

COMM 1101 :: Guest lecture

Cornell University  
Department of Communication



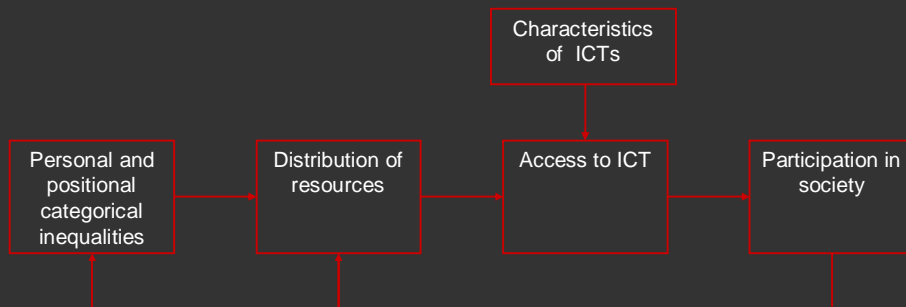
# Digital inequalities and politics

October 29, 2008  
(6 days to election)

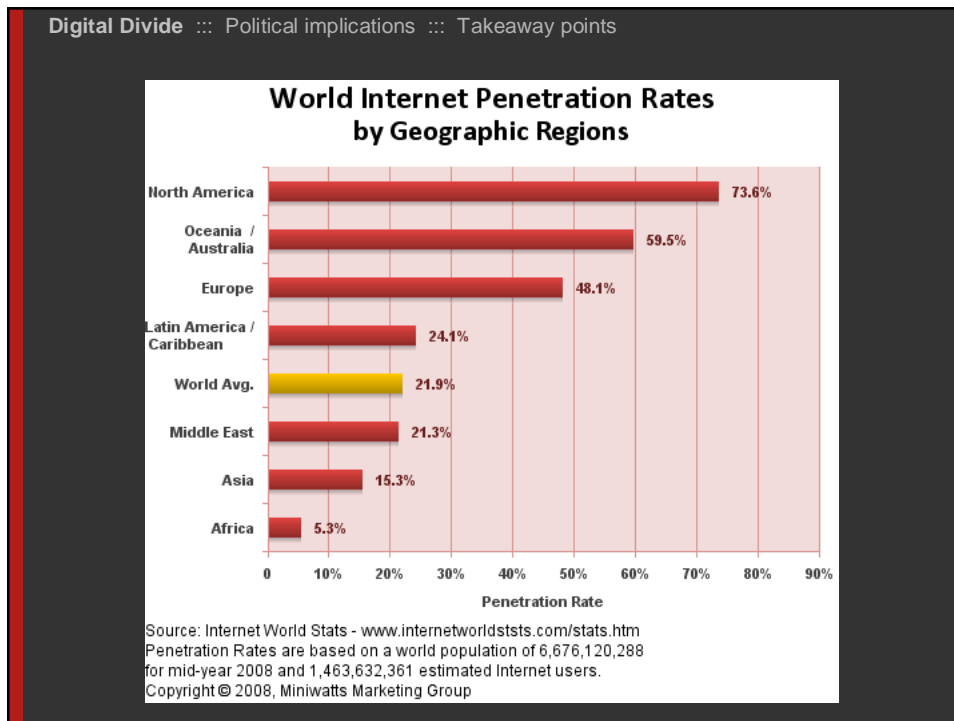
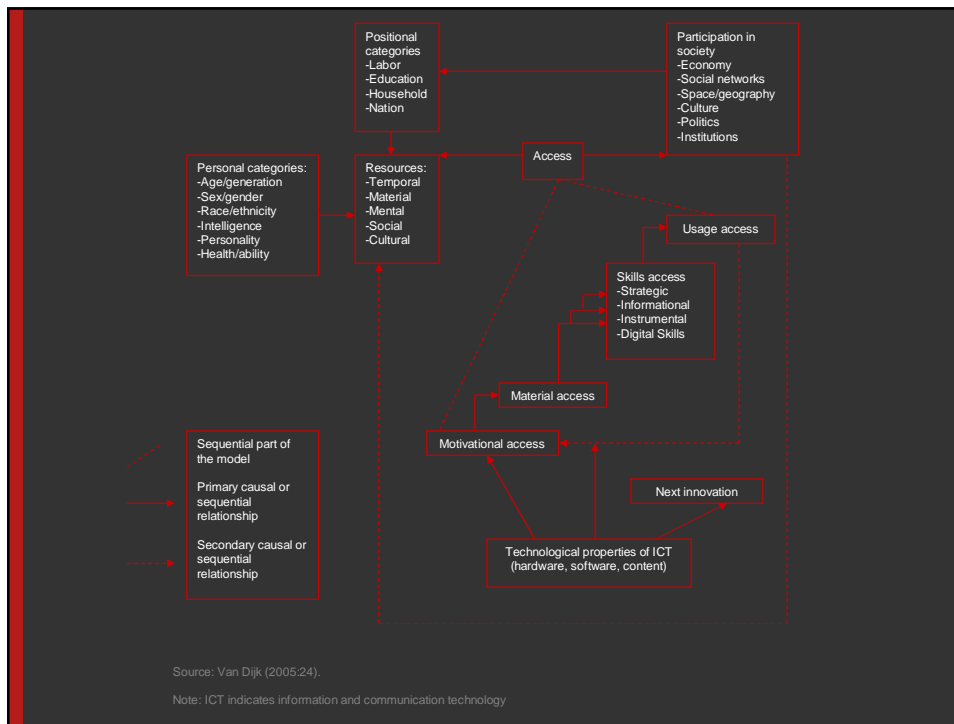
Digital Divide :: Political implications :: Takeaway points

## What is the “Digital Divide”?

Divide → Divides → Inequality → Inclusion



Source: Van Dijk (2005:15).  
Note: ICT indicates information and communication technology



Digital Divide ::: Political implications ::: Takeaway points

Region	Population (2008 est.)	Internet Usage (Q2 2008)	% Population (Penetration)	Usage Growth 2000-2008
Africa	955,206,348	51,065,630	5.3%	1,031.2 %
Asia	3,776,181,949	578,538,257	15.3%	406.1 %
Europe	800,401,065	384,633,765	48.1%	266.0 %
Middle East	197,090,443	41,939,200	21.3%	1,176.8 %
North America	337,167,248	248,241,969	73.6	129.6 %
Latin America / Caribbean	576,091,673	139,009,209	24.1%	669.3 %
Oceania / Australia	33,981,562	20,204,331	59.5%	165.1 %
World Total	6,676,120,288	1,463,632,361	21.9%	305.5 %

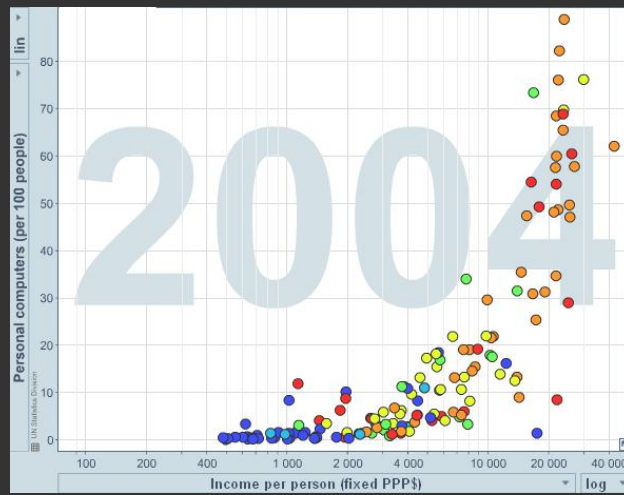
Source: Internet World Stats - <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm>  
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Digital Divide ::: Political implications ::: Takeaway points

More examples via Gapminder World [<http://graphs.gapminder.org/world/>]

- Personal computers per 100 people vs. Income per person [<http://tiny.cc/XWV8F>]
- Cell phones per 100 people vs. Income per person [<http://tiny.cc/rGx5R>]
- Broadband subscribers per 100 people vs. Income per person [<http://tiny.cc/9NDYE>]

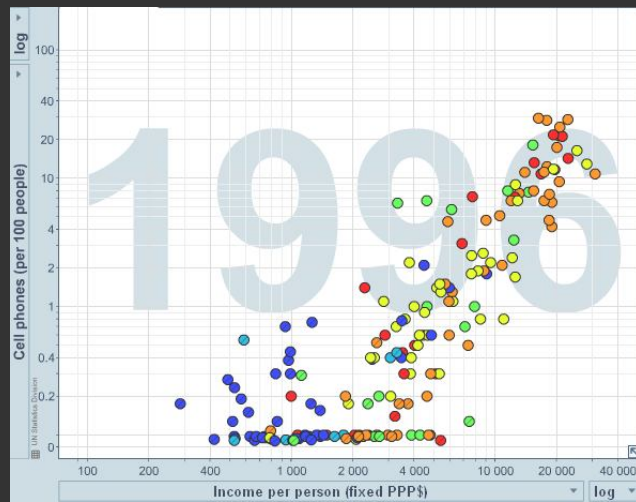
Digital Divide :: Political implications :: Takeaway points



Gapminder World: Personal computers per 100 people vs. Income per person



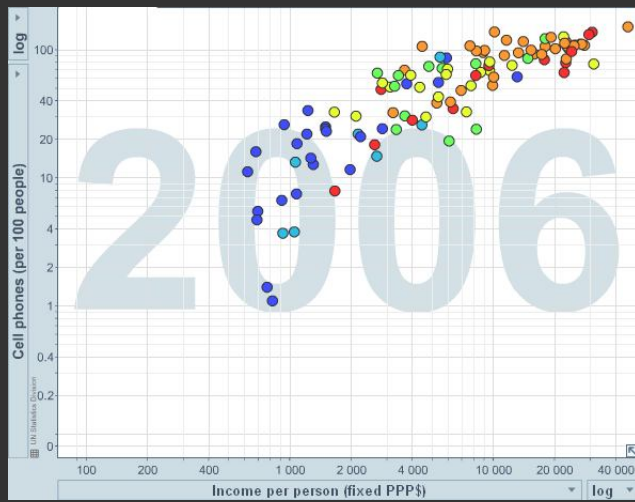
Digital Divide :: Political implications :: Takeaway points



Gapminder World: Cell phones per 100 people vs. Income per person



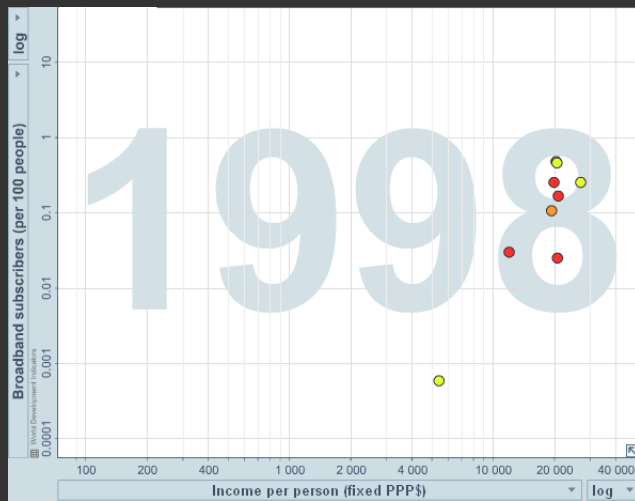
Digital Divide :: Political implications :: Takeaway points



Gapminder World: Cell phones per 100 people vs. Income per person



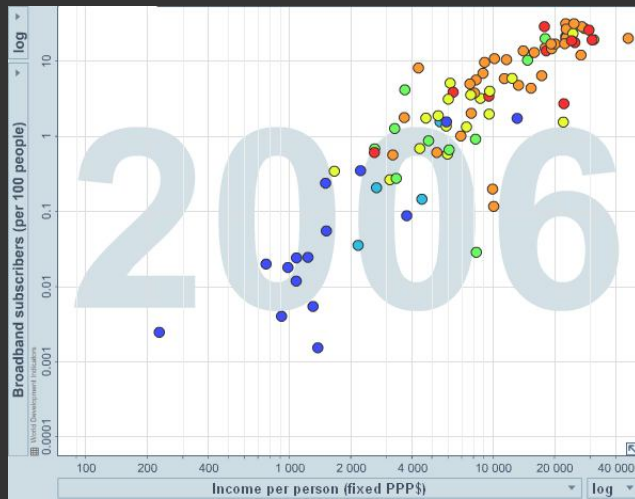
Digital Divide :: Political implications :: Takeaway points



Gapminder World: Broadband subscribers per 100 people vs. Income per person



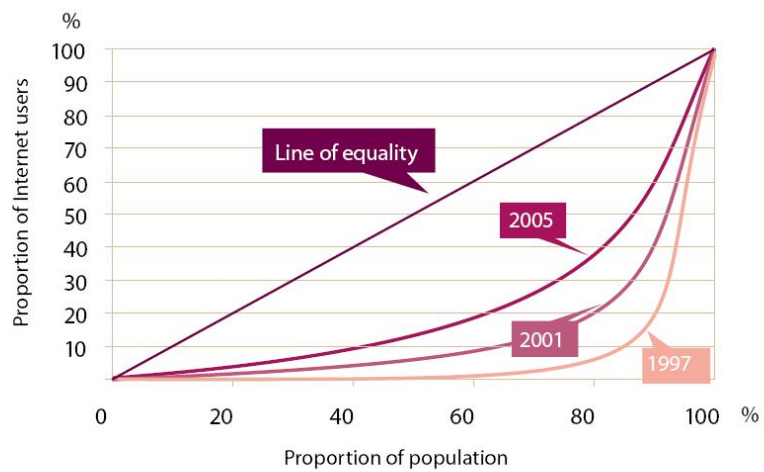
Digital Divide :: Political implications :: Takeaway points



Gapminder World: Broadband subscribers per 100 people vs. Income per person



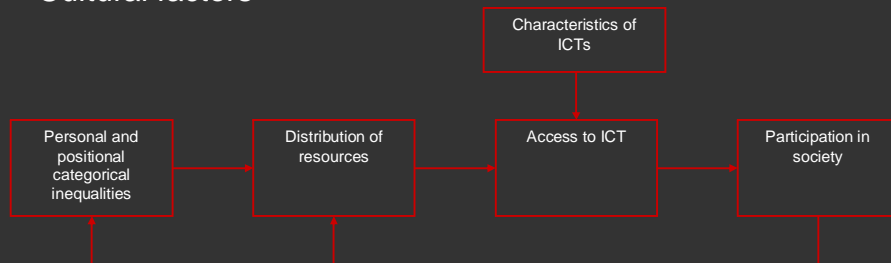
Digital Divide :: Political implications :: Takeaway points



Source: UNCTAD, adapted from ITU data.

## Not just access...

- Personal factors
- Socioeconomic factors
- Social factors
- Cultural factors



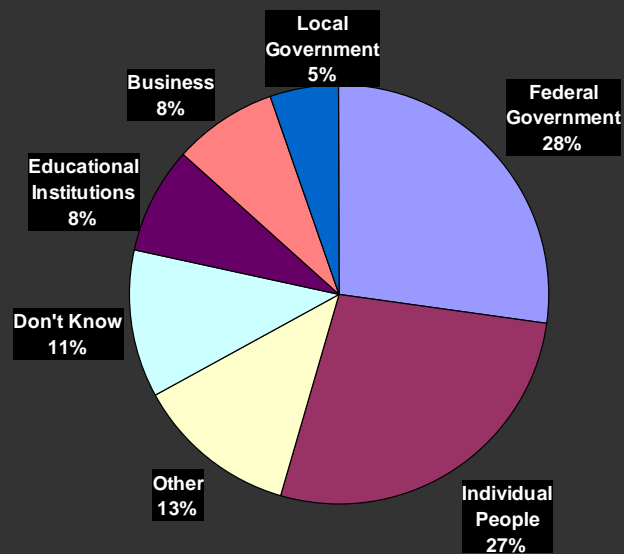
Source: Van Dijk (2005:15).

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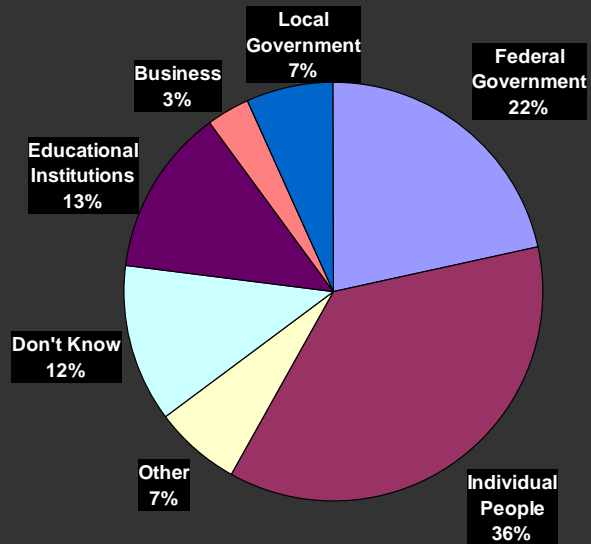
## Why definition is important?

## Research and politics

- Distribution of Responses – “Access” Frame



- **Distribution of Responses – “Skills” Frame**



**Should it concern us in the US?**

Digital Divide :: Political implications :: Takeaway points

Use of Internet		Use of Internet	
<b>Total adults</b>	73%	<b>Household income</b>	
<b>Age</b>		Less than \$30K	53%
18-29	90%	\$30K-\$49,999	76%
30-49	85%	\$50K-\$74,999	85%
50-64	70%	\$75K+	95%
65+	35%	<b>Geography</b>	
<b>Race/ethnicity</b>		Urban	74%
White, Non-Hispanic	75%	Suburban	77%
Black, Non-Hispanic	59%	Rural	63%
EN-speaking Hispanic	80%		

Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project, April 8-May 11, 2008 Tracking Survey

Digital Divide :: Political implications :: Takeaway points

Broadband at home		Household income	
<b>Total teens</b>	66%	Less than \$30K	48%
<b>Parent education</b>		\$30K-\$49,999	54%
High school or less	56%	\$50K-\$74,999	69%
Some college	67%	\$75K+	81%
College Grad	82%	<b>Race/ethnicity</b>	
<b>Race/ethnicity</b>		White, Non-Hispanic	70%
White, Non-Hispanic	70%	Black, Non-Hispanic	56%
Black, Non-Hispanic	56%	EN-speaking Hispanic	60%
EN-speaking Hispanic	60%		

Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project Teen/Parent Survey on Writing, Sept.-Nov. 2007.

## What in this for politics?

- Campaign
- Policy
- Democracy

- Campaign
  - Policy
  - Democracy
- 40% of all Americans (internet users and non-users alike) have gotten news and information about this year's campaign via the internet.
  - 19% of Americans go online once a week or more to do something related to the campaign, and 6% go online to engage politically on a daily basis.
  - 23% of Americans say they receive emails urging them to support a candidate or discuss the campaign once a week or more.
  - 10% of Americans use email to contribute to the political debate with a similar frequency.

Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project Surveys.

- Campaign
- Policy
- Democracy

The Growth of Political News Consumption					
<i>% who look online for news or information about the campaign...</i>					
	Spring 2000	Fall 2000	Spring 2004	Fall 2004	Spring 2008
<b>Among all adults (internet users and non-users)</b>					
Total	16%	23%	31%	34%	40%
On a typical day	3	8	8	10	17
<b>Among internet users</b>					
Total	34	43	49	58	55
On a typical day	7	16	13	18	23

Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project Surveys.

- Campaign
- Policy
- Democracy

Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project Surveys.

Political News Consumers, 2004 vs. 2008		
% of all adults (internet users and non-users) who look online for news and information about politics or the campaigns		
	Spring 2004	Spring 2008
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>		
White, non-Hispanic	32%	40%
Black, non-Hispanic	19	40
Hispanic	31	43
<b>Age</b>		
18-29	36	50
30-49	37	51
50-64	31	36
65+	11	15
<b>Education</b>		
Less than high school	15	18
High school grad	18	24
Some college	39	49
College grad	51	65
<b>Household Income</b>		
Less than \$30,000	18	22
\$30,000-\$49,999	34	41
\$50,000-\$74,999	44	51
\$75,000 or more	51	63

- Campaign
- Policy
- Democracy



*“Barack Obama believes that America should lead the world in broadband penetration and Internet access. As a country, we have ensured that every American has access to telephone service and electricity, regardless of economic status, and Obama will do likewise for broadband Internet access. Obama and Biden believe we can get true broadband to every community in America through a combination of reform of the Universal Service Fund, better use of the nation’s wireless spectrum, promotion of next-generation facilities, technologies and applications, and new tax and loan incentives.”*

Source: <http://www.barackobama.com/issues/technology/>

*“John McCain has long believed that all Americans, no matter if rich or poor, rural or urban, old or young, should have access to high-speed Internet services and receive the economic opportunities derived from technology. Access to high-speed Internet services facilitates interstate commerce, drives innovation, promotes educational achievements, and literally has the potential to change lives. As President, John McCain would continue to encourage private investment to facilitate the build-out of infrastructure to provide high-speed Internet connectivity all over America.”*



Source: <http://www.johnmccain.com/Informing/Issues/cbcd3a48-4b0e-4864-8be1-d04561c132ea.htm>

- Campaign
- **Policy**
- Democracy

White space example:

- [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y5JH\\_iCSTqA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y5JH_iCSTqA)
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MCUUSGVgjV4>

- Campaign
- Policy
- **Democracy**
  - Freedom of speech
  - Accountability
  - Participation
  - Power



Digital Divide ::: Political implications ::: Takeaway points

**So, what did we learn?**

- **Think macro**

- Context
- Inequality (not just access)
- Political Significance of Information and Communication
- Critical thinking



# Thank you!

Credits:

- “Monks Protesting in Burma” by racoles (<http://www.flickr.com/photos/racoles/>)

A version of these slides will be available at: [www.thinkmacro.org](http://www.thinkmacro.org)

