Class Exercise: Testing Claims in the News

Let's start this first lab with the idea, central to the class, that we want to subject ideas to data – to be scientific about claims that others make about reality in the world around us. The first step of that process, is to find specific ways to measure examples of the ideas asserted.

Divide into groups of 3-5, and get a copy of the *Sundial* (if we're on campus) or look at the homepage of a news site such as CNN or FoxNews (if we're online). Find an example there of a contention purportedly <u>based on empirical evidence</u> – not a normative idea about what *ought* to be, but an empirical contention about what was, is, or will be It could be in an article, an editorial, or even an advertisement. It could be about a single variable (such as attendance at NFL games) but not about a single case (such as about one team or elected official.)

Then briefly answer the following questions. The space provided should be more than sufficient; I'm looking for a sentence or two each, not a paragraph or essay. Be sure to attach the article or (if we're online) include the URL.

Secretary (5 pts extra): _____   _____

Other group members: _____   _____

_____   _____

Questions

1. What claim is made?

2. What is the dependent variable?

3. Is it a qualitative or quantitative claim?

4. Which "way of knowing" is the claim, and how is it supported?

5. What possible evidence could show that the claim is wrong or false?
   (If that's not possible, the claim isn't falsifiable and so isn't empirical; you'll need to pick a different claim.)

6. Do you agree or disagree (*scientifically*) with the claim? Why or why not?

7. What would be a better way to address that claim (*scientifically,* as a *researcher*, not a problem solver)?