

TOWARD A RENEWED SOCIAL CONTRACT

*A Proposal to Frame the Debate and Advance a Progressive
Values Agenda Around Preparedness and Reconstruction in
the Wake of Hurricane Katrina*



THE BREAKTHROUGH INSTITUTE



THE CENTER FOR AMERICAN PROGRESS



AMERICAN ENVIRONICS

Project Overview

Three Strategic Initiatives to Excite the Imagination Post-Katrina

In the weeks after Hurricane Katrina razed much of New Orleans, the conventional wisdom was that the episode demonstrated precisely how ill-prepared the Bush administration had been, and created a new opening for a renewed national dialogue on inequality. But within a few short weeks, conservative think tanks and the Republican administration were pushing a set of seemingly bold proposals, from the Urban Homestead Act to the Gulf Opportunity Zone, as a way to jump-start economic development in the area.

Liberals were surprised to be back on their heels, attacked on budget and spending issues, and losing the deeper war over the vision for reconstruction. Progressives protested that the Republican proposals would weaken environmental and labor standards and inflame old contracting scandals, and that Katrina had shone a stark light on the brutal realities of poverty and racial injustice in America that must be addressed. Yet they were not able to break through the debates with either a stirring new vision for rebuilding New Orleans or a set of policy proposals that spoke to revitalizing America's tattered social contract for the next generation. While some of the blame for this outcome goes to the mechanics of minority party politics hampering effective advocacy, it is also true that when the moment of national attention arrived progressives seemed ill prepared to seize the day.

In response to the slipping away of this historic moment in the national dialogue, the Nathan Cummings Foundation gave a grant to the Breakthrough Institute and the Center for American Progress to research a set of Strategic Initiatives not only to address the needs and vulnerabilities that the hurricane exposed or created, but to begin to lay out the framework for a renewed social contract and a restatement of core progressive values. This policy and communications exploration builds on the literal and figurative post-Katrina landscape, but by necessity is not limited either to the Gulf states or to the hurricane's victims, instead articulating a response to the tragedy that lays the foundation for addressing the deeper issues of vulnerability and inequality that Katrina exposed.

After studying the evolution of the policy debate and the unfolding of the larger public dialogue in the media, we have focused on four areas that are central both to the task of reconstruction from Hurricane Katrina and to rebuilding a set of progressive policies that speak to the deep unmet needs of a nation that is increasingly vulnerable to the disruption and human cost that Katrina represents.

The key themes of the three Strategic Initiatives are the following:



1. **GLOBAL WARMING PREPAREDNESS**, making the nation more prepared and more resilient in the face of the increasing probability of devastating natural disasters related to global warming;



2. **A FRESH START OPPORTUNITY AGENDA** that offers hope and economic mobility to those in need through the transformative power of work; and



3. **PUTTING GOVERNMENT BACK TO WORK**, a civil service agenda that restores America's trust in the character and value of civic institutions.

These initiatives were informed by social values and cognitive research conducted by American Environics for the Nathan Cummings Foundation, and built upon their “Road Map for a Progressive Majority,” a social values report which identified the Progressive Base within the American public as well as key constituencies who can be reached at a values level in order to achieve a political progressive majority.

Using this research, we have developed potential Strategic Initiatives by (1) analyzing the important Bridge Values shared by the Progressive Base and Constituencies of Opportunity (or COOs), and (2) understanding the deeper worldviews that underlie these values. A Strategic Initiative (or SI) is the policy entailment of these worldviews, and is intended to elevate key values in contested political space. These initiatives should create new alliances that go beyond the traditional left-right divide, and instead change the way people think about “the issues.” An SI can be “thick” or “thin.” Thick SIs, like the Bush Administration’s prescription drug/Medicare legislation, have far-reaching policy consequences. Thin initiatives, like the ban on “partial-birth” abortion, have less sweeping policy implications but lay the groundwork for future victories and redefine the conceptual terms on which larger issues are debated.

Each of the initiatives we propose here was constructed with the goal in mind of “winning while losing.” Too often progressive debates remain stuck in a mental model created when a liberal governing majority held political power. The impulse to govern leads progressives to ask, “What legislation can we get passed?” when a more productive question might be, “Which political battles should we fight that will—win or lose in the short term—build a progressive majority?”

Breakthrough and CAP have tested the following initiatives at a values level, using opinion research to explore how to communicate these core progressive themes to members of the public who share deep concerns about the devastation of Hurricane Katrina and the issues it raised, but who are not effectively mobilized around progressive solutions. In this research we looked for aspects of these policy proposals and narratives that, by elevating a set of worldviews, a vocabulary, and strategically articulated values, will form new bridges of communication to connect the Progressive Base to potential new Constituencies of Opportunity, in order to build over time a working progressive majority. After testing and refining these initiatives, we have begun work with allies to inject them into contested policy debates and thus attempt to influence the larger dialogue on

reconstruction, investment, and the range of issues and concerns touched by these measures.

Methodology and Analysis:

To arrive at the Strategic Initiatives explored in this project, we undertook the following pieces of primary analysis.

POLICY ANALYSIS:

The first was an exploration of the policy debates that unfolded on Capitol Hill in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. We studied the public record and the coverage in daily congressional news coverage. Here we saw a disturbing evolution characterized by five distinct periods in the unfolding of the debate:

1. The initial phase was driven by the lack of recognition of the full extent of the devastation, epitomized by the President's slow response to the tragedy and failure to visit the site for a matter of days.
2. This initial failure of attention was followed by a rush to offer relief, which led to ambitious reconstruction proposals, but ultimately was characterized as overreaching by the affected communities as they sought financial support for digging out of the wreckage. This second phase represented a defeat for the underlying values associated with reconstruction, as they became characterized as part of pork barrel politics and a culture of waste and corruption.
3. Following the rush to provide relief, a new mood took over Washington, as the battle over reconstruction became absorbed by the budget debate. This period focused almost exclusively on cost containment, as fiscal conservatives and budget hawks transformed the discussion of Hurricane Katrina into an opportunity to roll out old positions on rollbacks for federal entitlement programs and the limiting of the very benefits and programs that could have been poised to provide progressive relief to affected families.
4. Over time, moderates asserted themselves, beating back the most extreme of the budget-cutting proposals and advancing a proposal for reconstruction that largely underfunded the long-term needs of the region and did little to address the deep-seated problems that were settling into the reconstruction effort.
5. The final and current phase that emerged was a sense that we are losing the fight. This ongoing stage has moved into a series of chronic long-term problems that attract intermittent national attention, visible in the difficulties of sustaining access to temporary housing, managing electoral complexities and voting, ongoing emotional distress and lost access to education, and barriers to establishing systems for rapid cleanup and reconstruction.

This final phase potentially brings public attention back to a point of willingness to address the deeper structural causes and solutions, a context that is ripe for progressive policies. Yet recapturing the policy agenda in this period as we have passed the anniversary of the tragedy and the arrival of a new hurricane season will not be easy, and, as earlier debates have shown, there are no guarantees of success in making lasting inroads in the popular debate.

A central lesson from this analysis was that, throughout the reconstruction debate, although progressives held many of the policy solutions they were not fully ready with a clear articulation of a reconstruction agenda, the need for aggressive investment, and a positive articulation of the role of government and public institutions that was able to cut through the competing commentaries.

It is possible to overstate the rhetorical and ideological underpinnings of the barriers to successful implementation of a progressive agenda and to overlook the specific structural impediments to moving progressive solutions in Congress as a result of the control of committees and the ability to move consideration of votes. Yet looking at the construction of a clear progressive narrative and articulating a values-based restorative agenda will be a useful contribution, under any electoral circumstance, to the act of translating a positive progressive vision for America into decisive policy actions.

See the Research Materials for the full policy analysis, “Katrina and the Common Good.”

MEDIA NARRATIVE ANALYSIS:

In addition to looking to the policy debates for an understanding of how the Katrina narrative was constructed at the values level, we worked with a team of cognitive linguists from American Environics who analyzed the development of the story within the national media to understand how public views were shaped by existing narratives, as well as how the problem and policy solutions were framed by advocates on both the right and left. This analysis found strikingly different narratives of the tragedy on the right and left, each of which points toward very different assessments of causes and prescriptions for solutions. These different views play out in the arguments put forward from both conservative and liberal sources on issues like the role of government, the drivers of human nature, and questions of retribution and responsibility for personal life outcomes. In every case differing narratives leads to differing levels of willingness to embrace structural or individualistic solutions, resulting in dramatically different policy demands.

See the Research Materials for the full report, “Katrina as Rorschach Test.”

Connecting Policy to a Values-Based Constituency:

Drawing on this policy and narrative research, we conducted a series of Strategic Initiative workshops, where we worked to identify the values and underlying worldviews relevant to post-Katrina policy initiatives, and the Constituencies of Opportunity most likely to connect to these proposals.

Using these insights, we constructed three key themes of a progressive agenda drawn from the Katrina narrative: 1) disaster preparedness, 2) inequality and opportunity, and 3) articulating the role of government. These themes then formed the planks of a potential progressive agenda, and we worked to develop concrete policy proposals that could create opportunities to frame the political debate in a manner that advances progressive solutions over the long term.

From this analysis we identified core values relevant for each initiative:

GLOBAL WARMING PREPAREDNESS

- *Adaptability to Complexity*
- *Community Involvement*
- *Ecological Concern*
- *Faith in Science*
- *Work Ethic*
- *Financial Security*
- *Fear of Violence*
- *Global Consciousness*
- *Social Responsibility*

FRESH START: REWARDING WORK

- *Acknowledgement of Racism*
- *American Dream*
- *Civic Engagement*
- *Confidence in Small Business*
- *Conformity to Norms*
- *Cultural Assimilation*
- *Entrepreneurialism*
- *Financial Security*
- *Introspection and Empathy*
- *Largesse Oblige*
- *Personal Control*
- *Saving on Principle*
- *Social Mobility*
- *Social Responsibility*
- *Work Ethic*

PUTTING GOVERNMENT BACK TO WORK

- *Civic Engagement*
- *Duty*
- *Everyday Ethics*
- *More Power for Politics*
- *Propriety*
- *Work Ethic*

Analyzing the Nathan Cummings–funded “Road Map for a Progressive Majority,” we looked at the Constituencies of Opportunity that shared important values with the Progressive Base, and whose worldviews provided possible windows of resonance to this policy agenda. Although this analysis was highly informative in finding points of connection to the values held by a wide range of constituencies, it did not offer clear targets among the various constituencies.

As a second approach to selecting a targeting strategy for values-based constituencies, instead of building from the latent values embedded in the particular policy initiatives we looked at the properties of various constituency groups as defined in the Road Map. Among these values-based cohorts, a small group stood out as holding the potential for adopting progressive values through their self-identification with key issues, yet these groups were underperforming in their observed behavior.

In essence, we identified those groups who said they were progressive yet behaved as conservatives, on the presumption that something in the progressive message attracted them at a values level, yet in particular debates they were not being won over by progressive arguments. Through this analysis we identified six values-based constituencies, a top tier who diverged strongly in their behavior from that which would be predicted based on their self-identification, and lower tiers of those who diverged significantly but less dramatically:

Tier 1: COOs: 12, 3, and 10

Tier 2: COOs: 15, 4, and 11

Tier 3: COOs: 17, 14, and 9

As a proxy for progressive self-identification we used declared Democratic party identification, and as a proxy for values-based behavior we looked at two measures: self-identified Kerry voters and self-declared Liberal identification. Where the divergence between Democratic ID and Kerry voters or Democratic ID and Liberal ID was greatest, we determined that there was a disconnect between stated progressive political affiliation and support for progressive causes. As a result, we hypothesized a disaffection from progressive values as they were being expressed in real world debates and a potential opportunity to target policy messages in new values-based language more likely to reach these disaffected progressives.

For our final selection of constituencies of opportunity, we selected Constituencies of Opportunity 12 and 3 as the potential progressive constituencies with the greatest disparity between self-identification and observed behavior. As our third COO, we selected 15 as a constituency with a similarly large divergence between self-identification and behavior, but also holding a strong conservative identification and voting record despite significant links to the Progressive Base around attitudes toward government and the social contract.

Below is a summary of Constituencies of Opportunity 3, 12, and 15, including core values and brief demographic profiles:

CONSTITUENCY OF OPPORTUNITY #3:

See Figure 1.

Representing 2 percent of the total electorate, COO3 appears to be strongly middle aged, female, upper income, and non-White (43 percent Asian). At the values level this group is strongly outer-directed and strongly oriented towards consumption. This group holds values such as *Importance of Aesthetics*, *Concern for Appearance*, *Status via Home*, and *Importance of Brand* at three to four times the level of the average American. *Enthusiasm for Consumption*, *Ostentatious Consumption*, *Crude Materialism*, *Selective Use of Professional Services*, and *Joy of Consumption* are represented at similar levels among this group. Ironically, this group also holds the value *Voluntary Simplicity* at extraordinary levels, probably a guilt response or compensation for the off-the-charts enthusiasm for consumption and appearance that this group reports elsewhere. (One imagines this group identifies strongly with the Citibank “Live Richly” and MasterCard “Priceless” advertising campaigns, which speak directly to this guilt response.)

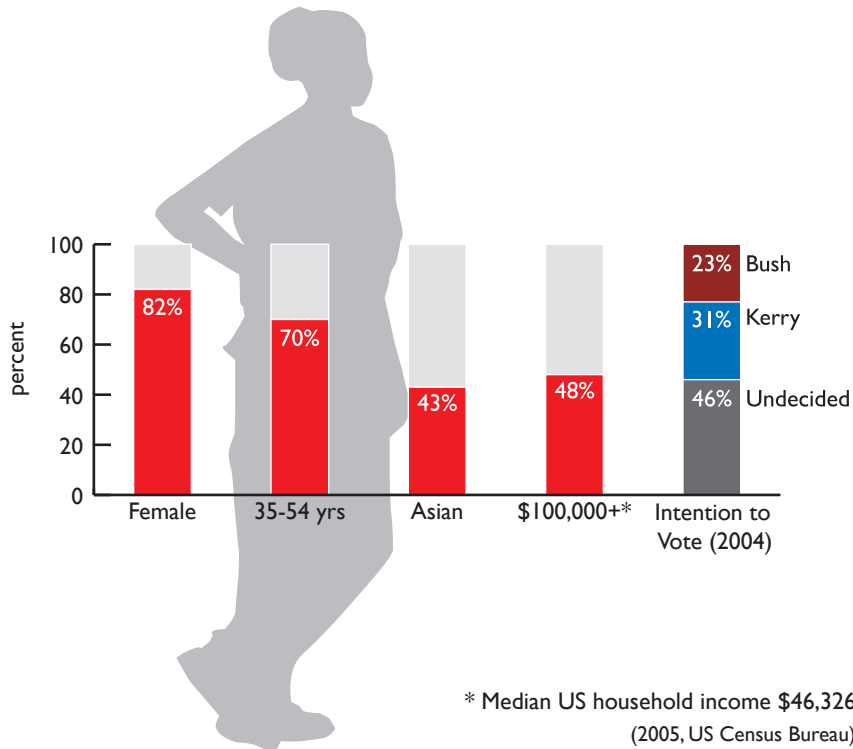
With outer-directed concern for appearance comes a strong desire to demonstrate adherence to traditional social norms. One suspects that this group of economically successful outsiders is eager to demonstrate that they belong. This group scores high on values such as *Search for Roots*, *National Pride*, *Conformity to Norms*, *Celebrating Passages*, and *Need for Status Recognition*. This orientation, along with religiosity (78 percent very religious), marital status (82 percent married or widowed), and family structure (high scores on *Traditional Family* and *Primacy of Family*) accounts for the location of this group high up the map.

Although they vote, this is a largely an apolitical group; only 28 percent report paying a great deal of attention to politics. While 75 percent identify as Democrats, this group has little by way of strong ideological orientation and a plurality (46 percent) were undecided as the 2004 Presidential election approached.

Bridge Values between this group and the Progressive Base include *Social Responsibility*, with this more material group appropriately expressing that through *Strategic Consumption*. There is also a similar curiosity and commitment towards defining one’s place in the world, as seen by the shared values of *Introspection and Empathy*, *Interest in the Unexplained*, *Spiritual Quest* and *Culture Sampling*.

Figure 1

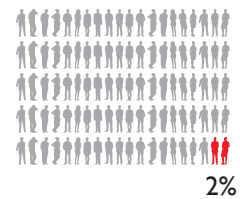
CONSTITUENCY OF OPPORTUNITY #3



TOP 10 CORE VALUES

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Voluntary Simplicity | 6. Enthusiasm for Consumption |
| 2. Pursuit of Intensity | 7. Status via Home |
| 3. Importance of Aesthetics | 8. Sensualism |
| 4. Concern for Appearance | 9. Search for Roots |
| 5. Traditional Family | 10. Ostentatious Consumption |

% TOTAL ELECTORATE



Data Source: Road Map for a Progressive Majority © American Envirionics 2005

CONSTITUENCY OF OPPORTUNITY #12:

See Figure 2.

Representing 4 percent of the total electorate, COO12 is relatively prosperous despite low levels of educational attainment (49 percent high school education or less) and relatively low-status occupations (49 percent blue collar or non-management white collar). This group's strong orientation towards authority, tradition, and conformity places it in the upper half of the social values map, while its rejection of consumption, violence, and thrill-seeking places it on the fulfillment side of the map despite relatively low scores on values such as *Introspection and Empathy*, *Spiritual Quest*, and *Meaningful Moments*.

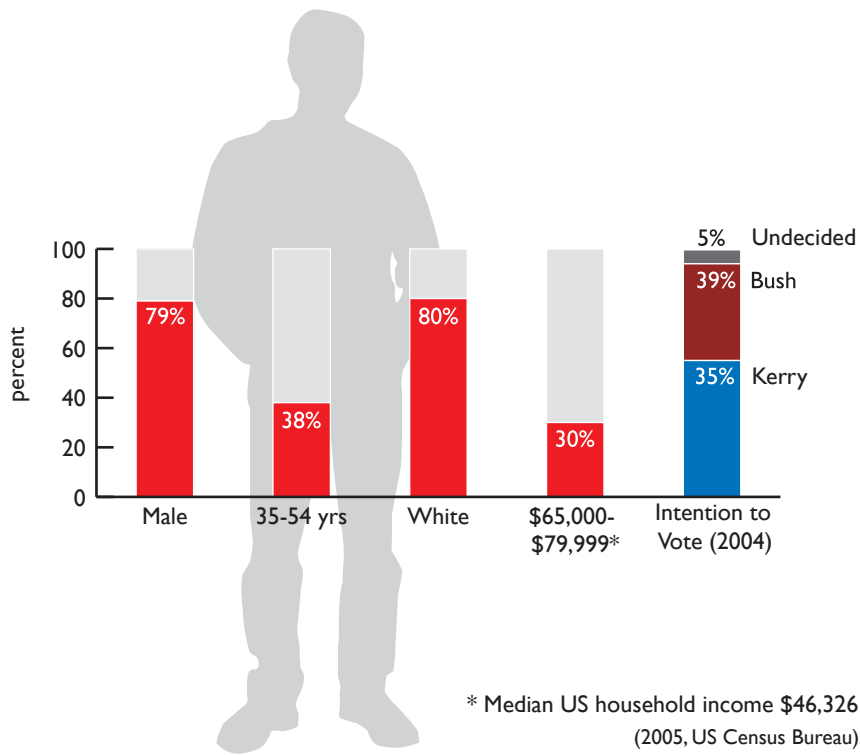
High scores on the values *Traditional Gender Identity*, *Parochialism*, *Cultural Assimilation*, *Xenophobia*, and *Obedience to Authority* and extremely low scores on *Multiculturalism*, *Racial Fusion*, *Culture Sampling*, *Equal Relationship with Youth*, and *Flexible Gender Identity* point up the high value this group places on authority and conformity. Low scores on values such as *Pursuit of Intensity*, *Penchant for Risk*, *Advertising as Stimulus*, *Living Virtually*, *Joy of Consumption*, and *Enthusiasm for Consumption* suggest that this group of largely middle-aged men have settled into modest, comfortable lives and, unlike many progressives and other fulfillment-oriented constituencies, reject much of the consumer culture in actions as well as words.

High on the exclusion values *Xenophobia* and *Modern Racism* and low on inclusive values such as *Multiculturalism*, *Racial Fusion*, and *Equal Relationship with Youth*, this group is also low on *Sexism* and *Patriarchy*, suggesting that these attitudes, prejudices, and orientations are complicated territory with this group—all the more so as this group is heavily male, with a substantial (25 percent) African American and Latino population.

Democratic-leaning but not liberal (29 percent describe themselves as conservative versus 24 percent as liberal), this group tended towards Kerry as the election approached, although one suspects that by election day many in this group ended up voting for Bush. Bridge Values to the Progressive Base number precisely three: *Largesse Oblige*, *Brand Apathy*, and *More Power for Media*. In contrast, this group strongly holds a substantial number of values that were highly contested in the last election that probably drove them towards a vote for Bush, including *Traditional Gender Identity*, *Cultural Assimilation*, *Xenophobia*, *More Power for Business*, *Obedience to Authority*, and *American Entitlement*.

Figure 2

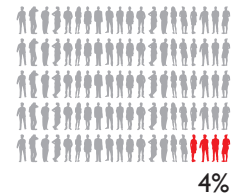
CONSTITUENCY OF OPPORTUNITY #12



TOP 10 CORE VALUES

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. <i>Traditional Gender Identity</i> | 6. <i>Everyday Rage</i> |
| 2. <i>Largesse Oblige</i> | 7. <i>Xenophobia</i> |
| 3. <i>Parochialism</i> | 8. <i>More Power for Business</i> |
| 4. <i>Cultural Assimilation</i> | 9. <i>Obedience to Authority</i> |
| 5. <i>Protection of Privacy</i> | 10. <i>Emotional Control</i> |

% TOTAL ELECTORATE



Data Source: Road Map for a Progressive Majority © American Envirionics 2005

CONSTITUENCY OF OPPORTUNITY #15:

See Figure 3.

Representing 3 percent of the electorate, the demographics of COO15 are largely low-income, southern, and with modest educational attainment. This group combines economic populism and aspiration, cultural conservatism, and a survival-oriented, Darwinian view of the world.

This group scores high on the values *Largesse Oblige* and *Active Government*, suggesting that they are looking for and are comfortable with a helping hand from the government. They also score high on *Just Deserts*, *Social Mobility*, and *Work Ethic*, suggesting that they also believe that those who do not prosper and succeed (presumably excluding themselves) get what they deserve and fail due to lassitude and lack of moral rectitude.

High scores on *Religiosity*, *Obedience to Authority*, *Patriarchy*, *Traditional Gender Identity*, and *Xenophobia* and low scores on *Flexible Families*, *Sexual Permissiveness*, *Traditional Family*, and *Flexible Gender Identity* highlight a strong conservatism on social and cultural issues that co-exists with a set of darker survival values including *Sexism*, *Just Deserts*, *Everyday Rage*, and *Modern Racism*.

While this group's strong embrace of the values *American Entitlement* and *National Pride* alongside a higher-than-average score on the value *Global Consciousness* may appear contradictory at first blush, it suggests that they hold a kind of "Manifest Destiny meets White Man's Burden meets Puritan Grace" idea of America in the world.

Outer-directed, this group scores high on values such as *Importance of Brand*, *Concern for Appearance*, and *Confidence in Advertising* alongside values such as *Discount Consumerism*, *Saving on Principle*, and *Voluntary Simplicity*, suggesting that this group attempts to strike a careful balance between keeping up appearances, purchasing tried and true brands and products, and saving money without being "cheap." One imagines that Wal-Mart receives a large portion of this group's consumer spending.

This group also holds a set of less strongly held, but still above-average, fulfillment values that belie its more conservative orientation, including *Celebrating Passages*, *Effort Towards Health*, *Introspection and Empathy*, *Meaningful Moments*, and *Holistic Health*. These values, along with a rejection of values such as *Anomie and Aimlessness*, *Fatalism*, *Malleable Self*, and *Need for Uniqueness*, suggest that this group, in its cultural conservatism, moral judgments, and sense of their aspirations as Americans, has a clear set of identities through which it finds meaning in the world and direction in life.

Politically, this group's cultural conservatism and triumphal American pride and nationalism clearly trumps its economic populist tendencies. A majority identifies as Republicans and 40 percent identify as strong Republicans. While not strongly identified as conservatives, this group voted heavily for Bush, with 55 percent favoring Bush and only 30 percent favoring Kerry.

Bridge Values to the Progressive Base include *Largesse Oblige*, *Personal Creativity*, *Introspection and Empathy*, *Meaningful Moments*, *Discriminating Consumerism*, *Global Consciousness*, and *Culture Sampling*.

Conducting Values-Based Opinion Research:

For this research process we then empanelled a series of focus groups representing the values-defined constituencies outlined above, to test the reaction of non-progressive target constituencies to the strategic initiatives. This phase of the research process took place in two stages:

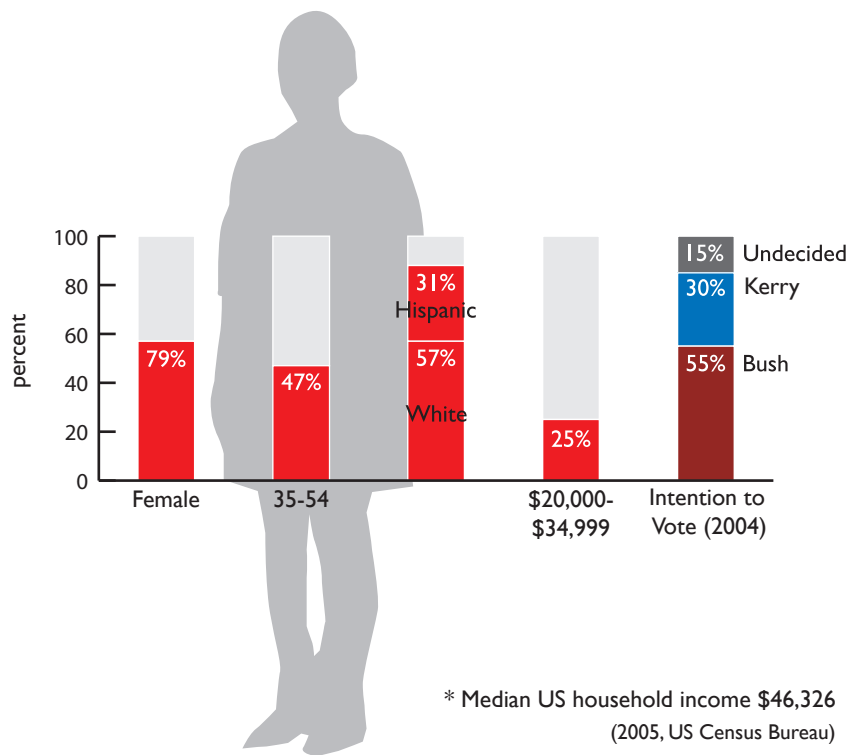
Stage 1: In June, focus groups were empanelled in St. Louis, Missouri, a community that well matched the profile of the target COOs, in order to test language, policy, and communications around the initiatives with the target constituencies. In addition, a demographically constructed African American focus group was conducted specifically to test the Global Warming Preparedness and Fresh Start initiatives with a core progressive-base constituency.

Stage 2: Based on the research from these focus groups, additional policy research, and work with a design team in the wake of the focus groups, a separate set of focus groups was empanelled in Phoenix, Arizona, in order to refine the framing of the Strategic Initiatives especially around attitudes toward work, government, and social safety nets. These focus groups were targeted on the basis of a values-based questionnaire that screened for the Constituencies of Opportunity, and were matched with demographic profiles to test white women independent voters and a demographically mixed, values-based cohort.

Further cognitive research of the focus groups allowed us to further refine the policy specifics of our three Strategic Initiatives based on the narratives, worldviews, and values they activate.

Figure 3

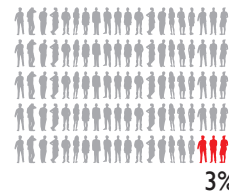
CONSTITUENCY OF OPPORTUNITY #15



TOP 10 CORE VALUES

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Sexism | 6. Search for Roots |
| 2. Largesse Oblige | 7. Importance of Brand |
| 3. Fear of Violence | 8. Concern for Appearance |
| 4. Confidence in Small Business | 9. Social Mobility |
| 5. American Entitlement | 10. Confidence in Advertising |

% TOTAL ELECTORATE



Data Source: Road Map for a Progressive Majority © American Environics 2005

Three Strategic Initiatives: Key themes of a progressive narrative:

The following outline captures the three planks and some potential policy entailments underlying sample proposals for moving these initiatives into contested political space.

I. GLOBAL WARMING PREPAREDNESS:



1. Mapping vulnerability and community impact assessments
2. Developing state level global warming preparedness plans
3. Create a state-by-state disaster resilience index
4. Set financial disclosure requirements for documented threats
5. Establish a national fund for critical infrastructure investment
6. Build smart microgrids for emergency preparedness

II. A FRESH START OPPORTUNITY AGENDA:



1. Creating a Citizen Corps
 - a. Ensuring high quality placement
 - b. Healthy workers and stable families
 - c. Getting to work
 - d. Educating our workforce
 - e. Reducing taxes
2. Revising the definition of poverty
3. Ensuring employers share responsibility for honest work
4. Providing a real safety net in the event of disaster and life disruptions

III. PUTTING GOVERNMENT BACK TO WORK:



1. Reducing cronyism
2. Shining a light on money in politics
3. Establishing “Hoover Dam Grants” to reward performance
4. Ending no-bid contracting