

40 percent of parents learn how to use technology from their children

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Just how are adults learning to use technology? Chances are if you are a parent, your child is teaching you. A recent paper published in the *Journal of Communication* found that between 30%-40% of parents were taught how to use the computer and Internet from their children.

Teresa Correa, University Diego Portales (in Santiago, Chile), conducted in-depth interviews with 14 parent/[child](#) sets and surveyed 242 parent/child sets. She found that youth influence their parents in all technologies studied (computer, mobile Internet, social networking) up to 40% of the time. The [children's](#) scores were higher compared to parents, showing that parents don't necessarily recognize the influence. Parent's also learned how to use technologies by self-experimentation.

This bottom-up influence process was more likely to occur with mothers and lower socioeconomic families. Similar to what happens among low-income immigrant families, where the children act as language and culture links between the family and the new environment. Digital media represents a new environment for lower socioeconomic families, and the children from poorer families were more likely to receive input about [technology](#) from school and friends. This spills over and, in turn, the children teach their [parents](#).

Past studies have connected younger family members' influence of older family members with the computer and Internet. Those used qualitative methods and have not explored the extent to which this process occurs and what factors play a role, like Correa's study.

"The fact that this bottom-up technology transmission occurs more frequently among women and lower-SES families has important implications," said Correa. "Women and poor people usually lag behind in the adoption and usage of technology. Many times, they do not have the means to acquire new technologies but, most importantly, they are less likely to have the knowledge, skills, perceived competence, and positive attitudes toward [digital media](#). These results suggest that schools in lower-income areas should be especially considered in government or foundation-led intervention programs that promote usage of digital media."

More information: "Bottom-Up Technology Transmission Within Families: Exploring How Youths Influence Their Parents' Digital Media Use With Dyadic Data," by Teresa Correa. *Journal of Communication*.

Provided by International Communication Association

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