

Courtesy of Hei-Jung Kim. Used with permission.

## HeiJungKim8

For me, the digital divide is the imbalance of device access and literacy, and also the social exclusion(Warshauer) that this imbalance produces.

I think the digital divide involves three main issues. The first, is the issue of literacy with technology where I agree with Warshauer that the situation is not of haves and have-nots, but there is a literacy spectrum and the level of literacy is determined by the social context. The second is the issue of what opportunities and improvement of life the literacy gives, and the third issue is, are these opportunities and improvements in life best obtained from literacy with technology.

The third issue makes the definition of the digital divide complex for me because the value and opportunities gained by literacy with technology would only cause a division (ie. a social division) if these opportunities could not be or are not gained in another way. Furthermore, this is made harder to understand because the opportunities and improvements created by technological literacy are still being researched and understood in part because the technology is fast-changing.

When I look at this through the lens of getting a job, a very important goal for most. I see that many companies ask and some require employees have a certain level of computer literacy. Also when applying and interviewing for work, we have the option to apply electronically. Will there be a time when all jobs as well as applications to them require computer literacy?

Through a cultural lens, currently we use technology to communicate with others through email, blogs, bulletin boards. Will there be a time when all of our communication is electronic? Currently, when we need healthcare we fill out paper forms prior to receiving care. Will there be a time when all of our healthcare requests will be electronically driven?

If our marketplace (to me the most concrete area in which to look at this) continues to demand greater computer literacy, then like foreigners who cannot fully participate and capitalize opportunities without first acquiring language literacy, technology illiterates would also be unable to fully participate and capitalize opportunities. I believe that this would cause the problem of social exclusion as Warshauer describes.

The papers by Shaw and Shaw and Resnick and Rusk show computer literacy as an agent for learning and community building. These activities bridged the access and literacy divide, and gave opportunities and improvements to life of the participants. But, would it be possible to achieve these opportunities and improvements in another way? Probably I think, but it would have been a lot harder. Mike Lee probably would not have had as much success in the marketplace had he not had the computer graphics skills and portfolio that he developed at the clubhouse. The New Jersey community may not have ever become engaged in their community if not for the MUSIC software.

I wonder if one indicator of a digital divide would be when people view computer literacy as a critical skill to be learned much like a foreigner considers ESL classes critical to their success in a foreign country?