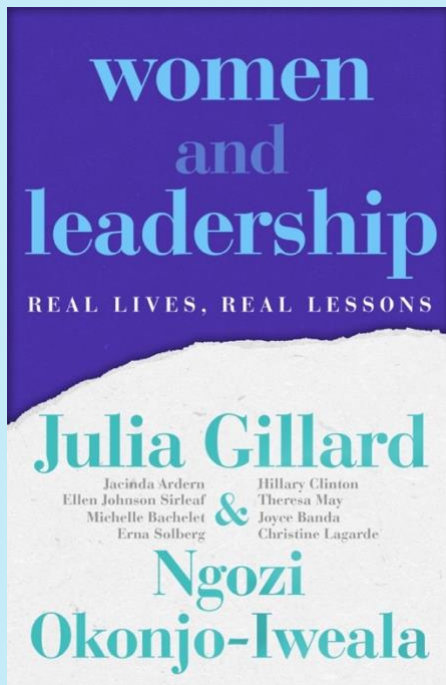


WOMEN AND LEADERSHIP

REAL LIVES, REAL LESSONS

Executive Book Summary by Annie Schubert

By Julia Gillard & Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala



WHY ARE WE WRITING THIS BOOK?

Women need leaders who understand their experiences and support them in reaching their goals. Gillard and Okonjo-Iweala know the reality of leading as a woman; the crude judgements passed by outsiders, the sexism and the pressures to maintain work-life balance. Though they are both successful leaders and politicians in their own rights, women still face barriers today and do not yet have the toolkits necessary to overcome. In 2020, less than 7% of countries were led by a woman. Gillard and Okonjo-Iweala hope sharing their stories will help shape the roadmaps of future women leaders to combat stereotypes in positive ways.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Julia Gillard is best known as former Prime Minister of Australia. She identifies as a feminist who has worked to bring women to the forefront of politics on a global scale. During her time as Prime Minister, she faced criticism and sexism by way of negative stereotypes, which, she has used to inform her leadership practice. She has worked to advocate for women in positions of leadership and challenge the status quo. Gillard argues that men assume people are interested in what they say whereas women hold the belief that they must earn the respect of others in order to be heard.

“I want to be intellectually engaged, to keep learning more about women and leadership, and bring to readers facts, evidence and insights. However, thinking alone was not going to be enough for me. I also wanted to feel, to revel in women’s stories” – Julia Gillard

(Gillard & Okonjo-Iweala, 2021, p. 14)



Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala strives to establish systems of recruitment for women and girls within the World Bank organization and emphasizes that women are capable of contributing powerfully to the financial world and within other sectors that are colloquially male-dominated. As a girl, she was made to feel that she could do anything and now, works to give young girls the opportunity to do the same. As Director-General of the World Trade Organization and Nigeria’s first woman Finance Minister and Foreign Minister, her perspective on leadership in and outside of the political sector is incredibly optimistic.

“You may be at the bottom of the power pecking order that positions white men first, then men of colour, white women, and women of colour. I have not let this reality dampen my optimism for life or diminish my passion for the work I do.”

– Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala (Gillard & Okonjo-Iweala, 2021, p. 15)



**FOCUS
OF
SUMMARY**

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OVERVIEW

Women in Leadership shares the story of ten inspiring women, including the book’s authors, through eight hypotheses that summarize the realities women face in today’s climate of leadership. These experiences are shaped largely by socialization and stereotypes and not by biology as the typical nature versus nurture argument would suggest. Throughout each chapter, Gillard and Okonjo-Iweala pose a series of questions to each of the women and document the differences and similarities in their responses. In analyzing these hypotheses, Gillard and Okonjo-Iweala summarize ten lessons for women to consider, and end with a message of upliftment – that women can and should hold positions of leaderships but, need help to do so.



“In a democracy, a population should be able to look at its leaders and see a reflection of the full diversity of society. What kind of democracy is it that bestows a vote but not a real prospect of becoming the person voted for?”

(Gillard & Okonjo-Iweala, 2021, p. 39)



**PERSPECTIVES
OF WOMEN**

Intertwined into Women in Leadership are perspectives and **experiences from a variety of prominent women politicians**. These women hold extremely diverse, insightful and poignant perspectives on not only their areas of expertise but the reality of womanhood in the professional world. Though these women experienced different upbringings and trajectories for their ascent to leadership, their stories demonstrate that the experiences of women in leadership exist for all women on a global scale.

CELEBRATING WOMEN



The women featured throughout Women and Leadership deserve more than a photo, brief career description and featured quotation. In this context however, **women and girls need visible examples of strong women as inspiration and information.** Still, when the masses are asked to name a politician, the male President of the United States is perhaps the most prominent example. This is not a complaint or critique but an observation that **women need to be on the forefront of celebration and visibility in order to evoke positive change.** A focus on multiple women shows women and girls that **there are more women in power than they may know.**



“I don’t think there is such a thing as balance because women always feel guilty... I don’t think there ever is a thing called balance because we’ll always feel as if we should be giving more of ourselves to everything.”
– **Jacinda Ardern** Prime Minister of New Zealand.
(Gillard & Okonjo-Iweala, 2021, p. 197)



“... I was the first female president of Chile. This doesn’t mean I am fantastic, but it does show how terrible Chile was that they had never had women in those posts” – **Michelle Bachelet** President of Chile
(Gillard & Okonjo-Iweala, 2021, p. 59)



“But some battles you just have to give up on, and one of those for me was the battle against men around the number of women in parliament. Their position was, ‘You are president, you have all the power as president. That should be enough for you women.’”
– **Ellen Johnson Sirleaf** President of Liberia
(Gillard & Okonjo-Iweala, 2021, p. 224)



“You’re trying to be yourself, which is often not appreciated if you are not fitting into the category of an ‘acceptable’ woman. You are not only being confronted by the double standard, but you’re also second-guessing all the time.” – **Hillary Clinton** United States Secretary of State
(Gillard & Okonjo-Iweala, 2021, p. 163)



“In Malawi, there is a saying that a bull goes to the farm to pull a car, a cow is kept at home for milk. So, people in the opposition said, ‘How unlucky are we to end up with a cow pulling our cart?’ It was vicious and cruel and could only be used because the person at the end of the insult is a woman.” – **Joyce Banda** President of Malawi
(Gillard & Okonjo-Iweala, 2021, p. 180)



“It is difficult for women, as the media moves to the sensational.” – **Theresa May** Prime Minister of the United Kingdom
(Gillard & Okonjo-Iweala, 2021, p. 139)



“One of the things people often say about me is that I’m always calm. Naturally, I am calm as a person, but I’ve also had to learn to be so. If a woman becomes too aggressive, too agitated, then I think people react to it.” – **Erna Solberg** Prime Minister of Norway
(Gillard & Okonjo-Iweala, 2021, p. 179)



“I don’t think I had obstacles or barriers from other women, but I didn’t get particular support either. For sure, not many women have supported me, but I don’t blame them because they also had much to prove professionally” – **Christine Lagarde** President of the European Central Bank
(Gillard & Okonjo-Iweala, 2021, p. 228)

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EIGHT HYPOTHESES

Each of the eight hypotheses put forth by Gillard and Okonjo-Iweala offer a comical yet poignant description of the current realities faced by women who are attempting to ascend the corporate ladder. Also shared are perspectives on how to combat these preconceived notions.

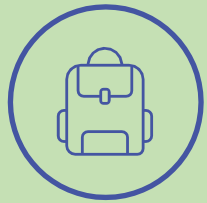
<p>HYPOTHESIS ONE “You go girl”</p>	<p>Encouraging leadership begins at a young age, for women, during girlhood, and takes shape through family practices and stereotypes first.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women are expected from a young age to contribute to free work. 8.8 hours for women and 5.2 for men on average to be exact. Modelling shared domestic responsibilities in the home denote such gendered practices. Though some leaders came from homes with stereotypical gender-based roles, others did not. • Girls who came from elite families were not more likely to lead. • Formative experiences including participation in girl scouts, serving as class prefect and helping in the community influenced later leadership.
<p>HYPOTHESIS TWO “It’s all about the hair”</p>	<p>Gender-based appearance bias exists for women in leadership, not men.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Men of power typically dress in suits or traditional dress. • Women have no one work uniform. There exists no standardized image of a woman in power. Women are patrolled by the fashion police. • Appearance has become a point of critique and vulnerability for women as there is no standard. For example, Theresa May’s shoe wardrobe was a major point of contention during her campaign as Prime Minister. • The world needs to listen and read, not just look for information to combat the preconceived image of women.
<p>HYPOTHESIS THREE “Shrill or soft – the shrill conundrum”</p>	<p>Men are perceived to hold more qualities of leadership than women when polled by the masses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women leaders can be accepted within organizations provided they are not offending anyone with their style, appearance or beliefs. Women self-limit due to these biases. • A study on Rate My Professor revealed male professors garnering most ‘genius’ or ‘star’ ratings with women being described as ‘bossy’ or ‘ugly’. • Women are equally criticized for their emotions as they are for being rigid. • Women leaders have effective skills in leadership, specifically through transformative and transactional leadership styles.
<p>HYPOTHESIS FOUR “She’s a bit of a bitch”</p>	<p>Women in power are assumed to be unlikeable and un-womanly. They are expected to prioritize others first, to be agreeable and to avoid unattractive or reactive traits.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women who were viewed as calm, nice or agreeable did not face the same scrutiny as women who demonstrated more typically-male characteristics. Traits that are typical of men are not always celebrated when they are held by women. • Whether or not a woman faced judgement or not for her personality depended on the social climate where she led. • Women should not have to change even if they are perceived as assertive, confident or driven. How can we combat such stereotypes?

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EIGHT HYPOTHESES

Each of the eight hypotheses are proven at the end of their respective chapter either definitively or subjectively. Hypothesis 1: “You go girl” proves that upbringing influences the stereotypes of women while Hypothesis 5: “Who’s minding the kids?” is neither proven nor disproven as women and men are or are not judged on whether they have children or not.

<p>HYPOTHESIS FIVE “Who’s minding the kids?”</p>	<p>Women face pressures to decide when and if to have children and how it will affect their professional lives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balance between family life and work life is not a realistic expectation, there is always give and take. Leaders depended on their partners and family to help care for their children. • Jacinda Ardern becomes the first Prime Minister ever to take maternity leave. Her maternity leave is highly publicized. • Being a childless leader opens up other avenues of judgement from the media, although this depends on the relevant social culture.
<p>HYPOTHESIS SIX “A special place in hell – do women really support women?”</p>	<p>According to the authors, women who do not support other women do not belong.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Though in an election the woman leader may not be the individual who represents the opinions of all voters, women need to stand together in solidarity to offer support even when other women have differing opinions. Women have historically been compared and encouraged to critique each other. Scarcity of women in leadership roles contributes to competitiveness amongst women. • The women featured had different mentorship opportunities in their early careers. • The image that “Women are superheroes” further perpetuates stereotypes that women can and should be able to do it all perfectly. Supporting women means acknowledging that they need support, too.
<p>HYPOTHESIS SEVEN “Modern-day Salem”</p>	<p>All leaders make mistakes; however, women leaders are held to a different set of standards as compared to men.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Men are much more likely to be forgiven for scandal whereas women are more likely to be implicated in legal action because of scandals. • The impeachment of President of Brazil Dilma Rousseff and the “Lock her up” campaign against Hilary Clinton are representative of ways in which women in leadership are made as examples or scapegoats in the political world.
<p>HYPOTHESIS EIGHT “The role modelling riddle”</p>	<p>Visibility is important in encouraging women to seek leadership roles.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In India, the 1993 government randomly selected villages to nominate women only in local leadership elections. The results were a positive increase towards the attitudes and aspirations of girls to ascend to positions of leadership. Role models matter. • Role-modelling must be sustained over time and the mentor must be relevant to the mentee. A woman leader who is white and wealthy may not be a mentor that every girl can relate to. • Modelling the positive parts of leadership as a role model, man or woman, encourages others to consider themselves in these positions.



IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION

Women and Leadership causes institutions to reconsider not only how they treat their women leaders but their girls. **Schools can heed this advice especially in consideration of female students, teachers and administrators.** For example, Okonjo-Iweala's role as a school prefect helped shape the overall leadership trajectory of her career. The education sector parallels the current composition of leadership around the world wherein women make up a large portion of the majority of workers yet represent few positions of leadership. Women in education need further consideration to increase representation in administrative roles.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

When selecting this book, I recognized a few of the names of the inspiring women on the cover, however, had no greater concept of their roles or their impact prior to reading this book. How is it possible that myself, an adult woman interested in women in leadership did not know that Chile, Malawi and Liberia were all lead by women? **There exists a need for all people, women included, to continue to read about and learn from women, especially women of colour, and all of their contributions to leadership today.**

IMPLICATIONS FOR HUMAN RESOURCES

Human resource departments have an obligation to provide equal opportunities for women in leadership. This however must not solely take place when organizations are seeking candidates for specific roles. **Women must be encouraged from the ground up to pursue opportunities, to seek supportive working relationships and to celebrate the accomplishments of other women.** This is not a job solely for women but for all people who also have the opportunity to help women design their own road maps without gendered being limited by gender bias.

QUESTIONS FOR THE READER

1. Gillard and Okonjo-Iweala recommend leaving space for women to engage in conversation and share ideas within organizations. **Have you ever felt unable or unwilling to share given the climate of a conversation?** Is there a time when you could have facilitated a more balanced discussion?
2. A major theme in this book is the notion of women supporting women. Historically and presently, this has not always been the case. **What are ways that women can support women in the workplace?** How can we celebrate the success of women?
3. Women in leadership are often asked or shoulder tapped to mentor other women. **Have any mentors, specifically women mentors, influenced your path to leadership?**
4. What role does the media play in influencing the successes or leadership skills of women? What roles do family, friends and general society play? Does this change from country to country?



10 STAND-OUT LESSONS

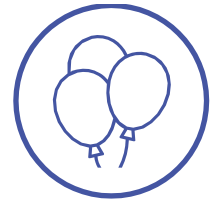
A summary of the lessons presented in Women and Leadership

1. Expect but do not accept comments on your appearance.
2. Your leadership ambitions and style are up to you.
3. It is important to be aware of the political climate you are in.
4. Balancing family life and leadership roles is challenging. Family life is becoming more of a priority for men and women.
5. Be critical of yourself and your contribution to supporting women in your own workplace.
6. Know your worth and your limit so that you can set boundaries.
7. Sexism exists and you must be ready to respond to it.
8. Seek positive male and female role models who focus on the positive.
9. Networking can lead to new opportunities and connections.
10. Try to combat and question your own gendered biases and doubts.



CRITICAL ANALYSIS

The multiple perspectives from the women leaders featured throughout *Women and Leadership* allow the reader to develop a balanced view of power and see themselves in the experiences of others. Through each of the chapters, there exists a balance between anecdotal evidence, reference to reputable, large-scale studies and analyses by Gillard and Okonjo-Iweala. Though the book recounts several caveats well-known to many women, the seriousness of the overall message of the book remains at the forefront – that society must recognize the experiences of women and simultaneously move forward to push past biases. A critique of this book is that it is applied to such a broad context that it negates some of the nuances of each community mentioned and excludes groups altogether. A focus on intersectionality, an application to a Canadian context and the inclusion of a school-based context could improve the book’s message. Overall, **the message to aspiring leaders, “be aware, not beware”, exists to guide women as leaders, not to scare them away** (Gillard & Okonjo-Iweala, 2021, p. 274). The experiences of women leaders highlighted by *Women and Leadership*, is relatable to all women and people as it mirrors a global experience that needs to be challenged.



“Skipping over exploring why it is wonderful and worthwhile to be a leader risks putting women off, rather than having them step forward.”

(Gillard & Okonjo-Iweala, 2021, p. 273)

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