

ANNENBERG PRESIDENTIAL FOCUS GROUP TRANSCRIPT
SWING VOTERS
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MODERATOR: . . . Basically, what I'd like to do start the discussion by going around the table, each of you giving me your name, your first name's fine. And have three John's, which has to be an all-time record. I think that we've never had that many in one session. And why don't you tell me what you do, and if you have kids at home, tell me their ages and that would be great. We'll start with Casey. Welcome, Casey.

CASEY: My name is Casey. I have two children. I have a son, 17, who lives at home and then I have a son, 20, that's in college. And I'm a mom first and foremost, but I also do gardening for hire.

HOWARD: I'm Howard. I am a retired 32-year veteran of public school teaching. I have no children left at home. I have one 29 and one 27.

ROB: My name is Rob. I work for the IRS. And I have two kids at home and one in college. I've got a 13- and 14-year old at home and freshman in college.

MODERATOR: Okay. So now you've made everybody else nervous around the table.

JENNIFER: My name's Jennifer. And I have two children. My son just turned 3 and my daughter is almost 17 months old. And I'm primarily taking care of them and I also sell birth announcements and note cards and greeting cards.

JOHN G.: I'm John G. I'm a project manager for an engineering/construction firm. I have two children. One's married and has children as well.

MODERATOR: Any at home?

JOHN G.: One is in college and is away from home . . . she's 20.

RICK: I'm Rick. I have a high school senior, a high school sophomore, and a grade-schooler. I'm self-employed as an engineer.

JOHN F.: I'm John F. No children. And I can't really say I'm retired, but I'm not working right now after 12 years in retail management. Most recently, I've worked at a seasonal employee for the IRS.

MODERATOR: And you're not working by your own design or . . .

JOHN F.: Yes.

MODERATOR: Or not by . . .

JOHN F.: I can't really say I'm retired.

MODERATOR: Okay, good.

JOHN K.: My name is John. My wife and I have an . . .

MODERATOR: John K., right?

JOHN K.: Correct. My wife and I have no children. I import and export computer parts.

FRANK: I'm Frank. I have eight children, but only one's still left home, other than one who moved back temporarily. I'm a civil environmental engineer, retired from the federal government ten years ago, but still working full time in the private sector.

STEPHANIE: I'm Stephanie. I have a 3-year-old daughter at home and actually another one on the way.

MODERATOR: Congratulations.

STEPHANIE: Thanks. And I'm a sales analyst for Sprint.

SHELLEY: I'm Shelley. I have a 5-year-old daughter and an 11-year-old son. I'm primarily a homemaker, but I'm a retired carpenter.

DE: I'm Deborah. I work for the U.S. Department of Agriculture and I have a soon-to-be 20-year-old boy and a, or man, son, he wouldn't let me call him a boy, and a 12-year-old daughter.

MODERATOR: I won't let him see anything.

DEBORAH: No.

MODERATOR: Let me just start off, if I can, just very quickly and very easily. And, basically, I'll start with you Rick and ask you to give me a word or a phrase to describe how you feel things in America are going today. What's a word or phrase to describe how you feel things are going today?

RICK: Struggling.

MODERATOR: What would Stephanie say?

STEPHANIE: I would agree with that, struggling.

MODERATOR: Howard, what would your word be?

HOWARD: Struggling and uncertain, I believe I would add to that.

MODERATOR: Rob, what would your word be?

ROB: I don't know how to answer. I'd say probably the economy is struggling. Actually, as a whole, I think there's some concern, I guess, and doubt in people's minds.

MODERATOR: How about John K.?

JOHN K.: Turmoil.

MODERATOR: Frank?

FRANK: I didn't like struggling, but I kind of go along more with the turmoil, but maybe not quite that strong or that things are just kind of confusing right now.

MODERATOR: And what way are they confusing and struggling, in turmoil? Tell me what you're thinking.

FRANK: Me?

MODERATOR: In short, start it off Frank.

FRANK: Well, obviously, the 9/11, the Iraq war, whether it was we should have or we shouldn't have. There was the downturn in the economy. They talk about it, it's going up back, it's going up again now. But there's just, from the government, from the world standpoint, there just seems to be things bouncing all over the place. And, frankly, I don't think this election is doing anything to help it because it's becoming so divisive, it's rather than trying to bring us together.

MODERATOR: John F., what are you thinking?

JOHN F.: My word would be discouraging.

MODERATOR: And why?

JOHN F.: Well, it's just seems like everything seems to be getting worse in little ways every day. I don't see the economy improving and this thing in Iraq is sucking up all these dollars that we have a crying need for here at home. I think the environment's under attack. I mean, I could go on, just discouraged.

MODERATOR: Jennifer, what are you thinking?

JENNIFER: I think it's challenging, but it's getting better.

MODERATOR: And how do you see it getting better?

JENNIFER: Well, I see my portfolio starting to come back up.

MODERATOR: Good.

JENNIFER: I see more jobs just in the help wanted pages, you know, I kind of look and I see more going on there and I have friends that have started being able to move to different companies for whatever reasons they want. I mean, it's not perfect everywhere, but it's better than it has been.

MODERATOR: And how about you, Deborah?

DEBORAH: I would say we need more direction, a little bit more clear picture of a little bit more of everything, instead of just, you know, bits and pieces of, and we know the security is getting better, but that was because something had to happen before that took place.

MODERATOR: And, Casey, let me sort of change just slightly and say, a lot's happened in the course of the last couple of months. What stands out in your mind? What are the important things that are going on that you think about at home and you think about as you talk with friends and neighbors?

CASEY: Me personally, I'm most concerned about how our country is viewed by the world and other people that I think will have a huge bearing on what happens in the future. I'm concerned about people being driven by the media and just bits and pieces that lack vision and substance. And that covers the economy, jobs, foreign policy, personal lives, congressional dealings, everything.

MODERATOR: Rob, what have you been thinking about? A lot's been happening over the last couple of months. What's been on your mind? What are the things that concern you a lot?

ROB: Well, probably the economy mostly. High oil prices, I think they've been a big part of why everything seems sluggish. I'm concerned about the infighting in the political arena also.

MODERATOR: And, Shelley, how about yourself?

SHELLEY: I see their word as a big fat lie.

MODERATOR: A big fat lie. Tell me what you're thinking.

SHELLEY: Everything is so contradicting, it looks everything that they're saying. They want us to think that the economy is getting better and there's more jobs, and at the same time, Congress and the Senate is giving themselves another raise, where we're not getting the standard-of-living raise. Just little things like that and the price of bacon, it just keeps going up. I'm a bacon lover. And it's just almost \$4 for some bacon and the economy is not getting better to me.

MODERATOR: Stephanie?

STEPHANIE: I, yeah, I think the thing that concerns me personally right now still is the economy. I really don't see a huge improvement in jobs. I saw, you know, people, and working people are getting laid off, and those people are still looking. I'm also concerned about healthcare. I think there is a healthcare crisis going on in this country, and a prescription drug crisis and I think there's a lot of area for improvement there that, I think has been getting worse over the last few years now. I think it needs to get better.

MODERATOR: Richard, I'd love to hear what you're thinking and what's been going on as you look at things out there.

RICK: It's just re-gathering and regrouping from . . . what happened in September.

MODERATOR: You mean, 9/11?

RICK: Right.

MODERATOR: Right.

RICK: And the fall of the economy in trying to get reorganized and get the country moving back again in a forward manner.

MODERATOR: John G., let me ask you. What makes you proud to be an American?

JOHN G.: I think we live in a country that provides the greatest opportunities that any populous has ever had and those freedoms, basically, are what this country is about. And sometimes we get discouraged because we're so polarized, I mean, you have 45% of the nation going one way and 45% of the other going the other way. It means 10% that are undecided are going to determine who's the President. And it seems like no matter what you do, that's how this country has slowly evolved itself, but I travel all over the world, we live in the greatest country in this world.

MODERATOR: Frank, what makes you proud to be an American?

FRANK: Well, I think I agree with John G. that freedom and the ability to do what we want to do is, to me, practically unlimited, and so that's, and the other thing I think is that even though we have division and everything, Americans still probably, when it gets into the serious situation, come together strongly, probably more strongly than most of the other countries do. We fight amongst ourselves, but when there's something that brings us together, we're willing to come together.

MODERATOR: How about Howard?

HOWARD: I will agree with that. I think that the freedom we have is what makes us great. And then you look at other countries in comparison with them and they live on \$500 a year. I mean, you look on TV, people are poor. They're living on the street practically. They're destitute. And we have more opportunity here. You know, it's not perfect, but I do agree with what Frank said that if something happens, we can fight among ourselves, but if something happens, we come together. It's like family links out there and fight among ourselves, but somebody attacks the family, we all pull together and take on the one who's hurting us.

MODERATOR: John K., let me just ask you. As you look, is anything slipping away from the America that you love and makes you proud?

JOHN K.: Well, morality.

MODERATOR: Go ahead, tell me a little bit about this.

JOHN K.: I'm seeing kids coming in the school and out of school with no concept of right or wrong. I don't see that changing. I don't see anything in the school districts that want them to know right from wrong. I see churches, they're so involved with getting people in the pews, but they forget why they ever existed. I don't think we teach morality at the lowest level.

MODERATOR: Deborah, anything that you see where you say, the American of 10 years, 20 years ago, I don't think we're quite the same? As proud as I am, there are things that worry me.

DEBORAH: Well, I think the family values, it's kind of, you know, most people have to work now, so that kind of pulls away from spending time with your family or traveling or working late hours to, you know, struggling along, so I think that's an issue.

MODERATOR: Casey?

CASEY: What concerns me the most is the fact that our government and all of us are, I think, forgetting how important civil liberties are, and that is one of the underlying bases why our opportunity has always been great. And the respect issues and I think that's

played out in a lot of the things that are going on and the problems that are going to occur because of that.

MODERATOR: And, John F., anything you'd add here?

JOHN F.: Well, I, Casey had a good point. Our civil liberties are being eroded quite a bit. You know, 9/11 happened and it was those people using our freedom against us. And so something had to be done, but I feel like the Patriot Act has gone way too far in eroding our civil liberties.

MODERATOR: Does everybody feel the same way? Does anybody feel differently about that?

JOHN K.: No. They can open up any suitcase I have. They can look through anything I own right now because I absolutely could care less if somebody wants to look through it, if, in fact, we can be safe. It is a global community we live in. It's not like it used to be. Things will never be the way they used to be.

MODERATOR: Anybody else? Jennifer, what are you thinking?

JENNIFER: It doesn't bother me. I don't see how anything that they've done has infringed on me personally.

MODERATOR: They meaning the government?

JENNIFER: The government with the Patriotic Act.

MODERATOR: Right, yeah.

JENNIFER: Not of it infringes upon me or what I do daily. I mean, I see the little traffic lights, little cameras on top of the lights, and sometimes that gives me the willies, but I'm not running lights anymore, so those things just still bother me.

MODERATOR: Jennifer, we brought you in here because we saw the lights . . . let me move on from this. And I'm going to talk a lot about presidential politics, but before we sort of get into candidates and attitudes, just tell me about the presidential campaign so far. What's a word or phrase to describe the campaign, Richard? How do you feel about the campaign so far?

RICK: Disappointing.

MODERATOR: Disappointing, why?

RICK: No clear direction. John Kerry does not have a stand that he is staying with. He's moving around. And one day, I love what he says. The next day, I detest it.

MODERATOR: Good. I'm going to try and stick broadly to how you feel about the campaign rather than the candidate individually, and we will talk about that, but I'm just wondering, how are you feeling about the campaign so far? Stephanie?

STEPHANIE: I think it's been kind of senseless.

MODERATOR: Senseless, why?

STEPHANIE: To be honest with you, I don't care what either of the candidates did back in the 1970s. I'm more interested in what they're doing today and what they plan to do in the next four years if they're elected to be President. And I think all this, all the ads, and everything going back and trying to grudge up what happened 30 years ago, I just don't think, I'm not interested in knowing about it. I don't think it has to do with what's going on right now in our world today and I just don't like that direction that it's headed.

MODERATOR: How many agree with Stephanie's statement? Raise their hand. I've got one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight. Eight of 12 people agree with that. Why do you agree with it, Jennifer?

JENNIFER: I just, I mean, my word was ridiculous and they're focusing on items that have no relevance as to what is going on today.

MODERATOR: Why doesn't it have relevance?

JENNIFER: How is it relevant as to what somebody did 30 years ago, whether they got out of going to a physical or if they did or didn't get hurt by a bullet or rock shrapnel? I mean, it just doesn't make a difference. What I, you know, what's more important is the record they've done since then, how has his President voted, you know, what policies have they or have they not supported in how that affects what I will get into.

MODERATOR: Yeah, your word, Casey, your word.

CASEY: Well, I think that, comparatively, past history is pretty much minutia compared to the issues and the problems that are facing us right now. And I would like much more for time to be spent on addressing ideas and plans for how to take on and solve bigger issues.

MODERATOR: Okay. Let's see, Frank, I'm going to give you a magic wand for the next 40 days, about 40 days left in the campaign. You can do, change the campaign in any direction you want. What do you want to do with your magic wand?

FRANK: Well, just to follow up with what some of the other people have said. I think a clear position on various issues, whatever they might be, right now we're just not getting anything.

MODERATOR: Okay, magic wand, Shelley, what are you going to do with it?

SHELLEY: I'd like to make the entire House and Congress, everybody involved in the whole campaign get a minimum wage paying job, drive a 1985 Honda, or whatever, live like a supposed, just standard individual and then come back and tell me, can you live off of this? Tell me how those experiences maybe make you think differently about raising the minimum wage or making healthcare affordable and just basic things like that.

MODERATOR: How are you going to use your magic wand, Rob?

ROB: Well, kind of what Frank said, I would try to get rid of the attacking of past military service and try to learn a little more about where the candidates stand on issues. I haven't heard a lot about that. I may be missing the boat, but I really don't, you know, I voted for Bush before and I'm kind of burning out. I really don't know how Kerry, where he stands exactly because all I've heard him talk about is Bush's National Guard, trying to evade duty and things like that.

MODERATOR: And, Howard, your magic wand, what are you doing with it?

HOWARD: I will just go along with what Rob said, especially what Shelley said, I think that's a very good idea to put these people down and let them live like the regular people do. And, again, what happened 30 years ago is not important. These are not the same people that were there 30 years ago, and they've changed, they've grown up, they've matured, hopefully. But I would say what she said is a very good idea.

MODERATOR: By the way, I have a whole bunch of reporters back here who are watching this session. Anything you want to tell them, John G., in terms of how they should be covering the election?

JOHN G.: Yeah, I think they need to get a little more in depth. The big journalism right now is quick sound bites and bylines and as fast as you can catch somebody's eye, and you sell newspapers or you get people's attention. That's not the depth of what this campaign is about.

MODERATOR: John K.?

JOHN K.: The media needs to stay out of the play. Right now the media and the news, they're working 24 hours a day because they're on the air 24 hours a day. They're not reporting it, they're promoting it.

MODERATOR: Good. John F.?

JOHN F.: Yeah, I don't think the media's been doing their job for a while. If I had the magic wand, I'd say no more political ads at all and let's get the candidates talking about issues and have reporters cover what they're saying.

MODERATOR: Stephanie, anything you want to do?

STEPHANIE: Well, I certainly wouldn't have them get out of this because I think freedom of the press is, you know . . .

MODERATOR: No. I . . .

STEPHANIE: . . . One of the greatest things we have and we need to keep it, but I definitely think they need to stop focusing on the glamour issues and what the hot topic is, but do some real research and do some real journalism and let the American people know what the issues are. Just like Rob said, he didn't even know what John Kerry's issues were because he only sees what the media is putting on television, which is the glamour issues as to him bashing Bush. And so I think that, you know, everything needs to get, you know, journalism and the press need to get more in depth in what the issues are and let people know because I don't think that they're doing a good job with it right now.

MODERATOR: Okay. Obviously, we've got a period of time before we're going to get to the 2004 election, but as of now, I'm just going to go around the table. Tell me how you're for, and if you're truly undecided, feel free to say, I'm truly undecided at this stage. And the only other thing I would like to know is, I'm really firmly committed or I may be for Bush or I may be for Kerry, but I'm open. So I'm interested in two things, who are you for and then whether you're firmly committed or still open. Deborah?

DEBORAH: John Kerry and leaning towards.

MODERATOR: Not open versus fully committed.

SHELLEY: John Kerry.

MODERATOR: Committed or open?

DEBORAH: Somewhat committed.

MODERATOR: Okay, committed.

STEPHANIE: John Kerry, committed.

FRANK: George Bush, but subject to change, depending upon, probably depending upon the debates.

JOHN K.: George Bush, somewhat committed.

JOHN F.: I'll vote for John Kerry. I'm not wild about him, but he's all we've got and there certainly is a clear choice.

MODERATOR: Good. Rick?

RICK: Bush, and I want to see how the debates.

MODERATOR: So you're open.

RICK: Yes.

MODERATOR: John G.?

JOHN G.: Undecided. I'll see the debates . . . talk about issues.

MODERATOR: Jennifer?

JENNIFER: George Bush.

MODERATOR: Open or committed?

JENNIFER: Committed.

MODERATOR: Good. Rob?

ROB: George Bush, slightly open.

MODERATOR: Howard?

HOWARD: George Bush, open. Again, I'm interested in the debates and what transpires there.

MODERATOR: And, Casey?

CASEY: I'm open. I, you know, I have an idea of what George Bush has done and his talking and I need more information to decide on Kerry. And I am looking forward to the debates to see how he . . .

MODERATOR: So are you undecided or Bush or . . .

CASEY: Undecided is what . . .

MODERATOR: Okay, undecided. So we've got a couple undecideds and it looks like roughly the same number of Kerry and Bush. Not bad. And tell me how you're formulating your choice? In other words, here's how I came to my choice. Stephanie, whether you're open or committed, how did you come to your choice? What's it based on?

STEPHANIE: Well, it's based on what I believe, the future of this country, the direction that it needs to go, and what I hope for it. I was pregnant at the last presidential election, and had my daughter one with George Bush, and I'm pregnant at this presidential election and going to have my second child with this President.

And I just, I do not like the direction the country is going right now and I do not think it's a positive one. And I think that George Bush is focusing on, at least what I've seen on one issue, and that's national security, which I think is important, but I think there's other issues going on in this country right now and I think they need to be addressed and I do not feel that he is doing that.

MODERATOR: Good. Rick, how are you formulating your choice? I mean, you're for Bush and here's how I'm coming down and thinking about my choice for Bush.

RICK: Right now I think our, I'd be interested in having Bush because I think he has a stronger philosophy as to the protection of this U.S., and then be right behind it is the economy and jobs and everything else, the insurance, health, education, but I think Bush has got a stronger policy and feeling and standing on the national security.

MODERATOR: Jennifer, you're committed. How did you come down on George Bush, on what basis?

JENNIFER: Well, for one thing, there's nothing, I can't decide what way Kerry would go for me to feel confident. Have I just seen too many contradictions? And it makes me nervous to think if this is an individual who just can't have a straight, you know, focus of which way he's going with things, and for that reason, I wouldn't want somebody like that to be leading my country, if he's just . . .

MODERATOR: So it's more anti-Kerry than pro-Bush?

JENNIFER: Well, I do like the way President Bush has handled the situation that was handed to him since the September 11th. I mean, he didn't set out to do all the things that we've had to do since then, and I believe he did what he felt was right and what needed to be done for the security of our country, and you have to have the country secure for everything else to bounce back.

MODERATOR: Howard, you said you were open and you were leaning towards Bush. Did you vote for Bush four years ago?

HOWARD: No, sir, I did not.

MODERATOR: You did not. Okay. So what brings you to Bush now?

HOWARD: I think he's doing a better job than Mr. Kerry could. Frankly, I don't know where John Kerry stands on much of anything. I mean, you see the TV ads. There have been some pieces. This is why I'm so looking forward to the debates and hope that the moderators are savvy enough to let's get down to the issues and see what the people stand for. So I'm not completely for him, but so far, I don't know what Mr. Kerry stands for.

MODERATOR: And in judging the four years of George Bush, satisfied with his performance?

HOWARD: Yes.

MODERATOR: Okay. And I'm satisfied because?

HOWARD: I think he's had very steady hands during a very difficult time.

MODERATOR: Good. Casey, you're truly undecided.

CASEY: Yeah. Because Kerry, I'm not, I haven't seen him in a situation that I feel like I truly know how he functions as a person and that's important to me.

MODERATOR: And why is that important?

CASEY: Because first and foremost, I mean, when they're making decisions with new information and in crisis situation, I don't think anyone issue is that, is the key issue. It's how that person thinks and operates that, in the end, will dictate how they function.

MODERATOR: And, John G., you're truly undecided. What makes you truly undecided.

JOHN G.: Yes.

MODERATOR: What makes you truly undecided?

JOHN G.: I think it's too early.

MODERATOR: Did you vote for Bush or did you vote for Gore?

JOHN G.: I voted for Bush the last time.

MODERATOR: You voted for Bush last time and you're undecided right now. And, Casey, how did you vote four years ago?

CASEY: I voted for Gore.

MODERATOR: Okay, so you're Gore and undecided. You're Bush and undecided. What makes you undecided?

JOHN G.: I think it's too early to make a final decision. I think we need to find out what they're really talking about.

JOHN F.: All they're doing right now is they're responding to negative attacks. Coming out of the Democratic Convention, Kerry made the speech that he wasn't going to go negative. I said, well, that's encouraging. That's something that we can really rally around.

MODERATOR: Yup.

JOHN F.: He was negative the next day.

MODERATOR: John K., you're with Bush pretty strongly. Are you committed?

JOHN K.: Somewhat.

MODERATOR: And do you formulate your choice? What's that based on?

JOHN K.: I remember the Congressional Hearings from the late '60s, early '70s. This opposition of Bush was a one-trick . . . event and the same thing he did then . . .

MODERATOR: He meaning?

JOHN K.: Kerry. He's doing the same thing now. His issue was Vietnam and how everything over there was screwed up and now it's the same issue. There's just 30 years' difference with what the administration is doing. So, yes, he's a one-trick . . . he's accomplished very little in the 20-odd years he's been in the Senate. I don't know of any legislation that he formally has introduced or promoted. And he's at the, you know, the boots of Kennedy his whole career, so, I mean, there's no reason there I need to look to him for anything.

MODERATOR: And, John F., when we talked to you, you seemed to be saying, I'm for Kerry, but I don't know a lot about him and it seemed more anti-Bush than pro-Kerry.

JOHN F.: That's correct.

MODERATOR: Tell me what's happening in your formulation.

JOHN F.: Well, I was appalled at the way the Republicans appropriated the last election behind the massive voter fraud in Florida. And before anybody knew what had happened, I mean, they just accepted him, and once again, this is the press not doing its job, as far as I'm concerned.

MODERATOR: And did you vote for Gore?

JOHN F.: Yes, I did.

MODERATOR: Okay, go ahead.

JOHN F.: And I wasn't wild about him either, but he was all we had. But, I mean, I've just been appalled at a bunch of what's gone on in the current administration, and the run-up of the deficit, the rollback of environmental policies, and the war in Iraq. I mean, my God, we attacked a sovereign nation without any reason to do so. I mean, I was one of those kids who did the Pledge of Allegiance every day before school and I bought all that stuff. And it was just right out the window in the last election, as far as I can see.

MODERATOR: Anybody wants to say anything on this? Yeah, Frank.

FRANK: Just as far as some of the issues that I do know about, in general, I think Bush is going to be stronger on defense overall. Kerry has voted against it most of the way through his career. He has offered no legislation that I know of in the whole time he served as a senator. Even though it hasn't happened in this first term, I think Bush is going to be hopefully, hopefully from my standpoint, less big government. And I also really like the, Bush's Social Security plan on privatization if the individuals want it. I think we've been so much farther ahead economically if we would have had that earlier.

MODERATOR: I'm just going to do a quick vote. Privatizing Social Security, if you don't have any viewpoint, don't raise your hand, but how many say, I like Bush's plan, I agree with privatizing? Okay, I have one, two, three, four, five. How many say, I don't like it? One, two, three, four. And the other three don't really have an opinion. Okay, good. I'm sorry, I stopped you for a second.

FRANK: Well, and the . . .

MODERATOR: That's our polling part of this.

FRANK: The other thing, which hasn't been brought up yet, I am pro-life, so I support Bush based on his differences with Kerry in that regard. And is particularly bothersome with me when Kerry doesn't, he says he feels that abortion is taking a life, but yet even though it is, he's not, he isn't going to do, I can understand somebody has a different position, but if you feel that it's taking a life, and yet you still, and I think strictly for political reasons, is not going to support, I don't know.

And then the last thing, and I know everyone else has said 30 years ago, 40 years ago doesn't matter, and what Kerry did in Vietnam doesn't matter to me, but what he did when he came back after Vietnam, where he testified before Congress about things that really didn't happen, where he went to Paris and talked to the North Vietnamese and they used his quotes as a military officer, while we still had prisoners of war, it's not what he did in Vietnam, it's what he did immediately after Vietnam that I really got some concerns with.

MODERATOR: Good. We got a lot out on the table. A week from Thursday, I believe it is, first debate, how many of you, be honest, say, I'm going to rearrange my life so I can watch that debate? And by the way, the chairs change colors if you lie, so we've got the cameras on the back of the chair.

How many say, I'm going to rearrange my life or I'm going to make certain that I'm in front of that television set? Every one of you. So when I see the Nielsen ratings are down low, I'll realize it's somebody else. Complete this sentence. If there were one thing I could learn in this debate, I would want to know. I'll start with John G. I would want to know?

JOHN G.: Kerry's plan on carrying the nation forward.

MODERATOR: Jennifer?

JOHN G.: Specifically.

MODERATOR: Okay, specific plans about carrying the nation forward for Kerry. Jennifer, what . . .

JENNIFER: I would want to know John Kerry's specific plans on how he's going to continue with our military in Iraq.

MODERATOR: Okay. Rob, you can find out one thing from the debate next week, what do you want to know?

ROB: I would have said John Kerry, how he stood on abortion, but I just heard what Frank said a minute ago.

STEPHANIE: But you didn't believe him, huh?

ROB: I wasn't aware for sure of where he stood on that.

MODERATOR: Okay. Howard, what do you want to know?

HOWARD: John Kerry's domestic policy.

MODERATOR: Anything in particular in domestic policy?

HOWARD: Just everything in general.

MODERATOR: Casey, what do you want to know?

CASEY: I would like to hear John Kerry talk about his plan regarding our economy.

DEBORAH: I would like to hear Mr. Bush's plan to improve the deficit.

SHELLEY: I would want to hear both candidates on the idea of, more specifically, on the jobs that need to stay in the United States.

MODERATOR: Stephanie?

STEPHANIE: I would like to find out from Mr. Bush plans on improving jobs and healthcare.

FRANK: Well, there's one thing that's been flying under the radar, I think, and it may not be a big deal to a lot of people, but I think, I haven't heard much from either candidate on the illegal immigration situation in the United States. And I'm not, it's not a matter of the immigration, but I just want to know what their plans are in that regard.

MODERATOR: Good, from both candidates, immigration. John K., what do you want to learn?

JOHN K.: Why Kerry won't sign the form to release his documents from the military.

MODERATOR: John F.?

JOHN F.: Well, I would like to hear both candidates talk about a plan for extracting us from the quagmire in Iraq.

MODERATOR: And, Rick?

RICK: Homeland Security.

MODERATOR: From whom, both?

RICK: From both.

MODERATOR: I would say if I knew nothing else, this debate seems to be more important to John Kerry. In other words, it seems to me you have more interest and more attention to John Kerry, correct or incorrect? I mean, just listening to you that it sounds to me that if George Bush had laryngitis, you would say, that's okay. If we could have an hour and a half of learning about John Kerry, that would be exceptionally helpful. Is that true or incorrect?

SHELLEY: I disagree.

MODERATOR: You disagree. Others?

FRANK: I agree that it is more important.

JENNIFER: I agree too.

MODERATOR: Okay. And it's more important because of what, Jennifer?

JENNIFER: I know nothing about the man. I mean, I can go back and look at his voting record and, I mean, people are allowed to change their opinion, but his opinion has changed so much that I do not have any confidence in any of his positions, and I want to know what his plans are. I can't formulate my opinion on what he plans to do in any area.

MODERATOR: John G., you started out by talking about, here I want to know from Kerry, why is Kerry important?

JOHN G.: I think he's wasted some time telling people what he's about and he's only got so many days left. And he needs to have, you know, I think it should be natural that we want to hear more about Kerry. We had four years of Bush. We understand what Bush stands for. Whether we agree with him or not on all the policies, at least we understand. I don't think it's truly a debate if you . . .

MODERATOR: I understand.

JOHN G.: At least he has to stomp his foot if he disagrees, but I think he has to tell us where the differences are. And so just saying, I disagree with this, this is wrong, don't do that, that that polarizes the nation. Let's find out what they're going to do. Bring solutions, just don't point out problems.

MODERATOR: Good. Deborah, help me out, same point.

DEBORAH: Well, I'm still not real clear as, you know, I'm leaning towards John Kerry, but I'd like to see the specifics of each one, the details, you know, get down to the nitty-gritty between the two, instead of worrying who did what 20 or 30 years ago because, you know, we've all done things that we're not proud of, so that would be the specifics of each.

MODERATOR: Good. Casey, go.

CASEY: I think it's a natural consequence that we're eager to hear more about Kerry, not anything against him, but again, we have an incumbent, and so you have a little more knowledge and track record, and actually have been exposed to what they've been doing and talking about for four years.

MODERATOR: Right. I'm interested, how many people around the table, John Kerry has a good debate, makes a lot of sense to you, says, he can win my support? How many people around this table could say, yeah, if he did the kinds of things that John G. talked about and Casey talked about, yeah, he could win my support? I'd like to see the hands up.

Okay. I mean, obviously, right now he's got your support, but that's okay, that I assume he could lose your support too, maybe not. But, so how many hands do I get, just so I can see? One, two, and then those people who are already with Kerry. Yeah, but the rest of you are essentially, even if he were good, Howard, he probably wouldn't get your vote.

HOWARD: Again, I would have to see what he has to say.

MODERATOR: Sure.

HOWARD: Again, I would agree with what somebody said here, he said, we're doing this wrong, but, all right, what are you going to do about it, how would you do it differently, and I have not heard this from Mr. Kerry.

MODERATOR: Okay, good. And is there anything that you want to be able to understand about George Bush in this debate, anything that's important to you? I mean, obviously we talked about programs, but is there anything that's important as an insight that you feel you need to get from George Bush. John G., he wants your vote. He wants your vote badly. You voted for him four years ago?

JOHN G.: Right.

MODERATOR: Is there something you want to see or hear that . . .

JOHN G.: Well, I'm a little concerned with how America's being seen around the world. And I don't disagree necessarily with his actions as his opponent does, but maybe it's the style in which it's delivered. You know, maybe it is that Texas swagger that irritates the Europeans here. It irritates the people from Asia. But that, we're living in a different world and we're living in a world community. And how we garner support or we repel it is very important to our Homeland Security, to our domestic and foreign policy. And I think we need to be decisive in what do, but we need to make sure we're not divisive in the process.

MODERATOR: Right. Casey, you voted for Al Gore and you're undecided. On George Bush, what can he say to you or what do you want to hear that would help you maybe tilt his way?

CASEY: On foreign policy would be great. I would love to hear him talk about how he's handled a lot of things and his Cabinet in regard to dealing with other countries, the U.N., and it's very lengthy and the negatives that I feel are the result of some of that and how he perceives himself and how others perceive him in the world.

MODERATOR: And, Howard, you said you're Bush, but you're open. How does he solidify your vote? What does he need to do in this debate?

HOWARD: He needs to be a little more definitive about what he's going to do. He's done a lot of . . . he may have a plan for this, a plan for this, but let's expand on it or if they've got a plan to do this, what is that plan.

MODERATOR: And, Rob, how about you? You talk about you're being a Bush voter, but not totally committed yet.

ROB: Well, he, I think we're all pretty clear on how he feels about the Iraqi thing and what's going on with the military, but just his stance on the domestic issues, kind of approaching how we're going to, what we're going to do about the economy. And, you know, after Clinton went out, Bush comes in, he has these meetings with all the top CEO's of the companies and you figure he's going to be real cool, and then all of a sudden, everything dies and there's not much talk about it. There's not much talk. I know the oil prices are a big problem with making it . . . but I'd like to find out what he's thinking.

MODERATOR: When John Kerry talks, here's what bugs me. What bugs you? John K., when John Kerry talks, here's what bugs me.

JOHN K.: He doesn't speak with specifics.

MODERATOR: Rick, when John Kerry talks, here's what bugs me.

RICK: He's not firm in a position.

MODERATOR: Jennifer?

JENNIFER: His arrogant tone.

MODERATOR: Rob?

ROB: He's just going to attack Bush.

MODERATOR: Howard?

HOWARD: I can't notice specifics, how are we going to make things better.

MODERATOR: Casey?

CASEY: His lack of personal touch.

MODERATOR: John G.?

JOHN G.: Deals with problems and he's not bringing solutions.

MODERATOR: When George Bush talks, here's what bugs me, Deborah.

DEBORAH: I would say he needs to focus on what some of the things he needs to work on and like the deficit, being over in Iraq way too long.

MODERATOR: But what bugs you? Here's what bugs me about him.

DEBORAH: Kind of his arrogance, I would say. He's kind of a, he's been from, you know, always had money as he's been, all the years, things like that, his public view over in the foreign countries as American pig, basically I would say.

MODERATOR: Shelley, here's what bugs me.

SHELLEY: The flip-flopping.

MODERATOR: By Bush?

SHELLEY: Yes.

MODERATOR: Stephanie, here's what bugs me.

STEPHANIE: I think he focuses on Americans' fears from 9/11 and that's why he specifically likes about national security because he feels, and like as many of us have said in this room, we feel like he did a good job with it, so then that's what he focuses on and that's what he likes to talk about. And I believe he wants and likes to try to make us feel like he and his partner are the only two that can protect us and that we need to vote for him.

MODERATOR: John F., here's what bugs me about George Bush.

JOHN F.: . . . He has an arrogant smirk about him when he speaks. He bugs me.

MODERATOR: John G., what bugs me?

JOHN G.: I think when he's counting unemployment, employment, the unemployment figures as a person loses the job at \$70,000 a year, and he gets a replacement job at \$24,000, and everything is equal. Well, it's not equal.

MODERATOR: Jennifer, here's what bugs me.

JENNIFER: I guess, well, it's kind of silly, just the way when he's talking, it's not so formal. It's more kind of laid back and I think somebody who's a statesman should sound more formal.

MODERATOR: Howard, here's what bugs me.

HOWARD: Again, lack of specifics . . . had a plan to do this . . . what it is.

MODERATOR: Casey, here's what bugs me.

CASEY: His cowboy testosterone attitude thing, it really offends my sensibility.

MODERATOR: Let me try this. We'll call this the lightning round. I'm going to read you various people, you give me a word or phrase to describe your feelings about the person, do anything that you want. Let me start with George W. Bush, word or phrase, Frank, to describe George W. Bush, and don't tell me President of the United States. I know that.

FRANK: Definitely firm in his opinion.

MODERATOR: Good. John K.

CASEY: That's a word.

MODERATOR: . . . word or phrase.

CASEY: Okay, all right.

MODERATOR: Word or phrase, he's done his job.

JOHN K.: Leader.

MODERATOR: Good. John G.?

JOHN G.: Confident.

MODERATOR: Howard?

HOWARD: Self-assured.

MODERATOR: Shelley?

SHELLEY: Faker.

MODERATOR: Deborah?

DEBORAH: I think about JR on the TV show, just because of his background, Texas.

MODERATOR: Casey?

CASEY: Cowboy.

MODERATOR: Rob, word or phrase?

ROB: Good Christian man.

MODERATOR: Good Christian man. Jennifer?

JENNIFER: I think he's, I'll say honest.

MODERATOR: Honest, okay, good. Did I ask you John?

JOHN G.: He's still confident from where I'm standing.

MODERATOR: Okay, good. Rick?

RICK: We know where he stands.

MODERATOR: Good. John F.?

JOHN F.: Fortunate son.

MODERATOR: Good. Collin Powell, word or phrase. Rob? Lightning round.

ROB: Strong.

MODERATOR: Strong. Frank?

FRANK: Oh, willing to, let me just, let's just say moderate.

MODERATOR: John K.?

JOHN K.: Role model.

MODERATOR: A role model. Shelley?

SHELLEY: Eloquent.

MODERATOR: Stephanie?

STEPHANIE: I don't think I have one.

MODERATOR: What?

STEPHANIE: I don't think I have one.

MODERATOR: Good. Howard, got one?

HOWARD: Military man.

MODERATOR: Ralph Nader, Casey.

CASEY: Has-been.

MODERATOR: Ralph Nader, Jennifer.

JENNIFER: Cares for the working man.

MODERATOR: John F., Ralph Nader.

JOHN F.: Loose cannon.

MODERATOR: Frank?

FRANK: He's past his time.

MODERATOR: Shelley?

SHELLEY: Persistent.

MODERATOR: Good. Deborah?

DEBORAH: I was going to say go-getter.

MODERATOR: John Edwards, Stephanie.

STEPHANIE: Father.

MODERATOR: John Edwards, Frank.

FRANK: Trial lawyer.

MODERATOR: John F.

JOHN F.: I'm trying to think of a word. He was my guy, excellent candidate.

MODERATOR: Rob, John Edwards.

ROB: Seems to be good.

MODERATOR: Howard?

HOWARD: I have no idea.

JENNIFER: Impassioned.

MODERATOR: What?

JENNIFER: Impassioned.

MODERATOR: Impassioned. Deborah?

DEBORAH: I don't really know. I'd say just down the middle.

MODERATOR: Rick?

RICK: Mature.

MODERATOR: Let me go to the next. Dick Cheney, John K.

JOHN K.: Brilliant.

MODERATOR: Brilliant. John G.

JOHN G.: Decisive.

MODERATOR: Decisive. Jennifer?

JENNIFER: Intelligent.

MODERATOR: Intelligent. Deborah?

DEBORAH: I'm not sure.

MODERATOR: Howard?

HOWARD: Businessman is the only thing I can think of.

MODERATOR: Frank?

FRANK: Stubborn.

MODERATOR: Casey.

CASEY: Clever like a fox.

MODERATOR: John F.

JOHN F.: He's the brains behind the operation.

MODERATOR: John Kerry, John G.

JOHN G.: I don't know where he stands.

MODERATOR: Jennifer.

JENNIFER: He's ambitious.

MODERATOR: Rob, word or phrase?

ROB: I don't know yet . . .

MODERATOR: Howard?

HOWARD: Wishy-washy.

MODERATOR: Casey?

CASEY: Politician.

MODERATOR: Deborah?

DEBORAH: I'd say determined.

MODERATOR: Shelley?

SHELLEY: Nice hair.

MODERATOR: Stephanie?

STEPHANIE: Positive.

MODERATOR: Frank?

FRANK: I'd go with politician. I think that's . . .

MODERATOR: John K.

JOHN K.: Opportunistic.

MODERATOR: John F.

JOHN F.: Could use a serious charisma implant.

MODERATOR: Rick?

RICK: Misguided.

MODERATOR: Good. Do me a favor. On your piece of paper there, basically what I'd like to do is I want you to think George Bush. Just close your eyes and think about anything that you've seen, any video or anything else, get an image, and just write down what your image is that comes to your mind. Are you with me? You've got to close your eyes, think of George Bush, and then here's what image comes to my mind, okay, and then write it down. Okay. What image jumped into your mind? What did you see, Jennifer? More than just saying, he's this or that, what was that image that . . .

JENNIFER: I saw in a chambray shirt and his jeans on his ranch.

MODERATOR: And does it take you any further than that, anything else that you were thinking about as you thought about him?

JENNIFER: Well, that just kind of, I was just thinking of my first image of him, but that's kind of what I thought of as him being on his ranch, just working, you know.

MODERATOR: Good. Anybody else, something that jumped into your mind, the image that, go ahead, John F.

JOHN F.: I saw him in a flight suit on a deck of an aircraft carrier with a great big sign that said, mission accomplished, behind him.

MODERATOR: What else jumped in? Anybody? Yup, go head, Frank.

FRANK: Well, mine is speech after 9/11 and it's more the determination with his, you know, with us or against us.

MODERATOR: Good. Who else? Yeah, John.

JOHN K.: Because he stood on the mount in New York for the firefighters.

MODERATOR: Okay, good. Who else had an image?

SHELLEY: Well, I put down sitting out on the swing on his ranch . . . twirling around in his mouth, a look of accomplishment for Bush once again.

MODERATOR: Good. Anybody else? Let's try to do the same thing, if we can, with John Kerry. Close your eyes, think about an image that jumps to your mind, and what is it, and then write it down. Jennifer, what jumped into your mind?

JENNIFER: Black-and-white photo of testifying before Congress.

MODERATOR: John. When?

JENNIFER: Back in the early '70s.

MODERATOR: In the '70s, okay. John G.

JOHN G.: Well, it was more recent than that. It was his midnight rally speech after the Republican Convention. I got a sense that he got the wrong speech by the Republicans

because he was saying he heard him say this, but they didn't say some of those things. It was very disappointing. It just seemed to politically oriented. Speak from your heart.

MODERATOR: Good. Rick?

RICK: Uncomfortable in a tie.

MODERATOR: John F.

JOHN F.: All I could see was his hair, but then when I thought about it, I just saw the young guy in that shot of the other Navy guys on the SWIF Boat in a T-shirt.

MODERATOR: Yeah, Casey, what did you think of?

CASEY: I see him as a politician on the floor talking.

MODERATOR: Okay, so on the Senate floor or something like that.

CASEY: Yeah.

MODERATOR: Deborah, what did you see?

DEBORAH: I just kind of visualized him trying to meet with people and to get to know everybody and win some votes.

MODERATOR: Frank, what did you see?

FRANK: It wasn't any one particular time, but just it seems to be most of the time that I see him it's his aloofness or pontificate, you know, I'm, his stature or voice or something, I don't know.

MODERATOR: Howard?

HOWARD: I put consummate politician.

MODERATOR: But did you have an image? I mean, in other words, that's telling me this is what I think he is, but, I mean, I understand when Jennifer says to me, I saw him as a person testifying, or somebody else says, I saw speaking on the Senate floor. Did you have a visual image?

HOWARD: . . . speech during the Convention at the end.

MODERATOR: And, Stephanie, did you have an image?

STEPHANIE: Yeah, I just saw him the other night on Letterman, so that was the first thing that popped in my head.

MODERATOR: Did you like him or not on Letterman?

STEPHANIE: I thought it was, he did the Top Ten, which I . . . as a Letterman fan and I thought it was funny, so he poked a little fun at himself too.

MODERATOR: Let's try this very quickly. I'm running a little bit behind. Cheney, close your eyes, tell me what you see, and then write it down. We'll do it very quickly. Okay. Who's got an image for me? Very quickly, Casey.

CASEY: Well, tight-lipped snake.

MODERATOR: A snake.

CASEY: Yeah, just somebody that I don't trust, that the way he talks and comes across, I just never feel like he's straight when he . . .

MODERATOR: And where do you see him? I mean, what is this . . .

CASEY: Oh, anytime I've heard him talk.

MODERATOR: But that's more a feeling. Do you have an image of a place?

CASEY: It's just the image of his head and those lips kind of coming out the side of his mouth, just not really feeling like he's ever dealing straight with me.

MODERATOR: Rick?

RICK: Mine contrasts greatly with that. I put down an image, the wisdom of a grandfather.

MODERATOR: Anybody else? What did you see, Shelley?

SHELLEY: A contradictory father/Vice President.

MODERATOR: Anybody else? Yeah, Stephanie.

STEPHANIE: I picture him saying he's no longer involved with Halliburton.

MODERATOR: John F.

JOHN F.: I pictured him still involved with Halliburton.

MODERATOR: Okay, but unlike the others, you don't end up with a sort of visual place that you put him. You don't put him on a ranch or you don't put him someplace. Try one more, John Edwards, give me that visual image that comes to mind, where you see him, what you see, etc. Close your eyes because it works much better when you close your eyes. What have you got? What have you got for me, Jennifer?

JENNIFER: I just had him in like a navy suit with a white shirt and a red tie, and a big cheesy grin, and it was like either while he was down at Union Station or when he came back to Lawrence. It was somewhere right in there, when he was back in town.

MODERATOR: John G.

JOHN G.: I had him on a railroad car, consummate or charismatic campaigner is what I wrote down.

MODERATOR: Rob?

ROB: Yeah, I visualized him when he went, I guess, to South Carolina after the, when they were doing the caucuses and the . . .

MODERATOR: I see.

ROB: . . . And the primaries and the . . .

MODERATOR: Anybody else got an image? Okay, Casey.

CASEY: Yeah, just in real casual clothes at the park at a picnic, a town picnic at the town square type thing.

MODERATOR: Yeah, John F.

JOHN F.: I pictured him in casual clothes too because that's the way he was on the early campaign trail in the Democratic Primary season and he had the clearest platform of any of the candidates at the time.

MODERATOR: And, Howard?

HOWARD: I just when he came back and made the speech at Lawrence.

MODERATOR: And was it a favorable, unfavorable image that jumped into your mind?

HOWARD: I had a problem with it because he came back on like he was a secondary thing, oh, we messed up. We've got to go fix it.

MODERATOR: Now let me try this. I'm reaching out. You're going to have to help me. And that is, the one thing I thought about is a President is a person that comes into your home over 100 nights a year, I mean, not physically, but in terms of presence, whether it's on television or one way or another. And I would like you to tell me sort of who does this person remind you of, what is this person like as a visitor to your home.

Before we get to the candidates, what I'd like to do is let us suppose that Donald Trump is that visitor for the next four years. What would he be like as a visitor to your home, and again, when I'm talking about a visitor, it's not a physical presence that he's sitting in that living room or whatever, but there is a presence because whether you like it or not this person comes in all occasions, all holidays, all various things. Tell me what Donald Trump would be like as a visitor in your home. How do you see him, John F.?

JOHN F.: I'm trying to imagine that.

MODERATOR: Well, am I making myself clear or not on this that I'm trying to get a sense. John K., can you help me out?

JOHN K.: A real asshole.

MODERATOR: Okay, so he's a jerk to you.

JOHN K.: Yeah.

MODERATOR: Good. Who else sees, what do you think he'd be like?

JOHN G.: Irritating.

MODERATOR: An irritating person to have coming into your house for four years. And he's irritating because?

FRANK: Just he's . . . got bad hair.

MODERATOR: I always hate when people go to hair. Rick, tell me, Donald Trump.

RICK: Uncomfortable to be around. I can see he's going to be judging you more than he's interested in getting to know you.

MODERATOR: Good. Casey?

CASEY: Condescending, just feeling like he's just, you know.

MODERATOR: Deborah?

DEBORAH: I'd say better than you or above you, like you're beneath him.

MODERATOR: So nobody has a very favorable feeling. Anybody got a favorable feeling about getting Donald Trump in their room for 100, in their house for 100 days a year? Okay. So tell me what it's going to be like with George Bush. He's in your house 100 days a year, what's it like? Okay, John K.

JOHN K.: Family friend.

MODERATOR: A family friend, good. Help me out.

ROB: Comfortable.

MODERATOR: A comfortable feeling to have him in that house. Yup?

FRANK: One of the gang.

MODERATOR: What else?

JENNIFER: I'd say reassuring.

MODERATOR: A reassuring presence. Good.

MAN: Professional.

MODERATOR: A professional, good. John F.

JOHN F.: And I'd say a smug incompetent myself.

MODERATOR: Sort of a smug person that's coming into your, okay. Who else? Help me out.

STEPHANIE: Someone that doesn't really care about me that, I mean, wouldn't have anything related to me or have a clue what to even say to me as a person.

MODERATOR: Okay, but again, he may be coming in on his terms, but he is that person. Howard?

HOWARD: One of the gang.

MODERATOR: Oh, one of the gang. Who'd I miss? Stephanie, did you tell me?

STEPHANIE: Smug incompetent is pretty darn good, yeah.

MODERATOR: Jennifer?

JENNIFER: I said reassuring.

MODERATOR: Did I get John G.?

JOHN G.: And I think we see the image of the President . . . towards Bush is probably, you know, Texas ranch or, I mean, probably if you can get to know that George Bush, he's not a bad guy.

MODERATOR: So for some people, it's a distant feeling, smug, somebody that doesn't relate, but to others, comfortable, somebody that you feel reassured about, etc. What's John Kerry like? If he comes into your house 100 days a year, tell me what he's like. What's he like, Deborah?

DEBORAH: I'd say friendly.

MODERATOR: A friendly person.

DEBORAH: Um-hum.

MODERATOR: And what do you see, Shelley?

SHELLEY: I see a ball-parking hot dog kind of.

MODERATOR: A ball-parking hot dog. John G., what do you see?

JOHN G.: I don't see him at the ballpark with a hot dog.

MODERATOR: But, so what do you think you see?

JOHN G.: I do see him as a career politician.

MODERATOR: But what does that mean?

JOHN G.: I think he's aspiring to be a statesman and I think there's a certain elitism to that. Maybe it's what some of the people were talking George Bush and I just don't see him that way.

MODERATOR: Jennifer?

JENNIFER: I would feel like he's being condescending. He's just going to tell me what's going on, and I don't know what's good for me, and he knows how to take care of it, and that's just going to be the way it is.

MODERATOR: Howard, what's he going to be like?

HOWARD: A person who's aloof, who does not belong. He's just kind of impressed himself on it, but he doesn't really belong there.

MODERATOR: Casey?

CASEY: Kind of like an insurance salesman, I mean, he's going to act like he's friendly and somewhat interested in me, but, and I don't see him as being rude, but I'm not really connecting with him.

MODERATOR: Frank?

FRANK: I see him as being uncomfortable in my house in that he just wouldn't seem to fit in.

MODERATOR: Stephanie?

STEPHANIE: I heard what someone said earlier about uncharismatic, but at the same time, hopefully bringing positive things.

MODERATOR: Yeah, but you'd find him welcoming or how would you feel about his coming into your house, I mean, again through the television, not personally?

STEPHANIE: Right. Welcoming because I think with him would come positive things.

MODERATOR: John F.

JOHN F.: Well, I think of him as statesmanlike. If he was in my house, I wouldn't expect warmth from him. I'd feel like, not aloof, but like at a distance a little.

MODERATOR: And, John K.?

JOHN K.: Cold.

MODERATOR: Cold, a cold person. That's helpful. Anybody want to say anything else? Oh, what would John Edwards be like coming into your house? Anybody, just throw it out.

JOHN K.: I'd say more personality than Kerry.

MODERATOR: What else?

MAN: Genuine.

SHELLEY: The boy next door.

MODERATOR: Genuine. What?

SHELLEY: The boy next door.

MODERATOR: The boy next door. Yeah, Rick?

RICK: Interested in you.

MODERATOR: Interested in your. John G.

JOHN G.: That he does seem, he comes across that way, a lot more interesting.

MODERATOR: Yeah. Anybody else?

CASEY: Friendly.

STEPHANIE: Relaxed.

MODERATOR: How do you know he's relaxed?

STEPHANIE: A few people earlier said they, when they pictured him, he was in just casual clothes and I did too. He just always seemed so laid back and relaxed, concerned, but not the politician figure, you know.

DEBORAH: I would say more approachable. I mean, I know I've not seen him, but I'd be more open to, I just see him in a more, interested in what he has to say. I don't feel like he would be talking down to me or knowing me. I'd be like, well, I don't agree, but I'll listen to you because I'll . . .

MODERATOR: Good. And what would John McCain be like in your house 100 days a year?

CASEY: Annoying.

MODERATOR: Annoying, says Casey. Why?

CASEY: Just him talking, it just would be annoying.

MODERATOR: What would John McCain be like?

JOHN G.: I'd love to have John McCain come to my house. I think he's an interesting man and he seems to care about real things, about what's happening in the political process and all this polarization.

MODERATOR: Rick?

RICK: I'm going to say strongly opinionated.

MODERATOR: Good. Anybody else?

JOHN F.: I don't he'd lie to me.

MODERATOR: You think he wouldn't lie to you . . . okay. How about anybody else?

FRANK: I had the same exact word that John G. did about, interesting. I mean, I would just like to talk to him and listen to what he has to say.

MODERATOR: Good. Anybody else?

DEBORAH: I'd say interesting. I mean, I might agree with some of the things and I might not, but I'd always be up to hear what he had to say.

MODERATOR: Good. Let me ask you about Bush, a couple of things about George Bush. What's his best quality? Best quality, just throw it out. You don't have to . . .

JOHN G.: Honest.

MAN: Integrity.

FRANK: Folksiness.

MODERATOR: Honest, integrity, folksiness.

HOWARD: Compassion.

MODERATOR: Compassion.

SHELLEY: Speechwriters.

MODERATOR: Best quality.

STEPHANIE: He has character.

MODERATOR: Character, okay.

JENNIFER: Commitment.

MODERATOR: Commitment. Anybody else? Okay. What's one quality, or let me ask a question. What's the most important lesson George Bush has learned in the last four years? Most important lesson, you can agree with him or disagree with him, but I think he's learned this lesson.

CASEY: I don't think he has learned any lessons.

MODERATOR: I don't think he's learned any lessons. What do you mean?

CASEY: No, I don't.

MODERATOR: Why not?

CASEY: I know, I think he has a set way and it doesn't matter what information comes down the pike or what circumstances change, how he is is how he's going to be, period.

MODERATOR: And is that good, bad or indifferent?

CASEY: As a President, I think it's probably bad.

MODERATOR: Okay. Best thing he's learned, Howard.

HOWARD: I would say basically the same thing she does, I kind of see that as a plus. I mean, know where he stands and everybody in the world knows where he stands.

MODERATOR: Okay. We have that marvelous debate, tastes great, less filling. Casey says that's not a good thing, I mean, that essentially he doesn't adapt, he has a set point of view, and the world may change around him, but essentially he's got a fixed point. Howard says less filling, okay, because he says that here's a person who you know where he stands and he doesn't switch around and that's good. So let's just quickly go around and basically I'm Casey, Howard, and why. Do you agree more with Casey or Howard?

CASEY: Well, I think he's learned from some of the mistakes over the past years that he's been in the office, trial and error, just kind of filling in where he needs to be like for the 9/11, what he's done, security, tighten up on security issues in that area. But I think he's done a lot to help America, but there's still a lot of other issues that need to be addressed.

MODERATOR: You're giving me a third position.

CASEY: It's not black or white, that's the problem.

MODERATOR: All right, Shelley.

SHELLEY: I agree with Casey.

MODERATOR: Why?

CASEY: Because I feel like, even like regarding Iraq and everything, even if the people over there say, okay, we'll do it your way and you could send all the troops home, we'll behave, I think he would still just leave them over there just because he's stubborn and he's going to do it his way, how he wants to do it.

MODERATOR: Stephanie?

STEPHANIE: I agree with Casey because he's a man, and he's not infallible, and we all, everyone needs to learn, and everyone can make mistakes. And to think that his way and that's the best way, that's the only way, that's naïve for anybody, but especially a President.

MODERATOR: Frank?

FRANK: Well, I agree with Howard in that aspect that, you know, knowing where he stands is more of a plus to me than a minus.

MODERATOR: Okay. I'll just get a quick raise of hands. How many agree with Howard? Okay, I've got two, I've got four, I've got six people, seven. And how many agree with Casey? Okay, one, two, three, four. And where's John G.?

JOHN G.: I was with Howard.

MODERATOR: Good. So we probably have eight to four. Good. Let me ask one other thing, and that is, if George Bush could have one quality of John Kerry's to make him more appealing, what one quality do you wish he had?

JOHN K.: Say that again.

MODERATOR: I knew it would throw you, John K. I just want to throw you off. If George Bush could have one quality of John Kerry's to make him more appealing, what quality would you give him?

JOHN K.: Statesmanship.

MODERATOR: Statesmanship. Anybody else?

CASEY: Yeah, that's probably the only thing I could come up with.

MODERATOR: Anybody else? One quality.

FRANK: Well, the thing that came to my mind I know is compromise.

MODERATOR: Okay.

FRANK: I think we need, there needs to be more or less my way or the highway.

MODERATOR: Good. Anybody else? If George Bush could have one of his father's qualities, what quality do you wish he had of his father's?

JOHN G.: He does have his father's quality.

MODERATOR: But if he could have any one quality that, yeah?

JOHN K.: I think Bush, 41, analyzed his intelligence coming in and didn't underestimate his . . . and I think Bush was focused on some of the things he was promising and that was a lower priority because we know President Clinton talked to him about it and Osama bin Laden in particular, and it's not like it was something that was maybe that couldn't have been prevented. But I think that I disagree, I think Bush has learned, the current Bush has learned from his mistakes and I think one of those is you can never underestimate your enemy.

MODERATOR: Good. Anybody else? I hear people say George Bush doesn't get it. What doesn't he get? George Bush doesn't get it. What doesn't he get?

CASEY: That we're not living 40 years ago, that the world we live in changes every second and it's really important that you look at what's going on, what has gone on, and things more than just the events that are going on, there's a bigger thing happening, and I don't think he gets that.

MODERATOR: George Bush doesn't get it. What doesn't he get it, John F.?

JOHN F.: I don't think he gets the lives of ordinary Americans, people who weren't born rich and well-connected.

MODERATOR: Jennifer, what doesn't he get?

JENNIFER: I don't think he gets how to work with the Democrats.

MODERATOR: What doesn't George Bush get, Shelley?

SHELLEY: He doesn't get that you can't have it your way all the time and you can't come in bothering someone else's country just to make them do things your way. He just does not get, leave me alone.

MODERATOR: Anybody else? Yes?

STEPHANIE: He doesn't get that we need friends in the world. As great as we are, we're not, we need friends.

MODERATOR: George Bush loses the election. I'm going to play this tape and we're going to say, John K. was clairvoyant when he said, why did he lose the election?

JOHN K.: George Bush loses the election?

MODERATOR: Yeah. And you're going to tell me today, here's why he lost the election.

JOHN K.: It would be because of an upcoming catastrophe.

MODERATOR: Frank, he lost the election. Why did George Bush lose the election?

FRANK: Between now and the election, things get even worse in Iraq.

MODERATOR: Rich, he lost the election. Why did he lose the election?

FRANK: I'm still thinking. You can come back to me.

MODERATOR: John F., he lost the election. Why did he lose?

JOHN F.: I don't think he will lose the election, but I think if he does, it will be because John Kerry finally got his campaign going in the right direction and made some points.

MODERATOR: Jennifer, he has your heart, he has your soul, but he lost the election. Why did he lose?

JENNIFER: The only thing I could think is if John Kerry got a really good domestic policy that he was able to convey to people. He convinced them that his was the way it was going to work.

MODERATOR: Yeah, Rick . . .

RICK: He does a poor job in the debates.

MODERATOR: Rob?

ROB: There's just an insurmountable number of people that are dissatisfied with his war stance.

MODERATOR: Let me turn to John Kerry just quickly. How did John Kerry turn out differently from the person that you thought you saw at the beginning of the campaign? I mean, you may not have known him or you may have only seen him in brief situations. How did he turn out differently than what you expected? Stephanie? That can be good or bad.

STEPHANIE: No, I haven't seen him be able to really connect with people, be personable.

MODERATOR: How did he turn out differently, Casey?

CASEY: I don't think he really has turned out any differently than I expected him to be, so far, so far.

MODERATOR: Good. John G.?

JOHN G.: I would have expected him to solidify what he's going to do by now.

MODERATOR: How did he turn out differently, Howard?

HOWARD: He doesn't communicate well.

MODERATOR: So you thought he was going to . . .

HOWARD: I thought he would be better at communicating his . . .

MODERATOR: Yeah. Deborah, what do you think?

DEBORAH: I didn't see any different from the beginning.

MODERATOR: Shelley?

SHELLEY: I see him as losing a little bit of momentum.

MODERATOR: Rick?

RICK: I don't think he's the right candidate from the Democratic side. At the time he was nominated, I thought, well, he's the candidate, but now I'm thinking that there may have been some other better selections.

MODERATOR: And if you could observe John Kerry in any situation that would help you to get a better insight into who he is and what he's about, where do you want to observe him? You can see him. You can be a fly on the wall anyplace. He can't see you. You can see him and you want to make sure this is a person that I can vote for or I could be happy with or satisfied with if he were President. I'd just like to be able to see him in some situation. Where do you want to see him, John?

JOHN K.: In a private discussion with his wife.

CASEY: That's what I was thinking too.

MODERATOR: And why is that important?

CASEY: Because that's where generally people feel safe and are their real selves.

MODERATOR: Good.

JOHN F.: That would show more of his honesty. I think we'd see more of what he is at that point.

MODERATOR: Good.

STEPHANIE: With his, just with his family.

MODERATOR: Anybody else besides his family that you'd like or you can echo the same point. Jennifer?

JENNIFER: I'd like to see him go over to Iraq and visit with some of the troops and see what it is they go through for a day. I mean, I wouldn't let his life be put in peril, but I'd like for him to appreciate what his going on.

MODERATOR: Okay. But this is get an insight into him more than anything else.

JENNIFER: Right. Well . . .

MODERATOR: Rob, anything?

ROB: My first thought that came was just in a room where the Democrats were discussing their strategy and . . .

MODERATOR: Do you think of John Kerry as a religious person?

ROB: I haven't heard anything about it.

MODERATOR: Do you think of him as a religious person or not?

CASEY: Yeah.

MODERATOR: You do?

CASEY: As religious as the next guy. I mean, I, yeah, yeah, sure.

JOHN G.: Not compared to Bush.

FRANK: No.

FRANK: Not particularly.

JOHN F.: Only in conversation.

JOHN K.: No.

STEPHANIE: No.

SHELLEY: Kind of.

DEBORAH: I . . . one way or the other.

MODERATOR: Do you think Bush is a religious person?

DEBORAH: Yes.

SHELLEY: Kind of.

STEPHANIE: A little.

FRANK: Yes.

JOHN K.: Absolutely.

JOHN F.: I think he wears his religion on his sleeve.

RICK: Yes.

JOHN G.: Yes.

JENNIFER: Yes.

ROB: Yes.

CASEY: Yes.

HOWARD: Yes.

CASEY: I see his as dogmatic, not religious.

MODERATOR: John Kerry can have one of George Bush's qualities. What's the one quality you wish he had, George Bush?

CASEY: Say it again.

MODERATOR: This one seems to fool everyone this time. We'll try it. John Kerry can have one of George Bush's qualities. What quality would you like him to have that would make him a more appealing person to you? Anybody?

JOHN G.: Decisiveness.

FRANK: Commitment.

HOWARD: Decisiveness has already been said.

MODERATOR: What else?

STEPHANIE: Down to earth, just being down to earth.

JOHN F.: Yeah, very similarly, but he could use some of Bush's folksiness. He's awfully stiff in public.

MODERATOR: Good.

JENNIFER: I would have to agree with John F.

MODERATOR: Good. And John Kerry wins the presidency and is sworn into office January 20th, 2005. What's your greatest hope? He's now your President. John K., what's your biggest hope?

JOHN K.: That he remarries.

MODERATOR: Frank, what's your biggest hope?

FRANK: That the Republicans have control of the House and the Senate. I mean . . .

MODERATOR: Okay, yeah, but that's not a fair answer. Well, in other words, seriously, I mean, because what I'm interested in is he is your President, and I know what you're saying, I'd like to be able to see balance in there.

FRANK: Right. That's what I . . .

MODERATOR: But what would be your hope for him? I mean, that, similarly, Casey may have voted for Al Gore, but could have answered this was my hope for George Bush in his first term. What's your hope for John Kerry? Jennifer?

JENNIFER: I would hope that he is able to deal with the responsibilities that are put before him that he . . . that he's able to have the leadership to make the decisions that are going to be put before him and not be, try to, I don't how to say this right, I just want him to be able to take control and make the decision he needs to and not like run to all the other countries or, you know, I'm not communicating very well. Sorry.

MODERATOR: Rob? That's all right. No, you've done great. Rob?

ROB: Just that the things that we're concerned about, the economy, the troops in Iraq, and the way we're viewed by the world, he'd be able to bring us out of that, bring us to a point where . . .

CASEY: I would really like him to have a balanced, well-informed Cabinet.

JOHN K.: I would too.

MODERATOR: Good. I think what I'd like to do is switch the issues. Anything else anybody would like to say about John Kerry or George Bush, W. Bush, that you did not get to say?

JOHN F.: I'd like just to say that I think these upcoming debates are going to be crucial for John Kerry, much more so than Bush, I think. Hearing people here and just what I've heard around that the people just don't really seem to know what John Kerry stands for and this is going to be an opportunity to find out.

MODERATOR: Good. Anybody else? Okay. Let me show you what I've got here and maybe we can flip the chart, and that is, what I tried to do is to essentially take a series of different issues that are major parts of the campaign, ranging from energy to jobs to taxes, environment, the war in Iraq, terrorism, Homeland Security, etc.

And I put down a lot of boxes because it's my way of saying you can't say everything's important. And all I want you to do is put your name up at the top, and for the John's, put your initials, and then just put a letter that signifies which issue. And if there's an issue that's not on there that you care desperately about, fine, just add that and put it in the box that it belongs.

So those issues that are less important, you'd put down in the bottom. Those that are, that one that's the most important, you'd put up at the top. And there may be some secondary issues, one of which is most important, and several which are less important. So every box is going to get filled in with a letter.

CASEY: You're saying one per box then?

MODERATOR: Yes, one per box. Thank you very much. One per box.

ROB: Just all you need is the letter though.

MODERATOR: That's correct. All you need is the letter. And if a word, you should have letters for A to J someplace. Okay. Everybody set? Okay, here we go. Most important issue, John F., what did you put down?

JOHN F.: I put C, healthcare drug coverage.

MODERATOR: Okay, write down C. How many others had C? Anybody else? One C. What did you have John K.?

JOHN K.: H.

MODERATOR: H, which is terrorism. How many put that down as the most important? One, two, three, four, four terrorism. Okay, what did you have, Stephanie?

STEPHANIE: I have B, jobs, unemployment.

MODERATOR: How many had B? Two B's. Who else had something? Casey, you had?

CASEY: I have D, budget deficit.

MODERATOR: D. Anybody else have budget deficit? Two budget deficits. Anybody else? Who else has got something?

MAN: F.

MODERATOR: F, which is the war in Iraq. Anybody else have war in Iraq?

JENNIFER: I did.

MODERATOR: Three people had the war in Iraq. Good. Let's go to the second box, which is the big long box here. How many had F in the second box? Raise your hand. Here we go. One, two, three, four, five. How many had H? Three in the second box.

And how many had B? I have two for B. And how many had C? One C. Okay, we're missing one person. What did we have, Rob?

ROB: E.

MODERATOR: E, okay. So as I look at it, essentially I have eight people who mention the war in Iraq either as their major issue or secondary issue. I have terrorism, Homeland Security, seven people. And then jobs and unemployment, we have four people and I think a little bit of healthcare. Am I missing, oh, yeah, I think that's it. So what are you telling me this election's about? What do you care about? What's it all about? Anybody?

CASEY: Priorities.

MODERATOR: Priorities, what does priorities mean, Casey?

CASEY: Well, what you're spending most your time and money on is what seems to be, to me, the most important thing and what affects more things down the road.

MODERATOR: Okay. What are you telling me about? What's this election about? Anybody.

JOHN G.: War and Homeland Security.

MODERATOR: Are they the same thing or different?

JOHN G.: In this case, I they're pretty much the same and there where, it seemed to be where Bush is concentrating his efforts all along.

MODERATOR: Okay. Stephanie, what are you trying to say? What did you put down?

STEPHANIE: That we need to keep up security and we need to make that the focus. But at the same time, we need to focus on home. We need to focus on what's going on here.

MODERATOR: And what's home mean?

STEPHANIE: Home is our country and home is what's happening to our country, as far as loss of jobs and loss of healthcare to our citizens.

MODERATOR: What did you have as most important? C.

JOHN F.: That was me.

MODERATOR: What?

JOHN F.: That was me.

MODERATOR: Yes, but . . .

JOHN F.: I was the only one with, that's kind of my enlightened self-interest right now. I think we're coping with that thing. It's not at the point where we have to choose between buying prescription drugs, needing, but I know that is an issue for some people. The healthcare system is a national disgrace.

MODERATOR: Anybody else have a feeling? But to a lot of people it's terrorism. I can see three of you. What are you trying to tell me? Jennifer?

JENNIFER: Well, I feel this election is about the safety and security of our country because if we're not feeling safe and secure, we're not going to go out, I mean, it's just going to affect everything else. If we have another terrorist attack, everybody's going to freak out, stay home, the economy's going to go down, the stock market's going to go crazy, I mean, everything's just going to take a big dip again. And unless we feel safe and secure, I mean, that sort of is the big wall around everything that has to be maintained to keep everything inside going. It's an unfortunate reality that just is now our reality since September 11th.

MODERATOR: John G.?

JOHN G.: I think it's terrorism, Homeland Security because that's what the Constitution says the federal government is supposed to be about. And that interstate commerce, we get, sometimes we confuse. We want the federal government to do everything and then have a whole bunch of . . .

MODERATOR: And why is this so important, this issue?

JOHN G.: Oh, I think after September 11th, well, I was 16 hours away by car when September 11th happened. I said to the person in the car, our lives are never going to be the same and they won't. Has it affected our President? I certainly hope so. I think it has and that's what the federal government's primary job by the Constitution is to do.

MODERATOR: Yeah. And, Rick, you have it also as most important. What are you trying to tell me?

RICK: We, in order to have anything, we've got to have stability. We cannot operate with terrorism . . . on our soil, and the way it is other countries, I would not be happy, you know, with that type of lifestyle.

MODERATOR: Okay. Several people also talked about the war in Iraq. What are you trying to tell me with the war in Iraq? What's that about? Who had that?

FRANK: Well, I had it as first and it was not so much because, to me, the important thing about it is the division in this country that has happened because of it. I mean, I think everybody comes together under the terrorism type aspect, but in view of the situation in Iraq, it's a great physical concern, but it's also a concern because we have so much division in the country, so I think it has to be however resolved and get behind us.

MODERATOR: And resolved, you mean what?

FRANK: Well, that's what I mean is resolved. Whether it means being, making a stronger effort, whether it means bringing in the other countries, it just needs to get done.

MODERATOR: Who else?

FRANK: I mean, you know, you could argue about which way to go, but it needs to happen.

MODERATOR: One way or another.

FRANK: Right.

MODERATOR: Okay. Casey?

CASEY: I have the war in Iraq as my second item, but for just the opposite of what sounds like what's being said here, I think the war in Iraq actually is creating more vulnerability and hatred and potential problems for terrorists in our country, as well as contributing to a lot of the other problems because of the drain on our resources.

MODERATOR: Okay. What else? Yeah, and somebody else on the war in Iraq? Go ahead, John F.

JOHN F.: I think the war in Iraq and terrorism are two separate issues completely. The Bush Administration would like us to think they are the same thing, but they are not. We tied the . . . on Iraq to terrorism and it turned out nothing. I see terrorism not so much as the disease, but it's like a symptom.

Why do these people hate us so much that they commit suicide by flying airplanes and killing a bunch of innocent building in buildings? If we can address that, we might have something. But instead, we're doing the opposite direction. I mean, we're not going to be able to hunt down every terrorist and kill them. It's just not

practical, so we've got to change some minds, and instead, we're changing the minds, but in the wrong direction.

MODERATOR: Other people, war in Iraq, the other issue that you put up there. Who else had it at the top of their either one or two? Jennifer, what do you think about the war in Iraq?

JENNIFER: Well, I think that we're in it now and we need to, we're going to have to, whoever is in there is going to see it through. We can't leave and create a big void where a bunch of chaos can grow and that would just lead to instability. Because I believe that there would be more people went in and terrorists and training, and they would just turn around and come back and attack us more. So I feel that the war in Iraq, whoever is President, it's very important that they have a plan to see it through until it is a stable environment over there and that they can trust the people themselves to govern.

MODERATOR: Deborah?

DEBORAH: I agree with John F. There's always going to be terrorists, and regardless of what country, and they're always going to hate us, so they're going to be jealous of our freedom and everything that goes along with it. They just have different values, different morals, so . . .

MODERATOR: What are you telling the President of the United States, whether it be George Bush or John Kerry, about Iraq? What should they do?

DEBORAH: Well, I think they need to come home. They've been over there long enough. They've already rebuilt practically everything, so . . .

MODERATOR: What are you telling them, Shelley?

SHELLEY: I agree, as far as they need to come home, but I think it's way down at the second to last on my page because I feel that it's not important to me because it doesn't affect me directly. Indirectly it does, but if we were just to mind our own business, instead of trying to take care of someone else's problems, then we wouldn't have lost the lives and every other downfall that has happened since then.

MODERATOR: What are you telling the President, Stephanie?

STEPHANIE: Well, I agree with Jennifer that we went over there and we started this, and we have to finish it now, and we have to see it through to the end, and we can't just pull out and leave at this point. But I also, I don't think the mentality of let's go in and shoot them up, and do what we want to do and, you know, we're going to do what we want to do was the right attitude in the first place. I think intelligence and not alienating

our neighbors and trying to find the actual terrorists is what we need to, we should have been focusing on and not just go getting Iraq. I think it was wrong in the first place.

MODERATOR: Frank? I've already you say one way or another. That's true. I don't need to, John K.?

JOHN K.: Worrying about whether we pissed somebody off is pretty low on my scale. The fact is you're doing what you believe to be right. And as long as you believe that . . . whether you have people behind you or not doesn't stop right from being right.

MODERATOR: And any concerns about what's going on in Iraq?

MAN: Concerns about what's right, I don't think there's anything different between terrorism, Homeland Security, and Iraq. I think it's all synonymous. Our energies in that part of the world are to bring democracy hopefully in there, let them see the benefits of it, and possibly to diffuse what's going on in the Muslim world.

MODERATOR: Rick?

RICK: I think we went over and took out the weapon of mass destruction and he was in a hole in the ground. I'm real upset with the press in the reporting that we get out of Iraq. I have some people that I know that have just returned from Iraq and the stories that they tell me about the people over there being terrorized by Saddam are incredible. And it's not that we had to put in a democracy, but we got to take out the genocide that's going on and breeding of terrorism.

MODERATOR: And John G.?

JOHN G.: I know some of the people that come back from Iraq and they have friends that are over there now. It's something you just don't cut and run from. I think we can, the United States has always found ways of winning of a war, so we always have difficulty winning these. Right? And what we need to focus on is getting a peaceful solution to the people of Iraq.

You know, the news agencies like to focus on car bombs, those kinds of things. Those people are coming in from outside that country, okay, and a lot of Iraqis are dying. Americans aren't killing them. Their neighbors are. That's what we need to stabilize. Okay. And the Iraqis have the rights, the God given right, to experience liberty and freedom. That's what our country is about. Why would they want to be under oppression?

MODERATOR: And just the one question here is should we do anything differently? I mean, in other words, this isn't about what's happened today or yesterday or a year ago. Starting today, should we do anything differently?

JENNIFER: In Iraq?

MODERATOR: Yes.

JENNIFER: I don't know if we can do anything differently what we're doing over there, but what I would like to see different is what's being reported back, just like John G. was saying. They need to tell more stories about the things that have been accomplished, the infrastructure that has been rebuilt. I need the American people need to hear more about how it's working, so that we can be more . . .

MODERATOR: Okay. Anybody here say, yes, we need to do something differently?

JOHN K.: We need to constantly be thinking of new and different things. Changing it maybe the answer, but the reality of realizing that we might have to and possibly change is a possibility.

MODERATOR: Okay. Howard, anything you want to add?

HOWARD: . . .

JOHN F.: I think we need to realistically come to grips with radical Islam, which is the big power over there, and see if there is a way for us to deal with it. It's just a radically different way of thinking than we're used to and it's really kind of insane by our point of view.

MODERATOR: Okay. Let me ask a couple more things. Anybody else want to say something on Iraq that I have not let, do you think we'll look back on this and consider this a victory for America 25 years from now? How may say, yeah, we'll look back on this, this was a victory for America.

JOHN G.: You know, it depends on how it's resolved.

MODERATOR: Well, we don't. I'm just saying right now, that 25 years from now, we'll look back and we'll say, this is a victory for America. Jennifer thinks so, Frank, maybe three, John K., Frank, and Jennifer. The rest of you, not necessarily a victory for America?

CASEY: Never, in my mind, never.

JOHN K.: What Vietnam a victory for America?

MODERATOR: I don't think, I mean, I won't answer the question.

JOHN K.: Right, that is rhetorical.

MODERATOR: Yeah. Rick, do you think we'll look back and say this is a victory for America?

RICK: It depends on how it turns out, but the track that we're taking now, it appears that it will be a victory for America.

MODERATOR: Okay, so . . .

RICK: It would be a victory for the world.

MODERATOR: Okay. Let me turn to the economy, if I could. We've got a little time left. And I guess my question would be a couple things. How would you describe the economy as today? Jennifer, word or phrase.

JENNIFER: It's improving.

MODERATOR: Improving, drop.

MAN: Sluggish.

MODERATOR: Sluggish. John G.?

JOHN G.: Struggling, but . . .

MODERATOR: Howard?

HOWARD: . . . but getting better slowly.

MODERATOR: Shelley?

SHELLEY: Lackadaisical.

MODERATOR: Lackadaisical. Frank?

FRANK: Recovering.

MODERATOR: Recovering. John?

JOHN K.: Doing well.

MODERATOR: John F.?

JOHN F.: Doing poorly.

MODERATOR: Deborah?

DEBORAH: Sluggish.

CASEY: Crappy.

MODERATOR: Okay. We got a lot of different, and tell me what changes you want to see in terms of the economy? Anybody? What changes would you like to see?

JOHN F.: I'd like to see my investments back where they were when Bill Clinton left office.

CASEY: . . .

MODERATOR: What changes would you like to see in the economy?

SHELLEY: I would like to see a decrease in the salaries of every politician and have them to make a pledge to cut the deficit.

MODERATOR: What changes, okay, cut the deficit. Yeah.

DEBORAH: I would like to see a change in companies employing and investing nationally at home, but not abroad.

MODERATOR: How many say that that's an important policy? Okay, a lot of people. What else would people like to see?

ROB(?): I would like to see a reduction in the gap between the rich and the poor in this country.

MODERATOR: Okay. Economic policies that you'd like to see changed.

MAN: Well, I'd just, it's not economic policy as such, but less government, in other words, less expenditures, so that there is more money out of the federal government available for the people.

JENNIFER: I guess there would need to be some sort of changes in the taxation of the companies to make it more beneficial for them to keep their business here and to be able to create the jobs that everybody wants created.

MODERATOR: Good. John G.?

JOHN G.: Yeah, I agree. That will stave away investment back into this country.

MODERATOR: Good. Rick?

RICK: Same.

MODERATOR: Anything else?

CASEY: Income tax, flat tax, and major revision.

MODERATOR: You want a flat tax?

CASEY: Yes. I think that would be a positive.

ROB: I was going to, that was one of the things I was considering saying because I agree with it.

MODERATOR: Anybody else? And what advice would you give President Bush in terms of his economic policies? Would you tell . . .

ROB: . . . try that again.

MODERATOR: What advice would you give President Bush in terms of his economic policy? Would you tell him, follow the same path you followed the first four years, change it, adjust it, etc? What would you tell him?

SHELLEY: Change it.

MODERATOR: Yeah, John G.?

JOHN G.: See, I thought we were just talking about, stimulate investment back in the county with the businesses.

MODERATOR: Who else? Howard?

HOWARD: I agree with John G. that . . .

JOHN G.: I'm really not sure where, I'm really not sure where he stands on it. I don't know what he's done to try to stimulate the economy.

MODERATOR: Okay.

CASEY: I don't understand the concept of giving tax cuts when our deficit is like this that there is something there, in my opinion, needs to be rethought.

MODERATOR: Rick? Yeah, go ahead.

JENNIFER: I'm sorry. I was just going to say, I don't know how they can do it, but it seems a lot of times when the federal government does some sort of a tax cut, the states will do the opposite to make up for the lost revenue. I don't know how they can control the states, but they need to do something that if the federal something to help people, they need to make sure the states don't counteract it when it comes to how they're doing to do tax cuts.

MODERATOR: And, Rick?

RICK: It's interesting. Actually, my portfolio was much better when Bush started office. We've all forgotten that September 11th kind of took care of everything. So he's had to change his policy quite a bit from the day he entered office and there's going to be constant, there's going to be continuing, additional course changes to get back where he wants, but it needs to be fine-tuned. And we're starting to make progress, but it's very, very shallow at this point. I think we bottomed out.

MODERATOR: Yeah, John?

JOHN K.: He physically destroyed the economic center of this country, blew it off the face of this earth, blew half the people who were in those centers off the face of this earth. Within a very short period of time, the markets are back, the markets are strong. It is phenomenal what has occurred in a very small, small period of time. We're sitting here pissing and moaning about how bad things are. I think things are damn good. My glass is half full. I got myself . . .

MODERATOR: John F., you don't feel like you're . . .

JOHN F.: I wish I could agree with that rosy outlook. Things aren't anywhere near where they were and, honestly, I don't see them happening under a Bush Administration. Every economic decision they've made has been to benefit the wealthy.

MODERATOR: So what would be the best thing about John Kerry?

JOHN F.: He's a wealthy guy too and I have concerns about that.

MODERATOR: But is there anything about his economic policies?

SHELLEY: He married into money.

JENNIFER: I don't know what they are.

JOHN K.: I'm looking forward to the debates.

MODERATOR: One of the things I just wonder is, does John Kerry not have specific stands or is it that the media has concentrated on, you know, the controversies and the various things? I mean, does anybody feel that . . .

CASEY: Not sure.

MODERATOR: What?

CASEY: Not sure.

MODERATOR: Not sure, but, I mean . . .

CASEY: Which it is or what it is.

MODERATOR: But my only question for you is, do you feel that maybe it's the media has not covered what his positions are or the fact that he just doesn't have positions or he's inconsistent or whatever else it is?

JOHN G.: He was always the Junior Senator from Massachusetts. He always took a backseat. How could you have a position if you were taking, if you were in the backseat?

MODERATOR: Stephanie, do you think he has positions and just not covered or . . .

STEPHANIE: I think they both have positions and I think there's a way for people to find out. I mean, both candidates have websites where they put their policies and what their plans are and you can go read them. I don't think the media's done a good job covering that. I think they look for the, you know, what's going to give them best ratings on their news show and that's about it.

MODERATOR: Jennifer?

JENNIFER: You know, I just, I don't really feel like that if they've got positions that they've been advertised. I'm one of those people, I just feel like everything I hear is just like the headline about a news story. I never hear what's inside the story. I want to know the specifics. You can't just say, I'm going to wave my magic wand and do this and this. I want to know from A to Z how you're going to do it. I just can't take your word for it.

MODERATOR: Okay. I'm going to conclude and I'm going to go around the table. I will start with John K. and we'll go clockwise. And what I'd like on the first question, I'll have two questions, first question is, what's the one message you want President Bush to understand from you before you vote? What's the one message you want President

Bush to understand from you before you vote? And then I'll ask you the same thing. You may be voting for Bush or you may be voting for Kerry, but it is your opportunity to send one message, first to Bush, second to Kerry? So, John K., what's the one message you want George Bush to understand from you before you vote?

JOHN K.: That's a tough one. I want him to understand that my opinion doesn't have to count.

MODERATOR: Meaning?

JOHN K.: Meaning that sometimes people with the loudest voices and the people pushing their way around have the ability of swaying a person's opinion. He needs to stand up on his own, do what's right.

MODERATOR: Frank, what's the one message you want George Bush to understand before you vote?

FRANK: That we need to get his understanding or his background on the decision process leading into Iraq, and then secondly, what the plan are to get us out of Iraq.

MODERATOR: Stephanie?

STEPHANIE: To Bush, I guess that I feel that he has acted arrogantly, and that the day after September 11th, we had the support of world and that was squandered to where we now have nothing. And we actually have other countries who are looking down the . . . which I think is very sad. To Kerry . . .

MODERATOR: No, hold on. I'll come back around to Kerry afterwards.

STEPHANIE: Oh, okay.

MODERATOR: Shelley?

SHELLEY: That it is okay to tell the truth sometimes.

MODERATOR: Deborah?

DEBORAH: I think it's just time for a change.

MODERATOR: Okay, so that's the message you want him to understand. Casey?

CASEY: That the world that we live in is bigger than this country.

MODERATOR: Howard?

HOWARD: Domestic policy is as important as foreign policy.

MODERATOR: Rob?

ROB: I was about to say that exact same thing, make clear what his standards on our domestic issues more.

MODERATOR: Jennifer?

JENNIFER: I just want him to know that I want him to do what he needs to do to keep our country safe.

MODERATOR: John G.?

JOHN G.: That America's position and reputation in the world is very important. We need to be working on our foreign relations with our allies and, hopefully, future allies.

MODERATOR: Rick?

RICK: Decisions need to be based on long-term objectives, not tomorrow's objectives, what the implication will be for the country 5, 10, 15 years.

MODERATOR: John F.?

JOHN F.: I'd just like to remind him that he's President of all Americans and not just the corporate elite.

MODERATOR: Casey, I'm going to start with you and I'll end with Deborah. What's the message to John Kerry, one message that you want John Kerry to understand before you vote?

CASEY: Same one, the world that we live in is bigger than this country, same one.

MODERATOR: Howard?

HOWARD: Tell us where he stands on things.

MODERATOR: Rob?

ROB: That the issues are more important than this . . .

MODERATOR: Jennifer?

JENNIFER: I want him to know that I would want him to put America's issues first and foremost before any other countries.

MODERATOR: John G.?

JOHN G.: Just tell me your plans . . .

MODERATOR: Rick?

RICK: Opposite the President, just needs a lot of stability.

MODERATOR: Okay . . .