

# A Study of Leadership Styles of Women Leaders of Nonprofit Organizations in India

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In their recent book on grass roots nonprofit organizations (NPOs) and women leaders, Handy, Kassam, Feeney, and Ranade (2006) raised the concern that "non-profit entrepreneurship studies in academic journals are limited. In particular, there is little material on female non-profit entrepreneurs or entrepreneurship in non-Western cultures" (p. 30). This paper attempts to narrow this gap by critically analyzing leadership style of women leaders of NPOs in India. The number of NPOs has increased dramatically around the world, and India is no exception (Srivastava, Tandon, Sokolowski, & Salamon, 2004). The role of women as leaders in India dates back to the 12th century, when Razia Sultan became a first women ruler of the country (Brijbhushan, 1990). Since then, women have played leadership roles in various sectors including nonprofit. Women's leadership of autonomous NPOs dates back to the 1840s when the women's movement originated (Forbes, 1982). However, there is little research done on the leadership style of women leaders of NPOs in India.

So far leadership style literature has been characterized in two distinct natures—feminine and masculine. However, Court (2005) suggested that rather than focusing narrowly on the gender dimension alone, leadership studies should also consider the impact of social, cultural, and political factors on the style of leadership. This paper critically analyzes the leadership style of women leaders of NPOs beyond the dichotomous approach of masculine and feminine leadership styles. It presents the broader perspective by extending the analysis of leadership style and

considers the influence of social, cultural, and political factors on leadership style of women leaders of NPOs in the context of India.

Status of women in the Indian society is changing in the modern times. In traditional India, the inferior status of women was decided by the position in the society of her birth family and not on the bases of individual ability and accomplishments. More recently, rapid urbanization and industrialization has resulted in a rapid process of social change. In modern India, industrialization, modernization, and globalization deeply impact how women are perceived in this society. Today women's rights are considered increasingly as individual's right rather than special privileges (Pandey, 2005). The numbers of women participating in public services and holding positions of political power are rising (Upreti, 1988). The traditional negative view of professionally working women is fast disappearing in rural areas and has almost disappeared in large urban centers. Employment of women in all the sectors of the economy is accepted as part of the social reality in India (Ghosh & Roy, 1997). Women with education and employment gains higher status than women who only in domestic work (Ghosh & Roy, 1997). While it is apparent that women today are in a better position than a few decades ago, gender roles still exists. Ghosh and Roy (1997) studied demographic indicators such as sex-ratio, age at marriage, and literacy rates and conclude that women have continued to stay in a position that is inferior to men.

## Women and Leadership Style

Leadership is a process by which an individual

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attempts to influence a group of individuals to achieve a common goal (Northouse, 2004). More recent studies parallel earlier studies done by three influential groups of investigators—Robert Bales and his associates at Harvard (Bales, 1954), members of the Ohio State Leadership Center (Stogdill & Coons, 1957), and members of the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan (Kahn & Katz, 1953). Each of these groups of researchers found that leadership has two distinct dimensions: the task dimension and the relationship dimension. The task dimension involves goal setting, direction, control and organization. The relationship dimension involves interaction, communication, support, and active listening.

Parallel to findings from the Harvard, Ohio, and Michigan studies, Eagly, Wood and Diekmann (2000) described gender roles and leadership in terms of agentic and communal attributes. Agentic attributes are described primarily as assertive, controlling, and confident. "In employment settings, agentic behaviors might include speaking assertively, competing for attention, influencing others, initiating activities directed to assigned tasks, and making problem-focused suggestions (A. H. Eagly & M. C. Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001, p. 783). Communal attributes are characteristics that are primarily concerned with the welfare of other people (Nanus & Dobbs, 1999). "In employment settings, communal behaviors might include speaking tentatively, not paying attention to oneself, accepting others' direction, supporting and soothing others and contributing to the solution of relational and interpersonal problems" (A. H. Eagly & M. C. Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001, p. 783). Agentic attributes are more strongly associated with men and communal attributes are more strongly associated with women.

In the field of organizational behavior, debates about women and leadership vary according to psychological versus sociological perspectives. From a psychological perspective, extensive research has taken place to determine whether there are differences in leadership styles between men and women. Appelbaum, Audet, and Miller (2003) similarly found that the leadership styles of women are different from those of men; however, they further point out that men and women learn from each other. The research concludes that the leadership styles of women and men are equally effective; however, team-based organizations might benefit more from leadership styles of women.

From a sociological perspective, gender roles are viewed more as a social construct that resides in the observer rather than the object of study. Due to traditional gender stereotypes, men are considered better suited to take on the role of leadership than are women. Gender stereotypes illustrate stereotypical attitudes about the attributes of women and men and prescribe how men and women are supposed to be (Burgess & Borgida, 1999). This cultivates the gendered organizational roles. Such stereotypes are due to socially expected roles of gender. Ridgeway (2001) proposes that gender differences in influence and leadership occur because people presume that men are more competent and legitimate as leaders than are women. These beliefs foster hierarchical patterns of social interaction through which men exert more influence and exercise more leadership. Gender status beliefs create reactions that penalize assertive women leaders for violating the expected status order and reduce their ability to gain compliance with directives (Ridgeway, 2001).

Women leaders face greater damage due to

gender stereotypes because agentic tendencies are more indispensable in comparison to communal tendencies (Chemers & Murphy, 1995). As role congruity theory implies, agentic qualities that are thought of as necessary for leadership are contrary to mainly communal qualities stereotypically associated with women, thus resulting in prejudice against women leaders (A. Eagly & Karau, 2002). Such prejudice likely becomes diluted as men and women interact and socialize over time (Appelbaum et al., 2003).

Recent research that suggests women face cross-pressures in leadership roles. Expectations about leader behavior are generated based on social gender stereotypes. As leaders, due to stereotypical social expectations of leadership, women are expected to be agentic and tough, but as women, they are expected to be communal. The conflicting expectations women face result in either harsh criticisms of women leaders for not being "feminine enough" or being judged as less qualified for elite leadership positions because they are not "tough enough." For example, Carli (2001) notes that women who use dominant forms of communication are less influential, whereas men have less influence in domains that are traditionally associated with the female role and in group settings in which more than one woman is present. Men in particular resist influence by women more than women do, especially when women leaders employ highly competent styles of communication. Resistance to competent women is reduced when women display communality and warmth along with other competencies. Court's (2006) proposition to study leadership style beyond dichotomous divide might provide useful to understand the intensity of the cross pressure experienced by women leaders.

Though the focus of the leadership style literature

has been dichotomous in nature for more than two decades, recent studies propose to look at leadership from a broader perspective (Alvesson and Billing, 1992; Court 2005) According to Court (2005), leadership style should not be categorized narrowly between men and women; rather it should be studied with reference to other factors such as personal beliefs and social, and cultural factors that influence the behavior of leaders regardless of their gender. Evidently, research done by Rosener (1990) indicates that because of the traditional socialization patterns of women leaders and their experience from such social experiences (that are constructed according to social expectations), women prefer to lead in a participatory way, sharing power and information, and focusing on moral strength to motivate employees. Women leaders accomplish organizational goals by encouraging people to transform their self-interest into the goals of organization. They align employees' self-interest with organizational goals by sharing power and information and enhancing their feelings of self-worth (Rosener, 1990). This style becomes the same way they nurture and structure their family. The intensity of the role of women as nurturer tends to be socially constructed and culturally diverse. Rosener's study, though not aimed to study influence of social factors on leadership style, presented some evidence that leadership style is influenced by multiple social, cultural, and political factors that go beyond feminine and masculine style attributes. Based on the presented review of literature, this paper considers personal, social, cultural and political factors in analyzing the leadership style of women from NPOs (Rosener, 1990).

### **Women Leaders from Developing Countries**

Even though leadership is essential for NPOs in a developing country to succeed, little research has been

done on the subject. The majority of the research on leadership is based on developed world perspectives and is placed in a context of the for-profit sector. According to Handy, Kassam, and Ranade (2002), entrepreneurs in the nonprofit sector and for-profit sector face similar challenges. These challenges include "identifying opportunities, promoting innovative ideas, implementing ideas into viable enterprises, mobilizing resources, and undertaking risks inherent in starting a new project" (p. 140). These findings suggest that, although motivations in the two sectors differ, leadership challenges are similar in nature. Due to the lack of sufficient academic research on women leaders of NPOs in developing countries, this section presents a limited number of research findings from the developing world.

Studies conducted by Gupta (1991) and Naffziger and Terrell (1996) focused on India and concluded that caste, family support, previous experience and individual characteristics are determinants of entrepreneurship. These researchers studied male entrepreneurs of for-profit organizations; however, these results are supported by findings from the research conducted by Handy, et.al. (2006) on women nonprofit entrepreneurs. Their findings reported that the determinants of entrepreneurship for women leaders of NPOs are family support, caste, and personal beliefs and values.

According to Bilodeau and Slivinski (1996), individuals who start NPOs receive an intense psychological payoff in carrying out the missions of their organizations. Interestingly, their socioeconomic status is likely to be in the middle income range. A study by Handy, et.al. (2006) on Indian women leaders of NPOs supports this finding and indicates that the majority of the women nonprofit leaders belonged to

middle and upper-middle income groups, as also suggested by Western scholars. Contrary to the findings of the study done by Caputo and Dolinsky (1998) on women entrepreneurs from the West, marital status and childcare responsibilities did not affect the Indian women leaders' decision to start NPOs (Femida Handy et al., 2006). The researchers believe this contradiction is due to the difference in the living and family arrangements between developing countries and highly industrialized countries. In India, young couples live with the husband's family (brothers, unmarried sisters, and parents) and newly married women benefit from the additional help available for domestic work and childcare. Also, middle income families can afford to hire inexpensive labor for household and childcare chores.

It is apparent from the discussion that literature on women leaders in the nonprofit sector and in developing countries is still in its infancy. Both fields need greater inquiry to build the knowledge about women leaders. This research attempts to reduce this gap by studying women leaders of NPOs and asks the following questions: What is the leadership style of women leaders of nonprofit organizations in India? What is the influence of social, cultural, and political factors on leadership style of nonprofit women leaders?

### **Methodology**

To understand the leadership style of women leaders, semi-structured interviews were conducted in the western state of India. From the analysis of interview data, the researcher intended to address the following research questions: What is the leadership style of women leaders of nonprofit organizations? What is the influence of social, cultural, and political factors on leadership style of nonprofit women leaders?

A total of 32 women leaders were interviewed.

Among the 32 organizations, 3 organizations are more than 15 years of age; 7 organizations are between 10 and 15 years old, and the rest are less than 10 years of age. These NPOs are involved in many different issues such as empowering the village population, providing health services for women and children, promoting literacy, and financing activities. Respondents ranged in age from 34 to 63 years. Twenty-five out of 32 women were the leader as well as the founder of the organization.

All of the interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed. Most of the interviews were an hour to 90 minutes long. A grounded theory approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) was used to analyze the qualitative interview data, employing sentence-by-sentence coding utilizing open-, axial-, and selective-coding strategies. Open coding is a process to explore the data and develop the concepts. Data are broken down into discrete parts, closely examined, and compared for similarities and differences (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 102). Using axial coding, the subcategories are created that related to the categories that were developed in the first phase of the coding. Finally, in selective coding, the analysis is focused on specific categories and the data is extracted to clarify definitions and relationships among the codes and categories. This coding technique was used to identify key themes and to integrate emerging concepts.

### **Findings—Leadership Style**

This section addresses the self-perception of women with respect to their role as leaders. Women leaders told various stories about their leadership style. They also shared anecdotes explaining the influence of social, cultural, and political factors on their leadership.

During the interviews, women leaders narrated their leadership styles and provided many examples. The interview data suggested that women leaders have mixed leading styles of communal and agentic. On the one hand, leaders focus on interpersonal skills and create a participatory work environment while on the other hand, they execute their leadership by being assertive, task-oriented, and performance-focused.

### **Communal Leadership Style**

Almost all leaders mentioned that their role as a leader goes beyond the activities related to the jobs they are assigned. Their relationships with employees often provide nurturing and motivation, creating a participatory work environment, and building relationships among employees. A leader with 15 years of experience mentioned that “[the first part of the leadership role is] nurturing, creating space in the environment to grow; the second part is to constantly provide the intellectual and emotional energy and to motivate them to implement the vision.” There was general agreement regarding the style of leadership that women leaders create space for informal communication. They believe that the majority of professional and organizational communication happens informally, which at times is vital in solving complicated problems. As one leader mentioned, “It [communication] does not get restricted to what position so-and-so belongs to, or what role the individual has in the organization and whether it is an appropriate time to communicate...a lot of very complex problems get handled very simply because of that kind of informal way.”

Nearly all of the women believed that they were able to empower other women within and outside their organizations at the individual level or by organizing

them at the community level. Leaders believe that being a woman helps them to understand other women better. Some leaders also believed that they encourage the hiring of more women for their respective organizations. Many reported that if the leader of their organization would have been a man, there would have been fewer women employees, and projects that concern women would not be given priority. As one leader mentioned,

Our organization has a program against domestic violence....Our organization was facing severe funding problems. In the meeting, they [assigned group] came up with the proposal that this project is not as important as other projects and so it should be put on hold until we have enough funds again. I said, "Nothing doing, this project is very personal to me, and it will stay." Finally, we continued with the project and decided to put in long hours....I just could not back off...It hurts me when a woman is beaten up by her husband.

### **Agentic Leadership Style**

Informants mentioned during their interviews that they perceive their role to be assertive in addition to being a leader who establishes power and identity as a leader. Many informants mentioned that there is a constant tension between being soothing and comforting the employees and, at the same time, demanding performance and being assertive about it. One of the women, who was a leader of an all-women organization for about 10 years, then started another organization with both men and women as employees, said,

I am generally the youngest in the group [in the meetings]. So I generally have to be careful not to very easily tick them [men] off by being angry or harsh. However, I get very surprised...when I have been really

harsh and angry with men who are much older than I am, they actually appreciate me. I show my annoyance and they actually enjoyed it. They turn around and perform much better, as if they were waiting for that to happen, and I found new respect for me in them. It is a strange thing.

Women leaders also mentioned that they have to struggle within and outside of their organization in some instances to establish their identity as a leader. However, over a period of time, women manage to establish their identities as leaders by being assertive and at times by showing power and by being hard and demanding. The majority of the women leaders mentioned that they have faced more problems of acceptance as a leader from the male employees of the organizations than from female employees. According to one of the leaders, "I have a workforce who is below me in the administrative ladder. They have always thought, 'How can a lady order me to do things? How can she say what I am supposed to do?' This was so much there in the beginning. It has been a continuous struggle to make myself understood."

Women leaders also mentioned that they have faced issues with female employees, but in a different way. With female employees, the issue is competing for power by being "like men" in the group. As one woman reported, "In my professional life, I had seen women who have always thought that they are 'the men' in the group." Another women leader mentioned, "You have to display 'men-like' traits to be recognized as a powerful leader. Women are often considered polite and soft-spoken with no real power to lead an organization." When asked about the "men-like" qualities, women leaders mentioned that a task-focused approach with little consideration for personal issues

and attitude for competition is considered “men-like.” Showing off the power by using an authoritative attitude and formal communication is considered to be a part of behaving like men. However, women leaders also experienced that once they have established their power and identity as a leader, employees overcome gender barriers and tend to understand their individual style of leading. As mentioned by one leader, “You get such issues [gender barriers] more from men, but they have not been difficult to condition or recondition. After some working experience, these men understand the way I work and accept me as a leader.”

#### **Influence of Social and Cultural Factors**

When respondents were asked about the social, cultural, and political factors that might influence their leadership style, they all reported that for them to be a successful leader, it is extremely important to be socially acceptable and well connected, culturally sensitive, and politically smart. Women leaders narrated various stories explaining the social, cultural, and political environment that impact their leadership style.

The majority of the leaders mentioned that their ideas are heard during meetings and that they are able to contribute to discussions without any problems. However, a prevalent issue is that men colleagues often do not take young women leaders seriously. Many times, if a leader in her late twenties or early thirties approaches men in other organizations or in the community at the village level, she is not taken seriously; at times, men are called to work instead of her.

“I went to meet the male leader of the community to discuss our new initiative that we planned for their settlement. The project was about women and children.

But, as soon as they saw me, they asked me, ‘Where is the ‘saheb’ (male authority)?’ I responded that there is no ‘saheb’ on this project. They replied, ‘then whom should we talk to?’ I said, ‘to me’...they were so not ok with my being the leader of the project and they did not talk with me for a week [about] the project. I kept visiting them and eventually they realized that there is no man as an authority on this project and they will have to talk to me if they want this project in their settlement.”

Another young leader reported, “When women are accompanied by men to the meetings, things are for the most part addressed to men. My existence was almost unnoticeable.”

Experienced leaders (more than 40 years of age) mentioned that they received such treatment when they were young, however, it does not happen to them anymore. Now, with an aged look and many years of experience, they are taken seriously and people respect them. As one leader noted, “they have to take me seriously. I am working in this field for so many years now and they have been there all these years...I have gray hair and they cannot perceive me as a young woman anymore. So I do not struggle for my position anymore.”

Leaders with ten or more years of experience reported that men are more confident working with women in their late forties than with women in their late twenties. It seems tied to the cultural belief that older women are considered wise as they have seen more years of life. This generally is true for men and women; however, younger women tend to be seen more as objects of sexuality than as cognitive individuals. As one woman leader stated, “When I started this organization (20 years ago), I was very young—in my late twenties. People tend not to take

your actions seriously when you are young. So they used to say, 'Oh, she has just started, let see how it goes. It will be good if it lasts even for five years...we will see what happens in future.'"

Another experienced leader recalled her early experience and mentioned: "Even funding agencies were not sure of our ability as they found us very young, not only organization-wise but also by our own age. They were not willing to support us because they were not sure of our ability to continue." Women leaders pointed out that there has been slow but gradual change in male attitudes with respect to working women. They pointed out that attitudes in the professional world as well as society have changed, and participation of women in different professions is no longer considered unique. However, all leaders agreed that there are subtle ways in which discrimination still exists and women have to work harder than men to be considered comparable.

### **Influence of Political Factors**

According to women leaders, two political realities influence their style of leadership: first, the low representation of women in government; second, the uneasy relationship between government and the nonprofit sector. During the interviews women leaders mentioned that their leadership style is developed in accordance with the political environment in which they operate. As a result, women have incorporated flexibility, inclusiveness, networking, and long-term relationship building in their leadership style.

Due to the low representation of women in government, women leaders reported occasional power display of front-line male administrators by making the leader pay several visits to them until the job gets done. This could happen to both men and

women, as one leader mentioned. However, gender does seem to play a role in the likelihood that administrators will display their power. Women tend to be perceived as too fragile to do certain types of jobs, including "running around." In such instances, men maintain their sense of superiority and power by helping "the weaker" woman. Ironically, women leaders mentioned that male NPO administrators would receive much harder treatment than women because of the clash of perceived power.

While men leaders will help women leaders, they often resist if women leaders are non-traditional in their appearance. Women who wear traditional clothes are more acceptable by social norms. They are perceived as being respectful of culture and tradition and fit into the image of "respected women." However, leaders who wear non-traditional clothes are perceived as being "modern women" who might lack respect for their own culture and traditional values. They are thus perceived as "rebels" or "forward minded." The underlying connotation to this perception is that such women reject the stereotypical image of women as the weaker sex, which threatens male superiority and, as a result, male government officials try to repress such women. Often they convey their repression by not helping them or by postponing the task. The same leader who previously was quoted as saying that women leaders tend to receive help also mentioned, "But they would have problem with this... that you can speak English, or you have short hair or you are wearing pants, things which don't fit in the stereotypes." To balance such tensions women leaders employ a more communal leading style. They tend to listen more to what government officers have to say. They also dress more traditionally to avoid the



resistance. Some leaders reported this as a part of the process of gaining trust and respect. They further mention that if their organization has had a long-term relationship with a government office, the importance of appearance decreases; however, it never completely ceases.

The second political factor that influences leadership style is the uneasy relationship between government and the nonprofit sector. The sentiment of "uneasy" relationship between the nonprofit sector and government was acknowledged by the leaders during the interviews. A majority of the leaders noted that people on both sides hold negative attitudes toward each other. According to these leaders, some NPOs perceive government as inefficient and bureaucratic whereas some government officials believe that NPOs do not acknowledge the government for their role in the success of the partnership but cast blame if it fails. Some government officials also perceive NPOs to be corrupt organizations, making profits under the name of a social cause. There is a general sentiment among the leaders that, due to NPOs' dependence on government (for funding and permits), government holds more power, and so its role is to dominate NPOs.

To overcome the attitudinal barriers, a majority of leaders mentioned that they try to work within the policy agendas that government agencies have and acknowledge government as an effective partner at the community level. They further employ a leadership style that focuses on developing trust. Over time, trust between the two actors improves the working relationship. An officer from an NPO suggested that one might need to have the "know-how" to deal within a political environment that constantly changes. To integrate such tact into the leadership style, leaders acknowledged that flexibility to incorporate the

government's goal in a project is very important. Insensitivity to the political aspect of a project can obstruct effective leadership. As one of the leaders mentioned "It is the balance that matters.... Flexibility is important. However, one does not have to bend so much that you break. It is important to achieve balance between both the partners' agenda."

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

The analysis of the findings indicated that leadership style is based not only on gender differences, but is also influenced by social, cultural, and political factors. According to the findings, both agentic and communal attributes were present in the leadership styles of the women leaders in this study. The leaders prefer participative leadership style and informal communication. They perceive nurturing, motivating, and building long-lasting relationships as among their most important tasks. These attributes would be referred to as communal attributes according to the leadership literature in the field of for-profit organizations (A. Eagly & M. Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001). However, these leaders also consider assertiveness, a performance-oriented focus, formal communication, and a focus on influencing others as important attributes in their leadership style. These behaviors are associated with agentic attributes (A. Eagly & M. Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001).

Constant with extant literature, this study also confirms that women nonprofit leaders experience complex and simultaneous cross-pressures (Alice H. Eagly & Carli, 2003) due to a double standard in the leadership style expected from women. In general, the leadership position is viewed as "male" in gender-type, especially in patriarchal societies such as India; thus, women who display "male-like" behaviors are perceived as being more qualified for leadership.

Consequently, nonprofit women leaders employ agentic attributes to be perceived as being competent for a leadership role. Engaging in agentic behaviors allows them to overcome descriptive stereotypes of lesser competence (Rudman, 1998). At the same time, they employ communal attributes to be "woman" enough—a set of norms men do not have to adhere to.

In studying leadership, present research empirically supports the approach suggested by Court (2005.) Along with the consideration of gender and its impact on leadership style, findings also indicate that social, cultural, and political factors provide further insights in studying women leadership of NPOs. The research indicates that social and cultural factors influence the leadership style of women leaders. Stereotypical beliefs about a woman's age in Indian culture play a role in how women are perceived. Women who appear to be non-traditional and/or are relatively young may be perceived more as sexual objects and less as cognitive individuals. Thus, women leaders tend to employ leadership styles that comply with the conventional images of women when they visit government offices to feel more accepted. A traditional image earns women leaders more respect and thus eases the process of "getting work done." By portraying themselves as traditional and mainstream, women use their "traditional" image as a "tool" against men's prejudices to get the work done.

Another cultural belief about age is that the older one is, the more wisdom one has. Elder women get more respect and recognition based on the cultural belief that older women should be respected as "mothers," and thus are considered wiser than younger leaders. Again, younger women are perceived more as sexual objects and not as competent colleagues or leaders. To overcome this barrier, women leaders

persistently network with the leaders of other organizations and build a long term relationship with other organizations to overcome the stereotypical image. Due to this reality, women leaders employ a flexible approach with a heavy focus on building personal relationships that they nurture for many years.

The influence of political environment for relationship between two sectors also crucially influences women's leadership style. According to the findings, women leaders experienced an "uneasy" relationship between government and the nonprofit sector. Research conducted by Sen (1999) provides deeper insight to understand this uneasy relationship between two sectors. Sen (1999) analyzes the government-nonprofit relationship in India based on three time periods. These are the era of co-operation between the NGOs and the state in the early post-independence period (1947 to the late-1950s); the emergence of antagonism between the two sectors in the 1960s and 1970s; and increased state control in the 1980s and 1990s' (Sen, p. 333).

According to Kudva (2005), 1989 to the present can be characterized as a period of "active involvement of government" in encouraging partnerships with nonprofit sector groups. At present, the government has taken policy initiatives to improve the nonprofit-government relationship from one of opposition to one of close collaboration. The majority of the NPOs are, however, "keeping an uneasy, sometimes reluctant, but pragmatic and often sophisticated partnership with the Indian State in its various forms" (Kudva, 2005, p. 12). Currently it seems to be an era of transition from adversarial to collaboration between government and NPOs. As in any transition, this change generates "uneasiness" on both the sides.

Due to the low representation of women in government, perceptions of successful leadership characteristics are more closely related to typical male behavior and completely unrelated to descriptions of typical female behavior (Brenner, Tomkiewicz, & Schein, 1989). Due to the socially constructed gender-role expectations, however, women who do not fit into the traditional stereotype of "Indian women" do face resistance from these administrators. Such women are considered "modern" or "rebels" and thus might be perceived to be a threat to the status of men in society. The experience of the women leaders in this study indicates that some government administrators will help women leaders more than men because of traditional male attitudes which condone "being gentle" to the "weaker sex." The underlying reason for such behaviors might be the result of a general attitude of "think manager, think male" held by government officers.

Findings from this study suggest that leadership style of women leaders is influenced by the cultural, social, and political environments in which they operate as leaders. However, the nature of such dynamics would be different depending on the type of the country, structure of the government in power, and the level of development of the nonprofit sector. In a time where globalization is an increasing trend around the world, it is important to study leadership style in the international perspective by taking the cultural, social, and political environment of that particular country into consideration. Research should be presented in a culturally sensitive fashion that would enhance our understanding about the diverse nature of leadership style across the globe.

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