Lessons from a Utopian Community
Is a Critical Examination of Technology Feasible, Possible, or Necessary?

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper was to examine and learn from the technology found in a unique Amish Mennonite community. Information was collected in the home, school, church and workspace. An ethnographic approach was used to recreate the shared beliefs, practices, artifacts, folk knowledge, and behaviors in this community. The ethnographic methodology allowed analytical descriptions and reconstructions of whole cultural scenes and groups of the community. Findings indicate that technology is seen as a tool for making the community prosper. However, a critical examination by the elders of the community select or reject any new technology being considered.

Introduction

William Wordsworth (1888) once shared about the loss that humans feel about society and its ills. He writes:

> The world is too much with us; late and soon,
> Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;
> Little we see in Nature that is ours . . . . (p. 398)

Like Wordsworth, numerous groups have struggled with the ethical tensions produced by the growth of technology. This examination of technology in a local minority community is only to suggest that the secular world poses the question

of a check and balance system in the acquisition of new technologies. Some separate communities, in an attempt to escape from the effects produced by a strong capitalist society, have tried to create what they perceive as utopias. The purpose of this research was to collect general knowledge of a group that lives on the fringe of society. The initial purpose of the research was to find out how science and technology was taught in the Amish Mennonite school. However, after being there only two weeks, I had to change my focus to embracing the entire research in an ethnographic community piece. From an emic perspective, the decision-making Amish Mennonite team defines their community as a democratic process by their limited definition of what it means to be democratic within their world. Each part of the research has been member checked by the key informant.

The following is part of a 7-year ethnographic study of this group, the Oak Knoll Amish Mennonite Community (OKAMC) located in the southeastern United States. It started out as a 1-year snap shot of their science and technology. However, it did not take me long to discover that their science was their religion and the technology was learned through apprenticeships in the greater community. Furthermore, I learned that technological advancements were relative. This drove my study to also examine a group of Amish Mennonites in Belize, Central America. I used an ethnographic methodology to provide understanding of the complexity of procedures through which the researcher arrives at an ethnographic statement. Triangulation was met by using multiple sources and bringing four of my five-committee members to get their perspective on the community.

In this self-defined utopian group, the OKAMC has devised a system for deciding which specific technologies will be allowed into their community. Their decisions are based on an examination of how the proposed technology could ultimately alter their lifestyle, thereby affecting their values and beliefs. We can look to the OKAMC for suggestions on how we too can evaluate technology in our community.

History and Definition of Utopian Societies in the United States

The idea of utopia suggests a refuge from the troubles of the world as well as hope for a better one (Kanter, 1972). The United States has been the site for the beginning of many utopian societies. Utopia represents the ideal of good, separating from the ills of society. Utopian societies range from religious sects to communes, which can be divided into three categories: religious/spiritual, political/economical, and psychological/social. The religious communities have a vision of creating a purified, spiritual society, based on fundamental truths, where members can live out shared ideals in harmony, cooperation, and close association with fellow believers. Out of this search came groups such as the Shakers, the Amanas, and the Oneidas. For the political and economic communities, their fundamental belief is that they want to secure refuge from the factory

system that dehumanizes people through competition and excessive labor. The psychological and social communities have a commitment to promote the psychosocial growth of the individual by putting the individual in closer touch with others, rejecting the isolation and alienation of the surrounding society (Kanter, 1972). In theory, utopia can exist, but under practical scrutiny, utopian societies are made of humans who must negotiate on the democratic process. So when necessarily appropriate, the community leaders made changes to increase technology at a much slower pace than their counterparts to sustain their community.

My role continued to be defined. Entrée was crucial. My family connections with OKAMC allowed me easy access into this community and the trust it evoked. This was a golden opportunity to study a unique community. I was a participant observer in the OAKMC. Only by participating in the community could I become acquainted with the value and belief system of this group.

In the anthropological tradition of the last 125 years, ethnographic research has been holistic, global, and systematic. Ethnography provides the reader with an adequate contextualization of the cultural phenomena under study (Delgago-Gaitan & Trueba, 1991). Anthropologists such as Arsenberg and Kimball (1940), Ogbu (1974), Warren (1967), and Wolcott (1995) have studied the interaction of individuals living in a community and such institutions as school, home, and church. These ethnographers use cultural description and interpretation as their basis for ethnographic writings. Other anthropologists such as Chang (1991), Spindler (1982), Hostetler and Huntington (1981), and Wolcott (1967) have written ethnographies representing cultures and microcultures. For example Hostetler and Huntington's (1981) study of an Amish community in Ohio found that the community through their lives supports families and individuals.

My interest in different cultures began as a 6-year-old when I met a missionary from the Belgian Congo in Africa. Sara Shafe's calling as a missionary was not my interest or focus. The woman spoke to our congregation and was one of many visiting religious educators from other cultures. She talked of the richness of the lives of people whose material possessions were very few. She told stories of her journeys in the Congo. I remember the intensity with which I sat and listened as she told of the people in a far away land.

Differences exist among the above kinds of utopian communities; I will focus, however, on the similarities of these types of utopias using the lens of the religious utopian society that I have studied. In doing so I will argue that United States society should directly address the exponential growth of technology with a critical eye. Whether or not utopian societies endure, they are important to examine and experience. The tentative assumptions that these utopian societies make about what is feasible in social life dispute the presumptions made by other sectors in the United States. I will focus on six primary commonalties:

1. Live in harmony, cooperation, and close association with fellow believers;
2. Reject the established order as sinful, unjust, or unhealthy;

3. Stress the possibility of perfection through restructuring social institutions;
4. Seek recreation of a lost unity between humankind and God, between humankind and self, or within humankind as a whole;
5. Stress achieving harmony now; and
6. Seek a return to the land as a pathway to perfection (Kanter, 1972).

Boundaries, History, and *Gelassenheit*

Boundaries—physical, behavioral, and social—are one of the primary structuring tools of any utopia. The boundaries allow for a psychological focus that rapidly facilitates commitment of the members to the community. What goes on inside a community is strikingly different from what goes on outside. Strong boundaries make obvious who is in the group and who is not a part of the group (Kanter, 1972). However, 20th-century North American society gives rise to an environment that constantly penetrates utopian boarders. An increase in urbanization, the advancement of technology, and the ability for instant communication have blurred the boundaries between groups. The Amish Mennonite community that I studied has strengthened the boundary of the community by focusing on limiting technology. The 250 members of OKAMC developed a specific sorting mechanism using the question: "How does the proposed technology change our communal sustainability?" Amish Mennonites allow new or modified technologies *only if* they see it benefiting their economy without causing a large change to their sustainability as a community.

The Amish Mennonite's system needs to be seen in context of Mennonite history. The Mennonite religion originated in Switzerland and Germany. The group whom the Mennonites, at this time called Anabaptists, count as forbearers were political pacifists, who concluded that their life should be one modeled with peaceful decisions. They also believed that a person could be a Christian only by a personal and voluntary decision, and they called for the church to separate from the worldly order of politics, civil society, and state. Because of religious persecution, which included burning at the stake, strangling, and beheadings, the Mennonites frequently moved and resettled within Europe in search of religious tolerance. Eventually, some communities came to North America. The first permanent settlement in North America was at Germantown, near Philadelphia in the 1800s. Twenty years after the first American Mennonite preacher was chosen at Germantown, a new Mennonite settlement was started in Lancaster, Pennsylvania (Schabach, 1988). The Oak Knoll Amish Mennonite community members consider themselves Mennonites. They attach the adjective Amish to signify a conservative branch of the Mennonite religion.

The Amish Mennonites have used the German word *Gelassenheit* to signify the yielding of the individual to higher authorities such as God and the Christian community. *Gelassenheit* is the foundation of the values of the Amish Mennonite culture and includes self-surrender, self-denial, and a quiet spirit. Individualism

is suppressed as a threat to the larger Amish Mennonite community (Kraybill & Olshan, 1994).

Groups such as the Amish Mennonites engage in several defensive techniques for cultural survival that promote the idea of *Gelassenheit* (Kraybill & Olshan, 1994). They are as follows: (1) *Symbolization of core values*—Cardinal values are symbolized by objects and rituals that call for group loyalty and accent group identity. The Amish Mennonites value Jesus and emulate the values Jesus taught; (2) *Centralized leadership*—Threatened groups often use authoritarian leadership because it speeds decision making and offers a sense of security. Democracy is seen as crippling a group's ability to respond quickly to external threats. For example, the church elders voted not to allow the Internet to avoid conflict with the "evil" values of the secular world; (3) *Social sanction*—A system of rewards and punishments is necessary to encourage conformity to group standards. Leaders in the community establish the standards of the members' actions in line with group norms. For example, if someone marries outside the faith, that member must leave the OKAMC church; (4) *Comprehensive socialization*—Like other defensive groups, the Amish Mennonites must find ways to pass on their worldview to their offspring as well as to newcomers. Indoctrination into the group's ideology through formal and informal schooling must happen early in life and be repeated over and over again to build group loyalty. Participants believe that the fewer the opportunities to mingle with outsiders, the less likely that members will leave the community. When interacting with the secular world is necessary for economic survival, the time, place, and mode of interaction is carefully monitored. A special lexicon, taboos on public behavior, and social isolation are common ways the Amish Mennonites limit social interactions. These cultural fences make it difficult for group members to join secular societies (Kraybill, 1989). For example, teenagers cannot participate in dancing, listen to music, go to movies, or be involved in organized sports.

Overview Representation of the Oak Knoll Amish Mennonite Community

The Oak Knoll community consists of a church, a school, 16 businesses, and houses for 50 families. The central institution from which the community radiates is the church. From a distance, the Oak Knoll community looks like many other rural communities. In front of the traditional brick church are some perennial shrubs, to the left and back, loblolly pines. To the right, a baseball field separates the church from the school. Scattered throughout the community are family farms and homes.

A typical farm consists of well-managed land used for grazing, planting crops, or raising hay. Many of the pastures have springs or ponds for the livestock. After being baled, much of the hay is stored in freshly painted and well-kept barns. Farm machinery is housed in barns or other buildings. The

Mennonite homes in this area of the United States are usually constructed of brick or wood. Flowers abound, surrounding the main house, the gardens, and the exterior buildings. Almost every home has a well-tilled vegetable garden.

The OKAMC are unlike some Amish communities in that they do use some modern technology. The Old Order Amish, for instance, tend their fields with horse-drawn machinery, rejecting tractors and other modern equipments. The Oak Knoll Amish Mennonites, however, do use modern machinery, but they make choices about what to use, based on simplicity over complexity. Therefore, given the choice of a modern air-conditioned tractor, the OKAM choose the older model. The OKAMs define themselves as caretakers of the earth. Their religious message is to model as their values and beliefs through their acts. Langin (1994) talks of the reason for this practice:

> Machines produce no manure . . . manure is recycled, fertilizer for the soil. Land ought to be treated and developed so that parents can face future generations without shame for what they have done to the earth. Thus, they have a sense of working in partnership with God, subduing the earth, with accountability to God and their community—past, present, and future. (p. 56)

The OKAMC must as best they can limit they modernity of their technology as to show outwardly what they talk about in their religion. On a practical side, the OKAMC also chose the older model machinery since it is more physically intense. An idle mind is the Devil's playground. The more physical the labor, the less leisure time that community members have. Leisure time is seen as an opportunity for individuals to think about doings something that may not fit with the values of the Amish Mennonites. This is the reasoning given as to why the Amish Mennonites censor radios and televisions. The elders see radios and televisions as being instruments that could expose their community members to secular values that are in direct conflict with their own.

Technologies and their adoption or rejection can cause disagreements within an Amish Mennonite community. Such arguments led to the separation of several communities from the main Oak Knoll community over the past 15 years. For the Oak Knoll Amish Mennonite community, technology allows them to take what science reveals and make life as serviceable as possible for their God (Interview, April 7, 1994). The OKAMC believe they use technology to better serve their God, not humans. Thus, radio and the Internet have no place in this group. Some members of the OKAMC, however, want to use both. These families moved from the OKAMC to create a new community. The OAKMC has for the past 30 years been extremely selective in adopting technologies. The community prohibits not only radios and televisions but also video recorders and video games like Nintendo and X-Box. Until recently, computers have been restricted to places of employment.

One way to control the community and their association with the secular world is to prohibit certain technologies. Oak Knoll Amish Mennonites believe that "we use technology when we can control it, not it controlling us" (Interview, January 18, 1994). Oak Knoll Amish Mennonites maintain that order in their world, as they know it, requires enforcing control over technology. Without this control, the technology may engulf them and change their community values. For them, technology is not only physical equipment but also all the values and beliefs attached to the equipment that inform its creation.

Filtering of technology comes from a blending of the practical with their values and belief system. These criteria are what OKAMC use to evaluate technologies before adapting them. Still, people in this community are industrious and creative in their application of those technologies adopted. For example, cabinet shop workers developed a new process and a new "machine," the double-sided stapler. In this case, they developed a new technology to meet a specific need.

A secular business would produce a product like the double-sided stapler, prohibiting the design from being used without the inventor's permission. In 1790, the United States Constitution empowered Congress to establish a national patent system. This law gave Congress power to promote the progress of science and useful arts by securing for a limited time to authors and inventors exclusive right to respective discoveries. The United States Congress enacted the patent law protecting new, obvious, and useful inventions. This protection is for machines, devices, chemical compositions, and manufacturing processes. Congress also has enacted intellectual property regimes to accommodate a technology's peculiar features. The OKAMC avoids applying for a patent to avoid possible litigation. They would be concerned with having to testify in court if a problem arises. The OKAMC believe only God has the right to judge other humans.

Economic pressures and constraints rather than the desire for "progress" or enormous financial gain encourage OKAMC to adopt certain technologies or reconstruct existing technologies. For instance, the double stapler was developed through a rudimentary experimental method. Such inventions are seen as efficient technological developments. This inventiveness in technological development has much value. It aids efficiency. However, Amish Mennonites do vary in their approach to patenting. The less traditional the group, the more apt they are to apply for a patent.

The Relationship of Values and Beliefs to Technology

Day-to-day existence for the Oak Knoll Amish Mennonite community members depends on a value and beliefs system that constructs for them standards by which to live. This value and belief system focuses on religious freedom and belief in a supreme being, uniformity of community, teaching by using oral histories, civic participation, tilling the soil, worshiping in the home as well

as the church, wearing appropriate dress, and selection of leaders. These values embrace community spirit (Document, November 19, 1994). Other values and beliefs that fashion Amish Mennonite lifestyle include rejection of worldly fashions; shunning (a form of excommunication); control of scientific views and technologies that enter the community; discipline in the church; humility and holiness; fundamentalist lifestyle; conventional Christian marriage; rejection of military service; rejection of oaths; rejection of litigation in courts; and submission of wife and child to the husband and father (November 19, 1994).

The Oak Knoll Amish Mennonite community members see a strong link between allowing a new technology into their community and having to alter their set of values. The introduction of new technologies may influence these values and become associated with a shift in thought and less control over community members. By controlling the technology, they decrease the chance that their values may have to be altered. This particularly applies to those technologies that are seen as laden with secular values, such as television, radio, and computers with access to the Internet. However, there is a discrepancy among the distribution of technologies in the church, school, home, and businesses.

Differential Distribution of Technology in the Community

Anomalies such as the differential distribution of technology across the OAKMC raise questions about ideology and behavior. How do these Amish Mennonites accept technology in one setting but prohibit it in another? This particular anomaly dealing with technology may be explained by cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957). Cognitive dissonance usually is externally induced. Pressure is put upon the individual to conform to group standards, creating a dissonance and conflict between the individual and the individual's beliefs and perceptions. Conflict usually arises with the demands of peers. The individual can reduce this dissonance and conflict either by dissociating himself or herself from the group or by selectively ignoring those perceptions or beliefs that perpetuate the dissonance (Festinger, 1957). Cognitive dissonance explains social situations and how to resolve differences (J. Preissle, personal communication, February 17, 1998). Compartmentalization refers to the notion of sectioning or partitioning off parts of individual's lives to legitimize decisions made (Festinger, 1957). Depending on the social context, people act and react differently. The notion of cognitive dissonance, conflict reduction, and compartmentalization can explain discrepancies about science and technology in the OKAMC.

Distribution of Technologies in the Church

Because the church is the core of the community, the community leaders believe it should be the place with the least amount of technology and the least contact with the outside world. Job, a member of the community, says the reason so little

technology is found in the church is that "God is worshipped though being." He refers to Acts 17:24–25:

> God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things.

Members see no need for pianos or organs, which they view as distractions. My key informant who was my main source of information within the community says the Amish Mennonites believe the spiritual and physical body is the purest form of being. Musical technology represents an artificial manifestation of being. However, my key informant does say, "If there was a technology which would enhance our church service, we would use it." Thus, the addition of a sound system is justified as a different category of technology than a musical instrument. They see this addition as no threat to their community.

However, technologies that carry the voices of outsiders are excluded from the church. These technologies are perceived by the elders to tempt community members to leave the Oak Knoll Amish Mennonite community. This provides another reason for prohibiting television and radio. Computers may be used unless they are linked to the World Wide Web. Their belief is that temptation lurks out on the web for the OKAMC children to find. This temptation may be sufficient to draw them away from the community. Further, they believe that the balance that maintains this community is very fragile. The elders fear upsetting the balance when they contemplate adding any technology laden with secular values. The world-connecting technologies might be contrasted with the sound system that transmits the church service over the phone to invalid members not only to pose no threat, but also to foster the church's goal. Again, technological additions to the church service are allowed only if those additions were seen to somehow enhance the physical and spiritual body. Therefore, the church elders limit themselves to a speaker system, a telephone, electricity, and air conditioning. The majority of the church saw no conflict with their values by adding this technology; no cognitive dissonance occurred.

Distribution of Technologies in the School

The school is such a reflection of the church and what it represents that technologies are kept to minimum. The principal considers the school a "training center for future church members" (E. Hostetler, personnel communication, November 11, 1996). The school has a few more items of technology than the church; in addition to a telephone, air conditioning, and electricity, it has a duplicating machine and a reading machine (an antiquated machine that gauges both speed and reading comprehension of the students) just updated with two computers

used exclusively for word processing. The principal says that school has two purposes: (1) basic education, and (2) Christian development. Therefore, the OKAMC education takes on a holistic training of mind and body utilizing both formal and informal opportunities to teach both the practical and spiritual ideals to becoming an Amish Mennonite. A debate about the teaching of word processing with computers in the school lasted for 10 years. The issue of allowing a new technology into the community is complex. The elders make the decision pending a final approval by a majority of the church congregation. To date, the congregation has voted with the elders. The voting of the congregation is usually a formality and has been so since this community became in existence. However, the elders of the church wear many hats. They serve on the school board and are all business people. Therefore, they are trying to balance the traditional and the innovative for what they see as best for their community.

Distribution of Technologies in the Family

Because people in the Amish Mennonite families have so much contact with the outside world, more technologies are found in the homes than in the church or school. I will focus on one home. Henry's home has a washing machine, electricity, telephone, stove, refrigerator, and oven. However, it lacks a television, a radio, a dishwasher, and a clothes dryer. These excluded technologies would make it "easier" on the families. For the OKAMC the issue is the degree of ease and the avoidance of too much leisure time. They prefer not to get comfortable lest they forget their mission in life—to prepare for the afterlife, not earthly existence. This Amish Mennonite's home is not uncommon in the OKAMC. Henry is a second-generation Amish Mennonite to this area. He has much technology in his wrought-iron business. Henry is also a part-time photographer who uses contemporary equipment.

Many forms of transportation are used by the OKAMC. Henry owns a white 1989 truck that he uses at home, at work, and on the farm. Modes of transportation for public and private business are necessary. The choices of colors, however, are limited. Colors are typically those that are considered neutral by the OKAMC. However, makes of cars can range from the cheapest American-made cars to Mercedes-Benz. The color was more limited than type.

Cognitive dissonance in this particular Amish Mennonite community is especially evident within individual families. They see that cognitive dissonance happens in their community, but refuse to talk about it with an outsider. Contact with secular families and more liberal Mennonite families has created conflicts about adding technology to the homes. However, this conflict, as opposed to what occurs in the church and school, varies from family to family. For example, one family may choose to have a dishwasher after much consideration, whereas the neighboring house may not have a dishwasher but a trash compactor. Social contact with other families exposes the OKAMC to new ideas and new technologies.

These exposures create more external peer pressure and produce more internal conflict for individuals.

Distribution of Technologies in the Businesses

Technology in business is where the greatest discrepancy in technology is seen compared to the church, school, and home. The OKAMC businesses are necessary for economic survival of the family and community. The OKAMC must sell their products and services to people outside their community, and in doing so they must also make a profit. They seek a balance between their traditional values and their sustainability as a community. Some technologies such as fax machines, answering machines, and computers are seen as necessary and useful items to expedite their work. The interface between OKAMC and the secular world is business. Thus, the businesses must be able to communicate (seen as in limited contact) effectively with the secular world. To accomplish this, the OKAMC have to adjust some of their beliefs. However, even in the businesses, television and radio are excluded, again because of the exposure (seen as more contact with more of a chance of obtaining secular values) they would bring to the outside world with its different set of values.

Merl's cabinet shop has technology comparable to non-Mennonite shops. These include spray glue machines, compression machines, post formers, radial arm saws, band saws, and fork lifts. A large laser beam, for specific tasks, has been added to the table saw to increase its accuracy. The post former rounds the front edges of countertops. The front office and showroom has Christian a cappella music playing from CDs. This playing of music signals customers this is a Christian shop. It shows the customer who the Amish Mennonites are and reaffirms by modeling what they believe. Similarly, Paul's welding shop has a fax machine, a copier, fork lifts, metal cutting shears, form breakers, iron workers, plasma cutters, band saws, hydraulic pipes and tubing benders, and an air compressor. Again, each machine performs a specific task. For example, Paul uses the plasma unit to cut aluminum and stainless steel, which cannot be cut with the more conventional oxygen-acetylene torches.

Each decision about using technology is careful and deliberate. For example, Paul delayed purchasing a fax machine, answering machine, copier, and an updated metal bender until he built a new office and shop. As for the businesses, the choice of technologies is individually based. However, these businesses recognize that the use of television, the World Wide Web, and the radio lie outside of the limits. Each owner is given leeway to make distinct choices. However, only in the businesses does leeway exist. Cognitive dissonance reaches an apex here in the area of business. A conflict between values found in the church and school and values found in business practices creates a very stressful situation for many. Decisions to introduce a new technology must be carefully weighed, legitimizing

each technology for adoption in the workplace. These same technologies may not be comparably acceptable for use in the church, school, or family.

The OAKMC businesses must be flexible enough to adapt to a competitive business worlds. However, the businesses are controlled by the doctrine of the church. Even in earlier times, the implementation of technology was balanced with accountability to the OKAMC's God. This thinking requires a careful balance of religious ideology and economic priorities.

Implications and Conclusions

What can we learn about limiting technologies from these groups? Can we learn lessons about our own sustainability from such communities?

Lesson 1—Balancing Ideology and Sustainability

This particular utopian group has procedures for selecting their technology. These procedures serve to protect the community from technology that they believe possess harmful values. Therefore, they are very precise with what their beliefs are in order for a thoughtful examination of new technologies. The elders are aware that negotiation is evident within the business arena, but they are also aware where negotiation will end—between the church and school. The home is caught between the non-negotiation world and the negotiated world of survival and sustainability. Nevertheless, the OKAMC teaches us that conversations among communities regarding thoughtful procedures for examining implementation of new technology are needed. I suggest that conversations must take place to foster a sustainable society. Conversations can include, but are not limited, to emphasizing voluntary cooperation, and the ability of communities to live by their own efforts and resources. This leads to an awareness of our responsibilities as stakeholders in controlling appropriate technologies "that create the least amount of disturbance to the environment and that can be used sparingly enough to insure that the environment can be allowed to replenish itself" (Rifkin, 1985, p. 93).

Barbour (1989) says the direction of technology involves ethical values such as justice, freedom, and the environment. Technology seems to have offered humans power, control, and the prospect of overcoming our helplessness and dependency. Technology has not brought the personal fulfillment or social well being it promised by being powerful beyond our control.

Wisdom is necessary for applying technology in the world. This balancing of technological responsibility with technological growth is a necessary component on which to reflect. Perhaps the greater society can learn to cultivate a critical examination of technology. My key informant said, "We use technology when can control it, not it controlling us" (Interview, April 15, 1994). Paul emphasized that the OKAMC must have technology that can be managed. Management allows control over technology.

Lesson 2—Envisioning Technology as a Means not an End

The word technology has multiple meanings. At the most basic level, technology refers to human activities, as well as objects. Technology also refers to human activities, as well as to objects (Makenzie & Wajeman, 1985). Finally, technology refers to what people know as well as what they do (Layton, 1993). Technological items are useless without the know-how to use them, repair them, design them, and make them (Makenzie & Wajeman, 1984). Studying technology only becomes problematic when we expect the definition to be uniform from culture to culture. Thus, a reevaluation of the definition of technology may be helpful.

Lesson 3- Recognizing that Technology
Contributes to the Social Shaping of Society

The OKAMC knows that technology may/can define who they are and their purpose. They also know that the limitations that they put on the entrée of technology into their society limits their power within the greater society. Langin (1994) suggests that technological development is a driving force for social change as well as the central component of power politics. For many individuals in the secular world, the way of thinking about and usage of technology represents the most efficient way to change their lives with the purpose of making it better, easier, and more productive. This directly links with controlling the power within a system.

What I want to suggest here is that today's consumers in the United States should more critically examine proposed technologies. Milbrath (1989) writes, "the more our lives are dependent on clever technology, the more vulnerable we are to breakdown and injury" (p. 20). In light of developments since September 11, 2001, we, as a global community, need to reconcile the advancement of technologies with sustainability.

With this in mind, lifestyles should be consciously chosen so that ecosystems remain viable to nourish a high quality of life. Milbrath (1989) suggests that we want a society and an environment that will allow people, as individuals, to make the best of their situation and to take personal actions to achieve this quality in living. Perhaps Wordsworth and other groups that have struggled with the ethical tensions produced by the implications of the growth of technological products created by humans can help us become aware of the delicate balance that we should maintain with technology.

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Denise K. Crockett received her Ph.D. from the University of Georgia in 1999. She had participated in a 7-year study of an Amish Mennonite community in the Southeast. The title was *Science Education in an Amish Mennonite Community and School: An Examination of perception and Application*. Dr. Crockett is presently a Licensed Professional Counselor/Intern under the supervision of Chrys Harris, Ph.D. in the Family Therapy & Trauma Center, 311 Bennett Center Drive, Greer, SC 29650. The practice specializes in the prevention, assessment (therapeutic and forensic), and treatment of emotional trauma, specifically Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). E-mail: doctordenise12@hotmail.com