

Newsflash: Internet Polls Are Meaningless

Following last Monday's presidential debate between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump, the consensus among those in the news media was that Clinton had won it. While few commentators believed it to be a resounding victory, they gave her the edge on points, and cited Trump's unpreparedness and defensiveness as his major weaknesses.



I agree with that analysis.

Unsurprisingly, Trump and many of his supporters drew the *opposite* conclusion, and as proof of their side's victory, they began citing an array of Internet polls (including the *Drudge Report*, *Time*, and *CNBC*) whose results revealed Trump to be the clear victor. In fact, Trump himself has posted 11 separate tweets over the past three days, reiterating his dominance in post-debate online polling. Several people in the pro-Trump wing of the conservative media have also echoed the narrative, including some hosts on *Fox News*.

Now, it shouldn't be all that surprising that Trump would tout a media theme, or a report of public sentiment, that works in his favor. He's been doing it reflexively for well over a year, often with little regard to (or apparent interest in) the credibility of those sources. That instinct has famously led him to cite *National Enquirer* stories without embarrassment, and unknowingly retweet the words of white supremacists.

When it comes specifically to online polls, Trump has

certainly found his wheelhouse. He wins pretty much all of them, and usually by a wide margin. We saw this on display throughout the primary season, when putting in even lackluster debate performances would earn him easy wins on the Internet. Some online polls even showed Trump winning (or placing second) in the Iowa debate – the one he didn't participate in. Now *that's* impressive!

Of course, there's a reason for this – as there was for Ron Paul when *he* won all of those same polls back in 2012 and 2008, as a presidential candidate. That reason is *not* that Trump and Paul are two of the greatest, most compelling orators to ever grace a debate stage. I don't think anyone believes that.

The real explanation is fairly simple: Internet polls are utterly meaningless.

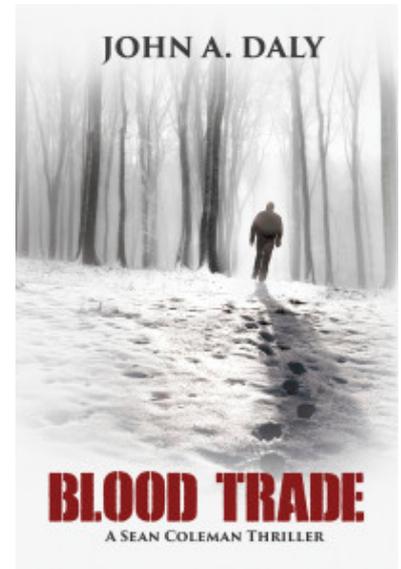
Media organizations conduct these highly unscientific polls for one primary purpose: to drive traffic to their websites. The polls are not a useful gauge of anything other than how inclined a particular candidate's most loyal fans are to seek out and participate in the them.

Ron Paul had a small but enthusiastic following that was desperate for their candidate to be taken seriously, and look good on the national stage. Trump has a much larger following, but the passion and motivations are the same.

While the overwhelming majority of people who watch a presidential debate go to bed afterwards, the super-fans of candidates like Paul and Trump stay up late and scour the Internet, searching for polls to participate in (entering their choice multiple times, if possible).

There's of course nothing wrong with this. *Every* candidate wishes they had supporters as passionate as these people. But the results of these types of polls should *not* be part of any legitimate news story from a legitimate news source.

Furthermore, a candidate who is touting such results should be challenged by journalists.



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According to Oliver Darcy of *Business Insider*, this point was just made clear by Dana Blanton, the VP of public-opinion research at *Fox News*, to employees at the network. In a memo to Fox producers and political teams, Blanton emphasized that such polls are not credible, thus they should not be presented as valid data.

“As most of the publications themselves clearly state,” Blanton wrote, “the sample obviously can’t be representative of the electorate because they only reflect the views of those Internet users who have chosen to participate... Another problem – we know some campaigns/groups of supporters encourage people to vote in online polls and flood the results. These quickie click items do not meet our editorial standards.”

Bravo.

A lack of journalistic discipline is one of the major proponents of bias in media organizations. In this particular case, a problem was recognized, addressed, and *hopefully* dealt with.

Let's see some more of this, please. And when it comes to political polling, let's be pro-science.

“Binders” Are Now Offensive

✘ Sometimes I think I'm a woman trapped in a man's body. Well, not exactly his body; maybe his mind. I say that because the older I get the less I understand how some dopey women overreact to things said or done by a man.

Last week was a perfect example. Of course I watched the Presidential debate on Monday and enjoyed every minute of it. I liked the confrontational aspect of the debate and the aggressiveness of both candidates. I don't like flatliners. I can't tell you how many times I've seen President Obama speak and have called him just that... a flatfliner. He didn't come across as one during the most recent debate.

So it came as a shock to me after the debate, that some of the women pundits were turned off by the demeanor of the candidates. I, on the other hand, found it refreshing. I enjoyed the battle to see who wins the Alpha Male spot. We got to hear about their core beliefs. Reading off of a teleprompter just isn't the same. (Of course, I already knew President Obama's core belief system before the 2008 election when he said he believed in income redistribution and big government – that's why I didn't vote for him then and won't vote for him now.)

But the comment which has apparently caused the biggest stir is Mitt Romney's reference to the "binders" full of women applicants he received while Governor in an attempt to find qualified women candidates to work in his administration. Right after the debate, I saw headlines on my news feed regarding "binders" but didn't have the time to find out what the brouhaha was all about until I watched the O'Reilly Factor and discovered that some women were actually "offended" and "disturbed" and found the comment "unnerving."

Listen to the segment yourself.

The desperation on the left is really showing. They must be sweating about some recent polls showing Mitt Romney leading President Obama. After listening twice to the comments on the Factor (I DVR the show every night), I still, for the life of me, can't figure out why anyone would be offended by the word "binders." It's all nonsense.

I have no idea how resumes/credentials/CVs are handled in politics, but it seems perfectly reasonable if you're going to compile several, why wouldn't you put them in binders so they can be easily reviewed? If you're going to have hard copies of documents, do you really want all that paper flying around or would you rather have it compiled neatly in a "binder"?

Were these kookaloonie women, like Erica Payne, reading something into it that I'm not getting? Maybe a little bondage entered into their psyche? Really, what am I missing here? As far as I'm concerned, these women have far too much time on their hands.

As one political analyst recently noted, it seems that these outraged women are just shills for the liberal left. I hope they were as outraged, disturbed and unnerved when Bill Maher, a \$1 million contributor to President Obama's campaign, called

Sarah Palin “a dumb twat” and “a cunt” and Michelle Bachmann a “bimbo” or when Keith Olbermann called Michelle Malkin a “mashed-up bag of meat with lipstick on it” or when President Clinton was engaging in extracurricular activities in the Oval Office with a 22-year intern?

I don't get it, but if you do, God bless you.

Candy Crowley Gets Obama Off the Hook on Benghazi – Blunder or Bias?

✘ One of the most anticipated topics in this week's presidential debate was the terrorist attack on our U.S. consulate and murder of four Americans in Benghazi, Libya. Many analysts were curious how President Obama could possibly defend the way his administration cited phony players and motives in the attack (a spontaneous mob angered by a YouTube video), when they knew all along that it had been committed by terrorists as part of a coordinated effort on the anniversary of 9/11.

Though the topic didn't come up until surprisingly late in the debate, it did come up. And when it did, Mitt Romney had a good opportunity to nail the president on his refusal to label the violence as an act of terrorism until weeks after the event. There was only one problem: Soon into Romney's charge, debate moderator Candy Crowley substantiated President Obama's assertion that, on the day after the attack, the president used the term *act of terror* when speaking about the incident. This clearly threw Romney off his game, and led to some quibbling back and forth between Obama and Romney before

Crowley shut down the topic all together, and the president was effectively let off the hook. Viewers could read the relief in Obama's eyes when the topic was changed. Who can blame him? He dodged quite a bullet.

Crowley has since taken a lot of heat from mostly conservative commentators, and I do think she certainly deserves some criticism. However, I don't believe this was a case of media bias, as many are charging. I think she made the honest mistake, as consequential as it was, of trying to break down the semantics of the argument, instead of letting the candidates engage in the merits of the argument itself. For the most part, she did a fine job of moderating. Did she blow it on Benghazi? Yes. Was it a concerted effort to rescue President Obama? I don't think so.

You see, President Obama *did* use the term "acts of terror" in his speech on September 12th. The problem is that he didn't use it in reference to the attack in Libya. It was a passive reference, spoken in general terms to explain historical, American resolve in the face of tragedy. There's certainly been a conscious effort by the Democrats to retroactively contort the president's words into a condemnation of the people who carried out the Benghazi attack, but that's not at all what he did.

The far more important issue was the conduct of the Obama administration over the two weeks following the attack. We now know that the U.S. government knew from the onset that the attack on our consulate was committed by terrorists. So what happened during those next two weeks? President Obama was asked directly and repeatedly if terrorism was to blame. Each time, he claimed that he didn't know. U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Susan Rice, was sent out on five Sunday morning talk-shows, five days after the attack, and repeated the story that the attacks stemmed from an overzealous mob. Both President Obama and Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, blamed the infamous anti-Islam YouTube video for inciting the

violence. None of that was true. There was no mob. There was no influence from the YouTube video because no one knew of its existence.

Yet, because Candy Crowley mangled the issue, President Obama escaped having to answer for any of that in Tuesday night's debate. The media should not let the president off the hook for this, but if ABC News' George Stephanopoulos is of any indication, they may very well do just that. Wednesday, on *Good Morning America*, Stephanopoulos repeatedly tried to convince guest Paul Ryan that the controversy is essentially now a dead issue for the GOP ticket, due to the debate exchange. I can't say that I'm surprised.

To her credit, Crowley did concede, in an interview immediately following the debate, that Mitt Romney was right. She expressed misgivings in distracting from the issue, and she verified that the Obama administration did indeed avoid linking the Libya attack to terrorism by misdirecting the media and the public. Unfortunately, that's not the news coming out of the debate.

Rather than a president publicly being held accountable for what was a clear cover-up of a serious failure, the post-debate headline is that all important question of what Mitt Romney really meant by "binders full of women." How anyone can feel proud to wear the title of "Journalist" in this environment, I'll never know.

Five Things Romney Needs To

Do In the Debates



With the first presidential debate set for Wednesday night, there's been a lot of discussion in the media over what Mitt Romney needs to say to achieve some much needed momentum this close to the election.

By now, his debate strategy and most of his talking points have surely been finalized and rehearsed extensively. Still, I don't think it hurts to offer a little last-minute advice to the man the Republican party and much of the country are counting on to drive home his case for why the nation desperately needs a change in leadership.

We'll start with the cosmetics. From an attitude standpoint, Romney has to end the *Mr. Nice Guy* routine. The Romney campaign has invested a lot of time in building Mitt's *likeability* factor, which is understandable in the sense that his opponent has maintained a lot of support based solely on his personality. The reality, though, is that Romney just can't compete with Obama on that front. He should stop trying. Our country is headed off a fiscal cliff, and he needs to start acting like it. He should be civil, but direct, firm, and show some conviction, ala Newt Gingrich.

As for the substance of the debate, it's important that he do the following:

Tie the Poor Economy to Obama

There's been an assumption all along, both from the Romney campaign and the Republican party, that four straight years of a disastrous economy would force voters to draw the logical conclusion that our president's economic policies have been a resounding failure. I certainly shared that assumption myself. We were all wrong. The consensus of the electorate seems to be

that the economy is indeed in rough shape (though most people have no idea *how* rough), but they're not quite convinced that it has something to do with President Obama. As utterly ridiculous as that sounds, it appears to be the case. Romney has to break that false perception apart.

He needs to aggressively explain that the economy is not stagnant *despite* President Obama. It's stagnant *because* of President Obama. He needs to remind the electorate that Obama was elected in 2008 to FIX THE ECONOMY, not to act as a spectator, hold their hands, and promise them that *everything's going to be okay... someday*. He needs to explain that several presidents have inherited tough economies. Obama wasn't the first, by any stretch of the imagination. Obama is, however, presiding over the worst economic recovery since World War 2. Romney then needs to explain why that is.

He should point out that Obama's economic policies have discouraged economic growth rather than promoted it. There is a plethora of examples he can use: Over-regulations on the energy industries and the absence of an overall energy policy (including Obama's refusal to approve the Keystone Pipeline), the constant threat of tax increases on businesses, the burden of Obamacare on business growth and hiring, the devaluation of the U.S. dollar and how it has driven up the price of products (including gasoline), etc.

Romney's overall message has to be that the country's only chance of digging our way back to prosperity are for businesses to thrive, and that Obama has done nothing but place burdens on businesses in this country.

Set the Tax Record Straight

For weeks, the Obama campaign has been running an enormous advertising campaign in swing states and across the internet, insisting that Mitt Romney plans on raising people's taxes. It's an outright lie. Yet, a lot of people have seen the ads

and probably believe them. That's a bad thing for Romney.

The information the ads use was based on a thoroughly debunked study that made several false assumptions to draw a speculated conclusion. Romney has pledged all along not to raise anyone's taxes. The Obama camp, of course, is well aware that they're lying. The president himself even admitted in a recent *60 Minutes* interview that his campaign has been dishonest, and rationalized that dishonesty by saying, "You know, that happens in politics." Unsurprisingly, *CBS News* didn't find that admission newsworthy enough to include in the final cut of the interview that made it on to national television... but media bias is a topic for another column.

Romney needs to not only call out President Obama for outright lying about the tax charge, but broadcast to the world (as Paul Ryan has been doing in recent interviews) that there is only one presidential candidate who has vowed to raise taxes, and that is President Obama. He needs to affirm directly that no one's taxes will go up under a Romney administration.

In contrast, Romney needs to highlight the dozen or so Obamacare taxes that are being placed directly on the backs of the middle class. He needs to explain how raising taxes on *wealthy people* hurts the rest of us because it raises the cost of consumer products and services.

He needs to explain that there are no upsides to raising *anyone's* taxes. Lower taxes for wealthy people don't mean higher taxes on people who aren't wealthy. That's a myth. However, higher taxes on wealthy people do mean higher costs of services and products to consumers. That should be his rationale for lowering *everyone's* taxes, via his tax reform plan.

Crucify Obamacare

Throughout the campaign, the Romney camp has pulled their punches when it comes to going after Obamacare. Sure, they've

been talking about repealing and replacing it, but they've been timid when it comes to describing just how much of an impending disaster it is for our country, and how this election is the last remaining chance of stopping it. Romney needs to stop worrying about the superficial similarities between it and Romneycare, and explain once and for all what the law's survival means to Americans. It's already a winning issue for him, as most national polls show that Americans are still standing adamantly against it. He just needs to drive home the desperate need to kill it.

Romney needs to point out that essentially every promise made from the administration about Obamacare was a lie. The promised price-tag was a lie. The promise that it would bring down our national debt was a lie. The promise that our healthcare premiums would not go up was a lie. The promise that it would bring down the actual cost of healthcare was a lie. The promise that we'd get to keep our existing plans, if we chose to, was a lie.

He needs to point out the large jump in healthcare premiums as a result of Obamacare, the law's unfunded liabilities, the healthcare rationing decided upon by government boards, and the startling percentage of doctors who have vowed to leave the field because of the burdens placed on their practices by Obamacare.

He needs to pound home the fact that Obama took billions out of Medicare to help pay for Obamacare. The polls surged for Romney when Paul Ryan took on this battle a month or so ago. They need to return to it, and also explain that Medicare Advantage is going away under Obama, which a lot of Americans don't realize.

Paint a Picture of Obama's Second Term

It's not enough for Romney to point out how much of a disaster Barack Obama has been for our country. He needs to explain

that *this* (October of 2012) is as good as it gets under Obama. There is no such thing as an *Obama Recovery*. It's a fiction. It's a fantasy. No matter how many times the president tries to push the square peg into the circle-shaped hole, it's not going to fit.

Romney needs to point out that economic growth is not getting better. It's only getting worse, and will continue to worsen. He needs to explain that the workforce is not growing. It's shrinking, and will continue to shrink. He needs to explain that with an administration that is hindering domestic oil production, the average price of gas over this past year will be the cheapest Americans will see under Obama. Gas prices will only get higher due to our dependency on foreign oil and the continued devaluation of the U.S. dollar.

Lastly, without mincing words, he should boldly state that under Obama, there WILL be another recession. This will undoubtedly get people's attention, and it's a reasonable conclusion to draw. The economic numbers point in that direction. The runaway government spending points in that direction. The national debt points in that direction. The president's inability to work with congress to solve dire problems points in that direction. Many people in the media will fly off the handle in reaction, but who cares? The national debate over the economy needs to get serious, and this will do that. It's not fear-mongering. It's a wake-up call.

Explain What a Romney Presidency Will Means to Individuals

Despite a national media that's out to get him, and a political opponent who has successfully created a negative caricature of him, it's ultimately Mitt Romney who is responsible for making his case (as hard as that might be in this political climate) to sell his presidency to the American people. More specifically, he needs to sell his presidency to undecided voters who aren't all that informed. Like it or not,

they'll be the ones deciding the outcome of this election.

Thus, Romney needs to do more than cite all of the economic numbers that point out Obama's sweeping failures. He needs to go beyond promises of tax cuts and lifting regulations. That kind of talk goes over well with business owners and others who understand economics, but it's lost on most voters. He needs to go beyond talking about China and the national debt because most people just don't understand why that stuff is important or how it effects them.

Undecided voters don't think *big picture*. They think about their own microcosms.

Romney needs to simplify his message to speak directly to middle and lower class families who aren't politically sophisticated, but struggle in this chronically weak economy every day. These are the people who aren't quite sure that either man can fix our problems. Romney must convince them that *he* can.

He should explain that his presidency won't be about forcing Americans to navigate through obstacles. It will be about lifting the burdens that are weighing them down: Lowering gas prices through expanded drilling and a stronger dollar, lowering unemployment and raising job security through pro-growth policies that incentivize companies to hire and invest, lowering the cost of healthcare by replacing Obamacare with *real* reforms that actually save patients money, etc.

He needs to apply conservative principles to family budget issues that people can identify with, because right now, those people aren't identifying with the *big picture* crisis our country is in.

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If Mitt Romney can begin to do many of these things during the first debate, and actually follow up with those themes along

the campaign trail, there's no reason why he can't turn the momentum in his favor and win this race.