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Observe and explore: empirical studies about learning in creative writing and the visual arts

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PREFACE

I was familiar with participant observation and observation in life drawing classes, but observational learning was new to me when I started working on this research project in September 2006. I had little experience with experimental, quantitative research and writing processes. I am glad that Gert, Tanja and Huub introduced me to this research area. First I want to thank my promotor, Gert, for his support and trust. I guess it was not always easy to coach me, but you were always positive, warm and helpful. Without your support and feedback this dissertation would not have been finished. You were involved in every part of the research process: you and Tanja developed the research plan, you gave me helpful feedback and valuable advice concerning the experiment design, the intervention, data collection, data analyses and the resulting papers. I would also like to thank Tanja who was always very quick in reviewing my documents, I am grateful for the advice and feedback. I would like to thank Huub, who was indispensable for the analyses and who was always prepared to answer my endless number of questions. The Shadish, Cook, & Campbell reading club would have been nothing without you!

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I would like to thank the language research group for the involvement in the research process. Anne gave me some great support when times were difficult. I am grateful to Martine, who gave me the opportunity to observe and learn from her experiments. I thank Ton for his last minute editing work.

I was happy to be surrounded by many other PhD students: Maartje, Jaap, Anne, Annoesjka, Hessel, Ellen, Mayke, Albert, Jantina, Phuong Nam, Tatiana, Marcel, Sonia, Bram, Gerhard, Marie-Thérèse and Marris. I thank them all for the support and the good times! Jaap, your advice was very helpful! And, of course, I thank all the other ILO colleagues for the nice chats.

A special group is the ‘Kenniskring’ at the Amsterdam School of the Arts. It is very nice to be part of such a warm group of arts education researchers. You have shown me another side to arts education and arts education research, which has left its traces in this dissertation. Above all I am very grateful to Folkert who gave me valuable advice, contributed to symposia and offered me the opportunity to develop myself broader in arts education research. Emiel’s enthusiasm and positive attitude inspired me. Working with Marike and Robert on the altermodern project is a pleasure and certainly contributes to the development of my ideas about arts education and arts education research. I would like to thank Marjo for always being interested and giving me good advice!

I am glad that Anna and Eline are willing to support me during the defense of this thesis. Anna, it is great that we have each other for support throughout our many lifetime events: high school, studying, being pregnant, and now defending a PhD thesis. I was happy you defended first so I could observe and learn from you! Thanks for everything. Eline, thank you for being such a nice aunt for Naäma. Your wine has certainly helped me during the late night writing process...

My squash friends: Sophie, Catherine and Marieke, it was nice to play squash after a day of work. You could always notice the progress of the day; does she hit the ball hard, softly, does she see the ball at all? Sameena, Judith, Noelia, Nicole, Liselotte, Marieke, Anna, Carla, Kirsten, thank you for listening and understanding, for being positive and providing me with very nice distractions from work! Noelia, I needed those yoga classes!

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