Reviewer's report

Title: Clarifying differences between review designs and methods

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Reviewer: Jane Noyes

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The science of evidence synthesis is developing rapidly and this type of 'clarification' paper helps advance organisation of conceptual and methodological thinking and understanding. These papers are usually highly cited as review authors are hungry for manuscripts that do this type of thinking on their behalf. The classification moves beyond the usual aggregative and interpretive dimensions to aggregation to interpretation and configuration. The reasoning is well made, adequately justified, and easy for the reader to follow.

Minor essential revisions:

For additional clarity, the reader would benefit from some further explanation to make clear the distinction between interpretative (established classification) and configurative (new classification) dimensions of reviews. Are they actually the same dimensions by a different name or an entirely new classification moving beyond an interpretive dimension of a review? Other authors have argued for 'idealist' versus 'realist' dimensions of difference on the synthesis spectrum. It would be helpful for the reader to see where these ideas map against the clarifications presented in the current paper (realist is already well explained but idealist is not so clear where this sits). The first to publish this type of 'variation of dimensions of difference' paper usually become the seminal papers in the field and others then follow. Covering all bases in the current paper may help avoid a subsequent proliferation of 'clarifications of dimensions of variation' papers being published along the lines of what happened with dimensions of quality in qualitative appraisal tools, when we ended up with 140+ tools all purporting to be unique but assessing similar dimensions of quality with varying terminology.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests