DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my family: my parents, James Allan and Mary Janet Stafne, my brother, Mark Willms Stafne, and my surviving grandmother and grandfather, Elvina Everetts and Paul Willms, respectively. It also dedicated to the memory of my late grandparents: my grandmother, Clara Argo Willms, who passed away just before my thesis defense, and my grandfather, Alvin Stafne

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Theses are not works of a single individual; several persons and organizations usually provide valuable advice, help, equipment and support. My thesis is no exception and the following persons and organizations are recognized for their contributions.

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