

One-step approach (when the terms are familiar)

“Entrepreneurship in small businesses is more of a collective rather than an individual activity because small business entrepreneurs typically depend on the involvement and support of their family (cites)... Various authors have argued that, particularly in migrant communities, entrepreneurs profit from family capital (cites)... However, limited research has been conducted on how female migrant entrepreneurs are influenced, positively or negatively, by their family and ethnic community while setting up and sustaining their business, and how gender plays a role in navigating belonging. Indeed, while research exists on legitimacy (cites) and its subset identity (cites), another subset of legitimacy, belonging, remains underresearched.”

Essers, Caroline, Edwina Pio, Karen Verduijn, and Najlae Bensliman. "Navigating belonging as a Muslim Moroccan female entrepreneur." *Journal of Small Business Management* 59, no. 6 (2021): 1250-1278.

One-step approach

“The COVID-19 pandemic has wrought acute harm to mental well-being across the globe... However, while the pandemic’s onset was global, its impacts have not been shared equally across societies, with greater harm among groups such as the socio-economically disadvantaged or ethnic minorities (cite). One group facing a particular set of struggles has been caregivers of school-aged children, who experienced significantly worse mental well-being outcomes over the pandemic (cites)...However, while we know much about how the pandemic impacted mental well-being, we know less about what factors helped cushion the pandemic’s effects on mental well-being; especially among vulnerable groups hardest hit.”

Laurence, J., Russell, H., & Smyth, E. (2024). “What buffered the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on depression? A longitudinal study of caregivers of school aged children in Ireland.” *European Sociological Review*, 40(1), 14-40.

Two-step approach (when the terms are unfamiliar or importance is not obvious)

Step 1: Introduce the importance

“Stroke is today the most common cause of adult physical impairment... Medical advances today mean that survival after a stroke is increasingly likely...”

Bringing sociology into the study of stroke itself—and not only its narratives or its representations (cites)—is not such a big leap. More specifically here, the sociology of social class seems highly relevant to analyzing stroke since epidemiology currently shows the importance of social class in stroke recovery...”

Darmon, Muriel. "The School Form of the Hospital: How Does Social Class Affect Post-Stroke Patients in Rehabilitation Units?." *Qualitative Sociology* 43, no. 2 (2020): 235-254.

Two-step approach

Step 2: Introduce the gap

“It is usually said that one-third of patients having suffered a stroke will die from it, one-third will recover without any heavy sequelae, and one-third will become dependent in everyday life due to disabilities. However, social inequalities inform these three outcomes...

Social class therefore affects post-stroke patients' careers. But *how* does it produce these effects? How can we explain class inequalities in rehabilitation outcomes?...

Based on an ethnography of what happens during rehabilitation for stroke patients, I would like to show two things...”

Variation of the 2-step approach

Multiple problems approach – Step 1: Introduce the topic

P1: “The impact of marriage on men’s and women’s economic well-being has long been a topic of debate for sociologists, economists, and policymakers alike (Waite, 1995). A relevant and increasingly studied dimension of economic well-being is wealth (Killewald, Pfeffer and Schachner, 2017). Ample literature illustrates that continually married men and women have substantially more household wealth than never-married individuals and individuals with disrupted marital histories...”

Kapelle, Nicole, and Philipp M. Lersch. "The accumulation of wealth in marriage: Over-time change and within-couple inequalities." *European Sociological Review* 36, no. 4 (2020): 580-593.

Variation of the 2-step approach

Multiple problems approach – Step 2: Introduce the problems

P2: “Previous research is limited in two important ways that hamper our understanding of how marriage stratifies wealth. **First, previous research often conceptualizes** [STATEMENT OF CONCEPTUAL PROBLEM]... We argue that previous literature does not sufficiently consider...”

P3: “**Second, previous research mostly focuses on** [STATEMENT OF FOCUS PROBLEM]... However, the specific conditions for the within-couple gap have not been thoroughly examined. In addition, we do not know...”

Variation of the 2-step approach

Multiple problems approach – Step 3: propose the solution

P4: “We aim to fill these gaps in our current knowledge about the consequences of marriage for between- and within-household inequality by addressing two research questions: (i)... (ii)... To answer these questions, we draw on longitudinal data from the German Socio-Economic Panel Study ... which internationally is one of the few household surveys providing individual-level wealth data.”



“The need to focus your research and generate a coherent research problem cannot be stressed enough. Central research questions, hypothesis or problems give your research activities purpose and direction, linking your research to an ongoing debate and/or body of knowledge” (Churchill and Sanders 2011: 3).

Types of inquiry influence the direction of the research

Question	Answer
What	Typology
Do...?	Yes/no
When and where	“under what conditions”
Why	explanations, i.e. theory
How	Mechanisms

Whereas a “research question” is crucial for the article,
many articles do not phrase it as a question.

Instead, it is simply a statement of what the article is about.



Questions in the form of a question

“We aim to fill these gaps in our current knowledge about the consequences of marriage for between- and within-household inequality **by addressing two research questions**: (i) How does personal wealth of both spouses develop over time in marriage? (ii) How does inequality in personal wealth between spouses develop over time?”

Kapelle, Nicole, and Philipp M. Lersch. "The accumulation of wealth in marriage: Over-time change and within-couple inequalities." *European Sociological Review* 36, no. 4 (2020): 580-593.

Questions not in the form of a question

“However, while we know much about how the pandemic impacted mental well-being, we know less about what factors helped cushion the pandemic’s effects on mental well-being; especially among vulnerable groups hardest hit...

This paper examines how the pandemic impacted depression symptomology among a key vulnerable population—caregivers of school-aged children—and explores what social, economic, and local environmental factors helped mitigate any harm.”

Laurence, J., Russell, H., & Smyth, E. (2024). “What buffered the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on depression? A longitudinal study of caregivers of school aged children in Ireland.” *European Sociological Review*, 40(1), 14-40.

Questions phrased in the title

Guetzkow, Joshua, Michèle Lamont and Grégoire Mallard. 2004. "What Is Originality in the Humanities and the Social Sciences?" *American Sociological Review* 69(2): 190-212.