



Human Dimensions Quarterly Newsletter Culture, Learning and Risk

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IN OTHER NEWS

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Fifty Shades of Risk

The book *Fifty Shades of Grey* by E. L. James has sold 40 million copies and is the fastest selling paperback of all time. The book is an example of 'fan fiction' and the attraction of people to risk. The word risqué comes from the word 'risk' and denotes suggestions of sexual impropriety. The earliest use of the word 'risk' in English can be traced back to 1621 when it was spelt 'risque'.

I was chatting to Susan, a friend of one of my children and she was telling me about the book. 'It's so wrong' she said, as she relayed why she had bought the book. 'But I had to read it, because everyone else was', she said. When I first started reading all the explicit sex I thought, 'this is not right', but I wanted to see just how far it went.

Fifty Shades of Grey sales have gone crazy because of 'viral marketing' and word of mouth. The book is not about love but is a semi-pornographic text about contractual sex. Marketed as 'mommy porn', the book has become a must for young teens and Gen Y females. Assisted by the anonymity of ebook readers and ebook downloads, *Fifty Shades of Grey* normalises sexual deviance in bondage, discipline, sadism and masochism. The book is all about female submission and harm (physical and psychological). For those who I have spoken to, they have often spoken about the risk of not reading the book much more than the risk of reading it.

We can learn a great deal about the nature of risk from the success of *Fifty Shades of Grey*. It is counterintuitive to think that people would seek pleasure from pain. It would seem odd to many that people would seek to harm themselves or seek suffering to seek happiness. However, when it comes to risk, there are more than fifty shades. Risk is attractive because it is in risk that we experience the fullness of living, of being fully human. It is in risk that we learn, create, innovate, imagine and engage with life. The quest to deny risk and eliminate risk is a life-destroying journey. The language of risk elimination is not attractive to people, just as the language of risk management has come to denote boring technique.

For those who seek to deny and extinguish risk, risk doesn't make sense. For those who know that life and living is about embracing risk, risk makes sense. The fear of risk is indeed, the fear of freedom. The fear of uncertainty and the quest for total control is a fundamentalist activity.

In 1997 I established an alternative school for high-risk young people. You can see in the paper clipping below a rather younger Rob with three of the young people from the school. All of the young people in the school were at risk of death each day and were trapped in cycles of risk that were difficult to escape, most had no choice about the risks they took each day. The best way to help these young people was not to reject their way of living but to understand that their risks made sense. That empathy and understanding enabled helping and a new journey for many of them. All those who tried to help on their own terms, were rejected by the young people and that alienation simply created a greater gap, between them and any chance of helping them escape from their world of risk.





Coordinator of the Galilee Day Program Robert Long with students Natalie O'Neil, Daniel Johnstone and Adrian Masters.

New school a 'break' for students

THERE are advantages to setting up an alternative school on 70ha of land in the Tuggeranong Valley.

Students learn not only the academic subjects, but can sink their hands into animal husbandry, horticulture, farming and carpentry.

And being at school doesn't feel like being at school.

This is an important distinction for the Galilee Day Program which is located at the Lions Youth Haven and was officially launched last week by MLA Louise Littlewood.

The program took on its first group of six young people in February and, according to coordinator Robert Long, is a much-needed addition to local services for disadvantaged young people.

Galilee takes on students by referral and currently has a total of seven, aged between 12 and 16, who are in substitute care and with no formal school connections.

Long says the service aims to reintegrate young people into a learning environment and cater a program around individual needs.

The young people referred

to Galilee come from disadvantaged and difficult backgrounds, and often need a "break" and an unconventional school environment in order to complete their basic learning, Long says.

"It is very difficult for these kids to function in a normal school and they need a different structure to learn in, but so far we have had a lot of success particularly when it comes to working on the computers."

Galilee's purpose is to broker positions for students in further training, education, or employment positions, and Long says at least three

students in the current intake are going on to continue at the Canberra Institute of Technology, a mainstream high school, and an employment program.

The rest will complete their studies till the end of the year. According to Long, the students are enjoying spending their school days in the wide open spaces.

The Day Program opens weekdays from 8am to 12pm, including school holidays.

During school holidays, the program adopts a more recreational structure.

— EMMA BACON

For those who find the language of risk elimination attractive, such language simply alienates you from people 'on the tools'. They know that risk makes sense, any talk of perfection or blaming in risk simply disconnects. When risk makes sense, then we have a mindset that opens opportunity to embrace risk with wisdom.

Perception Puzzle

The following puzzle is a popular example of how experience shapes perception and how perception influences reality. Look at the puzzle and write down what you see. At the end of this newsletter is the solution.



Conscious, Subconscious and Unconscious

We accept these days that having a surgical procedure won't be harmful or leave any painful memories. The magic of anesthesia is remarkable, as are those who administer its control. Anesthesia safely knocks us out of conscious experience and we magically wake up with the job done. We have come a long way from the risky interventions of opium and alcohol.

We know that a range of substances slow down the brain and strengthen neuronal inhibition and constrain neuron activity. This limits the ability of the brain to transmit information. Neuroscientists are only now trying to track the actual source of consciousness using position emission tomography (PET) but as yet, we do not know enough about unconsciousness. However, the work of Hassin, Uleman and Bargh (2005) *The New Unconscious*, shows that the non-conscious can be subliminally influenced. Bargh shows that the unconscious can be influenced by priming, by words, concepts or by the social environment. The latest issue of *Scientific American Mind* (Sept/Oct 2012) discusses the switching off of consciousness in an article Safely Switching Consciousness Off and On Again.

One Brain Three Minds – Keynote

Following on from successful keynotes in Perth and Brisbane, Rob will next be presenting the One Brain Three Minds, The Key to Understanding Risk on 24 October in Sydney at the Safety Institute of Australia Conference at Southey Stadium, Sydney Olympic Park.

If you would like this presentation in your organisation for either a 'lunch and learn' session or as a conference keynote, please contact Rob at admin@humandymensions.com



Managing Risk Religiously

We can learn a lot about belief and conversion to better risk management by learning from the conversion experts. We may wonder why our organisation spends a fortune on systems and policies only to find that people don't believe in them. Many a safety officer or risk management officer spends much of their time trying to convert people to ownership of risk. Some people follow rules religiously and some don't, what is it that influences this?

In 1981 Lewis Goldberg developed a theory to explain behavior and commitment. He argued that five attributes characterized the way we relate to each other and make sense of our environment, these are: extroversion, neuroticism, agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness. Many psychologists argue that the ways in which our personalities differ can be organised along these five dimensions.

Saroglou (*Scientific American Mind* May/June 1012 Are We Born to be Religious) argues that agreeable and conscientious people tend to be more religious in what they do than others. They enjoy rules and value obedience. The creative-rebellious types don't. Saroglou argues that the disposition to follow rules religiously develops in the genes and in early life experiences. Others like social psychologists Adorno (*The Authoritarian Personality*) and Milgram (*Obedience to Authority*) argue that belief and religiosity can be socially manufactured. Regardless, it seems like we could learn more about what we are trying to do in risk and safety by looking at how belief is developed in the religious sphere.

Rob's Blogs

Rob writes blogs at:

<http://humandymensions.blogspot.com.au/>

and

<http://www.safetyrisk.com.au/category/robert-long/>



Six On-Site Conversations Workshop

Having conversations about risk is the best way to assist others manage safety. The trouble is we often

are so focused on our own agenda that it's hard to 'frame' and 'pitch' the right message to those with whom we are conversing. If we are too busy we tend to lecture or we get trapped into talks about operations and program.

The Six On-Site Conversations Program is a workshop that teaches participants how to approach safety conversations using the framework of De Bono's six thinking hats. The workshop teaches how to approach site walks in six different ways and so helps develop balance in engagement and perception about safety.

The workshop uses 6 coloured hard hats, role plays, tips and tools to help supervisors and managers influence safety culture on site. The workshop includes tips in how to manage interruptions, provide recognition, document observations and 'prime' the thinking of employees. The roll out of the workshop can include real coloured hard hats that help tune in the organisation to the six conversations or the program can be enacted figuratively.

Contact Rob at admin@humandimensions.com if you would like to experience this workshop.



Perception Solution

If you said you saw two people in a sexual embrace you could be wrong, the picture is really the depiction of nine dolphins.



Consultants

Several of Human Dymensions consultants are coming to a close in current outsourced contracts and are available for short term contracts or consultancies.

Health and Well Being – Keith Todd

Keith has extraordinary expertise in crisis intervention, suicide prevention, security, risk and leadership. Keith has more than 20 years experience in special forces in the British Police Force including responsibilities in counter terrorism, some of the worst critical incidents in recent British history. Keith was a trainer of specialised staff for his special forces unit and served in the position of Chief Inspector.



When Keith moved to Australia in 2001 and commenced work in Emergency Management and Training and in 2002 founded OzHelp, a National Foundation for leadership in mental health, suicide prevention, critical incident management and well being.

Keith offers a range of services and programs which your organisation may find helpful including:

- The K-How diagnostic survey for staff and client well being (delivered jointly with Dr Long)
- Leadership and management coaching
- Training in Mental Health, Suicide Prevention and Health and Well Being

On-Site Safety – Errol Pentland

Errol has extensive experience across a range of industries including automotive, civil construction, logistics, government, corrections and security. Errol has worked with Dr Long for 20 years and has been coached by Dr Long in all aspects of the psychology of risk and safety. Errol's strength is in onsite influence and culture change. In particular he is an outstanding coach, mentor and advisor to young work health and safety officers.



Errol holds qualifications in automotive mechanics, safety, security and case management. He is currently completing a short term contract with a civil construction company.

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