

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

Date: October 27, 2004

To: Friends of Democracy Corps

From: Stan Greenberg
Anna Greenberg

RE: THE TALE OF TWO GAPS
The Role of Education and Gender in the 2004 Elections

The Education Gap may well prove larger than the Gender Gap in the 2004 election, not because John Kerry is doing less well with women, but because of the firestorms that the Bush administration has set off around Iraq and cultural issues and around their views of government and America's role in the world. It has produced shifts of non-college-educated women to Bush and college-educated men to Kerry. That cultural shift has diminished the gender the gap and enlarged the education gap.

The State of the Gaps

When one looks at the current state of the electorate (combining all of Democracy Corps' post-debate polls), we see a gender gap of 10 points: among men, Bush is ahead by 3 points; among women, Kerry is ahead by 7 points. As we can see in the table below, the gender gap has been cut in half compared to 2000 when the gap was a striking 23 points.

On the other hand, there was no education in gap in 2000, just 2 points. Essentially, Gore and Bush ran equally well with the college educated and those without a college degree. But today, the education gap equals that for the gender gap, 10 points. Bush is ahead by 2 points among the non-college graduates, but Kerry is leading by 8 points with the college educated voters.

| GENDER AND EDUCATION GAPS: 2000 VS. 2004 | | | | | | |
|---|-------------|-------------|------------|--------------|-------------|------------|
| <i>Percent Responding</i> | | | | | | |
| | 2000 | | | 2004 | | |
| GENDER | Gore | Bush | Net | Kerry | Bush | Net |
| Male | 42 | 54 | -12 | 46 | 49 | -3 |
| Female | 54 | 43 | +11 | 52 | 45 | +7 |
| Net Gap | | | 23 | | | 10 |
| EDUCATION | | | | | | |
| Non-College | 48 | 48 | 0 | 48 | 50 | -2 |
| College/Post-Graduate | 47 | 49 | -2 | 52 | 44 | +8 |
| Net Gap | | | 2 | | | 10 |

What is going on here?

The coverage of the election has mostly missed the real story.

In recent weeks, the news media has obsessively covered the status of “the women’s vote” and asked the question, “will there be a gender gap in 2004?” John Kerry’s weakness among women in the post-GOP convention polls led many commentators to believe that the gender gap would disappear as women moved over to the Bush camp. But as Kerry improved after the debates, he built his lead among women such that he now leads by 7 points, 52 to 45 percent – with Kerry’s vote just short of Al Gore’s 54 percent. That Kerry has fallen just short of Gore is due to slippage among white non-college educated women voters.

The big change is Bush’s underperformance with men. His margin has slipped 9 points. As we shall see below, that has been driven by dramatic losses with white college-educated men.

The Men’s Story

The gender gap has been reduced by Kerry’s stronger performance with men. That is true for all men, including white non-college educated male voters. Gore was slaughtered there in 2000 by 29 points and Kerry has marginally diminished the bloodshed, trailing by 25 points. The really big change is for white college educated men. Watch them. In 2000, Gore faced a similar rout here, losing by 25 points. These were paid up members in Karl Rove’s “Republican base.” But today Kerry is only losing these college men by 6 points (51 to 45 percent).

More than any other factor, these white college educated men are undercutting Bush's male vote.

| EDUCATION GAP AMONG WHITE MEN: 2000 VS. 2004 | | | | | | |
|---|-------------|-------------|------------|--------------|-------------|------------|
| <i>Percent Responding</i> | | | | | | |
| | 2000 | | | 2004 | | |
| | Gore | Bush | Net | Kerry | Bush | Net |
| White Non-College Men | 34 | 63 | -29 | 35 | 60 | -25 |
| White College Men | 35 | 60 | -25 | 45 | 51 | -6 |
| Net Gap | | | 4 | | | 19 |

Where did Bush go wrong with educated men? Clearly the Bush campaign set out to win college educated men with a strategy that emphasized continued tax cuts and Kerry's "tax and spend" record in the Senate. At the outset, this might have been sufficient: Bush led among white college educated men by 20 points (56 to 36 percent) in the late winter and early spring. But as the campaign progressed, Kerry steadily increased his share of the vote – ultimately by 9 points to 45 percent – while Bush dropped by 5 points to 51 percent. In contrast, Bush increased his margin among white non-college educated men from 20 points to 25 points over the same period, almost getting back to 2000 levels.

| BUSH MARGIN IN PRESIDENTIAL VOTE: 2004 | | | | | |
|---|------------------|------------------|--------------|--------------------|--|
| <i>Bush - Kerry</i> | | | | | |
| | Feb – Apr | May – Aug | Sept. | Oct. 4 – 11 | Oct. 14 – 25 (Post Debates) |
| White Non-College Men | -20 | -19 | -29 | -24 | -25 |
| White College Men | -20 | -16 | -11 | -4 | -6 |

Republican strategies, centered on the war and the military, cultural politics and ideology were meant to solidify the base, but it created a series of problems among the educated men. First, college educated men are increasingly skeptical about the situation in Iraq. Second, educated men question Bush's approach to the economy, which remains sluggish while the deficits explode. Finally, the cultural politics that are so important to shoring up religious voters have no impact with these socially moderate voters.

White college educated men prefer Bush on foreign policy by only 4 points, down from 15 points in the spring and summer, while white men without a college education

prefer Bush by 28 points. White educated men favor Bush on Iraq by only 8 points (down from 20 points) while white non-college educated men favor him by 29 points. Only 45 percent of white college educated men say that Bush has good plans for Iraq compared to 61 percent among white non-college educated men.

Interestingly, Bush has seemed to lose these voters on the economy, no longer persuaded by tax cuts.

While white college educated men say they prefer Bush on taxes to Kerry (55 to 39 percent), they are split on which candidate would do a better job on the economy. In fact, they moved from giving Bush a 16-point advantage on the economy over Kerry in the spring and summer to only a 3-point edge now. At the same time, white non-college educated men did not move in their assessment, giving Bush a 17-point advantage on the economy.

While cultural politics helped Bush with many of his base groups including white religious and rural voters, it created no traction among white college educated men. White college educated men are simply not culturally conservative – they give pro-life groups (39 percent warm, 42 percent cool) and the NRA (39 percent warm, 43 percent cool) net negative ratings, unlike white non-college educated men. And while they oppose gay marriage (26 percent warm, 48 percent cool), they do so not nearly by the margin as white non-college educated men (16 percent warm, 64 percent cool). A majority of white college men do not own guns (55 percent), while a majority of white non-college men do (54 percent).

| CULTURAL VIEWS WHITE NON-COLLEGE MEN VS. WHITE COLLEGE MEN <i>Mean Thermometer Scores</i> | | |
|---|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| | White Non-College Men | White College Men |
| The NRA | 64.9 | 46.5 |
| Pro Life Groups | 56.4 | 48.6 |
| Gay Marriage | 24.5 | 37.9 |

The Women’s Story

The story among women is much less dramatic. Kerry is winning white college educated women with the same margin that Al Gore did, by 7 points (52 to 45 percent).

Among the white non-college graduates, Kerry has slipped somewhat, though not dramatically. Gore lost them by 7 points, but Kerry is losing them by 12 (55 to 43 per-

cent). At this point Kerry's vote is down from Gore's but only by 2 points: Gore got 45 percent.

| EDUCATION GAP AMONG WHITE WOMEN: 2000 VS. 2004 | | | | | | |
|---|-------------|-------------|------------|--------------|-------------|------------|
| <i>Percent Responding</i> | | | | | | |
| | 2000 | | | 2004 | | |
| | Gore | Bush | Net | Kerry | Bush | Net |
| White Non-College Women | 45 | 52 | -7 | 43 | 55 | -12 |
| White College Women | 53 | 45 | +8 | 52 | 45 | +7 |
| Net Gap | | | 15 | | | 19 |

The small slippage for Kerry is likely due to these women's continuing social conservatism, their strong support for Bush's resoluteness immediately following September 11th as well as his prosecution of the war on terrorism, and the fact that many were beneficiaries of the Bush tax cuts (e.g., the child tax credit and the marriage penalty).

And there is still opportunity for Kerry to make gains here, which would fully restore the women's part of the equation for Kerry.

The diminished gender gap has been produced partly by Kerry's stronger performance among men, but dramatically by Rove's driving college educated white men out of the Republican base. Cultural politics has a price, felt directly in the diminished gender gap.