

**Focus Group Guidelines**  
**October 5, 2006**  
**Brandenton, FL**  
**FL-13**  
**Men**  
**3 Kerry voters – 5 Bush voters**

**I. Introduction** (10 minutes)

- Confidentiality
- Mirrors, audio and videotapes
- Respondent introductions

Aaron: from Chicago. I'm separated

Bernard: originally from Illinois. Married, works a lot

Charlie: Retired NY city fireman. Have my hands full with 2 kids

Doug: New Jersey, retired, have part time job

Ed: been here for 10 years

Frank: born and raised in Florida. Seeking employment.

Gary: Just retired.

Hank: Transplant from Montréal.

**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 direction

We are in chaos right now

No one seems to have a direction. A lot has not been taken care of with our fuel situation and what is going on over seas. Something needs to be done. We need to make it right.

I think George and company know exactly what they are doing, and I don't think they care. They really don't care about the average citizen. It's just another Vietnam. we are wasting our money.

We will get out, we can't keep that up. Especially when the situation is getting worse. Especially when you have social reengineering. Saddam Hussenin understood his people

Same thing as Vietnam is happening here. We have no idea what to do. Someone is making money

Same with the oil. How do you account for it suddenly going down.

I think that the government has lost focus. They are trying to solve the world's problems. My sense as a middle class citizen is that we got forgotten by the government. The world's industrial countries are modernizing their industries and we are getting our butt's kicked

I worked for Morgan Stanley's and retail are making a lot of money but are not investing into system

We had to do what we had to do. It seems that it has lost balance. I am worried more about my kids than out pockets. I feel helpless and that there is not much I can do about it. I scare about nuclear explosions in any city of the US. That's what worries me, security. More than money.

If we didn't go to Iraq and stopped what we stopped. How many 9/11s there would have been? I think we are slowly heading in the right direction.

#### WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN IN IRAQ?

We are trying to get a government in there, but that will take time. They need to be a democracy  
They want to kill

Not every person on Iraq wants to kill

They leave to die

Absolutely not, going backwards. In stead of minding our own business we are worried about them over there. But it goes above and beyond that.

As a day trader stock trader myself, I don't think nobody realizes the future market has on oil prices. They can manipulate that market.

#### HOW ABOUT HEALTH CARE?

I had my pay for health care, and that was a discounted program and it was a lot of money. Was unbelievable.

I still keep what I had, but it is a lot of money.

Well, I'm retired with my benefits and it comes out of my pay check.

Years ago you worked for a company and there was no problem. Now they give you an insurance but if you have more than x amount of kids you have to pay off your own pocket.

I have a decent job, but I pay \$150 a month. My pension didn't go up, but my insurance went up.

I know a lot of people my age that don't have health insurance. And you have to be really poor or really rich. And if you are really poor you get it for free.

I worked for a pharmaceutical and the reason they retired me is because they do it cheaper for Mexico. I think it is really unfair that they get people come here legally and illegally getting food stamps and benefits. The wages are so low in Florida and nothing is cheaper here in Florida than in New Jersey. It's the same cost.

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

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

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

- **[PROBE]** Rising prices (especially gas and health care), 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; war on terrorism

4. **[OLDER VOTERS AND SENIORS]** How about the new prescription drug program through Medicare? What are your impressions of that?

**III. Associations** (25 minutes)

1. Charlie Crist

The problem is that I don't know any of these people

Better than the alternative

Republican

Office

Describes all politicians

Fight for the gas. This time the gas went up and he had nothing to say about it.

Jeb is patting him on the back for everything.

They turn him down and companies are going everywhere

2. Jim Davis

Don't know much about him

Do you know what he is running for?

His commercials, he talks about his campaign and the other guys

3. Bill Nelson

Congressman

Senator

Republican

4. Katherine Harris

Insurance in the pocket

She is the republican running against nelson who is the democrat

Trust, it started from the voting fiasco of Bush over Gore. It was done so poorly.

Bad publicity, but don't know much about her.

5. Vern Buchanan [**Extensive**]

Car dealer. He owns 2 car dealerships.

We are not paying it

I just know the name, because he did some work on the properties

He had some success

You can't blame the guy, he's done very well

He doesn't pay taxes like me

When you say something on international or national television., you'd better be right

Look at Foley. You think he is going to go to jail for being a pervert?

Look at George W

I saw the ads that he didn't pay his taxes. That's all I know. True or not.

I don't know much about him.

6. Christine Jennings [**Extensive**]

Congress

I was usually conservative republican. I'm impressed with Buchanan's credentials is that he is a

strong businessman. I don't know much about Jennings and usually don't vote democratic.

Lesser of 2 evils.

I saw the ads, but I don't know much about her record.  
Haven't been able to have enough information about what her positions really are  
Haven't heard the name  
Good campaigns they run. Boy! Nobody knows who they are.

#### 7. Congress

Thieves  
Encircled with machine guns  
Confusion. It's confusing to try to pay attention to what they say. I don't consider myself an ignorant person, but it's confusing  
There is no one to blame but ourselves. We put them there  
They are all paid. they vote themselves a raise. I don't think congress is doing much  
They waste so much time and money and could be made so much easier

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

Same, is like a revolving door.

Things have gotten so thick with the committees. They clean their BS

#### WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT BEING IN WASHINGTON SO LONG?

Pay offs

They are bought and paid for. They are not acting on their own. They've got a boss and they have to listen.

Congress doesn't pay into social security because they have a different retirement plan that will be pay for their retirement and their wives. Want to do something about social security? Do something about congress and what they are being paid.

#### 8. [IF NOT MENTIONED IN PREVIOUS DISCUSSION], Mark Foley [**Extensive**]

- What does the Foley case say about Congress?

Pervert

He got caught

Obviously, I think he is perverted

And the rehab center will cure him

- What does the Foley case say about Republicans in Congress?

Next day the lawyer said, well he was molested, and he is now recovering. Poor Foley.

Now there are 2 or 3 other ones that knew about it. You got 2 extremes. They are not policing each other.

Too much time on their hands. If they are looking at porn they have too much time with taxpayers money. It's not just republicans, it's everywhere.

I think the 2 party systems is old. It just draws a line and makes it hard for people to cross party lines.

#### DOES THE FOLEY CASE IMPACT WHAT YOU THINK ABOUT THE ELECTION?

Doesn't make me think any better than other congressmen who have too much time in their hands

We only have a couple more weeks here, we want to find out what is going on

They cover it up because they are friends. And now they got caught,. They knew about it and they didn't report it. It's like the priests, same thing.

#### [Written Exercise – Handouts #1 and #2]

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

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

He stopped drinking after ultimatum from his wife and s very religious

He's done a good job to protect the country. Strong willed, stands by his Christian believes

He is a strong leader

He has a strong will. He truly believes what he is doing. He thinks he is right and frankly it takes a lot of balls to do what he did

Family values. Initial goals are good but he lacks the follow up

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

He's lost touch with the common man and middle class

Talks about cutting taxes and increase spending. Can't do both

He's more concerned about the rich than the middle class.

Inability to admit he was wrong about his war in Irak and inability to get the troops back ever

#### IV. Election 2006 (20 minutes)

In less than two months, we will have elections for Congress, so let's talk about the upcoming elections now.

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

The public has a chance to give republicans a non confidence vote with this scandals and the war. I'm not happy. The situation has changed, we don't have enough troops. The troops to finish the job don't exist and they will have to pull the draft

Our side, their side. I believe Iraq has to evolve. It's just that, nobody wants to get drafted. I don't want to go, but people who are electing to go into service, are going to get killed more easily if that's not out there

The American public is with the congress. They are trying to secure their positions. And a lot of republicans are concerned about this election and they really wished they were down with Iraq. Just the republicans keeping the majority, that's my concern that they will keep the seats. I almost rather see a heavy controlled congress that whether it's right or wrong it gets something done

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

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

All bashing

All the negative

Commercials run back to back. This guy's commercial says how bad the other one is and then we listen to the other one

Nobody knows any more

People are fed up with republicans. We've got to change directions. Bush will never change. We'd be there for ever if he was in the white house. They are not going to change

#### ■ Stay focused on House race

3. Let's talk about the Republicans and the elections for Congress in November.

- When thinking about your vote, what reasons are there to vote for the Republicans?

Conservative values. If a hurricane hits, we would all fend for ourselves. Try to raise your own family with no hand outs. You protect the country you leave in starting with borders.

Last year Katrina, took the government days to go there and help them.

- And what holds you back from voting for the Republicans?

Social security issue, and all the senate that voted against having English the American language. They are all democrats. What are you going to make it Spanish? Do you all want to learn Spanish?

The more I read, the more I become apprehensive about reelecting what we have.

There are things that will hold me back from voting democrat. But right now there are no things that hold me back from voting republican.

Conservative values is what republicans stand for. But they are trying to please too many people. For me the labels are conservative and liberals.

- 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**

4. Now, let's talk about the Democrats and the elections for Congress in November.

- When thinking about your vote, what reasons are there to vote for the Democrats?

None. Lack of self education to vote either way.

They'll be new in the office. It'll take them at least a few years to get organized and start accumulating the money

My dad always said democrats are good people. They have the right reasons.

Change.

- And what holds you back from voting for the Democrats?
- 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?

I don't know, but there will be change. It will just be different.

They will be against the republican president. If I vote democrat, I would vote to an independent Democrat that is in the conservative side to replace a republican that has done nothing

Is there someone that is going to offer something different?

I see democrats like. put me on office, I'll take care of you with food stamps. all kind of benefits that we have to work for. and they don't want to work. -- they want to get everything for free.

**V. Ad Testing** (40 minutes)

**[Written Exercise – Handouts #3-#10]**

As many of you have probably seen already, everyone’s favorite part of the campaign season – the television ads – have already begun here in Florida. 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>Jennings</i>					<i>Diff</i>					<i>Buchanan</i>
<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

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?

<b>Buchanan Tax Attack</b>	
5 Jennings	
4 Jennings	
3 Jennings	
2 Jennings	
1 Jennings	
0	1
1 Buchanan	11
2 Buchanan	11
3 Buchanan	11
4 Buchanan	
5 Buchanan	1

I have this very positive toward him. The impression is that he is honest and is going to help America. Same thing. For working class. I guess I believe it now.  
 If you vote for Jennings you are going to get more taxes. But then again you never know. Obviously, if it was her commercial she could do the same thing and you can switch around. They don’t tell you who is who.  
 They assume you know.  
 I think they ought to put more consideration into the party and not individuals.

<b>Jennings Trust Contrast</b>	
5 Jennings	1
4 Jennings	
3 Jennings	1
2 Jennings	
1 Jennings	111
0	11
1 Buchanan	1
2 Buchanan	
3 Buchanan	
4 Buchanan	
5 Buchanan	

Based on that commercial it came across well. They portray her as being honest that will lower taxes. And Mr. Buchanan not paying his taxes for a number of years.  
 It was her commercial and it was the same positive negative as Buchanan. I believe the Buchanan attack that I've heard in the past. She put in there that she is a fiscal conservative, but she is a democrat? But I like that. That is the old democrat, not the liberal democrats.  
 She is going to raise the taxes to get these things accomplished.  
 She is going to increase taxes because she is a democrat

<b>Buchanan Bio</b>	
5 Jennings	
4 Jennings	
3 Jennings	
2 Jennings	
1 Jennings	
0	
1 Buchanan	
2 Buchanan	
3 Buchanan	111
4 Buchanan	11
5 Buchanan	111

Strong values, great for the community, strong moral character  
 There wasn't a slam against the opponent.  
 Great family man, has been married 29 years.  
 I guess Buchanan is an outstanding member of the community and worked himself from the bottom. Will do a good job in congress.  
 The family values  
 That's a good ad. No mud sliding  
 I like the fact that his wife stayed home to raise the kids  
 In stead of sending emails  
 He is hard working, for family values, should be a good asset.

<b>Jennings Bio</b>	
5 Jennings	
4 Jennings	1
3 Jennings	
2 Jennings	1
1 Jennings	1
0	111
1 Buchanan	
2 Buchanan	1
3 Buchanan	
4 Buchanan	1
5 Buchanan	

She was self reliance and a success in her field, if she wanted could help congress  
 The commercial conveyed that she is strong enthusiastic. She is going to clean up the mess? Is she going to show up with a vacuum cleaner?  
 She started as bank teller and then a bank president and helped millions in the community  
 No difference, I don't think she'll clean the mess.  
 I think that she proofed herself as a financial responsible person. Cares about the communities.  
 You would think that she would bring in a family  
 At least a cat  
 Is she married?  
 We don't know if she is married  
 She is too busy doing her campaign.

<b>NRCC Security Attack on Bruce Braley</b>	
5 Jennings	
4 Jennings	
3 Jennings	
2 Jennings	
1 Jennings	
0	1
1 Buchanan	
2 Buchanan	
3 Buchanan	111
4 Buchanan	111
5 Buchanan	1

This guy is a communist. Endorsed by the communist party. Come on!  
 It was so negative and all it talks about was negative about that candidate. It was so negative that it brought me back to neutral. It's so off the top.  
 Talk about mud sling!  
 To me he is a communist

<b>Bruce Braley Iraq Position</b>	
5 Jennings	1
4 Jennings	
3 Jennings	111
2 Jennings	111
1 Jennings	1
0	
1 Buchanan	
2 Buchanan	
3 Buchanan	
4 Buchanan	
5 Buchanan	

Support out troops even though he wants to bring them back.  
 I feel safe. Says to bring the troops home that I'd like to see  
 Seems that he was defending himself to defend of what is being said about him earlier. To me it didn't sound honest at all. It was all crap.  
 No candidate is going to say they are not supporting our troops. But he said his opinion.  
 Don't believe what they say  
 Is the first person to say that wants to bring the money back and spend in our own country where we really need the help.  
 Good positive ad that needs more effects. Makes the other candidate look bad. but there weren't enough facts.

<b>O'Donnell Immigration</b>	
5 Jennings	
4 Jennings	
3 Jennings	
2 Jennings	
1 Jennings	
0	
1 Buchanan	
2 Buchanan	
3 Buchanan	1
4 Buchanan	
5 Buchanan	111111

I like the way they stated the other candidate's position and what he wants to do – without mud sliding.  
 The association with Ted Kennedy  
 They kept what his political views are. Not if he didn't pay taxes.  
 Convincing commercial, to the point on important issues  
 He is going to protect our borders and the other guy wants to give money to illegal  
**HOW IMPORTANT IS IMMIGRATION?**  
 Very

Very

Takes jobs away

That's why we retire. It is cheaper to hire them. It is all about corporations

Where I work in citigroup 80% are Hispanic and they speak Spanish all day long. You would think that in a place of business they would speak English

The biggest business in Mexico is sending back money from the US

<b>Ed Perlmutter Stem Cell Position</b>	
5 Jennings	
4 Jennings	
3 Jennings	11
2 Jennings	1
1 Jennings	
0	11
1 Buchanan	
2 Buchanan	
3 Buchanan	
4 Buchanan	111
5 Buchanan	

I'm a cancer patient and I think it is important.

I am a diabetic and I think the same thing

Other countries in the world are doing stem cell research, and we are not doing it

Bush can block government funding, but that is all he can do.

You are killing a baby. That's OK? Are you going to allow that?

Didn't have much information other than stem cell research. Yes, it is important, but there are other issues.

Didn't impress me either way.

Who is going to aid? People crossing that fence or people in the united states?

Tell me more about what you are going to do. What are you going to do about it?

<b>Pay raise</b>	
5 Jennings	
4 Jennings	1
3 Jennings	
2 Jennings	1
1 Jennings	
0	1
1 Buchanan	11
2 Buchanan	111
3 Buchanan	
4 Buchanan	
5 Buchanan	

Why 7.25? He is not raising high enough and the other reason is that I don't believe he won't take a pay rise until the minimum wage is up.

He can actually have an effect.

What is he going to do? Help illegals more with 7.25 an hour

He is going to put some businesses out

We'll get more Mexican illegals

It is insulting people's intelligence.

It is an attempt to raise the minimum wage

**For all ads:**

- **Show of hands, then discuss each one**
- **Explore takeaways**
- **Which of these ads addresses what is important in the election?**
- *Probe on takeaways: do Republican tax and immigration attacks hold you back from the Democrat? Are you concerned about Democratic Congress?*

**VI. Final Ballot (5 minutes)**

**[Written exercise – Handout #11]**

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]**