Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I would like to gratefully acknowledge my advisor and friend, Dr. Benny Bar-On, for supporting me throughout my masters and doctoral studies. Benny is someone who is instantly lovable and ultimately unforgettable. His enthusiasm, inspiration, endless patience, and impressive efforts to explain things clearly and simply, were invaluable in helping me develop my professional skills and become a better researcher. Throughout this research, he provided encouragement, sound advice, excellent teaching, good company, and endless useful ideas.

My family was another major factor in making this endeavor possible. I would like to thank my parents Ruth and Zvi, who always unremittingly believed in and encouraged my education, and my siblings Nitzan and Amir, who always supported this research.

Finally, I offer thanks to my lovely wife, Sheila, and my daughters, Lotem and Yael, for their endless love and support.