The Perpetuated Myth That the Polls Are Wrong

Donald Trump is not a popular president. To some people that matters. To some people it doesn't. Either way, it's the reality of the situation. As of today, the president's approval rating, according to the *Real Clear Politics* average of national polls, is at only 42%.

If you're a fervent Trump supporter, it's a safe bet that your reflexive response to that last sentence will be something like: *Are those the same polls that showed that Hillary Clinton was going to win the election?*

After all, just about every time a commentator references President Trump's approval ratings, that's the kind of snarky retort they're typically greeted with by the Trump faithful, whether it be through social media, website comment-sections, or in person (I'm speaking from personal experience on that last one).

I understood such a visceral response back in November, right

after Trump won the presidency. Swing-states that were supposed to go to Clinton went to Trump, and many analysts (sometimes dubbed "the elites") were left dumbfounded over what happened. The default sentiment was that the much-cited poll numbers (nearly all of which suggested a Clinton victory) had been dead wrong.

Only, as it turned out, they *weren't* wrong. They actually ended up being pretty accurate.

Back in January, when the final vote tallies were released, we learned that Clinton had won the popular vote by about [three million votes](#), which equates to [2.1 points](#). The average of national polls (which measure the popular vote), taken just prior to the election, showed Clinton with a 3.1 point lead. That's only a one-point difference between the polling estimate and the actual numbers, making the national polling results from 2016 even more accurate than in the 2012 election.

The problem was with a handful of *state* polls (which are notoriously less reliable). Local polling in Wisconsin (which none of the national pollsters participated in), for example, had Clinton with a [6.5 lead](#) right before the election. As we all know, Trump ended up winning the state.

The national polls reflect general public sentiment in this country. They don't necessarily reflect the nuances of the electoral college. And though the national popular-vote isn't how the presidency is ultimately decided, it has historically been a good indicator of the electorate's attitude.

Of course, I'm not the first person to point out this distinction (not by a long shot). But being that it's been nearly five months since the election, and a large number of people are *still* denying the validity of national polling based on the election results (including President Trump at times), I think it's worth repeating.

After all, accurate data is a good thing. Is it not?

As Americans, we've understandably lost faith in many of our country's institutions, but national polling firms shouldn't be among them. They've turned out (for the most part) to be pretty darned good at what they do. They're not "out of touch" with people's sentiments, as is often suggested. They're actually very much reflective of the sentiments of Americans, as they proved in November of 2016.

So, when people thumb their noses at the notion that our president's job-performance ratings are legitimate, it's safe to say that those people are either in denial or blissfully ignorant on the matter.

And when they respond to those unflattering ratings by asking, "Are those the same polls that showed that Hillary Clinton was going to win the election?" the correct answer to that question is: "No. They are the same polls that accurately predicted the election results."

It's perfectly valid to argue that Trump isn't getting a fair shake, and that the mainstream media's overwhelming negative coverage of his presidency is contributing to his poor approval rating. But denying the premise that our president is viewed unfavorably by most of the country is both unfounded and foolish.

Thirty years ago, Sean's father mysteriously abandoned his family in the Colorado mountains. He was never seen again. **This October, the truth comes home.**

JOHN A. DALY

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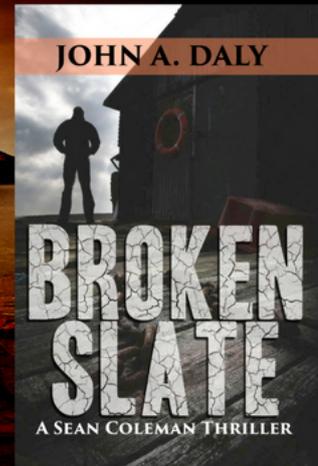
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Being 'Out of the Mainstream' Is Suddenly a Political Non-Starter?

It seems you can't listen to a political debate these days without hearing some liberal politician or media pundit using the term "out of the mainstream" to marginalize a conservative viewpoint. Much like "the one percent", it's one of those nauseating catchphrases designed to discount an argument on the basis that its perspective falls outside of a common perception.

For example: If you don't think it makes sense to raise taxes on job creators during a weak economy and high unemployment, you're "out of the mainstream" because most people have no problem with *rich people* paying higher taxes.

I guess it's no longer enough to prop up an argument by simply saying, "Most people agree with me." No, you now have to degrade the opposition by claiming that they're not part of the *all important* "mainstream" — the inference being that they're not only wrong, but also *weird* for not subscribing to the prevailing mindset.

I assume the phrase has been poll-tested and was somehow determined to strike a chord with people, otherwise we wouldn't be hearing it so often. I guess that makes sense. After all, it's important to a lot of people to be part of the 'in' crowd. No one wants to be the outcast. Republicans, apparently recognizing its value, even tapped into the phrase recently in their criticism of defense secretary nominee, Chuck Hagel.

I realize that it's just part of a political tactic, but the choice of words is interesting — especially coming from liberals.

I thought liberalism was supposed to be the ideology that took the lead on pressuring society to reject bullying and be more accepting of those who march to the beat of a different drum. I thought they were supposed to be the protectors of minorities and the defenders of the *little guy*. I thought they were the preachers of diversity and inclusion.

When they make the "mainstream" argument, however, they sound like a clique of popular high school kids, defining those who aren't part of their group as being dopey.

Maybe I'm reading into this too much. Maybe their use of the term is simply another way for them to say that they have majority support, and thus their policy ideas are the correct ones. But if that's the case, since when did liberals begin basing the merits of policies on majority support?

Obamacare certainly didn't have majority support. On the contrary… It faced overwhelming public resistance. It's

passage even led to a historical take-over of the House of Representatives by the party whose future had widely been written off by political observers two years earlier.

Most people believe the federal government needs to reduce its spending. Most people believe our entitlement programs need to be reformed. Most people favor smaller government, less services, and lower taxes. Most people believe that identification should be required in order to vote. Most people want to expand domestic oil drilling and to get the Keystone Pipeline built. Some national polls are even showing that the pro-lifers are beginning to outnumber the pro-choicers.

If being in the mainstream is so important, how can the Democrats possibly hold the positions they do on these issues?

The lack of an answer makes me think I was right in my original assessment.

In the grand scheme of things, political jargon is the least of our country's worries right now, thus my beef is a minor one. Still, it's hard not to be annoyed by what is yet another example of our Obama-driven culture of divisiveness. Though the rhetoric may not be as sharp as it was during campaign season, the key elements remain the same. The winning method for building coalitions is no longer to unite support through common interests, but rather to divide people into categories, create tension between them, and debase the ones who don't choose your side.

Judging by the apparent success of this approach, I'm sure there will be many more of these irritating little phrases that we can look forward to hearing in the future.