



The Mitchell Centre for
Social Network Analysis
Seminar Series 2011/2012



manchester Industrial Marketing & Purchasing
Research Group
Seminar Series 2011/2012

Wednesday 28th September 2011

A joint event of
Mitchell centre and mIMP RG
3.78 Manchester Business School West
4pm – 6pm

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Network Related Personality and the Agency Question: Multi-Role Evidence from A Virtual World

Multi-role networks provide a unique window on the agency question in network analysis. A multi-role network is the collection of a person's role-specific networks. Consistency across the role-specific networks reveals the person's network-relevant personality, a recurring network "style," she brings to the roles she plays. Consistency is a clue to the agency question in network analysis. The more consistent the networks a person builds in his roles, and the more important that consistency is for the person's achievements, the more important agency is for understanding achievement. Using network, experience, and achievement data on seven thousand people each playing two or more of twentyfive thousand characters in a virtual world, evidence is presented to support two conclusions: (1) About a third of role-specific network variance is consistent within people across roles. In other words, people who build a closed network in one role are likely to build a closed network in other roles. People who build in one role a network rich in access to structural holes, are likely to do the same in other roles. (2) However, the network consistent across a person's roles contributes almost nothing to predicting achievement. Achievement in a role is determined by a person's experience in the role and the person's role-specific network (about 90% of predicted achievement variance). The two conclusions are robust across multi-role networks differing in role strain and so variably prone to the display of personality (strain high when a person is spread across too many roles, the person plays a difficult combination of roles, or plays multiple roles to the same audience). Agency emerges more relevant to style than success. Individuals display a network-relevant personality across the roles they play, but their achievement in a specific role depends on something else: their experience in the specific role, and their network in the specific role.