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Job description

We are looking for a highly motivated and qualified PhD candidate for the project “Substance Use and Risk Taking among At-Risk Youth”. This project is a collaboration between the Department of Sociology and the Department of Pedagogical and Educational Sciences (GION).

Adolescence is a formative period of life in which adolescents face various developmental tasks related to autonomy, identity formation, and the formation of social relationships. Although these tasks affect all adolescents, there are individual differences in the extent to which adolescents accomplish these tasks (Crone & Dahl, 2012). Specifically, marginalized adolescents, or those at risk of being marginalized within their peer group, may be more likely to develop problem behaviors related to substance use, risk-taking, and mental health problems. In the context of this project, (risk of) marginalization includes any way in which people or groups of people are placed outside of a social group, e.g., through social rejection/exclusion, neglect, or victimization. Marginalized adolescents, including sexually and gender minority adolescents, have higher rates of mental health issues and substance use (Fish et al., 2020; Mereish, 2019).

Marginalized adolescents may turn to substance use as self-medication for mental health issues caused by social marginalization (Bos et al., 2016; Felner et al., 2021). Alternatively, marginalized adolescents might use substances to conform to peer groups norms through social influence processes (Boyle et al., 2020; Henneberger et al., 2020). This idea resonates with Moffitt’s dual taxonomy of adolescent risk behaviors, which suggests that risk behaviors, including substance use, are often imitated and socially rewarded in terms of peer group status because these behaviors indicate “maturity” (Moffitt, 1993).

To shed more light on these divergent explanations, we aim to examine the role of coping, social dynamics, and social norms in substance use and risk behaviors among (at-risk) marginalized adolescents. Furthermore, to understand these dynamics, it is important to consider the diversity of peer groups to which adolescents belong. Previous work has largely focused on social relationships and norms within the school context to understand substance use and risk behaviors (Laurson & Veenstra, 2021), but for many adolescents, and especially those who are (at-risk for) being marginalized, out-of-school contexts, including online contexts, may provide more rewarding peer groups and a better explanation for their substance use and risk behaviors. Therefore, we aim to advance previous work in three ways:



contexts?

3) Are substance use and risk-taking responses to marginalization or methods of connecting with peer groups?

To address these questions, we propose a mixed methods approach. First, we plan to conduct in-depth interviews that will provide more insight into the processes, mechanisms, and motivations that explain substance use and risk taking among marginalized adolescents (Felner et al., 2020). Second, the findings from the in-depth interviews will be used to design a quantitative study in which we will map social relationships across peer contexts using a combination of ego-network approaches, full-network approaches, and daily diaries. This will provide insight into the breadth of adolescents' social networks and their respective functions in meeting social needs.

The tasks of the PhD candidate are:

- conduct research leading to a dissertation that is in line with the objectives and requirements of the project
- organize and carry out the data collection for the different studies
- publish the results of the research in international scientific journals
- present the research findings to fellow scientists
- provide a limited number of educational activities at the Department of Sociology and at GION Education/Research, such as small-scale tutorials and guest lectures, in collaboration with the supervisors.

Organisation

The University of Groningen is a research university with a global outlook, deeply rooted in Groningen, City of Talent. Quality has had top priority for four hundred years, and with success: the University is currently in or around the top 100 on several influential ranking lists.

The Faculty of Behavioral and Social Sciences excels in teaching and research in the fields of human behavior, thinking, learning, and how people live together. We work on societal issues and problems that people experience in daily life. Central to this is individual and societal resilience and how to increase this. To this end, we focus on the topics of migration, the environment and climate, health, upbringing and education, the protection of vulnerable minorities, and sustainable partnerships. The Faculty of Behavioral and Social Sciences employs over 650 staff members. For more information about the Faculty please check the link <https://www.rug.nl/gmw/>.

The Department of Sociology in Groningen is known for its research on determinants of social well-being by means of advanced theory formulation and method development as



Sociology, located in the Netherlands at the Universities of Groningen, Utrecht, Nijmegen, and Amsterdam (UvA).

See also:

<https://www.rug.nl/gmw/sociology/?lang=en>

The Department of Pedagogical and Educational Sciences (GION) contributes to better education by conducting academic research. Our goal is to expand the body of knowledge about education and to improve educational practice. See also:

[https://www.rug.nl/\(...\)educational-research/](https://www.rug.nl/(...)educational-research/)

Qualifications

For this position you are expected to

- have a (research) master's degree in Sociology, (developmental) Psychology, Pedagogical Sciences (or a related discipline)
- be enthusiastic about writing international publications and a dissertation
- have good academic writing skills in English
- have good command of Dutch
- have good social and communication skills and be willing to work with other team members
- have good organizational skills and the motivation to organize and realize data collection
- have demonstrable competences as conceptual capacity, presenting, planning and organizing and monitoring.

Organisation

Conditions of employment

We offer you in accordance with the Collective Labour Agreement for Dutch Universities:

- a salary of € 2,770 gross per month in the first year of the appointment, rising to € 3,539 gross per month in the fourth year for a full-time position
- a holiday allowance of 8% gross annual income and an 8.3% end-of-the-year allowance
- attractive secondary terms of employment
- the position is classified in accordance with the University Job Classification (UFO) system; the UFO profile is PhD candidate
- a temporary employment of 0.8 FTE for a period of five years. You will first be



Application

You can apply by submitting a letter of application and curriculum vitae before June 27, 2024. Only submissions via the application form will be considered.

The selection interviews will take place in the week of July 5, 2024.

The University of Groningen strives to be a university in which students and staff are respected and feel at home, regardless of differences in background, experiences, perspectives, and identities. We believe that working on our core values of inclusion and equality are a joint responsibility and we are constructively working on creating a socially safe environment. Diversity among students and staff members enriches academic debate and contributes to the quality of our teaching and research. We therefore invite applicants from underrepresented groups in particular to apply. For more information, see also our diversity policy webpage: [https://www.rug.nl/\(...\)rsity-and-inclusion/](https://www.rug.nl/(...)rsity-and-inclusion/)

Our selection procedure follows the guidelines of the Recruitment code (NVP): <https://www.nvp-hrnetwerk.nl/nl/sollicitatiecode> and European Commission's European Code of Conduct for recruitment of researchers: <https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/jobs/charter/code>

We provide career services for partners of new faculty members moving to Groningen.

Unsolicited marketing is not appreciated.

Information

For information you can contact:

- Jelle Sijtsema, Assistant Professor, j.j.sijtsema@rug.nl
- Wouter Kiekens, Assistant Professor, w.j.kiekens@rug.nl

Please do not use the e-mail address(es) above for applications.

Additional information

- [Sociology](#)
- [GION](#)

Apply