

DEMOCRACY CORPS
JAMES CARVILLE ♦ STANLEY GREENBERG ♦ BOB SHRUM
10 G STREET, NE ♦ SUITE 400 ♦ WASHINGTON, DC 20002
202-478-8330 (TEL) ♦ 202-289-8648 (FAX)
WWW.DEMOCRACYCORPS.COM

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To: Friends of Democracy Corps

From: Stan Greenberg
Matt Hogan

RE: Reclaiming the White Catholic Vote

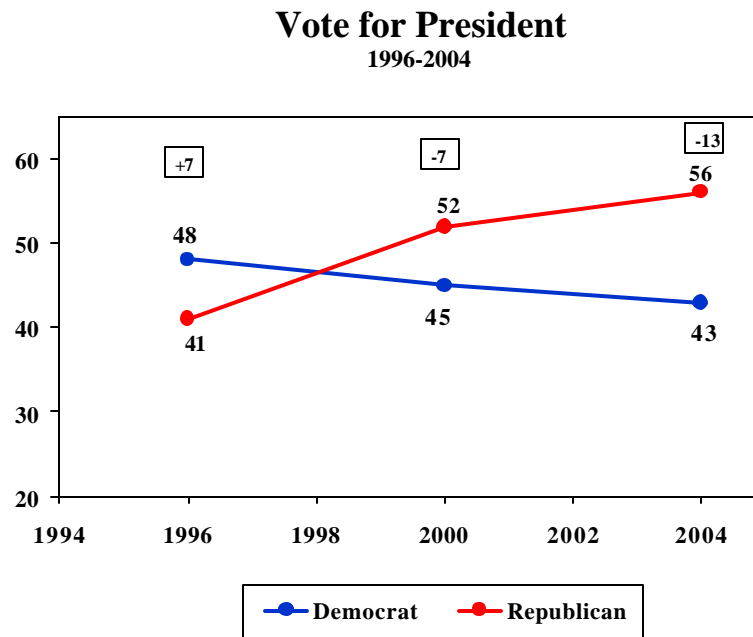
Less than a decade ago, Bill Clinton carried the white Catholic vote by 7 points (48 to 41 percent), but support for Democratic presidential candidates has fallen in successive elections, with Al Gore losing them by 7 points (45 to 52 percent) and John Kerry by a striking 13 points (43 to 56 percent) in 2004 – a 20-point swing against the Democrats over three elections. The drop in Catholic support is a big part of the 2004 election story, as Democratic support dropped sharply compared to 2000 in nearly all the eastern states, including New England. Kerry also lost some ground among white Catholics in Ohio, Pennsylvania and Michigan.¹

What is this all about? Catholic voters have been a swing bloc since the mid-1980s, but are the Democrats being marginalized by a new surge of defections – comparable to the pull back of “Reagan Democrats” that shook the party between 1968 and 1984? Are white Catholics moving to join the Republican coalition? Is the trend against the Democrats likely to continue, thus impacting Democratic prospects nationally and in key battleground states? Alternatively, should we think of Catholics as an increasingly volatile group, with a large number of dislodged, cross-pressured white Catholic voters, and thus a primary target of both parties in future elections? Or is this about nothing much at all, just Catholics feeling more comfortable with George Bush and less so with John Kerry?

And bottom line, can Democrats reclaim the white Catholic vote and build their base back in the East and move ahead in the Midwest battleground?

¹ 1996 and 2000 VNS election results and 2004 NEP election results

To help progressives better address this challenge, Democracy Corps conducted a nationwide survey of 1,033 white Catholic voters, a unique resource for those tackling these issues.²



White Catholic voters pulled back for a number of reasons – including concerns about security and values, Kerry’s seeming lack of conviction and the absence of a strong Democratic advocacy for the middle class. Today, they view the Republicans much more favorably than the Democrats.

But this is not 1984 and not Macomb County, where I first spoke to the “Reagan Democrats.” White Catholics have not gone Republican. They are divided evenly on almost every important policy question and political indicator, and indeed, on their basic world views. They are split 50-50 on whether the country is headed in the right or wrong direction, on their vote for Congress, on whether we need more or less regulation, whether we need more community or more self-sufficiency, whether abortion should be legal or not and on whether the Catholic church should be more modern or traditional. They are divided evenly between those who attend church every week and those who are less observant. And finally, they are evenly divided be-

² Drawing on our database of white Catholic voters, Democracy Corps conducted a survey of 1,033 white Catholic likely voters, February 22-28, 2005. The survey has a margin of error of +/-3.1%

tween those with a college degree and those without – closely related to the distinct worldviews that leave white Catholics so evenly divided.

Indeed, white Catholic voters are considerably more Democratic than other white voters and more moderate on a whole range of issues, including tolerance on homosexuality and openness to stem cell research. They remain more Democratic in their identification than in their voting: Bush's 13-point margin over Kerry among white Catholics was 10 points higher than the Republican advantage in partisanship – leaving a large bloc of voters available to the Democrats.³

Indeed, that gap creates the main target audience for the Democrats: the *Democratic defectors*, the 10 percent of white Catholics who identify with the Democrats but did not vote for Kerry; and the *post-Clinton defectors*, the 14 percent who voted for Bill Clinton in 1996 but not for Kerry.⁴

The Democrats can compete comfortably for *half* the Catholics, as so many of the modern trends that divide America politically also divide the Catholics. Thus, Democrats win their greatest support from the less observant, those looking for a more modern Church, and those who highlight community as a principle value. Each of these groups constitute about half of the Catholic electorate and Democrats hold a 22-point advantage in partisanship among those who would prefer a more modern Church and are favored by 6 points among non-devout Catholics. Among those who place an emphasis on the need for a strong community, the advantage is even greater, with Democratic identifiers outnumbering Republicans by 41 points.

But half is not good enough, which means reaching across the cultural divide.

The dislodged Democratic voters are more socially conservative, less certain about a modern course for the Church, less positive about Bill Clinton and his legacy, and importantly, much less hostile to the Iraq war and much more favorable to the Republicans on safety and security. For those who pulled back in 2004, they are more pro-life, and that mattered for them in the pull back from Kerry. Yet two-thirds of the recent “defectors” still vote Democratic for Congress and a good half of them agree with Democrats on values and issues.

To break across the divide and aspire to reclaim their majority among white Catholics, Democrats will need to do the following, which underscores some of the main findings of the survey:

³ 2004 NEP election results

⁴ The Democratic defectors consist of those voters who did not vote for Kerry but either identify themselves as Democrats or lean Democratic in their party identification, or those who did not vote Kerry but plan to vote for a Democrat for Congress in 2006. The post-Clinton defectors are purely those who voted for Clinton in 1996 but did not vote for Kerry.

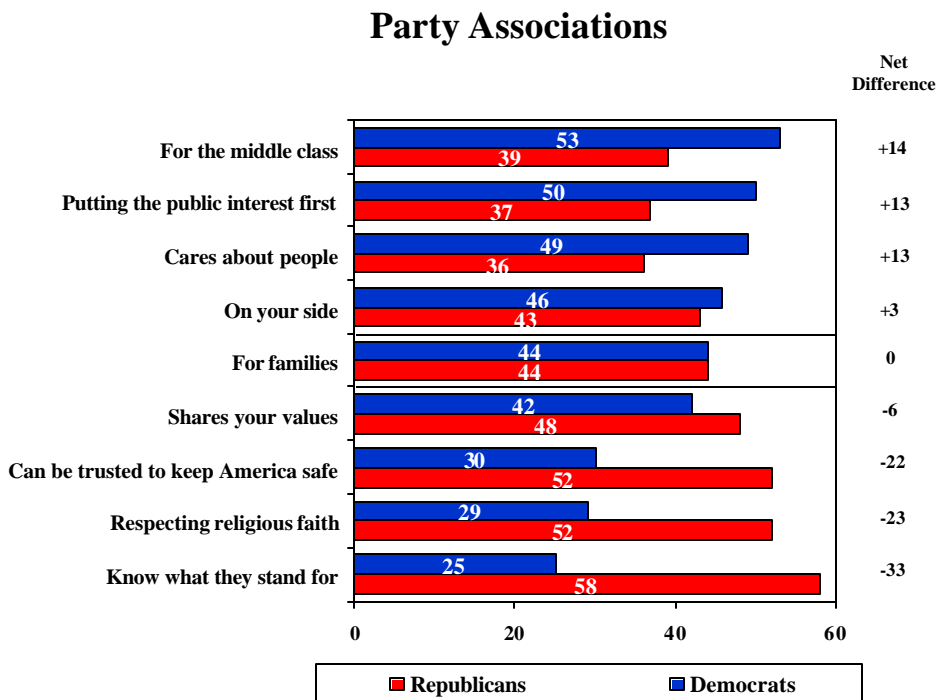
- Reach across to the more traditional Catholics (those who want the Church to be “more traditional and connected to Church teachings”). While they voted heavily for Bush, a significant portion of them have progressive views on issues: 43 percent want a multilateral foreign policy; 41 percent say Iraq was not worth it; 43 percent say we should be tolerant about homosexuality in society.
- Highlight the Democrats as the middle class party, focused on work and personal responsibility. That remains a strong advantage for the Democrats and a very positive element of a prospective profile. There is very strong support for a Democratic candidate who rolls back tax cuts for the wealthy and deplores excessive CEO salaries, while underscoring advocacy for the middle class. Democratic defectors, in particular, are just as skeptical of corporations and supportive on economic issues.
- Democrats need to reassure broadly on values. “Personal responsibility” is the most important value overall and for many of the Democratic defectors and a very important element in the Democrats being a middle-class party. Catholic voters, when they think of moral values, are looking for honesty and integrity, the Golden rule, and a commitment to family.
- Catholic voters have emerged more pro-life, which is a factor in the recent losses and one of the blockages for Democrats, at least in the Midwest. But they are very responsive to a broad initiative to reduce unwanted pregnancies and the number of abortions.
- Critically, white Catholics should not be caricatured as traditional social conservatives, as among the Evangelical churches. They are fairly tolerant of America’s social diversity, including homosexuality. They are open to pro-choice Democrats who emphasize fewer abortions. And they firmly align with progressive developments and science, like stem cell research, even when opposed by the Church.
- The dislodged Democrats are also distinctive on security issues and much less opposed to the Iraq war. White Catholics respond very positively to a Democrat who is strong on defense and the war on terrorism.

Making up one in five votes, white Catholics are genuinely divided and will be contested by both parties in the coming elections. About 20 percent of the white Catholics are at the center of the battle, though Democrats have every reason to believe they can reclaim lost ground.

Democrats and the White Catholic Vote

White Catholics are evenly divided in their congressional vote and party identification, which makes them more Democratic than most other white voters. They lean Democratic in the East, are divided in the Midwest, and are strongly Republican in the South. But with lost ground in the last two elections, Democrats have a lot of ground and affection to reclaim. They are more likely to have favorable views of the Republicans (49 to 40 percent for the Democrats) and a higher regard for George Bush than John Kerry (54 to 36 percent) – the Catholic candidate in 2004.

Democrats are the better party for Catholics on advocacy for the middle class, putting the public interest first and caring about people, though they are just barely ahead on battling closer to home for who is “on your side”. But that modest edge on advocacy is overwhelmed by the Republicans’ greater advantage on dimensions that are currently more predictive of the vote and partisanship. On which party “shares your values,” the strongest predictor in our regression modeling, white Catholics favor the Republicans by 6 points; on the next three most important issues, the Republicans are favored by over 20 points: “can be trusted to keep America safe,” “respecting religious faith,” and “know what they stand for.” In the end, neither party is seen as dominant on the family.



The Democratic Defectors

Among white Catholics there are a lot more self-identified Democrats than Kerry voters and even more who had voted for Clinton in 1996. Together, these “defectors” comprise a substantial 18 percent of the white Catholics and hold the key to the question of why Democrats are slipping here. Compared to other Democrats, the defectors are more blue collar (that is, non-college educated and lower income) and primarily identify themselves as moderate or conservative. They are disproportionately non-college educated voters under 50 years of age.

The reason for the defection of these more blue-collar Democrats is rooted in their conservative views on cultural issues, greater trust of Bush and the Republicans on security issues and less concern with Iraq, and their skepticism about John Kerry and trust of George Bush. But the reasons they are “defectors” and not Republicans are continued social tolerance, support for regulation and serious openness to a middle class populism.

Security was a big factor for these Democratic and post-Clinton defectors, particularly the latter, as they gave the Republicans a 34-point advantage on “keeping America safe.” While self-identified Democrats are deeply negative about the Iraq war (10 percent favorable and 81 percent unfavorable), the defectors are evenly divided or lean toward it – the biggest gap in thinking with regular Democrats.

Even with that, all white Catholics, including the Democratic defectors, say they are less likely to support a candidate who voted in favor of the Iraq war.⁵

Culturally, the defectors differ from other Democrats on abortion, gay marriage and especially the NRA, the second biggest area of difference. As we can see in the chart below, regular Democrats view pro-life groups somewhat negatively, but the Democratic and post-Clinton defectors view them favorably, by a two-to-one ratio. While feelings about Bill Clinton are quite important to understanding the defectors, white Catholics now express quite favorable views of the ex-president.

⁵ Half the electorate (50 percent) says they are less likely to support that candidate, with only 44 percent saying more likely.

COMPARING DEMOCRATS AND THE DEFECTORS						
<i>Thermometer Ratings</i>						
	ALL DEMOCRATS		DEFECTORS			
	<i>Warm – Cool</i>	<i>Net</i>	Democratic		Post-Clinton	
			<i>Warm – Cool</i>	<i>Net</i>	<i>Warm – Cool</i>	<i>Net</i>
NRA	19-62	-43	41-31	10	35-32	3
Pro-life groups	32-44	-12	54-26	28	55-28	27
Bill Clinton	78-11	67	56-32	24	53-30	23
Gay marriage	36-36	0	24-60	-36	21-59	-38
Hollywood	24-33	-9	18-43	-25	18-45	-27
Evangelical Political Groups	8-60	-52	20-40	-20	17-30	-13
United Nations	61-18	43	47-32	15	43-36	7
Iraq war	9-82	-73	40-41	-1	46-33	13
NAFTA	37-25	12	32-25	7	30-26	4
Big Corporations	17-52	-35	27-44	-17	43-30	13

Among the more recent Democratic defectors, the abortion issue seems quite important: 26 percent believe that abortion should be illegal in all cases, nearly three times the number for all Catholic Democrats. A plurality of these defectors (41 percent) say one of their top two moral concerns is the “lack of respect for life, including abortion.”

Although both the Democratic and post-Clinton defectors are obviously more conservative than Democrats overall, they do not easily fit the Republicans’ cultural vision either. The defectors are no more likely to go to church; they are very uncomfortable with Christian evangelical groups and despite their strong opposition to gay marriage, they believe homosexuality should be accepted rather than discouraged.

The defectors were particularly troubled by Kerry’s seeming lack of conviction: 85 percent say he lost because voters were “not clear what he stood for” or had “no plans or ideas on what he would do.” That is 21 points greater than for regular Democrats and above the total among white Catholics overall.

That perception prevented Democrats from making gains amongst these voters who are quite open to Democratic ideas, particularly if Democrats were more forthright champions of the middle class and more willing to challenge corporations and the wealthy. Over 60 percent supported repealing Bush’s tax cuts for the wealthy to fund other priorities. The Democratic defectors are almost as hostile to big corporations as regular Democrats and are divided on NAFTA.

There are clearly reasons why the defectors have not slipped all the way to the Republicans, as they look for a greater advocacy for America and the middle class on economic issues.

Ethnic and Regional Distinctions

White Catholics in the U.S. are a diverse community. The Irish are the largest segment (21 percent), followed by German-Dutch (19 percent), and then the Italians (12 percent) and Eastern Europeans (11 percent). The Irish are most receptive to Democrats, giving the party a 3-point edge in identification and 10 points in the vote for Congress. But Kerry significantly underperformed with these voters, losing them by 6 points, 51 to 45 percent.

The East is more Catholic and more Democratic. Here white Catholics make up 34 percent of the electorate, with the Irish and Italians predominant. These white Catholic voters are much more receptive to progressive positions. On cultural issues, they are the least opposed to gay marriage and a clear majority is pro-choice. Their progressive views carry over to other issues: 50 percent favor a more modern Church and 52 percent prefer an emphasis on community, rather than self-reliance. They are the most opposed to the Iraq war, with 59 percent saying it was not worth it. While white Catholics in the East still side with Democrats overall, this is the region where Kerry lost the most ground, losing them by a 5-point margin after Gore won them by 6 points in 2000.

White Catholics make up about a quarter of Midwest voters, with Germanic-Dutch voters (31 percent) as the largest group. While they are evenly divided on many issues, that is not true on the cultural ones, where they are more conservative on gay marriage and abortion: a majority is pro-life. Bush won these voters by 11 points, though that is not a significant change from 2000. With so many of these voters in the battleground states, they were hotly contested and like other battleground voters, did not shift very much in this election. But they are a big target, as they are much more Democratic than other white voters: Republicans have only a 4-point party advantage, while Democrats are ahead by 3 in a congressional contest.

According to exit polls, Kerry actually made gains with white Catholics in the western part of the country. These voters are more secular than white Catholics elsewhere, and a majority are pro-choice and oppose the war in Iraq. But these voters are also more libertarian and skeptical about government: just 44 percent support government regulation or a pro active government that focuses on building a strong community.

White Catholics in the South align much more closely with their neighbors. Bush did not make much progress with these voters from 2000, but then again, there was not much room for growth, as he won them by a nearly 40-point margin in both 2000 and 2004. The cultural con-

servatism that is endemic to the South is particularly evident among white Catholic voters here. Almost 60 percent think abortion should be illegal.

The Catholic Worldview

While white Catholics are evenly divided on a number of cultural and political issues, there are few issues that more effectively capture the contrasting ideologies within this electorate than the debate over the direction of the Church. The debate is over whether the Catholic Church needs to become more modernized and adapt to an evolving society or whether the Church needs to return to its roots and become more tied to traditional Church teachings. White Catholics come down evenly on each side with 46 percent favoring a more modernized approach and 47 percent preferring a return to more traditional practices.

Where voters come down on this question is significant, as it trumps gender, age, education, region and even Church attendance as an indication of their partisan leanings and ideology. The Catholics favoring modernization side firmly with Democrats, as Kerry won these voters by a 17-point margin in November. For their part, Republicans dominate among the traditionalists, as Bush won these voters by 39 points, thus creating a 56-point voting gap on this world view.

Demographically, support for more traditional positions is driven by seniors, who make up a third of these voters and favor a more traditional approach by a 33-point margin (61 to 28 percent). There is also a sharp education gap on this issue with 54 percent of those with a college degree preferring a more modern Church while just 39 percent of voters without a college degree support a more modernized approach. Regionally, the Northeast is the only region where a more modern approach is favored, and even here only 50 percent prefer a Church more connected to society.

As to be expected, the cultural divide between the two sides is stark, as they are diametrically opposed on abortion, with 67 percent of traditionalists believing it should be illegal in all or most cases and 66 percent of the modernists supporting a woman's right to choose. When it comes to gay marriage, the modernists split evenly (putting them on the same level as Democrats), but there is no such ambivalence among traditionalists on the issue as 71 percent oppose it.⁶

⁶ When it comes to Church attendance, 37 percent of modernists continue to attend Church on a weekly basis, a sizable percentage though still much less than the 56 percent of traditionalists who do so. Overall nearly half of the white Catholic electorate attends Church every week, with attendance heaviest among Seniors (68 percent), conservatives (59 percent) and women over 50 (57 percent). Italians, at 38 percent, are well below their Irish and German counterparts in attendance, as are voters under 50 (40 percent) and Catholics in the West (40 percent) and the Northeast (43 percent).

While there is a big gap in thinking between the modernists and traditionalists, the gap is not insurmountable. About a third of the traditionalists align with the Democrats. And even more support progressive positions on issues: over 40 percent believe the Iraq war was not worth the cost and favor a more multilateral foreign policy. They favor increased aid to reduce poverty in America; they are open to an approach on abortion emphasizing prevention and they are very responsive to an appeal based on middle-class advocacy.

Moral Values

Part of reaching practicing and more traditional Catholics, as well as the Democratic defectors, is more explicitly addressing concerns about moral values.

But what does that mean for Catholics? While these voters are more pro-life than other white voters, they are more tolerant than non-Catholic social conservatives. In fact, when we give people a list of “moral concerns,” the dominant one is “people not being personally responsible” (36 percent), with an additional 28 percent citing “permissiveness and lack of discipline.”

Lack of respect for life, particularly abortion, was mentioned by 29 percent, comparable to and not appreciably greater than other moral concerns, such as “people living in poverty” (28 percent) and “greed” (26 percent). About a quarter mention families threatened by breakdown (23 percent), while only 10 percent mention families threatened by Hollywood and gay marriage.

Among the *traditional* Catholics, the highest moral concern is the threat to life, including abortion, buttressed by permissiveness and lack of discipline. That is also true for the Democratic defectors.

However, if we step back from the politically constructed categories and just ask people, “what comes to mind when you hear the words, “moral values,” the discourse is much broader and more open. Their discourse starts with personal integrity (24 percent), above all honesty and integrity, and knowing right from wrong. That is the starting point, on which neither party has any philosophic claim, though Democrats have battled for trust in the last few presidential elections.

DEFINING MORAL VALUES⁷	
<i>Open-ended Responses</i>	
Personal Integrity	24
Honesty/integrity/honor	14
Knowing right from wrong	3
Standing up for what you believe in	3
Tolerance/not judging others/not forcing views on others	3
Family and Culture	22
Family/home	13
Respecting/valuing life (general, not specifically abortion)	6
Children/taking care of/raising well	3
Golden Rule/Social Compact	21
Doing the right thing/being a good person/living a good life	8
Golden rule/treating other people well/compassion	7
Taking care of people/health care/safety net	4
Helping poor/homeless/less fortunate	3
Gender Roles (incl. abortion & gay marriage)	14
Abortion	9
Homosexuality/gay marriage	5
Marriage/fidelity/not cheating	2
Religion	11
Religion/faith/Christianity/belief in God	8
Ten Commandments	3

Very close in importance are responses that center on the Golden Rule (21 percent), treating other people well, being a good person, and doing the right thing.

The other major open-ended responses center on a strong family, children and respecting life (not mentioning abortion), mentioned by 22 percent. Through the survey, people when asked about moral values spoke of “home and family,” “family values,” “family protection,” “family-oriented.”

Much further down are the explicit mentions of religion, cited by 11 percent – people talking explicitly about religious faith, belief in God and the Ten Commandments. A like number (14 percent) mention symbolic cultural issues, like abortion and gay marriage.

There is a broad opportunity to open up a narrative about morals, particularly as one highlights personal responsibility, greed and regard for others, and even poverty. More broadly, this is a narrative about personal integrity, support for the family, and the Golden Rule.

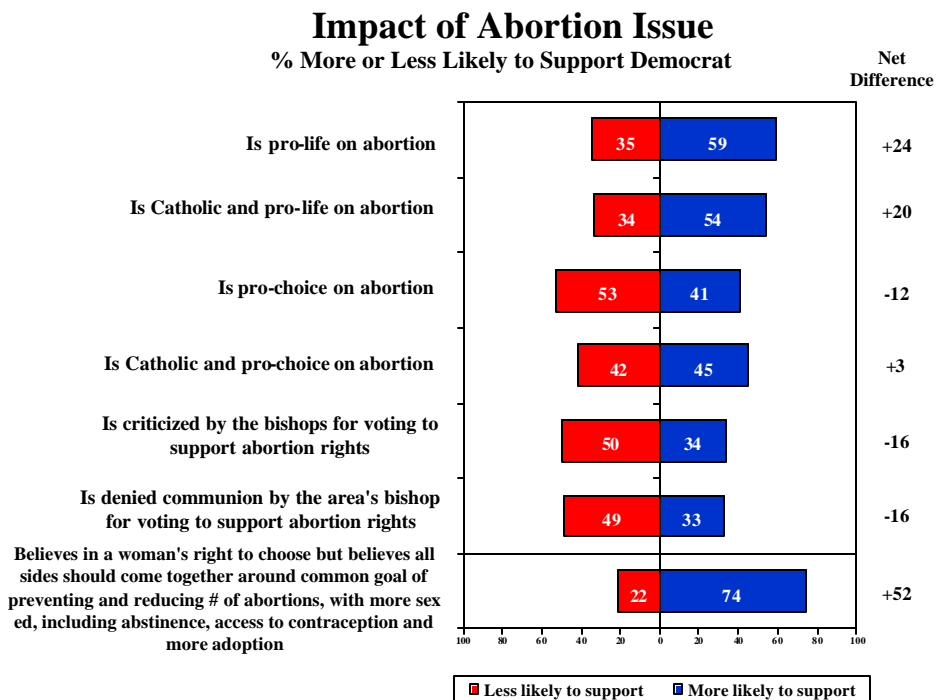
⁷ Because some respondents gave more than one response in a particular category, the total in the sub-categories occasionally exceeds the total number cited in the corresponding collapsed category.

The Choice Issue and Beyond

This survey shows a white Catholic electorate that is more favorable to pro-life groups (49 percent) than voters overall (42 percent). While a majority of the country favors keeping abortion legal (56 to 37 percent), white Catholics are evenly divided, though the strong opponents outnumber the strong proponents. A majority of the Democratic defectors (54 percent) have favorable views of pro-life groups and they cite abortion as their single greatest moral concern.

Although the pro-life position is strongest among seniors, Catholics current pro-life position does not appear likely to lessen with time. While middle-age Catholics lean toward keeping abortion legal, voters under 30 are more pro-life: 53 percent believe abortion should be illegal in most cases.

Overall, a Democratic candidate who is pro-life on abortion gains a net 24-points on the issue: 59 percent more likely to support, with 35 percent less likely. A pro-life Catholic Democratic candidate gains a similar advantage, though that advantage is cut in half in the East. A pro-choice Democrat loses a net 12 points in support, with 53 percent less likely to support the candidate. Interestingly, a pro-choice Catholic Democrat, showing a streak of independence apparently, does not lose ground on the choice issue, indeed gaining a net 7 points in the East.



Conflict with the bishops on abortion or on communion is not particularly helpful – a net 16 points less support for the Democrat.

But these same voters are very open to a pro-choice Democrat who wants to unite all sides around the goal of reducing the number of abortions, with a focus on abstinence, contraception and adoption. Almost three-quarters are more likely to support that candidate, including almost half much more likely. That pro-choice Democrat gains a net 63 points among Democratic defectors and even 28 points among the traditionalist Catholics. White Catholics are clearly open to a different approach from the one that has polarized them over the last few years.

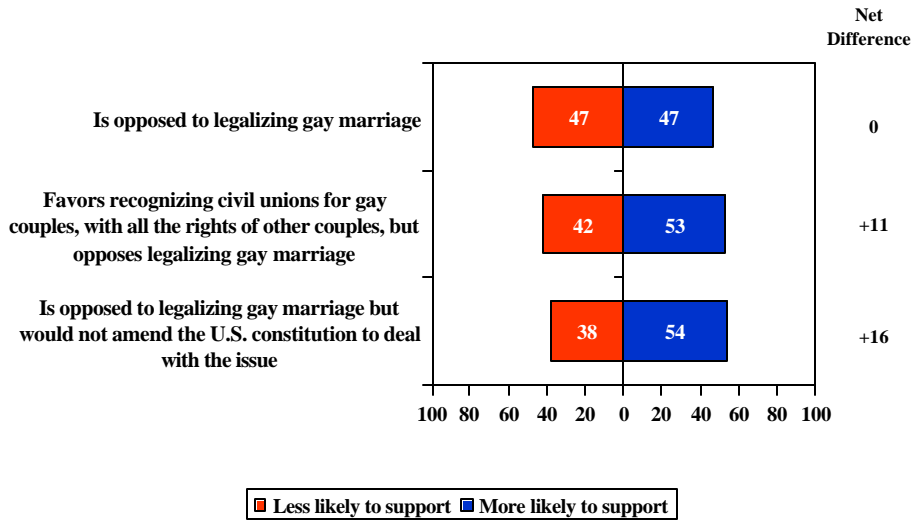
From Tolerance to a Broader Social Agenda

White Catholics not only are more tolerant on social issues, like homosexuality, they affirmatively want to vote for tolerance and progress.

On homosexuality, 57 percent of white Catholics assert that it should be accepted by society, with 35 percent believing it strongly; just 35 percent think it should be discouraged. This is a greater level of tolerance than among whites overall, who are divided on the issue (46 to 43 percent).

There is no advantage for a Democratic candidate who makes clear their opposition to gay marriage: remarkably, 47 percent say they are more likely to vote for him or her, but an equal number are less likely. Democrats opposed to gay marriage but supportive of civil unions or opposed to a constitutional amendment actually gain on the issue: a net 11 points for civil unions and 16 points on opposition to the amendment. In effect, the “Kerry position” on gay marriage, surely not very well known to voters, would have helped Kerry and other Democrats among white Catholics. That was true in the East, as well as in the more contested Midwest.

Impact of Gay Marriage Issue
 % More or Less Likely to Support Democrat

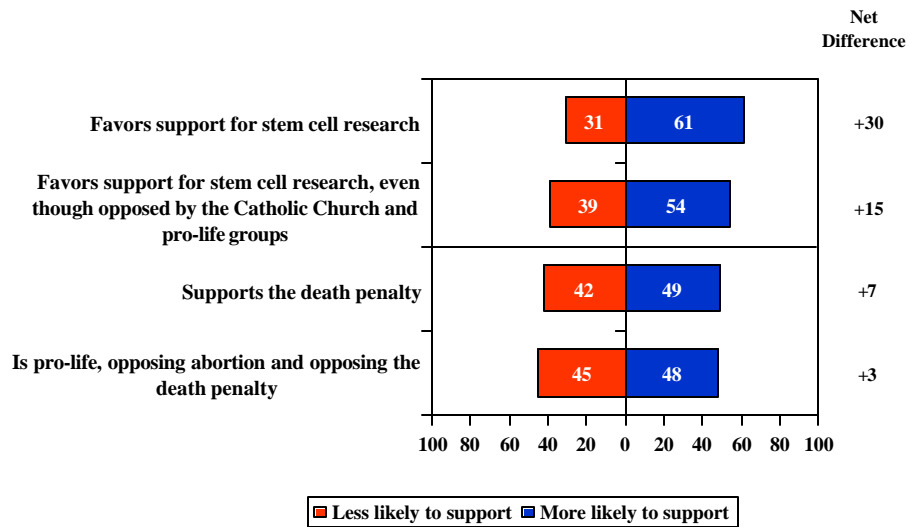


“Now, let me read you some things about a Democratic candidate for Congress. After the statement please tell me whether this would make you more likely or less likely to support a Democratic candidate?”

The white Catholic electorate, across all divides, wants to support scientific progress on attacking social ills, particularly health problems. They are more likely to support a Democrat who favors stem cell research by a 30-point margin: 61 percent more likely to support, twice the number who say less. Even when advised that such research is opposed by the Church and pro-life groups, these voters are much more likely to support the Democrat promoting work on stem cells.

There are clearly limits to Church advocacy, as is evident with stem cell research. But it is interesting that Catholic voters are more likely to support a Democrat who supports the death penalty: 49 percent more likely and 42 percent less. A Democrat running with a pure-pro-life position – against abortion and the death penalty – actually gains only 3 points net (48 percent more likely and 45 percent less).

Impact of Positions on Catholic Issues
 % More or Less Likely to Support Democrat



“Now, let me read you some things about a Democratic candidate for Congress. After the statement please tell me whether this would make you more likely or less likely to support a Democratic candidate?”

In this survey, we buttressed statements by candidates with biblical references. But we found no case where such a reference increased support and, in fact, in one case, it significantly lowered support.⁸ This was true even for practicing and more traditionalist Catholics.

White Catholics are open in ways not evident for Evangelical Christians, who carry their abortion position deeper into a larger world view and who ground their politics more deeply in their faith. For white Catholics, this is much more conditional, with a greater skepticism about Church authority. A pro-life position stands alongside a greater tolerance and openness to progress in a modern world.

⁸ Without any Biblical reference, the following message generated a net of 38 percent more likely to support: “My obligation is to reduce economic inequality and create opportunity for all. Today, CEO's of the largest corporations earn 500 times that of the average worker and that is just wrong.” When a Biblical reference was included, a similar message stating “my obligation is to reduce economic inequality and create opportunity for all. Today, CEO's of the largest corporations earn 500 times that of the average worker, even though Luke taught us, ‘be on your guard against every form of greed.’ Luke was right and that is wrong” garnered a net gain of just 22 points.

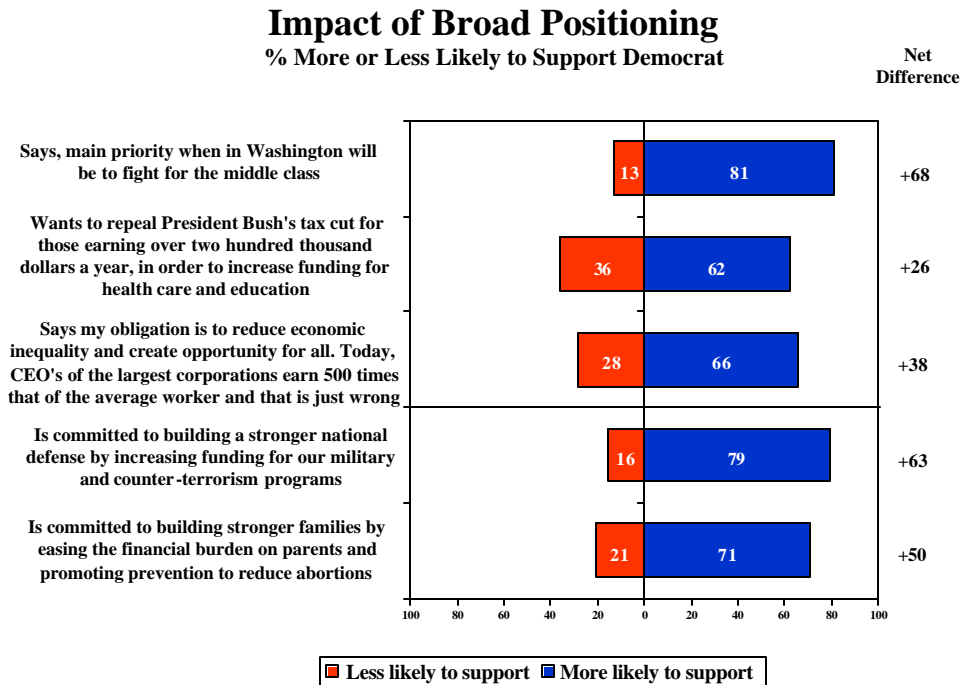
The Broader Agenda for Catholic Voters

A Democratic candidate moves into a whole different level when they go beyond the narrow social issues to a broader agenda.

They gain their strongest position by stating simply a mission to fight for the middle class: 81 percent are more likely to support such a candidate. That would no doubt have been enhanced had the candidate stressed the values, like hard work, personal responsibility and family, that are associated with a middle-class narrative.

Even when we take this message to a tougher populist position, the Democrat makes major gains. Talking about the inequality that allows CEOs to make 500 times more than their employees produces a 38-point gain for the Democrat: 66 percent more likely and only 28 percent less. Asserting the more partisan goal to reverse Bush’s tax cuts for those earning over \$200,000 to fund health care and education produces a net 26-point gain.

Every one of these populist economic issues wins even more support among the Democratic defectors than in the electorate as a whole.



There is opportunity for Democrats beyond populist economics. In light of earlier doubts about the Democrats on security issues, it is striking that the Democrat stressing increased mili-

tary spending and resoluteness against the terrorists gains a net 63 points, with 79 percent more likely to support the candidate.

The candidate gains a net 50 points with a pro-family position, helping with the financial burden and working to reduce abortions: 71 percent say they are more likely to vote for that candidate. As one thinks beyond the narrow social issues, it is worth underscoring the high support won by a Democrat running as a populist champion of the middle class, working for strong families and a strong America.

White Catholics are an increasingly contested group, divided on many issues. That is an invitation for Republicans to take their cultural war to a new level. But there is no reason why Democrats should fail to battle for the dislodged Catholic voters. These voters can be won back, both with reassurance on values and security and a broader agenda that recognizes Catholic support for tolerance, progress, a strong family and a strong middle class.