

Focus Group Guidelines

August 23, 2006

Albuquerque, NM

NM-1

Hispanic Men, 30-50, Non-College Educated

6 Kerry/4 Bush

I. Introduction (10 minutes)

- Confidentiality
- Mirrors, audio and videotapes
- Respondent introductions

Ana – Washington, DC. Do this for a living, like to be outdoors.

Ron – Married, 4 y/o daughter. 10 year anniv.

- 3 Kids, from Denver. Divorced.

David – Married, 2 kids.

Mike – Just married, 3 y/o daughter. Work with kids with psych. Issues.

Ken – Married, 2 kids.

Daniel – Kids.

Emmanuel – Single, no kids.

Jerry – Married, 3 boys, 10, 11, 3/2. Born in MN, raised here.

Enrique – No kids, coach basketball.

II. Direction of the Country (20 minutes)

1. Thinking generally about the country, are things moving in the right direction or wrong direction? **[VERY EXTENSIVE – PROBE AND LISTEN]**

Hard question.

It's not going in the right direction.

War.

It's a train wreck. It's hard to get out now.

My wife's taking a course on Vietnam history, and just what she's read the similarities between then and now — somewhat agree these wars are all about money. I believed her when she was sharing about corporations making money hand over fist of these.

I agree. Has nothing to do with Democrat or Republican, there's always an alternative. I served in the Marines in Somalia, supposedly there to make sure they got food. We stayed almost a year making sure — knew exactly where the bad guys were but couldn't do anything. I felt there's always an ulterior motive besides helping.

I'm ex military as well, but believe that if we didn't go, they'd be walking in to our territory.

I think we could have done it a different way. It started with us going after UBL and we ended up invading Iraq, now not to say we shouldn't have done that, but he used the WTC as a reason to go to war. We lost track of our goal.

I don't think it's right either. Human nature is greedy, power. They're really pushing the point on oil. North Korea's a big issue, but they don't have oil.

I believe there's no clear this way, that way. Sometimes you should keep your nose out of other people's business.

The whole thing with democracy — you hear Condi talk about getting democracy, but a lot of these countries don't want it. Excuse my ignorance but Americans seems more and more that we're just getting hated. We want to be this world police thing. . . If these atrocities are happening, we can't just stand a blind eye. Are there other countries that are doing it now. . . I was just going to say we try to dictate our standards — different culture, what's right for one isn't necessarily right for others.

They're born to hate Americans, lots of them.

America's totally — all of America is totally diverse, there's nobody is alike. Even the Catholicism is different. When we went to invade, I think we went about it the wrong way. There's different things we can do to keep America safe besides going to other countries. We should look here before spreading ourselves too thin. It sounds selfish, but we can't keep others safe if we're not doing it here.

Failed plot?

I think it was a setup. You can call me a conspiracy theorist, but I believe that it was Bush's way — Newspapers blow things out of proportion. As far as explosives, it was his way of. . .

They like keeping us on edge.

The whole thing with them plotting is that they're still winning, it's this psychological thing.

It also hurts our rights. We're losing rights.

It becomes a police government.

“It's for your safety.” Before you know it, your safety's gone.

Heading in that direction?

We're losing rights slowly.

But we get our paychecks, drink our beer, watch our TV.

2 things scare me, I know the media's not bush friendly. I think about what if we brought all our troops back — what state would the world be in.

I'm not suggesting pulling them back. We're obligated to stay out there.

They're recalling more marines.

I'd go because I'm a patriot.

Civil War in Iraq?

Oh yeah.

The power and the money is where it's all at.

There's a civil war in this country — but we don't kill each other.

2. How about the economy? What's going on with the economy here in New Mexico?

Health insurance is going back up. . .

If we had a better transit system, it'd be more convenient. The stops are so far apart, and the times. . . You can't do it.

I think it'd be better if our politicians stayed here, rather than going to other states.

How did we get here?

Voting for Bush.

I think it's any president. Democrat or republican, there's ulterior motives.

I'd like to say it's Bush, but it started with this WTC thing and everybody's guard went up. Bush didn't help by invading Iraq.

I don't know if you're history buffs, Clinton was reaping the benefits of what Reagan did. Yeah, but he's had almost 8 years.

It started going down in the Clinton era. . . They're all in for one reason, to serve their own purpose.

Every time you campaign, you get contributions for certain organizations. . . They're all backed by somebody.

Where's it going?

I think it'll get better.

It's gotta get better. The only way to go is up. With the — hopefully the war will be ending.

Immigration issue, people don't realize that these 25 million or so immigrants will be taxpayers. . .

There's gotta be something better. I don't think any of us are probably true Americans, natives. Our parents came from Spain, Europe, Mexico. . . Somewhere. They can't go sending everybody back.

"They're taking all our jobs" There's a lot of jobs that people in America, I'll never do that job. . . But we don't want those people here. Right now, it's under the table.

More rules, regulations. Just a lot going on. Media only tells you what they want you to hear.

I think everybody forgot Katrina and what happened there. 9/11, Katrina. That's all it takes.

Went from a state in the US to a 3d world country over night. Too slow response. They could've forced evacuation, done a lot more. That just. . .

I can't understand why Louisiana doesn't take blame. They blame it on the federal government.

They had money for levees, they didn't make them strong enough.

It also goes back to city government. They reelected that mayor that failed them. It starts at the smaller level.

I found it interesting. They were able to get the people out of Lebanon, but. . .

That's where it should be. . . They should put the people before the money.

It won't happen.

Too much greed.

What else?

The youth of today. Anymore it's not like we were raised, they have cell phones at 9, 10. When I was growing up, you listened to adults. No respect. Kids 9, 10 cussing adults out. The family unit isn't anymore.

"I know it all".

- **[PROBE]** Rising prices (especially gas), employment, any inflation fears
- How did things get to this point?
- What direction do you think the economy will go from here – will it continue to get worse, will it start to get better, or will it continue at the current level?

3. Let's talk specifically about the war in Iraq...

- **[PROBE]** What are your feelings about our continued involvement over there?
 - **[EXPLORE]** Loss of American lives, cost, no plan or exit strategy, weaker at home

4. How about the growing violence in the Middle East?
 - What are the implications of this for the U.S. and the broader war on terror?
5. **[OLDER VOTERS AND SENIORS]** How about the new prescription drug program through Medicare? What are your impressions of that?

III. Associations (15 minutes)

1. Jeff Bingaman

Too long in office.

Same.

Same.

What does he do.

I think they've worked well together.

If it ain't broken, don't fix it.

If these guys are doing a good job and working together, it wasn't worth changing.

I believe it's like a business. It's not good to get a manager from in house.

But somebody's been there long enough, they know the ins and outs. . .

2. Bill Richardson

Mover and shaker.

Consummate politician. He'll do whatever it takes to do what he's got to get done. I think he's out more for his own agenda than people.

Doing a good job.

Good person, I've met him a few times.

3. Pete Domenici

Too long in office.

I'll agree.

Done a good job but it's time to move on.

4. Heather Wilson[**Extensive**]

Ugh.

Seen a lot of badmouthing on TV.

Mudslinging.

Always comes with elections.

I think she's done okay there.

She did help a veteran a while back. She got him in.

I think she did wll with the base closing.

Haven't really decided. She's done a good job.

5. Patricia Madrid [**Extensive**]

I don't know enough about her. Just what I've heard on the commercials.

I don't judge from those.

Just that she was Attorney General.

Not enough about her.

The guy before her you always knew what was going on.

She only really comes into the picture when it's a major trial. Really quiet until something major.

Strong enough?

Can't decide.

I don't know. I don't know if she has the experience.

I'd like to see more her stance on some issues. It'd be beneficial to make a decision.
I think I've only heard one positive commercial.

6. Congress

I believe in it as an institution. But we have people out for their own agendas. Too many bad things on the floor instead of important issues.

Let me see who I can make friends with rather than doing what's best for the public, you can do things for me. . . We'll go make a lot of money.

- Is the current Congress worse than in times past or is this just politics as usual?

I think it's politics as usual.

Worse. The economy, social issues, medical. . . It's made their job maybe more difficult. Since life is more complicated.

Even with voting, how come there's always problem.s

[Written Exercise – Handouts #1 and #2]

7. Now I'd like to talk specifically about George W. Bush.

- What good things come to mind when you think of Bush? **[Discuss]**

Didn't really write a whole lot. He started out good but he's really dropped.

Only thing I can really think of is retaliating for 9/11. going after UBL.

I can't find too many. He does what he can with what he has, as far as being controlled by big business.

Almost brought the senate together until he realized they were republicans and democrats. He's strong on Defense, you have to defend the country.

Keeping this country safe, his wife.

Got saddam out of power.

Funny when he's joking.

- What doubts do you have? What worries you about him? **[Extensive]**

I believe that as far as the president goes, he's gone as far as he can.

I put down he's a typical politician. He's very smooth, but how much is he really getting results.

I'm worried about his plans for the American people. We're so focused on overseas, we're not worried about here.

Totally agree with that. More focused on over there than here.

If he were able to run again, he wouldn't win.

IV. Election 2006 (20 minutes)

In a little more than three months, we will have elections for Congress, so let's talk about the upcoming elections now.

1. Are you more or less motivated to vote for Congress this year than in previous years?
Why?

Always motivated. Don't vote, don't have the right to be here.

About the same as past years.

■ **Probe on whether voting can help affect change**

Change the vote. Change things? No.

But it'll make you feel good.

All we can do.

No other issues that make you passionate about voting?

If they vote in liberal supreme court justices the country's going to pot.

2. For you personally, what is this upcoming election about? What is the most important factor that will determine how you vote for Congress?

What can you do for the economy. Those of us who can't afford to pay higher gas prices, I know that in Europe it's 5\$, but the housing issue — What is it economy-wise you can do for the people to raise their morale.

401k goes to pot.

Also health care and social security. You get that raise, and it goes to healthcare. It's hard to even be on a health care plan.

For me, it's education. Especially with NCLB, it's better to get a kid who doesn't really understand than to actually help them.

Same. Education, retirement, social security.

I'd like to see some politicians pushing alternative fuels. Solar, there's stuff out there. That'd be nice. Especially out here with the sun.

■ **Probe on personal traits, but push through to issues as well**

It's better to focus on the issues. I won't even vote for someone with the mudslinging.

A personality where you can relate to them, not so much that they're trying to do for you, but it'll benefit us.

Integrity.

3. So what are you hearing so far in this election? Have you heard anything from the candidates here in New Mexico, the candidates that you will be choosing from?

Bickering. Too much fighting.

Scandal,

Let's focus on the issues instead of past. . .

Just a lot of finger-pointing, personal they did this, that. Don't hear about too much their stances on issues.

To educate everybody instead of throwing mud.

A lot of times their intentions are good.

Once they get in office, they can't do what they want, too much red tape.
Only thing I really paid attention to was Madrid's commercial about delay.
We all agree about the mudslinging and facts, but obviously they work.

4. What are the Republicans talking about? Why do they say you should vote for a Republican for Congress?

The opponent has done all this — I have yet to see a real positive commercial for either side. Usually by now they'd have said that. It'll be a tough election. They say they're keeping us safe. I think what's sticking out in our minds is the mudslinging. It's repetition. Over and over, if they were to switch. . .

- Is this a compelling reason to vote Republican? Is it believable?
- As you know, the Republicans now have control of the White House, as well as both the House and the Senate. If Republicans maintain control of Congress, will anything change in Washington?

5. What are the Democrats talking about? Why do they say you should vote for a Democrat for Congress?

Republicans are failing in this war.
It's easy when it's going bad.
I think I've heard the Madrid ads talking about how she went after Vigil and all that. That's one I can remember.

■ Is this a compelling reason to vote Democratic? Is it believable?
Somewhat. At least she's going after people breaking the law. . . Regardless of where you are politically.
I see a lot of people hugging but after they're elected you don't see them here any more..

Iraq?

I never voted republican until bush, and never before. I hate to be party line, but I'm back to democrat.
I'm just looking for change. Good or bad, it's stagnant.

- If Democrats take back control of the House and/or the Senate, how will things be different in this country? What, if anything, will change in Washington?

- **Probe if there's any sense of sending Bush a message**

Change is imminent no matter what. For the better, I don't know.
We're at a standstill. Personally, I'm the only one working in my family, health care is killing me. Gas.
I don't know. It'd be nice to have some change. Never know where it's going to go.

Dems?

You can hope.
It goes back to what we said earlier. All politicians have an ulterior motive. If the Democratic party takes over, some things might change for Democrats, but locally the issues we as people care about probably won't change.

I'd like to see starting at the beginning for education.

Congress votes themselves a raise every year, teachers should. Make it worthwhile to have people invested in our kids.

Getting to the raise issue, you hear the Democrats saying republicans give themselves raises — they all do that. But the won't raise the minimum wage.

Message?

I think so.

Just voting for a party doesn't really show bush. . . It matters what a candidate stands for.

The status quo isn't what people are happy with.

If you saw him on TV the other night, he said I don't care who says what, we'll keep doing what we're doing. If he can't receive it now that his ratings are low, I don't know if voting for an opposite party will send him any type of message.

I don't believe sending a message to Bush will be good. . . he's not going to be president.

- What are the consequences if Republicans remain in power?
 - **Probe on Iraq, Social Security, gas prices, health care, any other concerns that have been raised**

V. Ad Testing (35 minutes)

[Written Exercise – Handouts #3-#8]

As many of you have probably seen already, everyone’s favorite part of the campaign season – the television ads – have already begun here in New Mexico. I’d like to show you some of these ads, and for each one, I’d like you to do two things:

First, rate how this ad makes you feel about your choice in this election on this scale (explain scale, shown below).

<i>More</i>										<i>More</i>
<i>Likely</i>					<i>No</i>					<i>Likely</i>
<i>Madrid</i>					<i>Diff</i>					<i>Wilson</i>
5	4	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	4	5

Then below that, in just a few words or phrases, tell me **in your own words** what this ad says to you – that is, if you were watching television at home and saw this ad, what would you take away from it?

Wilson corruption attack on Madrid

5W	4	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	4	5M
			2		6		1	1		

No difference.

No issues.
 Everybody makes mistakes.
 I’m not privy to the information, I don’t know what she did or didn’t do.
 Is what she’s saying true? I don’t know. . . just seeing this, I wonder what’s true.
 I read the article, it’s all she’s pointing out is everything she did bad as AG.
 Every guy likes a catfight, but they’ve gotta stop pointing out the other’s shortcomings. “they did wrong, they did wrong” What did you do?
 What it mainly is is they screwed up, it makes everyone look bad.
 I read the article, it’s not all Madrid it’s the Attorney General’s office.
 I lean toward Madrid only because there’s no issues, just mudslinging.
 I can’t respect somebody who all they want to tell you is how bad the other one is.

Madrid response

5W	4	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	4	5M
			1	1	1	1	4	2		

She defended herself.
 There wasn’t the strong mudslinging. Still pointed out what she’d done.
 Less negativity. Still attacking.
 Wasn’t as vicious.
 She’s just saying that Heather Wilson is being a politician.
Is it good she defended herself?

Yeah. She had to.

Just looking and thinking about it, she tries to add more integrity.

They're not talking about issues. It's just doubletalk.

For me, following that Vigil thing, she didn't come out until after the FBI.

- *Explore exhaustively*

Wilson 2nd corruption attack

5W	4	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	4	5M
			1	1	4	2	2			

I don't know what's true or untrue.

I haven't heard what you're going to do for us. Fingerprinting.

It was more vicious, swings me the other way.

I just wrote nothing positive. Makes it look bad for Wilson.

It takes away from Madrid if this is the truth, so I'd lean to Wilson.

Takeaway?

It makes Heather Wilson look like she's attacking too much.

I would think also that Heather Wilson's the incumbent, she has a track record she should be able to stand on.

Madrid energy/oil attack

5W	4	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	4	5M
				1	1	2	3	1	4	

Little more positive. Less finger pointing.

I want to see more issues, what they've done, can do, want to do.

Points out mistakes, what she's going to do to fix them.

Good job in that she talked about some issues.

A little bit of mudslinging.

What's she doing for you.

Believable?

No.

She's going to — there's too much opposition. If you really thought about the commercial, you'd have to go in there to see. . .

It just sounded believable.

She's willing to work for the state of New Mexico.

If she tries and doesn't succeed, at least she tried.

Chamber of Commerce for Wilson

5W	4	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	4	5M
		1	4	2	3					

Wilson

Talked about issues, her past record. No finger pointing, no. . .

Definitely a better ad. Good overall.

I don't think it was that good.

I liked the fact that they gave that address.

Takeaway?

First positive ad.
 Cares for seniors.
 Medical, sounds like she's working towards it in general.
 Everybody should have health care.
 I'm not old yet.

No difference?

I'm not old. Don't make a difference on my positions.
 I think a lot of the negative ads beforehand.

Madrid Special interests

5W	4	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	4	5M
					2	3	2	2		

I like the laws that she did get passed.
 Thing for me is that she stood on her record.
 What have you done, what will you do.
 Informative in a positive way.
 Started out okay until the name calling. That turned me off.
 He's the president regardless of Republican or Democrat, it's the highest office. Takes it back down.
 I put no difference. I was all for it until the jab.
 Making me more convinced voting for her. A little more positive.

Madrid Iraq

5W	4	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	4	5M
				3	2	1	2		1	

Wilson's?

We need to get beyond Iraq.
 It's just negative Wilson.

Madrids?

She pointed out how Wilson votes. She's not working for us, she's working for them, oil, bush.
 I gave it a 2. It just seems more — comes across as more credible.

For all ads:

- Show of hands, then discuss each one
- Explore paired ads, which is more effective

I see all these, I'd have to vote for Madrid. We don't know until we see the facts.
 Madrid should have something more to stand on.
 It makes me feel better about Heather Wilson, like there's a reason to try and knock her down.
 Madrid just seems more convincing.
 Makes me feel better about Patricia Madrid in general, I think change is good.

Wilson should have laid off the mudslinging.

VI. Election Debate (15 minutes)

Now I'd like to talk in more detail about a couple of specific issues and the role they will play in your decision making in this election.

TAX AND SPEND

1. You remember that one of the ads we watched tonight was about taxes, raising questions about the Democratic candidate's position on the issue of taxes. Let's watch it again, just as a reminder.

Democrats on taxes?

Want to cut them.

Republicans on taxes?

They want to cut them.

But they can't agree what to cut.

Who wants to cut what?

Democrats defense, republicans want to cut education.

Everyone says they're not cutting social security, but it's going down.

[Written Exercise – Handout #9]

2. We saw a couple Democratic responses to this ad. But now I'd like to look at what some other Democrats are saying about this. So flip to Handout #12 now. I'll read this message out loud, you follow along with me and then rate it, just as you did the ads we watched earlier.

Democrats say, Americans are struggling to keep up with the skyrocketing costs of gas, health care, and education. President Bush and Heather Wilson's economic policies have produced record deficits while giving away billions in tax cuts to their corporate backers and shifting the tax burden even further onto the middle class. We should repeal tax giveaways to companies that send jobs overseas and millionaires who don't need relief, and instead pass fiscally responsible middle class tax cuts: making college tuition tax deductible, tax credits for first-time homebuyers, and tax breaks for caregiving expenses on behalf of an aging parent.

■ Show of hands, then discuss

5W	4	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	4	5M
					4	1	3	1	1	

2s and 3s

Cost of living, it looks at whatever Democrats are going for. I want the military to be strong, but we've got to make a living too.

We should repeal. Whether it happens or not, it sounds nice.

Sounds believable. Taxes.

My wife is in college, tuition deductible would be a big difference. And my mom lives with us — that'd be great.

Keep jobs here.

SECURITY

[Written Exercise – Handout #10]

3. Now I want to talk about one other issue and see what candidates from both parties have to say. Again, I'll read them out loud, you rate them, and then we'll discuss. Let's start with the Republican candidate.

The Republican candidate says, we are making significant progress in Iraq. After holding three successful elections, there is now an Iraqi government with a new constitution, and a quarter of a million Iraqi troops are trained and equipped. But there is still more to do, and the United States can't afford to bail out on Iraq before we complete the mission. If we follow my opponent's advice to cut and run, al Qaeda will have a new terrorist haven in Iraq and the whole world will see that America doesn't have the stomach to fight the war on terror.

■ **Show of hands, then discuss**

5W	4	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	4	5M
					8	1	1			

Even if it's true, that's overseas. Just to go by this, I couldn't make a decision. Madrid's not the hinge that's going pull us out of Iraq. I find it hard to believe that anyone Democrat or Republican can make that big a difference. We're screwed either way. I'd like to see them come home.

[Written exercise – Handout #11]

4. Now, let's hear from a Democratic candidate.

The Democratic candidate says, we need to chart a new course in Iraq. Our military has done its job in Iraq, and it is now time for Iraqis to take control of their own future. But my opponent and President Bush offer no plan to end the war and are sending even more troops to an urban war zone in Baghdad. With over 2,500 Americans dead and 3 billion dollars a week going to a war that has no end in sight, we need a change in policy. We won't withdraw precipitously or allow terrorist elements to seize control, but we must begin a phased withdrawal of U.S. forces before the end of 2006.

■ **Show of hands, then discuss**

5W	4	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	4	5M
				1	4	1	1	2		

I just agree that they need to take control of their own lives. We need to figure out some way to get those people back. To me it sounds like a sensible plan. Just a little bit rushed.

It sounds good, but I don't see. . . It'd be nice to see it happen. There'll be a lot of death before anything happens.

For me it didn't work because — this is already planned. It's a planned thing. It's not her idea.

VII. Final Ballot (5 minutes)

[Written exercise – Handout #12]

1. Finally, I want you to choose, if the election were held today, which one you would vote for – based on everything we've discussed tonight. Circle which candidate you would choose, then briefly write why in the space below. **[Written only]**