

Focus Group Guidelines
June 16-17, 2008
Philadelphia, PA / Denver, CO
3 Undecided, 2 Weak Obama, 1 McCain

I. Introduction (10 minutes)

- Confidentiality
- Mirrors, audio and videotapes
- Respondent introductions

**Karl – Wilmington, DE. Married, 3 daughters. This is what I do for a living.
- 26 daughter, w/ 17 mo son.**

Debbie – 3 kids, 17, 19, 23. Work fulltime.

Barbara – No children, nanny. Live in Phila.

Mandy – one daughter, 2 granddaughters. Work at VA. Birthday

Kathy – Mother of 3, 25, 26, 21. Homemaker, formerly a schoolbus driver.

Wendy – three kids, northeast phila. Homemaker.

II. Direction of the Country (15 minutes)

1. We'll start by talking a little bit about your daily lives. What are the main goals you are working toward in your life at this point?

Debt- Getting out of it.

Lot easier to get into it. Paying tuition, looking forward to not having kids around anymore.

Where they're more independent.

It never stops.

Boys you might, but girls. . .

Debts a big one for everyone.

My goal is to look for cheaper gas. We're in bad shape

To make the most of what I have and enjoy myself as much as I can within my means.

Working on trying to improve my health.

Always looking for a new job. Always have my resume out there, close to the home, gas is killing me.

There's a website that has the cheapest gas by zip code.

What else? What's holding you back?

Money.

The economy.

Everything's going up except the paychecks.

Cost of living.

Percentage of raise is low.

Ours goes up, but health insurance goes up more.

2. And would you say you are making progress toward those goals, kind of stuck and not going either way, or would you say you are losing ground when it comes to the main goals in your life?

Stuck.

One step forward, two back.

Every time you think you have some money. . .

My situation's going to get better — we had some saved, but the people younger than me or older than me are going to get screwed.

They're very disrespectful.

Know too much about sex and drugs.

I was very lucky, my daughter was 25 when she had hers. . .

- What are the biggest challenges you face?

3. How about our country as a whole? Do you feel we are making progress and moving in the right direction, are we kind of stuck where we are right now, or are we losing ground?

Formatted: Bullets and Numbering

Everybody's hurting.

I don't know many people who still maintain their nest egg Medical emergency, or what. . .

Government hasn't. . .

I can't save.

What happens when you're. . .

- What are the biggest challenges we face?

What else is going on?

Schools.

Violence.

Have to pay for private schools since the public schools.

More robberies because of the economy.

Drugs, crime, schools.

Else?

There's people walking the streets, not eating.

Layoffs, companies closing. All these people trying to work but unemployed. . .

They don't get financial help because. . .

- What will it take to get us moving in the right direction again?

III. Associations (20 minutes)

Now I'm going to throw the names of some people from all walks of life that have been in the news lately. For each, please tell me the first thing that comes to mind...

1. George W. Bush

Yuck.

I just think he's got our country into too much.

A hard thing to be president.

I wouldn't want to be him.

Sucks.

I agree.

He might be doing what he thinks is best, but I don't.

Look at the economy.

Iraq.

I guess he thought he could give everyone a stimulus check and we'd be happy.

There should be a better way. . .

2. Hillary Clinton

I like Hillary. I think she's cool.

I would've voted for her.

My biggest thing is it doesn't matter who's sleeping with who as long as they're running the country.

I think she would've been good.

3. Tiger Woods

He's awesome.

The best.

4. Angelina Jolie

I want her husband.

A busy woman.

Mom.

Whackjob.

Different.

I think in years to come she'll end up doing a lot more like she's doing now. . . Get more deeply into that.

It's competition. . . they're all doing that.

5. Kobe Bryant

I could care less.

No opinion on him.

He thinks he's it.

6. Michael Nutter

Kinda new.

Anyone has to be better than Street.

Don't care for him too much.

Did bring Ramsey in. That's a plus.

He's got more people that have more faith than Street did.

Don't think it'll make a difference.

[Written Exercise – Handouts #1 and #2]

7. Barack Obama

- What good things come to mind when you think of Barack Obama?

He might have some good ideas, but not sure.

Get us out of Iraq.

Cares more for the middle class. If you listen to him speak, he wants to try and get more money to not the rich. He's for the average joe. People trying to get by.

Might have good ideas, but will he follow through.

He's liberal but not overly. He seems to have a touch of conservatism with his being liberal. I guess he'd be a moderate.

I just had him bringing the troops back. And tax the rich at a higher level.

Healthcare, make it available for everyone.

Makes you feel like he wants to fix things.

They all say that, though.

I think it should be one tax, no matter how much you make.

- What doubts do you have? What worries you about him?

Not enough experience.

Afraid of more wars, he says he'll bring the troops home, which might lead to more bombing.

Taxes — if he releases the cap, may go up. And the medical.

Trying to do too much.

Lots of issues.

I'm afraid he's too green. High expectations but, might be biting off more than he can chew.

I like him, but I'm concerned about if he could effectively lead everyone because of people who judge based on race. And his safety.

But he's half white.

What particularly about his race?

People think he's a muslim, but he says he's not.

Some people say he's the antichrist.

- If you had to give me three words or phrases to describe Barack Obama, what would they be?

Well spoken, good posture

Nice looking, too.
Beautiful smile for people who aren't racist.
Since he's not the white color there are people drawn back by that.
People won't say "he's a nigger", he's not. He's well spoken. . .

Look at the two preachers — one made fun of hillary, and one had nothing but negative things.
I love hillary, but you're going to do anything. . .

What do you think of the preachers?

I don't think all that stuff should be part of it.

- What is the biggest question you have about Barack Obama at this point?

[Written Exercise – Handouts #3 and #4]

8. John McCain

- What good things come to mind when you think of John McCain?

Think he knows a lot more probably than obama. More experience.
Take him more seriously.
Might change the economy. But I have that for both of them.
They'll all try with the economy.
He has good ideas if he sticks to his promises, then he should do a good job.
He's out there and he's saying I'm going to fix this, but you're always wary.
I always think he's related to French fries.

- What doubts do you have? What worries you about him?

War.
War.
The war'll continue.
He's a republican for the really rich.
Makes promises for the working people, but he's not really for them.
Always pushing the vet. Card.
Another thing about obama, young, fresh ideas.
But mccain says he fought in a war — get the vets on his side.

Wouldn't say he's as bad as bush.

What same?

War, the economy.

No personality, seems kinda white bread. Obama's electric, you see him talking, whether you like him or not.
I'm still undecided, but I've gotta listen more, see if they're bullshitting us.

- If you had to give me three words or phrases to describe John McCain, what would they be?
- What is the biggest question you have about John McCain at this point?

IV. Candidate Grids (20 minutes)

Let's look at these candidates in a different way now. I'd like you to think about them in relation to some other leaders in our country, both past and present, and to use these comparisons to really think about each of these candidates – What kind of a leader is he? What are his strongest qualities? What are his weaknesses? Where will he lead our country as President?

We're going to place each of these candidates relative to other famous leaders on a chart that looks like this... **[Explain grid exercise on easel]**

[Written Exercise – Handout #5]

1. First, let's talk about Barack Obama. On the axis going up and down, you will see that we have John F. Kennedy at the top and John Kerry at the bottom. On the axis going left and right, you will see that we have Jesse Jackson on the left and Colin Powell on the right. Please mark where in the grid you feel Obama fits as a leader relative to each of these leaders, then briefly write why you put him there in the blank space below.

- **Discuss extensively**

Intelligence, well spoken educated from powell. Hopefulness of Kennedy.

Listening to him talk, he sounds more like he's in that area. I know he's not like Jesse Jackson — I don't like him. And John Kerry is so. . . Obama sounds more businessy than Kerry did. Wants to talk to you.

I put him more towards Kerry, same ideas, what he wanted to do for everybody. I think they're the closest out of everybody. I really liked Kerry.

I have him in there too, between Kerry and Powell. I pray he's not like Jesse Jackson. I don't think he is. Jackson's too much about race. It's not always a racial thing.

I put him between JFK and Colin Powell because of the youth and classiness of JFK and the well-spokenness of Powell.

Just reminded me of the idealism of JFK and Camelot, and the statesmanlike Powell.

He's not proven yet.

Powell?

He's not coming off like Jackson.

Seems like he has more class.

Jackson's more like the John Street.

Preachers?

I don't think that's what he's about.

I think we hope he's not.

He can't be as president.

But other black people might think. . .

His mother is 100% caucasian and his father 100% African. So why's his mother's side negated? She raised him.

I think it's sad, but no matter what you look like. . .

[Written Exercise – Handout #6]

2. Now, let's look at John McCain. On the axis going up and down, you will see that we have Ronald Reagan at the top and George H. W. Bush, the current President's father, at the bottom. On the axis going left and right, you will see that we have Arlen Specter on the left and Newt Gingrich on the right. Please mark where in the grid you feel McCain fits as a leader relative to each of these leaders, then briefly write why you put him there in the blank space below.

- **Discuss extensively**

Didn't know where to go. . . Little more Bush than Reagan.

Put him right next to HW, he reminds me of the typical republican clone. Just seems to be very republican right down the line. Bush, bush, McCain, same same same.

I put him in the middle for Reagan, and in the middle for Gingrich. Reagan because he's more for the upper class, Gingrich because he has hard, strong opinions.

Bush and Specter. Didn't really know anything about Gingrich.

Just think he reminds me of him. His speaking and his way about him.

I did Specter because the veterans.

Same thing.

V. Candidate Bios (20 minutes)

Let's talk in a little more detail about each of these candidates. This time, we'll start with John McCain...

[Written exercise – Handout #7]

1. On Handout #7, you will see a series of statements that represent a brief biography of John McCain and some of the key milestones in his life. Please read through this list and circle the two statements that really stand out to you as the most important things to know about John McCain.
 - a. McCain comes from a family of high-ranking military leaders. Both McCain's father and grandfather were admirals in the U.S. Navy, and McCain grew up as a military brat, attending nearly 20 schools at various naval postings in the U.S. and the Pacific. He followed in the footsteps of his father and attended the U.S. Naval Academy. His son Jimmy also followed him into the military and served in Iraq until Feb. 2008.
 - b. McCain volunteered for combat duty in Vietnam, shipping out in December 1966 and leaving behind a wife and three small children. He flew missions in Vietnam until he was shot down in October 1967. He spent 5 ½ years as a POW in the Hanoi Hilton, where he was viciously tortured but refused an offer to be released by the Vietnamese unless all of his fellow prisoners were also released.
 - c. McCain returned to the U.S. as a war hero and eventually took a position as the Navy's liaison to the U.S. Senate. He met his current wife Cindy, only child of a wealthy beer wholesaler in Arizona, in May 1980. He moved to Arizona, retired from the Navy, and began his political career when he was elected to Congress from Arizona in 1982 and then to the Senate in 1986.
 - d. McCain likes to say he began his political career as "a foot soldier in the Reagan Revolution." But his reformer credentials were damaged early in his career when he was rebuked by the Senate Ethics Committee for his role in the Keating Five influence peddling scandal.
 - e. McCain has been a vocal critic of wasteful, pork barrel spending by Democrats and Republicans alike throughout his career. He helped pass the Line Item Veto Act of 1996, has won the "Taxpayer's Hero Award" three times for his efforts to fight pork spending and special interests, and claims to have never requested a single earmark..
 - f. McCain has a well-established reputation as a political maverick who refuses to tow the partisan line. Praised for his "straight talk" during his 2000 campaign against George W. Bush for the Republican nomination, he spoke out against right-wing "agents of intolerance" and promised to work with members of both parties. In 2002, he led the effort to pass bipartisan campaign finance reform, known as the McCain-Feingold Act to limit the influence of money in politics.

Straight talk, promised to work with both parties.

Hopefully he is a straight talker. But he's too busy trying to appease both sides. Tell everyone what they want to hear, and swear to both he's got their back. Only spread yourself so thin

- g. McCain is uniquely qualified to serve as Commander in Chief. In addition to his military career, he serves on the Senate Armed Services Committee and has played a leading role in virtually every major national security issue since 1983.
- h. McCain has been the leading voice in Congress in support of the Iraq War and President Bush's surge policy in 2007, which he says has reduced violence in Iraq. He's criticized any call for withdrawal or a timeline in Iraq and vowed to never surrender or accept any outcome other than victory. And McCain will refuse to negotiate with the leaders of Iran or other terrorist states unless they make security concessions and agree to U.S. demands.

In favor of never getting our guys out of there.

This is a negative.

We have so much that needs to be done here. . .

- i. An early favorite to win the Republican nomination, McCain's 2008 presidential campaign almost went bankrupt in 2007, and he was dismissed as finished by virtually every political pundit. But McCain refused to quit; he trimmed down his campaign, flew on commercial flights to save money, and made his case directly to voters, defeating candidates with more money to win the nomination convincingly.

- **Show of hands, discuss**

- Looking back on this list, what does this say to you about John McCain?

[Written exercise – Handout #8]

2. On Handout #8, you will see a similar series of statements that represent a brief biography of Barack Obama and some of the key milestones in his life. Once again, read through this list and circle the two statements that really stand out to you as the most important things to know about Barack Obama.
- a. Obama’s mother was a white woman from a small town in Kansas who raised him as a single mother from the age of two, sometimes relying on food stamps to make ends meet. His maternal grandfather fought in Patton’s Army in WWII and went to school on the G.I. Bill, while his grandmother worked in a factory to support the war effort. Between the ages of 6 and 10, Obama lived with his mother and stepfather in Indonesia, then returned to Hawaii, where he was raised by his maternal grandparents.
 - b. Obama’s father was a Harvard-educated economist from Kenya who left when he was two years old. Obama met his father only once more before his death in a car crash in 1982. Obama wrote a book about how his father’s absence affected his childhood and recently marked Father’s Day by delivering a speech about the harm caused by absentee fathers, particularly in the African-American community.
 - c. Despite his humble roots, Obama earned academic scholarships that enabled him to attend some of the finest colleges in the country. He graduated from Columbia University with a degree in political science and international relations, and later attended Harvard Law School, where he became the first ever African-American to head the prestigious Harvard Law Review.
 - d. After college, Obama turned down the ability to make big money on Wall Street or with a big company. Instead, he became a community organizer in Chicago with a church-based group seeking to help a diverse set of poor neighborhoods – white, black, and Latino – decimated by the closing of local steel plants. He says this experience made him the leader he is today, with a focus on bringing people with varying interests together for a common purpose and trusting ordinary people to get things done rather than relying on politicians and powerful interests.

Puts him in a positive light. Wants to help everyone.

Poor neighborhoods, white black and latino.

Not in it for the money, not as important as the people.

Saw what the closing did, made him stronger today.

Trust in people rather than relying on politicians.

Father was from Kenya? Not an American?

Probably a lot we don’t know about him.

How much does this matter?

It should be about him, what he’s done. Not his mother was white, father black.

- e. After law school, Obama returned to Chicago to practice as a civil rights lawyer and teach constitutional law at the University of Chicago. He also continued to work in local communities, organizing voter registration drives during the 1992 campaign, and his advocacy work ultimately led him to run for the state legislature in 1996.
- f. Obama was elected to the Illinois state senate in 1996. In the Illinois Senate, he immediately demonstrated an ability to reach across party lines to get things done and led bi-partisan efforts to provide health coverage for 154,000 uninsured Illinoisans, to pass the state's most sweeping new ethics law in a generation, and to expand access to early childhood education programs.
- g. Obama publicly opposed the Iraq war from the very beginning, even when most politicians supported it, and said it would distract from the war in Afghanistan and the effort to stop al Qaeda and Osama bin Laden. Speaking at a rally in October 2002, he said, "I know that even a successful war against Iraq will require a U.S. occupation of undetermined length, at undetermined cost, with undetermined consequences...I know that an invasion of Iraq without a clear rationale and without strong international support will only fan the flames of the Middle East, and encourage the worst, rather than best, impulses of the Arab world, and strengthen the recruitment arm of al-Qaeda."

Nobody wants that war, and saying that, I think — it means something for a lot of people. I don't like some of the others that -- his mother was white, what does that have to do with. . . and his father? Trying to stay away from the racial thing.

- h. While still a candidate for Senate in 2004, Obama was asked to deliver the keynote speech at the Democratic Convention. His speech, emphasizing national unity and attacking partisan division – "We worship an awesome God in the blue states, and we don't like federal agents poking around our libraries in the red states... We are one people, all of us pledging allegiance to the Stars and Stripes, all of us defending the United States of America." – made him an international celebrity before he even took office.
- i. In the U.S. Senate, Obama led the fight for bipartisan ethics reform and introduced major legislation on immigration, reduction of greenhouse gases, and veterans' benefits. On the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, he worked with leading Republicans to pass legislation designed to find and secure deadly nuclear materials and traveled to Russia to begin a new generation of non-proliferation efforts.

- **Show of hands, discuss**

- Looking back on this list, what does this say to you about Barack Obama?

He's a fighter.

Got the attitude.

Going back, what he did after college, actually went out there and organized. Brought the community together beside him, not behind him. Get things done.

VI. Videos (30 minutes)

Now I want to look at some video on some of the major topics we are likely to see and hear about in this campaign...

Wright Footage (Group 1) / Pflieger and Ayers (Group 2)

I think he's crazy. Anybody that's been that religious. . .
I don't agree with everything my priest says.
I don't know. I hope he's not like that.

- Does this raise doubts about Barack Obama?

I go to church, don't agree with everything. Maybe he was sleeping during it, maybe he was in the balcony. . .

Pflieger

A hatermonger and an asshole.
Thought he'd get everybody riled up.
Like a comedy show.

Doubts?

No.
But didn't he condemn him?
This one bothers me. How could Obama not know about this one?
I didn't hear anything.

Know who that guy is?

Everything he said was hateful. . .
He really doesn't like hillary.

- **Probe – Is it about race, patriotism, judgment, what?**

Economic Debate

- After hearing from both sides here, what do you make of this? Who do you think will do a better job of turning our economy around?

One is for the working man, and one's not.
Usually the republican is for the rich. They didn't say who was getting McCain's tax cut, and Obama said who was getting his.
Most of this country is made up of the middle class — very few are getting 2.5 million.

Believable?

I would say Obama, was speaking to us.
Obama's got charisma, too.

Which candidate do a better job turning the economy around?

Obama – wants to work for the working people.
He's been through hard times.

He's more out front — but can he do it?
But can McCain do it?
He's republican and they're usually —
One of these guys gotta look at the health issues.

Positive Ads

[FOR EACH]

Obama

Had different parties, that was nice.
I guess the republican sees the way the wind's blowing.
Don't see that very often.

- What is your response to this ad?
- Is it believable?
 - **[IF NO]** What parts are most unbelievable?

VII. Postcards (5 minutes)

Finally, we've talked a lot tonight about each of the two candidates for President and heard a lot of what they have to say to us as voters. Now, I'd like you to know what you have to say to them. If you flip to Handout #9, you will see two postcards – one to Obama, and one to McCain. Please write down what you would say to them if you had the chance to send each of them a note...

[Written Exercise – Handout #9]

Postcard exercise – Obama on top, McCain on bottom – address each one as Dear Senator ...

- **No discussion**

PHILADELPHIA NON-COLLEGE WOMEN

Please write down what good things come to mind when you think about Barack Obama.

WENDY

He wants to get our troops out of Iraq

He wants to make health care available for everyone

He's young and smart

MERLE

Younger than McCain maybe more of today's times

DEBBIE

War — drawing the troops out

Gas tax cap

Tax the rich higher

BARBARA

Liberal with a touch of conservatism

Bringing the troops home

Lowering taxes

MARIANNE

Hopeful

Seems to care more for the middle class

Genuine

KATHY

He might have some good ideas

Please write down any doubts you may have about Barack Obama.

WENDY

He is trying to do too much

MERLE

Not enough experience and knowledge

DEBBIE

Possibly increase all taxes??

Medicare going up?

BARBARA

If he can effectively lead all the Americans because some people still judge a person by their race

MARIANNE

Phoney?

Too green

KATHY

That he might make the US worse than it is

Afraid of more wars

*Please write down what good things come to mind when you think about
John McCain.*

WENDY

He's a leader and knowledgable

MERLE

More knowledge and experience

DEBBIE

“Nothing”

I do not like him.

BARBARA

French fries?

MARIANNE

Has some good ideas if they come to work.

KATHY

Hope to change the economy

Please write down any doubts you may have about John McCain.

WENDY

He's just like Bush

MERLE

Republican for the rich

War will continue

DEBBIE

War to continue

No tax relief

No gas relief

BARBARA

His age

Republican

I don't get his vibe — seems to have no personality

MARIANNE

2 faced on certain issues

Stresses the war card — telling vets what they wanna hear

KATHY

War

That he will make promises for the working people and not follow through

Please mark where in the grid you feel Barack Obama fits as a leader relative to each of these leaders. Then briefly write why you put him there in the blank space below.

Wendy	0	-5
Merle	-4	4
Debbie	3	3
Barbara	3	3
Marianne	4	3
Kathy	2	-1

WENDY

MERLE

DEBBIE

Youth, classy

BARBARA

MARIANNE

Intelligence/good for people

KATHY

Please mark where in the grid you feel John McCain fits as a leader relative to each of these leaders. Then briefly write why you put him there in the blank space below.

Wendy		
	0	-5
Merle		
	-2	-2

Debbie	-5	0
Barbara	-3	-5
Marianne	3	3
Kathy	0	0

WENDY
MERLE
DEBBIE
BARBARA

McCain because he is a republican

MARIANNE

Mostly for upper class

Strong appearance

KATHY

Please read the following information about John McCain. Circle the circle the two statements that really stand out to you as the most important things to know about John McCain.

1	1. McCain comes from a family of high-ranking military leaders. Both McCain's father and grandfather were admirals in the U.S. Navy, and McCain grew up as a military brat, attending nearly 20 schools at various naval postings in the U.S. and the Pacific. He followed in the footsteps of his father and attended the U.S. Naval Academy. His son Jimmy also followed him into the military and served in Iraq until Feb. 2008.
1	2. McCain volunteered for combat duty in Vietnam, shipping out in December 1966 and leaving behind a wife and three small children. He flew missions in Vietnam until he was shot down in October 1967. He spent 5 ½ years as a POW in the Hanoi Hilton, where he was viciously tortured but refused an offer to be released by the Vietnamese unless all of his fellow prisoners were also released.
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	elected to Congress from Arizona in 1982 and then to the Senate in 1986.
	4. McCain likes to say he began his political career as “a foot soldier in the Reagan Revolution.” But his reformer credentials were damaged early in his career when he was rebuked by the Senate Ethics Committee for his role in the Keating Five influence peddling scandal.
	5. McCain has been a vocal critic of wasteful, pork barrel spending by Democrats and Republicans alike throughout his career. He helped pass the Line Item Veto Act of 1996, has won the “Taxpayer’s Hero Award” three times for his efforts to fight pork spending and special interests, and claims to have never requested a single earmark..
4	6. McCain has a well-established reputation as a political maverick who refuses to tow the partisan line. Praised for his “straight talk” during his 2000 campaign against George W. Bush for the Republican nomination, he spoke out against right-wing “agents of intolerance” and promised to work with members of both parties. In 2002, he led the effort to pass bipartisan campaign finance reform, known as the McCain-Feingold Act to limit the influence of money in politics.
	7. McCain is uniquely qualified to serve as Commander in Chief. In addition to his military career, he serves on the Senate Armed Services Committee and has played a leading role in virtually every major national security issue since 1983.
4	8. McCain has been the leading voice in Congress in support of the Iraq War and President Bush’s surge policy in 2007, which he says has reduced violence in Iraq. He’s criticized any call for withdrawal or a timeline in Iraq and vowed to never surrender or accept any outcome other than victory. And McCain will refuse to negotiate with the leaders of Iran or other terrorist states unless they make security concessions and agree to U.S. demands.
	9. An early favorite to win the Republican nomination, McCain’s 2008 presidential campaign almost went bankrupt in 2007, and he was dismissed as finished by virtually every political pundit. But McCain refused to quit; he trimmed down his campaign, flew on commercial flights to save money, and made his case directly to voters, defeating candidates with more money to win the nomination convincingly.

Please read the following information about Barack Obama. Circle the circle the two statements that really stand out to you as the most important things to know about Barack Obama.

1	1. Obama’s mother was a white woman from a small town in Kansas who raised him as a single mother from the age of two, sometimes relying on
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	<p>food stamps to make ends meet. His maternal grandfather fought in Patton's Army in WWII and went to school on the G.I. Bill, while his grandmother worked in a factory to support the war effort. Between the ages of 6 and 10, Obama lived with his mother and stepfather in Indonesia, then returned to Hawaii, where he was raised by his maternal grandparents.</p>
	<p>2. Obama's father was a Harvard-educated economist from Kenya who left when he was two years old. Obama met his father only once more before his death in a car crash in 1982. Obama wrote a book about how his father's absence affected his childhood and recently marked Father's Day by delivering a speech about the harm caused by absentee fathers, particularly in the African-American community.</p>
1	<p>3. Despite his humble roots, Obama earned academic scholarships that enabled him to attend some of the finest colleges in the country. He graduated from Columbia University with a degree in political science and international relations, and later attended Harvard Law School, where he became the first ever African-American to head the prestigious Harvard Law Review.</p>
3	<p>4. After college, Obama turned down the ability to make big money on Wall Street or with a big company. Instead, he became a community organizer in Chicago with a church-based group seeking to help a diverse set of poor neighborhoods – white, black, and Latino – decimated by the closing of local steel plants. He says this experience made him the leader he is today, with a focus on bringing people with varying interests together for a common purpose and trusting ordinary people to get things done rather than relying on politicians and powerful interests.</p>
1	<p>5. After law school, Obama returned to Chicago to practice as a civil rights lawyer and teach constitutional law at the University of Chicago. He also continued to work in local communities, organizing voter registration drives during the 1992 campaign, and his advocacy work ultimately led him to run for the state legislature in 1996.</p>
1	<p>6. Obama was elected to the Illinois state senate in 1996. In the Illinois Senate, he immediately demonstrated an ability to reach across party lines to get things done and led bi-partisan efforts to provide health coverage for 154,000 uninsured Illinoisans, to pass the state's most sweeping new ethics law in a generation, and to expand access to early childhood education programs.</p>
4	<p>7. Obama publicly opposed the Iraq war from the very beginning, even when most politicians supported it, and said it would distract from the war in Afghanistan and the effort to stop al Qaeda and Osama bin Laden. Speaking at a rally in October 2002, he said, "I know that even a successful war against Iraq will require a U.S. occupation of undetermined length, at</p>

	undetermined cost, with undetermined consequences...I know that an invasion of Iraq without a clear rationale and without strong international support will only fan the flames of the Middle East, and encourage the worst, rather than best, impulses of the Arab world, and strengthen the recruitment arm of al-Qaeda."
	8. While still a candidate for Senate in 2004, Obama was asked to deliver the keynote speech at the Democratic Convention. His speech, emphasizing national unity and attacking partisan division – "We worship an awesome God in the blue states, and we don't like federal agents poking around our libraries in the red states...We are one people, all of us pledging allegiance to the Stars and Stripes, all of us defending the United States of America." – made him an international celebrity before he even took office.
1	9. In the U.S. Senate, Obama led the fight for bipartisan ethics reform and introduced major legislation on immigration, reduction of greenhouse gases, and veterans' benefits. On the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, he worked with leading Republicans to pass legislation designed to find and secure deadly nuclear materials and traveled to Russia to begin a new generation of non-proliferation efforts.

Dear Senator Obama,

WENDY

Please help this economy and get our troops out of Iraq

MERLE

Please try to resolve the war and the economy and take care of the middle class people

DEBBIE

We need help!! Do as promised, bring our troops home, lower our taxes, find us gas closer to home

BARBARA

Please, be careful, always keep in mind that America is a melting-pot full of different people. Sometimes these differences can be bad and sometimes these differences can be good.

MARIANNE

Keep up the good work you promised. Don't drop the ball. Fight the good fight. Make America strong.

KATHY

Take time to change our economy. Look at helping the US get back on board. Help health care control so we have no more wars.

Dear Senator McCain,

WENDY

Please help this economy and get our troops out of Iraq.

MERLE

Same as above.

DEBBIE

Too much war and you like that!!

BARBARA

Don't run for office.

MARIANNE

Don't forget the people you fought for. Make America strong.

KATHY

Look at the war

Change it. Look at the lower income people.

Help the US get on board.

Focus Group Guidelines
June 16-17, 2008
Philadelphia, PA / Denver, CO

I. Introduction (10 minutes)

- Confidentiality
- Mirrors, audio and videotapes
- Respondent introductions

Karl – Wilmington, 3 girls, 8, 5, 3.

Lisa – Married, 2 daughters, 27, 23.

Robbie – Recently retired. Used to work for a major chemical company.

Jennifer — 3 y/o daughter, 2 stepchildren. Cleaning business.

Amanda – Husband, 2 cats, no kids.

Pam –

Sherry – 2 children, teacher for 20 years.

Amy – 2 daughters in their twenties. Speech therapist.

Marcie – Husband, 2 cats. Teacher at private school.

Ellen – Married, 1 son. Hospital lab director.

II. Direction of the Country (15 minutes)

1. We'll start by talking a little bit about your daily lives. What are the main goals you are working toward in your life at this point?

Retirement

One in college, another going. Tuition.

Retirement.

Trying to figure out what to do since retired.

Trying to figure out what I want to do when I retire.

I want to have some money that I can do what I want — fun money. I'm not having fun right now.

I want to enjoy life, don't see retirement in my immediate future.

2. And would you say you are making progress toward those goals, kind of stuck and not going either way, or would you say you are losing ground when it comes to the main goals in your life?

Stuck.

Just paying bills, school loans for my kids. Don't think it'll ever end.

I'll have to keep working after kids out of school to pay loans.

Seems like it'll never stop.

Endless financial aid.

My situation's different, don't have children, so no tuition, but I find myself looking back — I think I'm going to have to go back to work, don't know how happy I'll be doing nothing. Married 5 years, the only thing we argue about is money, how it should be spent..

- What are the biggest challenges you face?

| 3. How about our country as a whole? Do you feel we are making progress and moving in the right direction, are we kind of stuck where we are right now, or are we losing ground? Stuck. Things just aren't getting better — maybe getting worse. Very unstable, gas prices up, astronomical. Stores going up. Scary.

Formatted: Bullets and Numbering

- What are the biggest challenges we face?

Healthcare costs.

Can't retire, enough years, but too young for benefits.

Increasing costs on childcare.

Daughter's been unemployed since October, went through her savings. \$500/mo for cobra, paying her rent. . .

- What will it take to get us moving in the right direction again?

III. Associations (20 minutes)

Now I'm going to throw the names of some people from all walks of life that have been in the news lately. For each, please tell me the first thing that comes to mind...

1. George W. Bush.

Loser.

Idiot.

Puppet

Idiot.

Asshole.

Unconscious.

No conscience.

2. Hillary Clinton

Brave.

Tireless.

Very smart.

Aggressive.

Just constantly kept going — excellent for females to see her out there every day striving.

No matter how bad it was getting, always went out there with a cheery face.

Very unhappy about how it went for her. I liked her.

Feel like there was very little choice. McCain, and Obama who says what everybody wants to hear. She owned her flaws.

3. Tiger Woods

Wow.

Really good.

Great golfer.

Role model.

Cold.

4. Angelina Jolie

Pregnant.

Cool.

I think it's amazing what she's done with her celebrity. She's all for the right reasons, all for good.

I think she rejects Hollywood for what she wants. Kind like old movie stars, doing what she wants.

5. Kobe Bryant

Went to my daughter's high school

Not a sports fan.

6. Michael Nutter

I like him. Doing a good job so far.

Good start.

Good person.

Seems to jump on crises.

Visible.

Approachable.

[Written Exercise – Handouts #1 and #2]

7. Barack Obama

- What good things come to mind when you think of Barack Obama?

He's a democrat. I want to see the democratic party in. Everything he stands for is what I want.

The economy, healthcare, most of the issues. . .

Just reading some of the things he's written, seems well versed in domestic policy. He's new, fresh to the scene.

Awesome motivational speaker, seems to be very composed.

Seems to have a cool head, youth are gathering around him. Maybe that'll lessen apathy — it won't be McCain.

I feel like he's very genuine, committed to change. Focusing on environment and renewables.

Family man, wife and children. I'd like to see a black man succeed — very supportive for young kids.

- What doubts do you have? What worries you about him?

Needs more experience.

What kind?

Can he get enough support within the system to do the things he needs to do?

I agree — foreign affairs, does he have enough experience?

Books show a lot of racism. There's a quote — didn't care for the way it was written.

Can't lose the religious affiliation things — even though he's pulled out, I do believe he's had these affiliations for most of his life and has been a part of it. I think these people are horrendous, leading his church.

Insincere and definitely prejudiced. Insincerity, just says what people want to hear.

They all do that. Affiliations, things that he's written, his wife. She's scary, real prejudiced.

That was my next comment — very worried about her. I think she's fairly racist.

Lack of experience and what's his track record. Nothing that would qualify him for the position.

Hasn't really expounded on a solution to anything. Said he'd fundamentally change the way the gov't operates. How's he going to do that?

I haven't heard that much either. Was at the site yesterday, has a 64 page plan on his website.

Doesn't instill a sense of faith that he'll be able to run the country. Rhetoric, religious affiliations, not what a president should be.

Feel like I shouldn't be undecided — I'm totally a democratic individual, but don't know what to do.

- If you had to give me three words or phrases to describe Barack Obama, what would they be?

Slick.

Slimy.

I think he's very genuine. They all get up there and give a speech and their speechwriter has polished it, but his body language, look on his face, feels sincere to me.

I find it puzzling. . . There's gotta be something more to him.

Energy.

Inexperience.

- What is the biggest question you have about Barack Obama at this point?

Why did he feel the way he did when he wrote those things in his books?

How confident does he feel he could change the economy in a positive way?

How could he change the economy?

What are your objectives?

[Written Exercise – Handouts #3 and #4]

8. John McCain

- What good things come to mind when you think of John McCain?

Experience.

Experience.

Military POW maybe help him relate.

Very likeable, seems to be sincere.

So old he'd probably die in office.

Seems kind and warm.

Must be strong willed.

Feel like I don't know much about him.

- What doubts do you have? What worries you about him?

Republican.

Not charismatic at all.

Getting out of the war, repeat of bush.

Prototypical republican points of view.

Older, doesn't have the energy

Probably unfair, but married to a wealthy woman — how can they relate?

Seemed to be for the war before, now seeing a softer side.

Know a commercial you're talking about — his PR people said now talk about families. Just thought it had nothing to do with him at all.

What's he going to do?

Viewpoint doesn't match with what the country wants.

Same as bush?

War.

Economy.

Healthcare.

On the cusp of major changes, and he's going to have the power to replace 3 Supreme Court judges.

Court?

Huge.

He's pro-life, so that puts him in the position to overturn Roe.

Country different?

Poorer.

He's brighter than bush.

So are we.

- If you had to give me three words or phrases to describe John McCain, what would they be?

Old.

Conservative.

Military.

Experience.

- What is the biggest question you have about John McCain at this point?

What'll you do about the economy?

About the war. I'd want that answered.

IV. Candidate Grids (20 minutes)

Let's look at these candidates in a different way now. I'd like you to think about them in relation to some other leaders in our country, both past and present, and to use these comparisons to really think about each of these candidates – What kind of a leader is he? What are his strongest qualities? What are his weaknesses? Where will he lead our country as President?

We're going to place each of these candidates relative to other famous leaders on a chart that looks like this... **[Explain grid exercise on easel]**

[Written Exercise – Handout #5]

1. First, let's talk about Barack Obama. On the axis going up and down, you will see that we have John F. Kennedy at the top and John Kerry at the bottom. On the axis going left and right, you will see that we have Jesse Jackson on the left and Colin Powell on the right. Please mark where in the grid you feel Obama fits as a leader relative to each of these leaders, then briefly write why you put him there in the blank space below.

- **Discuss extensively**

Kerry, with a touch of Jackson. Wanted to change things. But a little of that racial issue with Jackson.

About the same spot for similar reasons. Kerry talked a lot about change, Jesse Jackson's a very powerful speaker.

Put him in the same spot — won't go near JFK. I resent the PR comparisons they're making. That's ridiculous. He's just not. I also find him to be a little bit of a holy roller type. Think he likes media like Jesse Jackson.

I put him in between Jackson and JFK, because of his ability to inspire and motivate. Young people, that reminded me a little of JFK. Jackson part is because he is a little bit of a racist.

Same spot but closer to the line, not as far as Kennedy. Same reasons, charismatic.

Towards the Jesse Jackson side because he shares his tendency for rhetoric. Far from Colin Powell, nowhere near experienced. As far as Kerry goes, more poised and instills more confidence.

Between Jesse and Kerry — like Jackson because talks a lot but not much comes out. None of us can remember Kerry, Obama's the same way. Lot of talk.

Line between Kerry and JFK, should've been more towards Jesse. Think he's charismatic.

Associate Colin with military and war.

Have him between Kerry and on top of Jesse Jackson. Racial thing I'm having a hard time with. Right near Jackson, race.

What role race?

Not a huge role in his leadership style, being mentioned because he's the first. That's huge. I'd be thrilled to have an African American president if he's the right person. He's not said anything that I've seen as racist. Wouldn't have gotten this far.

Think race will be a huge factor in how he presents himself. Without the black vote he wouldn't have won the nomination.

Isn't that like saying any white president. . . ?

Maybe it's because of the focus CNN's put on. . .

Is he talking about it, or are others?

He's not, but. . .

Feel like he'd go out of his way to not talk about it.

Don't think it would impact.

Some speeches sound almost like a Baptist revival speech.

Actually reminded me of MLK during his last primary speech.

First black anything is always going to be a big thing. Big effect on how media portrays it.

All of us are afraid of the hidden agenda, from all three of the people.

[Written Exercise – Handout #6]

2. Now, let's look at John McCain. On the axis going up and down, you will see that we have Ronald Reagan at the top and George H. W. Bush, the current President's father, at the bottom. On the axis going left and right, you will see that we have Arlen Specter on the left and Newt Gingrich on the right. Please mark where in the grid you feel McCain fits as a leader relative to each of these leaders, then briefly write why you put him there in the blank space below.

- **Discuss extensively**

Middle.

Middle.

Middle.

Don't know enough about McCain, or the other folks?

Mine is both.

Heard the names, but. . .

For some reason I think of Specter as being kind of crazy, McCain reminds me of that.

V. Candidate Bios (20 minutes)

Let's talk in a little more detail about each of these candidates. This time, we'll start with John McCain...

[Written exercise – Handout #7]

1. On Handout #7, you will see a series of statements that represent a brief biography of John McCain and some of the key milestones in his life. Please read through this list and circle the two statements that really stand out to you as the most important things to know about John McCain.
 - a. McCain comes from a family of high-ranking military leaders. Both McCain's father and grandfather were admirals in the U.S. Navy, and McCain grew up as a military brat, attending nearly 20 schools at various naval postings in the U.S. and the Pacific. He followed in the footsteps of his father and attended the U.S. Naval Academy. His son Jimmy also followed him into the military and served in Iraq until Feb. 2008.
 - b. McCain volunteered for combat duty in Vietnam, shipping out in December 1966 and leaving behind a wife and three small children. He flew missions in Vietnam until he was shot down in October 1967. He spent 5 ½ years as a POW in the Hanoi Hilton, where he was viciously tortured but refused an offer to be released by the Vietnamese unless all of his fellow prisoners were also released.

Background. Spoke of a little character to me. Can't even imagine what going through that must have been.

Have to worry about that — wonder what long lasting effects there are.

- c. McCain returned to the U.S. as a war hero and eventually took a position as the Navy's liaison to the U.S. Senate. He met his current wife Cindy, only child of a wealthy beer wholesaler in Arizona, in May 1980. He moved to Arizona, retired from the Navy, and began his political career when he was elected to Congress from Arizona in 1982 and then to the Senate in 1986.
- d. McCain likes to say he began his political career as "a foot soldier in the Reagan Revolution." But his reformer credentials were damaged early in his career when he was rebuked by the Senate Ethics Committee for his role in the Keating Five influence peddling scandal.
- e. McCain has been a vocal critic of wasteful, pork barrel spending by Democrats and Republicans alike throughout his career. He helped pass the Line Item Veto Act of 1996, has won the "Taxpayer's Hero Award" three times for his efforts to fight pork spending and special interests, and claims to have never requested a single earmark..

Made me hope that maybe he would designate dollars where they should go so this economy can get back on its feet again.

- f. McCain has a well-established reputation as a political maverick who refuses to tow the partisan line. Praised for his “straight talk” during his 2000 campaign against George W. Bush for the Republican nomination, he spoke out against right-wing “agents of intolerance” and promised to work with members of both parties. In 2002, he led the effort to pass bipartisan campaign finance reform, known as the McCain-Feingold Act to limit the influence of money in politics.

That’s why I liked him back when he was going against bush.

Believable?

I read a little about him in magazines — kinda on the left wing side of the republican party — but this was in 1996, not now. . . think he’s changed.

Seems like he’s come out against bush a little big, as much as I know about him, against some of the things bush said. Give him credit if he’s really doing that.

- g. McCain is uniquely qualified to serve as Commander in Chief. In addition to his military career, he serves on the Senate Armed Services Committee and has played a leading role in virtually every major national security issue since 1983.
- h. McCain has been the leading voice in Congress in support of the Iraq War and President Bush’s surge policy in 2007, which he says has reduced violence in Iraq. He’s criticized any call for withdrawal or a timeline in Iraq and vowed to never surrender or accept any outcome other than victory. And McCain will refuse to negotiate with the leaders of Iran or other terrorist states unless they make security concessions and agree to U.S. demands.

Not something he’s going to ever compromise on. Sticking to his guns.

Literally.

Shades of bush. Strong military background. Doesn’t mean it’s right for the country.

Believe he could get it done?

Why do we need to win?

What do we in?

We’re not being oppressed, fighting somebody else’s war in their country. . . what are we getting out of it?

What does victory mean?

- i. An early favorite to win the Republican nomination, McCain’s 2008 presidential campaign almost went bankrupt in 2007, and he was dismissed as finished by virtually every political pundit. But McCain refused to quit; he trimmed down his campaign, flew on commercial flights to save money, and made his case directly to voters, defeating candidates with more money to win the nomination convincingly.

- **Show of hands, discuss**

- Looking back on this list, what does this say to you about John McCain?

Military.

Pretty tough.

Seems like he'd be concerned with foreign policy, more than domestic.
Tough guy mentally.

[Written exercise – Handout #8]

2. On Handout #8, you will see a similar series of statements that represent a brief biography of Barack Obama and some of the key milestones in his life. Once again, read through this list and circle the two statements that really stand out to you as the most important things to know about Barack Obama.
 - a. Obama’s mother was a white woman from a small town in Kansas who raised him as a single mother from the age of two, sometimes relying on food stamps to make ends meet. His maternal grandfather fought in Patton’s Army in WWII and went to school on the G.I. Bill, while his grandmother worked in a factory to support the war effort. Between the ages of 6 and 10, Obama lived with his mother and stepfather in Indonesia, then returned to Hawaii, where he was raised by his maternal grandparents.
 - b. Obama’s father was a Harvard-educated economist from Kenya who left when he was two years old. Obama met his father only once more before his death in a car crash in 1982. Obama wrote a book about how his father’s absence affected his childhood and recently marked Father’s Day by delivering a speech about the harm caused by absentee fathers, particularly in the African-American community.
 - c. Despite his humble roots, Obama earned academic scholarships that enabled him to attend some of the finest colleges in the country. He graduated from Columbia University with a degree in political science and international relations, and later attended Harvard Law School, where he became the first ever African-American to head the prestigious Harvard Law Review.
 - d. After college, Obama turned down the ability to make big money on Wall Street or with a big company. Instead, he became a community organizer in Chicago with a church-based group seeking to help a diverse set of poor neighborhoods – white, black, and Latino – decimated by the closing of local steel plants. He says this experience made him the leader he is today, with a focus on bringing people with varying interests together for a common purpose and trusting ordinary people to get things done rather than relying on politicians and powerful interests.
 - e. After law school, Obama returned to Chicago to practice as a civil rights lawyer and teach constitutional law at the University of Chicago. He also continued to work in local communities, organizing voter registration drives during the 1992 campaign, and his advocacy work ultimately led him to run for the state legislature in 1996.
 - f. Obama was elected to the Illinois state senate in 1996. In the Illinois Senate, he immediately demonstrated an ability to reach across party lines to get things done and led bi-partisan efforts to provide health coverage for 154,000 uninsured Illinoisans, to pass the state’s most sweeping new ethics law in a generation, and to expand access to early childhood education programs.

What he’s accomplished.

Across party lines to convince people.

A priority of health coverage.

Makes you realize how young and inexperienced he is, if it was only 1996.

Why more than later experience?

Health care, bipartisan.

- g. Obama publicly opposed the Iraq war from the very beginning, even when most politicians supported it, and said it would distract from the war in Afghanistan and the effort to stop al Qaeda and Osama bin Laden. Speaking at a rally in October 2002, he said, "I know that even a successful war against Iraq will require a U.S. occupation of undetermined length, at undetermined cost, with undetermined consequences...I know that an invasion of Iraq without a clear rationale and without strong international support will only fan the flames of the Middle East, and encourage the worst, rather than best, impulses of the Arab world, and strengthen the recruitment arm of al-Qaeda."

One of few against it in the beginning.

Distract from Afghanistan.

Words that he used. Like he had a crystal ball.

Took away the focus from the terrorists.

Experience doesn't matter as much as judgment. . . Discuss?

It helps, but it's not enough. Lack of experience is still a concern. He has to go with what he has.

It helps him, though, but he doesn't have the experience.

I'd be very happy to vote for him with Hillary as his vice president.

- h. While still a candidate for Senate in 2004, Obama was asked to deliver the keynote speech at the Democratic Convention. His speech, emphasizing national unity and attacking partisan division – "We worship an awesome God in the blue states, and we don't like federal agents poking around our libraries in the red states...We are one people, all of us pledging allegiance to the Stars and Stripes, all of us defending the United States of America." – made him an international celebrity before he even took office.
- i. In the U.S. Senate, Obama led the fight for bipartisan ethics reform and introduced major legislation on immigration, reduction of greenhouse gases, and veterans' benefits. On the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, he worked with leading Republicans to pass legislation designed to find and secure deadly nuclear materials and traveled to Russia to begin a new generation of non-proliferation efforts.

- **Show of hands, discuss**

Does background matter?

It doesn't matter as much as McCain. Lots of people have humble roots and have gone on to great things.

Very nice and wonderful, but it doesn't make me feel any more confident about what he's going to do.

More important what he's done.

Only thing it says to me is that he wasn't raised in the lap of luxury, maybe relate better to more Americans.

Show's he's driven.

Young voters trying to set an example. . .

What about D and E.

Admirable.

Looks like he had his own progression for his action. Had good judgment. Just think he's still too young.

All speaks to his background. Civil rights lawyer, teacher, didn't know any of that.

- Looking back on this list, what does this say to you about Barack Obama?

Kind, civil, people oriented.

Able to relate to people. Has been in the trenches, down there with people like us.

Stayed the course in terms of his life and direction that it's on.

See him as goal driven.

VI. Videos (30 minutes)

Now I want to look at some video on some of the major topics we are likely to see and hear about in this campaign...

Wright Footage (Group 1) / Pflieger and Ayers (Group 2)

- Does this raise doubts about Barack Obama?
 - **Probe – Is it about race, patriotism, judgment, what?**

Really surprising that he'd've stayed at a church like this if he had aspirations.

His mother's white, that's interesting. He was raised by a white woman.

I'd like to know more.

When I listen to the words that guy's using, it's not anything that I haven't thought personally. I guess what bothers me is that he said it that way, with that kind of tone. . . And 5 days after 9/11. And the second, he's got points there too. . . there's huge white supremacists movements in this state. But again, he's trying to start an uprising.

Really morbid, his vice president choice may be very important.

May sound silly, definitely wanted a democrat, kept thinking about all the republicans on the fence, would they rather see a black person or a white woman. I wanted hillary, and I'm sorry she's not in the race. Thought she'd have a better chance, these videos remind me of that.

Will he be tagged with this? Responsible for what his pastor said?

There's a whole other campaign coming up.

If all you see is what's on TV, that's pretty scary.

Pflieger

Is he a comedian or what?

I think the guy's a complete asshole, but I couldn't tell if he had a tie with Obama or if he just supports him and in his idiocy just wound up damaging him.

I think obama, more than just dissociating himself, will have to address these people. It's really bad for him.

I don't hold this guy at the same level I hold the other preacher. Obama was really associated with the other one. This guy's just an idiot.

Economic Debate

- After hearing from both sides here, what do you make of this? Who do you think will do a better job of turning our economy around?

Still don't know the how. How will he make those changes?

Confused. The way they spin things.

I guess both of them left me wanting more details. Barack said 3 times more in tax relief than under McCain's plan. What's that mean?

What about the other 75%?

Was hoping to see McCain's point of view, but. . .

Instinct here?

Democrats.

I feel like the republicans just look out for themselves.

Echoing bush a drawback?

I feel like it's a copout. Obviously they're not working.

Positive Ads

[FOR EACH]

- What is your response to this ad?
- Is it believable?
 - **[IF NO]** What parts are most unbelievable?

Obama

I'm very anti-commercials. Feel like you don't learn anything.

I don't either. They have the best marketing minds out there making them look the best.

Statements in public addresses, it seems honest.

Not the kind of commercial I want to see now, seems like window dressing. Now we need substance.

Like fluff.

McCain

Strong.

Very strong.

I liked that it was more a general statement. Not "vote for me and I'll do this for you"

Obama – Convention speech ad

I think it's clever he had a republican speak on his behalf. Showing how long he was in the senate shows his inexperience.

Reiterating what he's saying in his speeches again. When they do the back and forth, that's where it'll come out.

VII. Postcards (5 minutes)

Finally, we've talked a lot tonight about each of the two candidates for President and heard a lot of what they have to say to us as voters. Now, I'd like you to know what you have to say to them. If you flip to Handout #9, you will see two postcards – one to Obama, and one to McCain. Please write down what you would say to them if you had the chance to send each of them a note...

[Written Exercise – Handout #9]

Postcard exercise – Obama on top, McCain on bottom – address each one as Dear Senator ...

- **No discussion**

Please write down what good things come to mind when you think about Barack Obama.

LISA M.

He is a Democrat

He wants to change the country

ROBERTA G.

Awesome, motivational speaker

Composed

—

He can talk the talk

Cool head

Wants change — though that is more of a campaign slogan

Youth rallying around him — may lessen apathy

JENNIFER G.

I feel like he is genuine and committed to change.

I think he is honest and a great role model, especially to African-Americans.

He feels very likeable.

Environmental issues, renewable resources.

AMANDA C.

He's not George Bush

Could be a good inspiration/role model

Could bring change

PAM D.

Black male succeeded — many Af. Am. needed to see him come this far.

Democratic Individual

Family man (wife and kids)

MARCEY C.

Fresh to scene

Well versed in domestic policy issues

Speaks clearly, makes sense

Seems approachable, driven

ELLEN W.

Smart

Decent speaker/his presentation

SHERRI

Possibilities for change

New ideas

Positive

Youthfulness

Well educated

Excellent speaker (pulls you in)

Democrat

Please write down any doubts you may have about Barack Obama.

LISA M.

He doesn't have enough experience in Foreign Affairs

His being black might be a reason middle American republicans who are on the fence might not vote for him.

ROBERTA G.

Inexperience

Religious affiliations

Holy roller attitude

Doing what he promises

—
Lack of experience, no track record

Has not followed thru with solutions

Fore example: how is he gong to “fundamentally change how the US government operates”

JENNIFER G.

What did he have to promise to get all those “super” delegates?

Has not run a government

AMANDA C.

I don't really have many doubts about Barack, except that he lacked experience when compared with Hillary.

PAM D.

Lack of experience

Rehearsed rhetoric

Doesn't convey sense of power/reassurance

Inability to convert Hillary supporters

Doesn't instill faith.

MARCEY C.

Past books written show racism toward many

Not enough experience w/ other countries

Seem to tell what people want to hear

ELLEN W.

Too new, needs more experience

May be somewhat of a “yes” man

Understanding of foreign policy seems weak.

SHERRI

Lack of experience

Insincere

Please write down what good things come to mind when you think about John McCain.

LISA M.

Experienced — esp in foreign affairs

Likeable

Sincere/trustworthy

ROBERTA G.

Experience

—

Military/POW – Helps him to relate to citizen.

JENNIFER G.

He seems kind, has a warm vibe.

He isn't completely in agreement w/ Bush's views.

AMANDA C.

Experience

Not as right-winged as bush — slightly more moderate

Seems to know his way around DC

PAM D.

Experience w/ both US and foreign affairs

Knowledgeable

Sympathizes with those at war b/c of his past

Sincerity

MARCEY C.

Veteran

Sound understanding of policy

Experienced

Has his own mind

ELLEN W.

Experience in the Senate

Strong willed individual/ 5 years POW.

SHERRI

Military/War veteran (POW)

Long political career (experience)

Patriotism

Personable, warm

Please write down any doubts you may have about John McCain.

LISA M.

Republican

Supports NRA and other typical Republican issues.

ROBERTA G.

Age — dropping dead

Wealth — how realistic is he about the reg. guy.

Republican

Getting out of Iraq?

A repeat of Bush?

—

Republican

Same old Republican crap

4 more years of declining economy

JENNIFER G.

He is a Republican! His views and mine do not align. I'd also prefer a younger president.

AMANDA C.

Republican

Would skew supreme court to republicans

Too old

Views don't align with mine

Don't think he's as focused on ending war or healthcare as I'd like him to be

As everyone is saying — bush's 3d term.

Doesn't have finger on the pulse of the issues US faces

PAM D.

Not another Republican in office

Too old

Does he really have energy to make changes and follow through

Delegate rather than facilitates

For war!

MARCEY C.

Question of physical and mental health

Republican platform needs to change

Too conservative

ELLEN W.

Not a strong leader

Republicans same as Bush

Not charismatic

SHERRI

Long political career

Not sure of message

Business as usual, things keep as they are

Age

Please mark where in the grid you feel Barack Obama fits as a leader relative to each of these leaders. Then briefly write why you put him there in the blank space below.

	Jackson-Powell	Kennedy-Kerry
Lisa	-3	3
-	-3	-3
Roberta G	-2	1
Jennifer G	0	1
Amanda C	-3	-4
Pam D	0	0
Marcey C	-3	-5
Ellen W	-5	-1
Sherri	-2	-2

LISA M.

Only mean JFK because of his ability to inspire

I don't think he could even be as good a leader as if he is elected and become a legend it is because of his race.

ROBERTA G.

He's not strong and experienced like Colin Powell

He's like Kennedy only in that he's a charismatic person and speaker

He appears to share Jackson's tendency for rhetoric

He's more poised and in control and instills more confidence than Kerry

—

Getting AA vote

Holy roller type

Media guy

Not JFK

JENNIFER G.

I don't know enough about JJ or CP to relate him to them, except to say he isn't pro-war (which I'd associate with CP)

He's charismatic like JFK and a Democrat

AMANDA C.

Obama seems to border on revolutionary but unmemorable in policy and ability to enact change.

PAM D.

MARCEY C.

Obama reminds me of John Kerry with a touch of Jackson. Gives same vibe as Kerry, racial [] put him in Jackson territory

ELLEN W.

Both seem prejudiced

Not experienced in foreign affairs

SHERRI

Kerry – question of experience

Jesse Jackson — effective speaker, black issue, message of change

Please mark where in the grid you feel John McCain fits as a leader relative to each of these leaders. Then briefly write why you put him there in the blank space below.

Specter- Gingrich	Reagan- Bush
-1	-2
0	0
-2	-3
0	0
0	0
0	0
-1	-1
0	0
0	0

LISA M.

He could never be as popular as Reagan

He's stronger than Specter

Don't know Newt

Specter isn't as conservative

ROBERTA G.

McCain= 30% Reagan, 70% Bush

He's old (and crafty) like Specter; Also wields power.

—

JENNIFER G.

I'm not familiar enough with Arlen or Newt to rank him against them, and not much about the policies of the others

AMANDA C.

Don't know much about any of them, so can't make an educated decision.

PAM D.

MARCEY C.

Conservative and reminds me of Bush “boys network”. Arlen seems like he is a little off (crazy) as does McCain.

ELLEN W.

SHERRI

Older President

Conservative

Wealth background

Please read the following information about John McCain. Circle the circle the two statements that really stand out to you as the most important things to know about John McCain.

	1. McCain comes from a family of high-ranking military leaders. Both McCain’s father and grandfather were admirals in the U.S. Navy, and McCain grew up as a military brat, attending nearly 20 schools at various naval postings in the U.S. and the Pacific. He followed in the footsteps of his father and attended the U.S. Naval Academy. His son Jimmy also followed him into the military and served in Iraq until Feb. 2008.
3	2. McCain volunteered for combat duty in Vietnam, shipping out in December 1966 and leaving behind a wife and three small children. He flew missions in Vietnam until he was shot down in October 1967. He spent 5 ½ years as a POW in the Hanoi Hilton, where he was viciously tortured but refused an offer to be released by the Vietnamese unless all of his fellow prisoners were also released.
	3. McCain returned to the U.S. as a war hero and eventually took a position as the Navy’s liaison to the U.S. Senate. He met his current wife Cindy, only child of a wealthy beer wholesaler in Arizona, in May 1980. He moved to Arizona, retired from the Navy, and began his political career when he was elected to Congress from Arizona in 1982 and then to the Senate in 1986.
	4. McCain likes to say he began his political career as “a foot soldier in the Reagan Revolution.” But his reformer credentials were damaged early in his career when he was rebuked by the Senate Ethics Committee for his role in the Keating Five influence peddling scandal.
3	5. McCain has been a vocal critic of wasteful, pork barrel spending by Democrats and Republicans alike throughout his career. He helped pass the Line Item Veto Act of 1996, has won the “Taxpayer’s Hero Award” three times for his efforts to fight pork spending and special interests, and claims

	to have never requested a single earmark..
3	6. McCain has a well-established reputation as a political maverick who refuses to tow the partisan line. Praised for his “straight talk” during his 2000 campaign against George W. Bush for the Republican nomination, he spoke out against right-wing “agents of intolerance” and promised to work with members of both parties. In 2002, he led the effort to pass bipartisan campaign finance reform, known as the McCain-Feingold Act to limit the influence of money in politics.
	7. McCain is uniquely qualified to serve as Commander in Chief. In addition to his military career, he serves on the Senate Armed Services Committee and has played a leading role in virtually every major national security issue since 1983.
7	8. McCain has been the leading voice in Congress in support of the Iraq War and President Bush’s surge policy in 2007, which he says has reduced violence in Iraq. He’s criticized any call for withdrawal or a timeline in Iraq and vowed to never surrender or accept any outcome other than victory. And McCain will refuse to negotiate with the leaders of Iran or other terrorist states unless they make security concessions and agree to U.S. demands.
2	9. An early favorite to win the Republican nomination, McCain’s 2008 presidential campaign almost went bankrupt in 2007, and he was dismissed as finished by virtually every political pundit. But McCain refused to quit; he trimmed down his campaign, flew on commercial flights to save money, and made his case directly to voters, defeating candidates with more money to win the nomination convincingly.

Please read the following information about Barack Obama. Circle the circle the two statements that really stand out to you as the most important things to know about Barack Obama.

	1. Obama’s mother was a white woman from a small town in Kansas who raised him as a single mother from the age of two, sometimes relying on food stamps to make ends meet. His maternal grandfather fought in Patton’s Army in WWII and went to school on the G.I. Bill, while his grandmother worked in a factory to support the war effort. Between the ages of 6 and 10, Obama lived with his mother and stepfather in Indonesia, then returned to Hawaii, where he was raised by his maternal grandparents.
	2. Obama’s father was a Harvard-educated economist from Kenya who left when he was two years old. Obama met his father only once more before his death in a car crash in 1982. Obama wrote a book about how his father’s absence affected his childhood and recently marked Father’s Day by delivering a speech about the harm caused by absentee fathers, particularly

	in the African-American community.
1	3. Despite his humble roots, Obama earned academic scholarships that enabled him to attend some of the finest colleges in the country. He graduated from Columbia University with a degree in political science and international relations, and later attended Harvard Law School, where he became the first ever African-American to head the prestigious Harvard Law Review.
	4. After college, Obama turned down the ability to make big money on Wall Street or with a big company. Instead, he became a community organizer in Chicago with a church-based group seeking to help a diverse set of poor neighborhoods – white, black, and Latino – decimated by the closing of local steel plants. He says this experience made him the leader he is today, with a focus on bringing people with varying interests together for a common purpose and trusting ordinary people to get things done rather than relying on politicians and powerful interests.
	5. After law school, Obama returned to Chicago to practice as a civil rights lawyer and teach constitutional law at the University of Chicago. He also continued to work in local communities, organizing voter registration drives during the 1992 campaign, and his advocacy work ultimately led him to run for the state legislature in 1996.
9	6. Obama was elected to the Illinois state senate in 1996. In the Illinois Senate, he immediately demonstrated an ability to reach across party lines to get things done and led bi-partisan efforts to provide health coverage for 154,000 uninsured Illinoisans, to pass the state's most sweeping new ethics law in a generation, and to expand access to early childhood education programs.
8	7. Obama publicly opposed the Iraq war from the very beginning, even when most politicians supported it, and said it would distract from the war in Afghanistan and the effort to stop al Qaeda and Osama bin Laden. Speaking at a rally in October 2002, he said, "I know that even a successful war against Iraq will require a U.S. occupation of undetermined length, at undetermined cost, with undetermined consequences...I know that an invasion of Iraq without a clear rationale and without strong international support will only fan the flames of the Middle East, and encourage the worst, rather than best, impulses of the Arab world, and strengthen the recruitment arm of al-Qaeda."
	8. While still a candidate for Senate in 2004, Obama was asked to deliver the keynote speech at the Democratic Convention. His speech, emphasizing national unity and attacking partisan division – "We worship an awesome God in the blue states, and we don't like federal agents poking around our libraries in the red states...We are one people, all of us pledging allegiance

	to the Stars and Stripes, all of us defending the United States of America." – made him an international celebrity before he even took office.
	9. In the U.S. Senate, Obama led the fight for bipartisan ethics reform and introduced major legislation on immigration, reduction of greenhouse gases, and veterans' benefits. On the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, he worked with leading Republicans to pass legislation designed to find and secure deadly nuclear materials and traveled to Russia to begin a new generation of non-proliferation efforts.

Dear Senator Obama,

LISA M.

I want to believe that you are the right person to lead this country, but please show me how you can overcome your inexperience to do a good job. How will you fight members of congress to win them over so that the economy will change and the middle class (and lower) can prosper? Who will you surround yourself with that will be able to advise you on the areas you are a novice in like foreign affairs?

ROBERTA G.

Please explain "how" you are going to accomplish all of the things you say you'll do. Also explain how you are qualified to run our country when you haven't done so at the state level. I will strongly consider giving you my vote if you put Hillary Clinton on your ticket.

—

Are you for real? Are you a racist or do you feel you are for all in the country. It is very important that you support and protect Israel and destroy terrorist cells. You don't have much experience, so I would like to know what makes you think you can run a country

JENNIFER G.

I will be voting for you, and I hope and pray that you are as sincere as you seem. I hope you are able to turn things around for our country and lead us into a better era. Remember your roots and your goals, and be open to re-evaluate your plans along the way if need be.

AMANDA C.

The nation needs to know that you're more than a pretty face with a smooth voice. We need to know how you plan to enact your changes and how you're going to mitigate

your lack of experience. And pick Hillary as VP. It's the best shot at winning against the good old boys club.

PAM D.

Get Senator Clinton as your VP and make it happen.

Address the racial comments/statements — with honest answers. Admit your weaknesses and address them!!

MARCEY C.

Stay focused on what you can do for this country. Tell us how you are going to do it — Play judgment card — and show your accomplishment.

ELLEN W.

Please tell me about:

Tax cuts for regular folks

Healthcare plan

Oil pricing

Care for the elderly

Who is your running mate going to be

SHERRI

How are you going to implement your objectives? How will you get support for your goals once in office. What is your plan to end the war and return our troops?

Dear Senator McCain,

LISA M.

Prove to me that you will support the middle class and not businesses

ROBERTA G.

How will your administration be different than Bush's?

—

I would like to know more about you than your military background

JENNIFER G.

Sorry you lost!! Seriously, if you win, I hope you will lead us into a positive direction, end the war, listen to your country, and don't toe the party line.

AMANDA C.

To restore nation's faith in Republicans you need to be for change — ending the war, stimulating the economy, and addressing the health care crisis.

PAM D.

What is your tax relief plan for middle class citizens? Tell me how it can be accomplished.

MARCEY C.

Stay on same path —

Address issues — taxes, war, gas — be firm and truthful about what you will do and how.

ELLEN W.

Please tell me about:

Tax cuts for the regular folks

Healthcare plan

Oil pricing

Care for the elderly

Who is your running mate going to be

SHERRI

What are you going to do about the war in Iraq? You support the war but for how long and at what cost?