



The Dynamics and Patterns within a New Organization



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Abstract

The successes of new organizations depend on communication from the top-down, bottom-up, and peer to peer interactions. The development of the informal friendship and respect networks over several months, layered on top of the formal Chain-Of-Command (CoC) positions can show us how communication between organizational members develop. Key nodes of the informal friendship and respect networks allow comparison with the key nodes in the CoC network. This enables the analysis of common similarities between the influential leaders of both networks.

This research project identifies the informal friendship and respect networks of a new military company through anonymous surveying. It also measures people's Organization Identification within the company and their belief in the organizational values. This helps visualize how links over time might develop one's identification or perception of the company through social or formal interactions. Using this approach, we utilize social network analysis tools to understand the many unique dynamics and patterns that are and are not present within a new organization. Some of our results challenge the traditional understanding of the leadership culture within an organization while reinforcing others.

Background

For any new organization, it may be daunting to lead the new group into the right direction. During this school year at USMA, brand new academic companies were created. This allowed the opportunity of a group of 132 cadets who do not know each other work together to create one of the best companies of the school.

Through investigating how the friendship and respect network changed throughout the semester, we can find how influential the main leaders in command were. We know this because behavior and attitude are spread around by those around you due to the psychology theory of the "Mere Exposure Effect". Social network analysis allows us to better understand how demographics, Organization Identification (Cheney & Tompkins, 1987), and one's identity to the U.S. Army are all correlated to one another. Through this understanding, leaders can better understand their role in a new organization.

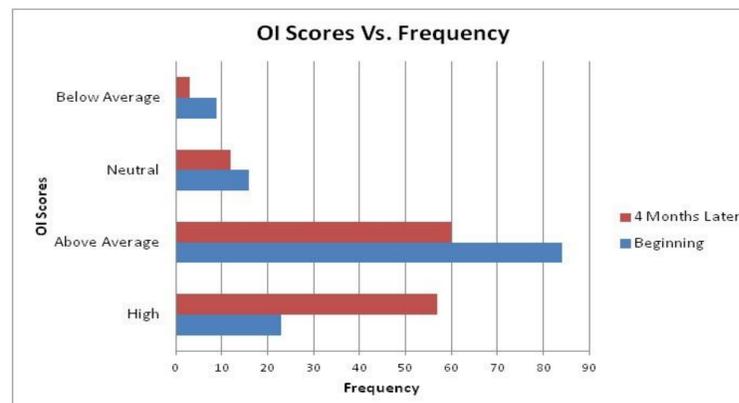
Methodology

The data was collected through paper surveys distributed throughout a cadet company. The survey was administered in privacy at the same time to encourage each cadet's honesty. In order to determine how a cadet identifies with the company and with the U.S. Army, a series of questions were asked. How well cadets identify with a company was measured through OI (Ashworth & Mael, 1992; Edwards & Peccei, 2007), whereas how the cadets identify with the U.S. Army was measured through how well they agree with the 7 Army Values.

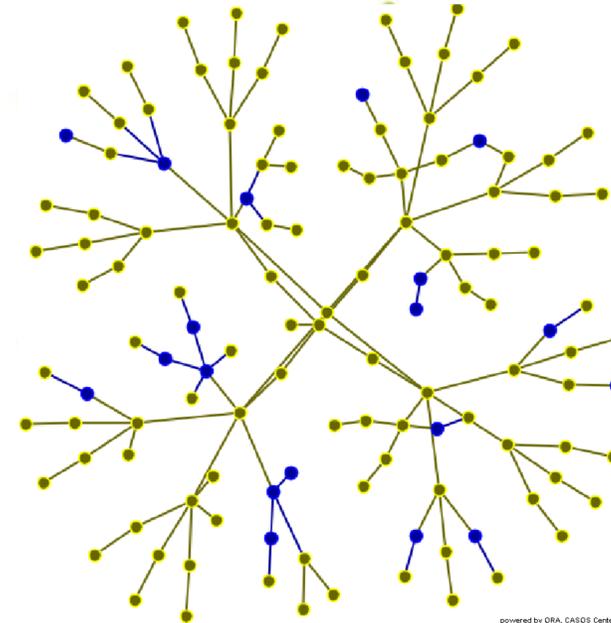
The friendship and respect networks were created through free recall census of each cadet's closest friends and the leaders they respect within the company. Free recall was used in order to have more genuine results. The survey also had demographics so we can see how demographics may play a factor with the results. This survey was conducted when the company first started and was passed out again four months later. The second time the survey was conducted, the same procedures for the first survey were followed.

Results

Organization Identification increased over time, indicating that perception of the company improved. The process to analyze how OI has changed involves the examination of the friendship network, the command network, the respect network, and CONCOR groups. This gives us the opportunity to run centrality measures and understand how ideas and perception is spread over time.

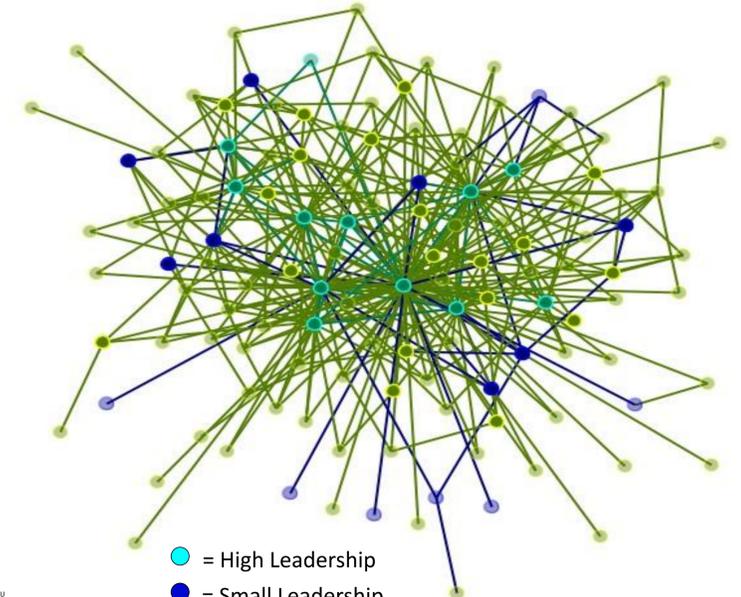


Command Network



powered by GRA, CASOS Center @ CMU

Respect Network



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Yellow High Organization Identification

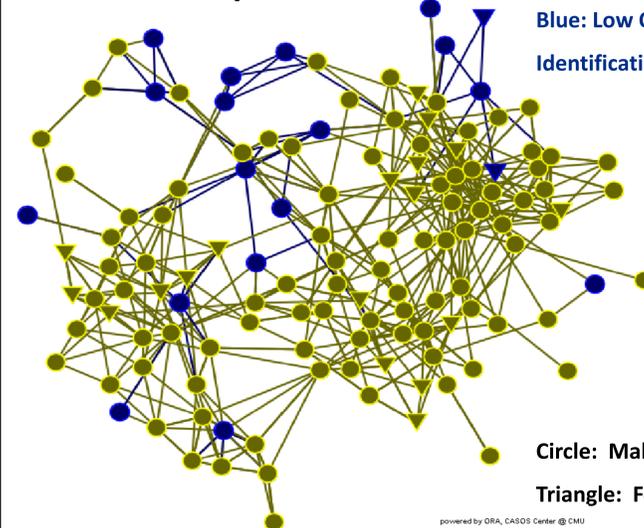
Blue: Low Organization Identification

Blue: Low Organization Identification

Blue: Low Organization Identification

- = High Leadership
- = Small Leadership
- = Normal Person

Friendship Network

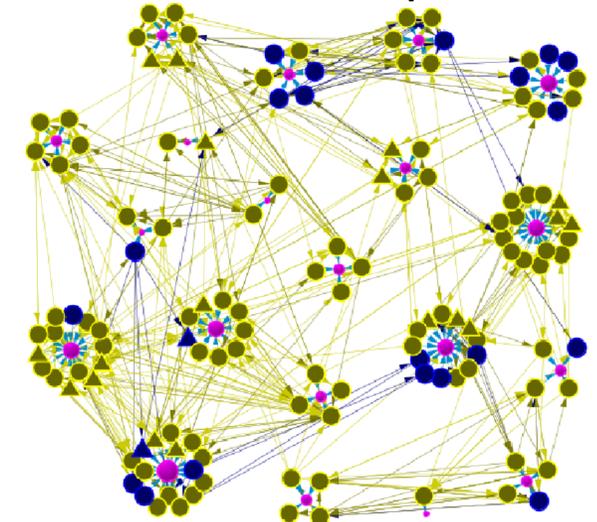


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Circle: Male

Triangle: Female

CONCOR Group



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Conclusions

In our investigation of interesting patterns within a new organization, this research applies social network analysis to identify and compare influential people.

- Informal leaders are relevant within a new company and they influence the people around them over time. There is a positive correlation between the cliques that a person belongs in and their level of OI.
- Leadership positions do not mean one is respected, but does allow more exposure to earn it.
- People are influenced mostly by those that are in close proximity. The leaders that are respected, the friendships made, and the groups that people belong to are mostly related to their proximity. These factors help explain how OI increased throughout the company over the four months.

Leaders of a new organization must ensure the team is cohesive. Getting the informal leaders involved with the development of a new company can positively impact the organization's progress. Current effort is going into how to quickly find the right informal leaders.