

## Academic Writing: Using Paraphrasing – Social Sciences

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When a marker reads a student essay, he or she will be looking to identify the following:

What has the student quoted?

What has the student paraphrased?

What has the student included that is fact or common knowledge?

(Most importantly) Where is the student's own argument?

### Exercise:

Read the following two examples of a fictitious paragraph from a student essay. In each example, try to identify the function of each sentence.

Is it:

- a) quotation
- b) paraphrase
- c) fact / common knowledge in the field
- d) the student's argument

The sentences have been numbered for you in each example.

### Example One

[1] Margaret Mead's 1928 *Coming of Age in Samoa* was a highly influential work in the new field of anthropology, and was also a huge popular success in America. [2] According to one author, her theory of cultural relativism "was adopted by generations of social thinkers and policy-makers who interpreted the Samoan experience as a message to our own society about how best to raise children and to govern." (Buchholz 1984) [3] We can see, therefore, that Mead's *Coming of Age in Samoa* was influential not only within the field of anthropology, but far beyond academic circles. [4] However, after Mead's death the anthropologist Derek Freeman attacked her research in Samoa, as well as her findings and theory (Freeman 1983). [5] In particular, he attacked Mead's claim that Samoan society was sexually permissive. [6] Recent work has revealed that Freeman himself was not beyond reproach. [7] Shankman, a leading scholar in Pacific studies, has pointed out that Freeman did not reveal that when he worked in Samoa, he did not yet have an undergraduate degree, and that his work was in fact not ethnographic, but archaeological (Shankman 2009, 217). [8] Furthermore, the Freeman – Mead debate has been left behind by more recent research. [9] Tcherkézoff argues that although "Freeman was correct in asserting that Samoans are sexually restrictive rather than sexually permissive... one can agree with Freeman's ethnographic observations without embracing his theory, and ... one can disagree with Freeman theoretically without embracing Mead." (Shankman 2007, 325). [10] It could be said that the debate over the value of Mead's work is now irrelevant, as the focus of

anthropology has moved on to consider how Western anthropologists' own preconceptions cloud their research.

Buchholz, Todd G., 1984. Margaret Mead and Samoa, by Derek Freeman, (book review). *Commentary Magazine* (Jan. 1984)  
<http://www.commentarymagazine.com/viewarticle.cfm/margaret-mead-and-samoa--by-derek-freeman-6801> (22 July 2010)

Freeman, Derek, 1983. *Margaret Mead and Samoa: The Making and Unmaking of an Anthropological Myth*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Shankman, Paul, 2009. Derek Freeman and Margaret Mead: What did he know and when did he know it? *Pacific Studies* 32: 2/3, 202-221 .  
[http://www.colorado.edu/Anthropology/people/bios/documents/DerekFreeman\\_001.pdf](http://www.colorado.edu/Anthropology/people/bios/documents/DerekFreeman_001.pdf) (22 July 2010)

Shankman, Paul, 2007. Book review of Serge Tcherkézoff's "First Contacts" in Polynesia. *The Contemporary Pacific*, 19:1, 324-325.

### Suggested answers to Example One:

- [1] fact / common knowledge in the field
  - [2] quotation. (For the sharp-eyed, the reason there is no page number given is that this online article has no page numbers.)
  - [3] student's argument
  - [4] paraphrase (of main argument of Freeman's book)
  - [5] paraphrase (of particular claim in Freeman's book)
  - [6] student's argument
  - [7] paraphrase (of Shankman's article)
  - [8] student's argument
  - [9] quotation
  - [10] student's argument
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### Example Two

[1] Margaret Mead's work was revered in America for its explanation of how sexually free the Samoans were. [2] Her theory of cultural relativism was adopted by generations of social thinkers and policy-makers who interpreted the Samoan experience as a message to our own society about how best to raise children and to govern. [3] However, after her death, one critic took issue with her work. [4] Freeman claimed, in *Margaret Mead and Samoa: The Making and Unmaking of an Anthropological Myth* that she was wrong and that, in fact, Samoans were the opposite. [5] However, Freeman himself did not even have an

undergraduate degree when he was researching in Samoa! [6] Another critic has recently criticised both Freeman and Mead. [7] Serge Tcherkézoff argues that although “Freeman was correct in asserting that Samoans are sexually restrictive rather than sexually permissive... one can agree with Freeman’s ethnographic observations without embracing his theory, and ... one can disagree with Freeman theoretically without embracing Mead.” (Tcherkézoff *“First Contacts” in Polynesia*)

Buchholz, Todd G., 1984. Margaret Mead and Samoa, by Derek Freeman, (book review). *Commentary Magazine* (Jan. 1984)  
<http://www.commentarymagazine.com/viewarticle.cfm/margaret-mead-and-samoa--by-derek-freeman-6801> (22 July 2010)

Freeman, Derek, 1983. *Margaret Mead and Samoa: The Making and Unmaking of an Anthropological Myth*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Shankman, Paul, 2009. Derek Freeman and Margaret Mead: What did he know and when did he know it? *Pacific Studies* 32: 2/3, 202-221 .  
[http://www.colorado.edu/Anthropology/people/bios/documents/DerekFreeman\\_001.pdf](http://www.colorado.edu/Anthropology/people/bios/documents/DerekFreeman_001.pdf) (22 July 2010)

Shankman, Paul, 2007. Book review of Serge Tcherkézoff’s “First Contacts” in Polynesia. *The Contemporary Pacific*, 19:1, 324-325.

### **Suggested answers to Example Two:**

[1] This sentence seems to be intended as fact / common knowledge - but it is debatable whether or not the main reason Mead was revered was because of her explanation of how sexually free Samoans were.

[2] This sentence looks like the student’s argument - but it is an unacknowledged (plagiarised) quotation from Buchholz.

[3] Common knowledge / fact – except the reader would like to know who the mystery critic is!

[4] Paraphrase (of Freeman’s argument) – lacking a proper reference.

[5] Looks like the student’s argument - but is an unacknowledged paraphrase of Shankman 2009.

[6] Student’s argument.

[7] Quotation – misattributed to Tcherkézoff (actually from Shankman 2007).