SCARLETT SLAGTER

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Institution Name
Universiteit van Amsterdam

Country
The Netherlands

Research Area
Sociology

Thematic Focus
Adolescent behaviour

Stakeholders involved
Secondary schools

Research Phase
Data analysis

RESEARCH ASSET

Role of peer relations on risky decision-making across adolescence

We know from many studies, and our own experience that peers have a great impact on our choices. This social influence peaks around adolescence. Eventhough social influence is often associated with peer pressure and negative behavioral outcomes, such as risky-behaviour, teens can also learn from each other by observating their social enviroment. However, whether it is advantegous to look at others, depends on WHO and WHEN we consult a peer.

My name is Scarlett Slagter and I am interested in when and who adolescents observe to guide their behaviour. Do you look at others, only when you feel uncertain about what to do? Or do you listen to others when you feel pressured and want to keep your social status? Secondly, to whom would you actually listen? Do you follow someone with expertise, or someone you trust such as your friend? Or would it be wise to follow the cool kid. I answer these questions by studying the decision making process of adolescents (aged between 12 and 18 years) and their classmates at school.

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POTENTIAL VALORISATION AREAS

- **Collaboration with public institutes:** the knowledge is relevant for schools (secondary education), non governmental institutions focusing on adolescents, and other organizations representing adolescents

DESCRIPTION OF VALORISATION ACTIVITY

- Designing **mini-workshop** during mentor hours, where the effects of social influnece is illustrated by **interactive games**.

Adolescents can experience that their choices become better, but also worse, depending on whose choices they follow. These games give an opening to discuss 1) when and who adolescents consult and 2) the benefits and disadvantages of social influence.

VALORISATION TARGETS/POTENTIAL FUTURE COLLABORATORS

- Several secondary schools (to start with, those that were part of the research project)
- Game developers

A starting point for increasing the benefits and adaptiveness of social influence is to bring awareness among adolescents. I would like to help teens to think about the social sources that guide their behaviour, and challenge them to think about whether they can really learn and profit from these social sources.

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