



Rowan University

SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

# Synthesis

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# What is Synthesis?

“The act of combining different ideas or things to make a whole that is **new and different from the items considered separately.**”

Synthesis is analysis that connects multiple pieces of evidence from different sources to compare, contrast, and draw conclusions.

A synthesis is not a summary, in that it does not just restate the ideas in each source. Instead, a synthesis aims to make new knowledge that roots in but is different from original sources. In academic writing, you **AREN'T** simply reporting what others said on a topic. You present new ideas based on interpretations of other evidence or arguments. You are arguing something about a topic. You are combining individual pieces of evidence across sources, so your readers can understand how the individual pieces work together.

Why does your paper, article, dissertation, or thesis need synthesis? An effective source synthesis helps you:

- Gain a greater and deeper understanding of a particular topic
- Demonstrate how you join the current academic conversations and scholarship
- Showcase how you build on/expand/extend/connect to prior work and add your ideas, perspectives, and/or insights to the existing knowledge

# How Synthesis Works

Synthesis involves:

- quoting, summarizing, and/or paraphrasing the important ideas that are **relevant to your research** focus from multiple sources;
- organizing, interpreting, and analyzing them to **present the connections** (e.g., similar, overlapping, or different ideas/findings) between these sources;
- **incorporating** these quotations, summaries, and/or the paraphrasing of the sources into your work **and adding your ideas and/or perspectives**.

To synthesize is to summarize, quote, and/or paraphrase the work of others **in a way that connects to your research; add your analysis, interpretation, and/or evaluation of that information; and then concludes by providing your new idea or perspective.** Synthesis encompasses interpreting sources and establishing a connection between the writer's and the sources' ideas.

In November of 2014, "almost all Swift's music vanished from Spotify, the online streaming service that claims over 50 million active users, more than 10 million of whom pay for an ad-free and mobile-ready version. Swift's departure came as a surprise to plenty of those users" (Dickey).

Taylor Swift pulled her music from Spotify because, "she believes that Spotify's particular model devalues her work" (Dickey). Swift will leave her music on Beats and Rhapsody because both programs require users "to pay for a premium package in order to access my albums. And that places a perception of value on what I've created. On Spotify, they don't have any settings or any kind of qualifications for who gets what music. I think that people should feel that there is a value to what musicians have created, and that's that" (Dickey).

According to Swift, removing her music "shouldn't be news right now. It should have been news in July, when I went out and stood up and said I'm against it in an op-ed in the Wall Street Journal" (Dickey).

"Spotify CEO, Daniel Ek, wrote a blog post defending his business" (Dickey). The company also responded to Swift's accusations that artists aren't paid by saying that the "total payout for Swift's streaming over the past 12 months globally was \$2 million" (Dickey). However, "Swift's label, which receives only a portion of payments, says it collected \$496,044 from domestic streams during that period" (Dickey).

However, Swift proved that she doesn't need Spotify because "her first-week figure of 1.287 million copies sold for her new album, 1989, bests any album's sales week since 2002's The Eminem Show" (Dickey).

In November of 2014, "almost all Swift's music vanished from Spotify, the online streaming service that claims over 50 million active users, more than 10 million of whom pay for an ad-free and mobile-ready version. Swift's departure came as a surprise to plenty of those users" (Dickey).

Taylor Swift pulled her music from Spotify because, she doesn't approve of the free, ad-supported business model that Spotify uses. Shortly after the release of 1989, Swift's record label, "notified Spotify that it would be withdrawing her entire catalog from the service. Big Machine didn't pull her catalog from other on-demand streaming companies such as Apple Inc.'s Beats Music, which doesn't offer a free, ad-supported tier. Rdio also still has her catalog, but only allows its paying subscribers to access it, not the users of its free service" (Grundberg).

According to Swift, she "didn't think that it would be shocking to anyone. With as many ways as artists are personalizing their musical distribution, it didn't occur to me that this would be anything that anyone would talk about. But I could never have expected so many text messages, emails and phone calls from other artists, writers and producers saying thank you" (Light).

Spotify responded to Swift's accusations that artists aren't paid by saying that the "total payout for Swift's streaming over the past 12 months globally was \$2 million" (Dickey). However, "Swift's label, which receives only a portion of payments, says it collected \$496,044 from domestic streams during that period" (Dickey).

In November of 2014, Taylor Swift removed nearly all of her music from Spotify, (an online streaming service) leaving both fans and Spotify shocked. Swift made the decision to remove her music from Spotify because "she believes that Spotify's particular model devalues her work" (Dickey).

In order for her to be recognized as an artist, Swift wants to see Spotify follow the same business models such as Beats or Rhapsody because both programs require users "to pay for a premium package in order to access my [Swift's] albums" (Dickey). However, Spotify does have an option for users to "pay for an ad-free and mobile ready version" (Dickey), but only a small portion of Spotify users subscribe for the ad-free version.

Although many listeners are upset with Swift's decision, she "never could have expected so many text messages, emails and phone calls" (Light) from people who are in the same industry as her. Swift says that she's heard from "other artists, writers and producers" (Light), thanking her for taking a stand on music rights.

According to an article written by Sven Grundberg, a label company can pull an "individual artist's work from Spotify with only a few days notice" (Grundberg). While it is unclear if Swift will ever allow Spotify to stream her music again, sales for the 1989 album continue to rise and are expected to reach 1.2 million by the end of the release week. With such a large fan-base around the world and albums sold, Swift has made it clear that she does not need to use Spotify as a platform for distributing her music.

In November of 2014, Taylor Swift removed nearly all of her music from Spotify, (an online streaming service) leaving both fans and Spotify shocked. Swift claims that she isn't sure why the removal is news to the company, especially after she "said I'm against it in an op-ed in the Wall Street Journal" (Dickey) earlier that year.

Swift believes that Spotify's ad-supported model is unfair to artists and diminishes the quality of their work. According to Swift, several "other artists, writers and producers" (Light) have thanked her for standing up to the streaming service and protecting artists' music rights, making Swift feel "she'd made the right choice" (Gibson). Although those around her are grateful, Spotify's CEO, Daniel Ek, responded to the frenzy in an official blog post. Ek argues that Spotify doesn't detract from the artist's value but rather serves "as a bulwark against online piracy" (Kedmy) and pays artists fair compensation.

However, Swift disagrees with Ek about the royalty payments. Spotify claims that Swift received two million dollars from 2013-2014, but the record label "says it collected \$496,044 from domestic streams during that period" (Dickey). The low amount of royalties is staggering, considering that Spotify has over 40 million registered users. According to Spotify, Swift's music was on "over 19 million playlists," and has about "sixteen million listeners approximately every thirty days" (Grundberg). With so many listeners, the amount of royalties should exceed the \$496,044; however Swift argues that each song played "average[s] less than a penny" (Kedmy), significantly less than other companies.

Sample 1



Sample 2



Sample 3



Sample 4



# Synthesis Starts with Reading and Note-Taking

When you are reading, make sure to note down common themes that you remember seeing in other papers and sources you have read. Organize your papers according to those themes.

If you have research questions already in mind, read with those questions close at hand, so that when something relevant comes up, you will recognize it immediately and be able to store it for later.

Summarize the reading that you do so that you have a quick, handy way of remembering what each source is about.

# Making a Synthesis Matrix

A synthesis matrix puts all of your sources in conversation with each other in a visual way.

You can choose the topics you would like to compare with a synthesis matrix. Some options include:

- Research Questions, Methodology and/or Context
- Themes that you notice are shared among the literature
- Ideas that you are interested in exploring, not led by the literature itself
- How the literature interacts with your research questions

[Here is an example](#) of a synthesis matrix that focuses on ideas that the student is interested in exploring.

In order to create this matrix easily, I used a Google Form that was designed to record the necessary information for a synthesis matrix. Feel free to make a copy of the form and use it yourself! You will find it [here](#).

# Using a Synthesis Matrix

When making your synthesis matrix, you will likely begin to see more clearly the connections, agreements, contradictions, and shared themes that exist between the sources you are working with.

Having a visualization of how your sources interact with each other and with the questions you have will give you pathways into writing about them as interacting texts, rather than as separate, discrete projects.

From there, you can develop your analysis, interpretation, and/or evaluation of the sources as part of the conversation your own work is having with those sources. You can then use your part of the conversation to bring in your new idea, perspective, or conclusion about the subject.

# Synthesis Don'ts

When synthesizing sources, DON'T:

- construct the body of your literature review out of a series of summaries.
- list your sources one after another.
- bombard your readers with undifferentiated masses of facts, examples, and quotations.
- begin/end your paragraphs by presenting quotations or facts from your sources.