

---

# THE LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE **research**

---

THE MOST TRUSTED SOURCE ON BECOMING A BETTER LEADER

**TITLE** The Relationship Between Emotional-Social Intelligence and Leadership Practices Among College Student Leaders

**RESEARCHER** Bryan J. Cavins  
School of Education  
Bowling Green State University  
Doctoral Dissertation: December 2005

**OBJECTIVE** The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between emotional-social intelligence, student leadership practices, and performance.

## METHODOLOGY

Student leaders enrolled in a leadership development program at a Midwestern state university completed the Student Leadership Practices Inventory and the Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-I; Bar-On, 1997). The program's director also classified each respondent's performance as top (25%), middle (50%) or bottom (25%). Complete data were provided by 20 first year students, 16 sophomores, 25 juniors and 12 seniors (N=73). The typical respondent was female (60%), 20 years old, with a 3.13 GPA. Forty-five percent were African-American, 42.5 percent were Caucasian, 5.5 percent were Hispanic/Latino, and the remaining "other." Internal reliability for the S-LPI was .68 Modeling, .74 Inspiring, .69 Challenging, .51 Enabling, and .77 Encouraging.

## KEY FINDINGS

Students reported engaging in Enabling most frequently, following by Encouraging, Inspiring, Modeling and Challenging. No significant differences on the Student LPI were reported for gender, age groups, year in school, and GPA. Caucasian students rated themselves significantly higher in Modeling and Challenging than did students of color, with no differences reported on Inspiring, Enabling and Encouraging.

The overall EQ-I correlated significantly with all five leadership practices, indicating that as "students' emotional-social intelligence increases, each of the five leadership practices also increases" (p. 77). There were significant differences between program performance groups with respect of total EQ-I scores, with the highest performers different than the middle, and the middle different from the bottom performers. In terms of leadership practices, this same pattern was found for Modeling, Inspiring and Challenging. On Enabling and Encouraging, only the differences between the top and bottom performers were statistically significant. The author notes that "the leadership development program curriculum does not align exclusively with Kouzes and Posner's Student Leadership Practices model" (p. 130) and that this might account for only moderate rather than stronger relationships being identified between leadership and performance (and experience).

## **THE LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE<sup>®</sup>**

Modeling the Way had the strongest correlations with the various dimensions of emotional-social intelligence, followed by Inspiring and Challenging, and the Enabling and Encouraging. All of the EQ-I dimensions were related in conceptually meaningful ways with the five Leadership practices, adding to the construct validity of that framework.