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Me, My Friends, and I : a neuro-ecological perspective on adolescent prosocial development

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PROPOSITIONS

*accompanying the public defense of Rosa Meuwese's dissertation "Me, My Friends, and I"
on October 31, 2017*

1. General prosocial behavior does not further increase during adolescence, because moral reasoning skills do. Advanced reasoning skills facilitate prosocial behavior to depend more on contextual factors instead of unidimensional social norms. (this thesis)
2. Adolescent close friendships help the brain mature for better skills in social interactions and relationships. (this thesis)
3. There is a good reason to befriend popular peers and it is not their prosocial behavior. (this thesis)
4. The Nucleus Accumbens cannot lie: socially attractive peers are not just "doing nice", they are truly not as self-oriented as their less favorable counterparts. (this thesis)
5. The function of cognitive development is to aid social skills development, because cooperation is the most important driving force behind accelerated development in human evolution.
6. Developmental psychology as it is today is limited by cultural bias, to an extent that we as Western psychologists cannot (yet) understand.
7. For psychological science to advance, researchers need more freedom to responsibly explore and more time to pause and reflect. The whole spectrum of research activities based on the empirical-analytical cycle should be put into practice: from empirical exploration to deep analytical reflection.
8. When studying any adolescent mental process, the correct unit of analysis is the adolescent during social interaction, not the solitary adolescent – adapted from Social Baseline Theory, James Coan.
9. Loneliness is a modern epidemic that is most threatening to human kind.
10. Psychology should be a main subject in school, to increase understanding of the self, others and relationships. This could promote social skills and class climate in school.