



Human Dymensions Quarterly Newsletter Culture, Learning and Risk

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

- [December 2015 Newsletter](#)
- [The Strain of a Broken Heart](#)
- [New Video Launch Page](#)
- [Post Graduate Studies 2016](#)
- [Texting While Walking](#)
- [Innovation and Risk Aversion](#)
- [Some Good Links](#)

IN OTHER NEWS

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December 2015 Newsletter

This is the final newsletter for 2015 packed with research news, information and updates. With over 1200 subscribers and more than 500 passing on to friends and acquaintances, it's good to know that the perspective of the social psychology of risk is being circulated and discussed.

Happy Christmas and Best Wishes for 2016

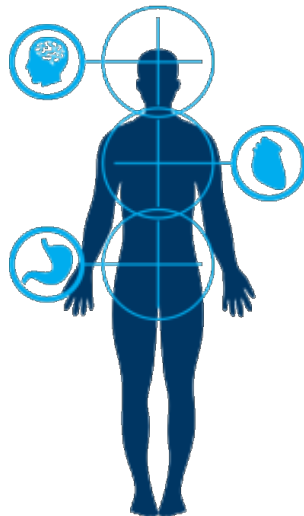
This has been somewhat of a hectic year for Human Dymensions now with more than 20 associates and contractors all qualified in the Social Psychology of Risk. This year we have added more than 20 new clients to our consulting work and it's all good news about business and organisations wishing to build the psychology of risk into their business.

Rob and the team of associates wish you a Happy Christmas, holiday refreshment and best wishes for 2016.

Framing and Competition: I took this photo on the right at the Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg. It is the Madonna and Child by Leonardo Da Vinci. My daughter (who is married to a Finn), wife and I caught the fast train from Helsinki to St Petersburg and enjoyed days wandering the 'Venice of the East', taking in the rich semiotics of the city. The first 5 who respond, a copy of any of my books of choice. What do you notice about the photo? Email to admin@humandymensions.com



The Strain of a Broken Heart



Individual and collective decision making is greatly affected by many non-cognitive, non-rational factors. We make decisions with our head, heart and gut individually and collectively. We have **one brain but three minds** with over 250 different social effects and biases that condition the way humans make decisions.

Recent research by **Alexander Lyon** discusses the way humans experience heart pain. **Lyon discusses the metaphor of a broken heart and suggests there is much more to it than the romantics of the heart semiotic.**

We know from research by Young (**New Scientist, 15 Dec 2012**) that the Alimentary System is much more than just flesh and blood. We are only just learning about how our heart and gut 'think' independently of the brain. Young calls the alimentary system 'a second brain' just like Kahneman talks about thinking 'fast and slow'. I would prefer to be less binary about the matter and hold to lots of grey in between the black and white. This is what I try to do with my One Brain Three Minds Model.

Lyon states 'To paraphrase Donald Rumsfeld, there are many known unknowns when it comes to broken heart syndrome but we're learning much more about this fascinating condition and why the heart undergoes this temporary paralysis in just one area. We suspect it's triggered by adrenaline, one

of the body's main stress hormones, often associated with fight or flight response.' One thing is for sure, many of our non-rational decision making operates in a state of automaticity and through heuristics. Our whole working system seeks to drive us to efficiency by wanting us to work without thinking. 99% of the time we manage everthing very well through heuristics and automaticity. Then when something happens we end up with regulators and legislators attributing stupidity, irresponsibility and irrationality to an incident and advocating rationalist responses (mind 1) when that is not where the seat of decision making was made.

Further [Angela Kucia suggests we can die of a broken heart.](#)

As long as the risk industry continues to frame the world through MInd 1 only, responses to risk will never make sense. Neither will the response to risk that doesn't seem to make sense really tackle the problem.

New Video Launch Page

human dymensions **hd** Culture, Learning and Risk helping organisations better manage people at work

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With the collection of over 100 videos on the Human Dimensions site we have reorganised the [Video Launch Page](#). The page is now a collection of 16 launching icons that help with navigation. There are quite a number of videos that are free and most of the academic files from the post graduate program are pass coded and cannot be viewed. Two sample lectures on Weick and organising are available [here for those interested](#).

Post Graduate Studies 2016

For those considering [Post Graduate Studies](#) for 2016 please [contact Rob asap](#) as there are possible changes afoot.

On the right we see a group from 2015 undertaking an experiential learning activity 'Casino Royale'. A great way to understand the unconscious and learning.



Texting While Walking



[A recent alert at Newcastle University](#) raises some interesting questions and challenges about technology, technique, learning, regulation and the social psychology of risk.

Graham Percy, an IT systems administrator at the university for 15 years, said "I suppose in the world we're living in, commonsense doesn't really exist any more and it's about 'warn me or I'll sue you'.

One of my favourite authors is [Jacques Ellul](#). Ellul is a trailblazer in highlighting the trajectory of human fixation with technology. A free download of Ellul's best selling book is [here](#).

Recent research shows that [our love for screen damages the brain](#). It is also clear that the current exposure of children to screens is taking its [toll on our children](#).

The seduction of screens and technique also spreads to various advocates of technologies in understanding and tackling risk. Is this anything more than being mesmerised by [The machine that goes bing?](#)

One of the most successful programs for Human Dimensions is the [conversations, engagement and listening](#) program. It is fascinating that many people who attend this training are overloaded with training on regulation and systems yet so poorly trained in engagement, open questions, listening, motivation and attending.

It is also a challenge in training to ask people to put down their screens in training and focus attention on the training, it is like we have created a whole new generation of people who can't reflect and think without a screen in their face.

I went to the movies the other evening and was confronted with a person beside me with their watch buzzing off every few minutes. After 30 minutes I had to ask him to switch it off. Indignantly he complied but not with understanding nor any sense of social responsibility.

We enter a brave new age where the most important questions about social decision making will be: Where is this all taking us? What is the trajectory?

The attached picture shows a group of Post Graduate students walking and reflecting at the [Canberra Cork Plantation](#). Part of our studies have been to better understand addictions and unconscious communication. With so many gadgets and apps being sold as solutions for tackling risk, isn't it time we asked questions about trajectory and the loss of basic engagement skills?

Innovation and Risk Aversion

Today (7 December 2015) the [Turnbull Government released a \\$1 Billion Innovation Statement](#). It seems one of the greatest dangers to our economy is not a lack of productivity but a [culture of risk aversion](#). Leading the charge of risk aversion and trickle dumb down is the risk and safety industry. Now more over burdened with regulation than ever and the sector infused with extremist 'zero' discourse. The mantra for organisations is 'risk elimination'. Meanwhile, the Turnbull government is talking up risk and invoking new processes to try and encourage businesses to risk. I felt the trickle down effect of risk aversion and dumb down when I drove under a massive sign on the M1 freeway in Melbourne this week that read 'Zero is Possible'.

After many years of insulting every driver on Victorian roads by calling everyone 'bloody idiots' or 'the son of a bloody idiot', the TAC and its associates have gone one crazier. I also drove under a sign that said 49,000 something but it was too distracting I decided to not read it. The only reason I could read the first sign 'Zero is Possible' was because there had been two road accidents on the M1 and I was caught in a traffic jam. There is no doubt about it, if you talk nonsense and believe nonsense then people will ignore the language and reject the discourse.

The latest campaign for TAC Victoria demonstrates the most **absurd binary nonsense witnessed in Australian cultural history**. On a complex road system with millions of fallible drivers, with no history of zero since the inception of cars and roads, the TAC has developed the ability to believe in zero. In a moving, mortal mass of motorists the TAC speak perfectionism requiring perfect cars, perfect roads, perfect judgments and perfect decisions at all times from mortal humans simply because they can't imagine or escape from their binary mindset. This means no drunk driving, drug driving, inexperienced driving, silly driving and mistakes. This is where binary logic takes you, a trajectory of nonsense. The trajectory of all binary logic leads to extremism. This is the same logic of **David Cameron (PM UK) that supposes if you don't support the war on terror one is a terrorist sympathiser???** This is the same logic as 'all accidents are preventable' and 'zero harm'. Any binary trajectory can only lead to delusion and denial.

The population of Victoria must be either amazingly tolerant of stupidity and nonsense language or be so desensitised to stupidity that they don't care. **The only humans who believe in perfection have a mental health condition** and talking perfection to humans in the face of fallibility and complexity demonstrates a state of insanity.

This TAC campaign makes 'Dumb Ways to Die' look like a stroke of intergalactic genius. Like counting the number of 'global thought leaders' on LinkedIn, one could become depressed about the non-leadership of the many over the non-existent followers of the few.

Here are some good reasons why this TAC 'Zero is Possible' Campaign takes the crazy risk aversion cake:

1. People don't believe in zero. The majority of people surveyed in my MiProfile database (sample of 30,000) believe zero goals and zero language are nonsense.
2. Talking about faith in something as if belief can make something happen is simply the same as faith healing, it is delusional. No sane person believes in perfectionism ().
3. Perfectionism is about denial. Perfectionism is a mental health disorder.
4. Calculative language and discourse in numbers is demotivating. Talking in numbers and thinking in numbers disconnects people from the story behind the numbers. This is learned early in social psychology through a study of 'psychic numbing' (Slovic). It's the same reason we become desensitised to numbers/fatalities in terrorist attacks or numbers of those suffering famine in Africa. Calculative talking and thinking is immature uninspiring discourse.
5. Insulting people and insulting their intelligence is demotivating. Keep calling someone a 'bloody idiot' and see how many friends you have. Surely one of the most unsuccessful road campaigns in Australian History. Keep telling people you believe in zero in the face of complexity and fallibility and watch the response.
6. Binary logic only has a trajectory of entrapment. How many people do you want to kill today is a silly question just like stating 'all accidents are preventable'. In what world? With what people? In what time?
7. Zero doesn't pass the by-products test. What is the trajectory and by-product of such a silly campaign? What toll is acceptable? The TAC tell you in their strategy document, anything less than 200. So, does $199 = 0$?
8. The TAC campaign contradicts all that is known through research about motivation and inspiration. The nonsense language of 'safety is a choice you make' (in the TAC strategy) ignores all evidence on how social, psychological and non-rational factors influence human judgment and decision making.
9. The semiotics (signs and symbols) of zero will change the whole way that incidents are reported, denied, shifted and reframed, so that people can speak in glowing ways to the government of achieving goals and attributing success to nonsense language.
10. 'Zero is possible' doesn't pass 'the pub test'. Tell anyone in a pub you believe in fairies and Santa Clause and watch the faces and listen for the comments. Tell everyone you believe humans are infallible and immortal, listen and look. Zero doesn't work, just ask any mature person who works in drug and rehab.
11. TAC language in their Strategy only speak of reduction in targets and never speak of perfectionism. Such contradictions confuse and deny all we know about semiotics. Speaking one meaning and contradicting it with other language is called 'double speak', the foundation for all hypocrisy. The goal in all the documentation for TAC is 'fewer than 200', how is this zero?

The reality is, we don't need to speak in binary ways that demotivate people but need to speak in ways that motivate people. If we want to motivate we need to be silent about things that demotivate and amplifying things that motivate. Refraining from speaking binary nonsense is a sure sign of maturity. Amplifying nonsense simply tells the Victorian population that the TAC and associates have a mental health condition. Amplifying nonsense zero noise deafens the population and sets back the population years in taking the sense of the authorities seriously. What is worse, the constant bombardment of zero

on the collective psyche drives risk aversion like a contagion. With millions of people driving under a 50 metre sign saying 'zero is possible' the unconscious priming affect is alarming.

So, in 10 years time we will look back on the nonsense of this campaign and see that humans are mortal and fallible, systems are complex and not perfect and, that the semiotics of perfection is dangerous. But wait, some bright spark will come up with a beyond zero campaign, obviously the last campaign wasn't non-sensical enough.

Some Good Links

[Resilyence](#)

[In Mind](#)

[The School of Life](#)

[The Philosopher's Mail](#)

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HUMAN DYMENSIONS PTY LTD.
10 Jens Place
Kambah ACT 2902
Mobile: 0424547115
Fax: 02 62311815
www.humandymensions.com