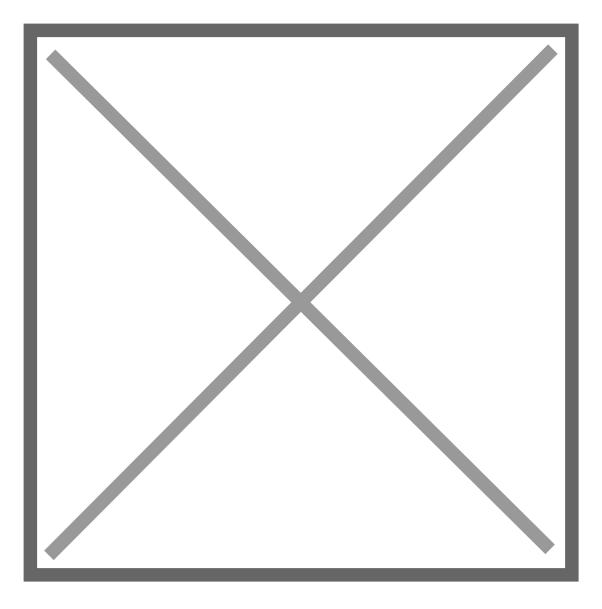
We mostly like Jews, Catholics, and evangelicals! Do they like us?

By <u>Steve Thorngate</u> July 21, 2014

How do American people-of-faith feel about American people-of-different-faith?

The Pew Forum has a new polling report on this question. It seems Catholics have a slightly higher view of Jews than vice versa, while white evangelicals' view of Jews is *much* higher than Jews' view of evangelicals. White mainline Protestants have moderately positive views of Jews, Catholics, and evangelicals, while the opposite is....

Huh, okay. The opposite is not a question included in the poll:



Pew <u>didn't ask people</u> (pdf) how they felt about mainline Protestants, by that name or any other. The only Christian groups asked about were Catholics and evangelical Christians. The Protestant *respondents* are split into three groups—white evangelical, white mainline, black Protestant. But only evangelicals (of whatever color) merited an actual question. Why?

I'm sure there was a time when this seemed obvious to many: *mainliners aren't a specific group that people in the culture have opinions about; they're the culture itself.* These days, most mainline leaders I know can critique this sort of hegemonic view in their sleep. To say nothing of the fact that <u>the numbers didn't support it even in the mainline's alleged heyday</u>. Certainly not now, years after <u>Pew's own people started calling evangelicals the new mainline</u>.

Yes, the word "mainline" itself implies this sort of assumed cultural dominance. I'm among those who persist in using the word not out of enthusiasm for it but simply for lack of a good alternative. But I can't see the nomenclature itself being the issue here; Pew could have asked about progressive Protestants or liberal Protestants or whatever.

I don't know why they didn't. (It's <u>not like they're the Barna Group</u> or something.) The results are predictable: headlines like "<u>Evangelicals, Catholics, Jews Viewed</u> <u>Warmly</u>." Mainline Protestants aren't necessarily viewed coolly, like atheists and Muslims. We just aren't viewed at all.

I for one would much rather see my tradition considered as one option among many than as some kind of default. I would, however, like it to actually be considered among them.