



# Human Dimensions Quarterly Newsletter Culture, Learning and Risk

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## HUMAN DYMENSIONS NEWSLETTER September 2015

### Enrolments Now Open for Graduate Certificate in the Psychology of Risk for 2016

Enrolments are now open for the Post Grad Certificate Psychology of Risk Program for 2016

The opening Unit 1 in the Psychology of Risk commences in the first week of March 2016. From now on is your time to enrol. You can find out more about the program [here](#) and [here](#). You can also read more from the Human Dymensions website about the Post Graduate Program [here](#).



There are several past reports about previous programs [here](#) and [here](#).

You can also see examples of some of the group activities here:

<https://vimeo.com/118213160>

<https://vimeo.com/135437986>

<https://vimeo.com/86743923>

The four units in the Post Graduate Certificate are:

- Unit 1. The Social Psychology of Risk Introduction
- Unit 2. Leadership and the Social Psychology of Risk
- Unit 3. Communicating and Consulting About Risk and the Unconscious
- Unit 4. The Social Psychology of High Reliability Organising

The program is undertaken mostly in face-to-face intensive (4 day) units although some mixed model options (distance learning) are available for overseas students.

There are also opportunities to progress on to [Post Graduate Diploma and Masters Qualifications](#)

### Who is this program for?

Enrolments to date indicate a broad interest from people in the Financial Sector (enterprise and business risk), Health (risk and patient/staff care), Security (human behaviours), Health and Safety (human risk) and Education and Community Services (people 'at-risk').

Places are filling quickly and are limited.

If you want more information please contact: David Rowlinson: [David.Rowlinson@acu.edu.au](mailto:David.Rowlinson@acu.edu.au) or **Dr Long: [Robert.long@acu.edu.au](mailto:Robert.long@acu.edu.au)**

### Solution to Puzzle in June Newsletter



If you look carefully at the picture both images look like a clenched fist, this is because the top image influences the way you see the bottom image. If you look carefully at the bottom image you will see that it is not an image of a fist at all but rather, a mother nrturing her child. The woman is sitting with her back facing the left and her knees raised, her right arm is holding an infant. Maybe you can see it now? Funny how our perception is so influenced by other things, the top fist primes

## IN OTHER NEWS

### Add a title

Enter your description



our perception to mistake the image below. This often happens when we look quickly at things and explains why people make very simple mistakes with perception when they are rushing.

Congratulations to the three participants who got this puzzle correct, good luck with the challenge for another crack at a free book below.

## The Mythology of Using Emotional Narrative to Effect Behaviour



A common strategy (usually an isolated strategy) in trying to effect awareness and behavior change is to use 'emotional narrative' to tug at 'hearts and minds'. What this means is parading an amputee or person who has experienced trauma etc in front of a group of people with a confronting presentation of, 'look, don't do what I did'.

Whilst people are enticed by this strategy, is it effective? Does it achieve longitudinal change? Does it facilitate change in decision making?

The idea of sharing trauma or using trauma for transformation may be cathartic for the individual presenting but the strategy of traumatizing others is not a good idea. The simplistic notion of 'shock' as an educative or motivational change agent has no empirical support indeed, one needs to be considered rather than simplistic in the sharing of trauma. Certainly, using trauma to either entertain or motivate has very limited utility. If sharing trauma creates trauma in the recipient then its practice must be deemed essentially unhelpful. After all, psychologists know that trauma is devastating, why would we want to traumatise people in the name of good? For more on understanding and managing trauma look [here](#):

There is a strange mythology in risk and safety that shock tactics or 'boot camp' strategies are motivational when research shows they are mostly ineffective.

[Research paper 1.](#)

[Research paper 2.](#)

[Research paper 3.](#)

[Research paper 4.](#)

Certainly, when I worked in Youth Detention, 'boot camp' strategy was highly ineffective, indeed it was counter productive. Most of the mythology about shock and boot camp strategy is based on a naïve behaviourist understanding of humans. Humans are far more complex than the simplistic behaviourist framework that thinks positive and negative inputs produce predictable outcomes.

At the foundation of shock, trauma and 'tough love' rhetoric and semiotics about motivation and learning is a profound naivety about framing and priming messages. What is most annoying about this rhetoric of 'tough love' is that it is not just ineffective but it is not 'loving', it seems always good for other people. What is often the outcome of these approaches is a counterintuitive response that looks at the amputee presenter in confirmation of the message 'yes, you were an idiot, now you are telling me you are an idiot, but I'm not an idiot'. The logic of 'do as I say, don't do as I do' is crazy priming.

What is also tied to this naïve emotional narrative is often and equally naïve message such as 'safety is a choice you make'. This naïve logic then supposes that anyone who is harmed chose to do so. This position ignores all the situations and factors that affect the unconscious and social decision making. Yet again in this approach risk and safety falls back on a simplistic binary model to understand humans.

The evidence shows that rational choice probably makes up less than 10% of how we make decisions. Most decisions are based on heuristics and automaticity (see further Gigerenzer, Bargh, Calдини, Slovic, Plous, Mlodinow, Norrtranders and a host of research that demonstrates this).

A very easy place to start to understand the Social Psychology of Risk is by reading Paley, Chris. (2014) *Unthink*. This neat little book is a collection of summaries of 200 experiments in how the conscious and unconscious is shaped by social arrangements. A great book but more difficult read is by Abelson, Frey and Gregg *Experiments with People* Vols 1,2&3. This book summarizes (in detail) the progress of Social Psychology over the past 70 years.

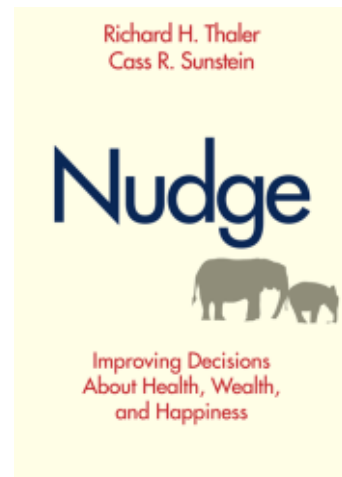
## The Positive Power of 'Nudges'

The evidence against the mythology of choice in risk and safety is overwhelming. In the latest issue of *Scientific American Mind* (Sept/Oct 2015) Jachimowicz and McNerney (The Positive Power of Nudges) discuss the phenomenon of 'nudging'. Nudging is a way of shaping social and psychological arrangements to influence decision making. You can read more about nudging in the book by [Thaler and Sunstein](#) or on their [blog](#)

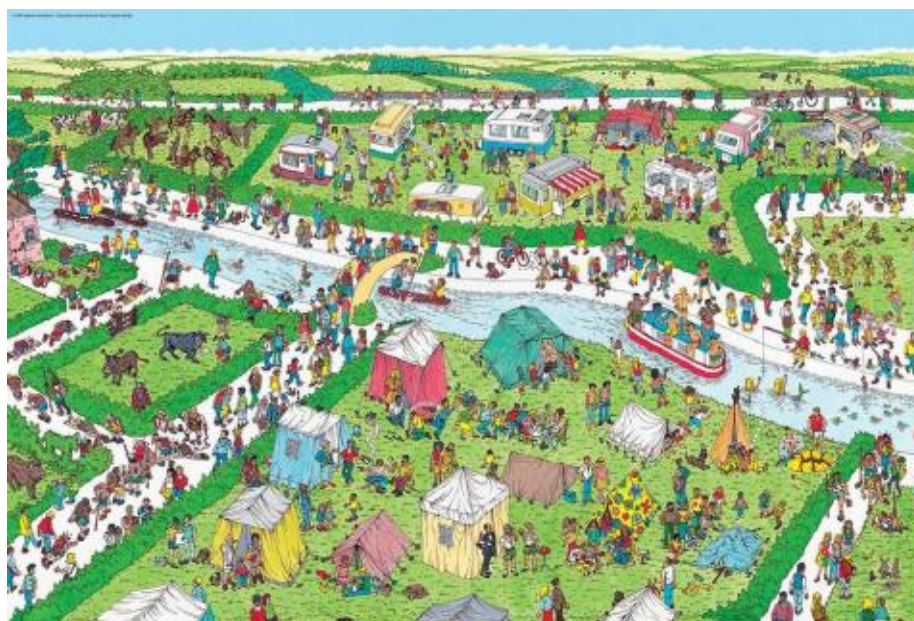
**Nudge Theory** is just a label for how human decision making can be influenced by social arrangements, the founding principle of social psychology.

Jachimowicz and McNerney discuss 'choice architecture' showing that even subtle changes in the environment have a profound effect on decision making. The UK government even has a 'Nudge Unit', to monitor the way the general populace is affected by framing and priming through social arrangements.

Of course nudging is mostly guess work, we cannot 'know' exactly how things may influence decisions, we can't optimize all factors and rarely know the by-products of setting up particular 'choice architecture'. There are also grave concerns about the potential for manipulative and unethical actions by this group and this is a general concern for anyone in this discipline. Although, as Sunstein points out, no one is 'forced' to behave in a certain way and these techniques are mostly about 'influencing' decision making with no real ability to mind control or forecast behavior.



## Win a Copy of Following-Leading in Risk



Here is your chance to win a copy of *Following-Leading in Risk, A Humanising Dynamic*. One book is available for the first 5 successful entries. Please note that most prizes are claimed within 60 minutes of

the launch of the newsletter. How many different kinds of animal types are in this image? [Original Image Here](#):

### Win Real Risk as a Bonus

This task will take a bit longer. For a bonus book (5 copies available of *Real Risk, Human Discerning and Risk*) which activity in the image is perceived to be the most risky by experts? Have a look at [Slovic's research on perceptions of risk](#) and see if you can match up what the experts would think was the most risky activity in the scene.

Please post your entries to [admin@humandimensions.com](mailto:admin@humandimensions.com)

## Social Media Throwing Our Lives Out of Sync

A great article by Laber-Warren in Scientific American Mind (Sept/Oct 2015) Out of Sync, describes how 24/7 digital devices are throwing our natural rhythms out of sync with grave consequences.



I was at a meeting last week with risk and safety people who were chaffing at the bit to get people onto iPads and digital devices in their business. The discourse was not about decreasing paper-work but rather simply shifting paperwork to a digital device. This was somehow going to make 'life easier' and things more efficient. This mythology is like the myth of the paperless office, since this myth **we now consume more paper in our offices not less**.

Laber-Warren demonstrates how digital devices and related social shifts have upset human circadian rhythms and misaligned the way humans think about time. Now people have less 'rest' than ever before. As Laber-Warren states, we have 'flipped the biological switch'. Many executives I speak to have unmanageable levels of email. One commented last week that they returned from holiday after 2 weeks and had 2000 internal emails waiting on his computer and had already answered many external emails on holiday.

Laber-Warren shows that just about every organ in the human body has a circadian rhythm with the brain working as a 'master clock of clocks', or what Laber-Warren calls 'A Symphony of Clocks'. What is suggested by Laber-Warren is some simple back to basics, not to be **luddites**.

but with some simple suggestions to get some balance back:

- Adjust natural light exposure before bed, low light promotes the production of melatonin.
- Try to fall to sleep in darkness
- Go to bed and get up at the same time, including weekends. Rhythm of habit is important.
- Block blue and screen light before bed for at least a few hours. Sleep with eye mask on if there is blue light (recharger) in your room.
- Eat regular patterns no more than 12 hours. Don't eat late.
- Exercise morning not night

Laber-Warren suggest we should practice 'circadian hygiene' just like we habituate healthy hygiene.

## How Dangerous is Common Sense?

If you haven't read Everything is Obvious, How Common Sense Fails Us by Duncan Watt, perhaps you might enjoy this brief overview [here](#).

A neat little video by Duncan Watts is [here](#).

## The Social Power of Touch

The feature article in the July/August issue of Scientific American Mind by Denworth The Social Power of Touch demonstrates the power of touch in connecting with others. Somewhat in the same message as Pinker (The Village Effect) Denworth shows that the touch of hands, strokes on the shoulder and movement with others all increase happiness and connectedness. Further see [here](#).

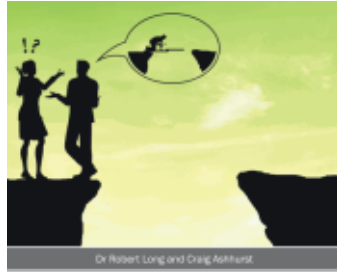
## Heads Up on Books Five, Six and Seven



For those interested, we (Craig Ashhurst and I) propose to have the book Tackling Risk, A Field Guide to Risk published by late 2016.

I am also working on book 6: Risky Conversations, Law talks





to Social Psychology about Risk. With **Greg Smith of STE Legal** this book will be transcribed conversations between Greg and Dr Long on many accepted myths about risk and safety at work. Hopefully launched with video in late 2016.

Book seven is also proposed for a release in 2016, a selection of the best essays from the 2014/15 Post Graduate Program. The book will be edited by Dr Long and titled Journeys in Risk, Stories in Applying The Psychology of Risk at Work.

More news about the books in the March 2016 Newsletter.



## Workshops in New Zealand Postponed

Since the last Newsletter in June 2015 we have not had sufficient interest from New Zealand people for a proposed series of workshops in the Psychology of Risk and so have postponed the idea to 2016. If you wish to register interest in this series of workshops please do so at David Rowlinson:

[David.Rowlinson@acu.edu.au](mailto:David.Rowlinson@acu.edu.au)

The long term plan is to offer the Graduate Certificate to New Zealanders in Auckland.



## Three New Videos, Information and Links



Three new videos have been posted on the Human Dymensions Vimeo Web Site:

[An Introduction to Semiotics and Risk.](#)

[Understanding the Unconscious, Risk and Safety.](#)

[The Psychology of Goals](#)

The [video launch page](#) has changed and now lists all videos, including passworded videos, in a list of over 90 topics and themes.

The vimeo home page remains the same at: <https://vimeo.com/humandymensions>

Videos from the Post Graduate Program are passcoded for distance education purposes but a pre-view can be provided on request. Simply send an email to [admin@humandymensions.com](mailto:admin@humandymensions.com) requesting temporary access.

### Rob's Latest Safety Book Recommendations on

[Safety](http://www.safetyrisk.net/top-20-safety-books/)<http://www.safetyrisk.net/top-20-safety-books/>

### Rob's Blog Hosted by Dave Collins and Riskex

<http://www.safetyrisk.net/author/rob-long/>

### Human Dymensions Web Site

<http://www.humandymensions.com/>

### Join the Safety Leadership Group on facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/152071534818549/members/>

### Join the LinkedIn Social Psychology of Risk Forum

<http://www.linkedin.com/groups?home=&gid=6745222>

### Safety Accreditation in Australia LinkedIn Group

A group formed to discuss concerns about trends to monopolize accreditation and registration of the safety profession in Australia.

[http://www.linkedin.com/manageGroupMembers?dispParts=&gid=6697359&memberLevel=PENDING&trk=my\\_groups-tile-flipmgmt](http://www.linkedin.com/manageGroupMembers?dispParts=&gid=6697359&memberLevel=PENDING&trk=my_groups-tile-flipmgmt)

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