ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my parents – Kishori Andharia and Jitendra Andharia for the love they showered on me and the confidence they instilled to explore unusual life choices.

The first person I would like to thank as I complete this thesis is my 11 year daughter Inika who has been extremely understanding of her mother who has been preoccupied with her work and computer especially in the last six month. She willingly agreed to spend time with friends and family during her vacations so that I could concentrate on my research work, although she would have loved to spend time at home with me. Her sacrifices have kept me motivated to complete my work.

I would then like to thank my dear friends Sejal, Neeta, Sumitra and Preeti who have made it possible for me to balance my work at ANANDI with the pressures of the research work. They have also provided critical inputs to bring out nuances of the subject. At a personal level they have been there to keep my motivation up when I would be overwhelmed with the various responsibilities.

My sister Janki was the one who planted the idea that I should take up the doctoral work and I thank her for having faith that a social worker and activist can write. Her feedback at the very inception phase gave structure to my thoughts. My brother-in-law Benny and nephews Udeet and Prateek have shared the care taking responsibilities for my daughter and made it easier for me focus on my work.

I would like to thank the entire team at ANANDI who have at various points had to deal with my absence and yet keep the work going.

I owe this study to the open sharing by all the women who were willing to share very personal details of their lives and sometimes painful memories which helped me understand their realities.

I would like to thank the Professors who taught us the course qualitative research methodology at the MS University as it provided the theoretical base to undertake my study. My fellow scholar Meena Chandarana ensured that I was informed of all the formalities that I had to attend to throughout the period. I extend my sincere thanks to her.

And last but not the least I would like to thank my guide Dr. Leena Mehta who had more faith in me than I had myself in being able to navigate the process of research and writing the thesis. Her patience and motivation have been critical to complete my work.