Abstention from the Electronic Commons: Autonomy versus Universal Service

Sarah B. Cornell
L563, Information Policies, Economics and the Law
Professor Alice Robbin
May 3, 2004

"Only connect."
E.M. Forster, *Howards End*

INTRODUCTION

Efforts of public policy and technology advocates have been focused on achieving universal service in information and communication technologies (ICTs) since the mid-1990s. Providing technology services to those individuals and communities who want these technologies is often a struggle of wills and a complicated process of negotiation. Technology advocates have also struggled to understand why an individual or a community would choose not to foster the use of ICTs. Most of the digital divide literature addresses how to achieve universal service by influencing and adapting the needs and wants of individuals and communities. This paper addresses the role of autonomy and individual choice in Americans' use or non-use of technology. I will also address whether the acceptance of a condition of autonomy can be integrated into universal service policy and technology advocacy.

PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS

The struggle between individual goals and community goals is squarely placed in the intersection of philosophy and economics. Current public policy is based on the pragmatism of James and Peirce, the Pragmatic Instrumentalism of Dewey, and neoliberalism, which have been the foundation of the "growth economy" in effect since the 1980s.

The pragmatism of John Dewey

The pragmatism of Charles Sanders Peirce and William James was one of the first American public philosophies. Pragmatism has certainly become, as Hickman notes, the most influential public philosophy (1996, 198). Pragmatism is also the most public of the influential philosophies. Dewey reformulated pragmatism as pragmatic instrumentalism, which emphasizes individual inquiry and the scientific formulation of knowledge.

Dewey's "instrumental" philosophy includes a broad definition of technology: "the tools and methods of productive inquiry" (Hickman 1990). Dewey's definition of technology has been reworked by many later philosophers, including Martin Heidegger, who defines technology as a revealing of the natural way of things. Modern technology, however, is a challenging of the natural way of things (1977, 14).

Dewey required that technology be responsible. Responsible technology rests on responsible inquiry, where values are defined and subsequently evolve. In this same way, technology as a class of tools must evolve. Responsibility requires flexibility on the part of the individual and his or her values, and also the tools themselves. Dewey equated democracy with education and saw that "the paths to technological revolution ... lead not to the cheap talk of individualism that is most often a cover for retreat from common action, but to a true individuality that enables children and adults alike to undertake a lifelong quest to develop their capacities to the fullest extent, whatever those capacities may be" (Hickman 1996).

One should be responsible to one's own experience and values, not to a single principle or external set of values. There is, however, a collectivized set of values that come *from* individual inquiry and experience. Like individuals themselves, they are considered and required to be flexible, but Dewey does not allow for complete anarchy and unstructured individualism. Dewey's "My Pedagogic Creed" (1897) reveals that in the educational process, children are to be exposed to the thought and experience of those around them and before them, and through this experience will learn to conduct their own responsible inquiry.

Because a new individual's inquiry is based on the inquiry of others before him or her, Dewey expects that their inquiry will find a place in the core set of values already in existence. Although their intersection is rife with struggle, the individual and the community are inseparable: conduct should be social, but only because it is by nature social (Dewey 1922; see also Fesmire 2003, 11). One cannot reduce Dewey to valuing the individual or valuing the group because his philosophy is "holistic" (Marshall 1996; Dewey 1897), but he does advocate the "love of society" and focuses on the goals which a good society can achieve (Dolhenty 2004). Therefore, American pragmatic government relies on individuals to achieve a group goal (Stone 2002, 214). However, when individual values do not converge with the values of the group we find adoption differences, and power struggles result.

Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism is a primarily economic point of view which has been in ascendancy for the last quarter of the 20th century. The values of freedom, equality, non-interference by government in the market, and expansionism characterize this philosophy. Although it is an economic philosophy, its mechanisms are based on and affect in turn social interactions.

Neoliberalism as an expansionist policy is intertwined with the exportation of democracy (see Sen 1999). The basis of interactions in neoliberalism is the freedom and fairness of the transaction process. In an ideal system, there is no intended outcome as there is in socialism or communism, so that individuals may seek their own best ends. In a rational and free market all will get the best result that they deserve. Such a market economy is not necessarily based on individual or corporate greed, according to neoliberal economists, but rather "powerful systems of values and norms" (Sen 1999, 262). Neoliberal market interactions therefore place the responsibility for individual success squarely on the shoulders of the individual.

Neoliberalism requires the self-promotion or "entrepreneurship" of individuals, communities, and even states (Treanor 2004). There is a significant element of evolutionary psychology functioning in the new information economy: success is awarded to the fittest and the most willing to play the game. The neoliberal economy grows because of an evolutionary imperative of the individual. In essence, neoliberalism relies on the individual to reach a market goal: economic growth (see Stone 2002).

The neoliberal market economy requires flexibility on the part of individuals as does Dewey's pragmatism, but flexibility in this case is required so that the individual may be able to play any role needed in the market so that his or her own survival is assured. Flexibility on the part of

individuals, communities, and states is also required so that they continue to develop along with the trends. Okun (1975, 86) rests his theories on the assumption that, "reflecting traditional values … most Americans would rather run races for their own prizes rather than run errands for their leader's glory." Thus, neoliberal sentiments rest on the belief that it is an individual's responsibility to pursue self-betterment and adapt to new technologies at all times (see also Stone 2002, 17).

Where pragmatism and neoliberalism intersect

American philosophy has always valued the individual, but differences arise in how the philosophy or policy is framed: Is the community an aggregate of individuals and their values, or is it a "theater" where consumers scramble for wealth and social recognition (Diggins 1994, 379; see also Tocqueville)?

There is a significant difference, as my later discussion of the literature on the digital divide will bear out, between the society as an aggregate of autonomous individuals and a society which includes the actions of individuals acting in their own interests in the same arena. The former provides for individuals developing their own values and then together formulating a collective set of values. By definition this is an inclusive society, because the entire population is involved in formulating collective values. The latter relies on the individual and his choices, but already knows which values will be most contributive or valuable to the workings of the group or market.

Both Dewey and the neoliberals require participation (even presuppose it) because it is a significant nonviolent method of maintaining order. Regarding individual participation in society and the adoption of technology, Dewey requires individual participation in the responsible adoption and development of technology. The neoliberals take technology and its advancement as a given, and then require participation in its advancement or rejection of it through market means. Critics of the neoliberal system protest, saying that those who do not participate are told that they "have failed in some way" (Treanor 2004). If taken literally, yes, non-participants have failed indeed: they have not contributed their voices and values to the neoliberal "system of values and norms" (1999, 262). Since participation is required to maintain order, the requirement to participate is not surprising: according to Stone (2002, 119), "we allow all kinds of harms in the name of the free market" because law and morality are separate.

Rationality is the basis for the neoliberal and pragmatist ideal of the ever-improving individual and group. Rational sciences should always be oriented toward the future, and should always be improving "the lot of human beings" (Marshall 1996, 58). Wachtel (1983) considers Freud's ideas a major factor in the personalizing of economic individualism. We should not only be out for our own benefit economically, but psychologically as well: "by the nineteenth century the legitimizing of the unconstrained pursuit of private gain had reached proportions that completely reversed traditional views of the rules and ideas by which life was to be conducted" (123).

In this sense the two philosophies speak in concert, but with very different agendas. Either way, individual choices, if they differ from the expected, throw a wrench in the workings of society; this is perhaps why Wachtel (1983, 135) refers to our "problematically individualistic society." I will concentrate in this paper on the ways that the decision made by an individual to not adopt a

technology, new or old, complicates the goals of social policies involved in narrowing the digital divide and reaching universal service.

Autonomy

Autonomy is self-management, whether individual or collective. At times the only visible result of autonomy is the rejection of the tyranny of the majority (Wilhelm 2000, 38-40). An autonomous individual or group (i.e. one whose self-management is well-developed) does not automatically abstain from collective goals, social or technological trends, or even progress in general. It is not my intention to excuse all autonomous individuals from technology use, although most philosophers consider non-participation part of the full range of choices available to the autonomous individual, and consider exploring a full range of choices to be part of living to one's fullest potential.

Neoliberalism and pragmatism both claim to privilege the individual. They both also claim to promote personal autonomy while they integrate individual needs into group needs and a healthy economy. Wachtel calls the individualism in effect in America today "atomism" which he equates with a "superficial conformity, which is simply the *vehicle* for effective individual advancement and competition" (his italics, 1983, 135). He calls himself an "individualist," though only in terms of his belief in civil liberties, equity, equality and the "inviolable dignity of the person" (138). The movement to foster individual autonomy is not new: Thoreau's *Walden* is about the possibility "that an individual might actually exert more control over his or her life. Freedom is the unsettling message of *Walden*, independence its underlying theme" (Fox 2002, 142).

Marshall criticizes individual autonomy as the "central plank of Western liberal education" using the philosophy of Foucault (Marshall 1996, 1). Foucault, according to Marshall, "provides the basis for a powerful critique of the post-Enlightenment ideal of personal autonomy. It is not just that this ideal is difficult to attain in education but that it is fundamentally incoherent; instead of liberating the individual and guaranteeing independence it promotes dependence, subjection, and domination" (1). Marshall considers personal autonomy an "important aim, if not *the* aim, of education" (his italics, 213), so he is critical of the pragmatic and neoliberal reinterpretation of autonomy, not autonomy itself.

The digital divide debates and public policies center on freedom and equality and how we as a nation or global community are to remove constraints to freedom and provide the capacity to enjoy one's freedom. What we see right now is a conflation of liberty, freedom, and autonomy. Autonomy is clearly addressed in American political thought as a much-debated condition of democracy, but is autonomy addressed in the digital divide literature?

CONTENT ANALYSIS

Public policy regarding technology and the digital divide has functioned under the auspices of pragmatism and neoliberalism since the discourse began in the mid-1990s. Authors, policymakers, politicians, and technology activists all work from some premise of pragmatism and/or neoliberalism. Discussions of autonomy and how individuals demonstrate their autonomy within ICT policy, electronic community building, or economic change and development are no different.

This content analysis will explore the disconnection between the ostensibly pro-individual efforts to provide universal ICT service and the autonomous individual's choices to abstain from ICT use.

There appears to be a gradation of acceptance of autonomy and the choice to abstain in current literature:

1. Acceptance of a condition of individual autonomy.
2. Consideration of individual autonomy within the construct of democratic society.
3. Consideration of abstention as a right of the autonomous individual or group.

These levels of consideration of autonomy are by no means restricted to the study of technology use and work to narrow the digital divide. Reformulated for the task at hand, they are:

1. Acceptance of the role that autonomy plays in technology use.
2. Acceptance of the need to adjust individual or group needs in order to encourage technology use.
3. Consideration of persistent non-use as a right of the autonomous individual or group.

Level 1:
Acceptance of the role that autonomy plays in technology use

The first and second levels of acceptance often coalesce, but I will consider them separately because significant authors in the digital divide and ICT literature do not even consider the possibility of non-use. This is often a function of the advocacy position the writer holds (see Schement 2001, 2003; Kranich 2001). The need to convince an audience of the need for *sufficient* service cannot be won by simply asking for enough attention -- sufficiency is usually won only by asking for more than one needs. The literature that merely "accepts" the role of autonomy in choosing to use computers or other ICTs often assumes that these autonomous choices will lead to ICT use. In general, this portion of the digital divide literature asserts that if only the underserved population *could* make autonomous choices, they would be using ICTs already (see Pinkett and O'Bryant 2003; Gordo 2003; Tapscott 1996).

Jorge Schement, in his article "Imagining Fairness: Equality and Equity of Access in Search of Democracy" (2002) points out that the American conviction that "access to information and communications technologies is the primary policy tool for enabling all citizens to participate in those economic, political, and social activities fundamental to a democratic society that is also a good society" and that this leads to his assertion that "an accessible National Information Infrastructure (NII) is the essential ingredient for overcoming social fragmentation and enabling participation" (see also Jennings and Zeitner 2003).

This level of acceptance is also characterized by "tolerance" as Voltaire describes: one can be free as long as one doesn't "disturb the public order" (quoted in Marshall 1996, 63). Although this sentiment might also be applied to those who accept that there will always be non-users, Voltaire's words are apt here because this group assumes that everyone is playing the same game ("the public order"), and that our lot is improving in generally the same direction, regardless of our individual choices within the existing framework. Both Bellamy and Taylor (1998, 109) and Jennings and

Zeitner (2003) assume that access to the "information superhighway" will always be expanding, but this assumption completely ignores the possibility of stasis or individual adoption choices.

There is little or no explicit discussion in this portion of the literature of voluntary non-use of ICTs. Some of this research suggests that there are indeed individuals who choose not to go online and their reasons are sometimes cited in brief, but non-user participation in the community outside of ICT use and their reasons for non-use are seldom investigated in depth (see Gordo 2003; Warschauer 2002, 2003).

Level 2:
Consideration of individual autonomy within the construct of democratic society

The second level of acceptance of autonomous choices is characterized by authors and organizations that accept that people have made choices against technologies thus far and attempt to either change the minds of the individual or community or to adapt the technology to their needs. This group also reinforces pragmatist and neoliberal worldviews, in that they rely heavily on individual rationality, making change and building consensus in a democracy through "rational persuasion and voluntary behavior change" (Stone 2002, 307). This group primarily privileges the polis in terms of technology adoption: if technology is good for the group, individuals should participate.

Most digital divide research and policy discussions focus on the fact that there are people who cannot connect to the internet or use computers because of disability, language barriers, distance from technological centers, or lack of literacy, training, economic means, or education. This focus “reflect[s] the normative structure of liberal political thought” (Robbin 2002).

This portion of the literature accepts the existence of persistent non-users because the authors must accept the results of their own research. For example, the 2000 Pew Internet and American Life Survey (Lenhart 2000) found that about 31 million Americans were positive that they would not get internet access. The 2003 Pew survey (Lenhart 2003) found 24% of Americans were non-users, and 17% were "net dropouts". The gradations of use and non-use employed by the Pew study include "Net Evaders" (20% of non-internet users), who live "close to the internet" but are not users themselves. Despite these finely defined levels of use, these authors struggle with the concept of voluntary non-use. Occasionally, a researcher highlights the story of someone who simply will not 'log on,' but even in the best of research the individual's stated choice to not have or use computers or the internet is framed as a disability born of social disconnection or ignorance and misunderstanding of "what the internet has to offer."

The literature on internet non-use began in the mid-nineties with the binary options of connection and disconnection in terms of the "digital divide." The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) published a study in 1995 that suggested that universal service should not be connected only to telephone service: "While a standard telephone line can be an individual's pathway to the riches of the Information Age, a personal computer and modem are rapidly becoming the keys to the vault." The earliest literature usually attributed the digital divide to economic causes, at a time when public policy prescribed subsidizing the distribution of

expensive hardware to expand computer ownership and building infrastructure in underdeveloped areas to expand network availability.

The reasons given for non-use at that time are characterized by lack of training, lack of social-circle support (that is, "I don't use email because none of my family and friends do"), or lack of cultural relevance ("this website doesn't look like it was designed with African Americans in mind") (Jackson et al. 2003). These characterizations of non-users fall short of considering the possibility of voluntary non-use and suggest that modifications of the technology or of the non-user will contribute to technology adoption.

The rhetoric of level 1 was a determining characteristic, as is that of level 2. For example, the most recent Pew study (Lenhart 2003) describes some non-users as those who "proudly reject the Internet and proclaim their independence from the online world." This suggests that autonomous choices are not only possible but noble, given the terms "proudly" and "independence." The Pew studies rest firmly in this group because clearly one *should* be online, and it is our responsibility as a society to demonstrate to non-users what ICTs have to offer and to make sure that as many participate as possible.

This portion of the literature rests many of its conclusions on findings that show use of the internet or other ICTs correlating with offline advantages. Bimber's (1998, 2000) work confirms that political activity on the internet is primarily in the interest of people who would also be politically active offline, which reinforces the already existing (offline) socio-economic structure of a community. Wilhelm discusses how information technology might actually cause greater participation differences (2000, 39), but this correlation does not only apply to advanced technologies: in 1998, all but 6% of U. S. households had telephones, but 43.5% of families dependent on public assistance did not have a telephone at home, and "50% of female-headed households living at or below the poverty line lack even this basic technology" (Benton Foundation 1998).

Frankston (2004) has pointed out that "connectivity" is the topic whenever anyone writes about telecommunications, Internet use, or media consolidation, and that attention to the wider issue should also widen the conversation about the digital divide and expanding ICT use. Rifkin (2001) also exhorts: "The gap between the possessed and the dispossessed is wide, but the gap between the connected and the disconnected is even wider. The world is fast developing into two distinct civilizations – those living outside the electronic gates of cyberspace and those living inside." Sullivan et al. (2002) propose that political capital (a subset of social capital) affects the individual's participation in the public sphere, and by extension, that "citizens who are more knowledgeable about, and active in, the community would be more knowledgeable about, and more likely to participate in, the communications technology available to them." Thus Sullivan et al. conclude that "economic resources matter for personal ownership of technology."

These authors and community technology activists often see technology as the "great equalizer" (Clodfelter 2004), in part because of the idea that "knowledge work has no gender bias" (Tapscott 1996). James Bohland's study of cultural barriers to technology use demonstrates how traditional values are turned upside down by computers in the home and workplace: women demonstrate aptitude with computers, but the type of work done on computers (family finances, for example) is

supposed to be performed by men, whose "cultural construction" does not allow for office work. In one Appalachian community, Bohland found that women would manipulate the hardware and software, and leave the actual decision-making to the men. Thus, creative adaptation has contributed to women's and men's ability to participate in online life, while not entirely leaving behind the cultural structure of their community (n.d.; see also Looker 2003).

The Pew study uses descriptors like "exploit workarounds" and "having others in their home do online searches for information they want" to describe the internet use of "Net Evaders." The term "workarounds" implies that people want the information but cannot use the technology themselves, and the current digital divide literature counts this as a disability, even if this is simply the way individuals choose to make use of the technology (Lenhart 2003).

Authors are not consistent in considering whether using "workarounds" counts as use or non-use, so comparison is difficult. Reluctant and/or very occasional users, even those who only use computers at work, may count as users in many studies, and their reasons for being reluctant or finding workarounds are often not even researched. Mueller and Schement's (1996) telephone study lists many similar workarounds for those living without a home telephone connection: using a phone at work, neighbors, or pay phones, personal visits to use telephones or relay information, mail, and family gatherings. Those without home computers or home network connections must manage their computer use in very similar ways. Seventeen percent of non-internet users were once users, so there are many non-users who are already familiar with what arrangements need to be made in order to gain temporary access and the information they need. Because this group has grown since the last publication of the Pew study in April 2000 (Lenhart 2000), when net dropouts were 13% of the respondents, it is possible that there are a growing number of non-users who will be able to "exploit" similar workarounds. These statistics demonstrate that for both basic and advanced technologies, non-ownership means exerting even more effort to make use of the technology, although much of the existing research presumes that non-users consider technology "out of sight, out of mind."

If it is true that "part of being poor means being unconnected to public institutions," then it is not surprising that "many low-income people themselves are skeptical about the value of digital technologies" (Benton Foundation 1998). If even prospective local electricity, telephone and internet service providers need to be convinced that they have a viable market (Clodfelter 2004), then technology advocates certainly have their work cut out for them in changing the minds of the disconnected.

Technology activists and this portion of the literature use three general concepts to convince non-users to become users: social, consumer, and economic development. All of these methods in some way modify the autonomy of the individual through advocacy of certain types of technological needs. Marshall describes the neoliberal adaptation of the autonomous individual into an "autonomous chooser." The individual is no longer "an independent and free chooser but someone whose choices have been structured through the manipulation of needs and interests" (1996, 213).

The adaptation of individual choices is evident in most of the work done by community technology programs, and in most of the published research on the digital divide because there is a constant undercurrent of seeking ways to bring people on board. Most public policy on the digital divide is

of this group: universal service efforts since the first post road have exploited opportunities to fill needs as well as to manufacture them. The ends, of course, are noble: “when citizens enjoy access, they and society benefit meaningfully, but when some lag behind, all of society suffers” (Schement 2003). Even libraries base programs on this idea: if someone is not using technology, he must not be able to use it; therefore it is society’s duty to provide the skills needed to participate. In Clodfelter's rural county, the individuals who began community technology programs were essentially outsiders who knew what technology was available, and were responsible for convincing the community and government of the benefits of that technology.

Many advocates of technology education think that ICTs amplify the status quo, and that their job is to remedy the discrimination and disenfranchisement in the status quo as a whole, in addition to the discrimination and disenfranchisement online. Wilhelm even suggests that ICTs are really an extension of unregulated capitalism (i.e. neoliberalism), not a new democratic frontier on a level playing field. In order to combat "information poverty" (2000, 40), Wilhelm recommends in-depth social and governmental programs. In addition to Wilhelm, the Pew Internet and American Life Project, Warschauer, the Benton Foundation, Bohland, Servon, and many other authors recommend narrowing the digital divide by the using the same methods as those used to fight other forms of disenfranchisement, because the economic digital divide is a symptom of the traditional economic divide (Bohland n.d.). Thus the metaphor of the digital divide has been effective in making efforts to bring people online a part of existing social equality programs. The Benton Foundation (1998) simply asks whether "society's traditional commitment to universal access to telecommunications keeps pace with changing technology." Unfortunately, the rhetorical effect of “universal service” as a policy term neglects autonomous choices not to use ICTs.

According to the Benton Foundation (1998), schools and libraries have been the traditional means of assisting in access to ICT use but are not equipped to bridge the gap themselves. According to Alvarez (2003), "Digital inequality research should concern itself with the transformation of the mechanisms of inequality in the information age." Rifkin adds a caveat that "the migration of human commerce and social life to the realm of cyberspace" will isolate those left behind faster and more definitively than with any other technological change, because "one segment of the human population is no longer able even to communicate with the other in time and space" (2001).

Mueller and Schement (1996) find that "the traditional approach hinges on designating a particular service as 'essential' to a decent life," but if Americans are more likely to demand social equality than economic equality (Benton Foundation 1998), then Mueller and Schement's subversion of the "traditional welfarist approach to universal service" is a necessary one. The Benton Foundation recommends that computers will have to be made more a part of social lives in low-income neighborhoods in order to expand computer use and ownership in those communities, but accepts that "low-income people should decide for themselves how these tools can best serve their interests" (1998).

Bohland's evidence demonstrates that "the principal barriers are not technological, but are associated with the culture and social context" of Appalachian communities (n.d.). For example, language and dialect differences make the internet very difficult to use for medical reference services. He recommends that community technology programs must be developed according to

"culturally-sensitive models" especially if they are administered by outsiders (see also Jackson et al. 2003; Postman 1992; Rifkin 2001).

In much the same way that activists attempt to teach people how to be smart consumers, they also attempt to teach non-users how to be smart members of the information economy. They extend the reach of non-users by extending their ability to use the commodity of information. This is simply one arm of the battle against marketization, controlling access, and the commodification of information (Gordo 2003; Pinkett and O'Bryan 2003). Bellamy and Taylor (1998) and others call this a consumer democracy, where citizens affect the direction of business via their decisions to purchase or not to purchase certain goods.

In a similar vein, some of the digital divide literature is concerned with simply making good use of the internet and related ICTs to diminish other societal divides. For example, Alvarez attempts to focus "on the processes through which Internet use can be made to generate positive outcomes" (2003). Authors like Alvarez consider it the responsibility of the community to bring non-users on board, despite warnings that we simply do not know whether the web has only made participation easier for those who already participate, or made it easier for all to participate (Colebatch 2002, 46). Not knowing which is true has made many policies possible that attempt to make sure that the former is not the only effect ICTs have on political participation.

Blanca Gordo (2003) proposes an innovative "solution" to the economic digital divide: "Today's IT represent most important enabling tools to build new jobs with social technical abilities, including low wage occupations." In this way, entry-level and low-wage workers would be exposed to technology on the job, and presumably would be more likely to seek out technology for their home. Bohland's research is based in a proposition that that technology will play a large part in the development of rural areas (n.d.), but that the cost of national internet service providers (ISPs) like America Online and the long-distance charges required to use them are prohibitive. Local ISPs are touted as part of the answer for rural technological development that is accessible to households at typical rural Appalachian incomes. The 1999 NTIA report states: "at the lower income level, those in urban areas are more than twice as likely to have Internet access as those earning the same income in rural areas" (see also Kline 2000; Mueller and Schement 1996; Looker 2003).

This portion of the existing literature approaches participation in ICTs as an "ought implies can" issue, where the author attempts to explain why certain groups can't access technology or information, when clearly they ought to be doing so. The next portion of the literature attempts to turn Kant's phrase to their advantage, and approach the intersection of personal choice and connectivity as a "can implies ought" issue, asking why, if one can use a computer, the internet, or any ICT, one would choose to abstain.

Level 3:
Consideration of persistent non-use as a right of the autonomous individual or group

I have found that the discussion of voluntary non-use is actually taking place far removed from the scholarly literature. Those that consider non-use an autonomous individual's right often are those who have made the choice themselves not to use a technology in particular or the whole class of ICTs.

In large part, the writers and philosophers I include here use the same sources for their defense of autonomous choice as technology advocates. Dewey requires the development of a strong sense of "responsible inquiry," although he also assumes that technology will be a tool in that inquiry. Using a definition of technology like Dewey's, those who do not use ICTs are indeed using technology every day, with perhaps more awareness of its capabilities and their needs than mainstream ICT users. These non-users/authors also accept that each individual is responsible for formulating their experience and values in the context of the group. Fox's discussion of the Luddite tradition in American literature reveals that the origins of "antirationalism" are closely related to the origins of the rationalism of pragmatism and liberalism in the nineteenth century (2002, 60).

Who are these individuals who choose not to use computers? Mueller and Schement (1996) found female heads-of-household who decide against a home telephone line in order to have better control over their children's social connections, and Schement (2004) found parents who decide not to support the connectivity of their children's schools because it is more important to them to know exactly how and when their children access the internet. One woman swears never to use the computers her husband has at home because she's too busy to learn how to use them, and she's never enjoyed working at a keyboard anyway (Curry 2004). Some individuals who have "downshifted" live without computers in their home because of economic choices. These choices may overlap with economic restrictions but the decision would have been made to not own a computer anyway (Schor 1998, 102). Some simple living advocates live without computers in their homes because a computer is an expensive commodity, built to become obsolete and requiring upkeep which lines the pockets of corporations (Berry, 1990). Some rural residents have their needs for community and social contact met quite successfully in daily face-to-face interactions, without the aid of computer mediated communication tools (Clodfelter 2004).

Kline asserts very strongly that it "is wrong to imply that these technologies were irresistible, powerful social forces" (2000, 278). Rural communities sometimes do not support the implementation of technological advancement in their area because the hardware itself (e.g. wires and towers) would change the essential character of their community: the scenery, open space, the shape of the land, to say nothing of the inevitable change of values that arrives when industrial changes occur in an area. Some rural communities are choosing a specific rural character over the changes that technological advancement would bring. Migration from the cities enabled by the expansion of the network would bring encroachment of housing developments and "citified" values that will bring up not only technological issues but also debates over values integral to the rural lifestyle, like hunting, fishing, gun ownership, conservative religion, and agriculture (Clodfelter 2004).

Communities that do support the establishment of community technology centers decide to do so through an unexpected process: Clodfelter has noted that bringing money into their community was not enough of a benefit for rural residents to pursue new technologies. However, if there is no cost to residents or local government, the community is likely to accept the technology. Once a cost is assessed, either monetary or cultural, a community may very well reject the advancing technology.

Kline makes a strong case for the inevitable adaptation of technology, rather than simple "adoption." He outlines the process of rural adaptation and adoption of electric, telephone, automobile, and radio technologies, which reveals a conscious struggle to establish and keep local self-definition of needs (2000, 154). Rural resistance to technology is far from monolithic; instead, rural technology adoption is characterized by "individual modernities" and the individual adaptation of technology (278).

Schor discusses alternatives to “enslaving” technologies which have their own “keeping-up dynamic” in her book *The Overspent American*, and gives many examples of people living without the latest technologies like computers because they change social interactions within families. Individuals’ reasons for doing without amenities and modern “time-savers” like second cars, dishwashers and answering machines are remarkably similar to their reasons for doing without computers in the home (1998, 102-4; 140).

Wendell Berry, a farmer and essayist, proclaims in an essay titled “Why I am not going to buy a computer” that he prefers to remain disconnected from the computer manufacturer's "seduction" of farmers into saving their failing farms by purchasing what he believes is simply a new and expensive piece of equipment. He chooses to remain connected to his established social contacts and to take part in a refusal that would "involve me in the preservation of some cultural goods" (e.g. the routine of writing longhand a manuscript which his wife later types on a manual typewriter). His social contacts are nurtured by what he describes as asking for help: "I have received an abundance of the best of help from my wife, from other members of my family, from friends, from teachers, from editors, and sometimes from readers” (1990, 170-172).

Berry has emphatically defined his own relationship to technology. His reasons for disapproving of the proliferation of machines and computers have wide application: "the machine did away with mystery on the one hand and multiplicity on the other" (1997, 45). In general, he objects very strongly to the "mechanizing" of society: "It is impossible to mechanize production without mechanizing consumption, impossible to make machines out of soil, plants, and animals without making machines also of people" (75).

Neoliberalism asserts that people make decisions based on their own best interest (Okun 1975; Sen 1999), but neoliberalism makes too large a generalization about what those interests entail: people will indeed decide for themselves what level of technological access is best, but they may not choose the highest level of technological access possible as their "best" level of access. People consider their own needs and the needs of those around them to decide how much access is appropriate; so many people are making unexpected choices. Unfortunately, "few have examined the substitution choices and trade-offs made by users on the economic margins" (Mueller and Schement 1996). As a result of neglecting substitutions and tradeoffs made by individuals, researchers have been attempting to solve a problem which people like Berry simply don’t think they have (1990, 189).

The reasons "Net Evaders" have for not using the internet are different from those used by net dropouts and are still more different from those used by the truly disconnected. Mueller and Schement ask: "To what extent do the phoneless prefer to be phoneless? How do they adapt to the absence of telephone service in their everyday lives? What kind of substitutes are most commonly

used? Most fundamentally, what difference does the presence or absence of basic telephone access make to their overall quality of life?" (1996). In this portion of the literature, I find that non-users choose in favor of simplicity, quality of life, and traditional social ties.

Although the primary objective of social capital and participation studies is to emphasize how ICTs can or cannot affect community development and/or individual participation in policymaking and governance, they are often unknowingly discussing alternatives to ICT use. For example, John Gastil (2000) concludes that "face-to-face deliberation may be more appropriate in the political arena because of the nature of political decisions" although his conclusion does not presuppose or require complete disconnection from ICTs.

Much of the literature referred to above assumes that computer-mediated participation, computer ownership and computer use are variables by which we can measure participation in society as a whole. If a wider range of possible technologies is brought into this discourse, we will be able to see more clearly the choices people make "about where they want to be on the continuum of access" (Mueller and Schement 1996).

Okun gives the example of a mother staying at home to raise her children because the family has found it more fitting with their full complement of values to economize in terms of material goods rather than sacrifice family time by seeking additional income (1975, 71). If this family then chooses not to purchase a computer because family funds are required elsewhere (i.e., "their capacity to buy consumer goods and services" is different from another family's capacity), does this count as voluntary disconnection or involuntary disconnection?

Thus it is possible for very socially involved individuals to be disconnected from the ICT network, because of how narrowly the literature defines "connectivity." Choices are also made based on the understanding that technology breaks down traditional social networks, as Putnam (1995) says of electronic entertainment: "electronic technology enables individual tastes to be satisfied more fully, but at the cost of the positive social externalities associated with more primitive forms of entertainment." Putnam's point of view may be outmoded in scholarly discourse, but it is still a functional part of some families' and communities' decision-making processes.

Simplicity activists like Berry, who are choosing in favor of authenticity, humanity, and social ties, find fault with "the cultivation of discontent, the worship of the 'new and better,' the throwaway attitude toward what has until this moment seemed serviceable -- these are the mental structures that have supported our unprecedented industrial growth" (Wachtel 1983, 121). Technology selection, rather than broad acceptance, has made the process of rural adaptation of technologies a cooperative endeavor. Rural community members *choose* "how to weave communication, transportation, and household technologies into daily life" and social change has happened slowly, kept in check by "selective adaptation" (Kline 2000, 281).

Schement and Curtis (1995) found that "in 1930's [sic], Americans spent on average one dollar on information for every six dollars on food. By as early as 1986, this figure had grown to $3.50 for every dollar on food." The cost of connectivity is higher than that of food, so it would need to be valued over food to have that portion of the budget transferred to information needs. Okun calls these "voluntary nonmonetary sacrifices" (1975, 71). People make choices every day and

sometimes make economic choices that appear to be to their own detriment. Decisions are often made for economic reasons on the surface, but underneath there are many layers of reasons, and a lot of time for deliberation and change.

TENSIONS BETWEEN AUTONOMY, PRAGMATISM AND NEOLIBERALISM

A return to autonomy

Outside of a tyrannical state, autonomy will always play a part in individual lives, regardless of the "system" in place and regardless of what restraints that system places on autonomy. Unless the state is truly oppressive, "when all is said and done it is for the person whose life it is to make the final decisions" (Wachtel 1983, 291). Advocates may strive to make technology more attractive and useful, but ultimately they must wait until the person makes a choice themselves.

The rhetoric of "liberty," however, makes people think that pragmatism and neoliberalism foster their autonomy. The way Stone describes the "rational ideal" reveals that the "autonomous individual" supposedly valued by pragmatism and neoliberalism is really very much subject to forces of the group, "where individual actions are brought into harmony through the persuasive power of logic and evidence" (2002, 307). This rational ideal is intended to only aid deliberation, but often compromises the autonomy of its individuals (see also Epstein 1995). Mueller and Schement (1996) acknowledge the difficulty of paternalistic telecommunications policies which "attempt to impose a specific set of choices on users."

Wachtel rejects the pragmatist and neoliberal "growth-obsessed society" (1983, 112), because it has formulated a set of ideal ways to be an individual within this society. The belief that individuals are responsible for themselves alone, will act in their own best interest and should pursue self-improvement at all times is where I diverge from pragmatism and neoliberalism for the purpose of this paper.

Stone's discussion of liberty in the polis is a good place to begin a discussion about the tensions between autonomy and pragmatism, neoliberalism, and the community. She says that "freedom is the essence of what America is about," although it is "ambiguous and complex" (2002, 108). This ambiguity allows for government to interfere with the choices and activities of its citizens if it is "necessary to preserve a community in which individuals can thrive and exercise free choice." The traditional liberal view, this time in the words of Mill, is that the only time the state can exert power over an individual is to prevent harm to others, and that "self-regarding" actions should not be regulated at all (*On Liberty*, cited in Stone 2002, 109). Despite the appeal of Mill's single criterion for liberty, the complexity of the relationship between the individual and society makes it inadequate for use in real-world politics (108-130).

Because community and government always involve some sense of collective interest, people also often believe in "legitimate compulsion" where the individuals are required to participate in collective action (Stone 2002, 110). These duties include participation in the political or judicial process, but also can include observation of regulations in the absence of anyone else's harm. Does "legitimate compulsion" include requiring individuals or communities to participate in new technologies for the good of the larger group? Bohman acknowledges the individual's right to

"refuse to deliberate" and considers it a right of privacy, but upholds that even "voluntary absence" leaves the individual responsible for decisions made in their absence (1996, 38). There may be drawbacks to abstention, but as I have already shown, autonomous individuals may be capable of making this tradeoff work for them.

Personal decisions are made within a social context and can change that social context, which then affects individuals in turn. Wachtel thinks that the problem is that we have continued to strive after economic growth "beyond the point where it brings any real benefits" and that this is because of "the tendency for each person to think only of what he can do to better himself as an individual in the competitive struggle" (1983, 116). This single-mindedness is what neoliberalism and pragmatism *expect*, but I assert that autonomous individuals are not so single-minded, and that self-promotion is not the only value that affects technology adoption decisions.

Wachtel believes that individuals should have a "transactional understanding that integrates our existence as separate individuals and our membership and participation in a web of social relations, and that sees them as but two aspects of the same unity" (1983, 140). In this way, our actions are always made in context. If the structure of society nurtures true self-management, individuals will be able to both formulate what is in their best interests and to pursue their interests and chosen activities free from constraints (Marshall 1996, 56). In fact, Rifkin (2001) makes it clear that an increasingly technological world has created a generation of Americans who value even more highly their autonomy, both online and offline.

Our relationships to technology have changed since the development of advanced technologies, but in ways that the digital divide literature has not addressed. Non-use of ICTs has always essentially been a personal choice. Those who still do not use the internet or own a computer now are abstaining in a world where technology is more embedded every day, so the tensions between the individual, the community, and the economy have mounted. The following tensions are representative of what happens when a society tries to balance the individualism of pragmatism and neoliberalism against individual autonomy:

1) Paternalism leads to the liberty/security tradeoff, where autonomy/liberty is weighed against the responsibility of the state to prevent harms to its citizens.
2) The liberty/equality tradeoff weighs autonomy against the state's responsibility to provide resources and "meaningful choice" by equalizing the prerequisites to liberty.
3) The autonomous individual is often using a different reference group than that which the larger society is using to define their needs and role in society.
4) Needs as defined by the state are balanced against the individual's autonomously defined needs.
5) The individual's relationship to technology, if defined autonomously, may be very different from the relationship as defined by pragmatism or neoliberalism.

Paternalism and the liberty/security tradeoff

Community technology advocates usually make their case in terms of Mueller and Schement's "traditional welfarist approach" as I have discussed in level 2 above. This is the primary conflict between the individual and the community because the paternalistic role of government places it (in pragmatist tradition) in the position of influencing what exactly is in the public's best interest (see

Schneider and Ingram 1993). Most of the time what the government considers good is at least similar to what the individual considers good. There are significant differences in how we define "dependence" on the state.

Do we owe it to the economy to participate in its growth? Do we depend on the state simply because we live here, or do we decide when we are dependent? When people rely on the state for survival, their choices are externally influenced, and less autonomous. Do we have the responsibility to use computers and better ourselves to better the state or community? It is impossible to rest all of our technology adoption decisions on the idea that we wouldn't be where we are today if it weren't for technology. Brown and Duguid (2000, 13) clearly believe that the technology-rich world is the status quo:

> "Even those people who continue to resist computers, faxes, e-mail, personal digital assistants, let alone the Internet and the World Wide Web, can hardly avoid taking advantage of the embedded microchips and invisible processors that make phones easier to use, cars safer to drive, appliances more reliable, utilities more predictable, toys and games more enjoyable, and the trains run on time. Though any of these technologies can undoubtedly be infuriating, most people who complain want improvements, not to go back to life without them."

Brown and Duguid believe that any autonomy possessed by the individual is clearly bounded by inevitable technological advances. As noted above, Voltaire's treatise on tolerance asserts that one can be free as long as one does not "disturb the public order" (quoted in Marshall 1996, 63). Since the "public order" as it stands today includes technological advancement and full participation, then abstention must qualify as disturbing the public order.

In exchange for civic participation, the state is responsible for providing services and security to its citizens. Often this means the prevention of an individual from taking one choice which will restrict their future choices. In essence, the state decides who is capable of "exercising true liberty." Even an autonomous individual is to some extent reliant on the state to establish boundaries for their own safety: "given the problem of dependence, formal rights are the best device we have for protecting the liberty of those to whom we guarantee security" (Stone 2002, 120).

Guaranteeing security is about preventing harm. In this case the state is attempting to prevent the material or accumulative harms of being damaged economically or suffering social exclusion because of not being online or having computer skills. This is an extremely imprecise harm, and compulsory computer use is an outlandish antidote. Should society prevent the first harm or the harm of being forced to participate? Is it even the government's or society's job to prevent the first harm, the loss of income or resources? It may be, according to Mill's single exception to liberty: one cannot enslave oneself (Stone 2002, 110). The American pragmatic society is concerned with preventing individuals from enslaving themselves by not bettering themselves professionally or personally.

Paternalism is pitted against the autonomous individual attempting to prevent amenity effects (such as the aesthetic harm of the rural environment made by the physical requirements of net connection, the environmental harms of computer disposal, invasions of privacy, disturbances of quiet), the emotional and psychological harms of pornography or other inappropriate behavior online, and spiritual and moral harms (Clodfelter 2004).

Accumulative harms are also the object of non-users' preventive measures: some wish to not be a part of the accumulative harm of the degradation of the environment via the inadequate disposal of the toxic components of computer hardware. Non-users also consciously choose face-to-face interaction over computer interaction because they wish to prevent the accumulated effect of losing our face-to-face deliberative skills (Gastil 2000).

Stone enumerates more harms than Mill, all of which are the object of preventive measures on both sides of the individual/group fulcrum. Technology advocates attempt to prevent structural harms (the interference with the community's ability to function) by bringing everyone online, and/or trying to provide everyone with Wilhelm's "antecedent resources" needed to function in a technologically intense environment (2000, 35-38). Individuals and communities who prefer not to use computers for public deliberation are often trying to preserve the same thing: a stable and highly functioning community (Clodfelter 2004).

Stone accepts the fact that "every community permits some kinds" of harms "while it punishes others" (2000, 119). Perhaps this leaves us balanced on the same fulcrum - the community will always be making decisions based on a weighing out of the harms involved, but so will the people. If an autonomous individual makes a decision that deviates from the status quo, and accepts what harm it may cause him or her, (in this case being left out of the technological revolution), does preventing that harm remain the responsibility of government and society?

The liberty/equality tradeoff

Technology advocates generally develop their methods of bringing people online from the point of view of creating equity and/or equality. They are willing to make changes in the allocation of resources to improve some people's lot in the current distribution of resources. A community tries to provide resources and "meaningful choice" by equalizing the prerequisites to liberty (Stone 2002, 108; see also Wilhelm 2000). The Benton Foundation (1998) cites research by Jennifer Hochschild who found that "Americans expect equality in the socializing domain, which includes goods like education, health care, and basic political rights, but we tolerate much wider differentiation in the economic domain." The positive view of liberty then approaches the process of equalizing liberty by bringing problems under control. Autonomous non-users are choosing a different venue for their equality: offline needs instead of the need to be online.

Reference groups: with whom do we compare ourselves?

An autonomous individual must know for him or herself what his or her reference group is before he or she can embark on defining needs and a relationship to technology. Research shows that individual technology adoption has a great deal to do with the individual's reference groups (see Jackson et al. 2003; Kline 2000; Stanley 2003).

Because rural and urban environments are different, rural and urban social lives will be different (Kline 2000, 288). If rural residents do not see their neighbors with broadband net access, then individuals are not very likely to see it as a need or a possibility. On the other hand, individuals' reference groups are growing every day. One's reference group may include not only neighbors, but also characters on television and in the news or in advertising, which concentrates its efforts on influencing what one sees as one's reference group.

Instead of seeing self-defined reference groups as a by-product of autonomy, technology advocates tend to see abstention because of one's reference groups as a community problem or a generalized lack of resources and initiative. It is difficult to draw the line between autonomous abstention and disadvantage at this point. If one simply does not see oneself as the "kind of person" who uses computers (Stanley 2003) then is this self-image a failure on the part of the community to provide you with the appropriate antecedent resources?

Needs

The individual's and the community's definition of needs as they relate to technology are at the heart of the paternalism conflict discussed above. So we need to consider what is being provided or defended: is it essential, and to whom?

The public interest includes what the public, and the individuals that make up the public, think is necessary for good government, good community, and a good life for the individual. Universal service advocates assert that computer use is necessary for as many people as possible. These technology advocates say that it is for the benefit of the individual who must function in the context of the information economy and the information society. However, if a broader definition of "need" is used, like "access to essential services," education, and training, it is not a given that these must involve the most up-to-date technology.

Although it may appear simple or misguided to an outsider, autonomous definition of needs may rest simply on whether a family finds a certain type of technology important "to [their] household's ability to be part of the social and economic community" (Rowe, cited in Benton Foundation 1998). Self-definition of one's needs is essential to my definition of autonomy because a fine definition of needs is central to the success of a non-users argument to persist as such. Non-users like Berry have defined their needs through a very pragmatic method of inquiry. Berry has even developed nine criteria by which he judges whether a new technology is worth adopting (1990, 172).

On the other hand, some late adopters of computers or computer skills have simply waited until their "need" to learn to use the technology has presented itself and there is time and energy to meet that need (Stanley 2003). Mueller and Schement (1996) note that “to some, the absence of a telephone represents deprivation; to others, it is just an inconvenience.” Communities may not seek out access to the ICT infrastructure because they know that technology is not the only way to satisfy communal needs (Clodfelter 2004). Autonomous individuals have adjusted for the technology they lack, and as Sunstein (2001) says, they "make choices so as to promote wider understanding and better formation of their own preferences."

The acceptance of an external definition of one's needs without due inquiry leads to purchased computers sitting in boxes (Stanley 2003) and unsuccessful community technology programs that teach people how to use Microsoft Word when they will never be required to use it at work (Clodfelter 2004). Wachtel (1983, 133) firmly believes in the "continuing feedback and interplay between personal and social context" because it is "crucial in determining our sense of ourselves, our goals, and our values."

Defining an individual relationship to technology

What is a relationship to technology? A relationship to technology should address the entire range of levels of use and types of technology, including everything from machines and the printed book to mobile phones and text messaging. In order to define a relationship, one must ask what one needs and how much mastery of it one expects to achieve.

Fox's history of the rejection of technology includes many discussions of "who is in charge." Is the technology in charge or is the autonomous individual? An individual may find it easier to be in charge of an older, tamer technology. Fox refers to a clock owned by a friend as "an older technology with a crucial difference" - her friend is in charge (2002, 329). In pragmatism and neoliberalism, are we in charge or is the technology? Again, the individual is ostensibly in charge. It is unlikely that pragmatists and neoliberals will accept that technology is in charge, but pragmatism and neoliberalism definitely privilege advancement of technology and the market.

Whose relationship to technology takes precedence? If the community or government has a preconceived notion of what relationship its individuals have to technology, or attempts to change the minds and use habits of non-users or occasional users, tensions will result. These tensions play out in a relationship to technology that has become a “mixture of adulation, dependency, frustration, and rage” for many Americans (Fox 2002, *ix*).

Pragmatism and neoliberalism, which I have shown above to ostensibly privilege the individual, in fact have a preconceived notion of what that individual should or might choose. The power of the preconceived notion regarding technology is evident in counter-capitalism movements. Marxists work toward technological revolution by “politicizing” technology and by “choosing among possible technologies so that things go our way” (Hickman 2002).

Dewey's pragmatism privileges the group in terms of technology adoption because learners are expected to take into consideration their own experiences, the experiences of others in their community, and come to understand their own positions. As I showed above, Dewey's system does not really consider or include what the community should do if this method of inquiry leads to outlying decisions like that of non-use of technology.

Neoliberalism also has a preconceived notion of what the individual's relationship to technology should be. Although it privileges the individual within its system, individuals who develop a relationship to technology that is different from the predominant idea simply suffer market consequences. Non-users simply lose, and reigning market forces accept that non-users lose because they chose not to have an entrepreneurial relationship to technology.

The autonomous individual and the autonomous community are characteristically able to define their own relationship to technology. These are the Pew study's non-users who "proudly reject the Internet and proclaim their independence from the online world" (Lenhart 2003). These non-users have decided what is appropriate to their lives. Is finding *more* new technologies important to an individual's life or a community's health? Some autonomous individuals are innovators who want to make the best use out of what is available. Some are skeptical regarding all things technological, and some are skeptical of all computer-mediated communication. As discussed above, part of the "revolution" in the digital divide literature is including the full range of ICT choices and temporal aspects of use. I propose that these are essentially demonstrations of personal relationships to technology.

Making the decision to rely on older technology is a way of preserving an individual's autonomy, as well as a community's autonomy (see Kline 2000) because it shows close inspection of one's own needs and relationship to technology. Heads of household will decide on the best level of access for their whole family, who may individually have a different understanding of what is "best" for them. It is far more important that we make sure families' choices are not made in isolation than that we make sure they all make the same choices. The adoption of ICTs is not only a "problem of developing a relationship with the technology" (Jung et al. 2001) but a problem of developing one's *own* relationship with technology.

IMPLICATIONS

Personal computers and the internet are not the first ICTs that have been touted as the answer to all of our social participation problems, in the United States and elsewhere, but the urgency with which academia, policy analysts, and local and national governments have approached the issue of getting America online/connected is unprecedented. Their sense of urgency has increased because the acceleration of technological innovation has increased, but it has lent single-mindedness to public policy and community-building projects. However, if we think outside the assumptions that pragmatism and neoliberalism make about technology use (that is, that everyone should or will use technology), we are left with personal autonomy as the remaining factor in technology adoption.

If we allow personal autonomy to play a role in people's decisions to use or not use technology, then individuals will use it, not use it, not use it very deeply, or not use it consistently. Therefore, there will *always* be users and non-users in one form or another. Given this understanding, we have these collective responsibilities: 1) to make sure that non-users are not non-users because they *cannot* become users, and 2) to make sure that users and non-users are included in public discourse and programs.

Communities, libraries, and community technology programs are most effective in making sure that non-users have ample opportunity to become users. Governments, media, and individuals are most responsible for making sure users and non-users are included in public discourse: guaranteeing that all voices can and will be heard is the responsibility of groups and individuals because it is a partnership between online and offline spheres.

Communities also need to make sure their civic space does not move entirely away from the face-to-face. Integrating technologically enhanced community building into their repertoire makes

sense, but not if traditional civic spaces are left behind. Most research shows that the virtual civic space benefits from a well-developed traditional civic space. Aiming toward a "seamless" community space, online and offline gives non-users the opportunity to become users or peripheral users, and non-users are not left out of community discourse (see also Pigg 2001).

Community technology programs and libraries want to be the connectors in this "seamless" community space. They are best situated to incorporate individual choice into community technology efforts, because they offer a range of relationships to technology: librarians mediate computer search inquiries on behalf of patrons, coach in the use of databases and online searches, teach classes for more independent use, and libraries are often where community technology centers get their start or their funding (Clodfelter 2004). Libraries have already been balancing their online and offline presence, so they are in a prime position to facilitate online and offline community development (see also Schement 2003).

Faster media, both traditional and via ICTs, really do change our lives, even the lives of non-users. Faster news and weather communications greatly change what information reaches individuals, not just how much information reaches them. Whether or not these individuals participate in ICTs, this information affects their lives offline. The media need to show a balanced view of online and offline community development and show the full range of connected lives, which include face to face as well as online connections. Technological advancement is not necessarily "an unmitigated good" (Alvarez 2003), but if individuals and governments carefully formulate a durable relationship to technology, the media will need to respond to this social change as well, by not abandoning traditional means of dissemination of information.

Individuals are responsible for their own decisions to use or not use, and will still be responsible for the decisions made in their absence. The harms caused by both use and non-use must be dealt with by the community as a whole. All individuals, even those who choose to use computers and new technologies, are responsible for their choices. Individuals must accept the effects their choices have on others. In addition to preventing harm to the community caused by autonomy, it is vital for communities to "incorporate and capitalize on the enthusiasm, interest, insights and skills" (Bishop et al. 1999) of all their members in order to build community, both online and offline.

CONCLUSION

Connectivity is a quintessentially American concept. It is not surprising that efforts to technologically expand connectivity have become the focus of American social programs. Although these programs have the lofty goals of social equality and community development, the methods used to reach their goals are based on pragmatic and neoliberal ideals which require the undue influence and adaptation of the needs of individuals. I recommend that we accept that a condition of autonomy will lead to a certain amount of non-users, and focus technological equality efforts on two goals: ensuring that all individuals who wish to make use of technology are able to do so, and guaranteeing the inclusion of non-users as well as users of advanced technology in public discourse.

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