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To: Friends of Democracy Corps

From: Stan Greenberg
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RE: GENDER GAP, MEET THE EDUCATION GAP
Report on the Latest Democracy Corps National Survey and Post-Debate Trends

The latest Democracy Corps poll show shows a stable race for president, with John Kerry ahead 49 to 47 percent. Nader is at 1 percent, but double that in the battleground states. Bush has still not been able to move himself above the 47 percent threshold, which is a very dangerous position for an incumbent.¹

That Bush has hit this ceiling and that Kerry is in a position to win is difficult to see amidst the public polls, which seem and are all over the place. That is because of inconsistent methodology, inexperience in electoral polling and because of turnout models that are missing current dynamics. But even from the public polls, Bush and Kerry are on average tied at 47 percent of the vote.²

Democracy Corps shows a continuing consolidation of Democrats, union households, and minority voters behind Kerry after the debates. In addition, he has moved ahead with new registrants and young voters, independents and moderates, and Kerry is now clearly ahead of Bush in the battleground states where it matters. There is plenty of evidence of the fruits of progressive activity over the past year.

But the big story in this election is the *Education Gap*, which is greatly impacting who are the targets in the coming week, and will impact and be the story of the election afterwards. While the Gender Gap has diminished since 2000, the Education Gap has

¹ Democracy Corps conducted a national survey of 1,015 likely voters October 20-21, 2004.

² This is based on the vote among registered voters. According to academic studies, Gallups' registered estimate was a better predictor of the vote than their likely estimate in three of the last four presidential elections.

expanded significantly, and is now slightly larger than the division along gender lines. Gender Gap, meet the Education Gap.

The Education Gap is a production of the polarizing strategies of the Bush White House and the voter reaction to the culture war and the real war in Iraq.

News organizations have correctly talked about the fact that the Gender Gap is somewhat reduced this year, but they are wrong when they say Kerry is losing women. He has a 8-point lead over Bush in the post-debate period, 53 to 45 percent.³ That produces a gender gap of only 10 points, compared to 2000 when, according to the exit polls, Gore won with a gender gap of 22 points. But that is a product of a number of other currents. First, Kerry runs better with men than Al Gore, as Kerry only trails Bush by 2 points among men.

GENDER AND EDUCATION GAPS: 2000 VS. 2004							
<i>Percent Responding</i>							
	%	2000⁴			2004		
		Gore	Bush	Net	Kerry	Bush	Net
GENDER							
Male	48	42	53	-11	47	49	-2
Female	52	54	43	+11	53	45	+8
Net Gap				22			10
EDUCATION							
Non-College	58	47	49	-2	48	50	-2
College/Post-Graduate	42	48	48	0	53	43	+10
Net Gap				2			12

But second, and perhaps more important to this race, the Education Gap has now emerged as at least as important as the Gender Gap. In 2000, there was only a 2-point education gap, with Gore and Bush running dead even among college graduates and Bush winning by just 2 points among the non-college educated voters. The result was a 2-point education gap. But not so in 2004. Today, there is now a 12-point education gap. Kerry is winning college educated voters by 10 points but losing the non-college graduates by 2 points. This emergence of the Education Gap is the new story of this election.⁵

³ These comparisons use the combined data base of the three national surveys conducted since the conclusion of the presidential debates.

⁴ Based on 2000 exit poll data.

⁵ The large gap between married and unmarried women has also been mentioned by news organizations, and this current 31-point gap has expanded slightly since 2000. This gap is significant, but it is not new, as there was a 28-point marital gap in 2000. Bush's 11-point advantage among married voters has remained constant while Kerry has improved on Al Gore's advantage among unmarried voters by 3 points, 60 to 37 percent.

When you disaggregate education by gender, a whole new world opens up, particularly when you look in the white electorate. Among *white college graduates*, there is a 13-point gender gap: Kerry is doing very well with women, winning by 8 points, and surprisingly with men, losing by only 5 points. That Kerry is currently getting 46 percent of these male voters is quite striking.

There is a similar gender gap *among the white non-college graduates* where Bush is smashing Kerry among the men by 25 points. Bush’s entire campaign and presidency – from guns to Iraq to tax cuts – was meant to build his support here. Kerry is also losing these blue-collar women by 13 points (56 to 43 percent). But in 2000, Bush and Gore ran almost evenly here, with Bush edging Gore by just 2 points. That is a serious shortfall, rooted in the ascendancy of cultural politics.

2004 Presidential Vote				
<i>Percent Responding</i>				
	%	Kerry	Bush	Net
GENDER AND EDUCATION				
White Non-College Men	20	36	61	-25
White Non-College Women	26	43	56	-13
White College Men	18	46	51	-5
White College Women	16	53	45	+8

That is why the non-college educated women are the center of attention in this election. The cultural issues have moved them toward Bush, but they are not nearly so Republican or supportive of the President. White non-college educated women over age 50 are the biggest area of opportunity and the group that Bush will work assiduously to hold back with a campaign of fear in the next week.

They are very important to the rural areas, where so much of the race will be fought. But they are also important to the more industrial battleground states, where social conservative trends have diminished Democratic support in recent years. As television nears exhaustion, radio could be the battleground at the close of the election.

Despite the culture war waged by Bush, these older non-college educated women are very open to the issues that Kerry and the Democrats are advancing, from job changes, health care and Social Security to middle class tax cuts.

The media has focused on the diminished gender gap and saw a problem. But the major story is the ascendancy of the Education Gap, which makes much clearer where the battleground lies for November 2.