

**ANNENBERG FOCUS GROUP
VOTERS
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MODERATOR: And what's the business?

WOMAN: Beauty control spa . . .

MODERATOR: Okay, sounds good to me.

RUTH: My name is Ruth and I am a retired security supervisor for the State.

MODERATOR: Welcome.

JERRY: My name is Jerry and I'm retired from Ohio State University where I taught in the College of Education.

MODERATOR: Great.

CATHY: I'm Cathy and I graduated from the College of Education at Ohio State. I'm a high school math teacher.

MODERATOR: How was he? Was he a good teacher?

JANIE: Hi, I'm Janie. I'm a medical office manager and I've been there for 18 years.

TOM: I'm Tom and I'm a salesman covering the southern parts of the state of Ohio.

MODERATOR: Great. What are you selling?

TOM: I sell toilet paper.

CAROL: I'm Carol and I work for a local bank in technology.

ED: I'm Ed, and I'm an information operations manager, and I work for the Department of Defense.

JENNIFER: I'm Jennifer, and I'm a stay-at-home mom with two children and one on the way, and I work part-time as a copy editor for a nonprofit.

MODERATOR: Great, and congratulations.

JENNIFER: Thank you.

TREVOR: I'm Trevor, project manager for a small environmental firm here in Westerville. I've been at it for five years since I got out of college.

MODERATOR: Has anybody moved to Ohio within the last ten years? Everybody's been here for a while. That's great. Let me start out with a simple question. People talk about how important this election was, and, compared to other elections, what made this election important, Carol? Was it important?

CAROL: It was extremely important.

MODERATOR: Why?

CAROL: We're in a war that's not a very popular war. There're so many very big issues that are out there that people have such different views on. I think that's why it was so important.

MODERATOR: What made it an important election, John?

JOHN: I would agree with Carol. The country has not been at war for a while, and this is a pretty tough war, and it was in response to a huge attack on our country. How this war is handled is an extremely important issue. I believe that the values that our country is wrestling with right now, those values represented by George Bush or those represented by John Kerry, seem to be significantly apart.

MODERATOR: Susan, what made this such an important election? Everybody seemed to turn out. There were something like 116 million Americans who went to vote. What made it so important? What made it so important? Why was it important to you?

SUSAN: I think that the war as they stated was definitely a very significant factor, but I think something else that we are just now realizing that we are on the edge of, what I see, as a global revolution in our economy. With the NAPA act that went through, we are undergoing a significant economic change in our country. The way that we make our living and the way that our children and grandchildren will make their living is going to be considerably different than anything that we've seen before. So education and the economy played a big factor in this election.

MODERATOR: Cathy, was this an important election?

CATHY: Yeah, I thought so.

MODERATOR: More important than other elections? I mean, 2000 was a very close election. Obviously, 1992 was another very competitive election. Did this seem to be more important?

CATHY: Well, one of the primary reasons for me was that he has four more years. I didn't vote for him, and I wouldn't vote for him. I didn't the first time. I felt that with four more years, he had a chance to do some more policymaking and he doesn't have to please us too much. I was really concerned about the swing and what's going to happen with the Supreme Court. He's going to have a chance to make a huge impact there. And make a big impact on us for a very long time to follow.

MODERATOR: Ed, what are you thinking?

ED: I think that just the war against terrorism. The events of 9/11 were just a terrible shock for all of us. It was a very emotional time. The war, the way it has been prosecuted, has a keen impact on why it is so important.

MODERATOR: Tom, what are you thinking?

TOM: I agree with Cathy. I think that the most important issue was the direction that the Supreme Court is going. That was my primary thought. The second was after the closeness of the second election, I was hoping for the electoral tally, the way it came out, no side can say it was won by 300 or 400 votes in one particular corner of Podunk, U.S. I think that the size of the victory was such that nobody can say that. I think that will help. Neither side can say that the other side stole the election from the other. It took a little bit of thunder out of both sides.

MODERATOR: Let me ask a simple question. We'll go right around the table very quickly. Who did you vote for? When did you make up your mind and why? We'll start with John and go right around the table. John, how did you vote?

JOHN: I voted for George Bush. I made up my mind months ago. However, I remained open through the debates.

MODERATOR: Then you came back and decided that you were with Bush?

JOHN: I waited for the words that I wanted to hear from John Kerry, and I never heard them, so I went with Bush.

MODERATOR: Susan?

SUSAN: I voted for George Bush, and I made up my mind on the day of the election.

MODERATOR: So you held out until the day of the election. And what was it on Election Day that said, yeah, it's Bush?

SUSAN: I really didn't decide until I walked into the voting poll, and at that point, I had to make up my mind. And I basically said to myself, who do I think will do the least damage to the country over the next four years? I had a lot of concerns, not just about Kerry and his policies, but more importantly, about Mrs. Kerry and her outlook on life, and how much influence she would have.

MODERATOR: Okay, good. Julie?

JULIE: I voted for George Bush. I made my mind up pretty early on, but I tried to keep an open mind, and watched all of the debates to see what Kerry stood for.

MODERATOR: What helped you to make up your mind? You said that early on you were set on Bush. Did you vote for Bush in 2000?

JULIE: Yes.

MODERATOR: So it was a reaffirmation of your initial vote. Anything in particular move you?

JULIE: Their views are very different, and I just agree with Bush's policies and his views.

MODERATOR: Ruth?

RUTH: I voted for John Kerry. I had an open mind on voting for him from the very start. Bush never was, from the first, part of my choice. I never voted for him.

MODERATOR: Jerry?

JERRY: I voted for John Kerry. I have watched George Bush's policies over the past four years, and at the time he was first elected, I was hoping for a slightly different direction than he took. With me and my colleagues, he confirmed our worst fears of what the direction would be in the country. I was likely to vote for most any Democrat that was nominated. I did think that Kerry was a presidential candidate and that he handled himself well and that he would make a good President.

MODERATOR: Cathy?

CATHY: I agree with Jerry for the most part. Basically, I didn't vote for him in 2000, but went into it with some hope that there were going to be some changes that were going to be good. I think that I was let down early on. From that point on, it would have been very hard for them to find a candidate to run against him that I wouldn't have voted for.

MODERATOR: Jane?

JANE: I voted for Kerry. I felt that the Democrats could have had a stronger candidate, but I definitely voted for change. Change was what my vote was basically for. I work in the healthcare field, and it's being devastated by the administration that we have now. Unless they turn things around, I think that it's going to get worse.

MODERATOR: Tom?

TOM: I'm definitely a Bush supporter.

MODERATOR: Were you all the way?

TOM: No. Most of the time, I leaned very heavily towards Bush, but I was willing to hear John Kerry talk. There are a few comments he made during the debate that I don't think he gave an answer one way or another. My point of view is that I want a President who is going to go the course. I want him to say what he is going to do, and he's going to try to do it. I don't want my President to open up the *New York Times* on Monday morning, and on Tuesday change his views. That's exactly how I feel about John Kerry. Kerry was obviously right in my point of view about half of the time because he was all over the board. I just don't want that kind of a President.

MODERATOR: Explain to me one other thing, did you vote for George Bush in 2000?

TOM: Yeah, but it took a lot longer to make up my mind. I firmly read all of the issues. I have some questions about Medicaid, the medical thing too, and a lot of the things that the current President is getting hammered on are mandated by Congress, and he had no control.

MODERATOR: Let's hold off on that, and let's whip around here. Carol?

CAROL: I voted for John Kerry, and I decided long, long before John Kerry was ever nominated. I did not vote for Bush in 2000. I would never vote for him no matter who was running against him.

MODERATOR: So you were committed early on. Ed?

ED: I voted for George Bush. I committed to him pretty early.

MODERATOR: Did you vote for him in 2000?

ED: Yes, I did.

MODERATOR: Jennifer?

JENNIFER: Same as Ed, voted for Bush in 2000, and didn't consider not doing so this time.

MODERATOR: Trevor?

TREVOR: Voted for George Bush and did in 2000. I like to think that I'm an issue voter. I kept my mind open, but I never heard what I needed to hear to change my mind.

MODERATOR: Let me try this. What one word would you use to describe how you felt when you actually cast your vote in 2004? In other words, was there some emotion, some feeling that you had when you cast that vote? Trevor?

TREVOR: Trust.

MODERATOR: Jerry?

JERRY: Change.

MODERATOR: Change. Jane?

JANE: Hope.

MODERATOR: Hope. Julie?

JULIE: Proud.

MODERATOR: Proud. Susan?

SUSAN: Safer.

MODERATOR: Safer. John?

JOHN: Values.

MODERATOR: Values. Jennifer?

JENNIFER: Proud and relief.

MODERATOR: Relief. Ed?

ED: No more commercials.

MODERATOR: Carol?

CAROL: Hope.

MAN: Hope too.

MODERATOR: Okay, good. You brought up something. I'll make you do this. Write down any commercial that stuck in your mind. You were bombarded more than any other media market in America. Write down any commercial that stuck in your mind. It's now a week later, and if there's a commercial that stuck in your mind, it doesn't have to mean that I loved it or didn't love it, it's just this is the one that stuck in my mind. Write it down. If none of them stuck in your mind, that's perfectly fine too. You don't have to reach or grab or anything else.

MODERATOR: What are you writing, Julie?

JULIE: I'm writing the commercial about the little girl that lost her mother.

MODERATOR: Anybody else write that commercial down? Two people, Susan and Julie chose that commercial. Carol, did you write down any?

CAROL: Yes, I wrote down the Swift Boat ads.

MODERATOR: Did anybody else write down Swift Boat? One, two, three of you wrote down Swift Boat. Cathy, what did you write down?

CATHY: I didn't write it down, but that's some of the stuff that I remembered and it was basically the Bush camp putting it out.

MODERATOR: Okay, I'm just interested. Janie, did you write anything down?

JANIE: No.

MODERATOR: Okay, Jerry?

JERRY: I wrote down the Bush commercial on Kerry's liberalism in voting for taxes with sort of absurd numbers thrown in about how many times voted for taxes.

MODERATOR: John, what did you write down?

JOHN: The empty factories and that George Bush outsourced everything.

MODERATOR: Jennifer wrote that too. Ruth, did you write anything else?

RUTH: No, I didn't write down anything.

MODERATOR: Anybody else have something to contribute? I just wanted to see. They spent about \$62 million in Ohio. What are you going to do now? Let me ask you a question. What was this election all about? What was this election all about? John, what was it?

JOHN: The election was about George Bush's leadership ability and his vision for the future. I personally have some confidence in his vision. I didn't hear John Kerry express his vision in the words that I wanted to hear. It was more about George was making a lot of mistakes. We need to get George out of there. Like some of us have said here, anybody, let's just get somebody else in there. I couldn't go that route.

MODERATOR: Okay. Carol, what was the election about?

CAROL: To me, it was two people trying to unite the country in two different ways.

MODERATOR: How were they trying to unite the country?

CAROL: Well, I think that's why it was such a tough election. I don't think that either of them gave a solid plan on how they were going to do that, but they both kept saying that they were going to do it.

MODERATOR: Ed, what was the election all about?

ED: I thought it was about the moral strength and values of the two candidates, the two different platforms, who could stay the course longer and get victory or end this war, who could stay the course longer and do better in the economy.

MODERATOR: Tom, what was the election all about?

TOM: I think that it was a referendum for or against George Bush.

MODERATOR: How many of you agree that it was a referendum for or against George Bush? I have seven hands up. Okay, anybody else have something to add? Jerry?

JERRY: I thought it was about marketing, I thought that the candidate who could come across the slickest. I think that the Republicans did a great job of projecting the issues that they wanted to project. I am sort of struck by several reports that I've read about how people voted on issues without accurate information. For example, the number of people who thought that the 9/11 Commission reported that there were weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, and people who thought there was a direct connection between Iraq and Osama bin Laden. There are a lot of places that I think that marketing was more important than facts, and that a lot of people voted on gut and emotion and not on facts.

MODERATOR: Let me ask you a question. What gives you optimism from this election as you look ahead? What is it that gives you a sense of optimism as you look ahead more than this guy won or this guy lost? Is there anything about the process that gives you a sense of optimism? Susan?

SUSAN: I think that now that it is over that hopefully the stock market will return to a more normal daily outlook on our future. I'm so happy that the gas prices are dropping. I think, optimistically speaking, that we have some continuity now for four years, good or bad, we're going to have come continuity.

MODERATOR: Jane, anything that gives you optimism as you look ahead out of this election? It's something where you say that something good has come out of this. You may have voted for John Kerry, but looking at everything that has happened, is there anything that has given you sense of optimism?

JANE: Yeah, I'm trying to be optimistic about the fact that the election was so close and that so many Americans came out and voted. Hopefully, people will see to it that our elected officials do live up to their promises. Maybe because the election was so close that the parties will be more united and not be so totally divided.

MODERATOR: John, does anything give you a sense of optimism?

JOHN: Yeah, going back to my earlier statement, I think it was a close election, but it was an election with enough vote difference that neither side can go through what we did last time. The fact that, number one, I think Americans are great forgivers and forgetters. We forgive and forget. We want to be behind our President. There are Presidents that I've supported and Presidents that I haven't supported, but once they're elected, they're my President, and I would hope that both parties do that. I think that we will. I truly, truly believe that. And there are so many new people being brought into the voting pool that it can only be optimistic for both parties. We've got a tried-and-true method that has lasted for more than 200 years. It's the envy of the world. We should be proud of it.

MODERATOR: What gives you a sense of optimism, Carol? Is there anything that has come out of this which says I feel optimistic?

CAROL: I feel that it's going to change future elections. People will continue to come out and vote and realize how important that their vote is.

MODERATOR: Let me move from here, if I can, and just ask you if there were any groups that affected your vote either positively or in a negative way, where you say, yeah, that's somebody that had influence on my vote? Trevor?

TREVOR: I would have to say that the majority of the small private interest groups, in general, whether it be for Kerry or for Bush turned me off on the election a little bit. I thought the whole idea of campaign finance reform was to get some of that outside money out, so we got to see what the President thought or his opponent. Rather we got all of these outside marketing views of either candidate.

MODERATOR: Did anybody else feel that, I felt deluged by all of these outside groups? How many say, yeah, I felt that? Were they good for the system or bad for the system? Bad, says Jennifer. Why?

JENNIFER: I just started to shoot it all out, and it didn't affect what the core issues were for me, and it just seemed like an irritation and a waste of time and money.

MODERATOR: Julie, any effect?

JULIE: I agree. I already have my views on the policies and the morals of the candidates, and those just got on my nerves, and I turned them off.

MODERATOR: Ruth, how about yourself?

RUTH: I agree.

MODERATOR: So nobody was in favor of all of these groups expressing themselves in an independent way. There were certainly a lot of them. Did anybody feel that it did something for the system?

JERRY: I think that it raises questions about the information overload and how the media and how the opportunities to express ideas and not necessarily to be accurate in them, what kind of power that has. I think that is a real concern. I was very positive about the groups that I saw working in the campus area. I live near the university. I was impressed in terms of their commitment and idealism and willingness to get out and talk with people. I thought that was really positive to get young people out and voting and thinking.

MODERATOR: Anybody else? Let me, if I can, have you look at Handout B. One of the things that struck me, and I wrote down a whole series of things about different elements that may have played a point in this election. Just take one and pass the rest around. Put your name, first name is fine, up at the top of the page.

What I would like you to do, if you could, is just look at each of these things. And as far as your own vote and your own decision-making process, not how you think the rest of America feels, but how you feel, is concerned for each of these 16 different things, tell me if it played a critical role for you, some role, or very little or no role at all. So just X each of these.

For example, did the patriotism and service records of Kerry and Bush play a critical role, some role or no role? The current economic conditions in Ohio, what role did that play? The record of the Bush Administration during the first term, the ability to fight terrorism in America, etc., for each, think about your own vote and how important that issue may or may not have been.

What I'd like to have you do afterwards is circle the two that had the most critical role, the two that had the most critical role. If you said a lot of things had a critical role, just take the two that had the most critical role for you. Okay, everybody about ready? Ruth, what had a critical role for you?

RUTH: The Social Security system.

MODERATOR: That was letter H?

RUTH: Yes.

MODERATOR: Anyone else indicate that H played a critical role? Okay, Jerry and Ruth checked H. Why critical?

RUTH: I'm not good at explaining things. The Social Security system at this time, the way it is going, will be affected with the new generation. If nothing happens now, the young people now will not be able to get Social Security benefits unless something changes. I'm not good at explaining myself.

MODERATOR: No, that's perfect. Jerry, is it important?

JERRY: I think that it's important because we're at a point where we're with large deficits with baby boomers coming of age and people needing that kind of support. We're in real danger of bankrupting the government in a variety of ways, without dealing with Social Security.

MODERATOR: Good. Ed, what was the one that you circled as being extremely critical?

ED: I circled two of them. The ability to fight terrorism . . .

MODERATOR: How many put that D, ability to fight terrorism? We've got five hands. Why is it so critical?

ED: Well, I think it's threatening Americans. It's threatening our economy. It's threatening the airlines. It's threatening all sorts of things that America utilizes and has available for us.

MODERATOR: Jennifer, why is it so critical for you?

JENNIFER: All of these things are critical, but if under terrorist attacks, I may not be here to need my Social Security if terror isn't under control.

MODERATOR: Susan, same question?

SUSAN: The thing that I am most proud of in being an American is my ability to be independent and to have freedom, personal freedoms. I think that terrorism will severely limit that. It already has. If we don't put a stop to it, it's only going to get worse,

MODERATOR: Who else has one? Carol, what did you circle as particularly critical?

CAROL: The war in Iraq.

MODERATOR: Did anybody else circle the war in Iraq as particularly critical? Ed, Carol, Ruth, and John chose the war. Carol, why is it so critical?

CAROL: It's costing so much money and it doesn't seem like we're getting anywhere. It seems to be very poorly thought out or not thought out at all. It makes me very angry when I think about it and of all of the lost lives.

MODERATOR: John, why is it so critical?

JOHN: I think it's critical because it impacts our ability to fight terrorism in America. I see a link there. I know a lot of people don't, but I see a link there, and I think how we deal with the war in Iraq is an extremely sticky wicket at this point. How we resolve that situation is going to impact terrorism throughout the entire world.

MODERATOR: Okay. Ruth, how is it important to you?

RUTH: What's the reason for the war in Iraq? There are still soldiers getting killed there every day. Where are the weapons of mass destruction? The war is uncalled for to me. Why can't they shift the soldiers back over here in America? Why is this war still going on? I can't understand that.

MODERATOR: Good. Who else said it was critical, and what were you thinking?

MAN: I think that Iraq played a big part in terrorism throughout the world, and they were culpable for all sorts of damage throughout the world. Freedom isn't free. You have to pay the price. I would rather fight those folks there versus here. I think our army and military are much more capable of fighting terrorism and vice by bringing the army home and letting our police officers and firemen fight terrorism in the streets.

MODERATOR: Good. Who has another issue that we haven't talked about as central? Cathy?

CATHY: The two that I have are concerns about the moral values in America . . .

MODERATOR: How many of you put down moral values in America? There are three people. What's your concern about that?

CATHY: I'm concerned that Bush feels it's necessary to push his moral values on the country and the way that he's chosen to do so. There are issues that have been settled for years and should still be settled. He's trying to get some of that stuff reversed. And I don't believe that my government should be the one that's imposing these kinds of views. Honestly, if you ask me about myself personally, I'll tell you that I'm a very conservative person in my lifestyle. Anybody that knows me probably . . . but I'm very liberal in my voting because I don't want those views dictated by the government. They still need to be individual choices.

A lot of the stuff that I'm hearing just scares me. I know my ancestors came over here because of religious persecution, and I'm just feeling that it's starting to lean more to this area where if you don't go this way, then you're out of the popular group. I think that there is a lot more at stake here.

MODERATOR: Julie, tell me, how you are looking at it?

JULIE: Well, I think it's important to have a leader who has moral values. It doesn't mean that your morals affect who you are and what decisions that you make, but I believe it's important also to support the family and good morals. If you don't help strengthen the family and the individual, it will project out to the nation.

MODERATOR: You saw the family as an important element in your voting decision. Where does Jennifer come down?

JENNIFER: It's similar to what Julie said. It's really interesting what Cathy said too. You were saying that there are things that have been settled and he's pushing his moral values. There're also things that maybe were settled for some people, but maybe remained unsettled for other people.

CATHY: You don't have to do anything that you don't want to do. What I'm saying is that we all need that right to choose rather than have it dictated by some government. We all have our own faith. We all have our own morals and ethics. As long as you're not harming someone else in that way, I don't want anybody else telling me what to do.

JENNIFER: I understand that, and I think that most people agree with it for the most part. Then you come to those really sticky issues like abortion, and if one person says

that it's not hurting you, but the other person is saying that it's hurting someone that is innocent. At this point, we have this huge issue. I think that that was a core issue.

MODERATOR: As far as you're concerned . . . Tom, how about yourself? You've listened to this conversation. What are you thinking?

TOM: When I say that I'm not intelligent enough to make views for other people, I believe our country over the past couple of years, well, the last 12 years, has had a very weak name of commonsense and leadership in the White House. The prior President embarrassed me. I have to be completely honest. I believe that everybody should have their rights within limits to do what they want.

We are a nation of law, and I really don't see George Bush in the view that you do, but I accept the fact that you do. That's the beauty. You and I can do it. What I don't want is for somebody to go over and throw a rock through my window because I don't agree with their view. That's what I don't like. What I thought was most important was who is going to go to the Supreme Court and the selection of justices. That's going to be around a long, long time.

MODERATOR: Let me come back to that in one second, but just get Ed's view. Ed, where are you coming from on this, and how important is it in terms of you making a decision in 2004?

ED: The moral issue isn't the one that I selected, but I think that the moral character and fiber of the President has to stand. He's on the world stage. You have to have that kind of person where there's no talking over the shoulder about what a former President did in his private chambers. You don't want that kind of stuff going on about the leader of freedom in the world. I feel strongly that our President should have been a very moral person.

MODERATOR: I'd just like to ask one additional question. The way that you framed it, did you see a difference between Kerry and Bush in terms of, as you expressed it, moral fiber and character?

ED: Yes, I did.

MODERATOR: And the difference that you saw just on that dimension?

ED: The difference that I saw in Kerry was the flip-flopping back and forth and the issue about his military record. His website still does not show his discharge papers, whether it was honorable or not. I'm a Vietnam veteran. I was wounded many times in Vietnam, all of the scratch variety and I didn't get one Purple Heart. I wouldn't dishonor the medal for a scratch. I certainly didn't inflict any of those scratches on myself. I just have problems with that kind of . . .

MODERATOR: And that came down to the moral fiber?

ED: Yes.

MODERATOR: Anybody else? I want to make a quick point and then go back to Tom's point about the Supreme Court. Yes, John?

JOHN: I serve in leadership, and I'm kind of surprised that I've haven't heard that from anybody else around here. To me, this is a world-class leadership position here. He's got to lead a lot of powerful people, a lot of powerful personalities on a world stage. It's an extremely difficult position because as we all know, George Bush and every other President that we've had is not the most intelligent person in the world. He has to surround himself with people who are good advisors and can help him fulfill that leadership position.

I've always felt that one of the great resources, natural resources, of this country is the great leadership that we've had. It seems like once a man gets to that level, suddenly he realizes that he's not a Democrat or a Republican anymore, he's on the world stage, and he's representing the most powerful and the greatest country in the world. and maybe of all time. It's a tremendous responsibility. I think that's one of the things that makes this country great is this leadership quality that we've seen in our Presidents over the years. I felt like George Bush had better leadership qualities than John Kerry.

MODERATOR: Just describe one, from your point of view, that had better leadership qualities than John Kerry.

JOHN: Well, first of all, he's been President for four years.

MODERATOR: Okay, so experience. He's got the experience of doing the job. Does he have any other leadership quality?

JOHN: He's made some serious convictions and he's stuck with them. He doesn't seem to react to spin.

MODERATOR: Jerry, let me hold off on you, if I could for a second, and Tom just raised the point on this screen quick. Did anybody else say that this played a critical role in their decision for Cathy, Jerry, and Tom? Jerry, played an important role because? Is it the same as Tom, decisive?

JERRY: I think it's extremely decisive. I think that, from my perspective, the court is leaning more and more towards not protecting the rights of the individual person and supporting, what I consider conservative and almost reactionary agendas, and I think that will continue and be exacerbated by Bush's appointments. I was reacting to your question earlier about moral values. I really think that what we have are two very

different views of what moral values are and what moral values obtain in this selection. Which ones were important?

I was more concerned about things like the war in Iraq and what kind of values were behind a war that, in many ways, created more problems than it solved and killed an awful lot of people. I'm concerned about what I see in the health professions, what I see in education in terms of the lack of support in what I would call social justice issues. I find it sort of interesting, and I don't mean to be critical of the other side on this, because I think that there were some inconsistencies both ways, but I found it very interesting that the Catholic Church came out strongly in many individual instances about Kerry's stand on abortion. They made that sort of a litmus test. They didn't come out that way on the death penalty, which is another element in which the Church supports life in a sense.

I think people sort of choose which moral values they see as sort of the operating and crucial thing at this point. I think that this whole idea about the critical roles though, things can be critical, but, to me, the difference is what were the differences on the candidates between them. There would be some things that are critical, like the war in Iraq, but I'm not sure that the candidates were radically different on those as they were on, say, the Supreme Court, for me.

MODERATOR: Let me just clear up on the Supreme Court. I've got three people who said it was critical. Tom, you look at it, I assume, a little differently than Jerry?

TOM: One-hundred-and-eighty degrees.

MODERATOR: Yeah, 180 degrees. And, Cathy, I assume you're about one degree different or one-half degree, as the case may be. For anybody else, Julie, Jennifer, Trevor, did it enter into your decision or that was not one of those issues that really counted very much?

TREVOR: It's an issue. It's a lifetime appointment. Once again with the trust, he's done it for four years. He's had the possibility of somebody being hit by a car every day. I'm just going with that flow.

MODERATOR: I'm going to move on. Does anybody else want to discuss one of the other issues on this as it having an important and critical role in my decision on which candidate I was going to vote for? Janie, what are your views?

JANIE: I had one. Mine was respect in relationship with other countries. That played a major concern with me. That was the big issue that kept pushing me away from Bush. As you guys say, he would take a stand, and you would like that, but I felt that he wasn't able to bend sometimes when he needed to, in a situation where I felt he needed to give things time, and maybe listen to other views, and not make up his mind so early in the situation, and stick with that regardless.

MODERATOR: An interesting point that Janie brings up. John, you talked about the strength of leadership and the strength of conviction. Did you feel that way about Bush that sometimes he didn't bend or adjust when he needed to?

JOHN: This is what I heard. Colin Powell told George Bush before he went into Iraq, he said that if you go in there, you are going to own Iraq. Do you want to own Iraq? I'm not sure that George gave the right answer to that question. He should have put a little more faith in Colin Powell. I can go on for a long while about the Iraq thing, but I think ultimately he made the right decision. Can you play the Monday morning quarterback and go back and say we all should a, should a, could a? Maybe so, but I think he made the right decision at the time. And whether Kerry got in or Bush gets back in, getting out of there is going to be tough.

MODERATOR: Susan, do you have any reaction to Janie?

SUSAN: As far as . . .

MODERATOR: Just the sense of, as she said, working with other countries, and having the respect of other countries.

SUSAN: I think that Bush has a typical Texas attitude. I don't know if you are aware of this or not, but to have a business in Texas, you have to incorporate in Texas. You can't be incorporated anywhere else in the United States. They run that state just about as independently as they can from the country.

WOMAN: I live in Texas.

SUSAN: So you know that. He has a typical Texas attitude. One of my big concerns about Bush and one of the reasons that I didn't make up my mind until I got in there that day was that I don't think that he's terribly intelligent, and I think that he surrounded himself with some advisors that gave him some very serious misinformation with regard to weapons of mass destruction.

My hope was that because of the closeness of this election that maybe he would rethink some of his choices, and that has indeed happened as of today. I'm glad to see that. I think that Bush needs to reconsider some of his decisions. I think that taking Saddam Hussein out was a good thing. I don't think that we did it the best way that we could.

MODERATOR: I'm going to move on. We can come back to some of these issues. This is great. You're doing great, thank you. Let me ask a question. Were the debates important for anybody in terms of this election? Can anybody say that, yeah, the debates really played an important role in my decision? Why, Trevor?

TREVOR: I would say that he helped to either affirm or disaffirm my belief in a candidate. It was the rock in the cornerstone wall, if you wanted to get things started and finalize what I decided.

MODERATOR: Okay, let me get some other people. Jennifer?

JENNIFER: I almost think that if you have made up your mind early on, the debates, you sort of see in them what you want to see. You get out of it what you want to get out of it. It just makes you that much more sure of what you already thought.

MODERATOR: Julie?

JULIE: I agree it just sort of affirmed, but it did give me a chance to be able to hear what some of Kerry's views were and get to know him so that I could make that decision and feel good about it.

MODERATOR: Carol, you were pretty committed to voting against Bush, so did it have any real role for you?

CAROL: I still watched all of the debates because I felt that they were important to see if I was missing anything, and it gave me a chance to see them really react in that kind of forum. Even though it didn't change my mind, it was good.

MODERATOR: Is there any issue that the media overplayed, where you said too much? Cathy?

CATHY: From the beginning when they were talking about Kerry's war record, I don't care.

MODERATOR: You just felt that they overplayed that. Anybody else agree that they overplayed it? Quite a few people agree it was overplayed. Is there anything else that you think that the media overplayed?

WOMAN: Yes, I'd say their opinion on who won the debate.

MODERATOR: You didn't like that? Why not?

WOMAN: It was just so biased. It was almost comical to watch.

MODERATOR: Is there anything else? John?

JOHN: I don't see the debates as a win or lose thing. I'm not going into the Washington debate as a who won? One of them might be a better debater than the other person, so what? I want to hear what they have to say and hear the . . .

MODERATOR: Okay, got it. Is there something that played a part in the decision where you say that it just didn't get any coverage, it didn't get enough coverage, we deserve more airing on this, we deserve more of a discussion?

MAN: I don't think that the Supreme Court decisions about justices and the coming vacancies were discussed enough.

MODERATOR: I'm going to move on, only because I got your view on that earlier. What elements did John Kerry not understand well enough or deal with well enough during the campaign? What didn't he deal well with?

JOHN: Reality.

MODERATOR: Reality, says John. Ed?

ED: Can you come back?

MODERATOR: Sure. Does anybody else have something?

SUSAN: Well, he said so strongly about how he wanted to get more jobs for this country, and how Ohio, in particular, as we all know, has been devastated by loss of jobs. I never heard a very good concrete plan for how he was going to accomplish this.

MODERATOR: Tom?

TOM: He never stayed on a topic long enough that I could get an opinion on the man. I was willing to listen. It seemed like when I wanted to hear an answer about this, he would talk about that. We never seemed to stay on the track. Now, that's how I saw it. I imagine my opponents would say the same thing to Bush.

MODERATOR: Cathy is not your opponent.

[Simultaneous discussion]

TOM: Personally, I don't think that any question was answered by either candidate in enough detail to make an intelligent decision.

WOMAN: How long was it in each of the debates? We're talking less than two minutes. We can't expect . . .

TOM: The format was bad.

WOMAN: You cannot expect to get any kind of . . .

MODERATOR: How many say that the format was bad, hands up? A lot of people said that. Is there anything else? Okay. What didn't George Bush deal with or understand well enough? What did George Bush not understand?

WOMAN: I thought he was always on the attack mode more than on defending his own policies.

MODERATOR: Okay. Beyond that, was there any issue, any area where you say . . . I thought that Susan's remark was very telling when she said that Ohio was devastated with jobs, and I felt that John Kerry talked about jobs a lot, but he never really told us what his plan was. Is there anything about George Bush where you say, I was disappointed, I don't think that he really got it or related to it? Cathy?

CATHY: I guess part of it, with respect to the relationship with other countries, and that was a big issue of mine as well, if you go to European countries and they hear that you are from the United States, you're not getting an overwhelmingly wonderful response about the President. That's, I think, is kind of a hurtful thing. The point is that we should not be looked at, I don't believe, as bullies. We need to have a good relationship with the world. They already look at us like we think that we are an island to ourselves, and we take care of ourselves, and the hell with everybody else. I don't want that kind of image projected for my country and the people that I live with.

MAN: Excuse me. Hasn't that been any country that is perceived as being on top? They do it. They did it to Japan during World War II. They did it to Britain before World War I. I hate to say it, but when you are number one or perceived as number one, goes public opinion, which is against us. Some of the countries that are against us were also the countries that . . . Iraq's fall would cost them an amazing financial amount. Did they vote with a moralistic view or did they vote with a financial point of view?

WOMAN: I guess we could ask the same question about why we are there.

MAN: That's exactly right.

WOMAN: I don't think that we need a President that stands there and basically flaunts it and says that I don't need you, and I don't want your opinion, and I don't care what your opinion is.

WOMAN: I think that going against the United Nations was awful.

[Simultaneous discussion]

MAN: How many times did you go to the United Nations when they have given you the permission to do it? Tell you to do it and then they do nothing. If you're going to go and

go and go, and the answer is no and no and no, why do you have one? I'm a firm believer in the UN, and I think it's a great idea, but if they're not going to have the courage of their own convictions, why are we listening to them?

MODERATOR: Cathy, I think that we'll truncate the discussion on the United Nations. We'll come back tomorrow. Thank you. Julie, any point in terms of George Bush that you felt that he missed or didn't cover in terms of the campaign, where you say, I wish he'd done better here or there or I wish he discussed it more?

CATHY: No, not really.

MODERATOR: Jennifer? Ed?

JENNIFER: Well, I think that we've already said both of them needed to be more specific and they weren't. That would go for George Bush as well on his plan for jobs and improving healthcare. It was all so vague that you almost had to go with your gut. You really didn't have a lot of specific information to go on.

MODERATOR: Ed?

ED: I'm not sure I caught much about his ideas and thoughts about the tax reform that he's coming out with now. I don't think that I really understood that before the actual election.

MODERATOR: Tell me a couple of other things. Did the selection of John Edwards or Dick Cheney or the wives and daughters of the candidates at the convention have much of an effect on anybody? Any of those things play a part in your decision? John?

JOHN: The Vice Presidents do. As far as the daughters go, I could care less about that. The thought of John Edwards being Vice President and possibly President was really a tough one. I couldn't even think about that one very much.

MODERATOR: The hurdle that you needed to get over on that was?

JOHN: I understood that he wasn't going to carry his own state in the election. He just seemed so much of a young, flashy guy with no experience in government at that level.

MODERATOR: Did anybody else have strong feelings about John Edwards one way or another? Julie?

JULIE: I felt that I couldn't trust what he was saying. He seemed very rehearsed, and let me give you the big patriotic speech, and the flag is waving in the background. I don't know if I can believe what he is saying.

MODERATOR: Okay. Ed?

ED: I thought it was very interesting about him condemning the President for not having a plan for flu shots. He was the lawyer that helped sway the flu shot producers in the United States to not produce flu shots for us anymore.

MODERATOR: Okay. Has Vice President Cheney had any effect on anybody? Susan?

SUSAN: He almost cost Bush my vote.

MODERATOR: Did he? Why?

SUSAN: I think that Cheney is very intelligent, and I think Cheney is very self-centered. I think that he is out to line his pocket and to build a powerful base. I think he is a very powerful man. I think that he holds that job, not because he cares about the welfare of the citizens of this country, but merely to have power and to gain more money through his power.

MODERATOR: So you were really bothered by . . . was there anything he did during the campaign that really bothered you?

SUSAN: Well, the one thing that I noticed that I got the biggest kick out of is when George Bush and Laura were standing up there, and Dick Cheney and his wife were standing up there, George Bush and Laura were fairly close together, and Dick Cheney and his wife were probably five feet apart. The ice between them was tremendous. If your wife dislikes you that intensely, that really works.

MODERATOR: Okay, I'm not sure I know that. Does anybody else have something?

MAN: He seemed like a liability.

MODERATOR: Who, the Vice President?

MAN: Why? Why do you see . . .

MAN: Because of a lot of the points that Susan brought out. There are enough other Republican people that he could have picked this time.

MODERATOR: Does anybody have anything else in terms of that? Was there anything important with the conventions? Janie?

JANIE: Cheney, I don't like Cheney at all or his wife is always in attack mode. In the beginning of Bush's first election, it was said that it was he that was running the country,

basically. And I think that now Bush has probably more or less put him in his place. The thing with reaching out and he accusing Edwards, I'm not a big Edwards fan either, but I just thought that he was awfully petty. He was saying stuff like, I've never seen you around. Well, what happened to the Administration reaching out across party lines and welcoming them in? I just felt that he was really petty.

MODERATOR: Jerry, do you want to add something?

JERRY: I think that I was not impressed by Cheney, and I think that I agree that he seems to have more personal monetary interest involved. But more than that, to me, he symbolizes a combination of leadership roles around the President that included Rumsfeld and people in the Department of Defense as a very tight-knit group of neoconservatives. I saw them in opposition to somebody like Colin Powell. I think that it really did not play to the President's advantage to seem to be following their lead more often the Powell's, who I think is a very respected man around the country.

MODERATOR: Let me get a couple of quick things out. Just pop them out if you've got something. My question is, besides who won and lost the election, what was your biggest disappointment about this election? Trevor, what was the biggest disappointment about this election? You don't have to have something, but if somebody says, here was a disappointment.

TREVOR: . . .

MODERATOR: A big disappointment, Ruth? Is there anything that Ruth thinks about as a disappointment in this election?

RUTH: My disappointment was Bush winning.

MODERATOR: I imagine that would be true of a lot of people who voted for Kerry, and I imagine that the other side was much more elated. That happens when you win and lose an election. Carol, what disappointed you?

CAROL: I was disappointed with how nasty it got and how personal it got. It just totally turned me off.

MODERATOR: Okay, Ed?

ED: The \$62 million, all of that money, going into commercials re-spinning the same stuff.

MODERATOR: Good. Does anyone have anything else? Jerry?

JERRY: I think that after the election this whole spin about red states and blue states. I think that has driven the country further apart. I was looking at the map in the papers, and in the *Dispatch*, it had red states and blue states, but it also colored the counties that went against the winner in that state a different color. What appeared to be much more important than red and blue was urban and rural, and the states the tended to carry Kerry tended to have larger . . .

MODERATOR: John, was there anything that disappointed you about this election?

JOHN: There's just so much spin, and the only thing that the spin does to me after it turns me off, it does energize my will to find out what the truth is as best you can.

MODERATOR: What was the most surprising thing about this election? What was the most surprising thing about this election? Ed?

ED: I was most surprised with the voter turnout.

MODERATOR: The voter turnout. Good. What was the most surprising thing about this election? Okay, the rest of you had very little surprise. Was there a single event that helped you more than anything else to nail down how you were voting? Obviously, if you're Carol or Cathy, you knew pretty early on. Ed and Jennifer probably knew fairly early on. Is there anybody who was deciding where you say, yes, there was an event, there was something that happened that was crystallizing and helpful? Ruth, is there anything from your point of view? Is there anything that you think of, Trevor?

TREVOR: The debates helped. You got to see a little more of the actual candidates rather than just seeing the snippets and blurbs.

MODERATOR: Okay, does anybody else have something?

WOMAN: I think the debates, and I think probably it was grotesque and overplayed in my opinion, about John Kerry wishy-washiness. What I've learned in my life is terrorism I see as a form of bullies. And I've learned that with bullies, you have to be very strong, and stand up to them is the only way to really defeat them or not allow them to control your life. I didn't see John Kerry standing up to the bullies in the way that I thought he needed to.

MODERATOR: How did you know that he wouldn't? It's a great insight. Did anybody else feel that he might not have been strong enough to stand up to the bullies? Tom does too and maybe John. What helped you to say, yeah, I knew he wouldn't stand up to those bullies?

WOMAN: He wanted to be President so bad, he would say whatever he thought the people wanted to hear at that given moment in time. He wanted to be President more

than anything, and he wanted the position, and, in my opinion, he did not want to make this country better or make my life or everybody else's lives here significantly better. He just wanted to be President.

Then, once he got it, I felt that he was going to decide then what he was going to do with the power as President. His goal was just single-minded on getting that job. It was like somebody doing a really great interview. They feed you a whole line of stuff, and you give them the job and, thank God, we have six months' probation because three months into it, you decide that you made a terrible mistake.

MODERATOR: Yours sounds like a boss.

WOMAN: That goes the other way too. Bush was so focused on retaliation with Iraq, that I felt that he's a bully. I felt that he was just not willing to give a deal without going to war. I think that war should have been the very last resort. If we had to go a hundred times to that table, why should you jump and go to war? Is that going to solve anything? Look where we are. It's not solving anything.

WOMAN: Well, I look where we're at, and the fact that this is 2004 and we haven't had another 9/11. I think that it helped slow them down. I don't think that we've stopped them. I don't know that we will ever stop them. I don't know that we can stop them. We have just slowed them down.

WOMAN: That's my point, where do we go from here? Where does it stop?

WOMAN: That's the scary part, Janie. I agree with you. I have two teenage sons. They're talking about bringing back the draft, and they're reactivating people that have paperwork that says that they are done. I work with some of those people. That's very scary to me. I have a lot of personal experience with bullies, and I've learned that they will push you and push you and push you until you finally stand up. And when you stand up, you have to be prepared to put your money where your mouth is. You have to be prepared to say this is going to stop.

WOMAN: There's the key point right there, put your money where your mouth is. We're talking about a man who could attack Kerry's record, and we know that the Republicans were doing that. There was a smear campaign, but yet how often did they try to sweep under the rug? I give a lot a credit to Kerry for not blatantly saying to the man, look, buddy, I was there. I at least did my time. I don't know what you think my time was like, I did my time. You kept your butt in the United States, and Daddy and whoever else your friends were kept you out of it. Not a lot of people were kept out of it.

MAN: Oh, no, that's not true.

WOMAN: When I'm looking at these two, I'm going to put my money with the guy who had the guts and the conviction to go over there. I don't care what you think his record

was like versus a guy who is sitting there saying I've never been there. He has no personal experience with it.

MAN: I'll tell you something. Kerry did the same thing after Vietnam or during Vietnam that he did during this war. We've got troops in harm's way, and he's putting comments out there indicating that he's putting you in more harm's way. You really, really can't do that. That was extremely offensive to me. I'm a Vietnam veteran also, and you just can't do that.

WOMAN: What did he say that was going to hurt someone? That's what I don't understand.

MAN: He's was going to pull out. He was going to pull our troops out on a set timetable.

MAN: He was going to make changes that were going to get us out of there sooner or get us out of there with less than the goal and the vision. You just can't do that while it is going on. He can do anything that he wants to after it's all over. That's okay if he wants to write a book and say that this went wrong and that went wrong. That's fine. I don't have a problem with that. Everybody has their opinion.

We all had different experiences in Vietnam, and all that kind of stuff. When you have troops over there taking rounds, you have to be extremely careful, and that was very upsetting to me. The other thing that was upsetting to me about Kerry was, at the convention, he was going to solve all problems. In his convention acceptance speech, there was not anything wrong or perceived wrong about America that he couldn't fix in the first 20 minutes of being President.

WOMAN: I thought that too. It was very simplistic, and he just didn't acknowledge the complexities. Even going back to the respect of other countries, a lot of things that he said that you just mentioned to me made it seem like how could other countries' leaders respect him after he said a lot of this stuff.

WOMAN: The promises Bush made on his first term, he's not even fulfilled, and we reelect this . . .

WOMAN: That's the whole point.

[Simultaneous discussion]

WOMAN: You don't go up to the leader and say, you didn't get this done or you didn't get that done. The President is not a dictator. He cannot just do, do, do, do. This is how it is.

[Simultaneous discussion]

JERRY: He had much more power than many of our previous Presidents. I'm sort of interested to talk about complexities and things for Kerry. As I read George Bush, I've seen this in education, I think that in the war in Iraq, he has a magic-bullet solution. We go over and we knock Saddam out of power, and everything is going to be okay. I might be able to forgive him for the war, but I can't forgive him for the lack of vision of the complexity of dealing with other people. He expected people to roll over, and we're going to have a democracy in five months or whatever. He didn't put enough troops in to guarantee civil liberties. It was going to be a quick hit, and we were going to be in and out, but we engaged the lives of a whole nation of people without thinking it all of the way through.

In my own area of education, the No Child Left Behind Act has some real value to it, but, again, it was sort of, we'll test everybody, and that will solve the questions and the issues. They did not consider that there were other root causes that have to be addressed or that you have to stick with this with full support over a long period of time. I see this Administration as doing short-range things and not thinking through long-range consequences.

MAN: They want to throw money because that's the only power they had, generally speaking, is to throw money at something. When you talk about root causes, especially in education, we know what the root causes are, but nobody wants to talk about those kinds of things because they don't necessarily involve the federal government. They don't involve George Bush going to a kid's school and fixing things. They're more about the family, and more about the people of the country, and raising their kids right.

That's what I've seen going downhill, and no politician is going to stand up and say that because it's just not something that you want to hear. You want to hear how it's going to take \$4.2 billion to do something in your schools. That's what people want to hear, and that's what they are going to hear out of the politicians.

MAN: I agree with you in the sense that you can't just throw money at issues, but you have to pay the cost of delivering services effectively and efficiently. If all you're going to spend on is the testing part and make that your primary concern without thinking about what it means to be poor and what that means about the nature of your school compared to one in the suburbs . . .

MODERATOR: Thank you. Thank you for the debate on education on the national and local levels. I've got a lot a territory to cover, so I apologize when I cut off some of these very good discussions. I just decided that I'd put up a bunch of people that I saw appear throughout the election. Does anybody make any difference to you in terms of this where you said, yeah, that person had an influence, either feeling much more positively or negatively towards a candidate or party?

MAN: Yes, I'm very strong with John McCain. I think that John McCain was the best thing that came out of this whole election. I think that he had an even view on both

sides. I think that he cautioned intelligence, and he definitely counseled compassion. Of this list, he's the only one that really did it for me.

MODERATOR: He came out strongly for Bush. Did that help you towards making your decision?

MAN: Do you want to know the nice thing? He was very supportive of Kerry too. He was a healer. He was not an attacker. Of all of the people, he was the only one that didn't attack.

MODERATOR: How many of you agree that you had a good feeling about John McCain during this election? Most people agree. Does anybody else have something? Let me get Trevor's point of view.

TREVOR: I was agreeing with John McCain more so than anybody else. They brought in the celebrities it seemed like at the end, and that has always been to me a turn off because I've seen what I want to see. I don't want to see who supports you. I don't want to see who is in your club. I want to see what you are going to do.

MODERATOR: Okay. John, you've given a lot of air time. Let's get some others in there. Jennifer?

JENNIFER: Along with that, one of the things that bothered me was that, I don't care who the celebrities or the rock stars are. I think it was neat how they got people out to vote, but it shouldn't . . .

MODERATOR: Okay, fine. Is there anybody else? Do you have any feelings in terms of Rudy Giuliani, Arnold Schwarzenegger, anybody else?

MAN: You left somebody out.

MODERATOR: Who?

MAN: I felt pretty negatively about Zel Miller.

MODERATOR: Does anyone have feelings about Zel Miller?

MAN: Oh, yes, he had his effects.

WOMAN: Indeed he had effects.

MODERATOR: We didn't like Zel Miller?

MAN: No, I didn't like him at all.

MODERATOR: Why not? He's the senator from Georgia who spoke at the Republican convention.

MAN: I thought that he was very demagogic. I thought that his remarks were extreme. I thought that some fundamental issues about being a Democrat with Democratic values that I thought he had, he didn't show.

MAN: He's a pretty strong conservative. His past history . . .

MAN: He should have turned Republican a long time ago.

MAN: Rudy Giuliani affected my vote because he was up to his eyeballs in one of the worst disasters, if not the worst disaster, and he supported George Bush. If George Bush had not done what he thought was necessary, Rudy Giuliani, in a heartbeat, would have said I'm not supporting this guy.

MODERATOR: So that was important to you. Okay, let me move on. Any new face or personality that came out of this election, they may not be on that list, who you said, yes, that impressed me?

WOMAN: I'll never get his name right, and this is awful and I apologize, when he spoke at the National Democratic Convention . . .

MODERATOR: Barack Obama, and he impressed you.

WOMAN: I was extremely impressed. I saw him again this weekend. He was on one of the news shows.

MODERATOR: Did anybody else impress people? Was anybody else impressed by Barack Obama, the new senator from Illinois? It is Tom, Jerry, and Janie. Did anybody else impress somebody? Okay, onward and upward, if we could go from there. Let's go with a lightning round. Give me a word or phrase to describe George Bush? Ed?

ED: . . .

MODERATOR: Carol?

CAROL: Bully.

MAN: Dynamic.

WOMAN: I can't think of anything.

MODERATOR: Cathy?

CATHY: Not fit.

MAN: It's not going to sound nice, but dumb.

MODERATOR: Ruth?

RUTH: I can't say. I have nothing to say.

MODERATOR: Julie?

JULIE: Integrity.

MODERATOR: Susan?

SUSAN: Consistent.

MODERATOR: John?

JOHN: American.

TREVOR: You stole my word, consistency.

MODERATOR: Jennifer?

JENNIFER: Strong.

MODERATOR: Do me a favor. Okay, we won't have any of these little caucuses over at the far end. I want you to do this. I want you to close your eyes and think of George Bush, and tell me the image that comes into your mind as you think. What does he look like? What's he doing? How is he dressed? What do you see? What image jumps into your mind when you think of George Bush? Just let it fly.

WOMAN: I just have a big blank.

MODERATOR: Ed?

ED: I see him with his shirt unbuttoned and the sleeves rolled up, and he's just talking, communicating.

MODERATOR: Jennifer, tell me what you see?

JENNIFER: The first image was immediately after 9/11 in the rubble. He was giving everybody help and courage.

MODERATOR: Good. Trevor, tell me the image you see?

TREVOR: Texas rancher.

MODERATOR: Okay. Susan, tell me the image you see?

SUSAN: Shirt sleeves and someone who's willing to get in there and work beside you.

MODERATOR: Julie, tell me the image you see?

JULIE: I see him in a suit, but with this very warm compassionate smile. He appears very humble.

MODERATOR: Good. Tom, what do you see?

TOM: I see a presidential three-piece suit, looking like the President that I want to see.

MODERATOR: Okay. Janie?

JANIE: A scary GQ.

MODERATOR: Okay. Cathy, what do you see?

CATHY: He's in a suit. But I think it's his smirk, he doesn't smile, he smirks.

MODERATOR: John?

JOHN: After 9/11, when he went to New York City, I see a strong leader. I see a compassionate leader.

MODERATOR: Okay, good. Oh, just tell me something. You won't believe it. Your cousin just remarried, and it happens to be George Bush. He's suddenly in your family. The way that your family carries on, everybody comes to dinner on Sunday night. By the way, you can open your eyes. Three people had fallen asleep over there. The whole family comes to dinner every Sunday night. How is George Bush going to be as the new member in your family? How do you feel about him? What's it going to be like? Julie, he's coming to dinner every Sunday night.

JULIE: It's great.

MODERATOR: Great. Tell me what it's going to be like?

JULIE: He would be very welcome in my family.

MODERATOR: Will he fit in?

JULIE: Oh, yeah. He has strong values.

MODERATOR: Carol? What do you think?

CAROL: He wouldn't fit into our family at all.

MODERATOR: What would it be like? I'm sure that there are people in your family that probably don't have the same ideological view.

CAROL: They all have the same view.

MODERATOR: Okay, they all do?

CAROL: If he came, I don't know if we would have anything in common.

MODERATOR: Tom?

TOM: As the only Republican in my family, first of all, I would like to have another one. I think that he'd be a fun-loving person. My family believes in practical jokes and nice long conversations, and I think that he'd be up all night talking with us.

MODERATOR: Yep. Susan, how would he be, your new cousin, George?

SUSAN: Well, as just a person, he'd be very welcome. As the President with all of the Secret Service, he wouldn't be.

WOMAN: I went to the airport. I took the brunt of it this year.

SUSAN: I think that George is the kind of person who doesn't have to have the stage all of the time. I think that he would have conversations and not dialogues. I think that is a good thing. I also get the impression that he would be willing to listen to other's views without feeling argumentative.

MODERATOR: Okay. Jerry?

JERRY: He'd get along with my relatives. I wouldn't. That's sort of the reverse of your situation.

MODERATOR: So are you going to trade families?

JERRY: I think that he would be sort of like a good guy to watch a football game with. That's fine with me. I just don't want him for President.

MODERATOR: Okay. Ask John, Susan, Tom, as well as Janie, Cathy, and Ruth, and that is, you may not have voted for him, but how has he grown or changed over the past four years? What gives you hope for the next four years? Tom, how has this man grown since he came into office four years ago?

TOM: First of all, I think the office of President ages everybody tremendously. I don't think that you ever see a President after four years that looks like he's within 15 years of his age. I think that they develop an aura. I look at any President after four or five years as a father figure, both Democrat and Republican. I want to see a familiar face sitting in the most powerful office in the world. It may not be as important as it was during the height of the Cold War, but you're one step away from doing some real serious stuff. I think that he's grown into it. Even though he's younger than me, he's almost like a father figure. It's somebody that I can respect, and I think that I would have done that for John Kerry after five or six years too.

MODERATOR: How has he grown or changed?

MAN: I think it was a baptism of fire with going through the 9/11 deal, and his reaction to that, and how he's worked through that. Now his plate is more than full with the war in Iraq, and it will be interesting to see what lessons he's learned, and how he's going to survive another four years. However, I also think that he's insane for wanting that job for another four years. I can imagine why anybody would want that job for an additional four years.

MODERATOR: Janie, you didn't vote for him and you're not particularly fond of him. Has he grown or changed in any way that gives you more confidence in him?

JANIE: I think that he has. I think that before he was President, he was used to having things go his way a little bit easier. I think that he has realized that it's not that easy in Washington, and he's had to maybe skirt around some of the issues to try to get things to grow with it.

MODERATOR: Susan, do you have anything in terms of his growth or expansion that impressed you?

SUSAN: I think that he had to grow up. I didn't vote for him in 2000. I thought that he was very immature, spoiled, and thought he was going to walk in his father's shoes. Oh, my God, he was President, and I can do it too. Reality came home to him on 9/11. And because of the wonderful way that our country is set up, with the system of checks

and balances, he does deal with adversity every day, and he does not get his own way most of the time. I think that he has gotten some wisdom and maturity to deal with that.

MODERATOR: Let me turn around and ask Jennifer. You're a supporter of the President. What concerns you about his second term? You voted for him. You like him. With everybody, as much as we like them, there are always concerns and uncertainties. Are there any concerns or uncertainties as you look at the President's second term?

JENNIFER: There are a lot. Will he make the right decisions about the war? Will he do everything necessary to protect our country from terrorists? I believe he's the better choice, but he is human.

MODERATOR: Just as Susan or Janie have said, I feel that he grew up, and he's dealt with adversity, and he's learned about compromise. What would you say that he still has to learn? I'll put it the other way. What does he have to learn?

JANIE: That's a tough one.

MODERATOR: Ed, still looking ahead, what does he have to learn?

ED: I think that going back to the previous questions, like how the whole Defense Department is going to work, and how the intelligence departments are going to work, he's got a lot to learn about that. We've lost a lot of our intelligence since the church inquisitions of the '90s dismantled all of the intelligence stuff. He has, in a leadership position, to relearn how to use the intelligence.

MODERATOR: Julie, what does he have to learn?

JULIE: One thing that comes to mind is that I'm not sure he's really in touch with the job losses that we've had. I'm not sure that it's his fault. Obviously, 9/11 has impacted our economy, and there's nothing that he can do about that. I just wonder if he really, truly understands the struggles that we're going through, and what he has that's going to help with that.

MODERATOR: John, what has he got to learn?

JOHN: He's got to learn where that line is between keeping us as free as possible and as secure as possible. Everybody probably has a different idea of where that line is. When I go through an airport, I want to go right through that line and get on that airplane. However, when I do sit down in that seat, I want to know that the guy next to me isn't a terrorist. It's tough. And whoever would be in the position to deal with that

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MODERATOR: Does anyone have anything else? Tom, is there something that he needs to learn?

TOM: I think, and it's really been brought out by this discussion, I think he has to learn to work within the minority party, the Democratic Party. I think that John McCain gave him some really good blueprints, and I think that if he will follow them, his elected period can be very memorable. It is going to take bipartisanship. I want to be optimistic. I think he can do it. Will he do what is necessary? That I don't know. Nobody I know can tell you one way or another, but I want him to.

MODERATOR: You bring up a great point. The President talked right after the election because he had a mandate. The question is, what mandate does he have, and what mandate doesn't he have? Jerry, does he have a mandate, and what mandate does he have and doesn't he have? If he's really to understand coming off this election where he got 51% of the absolute majority of the vote and won by three million or three and one-half million votes. He had a clear majority in the Electoral College. Does he have a mandate? And if he does, in what area does he have a mandate, and in what areas doesn't he have a mandate?

JERRY: Although I would disagree with it, I think he has more of a mandate in the issues regarding, quote, moral values and issues regarding prosecuting the war in Iraq more firmly. I don't think that he has a mandate on taxes and how they're distributed. I don't think he has a mandate to completely turn the direction around for the Supreme Court. I don't think that people thought enough about that. What I'm sort of surprised by, and you have to give the Republicans credit, I don't know how they did it, but if you look at all of the social issues on a one-by-one basis, he is often on the minority side, and yet he winds up with the majority of the votes. And that's a credit to the machine that got him elected. But I think he needs to look at how all Americans feel about issues.

MODERATOR: I want to come back to the mandate, but I'd love to have Tom answer it. You sound as though, when you say on the moral and social issues, that somehow it was a sleight of hand by the President. You say that you look at each of these things, and you find the majority really on the other side, and yet somehow he prevails. Can you explain that to him, Tom?

TOM: If I could, I'd probably make about \$500,000 working for one of the parties.

MODERATOR: You'd really get that much?

TOM: Yeah, I think that I would. I agree with you. I think that the talking heads put together a real good program, and I think that your candidate fell into it. He's leading, and your man was not leading.

JERRY: If those were the top priorities for all Americans, then the outcome may have been different. I don't think that those were the top priorities. I think that other things caused the election to turn out the way that it did. I think that there're a lot of issues for what you are talking about, and a lot of people care about. They weren't the top priority as to what caused them to make that decision.

MODERATOR: I want to come back to the mandate, but there's a real interesting question on the table here. Jerry has put out a thesis, which is an interesting thesis that basically said look, here is the President of the United States, and his top advisor said the same thing publicly, who prevailed on the issue of values. That was a very important component of the election. Jerry is saying that seems like a sleight of hand because on each issue that you look at, he was really on the minority point of view.

My question is, was it some kind of sleight of hand or, as you say, brilliant strategy or did he really represent the majority, and Jerry doesn't quite have it right? I've seen an awful lot of articles saying that social, religious, and moral values were a very important component in the election. Were they, John?

JOHN: It wasn't the side of the majority. It's just that you hear so much noise from the other side that you assume that's because of the coasts. The coasts have a very loud voice. That's where your news is coming from and everything, so they have this tremendously loud voice. I think that in the heartland he was on the majority side. It's just that nobody wants to acknowledge that.

MODERATOR: Can anybody else explain this to me in any more detail or depth? I can understand exactly what you're saying, Jerry. I'm just wondering about what I've heard from the other side. We think of Ohio as the heartland. Were the President's moral, religious, and social values a boon to him in the reelection campaign? Susan?

SUSAN: Yeah, I think so. One thing that I saw with 9/11 is that a lot more people turned back to church, be it whatever religion they turned back to. Of course, churches have very strong stances on moral values, and one thing that I remember Bush saying in one of the debates was that whatever religion you were, he supported that there's an existence of a god. He didn't define that god by any specific name.

Regardless of his own personal beliefs, he truly supported everyone's beliefs to worship God in their own way. He said that with conviction. I believe the man meant it when he said it. I think that's something as a personal freedom that as Americans I think that we value about more highly than anything. That's how this whole country started.

MODERATOR: Julie, again, playing off of what Jerry said, do you agree or disagree?

JULIE: I would disagree.

MODERATOR: Okay, why?

JULIE: I agree with John, I think. The liberal media, and the people, the stars, and the public figures, we hear all of that more. Nobody comes to Marysville, Ohio, and talks with the average person.

MODERATOR: Tell me what it's like. Do you live in Marysville?

JULIE: I live in Marysville now.

MODERATOR: Tell me what it's like.

JULIE: I love it. The people are really friendly, but it's a very high moral community. There are, I don't know how many, churches. There are lots of churches for a small community. Those people kind of cling to those moral values.

MODERATOR: Does anybody else have something? On the same point, I want to get the other point of view. I just think that it's important to be able to hear.

WOMAN: I was just questioning. I really, truly am trying to understand what did Kerry do that would indicate that he did not have the same sort of morals on a personal level that George Bush did.

WOMAN: Being a Kerry supporter. I feel that he wanted to talk more about issues and not as much about morals. Bush wanted to talk about morals and less about the issues. People looked at that as being not kind hearted or something. That's the opinion that I get. I thought that the Republicans jumped on that and made him look like a total, way out there, ultraliberal that had no caring about people's actual moral issues. I really feel that he did. I'm a very moral person. I have two children, and I feel that moral issues are important to me, but I don't feel that Bush is not going to make that change in me as far as my moral issues with my family and my beliefs on abortion.

MAN: Didn't John Kerry have, as I perceive it, a little bit of a handicap from the beginning? He was coming from Massachusetts, whether you want to believe it or not, and the majority of people believe that if you are from Massachusetts, you are fairly liberal.

WOMAN: Obviously, because George Bush in that one . . .

MAN: And I think that put him behind, and he did not counteract it, and he should have.

WOMAN: That's what I'm saying. He did not. He did not come out and make a stand until it became an issue in the second debate. Then he felt like he had to come out and make a stand on the issue.

MAN: I'm not saying that he is liberal. I'm saying . . .

[Simultaneous discussion]

MAN: What's interesting about what you just said was that we're talking about morality over here, and then you change the word to liberal. There is sort of an assumption that liberals are moral. I do consider it highly offensive. I think that there are different issues on morality that we would agree about, and others that we might disagree about, but it's not because I have thought through a moral stand on that issue. I think that the Republicans have been very good at equating liberalism with immorality at some level.

MAN: And flip-flop it, that conservatives are insensitive.

[Simultaneous discussion]

MAN: The conservatives won out in this election.

MAN: Yes, I think that you may be right.

WOMAN: You asked about Bush coming to have dinner in your house. If you look at the two candidates, he's the good old boy, the southern guy that would roll up his sleeves, and you don't look at Kerry in that way. You look at him as being more of a stiff shirt.

WOMAN: I heard Kerry make a joke during one of the debates, when I think his spin, people were telling him to lighten up a little bit, and I was offended by his joke. I don't remember the question, but the issue was regarding his marriage to Teresa Heinz Kerry. They were both asked questions about how they picked their spouse and all of that. He said that he married up. I'll tell you, I'm an independent on this, I regard marriage as a relationship that should not be defined as heterosexual or homosexual, but I do regard marriage as a sacred institution, however it occurs, and for him to make a joke about marriage, just offended the dickens out of me.

MAN: I didn't take the joke that way. I took the joke as my wife is better than I am.

[Simultaneous discussion]

MODERATOR: Thank you all for the fascinating discussion on that. I get to go back to my other question. My other question is that Bush talks about a mandate. What is his mandate or what's not his mandate? Jerry, you took me off on a side stream, which was interesting, but I want to come back. George Bush obviously says that I have a mandate. You, the good people of Ohio, have the ability to tell me, yes, he has a mandate here, and he doesn't have a mandate there. He doesn't have any mandate at

all, or he has a total mandate. Does he have a mandate, Trevor, and if so, what should he be reading from this election if he were listening to your friends and neighbors?

TREVOR: I would say that he has won outright, which in his eyes and most eyes could be called a mandate. I would hope that he doesn't play it as a mandate. If he plays it as a mandate, I see it making more of a riff between those who agree with him and disagree with him.

MODERATOR: I hope he doesn't play it as a mandate. Therefore, I want him to?

TREVOR: Use the confidence of the people that he's gotten in a positive way. Not to play the bully, but to use that positive attitude, and that turnout, and that confidence in the President to help bring it together.

MODERATOR: Okay, great. Jennifer, does he have a mandate, what does it mean, and how should he use it?

JENNIFER: I don't know. I'm having trouble with that one. I do think that the moral values were a main reason for Ohio anyway. But he won, and we're looking to him to preserve those core values, the values that our country was founded on.

MODERATOR: Central question. Ohio voted along with ten other states against same-sex marriage. He says, should I read my mandate as getting a constitutional amendment put in on same-sex marriage? Would you say, yes, that was part of your mandate or no?

JENNIFER: That's tough because I struggle with is that really the federal government's job or is that left to the states? Me personally, I do want that protected.

MODERATOR: So you would say to him, part of your mandate was same-sex marriage, and we should have a constitutional amendment.

JENNIFER: I think so.

MODERATOR: How many of you agree with Jennifer? You have one, two, three for a constitutional amendment for same-sex marriage. The reason that shouldn't be seen as part of his mandate is?

MAN: I think that it should be done lower than the federal government. It should be down to the state level.

MODERATOR: So you don't want to see a constitutional amendment?

MAN: That's tough. I don't think it should be dealt with at the federal level.

MODERATOR: Susan?

SUSAN: I definitely wouldn't want it as a constitutional amendment because I see that as limiting personal freedoms, and I'm very adverse to that.

MODERATOR: Julie? He says he's picking up from Jennifer that moral values are extremely important. I'm translating this as support for my constitutional amendment against same-sex marriages. What would you tell him? Would you want him to push for a constitutional amendment?

JULIE: Yes.

MODERATOR: And the reason you want him to?

JULIE: Well, I believe that marriage is sacred, created by God, between a man and a woman. I have people and friends that I know are homosexual, and that's fine. I don't think of them as lower. It's just like I choose not to drink, but if someone drinks, that's fine. I'm not going to think less of them. But as far as an institution and benefits, I think that should remain between a man and a woman.

MODERATOR: Okay. And, Ruth, you voted for John Kerry. Is that reaching too far if George Bush says that this is part of the mandate?

RUTH: I agree with Julie as far as man and woman. I believe that man and woman should be one.

MODERATOR: Do you think that we should have a constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage?

RUTH: Yes.

MODERATOR: Okay, so you would be in favor of that. Does anybody else have something on the mandate? Carol, you didn't vote for George Bush, and he talks about a mandate. Is there a mandate? Is there something that he can take out of this election which you say is important for him to take out of the . . . not just listening to those who didn't vote for him, but in terms of what he should take out of the election?

CAROL: I think so because he had a chance to hear people's problems and their views, whether they were for him or against him. He knows what the American people want now and what they are looking for in both parties.

MODERATOR: I think that the media in the Bush campaign would love to have one question answered. And that would be, Janie, does the Bush Administration have a

fresh start? It's a brand new year. Do you wipe the slate clean? Does he get a fresh start or are all of the feelings and barnacles that are there things he's going to have to scrape off and deal with to get your support? What everybody would love to know is if there is a clean slate now that the election is over, it's a brand new term or do you come out of the first term with certain feelings, and after having gone through this election, I'm sorry the slate isn't clean, and there's a lot for him to do in order to win my support and trust.

JANIE: I feel that the slate isn't clean, but he can definitely pull people in to unite as one.

MODERATOR: Can he pull you in?

JANIE: Can he?

MODERATOR: Yup.

JANIE: Possibly.

MODERATOR: Okay, how does he do it?

JANIE: I think that he needs to listen to the people. I think he needs to listen to the middle class, and listen to his advisors, and do what the people are telling him. This election should tell him some of that. There was a large minority that was not for him.

MODERATOR: Cathy, a clean slate?

CATHY: No.

MODERATOR: Can he get your support or is . . .

CATHY: What do you mean by support?

MODERATOR: We talk about unifying the country, and we all like that term. It's always the question of what's the price for unification. Is there a way that he can get Cathy's backing and support for whatever it may be? I don't want to say everything in his agenda, so you don't look at him as a person that's alienated you and left you outside.

CATHY: I think that it would be very difficult, incredibly difficult actually, because I think we're in such different places. I can't imagine him changing enough to suit me.

MODERATOR: Jerry?

JERRY: I agree. It would be a very different course in direction, and I think that he thinks that he has a course to follow that was confirmed by the election results, and it would be amazing to me to see him change course in any of those directions. I guess he could gain some of my respect and support, for example, if he picked moderate Supreme Court Justices, as opposed to going to extremely conservative ones.

MODERATOR: Carol, can he get your support?

CAROL: Probably on certain issues, but not overall.

MODERATOR: Give me an issue where you think he could get your support.

CAROL: If he could clean up the mess in Iraq and make our country feel more secure. I'll give him credit for when he does things, but it probably won't make me like him any more as a person, but I can give a person credit for the good that they do too.

MODERATOR: We're going to take four minutes and cover John Kerry. I think that he deserves more than that, but we're going to do it very quickly because I need to sneak through a few issues. Close your eyes. What's the image that comes into your mind when you see John Kerry? What is it? How does he look? How is he dressed? What is he doing? What do you see? Cathy?

CATHY: He's confident. I see him in like a dress shirt, casual pants.

MODERATOR: Jennifer, what do you see?

JENNIFER: I saw him on the campaign trail with his tie loosened up and talking with the average worker. He is trying to convince them that he had a better plan.

MODERATOR: Ed, what do you see? What's your image?

ED: He had a business suit, much slicked back type of thing. I see back to the Democratic debates, when they went to do a group picture and Kerry was the first one off of the stage. He was the first one that left. He didn't want to socialize. He didn't want to talk with them. He just left.

MODERATOR: John, what's the picture that you see?

JOHN: I see a very stiff person, a very elitist person, a person who can fake about anything, but there's no real substance there in the individual.

MODERATOR: Was that the image that jumped into you mind or is that the feelings that you have? I mean, did you see something?

JOHN: When he went duck hunting, I really felt that was absurd. I'm not saying that the man is not a duck hunter. He may love guns and whatever, but just the fact that you do that in the middle of your campaign was . . .

MODERATOR: Susan, what do you see?

SUSAN: He's very polished and very GQ, and I am certainly not someone that he would invite to dinner.

MODERATOR: Julie?

JULIE: I see him in a business suit, talking, making a speech with his hand held up as he likes to gesture.

MODERATOR: Okay. Janie?

JANIE: I see him in a business suit with his red power tie. I see him as confident.

MODERATOR: Tom?

TOM: I see him in a business suit in front of a microphone.

MODERATOR: Tell me one thing. John Kerry lost a narrow election, a 75,000 vote switch in Ohio, and suddenly he's the President of the United States. Carol, you can open your eyes. I always worry that some people are gone. And he says, what did I do wrong? Why did I lose Ohio? What do you tell him?

MAN: I don't think that he has any clue as to what's going on in Ohio. He's been in the Senate for 20 years and probably never knew where Ohio was or even have a start. Suddenly because it's a huge savior, he's all over the place.

MODERATOR: Yeah, but you can say the same thing about George Bush who had been the governor of Texas. I'm going to make you reach deeper than that. That seems too shallow. I'm more interested in what went wrong. Why didn't he win Ohio? Carol?

CAROL: I think it's because the Republicans had a much better organized campaign. They had more people in Ohio in all of the precincts. I noticed the first-time voters that just registered and they got a thing from the Republican Party telling them about their candidates and everything, and they didn't get anything from the Democrats.

MODERATOR: Okay, so they were better organized. Why did he lose Ohio, Cathy?

CATHY: That was one of the things that kind of struck me as the night of the election, my son had gotten off work late. Everybody else in our house that's registered to vote had gone to vote. A Republican person called us and asked for my son specifically, and said does he know that it's not too late to go to vote. We hope that the President has his support. I found that incredibly odd that in our household, they asked only for my son who had not voted yet. Somebody was incredibly organized . . .

MODERATOR: So they were organized. Is there anything else?

MAN: Yes.

MODERATOR: Yes, what?

MAN: I don't think that he was able to portray himself as whatever we consider as the common man. For whatever reason, George Bush was able to do that. I don't know if it was a character defect or character strength, but to me and a lot of people I talked with, George is the kind of guy that you'd like to pal around with. And you know what, it does count. That counts for votes. I know, but 51% agreed with me on it.

MODERATOR: And the reason that John Kerry was not able to be seen as a common man is because?

MAN: I didn't see him as having a clear vision. Everyone that came to Ohio said that they could see the problems that we have in Ohio, John Kerry more so than George Bush, not that George Bush is perfect, stutter, step around. They brought up all of the key talking points, but never told us how Ohio could get out of where we are.

MODERATOR: Anything else? Ruth, how did you see John Kerry? Why didn't he win Ohio?

RUTH: Like they said, the Republicans had Ohio pretty well-organized, and I think that is the reason why John Kerry did not win.

WOMAN: I don't think that is the reason. I think it just simply goes back to Ohioans identify with George Bush.

MODERATOR: What did they identify with George Bush?

WOMAN: I think it was his experience, and I think it was his values, which I know we are all struggling to define. I think that when we look at John Kerry, he's got this money. He's spent this time in the Senate, and what did he really do? It seemed a little bit empty and elitist, and, okay, George Bush, maybe he had things handed to him, but he's been a business owner. He's been the governor. We felt like he knew more about how to help us out, and that's it.

MAN: I don't think the election was ever about John Kerry. It was about do you like George or hate George. George is an incumbent President. When you try to convince someone that they hate somebody, they say, wait a minute, that guy's my President. That has to count for something.

MODERATOR: Cathy, let me ask you a different question. John Kerry phoned me this morning and announced that he's really planning to run all over again in 2008. He'd like one piece of advice from you. Which one piece of advice do you have for him?

CATHY: I'll tell you what kind of stunned me that I think that maybe, at least from the people that I have talked with, and, in some cases, it was a turnoff, and what they turned against were their churches. You're going to have to get into the organized religion. I'll tell you that my aunt, who did vote for Bush, she couldn't go to church that Sunday because in her church, the minister and the organization were very, very Bush-oriented and were pushing it. Basically, they were telling them that they had to go out and vote, and you have to vote for Bush. They very specifically said that. I think that he won on their fear factor.

MODERATOR: Your advice is to get involved in the church.

CATHY: Quite frankly, I'd be very disappointed if he did.

MODERATOR: Janie, one piece of advice?

JANIE: I would have to agree. I think that people identified more with Bush in that aspect of the down-to-earth guy, and they could see him more on that level. Kerry was more the politician, and people had that separation between him and them.

MODERATOR: One piece of advice, Ed?

ED: Where's the beef? He says he has a plan for something. Where is it?

MODERATOR: Okay, good. Can I have one piece of advice, Julie?

JULIE: I agree he needs to be seen more on our level. I feel that he was much rehearsed and only giving a speech.

MODERATOR: Susan?

SUSAN: He needs conviction.

MODERATOR: You mentioned one thing. You said it was Teresa Heinz Kerry that made the difference to you. What was it?

SUSAN: I really, really hoped that we have a President who has been hungry or been worried about how to make the grocery bill or at least has family members that they have helped through tough times. Bush had some tough economic times. Teresa Heinz Kerry, she's never had an economically bad day in her life, and I don't know that John Kerry has ever had an economically bad day either. I've had a lot of those, and I just felt that they were so isolated from that, and she would just further engender his isolation from those issues.

MODERATOR: And that was to you the big difference?

SUSAN: I believe wives have, positive or negative, fairly profound influences on their husbands and vice versa. He chose her specifically for her economic condition. He made a joke of it.

[Simultaneous discussion]

Tape 2 Starts

MODERATOR: . . . made others think and recognize the strengths.

MAN: I agree with the educators that we have here. My wife is an educator also. There are very serious education problems in the United States, and we can't allow people to just say it's a money issue. We'll throw money at it. There are real educational issues. I've got a great person at work with four children. It's like, I'm not involved. It's the teacher's responsibility to teach them. It's not up to me.

MODERATOR: Okay, good. Jerry, Cathy, is there something that you've heard from others where you said that this is a bridge that I see and something that's important or is it going to be a cold winter?

CATHY: I thought that Tom and Susan were willing to reach out, and it wasn't just a party issue. I felt that they were willing to look at the whole picture, and have disagreements and agreements, and not be a party issue. I feel that's where we need to get to. Coming off an election that was so intense, people were so emotional about it. I think that it's a difficult thing this soon after the election. To see that happening this soon, I think is a good thing.

MODERATOR: Trevor?

TREVOR: As much as we all say different things and are strong about both issues, it's nice to see that there is actually some common ground once you get past the politics.

MAN: I think that we've sort of laid out basically in microculture what people were debating about in the election. And if I see one hope, it's that major issues will get discussed more fully, and we have to realize that we have differences on some issues and similarities on some others. I think that it is then a question of deciding where we need to put the greatest emphasis. I think that everybody here is honest and convicted about what they believe. I think that most Americans are.

MODERATOR: I still have a couple of more issues, and I'll come back around. I want to cover something that we talked about, and that is terrorism. Did you believe that one of the two candidates would be better at protecting us against terrorism or protecting Homeland Security? Was that significant to somebody that they saw that as making a difference? Julie's nodding. What are you thinking?

JULIE: Well, I felt that George Bush would definitely be better at that. I think that he's done a great job, and with 9/11 happening, he's very strong, and he makes decisions and sticks to them. He's just a no nonsense kind of guy, and I felt that I could trust that he'll do what he feels is right.

MODERATOR: Susan?

SUSAN: I feel that the person that we have leading the country needs to have conviction in their views against terrorism. And I don't necessarily agree with the war in Iraq, but he has conviction, and he's stuck with it. My concern was that Kerry would not do that. Kerry would have gone in like Bush did . . .

MODERATOR: I'm going to stay on terrorism here. Did you feel that the convictions that the President had would serve well in terms of Homeland Security and against terrorism?

SUSAN: I voted for Bush because I felt that the terrorists would be a lot happier if we elected Kerry.

MODERATOR: Okay, fair enough. Jennifer or Trevor, do you have something?

TREVOR: I would have to say that actions speak louder than words, and unfortunately or fortunately, John Kerry hasn't had a chance to show us that. What I've seen is on the terrorism front and at least George Bush can handle it and deal with it. That helps to know that it's been tested.

MODERATOR: Tom, did it have any effect in terms of how you thought about the election?

TOM: Yeah, it had quite a bit. First of all, it's a shame that it had to happen. And if Kerry were the President, I am sure he would have rose to the occasion. I firmly believe that the President of the United States always rises to the occasion or least in my history. George Bush was here. Whoever was there and took the right stand was going to have the votes of most of America. It could have been John Kerry. Now of the two men running, I would prefer both of them get some of the people who have been around in the past.

Getting back to the military thing, I don't think that has anything to do with this. They were both good men. They were both sincere patriots. I don't think that anyone can say anything. I will not attack John Kerry about his patriotism. It was just the luck of the draw or whatever it was that George Bush was there on that awful, awful day and he seized the moment. And I think that John Kerry could have done it too. That's not reaching out.

MODERATOR: On terrorism, was there a true advantage to the President on this issue in terms of your thinking?

TOM: On George Bush?

MODERATOR: Yeah, for George Bush on the issue of handling the issue of Homeland Security and terrorism.

TOM: All that was an . . . on 9/11. He was here. He's the guy that was involved in it. I still think that he's got a way to go to shore it up on the container ships. There're all sorts of ways that we can get all sorts of crap over here. He's really got to tighten it down now that he's going to have this second term.

MODERATOR: Let me switch and talk about Iraq for half a second. If the President asked for one piece of advice about Iraq, Jerry, given where we are today and everything that's gone on, what's your one piece of advice that you would give him?

JERRY: Either decide to fully fund the electoral process. . . my advice would be to fully fund the development of Iraq along with the military part. I'm afraid that we've created a haven for people who are disgruntled and upset, and so I want to see him help to build the infrastructure, the school systems, and I'd like to see him spend more money on that.

MODERATOR: So you're saying more commitment in Iraq, meaning both more troops and more money.

JERRY: I think that probably, to be totally honest, that he can't do it without more troops. I think that at this point, things are out of hand. I want him to do more than spend troops. I want him to build the infrastructure of the country.

MODERATOR: Okay, John? Give us one piece of advice for the President on Iraq.

JOHN: I wish I had some. You heard the development yesterday, where the Prime Minister and some of his family had been captured. That's a mess. I really, really don't know how he or anybody else is going to fix that problem. The cultural problem is just miles apart.

MODERATOR: Do you have any suggestions for him? If I heard Jerry, he said more involvement, more money, and more troops.

JERRY: I agree. It's sort of a no-win situation, but if I have to do something, I'm going to try to get people living under better conditions.

MODERATOR: Okay. And, John?

JOHN: As you have heard, I'm not afraid to express my thoughts. In this particular situation, I don't know what to tell him. It's above my pay rates.

MODERATOR: Janie?

JANIE: I wasn't for the war, but since we're in this war, I think he needs to enlist the support of the rest of the world and get some support.

MODERATOR: Cathy, do you agree with Janie?

CATHY: Totally. I think that at some point that he has to suck it up and say, and perhaps admit that he's had to rethink a little bit and maybe backtrack, and say that maybe there is something that could have been done different, he might have to apologize just a little bit, or whatever. But he's got to get somebody to support him in the rest of the world, it's not just us.

MODERATOR: Okay. Julie?

JULIE: You can't go over there, and create a mess, and just pull out. You can't leave those people hanging there.

MODERATOR: Susan?

SUSAN: If we've learned anything from Vietnam, when we went in there to do it, we didn't go in there to do it right. I hope that it's a lesson that we can really put into use now. I agree with Jerry. We have to make it right. I think that if we show the other countries that we're willing to put the money into the human condition there and fixing that, we will get more support from the rest of the world. This is just killing people.

WOMAN: We definitely have to get help. We can't do it by ourselves.

MODERATOR: Trevor?

TREVOR: Finish what you started. Do what you have to do to do that. Whether it's somebody else or whatever we need to do, but it's got to get finished and finished right or it will just come back to bite us.

MODERATOR: Is there a lesson for the President, this President or any other President, if we have to get involved in another situation similar to Iraq where we feel that it is imperative to be involved? Is there a lesson that we should take out of this? Carol?

CAROL: I think so. We should not jump into it so quickly and without a good plan. I can still see him landing on that aircraft carrier and declaring victory, and now it's over 1,000 more dead, and it's a year or year and one-half later, and it's worse than it ever was.

MODERATOR: Jennifer, is there a lesson that we take out of this?

JENNIFER: Well, I agree that he needs to find new ways to reach out and build a coalition. Obviously, he tried. That's what bothered me. Kerry made it sound like he just said, forget about it, you people, I'm just going to do this. He tried. Something just had to be done. I hope that there is a way that he can reach out to these other countries. It matters to them too. They're the ones who live next door to these people. He's got to find a way to convince them that this is a global effort, and that this problem is not going to go away, especially if you have a biblical world, you know that that part of the world is always going to have problems like that. We're in this for the long haul.

MODERATOR: Ed, do you have something to add on this?

ED: Stay the course.

MODERATOR: If we have another situation such as this, is there anything in particular?

ED: Coalitions have always helped America in all sorts of wars. We have been very successful at that.

MODERATOR: Do you think that we've done well with coalitions in this war?

ED: No. You go to the dance with the people who are with you. It was Britain with us. They had no big investment in Iraq. The French did. They wanted their investments returned. The Germans did. They wanted their investments returned. The Russians did. They wanted their investments returned. Now we find out that the Russians were part of the cleaning up of some of the chemical weapons, taking them back into Syria. They had all sorts of reasons why they didn't want to get involved in it. They were tough sells to get those people involved. A lot of other countries sided with us.

MODERATOR: A quick question about the economy. You mentioned how important the economy is in Ohio. What's your long-run concern about the economy? What does the President and the Congress have to deal with in terms of the economy recovery?

MAN: I would have to say probably manufacturing for a small business. We've actually been helped by the Bush Administration so far, but, unfortunately, that part that we've been helped with is seeing the downfall of some of the big manufacturing in Ohio. If we could bring some of that back nationally, it should come back regionally.

MODERATOR: Okay. Tom?

TOM: Quite honestly, I think that you have an easier shot winning in Iraq. I do agree with Jerry not to do it. We're in a global economy, and it's dictated totally by whoever's in office. Again, we could sit and pick on each other choices. We're outsourcing

because other countries produce it cheaper than we can. Some countries subsidize. We take it, we get hammered. They take it, and they don't get hammered. We have an economic disadvantage.

The euro is at an all-time high now versus the dollar, with advantages and disadvantages. It makes our selling product over there better, but it makes it worse for us to buy locally. I don't have an answer. I'm more worried about the economy because I think that winning the war in Iraq, using Jerry's approach, is feasible. The economy, I don't know, I'm not as positive about the economy.

MAN: We've got to figure out how to level the playing field, and I don't know that it's going to be leveled or coming anywhere near level in my lifetime. Everybody else is. Who has an OSHA or an EPA or a labor union? They don't have those things overseas. And how are you going to compete in a world market with those kinds of things and people who buy? At least I bought American. I bought Hondas.

MODERATOR: That's an interesting interpretation. Jerry?

JERRY: I think it would be to our advantage to try to get more energy independence with other means of providing energy, and I think that a lot of what we've tied up in since the '70s is our dependence on foreign oil, but we've got to do it in such a way that it doesn't destroy our environment as well. The great resource is the ingenuity of the American people to develop solutions to problems. And I think we need to put more money into developing students who are problem solvers and who see that as their job.

MODERATOR: One other question and that is Social Security. One of the ideas that the President talked about was allowing individuals to put money into the stock market and invest privately. Is it a good idea or a bad idea?

MAN: It depends on the investor and how much they know about it. They have to do their homework and study.

MODERATOR: But the question is in policy terms, is it a good idea or bad idea?

MAN: The military and the federal government are doing it now, and it has been a big boon for a lot of people. It's just a matter of being smart in your investments. You have to educate people.

MODERATOR: Carol, is it a good idea or a bad idea?

CAROL: Will they do it? Now, it is more or less forced on you, but would they do it if they had the option to invest it on their own? How would they control it to make sure that they really did it?

MODERATOR: You can't spend it. In other words, it is set aside. I'm just saying, does anyone have any feeling?

MAN: I'm concerned that if a large chunk of money becomes privatized, does the system as a whole have fewer resources for other people?

MODERATOR: Does anybody think that it's a good idea or bad idea?

MAN: I don't get much of a sense of spark on this one.

MAN: I think that it's sort of scary to think of people who have been told that they're going to get Social Security and not have money later on for them. I think that we have a moral obligation to fulfill what we said we were going to do, and I think that both parties have pushed Social Security under the rug. They don't put it into the budgetary figures, and I think that they have to address it.

MODERATOR: Okay, the final question. We're going to start with John. John will give me a short answer. George Bush is going to the ranch to celebrate Thanksgiving. He has a lot to be thankful for, and it's going to give him time to reflect. What would you like him to reflect upon as he prepares for his second term?

JOHN: He can reflect upon what he might have missed while the campaign was going on. He put a lot of time into the campaign, and there were certainly things going on during that time. If I was him, I'd look back in review.

MODERATOR: But what do you want him to reflect on? In other words, it's a chance to take stuff to appreciate what we have and what's ahead. What would you tell him?

JOHN: Reflect on the values of Middle America and interpret what he says is his mandate. I don't like using that word. I think that he needs to reflect on what he thinks the mandate is, interpret it properly, and get ready to apply it to his next four years, think about all of the issues that came up during the campaign and during the debates.

MODERATOR: Susan, what would you like him to reflect on?

SUSAN: I want him to determine what the strengths of this country are, and how he can use those to solve the problems of the people who aren't going to be having Thanksgiving dinner, and how many empty seats are at how many Thanksgiving tables in this country at this particular holiday.

MODERATOR: Julie, what would you like?

JULIE: I think that he should reflect on this election and try to figure out what it is that the normal working middle-class person needs, and what's important to them, and how he can help achieve that.

MODERATOR: Ruth, what would you like him to reflect on?

RUTH: The economy, the middle class.

MODERATOR: Jerry, what would you like him to reflect on?

JERRY: I'd like him to reflect on a long-range new effect of his policies on the world. And I'd like him to think in not so simple terms, as it seems that he's thought so far. I'd like him to see the world in a little bit more of its complexity.

MODERATOR: Cathy, what would you like him to reflect on?

CATHY: Actually, Jerry pretty much said what I would say, really sit back, and think, and try, and be what you projected yourself to be, and be real.

MODERATOR: Janie?

JANIE: Another issue to reflect on would be on our senior citizens, taking care of them and seeing that they can afford the medications, see that they have healthcare, see that they have affordable living.

MODERATOR: Tom, what would you have him reflect on?

TOM: I want him to concentrate on things that he can do and get them done. I want him to start with little steps and build on that, and I would truly like the unification of this country. I would like the parties to vote for a person not against a person on either side. That is shameful.

MODERATOR: Your piece says I care about unification, and what do you want him to do?

TOM: I think that he should seriously reach out. There are intelligent people in both parties that want the same thing. The sad thing, this whole thing is we have a winner, and we have a loser. We don't have two people who want to be President and want to do a good job. I think that they did. I think that any person should do that. We've had some great ones.

MODERATOR: Is there any point or issue where you say I think that John Kerry's got it right, Mr. President?

TOM: I think that John Kerry is a compassionate human being, and I truly think that George Bush could really use his help. I would like him to put some people in his cabinet that are from the other party. It would eliminate a lot of problems in the future if people had input. We just don't talk a lot.

MODERATOR: Carol, what do you want him to reflect on?

CAROL: I would like him to reflect on 51% of the people in America voted for him because they have faith and trust in him, and that he needs to sit back and deliver to the people who put their trust in him. He needs to review what he's done and what he needs to do to do a better job.

MODERATOR: Are you saying something about the other 49%?

CAROL: No. But he's got to realize that 51% trust him and put their full faith in him. Now he needs to be appreciative of that and deliver for everyone.

MODERATOR: Ed?

ED: How to harvest the bipartisan support in Congress, to get them to work on the issues together, to get that joining a little bit better.

MODERATOR: And is there any issue where you say, Mr. President, you should compromise maybe some of your feelings to maybe reach out for some of that bipartisanship?

ED: As we said, he's not the smartest man in the world, and he has to surround himself with voices that he listens to. I'm just saying get the bipartisan stuff going well and listen to them.

MODERATOR: Why didn't people care so much about this bipartisanship?

ED: It takes all views and puts them together and forces them to work compromises. You take a step, and I'll take a step, and we'll come to some solution that we'll all live with.

MODERATOR: Jennifer, what do you want him to reflect upon?

JENNIFER: That's a good question. I think that I want him to use his belief in right and wrong to guide him and to work to find what's best and fair and what's right. I think that can be done. We like to say that there is all of this gray area, but I think he is our President, and so I hope that they can get everyone behind him, but still maintain course of what most people view as right.

MODERATOR: Final point, Trevor?

TREVOR: I would say for him to reflect on the greatest resource of the United States are its people. How to use those people whether they are Republicans or Democrats, what they believe in, and what they don't believe in to help the people help themselves make the economy better, make the education better. Are there ways that they can do that without being a mandate, with it being a self-motivational mandate or policy that can help us work better with the world and with each other? We can join together and work together to make it better, regardless of who's in office, and to follow that and to use that.

MODERATOR: That's marvelous. It's been a great discussion. It's been a long, long political campaign, and you have had the brunt of candidates caring about you, and reaching out to you, and doing everything possible to persuade you. You reflect a lot of what is going on, and you reflect it well. I'm wishing you each a Happy Thanksgiving. And I thank you very, very much for sharing your points of view and your ideas. Thank you, and we're adjourned.