Enhancing the impact of qualitative evidence synthesis: development of evidence-based reporting guidance for meta-ethnography

Nicola Ring, 3rd September 2019
eMERGe project team

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Background

Qualitative evidence synthesis (QES):  
• Increasingly popular  
• Several approaches.

Meta-ethnography (ME) (Noblit & Hare 1988) most cited approach but:  
• Often poorly reported reducing potential impact of ME findings on practice and policy.
7 phases of meta-ethnography

Phase 1: Getting started

Phase 2: Deciding what is relevant to the initial interest

Phase 3: Reading the studies

Phase 4: Determining how studies are related

Phase 5: Translating the studies into one another

Phase 6: Synthesizing translations

Phase 7: Expressing the synthesis

Noblit & Hare 1988
THE eMERGe PROJECT –
Developing
Evidence-based reporting guidance for Meta-ethnography (ME)

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Stage 1. Review of guidance on meta-ethnography conduct & reporting

Stage 2. Review & audit of published meta-ethnographies, interviews with users

Stage 3. Agree guidance content & standards

Stage 4. Develop & disseminate the guidance & project findings
Stage 1: Review of good practice

Aim & Methods: Systematic methodological review to identify good practice in ME.

Findings: 57 items included in review. Identified where:

• Methodological clarity needed.
• Reporting guidance needed.
Stage 2: Review of current practice & information needs of ME users

Aim: Define good practice principles & standards in ME reporting.

Methods:
- Documentary analysis of sampled ME reports (Part 1)
- Interview analysis of these reports by potential end users (Part 1)
- Audit of published ME reports (Part 2).
Stage 2: Part 1

Documentary & interviewee analysis: 29 ME reports and 14 potential end users.

Overall findings include:
- End users & academics can value different reporting aspects.
- Difficult to identify clear boundaries between the ME Phases.
Stage 2: Part 2

Audit of published MEs against 109 potential draft reporting standards.

Purposive sample (n=40) of ME reports.

Data descriptively analysed.

Qualitative auditor feedback e.g. ambiguous standards.
Stage 2: Part 2

Findings:
- Some sampled reports not recognisably ME.
- Provided systematic in-depth insight into:
  - Where reporting needed improved in practice.
  - How ME was evolving.
Stage 3: Agree guidance

Aim: Gain consensus on key reporting ME standards

Methods:
- Online expert & stakeholder workshop (n=31) (Part 1)
- eDelphi consensus studies (Part 2).
Stage 3: Agree guidance

E-Delphi (Part 2):
• Used platform previously designed for online use
• Two identical studies – experts & stakeholders
• 62 participants completed 3 rounds
• Reached consensus on:

62/69 items!!!
Phase 1 – Selecting meta-ethnography and getting started

**Introduction**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Criteria Headings</th>
<th>Reporting Criteria</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Rationale and context for the meta-ethnography</td>
<td>Describe the gap in research or knowledge to be filled by the meta-ethnography, and the wider context of the meta-ethnography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Aim(s) of the meta-ethnography</td>
<td>Describe the meta-ethnography aim(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Focus of the meta-ethnography</td>
<td>Describe the meta-ethnography review question(s) (or objectives)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Rationale for using meta-ethnography</td>
<td>Explain why meta-ethnography was considered the most appropriate qualitative synthesis methodology</td>
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Co-publication of guidance

- Journal of Advanced Nursing
- Review of Education
- Psycho-oncology
- BMC Medical Research Methodology

Conclusions

- 1st bespoke evidence-based meta-ethnography reporting guidance
- Should improve reporting, possibly conduct
- Advanced the methodology

Next steps:
- monitor reporting
- record feedback on guidance
- revise guidance.
Other materials

*BMC Medical Research Methodology* 2015: 15:103 
https://doi.org/10.1186/s12874-015-0068-0


**Training materials**

- 4 short films on YouTube.com by George Noblit, Emma France, Jane Noyes & Nicola Ring - available via www.emergeproject.org/resources/
Contact & social media

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