



Carrying out a qualitative evidence synthesis –

Choosing a methodology/method(s)

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Acknowledgement Ruth Garside QIMG – sharing slides

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Approaches to synthesis (I)

- Aggregative
 - More “additive” approach
 - Summation/ aggregation of the existing themes
 - Concepts clearly pre defined
 - More deductive

Approaches to synthesis (II)

- Interpretative
 - Interpretation of existing findings
 - Develops concepts and theories to explain evidence base
 - Inductive

Methods of evidence synthesis

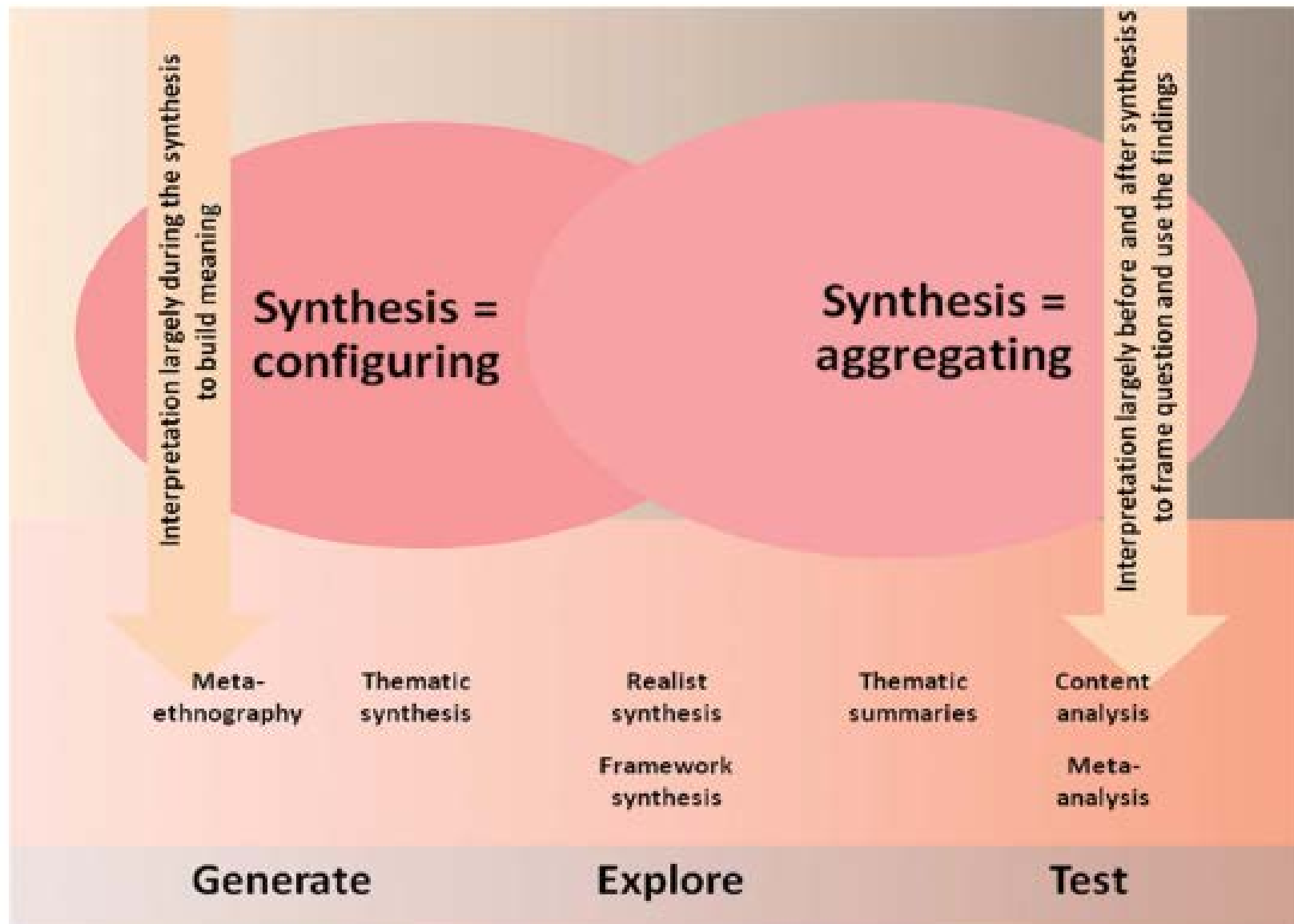


Figure 1. Methodological continuum of synthesis approaches and methods.

Source: Adapted from Thomas *et al.* (2012).

Methods for the synthesis of qualitative research: a critical review.

[Barnett-Page E](#), [Thomas J](#). BMC Research Methodology 2009

FIGURE 1: Dimensions of difference

Ranging from subjective idealism through objective idealism and critical realism to scientific realism to naïve realism [41, p45-46].

- Subjective idealism: there is no single shared reality independent of multiple alternative human constructions
- Objective idealism: there is a world of collectively shared understandings
- Critical realism: knowledge of reality is mediated by our perceptions and beliefs
- Scientific realism: it is possible for knowledge to approximate closely an external 'reality'
- Naïve realism maintains that reality exists independently of human constructions and can be known directly.

Epistemology

Idealist _____ Realist

Meta-narrative	CIS	Meta-study	Meta-ethnography	Grounded theory	Thematic synthesis	Textual narrative synthesis	Framework synthesis	Ecological triangulation
Subjective idealism	Subjective idealism	Subjective idealism	Objective idealism	Objective idealism	Critical realism	Critical realism	Critical realism	Scientific realism

Methods share many common aspects.....

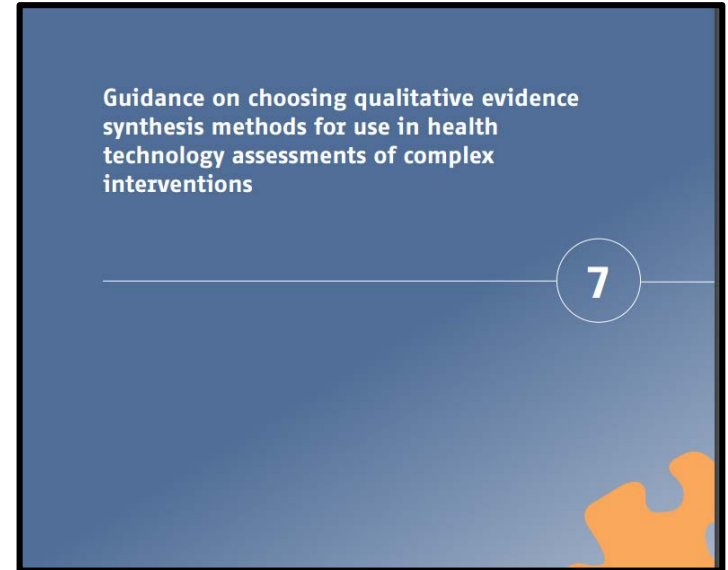
- but may also differ in:
 - Purpose
 - Sampling
 - Analysis
 - Output

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Choosing a methodology/method

- Experience
 - Time & resources
 - Purpose of review
 - Audience and purpose
 - Type of evidence available
 - Appropriateness for a Cochrane context
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- We have more experience of applying CERQual to a limited number of methodologies/methods such as Framework synthesis



Booth, Noyes et al 2016. Free to download.

Choice of Synthesis (Adapted from Noyes & Lewin, 2011)

