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Why does education pay off? Relations between institutional context and the mechanisms by which education pays off in the labor market

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

If you want to become a PhD student, reading acknowledgements in dissertations is not the best way to get motivated. Often former doctoral students use this space to write about the relief of finishing, and in between the lines you clearly taste the difficulties they faced during their research. I had a completely different experience: my PhD was anything but a struggle and was extremely fun to do. That the writing of my dissertation went relatively smooth is, however, largely due to others. I would like to use this space to thank them.

Over the past four years, I have gained a great deal from both of my supervisors. Daniela, you were always ready to provide detailed feedback on my work. It did not only improve my dissertation, but also taught me to become a more critical reader myself. Herman, during your inaugural lecture you mentioned that your door would always be open for your doctoral students. This was not an empty promise; you encouraged me to work on new ideas, and were always available to discuss them with me. I am confident that we will keep collaborating in the future. This dissertation would not be the same without the help of my supervisors—thank you both.

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you will share a room. Valentina, I enjoyed working with you in the same project, and I am confident that we will keep collaborating in the future. In a pub I once declared to a group of co-workers that colleagues and friends should be kept separated. I have to take this back: colleagues *can* become friends.

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I did not neglect my friends during my doctoral research, so I am not going to thank them for sticking around with me for the past four years. I will also not thank them for being immensely interested in my research, because, frankly, they were not. That is, however, a good thing: having fun outside your work is vital to remain enthusiastic about your work. In that way you did contribute a lot, and I am thankful for always being there for me whenever I needed you.

Finally, my family. Daan and Neis, I am lucky to have you as a brother and sister, and I am happy that we are so close. My parents, Anneke and Dienus, have always been supportive of anything I wanted to do,¹ and are always there when I need them. This dissertation is about education, and how it helps people become successful in the labor market. My parents taught me a very important lesson: there are things in life that are more important than being successful in the labor market.

Next to my family and friends, for me that “thing” is Gianna, the love of my life. We met in the first year of our sociology studies and chose different, although related, careers: you educate students, and I study education. Gian, I am grateful for your love and support over the past four years, especially during the time I spent in Ithaca. I look forward to growing old with you.

1. It must be noted that my mother always thought that I would become a physicist. Mum, I am a quantitative sociologist now, and that is as close to physics as you can get within the broad field of sociology.