**Methodology**

**Project 1: Susan Somerville**

The mobile clinical skills and simulation facility was unique in the UK at the time of its launch (2009), and is now the subject of this PhD. Published literature is very limited regarding mobile simulation, so grey literature, field trips and stakeholder interviews are the sources of data indorsed as part of a realist synthesis. The realisation that the collection and analysis of such data for theorizing was validating and was pivotal in my developing understanding. This PhD was originally designed to be sequential; a realist synthesis which would inform a realist evaluation. The sequence and weighting of this 2-part study is generating much reflecting, reasoning, mediating and judgement within this team of student and supervisors, none of whom are experienced realists.

**Project 2: Christina Cooper**

As a PhD student new to both realist methods, and the subject area, prevention of risk behaviour in adolescents, a large amount of time was spent submerged in the literature. Unfamiliarity with the specifics of the subject impacted on both retroductive theorizing, and application to ethics in order to carry out consultation with key stakeholders. A key issue in this was reaching an agreement on when consultation becomes primary data in relation to research governance. Addressing and resolving methodological issues is an ongoing process.

**Project 3: Sarah Wilmot**

Saul et al’s (2013) protocol for a rapid realist review (RRR) suggests a composition of essential team members. My RRR was undertaken as part of a PhD, therefore, instead of engaging a local reference group and expert panel throughout the RRR as Saul et al. (2013) suggest, guidance was sought from the PhD supervision team, who have a breadth of knowledge of care planning and realist methodology and thus fulfil the role of the local reference group and expert panel.

**Discussion**

Looking for a realist recipe is a natural yearning as a PhD student who is unfamiliar or uncertain about using this methodology. Three PhD students have undertaken different approaches to their realist studies modifying the standards, protocols and methods to find a bespoke way to explore their respective, unique and complex interventions with a realist lens. The acceptance of uncertainty and the importance of theorizing from a plethora of sources is fundamental for realist doctoral students.

**References**


Dalkin S., 2015, personal communication.

