Reviewer's report

Title: From intervention to interventional system: Towards greater theorization in population health intervention research

Version: 1 Date: 22 Oct 2018

Reviewer: Ray Pawson

Reviewer's report:

Please include all comments for the authors in this box rather than uploading your report as an attachment. Please only upload as attachments annotated versions of manuscripts, graphs, supporting materials or other aspects of your report which cannot be included in a text format.

Please overwrite this text when adding your comments to the authors.

The authors have made a brave attempt to steer between Scylla and Charybdis.

Point 1. The reviewers (including me) set them a difficult task in calling for a contrary range of additions and reductions to the text, all within the tight word limits of the journal. The main solution - concentrating on two key methodological issues - works well. The complexity and high abstraction of the original submission is thus reduced

Point 2. The reviewers made a clear call for substantive examples of the authors' methodological claims. They have responded with brief examples from their own research. These work up to a point. They provide a first indication of how empirical work should be approached but little more. I would be inclined to forgive this inevitable limitation. There is simply not enough word allowance for extended discussion. Interested readers will be able to follow the reasoning further via the references.

Point 3. Reviewers and editors called for further attention to the niceties of the English Language. This version is simpler and clearer. There is some grace here - 'mechanisms punctuating the process of change'. Pawson and Tilley are still referred to as Pawson et Tilley (line 146). I know they will approve.

Point 4. Above all, this remains a very useful contribution on a crucial issue for public health research.
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.

Unable to assess

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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