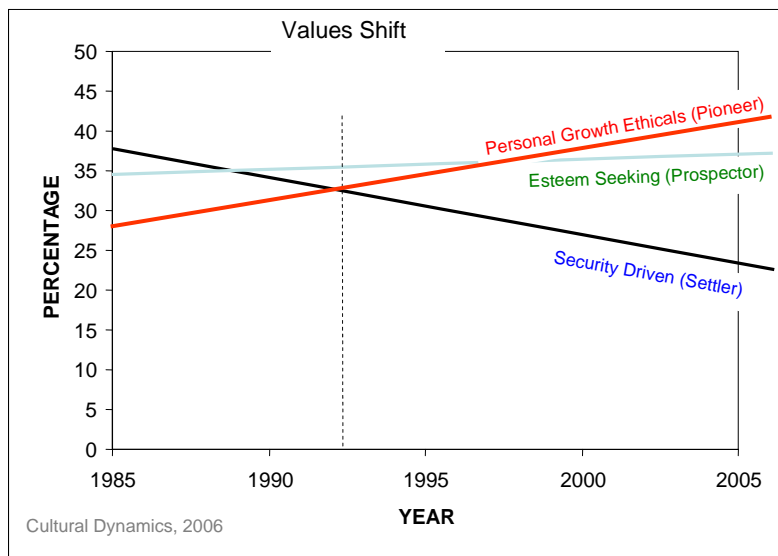


A Values-Dynamic Tipping Point

Chris Rose

Readers of the Campaign Strategy Newsletter will be familiar with the Values Modes system of segmenting any group or population according to the psychological motivations (needs) that underly behaviour [1]. At the broad Maslow Group level there are Pioneers, Prospectors and Settlers. Pioneers are in the vanguard of change and new behaviours, and were for example, the first to adopt “green” concerns and lifestyles, as has been discussed in many previous newsletters. Settlers re the most socially conservative, change-averse and the last to adopt anything new. Prospectors, the middle group, have met the needs felt by Settlers for safety, belonging and security, and are looking for success, finding it in terms of the esteem of others, and then self-esteem. Prospectors –est and –er things: making them best and better, as a sign to others and themselves that they are ‘winners’.

Cultural Dynamics Strategy and Marketing (CDSM [2]) the company that runs the Values Modes system, has been tracking change in the UK population since the 1970s. This has revealed a progressive shrinking in the proportion of the population that are ‘Settlers’, and a gradual rise in the other groups, so that around 20% are now Settlers, and just under 40% are Prospectors, while somewhere over 40% are Pioneers. This is shown in the diagram below:



This significant shift has brought about radical changes in the cultural balance of our society, for example away from ‘traditional values’ espoused by the Settlers, and away from unquestioning acceptance of authority (another Settler attribute), towards questioning claims (a tendency shared by Pioneers and Prospectors).

In recent years there have been signs in qualitative research that changes in behaviour and attitudes more typical of Pioneers are also becoming widespread amongst Prospectors. For example in Newsletter 23 we noted that the Henley Centre had recorded a remarkable increase in the number of Britons agreeing they had “more than enough stuff”. The important point is that there were more of these people than there were Pioneers, suggesting that some Prospectors too were taking up this attitude. We have found the same thing in a number of qualitative research projects, particularly with the uber-Prospector Now People Values Mode, copying behaviours from the Transcenders (the ultimate Values Mode of Pioneers).

This behaviour-transfer can take place much more quickly than (and without) values change in which individuals transition from one Values Mode to the next. For example Now People and Transcenders are adjacent on the values map and behaviours can easily be shared or filter across but to become a Transcender the Now Person has to negotiate transitions to Tomorrow Person, Transitional, Concerned Ethical and Flexible Individualist before finally reaching Transcender. What we now seem to be seeing however is a much larger effect, as the result of a ‘tipping point’ between the three major Maslow Groups.

Pat Dade at CDSM believes it is working like this. Prospectors turbo-boost whatever they do – at home, at play or at work – making things bigger and better, seeking to have the best, to win, to be the best. What they apply this to has changed, and that’s the reason for reaching the tipping point. In the past, for example in the 1960s and 1970s and up to at least 1985, Settlers were the dominant, largest group in society. It had been this way literally since time immemorial.

The Prospectors of the day took their cue in looking for success to emulate, from the dominant group. As these were the Settlers the channels, contexts and symbols of success were those they had always been: positions of authority, the accents, clothes and behaviours of those in charge, their possessions and services. A British Prospector in the 1970s or even early 1980s might therefore set out to acquire a larger car, bigger house, longer holiday, a second house, a second car, the right clothes, the right accent, and so on. He or she might even acquire a butler, gardener and the trappings of the landed gentry: all symbols of success as adopted by generations of successful Settlers. (Needless to say a lot of this involved increased consumption – they were not good ‘conservationists’.)

By the 1990s the Settlers were shrinking so fast that cultural certainties long criticised and questioned by the Pioneers were seeming archaic, relicts of a past era. Historic institutions (eg the political system) were under increasing strain as they no longer ‘fitted’. And now the Pioneers are the largest group. The Prospectors are increasingly emulating the Pioneers, not by adopting their values but by seeking to emulate the behaviours of successful Pioneers. Thus it becomes fashionable (a Prospector thing) to have a solar panel, to downshift, to buy ethical branded products. Today I was sent a newspaper cartoon by a friend which showed a man rejecting the installation of a solar panel on his home once he found that to work, it had to be positioned on a roof which the neighbours could not see. There is more than a grain of truth in this: the Prospector dictum is to display symbols of success. The solar panel needs to be displayed to show success, just as once the ‘posh accent’ or gardener needed to be on show for the same reason.

The Kevin Effect

On 30 April BBC Television broadcast a post-mortem [3] of an episode of the TV series “The Apprentice” featuring successful businessman (and Settler) Sir Alan Sugar. (It is based on the US series of the same

name which was hosted by Donald Trump). In this show teams of young people compete as viciously as possible to win a series of 'business tests' and become the apprentice of the main judge of their efforts, Alan Sugar.

The great majority of the contestants display all the competitive hallmarks of Prospectors. The unfortunate Kevin, leader of the losing team, described himself as "totally 150% confident". The striking feature of the 30 April episode (which for UK readers is still viewable at the time of writing on BBC Iplayer) was the ill-fated attempt by one team to market a set of gift-cards based on 'environmental' messages. One card read "green is the new black", another "pedal your way to a better future", and inside they carried messages such as "bath less, shower more". "Love our planet!" Kevin told one business leader in his pitch, and attacked another prospective client for not running a green business, likening a cards company to G W Bush and his refusal to sign the Kyoto Treaty.

The judges panned the effort. They pointed out that the cards weren't on recycled paper. The group hadn't thought about the implications of encouraging more use of fossil fuels in delivering more cards. An environmentally friendly card should be an e-card. One team member explained that she was so convinced about all this green stuff that she was sending fewer cards these days – apparently without seeing any contradiction between that and a business proposition that rested on increasing card sales. The programme even interviewed John Sauven from Greenpeace who pronounced the tone of the cards as 'too hectoring' to work for most people.

In short the team had adopted a behaviour of Pioneers – criticising consumption, questioning conventional lifestyles – and 'bettered' and 'bested' it without changing their values, indeed because of their values. They had taken a symbol (the campaigning card) of the Pioneers, in fact a symbol of the most judgemental of all Pioneers the 'Concerned Ethicals', and turbo-charged it to the point where it seemed it could not work, and with no thought for the whys and wherefores, the connections and consequences. This is a classic Prospector approach. Kevin was clearly no 'ethical campaigner': as he explained to camera, "by the age of 20 I had my first house, by the age of 23 I had my second house, and by the age of 23 I had my Porsche. Now I want a Ferrari".

What is notable about this is that the team took to pumping out green propaganda quite easily: the sentiments of the card were not only familiar but at a superficial level at least, they were arguments and opinions – attitudes – which the team held themselves. These 'deep green' notions were no longer fringe or weird, they just required marketing. Moreover, the you-should-do-better card is not a leading-edge Transcender type thing, it is much more Concerned Ethical, really 'deep green' in the beards-and-sandals sense that Prospectors have run a mile from. Until, it seems, now.

The judges were of course older and ostensibly wiser than the team but were they really right? Alan Sugar declared "The last thing I am going to do is to buy a card that has the sole purpose of lecturing me about green". True perhaps of Sir Alan who added "it's beyond my comprehension this" but he represents a dwindling 20% of the population. Perhaps their cack-handed approach disguised something that really could work.

Marginalisation Beckons?

The tipping point created by Prospectors migrating to the behavioural territory (not the values territory) of the Pioneers means that instead of cultural change driven by the influence of the 40% Pioneers, it is being driven by that 40% plus a growing proportion of the 40% Prospectors. Because in cultural terms

this has happened quickly, since the Pioneers only recently have become the dominant group, it creates a 'tipping point'.

The full consequences for such a change have yet to become apparent by *The Apprentice* perhaps shows what could happen. For Pioneer purveyors of campaigns and promoters of change the future – starting now – holds unfamiliar dangers.

NGOs and other advocates of change are accustomed to spending long periods 'making the case' and campaigning hard only to achieve small incremental changes. This though may not work in future, and more importantly, could simply be overtaken by attention paid to more dramatic offerings. Prospectors actualise the media dictum of 'simplify and exaggerate': the media itself is likely to play a part in setting an agenda which favours dramatic 'solutions'.

Prospectors do not want to 'see the big picture', they have enough challenges just acquiring and displaying the current symbols of success. Unlike the question-it-all Pioneers they want a world in which certainties are maintained so they know there is going to be a reliable ladder to climb up. The difference is that they are now chasing after ladders created by the Pioneers, and 'being green' is one of those.

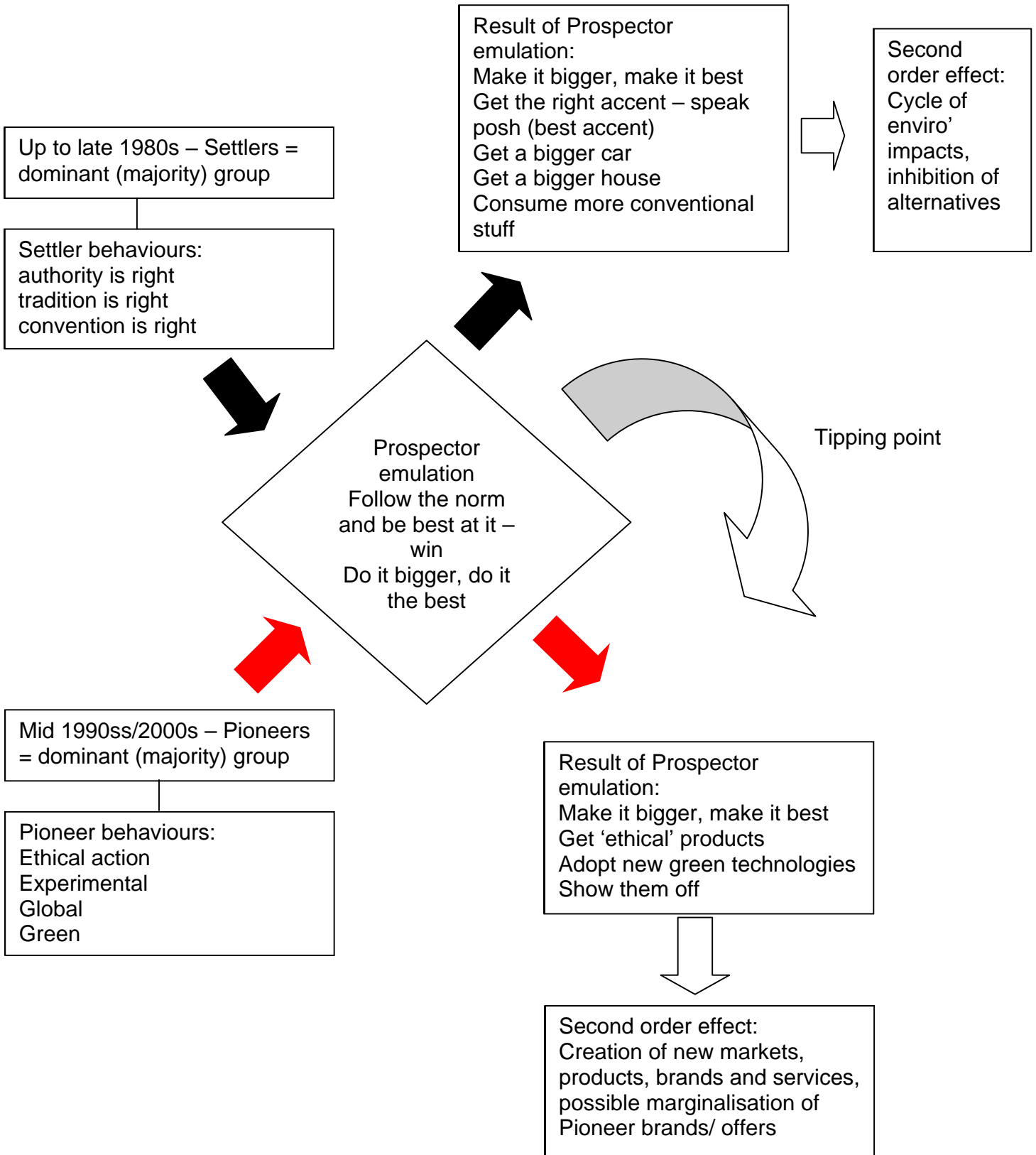
Pat Dade comments: "Organizations who now set their sights too low – if the 'ask' for change is not challenging enough or the 'offer' is not exciting enough, or the rate of implementation of policy or program is too slow (eg achieving a target over 10-50 years) – may well be overtaken by the desire of the English/UK and world population to change their behaviour anyway."

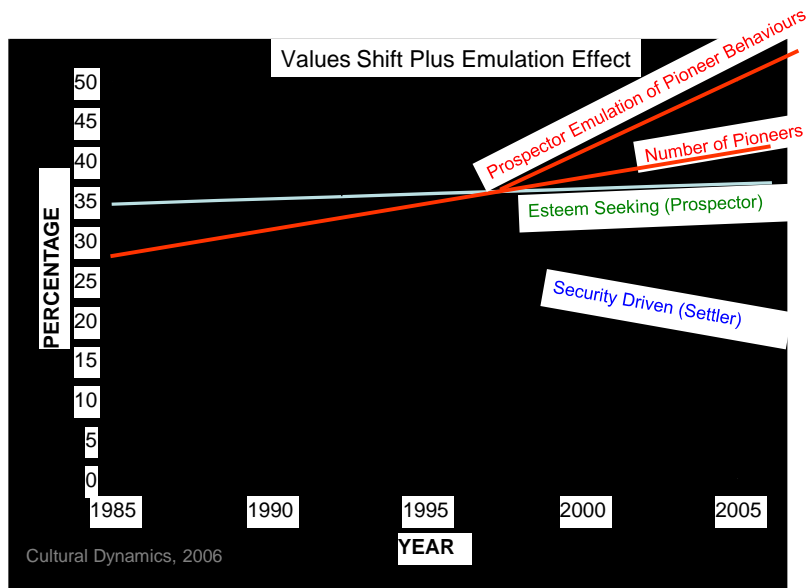
The trick will be to offer immediate and dramatic ways to be part of the new stuff for Prospectors, while offering Pioneers a dimension which is long term and complex enough to be credible: realistic in not claiming discrete, closed, tick-box 'solutions' to problems they know are inherently difficult and may have no immediate solution. Climate change for example, is not something that Pioneers expect to be 'solved' in a few years or through a single action. Any such claim will simply raise questions in their minds about the competence or intentions of the messenger. Instead they seek a better-than-predicted outcome.

Pioneering organisations now have an opportunity to surf a wave of change but they can just as easily be left behind the curve, replaced as leaders by a new wave of brands created to meet the needs of the New Prospectors.

Note:

The diagrams below attempt to illustrate the tipping point dynamic. This is created by the dynamic links between the values groups, not simply by the changing size of each group.





[1] see Using Values Modes at this website www.campaignstrategy.org

[2] see www.cultdyn.co.uk

[3] *You're Fired*, Episode 6, Series 4, BBC

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