

Focus Group Verbatims
August 22, 2006
South Bend, IN, IN-2
Non college women, 30-45
5 Kerry/4 Bush
5:45 pm

I. Introduction (10 minutes)

Sue: daughter in Florida with 2 grandkids, married
Jeanne: works for the county, married, son leaving for college
Elizabeth: work at supermarket, hairstylist, daughter
Tamara: 3 kids, work for the city, one on the way
BrendaLee: been here 3 years, 20 year old son and one-year old daughter
Wendy: daughter, married
Angela: 2 boys, single
Moriah: homemaker, 2 daughters, one on the way, married
Jennifer: 4 kids, including 2 year old

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**]
 - Wrong (all around)
 - Right for the oil companies
 - Wrong for most of us
 - If you have money, it's going better for you
 - I think it doesn't even matter – think we're all in the same boat
 - If you're a student, you're up a creek without a paddle. Education is costing more
 - It's a good investment
 - It is – but I don't know if it's going to be available to all soon
 - Definitely not available for the middle class – only for poor and super rich
 - Not poor enough to get benefits
 - Then the hard part is, they tell you to quit your job
 - I'm a homemaker, so with one income, have to be frugal, no extras
 - Try to help everyone else, and in return it comes back to you tenfold – but say where is it?
 - Medicare penalizes my husband for my paycheck – say wouldn't be penalized if were divorced
 - I know families that aren't married just so they can get help for their kids
 - You're better off being a single parent than being a married couple
 - You can only make so much money or then you won't get any help
 - Friend who works with mentally retarded – can't work over certain hours or else he's penalized. Just trying to live

When I was on welfare, they sent me to school to get my associates – feel great because are working, but society tells you you're bad

HOW DO YOU THINK THINGS GOT HERE

Greed – it's for the almighty buck

The jobs have gone to Mexico – there aren't the jobs that pay 20-25 anymore here.

Why should I send my child to college – can you guarantee that she'll make money when she gets out?

WHY ELSE?

Taxes have gone up, gas has gone up

I think the cost of living has gone up – I'll be super lucky if I get a 1% increase this year. So many corporations are backing the politicians...

Corporations are letting people go that have been there long term so they can hire someone to pay lower and there's no loyalty anymore. Everyone's fighting for their own job – trying to make ends meet and keep up

I lost my job in August of 2000, and wouldn't take those people that had been making \$9 an hour – just took those that made \$6. they shit on people

- What things are going right?
- What things are going in the wrong direction?

SO WHAT THINGS ARE GOING RIGHT AND WRONG?

Education

Especially with our government. The state is taking away money – are constantly cutting school budgets when education should be first priority.

What about the lottery – say they're going to funding, but haven't seen anything Health insurance. Most of my husband's paycheck is going to our health insurance.

He makes so much money that we barely get by, but can't get a grant for education so we can afford more

Everything's going in the wrong direction – cutting back in schools. Gym class is now twice a week and these kids sit on their butts. Get so worried about obesity – used to have gym everyday.

And they want to say it's because of the food...

- **Probe national direction vs. local direction**

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

- **[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?

SUE YOU MENTIONED THE MIDDLE EAST

I think it's totally wrong – don't see how it can possibly get better.

I think the foreign policy is so inconsistent. We're going to make Iraq a free country, but we're ignoring North Korea and what happened in Lebanon. I kind of agree with how we handled that – but why Iraq? Why is the focus there?

Oil

Well, I understand that, but what about other countries, like Venezuela, Africa? I think we're inconsistent and it's more of a personal issue

Do you think America is even aware of what we're trying to achieve?

Why are people starving in our country and we're still sending people over there

We're not addressing crime, hunger, education here, but billions are going somewhere else

I believe that we need to be there. If Clinton would have taken care of it, we wouldn't be there right now.

But maybe even before Clinton

i think there are many things, not just Bush

I think 9/11 pushed the envelope – we have to do something right now. But now it's been 5 years, and still pouring money into Iraq

We handled Katrina so poorly

What are we trying to accomplish – they're never going to be happy. It's inter-fighting

Heard about a survey about Vietnam veterans – used to say wanted to come home, but now, they want to do this on his own

Yeah, but what is he taking care of?

How are we going to make their lives better in Iraq. I don't think we've made their lives any better

I think the Iraqis do appreciate us over there

Throwing money over there doesn

I don't see anything getting built over there either

DO YOU THINK IT'S ACCURATE TO SAY IRAQIS ARE IN A CIVIL WAR

Very close

We understand what we think we do – I don't think we understand the factions of who's fighting. I don't think those that are directing things here understand. I don't know if it's a culture clash

See the media should come in and explain it to us

Tell me what's going on over there – what we're doing over there

WHAT DO WE NEED TO ACCOMPLISH?

Needs to be stabilized, and government needs to be ready to take it on their own

You see pictures of kids that look like us and they're against us
They're government needs to step up a bit
Maybe the people that are trying to live together, they should separate into sections
and live apart
They were made to live together under Hussein because he would just gas them
Now they have the freedom to say what they and so I see that in some situations,
would be more vocal and maybe more violent in getting what you want. Could be a
natural progression and with a stabilized force, it will run its course

- 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. Evan Bayh

Good looking man

Next president

Meet in person

2. Mitch Daniels

Best thing that's happened to Indiana – runs the government as a business

What about in a few years and the money he brought in now may be bad later

3. Dick Lugar

Old

Experienced

Indiana

Senator

Maybe the next president

4. Chris Chocola [**Extensive**]

I like him

Don't hear too much about him

Talks about wasteful spending, but sends out six fliers a month – provided by taxpayers

At least he's asking some questions on his surveys

Think he's trying to make a difference. Asking everyone their opinion

I don't care that he's paid his taxes late, I want to hear what you would do

I don't know

At least are saying what they want to do

Nothing stands out about Chocola

I don't see him a lot on TV unless Bush comes to town

5. Joe Donnelly [**Extensive**]

Saw him at the fair

Saw him at church the other night

He's unremarkable. Just there

Just don't know anything that makes these men a stand out

Waiting to hear what their issues are

I would love to see a debate between them – talk is cheap but want action

Both want to make the other guy look bad, but don't say what they want to do

6. Congress

Bunch of rich guys

Raises every year

Take vacations all the time

They'd die if they had to live on what we live on

They don't live by the basic guidelines that we live by

- Is the current Congress worse than in times past or is this just politics as usual?
I think they take a lot from the special interests – do a lot for these people
Again, it's the greed issue
Why can they give themselves a raise almost every year while we're scraping the barrel?
We can't get any assistance – make "too much money" – I live in a one bedroom trailer
I think it's worse because of the greed
And worse because they want to get re-elected

[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]**
Cannot run for next term
Strives to do good things, but things he says he wants to do get bottled by Congress
Strong Christian faith
Pretty blue eyes
Jokes that come from his speeches
His comeback on immigration is a good thing. If you're going to come to America, speak English
Immigrants can be the ones on welfare
And go to our schools and we have trouble paying for our own
- What doubts do you have? What worries you about him? **[Extensive]**
Too focused on oil
Completing his agenda before he leaves office
How about social security
Don't know what's going on with that. None of us are going to enjoy that
Maybe if he had a little more knowledge, wouldn't have to rely on others
Medicare plan B was a disaster – costs went up immediately. Health care costs continue to rise
Have no health insurance
My husband's company pays you not to take insurance
The gas prices – does he have anything to do with that?
You hear about him talking about getting ethanol and how in the end will cost more
I don't get why the more economical cars are more expensive
THINK HE COULD BE DOING SOMETHING ABOUT GAS PRICES?
Yes, require the companies to say what they are actually making. I can't tell you what he can do, but he can do something. Gas prices have tripled, but our minimum wage hasn't increased. Nothing's going up but our gas prices.
There's no way they're showing billions more in profits
Why can't we be producing more oil here ourselves?
Basically what's happening is price gouging. When a oil company can react to a world event, that's a little scary. Can't allow gas stations to charge \$5 a gallon, etc
The thing is though they basically help line the pockets

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?

More

I always vote

Whether it counts or not, I vote

WHY?

Want to get the Democrats in

Something's got to be done and my little vote might help

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

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

Economic issues are number one. Gas prices, social security, education

Too busy bad mouthing each other

That's why I want someone to say what they're going to do

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

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

Just negative stuff

Property tax ads

You're treated like an idiot – like you can't get the facts straight and they have to tell them to you. First ad that came out was the red handed ad. They rope you around in such circles that you just say why bother

Remember the negative ones

Helping seniors with their medical costs. Felt like he was a little out of touch

WHAT ABOUT DONNELLY?

All I know about Donnelly is that he's a businessman

Think he's a bully. Swung the first punch and don't want him in office

For them to say he hasn't paid his property taxes in years

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

I haven't seen much of a difference. They're both in the middle

Both are saying the same things, but none have a plan to say how they're going to change it

They're always bad mouthing – never this is what we want to do

As a woman, I don't care if there's a good politician or bad, if she's a woman, I'll vote for her. We're under-represented

No, it's the policy

I would like to know that there is someone here that's going to work for us

- 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?

Evan Bayh – I've heard a lot about small business and supporting them. It's kind of been his thing to support small business

- Is this a compelling reason to vote Democratic? Is it believable?
- 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?

That I'm worried about because Democrats usually tell you how to spend your money and don't trust you to spend your money right

Balancing the budget out of the Democrats

Doesn't seem to be a campaign

Whole campaign issue for Democrats is Iraq and what they can get out of us for other countries

Need smaller government to have control – outsourcing is such a problem

DO YOU THINK DEMS WOULD BRING A CHANGE?

Yes, want to bring different people in because need a change

When we started this country, we traded. Now it's the almighty dollar – people starving here and are paying people not to grow. Don't see it getting any better. The dollar only stretches so far

Instead of relying on the government have to rely on Larry Jones

Sit and make you cry at night watching the starving children

Whether it's democrat or Republican, can we get a diagram of what we'd like to have done. I feel ignorant sitting around – know you want change but it doesn't seem like it would matter one way or the other

How much money do we all pay in taxes? What are our taxes paying for?

We pay 22-26% out of our paychecks to taxes, but we are giving some of this money to those that are taking advantage of the system. Taking and taking and not giving anything back

Falls into give us a program to overhaul the system. I want to know how they can use our vote for something

- **Probe if there's any sense of sending Bush a message**
- 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-#11]

As many of you have probably seen already, everyone’s favorite part of the campaign season – the television ads – have already begun here in Indiana. 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>Likely</i>
<i>Donnelly</i>					<i>No</i>					<i>Chocola</i>
					<i>Diff</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?

Chocola tax attack on Donnelly

3’S, 4’S AND FIVES?

Are being taxes to death already, don’t want more. With democrats in the House, taxes will go up. Always been that way, will be that way

If I was going on that ad and it’s honest, I would be more for Donnelly

I did 5 for Chocola, just so tired of everything being taxed. Don’t really know what he means, but tired of being taxed

They target certain groups that should be the last of those taxed

Like Wendy said, we’re going to get taxed anyway, and would like something visual if are going to be taxed.

Accusing of him raising taxes, but doesn’t say what he’s going to do

Chocola tax attack		
Donnelly	5	0
Donnelly	4	0
Donnelly	3	1
Donnelly	2	0
Donnelly	1	1
	0	1
Chocola	1	1
Chocola	2	0
Chocola	3	3
Chocola	4	1
Chocola	5	1

DCCC big oil attack on Chocola

Gas prices really hit home and stated the sources

Yeah, that was a good one

WHY?

Again, negative, but it showed his record, so not saying that Donnelly is going to help prices, but it made me mad. In this case I'm voting against someone, not for someone, which I don't like but...

Oil prices really affect my 8 person family

OTHERS WHO LIKED IT?

The facts and stated sources. They were right there, made me not want to vote for Chocola

In my mind, Republicans are always for big business

Makes me want to defend Chris Chocola because want to ask what we got back in return

Says Chris Chocola does this, but what about Donnelly – bashing this guy, but what does he do?

- *Explore exhaustively*

DCCC big oil attack		
Donnelly	5	0
Donnelly	4	1
Donnelly	3	3
Donnelly	2	2
Donnelly	1	0
	0	1
Chocola	1	1
Chocola	2	0
Chocola	3	1
Chocola	4	0
Chocola	5	0

Chocola positive on cutting taxes

4'S AND 5'S?

First thing I noticed is that Chocola is saying he's there and that he's looking out for us

Finally someone that says what they want to do

Tell us what you want to do, have done and are going to do without tearing down the other person

Children, veterans or seniors weren't mentioned

What he's done and will do, try to accomplish

I think our country needs to start voting for candidates instead of voting against candidates. May get change but not exactly what you want

Chocola positive		
Donnelly	5	0
Donnelly	4	0
Donnelly	3	0

Donnelly	2	0
Donnelly	1	0
	0	0
Chocola	1	2
Chocola	2	1
Chocola	3	2
Chocola	4	2
Chocola	5	2

DCCC Hostettler pay raise/troops

WHY 4'S?

Because I live in America and I stand behind my Americans

Feel it's dishonest and is only for himself – be a leader and not for yourself

Greed

3?

Don't think there should be any more money to support government officials that already make much more than the average Joe

Don't support those that put their lives on the line and you get a raise and can't give them \$1500

If they can't support the troops then why would they want to even give themselves a pay raise. Have a heart they do not make a lot of money

I want to know who these people are that support these ads

DCCC Hostettler pay raise		
Donnelly	5	0
Donnelly	4	2
Donnelly	3	4
Donnelly	2	0
Donnelly	1	1
	0	1
Chocola	1	0
Chocola	2	0
Chocola	3	1
Chocola	4	0
Chocola	5	0

- *Explore exhaustively*
- *Gauge differences in reactions to Donnelly and Elsworth ads*

MoveOn Red Handed on Chocola

START WITH MOVED TOWARD DONNELLY?

Very negative toward the situation, makes me want to vote for the other guy.

I just don't know if I heard it right – did he say he was against contracts for Halliburton?

Said he took money from defense companies and didn't vote against them

WHY NO DIFFERENCE?

Why is there a vote – why isn't there a judge and jury?

I don't really give MoveOn.org a lot of credibility – over the top. Groups like this I think they feed you what they want you to hear

MoveOn Red Handed		
Donnelly	5	1
Donnelly	4	1
Donnelly	3	1
Donnelly	2	0
Donnelly	1	0
	0	4
Chocola	1	0
Chocola	2	0
Chocola	3	1
Chocola	4	0
Chocola	5	1

Chocola response

AFTER YOU LOOK AT THIS, WITH HALLIBURTON, WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ABOUT CHRIS CHOCOLA AFTER ALL THIS?

That he approves of them – it's in the newspaper

A lot of proof against Donnelly

Wasn't so much that he was completely attacking Donnelly, but at least he was defending what others were saying about him

He's done his research, makes you want to believe him

ANYTHING ELSE?

Yes, I think it's the same ad that ran earlier, but just added a few things

As these go on, I get more and more undecided

Chocola response		
Donnelly	5	0
Donnelly	4	0
Donnelly	3	0
Donnelly	2	0
Donnelly	1	0
	0	2
Chocola	1	1
Chocola	2	0
Chocola	3	2
Chocola	4	1
Chocola	5	3

Chocola late tax payments attack on Donnelly

Who cares about paying property taxes on time – making something out of nothing
 And, if you pay late, you're paying a penalty anyway
 Where did this newspaper come from?

Chocola late tax payments		
Donnelly	5	0
Donnelly	4	0
Donnelly	3	1
Donnelly	2	0
Donnelly	1	0
	0	6
Chocola	1	0
Chocola	2	0
Chocola	3	1
Chocola	4	0
Chocola	5	1

Donnelly late tax response

It was just a response ad. Copycat – just show me the proof
 Makes you want to figure out more on the outsourcing
 Just about the jobs
 But outsourcing goes all the way to higher government
 YOU SAW LOTS OF ADS ON TAXES. IN THE END, DO YOU THINK YOUR
 TAXES WOULD GO UP IF DONNELLY WERE YOUR CONGRESSMAN?
 (half) yes
 (half) no
 Either way they're going to go up
 DO YOU THINK CHOCOLA MADE A STRONG CASE AGAINST DONNELLY?
 Yes
 AND DID DONNELLY MAKE YOU THINK CHOCOLA IS WRONG?
 No
 But they're accusing him of saying he'll vote – will he?
 DO YOU THINK THAT CHOCOLA AND CONGRESS ARE TOGETHER, OR IS
 UNIQUE AND STANDS AWAY FROM CONGRESS
 Believe he is for us – he's the only one that says what he wants to do
 He's here for the parades, he's here walking the streets
 I want to know that he's working for me in Washington, but I want to see him here
 THINK HE'S PART OF THE PROBLEM?
 Definitely a Congressman
 I'm wondering if one really makes a difference at all
 Can go ahead and research Chocola's vote, but can't check out Donnelly

Donnelly late tax response		
Donnelly	5	0
Donnelly	4	0

Donnelly	3	2
Donnelly	2	0
Donnelly	1	1
	0	5
Chocola	1	0
Chocola	2	0
Chocola	3	1
Chocola	4	0
Chocola	5	0

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.

[Written Exercise – Handout #12]

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 Chris Chocola'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.

Handout 12		
Donnelly	5	0
Donnelly	4	3
Donnelly	3	3
Donnelly	2	0
Donnelly	1	0
	0	2
Chocola	1	0

Chocola	2	1
Chocola	3	0
Chocola	4	0
Chocola	5	0

WHAT IN THIS STATEMENT STANDS OUT FOR DONNELLY?

All want to live in a perfect world, so it stands out

DO YOU BELIVE IT?

Well, maybe – want to see these things happen

We should do this

These make sense, and there should be other tax breaks too

But you have to pay for those tax breaks – just like how George Bush gave us all his money back. So that means taking away the tax breaks for those that don't need them and taking benefits from those that don't need them

This is just hearing what you want to hear and listening to this is like going back to the little kid running for class president

- **Show of hands, then discuss**

SECURITY

[Written Exercise – Handout #13]

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.

Handout 13		
Donnelly	5	0
Donnelly	4	0
Donnelly	3	0
Donnelly	2	0
Donnelly	1	0
	0	5
Chocola	1	0
Chocola	2	1
Chocola	3	2
Chocola	4	0
Chocola	5	1

Just don't like cut and run thing. It scares me
 Think what we did, going over there, was right, so just wonder when we're getting out.
 Not real sure about the Iraq thing
 If the Republicans can say this, why can't the Democrats? Can't they stand together?
 I think these are fantastic statements, so why can't we just cross out Republicans or Democrats?

■ **Show of hands, then discuss**

[Written exercise – Handout #14]

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.

Handout 14		
Donnelly	5	3
Donnelly	4	1
Donnelly	3	0
Donnelly	2	0
Donnelly	1	2
	0	2
Chocola	1	0
Chocola	2	0
Chocola	3	0
Chocola	4	1
Chocola	5	0

WHY MOVED TOWARD DONNELLY?

Can't let it go on indefinitely.

Need to let them take over. Have had three elections and troops ready to go. It's their future so need to let them take control

Need a statement on how to fix this

Need to step back and let them build their infrastructure from the inside

Makes the community sustainable again

REPUBLICAN STATEMENTS SAYS STAY, DEMOCRATS SAY LEAVE – WHICH ARE YOU MORE WORRIED ABOUT?

Republicans will stay too long

I'm opposite – think they would cut and run and put us in a worse position than we are

Already worn out our welcome

■ Show of hands, then discuss

VII. Final Ballot (5 minutes)

[Written exercise – Handout #15]

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]**