Acknowledgements

This dissertation could have never been conceived without the support, advice, patience, and dedication of a number of people who all deserve my deepest gratitude and respect. I would therefore like to take the opportunity to thank them here. First and foremost, I would like to express my greatest appreciation to my promotor Liesbet van Zoonen and copromotor Sally Wyatt, whose critical and dedicated presence has meant the world to me these past years. I want to thank Sally for always being there for me, for her guidance and support throughout our many professional encounters (whether as my internship supervisor, my thesis supervisor, my copromotor, or just as colleagues), and of course for being such a good friend. I want to thank Liesbet for believing in me and taking me under her wing, where our friendship has steadily grown. Without the opportunities she and Sally created I would have not been in the position I am today. Together they have been tremendously supportive, committed, and generous, encouraging me to make the most out of myself as a young academic. Moreover, they have shown great patience when my obduracy got the best of me and I gave them a hard time. For these reasons and more, they have truly been the best supervisors a PhD student could ever wish for.

Second, I would like to thank a number of wonderful colleagues, whose kind words and critical comments have been so crucial to both my work and well being at the Amsterdam School of Communication Research. I am particularly thinking of the past and current members of the Media Entertainment and Popular Culture (MEPC) PhD club: Stijn Reijnders, Linda Duits, Vincent Crone, Koos Zwaan, Floris Müller, Yiu Fai Chow, Jeroen Jansz, Jeroen Lemmens, Cem Gömüsay, Pauline van Romondt Vis, Marcel van den Haak, Mirjam Vosmeer, Mervi Pantti, Monique Aerts, Joyce Neys, and Henry Mainsah. Both during our meetings and at various other occasions it has always been a true pleasure to be around such friendly, witty, and bright people. An additional word of praise goes out to the members of the 'Internet Research' PhD club, which I was allowed to partake in during my time as a junior researcher at ASCoR in 2005: Todd Graham, Tonny Krijnen, Tamara Witschge, Enrique Gomezllata, Caroline Nevejan, and Diana Lucio Arias. From the very start they offered me a warm
welcome and a stimulating atmosphere, which made me feel right at home. Thank you for making my first steps into academia such a pleasant experience. I would also like to express my gratitude to Elske Verkruijssse, Ardy Grefhorst, Sandra Zwier and Maaike Prangsma, whose organizational and administrative assistance has made my whole PhD trajectory run so much smoother.

Finally, it is essential to acknowledge the unremitting support I have received from those outside of the university who are all so very close to me. I especially want to thank my parents, Ruud and Nelly, my sister Caroline, my ‘almost brother in law’ Luis, and of course my amazing girlfriend Melanie for providing me with virtually infinite measures of moral, mental and material sustenance. Without your enduring presence in my life none of this would mean much. Some of my awesome friends should surely be mentioned here as well, since they collectively form the social network on which I can always rely and where I will forever feel at home. Thank you Caspar, Thomas, Willem, Wolf, Johan, Teun, Ernesto, Geertjan, Maren, Roos, Rogier, Kim, Gijs, and all those others who I am lucky enough to know and hang out with in both physical and digital space (yes, I am referring to Re: afleiding here!). An extra special thank you goes out to Caspar, for helping me with the layout of this dissertation, and to Sandra Kassenaar, for designing such a wonderful cover: your efforts to make this thing look good are truly appreciated!