



Centre for Workforce Futures

SEMINAR SERIES

Mechanisms of terror?: Critical Management Studies Early Career Academics' experiences of 'targets and terror' in the contemporary business school

27 November 2019

3:00–4:30 PM

Ron Kerr, Edinburgh University
Sarah Robinson, University of Glasgow

(with Alex Bristow, Open University and Olivier Ratle, University of West of England)

LOCATION: 120 Lend Lease Room, 1 Management Drive, Macquarie University NSW 2109

ABSTRACT

The implementation of target cultures in public sector organizations can have damaging effects on organizational morale and on the working experiences of employees (Diefenbach 2009; Visser 2016). During early 2000s, the imposition of a target culture in the English National Health Service (NHS), led to what some commentators have termed a 'targets and terror' regime (Sheaff, 2006, Sheaff and Hood 2006, Bevan and Hood 2006), which led to a culture of workplace bullying that had dire effects on patient care, as reported in the Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust Inquiry (Francis 2010). Given that UK universities have also been subjected to governmental drives for audit and accountability, it is not surprising that the 'targets and terror' epithet has also been applied to academia (Di Leo 2015; Gill 2009; Geppard and Hollinstead 2017). While recognizing that the concept of 'terror' applied to target-driven cultures in public or semi-public institutions, in our case universities, may be unhelpfully melodramatic and under-theorised, we nevertheless ask whether 'targets and terror' can serve as a helpful lens to understand the processes by which fear is inculcated and enacted in contemporary universities, and whether it may serve as a means of opening up and exploring employees' experiences of such 'bullying cultures'.

Our aims in this paper then, are, firstly to apply the concept of 'targets and terror' to problematise the current audit culture within universities (Strathern, 2000; Chandler, Barry and Clark 2002; Craig, Amernic and Tourish 2014; Tourish, Craig, and Amernic 2017), and more specifically within business schools (Willmott 2011 and 2014; Huzzard et al. 2017). Secondly, we explore to what extent terror, or the inculcation of fear through processes of domination, may be identifiable at the micro level of the lived experience of early career academics. In exploring how Critical Management Studies (CMS) Early Career Academics (ECAs) learn to become academics in such environments, we pose the questions a) what mechanisms and processes of terror shape and control

ECAs' socialisation into the academic field? b) how do ECAs learn to respond to these? c) what effects do such responses have in perpetuating or challenging the 'targets and terror' culture? We create a theoretical framework based on Bourdieu's concepts of domination (2000, 2016), Meyerson and Scully's concepts of Tempered Radicalism (1995) and our own emergent concepts of micro-terrorism, micro-terrorisation and counter-terrorisation.

ABOUT THE SPEAKERS

Ron Kerr is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Edinburgh Business School who has held academic posts at Lancaster, the Open University and Newcastle University Business School. His research draws on the critical sociology of Pierre Bourdieu and focuses on issues of power in organizations. He has published on the role of the Scottish banks in the global financial crisis, on corporate architecture, and most recently, on political leadership in Scotland, and on populism, with a particular focus on the impact of Brexit on and within organizations.

Sarah Robinson is Professor in Management and Organisation studies at Adam Smith Business School, Glasgow University. She has worked at the Open University Business School, Leicester University and Lancaster University School of Management. Her interests include organisational and management learning, issues of power, resistance and identity within professions and critical management studies, often drawing on the work of Pierre Bourdieu. Recent work includes a study of women's political leadership in Scotland and a study of early career academics. She is Co-Editor of European Management Journal and Associate Editor of Management Learning.

REGISTER

<https://eventbrite.com.au/e/75801354893>



CRICOS Provider 00002J



CONTACT CENTRE FOR WORKFORCE FUTURES

Lynne Cousins

T: +61 (2) 9850 7732

E: lynne.cousins@mq.edu.au

Jason Antony

T: +61 (2) 9850 8533

E: jason.antony@mq.edu.au

W: <https://goto.mq/83> [or scan the QR code]