Reviewer’s report

Title: A methodological systematic review of meta-ethnography conduct to articulate the complex analytical phases

Version: 1 Date: 17 Dec 2018

Reviewer: Peggy Shannon-Baker

Reviewer’s report:

I appreciate the time and effort that the authors put in to address my own and the other reviewer's feedback. Their individual responses to each comment were particularly helpful because they indicated the areas of the manuscript that were changed in reference to particular issues.

Since there were a number of changes made based on the original version, I reread the entire submission. The background section in particular is much more concise. The methods of the systematic review were also much clearer. Below are some points related to the findings presented that may help to further strengthen the manuscript.

Key findings:

Phase 4: Analyze studies that contain rich, conceptual data and limit the inclusion of 'thin' data/accounts (me: though this will then necessitate a description of how the reviewers distinguished thick from thin); consider issues of efficiency when drawing comparisons (e.g. through tables, QDAS)—neither addressed in insights on phase 4 (p. 23). The issue of drawing from rich data should also be addressed more directly in the discussion section of the article. This finding in particular seems connected to the authors' discussion of the trend in health sciences meta-ethnographies of aiming for quantity (perhaps over quality, i.e. richness). Coming from education myself, the later discussion of the disciplinary differences between education versus health/social care meta-ethnographies is particularly interesting. This could be where a more direct conversation on the richness finding could come in if not earlier in the discussion section.

Phase 5: Organizing the studies by concepts could influence the interpretation of subsequent studies and the 'overall interpretation' (p. 25); comparing 'concepts account by account' could be useful with large data sets, but this approach does not follow Noblit and Hare—both findings addressed in the insights on reciprocal translation (p. 27)

There were few refutational translation examples—no 'insights' section, though the last paragraph in this section seems to indicate the insights (especially the last sentence).

Minor issues:
One suggestion I have for making the writing stronger here (and in future writing) is to try to limit the use of compound sentences (joining 2+ sentences into one sentence). Writing shorter sentences will help to strengthen the writing voice. Shorter sentences also help the writing be more concise, making each point more direct. I noticed this writing trend more in the abstract, background, and case summary sections than the methods and findings sections.

There were a number of typographical errors in the text. Some are highlighted in the PDF I attached. I also noticed that citing the page number with the reference number was formatted in at least five different ways (cf. pages 5-7).

**Are the methods appropriate and well described?**
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

**Does the work include the necessary controls?**
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

**Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?**
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Yes

**Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?**
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

Not relevant to this manuscript

**Quality of written English**
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable

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