

**TITLE** Leadership Behaviors and Practices among Executive Women of Color in Higher Education

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**OBJECTIVE** The purpose of this research was to study and analyze the leadership behaviors and practices of executive women of color in higher education.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The population used for this study consisted of 120 women of color in executive positions (dean, director or vice president) within the field of higher education who attended national and regional meetings of executives, of which 34 effectively completed the Leadership Practices Inventory and provided demographic information. The typical respondent was 30-39 years of age (38%), African-American (38%), had earned a master's degree (50%), held a director title (50%), worked in Student Affairs (41%), had been at their current institution for less than six years (41%), worked at a college with a student enrollment under 1,500 students (41%), and had participated in formal leadership training (74%).

## **KEY FINDINGS**

Women of color in executive positions within higher education were found to exhibit all five leadership practices at a higher level than that reported by the Kouzes and Posner normative database. Challenge the Process and Encourage the Heart were the two most frequently engaged in leadership practices, followed by Model and Enable; while Inspire a Shared Vision was the least frequently utilized.

Younger age (20-29) women and older (60-69) women practiced all five leadership behaviors more than the other age groups. Additionally, Asian-American women practiced the behaviors at a higher rate. Also, the longer the tenure of employment, the higher the levels of leadership exhibited.

In sum, according to the author:

The similarities of surveyed women of color administrators across all five leader behaviors are: (a) a personal orientation that considers the concerns and needs of others; (b) the ability and willingness to communicate to others the higher meaning in work, such as purpose; and (c) the ability and willingness to understand that learning takes place at all times, regardless of the circumstance or situation. There is one item that has clearly emerged from the data: surveyed women of color administrators in higher education engage in challenging the process and encouraging the heart at a high rate (70<sup>th</sup> percentile) and above, more than any leader behavior. Challenging the process and

encouraging the heart leader behaviors have been high scores on a consistent basis across all demographic characteristics among surveyed women (p. 98).