

Synthesizing Research



**CONVERTING FRUIT INTO FRUIT
SMOOTHIES**

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Importance of Synthesis



#1 - Research involves incorporating many sources to understand a research question.

#2 – Sources support subtopics to prove the thesis statement and/or answer research question.

#3 – Synthesis integrates information from two or more sources to demonstrate how the research *works* together.

Fruit Smoothie Metaphor



- Do not think of synthesis as separate parts lined up next to one another.
- Think of synthesis as “smoothed” integration of the parts.
- Just as fruit is blended together to make a smoothie so should you blend your sources together.

What is synthesis?



- What it is not....

- Not a bowl of fruit
- Not a scattered juxtaposition of ideas from several sources



- What it is...

- Blended fruit smoothie
- Integration of support from more than one source for one idea/argument
- Identification of how sources are related



What do you integrate?



- Material from several sources on the same question/research topic
- Bases of comparison by examining
 - (1) point of view
 - (2) definition of terms
 - (3) common ground
 - (4) factors studied
 - (5) issues that divide
- Compare/contrast important factors (assumptions, interpretations of results, theories, hypothesis, speculations, etc.)

Tips for Effective Synthesis



- Strong, clear, precise thesis statement
- Discuss sources in relation to your thesis
- When using more than one quote/source, make sure you relate both sources to your main idea and to each other
- Use more than one source for each main point
 - The more sources you have to support your claim makes your thesis, and research paper, more credible

Types of Synthesis



- **Similarity:** demonstrates how two (or more) sources agree with one another.
 - Ex. Smith, like Taylor, argues that the Big Mac is better than the Whopper.
- **Contrast:** demonstrates how two (or more) sources support a main point in different ways.
 - Ex. Unlike Smith, Taylor argues the Big Mac has fewer calories.

Types of Synthesis



- **Accumulation:** demonstrates how one source builds on the idea of another.
 - Ex. Smith adds to Taylor's point by noting that the Big Mac has more carbohydrates.
- **Causation:** demonstrates how one source discusses the effects of another source's ideas.
 - Ex. Though Smith identifies the addition of carbohydrates, Taylor posits that the Big Mac's carbohydrates are due to an increase in protein.

Attribution Verbs



- Use specific verbs to attribute information to the source. Here are some examples:

- Add
- Admit
- Affirm
- Allege
- Announce
- Argue
- Believe
- Comment
- Confirm
- Criticize
- Complain
- Declare
- Deny
- Disagree
- Emphasize
- Estimate
- Exclaim
- Insist
- Mention
- Note
- Observe
- Posit
- Predict
- Proclaim
- Propose
- Question
- Remark
- Respond
- Retort
- Reply
- Reveal
- Say
- State
- Think
- Verify
- Write

Which attribution verb to use...



- To draw attention to the fact that the source has stressed a point: emphasize, insist
- To disagree: allege, claim
- Verb depends upon context of paper
 - Argument essay: affirm, argue, confirm, deny, disagree, verify
 - Research essays: add, reveal, state, mention, say

Which tense to use with attribution verbs...



- Regardless of citation method, maintain verb tense throughout essay
- APA
 - Usually requires the use of past tense or present perfect tense
 - ✦ Ex. argued, has/have argued
- MLA
 - Usually requires the use of present tense
 - ✦ Ex. argue or argues

Discussing Specific Source Ideas/Arguments



- To debate with clarity and precision, you may need to incorporate the quote into your statement.
 - Ex. Jane Doe, a well-known war historian. “At the beginning of the Iraq war, most Americans believed the war would end quickly.”
 - To argue this claim, quote the part that you feel is questionable
 - ✦ Ex. Historian Jane Doe argues that “most Americans believed that the war would end quickly” (23). However, most servicemen reported feeling the opposite.

Emphasizing Authoritative Sources



- Drawing attention to the definitive source or sources that clearly prove your point gives your paper and thesis credibility.
 - For example, you are providing new information on a current argument:
 - ✦ Ex. This fact is not new information. In *Errors and Expectations* Mina Shaughnessy points out this contradiction: “The fact that graduate schools, aware that their students would spend a good part of their professional lives teaching freshman English, made no effort to train students to teach writing (or to write themselves) only guaranteed that English teachers would be the last to see the limitations of the prescriptive approach to writing” (120-21).
 - Shaughnessy, Mina. Errors and Expectations. New York: Oxford U P, 1977.

Analyzing an Author's Language



- Often, this occurs in literature, history, linguistic, and social science courses
- In literature, this includes the use of colloquial or vernacular
- The way certain things are said can be used as evidence for your claim
 - Ex. “Who we really are when we *speak* and to whom we *speak* when we *speak* and what we *say* when we *speak* and why we *speak* at all are factors not in the grouping of rules” (87, my emphasis).
 - ✦ Berlin, James. Rhetoric and Reality: Writing Instruction in American Colleges 1900-1985. Carbondale: Southern Illinois U P, 1987.

Setting up and Following Quotations



- Remember, sources should be blended to create a smoothie and quotations should never just be dropped in a text.
- What precedes and follows a quote are just as important as the quote itself.
- Four steps to follow.

Setting up and Following Quotations



- Choose attribution verb.
 - In example to follow, the attribution verb is “reminded”
- Provide a context for the quote
 - Do not assume quote will speak for itself
 - Context possibly includes when, where, and under what conditions the quote was written or spoken
 - ✦ Ex. After the North defeated the South at the Battle of Gettysburg, President Lincoln reminded the United States, "Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal" (wikipedia).

Setting up and Following Quotations



- Provide a citation for the source of the quote
- Explain the significance of the quotation
 - Why did you choose the specific quote for your paper
 - ✦ Ex. After the North defeated the South at the Battle of Gettysburg, President Lincoln reminded the United States, "Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal" (wikipedia). Lincoln's Gettysburg address serves as justification for a war that took more American lives than any other US war.

What does synthesis look like?



Example 1

The **three distinct sources** show how the government controlled society. **Parry-Giles** directly correlated the President's administration during the Cold War to help emphasize the correct publication of information to the public. Also, **Gamson and Stuart** displayed that the general public did not want to go against the government. Furthermore, the younger generation (in the 1950s) which included **Jan Wolgamot** grew up understanding that the government would not mislead its people, and the media independently reported truthful information because of the first amendment. **All the sources** build on the idea that the government knowingly influenced the public through the media. However, the public did not know about the fabrication of the media. In reality, the government defended America from the fear of Communism through the fabrication and control of the media.

Continued...



Example 2

The **four authors** demonstrate that people can never be too sure about what media provides to them. **They** also portray how media affects public and policy issues, assessment-making at times of war, and the overall level of charitable aid. One should acknowledge that it is important to understand that information people believe as propaganda is the work of the government using the media for fabrication. Although the **authors** had different modus operandi, they agree with the hypothesis that the U.S. government controls information for supremacy of American society by using deception through the media. **Suderland** (2003) stated that journalists are enforced to manipulate stories that considered United States public policy issues, and **Miner** (1996) stated that specific information was restricted to the general populace by media. **Parry-Giles** then adds that since the government influences the media, they too have to conceal and falsify information when the American public demands their right to know all the facts (1976) and “the media present[s] a specialized picture of reality” (Pool, 1976, p.1237). Basically, the media creates an alternate perspective of the reality.

Group Discussion



- What are you researching currently?
- What is your research question?
- Have you taken notes on your sources?
- Have you compared/contrasted your notes?
- Have you mapped out how you will organize your notes into subtopics?
- Have you started synthesizing the notes into cohesive paragraphs?

Further Information



- If you require further information, please contact the Center for Teaching and learning at 217-206-6503 or ctlwrite@uis.edu
- Some of the information for this presentation was taken from the University of North Carolina Writing Center web site at www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb.