Developing a model of adolescent friendship formation on the Internet.

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Previous research has been largely silent about what precisely influences online friendship formation and has ignored motives for online communication as potential explanations. Drawing on a sample of 493 adolescents, this study tested a path model of adolescent friendship formation including as predictors introversion/extraversion, online self-disclosure, motive for social compensation, and frequency of online communication. Our path analysis showed that extraverted adolescents self-disclosed and communicated online more frequently, which, in turn, facilitated the formation of online friendships. Introverted adolescents, by contrast, were more strongly motivated to communicate online to compensate for lacking social skills. This increased their chances of making friends online. Among introverted adolescents, a stronger motive for social compensation also led to more frequent online communication and online self-disclosure, resulting in more online friendships. The model suggests that the antecedents of online friendship formation are more complex than previously assumed and that motives for online communication should be studied more closely.