Introducing the new Meta-Ethnography Reporting Guidance

What it is and how to use it.
Project team:

Emma France,¹ Nicola Ring,² Maggie Cunningham¹, Isabelle Uny¹, Edward Duncan,¹ Rachel Roberts,¹ Ruth Jepson,³ Margaret Maxwell,¹ Ruth Turley,⁴ Jane Noyes.⁵

¹University of Stirling, ²Edinburgh Napier University ³SCPHRP, University of Edinburgh, ⁴University of Cardiff, ⁵Bangor University.

Project funded by NIHR Health Service & Delivery Research Grant 13/114/60 (2015-17)
What is meta-ethnography?

Meta-ethnography (ME) developed by George Noblit & Dwight Hare in USA, in field of education.


ME – bringing together standalone qualitative research studies to provide a new interpretation.

‘Making a whole into something more than the parts alone imply’ (1988:28).
The 7 phases of a 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 the studies are related

Phase 5: Translating the studies into one another

Phase 6: Synthesising translations

Phase 7: Expressing the synthesis
Why is ME reporting guidance needed?

ME increasingly used in health research but reporting is highly variable in quality.

This means:

• Some ‘ME’ reports are so poor its not clear whether what is reported is actually ME.
• ME reports lack transparency so its difficult to assess their quality and credibility.
• Readers lack confidence in some ME findings
• This reduces the potential utility of ME to inform health care practice, policy & research.
Stage 1. Review of guidance on ME conduct & reporting

Stage 2. Review & audit of published meta-ethnographies against provisional standards

Stage 3. ‘Test’ preliminary reporting items (Delphi)

Stage 4. Refine & agree reporting criteria. Disseminate.

Outputs

Provisional audit standards for ME conduct & reporting

Preliminary ME reporting items

Preliminary ME reporting criteria
Who is the ME reporting guidance for?

Possible users of the eMERGE ME reporting guidance e.g.

- Researchers
- Guideline developers
- Patient & Lay Groups
- PhD students & supervisors
- Health technology assessors
- Journal editors & reviewers
eMERGe reporting guidance consists of three Parts:

• Part 1: Guidance Table containing summary of reporting criteria
• Part 2: Explanatory notes
• Part 3: Extensions to the reporting criteria.
Part 1: Guidance Table:

- 1 page summary of reporting criteria only
- 19 reporting criteria – common to all ME
- Criteria structured to:
  - Reflect the 7 ME phases
  - Link to journal paper section headings
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Criteria Heading</th>
<th>Reporting Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Rationale and context for the meta-ethnography</td>
<td>Describe the research or knowledge gap 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>
</tbody>
</table>
# Phase 5 – Translating studies into one another

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Methods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>13</strong> Process of translating studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe the methods of translation:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Describe steps taken to preserve the context and meaning of the relationships between concepts within and across studies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Describe how the reciprocal and refutational translations were conducted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Describe how potential alternative interpretations or explanations were considered in the translation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>14</strong> Outcome of translation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe the interpretive findings of the translation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Part 2: Explanatory notes (EN) provide details of how to apply the criteria.

Phase 5, criterion 13: EN suggest e.g.
- What type of narrative could be provided to indicate how context were preserved.
- What visual aids could indicate how relationships between concepts were preserved.
- Possible ways to report refutational translations.
## Phase 7 – Expressing the synthesis

### Discussion

|   | Strengths, limitations & reflexivity | Reflect on and describe the full context and limitations of the synthesis:  
- Internal context e.g. describe how the nature of the included studies, and how the meta-ethnography was conducted influenced the synthesis findings.  
- External context e.g. compare the output of the synthesis in the context of existing literature. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td><strong>Recommendations and conclusions</strong></td>
<td>Describe the implications of the synthesis.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Part 3: Extensions to the reporting criteria:

1. Format of the ME output (report)

2. Assessment of the methodological strengths and limitations of included studies

Supporting materials

Journal papers:

Related publications to follow reporting different eMERGE stages.

Training materials:
• 4 short films by George Noblit, Emma France, Jane Noyes & Nicola Ring – due summer 2017
• Webinar recording

Available at: www.emergeproject.org
Your questions?
With grateful thanks to:

The NIHR for funding the project

Professor George Noblit

Project Advisory Group: members & chair (Sheena Blair)

Steve Boulton for online support

Lonnie Wright & Lynne Gilmour for filming

All other Collaborators & Supporters – too many to name individually but we wish to thank them all as we could not have done this work without them.

The eMERGe team!
References:


