A considerable number of journal publications using a range of qualitative synthesis approaches has been published. Mary Dixon-Woods and colleagues (Mary Dixon-Woods, Booth, & Sutton, 2007) identified 42 qualitative evidence synthesis papers published in health care literature between 1990 and 2004.

An ongoing update by Hannes and Macaitis (2010) identified around 100 additional qualitative or mixed methods syntheses. Yet these generally lack a clear, detailed description of what was done and why (Greenhalgh et al, 2007; McInnes & Wimpenny, 2008). Choices are most commonly influenced by what others have successfully used in the past or by a particular school of thought (Atkins et al, 2008; Britten et al, 2002). This is a substantive limitation.

This book brings balance to the options available to researchers, including approaches that have not had a substantial uptake among researchers. It provides arguments for when and why researchers or other parties of interest should opt for a certain approach to synthesis, which challenges they might face in adopting it and what the potential strengths and weaknesses are compared with other approaches.

This book acts as a resource for readers who would otherwise have to piece together the methodology from a range of journal articles. In addition, it should stimulate further development and documentation of synthesis methodology in a field that is characterized by diversity.