



# URS 410 Urban Empirical Research

<sup>1</sup><sub>2</sub> $\Sigma$ <sub>3</sub>

- Research Questions
- How would you design these projects?
- Mid-Term



## Research Questions

### Research Questions Must be:

- do-able
  - narrow
  - well defined methods
- based in an existing literature
  - extension of accepted concepts & theory



## Research Questions

The specific question you ask and how you ask it determines the appropriated research method

- do you want to ‘describe’, ‘understand’, or ‘explain’



## Research Questions

Are not grand statements on theory or conditions

- books and dissertations

Are narrow and small steps towards describing, explaining, or understanding a small part of many parts of a grand theory

- research papers, journal articles, & theses



## Research Questions

Research questions need not be an expansion of theory or concepts *per se*

- particularly undergraduate research papers & M.A. theses
- replication (not duplication) is appropriate at the undergraduate & M.A. levels



## Research Questions: Example 1

**NO**

*“What causes urban poverty in developing countries?”*

**Yes**

*“What are the observable socio-spatial relationships of everyday life of between female householders in a shantytown outside of Mexico City?”*



## Research Questions: Examples 2

**NO**

*“What was the role of the glass industry industry in the development of the Miami Valley?”*

**Yes**

*“How did presence of a specialized commercial glassworks industry influence the development of Vocational Education programs within the Miami Valley between 1950 and 1960?”*



## Research Questions: Example 2

**NO**

*Why is the city manager model of government so popular in the Miami Valley?*

**YES**

*What was the spatial pattern of adoption of the city manager style of local government within the Miami Valley between 1920-1935?*



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## Example 1

- Income & education data
- UN data on infrastructures in Urban regions
- Participant observation & fieldwork
- Oral history & interview

## Example 2

- A survey directed at Vo-Tech administrators
- Local histories & oral histories
- Enrollment figures for Vo-Tech Programs
  - how has the pay structure changed over time?

## Example 3

- Research Local Charters developed during the period
  - original documents
- Basic demographic data on adopters & non-adopters
  - what does the ‘average’ community look like?
- Oral history & interview



## Research Questions or Objective

- Not all research is driven by an answerable questions
  - some questions can't be answered
- Some research and philosophical perspectives reject the utilitarian character of the 'question' approach towards research, but are still an example of empiricism



URS 410 Urban Empirical  
Research

$1$   
 $2$   
 $3$   $\Sigma$

How would you research....

*Policing Homelessness: The Seasonality of “Quality of Life” Arrests in Downtown Dayton, Ohio’s Entertainment District, 1998-99*

*Industry & Art: Preserving Dayton’s Historical History through Art Glass, Dayton Art Institute 1995-99*

*A Highway Ran Through It: The dislocation of Wolf Creek Residents and Business during the construction of Interstate 75*

*Declining City?: Patent Productivity and Manufacturing Job Loss in Dayton, OH, 1970-1998*

*Working Class Landscapes: The decline of Riverside, OH’s Valley Street*