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Abstract

Mainstream accounts [illegible] and given with the role of leadership as paramount. Through the intertextual reading of media texts and interviews with banking leaders, this article in contrast demonstrates the dynamic, discursively constructed nature of leadership during the GFC. Despite the relative buoyancy of the local economy and strong performance of the major banks in Australia, the findings show how some banking chief executive officers were able to exploit the GFC by co-constructing with the media vivid, compelling narratives of their leadership in delivering their banks from ‘crisis’. Although banking leaders conveyed via interviews an intractable, unpredictable view of the crisis and their adoption of more reactive approaches to the GFC, this study suggests that the media played a powerful role in enforcing a separation between ‘front stage’ and ‘back stage’ leadership performances. The article concludes that the vivid metaphors of crisis leadership lauded in the media served to reinforce the romance of leadership and potentially elide considerations of banking reform in the aftermath of the GFC.

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Biographies

Helena Liu is a Lecturer in Organisation Studies at Swinburne Business School. She holds a PhD from the University of Sydney Business School. Her research focuses on the discursive construction of leadership. This approach has led her to examine how leaders account for failure and the social construction of authenticity amongst banking CEOs during the Global Financial Crisis. Central to her work is a critical disposition towards the gendered, racialised and classed nature of how we have come to understand ‘leadership’. Helena's work has been published in the *Gender, Work & Organization, Journal of Business Ethics* and *Management Communication Quarterly*.

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