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ADHD and the power of generalization

te Meerman, Sanne

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Acknowledgements

To colleagues, friends and family

In relation to the ADHD construct discussed in this thesis that pathologizes impulsiveness, I am happy to say that I wrote my research proposal in an impulse. Around July 2011, I had just finished a master in teaching, and during my intern, a discussion in the teachers' boardroom about "children with letters", as someone wittingly stated, struck a nerve and led me not to pursue a career in teaching. In one of those "unexplainable moments of inspiration" I wrote a research proposal in 2 days.

This does not mean I want to sanctify impulses. They are not always useful or helpful, and my research proposal did not lead to a PhD position instantly. And when it did in 2014, much of the ideas from my moment of clarity had been transformed into something else. However, I share this anecdote to illustrate that whatever happens to such impulses for a large part depends on the people in the context. If I had not come into contact with Laura Batstra, who at that time was doing many studies about ADHD and the way we pathologize behavior in general, my impulse might have been just a glitch, a momentary lapse of reason that led to nowhere.

But it did not and I first and foremost want to thank you Laura for this and so many other things. One special quality you have, is your ability to normalize and even enjoy things many people would consider abnormal. For instance, after years of frustration with regard to the dominant discourse about ADHD and other classifications, my first public reaction to a psychiatrist during a conference meeting came out, a little... well, incoherent and frustrated. You only laughed and thought it was hilarious. During this research I discovered many talents in myself, or a sometimes complete lack thereof. You nurtured my talents while helping me to overcome my flaws mostly by accepting them and by reminding me I was working on something bigger than myself. Your great sense of humor helped tremendously to relativize mine and sometimes our collective little screw-ups as well. As Bruce Springsteen sang: "you can't start a fire, worrying about your little world falling apart". Thank you Laura, it was fantastic, no less. I hope to work with you for many more years.

Then came Hans, who lobbied for my PhD proposal. Underneath your polite manners, on several occasions you have shown to be stubborn and to have a solid and unique vision. The 'voice of the child' has been an important theme you fought for and I have discovered the importance of this when working on this thesis. I am grateful that you valued my own stubbornness as I did not always walk the line. I recall, when I was a sociology student in Groningen, I expressed my interest in qualitative studies and my concerns with quantitative studies. My teacher Rie Bosman suggested I should cross the street to the pedagogical department. Somehow I never followed her advice, but I'm grateful that the department of Youthcare throughout the years has maintained focus on qualitative studies alongside the more common and admired quantitative ap-

proaches. Thanks also to Greetje Timmermans and the other members of the reading committee, Micha de Winter and Paul Verhaeghe.

I also want to thank my parents. Reading the last chapter you might get the impression that I disapprove of “disengaged reasoning”. On the contrary, I thank you for teaching me to sit back and think things through – and I was no easy student-. I know you were at times even holding back enthusiasm about certain choices I wanted to make just to avoid pressuring me into anything that was not mine. I felt lonely in all this space sometimes, but I understand the importance of this more and more. Furthermore, you helped me remain in touch with my feelings, for instance by letting me play guitar without limits. Not a single time did asked me to stop my endless –and not always melodic!- noodling and do my homework. Much respect!

From day one working at the University, I have met so many friendly, funny, and interesting people, and I apologize beforehand for whomever I forgot. My first roommate Jorien, and then Bé provided a soft landing with practical tips, some good conversations and beautiful paintings by Jorien. My next roommate Renske, thank you for your endless flow of creative ideas, the latest news and of course working with “my tomatoes”. When I moved to Anne-Fleur & Arjen’s room, we became true tomato heroes (in perfect synchronicity!). Finishing my PhD together with you guys was unforgettable. Thank you so much for all the fun that we somehow combined with productivity as well. Thank you also for being my paranymphs.

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It wasn't all roses, of course. Like behavioral problems and ADHD, legal rules can also become reified. This is not necessarily a bad thing, when they should protect those who do not have the strongest legal position like PhD's. However, in such cases, these rules have often proven to be quite liquid, while rules that aim to protect the (financial) interests of the university somehow seem more solid.

Fortunately, several people have offered a helping hand, like Carla van Os and Anke van der Wal who both gave (legal) counsel so selflessly. And when Druk & Dwars apparently could not continue at the University, Jeannette Doornenbal came to the rescue and gave our project a very pleasant and tidy new home. Thank you, Jeannette, I am very proud to continue our work at the Hanze University and thanks also to Maruschka, Jasna, Elin, Anna and Bert. It is a pleasure working with you. Thanks also to ZonMW for financing the Academic Collaborative Centre and thanks for all those involved in the lively and interesting discussions.

To friends and family

Johnny, thank you so much for generously allowing me to use your work. I feel a strong connection between your work and my research. Perhaps because when we were both studying psychology, we were already discussing several things that now ended up in this thesis and that might also have influenced you. More likely, it is the power and humor of your work in itself. Also, thank you for our men's weekends off together with Gillis. Life wouldn't be the same without it.

Erik, it's probably because we're having too much fun, we haven't written too many songs lately, but what the hell, I'm proud of Foreign Affairs and it was great to have you over so often for dinner and music. Hopefully there'll be a bit more time now. Thanks also Roelof, Petrick, Jan and Robert.

Franke & Monique, Wouter & Martine, Maarten & Anouk, Paul-Pieter & Vanessa, Joop, Ruth & Tammo, Hugo & Nienke, Willem & Elisabeth and of course the 'OBV'. Thank you for your interest in my thesis and your friendship throughout the years.

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Last but not least

En dan eindelijk, zoals ze zeggen: last but not least: Tesse en Sytse. Eigenlijk horen jullie vooraan te staan, maar je vader doet 't nu even braaf zoals het hoort. Dat terwijl

ik eigenlijk hoop dat jullie niet altijd braaf doen wat hoort, en dat jullie niet altijd netjes in de rij lopen (zoals bij dit kunstwerk van Johnny hieronder)! Wij volwassenen weten veel dingen ook niet, daar gaat dit boekje over. Dan bluffen we een beetje, of we zijn een beetje veel met onszelf bezig (papa ook de laatste jaren, oops!) maar we bedoelen het meestal goed. Neem ons niet te serieus dus. Maar wel je bord leeg eten als mama en papa het vragen, begrepen?!?

Het allerlaatste heb ik voor jou bewaard: lieve Marieke, wat ben je toch geweldig. Als ik met m'n hoofd vol gedachten de glazen weer eens niet op de goede plek had gezet dan bleef je bewonderenswaardig geduldig. Er is niemand bij wie ik meer mezelf kan zijn dan bij jou. Ik kreeg van jou ook erg veel ruimte om te schrijven en te werken, we konden over veel onderwerpen samen boeiende gesprekken hebben maar het allerleukste was na een dag werken en in de weekenden met jou en de kinderen gewoon lekker samen eten, kletsen en lachen. Gewoon geluk, wat helemaal niet zo gewoon is, weet ik gelukkig. Jullie zijn m'n alles, ik hou van jullie!

