OPENING DOORS: HOW INDEPENDENT PHOTOJOURNALISTS
GAIN ACCESS TO SENSITIVE STORIES

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Master of Arts

by

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DEDICATION

None of this would have been possible without my sister and her inexhaustible drive to help me survive graduate school. I’ll never be able to top Ph.D. Stewart’s accomplishments and love of family. Thanks for carrying me through this. And to my mother for her unflinching support of every decision I’ve ever made. To my father, for whom I have to thank for my appreciation of the outdoors and my endless curiosity of the world around me. To all my grandparents who have been so supportive of furthering my education, giving me money to help pay my fees and various bills. To Depressed Fest, the best group of friends a guy could ask for.; without Taco Tuesdays, your help, and your friendship, this experience wouldn’t have been the same. And to everyone of the innumerable friends and colleagues who helped me in one way or another. It takes a village to raise a child.
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ABSTRACT

_The Working Family_ is a photographic project documenting a low income family sustaining themselves on their meager wages in Los Angeles, CA. The project shows how wages and jobs affect a family’s ability to care for one another. Minimum wage jobs are regularly characterized as jobs for teens or young adults working their first jobs and learning skills. Minimum wage is then categorized as something meant for these young workers, not adults trying to make a living. Those arguments are used politically as reasons why the federal minimum wage and state mandated minimum wages should not be raised. The text and photographs of this project were recorded to counter those stereotypes and to help explain why a large percentage of these jobs are filled by adults.

SUMMARY OF PROFESSIONAL SKILLS COMPONENT

Three professional independent photojournalists who have worked extensively on photographic stories regarding sensitive subjects such as poverty and sexual assault were interviewed using in-depth, semi-structured interviews. Darcy Padilla, Tim Matsui, and Mary Calvert were questioned about the process of gaining access to the difficult stories they have pursued and whether as an independent photojournalist they felt they were given less trust or credibility than a photojournalist backed by a reputable publication such as _The New York Times_. 