

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Writing a doctoral thesis was a curious and enveloping process. It was born and formed by a product of many minds, but was mine alone to tame, nurture and make sense of. I would like to thank the many people that have helped shape my investigation and have supported me as I maneuvered through its unfamiliar terrain.

First of all, I would like to thank my thesis committee members for their thought provoking viewpoints and helpful suggestions. Their perspectives on focus of study and clarity of methodology not only provided me with a number of challenging opportunities, but also encouraged me to produce a stronger and more coherent research endeavor.

Secondly, I would like to express my appreciation to the many unnamed people that gave their expert opinions in order to help me shape my study curriculum and to others that allowed me to use their creative accomplishments toward the goal of conducting my investigation.

Thirdly, I would like to convey my gratitude to my thesis advisers Dr. Chih-Min Tang and Dr. I-Hua Chang. It was Dr. Tang who gave me the necessary push and initial courage to begin my change of status from doctoral student to doctoral candidate. He believed in my ability to succeed and encouraged me to submit one of my academic papers for formal publication. Whenever I needed decisive action or a definitive answer to a problem I was having, Dr. Tang was always there. I admit feeling guilty about stealing time away from his many teaching, research and administrative commitments, but he never demonstrated any reluctance to help me. On the contrary, it was his steadfast smile and practical advice that empowered me to face difficult decisions or make necessary changes. Without Dr. Tang's encouragement and support, I would not have been able to carry out all the phases and procedures necessary to complete my dissertation.

Dr. Chang was the person with whom I had the most contact and who had the greatest influence in helping me create, plan and transform my thesis activities. He not only spent countless hours professionally working with me to understand and refine my research perspectives, but also provided me with a human and personal counterpart to discuss related educational topics and real world concerns. My frequent meetings with Dr. Chang were refreshing in that I always felt I could be myself - even to the point of expressing doubt and frustration with certain aspects of the thesis process. Although our relationship was a teacher-student one, it usually felt like I was working with a colleague, someone who had an actual interest and stake in what I was trying to achieve.

Finally, I would like to thank my wife, Shirley, and my children, Clay and Max, for not only putting up with my endless hours of sitting at the computer, but also for helping me to realize that working on my thesis should not be the most important thing that I was doing with my life. In addition to her constant belief and support, Shirley also sacrificed her own time to help me with the Chinese translations of the many written papers and oral reports I had to give throughout my graduate studies and during my thesis defenses. I'm sure my classmates and professors benefited from her dedicated contributions to my academic endeavors.

Writing a doctoral thesis has given me a new perspective regarding the purpose of education and the meaning of research, and will undoubtedly help guide the directions that I will take in my continuing journey of future investigations.