Computer--Mediated Communication among Sociologists in Distributed Research Teams: An Application of the Eight-Window Sample Model

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Research Agenda

• Focus on: the status of computer-mediated communication among collaborators in distributed research teams

• Background trends:
  – Significant growth of co-authorship since 1950s
  – Computer-mediated communication (CMC) in science growing
  – New tools and opportunities for scientists to collaborate
  – New publishing and sharing mechanisms

• Effectiveness of new tools? Instrumental only?
• Factors of eff: field; personal; media-related
Theoretical background

• Sociality with objects, synthetic situation (K. Knorr-Cetina)
• Structuration theory: structuring organizations within ICTs-intensive interactions; double reflexivity (Giddens+W. Orlikowski)
• “transhuman” network approaches e.g. ANT
• Implementation of cultural meanings into the networks (H. White+J. Fuhse)
The Concept

• The sample is based on the eight-window model of sampling for the qualitative research proposed by I. Shteinberg (2011).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theoretical expert</th>
<th>Key Expert</th>
<th>Exclusive (non-practicing)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(False exp)</td>
<td>Typical expert</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-typical</td>
<td></td>
<td>Typical (default)</td>
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Data

- Interviews (attributes: 5 typical+5 atypical)
- What use of the ICTs during research?
- At what stage of research?
- To what results?
- Was knowledge creation integrated into computer-mediated interaction?
Expert-Produced Narrative Topics

• “Distributed resident research”
• “The long table” procedure as a mechanism of verification of the research methodology in a face-to-face collaborating group
• Email as the preferred means of structuration
• External sources of innovation in sci.comm.
• Multi-stage historical narratives vs. indigenous digitals (generation gap to expect)
Discussion Points

On Methodology
- Latent and explicit expert knowledge
- The “expert/typical” object structure works(?)
- How different is the method from common sense?

On interaction with CMC
- What is the rationale between the depth and quality of ICTs use?
- The digital divide, and digital generation?
- Collective or individualistic nature of research?