mentoring on identity development and its relationship with resilience.

A comprehensive study, which applies a thorough critique of existing theories of resilience before presenting findings from a substantial sample of empirical data, emphasises the social factors on identity development (Johnson, *et al*., 2014). The authors emphasise the importance of relationships in developing a ‘sense of belonging and sense of connectedness to their school community’ (Johnson *et al*., 2014, p.542). Whilst, they acknowledge that self-reflection is a significant part of developing a positive teacher identity, they highlight the role of more experienced colleagues (mentors) in modelling this self-reflection (Johnson *et al.*, 2014).

The literature reviewed in this section highlights the importance of identity development as a significant aspect of learning to teach. However, the emphasis on a standardised core content of knowledge for trainees may pose obstacles to identity development, such as limiting trainee agency and imposing time constraints on mentors. Given the established connections between identity development and resilience, it is relevant to critically explore how these dynamics influence the experiences of resilience for trainees.

## 3.4 Conclusions from the Literature

This review has highlighted the shortcomings in recent policy advice and guidance on developing trainee resilience. Specifically, it underscores the insufficient attention given to the situated, social elements of learning to teach in school placements and the potential impact of variations in these contexts on trainee resilience.

# 4. Conceptual Framework

## 4.1 Resilience

As discussed in the literature review, the concept of resilience is complex. The review problematised the most common definition which characterises resilience as the ability to ‘bounce back’ from stress, adversity, or suffering (Fredrickson, 2004) and how it relates to definitions of teacher resilience. In conceptualising resilience for this study, there are two main points to consider:

1. That the concept of resilience is relevant to the contextual reality of being a trainee teacher (Gu and Day, 2013).
2. That teacher resilience is critically considered as a construct that could potentially undermine the ability to challenge adverse conditions that trainee teachers face (Price, et. al, 2012).

Thus, the definition of resilience for this study will extend the contextualised concept of resilience of Gu and Day, (2013) to *A trainee teacher’s ability to maintain their commitment to teaching* (Brunetti, 2006; Gu and Day 2013) *and to their development as a teacher without taking steps that may be detrimental to their overall well-being.*

## 4.2 Mentoring

There are multiple possible definitions for mentoring across different contexts (Clutterbuck, 2004). The mentor’s role in English ITT is broadly defined as ‘a suitably experienced teacher who has formal responsibility to work collaboratively within the ITT partnership to help ensure the trainee receives the highest-quality training’ (The Teaching School’s Council, 2016, p.7). The formal aspect of the role involves ongoing assessment of the trainee’s progress towards the teacher standards culminating in a final assessment which determines whether the trainee is meeting the standards for recommendation for QTS. Thus, the role combines in-school support with formal assessment which is quality assured by the ITT provider.

# 5. Theoretical Framework

## 5.1 Ontology

This research is underpinned by a constructivist ontology which argues that reality is created through social processes influenced by history and culture (Gergen and Gergen, 2007). I hold the belief that reality is co-constructed, specific and context dependent (Dibley, *et al*., 2020).

## 5.2 Epistemology

Whilst I acknowledge that positivist paradigms may be relevant for research in the natural sciences, the complexity of human beings renders them unsuitable for study through mere measurement alone, distinguishing them from other objects of inquiry (Kincheloe, 2011).

This challenges the idea of a universal truth as the only route to knowledge (Dibley, *et al*., 2020). This research focuses on the lived experience of trainee teachers in a specific context to make sense of the influence of mentoring on their resilience. Given the complexity of the concept of resilience, I do not consider it to be a universal construct, rather it is constructed by trainee teachers in the context of their school placement (Hong and Cross Francis, 2020). Thus, the research question is focused on understanding the depth of trainee teacher’s subjective experiences, the relevance of mentoring as a contextual factor in their experience, and the originality of each participant’s viewpoint (Hong and Cross Francis, 2020).

This research also acknowledges that ‘it is the meaning-making, sense-making, attributional activities that shape action (or inaction)’ (Lincoln and Guba, 2011, p.220). By illuminating the ways trainee teachers make sense of their experiences, this research can identify useful approaches to mentoring that can foster resilience in trainee teachers. However, claims to new knowledge do not present objective truth because knowledge is always evolving (Lincoln and Guba, 2011). Thus, the reader is prompted to think about how the research can transfer to their own context (Dibley, *et al.,* 2020). Given that the utility of this research is embedded in such a specific context, there is no rationale for uncovering a universal truth beyond the social context of a trainee teacher placement. Rather, the purpose is to understand the way in which participants give meaning to their experiences in relation to their social role as trainee teachers (Salgado and Clegg, 2011).

As a researcher who is also part of the social world being investigated, another consideration was my role in the construction of findings. In a constructivist paradigm, knowledge emerges through the interaction between the participant and the researcher (Waring, 2012). In exploring the nature of human experience, my view aligns with that of Heidegger who posits that we understand ourselves in relation to others (King, 2001). This philosophical stance deeply influenced my role as a researcher. It underscores the importance of engaging with participants as co-constructors of knowledge so that in coming to an understanding ‘we do not relate the others’ opinion to [them] but to our own opinion and views’ (Gadamer, 2013 p.403). This allows me to integrate my perspectives with theirs, facilitating a richer, more nuanced understanding of the phenomenon.

## 5.2 Methodology

In response to my beliefs about the nature of reality and knowledge, and the complexity of the concepts to be investigated, this study adopts a hermeneutical phenomenological approach, which involves the interpretation and description of lived experiences. The aim is to explore the research question: *How does mentoring impact the lived experience of resilience in trainee teachers?* This section details how the chosen research methodology will address this question, ensuring a rigorous and comprehensive exploration of the phenomenon under investigation.

Central to hermeneutic phenomenology is the notion of ‘*being-in-the-world’* (Wrathall, 2005, p.7) which means that as researchers we are embedded in the worlds we seek to understand by language and socialisation (Smythe and Spence, 2012). My background as a trainee teacher, a teacher, and a professional working directly with trainees provides me with my own experiences that are highly relevant to the phenomenon of mentoring and resilience in this context. According to Heidegger, one cannot separate oneself from the world to study it from an objective perspective (Peoples, 2021). This view differs from the phenomenology of Husserl, whose transcendental phenomenology sought to uncover the universal experience of human consciousness by identifying the essential structures and conditions that underly experience (Denscombe, 2021). Thus, a research methodology based on Husserl’s underlying philosophy would propose that the researcher suspend all prior understanding of the phenomenon to see the lived experience of participants without bias (Peoples, 2021). However, this study recognised the relevance of what is already understood about the phenomenon through my lived experience in context and my engagement with the literature. Thus, the process was guided by the thinking of Gadamer in that to be open to what is different we need to first be aware of our own understanding (Gadamer, 2013) and the potential effect on the research (Smythe and Spence, 2012). This allows the researcher to modify their existing understanding of the phenomenon by analysing the data until a suitable 'unity of meaning' is achieved (Gadamer, 2013, p.600).

In hermeneutic phenomenology studies, there is some variation of the key terms that are central to answering the research question (Norlyk and Harder, 2010). A phenomenological study aims to uncover the ‘essence’ (King, 2001, p.8) of the phenomenon, and it is this term in particular that requires further clarification from a hermeneutic perspective. Thus, this study sought to understand the essence of how mentoring impacts the lived experience of resilience as it pertains to ‘what matters’ (Wrathall, 2005, p.92) in the experience of resilience in trainee teachers, to gain a deeper perspective of the situated nature of resilience in school placements. This recognises that understanding is ‘dynamic and contextual’ (Smythe and Spence, 2012, p.13). Through the subsidiary questions, the research aims to uncover themes that are universal to the experience of this specific group (Norlyk and Harder, 2010) to capture the nuanced, shared understandings and interpretations that emerge from trainees’ experiences of resilience and mentoring. This requires the researcher to seek depth and detail in participant stories whilst maintaining openness and curiosity about what emerges (Denscombe, 2021).

# 6. Methods:

This section outlines the methods chosen to answer the research question: How does mentoring impact the lived experience of resilience in trainee teachers? A clear rationale will be presented for the decisions made in sampling, data collection, and analysis, accompanied by an explanation of the philosophical assumptions underpinning these decisions. This aims to clarify the process of the methodology outlined in the previous section and to support the trustworthiness and utility of the study (Noryk and Harder, 2010; Fleming, Gaidys and Robb, 2003).

## 6.1 Sampling

As outlined in the literature review (3.1), resilience is a complex concept, particularly in the field of education, lacking a universally agreed-upon definition (Kaplan, 2013). To gain a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of resilience among trainee teachers, purposive sampling was utilised to narrow down the population, as suggested by Denscombe (2021). The initial criteria for participant selection were aligned with the purpose of the study (Dibley, *et al.,* 2020) and required participants to have completed teacher training through a school-based programme, such as School Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) or School Direct. This was important as the research focused on individuals whose school-based experience was a significant component of their training and ensured mentor involvement was consistent for all participants. The second requirement was that trainees had finished their training in 2021 or 2022. This ensured that their experiences were recent and considered the disruptions to school placements and mentoring caused by COVID-19, which uniquely affected those who completed their training in 2019-20.

The research question formulation was initially inspired by discussions within my organisation concerning trainee retention. This led to an inquiry into how resilience could be fostered among future trainees. However, due to constraints in sample size, only one participant who had trained within the organisation was initially recruited. Consequently, the decision was made to broaden the sample to include recent trainees from other school-based programs. Further elaboration on this decision will be provided in section 7.

Empirical criteria for sampling, which aims to cover a cross-section of the population, does not apply to phenomenological enquiry (Norlyk and Harder, 2010) rather, in hermeneutic phenomenology research, the goal is to recognise that each person's experience holds equal significance and cannot be measured against others. Therefore, this study does not aim to demonstrate representativeness or similarity of experience as indicators of truth (Dibley, *et al.,* 2020). The sample size consisted of four participants, including two secondary and two primary former trainees. The number of participants in the sample fell at the lower end of the desired range of 4-6 individuals. This smaller sample size allowed for a more in-depth study of the phenomenon, aligning with my belief in the complexity of human beings (Kincheloe, 2011). This final sample size was also partly determined by the willingness of the population to take part (Dibley *et al.,* 2020) and the ethical considerations employed during the recruitment phase. Nevertheless, a cohort of 4 participants was sufficient for the ‘richness and depth’ (Dibley, *et al.,* 2020, p.61) of the phenomenon because of the complexity of the research question, which explores both the concept of resilience as it pertains to trainee teachers and the relational implications of mentoring.

## 6.2 Data Collection

A key tenet of hermeneutic phenomenology is ‘to let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way it shows itself from itself’ (Heidegger, 1962, p.58). Thus it was important to open up the space for participants to reveal what was meaningful to them about their experiences of resilience and the impact of mentoring. Nevertheless, the nature of the question involving both mentoring and resilience meant that some structure was used to keep responses focused on the research question. Consequently, a flexible semi-structured interview was conducted using focused questions that had been revised through the research design trial (Appendix A), Additional questions were posed to gain a deeper understanding and clarification of meaning of the experiences shared. This approach allowed for the co-creation of the data that is aligned with hermeneutic phenomenological philosophy (Dibley *et al.,* 2020).

## 6.3 Data Analysis

In hermeneutical phenomenology, there is no agreed process to be followed (Dibley, *et al.,* 2020). As a novice researcher, I was guided through the hermeneutic circle by reference to the field of nursing, where this methodology is most common, and through critical analysis of previous studies using this methodology. I applied these flexibly based on the project's needs and my developing understanding of the phenomenon, as outlined in this section.

Interviews were transcribed manually so that I could immerse myself in the data from the beginning, to illuminate meaning through the tone and mannerisms of the speaker (Dibley *et al.*, 2020). The analysis of my pre-conceptions, which had been explored through handwritten journals, was used reflexively as part of the process. From the interview stage to the final write-up of the findings, I reviewed these entries throughout the study and added my reflections to a spreadsheet (Appendix B) this provided me with a systematic way to evaluate how any emerging thoughts or feelings might impact the research and allow this to guide reflexive thinking and revisiting the data with a more open mind (Fleming, Gaidys and Robb, 2003; Smythe and Spence, 2012).

Phenomenological analysis aims to ‘explore what appears to the subject and the manner of it’s appearing’ (Norlyk and Harder, 2010, p.428). Thus, data analysis does not tend to follow a linear approach to coding and analysis (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2022), nor is it appropriate to code data concerning the frequency of themes participants discuss (Norlyk and Harder, 2010). Initially, interviews were coded to identify what stood out in the text generally (Dibley *et al.*, 2020). This was decided based on what was directly related to the research questions. Readings and annotations continued until meaning began to emerge (Van Manen, 2016). Broad themes were developed to ‘give control and order to the writing’ (Van Manen, 2016, p79). This enabled the emerging essence of the whole experience to inform the meaning of the parts (Fleming, *et al.,* 2003). Subsequent readings were annotated in a different colour to track the process of interpretation until more specific themes were formed (Dibley, *et al.,* 2020). This process involved ‘dwelling with the data’ (Dibley, *et al.,* 2020, p.125) which is taking time away from the official data analysis to sit with the data, think, and make connections. This meant that data analysis was a long process of around 5 months and was ongoing alongside the final literature review, to allow meaning to emerge and connections to form between the parts and the whole (Appendix C). I read, listened to and watched the participant interviews during the process of interpretation to pick up on nuances in the expression (Fleming, *et al*., 2003). Examples of the coding process are included in Appendix D.

**The approach to data analysis was guided by the underpinning philosophy of Gadamer to ensure alignment with the theoretical framework, giving particular note to the relevance of fore-conceptions in the analysis (Gadamer, 2013). This was supported through discussions with my tutor which helped me to reflect on my assumptions to avoid projecting meaning onto the data based on my fore-conceptions (Gadamer*,* 2013). The extract from my journal (Appendix B) below exemplifies how this phenomenological thinking unfolded.

*(Figure 1: Researcher Journal Entry, 2023).*

One example that was given careful consideration was the emerging theme of power. I had written about power balance in mentoring relationships in my first assignment for the MA, and as this theme emerged from the data I returned to this assignment to consider how my understanding had changed through engaging with the research data. My perspective had evolved from focusing on the mentor’s role in creating a power balance to a more nuanced understanding that power imbalance is somewhat inevitable. Thus, the mentee’s role in navigating it is more socially complex than I initially thought.

One particular challenge with using the hermeneutic circle was the continuing dialogue with participants to account for changes in understanding over time (Fleming, *et al*., 2003). This was limited by the availability of participants and their willingness to commit to further discussions. Whilst all participants were contacted for ongoing dialogue, only one responded and ethical considerations were prioritised concerning the number of emails sent to participants to request further discussion. Nevertheless, the contributions that did take place entered into the ongoing dialogue with the text to inform interpretation. (Appendix B).

Another challenge of this method is knowing when the fusion of horizons is complete, as Flemming, *et al.,* (2003) note, ‘the process could go on indefinitely because every understanding will change as time goes on’ (Fleming, *et al*., 2003, p.119). I returned to Gadamer’s original writings to ensure fidelity to the philosophical underpinnings of the method and to gain a deeper understanding of what it meant practically to reach a ‘fusion of horizons’ (Vessey, 2009). Gadamer posits: ‘Interpretation is not a means through which understanding is achieved; rather it enters into the content of what is understood’ (Gadamer, 2013, p.416). Thus, the fusion of horizons was reached when the participant interview data provided clarity of understanding of the lived experience so that the experience of resilience and mentoring held new meaning. I supported this by playing with the data reflexively (Vagle and Hofsess, 2016) to uncover meaning, this involved deconstructing the data to enable me to see the connections of the different parts before realigning this close analysis with the whole text and context. For example, I created word clouds using the words and phrases from the participants that related to the themes that were beginning to emerge. This helped me to get an overall sense of their experience; For example, using this method to examine the language used by Participant 2 to describe his mentoring experiences, it becomes clear that there was inner conflict characterising the experiences. I then returned to the data to examine these in more detail.

A person with text in the shape of a head

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Figure 2: Participant 2 Word Cloud

Further examples of how I played with the data are included in Appendix E.

I consolidated this exploration by writing interpretative summaries for each participant which evolved along with my engagement in the hermeneutic circle. The use of Interpretative summaries ‘promotes a process of writing, thinking and dialoguing with the text’ (Dibley, *et al.,* 2020, p122). I continued to edit the interpretative summary until I was able to create a coherent account of the participant’s individual story woven in with my interpretations (Appendix F). I was ethically conscious of my role in this iterative process; to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, I embedded participant quotations into the interpretative summaries to anchor the participants’ voice throughout the summary. I also compared the summaries with how I had deconstructed and played with the data to see if the overall sense of the stories was consistent.

The themes that were identified in the analysis facilitated the thick description (Van Manen, 2016), which is a contextualised description of the findings. Consideration was also given to the extent to which quotations were used to support the description. On the one hand, direct quotations are considered to be raw data which has not gone through the process of interpretation; thus overuse of participant quotations may move away from alignment with a hermeneutic phenomenological philosophy (Nordyk and Harder, 2010). However, participant quotations can also support the trustworthiness of the data by illuminating the participant’s perspectives as a core element of the description (Fleming, *et al.,* 2002). The contradictory nature of the application of hermeneutic phenomenology concerning the inclusion of quotations necessitated a balanced approach. Quotations were included only when the participant's language was directly relevant to the underlying structure of the phenomenon, as determined by the analysis. These quotations were then integrated into the narrative to illuminate the stories, rather than to validate the interpretation. For example, the quotation below, from Participant 4 features some interesting language that provides insight into the trainee’s experiences.

*She gave me a job which made me feel useful and made me feel like I actually wasn’t just a drain on them or wasn’t just dependent on her*

(Participant 4: Appendix H: Line 119-120)

The language used by the participant in this section prompted deep analytical thought. For example, ‘gave me’ brings attention to how the mentor held power regarding how work was distributed to the trainee. This, in turn, seems to impact how the trainee felt about her place in the department and in the school. By giving her a role in the department the mentor reduced the trainee’s inherent concerns about adding extra pressure to the mentor and other colleagues’ workload. The use of the metaphor ‘drain’ underscores the strength of this inherent concern and the phrase ‘dependent’ further illuminates how this simple act frees the trainee from this concern. The richness of language in this quotation illuminates the trainees’ experience beyond what the thick description provides and thus can be useful in enhancing the reader’s understanding of and engagement with the findings.

# 7. Ethics

It was crucial to adhere to ethical principles for academic research; ethical considerations guided decision-making from topic selection to project completion.(BERA, 2018; Stutchbury and Fox, 2009). The ethical considerations were carefully thought out in the research design and ethical approval was granted by St Mary’s University on 31st May, 2023 (Appendix G). An ethics log (Appendix J) was used to ensure a structured approach to evaluating ethical considerations throughout the study. Stutchbury and Fox's (2009) framework was employed alongside the BERA guidelines to inform decision-making to ensure these principles were applied in the context of the study at every stage.

## 7.1 Trustworthiness

Being hermeneutically conscious requires sensitivity to the distinction between others and self (Gadamer*,* 2013). Thus, examining fore-conceptions in pursuit of understanding ‘the things themselves’ (Gadamer, 2013, p.279) is important in upholding the trustworthiness of the data. The implications of my role and pre-understanding were fully explored through journalling throughout the study (Dibley, et, al., 2020). Examples of the journal and how it was used throughout the research process have been included in Appendix B.

Member checking was limited due to the availability of participants after the initial interviews. I decided to limit the number of emails sent to three beyond the initial stages of analysis to arrange member-checking conversations to avoid pressuring participants to contribute further. Member checking was also part of the interview process in the form of clarifying questions that checked my understanding and interpretation (Hong and Cross Francis, 2020).

## 7.2 Confidentiality

The BERA guidelines state that researchers must ‘take all reasonable precautions to avoid identification’ (BERA, 2018, p.23). This section will outline how this was managed in the recruitment process, storage and management of data and the presentation of findings.

Ethical considerations for confidentiality arose during the recruitment phase of the study. In the research design, I originally planned to recruit through my organisation. I was granted approval to send emails to past students via the ITT Coordinator (Appendix I). However, this method only resulted in one participant being recruited via three emails sent between August and mid-October. The decision was made to broaden the sample of the study and approval was granted, through the supervision process, to recruit via social media. This method made it easier to maintain the confidentiality of the participants when reporting the findings, as the broader sample size allowed for a more straightforward management of anonymity. (Gelinas, Pierce, Winkler, Cohen, Bierer, 2017).

To maintain the integrity of the study, I used passive recruitment (Gelinas *et al.*, 2017) via Twitter (now known as X), to target the education community that made up the bulk of my connections. I created a square poster design containing the key information about the study which contained an image that encapsulated the focus on the participant's voice and was mindful of openness to diversity and inclusion (Appendix J).

During this process, I considered the privacy implications for potential participants. Whilst I had requested to be contacted by interested participants via my university email address, I could not control other people’s actions in respecting the privacy and anonymity of potential participants. Thus, I ensured close monitoring of the posts and shares to enable me to swiftly remove any comments that may reveal the identity of participants. On one occasion, I deleted the Twitter handle of a participant who had been tagged by someone else in the post once she had contacted me by email. Another privacy consideration was that I did not view the profiles of the recruited participants so it was only their interview data that informed the analysis of their experience.

To protect anonymity during the transcribing process I coded each participant as ‘participant + number’ in date order. As there were only four participants, I was able to keep track of this without keeping a spreadsheet of names. I also protected anonymity by redacting identifying information such as school name, location, provider and any other information that may have identified the participant, students or colleagues (BERA, 2018).

This section has presented the methods employed in this study, as well as the philosophical assumptions underpinning the decision-making process. Articulating these methodologies and their philosophical foundations ensures transparency and rigour, which are critical for establishing the trustworthiness of the findings. The results and interpretations derived from this study will be presented in the subsequent section.

# 8. Discussion of findings and claims to new knowledge

This research examined the impact of mentoring on the resilience of trainee teachers, taking into account the type of support provided and how the relational dynamics either facilitated or hindered resilience.

## 8.1 The Essence of the Phenomenon**:** Facilitating the Space for Identity Development.

The influence of mentoring on resilience in trainee teachers revolves around facilitating trainees’ ability to merge their professional and personal identities throughout the learning process. When mentoring fosters congruence between trainees’ personal and professional identities, their resilience is enhanced.

Trainee teachers are in the ‘process of becoming’ (Wenger, 1998, p. 215). Their professional identity is not separate from their sense of who they are more generally, thus they bring their whole selves to the learning process and therefore are likely to experience vulnerability in their mentoring relationships.

*...if I get feedback, it is so hard not to take it personally b..’cause you do, because it’s* ***you****. You know,* ***you’ve*** *delivered that lesson and* ***you’ve*** *had that interaction*

(Participant 1: Appendix H Line 7-9 ).

Trainee teachers are not separate from their existing identities but are embedded in a world that shapes their understanding and approach to learning. They bring their past, knowledge, and biases into the learning process (Tessmer and Richey, 1997). It is important to trainees that their mentors know their temporal context as they begin their teacher training so that the approaches to their development are relevant to the continuity of their personal history and its impact on their present learning journey.

*I think building resilience is also about erm what’s come before and you can’t really know someone until you know like what’s, what's come before and why.*

(Participant 3: Appendix H Line 22-24).

*The mentor role is all about knowing who you are as an individual… a mentor knowing you knows how to manipulate the information and the advice erm, to make it more worthwhile to you.*

(Participant 4: Appendix H: Lines 27, 38 and 39 ).

The findings, from interpretations of the stories participants shared, show that resilience is an outcome of the trainee teacher’s ability to both shape and be shaped by the practice of being a teacher in a way that feels balanced. This process is significantly influenced by mentoring which, this study finds, impacts resilience through the extent to which the mentoring relationship allows the space for the trainee to develop a professional identity that is congruent with their existing identity.

This study found that this also occurs in the opposite. When mentoring relationships encourage trainees to acquiesce too much of their identities in the process of becoming a teacher, this imbalance negatively impacted their resilience. This was significant in the experiences of Participant 2, whose mentoring relationship was characterised by conflict. This participant initially saw resilience as navigating conflict to create space for his identity development. For example, being able to develop his own teaching style independent of the mentor’s style.

‘*It’s having the confidence to say ‘I’m going to do it in a different way*.’

(Participant 2: Appendix H, Line 47)

Nevertheless, the mentor’s support and relational conditions that may have enabled him to do this were limited meaning the trainee chose to acquiesce to the mentor’s preferred way of doing things to protect himself from negative judgement.

*‘bite the tongue and survive the year was the ethos of the trainee teacher. If you don’t like things you just shut up and do it’.*

(Participant 2: Appendix H, Line 52-53)

Whilst this helped him to reduce conflict and complete the course, it actually diminished his resilience by creating distance between his general identity and his professional identity.

What is significant in this account is that the participant did not commit to teaching as a career, instead choosing another role working with children.

*‘My passion for teaching was helping children and as a teacher that doesn’t feel like the reality any more it is just: here’s thirty kids…best of luck’*

(Participant 2: Appendix H, Line 147-147)

It raises questions about whether more space to develop a congruent teacher identity would have influenced this decision.

The findings presented here are compatible with the work of Day and Kington (2008) and Garner and Kaplan (2019) in that it is acknowledged that learning to teach involves instability and change in the trainee’s personal and professional identity. However, this research builds upon these ideas by proposing that, for trainee teachers, congruence between dimensions of identity positively influences experiences of resilience, rather than stability. This is more closely aligned with the communities of practice theory of identity development discussed in the literature review (Farnsworth, Kleanthous and Wenger-Trayner, 2016).

Three broad themes emerged through the interpretations of participant interviews which respond to both subsidiary questions:

1. How does mentor support impact resilience?
2. How do the relational conditions between the mentor and the trainee promote or hinder resilience?

## 8.2 Power

The first finding is that perceived power between the trainee and the mentor influences the extent to which trainee teachers can navigate the complexities of becoming a teacher. That is, the more control the trainee has over their development, the more resilient they perceive themselves to be because they can effectively merge their broader sense of identity with their developing identity as a teacher.

Trainees were able to be most resilient when the mentor was perceptive to inherent power imbalances in the relationship. Trainees experienced resilience when mentors understood their needs and empowered them to take actions that felt specific to them. They also experienced self-suppression, which challenged their resilience, when they felt that mentor support was inflexible or when they were unable to openly share their reflections with their mentor because of the inherent power imbalance in the relationship. Participant 1's data illustrates this in the story she tells about her conversations with Mentor 2 when navigating discussions about behaviour strategies.

*I didn't feel like I could say that because I'm a trainee'...'who am I, you know?'*

(Participant 1: Appendix H: Line 91, 92 and 98)

Mentors inherently possess power concerning the working practices of the trainee whereas the trainee’s ability to challenge adverse working conditions may be limited.

A mentor who is perceptive and realistic about the trainee’s workload could empower the trainee to challenge unhelpful workplace pressures and challenge the managerial discourse that expects teachers to bounce back from adverse working conditions (Price, *et al.*, 2012).

*‘My mentor would say ‘I don’t want you to work outside of school. I don’t want you to sit up marking ‘til 11 o clock at night and working all day Sunday’ and he was really kind of aware of that’*

(Participant 1: Appendix H: Line 76-77)

*‘I started the course with a six-month-old baby, and so, something that was really important for me was like leaving on time, not having to get in super early…* *Because I wouldn’t have been able to do it without her [the mentor] telling me to go. Like she would stay and do stuff, and she would be like you don’t need to sit here and do this – go.’*

(Participant 3: Appendix H: Line 80-85)

Whereas those who are not perceptive can perpetuate unhealthy practices as socially situated norms (Price, *et al.*, 2012) that the trainee feels powerless to challenge.

‘*our flow was very much, we finish Friday and we are gonna have lessons for next week on Monday and that was kind of our workflow, and that took up both of our Sundays and I feel like that probably could’ve done way better it worked and we got there but it just feels a bit wrong’*

(Participant 2: Appendix H: Line 69-72 )

As mentors have some say over whether trainees successfully complete the course, acquiescing may seem like the safe option to avoid conflict and stay in the mentor’s favour. Although Participant 2 took this approach to resilience, it did not guarantee his survival as he spoke of having to ‘battle’ and ‘fighting’ (Appendix H: Line 63) for the mentor to agree to sign him off on the Teacher Standards. This contributes to the argument that mentor’s acting as assessors may be detrimental to fostering a sucessful mentoring relationship (Hobson, 2013; Lofthouse, 2014).

## 8.3 Care

The second finding revealed that trainees experienced resilience when they felt valued by their mentors. This supported trainees in being accepted into the profession as well as feeling as though participation in the community had a positive impact on their sense of competence and confidence.

Mentoring approaches where the mentor worked alongside the trainee to support them in developing competence fostered resilience among trainees. For example, Participant 1’s mentor would take opportunities whilst teaching to model effective practice to support her in meeting her targets.

*‘I never felt ...that it was ‘right you’re not doing that’ and ‘that needs improving…*

… *he was teaching the students, but I was there to benefit from it as well ...again it’s coming back to that I felt valued and understood and listened to.’*

(Participant 1: Appendix H: Line 101-111)

This builds on Hobson and Malderez's (2013) criticism of the focus on judgements in mentoring, highlighting that a developmental, rather than judgemental approach also fosters resilience by reinforcing the trainees' belief that their success is of value to the wider teaching community.

Participants felt inherently vulnerable to the assumption that they were a burden on their mentor. Thus, simple acts of care were crucial for their resilience as these acts countered this assumption. Mentor actions which elicited perceptions of care tended to be related to personalised support where mentors were able to draw upon their knowledge and resources to develop the trainee’s competence. Other participants felt that mentors cared about them as a person when they recognised their strengths and capacity to support the department as with Participant 4.

*She gave me a job which made me feel useful and made me feel like I actually wasn’t just a drain on them or wasn’t just dependent on her*

(Participant 4: Appendix H: Line 119-120 )

Directive approaches that involved mentors asking trainees to complete teacher actions first, which are then checked and judged by the mentor, could reinforce the trainees’ assumptions that they are a burden and create a dynamic which is detrimental to trainees’ experience of resilience.

## 8.4 Belonging

The third finding was that the trainee’s perception of belonging to both the school and the profession was linked to their perception of their resilience. To some extent, this was linked to the support they received from their mentor. Conversely, trainees often associated a lack of support with feeling lonely or isolated.

The trainees’ experience of belonging was also related to how much they felt part of the school community and as a result, this impacted their sense of identity as a teacher. Participant 2 expressed this when discussing the status of being a trainee and how that was managed through school policies.

*It made me feel not part of the academy, it made me feel not part of a teacher, I was just a person that existed within the, within the building per se, I’m just here to do my traineeship and it stops there*

(Participant 2 Appendix H: line 125-127).

*(the mentor) was the only contact I had – I mean, I’m stuck outside, I don’t have a fob, can you let me in?*

(Participant 2 Appendix H: Line 137-138)

The sense that congruent teacher identity is not being constructed at all is evident in this account as the trainee seems to lose the sense of both themselves as well as any sense of being part of a professional community. The mentor's role here is superficial, lacking broader support for the trainee's identity development. This was particularly significant for trainees’ on their second placements where relationships with mentors were not established and this often made them feel more isolated. This echoes the work of Gordon (2020) on supporting teachers transitioning from their ITT to ECT years, which highlights that fostering a sense of belonging is a key factor in successful ECT transition and retention (Gordon, 2020). This may indicate that the transition between placements needs further attention by providers so that trainees have support during this period.

Notably, some very simple mentor actions helped trainees to belong and, as a result, experience resilience. For instance, trainees mentioned having lunch with their mentor or being invited to social events. A sense of belonging was also linked to the finding of care and feelings of being valued by the mentor, particularly concerning their temporal context as outlined in section 8.1. This provides qualitative context to the findings of Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2011) who suggest alignment of trainee’s values predicts feelings of belonging.

Whilst these broad themes give structure to the findings, they overlap under the broader essence of the phenomenon. For example, trainees who felt their mentors valued them as individuals also experienced a sense of belonging and were able to navigate power imbalances to better define their developmental route through the ITT year.

In exploring participants’ stories of the influence of mentoring on trainee teachers’ experience of resilience, this research has identified the difference between being a resilient teacher through change as with the work of Day, et al., (2006) and *becoming* a teacher in the current context. This subtle difference has implications for mentor training which will be discussed in the subsequent section.

# 9. Policy proposal

I have recently been appointed as a Curriculum Development Adviser for a SCITT provider. A key aspect of my role involves leading the design and delivery of mentor training in accordance with the new requirement for ITT providers to provide 20 hours of training to their partnership mentors (DFE, 2024). As mentioned in the literature review, current recommendations for supporting trainee resilience focus on professional advice provided directly to the trainee by the provider. However, the findings of this study suggest that mentoring relationships can impact trainee resilience by providing them with the space to develop a professional identity that aligns with their existing identity.

The proposal outlined in Table 1 focuses on embedding a thoughtful approach to mentoring that moves mentor support from a ‘judgementoring’ (Hobson and Malderez, 2013, p.1) approach characterised by observation followed by feedback to a more developmental approach which also incorporates supporting trainee teachers to belong as part of their induction. This would align with the definition presented by Hobson and Malderez (2013) that mentoring ‘aims to support the mentee’s learning and development as a teacher, and their integration into and acceptance by the cultures of the school and the profession’ (Hobson and Malderez, 2013, p1).

Table 1: Mentor Training Implementation Plan

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Policy name | Resilience Informed Mentor Training |
| Aim | To invite ………… SCITT partnership mentors to consider ways in which they can provide the space for trainees’ identity development within the context of their school culture. |
| Linked Improvement Priority | To improve the consistency of mentoring quality across the partnership. |
| Training Approach | Share insights from the study  Invite discussion  Identify barriers and ways forward  Generate new intentions for practice  Reflect in the impact |
| Reviewed and approved | ITT Partnership Manager: September 2024 |
| Implementation Timeline | **Planning –** August 2024  **Delivery –** TBC by ITT Partnership Manager.  **Evaluation and feedback –**  Professional Tutors: Quality Assurance of mentoring and feedback at each visit.  Curriculum Development Adviser and Professional Tutors: Monitoring of trainee records and wellbeing check-ins.  **End-of-year review –**  Feedback from trainees and professional tutors on the influence of mentoring on their resilience and general well-being.  Analysis of successful [trainee] completion rates against the national benchmark (DFE, 2020). |
| Funding | Embedded as part of the 20 hours of mentor training to be offered by ITT providers from September 2024 (DFE, 2024). |
| Outcomes | To support mentors to develop insights about the positive and negative influences of mentoring on resilience inviting them to consider how their actions can foster the conditions for resilience in the trainee teachers they will mentor. |
| Success Criteria | **Short term**: mentoring approaches provide trainee teachers with improved support for their resilience and overall well-being in placement schools reducing feelings of isolation and vulnerability.  **Long-term:** Reduction in trainee attrition in the ITT year. |
| Evidence | Short Term:   * ‘Mentor evaluations of the impact of training on their expertise’ (DFE, 2020, Section 9: Bullet Point 6). * ‘records of both central and school-based training, including records of observations, meetings, tutor visits and session plans, together with accompanying resources and research’ (DFE 2020, Section 7: Bullet Point 3).   Long Term:   * Trainee completion rates are higher than the national benchmark (DFE, 2020). |

For policy change to be successful, there needs to be alignment between the intended change and the context in which it will be implemented (Trowler, Saunders and Knight, 2002). In designing this policy for change, careful consideration was given to the limitations imposed by the current policy context in teaching and teacher education. The variation of levels of performativity, workload and culture in each mentor’s context is such that any approach to change accepts that ‘innovation will be received, understood and consequently implemented differently in different contexts’ (Trowler, *et al*, 2002, p.18). This approach to change aligns with phenomenological research, which invites readers to connect the findings and their contextually situated practice rather than be directed to perform specific, generalised actions (Dibley, *et al*, 2020).

A detailed version of Lewin’s model of change will be used to design the resilience-informed mentor training. Focusing on ‘group dynamics, democratic participation and choice’ (Burnes, 2020) as a key feature of the change process, mentors will be invited to engage in the training sessions through discussion and reflection throughout the process.

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Figure 3 ‘A Field Theory view of Lewin’s three-step model’ (Burnes, 2020, p. 49).

The model in Figure 3 outlines the structure of the mentor training, which will be threaded through the other sessions. At the beginning of the mentor training programme, the aim will be to challenge (unfreeze) existing views of mentoring such as judgementoring approaches (Hobson and Malderez, 2013). By educating mentors and sharing the findings of this research, the aim is to encourage mentors to evaluate how their own behaviour affects the resilience of their trainees. This involves addressing the challenges within the school environment that sustain such a mentoring approach, such as time constraints. The second phase will involve frequent revisiting and evaluation of the impact of the change leading to sharing and refining the approach as a group. Finally, this ongoing iterative process of reflection and refinement instigates refreezing by creating new group norms on mentoring and ways of being as a mentor.

# 10. Future orientations of the research

The research findings uncovered some of the social complexities of learning to teach on school placements and in particular, the social complexities of mentoring relationships. This motivates further interest in in-depth studies exploring these complexities. In this section, I have proposed two potential future orientations to consider in light of the findings of the present study.

A trainee teacher has to navigate this social world to enable the development of their professional identity within an established school culture. As discussed in the rationale for this study, teachers themselves are experiencing a significant drop in their well-being at work (Education Support, 2023) as well as political challenges that may require them to reconstruct their own identities (Menter, 2016). Further research, that considers the practical implications of a more meaningful approach to mentoring in the reality of these circumstances, would be useful in identifying barriers to fostering trainee autonomy. This could be achieved by incorporating the mentors' experiences into the design of the study or by conducting action research on the implementation of the training programme.

A potential limitation of the present study is the time constraints of the MA which led to data collection from past trainee teachers reflecting on their experiences of their training year. However, the findings reveal that identity development underpins the impact of mentoring relationships on resilience. To gain further depth of understanding of this, a longitudinal case study on trainees’ experiences at key points in the ITT induction could provide valuable insights into this process (Dibley, *et al*, 2020). The timings of data collection would aim to gather further detail on how far mentoring provides the space to develop a congruent identity at key points of the year (Yin, 2014) providing a more precise timeline for interventions.

# 11. Reflections on the MA learning journey

## 11.1: My role as a Teacher Educator.

At a time of significant change in the ITT sector, the MA program has enabled me to expand on existing literature by critically examining mentoring theory, practical challenges, and the political context. I have chosen specific areas of focus for my academic work, which has contributed to my professional growth as a Link Tutor. This has provided me with the knowledge and credibility to secure a new position as a SCITT Curriculum Development Adviser, where I will be responsible for leading the design and delivery of mentor training. This opportunity allows me to apply my learning to the sector ensuring my studies can have a direct impact on ITT trainees and their mentors.

## 11.2: My Development as a Coach

Alongside my MA study, I have also undertaken a practical coaching qualification. Exploring my theoretical position as part of my research design has directly impacted my coaching approach. The complexity of phenomenology and the lack of a clear method required deep engagement with the philosophical underpinnings of the methodology. This has taken me beyond tools and models in coaching to developing a clear philosophy for my coaching practice informed by the work of Heidegger and Gadamer. For example, with two of my coaching clients, I found that in-depth exploration that allowed clients to discover and articulate their authentic selves encouraged them to make choices that aligned with their true values and beliefs even when this did not match their initial goals.

## 11.3: My Academic Development

I started the MA as a mature student, completing my undergraduate degree in 2005 and my PGCE in 2011. Having previously undertaken academic study for the purpose of meeting job qualification requirements, I had not approached my studies with full curiosity. However, the MA programme was my opportunity to challenge and develop myself in my area of interest during a career break. This gave me the time and mental space to fully engage with my academic development as well as my knowledge of the field of education. This engagement has enabled me to see myself as both a teacher and an academic. Through the findings and direction of this study, I can see how, I too, have not only acquired knowledge but also transformed my identity through the practice of learning.

# 12. Conclusion

In this research paper, I have problematised the concept of resilience in a neoliberal education policy context. Through prominent studies of teacher resilience, I argue for a renewed emphasis on the social and relational factors of mentoring that contribute to or hinder, trainee teachers’ experiences of resilience. This challenges current guidance, which focuses on an individualised notion of resilience, taught as a professional behaviour.

This research explored the nuanced and varied nature of trainee teacher experiences of mentoring and how they influenced their resilience during school placements. By narrowing the population sample to trainee teachers and the contextual influences to mentoring relationships, I was able to collect rich, detailed, and specific data. Utilising hermeneutic phenomenology as a methodology resulted in a contextualised understanding of the essence of the phenomenon: that mentors can positively influence trainees’ experiences of resilience by allowing space for holistic identity development as part of the learning process. Conversely, limiting the space for this identity development can negatively influence resilience, which may contribute to attrition. This aligns with the work of Wenger (1998) whose communities of practice theory conceptualises learning as identity change (Farnsworth, *et al*., 2016).

Three broad themes were explored through the interpretation of the data: Power, Care and Belonging. These themes provide insights into how mentoring relationships could be optimised to foster resilience, providing content that can be integrated into mentor training.

I present the findings of this research at a time of political change; in the last few days, there has been a transfer of government from Conservative to Labour and a renewed commitment to tackling the recruitment and retention crisis (Standley, 2024). It is too early to know whether this shift in government will lead to changes in the direction of recent ITT reforms from a knowledge-based curriculum (DFE, 2019) to one which creates more space for identity development as advocated by Steadman (2024)

*‘The ‘one size fits all’ version of teacher identity present in the ITE reforms can only serve to undermine professional autonomy, threatening the recruitment, retention and fulfilment of England’s teachers.’*

(Steadman, 2024, p.175)

The findings presented in this research paper provide practical insights that are compatible with the current policy context. Nevertheless, the evidence presented here also supports calls for a curriculum that incorporates this space for identity development, contributing to the ongoing debate about the future of teacher training more broadly.

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# 14. Appendices

## Appendix A: Interview Design

**As you know, I am interested in how trainee teacher resilience is supported or hindered by mentoring. I want to know what it’s like for trainees during their training year and what positive or negative impact mentoring may have had on their resilience.**

1. **When you think of resilience, what comes to mind?**

e**. What is it like to have that happen?**

f. **How did you feel when that happened?**

g. **What were you thinking about when that happened?**

h. **Can you tell me more about…..?**

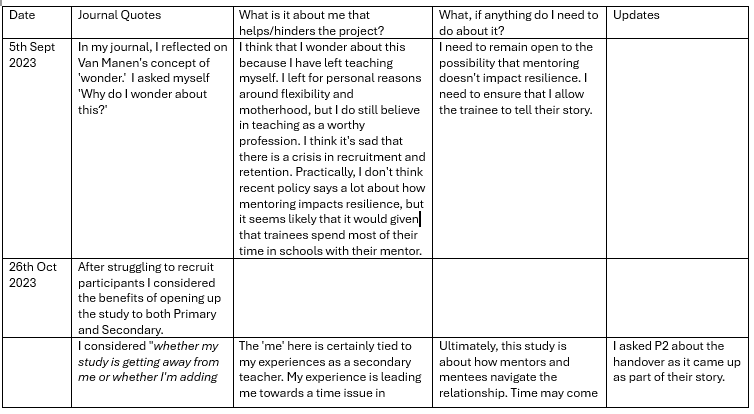
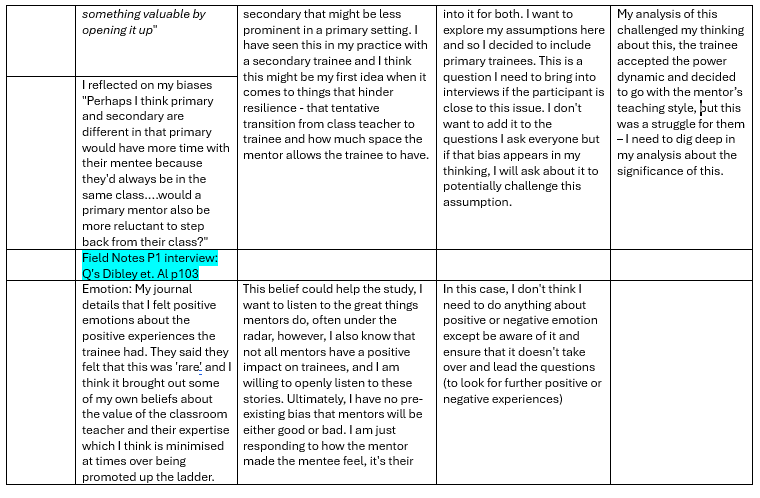
1. **Tell me about your experience of mentor support.**
2. Did this support or hinder your resilience?
3. Can you tell me about a time when….?
4. **Tell me about your relationship with your mentor.**

a. Did this support or hinder your resilience?

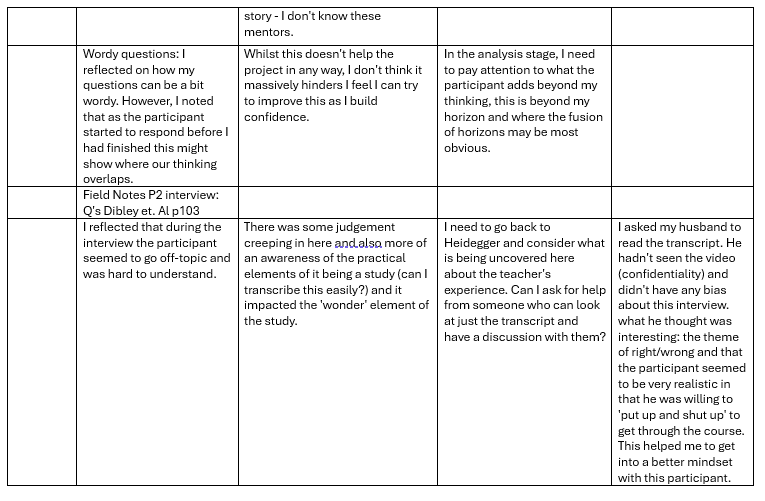
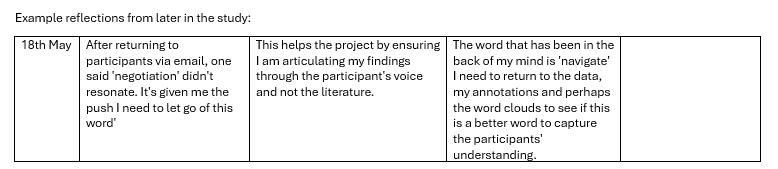
b. Can you tell me about a time when….?

4. Now that we have spent some time reflecting, is there anything else you would like to add about what resilience means to you?

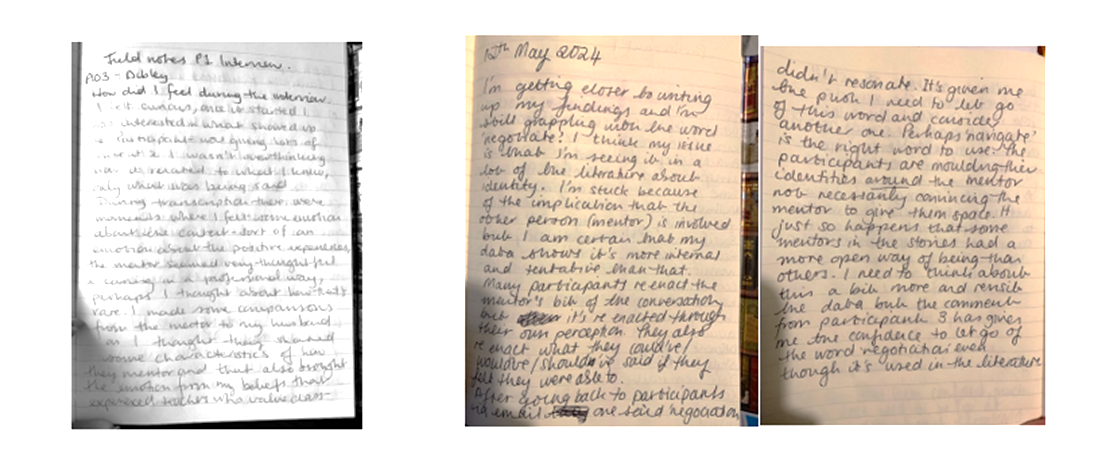
## Appendix B: Journal Reflections (Examples)



\*continued on the next page.

Examples from later in the study

\*Journal extracts on next page

Extract example corresponding to journal reflection tables

A close up of a paper

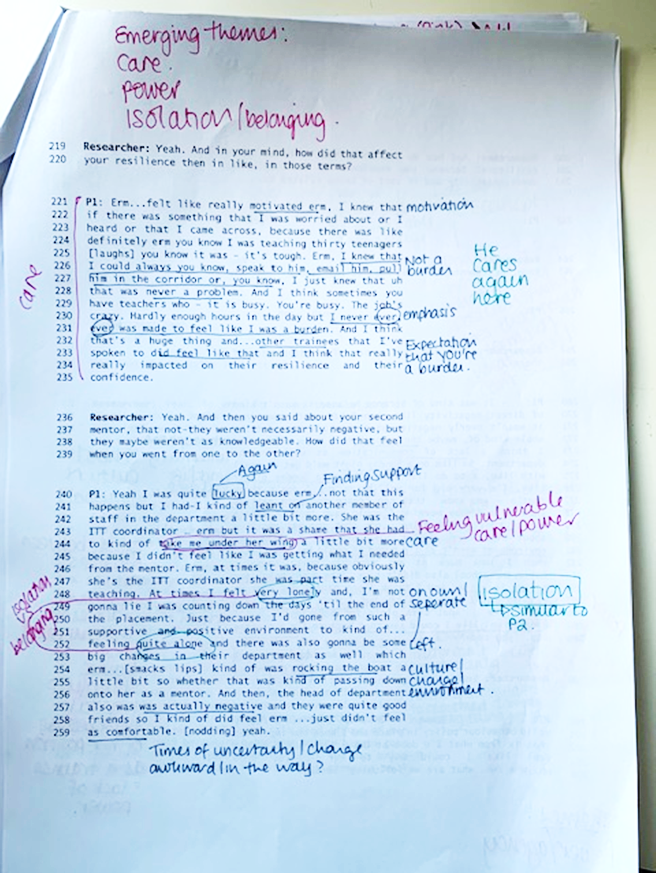
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Extract corresponding to the quoted entry

## A screenshot of a diagram Description automatically generatedAppendix C: Research Timeline

## Appendix D: Coding Process (Example)

P1 annotations – Example Page



## 

## 

P1: Example developing summary

## Appendix E: Playing with the Data

An example of close annotations looking just at the language used when discussing tensions in navigating power dynamics.

A screenshot of a computer

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Participants 2 and 4 – example word cloud summarising the language participants used related to navigating their identity.

A person's head with text

Description automatically generatedA person with text in the shape of a head

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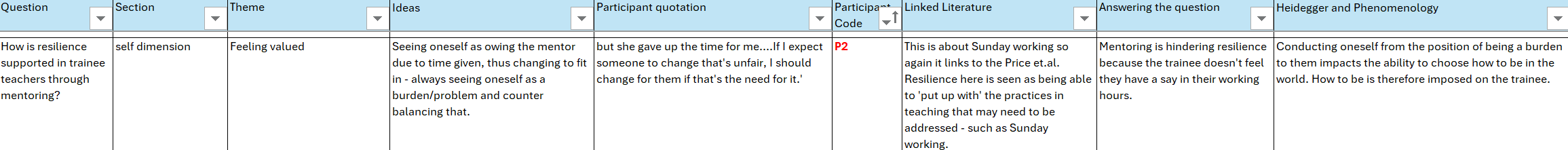
\*Continued on next page.

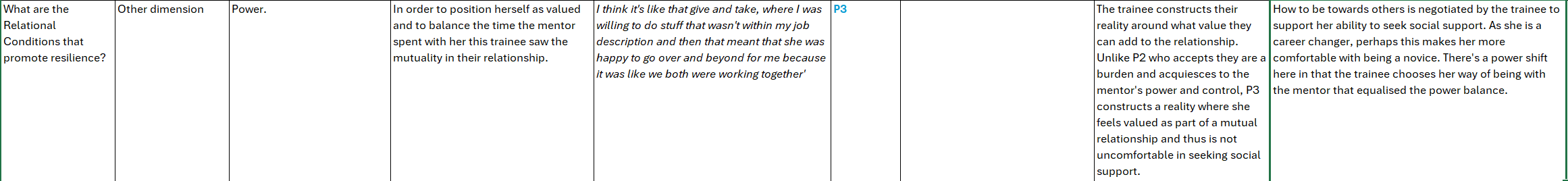
A tablet and sticky notes on a table

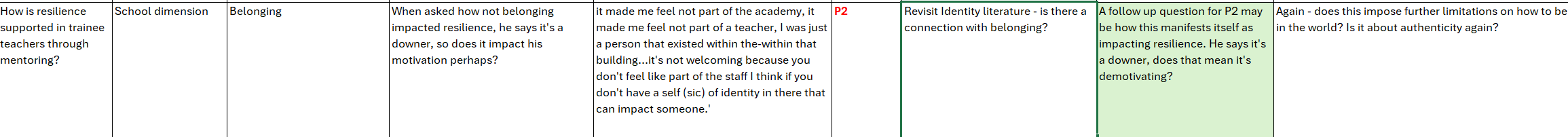
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Identifying key quotations from the data and making notes

Examples from a spreadsheet – making links and enabling filtering of data to see different connections showing evolving thinking and links to philosophy and literature where relevant (examples from each theme):







## Appendix F: Interpretative Summary Example

Interpretive Summary: **Participant 1**

The stories this teacher shared about her ITT year mentoring experiences position the main placement mentor as significant to her overall positive experience and feelings of resilience. There is a clear sense that the trainee felt valued by her placement 1 mentor and this comes through in most of her retelling. The feelings come from various actions by the mentor, for example him being knowledgeable about the mentoring role and the PGCE generally makes her feel valued. Also, providing time, and finding opportunities for her learning, all feed into the feeling of being valued. This is also, at times, discussed in the opposite: (‘*I never felt that I was a burden’*) which perhaps suggests a risk of feeling this way as a trainee. This vulnerability comes across when discussing placement 2 where a lack of support means she turned to another member of staff at the school (‘*it’s a shame that she had to kind of take me under her wing*’).As well as the feeling of loneliness at placement 2, in contrast to a sense of belonging at placement 1. The simplicity of actions by the mentor challenges my initial thinking about well-being support. Care can be interpreted by the trainee from the mentor giving time and attention to the role. There is a power imbalance, and it helps the trainee when the mentor gives permission to manage her working practices by telling her to stop working. This is interesting, it builds on my thinking about current approaches where trainees are taught how to manage their workload, moving my thinking towards this being dependent on the values inherent in the culture of the school and the beliefs of the mentor as well as the power the trainee holds in being able to define these boundaries in reality. This is highlighted through the trainee’s repeated use of the word ‘lucky’ to describe her mentoring experience and her comparisons with others, who were unable to define their desired working practices within the framework of the mentor’s existing beliefs.

There is an internal awareness of how feedback is processed during the training year in these stories. The teacher indicates that this is in part how feedback is delivered but also there is a sense of the trainee learning how to process feedback positively. The difficulty in feedback comes from the tying up of self with teacher competence ‘*it is so hard not to take it personally because you do. Because it’s you. You know, you’ve delivered that lesson and you’ve had that interaction.’*  This makes me think more deeply about whether teacher identity and a person’s general identity are ever separate or the same and provides insights into how they merge or overlap during the training year. Comments show that the mentor is partly responsible for whether feedback impacts your sense of self. For this teacher, her placement one mentor was perceived as resourceful and caring about her progress by putting things in place to support her development. This helped her to process feedback in a way that didn’t impact her resilience negatively. This makes me wonder if the mentor is significant in the trainee learning how to process feedback.

Some stories indicate things that were or are still, unsaid. These relate to negative experiences at the second placement. What strikes me is that the first thing this teacher brings up relating to resilience is ‘negativity’ and she talks about this in relation to her resilience as trying to separate her emerging sense of self as a teacher from the negativity present in the environment. The language she uses here is about not getting ‘drawn in’ highlighting the need to be aware and make choice about how you’re impacted by the environment but there’s also the language of power when she comments on being ‘strong enough’ to do this because as a trainee you’re ‘inexperienced.’ As her responses uncover more about this negativity there is a further sense of power imbalance in the mentor relationship with mentor 2 – there’s lots of pauses where the teacher seems to, even now, be careful with how she retells her negative experiences. She describes the 2nd placement mentor as ‘*different’* or puts it down to her ‘*personality maybe’* perhaps feeling reluctant to give what sounds like a negative appraisal. Perhaps this shows an awareness of her perceived status as an early career teacher. This filtering comes through in her retelling of a time when she had to be resilient when experiencing difficulties with student behaviour. In this scenario she re-enacts what she would have said to the mentor about the lack of a clear behaviour policy:

*I think [long pause] not that we clashed but I wanted to say, but didn’t feel like I could like ‘what’s in place for behaviour?’ but I didn’t feel like I could say that because I’m a trainee and, you know?*

In this story she re-enacts the conversation including the unsaid parts. Her repeated use of ‘you know’ throughout the retelling also suggests some silencing in the retelling. She appraises the mentor and the school considering how she would’ve approached the situation if she *‘felt able to and confident to.’* Her comparisons between placement one and two in her retelling reveal that by placement 2 she has already started to develop a way of being from her experiences with her placement 1 mentor and she carries these with her to placement 2. At this point, her sense of self as a teacher is very much influenced by Mentor 1. In my first assignment about power, I didn’t think about it like this, I focused on the mentor’s actions to create a power balance, but this suggests that there’s some give and take and that imbalance of power is to some extent inevitable and socially complex.

## Appendix G: Ethical Approval Letter

A close-up of a letter

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## Appendix H: Participant Quotations in Context

**Participant 1**

**Researcher:** So do you think resilience resides, sort of inside of individuals or is it more affected by [moves hands apart]

**P1**: -I think...yeah

**Researcher:** other people-

**P1**: -I think your personality can come into it. But then I think, if you’ve got a mentor that’s sort of tearing you down, they’re gonna hold that responsibilit...y of you know. I think yeah...your personality does come into it. I mean, you know, I overthink everything if I get feedback, it is so hard not to take it personally b..’cause you do, because it’s *you*. You know *you’ve* delivered that lesson and *you’ve* had that interaction, but I think umm...yeah your mentor definitely needs to take some responsibility for [shakes head] for that and you know

**Participant 3**

**Researcher:** Just before moving on to the next bit, I just wanted to come back to one thing that you said and it seems really minor but every person that I’ve interviewed has mentioned having lunch together, with your mentor. Just tell me a bit more about how that affects your resilience or relationship or, wh-why that comes up do you think?

**P3:** Why does that come up? Erm ..I think to build relationships with people, you need to spend time together that’s not necessarily working and the only time you have to do that is the hour for lunch and erm, I know that there are a lot of teachers who work at their desk, and they, they don’t take the time, or even like, we didn’t go to the staffroom and we just sat in the year group and had lunch together and I think you need to do that in order to build trust and build ...build relationships in the same way that when you’re with the children you have to go to the playground and like talk to them outside of doing the learning. Because otherwise they just see you as a like as a teacher. Erm why do I think that’s important to build resilience because I think building resilience is also about erm what’s come before and you can’t really know someone until you know like what s what's come before and why-and it helps to build the reason about why people are the way that they are.

**Participant 4**

\*reference to what she thinks resilience is as a trainee.

**Researcher:** mm and how does that \*, interact, do you think, with the mentor’s role.

**P4:** For me the mentor role is all about knowing who you are as an individual because I think we can all look up general notes about resilience and how to be more resilient, you know we all have access to the materials and the internet is full of it, Twitter lives off it erm...but but they need to know you and your capacity for (inaudible)...information your capacity for pressure, capacity for stress and so they can help-if they know you on a personal basis erm and they know how to give some more specific tailored advice as to your resilience and how you –in terms of how you deal with things so me personally, I’m a military veteran, I spent seven years in the military erm, so in terms of time at work for me that wasn’t really an issue because I was used to protracted periods of time I’m used to high pressure, high stress scenarios, so but for me a lot of my pressure is self-induced; I’m a bit of a control freak (laughs) and because of that, my mentor knew erm knew that was what I was about so we could deal with how I could be more resilient in terms of managing my expectations of myself, cause that, that was my main issue erm and that’s, a mentor knowing you knows how to manipulate the information and the advice erm, to make it more worthwhile to you. Erm, otherwise it’s just like reading positive memes on the internet. It’s all very nice but it doesn’t do anything.



**Participant 2**

**Researcher:** When you think about resilience what comes to mind in terms of what does it mean in the context of a trainee teacher?

**P2**: Yeah, erm that’s a tricky one so there was resilience about err standing up to, if you think something’s done wrong by your main –I'm going to refer to my shadow-I'm just going to refer to her as my mentor as that’s kinda refer to her as my main one in my school is if you have a disagreement with their teaching style per se. Because a lot of teachers have a style that works for them but that might not work for somebody else. It’s having the confidence to say ‘I'm going to do it in a different way. And then having a third-party men-Link tutor was quite positive ‘cause they have –they don’t observe you twenty four/seven. So your ideas kind of are fresh to them and they may have a contrasting take to the mentor.

**Participant 2**

**Researcher**: Right, so what did the, kind of, discussion go like, when you had that conversation or feedback on that lesson?

**P2**: Erm, it was fine I w-I-I bit the bullet as a ment-as a trainee teacher pretty much bite the tongue and survive the year was the ethos of the trainee teacher if you don’t like things you just shut up and do it, [laughs] in a sense.

**Participant 2**

**Researcher**: yeah, so you kind of had to fit around her, sort of, schedule but that may not have necessarily been your preferred schedule.

**P2**: No, no [shakes head and smiles] Absolutely not but she gave up the time for me, very much in the sense of ...if I expect someone to change, that’s unfair, I should change for them if that’s the need for it. And that’s my kind of ethos in itself so I’m OK with it.

\*Participant discusses his confusion about the mentor and senior mentor’s expectation that the trainee demonstrates all teacher standards in ALL lessons before agreeing to pass him against the standards at the end of the programme.

**Participant 1**

**Researcher:** you said that was when it\* happened, right at the end?

**P2**: Yes that’s when this happened. And everything else was fine and I was meeting expectations but they kind of wanted. I feel like I might’ve fought a battle not worth fighting in a sense but they kind of put emphasis that you need to pass your teaching standards, it’s like a hallmark that stays with you. I don’t know if that’s true or not but all three of them kind of had that ...thing maybe more the half of them and me fighting back on it, I don’t know. I don’t know quite to this day what that was even about.

**Participant 2**

**P2:** …But she wouldn’t help me design it. It would be, right you design it, I’ll feed it back and then you’ll edit it and that workflow could’ve been done differently I reckon. Like, maybe sit down lesson planning on a Thursday or something like that, and have it ready for next week but our flow was very much, we finish Friday and we are gonna have lessons for next week on Monday and that was kind of our workflow, and that took up both of our Sundays and I feel like that probably could’ve done way better it worked and we got there but it just feels a bit wrong.

**Participant 1**

**Participant 1 was asked why she used the word ‘lucky’ a lot to describe her experiences. Here she compares her experience to another trainee on her ITT Programme.**

**P1**: …my mentor would say ‘I don’t want you to work outside of school. I don’t want you to sit up marking ‘til 11 o clock at night and working all day Sunday’ and he was really kind of aware of that and whereas she would be you know messaging our group chat to say she was still marking papers at midnight and because she’s been, you know, given so much pressure.

**Participant 3**

…so I started the course with a six month old baby, and so, something that was really important for me was like leaving on time, not having to get in super early, erm and so I was very grateful that she was very supportive of that. So the support I got from her in terms of you know, workload and ...not work load but erm … I’m trying to think, what’s that called...work-life balance...was really, really key. Because I wouldn’t have been able to do it without her telling me to go. Like she would stay and do stuff, and she would be like you don’t need to sit here and do this – go.

**Participant 1**

**Researcher:** And how do you think that affected your resilience? Because you mentioned at the beginning about negativity, and it sort of being related to-

**P1**: -yeah

**Researcher:** You know, detrimental in some ways to resilience-

**P1:** the school also didn’t have, like a set behaviour policy in place. And I think [long pause] not that we clashed but I wanted to say but I didn’t feel like I could like … ‘what’s in place for behaviour?’ but I didn’t feel like I could say that because I’m a trainee and...you know?

**Researcher:** Yeah

**P1**: I came from a school that had a really solid behaviour policy in place and I know how important that is from what I'd done at University but I didn’t feel like I could say to her … you know wh..whe..wh..what are we following? Because-

**Researcher:** Yeah

**Participant 1**: Who am I? You know?

**Participant 1**

I remember where I thought I’d yeah, that was quite good, it kind of wasn’t. Erm ...but again that support was there so it never really felt like the end of the world. It was a little bit … oh I've not done it again, with myself, because....there’s so many things to think about in a lesson...that, you know, it’s tough, but I never felt ...that it was ‘*right you’re not doing that*’ and ‘*that needs improving*’. OK but I need support with that and that was always there, so yeah...

…he would erm...you know whilst they’re, sort of having a discussion or doing a task, he would come over and say ‘*right, did you see that. That was you know good because bla bla bla’* and explain to me why it worked or, or he might come over and say ‘*right so you know I gave that student the question, they didn’t quite understand it so did you see that I sort of simplified it for them’* or...he would explain what he’d done and was conscious-

**Researcher:** -yeah

**P1**: -Yes he was teaching the students, but I was there to benefit from it as well ...again it’s coming back to that I felt valued and understood and listened to.

**Participant 4**

**P4:** But erm, yeah it became quickly that she actually, we worked together on erm I was in a bit of a strange position because they had very little materials, some they didn’t have a full curriculum of stuff in that school because there were gaps in their roadmap so I actually worked with her and another member of staff to do some curriculum design which was strange as an ECT erm, you know but she’s, you know she was very honest with me in that she said you know you’re a lot more creative than I am with this so this is what I need to achieve in terms of my substantive, this is my disciplinary this is my component and (smiles) we’re going through the curriculum as she’s written it, erm she’d had for me I was a material gatherer, and erm, so she gave me some agency. She gave me a job which made me feel useful and made me feel like I actually wasn’t just a drain on them or wasn’t just dependent on her erm, which was good for my self-esteem erm, which I think would help my resilience as well...because I...I need to feel ...ego, vanity whatever it is (laughs) I need to feel like I’m helping or contributing erm...and she read that, which was really good.

**Participant 2**

**Researcher**: Did the Academy style, some of the things you’re talking about, did that affect your resilience in any way?

**P2**: Erm yeah it made me feel not part of the academy, it made me feel not part of a teacher, I was just a person that existed within the-within that building per se, I’m just here to do my traineeship and then it stops there...

**Researcher**: mmm

**P2**: and yeah, it’s not welcoming because you don’t feel like part of the staff...I think that if you don’t have a self of identity in there that can impact someone. Resilience-wise, yeah just, it’s a downer and like there’s no ifs or buts of it it’s a negative thing that could’ve been done better.

**Researcher**: yeah, do you think the mentor helps in any way, did they help to bring you in, either of those two people?

**P2**: Erm most of my visits\* were always positive, so it’s nice to have an outside person going ‘no you’re doing fine, there isn’t a concern about, you’re gonna pass and she, she ...sorry, you said mentor so main mentor, so yeah she’s pretty much the only person there, she was the only contact I had – I mean, I’m stuck outside, I don’t have a fob, can you let me in? [smiles]...and she’ll do that [laughs] and she’d be like yeah this is shit. So she, she provides the affirmation that yeah it’s a shit system it’s terrible and you shouldn’t feel like that.

\*Reference to visits here refers to link tutor from the ITT provider.

Participant 2

**Researcher**: yeah. That's interesting, so you mentioned, sort of briefly as well that you’re doing a different job that isn’t teaching, was there anything behind that decision?

**P2**: I like working with children and young people, I always have a passion to help people. In the teaching year some of that help isn’t possible as a teacher, they always have to be referred to like a different third party being cahms or social care and stuff like that. And my kind of passion for teaching is was helping children and as a teacher that doesn’t feel like the reality anymore it is just a ‘here’s thirty kids...best of luck. Errr and there isn’t enough support in there for, even in secondary schools like you do have a bit of your workload taken off of you but I think the whole helping children’s futures is slightly taken away and there’s far too much other crap on the side.

END

## Appendix I: Institutional Approval

A paper with text and a signature

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# Appendix J: Ethics Log Example

