

Broadening the Appeal of Environmental Action through Values-Framing Uplift

Chris Rose June 2014

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Synopsis:

Many NGO environmental campaigns and government-sponsored attempts to encourage pro-environmental behaviours struggle to reach beyond 'the converted'. Surveys show that in most cases the engaged support base of environmental NGOs is dominated by the psychological group Pioneers (inner directed). Most of their staff are also Pioneers. Their campaigns are usually framed in ways that appeal more to Pioneers, than to Prospectors (outer directed) or to Settlers (security driven).

Surveys also show that many Prospectors and Settlers are potentially just as 'green' but are not being engaged. Here I show examples from surveys conducted for the Fairyland Trust and Greenpeace UK, demonstrating that by using differently framed propositions, such as about 'nature-for-children' rather than just action for 'nature' or 'environment', support amongst Settlers and Prospectors can be significantly increased.

On climate change, the gap between the position of 'the public' measured in a National UK survey, and that of Greenpeace UK Supporters as reflected in a Supporter survey asking mostly the same questions, can be reduced by as much as 38% if you test the statement "There's still time to address climate change if we all make quite small and easy changes" as opposed to testing belief in climate change. The reduced gap (7.5% as opposed to 45.1%) is mainly due to increased support from Prospectors and Settlers.

Similarly, the 'gap' between where Greenpeace Supporters are and the National population is, on 'environment' is closed from 49% to 21% by use of a for-children framing, again almost all by uplift amongst Settlers and Prospectors.

As the underlying reasons for differences are psychologically fundamental (such as different senses of self-agency and the importance of being a parent in self-identity), these findings are also likely to apply to other 'causes', where these are primarily framed in ethical and Pioneer terms.

Introduction

Since 2011, Greenpeace has commissioned CSL (Campaign Strategy Ltd) and [CDSM](#) (Cultural Dynamics Strategy and Marketing) to conduct National and sometimes also Supporter surveys, in more than a dozen countries. These surveys utilise the psychographic segmentation 'Values Modes' system developed by Les Higgins and Pat Dade of CDSM since the 1970s. This divides any population into the three large "Maslow Groups" (MGs) of Settlers (Security Driven), Prospectors (Outer Directed) and Pioneers (Inner Directed), and 12 more distinct Values Modes within the MGs .

An introductory guide to this system of motivational values at the level of Maslow Groups is provided [here](#), and one on communicating with them [here](#). The differences between the four Values Modes (VMs) in each of the three MGs, are explained here: [Settler VMs](#), [Prospector VMs](#), [Pioneer VMs](#). The book *What Makes People Tick: The Three Hidden Worlds of Settlers, Prospectors, and Pioneers* provides many examples of how the system works and is available [here](#).

Numerous blogs and articles at www.cultdyn.co.uk and www.campaignstrategy.org (including 'three worlds' blog) have previously reported evidence that most 'cause' campaign groups are dominated in staff and supporters by the Pioneers. The Pioneers are not a majority in any of the countries surveyed. In the UK the 2013 British Values Survey found that the three MGs are now roughly equally split: 31% Settler, 32% Pioneer, 37% Prospector. Other countries may look very different. For example Pioneers are now the largest single group in the US (49.9%), and Prospectors comprise over 70% of the population in China.

For many reasons almost any campaign will stand a greater chance of success if it has wide across-values acceptance and appeal. In many cases the way campaign offers and asks are framed and communicated, means that actual engagement is often heavily skewed to Pioneers. Similarly, the promise and experience of engaging with many campaign groups, is much more satisfying to Pioneers than to Settlers or Prospectors, hence their Support base is Pioneer dominated.

Although Greenpeace membership is not a direct sample of 'green support' in the UK, a lot of other evidence shows that in values terms, its support is very similar to organisations such as major conservation organisations, human rights groups, and the Green Party, in being very Pioneer-skewed.

Over the past four years Greenpeace has been active in exploring ways to formulate campaigns so that they attract the support of more mainstream audiences. (One example is the 'detox' clothing campaign run internationally, which has engaged many clothes consumers in applying pressure to retailers and manufacturers to change their use of toxic polluting chemicals).

In many countries, especially those with young populations and rapidly developing economies, Prospectors make up an outright majority of the population. It is therefore self-evident that campaigns need a broad appeal if they are not to remain a good but hopeless cause. Even if most 'activists' are Pioneers, the offers and asks of a campaign need broader acceptance and support.

Values in the UK and Greenpeace UK

In December 2013 we (CDSM, Greenpeace, CSL) asked 2000 representative UK adults a set of specific 'issue' or behaviour questions plus the CDSM set used to match respondents to their values-segmenting database. We also put the same questions to a survey of over 2000 UK Greenpeace Supporters.

In common with many other environmental groups in the UK, Greenpeace Supporters are highly dominated by Pioneers but the National Population is not. Prospectors are under-represented in the Greenpeace UK Supporter population six-fold.

Maslow Group			
		NAT	SUPP
Pioneers		32.0%	83.8%
Prospectors		37.0%	6.1%
Settlers		31.0%	10.1%

In the UK Greenpeace is well-established but it remains leading-edge organisation, in other words it constantly adopts new challenges, which often means it is confronting powerful opponents and is frequently involved in social controversy and criticism. Our survey found that it is widely supported in the UK: twice as many say it ‘addresses issues that are important to them’ as disagree, and if asked if they ‘dislike’ Greenpeace, a majority disagree.

The main reason for the huge skew to Pioneers amongst Greenpeace Supporters is probably self-agency. Decades of research have shown that Pioneers have a much higher sense of self-agency than Prospectors, who in turn have a lower sense of it than Settlers. Self-agency means the sense that you can change your world, make your own decisions and set your own direction, rather than having it dictated by factors such as birth, circumstance or the opinions or actions of others. Campaigns for change, particularly those involving social challenge and the likelihood of criticism or social controversy, are almost a test of self-agency in themselves.

Framing and Values

A recent paper at www.campaignstrategy.org reported another values-segmented study from the same wave of the British Values Survey (BVS) as the Greenpeace survey discussed below. That paper [‘Why Our Children Are Not Being Connected With Nature’](#) references a survey for the Fairyland Trust (www.fairylandtrust.org). This is a conservation group which targets mainstream families to engage young children with nature, mostly using ‘day out’ events attended by families, where it is the adults who typically make the decision about whether to attend. The attitudes of the adults are therefore crucial to whether or not the children attend. That survey asked people to agree or disagree (five-point Likert scale from ‘strongly agree’ to ‘strongly disagree’), with the statement “It is vital to introduce young children to nature”.

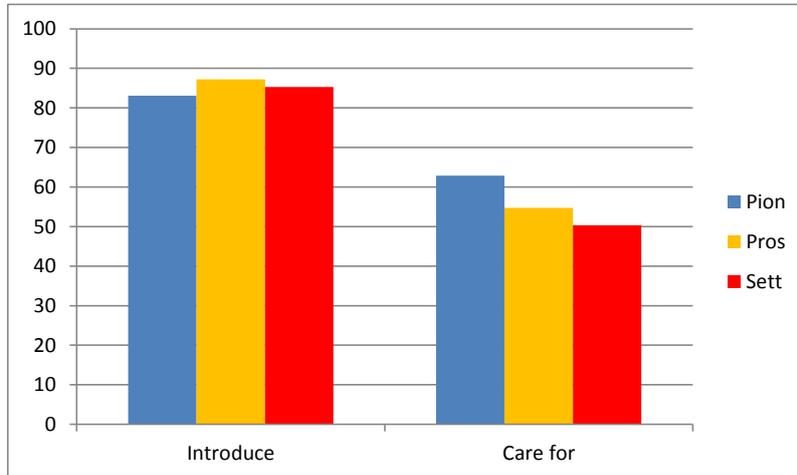
Responses to this question were overwhelmingly positive: 85.2% agreed. There was also a positive response across the board in terms of values. 83.1% of Pioneers agreed (strongly or slightly), along with 87.2% of Prospectors and 85.3% of Settlers.

However we know that this is not what happens if you measure behaviours such as visiting nature reserves or supporting conservation groups. In that case the great majority actually taking actions that could ‘introduce children to nature’ are Pioneers, and then only a minority. That is better matched by the response to another BVS question, which asks people how similar they are to a person who ‘strongly believes that people should care for nature. Looking after the environment is important to him/her’.

In this case 62.9% of Pioneers agree, 54.7% of Prospectors and 50.3% of Settlers, with an overall ‘agree’ score of 67.6%. A slightly differently worded question about the belief that ‘we should all do something’ for the ‘natural environment’, gets 42% agreement. So this ‘care

for nature' statement enjoys less than half the support for 'it is vital to introduce young children to nature'.

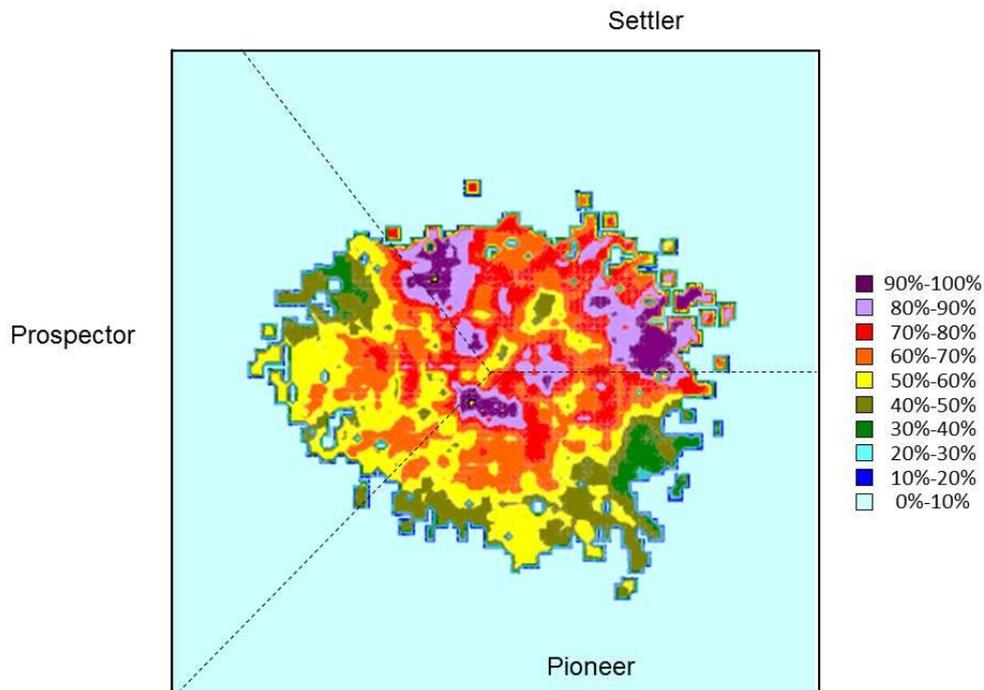
The difference between "introduce children to nature" and "care for nature", is mainly due to a higher response from Prospectors and Settlers.



Pioneers are 20.2% more likely to respond positively to being asked to introduce young children to nature, than just to 'care for nature' but for Prospectors this 'uplift' rises to 32.5% and for Settlers it increases to an even higher 34.9%.

The underlying reason for this is almost certainly that the response is triggered by re-framing nature or the environment as 'about children'. The statement then provokes a response based on attitudes to children as well as attitudes to 'environment' or 'nature'.

CDSM has run surveys asking people in the UK about factors most important in their 'identity'. When given a long list of options such as nationality, ethnicity, work and so on, the most popular single choice (even including some people without children), is "being a parent". As the colours in the 'gradient map' below show, this is an especially strong effect with Settlers.



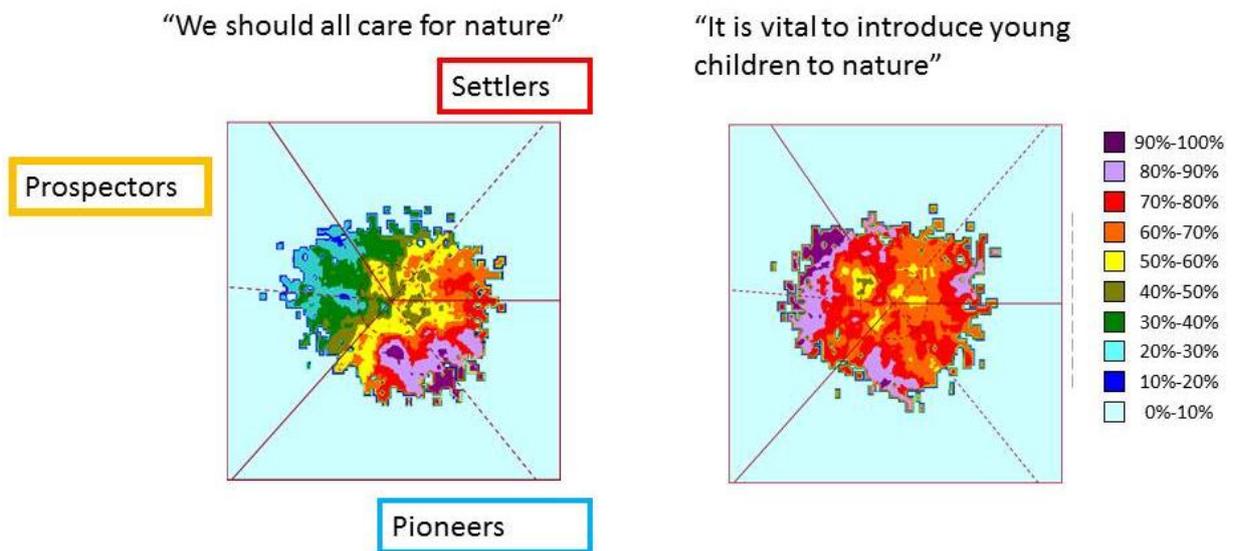
It's not hard to imagine that the basis for this is simply biological. As Dan Gardner suggests in [Future Babble](#), it probably is a 'kluge' or crude behavioural rule we respond to unconsciously, formed as a 'stone age' evolutionary reflex to unthinkingly protect any child you came across. Acquired in an era when you were most probably related to any children you might encounter, and when there were no images of anything to react to, just the real thing, this would have conferred an evolutionary advantage. We are hard-wired to protect children, and so react positively to frames which conjure up children, especially babies, even if they are not ours, or represented by nothing more than a photograph.

This was famously illustrated by Richard Wiseman's ['Edinburgh Wallet Experiment'](#), in which 240 wallets (without money in them but all containing the owners address) were dropped in the streets of Edinburgh. Some had a charity card to show how generous the owner was, some a baby photo, some a family, some a picture of an elderly couple, others a baby, and some a photo of a puppy, while another set had nothing.

The rates of return are shown in the graphic below (not the original wallets):



The puppy, which looks more like a baby than any of the other images, came in 2nd. It's not surprising then, that 'introduce young children to nature', because it's doing something for children, scores more highly than just doing something 'for nature'.



The diagram above shows the difference in response between those agreeing to another, similar statement; “we should all care for nature”, and “it’s vital to introduce young children to nature”. The first is concentrated in the Pioneers and has least support in the Prospectors, the second better covers the ‘map’ (ie everyone) but has its largest area of strong support in the Prospectors.

‘Framing’ refers to the unconscious process of using mental categories to interpret new information. Many frames are triggered visually, and if text is involved, we read them and

instantly convert them into a mental image. This process happens faster than our conscious thinking processes, and we draw conclusions (form opinions, take actions etc.) which our conscious brain then rationalises (Kahneman's System 1, quick and intuitive, and System 2, slow and analytical).

In the CDSM surveys the question-statements are as text but the same process will take place. The 'nature-for-children' frame evokes a more powerful reaction than just nature (for contrast, imagine the wallet had contained a photo of a tree, or a Greenpeace membership card).

The baby trigger generally works for everyone (ie it works more often than not, is a 'heuristic' or 'rule of thumb'). Kahneman has [identified](#) dozens of other 'heuristics' or cognitive biases but although they work on average for everyone, many work much more strongly for some than others, and in many cases, the reaction varies between different Maslow Groups or even Values Modes. For example any heuristic which is associated with social conformity and following the majority of others, will exert a more powerful effect on Settlers and the two Prospector Values Modes Golden Dreamer and Happy Follower, than on other Prospectors or any Pioneers.

So different framings of the same issue tend to be more or less attractive to different values groups. The detail of the CDSM model, which breaks down the underlying question database into 100 Attributes is such that it is possible to use it to 'reframe' almost any 'issue' or idea in a way that will appeal to any one particular values group ([in practice](#) this is done by using a group of statistically linked Attributes).

The Greenpeace Questions

Greenpeace UK asked several questions about climate change in its CDSM survey. One was about climate belief (which we have asked many times in many countries), in other words about 'existence' of climate change. This is the default framing of the 'issue' particularly favoured by the UK media. "It's a 'question of belief". This is the source of terms like 'denial' and 'sceptic". It is also the framing favoured by 'sceptic' organisations funded by the fossil fuel industry and their allies, and has been discussed in previous Campaign Strategy papers, for example ['Sustaining Disbelief'](#).

In putting forward climate-related propositions, the purpose of environmental NGOs is invariably to try and build support for taking some sort of action to help reduce and eliminate man-made emissions of climate-changing greenhouse gases, whether directly as in personal behaviour and choices, or indirectly as in politically relevant actions, or in other ways. The initial 'proposition' is there often only a first step in a conversation intended to lead to the desired result.

The Greenpeace UK 2013 survey included these 'climate' questions (agree-disagree, 5 point scale):

"Climate change – I don't believe in it"

"I Have Noticed that the Climate Seems to be Changing"

"There's Still Time to Address Climate Change if We All Make Quite Small and Easy Changes"

It also included a number of questions about ‘the environment’ (agree-disagree, 5 point scale) including:

“We must all take care of the environment so that children inherit a world worth living in”

“The environment – I’m not concerned it doesn’t bother me”

“It’s only worth doing environmentally friendly things if they save you money”

Each set of questions essentially frames one ‘issue’ in different ways. The statements “There’s Still Time to Address Climate Change if We All Make Quite Small and Easy Changes” and “We must all take care of the environment so that children inherit a world worth living in” were written by Karen Rothwell, Greenpeace UK Marketing Director.

Climate Framings

The common UK media treatment of the ‘climate issue’ is that there is a ‘problem’ to be overcome in terms of convincing ‘the public’ about the existence of climate change, *before* a constituency can exist for real political action or social change. Belief/disbelief surveys are regularly used to create a ‘story’ about this. In fact the UK is not a particularly climate sceptic country. Of those we have surveyed (using the same statement, below), it has the third lowest number of people saying they ‘agree’ they ‘don’t believe’ in climate change. What in fact distinguishes the UK from other countries is the large number of people who opt for “neither” (an option not included in most surveys, so they often register as ‘sceptic’) but that’s another story.

Here’s the response to the ‘belief’ framed statement:

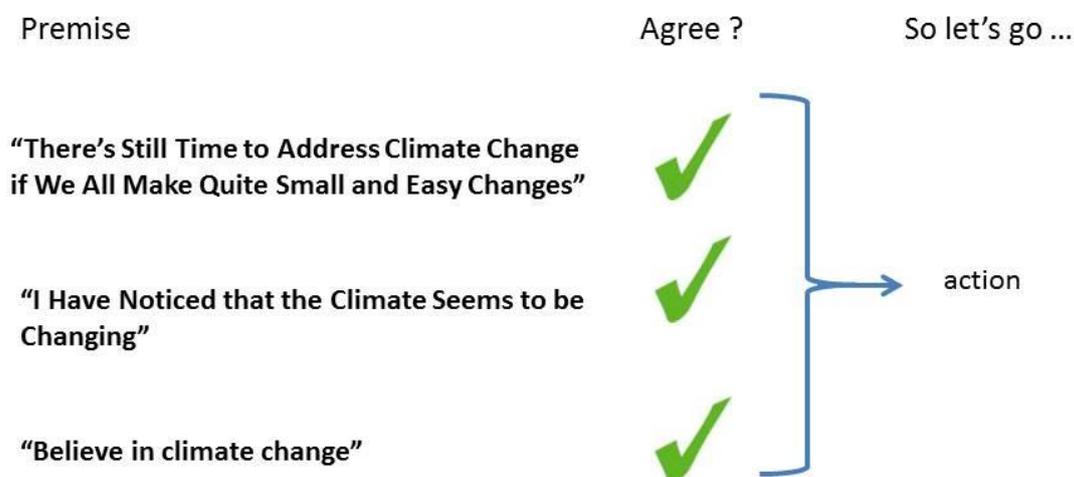
<i>Climate change – I don’t believe in it</i>	National UK	Greenpeace Supporters
Strongly agree	7.8%	0.8%
Slightly agree	18.2%	0.9%
Neither agree nor disagree	24.7%	3.9%
Slightly disagree	22.4%	6.4%
Strongly disagree	26.9%	88%

This result shows a huge gap between the attitude of the Greenpeace Supporters and the wider public when using this framing. Overall 49.3% of the UK public are ‘believers’ (disagree with the statement) against 94.4% of the UK Greenpeace population, a gap of 45.1%. Greenpeace Supporters may be an extreme case in the UK but this illustrates the gap which environmental advocates need to close, if they chose to start from a proposition that hinges of agreement that ‘we believe in climate change’.

There is however, no practical need to start there, as the purpose of the campaigns is not to shift this opinion but to build a constituency for action. Not even Uri Geller is going to actually make any difference to human-made climate change just by believing in it.

What campaigners and advocates need to do is to get awareness (‘what we are talking about’) and alignment (we are on the ‘same page’) and then propose an action. The other two statements provide alternative starting points.

Any of them could be used as a premise/platform leading to action



As [reported](#) in a previous Campaign Strategy post, "I have noticed the climate is changing" is a statement that we have tested in a number of countries. In every one (which now includes UK, Turkey, India, Brazil, Philippines, Indonesia and Thailand), more people say they have noticed climate is changing than say they 'believe in' climate change. Seeing as these are surveys of the National Populations and not 'climate buffs' or climatologists, this is plainly because of two different applications of intuitive reasoning (Kahneman's System 1). One has become an 'identity test' (am I this sort of person/ in this belief group), and the other is a commonplace, something discussed with neighbours, friends or evidenced by changes in your garden (etc.) and weather.

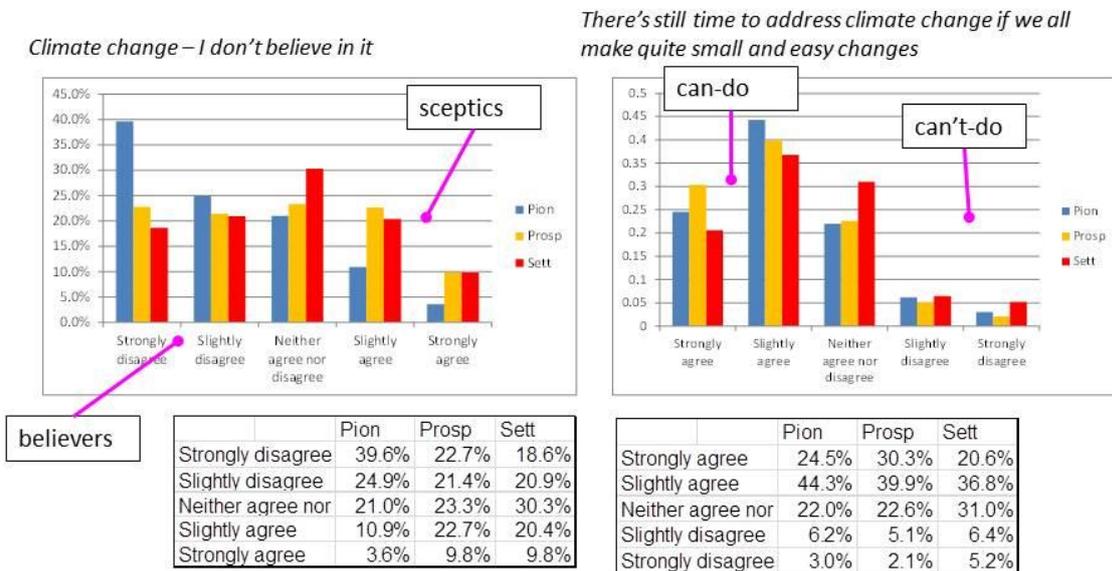
In the case of the UK, as in other countries, this difference is much greater amongst the public than the Greenpeace Supporters. 58.9% of British people agree that the climate is changing whereas only 49.3% of them assert they 'believe in' climate change. On this question, the gap between Greenpeace Supporters and the public is reduced to 32%.

While that is useful, it has nowhere near the effect of the third framing: "There's still time to address climate change if we all make quite small and easy changes". This proposition jumps straight to talking about taking action, and then specifies "small and easy". The result is dramatic: 65.7% of the British public agree that it's not "too late".

Although this framing is about time and action, the operative part is "small" and "easy". The effect of this is to drive up support not so much from the Pioneers, who already tend to agree and who dominate the Greenpeace Supporter population but amongst the Settlers and the Prospectors. In other words, the differences in response to these framings are mainly due to differential responses between the Maslow Groups (which is why campaigners would do well to use values segmentation in researching and planning communications).

The net effect of this option as a starting point is that it reduces the gap between the ‘green people’ and the ‘normal people’ to just 7.5%.

Reframing climate action as ‘all’ + ‘small and easy’ recruits GDs + Settlers



The ‘small and easy’ framing ‘pushes’ more of the Settlers and Prospectors ‘to the left’. That is, adds to the Pioneer-dominated base believing that something can or should be done about climate change. Response difference determined by self-agency.

[The option agree-disagree sequence in the ‘believe’ question has been reversed to make the graphs visually comparable.]

This is shown in the difference between the two diagrams above. The underlying reason for the different response is the higher sense of self-agency amongst the Pioneers. The abstract thought of ‘tackling climate change’ just because it exists, is itself more intimidating and unattractive to Settlers and Prospectors if it implies a long, difficult, complicated, contested and controversial process. Settlers are particularly averse to major changes that affect them. Prospectors are particularly averse to the risk of any sort of failure that affects them. Pioneers on the other hand are quite attracted to the long, complicated and debatable.

Consequently “small” and “easy” changes are much more attractive to Settlers and Prospectors, because they sound achievable, discrete, quick and controllable. Some Pioneers feel compelled to point out that such changes will have to add up to something big to stop climate change, which is of course true but that is a matter for strategy to take care of. It is not good communications strategy to insist on talking about it with people who don't want to get into that conversation.

The most successful proposition (‘small and easy actions’) also goes straight to the action rather than going through-the-problem (a Pioneer reflex). As [Global Cool](#) have pointed out, this is a preference for Prospectors (specify action + benefits). The statement also says “if we all” take action, which ticks a box for Settlers, who tend to be most concerned about potential free-riders.

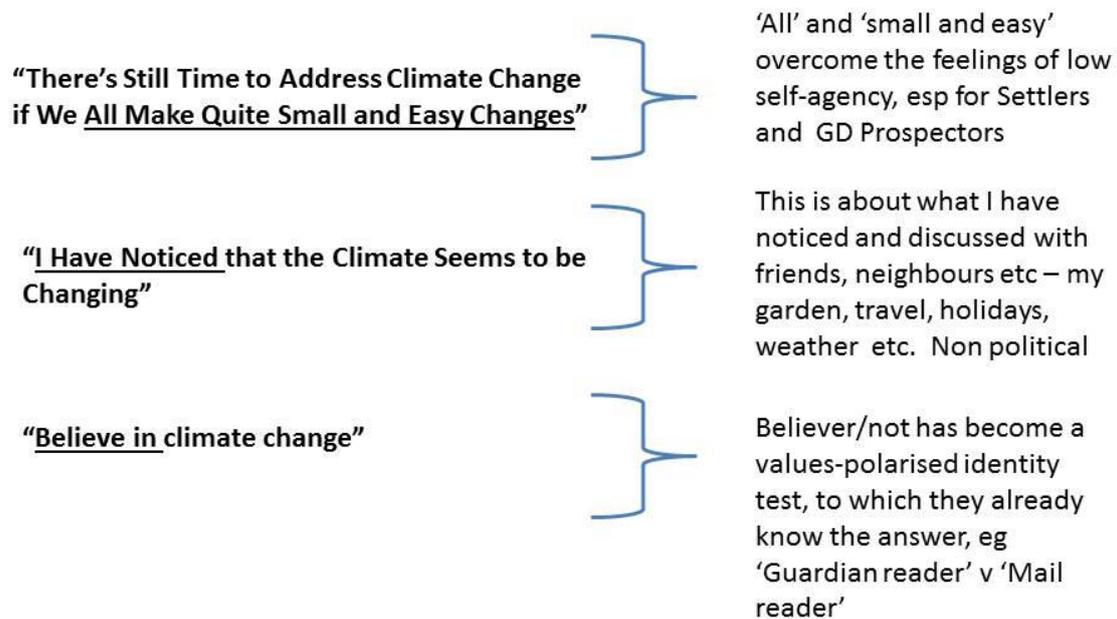
The overall difference in the 'gap' to be closed, is shown below:

	Total agree public	GP- public Gap
"There's Still Time to Address Climate Change if We <u>All Make Quite Small and Easy Changes</u>"	65.7%	7.5%
"<u>I Have Noticed</u> that the Climate Seems to be Changing"	58.9%	32%
"<u>Believe in climate change</u>"	49.3%	45.1%

(GP-Public gap = gap between Greenpeace Supporters and UK public)

The reasons for differential values group responses are show below:

Because



General Environmental Framings in the UK

The other three statements tested by Greenpeace UK are more generally about 'environment, and each also represents a potential stepping-stone or starting point which could lead to an 'ask' to actually do something about the environment.

“We must all take care of the environment so that children inherit a world worth living in”

“The environment – I’m not concerned it doesn’t bother me”

“It’s only worth doing environmentally friendly things if they save you money”

Statement	NAT	SUPP	gap
The environment – I’m not concerned, it doesn’t bother me [total disagree]	60.2%	-	-
It’s only worth doing environmentally friendly things if they save you money [total disagree]	41.4%	90.6%	49.2%
We must take care of the environment so that children inherit a world worth living in [total agree]	78%	98.7%	20.7%

The first statement was only put in the National UK survey and not to the Greenpeace Supporters but it has been put to many other supporters of ‘green’ groups, and responses to other questions in the survey suggest that the Greenpeace Supporters would disagree (ie they are bothered) by something like 95 – 100%, so the ‘gap’ to be bridged is probably about 30 – 40%.

Both that question and the next, have both been asked in surveys in many countries. ‘It’s only worth doing environmentally friendly things if they save you money’ is a question which enables comparison with general “I care” type statements because it introduces the idea of a trade-off or cost, which is often the case in real campaign issues. Almost invariably it is agreed with more by some Prospectors and usually by Settlers, than it is by Pioneers (which was also the case here). Indeed the Values Mode level pattern is also very consistent between countries. The framing of ‘economic rationalism’ encourages respondents to challenge the priority that they ‘really’ give to ‘environment’ and so produces a greater differentiation across other metrics such as age, sex or values.

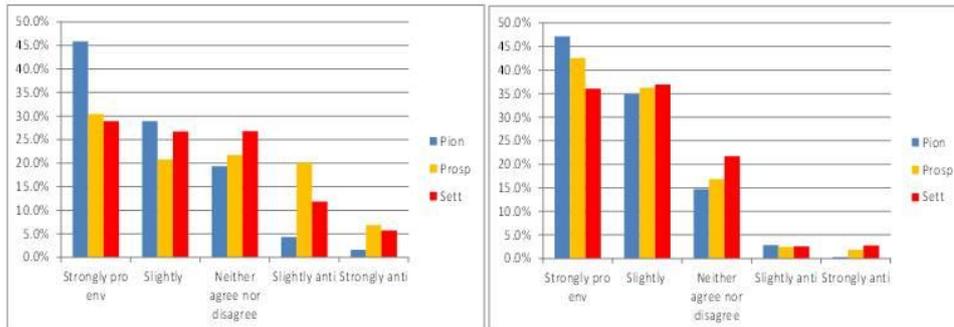
As was discussed earlier, the final statement ‘we must take care of the environment so that children inherit a world worth living in’ reframes environment as for-our-children or about-our-children. Whereas 60% of Britons say they are bothered about the environment, 78% say we must take care of the environment for our children. Clearly the second is a better starting point.

Not surprisingly the difference between the children farmed statement and the ‘save you money’ one is even greater. Many fundraisers will know that if you prompt people to think about *their* money, they become [less generous](#). This effect may be more acute in people who are more anxious about what they can do with their money (more aspirational – Prospectors), and more concerned about loss (Settlers). [This does not mean these people are inherently ‘less generous’. Evidence also suggests that Prospectors can often be the keenest to donate to ‘good causes’. Poorer people are usually more generous than richer ones, and there is little correlation between income and values].

Overall, the 'gap' between where Supporters are and the National population, is closed from 49% to 21% by use of the for-children framing.

Environment>Children Reframing uplift effect – more Settlers + GDs agree

ENV	Pion	Prosp	Sett	CHILD	Pion	Prosp	Sett
Strongly	45.8%	30.4%	28.9%	Strongly	47.1%	42.6%	36.1%
Slightly	29.0%	20.8%	26.7%	Slightly	34.9%	36.2%	36.9%
Neither a	19.3%	21.8%	26.8%	Neither a	14.7%	16.9%	21.7%
Slightly a	4.3%	20.2%	11.8%	Slightly a	2.9%	2.5%	2.6%
Strongly	1.6%	6.8%	5.7%	Strongly	0.3%	1.8%	2.8%



Use of the 'environment for our children' frame rather than the 'environmental concern' frame has a positive effect on all MGs but it is very small for Pioneers, and much larger for Prospectors and Settlers.

(GDs means Golden Dreamers, the entry-level Prospectors who are more like Settlers than the NP Now People Prospectors). 'For environment' left, 'for children right'.

Conclusions

These examples show that framing effects can have a powerful impact on the 'gap' between a campaign, engagement or fundraising proposition which seems to make sense to the 'messenger', and the gap they have to bridge in order to engage their target audience.

Where the messenger represents a Pioneer dominated cause or issue group which is attempting to reach a wider, more 'mainstream' public, the principal gain is made by increasing the appeal to Settlers and Prospectors, if the right frame is used.

Karen Rothwell of Greenpeace comments: "Values Modes provide a powerful additional tool for developing almost any form of communication because they give insights into the emotional motivations at play, and how these differ across different groups. A Holy Grail for communicators is to be able to 'see and feel' the world as the people they want to reach see and feel it, and values modes can help us do that. Without this insight, it's all too easy to develop work based on 'what works for me' – and come up with things that don't work for the people we want to reach. Of course it's not the be all and end all of any strategy but I've found at both the RSPB and Greenpeace that it's easy to use - and it works!"

Acknowledgements:

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