**Constructing Research Questions in Organisation Studies**

**1. What is "gap-spotting" in research?**

Gap-spotting is the dominant approach to formulating research questions. It involves reviewing existing literature to identify gaps in knowledge, such as:

* **Confusion spotting:** Identifying conflicting findings or competing explanations in the literature.
* **Neglect spotting:** Finding areas that have been overlooked (overlooked areas), insufficiently studied (under-researched areas), or lack empirical support.
* **Application spotting:** Recognising where an existing theory or perspective hasn't been applied but could be useful.

**2. Is "gap-spotting" an effective way to formulate research questions?**

While gap-spotting is common and has its merits (ease of positioning, perceived safety, alignment with knowledge accumulation ideals), it might not always lead to the most interesting and impactful research. This is because it often doesn't challenge the underlying assumptions of existing theories.

**3. What is "problematisation" in research?**

Problematisation offers a contrasting approach. It involves critically examining and challenging the fundamental assumptions upon which existing theories and research within a field are built.

**4. Why is "problematisation" important for crafting research questions?**

Challenging assumptions can lead to more innovative and influential theories. By questioning accepted truths, researchers can open up new perspectives and generate more insightful research questions.

**5. If "problematisation" is so valuable, why is it not more common?**

Several factors contribute to the prevalence of gap-spotting over problematisation:

* **Ease and safety:** Gap-spotting is often seen as less demanding and less likely to generate controversy.
* **Academic norms:** The emphasis on knowledge accumulation, citation metrics, and securing funding often incentivises researchers to align with existing paradigms.
* **Journal practices:** Current journal formats and review processes frequently favour research that fits neatly within established lines of inquiry.

**6. Are there other approaches to formulating research questions beyond "gap-spotting"?**

Yes, several alternatives exist:

* **Critical Confrontation:** Directly critiquing a theory or field by highlighting its limitations.
* **New Idea:** Introducing a novel concept or framework without explicitly positioning it within existing literature.
* **Quasi-Problematisation:** Presenting a seemingly critical perspective that relies heavily on pre-existing critiques or alternative viewpoints.

**7. Can "gap-spotting" and "problematisation" be used together?**

Yes, these approaches aren't mutually exclusive. Research projects often involve elements of both. The key is to strike a balance, ensuring that the research questions are both grounded in existing knowledge and challenge conventional thinking.

**8. How can we encourage more "problematisation" in research?**

Fostering a research culture that values problematisation requires a shift in multiple areas:

* **Rewarding innovation:** Universities and funding bodies should recognise and incentivise research that challenges existing paradigms.
* **Embracing diverse methodologies:** Journals could encourage a wider range of research approaches, including those that engage in critical analysis and problematisation.
* **Cultivating critical thinking:** Researchers should be encouraged to question assumptions, both in their own work and in the broader field.