

MODEL MINORITY

A Professional Project

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at the University of Missouri-Columbia

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Master of Arts

by

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Table of Contents

Chapter One

Introduction.....1

Chapter Two

Field Notes.....3

Chapter Three

Evaluation.....21

Chapter Four

Physical Evidence.....25

Chapter Five

Professional Analysis.....26

Appendix

Original Proposal.....38

Participants' Bios.....64

Chapter One INTRODUCTION

I have wanted to work on a long-term documentary project ever since I enrolled at the Missouri School of Journalism. Through this project I was able to fulfill that dream of mine to some extent. Incidentally, a photo essay on the Indian American community was not on my mind at all when thinking of a topic to shoot for my master's project. I had zeroed in on documenting the last active African American cowboys left in this country but that project fell through because of logistical issues. That's when Prof. David Rees suggested that I try doing a story on the thriving local Indian American community. Even though I am from India, I was not familiar with the Indian community in Columbia and I thought doing my master's project on the community would be a good opportunity for me to get to know the community and its people. One of the things I wanted to do with this project was to address some of the stereotypes, both positive and negative, associated with the community. I also wanted to give an overall view of the way the Indian community functions in Columbia and I think I have been able to achieve both of those things to a certain extent.

Advanced Techniques in Journalism, a core class I took in my second semester in the program, has been instrumental in shaping me as the kind of photographer I am today. It is thanks largely to that class that I rediscovered my love for shooting portraits and was totally awed by the realm of creative possibilities that artificial light unleashed. I started honing my skills further during my fourth semester through *Picture Story and Photographic Essay*. I shot portraits, for the most part, for almost all of my assignments for this particular class and started experimenting with strobes on a consistent basis. After getting mostly positive feedback on my final project for this class, doing a portrait

series for my master's project seemed like the ideal choice in terms of photographic approach. In addition, the photography classes I took at the Fine Arts School helped me get familiar with and appreciate film photography. That in turn has affected the way I shoot and tone images and even though I used a DSLR to shoot this body of work, I was very conscious of the way I framed and lit my images which I think would not have been the case had I not been exposed to film photography.

I envision myself working as a freelance documentary photographer in India. So, this project gave me a taste of both the logistical and artistic challenges that accompany a documentary project and how to successfully go about completing a project of this magnitude. Furthermore, I think I have laid the foundation for a potential photo book or project on the Indian diaspora living in the West which I think is a subject that has high journalistic relevance as the population of the Indian diaspora has been increasing steadily over the past two decades and the Indian diaspora has a global presence that almost none of the other ethnic groups can match. Even if I am unable to continue with the project in the United States, I should be able to continue elsewhere with the help of grants. A lot of European countries along with Canada have a sizable Indian population as well.

Chapter Two: Field Notes

June 24, 2013

The project has been progressing fairly smoothly so far. Two families have agreed to be part of my project. One of the families comprised of professors (of Physics) Mr. H. Chandrasekhar & Mrs. Meera Chandrasekhar has been in the States for more than two decades. The Chandrasekhars have three daughters and all of them have moved out of the house and they have been living all by themselves since their last daughter left Columbia just a few months back after graduation. I think it will be interesting to document an ageing Indian couple's life in a small Midwestern town.

The second family that I will be documenting is relatively young – Mr. Elangovan Balakrishnan and Mrs. Abirami Balakrishnan – they moved to the States in the late 90s. Mr. Balakrishnan is an oncologist who works for the Missouri Cancer Associates. Mrs. Balakrishnan has a postgraduate degree in Business from MU and is a homemaker at the moment. They have two boys, Ashwath and Akilan, both of whom are in middle school and elementary school respectively. I think with this family my focus will be on the kids and I will try to document how well they are assimilating into the American culture while at the same time having a firm grasp on their traditional roots. When I visited their place last Tuesday I actually asked Akilan, who is in 3rd grade, if he considers himself Indian or American and he answered Indian to my surprise considering the fact that he was born in the States.

I am also meeting a PhD student, Shashikanth Gajaraj, this evening. He doesn't have a green card yet but he's planning on settling in Columbia. In that

respect it will be useful to include someone like Shashikanth in my project to show what the life of a hopeful US citizen is like? He is married and as of now I'm not sure if has a child or not.

I forgot to mention, all these families are from the southern part of India and the reason I decided to stick to just South Indian families is 1. I felt I would have better access since I'm from the South 2. I also felt that South Indians living in the states have not been covered as extensively as say Gujaratis or Sikhs. In addition to these three families, I'm also toying with the idea of going to Chicago for a few days and doing a portrait series on South Indian families residing there. But I'm not sure what I want to show through those pictures or what kind of individuals or families I should look for to include in the series.

I have also been thinking about whom to interview for the research component. Apart from Steve McCurry, Joey L. and Ken Hermann I came across Kevin German's photo essay on Vietnam recently and was blown away by the images. German is an American photographer (I think) who founded Luceo Images and is based in Vietnam and has been living in there for the last 4-5 years. He also does a lot of commercial photography and I want my career to look somewhat like his – dabble both in commercial as well as personal projects. Hence, I think he would be an ideal person to interview since both Joey and Ken have almost zero photojournalism background and on the other hand Steve McCurry has very little commercial work. The only commercial assignment that he did in recent times (and the one that I know of) is last year's Pirelli Calender.

June 28, 2013

I met Shashikanth Gajraj and his wife Anitha Gajaraj last Monday and they have given me their consent as well. Shashikanth's in-laws are in town for a month and I think that will make for some interesting pictures.

Moving on, I made my set of pictures yesterday morning at the Rec. Akhil took swimming classes for the last two weeks and yesterday was the last day. IT was my first time shooting in a pool and I think I did a decent job. I was pleasantly surprised by the fact that Akhil was not conscious of the camera at all. Maybe he was too preoccupied with his swimming instructor's instructions to pose for the camera or maybe he was just playing it cool since he barely knows me, only time will tell. I'm yet to meet his elder brother Ashwath. I might get to meet him this evening.

I was really struggling with the style of photography I was going to adopt to work on this project. I was searching for reference images for quite some time and I have finally zeroed in on this body of work –

<http://www.burnmagazine.org/essays/2013/04/martina-cirese-asnakojo/> – by a very talented young European photographer, Martina Cirese. The reason I want to shoot images like these is because:-

- I want to do something new as I'm tired of making "safe" images.

My biggest concern about my master's project is whether my images manages to awe the viewers or not and by doing something fresh I think I would be able to do that.

- I want to rekindle my love for documentary photography; I have

found myself drifting away from photojournalism since last semester. And to keep the fire alive in me I have to do something radical. Besides, I have always been fascinated by D'Agata-esque images right from the time I stumbled upon Magnum Photos.

July 2, 2013

I photographed Akhil and his elder brother Ashwath at the Wilson's Beach Club yesterday. Again I didn't know what kind of images I was looking for so I just kept clicking until I felt I had had enough. Anyway, I did manage to break the ice with Akhil and I think he's slowly getting used to the camera. That's good news!

Ashwath did seem a little perplexed by me (and the camera) but I guess he will be alright once I start spending time with him as well. By the way, he's going to Duke University coming weekend to attend a "program" and will be back in town only in August. Guess I have to get some good shots of him and Akhil interacting within the next few days.

I still haven't started following Shashikanth Gajaraj. It will happen by the end of the week I hope. And the Chandrasekhars are still not back in town I suppose. They left last week of June to visit their daughters.

July 5, 2013

I photographed Akhil and his family yesterday at the Peace Park. My camera was on Akhil the whole time, I think I'm just going to focus on Akhil and try to tell his story through my pictures. I think I can show "family life" of the other families I'm photographing, with Akhil I just want to explore what he's going through

growing up in the US. I also met another family last Wednesday and asked them if they would be willing to be part of my project. They said they will think about it. I am keeping my fingers crossed...

July 30, 2013

I haven't shot any pictures the last three weeks or so. I don't think the photo essay/story is right up my alley. Besides I just have three families' consent so don't think the viewers will get an idea of what kind of people the Indian diaspora is comprised of?

So, a portrait series (accompanied by brief interviews) is the next best approach in my opinion. That way I would be able to meet and photograph a lot more people from varied backgrounds. My goal is to meet somewhere between 25 to 50 individuals/families. And I am going to travel to neighboring cities as well in addition to Columbia.

The challenge will be to do something new. I have done portraiture work primarily the last six months or so and to be honest I'm actually out of any fresh ideas at the moment. So, before I start shooting I need to come up with a solid idea or a "shooting style" and stick to that throughout. My focus is going to be on technique first and foremost and then how to best tell each person's story through a single image and audio/words. I am also contemplating removing the whole stereotype angle from the shooting part and just concentrate on making solid images. I will deal with visual stereotypes in my research component.

August 7, 2013

I had a great chat with Ms. Lois Raimondo today. I was exposed to a lot of great photographers namely Abby Robinson, Adam Panczuk, and James Mollison – great portrait photographers all of them. Having looked at their works I feel even more overwhelmed and there's a lot more pressure on me to ace my project now. She suggested that I should consider doing a portrait series on the children (as opposed to adults/families) from the Indian community living in Columbia and explore (through interviews and photography) how they connect to their roots/traditions/customs? Or how strongly they identify themselves as Americans?

Prof. Rees had suggested the same thing before I even started working on my project proposal but somehow the thought of doing kids' portraits never struck my mind. And today after talking to Ms. Raimondo I feel that a portrait series on the Americanization of kids and perhaps the youth of Indian origin could very well be the answer to all my woes (read problems with access, lack of vision). And I, as a photographer, am excited about the kinds of images that I'll be able to make.

Then again, I'm worried that though all this sounds good on paper there are going to be a lot of hiccups along the way. Will I be able to find enough participants? Are they going to be able to express themselves in the interview? Can I do something new in terms of photography? etc. Anyway now that I know what I'm going for I think I'll start shooting very soon once I gain access and develop my vision for the project more concretely.

August 27, 2013

The Indian community had a get together last Sunday at Cosmo Park. I met

with more than a dozen families and distributed flyers explaining my project. A lot of people expressed interest in the project and a couple of them gave their consent on the spot. So I have five families to photograph so far.

I also tried connecting the two Normans that Prof. Rees loaned me last semester and the *Adorama* strobe that I recently bought to the camera at the same time and to my surprise it worked. I still have to experiment a lot before I get comfortable with using three lights effectively. Once I kind of master the lights I will begin shooting the portraits and doing the interviews.

I haven't started working on the research component either. I'm still having a hard time figuring out who the best person (photographer) to talk to would be. I have a few names that I'm really interested in but don't want to commit to anybody as I'm afraid I might change my mind later.

I'm hopeful once I start doing the portraits, things will speed up and I will get majority of the work done in a short span of time and hopefully get ready to defend sometime in December.

September 9, 2013



I finally made my first picture this afternoon. I rented out a car from the university's car sharing program – *Enterprise CarShare*. I opted to rent a car as opposed to riding my bike because of all the heavy lighting equipment and hiring a cab was out of question as they are unreliable (from my experience) and cabs can get quite expensive more often than not when I'm visiting someone who lives quite far away. I photographed Dr. Elangovan Balakrishnan, Oncologist, Missouri Cancer Associates in his office. I ended up with this shot after spending more than an hour shooting. This isn't the kind of picture I had in mind; I was going for a more candid/active moment. But those shots didn't work out as well as I wanted. I'll be doing a couple more pictures of him in a different environment and also photographing his family – wife and two sons – soon.

The response from distributing flyers at the Indian community "picnic" last week of August hasn't been that great but I have five families' consent so far and once I finish working with at least three of these families and share the pictures with the community I think there will be some positive buzz about my project.

September 16, 2013



This portrait of Prof. Meera Chandrasekhar was taken after her lecture - *Blind to Polarization* - in the Monsanto Auditorium, Life Sciences Building his weekend. She teaches Physics and was recently named one of three finalists for Baylor University's Robert Foster Cherry Award. Her husband is also a Physics professor and I should have his portrait ready sometime later this week. As far as the interviews (not my research component interview) are concerned, I think I have finally settled on a common thread which will kind of connect all the pictures together.

My interviews with the participants are all going to be focused on the concept of American Dream i.e. how settling in the US has changed their life for the better? And the two or three supporting (still life/detail) pictures that are going to accompany each of the portraits are also going to reflect that concept. As far as the pictures are concerned I'm still not getting the pictures I set out to make but I'm hoping things will fall into place once I get used to my new strobe. I will be trying at least two different portrait setups with each of the participants.

September 30, 2013

I did a bunch of portraits this past week. I also tried capturing candid moments using strobes with Akhil and Ashwath. I think it worked pretty well. I'm planning to capture more candid portraits for the project rather than just having everyone pose every single time. I still haven't gotten to shooting any of the secondary images (which will accompany each portrait) yet but will start soon. Also, the interviews with my subjects will take place once I wrap up majority of the shooting. From the way things are progressing, I think my project (pictures)

has become more about how the Indian diaspora represent “American Dream” as opposed to a revelation of the Indian culture. I don’t know if it’s a good thing or a bad thing?

October 4, 2013

Like I mentioned in my earlier post, I tried shooting candid portraits for the most part this week. I’m quite pleased with the outcome but there’s a lot of room for improvement. I have a shoot tonight and once again I’m going to adopt the ‘fly in the wall’ approach and hopefully do a better job. The other shoot that is scheduled for Sunday is a pretty cool situation as well.

Once I get all the portraits done, each family member of a family will have a page for themselves with a portrait and three additional images. I’m still working on my interview questions but they will mostly be on the lines of how has settling in the US affected their life? I’m planning to interview just the adults.

October 15, 2013

It’s been a challenging experience shooting pictures without giving any directions to my subjects. The major difficulty is in the placement of lights as in some cases the subjects are constantly moving and I too have to constantly reposition my lights based on their movements. But I like the challenge involved and I guess I’m going to stick to this approach (candid portraits) for the remainder of the project except for one or two posed portraits here and there.

Also, it’s been hard getting access to families who own a business e.g. restaurants, motels in Columbia. I guess since the goal of this project is to portray

‘American Dream’ through pictures of the first-generation Indian families would it be relevant to include pictures of the less well-off families in my project as I don’t really think they are living the American Dream but rather making barely enough to make ends meet and send some money home. By the way, two more families have expressed their interest in being a part of this project but they are both doctors. Having said that I have a feeling they are upper middle class and that will offer a lot of varieties in terms of visuals in my opinion.

November 6, 2013

I was going through the CPOY Portrait category winners yesterday and the first thing that struck my mind was – in spite of spending the last two years learning to make better pictures in a reputed journalism school such as ours I still haven’t picked up the basic visual grammar of good photojournalistic images (nor fine art photography for that matter). And the thing that I was most afraid of – commercial photography (read senior portrait photography, family portrait photography and the likes) – has started to define my photographic style and I don’t know how to feel about it but then I have always been fascinated by (well-lit) “beautiful” images. Having said that, I’m still not able to recreate the lighting style of some of my favorite photographers - Philip-Lorca diCorcia, Julia Fullerton-Batten, Reed Young, Martin Schoeller, Joey L. and the likes – photographers whose lighting skills are as refined as their amazing images.

I’m kind of apprehensive to pick up my camera and shoot another portrait these days and the last two shoots for my master’s project were disastrous. Last but not least, I have found two more families who are willing to participate in this project

and I think I might be able to convince one more family. To be honest, I don't think I'd be able to do the interviews (with the families) this semester. I see myself wrapping up the shooting portion of the project only in late December or mid January. I'll start working on my professional analysis – interview with a professional photographer who's worked in the sub-continent – from January and simultaneously I'll also do the brief interviews with the families to learn more about American Dream.

November 18, 2013

Things have been a little slow the last two weeks partly because of my “struggle” with photography and partly because of scheduling conflicts of the families I'm photographing. Anyway, I think I'll be done with the two portraits of all the people I'm following by semester end and then I'll start shooting everyone's three “prized possessions” or things that symbolize American Dream.

December 3, 2013

I have completed my coverage of the Chandrasekhar family. Here are all the pictures of the family: two portraits (formal and informal) of each member of the family followed by the three things that they treasure. This is what I have envisioned for the other families as well. Please let me know if there are any shortcomings in this format or these set of pictures.

Here's my plan:-

Get all the portraits and still life images done for the remaining families by Dec. 31 (if possible) or Jan. 15 (most definitely). I'll also interview some of the families (and transcribe those interviews) during this time period. Interview the

remaining families by Jan. 31.

Feb. 1 – Feb. 15: Interview a photographer (I have a list of potential photographers that I'd like to speak with; haven't made up my mind yet) for my research component and transcribe that interview.

Feb. 15 – Feb. 31: Carry out a follow-up interview if possible and necessary and get that transcribed and then start working on my professional analysis.

March 1 – March 31: Design the book, finish the professional analysis and get it finalized and finish any pending/unfinished tasks such as reshooting a bad picture or getting a quote from one of the participants.

Defend in April.

December 17, 2013

Things have become a little slow again. Or maybe I'm not bold and persistent enough. Anyway, I'm confident that along with the Chandrasekhar family, whose complete set of pictures I posted in my last post. I'd be done with four more families by the end of December and the last two by the start of next semester.

I'm also trying to include two more families in the mix – Dr. Batchu's family and Mr. Patel's family. I just spoke to Mrs. Batchu, who designs houses, and she seems interested. She was actually raised in America which practically makes her Indian American, unlike the adults in other families I'm photographing, her husband is from India though.

The Patel family is a relatively big family with four kids – two of them are twins. Mr. Patel owns a few liquor shops in town and Mrs. Patel is a master's student

and they have been in the states for more than ten years. I met Mrs. Patel while working on the India Nite story for MU Web Comm. If the family gives their consent, I think it'll make for a great story.

Almost forgot, I managed to get Duffy Scholarship two weeks back. It's not a big amount but it will still help me recover some of the expenses that I spend on renting car and occasionally hiring cabs to go on a shoot.

January 13, 2014

I've completed covering three families including the Chockalingam family (posted above) out of the nine participating families so far. I'll be posting the pictures of the third family sometime next weekend. I've been turned down by Ken Herman for the analysis component interview. I'll contact the other photographers later today, hopefully somebody will give me the nod. I finally gathered enough courage to email some pictures from this project to Mr. Dan White and Mr. Brian Smith last week. Mr. White gave me a positive feedback though he did mention that I ought to keep the background in my pictures clean and that the quality of light was pretty much the same in the seven pictures that I sent him. I tried my best to incorporate his advice in the shoot last evening and will continue to do so in future outings.

Overall, the break has been kind of slow. But I'm confident of completing all the pictures by February end at the latest. I'm close to completing one more family's set of pictures with only their family portrait remaining. I'm about 75% done with two other families.

Anyways, coming back to the set of pictures posted above. I'm still not sure about any of the pictures of the family members' belongings. I can't tell if those

pictures add to the story or are detrimental to the same? I'd love your feedback.

January 20, 2014

I found out last weekend that both Shashikant and Anitha are planning to move back to India within the next two years. It's hard to come across people like him who despite settled and doing well abroad want to return *home* and make themselves useful. He is really passionate about environmental conservation and will acquire his doctorate in civil and environmental engineering from MU this May.

I still feel including this set of pictures in my final edit would be relevant in a way since both Shahikant and Anitha have Green Cards and have been in the US for a while now even though they came primarily for higher studies. What is your opinion?

I have finished photographing three families so far (including Shashikant's). I'm on the verge of completing two other families' pictures – I only have their family portraits left to do. It should be done within a week's time. I think I forgot to mention this last time but the two new families I spoke with over the break have given me their consent and I'm going to start photographing them this week (hopefully). One of the families is returning from their India trip on the 25th. Though I'm off the time table for completing the photography portion of the project I'm hopeful it'll all come together soon. I have been putting aside the interviews (with the families) for a while now. I will get started this weekend and should have gathered audio and transcribed the relevant portions of the interview of at least one family by next week. Since, my plan is to come out with a book; these interviews are meant to provide some context to the people in the photographs in addition to the cutline.

I also experimented using just the modeling light from the strobe for one of

the portraits I shot earlier today. The results weren't that bad, I may use this technique more often for my upcoming shoots. Ben Hoste taught me how to effectively use this technique when I shot some portraits of him during his last week in the city before graduation. I was really pleased with the results but didn't want to experiment with that technique with this project as I wanted all the pictures to have a consistent look. But to be honest, I've kind of reached a saturation point with strobes and of late I've been just mechanically setting up strobes without really giving much thought to the quality or direction of light and thus, the results have been unremarkable. Maybe this technique will help revive my photography. By the way, I've also started shooting pictures vertically now which I avoided for the most part last semester.

Almost forgot to mention, I'm almost done covering the Bhakta family (the family that runs the Curries to-go restaurant) as well. I've shot all their pictures but the pictures of each of their "three things". I was at their place yesterday morning and had a blast shooting their portraits. They both seemed really uninterested all this while but I don't know what happened this morning but it all worked out for good. Mrs. Bhakta especially was really upbeat and enthusiastic about her portraits. Hopefully, I've done justice and I really hope they like their pictures.

March 10, 2014

I'm nearing the homestretch! I literally have 5 more pictures left to shoot and a few more pictures that need to be reshot.

I've also finished my interviews for the analysis component with two photographers – Erika Larsen and Reed Young. I should have a draft of my professional analysis ready before Spring Break or just after the break.

Two important changes to my project: I've dropped photographing things that belong to the people after getting not-so-positive reviews for those set of images. Also, I may not be making a book after all as my edit will have anywhere from 25-36 photographs and I think that's too low a number for a coffee table book. I saw this book called *Images of a Journey: India in Diaspora* by Steve Raymer and it had at least a few hundred pictures of scores of families shot in at least half a dozen countries.

I wanted to bring up an ethics-issue that I faced in the last few weeks. Mr. Bhakta, owner of Curries take-out restaurant, has been avoiding me for no reason. It's really baffling especially because the last time I was at his place, I shot a lot of photos and the vibe was pretty good. But I don't know ever since then whenever I call him he picks up the phone and after he realizes it's me on the other end he just hangs up. So, I visited the Bhaktas in person around two weeks back and Mrs. Bhakta answered the door. I asked her if I had done anything wrong and she replied that it wasn't my fault and that Mr. Bhakta was very busy with work. She seemed welcoming and asked me to come next week to do the interview (that's the only thing left; all their photos have been shot) I called Mr. Bhakta that night and again a few days later with no luck. Looks like I've done something that has upset Mr. Bhakta and he doesn't want to sort it out.

What do you think I should do? Should I still pursue them or should I just exclude their story/pictures from my master's project work because I don't feel right

about including them if they are reluctant?

April 1, 2014

I just have one more family portrait left which is scheduled this evening. Once I nail it, I'm done with the shooting part of the project! To be honest, I am lagging behind on the paper but I assure you that I'll have the paper ready this weekend. I'd like to meet with the committee on the 14th (Monday) to sort out any last minute issues and I'd like to defend the following Monday, April 21 if that works with all of you.

And I did (try to) meet the Bhaktas about 3 weeks back and it didn't go well. I spoke to Prof. Rees and he's fine with me using their pictures as long as they are not published. So, I'm going to go ahead and hopefully the Bhaktas forgive me for whatever I did to upset them after seeing the finished product (book).

I've dabbled quite a bit with street photography back home and I wasn't welcomed with "open arms" most of the time. I think the reason people esp. people from lower socioeconomic circles are so wary of guys with cameras is because:-

1. They are afraid that we (any photographer) might exploit them i.e. sell their pictures and make profit

AND/OR

2. They are just afraid that anybody with a camera in hand is a tabloid journalist and will misrepresent them.

In my opinion the reason that thought generally persists among this demographic is because of lack of awareness about photography (as a hobby) and/or lack of education. I think the Bhaktas too might have felt exploited due to my

random visits and my requests for pictures. Or maybe they just don't get what the pictures are for and hence decided that they've had had enough of my shenanigans. Once again, sorry about the delay on my paper. Since, I'm doing a professional analysis and have my interviews transcribed already I should be able to get it done in a week's time. I just need to devote an entire day or two on this and I think I should be fine.

Chapter Three: Evaluation

I am content with the work I have been able to accomplish for this project. I spent the last two semesters working on this project with the majority of time spent on taking photographs. I learnt driving and received my driver's license just weeks prior to commencing shooting of this project. I cannot imagine how the project would have come to fruition without acquiring that (necessary) skill. Since I had to carry all the cumbersome lighting equipment to every shoot, renting cars was the only option that worked out to be both economical and reliable. And the reason I relied so heavily on lighting was that right from the day this project was conceived I wanted to make images that were very different and unique from master's projects done by photojournalism students in the past especially in terms of aesthetics. I figured lighting was one of the ways to go about achieving a distinct look.

I also spent a lot of time on post-production. In fact the time spent on brushing up my toning techniques and applying those techniques on each of the photographs (selects) would easily have amounted to more than thrice as much time I spent on shooting. There is no denying that toning has played a prominent role in the final look of the images but I wish I had not spent so much time on this process and rather allocated that time on research or shooting.

If I had a chance to do this all over again there would definitely be a lot of changes in my approach. Firstly, I would test the light that I bought thoroughly to make sure that I know exactly what it is capable of and what it is not and then begin shooting for this project. This would have kept the quality of light

consistent in all my images and as a result the images would have worked very well together. I would definitely settle in on a particular number of families to photograph right at the very beginning and then spend some quality time with them, prior to shooting, in order to familiarize myself with the individuals and the family as a whole on a more personal level. Interacting at this level will help me design a storyboard for each of the families I am documenting. This in turn would help me decide the kind of pictures that would best tell the story and thus pre-planning the shoots, which reflecting back now seems like an essential process and one that I did not put a lot of effort into, would become a whole lot easier. For example, I initially started shooting with the idea that each of the families would have around 10 portraits with each member of the family having two portraits, one taken at their workplace or in a similar setting and the other showing them engaged in a recreational activity or at home. The idea was to design a book having a section devoted to each family and their set of pictures. But, in the end the edit turned out to be entirely different from what I had envisioned in the beginning.

Even though I established a good rapport with almost all the families and especially the three families that spoke the same regional language as I did I still think I should have been a lot more involved in the community by attending community gatherings and other similar activities on a frequent basis. This again would have helped me gain a good rapport with the families I was documenting and the camaraderie would have reflected in the photographs resulting in far more revealing pictures of the families and the community. Furthermore, it was quite

challenging working with artificial lighting. If I were to do this project all over again, I would keep the lighting very simple. Most of the shots that have made the edit were shot using a single strobe and I think using a single light makes more sense especially when you do not have an assistant helping you during the shoot. This would also enable me to shoot a lot of the portraits outdoors. For example, a picture of a family shopping for groceries and parents walking or driving their children to school would have given viewers an idea of what Columbia looks like and would have also established that the people in the pictures are, in fact, from the US and that they can assimilate with the local population. Speaking about assimilation, I did notice that the families I followed for this project rarely interacted with the locals except at the workplace. That is probably the only negative stereotype that turned out to be neither completely false nor exaggerated by the media. Having said that, I do feel that I have done a decent job of portraying the local Indian American community without any bias. I think I have a good variety of images. I started doing detail shots during the course of the project but realized those pictures did not fit in with the rest of the work so I ended up not using any of those pictures.

Reflecting back on the progress from the start of the project to now, it has definitely been a roller coaster ride of ups and downs. There have been times when nothing worked in my favor and there have also been times when somehow everything clicked. The most important thing I take away from this project is that pre-planning and a good rapport with the people who you choose to photograph are a must when embarking on a long-term documentary project.

Chapter Four: Physical Evidence

Please refer to the Media Folder for images and an eBook. Refer to the Appendix for participants' biographies.

Chapter Five: Model Minority

The mass media since the last few decades have become both omnipresent and omnipotent. They are ideal vehicles for stereotyping as they frequently churn out raw material for daily conversation. Research has shown that when photographs that were partial to just one side of an issue accompanied a balanced news report, readers developed distorted perceptions of the issue in the direction of the partial images. Research has also shown how bias in pictorially representing a particular ethnic group perpetuated the stereotypes associated that group. For instance, racial images of Blacks helped inform racial stereotypes about Blacks and led to stronger association of Blacks with social problems addressed in the stories. In sum, studies suggest that media often oversimplify news for consumers by rarely placing news events and issues into a broader context.

Photographs have accompanied information contained in news stories since March 4, 1880 when *The Daily Graphic* published the first halftone reproduction of a news photograph. They help readers make sense of a news story before they actually read that story. Recent research has demonstrated that visual images have a great impact on public knowledge. For example, visual aspects of media content have been found to have a long lasting effect on viewers when recalling content and can also have a strong effect on an individual's perception of an issue. The photo story or photo essay came into being over the past 100 years. New publications developed, first in Europe and then in the USA, to highlight these

story types. *National Geographic Magazine* (NGM) was one of them even though it was a text-oriented publication for almost the first two decades since it went into circulation in October 1888, along with *Picture Post*, *Berliner Illustrirte Zeitung*, *Vu*, *Life* and *Look*. The photo story presents a sequence of photographs and a story, which is more than just a mere collection of photos on a topic.

With the impact that photographs, particularly photo stories or photo essays, can have on perpetuating stereotypes, how can photographers working in foreign areas avoid perpetuating stereotypes? For photographers Erika Larsen and Reed Young, the answer boils down to the photographer's intent and a keen awareness of the people they photograph.

Erika Larsen, who is Norwegian, was born and brought up in the US. She got her degree from Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) and has photographed various assignments for NGM besides her enormous body of personal work in which the common recurring theme is people's connection with their land. She is "fascinated with the human experience, people in general and what it means to be human." With 'Sami – Walking with Reindeer', and her other personal projects 'Young Blood' and 'The Hunt' she has tried to explore the "primal drive" of the modern day hunter and the way hunters could be immersed in nature for long periods of time. Reed Young, a New York City based photographer, who received his photography education from Brooks Institute of Photography and later at Fabrice Benetton's research workshop, school and studio in Italy has a totally different approach than that of Larsen's. Young used to take portraits of people he met on the streets during his time at Fabrice and in the process stumbled upon documentary portraiture by

accident. He realized that he could tell each person's story if he interviewed them along with taking their portrait. He says he went from doing single subject stories to focusing on "specific groups of people from different cultures or backgrounds."

Both Larsen and Young are subconsciously aware of stereotyping while working on a story. One way Larsen tackles stereotyping in her work is that she prefers going to a place with an open mind as opposed to reading up everything there is to know about the place and its people. Larsen's interest in the Arctic landscape began with a fascination with how long the Sami had sustained their unique culture; she had been documenting the hunting cultures in Canada and the US for eight years prior to starting her research on the Sami community. The Sami story is one of her most published works; it's a photo essay on the Sami people residing in Kautokeino, Norway. What started as a personal project in 2008 was later published in 2011 by NGM.

The Sami are an original hunter-gatherer pastoral community that still actively hunts in the Nordic region. They are considered semi-nomadic and earn their livelihood through reindeer herding. Larsen worked on this story for around three years and initiated her first contact with the community via email. In 2007, she contacted several Sami women and expressed interest in learning about the "traditional medicine of the arctic landscape" and their role in the community. Laila Spik, a woman from a reindeer herding family in Sweden, invited Larsen to her house. Initially, it was just a two-week visit, but Larsen spent a lot of time listening to Spik and learning about the Sami way of life. After those two weeks, she knew that in order to truly understand the Sami culture she had to spend a significant amount of

time with them.

Larsen mentions that personal interests drive her personal projects and that these projects generally arise from curiosity to learn about a place and its people. In terms of research, she says that the amount of research involved is usually a little less when compared to magazine assignments. “The idea of exploration, the unknown leads me,” she says. Larsen adds no matter what the project is, research takes on different levels at different times – there is research on the front end, during the project and after the project. For example, for the Sami story she had to learn the Sami language and then study about their history and culture. She did not opt for an interpreter on this story as she likes to communicate directly with her subjects and feels having an interpreter around would not allow her to connect with her subjects, which she thinks is very important when working on a photo story.

It was a year into the project, when Spik introduced Larsen to the Gaups, a family of reindeer herders, with five children ranging from teenagers to two adults in their early thirties and with kids of their own. She followed this particular family and they became the focus of a lot of her images. She, in turn, became their *beaga* – a housemaid who traditionally cooks, cleans and helps out with chores in a Sami household. This helped her better understand the Sami customs and culture. She mentions that during her extended stay with the Gaups she never felt unwelcome and that the Gaups were as interested in Larsen learning the Sami culture as she was. “The Gaups embraced me completely... In time I began to feel like part of the family.” Erika Larsen believes building relationships and a desire to learn new things are a must when working on long-term stories. “I tend to build enough of a

relationship even on smaller things,” she says. I go with as much of an open heart as I can for myself to learn about a situation. I believe the only thing I can carry is that I’m there to learn from the land, from the people, from the situation.”

Larsen puts the same patient effort she devotes into learning about her subjects into photographing them. She spends a lot of time observing what is going on around her, and as soon as she sees something that she would like to photograph she says she “almost stops the moment, engages in the moment and makes the portrait.” She does not stage moments but often poses people for a portrait. She makes use of a 4x5 field camera for the most part even though more than half of the pictures taken for the Sami story were shot using a DSLR. She has 15 years of experience using this kind of camera and feels “comfortable” with it. She adds, a 4x5 camera “has a wonderful way of interpreting the moments that I see – the moments between moments, the worlds between the worlds.” Using such a heavy piece of equipment has made her more observant and aware of her surroundings. It also lets her interact with her subjects (even though she does not prefer to talk while actually making a portrait).



© Erika Larsen, *Sami – Walking with Reindeer*

In addition to portraits, Larsen also included still life images and landscape shots in the narrative of the Sami story thanks in part to her habit of shooting with a large format camera. “The still life images tell so much. It’s just a valid way of telling a story,” she says. She feels that the detail shots and landscapes make up the broader scene. “At the end of the day, it’s all about emotional content,” Larsen says. My stuff is extremely simple... it’s the emotional thing I’m trying to tap into.” But she adds that she is human after all. “I have all my background and perspectives and everything that made me who I am,” Larsen says. All that is carried in the bag with me and I can’t strip myself off that. That’s just the way life is.” She feels that the viewer plays a huge role in how her work is perceived. “When you see my picture, you are going to bring all your perspective, all your stereotypes, all your life to your way of viewing my picture. I can’t control that. So, it’s all based on context, who is seeing it and where they are coming from... We just have to be honest to ourselves if we can be.”



© Erika Larsen, *Sami – Walking with Reindeer*

Reed Young also attests to the fact that access and intimacy with the subjects play a key role in the outcome of any story. “When you are doing a story about a place, it is really difficult to avoid (stereotyping) sometimes. When you don’t include some of the stereotypes of the story you risk having a story that isn’t really honest because often times stereotypes or generalizations are quite true... Who I choose to include in the story is how I avoid the stereotype,” says Young. Young did a story in India called *The Seven Percent*. Unlike most Western photographers who visit India in pursuit of a story that depicts the dark side of the country namely poverty, overpopulation, corruption etc., he chose to focus, instead, on the country’s burgeoning upper middle class population.



© Reed Young, *The Seven Percent*

Young also points out how editing a shoot a certain way can have implications on how a particular picture and consequently that body of work is perceived by the audience. “Even the smallest movement of the face can give a completely different sense of who that person is,” Young says. He was actually researching about Tokyo when the idea of doing a story on Sumo wrestlers struck him. As he was researching about the place – *Wikipedia* is one of his favorite research tools – he realized that the Sumo scene in Tokyo was big. Once he had had made up his mind on doing a story on Sumo Wrestlers he wanted to delve a little deeper into the subject. That is when he came to know that a lot of Sumo wrestlers are foreigners. As he started pre-production work on this story, he came to know that the Sumo wrestling community was “closed in terms of letting journalists in.” Having established no contacts and only two weeks left for the trip, Young decided to restrict his story to just retired Sumo wrestlers.



© Reed Young, *The Seven Percent*

Unlike Larsen, all of Young's photo stories are actually portrait series, and he does not spend as much time on his projects as Larsen spends on hers. Young used to spend around two weeks in the field for a story not very long ago and managed about four to six stories a year but has now decided to spend almost a month on a story and is planning to restrict himself to doing just two stories a year from now on. He said this will help him better research the stories and consequently the final product will be much better. Since he shoots only portraits he rarely spends more than an hour or an hour and a half with his subjects as opposed to following a person or a family for an extended period of time, say, a month over even a year. He stages his shots and everything is planned for the most part. For example, Young worked in Rome on a yet to be published story about voice over artists recently. He flew there 10 days before the shoot and chose all the locations himself and then photographed his subjects, in wardrobe and set that resembled the art direction in

Hollywood films that they dub for, at the time of the day that he thought would be ideal for a portrait. He lights all his portraits and has assistants helping him during every shoot. He uses anywhere between four to six strobes if shooting indoors and manages with one or two strobes when shooting outdoors. He also prefers having a writer, usually a friend, on board during the shoot and the writer gets all the back-story on the person who is to be photographed prior to the shoot and helps Reed write the captions.

“Being trustworthy and likeable and putting a really good first impression is pretty important,” Young says. If Young encounters any reluctant subjects on a shoot he does not try to push but instead starts making small talk to ease the tension. “Be open about yourself,” he says. “Don’t leave out the embarrassing stuff because then it brings you down to earth and makes them feel like they’re on the same level with you.” He also mentions how showing pictures from the ongoing project to the person whose picture is being taken, goes a long way in connecting with that person. “I’ll put the pictures on my phone from the day before. I’ll be like we photographed your neighbor yesterday and they see a familiar face... I’ve realized that’s a great way to earn trust.”

Thus, both Erika Larsen and Reed Young try their best to stay away from stereotyping but as Young mentions stereotyping could be a positive thing sometimes especially when that stereotype does not carry any negative connotations with it. Also, in this day and age where consumers of mass media, thanks to the internet, have a platform to express their thoughts and concerns the chances of misinterpretation are high. Therefore, no matter what kind of photography one wants to pursue (newspaper

or documentary) or where they are from (East or West), the intent should be to provide a realistic portrayal of the community (and its people) they are photographing. If they simply drop into a region for a few days to make pictures, there is a strong likelihood that no matter how visually striking their images may be, they would have missed out on the opportunity to connect with locals and cultivate any sort of relationship. As a photographer, it becomes imperative for us to understand and document a place and its people holistically, as an evolving community, inclusive of a diversity of people and ideas. When our work is complete, we need to be able to look the person or people or community in the eye and have them be okay with the work we have done. But no one can represent a particular place in its totality. Photography, by its very nature, will ask more questions than provide answers; it enforces subjectivity. But like pieces of a puzzle, when taken together, those individual stories can offer a collective truth.

As we are working in the field, we must actively consider the final picture and its implications. We must take great care to provide reference and circumstance for our pictures. An accurate photograph of any place must be honestly observed and rendered, understanding that both the maker and viewer bring their own biases and filters to the table.

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Appendix PROJECT PROPOSAL

INTRODUCTION

I came to the US, fall of 2011, with big dreams...

I discovered the beautiful art called photography during my high school years, and my passion grew as I got into college. I graduated college in 2009 with an engineering degree but knew engineering is not something I could or would do for the rest of my life. About three months after I graduated I came across a beautiful photo-essay, about Indian saltpan workers, in a local newspaper. More interesting was the fact that it was done by a local news photographer. I immediately emailed the photographer and scheduled a meeting with him. I found out he was from a neighboring city, and with a little hesitation I travelled to his city to meet him. It was this photographer who introduced me to the wonderful world of photojournalism. We kept in touch, and the same person about a few months later asked me to apply to a photojournalism school abroad. After a year of preparation, tests and application forms, I finally landed at the MU School of Journalism.

After about a year and a half into the program, I realized that I was not really cut out for journalism but my first and foremost love of photography was still intact in me. Thanks to *Beginning Photography*, a darkroom photography course offered by the Fine Arts department, and *Photography in Society* I was introduced to a lot of great art and documentary photographers like Diane Arbus, Sebastiao Salgado, Sally Mann, Bill Owens, Lee Friedlander, Garry Winogrand and Dorothea Lange. And the

more I looked at their work, the more I drifted away from newspaper photography. When I finished *Staff Photojournalism* in the fall of 2012, I came to the conclusion that I would make an incompetent news photographer. On the other hand, I discovered that I was not very bad at portraiture. *Advanced Techniques in Photojournalism*, a class about strobe lighting which I took in my second semester, also played a huge part in defining my current photographic style, i.e. studio or on-location lit portraiture. Last but not least, photojournalism chair David Rees has always been a constant source of support, and his work has had a big influence on me as a photographer.

The core courses, *Mass Media Seminar* and *Media Ethics*, I took during my first semester in the program were really instrumental in teaching me how to go about doing research on a topic. Prior to taking those classes, I had no research experience whatsoever. Thanks to both these classes, I read my first ever journal articles and subsequently wrote my first ever literature reviews and essays.

I see myself as a freelance editorial photographer a few years from now, and my master's project, I believe, will be a great way to enhance my technical skills and at the same time have my feet firmly grounded in the world of photojournalism. If executed well, the images resulting out of this project will be a worthy addition to my portfolio.

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS COMPONENT

I plan to start working simultaneously on both my professional skills and analysis components starting late May. I will try to explore the various facets associated with

the lifestyle of Asian-Indians living in the US photographically by doing a documentary photography project on the Indian diaspora living in Columbia. If time permits and if it helps add credibility to my project I might travel to Springfield and Chicago to photograph the Indian families residing in those two places.

AREA OF EMPHASIS OF THE PROJECT

My area of emphasis is photojournalism and thus photographs will be a major part of my professional skills component. I will strive to create technically strong photographs while at the same time try my best to capture the essence of the people I photograph. Additionally I will also be spending around half hour interviewing each of my subjects to gather information to write captions for the photographs.

EDUCATIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

During my time as a staff photographer for Columbia Missourian, the most important thing I learned was to connect with people who I photographed for my assignments. I think the people skills I developed during my Missourian stint will go a long way in ensuring that I find enough willing volunteers to photograph for my project and thus finish my project in time. All the core courses, as mentioned previously, that I took as part of my program will also ensure that I do not fumble on the technical side of things and finish my project in time. One other important class that imparted the necessary skill required to complete the analysis component, in my case professional analysis, is Qualitative Research. Moreover, the different assistantships I have held during my four semesters in the program have not only taught me to work under deadline pressure but also to work overtime when needed.

PROJECT DATES AND WORK SCHEDULE

May 19 – June 1: Make contact with potential subjects and arrange a time to shoot and interview.

June 2 – 16: Contact photographers to interview for the research component and arrange the interview day and time. Photograph and interview the contacts established and speak to them via Skype.

June 17 – June 30: Photograph the remaining participants and complete an additional interview with the photographers (if necessary).

July 1 – July 31: Tone the photographs and transcribe all the interview(s).

August 1 – August 31: Strengthen theory and literature review and conduct any additional interviews or photo shoots if necessary. Prepare both the professional and analysis components of the project for submission.

DESCRIPTION OF WORK

I will start by contacting a few prominent members of the Indian community residing in Columbia and email the president of the MU student organization, Cultural Association of India (CAI). I will explain in detail about my project and what I am trying to convey through the images. Once I gain their trust, I will ask them to get me in touch with other Indian families, in other words, potential participants for my project. I will ensure that the individuals or families I photograph are from diverse backgrounds in terms of their occupation and the number of years they have been residing in the US. I will spend a substantial amount of time working with each family in order to make a technically sound photograph and record as detailed an audio interview as possible about their background and experiences in the US.

Through my project, I want the viewer to see these people as individuals, to know their names and a bit about their history and/or culture and not just view them as an anonymous part of some ethnic minority living in the US. My intention is to help bring attention to the value this culture represents and the issues they face in this country. This will be a great challenge as a photographer since I have to bring all those qualities out through just one picture of each individual or family. Since I share the same background as those of my subjects I have to keep my reflexivity in check to extend the validity of my project.

One of the biggest stumbling blocks that will stand in the way of successful completion of this project will be access to subjects. I have a fear that the individuals or families I get in touch with in regards to this project will be a bit hesitant as people from the subcontinent are a bit shy and generally like to keep a low profile. I will try to overcome this issue by presenting my motives as clearly as possible and by involving the subjects as much as possible while making their pictures.

DISSEMINATION OF WORK

The work can be disseminated in two ways:-

1. Publish a book with all the photographs with or without captions.

OR

2. Make a DVD-Video with each photograph as separate chapters. Each photograph will have an excerpt from the respective subject's audio interview.

Since the number of Indians immigrating to the US keeps rising every decade the project has a good amount of news value. It can either be published in Columbia

Missourian or Vox. I will also contact editors of other local and regional magazines based in Kansas City and St. Louis. Since the project is about Asian Indians living in the US, their image as projected by the media and the resulting stereotypes associated with the community, another remote possibility would be getting my work published on Time's Lightbox and New York Times' Lensblog. In addition, several leading Indian news magazines like *India Today* and *The Week* would be great platforms to get my work across to the public in India.

EVIDENCE

The main evidence will be the photographs that I make for the skills component. I plan to shoot primarily on film as it slows me down as a photographer and thus helps me connect with my subjects and make better pictures. I will also be making contact sheets of all the film rolls exposed in case I decide to use film for some of the portraits/pictures. Moreover, I will be handing out a DVD with the outtakes from every single shoot to all my committee members, and my final project report will also have elaborate field notes written every single day I shoot and/or conduct interviews. Log sheets of all the interviews conducted will be included in the final project report along with transcription of relevant audio. I will also create a private blog and provide the link to my committee members. I will be updating this blog regularly with a post at least once every week and keep my committee members updated with all the work done as part of the project.

SUPERVISION

I will be in Columbia for the most part during my project and hence I will meet in

person with my committee chair, Prof. David Rees, once every two weeks and get his advice and suggestion on relevant matters to make sure that I am moving along the right path. I can also meet my other committee members, Dr. Keith Greenwood and Prof. Brian Kratzer, on a regular basis. Dr. Greenwood with his vast knowledge about the history of photography and photojournalism can guide me with the analysis component of the project and Prof. Kratzer, Director of Photography for Columbia Missourian, can help me with the professional skills component.

Additionally, I am also thinking of getting in touch with a freelance photographer and showing them my work frequently as I work on my project to get his feedback on the quality of my images since images are going to be a big part of my skills component.

ANALYSIS COMPONENT

STATEMENT OF TOPIC

For a long time since I started taking pictures I considered photography to be the medium that allows photojournalists to document facts and situations in a manner very close to the ideal of objectivity. As I discovered later photography can be – and I think it actually is – a very subjective way of telling stories. By deciding what to photograph, how to *frame* an image, how to compose it, or by making technical choices, a photographer presents his or her point of view. When taking a photograph we usually want to draw others' attention to something or somebody that first drew our attention. Photojournalism has been credited with the power to stir reaction and change opinions because of its ability to reproduce reality in a way a mirror does. People still believe that photographs are unaltered representations of real life situations (Goldberg, 1993). Dorothea Lange says documentary photography records the social scene of our time, it mirrors the present, documents the future and that its focus is man in relation to mankind (2005, pg. 12).

I have noticed documentary work done in the Indian sub-continent has always tended to glorify the slums or the things that are typically considered exotic by the western media e.g. Bollywood, transvestites etc. And these photographs are predominantly the work of photographers from western countries. I want to explore:

Q: What factors influence how non-indigenous photographers can document stories in the Indian sub-continent to avoid perpetuating stereotypes?

I plan to find out the answer to the above question with the help of in-depth interviews with photographers who have done substantial amount of work in the subcontinent.

RELEVANCE OF THIS STUDY

I think this study will help rising photojournalists to accurately represent the world beyond their “bubble,” and in the process the public will have a better understanding of the outside world. For example, Africa is a land of diversity but time and again journalists from western nations have focused their attention primarily on these two topics: genocide and hunger. Similarly, a rapidly developing nation like India has almost always been portrayed by the media as a land of poverty. But the real fact is that India is urbanized to a large extent and though poverty is present in most parts of the country it is not as prevalent as the western media makes it seem to be.

THEORY

Agenda-setting and framing are two theories that can potentially be used to answer my question but I chose the latter since agenda setting theory is more about the creation of what the public thinks is important. It is more concerned with the editing side of photography which is something that takes place after the content is already made, in other words, after the photographs are shot. Framing: media decides what people think about (McQuail & Windahl, 1993). It literally takes place right when

the photographer presses the shutter button of the camera. By trying to understand what makes a photographer shoot a land, people, or an event outside his/her “home” the way he/she does we can gain a much deeper understanding of stereotyping and in the process help control or curb it. This in turn will result in a better representation of the world in general and lead to the public being well-informed about the “outside world,” helping them make better decisions.

Media frames, largely unspoken and unacknowledged, organize the world both for journalists who report it, and in some important degree, for us, the audience, who rely on their reports” (Gitlin, 1980).

A frame is a schema through which we see and interpret events (Goffman, 1974) or “a central organizing principle that holds together and gives coherence and meaning to a diverse array of symbols” (Gamson, 1992, p. 384). Frames allow individuals to understand and respond to new information. To study framing is “to study a process of constructed meaning” (Gamson, 1992, p. 385).

McQuail (2005) stated that framing is a concept that has two meanings. The first would be “the way in which the news content is typically shaped and contextualized by journalists within some familiar frame of reference and according to some latent structure of meaning” (McQuail, 2005, p. 555). The second meaning is related to the first and refers to the effects of framing on the public. “The audience is thought to adopt the frames of reference offered by journalists and to see the world in a similar way” (McQuail, 2005, p. 555).

Hertog and McLeod (1999) go further to define frames as “relatively

comprehensive structures of meaning made up of a number of concepts and the relations among those concepts. Although each frame provides principles for the organization of social reality, frames are more than just principles. Frames have their own content, as well as a set of rules for the processing of new content” (p. 140). Martinson, Hinnant and Martinson (2008) assert “framing in media presents information in a structure that organizes the world and guides the perceptions of reality” (p. 13).

According to Entman (1993), the two key aspects of framing are selection and salience. Entman explains that framing “involves the process of selecting some aspects of a perceived reality and making them more salient in a communicating text to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described” (p. 52). In essence, framing theory is based on the notion that an increase in salience can increase the probability of the readers to perceive the information, to discern and process the meaning, and to store it in memory (Fiske and Taylor, 1991, p. 55). In a similar sense, framing can have an ability to define the terms of a debate without the audience realizing it is taking place (Reese, Gandy and Grant, 2003, p. 97). Such tenets of framing are also applicable to the analysis of visual frames, considering that images as modes of communication have properties that either “enhance or mitigate their consequences” (Messaris and Abraham, p. 215) or sometimes even override the messages embedded in the text (Wischmann, 1987; Rodrriguez and Dimitrova, 2011, p. 49).

In addition, Entman (1993) explains how a consistent definition of framing can be

beneficial in various aspects. One aspect Entman touches on is journalistic objectivity. According to Entman, journalists often become subject to the “media manipulators” that impose their dominant frames, which is due to a lack of a common understanding of framing. Entman says that if journalists are more educated so that they can challenge a dominant frame, they can be better equipped to construct news that makes equally salient – equally accessible to the average, inattentive, and marginally informed audience – two or more interpretations of problems (p. 57).

Messariss and Abraham (2003) suggest how visual communication can function as an agent of framing, and how the framing process is affected by the use of visual images. By examining what makes pictures different from verbal language as a medium of communication, their discussion focuses on three distinctive properties of visual images – their analogical quality, their indexicality, and their lack of an explicit propositional syntax.

Messariss and Abraham say that the relationship between most words and their meanings is purely a matter of social convention, whereas the relationships between images are based on similarity or analogy (p. 216). Regarding viewers’ responses to framing, such an analogical quality of images can make images more natural, more closely linked to reality than words are, thus deceiving viewers into overlooking the fact that all images are human-made, artificial constructions (p. 217).

The indexicality of images refers to the semantic property of images to serve as

evidence for something else (Humphreys, 2006, p. 57). Messaris and Abraham say that because of such indexicality, photographs come with an implicit guarantee of being closer to truth than other forms of communication are (Messaris and Abraham, 2003, p. 217). Notwithstanding, photographic practices such as unacknowledged staging, manipulation, and even the more commonly used practices in visual framing such as selection and cropping can mislead a viewer (Rodriguez and Dimitrova, 2011, p. 52). Messaris and Abraham maintain that in contrast to verbal languages, visual communication does not have an explicit set of syntactic conventions for making propositions (p. 219). Finally, Messaris and Abraham state that the properties listed above can make visual framing less obtrusive than verbal framing (p. 215). Therefore, visual framing may convey meanings that would be more controversial or might meet with greater audience resistance if they were conveyed through words (p. 225).

When it comes to newspapers, the experiments of Zillmann, Knobloch and Yu (2001) have shown that photographs draw attention to themselves rather than to the accompanying text. Readers scan rather than read (Garcia and Stark, 1991). It is therefore common to 'read' the photograph but not the text and consequently form opinion based on the image alone.

The experiment conducted by Gibson and Zillmann (2000) showed that images depicting sick people belonging to specific ethnic groups created an exaggerated fear caused by the mental association of these groups with health risks, despite the absence of text supporting this view. In other words, images influence the reception and interpretation of news, regardless of the accompanying text. Furthermore,

because a photograph appears as a faithful depiction of reality, when it is not in accordance with the accompanying text the reader reacts by doubting the text but not the picture (Deni and Lester, 2003). An unbiased depiction of sick people is possible, but instead there is a preference for a representation that constructs and confirms the 'otherness' of the depicted. After all, one basic visual-framing technique is the 'simple action of selection' (Scheufele, 1999). The process of selecting and filtering photographs contributes to the creation of ideologically charged products as selection is guided by ideological and cultural considerations that reflect the dominant ideology. Photographs constitute socially constructed products because they are created within an institutional framework that determines how journalists and their products function within it (Schwartz, 1992).

LITERATURE REVIEW

INDIAN DIASPORA

Immigration

Indian Americans are not to be confused with American Indians. The former are Americans who have a background in the subcontinent and the latter are native Americans. To avoid confusion with American Indians, such as the Cherokee, Apache or Sioux, Indian Americans are sometimes called Asian Indians. Indian Americans are amongst the fastest growing immigrant groups in the United States, and the Indian American population has increased exponentially over the last few years to become the third largest population group after Hispanics and Chinese with a 2,846,914 headcount. A 'recompilation' of the census has put the number at 3,183,063. According to the 2010 census, India sent the second largest number of immigrants

in 2010 after Mexico (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

In 1946, President Harry Truman signed into law the Luce-Celler Act, which granted to Indians the right to immigrate to the US and also to be naturalized. But the effect of the 1924 Immigration Act meant that only one hundred south Asians were permitted to enter per year (Ninian, 2012, pg. 318). In the 1960s the immigration restrictions on south Asians were relaxed, and the number of immigrants from India grew. In 1965 President Lyndon Johnson signed into law the INS Act of 1965, eliminating per-country immigration quotas and introducing immigration on the basis of professional experience and education (pg. 318). At present, Indians are among the largest ethnic groups legally immigrating to the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007).

The immigration of Indian Americans has taken place in several waves since the first Indian Americans came to the United States in the 1700s. A major wave of immigration to California took place in the first decade of the twentieth century; the migrants were mostly agricultural laborers who left India to escape the economic crisis. Another significant wave followed in the 1950s which mainly included students and professionals. The elimination of immigration quotas in 1965 spurred successively larger waves of immigrants in the late 1970s and early 1980s. With the technology boom of the 1990s, the largest influx of Indians arrived between 1995 and 2000. This latter group has also caused a surge in the application for various immigration benefits including applications for a green card – a permit allowing a foreign national to live and work permanently in the US.

Culture and Background

Asian-Indian Americans are a rapidly growing ethnic group of almost one million people who are generally well educated and wealthy (Taylor and Stern, 1997). As with most recent immigrant groups, Asian Indians tend to live in and around major metropolitan areas (Mogelonsky, 1995, pg. 32). In 1990, New York City had the largest population of Asian Indians, followed by Chicago, Los Angeles-Long Beach, and Washington, DC (pg. 32). In America, Indian Americans made up 18 per cent of all Asian Americans in 2010 (up from 16 per cent in 2000) and over 69,000 people of Indian origin obtained legal permanent resident status in 2010 (U.S. Consular Affairs Bureau, 2012). Indians, along with other Asians, have one of the highest educational levels of all ethnic groups in the US. Almost 67 percent of all Indians have a bachelor's or higher degree (compared to 28 per cent nationally and a 44 per cent average for all Asian American groups). Almost 40 percent of all Indians in the United States have a master's, doctorate or other professional degree, which is five times the national average. Indian Americans led all Asian American groups in the country in median household income at \$86,660, ahead of the \$77,596 of Taiwanese households (Ninian, 2012, pg. 319). Although Asian-Indian Americans retain a high ethnic identity, they are known to assimilate into American culture while at the same time keeping the culture of their ancestors. They may assimilate more easily than many other immigrant groups because they have fewer language barriers (English is an official language and is widely spoken in India among professional classes). They have more educational credentials and come from a democratic society. Indian culture, like many other Asian cultures, puts emphasis

upon achievement and personal responsibility of the individual as a reflection upon the family and community (pg. 319).

Stereotyping

A stereotype is an exaggerated belief, image, or distorted truth about a person or group. It is a generalization that allows for little or no individual differences or social variations. Stereotypes are based on images passed on by the media, or beliefs and attitudes passed on by parents, peers, and other members of society (Dánico and Ng, 2004, pg. 121).

Ever since their arrival in the United States, Indian Americans have been subject to stereotyping. In order to be activated, stereotypes are dependent on an ethnic or social marker, which has to be easily recognizable. Only if such an indicator is found, can the chain of associations and prejudices begin to unfold. The most obvious and common marker for NRI (Non-Resident Indians, Indian citizens who live abroad but retain Indian nationality of) and PIO (Persons of Indian Origin, people of Indian descent who are citizens of a country other than India) is the color of their skin, which sets Indian Americans apart from the predominantly white population in the U.S. But, the most important ethnic marker for first generation Indian immigrants is their distinct South Asian English accent, the so-called "brown voice" (Dave, 2005, pg. 318). As for Indian women, saris and bindi have become the most obvious ethnic identification marks.

Like other immigrant groups from Asia, Indians are immediately associated with certain character traits that are somehow inherent in what is often called the

"Asian nature": They are perceived as being passive, humble, shy, docile, and generally submissive. At the same time, they are also said to be reliable and dutiful. Hence, Asians in general and Indians in particular are regarded as very loyal and efficient employees. In an interesting contrast, the assumed passivity and lack of emotion is also connected to being heartless and cold. Furthermore, it is sometimes linked to deceitfulness. While acting docile and polite outwardly, Asians in general and Indians in particular are suspected of not showing their true intentions and of being calculating and manipulative. Often, this is linked to alleged character traits of being cheap and greedy. Socially, Indians are considered to be reclusive and voluntarily isolate themselves. Like most other immigrant groups from Asia, they are said to be extremely family-oriented and not interested in too much interaction with the host society. Occasionally, this cliché leads to the assumption that Indians reject integration (Dánico and Ng, 2004, pg. 127).

The immense economic success of NRI and PIO in the United States has shaped and changed the way stereotypes of this group are constructed. Most obviously, they are associated with certain professions such as shopkeepers, motel owners, or IT experts. While many other ethnic minorities such as Hispanic or African Americans are mostly subject to purely negative clichés, Indian Americans have the attribution of being a "model minority". Indians (and other Asian immigrants) are said to embrace certain values that allow them to thrive economically, particularly in comparison to other ethnic groups. Among those alleged traits are an insatiable hunger for education and a tireless work ethic. Self-discipline, diligence, and persistency are other so-called "Asian values" that are used to describe

immigrants from India (Prashad 2000, pg. 170; Egan 2007).

METHODOLOGY

Photo Elicitation

The main methodology for this analysis would be photo elicitation in the form of semi- structured interviews. Harper says the main idea of photo elicitation is to insert a photograph into a research interview. He further explains that the use of images evokes deeper elements of human consciousness than words do; exchanges based on words alone utilize less of the brain's capacity than do exchanges in which the brain is processing images as well as words (2002, p. 13). Although most elicitation studies use photographs, as Harper suggests, photo elicitation can be done with virtually any visual image (p. 13). I plan to use the photographers' own photographs, taken in the subcontinent, for the photo elicitation part of my interview.

In terms of photo elicitation incorporated into photojournalism, Smith and Whitney (2002) provide a more helpful insight in their study. Incorporating photo elicitation, Smith and Whitney present Donna Ferrato's book *Living with the Enemy* to three individuals who are intimately familiar with the topic of domestic violence. Whitney conducted separate, individual interview sessions using the photo elicitation process, through which each of the three participants are able to have a common starting point in sharing their thoughts on domestic violence.

Analyzing the response from the interviews, Smith and Whitney list some of the main agreements and disagreements of the three participants and conclude that their feedback gave an invaluable insight into how the topic of domestic violence can be perceived (p. 12). In terms of the photo elicitation method, they note that

conducting photo elicitation with individuals who are “experts” compared to the average citizen can create a unique challenge, in that the experts can overwhelm the researcher with their experiences and commentary (p. 13). I, on the other hand, have no other choice but to interview experts to gain a better understanding of their approach to photography in developing nations.

While photographing an Italian-American neighborhood in St. Louis known as “The Hill,” Truax (1997) also utilized photo elicitation to gain a deeper understanding of the neighborhood and its people. Truax reflects that photo elicitation enabled him to understand his photographs through the eyes of Hill residents (p. 13), and that such perspectives of the insiders provided “a much-needed context to my pictures, imbuing many with the sociological and anthropological relevance” (p. 153). Truax maintains that through the use of photo elicitation, the distinction between the insiders’ perspective and his own was able to emerge.

Interview

Wellman (2001) suggests that the interview method should be used when specific data has to be collected in a limited amount of time and where an overview of people’s thoughts has to be researched.

An interview can be structured, semi-structured or unstructured and can be used in a whole variety of situations and fields for measuring or for understanding individual or group perspectives on specific issues (Fontana and Frey, 1994). The extensive use of the interview as a method to acquire information in the world has prompted the same two authors to state that ours has become an “interview society”

(Atkinson and Silverman, 1997, pg. 307).

According to another author, “interviewing has become a routine technical practice and a pervasive, taken-for-granted activity in our culture” (Mishler, 1986, 23).

During a structured interview the researcher uses the same set of pre-established questions that offer very limited possibilities of response. Sometimes, but not very often, open-ended questions might be included in this type of interview. Structured interviews do not allow variation in terms of questions to be asked and answers to be given (Fontana and Frey, 1994).

For my project a structured interview is not the best choice because it would automatically limit the amount and quality of the information I would gather.

Hence, I have decided to go with a semi-structured interview. The interview would be conducted through Skype (to facilitate sharing of photographs if needed) with the chosen photographer who has worked on several projects in India covering. He still continues to work on long-term projects in India.

The purpose of this interview would be to gather information about how the professionals decide to cover issues/stories in developing nations, what mechanism – demands of the assignment or personal interest – causes them to choose a certain topic instead of others, how they conduct their research prior to the serial execution of the photographic work, and what patterns, if any, they use to determine the final edit of their work. The interviews would also aim to gather information about how photojournalists gain access and eventually manage to get their projects published.

Dunne (2000) has used a similar approach in his interviews with wildlife

photographers and found it to be a successful and insightful technique, and Smith (1989) used interviews to understand the structure and human dynamic of a photo department.

Before conducting interviews, Denzin and Lincoln (2000) emphasize the important of presenting oneself (the interviewer) in an appropriate manner; one that will help establish trust and promote honest responses to interview questions. I hope to gain this trust and honesty by thoroughly explaining the value of my research and conveying the value of each person's input. The process will begin with a letter/email of introduction to each of the photographers I plan to interview.

Each interview will last between 30 and 60 minutes and will be recorded (with permission) to enable a more thorough review of the interview during the analysis section of this paper. I will be interviewing at least three photographers who have worked extensively in the subcontinent. The sample size of three is not representative, but that is not the goal. Rather, I want to gather useful information from a small set of experienced photographers. I will use a set of questions as a framework for the interviews, but I want to keep the talks simple and conversational.

There are important steps to conduct an interview properly. I must listen carefully for hidden meanings and ask good questions to elicit ideas or stories that the interviewee may not think to explain fully. I must be careful to avoid leading questions and to ask open-ended questions instead. I will focus their attention to help them provide concrete examples of an idea rather than talking in generalities.

Interviewing is a matter of showing genuine respect for the people. I will need to

conduct an efficient, clean interview.

An “interview guide” or schedule of general topics will be prepared. Wellman (2001) describes an “interview guide” as a list of topics and aspects of these topics that have a bearing on the given theme and that the interviewer should raise during the course of the interview. This interview guide will ensure good use of limited interview time, will make interviewing more systematic and comprehensive and will help to keep my interactions focused.

Note keeping can be very demanding. Baxter (1996) supports this statement in saying that concentrating on asking questions, listening to the responses and taking notes is a complex process, so therefore, the interviews will be recorded as advised by Creswell (1994). I will either utilize a portable audio recording device for the purpose of recording data or use a audio capture software depending on the availability and /or efficiency. Recordings have the advantage of capturing data more faithfully than hurriedly written notes could, and it will be easier for me to focus on the interview. Having said that I will still note down the important parts of the interview. Upon completion of the interview, I will transcribe the data and maintain a physical copy of the transcribed data for reference.

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PARTICIPANTS' BIOGRAPHIES

Balakrishnan family

Dr. Balakrishnan, who was born and raised in Chennai, one of the largest metropolitan cities in India, came to El Paso, Texas to do his residency in internal medicine in 1995. After completing his residency program, he did an oncology fellowship in Houston. He then moved to Guam, a U.S. territory in the Western Pacific, in 2001 and started working as an oncologist before moving to Columbia in 2004. He married Abirami Elangovan in 1998 and brought her to the United States. Ms. Elangovan hails from a small city in the state of Tamil Nadu, located in southern India. She graduated with a master's degree in business administration from the University of Missouri two years back. She is a homemaker and is working on co-founding a healthcare billing company with a friend of hers.

Even though Dr. Balakrishnan moved to this country for obtaining higher education and work experience, he does not have any definite plans to move back to India. The couple feel that life in the United States is better suited to the overall development of their two U.S.-born sons, Ashwath, 14, and Akhil, 9. They feel that the children enjoy a lot more freedom here and living in the United States has made the family, as a whole, more self-reliant. Both Ashwath and Akhil learn chess, tennis and piano. Ashwath, who is in eighth grade, is a member of his school's Science Olympiad team and attended the Duke University's Talent Identification Program (TIP) in 2013. Akhil, a fourth grader, has been a part of the Columbia Public Schools' gifted educational program, known as the Extended Educational Experiences (EEE), since second grade.

Batchu family

Priyadarshini Batchu and her family moved to the United States in 1963 when she was two years old. Ms. Batchu completed her schooling in Rolla, Missouri and then went on to get her bachelor's in mechanical and aerospace engineering from the Missouri University of Science and Technology (formerly known as University of Missouri-Rolla) in 1983. She married Dr. Sudhir Batchu, who hails from the southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh, while she was a freshman in college in 1979.

Dr. Batchu joined Ms. Batchu in the United States after she moved to Columbia in 1983. Dr. Batchu graduated with a degree in medicine from India in 1981 and after moving to the United States, he worked as a post-doctoral fellow initially and then completed his neurological residency. He then moved to Cleveland, Ohio in 1994 to complete his fellowship in neuroimmunology. He started practicing as a neuroimmunologist in Rolla in 1995 and Columbia in 1996 and then founded the Columbia Center for Neurology & Multiple Sclerosis, a neurological treatment facility, in 1996. Ms. Batchu worked as an engineer for almost two decades after obtaining her master's degree from the University of Missouri. She then quit her engineering job and got into interior and exterior designing and now runs her own design consultancy called Innovative Designs.

The Batchus have two daughters. Their older daughter is married and settled in Boston while the younger works as a staff member in her father's clinic.

Bhakta family

Bhiku Bhakta moved to the United States in search of a better living in the mid 90s with the help of his eldest daughter who is married and settled in Kansas City. Mr. Bhakta hails from the western Indian state of Gujarat and owns a motel, Eastwood Motel, in Columbia, Missouri. He initially started working as a chef in one of the Indian restaurants in downtown Columbia and continued until 2001 when his son-in-law helped him set up the Eastwood Motel. He has also been running a modest Indian takeout kitchen, Curries, attached to the motel, for the last four years. It has become quite popular, especially with the local non-Indian residents, since its inception. He left for India in the early 2000s and got remarried and brought his wife, Kokila Bhakta, to Columbia. The Bhaktas are not as financially sound as most of the other Indian families residing in Columbia. As a way to offset the costs incurred in running an operation such as a motel they operate the business by themselves and have not hired any employees.

Mr. Bhakta has three daughters and a son. While his son has his own business in India, all of his daughters are married and settled in various parts of the United States. He feels that life in this country is a lot better when compared to life in India. He thinks things get done faster here, the people are nicer and the potential to make money is a lot more here than at home.

Chandrasekhar family

Dr. Holalkere R. Chandrasekhar was born in a small village, that he shares his first name with, in the southern Indian state of Karnataka. Chandrasekhar obtained his bachelor's and master's degrees in physics, chemistry and mathematics from India. He started receiving offers for graduate studies from several American universities upon

completion of his master's program. He moved to the United States in 1968 and graduated from Purdue University with a Ph.D. in physics five years later. He kept himself busy with post-doctoral research until 1975 and then left United States to work as a research scientist at the Max Planck Institute in Stuttgart, Germany.

Chandrasekhar's wife, Dr. Meera Chandrasekhar, was born in the large city of Secunderabad, in the southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh, but was always on the move during her school days thanks to her father who was in the Indian Army. She received her bachelor's and master's in physics and mathematics. She came to the United States to pursue her doctoral studies at the Brown University in 1970 and received her Ph.D. in 1976. She also went to the Max Planck Institute for her post-doctoral research and met Mr. Chandrasekhar and they got married in 1976. In 1977, while still in Germany, Mr. Chandrasekhar was asked to give a lecture by the chair of the physics department at the University of Missouri and subsequently was offered a faculty position in the physics department. The Chandrasekhars moved to Columbia in 1978. Ms. Chandrasekhar was offered a faculty position in the physics department in 1983 and both of them have been teaching at MU since.

Having spent the majority of their lives in the United States, they have no plans of moving back to India. They have three daughters, two of them twins, born and raised in the United States who have now settled all around the country. Ms. Chandrasekhar's mother, Kusum Chandrapal, stays with them and has been living with them ever since her husband passed away in 1995. She is 88 years old and spends alternate days of the week in an adult day care center enjoying the company of other participants.

Chockalingam family

Dr. Anand Chockalingam who hails from Chennai, India is a practicing cardiologist at the University Hospital, Columbia, Missouri. Chockalingam arrived in the United States in 1997 for a residency program in Pittsburgh and returned to India in 2000 to do a cardiology fellowship. He married Dr. Smrita Dorairajan, also from Chennai, who was a medical school student at that time. Dr. Chockalingam started practicing as a cardiologist when the couple moved to Charleston, W.Va. in 2004 with their son, Kavin Anand, who was 3 years old at that time. Dr. Dorairajan began her internal medicine residency in 2005. The family relocated to Columbia in 2006 and Dr. Dorairajan continued with her residency program and was awarded a fellowship in nephrology in 2008. She has been practicing as a nephrologist at the Harry S. Truman Memorial Veterans' Hospital since 2010.

Quality education was always the motive for the Chockalingams to come to the United States. In fact, Dr. Dorairajan was training as a pediatrician in India when Dr. Chockalingam decided to move to the United States as he felt studying and working in this country would provide the couple especially, Dr. Dorairajan, a lot of exposure and potential for engaging in research work. Even though life in United States has taught them to juggle personal and professional lives successfully, they still value Indian traditions and culture. Their plan is to go back to India once their son, Kavin, 12, finishes high school. They are afraid that moving now would negatively impact his education. Kavin is passionate about tennis and music. He plays piano and has been learning violin from his maternal great grandmother since he was six. They also have a daughter, Laya Anand, four, who is in preschool and loves ballet.

The Chockalingams plan to use their skills acquired in the United States to help improve the health of the underprivileged in Chennai when they eventually return to India.

Gajaraj family

Shashikant Gajaraj and Anita Subramani both hail from Bangalore, India. They married in February 2009 and moved to the United States together in the fall of that same year. Both Mr. Gajaraj and Ms. Subramani hold bachelor's degrees in chemical engineering from India. They came to the United States to pursue their master's. Incidentally, Mr. Gajaraj has been staying in the United States since 2007 and earned his master's degree from San Diego State University in environmental engineering. He is now close to finishing his Ph.D. in civil engineering with a specialization in environmental engineering from the University of Missouri. On the other hand, Ms. Subramani started her master's program in computer science engineering at MU in 2009 and graduated in December 2011. She currently works for the health informatics company, Cerner, as a project manager in Columbia, Missouri while her husband interns for the city government.

The couple feels that life in the United States is a lot more comfortable than life in India and that staying away from their respective families has made them more independent. Eventually, they want to move back home, most probably in a couple of years, as both of them came to this country with the sole purpose of getting a good education and consequently to gain some experience working in the industry.

Kannan family

Raghuraman Kannan, a faculty member in the department of radiology and

bioengineering at the University of Missouri, came to the United States in 2000 after earning his Ph.D. from India the year before. Anandhi Upendran, Mr. Raghuraman Kannan's wife joined him two months after he landed in this country. Ms. Upendran serves as the director of Nanoparticle Biochem, Inc., a private nanoparticle-based research company, and is also an adjunct faculty member in the physics department at MU. She holds a doctoral degree from India as well.

Both of them hail from Tamil Nadu, a state situated in southern India. They have an 8-year-old son, Saatvik Kannan, who is in second grade. Saatvik is passionate about computers and learns chess and attends Kumon, an afterschool math and reading program. The Kannans moved to the United States immediately after marriage and the prime reason for their decision to come to the United States was that they felt opportunities for someone with a Ph.D. in India are far and few between compared to the West. They zeroed in on the United States specifically for its great infrastructure and support systems for carrying out research. They did not plan on staying here for long but all the three members of the Kannan household hold U.S. citizenships now.

They are not looking to move back to India as their son's education is their top priority and feel that moving back would put a lot of stress on him and hinder his academic progress. In addition, they also do not want to risk their careers by trying to re-establish themselves in India, a country they have been out of touch with (professionally) for the last 15 years.

Patel family

Nitu Patel moved to Michigan City, Indiana after getting a job as a medical technologist at a Chicago hospital in 2000. Patel sacrificed her family life in order to

establish her professional career in the United States. She moved to Columbia, Missouri in 2008 after getting placed at the University Hospital. Her husband Hiren Patel joined her and their U.S.-born daughter Mansi Patel in 2009. Mr. Patel owns two liquor stores, Columbia Liquor and Eagle Liquor. He also takes care of his father's chemical, hardware, pharmaceuticals and real estate enterprise in Uganda during the summer months as his liquor stores usually take a hit during summer as most of the college students, his primary customer base, are out of town.

Ms. Patel is happy that staying in the United States has helped her kick start her professional career which she feels would have never taken off had she stayed in India. She is currently working towards achieving her long-term goal of becoming a diagnostic lab manager and is currently enrolled in the master's program in health administration at the University of Missouri. On the other hand, Mr. Patel misses the Indian culture and traditions and feels sorry for his children that they are not able to stay in touch with their roots at a much closer level. But he does feel that the quality of education in the United States is much better and that raising his children here would provide them with more opportunities compared to raising them in either India or Uganda. The Patels are from Ahmedabad, a city situated in the western Indian state of Gujarat and have four children - elder daughter, Mansi Patel, 13, younger daughter, Krupa Patel, 4, and two 3-year-old twin boys, Aadit Patel and Anuj Patel.

Tharakan family

Dr. Ajit Tharakan, was born in a small town in the southern Indian state of Kerala and raised in Chennai. Tharakan is currently the chief of the division of cardiothoracic surgery at the University Hospital, Columbia, Missouri. He has been serving in this

position since 2009, having done his residency in general surgery from 2003 to 2006. He is married to Rinu Tharakan. Ms. Tharakan was born in Kerala and spent considerable part of her school life in Bangalore, India.

The Tharakans came to Columbia in 2003 and then left for Boston in 2006 for three years after Mr. Tharakan got a fellowship from the Massachusetts General Hospital in thoracic surgery. Both Mr. Tharakan and Ms. Tharakan come from wealthy families and the reason they came to the United States was primarily for Mr. Tharakan's higher education. Ms. Tharakan, despite having a degree in medicine acquired from India, made the decision to be a stay-at-home mother in order to better look after her children, Matthan Tharakan, 12, and Anna Tharakan, 11. Matthan and Anna are both passionate about tennis and violin and Matthan devotes up to four hours every day to tennis and was the second seeded player in his age group in the Missouri Valley not very long ago. Anna is a voracious reader and also writes short stories every once in a while.

The Tharakans' long-term goals are to improve healthcare and its delivery in developing countries.