ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you, Dr. Kimmel, for all your help, patience and comments on every phase of this process. Thank you for the many hours you spent with me, and your dedication as a professor.

I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Lawrence Estaville, Dr. Cynthia Peterson, and Dr. David Stea. Your insights were very important in guiding me through the stages of this dissertation. This work would not have been possible without your encouragement and support.

Thank you, Joshua for your incredible patience. You came to my life during the process of this research. This dissertation is dedicated to you too. Finally, thank you, Andy, for your love, support and encouragement throughout the research and writing of this dissertation.