

## Preface

Dear reader, here you are! There comes a time when a scientist has to deliver something. For the last four years, I have enjoyed doing the most exciting things I could think of: reading, doing experiments, teaching, writing, and meeting peers. It is your turn now to benefit and hopefully enjoy the product of my work.

Oh, have I just said “my work”? Please take it as in “I am the one lucky enough to report this teamwork”. First of all, there is a great deal of input here from my daily supervisor Dr. Herre van Oostendorp. Not only has he masterminded the whole project from the very beginning, he has been there all the time. If one wonders what the expression “daily supervisor” really means, one should meet Herre. At times, I was quite challenged by his insistence on details, but this helped me sharpen my mind and my writing hand. My promotor, Prof. Dr. Jörgen van den Berg strategically guided me and, most importantly, gave me confidence. I have always known that he would have supported me if I had been in need of anything.

I had profitable exchanges of ideas with my colleagues in our group – Cognitie en Communicatie. In particular, I worked pretty close with Stacey Nagata, Joris Graaumanns, and Christof van Nimwegen. Thank you all for your collaboration, and for making me feel a bit at home between yourselves!

I have been involved in teaching and supervising projects from the beginning to the end of my stay at Utrecht University. I owe thanks to Herre for assigning me not only assistant duties but also high-level responsibilities such as course development, coordination of research internships and assessment. Needless to say, I learned a great deal from teaching and interacting with other teachers. In particular, I advanced my knowledge of statistics by assisting Dr. Richard Starmans in his course “Advanced Research Methods”. Thank you Richard, for making it smooth and, to use one of your favorite words, robust!

A number of master’s students contributed directly to my research, most of the time with data collection, but also with brilliant ideas, or just with tough questions. Here they are: Ellert van den Broek, Vincent van der Linden, Koen Buurman, Poyan Karbor, Brian Pauw, and Arnaud Lek. Thank you, guys! I hope you benefited from our collaboration at least as much as I did.

I have collaborated with a PhD student from Twente University, now Dr. Eelco Herder. Together we did a couple of experiments, data analysis, and writing. It has been beneficial and most of the time enjoyable to

work with a brilliant computer scientist. Thank you, Eelco, for everything, and especially for presenting our award-winning paper!

Working and living in Utrecht, The Netherlands, made it possible for me to successfully complete this project. Utrecht is a perfect city for studying and doing research and Utrecht University provides everything a scientist would need to do top-level research. I wish I could mention all the nice people from the management and administration of the Institute of Information and Computing Sciences, but there are just too many to be listed here. I do thank them though from all my heart! I owe special thanks to Ir. Wilke Schram, Monique Dixon and Floor Jansen for welcoming me in the institute and helping me with personal and professional matters.

Thanks to Wim de Jonge for being a friend and sports-partner all these years. Florentina Pena, my housemate, made me realize that sharing facilities can be not only practical but also enjoyable. Thank you Florentina for letting me drink the leftover coffee! Thanks to Dr. Hein van Vliet, my landlord, for being a gentleman and for keeping things under control.

It is such an honor to have the manuscript of this thesis proofread by Abigail G. Matthews, a Harvard PhD and Yale post-doc. Thank you Abigail, for tolerating my peculiar writing style!

Last but not least, I would like to thank Rosa de Vries, who has been my friend and girlfriend for most of the period of my studies in Utrecht. Thank you Rosa, for understanding my crush on science, downsized only by my crush on you!