RAMESES Delphi - Round 3

Introduction

Thank you for continuing to help us with the RAMESES project.

In Round 2 of our Delphi process, you rated a list of potential Items for inclusion in the 'RAMESES statement' for Relevance and Content.

We have analysed you ratings and free text comments and only six Items (three each for realist synthesis and meta-narrative review) needed to be included in Round 3 for your attention. We would be grateful if you would please rate these six Items for:

- Relevance (should we include an Item on this theme/topic at all?)
- Content (should we word this Item like this?)

There will be a free text box for you to make comments on any aspect of an Item. To help you understand why an Item has been included we have also provided a brief explanation.

As this survey has only six Items, it will only take a few minutes of your time.

You may at any time stop and return to where you left off by clicking on the unique web link you were sent inviting you to take part in this survey. You may also go back to previous items if you wish.

We would be most grateful if you would please try to complete the survey by Sunday 11th March 2012 at the latest.

Please click on the NEXT button below to proceed.

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PART 1 - Realist Synthesis

The questions in PART 1 cover potential Items for inclusion in the RAMESES publication standards for Realist Synthesis only.

Our previous formulations of the following two items from the Methods section of the RAMESES publication standards did not achieve consensus in Round 2. We would appreciate further attention to our revised efforts.

For each Item we have provided you with our new suggested wording as well as the results of the ratings and original wording from Round 2.

Please click on the NEXT button below to proceed.

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Item 5: Changes in the review process

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Any changes made to the review process that was initially planned should be briefly described and justified.

ORIGINAL TEXT IN ROUND 2
Item 5: Protocol
The final protocol (i.e. the account of what was actually done) should be reproduced, at least in summary form, in the document which presents the main findings. If this is not done, the omission should be justified and a reference or link to the protocol given. It may also be appropriate to publish the original protocol (e.g. as set out in the grant proposal or developed in the early stages of the review).

RATINGS FROM ROUND 2

Relevance
Response rate (%): 35/37 (95)
Mode: 7
Median: 6
Inter-quartile range: 5 to 7

Content:
Response rate (%): 34/37 (92)
Mode: 7
Median: 5.5
Inter-quartile range: 3 to 6.75

Please rate this Item for:

	1 = Strongly Disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7 = Strongly Agree
Relevance - (Item inclusion)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Content - (Item wording)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Explanation:
A realist review can (and often should) evolve over the course of the review. For example changes to the research question or scope is likely to have an impact on many of the review's subsequent processes. However, this does not mean the review can meander uncontained. At the very least, an accessible summary of what was planned and how and why this differed from what was done should be provided as this may assist interpretation.

ORIGINAL TEXT IN ROUND 2
The study protocol for a realist review differs in significant respects from that in a traditional meta-analytic review. As noted above (in Item 4), the research question and scope (and, by implication, all subsequent steps) of a realist review can (and often should) evolve over the course of the review. However, this does not mean the review can meander uncontained. An accessible summary of what was done, in what order, and why is essential for interpreting the review. Comparing the original protocol with the final account of what was done may provide transparency on how the review's processes has evolved in its bid to build understanding of the topic area.

Please comment on item, including wording (optional):

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Item 9: Selection and appraisal of documents - Realist Synthesis

Item 9: Selection and appraisal of documents

Explain how judgements were made about documents to be included and excluded, and justify these.

RATINGS FROM ROUND 2

Relevance
Response rate (%): 35/37 (95)
Mode: 7
Median: 7
Inter-quartile range: 6 to 7

Content:
Response rate (%): 35/37 (95)
Mode: 7
Median: 6
Inter-quartile range: 4.5 to 7

Please rate this Item for:

	1 = Strongly Disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7 = Strongly Agree
Relevance - (Item inclusion)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Content - (Item wording)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

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Explanation:
Realist review is not a technical process. Rather, it requires a series of judgements about the relevance and robustness of particular data for the purposes of answering a specific question.

Within any one document, there may be several pieces of data that serve different purposes in the review, such as helping to build one theory, refining another theory and so on. Therefore the selection (for inclusion or exclusion) and appraisal of the 'worth' of any document cannot be based on an overall assessment of document 'quality'. An appraisal of the 'worth' of any section of data (within a document) should be made on two criteria:

- Relevance – whether it can contribute to theory building and/or testing; and
- Rigour – whether the method used to generate that particular piece of data is credible and trustworthy.

A wide range of documents can potentially contribute to a realist review. For example, outcome and impact studies, qualitative interviews, ethnography, questionnaire surveys, mixed-method case studies, and close reading of policies, business plans, websites, project initiation documents and 'grey literature' write-ups of programmes may all contribute in different ways to identifying and elucidating programme theories. Because of this range and realist review's focus on relevance and rigour, it can initially be difficult to 'whittle down' the number of documents that are potentially eligible for inclusion in a review. This process can only occur as the data sources are analysed in detail. Thus, in practice, the selection and appraisal stage may need to run in parallel with the analysis stage.

It is unlikely that authors will be able to describe each decision involved, but the broad processes used to determine relevance and assess rigour (for example, using quality standards appropriate to particular kinds of research to appraise documents or sections of documents, discussion and/or debate within a review team of a document's findings or consulting experts about technical aspects of methods or findings) should be described. Whilst the description of the processes followed will not allow the reader to draw firm conclusions about judgements made, it will give an indication of the coherence, plausibility and appropriateness of the processes used to inform those judgements.

ORIGINAL TEXT IN ROUND 2
[NB: Only the final paragraph of the Round 2 text has been amended. The original Round 2 text is below.]
Description of the selection and appraisal process should be sufficiently detailed to enable a reader to estimate how likely it is that researchers inadvertently excluded data that may have significantly altered the findings of the review.

Please comment on item, including wording (optional):

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Results section - Realist Synthesis

The following question covers a potential Item for inclusion in the Results section of the RAMESES publication standards.

Please click on the NEXT button below to proceed.

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Item 13: Document characteristics - Realist Synthesis

Item 13: Document characteristics

Provide information on the characteristics of the documents included in the review.

RATINGS FROM ROUND 2

Relevance
Response rate (%): 35/37 (95)
Mode: 7
Median: 6
Inter-quartile range: 5 to 7

Content:
Response rate (%): 35/37 (95)
Mode: 7
Median: 6
Inter-quartile range: 4.5 to 7

Please rate this Item for:

	1 = Strongly Disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7 = Strongly Agree
Relevance - (Item inclusion)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Content - (Item wording)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Explanation:
A clear summary of the characteristics of included sources can add to the transparency of the review and may help readers judge the coherence and plausibility of inferences. Characteristics of documents might include, where applicable: full citation, country of origin, study design, summary of key main findings and how the document contributed to the review. While considering specific requirements of any particular publication, reviewers may wish to tabulate key characteristics.

ORIGINAL TEXT IN ROUND 2
Characteristics of documents might include for example (where applicable) full citation, country of origin, study design and (where applicable) main findings. A clear summary of the characteristics of included sources adds to the transparency of the review and may help readers judge the coherence and plausibility of inferences. Reviewers may wish to report data source characteristics within one or more tables.

Please comment on item, including wording (optional):