Some theories of interpersonal communication

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- A- Who communicates with whom and why?

- B- What is the use of a good communication network ?

- C- Some social processes developing based on communication networks

  - ex: influence/contagion ; adoption and diffusion of innovations

  (in Monge e Contractor,2003)

A- Who communicates with whom and why?

- What makes it more probable that we communicate more with some people rather than others?
  - What do you think?
  - With whom do you prefer to communicate?

A. Who communicates with whom and why?

- Departing assumption is based on Social exchange theories :

  - cost benefit analysis (but not in a material sense, in the sense of a broad rationality)

  (Classic authors: Homans, Blau)

A. Who communicates with whom and why?

- **Similarity theories** (*homophily theories*)-1
  - Balance theory (Heider, 1958)
    - Similarity reduces the psychological discomfort that arises with cognitive or emotional inconsistency
  - Theory of conflict reduction (Sherif, 1958)
    - By interacting with similar others one reduces the potential areas of conflict in a relationship

A. Who communicates with whom and why?

- **Similarity theories** (*homophily theories*)-2
  - <u>Theory of self-categorisation</u> (Turner, 1987; Turner e Oakes, 1986)
    - We define our social identity based on self categorisations ; this self categorisations guides us in the choice of interaction with others
- Research on o'al demography clearly shows these trends: e.g. we choose as friends colleagues that are similar to ourselves (in seniority, gender, age)

A. Who communicates with whom and why?

- <u>Geographical proximity</u> (e.g Festinger et al , 50; Allen 1970)
  - Geographical proximity increases the probability that individuals will meet and interact

- And links with <u>similarity theories</u> : the closer geographically the more interaction → the more interaction the more similar (Homans, 1950)

B- what is the use of a good (rich)communication networks

- How do I benefit from having a good (rather than a bad) communication network ?
  - It increases my **social capital** (Lin , 2004) i.e. the resources (material or immaterial resources - information, money, status, support…)   I acquire from others in my social network

  - Social capital is different from human capital ; human capital concerns the attributes of individuals (schooling, competences, etc)
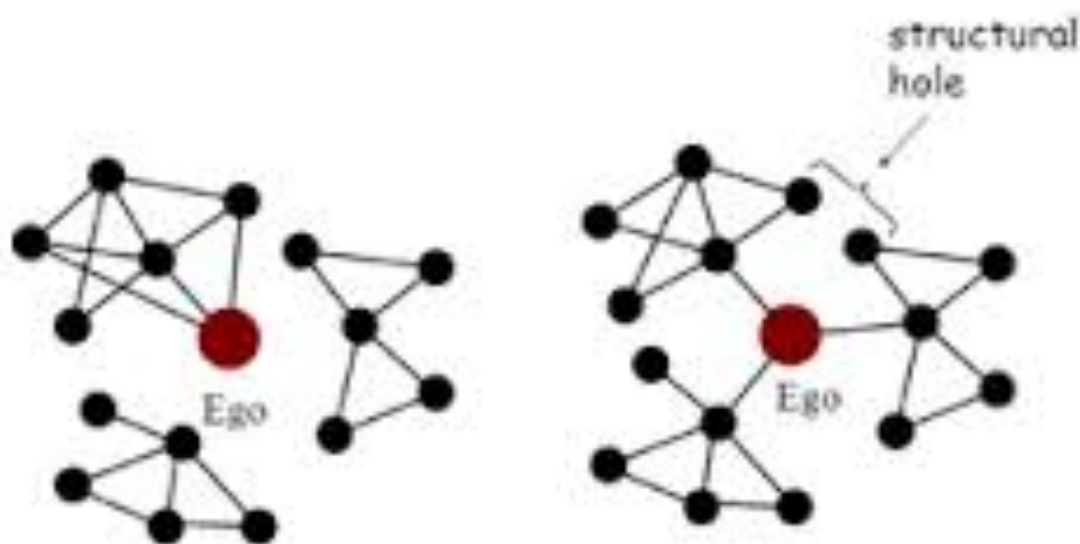
B. what is the use of a good (rich)communication network

- Two types of Social Capital (Coleman, 1988; Burt, 1992)
  - obtained through **Strong relations** →implies relationships of trust , reciprocity, cooperation (Coleman, 1988) ; communities which have much of this social capital have a greater capacity to act in coordinated fashion
  - obtained through **Weak relations** (Granovetter, 1973;Burt, 1992, 2005) → gives access to more information, increases the capacity of innovation; communities with weak relation are more capable of adapting to unpredictable circumstances, to innovate

Individual who fills in a structural hole maximises information and control if individuals with whom it is linked are not linked them selves (Burt 1992, 2005)

Tertius gaudens strategy

Structural Holes

structural hole

Ego

Ego

B. what is the use of a good (rich)communication network

- **Uncertainty reduction** (Weick, 1979)
  - We communicate in a way that help us reduce our uncertainty / increase the predictability in our environment (interaction is different when we feel predictability around us)
    - Evident linkages with stable vs precarious jobs; capacity of adopting innovations/ risking behaviours vs not doing it

B. what is the use of a good (rich)communication network

- Social support
    - " the existence or the availability of people on whom we can rely , people that let us know that they care about , value and love us (Saranson, Levine, Basham and saranson 1983)

Types of social support
- Emotional
- Material (goods and services)
- Information
- Sociability /companionship

C- some social processes developing based on the communication network

- **social influence** (Festinger et al., 50's; Merton, 50's) (or **contagion** (Rogers, 1995; Valente, 1995)

  - it is through communication networks that people are exposed to information, attitudes and behaviours of others
  - attitudes are formed /shaped in interaction : those who interact a lot more probably adopt similar attitudes, opinions, and behaviours

The probability of being influenced links to the level of confidence and the ambiguity or unpredictability (e.g a new experience) of a situation

C- some social processes developing based on the communication network

- **Innovation** (Rogers, 2005; Valente, 2005)
  - The probability of the adoption of an innovation and the speed of its diffusion depends on the communication networks of individuals and group (but also the norms of the group in face of the innovation)

  This links to the characteristics of the social network - bonding vs bridging character - the level of social support and predictability it supplies and also on the characteristics of the individuals (schooling, wealth, media information, cosmopolite character)

C- some social processes developing based on the communication network

Innovations : the innovator & the pioneer (Merton 1968)— has a low threshold – no one or just a few other need to adopt before I adopt$_n$

P**ioneer** – low threshold level ; outsider; risks ; (Granovetter, 1973); weak links within the community

-**Innovator** – low threshold level ; insider; has the credibility in the group/community to institutionalises the innovation; strong links in the community ; is able to mobilise those with high threshold level (has the capacity to influence those in the group/community)

In sum: theories of communication explain

- A- Who communicates with whom and why?

- B- What is the use of a good communication netwrok ?

- C- social processes developing based on communication netwroks

Bibliography

- Photocopies : Monge and contractor 2003