

"HOW DO YOU INTEGRATE INDIAN CULTURE INTO YOUR LIFE?":  
SECOND GENERATION INDO-CANADIANS AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF "INDIAN  
CULTURE" IN VANCOUVER, CANADA

by

EVELYN NODWELL

B.A., The University of Calgary, 1969  
M.A., The University of Alberta, 1971

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
(Department of Anthropology and Sociology)

We accept this thesis as conforming  
to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

October 1993

© Evelyn Nodwell, 1993

In presenting this thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an advanced degree at the University of British Columbia, I agree that the Library shall make it freely available for reference and study. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by the head of my department or by his or her representatives. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

(Signature)

Department of Anthropology

The University of British Columbia  
Vancouver, Canada

Date Oct. 14 / 1993

## ABSTRACT

This dissertation is a case study of one small segment of what is commonly referred to as the "Indian community" in Vancouver, focusing particularly on its second generation youth members. The study examines members' constructions of "Indian" identity, "Indian community," and "Indian culture."

The first generation members of this population segment are primarily upper to middle class Hindu speaking Hindus from north India who migrated to Canada as students and independent class immigrants between 1955 and 1975 and are currently practicing professional and business people. They represent a minority of the Indian population in Vancouver by virtue of class, urban background, and language-regional-cultural affiliation. I argue, however, that this case study is an important addition to literature about South Asians in Canada both because this population segment is absent from existing literature, and because many of these individuals play leading roles in Vancouver's Indian community.

Canadian literature which pertains to second generation South Asian youth emphasizes issues of assimilation,

inter-generational conflict and inter-cultural identity confusion. This case study diverges from those issues in order to provide a fuller appreciation of relatively neglected aspects of youth lives. It describes how youth act as agents in the construction of their own lives and documents their experiences, visions, and initiatives. In doing so, the dissertation documents processes by which culture is constructed, conceptually and in practice.

The research draws on a number of theoretical perspectives including symbolic interactionism (Blumer 1969), structuration theory (Giddens 1976, 1979, 1984), "conscious models" (Ward 1965) and reference group identification (Merton 1964; Shibutani 1955). Data is derived from participant observation, interviews, and group discussions.

Youth respondents express that the challenge for them, a different one from that of their parents whose formative years were spent in South Asia or East Africa, is how to integrate Indian culture into their Canadian lives. My study concludes that active phrases used by respondents, such as, "trying to cope," "having the freedom to choose," and "integrating Indian culture" are more accurate expressions of the experiences of youth respondents than the passive metaphor commonly applied to South Asian youth of being "caught between two cultures."

**"HOW DO YOU INTEGRATE INDIAN CULTURE INTO YOUR LIFE?":  
SECOND GENERATION INDO-CANADIANS AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF "INDIAN  
CULTURE" IN VANCOUVER, CANADA**

Table of Contents

Abstract .....	ii
Table of Contents .....	iv
Acknowledgement .....	viii
<b>PREFACE</b> .....	<b>ix</b>

PART I: THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL INTRODUCTION

<b>1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>1</b>
	<b>A</b>	
	<b>THE SUBJECTS</b> .....	<b>7</b>
	<b>B</b>	
	<b>LITERATURE REVIEWS</b> .....	<b>13</b>
	1	
	<b>LITERATURE REVIEW: SOUTH ASIAN DIASPORAS</b> ..	<b>13</b>
	2	
	<b>LITERATURE REVIEW: SECOND GENERATION SOUTH</b>	
	<b>ASIANS</b> .....	<b>19</b>
	<b>C</b>	
	<b>INSIDER CATEGORIES</b> .....	<b>29</b>
	1	
	<b>CONSTRUCTING "CULTURE"</b> .....	<b>30</b>
	2	
	<b>INSIDER SOCIAL CATEGORIES</b> .....	<b>32</b>
	<b>D</b>	
	<b>CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK</b> .....	<b>37</b>
	1	
	<b>TURNING THE THEORETICAL TABLES</b> .....	<b>37</b>
	2	
	<b>EVERYDAY ACTIVITY AND PRACTICAL CONSCIOUSNESS</b>	
	.....	<b>39</b>
	3	
	<b>SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM</b> .....	<b>44</b>
	4	
	<b>IDENTITY AS A PROBLEM IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF</b>	
	<b>KNOWLEDGE</b> .....	<b>48</b>
	5	
	<b>HOLI AS A "MODEL OF" AND "FOR" CULTURE</b> ....	<b>53</b>
	6	
	<b>GENDER</b> .....	<b>55</b>
	<b>E</b>	
	<b>THESIS LIMITATIONS</b> .....	<b>56</b>

2	<b>METHODOLOGY</b> .....	61
	F    IN THE FIELD .....	61
	G    METHODS .....	71
	1    INTERVIEWS AND PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION ....	71
	2    GROUP DISCUSSIONS .....	75
	H    INTERVENTION .....	80
	I    ADDENDUM .....	84

PART II: ETHNOGRAPHIC DESCRIPTIONS AND OBSERVATIONS

3	<b>ETHNOGRAPHIC CONTEXT: IMMIGRATION AND COMMUNITY</b> .....	87
	J    IMMIGRATION AND SETTLEMENT .....	89
	1    HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF HINDUS IN VANCOUVER..	89
	2    PERSONAL IMMIGRATION NARRATIVES .....	91
	K    COMMUNITIES .....	97
	1    DEFINING "COMMUNITY" .....	97
	2    ORGANIZATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS .....	106
	3    "INDIAN COMMUNITY" .....	108
	4    DEFINING SELVES AND OTHERS .....	113
	5    SECOND GENERATION DEFINITIONS .....	122
	6    THE FAMILY FRIENDS CIRCLE .....	128
	L    THE EXTENDED FAMILY AS CONTINUING IDEAL .....	139
	M    CHAPTER CONCLUSION .....	142
4	<b>YUVA: INTEGRATING "INDIAN CULTURE"</b> .....	145
	N    YUVA .....	145
	1    ORIGINS: INDIA CLUB, THE FAMILY FRIENDS CIRCLE	145
	.....	145
	2    THE FORMATION OF YUVA .....	148
	3    YUVA'S AGENDA .....	157
	4    EXPERIENCES OF RACIAL PREJUDICE AND HOSTILITY	166
	.....	166
	O    SYMBOLIC AND SITUATIONAL ETHNICITY .....	173

## PART III: YUVA'S HOLI CELEBRATION

5	DESCRIPTION .....	183
	P THE SEASONAL CYCLE .....	185
	Q INSIDER KNOWLEDGE .....	187
	R PLANNING .....	191
	S THE EVENT .....	193
	T COMPONENTS .....	198
	1 A SPEAKER .....	198
	2 A TALENT SHOW .....	203
	3 AMBIENCE .....	215
6	ANALYSIS: CONSTRUCTING "INDIAN CULTURE" .....	221
	U DEFINITIONS OF THE EVENT .....	221
	1 A YUVA EVENT .....	222
	a) EXPANSION AND DIVERSIFICATION .....	222
	b) RELIGION .....	233
	c) LEARNING ABOUT CULTURE .....	238
	d) EFFICIENCY .....	243
	2 A CULTURAL EVENT .....	250
	a) MAKING THE EVENT "CULTURAL" .....	250
	b) LANGUAGE .....	253
	c) CONSTRUCTIONS OF GENDER .....	257
	3 A FAMILY EVENT .....	276
	4 A PARTY .....	288
	V CHAPTER CONCLUSION .....	290

## PART IV: CONCLUSION

7	CONCLUSION .....	297
	W SUMMARY .....	297

X	FINDINGS, DISCUSSION, AND FURTHER QUESTIONS ..	302
1	YOUTH: INTEGRATING AND DEFINING INDIAN CULTURE .....	303
2	CULTURE AS PERFORMANCE .....	310
3	INDIAN COMMUNITY: CENTRALIZING TENDENCIES	312
4	HINDU HEGEMONY .....	314
5	CENTRIPETAL TENDENCIES .....	318
Y	SUMMARY OF CONTRIBUTIONS .....	328
Z	THE FINAL WORD .....	329
	GLOSSARY .....	331
	WORKS CITED .....	337
	APPENDIX ONE: PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS .....	361
	APPENDIX TWO: ORGANIZATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS .....	364

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This thesis is based on fieldwork in Vancouver in 1990-91. I acknowledge the Shastri Indo-Canadian institute for their award of a trip to India in 1986 which inspired my interest in the people and cultures of South Asia. I also acknowledge the generosity of the University of British Columbia for awarding me university fellowships which enabled me to undertake this work.

I owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to all those representatives of organizations, respondents, acquaintances, and friends who shared with me their thoughts and experiences of being Indian and their knowledge of Indian history, philosophy, religion, and culture. The warmth of their hospitality and enthusiasm of their interest in my work encouraged me to continue with it. I would like to individually name all those whom I owe, but refrain from doing so, in part because of the impossible task of naming everyone, and in part to preserve the anonymity of respondents. I would most particularly owe a debt to members of Yuva whose enthusiasm inspired me; who kindly consented to become the subjects of this research; and who accepted me as their most senior (in age) member, allowed me to attend their meetings, invited me to share in their activities, and became my friends.

I am grateful to all my committee members for their continuing genuine interest in my project, their support in seeing me through, their valuable insights and probing questions, their patience, and their deep commitment to ethical concerns. I cannot measure the influence which my advisor, Michael Ames, has had on my thinking, my writing, my humanity, and my own teaching and interaction with students. As anthropologist, teacher, and human being I will always carry his positive influence with me. I owe Tissa Fernando a special gratitude for serving as my advisor for a year while Dr. Ames was on leave. His genuine encouragement, support, and valuable suggestions during this time enabled me to progress with my work. My gratitude also goes to Elvi Whittaker for serving on my committee from the beginning and for always suggesting something insightful and helpful, even in the briefest of conversations. I also thank Kenelm Burrige and Neil Guppy for kindly served on my committee temporarily.

My greatest debt is to my family who have shared the burden of this work, and without whose unfailing love, support, encouragement, assistance, and cooperation I could not have completed it. I offer my love and gratitude to my husband, Ted, whom I believe to be a saint in his unfailing patience, love, and confidence in me, and who has read this work more often than anyone else; to my children, Eric and Mark (and then Carolyn), who always accepted this work as valuable and important and who gave balance and joy to my life; and to my parents who loved me unconditionally whether I would successfully complete this project or not.

Finally, I have been fortunate to have friends and colleagues who shared the experiences of being a student and who understood as no one else can, and I thank them.

Any shortcomings of this work, I acknowledge as my own.

## PREFACE

This dissertation winds out of several personal threads. One is a desire to learn about alternative ways of viewing and dealing with the world. When this brought me to the University of British Columbia to undertake a graduate degree in anthropology, I was required to select a culture area course from those offered. South Asia was my choice. During that first year I entered and won a Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute essay competition. The prize was a trip to India.

Having had only a distant interest in India, I had never been one of the "hippy" spiritual seekers who looked to India for enlightenment. But once there, the intensity of social interactions and the sheer exoticism of the country in relation to anything I had known enchanted me. I quickly realized that this place and its people challenged many North American assumptions in a way which makes one understand oneself and one's own culture, as well as that of others, better. This is what the anthropological undertaking is about.

From this fortuitous beginning, I chose to make South Asia my area of specialization. At first I hoped to do fieldwork in India, but at that time in my life it was not practical to be away from home for the necessary amount of time. This led to an interest in the Indian community in Vancouver.

The interest in ethnicity arose out of a second thread, my own sense of otherness and questions about my identity as a Canadian. I was born in Austria, and grew up in Canada in an Austrian-German family. I was brought up with a sense of being different; of not quite belonging; of experiencing mysterious, invisible ties to my place of birth and heritage. Consequently, I did not apply for my own Canadian citizenship until I married.

This sense of difference and of "having a culture" (as one of the respondents was to put it)--since my parents for many years considered Canada to be culturally poor--is an experience I share with my Indian friends, even though in many other ways I appear to be an "outsider" (Aguilar 1981; Merton 1971).

As the role of anthropologists is currently highly debated, it may be useful to state here how I define my role: 1) to report respondents' points of view as best as I can understand them; 2) to describe processes of cultural

reproduction and social construction; 3) to identify characteristics of the subjects' world which they may not themselves recognize and their knowledge about it, or, as Anthony Giddens puts it, their "practical consciousness" (Giddens 1984:xxiii, 376); 4) to examine and interpret connections between insiders' conceptualizations and behaviours; and 5) to relate observations and findings to other epistemological, methodological, theoretical, and ethnographic knowledge.

## PART I: THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL INTRODUCTION

## Chapter 1

## INTRODUCTION

We live in a world in which groups of peoples everywhere are insisting on their cultural differences.<sup>1</sup> Migrants with origins in India form such collectivities.

When Indians migrate, "Indian culture" is not an item simply carried in a suitcase along with *saris*, *murtis*, and household furnishings, to be unpacked, installed, and used as is. *Saris* and other paraphernalia serve as props and symbols in an ongoing process of cultural reproduction and construction, sometimes deliberate and recognized, sometimes unrecognized and unintended.<sup>2</sup>

According to Canada's 1992 census, about 75,000 residents of the Vancouver Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) are "South Asians" (see "*Immigration and Settlement*" in Chapter Three). Of these, approximately sixty-five percent

---

<sup>1</sup>For elaboration on this phenomenon, see, for example Glazer and Moynihan (1975), Moore (1989), Porter (1975), Tambiah (1989).

<sup>2</sup>cf. Appadurai (1991) who argues that the concept of culture must be rethought in the context of what he calls "deterritorialization."

are Sikh, twenty percent Hindu, and the remaining fifteen percent include Ismailis and other Muslims, Jains, Buddhists, Christians, and Parsis. A subset of the South Asian category consists of those who consider themselves to be "Indian" or "Indo-Canadian."

This dissertation is a case study of a community of families who belong to one small segment of what is commonly referred to as the "Indian community." It examines constructions of "Indian," "Indian community," and "Indian culture," and the locating of self within these categories from the points of view of the members of this segment.

The first generation members of this population segment are primarily upper to middle class Hindu speaking Hindus from north India (primarily Uttar Pradesh and Delhi), who migrated to Canada as students and independent class immigrants between 1955 and 1975 and are currently practicing professional and business people. A number of Gujarati families also belong to the community of families of this case study. These families represent a minority of the Indian population in Vancouver by virtue of class, urban background, and language-regional-cultural affiliation. I argue, however, that a study of this population is an important addition to literature about South Asians in Canada. First, the population segment represented by the subjects of this case study is completely absent from the picture

portrayed in existing literature. Secondly, these individuals are among those who are leaders in Vancouver's Indian community and whose influence, I would suggest, outweighs their numbers.<sup>3</sup>

One of many South Asian youth groups in Vancouver, Yuva,<sup>4</sup> is an outgrowth of a number of families who belong to this segment of the population. This case study centers in particular around this youth group and its activities. Because of Yuva's agenda to diversify membership and expand social networks among Indo-Canadian youth, Yuva members also include Gujaratis, Sikhs, Bengalis, Punjabis, and a few

---

<sup>3</sup>Sharma (1982:11) outlines his view of the class structure: "The present-day East Indian community in British Columbia is highly stratified on the basis of social class. At the top of the social and economic ladder are a few families, usually descendants of early immigrants of the pre-World War I period. This category includes a few owners of mills, logging camps and large farms, and independent truckers, e.g., the Doman family. There is also a significant and established petty-bourgeois class - most have emigrated since World War II. They are an active and relatively prosperous group of men and women who today dominate the leadership of the community. Within the Sikhs this class comprises approximately 20% of the total Sikh population, within the Fijian East Indians they comprise under 15% of the total population (Sharma 1980)."

<sup>4</sup>I sought the opinion of several youth and adult respondents about whether Yuva should actually be named in this dissertation, or whether a pseudonym should be used. Without exception, they felt that Yuva should be named. They not only felt that there would be no disadvantage to doing so, but that the credibility and usefulness of the case study would be greater.

others, and include individuals from various socio-economic strata. (See Appendix One for a profile of respondents.)

Most Canadian literature which pertains to second generation South Asian youth emphasizes issues of assimilation, inter-generational conflict and inter-cultural identity confusion. This case study, in the interest of providing a fuller appreciation of neglected aspects of youth lives, diverges, therefore, from a sole focus on these issues.

I do not wish to suggest that inter-generational conflict and identity confusion are not present or extremely salient in the lives of these youth or that these are not significant issues. At least three arguments can, however, be made for examining other aspects of Indo-Canadian youth lives:

1. Existing literature emphasizes these aspects of the lives of second generation South Asians to the exclusion of providing a more complex and nuanced view of their lives and documenting their experiences, visions, and initiatives.
2. Existing literature tends to depict youth as reacting to restraints imposed on them and does not view them as agents in the construction of their own lives.
3. Existing literature on youth in contemporary India also deals with "the generation gap" and cultural identity (e.g. Gangrade 1975; Kapur 1982; Sinha and Gangrade 1971). This suggests that inter-generational conflict and inter-cultural confusion ought not to be viewed, as much of the ethnicity literature implies, as solely the result of being "caught [or "torn"] between two cultures" in consequence of living in an overseas diaspora.

Also for the purpose of this case study I focus on only one of many possible public gatherings, celebrations, or performances. A great many Indian organizations, institutions, and events exist in Vancouver (see "*Organizations and Institutions*" in Chapter Three, and Appendix Two), and it would be physically impossible for one individual to attend all of them. Seasonal celebrations, *pujas*, life-cycle celebrations, *jayantis* (birthdays of deities or famous people), *satsangs* (religious congregations), *kathas* (moral discourses), performances, forums and symposia, classes and lessons, and other activities take place on a regular basis. *Holi* is one of the Hindu festivals which Yuva chooses to celebrate.

This case study does not attempt to provide a picture of the Indian community and all celebrations in Vancouver, nor even of second generation youth experiences. It examines how various identity, cultural, and social aspects come into play in the daily lives of members of one particular group known as Yuva. In this way, processes by which culture is constructed, conceptually and in practice, are documented on a local level. The research objective is to identify, document, and examine one set of examples of subjects' categories, definitions, motivations, choices,

actions, and consequences. These can provide the basis for further research.

A more detailed description of the families and individuals who are the subjects of this dissertation follows immediately (and is further elaborated on in Chapters Two and Three. See also Appendix One). Then I review anthropology / sociology literature pertaining to South Asians and South Asian youth. Next is a description of the theoretical framework which guides this work and which draws on a number of theoretical ideas. The chapter concludes with a statement of the limits of this dissertation. Chapter Two describes the methodology.

Part II (Chapters Three and Four) deepens the ethnographic description of the Indian community in Vancouver and more particularly of the subjects of this case study, and makes some observations about social categories. Chapter Three discusses families and social groups. Chapter Four describes and discusses Yuva.

Part III (Chapters Five and Six) focuses on Yuva's celebration of *Holi*. Chapter Five is primarily descriptive and begins the analysis. Chapter Six provides an analysis. Chapter Seven, the concluding chapter, summarizes the findings of this case study and suggests some hypotheses which may be drawn to guide further research.

## THE SUBJECTS

The subjects of this dissertation are individuals, primarily Hindu, who observe some Indian cultural practices. In order to identify individuals who claim an Indian identity without reifying a group (cf. Cassin and Griffith 1981; Moerman 1965) I initiated fieldwork by attending public Indian activities and organizations. From the people whom I first met, I asked exploratory questions along the lines of: 'Who are you?' 'What are you doing?' 'What does this mean to you?' 'Who are your friends?' In this way I discovered respondents' self definitions and came to know of other individuals, organizations and activities.

I began to trace "natural communities," individuals "directly involved in one another's lives" (Geertz 1983:156). Ortner (1989:7-8) argues for the importance of studying "interrelated people--'communities'" through ethnographic fieldwork in order to:

maintain the contextuality, the thickness of people's lives, the fact that people live in a world of relationships as well as a world of abstract forces (e.g., the market) and disembodied ideas (e.g., "opinions").

She admits that "it is not at all obvious how such communities are to be defined, or where (if any actual place at all) they are to be found" (ibid:8).

One can start at any point, with any individual, family, or group, and trace their social connections in any

direction.<sup>5</sup> This method led me to a network of families--or what respondents call a "family friends circle"--which consists primarily of Hindi speaking North Indians from urban backgrounds. The particular family friends circle of this case study will be capitalized in the remainder of the thesis (i.e. The Family Friends Circle).

In my early interviews with the members of this group, some of the teens spoke about Yuva, a fledgling "Indo-Canadian youth group" (their definition), and directed me to its council members. It seemed appropriate to focus my research and writing around this group for a number of reasons. One reason is that Yuva and its activities are an expression of the visions and initiatives of some second generation Indians. This is significant in light of the fact that 43.5% of British Columbia's South Asian ("Punjabi," "East Indian," Pakistani," and "Sri Lankan") population is under the age of twenty-five (Statistics Canada 1993a),<sup>6</sup> and over one quarter of Vancouver's South Asian

---

<sup>5</sup>For more formal network analysis, where the emphasis is on revealing the network itself, one may look to Barth (1978), Bott (1957), Fleuret (1974), Hannerz (1980), Helweg (1986), Mitchell (1969), and Pelto and Pelto (1978).

<sup>6</sup>Calculated from single response data only in Table Three (Statistics Canada 1993a). This is significantly higher than the 32% of Vancouver's total population under the age of twenty-five as calculated from Table One (Statistics Canada 1992).

population is under the age of fifteen (Statistics Canada 1990).

I consider the second generation to be a pivotal location for the construction of community and culture. On the one hand, youth are the motivation behind much of their first generation parents' concerns and actions. On the other hand, I soon found that the youth themselves are formulating their own goals, taking their own initiatives, and struggling to define what it means to be Indo-Canadian in their own terms.

I examine the self definitions of Yuva members, how they are expressed, and the significance which an Indian identity has for their daily lives. I also examine their attitudes towards and relations with their parents and community, their visions, their negotiations, and their initiatives.

A second reason why it seemed appropriate to focus on Yuva was because the kinds of identity and cultural questions in which I am interested are similar to questions which they themselves are asking and are interested in discussing.

By choosing Yuva as a focus, I am not implying that it is central to the lives of its members. It has a place along with family, community events, school, school friends, hobbies, sports, and part-time jobs. It is, however, one

arena in which some young Indo-Canadians are articulating their cultural identity, expressing some of their concerns, and collectively trying to implement their own solutions. Yuva represents one example in which some Indo-Canadian youth deal with their experiences and initiate actions towards their visions.

Yuva is one of a number of Indo-Canadian youth groups in Vancouver that fluctuate in their activeness. Many are fostered by adult organizations in which parents wish to engage the interest of their youth. Here, as in the United States, they represent "a desperate attempt by parents connected with the local Hindu Temple Society [or other Indian organization] . . . to instill some semblance of an Indian identity into children born and raised in the US [sic] [or Vancouver]" (Basu 1989:106).

For example, in Vancouver, the Vishva Hindu Parishad, Bengali Society, and Gujarati Society have in the past all attempted youth groups that were largely adult driven. The Gujarati Society group was reactivated in 1992, motivated by a renewed interest on the part of their young members in learning more about their culture and religion. There are also strong Sikh and Ismaili youth organizations. A support group for Indo-Canadian girls sponsored by Burnaby Multicultural Society began in 1991. The same year, an

Indo-Canadian youth group also formed in B.C.'s lower mainland in Abbotsford (The Link 1991).

Immigrant service organizations such as OASIS and MOSAIC also form youth groups and hold workshops where they see a need for an arena in which young Indo-Canadians can share and discuss experiences and begin to deal with their culture related problems. For example, Hemi Dhanoa, who works for MOSAIC as well as producing and hosting the program "*South Asian Mosaic*" for *Community Television*, has organized individuals into a group she calls YICS (Young Indo-Canadians), in order that they may discuss issues and form panels which she then televises on "*South Asian Mosaic*." Special programs have been produced dealing with identity, problems of dating and communication with parents, and arranged marriage. OASIS conducted a survey in summer 1991 and organized a workshop for Indo-Canadians, "Youth in the '90's."

There are also university organizations such as the University of British Columbia's Sikh Students Association, an organization for visa students called Utsav (meaning celebration), and a Bhangara Club.

The central portion of this dissertation is devoted to an analysis of one of Yuva's organized events, their celebration of the Hindu festival of *Holi*. It is a truism that immigrants adapt and change their practices and values

in their new environments. It is inevitable that a festival like *Holi* will take on a different character and meaning outside India. Bruner (1984:10) observes the more general phenomenon that:

. . . self and society are generated as they are expressed -- it follows that every expression is also a change. . . . we agree with Sahlins (1981:67) that 'what begins as reproduction ends as transformation.' Culture changes as it is enacted, in practice.

My purpose here, therefore, will not be to demonstrate this process by documenting changes in the celebration of *Holi*.

A single event can serve as an entry point into a culture. As Geertz (1973:453) suggests, "One can start anywhere in a culture's repertoire of forms and end up anywhere else." Yuva's *Holi* celebration serves as an example of a cultural event produced by the second generation. It provides an opportunity to examine how they "integrate Indian culture into [their] life," reproduce Indian cultural values, and also inevitably give the event their own interpretations.

I choose this event not because it is more significant than any other of Yuva's activities or the activities of other youth groups; nor because it is more significant in the organizers' lives than other events and activities. Rather, it serves equally well as any other activities in reflecting broader ideas and processes. Behind the apparent ordinariness and common sense organiza-

tion of Yuva's Holi celebration, lie various assumptions, understandings, choices, and negotiations which operate in the daily lives and activities of its participants. This examination of the Holi party attempts to illucidate these. Chapter Five examines how Yuva members understand Holi, and what they understand to be the components of such a cultural events. Chapter Six examines four definitions of Yuva's celebration of *Holi*, and what organizers do in consequence of their definitions.

#### LITERATURE REVIEW

##### LITERATURE REVIEW: SOUTH ASIAN DIASPORAS

Canadian social science literature on "South Asians" addresses a limited range of topics.<sup>7</sup> The emphasis has been on immigration history and settlement,<sup>8</sup> and assimilation

---

<sup>7</sup>Buchignani has produced three literature reviews on South Asians in Canada (Buchignani 1977, 1987, 1989). The collection of essays edited by Israel (1987) represents a stock-taking of literature to date. Chandrasekbar (1986) also includes a large bibliography which includes general works of relevance to, but not specifically about, South Asians. U.B.C.'s library has a regularly updated compilation of holdings about South Asians in Canada. Sharma's (1991) essay also includes a literature review.

<sup>8</sup>See Bolaria and Li (1985) for a Marxist analysis of the colonial circumstances of emigration; Buchignani (1985) for particular reference to Alberta; Buchignani et al. (1985); Chandrasekbar (1986) for a series of papers which cover a wide variety of demographic information; D'Costa (1984, 1987) for quantitative demographic information; Jensen (1988) for the history of Asian Indian immigration to North America, specifically in relation to discrimination; Johnston (1984); Mayer (1959).

perspectives, and is largely positivistic and functionalist and based on quantitative analysis.<sup>9</sup> A much smaller body of work deals with family life;<sup>10</sup> South Asian women;<sup>11</sup> political activity;<sup>12</sup> and performing, visual, or literary arts.<sup>13</sup> The essays in Israel (1987) express the need for a broad range of new substantive and theoretical directions.<sup>14</sup> Buchignani (1987) reports that little is known about self-perceptions of various South Asian ethnic groups, their ambitions, social organization, internal relations, family life, or ritual and creative activities.

In British Columbia, South Asians are a complexly heterogeneous population, distinguished by separate and cross-cutting characteristics of birthplace, language, religion, caste, class, customs, and upbringing, as well as age,

---

<sup>9</sup>Moodley (1983:321) argues that this is true of Canadian ethnic studies in general.

<sup>10</sup>Ames and Inglis 1973-74; Kurian 1974; C. Siddique 1977a, 1977b; M. Siddique 1974.

<sup>11</sup>Battacharjee 1992; Naidoo 1987; Srivastava and Ames 1989.

<sup>12</sup>Buchignani and Indra 1981b; Parel 1988; Wood 1978, 1981.

<sup>13</sup>Beck (1987), Cunningham (1990), Nainpally (1989), Nodwell (1985, 1993), Nuttall (1991).

<sup>14</sup>See also Srivastava and Ames (1989) for suggestions of new directions for research.

gender, and interest.<sup>15</sup> In Canada, studies of Hindus per se are few and fragmented.<sup>16</sup> Because of a predominance of Sikhs in British Columbia, the majority of work in this province has focussed on this group.<sup>17</sup> Hindus with whom I have spoken feel themselves under-represented, if not invisible, in popular representations. One frustrated Bengali woman explained:

I was taking a course. We had a multicultural class. That day they were showing Indian culture, only the Sikhs. So I went there--Punjabi people--I talked to the teacher, I said, 'That is not the only Indian culture. We have so many things, you know, so you should find out more about that.' So they didn't do anything. Every year they're showing the same picture[s], same Punjabi people, but they're not the only Indian culture. There're so many things, you know. Even I offered them, you can come to our Society and you can take some pic-

---

<sup>15</sup>Buchignani 1985; Dusenbery 1981; Mathur 1991; Paranjpe 1986; Wood 1978.

<sup>16</sup>Anderson et al. 1983:214-222; Buchignani 1985:425-28; Buchignani et al. 1985 passim; Coward and Goa 1987; Dhruvarajan 1993; Filteau 1980; Goa et al. 1984; Pi 1978; Wood 1980. Some general works on overseas South Asians are useful for the study of Hindus overseas: Conklin 1981, David 1964, Ghosh 1989, Jain 1982, King 1981, Kurian and Srivastava 1983, Patel 1976, Schwarz 1967.

<sup>17</sup>"The makeup of the 'East-Indian' population as a whole . . . has gone from overwhelmingly Sikh to a point where Sikhs represent only one-half to two-thirds of all 'East Indians' in the lower mainland" (Dusenbery 1981:107). "Over eighty per cent of British Columbia's South Asians belong to the Sikh religious group" (Ramcharan 1984). Calculated from Canada's 1991 census (Statistics Canada 1993a, 1993b) approximately sixty-six percent of the Vancouver CMA's South Asian population, and seventy-two percent of British Columbia's South Asian population, is Sikh.

ture[s] and so at least a few picture[s] you can show the different things. (TT-8)<sup>18</sup>

Similarly, in one of the Yuva discussion groups, when the topic of media came up, the participants complained that what coverage there is represents only Punjabis, not to mention negative events (cf. Said 1979).<sup>19</sup>

In academic literature, generalizations across the category of overseas South Asians are often assumed, masking significant differences, both conceptual and actual. Even when internal distinctions and divisions are the subject of research (e.g. Buchignani and Indra 1981a; Mathur 1990), the category "South Asian" remains unexamined. Differences within the category based on members' definitions remain all but invisible.<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup>Codes in brackets after quotations refer to data files. For computer files, "T" refers to tape transcripts, "I" to interview notes, and "O" to observation notes. "NB" refers to notebooks.

<sup>19</sup>Mainstream institutionalized values and mainstream representations of Indians are often at odds with their own values and self perceptions (Indra 1979a, 1979b). Anderson (1991) for Chinese, Cassin and Griffith (1981) in an examination of the construction of class and ethnicity, and Whittaker (1986) for *Haoles* in Hawaii and Mexicans in the United States (1988), disentangle socially constructed mainstream images of immigrant populations from their own self definitions.

<sup>20</sup>Sollers (1989b) and Srivastava and Ames (1989) discuss the problem of presumed homogeneity. A few studies examine intercultural differences among South Asians (Bagley 1987; Buchignani and Indra 1981a; Stopes-Roe and Cochrane 1987; Wakil et al. 1981). Some address other variables such as generational differences (Ames and Inglis 1973-74; Stopes-Roe and Cochrane 1987; Wakil et al. 1981), and gender (Siddique 1977a:221-2; Naidoo 1979, 1980; Stopes-Roe and

Only a few works about South Asians address identity from the points of view of the subjects (Buchignani 1980a, 1980b; Buchignani and Indra 1981a; Burghart 1987b; Chadney 1977, 1990; Paranjpe 1986; Subramaniam 1977).<sup>21</sup>

Adaptation, adjustment, cultural change, and cultural preservation have been and continue to be common themes explored and applied to a variety of problems in literature on ethnic identity in general, and South Asians in particular.<sup>22</sup> Research into these issues has provided valuable insights into the processes by which new cultural

---

Cochrane 1987).

<sup>21</sup>In the United States, see for example: Appadurai 1991 <in press>; Bhattacharjee 1992.

<sup>22</sup>For example: Israel 1987; Sharma et al. 1991. See also Naidoo (1987) on the difficulties of adaptation for South Asian women; Bagley (1987) on self-evaluation among children from different geographic origins; Coward and Goa (1987) and Goa et al. (1984) on religious adaptation. Buchignani (1980a) describes how cultural differences, such as strong social and family networks, are used as resources for mutual aid. Adaptation of family roles are seen to lead to new patterns of decision-making (C. Siddique 1977b; M. Siddique 1974, 1977). Differences in degree of adaptation and change are seen to lead to inter-generational problems (Akoodie 1980, Ames and Inglis 1973-74, Buchignani 1977b, Chawla 1971, Sandhu 1980).

It is not always clear how adaptation, etc. are measured. Self-evaluation, satisfactory employment (also self evaluated), and behavioral conformity are implied (Buchignani 1980a; Coward and Goa 1987). Giddens (1984:233-36) critiques the concept of adaptation as being imprecise, based on specious functionalist explanations, and indemonstrable. Srivastava and Ames (1989) argue that adaptive strategies are often tautologically defined.

environments are managed by immigrants.<sup>23</sup> Specific adaptive strategies identified by Singer in relation to modernization in India, "compartmentalization" and "vicarious ritualization," continue to be used in understanding processes of adjustment for immigrants to new socio-cultural environments.<sup>24</sup>

Recognition of the constructed quality of identity and examinations of the processes of construction<sup>25</sup> have as yet barely touched studies of South Asians in Canada. Phenomenological accounts of the experiences of South Asian Canadians are rare.

---

<sup>23</sup>e.g. Ames and Inglis 1973-74; Kanungo 1984b.

<sup>24</sup>Singer defines "compartmentalization" as the rationalization by which respondents explain "that there can be no conflict because business and religion are different and separate spheres" (Singer 1972:320). "Vicarious ritualization" involves "the substitution of an abbreviated rite and ceremony for several longer rites, or the substitution of a proxy performer of the rites for the original performer" (ibid:331).

For applications of these models, see Ames and Inglis (1973-74) on the adaptation of customs and values in Sikh families in B.C.; Coward and Goa (1987) on the adaptation of Hinduism in Alberta; Dossa (1985) on Ismailis; and Joy (1984) on Sikh labourers in B.C. adapting religious practice to long hours of work.

<sup>25</sup>cf. Appadurai 1991; Bentley 1987, 1991; Berreman 1975; Breems 1991; Cohen 1985; Ghosh 1989; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Lowenthal 1986; Sollers 1989b; Turner and Bruner 1986; Whittaker 1986, 1988; Yelvington 1991.

LITERATURE REVIEW: SECOND GENERATION SOUTH ASIANS

In a retrospective of research about South Asians in Canada, Buchignani (1987:120) states that, "Insofar as children are concerned, massive acculturation seems to be the rule." Parents articulate similar perceptions:

But I have a fear, that I came with semi-modern thoughts because I was born in Africa, grew up in India, an age when things were changing. I've come to Canada, my children are born, they have certain amount of Western and Eastern upbringing because of my and my wife's way of life. But when my children have children, they'll be very Westernized. That means I can see down the road, my great grandchildren possibly will be only brown in color, and maybe Hindu by religion, and that's all. Otherwise everything will be strictly Canadian. . . . Tomorrow if my son or my daughter decides to marry in the American society or the Canadian society other than the Asian society, then definitely there is going to be a split as far as the culture is concerned. And you can't stop it, because this is what it is, this is the way of life here, you cannot change it. And you can't force them either. At one time you had the arranged marriage, and you had to marry within the society because you want to preserve your culture, but that does not apply here anymore. (TT-5)

Buchignani (1977:355-56) also states, "I believe it to be a certainty that most of the Canadian-born will not become Hindus." He (1987:120) recognizes that:

much work remains to be done to clarify the causes and details. . . . particularly . . . with respect to the degree to which the second generation maintains an ethnic identity and commitment to its roots.

The young respondents from Hindu families in my study insist that they are Hindu in spite of an expressed aversion to prescribed ritual and orthodox beliefs. In their doing so, Hinduism is being redefined. I hypothesize

that acculturation will not appear to be so massive if one focuses on the phenomenological experiences of the youth themselves and on their part in the social construction of their reality.

Anthony Cohen (1986a:2) cautions that outward appearances of conformity may be deceiving:

We should not confuse an increasing similarity in the machinery of people's lives with their responses to it. The response--interpretation, meaning--is not mechanical, and frequently it is not overt.

University students provide a good case in point. On the basis of observation alone--and this includes observations of first generation Indians and of "non-Indians"--many Indo-Canadian students appear to be completely assimilated into Canadian society. Observers point to their clothing (jeans, tee shirts, cycling shorts, bomber jackets, etc.); their language (lack of accents, Canadian and local colloquialisms); their activities and social life (schoolwork, sports, dances, etc.); their association on campus with peers of other backgrounds and other cultural origins; and their desire for greater personal independence, gender equality, and freedom to date.

John Berry (1987) defines assimilation by the combined characteristics of 1) not considering it "to be of value to maintain relationships with other groups" and 2) not considering it "to be of value to maintain cultural identity and characteristics."

In view of Berry's definition, I argue that complete assimilation does not occur among youth who assert their Indian identity, ascribe to Indian values, exhibit reference group identification with India and Indians (Merton 1964; Shibutani 1955), and take steps to strengthen social networks between young Indo-Canadians.<sup>26</sup> As Cohen (1985) argues, the efficacy of symbols lies in their ability to be manipulated and to carry various meanings. Customs and dress can persist, change, or be lost with only a tenuous relationship to cultural values (cf. Sollers 1989a).<sup>27</sup> I take change to be a given and conducive to identity formation. Edward Bruner, in arguing for an anthropology of experience, articulates such a perspective:

. . . the anthropology of experience sees people as active agents in the historical process who construct their own world. . . . Cultural change, cultural continuity and cultural transmission all occur simultaneously in the experiences and expressions of social life. All are interpretive processes and indeed are the experiences 'in which the subject discovers himself' (Dilthey 1976:203). [sic] (Bruner 1986:12)

---

<sup>26</sup>Dusenbery (1981:110) notes about another Indo-Canadian population that "what is striking about the second- and third-generation Canadians of Punjabi-Sikh ancestry is their strong ethnic identity."

<sup>27</sup>Clifford (1988:277-346) documents how contradictions between self-definitions and symbolic representations of identity on the one hand, and outsider demands for observable criteria on the other, plague First Nations peoples of Canada in their attempts to assert their identities and demand self determination.

Glazer and Moynihan (1963:12-13) recognized that change does not undermine the strength of cultural identification:

The powerful assimilatory influences of American society operate on all who come into it, making the children of immigrants and even immigrants themselves a very different people from those they left behind. . . . It is true that language and culture are very largely lost in the first and second generations . . . . But as the groups were transformed by influences in American society, stripped of their original attributes, they were recreated as something new, but still as identifiable groups. Concretely, persons think of themselves as members of that group, with that name; they are thought of by others as members of that group, with that name; and most significantly, they are linked to other members of the group by new attributes that the original immigrants would never have recognized as identifying their group, but which nevertheless serve to mark them off, by more than simply name and association, in the third generation and beyond.

Little literature directly addresses cultural or social issues concerning youth of South Asian families in Canada, particularly from the point of view of the youth themselves.<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup>See: Bhatnagar 1984; Bagley 1987; Kurian 1991; Kurian and Ghosh 1983; Manhas 1979; Sandhu 1980; Sharma 1991; Tonks 1990; Wakil et al. 1981. For references to youth, see also: Ames and Inglis 1974; Buchignani 1977; Kurian 1983; M. Siddique 1977; Naimpally 1989; Srivastava 1974. For comparable British sources, see: Anwar 1978; Ballard 1979; Brah 1978; Pirani 1974; Stopes-Roe 1987; Taylor 1976; Thompson 1974; Weinreich 1979.

Although Hindu, Sikh, and Muslim South Asian youth from various backgrounds hold much in common, there are also differences which make it advisable to use caution when generalizing between them (Anwar 1978; Stopes-Roe and Cochrane 1987; Taylor 1976).

Existing literature reproduces popular notions of South Asian youth as "caught between two cultures." These notions are expressed by Basu (1989), "American Born Confused 'Desis'"; Baxter (1991) "Torn Between Two Cultures"; and Rao (1991), "The Agony When East Meets West." Burghart (1987a:242) offers a description of how youth are often conceptualized as lost in a "no-man's land":

[Culture] is often thought to be a system of meaning or of communication in which internal relations are logically or coherently ordered and in which external relations are discretely bounded with other cultures. . . . It is . . . the implication in the notion that Indian immigrants in Britain, or their offspring, are 'between two cultures.' One almost has here the image of culture as a nation state, complete with immigration offices and a no-man's land between frontiers in which people do not know how to think or act.

Analyses are often limited to the theoretical frameworks of assimilation, acculturation, and adjustment. Issues are conceptualized in terms of conflict, change, pressures, tensions, stresses, and strains. Relations between parents and youth tend to be conceptualized in oversimplified, dichotomous terms positing the parallel and conflicting pairs of objectifications of parents/children, Indian/Western, and traditional/modern, positions which are separated by an unbridgeable "generation gap."<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup>For a similar critique of the emphasis on conflict and acculturation, see Sarhadi (1993). Graduate students and young professionals from various South Asian backgrounds praised this presentation for moving beyond the much over-presented conflict stereotype of South Asian youth.

Marriage practices provide an example of a complex issue which cannot be understood in terms of simple

Ballard (1979), on the basis of her study of Sikh youth in Leeds, argues that "polarization of the generations is by no means inevitable. She observes a number of possibilities:

"Some parents who understand the need for change and can communicate the reasons for their attitudes to their children are able to strike a balance between strict discipline and giving in to all their children's demands." (ibid:117-18)

"Some families share a deep religious faith, and parents and children are able to accept their differences calmly and to maintain mutual respect and affection." (ibid:118)

"Other parents are afraid of recognising the truth and they may turn a blind eye to what their children are doing . . ." (ibid)

Some "parents are prepared to allow their children considerable freedom when this is necessary for their

---

rejection or acceptance by youth. Arranged marriage is perceived and defined in different ways, debated between parents and youth and among youth, and negotiated in a variety of ways in which some aspects are accepted and some are rejected. A one hour panel discussion on arranged marriage, the culmination of a series of group discussion among YICS (Young Indo-Canadians) members, was produced by Hemi Dhanoa and broadcast several times (and continues to be rebroadcast) on Community Channel's program, *South Asian Mosaic*. Participants discussed a broad range of practices, personal experiences, expectations and compromises. See also Bose (1984). Many variations exist which include, for example, situations in which the parents introduce potential mates who themselves have the final say, and young people who find some sense of security in the help and advice of their parents. In Britain, Anwar (1978:25-31), Ballard (1979:123-26), and Taylor (1976) show similar findings regarding the negotiation of definitions and practices regarding arranged marriage. In urban centers in contemporary India changes are also taking place in marriage practices (Nair, Vemuri and Ram 1989:167-68).

careers but they may still demand that they should behave in a very orthodox way at home." (ibid)

Some "parents may come to rely heavily on their children as interpreters and as sources of information." (ibid:119)

There may be some "degree of breakdown in the hierarchical relationships which . . . may enable the second generation to challenge some of their parents' assumptions and, while keeping up an outward show of respect, to negotiate more freedom for themselves." (119)

"pressure to conform can seem suffocating . . . but they [young Asians] too can derive support from these networks" (ibid:122).

Ballard goes on to remind the reader that "a phase of rebellion against parental values and authority is an almost universal phenomenon" (ibid:121).

In rejecting cultural explanations as the most important explanatory factor of inter-generational problems, Ballard argues that "severe and prolonged tension, where there seems to be little possibility of compromise, generally occurs when there are pre-existing factors within the family which makes it particularly vulnerable" (ibid:119). One such factor which she cites is "excessive authoritarianism of the father, whose behaviour may be partly the result of living in Britain." Other factors may be at work where "a few families are characterized by an almost total breakdown of ordinary relationships. This is frequently associated with poverty, overcrowding or mental and physical ill health affecting the family" (ibid:120).

Kurian (1991) reports from a comparative study he undertook with both South Asian university students in Canada (Calgary) and university students in India: "To the query, whether parents' viewpoint [sic] are often alien to youth, only 38.8% of the Canadian youth agreed, while 53.2% of Indian youth agreed" (1974:52). This suggests the possibility that the generation gap and perhaps cultural conflict, for university students at least, may not be more, but less, prevalent in this overseas context than in India. Kurian cites a study undertaken by NACOI (National Association of Canadians of Origins in India) with South Asian youth living across Canada in which it was found that, "only 4.3% [a figure which seems to me to be too low] had conflict with parents while 76.6% felt that parental guidance was essential in matters affecting them."

Issues of parent-youth communications, independence, dating, marriage, and identity are certainly present and pressing in the lives of youth whom I interviewed. But the above findings lead one to question a sole emphasis on conflict.

Weinreich (1979) examines youth's reappraisal of and continuing allegiance to their ethnic group from a psychological perspective. He (ibid:106) argues that, while identity development is a common and widely shared process

which adolescents go through, special pressures are faced by children of ethnic minorities. But he recommends:

that the terms 'culture conflict' and 'identity conflict' be sparingly used. . . . When applied to the consequences of contact between different cultures, they falsely stigmatize whole groups of people as 'social problems.' Whilst some adolescents of immigrant parentage may go through acute phases of psychological distress, there are positive pay-offs in the contributions of creative resolutions of identification conflicts to social change.

The search for identity by Indian youth is not addressed in Canadian literature. Some of the British work, however, gives voice to the youth themselves, provides the reader with a nuanced view of the complexities of their aspirations and problems, examines how they redefine what it means to be Indian (or "Asian"), and characterizes the search for self identity as a process which includes self examination and conscious decision making (Ballard 1979; Brah 1978; Pirani 1974; Taylor 1976).

The role of second generation youth both as catalyst and initiators in relation to the perpetuation of Indian

culture has been almost entirely overlooked. Catherine Ballard (1979:128) points to the fact that youth do think and act when she argues that:

In reality, young Asians are not faced with an either/or situation. They have difficult dilemmas to resolve and in resolving them they work towards their own synthesis of Asian and British [or in the present case, Canadian] values.

I argue that, in resolving their dilemmas, young Indians are also taking part in the construction of "Indian community," "Indian culture" and what it means to be "Indian." An approach of symbolic interactionism (on which I will elaborate later in this chapter) directs inquiry to "trace and study the emerging process of definition which is brought into play" (Blumer 1969:86).

Blumer (ibid:70) emphasizes that it is not necessary for participants in the construction of collective action to behave in the same way:

Each participant necessarily occupies a different position, acts from that position, and engages in a separate and distinctive act. It is the fitting together of these acts and not their commonality that constitutes joint action.

The corollary of this is that:

In making the process of interpretation and definition of one another's acts central in human interaction, symbolic interaction is able to cover the full range of the generic forms of human association. It embraces equally well such relationships as cooperation, conflict, domination, exploitation, consensus, disagreement, closely knit identification, and indifferent concern for one another. (ibid:67)

Empirically, Indian parents and youth "can and do meet each other in the full range of human relations" (ibid:68), conflict being only one of these.

The development of Yuva and its activities takes place within this range of relations and is made possible by it. Both parents and youth are equally actors in the ongoing construction of their realities and their cultures. In this perspective, it makes no sense to analytically align parents with the traditional nor to view the second generation as simply reacting against pressures imposed by their culturally determined parents. Both are involved in a continuous process of interpretation, assessment, and adjusting attitudes and behaviours in the context of daily circumstances that must be handled. In their construction of culture, results are both intended and unintended, recognized and unrecognized, reproductions and new constructions.

#### INSIDER CATEGORIES

Herbert Blumer (1969:21-47) outlines a methodology in which premise, problem, and concepts must arise from the empirical world (cf. Glaser and Strauss 1967). He identifies two steps of research: "exploration" and "inspection." By exploration he means:

a flexible procedure in which the scholar shifts from one to another line of inquiry, adopts new points of observation as his study progresses, moves in new directions previously unthought of, and changes his recogni-

tion of what are relevant data as he acquires more information and better understanding. (ibid:40)

By inspection he means the analysis of the relationship of elements in the empirical world.

The present research began with exploration, in which initial observations and interviews were used to guide the location and focus of further research. Themes and categories were allowed to emerge from the data.

#### CONSTRUCTING "CULTURE"

"this is my culture," "in our culture," "the culture of your country," "among different Indian cultures," "people from other [or same] cultures."

"love my culture," "committed to their culture," "what people feel about their culture."

"promote our culture," "retain my culture," "try to preserve culture," "foster culture," "give up their own culture."

"learn Indian culture," "find out more about our culture," "know very little about my culture."

"way of showing culture," "see all the different cultures," "having culture," "get involved in Indian culture."

In my interviews and conversations with Indians in Vancouver, as well as in Indian publications and speeches at Indian events, "culture" occurs as a widely used term. Different individuals use it with apparently different meanings, and meanings vary with context. Yet it was some time before I realized that "(Indian) culture" (and "Indian com-

munity," to be examined in Chapter Three) were unexamined assumptions on both my part and theirs.

Clearly, the speakers of the phrases above are actively engaged in culture. Culture appears to have an almost tangible reality for them which can be seen, felt, expressed, manipulated, possessed, or dispossessed. Individuals have attitudes toward culture and act towards it. Cultures are reified and essentialized not only by anthropologists (cf. Appadurai 1986b; Clifford 1988; Fox 1991; Marcus 1986; Ortner 1984; Rosaldo 1988; Turner and Bruner 1986; Yengoyan 1986), but also by members. Culture has common sense, ideological and experiential meanings in everyday life for its subjects.<sup>31</sup>

The respondents of this study not only hold models of their own or others' cultures, but also have thoughts and queries on the concepts themselves. Many of them have been exposed to many of the same ideas as the researcher has, and think about some of the same sociological problems.

In a discussion group with half a dozen young Indians, the definition of culture came up as a topic. One of the participants, a secondary school student, had just explained how she does not mind participating in her

---

<sup>31</sup>cf. Haagen (1990:37-42), who discusses differences between Native (First Peoples of Canada) and mainstream definitions of culture.

school's multicultural events by wearing Indian clothing or performing a dance. One of the women, a university student, responded:

A: Most of my white friends are really interested in the culture. 'Cause their culture doesn't deal with the traditions that we have, the clothes that we have and the things that we do. . . . So they're always asking me questions. I don't know . . . a lot of my friends don't have a culture. Like when you say culture, what do you mean? I don't know how you would define it in a white society. . . . Because . . . of the way we dress, our language, the events that occur, that all to me feels like culture. Together it's my culture--

[interjection by another participant]: Just say another person came along being of the Caucasian descent--

A: And asked me, I could define it. (TT-Y2)

Defining, constructing, and negotiating culture, cultural identities, and community is what this dissertation investigates.

#### INSIDER SOCIAL CATEGORIES

Say 'Hindu' if you have in mind a human type common to the whole continent; otherwise, according as you want to refer to this or that group, say 'Bengali, Punjabi, Hindustani, Marathi, Tamil, Sikh, Muslim,' and so on. As to the word 'Indian,' it is only a geographical definition, and a very loose one at that. (Chaudhuri 1967:34, quoted in Berreman 1975:71; cf. Rushdie 1991)

Nevertheless, respondents in Vancouver most commonly refer to themselves and each other simply as "Indians" (or "Indian people/person"). The term becomes meaningful in an overseas context where ultimate origins in India is a shared characteristic of a minority population. I asked one of the

Hindi speaking respondents whether he used the English word or a Hindi word. He explained:

It ["Indian"] is an English word, yea . . . use it all the time. But the correct term is *Bharatiya*. Also when we--when I write a letter in Hindi, it is hard to write 'Indian,' so I quickly switch to the word *Bharatiya*, but to that extent the language becomes somewhat artificial. But it is quite accepted norm, we just do it interchangeably all the time.

Because of confusion with indigenous Indians, "Indian(s)" is not generally used either in academic work or everyday discourse in the mainstream to designate origins in India. In this thesis, however, having established the population as those with origins in India, I will prefer to use members' own simple term wherever more precision is not called for.

Canadian academic writing on Indians in Canada is categorized under "South Asians," which refers to those with origins in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim, and the Maldives (Buchignani 1985:414, Kanungo 1984a:6). (In British literature, "Asians," and in the United States, "Asian Indians" are more commonly used). This includes Indians who have emigrated to Canada from elsewhere, most commonly Africa, Fiji, the Caribbean, or Britain. "South Asian origins" is the relevant Canadian census category of ethnic origin, and includes Bengali, Gujarati, Punjabi, Singhalese, Tamil,

Bangladeshi, East Indian, Pakistani, and Sri Lankan (Statistics Canada 1993a).

Local Indian newspapers and television programs use the term, "South Asian" to suggest similar populations: e.g. *The Link*, a community newspaper, which subtitles itself "South Asian Community Newspaper"; and *South Asian Mosaic*, a *Community Channel* Television production.<sup>32</sup> Indians do not, however, refer to themselves as "South Asian(s)," a category too broad to express meaningful self definitions.

"East Indian(s)" as a description of an ethnic category was appropriated by members in 1947 with the formation of the East Indian Canadian Citizens' Welfare Association.<sup>33</sup> "East Indian(s)" had some currency in academic literature during the 1970's and earlier. It is disliked by many Indians who are informed and politicized towards the problems of racism on the grounds that it has historical pejorative overtones and is inaccurate (the argument commonly used is that there is no country called "East India").

---

<sup>32</sup>Buchignani (1980b) documents how Fijians insist on distinguishing themselves from a general category of "South Asians" or "East Indians." Many Hindus with whom I spoke questioned whether Ismailis would consider themselves to be Indo-Canadians. The later query is discussed further in following chapters.

<sup>33</sup>An ethno-political organization aimed at changing government policies toward East Indians in Canada (Chadney 1977:197). This organization was established as a move away from Sikh domination of political affairs (Dusenbery 1981:106)

Others, however, find it a convenient or habitual term and use it occasionally or freely in self reference or reference to others.

In Canada, "Indo-Canadians" has its roots in government ideologies of multiculturalism (Porter 1975:277-82). Among Indians, it is used primarily by the second generation, and specifically by Yuva. It is otherwise used in contexts of multiculturalism. Where I use it, it reflects the self-referential term in a particular context.

"Community," is in common everyday use among Indians (see also Chapter Three, "*Communities*"). Where "ethnicity" or "ethnic group" contain connotations of outsiders' designations of difference (Glazer and Moynihan 1975; Patterson 1975; Whittaker 1986; Williams 1989), "community" reflects, as A.P. Cohen (1985:15) puts it, "a primacy of belonging." I asked one of the Hindi speaking respondents about what appears to be a widespread use of the English word. He explained:

We use the word 'community.' It's very peculiar, we are very permissive in terms of language. . . . this is a cultural trait. Nobody in our immediate group minds using English words all the time.

Phrases like, "in our community," "the Hindu community," "the Gujarati community," "the Sikh community," and "the Indian community" (or just "the community") reflect situational self definitions (Berreman 1975; Leach 1964;

Nagata 1974) in a way which Ronald Cohen (1978:387) has characterized as "nesting dichotomizations of inclusiveness and exclusiveness." Used as a symbolic designation which has the ability to take on meaning rather than to bear specific meanings (Cohen 1985), "community" allows for ambiguity and lack of consensus. When one Gujarati woman talks about the great effort it takes on the part of parents "to make the children do all this, to stay within the community, to help participate in the culture," she may mean any or all of the Indian community, the Hindu community, the Gujarati Society, or her family's caste group. "Community" takes on meanings in interactions where individuals situate selves and others.

In summary, in this dissertation I use the term "Indian" most often to reflect members' sense of identity, "Indo-Canadian" where it is used in the context of Yuva, and "South Asian" where it reflects an academic or census category. In order to preserve members' sense of ambiguity about boundaries and belonging, I will adopt members' use of the category "Indian community" as indicating a general sense of "among Indians."

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

TURNING THE THEORETICAL TABLES

You're going to need a good question to get the discussion started.

[a few moments of discussion]

How about, 'How do you integrate Indian culture into your life?'

That should get people talking.

Everyone will have something to say about that. (NB-III:2-8; O-2. Paraphrased from notes. The question is an exact quotation.)

This suggestion came from Yuva's five council members, two women and three men. In order to find out about the views of some second generation Indian youth, I attended their first council meeting of 1991. I had explained my interest in forming a discussion group with half a dozen Indian young people from different backgrounds for the purpose of talking about issues relating to youth and "Indian culture." Those present were enthusiastic, since one of the long term goals for Yuva is to be able to provide opportunities for youth to talk together and to share their common problems and interests.

In a few moments of discussion they came up with what at first glance seemed to be a simple but apt question, one which effectively summarized what I wanted to get at:

*How do you integrate Indian culture into your life?*

As I thought about that question, I gradually came to see its significance. Inherent in it is a twist on more common approaches to the problem of ethnic identity in general and South Asians in particular. The question demands a reconsideration of the processes of cultural definition and identity formation, and of the meaning, direction, and agents of integration.<sup>34</sup>

1. The question reverses the more commonly assumed direction of integration. It situates the speakers as Canadians living in Canada, and identifies Indian culture as that which must be integrated.
2. The question shifts the agent of integration. It assumes choice, action, initiative: "How do you *integrate* . . . culture?", rather than the more common passive perspective asking how individuals are *integrated*, assimilated, or socialized into a single and fixed group of reference.
3. The question changes the perspective on integration. It does not presuppose and reify an ethnic group or ethnic culture. It rather implies activities and priorities.

The subsequent research of this dissertation bears out that the orientation of the question reflects more closely experiences of second generation respondents. The

---

<sup>34</sup>Berry (1987) defines integration by dual characteristics of 1) considering it "to be of value to maintain cultural identity and characteristics," and 2) considering it "to be of value to maintain relationships with other groups." He contrasts this in a table of binary oppositions with assimilation which is characterized by not considering it of value to maintain relationships with other groups. Yuva members expressly consider it of value to maintain relationships both with other groups and their own (i.e. other Indo-Canadians).

process of integrating is also one of defining and creating. The youth's question demands a recognition of their part in the construction of their culture.

#### EVERYDAY ACTIVITY AND PRACTICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

This research is guided by an assumption of agency and draws on several theoretical perspectives in attempting to identify the conceptual categories by which respondents operate, and to analyze action. Anthony Giddens (1976, 1984) concept of structuration "relates to the fundamentally recursive character of social life, and expresses the mutual dependence of structure and agency" (1976:69).<sup>35</sup> His stratification model of the acting self is useful in examining actors' conceptualizations. The research also draws on symbolic interactionism (Blumer 1969), Barbara Ward's (1965) phenomenological scheme of "conscious models," and on reference group theory (Merton 1964; Shibutani 1955).

Giddens (1976:122) argues that the study of larger systems must take place at the level of everyday activity, which are expressive of social ideas. He places the emphasis on individual interactions:

The proper locus of the study of social reproduction is in the immediate process of the constituting of interaction. . . . every interaction bears the imprint of the global society: this is why there is definite point to

---

<sup>35</sup>Compare Bentley (1987, 1991) and Yelvington (1991) for a practice approach to ethnicity, using Bourdieu.

the analysis of 'everyday life' as a phenomenon of the totality.

Giddens argues (1984:3) that individual actions must be examined and interpreted in relation to the conceptual processes which guide the actions:

'Action' is not a combination of 'acts' . . . Nor can 'action' be discussed in separation from the body, its mediations with the surrounding world and the coherence of an acting self. What I call a *stratification model* of the acting self involves treating the reflexive monitoring, rationalization and motivation of action as embedded sets of processes.

What he defines as a "stratification model" consists of

an interpretation of the human agent, stressing three 'layers' of cognition / motivation: discursive consciousness, practical consciousness and the unconscious. (ibid:376).

He thus divides consciousness into two types and juxtaposes both of these to the unconscious, which is inaccessible and "poses altogether a different order of problem" (ibid:xxx). "Discursive consciousness means being able to put things into words" (ibid:45). The analysis of discursive consciousness is the relatively straight forward accounting for what subjects say about what they do. As for practical consciousness, Giddens suggests that:

It would be an error to suppose that non-discursive components of consciousness are necessarily more difficult to study empirically than the discursive, even though agents themselves, by definition, cannot comment directly on them. (ibid:xxx-xxxi)

Giddens suggests that "non-discursive" or "practical" consciousness--"all the things which actors know

tacitly about how to 'go on' in the contexts of social life without being able to give them direct discursive expression" (ibid:xxiii)--can be studied through analyzing "situated strips of action" (ibid:330). He specifies (ibid:330-31) how such a strip of interaction "can readily be prised open":

Each turn in the talk exchanged between participants is grasped as meaningful by them (and by the reader) only by the tacit invocation of institutional features of the system . . . These are drawn upon by each speaker, who (rightly) assumes them to be mutual knowledge held also by others. (his parentheses)

Embedded in these strips of action is the cultural knowledge which makes exchanges meaningful to participants. Shared knowledge includes procedures, meanings, role definitions, power relations, rights, obligations, expectations, and so on.

Yuva's celebration of *Holi* serves as an extended strip of action. My analysis will be aided by "mutual knowledge"--"knowledge of 'how to go on' in forms of life, shared by lay actors and sociological observers; the necessary condition of gaining access to valid descriptions of social activity" (ibid:375)--which I have gained through the process of extended fieldwork.

We may see that an an aspect of practical consciousness are the definitions which individuals hold of the groups to which they consider themselves to belong, and

those of others. Barbara Ward (1965), in attempting to examine variations in the definitions of "Chinese" which she encountered among South China fishermen, identified three broad types of definitions.

Ward terms an "ideological model" (or "believed-in traditional model") the definitions which actors hold about the true cultural community--"Chinese" in her case, "Indian" in the present case. She calls her second type of definition the "immediate model" (or the "homemade model"). This is the individual's "own subgroup's model of its own socio-cultural system as they believe it to be" (ibid 124). Ward terms a third type of definition "internal observers' models." These are insiders' evaluations and definitions about what they believe other sub-groups to be.

Ward suggests that a characteristic of these definitions is that members of subgroups compare their "immediate model" of their own social arrangements with their "observers' model" of other groups. "Such comparisons usually serve merely to confirm" the individual's "belief in the superiority of his own group" (ibid:125). Individuals also typically measure their own subgroup and those of others against the "ideological model" in terms of how these groups conform to or diverge from the ideological model. Others are, however "criticized according to criteria set by what are believed to be, and very largely are, agreed standards--the

standards of the believed-in traditional (ideological) models. Therein . . . lies the degree of 'Chinese-ness' [or "Indian-ness"] of any other groups (or individuals) . . . Only patterns of living which are so aberrant as to imply that this traditional ideology has never been accepted are dubbed 'non-Chinese' [or "non-Indian"].

Ward briefly refers to a fourth category of definitions, foreign patterns, which she suggests "are judged by criteria which the foreigners themselves do not and are not expected to share." This corresponds to what may be identified as Indians' definitions of "North American." All of these types of definitions will be further elaborated specifically in relation to the Indian community in *"Defining Selves and Others"* in Chapter Three.

Reference group theory accounts for the fact that individuals commonly identify with more than one reference group. As Nagata (1974:333) suggests, "ethnic groups are special kinds of reference groups." A reference group is, according to Shibutani (1955:365), "that group whose outlook is used by the actor as the frame of reference in the organization of his perceptual field." This is a useful concept in examining cultural identity when "One of the characteristics of life in modern mass societies is simultaneous participation in a variety of social worlds" (ibid:367). Shibutani (ibid:369) argues that:

In the analysis of the behavior of men in mass societies the crucial problem is that of ascertaining how a person defines the situation, which perspective he uses in arriving at such a definition, and who constitutes the audience whose responses provide the necessary confirmation and support for his position. This calls for focusing attention upon the expectations the actor imputes to others, the communication channels in which he participates, and his relations with those with whom he identifies himself.

An examination of reference group identification also requires a recognition of practical consciousness, as well as of discursive consciousness and action.

#### SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM

Symbolic interactionism directs attention to individual actions, interactions, and interpretations in the construction of conceptual categories and the formation of collective or joint action.

The key to symbolic interactionism is that "the essence of society lies in an ongoing process of action" (Blumer 1969:71). Action takes place in a circular continuum of interpretation, definition, action, interpretation, and so on. Interpretation of meaning guides action, the resulting interaction creates meaning, and meanings are further interpreted to yield further action. Blumer (ibid:66-67) elaborates on this process:

First . . . human interaction is a positive shaping process in its own right. The participants in it have to build up their respective lines of conduct by constant interpretation of each other's ongoing lines of action. As participants take account of each other's

ongoing acts, they have to arrest, reorganize, or adjust their own intentions, wishes, feelings, and attitudes; similarly, they have to judge the fitness of norms, values, and group prescriptions for the situation being formed by the acts of others. . . .

. . . second . . . the dual process of definition and interpretation . . . operates both to sustain established patterns of joint conduct and to open them to transformation. . . . Redefinition imparts a formative character to human interaction, giving rise at this or that point to new objects, new conceptions, new relations, and new types of behavior.

"Joint action," "the larger collective form of action that is constituted by the fitting together of the lines of behavior of the separate participants" (ibid:70), is seen to be constituted through the dynamic processes of individual decisions and group interactions (ibid:53). An understanding of collective action requires the examination of "how people are led to align their acts in different situations" (ibid:76). It follows that:

A network or an institution . . . functions because people at different points do something, and what they do is a result of how they define the situation in which they are called on to act (ibid:19).

The explication of *Holi* will include an examination of:

1. how members of Yuva define their situation;
2. their conceptualizations and values as revealed in their actions and statements;
3. their goals, decisions, evaluations, choices, actions, and negotiations; how they "align their acts";
4. immediate consequences (intended and unintended) of their actions.

Blumer (ibid:71) describes the process by which conceptualizations such as culture become reified and take on a sense of coherence for members:

The common definition [of a joint action that is made by its participants] supplies each participant with decisive guidance in directing his own act so as to fit into the acts of the others. Such common definitions serve, above everything else, to account for the regularity, stability, and repetitiveness of joint action in vast areas of group life; they are the source of the established and regulated social behavior that is envisioned in the concept of culture.

Berger and Luckmann's (1966:78) aphorism expresses the relationship between shared definitions and the individual:

. . . man is capable of producing a world that he then experiences as something other than a human product.

Individuals tend to conform to social definitions but do not necessarily do so. Blumer's (1969:71-2) formulation includes contestation and change or transformation as intrinsic aspects of the processes of interpretation, definition, and action:

the career of joint actions also must be seen as open to many possibilities of uncertainty. . . . One, joint actions have to be initiated--and they may not be. Two, . . . a joint action may be interrupted, abandoned, or transformed. Three, the participants may not make a common definition of the joint action . . . and hence may orient their acts on different premises. Four, a common definition of a joint action may still allow wide differences in the direction of the separate lines of action . . .

Common definitions of Indian culture, community, and identity can be seen to account for a cohesiveness and regularity of behaviour among those who subscribe to these

categories. Transformations are introduced when new definitions are made, or actions take a course which has not been previously established.

Youth are among those who make such new definitions and take such new actions. A useful way to conceptualize relationships between parents and youth according to Blumer's formulation is as follows. Parents' actions serve as definitions towards youth actions. Youth interpret these actions and determine their actions. In doing so, they, in turn, define actions for their parents. Both parents and youth may understand and be able to articulate role expectations and cultural values. Yet their actions are not restricted to these roles and values as they interpret them. According to Blumer (ibid:81-2):

Self-indication is a moving communicative process in which the individual notes things, assesses them, gives them a meaning, and decides to act on the basis of the meaning. . . . behavior, accordingly, is not a result of such things as environmental pressures, stimuli, motives, attitudes, and ideas but arises instead from how he interprets and handles these things in the action which he is constructing.

In the examination of action and consequences, I will find it useful to refer to two additional theoretical points made by Giddens. One is his rejection of structures and society as solely morally or materially constraining. He argues that all structures are simultaneously constraining and enabling (1984:169-180). The second theoretical

point to which I will refer is Giddens' concept of the consequences of action as not merely the result of decisions and choices made by actors, but as sometimes unintended and even unrecognized by actors (Giddens 1979:49-95, 1984:8-14).

#### IDENTITY AS A PROBLEM IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF KNOWLEDGE

Orlando Patterson (1977) defines "ethnicity" in contrast to "culture" as a consciousness of difference that is a prerequisite for commitment to group identity. This assumption of an outwardly imposed consciousness of difference is the basis for structural and materialist theories of ethnicity (e.g. Cassin and Griffith 1981; Williams 1989). The political and ideological facts of ethnicity and racism within the context of multiculturalism and the experiences of belonging to a minority cultural group impress themselves on individuals and shape their sense of individual or group identity. These facts also set parameters which define group action.

What is often overlooked in these kinds of analyses, however, are a) affective rewards of ethnic identity, and b) relationships, expectations, and circumstances within a category. As Kogila Moodley (1981:10) has suggested:

The attractiveness of essentially economic explanations of ethnicity lies in their ability to pinpoint the beneficiaries of ethnic mobilization. . . . they reveal the social forces in motion which retain or abolish the need for ethnicity in a specific historical setting. However, while analyzing the *instrumental* rewards of

ethnic ties, they lose sight of the *intrinsic* rewards of ethnic belonging. . . . Ethnicity is both an objective and subjective phenomena. What needs to be explored is their inter-action, rather than the simple assertion of the primacy of one over the other. (her italics)

Intrinsic rewards and interactions between Indians is significant in creating consciousness of cultural identities. Segregation and "racism" between Indian groups, and internal status building are often of more immediate concern than relations in the wider society (cf. Bentley 1987, 1991).

Bentley (1991:172) argues that:

cognitive and social differentiation cannot simply be taken as extant facts that can account for perceptions of identity. . . . In the same way, group conflict cannot be taken as simple fact and then used to account for social consensus, while disallowing causation in the reverse direction. . . . My failure to offer a complete model that considers equally relations among all terms represents a choice of what to emphasize . . . The same is true of my emphasis on domination within ethnic groups, something I believe has been insufficiently studied, rather than domination between groups, a topic more than adequately treated in the existing literature.

Peter Berger (1966:111), by demonstrating an affinity between the social psychology of symbolic interactionism and the sociology of knowledge, suggests their combined significance to be that:

identity, with its appropriate attachments of psychological reality, is always identity within a specific, socially constructed world. . . . One identifies oneself, as one is identified by others, by being located in a common world.

This thesis focuses on the construction of the everyday world of the "Indian community" and the locating of self within it as responses to inside relationships and

affective needs, recognizing that these are situated in broader social circumstances.

In particular, Yuva members express the need to know themselves before attending to problems of interaction with outsiders. This priority became clear in a youth forum organized by Yuva. One of the topics on the agenda was "racism" between Indians. The council sought the help of an "expert" as moderator, Charan Gill of B.C.O.F.R. (B.C. Organization to Fight Racism), who spoke about institutional racism in Canadian society.

During the question and discussion period, it became evident that participants were speaking at two different levels, the structural and the interpersonal. Many of the participants argued that stereotyping and discrimination between Indians on the basis of religion, class, and caste is more immediately pressing than racism in the larger context, and ought to be of greater concern to the Indian community. Others did concur with the speaker about structural problems which perpetuate discrimination and racism. (See "Yuva's Agenda" in Chapter Four for an elaboration of Yuva members' experiences of racial prejudice and discrimination).

One young Hindu woman, a university student, who was actively involved in organizing the Yuva youth forum and choosing the topics, commented on her own refusal to recog-

nize racist attitudes against herself, even though she recognizes that such attitudes exist:

I was the only person in high school, maybe one other guy in my graduating class, we were Indian. But the thing is I never felt Indian. I feel like--when I'm sitting here with you I don't ever feel like I'm brown and you're white. I've always felt like, if somebody's looking at me, and they're all white, say, and I'm brown, and they're looking at me, I'll think, 'Well gosh, do my pants look funny or something?' I never ever thought it would be anything else. Now I realize a lot of people, they think, they do feel they are wearing a mask of some sort, and that disturbs me. . . . These ["Oreo," "coconut"] terms make me realize that people really do feel-- . . . Even when I'm commuting and stuff, I watch people. Like say a bunch of Indians get on the bus or a bunch of Orientals get on the bus, and I just watch general people's faces . . . You can see people's eyes change, just sort of their body language, and it's there. I mean, you can't pretend it's not there. That's blindly dealing with an issue.

Further evidence of the priority of internal prejudices over racism surfaced during one of the Yuva discussion sessions. I had asked participants whether experiences of discrimination had had any effect on their own attitudes. One participant gave an illustration of her experience of being discriminated against by a high school teacher. A few comments showed sympathy for her situation and tentatively addressed racism:

Ramesh:<sup>36</sup> I mean, you know it exists out there, because you just have to watch those commercials . . . 'campaign against racism.' But when I look at them . . . it doesn't strike me as that extreme--like the way they talk about it seems really extreme--

---

<sup>36</sup>All respondents' names which appear in any part of this thesis are pseudonyms and bear no relation to actual names.

Manjit: I think it is . . . in our everyday life I don't think we encounter it but it is out there

Ranjit: There's job discrimination, when you're out there getting interviews and stuff.

The discussions then very quickly turned to expressing a greater concern for what they experienced more in their daily lives, prejudice and discrimination between Indians (for an elaboration of these experiences, see "*Expansion and Diversification*" in Chapter Six):

Ramesh: Don't you think the misconception is--the way I hear it is that it's always white against everyone else. I don't think it's that way. It's also between--

Manjit: We're stereotyping, but it's also between the minorities against each other--

Ramesh: Yea, yea--

Ranjit: . . . You shouldn't be--you can't say there's white people discriminating because they do it amongst themselves, and that's kind of true.

Manjit: Indian people discriminate against white people too so it works both ways . . . I think because they don't want intermarriages, that kind of thing.  
[everyone agrees]

Ranjit: I just thought of an example, actually, of prejudice within the Indian community. . . . it involved getting my name on a list to get something, and because I'm Indian and the gentleman who was running this, he was Ismaili, and because I'm Indian he let me have this. And this white lady who was going for the same thing, he didn't even take her name for the list, he said that it's too full. And we did this at exactly the same time. I ended up getting it, I thought it was really unfair. There is a lot of prejudice among Indian people as well.

In this thesis, the emphasis is on the examination of self definitions in so far as they are a response to internal circumstances. The examination of outside pressures themselves is beyond the scope of this thesis. In redressing the imbalance of an existing emphasis on outside factors, however, this study provides data toward an exploration of the interaction of outside and inside circumstances.

#### HOLI AS A "MODEL OF" AND "FOR" CULTURE

Geertz (1973:113-14, 123) identifies cultural performances as functioning at two levels. As "models of what they [participants] believe" performances are "presentations of a particular . . . perspective," or "conceptions of the world, the self, and the relations between them." As "models for the believing of it" performances are "enactments, materializations, realizations of" that perspective.

Yuva's celebration serves as a "model of" Indian culture in that it is an expression of members' interpretations of it. At the same time, preparing for the event and participating in it is a "model for" engaging in Indo-Canadian culture (Geertz 1973:87-125).

At one level of analysis, youth organizers of *Holi* consider their celebration to be "a very good way of showing culture" (TT-9). This corresponds with Milton Singer's con-

ceptualization of cultural performance which his "Indian friends" "could exhibit to visitors and to themselves" and in which they "thought of their culture as encapsulated" (Singer 1972:71). As one Yuva member explained, "it gives them [audience] a little more sense of the culture" (TT-4).

Geertz (1973:21) argues that a thick description of such an event can provide a "wall-sized culturescape" from an "ethnographic miniature." As such, a celebration is a reflection of cultural values, ideals, role definitions, and social relations (cf. Manning 1983; Warner 1959). By interpreting the event, one can gain "access to the conceptual world in which our subjects live" (Geertz 1973:24). In Chapters Five and Six, I will use Yuva's *Holi* celebration as a point from which to draw out patterns and discuss broader issues. Interviews which I conducted, and observations of and participation in other Indian activities will augment my analysis of the event itself.

In his insightful account of a Balinese cock fight, Geertz (ibid:412-53) places the subjects in the role of experiencing the event and the anthropologist in the role of "reading" or interpreting the event as text. A limitation of the analysis is that Geertz is not explicit about the extent to which each may share in the activity of the other, how the roles of experiencing and interpreting may interact, or the processes by which the event is constructed.

This leads me to introduce another level of analysis into the examination of Yuva's production of a *Holi* celebration. The event exemplifies an interpretation and a "re-presenting" (Carey 1989) of that interpretation. Carey argues for a synthesis of what he calls a "ritual" and a "transmission" view of communication. Such an approach would examine concurrently the content of expressive forms, their relationship to society, and the processes by and circumstances in which they are produced. My examination of *Holi* will include the planning of the event, the event itself, and subsequent comments about it.

#### GENDER

This is not a feminist study in the sense of being research beginning with a problem defined by women or designed for women (Harding 1987:8). It does, however, attempt to elicit both women's and men's perspectives and categories, to ascribe them as such where significant, to identify the roles both men and women play, and (in "*Constructions of Gender*" in Chapter Six) to describe a gendered experience and construction of culture (cf. Harding 1987).

## THESIS LIMITATIONS

Having set forth my theoretical and substantive framework, this section specifies limitations of this dissertation.

First, my methods do not allow me to identify individuals who reject Indian identity, who do not participate in Indian cultural activities or who avoid association with Indians. Respondents are chosen on the basis of observable participation in identifiable Indian activities. It follows that I cannot determine variables which are related to assertions or rejections of Indian identity. Specifically, I have not studied youth who do not participate in Yuva either because they do not know about it, do not choose to participate, or are prevented from doing so.

My data suggests three explanations for ignoring, avoiding, or rejecting Indian culture: 1) embarrassment, experiences of prejudice, peer pressure, reaction against parental pressure, or a desire to "be as normal [i.e. fit into the mainstream] as [they] possibly can" (TT-16) (see "*Experiences of Racial Prejudice and Hostility*" in Chapter Four); 2) lack of encouragement; having grown up in a family who do not encourage strong adherence to Indian values or practices. This occurs in some families when parents are so pleased to see that their children are becoming Westernized that they encourage it to the extent of ignoring or dis-

couraging interest in Indian culture. 3) lack of exposure; some children spend their formative years in locations where there is no strong Indian community and neither they nor their parents have continued exposure to Indian culture.

A second limitation relates to a question of practical as well as academic interest, one often asked by Indians, 'Will Indian culture survive in Vancouver (or other Indian Diasporas)?' My approach in this thesis negates this question in that Indian culture is seen to be an ongoing and changing product of socially constructed knowledge. My data does not allow me to predict to what extent future generations will continue to assert Indian identity, or in what manner language, religious beliefs, or particular customs will continue to be adhered to by future generations of Indians overseas. The concluding chapter will, however, suggest some immediate consequences and hypotheses about the future.

Another aspect of this second limitation, related to survival and change, is the question of authenticity of culture, rendered bogus by the constructivist approach which I am taking (cf. Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Rushdie 1991:66-7). Questions of authenticity could only make sense in comparison with a static, objective, and homogeneous culture in India. But culture in India itself is culturally, socially, and geographically diverse. Cultural transformations take

place both in India and its diasporas, and are out of step with each other in complex and unpredictable ways. For example, is "traditional Indian culture" that which no longer exists in India but survives in a kind of fossilized form in its diasporas? Is that more or less "authentic" than, say, what exists in contemporary Delhi or Bombay? What meaning can "traditional," "modern" and "authentic" have where the latest *saris* and Punjabi suits desired by fashionable Indian women are also viewed as "traditional" Indian dress.<sup>37</sup>

This is not to say that participants do not judge aspects of cultural reproduction overseas to be authentic or unauthentic. Such evaluations, however, are themselves based on constructions of an India and Indian culture of the imagination (Ghosh 1989), on "conscious models" of selves and others (Ward 1965), and on reference group identification. At the same time, insiders also recognize that change is a necessary characteristic of culture when they make statements such as, "The culture won't change [i.e. be lost] completely. It might enrich itself because then there'll be new ones [immigrants] coming in, always pumping ideas . . . India itself today has become very modern" (TT-5).

---

<sup>37</sup>Ames and Inglis (1973-74) describe how the Sikhs in their study sharply distinguish between modernization and Westernization. Bendix (1967) provides a detailed critique of the concepts of tradition and modernity.

A third question which lies beyond the subject of this thesis is the extent to which Indians have the power to enforce their own constructions in society at large. I do not remain unaware that Indo-Canadians have a major structural, i.e. racial, differentiating characteristic.<sup>38</sup> Imbalances of power between minority racial and cultural groups and the dominant society are justifiably a major concern of analysts of ethnicity, and one of its most urgent practical problems (Dahlie and Fernando 1981). An emphasis on self definition and agency does not, however, deny imbalances of power. Such a focus examines the role which individuals play within their limiting and enabling circumstances (Giddens 1984:169-79).<sup>39</sup> This dissertation investi-

---

<sup>38</sup>Bolaria and Li (1988:7) argue against the "inability of assimilation theories and other transplanted cultural theses to account for many racial phenomena." Parmar (1982) and Srivastava and Ames (1989) also argue that cultural theories do not adequately account for enforced conceptual and actual segregation of peoples of colour.

<sup>39</sup>See Abner Cohen (1980, 1982), Khare (1984), and Manning (1983) for examples of symbolic identity-making activity for political ends.

Khare (1984; cf. Appadurai 1986a) argues, in relation to the ideologically and practically deprived and subordinated untouchables of India, that symbolization and representation of identity is an important step in the larger practical problem of deprivation and subordination. "Anthropological procedures . . . have to examine not only the dominant social viewpoint, but also the countervailing, the spontaneous, and the resurgent. . . . Such a perspective demands . . . that we examine carefully the indigenous schemes of cultural categorization, construction, and interpretation" (Khare 1984:7). He explains that he examines their cultural arguments in their own terms, even if they are based on conflict, reaction, myth, and are logically imperfect (ibid:14). This is not to imply that the versions

gates initiative and action in the context of constraints and opportunities, and evaluations by respondents of the degree to which their circumstances are constraining or enabling.

---

of subordinates are more "correct" or "true," but that they need to be heard. They 1) perhaps more closely reflect the experience of the subjects, 2) provide an alternative ideology or world view, and 3) represent steps toward eventual transformations.

## Chapter 2

### METHODOLOGY

#### IN THE FIELD

Where does one begin fieldwork in one's own city among a large, diverse, and geographically scattered population?

Not at the beginning, for there is no beginning, end, or middle. Even if one were to choose some calendrical beginning, what would it be? The Hindu New Year in October or November? The one in February or March? The Julian New Year on January first? An administrative new year in September after Labour Day? In any case, these would only give a false sense of absolute beginning.

The best way to begin seemed to be as an immigrant to a new community: at the present moment by simply showing up and making one's presence known, finding out what goes on, and making some acquaintances. One place where newly arrived Hindus to the Lower Mainland find their way is the Vishva Hindu Parishad, Vancouver's first and well estab-

lished Hindu temple (hereafter referred to as the V.H.P.).<sup>40</sup> It promotes cultural activities and maintains links with other organizations.

I phoned the V.H.P. to find out its schedule of prayer meetings and *pujas*. Then with eager anticipation of actually getting into "the field" I went there one Sunday morning. I did not enter entirely without any foreknowledge or contacts. During the previous four years I had researched two papers, one on Indian dance and another on the celebration of *Diwali*. These had given me knowledge about some Indian activities, introduced me to individuals, and indicated to me a role played by the V.H.P. in the cultural life of Indo-Canadians.<sup>41</sup>

That first Sunday I entered self-consciously, sure that my presence as the only "white" visitor, dressed in Western clothing, and a woman alone, would draw curious, perhaps even disapproving, stares. As I was to discover this does not happen. Opinions and curiosity both remained well disguised as indifference.

I also found that education is highly valued. The fact that I was undertaking a doctoral program appeared to

---

<sup>40</sup>For a description of the V.H.P. see Buchignani et al. (1985:190), and Wood (1980).

<sup>41</sup>Large temple complexes in India have also played roles as educational and artistic centres (Ismail 1984).

command some respect and admiration and gave me some legitimacy. The fact that I am a woman undertaking this was never openly questioned. I found, however, that people usually assumed that I was not married. When they realized that I had a husband and children I invariably sensed a tangible relief followed by genuine pleasure and show of interest. I learned to let people know early on that I had a family. I was grateful that my husband quite willingly accompanied me occasionally to the temple or other activities.

The prayer room is free of furniture except for a short bench against the back wall. I sat down cross-legged on the thick, soft, red carpet and looked around, furtively jotting down initial impressions: the carefully adorned *murtis*; sparkling chandeliers; women dressed in brilliantly colored and gracefully draped *saris*; the division between men and women on opposite sides of the large room; and small children running laughingly back and forth between their mothers, fathers, and older siblings.

I also noticed things such as the wall hanging--mysteriously of Indonesian batik--with a loose, drooping corner, and a Christmas garland framing a picture but only reaching half way around. These things I quickly stopped noticing, as apparently did regular worshipers. I had jotted down a note to myself to see when the loose hanging

would be fixed. It was, four months later, when a CBC crew came to film a television documentary on Hinduism. The half-framing garland remained. The Indonesian batiks disappeared two years later when the whole room underwent renovations and painting.

It is such apparent disinterest in these kinds of detail, perhaps even more than something like the worship of *murtis*, which seems puzzling to our European sensibilities. Perhaps it is part of the same sensibilities which are not concerned about tall ladders being dragged in right during a prayer meeting in order to prepare for the videotaping of a children's performance; or a *pujari* discussing the procedure for a complex *puja* during its execution and asking the worshipers if everything seems ready for the next step. Time and again I have noticed that, in a variety of ways, staging and performance are not distinctly separated from production or life around.

My purpose here is not to provide a full description of the V.H.P. in terms of the setting, proceedings, participants, and interactions. This could form the subject of a thesis in itself. I only wish here to briefly outline how I made a beginning.

The morning continued with what I came to recognize as a typical sequence.<sup>42</sup> After the informal singing of

---

<sup>42</sup>This Sunday prayer meeting format appears to be typical in Hindu temples in Great Britain as well (Bowen

*bhajans*, the priest gives a *katha*, a religious story and lecture, usually relating to the Gita. This lasts about an hour. The children and instructors from the Ganesh school upstairs came down to hear at least the end of his lecture. The prayer meeting ends with *arti*. Announcements are then made. Finally devotees line up for *prasad*, or blessed food, handed out by the priest. Afterwards most of the congregation make their way downstairs for *priti bhojan*, a vegetarian meal.<sup>43</sup>

A practical problem which presented itself from the beginning was how I could be "in the field" when my family and colleagues could clearly see that I was still at home and at the university, and when many of my relationships, personal responsibilities, and daily activities did not change?

Even after arranging my life to be in the field simultaneously as at home, what about the attitudes of respondents toward me? I am to them neither a stranger in their land to be guided along, nor a guest to be brought in. I am a fellow citizen, albeit one with different birthplace,

---

1981; Kanitkar 1982; Jackson 1982; Knott 1987).

<sup>43</sup>*Havan*, or fire ritual, is also performed on certain occasions. How often and with what degree of elaboration depends on the leaning of the priest. Those who consider themselves *Arya Samaj* tend to put more emphasis on *havan*.

skin colour, religious orientation, and tastes. At the end of a visit I have my own home to go to and do not need any help becoming adjusted to life here (although I did, in the course of research, receive occasional, gentle instructions on how to behave properly in a Hindu context. For example, I learned how to do *arti*, take *prasād* with the right hand, dress in a *sari* for special festival or ritual occasions, and not arrive too early for private functions).

I needed some strategies to deal with these problems and to gain a place for myself which would allow intensive ethnographic research.<sup>44</sup>

I explained my project to the President of the V.H.P., whom I knew previously. He subsequently introduced me and my project during the announcements at a Sunday prayer meeting. I began by attending the temple every Sunday, where I never failed to meet someone new, have the opportunity to talk with someone I had already met, see something new, witness an event, or find out some information. I went so regularly that new acquaintances began to tease me about being a better Hindu than themselves. Later, when I became more familiar with the comings and goings at the temple and became a regular participant, I ironically

---

<sup>44</sup>Whittaker (1986) describes the adventures and difficulties of entering a "field," identifying suitable candidates for one's subjects, and producing anthropological knowledge out of everyday experience.

felt more comfortable about occasionally missing a Sunday, arriving late, or leaving early. This is what most people do. A few "hard core" members attend regularly every Sunday. Even fewer, perhaps thirty individuals, arrive early enough to sing bhajans.

Ultimately the V.H.P. turned out not to be as central to the lives of most individuals as I had at first imagined, nor is it the only centre. Many people whom I subsequently came to know rarely or never went there. Nevertheless, going there did give me a regular connection and some sense of belonging to a community. It was an ideal location in which to meet people who had this as a shared, if sometimes tenuous, link, and from which to form social connections out into other spheres of Indian life.

I also joined the India Music Society and attended concerts to learn more about the Indian arts. I tried to attend as many functions as I could find out about and find time for, including Gujarati Navratri celebrations, Bengali *Durga Pujas*, V.H.P. *Diwali Cultural Evenings*, and so on. Such a goal produced the inevitable accompanying frustration of missing events, either through conflicting times, my own personal responsibilities, finding out about them too late, or speaking to someone in one room and missing the event in another. Even so, people began to comment on my being everywhere.

These strategies helped me to get to know people, to allow them to get to know me, and to outline the framework of Indian cultural organization in Vancouver. After a few months, however, I realized that I was only seeing the superficial, public side of life. Ironically I realized this when my husband and I were recognized and ushered to the special guest section at a couple of performances. We were pleased and honoured. As guests we were treated well--not just tolerated but actively welcomed. But as an outsider I was being shown and told about the public face of the community (cf. Berreman 1962). I could not do the work I had undertaken as a special guest.

I did not have access to the backstage of meetings, rehearsals, informal gatherings, decision making sessions and home activities. Much of what I was interested in was not being hidden from me, but such things were not perceived as being of interest. One early exception was an invitation to attend a decorating party for a major festival. I was warmly welcomed and encouraged to feel a part of the group, but not asked to help.

The solution to this helped me with my commitment to giving something back to the community (cf. Gill 1988; McCurdy 1981). I have attempted, with some inevitable oversights, to be meticulous about reciprocating on an ongoing basis. It had already begun in small ways, some of which

insiders do: helping make *puris* for *priti bhojan* in the V.H.P. kitchen, bringing something when invited to someone's home, responding to requests to take a photograph when I have my camera handy, providing prints of photographs, paying offerings at the temple, and writing an article for a newsletter. But something more significant seemed to be required.

The solution was to offer my services, since all organizations are run by volunteers. I undertook three jobs: assisting the editor of the V.H.P. in producing the newsletters and *Souvenirs* (which led to a suggestion that perhaps I might like to run for editor, which I declined), assisting the cultural coordinator of the *Holi Cultural Evening*, and becoming a board member of the India Music Society. This gave me access to at least certain kinds of backstage activities, demonstrated a commitment, fostered some closer relationships on the basis of common interests, and allowed me to make myself useful.

Beyond the surface facade of public events and organized activities, I depended on individuals to voluntarily choose to invite me to private events and their homes. This happened only selectively and gradually, giving me the sense that at the time I "completed" fieldwork (fieldwork no more has a definite ending than beginning), I had really only begun to get to know people and to feel

accepted in the community. This awareness contributed to my decision to focus on public events and activities.

I came to a deeper understanding of the meaning of fieldwork. The field is not a location, nor is fieldwork an activity. Fieldwork is a state of mind which frames a geographic or social area as "the field." It is a state of suspension of disbelief, inquiry and curiosity, observation and thoughtfulness, and a certain sense of detachment, even during the most participatory participation.

I carried on intensive participant observation research between July 1990 and September 1991. During that time I attended over seventy events including formal performances and events, Sunday prayer meetings, religious celebrations, family gatherings and meetings. I conducted thirty-eight formal open-ended interviews with fifty individuals, twenty-one of them taped and transcribed. I also conducted two taped group discussions involving eleven youth, which I also transcribed.

One respondent gave me some advice. He explained that others had studied the community, gotten what they needed, and dropped out of sight. He gently suggested that it would be a very good idea to remain in touch. I have taken his advice seriously and continue to attend functions as time permits, and to stay in touch with individuals. This is not merely a duty, as my husband and I have formed

friendships we value. One is, however, torn between academic and personal responsibilities, and the time pressures of widening one's social circle while being a full time student. The balance becomes increasingly difficult as the exigencies of analysis and writing encroach on the fieldwork and social aspects.<sup>45</sup> A positive side is that I was able to retain a fresh perspective on activities right up until the final writing stages, and was able to incorporate new information as it occurred.

#### METHODS

##### INTERVIEWS AND PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

Modern urban lives, my own and those of Indians in Vancouver, are fractured and hectic. Doing research in an urban setting requires a good deal of racing across town from one interview to another, from one event to another. This duplicates in some ways the pace of lives of the subjects themselves who must scurry between work and personal activities, and between the many social and cultural engagements and obligations spread around a city as large as Vancouver.

---

<sup>45</sup>Harrell-Bond (1986) discusses the difficulties of handling continuing obligations and large numbers of relationships which develop during fieldwork (cf. Gill 1988).

The frenetic pace of trying to cover many cultural activities is not just a methodological difficulty, but is in itself a form of ethnographic participation. It mirrors the experiences of working parents who valiantly enable their children to take part in a variety of activities, including Indian cultural activities such as dance classes and show rehearsals, while themselves trying to fulfill the social and community responsibilities typically expected of Indian adults (Bhagat and Kedia 1986:144).

This hectic lifestyle affected the amount and type of data which I could collect. I found that I could not entirely control the depth, comprehensiveness, or logical consistency of my research. Without greater forcefulness and audacity to impose than I was able or willing to muster, I could not, for example, obtain interviews with all members of selected families, as I had originally planned. I was always very conscious of imposing myself on their leisure time, of which many so generously gave. Work or school pressures (with which, as a student myself, I could fully sympathize); heavy volunteer obligations; family and social obligations; holidays and celebrations; and frequent, extended, and often unexpected trips to India prevented the consistent kinds of follow-up which I had hoped to obtain.<sup>46</sup>

---

<sup>46</sup>Sharma (1991:86) refers to the difficulty of scheduling time with students.

In arranging interviews, some people were immediately prepared to spend time with me. Others set up a tentative date for some weeks ahead and postponed it several times before the actual meeting was able to take place. Often a key respondent would go out of town--sometimes on short notice and most often for a lengthy trip to India--because of illness in the family, for a wedding, or just to visit relatives and travel--and interviews would again be postponed.

I followed Mishler's (1986) approach to interviewing, which allows for the interactive construction of knowledge between interviewer and respondent in unstructured and non-directive sessions with open-ended questions. Categories and problems were allowed to emerge from the research and to be continually refined throughout the research process (Blumer 1969; Glaser, Strauss 1967).

I began interviews by introducing myself and outlining the kinds of things in which I was interested. From there I allowed the discussion to flow, allowing the interviews and observations to guide further questions and categories.

I began some of my early interviews with a simple genealogy and family history. But often this questioning took the better part of an entire interview, leaving little time to pursue more pertinent questions. I began to omit

this line of questioning from the beginning of interviews as this kind of information would only be useful if I could be guaranteed a subsequent interview.

At other times, I started interviews with a brief outline of my research interests and then began with a direct question about how much the respondent had been involved in Indian activities, or asking some specific questions about an organization in which I knew they were active. Personal experiences, feelings, ideas, and perceptions usually followed. Occasionally I interjected to ask for clarification, to comment, or to ask a related question.

These interviews have proven to be rich sources of information. They contain a wealth of references to things which reflect a perspective or way of looking at things, terms brought up by respondents and which have meaning to them, and topics which they introduced. Questions raised lead to further observations and questions.

A variety of interview formats were used, including formal, informal, group, individual, and discussion. Some took place at pre-arranged times for that specific purpose. These were taped with the permission of respondents, none of whom refused. Some did from time to time take me up on my suggestion that they ask me to press the pause button if they wanted to say something which they did not want recorded. Some questions were asked informally during

social events or visits. I made notes on these immediately afterwards. The location varied between public places, the respondents' homes, and my own home.

Throughout the research period, I augmented my "immersion" by reading South Asian literature, news media, promotional materials, and other relevant publications; and by listening to South Asian television and radio programs. Documents such as community newspapers, temple newsletters, and performance programs gave me insights into interests, activities and participants.

Most of my field notes, as well as tape transcriptions, were entered onto computer. From observations, reading through field notes and transcriptions, and listening to taped interviews, I was able to identify recurring themes. Computer technology allowed me to search themes and clusters of related terms which I could compile for analysis.

#### GROUP DISCUSSIONS

One important component of my research data derives from two group discussions which I initiated with the support of the Yuva council. One of the Yuva council members organized two meetings at his home. One included two young men and four young women, and the other three of each, all between the ages of sixteen and twenty-three. At my request, he arranged groups made up of individuals from the

Yuva members list whom he knew to have diverse religious, linguistic, geographic, and socio-economic backgrounds. The two discussions included Gujarati, Bengali, and Hindi speaking Hindu; Jain; and Sikh young people.

All the council members, clearly committed to promoting youth interactions and activities, were interested in taking part in these discussions. Since, however, one of council's aims was to involve some of the less active Yuva members, each discussion included no more than one or two council members.

I gave each participant a simple agenda and outline of suggested topics based both on my interests and on themes which had surfaced in individual conversations as being of concern to them. At each meeting, I outlined this broad agenda and emphasized that I would not be leading the discussion or following a predetermined list of questions. I encouraged them to carry the discussion themselves. I would only interrupt with the occasional question or to move the discussion forward if need be.

The host introduced the project. The following is an excerpt from the introduction to the second discussion:

. . . the session can go any way we all want it to go but the basis of it is, 'What is Indian culture?' and what it means to us. And we're doing this for two reasons. The first reason is because of Evelyn's research [elaborates] . . . And the second reason is that we feel that Yuva should get more involved with these sort of activities. We've been a very social and

recreational sort of group . . . and we want to get more into doing these sort of cultural things. . . . And it's also so that our members feel that they're participating in our group, more than just coming to our dances. . . . It's a two hour discussion, it's very informal, very casual, you're free to say whatever you want. That's what happened last time. . . . (TT-Y2)

Participants were then asked to introduce themselves, giving their own name, age, birthplace, school or work status, religion, and languages spoken. They also gave the birthplace, date of immigration to Canada, language, and religious affiliations of their parents; the number and ages of their siblings; and reasons why they had agreed to join the discussion.

In each case, I opened with a question which responded to one of the introductory comments. In the first, after comments about a growing interest in Indian activities, I suggested, "Maybe we could start with that. Why is this so important now?" The first response was:

I think it has to do with self-awareness, to know who you are and where you come from, to feel more confident when you go to the mainstream society, so you don't feel confused, you don't have an identity crisis. And I think also that it hits you at a certain age, when you get out of high school, when you get a little bit older, then you start asking questions like, 'Who am I?' (TT-Y1)

In the second group, one introductory comment was:

Even though we might for a non-Indian seem to be the same--we're all Indians--we're all quite different because our upbringings are quite different. We have different attitudes now because of the way we've been brought up. Some are more traditional than others, and some are more Westernized than others. (TT-Y2)

I responded with, "Maybe that's a place we could start, what Indian culture means to you and your family, and how much of it you've been brought up with yourself." The initial response to that was, "To me Indian culture is divided into a private life and a public life. . . ." (TT-Y2).

From these beginnings, discussion ranged over topics such as what comprises Indian culture, who Indo-Canadians are, identity, attitudes towards Indian culture, experiences of growing up, experience of racism, attitudes and values (their own, their parents', Indian, "Western"), and multiculturalism.

The discussions, lasting two to two and a half hours, were taped. I subsequently transcribed the tapes and made the transcriptions available to participants (with personal details removed, and with the consent of participants). Participants agreed to make the transcriptions available to Yuva members. This was done by circulating the information among friends, by making the transcripts available at their next function, and by placing them in a "Yuva library" binder. Participants and council members expressed keen interest in reading the transcripts.

Other young people expressed to me and to Yuva council members an interest in taking part in other such discussions. More were tentatively planned, but have not taken

place, at least in part because of my own and their busy schedules.

Asked why they had chosen to take part in this discussion, responses were broad statements similar to the following:

I'm always interested in Indo-Canadian issues. I think it affects all of our futures. It's important. (TT-Y1)

To promote these sort of things within our group. Also I'm quite interested in this topic. . . . to see the different ways we've all been brought up and how we've sort of changed and how some people stay the same and some have changed a lot. (TT-Y1)

. . . so I can have a better understanding of what other people feel about their culture and how they could assimilate with Western ideals as well. (TT-Y2)

Some of the participants were already highly involved in organizations and activities. Others were more tentative. At the end of the discussions, all of them commented on how much they enjoyed it and how valuable it had been to them. Council members viewed it as a catalyst for something they wanted to do more of. A Yuva Youth Forum in the summer of 1991 was a direct result of these discussions.

I talked about the interest in these discussions with three social service workers, and informally with respondents. Some reasons were posited for the interest. One is the dynamics in Indian families of hierarchical authority, and priority of group over individual rights. The participants admitted that for themselves or their

friends, communication with their parents is often not free and open.

Secondly, participants in the discussions indicated that cultural issues and the bicultural dilemmas they face are not topics which come up in conversations with friends, either Indian or non-Indian. Consequently, individuals often judge their experiences to be unique, not realizing that they are widely shared. Social workers at MOSAIC, OASIS, and Surrey-Delta Immigrant Services have noted to me that, in their experience, Indo-Canadian youth are for these reasons ready to jump at opportunities to organize and discuss common issues. Those who are too shy to express themselves at least like to be able to hear what others have to say (I-1; I-2).

#### INTERVENTION

In my role as researcher I have not remained an impartial observer. Complete non-intervention is not possible or even necessarily desirable (Rynkiewich 1981). By merely being present and interacting with people, the field worker becomes part of her subjects' realities. In any case, in the urban context, subject and analyst are not distinctly separated. Respondents are educated, self reflexive, and think critically. The youth are students, and some of them have taken social science courses.

At a personal level, at the first few Yuva meetings, I quietly sat and took notes. The meetings carried on apparently as if I were not present. (I asked two council members about this afterwards, and they could not think of any way of which they were consciously aware in which my presence altered the meetings.) From time to time I was asked my opinion about an event I had attended. I described personal reactions while attempting to refrain from advising or passing judgement.

Increasingly, I felt a responsibility to share some of the information and ideas which I had gained with those who were clearly interested in similar issues. The effect of my presence became particularly obvious when my request for a discussion group was enthusiastically taken on by the Yuva council as a joint project. At that moment I became, as one of the participants later said, "a catalyst." Given that my presence and activities were in any case effecting the situation I was in, I decided that what was important was not the impact of my presence, but to note reactions to and consequences of my influence as one of many (Hammersley and Atkinson 1982:15). I comment on this where applicable throughout this thesis.

One form of active intervention was in providing information in the form of written materials and references which I thought might be of interest and which I felt a

responsibility to share. I also found myself increasingly becoming a carrier of information about community events, since I attended a wider range of activities, and was in contact with a wider circle of people, than most community members.

A second form of active intervention was to make suggestions from time to time about possible activities, as I became more familiar with the problems and needs of Indo-Canadian youth and the goals of Yuva council members. One suggestion was to supplement an existing collection of Yuva photo albums, minutes, and newsletters with a "Yuva Library" to which I would submit copies of the transcripts of discussion groups, copies of my papers, and copies of any other information which I thought might be of use or interest to them. This idea arose from the enthusiastic interest of Yuva council members who had not taken part in the discussions, in knowing more about the topics discussed and asking to read the transcripts.

A second suggestion, made more as a comment in passing, was that since it seemed as if the discussions could easily extend well past the two hours if it were not for other time commitments, they might want to consider a retreat. (India Club organizes an annual retreat for member families). That idea was immediately taken up. A committee was formed to organize a one-day workshop which became the

Yuva Youth Forum. The discussion transcripts were used to help determine topics for discussion.

A third suggestion also came out of an observation in the discussion groups that youth of different backgrounds celebrated different festivals and religious events and often had not heard of, much less attended, those of others. I suggested the possibility of organizing group "field trips" to each others' events. This was not received as enthusiastically. Informal invitations were extended during one of the discussions for others to attend the Gujarati Society's Navratri celebrations. Otherwise, to my knowledge, nothing has been formally arranged. (Implications of this will be further discussed in "A Talent Show" in Chapter Five.)

A third form of intervention was the discussion groups themselves. Some council members indicated that they would like to continue with them, even when I no longer wished to take part. In the May 1991 issue of their newsletter, the *Yuva Yakker*, the editor wrote an article about "Yuva 'Indian Culture' discussion groups," encouraging interested members to participate.

Presuming to speak for others is both an epistemological and ethical problem in Anthropology (Clifford and Marcus 1986; Fox 1991; Geertz 1983, 1988; Rabinow 1977; Whittaker 1986). I have made drafts of my

written work accessible to respondents and have attempted to generate some interactive responses to my work (cf. Cruikshank 1990; Light and Kleiber 1981). This has so far not been successful among adults. Not many read it, and those who do are, I speculate, either too busy or too polite to comment.

Some Yuva members read a draft of a paper (Nodwell 1993 <in press>) and transcripts of the Yuva group discussions. All who responded expressed that these echoed their own experiences, some of which they had not been aware that others shared.

On one occasion I had made a copy of my paper on youth available at a Yuva meeting. Participants were immediately keen to see if they appeared in the quotations. Some comments caught their eye, and a short, elucidating discussion ensued.

#### ADDENDUM

At the time of writing (summer 1993) I have discussed plans to have another group discussion with Yuva members in which they could respond to this dissertation. A number of members have expressed interest in doing this. I have provided one or two copies of the dissertation which have been circulated among Yuva members. Responses and observations will be written up in a subsequent paper.

I hope also to organize a group of parents for a similar discussion on the dissertation.

PART II: ETHNOGRAPHIC DESCRIPTIONS AND OBSERVATIONS

## Chapter 3

## ETHNOGRAPHIC CONTEXT: IMMIGRATION AND COMMUNITY

This chapter:

1. outlines the history of immigration of Indians to Canada;
2. narrates a selection of personal experiences of about immigration to Canada and settlement;
3. provides a demographic profile of Indians and Indian organizations in Vancouver;
4. describes members' notions of community;
5. describes "The Family Friends Circle," to which the core Yuva members belong;
6. discusses the continuing importance of extended family networks.

Indian populations in Canada can only be estimated from Canadian census reports (Wood 1978:551).<sup>47</sup> Data can be derived from several non-exclusive, overlapping categories. "Ethnic origin" is determined by responses to the question, "To which ethnic or cultural group(s) did this person's ancestors belong?" (Statistics Canada 1993a:233). "Mother tongue" is somewhat indicative, although Punjabi is the only South Asian language which appears as a non-official lan-

---

<sup>47</sup>Census categories, in any case, must be viewed critically (Porter 1975; Whittaker 1988) because of the reifying work which census taking does.

guage choice. Furthermore, many South Asians who have immigrated from other English speaking countries, as well as those born in Canada, may claim English as their mother tongue (Puri 1992). A third category, "religion," determined every ten years, is also relevant.

According to the 1991 census, 420,295 Canadians (1.56%), 103,545 (3.19%) British Columbians, and 75,430 (4.8%) residents of the Vancouver Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) are of "South Asian origins" ("Bengali," "Gujarati," "Punjabi," "Singhalese," "Tamil," "Bangladeshi," "East Indian," "Pakistani," and "Sri Lankan") (Statistics Canada 1993a).<sup>48</sup> In B.C., 18,140 residents claim to be Hindu and 74,550 to be Sikh (Statistics Canada 1993b). In the Vancouver CMA, 14,880 residents claim to be Hindu, and 49,625 to be Sikh.<sup>49</sup> This means that approximately 66% of the Vancouver CMA's South Asian population are Sikh, 20% Hindu, and the remaining 15% Ismaili, Muslim, Jain, Christian, Buddhist, and Parsi. Ismailis and other South Asian Muslims are not specifically accounted for, as they are included in

---

<sup>48</sup>The 1991 census includes non-permanent residents who have employment or student status. This likely accounts for some of the increase in numbers since the 1986 census.

<sup>49</sup>These figures may include a small number of converted or "gora" ("white") Sikhs (see Dusenbery 1990), and a small number of converted Hindus--this is not common--or Hindus of South East Asian origin.

the category of "Islam."<sup>50</sup> Vancouver's South Asian population includes over two hundred Gujarati families, over fifty each Bengali and Maharashtrian, and smaller numbers of other South Asian cultural groups.

### IMMIGRATION AND SETTLEMENT

#### HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF HINDUS IN VANCOUVER<sup>51</sup>

K.N. Sharma (1993) has outlined four waves of emigration from India (see also Atal 1989; Burghart 1987c; Jain 1989; S.L. Sharma 1989; Tinker 1977). In the second to fifth centuries A.D., Indians journeyed to Southeast Asia. In the second wave, indentured labourers went to Southeast Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean Islands. The third wave saw immigration to Europe and North America. The first migrants of this group, in the early part of this century, were labourers and farmers, primarily from the Punjab, who settled all along the West coast of North America. In the 1950's, and peaking in the 1960's, trained professionals,

---

<sup>50</sup>Dossa (1985) estimates that "at present, it is estimated that out of the total population of about 20,000 Ismailis in Canada, about 9000 Ismailis live in British Columbia, with the largest number located in the greater Vancouver area.

<sup>51</sup>Buchignani et al. (1985) document the history of Indian immigration to Canada. See also Ramcharan (1984), Srivastava (1974:375-6), and Wakil (1981:930-32); Bristow et al. (1975) on Ugandans; Buchignani (1977) on Fijians; and D'Costa (1989) and Fernando (1979) on Ismailis in Canada.

students, and businessmen emigrated to Britain or North America. This last wave of migration is the one into which the families in this dissertation fall.

Before the mid 1960's, with a few exceptions, immigrants from India to Vancouver came primarily from the Punjab as labourers (Buchignani et al. 1985). With changes in Canada's immigration policies, an influx of immigrants of Indian origin arrived in Canada in the late 1960's and early 1970's. In Vancouver, those directly from India, mostly Hindus this time, were primarily graduate students and professionals. Others, primarily Gujarati speaking Hindus and Ismailis, came from Africa where they or their parents had moved as migrant labourers, business people, or teachers (Bristow et al. 1975). Many of these had been ousted from Uganda by Idi Amin in 1972, or had felt repercussions in Tanzania, Kenya, and Zambia.

The adult respondents of this dissertation are among those who immigrated to Canada on independent class in the 1960's and 1970's (and a few in the 1950's). They came with young children or as newlyweds with no children. Now, about 20 years later, a cohort of second generation Hindus are becoming young adults and teenagers. The beginnings of a third generation is literally just in its infancy.

PERSONAL IMMIGRATION NARRATIVES

The following narratives were related during interviews. The speakers all immigrated directly from north India (most commonly Delhi or the north eastern state of Uttar Pradesh).<sup>52</sup> The stories illustrate some shared characteristics which are also true of others with whom I have spoken who came in similar circumstances (cf. Coelho 1958; Klein et al. 1986).

Mrs. Kapoor, age 55-65, is a Hindi speaking Hindu from Uttar Pradesh (U.P.):

My husband came first . . . in 1953 and they were the first batch of [professionals] . . . Before that people knew about the U.K. or U.S. They never came to Canada. But there was a program, the Government of Canada . . . so he came . . . He didn't know anything about here. I joined him about six months later. Because he didn't know about the housing, he didn't know about the other food things, and at that time they used to pay for so less that it was very hard. So he said, 'Let me see for six months and then I will try to call you.' . . . We just got married at that time and then he came here . . . They didn't even know--people there--about the Indians and the Indian way of life. It was completely strange. When I came, I didn't used to put the Western dresses or anything on. And I had no idea--I was so young, mind you--so I had my *saris* and everyday cotton things, and I used to wear them. But then I realized--because you know I came in January, and you have the overshoes on, this and that--so they're not practical, so slowly and gradually I changed it. But what I am saying, when they

---

<sup>52</sup>Calculated from Canada's 1991 census, 96% of Vancouver's South Asian population falls in the categories of "Bengali," "Punjabi," and "East Indian" (the latter includes "Gujarati") and .2% are "Tamil." ("Sri Lankan" is a separate category.) In comparison, for example, 77.3% of Toronto's South Asian population falls in the former categories and 3.7% are "Tamil."

will see me in sari, it was so strange--all the Canadian people--that they will look at it. And I know that once or twice I went in a studio, so they just took my picture in sari because they have never seen a sari . . . People were here in Vancouver, but those were only working class. . . . So that Montreal and Toronto, I think, were the two, or Ottawa three, places that batch of [professionals] came. . . . And we didn't come with the idea of staying here. You see, because my husband came--he says he will do his post graduate training and post graduate degree . . . So he thought that he will stay maybe two years, three years and then we will go back. We never came with the idea--we were just on a student visa, well you could say the immigrant visa, student visa. So he says, 'Okay, once we are here, why not complete my training, and then I will take this fellowship. . . . And we lived in [another Canadian city] and then we came to Vancouver, in '54, '55 . . . And then, we had the children after two, three years, so we stayed here five years. . . . So he says, 'We have to go back. So before I go back, we'll go to London . . . and then from London to India.' So I said, 'Well, you stay here, and I'm here for a long time, six, seven years, so I should visit my parents and stay with them. . . . in U.P. . . . So then when I went to India, I stayed six, seven months, and I had two children . . . they were three and five. So I said, 'I don't know. . . . why not come back again for a year or two and then we could decide. I wrote to him and then I came back in England, and then we decided to come back to Canada. . . . And then children got older, they started going to school, and in a way, maybe subconsciously I like Canada because I was very, very young when I came here. . . . Then we applied for the immigrant visa . . . we got it '62, '63. . . . You will find that most of the people whom you will interview or who you already interviewed, they didn't come with the idea of staying here. Either they came for the higher education, and then they decided to settle down here. So this is the way we did it. We never thought, because my husband thought--you see, he's a very nationalistic type of person. He's a Canadian now and Indian, both the things. But in the beginning people just wondered, his friends, how he stayed here . . . We go quite often. We have very close ties with India. . . . at least twelve times. Every two years, one year . . . (TT-7, April 1991)

Mr. Chand, age 55-65, is a Hindi speaking Hindu from north India:

I was raised in a very big city . . . I went to a convent school . . . right from age eight . . . Now our kids' medium of instruction was all English because the youngest was six years old when we came, the oldest was I think nine years. Girl was around seven. . . . See, we were in business, we had good education, we had cars, we had motor bikes, we had servants at home. For us, the transition was not that bad. We just came . . . See, I could, Evelyn, just count on my fingertips the families who would have the same age group as our children. Because most of them had very young children. So I was sort of considered to be a little older as compared to my others. . . . And the older generation whom--now these people whom I invited the children, their parents had lived here for much longer than--I was just a newcomer for them because they came in 1908 or 1910. . . . at the time when I came, there were no Hindus here. So it was, I came and went to their Sikh temple, and I went to a lot of effort to build this one [Ross Street Gurdwara]. . . . 1963 I started in the . . . business. (TT-10, May 1991)

Mrs. Ghosh, age 45-55, is a Hindi speaking Hindu from North India:

[I think we are pretty] open-minded-- . . . We come from a very urban-- . . . And for instance, my grandfather used to have asparagus and cheese for breakfast, thirty-five, forty years ago. We used to have Australian Kraft cheese at breakfast time. And my mother's a business woman . . . We are a very unusual family. So adapting, coming to Canada and living here wasn't such a big change for us as far as a mental adjustment . . . But I did become more aware of my contribution in keeping the culture alive. Because as it is, I was not a very religious person or very deep rooted in my culture, history or background, it wasn't that ingrained in me. So I thought for the first couple of years--you guys lost the language, remember, we didn't speak it at home. Then we went back to India and they couldn't talk to their relatives and it hit me, 'What am I doing?' Then I started doing some of those things out of need. We want to be able to talk to our relatives when we go back, and English they'll know, I don't have to harp on the English language, that will come naturally. . . . I was seventeen and a half years old and then I got married. Marriage was arranged for me, and moved to another part of India . . . till 1973. . . . then I came to Canada,

end of '74. . . . And now, sixteen years later, I'm pursuing what I want to do with my life . . . And that's the reason I never went back to India. I would never have any independence there. I would always be somebody's daughter, or somebody's sister, or somebody's something. I wouldn't be myself. . . . But then once . . . the kids were sort of settled in school and doing well, I think after four years or so, I started the social circle I should say, and then got involved with the temple. I sat on the board of the V.H.P. one year . . . (TT-14, September 1990)

Mr. Bindi, age 45-55, is a Hindi speaking Hindu from U.P.:

When I came it was not intention to stay here . . . came for Ph.D. . . . So one thing led to the other . . . they offered me a job . . . Came to Vancouver and U.B.C. . . . Then suddenly I felt I wanted to settle down and get married, and once that bug bit me I decided to settle down and stay a few months. The job was there, it was very well paying job. But somewhere a year later I decided to look for other alternatives . . . '66 I came here, took my . . . training, that gave me my need to become a student of U.B.C. . . . So when I settled down, now came the desire to get married, I was about twenty-eight, twenty-seven. By looking at people on other side I found that I was not really--deep inside I was nothing more than Indian. I am very much Indian. Very much dedicated to Indian culture, Indian food, and Indian people. It wasn't as well formed as it is now, but that time I could see that deep inside my attributes propelled me away from [?]. . . . Whatever I learned about the girls here, Caucasian girls, I could see that there was tremendous difference at the more intimate level. . . . And I think for one year I had pretty open mind, if I ran into somebody here who was the right kind, I would have married her. . . . And once I got into [his profession] it was pretty well determined for me that I wasn't going to go back to India . . . So I--when I got married there, it was reasonably strong arranged marriage--I went back to India and when my parents asked me, 'What's your intention?' I said, 'Well, if I run into somebody here that I like, maybe I'll get married.' And I was introduced to three or four girls, and [his wife] and I, we kind of fit together. . . . So what happens, I go to India and meet with her and she says, 'Look, I don't want to live in North America. I am prepared to come for a year or two. I'm not coming to stay there. So [his wife] comes. For

a year or two we had tremendous disagreement on . . . whether [his wife]'s going to live here forever . . . And then community started to change. '72 there was a big influx of Indo-Canadians. Suddenly community exploded. Previously at one time you almost knew everyone in the community, now you didn't. (TT-2, July 1991)

Mr. Lal, age 40-50, was born into a Hindu family in a city in U.P. He applied for a scholarship to a Canadian university to do graduate work there and, to his surprise, got it. After his two years of university, and some time to see the country, he went back home to India to get married. He wanted to show Canada to his wife, so he brought her here. She liked it and did not really want to go back. Nevertheless, they did intend to go back sometime. They had a child and once he was in school they finally realized that they would not return to India. Mr. Lal misses his family. But in India he could not get the same kind of job which he has here, or have the same standard of living. They have lived in several other cities in Canada. He elaborates on his perception of Indian communities in various areas:

In the university you had some other students who came from the same part and you went out with them sometimes, but that wasn't exclusively Indians. You also went with other graduate students, and went for a beer . . . because you were not that uncomfortable. You didn't have trouble communicating. . . . When I first came there was very little Indian cultural activity anywhere in '72. But then they started bringing some Hindi movies, so when there's a movie on, once every two months, it's a big event and you go there, firstly to see the movie and secondly to meet everybody that's around . . . more and more things . . . mostly in the university theatres, at least in [other Canadian cities] . . . [Vancouver] is different because most immigrants

to Vancouver are from a very small population base in India. The biggest base is Sikhs here, from Punjab, and that is only two percent of the Indian population . . . so it's a very small membership, yet over here they constitute ninety percent. So most of the things we see and assume about India are based on that small two percent sample. In other places in Canada, and most of the United States, with the exception of maybe Toronto . . . have more of a mix, smaller numbers but from all over India. Most of the people who came on merit type immigration will come from a broader perspective. People who will come on family class will usually come from a small area, because say two families came, and they brought their brothers, and their relatives, and their friends . . . and that's how Vancouver was developed. . . . In most of the other parts of the country people came in mid '60's to say mid 70's. . . . I recall that if somebody said, 'I came here in '63,' he became the veteran, the senior most person in the city . . . '65, '68, '70 was the very big years, '68-'70. Whereas in Vancouver, '65 was no big deal. A lot of people came in 1920's and 30's and '40's . . . (TT-12, June 1991)

These narratives reveal some shared characteristics. The speakers come from well to do urban families in north India and have become well established in Vancouver. All came on independent class, leaving extended families behind. (The following section describes how they built social networks.) They spoke English in India. Often the man came to Canada as a student, returned to India to marry, and came back to Canada with his bride. Another shared characteristic is that they did not come with an intention of staying (cf. Radermacher 1991). Bhatnagar (1984) refers to this as "the myth of temporary stay in Canada." The arrival of children and the recognition of opportunities in Canada which would not be available to them in India finally brings

the realization that they would probably stay. They all speak about the experience of an intensified consciousness of being Indian as a result of being overseas and of having children in that context.

### COMMUNITIES

#### DEFINING "COMMUNITY"<sup>53</sup>

The respondents of this study constantly use "community" as a flexible concept which reflects members' sense of group in given contexts. In relation to this usage, "culture" is used in a way which represents what Anthony Cohen aptly calls the "symbolic constituents of community consciousness" (Cohen 1985:14). I will explore what it means to members to speak of "community," describe some interactions and divisions, and then examine "Indian community." I will then describe the specific community from which Yuva originated and the sense of family on which it is based.

Anthony Cohen (1985:114) suggests that "community" "as a mental construct . . . condenses symbolically, and adeptly, its bearers' social theories of similarity and difference." Within the "Indian community" in Vancouver, there are many theories of similarity and difference. They are

---

<sup>53</sup>cf. Ortner (1989)

founded on the basis of religion, language, region, customs, caste, family, interest, socio-economic status, and age. "Community" serves as a reference group which shifts with context (Shibutani 1955).

Some communities are constituted on the basis of ascribed qualities of members. This may be religion, such as "Jain community," "Ismaili community," "Sikh (or "Punjabi," which is often used as an equivalent<sup>54</sup>) community," and "Hindu community."

Language is the basis for Gujarati, Bengali, and Maharashtrian communities. In addition to these common designations are countless numbers of local designations, such as "from the South," "Marwari" (a linguistically and occupationally--trade and business--identified group with origins in Rajasthan), "Kachhi speaking" (from a region in Gujarat), and so on.

Caste groups are also spoken of as communities. In a discussion about Gujarati sub-groups, Mrs. Om describes:

That way you can be closer to your own. It's just like a big family. Patel is one big family of Patels, Soni is a big family of Soni. Patels are a community. Darjis are also a community. . . . Now we have Mochi Samaj. . . . They have their own organization that's very small here. So they keep in close contact with each other. (TT-6)

---

<sup>54</sup>Oberoi (1988) documents how, from the Sikh point of view, Punjabi was inscribed as the language of Sikhism, and the Punjab as their land.

Apart from Gujaratis, "the Mathur community" publishes lists of Mathur families all over North America. Others certainly exist.

Avocation is also the basis for a sense of community as in the "business community," "farming community," and "professional community." Individuals also commonly make reference to those who come from an "urban community" or a "rural community."

Closeness of interpersonal relationships within a community is a valued ideal. In his exposition of the symbolic construction of community, Cohen (1985:11-38) rejects earlier anthropological definitions which equated community with social and cultural simplicity and contrasted it to urban life:

Community, whether local or ethnic, or in whatever form, need not therefore be seen as an anachronism in urban-industrial society. Rather, it should be regarded as one of the modalities of behaviour available within such societies. (ibid:117)<sup>55</sup>

It is a "modality of behaviour" within Vancouver's Indian community. For example, the Bengali society is described in such terms:

Mr. A. Mohan: . . . one thing good about a small community--it's a very small community, a very neat

---

<sup>55</sup>Ortner (1989:14) argues that "if 'we' are 'modern,' and 'they' are 'traditional,' it is not because we do not have community, but only because we do not have the kind of community that social scientists have thought we ought to have".

community, Bengali community--we know . . . each other. . . . And very cooperative. This is a very good thing. We are always there for their happiness, as well as, unfortunately, any sorrow, any sad thing. For a big community, it's not possible. . . .

Mr. B. Mohan: If there are a hundred people, they might divide into three groups. But if it is thirty people, they will not divide. So one person who will be the President, he is taking the decision that this year so many functions we want to perform. Everybody maybe agreed.

Mr. A. Mohan: Not only that, when you are a small community, you know personally everybody. But if you live in a place where five thousand people--there it's very hard to meet each individually. So we know personally. If I heard a news something happened, it's very easy to contact with the people and find out whether it's right or wrong, or what's his idea. . . . (TT-8)

Community in the sense of close communication links may exist as an ideal rather than a practical reality. It is another question whether all members of such a community are equally well informed.

Large size or growth is posited by members as a characteristic which accounts for fission into smaller communities.<sup>56</sup> Size determines the range of interaction which in turn establishes the basis for sharing within a community. One young Hindu woman describes growing up as an Indian in a small Canadian city:

There wasn't and there still isn't a large Indian community . . . In the community we live in, about twenty

---

<sup>56</sup>Sharma (1989) describes how the growth of the Indian community in a Saskatchewan city led to fission between groups.

Indian families, and that's from every part of India or Africa.

EN (I will identify quotes of my own statements by "EN"): Did they all know each other?

Yea, they pretty much do. [then discussing whether they have Sikh friends] You guys [to her husband who had grown up in Vancouver] don't, but we did, because our community, . . . everyone who was Indian was there. (TT-16)

When numbers are small, being Indian is the only significant shared requirement. The group to which Mr. Bindi first belonged has, with growth, become segmented along family or caste lines whose differences are attributed to different religious practices:

In the beginning our clan consisted of all these families because we didn't have other members of our real clan. But now other members have come. Sometimes we see now the bigger family has become somewhat fragmented. . . . the saturation point is reached. And then they have their Kayastas, we are Marwaris, so their religious practices are different than ours. So they get together. So they have become a group within a group. Then there are Mathurs . . . So there are separate groups. (TT-2)

In one of the youth group discussions, one of the Gujarati participants posits an explanation for Gujarati segregation:

Our community [Gujaratis] is so big. That's why we've distinguished ourselves away from Hindus . . .

[one of the others interjects a correction] Hindi speaking Hindus. (TT-Y2)

Gujaratis have themselves separated into caste groups who have formed their own organizations.

Before examining the construct of "Indian community," I will describe some of the interactions between internal groups which I have been able to identify. Although social interactions between linguistic groups (e.g. Bengali, Maharashtrian, Gujarati) and regional (e.g. Fijian) are limited in practice, the most significant conceptual differences are religious.

Hindus and Sikhs interact socially, culturally, or through business. For example, the Vishva Hindu Parishad celebrates Guru Nanak's birthday and invites Sikhs on that day. During my research, that drew one of the highest attendance during the year, totalling about five to six hundred people. More than one Hindu respondent has urged me to visit a particular Gurdwara, explaining that they go occasionally. Both Sikhs and Hindus take part in India Music Society, India Club, and, less so, in classical Indian dance schools. Hindu business people rely on Vancouver's large Sikh population for much of their business. Most of the Hindu respondents have Sikh friends with whom they do, however, avoid talking about politics or religion.<sup>57</sup>

Both Sikh and Hindu individuals with whom I have spoken admit that relations between Hindus and Sikhs in Vancouver became more strained after the 1984 invasion of the

---

<sup>57</sup>See Sharma (1989) for a description of relations between Hindus and Sikhs in Saskatchewan.

Golden Temple. This is true even between young people. As one young Hindu woman put it:

When this Indira Gandhi assassination came up, their attitudes were quite different. . . . So for a while they were strained. It's something you just don't talk about, 'So how are things at the Gurdwara temple?' You just don't do that. [laugh] You just don't discuss politics. But that's not with all Sikhs, most Sikhs, everyone's suffering the same amount. Even within the Sikh community, there's so much division now, too, because a lot of people are dead against the idea of Khalistan. (TT-16)

Hindu respondents invariably stress that Sikhs and Hindus comes from the same roots and are fundamentally no different.<sup>58</sup> A factor cited most often by Hindu respondents as that which accounts for a social distance between Sikhs and Hindus, is a difference in socio-economic position. This is a stereotype based on Sikh "old timers." "New-comers" of the 1960's and later tend to have increased levels of education and socio-economic status (Srivastava 1974:375-77).

Three categories, "Hindus," "Gujaratis," and "Sikhs," are frequently juxtaposed by Gujarati respondents. "Hindus" is clearly not constructed as a religious category in this case, since many Gujaratis themselves are Hindu (others are Ismaili, some define themselves as "Fijian" (Buchignani 1980b, 1977)).

---

<sup>58</sup>Oberoi (1988) documents the historical construction of symbolic differences between Sikhs and Hindus.

"Hindus" here refers to that group of Hindus who have no other strong distinguishing characteristics, namely those from northern India, commonly U.P., who are Hindi speaking, and who represent the dominant "community" in India.<sup>59</sup> Gujaratis, who conceptualize the primary characteristic of their own immediate model as being Gujarati speaking and who identify with specific castes, define these Hindus as a separate group. The Gujarati "internal observers' model" of Hindi speakers emphasizes their Hindu-ness where, in contrast, these Hindus consider themselves to be quintessentially "Indian."

The relations between Hindus and Muslims is less clear to me.<sup>60</sup> "Muslims" as a general category has rarely been referred to by Hindus in my presence. A "Muslim / Hindu thing," referring to a tense relationship, was brought up in one Yuva discussion. The *Babri Masjid* and *Ram Janmabhoomi* issues had not come to a head at the time of the main research for this dissertation. At the time of writing (1993) there are certainly conversations about it. Some Hindus view the whole situation with sadness and consider it

---

<sup>59</sup>See Freitag (1980) for a discussion of the historical and symbolic construction of Hindus as a community in India.

<sup>60</sup>Anderson et al. (1983:223-239) describe Muslims, including Ismailis, in British Columbia. They do not, however, specifically identify those of South Asian origin.

to be primarily a political issue, others express anger against Muslims.<sup>61</sup>

On the basis of shared language, Bangladeshis originally joined with Bengalis to form the Bengali Cultural Society. Bangladeshi Muslims, however, separated and formed their own group some years ago.

The only Indian Muslims whom I have met are Ismailis.<sup>62</sup> Bristow et al. (1975) report that in Canada 58% of Ugandan South Asians, who are primarily Gujarati speaking, are Ismaili. Vancouver's Gujarati Society has some Ismaili members. Ismailis tend to be very active in and supportive of India Music Society. In June 1991, a Past President of India Club reported that there were no Ismaili members. At the same time, Yuva had one half-Ismaili member.

My research suggests that Hindus typically hold a definition of Ismailis as being relatively more "Western-

---

<sup>61</sup>At a Vancouver viewing of a film on the subject, *"In the Name of God,"* a discussion took place among Indian audience members on the subject of whether those overseas Indians who contribute financially to the Vishva Hindu Parishad in India are fully aware of the implications and repercussions of such support.

See Pandey (1990) for a historical analysis of the symbolic construction for political ends of Hindu-Muslim communalism.

<sup>62</sup>See Dossa (1985) for a description of Ismaili philosophy and life and Vancouver; and Fernando (1979) for a demographic profile of Ismailis in Western Canada.

ized" and having such a strong community of their own and such unique and rigorous religious practices that they tend to limit their association with other Indians. Dossa's (1985) findings concurs that these characteristics are part of Ismaili ideology. Their strong participation in India Music Society events suggests, however, that they share an identification with at least this aspect of Indian culture.

#### ORGANIZATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS

Hindu families who arrived in Vancouver before 1970 came to a city without the large number and diversity of Hindu religious and cultural organizations which exist now. Some, like Mr. Chand, who helped to establish a Gurdwara, initially became involved in the existing Sikh community.

When the Hindu population was small, a "community" consisted of families with shared cultural backgrounds who found each other and met informally. Founding members of organizations regularly cite three motivations: a desire to be able to pursue activities with other Hindus or other Indians; a concern that their children might become too integrated into the mainstream and lose all touch with their religion, language and culture of heritage; and a desire to pursue interests in Indian religious or artistic activity.

So, for example, India Club was established in 1968; the Vishva Hindu Parishad in 1968; the Gujarati Society in

1969; the Indo-Canadian newspaper, *The Link*, in 1973; and India Music Society in the mid-70's. Since then, organizations have proliferated (see Appendix Two for a list).<sup>63</sup>

Sushma, the host of the *Multicultural Channel's* semiweekly three-hour program, "*Indrahanush*," has reportedly exclaimed in exasperation, "Did you know there are sixty-two South Asian organizations here in Vancouver? Sixty-two societies? Sixty-two different societies! Can you believe that?" (Mathur 1990:64)

Anand Paranjpe (1986:77-78) argues that a high degree of institutional completeness has been achieved. (see also Buchignani et al. 1985:183-204). "Institutional completeness" refers to the degree to which an ethnic group has put into place their own organizations, institutions, media, and services. In consequence individuals of that group are able to live their lives to a high degree within the boundaries of their own institutions; maintain a way of life which relates to their culture of origin; associate primarily, sometimes almost exclusively, with others of the same background; and integrate their young people into their ways (Breton 1964). Others (e.g. Buchignani 1984:173; Kanungo 1984b:107-8; Ramcharan 1984:43) also posit that an

---

<sup>63</sup>Compare Burghart (1987c:8-9), who describes the proliferation of Asian organizations and institutions in Britain.

abundance of cultural associations limits conjugation with the host society.

The existence of organizations and institutions allows immigrants the option of joining established social and cultural networks as soon as they arrive in Vancouver.<sup>64</sup> In the case of Indian immigrants, a few inquiries might easily lead newcomers to a Hindu *mandir* or temple. There they meet people with whom they have other interests in common, find out about other organizations and activities, join one of many "friends circles," and tap business prospects.

Organizations also deal with problems and make possible the planning of regular public events in which group identity is reconfirmed and celebrated (Chadney 1977; cf. Manning 1983). It would be inaccurate to speak of something as substantial as a backbone in relation to what is commonly referred to as the "Indian community," but organizations such as the V.H.P. support a sense of community.

"INDIAN COMMUNITY"<sup>65</sup>

Mr. Bindi: . . . some of these Indian families here . . .  
 . I think within the Indian community you are looking

---

<sup>64</sup>Buchignani et al. (1985:203) conjecture that these kinds of Indian institutions will in the future be perpetuated by new immigrants, not by the second and subsequent generations.

<sup>65</sup>Also, but less commonly referred to as, "East Indian community," "Indo-Canadian community," or simply "the community."

at about 80% or 75% Sikhs, Punjabis. Then within 20%, you have zeroed in on Hindus. But some of us are Hindu, some of us are Ismailis, some of us are Muslims. Amongst the Muslims you have people from Fiji, people from India, people from Pakistan. You're looking at a nation.

EN: Is there an Indian community?

Mr. Bindi: No, there is none. It's a fallacy. There is no Indian community. (TT-2)

The apparent contradiction between talking about an Indian community and denying its existence occurs repeatedly in my interviews and discussions with Indians as well as in daily life among Indians. On the one hand is a spontaneous usage and everyday understanding of "Indian community." On the other is constructed difference, observable divisiveness, ambiguity about membership, and a denial of the existence of an Indian community.

Because of this ambivalence, I suggest that "fallacy" in the above quotation may be too strong a word. It is not that "Indian community" does not exist. It is the nature of its existence which is in question. References to Indian community operate at a conceptual level, while denials of its existence refer to actual levels of interaction and cooperation.<sup>66</sup>

---

<sup>66</sup>Ortner (1989) outlines the historical use in sociology and anthropology of both abstract and concrete senses of "community."

"Indian community" exists as a symbolic construction, a social myth whose concrete existence may be disputed but which does represent an ideal in the minds of those who use it as a term of self reference. Strauss (1959:149) defines group as "a symbolic not a physical fact" based on "shared meanings."<sup>67</sup> In his postulate of "the essentially symbolic nature of the idea of community," A. P. Cohen (1985) argues against functionalist accounts of community which posit integration and solidarity.

Donald Horne provides a secular, symbolic definition of myth:

I take 'myth' to mean a belief held in common by a large group of people that gives events and actions a particular meaning. . . . 'Myths' have the magic quality of transforming complex affairs into simple but crystal-clear 'realities' that explain and justify how things are now, or how we would like them to be. Whether altogether false, or partly true, they have the transforming effect of hiding actual contradictions, confusions and inadequacies. (Horne 1986:57-8)

I suggest that a myth of "Indian community" exists as a conceptual social category for its members, and as such it exerts an influence on action or as a standard for judgment. Yuva is guided by this myth of "Indian community" which they aim to strengthen. I asked one young woman why she feels it is so important to meet other Indians. She was

---

<sup>67</sup>Barth (1969), Berreman (1975), Leach (1964), and Shibutani (1955:565) formulated symbolic and interactive approaches to group definition.

brought up in a Hindu Punjabi family in a Canadian small town and moved away from home to attend university in a larger city. There she joined the university's Indian Students Association.

When you're living at home with your parents you feel that security and that . . . comes from the way you've been raised and what you do with your parents. And for us it's a lot of the East Indian values. So when I went outside . . . it was sort of a common basis. We were all second generation Canadians, and all our parents had come from India in the late sixties and we'd all grown up with the same problems, you know the restrictions, and the only sort of freedom was going to university. And meeting other people, you sort of didn't have to explain things all the time. Or if there was something you didn't like doing you weren't an oddball 'cause there were other people who felt the same way that you could feel comfortable with. I think that's why, because there's always that sense of belonging you're looking for whether you're a kid or an adult. (TT-16)

Her husband agrees that shared understandings and a need for belonging draw Indo-Canadians together:

You have to feel like you have--otherwise there will be something that you can't share with the majority of people here. You have religion, or you have culture, but you cannot share. Like the majority of the Anglo-Saxon people can share something which we will not be able to share or join in. (ibid)

In trying to explain, they also say in almost the same breath as the above statements:

Rani: Because there's nothing really, there's not a common thread--

Rajesh: No, nothing holding us together.

The apparent contradiction of their statements, that they there both is and is not something shared, reflects that

they, like Mr. Bindi, refer to two different levels. On one level there is little in the way of a common set of behaviours or activities. Such things define smaller communities within an Indian community. But at another level, nurturing the myth allows for a sense of belonging over and above differences which, as Rani and Rajesh try to articulate, is based on shared values, understandings, and experiences. For diasporic Indians this includes shared problems.

Events such as *Gandhi Jayanti* and India's Independence Day (both organized by India Club) celebrate positive values of India and affirm an ideology of unity. As models of and for an Indian community such activities help to perpetuate the myth. Classical Indian dance and music (which are often performed at such events) are also symbols of an Indian identity and community (Cunningham 1990; Nainpally 1989; Nodwell 1985; Nuttall 1991). Indian Music Society concerts reinforce the myth more indirectly when Indian audience members take pride in their cultural achievements.

"Indian community" is a term of reference within which other experiences make sense to members. Within definitions of this community Yuva's goals and their criticisms of some of their parents' attitudes make sense. This will become clear in the following chapter.

DEFINING SELVES AND OTHERS

In interviews I pursued the question of who belongs to the Indian community. Members have different answers about who belongs, to what degree, and under what circumstances. They also evaluate their own groups and the groups of others in terms of how they are perceived to conform to or diverge from an ideal. These definitions are never to be taken at face value, as all groups tend to define themselves positively in relation to others. This section identifies definitions of selves and others as held by the subjects of this case study. Countervailing definitions are undoubtedly held by others.

Barbara Ward (Ward 1965) specifies three definitions of groups (see *"Everyday Activity and Practical Consciousness"* in Chapter One). The value of Ward's models is in directing attention to identifying typical ways in which groups define themselves and others. She stresses that these definitions are not to be viewed as factual, but as collectively constructed definitions. To remind the reader, Ward's "ideological model" includes ideas which members have about what an ideal community is, against which they measure their own group and those of others. In this instance, it corresponds to members' definitions of "Indian community." What Ward calls the "immediate model" corresponds to self-perceptions which communities or sub-groups encompassed

within the larger category hold of their own communities. Ward suggests that a characteristic of this model is that insiders of each sub-group believe themselves to meet the standards of community, while others are judged to be deficient. This corresponds to how members of The Family Friends Circle and Yuva define themselves, and how authentically "Indian" they consider themselves to be. A third type of group definition is what Ward calls the "internal observers' models." These are insiders' evaluations about other sub-groups and the degree to which they conform to or diverge from an ideal. This corresponds to definitions which members of The Family Friends Circle and Yuva hold of other groups or communities within an Indian community.

Mr. Bindi speaks as if an undifferentiated group of "Indians"--in which he includes himself--make up an Indian community. He makes continual reference throughout my interview with him to "Indians," and "Indian" community, culture, way, system, music, food, and values. Yet at one point he interrupts himself to explain a differentiation:

And when I say 'community' I am not thinking of those Sikhs there, sawmill workers. They've never been part of our group. There were they and us--educated, more recent arrivals, and didn't work in the sawmill. I guess that was the [community]. . . . Many clean shaven Sikhs also were part of our group. (TT-2)

He defines himself, his family and friends, and the groups to which he considers himself to belong as "Indian" and

belonging to an Indian community. This is his "immediate model." He can, however, identify people with origins in India whom he does not consider to adhere to the standards of that same Indian community. This is his "insider observer's model" of them.

One characteristic of The Family Friends Circle "immediate model" is a high level of education and socio-economic status. Mr. Bindi's "internal observer's model" of other sub-groups characterizes their difference from his own in terms of class difference, a criterion common among Indian professional and business people. One Hindu respondent referred to the social distinction between the educated and less educated as the "other side of the Indian caste system." Mrs. Kapoor, a professional's wife, makes such a distinction:

[When we first came, in the fifties] people were here in Vancouver, but those were only working class. . . . The culture is not really reflected through them. They have their own ways and they're not educated. Mind you, they're not bad people, they're nice and simple people. But you know . . . they don't know the culture . . .  
(TT-2)

The class difference is expressed in terms of lack of education:

But there are people who don't go to V.H.P. . . . some people felt rejected, and it was because they brought in some so-called non-professional people. . . . Their value systems are very different. . . . these are minor businessmen from Fiji . . . they are not relatively educated. So in this [speaker's] group you are also looking at people who have achieved a certain level of

education, and they somewhat look down at the other people. (TT-2)

As in Mr. Bindi's previously quoted reference to sawmill workers, class difference is often equated with a difference between Hindus and Sikhs. Mr. Chand expresses similar views:

Now V.H.P. . . . most of the people are educated . . . most of them who go there speak English, they don't have that problem [of language]. . . . But in the Sikh community I came to know recently they have one group organized . . . they call them the Pensioner's Group . . . . At least the citizens feel some usefulness in a way that we have somebody else to communicate with and also a place to go. . . . In the Ross Avenue Temple, over there I find all the older people are sitting outside the temple--there are benches there--on a sunny day . . . . but there is no program. Those people could, because they do feel very lonely . . . that type of program is actually required. . . . No one else to talk to. Everybody goes to their own job . . . and the only thing to look at is the walls. They feel very, very frustrated. They say, 'Why the hell I came here?' . . . . See, people who know the language, they can go out, they take a bus pass, they go any place . . . . But those people, scared, if they get lost. (TT-10)

He is sympathetic and explains that he speaks to elderly people whenever he has a chance. Nevertheless, in this statement, he construes the problem as a difference between Sikhs and Hindus, when in fact elderly Hindus have similar problems. In spite of controversy over the years, V.H.P. prayer services and announcements continue to be conducted in Hindi, and the reason given is always that the most regular members are the older people who do not understand English.

Lack of education and rural upbringing is associated with a high degree of traditionalism and "old fashioned" values.<sup>68</sup> These are seen as negative characteristics in contrast to the "modern" outlook of the "immediate model." Talking about marriage, Mrs. Kapoor also associates lack of education with village upbringing and a more traditional set of values:

There are two groups in India, too. One is the uneducated group from the villages, and their thinking is completely different from what I'm telling you. But I mean, suppose we want to see our son, our daughter, that they should have a happy life. So we will do our best and then the final decision is on them. We are not deciding--I'm not saying it happens with every Indian family, I mean in villages they still--(TT-7)

Kumar and Mrs. Ghosh elaborate on their representation of the association between rural and urban upbringing, education, and outlook:

Kumar: I know families that are so unadapted that their daughters, they live secluded at home. And when they get old enough, they get taken to India to get married . . . They don't have the choice of doing whatever they want. And they come back and just wait for their husbands to come here . . . circles where the young girls and guys just don't mix. . . . They [those circles or families] belong to their own groups.

Mrs. Ghosh: They may go to the same temple, because I think that is still a binding, or I should say a universal concept, of going to the Hindu temple, for instance. But socially I don't think we would mix, because we don't have very much in common except the temple and the clothes and the food--

---

<sup>68</sup>Reddy's (1980) study examines relationships between socio-economic status and rural or urban upbringing on the one hand, and attitudes and values on the other. Correlations found in his study provide some basis for these beliefs.

Kumar: Oh, we have things in common--

Mrs. Ghosh: But the wave lengths I think would be very different. But also partly because our upbringing in India was much more liberal than maybe--

Kumar: See, we don't come from a rural background. You'll find that a lot of people that come from a rural background keep their traditional ideas with them, their ways of living with them. We come from a very urban, and we haven't had the same--when you come from a rural background, religion and culture is what you have, right. But when you're in an urban background there's a lot more, there's the cars--

Mrs. Ghosh: Education. Also there's a lot more--the composition of the people you come across is very different. (TT-14)

Here they appear to be referring to Hindus from different rural and urban backgrounds. On another occasion, they had a similar conversation which referred specifically to Sikhs and Ismailis:

Kumar: I think Sikhs are more old fashioned in some ways. They live a very old fashioned kind of life, like the girl can't go out and things like that--

Mrs. Ghosh: You know the reason for that, most of the Sikh people who are here are from villages and they don't have education . . .

Kumar: Like all the [names a Hindu family from their group], they're all from villages.

Mrs. Ghosh: But they worked in Lucknow. A lot of the Sikh people you find are traditional people because they were farmers. They were never educated. . . .

Kumar: They were the first settlers, Indian settlers, here. I guess they just never wanted to [assimilate]. They've just been with themselves.

Mrs. Ghosh: . . . Because the whole villages, and fifty, sixty, eighty families from a village have moved to

Vancouver. So they form their own little circle here and never have to deal with anybody. . . . A lot of Ismaili people have the same setup here too, that's why they don't--

Kumar: Yea, but Ismailis, that's more to do with their religion, their religion really emphasizes their link to--like they give money to their, a lot of money--

Mrs. Ghosh: I find a lot of similarities between Sikhs and Ismailis in that region. Sikh people give a lot of money to their religion. Unlike Hindu people, they never have money for their temples--[both laugh]

Kumar: Yea, they have money for themselves, that's it.  
(TT-15)

The exaggerated numbers are a reminder that these definitions ought not to be taken at face value but as representative of how people define their own groups in contrast to others. The speakers imply that assimilation and integration are a characteristic of their own "immediate model" in contrast with Sikhs and Ismailis whom they perceive as isolating themselves. Furthermore, their "internal observers' model" identifies Sikhs as distinguished by class differences, specifically education. They also posit family class immigration as a reason for isolation.

An explanation for an emphasis on class may be found in a description by Mr. Lal:

People who came here in the early nineteen hundreds as labour . . . because they had nothing else in India. They came for a better future and then they came from small villages. . . . Because of the majority of the population in British Columbia type of people in general . . . they will assume that if you are from India that you are illiterate unless you prove otherwise. Whereas in other parts of the country . . . except Toronto, and

U.S. also, because most of the people came as independent immigrants, most people came as professionals. They are very well respected, and if you are from the Indian subcontinent they expect that you must be highly educated unless you prove otherwise. The Hindu community is taken as intellectuals unless you prove otherwise.  
(TT-12)

Mr. Lal's description suggests that educated Indians may feel a need to distinguish themselves from those whom they consider to be less educated because of negative stereotypes held of the latter by outsiders.

A second characteristic of the "immediate model" is that members maintain a broader social network in comparison to others who are seen as remaining numbers isolated. Mr. Chand relates that to the difference between a rural and urban upbringing:

That is a problem [that most people don't take the initiative to reach out] because you see, they isolate themselves. Too much Indian culture . . . wherever you have large concentration of the community at one place. Like in South Vancouver here, you see rows of homes where you'll seldom find one or two Canadian. Most of them are East Indian. . . . See, I was brought up in a different atmosphere. I was raised in a very big city . . . (TT-10)

Ward briefly refers to a fourth category of definitions, "foreign patterns." This corresponds to definitions of those who are outside an "Indian community" or who are "non-Indian." North American society often serves as a reference group (Merton 1964) in contrast to which definitions of India and Indians are sometimes positively and

sometimes negatively assessed.<sup>69</sup> Such an outside group is variously referred to as "Western," "Anglo-Saxon," "North American," "Canadian society," "European society," "Canadian way," "mainstream," and "WASP culture." Respondents are never quite sure how to designate those who are not Indian and their culture and society. Members are variously conceptualized as "Canadians" ("Canadian means Caucasian living here" (TT-1), Caucasians ("We're gonna define Caucasians as white" (TT-Y2)), "North Americans," "white people," and "non-Indians."

Mrs. Ghosh considers it important for young Indians to strengthen their connections with each other. Her explanation reveals a strong sense of Indian community:

I think it's an excellent foundation for young people of similar background to work together and I can see this as being very useful in their social network even when they're adults. . . . These are the people--they'll all become lawyers and doctors and whatever--this will become their old boys' network at some other time, which we didn't have because the people we grew up with, we

---

<sup>69</sup>Indians also hold stereotypes of North Americans. When asked where Indians get ideas about Westerners, one respondent answered, "Indian movies" (TT-16). Compare Kakar (1986) and Barnow and Krishnaswamy (1980) on the creation of gender stereotypes in Hindi films.

There is a history of dichotomization between India and the West, from both sides. Anannya Bhattacharjee (1992) relates the dichotomy from the Indian side to dominant nationalist thought in India in which "India signifies nation, culture, tradition, God; and the United States signifies material prosperity, participation in legislative politics, economic advancement, and the industrial and technological development." See also Said (1979) and Singer (1972).

all spread out. Like I'm in Canada, my people I went to school with are somewhere else. And they've [i.e. young people] now got a community based network, which will be really useful for them and give them a sense of belonging as they become mature and individuals. . . . I mean there's nothing wrong with having it in a Canadian context and having your friends. But there's always some barriers. (TT-14)

She appears to posit an absolute difference between Indians and others. The social networks which she finds important are the extended family networks which independent class immigrants lose when they leave India. She argues that here such networks must be consciously recreated (see following section of this chapter, "*The Extended Family as Continuing Ideal*"). The Family Friends Circle (to be described in a following section) is one such creation.

#### SECOND GENERATION DEFINITIONS

The second generation are struggling with and redefining their concepts of community and their definitions of who belongs. Yuva's agenda to de-emphasize internal differences is based on a conception of Indian community. Individual members continue to remain involved in their own groups (e.g. Gujarati, Bengali, Jain, Sikh). But a desire to expand social networks brings them to Yuva in order, for example, to have "multicultural friends," for Hindus to maintain friendships with Sikhs despite their parents fears, or to break out of limited Gujarati social circles.

Since Yuva is explicitly aimed at "all Indo-Canadians," I asked who Indo-Canadians are and what they have in common:

Ranjit: I think it's our appearance. I mean we all look 'Indian,' right?

Kumar: But do you think an Ismaili would consider him or herself Indo-Canadian?

Ranjit: I don't know. I don't think so.

Kumar: I don't know either. 'Cause I think you consider yourself Indo-Canadian, I consider myself Indo-Canadian--

Ranjit: Don't they speak Gujarati?

Kumar: They speak Gujarati.

Ramesh: They do, yea.

Kumar: Yea, so 'cause they came from Africa--

Ranjit: And they [the people from Africa] originally came from India, so--

Kumar: But I don't think Ismailis--this is my personal opinion--consider themselves Indo--

Ranjit: They consider themselves Muslim first. I think their religion is very--they have, what do you call those things, every Friday they get together--

Kumar: *Jamat Khana*

Ranjit: Yea. So that everything revolves around their religion, rather than the culture.

Kumar: Yea, that's right. (TT-Y1)<sup>70</sup>

---

<sup>70</sup>I have no data on corresponding definitions which Ismailis hold of themselves and others, although these are equally worthy of examination.

In this conversation, the speakers cover the primordial (Geertz 1963) attributes of appearance, Indic language, and India as ultimate place of origin as characteristics of Indo-Canadian. They also posit self ascription as necessary to membership. Their own emphasis on culture over religion (described as a characteristic of Yuva in "Religion" in Chapter Six), represents their "internal observers' model" of "Indo-Canadian."

Kumar explains the relationships between young people from various groups:

Sikhs and Hindus, like the younger generation, the younger people, they tend to get together a lot. I mean at things like at school, things like that, there's no-- they assimilate, there's no difference, they don't consider themselves very different. We don't consider ourselves very different from Sikhs, we talk and so on. No problem . . . at our dance there were a lot of Sikhs, there's a lot of mixing. But Ismailis are very with themselves. They don't mix very much. . . . Fijians are Hindus, too, a lot of them are Hindu, so the ones that are Hindus--Fijians are Hindu, Fijians are Gujarati--but they have their own things as well. A lot of them are with themselves as well. I don't know too many Fijians that mix with us as much. They have their own *mandir*. (TT-15)

Self ascribed difference and isolation are again posited as an "internal observers' model," here of groups whose members are not (yet) involved in Yuva.

As internal observers, this group posits that Ismailis' own "immediate model" is not based on Indo-Canadian culture but that they see themselves as distinct on the basis of religion. Yuva has attempted to include

Ismailis. A few members have commented on the lack of Ismaili members and the difficulty of trying to persuade their Ismaili friends and acquaintances to join. They posit the strength of Ismaili youth organizations as a reason for this.

The youth also make another type of distinction. They have a term for those they consider to be excessively old fashioned:

Sunil: The word 'typical' has two meanings. The way I understood it was old fashioned.

Other: 'Typical Indian'--

Other: Yea--

Sunil: If we use, in front of my friends, the word 'typical'--

Jyoti: 'She's totally typical'--

Sunil: 'Totally typical' [everyone recognizes and agrees] that means like--

Kumar: . . . Simple, traditional, old fashioned, homely [meaning homey]. (TT-2)

"Typical," means too Indian and out of step with life here. It serves as an "internal observer's model" of unintegrated, old fashioned, or closed-minded Indians with whom they do not wish to identify or whose ways they do not wish to emulate. It refers to a definition of "Indian" which is opposed to "modern" and to which they do not subscribe.

In response to my question about outsiders as members, Kumar defines Yuva membership as anyone interested in promoting the well-being of Indo-Canadian youth. But I am the only non-Indian member, since membership from outsiders is not actively sought.

In spite of association with non-Indians in daily life at school, a social separation is maintained between one's Indian and non-Indian friends. Friends from the group form one social circle, while school friends form another. Vijay explains what appears to be a common pattern:

At school there are very few Indians. . . . while going through school, I've had two sets of friends. I've had my school friends and I've had my family friends all the time, and it's always been that way. But now that I'm up here [at U.B.C.], there are a lot more Indians. So my school friends, some of them are my family friends and they're Indians. And the people I don't see that much are my old high school friends, and they're the non-Indians. . . . I just had two sets 'cause they didn't know each other and they'd do different things, and sometimes I'd be doing things with my Indian friends and sometimes I'd be doing things with my school friends. (TT-4)

Most of the university students with whom I have spoken have had the similar experience of going to schools where there were very few, if any other, Indians, and so having non-Indian friends.

Ramesh: It was a shock for me when I went from high school to U.B.C.. In my whole high school there's only about four East Indians, including myself. Then I went to U.B.C. and saw all these different people, it just blew me away. I didn't realize there were that many people--

Ranjit: Lots of East Indians, yea--

Kumar: U.B.C.'s got a lot of Indians, whereas my High School, Burnaby Central, same sort of thing. There's just a few. And I didn't even know them. In my elementary school I think I was the only Indian in my grade. (TT-Y1)

The family friends were the ones they saw most often outside of school and on weekends. These have become the lasting friendships. Once in university, they meet many Indians, and find that their family friends are also there, so the two categories converge. In so far as this coincides with an increasing interest in things Indian, these friendships become intensified. At the same time, there is not much time or energy left over for other social relations. The latter are maintained where individuals have previously formed strong friendships, or in connection with specific interests such as, for example, sports activities or music groups.<sup>71</sup>

Further examples will surface in the next three chapters. Yuva members, in their drive to assert their own Indian identity and to forge networks between "all kinds of Indians," often have occasion to contrast Indian values and

---

<sup>71</sup>I have observed a development cycle which, however, I have not been able to confirm due to insufficient evidence. It appears that once this second generation marries, lives on their own, and gets jobs, they develop new non-Indian friendships. With the birth of children, an even stronger sense of family resurfaces. This takes the form of more frequent contact between extended family members, and more involvement with Hindu family rituals.

behaviors with those of their "white" friends. It will be seen that these youth sometimes identify with an Indian community and sometimes with North American society.

#### THE FAMILY FRIENDS CIRCLE

Kumar: We also actually . . . we have a group of friends--

Mrs. Ghosh: Social--

Kumar: Indo-Canadian friends, our social family friends circle--

Mrs. Ghosh: Sort of our community family--

Kumar: And we have regular parties. (TT-14)

In another conversation, Vijay explains,

There are circles and circles of people that know people . . . Most of the family friends that we have--we call it a circle, it's more like a community itself--but the close circle of friends is, like [Kumar] and [Kamla] and all these guys . . . (TT-4)

Mrs. Das describes the parties:

Plus our family friends circle, we keep meeting every weekend. Like we know so many, about fifteen, twenty families are very close to us. So one or the other keeps having a party. We meet on weekends most of the time with these friends and their children. And we never go for our parties alone, we always go with the children. It's not like only for adults. It's not a formal party, it's always with the family, the family party. So adults sit in one room and talk, or children are either watching T.V. or they talk, but we are all together. That's why they know them so closely. . . . their children are well know to our children. (TT-17)

Mr. Bindi describes the make-up of the group:

In our group it's predominance of Hindi speaking. Not only Hindi speaking, but Hindi speaking from certain part of the state . . . mostly from U.P. Even from U.P.

they come from a particular belt, western U.P. So our cultural mores and social functions are very similar.  
(TT-2)

Kamla, his daughter, who is a Yuva council member, describes the group from her perspective:

It's about thirty families . . . and we've all grown up together and we've partied together and sort of gotten to know each other on that basis. . . . I think it started when we had New Years' parties together. . . . when I was younger, in high school, we'd be going--I had no need of a social life in high school with my friends, even though I eventually had to get one because this wasn't enough--we'd be going to an auntie's house every weekend for dinner. Two or three parties every weekend, like Friday night, Saturday night. And now it's become less, I think, just because the kids have gotten older and we have other interests and we have other things to get on with. But yea, that would be a big part of our lives, would be these parties and these singing gatherings. (TT-1)

Mrs. Das, whose family is a long time member of the group, explained a practical reason for these parties. Indians carry with them the sense of obligation to maintain close and continuous social contact with a large circle of family and friends (cf. Buchignani et al. 1985:171). Individuals start by maintaining phone contact with each other, since dropping by regularly to all one's friends and acquaintances is impractical in an urban context where geographic distances are often great. But even this proves to be exhausting and time consuming, particularly when husband and wife often both hold jobs. So social obligations are met by holding large informal "parties" on weekends.

This serves an unintended function of limiting relationships with others, since little time or energy is left over.<sup>72</sup>

This family group defines their own parties in contrast to two other types. One is those which do not include children. The other is those which emphasize drinking.

Our group was the kind of envy of other people. I heard of a lot of people who wanted to come, they would come but wouldn't feel comfortable. Like people who like to drink, have fun, fun-oriented people, have adult parties, they came and they just didn't fit in. (TT-2)

And this is another thing, even with our Indian people, cocktail parties, artificial sort of things, they don't devote enough time to the children. And this is one of the reasons that they lack in the value system and they don't know what values are and what culture is. (TT-7)

These two defining characteristics of parties will shortly be seen to also define The Family Friends Circle in relation to others.

The Family Friends Circle has grown over the years, partly as the spontaneous meeting of people with similar interests, and partly as the result of decisions individuals made as to the kinds of social relationships they wanted for themselves and their children. Mr. Bindi describes the development of the group from his perspective:

We made friends, we dropped friends, and we stuck to the same basic course--between [his wife] and I there must

---

<sup>72</sup>Varma (1980:34) makes a similar observation and suggests that "The developing sense of community among Indians in the United States often works as a barrier to their wishes for assimilation in American society."

have been a very strong consensus that this is the way to go--and we picked up friends. And I was definitely part of setting up that group. . . . Then [when he first came] there were two or three families. . . . So as the clan grew, so grew our group. . . . It became a support group in which the kids can go to each other unsupervised, when parents are sitting and talking about good old days. . . . (TT-2)

I asked Mr. Bindi whether this group takes the place of an extended family. He immediately affirmed this idea: "Yes it does. I think you are looking at a modified form of extended family" (TT-2). Others, like Mr. Chand and Mrs. Ghosh, make comments which reflect similar feelings:

So they are sort of family members now. My extended family's here. My roots are sort of cut off. So these are my roots now. (TT-10)

It was like a network there already and I just became part of an existing network. Their network was already in place, partly because some of them are related to each other and some are close friends. I mean I started realizing the importance of being part of a group that would help keep the values. . . . That has a different place, a special place. They're like family . . . so that's become your family and the other people are friends. (TT-14)

I asked Mr. Bindi what word he regularly uses for 'family.' He explained:

That word [family] we use our nuclear family and also our larger family. Like occasionally I'll switch to the larger family connotation. And then I'll involve all my brothers and sisters and cousins and say, 'That's our family, that's our heritage.' In our house we talk a lot in English. So you can see that some of these English words get used all the time. . . . I don't think our children understand the word *parivar* quite a bit. We just don't use it in our day to day language. If I write a letter though, then I will use the word *parivar*. Or there is another word I use interchangeably, *ghar*,

*ghar* means house. And we also use *hamare ghar men*, in our house . . . (TT-3)

Mrs. Ghosh suggests to why this fictive family is so necessary:

I'm not as judgmental of people here as I was before because I feel that, you know, it's not like living in India when you live here. The social, the support is not there, the network is not there. In India there is a network, people you can fall back upon. Here there is no such network, that's a big problem. The family unit is different over here. (TT-13)

Indian immigrants who come on independent class and so find themselves without a family network, create one in the form of these family friends circles. Mr. Lal explains why he believes creating a support network is so crucial:

Most of the Hindus who came here in the sixties or seventies, we were too busy in the first ten to twelve years, fifteen years maybe, trying to build up a security for ourselves, to be self sufficient and secure. It's very difficult to explain, but only now is the time that we're getting into things that will have long term benefit to the community. Up to this time we were so self conscious of security that we only looked at ourselves and tried to build up, save some money, make more money, buy a house, be able to pay a mortgage, and things like that. Most of us, in fact none of us, have any place to go if we had a major catastrophe . . . for family. And that's very important to Indians, because we're not used to the social security systems that you have here. So you are told that you must stand on your own feet, otherwise the government will not-- (TT-12)

Mr. Chand gives some examples from his own family of how he conceptualizes the Indian family as a strong support system:

I feel that's very important, that if I am in trouble or if I need some help . . . [describes an incident and

involvement of his cousin's daughter] Now you say she's the cousin's daughter, now there's a distance. But no! That Indian value system was there. So she said, 'No, it's not only their problem, it's family's problem.' That is the Indian value. For me, this is very important. . . . and that's why our concept is extended family concept. See, our family is not husband, wife, and the children. My brother . . . is as important to my children as I am. If they get a call from him--just to give you yesterday's example. . . . I got a call here at about nine o'clock last night. From [American city] my brother said that, 'On the left eye today at about two o'clock I started seeing that I'm losing my sight on the left eye.' . . . See, why did he phone? Just understand this point. He kept me informed. He could have waited, 'Let the operation be done, when I come home I tell my brother.' No! . . . he says, 'He is my elder brother, I have to let him know. This is for your information I am phoning you.' . . . tomorrow I'll go . . . to see him. Now you see that, that's the family, extended family system. Where he is as important to me as any of my sons or any of my blood relations. So that's the family. . . . Now this is the extended family. . . . Because they want to share the happiness and the sorrows. Then the burden is less on your shoulders. Sharing's important. (TT-10)

Mr. Bindi explains another aspect of what he defines as extended family:

I would say that's the most appropriate description, a modified extended family. Even now if I--like the ticket I have to buy, I know [X's] in the travel agency. I'll phone [X] and there is a basic amount of trust relationship, so I know she will not give me wrong advice. But we also keep things confidential wherever we should. Like I'm [Mr. Das's] client, but I don't care very much about who else is [Mr. Das's] client. . . . There's been enough maturity and self assurance in that group in terms of not divulging or not playing one against the other. It can happen only within an extended family. (TT-2)

He describes trust and loyalty among community members as other characteristics.

It also functions as a set of long term relations. These are cemented in a kind of reverse process of extending fictive kin relations back to India when close friends visit each other's family members there. Mr. Bindi describes one example of friends travelling to India and visiting his relatives there:

So [Mrs. Das] and I, now that their families have met with us--like [Mrs. Das'] mother and father came and visited my brother's family in [India] . . . So this was another piece we put together. So we really become very close family now. [Mr. Das'] brother's daughter is getting married . . . we are planning to go there. We have made our kind of family circle, although it is a friends circle, but close. Just a way of developing long term relationships. (TT-3)

Parents like Mr. Bindi place obligations of mutual support on their children. He recently had occasion to remind his daughter of her obligation:

Like yesterday Kamla [his daughter] said she was not going to be able to go to fifteenth of August program [India's Independence Day celebrations]. Mr. Das got a phone call from them, from the Consul General, saying that, 'When the flag raising ceremony will take place we want some kids to sing.' And it has been done in the past, except they have been disorganized and consequently did not think of it earlier. . . . And last night I told her that, 'Look, whenever you need [Ram] Uncle, and he's there always. Now he's setting up this program and you are saying you have other plans. What is this?' So [Kamla] submitted to that little pressure. [She had earlier been quite adamant that she could not go because of her own school pressures and commitments.] And she said, 'Oh yea, I'll change the plan, I'll go.' She could easily have said, 'Look Dad, I have other plans. I just can't go.' And I wouldn't be able to say anything. But she quickly realized that, 'No, no, there is something selfish about it. If [Ram] Uncle is responsible to put it together, then he's counting on

us.' So she will show up. [She later said she had enjoyed it and was glad she had gone]. (TT-2)

Mr. Bindi's explanation of the situation suggests that he does not strictly enforce his authoritarian role as male head of the house. His daughter, however, respects his wishes and her obligations. This is an example of a youth definition of respecting parents by conceding to their wishes even if it is not what you want (see "*A Family Event*" in Chapter Six).

With Mr. Bindi I explored some of the characteristics of The Family Friends Circle in so far as he was able to articulate them. This is his "immediate model" of his own group:

The way I see it, some of the common things we do, none of us likes liquor. We use liquor, but it is only to the point of socializing. Nobody drinks alone, we don't drink in the presence of our children. They are aware that we drink with friends, but it is never more than a drink or two, social drink. That is very important. I get turned off if people get drunk. Smoking is another thing. . . . smoking and drinking, I think these are very external ones. (ibid)

Abstinence from liquor is a value which is brought up repeatedly. Yet Mr. Bindi admits that social drinking is acceptable and alcohol is often served at private social gatherings. Abstinence represents an "ideological model," against which actual practice varies. The symbol of abstinence distinguishes, on the one hand, from Western ways which are defined as less moral than Indian ways. Two

respondents describe how they pick up these stereotypes from Hindi films (see footnote #59):

Rajesh: One of the stereotypes Indian people have of white people is that they drink--

Rani: If you watch some of the older movies from the early seventies or late sixties, whenever they would portray someone white, or an East Indian woman who was very Western, she'd be wearing very tight clothes that nobody would really wear, and she'd have a glass of wine in her hand or be smoking a cigarette. That's something that East Indian women just don't do.

On the other hand, abstinence from liquor also symbolically distinguishes from "working class" Sikhs who are reputed to be heavy drinkers. As Ward suggests, a group's "immediate model" of itself is typically evaluated as superior to their "insider observer's models" of others. This superiority is similarly applied to perceived behaviour in relation to children:

The other thing is we have a certain belief, a very strong belief in family. . . . I think we all are very loyal to our children. . . . in other words we will not do anything which will cause neglect of the children, or leaving them too much on their own. (ibid)

Family is a strong South Asian value. A characteristic of this group is a strong commitment to including children in all activities. As Mr. Bindi explains:

In the beginning we had some friends who had adult parties . . . some Indian, some Caucasian. And I found it very uncomfortable to leave my daughter with somebody-- . . . there was no problem with good babysitters, but I didn't like that system. So we gravitated more and more to this group, because in this group the norm was that you don't leave your [kids] with babysitters. Your kids have to go with you, so you are seeking

those families who also want to bring their children. . . . I think raising children, it has to be a community affair, at least a large part of it. Individuals have a role, between husband and wife is very difficult to raise it. We kind of developed a small commune, if you like, and within this commune there was a lot of freedom . . . but we came together for social interaction, cultural interaction. (ibid)

However, one member of the group who strongly advocates the strength of the Indian family, including his own, is criticized by another as not living up to his "immediate model":

They would have completely different adult-oriented entertainment, adult-oriented work environment. Whenever we went to their house, it struck me as most odd that we never talked to their kids. We just didn't know where they were. Every time you go there, 'Where are they?' 'Oh, they're studying,' or 'They're out with their friends,' or 'They had to go to visit somewhere.' I felt emptiness because, to my mind, knowing you is also knowing your family. Just in-built, I just don't feel comfortable. So our friendships don't go very deep unless we know the family.

The two have different "immediate models" of what family means, and both of them positively compare their own conceptualizations to a Western one.

Mr. Bindi goes on to describe some other characteristics of The Family Friends Circle:

When it comes to family--and education may be another one. I don't know how to define. The list keeps getting longer. The value of education is understood by each one of us without any coaching. So when it comes to educating children, money is no object. Like in none of these families you will ever see that they will say, 'Okay, you've done your high school, go and earn on your own.' And I think it's a very good Canadian virtue to let the kids appreciate the value of money. But the way we apply it is different. (TT-2)

The high value placed on education and their sense of responsibility to educating their children is contrasted with three negative reference groups. One is "Canadians" who are characterized as not taking full financial responsibility for their children. A second is working class Sikhs whom several respondents described to me as having an attitude that high school is enough because it was enough for their parents (TT-7, TT-11, I-1). A third is those who are characterized as "closed-minded" or "traditional" families who do not see the value of educating their daughters equally to their sons.

Mr. Bindi also describes how shared experiences based on similar backgrounds play an important role in the cohesiveness of The Family Friends Circle:

And one thing which puts us together is the kinds of devotional music we like. There are some *bhajans* or music which we quickly remember. Like this is one of the good things we share when we get together. As a kid I heard this *bhajan* from my mother. And they'll say, "Oh yea, my mother used to sing it too." It quickly brings the relationship together. I think shared experiences are very important to make friends. Shared experiences as a child already. A lot of--it's amazing how much time we spend in reminiscing. . . . So in our group, I find a lot of things I did as a kid as very similar to a lot of things they did as a kid. The kind of food, the kind of *sabji*, vegetables, they ate, the way they were made, and so on. (TT-2)

In summary, this Family Friends Circle defines themselves as sharing high levels of education and taking full responsibility to see their children through high levels of

education; strong family relationships which provide mutual support and in which children are a priority; customs, upbringing, food, and songs; and abstinence.

#### THE EXTENDED FAMILY AS CONTINUING IDEAL

The characteristics of the ideal extended family system in India are patrilineal descent, virilocal residence, patriarchal authority, filial and fraternal solidarity, pooled financial resources, and individual and family status dependent on the reputation of all members. Expectations and obligations include the maintenance of the family's reputation by each member through appropriate behaviour, mutual aid, the communal celebration of significant life cycle rituals, the responsibility of those with authority for those below them, the responsibility to respect and honour those above one, and the male responsibility to protect the women of the family.<sup>73</sup>

The Indian extended family system as a conceptual ideal and a social network continues to be important for Indians in Vancouver.<sup>74</sup> Individuals who came here without

---

<sup>73</sup>See Mandelbaum (1970) and Singer (1972:286-304) for a description of India's joint family system, its ideal, its variations, and its developmental stages. See also Kurian (1974).

<sup>74</sup>cf. Nath 1973:8-9. Ames and Inglis (1973-4) document the continuing significance of joint family ideals to Sikhs in Vancouver, and its form and practice here. See also Srivastava (1974), and Wood (1984:69-114).

For the continuing significance of the extended family system in industrialized urban India, see Ames (1973),

family networks have recreated fictive kinship networks which aim to serve similar functions as in India. As Mr. Bindi says, "We have made our kind of family circle, although it is a friends circle, but close" (TT-2).

Members define their group as a "community family," "modified extended family," "social security system," and "support group." The Family Friends Circle functions as a fictive extended family network which assures the security of a mutual support system, nepotistic business arrangements, a forum for maintaining and passing on cultural values, and a long-term set of relationships.<sup>75</sup>

Positive Indian values are often contrasted to what is perceived to be the norm in Canada or North America and which serves as a negative reference group. Family is one point of contrast:

. . . this is one good thing in Indians, mind you, that they are very, very family-minded, no matter who they are. . . that is one big difference I see in Canada, I mean in Western countries . . . And the other thing, they are very close to the children--although it all comes into the family umbrella. They would do anything for the children. They don't have money, they would take a loan, and give them the best whatever they can do it. (TT-7)

---

Beteille (1964), Freed and Freed (1982), and Singer (1972).

<sup>75</sup>cf. Gould (1963) who describes similar adaptive functions of caste in contemporary urban India.

The descriptions and functions of this "modified extended family" correspond closely to the reasons given in response to a question about preference for family form in a study undertaken in India. Freed and Freed (1982:199) report:

that the cited reasons [for preferring the joint over the nuclear family form] related to economics and mutual aid (e.g., assistance in case of illness or misfortune, lower costs, greater financial strength, and strength in a fight) and emotional reasons (e.g., one is not lonesome, greater family prestige, plenty of love).

In practice, those who left India themselves have often struck out independently from their own families there, and have here come to further value that independence. Mr. Bindi, for example, tells about his own situation:

My father passed away in India--he never saw me after I left India--and I had some serious disagreements with him when I left India, in terms of he didn't want me to really come here. He always opposed my coming to North America. (TT-2)

Mrs. Ghosh explains why she prefers to be here:

And that's the reason I never went back to India. I would never have any independence there. I would always be somebody's daughter, or somebody's sister, or somebody's something. I wouldn't be myself. (TT-14)

Mrs. Kapoor admits that she recognizes a disparity between her own "ideal" and "immediate models":

Mind you, I'm telling you [about the family system], but I'm very independent because I'm living on my own [i.e. in a nuclear family] for so long, but this is the idea behind it. (TT-7)

Chapter Six will show that the extended family continues to serve as an ideal of family for Yuva members.

#### CHAPTER CONCLUSION

In summary, the Family Friends Circle has formed on the basis of shared attributes (including region of birth, religion, and language), and shared upbringing (memories, type of music, food, customs, social functions). The values described as characteristic and shared define their "immediate model" as contrasted to their "internal observer's model" of other Indians and North Americans or Canadians. Their "immediate model" or definitions of themselves includes abstinence (in practice, social drinking rather than perceived more extravagant drinking of others), which is symbolic of class difference; no smoking; placing a priority on children and maintaining mutual parent-child obligations; a high value placed on education; and preserving the importance of the family.

It is within this fictive extended family that children learn about the rules of social interaction, about their rights and obligations, and about their culture. Yuva members who belong to The Family Friends Circle interact with the adults as part of their extended family, approaching them for advice, assistance, or support.

When Mrs. Ghosh suggests that, "This will become their old boys network . . . They've [i.e. young people] now

got a community based network, which will be really useful for them and give them a sense of belonging as they become mature" (TT-14), she is expressing her perception of Yuva as a continuation of this kind of network for both social and business support.

Members of The Family Friends Circle distinguish themselves from others on the basis of class. They place an emphasis on education and relate this to urban upbringing and professional or business status which, they posit, results in a "modern" or "liberal" outlook. In contrast, their "internal observers' models" of others emphasize lack of education, "village" or "rural" upbringing, residential concentration, isolation, and an adherence to "traditional" or "old fashioned" values.

An "ideological model" or ideal definition of an Indian community is posited by both youth and adults. Membership is defined by such attributes as ultimate origin in India, Indic language, food, clothing, and appearance, as well as by shared values, standards of behaviour, and problems. The youth recognize self ascription and are uncertain about whether to include those whom they perceive as maintaining a social distance from other Indians.

An definition of community is also described. Members of the Bengali society, Gujarati caste groups, and Family Friends Circle, suggest that an ideal community, like

their own, is small enough to allow all members to know each other, have "close contact," and be mutually supportive.

The following chapter describes Yuva, established by the youth of The Family Friends Circle. It will also include an assessment of two theoretical approaches for the understanding of youth and ethnic identity, and will suggest an additional usefulness of a symbolic interactionist framework.

## Chapter 4

## YUVA: INTEGRATING "INDIAN CULTURE"

## YUVA

Yuva means youth. It's a Hindi word that we decided to use because it was easy to pronounce by Indo-Canadians and non-Indo-Canadians, and also because it sort of represented what our group is about.<sup>76</sup> (TT-14)

ORIGINS: INDIA CLUB, THE FAMILY FRIENDS CIRCLE

Indian organizations inevitably question how to maintain the interest and participation of their youth. India Club is one of these. India Club of Vancouver is a social and community service organization of professionals (doctors, professors and teachers, engineers, business people), originated in 1968. Typically, it began with a group of individuals sitting and talking in someone's home and turning to the question of how they can preserve "India's rich cultural heritage" and how they can maintain the interest and participation of their children. An informal agreement leads to the establishment of a Society.

---

<sup>76</sup>One of the Government of India's three major youth service schemes is called the Nehru Yuva Kendra (Saraswathi 1988).

News of it is spread by word of mouth. India Club soon had fifty to sixty member families.

The main objectives of India Club are:

(i) to promote a better understanding and interchange of cultures and traditions of India and Canada;

(ii) to build up community spirit and to engage in work of moral, benevolent, charitable, philanthropic, social and community service nature. (Sikka 1986:21)

Annual social events include a wine and cheese party, Halloween party, Christmas party, retreat at Whistler complete with talent show, and picnic. A Past President explained to me that, along with the service mandate of India Club, its two goals are to foster Indian culture and to foster integration into Canadian society. He considers both essential. Yuva continues with these two goals.

In practice, however, for both organizations, integration into Canadian society still means doing more Canadian things, but with other Indians. The discrepancy is most commonly rationalized by the statement, "everyone is welcome." But others are not actively invited, except for the occasional personal friends of some individuals and political representatives invited as "special guests."

India Club has, however, reached out with community activities which include the donation of a bronze bust of Mahatma Gandhi to Simon Fraser University in 1969--an initiative which eventually resulted in several municipal

declarations (in Vancouver, Surrey, Burnaby, Coquitlam, Langley, and New Westminster) of October second as Gandhi day; an annual *Gandhi Jayanti* garlanding ceremony and program held at Simon Fraser University; an annual walk-a-thon in Stanley Park to raise funds for Operation Eyesight; awarding a number of scholarships in the city for Indian students; and the organization of an annual "*Mehfil-e-gazal*."

These activities aim to reach outwards to create an Indian presence in the wider society. In practice, they still engage primarily Indians as participants. Breton (1964:197) observes on the basis of his study, that "the existence of an institution in the group would tend to have the observed effect on the cohesiveness of the ethnic group irrespective of its orientation toward the native and its own national culture." Another example is India Music Society. That organization advocates cross-cultural participation and initiates cross-cultural activities. It must, nevertheless, continually work against the powerful effects of its Indian orientation which continues to draw the majority of its audience from the Indian population. It in turn then strengthens the sense of a vital Indian community.<sup>77</sup>

---

<sup>77</sup>At the time of completion of this dissertation, India Club sponsored an event which, to my mind, is a significant cross-cultural initiative. For the third consecutive year, India Club has, on the occasion of *Gandhi Jayanti*, Mahatma Gandhi's birthday, awarded a Gandhi Peace award to a non-Indian. This year, October 2, 1993, the

THE FORMATION OF YUVA

In the summer of 1989 India Club encouraged a youth group to form under their umbrella. Mr. Lal, a Past President of India Club explains:

Every year at our annual general meeting it came up that they are all an aging population, the first generation immigrants. How can we sustain the India Club? Kids would not be actively involved because most of the activities of India Club were geared to the India-type things, like what we enjoy as first generation immigrants. So then we said, 'Why don't we get the kids to form their own thing . . . and we will guide them and help them, financially and otherwise.' . . . I got two or three kids . . . twenty years old, who I thought would pull this off. . . . They were . . . as if they were just waiting in the wings. (TT-12)

The last observation concurs with experiences of those who work at South Asian service organization and find youth eager to take part in discussions and activities (see "Group Discussions" in Chapter Two). Those "two or three kids," plus the rest who initially joined them on the council and the core membership were drawn from The Family Friends Circle. Mr. Lal further explains how India Club helped to get the young people started:

So we started them out with a hundred dollars to do a mail out . . . and India club also guaranteed a no loss situation. If at the last minute nobody showed up and they paid for the hall or something, we would look after it, but if they made, then it's fine. And then we also helped them in a couple of other ways. We have an annual concert that we hold at Gateway Theatre. We usually hire ushers for fifty dollars, so we said, 'Why don't you guys be the ushers'--they are not interested in the program but they could be the ushers--'and we'll give you a hundred bucks.' So we'll save money and--and they organized part of Halloween program. This is

mostly a local program. To make it more Canadianized we said, 'You organize it. We will just rent the hall, bring the food, things like that. But you do the cultural part.' (ibid)

There is an irony here in that India Club has encouraged Yuva in order that the youth may have more involvement with India Club or Indian culture and people. Yet the first thing which they engage Yuva to undertake for them is a North American cultural activity, Halloween. This is reminiscent of New Year's parties bringing together adults of The Family Friends Circle (see "*The Family Friends Circle*" in Chapter Three. The implications will be drawn out in the concluding chapter.).<sup>78</sup>

The creation of Yuva coincides with a growing population of teens and young adults in Hindu families (Chapter Three). Kumar, one of the original members, explains that India Club started about fifteen to twenty years ago when the adults were in their late twenties and thirties. Now they are in their forties and their children are grown and do not participate as much any more.

---

award was presented to Ovide Mercredi, National Chief, Assembly of First Nations. The event drew a large audience which included South Asian Indians, First Nations people, and "non-Indians," and included speeches by recognized public figures.

<sup>78</sup>New Year--i.e. January first and not a Hindu new year--is one of the most highly attended days at the V.H.P. Individuals who hardly attend during the whole year, make a point of coming with their whole families on this day. A term applied to Indians who only visit the *mandir* on special occasions is, "Diwali Hindu." "New Year Hindu" might be a more appropriate term in light of my observations. *Diwali*

The president sort of recognized that and I guess he talked to a few of us and said, 'Why don't you guys do something to change this?' He talked to us and me and a few of us. Four other people got together in June and we just said, 'Okay, well, why don't we do this. And why don't we just start off with something like a barbecue and we'll call all the kids of the families in this Club, and we'll also call other people. Because first of all there aren't that many kids and, you know, we wanted to invite as many people as we could. And it started from there. We had a barbecue and then we had a dance and then we had some, you know, we put together skits, Indian skit about this Indian with a very bad understanding of the English language. He comes to England and all the troubles he has with his accent and so on. Then we showed the skit a couple of times and it sort of took off from that. And now we're a year and a half old. (TT-14, September 20, 1990).

Mr. Bindi, a member of both India Club and The Family Friends Circle, explains the relationship between these two groups:

India Club . . . has somewhat different ideal than this extended family. This extended family is somewhat narrow in their approach. So I relate to this group, but I also relate to India Club on a different plane. Because in this group there are very few people who like to speak in public or who like to set up programs. . . . I do . . . India Club is a kind of umbrella group which cuts through the language of narrow cultural boundaries. It is open to Muslim, it is open to Pakistani or Fijian, anyone.<sup>79</sup> (TT-2)

---

day does not usually draw such a high attendance because a) it usually falls on a weekday, b) many people prefer to visit family and friends, and c) the big *Diwali* events in Vancouver are the cultural shows.

<sup>79</sup>The actual degree of diversity of India Club's membership is not clear to me. On the one hand, another Past President confirmed the ideal of diversity when he explained that, "India Club prides itself in saying that we are apolitical, non religious, non-denominational. They're only here as a service club for the Indian society. . . . India Club has Sikhs in it and Hindus." Yet, on the other hand, in response to a question about whether there were Ismaili members, he told me that: "There aren't any, because

Kumar and Mrs. Ghosh, describe what Yuva members have in common:

Kumar: I'm the oldest, I'm twenty-two, and the rest of the people are twenty or younger. Age group is thirteen to twenty-five--

Mrs. Ghosh: And most are children of first generation immigrants, so there is that common thread, and most parents have origins in India--they may have come from Kenya or Africa--so they've gone through a lot of bicultural experience, first Indian, then Canadian and Indian combination. So they all understand each others' problems . . . that's what I find is key. Parents not allowing the daughters to go out on dates, how they dress, double standards. (TT-14)

The core members of Yuva have the enthusiastic support of their parents. Since dating is such a controversial issue in Indian families, many parents prefer that their teens at least meet other Indians rather than just anyone of the opposite sex (Srivastava 1974:385, Wakil et al. 1981:934). Therefore the parents allow some independence and a certain amount of controlled interaction between the sexes and between different Indian groups. Yuva is a compromise between the desires of parents to keep their children active in "the community" by maintaining social links with other Indians, and the children's desires for greater independence and to meet other young people. Rajesh thinks that Yuva fills a need for young people whose parents feel this way:

---

see, it was primarily started by immigrants from India. Although there is a couple of people now from countries--like Ghayanese, one person is Indian origin from Ghayana, Ismailis there might be some in the future--but nobody has

Like I see Yuva for a lot of younger students, kids fourteen, fifteen, people who have a lot of restrictions on where they go and so on. Their parents feel most comfortable having them go to an organization that's centered for Indian students. (TT-16)

This was discussed in one of the Yuva group discussions in response to my question about why social dances, Yuva's most popular events, are allowed:

Ramesh (Gujarati Hindu): Well I think in the community it's okay, but if it was some other type of dance--

Manjit (Sikh): We had a major problem in our group [Sikh Students Association] at U.B.C. about dances, and there's no dances allowed at our functions.

Ranjit (Sikh): Our parents aren't quite as strict as other East Indian parents. It's also 'cause we're older now . . . A lot of Punjabi parents are really strict and they don't allow that with their kids even when they do get older. I guess it just depends, but most Punjabi parents, they wouldn't encourage it.

Kumar (Hindi speaking Hindu): They [parents] might allow people to go to a dance because they know it's in a group and it's a group atmosphere and you're not really individual. They would never, in most cases, allow dating. But because they know it's a group atmosphere--like they might not know the specifics of what happens at a dance, they might not be concerned about any of the specifics, but just because there's a group of people, they're not as concerned. Well, I guess they know it's mostly Indians . . . Individual going out with somebody would not be--having a guy come over to your house and pick you up if you're a girl [laughter from girls] would not be, uh--you know, 'We're going to the dance, see you.'

Ranjit: You go with your girl friends.

Kumar: Yea, exactly. That [referring back to guy picking girl up at her home] would definitely not be the norm. Even if they were going to the dance, it would not be the norm. But just if you're going in a group of people to a dance, it's not considered--I guess

---

shown that much interest."

it's one of the eas[y]--they can let that go, type thing. (TT-Y1)

Parents also support the opportunity for their children to learn about and maintain some cultural traditions, as Mrs. Nandi suggests: "They will learn something if they are all together . . . then everybody's culture is maintained" (TT-9). Mrs. Ghosh more altruistically recognizes the need for teens to come to terms with their dual identities:

If Yuva was not there . . . they would not have a place where they could do their things in their way which was uniquely Canadian and Indian at the same time. So it is a great way for them to express what is important to them and how they want to do things. (TT-14)

Mr. Lal finds that it also provides a good opportunity to learn organizational skills (TT-12). -

These members whose parents support them have, however, spoken about others whose parents' attitudes toward Yuva ranges from ambivalence to distrust. They fear that often those youth who need support and who need to share their feelings the most are the ones who are not allowed to take part. They describe how many parents retain strict control over their children's social lives in order to try to avert what they consider to be negative influences.

Reputation serves a function here. The importance of reputation is strongly and frequently criticized by Yuva members (see "A Family Event" in Chapter Six). An

unrecognized consequence, however, is that it allows compromise and transformation to take place. Giddens (1984:173-4) argues that structures serve not only as constraints but also as enabling circumstances:

Each of the various forms of constraint are thus also, in varying ways, forms of enablement. They serve to open up certain possibilities of action at the same time as they restrict or deny others."

In more everyday language, every 'can't' can also be seen as a 'don't have to;' every 'have to' as an 'able to.'

To apply this to the situation under discussion, the control which Yuva parents have over their children is not merely a constraint. A key to acceptance, according to those who are supportive of Yuva, is the involvement of individual young people who have "good reputations," or the active support of parents who are known to be of good standing in the community. Yuva activities are legitimate in the eyes of parents to the extent that participants and advocates are those members of the community who have good reputations.<sup>80</sup> Parents who are hesitant may be persuaded by a community member of good standing through a personal phone

---

<sup>80</sup>OASIS (Orientation Adjustment Services for Immigrants Society) has also found with their youth programs that they must have an adult--i.e. someone married and preferably with children--involved and taking responsibility. They are trying to institute a system where such an adult will personally contact the parents for support. They also try to get the kids to be responsible by letting them know that parents' permission depends on their reputation. (I-6)

call. Or they may allow their children to attend if they go with someone known to them as being from a family of good reputation. When I asked about the presence at a dance of a young woman whose parents I know to be highly religious and strict, she answered:

Anita: They [her parents] don't mind because they know [Kumar] and they know [Jyoti] and [Narendra] and the people I hang out with. They're more open-minded. They still ask, 'Oh, when are you going to be back?' and this and that--

Jyoti: And 'Who's going to be there?'

Anita: And 'Don't dance with anyone you don't know. Just dance with [Narendra, Jyoti's brother] and [Ram, another friend's brother].' (TT-Y2)

Kumar explains this too:

They'd [the parents] much rather see that [kids being with other Indo-Canadians] than have them go out just on their own with anybody. They know where they're going, they know it's a dance with Yuva. Even if it's the first time, at least the people there are kids of--a lot of them are the sons and daughters of people that they know. For the [Rama]'s, [Jyoti]'s the daughter of one of their best friends, so it's okay if the daughters go there. And all the [Lal]'s know it's a Yuva thing and all the kids are involved so they don't mind if their kids go. (TT-15)

Active members slowly try to build trust and reputation, and let word of mouth bring over others:

Kumar: I think word of mouth is the biggest thing. What happens a lot of times is some parents tell--they associate regularly at parties with other Indians--some parents, they tell these people they talk to . . . they go home and tell their son or daughter, 'Hey, there's this, why don't you go.' What usually happens is they end up--not the kid but the parent--ends up calling me, 'Well my son is doing this, so can you talk to him'-- [laugh]

Mrs. Ghosh: 'Can you get him involved?'

. . .

Kumar: I think the parents would always like . . . their kids to associate with other Indian kids, but sometimes the kids, youth, think, 'Ah, it's not cool, I don't want to hang around with other Indians.' (TT-14)

Yuva realizes that their existence depends on the good will of parents. To maintain a good standing requires the scrupulous monitoring of activities and members by the council. To this end, they informally attempt to screen membership so that they can expand in a controlled way. They have tried to do this by limiting the number of guests a member may bring to an event; limiting the number of non-members which may attend an event; encouraging commitment through membership rather than attendance without membership; and by insisting on certain basic rules such as acceptance of a wide age range, no alcohol, and some family events.

Confident in the good reputation, self-motivation, and commitment of Yuva's leaders, India Club gave Yuva a great deal of independence. This places the youth in the situation of being able to "make a difference" or to have "transformative capabilities" (Giddens 1984:14-15) in relation to defining their world. The youth have taken this opportunity to try to deal with issues that they think are

important and to implement activities according to their own visions.

#### YUVA'S AGENDA

Yuva's mission statement, as printed in all issues of their newsletter, the *Yuva Yakker*, defines their agenda "to promote, organize, and implement successful cultural and recreational activities for Indo-Canadian youths." They emphasize that they aim to provide occasions for "different types of Indians" to be able to socialize, discuss their common experiences and problems, develop a sense of pride and confidence in their identities, and learn about their own and each others' cultures. In this way they hope to break down some of the religious, linguistic, regional, socio-economic, caste, and family barriers that they regularly encounter.

My first introduction to Yuva was at a council meeting called to select new council members from a list of applicants who had already been interviewed. At stake was the expansion of Yuva and the viability of its existence. Attendance at activities had slumped. The present council realized that they needed "new blood." They had decided on expanding the council to eight members and so had three spaces to fill.

Their initial criteria were enthusiasm, energy, and the commitment to devote time and effort into making Yuva

work. The viability of the organization depends entirely on its council members and their industriousness. Plans are made at council meetings and by phone. Meetings are held at members' homes on a rotating basis. These must be squeezed between exams and school assignments and are sometimes postponed several times in order to ensure an adequate attendance. The *Yuva Yakker* is printed approximately four times a year. Information about events is communicated primarily by phone (calls are shared by council members), by occasional announcements on *Indrahanush*, and by articles in community publications.

In January 1991, the selection committee aimed to fill three additional criteria. Two criteria which were constantly stressed at the meeting were 1) "expansion" - i.e. knowing a lot of people, and 2) "diversity" (in the council itself and in the range of connections of council members) - i.e. knowing "different types of Indians." They were convinced that in order to achieve their vision of creating a pan Indo-Canadian organization, they needed council members who did not belong to The Family Friends Circle of Hindus. This was not easy since most of the applicants were Hindus and friends of the original council members. It was difficult to choose between those applicants whom they knew well and could count on, and someone unknown who could, however, bring in new connections. They could not be sure

that new members would share the same priorities. Nevertheless, one of their priorities was to overcome the segmentation, cliquishness, stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination which they see between Indians.<sup>81</sup> With this in mind, they selected a Sikh, a Gujarati, and a Hindu who has Sikh friends, all good friends of the selection committee.

What they have undertaken is not easy. Diversity brings problems: attracting those whose interests and backgrounds are different from those of the current founders and members, maintaining a unified vision and agenda while also trying to include diversity, and crossing cultural (religious, linguistic, regional) boundaries. Furthermore, expansion and diversification are at odds with a mode of interaction based on close personal contact, to which they implicitly subscribe, as they explicitly aim to target all Indo-Canadians. This is expressed in their attempts to maintain good reputations with their families; in their methods of contacting all members personally about events; and their insistence that new members must be friends of current members, and new participants in events must be accompanied by a member.

---

<sup>81</sup>Little literature addresses these issues. Buchignani (1987:124) comments on the lack of research carried out concerning South Asian inter-group relations. Exceptions include Buchignani (1980b), Dusenbery (1981), and Mathur (1991).

A third criterion was to have at least one fourteen or fifteen year old representative on council, in order to encourage the participation of more young people. Yuva's target age group is fourteen to twenty-two. The older ones have a special commitment toward their siblings and others in their early and mid-teens. Kamla, twenty-two, is adamant about this:

Once you turn nineteen you can basically do whatever you want. . . . But to me, fourteen, you start high school, you want a sense of belonging, you want a sense of cultural identity. I remember in Grade Eight and Nine I was a really lost child. I didn't know what--something like this would have really helped me. I would have felt that I belonged to a group and I had a group of friends. And I want these kids to feel that way. So I feel very strongly and I think a lot of the other people on council feel that way too. We had no hesitation about starting at fourteen when we started it. (TT-1)

The older ones realize that the younger ones do not always have the self-knowledge or confidence to cope with the pressures of conflicting cultural values. Nor do they have the same freedom of movement as their older siblings, and so do not have as many opportunities to communicate with peers.

The older ones report experiencing feelings of confused identity at some time while growing up. They commonly speak about going through stages of neglecting or rejecting involvement in anything Indian, and then rediscovering its importance as they reach mid to late teens and early twenties:<sup>82</sup>

---

<sup>82</sup>Similar stages in identity development are noted among Indian youth in Britain (Ballard 1979) and in the

Manjit (age 20): I think it has to do with self awareness, to know who you are and where you come from, to feel more confident when you go to the mainstream society so you don't feel confused, you don't have an identity crisis. And I think also that it hits you at a certain age. When you get out of high school, when you get a little bit older, then you start asking questions like, 'Who am I?' When you're younger you don't really pay attention to that kind of stuff.

. . .

Kumar (age 23): I found that when I was between the ages of ten and sixteen I almost forgot Hindi completely. I just said, 'Who wants to learn this? Who wants to speak Hindi?' Then after sixteen, seventeen, mainly in University [he took Hindi 310], I started getting it all back and I started speaking more here and also in India.

. . .

Ramesh (age 23): I really don't have that much Indian culture. I know it's sad but it's true.

Kumar: You might.

Ramesh: I know I might, although my parents are really religious and know a lot about religion--it's like they go to the temple every Sunday. . . . They're really involved, my brother and I hardly go. I don't know why it is. We go sometimes but we're not totally dedicated.

Kumar: Do your parents always ask you or do they just let you do what you wanted to do?

Ramesh: Sometimes they ask me, usually when there's a special function. Then we go. But like usually it's not something that happens, they don't even ask.

Kumar: Yea, but have they asked you in the past or has it always been like . . . 'Well if you guys want to come'?

Ramesh: When we were young, always we had to go, yea. But as you grow older they hardly ask. But I know they wanted me to be a lot more involved. I don't know why. I don't know if I'm lazy or whatever.

. . .

Ranjit (age 19): I don't know if I should say this, but I never used to pay much attention to it [Sikhism] but now it's starting to be really important to me. And I don't know how far I'll go with that.

. . .

Manjit: Like I said before, you reach a certain age and then you have to find out who you are. So everybody's going around and trying to find out about their own culture. Makes you feel more secure. (TT-Y1)

In another interview, Vijay, age 18, expresses similar experiences:

I wish I had known it [Gujarati] fluently. I didn't want to learn then, and I don't regret not learning then but I do regret not knowing it. I don't think I would have learned no matter what at that stage--I was Grade Four, Five. I knew I was Indian but it was not something I thought too much about, so I didn't have an interest in it then. . . . I was more of an Oreo--brown on the outside, white on the inside, that's what they say--I was leaning more towards the white or the non-Indian Western culture when I was younger. Now I'm more likely to do or be with people who are Indian--not that I have anything against people that aren't. I think there's a time, an age where everyone reaches, where they start realizing that it's about time they realized exactly who they are and where they came from. And then it's up to them to decide if they want to pursue and try to preserve and learn more about what they are or shun it to one side. I chose to be more Indian than white but not to the extent that I was not assimilating. That's a choice you have to make. . . . It just happened over time. I probably didn't even know I was doing it and before I knew it I kind of found myself in that situation. (TT-4)

Sunil, from a Hindi speaking Hindu family has had a similar experience:

I think after Grade Twelve you sort of mature up and I realize that-- . . . but I totally ignored them [other Indians] from Grade Eight to Twelve. So I lost my--you know, I didn't know my language at that time as well as I should have, and I didn't even know what my own culture was about till after Grade Twelve. That's when I started learning more about it. (TT-Y2)

These experiences accord with Michael Fischer's (1986:195-97) description of ethnicity in America:

. . . ethnicity is something reinvented and reinterpreted in each generation by each individual and that is often something quite puzzling to the individual . . . it is something dynamic, often unsuccessfully repressed or avoided. . . . The recognition of something about one's essential being thus seems to stem from outside one's immediate consciousness and control, and yet requires an effort of self-definition.

At this stage of recognizing that being Indian is an undeniable component of their identity, Yuva members make the choice to learn more about Indian culture and revitalize their own links to it.

Where the others renew relationships with other Indians as they get older, Jyoti, a Gujarati, finds she is just beginning to gain confidence in meeting people from other cultural backgrounds:

I'm totally opposite to what [Sunil] says, because growing up, I found that I had more Indian friends. Because I have a big family, and we used to always spend a lot of time with the family doing things with the family. If anything ever came up, it was--I would talk it out with my cousins or [Anita] or [Shanti]. Whereas my, I guess white friends, would be only the ones--I would see them at school, talk to them at school, I'd give them a call once in a while, but it was nothing really too close. And I think it's now that I'm starting really to meet--like going to college--that I'm starting to be more open-minded towards other people. Because I find

that I'm very closed-minded towards like white people or Orientals. I really don't want to get too close because I find that I really don't have much in common, so what are we gonna talk about. But now I'm starting to figure out that it's easy to talk to other people, and they are interested in you. (TT-T2)

Jyoti still remains highly active in Indian activities, including Yuva. For all of them, Yuva provides opportunities to discuss how to balance these different interests.

All of the above explanations reflect a growing interest on the part of Yuva members in their Indian background and in being with other Indians, which in turn leads them to an interest in Yuva. The young male respondents most often express regret at not learning more and taking more interest when young. Girls generally grow up being more involved in dance, singing, language learning, and religious functions. (This gender difference will be elaborated on in "*Constructions of Gender*" in Chapter Six).

Kamla, a council member who has trained in Indian classical dance and has taken part in many Indian activities, observes that this active search for cultural roots is getting stronger:

I think it's just become a lot more popular to really know your roots. It's wonderful, I think, I mean that's great. I just see a lot of people asking me now that I would never have thought were really interested. A lot of the guys that just never cared before, or didn't think they cared, they all of a sudden seem to be waking up. 'There's a whole different culture out here, guys, let's go grab some.' So I really find it amusing but

great. So I think the younger kids are much more conscientiously trying. When we did it we sort of had it fed to us. These kids are trying to come out to it. . . . I find that I don't really want to leave Vancouver right now 'cause there's a lot of stuff happening here and it's sort of exciting in terms of culturally. I just feel like there's some sort of a, not a renaissance, but people are suddenly becoming so aware, and there's all these discussion groups and things going on, and you want to be part of that. I think it's a really slow but important change, people are becoming more aware of who they are. (TT-1)

Yuva attempts to foster social networks and friendships through activities such as dances, barbecues, picnics, bowling and softball tournaments. In September 1990, Kumar explained how in the first year or so Yuva concentrated on social activities:

Our main goal right now is just to get some rapport in the community so that . . . most of Indo-Canadians know about us, and they know that they can do something with other Indians, that they can talk to other people if they want to. Just sort of identity . . . we like the same sorts of things. And maybe just develop some sort of friendships . . . trying to achieve it although we totally haven't. . . . We've hit the social ones, we've hit some of the recreational ones, but we haven't hit a lot of the cultural ones. We're starting to do that now 'cause we're getting into talking with MOSAIC about Indian life, arranged marriages . . . They're actually doing this and we're a big part of it because we have about seven or eight people that go. (TT-14, September 25, 1990)

Indian culture is incorporated through other kinds of activities. One is talent shows, a popular activity which they organize for India Club retreats or other social gatherings. Here young people can demonstrate their skills in Indian classical, semi-classical, folk, and popular

dance, and perform air bands to popular film songs. Yuva also has an arrangement with India Music Society in which they provide the Society with reliable volunteer assistance. This in turn provides Yuva members with an exposure to classical Indian arts. Yuva's major annual cultural event, which includes a cultural show, is the celebration of *Holi*, which is the subject of Chapters Five and Six.

One of Yuva's long term goals is to foster more discussion between Indian youth of all backgrounds. As Kumar mentioned, some members took part in a series of panel discussions sponsored by *South Asian Mosaic* in 1990 to 1991. In the summer of 1991, Yuva held their own Yuva Youth Forum which they hoped would become an annual event. They identified three issues of concern: prejudice and discrimination within the Indian community, dating, and parental expectations. This forum was a step toward sharing experiences and trying to resolve common problems. Thirty young Indo-Canadians from a variety of backgrounds attended and many experiences and opinions were exchanged in discussion.

#### EXPERIENCES OF RACIAL PREJUDICE AND HOSTILITY

My observations, oblique references by respondents to such experiences, and the descriptions of a few respondents, suggest that racial prejudice and hostility are expe-

rienced by the respondents of this study.<sup>83</sup> Nevertheless, my study does not include a full examination of experiences of racial prejudice and hostility. There are two reasons for this.

One reason is the apparently sensitive nature of racism among those whom I interviewed. Few respondents speak freely or directly about their experiences, although some adult respondents did describe their experiences as victims of verbal abuse and vandalism. Amongst Yuva members, some are outspoken about racial issues, but youth respondents most often refer to such personal experiences obliquely if at all. Cunningham (1990:293) comments on a similar sensitivity--on her part and/or that of youth with whom she came in contact--to discuss issues of racism until a closer relationship had developed between them. Ballard (1979:127) finds that:

Young Asians who have been brought up and educated in Britain are constantly aware of being 'different', and the experience of racial discrimination has the most profound effect on every individual. . . . Some are able

---

<sup>83</sup>The finding of Robson and Breems' (1985) study indicate that one in two Indo-Canadians have experienced some form of ethnic hostility.

Few original studies have examined racial hostility toward Indo-Canadians (Nodwell and Guppy 1992). The following address this topic: Bolaria and Li 1985; Buchignani 1980a; Buchignani and Indra 1981a; Chandra 1973; Henry (1983); Indra (1979a, 1979b); Jain (1984); Kanungo (1984b); Mathur (1990); Nodwell and Guppy (1992); Ramcharan (1984); Robson and Breems (1986). None of these specifically considers experiences of second generation youth.

to retell their experiences of discrimination and abuse with ironic humour, others recognise the general existence of racialism in Britain but find it intensely painful to admit that it has directly affected them.

I did not feel it appropriate to intrude on these sensitivities since the study of racism was not central to my interests.

A second reason for not examining racial issues fully is that Yuva members themselves explicitly choose to focus on stereotyping, prejudices, and discrimination between Indians (as described in "*Identity as a Problem in the Construction of Knowledge*" in Chapter One, and elaborated on in "*Expansion and Diversification*" in Chapter Six).

This section will outline the experiences of Yuva members insofar as they discussed them, and as they relate to the central question of the construction of culture.

Youth respondents indicate that most of their experiences as victims of racial hostility occur during their elementary and secondary school years. Concurring with the findings of Robson and Breems (1985), verbal abuse is the most common form of such hostility.<sup>84</sup> Cunningham (1990:127) similarly observes that, for the dance students whom she interviewed, "School life not infrequently involved racial

---

<sup>84</sup>Skin colour and "jealousy" are the most frequently cited causes suggested by their respondents.

comments that were as hurtful to the parents as to the children." In response to a question asking whether he had experienced racism himself, one Yuva member, a university student, describes experiences similar to those shared by others:

Oh spurts, I guess, more when I was really young and I didn't know what people were talking about. If I'd known then I really would have gone after them--more when I was like Grade One, elementary school, a lot of the older kids from high school used to--it was bad a time ago, now it's not so bad. They pick on people who can't defend themselves. I was really young and I was walking--I've been called bad things. . . . I've had some people calling me names. I haven't had bad, bad, bad things happen, but mainly names and stuff like that.

His own self consciousness of being "brown" (exhibited on other occasions) and comments such as the following from one of the Yuva discussion groups, suggest a correlation between such experiences and the degree of self esteem as Indians:

Ranjit: I was in one group and the point that came up was that when a lot of us were younger, in elementary school, we were almost--

Manjit: Not proud of our--

Ranjit: Yea, not ashamed, but just not willing to show that we were Indian. You were just almost really quiet and suppressed because you were a minority, but now a lot of us are learning to be proud that we're Indian. We speak Punjabi more openly and you're not embarrassed to wear an Indian suit in public and stuff. So definitely views are changing positively.

Gita: I think when I was younger, like with my friends and stuff, I didn't want to admit that I was Indian . . . they used to make fun of you . . . but as soon as you get older--now my friends are like, 'Oh, that's so neat,' and they want to learn Indian culture. Now people, I think, are actually more tolerant when you get older, more understanding--

Ramesh (age 23): That's true. (TT-Y1)

When individual youth feel that being Indian is a stigma, they wish to avoid that association (cf. Goffman 1963).

Youth deal with racial experiences in a number of ways. One is to avoid associating with other Indians.

Sunil explains a reason:

When I was in Grades Eight to Grade Twelve I had a lot of non-Indian friends. But I think I was just--we all go through this phase where we don't want to hang around with our own people and you get this attitude sort of, 'I'm special.' And if you have white friends it makes it look like you're more important and all that. (TT-Y2)

Avoiding other Indians is posited to be a consequence of negative experiences:

Rani: When they had Club's Day, I saw the booth for the Indian Students Association . . . They were really surprised that somebody actually came up to the booth and registered.

Rajesh: A lot of people who would avoid it-- . . .

E.N.: Even at university age?

Rani: Very much so. . . . I've had people in my classes where they just will not sit with anyone East Indian. They won't talk to you, they'll turn if you're coming one way-- . . . I think what it is is just embarrassment . . . some people feel uncomfortable--it's because you're different. Maybe growing up there is some prejudice. . . . I never heard the word, 'Paki' until Calgary, and I hated going to that city ever since . . . I never grew up with anything like that . . . and we knew a family there where a girl had gotten into a fight at school with some other kids, and it was just over racial differences, and I couldn't understand that, and it really scared me, because this was something totally alien . . . a friend of ours we had been staying with . . . said, 'If somebody calls you "Paki" or something, don't get offended. We just

say, "thank you." This is how we deal with it.' . . . every single person that went by me, I was so tense someone would call me this name. I was about thirteen or fourteen. . . .

Rajesh: [In Vancouver] I've heard lots of people--not really much after elementary school . . . I think it affects everybody.

Rani: They just deal with it differently. (TT-14)

Another common way of dealing with racial prejudice is to make light of it through humour. One young Gujarati man describes this approach:

I always make jokes. That's one thing Indians do, they'll make jokes about Hindus or Sikhs, or even Gujaratis for that matter. . . . it's something that if we laugh about it and we don't take it seriously then it's not so much of a problem. Even in school I used to always make jokes about Indians and East Indians. I couldn't understand why I was doing it but I don't take it too seriously. I only take it if it was meant in a derogatory sense and there are people have done that, - which gets upsetting after a while. But a lot of my friends, they'll tell a joke, and the first thing they'll do--if there's an East Indian in the joke--first thing they do is turn to me and say, 'No offense.' But it's part of the joke, so, you know, you live with it. . . . unless it's said by a brown person, because then it's not considered a race reference. As long as it's not meant in a derogatory sense you have to learn to laugh at it. (TT-4)

A third way to deal with racial prejudice is to assert one's cultural and racial identity and find a way to find pride in it. This is what Yuva is undertaking: to share experiences and to foster pride in Indian culture.

Efforts at reappropriating a racial identity as a positive attribute may be seen in quips about being "brown." These surface in Yuva "graffiti," six to eight foot pieces

of newsprint tacked up on the wall at the Yuva dances. These "graffiti" originated in a brainstorming session about what activities to do at dances to make them more interesting. One member had seen such "graffiti" at his school and suggested the idea. Yuva council decided "just to put up a few pieces of paper to give people something to do and create some conversation." There was "no big deal about it."

Most of the inscriptions on these "graffiti" are caricatures of personal characteristics--physical and personality--and statements such as "[so-and-so] was here." Among these appear references to race. For example, "the brown brothers," is scrawled on one, and a figure wearing a Yuva tee shirt is drawn in the centre, accompanied by a caption, "I'm brown."

Further research is required to determine the relationship between experiences of racial prejudice during childhood and the victim's interest in or rejection of Indians and things Indian in later years. This case study suggests that the need to pursue a sense of pride is at least in part a response to experiences of racial prejudice, and that a growing interest in Indian culture among those in their late teens represents a refusal to be shamed by who they are. They are aided in this by what they perceive to

be demonstrations of interest in Indian culture on the part of their non-Indian peers.

#### SYMBOLIC AND SITUATIONAL ETHNICITY

Two theoretical approaches--"situational ethnicity" (Nagata 1974) and "symbolic ethnicity" (Gans 1979)--offer some explanation of Indo-Canadian youth attitudes towards their ethnic identity. I will outline their usefulness and then describe how symbolic interactionism might offer a deeper understanding of the experiences of Indian youth in Vancouver.

"Situational ethnicity" attempts to explain situations where many ethnic groups reside together and where ethnic categories overlap and encompass one another. This approach suggests that individuals do not hold a firm or exclusive commitment towards a single cultural identity. Self-identification may change according to expedience. This approach does have some limited use in understanding Indian youth.

For example, most Indian girls have a wardrobe of Indian clothing--saris and Punjabi "suits"--which they enjoy wearing to family and Indian community events and activities. They admire each other's new acquisitions in the latest styles. Yet these same girls would not wear these clothes to school. Even adult women can occasionally

be seen to change out of their *saris* before leaving the *mandir* on Sunday morning for an afternoon of shopping and errands.

This way of looking at identity corresponds to a description given in an interview with British film director, Gurinder Chadha:

. . . we knew that we were a bit Asian, a bit English; you know a mixture... but we did not have a crisis about it. I mean we knew when to speak in English, and when to speak in Punjabi. We knew how to behave when we went to the Gurdwara (temple) with the family. We knew how to live in two cultures; that's what we were doing.  
[sic] (Hundal 1991:24)

Personal identities may be mutually exclusive or encompassing and overlapping. When, in a Yuva group discussion, participants were asked whether they thought of themselves in terms of being Sikh or Hindu, one young woman responded, "a Sikh, Indo-Canadian, atheist, feminist. I have a long list" (TT-Y1).

The perspective of situational ethnicity focuses on outward behaviour and knowledge of how to act appropriately in different situations. Milton Singer (1972:272-380) describes how individuals in India similarly "compartmentalize" their behaviours according to circumstance.

Yuva members express an intense need to know who they are. In addition to a normal adolescent search for identity and self confidence, they also search for a satisfactory way to integrate Indian and North American culture

into their lives (Weinreich 1979). Mrs. Ghosh, a parent whose children have been very involved in the founding and growth of Yuva, explains what she sees:

You see, what happens before this group was formed, you have the youth talking to non-Indian youth at school and their parents. So they see two extremes. I mean then they say, 'Well your parents are either right or wrong, there's no in between.' . . . But then you meet people your age who are in the same situation, and yet they're happy and they're doing things, and there is an identity. There's I think that bond gives you the strength to say, 'Okay, well fine, I'm having some doubts about how to function, but then look at all these people.' That's pretty valuable. (TT-14)

For them, the cultural component is part of knowing who you are. Kamla, one of the founding members of Yuva and a highly committed council member, expresses strong feelings about the need for a cultural identity when she says, "you start high school, you want a sense of belonging, you want a sense of cultural identity. I remember in Grade Eight and Nine I was a really lost child" (TT-1). Kumar, also a founding member and highly active council member, expresses this need in more general terms:

I think a lot of people are--a lot of Indians--they have trouble adjusting, they have trouble figuring out what, where they stand in society, what they can do, how they should react in situations. I feel that a lot of Indo-Canadians are not comfortable with everything, with the home lifestyle, the attitudes of the parents. So I think what our group does, if anything, it gives them a, well it gives them some confidence. When they talk with people that they can relate to, when they have fun with them, when they have barbecues and dances, they form some sort of confidence in themselves. You know you really can't achieve anything until you know exactly who you are, what you are. So I think that's what this

does. Right now it's a bit small scale, but as it grows-- (TT-14)

One of the Sikh participants in the Yuva discussion group similarly explained why she chose to take part in the discussion group:

I think it has to do with self awareness, to know who you are and where you come from, to feel more confident when you go to the mainstream society, so you don't feel confused, you don't have an identity crisis. (TT-Y1)

Jyoti, a young Gujarati woman, and her teenaged brother, Narendra, occasionally go to Africa to visit their relatives, where, according to their descriptions, cultural and religious traditions are adhered to more strongly than in Vancouver. She resists the suggestion by her mother that they really change. She describes their outward adaptation to different environments as distinct from their own self knowledge of who they are:

My Mom says when we go to Africa we change. . . . We just don't want to be different . . . we just try to fit in. . . . Nobody can change in a few months on holidays. You are who you are and when we come back we just continue the same way we are. But we just learn to adapt to what they're doing, we have lunch when they do, we have Indian food, we start talking Gujarati more because we can communicate better. That's all it is. It's not that we really do change when we're there. (TT-9)

She makes a distinction between behaviours, which are the expression of social identification with others, and a personal, coherent sense of self identity.

These young Indians are indeed adept at managing different cultural situations. They know how to behave as

"Indians" at home and with relatives, and as "Canadians" at school, work, and with peers. It is the adaptive process which they use to "cope with two sets of values."

Yet these previous statements seem to express a need to find wholeness and meaningfulness as individuals.<sup>85</sup> Their search is not to find a way to be both Indian and Canadian. Their search is to find the confidence, knowledge, and pride to be Canadian as Indians. This is part of the process of their search for identity which includes taking possession of their heritage, and of affirming their Canadianness as Indians (Nodwell 1993 <in press>).<sup>86</sup>

---

<sup>85</sup>This seems to correspond to the psychological concept of "identity achievement" as defined by Tonks (1990:7) as: "characterized by a subjective sense of wholeness which is . . . characterized by the outcome of a *process* of acquiring a subjective feeling of having found particular goals values or beliefs [*sic*] which are not ordinarily expected to change. Although the actual content of these goals or beliefs may change, the feeling of security, or self-sureness, in a belief structure and the *process* of obtaining that structure . . . is what makes the IA status achieved." (his italics) Tonks compares and contrasts this with other identity orientations, i.e. "identity moratorium," "identity foreclosure," and "identity diffusion."

<sup>86</sup>I witnessed a striking example of integration in the sense of being Canadian as Indian. On October 24, 1992 the V.H.P. annual *Diwali Cultural Evening* was held at the twelve hundred seat Vincent Massey Theatre to an overflow crowd. The audience was this large in spite of the fact that, a week earlier, the Gujarati Society had held their *Diwali Variety Show* in the same venue also to an overflow crowd. The audiences for both shows are almost entirely Indian. Commentaries are primarily in Hindi or Gujarati, and all items in the three to four hour shows are Indian. During the second half of the V.H.P. show, an announcement was made that the Blue Jays had just won the world series. The cheer almost raised the roof. This simultaneous

Anil, a twenty-two year old university student from a Gujarati Hindu family, explains:

I think Indo-Canadian is a good term because it tells us that we aren't just Indians, we aren't completely Canadians--you know it's not like a melting pot where we're like America is, where you're American first and then whatever you are afterwards. . . . We're Indian first in the sense that we should have the freedom and the privilege to be whatever we want to be first, before we are loyal--like we'll always be loyal to the country we belong in--but where our heritage is and where we're from, that's all of who we are . . . I think that's really important. . . . they're kind of intertwined together. (TT-4)

Integrating Indian culture into their lives can be understood to refer to a search for an integrated life in a manner expressed by Fischer:

To be Chinese-American is not the same thing as being Chinese in America. In this sense there is no role model for becoming Chinese-American. It is a matter of finding a voice or style that does not violate one's several components of identity. In part, such a process of assuming an ethnic identity is an insistence on a pluralist, multidimensional, or multifaceted concept of self: one can be many different things, and this personal sense can be a crucible for a wider social ethos of pluralism. (Fischer 1986:195)

Rani, born in Canada into an Indian family, studies both Indian classical dance and classical singing, celebrates Indian festivals with enthusiasm, holds dear values such as strong family ties, and accepts the obligations which accompany such ties. She also insists that she

---

expression of dual loyalties towards the Indian festival of Diwali and a Canadian baseball team seemed to me to signal integration, being Canadian as Indian.

is first and foremost a Canadian. She takes keen and active interest in issues of concern to Canadians at large. She does not define herself as part Indian and part Canadian. She strives to be a Canadian as an Indian and to integrate Indianness into her life as a Canadian. (TT-14; passim)

"Symbolic ethnicity" is another theoretical approach which attempts to explain the display of minority cultural characteristics. Gans (1979) argues that ethnicity is interest and circumstance driven, and therefore, by definition, lacks true commitment. Ethnic identity is subscribed to where it is profitable to do so.<sup>87</sup>

Such displays of ethnicity do occur in my research. In one of the Yuva discussions, during a dialogue about what being Indian means, two of the young women commented: "I think the clothing and food is what makes you different. It kind of gives you an identity." "I know a lot of East Indian girls love dressing up . . . just for the sake of being different, it makes you feel really good" (TT-Y1). Where earlier I gave an example of Indian women and girls choosing their ethnicity situationally by not wearing Indian clothing in mainstream settings, here the girls are choosing to make symbolic statements to outsiders about their ethnic

---

<sup>87</sup>Gans' (1979) concept of "symbolic ethnicity" as interest-driven is not to be confused with the use of symbols in the construction of social reality as used, for example, by Cohen (1985; 1986).

allegiance. On another occasion, Jyoti describes how dress identifies her to insiders as belonging:

"When we're going to someone's house . . . my Mom will say, 'Wear a suit.' . . . my mother would want me to look Indian. And by making me look Indian I have to wear suits, so the suit gives me a sort of--like I'm an Indian girl type of--you know. (TT-9)

Displays of ethnicity in dress or performance suggest outside observers. However, despite the stated objectives of many Indo-Canadians that they wish to "share cultures" with others, and apart from occasional multicultural initiatives in schools or society at large, in practice most involvement in Indian activities takes place within the Indian community, among family and other Indians. Here it is not a matter of trying to be different. It is a matter of choosing to take part.

Both "symbolic ethnicity" and "situational ethnicity" are concerned with outward self-representations of ethnic identity. Both approaches provide a way of analyzing constructions of identity of selves and others.

Symbolic interactionism advances on this by examining not just constructions of identity or the way one represents oneself. It also directs attention at the construction of the categories of identity and of the subjects' worlds. In this case, it leads one to examine not only in what circumstances and by what symbols or behaviour one may present oneself as Indian or as Canadian, but to examine how

definitions of Indian and Canadian are collectively constructed and understood. By interpreting, acting, and defining, subjects construct their self definitions and define objectifications. In my case study I view the second generation as agents in the construction of their cultural world.

Part III following will examine one event produced by Yuva, their *Holi* celebration. Through describing and analyzing this event, I will discuss issues which impinge on its production and which give it meaning.

PART III: YUVA'S *HOLI* CELEBRATION

## Chapter 5

## YUVA'S HOLI CELEBRATION: DESCRIPTION

What about cultural activities?

"We have to have *Holi*, definitely a *Holi* party."

It'll be a family event.

With a talent show.

"Holi Smokes!" (paraphrased from notes except what is noted as quotations)<sup>88</sup>

The eight council members of Yuva are planning their activities for 1991. Dances, softball games, bowling nights, a food drive, and assisting India Club and India Music Society are on the agenda. So are some "cultural events" such as the celebration of *Holi*.

---

<sup>88</sup>I did not tape Yuva council meetings. I took hand-written notes which I elaborated from memory immediately afterwards. Throughout this dissertation block indentations indicate exact quotations except where noted in this chapter as paraphrases. In those cases, portions of exact quotations appear in quotation marks.

Yuva council meetings relating to the planning of the Holi celebration took place: Feb. 3, 1991, Feb. 17, 1991, March 10, 1991 (NB-III:2-7, 43-48, 55-61). Additional information about Holi comes from participant-observation at Yuva's Holi party (O-5), participant observation at other Holi activities, and scattered references in interviews and conversations.

Like the fall festival of *Diwali*, *Holi* is one of the major Hindu festivals celebrated all over India.<sup>89</sup> It takes place on the full moon day (February 28 in 1991) of the Hindu lunar month of *Phalgun* which falls in February or March. Both *Diwali* and *Holi* are considered to be New Year by some Hindus, different people placing more importance on one or the other.<sup>90</sup>

This chapter describes Yuva's *Holi* celebration of 1991 and examines how participants in Vancouver understand *Holi*. It also examines what organizers consider to the components of such a cultural event, and what that reveals about their assumptions and understandings. The following chapter will provide an analysis of the event.

---

<sup>89</sup>For other descriptions of *Holi*, see Arunachalam (1980:241-45) for an explanation of some of the mythology and a description of contemporary practice in South India; Jackson (1976) for mythological references and an account of a celebration in Britain; Kumar (1988:165-197) for a historical examination of *Holi* in Banaras and an analysis of the place of major Hindu and Muslim festivals in contemporary life; and Marriott (1966) for an anthropological interpretation of *Holi* as a ritual of role reversal as celebrated in a North Indian village.

In addition to my experiences with Yuva, my own understandings of *Holi* come from readings, stories told me by my Indian friends, participation in the V.H.P. *Holi* shows and celebrations, and an experience of it in India in 1992.

<sup>90</sup>Merrey (1982:20,n19) explains variations in New Year throughout India.

## THE SEASONAL CYCLE

A seasonal cycle of events and activities is a defining characteristic of the Indian community in Vancouver. The annual calendrical cycle, as it is understood and practiced in Vancouver, is simultaneously a consequence and determinant of experiences, opportunities and responsibilities. Through choices acted upon and modes of celebration, the seasons are social constructions which in turn become the reality within which people live.

Hindu religious events are based on a lunar calendar (Merrey 1982; also Basham 1967:492-3; Östör 1980:212-14; Singer 1972:89-94). Countless numbers of *pujas*, special group ceremonies, life-cycle celebrations, *jayantis* (birthdays of deities or famous people), *satsangs* (religious congregations), performances, and other special activities take place continually. The lunar calendar coexists with the Julian calendar. The two calendars incorporate and amplify each other to make up the yearly experience of Hindus in Vancouver. For example, the annual Gujarati Society *Diwali* dinner is regularly scheduled on Remembrance Day. Christmas is incorporated as a major annual celebration by organizations such as the Bengali Society, Gujarati Society, and India Club. New Year's day is a major social event at the V.H.P.

Holidays and activities have to be pragmatically incorporated into the dominant system of working hours and holidays (Joy 1984). Public celebrations of festivals are shifted in order to accommodate work and leisure schedules. *Pujas* are performed to coincide with regular Sunday prayer meetings. Shows are scheduled for Saturday nights and when venues are available. When *pujas* must be performed on specific days, such as, for example, the Bengali celebration of *Durga Puja* (five of its days are celebrated in Vancouver), individuals try to adapt their own lives. Those who can arrange it may take extra time off during these days. Others make the effort to come on week nights.

*Holi* is one of the flexible celebrations. The V.H.P. holds a *puja* on the actual day. Sometimes, after the *puja*, a short cultural show takes place downstairs. Children perform and then everyone plays with colours. Some years the V.H.P. produces a *Holi Cultural Evening* similar to the *Diwali Cultural Evening* and in the same location, though not as well attended. The *Holi Cultural Evening* show does not happen every year because such time and energies as members have for this kind of intensive volunteer activity goes into *Diwali*.

Adults who reminisce about celebrations in India or Africa, express nostalgic memories about the fun and socialization which makes up the festival. There,

activities take place primarily between one's neighbors, friends, and family. People walk from house to house paying visits, throwing and smearing colour on each other, and sharing special sweets and snacks.

Here in Vancouver, families may invite good friends for dinner, and play a little colour at home. The only public *Holi* celebrations of which I am aware are those of the V.H.P., Yuva, and Utsav (an organization of visa students at U.B.C.).

As it is not an equally important celebration for all Hindus, I have at times wished a Hindu acquaintance "Happy *Holi*" or "*Holi Mubarak*," only to be met with their surprise that this was the day. Without visible public reminders it is easily forgotten. When Yuva members declare that, "we have to have *Holi*," it reflects the fact that *Holi* does not arrive automatically each year in Vancouver. It does not exist with a life of its own, is not a public event with structures in place to bring it to the surface each year, nor does it automatically engage all community members. It must be produced. A decision must be made to participate or to make it active in one's life. Choices must be made as to how it is to be constituted.

#### INSIDER KNOWLEDGE

Indians with whom I have spoken in Vancouver, including the second generation, know, at least, that *Holi*

is a spring festival of rejuvenation whose historical origins lie in harvest celebrations, and above all, whose characteristic feature is the abandoned play with coloured powders, *gulal*, or coloured water. For many youth this is the extent of the knowledge, gained from snippets of myths, stories from family and friends, information from university courses, and for some, memories from their childhood in India or a chance visit to India in that season. Vijay, a university student, is one of these youth:

So what we [Yuva] started, we have like a *Holi* thing with the throwing of the colours . . . and there's a story behind that--now it was explained to me last year but I can't remember what it is . . . (TT-4)

At one of the Yuva discussion groups, others, similarly, had only a vague understanding:

Kumar: It's just, ah, they just play with colours. Like in India it mainly was done in villages, because they used to have a bad winter, and finally the winter used to go away and all the crops used to come up, so everybody used to get together in the village and play with colours--

Manjit: And throw colours, right?

Kumar: Yea, just mess yourself up. Like when we were in India, the idea was to create the colour that would not come off, you used to put all this junk in it and you used to go around and get everybody. If you saw somebody that had some really nice clothes on, get 'em!

. . .

Lakshmi: Yea, they burn this holy guy--

Kumar: Yea, actually the original story was of this lady being burned--

Gita: Holika. (TT-Y1)

Since major festivals in India, such as *Holi*, *Diwali*, and *Id* are part of the public culture, individuals of all religions are drawn in and often do take part.<sup>91</sup> In India, I chanced to be in Chandigarh during *Holi* in 1992, where it was celebrated exuberantly by Sikhs and Hindus alike; and in Delhi, where my Muslim friends went out to play *gulal* with their Hindu neighbors.

Here in Vancouver, Indian communities tend to coalesce around certain celebrations by which they distinguish themselves and which they celebrate within their own communities. An active member of both the Vishva Hindu Parishad and the Gujarati Society described the difference between the two organizations and commented that:

India has so many different communities and groups. Gujaratis have *Navratri*--10 days of *Devi Amba*, *Amba's* festival. That is celebrated differently by Hindus, by Gujaratis, and Bengalis. So Bengalis do it differently in the temple at that time, *Durga Puja* whereas we have *Amba Puja*. They are one and the same but they have different forms.

Yuva's youth discussion groups discussed these Hindu festivals:

Gita: Even for the festivals and stuff, we [family friends circle] usually get together and celebrate the festivals . . .

---

<sup>91</sup>Kumar (1988) describes how this is so for the Hindu festivals of *Diwali* and *Holi* and the Muslim festivals of *Id* and *Baqr Id*. She also explains the limits of mutual celebrating where communal tensions have the potential to erupt.

EN: Like *Holi*?

Kumar: *Holi* is more of a group, it's also a group thing. It's done together with a lot of other people . . . to celebrate the first harvest, the end of winter. . . Do you guys [addressing the Sikh participants] have anything like that? . . .

Manjit: Same thing, but not everybody in the Punjabi culture celebrates it.

Gita: Do you have it here [Manjit]?

Manjit: I've heard of it. Actually I think somebody invited me--I can't remember who now--to one of the festivals. Like our parents know what it is--

Ranjit: Our parents don't go though. A lot of people we know, their parents don't go either.

Manjit: But we know what it is--

Ranjit: I don't even know what *Holi* is, actually. I've never even heard of it.

. . .

Manjit: I think we were talking about this in our group in the S.S.A. [Sikh Students Association, U.B.C.], and somebody was saying . . . Sikhism has sort of incorporated that day, and it's significant to Sikh people too. And I can't remember what happened, there was some famous or historic event, and so they celebrate *Holi* too. Like that's just the way the religion has evolved. It does have significance.

. . .

Kumar: Yea, these are all, *Diwali* and *Holi*, they're all run by our temple, so they're very Hindu, 'cause they're affiliated with the *mandir*. They're mostly attended, I guess, by people that go to the *mandir*.  
(TT-Y1)

In this conversation, these youth identify *Holi* as a Hindu festival. It seems to be known to Sikh parents, while

Sikh youth have no, or only a vague, knowledge of it. This is strengthened by the fact that it is the Hindu *mandir* which has the organizational structure and political will to produce a public event of it.

#### PLANNING

There's food [chips and pop] left over from the dance.  
 Should we have cookies?  
 How about Indian food?  
 A's Mom can make *jalebis*.  
 B's Mom can make her *dhokla*.  
 We'll ask the Moms to make something and we'll reimburse them.

What about an M.C.?  
 "A girl or guy, it doesn't matter."  
 "Maybe somebody should do it in Hindi?"  
 "Nobody understands it."

Who should we get as a speaker?  
 "Somebody old and wise."  
 Mr. [X]?  
 "He's too old, although he's very wise." [laughter]  
 How about [Y]?  
 "He'd just hand out business cards." [laughter again]  
 We need someone who knows about *Holi* and can explain it.

We should have a talent show.  
 Let's have some entertainment while people are coming in.  
 We can get my Mom's singing group to sing while people are coming in.  
 I think they should be more organized.  
 "No, it should be a festive atmosphere, very informal.  
 Just some folk singing on *Holi*."  
 Should they sit on the stage or on the floor?'

"Who would do some dances?"

"Should we have chairs or blankets?"  
 "People don't mind sitting on the floor."  
 "Yea, we're Indians."  
 "The men will want to sit on chairs."  
 "We better have chairs. We can put a sheet on the floor in front of the stage so people can sit there if they

want to sing along." (reconstructed and paraphrased  
except where quotation marks  
indicate exact quotes)

The enthusiasm of the initial planning is almost subverted by the exigencies of everyday life. Twelve days before the party is to take place, no one has booked the hall yet or bought the *gulal*, and the membership forms have not been updated and printed out so that all members can be called. School work is pressing, exams are coming up, and not all of the new council members are taking their duties seriously. Although they want to integrate Indian culture into their lives, it takes an effort to do so, and other daily pressures can seem more urgent.

"Maybe we should cancel it." Kumar, the oldest member and acknowledged leader, has doubts. But the others are convinced it can still happen and with their youthful exuberance they pull it off.

At the last minute everything gets done and the celebration takes place as scheduled on Friday, March 15. An extra meeting is called to finalize last minute plans.

It's a really nice hall. There are windows all along one side and a door leading out to the lawn.

"We have to play colors outside."

"We have to be out of the hall by eleven."

Okay, so the singers will start at seven-thirty sharp. My Mom's really organized so they'll be on time. Then the speaker from nine to nine-fifteen, dances from nine-fifteen to ten. From ten to ten-thirty we'll

play with colors. Then from ten-thirty to eleven we'll have food and we can clean ourselves up.

"Did you get some *gulal*?"

Yea, I went to Main Street and they had lots. (paraphrased and reconstructed from notes except where indicated by quotations)

#### THE EVENT

My husband and I are running late. It is pleasant for us, accustomed as we are to reproaches from our own relatives for not being punctual, that one is rarely made to feel too late for an Indian event. To the contrary, I had, on another occasion, been cautioned by a friend that it is poor etiquette to show up for an Indian party on time as you will not be expected till later, a practice commonly referred to as "Indian Standard Time." Nevertheless, out of habit, and because punctuality is also aimed for at more formal Indian events, we rush.

As we pull into the parking lot at nearly eight o'clock, so does the group of singers who were to begin the entertainment "at seven-thirty sharp." We all step out of our vehicles into the brisk evening air, and leisurely walk to the building, chatting amiably. The absence of time pressure transports us into an Indian ethos even before the celebration itself begins.

A table has been set up in the hallway. Here two of the young women, dressed in brightly colored and fashionable

Indian "suits" (popular term for *salwar chemise*) are selling tickets. Inside the Activities Room, the young men cheerfully greet us and other arrivals. To my surprise, all of them are dressed in silk or embroidered *kurta pajama*, something which I have not seen most of them wear before. As I complement Vijay he quips, "Well, it's a brown event, you know." I wondered whether he felt self-consciousness in this obvious affirmation of cultural identity.

The young men have finished setting up the temporary stage, tables, chairs, and sound equipment. Sheets are laid out on the stage and on the floor--as is customary wherever guests are to sit on the floor--between the stage and the front row of seats.

We are among the first to arrive. I receive compliments on my *sari* and incredulous questions about whether I tied it myself. Two young women exclaim that they cannot tie a *sari* themselves and feel uncomfortable wearing one, but if I can do it perhaps they will try. This strikes me as a strange reversal of cultural transfer.

Guests continue to stroll in, chatting with friends. People will continue to arrive well after the program has started, until there are about eighty people in the hall. About one third of the audience consists of young people, aged about fifteen to twenty-five. Most of the women are dressed in *saris* or *salwar chemise*. My husband and myself,

along with two or three friends invited by one Yuva member, are the only visibly "white" participants.

At 8:30, the program gets under way and everyone settles into their seats. No one, not even the children, sits on the sheets on the floor. Two of the young men share the M.C. duties. They have settled on English. Only the songs are in Hindi or Punjabi. Kumar, as often at Indian events, is taking photographs.

The show opens with the singing group performing Hindi songs about the joys of *Holi*. The group consists of eight women, all mothers, who have had the opportunity to learn classical singing. Some younger women who normally take part in the singing classes are now, instead, busy preparing for their dance items. One of the singers accompanies on harmonium and one man accompanies on *tabla* as he often does at Indian functions.

The item is treated as a performance. No one from the audience joins in. This is the group's first public performance, and the audience is excited to see what they have accomplished and are appreciative with their applause.

After the songs comes the requisite explanation of the event.

Audience enthusiasm picks up notably with the dance performances with more applause during the dances, cat calling, and people standing along the edges of the room to see

better. Most of the dances are choreographed around the theme of *Holi*. The high degree of polish of most of the presentations belies the "family and friends" informality of the show. Over the past few years I have observed the quality of Indian culture performances increase steadily. I attribute this to an increase in opportunities to perform, an increased interest in Indian cultural activities and particularly in the number of girls taking dance lessons, and an increase in competition between dancers.

*Nritya Manjaree*, Vancouver's Kathak dance school, performs two dances. Two young women perform a filmy *Holi* dance which they have choreographed together. A group of Punjabi women, who are not Yuva members but have been invited to perform, present a Punjabi *gidda* which excites the audience.

The highlight of the evening, judging by audience response, is one small, pre-teen boy who performs an air band version of a "filmi" song whose Hindi title means 'Kiss.' Words and mimed actions, which in an older individual would be provocative, are considered cute, and result in laughter, squeals, cheers, and applause. He later performs a second time along with his four older male cousins. Boys seldom dance in public performances. But the ease and grace with which all of these boys dance in this pop-folk item reflects the fact that boys also grow up watching Hindi

movies and learning popular and folk dances which they perform at private gatherings (I-6).

After the performances, one of the council members presents a short prepared speech about Yuva to this captive audience. At the last council meeting it was agreed that it is important to take every opportunity to promote Yuva, explain its goals, and encourage more membership. A similar speech at a previous dance had received little interest. The council had decided to "do it at *Holi*." They decided that a dance isn't the right place, since no one is in the mood for listening to speeches. "The parents will listen."

After the show, everyone moves to the back of the room where a table is laid out with chips, *dhokla*, *pakoras*, *jalebis*, chocolate cake, pop and juice. Most audience members know each other and they seem to enjoy the chance to socialize.

About 10:30, Kumar announces the climax of the evening, playing with *gulal*. The rain from earlier in the week has stopped and it is a clear evening, though cool. Some of the young people have disappeared to the washrooms to change out of their good silk Indian clothes into old jeans and tee shirts. Out come the buckets of colored powders and those wishing to play disappear outside. For the young, and some of the young at heart, this play retains some of the riotous abandon described by Marriott (1968), remembered by many of

the audience, and still evident in India. As individuals chase each other around the lawn, it takes only a matter of minutes for the buckets to be emptied and the flying coloured powders to coat everyone outside. Most of the parents, however, prefer to watch out the windows. A few carefully dab each other with some reserve and hug each other.

After this the gathering quickly dissipates as it is now well past eleven.

#### COMPONENTS

The components of a *Holi* celebration are identified by Yuva members according to their perceptions of what ought to be in this kind of event for the kind of audience they are expecting. The requirements--as outlined in the planning discussions, and subsequently followed in its execution--are an explanation (to be provided by a speaker); a talent or cultural show; and a festival ambience complete with food and play. The first two components typically comprise an Indian cultural event in Vancouver. The analysis of this Yuva party will illuminate how these come to be typical components.

#### A SPEAKER

Last year we had a family friend, his Dad was in town. We had him speak and he gave us a little story and stuff about what *Holi* is and how it originated . . . that was

really good to have it come from someone a little older that knew a little more about it. It's just them sharing their experiences with us . . . (TT-4)

Who should we get as a speaker?

"Somebody old and wise."

Mr. [X]?

"He's too old, though he's very wise." [laughter]

How about [Y]?

"He'd just hand out business cards." [laughter again]

We need someone who knows about *Holi* and can explain it.  
(paraphrased except where noted by  
quotation marks)

The second generation have not personally experienced the festival in India, unless they are among those who were born there and spent the first few years of their life there, or have travelled in India during the festival. These youth recognize the limitations of those who have experienced without fully understanding. They want "an expert," someone who has some specialized knowledge from study as well as experience.

The first generation, who grew up experiencing the festivals and other religious activities as part of daily life in India or East Africa do not necessarily have the intellectual knowledge about them (Taylor 1976:84-85).<sup>92</sup>

---

<sup>92</sup>Kumar (1988:174) reports that her informants in Benaras "are universally ignorant of the sacred purposes of the festival."

Living in an alien cultural environment, they now have a need to explain forced upon them both from their own children and from outsiders. Burghart (1987a) describes how, in an overseas environment, lay people without any special experience, knowledge, or expertise find themselves in a position of having to interpret and explain religious knowledge to others. As Mr. Bindi explains:

Looking back, I guess I'm quite a bit Indian by heart. . . . And this was reaffirmed when I came and lived by myself for four years. Because people will question you about your religion when you get invited to a church. You're asked to speak about your religion, and then you go to the library because your parents never taught you all this. You know, you are supposed to learn by osmosis all these cultural aspects. (TT-2)

He later went on to explain:

First I came I had very strong Indian identity . . . . I was very much Indian except that I didn't know how to explain it. I had those ideas but I didn't have the conviction behind it. That conviction came later through the questioning process. When people ask you, 'Where are you from?' 'What's your language?' 'What's your religion?' 'What's your belief?' All these things I found very hard to deal with because I didn't know how to respond. So there I was except that I didn't know that I was that and I had to rediscover that. I had to reinforce it. . . . I realized I didn't really know what it is, Hindu, being like a Hindu. So I had to go and read some books. Now I can--very gradually--now I can clearly and firmly speak. So I became thankful that they became the training ground because eventually I had to explain all this to my own children, children and friends. So till you go face to face with people different from you, different from society you are from, you don't develop a very sharp focus on these things. (ibid)

Youth also feel themselves put into positions of spokespersons. They have the added difficulty of lack of

experience as well as knowledge. Questions can make them doubt their own identity:

Sunil: Also, like Canada is a melting pot [?] major religions, Catholic, Protestant. Nowhere is Buddhism or Hinduism ever mentioned in there, and so it's almost like you're religious at home, but when you go out there, you get the pressure from like the communities. It's like the only religions that are important are Catholic and the other religions are, 'Oh, that's nice, you're Hindu, that's nice, don't you have a God of water?' And they'll start going, 'How many Gods are there in your religion?' They have one God, Jesus Christ, but we have God of water, God of Rain, you know--

Jyoti: Yea, we're not able to explain enough about it. Like somebody, an Ismaili guy, once asked me about my religion, and he was arguing with me, 'We do this in my religion, what do you do in yours?' And I really couldn't--actually I was quite young at the time too--but I couldn't explain myself, and I didn't know enough about it to hold a position. I mean I'm not saying that I believe mine is the best or anything, but I do believe in God and I believe in my religion. But then I felt really stupid, because I really don't know enough to say I believe because of this.

Sunil: Specially if you start doubting it yourself, it's hard to--

Jyoti: You doubt yourself because you don't know enough about it--

Sunil: And then you're forced to assimilate into Western culture even more. . . . I think it's important for us to know about our language, about our culture. There's nothing even wrong in knowing about our religion-- (TT-Y2)

They forget that their parents, while having experience, do not always have explanations either. A need to explain, and a show of interest from outsiders, can implant or nourish an interest in learning more.

Explanations and commentaries have routinely become a component of many Indian activities here in Vancouver for the benefit of both parents and children. For example, V.H.P. cultural shows at *Holi* and *Diwali* always include an introductory explanation of the festival's origins, mythology, and customs. Classical dance performances routinely include explanations (Dakshinamurti 1991). During ritual celebrations and *pujas*, both in the temple and in private homes, the *pujari* often explains procedures as he executes them. Those who act as *pujari* here are individuals knowledgeable in Sanskrit and with a religious background, but not necessarily trained as priests. They themselves often learn by doing. I have witnessed the *pujari* himself intermittently taking some suggestions from the women devotees during the Bengali *Durga Puja* or the Gujarati *Tulsi Vivaha*. These instances illustrate Burghart's (1987a:231) observations in Britain, that "Hindu laity . . . negotiated the form of the service themselves . . . authenticate their own religious observances."

For this *Holi* event, Yuva has had the good fortune to procure the help of Dr. Tirupathi, an erudite visiting Indian scholar to U.B.C. Speaking in English, he blends history, mythology and personal experience into an informative, entertaining, and well applauded twenty minute presentation. He wove a description from myth, ideology,

custom, and personal experience. Explanations provide a link between the here and now and the past (real or imagined) in India and provide an imaginary context in which the dances and the colour play become meaningful. As the content of the speech explains the celebration, the speech becomes a new component of the celebration. These commentaries represent "a procedure . . . for the shaping and re-shaping of content through an active participation in an interpretive process" (Narváez and Laba [n. d.]:10). The commentators define and evoke the festival through their telling, and the *pujaris* and laity together shape rituals.

#### A TALENT SHOW

And I was interested in music, this was an interest I discovered here, classical music. And I started with *ghazals* . . . I don't sing, I was confined to listening, but I was quite interested. So in our house we used to have parties. In the beginning we liked socializing . . . and once they come in, you want to do something more than just sit and drink. So we started singing, like that idea of talent show which was later on used with the kids, it was with us. Somebody would say jokes, somebody would sing a song . . . (TT-2))

Indian dinner parties usually have lots of people and all their kids, so at the end we have--usually the adults are upstairs and they'll get out the *harmoniums* and the *tablas* and they'll enjoy listening to people sing . . . and they try to get the daughters involved . . . if we're [the guys] there we usually listen and stuff, we don't sing. Guys can't sing anyway so we don't . . . or they usually do it to song, it's almost like an Indian air band, an India song, and they'll have dancing and stuff . . . (TT-4)

A second component of the *Holi* celebration is a talent show. "Talent shows" are regular components of

Indian social and cultural gatherings (this will be described further in the section, "A Party" in the following chapter). As Mr. Bindi explains, these "mini talent shows" gave the kids "their cultural end of things" (TT-2).

The more formal organizations like the V.H.P. had similar beginnings. One of the motivations behind establishing the V.H.P. as a cultural as well as religious organization was to have a more formal support system for their children's involvement. The wife of an active founding member explains that, "this is the reason he strongly believes in those cultural shows. That if they [teenagers, this generation] don't go to the temple, they know something about . . . the culture . . . they know about their history" (TT-7). This founding member has seen the major *Diwali* shows--which now draw a sell-out crowd of twelve hundred--grow out of just such home social gatherings at which the children were encouraged to perform (NB-I-2-10).

Dance is considered to be the most entertaining and accessible form of entertainment for an audience mixed according to age, experience, and cultural background. Opportunities to perform and to see others perform fosters an interest in taking lessons which, in turn, creates more interest. The existence of four classical dance schools (teaching roughly one hundred forty students) in Vancouver

means that many girls now have some formal training.<sup>93</sup> This is only a small part of dance activity (Nodwell 1993). Formal training is not a prerequisite for engaging in what is commonly called "filmi" dances (danced to Hindi film music with steps adapted from the film sequences), or in "semi-classical" dance, a broad category which combines elements of classical, folk dance, mime, and natural movements. Air bands are an acceptable and highly entertaining way for boys to get involved.

Many young girls grow up seeing their mothers and aunts dance and themselves start as soon as they can walk, learning the basic steps through imitation and participation, and sometimes with some informal lessons.<sup>94</sup> Also, Hindi films, watched by young and old, are a ubiquitous fact

---

<sup>93</sup>Natraj School of Dancing, established in 1974, is Vancouver's oldest. It and Kavital Dance School, founded in 1987, emphasize *Bharat Natyam* but incorporate other Indian dance traditions. Peali Dance Academy, established in the early 1980's, teaches strictly *Bharat Natyam*. Nriya Manjaree Dance School, established in 1983, is Vancouver's only classical *Kathak* school.

<sup>94</sup>It is still the case that not all Hindu girls are permitted by their parents to take part in any kind of dancing or public performance. There is no data available about these girls, how they deal with the restrictions placed on them, and whether an increasing popularity in participation and watching performances makes any difference in the attitudes of those families. Nor is there any evidence about how participation in Indian dance and performance arts varies according to religious, regional, or socio-economic characteristics.

of Indian life. Girls learn songs and dances from them, copying and choreographing their own moves (Nodwell 1993).<sup>95</sup>

We used to drive two hours a day to get to [a larger city] and back and stay there for four hours while I would have my lesson and my sister would have her lesson. My Mom would really go out of her way to do that because the only other culture we got was from watching Indian movies and copying dances or listening to songs. . . . We'll stop the movies and memorize exactly where they [songs and dances] are and rewind them--well my sisters and I used to . . . So we basically kept ourselves entertained. We learned the songs and did the dances. We'd been dancing since we were quite young. (TT-16)

A lot of our Indian movies have steps--that's how we base our steps on, is the movies. I guess since we've been brought up this way we just think of steps. I can imagine somebody else looking at it and thinking, 'How would you think of a step for a song like this?' But it's very innate, I think. It just comes to you right away. . . . We never took lessons. Like in our community, there's always that *Diwali* show every year. So we all just get together, pick a song and make up dances. So because we were too young at that time to do it on our own we had somebody teaching us. She'd say, 'Okay, let's do a dance this year.' It was always assumed that every year we're going to do a dance. Then for years she taught us. . . . She didn't really teach anything classical or semi-classical, it was just dances, just Indian songs, and she'd put her own steps together or watch the steps from the video. (TT-9)

Madhu and Gita are two young women who look forward to the opportunity to perform at the *Holi* celebration. Like

---

<sup>95</sup>Cunningham (1990:178-181) describes how watching Hindi movies and copying dances can stimulate young Indian girls to take classical Indian dance lessons. Cunningham also cites an unpublished study (Kiren E. Ghei, 1988, "Hindi Popular Cinema and Indian American Teenage Dance Experience." Prepared for the 17th Annual Conference on South Asia, Madison, Wisconsin, November 4-6, 1988), which examines the enthusiasm for Hindi films and film dances by South Asian youth in Los Angeles.

many Indian girls and women, they love to dance. They have both had formal classical dance training. When I visited Madhu, she was expecting Gita to come by so that they could choreograph and practice their dance for the *Yuva Holi* party. They had already picked out one of their favourite songs from a recent Hindi movie and had already spent some hours watching the steps in the movie, copying some sequences, and adding variations of their own. That day they practiced the dance and then looked through Madhu's cupboard to decide which of their clothes would look good together. They did not need to make special costumes because they both have a large wardrobe of Indian *saris*, suits, and *lahangas*. They ended up choosing *salwar kamiz* in bright pink, a colour appropriate for the spring festival of *Holi*.

While dance is ubiquitous, singing has not previously been included in Indian cultural shows (except for the singing of the national anthems by groups of youngsters). Although informal groups have existed (TT-2), India Club's popular "Mehfil-e-gazal" has been the one public event to feature classical singing. With this *Holi* show, singing is making a public debut as performance. This has been fostered since 1989 by the annual visits of Pandit Jasraj, one of India's foremost vocal artists, to give workshops. Interest has been sustained by a dedicated body of

students who work together throughout the year and by a committed group leader:

I've been trying to have workshops and education where we can have it [classical Indian music] more accessible. This last June I organized . . . teacher to come to Vancouver . . . and he gave month-long workshops. All these people were there, thirty-two students, sixteen hours of instruction. A seventy-two year old, [...], twelve year old [...]. It was a great success. And now . . . a group of the students, they come . . . every other Thursday to practice what we learned in class. Because our teacher is coming back next June, and we want to be able to continue and have some sort of follow-up. There were two white Canadians in there too. (September 1990)

The third annual workshop was held in 1992. In the fall of 1991 and 1992 the teacher's protégé also came from India to teach two-week workshops.

In 1991 sixty students, mostly housewives, filled two levels of classes. As Mrs. Ghosh explains:

In India it's difficult . . . they do it [go into arts] at very great cost. Here you can do it with ease. . . . It's different, mind you, I'm not really becoming a full time singer. . . . as a hobby there is more freedom to do it here. . . . [Housewives would not be able to pursue singing as a hobby in India] because, of course, there's all kinds of hangups about age and what one can do at a given age, and things like, 'You're too old to do this,' and 'You must be crazy if you think you can become a singer now.' . . . I mean this thing that we've started is amazing for some people--that they have this opportunity of sitting down with a maestro and learning from somebody like Panditji. It's just--some people cannot believe that we are actually fortunate enough to have that in Canada, in Vancouver . . . Any housewife would not venture to be close to--go as forward as that. . . . It's really amazing. . . . The community events are missing in India. We have much more here. Isn't it amazing how we've developed our own little [?] . . . And we do it for fun, and we become so good at it. And you know the same thing with my singing. I started just recently, and I feel that one day I will be able to per-

form. And I would never have done it in India. Just because people would have put me down and said, 'Oh well, you can't do this, you're too old for this,' that kind of stuff. (TT-13)

Ironically it is her own more "Western" sense of independence which allows her to put the time into organizing and sustaining these classes that, in turn, become representative of Indian culture here in Vancouver:

I'm quite westernized I think. My career's important, fitness is important, going for walks is important, studies. All these years I've been studying in the evening, working all day, advancement in my career . . . And now this singing thing, it's amazing how much time I'm finding for that. Twice a week I teach, that's four hours. Every other week we have a group session, say average it out to an hour and a half a week, so that's five and a half, and I sing at least eight to nine hours on my own. So that's fourteen hours a week I spend on singing. So can say leisure or whatever, but I don't think people take their hobbies so seriously in our community. . . . It's not a family thing. . . . But I want to do it and I'll do it. The kids, my family, knows that Mom has planned that way and she will not be inconvenienced. I'm very, very un-Indian in that fashion. (TT-13)

One of the criticisms of Canadian multiculturalism is that it fosters the display of culture as performance without serving the needs of daily life as lived. I have no argument with that criticism. But it should not prevent the examination of song and dance as vital elements in cultural construction, particularly where it fosters just that. In the Indian context, talent shows are not just models of, they also models for culture. In one discussion group, Yuva members expressed how dancing and singing are part of their

definitions of Indian culture. Kumar summed it up in saying that: "Dancing and everything that's live--singing, skits, story telling--people things are very big in India" (TT-Y1). Such "people things" are big not only in India, but producing, participating in, and watching dancing, singing, and performing seem also to be integral aspects of life for many Indo-Canadians in Vancouver.<sup>96</sup> These activities occur in home parties, weddings, and other social dances; festivals and celebrations; and cultural shows.

These shows have both intended and unintended consequences. They are intended to involve children, provide entertainment, serve as a focus for an evening's socializing, and provide opportunities for talented youth to perform.

The shows serve as bridges. They form a bridge between youth who have varying degrees of independence and of cultural knowledge. Those who have more cultural knowledge share it with others, and those who have less, gain knowledge and exposure in an informal, fun way. They bridge generations by creating a meeting ground in which performers can play back culture to their parent audience. They also form a bridge between different Indian groups in being a forum in which to "show" culture to each other in a way

---

<sup>96</sup>Buchignani et al. (1985:193-94) suggest that this is true across Canada.

which is entertaining, easily accessible, and politically neutral (in terms of widespread cultural and religious issues).

The preparation for performances brings the participants together in a common activity. This serves an unintended consequence of limiting the time they have for non-Indian social relations and activities. Preparation for the *Diwali* shows, for example, begins in the summer and continues intensively, taking all participants' spare time until October or November.

These shows are meant, according to statements made by Yuva council members, to "share cultures" or "show cultures" and so lessen prejudice and discrimination between Indians. This is revealed in statements such as, "I like to view everyone's culture" (TT-Y2; after having explained that she has visited different temples, *gurdwaras* and *jamat khanas*); "We [Yuva] can show them part of our culture" (TT-4); and "dances seems to be a very good way of showing culture" (TT-9).

The prominence of talent shows as a medium for cultural expression serves an unintended consequence of emphasizing the definition of culture as performance. The definition of culture as performance was brought into sharp focus by the response to a suggestion which I made at a Yuva

council meeting. It had become clear that the youth were not familiar with each others' festivals, including *Holi*:

EN: [addressing the two Sikh girls] So do you two, your family and friends, go to things like the V.H.P. *Diwali* or *Holi* show?

Ranjit: I've gone to *Diwali* but not because my family, but a friend invited me . . .

. . .

Kumar [from Hindi speaking Hindu family]: Yea, these are all, *Diwali* and *Holi*, they're all run by our temple, so they're very Hindu. . . . They're mostly attended, I guess, by people that go to the *mandir*. (TT-Y1)

Lakshmi [Bengali]: In our culture . . . we don't have *Kathak*, *Bhangra*, or anything of that sort. All we have *Rabindra Sangeet*.

Kumar: What's that?

Lakshmi: It's like, you know Rabindranath Tagore. All the songs and the dances are all--[she has difficulty finding the right word] they're not like *Kathak* or *Bharat Natyam* or anything of that type.

Kumar: Folk dancing?

Lakshmi: Folk dancing.

EN: Bengalis do a lot more recitations and acting and drama?

Lakshmi: Yea.

Kumar: They're considered one of the most literary of the different types of people in India. They do a lot of that.

Lakshmi: Yea, a lot of recitation and they have the special way of reciting Rabindranath Tagore's poems. Recitation is the main part of every function. (TT-Y1)

Kumar: [speaking to the Gujarati girls] You guys have *Navratri*.

EN: Has Navratri become an all-Indian thing?"

Kumar: Still mainly Gujarati--

Jyoti [Gujarati]: Gujarati. On the weekends you'll see--like I see Ismailis come.

Kumar: [to the others] Do you guys know what Navratri is?

Sunil [from a Hindi speaking Hindu family]: No, I don't know what it is--

Jas [Sikh]: I never even heard of it--

Jyoti: How come? You should come. You would love it--

Sunil: I haven't been. I don't even know what it is--

Kumar: Nine days--

Anita [Gujarati]: Festival. *Amba devi*. We do *garba* in front of her and then *dandia ras* afterwards--

Jyoti: It's like a celebration of good over evil--

Kumar: It's a big thing. The biggest Gujarati thing. And it's nine days continuously and they dance . . . every night--

[Kumar, Jyoti, and Anita all excitedly talk at once about it]

Kumar: Like on the weekend there's a whole bunch--it's huge, just huge, it's just a humungous--

Jyoti: In September, October. I'll tell you about it.

EN: What about your community [Jas, a Sikh]? Do you have any big event?

Jas: Not to my knowledge. Nothing like nine days. [Several people ask if they didn't just have something, but can't quite get the name.]

EN: *Baisakhi*? [several people ask about parade.]

Jas: My parents don't really talk about it. They don't go to it--

Sunil: It's supposed to be religious isn't it?

Jas: Something to do with Guru Nanak. I don't know really. I just talk to my friends about it sort of.

Anita: And I think the Ismaili big thing is *Id*, where they do *dandia ras* as well. . . . They have a similar *garba* thing as well. [?] And they have it at the coliseum. It's a huge event. And I think they had one at B.C. Place as well 'cause they have a very large community here--

Jyoti: They do *dandia*, but it's more a Western style of *dandia*--

Anita: They do it different from ours. Like you can sort of tell--

Jyoti: They dance to more English music--

Anita: I think they have a disco *garba* or something like that. (TT-Y2)

Limits of interaction between communities is evident in this discussion. Having realized the differences and the limited knowledge they have about each others' cultural practices, and considering Yuva's goals, I made a suggestion at one council meeting that Yuva might consider organizing some sort of "field trips" for interested members to attend each other's events. When I had first mentioned it privately to one of the council members, he had immediately seen the point and encouraged me to bring it up at this meeting.

At the meeting there was some discussion, but not everyone understood the implications. One comment was, "Well, we have our annual cultural talent show." The

speaker did not recognize the significance of going to see an actual event in contrast to presenting a performance on a stage. He reasoned that they were already planning a cultural event in October where they would be doing their cultural and talent shows, and he implied that this was the same thing:

If you have a cultural day then you're bringing all the groups to us--as long as we get to see the other cultures, that's the main point. (TT-9)

He did not perceive a difference between going to the groups or "bringing all the groups to us." It seemed to me that he was not making a distinction between demonstration and activity, between life as lived and performance. His attitude is reminiscent of Singer's (1972:71) observation that "my Indian friends--and perhaps all peoples--thought of their culture as encapsulated in these discrete performances, which they could exhibit to visitors and to themselves." (cf. Manning 1983; Turner and Bruner 1986). In this case, the performance comes to stand for culture.

#### AMBIENCE

I think they [the singers] should be more organized. No, it should be a festive atmosphere, very informal.

A third component of Yuva's *Holi* celebration is a certain kind of ambience. Council members express their plans of ambience for *Holi* in terms of "festive atmosphere," "organized," "very informal," "light," and "fun."

These simple words suggest connotations about some fundamental understandings of the everyday life of the speakers. The ways in which the descriptions are used suggest that they apply to different spheres of activity. "Fun" concerns the event as a whole. It has particular relevance for the young people and relates to how they would like to experience the event. "Informal" concerns the structuring of participation, which is a means to other ends and also reflects a mode of interaction. "Light" refers to the appropriateness of certain types of performance. The *Holi* party was not the place for serious classical performances. All the items are folk, popular, or semi-classical.

One of the plans to create a festive atmosphere was to have a group on stage singing *Holi* songs as guests arrived and then to have guests participate in the singing. Seating arrangements for both singers and audience came under discussion:

. . . Just some folk singing on *Holi*.

Should they sit on the stage or on the floor? . . .

Should we have chairs or blankets?

People don't mind sitting on the floor.

Yea, we're Indians.

The men will want to sit on chairs.

We better have chairs.

We can put a sheet on the floor in front of the stage so people can sit there if they want to sing along.

It is customary in Indian classical musical performances for musicians to be seated on the floor on a rug or sheet laid out for the purpose. This practice continues to be followed here in Vancouver. During India Music Society concerts artists sit on the stage on a dais covered with a rug. This area then becomes the sanctified performing area, and must not be entered with shoes.<sup>97</sup> At home social and music gatherings sheets are laid down on top of existing rugs. The singers are being trained in Indian classical music tradition and sitting on the floor is part of that tradition.

The options which the organizers considered for the singers was whether they ought to be seated on the stage or on the floor in front of the stage. Sitting on the floor would bring them into closer contact with the audience. The organizers hoped that this would invite audience participation and allow for the spontaneity and informality of a festive occasion.

The stage, on the other hand, designates a separation between audience and performers, and signifies a per-

---

<sup>97</sup>Similarly for dance performances, the stage is sanctified at the beginning of a dance performance, as is a practice room before dance lesson. These must not then be walked on with shoes until the performance, lesson, or practice is over.

formance. The sense of showing culture prevailed. The decision was made that it was more important for the singers to be seen, so they were positioned on the stage.

For the audience, organizers considered the options of sitting on the floor or on chairs. Many Indian homes maintain a room with a thick carpet and little furniture. This is used for music activities, religious gatherings, or large parties where guests sit on the floor (this makes it possible to accommodate large gatherings). Even in Vancouver, sitting on the floor is common for guests of all ages for religious occasions--either in the temple or at private *satsangs*, *kathas*, and lectures--and for large family gatherings, parties, or private music performances.

The second generation, in trying to create a cultural event, consider this accepted Indian practice for their public event. But the use of chairs prevails. Again, unintended consequences of this are that it situates the audience clearly as audience, and clearly marks the performance segment of the evening from the rest.

The spontaneity did not quite come off. The singers themselves did not arrive till half an hour after the designated starting time of the event. And since the singing group had not performed before, they were a little nervous about starting spontaneously. The audience did not join the singing, and all sat in chairs. Mrs. Ghosh later accounted

for audience reluctance to join in by the fact that there are so many different "languages, customs, and folklore," and so not everyone knows the songs. The event was structured to be a performance and the audience, in their actions, was implicated in structuring it as performance.<sup>98</sup>

Cultural shows like this provide opportunities for students to demonstrate their skills. But the specific requirements for these kinds of shows influence teachers in their selection of material.

For example, "light" refers to a type of entertainment, dance and singing, which is appropriate for a mixed family audience--that is, mixed according to age, interest, and knowledgeability about art forms. A commonly expressed opinion is that "people get bored with classical." One of the guests is the director and teacher of one of Vancouver's *Bharat Natyam* dance schools who aims to maintain strict classical standards. Because of her standards, her students do not perform at shows which require "light" entertainment. However, after seeing the high quality of performances at Yuva's *Holi* celebration, and recognizing the benefits for girls taking part, she has begun to incorporate some "semi-

---

<sup>98</sup>Bruce Kapferer (1983, 1986) analyses how the structuring of ritual in Sri Lanka can limit audience interaction at one time and engage audience involvement at another.

classical"<sup>99</sup> dances into her teaching.

This chapter has examined the components--a speaker, a talent show, and a festival ambience--which Yuva organizers decide must make up their *Holi* celebration. The components are similar to those of other Indian public performances. They reflect the youths' sense of ignorance about their culture and a desire to learn more, an effort to provide opportunities to exhibit cultural skills and to perform, a belief that performances exhibit culture and cultural diversity, and a need to appeal to a wide range of participants as performers and audience members. It was seen that culture is defined as performance and is reinforced as such by audience reaction. The next chapter examines how Yuva organizers define their event and what their definitions imply.

---

<sup>99</sup> This teacher defines "semi-classical" as maintaining classical movements and technique which are adapted to popular or folk music. Costuming may be more casual, subject matter less traditional, and choreography freer.

Chapter 6  
**ANALYSIS OF YUVA'S HOLI CELEBRATION:  
CONSTRUCTING "INDIAN CULTURE":**

This chapter examines Yuva's *Holi* celebration according to how the organizers define it. Their definitions reveal what they know about how such an event ought to be conducted and what is required and appropriate for each definition of it. The discussion will digress from the event itself in order to elaborate on broader issues relating to the Indian culture and community which are the context in which this event takes place. It will be seen that much can be glimpsed through these categories about experiences of being Indian in Vancouver.

DEFINITIONS OF THE EVENT

At various times, Yuva's *Holi* celebration is designated by its organizers to be "*Holi*," "a Yuva event," "a cultural event," "a family event," and "a party." First I discuss a "Yuva event" since Yuva is the immediate context within which this takes place. Secondly, the council has a

mandate to organize some annual "cultural events." Within these two parameters *Holi* is selected as a suitable occasion. Another mandate is to ensure that some of the annual events are family events, a third definition. And fourth, the format chosen in which to celebrate *Holi* is a party, but, as I will show, a type of party with a particular history.

#### A YUVA EVENT

Four criteria define a Yuva event. One is Yuva's mission to "expand and diversify" in order to create broader social networks. Another is Yuva members' de-emphasizing of religion. Third is their desire to learn more about their own and other Indian cultures. And fourth is an aim to be organized and efficient in contrast to what they conceptualize as their parents' overly lax attitudes towards efficiency.

#### EXPANSION AND DIVERSIFICATION

It [last year's *Holi* celebration] was supposed to be a Yuva event, but it was at my house, and somehow not all the members got called. It was mostly our family friends circle. But it sure was a lot of fun. (TT-15)

Chapter Four described how India Club initiated Yuva and how the core group actually grew out of The Family Friends Circle. In the above quotation, a Yuva event is explicitly contrasted to The Family Friends Circle. The

friends circle is an informal and amorphous social group whose members come together on the basis of common language, background, and values. Yuva is a more formal voluntary association which actively pursues expansion and diversification in order to help eliminate social boundaries between Indian communities. In other words, members aim to break out of the confines of the very group from which they originated.

The way in which Yuva's first *Holi* celebration (1990) as a family friends event developed into their second (1991) as a Yuva event reflects these broader concerns. Here I elaborate on their perceptions about internal divisions and prejudices. In the conclusion I will argue that in trying to expand and diversify the youth themselves perpetuate certain boundaries.

First, I will briefly compare the two *Holi* parties. According to photographs of the 1990 party and descriptions of it by participants, that party seems to have captured some of the spirit of *Holi* as I have experienced it in India. Celebrated among family and friends at Kumar's home, it was informal and playful. Participants shared a pot-luck meal and all played with colors outside until faces and clothing, as well as the whole patio and lawn were covered with the colored powders.

The 1990 party included the requisite "talent show," a regular feature of Indian family parties (see "*A Talent Show*" in previous chapter, and "*A Party*," to follow in this chapter). That show included a presentation by a selected adult about the history and meaning of *Holi*. Then the young people performed skits making affectionate fun of the different "aunties," one who always starts yawning by nine, another who habitually urges guests to eat more, and another who insistently loads her guests with food to take home.

When Yuva members declare that they "have to have *Holi*," they refer to the memory of last year's first Yuva celebration of it, which was such a good time for all those involved and has become a text for the reconstruction of *Holi*. Yuva members are already considering the celebration of *Holi* to be one of Yuva's annual "cultural events."

In practical terms, the difference between the two events illustrates a move from the spontaneous, word-of-mouth, informal modes of interaction which seem to be preferred by first generation Indians, to more formally organized proceedings. Yuva's second *Holi* celebration moves beyond the cliquishness of close friends who have similar backgrounds. The 1991 party changed location to a community hall, in a more business-like manner the council made the effort to phone all members, the show was longer and more

formally organized than the previous year's, and the talent show was planned to have a broader appeal.

Yuva's members share similar aspirations. Chapter Four described how internal discrimination surfaced in the Yuva Youth Forum and in Yuva discussion groups as an issue significant to them. Yuva strives to do something about the social boundaries, stereotypical attitudes and prejudices they see between Indian groups:

Narendra (Gujarati): What we're trying to do with Yuva is to not have these frictions. We do not want this. We know that it's going to be pretty rough in the beginning because all these new groups are going to meet together and they're going to have different values. . . . I think in the past we have been to these different events of different cultures and we see that a lot of people are missing out on what other cultures have to offer.

Jyoti (Gujarati): We realize that after meeting [Kumar] and all his friends and his family . . . that's the reason why we started [Yuva]. . . . It was just nice to meet others--we had been so restricted to just our own Indian people. (TT-9)

Kumar (Hindi speaking Hindu), describes a similar goal:

I think the main reason we do want to form one big, not one big group, but just have everybody interact with each other, is to eliminate prejudice. Not only amongst ourselves, but amongst everybody. And we have to start with ourselves if we want to go on to a bigger scale. I think that's the main reason. (TT-Y1)

Two related themes are expressed here. One is the fact of social interaction limited to one's own community. The other is prejudice and tension between communities. Jyoti and Narendra (above) describe Yuva as a reaction against both problems. Vijay details a similar perception:

. . . there are specific and unique regional differences, but when you get an all-Indian group, regardless of what region or part of India they're from, it is a deterrent for ignorance, you see. . . . If you get Sikhs and you get Hindus, Hindus have certain misconception about Sikhs, and Sikhs of Hindus. And you put them together--sure they can have their own groups by themselves, to preserve their own Sikhism and Hinduism and whatever, that's fine--but when you put them together then the Hindus see what the Sikhs are like and the Sikhs see what the Hindus are like and that'll diminish any misconceptions that each sect may have of each other. And that's important because in India there's a lot of problems with that . . . So I think getting them a broad base in that sense, without discrimination--'cause there's certainly discrimination between sects, between the Sikh sect and the Hindu sect in India and even here--I think by having an all-India thing without discrimination, then it's our little part of trying to diminish that thing so we don't have that in the future. Because our parents--I mean if you ask any Hindu parent of who you'd like their child to marry, that person better be Hindu kind-of-thing. Not better be, but they'd prefer Hindu, whereas, you'd think--Sikhs the same thing, they'd rather marry another Sikh than marry a Hindu. And that's because what they think that these people are like. And that's a problem and it's even here. (TT-4))

Vijay's world view draws on his knowledge of Indian life and politics.

The distinctions which respondents bring up as most common or significant are between Gujaratis and (other) Hindus; between Hindus and Sikhs; and between Hindus and Sikhs on the one hand and Ismailis on the other (see also "*Defining Community*" in Chapter Three).

The Gujarati youth talk about how they have been brought up in very closed social groups. Jyoti and Narendra discuss what they consider to be their parents' narrow range

of friends and their community's tendency to create boundaries:

Jyoti: . . . to associate with somebody outside [Gujaratis] was sort of uncomfortable. Like it was like, 'Oh, I didn't want to get to know that person because they're not really with us all the time.' . . . . I find that Gujaratis are very closed-minded. . . . --this might be a generalization but this is how I look at everything--I find that Gujaratis, we're very restricted to other people. We don't want people to--not that we'd mind them--like we don't mind you coming to our Navratri thing or anything like that, talking to us or anything like that--but you'll find that most of the families keep within themselves, they're much more orthodox. Our family and [Kumar's Hindi speaking] family are total opposites--

Narendra: They're modern--

Jyoti: In everything . . . like Gujaratis you'd find are opposite from the Hindis [sic] that [Kumar] and them hang around with--

Narendra: Hindis seem to be more modernized, open to other cultures, but we're--

Jyoti: No, we're Hindus as well, though. We have the same religion, but because his upbringing--and not his family, but the group that they've hung around with--that's what I mean by we're closed. We're not readily accepting the new ideas and moving forward.

"The group that they've hung around with" to which Jyoti refers is The Family Friends Circle who, as described in Chapter Three, define themselves as more modern and open minded than a) other Hindus, and b) Sikhs. Another Gujarati respondent explained how she and her friends dislike Gujarati caste social gatherings where they always see the same people. Narendra and Jyoti are both active members of Yuva and share in its visions. They explain their previous

isolation from other Yuva members before the Gujarati and the other Hindu young people first met at the wedding of a mutual friend:

Narendra: We just want to make it more flexible instead of--

Jyoti: Instead of just having Gujaratis and just Hindus, 'cause that's how it used to be. . . . for us to see somebody who is non-Gujarati is a big deal. He's [a Hindi speaking Hindu Yuva member] been living here all his life and we never met him. And he's been living five, ten minutes away from me. And he's Indian, he's the same religion--like we're both Hindus--but I'm Gujarati, and he's, he's a Marwari Hindu. And that little bit of a difference makes--I would never have met him in all my life because we were so restricted, like Gujaratis Gujaratis. Even my attitude used to be like that. Like 'Oh God, they shouldn't come to our events, we're Gujaratis.' (TT-9)

Hindu respondents' definitions of Sikhs<sup>100</sup> are based largely on class differences (discussed in "*Definitions of Selves and Others*" in Chapter Three). Some Hindu Yuva members describe other stereotypical attitudes about Sikhs which they attribute to their parents. One Hindu youth from a Hindi speaking family comments on his parents' attitudes:

I know my Mom, personally she has prejudices against Punjabi people. She gets this attitude like, 'Oh, don't say anything wrong about them. [laughter] Go along with them whether you agree with them or not because there are a lot more of them in Vancouver than there are Hindus.' I guess the media blows up this. (TT-Y2)

---

<sup>100</sup>I do not have data to determine the definitions which Sikhs hold of Hindus in Vancouver. Sikh Yuva members took part in the discussion groups. They refrained from commenting on these particular definitions, but expressed equally strong feelings about prejudices and discrimination between Indian communities.

One participant in Yuva's youth forum argues that, "They [parents] don't see it as racism because they make some kind of logic out of it" (O-6).

Another set of stereotypes is held by Hindus of Ismailis:

Jyoti (Gujarati): Nobody said to me, my Mom's never said to me, 'You can't associate with Punjabis' or-- actually they have with Ismailis, because there seems to be this Muslim / Hindu thing [a bit of laughter] with my parents anyways. They feel that--like they'll make comments here and there . . .

Anita (Gujarati): . . . But I still keep an open mind about that. Like I have a lot of Ismaili friends as well, but they're not the ones that I immediately hang around with.

. . .

Sunil (Hindi speaking Hindu): You can get the pressure from the East Indian community saying that you only trust your own kind. That's where that other prejudice develops, people will start saying, 'Okay, if you can only trust your own kind, so where do you belong?' If you're in the Punjabi community they're gonna say, 'Watch out for the Ismailis,' and that's how conflict develops. Like very rarely you'll find Ismaili people at a Punjabi dance. Like if you do people wonder what are they doing here.<sup>101</sup> (TT-Y2)

The other Yuva discussion group talked about the fact that the parents' prejudices are often perpetuated by the youth:

Ranjit (Sikh): Even at U.B.C. you notice different tables of students at lunch time. There's an Ismaili table. But I think that the Punjabi and the Hindu groups are fairly--

---

<sup>101</sup>Yet the Punjabi friends of Sunil and his sister were invited to her wedding. He argues that their own attitudes are forcing their parents to change.

Kumar (Hindi speaking Hindu): They're fairly open.

Ranjit: Yea, but especially with the Ismaili group, they sit at a different table. Sometimes there's even tensions between them, like people say things and stuff, so it becomes real the way they're thinking. Not all Ismailis. I know I have some Ismaili friends and they're really friendly and everything. But still, you always have lunch with--you know, it's kind of weird--

Ramesh (Gujarati): You're talking about in Sedgewick [U.B.C.'s undergraduate library], right? Yea, the first time I saw this, whoa, I just couldn't understand that. Like everyone was separated and they all came to the same place, and they left, then they'd come back to the same place. I just couldn't see why.

Kumar: Yea, I see your point of view. I'm not used to that, either, because I've never really had any Indian people that I hang out with. I've just been with whoever was around.

. . .

Manjit (Sikh): . . . even I've noticed that with my other Punjabi friends . . . like we sit around Sedgewick talking about what side of the river our parents are from. [lots of laughter] . . . like we're all, we all say we're against the caste system and . . . then we're sitting there and talking and say, 'Well, what caste are you?' It's kind of silly but it makes you think.

Kumar: Sort of a different way of the same thing. Sort of like, uh, we're talking about the same thing but we're doing it in a different way. (TT-Y1)

Similarly at the Yuva Youth Forum, discussions encouraged self reflexivity which resulted in participants becoming aware that they themselves unconsciously hold stereotypical and prejudicial views and often behave accordingly.

At the end of one Yuva meeting I showed a draft of my paper about Yuva, which precipitated a discussion (I-3).

Vijay and some of the others picked up on a section which contained some quotations from the discussion group about these distinctions. Those in attendance agreed that the attitudes represented are typical of what they have experienced. They explained that there is "major" stereotyping, ignorance, misunderstanding, and antagonism between Punjabis and Ismailis. One of the discussion participants speculated that a strong class distinction is the problem. Chapter Three described how Hindu adults often define Sikhs as culturally and even religiously similar, but how their "internal observers' model" of Sikhs defines the significant difference as one of class. It is to this that they attribute the limited interaction between Hindus and Sikhs.

Members attribute Yuva with bringing about some social interaction between young people from different communities who had not interacted previously:

Jyoti: Yuva was the thing that really brought everybody sort of--like we started coming to the events and we met a lot of his side of the--

Anita: I find Yuva to be very interesting because there's like no really discrimination against what kind of religion you are. Like you can find Ismaili people, you can find Punjabi people, Hindu people, Hindu Pun people [some discussion about this term] . . . Hindu Punjabi people, everyone--

Jyoti: Gujaratis--

Anita: At these dances, whatever, dances or--

Jyoti: Yea, like the last dance was great because I didn't know anybody. It was nice, it was like you get to meet new people--

Anita: Quite a change--

Jyoti: Some of them I knew, some of them I didn't. It was nice just to meet new people. It didn't really matter if they were Sikh or-- (TT-Y2)

These differences become minimized in the context of a conceptualization of an Indian community sharing a common culture, as expressed by Anil, one of the Gujarati youths:

It [whom I marry] doesn't matter to me because I've been exposed to--I know Sikhs, and I know a whole bunch of Hindus, and I know Gujaratis--it doesn't really matter to me. Whoever it is, it is kind-of-thing. I do prefer an Indian, though, because of the whole thing of preserving culture, and I'm going to try to make it pass it on as much as I can. So that way it'll probably be an Indian. I couldn't care whether it's Sikh or-- because the culture's there regardless. (TT-4)

"The culture" is expressed here at the *Holi* celebration by the semi-classical and classical songs and dances, the popular songs and dances of current Hindi films, the celebration of a Hindu festival, and being together with other Indians.

Expansion and diversity has been incorporated into the *Holi* celebration in three ways. Youth from different backgrounds cooperated in the planning and organization of this Hindu event. Secondly, organizers reached out to create wider networks of Indo-Canadian youth and made a concentrated effort to include them in this Yuva event by personally calling the entire membership list. Third, they made the effort to incorporate some cultural diversity by

including a Punjabi women's dance in the cultural talent show.

#### RELIGION

A second characteristic of a Yuva event is an aversion to orthodox religious practices and beliefs.

In 1991, two public *Holi* celebrations were produced in Vancouver: one by Yuva and the other by the V.H.P. A comparison of them serves to emphasize one of Yuva's priorities. Yuva members sharply distinguish culture and religion. Kumar, a founding member, explains this:

I think the reason some people do become interested after seeing our events is because . . . we don't have anything to do with religion. We don't have anything to do with religion at all. Like we promote culturalism in a few ways, like we promote our culture a bit, but we never promote religion. I think some people sometimes get afraid of--some people just don't like the religious side, and when they're younger--like when they get older they get more into all that--but not when they're young, like their early teens and so on . . . (TT-14)

His reference group here is young people, against whom he contrasts his definition of older people as being more religious. He also distinguishes culture from religion. A further distinction made in conversations is that between Yuva and other youth groups (according to Yuva's definitions of them). Yuva members contrast themselves in particular with Ismaili and Sikh groups which are conceptualized by Yuva's Hindu members to be large, very active, and strongly religiously oriented. There are other groups without religious

affiliation, such as, for example, those associated with MOSAIC and OASIS, but Yuva members do not compare themselves with these, which they consider to be more issue oriented.

Religion is seen as a divisive force in contrast to culture which is seen as shared. In a conversation about what Indo-Canadians have in common, this happened to be stated most clearly in a discussion group by a female Sikh participant:

We have lots in common, like with Hindu people and Fijian people or whatever. Even like when we speak, like our parents watch the same movies on T.V., and we can understand Hindi. It's all related, you can see it. Even the clothing and stuff, the *saris*, the food, everything is kind of shared. It's just, I think, the religion that sort of pulls everybody apart. (TT-Y1)

Yuva members rationalize *Holi* as being a non-religious celebration. Vijay explains:

Like *Holi* in a way is almost non-religious. It does have a big religious part, but a lot of it is strictly village celebrations. (TT-4)

An aversion to religion can explain the complete omission (except for Mr. Tirupathi's presentation) from Yuva's *Holi* celebration of any reference to the moral, ideological or social meanings of *Holi*, meanings which are embedded in Hindu mythology and beliefs. These are absent in any of their descriptions of *Holi*, and in the planning for the event. Its Hindu origins are ignored in the emphasis on it as a pan-Indian celebration.

By way of contrast, the V.H.P. produces a *Holi* newsletter and souvenir books containing articles explaining *Holi* and stressing its moral aspects. The following appears in the *Holi Souvenir 1991* (Goel 1991:13):

*Holi* spells enormous joy to the people, and it is one of those occasions when all reservations are thrown away. People come together to sing and dance and spray each other with colour, forgetting all the differences of sex, caste, creed, religions, sect and status. Equality amongst all the human beings is the basic theme of this great festival. . . . The basic theme of *Holi* is the celebration of goodness . . . *Holi* also denotes the harvest time. . . . It is a day of the year reserved for reaffirming our faith in God and in the human dignity and equality amongst all men and women.

For the V.H.P., *Holi* is an occasion to reiterate broad religious ideals. Another V.H.P. article (Gandhi 1992) states this explicitly: "It is a day of the year reserved for reaffirming the basic elements of Hindu Religion--love, respect, equality, brotherhood for everyone and faith in God.

For the youth, however, the 'joy,' which in religious ideology arises from the affirmation of goodness and equality, is translated into 'fun,' a characteristic which *Holi* also exhibits in India (Arunachalam 1980). Indian activities in what the youth see as parents' terms--ritual, religion, and classical arts--are often those things in which many youth are not interested. As Vijay explains above, culture is knowledge and heritage, religion is belief and ritual practice. The youth reject religion in these

terms, preferring to suspend belief in favour of rational choice.

Vijay describes what the difference between religion and culture means to him:

The Hindu religion I look at not as a religion like Christianity or anything. I look at it as culture. I see Hinduism, Hindu religion, more as culture of where we came from because there's the stories that tell and explain things. . . . And so the culture and the religion and ceremonies that occur because of this are all intertwined. So I see it more of as a cultural thing rather than as a religious thing. . . . I know that Laxmi may be the Goddess of Wealth and stuff, but I don't pray to them because of that. I see them and I understand the stories behind them and how they pertain to me, but I don't pray to them. But I'm interested in them and study them in the sense that they are a part of me regardless because of my culture. There's a fine line there, I know. But it's not something I practice but something I'd like to learn about. (TT-4)

In his definition religion is belief, ritual, and something to be practiced; culture is knowledge, resides in stories and ceremonies, and is something to be learned about. He explains the form religion takes in his home:

There are Indians that are highly religious. They go to the temple and they believe in fate. My Mom does, too, but my Dad is more of, you don't have to go to the temple as long as you live a straight life, a good life and you work hard and you're honest. . . . Sure, we have a little temple we have in the corner of our house . . . They light what they call *diva* . . . one just after you take a shower in the morning and then one before dinner at night, and that's always done, and it's more of a discipline. (TT-4)

His reference group here is also youth. It is his definition that ritual practices are "more of a discipline" than related to belief. He explained how he recently refused to

continue to do daily *pujas* at home, which his mother had always insisted upon, because that practice has no meaning for him.

I have noted differences in religiosity specifically remarked on in relation to Yuva: between youth and adults, and between Yuva and other youth groups. Another difference in religiosity often alluded to is that between men and women. The difference which Vijay noted above between the religiosity of his mother and father is a common one and is, to some extent, perpetuated in the second generation. This will be elaborated on in a following section of this chapter, "*Constructions of Gender*."

For Yuva members, associating with other Indians is a means of taking part in Indian culture. A statement by Narendra indicates in his own life a move away from culture as religion to culture as social networks when he says:

When I was small I used to always go to the temple and attend these religious events. But now I may attend these religious events less, but as long as I attend Yuva . . . I'm always kept up. (TT-9)

Yuva members integrate Indian culture into their lives by taking their turn in organizing functions like *Holi* and by strengthening connections between each other.

"Hinduism can be considered as something more than a given body of doctrine and practice . . . it is also a product of its spokesmen" (Burghart 1987a:225). The second gen-

eration are beginning to be spokespersons. Their interpretations will increasingly define Indian culture in Vancouver and what it means to be Hindu. In their production of *Holi*, religious ideology is left out and is replaced by fun and performance. The Indian culture which they integrate, they themselves construct as a-religious. They wish to avoid what they see as divisive beliefs in the case of Hindus and Sikhs in India, and between Hindus and Muslims. As Vijay described, their definitions of themselves as Hindus and their religiosity lies in belief in God, heritage, and wanting to learn more about it, and not necessarily in terms of ritual practice or absolute acceptance of doctrine.

#### LEARNING ABOUT CULTURE

I wanted to be involved [in Yuva] because I didn't know much about Indian culture at first, because I was just hanging around with my friends at school. They weren't really Indian friends. So I wanted to learn more about the Indian culture and the background, I wanted to get involved with more people, more Indo-Canadians, and primarily also I want to learn to organize and get involved . . . basically work with these people and set up these Indian events like *Holi*. . . . We've got to emphasize the fact that we are trying to unite these Indo-Canadians and it's not just a place to party . . . We're trying to benefit--it's special, we're giving the opportunity to learn more about other cultures. (TT-9)

A third criterion of at least some Yuva events is providing opportunities to learn about Indian culture.

Parents fear that youth are not interested in their culture

when they refuse to follow certain practices or values, or to accompany parents to Indian cultural or social events. Parents try to socialize their children into their culture of heritage by taking them to Indian activities, speaking to them in their Indic language, encouraging their participation in Indian activities, and sometimes providing--or insisting on--formal classes in language, religion, or arts. Parents' fears become intensified during their children's early to mid-teen years when, as described in Chapter Four, youth commonly show little interest in, or outrightly reject, any involvement with Indian culture.

Learning about their culture, however, gets to be important at a certain age, and one of Yuva's goals is to create a structure which will facilitate learning and sharing. But they want to learn in their own way, on their own terms. This *Holi* celebration allows the youth to show culture to others and to express what they understand about Indian culture. At the same time, it engages them in an activity that allows them to experience being Indian.

As well as becoming informed about their own and each others' cultures, Vijay (above) suggests another reason for sharing cultural knowledge. This group has grown up having to struggle with developing a sense of pride in their identity. The Yuva core group, those who have come through this struggle successfully in terms of positive self image

and self confidence, see the difficulties of others. They wish to share their experiences and provide support (particularly to their younger siblings).

A lot of the group I'm with . . . I know they probably think very similar to that [that the Indian part of one's identity is important]. But there are Indo-Canadians out there that some don't want to admit it. They want nothing to do with India and that's partly because they haven't been exposed to it as much as I have and my friends. . . . The value is almost a preservation of your culture, a wide base, I mean what we want to do in Yuva is to reach those Indo-Canadians that all have had a taste of both worlds and those that haven't. . . . and those that haven't experienced what India's like or been to India they can talk to people that have. And this way maybe they get an interest in going or whatever. I think it's important in that way. (Vijay, TT-4)

It [Yuva] just gets--lets people know--I guess we can talk to each other about things that we feel comfortable with, we can sort of learn a little bit about what it means to be Indian. We don't have to lose our Indian qualities. (Kumar, TT-14)

Vijay suggests that those who have been to India have a sense of culture which they can share with others. For him, cultural knowledge comes not only from socialization within the family and taking part in Indo-Canadian activities, but it is also based on personal experience in India.

Indian culture overseas is not constructed in isolation from influences from India.<sup>102</sup> Continuing links take the forms of personal visits, study trips both ways, visits

---

<sup>102</sup>Bhatnagar 1984; Helweg 1986:72-3; Mayer 1959:30-32; NACOI 1984. Appadurai (1991) describes cross-cultural influences as complex and multi-directional.

here by professionals and artists, information flow through various communication media, and the bringing of material artifacts. Vijay's father, Mr. Anand, describes the importance of such links. He recognizes that culture changes:

The culture won't change completely. It might enrich itself because then there'll be new ones coming in, always pumping ideas. The migration would be there. For instance, if the Indians had stopped coming to B.C. or Canada, say after 1950, and new blood had not come here, this generation wouldn't have know what's happening there. Even today I would say third generation Indians would like to visit India and see for their own what is their ancestry, what did they leave behind, what is there. . . . The Indian who leaves India and goes overseas takes certain amount of culture with him. If he doesn't go back home, or doesn't go back to India at all, and if he doesn't read or stay in contact, then he just preserves that old culture. India itself today has become very modern. . . . There is need of new blood all the time. But the only way you can get that is by culture exchange, go up there, visit the country, bring the best things. (TT-5)

Kumar's mother has been committed to exposing her children to India and to their relatives there:

And I think the most important thing [for maintaining culture for the children], now looking back, other than our network here, was our constant touch with people in India. In the last sixteen years we all went back . . . five times. The whole family used to go, and spend like two, two and a half months with them, talk to them. . . . Very few people actually will spend the money and keep those roots alive. I think it's really crucial to the Indian community. . . . I mean I couldn't afford the trips that I took in those days. I mean I could have lived so much more comfortably here if I didn't do it. But there's an urge within you to keep going back regardless of the price. (TT-13)

This taste of both worlds has a double impact. On the one hand, young people who go find their Indian sense of

identity strengthened. Kumar describes the influence these trips had on him:

I think it's very--it was very important for me. Going to India made me realize who I was. 'Cause when I was young I was very unsure of myself and what I was and what I was doing here and was I Canadian or was I an Indo-Canadian. But when I went to India, that's when I realized that I was a Hindu and I was Indo-Canadian. (TT-Y1)

On the other hand, those who go hold more contemporary conceptions of India than those who have remained isolated from it and perpetuate values and practices which were common when they (or their parents) left. Those who go find it easier to subscribe to an Indian identity based on contemporary urban Indian ways which are not so "old fashioned" as to be out of step with their own lives here:

My Mom and Dad having three daughters, it [marriage] was something that was always on their mind. But after going to India my aunt told them, 'I don't know why you people live in such a time warp.' She had a nice heart to heart with my Mom and she was saying, 'It was like you guys left India in the '60's and you're still hanging on to the values from the '60's. But our kids go to dances, our kids date, our kids don't have these restrictions. So why do you put them on your kids there? India has changed in twenty years, you guys haven't.' That sort of helped. (TT-16)

Madhu, who has visited her family in India, also observes changes there:

The new generation's very different. The new generation I found to be very rebellious. . . . They may not display it publicly, but they all have girlfriends and they all have boyfriends. At least, I hate to use the word, but at least the educated group, 'cause they have a sense of where you can look at both views and what's going on in the world. They all want to do their own

thing. They hate the caste system. They would never-- you see so much inter-caste marriages. It's amazing. In the city, not in the villages. . . . Also, you're seeing the joint families break up. There's not as many--young people wanting to go off. You can understand it too. A young married fellow--of course it's nice to live with, I guess, a joint family, but then there's privacy too. That was the one change I noticed, the biggest change, was that the joint family was not--you couldn't expect it anymore. You see it, it still exists, but it's not something you take for granted any more. . . . And love marriages. Big deal. That's happening even more than the joint family breaking up. (TT-11)

I have so far explicated three definitions or characteristics of a Yuva event. One is Yuva's goal to expand and diversify networks between young Indians. Secondly, they reject most orthodox religious beliefs and practices in their own lives. Yuva also emphasizes culture rather than religion, as religion is considered by them to be divisive. Third, as young Indians get to their late teens and early twenties, they want to learn more about their culture. This is the age group which has formed Yuva, and learning about their own and each others' cultures is one of their agendas. Following is the explication of the fourth aspect of a Yuva event, an efficient mode of operating.

#### EFFICIENCY

A fourth criterion of a Yuva event is that it be well organized in contrast to what they perceive as their parents' informal and ad hoc ways of operating. I have suggested that a difference between the 1990 and 1991 Yuva *Holi*

celebrations represents a development from The Family Friends Circle event to a Yuva event. I related this to their goals of expansion and diversification. The change is also indicative of their reference group identification in these matters.

As I will illustrate shortly, when it comes to planning, time management, and efficiency, these young people identify with a North American reference group, against which their Indian parents serve as a negative reference group. In contrast, their parents positively define Indian modes of social interaction by characteristics such as flexibility, spontaneity, imprecision, and personal contact.<sup>103</sup>

The youth also hold an ideal conceptualization of what an Indian mode of interaction is, as illustrated in one of the discussion groups, where the topic of Indian characteristics came up (cf. Roland 1986):

---

<sup>103</sup>Compare Bhagat and Kedia (1986), who describe the difficulty with which Indian professionals in the United States cope with "the pressures of superficial formalism" of the North American business world.

Kumar (1988:96-7) describes how time in India is defined by appropriateness rather than precision.

A related perception of time was described to me in relation to music concerts: "See, one thing happens in North American continent here, that we (India Music Society) are always short of time because the doors close at twelve. One o'clock the parking lot will be locked and you won't be able to get out. The Indian music is such that when the mood arises in the artists, time is no factor" (TT-5).

Ramesh: What really hit me there [in India] . . . when they heard some people from Canada were coming, it's like everyone would come there, 'What do these people look like?' But it's like anybody could come and leave and whatever. That's what I liked about it. Yea, here you can't do that. You can't just go over to somebody's house [general agreement and laughter] unannounced.

Kumar: Well, that's not altogether true, there are some people that you can just go to anytime.

Ranjit: Your families.

Kumar: Yea, your families. There are some people who are always there and you can just go there anytime and sit and talk. But there's always the thing that a lot of places you got to call and go. That's the North American society way, right. You can't just go to somebody's house, 'cause they might be busy. They gotta do things, you know. [laughter] (TT-Y1)<sup>104</sup>

In practice the youth themselves are too busy to live entirely according to the ideal they envision, but the standard exists for them making that kind of social interaction a possible and acceptable norm.

Mr. Lal works in a mainstream professional job. He also talks about applying what he sees as "Indian culture" which is "so different from Canadian" "in our day-to-day activities" (TT-12). He speaks about how he has applied it in his job by being flexible, not insisting on precise work hours or rules, dealing with people on a personal level, and applying situational ethics (cf. Bhagat and Kedia 1986).

---

<sup>104</sup>Dhar (1973) describes how an Indian neighborhood is viewed as an extension of one's home. He explains the difficulty Indians have in adapting to the very different North American urban neighborhood of isolated enclosures.

Mr. Bindi is another Yuva parent who holds a responsible mainstream job. The nature of his job requires that he understand mainstream cultural expectations. He explains the difference he perceives between the "North American" way, his generation of Indians, and the second generation of Indians (cf. Roland 1986):

In typical Indian way I let it go. If I was a perfect North American I would say, 'Excuse me, this is a very basic difference of opinion.' . . . I just didn't take a strong position. Because in our community you don't say 'no' or 'yes' too strongly because that leaves the doors open. To an outsider it will come to a very wishy washy--but it works fine and this is what [his daughter is] hopefully starting to see . . . leave it open. I think it's less stressful, too. Set your expectations to a level where you won't get shattered one way or the other. (TT-2)

In relation to the organization of one Indian event Mr.

Bindi explains:

They have been disorganized and consequently did not think of it earlier. Kids resist that, kids want everything planned ahead. And our community, we don't plan things that way. It is just snap, last minute thing, ad hoc decision. It's a group trait. (TT-3)

One weekend I came across two different examples of "kids resist[ing] that" (O-3). The first arose at a Yuva council meeting in connection with an activity which one of their parents' groups expected Yuva to organize. Yuva council members and their parents often refer jokingly to the lack of organization of events organized by adults, compared to the efficiency of the youth. The youth are on many occa-

sions recruited to organize events and are highly praised by their parents for their efficiency.

On this occasion Yuva had not been formally informed of a last minute change of date which now conflicted with their own plans. They had heard about the date from one of their parents. They find it hard to accept that the organizations and activities in which their parents are involved are often handled in an informal, ad hoc manner, often with unspoken expectations of what others will do. "They keep giving us things last minute." One of the Yuva council members firmly stated, "I'm not going to take this the Indian way." By this she meant that she will not allow the parents to assume that Yuva will simply be available to comply with these last minute, ad hoc decisions. The council discussed whether they should "jump the gun and tell them we can't do it" (i.e. before being formally approached). They decided to a) take the initiative to inform the parents of their own planned schedule, and b) to request the parents' group to formally define their expectations.

This was a decisive move away from interactions on the basis of unarticulated expectations and obligations between family and friends, to more formalized proceedings. By their reference group identification with North American modes of business interaction together with their affirma-

tions of Indian identity, their decisions and actions are redirecting models of interaction between Indians.

The second incident was revealed to me the day after the Yuva meeting. It does not involve Yuva, but is useful to describe because it underlines the Yuva incident. I was speaking with a young woman who has often organized the V.H.P. shows. She had not planned on doing it this year. Her explanation of how this changed echoed for me the previous day's discussion at the Yuva meeting. According to Veena, the V.H.P. Board had not done anything about the show, but had just assumed she would handle it again, in spite of the fact that she had informed them that she would not. At first she refused because she is busy with her own commitments and because she prefers to be more organized than last minute arrangements allow. But she was concerned that if she did not do it, there might not be a show. She did not want to see that happen, either, so she did all her phoning and pulled it together. In this incident, she felt forced to succumb to the unspoken expectations and assumptions of her elders.

Another example of a move from informal family relations to formal procedures is the decision to reimburse the mothers for their food contributions. This is a model of interaction which contrasts with systems of mutual support and obligation, in which support is given without immediate

compensation but with an expectation of future reciprocity. The model applied here is not one of Indian family, but one of short term business interaction (see section on "A Family Event" for elaboration on family ideals).

Yuva council members strive to achieve punctuality in their meetings and their planned activities. In the context of tight work and study schedules, they, like Veena, feel frustrated when things do not run on time. Through sometimes joking, sometimes disparaging, remarks about "Indian standard time" they compare their own efficiency to their perceived inefficiency of adult values and plans. These are held to be both faults and endearing characteristics, depending on which reference group they are aligning themselves in a given instance, which in turn depends on the pressures and expectations inherent in the situation.

Although punctuality is aimed for in Yuva meetings, their *Holi* Show, contrary to their stated intentions, started late and people wandered in at leisure. None of the youth were disconcerted about this. Their *Holi* celebration, in which they are highlighting their Indian identity, can appropriately run late. Here they can good naturedly joke about "Indian standard time" as a characteristic in which they themselves share.

A CULTURAL EVENT

If we didn't have a youth group like that, sure there would be groups of friends and that kind of thing, but there'd be nothing organized, nothing could be shown that these are the cultural events and that. They may hear of it but they may not actually get to see it. . . . I think what Yuva does by holding cultural events, people can see a little bit of what goes on . . . by expressing or showing, telling, explaining about what the ceremony is, why it's performed, it gives them a little more sense of the culture, what kind of people they were. (TT-4))

I have discussed Yuva's *Holi* celebration as a Yuva event. It is also defined as a cultural event. Here the distinction between culture as taken-for-granted lived experience, and ethnicity as culture made conscious (Patterson 1977) does not hold up. From the point of view inside the Indian community, "Indian events" or "cultural events" are culture made conscious and put on display for insiders and/or others. These contrast with everyday family and community activities.

I will discuss the conceptualization of a cultural event, the role of language, and gender roles in relation to culture.

## MAKING THE EVENT "CULTURAL"

In order to make this event cultural, Indian food is served along with other snacks, and all Yuva members, including the young men, dress in their Indian clothes. The main component of Yuva's *Holi* celebration as a cultural event is the cultural or talent show.

In order to emphasize the conscious aspect of a cultural event like *Holi*, I will briefly contrast it to a Yuva dance, which is designated by them as a "social," not a "cultural," event (O-1). Yuva dances provide opportunities for Indo-Canadian youth of both sexes to get together. Indian culture is not consciously displayed. There is no Indian food and English is the only language spoken. Dress is fashionable Western-style clothing for that age group.

However, *bhangra*--a style of Punjabi folk dance, popularized in Britain, and becoming a fad here as well<sup>105</sup>--is included. According to the lengthy discussions at Yuva council meetings, a requirement for a disk jockey is that he have current, popular *bhangra* tapes, and that he play just the right mixture of *bhangra* and rock. Too much is not appreciated, as expressed in a review of one of the dances by a council member:

. . . a lot of people complained about the music. Apparently there was too much Punjabi music . . . we don't usually have that much. Because a lot of kids just don't feel comfortable dancing to it yet. We don't want to get a reputation for being one of those dances where you just play Indian music the whole time, and the DJ was quite strictly sticking to that for quite a while until a lot of us went up and said, 'Can you play something else?' 'Cause I myself don't like dancing to that stuff all the time. It's fun for a while. . . . it's

---

<sup>105</sup>See Wong (1990). A full examination of the place which *bhangra* has as an expression of cultural identity for youth, and the degree to which it continues to have an association with Punjabi culture, is a topic for further research.

been done but it's always done with just one or two songs. Maybe not more than five songs for the whole dance.

The social dances contain elements of Indian popular culture, but it is not consciously exhibited. In contrast, Yuva's *Holi* celebration as a designated "cultural" event is an occasion for consciously displaying, demonstrating, and sharing culture.

In response to a question about what "culture" means for Yuva, Vijay describes what he means by culture:

" . . . where we start is ceremonies. Most people that come to Yuva know a little about their background. But a large part of what you were calling the Indian way of life . . . a large part of that is the ceremonies . . . the religious ceremonies. A lot of the culture is based on strong religious background. Things happen in India because of--the explanations are because of the God had done this, and there are stories that go on and on and on, and a lot of that is celebrated certain days [speaking in an awed and enthusiastic tone]. So what we started, we have like a *Holi* thing with the throwing of the colours . . . and there's a story behind that. . . . (TT-4)

The rituals and mythology express cultural values and beliefs. Participation in celebrations is enacting culture.

Anyone who has experienced *Holi*, even the young people, recognize that this celebration is a pale imitation of the real thing in India. Nevertheless, the authenticity of *Holi* as an Indo-Canadian event is strengthened by the fact that most of the participants are Indian, and that these participants understand it to be an Indian event and are therefore implicated in constructing it as such.

## LANGUAGE

In the context of cultural activities, language is always an issue which pulls in opposite directions. On the one hand, a strong motivation for parents to teach their children their native Indic languages is to keep them in touch with their heritage. Being able to speak with relatives is, as will be seen in the statements following, a strong incentive for parents to teach their children, and for the children themselves to learn the language as well as a means to do so.

On the other hand, it is partly the use of Hindi and other Indic languages in temples and organized functions, which is cited as a cause of making young people feel alienated and keeping them away from community events. The use of regional languages is also a factor in keeping separate the activities of Hindi speakers, Bengalis, Gujaratis, Punjabis, Tamils, Maharashtrians, Malayalam speakers, and so on.

The suggestion that, "Maybe somebody should do it in Hindi" is a tentative gesture to appropriate language as an expression of culture. But the response that "nobody understands it" reflects the inappropriateness of Indic languages as a cultural marker for youth. Language is an expression of identity for parents. The second generation's

first language and lingua franca (as it is in India, too) is English.<sup>106</sup>

Nevertheless, most Indian children are socialized into at least understanding simple conversations in their parents' Indic languages. The following statements by parents demonstrate a range of strategies used to pass the language on:

For the first couple of years, you guys [addressing her son] lost the language, remember, we didn't speak it at home. Then we went back to India and they couldn't talk to their relatives and it hit me, 'What am I doing? . . . We want to be able to talk to our relative when we go back. And English they'll know, I don't have to harp on the English language, that will come naturally. . . . We started speaking in Hindi. . . . [now] they'll speak Hindi and they'll understand. (TT-14))

But nowadays, our generation [i.e. their children] is not understanding Hindi at all. . . . they speak, they hear, they think in English. . . . They [her daughters] understand [Hindi] very well. They used to take lessons. They can write in Hindi letters to my, our grandmother. . . . [V.H.P.] wanted some Hindi teachers. So I said sure. . . . At home--[friend]'s daughter and my daughter are same age, so we said--it was sometimes not easy to go to temple every Sunday--'We have something or the other.' So we started having classes individually. (TT-17)

See, the good part was, when my Dad was here, he did not speak English. And even now, when they have to meet someone who cannot speak, [snaps fingers] then they do speak. But all the cousins [in India] speak in English. (TT-10)

The following conversation between Mrs. Nandi and her children illustrates further means of learning language:

---

<sup>106</sup>Salman Rushdie (1991:61-70) argues that English is an Indian language.

Mrs. Nandi: When I speak in Gujarati, he's answering in English. . . . he can understand everything but he doesn't want to talk back in Gujarati--

Narendra (her son): Yea, I can understand everything--

Mrs. Nandi: Yea, he can understand everything, because I don't speak English at home. . . . I want my children to learn my language so they can understand my songs, they can know about God, they can sing . . .

Jyoti: I understand Hindi because I watch Hindi movies and stuff, it's easier to understand--

Mrs. Nandi: Because we are singing, you know--

Jyoti: Yea, all the Indian songs we sing, most of them, are in Hindi--

Mrs. Nandi: Yea, so we can speak in Hindi, and we can sing in Hindi. (TT-9)

Some of the Yuva members give their descriptions of learning language:

When I was younger my parents would not allow us to speak English at home. They'd ignore us if we asked for something in English. They'd say 'No, ask me this in Hindi.' So they kind of in a way made us speak the language. But then we all went to India quite a few times and when we were younger we picked up the language. (TT-Y1))

I'm learning Hindi [at U.B.C.]. . . . Gujarati I've--my parents made efforts to teach us. On Sundays at the temple they have Gujarati classes, but I didn't like their methods. I was too young, and I don't think they were proper teachers, and I couldn't pick it up the way they were trying to teach it. My parents tried to teach me at home. I guess I could read it to a certain extent, probably could write a little bit. Speak it's not absolute fluent, but I can speak, and I can understand. (TT-4)

You'll find that the little kids coming back [from India] speak fluently, they're just rattling off Bengali, it's just coming out of their mouth. The other thing, when I go, it's easier for me to communicate with

my cousins or my aunts and uncles over there, because I know the language, so it isn't a barrier. Even though they know English and they speak it well, 'cause they learn in English in India, so the communication part of it is not a problem. But when you speak in their language, I don't know, it would seem it makes them more comfortable. It makes me more comfortable, too. I don't stand out. But you can tell I'm not from Calcutta . . . 'cause I have an accent I would assume . . . my pronunciation's different and stuff. (TT-8)

I can speak Punjabi and Hindi but I'm not extremely fluent in either. I can carry on a conversation and can comprehend fully. My parents can speak both. In the house they speak Punjabi to each other and to us. We've always responded to them in English, we've never spoken to them in Punjabi. My mother's mother never spoke a word of English. She used to live in [their town] so that's--and then going back to India you pick up a little bit. (TT-16)

The second generation grow up hearing Hindi or other Indic language spoken at home. It is common for children to understand their parents speaking their Indic language, but to respond in English (Wakil 1981:937). Some parents are content to expose their children to the language, even if they do not speak it; others insist that their children speak; still others provide some sort of formal or informal training. Having to communicate with grandparents and other relatives who do not speak English, either here or in India, is a powerful incentive. Hindi films and music are also a way to learn some Hindi.

These statements give the impression that some simple Hindi could certainly be attempted and understood at the *Holi* celebration. But English is a broader common

denominator, and so it is chosen. They are integrating Indian culture in a form they can easily understand.

#### CONSTRUCTIONS OF GENDER

Yuva male and female members work together to produce this cultural event. In doing so, they reproduce some aspects of gender roles at the same time as they blur some role definitions.

Indian girls and women are often referred to as culture-bearers (cf. Leonard 1989):

They [parents] seem to feel the importance of their daughters learning dance for the sake of acquiring physical grace and appreciation of the art while unconsciously maintaining the female role of culture-bearer within the family tradition. Parents express the fact that if the daughters appreciate and imbibe the ideals of Indian feminine behaviour, then these values will be passed down into the next generation. (Nainpally 1989:16; see also Nodwell 1985)

Respondents perceive that girls are pushed more and have higher expectations held of them in relation to dress and food habits, participation in the arts, and religion (Nainpally 1989). The expectation that daughters will imbibe and pass on culture is expressed in a Yuva discussion group:

Ramesh (male): I really don't have that much Indian culture. I know it's sad but it's true.

. . .

Manjit (female): [Ramesh], you don't have to answer this, but in a way do you, uh, not really resent your parents, but do you wish they taught you how to speak

the language better and pushed you into the culture a little bit more?

Ramesh: . . . Yea, looking back I wish. It would be a lot easier. Definitely.

Manjit: If you ended up marrying somebody who was the same as you, would you push it onto your kids?

Ramesh: Yea, I would have no doubts about that. But I'm sure in that case the person I would marry, and she spoke the language, I'm sure she would do most of the teaching or whatever. Also, she would be teaching me too. (TT-Y2)

One mother of teenagers expresses a similar perception:

Those boys do not do enough to retain their culture. But we expect that when they get married, their wives will make sure that they do it. I only hope that they don't go out and marry somebody else or that's the end of the culture and religion. (TT-6)

Ramesh's experience as a male is one of not being pushed into cultural activities and knowledge. Comments by others, parents and children, confirm that this is common. Conversely, both statements portray an expectation, also commonly held, that girls will maintain their culture and in the future instill it in their own families.

My research has suggested that Indo-Canadian women's roles characterize them as culture bearers. Indian women's roles as homemakers and child nurturers (Ghosh 1981; Naidoo 1984) gives them the close contact with their children which allows for serving as role models and socializing their children. They often engage in teaching cultural skills such as language, cooking, ritual practices, and singing and dancing to their own and others' children.

My research has most clearly revealed two aspects of women's roles as culture bearers: 1) they are active in religious practice, and 2) they are involved in dance and singing.

In relation to the first role definition, Burghart (1987c:9) comments:

Although Hinduism's privileged spokesmen are almost invariably Brahman and ascetic men, women take the more active role among the laity in the perpetuation of religious life. (cf. Naidoo 1984)

Wakil et al. (1981:938) present a table which indicates that of the participants in their study (primarily Hindu, also Sikh, Muslim, and Christian from India and Pakistan), 82% of mothers and 72% of fathers were concerned "to a great extent" about their children learning and practicing their religion. The same table shows that 42% of girls and 23% of boys were interested in learning about and practicing their religion "to a great extent."

At Sunday prayer meetings in Hindu *mandirs* there is typically a higher attendance by women. (Special occasions tend to draw entire families). Those who adhere to religious practices tend to insist that their daughters also take part in religious activities. Girls in their teens and early twenties are visible at prayer meetings, but rarely are boys in this age group in evidence (cf. Taylor 1976:88-96, 109-114).

Hindu women have responsibilities to perform various rituals aimed at ensuring the well being of their families. *Karva Chauth*, for example, is an important annual Hindu celebration for this purpose. Mrs. Kapoor, for example, who describes herself as not very religious in the sense of following ritual practices, fasts on this day. Other celebrations, such as *Durga Puja*, *Navratri*, and *Tulsi Vivaha*, revolve primarily around women's rituals (a male Brahman *pujari*, however, presides and, in Vancouver, takes some guidance from the women in attendance). Yuva members note that, even in daily worship, their mothers tend to adhere to religious practices more than their fathers:

Anil: I guess my Mom is a little more religious than my Dad. . . . My Mom does nag at me quite a bit, 'Oh you should wake up in the morning and pray for ten or fifteen minutes.'

EN: Does she do that?

Anil: Yea, my Mom does.

EN: Does your Dad do it?

Anil: Um, no.

Jyoti: That's exactly with my parents. My Dad doesn't do it--

Anita: Our whole family does.

Jyoti: Did your Dad always?

Anita: Yea.

Anil: I'd have to say my Mom is quite religious.

Kumar: My family is not at all. We've never done anything like that. I think that's mainly because of

our--just the way we were even in India. We had a *mandir* in India in our house, but my mother's side, they were never really into--like they all believe and they all go to the *mandir*--but they were never really into praying every day.

Sunil: My Mom does, my Dad doesn't. Every morning after she takes a shower she has a little thing set up in a closet--

Jyoti: My Mom does the same thing--

Sunil: And she says her little verses--

Jyoti: Yea, my Mom does the same thing.

Jas: I guess I'm not that religious. My Mom is the one--every Sunday [she goes to Gurdwara]--if she's working she won't--my Dad goes with her. Whenever my Mom and my Dad say go, I always go with them. Whenever they say they're going I say, 'Okay, I'll come with you.' I won't just go out of the blue by myself.  
(TT-Y2)

This is not to say that men are not involved in religious activities at home. In the Das household, for example, Mrs. Das has always had a small *mandir* in their bedroom, and in addition to saying prayers, she makes an offering from every meal and serves *prasad*. Recently Mr. Das has set up a larger *mandir* in an alcove where he performs daily prayers and offers *puja* every morning. Mr. Chand, now retired, also has a *mandir* in his office closet (most Hindu homes have such *mandirs* in the parents' bedroom or in a spare room closet) where he regularly says prayers, offers *pujas*, and meditates. Yet, while not all women observe religious practices equally strictly, and many men are also committed to their religions, women appear to be at least as rigorous in

religious practices and temple attendance as their husbands or often more so.

Of the individuals taking part in the Yuva discussions, the young Hindu and Sikh women (e.g. Jyoti, Lakshmi, Manjit) admit to being religious in the sense of spirituality and belief in God, whether or not they subscribe to all the ritual practices. The young men (Ramesh, Kumar, Vijay; all Hindu) on the other hand, express rejection of religiosity in favour of more pragmatic attitudes such as they attribute to their fathers. Yuva members describe their fathers as being more open-minded, practical and down to earth.

Kumar summarizes what the group had discussed:

I think that the mothers try to make their daughters more the way they are, like in terms of religion and so on. Whereas the fathers don't do the same for the sons. [general agreement] Or they wouldn't be as concerned about the son because the son can do whatever he wants. But the daughter should learn how to cook, she should go to the *mandir*.

Expectations of religious observance by girls are transmitted to the second generation through role modeling or direct pressure. Yuva members discuss their observations:

Ramesh: The way I look at it is, I know a lot more people who know a lot about it [religion] who are the same age--

Kumar: A lot of guys, a lot of girls, or both?

Ramesh: I don't know, both--

Kumar: I don't think guys know, in general. I think girls know a lot more, in general. That's what I find. I know a few people that I know my age, I know a few guys that know a lot about the religion, but I think a lot more girls--

Ramesh: Yea, I think you're right--

Kumar: What do you think? [to one of the girls]

Gita: I agree. My brother, like he comes around-- whenever my parents tell him to go anywhere he'll, like, go [she makes a face] . . . the *arti*, but other than that he'll just sit there like, 'Can we leave now?'

Related to religious adherence, Jyoti's mother is also more insistent about her daughter than her son not eating meat. For her, this is part of being Indian and Hindu:

Eating meat, you know, I don't like if girls, they go and eat meat. . . . it's against the religion to eat meat, especially for girls when we are praying, we know when we go to the temple we pray. . . . Because I have been brought up in a very religious family. . . . we pray to God, we don't eat meat, and we respect our parents. So I want my children to become like that. So what if we are living in Canada or a Western country, I don't care where they are living. We are Indians, we want to stay like Indians. We are Hindus. We don't eat meat. (TT-9)

This case study indicates that women observe religious practices more conscientiously than men, and that higher expectations are placed on girls than on boys as far as religious observance goes.

The second women's role definition is participating in dance and singing. Many adult women are active in danc-

ing and singing and teach both in formal classes and informally at home (Nodwell 1993). Many young girls are expected to learn some of these skills.<sup>107</sup>

In Vancouver, Indian women and girls far outnumber the men and boys in participation in Indian dance and music. The following conversation, a response to a question about gender differences in culture, indicates that this is a result of expectations and socialization. I quote a rather long passage because the conversation demonstrates how the speakers define differences between each others' communities. At the same time, underlying shared perceptions enable them to sympathize and to laugh together:

Ramesh (Gujarati): It's [dancing] expected, though, of a girl, isn't it, for girls to do that?

Manjit (Sikh): In our culture [Sikh] guys do lots of *Bhangra*--

Ranjit (Sikh): There's very few for women, but there's starting to be more. It's the opposite in ours, yea--

Manjit: And guys are pretty active in our religion too. Even in the Gurdwara they're all men--

---

<sup>107</sup>Leonard (1989:22,n.30; see also pp. 13-15) cites a study from Los Angeles by Kiran Ghei, "*From Bhangra to Kuchipudi: Movement Dimensions of Indian Public Events in Los Angeles*" presented at the West Coast Conference of the Asian Studies Association, Long Beach, October 1989. Leonard describes that Ghei "speculates that women and girls are primarily responsible for carrying on Indian culture in the United States, particularly through learning and performing Indian dance."

In some Indian families in Vancouver, public dancing and performing retains a stigma. My data does not, however allow me to comment further on this, as all the Yuva respondents do dance and perform.

Ranjit: It's male dominated--

EN: But that would be true in the mandirs, too, wouldn't it?

Lakshmi (Bengali): Yea--

Kumar (Hindi speaking Hindu): The Pandit is a man . . . mainly controlled by men, that's true. But, yea, I find that with us, more girls do things than guys do. Guys don't really do that much. Girls do the singing, dancing, all that--

Manjit: Cooking [laughter] . . . go ahead, say it--  
[laughter]

Kumar: No, that's really true, girls do most of the--and guys--

Ranjit: Maybe 'cause they're interested in it more than guys are?

Kumar: Maybe they just get pushed more into that area than guys do--

Ramesh: It's expected--

Kumar: Like nobody expects-- . . . I think in our . . . the girls are pushed to do these things when they're younger. The guys are not expected to do--to get into dancing or singing. Guys are expected to learn about the car or whatever [laughter] things like that . . . I guess it's very different for you guys (addressing Ranjit and Manjit).

Ranjit: Actually, all the Gujarati girls I do know, they are all in Kathak dancing . . . all of them--

Kumar: Actually, that's an important thing. If you ever go to Navratri, this is the scene . . . It's in a big gym and there's a big circle. There's all girls, ladies, from little kids up to oldest ladies, and just all ladies, all women. And up in the bleachers, right [holds his hands up like binoculars and mimes peering over all the dancers. Everyone laughs] . . . guys . . . talking . . . and sometimes there's a few guys that get dancing, and there's a few older gentlemen who start dancing, and some of the younger. But it's

about ninety percent and ten percent. Only when it really gets going or only on the last day do you see all the guys get involved. You [to Ramesh] know what I'm talking about, right?

Ramesh: Yea, exactly right--

Kumar: And a lot of the guys are up there, you know, they're there for a reason. Even like older men and so on, they're up there videoing their wives. [laughter] But that's the typical scene because the guys just don't do it.

Ranjit: Do you think it's slowly changing, though? Have you guys seen a difference?

Kumar: Not at Navratri I don't think--

Ramesh: Well guys our age are starting to--

Kumar: Yea, our age, we're really starting to do it now--

Ramesh: Like our fathers wouldn't do it . . .

Kumar: But some of the younger guys are really getting into it. The guys about eighteen to twenty . . . but it's not changing too much--

Gita: There are some guys that are learning stuff. Like I've know a couple of guys that are learning *tabla*. They're learning an instrument but it is Indian, and they're enjoying it. In a way they're kind of learning something Indian, but they're not--

. . .

Lakshmi: In our culture [Bengali], dances are left to girls, but then when it comes to plays, skits, males take up, they do that-- (TT-Y1)

Whether through consciously applied parental pressure, unrecognized socialization, or influences of mainstream gender stereotypes, the youth respondents of this study appear to have followed certain norms in relation to

leisure activities. Boys describe their involvement in sports, computers, and rock bands while growing up. Girls are sometimes also involved in sports at school, but also in dance and singing. Where this involvement is extra-curricular, it almost invariably includes Indian arts.

To my knowledge there are fewer than half a dozen boys who take classical dancing lessons in Vancouver. However, probably Vancouver's most popular Indian dance group, the Punjabi Artists Association of Richmond *bhangra* dancers, is primarily male. Since *bhangra* is traditionally a male dance, they have only recently included women in their highly skilled and exciting performances. Singing lessons are also attended primarily by women and girls. At the semi-annual classical singing workshops conducted by visiting artists from India a few men participate but no boys to date. Some boys take private instrumental lessons such as *tabla*, violin, and *sitar*, but these activities are not as visible as dance nor as common. Over the last few years, I have observed an increase in the number of boys who dance in *Navratri*, as well as dance or act in the major shows, although it still remains a very small percentage.<sup>108</sup>

---

<sup>108</sup>Other than some studies of Bharat Natyam classical dance, there is no literature on involvement in artistic activities in Indian diasporas (Nodwell 1993). Nor am I aware of any study of involvement in cultural activities examining gender as a variable.

Air bands, the miming and dancing of favourite Hindi and Punjabi film songs, is very popular. Women often do it playing both the male and female parts. Gradually, over the last few years, more boys are taking part in public performances. Very young boys are being taught to perform and receive a great deal of encouragement.

When I asked young men about the kinds of cultural activities in which they engage, they quip about passive activities such as, "we watch the girls" (TT-Y1), or "we drink tea" (TT-8). When I asked Vijay, he laughed:

What is there for a guy to do? There is instruments and stuff, but I never had the interest in doing that. I used to always watch her [his sister] practice or her rehearsals or her shows or whatever she'd do. . . . I think girls are pushed more or encouraged more to do--like Indian classical dancing and learn singing and that kind of thing--compared to guys. . . . But again it's a stereotype. On the majority I think it is that way, the ladies do more of the singing and the dancing and the guys do more of the instrument playing and the setting up of the celebration and that kind of thing. They play the big roles, but they don't do the other things. (TT-4)

After Ganesh's response about the tea, his Bengali mother interjected:

Mrs. Mohan: You do theatre. They do theatre, drama--

Ganesh: Oh yeah that's right, exactly. When the adults do a Bengali play, I like to get involved.

Mr. Mohan (father): You like to get involved in the *puja*.

Ganesh: I help. My father does a lot of the sound system, does the equipment at the functions and stuff. My mother helps out . . . so I help wherever I can. I

do little things like set up tables and stuff. . . . The friends that I have in the Bengali Society, we attend the functions I guess mainly. We're there. We spend time together. We spend time together outside the functions. (TT-8)

At these functions, several young women always take an active part. The very few young men who are seen at all, tend to hang around the edges or slip outside to socialize together, which Ganesh maintains is worthwhile in itself for maintaining relationships with other Bengalis. One mother who is highly involved in Gujarati activities laments the lack of participation by boys:

In India, the boys are involved. But in Africa, where many of the Gujaratis are coming from, no, boys are not, not as much. And here it is quite lax. Although in the Ganesh School<sup>109</sup> there are equal numbers, boys do take part--but if it comes to acting, things like that, you know, in *Navratri* also, the proportion is fewer men and boys--but here they are taking part, but not in proportion. It should be half half. (TT-6)

As Vijay suggested above, men are more actively involved in the running of organizations through which public culture is produced. In Yuva, young men and women were considered equally for nomination to the council, and they take equal responsibility. This appears to be a change from the roles their mothers played. Mrs. Das, when asked what

---

<sup>109</sup>Ganesh School is run by the V.H.P. during Sunday prayer meetings, finishing in time for the children to join the adults for *arti*. The school holds classes in Hindi and Gujarati, and in the past also in Bengali, and teaches some basic Hindu beliefs and practices.

role women play in India Club, describes common expectations for her generation:

Without wives they can't do anything [laughs]. . . . Oh we were the backbone. If there were any activities, we have to make phone calls, we have to arrange for Walk-a-Thon. Food is another problem, item to be arranged. And you have to get involved all the people, so ask them to come, bring some pot luck dinner. (TT-17)

A few women over the years, including Mrs. Om, Mrs. Kapoor, and Mrs. Ghosh have held positions on India Club and V.H.P. boards, including the position of President. They are, however, the exceptions. Mrs. Om, who is very active, explains:

With the Vishva Hindu Parishad I have a lot of say . . . I have say in keeping in contact with the other communities, other political organizations, and they leave it completely up to me what I do. . . . Whereas, even Gujarati Society--with Vishva Hindu Parishad I am the only lady on the board. Last year we had two but then she wasn't coming most of the time. And the previous year also I was the only one--whereas Gujarati Society we try to make it fifty-fifty. . . . Yea, there you can say that many a times men would like to keep that kind of organizing and all that and ladies being involved with the, let's say, preparing the meals in the picnic, taking the jobs like that. (TT-6)

The Yuva membership list indicates that two thirds of the members are women. This is consistent with the perception that boys are just beginning to be more interested, as Kamla's comment observes:

I just see a lot of people asking me now, that I would never have thought were really interested. A lot of the guys that just never cared before or didn't think they cared, they all of a sudden seem to be waking up. 'There's a whole different culture out here, guys, let's go grab some.' (TT-1)

It may also be that girls, who are under greater social restrictions than boys, feel a greater need for a social outlet.

The latter situation is an aspect of double standards--different treatment and expectations of boys and girls--about which so many young women complain. In discussing their beliefs about what aspects of Indian culture they would pass on to their children, Yuva members reveal some elements of Indian culture which are important, and some aspects of double standards:

EN: Would you pass on any of your Indian values to your children?

Anil: I would think that they would have to have the same type of respect. Like we're talking about money [general reciprocity, discussed in following section, "A Family Event"], how it's not really important. I would probably have the same type of feeling with my children. . . .

Jyoti: I think religion-wise it would be difficult because we don't know anything ourselves to pass it on. I know myself that I wouldn't be praying every-day. [Anita] would because she's been brought up like that. I have been tried to be brought up like that, but I haven't been, so I don't think that would be passed on. But going to *Navratri*, dancing--I know I would stress that. I would want my daughters to learn Indian classical dancing.

Kumar: Your daughters, not your sons?

Jyoti: No, I don't want-- [laughter]

Kumar: Double standard or what-- . . .

[someone interjects a comment about football]

Jyoti: Okay, I admit it. I can't help it. I'm sure I would let him go out with whoever he wanted.

Sunil: I wouldn't want my son skipping or learning classical dancing. I think that's part of the Indian culture too, the families in India want their sons into sports--

Jyoti: Doctor, and she should be not the nurse. She can have, education-wise, equal. I'd expect them to work hard.

Kumar: That's a distinct difference. Because her [Jyoti's] brother has always been pushed to study, and never once have her parents even told her you have to study--

Anita: I don't think that [Narendra] was really pushed. . . . The distinction between [Jyoti] and [Narendra] is [Jyoti]'s better at dancing, whereas [Narendra] is more school-oriented. They're both good in their own ways--

Jyoti: But I think that's a result . . . [Narendra] was always a good--he's very artistically inclined. He used to dance our culture dances. When he was really young he used to do Michael Jackson dances just like me. It's just been forced one way and forced the other way. I've always been praised for dancing. And my school, it's never been talked about. Even now, when I say to Mom, 'I'm going to get a degree,' she goes, 'Oh, what do you want--'(TT-Y2)

Definitions of Indian culture expressed here include:

respect for elders (see following section, "*A Family Event*"), reciprocity between family members, culture as not necessarily equated with religious ritual practices, and dance as a symbol of culture.

The speakers also refer to double standards in educational expectations. Anita, who has only sisters, tries to attribute the expectations placed on Jyoti and her brother to a difference in interests and skills. Jyoti,

however, insists that, although opportunities are available to boys and girls, they have been socialized by parental encouragement and pressure into developing in different directions.

In accordance with expectations of being culture bearers, girls are also expected to "look Indian." It is easily observable that women wear Indian clothing to Indian events and often at home, while few men do. A few middle aged and older men occasionally wear kurtas over dress pants, even at Indian public events, and fewer still wear Nehru jackets on more formal occasions.<sup>110</sup> In contrast, women enjoy wearing their Indian clothing and take every opportunity to do so. As Jyoti explains:

I just love wearing suits and I love wearing *saris* . . . we don't get a chance down here and when the chance does come, everybody wears whatever they can, 'cause they're so beautiful, the *saris*. I mean I have tons of gorgeous *saris* which I haven't even had--like I've worn them maybe once or twice in all the years that we've lived here. . . . My Mom's always said . . . 'Even if I could wear a *sari* to work I would.' . . . she loves to wear *saris*. (TT-9)

Parents' need to maintain their family's reputation (Mandelbaum 1988) can translate into demands that their girls dress appropriately:

I think because I enjoy wearing suits I find it a real pain when we're going to someone's house, just to sit

---

<sup>110</sup>In Indian cities, middle and upper class men tend to dress in Western style clothing in public, while their wives wear Indian clothing.

even, and my Mom will say 'Wear a suit,' and I'll say, 'You know, I don't feel like wearing a suit tonight. Why do I have to wear a suit?' . . . if there's going to be elder people there she'll want me to wear a suit just to please them. (TT-9)

The same topic came up at one of the Yuva discussion groups:

Jas (Sikh): I wear Indian clothes [to an Indian function]. It's a must. . . .

EN: What if you didn't?

Jas: My Mom would let me go but she would say, '[Jas], put on a nice suit or something.' She always thinks, 'How will people look? What will people think of me if I don't wear this?' I remember one time I was wearing jeans to the *Gurdwara* and people just stared and stared.

EN: What if you wore a nice Western style dress?

Jas: Still--

Sunil (Hindu): Not in the *Gurdwara*, it's more acceptable in the *Mandir*.

Kumar (Hindu): You couldn't wear a dress to the *Gurdwara*--

Jas: You'd feel funny--

Sunil: But the guys there go in track pants and shorts, but the girls, they have to wear suits--

Jyoti (Gujarati): But then again, it's always okay for the guys. Like [Narendra] can go in jeans to the temple, he can go in jeans and a sweatshirt. And I can't. (TT-Y2)

Because boys are not under the same pressure to "look Indian," it was unusual to find all the male Yuva members dressed in *kurtas* at the *Holi* celebration. Those involved in Yuva are beginning to be more open about asserting their own interest in their culture. In Yuva events, at least,

they find mutual support to overcome self-consciousness, particularly when they themselves are taking the initiative to make it a cultural event.

Double standards will be further discussed (in a following section, "*A Family Event*") in relation to reputation, dating and socializing with others.

The *Holi* celebration provides a case study of how gender differences play out among the youth. The planning and organization of the event was equally shared, and duties allocated on the basis of time schedules and access to transportation. Although in the planning it was decided that the M.C. could be "a girl or guy, it doesn't matter," the guys typically handled the announcing as well as looking after the sound system while the girls handled tickets.

Their cultural show also reflected the predominance of women in performing roles. In the singing group, all the singers are women. One of them accompanies on the harmonium, and typically, only the *tabla* player is male. As for dancing, only four boys performed. One item was an air band performed to a popular song. Older boys, Yuva members, performed a folk-popular item. In Yuva events they have the opportunity to perform in the company of family and friends. In October 1992, six girls and six boys, Yuva members and friends, for the first time performed a popular dance in the

annual V.H.P *Diwali Cultural Evening* and *Gujarati Diwali Variety Show*.

The gradual increase of boys in performing roles, and the fact that the young men dressed in Indian clothes at this public event, may be indicative of an increasing confidence or assertiveness in their roles as culture bearers. Conversely, the active role young women take in Yuva, may be illustrative of their increasing part as culture organizers. This may be seen as a change of function in their involvement in Indian public culture. For their parents' generation, this kind of involvement has served as a form of community status for those who have been producers, organizers, directors, and performers. For women it has also been a form of self fulfillment and a means to meet socially. For Yuva members, in producing culture both the young men and women are meeting identity needs.

#### A FAMILY EVENT

A third definition of the *Holi* celebration is a "family event." About half of Yuva's events are planned to include family members of all ages. At this *Holi* celebration roughly one third of the participants are youth. The others are parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, and a few friends.

On the one hand, the designation, "family event," represents Yuva's choice to integrate into their lives the

close Indian type of family relations which, they assert, continue to be important to them (cf. Ballard 1979:114-15).

On the other hand, the distinction between family and other types of events is made possible by an increasing independence on the part of the youth:

That would be a big part of our lives, would be these parties and these singing gatherings. And then as the kids started getting older, we started doing things on our own. That was the big exciting thing. . . . And this is the group that eventually formed Yuva. (TT-1)

The youth of the The Family Friends Circle have grown up with social gatherings which have essentially been family activities (see Chapter Three). Where family events are the norm, they do not need to be designated. So to speak of *Holi* as a "family event" marks it in contrast to other Yuva events which are youth-oriented. On the one hand, Yuva's family events represent the integration of one aspect of what is defined by them as Indian culture, i.e. family. On the other hand, the category of family events only makes sense in the context in which it is not an unquestioned norm.

In Chapter Three I described the continuing significance placed on family interdependence by the parents in The Family Friends Circle. Kumar explains his commitment to maintaining strong nuclear and extended family relationships, with which the others in the discussion group agree:

I have a very heavy family-oriented system built into me. I'm not just interested in going out and having fun

all the time with people my own age as much as I'm interested--not that I'm not interested in that [laughter]--but as much as I'm just interested in being with my aunts and uncles, brothers and sisters, kids, and older people [since he does not have all these categories of kin here, he is including his fictive extended kin]. I think it's part of my Indian upbringing--maybe it's not just necessarily Indians--but because the Indian system is so family-oriented . . . I like to do that more. . . . the family system, I want to pass that on. See one thing that's very different from Indian culture than North American, I don't know, WASP culture, as you get older and you reach the age where you can do things on your own--you know, you're twenty, you've got your degree, you're working, whatever--I find that Indians will stay at home, and they'll stay with their parents. Whereas if you're maybe white, you are expected to move out on your own. (TT-Y1)

He explicitly contrasts this with his definition of the North American family system. For him, spending time with his family and living with parents are legitimate norms and acceptable options.

One of the discussion groups talked about their definition of the Indian family system. I will quote quite a long excerpt from this discussion. Two definitions of family are described. The one with which the speakers are clearly aligning themselves--"the East Indian community," "our culture," "us," "Indian"--represents an "ideological model" of the Indian family. They contrast this with their definition of "Western culture"--or that of their "white friends"--which serves as a negative reference group against which they positively value their own system.

Sunil: It's important to hold on to the norms, the values, the traditions, especially in the East Indian

community, I mean the way we treat our elders with respect. It's something that the Western cultures really don't do--

Jyoti: Don't do that, that's right--

Sunil: Don't do that. I think we treat our parents in the sense that it's built in with our culture that we're supposed to help out our parents in their old age and all that, and our parents don't ask us to pay rent to live in our own houses [several voices agree]. And a lot of Western, you have your--

Jyoti: They'll ask you--

Sunil: They'll ask you, 'You don't pay rent in your house?'--

Jyoti: Or, 'You live at home, still?' I find that so different. Like I think, 'Of course I live at home. Where would I be living?' Like until I got married I'd always be living at home. That was something assumed. I never even thought twice about it. And then--actually we were having a Political Science discussion about if the government should help out in educational funding and I thought, 'Why should the government? Because if you wanted to study you would find a way to study.' And some other girl goes, 'Well do you live at home?' And I go, 'Yea.' And she goes, 'Well, do you pay rent?' And I go, 'No.' 'Well then!' Whoop, okay . . . I can see why something like that is so important to them . . .

Jas: I have a friend and when she told me that she's paying rent to her Mom and Dad, I'm going, 'Oh, my gosh, I don't believe this.' And she's not going to college because she hasn't built up money to go to college and then pay for her rent and everything--

Sunil: And by the time you're nineteen they expect you to find a place of your own and all that--

Jyoti: That's different for us--

Anita: Way different--

Jyoti: Like I expect my parents to take care of me if they want to or not . . . until I'm gone, and I think they look at it like that too. Like when I borrow

money from my Mom, I don't pay her back. . . . I do now, if I ever borrowed a large sum . . . not that I do-- [laughter]

Sunil: They don't expect it . . . Like pay back in our family, it's like, it's not really--

Jyoti: It's not there, right--

Sunil: Between me and my sister it's okay-- [agreement]

Jyoti: Yea, me and my brother--

Sunil: But with the parents, if my parents give me like five dollars or something, it's not like they're saying, 'Okay by this day you better pay me back.' [laughter and agreement] Like they help me pay for my school, too. Like I pay for my school. I feel more ashamed asking for--I feel like if I'm twenty-two years old, I don't feel comfortable going to my Mom and Dad and saying, 'Hey, can I have five dollars [agreement] so it's not like we're taking advantage of that either. I think I've learned responsibility, too--

Jyoti: Exactly. . . . for--I guess should I say Indians?--parents feel that through letting us, allowing us to be free in that sense--like I give you money--you learn that family is family and that you don't have to pay back family--

Sunil: I think we have a stronger sense of family--

Jyoti: . . . Like even him [referring to Sunil], I think we went out for pizza one night or something. Like if somebody pays--like everybody does share, but it's so different . . . that was just a group of us and whoever had money took it out. . . . It's not really like--if I went with my white friends, I would pay them back. [general agreement] I would say, 'Oh, I owe you.' Or I think they would say, 'You owe me.' Just, I think, because they're just used to that. Not because it's bad or good, but because that's the way they've been brought up. Like--and even with their parents they're similar . . . .

Sunil: I'll give you another example with this money thing. Just say I borrowed ten dollars from [Jyoti] . . . just say I for some reason forgot to pay her back--

Jyoti: I would never ask him, never--

Sunil: She wouldn't ask me back. If I remember to pay her back, I'll pay her back-- (TT-Y2)

The speakers identify ideal family values in terms of parental and children's obligations, and different rules applying to family members than to outsiders. Parents are expected to support their children at home at least until marriage, provide for education, and provide financial support. Although in practice some of these Yuva members spend time living in a university residence, they identify with a reference group whose norm is to live at home till marriage.

Parents confirm their responsibilities of support. Several parents, for example, like the one whose statement follows, have talked about it in terms of not allowing their children to take jobs when young:

Even twelve year old [in a North American family] will go on paper route. Why paper route? You stand on your own two feet. But I tell you the complications of this thing. Like [her son], he came one day, he says, 'I want to go on a paper route.' He [husband] says, 'Why do you want to go on a paper route?' He says, 'Well, I want to go and I will have some extra money.' He says, 'Okay, I will pay you that money what you earn. You just take it easy, you do your work, you be good in your studies, in the summertime you enjoy your holidays. And whole life is ahead of you, you will work.' He never was on the paper route. . . . The reason I am saying, what happens . . . I strongly feel the distance comes. If you are in need it's all right . . . but just for the fun of it or kicks out of it . . . And this way--like my husband says, 'I never worked [i.e. as a youth]. I am not less than anybody. Working is not necessary. You learn everything. This sort of phobia. If you are in need I'm one hundred percent for it. If you are not in

need, just to stand on our own two feet, it's not necessary.' Some people say 'They will know how to handle their own affairs, how to handle money, this and that.' Everybody, when you grow old, if you have the right training, you know how to handle, how to stand here on your own two feet. (TT-7)

Children are expected to put their energies into their studies, and the parents to look after their children's financial security. Responsibility is inculcated through teaching and socializing children into values, family roles, and responsibilities, not through work experience. Two other parents describe the situation from their points of view:

Like in none of these families you will ever see that they will say, 'Okay, you've done your high school, go and earn on your own.' And I think it's a very good Canadian virtue to let the kids appreciate the value of money. But the way we apply it is different. . . . As long as she is with us, her expenses are ours. (TT-2)

All the children, nobody moved out until they completely graduated from the university. . . . I think they were learning it [being responsible] in other ways. Like [his son], he had a newspaper route here, then later on when he grew up, he got a job . . . He just found a job on his own. . . . We always asked them not to take a job at the cost of the studies. 'Anytime you need the money I am here. But you don't do the job just for the sake of money. You don't miss classes.' . . . Parents' main idea is to see their children successful, good education. (TT-10)

In the segment from the Yuva discussion above, the children identify their own obligations as "respect" to their elders, and looking after their parents when they get older. In contrast, "Western" behaviours are defined as lack of respect for elders, expectations that young people

who earn money should pay rent to their parents, and expectations that at age nineteen to twenty children will move out on their own. Family relations--and this includes those who are fictive extended kin--are characterized by reciprocity without expectation of immediate repayment or repayment in kind.

Respect for elders is a behaviour often evoked as a positive Indian value. Ames and Inglis (1974:41) report a similar continuing ideal among Sikhs. Today's youth have redefined respect from what their parents were brought up to expect. Jyoti reported an incident in which her mother exclaimed, "See, look at the way she's talking to me . . . I never even raised my voice to my Mom" (TT-Y2). In the discussion which followed, respect was defined by the youth not as holding one's tongue and unquestioningly following parental will. It was defined as calling elders--including aunts, uncles, adult friends and acquaintances, and elder siblings--by the respectful terms, "auntie" and "uncle"; by sometimes doing what your parents wish just because they want it; and by upholding the family's reputation through acceptable behaviour (a further discussion on reputation will follow).

One married Hindu couple talked about living at home after marriage:

Growing up you do get a lot of support from your family. I find that in the Indian community. Children really

don't have to worry about--I guess the biggest burden for anyone is the financial burden and there's always that support. There's also pressure. You have to perform well in school. You have to behave yourself. Then there's the obligations. Like after we got married--we talked about this too that--how would I adjust . . . we always thought that if we moved to Vancouver we'll move in with your Mom. It was never a question of 'Well, do we really want to move in with your Mom, my mother-in-law?' And yes, that's an obligation. . . . expected and something even we expected. Not that it's something they want and we have to do. It's assumed, just a basic understanding. (TT-16)

They lived at his home for a time before moving out on their own. Srivastava's (1974:386-88) findings show that joint family residence among the "East Indians in B.C." whom he studied (who were primarily Sikh) is uncommon in practice. It exists as a temporary relationship, most often motivated by "kinship obligations" and "notions of hospitality." Ames and Inglis (1974:39-40) report that, while among Sikh families it may be practiced or not as convenient, it remains an ideal. Among the Hindu families of my case study the joint family as a residential unit is also uncommon except as a temporary situation. But the ideal exists as a norm which makes it a legitimate option and standard against which to measure behaviour.

Rani: Like when we say, 'We're living with--I'm living with--my husband and his Mom,' they're [non-Indians] surprised. 'How can you live with your Mom?'--

Rajesh: 'How can you live with your Mom? I couldn't stand living with my Mom.'

Rani: . . . It just doesn't go with the lifestyle here. To us it seems natural. (TT-16)

As to feeling an obligation to caring for their parents, Kurian (1991:52) reports that, "For the next question dealing with caring for parents in old age, 77% of the Canadian [i.e. of Indian families] youth and 86.7% of the Indian [in India] youth agreed." This corresponds with my findings that it is a continuing concern for Indo-Canadian youth.

Rani describes how her parents categorize peoples with similar values to their own:

My sisters would often say, 'Mom, what if we don't want to marry somebody East Indian?' 'Well fine, but marry someone who's Ukrainian, someone who has some cultural background. Any immigrants to immigrate to Canada come with basically the same values. People come from the Ukraine, they also come with the idea that they want to work hard, they want to build a place for their children, they come from joint families, strong families, respecting their elders.' So in my family we never really differentiated that way. But whereas with people who have been here generations and generations, and when they turn eighteen, they move out of the house. (TT-16)

While the values expressed here are in agreement with those already described, the reference group has shifted here from Indians to immigrants, while the negative reference group has changed to North Americans settled over many generations.

One of the characteristics of closely linked Indian kin and fictive kin networks is the importance of family honour or reputation (Mandelbaum 1988; see also Wood 1984:69-114) and the informal but highly effective com-

munication system facetiously called "tel-an-auntie"--in other words, "gossip"--on which it depends (cf. Ballard 1979:116-17). This was explained in one of the Yuva discussion groups:

Sunil: I have a lot more trust in people outside my own community . . . with personal matters--

Kumar: One thing I think that you're trying to say is that there's a lot of--like as in any sort of community--

Jyoti: Gossip--

Anita: Yea, gossip--

Kumar: There's a lot of talk and one--something said leads to something else and-- [interjections of "right," "exactly"]

Jyoti: They can get the wrong idea--

Kumar: If you confide in someone, there's always the chance that they'll tell someone else.

Anita: Well also because you know, in your own community everyone knows each other . . .

Parents must control their children's actions in order to maintain their family honour. Children see this as restrictive. The amount of freedom allowed at Yuva events contrasts with the suspicion surrounding association with strangers of the opposite sex. Discussion participants talked about a wedding which they had attended. There was dancing and some of the boys had asked some of these same girls to dance before they had met. Sunil, who has a sister, explained:

You are putting your parents on the spot when someone--I guess an East Indian girl--is sitting there with her parents, and some guy comes up out of the blue and asks her to dance. It's like putting the parents' reputation on the line. Like, 'Why is my daughter dancing with this guy?' [all the girls express agreement]. . . . They won't say anything right at the dance, but when you get home, they'll put the pressure on.

The conversation turned to reputation

Kumar: I think that in the Gujarati community, a lot of it is fear of people talking [all agree] and maybe not just this community. That's the main thing--. . .

Jyoti: That's the number one problem, reputation. Now my Mom would say--like if I was going out with a guy, my Mom would say, 'If you want to go out with him, why don't you just marry him?' And I go, 'Well what if I don't want to marry him?' And she goes, 'When the time comes that you break up with this guy and you want to marry someone else, no one's gonna want to marry you because you've already been going out with a guy and now you expect someone else to marry you?' They look ahead--

Kumar: No but she'll say, 'What are people going to say? What are they going to say to me? I don't want them saying something.' (TT-Y2)

In practice, good reputation may be maintained by giving the appearance of following proper procedures. One young woman described how parents might handle the eventual marriage of a couple who had been dating:

When the time comes, she [mother] can say, 'They approached us'--say when people ask her--'His family came over to our family, proposed, gave a proposal. 'Cause you know we don't do within ourselves. [Guy and girl] can't just say, 'Lets get married, fine, we'll tell our parents later.' We can't do that. And then she'd [mother] say, 'His family came to our family and they asked us and we said, "Well, he's a good boy, he studied, we looked at his family background, all that."' (TT-9)

In the case of Yuva members, reputation is being redefined insofar as girls and young women are permitted by their parents to associate with peers of both sexes in an all-Indian situation (as described in "Yuva's Agenda" in Chapter Four). Maintaining a good reputation for them means not drinking, associating with those who are known to come from reliable families, and going with friends known to the parents.

Given a degree of independence, Yuva members integrate family values and plan some of Yuva's annual events to include all family members. *Holi* enhances Yuva's reputation by serving as a showcase for the youth to demonstrate their organizational skills, their competence with Indian cultural forms, allows Yuva members to host their families, and demonstrates that this can be achieved safely with the cooperated efforts of young men and young women.

#### A PARTY

We've all grown up together and we've partied together and sort of gotten to know each other on that basis. (TT-1)

We have a group of friends . . . sort of our community family. And we have regular parties. (TT-14)

A fourth definition of the *Holi* celebration is a "party." Regular parties are an important social fact for The Family Friends Circle. In Chapter Three ("*The Family*

*Friends Circle*") I described how parties and their characteristics define The Family Friends Circle. Parties for this group are a significant social activity for maintaining networks with other Indians and for encouraging involvement in culture among their children. The parties are family oriented as adults insist on children being included. They incorporate "mini talent shows" in which both adults and children display singing and dancing skills:

So when they come here in our little group, support group, about twenty-five or thirty families, after eating--our kids were about the same age, they were growing up--we will sit down and let the kids sing. Quite a mini talent show, and that did a lot of good to them. This is how they got their cultural end of things. . . . parents are sitting and talking about good old days. Kids come back and forth, random supervision, they go and watch T.V.. . . . Then we would get tired, then we bring our kids back, then, okay, let's have the talent show. . . . we wanted our kids to go with us to the parties. (TT-2)

In those parties, children's participation is encouraged by structuring a performance into the evening's activities. I have attended a baby shower and a pre-wedding party, and have seen photographs and heard stories about birthday parties, anniversary parties, and informal social gatherings which follow a similar format. Men and women initially segregate themselves informally into different rooms. They come together when it is time for performances. Then everyone squeezes onto the floor of the living room or rumpus room. By squeezing still closer together, a small

performance space is cleared in the centre. If a *tabla* and *harmonium* are not available in the home, a guest brings them. Individuals may lead some singing. Then the young people take turns performing dances or air bands. Afterwards a buffet is laid out consisting primarily, but not entirely, of Indian dishes. An evening often ends with dancing *garbas*, in which most of the women join, and perhaps some *bhangra*.

The Yuva *Holi* party follows a similar format to that of the family parties, even though it takes place in a public venue. Like the family parties, it includes food, socializing, and a maxi rather than mini talent show of singing and dancing. *Holi* has been transformed by Yuva from an exuberant and spontaneous public festival, to a theme party. Without such an organized party, *Holi* will not take place for them. Yuva has taken part in bringing the Indian festival of *Holi* into being in Vancouver, and in its transformation.

#### CHAPTER CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have described how Yuva's *Holi* celebration is variously defined as a Yuva event, a cultural event, a family event, and a party, and how each of these designations relies on certain cultural beliefs and practices. Yuva organizers draw on their understandings of the

traditional celebration of *Holi* in India, their understanding of Indian culture, their families' tradition of "parties," and the format of other Indian cultural programs in Vancouver; and more "un-Indian" norms of social independence and of interaction between the sexes.

Yuva organizers attempt to create a balance between trying to engage the audience in active participation in a festival and trying to showcase culture in a performance. The organizers attempt to draw the audience into the spirit of the event by encouraging them to join in the singing, providing food and an opportunity to socialize, and by featuring play with "gulal."

Culture as performance, however, prevails. *Holi* must be pre-planned and contained. An Indian public celebration in Vancouver must take the form of a scheduled event, at a specified public venue, between set hours, and within set parameters. The dance and song, by evoking the feelings and expressions of *Holi*, constitute an enactment of *Holi* which in its form as it would be experienced in India is itself absent. Audience members behave as an audience by resisting attempts to draw them in.

This may be seen as an example of an evolution from participation to performance in the development of Indian cultural activities in Vancouver. Also, the characteristics of transplanted Hinduism which Knott (1987) describes can

also be seen here: standardization and "retraditionalization" or "rejuvenating and giving new meaning to traditional beliefs and practices" (ibid:179).<sup>111</sup>

The ideology of *Holi* which emphasizes the reversal of social roles and statuses and the suspension of social boundaries would suit Yuva's aspirations well. This is a definition emphasized in the V.H.P. celebrations. Mrs. Kapoor, an active member of the V.H.P., emphasizes this explanation:

What *Holi* teaches--*Holi* is harvest time, this and that--but one thing, no difference between the low and high, rich and poor, and then all of us are brothers and sisters. (TT-7)

This would coincide with Yuva's agenda of sharing culture and bringing together individuals from different Indian communities.

Yuva members do not, however, consciously recognize or employ these meanings. They are, nevertheless, played out in a few ways. The event engages early and late teens, adults and youth. Some Sikh and Bengali members who had not experienced *Holi* before attend. The show itself attempts to express diversity by including a Punjabi dance performed by a group of Punjabi women.

---

<sup>111</sup>cf. Singer (1972) for a description of similar processes in urban India.

Other boundaries remain uncrossed. The professor who spoke about *Holi* did not join in the play. He remarked that one needs to have someone (presumably family, friends, or neighbors) with whom to play. He did not feel comfortable joining in and no one pressed him. The boundaries remained between himself as stranger and the others as family friends, and between himself as expert and the others as participants.

Only a few parents joined in the play. Playing with *gulaal* was intended to be participated in by all, and a few adults did go outside. But the riotous play was engaged in primarily by the youth while most adults watched from inside, some shyly, others taking photographs.

The physical wall which separated the play area from the show area, also separated the players from the audience. Included in the audience were my husband and myself. Although we were urged to join in, that required a conscious decision and a physical movement from the "theatre" to the "playground" where we were not entirely sure we belonged.

Nevertheless, the theme of *Holi* serves as an unintended and perhaps unrecognized symbol of Yuva's ultimate goals. Through its characteristic play and abandon, *Holi* is effective in reversing those roles and dissolving those social boundaries which are significant in participants' lives. Boundaries which are significant for

Yuva members are those of parents/children and "different types of Indians." This party alone was not entirely successful in bridging those boundaries. But the need was articulated and the attempt made.

One set of roles, relevant to the topic of youth constructing culture, was reversed. The second generation hosted, entertained, and educated their parents. They provided their parents with an Indian cultural experience, albeit one of their own design. The parents learned through their children, not about North American culture as they do from day to day, but in this case about their own Indian culture, its traditional meanings, its transformations, and its integration into new ways of life.

In defining the event and its characteristics, Yuva organizers define, and redefine, *Holi*, Indian culture, and what it means to be Indo-Canadian. In their undertaking and participation they integrate both "Indian culture" and "standard North American type white culture" (TT-Y2) into their daily lives. Reference group identification shifts, sometimes to one's Indian family; sometimes to the "Indian community"; sometimes to a more specific Indian group; and sometimes to mainstream, Canadian or North American society. This kind of multiple reference group association results in a syncretization to which the label "Indo-Canadian" applies.

Among their definitions of Indian culture, as expressed through their celebration of *Holi*, Yuva organizers reject any emphasis on religion, emphasizing rather Indian values such as family at the same time as they subscribe to independence and personal growth. Yuva members have integrated Indian culture into their lives. A degree of independence has been a prerequisite for Yuva to exist and for a celebration such as this to be produced independently by members.

**PART IV: CONCLUSION**

## Chapter 7

## CONCLUSION

## SUMMARY

My research for this dissertation was initially motivated by the question, "Why do members of the Indian Diaspora in Vancouver recreate and maintain their culture(s) and cultural identification in this overseas context and how do they go about it?"

Assimilationist studies do not provide satisfying answers since they tend to reify ethnic cultures and ethnic groups and view subjects as reacting to constraints imposed on them. The Canadian literature on South Asians emphasizes adaptation, preservation and loss of culture, and inter-generational conflict. It does little to provide a sense of experiences of being Indian; of individuals' perceptions, definitions, and motivations; or of individual and group choices and actions.

This dissertation is a case study focusing on one South Asian "community" of families in Vancouver, and particularly their youth. They belong to a small segment of the South Asian population rarely described in existing lit-

erature. These are middle and upper class Hindu speaking Hindus. The case study focuses in particular on a youth group which arose from this population segment, and which expanded to include some Gujaratis, Sikhs, Bengalis, and Punjabis, and some individuals from various socio-economic strata.

During my initial interviews with council members of this group, they suggested the following as a research question, "How do you integrate Indian culture into your life?" This question with its active orientation became my thesis question. The process of integrating is also one of constructing and defining. The research objective was to identify, document, and examine subjects' categories, definitions, motivations, choices, actions, and consequences in relation to cultural identification.

Part One (Chapters One and Two) laid the theoretical and methodological foundations of the dissertation. Chapter One introduced the subjects of the research, detailing how they were chosen on the basis of their observed participation in Indian cultural activities, and in the case of Yuva members, their expressly stated interest in their Indian heritage. A review of existing literature on South Asian Diasporas in Canada, as well as in the United States and Britain, revealed that little has been written on identity

or on processes of perpetuating culture, particularly from the point of view of youth.

My preliminary research among Vancouver's Hindus revealed some conceptual categories used by them. Chapter One reviewed those categories. Of the many terms which designate Indian Diasporas, "Indian" emerged as the most preferred term of self reference used by Vancouver respondents. "Culture" was discussed in this chapter from the point of view of its everyday meanings for respondents. Its common sense meaning emerged as that which defines community. "Indian culture" also surfaced as a common sense constructed category.

Chapter One also laid out a theoretical framework. Drawing on symbolic interactionism, structuration theory, reference group identification, and "conscious models," attention was directed to conceptualizations, and to individual actions and interactions in the formation of collective action. This thesis takes the position that individuals make choices and act within their restraining and enabling circumstances, that they align their actions to create collective action, and that their conceptualizations and actions contribute to the social construction of their worlds.

Chapter Two described how the methodological approach allowed questions and categories to emerge from the

ongoing research. Data was derived from participant observation during a wide range of Indian activities in Vancouver, with a particular focus on Yuva activities; participant observation during Holi in Canada and in India, and conversations about Holi; interviews with Yuva members, their families, and other participants in and organizers of Indian activities and organizations; group discussions with Yuva members from various backgrounds; and numerous informal conversations.

Part Two (Chapters Three and Four) described the context of Indian immigration and settlement in Vancouver, described relevant organizations and social groups, and made some observations on Indian social groupings in Vancouver, examining how groups define themselves and each other.

In Chapter three, "community" surfaced as a common term to denote variable social networks to which self and others belong by virtue of shared attributes and interests (i.e. shared "culture"). I documented how "Indian community" for my sample of the population serves as an ideal model. Another type of "community" was found to be a "family friends circle." Chapter Three described the family friends circle to which the founding members of Yuva belong. Members of this circle define themselves by the following characteristics: they are predominantly Hindu and Hindi speaking, mostly from Uttar Pradesh in north India; they

immigrated with independent class; they stress education; they place a high priority on caring for their children and insist on their children taking part in all activities; and they do not drink (excessively) or smoke.

Chapter Four described Yuva and its agendas of bringing together Indo-Canadian youth of various backgrounds, sharing experiences and knowledge related to being Indo-Canadian, and exposing members to and learning about their own and each others' cultures. Racial prejudice and hostility from non-Indians are seen to be part of the experiences of Yuva respondents. Respondents choose, however, to focus on what they see as the even more significant problems of prejudices and discrimination between and within Indian communities.

My research experience suggests that the theoretical perspectives of situational and symbolic ethnicity do not adequately account for the experiences of Yuva respondents. These youth do not merely manipulate the ways in which they represent themselves according to circumstances. They also search for meaningful and coherent senses of identity which incorporate all aspects of their lives. Constructivist approaches show how individuals not only define and construct their identities in relation to each other, but also how they define and construct the categories of identity and of the cultural worlds in which they operate.

Part Three (Chapters Five and Six) examined one event produced by Yuva, the celebration of the Hindu festival of *Holi*. Chapter Five provided a description of *Holi* and of Yuva's production of it. It examined the components which Yuva organizers consider to be necessary: a speaker to provide information; a talent show to both show and share cultures, to entertain, and to provide opportunities to perform; and a light, entertaining ambience.

Chapter Six examined the event in terms of several ways in which the Yuva organizers define it: as a Yuva event, a cultural event, a family event, and a party. The chapter analyzed what they understand by each of these definitions and how they shape their *Holi* event to according to these definitions. The analysis revealed how Yuva members interpret their cultural world and the specific decisions they make and actions they take to define it.

#### FINDINGS, DISCUSSION, AND FURTHER QUESTIONS

In the remainder of this concluding chapter, findings and discussion will be organized under five thematic topics which have arisen out of the research: "Youth: Integrating and Defining Culture," "Culture as Performance," "Indian Community: Centralizing Tendencies," "Hindu Hegemony," and "Centripetal Tendencies."

In keeping with my attempt to reflect respondents' points of view, this chapter, and so the dissertation, concludes with the words of one Yuva member.

YOUTH: INTEGRATING AND DEFINING INDIAN CULTURE

The main finding of this case study is that the second generation youth members of Yuva actively participate in defining and constructing "Indian community," "Indian culture," and what it means to be "Indian." Though my sample was small and, in socio-economic terms, not representative of the total overseas Indian population, this finding may be generalizable beyond the sample. Existing literature about American, British and Canadian Indian Diasporas suggest, though do not detail, the persistence of certain Indian values among second generation youth, and of their continuing social and emotional links to India and Indians, both of which facts counter the outward appearances of assimilation. The theoretical approach taken in this research, I suggest, may result in similar findings about processes of cultural identity construction in regard to other youth in Vancouver's South Asian Diasporas, in other South Asian Diasporas, and among youth with other cultural backgrounds. Such studies would be valuable in identifying specific similarities and differences in processes, modes of communication, priorities, and how these youth define and construct themselves and others.

Yuva respondents admit that when younger, they had attempted to repress or avoid aspects of their cultural identity. A focus on this younger stage could create the impression among their parents, casual observers, and researchers that young people are oriented towards assimilation. As these respondents grew out of their early teens, however, they began to take a more active interest in their Indian heritage. More research on Indian youth is needed to test the generality of the findings of my small sample.

Another fact which may give an impression that young people are oriented towards assimilation, is that Indian culture and being Indian does not mean the same to second generation youth as it does to their first generation parents. The challenge for youth who grow up in Vancouver, a different one from that of their parents whose formative years were spent in South Asia or East Africa, is how to integrate Indian culture into their Canadian lives, not how to integrate things Canadian into their Indian lives. The youth of this study perceive themselves to be simultaneously "trying to cope with two sets of values," and "having the freedom to choose."<sup>112</sup> This research study suggests that the active phrases, "trying to cope," "having the freedom,"

---

<sup>112</sup>Expressions of these two points of view as polar opposites are expressed in a Globe and Mail commentary and its response (Ramachandran 1991; Rao 1991).

and "integrating Indian culture" are more accurate expressions of the experiences of Yuva respondents than the passive metaphor commonly applied to South Asian youth in immigrant communities, that they are "caught [or "torn"] between two cultures."

Randy Tonks (1990) examines several psychological processes of identity formation and various potential consequences including assimilation, integration, segregation, or marginalization. Yuva respondents appear to be among those who may be "successful in their searches and reach Identity Achievement" [see footnote #85 for a definition] and so "may experience a richer identity which integrates the best from both Indian and Canadian cultures" (ibid:77).<sup>113</sup> It is a question for further research how, in the case of Indo-Canadian youth, identity formation may be related to family attributes such as class, education, and cultural affiliation.

Ongoing links exist between India and its diasporas and between diasporas in the form of family visits and connections, educational and informational exchanges, flow of various media, business connections, transfer of material

---

<sup>113</sup>Taking "the best of both cultures" is an everyday phrase often heard among members of Vancouver's Indian community. The approach taken in this dissertation puts phrases like "the best from both Indian and Canadian cultures" into question as constructed conceptualizations.

artifacts, and exposure to Indian popular culture. The Indian culture to which youth relate is not the often outmoded one with which their first generation parents most easily identify, but rather that of contemporary, urban India.

Yuva represents a compromise between youth and parents which allows interactions between youth. It also provides the youth with a degree of independence which enables them to choose to integrate Indian cultural values and practices into their lives, and places them in a position where they can actively take part in processes of defining culture.

Indian culture is defined by Yuva respondents as consisting of:

- (1) the extended family system, defined by:
  - (a) reciprocity between members
  - (b) respect for elders
  - (c) mutual rights and obligations
  - (d) mutual support
  - (e) the collective celebration of festivals and life cycle rituals
- (2) dress and food
- (3) associating with Indians
- (4) celebrations, festivals, and "stories" (religious stories and myths).

Aspects of what Yuva respondents define as traditional

Indian culture and which they reject include:

- (1) orthodox religious beliefs and practices (such as literal belief in myths, regular temple

attendance, much of the ritual practices), and all divisions on the basis of religion

- (2) unquestioned hierarchical systems of authority within the family
- (3) gender related double standards, where girls are more insistently socialized into Indian cultural values than are boys:
  - (a) expectations are higher on girls to dress in Indian clothing for Indian activities and to adhere to food restrictions
  - (b) parents are more insistent about girls maintaining religious practices and expect their daughters to attend temple more regularly than their sons
  - (c) the social life of girls is more strictly controlled
  - (d) girls must be more stringent about their reputations
  - (e) in some families, girls are not always expected or encouraged to pursue education as seriously as boys.
  - (f) girls are encouraged more to learn singing, dancing, and language.

Gender related double standards are rejected primarily by the young women. My research has not generated enough evidence to determine to what extent their brothers and male peers do or do not support them in this.

Yuva respondents identify with multiple reference groups from which they evoke various norms and expectations. This is not to say that these norms and expectations are necessarily adhered to in practice, but that they situationally serve as standards for what is deemed acceptable. This kind of multiple reference group association results in an approximate syncretization--since it is unlikely that the synthesis would be tidy, complete, or uniform--to which the

label "Indo-Canadian" may be applied. At times, respondents judge themselves and others according to what they define as Indian norms. These include:

- (1) sets of rights and obligations within the immediate and (fictive) extended family such as:
  - (a) living with parents
  - (b) being financially supported by parents
  - (c) generalized reciprocity between (extended) family members
  - (d) providing mutual aid and support
  - (e) respecting elders
- (2) social interaction based on personal contact and flexibility.

At other times respondents evoke what they define as "North American" norms such as:

- (1) independence in making personal decisions
- (2) non-hierarchical social interactions
- (3) "efficiency" in daily activities.

Yuva respondents, as well as their first generation parents, often conceptualize "North American" or "Western" culture as a negative reference group, against which Indian values and practices are positively valued. Some of these conceptualizations may be traced to stereotypes portrayed in Hindi films and to dominant nationalist thought in India. Perceived negative characteristics of Western culture include:

- (1) drinking
- (2) lack of financial, educational, and social support for children

- (3) the practice of market exchange rather than generalized reciprocity between (extended) family members.

The reverse is also conceptualized when individuals identify with North Americans and judge Indian practices negatively:

- (1) as inefficient and ad hoc
- (2) or where a lack of trust between individuals is posited to be a consequence of ubiquitous gossip.

Yuva members push the boundaries of gender expectations:

- (1) both the young men and young women attend all types of Yuva events, including dances, sports, and discussions
- (2) the reputation of the young women is not compromised by associating with young men at Yuva events where Indians associate with each other, participants are known to parents, and activities are closely monitored by Yuva members who come from respected families and are respected themselves
- (3) young women take their part as cultural organizers by participating equally in the management of Yuva and the organization of events
- (4) the young men play a part as culture bearers by taking part in talent and cultural shows as performers and by wearing Indian clothing to Yuva cultural events.

These kinds of changes are in line with changes also taking place in contemporary, urban India.

Consequences for members' participation in Yuva include:

- (1) an expanded and diversified social network with other Indians whom it might be difficult to meet otherwise. This includes members of the opposite sex and members of other Indian communities
- (2) discovery, through interaction with other Indians, that experiences and problems are widely shared
- (3) a greater understanding of the beliefs, customs, and experiences of "different types of Indians"
- (4) increased exposure to Indian culture and direct participation in creating it.

#### CULTURE AS PERFORMANCE

Yuva's *Holi* celebration exhibits one type of standardization of cultural practices within Vancouver. In its format and content it draws on family parties and other Indian cultural programs in Vancouver, and in its turn, provides an incentive and a model for future activities.

Chapters Five and Six document processes by which this kind of standardization occurs. Many Indian girls are strongly encouraged to learn to dance or sing as they grow up, whether it is folk styles learned informally or classical styles learned in more formal lessons. This is considered to be both a valuable feminine attribute and a way of being exposed to Indian culture. Singing and dancing are ubiquitous elements of Indian celebrations, social activities, and public cultural events. These are performed by youth and adults at life cycle rituals and other social

gatherings. Shows are in part an outgrowth of these activities. Elements of standardization include an informative presentation and a talent show featuring dances.

Standardization in cultural practices and performances also appears to take place across Indian Diasporas (e.g. Knott 1987). Reasons for this may be similar circumstances which limit spontaneous celebrations and customary religious practices, and communication between Indian Diasporas.

Performances of song and dance are constructed as both "models of" and "models for" culture. Yuva organizers believe that dancing, and the shows in which dancing predominates, are "a very good way of showing culture" (corresponds to "models of"). They also believe that taking part in Indian "cultural shows" or "talent shows" as organizers, performers, and audience is a good way to be with other Indians and to celebrate Indian culture (corresponds to "model for"). Yuva's celebration of *Holi* also exhibits what Knott (1987) terms "retraditionalization" ("rejuvenating and giving new meaning to traditional beliefs and practices"). For example, *Holi's* religious symbolism is ignored, playing with *gulal* continues to be a central feature although in a controlled and organized way, and *Holi* becomes yet another opportunity for displaying cultural skills through song and dance.

Cultural and talent shows provide incentives for performers to learn, teach, and organize dances, and so become involved in Indian cultural activities. A growing population of Indian youth in Vancouver, and a more positive environment created by multicultural policies results in increased competition in cultural practices with the Indian community. This increased competition leading to more elaborate and more proficient practices is evident in a wide range of activities such as dancing, public cultural shows, and religious institutions and celebrations.

#### INDIAN COMMUNITY: CENTRALIZING TENDENCIES

An ideal, centralist conceptualization of an Indian community is expressed by Indians in Vancouver, even if in practice there is no community-wide solidarity.<sup>114</sup>

Yuva accepts, reproduces, and aims to expand on the centralist ideal of Indian community. As one Yuva member explains:

The main reason that I get involved in these sort of things, and I guess Yuva, is primarily to get Indians together and talking or doing anything together, 'cause there's quite a lack of any sort of central Indian, or Indo-Canadian society or group. There's a lot of little groups. There's groups in universities, there's groups such as India Music Society which is more toward one specific area, and there's things like India Club, but there's nothing central. If you look at other cultures that have come up, that are here, such as the Ismaili

---

<sup>114</sup>NACOI has attempted to create such a solidarity, but has not been successful.

people, they have a very central group, they're very organized, they do things quite together, and they have a lot of things--they have a location sort of, a foundation, where they can always relate to one another. We don't have anything like that. The main reason that I'm involved, main reason Yuva is here, is that we want to get into that mold, and we can have a central area, so that all Indians can feel that there's something.(TT-Y2)

My findings support Ballard's (1979:186) observations in Britain that:

While there will continue to be many differences between and within the various (Asian) ethnic categories (due to cultural, socio-economic and personality factors, etc.) it is likely that the more specific ethnic and religious boundaries will decrease among the second and third generations. However, an increasing number of adolescents may perceive of themselves as belonging to a weaker 'Asian' or 'British Asian' category and this will not necessarily involve (as is often assumed) a decrease in distinctive identity and values.

In Vancouver, groups within the Indian Diaspora continue to assert their own specific "parochial" identities (Buchignani and Indra 1980b; Chadney 1977; Mathur 1990). Some Yuva members also continue to be involved in other youth organizations, for example, the Gujarati Society youth group and the Sikhs Students Association.

Yuva's agenda in Vancouver and Ballard's observations in Great Britain suggest that today's youth may be putting a higher priority on cooperation between all Indians in their diasporas. They recognize that cooperation between them is a prerequisite for building positive self images, and for effective mobilization (Chadney 1977; Wood 1978). Understanding centralist tendencies among Indo-Canadians may

aid in the understanding of what Yancey et al. (1976) describe as "emergent ethnicity," or the crystallizing of ethnic identification and solidarity from separate groups within an ethnic category.

The unit of daily interaction is the smaller "community." Such communities may be formed on the basis of language, region, and religion. This case study has described some definitions of these communities as held by respondents. Another type of "community" was found to be a "family friends circle." This is a closely knit, though somewhat fluctuating, network of unrelated families who function together as an extended or joint family. They frequently meet socially, often in "parties," as well as to celebrate festivals and life cycle ceremonies, and they provide each other with mutual support. A finding of this study is that class is often a more salient characteristic than religion in determining social interactions.

#### HINDU HEGEMONY

The findings of this study concur with Bhattacharjee's (1992) observation that the concept of "unity in diversity" persists in immigrant Indian communities. She connects the ideology of "unity in diversity" with Indian nationalist discourse, but suggests that:

the use of this phrase has waned somewhat with the rise of a 'mainstream (Brahmanical Hindu, consumerist) cul-

ture' which flaunts itself as *the* national culture, expecting all other 'minority' cultures to fall in line with it and to which all difference appears threatening and foreign. (ibid:28, n.16)<sup>115</sup>

A characteristic of Hindi-Hindu organizations in Vancouver is to consider themselves culturally neutral or representative of that which is "Indian." In so far as a sense of identity is predicated on difference, those whom one Yuva member referred to as "we . . . plain old Hindus" who "just speak Hindi" (TT-14) do not appear--to themselves or others--to have the strong parochial affiliations on the basis of region, culture, or language as do, for example, many Gujaratis, Fijians, or Bengalis. This is evidenced, for example, in the production of public cultural shows. Cultural shows produced by Hindi speaking Hindus or umbrella organizations such as India Club, OASIS, India Music Society, or Yuva, tend to include items from different parts of India. In contrast, Gujarati, Bengali, and Punjabi shows generally feature only items from their own cultural groups.

This attitude is suggested in a conversation between Rajesh and Rani:

Rajesh: The Sikhs have their group . . . Gujaratis have one, Bengalis have one, I don't know who else has one--

---

<sup>115</sup>This latter situation becomes increasingly poignant in view of the Babri Masjid incidents of late 1992. The repercussions of these incidents are widely felt and discussed by Vancouver's Indian population (as referred to in "Defining Community," in Chapter Three).

Rani: That's the way it is everywhere. . . . everywhere in Canada who have strong community [sic]. Everyone else just, I don't know, just sort of straggle along, just try to fit in everywhere. (TT-16)

Yet, one practice, perhaps unrecognized, is not so much to "just try to fit in everywhere" as it is to project or define Hindi-Hindu identity as pan-Indian and to encourage others to merge into this pan-Indian identity with them (Bhattacharjee 1992). This is not to say that other individuals and organizations do not advocate and work towards greater unity among Indians (and stronger relations between Indians and others). It is to suggest that perhaps Hindi speakers, though a minority here, carry with them a view of their majority status in India.

This attitude, more often implied than stated, is revealed in a comment by Kamla, a Yuva member from a Hindi speaking Hindu family:

Even though these [other youth] groups say they welcome everybody, their name discourages anybody that's not Sikh or Gujarati or Bengali. When you have a Hindu youth group, everybody feels welcome to join.

A contrasting point of view emerged during one of the discussion groups:

Kumar (Hindi speaking Hindu): A lot of people thought we were just a Hindu council and that we didn't want Sikhs in our council. And that wasn't true at all. . . .

Manjit (Sikh): I think it's also because Yuva's a Hindu [sic] word, right? . . . unless you go and tell people that it's not a Hindu group they wouldn't know it.

Kamla's response on hearing about this conversation was that:

. . . Sikhs aren't Hindu. That's something I always sort of forget. I think Hindu is everybody. (TT-1)

In Bradford, England, Bowen (1987) documents how Gujaratis, who make up the majority of Hindus there, took initiatives to unite all Hindus in their region and to include Sikhs as well. He suggests that:

These ideological concepts of diversity and of unity, provide the evolutionary framework in which segmentation is both articulated and absorbed. In this movement between unity and diversity one finds among the Gujaratis of Bradford evidence of a characteristically Hindu paradigm for the structure of a plural society in Britain. (ibid 1987:30)

My research suggests that this phenomenon continues with the youth members of Yuva. In spite of Yuva's goals to "expand and diversify," the founding members and those who continue to be most active are, with a few exceptions, from Hindu families, and largely though not entirely Hindi speaking. Narendra, one of the Gujarati council members, makes a statement which reveals that he recognizes the role of Hindus in bringing others together:

If we isolate our crowd to basically Hindu people, then the rumor spreads that we're only doing a Hindu thing. Like between Punjabis and Muslims, they feel isolated in that they oppose our organization because they . . . want to be included in this too . . . already we've had some rumors that people are saying things about us because our election results were only Gujarati and Hindu [sic] people [there was also a Sikh council member] . . . they [unclear who 'they' is] were upset with that because they wanted more of a flexible presence in

the organization. They wanted more Sikhs, Muslims, whatever . . . But we're not just Hindi [i.e. Hindu], we just want to unite them. We're just concentrating on the youth groups of all Indo-Canadians in general. (TT-9)

In spite of their far reaching vision and attempts to engage with "all types of Indians," Yuva council members still find it difficult to escape the fact that their group was conceptualized and initiated by youth from Hindi speaking Hindu families and the leadership continues to come primarily from those who do not belong to other culturally specific organizations.

A question for further research is to determine the role of Hindi speakers in creating and promoting a pan-Indian identity in other Indian diasporas.

#### CENTRIPETAL TENDENCIES

Hindu respondents of this study, such as Mr. Kapoor, Mr. Lal, Mr. Chand, Mr. Bindi, and Mrs. Ghosh, who all argue for the necessity of integration with the wider Canadian society and have made various moves towards it in their own lives, are the same individuals who initiated many of the Hindu and Indian organizations which foster separation rather than integration.

This is largely unrecognized by them. Mr. Lal, a professional and Past President of India Club, and one of the adults who was instrumental in initiating Yuva, des-

cribes how part of India Club's agenda is to facilitate integration into mainstream society:

India Club does some extremely good things that may help us in integration. . . . over the last fifteen years--early seventies it was formed--we have developed some trust funds for scholarships, and those scholarships are not given to Indian students. They are given to anyone in those schools. . . . so that is a way of at least showing to the community that we are part of you. . . . The other thing that they do is that they work on this walk-a-thon every year in Stanley Park for Operation Eyesight. That's mostly Indian cause, but it goes through a Canadian organization. Then we have done occasionally things for global charity, like when Ethiopia thing came up three, four years ago. Steve Fonio we gave some money. So just to expand our horizons slowly and to be a part. (TT-12)

About Yuva's role in integration, he says:

They are getting a real good mix of functions that are needed for integration into the society, yet they are celebrating enough Hindu-type--or not Hindu necessarily, but Indian-type--cultural activities. So it's preserving your own cultural identity. You are explaining to the younger people who are coming to these functions as to what *Holi* is about or what *Diwali's* about or what is Independence Day, you know those or other Indian activities. The same time there are teenage dances, there are bowling nights, there is baseball coming up, which is what they should be doing as they grow up and to be able to be part of. So that is the mix that should have had all along. It's easier for the second generation. (ibid)

I subsequently asked him whether by integration he meant doing things with non-Indians or doing non-Indian things. He hesitated, admitting this was a question about which he had not thought before. He asserted that it is much more important to do things with non-Indians, whether Indian things or not, but realized that in practice it means

doing "North American type things" with other Indians. This finding concurs with what Breton (1964:197) found in his study of immigrants of various backgrounds:

The institutions of an ethnic community are the origin of much social life in which the people of that community get involved and as a consequence become tied together in a cohesive interpersonal network. We may note, incidentally, that the same result would obtain in the case of ethnic organizations whose stated purpose is to help the immigrant to "adjust" to the conditions of life and cultural habits in the country of adoption. Through such organizations immigrants may become partly acculturated; but at the same time they would become more strongly integrated into an interpersonal network of their own group. In other words, the existence of an institution in the group would tend to have the observed effect on the cohesiveness of the ethnic group irrespective of its orientation toward the native and its own national culture.

Mr. Lal did not recognize his own role in fostering the cohesiveness of the local Indian community.

Mr. Chand may serve as another example of a well educated professional who does not recognize his own role in fostering Indian community cohesiveness. He has strong views about organizations such as the Khalsa School:<sup>116</sup>

I think it's [sending a child to the Khalsa School] the worst thing they could ever do to a child. Why should I isolate my child? My child has to live in this country, be part of this country, and he should be in the mainstream. Why should I ask him to dig out another hole and hide in there? That is totally unacceptable to me. (TT-10).

---

<sup>116</sup>A school under the jurisdiction of the Vancouver School Board, and managed by the Khalsa Diwan Society, and including Punjabi language and Sikh religious studies in the curriculum.

He is expressing his "insider observer's model" of others who he thinks maintain social isolation in contrast to his own "immediate model" of broad mindedness and integration. He describes how he encouraged his own children to assimilate to Canadian culture and society. Yet he also speaks about his role as a founder and active member of a Sikh Gurdwara, the V.H.P., and India Club. He seems unaware of his own contribution in fostering the isolation he criticizes by building and strengthening Indian institutions and organizations.

Mr. Lal finds the Indian community in Vancouver (and to a lesser extent Toronto) to be more extreme in its "institutional completeness" than similar communities in other Canadian cities in which he has lived. His experience is that Indians get drawn in to the community because so many activities take place:

. . . you have a lot of cultural activities going on in the community, Vancouver and Toronto, a lot more cultural Indian activities, and you get so busy with those activities that you . . . have no time to go to anything else. We used to go to a fair bit of local movies, ballets couple of times, some operas, even a couple of plays in other places. But I've never done that in Vancouver since I came here. I guess we have so many activities here, like *Diwali*, and social things, and dance programs, music programs, and all kinds of things going on. . . . Here, there's something on every weekend or every second weekend. So if you had a choice to go someplace--I want to do something this weekend, I can go to the *Phantom of the Opera*, or I can go to this Hindi music concert--I'll probably choose the Hindi music concert. Although . . . I know a lot of kids who

are going to the *Phantom of the Opera*. . . . So what I'm saying, it's because of the volume of the activities. . . . And nothing wrong with it. . . . Community organizations are great to preserve your culture, but there is a happy medium and balance. Some place you've got to draw the line and say, 'Well, if we are ever going to integrate we have to have so much of our own community programs and we have to get involved in some of the other programs which are the mainstream-type-society programs. (TT-12)

Mr. Lal attributes the proliferation of organizations to the large population of uneducated labourers who came as sponsored relatives from villages in India. "A lot of them are not educated enough to speak good enough English and they'll always shy away from other activities" (ibid). Similar to Mr. Chand, his "internal observer's model" of others who regularly congregate together contrasts with his own "immediate model" of his own openness. The irony is that the Indian activities, organizations, temples, and markets these people patronize were not established, produced, and managed by themselves, but by pro-assimilation individuals like Mr. Lal.

Those committed enough to serve on Yuva's council--all ambitious students on career paths--are also providing the incentives and institutional support that enable Indo-Canadian youth to spend more time together. The following conversation suggests that involvement in Yuva has contributed to increased association between Indian youth at the expense of association with others:

Ranjit: Actually I find that most of my friends are Indian now, whereas when I was at school mostly they were mixed, whereas now they're mostly Indian, the closest friends anyways . . . I guess with all my involvement in the groups and stuff.

Manjit: I notice that for myself too. 'Cause I wasn't involved in anything Indian in high school, then I went to U.B.C., I joined several of them, and then you're only exposed to I guess Indian people. Like I made a couple of friends who are different nationalities but I didn't come close to them.

Ranjit: 'Cause you have more in common with Indian people.

Manjit: You can relate better, you have the same problems and everything.

Ramesh: For me it's an even mix. I knew quite a few people, but I've also got a lot of other friends as well. I don't divide people that way, they're just friends. Like when I talk to [Kumar] or talk to anybody, we don't speak the language, we speak English, so in my mind they're just the same sort of people.

Kumar: Same with me. I've never really had any--even through high school and university, I never was involved in any Indian groups or anything. Most of my general acquaintances or friends were just anybody who was studying in that area. . . . [I've been more involved] since Yuva formed, within the last year or so.

Ramesh: Yea, that's when I really got to know you. I didn't know you guys before. (TT-Y1)

Yuva's celebration of *Holi* is one example in which the youth not only continue to take part in family and community festivals, but begin to organize these events themselves, thereby sustaining family bonds and increasing time spent with other Indians.

When Kumar says that, "I've never really had any Indian people that I hang out with. I've just been with whoever was around," Ranjit speculates that the existence of organizations is a reason for group divisions:

Maybe that's because you guys weren't involved in the groups. Because I'm sure the S.S.A. people all sit together and then the Ismaili people from their group all sit together. 'Cause they don't interact very well amongst the groups. (ibid)

One of Yuva's goals is to form an active association for all Indo-Canadians on the model of these Sikh and Ismaili youth groups, but in which they may encourage more "different types of Indians" to (metaphorically) "sit together." A question for further investigation is whether spending more time with other Indians will continue to reduce the amount of contact with others, or does association with fellow Indians build self esteem and thereby enable individuals to mix more easily with non-Indians?

These issues were of concern to sociologists in India at a Conference on Overseas Indians in Chandigarh, India, March 1992. One of the questions posed throughout the sessions was, "Is there something Indian about the reluctance to adapt?" (personal notes taken during conference). Conference participants discussed why Indians tend to be "internally cohesive" or create "enclaves" wherever they migrate and why they place more stress on their Indian identity than on "integrating" ("socio-

politically, culturally, and economically") into the host society. Conference participants perceived this to be the case in Indian Diasporas throughout the world. They questioned whether this behaviour might be caused by lack of acceptance by the host societies; whether it might be a result of shared practices such as continued strong links with India and chain migration; or whether it might be something innate in the Indian character, such as "acceptance in the larger society" being of less concern than a "need to be accepted in a smaller group."

K.L. Sharma (1993:2-3), a sociologist at Panjab University, identified what he considered to be a key indicator of lack of integration among overseas Indians, a lack of social interaction, or what he termed "conjugation," with others:

Apart from adoption of language, norms and values, food habits, dressing etc. intercommunity conjugation is an important indicator of cultural integration. Indian immigrants are more integrated in some host societies than in others and tend to integrate as far as adoption of language etc. is concerned, but their integration in terms of conjugation with the host communities is minimal or almost nil. [sic]

The findings of Morton Weinfeld (1985), who conducted a survey of Jews, Slavs, and Italians in order to "examine the actual degree of ethnic persistence in Canada" (ibid:67), appear to contrast with those of my study. Weinfeld reports that "high levels of ethnic identification are

associated with immigrant status and lower levels of education" (ibid:77). He hypothesized that "native-born and higher socio-economic-status members of an ethnic group demonstrate less ethnic identification, compared to those of foreign birth and of low socio-economic status, within the same group" (ibid). His measures of ethnic identification were residential segregation, ethnic language use, ethnic community involvement, ethnic homogeneity of friendship network, social distance, ethnic self identification, and support for cultural pluralism. The difference in findings may suggest either that the communities of his study are more homogenous in terms of class, that they are not so large to warrant such strong organizational structures, or that Weinfeld did not consider the role of leaders as well as patrons of and participants in community organizations and activities.

My study suggests that those who are most actively involved in Indian organizations are often well educated, established in business or professions, maintain friends or acquaintances outside the Indian community, and live outside residential areas with high concentrations of Indians. Such individuals often initiate and manage the structures which enable others to meet most of their needs within an Indian community.

An unexpected finding is that the youth of Yuva also participate in this centripetal tendency. In their case, limiting interaction between members and non-Indians is an unintended consequence of their "need to know ourselves first," their desire to "integrate Indian culture into" their lives, and their initiatives to meet "other types of Indo-Canadians." Furthermore, the second generation youth of Yuva demonstrate high ethnic self identification, community involvement, and maintain friendship networks among Indians. Within Indian Diasporas there will continue to be both centripetal and centrifugal forces. Youth are likely to take part in both.

Another observation, which is perhaps further evidence of a centripetal tendency on the part of youth of middle and upper class families, is their expressed need to "know themselves" before attending to problems of interaction with outsiders. Yuva respondents, for example, choose to focus on problems of stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination between Indians before dealing with those issues in relation to non-Indians.

The findings of my study suggest that, in Indian Diasporas, limited "conjugation with the host communities" is an unintended consequence of attempts to maintain cultural vitality and social identity, and of forming and sustaining Indian organizations and institutions. This case

study suggests a hypothesis that ethnic identification, ethnic community involvement, and ethnic friendship networks continue to be strong in Indian Diasporas, and even among those who are highly educated and work in professions and business, and among second generation youth. This may be accounted for by strong extended family relationships, continued and ongoing links to India and to other Indian Diasporas, and strong religious and linguistic affiliations.

#### SUMMARY OF CONTRIBUTIONS

This thesis focuses on a small group within the Vancouver Indian community which, it is argued, are strategically located in terms of class membership and community influence. A number of processes operating within this small sample were identified. Though further research would be required to determine the extent to which these processes extend beyond my particular sample, there are reasons to think that at least some of them do. In summary, my study offers the following contributions to our understanding of one segment of the Vancouver Indian community, with potential reference to a wider population and to other Indian Diasporas.

1. It provides a phenomenological picture of one segment of the Vancouver Indian community.
2. It offers an in depth examination of experiences of one group of Indian youth.

3. It describes some processes operating among the youth by which culture is constructed conceptually and in practice.
4. It documents some processes by which ethnic culture becomes performance.
5. It shows how some Indian social groupings are formed and maintained.
6. It demonstrates in a particular instance how culture is both determining and determined, and in constant flux and open to redefinition. This draws attention to the problems of treating ethnic groups as culturally determined and ethnic cultures as essential and reified, assumptions which continue to persist in notions of ethnic diversity and multicultural education.
7. It demonstrates that relations between Indians in a Diaspora are as likely to be significant in shaping the cultural practices and identification of members as are their ethnic minority relations to the wider society.

#### THE FINAL WORD

I began this dissertation with my questions, was further guided by a question suggested by youth respondents, and engaged the subjects in looking for answers. Their complex answers and my interpretations of them form the body of this dissertation. This concluding chapter has summarized the findings and suggested some questions for further research. I end with the words of one Yuva member, a university student, who muses about the implications of Yuva's Indo-Canadian focus and on the future:

It's ["Oreo cookie"] a very popular term, I guess. I heard a girl say that to another girl the other day. She goes, 'You're such an Oreo, you know, you're hanging around'--what she was trying to say was that she hangs

around with white friends all the time instead of being with--she was trying to imply that you should be with us more, and I just find that really offensive, I really do. I think eventually Yuva isn't trying to--the only reason that we're an Indian based group--this is something that's been bothering me lately--is because we have that in common. But that doesn't mean that we're trying to exclude any other group. Like technically I would like anybody to be welcome to a Yuva event. And I think they are, but because it's an Indian youth group, I'm concerned that they don't feel welcome. But we have to sort out our own identity first, and then we can say, 'Hey, we have this great Indian youth group. If you're interested, please come.' That's what I'd like us to be, but we have to sort out how we feel about ourselves first. . . . it's getting there. I don't know how many more years that will take. (TT-1)

## GLOSSARY

- ar(a)ti                    a devotional ritual involving the circulation of lighted oil lamps in front of an image of a deity
- Arya Samaj                a Hindu reform organization dating from the nineteenth century, rose as a response to British criticisms of Hinduism by eliminating accretions and returning to Vedic practices
- Babri Masjid              a mosque in Ayodhya (a small town in Uttar Pradesh) built on the site of an old Hindu temple, purported by some Hindus to be the birthplace of Lord Ram. Has been the site of considerable communal conflict between Hindus and Muslims
- bhajan                    devotional hymn
- bhangra                    an athletic Punjabi folk dance which has become popularized and become a fad amongst Indian, especially Punjabi, young people in India and abroad
- Bharat Natyam            a style of Indian classical dance
- Bharatiya                 Hindi word for 'Indian'
- Baisakhi                  a major annual Sikh festival to commemorate the founding of the Khalsa brotherhood

dandia ras	a type of Gujarati folk dance performed with sticks
desi	belonging to the country,
Devi, (Amba)	a Goddess
diwa (deepa)	a lamp, generally referring to an clay oil lamp
dhokla	a spiced, spongy, steamed savory cake made from dried pea batter
Diwali (Deepavali)	the Hindu Festival of Lights, associated with Rama and with Lakshmi; new year for many Hindus; falls in October or November
Durga Puja	a Bengali festival for the worship of the goddess Durga; falls in autumn
garba	a women's Gujarati folk dance
ghazal	popular Urdu poems written in couplets, recited or sung
ghar	house, home
gidda	a Punjabi women's folk dance
gulal	coloured powder used at Holi
Guru Nanak	the founder of Sikhism
Gur(u)dwara	Sikh temple

hamare ghar men	in our house
harmonium	a portable musical instrument consisting of bellows and a key board
havan	fire ritual
Id	the most important annual Muslim festival; begins at the sighting of the full moon after the thirty days of fasting of Ramadan
jalebi	a fried and syrupy Indian sweet
jamat khana	Ismaili "house of assembly" or mosque
jayanti	a celebration in honour of an individual or deity's birthday
Karva Chauth	an annual Hindu festival during which women fast for the well being of their families
katha	a homily or moral discourse based on a religious story; the explanation of such a text to a religious gathering
kathak	a north Indian style of classical dance
kurta pajama	man's garment consisting of baggy pants (pajama) and a long loose shirt (kurta)
Khalistan	the name of a separate state desired by Sikhs in India

lahanga	a long skirt
mandir	(Hindu) temple
"Mehfil-e-gazal"	a performance of ghazals
murti	an image or sculpture of a deity
Navratri	a nine day Gujarati festival associated with Amba Devi; falls in September or October
pakora	vegetables fried in a chick pea batter
parivar	family
Phalguna	the last month of the Hindu lunar calendar, falls in spring
prasad	blessed food distributed after a puja
priti bhojan	a "meal of love" which is served to devotees in a temple after a devotional gathering
puja	worship; a ritual of worship; a devotional service
pujari	a specialist who presides at a puja
puri	small, round, fried, unleavened bread
Rabindranath Tagore	Bengali writer, philosopher, and humanist

Ram Janmabhoomi	the birthplace of Lord Ram, an incarnation of Vishnu and highly revered by Hindus
salwar kamiz	woman's garment consisting of pants and a long shirt
Sangeet, (Rabindra)	music; Rabindranath Tagore's style of music; a recital of his music
sari	a woman's garment consisting of (most commonly) six yards of fabric wrapped and tied and worn with a short blouse
satsang	a congregational gathering of devotees
sabji (sabzi)	vegetable
tabla	a musical instrument consisting of a pair of drums
Tul(a)si Vivaha	a Hindu ceremony performed primarily by women; celebrates the marriage of Vishnu to the sacred tul(a)si (basil) plant
Urdu	a language developed in India in about the sixteenth century through the intermingling of Hindi and Persian; largely Hindi grammar, much Persian vocabulary, Persian script; spoken language is almost interchangeable with Hindi

## INITIALS AND ACRONYMS

B.C.O.F.R.	B. C. Organization to Fight Racism
CMA	a Canadian census division in British Columbia consisting of the GVRD plus Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows
GVRD	Greater Vancouver Regional District; includes City of Vancouver; cities and municipalities of Burnaby, Coquitlam, Delta, Langley, New Westminster, North Vancouver, Port Coquitlam, Port Moody, Richmond, and White Rock; and some villages and reserves
ISKCON	International Society for Krishna Consciousness
MOSAIC	Multilingual Orientation Service Association for Immigrant Communities
NACOI	National Association of Canadians of Origins in Indian
OASIS	Orientation Adjustment Services for Immigrants Society
U.P.	Uttar Pradesh, a north Indian state
V.H.P	Vishva Hindu Parishad (Hindu temple)
YICS	Young Indo-Canadians (a youth group affiliated with <i>South Asian Mosaic</i> )

## WORKS CITED

- Akoodie, M. A. 1980. Immigrant students: A comparative assessment of ethnic identity, self concept and locus of control amongst West Indian, East Indian and Canadian students. Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Toronto.
- Ames, Michael M. 1973. Structural dimensions of family life in the steel city of Jamshedpur, India. In Entrepreneurship and modernization of occupational cultures in South Asia, ed. M. Singer, pp. 107-31. Duke University Press.
- Ames, Michael M., and Joy Inglis. 1973-74. Conflict and change in British Columbia Sikh family life. B.C. Studies 20 (winter 1973-1974):15-49.
- Anderson, Charles P., Tirthankar Bose, and Joseph I. Richardson. 1983. Circle of voices: A history of the religious communities of British Columbia. Lantzville, British Columbia: Oolichan Books.
- Anderson, Kay J. 1991. Vancouver's Chinatown: Racial discourse in Canada 1875-1980. Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Anwar, M. 1978 <1976>. Between two cultures: A study of relationships between generations in the Asian community in Britain. Second Edition. London: Commission for Racial Equality.
- Appadurai, Arjun. In press. A transnational culture in the making: The Asian-Indian Diaspora in the United States. London: Berg Press.
- . 1986a. Is Homo Hierarchicus? American Ethnologist 13 (November):745-61.
- . 1986b. Theory in Anthropology: Center and periphery. Contemporary Studies in Society and History 28(2):356-61.

- . 1991. Global ethnoscaples: Notes and queries for a transnational anthropology. In Recapturing anthropology: Working in the present, ed. Richard G. Fox, pp. 191-210. Santa Fe, New Mexico: School of American Research Press.
- Arunachalam, M. 1980. Festivals of Tamil Nadu. Tiruchitrambalam, Tanjavur District: Gandhi Vidyalayam.
- Atal, Yogesh. 1989. Outsiders as insiders: The phenomenon of sandwich culture. Sociological Bulletin 38 (March):23-42.
- Bagley, Christopher. 1987. The adaptation of Asian children of migrant parents: British models and their application to Canadian policy. In The South Asian diaspora in Canada: Six essays, ed. M. Israel, pp. 15-35. Toronto: The Multicultural History Society of Ontario.
- Ballard, Catherine. 1979. Conflict, continuity and change. In Minority families in Britain: Support and stress, ed. Verity Saifullah Khan, pp. 108-29. London: The Macmillan Press Ltd.
- Barnouw, Erik, and S. Krishnaswamy. 1980. Indian film. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Barth, Fredrik. 1969. Ethnic groups and boundaries: The social organization of culture difference. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.
- Basham, A. L. 1967 <1954>. The wonder that was India: A survey of the history and culture of the Indian sub-continent before the coming of the Muslims. Third Revised Edition. London: Sidgwick & Jackson.
- Basu, Rekha. 1989. Expatriate Indians: American born confused 'desis.' India Today August 31, 106-09.
- Baxter, Susan. 1991. Torn between two cultures. Easy Living May, 26-30.
- Beck, Brenda. 1987. Bread crumbs or yeast: Indo-Canadian popular culture and its growth potential. In The South Asian diaspora in Canada: Six essays, ed. Milton Israel, pp. 59-72. Toronto: The Multicultural History Society of Ontario.

- Bendix, Reinhard. 1967. Tradition and modernity reconsidered. Comparative Studies in Society and History 9 (April):292-345.
- Bentley, G. Carter. 1987. Ethnicity and Practice. Comparative Studies in Society and History 29(1):24-55.
- . 1991. Response to Yelvington. Comparative Studies in Society and History 33:169-75.
- Berger, Peter. 1966. Identity as a problem in the sociology of knowledge. Archive Européen de Sociologie 7:105-15.
- Berger, Peter L., and Thomas Luckmann. 1967 <1966>. The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge. London: Penguin Books.
- Berreman, Gerald D. 1962. Behind many masks: Ethnography and impression management in a Himalyan village. Society for Applied Anthropology, Monograph No. 4. Bobbs-Merrill reprint, A-393.
- . 1975. Bazar behavior: Social identity and social interaction in urban India. In Ethnic identity: Cultural continuities and change, eds. George De Vos and Lola Romanucci-Ross, pp. 71-105. Mayfield.
- Berry, John W. 1987. Finding identity: Separation, integration, assimilation, or marginality? In Ethnic Canada: Identities and inequalities, Leo Driedger, pp. 223-39. Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman Ltd.
- Beteille, Andre. 1964. Family and social change in India and other South Asian countries. Economic Weekly 16(5-7):237-39, 241, 243-44.
- Bhagat, Rabi S., and Ben L. Kedia. 1986. Coping and adaptation at the workplace: A cross-cultural perspective on Indian immigrants in the United States. In Tradition and transformation: Asian Indians in America, eds. Richard Harvey Brown and George V. Coelho, pp. 133-48. Williamsburg, Virginia: Department of Anthropology, College of William and Mary.
- Bhatnagar, Joti. 1984. Adjustment and education of South Asian children in Canada. In South Asians in the Canadian mosaic, ed. R. N. Kanungo, pp. 49-65. Montreal: Kala Bharati.

- Bhattacharjee, Anannya. 1992. The habit of ex-nomination: Nation, woman, and the Indian immigrant bourgeoisie. Public Culture 5 (Fall):19-44.
- Blumer, H. 1969. Symbolic interactionism: Perspective and method. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.
- Bolaria, B. S., and P. S. Li. 1985. Racial oppression in Canada. Toronto: Garamond Press.
- Bose, Tirthankar. 1984. Samhita. Proceedings of the First Indo-Canadian Conference on Socio-cultural and Religious Heritage, Organized by the Vishva Hindu Parishad of British Columbia, 1983. Burnaby, British Columbia: Vishva Hindu Parishad of British Columbia.
- Bott, E. 1957. Family and social network: Roles, norms, and external relationships in ordinary urban families. London: Tavistock Publications.
- Bowen, David G., ed. 1981. Hinduism in England. Bradford, West Yorkshire: The Faculty of Contemporary Studies, Bradford College.
- . 1987. The evolution of Gujarati Hindu organizations in Bradford. In Hinduism in Great Britain, ed. Richard Burghart, pp. 15-31. London: Tavistock Publications.
- Brah, Avtar. 1978. South Asian teenagers in Southall: Their perceptions of marriage, family and ethnic identity. New Community 6:197-206.
- Breems, Bradley. 1991. 'I tell them we are a blessed people:' An analysis of 'ethnicity' by way of a Canadian Dutch-Calvinist community. Ph.D. Dissertation, University of British Columbia.
- Breton, Raymond. 1964. Institutional completeness of ethnic communities and the personal relations of immigrants. American Journal of Sociology 70 (September):193-205.
- Bristow, M., B. Adams, and C. Periera. 1975. Ugandan Asians in Britain, Canada and India: Some characteristics and resources. New Community 4(2):155-66.
- Bruner, Edward M. 1986. Experience and its expressions. In The anthropology of experience, eds. Victor W. Turner and Edward M. Bruner, pp. 3-32. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

- Buchignani, Norman. 1977. Immigration, adaptation, and the management of ethnic identity: An examination of Fijian East Indians in British Columbia. Ph.D. Dissertation, Simon Fraser University.
- . 1980a. Accommodation, adaptation, and policy: Dimensions of the South Asian experience in Canada. In Visible minorities and multiculturalism: Asians in Canada, ed. K. V. Ujimoto, pp. 48-67. Toronto: Butterworths.
- . 1980b. The social and self identities of Fijian Indians in Vancouver. Urban Anthropology 9(1):75-98.
- . 1984. South Asians in Canada: Accomodation and adaptation. In South Asians in the Canadian mosaic, ed. R. N. Kanungo, pp. 157-80. Montreal: Kala Bharati.
- . 1985. South Asians in Alberta. In Peoples of Alberta: Portraits of cultural diversity, eds. H. Palmer and T. Palmer, pp. 413-36. Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books.
- . 1987. Research on South Asians in Canada: Retrospect and prospect. In The South Asian diaspora in Canada: Six essays, ed. Milton Israel, pp. 113-41. Toronto: The Multicultural History Society of Ontario.
- . 1989. Contemporary research on people of Indian origin in Canada. Sociological Bulletin 38(1):71-93.
- Buchignani, Norman, and Doreen Indra. 1981a. Inter-group conflict and community solidarity: Sikhs and South Asian Fijians in Vancouver. Canadian Journal of Anthropology 1(2):149-57.
- . 1981b. The political organization of South Asians in Canada, 1904-1920. In Power and politics in Canada, eds. J. Dahlie and T. Fernando, pp. 202-32. Toronto: Methuen.
- Buchignani, Norman, Doreen M. Indra, and Ram Srivastava. 1985. Continuous journey: A social history of South Asians in Canada. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd.
- Burghart, Richard. 1987a. Conclusion: The perpetuation of Hinduism in an alien cultural milieu. In Hinduism in Great Britain, ed. Richard Burghart, pp. 224-51. London: Tavistock Publications.

- , ed. 1987b. Hinduism in Great Britain: The perpetuation of religion in an alien cultural milieu. London: Tavistock Publications.
- . 1987c. Introduction: The diffusion of Hinduism to Great Britain. In Hinduism in Great Britain, ed. Richard Burghart, pp. 1-14. London: Tavistock Publications.
- Carey, James W. 1989. Communication as culture: Essays on media and society. Boston: Unwin Hyman.
- Cassin, A. Marguerite, and Alison I. Griffith. 1981. Class and ethnicity: Producing the difference that counts. Canadian Ethnic Studies 13(1):109-29.
- Chadney, J. G. 1977. Demography, ethnic identity and decision-making: The case of the Vancouver Sikhs. Urban Anthropology 6(3):187-204.
- . 1990. The formation of ethnic communities. In The Sikh diaspora: Migration and experience beyond Punjab, eds. N. G. Barrier and V. Dusenberry, pp. 185-99. South Asian Books.
- Chandra, K. V. 1973. Racial discrimination in Canada: Asian minorities. San Francisco: R and E Research Associates.
- Chandrasekbar, S., ed. 1986. From India to Canada: A brief history of immigration; problems of discrimination; admission and assimilation. La Jolla, California: A Population Review Book.
- Chaudhuri, Nirad D. 1967. The continent of Circe. London: Chatto and Windus.
- Chawla, S. 1971. Indian children in Toronto: A study of socialization. Master's Thesis, York University.
- Clifford, James. 1988. The predicament of culture: Twentieth-century ethnography, literature, and art. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Clifford, James, and George E. Marcus, eds. 1986. Writing culture: The poetics and politics of ethnography. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Coelho, George V. 1958. Changing images of America: A study of Indian students' perceptions. Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press.

- Cohen, Abner. 1980. Drama and politics in the development of a London carnival. Man 15:65-87.
- . 1982. A polyethnic London carnival as a contested cultural performance. Ethnic and Racial Studies 5 (January):23-41.
- Cohen, Anthony Paul. 1985. The symbolic construction of community. Chichester: Ellis Horwood.
- . 1986a. Of symbols and boundaries, or, does Ertie's greatcoat hold the key? In Symbolising boundaries: Identity and diversity in British cultures, ed. Anthony P. Cohen, pp. 1-19. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- , ed. 1986b. Symbolising boundaries: Identity and diversity in British cultures. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Cohen, Ronald. 1978. Ethnicity: Problem and focus in anthropology. Annual Review of Anthropology 7:379-403.
- Conklin, G. H. 1981. Cultural determinants of power for women within the family: A neglected aspect of family research. In Women in the family and the economy, eds. G. Kurian and R. Ghosh. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press.
- Coward, Harold, and David Goa. 1987. Religious experience of the South Asian diaspora in Canada. In The South Asian diaspora in Canada: Six essays, ed. Milton Israel, pp. 73-86. Toronto: The Multicultural History Society of Ontario.
- Cruikshank, Julie. 1990. Life lived like a story: Life stories of three Yukon native elders. Collaborators Angela Sidney, Kitty Smith, and Annie Ned. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Cunningham, Jean D. 1990. Classical dance of India in Canada: Adaptation, play - and woman. Ph.D. Dissertation, William Lyon University.
- D'Costa, Ronald. 1989. Socio-demographic characteristics of the population of South Asian origins in Canada. Paper Presented at the International Conference on Ethnicity, Identity, Migration: The South Asian Context, University of Toronto, December 8-10, 1989.

- Dahlie, Jorgen, and Tissa Fernando, eds. 1981. Ethnicity, power and politics in Canada. Toronto: Methuen.
- Dakshinamurti, Shyamala. 1991. Popularizing Indian dances. Bansuri 8:11-15.
- David, L. 1964. The East Indian family overseas. Social and Economic Studies 3(2):383-96.
- Dhar, Satish. 1973. The residential environment and the East Indian community. In An introduction to East Indian culture, Centre for Continuing Education. Vancouver, B.C.: University of British Columbia.
- Dhruvarajan, Vanaja. 1993. Ethnic cultural retention and transmission among first generation Hindu Asian Indians in a Canadian prairie city. Journal of Comparative and Family Studies 24 (spring):63-79.
- Dossa, Parin Aziz. 1985. Ritual and daily life: Transmission and interpretation of the Ismaili tradition in Vancouver. Ph.D. Dissertation, The University of British Columbia.
- Dusenbery, Verne A. 1981. Canadian ideology and public policy: The impact of Vancouver Sikh ethnic and religious adaptation. Canadian Ethnic Studies 12(3):101-19.
- . 1990. On the moral sensitivities of Sikhs in North America. In Divine passions: The social construction of emotion in India, ed. Owen M. Lynch, pp. 239-61. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Fernando, Tissa. 1979. East African Asians in Western Canada: The Ismaili community. New Community 7(3):361-68.
- Filteau, C. H. 1980. The Role of the concept of love in the Hindu family acculturation process. In Visible minorities and multiculturalism, eds. K. V. Ujimoto and G. Hirabayashi, pp. 289-300. Toronto: Butterworths.
- Fischer, Michael M. J. 1986. Ethnicity and the post-modern arts of memory. In Writing culture: The poetics and politics of ethnography, eds. James Clifford and George E. Marcus, pp. 194-233. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Fleuret, A. K. 1974. Incorporation into networks among Sikhs in Los Angeles. Urban Anthropology 3(1):27-33.

- Fox, Richard G., ed. 1991. Recapturing Anthropology: Working in the present. Santa Fe, New Mexico: School of American Research Press.
- Freed, Stanley A., and Ruth S. Freed. 1982. Changing family types in India. Ethnology 21 (July):189-202.
- Freitag, Sandria B. 1980. Sacred symbol as mobilizing ideology: The North Indian search for a 'Hindu' community. Comparative Studies in Sociology and History (Cambridge) 22 (October):597-625.
- Gandhi, Bansi. 1992. Festival of Holi. In Holi Edition Newsletter 1992, ed. Ashok Bhagria. Vishva Hindu Parishad of B.C.
- Gangrade, K. D. 1975. Crisis of values: A study in generation gap. New Delhi: Chetana Publications.
- Gans, Herbert J. 1979. Symbolic ethnicity: The future of ethnic groups and culture in America. Ethnic and Racial Studies 2:1-20.
- Geertz, Clifford. 1963. The integrative revolution: Primordial sentiments and civil politics in the New States. In Old Societies and New States: The Quest for Modernity in Asia and Africa, ed. C. Geertz, pp. 105-157. New York: Basic Books. Reprinted in The Interpretation of Cultures, ed. C. Geertz, 1973:255-311.
- . 1973. The interpretation of cultures: Selected essays. New York: Basic.
- . 1983. Local knowledge: Further essays in interpretive anthropology. New York: Basic Books.
- . 1988. Works and Lives: The anthropologist as author. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Ghosh, Amitav. 1989. The diaspora in Indian culture. Public Culture 2 (fall):73-78.
- Ghosh, Ratna. 1981. Minority within a minority--on being South Asian and female in Canada. In Women in the family and the economy: An international comparative survey, eds. George Kurian and Ratna Ghosh, pp. 414-26. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press.

- Giddens, Anthony. 1976. New rules of sociological method: A positive critique of interpretative sociologies. London: Hutchinson of London.
- . 1979. Central problems in social theory: Action, structure and contradiction in social analysis. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- . 1984. The constitution of society: Outline of the theory of structuration. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Gill, Kuldip. 1988. Health strategies of Indo-Fijian women in the context of Fiji. Ph.D. Dissertation, University of British Columbia.
- Glaser, B. G., and A. L. Strauss. 1967. The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.
- Glazer, Nathan, and Daniel P. Moynihan. 1963. Beyond the melting pot. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- , eds. 1975. Ethnicity: Theory and experience. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Goa, D. J., and H. G. Neufeldt Coward, R. 1984. Hindus in Alberta: A study in religious continuity and change. Canadian Ethnic Studies 16(1):96-113.
- Goel, Mrs. Prem. 1991. Festival of Holi. In Holi Souvenir 1991, ed. Vijay Verma, p. 13. Vishva Hindu Parishad of B.C.
- Goffman, Erving. 1963. Stigma: Notes on the management of spoiled identity. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.
- Gould, Harold, A. 1963. The adaptive functions of caste in contemporary Indian society. Asian Survey 3(9).
- Haagen, Claudia Elisabeth. 1990. Strategies for cultural maintenance: Aboriginal cultural education programs and centres in Canada. Ph.D Dissertation, University of British Columbia.
- Hammersley, Martyn, and Paul Atkinson. 1983. Ethnography: Principles in practice. London: Tavistock Publications.

- Hannerz, Ulf. 1986. Theory in Anthropology: Small is beautiful? The problem of complex cultures. Comparative Studies in Sociology and History 28(1):362-67.
- Harding, Sandra. 1987. Introduction: Is there a feminist method? In Feminism and methodology: Social science issues, ed. Sandra Harding, pp. 1-14. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Harrell-Bond, Barbara. 1981 <1976>. Studying elites: Some special problems. In Ethics and anthropology: Dilemmas in fieldwork, ed. Michael A. Rynkiewich, pp. 110-22. Malabar, Florida: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Company, Inc.
- Helweg, A. W. 1986. India's immigrant professionals in Toronto, Canada: The study of a social network. In From India to Canada: A brief history of immigration; problems of discrimination; admission and assimilation, ed. S. Chandrasekhar, pp. 67-79. La Jolla, California: A Population Review Book.
- Henry, Frances. 1983. Some problems of South Asian adaptation in Toronto. In Overseas Indians: A study in adaptation, eds. George Kurian and Ram P. Srivastava, pp. 41-50. New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House.
- Hobsbawm, E., and T. Ranger, eds. 1983. The invention of tradition. Cambridge University Press.
- Horne, Donald. 1986. The public culture: The triumph of industrialism. London: Pluto Press.
- Hundal, Sukhwant. 1991. Interview with film director Gurinder Chadha. Ankur 1 (Spring):24-28.
- Indra, Doreen. 1979a. Ethnicity, social stratification and opinion formation: An analysis of ethnic portrayal in the Vancouver newspaper press, 1905-1976. Ph.D. Dissertation, Simon Fraser University.
- . 1979b. South Asian stereotypes in the Vancouver press. Ethnic and Racial Studies 2(2):166-89.
- Ismail, K. 1984. Karnataka temples: Their role in socio-economic life. Delhi: Sundeep Prakashan.
- Israel, Milton, ed. 1987. The South Asian diaspora in Canada: Six essays. Toronto: The Multicultural History Society of Ontario.

- Jackson, Robert. 1976. Holi in North India and in an English city: Some adaptations and anomalies. New Community 5(3):203-10.
- . 1987. Changing conceptions of Hinduism in 'timetabled religion.' In Hinduism in Great Britain, ed. Richard Burghart, pp. 201-23. London: Tavistock Publications.
- Jain, H. C. 1984. Racial discrimination in employment in Canada: Issues and policies. In South Asians in the Canadian mosaic, ed. R. N. Kanungo, pp. 69-86. Kala Bharati: Montreal.
- Jain, Prakash C. 1989. Emigration and settlement of Indians abroad. Sociological Bulletin 38 (March):155-68.
- Jensen, Joan M. 1988. Passage from India: Asian Indian immigrants in North America. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Johnston, Hugh. 1984. The East Indians in Canada. Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association; Multicultural Program, Government of Canada.
- Joy, A. 1984. Work and Ethnicity: The case of the Sikhs in the Okanagan Valley of British Columbia. In South Asians in the Canadian mosaic, ed. R. N. Kanungo, pp. 187-04. Montreal: Kala Bharati.
- Kakar, Sudhir. 1986. Male and female in India: Identity formation and its effects on cultural adaptation. In Tradition and transformation: Asian Indians in America, eds. Richard Harvey Brown and George V. Coelho, pp. 27-42. Williamsburg, Virginia: Department of Anthropology, College of William and Mary.
- Kanitkar, Helen, and Robert Jackson. 1982. Hindus in Britain. London: Extramural Division, School of Oriental and African Studies.
- Kanungo, R. N. 1984a. Introduction. In South Asians in the Canadian Mosaic, ed. R. N. Kanungo, pp. 5-12. Montreal: Kala Bharati Foundation.
- . 1984b. South Asians in Canada: Problems and potentials. In South Asians in the Canadian Mosaic, ed. R. N. Kanungo, pp. 105-22. Montreal: Kala Bharati Foundation.

- Kapferer, Bruce. 1983. A celebration of demons: Exorcism and the aesthetics of healing in Sri Lanka. Bloomington: Indian University Press.
- . 1984. The ritual process and the problem of reflexivity in Sinhalese Demon Exorcisms. In Rite, drama, festival, spectacle, ed. J. J. MacAloon, pp. 179-207. Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues.
- Kapur, Promilla. 1982. Conflict between adolescent girls and parents in India. New Delhi: Vision Books.
- Khare, R. S. 1984. The untouchable as himself: Ideology, identity, and pragmatism among the Lucknow Chamars. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- King, Ursula. Hinduism in a Western context. In Hinduism in England, ed. D. Bowen, pp. 18-32. Bradford: Bradford College.
- Klein, Marjorie H., Aristotle A. Alexander, Milton H. Miller, Laura J. Haack, and Nancy J. Bushnell. 1986. Indian students in the United States: Personal and professional issues in cross-cultural education. In Tradition and transformation: Asian Indians in America, eds. Richard Harvey Brown and George V. Coelho, pp. 115-32. Williamsburg, Virginia: Department of Anthropology, College of William and Mary.
- Knott, Kim. 1987. Hindu temple rituals in Britain: The reinterpretation of tradition. In Hinduism in Great Britain, ed. Richard Burghart, pp. 157-79. London: Tavistock Publications.
- Kumar, Nita. 1988. The artisans of Banaras: Popular culture and identity, 1880-1986. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Kurian, George, ed. 1974. The family in India: A regional view. The Hague and Paris: Mouton.
- . 1991. Socialization of South Asian immigrant youth. In Immigrants and refugees in Canada: A national perspective on ethnicity, multiculturalism and cross-cultural adjustment, eds. Satya P. Sharma, Alexander M. Ervin, and Deirdre Meintel, pp. 48-57. Saskatoon, Saskatchewan: University of Saskatchewan.

- Kurian, George, and Ratna Ghosh. 1983. Child rearing in transition in Indian immigrant families in Canada. In Overseas Indians: A study in adaptation, eds. George Kurian and Ram P. Srivastava, pp. 128-38. New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House.
- Kurian, George, and R. P. Srivastava. 1983. Overseas Indians: A study in adaptation. New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House.
- Leach, E. 1964 <1954>. Political systems of Highland Burma. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Leonard, Karen. 1989. Ethnicity and identity in the United States. Paper Presented at the Conference on Ethnicity, Identity, Migration: The South Asian Experience, Toronto, Ontario, December 1989.
- Light, Linda, and Nancy Kleiber. 1981. Interactive research in a feminist setting: The Vancouver Women's Health Collective. In Anthropologists at home in North America: Methods and issues in the study of one's own society, ed. Donald A. Messerschmidt, pp. 167-82. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- The Link. 1991. Indo-Canadian youth group to be formed in Abbotsford. 18.
- Lowenthal, David. 1985. The past is a foreign country. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- McCurdy, David W. 1981 <1976>. The medicine man. In Ethics and anthropology: Dilemmas in fieldwork, ed. Michael A. Rynkiewich, pp. 4-16. Malabar, Florida: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Company, Inc.
- Mandelbaum, David G. 1970. Society in India. Two Volumes. Bombay: Popular Prakashan.
- . 1988. Women's seclusion and men's honor: Sex roles in north India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.
- Mangalam, J. J. 1986. Post-immigration adjustment of India's immigrants in Canada: A case study. In From India to Canada: A brief history of immigration; problems of discrimination; admission and assimilation, ed. S. Chandrasekhar, pp. 95-112. La Jolla, California: A Population Review Book.

- Manhas, Bonnie (Bhatti). 1979. The adolescent in the East Indian family in Canada. Master's Thesis, University of British Columbia.
- Manning, Frank E. 1983. The celebration of society: Perspectives on contemporary cultural performance. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling University Press.
- Marriott, McKim. 1968. The feast of love. In Krishna: Myths rites and attitudes, ed. Milton Singer, pp. 200-12. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Mathur, Saloni. 1990. Broadcasting difference: The cultural production of South Asian television. Master's Thesis, University of Western Ontario.
- Mayer, A. C. 1959. A report on the East Indian community in Vancouver. Vancouver: University of British Columbia.
- Merrey, Karen L. 1982. The Hindu festival calendar. In Religious festivals in South India and Sri Lanka, eds. Guy R. Welbon and Glenn E. Yocum, pp. 1-25. New Delhi: Manohar Publishing.
- Merton, Robert K. 1964 <1957>. Social theory and social structure. 2nd ed. London: Free Press.
- . 1971. Insiders and outsiders: An essay in the sociology of knowledge. In Essays on modernization of underdeveloped societies, Volume I, ed. A. R. Desai. Reprinted in American Journal of Sociology, 1972, 78(1) 9-47. Bombay: Thaker and Company.
- Mishler, Elliot G. 1986. Research interviewing: Context and narrative. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Mitchell, J. C., ed. 1969. Social networks in urban situations: Analyses of personal relationships in central African towns. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Moerman, Michael. 1965. Ethnic identification in a complex civilization: Who are the Lue? American Anthropologist 67:1215-30.
- Moodley, Kogila. 1981. Canadian ethnicity in comparative perspective: Issues in the literature. In Ethnicity, power and politics in Canada, eds. J. Dahlie and Tissa Fernando, pp. 6-21. Toronto: Methuen.

- . 1983. Canadian multiculturalism as ideology. Ethnic and Racial Studies 6 (July):320-31.
- Moore, Sally Falk. 1989. The production of cultural pluralism as a process. Public Culture 1 (Spring):26-48.
- NACOI, B. C. Chapter. 1984. Spotlight on Indo-Canadians: A resource book on the Indo-Canadian community and modern India.
- Nagata, Judith A. 1974. What is a Malay? Situational selection of ethnic identity in a plural society. American Ethnologist 1(1):331-50.
- Naidoo, Josephine C. 1979. Women of South Asian and Anglo Saxon origins in the Canadian context: Self perceptions, socialization, achievement aspirations. In Sex roles, ed. C. S. Adam, pp. 50-69. Montreal: Eden Press.
- . 1980. East Indian women in the Canadian context: A study in social psychology. In Visible minorities and multiculturalism: Asians in Canada, eds. Victor Ujimoto and G. Hirabayashi, pp. 193-218. Toronto: Butterworths.
- . 1984. South Asian women in Canada: Self perceptions, socialization, achievement, aspirations. In South Asians in the Canadian mosaic, Rabindra N. Kanungo, pp. 123-44. Montreal: Kala Bharati.
- . 1987. Women of South Asian origins: Status of research, problems, future issues. In The South Asian diaspora in Canada: Six essays, ed. Milton Israel, pp. 37-58. Toronto: The Multicultural History Society of Ontario.
- Naipally, Anuradha. 1989. Teaching Bharata Natyam in Canada: Perceptions and expectations. Bansuri 6:15-19.
- Nair, P. S., Murali Dhar Vemuri, and Faujdar Ram. 1989. Indian youth: A profile. New Delhi: Mittal Publications.
- Narváez, Peter, and Peter Laba. n.d. Introduction: The folklore-popular culture continuum. In Media sense: The folklore-popular culture continuum, eds. Peter Narváez and Peter Laba, pp. 1-8. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press.

- Nodwell, Evelyn. 1985. The living tradition of East Indian dance in Vancouver. Unpublished Paper, Winning Entry in Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute Student Essay Competition. Vancouver, British Columbia.
- . 1993. Indian dance in Vancouver: Models of and for culture. Paper Presented at the Annual Conference of the South Asia Council / Shastri Silver Jubilee Conference, Ottawa, June 9-12, 1993.
- . 1993 <in press>. 'Integrating Indian culture into our lives': Indo-Canadian youth in Vancouver. Presented at the International Conference on Overseas Indians, Chandigarh, India, March 17-18, 1992. Eastern Anthropologist.
- Nodwell, Evelyn, and Neil Guppy. 1992. The effects of publicly displayed ethnicity on interpersonal discrimination: Indo-Canadians in Vancouver. The Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology 29 (February):87-99.
- Nuttall, Denise. 1991. Privileging the body - Indo-Canadian performance in Ontario. Master's Thesis, University of Western Ontario.
- Oberoi, Harjot S. 1988. From ritual to counter-ritual: Rethinking the Hindu-Sikh question, 1884-1915. In Sikh history and religion in the twentieth century, ed. J. T. O'Connell, pp. 136-58. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Ortner, Sherry B. 1984. Theory in anthropology since the sixties. Comparative Studies in Society and History 26 (January):126-66.
- . 1989. Categories of un-modernity: Community. Paper Presented at 88th Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association, Washington, DC.
- Pandey, Gyanendra. 1990. The construction of communalism in colonial north India. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Paranjpe, A. C. 1986. Identity issues among immigrants: Reflections on the experience of Indo-Canadians in British Columbia. In Tradition and transformation: Asian Indians in America, eds. Richard Harvey Brown and George V. Coelho, pp. 71-94. Williamsburg, Virginia: Department of Anthropology, College of William and Mary.

- Parel, A. 1988. The Meech Lake Accord and Indo-Canadians. Canadian Ethnic Studies 20(1):129-37.
- Parmar, P. 1982. Gender, race and class: Asian women in resistance. In The empire strikes back: Race and racism in 70's Britain, Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, pp. 236-75. London: Hutchinson.
- Patel, N. 1976. Hinduism outside India: Selective retention in Gujarati families. In Family and social change in modern India, ed. G. R. Gupta, pp. 233-56. New Delhi: Vikas.
- Patterson, Orlando. 1975. Context and choice in ethnic allegiance: A theoretical framework and caribbean case study. In Ethnicity: Theory and experience, eds. Nathan Glazer and Daniel Moynihan, pp. 305-49. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- . 1977. Ethnic chauvinism: The reactionary impulse. New York: Stein and Day.
- Pelto, P. J., and G. H. Pelto. 1978. Anthropological research: The structure of inquiry. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pi, Clara. 1979. Food habits and nutritional status of East Indian Hindu Children in British Columbia. M.A. thesis, The University of British Columbia.
- Pirani, M. 1974. Aspirations and expectations of English and immigrant youth. New Community 3:73-78.
- Porter, John. 1975. Ethnic pluralism in Canadian perspective. In Ethnicity: Theory and experience, eds. N. Glazer and D. Moynihan, pp. 267-304. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Puri, Promod. 1992. Where are all the missing Indo-Canadians? The Link September 30 (1992):1, 4, 5.
- Rabinow, Paul. 1977. Reflections on fieldwork in Morocco. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Ramachandran, Deepak. 1991. Confessions of an Oreo cookie. The Globe and Mail May 10.

- Ramcharan, S. 1984. South Asian immigration: Current status and adaptation modes. In South Asians in the Canadian mosaic, ed. R. N. Kanungo, pp. 33-48. Montreal: Kala Bharati Foundation.
- Rao, Badrinath Krishna. 1991. The agony when East meets West. The Globe and Mail May 7:A17.
- Reddy, N. Y. 1980. Values and attitudes of Indian youth: A psychological study of rural and urban students. New Delhi: Light and Life Publishers.
- Robson, R. A. H., and Brad Breems. 1985. Ethnic conflict in Vancouver: An empirical case study. Vancouver: B.C. Civil Liberties Association.
- Roland, Alan. 1986. The Indian self: Reflections in the mirror of American life. In Tradition and transformation: Asian Indians in America, eds. Richard Harvey Brown and George V. Coelho, pp. 43-52. Williamsburg, Virginia: Department of Anthropology, College of William and Mary.
- Rosaldo, Renato. 1988. Ideology, place, and people without culture. Cultural Anthropology 3 (February):77-87.
- Rushdie, Salman. 1991. Imaginary homelands: Essays and criticism 1981-1991. Salman Rushdie. London: Granta Books.
- Rynkiewich, Michael A. 1981 <1976>. The underdevelopment of anthropological ethics. In Ethics and Anthropology: Dilemmas in fieldwork, ed. Michael A. Rynkiewich, pp. 47-60. Malabar, Florida: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Company, Inc.
- Said, Edward W. 1979. Orientalism. New York: Random House, Vintage.
- Saifullah Khan, V. 1979. Work and network: South Asian women in South London. In Ethnicity at work, ed. Sandra Wallman, pp. 114-33. London: Macmillan.
- Sandhu, Sukhdev Singh. 1980. The second generation: Culture and the East Indian community in Nova Scotia. Ethnic Heritage Series. Halifax, Nova Scotia.
- Saraswathi, S. 1988. Youth in India. Delhi: Cambridge Press.

- Sarhadi, Dhooleka. 1993. Intergenerational culture conflict in immigrant South Asian families. Paper Presented at the Annual Conference of the South Asia Council / Shastri Silver Jubilee Conference, Ottawa, June 1993.
- Schwartz, B. M. 1967. Caste in overseas Indian communities. San Francisco: Chandler.
- Sharma, K. L. 1993. A note on the theme of the conference. Paper Presented at the International Conference on Overseas Indians, March 1993, Chandigarh, India.
- Sharma, K. N. 1993 <in press>. Keynote address: A note on the theme of the conference. Presented at the International Conference on Overseas Indians, Chandigarh, India, March 17- 8, 1992. Eastern Anthropologist.
- Sharma, S. L. 1989. Perspectives on Indians abroad. Sociological Bulletin 38 (March):1-22.
- Sharma, Satya P. 1989. The anthropologist as a conflict mediator in an ethnic community: An unusual 'applied' role. Proactive 8 (fall):6-18.
- . 1991. South Asian visa students in a Western Canadian university: A study in process of adjustment and 'marginal' cultural adaptation. In Immigrants and refugees in Canada: A national perspective on ethnicity, multiculturalism and cross-cultural adjustment, eds. Satya P. Sharma, Alexander M. Ervin, and Deirdre Meintel, pp. 48-57. Saskatoon, Saskatchewan: University of Saskatchewan.
- Sharma, Satya P., Alexander M. Ervin, and Deirdre Meintel, eds. 1991. Immigrants and refugees in Canada: A national perspective on ethnicity, multiculturalism and cross-cultural adjustment. Saskatoon, Saskatchewan: University of Saskatchewan.
- Sharma, Shalendra. 1982. East Indians and the Canadian ethnic mosaic: An overview. South Asian Bulletin 2 (spring):6-18.
- Shibutani, T. 1955. Reference groups as perspectives. American Journal of Sociology 60(6):562-69.
- Siddique, Chaudry M. 1977a. On Migrating to Canada: The first generation Indian and Pakistani families in the process of change. Sociological Bulletin 26 (September):203-26.

- . 1977b. Structural separation and family change: An exploratory study of the immigrant Indian and Pakistani families of Saskatoon, Canada. International Review of Modern Sociology 7(1):13-35. Reprinted in eds. George Kurian and R. P. Srivastava, 1983, op. cit., pp. 100-127.
- Siddique, Muhammad. 1974. Patterns of familial decision making and division of labour: A study of the immigrant Indian and Pakistani community of Saskatoon. Master's Thesis, University of Saskatchewan.
- . 1977. Changing family patterns: A comparative analysis of immigrant Indian and Pakistani families of Saskatoon, Canada. Journal of Comparative Family Studies 8(2):179-200.
- Sikka, Kumar. 1986. India Club of Vancouver. In Diwali Souvenir 1986, ed. Dr. Krishan Anand, pp. 21, 23. Vishva Hindu Parishad of British Columbia. Vancouver, B.C.
- Singer, Milton. 1972. When a great tradition modernizes: An anthropological approach to Indian civilization. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Sinha, M. P., and K. D. Gangrade, eds. 1971. Intergenerational conflict in India. Bombay: Nachiketa Publications Limited.
- Sollers, W. 1989a. Introduction: The invention of ethnicity. In The invention of ethnicity, ed. W. Sollers, ix-xx. New York: Oxford University Press.
- , ed. 1989b. The invention of ethnicity. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Srivastava, A., and M. M. Ames. 1989. Issues in the adaptation of South Asians to the Canadian environment: Women's experience of gender, race and class. Paper Presented at the Conference on Ethnicity, Identity, Migration The South Asian Experience, Toronto, Ontario, December 1989.
- Srivastava, Ram P. 1974. Family organization and change among the overseas Indians with special reference to Indian immigrant families of British Columbia, Canada. In The family in India: A regional view. In Kurian, George, pp. 369-91. The Hague: Mouton.

- Statistics Canada. 1990 (May). Employment Equity. Fact Sheets, 1986 census. Ottawa: Ethnic and Visible Minorities Unit, Housing, Family and Social Statistics Division.
- . 1992. Profile of census divisions and subdivisions in British Columbia, part A. Ottawa: Industry, Science and Technology Canada. 1991 Census of Canada. Catalogue number 93-384.
- . 1993a. Ethnic origin. Ottawa: Industry, Science and Technology Canada. 1991 Census of Canada. Catalogue number 93-315.
- . 1993b. Religions in Canada. Ottawa: Industry, Science and Technology Canada. 1991 Census of Canada. Catalogue number 93-319.
- Stopes-Roe, Mary, and Raymond Cochrane. 1987. The process of assimilation in Asians in Britain: A study of Hindu, Muslim and Sikh immigrants and their young adult children. International Journal of Comparative Sociology 28(1-2):43-56.
- Strauss, Anselm L. 1959. Mirrors and masks: The search for identity. Illinois: Free Press of Glencoe.
- Subramaniam, I. A. 1977. Identity shift: Post-migration changes in identity among first-generation East Indian immigrants in Toronto. Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Toronto.
- Tambiah, Stanley J. 1989. Ethnic conflict in the world today. American Ethnologist 16(2):335-49.
- Taylor, J. H. 1976. The half-way generation: A study of Asian youths in Newcastle upon Tyne. London: NFER Publishing Company Ltd.
- The Link. 1991. Indo-Canadian youth group to be formed in Abbotsford. 18.
- Thompson, Marcus. 1974. The second generation--Punjabi or English? New Community 3(3):242-48.
- Tinker, Hugh. 1977. The banyan tree: Overseas emigrants from India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Tonks, Randal Glenn. 1990. Identity formation and acculturation in second generation Indo-Canadian youth and young adults. Masters Thesis, Simon Fraser University .
- Turner, Victor W., and Edward M. Bruner, eds. 1986. The anthropology of experience. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Varma, Baidya Nath. 1980. Indians as new ethnics: A theoretical note. In The new ethnics: Asian Indians in the United States, eds. Parmatma Saran and Edwin Eames, pp. 29-47. New York: Praeger Publishers.
- Wakil, S. Parvez, C. M. Siddique, and F. A. Wakil. 1981. Between two cultures: A study in socialization of children of immigrants. Journal of Marriage and the Family 23(3):929-40.
- Ward, Barbara E. 1965. Varieties of the conscious model: The fishermen of South China. In The relevance of models for Social Anthropology, eds. M. Gluckman and F. Eggan, pp. 113-37. London: Tavistock.
- Warner, W. Lloyd. 1959. The living and the dead: A study of the symbolic life of Americans. Yale: Yale University Press.
- Weinfeld, Morton. 1985. Myth and reality in the Canadian mosaic: 'affective ethnicity.' In Ethnicity and ethnic relations in Canada, eds. Rita M. Bienvenue and Jay E. Goldstein, pp. 65-86. Toronto: Butterworths.
- Weinreich, Peter. 1979. Ethnicity and adolescent identity. In Minority families in Britain: Support and stress, ed. Verity Saifullah Khan, pp. 89-107. London: MacMillan Press.
- Whittaker, Elvi. 1986. The Mainland Haole: The white experience in Hawaii. New York: Columbia University Press.
- . 1988. The Mexican presence in Canada: Liberality, uncertainty and nostalgia. The Journal of Ethnic Studies 16(2):27-46.
- Williams, Brackette F. 1989. A class act: Anthropology and the race to nation across ethnic terrain. Annual Review of Anthropology 18:401-44.
- Wong, Chris. 1990. Bhangra beat drives new Indi-Pop. Georgia Straight October 12:43.

- Wood, John R. 1978. East Indians and Canada's new immigration policy. Canadian Public Policy 4(4):547-67.
- . 1981. A visible minority votes: East Indian electoral behavior in the Vancouver South provincial and federal elections of 1979. In Ethnicity, power and politics in Canada, eds. J. Dahlie and T. Fernando, pp. 177-201. Toronto: Methuen.
- Wood, Marjorie R. 1980. Hinduism in Vancouver: Adjustments in the home, the temple, and the community. In Visible minorities and multiculturalism: Asians in Canada, eds. K. V. Ujimoto and G. Hirabayashi. Toronto: Butterworths.
- . 1984. Social service agents and Indo-Canadian immigrants in Vancouver: Implications of models of social exchange for intercultural transactions. Ph.D. Dissertation, University of British Columbia.
- Yancey, William L., Eugene P. Ericksen, and Richard N. Juliani. 1976. Emergent ethnicity: A review and reformulation. American Sociological Review 41 (June):391-403.
- Yelvington, Kevin A. 1991. Ethnicity as practice? A comment on Bentley. Comparative Studies in Society and History 33:158-68.
- Yengoyan, Aram A. 1986. Theory in anthropology: On the demise of the concept of culture. Comparative Studies in Society and History 28:368-374.

**APPENDIX ONE**  
**PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS**

PROFILE OF KEY FAMILIES

Adult members of eleven families, some of whom Yuva respondents belong to, are cited in this document. Three of the sets of parents were born in East Africa, and the remaining eight in north India. Those from India are all from urban centres. They immigrated to Canada between the mid-fifties and the early seventies, all on independent class. All but three of the men are professional and business people. All the women work in professional, clerical, or sales jobs.<sup>117</sup>

Two of these families have one child, one family has three children and the remaining eight have two children each. All live in their own homes as nuclear families, although some of them have temporarily had an aging parent or newly married son or daughter and spouse living with them.

The adults in all these families are or have been involved in community organizations by serving on boards of the Vishva Hindu Parishad, India Club, Bengali Society,

---

<sup>117</sup>Ghosh (1984:151-2) reports that according to a small survey, sixty percent of South Asian women in Montreal work (cp. Saifullah Khan 1979).

Gujarati Society, India Music Society, the parents' boards of classical Indian dance schools, or have informally taught dance, language, or religious classes.

PROFILE OF YUVA MEMBERS AND RESPONDENTS

In 1991, after Yuva made some efforts at increasing membership, sixty-eight individual members appeared on the Yuva membership and phone lists. Of these, forty-four were female and twenty-four were male. Characteristics were distributed as follows:

<u>AGE AND EDUCATION</u>	
14-16, secondary school:	25
18-22, university or college:	17
23-25:	6
16-20 (known to be in university in 1993):*	6
unconfirmed:**	14

<u>RELIGION OF PARENTS</u>	
Hindu:	34
Sikh:	14
Jain:	2
Hindu-Ismaili:	1
unconfirmed:**	17

<u>MOTHER TONGUE OF PARENTS</u>	
Hindi:	23
Punjabi:	17
Gujarati:	8
Bengali:	3
Tamil:	1
Marathi:	1
unconfirmed:**	17

\* This age group overlaps with the others because the year of university is not confirmed, so the exact ages of this

group is uncertain. It is estimated that their ages span this four year range.

\*\* The large number of unconfirmed attributes is accounted for by the fact that the council members with whom I spoke considered these characteristics to be irrelevant to membership in Yuva. They suggested that members do not ask each other for this kind of information. I, therefore, considered it inappropriate to make these questions an issue for Yuva members by asking them to find the answers from each other. It would also be inappropriate for me to personally contact individual youth or their families whom I had not met.

Nineteen second generation youth, including those who participated in the group discussions, are cited in this document. Of these, eleven are female and eight are male.

	<u>AGE</u>	
15-19		10
20-23		9

All but seven were born in Canada. Of those seven, one was born in Great Britain, two in Africa, and three in India. Fourteen are from Hindu families, four Sikh, and one Jain. Six are from Hindi speaking families, six Gujarati, five Punjabi, and two Bengali.

**APPENDIX TWO**  
**ORGANIZATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS:**  
**GREATER VANCOUVER REGIONAL DISTRICT**

This list cannot be complete, owing to constant flux and varying degrees of formality, accessibility, and tenacity. Dates indicate year in which organization was founded or registered in the case of registered societies.

CULTURAL (ETHNIC)

Bengali Cultural Society of B.C. (1977)

Deccan Cultural Society (1975-6; now said to be inactive)

Gujarati Society of B.C. (1969)

Darji Society

Lohana Mandal

Mochi Samaj

Patel Society

Soni Samaj

Indo-Canadian Heritage Club of Lower Mainland

Maharashtrian Society (not yet a formal society)

Punjab Cultural Association

Tamil Sangham

## DANCE AND MUSIC

India Music Society (associated with Raga Mala Society of Canada; 1975/76)

Kavital Dance School (1987)

Indian Folk Dance Group

Natraj School of Dancing (1974)

Nritya Manjaree Dance School (Kathak; 1983)

Peali Dance Academy (Bharat Natyam; early 1980's)

Punjabi Artists Association of Richmond (bhangra; 1972)

University (U.B.C.) Bhangara Club (1992)

Various informal folk dance groups and classes, bhangra associations, Gujarati garba classes.

Classes in Orissi.

## MEDIA AIMED AT INDO-CANADIAN COMMUNITY

Print

*Ankur* (means "budding"; "a quarterly magazine about art, literature, culture, social and political issues of concern to the Indo-Canadian community"; 1991)

*India News and Views* ("serving the Indian Community")

*The Indo-Canadian Voice*

*The Link* ("Indo-Canadian Community Newspaper"; 1973)

*The Overseas Times* ("Indo-Asian newspaper"; now defunct)

*Rungh* ("A South Asian quarterly of culture, comment, and criticism," 1992).

Television and Radio

*Gitanjali* (a weekly one hour program of Indian music on U.B.C.'s CITR radio).

*Indrahanush* (a semi-weekly three hour program on *Multi-cultural Channel*)

*Rhim Jim* (a private radio station for Indian programming)

*South Asian Mosaic* a one hour program on *Community Channel*

*The Asian Voice* (*Vision Television Network*, scheduled to begin in 1993)

## RELIGIOUS

Organizations

Khalsa Diwan Society

Hindu Council of Canada (1985)

Ismaili Council of B.C.

ISKCON (International Society for Krishna Consciousness)

Jain Center of British Columbia (1993)

Kabir Association of B.C. (and of Canada)

Sanatan Dharam Society

Shree Sanatan Dharam Rayaman Mandali of Fiji Society

Sri Sathya Sai Organization of Vancouver (and of Canada)

Swami Tilak Memorial Society

Vishva Hindu Parishad Of B.C. (1968) and of Canada (1987-8)

Vivekananda Vedanta Society

Vedic Hindu Society temple (1992; temple under construction).

TEMPLES

## Hindu Mandirs

Shiv Mandir (Fijian; after 1980)

Sri Maha Laxmi Mandir (Hindu; 1990)

Sri Sri Radha Madana-mohana Mandir (ISKCON Vancouver temple; not strictly speaking a Hindu temple for South Asian Hindus, but attended occasionally by them because of its well organized and sometimes elaborate festival celebrations)

Vedic Shastri Foundation (Surrey; 1993)

Vishva Hindu Parishad (1971; they own land for a new temple and cultural center)

Ismaili Jamatkhana (four in lower mainland?)

Sikh Gurdwaras (unconfirmed number--about four in GVRD? include Akali Singh Sikh Gurdwara, Guru Nanak Gurdwara, Ross Street Gurdwara )

## SERVICE

India Club (1968)

India Mahilla Association (1973)

Indo-Canadian Business Association (1992)

NACOI (National Association of Canadians of Origins in India), Vancouver chapter

OASIS (Orientation Adjustment Services for Immigrants Society; 1975)

Punjabi Market Association

## YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS

It is difficult to identify youth groups as they are often ad hoc and often form under the umbrella of other organizations.

The Vishva Hindu Parishad, Bengali Society, and Gujarati Society have in the past all attempted youth groups that were largely adult driven. The Gujarati Society group was reactivated in 1992, motivated by a renewed interest on the part of their young members in learning more about their culture and religion. There are also group-specific Sikh and Ismaili youth organizations. A support group for Indo-Canadian girls sponsored by Burnaby Multicultural Society began in 1991. The same year, an Indo-Canadian youth group formed in B.C.'s lower mainland in Abbotsford (*The Link* 1991:18).

Immigrant service organizations such as OASIS and MOSAIC also form youth groups and hold workshops where they see a need for an arena in which young Indo-Canadians can share and discuss experiences and begin to deal with their culture related problems. For example, Hemi Dhanoa, who works for MOSAIC as well as producing and hosting the program "*South Asian Mosaic*" for *Community Television*, has pulled together individuals into a group she calls YICS

(Young Indo-Canadians), in order that they may discuss issues and form panels which she then televises on "*South Asian Mosaic*." Special programs dealing with identity, problems of dating and communication with parents, and arranged marriage have been produced and aired repeatedly. OASIS conducted a survey in summer 1991 and organized a workshop for Indo-Canadians, "Youth in the '90's."

There are also university organizations such as the University of British Columbia's Sikh Students Association, an organization for visa students called Utsav (meaning celebration), and a Bhangara Club.