

# Email link to boys' popularity

October 14 2011

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Surveyed boys who used email at home were brighter and more popular than boys who did not – according to a recent study by an educational psychologist from Curtin University.

The study by School of Education Senior Lecturer Genevieve Johnson analysed responses by 51 boys and 44 [girls](#) at a Canadian primary school.

Dr Johnson likened the situation of boys who did not use [email](#) to that of boys from a generation or two before who did not watch TV.

“Think back to when you were a little kid if one of your friends didn’t have a lunch box with the latest cartoon characters on it – because they didn’t watch TV – they were almost socially isolated because they didn’t know what was going on,” Dr Johnson told Curtin News.

“So when we say that children who use the internet under certain circumstances are more popular – that’s true.”

The girls surveyed by Dr Johnson were more likely than the boys to use email at home, but at school the girls and boys reported very similar use.

The similarity between boys’ and girls’ email use suggested internet teaching at school may be closing the technology gender gap.

It was considered likely that the gap was closing not because of decreased use by [boys](#), but because of greater use by girls.

Dr Johnson has completed many studies on how communications technologies affect the development of children.

She said that throughout history parents and teachers had always been wary of how children would be affected by new technologies.

“We’ve got this impression that the internet, including internet games, is something bad,” she told Curtin News.

“This is totally inconsistent with the vast majority of my research.

“I cannot say that every single online application is associated with positive developmental outcomes – but most are.”

Dr Johnson said the same conclusion was broadly applicable to other communications technologies.

“Any technology is going to have advantages and disadvantages in terms of children’s development,” she said.

“To immediately assume that technologies like texting, like the internet, like video games, are a bad thing for children is so naive.

“There’s much more evidence to suggest that technology can be quite a good thing for [children](#).”

**More information:** Internet Activities and Developmental Predictors: Gender Differences Among Digital Natives, Genevieve Marie Johnson, *Journal of Interactive Learning*, Volume 10, Number 2, Summer 2011.

Provided by Curtin University

Citation: Email link to boys' popularity (2011, October 14) retrieved 30 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-10-email-link-boys-popularity.html>

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