



Human Dymensions Quarterly Newsletter Culture, Learning and Risk

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Risk and Safety Matrices and the Psychology of Colour

Artists, **marketers and advertisers**, fashion designers, graphic and instructional designers, **supermarkets, therapists, healing**, designers, and teachers know about the importance of colour. Many of these professionals know about **the psychology of colour**. Even **politicians** know that colour matters. **Human mood and emotion** is strongly affected by colour, sounds, music, the environment, social context and the presence of others. For the purposes of this blog I just want to focus on **colour**, although the interconnectivity of colour to other social psychological factors ought not be forgotten.

Colour communicates to the unconscious and has a profound effect on perception on the unconscious in a similar way to the way words and language (through discourse) also permeate into our **unconscious**. The use of colour is **not neutral**. This is why schools and teachers know that discipline issues are assisted by relocating children to a room that is painted soft green. Blue can have a calming affect and red can influence levels of **heart rate and exercise**. The **crime rate and suicide can be affected by colour in combination with other social and environmental factors**. Even the latest fad on colouring in books for **health and well being** show that colour can help relieve stress and anxiety. Strange isn't it that as we grow up we are told to give up colouring in for text because art, play, imagination and dreaming have been made a pejorative activity by the rationalists. Strange that one is now insulted by being called 'a dreamer' when in times of old this was a term of praise and attraction.

Of course the rationalist-materialist and reductionist-behaviourist paradigm would like to deny any affect of colour or that there is even an unconscious. It is strange that **so many disciplines know and are intelligent about the psychology of colour** and yet it never gets a mention in safety. Even McDonalds knows that the use of colour can affect hunger and perception of size (Ritzer, *The McDonaldization of Society*) but Safety doesn't connect colour to decision making. Unfortunately, all the curves, pyramids, triangles and matrices that populate the safety space have a psychological affect. Yet Safety continues to believe that **decision making is only a rational process**.

There is an amazing level of information on the psychology of colour, even a **pencil set** I have on my desk that helps remind me of the affect of colour on the unconscious. If you want to know what the instructional or graphic designer knows about colour this involves extensive study and play with the champion of colours, **Pantone**. There are at least 1700 colours, many of which we can't 'differentiate' with the naked eye and of course many people are colour blind and have challenges in differentiating between certain tones of colour. Then again **most of us don't even see major changes in colour** but our unconscious does.

This brings me to the naivety of Safety in its use of colour. When we do a risk assessments and use the typical risk matrix the use of colour change convinces our unconscious that something in actuality has also changed. Amazing how the shift from red to orange to yellow to blue to green is the psychological goal of the risk assessment process. Yeah, let's just get it out the way so we can get the job done. Of course, we all know that risk cannot be eliminated, there is either a residual risk or indeed, a new risk has been created or the risk has been 'shifted' elsewhere. But psychologically, the colour change convinces us (unconsciously) that something has happened in reality, in a way it makes us blind to real risk. By the way, the idea of a coloured risk matrix or coloured hierarchy of controls is **only very recent in the management of risk**. In some ways the coloured matrices and hierarchy of controls models help us feel psychologically comfortable with the risk assessment process. The shifting of the colours sometimes becomes the goal of a risk assessment rather than the actual focus on a conversation about risk. I call this the 'colour comfort factor'.

I **wrote about matrices** recently including an extensive list of research and resources on the topic, however none of these resources discuss the influence of the psychology of colour in the process.

In order to assist the affect of the 'colour comfort factor' in risk assessment using the hierarchy of controls, I use a By-Products and Trade-Offs calculator (see below) in my Risk Intelligence training. **(Please go to the competition section if you want to win a set of 20 By-Products and Trade-Offs calculators for your workplace)**. The purpose of the calculator is to help organisations reduce

IN OTHER NEWS

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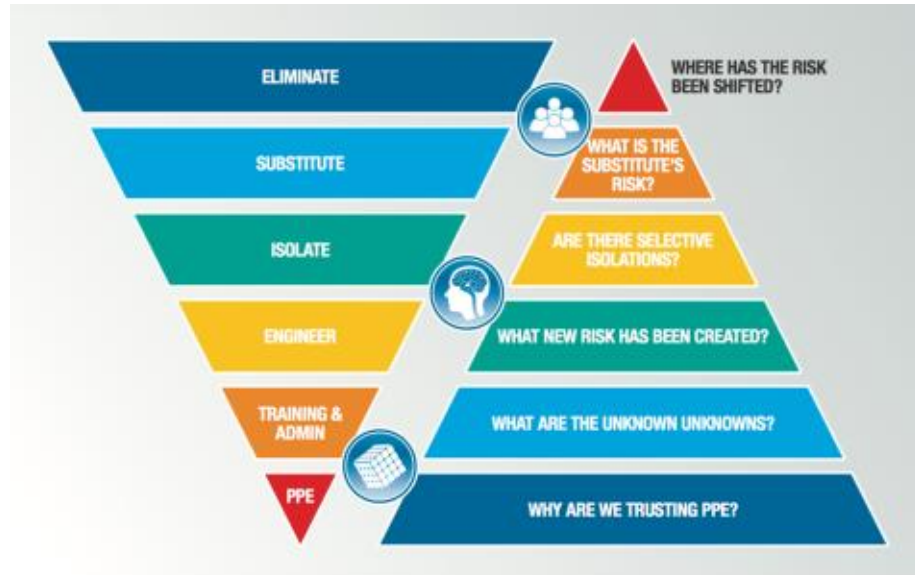
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overconfidence (hubris) and naivety in the risk management process. In this way, the organization and workers are able to 'entertain doubt' (or what Hudson calls 'Chronic Unease' or Weick calls 'Preoccupation With Failure'), one of the most critical factors in risk and safety management

Further Reading

One of the best books to read on by-products and trade-offs in risk is by Amalberti (2013, Navigating Safety, Necessary Compromises and Trade-Offs Theory and Practice).

By-Products/Trade-Offs Calculator



CONTROLS VS BY-PRODUCTS/TRADE-OFFS CALCULATOR

Phone 0424 547 115 • www.humandimensions.com



Enter the Competition to win your set.

Perspective Styles in Tackling Risk



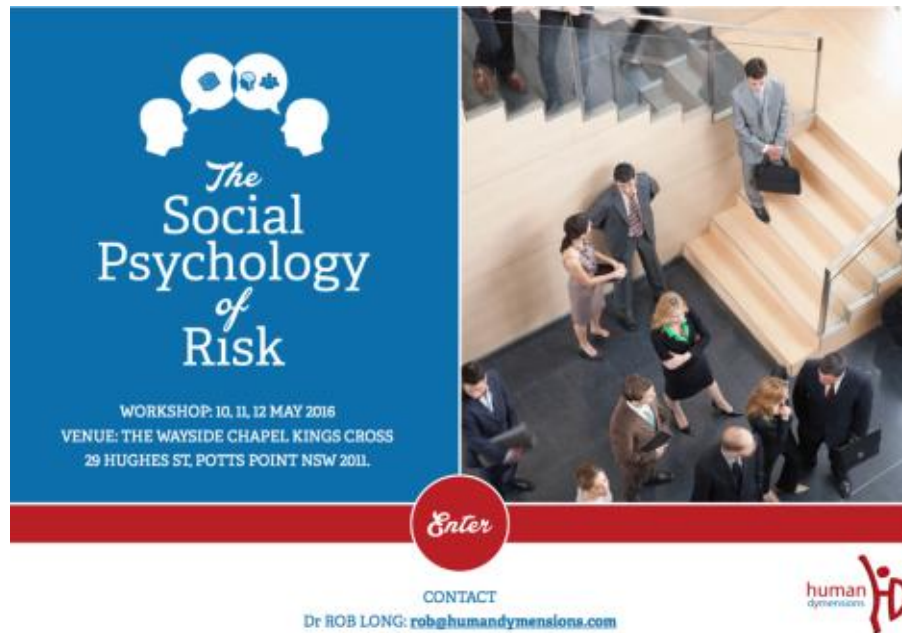
PERSPECTIVE STYLES

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Reverse of the Calculator to show how all risk is interpreted in relation to perspective and perception bias.

Public Workshop - Social Psychology of Risk



The Social Psychology of Risk

WORKSHOP: 10, 11, 12 MAY 2016
VENUE: THE WAYSIDE CHAPEL KINGS CROSS
29 HUGHES ST, POTTS POINT NSW 2011.

CONTACT
Dr ROB LONG: rob@humandymensions.com

human dymensions

When

10,11,12 May

Where

The Wayside Chapel Kings Cross Sydney

A re-scheduled Social Psychology of Risk Workshop has been set for 10,11,12 May 2016. Details of the workshop can be [downloaded here](#) and details about the Workshop to be held at can be viewed [here](#)

Places are strictly limited to 20 participants on a 'first in best dressed'.

[Register and pay here.](#)

Competition

Win a set of 20 Human Dymensions By-Products and Trade-Off Calculators

In less than 10 lines, tell me the story of an unforeseen trade-off or by-product in risk that emerged in the course of a project or workplace activity that you experienced.

The best 5 entries will receive a 20 pack of the Human Dymensions By-Products and Trade-Offs Calculator.

Send sentries to admin@humandymensions.com

Entries for this competition will close on 4 March.

Presenting at MassMin 2016

Dr Long is one of the Keynote presenters at **MassMin 9-11 May 2016**. **The Keynote will be on the Social Psychology of Risk.**

The presentation paper will be available from the **MassMin site** and will also be published in the The AusIMM Bulletin in May/June.

The presentation will involve some open public experiments to demonstrate that social arrangements affect decision making and perception.



Public Workshop on the Social Psychology of Incident Investigation Registration of Interest



Dr Long and the team are planning a four day public workshop of the [Social Psychology Event Exploration Program \(SEEK\)](#). The [SEEK program](#) builds on orthodox and conventional Incident Investigation Programs and takes investigation skills to a whole new level. The Program brings to the incident investigation process all the insights of a social psychology of risk. [You can download the program outline HERE.](#)

Most investigation methodologies are based on the rationalist-materialist and reductionist-behaviourist paradigm and as such only tackle investigation from one mechanistic perspective. [The SEEK Program](#) brings in to play a whole new way of understanding the investigation process, particularly how humans make judgments and decisions.

The four day program will include associate presenters led by Dr Long and will cost \$1750. If you wish to register interest in the four day Program proposed for 25-28 July 2016 in Melbourne please send an email to admin@humandimensions.com to go on the mailing list. Places will be limited to 20.

Dr Long and the team can also present the SEEK Program directly for your organisation. Contact admin@humandimensions.com if you want to know more.

Consciousness of Risk as Art

Humphrey tells us (Scientific American Mind May/June 2015, pp. 65-69) that consciousness remains a scientific mystery. Whilst consciousness is easy to talk about it is very difficult to explain how the activity of neurons create a unique consciousness. How can we be aware of mental states with which we have very little control?



I recently had a friend who had a gentle fall in a hotel foyer and yet developed brain damage and went into a coma. **A coma** is a prolonged state of unconsciousness. Sometimes people never 'come out' of a coma. Yet, how mysterious that some do. Someone in a coma just looks like they are asleep. Yet in a coma state a person cannot be controlled or woken unless their unconscious controls such awakening. Someone in a coma is unresponsive to the environment, even pain.

Humphrey supports findings by Ramachandran (2004, A Brief Tour of Human Consciousness) that the best way to understand consciousness is through theatre or art. Others believe that consciousness is more like a conjuring show.

Suppose you cut your thumb, your brain responds to signals from the thumb with an internalized hurt response. Yet take some morphine and that signal can be cut off to the **brain and no pain is felt**. The activity of pain is simply the activity of nerve cells that tell you there is pain. Scientists call this the explanatory gap, that it makes just as much sense that numbers come from biscuits. How do you get conscious 'pain' from nerve cells?

Humphrey supposes that consciousness is no more than your 'inner picture' of the neural activity? We think of art as a source of enlightenment and of illusion as a source of error. This is a good starting point.

So how does one become 'conscious' of risk unless one imagines what might happen or 'see' with their inner eye of what might unfold. In this sense risk is part of a painting in the mind. The risk is visualized as one imagines what might happen. So, making something conscious or becoming 'aware' of a risk is also an act of bring into being through just as an artist brings a work of art into being from what they visualize. The main player in the work of art is you in consideration and observation of someone else. The same is true for a hazard. One doesn't know what a hazard is without experience, memory or imagination.

Understanding Self Harm



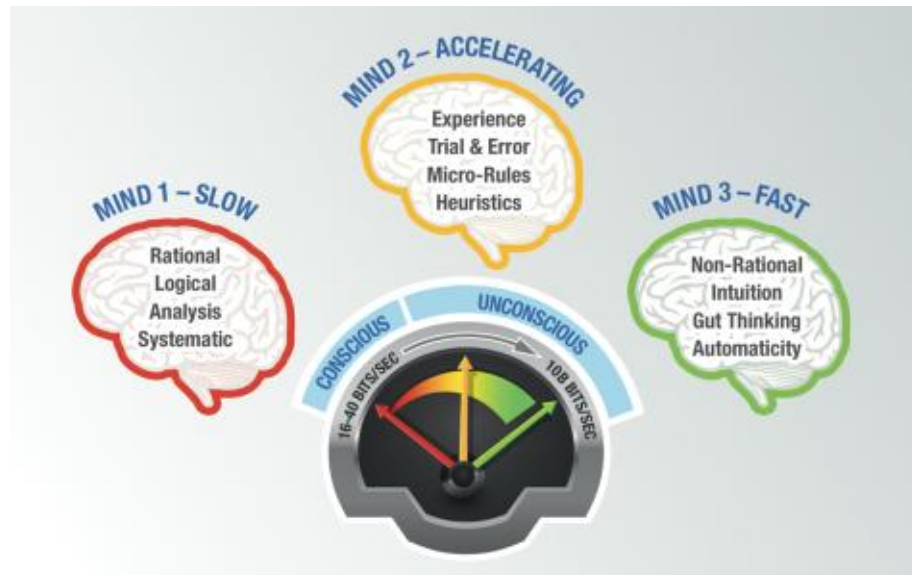
It seems strange that in risk and safety so many chant the semiotic of 'zero harm' whilst in many other ways people self harm, either unintentionally by lifestyle or intentionally by process.

[Recent research](#) shows that nonsuicidal self-injury (NSSI) is

about much more than a 'cry for help'. Strangely those who self-harm state it makes them feel better. Whilst this may seem for some difficult to understand we need to come to grips with this as we would with any mental illness. With compassion and understanding.

Some suggest it could be self-punishment that 'motivates' NSSI. Now there's a challenge for the behaviourists. Other research shows that 'relief' from pain is another motivator. Indeed, the research shows that some people seem hard wired biologically for NSSI.

Imagine, It's Easy if You Try



Imagining is an exercise, and like all exercise one gets better with practice. To strengthen the imagination helps deal with things past, present and future. Imagining what might happen is a precautionary exercise that helps plan, strategies and tackle risk. Sloan (2006, *Learning to Think Strategically*) demonstrates how imagination is essential for learning and planning. That is, strategic planning is an imagination exercise and, we don't get disappointed when all our plans are not realized. Rather, we learn from where our imagination failed and strategies didn't work. Sloan calls this process, the 'surf and dive and reflect' domains. Michael (1973, *Learning to Plan and Planning to Learn*) states (p. 84ff):

'Essentially, long-range social planning is a philosophy, with operational consequences, for going about learning how to act in the present, in light of continuously-revised anticipations of the future. It is a philosophy of responsible, strategic decision-making in a complex and changing society: it is inherently open and tentative, but strongly committed to acting in terms of chosen futures.'

Further:

'The set of requirements for long-range social planning represents a cybernetic system. These requirements take signals from two sources – from planning activities (the planning organization), and the plan-using activities (the plan-using environment) – and relates the signals to each other, so that differences between what is intended and what is happening can be detected and serve as a basis for adjusting the relationship between the sources, and any mismatch can be minimized. ... It requires persons and organisations to seek out their own errors and reward their detection, rather than repress errors in the hope of avoiding punishment for failure.'

Continuous improvement is not about failure but learning. Feedback is not a disruption to process but an enhancement of process in readiness for turbulence and uncertainty. Weick calls this 'continually updating'. One cannot do this without vivid imagination and reflection capability.

Brigard (Scientific American Mind Nov/Dec 2015 p. 30ff) explains imagination as 'counterfactual thinking'. We release our mind from the clutter of everyday things and dip into alternative realities by daydreaming, meditating and storytelling. Imagination helps us transcend the limits of **our slow rational mind one** and 'picture' a changing past and a possible future.

Counterfactual thinking and dreaming both have elements of coping inbuilt into the process. We tend to be counterfactual in thinking when we don't realize a plan or strategic goal eg. passing an exam/essay, completing a project on time or missing out on a desire. This can take the form of a 'what if' moment or consideration of positive or negative alternatives. Brigard calls these 'downward' or 'upward' counterfactuals.

One caution, not all imagination is productive or helpful, just as all dreams are not significant. This is why working with a team in imagining possibilities is so important as is the skill of effective collective reflection and dialogue. Such a process is emotionally strengthening and rewards the development of risk intelligence in the workplace.

Books to Read

Sherry Turkle (2015) Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of talk in a Digital Age.

Rolf Dobelli (2013) The Art of Thinking Clearly

Adam Alter (2013) Drunk, Tank Pink, and other unexpected forces that shape how we think, feel and behave.

Chris Paley (2014) Unthink

Carl Jung (2010) Synchronicity: An Acausal Connecting Principle



The Emperor has No Hard Hat

Whilst on the topic of reading and books I want to mention the excellent work of my friend Alan Quilley on the topic of safety. His book is called [The Emperor has No Hard Hat](#).

[Youtube video](#)

New Videos



There are a few three new videos up on the Human Dymensions Vimeo Site:

[One Brain Three Minds Supplementary By-Products and Trade-Offs Calculator Perspective Styles](#)

Human Dymensions videos now average 1500-2000 views and downloads globally per week. The most popular downloads are:

[Workspace, Headspace, Groupspace](#)
[One Brain Three Minds](#) and, [What is your risk iCue?](#)

[The video menu page is here](#)

Associate Videos

As a special release a number of participants in the Post Graduate Program have released their poster presentation from Unit 7 – Learning and Communities of Practice. These are:

Rob Cooper – [The Pedagogy of Risk Aversion](#)

Hayden Collins – [Critical Pedagogy](#)

Rob Sams – [Communities of Practice](#)

Rod Esdaile – [Implicit Knowledge](#)

Mark Gardiner – [Scaffolding Learning](#)

Gaynor Renz – [Foucault and Discipline](#)

David Whitefield - [Social Learning](#)

You can also see ‘Conversations on the Couch’ and [other excellent videos on risk and humanizing organisations here](#)

Other links and blogs

[Rob's Blogs](#)

[Linkedin Social Psychology of Risk](#)

[Facebook Safety Leadership Group](#)

[Humanising the Workplace with Resilyence](#)
[Risk and Safety Leadership](#)

Helping Workplace Culture
Philosopher's Mail
School of Life
Brain Pickings
Centre for Courage and Renewal
The International Jacques Ellul Society
C G Jung Foundation

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