



Does Gender Influence Leadership Styles? A View from the U.S. Nonprofit Sector

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Abstract

This study explores the predominant leadership styles of nonprofit executives to determine if gender informs their leadership style choices. The authors analyzed over 4,000 pages of transcribed interviews with 137 nonprofit executives. Nonprofit executives identified their predominant leadership styles with approaches categorized in the “feminine” domain of the gendered leadership framework. Although individual differences in leadership styles were explained in part by gender, leaders were most likely to adopt configurations of styles that blend gendered domains of leadership. The results indicate the nonprofit sector is one where gender is less determinative of leadership styles than in other employment sectors.

Keywords Nonprofit Management · Leadership · Gender · Role Congruity

Introduction

Do nonprofit executives adhere to gendered frames of leadership, where gender predicts their leadership styles? Gender diversification in the workplace has been pronounced in the “feminine” nonprofit sector, where up to 70% of employees are

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women (Faulk et al., 2013; Lee, 2014)—a proportion far higher than the 40–50% representation in the public and private sectors (Leete, 2006; Preston & Sacks, 2010). Yet, women leaders remain represented in lower proportions of executive positions (Lee & Lee, 2021). Examining executive leadership styles can shed light on the culture of organizations and the social norms people must adhere to (Cook & Glass, 2014; Turesky & Warner, 2020). Common barriers for women to be accepted as leaders are organizational cultures where masculine conceptions of leadership are the norm, which penalize women for both conforming or not conforming to these leadership styles. An unexplored question is whether nonprofit executives conform to gendered leadership styles or instead use mixed, boundary-spanning styles (Kark et al., 2012; Pillemer et al., 2014; Powell et al., 2002). The answer can explain gendered nonprofit cultures that simultaneously demonstrate a “feminine” sector and low representation of women in leadership positions (Bowles et al., 2007; Fitzsimmons et al., 2014; Rosette et al., 2015).

This study integrates social role theory (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Eagly & Johnson 1990) and role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002) to examine the leadership styles of nonprofit executives. The authors analyzed in-depth interviews with senior executives from 137 nonprofit organizations, providing insight into how the behavior of men and women in this context generally does not conform to expected gendered leadership behavior. The findings suggest the expected (gendered) behaviors of aspiring leaders are not as prescribed as perhaps they were in the past and/or in other employment sectors.

Focusing on the U.S. international nonprofit sector, the authors analyzed the leadership styles most commonly identified by nonprofit executives, the extent that gender influenced their leadership styles, and the configurations of styles they were likely to adopt. The findings are that (a) nonprofit executives were most likely to identify “feminine” leadership styles, (b) gender influenced some leadership style decisions—but not in the areas expected, and (c) gender did not result in prioritization of approaches that aligned with gendered frameworks of leadership. The empirical results provide evidence that leadership choices are less driven by gender than may be expected.

A Framework of Gendered Leadership

The case for examining gender differences in leadership styles is rooted in the study of psychology and sociology (Vecchio, 2002), and a wealth of prior research explains how expectations of gender roles influence expectations about what is deemed appropriate leadership styles for men and women. Social role theory, for example, explains how socialization pressures may lead men and women to adopt, and to be expected to adopt, different approaches to leadership (Davison & Burke, 2000; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Eagly, 2005). Social and cultural factors may lead women to approach leadership differently from men, where an individual’s “leadership capital” is developed over the course of one’s life (Fitzsimmons & Callan, 2016; Fitzsimmons et al., 2014). During childhood, young women can be “enculturated” into sets of norms and behaviors that prepare them for leadership differently than young men (Eagly & Johan-

Table 1 Gendered Framework of Leadership Styles

(Eagly, 1987; Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Eagly & Johnson 1990; Eagly et al., 1992; Fletcher, 2004; Helgesen, 1990; Kark et al., 2012)

	Leadership Characteristics
Masculine Domain	Assertive, authoritative, decisive, task and achievement oriented, dominant, proscribing behavior, role modeling
Feminine Domain	Interpersonal, relational, participatory and consensus seeking, understanding individual motivations and individual differences, visionary

nesen-Schmidt, 2001; Groysberg & Abrahams 2014; Lee, 2014; Reichl et al., 2014), including more opportunities for men to develop and be rewarded for exhibiting risk-taking behavior and assertiveness (Oakley, 2000; Pallier 2003). Differences in one's upbringing can foster internalized perceptions about appropriate behavior within socially-defined gender roles (Wood et al., 1997). Parental roles in childhood are also more likely, in the aggregate, to role-model domestic responsibilities that place higher burdens on women than men (Fitzsimmons et al., 2014; Groysberg & Abrahams, 2014). It is this combination of social and cultural expectations about what it means to be a man or woman, and the opportunities for one's leadership development based on those definitions, that could lead men and women to approach leadership differently in the workplace (Ely et al., 2011; Kark et al., 2012; Pillemer et al., 2014).

Indeed, a wealth of prior research explores the influence that gender identity has on leadership style choices (AbouAssi et al., 2018; Eagly, 2005; Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Neubert & Taggar 2004; Powell et al., 2002; Vecchio, 2002; Wilkins, 2006). This scholarship differentiates leadership approaches by those that are assertive, achievement-oriented, task-oriented, and impersonal (agentive/masculine) and those that are more interpersonally sensitive, participatory, and supportive (communal/feminine) (Bakan, 1966; Bass, 1990; Cann & Siegfried, 1990). Women are often expected to enact interpersonal dimensions of leadership, while men address more task and achievement-oriented styles (Eagly, 2005). Women are expected to be more adept at communicating with others and in understanding individual characteristics about subordinates, like their motivations (Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Hall & Friedman, 1999; Moskowitz et al., 1994). Women are associated with visionary leadership, articulating the ways that organizational actions relate to a sense of purpose (Eagly et al., 2003; Eagly, 2005; Turesky & Warner 2020). Men are expected to be more dominant, assertive, and prone to risk-taking. These expectations form the foundation of a gendered framework of leadership. Table 1 provides a summary of the leadership characteristics associated with masculine and feminine gender roles.

Women often face increased barriers to leadership when the most dominant leadership styles are those within the masculine domain. Women are more likely to be penalized for acting "out of role" than men (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Gupta et al., 2009), being penalized for not conforming to masculine leadership style expectations while similarly penalized for violating gender role expectations when she does enact masculine leadership styles. When leadership styles within a work context instead adhere to the feminine frame, it does not present the same types of problems for men leaders, who are often rewarded for displaying feminine leadership styles.

While prior research indicates that some work contexts are more inclined to emphasize one gendered frame over the other (Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Oakley, 2000;

Schlesinger & Heldman 2001), less is known about adherence to such frames in the nonprofit sector, where women are more represented and where work is more driven towards social objectives and mission orientation instead of the financial bottom line (Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Vecchio, 2002). The styles enacted by nonprofit executives may be more mixed, blending styles from across the masculine and feminine domains (Cann & Siegfried, 1990; Kark et al., 2012; Koenig et al., 2011; Lemoine et al., 2016; Powell et al., 2002). Perceptions about gender roles also evolve over time (Ridgeway, 2001), where more progressive views of gender roles may very well permeate this work context more than other work contexts, dispelling traditional notions of gender roles that could affect perceptions about leadership. Nonprofits are also under pressure to transform what leadership means, as they rely more on decentralized work structures and reporting requirements which require more human-relations-oriented leadership styles (Badura et al., 2020; Fletcher, 2004; Park & Liang, 2019). These changes could lead men and women to adopt similar styles.

Focusing on the leadership styles of senior executives of nonprofits provides a window into the cultures of the organizations, given the roles that senior executives play in setting and reinforcing norms within the organization (Adams et al., 2005; Adams & Ferreira, 2009; Fuhrmans, 2020; Peterson et al., 2003). Analyzing executive perceptions towards leadership can shed light on the extent that gender influences the norms and expectations. Increasing representation of women can lead to changes in public policies that address issues of concern to women (Heath et al., 2005) or workplace policies that address the needs of women (Turesky & Warner, 2020). Examining the influence of executive gender on leadership styles can thus help to explain the extent that gender diversification can create more opportunities for the development of men and women leaders alike.

Data and Methods

The data were collected through a National Science Foundation-sponsored study of senior executives working in U.S.-based international nonprofits from 2005 to 2008 (Grant No. SES-0527679). The sample is representative of international nonprofits in the U.S. at the time of the study. All known international nonprofits in the U.S. were first identified through the Charity Navigator database, and the sample was then limited to only those organizations with annual revenues greater than \$500k. Nonprofits such as foundations, hospitals, private universities, community foundations, and public broadcasting stations were removed from the sample in order to focus on those providing charitable services. 182 organizations were then randomly selected from the remaining 334.

The subjects of the study were all senior-level executives. Of these 182 nonprofits, 152 senior executive respondents completed interviews, for an effective response rate of 68%. The sample was reduced to 137 respondents due to missing data. The interview protocol included over 25 interview questions addressing respondent perceptions about organizational goals, strategy, and leadership. All of the interviews were recorded and transcribed. The majority of the respondents served in the roles of CEO, President, or Executive Director (78%), and a smaller portion served as Vice

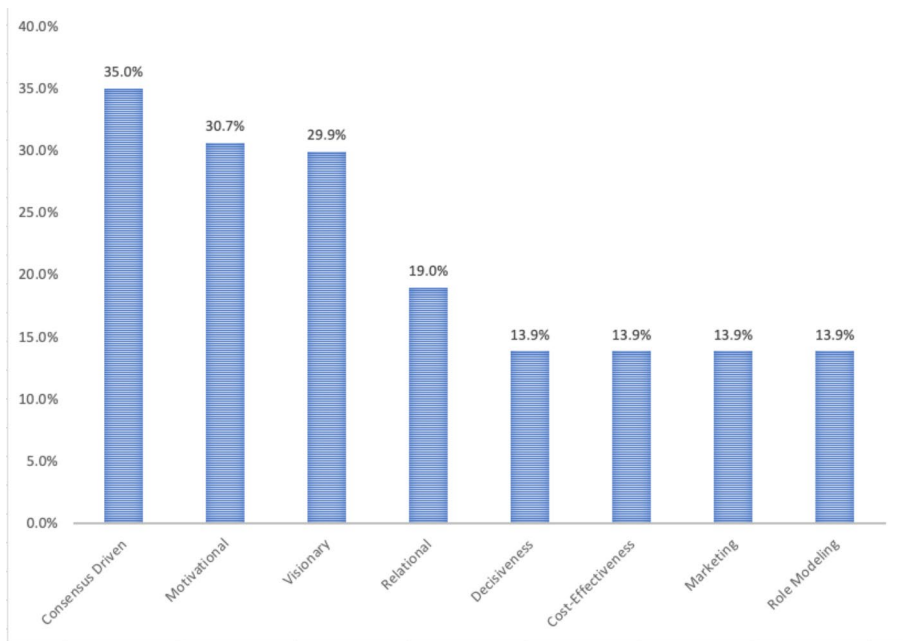


Fig. 1 Predominant Leadership Styles of Nonprofit Executives

President (9%), or Project Director (13%). 63% of the respondents identified as men and 37% as women.

More than 4,000 pages of transcribed interview text was reviewed to code the leadership styles identified by the respondents. The primary focus was on responses to the question: “How would you define what it means to be a good leader in your organization?” The open-ended nature of the question thus provides a unique, respondent-centered perspective on the leadership styles and is depicted in Fig. 1. A codebook of the leadership styles was developed from a synthesis of the literature on gender and leadership. The leadership codes were primarily deductive, but some emerged inductively through the transcript analysis. Two researchers coded the interview transcripts independently through a shared NVivo file, and then compared and refined their codes in respect to their respective analyses.

Executive Leadership Styles

The first stage of the data analysis identified the most commonly mentioned leadership styles by the executives. The styles mentioned the most were consistent with the feminine domain within the gendered leadership framework (see Table 1). Figure 1 reveals the proportion of respondents who reported using each of the eight leadership styles. Respondents primarily emphasized consensus-driven leadership (35%), motivational leadership (31%), and visionary leadership (30%). The executives also emphasized their attention to relational leadership (19%), decisiveness (14%), cost

Table 2 Executive Leadership Styles by Gender

	Male Leaders		Female Leaders		Total		Chi-Sq Test	
	#	#/86	#	#/51	#	%	Diff.	p
Consensus-Driven Leadership	30	35%	18	35%	48	35%	0%	0.96
Motivational Leadership	23	27%	19	37%	42	31%	-10%	0.20
Visionary Leadership	32	37%	9	18%	41	30%	19%	0.02
Relational Leadership	16	19%	10	20%	26	19%	-1%	0.89
Decisive Leadership	11	13%	8	16%	19	14%	-3%	0.64
Cost Leadership	15	18%	4	8%	19	14%	10%	0.12
Marketing & Communications	11	14%	8	16%	19	14%	-2%	0.64
Leadership Role-Modeling	16	20%	3	6%	19	14%	14%	0.04

leadership (14%), marketing & communications (14%), and role-modeling (14%). A description of the interview coding is included in Appendix I.

The leader-based explanations of how they work thus reveal a workplace environment that places a high premium on human relations (emphasizing input from others, understanding employee motivations, and nurturing personal relationships) as well as core skills in communicating and demonstrating organizational values. The respondents were most likely to discuss their leadership in respect to styles aligned with the feminine domain of the gendered framework: addressing the interpersonal needs of leading others, translating the organizational vision to others, and making decisions based on significant input from others. While the leaders professed some styles aligned with the masculine domain of the gendered framework, those four styles – *decisive leadership*, *role-modeling*, *marketing and communications*, and *cost leadership* – were the least mentioned of the eight leadership styles (see Fig. 1).

Differentiating Leadership Styles by Gender

To evaluate whether there is a statistically significant difference between men and women executive's leadership styles, chi-squared tests were estimated. The results, as shown in Table 2, indicate that gender had some influence on leadership styles, but the respondents did not adhere to strict gendered roles in their leadership approaches. In other words, men were not more inclined to utilize approaches in the "masculine" domain nor women to utilize approaches in the "feminine" domain.¹ Instead, the results indicate that more style-specific differences emerged from the analysis of the leadership styles. Of the eight leadership styles, only *visionary leadership* and *role modeling* reveal statistical significance, where men are more likely to indicate these leadership styles than women in transnational nonprofit organizations.

Some of the most commonly mentioned leadership styles, such as *consensus-driven leadership* and *relational leadership*, were just as likely to be mentioned by men as by women. Similarly, some leadership styles associated with the masculine domain of leadership, such as *decisive leadership* and *marketing & communications*, were just as likely to be mentioned by women executives as men executives – providing further evidence of some of the systematic ways that leaders did not adhere to gender roles in describing their leadership styles.

Table 3 Configurations of Leadership Styles by Nonprofit Executives

Variable	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Marketing & Communications	0.92		
Consensus-Driven Leadership	0.58		
Relational Leadership	0.55		
Visionary Leadership		0.67	
Motivational Leadership		0.64	
Decisive Leadership		0.56	
Leadership Role-Modeling		0.49	
Cost Leadership			0.90
Variance explained (total: 63%)	26	22	15

Note: Extraction method: iterated principal factors. Rotation: unrotated

The men in the sample were significantly more likely to emphasize two leadership approaches: *visionary leadership* and *role-modeling*. Men were also more likely to emphasize *cost-effective leadership* than their peers ($p < 0.1$). Surprisingly, men were not more likely to adhere to the authoritative approaches to leadership, such as *decisive leadership*, which is one of the most commonly assigned styles to the masculine domain of leadership. Instead, men focused on communicating their work in respect to the mission of the organization, demonstrating their commitments to others through their own actions (role-modeling), and addressing concerns related to costs. The inclination for both men and women to emphasize *decisive leadership* also indicates the perceived importance of this leadership style, providing further evidence that executives make difficult decisions to advance the work of their nonprofits.

Factor Analysis of Leadership Styles

Because these leadership styles are non-exclusive, as leaders can employ more than one style, additional analyses examined potential interrelationships among the eight leadership styles. As each leadership style serves as a strategy to achieve organizational goals, leaders can use multiple styles of leadership and different combinations of leadership styles in ways that serve to dynamically align leader's personality, identity, and goals with the organizational goals and structure. Specifically, the authors sought to evaluate the possibility of underlying or latent variables among these styles, as depicted in Table 3. Factor analysis offers insights to the underlying configurations of leadership styles that nonprofit executives utilize. Indeed, estimations of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy statistic (0.512) and the Bartlett test of sphericity (48.43, $p = 0.01$) indicated the potential for factor analysis (Hair et al., 2006). Since the measures of individual leadership styles were binary, the presence of underlying, latent constructs were analyzed through tetrachoric correlation analysis. The procedure yielded a three-factor solution, which explained 63% of the variance and passed the chi-squared test of sufficiency. Each leadership style was assigned to only one factor, with a threshold loading of 0.49.

Factor 1 explained 26% of the variance and indicates similarities in prioritizing external communications, consensual decision-making, and relational leadership. In other words, this configuration reflected leadership styles that aligned with the "feminine" domain of the gendered framework and demonstrated leadership styles in respect to externally-oriented, participatory, and interpersonal styles. The fact that

this configuration included primarily leadership styles from the feminine domain, indicates some commonality in how the respondents viewed these dimensions or strategies of leadership.

Factor 2 explained 22% of the variance and indicates that visionary leadership was mentioned in conjunction with motivational leadership, decisiveness, and role-modeling. In other words, this configuration reflected that leader styles from the masculine and feminine domains share commonality. This provides further evidence of the potential for executives in this environment to adopt more mixed leadership approaches to leading others rather than conforming to strict gendered frameworks of leadership. This factor also indicates that the leaders view aspects of managing meaning in the workplace in conjunction with one another: focusing on the mission (visionary), demonstrated values (role modeling), and the values of employees (motivational).

Factor 3 explains 15% of the variance, and indicates the uniqueness of respondents addressing cost leadership. The respondents who devoted attention to such financial issues viewed this approach as distinct from the other mentioned styles.²

Logit Analysis of Leadership Style Configurations

Table 4 offers an exploratory analysis indicating how nonprofit executive characteristics and organizational characteristics impact the selection of leadership style configurations, where the dependent variable for each of the three models is the leadership style configuration (Factor 1, Factor 2, and Factor 3). The models include senior executive age, gender, and tenure in the organization (as measured by years) as well as their interactions. These interaction terms capture if there are gendered effects of age and tenure; for example, if older women enact different leadership styles than their younger female peers or similarly-aged male peers. The interaction between gender and tenure offers insights as to whether women with longer histories at that organization identify different leadership styles than men or women that are newer to the nonprofit. The models also control for organizational environments that could impact how leaders select their leadership styles. For example, if the organization has mostly employees who are permanent and invested in the organization, consensual decision-making may be more beneficial than in organizations filled with volunteers and interns who are often less experienced, younger, and not permanent with the organization. The models similarly account for organization efficiency, capacity, and size, as measured by Charity Navigator. Efficiency measures the organization's efficiency at spending money on fundraising compared to fundraising amounts; capacity measures financial stability over time; and organization size defines small organizations as having less than \$1 million, medium nonprofits having \$1-\$10 million, and large nonprofits have greater than \$10 million.

The results indicate that gender does not statistically predict the use of Factor 1 (external communications, consensual decision-making, and relational leadership) or Factor 3 (cost leadership) leadership style configurations. However, men executives are statistically significantly more likely to utilize Factor 2 (visionary leadership, motivational leadership, decisiveness, and role-modeling) leadership styles configu-

Table 4 Logit Predicting Leadership Style Configurations

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Full-time employees	-0.001 (0.001)	0.0002 (0.0003)	-0.078 (0.053)
Part-time employees	-0.048 (0.134)	0.313 (0.220)	-0.168 (0.668)
Volunteers	0.00007 (0.0001)	-0.00001 (0.00003)	0.0003** (0.0001)
Interns	-1.318* (0.698)	0.212 (0.605)	-1.074 (1.162)
Human Rights	2.107 (1.415)	0.750 (1.289)	--
Environmental Issues	0.948 (1.861)	1.735 (1.543)	5.753* (3.050)
Conflict Resolution	-0.277 (1.411)	3.203* (1.791)	3.126 (2.332)
Sustainable Development	0.354 (0.799)	0.405 (0.839)	-0.655 (1.484)
Organization Efficiency	-0.568 (0.962)	0.587 (0.948)	-0.890 (1.892)
Organization Capacity	-0.778 (0.833)	0.220 (0.832)	1.276 (2.299)
Organization Size	-0.231 (0.536)	-0.659 (0.539)	1.136 (1.207)
Leader Gender (Male)	1.401 (2.519)	5.752** (2.674)	8.597 (5.396)
Leader Age	0.025 (0.584)	0.502 (0.615)	--
Leader Tenure in Organization	0.059 (0.100)	0.055 (0.096)	0.052 (0.073)
Director	-2.890** (1.323)	-1.122 (1.127)	--
Vice President	-1.573 (1.053)	-1.630 (1.226)	--
Male and Age	-0.177 (0.755)	-1.056 (0.760)	--
Male and Tenure	0.012 (0.118)	-0.059 (0.116)	--
Constant	2.114 (2.842)	-4.361 (2.871)	-12.211 (8.147)
N	71	71	90
Log Likelihood	-36.989	-37.267	-13.554
LR chi2(18)	24.10	23.54	35.68
Prob>chi2	0.152	0.171	0.0004
Pseudo R-squared	0.246	0.240	0.568

* $p < 0.1$ ** $p < 0.05$

Standard errors in parentheses. The excluded category in the first two models (Factor 1 and Factor 2) refers to humanitarian relief organizations and CEO respondents. Factor 3 model omits several non-significant variables due to data limitations.

rations than women nonprofit executives. Recall that Factor 2 leadership configurations reflect leadership styles from both “feminine” and “masculine” dimensions, whereas Factor 1 includes only “feminine” dimensions. These results may indicate that men are using “feminine” dimensions of leadership to supplement “masculine” dimensions, thereby they are more likely to use a mixed blend of these styles in nonprofit environments. Other executive characteristics fail to systematically impact leadership style configurations.

Organizational factors, however, also play a role in how leadership is enacted in transnational nonprofits. Specifically, executives in nonprofits that increasingly rely on interns, rather than employees or volunteers, are statistically significantly less likely to use Factor 1 leadership styles. Thus, as the number of interns in the organization increases, executives are less likely to use Factor 1 leadership style configurations. This result may indicate how the organization personnel can impact leadership styles, where interns are often younger and temporary workers. The fact that interns are not career employees for the organization may make Factor 1 leadership styles of consensual decision-making and relational leadership less beneficial. Similarly, leaders in the role of Director (rather than CEO or Vice President) are also less likely to use Factor 1 leadership styles. This result may be due to organizational structures that delegate particular roles to directors versus other senior executive roles. For example, CEOs are often not directly accountable for the organization's daily operations, while directors are generally more likely to be responsible for handling all aspects of an organization's daily operations. Daily operational decisions may incentivize Factor 1 leadership styles less than other positions where senior executives (CEOs and Vice Presidents) may serve more public-facing and liaison roles, especially to stakeholders, donors, and/or boards of directors.

For Factor 2 leadership style configurations, leaders in nonprofit organizations with a focus on conflict resolution are more likely to use leadership styles of visionary leadership, motivational leadership, decisiveness, and role-modeling. Leader gender is also statistically significant, where men leaders (across organization issue areas) are statistically more likely to address utilize Factor 2 leadership styles. Because men are not more likely to serve as executives of these conflict resolution nonprofits, these are distinct results where both organizational mission and executive gender impact leadership styles.

Finally, executives in organizations that rely on volunteers are more likely to indicate Factor 3 leadership (cost effective leadership). This result is likely due to underlying organizational structures that impact financial resources and lead organizations to increasingly rely on volunteers rather than employees or interns.

While these analyses are exploratory, they suggest that gender is not determinative of leadership styles and acts in conjunction with organizational contexts to generate leadership styles. Future research should examine how gender dynamically engages with, and responds to, organizational environments and structures.

Discussion and Conclusions

Through the analysis of in-depth interviews, this study reveals the types of executive leadership styles and, by extension, the cultural norms that are emphasized in the nonprofit workplaces. The findings further indicate that gendered dimensions of leadership should be evaluated as a dialogue with organizational context, particularly as each leadership style reflects particular goals that arise within specific settings and institutional structures. Furthermore, leadership styles were employed in a mixed manner, where each leadership style was used in conjunction with other styles. Hence, the results contribute to leadership scholarship by offering leadership style

configurations that move past previous analyses that examine leadership styles in isolation and as exclusive categories. These findings offer new insights to how gender may affect decisions to employ these leadership configurations. These configurations can propel leadership research as it begins to recognize the spectrum of gender identities, evaluating how different configurations of leadership styles can be enacted by gender fluid, non-binary, and trans leaders.

The results confirm findings from other work contexts that leaders increasingly rely upon more human relations aspects of leadership (Badura et al., 2020; Kovjanic et al., 2012; Pasha et al., 2017; Van Wart, 2014). The leaders in this study placed a high priority on understanding the motivations of their colleagues, relating work tasks to program missions and related goals and values, and in building relationships with those they work with. The results also indicate the prevalence of more downward-focused decision-making approaches, whereby leaders seek consensus through consultation and deliberation of organizational members, regardless of rank. The focus on such approaches is demonstrated by the commonality of responses by the nonprofit executives, as well as men and women leaders to address two of the approaches: consensus-driven leadership and relational leadership.

The results also indicate the executives adopted mixed approaches to their leadership styles that included approaches often assigned to both “masculine” and “feminine” domains of gendered leadership expectations. The emphasis on mixed styles reflects findings from other scholarship on the integration of gender-blended styles in contemporary work environments (Kark et al., 2012; Koenig et al., 2011; Pillemer et al., 2014; Vecchio, 2002), providing further evidence that the pressure to adopt more interpersonal and consensual dimensions of leadership (Davis & Eisenhardt, 2011; Uhl-Bien, 2006) had more of an effect on leadership style choice than traditional gender roles (Powell et al., 2002; Schein, 1996, 2007).

The fact that executives did not limit their leadership styles to gender roles provides some encouragement for increasing gender diversity at the executive level in the nonprofit sector. Given that executive leaders reflect expectations of those who hire them (Fitzsimmons & Callan, 2016; Rivera-Romano et al., 2020), and that executives play a central role in influencing organizational cultures, there is encouraging evidence that the social context of these nonprofit organizations are amenable to supporting women as the variety of leadership styles enacted by senior executives indicate a broader pathway to promotion, but also the need for aspiring leaders to develop and utilize a broad set of styles. These results present a useful complement to studies in private sector contexts (Eagly et al., 1992; Feingold, 1994; Hyde, 2014; Koenig et al., 2011; Park, 2020) by providing the first known evidence of leaders spanning gendered domains of leadership styles in their individual approaches within the nonprofit context.

The empirical evidence presented in this study provides further evidence of the need to get beyond expecting leaders to behave in one way or another based on their gender. The exploratory logit analysis offers evidence that leadership styles are similarly impacted by organizational structure and environments. Future research should explore how organizational context and leader characteristics interact to produce leadership styles perceived as best suited to achieve organizational goals.

The generalization of these findings is limited in part by the timeframe of the study, and the lack of representativeness of all U.S.-based nonprofit organizations. Yet, there is no shortage of evidence that women continue to be underrepresented in executive positions (Fuhrmans, 2020), and levels of gender equity have not substantially changed over time within the organizations in this study. By focusing on the leadership styles explained by men and women executives themselves, this study provides unique insights on the ways that men and women approach leadership, and how their approaches can benefit organizational outcomes in the nonprofit sector.

Notes

1. To test the robustness of the bivariate correlations in Table 2, additional analyses were performed to determine the extent that other characteristics of the respondents, including their age, tenure in position, specific role within the nonprofit (CEO, vice-president or program director), or educational level influenced the ways that gender explained their leadership styles choices. The reported relationships between gender and leadership style choices were robust despite these additional considerations.
2. Because factor analysis defines patterns of common variation among variables, the single item factor is necessary to account for the uniqueness of the separate, independent underlying phenomenon causing cost-oriented leadership. In other words, there is no redundancy across the three latent factors. While identifying single item factors is perhaps rare, there is no problem with its inclusion in the factor reporting, statistically or theoretically. Tests were also performed to determine whether gender influenced the likelihood of executives utilizing any of the identified factors, and no significant differences were found.

Appendix I

Interview Coding Guide

Leadership Code	Sample Quote
Consensus-Driven Leadership	You have to be able to listen, to welcome differences of opinion and believe that strength can come out of differences...[and] diversity.
Motivational Leadership	Pushing people to be the best that they can be, without having to specifically ask. I think people are always willing to do that, especially when they are feeling, "Well, you had the confidence to send me!" They work twice as hard.
Visionary Leadership	Exemplifying the core values... to keep people on track with what the organization is really about. This is the mission, this is the strategy, these are the real core values, this is what we're about.
Relationship Leadership	Being able to recognize in ourselves or others ...[when] one is working too hard, losing the temper...and being able to sit down and work with people and identify that and make sure that folks are ok.

Interview Coding Guide

Leadership Code	Sample Quote
Decisive Leadership	One can make an unpopular decision, even a bad decision, but if it's clear how and why it was made, and it was made for the right reasons then I think people can get behind that.
Cost Leadership	We have to control expenses...revenue has to exceed expenses. And most of us know how to either generate some revenue or generate reductions and expenses. But you've got to make it happen, and that's tough.
Marketing & Communications	I came in to it with a lot of public relations skills... I need to be very good at communicating what we do externally.
Leadership Role-Modeling	You've got to lead by example. If they don't see you working hard they're not going to work hard...when the sky is falling, even though I might think its falling, don't shout the sky is falling because they always look to your reaction for things.

Appendix II

Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Male	137	0.63	0.49	0	1
Years Tenure in Position	137	9.12	7.25	0.5	35
CEO	137	0.78	0.42	0	1
Vice President	137	0.09	0.28	0	1
Director	137	0.13	0.34	0	1

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Declarations

Conflict of Interest The authors have no financial or nonfinancial conflicts of interest.

Informed consent All human subjects in this study provided oral consent to participate in research interviews. (Documentation available, human subjects were not identified).

Ethical approval The authors can provide any further documentation requested to verify our adherence to ethical standards in this research.

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