

Focus Group Guidelines
October 11, 2006
Lombard, IL
IL-6
4 Bush – 5 Kerry

I. Introduction (10 minutes)

- Confidentiality
- Mirrors, audio and videotapes
- Respondent introductions

Anne: Lombard, 5 kids.

Bernice: Works for the school, has 2 kids

Claire: Lombard. Married

Diane: 2 year old.

Estelle: Registered nurse

Fran: retired from AT&T

Gloria: Substitute teacher

Henrietta: 2 grand children and I'm engaged

Irene: married, emergency procedures instructor.

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]**

2.

Wrong

Definitely wrong

It's scary. Well, the war thing. Just the terrorism issue. I got to a point where...which president

Can get this right. We need more...on the environment. I am a big recycle and I see every day

The polluting of the environment. I need our president to say to do something for the

environment. It is not something to take lightly. I don't know who I vote for any more.

I think we are headed to be a third world country where the rich are getting richer and the poorer

poorer. We are making less and less, and they are making more and more. The gap is getting

bigger

I'm not sure the priorities are where I'd like them to be. I'd like to see improvements in

education. The environment is completely off the radar

Global warming is so huge. If it goes we all go. We are done. We pollute it so bad...there are so many things to do.

When something happens we get 2 or 3 different stories. Like the plane that crashed in NY

Young people are interested in having things now, right away. Education is important, but how

much are we willing to get into debt for that. I don't think that we have a society that knows how to wait for things.

They are not saving.

When I was young, I said I had a long time and didn't have to worry about retirement. When I

was 25 nobody told me about retirement. Kids now are thinking about it. When I was growing

nobody told me that. I agree with you, the young are very impatient. They want it now. They don't want to climb. They get out of college and they say 'I have a degree'. When I started working I was working stacking shirts at target. They don't see that.

I still think this is a great country to live in. I am concerned about the younger generations. I work at a school. Don't support that. I thought I was for the war, but I'm not any more. There are a lot of young men dying. But there is a lot of positive things. The medicines are being developed. Healthcare. There is a lot of progress. There is the issue of going to Canada and Mexico.

I have to agree with Paula that this is the best country in the world. Yes. This is the greatest country but I am against the war. I think we were brought into it under false pretend and now we have kids dying. It is just so close to home. And then in a way it is so far removed. I am from the Vietnam era. It's that thing over there that nobody cares about because life goes on. The moral issue in our country. We have elected politicians that have no morals whatsoever. So I try to do the right thing with my own kids.

Well, all the sex stuff. Now with Foley. And with Clinton. This is the guy with the most important office in the world. And Foley. This predator. And don't tell me they didn't know what was going on. That part totally shake my confidence.

WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THE FOLEY CASE?

They knew and didn't do anything about it. High school professionals know that they need to report. You don't just tell someone with this problem to stop. I think Hastert didn't say anything because they want to maintain republicans in the congress.

This is like what it is going on in the church and everybody was sweeping it under the carpet.

DOES IT HAVE AN IMPACT ON YOUR VOTE?

I am looking for strong women. Because men don't.

No, when I vote if I am undecided between a man and a woman. I usually vote for the woman. I think we should get women a chance. We should prosecute Foley. And he uses the excuse that he had been drinking. He is sick, he is a pervert. Get rid of it. If your father was an alcoholic, does it mean he is a molester. We should get him out and Hastert too. And do we need a page program?

Well, it is an opportunity for these kids, especially if they want to go into politics.

DOES IT AFFECT YOUR OPINION OF THE PARTIES?

I think it is people, their moral fiber. Well, what he blamed it on is that he was gay. And that is an insult to gay people, because not all gays are predators. I just think that the arrogance. This guy used his real name and didn't really care.

I don't think it is only politicians. It is men of power. It is a power issue.

It takes away from the important issues. Get them out of office, prosecute them and let's deal with what it is important. It is a waste of time and kids have to listen to this on TV. The Clinton stuff also went on for ever.

It's the media.

HOW DOES THIS STORY AFFECT YOUR ELECTION?

Because he got caught.

They laugh at each other's jokes. They are like a private club.

If I do hear stuff like that I wouldn't vote for the person. It turns me off completely. No, prosecute and get them out.

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

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

3. How about the economy? What's going on with the economy here in Illinois?

We are not producing anything. we are importing everything.

No, they act like it's going well. But I really think it is not well right now. First of all gas prices. We are paying over \$3 a gallon. That to me shows the economy is not good. I think it is going to get a lot worse before it gets better.

When we graduated from high school you could get a job. But now because we are in a service economy kids are getting jobs that they can't support a family. And again, we are getting poorer and poorer.

- **[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?

4. 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

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

III. Associations (25 minutes)

1. Rod Blagojevich

Lots of hair

Not trustworthy

Undecided

I like a couple of things he did. I'm mad at him for not focusing on it in the ads. Because some of the things he did were great

Scandal, there were lots of scandals with his father in law.

You can do a lot of good, and one bad thing will off set all the good.

Healthcare for the kids. That's good

But at the same time he is not getting any money for education

So much of his focus has been on young children. And that is good and he is taking money off my pension fund for that. I would like him to expand and think about all groups

2. Judy Baar Topinka

Read haired

She seems a little rough around the edges

If you are a public speaker, you need to always be...

3. Barack Obama

Oh, definitely like him

Promising

We should have more with his type of character

Intelligent, well educated, lots of good ideas

Still early in his career

I like the word promising

The youth like him, they are very attracted to him. He has that charisma.

I think he is promising

4. Peter Roskam [**Extensive**]

His daughter is doing a commercial and says he is a good dad

He says the right things. Typical republican. He just says what we want to hear

I don't know much about him, but I won't vote for him because he is a republican and we need more democrats

I know he is pro-life.

I'm getting interested in the border

He said that she wants to give amnesty to illegal immigrants and give them social security numbers

Don't know much about him. Learning more now

Really don't know what he stands for

5. Tammy Duckworth [**Extensive**]

Not sure

The war

She has seniors like her, because they call my house and she has seniors call her

Someone called my house

Apparently she does not live in the district and she is funded by Barbara Streisand and Rosie O'Donnell. I was going to vote for her and now because of that I am not going to vote for her.

[The army service] would have made me vote for her. I am impressed and I think it's wonderful, but won't make me vote for her.

My big fear is that she is going to focus on the war because that is the only area she has expertise on

She is too new

That she served in the war won't give her my vote

6. Congress

Republican

Out for their own interest, not working for the good of the country

If they are democrats they don't want republicans to look good and vice versa. They are fighting for the party. Lyndon Johnson could bring the parties together to reach a compromise. That doesn't happen any more. We are not getting important legislation introduced.

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

They do things to make sure they get reelected rather than doing things because they are good for the country.

Incumbents work their way up through appointments. You get more things for your districts if your congressman has been there.

Seems a boys club and not going necessarily on the right direction

We had that problem all along, but the media is bringing it to our attention. I think congress, democrats and republicans are too separated. Parties should work together.

7. [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]

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

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

He has better morals than our previous president.

Laura. She is a good thing. I like the tax cuts and he is willing to make tough decisions.

He keeps our country pretty well informed.

Well, I disagree.

We've been more informed with him than with other president.

I disagree.

I like him because he is a family man and he has good morals.

He is healthy.

His morals are good. I don't know now if any president would have conquered any more given what happened.

We will always be there.

But I don't know. After a while it is difficult to know if they have done enough.

It seems that he is a good man. it looks good for him.

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

The war, the handling of North Korea. The economy, who is paying for the war? He is giving us tax cuts, but who is going to pay for the war? Education, we are falling behind other countries we have no business falling behind. I don't have terrorism here because I think that is the world we are living in. In the middle of the conference today he is complementing somebody's suit. That is inappropriate right now with all going on in Korea.

I do worry about his advisors. Is he up to make a name to say he conquered the Middle East? I don't know what he is up to. As far as education, I couldn't agree more.

He is so fully entrenched on what he thinks that he is not listening to the other side.

Immigrant issues you have to be strong. He keeps on saying we are doing this. It has nothing to do with your race. We are all nice people. If we are all here, that's fine. But everyone should pay taxes and that is fair game. You can let anybody in this country if we are paying fair. Just do it the right way and then we are all happy.

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?

I'm reading every piece of mail that I am reading rather than throwing it out. And my issues are different. Social Security. It's too late for pensions, I do believe in the right to bear arms.

Whoever is on my side, that is who I am voting for.

I guess I want to be change. But I don't know what change I want. I don't want the situation to continue as it is. I want someone to investigate and bring a plan.

I think that immigration is a real concern. I would probably be more attracted to someone who wants to do something. They need to stop the influx. Like I said, I adopted 4 kids and they were legal immigrants when they got here. It is difficult for kids to go to school. We should be able to do better for our kids.

I worry about social security. I worked all my life and I worked hard. More people should live like that and we would be in better shape. I would have to see the candidates and see where they stand. I don't support abortion. We all have the things that are important to us. But social security is now important to me.

■ 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?

I wish they did a little less bashing at each other. You know what? Let's hear some issues. Just the negativity of the whole thing. I'd rather hear what they plan to do than 'the other guy is bad'.

I'm tired of hearing about Duckworth disability. Well we are sorry, but don't use that.

I think it is sad the amount of money that is being spent on this. We've been listening to those ads since March. There is probably not 2 days in a row that I don't get a phone call from Duckworth.

She has the support from other people.

The republicans are really pouring the money.

■ 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?
 - 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?
- 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 would like to see more control over the national debt. I don't think we should fear that our children have to pay for that.

Maybe we should focus on people giving \$ out of their tax dollars for social security. And then we get all getting nothing. We've got to do something. Way too much focus on the war. And that of course. If we all work together on this country. Everybody doing the same thing.

V. Ad Testing (40 minutes)

[Written Exercise – Handouts #3-#9]

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>Duckworth</i>					<i>Diff</i>					<i>Roskam</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?

NRCC Immigration	
5 Duckworth	
4 Duckworth	
3 Duckworth	
2 Duckworth	
1 Duckworth	
0	1
1 Roskam	
2 Roskam	111
3 Roskam	1
4 Roskam	1
5 Roskam	11

I don't want to be paying social security for these people.
 Same reason. I was born in Germany and we had to do a lot to come here legally.
 I pay my bills. That is the fair way.
 I put for immigration and the social security
 I don't believe they are entitled to social security
 I wonder how truthful they are. I am not sure it is all honest.
 I always listen to it with doubt.
 I would like to hear her tell the story. I like to hear what he has to say about that too so that you can compare.
 I just know she lost her leg and she is running against Roskam.

Duckworth Immigration Response	
5 Duckworth	
4 Duckworth	
3 Duckworth	111
2 Duckworth	111
1 Duckworth	
0	11
1 Roskam	
2 Roskam	
3 Roskam	1
4 Roskam	
5 Roskam	

If I have to believe what she is saying. She isn't for amnesty.
 Seems more believable coming from her, rather than the opposition. Makes it more believable than the previous ad.
 I agree with that. To have her say it, rather than another person in the background.
 Has more character and is not bringing down the other person.
 But if she is telling the truth, then the previous ad is a lie.
 I feel more content toward her.
 That is what makes it so confusing because you are hearing one or the other. She was against...I am not sure I want the National Guard to be there protecting the border. She may be opposed to sending the guard but...
 Where is she going to get the money from? And where is she going to get the guards from?
 Two things she said, that she is new to politics makes me nervous because you have to be savvy in Washington. And enough about the helicopter story. I know, but enough.
 For some reason I don't like how she came out in this ad. I think she looked a little weak. And if you are going to lead with these men in Washington you need to be strong. Everybody can throw a number.
 I didn't believe her fully and can't tell you...

Roskam Bio	
5 Duckworth	1
4 Duckworth	
3 Duckworth	11
2 Duckworth	1
1 Duckworth	11
0	111
1 Roskam	
2 Roskam	
3 Roskam	
4 Roskam	
5 Roskam	

Wouldn't every kid talk great about his dad?
 It was so staged. Shows it has a cute family, but doesn't tell much about the issue
 Don't believe kids care about social security
 We want to hear it from you. You are the one that is running
 And that part they talk about his hair. It's just disgusting.
 I associate a big family with a conservative view.
 He is a good father but not necessarily a good politician.

Duckworth Bio	
5 Duckworth	
4 Duckworth	1
3 Duckworth	
2 Duckworth	111
1 Duckworth	11
0	11
1 Roskam	1
2 Roskam	
3 Roskam	
4 Roskam	
5 Roskam	

I just like the fact that...the Iraq shot. That commercial made me vote for her until I found out who was funding her.
 I liked the courage.
 I went to the opposite and thought that was a cliché. Every time they have military service they put in there.
 To me it was the rubber stamp.
 The legislation of the oil companies.
 My ears resonate with the oil. Because that is effective. I like the military. And I want to hear that and I think it's effective. Takes a certain kind of individual.
 I don't feel the sincerity. Just a little too staged. I don't know what I'm looking for.
 No difference. It is just like she keeps repeating herself over and over.

WHAT DO YOU TAKE FROM THE 4 ADS?

I think we know more about Duckworth than Roskam. She is telling us what she stands for. She is against amnesty, for border patrol. Those are things that interest me.
 She is talking more about issues. It is easy to talk trash, but she appears to be sincere and appears to address issues. It is easy to talk trash about somebody.
 I do know more now about Tammy than I know about peter.

Buchanan Tax Attack	
5 Duckworth	
4 Duckworth	
3 Duckworth	1
2 Duckworth	1
1 Duckworth	
0	111
1 Roskam	
2 Roskam	1
3 Roskam	1
4 Roskam	11
5 Roskam	

His last statement that he said, I agree with that. If it is your money you should be able to spend it where you want.

She is not for the working person, if you believe the ad.

I don't want to pay more taxes.

I find it totally unbelievable. The pictures look bad.

The ad is more effective when you have the individual speaking for himself. That slamming turns me off.

I don't know, I am always paying higher taxes, no matter what they say.

DO THOSE ISSUES OF IMMIGRATION OR TAXES HOLDYO BACK FROM DEMOCRATS?

No, I support who I think can do the job. I vote for who I think will do the job.

No, I'm not sure how I feel about immigration. Many of the ideas of republicans are for immigrations. Addressing the problem is going to cost money. No matter who does it.

It is almost a no win situation. I tend to worry about democrats spending tax money in a lenient way.

ARE THERE THINGS THAT WOULD REASSURE YOU OF DEMOCRATS ON TAXES?

If they said they were going to extend Bush's tax cuts.

Does anybody want to pay anybody else's bills? So we need to do something about immigration.

Braley on Pay Raise	
5 Duckworth	
4 Duckworth	
3 Duckworth	
2 Duckworth	1
1 Duckworth	
0	11111111
1 Roskam	
2 Roskam	
3 Roskam	
4 Roskam	
5 Roskam	

Bad big business is occasionally true. Minimum wage is probably not as high as other things, but it is long over due.

Minimum wage is not an issue to me.

I don't like ads like that

WHAT ABOUT THE CONGRESSIONAL PAY RAISE?

He is saying he wouldn't accept this. But how are we ever going to know?

It's unbelievable. I don't like when they do that and keep on putting him next to bush.

Tell us exactly what you are going to do.

Ed Perlmutter Stem Cell Position	
5 Duckworth	
4 Duckworth	1
3 Duckworth	111
2 Duckworth	
1 Duckworth	11
0	111
1 Roskam	
2 Roskam	
3 Roskam	
4 Roskam	
5 Roskam	

I support stem cell research.

I support stem cell research.

It is important, very important to me. I have a family member that would benefit from it. We

Should allow to advance

It makes you want to learn more about it.

I'm for it, but it is not high on my list.

And it said it is not something that would make me vote for him.

This guy I like his views, but I need to see the other party because he is not running by himself.

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?*

Mail Pieces (No written scale – Rate by hands, discuss)

Roskam Taxes	
5 Duckworth	
4 Duckworth	
3 Duckworth	
2 Duckworth	1
1 Duckworth	
0	11
1 Roskam	11
2 Roskam	1
3 Roskam	111
4 Roskam	
5 Roskam	

Will charge us more taxes.
 Paid by a national campaign
 They are speculating. They even use the word apparently
 They are quoting that she is going to repeal part of it. But what part?
 I don't want to see the marriage penalty come back.
 IS IT BELEIVABLE?
 I don't know
 Key words are 'apparently' and 'part'
 It is really bad

Duckworth	
5 Duckworth	
4 Duckworth	
3 Duckworth	
2 Duckworth	1
1 Duckworth	111
0	11111
1 Roskam	
2 Roskam	
3 Roskam	
4 Roskam	
5 Roskam	

You don't know if it is totally true or not. I have no idea what all that means.
 Our candidate questionnaire. To me that is never effectual. I want to see...he stated this on the
 tribune or something like that. this I very vague.
 I think it is just strong and misrepresented. Was he really lying or is that just the way she is
 interpreting it.
 Isn't that what all politicians do?
 His commercial about his kids mentions social security, but now I know why he put it in the ad.

Roskam Immigration	
5 Duckworth	
4 Duckworth	
3 Duckworth	
2 Duckworth	
1 Duckworth	
0	11111111
1 Roskam	
2 Roskam	
3 Roskam	1
4 Roskam	
5 Roskam	

This just says that what we just saw was a lie.

This is believable. I am reading it and they have some quotes on it. What they were saying was part of the story.

We have to see exactly what she says because we can tweak and twist.

I still thought she was very vague on saying what she said. She went over the issue but it wasn't strong enough to me to know that she was really going to do it.

VI. Final Ballot (5 minutes)

[Written exercise – Handout #10]

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]**