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To: Friends of Democracy Corps

From: Stan Greenberg
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**RE: The Culture War and Changes in the Not-Always-Stable 2004 Electorate
Faith, Iraq and the Economy**

While national polls continue to show a tight and fairly stable race for president, underneath there is a lot of churning – centered on Iraq and religious faith and perhaps the economy.¹ Putting the spotlight on that instability tells us a great deal about the underlying dynamics shaping the race ahead. They also highlight areas of volatility that will be important to targeting in the months ahead. Using the combined data set of Democracy Corps and Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research polls, we are able to examine these changes, otherwise invisible to observers.²

In the months of May-June, compared to polls earlier in 2004, Kerry has made dramatic gains among young white voters (under 30 years) and white single voters; indeed, he has made gains with younger blue collar voters (white, non-college under 50), where Bush had built up strong support through the Iraq war. In this period, Kerry has made sharp gains with self-identified “moderates” and also the non-observant Protestants and Catholics. Kerry’s gains with all these groups is driven by disillusionment on Iraq, but also perhaps by discomfort with the president’s cultural politics.

But Bush has remained competitive up until now with increased support in his base, particularly among white devout evangelicals (those attending church each week). His cultural focus may well have improved his position with older blue collar women (white, non-college over 50). And very important, given the recent focus on Kerry’s position on church issues, Bush

¹ Overall in the May-June period the race was a dead heat with Bush and Kerry each receiving 48 percent. This demonstrates a small decline for Bush, who held a 3-point lead (49 to 46 percent) over the January-April period. In the battleground states, however, Kerry held a 4-point lead in this most recent period (50 to 46 percent), which is comparable to the average of all public polls for this period, and represents a 5-point shift away from Bush from January-April.

² This shifts described in this analysis are based on comparison of surveys conducted during two time periods: The first period covers January 13 – April 22, 2004 and consists of interviews with 6,969 likely voters, while the second period covers May 10 – June 17, 2004 and consists of 2,972 likely voters.

has gained with devout Catholics (white Catholics attending church every week). Limiting that gain and underscoring the current dynamic, Bush has lost ground with both non-observant evangelicals and Catholics.

Shifts Toward Kerry

The war is a big factor in the shift away from Bush, re-enforced by concerns with the uneven economy. The groups that have shifted stand out, above all else, on their growing disgruntlement with the war and its costs. But these are also voters who also wanted to see a change on the economy, suggesting both cultural and material issues in the shift to Kerry.

Below are the groups that have shifted most significantly away from Bush and towards Kerry in the past two months as compared to the first four months of the year.

Young White Voters (under 30 years). At this time last year, young voters were some of President Bush's strongest supporters, with 76 percent approving of his job performance and only 22 percent disapproving. Support for the war was highest with young voters. However, perhaps no group has moved away from Bush more significantly in the last two months: 50 percent now disapprove of his performance. The percentage disapproving of his job performance increased 13 points from the first four months of the year, as these young voters turn on the president.

Kerry has gone from trailing Bush by 16 points among this group over the first four months of the year, to holding a slim one point advantage now (49 to 48 percent). The starting point is the war: from January to April, this group felt the war was worth it by a 20 point margin (59 to 39 percent) but they now oppose it by a 7-point margin (51 to 44 percent). Apparently, this is not a group that feel's the economic progress. They now favor moving in a significantly different direction on the economy by a 14-point margin (55 to 42 percent)³, compared to the first four months of the year when they favored the Bush direction by 4 points (51 to 47 percent).

These mounting frustrations have resulted in this group moving from solidly within the Bush column, to now entirely up for grabs. The heating culture war is not likely to bring these voters back, as a majority support gay marriage.

White single voters (never married). These voters have never been in Bush's camp, but over the past six months, they have gone from being competitive to becoming a part of Kerry's core support. Their distrust for Bush's economic policies and opposition to the war in Iraq have intensified over the past two months, with 65 percent now wanting a

³ Due to rounding the margin cited does not always equal the difference between the totals.

different direction on the economy (up from 59 percent over the first four months of the year) and 61 percent believing the war in Iraq was not worth the cost of lives and dollars (up from 52 percent).

These mounting frustrations have caused Bush's approval rating among these voters to decline from 46 to 38 percent, with 60 percent now disapproving of his job in office. Meanwhile, Kerry's advantage among these voters has grown to 20 points (58 to 39 percent), a significant increase over the 9-point edge he held over the first four months of the year (52 to 43 percent).

Younger Blue Collar White Voters (non-college under 50 years). These voters remain solid Bush supporters, but because they make up over 20 percent of the electorate their declining support for him could have major implications come November. Their approval of his job performance has dropped 9 points since the first four months of the year, from 64 percent to 55 percent in the current period. Their support for Bush in the presidential race has also declined noticeably as his 27-point advantage (61 to 34 percent) through April has declined to a 17-point advantage (57 to 40 percent) now.

The primary source of their dissatisfaction with Bush seems to stem from the war in Iraq. Over the first four months of the year, these voters were staunch supporters, believing the war was worth it by a 22-point margin (59 to 37 percent), but over the last two months they appear to have made an about face, and now feel it was not worth the cost of lives and dollars by a 2-point margin (50 to 48 percent).

Change in the 2004 Presidential Vote				
<i>Kerry Gains</i>				
<i>(Margin: Kerry – Bush)</i>				
	% of electorate	Jan-April Polls Margin	May-June Polls Margin	Kerry Gain
All Voters	--	-3	0	+3
Young White Voters⁴	9	-16	1	+17
White Single Voters	12	+9	+20	+11
Younger Blue Collar Whites	20	-27	-17	+10
Moderate Republicans	16	-74	-65	+9
Moderates	39	+13	+21	+8

+ sign indicates advantage for Kerry/- sign indicates advantage for Bush.

⁴ Group Descriptions: *Young White Voters*- Whites aged 18-29; *Younger Blue Collar Voters*- White voters under the age of 50 without a college degree; *White single voters*- White voters who have never been married; *Moderate Republicans*- Voters who identified themselves as ideologically moderate and Republican; *Moderates*- Voters who identified themselves as ideologically moderate.

Moderates. Moderates represent nearly 40 percent of the electorate and over 50 percent of each candidates' persuadable voters.⁵ As the cultural war heats up and doubts about the war grow, Bush has lost ground here. Among moderates, 58 percent now disapprove of his job in office, a 6-point increase over the first four months of the year, and their support for Kerry has swelled to a startling 21-point margin (59 to 38 percent).

This movement away from Bush is also being driven by moderate Republicans. Though a vast majority of these voters (77 percent) still approve of Bush's job performance and plan to vote for him in November (80 percent), his job approval rating and lead over Kerry have declined 7 and 9 points respectively over the past two months. While Bush's standing among these voters remains strong, these shifts are not minor, and could represent troubling signs for Bush.

The shift away from Bush among moderates and moderate Republicans alike appears related to the war and cultural issues, not the economy. There was little movement among either group in regards to Bush's handling of the economy over the past six months, but this is not true on the war. The percentage of moderates believing the war was not worth the cost rose 6 points (from 57 to 63 percent) while the percentage of moderate Republicans opposing the war rose by 8 points, with a third of these voters now opposing it.

Movements to Bush – Polarizing the faithful

While Kerry has made some important gains over the past two months, Bush has made some progress of his own, driven by increased support among socially conservative groups, such as devout evangelicals and Catholics, as well as older blue collar women. These are more traditional voters who may be responding to cultural issues, as well as the president's case on the economy. It is striking, however, that Bush's gains have come with those church affiliated voters who attend church each week, as well as with the most socially conservative older blue collar women, suggesting that Bush's cultural politics are resonating with these voters. On the other hand, Bush is losing ground with moderates and, as we shall see below, with non-devout evangelicals and Catholics.

White Devout Evangelicals. Although Bush has lost some ground with moderate Republicans, his focus on cultural issues appears to be paying off among white evangelicals who attend church regularly.

White devout evangelicals approval rating of Bush increased by 4 points to 83 percent and their preference for Bush over Kerry expanded to 72 points (85 to 13 percent) an 8-point increase from the first four months of the year. They still remain strongly

⁵ Based on a formula used to determine strength of support for Kerry and Bush.

supportive of the war in Iraq with 69 percent believing it was worth it, and became more supportive of Bush's economic policies, with 73 percent favoring his direction on the economy, a 4-point increase from the January to April period.

But the 8-point gain for Bush among the devout has been partially counter-balanced by the 10-point gain for Kerry among the somewhat smaller group of non-practicing evangelicals. That contrast suggests what is really driving the vote choice here.

White Devout Catholics. White devout Catholics have also moved more strongly to Bush over the course of this year, giving him a 58 percent approval rating and favoring him over Kerry by a 16-point margin, an 8-point increase in Bush's advantage. These gains for Bush came despite a significant souring on the Iraq war, suggesting the importance of religious issues. Through April they felt the war was worth it by a 2-point margin (49 to 47 percent) but over the past two months that mild approval has shifted to solid opposition, with devout Catholics now believing the war was not worth it by an 11-point margin (52 to 41 percent), with 43 percent opposing it strongly.

But again, the Bush gains among the devout (his margin up 8 points) has been partially offset by Kerry's gains (his margin up 2 points) among the more numerous non-practicing white Catholics. That the devout and non-devout have become more polarized, suggests the importance of this dynamic – as Bush continues to emphasize his brand of the values issues.

<p style="text-align: center;">Change in the 2004 Presidential Vote <i>Bush Gains</i> (Margin: Bush – Kerry)</p>				
	% of the electorate	Jan-April Polls Margin	May-June Polls Margin	Bush Gain
All Voters	--	+3	0	-3
White Devout Evangelicals ⁶	8	+64	+72	+8
White Devout Catholics	7	+8	+16	+8
Older Blue Collar White Women	15	+5	+10	+5
White Non-Devout Catholics	10	0	-2	-2
White Non-Devout Evangelicals	4	+40	+30	-10

+ sign indicates advantage for Bush/- sign indicates advantage for Kerry.

Older Blue Collar Women (non-college over 50 years). These traditional and socially conservative voters, who make up 17 percent of the electorate, moved slightly toward the president in the last two months. The shift may have been aided by economic perceptions. Over the first four months of the year, they favored going in a significantly different direction on the economy by a 20-point margin (58 to 38 percent), but over the past two months that margin has closed to just 3 points (50 to 46 percent). This changing view of the economy has helped Bush expand his lead among these voters from 5 points (50 to 45 percent) to 10 points in the latest period (53 to 43 percent).

The changes in the electorate are not major, and indeed, seem to be reflecting the main battles of the two parties. Kerry has gained sharply with younger voters and singles, moderates and younger blue collar, with the Iraq war being a major factor in these shifts. Some of the gains may be in reaction to Bush’s cultural focus, as Kerry has gained with non-practicing Catholics and evangelicals. Bush has gained with more religious and socially conservative groups, with some push from the economy. His gains, which are real, have come among the most devout.

⁶ Group Descriptions: *White Devout Evangelicals*- White Protestant voters who attend church every week and described their type of Christianity as Fundamentalist, Evangelical or Charismatic/Pentecostal; *Older Blue Collar Women*- White women over the age of 50 without a college degree; *White Non-Devout Catholics*- White voters who indicated that they are Catholic and do not attend church on a weekly basis; *White Non-Devout Evangelicals*- White Protestant voters who described their type of Christianity as Fundamentalist, Evangelical or Charismatic/Pentecostal and do not attend church every week. *White Devout Catholics*- White Catholic voters who attend church every week.

Culture War and Changes in the Electorate

That these groups have moved in response to the campaign is evidence of some volatility and will likely increase rather decrease attention to them by the campaigns.

Economy <i>Change in Direction or Continue Bush Direction</i> <i>(Margin: Significantly Different Direction – Bush Direction)</i>				
	% of the electorate	Jan-April Polls Margin	May-June Polls Margin	Shift Towards Sig. Diff. Direction
All Voters	--	+9	+10	+1
Young White Voters	9	-4	+14	+18
White Single Voters	12	+21	+31	+10
Younger Blue Collar Whites	20	-3	+3	+6
Moderate Republicans	16	-47	-45	+2
Moderates	39	+27	+27	--
White Devout Catholics	17	+5	+2	-3
White Devout Evangelicals	8	-42	-48	-6
Older Blue Collar Women	15	+20	+3	-17

+ sign indicates Sig. Different Direction/- sign indicates Bush Direction

<p style="text-align: center;">War in Iraq <i>Worth the Cost of Lives and Dollars vs. Not Worth Cost</i> (Margin: Worth the Cost – Not Worth Cost)</p>				
	% of the electorate	Jan-April Polls Margin	May-June Polls Margin	Shift Towards Not Worth Cost
All Voters	--	-2	-13	+11
Young White Voters	9	+20	-7	+27
Younger Blue Collar Whites	20	+22	-2	+24
Moderate Republicans	16	+46	+30	+16
White Single Voters	12	-9	-26	+15
White Devout Catholics	17	+2	-11	+13
Moderates	39	-18	-29	+11
White Devout Evangelicals	8	+47	+42	+5
Older Blue Collar Women	15	-11	-15	+4

+ sign indicates Worth cost/- sign indicates Not worth cost