

Compare and contrast framework

Using a grid to summarise different authors' arguments can help you move away from writing descriptively about them. Making comparisons and contrasts between different sources can help you think more deeply about sources and to use evidence from your reading more analytically.

- The fictional example below is a comparison of two studies in gender and education.

	Differences Author A: Wright (2000)	Similarities	Differences Author B: Black et al. (2000)
Evidence	Six schools in different areas of London. Larger sample across all ages; summary data. Variable approach. Uses classroom observations. Uses government statistics.	Case studies. England in the 1990s. Secondary school students.	One school in Birmingham. Specific in-depth study. Focus on school leavers. Uses narrative story telling – specific teenagers. Few stats.
Context	Service sector requiring types of skills unattractive to boys (e.g. customer care). Changes in education (reforms in secondary schools).	Economic transformation and changes in the labour market from 1980s – fewer manual jobs.	Either highly-skilled professional jobs or fast-food type jobs available (low pay, security and status). **Nothing on education reforms!
Approach	Feminist. Gender difference is socially produced. Argues for changes in teaching methods.	Understanding of identity – people construct who they are. (*Is this post structuralist - check?).	Some gender-based social limitations. Purely case-based study (descriptive).

Make your own grid to suit your purpose. For example you might want to compare case studies, practitioners, authors or research methods.

You may want to compare more than two.

Adapt to suit you: On screen, large sheets of paper or sticky notes.

Method

- Decide what you want to compare and choose a design for your grid or make one of your own.
- Identify the main themes you want to explore. These could come from course materials, a lecture or an assignment.
- Summarise using key phrases against the themes for each of the sources.
- Instead of writing about each source separately, write about each theme making comparisons.

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	Differences A:	Similarities	Differences B:
theme			
theme			
theme			