Reviewer’s report

Title: Methods for the thematic synthesis of qualitative research in systematic reviews

Version: 1 Date: 23 May 2008

Reviewer: Myfanwy Lloyd Jones

Reviewer’s report:

I found this a very interesting and useful paper, and wish only to raise a couple of points for revision, as follows:

Minor Essential Revisions

1) On page 7, you imply that meta-ethnographies inevitably take the form of a 'line of argument'. Noblit and Hare also recognised that meta-ethnographies could be reciprocal (if the findings of the synthesised studies were similar) or refutational (if they were contradictory); they did not have to be arranged into a line of argument.

Discretionary Revisions

1) On page 7: The earliest published work that I am aware of which deals with methods for synthesising qualitative research is Glaser and Strauss’s description of 'grounded formal theory' (Glaser and Strauss 1967 The discovery of grounded theory). However, you may have had some reason for excluding this as not being the sort of synthesis you had in mind.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests