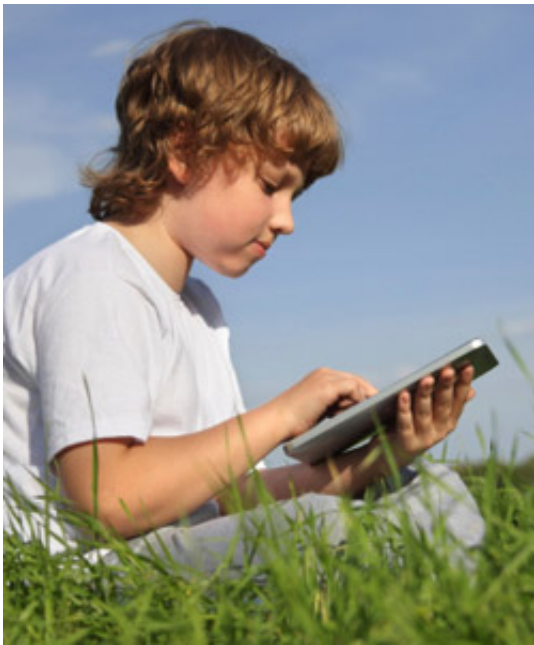


Social networking: Is the i-generation a 'we' generation?

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(Medical Xpress)—Social networking sites may increase the bonds of friendship for nine to 13-year-old boys, according to researchers from the University of York.

In a study published online today in the [British Journal of Developmental Psychology](#), Sally Quinn and Dr Julian Oldmeadow from York's Department of Psychology, looked at the link between [social networking sites](#) (SNSs) and group belonging.

Lead author PhD student Sally Quinn said: "Previous research has suggested that online communication is associated with increased closeness to friends and friendship quality. We know that children under 13 years of age are increasingly using SNSs but little research has focused on the effects of friendship for this age group. Our study examined links to group belonging for nine to 13-year-olds."

Over 440 children (49 per cent [boys](#)) from five primary schools and two secondary schools in England completed questionnaires that asked questions such as 'How long have you been using a social networking site to contact your friends in your group?' and 'How often do you use a social networking site to contact your friends in your group?'

Feelings of belonging were measured with questions such as 'I feel the rest of my friendship group accept me' with responses answered on a five-point scale ranging from 'not at all true' to 'really true'. The results showed that older boys who used SNSs showed greater feelings of belonging to their friendship group than those who did not use SNSs.

Sally Quinn said: "Among nine to 13 year olds, boys' friendship groups are characterised by lower levels of self-disclosure, acceptance and closeness than those of girls. In the offline world, boys' self-disclosure increases at around age 13 to 14 years old, later than that of girls. Our research is consistent with the view that boys may value the online environment as a rehearsal space for self-disclosure skills and [social networking](#) sites might help those who are less socially mature, with evidence suggesting that those who are socially anxious prefer the online environment for communication."

More information: The article 'Is the i-generation a 'we' generation? Social networking use among nine to 13-year-olds and belonging' is published online in the *British Journal of Developmental Psychology* on Thursday, 20 December.

Provided by University of York

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