

# Judging Nudging

## Can Nudging Improve Population Health?

Theresa Marteau

Institute of Public Health

**BHRU** Behaviour and Health  
Research Unit

Bupa Foundation Seminar - Motivating Change

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# The Problem

“The Great Challenge for Public Health”

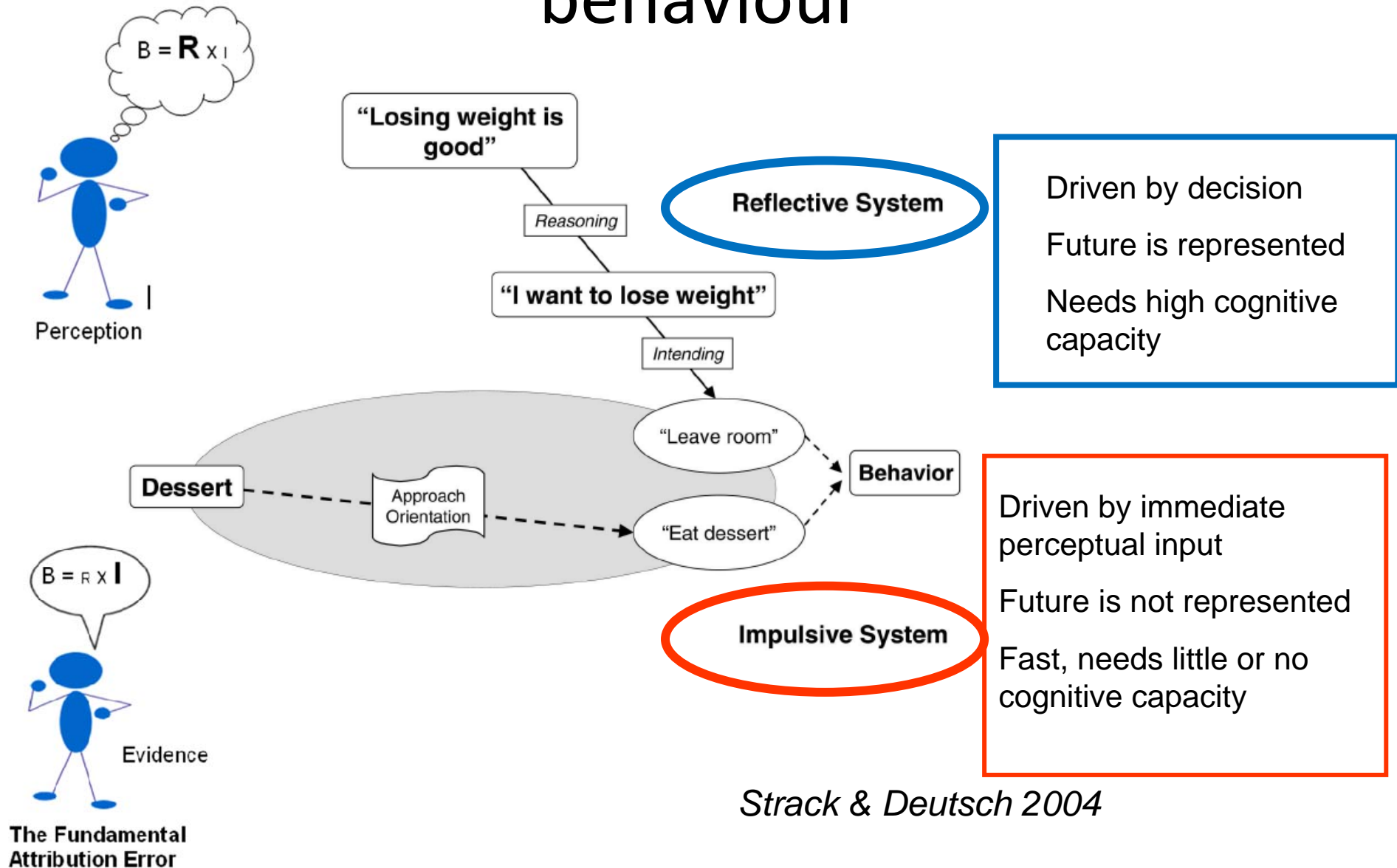
Andrew Lansley July 2010



50% premature deaths worldwide and 70% in Europe and USA  
[www.3four50.com](http://www.3four50.com) WHO Burdens of Disease Update 2008

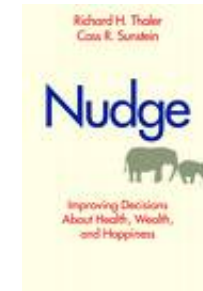
Despite placing a high value on health, why do people behave in ways that undermine it?

# Dual systems model of human behaviour



# Nudging

## “Altering Choice Architecture”



Nudging = altering people’s environments to prompt healthier behaviour, without using bans or economic incentives to achieve changes.

Changes in our environments over the past 30 years have nudged us into some very unhealthy ways.

- *The most powerful nudges are those that we are often unaware of but daily result in us into eating, drinking or smoking more than we want.*



Can nudging towards healthier behaviours reverse this?

ANALYSIS

### Judging nudging: can nudging improve population health?

Nudging has captured the imagination of the public, researchers, and policy makers as a way of changing behaviour, with the UK and US governments embracing it. **Theresa Marteau and colleagues** ask whether it stands up to scientific scrutiny.



If people didn't smoke, drink less, ate healthier diets and were more active, the huge burden of chronic diseases such as cancer, heart disease, and type 2 diabetes would be much reduced.<sup>1</sup>

What is nudging?  
The term "nudge" was first used in a book of the same title to describe "any aspect of the choice architecture that alters people's behaviour in a

Nudging is not new. It builds on psychological and sociological theory dating back over a century that shows how environments shape and constrain human behaviour—often far more than we like to

*Marteau, Ogilvie, Roland, Suhrcke, Kelly BMJ 2011*

# Examples of interventions altering “choice architecture”

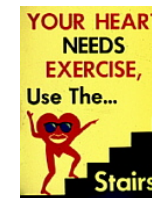
## Smoking

removal of cigarettes from  
point of sale (McNeill, 2011)



## Physical activity

stair use prompts (Andersen 1998)  
lift inconvenience (van Houten 1981)



## Alcohol consumption

glass shape (Wansink 2003)  
unit labelling (?)

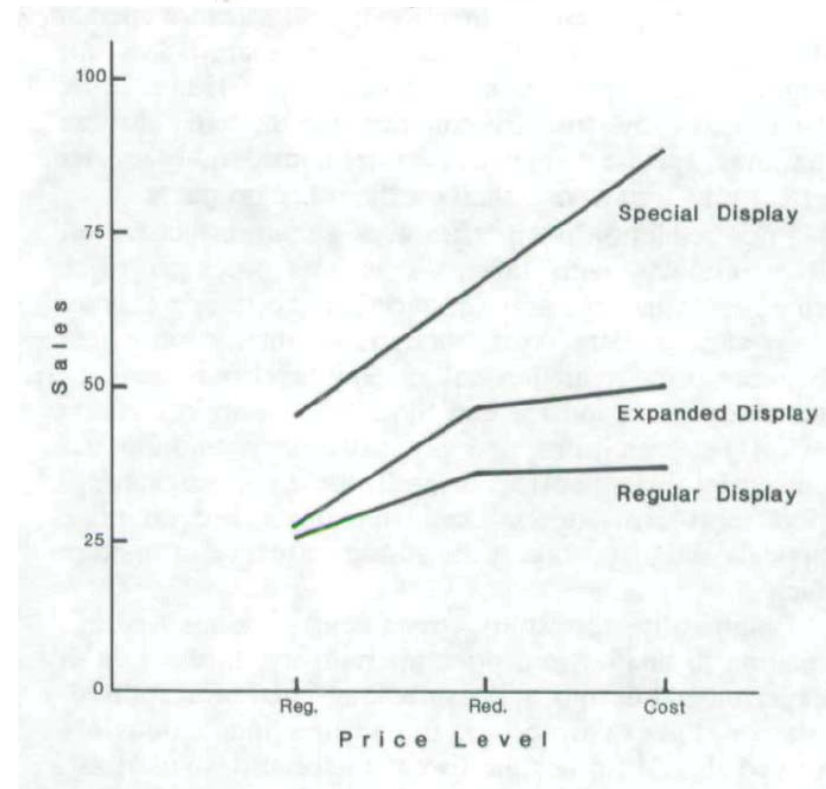
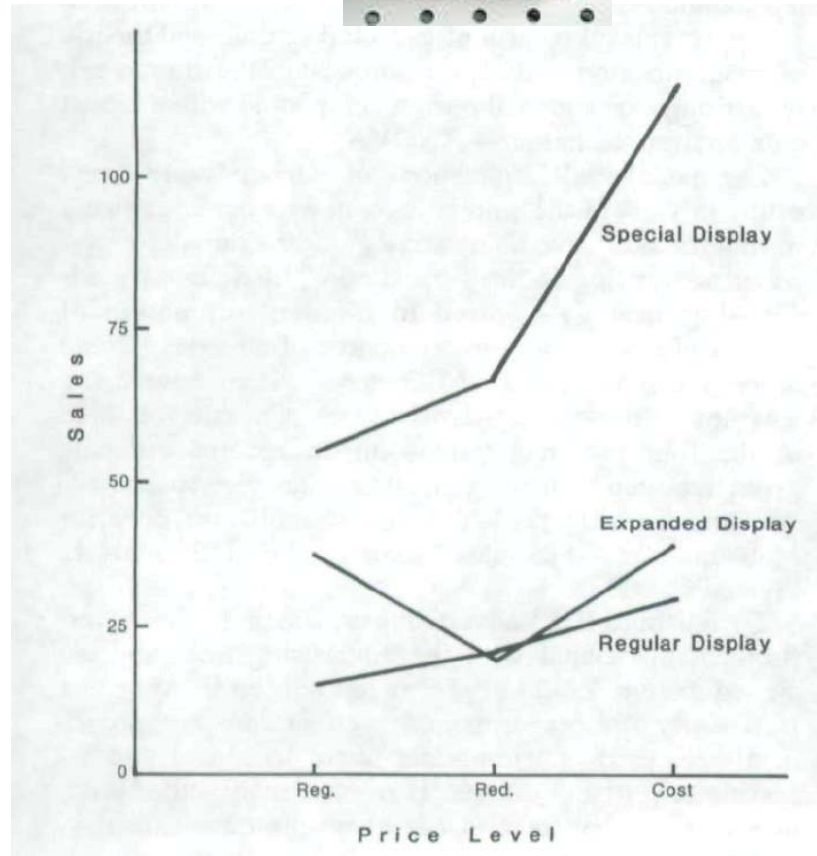


## Food consumption

ease of access (Rozin 2011)  
size of plates and spoons  
(Wansink 2006)



# Purchasing *Food, Alcohol, Tobacco*



Wilkinson et al

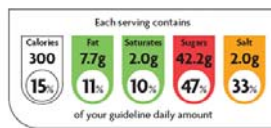
J Marketing Res 1982

# Nudging Towards or Away? The Example of Packaging

Healthy Nudges

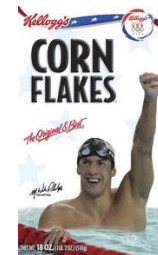
vs

Removing Unhealthy Nudges



Crockett 2011

food



Dixon 2011  
Chernev 2010

alcohol



absence of evidence?



The Grocer 2011

cigarettes



Hammond 2011

Now Imperial offers the ladies a stylish new cigarette brand



Imperial Tobacco 2006  
Doxey 2011

# Nudging vs Regulating

	<b>Nudging</b>	<b>Regulating</b>
Smoking	Make non-smoking more visible through mass media campaigns communicating that the majority do not smoke and the majority of smokers want to stop	Ban smoking in public places
	Reduce cues for smoking by keeping cigarettes, lighters, and ashtrays out of sight	Increase price of cigarettes
Alcohol	Serve drinks in smaller glasses	Regulate pricing through duty or minimum pricing per unit
	Make lower alcohol consumption more visible through highlighting in mass media campaigns that the majority do not drink to excess	Raise the minimum age for purchase of alcohol
Diet	Designate sections of supermarket trolleys for fruit and vegetables	Restrict food advertising in media directed at children
	Make salad rather than chips the default side order	Ban industrially produced trans fatty acids
Physical activity	Make stairs, not lifts, more prominent and attractive in public buildings	Increase duty on petrol year on year (fuel price escalator)
	Make cycling more visible as a means of transport, eg, through city bike hire schemes	Enforce car drop-off exclusion zones around schools

# The Challenge

## Changing Behaviour to Improve Population Health

### Individual *Reflective System*

Provision of information

health education

biomarker risk information

### Strengthening self-regulation

setting and achieving goals

*eg implementation intentions*

developing self-regulatory skills

*eg parenting programmes*

### Situation

### *Automatic System*

### Change Environments

### “Choice Architecture”

#### Built environment

layout of neighbourhoods,  
buildings, shops, cafes and  
bars; presentation of food,  
alcohol & tobacco

#### Social environment

social norms

#### Economic environment

pricing



# Judging Nudging: Can nudging improve population health?

**YES**, probably – given much of our behaviour is cued by the environments in which it takes place

**BUT**

Introducing healthy nudges without removing unhealthy nudges likely to have little effect

**Regulation** will likely be needed to achieve this

**Uncertainty** remains over **which aspects of environments** have largest effects in aggregate and across levels of deprivation

Conceptual review and synthesis: [In progress](#)