Acknowledgements

My first and most important thanks goes to the Lord—it was His firm hand that set my family on a path that has yielded a new richness in life, knowledge, and faith.

Unbeknownst to me at first, my wife was in fervent prayer during each and every midterm and final exam, and during each research milestone. Very often she took up the myriad tasks of family life, graciously “excusing me” to concentrate on my studies. Her unconditional support and love during this journey has been a genuine source of inspiration.

Finally, my thanks goes to my entire dissertation committee, but especially to Dr. Hanif D. Sherali. In my life I have met few who possess such a keen intellect and kind spirit. His ability to draw upon, purely from memory, a myriad of complex mathematical concepts and then to patiently deposit them upon his students is an ability I hope to someday imitate, but one I never expect to duplicate. I have had the honor and privilege to study under one of the very finest in my professional field.