Acknowledgements

I could not have completed this endeavour if it were not for the advice, encouragement and support of the people around me. I would like to take this opportunity to say a huge thank you to these people.

Firstly, many thanks to the schools, teachers and adolescents who participated in this research. Without the willingness of the teachers to allow us valuable time in the classroom and the cooperation of the students this would not have been possible.

My sincere thanks to my promoter and co-promoters for offering me this amazing opportunity and for their guidance over the past four years. In particular, to Winnie and Nadia for their constructive criticism, encouragement and ability to motivate! Further, I am grateful to my students Samira, Hester, Laura, Martijn, Ilse, Susanne and Margreet for the invaluable assistance with data collection and input, and for their interest in my progress with the project.

Also thank you to my colleagues and fellow PhD students from Leiden University for your input, expertise and encouragement. I hope to have the opportunity to work with you again in the future! In particular, a special mention goes to my room mates, Bart and Maarten. Het was een super gezellige tijd op 2B35, ik heb jullie vriendschap, advies, humor en optimisme zeer gewaardeerd. Ik zal jullie missen en ook ons 3 uurtje! Ik zal ook de dames van ‘de ondergang’ missen, the most social of social committees and an invaluable support group! I am also grateful to my new colleagues at the Erasmus MC who have given me the time, space and encouragement to cross the finishing line!

A big thank you to my friends both in England and Holland (you know who you are!) who have shown their interest and support over the years. Especially to Becky, Emma, Joanna, Becca and Anna, it means a lot to me that we have remained such good friends over the years and over the sea.

Lieve paranimfen: Vicky, we both moved to the Netherlands in autumn 2002 and since then have shared many highs, lows, major life events and glasses of wine together ☺. I couldn’t have survived those first years without you and I miss you terribly now you’ve moved to Singapore! But I’m really touched that you have flown over to share this day with me today. Hester, from the early days when I arrived in Holland we hit it off and my attempts at Dutch were much
cause for hilarity (how rude!). You’ve been an enormous help in getting me organized, arranging everything for today and generally keeping me sane! Beste mr. dr. de Lange, lieve Juan, you did a fine job converting my dunglish into legible Dutch – thanks ever so much!

My heartfelt thanks to my ‘family’ in Holland, (big) Robert, Setsuko and Emiko for your continued support and never-ending interest in my research. Also thank you to my grandparents, aunties, uncle and cousins for your interest in my progress and encouragement. Without such solid foundations I wouldn’t have been able to come so far.

A huge debt of gratitude goes to my Mum, Dad and Tom. You have always unquestioningly supported me in my choices, even when they meant moving to foreign, and sometimes far flung places. For this and for your faith in me I am forever grateful and I hope that I have made you proud.

Finally, Roba, since embarking upon this adventure you have listen to me, coached me, motivated me, made me laugh, been a shoulder to cry on as well as a sounding board. Your unwavering belief in me has spurred me on and given me the confidence to continue even when things were tough. For all this and much much more, a huge thank you. In other words...

I know you told me that you’re proud of everything I do
And I feel that this is true
So thank you!

1 Face Tomorrow, A phoenix and a deer, In the dark, 2008.