POL 51: Scientific Study of Politics

Professor Brad Jones

Fall Quarter 2009

Assignment 1: Evaluating Claims

Overview

There are two articles (URL is embedded below) that discuss the findings from two studies looking at the impact of corporal punishment on subsequent achievement of children. You are to answer the following questions:

1. What are the causal claims made by the researchers in each of these studies? Be precise and thorough in your answer. Make sure you discuss what the dependent and important independent variables are.

2. Based on what you can glean from the articles, what is the research design used in each of the studies? That is, what are the units-of-observation, how are the data gathered and measured, and how are the conclusions drawn. Be as precise as possible.

3. What are the major findings of the two studies? Be precise and clear.

4. What are the major differences between the two studies in terms of design, results, and so forth?

5. What possible problems do you see with either of these studies in terms of the ability of the researcher to sustain the conclusions he or she makes? Do you find one study superior over the other? Why or why not?

Each of these questions is worth 20 points making this assignment be worth a total of 100 points. Please word-process your answers with standard margins and fonts. You will not only be graded on the content of your answer, but also the ability to convey your answer with your writing. This assignment is due Oct. 6 at class time. E-mailed assignments will not be accepted nor will time-stamped assignments put in my mailbox. The URLs for the stories are:

Story 1:
http://news.guelphmercury.com/Life/article/540028

Story 2: