Reviewer’s report

Title: What methods do reviews of normative ethics literature use for search, selection, analysis, and synthesis? In-depth results from a systematic review of reviews

Version: 0 Date: 22 Jun 2017

Reviewer: Justin Clark

Reviewer's report:

This is an interesting well conducted study, the methods are rigorous, the categories are well selected and the data presented in the tables and figures are done so in an easy to understand manner.

What I feel is a limitation of the article is its length and its sometimes overly complicated descriptions. This may be because it is being written from a philosophy perspective for people engaged in ethics research. For it to be more easily read by those working in a more general systematic review methodology area it could possibly be shortened and some of the writing could be simplified. I think this is quite a worthwhile thing to do as I believe the results are of interest to systematic review methodology researchers.

As an example the background section appears to contain a large amount of information, regarding the results, methods and discussion. For instance the first paragraph (page 3 lines 7 to 17) is ok, although could maybe be shortened, the rest of the background you should attempt to compress to a single paragraph. To do this a large proportion of it could be moved to the methods, results and discussion sections.

An example of the overly complicated descriptions are the use of counter-checked (page 6 line 15). I am unsure of the difference between checked and counter-checked, if there is no difference then checked should be used. Also the sentence "This procedure allowed for a dialogical/argumentative validation of category building" (page 6 lines 16 and 17). A clear description has been given in the proceeding sentences as to how the categories were developed, therefore this line felt not only unnecessary but also a touch confusing.

Lastly the only part of the methods I found fault with, or did not understand was the part about only English, German and French articles being included (page 5 lines 14 to 17). It reads as if only English, German and French articles are concerned with ethical considerations. I assume this is not the case and not the impression meant to be given. This could be clarified by making more explicit why only articles from these languages were included, such as these are the only languages the authors can read and they did not have access to anyone who could read studies in other languages.
My comments regarding the writing is from the point of view of someone working in general systematic review methodology, and should be taken from this viewpoint.

In conclusion I think this is an interesting piece of research and look forward to it being available so I can share it with my colleagues.

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An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English**
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