

CURRICULUM VITAE

Rob Franken

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Interests

Social networks, sports & health, opinion dynamics, online experiments, computational social science

Summary

My research revolves around the drivers of social networks, perceptions of social networks, and their impacts on health behavior and opinion dynamics. My PhD has allowed me to explore a range of research methods – including online experiments, network surveys, multifactorial survey experiments, and web-scraping of big data –, as well as cutting-edge statistical models like stochastic actor-oriented models. As part of my dedication to open science and transparency, I have preregistered experimental designs, deposited survey data, and kept up-to-date lab journals and replication websites on GitHub. In my current postdoctoral research, I am developing large-scale online social network experiments.

Current positions

2024 - present	Postdoctoral Researcher in Experimental Sociology, Department of Sociology, Utrecht University / ICS
2020 - present	PhD Candidate, Department of Sociology, Radboud University / ICS Working title: <i>Social networks and sports participation. The interplay between selection and influence processes.</i> Supervised by dr. H. Bekhuis and prof. dr. J. Tolsma. Work Package 5 of the Dutch National Research Agenda Project 'TRansitions into Active Living' (TRIAL)

Publications

Peer-reviewed	Choosing your sports partners: assessing selection preferences through survey and experimental studies Franken, R., Bekhuis, H., & Tolsma, J. (2024). <i>Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport</i> .
	Kudos make you run! How runners influence each other on the online social network Strava Franken, R., Bekhuis, H., & Tolsma, J. (2023). <i>Social Networks</i> , 72, 151-164.
	Running together! How sports partners keep you running Franken, R., Bekhuis, H., & Tolsma, J. (2022). <i>Frontiers in Sports and Active Living</i> , 4, 643150.
	Shared decision making about housing transitions for persons with dementia: a four-case care network perspective Garvelink, M. M., Groen-van de Ven, L., Smits, C., Franken, R., Dassen-Vernooij, M., & Légaré, F. (2018). <i>The Gerontologist</i> , 59 (5), 822-834.
Codebooks	The Sports and Friendships Study 2021-2023 Franken, R., Bekhuis, H., & Tolsma, J. (2023). DANS Data Station Social Sciences and Humanities.
	Altijd Blijven Sporten 2019-2020 Franken, R., Bekhuis, H., & Tolsma, J. (2020). DANS Data Station Life Sciences.
	Transition Into Active Living Bekhuis, H., Wiertsema, S., Franken, R., Kraaykamp G., Hoekman, R., Beckers, D., Tolsma, J., & Steenbergen, B. (2023). DANS Data Station Social Sciences and Humanities.
Preregistrations	The bridging power of civic organizations and neighborhoods Dederichs, K., Franken, R., Wiertz, D., & Tolsma, J. (2023). Open Science Framework.
	The bridging power of sports clubs Dederichs, K., Franken, R., Wiertz, D., & Tolsma, J. (2023). Open Science Framework.
	Stimulating sport behavior via an online social network: a real-life experiment Franken, R., Bekhuis, H., & Tolsma, J. (2023). Open Science Framework.

Other publications

[Duurzame sportdeelname door online sportnetwerken - werkt dat?](#)

Franken, R., Bekhuis, H., & Tolsma, J. (2023, January 18). Sociale Vraagstukken.

[Vinden studenten wokisme een gevaar voor de democratie?](#)

Franken, R. & Tolsma, J. (2022, October 7). Stuk Rood Vlees.

Work in progress (selection)

The unstable social networks of students: where does dissimilarity drive tie dissolution?

Franken, R., Bekhuis, H., & Tolsma, J. (2024). *In preparation*

Greener than your friends? On the underestimation of the environmental engagement of proximal referents

Frey, V., Franken, R., & Tolsma, J. *In preparation*

How preferences for similarity hinder intergroup contact in neighborhoods and civic organizations

Dederichs, K., Franken, R., Wiertz, D., & Tolsma, J. *In preparation*

Data collection

Survey

[The Sports and Friendships Study 2021-2023](#)

- Designed an online longitudinal ego-network survey.
- Surveyed over 700 students from two cohorts 2-3 times during the academic year.
- Gathered data on multiple ego-nets, life transitions, opinions, study experiences and outcomes, sports activities, and more.
- An additional module was included in which alters of a specific group of respondents were surveyed. This aimed to investigate and explain the reliability and potential bias associated with proxy reports in network surveys.

Transitions Into Active Living 2021-2023

- The original aim of this survey study was to examine the impact of life-course transitions on physical activities and sports participation.
- We designed discrete choice-experiments to unravel decision-making processes regarding the selection of sports partners (wave 2) and sports clubs (wave 3).

[ABS! Altijd Blijven Sporten 2019-2020](#)

- Coordinated the data collection for the third and final wave of the project.
- The original aim was to test to what extent two different motivational stimuli affected sports activities of runners who enrolled for the 7Hills running event (Nijmegen, The Netherlands).
- Due to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, the study's scope was expanded to assess how Covid-19 and the restriction measures taken affected running behavior and motivation.

Experiment

[Online social network intervention](#)

- Designed a social network intervention in the online fitness and coaching platform *Final Surge*.
- Developed an automated web tool to facilitate experimentation within the Final Surge application (for documentation, see: <https://fsurge.netlify.app/>).
- Our goal was to examine the effects of social support and social comparison as strategies for motivating durable sports activity.
- Staged the experiment among participants of groups-based beginner strength training courses at a Dutch university sports center.

Conferences and other presentations

- Dag van de Sociologie, Nijmegen (The Netherlands, 2024)
- Sunbelt international network for SNA, Portland (United States, 2023)
- Sunbelt international network for SNA, Cairns (Australia, 2022)
- Dag van het Sportonderzoek, Nijmegen (The Netherlands, 2022)
- Duisterbelt annual meeting (online, 2021).
- Dag van de Sociologie, Utrecht (The Netherlands, 2021)

- Dag van de Sociologie, Rotterdam (The Netherlands, 2018)

Other scientific activities

- Workshop organizer and instructor in the 2024 Sunbelt workshops: [Webscraping Scientific Co-publishing Networks](#); and [Analyzing Structure and Evolution of Scientific Co-publishing Networks](#) (Edinburgh).
- Workshop organizer and instructor in the 2024 NIMMA Sports Congress: *The Power of Social Networks* (Nijmegen).
- Workshop organizer and instructor in the 2023 Sunbelt workshop: *From Webscraping to Social Network Analyses: Structure and Evolution of Scientific Co-publishing Networks* (Portland).
- Research and teaching assistant in the BIGSSS Summer School in Computational Social Science Project: [Residential Segregation and Political Polarization](#), led by prof. dr. Jochem Tolsma.
- Research assistant of dr. Lieselotte Blommaert (Radboud University). I contributed to an experimental study of labor market discrimination (preparatory work, data collection, conducting a field experiment).
- Research intern of dr. Mirjam Garvelink (IQ Healthcare). I contributed to a secondary analysis of a qualitative dataset with interviews with elderly people with dementia and their (in)formal caregivers about housing and care relocation decisions.

Teaching

2023	Honours Studio "Hollen of stilstaan. Hoe blijf je een leven lang actief?", Radboud Honours Academy.
2021-2023	Bachelor course Sociological Issues and Skills (BA1), Radboud University.
2021-2023	Learning Project II Sociology (BA2), Radboud University.
2020-2021	Learning Project I Sociology (BA1), Radboud University.

Education

2020	M.Sc. (Research) Social and Cultural Science, Radboud University. Specialization: <i>Comparing Societies. Questions regarding Cohesion and Inequality.</i>
2018	Honours Academy (disciplinary program), Radboud University. Research project: <i>Economic deprivation and right-wing voting intentions: the role of sociopsychological factors and sociopolitical attitudes.</i>
2017	B.Sc. Sociology, Radboud University. Minor in Conflict Studies (CICAM).

Course work

2021	Siena Winter School. Online workshop on longitudinal social network analysis with RSiena
2020-2021	ICS Writing and Theory courses
2017	Summer School on 'Populism in Europe and Beyond', University of Helsinki

Awards

2020	Prize for the best thesis of the Research Master <i>Social and Cultural Science</i> of 2020, Radboud University.
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Media coverage (selection)

- Dickinson, M. (January 2023). New study says Strava kudos motivate you to run more. *Canadian Running*.
- Niemantsverdriet, J. (December 2022). Motiveren kudo's op Strava echt? *Runner's World*.
- The Need to Run (October 2022). Kudos! New research on the impact of social media on running
- Niemantsverdriet, J. (May 2022). Trainingsmaatjes zijn heel belangrijk, ook als je niet voor de gezelligheid sport. *Runner's World*.
- Lambeets, K. (July 2021). Wat kudos kunnen doen met je motivatie en sportplezier. *VOX*.
- Stichting Zevenheuvelenloop (June 2020). Zevenheuvelenlopers missen doel en samenlopen tijdens coronacrisis.

Technical Skills

Programs	R (RStudio, Markdown, Apache Arrow), Limesurvey, oTree, Git, Stata, SPSS.
Techniques	multilevel models; advanced stochastic-actor oriented models (SIENA); agent-based simulations; latent profile analysis; conjoint analysis; webscraping; data visualization.