Do adolescent gamers make friends offline? Identity and friendship formation in school

# Details

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## Authors

Eklund L.;Roman S.

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* Risks and harms
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* Digital and socio-cultural environment

## Sample

115 pupils from a public school in a Swedish big city area.

## Implications For Parents About

Other

## Other Parent Implication

Social life and friendship relations of gamers (in school)

## Implications For Educators About

Other

## Implications For Stakeholders About

Researchers

# Abstract

Today adolescents grow up and make friends in an increasingly digital society, which has led to the study of potential effects of digital gaming on youths' friendships. To date studies have tended to focus on online settings with a knowledge gap concerning the role of gaming identity for friendship formation in offline settings. The current study addresses this, applying a longitudinal social network approach to investigate whether being a gamer impacts adolescent friendship formation. Data was collected by questionnaire from an entire cohort (n = 115) of pupils (age 16-18) on three occasions during their first year in a Swedish high school. Data was analysed using a stochastic actor oriented model, developed for testing hypotheses concerning social network changes. Results show that being similar in terms of identifying as a gamer at the later part, but not the start, of the school year makes a friendship 1.5 times more likely. We conclude that shared identities related to digital gaming influence individuals' offline, everyday social relationships as, in the analyses of changes over time to youths' school networks, digital gaming seems to motivate friendship formation.

# Outcome

"Our results suggest that gamers did indeed make friends with each other, in other words gamers preferred other gamers as friends in school. The effect while positive, was not significant for period one (between the start of the school year and just before the end of term one), but became significant and positive for period two (ending just before the end of the first high school year). This indicates that as time passes youth have a chance to get to know each other and this social identity feature begins to matter for friendship selection.... Moreover, our results in some sense contradict previous studies that have shown that increased time spent on gaming can reduce offline social circles.... Furthermore, this study adds a perspective of how digital activities such as gaming link in and affect offline social life; here life in school. Studies have shown how online and offline life are intimately linked.... Our digital lives tie in with our non-digital lives in such ways that it makes little sense talking about them as separate spaces." (Authors, 287)