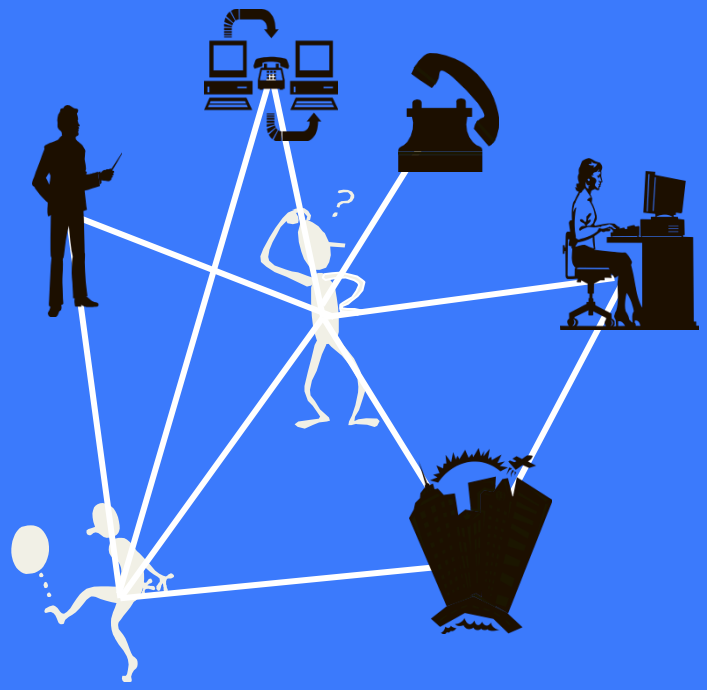
Implications of Networked Individualism For Collective Action



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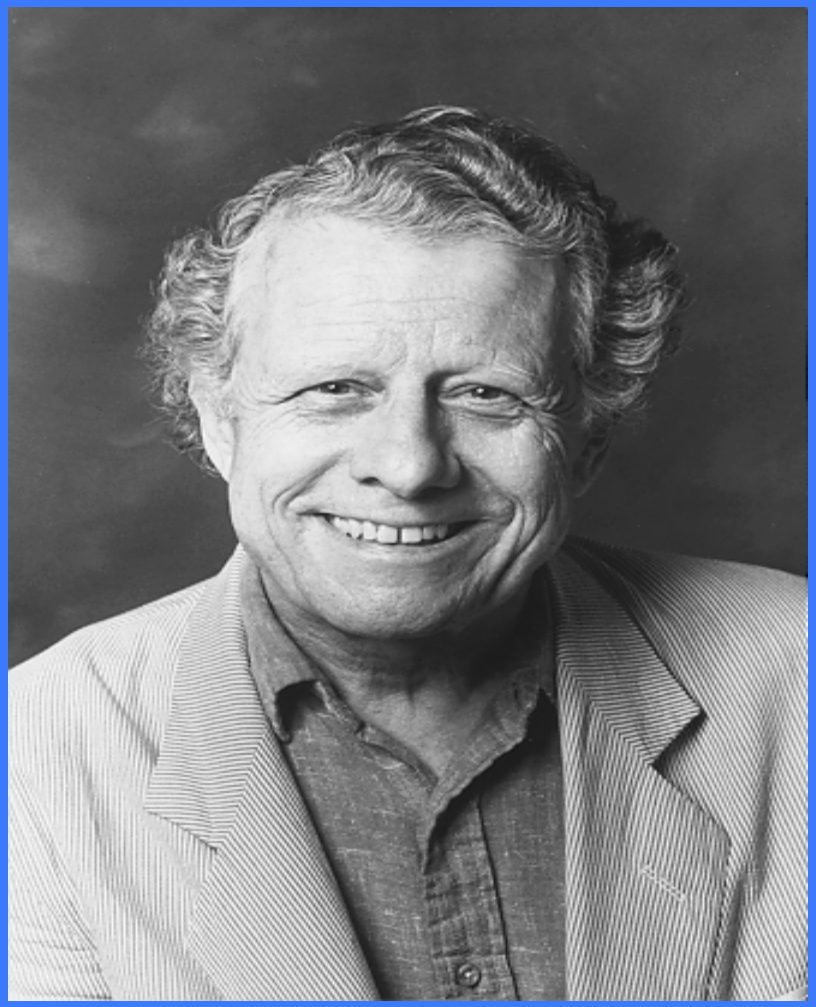


Chuck Tilly Taught -- & Showed!!

- Collective Movements do not come from isolated individuals
- Collective Movements do not come from alienated individuals – J-curved or not
- Collective Movements rarely succeed as tightly bound groups
  - Good for initial start-up
  - Not so good for reaching out & getting diverse ideas

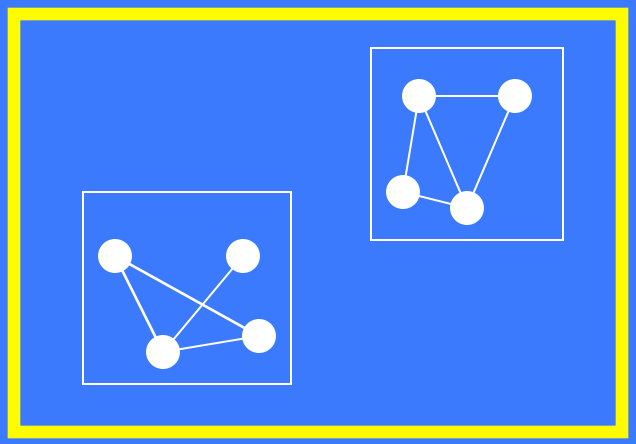
Conceptually and Empirically

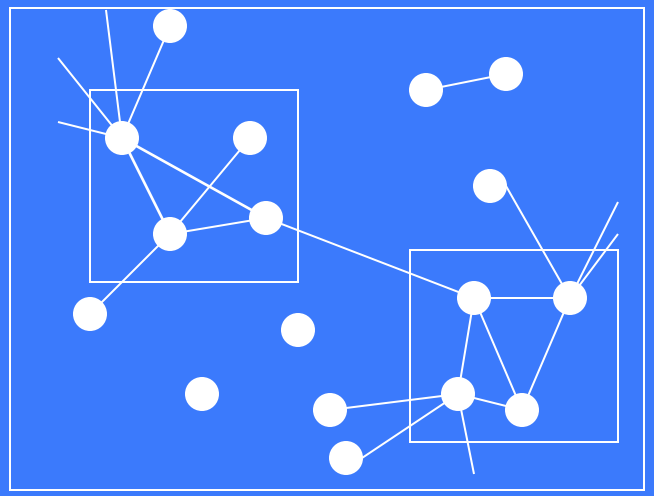
More Useful to See

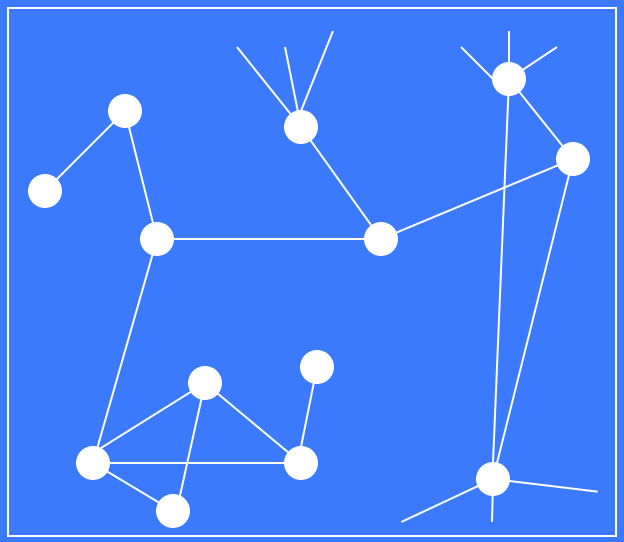
Collective Movements

As Social Networks

Groups: Door to Door







Socially & Physically Bounded
Physically Contiguous
Offices, Communities, Families
Still Held as the Normative Ideal
"Pastoralism"

Traditional Small Groups: Door-to-Door

- Old workgroups (& communities) based on
  - proximity, bureaucratic hierarchy, kinship
- All observe and interact with all
- Deal with only one group
- Knowledge comes only from within the group – and stays within the group

“Happy” Villagers in Shrek

Pastoralism: "The Machine in the Garden"

Recurrent Claims That Things Are Always Falling Apart

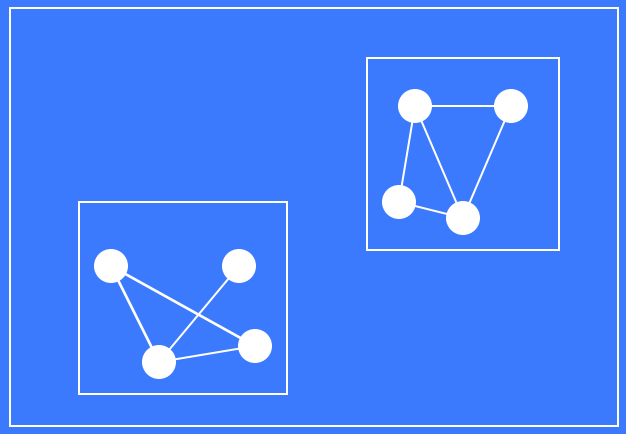
- From urbanization, bureaucratization, industrialization, capitalism/socialism & technological change – to the internet and mobile

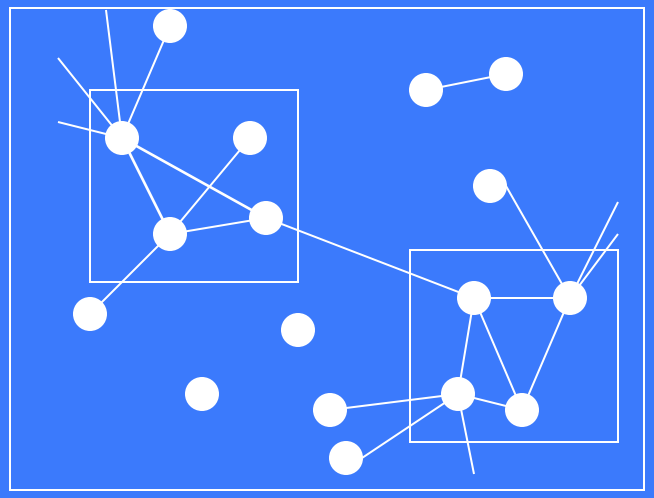
- Thomas Jefferson "*The mobs of great cities add just so much to the support of pure government, as sores do to the strength of the human body*" (1784, p. 86).

- Ferdinand Tönnies (*Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft,* 1887) thru Robert Putnam (*Bowling Alone,* 2000) to Sherry Turkle (*Alone Together,* 2010)

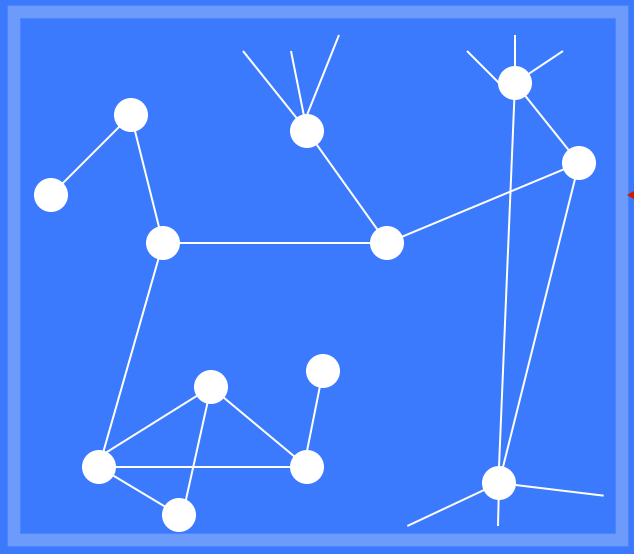
The Continuing Media Moral Panic

- *Too Much Punditry by Weird, Atypical Anecdotes*
- "Will this glow [from the Internet] produce a closed generation of socially challenged individuals; humans who are more comfortable with machines than anything else?"
  - Douglas Cornish, *Toronto Globe & Mail,* October 13, 2006,
- Also *NY Times, LA Times, Financial Times, Washington Post*
- Links with fears about *Facebook, Twitter* (e.g., Chomsky, 2011)
- "Is Facebook Making Us Lonely?" Stephen Marche, *The Atlantic,* May 2012.
- "The Flight From Conversation" Sherry Turkle, *New York Times,*
  - "And yet we have sacrificed *conversation* for mere connection. " April 21, 2012





Networked Individualism: Person-to-Person



Structural Changes
Linked as Individuals
Less Groupiness
More Agency
Less Place Bound
More Achieved, Less Ascribed

The Triple Revolution

- 1. Always ***Social Networks:*** Reach Beyond Tight Groups
  - Multiplicity, Partial Attention, Soft Boundaries
  - *But Now Augmented by:*
- 2. ***Internet:*** Personalization, Weakened Distance
- 3. ***Mobile-ization*** of Info & Communication
  - Hyper-Personal Body Appendages: Third Skin
  - Accessible To You
  - Available To Others
- ➔ ***Networked Individualism***

In a Nutshell

Triple Revolution: Social Network, Internet, Mobile

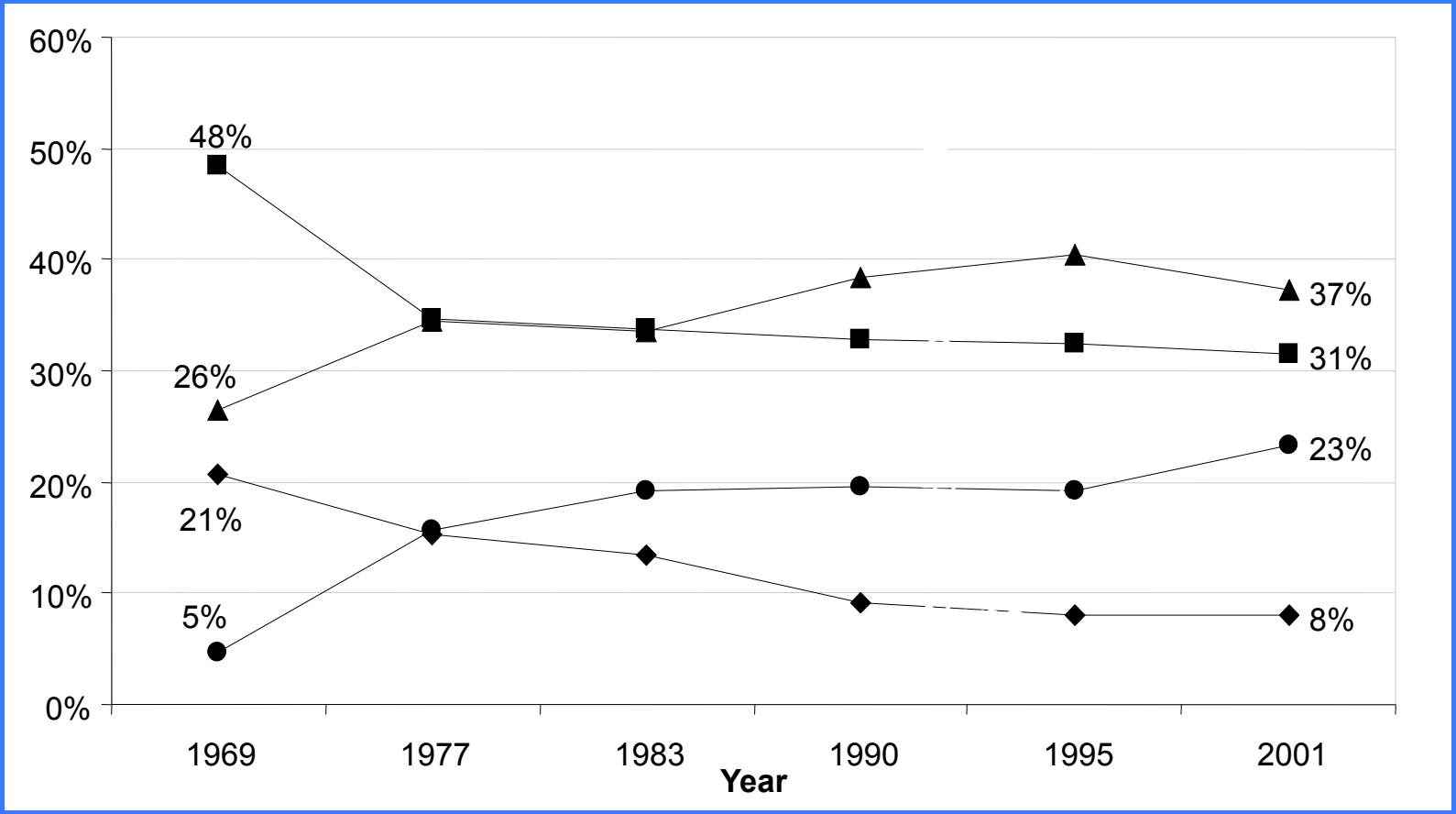
1. People function more as networked individuals
2. Families function as networks, not groups
3. Social networks are larger
   -- Integrate in-person, internet, mobile
4. The more, the more:
   -- More internet use ➔ more in-person contact
5. Work at home & away: part-time, full-time
6. Networks are sparsely-knit, loosely-bounded
7. Shift to interest-based communities
8. Public-private boundaries blurring

Structural Shifts Often Taken for Granted Have Enhanced Widespread Connectivity

- Automobile and airplane trips have made travel wider-ranging and broadly affordable
  ➔ Dispersed social networks

The World is *Not* Flat; The World is Lumpy
Contra Thomas Friedman

Percentage of U.S. Households By Number of Vehicles

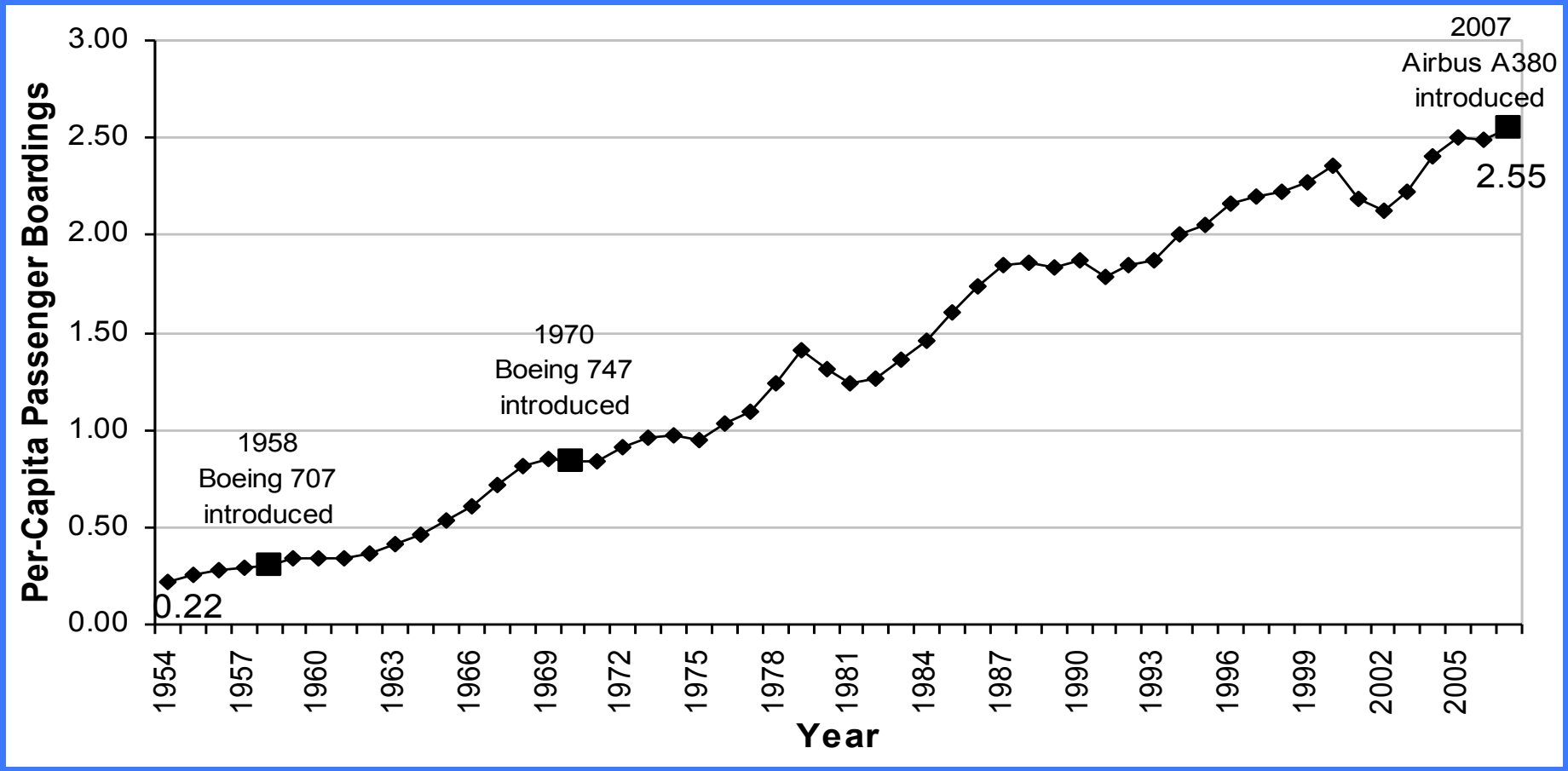


60% of Households Have 2+ Cars

Passenger Miles Up 60%: 900 Billion (1970) ➔ 1.5 Trillion (2007)

Average miles driven rose 20%: 10K ➔ 12K miles

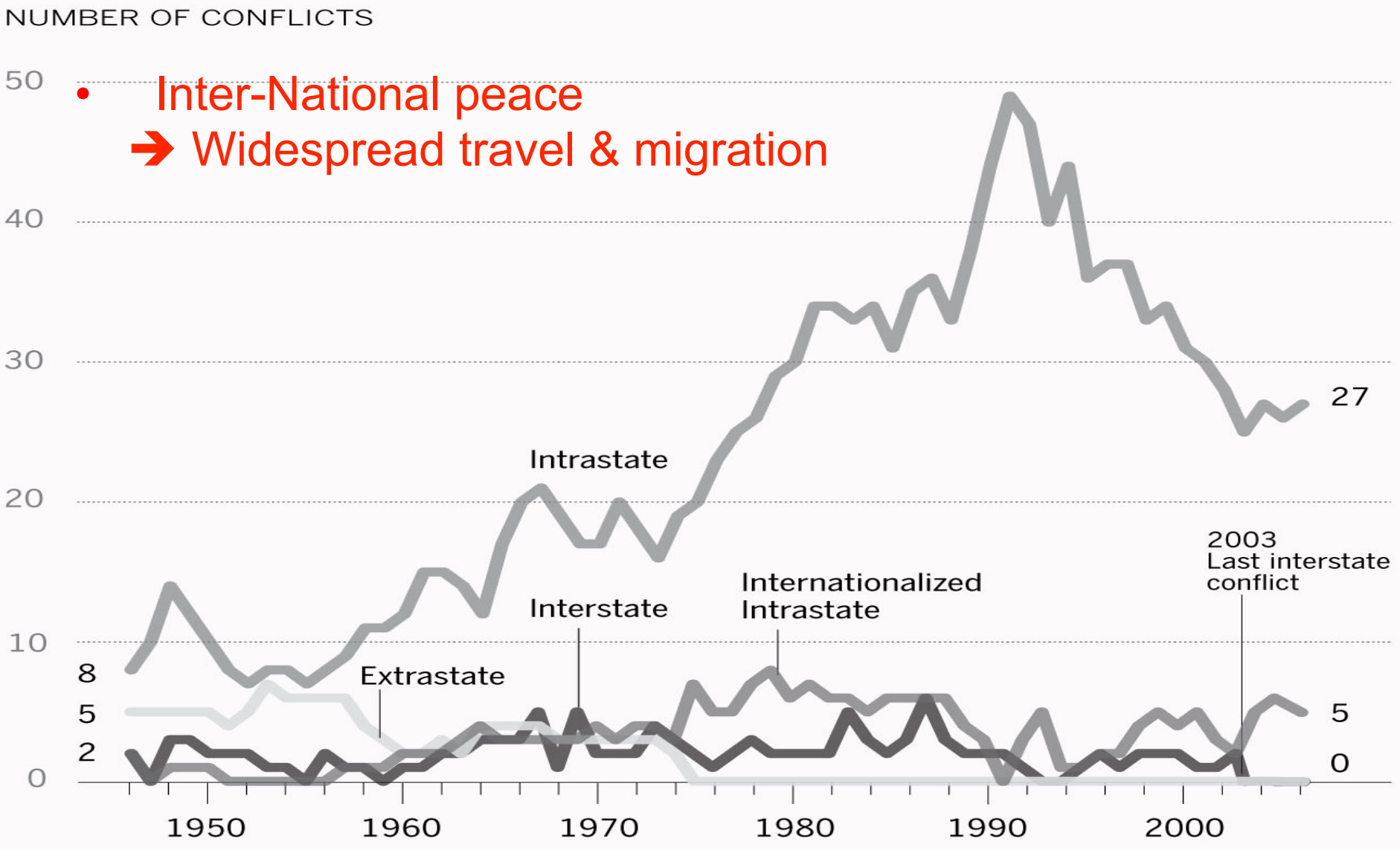
Per-Capita Airline Boardings in U.S.



Deregulation ➔ Lower prices
Very few crashes
Flights to more airports

Fig. 2.6

Number of World Conflicts



Source: UCDP/PRIO; UCDP/Human Security Report Project Dataset

Society based more on connectivity than on ethnic, religious , gender memberships

- 14.5% of US marriages are B-W interracial
  - Few worry about inter-ethnic:
  - Protestant-Catholic-Jewish boundaries no longer immutable

    Contrast: Will Herberg, *Protestant-Catholic Jew* (1955)
    & didn't even think about interracial, same-sex

Changing Interracial Marriage Norms

1967 Shocker

2010 Commercial Dating Ad

Person-to-Person Networked Individualism

- Sparsely-knit
- Diversified
- Looser boundaries
- Larger networks
- Partial membership in multiple networks
- Both local and remote relationships
- Less hierarchy and less bounded
- Agency: power to create media, act, fashion their complex identity
- Surveillance, Coveillance, Sousveillance

People Function as Networked Individuals With Partial Membership in Multiple Networks

- *.. and less as group members*
- Social ties & events organized around the ***individual*** rather than a ***social unit*** such as a family, neighborhood, school, or organization
- The ***person has become the individual*** unit of social connectivity; and not the place,
  - be it workplace, school, or household
- ***Agency:*** Each person operates own network
- Mobile phones and internet allow ***person-to-person*** contact to supplement place-to-place communication
- *The social network revolution has provided the opportunities – and stresses – for people to reach beyond the world of tight groups*

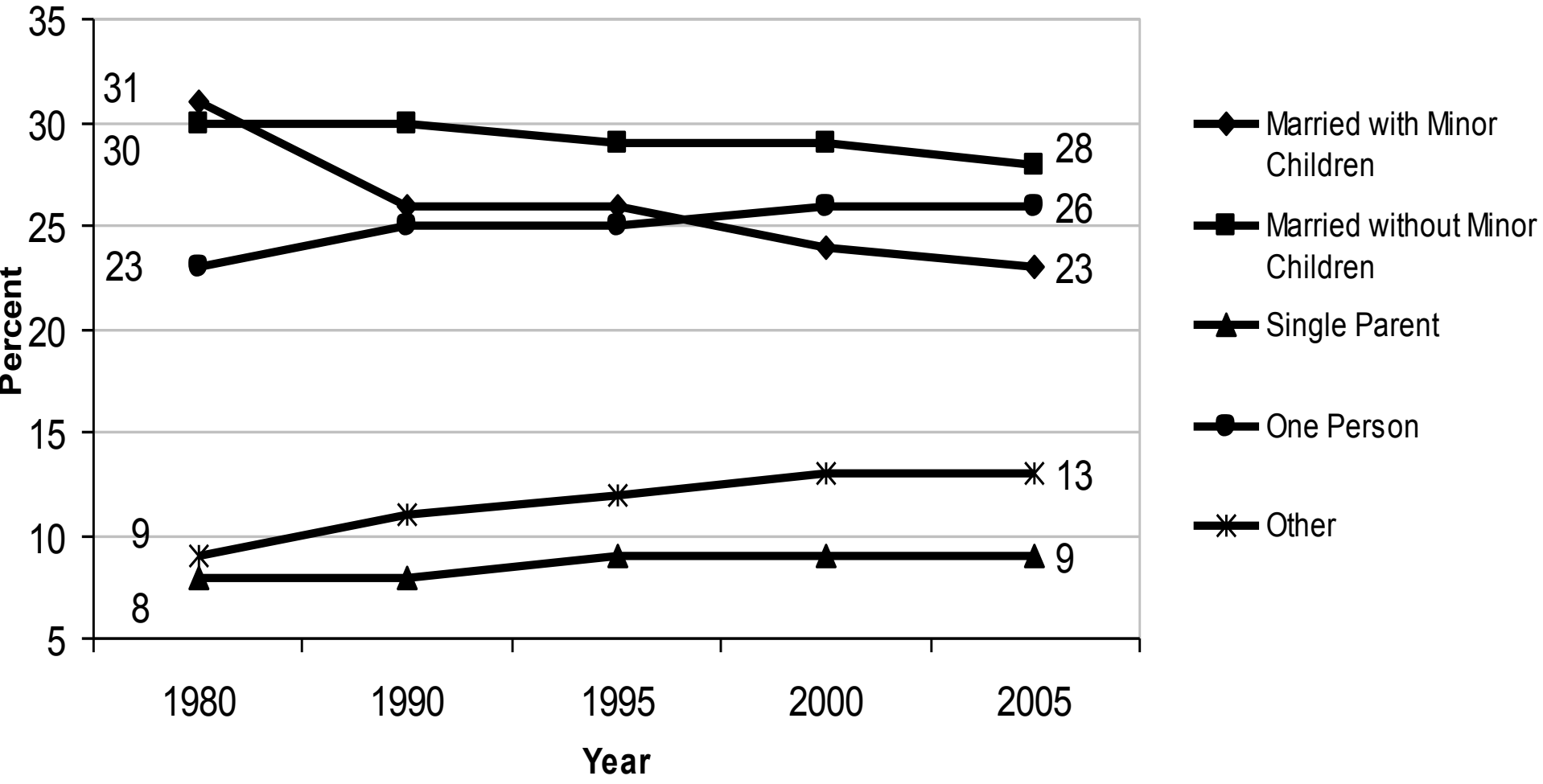
Is the New Media the New Neighbourhood?

- Lines between info, communication have blurred
- Geographic location is real, but less important
- In addition to neighbours, workmates:
  - Most info-sharing transcends spatial & social boundaries
- Movements can project their voices to networks that become part of their worlds
- *To what extent are collective movements local?*
- *To what extent are collective movements structured as strong or weak ties, in clusters?*

Networked individuals have partial membership in multiple networks rather than permanent memberships in settled groups (The Facebook fallacy)

- They must calculate where they can turn for different kinds of help – and what kind of help to offer others as they occupy nodes in others' extended networks.
- They have more transitory relationships than in the past.
- At the same time, they have an easier time reattaching to those from their past even after periods of non-contact.
- With a social environment in flux, people must deal with frequent turnover and change in their networks. "networkers", "netweavers", "net jugglers."

Distribution of Households in the U.S. (1980-2005)



% of households married with minor children declined by ¼,1980 -2005: 31% ➔ 23%

Families Function as Networks; Less as Groups

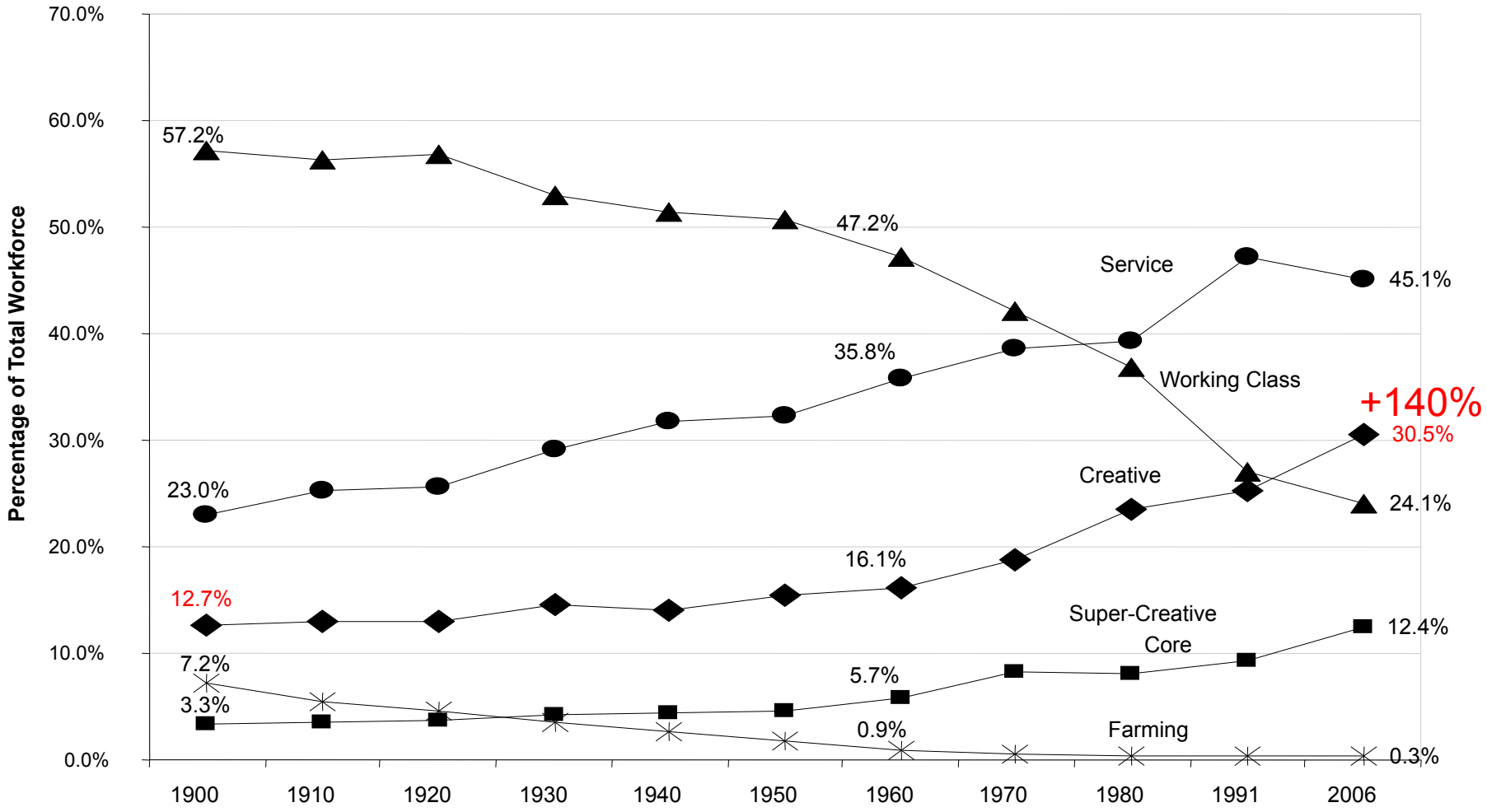
- Households Have Become Home Bases
  - No longer castles but bases for networking with outside world
- Act at times more like individuals in networks and less like members of a solidary family.
  - Spend less time doing things together as a group
- Each keeps a separate address book, calendar, mobile phone, and internet account.
  - Adults and children connect through mobile phones.
- Family members punch holes in the home-work boundary: working at home or bringing work home
  - Unobtrusive surveillance – knowing what each is doing all day

Increased Work Autonomy

- Work has become more flexible in the developed world
- Shift from pushing atoms in manufacturing

  ➔ pushing bits in white-collar "creative" work
- The Triple Revolution Has Facilitated Reconfigured Work
  - Networked Revolution – Moving among multiple teams
  - Internet Revolution – Connection and Information at a Distance
  - Mobile Revolution – Footloose Connectivity

Percentage of Creative Class "Bit Workers" in U.S.



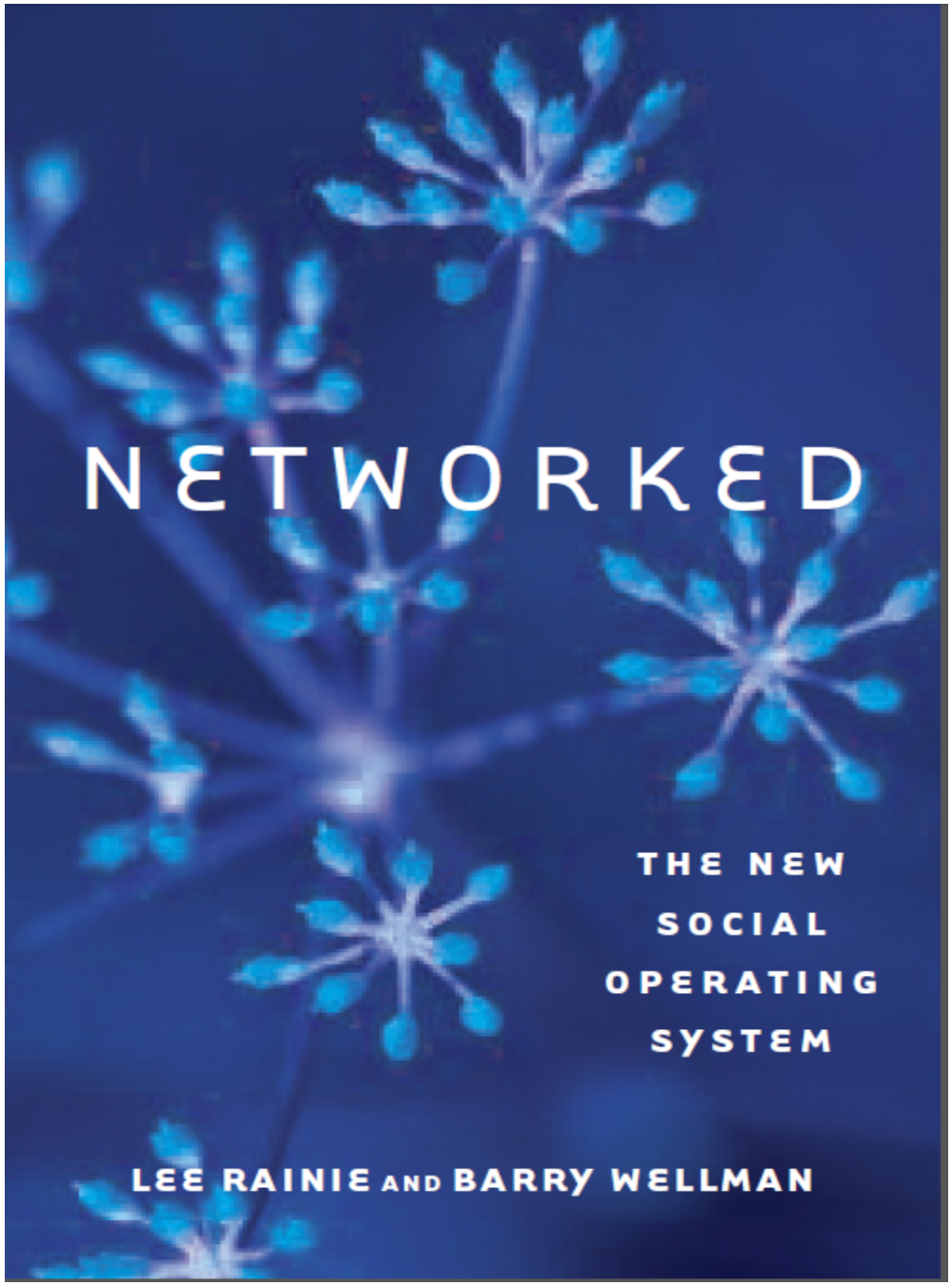
Source: Kevin Stolarick & Richard Florida, Martin Prosperity Institute, University of Toronto

Currently Directing Two Projects

- ***Networked Individuals / Connected Lives***
  - How do ordinary people integrate mobile & internet into their everyday lives?
  - How does Networked Individualism work
  - From Physical to Personal Digital Memory Archiving
  - Rhonda McEwen, Anabel Quan-Haase, Helen Wang
- ***NAVEL (gazing)***
  - How do 150 scholars in different disciplines spread over 5000 km and 30 universities collaborate?
  - Implications for Networked Work & Organization
  - Dima Dimitrova, Anatoliy Gruzd, Guang-Ying Mo, Diana Mok, Zack Hayat

Bounded Groups ➔ Networked Individualism

Each in its Place	➔	Mobility of People and Goods
"Our Town"	➔	*"Friends"*
Met at Malt Shop	➔	Met on *Match.com*
Dating > Engagement	➔	Hanging Out > Hooking Up
Love > Sex > Marriage > Baby	➔	Sex > Love > Partnering
Marriage	➔	Civil Union
Household as Reproductive Unit	➔	Household as Consummatory Space
"Love and Marriage"	➔	*"Sex and the City"*
Mom & Dad, Dick & Jane	➔	Carrie, Samantha, Charlotte, & Miranda
United Family	➔	Serial Marriage, Mixed Custody
3-4 Person Households	➔	1-2 Person Households
Shared Community	➔	Personal Nets
Densely-Knit	➔	Sparsely-Knit
Neighborhoods	➔	GloCalized, Dispersed Networks
Voluntary Organizations	➔	Informal Leisure
Face-to-Face Contact, Phone	➔	F2F, Mobile Phone, Texting, Facebook, Email, Listservs
Landline Phone	➔	Mobile Phone, Skype
Public Spaces	➔	Private Spaces
Similar Attributes	➔	Similar Interests
Social Control	➔	Dyadic Exchanges
Conserves Resources	➔	Gathers New Resources, Failures
"It Takes a Village"	➔	It Takes Partial, Multiple, Far-Flung Networks
Routinized Stability	➔	***Stable Instability***



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