



BU STUDENTSHIPS 2021

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

PROJECT DETAILS

PROJECT TITLE

Setting the assets-based agenda: a critical realist exploration

PROJECT SUMMARY

The assets-based approach to health and well-being involves building on the assets found in communities and mobilising individuals and community-led organisations to develop their strengths and their capacity to improve the health and well-being of community members. However, it is marked by a variety of interpretations concerning its effect and function. Competing interpretations include regarding it as an innovative approach to community empowerment; a Trojan horse for neo-liberalism; and a return to traditional public health concerns. Roy (2016) has observed that the latter interpretation is dominant amongst social enterprise practitioners.

While an important constituency in the provision of assets-based initiatives, practitioners are only one of a number of stakeholder groups, which also include policy makers and administrators in central government, local government and the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector, and community members that engage with the initiatives.

Taking a morphogenetic approach (Archer, 1995) to address the processes by which structured social relations are maintained or transformed by social agency, this PhD project will examine how these various social groups have influenced the direction of asset-based interventions, and in turn how (if at all) those interventions have influenced social relations.

Reflecting Archer's observation that the morphogenetic processes involved in altering structured relations are rarely, if ever, straightforward or unilinear, but are the result of competition and/or collaboration between different stake holding constituencies (and between social agents within those constituencies), this research will seek to:

- differentiate between different stakeholders' conceptualisations of, and influence over the development of asset-based approaches;
- identify the nature and extent of different stakeholders' influence;
- establish how the combined influence of different agendas have contributed to the form and function that asset-based interventions have taken; and
- explore the extent to which these interventions have influenced wider social relations.

Data gathered by the PhD student will be supplemented by data gathered by other researchers in the Common Health Assets project.

Archer M. (1995) *Realist Social Theory: The Morphogenetic Approach*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Roy, M. (2017) The assets-based approach: furthering a neo-liberal agenda or rediscovering old public health? A critical examination of practitioner discourses. *Critical Public Health*, 27(4): 455-464.

ACADEMIC IMPACT

This PhD, which is part of the prestigious funders scheme, will add an important theoretical dimension to the main NIHR project entitled 'Common Health Assets: a mixed-methods, realist evaluation and economic appraisal of how community-led organisations (CLOs) impact on the health and wellbeing of people living in deprived areas'. It will result in a number of publications and will add to the important methodological conversation about the realist evaluation in open systems.

SOCIETAL IMPACT

This project's societal impact will result from adding to the emphasis of evaluations on the direct mechanisms for change that organisations possess by looking at the relationships of those organisations with wider society, and the effects of that relationship on both organisations and society.

DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The student will have the opportunity to work with a strong interdisciplinary team that stretches beyond their immediate supervisors to the wider Common Health Assets research group. They will gain experience in the critical realist research approach. Opportunities also include training and experience in both quantitative and qualitative research methods.

SUPERVISORY TEAM

First Supervisor	Professor Sam Porter
Additional Supervisors	Dr Louise Baxter Professor Michael Roy (Glasgow Caledonian University)
Recent publications by supervisors relevant to this project	Porter Spacey, A., Scammell, J., Board, M. and Porter, S. (2021) A critical realist evaluation of advance care planning in care homes. <i>Journal of Advanced Nursing</i> . DOI: 10.1111/jan.14822 Porter, S., McConnell, T., Clarke, M., Kirkwood, J., Hughes, N., Graham-Wisener, L., Regan, J., McKeown, M., McGrillen, K. and Reid, J. (2017) A critical realist evaluation of a music therapy intervention in palliative care. <i>BMC Palliative Care</i> . 16. DOI: 10.1186/s12904-017-0253-5. Baxter Aughterson, H., Baxter, L. & Fancourt, D., 2020. Social prescribing for individuals with mental health problems: A qualitative study of barriers and enablers experienced by general practitioners. <i>BMC Family Practice</i> , 21 (1).

	<p>Baxter, L. & Fancourt, D., 2020. What are the barriers to, and enablers of, working with people with lived experience of mental illness amongst community and voluntary sector organisations? A qualitative study. <i>PLoS One</i>, 15 (7), e0235334.</p> <p>Roy Calò, F., Roy, M., Donaldson, C., Teasdale, S. & Baglioni, S (2021) Evidencing the contribution of social enterprise to health and social care. <i>Social Enterprise Journal</i>, 17 (1): 140-156.</p> <p>Roy, M. & Farmer, J. (2021) <i>Social Enterprise, Health and Wellbeing: theory, methods and practice</i>. Oxford: Routledge.</p>
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INFORMAL ENQUIRIES
Please contact the lead supervisor on the following email for informal enquiries: sporter@bournemouth.ac.uk
ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA
<p>The BU PhD Studentships are open to UK, EU and International students.</p> <p>Candidates for a PhD Studentship should demonstrate outstanding qualities and be motivated to complete a PhD in 4 years and must demonstrate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • outstanding academic potential as measured normally by either a 1st class honours degree (or equivalent Grade Point Average (GPA) or a Master's degree with distinction or equivalent • an IELTS (Academic) score of 6.5 minimum (with a minimum 6.0 in each component, or equivalent) for candidates for whom English is not their first language and this must be evidenced at point of application.
ADDITIONAL ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA
HOW TO APPLY
<p>Please complete the online application form by 31/10/2021.</p> <p>Further information on the application process can be found at: www.bournemouth.ac.uk/studentships</p>