



- TITLE** Follow Her Lead: Understanding the Leadership Behaviors of Women Executives
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- OBJECTIVE** The purpose of this study was to examine the leadership behaviors of women executives, in order to generate new research-based knowledge for the field of executive education.

METHODOLOGY

A total of 1,923 leaders from small, medium and large corporate, not for profit, manufacturing, service, health care, government and educational organizations in a metropolitan area in the Midwest were invited to complete an online Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) assessment and provide demographic information. From that population, 476 individuals responded (24.8% response rate), and the sample was reduced to 320 participants who currently held positions of director or equivalent (manager of managers), vice president or equivalent, senior executive or equivalent, c-level executive (chief executive officer, chief financial officer, chief information officer, etc.). Twelve in-depth face-to-face interviews were subsequently conducted. The typical respondent was male (72%), with 21+ years of professional work experience (76%), in director or equivalent positions (56%), and in a corporate settings (62%) versus non-profits.

KEY FINDINGS

The five most frequently used leadership behaviors were the same for males and females. Although the average scores of females on The Five Practices were higher than their male counterparts, there was only one on which females were significantly different than males: Finds ways to creatively celebrate accomplishments (ETH).

Based upon the data generated in the interviews with ten female and two male executives, the author identified the following leadership skills as important to women's success in executive level roles: Develop self-awareness, Get results, Value relationships, Recognize and reward performance, Foster collaboration, Take risks, Be resilient, Learn to assimilate, Value lifelong learning, and Find balance. She continues

to say: "These items can serve as good advice for anyone aspiring to an executive position to follow, regardless of gender. This should be reassuring to the next generation of leaders, as the path to the executive suite requires specific leadership skills that can be taught or developed" (pp. 126-127).