

Patterns of Competence & Incompetence Pervades Multiple Leadership Functions

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Data—*properly organized and presented*—may provide insight into new information that can lead to questions or guesses (a.k.a., hypotheses) about what is the nature of human performance and interaction. The table below shows the ranking, rating, and standard deviation (σ) for 11 student drill sergeants at a military college. Each was evaluated by n_i new freshmen under his or her command.

\bar{x}	σ	n_i	\bar{x}	σ	n_i	\bar{x}	σ	n_i
1 4.55	0.73	20	4 4.05	0.99	18	9 3.58	1.20	16
2 4.44	0.78	29	5 3.99	1.10	21	10 3.40	1.20	18
3 4.36	0.73	21	6 3.90	1.03	20	11 2.71	1.24	21
			7 3.90	1.15	21			
			8 3.70	1.22	16			
N= $\sum n_i$ =221								

A total of 221 subordinates participated in evaluating their training company’s drill sergeant, with 16 to 29 in each group (median=20 and mode=21).

Cadre Leadership Assessment Questionnaire

The evaluations were based upon a 25-question questionnaire that I abbreviated CLAQ. It was copied from an instrument that was used at Annapolis and is elaborated as an Appendix in Leanne Atwater, Paul Roush, and Allison Fischtal’s 1959 article published in *Personnel Psychology* (v. 48, pp.35-59). The piece is copyrighted but available from full-text databases and Interlibrary Loan.

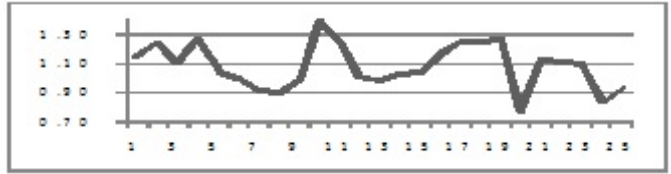
While their “Leadership Feedback Questionnaire” is a targeted and useful set of questions, it had not established sufficient validity and reliability support for me to use for my dissertation. Preliminarily, I used it as published, with author’s permission, making a couple of minor changes that were specific to the Academy. For my final research, I used the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ).

Patterns of Responses

An obvious first-level analysis is to plot the arithmetic mean of answers to the 25-questions for the 11 drill sergeants. This gets a very busy set of curves but patterns are somewhat discernable with multi-colored plots. On the next page, I have broken out the data into a set of four Figures 1a to 1d, comparing pairs of curves. Note that the 26th reading is the arithmetic mean or average of the prior twenty-five. (If readers want to otherwise analyze the data, I can provide them with an unprocessed Excel file.)

While the data shows a **consistency of higher or lower ratings** for different rankings of drill sergeants, there is an apparent *spike* on question 20: “The leader holds me accountable for the highest personal, uniform and room standards.” Less obvious convergence and divergence of answers can be discerned by tabulating and plotting the standard deviation for all 221 respondents, as shown ↗↗

???	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	#8	#9	#10	#11	#12
σ	1.15	1.24	1.10	1.27	1.04	1.00	0.91	0.90	0.99	1.39	1.24	1.00
#13	#14	#15	#16	#17	#18	#19	#20	#21	#22	#23	#24	#25
0.99	1.02	1.04	1.16	1.25	1.25	1.26	0.78	1.13	1.11	1.10	0.84	0.92



Converging and Diverging Answers

Aligning the lowest five standard deviations (σ) with the questions indicates that the lower rated drill sergeants are *primarily interested in impressing their peers and superiors*. The top few σ 's indicate a lack of focus on the well-being of their subordinates. In general, the troops do not intend to use poorer rated officers as role models for their own future leadership opportunities.

These evaluations were from subordinates who were subjected to the behavior of the drill sergeant for a period of about three months. As the lower rated upperclass student leader was focused on looking good to his or her superiors and peers, their top-down performance (superior’s) evaluation was probably higher than their bottom-up (subordinates’) rating. For this reason, some organizations have adopted 360° Assessments.

Spit and Polish, but What Is Underneath?

My Austrian grandmother used the proverb *oben hui, unten fui* to call attention to conditions that appeared neat and orderly, but were unclean beneath the surface. This German idiom is variously translated on the Internet as *haute on top, phew underneath; outside swank, inside rank; and at the top wow, at the bottom yuck*.

This bit of folklore is introduced because charm, charisma, eloquence, affability, friendliness, and image are often accentuated over knowledge, integrity, ability, dependability with personal commitment to the job and subordinates. Do not get me wrong, my grandmother believed in surface cleanliness, but was suggesting one also look for dust bunnies under the sofa, so to speak, for consistency. To wit, *competence is more than skin-deep!*

Reflections on this Limited Data

Presented above are a few possibilities extracted from a small amount of data. The main point indicated in the title is that **there is a remarkable consistency across ratings, spiking on self-promoting image items**. Some may feel that superiors are in a better position to evaluate their subordinates in command—but that can be costly.

There is insufficient data to draw a conclusion here, but there may be a relationship between the sample size per company resulting from students dropping out of the program. While military schools are modeled after the armed forces’ hierarchical model, they need to consider that students provide the funds that fuel the business.

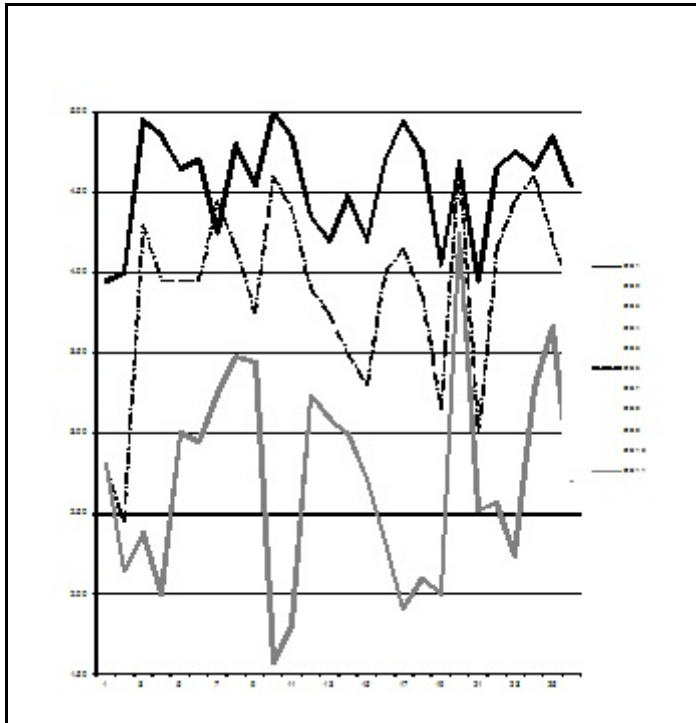


Figure 1a - Individual Ratings for High and Low Scorers on CLAQ with Center Rated Drill Sergeant

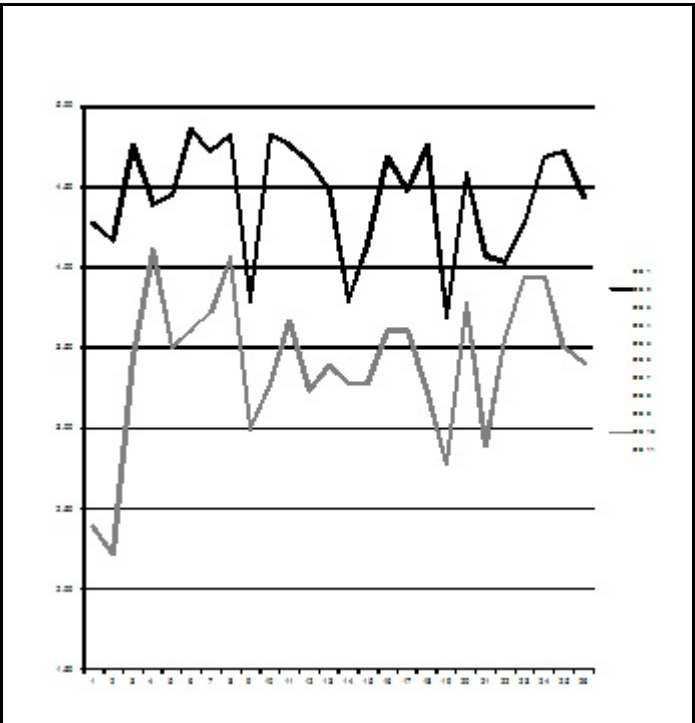


Figure 1b - Individual Ratings for Second Highest and Second Lowest Drill Sergeants

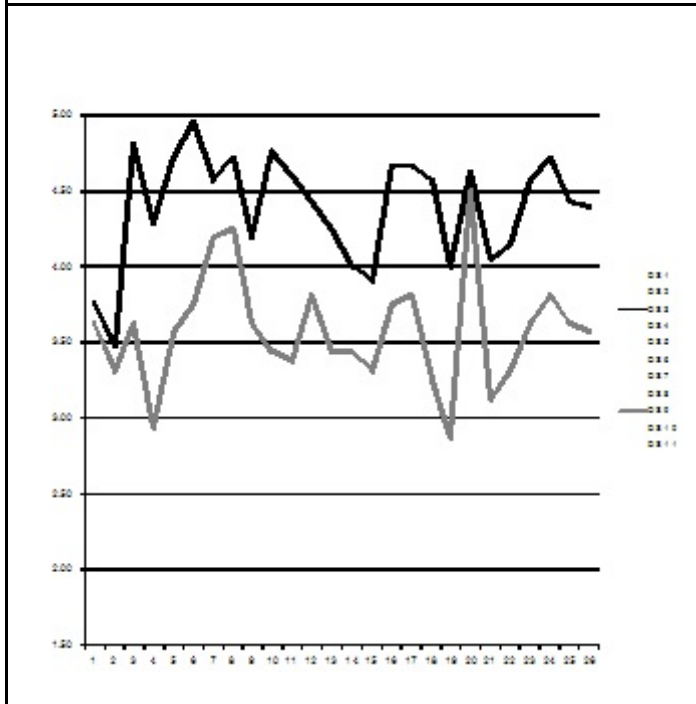


Figure 1c - Individual Ratings for Third Highest and Third Lowest Drill Sergeants

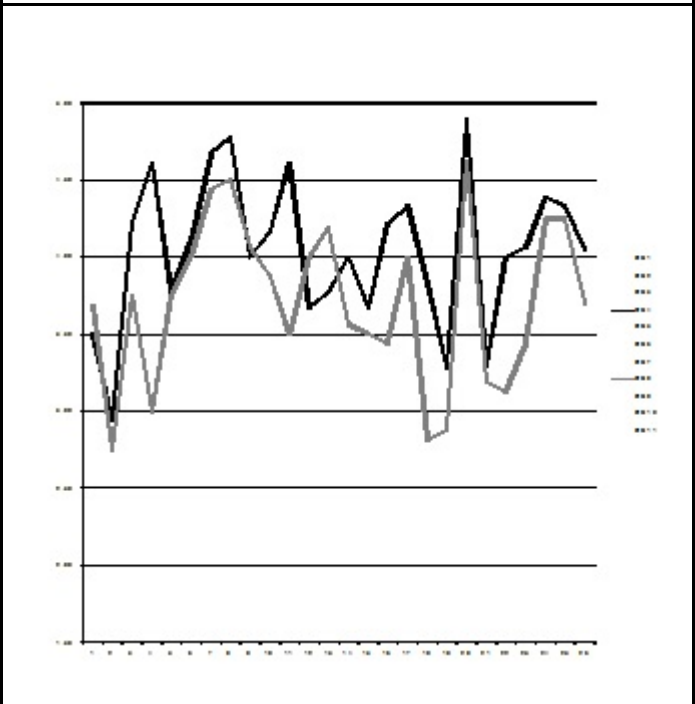


Figure 1d - Individual Ratings for Fourth Highest and Forth Lowest Drill Sergeants