Acknowledgements

Many people contributed to this dissertation in one way or another. First and foremost, I would like to thank my promoter Patti Valkenburg and my co-promoter Jochen Peter. Without your help and advice this dissertation would not have been possible. I am most grateful for your invaluable feedback, your enthusiasm for this project, your trust in my abilities, and for giving me the opportunity to develop as a researcher. I am convinced that I couldn’t have found a better place for pursuing my Ph.D. Sindy Sumter contributed also significantly to this dissertation. Since Sindy joined the group, my Ph.D. experience changed from being a sole researcher to working in a real research team. Sindy, thanks for your help, expertise and patience! Most of the data used in this dissertation was part of a larger study that was funded by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO). I also like to express my gratitude to the members of the dissertation committee for taking the time to read and evaluate this dissertation.

I have felt very privileged to be a Ph.D. student at the Amsterdam School of Communication Research (ASCoR). Throughout these years, ASCoR has been an incredible inspiring and supporting environment. I am grateful for financial support not only for my Ph.D. project but also for many international conferences, courses and extra research projects. ASCoR has also been a great place because of all the interesting, kind, and inspiring colleagues. I like to express my gratitude to Eva van Reijmersdal and all Ph.D. club members who have provided valuable feedback on many parts of this dissertation. Thanks also to Maria for helping with the Dutch summary.

Many present or former colleagues have also become friends. I am grateful to Anke Wonneberger, Ewa Maslowska and Mario Keer for numerous coffee and lunch breaks and for many leisure time activities. Helen, Doeschka, Sindy, and Jeroen have not only been great office mates but are also an infinite source of information and advice in all situations (including not only recipes, Dutch language, work-life-balance, holiday advice, and methodological issues). They also provided distraction with after work dinners and drinks. Many thanks to Moniza Waheed and Sophie Lecheler for being my friends and parnymphs. Moniza, growing up in distant places couldn’t prevent us from becoming close friends, and moving to distant places in the future won’t prevent us from staying close friends. (I am looking forward to visiting you in KL, climbing the mountain with you and of course going to Vincci). Sophie, from the first day of my Ph.D. you have been a true companion and a close friend. I am glad we will continue to be friends and colleagues.

I also would like to thank my friends outside of the university for providing much needed distraction and putting everything into perspective. Special thanks to Hanna, Philine, Sabine, Sarah, Anna, and Gonzo, for always being there for me. My parents, brothers, grandparents, and my parents-in-law have constantly supported me throughout these years.

Above all I am grateful to Tilo for his optimism, trust, support, humor and for his love. Thanks for being with me all this time.