



Risk and UK society



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The problem (??)

- **“UK society is risk-averse”**
 - Afraid to take risks (↓ innovation, creativity)
 - Seeking protection (↑ regulation, H&S)
- **Is this true?**
 - Your personal experience?
 - Your family?
 - Your community?
 - Your organisation?
- **If not, then how can it be true of society?**

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Uncertainty is everywhere ...



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BIG

Personal



Local



Business

small

Global

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The future is uncertain ?

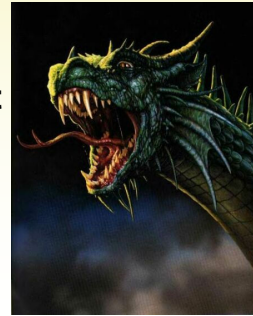


- *How do you feel about that?* ?



- **“Uncertain = dangerous”**

- Be careful
- Avoid, reduce, control, protect



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The future is uncertain ?



- *How do you feel about that?* ?



- **“Uncertain = challenging”**

- Be brave
- Embrace, shape, exploit ...





Perspectives on risk

- Key questions:

- What is our risk threshold?

- What are the risks?

- How big are they?

- What shall we do?

- All affected by **risk attitude**

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What is “risk”?

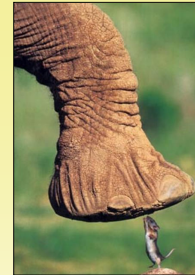
- “**Uncertainty that matters**”

- Only defined in relation to **something specific**

- “What is **at risk**?” (objectives)

- Affected by **perception**

- “How uncertain? How much does it matter?”



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What is “attitude”?

- “Chosen response to given situation”
- Only defined in relation to something specific
 - “Attitude *towards what?*”
- Affected by perception of situation
 - “What do I think it is?”



[Does this sound familiar ???]

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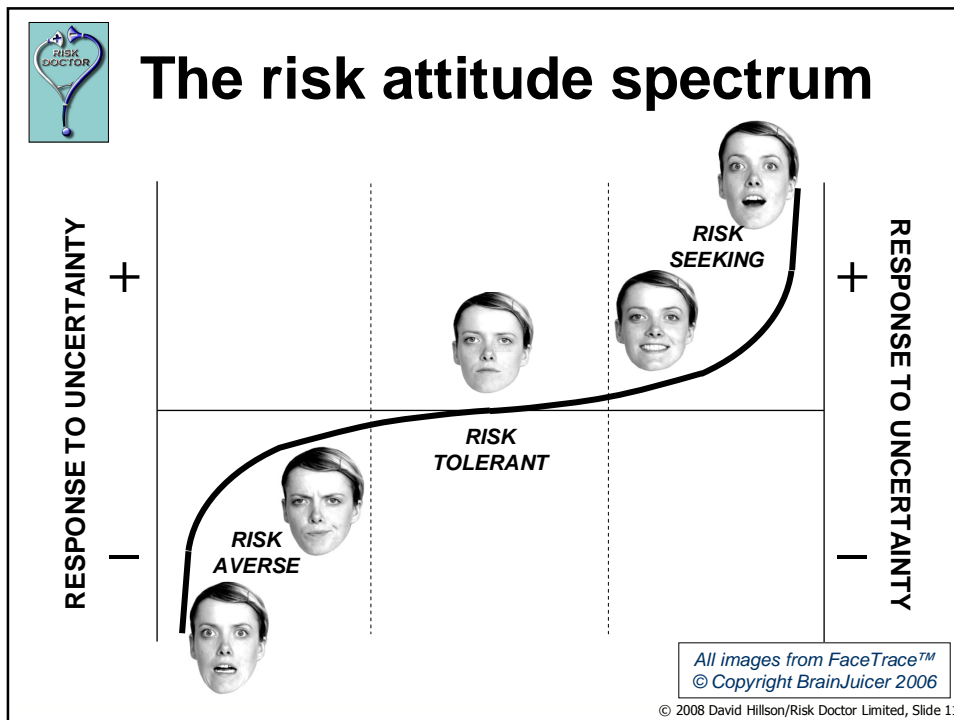


What is “risk attitude”?

- “Risk Attitude” = “Risk” + “Attitude”
“Chosen response to uncertainty that matters, influenced by perception”
- Risk attitude operates at many levels:
 - individual, groups, society, nations ...
- Risk attitude exists on a spectrum

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Two key questions

Where is UK society on the risk attitude spectrum?

- ***“It depends”***
- On ...
 - external environment (situation)
 - internal environment (me/us)

And where should UK society be?

- ***“It depends”***
- On ...
 - objectives

??

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Implications

- Risk attitude is **not fixed**
 - Driven by perception, situation & objectives
- Risk attitude is **chosen**
 - Can become habituated, but always a choice
- Risk attitude **can be modified**
 - Requires intentionality & emotional intelligence

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Why does this matter?



Managed Attitudes ⇒ **Modified Behaviour** ⇒ **Changed Culture**

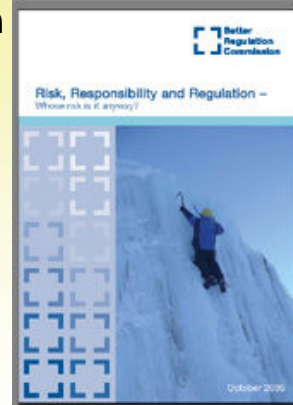
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Recent initiatives

- **Better Regulation Commission (2006-2008)**
 - *“Risk, Responsibility, Regulation: Whose risk it is anyway?” (2006)*
 - *“Public Risk – the Next Frontier for Better Regulation” (2007)*
- **Risk & Regulation Advisory Council (2008 - present)**



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Recent initiatives

- **Health & Safety Commission**
 - *“Sensible risk management” (2006)*
- **RSA Risk Commission (2006-2008)**
 - *“Risk & Childhood” (2007)*
- **UK Government**
 - *House of Lords “Government policy on the management of risk” (2006)*
 - *Cabinet Office “UK National Risk Register” (2008)*



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Conclusions & questions

- Culture = “*shared beliefs, values & knowledge of a group of people with a common purpose*”
 - Is there a single “UK culture”?
- Does UK society have “*a risk culture*”?
 - Risk attitudes are variable & chosen
 - Risk attitudes operate at various levels
- Is UK society “*risk-averse*”?
 - Better to be “*risk-aware*”, choosing risk attitude that is appropriate to current challenge

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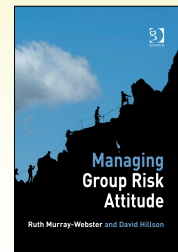
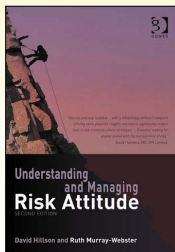
Thank you

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