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# Dare to be Digital: The Gender Influence

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## **Introduction**

Is there a poor perception of the digital world? I raised my children to not be afraid of the computer, to put it to good use and have fun with it. My experience with other parents has given me an insight to why computing is not recognised as a career in its own right. My own children have deserted me for what they deem as a more exciting career. Other children have shied away from computers because parents have influenced them to choose a different career path. The perception of not making any money from computers is still there.

This is not a new problem. Camp(1997) investigated this issue, and it appears nothing has changed in the past decade.

Is it a gender influenced attitude like pink and blue? Is it built into our genetic makeup?

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## **The current situation at CPIT**

The first year Bachelor of Information and Communication Technologies intake at CPIT in 2010 was a total of 61 students with 14 or 23% female this is consistent with other institutions in New Zealand. At the recent CPIT graduation 25% of the graduates in the BICT were female. Miller(2010) mentioned that only 12% of computer science degrees are awarded to women in the USA.

## **The current situation at a rural high school**

Darfield High School is a co-educational, Year 7 to Year 13 school, located in rural Canterbury. There are currently 745 students studying at Darfield High School.

ICT courses at year 12 and at year 13 are provided by the school. Both are the current NCEA syllabus for ICT.

The current numbers in 2010 for year 12 is 59 students with 31 or 53% female. For year 13 the enrolled number of students is 33 and 13 or 39% of those are female.

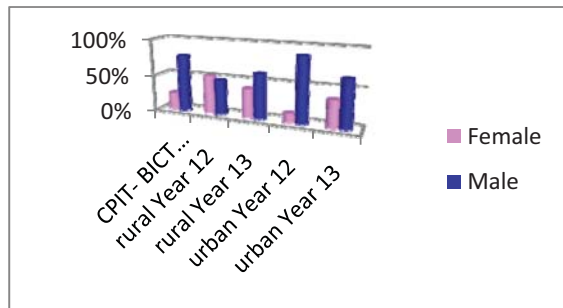
## The current situation at an urban high school

Middleton Grange School is a co-educational, Christian school, located in Christchurch. They cover primary, intermediate and senior schooling.

ICT courses at year 12 and at year 13 are provided by the school. They use the syllabus from CPITs current Certificate in ICT.

The current numbers in 2010 for year 12 is 17 students with 2 students or 12% female. For year 13 the enrolled number of students is 11 and 4 or 36% of those are female.

Figure 1: 2010 student data set



## Summary

It appears the number of female students entering the computing profession is still very low.

Schools, until recently, focused on unit standards which, due to its extensive and detailed program, do

not allow creative ideas from students. It limits what can be shown/ taught in the time allocated.

Many schools currently use Microsoft Office applications in their teaching of unit standards. A new curriculum is being prepared for secondary schools. Will this be enough to encourage more students to experiment with ICT? Will it encourage female students into a digital world as more than an end user?

Further study will be required to investigate potential solutions to the shortage of females in the digital world. This may involve an online survey for secondary school students from a range of schools.

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## References

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Miller, C. (2010, April 18) Out of the Loop in Silicon Valley: In the Wide- Open World of Tech, Why so Few Women? *The New York Times* 1-9.