Loneliness and Relational Biography

Affective communication

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Abstract - **This paper addresses the problem of loneliness in the increasing elderly community. This can be considered as a health and social problem. The objective of this research is to identify the relational patterns of the elderly in order to help them recreate a network of relationships suited to their unique needs. The research method examines the dynamics of relationships, which include interactions such alliances and breaks, commonalities and affinities, meeting places, including the use of social networks on the web. Our work is integrated in the field of affective communication as defined by F. Martin-Juchat. The proposed work will rely on observation methods and interviews with elderly and on the notion of situation, described by A. Mucchielli. We want to create a model of intervention which uses narrative methods to understand how a person builds his social network.**

Keywords - loneliness; strategy of relations; emotional social network; age; friendly.

I. BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The medico-social sector is subject to numerous changes and problems. In this context, there are two aspects that we wish to explore and connect, even though they seem un-related at first. On one hand, the health sector, led by the goals of streamlining services to the population, explores the development of individualized and modeled benefits, provided remotely through digital technologies in the context of the e-health. On the other hand, the social sector whose demand is increasing in terms of compliance with standards of hygiene, safety and care, is moved by the increasing isolation situations that mainly affect marginalized people, because of their health status, their age, or their social status. It appears that the infrastructure that offers many opportunities for communication and security cannot resolve the appearance of a feeling of loneliness for a growing part of the population. The paradoxical aspect of this situation raises issues pertaining to the humanities. It seems conducive to questions that fall within the field of social innovation in terms of communication sciences. The suffering caused by loneliness disturbs. It emerges in a society characterized by the diversity of its technological possibilities of communication: mobile phones, digital social networking, mails, Web 2.0, etc.

It challenges the institutions. Indeed, E. Durkheim [1] demonstrated the consequences of the transition from a traditional to a modern society. In traditional society, the family ensures the protection of individual. In modern society, the concept of family disappears and the State supports the vulnerable individual's protection according to common standards. According to S. Paugam [2], the institutions contribute in reality to the emergence of this loneliness. They use intervention models that tend to dehumanize the relational practices perceived only as "services".

Our question is how resolve this deficiency of systems and technologies which seems unable to find a solution to those needs expressed through this feeling of loneliness?

Our research is based on three questions.

With the first question we have attempted to theoretically clarify how individuals build their relational environment? For this, we favored specific approaches belonging to sociology, including structural sociology.

Our second question concerns the meaning that the person gives to its communication activities. Indeed, we consider the person as the driving element of the relation that is established. To answer this question, we borrowed our intellectual support from philosophy and from psychology but also from neurobiology which is very active in the field of emotion and cognition.

Our third question deals with the transformation and is particularly relevant with regard to our subject. The question is to identify if there are possibilities of reorganization of the relational environment of a person and, if there are, how these changes of relation can be developed? This third question is nourished by our tools of investigations applied to the qualitative inquiries which we led, but also by the constructivist and phenomenological approaches, belonging to the sciences of communication and to the sciences of education.

II. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

In this sense, our work is integrated in the field of affective communication as defined by F. Martin-Juchat [3], who perceives the emotional body as "moved by the emotion" F. Martin-Juchat [3], highlights the lack of studies on this emotional dimension, in the field of science of information and communication which is shared between two conceptual approaches. The first concerns the question of the interpersonal relationship and considers the body in terms of signs verbal and nonverbal (gestures). This approach refers to the work of F. Saussure and of the Invisible College of Palo Alto. The second highlights the manipulative attempts of mass media. In both cases, the receiver is not considered in its ability to act as if he had not feelings. According F. Martin-Juchat, [3], the receiver's action must be considered as a media. She proposes to put the "emotional body" in the heart of the communication device like a media. This approach requires paradigm shifts on two levels. First, as part of our subject, it needs to change the perception of social actors involved in the implementation of services, particularly those integrate technologies. Moreover, it is dependent on a change in posture of the person himself who becomes actor in the established communication system. By an action research, our goal is to bring the people who suffer of a feeling of loneliness to change their behavior. This transformation process must change the perceptions of actors in their relational environment and modify the perception of the way of seeing the technological communication supports. Our approach takes as reference the paradigm of "engaging communication" to the meaning of F. Bernard [4]. The concept of commitment is used to demonstrate the link between the action and the meaning given to action. The commitment depends on the situation. The "engaging communication" is based on the action as a mean of change. The identification is integrated in the processing of change through the action. The role of a mediator is to create situations conducive to changing actions.

III. RELATIONSHIP IN THE CONTEXT OF AGING

Our work integrates knowledge available in social psychology. The main causes of the sense of loneliness are related to a need for security and a lack of recognition. S. Paugam[2] believes that the feeling of vulnerability expresses a research of security. A. Honneth [5], N. Elias [6], D.W. Winnicott [7] highlight the need of recognition of individuals. They are shared between the desire to affirm its uniqueness and to be socially approved. The ageing is a stage of life that seems to reactivate these needs. Building on the contributions of sociologists and gerontologists, we find that the old age - estimated at the retirement age - is a period marked by many transitions and changes. V. Caradec [8] and P. Pitaud [9] observe that the elderly person is faced with a multiplicity of events and ruptures. These changes are due to recurrent affective losses, changes in material and economic living conditions, a decline in physical abilities, often affecting motor skills and the initial conditions of life. The old age is a particularly intense period of identity recomposition. The life changes impact the modes of socialization of the person. C. Bidart [10] emphasizes socialization change with age with a tendency to build proximity links and to keep more distance in the relation. She notes the need to more moments of intimacy. For gerontologist M. Billé [11], these times of intimacy and relational distancing correspond to the need for "interior narrative work." The elderly need to remember the past to ensure a temporal continuity at their life and preserve a consistent and positive image of their life.

IV. RELATIONAL INVESTIGATIONS AND BIOGRAPHIES

From this theoretical knowledges,we studied the relational dynamics of the elderly in order to highlight their mode of action, the uniqueness of their subjective experience and confirm temporal and spatial changes. We chose to proceed by biographical interviews for two reasons. The biographical interview allows the collection of data revealing the subjectivity of relational experience. It can be used as a means to train the person to take action. As stated by C. Delory-Momberger[12], the biography enables a work on the self images which precede action. We agree with this approach that considers the individual as an agent of his own socialization by the action. This method of data collection takes into account the "emotional body". C. Delory-Momberger notes that it is the place of biographical investment.

We conducted fifteen qualitative interviews with women and men, aged 65 to 99 years, on the theme of friendship. To analyze the biographies we used categorization method proposed by A. Mucchielli [13] through situational semiotics. A. Mucchielli raises the question of social identification. He writes: "Identify the other is a judgement for define him in a specific context. Identify others is a means to give a meaning to my "being" situated also in a context." This method allowed us to establish a frame of reference from a categorization that we have defined. These categories form "interpretive frameworks' of intentions and needs of the actor, its reference standards, its positioning in relation to other actors, the quality of relationships in a historic, temporal and sensory setting. The meaning is defined in a constructivist perspective and shows a schematic representation of the operation of the phenomena studied.

The following table shows an extract of the interpretative grid. Our goal is to highlight three aspects common to all the interviews. We find that relational environment evolves according to life events. Relationships are always built on the same pattern. This pattern is established from emotional factors related to values and beliefs. It shows the specific needs of each person and his way of composing relations through the choice of communication spaces and rhythms of interactions.

Table: study of biographies

	Categorizations		
	Biographical frame	*characterization of the relationship*	*Methods activation*
D.	Boarding school Work Marriage Death	Compensatory mode and selective strongly linked to the stages of change and emotional traumas	favors the communal group activity
A.	Childhood Studies Work Travels Marriage Death	Adaptive mode and links marked by complicity siituational Links with family friends Friendship is a family value	friend and ritualized moments : New Year's Day / birthday / holiday
N.	War/Childhood (holocaust) Marriage Accident (vision loss)	Selective mode marked by mistrust, emotional distancing, sharing the difficulty, Classification of friends by period	search for help, support, taking account of disability

The study of intentions of people and their recurrent pattern of actions show that there is a proper relationship strategy for each.

V. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STRATEGY OF RELATIONSHIP

This work from the interpretations of the actors in their friendly relations helped to highlight the dependence between the events of life and the appearance of new relationships. The person makes a classification and tells for example: "my friends from before." There is therefore a relational biography. Each phase change appears to activate a clean relationship strategy to each person and built on perennial patterns. This strategy is established on the basis of affective elements through values such as the value placed on friendship, beliefs and expectations. They direct the sympathies or antipathies. They provide data on the image that the person has of itself in an idealized form. The relational choices appear homogeneous, standardized, selective based on distinguishing elements of social status, age, etc. These emotional factors determine the level of commitment in the relationship ex. "When they suffer, I suffer." They compose an imaginary of the relationship: "I wanted to have news from him because it was my first love". The person creates, in this case, an ideal relational environment that is considered like a game. This is particularly noticeable when the person uses digital communication media. "I am in relation to a community of artists". The relationship strategy takes the form of ritualized interactions whose rhythm varies among individuals: annual exchange of holidays wishes, weekly meal, evening conversations on Skype, etc. They take singular forms appropriate to the needs of the person such as sharing of activities or friendly moments, or its values: "to give is my life ..." etc. The interactions are located in social contexts and spaces that have a symbolic value as: schools, companies, unions, associations of hikers, etc. They reinforce the value of belonging. These spaces increase connectivity levels cited by G. Simmel [14] and structural sociology (circles, networks). The aging is mentioned systematically in the relational biography. It concerns the disappearance of friendships: "of my generation has disappeared ...", "we were ten friends... we are no more than two". It expresses itself by the regret of the bonds of the past by comparison with those present: "Yes I have had really good friends, it was great ... today, it is different." It indicates a feeling of loneliness evoked on the mode of a battle to fight, "for not to be alone, you have to go out! "

The information collected shows activation of affects in the implementation of the social network and the importance of biographical and identity work that is developed. The experience through the implementation of the relationship strategy own to everyone appears as the essential element of identity's recomposition.

The role of emotions in action and the impact on the self-image of phases of changes were the subject of many studies in the field of neurosciences and the social sciences more broadly. The psychiatrist L. Ciompi [15] states that pure thought does not exist. Cognition is defined "as part of the emotional logic". It defines the affect as "a psycho-physical condition, with quality, duration and varying degrees of consciousness" and insists on "the energy aspect of affects." For the neurobiologist A. Damasio [16], the affects enable an adaptive learning. The process triggered by the emotion at the level of the body and brain, with the manner whose appears the feeling and his awareness, create new emotional dispositions. He concludes that "emotions are part of bioregulators devices with which we are equipped to survive." Emotion is generated through our experiences. According to P. Ricoeur [17], it allows man to recompose his understanding of his environment through a phenomenology of desire. P. Ricoeur distinguishes a permanent form of personality, "selfhood", around which are developed changing identities. Researches of A. Damasio confirm this hypothesis and distinguish in the constitution of personality a "central self" of an "autobiographical self." P. Ricoeur emphasizes man's anxiety in front of these continual identity changes. He needs to reassure himself by searching for clues of permanence. According to P. Ricoeur, friendship is "a promise in time of a self-preservation."

VI. CONCLUSION

The theories and works highlighted reveal two crucial needs for the human being related to safety and self-awareness. These needs are expressed through communication with the external environment composed of

other people. This constitutes the means for a person to validate their existence through recognition and to strengthen their feeling of protection. The relation which takes shape in the form of mutual identical projections is transformed into attachment when the reliable feeling (implicit protection) evolves and strengthens. This reliable feeling comes along with the certainty of a common cultural belonging which expresses itself through shared activities and symbolic exchanges. This process consolidates the commitment in the relationship.

In this selective configuration, the relation contributes to strengthen a positive self-awareness based on the mutual identification. The aspects of identity are expressed through emotions and feelings. The self-awareness answers a desire of self-idealization through values which direct the emotions. The feelings are the mainspring of the composition of the relational environment because they play beforehand a role in the choice of selected people.

The relation evolves during the relational process between the people and is transformed. It constitutes a story made up of events of which the meeting with the person is a part, and is characterized by the importance of the moments and shared activities. From this point of view, the story of the relation can be the object of a biography characterized by the ascendancy of its emotional contents.

In conclusion, the relationship strategy composed of the elements highlighted in our study in progress shows the importance of the building of the relationship as a sensitive experience. It reveals a space essential to the individual and which seems to correspond to what F. Guattari [18] calls "weaving" about the friendship relation. D.W. Winnicott [19] considers that "the experience of the body" goes through a third space, next to the inner space and the emotional environment of the individual, which he called "cultic area". It offers a creative space game. The condition for the individual to invest in this space depends on his confidence level. The feeling of loneliness that we prefer to call "relational vulnerability" in the sense of insecurity and lack of assertiveness, could come from a relational model unsuitable strategy. Our work opens other perspectives. It seems that the question of the relation of elderly to digital communication tools can be studied through the experience felt. These are the tracks that remain to be explored.

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