

Values And Voter Survey 2005

Cultural Dynamics Strategy And Marketing Ltd And Campaign Strategy Ltd

Part 3: What This Could Mean For Social Causes And British Political Life

This section of our report looks at politics with a small 'p'. It also includes a longer discussion of the 'not-interested-in-politics' issue mentioned Part 1.

The motivational values landscape has always been there in British society, and it has always underlain politics but in the past fifty years, that landscape has been transformed. Meanwhile the rigidity of British political institutions has held formal politics in aspic. This disjunct is now at the centre of the failure of politics, politicians and government to get along with 'the people'.

As we noted in Part 1, the motivational groups Pioneers and Prospectors have grown while the numbers of Settlers have dwindled. The roots of this change lie in factors such as health and life expectancy, education and expectations of women, the rise of the mass media, acquisition of sufficient material goods by almost everyone, globalisation and connectivity. What used to be called 'progress'.

The design template for the British political system was a society in which the Settlers would have formed the majority. When our main political Parties were formed, early death was still a widespread reality. Even as late as 1945, life for the majority was still a daily struggle.

Oppositional even in Parliamentary lay-out, with just two parties facing one another across the chamber, a class-based political system could successfully play out the simple politics underpinned by class-based identity. Of course this has been radically overtaken by events and, as one of us argued in the 1990s, Westminster has begun to resemble a political Galapagos, an evolutionary relic, isolated from the social mainstream.

The very idea of signing-up to a Party and thus accepting everything it stands for, is one that only Settlers are really comfortable with, and as the need to engage with politics has declined, more and more of the rest of the population do not bother.

Our formal electoral system is built around the instincts of what is now only around 20% or 30% of the population (the Settlers and a few other Value Modes).|

Over the past fifty years the Pioneers have multiplied and changed from a tiny elite with few immediate worries and with interests beyond economics or personal and family survival, to make up a third of the population. Their concerns have penetrated the media but been selectively excluded from Westminster.

At the same time, the numbers of esteem driven Prospectors have bulged, and most recently boomed, to form nearly half the population. In this respect, Britain now more closely resembles North America where it is thought that the esteem-driven segment has been large for a long time.

Post-Materialistic and Materialistic

In the past, political theorists such as Ron Inglehart suggestedⁱ that as our lives are no longer dominated by 'survival needs', society and its politics will become increasingly 'post-material'. Other political thinkers were aware of Maslowian values based on needs but often assumed that their influence was felt only during development, in adolescence. At any event, they were ideas which could not be measured across populations. In contrast, the type of survey we have conducted provides a quantified tool with which to test such ideas. Rather than a wholesale conversion to post-materialism, what we see at the present time is more complex.

In fact the *largest* single group – the Prospectors - is *highly* materialistic. They are seeking success, material and otherwise, and the signs of success, in all parts of life. For the most part they achieve this not through any form of politics but through consumption, acquiring and displaying the 'right' brands and fashionable lifestyle rewards.

Magnified by the media which picks up on relative change, the Prospector boom currently sets the background tone to our society. 'Materialism' is noticed by almost everyone but rarely understood in terms of needs, and often wrongly assigned to 'the public' as a whole.

At 35% the more 'post-material' Pioneers are a major social force themselves. Their interests are often inexplicable to other groups. Yet they are the instigators and main supporters of campaigns, issues and causes, particularly around 'global' and altruistic propositions. Prospectors, concerned mainly with self-advancement, can often be heard dismissing these ideas as 'do-gooding' or 'bleeding-heart liberalism'.

The Toyota Prius Effect

If you don't understand the dynamic, in which Pioneers start things and Prospectors (sometimes) follow, the picture of 'the public' becomes more confusing if once-fringe causes become fashionable and attract support from the esteem-seekers: think of MMR or nutritional standards for school dinners, or 'green' makeovers for homes and lifestyles. The petrol-electric hybrid Toyota Prius for instance, is a climate-friendly car which acquired glamour appeal in America once it was popularised by film stars such as Cameron Diazⁱⁱ. It has been suggested that the rival Honda, with similar performance, has sold much less well because it still looks like an ordinary Honda and thus lacks the essential quality of a status symbol – visual identityⁱⁱⁱ.

Climate

When social and political commentators reach for short-hands and examples to explain “what the public thinks” or “what people want” they often juxtapose Prospector interests against those of the Pioneers, the actions of the government, or the offers of political parties.

As a result, journalists and pundits often assert that action on subjects such as climate change is impossible because it’s “unrealistic to expect people to give up their cars” or “all people want is to fly to a holiday in the sun”. Such conclusions are understandable if all you look at is attitudes and behaviour but are essentially wrong. Simply asking people if they’d prefer a holiday in Crete or to stay at home and help save the climate is certain to reinforce the idea that action is impossible. If you look at underlying values, the picture is rather different. The same actions can often be ‘sold’ to people with different needs, so long as they are sold very differently. A solar panel for example might appeal to Pioneer to help her achieve “one planet living”. A Prospector would want one once they were fashionable.

So the task is not, as is often assumed, to “make people care about climate change” but to provide them with actions which mitigate climate change by meeting their psychological needs – in the Prospectors case, the need to acquire and display symbols of success. And what would make a Settler buy a solar panel? Perhaps if it was part of a community-action, led by an authority figure and conducted through traditional channels, if it had become ‘normal’ and if it conferred a sense of safety, identity and belonging.

The UK Government has recently^{iv} decided to spend £12m on a national “communications initiative designed to change public attitudes to climate change”. Unless this is designed to meet the psychological needs of all three main groups – the Settlers, Prospectors and Pioneers – it is doomed to fail, like many government ‘education’ initiatives before it. Those most likely to sympathise with its aims are the inner-directed Pioneers but they are also likely to be sceptical about its success if it fails to engage others who are ‘part of the problem’ but patently different in their motivations. Unfortunately, when faced with a communications problem, the Whitehall-Westminster reflex is still largely to say the same thing but louder and more often, and to think they can argue people into agreeing with them.

Politics without Politicians

The Pioneers particularly cause trouble for politicians once they are in power. They delight in exploring new possibilities and connections, and if they don’t get what they want from the system they are happy to start their own – through new networks and initiatives – or campaign to change the old one. When we survey the supportership of cause related ‘pressure groups’, there is usually a huge bias towards the inner-directed Pioneers (in the case of a group like Greenpeace for example, about 8:1).

At one end of the Maslowian spectrum, pioneers are finding new ways to do politics, often without politicians – what in his book *Ruling Britannia*, Andy Marr called ‘New Politics’. This is one element in the diminishing interest in formal political events and activities.

The latest Office of National Statistics study of voter turnout^v reported in 2003:

The decline in social trust from the late 1950s to the early 1980s was matched by a similar decline in political trust. The BSA asked adults in Great Britain the following question: ‘How much do you trust British governments of any party to place the needs of the nation above the interests of their own political party?’ The proportion of respondents who ‘just about always’ or ‘most of the time’ trusted British governments fell from 39 per cent in 1974 to 16 per cent in 2000. Similarly there was a decline in electoral turnout for local, national and European elections, especially in the last decade. The turnout for the 2001 UK general election was 59 per cent, which was the lowest turnout for any post-war UK general election.

However, some other forms of political participation have increased in recent years. According to the BSA, political action increased from the mid-1980s to 2000, with a peak in political involvement in the early 1990s. In 1986, 34 per cent of people had signed a petition, this rose to 53 per cent in 1991 and then fell to 42 per cent in 2000. Eleven per cent of people had contacted an MP in 1986, compared with 17 per cent in 1991 and 16 per cent in 2000. The number of people who had gone on a protest or demonstration steadily increased from 6 per cent in 1986 to 10 per cent in 2000.

Participating in extra-Parliamentary politics is not confined to the Pioneers. The security-driven Settlers are rarely moved to take any form of social action – their action-mode when faced with a new problem is not Do-It-Yourself (like the Pioneers) or to organise (like the Prospectors) – but to say “someone should do something about it”. That ‘someone’ is usually a figure of authority, a traditional leader. Yet if they feel threatened, even Settlers can be stirred into action.

The last large-scale mobilisation of Settlers in the UK was probably the Countryside Marches. The ONS comments:

The Liberty and Livelihood March in September 2002 highlighted active political participation in the United Kingdom, as an estimated 400,000 people marched in protest through the streets of central London. The main focus of the protest concerned opposition to a proposed ban on hunting with dogs in England and Wales, but the march also incorporated other grievances from rural communities.

The Countryside Alliance and its campaign for ‘rural values’ and foxhunting, pitted a Settler-dominated group against a largely disinterested and mostly esteem-driven ‘urban majority’. (Although in London, over 40% of the population is made up of inner-directed Pioneers). At first their numbers panicked Ministers but it soon became apparent that demographics were against them: they represented a highly mobilised but tiny group of people, and for all their huffing and puffing, were natural followers rather than activists. In a war they would have been natural soldiers but in a political

campaign their traditional conservatism and inability to make common cause with other groups in society, worked against them.

The 'non governmental organizations' dominated by Pioneers are one manifestation of alienation from the political system, through a turn to 'alternative' politics, and alternative ways of getting the government to do what you want. What sociologists call 'agency' or control over your world. One subgroup of the Pioneers, the 'Concerned Ethicals' number just 4.9% of the entire population but are highly active in trying to live life on an ethical basis, and enthusiastic adherents of new initiatives for ethical labelling, consuming, investment or other cause-directed lifestyles. In the political values map, they identify overwhelmingly with the Liberal Democrats.

The size of this 'NGO community' is a remarkable feature of British political life, as is and the relative lack of integration of its causes and concerns in conventional political thinking. Among environmentalists, Alastair Campbell became notorious in the early years of Tony Blair's first Administration for dismissing groups such as the National Trust (with 3m members) and RSPB (with 1m) as part of 'the lobby'. Others have called NGOs "the Fifth Estate".

The growth of such groups and their venture into politics without politicians has been in large part due to the disinterest that professional politicians have showed in their concerns. In a book to be published this week^{vi}, one of us argues that since the 1990s, campaigns have developed *as* a form of politics, in five main steps:

- *New concerns were politically excluded*
- *The mass media developed dominance*
- *Government retreated from leadership*
- *Business advanced into the vacuum*
- *Politics developed without politicians: involving NGOs, citizens (often as consumers), and other social actors such as supermarket retailers*

Campaigns defined new concerns but politicians from the conventional right and left, often resisted them. Examples include sexual equality, environmentalism, human rights, animal rights, and globalization. In the case of the environment, science, particularly the 'new' science of ecology, provided a new language, completely independent of established political ideology. Political parties called these 'fringe' or 'single issue' concerns.

Governments reluctantly had to accommodate them but they mostly have remained marginal, often treated with lip-service, rather than becoming organizing ideas. That laid the first foundation for the rise of campaigns as a political force.

TV brought occasional power to the excluded campaigners in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980's. Then from the 1980s governments began to retreat from doing things. Privatization, liberalization, tax cuts, 'less government', and replacement of the public with the private sector, came into political fashion. One writer said in 2003 in the USA, political liberalism and collective action have 'declined into oblivion'^{vii}.

... Politicians in power worry themselves over dwindling voter participation and focus on spin or engagement mechanism like easier voting but the root problem is that they have failed to respond to public concerns, abandoned defense of the public interest and made government less and less useful. It's only logical in these circumstances for people to seek agency elsewhere.

Not Voting

Many commentators recognize a dis-connect between formal politics and the people. Attention often focuses on the young. In 2004, Jessica Asato, chairwoman of the Young Fabians said "Young people have always voted less ... In 1970, the turnout of 18-24-year-olds was 66.5%, with the overall turnout 88.5%, while in the 1997 and 2001 elections turnout fell even more. The downward trend in young people voting mirrors the general downturn." Beccy Earnshaw, The Electoral Commission's commented^{viii}:

"Young people are very passionate about issues, but there is a real disconnection between Westminster politics and the issues. Politicians are seen to be debating high-minded things that have nothing to do with people's lives."

The 21% of the UK population represented in the traditionalist Settler motivational groups are a disproportionately ageing part of the population, and it's the older generations which still vote most. Whereas the inner-directed Pioneers are most likely to find new ways to play some sort of political role in society, it's the burgeoning 'esteem driven' Prospectors, at 44%, who represent the largest group who feel no need to engage with the business of shaping or running the country through 'politics with a small p'.

Our survey shows a core across all motivational groups of just over 20%, who feel *no* identification with any political party. This is a much more robust alienation than not bothering to vote: many people won't vote even though they *do* feel some identification with a party. Looked at in detail, this 21% come mainly from the motivational groups which are most content with life^{ix} - the 'relaxed' modes in the diagram in Part 1. These people are simply too happy, too untroubled and too unbothered by any pressing need.

So for anyone who wants to encourage voting, one difficulty is that engaging with politics has become less and less necessary as a way to achieve success, and even less attractive as a way to achieve recognition and respect. As Barry Cox of Channel 4 has written^x: 'people's lives have become much fuller and richer. There is more to do, and more money to do it with. The time when going out to political meetings was a form of leisure activity is long past.'

These relaxed unbothered Brits are putting up a 'do not disturb' sign to politicians. If present trends continue, they are likely to be just a vanguard of the disinterested.

Obsolete -isms

As the overt role of government in delivering services has declined, its psychological relevance has diminished outside those few areas in which it retains a monopoly: crime, war and terrorism, and for most, education and health. Even here, the old political continuum of left-right and the principal focus on economics, means that its relevance is intermittent and its grip on public interest is often fleeting and faltering. Writing in the *Sunday Times*, Andrew Neil recently stated:

The parties need to catch up with the issues and debates taking place outside Westminster. What divides them no longer necessarily divides us. They are still stuck in notions of right and left, capital and labour, middle and working class that have their origins in the 19th century and still reflect the divisions and concerns of the industrial age. But the British people now live in an information society, which has a different political discourse. If the political parties find it hard to engage the public, it is because they haven't.

Neil anticipates a terminal decline in the current political order:

... The election of 2005 is likely to be the last fought on traditional political ground. Over the next five years the trend towards more "value" issues will take root; the country will be divided as much (if not more) by cultural as economic matters. The parties and the political broadcasters will have to take notice — or face irrelevance...

Politicians find it hard to do more than promote palliatives to the current system because their careers and ways of thinking are caught within it. They dislike 'single issues' or 'values politics' because there is a fear of not being able to construct a platform, manifesto or organise these cultural or 'value issues' into a 'project' which can be aligned with a party that can win power and govern.

Andrew Neil again:

... Of course, "value" issues — what Americans also call "culture wars" — have always been around in British politics; but usually on the periphery and rarely as matters of party politics. But with the traditional economic issues that used to decide elections no longer dividing the parties as deeply as they used to, that could be about to change. We are all market economists now (at least all outside the unreconstructed left) and while Labour and Tory politicians can still get excited about whether the state should spend 1% less or more of GDP, the essential insignificance of the difference between them leaves the rest of us cold. ...

Unfortunately, a characteristic of a Prospector and Pioneer-dominated society is that relatively few people are likely to feel keen on signing up to a package which locks them into agreeing with a whole suite of options.

Even worse, while the old political -isms are increasingly out of synch with public needs, so is the 'modernised' model of professional managerialist party politics brought to its apotheosis in New Labour.

The culture of whips, towing the party-line and spin doctoring of public debate which is seen as vital in gaining power in Westminster, turns people off when what they expect from life is real consultation, genuine choice and responsiveness to their needs. Unencumbered by evolutionary blocks such as Black Rod, legislation and Westminster conservatism, business has evolved so that consumer choice now offers such responsiveness much better than does British politics. Where existing businesses do not, new ones spring up: Evangelical churches, New Age festivals, adventure holidays, cause-related groups, music tribes and more.

How To Re-Engage

If it was to re-engage through the needs of many more of the British the public, politics would now need to be much more transactional for the Prospectors – a series of negotiated bargains struck not every four years as a licence to operate but as and when a decision is needed – and much more diverse and issues-based for the Pioneers.

Clearly breaking the mould is hard to do from inside the mould. Entrenched in the political process, and nestled in a first-past the post system, which acts to exclude rival political entrants, the established political parties persist. Yet they are fighting over a shrinking number of people who are interested in voting, and politicians experience falling trust and growing disrespect. To many political commentary, obsessed with a largely irrelevant Westminster micro-agenda, seems the dismal chatter of corpses picking over each other.

When they come to grapple with this process, the first resort of the political classes is to make the current system easier to use. Proportional representation, Alternative Votes, and other attempts to make it easier to vote – such as electronic voting – are nevertheless palliatives: if it's the political offers and the relationship with the public which are at fault, then making the existing choices easier to make, won't solve the problem.

In the future, we can expect the inner-directed group to grow. How quickly it grows will depend on how fast the esteem-driven Prospectors feel they've achieved enough success. The culture of consumption of course acts to keep them consuming. Prospectors are above all, good for business.

Against this, the Pioneer inner-directeds are the movers and shakers of new causes and issues, and the generators of new ideas in society. They start things, and it is amongst them that new politics are likely to emerge.

How Politicians Think About 'Values'

Throughout this report we have used the term 'values' to mean social values determined by needs, and moving between the motivational groups depends on meeting those needs. It can be seen that this is very different from the way that the term 'values' is frequently deployed in political debate.

There is almost universal acknowledgement that 'values' play an important part in politics and political choices. In the United States, this discussion tends to focus on the supposed differences between the 'values' of Democrat and Republican voters.

In America, and if Cardinal Cormack Murphy O'Connor has his way, increasingly in Britain, 'values politics' is conducted via 'wedge' issues defined by voting initiatives, on subjects such as abortion, which split traditional political groupings. These may be seen as devices that attract people to cast or change a vote but they may be little more significant than that. The next wedge offer may take them somewhere else.

Political tradition has it that 'values' in politics are things you talk about, essentially rhetorical, intellectual constructs that can be improved by the contest of great (political) minds, and wheeled out as rallying cries. They are often used to reinforce people's supposed sense of identity. George W Bush has said:

"There is a value system that cannot be compromised, and that is the values we praise," "And if the values are good enough for our people, they ought to be good enough for others."

When politicians speak of 'values' they usually mean one of two things. On the one hand there are enlightenment theories of society turning around philosophy and principles: liberties and rights. Here's Tony Blair for example:

"Ours are not Western values, they are the universal values of the human spirit. And anywhere, anytime ordinary people are given the chance to choose, the choice is the same: freedom, not tyranny; democracy, not dictatorship; the rule of law, not the rule of the secret police."

On the other hand there is political economics: communism, socialism and capitalism are all essentially concerned with the same things – the creation and distribution of financial wealth. This economic determinism provides the main intellectual toolbox for devising political manifestoes and running governments because it is assumed to be the principal motivation. John Maynard Keynes said "even the most practical man of affairs is usually in the thrall of the ideas of some long-dead economist". This certainly applies to most UK politicians.

These deeply rooted organising ideas are used both to explain political success and failure and the need to change political offers: New Labour for example, was defined in relation to the dwindling appeal of class-based economic politics, and constructed an 'offer' using the rhetoric of both rights and the right.

Here's Blair again:

"Our mission is to promote and reconcile the four values which are essential to a just society which maximizes the freedom and potential of all our people—equal worth, opportunity for all, responsibility, and community."

New Labour's success though, probably has more to do with its eclectic pragmatism, for which it's been much criticised by intellectuals and traditionalists. It's ok to be rich, it's ok to get on, we like success – and the vagueness of its ideological programme. This has enabled it to appeal to more of the esteem driven population than the other parties, while not alienating all of its traditional support, who range from the inner directed Fabians through to the bulk of traditional Settler working class communities.

It's often implied that like ethics, values are principles which guide behaviour. Moreover, like objects they can be 'eroded' or lost: some people "don't have any values". In this view, values are things you hold but can also chose between: they can be postures or political clothing, and even come with territory, such as "core American values".

Conventional political analysis often has it that 'core political values' are those of the right and left, and without understanding those, the public is 'ignorant'. Consumerism versus community, libertarian versus authoritarian, sustainability versus parochialism; an American trinity of egalitarianism, individualism, limited government; political science maps political ideas using the dichotomies between isms and implies that it in so doing, it is also mapping society and its political choices. Our map offers an alternative view – a landscape of motives and needs rather than issues or isms.

Psychographic mapping is not the only or necessarily the best way to map the politics and values of the UK population but because it deals in values which are not themselves politically debated as ideas or propositions, it 'gets beneath the radar' and escapes the rhetorical tangles in a way that questioning about political offers cannot.

Some may recoil at the very idea that we can map psychology, and be even less happy that political parties should consciously use it in marketing. In our experience, politicians are some of the most reluctant to adopt psychological mapping as a strategic tool. We find this even more worrying, both for the future of democracy and the government's ability to run the country.

Tony Blair put "renewing democracy and overcoming the alienation and disconnection from politics" and "the renewal of local civic engagement" as the fifth challenge of the 'Third Way Part Two'. This study shows who some of the disengaged are: potentially 80% of the population !

'Framing'

Lastly, a word about 'framing'. Just before the US election that returned G W Bush, many American Democrats seized upon the work of Californian cognitive psychologist Professor George Lakoff. In numerous papers^{xi} and in his book *Don't Think Of An Elephant*, Lakoff has showed how our innate tendency to think with 'frames' usually determines the conclusions we arrive at when assessing a debate or a 'new idea'. It's a process of unconscious recognition using mental metaphors – "aha it's a one of those" or, as PR man Walter Lippman put it, "first we see, then we understand".

Lakoff and his adherents argue that if the Democrats were as good as the Republicans have become at framing, then they'd win elections. For example, 'moral values' have become equated with a particular set of ideas, which are solely the preserve of one part of society and to debate them, automatically accepts that, leaving no room for any alternative moral view. Once in the frame, you can't escape. A favourite example is tax, framed as a bad thing from which it is natural to seek or be rewarded 'relief', as opposed to 'investment', which would 'naturally' be better if it was bigger.

Beyond his ideas on how-we-understand, Lakoff's over-arching political thesis is that two competing frames of the family dominate American politics: nurturant (Democrat) and patriarchal (Republican).

His case works but only so far. Indeed he says himself^{xiii} that he estimates that there are 35 – 40% of Americans who follow the nurturant model and 35 – 40% of Americans who follow the patriarchal model: 'and then there are the people in the "middle"'. On this basis the 'middle' could be 30% - we think they are probably the esteem driven, as the patriarchal and nurturant models would clearly tend to differentiate the security and inner directeds. We are currently looking at value-modes data for the UK and the US to test this and other ideas.

ⁱ His work includes Inglehart, Ronald. 1977. *The Silent Revolution*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Inglehart, Ronald. 1990. *Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Society*. Princeton: Princeton University Press,

ⁱⁱ In *Foreign Parts: From gas-guzzling loser to ultra-chic winner on envy street* By Andrew Gumbel in Los Angeles 22 February 2003

ⁱⁱⁱ http://www.greencarcongress.com/2004/08/prius_sales_acc.html

^{iv} Climate change: Kyoto Protocol in force, £12m to target public attitudes in the UK, <http://www.defra.gov.uk/news/latest/2005/climate-0216.htm>

^v Post-war turnout for general elections, 1945-2001: Social Trends 33 Last Updated: 29/1/03, <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/StatBase/ssdataset.asp?vlnk=6231&More=Y>

^{vi} Chris Rose, *How To Win Campaigns*, pub Earthscan 2005

^{vii} Ed Milliband, *New Statesman* 10 March 2003 The house jack couldn't build

^{viii} <http://politics.guardian.co.uk/apathy/story/0,12822,1180540,00.html> Vote early - vote often? Enda Curran, *Guardian*, Monday March 29, 2004

^{ix} As people meet needs, they tend to move sequentially from a questing or searching phase into a settled or content 'relaxed' positioning.

^x Propsect Issue 55, Barry Cox Defending Apathy

^{xi} see www.frameworksinstitute.org and www.rockridgeinstitute.org

^{xii} *Don't Think Of An Elephant* p 20 pub Chelsea Green