

THE LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE **research**

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TITLE The Impact of Race, Gender, and Experience on the Leadership Practices of Orientation Leaders

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OBJECTIVE The purpose of this study was to examine the leadership practices of orientation leaders.

METHODOLOGY

The sample population consisted of 30 orientation leaders and incoming first-year students (N = 584) who attended orientation sessions staffed by these leaders at a large, public, research institution in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. Both groups completed the Student version of the Leadership Practices Inventory (Self or Observer) and provided demographic information. Half of the orientation leaders were male and half were women, with Caucasian being the predominant ethnicity (70%), most were either sophomores (37%) or juniors (40%) in school, and 23 of them were doing this for the first time (77%). The typical matriculant participant was male (62%) and Caucasian (85%).

KEY FINDINGS

Orientation leaders reported significantly higher scores on all five leadership practices than did their constituents. The first-year orientation leaders reported significantly higher leadership practices scores than the experienced orientation leaders on four of the five practices (the exception being Challenging the Process). No differences were found in LPI-Observer scores between first-year and experienced orientation leaders. No differences were found for any of the five leadership practices on the basis of race/ethnicity (Caucasian versus Non-Caucasian), from either the Self or Observer perspective.

On the basis of gender, female orientation leaders reported significantly higher assessments than males on Modeling, Enabling and Encouraging. However, from the perspective of constituents, matriculants reported female orientation leaders engaging significantly more often only for Enabling than did matriculants with male orientation leaders. Analyses by race and gender revealed significant interaction effects on all five leadership practices. Caucasian females reported engaging in Modeling more than Caucasian males, as did Non-Caucasian females versus Non-

Caucasian males. Caucasian males reported engaging in Inspiring and Challenging more than Caucasian females, while Non-Caucasian females indicated more engagement in these two leadership behaviors than Non-Caucasian males. On Enabling and Encouraging, Non-Caucasian females and Caucasian females reported more frequently engaging in this behavior than did Non-Caucasian males and Caucasian males respectively. However, significant interaction effects (race x gender) were not found on any of the five leadership practices from the perspective of the first-year students (constituents).