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Resident Advisor General Intelligence, Emotional Intelligence, Personality Dimensions, and Internal Belief Characteristics as Predictors of Rated Performance

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Resident Advisors (RAs) have a significant hand in helping students adjust and thrive in college life. Given the importance of selecting high-performing RAs, this study sought to examine how well various measures of intelligence (e.g., general, emotional) in addition to personality and additional "internal belief" characteristics predict performance in the RA position, using hierarchical regression analyses. General intelligence, emotional intelligence, personality dimensions, and "internal beliefs" survey data were obtained from 36 university RAs. Performance data were obtained from self-reports by the RAs and also from 190 resident students rating their RAs. RA emotional sta-

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bility, conscientiousness, and confidence in ability as an RA were found to be predictive of rated performance. Scores of emotional intelligence, but not general intelligence, were found to be significantly positively correlated with RA performance. However, emotional intelligence did not have incremental validity above the contribution of other measures. Implications for improving the current process of RA selection at colleges and directions for future research are discussed.

The college experience is a tumultuous time in young people's lives. Being away from home for the first time, meeting high academic expectations, and facing financial concerns can create a situation loaded with tension. In the face of these pressures, college students may feel hopeless and helpless, resulting in problems such as depression, sleep disorders, substance abuse, anxiety disorders, eating disorders, impulsive behaviors, and suicide (Kadison & DiGeronimo, 2004). Additionally, parents often feel shut out from their children's lives and unsure of how to help them during this difficult transition period (Kadison & DiGeronimo).

Fortunately, the transition to autonomy can be greatly facilitated by the guidance of capable peers. Indeed, many studies show that during the adolescent stage of development, teens tend to be heavily influenced by their peers (Conner, 1994; Dupre, Miller, Gold, & Rospenda, 1995). Recognizing this fact, most universities employ undergraduate students as leaders in important contexts of the college environment. For example, resident advisors (RAs) are students employed by universities to live in specific student housing and supervise students. RAs are typically charged with four major tasks: (a) maintaining campus residence halls, (b) enforcing residential policies, (c) developing community, and (d) assisting students. In addition, they are often viewed as role models by fellow students in the residence halls where they live and work, as they interact daily with fellow students (Healea, 2005).

In light of the important role that RAs can play in facilitating the transition to college life for incoming students, a major concern for universities ought to be the selection of the best possible candidates for this critical position. Unfortunately, as Jaeger and Caison (2006) have

noted, research examining the RA selection process is relatively nonexistent, despite the established importance of the RA role in literature. Thus, the goal of this study is to help fill this void in the literature by examining the extent to which tests of general intelligence, emotional intelligence, personality, and "internal beliefs" of RAs are useful in predicting RA effectiveness.

Background

The following discussion of RA selection is theoretically grounded in the scientific literature related to personnel selection. However, it is important to note that not all schools draw on this literature to inform their RA selection process.

Although a wide variety of methodological approaches have been used in selecting job candidates, the job interview is the "critical career gateway" in nearly every organization (Fox & Spector, 2000). Interviews are widely perceived as being an effective tool for measuring factors such as cognitive ability, job knowledge, social skills, and aspects of personality (Robertson & Smith, 2001). Unfortunately, past research has shown that interviewers tend to overestimate their capability of predicting future performance based on the results of a single interview (Myers, 2007). Consequently, as a safeguard against this "interview illusion" effect, many organizations have elected to integrate the use of psychometrically validated measures related to intelligence and personality into their selection process.

General Intelligence

General intelligence relates to the knowledge and faculties an individual needs for skill acquisition, and it is generally associated with what Spearman called the *g* factor: "a mental attribute called on for any intellectual task" (Gleitman, Fridlund, & Reisberg, 2004, p. 564). The *g* factor has also been described by what Cattell and Horn (1978) call *fluid intelligence*. It specifically refers to "the ability to deal with new and unusual problems" (Gleitman et al., p. 565) and is typically considered to be the core element of traditional conceptions of intelligence.

General intelligence has been shown to predict many work outcomes well, including job knowledge acquisition, training performance, and

job performance (Fox & Spector, 2000; Gottfredson, 1997; Hough & Oswald, 2000; Kuncel, Hezlett, & Ones, 2004; Oakes, Ferris, Martocchio, Buckley, & Broach, 2001; Schmidt & Hunter, 1998). For this reason, general intelligence is one of the major constructs used by employers to attempt to discriminate between candidates and predict future job performance (Robertson & Smith, 2001). Measures of *g* may be predictive because, as Robertson and Smith explain, "General intelligence allows people to acquire job knowledge, which in turn has a direct effect upon work performance" (p. 465). Self-selection based on general intelligence may also precede the personnel selection process. Job seekers tend to apply to positions with ability requirements that match the seekers' own general intelligence (Hough & Oswald).

Although general intelligence has been shown to be related to many work outcomes, it typically only accounts for approximately 25% of variance in job performance (Van Rooy & Viswesvaran, 2004). Thus, there is a great deal of variance in job performance that is not explained by *g* alone, and researchers have looked toward other measures to help enhance their ability to predict job performance.

"Big-Five" (Five Factor) Model of Personality

The search for additional variables that predict job performance, but are not related to *g*, led to the investigation of personality traits. Decades of research in the field of personality theory have resulted in fairly broad agreement regarding the structural organization of traits in terms of five domains: agreeableness, openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, and neuroticism (Costa & McCrae, 1992; Goldberg, 1990; Norman, 1963); however, Goldberg advocates labeling the neuroticism factor in terms of its opposite (i.e., emotional stability).

Most meta-analyses investigating the relationship of Five Factor model traits with job performance suggest that conscientiousness and emotional stability are positively correlated with overall job performance in virtually all jobs, with conscientiousness being somewhat more strongly related (Barrick, Mount, & Judge, 2001). The other three personality dimensions have tended to only be valid predictors of performance for certain occupational groups or for specific aspects of job performance. For example, agreeableness is a useful predictor of team-

work (Barrick et al.) while extraversion exhibits a positive relationship with job performance of managers and seems to be particularly important for jobs that have an interpersonal component (Boudreau, Boswell, & Judge, 2001).

Researchers and practitioners originally were skeptical that personality measures could aid effective personnel selection, but they have now moved to "a position where there is confidence that personality can play a role" (Robertson & Smith, 2001, p. 455). Although personality measures have established themselves on solid empirical ground with regard to their capacity to enhance the prediction of job performance, a substantial amount of variability in job performance still remains unpredicted by both general intelligence and personality. Consequently, researchers have continued to search for additional measures that will enhance the prediction of job performance. Recently, emotional intelligence, a construct that resides at the intersection of general intelligence and personality, has been gaining prominence in the quest to more accurately predict future employee performance (Jaeger & Caison, 2006).

Emotional Intelligence

Salovey and Mayer (1990) first introduced the concept of "emotional intelligence" (EI), and they defined it as "the subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions" (p. 189). Alternative conceptions of EI include "not only emotion and intelligence, but also motivation, nonability dispositions and traits, and global personal and social functioning" (Law, Wong, & Song, 2004, p. 484). For example, Bar-On's (1997) conceptualization of EI includes five domains, each with a number of subcategories: (a) intrapersonal components (e.g., independence, self-actualization); (b) interpersonal components (e.g., social responsibility, empathy); (c) adaptability components (e.g., problem solving, flexibility); (d) stress management components (e.g., impulse control, stress tolerance); and (e) general mood components (e.g., happiness, optimism).

The measurement of EI is directly related to how it is conceptualized theoretically. For example, the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional

Intelligence Test (MSCEIT) is a performance-based test, including items that ask individuals to recognize the emotions present in pictures with different facial expressions (Van Rooy & Viswesvaran, 2004). In contrast, the Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i) is a 133-item self-report questionnaire that measures abilities and the potential for performance, rather than performance itself (Van Rooy & Viswesvaran). Conte (2005) found that the MSCEIT V2.0 and Bar-On scales showed a relatively low correlation (r = 0.36) in one study, a finding that raises questions about whether ability measures and self-report measures are measuring the same construct.

Research has shown that self-report EI measures tend to be stronger predictors of success than are ability-based measures (Barchard, 2003). In addition, discriminant validity has been demonstrated in prior research studies as the correlation between the EQ-i and the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale, a test of general intelligence, was only 0.12 (Conte, 2005); however, EI and measures of personality have been more difficult to distinguish (Barchard; Van Rooy & Viswesvaran, 2004). Recently, a study by Dawda & Hart (2000) found that the average correlation between the EQ-i and the Big-Five personality measures was approximately r = 0.50.

Nevertheless, referring back to personnel selection, the appeal of EI lies in its potential for explaining another portion of the remaining variance in job performance that is not explained by general intelligence and personality. Law et al. (2004) found that after controlling for relevant variables and the Big-Five personality dimensions, EI accounted for more than 10% of the variance in in-role and extra-role job performance of employees at a cigarette factory. In addition, Lopes, Grewal, Kadis, Gall, and Salovey (2006) demonstrated that EI was related to company rank and percent merit increase in salary for analysts and clerical employees at an insurance company. EI has also been shown to correlate significantly with job performance in the banking sector and in the military (Bar-On, 2002).

Yet, the major empirical test in evaluating the utility of EI for personnel selection is to evaluate its incremental validity over and above measures of general intelligence and measures of personality. Thus, the goal of this study was to investigate the usefulness of EI in predicting RA performance after controlling for general intelligence and personality.

Characteristics Associated with RA Performance

On university campuses, RAs are student leaders who live and work with other students in residence halls, performing a multitude of tasks that include counseling students, enforcing policies, and being a role model (Deluga & Masson, 2000). In light of their explicit responsibility to create community on the college campus, it seems reasonable to assume that effective RAs are likely to be those with high levels of EI.

Indeed, specific responsibilities of the RA position seem intuitively related to these elements of Bar-On's EI model. For example, the Interpersonal domain relates to the ability to "establish and maintain cooperative, constructive, and mutually satisfying relationships" (Bar-On, 2002, p. 32). The RA position requires a great amount of social interaction; RAs may interact with head residents, area coordinators, other RAs, other members of the Office of Residential Life (e.g., directors of residential life), as well as residents themselves. Thus, one might assume that RAs with high Interpersonal domain scores would be more likely to build trust with these individuals and create a comfortable atmosphere in their residence halls. Furthermore, RAs may, at times, feel overwhelmed by the simultaneous stress of academic work and responsibilities in their residential areas; they are often "overworked and underpaid" (Blimling, 2003, p. 3). Managing that stress effectively is crucial, and Stress Management domain scores could, therefore, be related to RA performance.

In a recent study by Jaeger and Caison (2006), total EQ-i score was found to be a significant predictor of outstanding RA performance. Of the EQ-i subscales, Adaptability was a significant predictor of outstanding RA performance. High Adaptability scores reflect individuals who are "flexible, realistic, and successful in managing change" and "adept at finding effective ways of dealing with everyday problems" (Bar-On, 2002, p. 16).

Big-Five personality dimensions also have been linked to specific aspects of the RA job. In past studies, students have identified effective RAs as being social, warm, friendly, and extraverted (Dickson & Thayer, 1983). Similarly, a study by Deluga and Masson (2000) found that RA extraversion and positive affect were positively associated with rated performance. They reasoned that RAs high in extraversion

would comfortably interact with others and be more interpersonally approachable.

Although previous research has demonstrated an empirical link between EQ-i scores, personality styles, and ratings of RA effectiveness, the existing literature lacks evidence of the incremental validity of each measure when several measures are used to predict RA performance. No studies were found in which the effects of general intelligence, EI, and personality dimensions were all considered in predicting RA performance. This is relevant because even if, for example, EI (as measured by the EQ-i) were found to be a significant predictor of RA performance, the finding would lack importance unless it were able to provide more information than a measure of general intelligence, which might be more easily obtained.

In addition, it is important to recognize that when significant differences exist between groups on predictor or criterion variables, the predictive validity of the various selection measures used may be different for different ethnic groups. For example, a number of studies have shown that the SAT and ACT overpredict freshman-year GPA in underrepresented minorities (Noble, 2004; Sawyer, 1985; Young, 2004). Similar results have been found with regard to sex differences, but in the opposite direction: women's performance tends to be underpredicted in these studies (Bridgeman & Schmitt, 1997; O'Neill & McPeek, 1993; Willingham & Cole, 1997; Leonard & Jiang, 1999). This research highlights the importance of examining test performance and criterion performance by ethnicity and sex when the ultimate goal is making valid predictions of future performance.

Research Questions

The current study builds on the previous work of Jaeger and Caison (2006), who found EI to be a significant predictor of RA performance. Although that study made a positive contribution to the literature, it was limited in that the results were from one institution and did not control for the contributions of general intelligence, personality, or "internal belief" characteristics to the predictive equation. Consequently, the current investigation will be driven by four research questions:

1. Is EI significantly related to RA effectiveness within the context of a small, liberal arts university?
2. Does EI exhibit incremental validity in predicting RA effectiveness when compared to other measures?
3. Are there differences in EI scores when comparing RAs' scores to those of the general population of residents?
4. Are there demographic differences in ratings of RA performance?

The major focus of the first question is whether the work of Jaeger and Caison (2006) can be conceptually replicated in a different institutional context. This current study expands on Jaeger and Caison's work by making RA performance a continuous variable (via quantitative ratings) rather than a categorical variable ("Outstanding" or "Not Outstanding").

The emphasis in the second research question is whether EI has incremental validity in predicting RA effectiveness when controlling for measures of general intelligence, personality dimensions, and "internal belief" characteristics. More broadly, we are interested in knowing which indicators are most useful in identifying which RAs will be effective.

Finally, the last two research questions focus on whether there are significant differences between RAs and residents on EI and whether there are significant differences in RAs' performance associated with sex or race/ethnicity.

Method

This research investigates the predictive and incremental validity of EI for identifying effective RAs. The predictive validity question is examined via a simple linear regression in which the Pearson correlation coefficient represents the strength of the relationship between EI and RA performance ratings and the square of the correlation coefficient yields the percent of variance explained. The incremental validity question is examined via the use of hierarchical multiple linear regression. Multiple linear regression is an important statistical technique for investigating the joint impact of several independent variables simultaneously because it takes into account the multicollinearity, or shared association, between independent variables that are used to predict

the dependent variable. As Hair, Anderson, Tatham, and Black (1998) noted, "Because this shared prediction can count only once, the overall prediction increases much more slowly as independent variables with high multicollinearity are added" (p. 157). Stated more practically, if two independent variables, such as EI and general intelligence, are both highly correlated with the same outcome variable (e.g., RA performance), the inclusion of both variables will add little to the predictive equation if EI and *g* are highly correlated with one another, but it would add much more if EI and *g* are not correlated with each other.

The choice of which variables are entered first within a hierarchical multiple regression is typically driven by theory. In the current study, four blocks of variables will be investigated—those related to: (a) general intelligence, (b) EI, (c) personality, and (d) "internal belief" characteristics. A forced-entry approach (rather than a stepwise approach) is used in the regression for two reasons. First, rather than simply finding which individual predictor variables are the most significant predictors of RA effectiveness, we are primarily interested in exploring the total amount of variance in RA self-rated performance that is explained by variables associated with each of the four theoretical blocks listed above. The total amount of variance explained (R^2) in ratings of RA effectiveness, as well as the amount of incremental variance (R^2 change, or ΔR^2), will be evaluated at each step. Because the subject-to-variable ratio is high, the adjusted R^2 is a more appropriate statistic to interpret as it provides a less biased parameter estimate (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003).

Second, the theoretical perspective we adopt is that EI is an aspect of intelligence rather than personality, thus a forced-entry approach (rather than a stepwise approach) to variable entry allows us to specifically examine the incremental predictive validity of EI variables as a group over and above general intelligence measures. In the last step of the equation, with all variables included, we will evaluate the statistical significance of each predictor variable to determine which of the individual variables were significant in predicting RA effectiveness after controlling for all other variables in the equation.

To determine group differences in EI and RA performance scores, a series of independent-samples *t* tests was conducted. SPSS Version 15.0 was used for all data analyses.

Participants

Although the main focus of the study was on RAs, it was also necessary to gather information from residents to address some of the proposed research questions. Thus, there were two sets of participants involved in this study: (a) RAs and (b) residents.

RAs. The target population consisted of 68 students who served as RAs at a small liberal arts university in the Northeast during either the fall or spring semester of the 2007–08 academic year.

Residents. All residents at this university who were living in on-campus housing with an RA (approximately 1,800 students) were recruited by e-mail for this study.

Instrumentation

RAs completed a test battery that included the following six components: (a) a measure of EI, (b) a measure of RA self-rated performance, (c) a measure of emotional/personal/social intelligence, (d) a personality measure, (e) a measure of general intelligence, and (f) a background questionnaire. Participants took approximately 90 minutes to complete this battery.

By contrast, residents completed a battery consisting of the following three elements: (a) a rating scale measure of their RA's performance, (b) a measure of their own emotional/personal/social intelligence, and (c) a background questionnaire. All tests were administered online via a secure Web site. Each of these tests is described in further detail next. Participants took approximately 20 minutes to complete this battery.

Emotional Intelligence. Participating RAs completed the Bar-On EQ-i: Short form (EQ-i:S), a shorter version of the Bar-On EQ-i consisting of 51 items taken from the 133 items on the full version of the EQ-i (Bar-On, 2002). The EQ-i:S consists of 51 statements in which participants are asked to assess the truth of the statement from "1 = Very Seldom or Not True of Me" to "5 = Very Often True of Me or True of Me." Items are distributed across the following eight scales: (a) Intrapersonal EQ, (b) Interpersonal EQ, (c) Stress Management EQ, (d) Adaptability EQ, (e) General Mood EQ, (f) Inconsistency Index, (g) Positive Impression

scale, and (h) Total Emotional Quotient (EQ) (Bar-On, 2002).

The EQ-i:S scales have been shown to have internal consistency coefficients ranging from .76 to .93, with the exception of the Positive Impression scale (Bar-On, 2002). Generally, the test-retest reliabilities of the EQ-i:S scales after 6 months are excellent, ranging from .46 to .80 (Bar-On, 2002). As Austin, Saklofske, Huang, & McKenney (2004) reported, "Satisfactory psychometric properties have been reported in the technical manual accompanying the EQ-i:S and offer support for the short scale as a satisfactory substitute for the EQ-i when time constraints may limit the use of the longer questionnaire" (p. 557).

Scores for the EQ-i are computer-generated; raw scores are automatically tabulated and converted into standard scores based on a mean of 100 and standard deviation of 15, resembling IQ (Intelligence Quotient) scores. Higher scores indicate more effective functioning in meeting daily challenges, whereas low EQ scores suggest ineffectiveness in functioning and the possibility of emotional, social, and/or behavioral problems (Bar-On, 2005).

RA Performance. RAs completed self-evaluations of their performance as an RA. The scale was composed of 46 statements describing various RA characteristics and behaviors, to which the RA responded on a 7-point scale, from "1 = Strongly Disagree" to "7 = Strongly Agree." A "Don't Know" response option was also provided. These statements were distributed among five domains: (a) Interpersonal, (b) Community, (c) Intrapersonal, (d) Programs and Bulletin Boards, and (e) University Policy and Services. All items were positively worded and scored. The evaluation instrument was adapted from an RA evaluation instrument used at this liberal arts university. Figure 1 shows example items for each domain.

As an added criterion measure, all residents at this university who were living in on-campus housing with an RA (approximately 1,800 students) were invited via e-mail to complete an evaluation of their current RAs. This evaluation contained the same 46 statements and response format as the RA self-evaluations, with different wording to reflect a resident's perspective rather than that of an RA.

Figure 1. Example Items from RA Evaluation Domains

[Interpersonal] I try to understand my residents' problems and/or concerns.
[Community] I encourage my residents to respect one another.
[Intrapersonal] I am open-minded to the needs of my residents.
[Programs and Bulletin Boards] My residents enjoy the programs that I offer.
[University Policy and Services] I effectively confront violations of University policies.

Background Information. RAs completed a background questionnaire that gathered data about class year, sex, race/ethnicity, major(s), and international student status (Yes/No). In addition, they answered questions about their RA experience, such as their number of semesters as an RA, priority of the RA position in their lives, and whether or not the RA position was their first official leadership position. They also rated themselves using a 7-point Likert scale on variables of "internal belief" characteristics: (a) amount of effort as an RA, (b) satisfaction as an RA, (c) confidence with their ability as an RA, and (d) overall self-esteem. These variables were labeled as "internal belief" characteristics because they are subjective perceptions that RAs would hold internally about themselves. Residents were asked to provide their class year, sex, race/ethnicity, major(s), and to indicate whether they were international students.

Emotional/Social/Personal Intelligence. RAs completed a short 10-item scale of emotional/social/personal intelligence from the International Personality Item Pool (IPIP) (Goldberg et al., 2006). This scale contains 10 statements to which participants respond about the accuracy of the statement on a 5-point Likert scale. Scoring followed the protocol devised by Goldberg et al. Residents were also asked to complete the same 10-item scale of emotional/social/personal intelligence from the IPIP.

Personality Dimensions. Each RA also completed the short-form IPIP representation of the NEO-PI (McCrae & Costa, 1987). This IPIP scale, known as the IPIP-NEO, contains 50 statements (out of 100 on the full version) designed to measure the Big-Five factors of personality: 10 statements for each factor (Goldberg et al., 2006). Participants

were asked to respond about the degree of accuracy of each statement, from "1 = Very Inaccurate" to "5 = Very Accurate." For each factor, there were five statements that were reverse-scored. Scores on the 10 statements for each factor were summed to create an overall score for each factor.

The IPIP-NEO scale uses the same adjective markers as the Big-Five adjectives. Research relating the NEO-PI and the IPIP-NEO found correlations between corresponding scales that ranged from 0.85 to 0.92 when corrected for unreliability (Buchanan, Johnson, & Goldberg, 2005).

General Intelligence. To measure general intelligence, RAs completed a short form of the Raven's Advanced Progressive Matrices (RAPM) test. The test is made up of a series of visual patterns with a part missing; those taking the tests are expected to select the correct part to complete the pattern from a number of options displayed beneath the pattern (Raven, 2000). The short form of the instrument contained 20 items, retaining every other item on the full RAPM test. The first two items were used as examples to teach the participants how to approach the items. Test-retest reliability for adults taking the full RAPM test has been shown to be quite high at 0.91 after 6 to 8 weeks (Raven, Raven, & Court, 1998).

The Raven's APM test is typically administered in paper form, but a computer-administered version of the test was used for this study. However, research has shown that for the Raven's Standard Progressive Matrices (RSPM), another test with a similar item format, there are no significant differences in anxiety across formats and no significant correlations between anxiety and RSPM performance (Williams & McCord, 2006).

Procedure

All tests were administered online via a secure and encrypted Web-based server. After logging into the study Web site, RAs were redirected to the Web site of the publisher of the EQ-i:S (www.mhsassessments.com) and asked to log in with a unique username and password assigned to them by the principal study investigator.

A total of 68 RAs, employed at the university for at least one semester in the 2007–08 academic year, were recruited by e-mail and asked to complete a battery of assessments. Their participation was completely voluntary. Each RA participant received an e-mail that provided a link to an online survey. RAs were given $10 for participation.

Residents were recruited by e-mails through several area listserv mailing lists. Area Coordinators and Head Residents used these listserv mailing lists to send e-mails to all residents living in a particular area. All residents with an RA were recruited. The recruiting e-mail provided a link to an online survey. For the survey, residents completed a consent form and completed their test battery. In exchange for their participation, residents were entered into a lottery. If a resident was one of the five lottery winners, he or she received $20.

All participants consented to participation and were debriefed about the purposes of the project. Information was kept in strict confidentiality by assigning all participants with a random ID number before data analysis.

Results

In the present study, 39 of the 68 RAs in the population (57%) completed the battery of instruments. One RA case was removed from the overall data set because the participant only completed a small fraction of the battery of tests. Another two RA cases were removed because none of those RAs' residents completed a questionnaire. Thirty-six valid RA responses were analyzed.

Additionally, 303 out of approximately 1,800 residents (17%) completed the survey designed for residents. Twenty resident cases were removed because the residents did not identify their RA in their response to the survey. Three cases were removed because they were associated with the RA case that was removed because of an incomplete response. Additionally, cases were removed from the overall data set if residents had rated an RA who did not take the questionnaire at all. Ultimately, 190 valid resident responses were analyzed.

Respondent Characteristics

At this university, there are 50% men and 50% women. In the Classes of 2007–10, there are 26% students of color (7% Black or African American, 11% Asian or Asian American, 8% Latino or Hispanic) and 6% international students. Demographic data on the RAs in our sample is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics of Categorical Analysis Variables

	Resident Advisors		Residents	
Variable	***n***	**%**	***n***	**%**
Class Year				
Class of 2008	6	17.1	1	0.5
Class of 2009	16	45.7	20	10.6
Class of 2010	13	37.1	54	28.6
Class of 2011	N/A	N/A	114	60.3
Sex				
Male	16	44.4	74	38.9
Female	20	55.6	115	60.5
Race/Ethnicity				
Black or African American	8	22.9	7	3.7
Asian/Asian American or Pacific Islander	9	25.7	26	13.7
American Indian or Alaskan Native	0	0.0	0	0.0
Hispanic or Latino	3	8.6	10	5.3
White	12	34.3	128	67.4
Other	3	8.6	14	7.4
International Student				
Yes	11	30.6	19	10.0
No	25	69.4	167	87.9
First Leadership Position?				
Yes	7	19.4	Not Applicable	
No	29	80.6		

Note. 1 RA did not provide a class year and 1 RA did not provide race/ethnicity. 2 residents did not provide a class year, 5 residents did not provide race/ethnicity, and 4 residents did not provide international student status.

The RA sample had a mean of 2.56 semesters of experience as an RA. The average number of residents for each RA was approximately 29, and the number of residents supervised ranged from 15 to 44. Outlier values of 120 and 140 residents supervised were removed from this calculation. The full descriptive statistics of the continuous variables are shown in Table 2.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics of Scales/Items Completed by Resident Advisors and Residents

Variable	Mean	*SD*	Min	Max
RAPM Score	13.81	2.96	7.00	18.00
Intrapersonal EQ	97.92	15.04	64.00	128.00
Interpersonal EQ	101.33	13.67	68.00	123.00
Stress management EQ	99.31	12.36	74.00	124.00
Adaptability EQ	100.61	12.63	67.00	129.00
General mood EQ	95.25	13.02	59.00	117.00
Total EQ	98.33	12.84	71.00	127.00
Neuroticism	24.28	6.78	13.00	37.00
Extraversion	35.78	5.11	24.00	48.00
Openness to experience	39.69	4.60	30.00	49.00
Agreeableness	38.14	4.54	27.00	48.00
Conscientiousness	36.33	5.68	26.00	47.00
Amount of effort as an RA	5.17	1.21	2.00	7.00
Satisfaction as an RA	5.28	1.32	2.00	7.00
Confidence in ability as an RA	5.64	1.05	3.00	7.00
Overall self-esteem	5.37	1.35	1.00	7.00
Priority of RA position	5.25	1.05	2.00	7.00
Effectiveness as an RA (single-item)	5.42	0.87	3.00	7.00
IPIP Emotional Intelligence				
Resident Advisors	27.64	2.84	23.00	35.00
Residents	26.40	4.12	12.00	35.00
RA performance (self-ratings)				
Overall performance	27.35	3.07	19.76	32.16
Interpersonal	5.58	0.75	3.25	7.00
Community	5.45	0.66	3.27	6.30
Intrapersonal	5.53	0.67	3.92	6.67
Programs and bulletin boards	5.41	0.86	3.50	7.00
University policy and services	5.38	0.89	3.40	7.00
RA performance (residents' ratings)				
Overall performance	26.51	2.60	20.27	31.05
Interpersonal	5.22	0.79	2.92	6.47
Community	5.31	0.53	3.90	6.45
Intrapersonal	5.45	0.52	4.30	6.48
Programs and bulletin boards	4.98	0.67	3.17	6.00
University policy and services	5.55	0.56	4.29	6.20

Question 1. Is emotional intelligence significantly related to RA effectiveness?

Two indicators of RA performance were gathered in this study. The first indicator was self-rated performance from the participating RAs and the second indicator was the average rating of effectiveness that

each RA received from their residents. As often happens in multirater studies (e.g., van Hooft, van der Flier, & Minne, 2006), the correlation between these two sets of ratings was low and not statistically significant. Consequently, we report here the results of the self-rated RA measure. This choice was made for three reasons. First, past research has used self-ratings to measure RA performance (Denzine & Anderson, 1999). Second, self-ratings may be more accurate because self-raters often attribute good performance to their own behavior, while other observers (e.g. residents) may tend to attribute good performance to environmental factors (Harris & Schaubroeck, 1988). Finally, the RAs' self-evaluations completed for this current study represented about 57% of the RA population. In contrast, the residents' external RA performance evaluations only represented about 17% of the resident population. The percentage of evaluations received from the residents does not appear to be at a high-enough threshold to be seen as representative for the criterion.

Table 3 illustrates the intercorrelations between all of the scales and the "internal belief" characteristic items completed by RAs. The scales showed reliability that ranged from acceptable to excellent (Cronbach αs = .61 – .96). A strong positive, and statistically significant, zero-order correlation was found between Total EQ scores and RA performance (r (34) = .35, $p < .01$), indicating that Total EQ alone accounted for 12.3% of the variance in the ratings of RA performance. In addition, Intrapersonal EQ and Stress Management EQ were significantly positively correlated with RA overall performance self-ratings.

Of the personality dimensions, neuroticism was significantly negatively correlated with RA overall performance and conscientiousness was significantly positively correlated. Amount of effort, satisfaction, and confidence in ability as an RA were all significantly positively correlated with RA overall performance self-ratings at the $p < .01$ level of significance.

Question 2. Does emotional intelligence exhibit incremental validity in predicting RA effectiveness when compared to other measures?

The incremental validity of the EQ subscales was explored using hierarchical multiple regression. RA performance self-rating scores were

Table 3
Intercorrelations Between Scales/Items Completed By Resident Advisors

Scale/Item	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
1. RAPM	**.72**	-.29	-.34*	-.10	-.19	-.42*	-.39*	.19	-.38*	-.13	-.16	-.08	-.22	-.14	-.23	-.16	-.08
2. Intrapersonal EQ	--	**.82**	.44*	.49*	.44*	.64*	.89*	-.51*	.46*	.51*	.22	.20	.41*	.08	.25	.45*	.41*
3. Interpersonal EQ	--	--	**.83**	.28	.23	.14	.61*	.14	.54*	.52*	.30	-.11	.69*	-.06	.30	.14	.19
4. Stress Management EQ	--	--	--	**.82**	.21	.21	.62*	-.31	.11	.22	.22	.16	.04	-.07	.10	.37*	.37*
5. Adaptability EQ	--	--	--	--	**.79**	.52*	.65*	-.25	.23	.50*	.22	.05	.18	-.21	-.22	.34*	.01
6. General Mood EQ	--	--	--	--	--	**.83**	.72*	-.76*	.44*	.30	.18	.28	.25	.08	.04	.41*	.20
7. Total EQ	--	--	--	--	--	--	**.93**	-.49*	.52*	.58*	.31	.17	.46*	-.04	.15	.49*	.35*
8. Neuroticism	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	**.82**	-.22	-.11	-.25	-.34*	-.07	-.36*	-.10	-.53*	-.42*
9. Extraversion	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	**.72**	.39*	.22	.01	.67*	.17	.23	.07	.23
10. Openness to Experience	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	**.61**	-.10	.04	.44*	-.01	.18	.38*	.26
11. Agreeableness	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	**.66**	.23	.30	.25	.22	.25	.32
12. Conscientiousness	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	**.82**	-.01	.58*	.30	.21	.46*
13. IPIP Emotional Intelligence (RA)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	**.49**	.23	.39*	.15	.22
14. Amount of Effort as an RA	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	.56*	.21	.63*
15. Satisfaction as an RA	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	.43*	.60*
16. Confidence in Ability as an RA	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	.66*
17. RA Overall Performance (Self-Ratings)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	**.96**

Note. * $p < .05/.01$ (two-tailed).

Cronbach's Alpha coefficients (in bold) reported on diagonal. EQ Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were averages of values for males and females less than or equal to 29 years old given in EQ-i:S Technical Manual. Cronbach's Alpha coefficients are not applicable for single-item responses (correlates 14, 15, 16).

regressed on measures of general intelligence, EI, personality dimensions, and "internal belief" characteristics. In the first step, general intelligence, as measured by RAPM scores, was entered by itself. In Step 2, scores on the following subscales of the EQ-i:S were added to the equation: Intrapersonal EQ, Interpersonal EQ, Stress Management EQ, Adaptability EQ, and General Mood EQ. In Step 3, the following subscales from the IPIP personality scale were added to the equation: neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. In Step 4, ratings on the following RA "internal belief" characteristics were added to the prediction equation: amount of effort as an RA, satisfaction as an RA, confidence in ability as an RA, overall self-esteem, and priority of RA position. The complete results appear in Table 4.

The inclusion of the EQ subscale scores improved the predictive power of the regression over and above the variable of general intelligence, as measured by the RAPM scores. The inclusion of both general intelligence and EI explained a total of 25% (Adjusted R^2 = 9%) of the variance in RA performance ratings.

The personality dimensions further improved the predictive power of the regression over and above both general intelligence and EI, as ΔR^2 = .35 for Step 3, a change that was significant ($p < .05$). Specifically, RA scores on the neuroticism and conscientiousness subscales were significant predictors of RA performance self-ratings. When holding general intelligence, EI, and the other personality dimensions constant, the average RA performance self-rating score decreased by 0.29 point for each point increase in neuroticism score. When holding those variables constant, the average RA performance self-rating score increased by 0.18 point for each point increase in conscientiousness score. Furthermore, once personality factors were controlled, the positive relationship between Total EQ and RA effectiveness was no longer statistically significant.

Finally, in the fourth step of the regression, the "internal beliefs" variables were found to improve the predictive power of the equation over and above the contribution of the intelligence and personality measures, as ΔR^2 = .25 , a change that was significant ($p < .05$) and that resulted in a total of 84% of the total variability in RA performance scores being explained (Adjusted R^2 = 70%). The internal belief of

Table 4
Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting RA Performance Self-Rating Score (*N* = 36)

Variable	R^2	Adjusted R^2	*B*	*SE B*	β
Step 1	.00	-.03			
RAPM Score			-0.02	0.18	-.02
Step 2	.25	.09			
RAPM Score			0.10	0.20	.09
Intrapersonal EQ			0.08	0.05	.42
Interpersonal EQ			0.01	0.04	.04
Stress Management EQ			0.04	0.05	.18
Adaptability EQ			-0.06	0.05	-.26
General Mood EQ			0.01	0.06	.04
Step 3	.60	.40			
RAPM Score			0.06	0.16	.06
Intrapersonal EQ			0.05	0.05	.23
Interpersonal EQ			0.03	0.05	.13
Stress Management EQ			0.00	0.04	.01
Adaptability EQ			-0.05	0.05	-.19
General Mood EQ			-0.14	0.07	-.62
Neuroticism			-0.29*	0.12	-.67
Extraversion			0.07	0.11	.12
Openness to Experience			0.15	0.14	.24
Agreeableness			0.09	0.12	.14
Conscientiousness			0.18*	0.08	.34
Step 4	.84	.70			
RAPM Score			0.19	0.15	.18
Intrapersonal EQ			0.04	0.03	.18
Interpersonal EQ			0.03	0.04	.12
Stress Management EQ			0.02	0.03	.07
Adaptability EQ			-0.03	0.04	-.14
General Mood EQ			-0.03	0.06	-.12
Neuroticism			-0.04	0.11	-.08
Extraversion			0.10	0.08	.17
Openness to Experience			-0.04	0.12	-.06
Agreeableness			-0.02	0.10	-.02
Conscientiousness			0.08	0.08	.14
Amount of Effort as an RA			0.95	0.47	.39
Satisfaction as an RA			-0.08	0.53	-.04
Confidence in Ability as an RA			1.83**	0.53	.64
Overall Self-Esteem			-0.40	0.45	-.18
Priority of RA Position			0.19	0.71	.07

Note. * $p < .05$ (two-tailed). ** $p < .01$ (two-tailed). $\Delta R^2 = .25$ for Step 2 ($p > .05$, two-tailed), $\Delta R^2 = .35$ for Step 3, ($p < .05$, two-tailed), $\Delta R^2 = .25$ for Step 4 ($p < .05$, two-tailed).

"confidence in ability as an RA" was a significant predictor of RA performance self-ratings. When holding the other variables constant, the average RA performance self-rating score increased by 1.83 points for each point increase in confidence in ability as an RA.

Question 3. Are there differences in emotional intelligence scores when comparing RAs' scores to those of the general population of residents?

An independent-samples *t* test comparing the EI scores (as measured by the IPIP emotional/social/personal intelligence scale) of RA participants to those of residents found a significant difference between the mean of the two groups (t (223) = 2.21, $p < .05$). The mean EI score of the RA group was significantly higher (M = 27.64, SD = 2.84) than the mean of the residents (M = 26.40, SD = 4.12). The effect size difference between the two groups was moderately low (Cohen's d = -.35), suggesting that an individual scoring at the 50th percentile of the RA group would outscore 64% of test-takers in the "residents" group.

Question 4. Are there demographic differences that are related to ratings of RA performance?

Sex Differences in RA Performance. To examine possible sex differences in RA performance, an independent-samples *t* test compared the mean RA performance self-rating scores of participants by sex, either male or female. This test found a statistically significant difference between the mean of the two groups (t (34) = -2.22, $p < .05$). The mean of the male group was significantly lower (M = 26.15, SD = 3.26) than the mean of the female group (M = 28.31, SD = 2.59). The effect size difference was large (Cohen's d = .73), suggesting that females scoring at the 50th percentile on RA performance are outscoring 77% of their male counterparts.

Race/Ethnicity Differences in RA Performance. The mean RA performance self-rating scores of RAs from different ethnic groups were compared using a one-way ANOVA. No significant difference was found (F(4,30) = 1.04, $p > .05$). The RAs from each ethnic group did not differ significantly in RA performance self-rating scores. Black or African American RAs had a mean score of 28.77 (SD = 2.32). Asian/Asian American or Pacific Islander RAs had a mean score of

26.42 (*SD* = 3.58). Hispanic or Latino RAs had a mean score of 26.07 (*SD* = 3.84). White RAs had a mean score of 27.92 (*SD* = 2.39). RAs from "other" ethnic groups had a mean score of 25.79 (*SD* = 5.24).

Discussion

The primary purpose of this study was to further examine the relationship between EI and RA effectiveness. Specifically, the goal of the study was to explore whether EI was positively associated with RA performance and, if so, whether EI would exhibit incremental validity over and above the contributions of general intelligence, personality dimensions, and "internal belief" characteristics as predictor variables of RA performance.

Consistent with the findings from Jaeger and Caison (2006), the current study found that EI of the RA was statistically significantly associated with RA effectiveness. However, once general intelligence and personality factors were controlled, EI was no longer a statistically significant predictor of performance. Rather, different personality dimensions emerged as statistically significant predictors. Specifically, neuroticism was found to be a significant negative predictor of RA performance. According to Gleitman et al. (2004), neuroticism can be "reversed in direction and labeled as emotional stability" (p. 597) and by using that label, the finding states that emotional stability is a significant positive predictor of RA performance. Neuroticism measures an individual's inclination to perceive and feel reality as threatening and difficult; neurotic individuals often feel negative emotions (Rolland, 2002).

The stress of the RA position in performing such roles as counselor and policy enforcer while balancing classes and other commitments may mean that individuals with high neuroticism are not likely to perform well in the position. At the least, RAs selected in spite of higher neuroticism scores could be given additional encouragement by supervisors to reduce their stress.

Conscientiousness was found to be a significantly positive predictor of RA performance, even after controlling for general intelligence, EI, and "internal beliefs." Conscientiousness is a personality dimension that

describes people who display organization, perseverance, thoroughness, and respect for standards and procedures (Rolland, 2002). Although previous research by Deluga and Masson (2000) did not find conscientiousness to be associated with RA performance ratings, it seems intuitive that conscientiousness should be positively related to RA performance. Careful planning skills would benefit an RA in creating a program and following through on its execution. An example would be that in creating a program centered on a university professor's lecture, the RA would need to perform such tasks as communicating with the professor to plan a date for the lecture, reserving a venue, and advertising the event to his or her residents. Robertson and Smith (2001) even argued that it is difficult to imagine many jobs in which it is not advantageous for employees to be conscientious.

Finally, confidence in ability as an RA was found to be a significant predictor of RA performance. Confidence in ability being related to effective performance replicated Denzine and Anderson's (1999) finding that RAs' self-efficacy beliefs about their abilities positively predict their job performance. Although Denzine and Anderson did not recommend that a measure of self-efficacy be used as a selection criterion for hiring new RAs, the results of this study suggest that this option should be considered.

With regard to group differences, it is interesting to note that RAs in general had significantly higher EI scores on the IPIP scale of emotional/social/personal intelligence than did residents. One possible interpretation of this finding is that RAs may develop additional EI from experiencing the challenges of the RA position. Alternatively, the RAs in this study may have been selected because they already possessed higher EI than the general population at the time of their selection. Future research employing a longitudinal, control group design would help to further understand this finding. In addition, this study found large effect size differences between female and male RAs in terms of their performance self-ratings, pointing to a need for future research to further explore this area.

Limitations

This study had some limitations that are important to note. First, the total sample size of RAs was relatively small and the response rates

were moderate. This was partially attributable to the fact that the enrollment at this liberal arts university is small and thus the total population of RAs on campus was smaller than might be found on larger research university campuses.

Second, because the sample all came from a single university, the results of the study may have low generalizability. However, this limitation highlights the importance of replication for the advancement of science. This study builds on the prior work of Jaeger & Caison (2006) that was also conducted with the context of a single university, but one with very different demographic characteristics. Taken together, the results of these two studies together may be viewed as beginning to fill a void in the literature related to RA selection. In the future, multi-institution studies should also be conducted to facilitate a larger sample size and investigate whether the findings of the present study are generalizable to different types of universities.

Implications

The results of this study have several practical implications. When taken together, the measures used in this study predicted a substantial amount of variance (70%) in RA self-rated performance. Thus, it appears that professionals concerned with RA selection may benefit from the inclusion of some of these measures as a supplement to other methods of assessment (e.g., interviews, letters of recommendation). Indeed, some past research has shown that applicants may prefer a selection process that uses a combination of assessment methods. In a study of school counselor selection, Stone and Hanson (2002) found that applicants appreciated the combination of selection criteria such as written responses, speeches, interviews, and evidence of academic ability such as GPA. Applicants believed the variety of methods "increased their opportunities to have their strengths balance out their weaknesses" and described the selection process as "fair, objective, professional, and thorough" (p. 182).

Next, a further investigation of the study results reveals that the use of all of the instruments (e.g., general intelligence, EI, personality, and "internal beliefs") explored in this study may be excessive. The personality dimensions of emotional stability (the reverse scoring of neuroticism) and conscientiousness were significant positive predictor

variables of RA performance. These dimensions also showed incremental validity over the contribution of measures of general intelligence and EI. Consequently, student affairs administrators could consider administering a personality test to assess RA candidates on the basis of their emotional stability and conscientiousness. Although only the scores of those two subscales were significant predictors, we suggest that the entire IPIP-NEO short form, consisting of measures for five personality dimensions, be administered to RA candidates. Inclusion of the additional subscales would help mask the intent of the test to assess candidates' emotional stability and conscientiousness. Furthermore, the IPIP-NEO is a measure of the Big-Five personality dimensions that is easily accessible (http://ipip.ori.org), freely available, easily self-scored, and scientifically validated, so it may be of use to administrators in charge of RA selection.

The results of this study suggest that Residential Life staff interested in capturing some dimension of EI would do well to use the Bar-On EQ-i:S scale (postsecondary, short form), which is a relatively brief (10-minute) self-report questionnaire that correlated significantly with RA performance ratings. The Intrapersonal EQ, Stress Management EQ, and Total EQ aspects of EI significantly correlated with RA performance. However, based on the results of this study, measures of EI did not have incremental validity in predicting RA performance over the contribution of measures of general intelligence and personality dimensions. Therefore, using an EQ measure may not have much additional benefit if measures of general intelligence and personality are also being used.

Confidence in RA ability significantly predicted RA performance, even after controlling for general intelligence, EI, and personality. Based on this finding, we suggest that Residential Life staff could consider incorporating an RA self-recommendation that asks potential RA candidates to rate themselves on the "internal belief" characteristics used in this study. The form could ask the candidates to rate themselves on numerical scales and then provide justifications for the ratings. The intent of the form would be primarily to assess the candidates on their perceived confidence in RA ability. A "faking" scale such as the short form of the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (Reynolds, 1982) would be a good inclusion to check for possible social desirability bias of the RAs' self-reports when completing measures of personality dimensions and "internal belief" characteristics.

Finally, after RAs have been selected, efforts should be made to continue to build RAs' confidence in their ability as an RA, to improve performance. These efforts could also provide the benefit of reducing the anxiety of RAs with high neuroticism, whose anxiety could detract from their performance. Denzine & Anderson (1999) suggested inviting keynote speakers, possibly successful past RAs, to share their own experiences. They also emphasized the role of supervisors in modeling "self-efficacious thoughts and behaviors" (p. 254).

Conclusion

RAs can play an important role in helping students thrive in the potentially overwhelming transition to college life. RAs often interact with more students on a daily basis than do parents, professors, and the average college student. In these interactions, RAs have the opportunity to encourage students towards academic, social, cultural, and emotional growth (Jaeger & Caison, 2006). Given that RAs have this opportunity, it is imperative to have high-quality RAs. Investigating the factors associated with RA performance is critical to help Residential Life staff in selecting the best candidates for this important position. RAs have tremendous potential to help students thrive during the difficult transition period of college life. Therefore, investing effort into selecting more effective RAs is tantamount to investing in the healthy maturation of our nation's youth.

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