

4.6 Evaluating Public Opinion Data

Explain the quality and credibility of claims based on public opinion data.

1. Elected officials often use public opinion polls for the following reasons EXCEPT

- a. Short cut to hear from their constituents
- b. Helps politicians to properly represent the citizenry
- c. Helps to build political efficacy
- d. Best means to manipulate public opinion

2. It has been said that the modern information age ironically finds its citizens misinformed. All of the following explain this irony EXCEPT

- a. Information acquisition has gotten expensive
- b. Lack of trust in our ruling elite
- c. Demagoguery
- d. Unfiltered viral videos

3. Use the following passage from a notable political scientist to answer this question:

“[Democratic] government...cannot be worked successfully...unless there is an independent, expert organization for making the unseen facts intelligible to those who have to make the decisions.” Or in other words, a free and independent press is essential. If an elite media is no longer an option then perhaps the responsibility is ours. Each and every citizen must collaborate together, as best as they can, to create pictures and images that simplify the great issues facing our society.”

The primary argument of this passage is

- a. The government has neglected their responsibility to inform citizens properly
- b. Elite media offer only condescending messages
- c. For democracy to work we must band together to make the complex simple and confusing clear
- d. The government has become to complicated for anyone to understand

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Why do you suppose the elite media is less of an option today to inform us?

- a. There is no longer an elite media
- b. Explosion of media outlets have diluted elite messaging
- c. Elites have become too expensive to listen to
- d. Elite media has radicalized

5. Political science argues that the greatest check on government action at each level is

- a. Supreme Court opinions
- b. Elite opinion
- c. Public opinion
- d. International government opinion

6. When the media reports like a horse race it means

- a. Emphasis is placed on popularity rather than issues
- b. Emphasis is placed on sports
- c. Emphasis is placed on big money donors
- d. Emphasis is placed on southern voters

7. Which of the following headlines would be an example of objective media reporting?

- a. “President signs Executive Order on free trade”
- b. “President free trade policy reveals how corrupt all Democrats are”
- c. “Free trade is anti-American”
- d. “Executive Orders are an abuse of Presidential power”

8. Use the following data set to answer the question that follows:

Network Evening News Ratings

1980	42.3
1985	37.5
1990	30.4
1995	26.4
2000	23.5
2005	18.9

What conclusion can be drawn from the data set above?

- a. Network evening news ratings have remained the same over time
- b. Network evening news ratings have dramatically dropped over time
- c. Network evening news ratings have fluctuated over time
- d. Network evening news ratings have suffered due to cable news

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What is the most likely explanation for the trend in this data?

- a. Network news is no longer reliable
- b. Network news is too expensive
- c. Network news faces more and more competition
- d. Network news cannot be streamed

10. Which of the following polls would be the least helpful?

- a. A Pew Research poll
- b. A Gallup poll
- c. An *ABC-New York Times* poll
- d. An open access Internet poll