

Focus Group Guidelines
October 5, 2006
Brandenton, FL
FL-13
Group 1 - Women
5 Bush voters – 4 Kerry voters

I. Introduction (10 minutes)

- Confidentiality
- Mirrors, audio and videotapes
- Respondent introductions

Alisa: 3 kids

Beth: 2 kids

Caryn: 2 girls, one granddaughter

Dana: I'm a mother and grandmother

Elle: mother of 4, medical assistant

Fay: 2 teenagers

Gina: I'm an artist

Holly: I like to scuba dive when I don't have to baby sit.

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.

Me too.

There is too much stuff that is sliding under the carpet. And a lot of things that are not being told

We need to start looking at our people in our own country. The homeless in Florida alone have

grown. Some of them are veterans that we should be looking after

Some of them are Katrina victims.

We should be taking care of them.

I think it is going in no direction. The things that we hear that are bad, are things that happened

20 years ago, but nobody knew. I think we are not going on any direction.

We need to take care of our own people and we need to defend our country too. So I am kind of

in the middle there,

I still think it's going in the right direction. In stead of sitting back and not doing anything, they are trying to do something.

LIKE WHAT?

Like the war on terror. If they leave they are just going to keep on trying to destroy our country.

We can't do what we did before that. We threw the country upside down and then we left. This is going to take a while.

I heard that terrorism, homelessness...

I think the fact that we are losing our freedoms and our liberties. People go out of their way to take the word God out of the pledge of alliance. But who cares? I think it's disgusting that this guy. What's his name? They are hiding it and he was a pedophile first.

HAS ANYBODY ELSE HEARD ABOUT THE FOLEY CASE?

I don't believe we are going against the people that did 9/11. I don't believe any person had the right to do that to a child.

They are all human. There's got to be some really perverted people in those fields.

OK, he is a pedophile, but he is a pedophile with a political attachment and the fact that a whole office knew.

A kid totally ruined for that. That's a life time issue.

WHAT DOES IT SAY ABOUT CONGRESS?

It is so corrupt. I don't think I am voting any more. Because they are all crooks.

It seems that it was such a bad cover up. And they are not watching their own very well. It should leave it open to the possibilities that I don't believe everything I see

Everybody knew about it and it should have been taken care of

WHAT DOES IT SAY ABOUT REPUBLICANS?

It's both. It's every field somebody is doing what they are not supposed to do and others are covering up. There is always going to be something. This guy was caught, but that should be everywhere. The government represents our country and there are pedophiles in our country.

DOES THIS MAKE YOU MORE OR LESS LIKELY TO VOTE?

This is going to make me more likely to vote. And to do research.

I am completely changing my political positions. I am thinking of Bush as the anti Christ.

DID FOLEY AFFECT HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT THE ELECTION?

Not at all.

No, because...

I am thinking I will not participate in the vote any more. I am trying not to listen to the news any more because it is so frustrating. I just don't want any part of it on my life.

- 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?

Gas prices are lower.

They say that the economy. All I know as a mother of 2, I have never received so much money in any context before. It seems like is going better, now that gas prices are going down. To me, it's not getting worse.

Interest rates are starting to go up.

Too many people work too hard for too little money.

GAS PRICES, WILL THEY GO UP OR DOWN?

That depends on the election.

I don't get paid by the hour. If I don't work, I don't do any money. I gradually noticed that things are picking back up.

You can see a difference in traffic, it's more steady.

There is a lot younger crowd moving down. What they call the baby boomers now. There is a lot younger generations doing this their home. Not waiting for retirement.

Pay is not going anywhere, but prices are...prices of houses

Even if they are working, they are not making any money

- **[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...

As much as I don't like it, I have a teenager that has friends that are now enlisted. I don't like it, but now we're there. We got in there an whether I agree on that or not, we are there. We need to come up with guides to get out and then leave.

We need to set some goals. We have to meet ABC and then we can get out. There needs to be goals and I think we should know about them. Bush is out president and he needs to make us aware of what the goals are and so that we see we've checked this and that

I have a hard time because I see all the kids over there. I hated the last war and I hate it more now.

I don't know why it is taking so long. It doesn't make sense.

It's been televised and we have not seen that before on your face

We have to teach them to protect themselves so that they can get out of there and the only way is to help them protect themselves.

- **[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?

HOW ABOUT HEALTHCARE?

I have to make a choice. Do I feed my family or do I get to go to the dentist?

When we retire I don't know if social security is going to be there.

Basically, when I was working full time, I try to get Medicaid and they tell me I make too much money. Now I had to quit my job because Medicaid won't cover my hip surgery.

I am happy to see some part of the health initiative to help the elderly. We've got kids on one end and the parent you have to worry about on the other end. My mother was a nurse and nearly couldn't retire because her prescriptions. But Medicare part D seems to be helping her.

We are an over medicated society. People need to stop thinking there is a pill you can take for everything

5. **II. Associations** (25 minutes)

1. Charlie Crist
Governor, republican
Is he cute? For his age

2. Jim Davis
I don't know

3. Bill Nelson
The one that has not cut his hair
Is he the one that doesn't take more than \$100 in Campaign contributions?
I don't think I like him

4. Katherine Harris
Oh god!
Bitch
Crook
Liar
I don't keep up
She is the one that couldn't count the votes in the presidential re vote
She treats her staff really badly
They all spend a lot of money cutting the other ones down,
Don't you love the 'I approve this message'?

5. Vern Buchanan [**Extensive**]
I've seen his posters
I just know his name
Is he married?
I think there was a scandal with him of some sort before the election
It is just another name on a poster.
He has a lot of posters

6. Christine Jennings [**Extensive**]
Running against
Isn't she the one that started as a thank teller
She is the one that...probably the less of two evils
I just don't like her. I see the ads and don't like her. I don't like how she voted on certain things
The name is as far as it is
She is running against Buchanan. For congress?

7. Congress
The Foley scandal
Men
The senate
It's going to be a new house. There is a lot going on. The guys who new are as responsible as the
guy who did it. We should take them all out. Wouldn't have happened if they were women

I'm sick of it. There is more reason to vote and change the perspective on the way you vote. We are losing our liberties and freedoms. We cannot see that now.

Pretty good job when you think of it

Corruption, those people are paid. There is always a higher power and those people are paid for somebody else.

Lobbyists

SOME PEOPLE SAY THEY HAVE BEEN THERE TOO LONG?

People who are there for too long, they are just not...

It's like a hamster in a cage over and over

I think that they also can get tired of the same thing

People should change their job within 5 years.

All the little corruptions in there and so easy over time they can lose focus and the inside step in the way.

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

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

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

[**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 is from Texas

When he believes in something he fights for it

He is a Christian. if you chose to believe that, it is a good thing

He cares an awful lot

He is able to separate his emotions from his responsibility. Tries to run the country as a business.

He tries, speech impediment or whatever, he tries to rally people.

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

Honesty, faithfulness, sincerity, the goals. Like the way he is persistent, the same go getter mentality.

I don't think he has a direction to the war. I don't think he knows where he goes with it.

He seems to trust his advisors a little too much.

The weapons that were supposed to be in Iraq

I don't think he reaches his goals because he says one thing but there is someone else making the decision the whole group in congress make the decision, not just that one person

I don't think he'll be able to finish the war on terror before he gets out of congress. He doesn't believe in stem cell research.

Our social security is not going anywhere. My nephew told me that costs us 3 cents to make a penny. The future of health care, everyone should be able to go to the doctor and the dentist and the eye doctor.

They all want to sell you the best drugs in the market

They get a big kick back.

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?

Our children's safety.

Our future as Americans is at stake. Which direction are we going?

I haven't there is no specific thing. I definitely, I'm concerned that someone is going to penalize me for being married or having children. I remember that tax credit was going to pay my house when the check was coming after Christmas. And I don't think we should be penalized for that.

■ 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?

The day before I look at the paper and what the person's believes are. What they agree and disagree on.

Wow, I know that at least for me. I am not like the government poking their nose on my business.

I would be looking for family type issues. it will be what is going to affect me directly, healthcare. We have insurance, but we pay way too much money.

I'm waiting to see what happens

I think ads are a waste of time, for anyone other than...

Mud sliding commercials. It would be great to have someone saying something about themselves. It's the same basic crap that feels like recycling garbage. It's messing with the same system.

Mud slinging

I remember hearing something about the marriage penalty

■ 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?

I think it depends on the individual

Do you mean something big like republicans are big business, or republicans are for family?

Republicans will let you manage your own money

I would look at the issues on the table and where they fall on the issues

If you vote republican you will get a couple of thousand dollars at the end of the year is all they give you . The richer are getting richer, but the bottom is getting squeezed and in our situation ...those commercials are really disturbing.

I have to be honest. I voted in the past by name. And lately, it's just one of those thoughts. I am not likely to vote. Sometimes I am clue less. This is all over my head. And I am trying to cover up.

I don't know that much other than that you go with your best feeling.

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

They are for the poor

Every year they have dems and reps. They won't even allow Nader to speak in the debates. I really have to hate the republicans. I just have to have really good reasons.

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

The only thing is that...the only reason to vote for a democrat is that I really hated the republicans

I think more like the social programs. We get people in the catch 22 situation that they have to stay home in order to get the benefits, they don't have a transition plan to help people get on their feet.

- 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 think just the overall view as a whole. They have different issues that they support.

I think if democrats came into power they would make a conscious effort to...

That's the nature of dems and reps. You voted us because you wanted different. I don't know if it will be better or worse. I think it will change. And it almost makes me scared because it will change for change sake.

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>
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?

Buchanan Tax Attack	
5 Jennings	
4 Jennings	
3 Jennings	
2 Jennings	
1 Jennings	
0	
1 Buchanan	1
2 Buchanan	
3 Buchanan	111
4 Buchanan	1
5 Buchanan	111

Obviously is an ad from his campaign. It talks about Jennings and how she is going to put a lot of penalties. Based on that ad, he doesn’t tell me much about him but looks like the less of two evils

That he thinks we can do better with our money than Congress. And I think so too.

I thought that Jennings was against many issues that are important to me

I have to go with what she just mentioned, this is an ad from the campaign.

You didn’t really hear anything that he was going to do. I couldn’t give it a 5 because it didn’t say anything about Buchanan

If we didn’t know anything else, of course I would vote for him.

Jennings Trust Contrast	
5 Jennings	
4 Jennings	
3 Jennings	
2 Jennings	1
1 Jennings	1
0	111
1 Buchanan	1
2 Buchanan	1
3 Buchanan	
4 Buchanan	1
5 Buchanan	

She is talking about cutting what I think we need to do. And she is saying that this guy had some sort of tax evasion

It didn't say anything negative that Buchanan was going to do to me personally. It didn't say it was going to raise my taxes or penalize me because I have kids

It's the less of two evils. She is digging into his personal record

People can relate to that. Something like that happens. Makes it look more real.

That's different. If he was doing shady businesses someone didn't get their money. That is what I was reading.

I have no difference. At the beginning I liked what she said, but then with the headlines.

Sometimes the headline and the story are different.

I said a 1 but I would say higher for Buchanan because I don't believe in taxes. The tax evasion and this and that...

Buchanan Bio	
5 Jennings	
4 Jennings	
3 Jennings	
2 Jennings	
1 Jennings	
0	
1 Buchanan	
2 Buchanan	11
3 Buchanan	1
4 Buchanan	1
5 Buchanan	1111

He seems like an all American kid, paid his way through college and has a nice family.

Looks human, he goes from being a tax evasions, but he has a family. Looks human, less rigid than Jennings

He says his family is the most important thing to him. All American man

That means that he didn't have the trust fund sitting there. He worked.

Seeing that ad I gave it a 2 because it looks like it wouldn't stand out. I would have heard but not listen.

Everyone wants them to talk about themselves, but we don't listen when they talk about themselves.

I would assume that if someone has children and have been marriage for 20 years, he is going to think like me.

Jennings Bio	
5 Jennings	
4 Jennings	11
3 Jennings	
2 Jennings	
1 Jennings	
0	111
1 Buchanan	1
2 Buchanan	
3 Buchanan	11
4 Buchanan	
5 Buchanan	

Has been a hard worker.

Achievement, she helped people, understands how to balance a budget

After watching the 6th ad. Do they have the same people filming their commercials? By the time I watch this ad. They are all the same.

I didn't feel like anything stood up. She was a banker, but that was her job. Tell me what she is going to do to make my life easier.

The same, nothing in particular stood up to me. Buchanan seems to represent more of the same values I have. It may just be aesthetics

My opinion by watching this is that his ads are...I look her and I see upscale, high society, very un appealing

I am for a strong woman, but that is the kind of woman you don't want to give your back.

NRCC Security Attack on Bruce Braley	
5 Jennings	
4 Jennings	1
3 Jennings	
2 Jennings	
1 Jennings	1
0	111
1 Buchanan	
2 Buchanan	
3 Buchanan	1
4 Buchanan	1
5 Buchanan	1

It seemed to me that this guy was getting his contributions from people that I don't want my candidates to be associated with. I wouldn't personally...I would definitely research more information to find out as much as I could.

I agree, this is all we had to base on. And you see the words Taliban, and you want to go on reversal.

You are told to trust them until they proof you wrong

There wasn't enough information

Those are catch phrases at this point to me anyways. I thought it was cheesy.

Bruce Braley Iraq	
Position	
5 Jennings	1111
4 Jennings	
3 Jennings	1
2 Jennings	1
1 Jennings	
0	1
1 Buchanan	
2 Buchanan	
3 Buchanan	
4 Buchanan	
5 Buchanan	1

Bring the troops home

Like the fact that didn't say something bad about the other person

Just gets to the point. Quit spending and just get the troops home

He was saying exactly what I wanted to hear

Supporting our troops is certainly a big issue because we should still support them

He is basically not supporting our troops saying that it should be over

He 100% supports the troops but wants them to come home

WHAT DID HE SAY TO REASSURE YOU ?

I don't think he made a good point that he was going to stay there to make sure it was done right they should be responsible for their security, but we need to teach them

Immigration	
5 Jennings	
4 Jennings	
3 Jennings	
2 Jennings	
1 Jennings	
0	11
1 Buchanan	1
2 Buchanan	1
3 Buchanan	
4 Buchanan	1
5 Buchanan	111

They are coming in illegally and should not be allowed to stay , and get social security and all that

Seems that per...supports illegal immigrants

How many of your ancestors where born here in the US? And how many of us have ancestors from somewhere else? We are all immigrants. And that is what America was based upon. People from different nations building the country.

Ed Perlmutter Stem Cell Position	
5 Jennings	
4 Jennings	1
3 Jennings	111
2 Jennings	11
1 Jennings	1
0	1
1 Buchanan	
2 Buchanan	
3 Buchanan	
4 Buchanan	
5 Buchanan	

he fact that he wants stem cell research, has a daughter., he will fight for healthcare. and he said he would take care of their own

HOW IMPROTANT IS IT TO YOU?

Just because there are so many other things, to me there are other issuer. But overall I would go for something else. I wouldn't be against it but...

It depends particularly on whay is going on in your life. If you have family with health issues.

Congressional pay raise	
5 Jennings	
4 Jennings	1111
3 Jennings	
2 Jennings	1
1 Jennings	1
0	11
1 Buchanan	
2 Buchanan	
3 Buchanan	
4 Buchanan	
5 Buchanan	

The pay raise I think it's important. But it shouldn't be just the minimal wage, it should be for everyone.

I was impressed that he wouldn't take a pay raise.

The minimal wage is not so much important to me, but it is teenagers.

It is regular people that is going to help. People can't afford their mortgage on minimal 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]**