

學術對談

「網絡個人主義」——網絡社會的溝通之道

對談人：巴里·威爾曼、邱林川、張人文、甘晨

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翻譯：徐來、甘晨、張人文



巴里·威爾曼教授
(Prof. Barry Wellman)

「我反對將網絡僅僅視為一門技術。在我看來，它更多是一種思維方式；是一種觸及世界的途徑。技術並不複雜，你可以在電腦上輕而易舉的操作，但認識到世界是由眾多網絡、而非中國社區或美國社區這樣的群體組成，卻是非常難得的。事實上，一些最優秀的網絡分析研究往往是由人類學家完成的，因為他們能夠深入到村莊、社區，從而取得了十分厚重的數據。」

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Networked Individualism: The Way of Communication in the Network Society

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Abstract

Since the 1960s, Professor Barry Wellman has been a pioneer in using social network analysis in understanding communities and societies. Why did he embark on this journey of academic inquiry? How did he build the community of social network analysts? What has changed in this field that traverses the boundaries between sociology and communication studies, especially in this era of digital media? In this dialogue, Professor Wellman discusses his career and the evolution of network analysis; the concept of networked individualism, how it translates into Asian and Chinese contexts; as well as his current work and thinking on a broad range of topics such as the Internet of things and networked work.

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巴里·威爾曼教授簡介

巴里·威爾曼是加拿大皇家學院院士、多倫多大學社會學教授、網絡實驗室(NetLab)主任。他在社區社會學、互聯網研究、社會網絡分析等方面享譽已久，也是國際社會網絡學會(INSNA)的創始人。他的出版物包括300多篇論文、章節、報告及書籍，如*Networks in Global Village*(Westview, 1999)、與Caroline Haythornthwaite合編的*The Internet in Everyday Life*(Blackwell, 2002)、與Lee Rainie合著的*Networked: The New Social Operating System*(MIT Press, 2014)(中文版譯名：《超越孤獨：移動互聯網時代的生存之道》)。威爾曼教授在科研、教學及建立學術共同體方面均成績斐然。他因此曾獲國際傳播學會、美國社會學會、加拿大社會學及人類學會、國際社會網絡學會的多項學術終身成就獎。

BW：Barry Wellman

JQ：邱林川

AZ：張人文

MG：甘晨

JQ: 早在上世紀60年代，您就開始研究社會網絡、社區及電腦。我們知道，對全世界學術圈而言，當然也包括香港，那是個非比尋常的年代。是否有些特別的原因，使您在那個時候開始研究社會網絡呢？

BW: 剛開始我是個研究社區的社會學家。我從小在紐約生活，過得非常開心，總是與小夥伴們在紐約街頭玩耍。我喜歡坐地鐵到處跑，甚至背著父母到時代廣場玩。所以在我印象中，城市是個充滿歡樂的地方。後來我讀了研究院，讀到了一些非常愚蠢的文章，這些文章都在說城市是如何邪惡，城裡人之間是如何疏離，我知道這些都不是真的，這些論調讓我生氣。

幸運的是，我有兩位非常出色的導師。其中一位是社會歷史學家及城市社會學者Charles Tilly教授，不過很不幸，他已離開人

世；另一位是Harrison White教授，他依然健在，現在在亞利桑那州生活。Charles Tilly教授教會了我如何將城市看做網絡，而Harrison White教授已經致力於建構一個關於社交網絡的正式理論。所以，我慢慢將之前的憤怒轉化為研究網絡理論的興趣，並將社區視為網絡，探索這些網絡如何幫助人們互相聯絡、支持，並由此快樂的生活。

1967年我移居加拿大，就職多倫多大學。那時多倫多市政府正在推行街區改造項目，原先的街區面臨被拆除的危機，取而代之的是醜陋的高樓大廈。我去參加了一個保護街區的會議。會上我環顧四周，發現雖然這個會議是保護一個特定的街區，但與會者卻來自其他不同的地方。這是很奇怪的。我注意到，這些人在一起並肩作戰並非因為他們居住在同一個街區，而是因為他們彼此間有良好的社會網絡關係。

最後，我做了第一個關於多倫多「東約克」地區(請不要與紐約混淆)的研究。這裡是多倫多工薪階層和中低收入人群聚居區。我們詢問受訪者：你們的朋友和親戚有哪些？他們住在哪裡？當我看到SPSS軟件分析得出的那些簡單、陳舊而乏味的統計數據時，我震驚了。數據顯示受訪者的朋友和近親當中，只有13%與他們居住於同一個區域，餘下的87%則分散各處，許多甚至居住在多倫多以外的地區。而這竟然發生在廉價電話與廉價航空出現之前。所以，這次調查使我確信：社區並不在鄰里之間，而是在人們的社交網絡裡。

JQ: 回憶過去，您認為從上世紀70年代至今，除了電腦與軟件的普及，社會網絡分析領域發生了哪些變化？

BW: 在上世紀60、70乃至80年代，我們都堪稱「革命者」。為了發展網絡研究，我們不得不與幾乎所有人爭辯。1976年，我與妻子一同成立了第一個研究團體「國際社交網絡分析網絡」(INSNA)。我們當時有175名成員，基本上都是我的朋友。當時我找到他們，一一詢問是否願意加入我們的組織。那時我正好在英國休學術假，記得當時我到處奔相走告，給別人解釋我們在做甚麼。我們當時想一定有更好的組織方式，所以組建了這個研究團體，並且

告訴人們：嘿瞧，你首先是位傳播學或社會學研究者，而社會網絡分析專家就是你的第二身份。但是我們需要一些東西把大家聯繫在一起。

我們這個研究團體由起初的175名成員，增長到如今的1,300名，電郵群發成員也擴至2,600人，我認為目前發展勢頭不錯。我們甚至還創立了一本名為《聯繫》(Connections)的非正式期刊。就像在一場會議上，重要的往往不是令人昏昏欲睡的會議論文，而是與會者們私底下非正式的聯絡與交談一樣，我們有意將這份期刊設定為非正式性質，並將其命名為《聯繫》。期刊包含了大量的會員資訊，諸如：誰在做甚麼？誰遷居至何處？誰又獲得了終身教職？你的最新研究情況如何？等等。而這些資訊均由我親自審閱定稿。

目前而言，社會網絡分析領域最大的變化是：它已成為一個非常完善、成熟的研究領域。現在的社會網絡分析軟件比過去的好用多了。此外，這個領域也越來越制度化了，目前形成了兩個研究方向。其中一個是用訪談法詢問人們一些基本問題，譬如他們的人際關係包括哪些。另一個方向是利用網絡資訊或大數據收集，比如從Twitter、Facebook或者Wikipedia獲取相關信息。當你分析的用戶數量足夠多，甚至上萬的時候，你就會發現他們是如何聯繫在一起，以及甚麼因素形成了這些聯繫。你可以發現很多很強大的社交網絡模式。

JQ: 近些年來，「數據可視化」日益流行。一些社會科學家開始在方法處理上變得更具表現力，甚至富於藝術感。您如何看待這種所謂的「美學轉向」？

BW: 需要強調的是，我反對將網絡僅僅視為一門技術。在我看來，它更多是一種思維方式；是一種觸及世界的途徑。我很高興聽聞張人文正在讀我的書，她告訴我她非常喜歡第二章，因為它探討了社交網絡作為一種思維模式的視角。這一認識是非常重要的。技術並不複雜，你可以在電腦上輕而易舉的操作，但認識到世界是由眾多網絡、而非中國社區或美國社區這樣的群體組成，卻是非常難得的。事實上，一些最優秀的網絡分析研究往往是由人類學

家完成的，因為他們能夠深入到村莊、社區，從而取得了十分厚重的數據。

JQ: 相對社會學而言，傳播學是一門年輕的學科，以至有時會引發一定程度的學術焦慮。您認為社會學能為傳播學帶來的最大貢獻是甚麼呢？反之而言，社會學家是否亦可向傳播學者取經？

BW: 比起社會學家來，我更樂於被稱為傳播學學者。幾年前，國際傳播學會(ICA)授予我一個很奇怪的獎項：「其他領域獎」。頒獎辭上寫到：「雖然您不是傳播學者，但您教給我們一些東西，所以我們將此獎授予您」。「一些東西」指的即是將社會網絡的概念引入傳播學領域。

現在社會學的大部分研究都圍繞令人憤怒的種族、性別歧視及社會階級現狀分析展開。雖然這些擔憂不無道理，但在傳播學領域，我看到大量學者關注關聯性的研究，即人們是如何彼此相連的。因此，社會學給傳播學者帶來了一種對種族、階級及性別視角的敏銳性，同時也為之引入了社會網絡的分析方法。我們研究互聯網、研究網上社區如何形成網絡關係，以及人們如何在線上線下尋求社會支援。

然而，令人沮喪的是，我發現一些傳播學研究僅僅將研究視野局限於線上關係。

我想強調是，我們的研究表明，幾乎在所有情況下，人們的線上與線下關係確是一樣。換句話說，親身所見即網上所識。譬如在這裡我結識了一些優秀的同行與學生，見面之後，我會更加願意回覆他們的郵件並與他們交流。但假如我從未見過他們，或許就只會將其視為「又一個打擾我的人」，而不會去過多留意他們的信息。

JQ: 您如何看待文化與網絡？亞洲的社會網絡真的更趨於集體主義嗎？或者有人可能會說，當今中國的孩子大多成長於獨生子女家庭，可能比西方人，譬如嬰兒潮一代，更具個人主義傾向——至少嬰兒潮那代人還需與兄弟姐妹分享資源。

BW: 其實對許多家庭而言，嬰兒潮一代的人多數只有一個兄弟姐妹。然而，最近在新加坡的那幾個星期裡，我也一直在思考：究

竟新加坡是個兼具西方特質的亞洲社會、還是有著亞洲特性的西方社會？我認為答案是兩者都對。

我一直在思考東亞社會與「網絡個人主義」(networked individualism) 概念之間的關係。由於我在新加坡只待了一個多月，因此無法對這個問題給出任何嚴肅答案。但我的感覺是，這兩種社會特性在新加坡都存在。例如，我在新加坡交談與觀察到的學生，相比北美或西歐的同齡人更以家庭為中心。我的朋友們都回家過年，與家人團聚，弄得我都不知道該如何打發那段時光。他們好幾天或一周都與家人待在一起，而我在北美的親友中很少有人會這麼做。

但另一方面，如果從歷時性的比較來看，人們確實變得更加個人主義。如您所言，他們是兩代人。一代人依靠手機，另一代人則更多使用現實移動工具，如更多地使用轎車、巴士、火車等交通工具，去實現真正的「網絡個人主義」。他們分散在多個不同社區，而非僅僅因親屬關係捆綁在一起。因此，人們的社會網絡文化正經歷巨變。

我課上有位學生來自中國大陸，她告訴我：「您知道嗎，我沒有兄弟姐妹，這使我有些難以找到社會支持。」我問她，「那你的堂兄妹們呢？」她回答：「沒門兒，我與堂兄妹們是互相競爭的關係。因為大家都是獨生子女，父母們都希望自己的孩子是最棒的，遠超過其他堂兄妹。」雖然這只是一個個案，但我發現這非常有趣。她說：「我們依靠朋友，朋友正成為我們新的網絡關係」。這名學生今年25歲，或許當她40歲時情況又會有所不同，觀察這一變遷將會是非常有趣的。當然萬事萬物都處於不斷變化中。

JQ: 我們對您的一項殊榮印象尤為深刻，那就是2007年中國全國高考江蘇省英語試題中，有一組問題是關於您所提出的「網絡個人主義」概念。您也曾撰文探討華人社會中的「關係」。請問您如何看待網絡理論、尤其是網絡個人主義帶給我們的影響，以便我們更好認識當今中國社會？

BW: 首先，我不太清楚江蘇省為何選擇了我的「網絡個人主義」概念為考試命題。我很樂意知道其中的緣由。不過我更好奇的是，中國

學生是怎樣回答此題的。如果能看到相關資料的話，我大概可以寫本書，討論他們對這個概念的想法，但這些資料估計已被塵封在檔案館裡了。

我對當今中國的感覺是甚麼呢？首先，我在多倫多的中國學生均來自中國大陸，而不是香港。我留意到中國人工作十分努力，且敢闖敢幹。他們遠離家人，來到寒冷的加拿大，這點很重要。當然，Skype和微信確實帶來了些改善，但這遠不如實實在在的一個擁抱來得溫暖。

中國在發生甚麼變化？我確實不大清楚。我只知道兩年前我參加一個社會網絡研討會，會議的第一站設在西安。那裡的學者給我留下了深刻印象，他們大多在西方接受過學術訓練，或者如同您的學生一樣，受教於從西方學成歸來的教授們。於是我當即找到我的一個朋友、新加坡國立大學社會學系的Vincent Chua，邀請他一起做關於東亞和東南亞地區社會網絡研究的期刊專題。徵文發出後，我們竟然收到了18篇很好的文章。專題在《美國行為科學家》(*American Behavioral Scientists*)分兩期推出，它揭示了東亞與東南亞地區人們的社會網絡關係與西方社會的許多相似點，但也揭示了這些地區親緣關係的重要性，以及人們如何維持遠距離關係、尤其在使用數字媒體方面。

JQ: 最近，「物聯網」成為了一個熱門的話題。您認為它會影響到個體的聯絡方式嗎？如果會，那是如何影響的呢？

BW: 我得承認，我對物聯網有恐懼感，因為政府對此監管的可能性很大，比如攝像頭會把我們今天在這裡促膝相談的情景匯報給政府。我在《美國行為科學家》上的最新一期專題是關於網絡化工作的，其中一個研究是關於人佩戴感測器，並測繪出誰靠近誰、誰在與誰溝通，其中包含了大量的資訊。

但監視也有可能是件好事。或許你想知道你最好的朋友此刻在哪，而他們也許也希望我們知道。因此我們通過可穿戴技術來滿足這一需求。當我見到在座的學生，例如張人文和甘晨，我可以只要拉拉自己的耳朵，吩咐幾句，關於你們的介紹就會立刻呈現在我眼前。無論你們樂意不樂意，我都會因此獲取大量關於你

們的資訊：哦，原來你熱衷時尚、喜歡社會網絡分析、來自中國某地……就算它不能提供足夠多的資訊，也有助於加強我們之間的相互瞭解。

Steve Mann、Jason Nolan 與我提出了「反監視」(sousveillance) 一詞。因為在「監視」(surveillance) 這個詞裡，「sur」是法語，表示向下看，而「sous」在法語裡則是向上看的意思。瞭解當權者正在做甚麼是個不錯的主意。何樂而不為呢？瞭解他們甚麼時候會面，他們賺了甚麼錢，他們正在幹甚麼勾當。我們因而有機會「反監視」到那些有權有勢的人，就像他們監視我們一樣。

我們還提出了另一個詞，「相互監視」(coveillance)，指的是人們相互監視。我敢肯定，每個人都會通過一些社交媒體得知他的朋友們此刻又做了甚麼、說了甚麼。你們有的在 Twitter 關注了我，就會知道我現在在幹甚麼、想甚麼。反過來我也可以通過人人網、或是 Facebook 來監視別人，看看他們今天見了誰，做了些甚麼，以及身邊發生了甚麼事。這裡存在著大量的相互監視行為，在我看來實在太多了。我是北美少數幾個不上 Facebook 的人，因為我不希望世界上每個人都知道我每時每刻幹了甚麼。我常常上 Twitter，用戶名是 *barrywellman*。如果你想關注我，當然歡迎，但我不會反向關注你，因為這樣的話太耗精力。對於哪些內容發在 Twitter 上，哪些不發，我都很謹慎。我們習慣了這些不同的交流方式。過去在一個村莊裡，人們總是知道其他人白天幹了甚麼，現在我們的社交「村子」大了許多，面積或以萬公里計，且內部情況比之前更加多樣複雜。

JQ: 您最新的研究興趣聚焦「網絡化工作」。為甚麼您會認為這是一個值得研究的重要課題？

BW: 我認為職場正在發生變革。我猜在座的各位現在都是以「比特」(電腦運算的基礎)而非原子為基礎進行工作。我們的工作不是建造、挖掘或種植某物，而是通過文字和圖畫來傳遞訊息。當這種轉變發生時，它的影響非常大，意味著你不再需要待在大工廠或是大辦公室中進行工作。

如同許多在中國內地、香港，尤其在北美的畢業生那樣，你

可以考慮在家工作，玩轉「比特」。或許這並非完美。你依然需要與他人見面，建立信任，跟進最新的八卦。但一旦那樣做了，你又會樂意與他人保持遠距離合作。正因如此，我們才可以跨越香港與多倫多之間13個小時的時差合寫一篇文章。事實上，這種合作就像接力賽一樣無縫連接：你在睡前寫好東西發給我，我一覺醒來正好可以收到。這幾乎是一個完美的時間銜接。

同時，同電腦打交道增強了工作的流動性，並可同時加入多個不同的團隊。這就是我們稱其為「網絡化工作」的原因。你無需把自己安置在一個小隔間裡對著某人諂笑，而是可以短期或長期效力於多個不同的有創造力的團隊。

JQ: 對普通讀者而言，「網絡個人主義」這個概念或許看上去有些自相矛盾，因為它包含了兩個意思相反的詞語。您可否詳細解釋下，為甚麼我們需要這個概念？如何在維持人際關係的同時，保持個人的自主？

BW: 我正好從加拿大帶過來這本關於「網絡個人主義」的書——*Networked: The New Social Operating System* (中文版譯名為《超越孤獨：移動互聯網時代的生存之道》——譯者注)。這本是由我與「皮尤互聯網和美國生活項目」的負責人Lee Rainie合作撰寫而成。雖然該書只討論了北美社會，但我們都認為書中的概念也同樣適用於中國、東南亞、日本以及韓國地區。這本書的韓文版和意大利文版也已經出版了。令人高興的是，由北京大學楊伯澂教授等人翻譯的中文版也已於2015年5月由中國傳媒大學出版社出版。我的一位在多倫多的學生對中文版進行了校驗，以確保翻譯內容準確達意。我不懂普通話或廣東話，但中文版出版的消息的確讓我非常開心。

JQ: 這個問題是由莫廣盈提出的：曼威·卡斯特(Manuel Castells)在上世紀90年代提出了「網絡社會的崛起」一說，能否請您將您的「網絡個人主義」概念與卡氏的「網絡社會」概念進行一下比較？

BW: 莫廣盈是我的學生，謝謝她提出這個問題。我很高興地插一句，她最近剛剛完成了關於網絡化工作和網絡化學術的博士論文，即將開始美好的職業生涯。

言歸正傳，我非常尊敬卡斯特。早在1975年我就認識了他，當時的他全部精力專注於社會階級問題。之後他開始關注婦女，並開始討論性別。當他遷居美國加州以後，關於生活方式的探討進入了他的研究視野。後來，他對矽谷產生了興趣，研究興趣又隨之擴展到互聯網及移動通信上面。

事實上，在2002年，我和妻子便與卡斯特在他的故鄉——西班牙的加泰羅尼亞自治區進行過合作。我們研究互聯網社會是如何在包括西班牙東北部的巴塞隆納在內的加泰羅尼亞地區進行運轉，並發現了一些有趣的事情。讓我大吃一驚的是，比起北美社會來，這裡的人們更多是與他們的家族聚居在一起。此外，我們發現甚至在更早之前，加泰羅尼亞人就開始使用手機進行聯絡。因為許多加泰羅尼亞人是一大家子住在一起，所以他們通常喜歡到咖啡館去，拿出手機，坐在那裡與朋友們聯絡。

卡斯特偉大的「三部曲」之一，《網絡社會的崛起》，是站在宏觀角度審視網絡社會的演變過程。我的合作者Lee Rainie與我都從此書中獲得很多啟發，並試圖將這些啟發納入到皮尤互聯網的研究項目中。在寫作《超越孤獨》(Networked)的過程中，我們就是這麼做的。因此，「網絡個人主義」概念理所當然是建立在卡斯特網絡社會研究的基礎上的。我很高興能夠與這位偉大的學者有此密切的學術聯繫。據我所知卡斯特也是邱教授您的博士生導師，因此張人文和甘晨你們兩位也算是卡斯特的學術徒孫了。

AZ: 您與Lee Rainie先生合著的這本《超越孤獨》已被翻譯成多種語言。在中文版即將出版之際，請問您對中國的讀者們有甚麼寄語呢？

BW: 非常高興此書的中文版即將出版。我可能賺不了多少錢，但我會獲得數以百萬計的讀者。我希望借此機會對中國讀者表示歡迎，希望他們思考書中的概念，雖然它僅是基於對北美社會（甚至不包括西歐）的觀察，那麼它在多大程度上適用於中國呢？對於中國而言，這些模式也可能不像在北美那樣適用，但回想下你們父母那一代、或者你們的孩童時代：從那時到現在究竟發生了多少變化？尤其要注意工作環境的變化：人們是如何在不同地方進行

工作並四處流動的？人們是如何從這個世界獲得創新、創造力和知識的？他們是如何應對中國政府的各種限制？當資訊被封鎖，如何去查找這些資訊便成為一場遊戲。當然，中國政府並不是唯一這樣做的當權者。

MG: 對於那些在台北、上海、香港或新加坡，有志於從事社會網絡分析的青年學者，您有甚麼特別的感悟與他們分享？

BW: 堅持做，好好做。就社會網絡分析而言，條條道路通羅馬。我有兩個學生這個週末去到新加坡的一間酒吧，他們對那裡的人會選擇與怎樣的人坐在一起、與怎樣的人待在一處很感興趣。比方說，種族或是性取向可能是人們做出選擇的原因。你可以像我們上一次研究所做的那樣，進行深度採訪，也可以做調查，或是仿效政府，去做大數據。不過得小心，政府可是能夠清晰地測繪出你我的社交網絡的。試想如果你能掌握數據——據我所知，我在緬甸和新加坡工作的朋友 Rich Ling，就正在做電話用戶的社交網絡分析，諸如誰打了電話給誰、為甚麼打這個電話、甚麼時候打的。如果你與電話公司有密切聯繫，便可得到大量的資訊，這就再好不過了。

巴里·威爾曼著作選

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Academic Dialogue with **Barry Wellman**

Networked Individualism: The Communication Way in the Network Society

BW: Barry WELLMAN

JQ : Jack L. QIU

AZ : Alice Renwen ZHANG

MG: Maggie GAN

JQ: You began studying social networks, community, and computers in the 1960s, a rather unusual decade, for academics around the world, including in Hong Kong. Was there something special that drove you to study networks then?

BW: I started off as a community sociologist. I grew up happily in New York City. I played on the streets with my friends all the time. I loved sneaking around the metro and going down to Times Square without my parents knowing it. So I knew cities were very happy places. Then when I got to graduate school and I started to read stuff that was so silly—all about cities being evil, and people being alienated, and I knew that was wrong. It made me angry.

Fortunately, I had two very good mentors. I had Professor Charles Tilly, who has passed away. He was a social historian and urban sociologist. And I had Professor Harrison White who is still with us in Arizona. Charles Tilly taught me all about how to look at cities as networks, and Harrison White was really developing the formal theory of social networks. So I was able to channel my anger into thinking about networks, our communities as networks, and how they help keep people happy, connected, and supportive.

Then in 1967, I moved to Canada, to the University of Toronto. That was a time when neighborhoods were in danger of being torn down by the city government to build ugly high-rise projects. And I went to a meeting to preserve the neighborhood. I looked around and I thought everybody had come from a different neighborhood to attend this meeting to preserve this one particular neighborhood.

There was a contradiction here. I noticed all of these people worked together—not because they lived in the same neighborhood but because they had good social networks to each other.

Finally, I did the first study of East York, an area in Toronto. (Don't confuse it with New York.) It's an area of working-class and lower-middle-class people in Toronto. We asked people: who are your friends and relatives, and where do they live? I remember looking at the data—plain, old, boring SPSS print-outs—and being shocked. Only 13% of their friends and close relatives lived in the same area where they did; 87% lived outside. Many of them lived even outside Toronto. This was well before the time of cheap phone calls and cheap airlines.

So, that really convinced me: community was not in the neighborhood, but within people's networks.

JQ: **Thinking back, how has the field of social network analysis changed since the 1970s besides the obvious diffusion of computers and software?**

BW: In the 1960s, 1970s, even 1980s, we were the revolutionaries. We had to argue with everybody to develop the study of networks. In 1976, my wife and I developed the first society, the International Network for Social Network Analysis (INSNA). We had 175 members. That was basically me going around and asking friends if they would join. I was on research leave in England. I remember going around and telling stories from one guy to the other, telling each of them what the others were doing. We said there had to be a better way to do that. So we started this social network analysis society, and we told people: look, this is your second membership. Your first membership is in communications or in sociology. But we need something to link us up.

We started with 175 members. It has grown to 1,300 and the email listserv includes 2,600 people. I think it's been good. We also founded a very informal journal called *Connections*. As in a conference, where the major thing is not about the formal papers—often some of us sleep through them—what really matters is the informal connections and chats we make. We deliberately constructed this journal to be informal and called it *Connections*. It had a lot of information: who's doing what, who's moving where, who got tenure, what's your latest research happening? It was only refereed by me.

The big change now is that social network analysis has become established, a very well-developed field. The software is much easier to use than in the old days. It's pretty well institutionalized. It has gone into two separate directions. One direction is that we do interviews, asking people basic questions, like "who are your relationships?" The other direction is big data collection, where you use relational information gathered online from sources such as Twitter, Facebook, or Wikipedia. You analyze a large chunk of people, maybe ten thousand of them, and you see how they are connected and what shapes these connections. You can get a lot of powerful patterns going on.

JQ: Recently, data visualization has become popular. Some social scientists have become more expressive, even artistic, in their approaches. What's your take on this so-called "aesthetic turn"?

BW: One thing I really reject is treating network only as a technique. To my mind, it's a way of thinking; it's a way of approaching the world. I was very pleased that your student Alice Zhang is reading our *Networked* book, and she told me that she likes Chapter 2 a lot because it is about social networks as a way of thinking. That's really important. Technique is easy. You can run it on the computer. But you have to see the world as composed of networks rather than groups, be they Chinese communes or American neighborhoods. It's important to think of the world as composed of many networks. In fact, some of the best analysis of network is done by anthropologists who have gone into villages and communities, and gotten very thick data.

JQ: Compared to sociology, communication is a much younger discipline, which sometimes causes a certain degree of scholarly anxiety. What are the most promising contributions of sociology to communication studies, and vice versa? Do sociologists also learn from communication scholars?

BW: I feel more comfortable with communication scholars than I do with sociologists. Some years ago, I was honored by the International Communication Association (ICA) when they gave me a very strange award, called the Other Fields Award. It says: while you are not a communication science scholar, you have taught us something and

we will give you a prize for that. This was about bringing the notion of *social* networks into communications.

In sociology, right now most of the work is analyzing and being angry about race, male sexism and social class. While these are valid concerns, I see in the field of communications more shared interest in connectivity: how people are relating to each other. So sociology is bringing into communication studies the sensibility of foregrounding race, class, and gender; but also using social network methods. We study internet networks, how an internet community is a network, how people find social support on- and off-line.

Yet, I was distressed in looking at some communication studies that look only at online relationships.

One of the things that I really want to emphasize is something that our research has shown in almost all cases: people's online and offline relationships really are the same. People you see in person are the people that you know online. I've met some wonderful students here and some wonderful colleagues. Now that I've seen them in person, I will be much more comfortable answering emails from them and talking to them. But if I did not know them, I'd just say it's another person bothering me, and I won't pay attention to that.

JQ: **How do you see culture and networks? Are social networks in Asia really more collectivist? Or, some may say, today's Chinese kids, growing up in one-child families, can be more individualistic than westerners, for example, the baby boomers—at least they have to share with their siblings?**

BW: Well, actually most baby boomers only have one sibling in most of their families. But I have been thinking about that as I've lived in Singapore for a few weeks. Is it an Asian society with western traits, or a western society with Asian traits? I think the answer is both.

I have been thinking about the relationship between East Asian societies and the concept of networked individualism. I've only been there for a little over a month. And I will be crazy to give any serious answer to this question. But my feeling is that both things are true. For example, the students that I've been talking to and observing in Singapore are more family-centered than North Americans or Western Europeans. Everybody went home for New Year. In fact, I

don't know what to do for New Year because all my friends were with their families. They spent several days or one week with their families, something very few of my relatives and friends in North America would do.

On the other hand, I think if you take a comparatively time perspective, people are more individualistic. As you said, they are two generations. There are those using their mobile phones, and there are those using physical mobility, more access to cars, buses, and trains to engage in the essence of networked individualism, which is in multiple different communities, not just bound up in a kinship group. So it's been a big change going on.

One of the students in my class is from Mainland China. She said, "You know, I don't have brothers or sisters. So it's a little hard for me to find social support." I said, what about your cousins? She said, no, my cousins are competing against each other because they are single children and their parents want each of them to be the best and push out the other members. I don't know as it's just one case. But I found that interesting. She said we rely on our friends, and our friends are becoming the new networks. She's 25, and it may be different when she's 40. It's interesting to see how this develops. Clearly things are changing all the time.¹

JQ: As Chinese, we are most impressed by one of your unusual honors: a set of questions in the 2007 English exam for the national college entrance examinations in Jiangsu Province was about your concept of networked individualism. Some time ago, you have also written about *guanxi*. How do you see the implications of network theory, especially networked individualism, for us to understand Chinese societies today?

BW: First, I don't know how and why my networked individualism concept made its way to Jiangsu. I'd love to find out about that. Even more interesting, I'd love to learn the answers that the Chinese students gave to that question; I could have written a book about what they thought about that. But it's probably buried in the archives.

What is my feeling about China now? First of all, the students I work with are from the mainland, not from Hong Kong. They are in Toronto, now. What I notice is that Chinese people work very hard

and they are venturesome. The fact that they are coming into cold Canada, so far from their family, is really important. Of course, Skype and WeChat can really help a little bit, but it's not as good as hugging somebody.

How is China changing? I really don't know. What I do know is that two years ago I went to the first conference in China about social networks. It was held in Xi'an. I was so impressed by the scholars I saw there. These were often people trained in the west. Or, like your students, they were trained by people with western training. So immediately I went to a friend, Vincent Chua, at the National University of Singapore, and said: let's put out a journal issue about social networks in East Asia and Southeast Asia. We put out a call for papers and we were fascinated—we got 18 really good papers. They have come out in the *American Behavioral Scientist* volume 59, numbers 8 and 9. The issues show many similarities to the west, but it also shows the importance of kinship. They show how people keep long-distance ties going, especially using digital media all the time.

JQ: Recently, the “Internet of things” has become a popular topic. Do you think it will also influence how individuals connect? If so, how?

BW: Let me say, I am frightened by the Internet of things because the government surveillance possibilities are huge. For example, that the camera recording us will talk to the government and say we are sitting together. In our latest journal issue of *American Behavioral Scientist* about networked work, we have one study about people wearing sensors on them. They are mapping who is close to whom, who is communicating with whom. That's a lot of information.

But surveillance could be good news. You may want to know where your best friends are, and they may want us to know. So we will have wearable equipment to tell us about that. When I see students such as Alice and Maggie, I could just pull my ear, say a few words, and all of a sudden your biographies will come up. And I will know a lot about you, whether you like it or not, such as that you are very interested in fashion, social networks, and you've come from certain place in China. It will enhance our knowledge of each other, if it doesn't give us too much information.

Steve Mann, Jason Nolan, and I invented a term called “sousveillance”. In surveillance, *sur* is the French word for looking down. *Sous* is the French word for looking up. It would be nice if we know what the authorities are doing. Why not? When they will meet, what kind of money they are making, what kind of deals they are doing? So we have some possibilities watching the powerful people, just as they have the ability to watch us.

We invented another term, “covelliance”, which means we watch each other. I’m sure that everybody is on some social media and checking their friends: what they are doing today, what they are saying today. I’m on Twitter with some of you. You find out what I’m thinking and doing. I can check on people by using Renren—or Facebook in the West—and find out who they saw today, what they are doing, what’s happening. There is a lot of mutual observation. To my mind, it’s too much. I’m among the few people in North America who are not on Facebook, because I don’t want everybody in the world to know what I am doing at every time. I do go to Twitter a lot, and I’m @barrywellman. If you want to follow me, that’s fine. But I won’t follow you back, because it’ll be an overload. I’m very careful about what I put on Twitter and what I don’t. We get used to these various means of communicating. Back in the old village days, people always knew what each other were doing during the day. Now our village is so much larger, maybe ranging for ten thousand kilometers. It’s also much more heterogeneous than before.

JQ: Your new interest is in networked work. Why do you think this is an important topic worth studying?

BW: I think the world of work is changing. I assume everybody in this room right now work with bits, rather than atoms. We don’t build things, we don’t mine things, we don’t grow things. What we do is using characters and drawings to communicate information. When that switch happens, it’s very powerful. It means you no longer have to work in a big factory, no longer even in a big office.

You can consider working at home as many people do in China, in Hong Kong, and certainly in North America. You just push those bits around. It’s not perfect. You still need to see people in order to develop trust and catch up with the gossip. But once you do that,

you'll be happy to work with people at a distance. So you and I could collaborate on an article over the thirteen-hour time difference between Hong Kong and Toronto. Actually it works very well as a relay race: You work on it and send me something when you go to sleep. And when I wake up, I get the same information. It's almost a perfect time shift.

The other thing is, once you work in bits, it's easier to move around and work in multiple teams. So that's what we called networked work. You don't just sit in a cubicle and smile at one person. You work for multiple groups that often reorganize, maybe short-term or maybe long-term.

JQ: To ordinary readers, “networked individualism” may still seem to be a self-contradictory because it consists of two antonyms. Could you explain it more? Why we need this concept? How to keep interpersonal connections while maintaining individual autonomy?

BW: The Networked book was written with Lee Rainie, the head of the Pew Internet & American Life Project. We only talk in this book about North America. But we think the concepts are very applicable to China, Southeast Asia, Japan, and Korea. There are also Korean, Italian, and Chinese versions out. I am very happy that the book was translated into Chinese by a team led by Prof. Yang Boxu at Peking University and then checked by my student Chang Z. Lin in Toronto just to make sure that everybody was happy. I don't read Mandarin or Cantonese at all. I am just really happy this is happening.

JQ: This question is from Mo Guang Ying—Manual Castells proposed the rise of network society in the 1990s. How do you compare your conceptualization of networked individualism to his notion of network society?

BW: Thanks to my former student and continuing collaborator, Dr. Mo Guang Ying for proposing this question. She recently finished her PhD dissertation about network work and network scholarship. And she's going to have a great career.

I have great respect for Manual Castells. I've known him since 1975, when the only thing he wanted to talk about was social class.

Then he discovered women and started to talk about gender as well as social class. Then he came to California and he wanted to talk about lifestyles as well as gender and social class. Then he discovered Silicon Valley, and he wanted to talk about the Internet and about mobile communication.

Castells, my wife, and I actually worked together in 2002 in his Catalonia. We studied how the Internet society was operating in Catalonia, which includes Barcelona, in the northeastern part of Spain. We found some very interesting things. One that really struck me was that so many more people lived with their families than in North America. Another thing is that even way back then, the Catalans used mobile phones to communicate with each other. Because so many Catalans lived with their families, they usually met in cafés. They would go to a café, pull their phones out, and they sit there but involving their phone-friends in communication.

Manuel Castells' great trilogy, *The Rise of the Network Society*, really was talking about macroscopic things. Lee Rainie, my co-author, and I both got many ideas from the book. We tried to incorporate them into the research that the Pew Internet studies are doing. And we did that, in the writing of our book *Networked: The New Social Operating System*. Certainly the concept of networked individualism built on Castells' work on what happens in network society. So I am happy to share the affinity with that great scholar, Manuel Castells, who was also your professor, Jack. We have two of your students here so they are Manuel Castells' intellectual grandchildren.

AZ: *Networked*, the book you coauthored with Lee Rainie, has been translated into several languages. Now the Chinese version has come out. What would you like to say to Chinese readers?

BW: I'm very happy that the Chinese version has come out. I'm not going to make money from it, but I hope I will have millions of readers. I want to welcome the Chinese readers. I want them to think about the concept, which again was developed only by looking at North America, not even Western Europe. To what extent does it make sense in China? The patterns may not be as strong in China as in North America. But think back to your parents' generation, and earlier in your generation: how much change has happened?

Especially think about the work situation: how people work in different places and move around; how people get innovation, creativity, and knowledge from the world; how they work around some of the constraints that the Chinese government puts on them. It's a game of finding information when people block it. (Of course, China is not the only government that does that.)

MG: What about young researchers who are just beginning to do social network analysis in Taipei or Shanghai, Hong Kong or Singapore? Do you have something particular to tell them?

BW: Keep doing it. Make good research. You can do it in a number of ways. I have two students going into a bar in Singapore this weekend. They are interested in with which people sit next to each other, which people hang out with each other, by ethnic group for example, and also by sexual orientation. You can do in-depth interviews, which is what we did for our last study. You can do surveys. And you can get big data, which is what governments are doing. Governments are clearly mapping your network and my network. You should be careful about that. Imagine if you can get hold of the data—I know my friend Rich Ling, who works in Myanmar and Singapore, studying the social networks of telephone users: who calls whom, why did they call, when did they call. You can get a lot of information if you have good relationships with the telephone company, for better or worse.

Note

- 1 Please refer to Chua & Wellman (2016).

Selected Works by Barry Wellman and colleagues

Please refer to the end of the Chinese version of the dialogue for Barry Wellman's selected works.