Social-sciences research essay series:

Social Inertial Ballast

Adapted from Chapter 6 of the book: "A New America, An Awakened Future on Our Horizon"

Introduction

This December issue continues with concepts of "Choice, Freewill, New Patterns, and Discernment with Compassion", included in the July 2007 GA News. Previously we focused on the more positive qualities discovered in the rich IOOW-2000 statistical research data. It is time to shed light on certain socially-imbedded factors that are impediments to positive change and that are expertly manipulated by "the powers that be" to their advantage. To describe these tendencies, we coined the expression "social inertial ballast" or "inertial ballast" for short. This has to do with the leaden, ballast-like quality that, like a black hole, can absorb enormous energy from people and organizations who have good intentions. They wind up expending an enormous effort, trying to raise the level of awareness and opinions yet with little effect. This ballasting effect serves to maintain a low commonality in terms of values, beliefs, and opinions among the population at large.

Naïve calls for honoring of all opinions and beliefs directly couple into these profoundly dysfunctional tendencies within society and thus hold everyone back. Here in summary form are findings from the *IOOW-2000* research.

So Why Haven't Things Changed for the Better, Sooner?

If so many people identify with the positive future values and beliefs that we introduced in Part One of this book, why have things seemingly not changed very much? Part of the answer has to do with the qualities of active social involvement.

- Many of those people who identified with this emerging new paradigm *dissociated* themselves from traditional materialist culture and power.
- A significant percentage of individuals who supported positive future beliefs *withdrew* from the electoral process.
- Add to this, the *force of habit* of old ways rooted in the section of society acting as an *inertial ballast* favoring established norms.
- There has not yet developed a visible leadership or material presence for a *positive future movement*, largely due to its relative newness, compared to its well-established counterparts.
- Out of necessity for being early pioneers, leading individuals representing a new paradigm based on spiritual or integral values of compassion and service tend to function *more individually than they do cooperatively*.
- Consequently, there has been *too little impetus to work together* to gather the necessary material resources needed to elevate a coherent message for all to hear and upon which to act.

This pattern however, is beginning to change – partly out of necessity, as well as that of individuals choosing to know truth.

Perhaps there has been an innate "governor" that we have not been much aware of, much like an attractor from our future, calling to us. This call is like a homing beacon guiding us to our higher selves and higher nature. It seeks to graduate ourselves from "adolescence" as a species to a more "mature" position that co-creates a positive future out of a greater awareness of interconnectedness with one another and our natural environment. We are speaking of a fundamental spirituality so vital that it has *always* been there, waiting for us to connect and access its fundamental wisdom and higher guidance.

 "Wait," you may say. "What if you do not think spirituality or connection of all life is important. Or more so, what about those people whose idea-frame is contrary to much that we have been putting forward?" All right, let's first take a brief look at research-based indicators of a part of our society we have termed "inertial ballast."

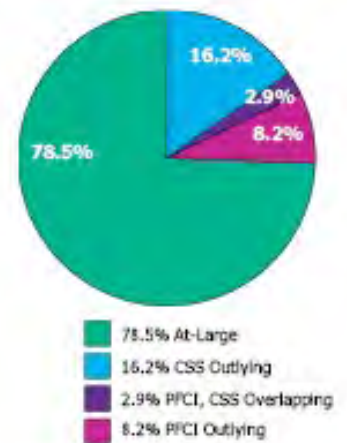## "Social Inertial Ballast," Disconnection, and Disengagement

Two small but distinct groups were identified through the *IOOW-2000* research that, combined, constitute a significant minority (21.5 %) of our population. They tend to act disproportionately as "inertial ballast" and are often used as a convenient excuse to hold everyone back.

One group, estimated to be 8.2 % of the U.S., are generally constricted and very conservative in their worldview, as well as being generally disengaged from self and society. Their future outlook is very pessimistic, they vote, and do so along conservative political lines. They tend to go to religious services more than once a week. They also tend to be older than the general population and are more likely to be men. They are, however, somewhat more aware of their need for spiritual growth. Of the 8 Types, Cautious and Conservative (CC) predominates here with a secondary component of Disengaged from Social Concerns (DSC).

ESTIMATES OF "INERTIAL BALLAST"

78.5% At-Large
16.2% CSS Outlying
2.9% PFCI, CSS Overlapping
8.2% PFCI Outlying

Another group that functions as "inertial ballast" represents 16.2 % of the population. This second group is noticeably not as constricted in perspective or conservatively oriented, but is more disengaged from self and society. They too, are more likely to be men (but not to the extent as the 8.2 % group first described). This group is also younger than the overall population, mostly Gen-X, and single. They are not as likely to be very religious in terms of attending services, their future outlook is not as pessimistic, and they are not as likely to vote. Of the 8 Types, Disengaged from Social Concerns (DSC) predominates here with a secondary component of Cautious and Conservative (CC).

There is very little overlap between these two groups (only 2.9 %) and combined, these two groups constitute 21.5 % of the general population. Education and income are not significant factors in either of these two groups. Rather, what is key are their values and beliefs. As "inertial ballast," these groups tend to function as a net energy drain by opposing positive innovations in a generally unconscious manner, usually passively, sometimes dynamically. How often have people asked relevant questions or said things in the presence of individuals of this type that differed from established norms, only to have them put down with cynical remarks, thus stifling any meaningful discussion? This happens in countless situations from family meal

times to workplace situations across the country. This dynamic is also fueled by news and entertainment mass media. They do this by denying copy space or airtime to investigate the truth, by purposeful misinformation, by crude rhetoric of on-air personalities, by promoting column space for cynical commentaries, and by endlessly promoting "dark" themes under the guise of "entertainment." People and organizations that are part of the social ballast dynamic are basically afraid of anything that hints of challenging their perceived world, whether it be in terms of their idea-frame, social or material privilege, or other belief systems that help them define their identity.

Such disaffected individuals might be more readily manipulated with superficial palliatives to support extreme conservative or reactionary positions. Here we wish to distinguish those who are disaffected and disconnected from those who are deliberately involved in deceiving society as to their true aims of power.

In the absence of truly innovative and courageous leadership, this inertial ballast factor in our society further makes it difficult for positive social innovations to become widely adopted by mainstream society. People *do* want to hear of a new perspective, people *are tired* of the old game, but without a coherent and substantial "stage" to speak from, most people will continue *not* to hear what is new and good, as it is drowned out (or met with silence) by the mainstream outlets for news and information.

Thus, powerful new strategies leading to the creation of new structures paralleling established ones are most invaluable at this time. Eventually, almost everyone will "see the light" although for some, the process may take longer.

Estimating "Social Inertial Ballast"

Using the *IOOW-2000* data, one way to identify this group within the population is to examine some of the qualities of those people who simply don't have any positive identification on the *IOOW-2000* indexes measuring Connection, Service, and Spirituality (see Chapter 11 for more information). The assumption is that they include a large concentration of highly disengaged individuals.

Another method would be to examine those 8.2 % who fall into a category of people who scored high on Social Material Stress scale, high on the Social Traditional - Religious Conservative index, and low on the Positive Future – Cooperative Integrative scale. The assumption here is that when you have very little by way of positive or integrative factors to balance a stressful daily life and socially conservative values, you get another type of disengaged person.

Two Estimates of "Inertial Ballast" in Society: The 8.2 % Group

The **"8.2 % Group"** includes those who scored *high* on the Social Material Stress scale, *high* on the Social Traditional - Religious Conservative index, and *low* on the Positive Future – Cooperative Integrative scale. They constitute 8.2 % of all respondents.

- 63 % are male.
- Tend to be slightly older (mean age is 47.9 versus 45.7 for all, and median age is 45 versus 43 for all respondents), however generational make-up is typical of that for the U.S. overall.
- 47 % are in the Cautious and Conservative (CC) type, compared to 10 % for all respondents.
- 25 % are in the Disengaged from Social Concerns (DSC) type, compared to 14 % for the overall population.
- Voting likelihood about on par with everyone else.
- Generally, 52 % preferred Bush for president in the 2000 election and 65 % of those most likely to vote chose Bush.
- 72 % identify with conservative political views.

- Score high on the religious index and 32 % tend to attend some sort of services more than once a week.
- 82 % support the death penalty, compared to an average of 58.5 % across all respondents.
- 59 % did not agree with being tolerant of others and 36 % strongly disagreed with being tolerant.
- Very pessimistic future outlook: 38 % see only problems and disasters; 19 % see either the same or problems and disasters.
- 25 % disagree that the Earth is basically a unique kind of living organism; 12 % are neutral.
- 48 % do not think there is a global awakening taking place.
- 52 % do not think that a global awakening will make the world a better place in 10 years.
- Only 38 % report experiencing a sense of sacred in everything, compared to 56 % for all respondents.
- Higher than average in feeling a need to experience spiritual growth.
- Tend to be almost on a par with – but slightly below – the rest of the population in terms of income and education.
- They are more likely to have Internet access at home but not on the job and their Internet usage is typical for the US overall.

Two Estimates of "Inertial Ballast" in Society: The 16.2 % Group

The **"16.2 % Group"** are those who simply don't have any positive identification on the *IOOW-2000* indexes measuring Connection, Service, and Spirituality. They constitute 16.2 % of all respondents.

- 59 % are male.
- May be slightly younger (mean age is 41.7 compared to 45.7 for all respondents).
- 42 % are Gen-X and Gen-Y age groups, compared to 34 % for all respondents; 30 % are Gen-X, compared to 25 % for all respondents.
- 33 % are likely to be single, never married compared to 24 % for all respondents.
- 78 % score high on the Social Material Stress scale, compared to 42 % for all respondents.
- 60 % score low on the Social Traditional - Religious Conservative index, compared to 40 % for all respondents.
- 48 % are in the Disengaged from Social Concerns (DSC) type, compared to 14 % for all respondents.
- Marginally less likely to vote: (51 % likely to vote compared to 55 % for general population).
- Choice of candidate in 2000 election was very similar to that of the general population of respondents.
- Score low on the religious index and 44.6 % tend not to attend religious services.
- More likely to support a death penalty with 68 % in support, compared to 58.5 % overall.
- While 59 % did agree with being tolerant of others, 21 % nonetheless strongly disagreed with being tolerant.

- Pessimistic future outlook: 28 % see only problems and disasters; 21 % see either the same or problems and disasters; and 15 % see things staying much the same.
- Slightly less likely to agree that the Earth is basically a unique kind of living organism and slightly more likely to disagree with this.
- 53 % do not think there is a global awakening taking place.
- 59 % do not think that a global awakening will make the world a better place in 10 years.
- Only 34 % report a sense of sacred in everything, compared to 55 % for all respondents.
- Less interested in being involved in creating a better world: 78 % agreeing with this compared to 91 % for the general population.
- Tend to be almost on a par with the rest of the population in terms of income and education.
- Internet access at home or work is on par with everyone else; however their Internet usage is high compared to the rest of the population.
- Less likely to feel their spiritual needs are not being met and lower than average in feeling a need to experience spiritual growth.

A simple comparison of overall key value and belief indicators show these groups are not that far from each other in a number of important areas. However, these two groups do appear to differ somewhat in terms of age, voting likelihood, candidate preference, social material stress, religious involvement, and global awakening.

While both groups have high concentrations of the Disengaged from Social Concerns (DSC) type and Cautious and Conservative (CC) type, the DSC type predominates in the 16.2 % group while the CC type predominates in the 8.2 % group.

Those people who most fit the "inertial ballast" profile do not have a set of positive values with which to balance the stress and challenges of daily life – with virtually no positive scoring on the Positive Future - Cooperative Integrative scale (PFCI). For example, we find in the 8 Types those who also share in a high Social Material Stress (SMS) score, yet who have a high PFCI value score and less constricted worldview. These would include Persisting against Adversity (PA) and the Working for a New Life of Wholeness (WNL) types. In contrast, there are those types – Cautious and Conservative (CC) and Disengaged from Social Concerns (DSC) – who also scored high on the SMS scale, but low on PFCI.

Meaningful bridging between these groups would likely meet with the best success first with the 16.2 % group in addressing their need for non-threatening connection, the possibility for spiritual growth in a non-doctrinaire manner, and creative, innovative projects in which to engage with others that also have some broader social benefit. It is a matter of helping not only these people, but all 8 Types, to see beyond that which we find different or exclusive about each other.

One valuable aspect of this data is to show an unmistakable overlap of our core values and beliefs. The reactive position of "me/us versus them" becomes moderated by recognition of something more inclusive and inspiring of humankind's greater being.

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