Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

RESEARCH PAPER

The cost of managerialism in the university: an autoethnographical account of an academic redundancy process

Richard Joseph*

The John Curtin Institute of Public Policy, Curtin University, Perth, WA, Australia

This paper presents an autoethnographical account of the events associated with the author's redundancy from a tenured academic position at Murdoch Business School, Murdoch University, Perth, Western Australia. It is argued that managerialism, a social philosophy that sees the management of a university to be little different from the management of a for-profit business, provided university management with a rationale for a course of action that imposed heavy costs on individuals and undermined core academic values. The apparent weakness of the protection provided by tenure is highlighted by the mechanisms through which university management exerted control over the academic employment relationship. The cost of imposing management's will to win at all costs corrodes valuable aspects of academic work, such as collegiality, trust and the sharing of information. The paper shows that the various mechanisms of control imposed by a university management that adheres to managerialist principles can destroy much of what is worthwhile in the university. What is left is something with little spirit and nothing worthwhile to manage.

Introduction

Until relatively recently, a university realistically may have been seen as comprising a membership of scholars, working collegially to further universal knowledge in disciplines worthy of the institution (Deem, 1998). The academic members of the university were assumed to be self-motivated and prepared to undertake unpopular research (for which they were granted the protection of tenure of employment). They were no strangers to controversy. As an institution, universities protected knowledge that might not have had an immediate use. In short, universities protected values that underpinned a democratic and open society. Of course, a golden age of universities has probably never existed in a pure form. Universities have always had to argue and make a case for their place in the social structure, no matter which country or political system they are in (Harding *et al.*, 2007). This aside, universities have been subject to considerable change in recent years, change which has seriously undermined the traditional scholarly attributes of the university. One of the key areas of change has been in the way universities are managed. From a collegial group of scholars that was largely self-managing, universities are now often considered to be similar to large for-profit business enterprises. University bureaucracies have expanded rapidly in recent years; one of the key pressure points of change is how universities are managed and consequently, the nature and conditions of academic work (Ginsberg, 2011).

*Email: rajoseph4342@hotmail.com
 Accepting editor: Stuart Macdonald

It is hardly surprising to note that the stylised changes outlined above have been widely identified in what is now an extensive literature about new public management (Maor, 1999; Hood and Dixon, 2015a). There is also a considerable literature on how new public management is affecting the university, as a key institution in the public sector (Coady, 2000; Ginsberg, 2011; Hil, 2012; Thornton, 2012; Forsyth, 2014). Within this far-reaching body of literature about change in the modern university, the theme of managerialism looms large. Studies linking managerialism and universities focus on a broad variety of themes, many of which are interconnected. Recent examples include change management in universities (Gabriel, 2012; Parker, 2014), the impact of neo-liberalism on the university (Thornton, 2014), an economic interpretation of the managerialist university (Aspromourgos, 2012), academic performance and the threat to the integrity of academic work and identity (Deem, 1998, 2008; Winter, 2009), collegiality and managerialism (Tight, 2014), corrosive leadership (Thornton, 2004), corporatisation and privatisation (Biggs, 2002; Thornton, 2012), and the decline of the university as a worthwhile institution supporting democratic values (Saunders, 2006; Williams, 2012), as well as individual country studies (Hedley, 2010; Ginsberg, 2011; Hil, 2012) and discipline specific critiques (Locke and Spender, 2011; Thornton, 2012, Kilkauer, 2013).

While national circumstances shape universities differently, there are sufficient common elements to suggest that traditional aspects of the university are under threat. The blame for this undermining of traditional values is frequently laid at the feet of managerialism, a corporate social philosophy that has come to dominate university management in Australia, New Zealand, the UK and the US. This philosophy sees universities as very much like businesses, and as such, what is good for managing a business will be good for managing a university. University managers apparently need to know little about the detail and the workings of the academy. Likewise, the dominance of business leaders on the managing boards of universities is becoming increasingly commonplace (Norrie, 2012). Managerialism does not fit well with the traditional role of the university (Thornton, 2005).

This paper argues that managerialism has a destructive impact on maintaining and nurturing the traditional roles of the university. Managerialism, in its generic sense, involves the wresting of control of key functions of the university from academics. Often these power struggles are described in broader terms, but there are relatively few studies that explore the impact of this battle for control on how individual academic staff conduct themselves and the values they adopt or eschew (Biggs and Davis, 2002; Donoghue, 2008, p.71; Bessant, 2014; Thornton, 2014). This paper presents a first-hand account of what managerialism means for the traditional attributes of the university: commitment of staff; trust; the willingness to share information; and the ability to speak out. Often, the impact of managerialism is described in abstract terms. The value of this account is that it explores the impact of managerialism at the personal level and as such exposes the tension between individual commitment to academic values and pressure to change from above. The study also has value as it provides insights for 'insiders' (people familiar with the day to day workings of a modern university) as well as 'outsiders' (people less familiar with the current culture of the managerialist university). The latter may still be holding on to outmoded views of how universities operate, and the former, perhaps, trying to make sense of their daily experiences in a turbulent work environment. What is becoming evident is that the psychological and emotional

impact of rapid changes to academic work practices and the related redundancy of professionals are becoming more pronounced.

An autoethnographical account of the redundancy of four tenured academic staff at Murdoch University in Perth, Western Australia, is presented to show the corrosive nature of managerialist control. 'Autoethnography is an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyse (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience' (Ellis *et al.,* 2011). It is also a personal account as the author was one of the tenured staff who lost their jobs.[1] Although based on personal experience of the redundancy, the paper is written in a passive rather than an active voice. The reason for this is not to diminish the personal dimensions (which are evident enough) but to highlight the collective response of the four academics subjected to the redundancy process. Division and uncertainty about tactics and strategy did arise from time to time among the four academics and the union representing them. However, these were largely resolved through the collective front presented by the union against university management. When any of the targeted academics tried to take individual action, they met with a swift response from university management threatening disciplinary action or loss of redundancy entitlements.

The paper is organised into the following parts. First, the changing nature of academic work is discussed to provide context. Second, managerialism is outlined and some of its mechanisms of control are identified. Third, the autoethnographical account is presented as a narrative. Finally, the impact of the redundancy on the staff and the university is discussed with the conclusion that there are numerous negative outcomes that undermine collegiality, trust and knowledge-sharing in the university.

Academic work in universities: now a mixed bag

The claim that academic work in universities is now a mixed bag is not meant to imply that the past was perfect or at least better in some objective sense. Historical studies of the evolution of knowledge institutions will support the view that we are really dealing with a continuum here (McNeeley and Wolverton, 2008). Knowledge institutions (be they universities, monasteries or similar entities of the past) change, adapting to and reflecting the broader changes in society. For example, for many, it would be a retrograde step were universities to revert to the elitist institutions they were, say, 40–50 years ago. It is, therefore, unhelpful to hark back to a golden age of universities. It is more accurate to say that the mode of production of knowledge has changed and this, in turn, is reflected by the institutions that are created by modern capitalism (Gibbons *et al.*, 1994; Harvie, 2000; Jessop, 2014).

What can be said with some degree of certainty is that, within universities, there will be academic staff who adhere to certain traditional values and others who eschew these values. There will be staff who value traditional aspects of the university and those who do not. Of course, what we are dealing with is a continuum which covers values, experience, commitment, achievement and so on. Some academic staff will have been drawn into management roles (which is only to be expected as an organisation grows), but equally managers with little knowledge of scholarly practice or any particular discipline (except business, perhaps) are now taking up key management positions in universities (Winter, 2009).

Debowski (2012) presents some common responses from academics asked why they like academic work, and has compared these with the challenges presented by

the erosion of conditions in universities. Positive attributes of academic work identified were:

- *Love of learning*: there are few professions that pay people to follow an intellectual interest and satisfy their curiosity.
- *Sharing passion*: sharing a love of learning with students, colleagues and protégés is a particularly fulfilling aspect of working in universities.
- *Seeking new challenges*: academic work can be rich in unpredictability and new opportunities, although it does have its share of routine and 'churn', where tasks must simply be done.
- *Working with colleagues who are intellectually challenging and inspirational*: as knowledge incubators, universities recruit and cultivate talented and innovative thought leaders.
- *Making a difference*: few professions offer the opportunity to influence the future in the way that academic work can through educating students, working with community groups and conducting research.
- *Working flexibly*: the capacity to work from home, adapt work to personal commitments, and work in a way that suits individual style is a lure for many.
- *Travelling*: the opportunity to visit new places and meet colleagues from across the world is also a significant benefit.

Debowski (2012) also identifies some of the current disadvantages of academic work:

- *Security decreased*: the casualisation of the academic workforce is associated with a greater use of contracts to enable flexible employment practices.
- *Workloads increased*: with tightening resources, technological developments and escalating student demand, higher education institutions have increased teaching loads and reduced administrative support to assist academics.
- *Available 24/7*: the growth in information and communication technologies has hampered the separation of personal and professional lives.
- *Not for the money*: most academics could earn much more by working in industry or as consultants.
- *Stakeholder expectations increased*: the cost of tertiary education has encouraged students to look closely at the quality of the education they receive.
- *The goal posts always receding*: academe is unusual in that the better the academic is, the better the academic is expected to be.

It should be evident from comparison of the above lists that the scene is set for a clash of values. University managers adhering to values that impose changes to working conditions, class sizes, online provision and internationalisation will be in conflict with academic staff adhering to more traditional values. It is not constructive to portray this as a simple clash of opposites (although it often is). It is more fruitful to focus on the points of paradox or contradiction in what is evident from the various stresses facing the modern university (Bateson, 1987; Tosey, 2006). From this perspective, we can follow Seligman's (2011) observation that there are two sorts of reality: a non-reflexive reality and a reflexive one. The former is rooted in evidence and objectivity whereas the latter (reflexive reality) is 'influenced and sometimes even determined by expectations and perceptions' (Seligman, 2011, p.234). If we

keep in mind that visions of the future (expectations) are central to policy-making decisions (Bromley, 2006; Seligman, 2011), then it is easy to see that the imposition of a management ideology in the university will have far-reaching effects. This management ideology is commonly referred to as managerialism.

The various dimensions of managerialism

The primary function of management is organisational, entailing the creation, maintenance and enhancement of administrative systems which transform resources into productive outputs (Wastell, 2011, p.38). Managerialism is a style of thought that distorts what is generally understood as the primary function of management. It is a set of beliefs, attitudes and values which support the view that management is the most essential and desirable element of good administration and government (Rees and Rodley, 1995). In managerialism, conflict and argument are unnecessary for solving problems. They are replaced by the rational assessment of problems by collating information, listing options, evaluating risk and choosing the best course of action. Measurements, such as key performance indicators, efficiency dividends, performance evaluation of staff and market testing are but a few of the key concepts that accompany the managerialist ideology.

In a university context, the ideology suggests that a university should be run just like a business (Hedley, 2010). The skills needed to run a university are very similar to those needed to run a bank, or a factory. One consequence of this thinking is the degradation of the skills associated with a university's central mission. Of more importance to managerialist thinking are the generic skills that apply to all management rather than the skills associated with a particular academic discipline. Managerialist ideology is also essentially a form of governance. It shifts the basis of power in universities from legal-rational authority to efficiency in the market. Accompanying these shifts in power are the various tools and rhetoric that legitimises the shifts themselves. For instance, the role of technology in promoting efficiency becomes important, as does the need to remove impediments in employment. From this perspective, the growth in the proportion of casual staff at university is not an indication of declining quality, but of greater productivity and efficiency.

Managerialism creates controls that marginalise the autonomy of academic staff and their involvement in university decision making. Managerialism offers to do more with less. This means using resources efficiently, but what ultimately replaces these missing resources is not less management but the belief that better management is the answer (Deem, 1998, p.52). In effect, managerialism reinforces management's right to manage which, if accepted, corresponds to academic staff having less or no involvement in management. Consequently, university governance procedures now tend to favour top-down, chain-of-command control, suppressing the more democratic aspects of collegiality (Hedley, n.d.). The status of academic staff is inevitably reduced in a hierarchical structure. Financial responsibilities and controls are greater and more tightly managed, meaning that access to key financial information can be limited, reducing transparency and shifting power to those 'in the know'. As the university becomes more focussed on profit and protecting its brand, loyalty is demanded of staff. University management may insist that employees refrain from speaking out on controversial topics and thereby risking damage to the corporate image (Saunders, 2006). The prospect of bullying or legal action arises as managers align their values with those of the institution and others to the values of

scholarship or their discipline. Finally, with managerialism's encouragement of entrepreneurialism, academic managers start to take business-like and risky decisions. They remove un-cooperative staff by sacking them, sometimes with tragic outcomes (Colquhoun, 2015).

Managerialism and control

The mechanisms by which managerialism exerts control fall into two classes: rhetorical and substantive (Fitzsimmons, 1999). The rhetorical relates to the language and social practices that surround managerialism. This form of control is significant as 'rhetoric also has its own discursive force in that it encourages people to define the world differently; as language changes, so too does practice, and vice versa' (Fitzsimmons, 1999, p.4). Substantive control incorporates the idea of a more powerful entity exerting influence over another. Coercive force and bullying, and 'playing the game' are two dimensions of this.

Rhetoric

Hoopes (2003) has pointed to two important rhetorical dimensions of managerialism. First, managerialism often conveys the idea (commonly taught in organisational behaviour classes) that bottom-up power is important in a competitive global economy. This translates into a recognition that human capital and the individual employee are important to the organisation. This is appealing in a university context since it has the semblance of reinforcing the importance of collegiality and disciplinary knowledge:

> Managerialism confuses 'power' in the physical sense of power to do the job with 'power' in the political sense of power over oneself and others. By emphasising the first sense of power, management gurus imply that employees also enjoy power in the latter sense. (Hoopes, 2003)

What this means is that academic working conditions and status can be undermined while at the same time the university asserts that it values its staff. Second, managerialism reinforces the notion that senior university managers are democratic leaders of employees' bottom-up effort. The notion of the vice chancellor as one among equals morphs into the cult of the chief executive officer (CEO) providing charismatic leadership for the whole university. Inflated by managerialism, the moral standing of the leader can withstand, and even promote, corrupt management and vindictive decision making. One practical example of this is the shift in university governance from academics themselves to boards and councils that have limited involvement with academics and are often dominated by business leaders with little interest in the scholarly activities. A further example is a new management layer below the CEO on which power can be centralised. Thornton (2012) refers to this layer as subaltern deans, Forsyth (2014) as the DVC (deputy vice chancellor) epidemic, and Ginsberg (2011) as cohorts of deans and deanlets. While such governance structures permit academics to work in disciplinary groups and exercise a degree of freedom within these groups, academics lose the right to determine what happens in the university as power is sucked from them to higher levels (Fitzsimmons, 1999, p.2; Ryan, 2011).

The rhetoric of managerialism changes academic practice itself (Bessant, 2002). For example, what was once classed as a contribution to scholarly practice, such as marking Ph.D. theses, book reviewing or editing journals, becomes something that is to be shunned as not contributing to efficiency. The nature of disciplinary turf wars has also changed. While such disputes are common features of academic life, they once had educative value, given the importance of intellectual argument. Managerialism has now added new fronts to existing battles among faculty groups, often reducing them to administrative wars of indeterminate length. The higher principles at stake are ignored – or not understood – by administrators (Ginsberg, 2011, p.85).

Coercive force and bullying

Coercive force and bullying can be identified in a wide range of behaviours, including exclusion, withdrawal of privileges, psychological abuse and dismissal (Thornton, 2004). Thérèse and Martin (2010) point to shaming or degradation rituals as a way of exerting social control in science. Degradation rituals have a number of features – agents, contexts, means and severity. Degrading agents refer to the person or group that administers a degradation ritual. If this happens to be the institution, the structural imbalance in power between the agent and the target can be serious. Context refers to the public or private nature of the ritual. The key factor here is that an audience is involved. Degradation of academic staff through disciplinary action or dismissal (through a redundancy process) sends a clear message to others about where they stand in the power hierarchy of the university. Means can relate to whether the degradation is informal or formal. Informality can be related to a type of institutional culture that allows abuse to go unchecked. Formality can refer to legal processes or even how degradation rituals are conducted, written up or promulgated. Finally, severity relates to the outcome of degradation. In the case of redundancy, this is a form of organisational death as the staff member is cut off from the university and dismissed (somewhat like an execution). Degradation rituals can be open to challenge (Thérèse and Martin, 2014). Of particular interest is Olivieri's (2003) personal account of a degradation ritual at the University of Toronto in Canada, where she was a researcher. Olivieri was undertaking clinical trials on a drug for which the university was receiving funding and research support from a drug company. She exercised what she believed was a public duty to speak out when the trials were showing dangerous results:

> Until these difficulties arose, I had naively assumed that my university would honour the principles of academic freedom. I have since learned that many universities approach this kind of situation using the 'Four Ds' – deny, delay, divide and discredit. That was in fact my experience. (Olivieri, 2003, p.33)

To the Four D's she adds a fifth D – dismissal.

Playing the game

'Playing the game' explains an aspect of the formal (often legal) process noted above. As most employment is governed by laws and contracts, employer and employee are often drawn into a formal legal process when a redundancy occurs. Once locked in a legal framework, constraints govern the scope of action (and

related penalties) open to individual actors. Hopkins (2012) notes that one of the factors making redundancy so psychologically damaging for victims is its process-driven nature. Organisations are keen to avoid unfair dismissal accusations or bad press, which means that redundancy can be callous and uncaring as long as it is driven by process. Once involved in a legally-constraining process, more powerful actors can force others to follow in what appears to be a reasonable process. Reasonableness does not equate to fairness.

Bateson (1987) discusses the importance of muddle. In the midst of mess, people become frustrated and soon feel things are getting out of hand. Bateson shifts the focus from mess to a particular sort of order. When people have different perspectives on what constitutes order, the potential arises for not only conflict, but the manipulation of a situation. This is particularly likely in an unequal power relationship, where the mess created by the more powerful actor becomes a particular form of order which is exploited to produce the desired outcome. There is a difference between game and play. In a game, there is an agreed set of rules and when a player chooses not to abide by the rules, there is the possibility of cheating or at least the accusation of not taking the game seriously. However, play can be a process of making up the rules as one goes along, a sort of discovery or learning process. Appreciating whether one is in a game or engaged in play will constrain actors in different ways. For example, managers can play in a redundancy process that the staff union considers a game.

Central to the employment conditions of academic staff is the notion of academic tenure. Tenured academics have certain expectations as to how the university should treat them (Tipples *et al.*, 2007). University management, for its part, may not share these expectations, and the abolition of tenure represents the ultimate triumph of the managerialist ideology over the individual. It follows that a redundancy process will bring to the fore many of the tensions inherent in managerialism. The notion of academic tenure is closely associated with what a university does (McKenzie, 1996). Commonly put forward as a basis for academic freedom and existing to protect academic staff from being summarily dismissed or persecuted for propounding unpopular ideas, tenure is also criticised for introducing inefficiency into the system. Tenured staff, it is claimed, may become lazy and avoid doing what they are employed to do. While both arguments are valid, tenure exists because management sees certain benefits in affording it and academics see value in having it. Tenure exists (although not in all universities), in part, because of the specific characteristics of academic work. This protection allows knowledge to be retained, embodied in expert staff. Staff also receive some protection from the fickleness of changing fads and fashions associated with disciplines or academic managers (Allen, 2000). In short, tenure brings with it costs and benefits, but if a university is defined by academic work, then tenure may not be out of place (Froomkin, n.d.). This is why tenure is not usually found in other sorts of organisations. The more routine the work, the less the need for tenure.

Tenure, then, is potentially in conflict with managerialism. By asserting the autonomy of the individual tenured academic, tenure shifts a degree of power back to the community of scholars rather than to university management. It also makes resources and strategy harder to manage centrally. Tenured academics are difficult to remove, even if their expertise is no longer required by the university. Managerialist ideology favours the flexibility provided by hiring casual staff. University management that does succeed in removing tenured academics from their posts reinforces

hierarchical structure and diminishes both collegiality and the status of the individual academic. The expert scholar, irrespective of reputation, becomes just another staff resource. The fact that tenured staff have reputations and are often involved in trusted networks of scholars means a lot less in managerialism than the power over the staff resource. It is little wonder, then, that tenure (and the enjoyment of such scholarly traditions as study leave and sabbaticals) is a key area of contention.

Redundancy is an extreme solution to a managerial problem. The manager has recourse to lesser options – bullying, degradation rituals, disciplinary action for minor infringements and preventing academics from speaking out on controversial topics. This paper presents a narrative of a redundancy process that lets the sequence of events 'speak for themselves' (Flyvbjerg, 2001). Making sense of the process is possible only after the fact. While the narrative is told from a personal perspective, it is important to understand that outcomes never seem as certain in the 'heat of battle' as they do afterwards. Nor do the motives of university management. However, with the benefit of hindsight, an appreciation of context and of the power relations associated with employment of academic staff, the resolve of university management to achieve the outcome it desires at any cost becomes apparent. It is apparent now that the negative impacts of redundancy could have been mitigated and costs reduced, but this would have required compromise. When there is a driving will to be right and demonstrate strength in a power struggle, compromise is low on the priority list (Tuchman, 1985). Whatever benefits university management derived from the redundancy were balanced by some very significant costs.

Context for the autoethnographical account

Since the mid-1990s, the funding relationship between the Australian higher education sector and the Australian government has changed significantly (Forsyth, 2014). Direct government funding for universities has been harder to procure. Similar trends have been noted internationally (Glass, 2013). Universities have been required to find revenue from fee-paying students. Many Australian universities have become dependent on international students, whose fees are substantially higher than those paid by domestic students. A decline in international student numbers has put considerable pressure on universities in recent years. As a result, individual disciplines have been scrutinised for financial viability. Teaching staff in non-performing disciplines (that is, ones that do not attract sufficient student numbers) have become vulnerable. The result is sorely-tested collegial relationships and increasing stress among staff (Brett, 2000).

Exacerbating these trends prior to 2006 were changes to the Australian industrial relations system. 'Work Choices', as it was termed at the time, was a system of sweeping reforms that the government argued would bring greater flexibility and more prosperity (through job growth) to the economy. In practice, the reforms severely limited the rights of unions to represent workers in collective wage bargaining with employers. They also reduced such worker entitlements as leave loadings and overtime pay (ACTU, 2007). Employers could now lay off workers for operational reasons alone and not face retaliation from unions or consequences from laws on unfair dismissal. Collective bargaining from unions was meant to give way to a form of employment contract, the Australian Workplace Award (AWA), signed between the individual worker and the employer. In Australian universities, numbers of contract and casual (part-time) teaching staff increased sharply. Academic tenure

no longer provided job security. Universities, depending on the provisions of the employment contract (whether they were collectively- or individually-bargained), now had few barriers to making tenured academic staff redundant, and could do so simply for operational reasons. Following the election of the Labor government in November 2007, changes were made to industrial laws in Australia. While moving away from the pro-employer laws favoured under the previous Liberal government, the changes have not substantially altered employment relationships in Australian universities.

During 2005–06, the Australian government offered universities financial incentives to make their academic employment more flexible. In practice, this meant reducing tenured staff numbers in favour of contract and casual staff (Macnamara, 2007). For university managers, this had the added attraction of reducing salary budgets as casual staff cost less than full-time academic staff. In sum, since the mid-1990s Australian universities have had less government funding, they have been subject to policy initiatives that seem to be contradictory, and much of their autonomy has been sacrificed to centralised government manipulation of their funding. More recently, the Australian government has adopted a deregulatory policy approach that is expected to reduce government support for universities still further, and at the same time grant greater freedom to individual universities to charge students the full costs of their degrees (Long, 2014). This policy change has not only encouraged university managers to find savings through staff cuts, but has also contributed to lowering student entry standards (Hare, 2015).

Account of the redundancy

The university

Murdoch University is the smallest of the four public universities in Perth, Western Australia. It took its first students in 1975. In 2006, Murdoch University had a student population of just over 14,000. Since the mid-1990s, as costs increased, the university had been considering structural reorganisation with talk of strategic alliances with other institutions. This generated lots of local interest, but little structural change. The persistent possibility of structural change did, however, entrench a climate of belt-tightening and financial restraint. Internal university funding models favoured the more costly natural sciences over the less costly social sciences. Business and commerce, traditionally sources of student growth, were regarded by high level management as cash cows which would allow the cross subsidy of poorer departments.

Murdoch University had an organisational governance structure typical of other Australian universities. The institution was headed by a chancellor, largely a figurehead. A university senate advised the chancellor on broad matters of policy. An academic council dealt with academic planning issues. The senior executive group consisted of a vice chancellor (the equivalent of a CEO), several deputy vice chancellors, and five divisional managers or executive deans, responsible for each of the five divisions of the university. The director of human resources, a non-academic role, was responsible for staffing and industrial issues and reported directly to the vice chancellor.

The focus of this account is Murdoch Business School, one of nine schools in the Division of Business, Information Technology and Law, headed by an executive

dean. The executive dean had considerable power in the division, allocating funds among schools and having the final say on academic matters. Each of these schools was led by a head of school. For university governance purposes, the school was the lowest level of academic unit recognised by the university. Positions under the head of school had no special legal obligations under university statutes.

Murdoch Business School

The university has had a commerce and management faculty since the 1980s. This grew steadily and developed a number of off-shore teaching ventures that brought in extra revenue for the university. By the late 1990s, there were over 25 staff in the Faculty of Commerce and Management. In 1999, the executive dean of the division amalgamated the Faculty of Commerce and Management with the Faculty of Economics (both of which were by this time called schools). The creation of a larger academic entity was to provide a more competitive, corporate image for the division. Prior to the dot com stock market crash of 2000, the commerce and management faculty had a reputation for being quite entrepreneurial in marketing teaching programmes abroad. However, by 2001, several of the off-shore teaching ventures had failed and debts were mounting. The dean at the time was effectively sacked by the vice chancellor in that his contract was not renewed. His sudden departure opened the door to structural change in the business, management and economics areas. Central university management was keen to rein in costs and particularly those managers who promoted off-shore teaching ventures where profits and costs were difficult to identify. The important milestones in this account are outlined in Table 1.

The Murdoch Business School came into being, somewhat controversially, at the beginning of 2002. A study of its creation published not long after the event argued that the change management process was deeply flawed (Van Rhyn and Holloway, 2004). There was little attempt to involve staff in decision making. It was one of the largest schools in the university with some 40 academic staff and by far the largest of the nine schools in the division. The marriage was not welcomed by academics in either commerce and management or economics, both fearing a takeover from the other. While the formation of the business school was achieved without loss of academic staff, continual uncertainty saw key staff drift away to better jobs outside the university. The cost reduction imperative meant that tenured staff were never replaced with staff at a similar level of expertise. The number of contract and casual staff grew steadily. The business school was further weakened by frequent changes in its leadership: there were seven deans and heads of school between 2002 and 2006.

By early 2003, a high profile head of school had been recruited from outside the university with the expectation that he would raise external financial support. After a brief period, he left the university. With morale low, an interim head of school was selected from internal applicants in late 2004. While the selection process involved interviews, staff considered that someone who had been groomed for the role by senior management would be the successful applicant. An economist, this individual was widely welcomed as a sensible choice. But he soon changed almost beyond recognition. Someone who had been a laid-back, hail-fellow-well-met sort in an Hawaiian shirt became an executive in a white shirt and business tie, complete with shaven head and clipboard.

Table 1.   Important dates and events.

Date	Event
February 2002	Murdoch Business School created. High leadership turnover with seven deans and heads of school between 2002 and 2006.
November 2004– January 2005	Rumour starts that the electronic business major had been cancelled. Electronic business staff not aware of any changes. Rumour quashed by head of school and labelled a 'mistake'. Management programme chair tells electronic business staff they are unfit to teach in the management discipline.
March 2005	Administrative process begins in internal university committees to cancel the electronic business major. Initiation of this process known only by a select few within the school.
Early October 2005	School planning retreat. Staff welcome fresh approach being adopted by head of school.
Mid-October 2005	Head of school announces redundancy to four academic staff. School staff divided about the rationale for the redundancy process.
November 2005	Union meets with vice chancellor (20 minutes) and VC confirms redundancy.
Mid-November 2005	School committee and executive committee meet to 'reconstruct' justification of programme cancellations and redundancy decisions.
December 2005	Academic staff union informs university that it is in dispute over redundancy process.
Mid-January 2006	First meeting of industrial commission, which meets monthly for next three months.
Late February 2006	Teaching allocated for first semester 2006. Targeted electronic business and economics staff left with no teaching and subjects allocated to other staff.
April 2006	One targeted economics staff member takes voluntary redundancy with confidentiality restrictions. The remaining economist has his redundancy case withdrawn by university management.
Late April 2006	Head of school and director of human resources resign suddenly.
May 2006	Union fails to make progress in the industrial commission appeal. Dean convenes special committee to review the resumes of the two remaining targeted electronic business staff. Both found unfit to teach in general management. Dean confirms there is no work for the electronic business staff.
Early June 2006	Union capitulates and two remaining electronic business staff given final notice.
End June 2006	Expiry of current enterprise agreement. Negotiations commence between union and university management about new agreement.
Early July 2006	Electronic business staff leave university.

Shortly after the appointment of the new head of school, rumours started that the electronic business teaching stream was to be closed. They coincided with the chair of the management programme in the school (a programme which covered the main business disciplines of accounting, management and business history) suggesting that those teaching electronic business did not fit into the school's future profile. They were too costly and were not qualified to teach the general management subjects that attracted the greatest numbers of students, according to his assessment. This was seen as a threat by the electronic business staff and the head of school was asked to intervene. The head of school declared rumours of programme closure to be false and a mistake. This was the start of a process of isolation and subtle denigration as

electronic business staff began to feel unwelcome in the business school. The new head of school was asked to stop the undermining strategy adopted by the chair of the management programme, but to no avail.

In early October 2005, a two-day strategic planning retreat was held at an off-campus venue. Prior to this strategic planning meeting, staff had been preparing academic improvements to a number of teaching programmes, especially the electronic business stream of the bachelor of commerce degree (the main undergraduate degree in the business school). Electronic business staff had developed a diversity of teaching options over the previous six months that would address the steady decline of student numbers in the area.

The October planning session

The two-day off-campus planning session for the business school in October 2005 was attended by about 30 academic staff. The agenda dealt with planning for the coming year. The head of school led the discussions and openly declared that he had an open mind and welcomed a range of opinions. Most of the attendees felt the two-day session was a success. The staff in the electronic business team and their supporters in the management group felt that things were finally changing and their concerns were being heard. While electronic business student numbers were down, there appeared to be scope for electronic business staff to teach in the more robust management area. The prospect of teaching reorganisation and closer alignment of electronic business with the management team was opening up. This was just one outcome of the two days that garnered broad staff support. This was important in the light of the accusation by the management programme chair that electronic business staff were not qualified to teach management, which had produced a split between senior management academic staff and the programme chair.

Shortly after the October planning session, staff started planning their teaching for the coming year. The management group had argued at the planning session for a more autonomous approach to its own planning within the school and this had been endorsed by other staff. Almost all staff were keen to move to a more open and collegial approach to the day-to-day management of their workloads. However, this move towards a form of participatory democracy was staunchly resisted by the head of school, who retained right of veto. He prized his ownership and control of a workload model (a complicated formula) that he used to allocate teaching and research opportunities. Some such models in use in the school then produced farcical results. One formula for allocating the school's scarce research funds depended on previous research output and awarded some staff a 'research grant' of $A2.50. Some got even less. Staff joked about which sort of Mars bar to buy with their grant.

The positive atmosphere lasted for about a week. About lunch time on a Monday (only five working days after the session), the head of school approached the two tenured electronic business staff individually – the author was one – as well as the two tenured staff in economics. They were all to be made redundant. Of the four targeted staff, two were associate professors and two senior lecturers. The four targeted staff were invited to meet the executive dean and someone from the university's human resources department the next day. The head of school told the four selected for redundancy that the university had made planning decisions about their programmes. They had been identified as ones who should lose their jobs and it was a done deal as far as the university was concerned. From the perspective of university

management, the concept of tenure was unimportant. None of these decisions had been disclosed at the planning session a week earlier, nor was the school executive committee aware of the decisions. For the electronic business staff, the justification for the decision was the closure of their programme – a result of a set of academic planning steps that had gone virtually unnoticed through university committees over the previous eight months. The business school members on the various planning committees had chosen not to take any specific steps to inform staff likely to be impacted. The redundancy action was nevertheless a surprise to nearly all the staff in the business school. For the two targeted economists, the justification was the cancellation of 11 of their elective subjects in their degree. Neither had been informed of this action prior to being approached by the head of school. The cancellation of both the electronic business programme and the economics elective units was made possible by an executive order from the dean. Instead of attending the proposed meeting with the dean and HR, the four staff sought advice from their staff union. The union's advice was not to attend any meetings.

Within hours of the redundancies being announced, the union had written to the vice chancellor demanding an explanation. The union argued that the agreed redundancy process had not been followed. Staff–management relations were mediated by an enterprise agreement (EA) that was legally binding on management and staff (AIRC, 2004). Redundancy is specifically dealt with in the EA. The business school was split on the matter. Some staff were affronted that they had been misled by management at the October planning session. One staff member openly declared that management could not be trusted. Staff were uncertain about the legitimacy of the redundancies and there was no collective response to management's challenge, no vote of no confidence in the head of school.

The sequence of events that led to the redundancies was quite opaque to both staff and the academic staff union (the National Tertiary Education Union – NTEU).[2] The university's governance procedures required virtually no coordination between the academic planning decisions and the corporate decisions that affected staffing and funding. In order to achieve its objective, university management had to be seen to be following a legitimate procedure. So, university management momentarily backtracked and established a formal process of consultation so that the legal processes could run more smoothly. Once adequate consultation had been demonstrated, the union would have no case since a legitimate process had been duly followed. What happened was a series of events that demonstrate just how managerialism can corrode collegiality and academic values.

Managing consultation: or reconstructing history (mid-November 2005)

The problem facing university management was that, once it had identified the four academics it wished to make redundant, due process had to be seen to be followed. Lack of attention to due process allowed the union to slow the progress of the redundancies. Having closed programmes and subjects, university management was faced with the union's argument that redeployment of identified staff needed to be investigated. Under the enterprise agreement, redundancy was to be a last resort after redeployment had been fully explored. In order to block redeployment, university management needed to demonstrate that no suitable positions existed elsewhere in the university. It also had to demonstrate that there was no suitable teaching for the identified staff. University management's after-the-fact adoption of a formal process

of consultation became central to manipulating the outcome. From the union's point of view, this consultation was to produce an outcome that demonstrated that teaching was actually available for the tenured staff. University management had other ideas. It proposed consultative meetings moderated by an 'impartial' dean from the university's law school. Written submissions from staff in the business school were invited as part of this consultation process.

The two consultative meetings that were held in mid-November 2005 involved the business school's executive committee and the whole school committee respectively. The latter consisted of all academic staff in the school. Staff realised, if not always immediately, that they were participating in a sham. For example, the whole school committee meeting was expected to debate the merits of closing the electronic business programme and cancelling the 11 elective economics subjects. Only after the meeting did staff learn that university management had already taken the decision to close programmes and to eliminate elective subjects. The meeting was a ritual to ratify decisions already taken. Despite this, the dean and head of school acted as though they were participating in a genuine consultation process. As staff became aware of this abuse of process, indignation gave way to resignation. Those not directly threatened by the redundancies resented being caught up in a process that was taking up their time and which defied logic. Submissions from the union about teaching allocations for affected staff were also given short shrift by university management. Modest attempts by some of the targeted staff to criticise university management were met with a swift response. Management warned that disciplinary action would follow (implying reductions to redundancy payments) if criticism continued. An attempt to appeal directly to the chancellor of the university was blocked by the director of human resources on the basis that communication was not permitted in an 'industrial matter'. A message was relayed through a retired friend that the chancellor regrettably could do nothing to intervene.

For the targeted staff, the meetings were degradation rituals. While they were about process, the subject matter was the jobs at stake. For tenured jobs to be at stake, the implication was that those who held them were incompetent. Some business school staff were disgusted at the arbitrary way they were being treated. Disputes broke out between factions as to whether the consultation process was genuine. Supporters of university management were less worried about ensuring a transparent process, arguing that tough times demanded hard decisions. Having demonstrated consultation (albeit shambolic), the university management had to ensure that the affected staff could not be redeployed nor have their protests heard. This meant they could not be allocated any teaching for the coming semester.

By December 2005, the academic staff union had notified the vice chancellor of a formal dispute. The vice chancellor had met with the union before going into dispute, but only to confirm that the redundancy process had the full backing of the university senate and the chancellor. It was in this context that the head of school and the management programme chair resolutely refused to make plans for teaching in the coming semester. They refused to convene meetings that would open up future planning to discussion within the management and electronic business groups and other staff were powerless to do anything about it. Since teaching started late February 2006, management staff were left wondering why there were no teaching allocations. Tensions soon developed and factions formed within the larger management studies group. One faction reasserted its willingness to integrate electronic business into the management discipline on academic grounds. Permitting electronic business

staff to share management studies teaching would also widen staff expertise and help reduce the number of subjects being taught by casual staff. Another faction, consisting largely of the management programme chair (who was in thrall to the head of school) and the casual and part-time staff, who would benefit if more teaching positions became available, resisted any decisions or remained silent on allocating workloads for the semester.

The majority of business school staff stood back from the factions, almost in bewilderment. This is not an uncommon response in such circumstances (Clarke, 2005). Staff were confused about what was happening, unsure if the head of school could really have taken such action unilaterally. They felt he must have been acting on orders from above. Rumours spread, many questioning the quality of management in the school, the division and even the university. The union argued that teaching needed to be allocated, but university management remained silent on the matter until just before the start of the semester. The electronic business staff, earmarked for redundancy, found themselves without classes to teach and their lecture notes sequestered so that other staff could teach their classes. The economists simply had their subjects cancelled.

The union, supporting the targeted staff, fought a legal battle that lasted some seven months. Repeated union letters to the vice chancellor and senior university administrators simply received no reply. It became apparent that university management was directing all discussion about the matter to the director of HR (recruited to the university from the mining sector), reporting immediately to the VC. Surprisingly, the university seems not to have factored the research of the targeted staff into the cost of the redundancies. The targeted staff were productive, accounting together for just under 40% of the published output of the whole business school and supervising 11 Ph.D. students among them.

The hearings before the Industrial Relations Commission were protracted, ending only with the exhaustion of the union. The terms of the battle were guided by the commission, a body that had its powers severely reduced by the new 'Work Choices' legislation that had just come into force. The result was that the union and university management had to engage in lengthy and often pointless meetings on conciliation. These meetings, often convened without a clear agenda, dragged on and on over months. University management effectively bided its time. For example, one typical meeting lasted for 60 minutes (the allocated time for the meeting). For 50 minutes the union read out a written deposition about the case. University management chose not to respond. At one point, the commission's deputy president insisted that at the next meeting, the university send a representative that could speak with authority for the university. The next time the commission met, the university engaged with the commission's deputy president (ironically, a former senior academic from another WA university) using a video conference link with the legal representative for Murdoch University based in Melbourne. In such meetings, the dean and head of school were present but not speaking with the authority of the university. In short, the formal legal process was little more than a war of attrition with the union requesting information and the university not supplying it.

During the six months of the commission hearings (from January to June 2006), staff morale in the business school plummeted. Communication stopped and the regular daily morning teas, once a popular occasion for school staff, were no longer attended. Friction grew and bickering broke out amongst staff, usually over trivial matters. Tempers flared. Teaching allocations were made at the last minute,

frustrating staff. Budgets were not disclosed. Uncertainty was further increased when some contract teaching staff did not have their contracts renewed. Within the school, bitterness developed between the various factions in economics and management studies (which supported the electronic business staff). Incivility became normal.

The new national industrial laws were to be in place by March 2006 and a new enterprise agreement negotiated between the academic staff union and university management was due to be finalised by the end of June. On the key issue of providing teaching for the affected academics, management simply declined to allocate the targeted staff any classes for the whole of the first semester. Though this was highly irregular, it was justified by university management in the industrial commission on the grounds that it was quite normal for academics not to teach in any given semester. After all, they still had student supervision and other administrative duties. Subjects that were normally taught by the two targeted electronic business academics were transferred to other staff members, inevitably increasing friction among staff. For the economists, the closure of their elective units meant that there was little left for them to do. Casual staff, with much weaker qualifications and less experience, were employed to teach. These casual staff were not questioned in the commission's hearings as they were short-term and their recruitment fell within the scope of managerial prerogative. In this way, any hope of redeployment for the affected staff was blocked by management. There was no limit to the hiring of casual staff even though the targeted tenured academic staff were available for teaching.

A secondary spiral of incivility was spurred by the cost to the university of the redundancy process dragging on so much longer than expected. The case was stirring up rumours that threatened the reputation of the university. The vice chancellor had a reputation for remaining aloof and then suddenly acting when line managers made mistakes. His management style may have delegated responsibility on paper, but he preferred centralised decision making in practice. Not surprisingly, then, some of the key players in the redundancy process, such as the head of school and the director of HR, left the university before the conclusion of the redundancy process. They had found it opportune to look for new challenges in their professional lives according to an email circulating at the time. The dean survived the process remarkably unscathed. With the departure of the head of school, a position in the economics stream became vacant and the university dropped its redundancy case against one of the targeted economists allowing him to retain his old job.

After fighting for nearly nine months with university management, the union began negotiating a new enterprise agreement. University management was particularly aggressive in the bargaining process and the small union team became tired and distracted as the redundancy process drew to a close. The union's appetite for continuing the struggle to save the four jobs was waning. University management had managed to get its way by wearing down the union and the staff it represented. Now it was willing to accept voluntary redundancy to resolve the issue as quickly as possible. As if to add insult to injury, the executive dean convened a panel of senior academics (selected by the dean himself, no less), to review the resumes of the remaining electronic business staff. The targeted staff were all found to have backgrounds that did not fit with the future direction of the business school.

With one of the targeted economists taking the position vacated by the head of school in late April 2006, the other economist chose to leave, induced by an offer from university management that included a confidentiality agreement. By mid-2006, the redundancies had been finalised. The process had delivered only three

redundancies in the end. University management commissioned a review of staff sentiment in the business school immediately following the redundancies. Not surprisingly, the consultants reported that staff morale was at rock bottom and that the school was troubled by autocratic micro-management. In addition, the university's competitiveness in terms of attracting the best quality business students remained low and there was difficulty filling senior leadership posts. Significantly, the internal report made no reference to the loss of senior staff from redundancies, but noted euphemistically that 'the school has lost a number of senior staff in recent years without replacement'. Given that the consultants completed their report just weeks after a debilitating nine-month process that divided staff in the school, the omission can be seen as an example of subtlety in the rhetoric of managerialism. Although management decisions were at the root of the problem, they were never identified as such, meaning that more or better management was an appropriate solution to the problem. There was no mention of redundancies. By mid-2007, some 12 months after the redundancies, the university had begun a full-scale reorganisation. Ironically, a senior university manager, presumably unwittingly, exposed the paradox of managerialism in promoting the university's new academic model: 'The university's greatest source of future value lies with its staff and every effort will be made to ensure staff have the means and the opportunity to unlock and deliver that value' (Thomas, 2007). With such rhetoric, managerialism allows managers to undermine academic working conditions while asserting how much the university values its staff (Hoopes, 2003).

The 10 years or so following these events revealed the damage done to Murdoch University's reputation and the vastly different fates of the staff involved. Three of the four targeted staff did not return to tenured academic positions. The programme chair of management (who had declared that the electronic business staff were not fit to teach management) left the university of his own accord in 2007, and committed suicide in February 2008. The head of school (who announced the redundancies to the four targeted staff and so cleverly orchestrated the October planning session) moved to a senior position in the private sector. The executive dean was promoted to pro vice chancellor within the university. Murdoch's vice chancellor, whose university salary of over $A900,000 was one of the highest in the country (Pownell, 2008), left the university in 2011 to become an education consultant in the private sector. As if demonstrating the managerialist dictum that CEOs should be able to manage anything (Allison, 2015), he has since taken up an executive position in Western Australia's racing and wagering authority (Anon., 2015). A new deputy vice chancellor alluded to the damage done to Murdoch's reputation: 'Part of [the] mission (of the new management team) is to restore the reputation. And for a university, reputation is crucial' (Hiatt, 2013, p.10). A new vice chancellor was appointed, but soon resigned in the face of corruption allegations (Burrell, 2014). Executive dysfunction is more common than is often suspected (Kets de Vries and Balazs, 1997).

Analysis and discussion

The redundancy process cost the university dear. University management was evidently prepared for redundancy payments to targeted staff of about $A400,000.[3] This estimated figure does not include other costs associated with staff time and general loss in productivity in the business school. The logic of managerialism tends to shift or limit the burden of costs attributable to management by restricting the criteria

determining costs. For example, the costs borne by doctoral students who had to refocus their research following the removal of their supervisors were not counted. Or again, management's ideological fixation with casualisation transferred costs to students in terms of quality of teaching and research output. Since the redundancies did not receive media coverage, university management succeeded in limiting reputational costs. However, one government department did let the dean know that it was displeased its students had lost their supervisors. Then there are reputational costs borne by the affected staff, and the personal costs they and their families had to bear. Targeted staff were offered counselling by the university. The cost of the redundancy process was seen as little more than collateral damage by university management. It had no interest in calculating the full costs of the exercise (see Bates, 1996; Mok, 1999; Hood and Dixon, 2015b).

The focus of this paper is on the impact of managerialism on the core functions of a university. Trust and relational networking are central to building institutional success and it is precisely these factors that are undermined by managerialist practices in educational institutions (Kirkby and Reiger, 2014). This narrative offers an analysis of how trust and relationships changed during the course of the redundancy. The most important relationships analysed are those between university management and targeted staff, between university management and the academic staff union, and between targeted staff and other academic staff in the school.

The second important dimension is context, the framework for what has happened. The redundancies occurred when new national laws were being introduced that were to give employers much greater freedom in how they dealt with such cases. As well, a new enterprise bargaining agreement was about to be negotiated. With the benefit of hindsight, it can be seen that these contextual factors pulled the interaction towards play and away from game (where rules are clear cut and should be followed), or conceivably game which is not taken seriously (that is, cheating is expected). The situation was a muddle from the outset and the university's management responded by restoring order. This, of course, was an order that suited university management, not an order that made much sense to staff and the union. In addition, for whatever reason, university management was resolved to achieve the redundancies at almost any cost. It is important to realise that the strength of this resolve was not known beyond the ranks of management.

University management–targeted staff relationship

Since the targeted staff had no warning of the attack on their jobs, it is not unreasonable to see university management as manipulative and deceptive, or simply inept. Even had targeted staff been aware of discussions in committees, the attack was still extraordinary and unexpected. Closure of teaching programmes and axing of elective units were previously unknown in the business school. With the exception of those who were confidants of the dean and head of school, staff were caught off guard. Invitations to planning and consultation meetings were really just deceptive tactics in a psychological sense. If this interpretation of the relationship between university management and targeted staff is correct, then one product of managerialism is the devaluation of the individual. It follows that the tradition of academic tenure is little valued in a managerialist university. This point is underlined by the sudden departures of the director of HR and the head of school. As agents of university management, they were expendable. No one is safe in a managerialist university.

University management–academic staff union relationship

During the redundancy process, the union was treated with no more respect by university management than the targeted staff. Information presented to the union was invariably delivered in a fog of uncertainty. The union had difficulty working out what university management was up to. University management played with the union and did not even engage in a game, let alone a formal legal process. University management was able to play (to make up the rules as it went along) or to shift to a game. Even in game mode, the denial of information was sufficient to keep the union guessing about whether university management was cheating. In the final stages of the process, adherence to a formal legal process allowed the university to construct its own version of what had happened.

With hindsight, the win-at-all-costs approach makes sense if context is factored in. Australian universities have an employer association that coordinates industrial strategy for university management. This affords the managerialist university scope to avoid legal impediments. Enterprise bargaining was affecting all universities at the time and it is likely that individual universities were selected to test how far the boundaries of industrial law could be pushed. Murdoch University may well have been one of these. When confronted with a managerialist ideology, academic staff have a lot less protection than they think.

Targeted staff–other staff relationship

The dynamics of this relationship strikes at the heart of tenure and collegiality, concepts that are anathema to the managerialist. What is evident from the account is that divisions appeared between staff very early on. There was uncertainty about not only the integrity of the redundancy process, but also the necessity for it. These divisions provided the opportunity for university management to divide and rule. They also destroyed any sense of collegiality in the business school. The right of staff to have an impact on university processes was successfully denied. To make matters worse, staff were expected to engage in rituals which were degrading for the targeted staff. They were also a sham, though this was not evident at the time. Only in the light of the determination of university management to complete the redundancy process did the sham become apparent.

The rhetoric of managerialism can change the way academics see themselves. Staff opposing the redundancies on principle could be seen as adhering to traditional academic values. More to the point is how other staff reconceived their understanding of the employment relationship. Instead of forming a unified front, business school academics were divided, uncertain and resigned. This subtle change in what it means to hold an academic position is a pernicious outcome of the rhetoric of managerialism. Managerialist thinking in universities strikes at the heart of many traditional values. It strikes at collegiality, tenure, academic integrity and trust. Strange behaviours manifest themselves at universities in these new circumstances (Gabriel, 2012).

Conclusion

Redundancy at university is part of change and adjustment in the organisation. However, what is pernicious in the modern university is the single-minded adherence to

managerialist ideology permeating upper levels of management. Human capital becomes a disposable resource. The will to win at all costs is central to managerialism. It is corrosive, not least because it creates fear. Staff are afraid of losing their jobs, and managers afraid that they are not doing their job correctly. In time, academics become run down and defeated, and managers lose sight of any purpose their job might once have had. As Jaspers (Thornton, 2012, p.222) concluded some time ago, 'if the spirit leaves the university, it becomes mechanical and technocratic'. Few academics would dare to believe there is any spirit in universities these days beyond that approved by senior management (see Lamberton, 2007; Donoghue, 2008; Fish, 2009).

Acknowledgements

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes

1. No attempt has been made to disguise dates or the name of the university. The author was an associate professor in electronic business at the time of the redundancy.
2. To be fair, it is difficult to determine how much this was a genuine surprise to the academic staff union. It is not as if redundancy was unknown at Murdoch University. The union representing general staff had been dealing with redundancy and cases of sacking of general staff for some time. In August 2005, a small group of academic staff teaching in software engineering at a satellite campus had their teaching programme closed because of low student numbers. With hindsight, these developments (which had little profile on the main campus) could be seen as a precursor to the redundancies in the business school.
3. The estimate of $A400,000 is conservative. The university's redundancy provisions under the Enterprise Agreement prevailing at the time provided the payment of three week's pay for each year of service. *Pro rata* long service leave and annual leave were also to be paid. Altogether, the four affected staff had a combined period of service of just over 50 years. Assuming a weekly pay of $2000 (or approximately $100,000 per annum) for each staff member, the figure can be seen to be conservative.

References

ACTU (Australian Council of Trade Unions) (2007) *One Year On: The Impact of the New IR Laws on Australian Working Families*, ACTU Factsheet, 27 March, available from http://archive.amieu.net/www.actu.asn.au/Images/Dynamic/attachments/5183/OneYearOnFactsheet.pdf [accessed August 2015].

AIRC (Australian Industrial Relations Commission) (2004) *Academic Staff Enterprise Agreement 2004 between Murdoch University and the National Tertiary Education Industry Union*, available from http://www.nteu.org.au/library/view/id/5114 [accessed July 2015].

Allen, H. (2000) 'Tenure: why faculty, and the nation, need it', *Thought and Action*, 16, 2, pp.95–110.

Allison, L. (2015) 'Death of the ascetics: the rise of the v-c lifestyle', *Times Higher Education*, 2 April, available from https://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/features/death-of-the-ascetics-the-rise-of-the-v-c-lifestyle/2019343.article [accessed July 2015].

Anon. (2015) 'General manager – racing', Media Release, Racing and Wagering Western Australia, 5 May, available from http://www.rwwa.com.au/home/general-manager-racing-23163.html [accessed August 2015].

Aspromourgos, T. (2012) 'The managerialist university: an economic interpretation', *Australian Universities Review*, 54, 2, pp.44–9.

Bates, R. (1996) 'The educational costs of managerialism', paper presented to the Joint Conference for the Educational Research Association, Singapore and the Australian Association for Research in Education, Singapore Polytechnic, 25–29 November, available from http://www.aare.edu.au/data/publications/1996/bater96191.pdf [accessed July 2015].

Bateson, G. (1987) *Steps to an Ecology of Mind: Collected Essays in Anthropology, Psychiatry, Evolution and Epistemology*, Jason Aronson Inc, Northvale NJ.

Bessant, J. (2002) 'Dawkins' higher education reforms and how metaphors work in policy making', *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 24, 1, pp.87–99.

Bessant, J. (2014) '"Smoking guns": reflections on truth and politics in the university' in Thornton, M. (ed.) *Through a Glass Darkly: The Social Sciences Look at the Neoliberal University*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, pp.229–55.

Biggs, J. (2002) 'Corporatised universities: an educational and cultural disaster' in Biggs, J. and Davis, R. (eds) *The Subversion of Australian Universities*, Fund for Intellectual Dissent, Wollongong NSW, available from http://www.uow.edu.au/~bmartin/dissent/documents/sau/ [accessed January 2015].

Biggs, J. and Davis, R. (eds) (2002) *The Subversion of Australian Universities*, Fund for Intellectual Dissent, Wollongong NSW, available from http://www.uow.edu.au/~bmartin/dissent/documents/sau/ [accessed January 2015].

Brett, J. (2000) 'Competition and collegiality' in Coady, T. (ed.) *Why Universities Matter*, Allen and Unwin, St Leonards NSW, pp.144–55.

Bromley, D. (2006) *Sufficient Reason: Volitional Pragmatism and the Making of Economic Institutions*, Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ.

Burrell, A. (2014) 'Intrigues in the halls of academe: Murdoch University management upheavals have ruined staff morale', *Weekend Australian*, 13–14 December, p.20.

Clarke, J. (2005) *Working with Monsters: How to Identify and Protect Yourself from the Workplace Psychopath*, Random House, Milsons Point NSW.

Coady, T., (ed.) (2000) *Why Universities Matter: A Conversation about Values, Means and Directions*, Allen and Unwin, St Leonards NSW.

Colquhoun, D. (2015) 'The death of Stefan Grimm was "needless". And Imperial has done nothing to prevent it happening again', available from http://www.dcscience.net/2015/04/09/the-death-of-stefan-grimm-was-needless-and-imperial-has-done-nothing-to-prevent-it-happening-again/ [accessed June 2015].

Debowski, S. (2012) *The New Academic: A Strategic Handbook*, Open University Press, Buckingham.

Deem, R. (1998) '"New managerialism" and higher education: the management of performances and cultures in universities in the United Kingdom', *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 8, 1, pp.47–70.

Deem, R. (2008) 'Unravelling the fabric of academe: the managerialist university and its implications for the integrity of academic work' in Turk, J. (ed.) *Universities at Risk: How Politics, Special Interests and Corporatization Threaten Academic Integrity*, James Lorimer, Ottawa, pp.256–81.

Donoghue, F. (2008) *The Last Professors: The Corporate University and the Fate of the Humanities*, Fordham University Press, New York, NY.

Ellis, C., Adams, T. and Bochner, A. (2011) 'Autoethnography: an overview', *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 12, 1, available from http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/1589/3095 [accessed July 2015].

Fish, S. (2009) 'The last professor', available from http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/01/18/the-last-professor/?_r=0 [accessed January 2009].

Fitzsimmons, P. (1999) 'Managerialism and education' in Peters, M., Ghiraldelli, P., Žarnić, B. and Gibbons, A. (eds) *Encyclopaedia of Philosophy of Education*, available from http://www.ffat.hr/ENCYCLOPAEDIA [accessed January 2015].

Flyvbjerg, B. (2001) *Making Social Science Matter: Why Social Inquiry Fails and How it can Succeed Again*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Forsyth, H. (2014) *A History of the Modern Australian University*, NewSouth Publishing, Sydney.

Froomkin, D. (n.d.) 'Terminating tenure: instruction, inquiry and the institutionalized intelligentsia', *Morningside Review*, available from http://morningsidereview.org/essay/terminating-tenure-instruction-inquiry-and-the-institutionalized-intelligentsia/ [accessed November 2013].

Gabriel, Y. (2012) 'Organizations in a state of darkness: towards a theory of organizational miasma', *Organization Studies*, 33, 9, pp.1137–52.

Gibbons, M., Limoges, C., Nowotny, H., Schwartzman, S., Scott, P. and Trow, M. (1994) *The New Production of Knowledge: The Dynamics of Science and Research in Contemporary Societies*, Sage, London.

Ginsberg, B. (2011) *The Fall of the Faculty: The Rise of the All-Administrative University and Why it Matters*, Oxford University Press, New York, NY.

Glass, A. (ed.) (2013) 'The state of higher education – 2013: executive summary', OECD Higher Education Programme IMHE, available from http://www.oecd.org/edu/imhe/StateofHigherEducation2013-ExecutiveSummary.pdf [accessed August 2015].

Harding, A., Scott, A., Laske, S. and Burtscher, C. (eds) (2007) *Bright Satanic Mills: Universities, Regional Development and the Knowledge Economy*, Ashgate, Farnham.

Hare, J. (2015) 'Unis ramp up offers to lowest tier', *Australian*, 19 January, pp.1, 5.

Harvie, D. (2000) 'Alienation, class and enclosure in UK universities', *Capital and Class*, 24, 2, pp.103–32.

Hedley, S. (2010) 'Managerialism in Irish universities', *Irish Journal of Legal Studies*, 1, 1, pp.117–41.

Hedley, S. (n.d.) 'Managerialism', *Ninth Level Ireland*, available from http://9thlevel.ie/party-poisitions/managerialism/ [accessed January 2015].

Hiatt, B. (2013) 'Murdoch lifts entry-level rank', *West Australian*, 5 August, p.10.

Hil, R. (2012) *Whackademia: An Insider's Account of the Troubled University*, NewSouth Publishing, Sydney.

Hood, C. and Dixon, R. (2015a) *A Government that Worked Better and Cost Less? Evaluating Three Decades of Reform and Change in UK Central Government*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Hood, C. and Dixon, R. (2015b) 'What we have to show for 30 years of new public management: higher costs, more complaints', *Governance: An International Journal of Policy Administration and Institutions*, 28, 3, pp.265–67.

Hoopes, S. (2003) 'Managerialism: its history and dangers', *Historically Speaking: The Bulletin of the Historical Society*, 1, 1, available from http://www.bu.edu.hisotric/hs/september03html#hoopes [accessed January 2015].

Hopkins, E. (2012) 'The redundancy crusader's prescription for a better model of redundancy', available from www.redundancywithrespect.com [accessed January 2013].

Jessop, B. (2014) 'The state and the contradictions of the knowledge-driven economy', available from http://bobjessop.org/2014/01/03/the-state-and-the-contradictions-of-the-knowledge-driven-economy-2/ [accessed July 2015].

Kets de Vries, M. and Balazs, K. (1997) 'The downside of downsizing', *Human Relations*, 50, 1, pp.11–50.

Kilkauer, T. (2013) 'Managerialism and business schools – a review essay', *Australian Universities Review*, 55, 2, pp.128–32.

Kirkby, D. and Reiger, K. (2014) 'A design for learning? A case study of the hidden costs of curriculum and organisational change' in Thornton, M. (ed.) *Through a Glass Darkly: The Social Sciences Look at the Neoliberal University*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, pp.211–27.

Lamberton, D. (2007) 'Review of Harding, A., Scott, A., Laske, S. and Burtscher, C. (eds) *Bright Satanic Mills: Universities, Regional Development and the Knowledge Economy'*, *Prometheus*, 25, 4, pp.458–59.

Locke, R. and Spender, J. (2011) *Confronting Managerialism – How the Business Elite and their Schools Threw our Lives Out of Balance*, Zed Books, London.

Long, C. (2014) 'End of the public university', *Arena Magazine*, 130, June/July, pp.5–7.

Maor, M. (1999) 'The paradox of managerialism', *Public Administration Review*, 59, 1, pp.5–18.

Macnamara, L. (2007) 'Casual staff pick up the slack', *Australian (Higher Education Supplement)*, 28 February, p.34.

McKenzie, R. (1996) 'In defense of tenure', *Journal of Institutional and Theoretical Economics*, 152, 2, pp.325–41.

McNeeley, I. and Wolverton, L. (2008) *Reinventing Knowledge: From Alexandria to the Internet*, Norton, New York, NY.

Mok, K. (1999) 'The cost of managerialism: the implications for the "McDonaldisation" of higher education in Hong Kong', *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 21, 1, pp.117–27.

Norrie, J. (2012) 'Collegiality is dead in the new corporatised university', available from http://theconversation.com/collegiality-is-dead-in-the-new-corporstised-university-5539 [accessed February 2012].

Olivieri, N. (2003) 'Patients' health or company profits? The commercialisation of academic research', *Science and Engineering Ethics*, 9, 1, pp.29–41.

Parker, M. (2014) 'University, Ltd: changing a business school', *Organization*, 21, 2, pp.281–92.

Pownell, J. (2008) 'Yovich to chair Student Edge', *Western Australian Business News*, 22–28 September, p.8.

Rees, S. and Rodley, G. (eds) (1995) *The Human Cost of Managerialism: Advocating the Recovery of Humanity*, Pluto Press, Leichhardt NSW.

Ryan, A. (2011) 'The fall of the faculty: the rise of the all-administrative university and why it matters', *Times Higher Education*, 1 December, available from https://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/books/the-fall-of-the-faculty-the-rise-of-the-all-administrative-university-and-why-it-matters/418285.article [accessed July 2015].

Saunders, M. (2006) 'The madness and malady of managerialism', *Quadrant*, March, pp.9–17.

Seligman, M. (2011) *Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-being*, William Heinemann, North Sydney.

Thérèse, S. and Martin, B. (2010) 'Shame, scientist! Degradation rituals in science', *Prometheus: Critical Studies in Innovation*, 28, 2, pp.97–110.

Thérèse, S. and Martin, B. (2014) 'Resist, scientist! Countering degradation rituals in science', *Prometheus: Critical Studies in Innovation*, 32, 2, pp.203–20.

Thomas, J. (2007) *Academic Structure Review – Preferred Model Paper – University Community*, 20 June, Murdoch University, unpublished.

Thornton, M. (2004) 'Corrosive leadership (or bullying by another name): a corollary of the corporatised academy?', *Australian Journal of Labour Law*, 17, 2, pp.161–84, available from http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/journals/ALRS/1994/1.html [accessed February 2015].

Thornton, M. (2005) *Universities: The Governance Trap and What to Do about It*, Australian Fabian Society, available from http://www.fabian.org.au/876.asp [accessed January 2015].

Thornton, M. (2012) *Privatising the Public University: The Case of Law*, Routledge, Abingdon.

Thornton, M. (ed.) (2014) *Through a Glass Darkly: The Social Sciences Look at the Neoliberal University*, Australian National University Press, Canberra.

Tight, M. (2014) 'Collegiality and managerialism: a false dichotomy? Evidence from the higher education literature', *Tertiary Education and Management*, 20, 4, pp.294–306.

Tipples, R., Krivokapic-Skoko, B. and O'Neill, G. (2007) 'University academics' psychological contract in Australia and New Zealand', *New Zealand Journal of Employment Relations*, 32, 2, pp.33–52, available from http://researcharchive.lincoln.ac.nz/bitstream/10182/520/3/University_Academics.pdf [accessed January 2015].

Tosey, P. (2006) 'Bateson's levels of learning: a framework for transformative learning?', paper presented at Universities' Forum for Human Resource Development, University of Tilburg, November, available from http://epubs.surrey.ac.uk/1198/1/fulltext.pdf [accessed January 2015].

Tuchman, B. (1985) *The March of Folly: From Troy to Vietnam*, Random House, New York, NY.

Van Rhyn, D. and Holloway, D. (2004) 'How not to do change management: the birth of a Murdoch University School', *Australian Universities Review*, 47, 1, pp.5–9.

Wastell, D. (2011) *Managers as Designers in the Public Services: Beyond Technomagic*, Triarchy Press, Axminster.

Williams, R. (2012) 'The academy in decay', *Agenda*, 19, 2, available from http://press.anu.edu.au/apps/bookworm/view/Agenda+-+Volume+19,+Number+2,+2012/10161/williams.html [accessed July 2017].

Winter, R. (2009) 'Academic manager or managed academic? Academic identity schisms in higher education', *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 31, 2, pp.121–31.