Human Dymensions Quarterly Newsletter
Culture, Learning and Risk
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IN OTHER NEWS

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The focus of this newsletter is on literature, language and culture.

I hope you enjoy this newsletter with over 1500 subscribers. I know that many of you post this newsletter on to others and I trust they enjoy it too.

Rob

Critical Theory, Children's Literature and Culture

My daughter is in her final year of an education degree and one her assignments was about a critical analysis of children's literature from a social justice perspective. In working through her thinking she was to explore four contemporary authors and their use of semiotics and text to understand how language influences cultural formation.

The English and Literature curriculum has always served to educate children about socio-cultural norms and expectations. This incudes the transmission of mutual care and learning about social justice itself. Social justice comprises the six elements of: self appreciation and knowledge; respect for others; issues of social injustice; social movements and social change; awareness raising and, social action (Picower, 2012).

It is important to evaluate children's literature through the lens of social justice because it teaches children their place in the world, their social setting and understand their place in relation to others. The lens of social justice helps focus on how children's literature influences children regarding cultural values, author belief, social norms and cultural identity.

Similarly, all forms of literature including texts and discourse in risk, shape and influence the cultural formation of a group. In the case of the industry of safety, much of this literature influences a culture of mis-education and the perpetuation of ignorance. This is evidenced in curriculum that teaches the irrelevance of injury data and ratios, Heinrich, Reason's swiss cheese and a host of reductionist ideas about causation. This is further endorsed by the delusional attribution of the language of 'professionalism' to the safety industry. There is simply no comparison between the educational and learning of professionals and the way safety people are prepared for work.

Back to the assignment at hand. My daughter used the methodology of Critical Theory to evaluate children's literature. The Critical Theory perspective on social justice puts a focus on: alienation from social identity and necessity through economic determinism, the distribution of power, technical rationality, means of efficiency, politics, ethics and autonomy from technical discourse. The Critical Theory school comes from Jurgen Habermas and the Frankfurt School of Philosophy which is also where we find the roots of Social Psychology.

Critical Theory holds a characteristic distrust of positivism and scientism and seeks liberation from technological and capitalist control. Critical Theory encourages self-criticism and critique through the praxis method that understands forces of social power in dialectic opposition. Social Theory seeks emancipation from ideological dogmatism, social justice for oppressed people and advocates for democratic communication methods. This includes an analysis of discourses of power and language/semiotics of inequity.

The overarching theme applied to this study of children's literature in the social justice perspective was on the presence of Alienation and Necessity in semiotic and text. It would be similarly educative to apply the same methodology to literature in the risk and safety industry.

Ellul (1976) explains alienation as the experience of powerlessness in face of the world, of the society in

which we are but which we can neither modify nor escape. In this state one feels abandoned and lost without knowing how to get help. This creates an indifference to oneself, something that creates an existential sense of dereliction.

One of the books my daughter evaluated as by Shaun Tan (**http://www.shauntan.net/**), Rules of Summer (**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fbjMpWc3amk**). You can get a good look at the book here: http://www.shauntan.net/books/Summer.html

Tan uses Bosch-like semiotics (**https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hieronymus_Bosch**) to complement the text about two boys confined by the necessity of living in a world of absolutes. Come in zero!

The opening graphic in Rules of Summer places the grey silhouette of two boys against the shadow of an urban neighbourhood. The scene is devoid of trees and environmental meaning, a place where Critical Theory emphasizes economic determinism. The boys are nameless and without identity. The language of Rules of Summer are 'framed' in the deficit language of 'never'. The contrast between the imagination of Tan and the demands of absolutes couldn't be more stark. In this way power is emphasized in favour of the authority of someone else. If the context was risk and safety the fear of authority would be placed against the archetype of Safety itself. The story is framed in 'nevers' with large animals looking over dwarfed children. The underlying questions are: Who is in authority? Who has the power? These are the missing questions in risk and safety discourse. The terror of beings unidentified in Bosch-like torment signifies the insignificance of the boys in the face of a raging tornado.

The images and text of the book conjure up concerns about consequence. What will happen to these two boys if they don't subscribe to the demands of what not to do? Are they un-safe? What is the risk? What are the hidden implications politically and ethically (in the moral system) if they don't comply? The Critical Theory perspective would ask here: Who has the power and what is to fear? Tan confronts both questions in semiotics and text by drawing attention to the binary darkness and light in image and text. Of course decision making in not that simple.

The technical discourse of the book including: dark images of masked medieval knights; robot tennis players; overarching contrast of light and dark; a crowd of red observers to a fight; the grey technocratic malaise of factory-like sparse geography and desolate destruction, emphsise the daunting demands of absolutes. The strange train in repetition stands out as Tan's burning hell image for an all consuming annihilation (**https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shaun_Tan**). Tan explains the sub-text of his book (**http://www.shauntan.net/Essays/ibby%20keynote.html**) and the alienation associated with what he calls 'arbitrary realities'. It is through the struggle of feeling estranged that Tan draws attention to 'bewilderment', social forces that 'galvanise' people together and the aesthetics of 'confronting strangeness' that situate the semiotics of Rules of Summer.

We can learn a great deal about philosophy, ethics and risk in Tan's books. We also can also compare the study encountered in an education degree compared to the simplistic binary curriculum of a non-professional safety qualification that continues reveling in the mythology of Heinrich, Reason and reductionist binary understandings of knowledge. Risk and safety has a long way to go before it tackles a sophisticated sense of learning of the professions.

Chapter 6 provides practical tools to address associated problems with simplistic approaches to risk and safety. Book six in the series tackling Risk, A Filed Guide to Risk and Learning (**https://www.humandymensions.com/product/tackling-risk/**) also provides extensive practical tips on improving on simplistic binary approaches to risk.

Workshops in Belgium
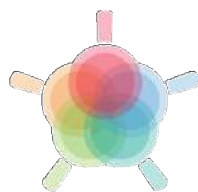
THE CENTRE FOR LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING IN RISK

Everything is progressing well for the SPoR workshop in Leuven Belgium on 2,3 July 2018. There is still space in the workshop but it is filling up fast. You can register here: **https://cllr.com.au/product/international-workshop-introduction-social-psychology-risk/**

You can download the flyer and overview here: **https://docs.google.com/viewerng/viewer?url=https://cllr.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Psychology-of-Risk-Workshop-flyer-Belgium-v3.pdf&hl=en**

Over 3000 Downloads of Fallibility and Risk

We have reached over 3000 downloads of book seven in the series on risk Fallibility and Risk, Living With Uncertainty (**https://www.humandymensions.com/product/fallibility-risk-living-uncertainty/**). Feedback is coming in regarding the complexity and philosophical nature of the book which is understandable. There are many reasons why this book has

Fallibility and Risk

Living with Uncertainty
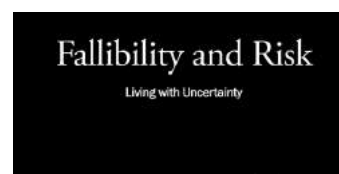
been offered for free but one reason is this is one of the books in which I have not held back for the sake of the readership. Some are saying they are reading the text with a dictionary in hand but this difficulty is not something I have intended. I just wrote the book basically off the top of my head about the metaphysical nature of fallibility. If there were to be anything more poorly understood and misconstrued by the safety industry it would be the notions of error, fallibility and suffering. One simply cannot tread down the path of discussing fallibility or 'human error' without a solid understanding of theology, metaphysics and systematic ethics.

Of course, few in risk and safety understand the metaphysics and theology hidden in the DuPont Bradley Curve (**http://www.dupont.com.au/products-and-services/consulting-services-process-technologies/brands/sustainable-solutions/sub-brands/operational-risk-management/uses-and-applications/bradley-curve.html**). Few understand that the language of zero and discourse of associated absolutes are a radical denial of fallibility. Few in risk and safety understand that zero is a semiotic, a language imposed on fallibility demanding infallibility from fallible people! Few understand how the nature of suffering in fallibility must draw the safety industry into the mythology and theology of zero. This is why the global mantra of the safety industry 2017 resonates with all the trappings of a Hillsong convention (**https://safetyrisk.net/no-evidence-for-the-religion-of-zero/**). This is why the INSHPO Framework is infused with religious language and zero ideology (**https://www.inshpo.org/docs/INSHPO_2017_Capability_Framework_Final.pdf**).

Language, Learning and Culture

Research by Hart and Risley (1995) demonstrated that children from lower socio-economic context hear 30 million less words on average than children from wealthy families (Scientific American Mind May 2018). The sheer quantity of words hears is the most significant influence on language acquisition. Recent research in Psychological Science February 2018, confirms the findings that children from wealthier families simply hear more words. Verbal exchange holds two components that children must master: temporal contingency and semantic/semiotic contingency. This means that children need to hear significant traffic in dialogue to sort out human conversation meaningfully. The research shows that children cannot learn this from watching television. The baseline for helping child development is conversation and reading books.

When we conduct language audits in Human Dymensions workshops we test three things: availability, recency and implicit knowledge (Polanyi). As language is the bedrock of culture this language audit becomes a significant indicator of underlying cultural values, beliefs and collective unconsciousness (Jung). Similarly, the MiProfile diagnostic tests implicit knowledge using keypad technology (**https://vimeo.com/24764673**).

The next MiProfile workshop is scheduled on 11-13 July 2018 (**https://cllr.com.au/product/miprofile-master-class-diagnostics-in-social-psychology-of-risk-unit-9/**). The MiProfile workshop is only available for ongoing students with The Centre for Leadership and Learning in Risk (**https://cllr.com.au/**).

The Satire of Safety

I have been sent a number of links to funny videos that expose the problem of safety crusading, enjoy:

https://www.mrctv.org/videos/middle-trip-and-fall-osha
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kF9jXZDYCxE&pbjreload=10
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BAnGYfnFz9I&pbjreload=10
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rK8UIGkzsf8
Utopia S:2
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cuavbKGDkwg

Talking of Literature and Learning in Risk and Safety

I rarely read books or literature in risk and safety, when I do I am mostly

disappointed. Most safety literature lacks imagination, innovation, creativity and sophistication. Buy a safety book and you will get bored by the discussion about the same old things that have been recycled for the last 30 years. Alternatively, here is some literature I have read recently that you might find of interest to broaden your horizons about people, culture, learning and risk.

Joan Baune (2014) Erich Fromm's Revolutionary Hope, Prophetic Messianism as Critical Theory of the Future.
https://www.sensepublishers.com/media/2144-erich-fromms-revolutionary-hope.pdf

Marcel Danesi (2017) The Semiotics of Emoji, The Risk of Visual language in the Age of the Internet.

Gilles Deluze (1968) Difference and Repetition.

Ivan Illich (1970) Deschooling Society.
http://learning.media.mit.edu/courses/mas713/readings/DESCHOOLING.pdf

Erich Fromm (1968) The Revolution of Hope.

Jean Piaget (1971) Insights and Illusions of Philosophy.

Neil Postman (1993) Technopoly.
https://www.collier.sts.vt.edu/1504/pdfs/technopoly-neil-postman.pdf

Potter and Wetherell (1987) Discourse and Social Psychology, Beyond Attitudes and Behaviour.

Donna West (2014) Deictic Imaginings: Semiosis at Work and at Play.

Yanni vs Laurel

Have you been caught up in the debate about Yanni and Laurel?
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gpwlBzralds

You can read an explanation about the difference here:
https://www.theverge.com/2018/5/15/17358136/yanny-laurel-the-dress-audio-illusion-frequency-sound-perception

Book Competition

Another perception puzzle.

If you can find the cat in this photo above and be in the first 5 responses a fresh copy of *Risky Conversations, The Law Social Psychology and Risk* will be yours. Email your solution to **admin@humandymensions.com**

Be sure to include your postal address with your solution. Generally prizes are gone within the first hour

of the newsletter going out.

Don't forget the audio for Risky Conversations is free here: https://www.humandymensions.com /product/risky-conversations-talking-book-free-mp3-files/

The videos are also free here: https://vimeo.com/album/3938199

Links

Rob's Book Recommendations on

Safetyhttp://www.safetyrisk.net/top-20-safety-books/

Rob's Blog

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

Human Dymensions Web Site

http://www.humandymensions.com/

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

Centre for Leadership and Learning in Risk

https://cllr.com.au/

Samples of Video Inductions and Work by Invision Pictures

https://www.humandymensions.com/services-and-programs/invision/