

CLASS AND ETHNICITY:

The Social Organization Of Working Class  
East Indian Immigrants in Vancouver

by

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# ABSTRACT

The thesis is concerned to explicate the social organization of ethnicity and ethnic relations in the Canadian setting. The work is developed from an ethnography of the East Indian 'community' in Vancouver, British Columbia and from other theoretical work done on ethnicity. The argument which is presented is that ethnic relations are special forms of class relations, which are mediated by the socially organized practices of the social institutions of the society.

The method of work proceeds in two ways. In the first place I begin from the categories and concepts present in the theoretical literature and return those to the social relations which they name; which are actual activities of individuals. In the second, I articulate on the basis of the actual activities of individuals who are part of and related to the social organization of a particular ethnic community, how the social organization of that ethnic community arises and is maintained.

The first part of the thesis reviews the literature, presents the theoretical framework which is developed out of this method of work, describes the particular research procedures and provides an initial overview of the community I studied. The later chapters explicate the social relations and describes family organization, labour force participation and the market relations of East Indian individuals. A central focus in the later chapters is to examine the work procedures of individuals who conceptualize and organize the 'community'. The thesis provides brief concluding remarks which tie the different arguments in the thesis together, and point out areas where the work must be further developed.

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## INTRODUCTION

The ethnic community as a social phenomenon, is visible as different from the community which surrounds it. This difference is socially organized. The difference arises out of the socially organized practices of the labour force and the social institutions, as they are historically determined, which singles out a category of persons to be treated differently from other members of the society.

It will be argued in this thesis that the ethnic community as a social phenomenon is a particular organization of class relations in this society. It is an organization of class relations which appear as ethnic relations. Ethnic relations are particular social relations in which the class relation between individuals who are identified as different, is mediated and organized by the practices of the social institutions to appear as different from the class relation between other individuals in the society. That is ethnic relations appear as relations between individuals who are similar in background, country of origin, culture and religious orientation, who live together in this society, in an ethnic community as a matter of personal preference.

The practice which organizes individuals differently in relation to the labour market is the organization of a segregated participation in the labour force. This creates an ethnically segregated labour force. This aspect of the organization of the labour force constitutes, for the working class, a division within the working class itself. In the work I will present here, I will demonstrate these particular aspects of class organization of the East Indian community in Vancouver. When one examines the East Indian community

in Vancouver from the location of businesses, social institutions, and departments of government, it appears as a homogenous group of people, organized and held together by their own personal preferences, ethnic identification, and cultural similarities. Individuals in the community are visibly different from most other members of the society; in one or more ways, colour of skin, dress or language. Thus the East Indian community is different from the society which surrounds it.

If, however, you examine the family situation and family organization of East Indian families who are organized into the community, a class division becomes visible. It is from this location that the class relations of the community can be seen. This class relation in the community arises as a definite practice. Individuals who are members of the East Indian community are organized as different from the majority of Canadian born citizens, as they are organized by their relation to the labour force, social agencies, schools, police, press and law. At the same time the practices of the social institutions (education, social welfare, law) are such that they differentiate among East Indians. These are the socially organized practices which organized the class relations in the community and which create and organize the East Indian community as different from the society which surrounds it.

An examination of the actual activities and relations of working class East Indian families reveals that they are in many ways similar to the actual activities and relations of working class 'Canadian' families. Yet, members of this society, who are East Indian and in the working class are located differently in the society from members of the society who are not ethnically identified. This becomes clear when you examine the participation of East Indian men and women (in the working class) in the labour force.

Consistently, they hold jobs which are among the lowest paid, most insecure and most physically demanding in the labour force. This segregation locates non-ethnically organized workers in an exploitative relation to East Indian workers. The practice of this relation is such that 'Canadian' workers benefit materially from the segregation of East Indian workers in the labour force and further are part of organizing that segregation. These practices and others which I will describe at length, are constitutive of a division within the working class.

I am suggesting that ethnic community has no other basis than as produced out of the combined legal, social service, school and businesses practices of this society. It is through these practices that individuals are defined as East Indian immigrants, with particular characteristics and organized into an ethnic community. The ethnic community is a particular organization of class relations which conceals class relations through practices which organize individuals first as different from the majority of Canadian born citizens, then as members of an ethnic community, on the basis of their country of origin.

When I began my field work among East Indian immigrants in Vancouver, I accepted the difference between East Indians and Canadians as a given. I understood that I was investigating an ethnic community which was a cultural island within and different from the broader society. I however found many inconsistencies with this view when I began to interview a broad range of people within the East Indian community. The interviews with social service agencies began to point to a series of problems in the community, which encouraged me to examine further the family relations in the community. Yet there seemed in some ways that the community did not exist. There was no firm geographic organization. People who were East Indians or at least

claimed that as their first country of origin in immigration statements, were not in the community. However the community was visible; how then did it exist?

The leadership of the community was clearly identifiable; who they led or represented was not. The leadership of the community held views about the community which were very different from industrial and service workers. The leadership were almost uniformly business and professional people and all were men. Workers in social service agencies seemed to be describing a class phenomenon in the delivery of service, yet they at the same time presented the description of the community as homogenous and unified.

As I struggled with the problems of trying to decide if there was a community at all and if there was, what was its composition, it began to be obvious to me that the frame that I was working with was concealing from me the organization of the community, and was further disorganizing my data. I began to look at the assumptions that I was working with. My frame did not allow me to account for or understand the diversity in points of view and inconsistency of description in my data. There did not seem to be a way of organizing the material. This led me to critique my assumptions and to discard the frame that I was working with, to examine the literature on ethnicity and to begin an inquiry into how I had in fact proceeded. I went back later to ask different questions and to interview a large number of working class East Indians. I did several short ethnographies on work setting which employed East Indian workers. In addition I did some corporate research on East Indian owned businesses and talked to numerous individuals on the street, at gas stations, parking lots, pubs and restaurants. (This is expanded in the Chapter on Data.)

In doing this I found that in the first place I had in my work taken

for granted many of the relations of the society. I had initially imposed a conceptual understanding, as a way of ordering and understanding the relations among individuals. As a result I found that my data did not make sense and further that the data did not reveal any of the community relations to me. I had not begun by understanding that the relations as they were might already be ordered and that my task might be to reveal or uncover the relations as they were organized in the everyday activities of individuals, in their work, homes and friendships. Working in a different way I found indeed that the relations were already ordered.

I do not work here in a way that simply describes the field work. Rather I engage in a different enterprise. I use my field work to explicate the relations among individuals who are East Indian working class immigrants in Vancouver. To do this I begin by grounding the description of the community in the everyday lives of individuals in the community so that we are able to see how the relations are lived in the community. My field work will be used to reveal how the analysis was developed out of the everyday relations which I studied.

Other studies have been done on aspects of the East Indian community in Vancouver. I have looked at the UNESCO Study done on Media treatment of East Indians (Scanlon, 1975), a study on community-police relations (Singh, 1975), the Canive-Kazinski study prepared for the Immigration Branch of the Department of Secretary of State (Canive, Kazinski, 1976), and a social profile of the East Indian community prepared for the Department of Labour, British Columbia (Campbel, Froise, Wood, 1976 in Mimeograph). In addition I have examined some of the material on European labour force trends and at ethnic studies of East Indian and Pakistani immigrants in England. These provided useful background to me both in my field work and in my consideration of my data. They are referenced in the bibliography. I however have not used



them directly in the work I will present here.

The first chapter of my thesis is concerned with the theoretical framework which I use to examine my data. I have reviewed some of the literature on ethnicity and ethnic groups, and have provided an alternative theoretical model. Chapter Two presents the data gathering procedures and described the types of research I did, the problems I had and the limitations of the research. In addition in this chapter I present an introductory description of the community, with a brief historical background. In Chapter Three I look at the social services which are provided to the community. Chapter Four is about the situation of East Indian families in Vancouver. The participation of East Indian workers in the Vancouver labour force is examined in Chapter Five and the East Indian business community and community organizations are described in Chapter Six. The Conclusion brings together my analysis and provides some consideration of problems that I see in this treatment of the topic.

## CHAPTER I

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### Introduction

In May 1977, in a lecture in Santa Barbara, California, Smith presented her recent work on description. Smith began by locating her work on description first in relation to a study of the social organization of the production of news and second in relation to the work and practices of sociologists. First she identified the procedure for studying news as focused on the practices by which information, news, and knowledge of various kinds is produced. The focus then is on the actual practices which give shape to or determine the character of that knowledge. The focus in the second is on an inquiry into the sociological practices as among these practices constitutive of knowledge in society. This she suggests is an inquiry, of the kind that Marx did of political economy. It is not only a criticism of the way discipline proceeds, but is itself an inquiry. (Smith, 1977a)\*

I want to locate my work in a way similar to Smith's. First, the study focuses on the actual practices which give form to what is visible as an ethnic phenomenon. This involves examining the actual practices which bring the community into being. These practices are activities. They organize

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\*In quoting Smith from Santa Barbara, and later Smith from a lecture on Women and Class I have used tape recordings and transcripts of tape recording, to draw the material I quote. In some cases I have paraphrased and in others, edited direct quotation. If in doing this there are errors, they are mine.

the relations of the community itself which is the 'material reality' which is seen and described by sociologists. Thus the practices which give form to the community also shape our knowledge of the community.

Second, I will locate my work in relation to the enterprise of sociology. In examining the literature on ethnicity, and ethnic groups, I will draw out some of the concepts and practices which anthropologists and sociologists have used to describe and account for ethnic phenomena. In the presentation of my field work, I will use the concepts theorists have used and return them to the actual practices from which they arise. This inquiry begins to sketch the links between the practices of ethnic theorists in doing their work, and how the account that is generated by the theorists is related to the organization of the ethnic community.

#### Review of the Literature

Recent sociological and anthropological literature on the topic of ethnic relations and ethnic communities, has focused on the problem of explaining the development and persistence of ethnic groups in the face of social, political and economic interaction among culturally diverse groups of people. I have focused on two pieces of literature which highlight the issues raised in the literature. Barth has provided an alternative to traditional anthropological approaches to ethnic groups. Boulter has provided a consideration of class and ethnicity with respect to recent literature on the topic.

Barth provided a critique of the methods of social anthropologists, which framed the study of ethnic groups in terms of cultural difference. (Barth, 1969). Social anthropologists argue that the preservation of cultural groups depends on the relative isolation of groups from one another.

The procedure that is used for studying ethnic communities is to begin with an ideal type definition, which Barth describes:

The term ethnic group is generally understood in anthropological literature (cf. e.g. Narrol 1964) to designate a population which:

1. is largely biologically self-perpetuating
2. shares fundamental cultural values, realized an overt unity in cultural forms. (Barth, 1969)

Boulter, in her examination of Barth summarizes his position as follows:

Therefore, the distinctive feature of ethnic groups becomes not the cultural content of any given ethnic group, but rather the boundaries which distinguish one group from the other. Thus the observable boundaries of ethnic groups arise out of a comparative stance vis a vis other groups. In other words, the need to categorize oneself and one's group as an ethnic group arises only in the context of another group being present. It is the interaction between the two groups, the 'dichotomized statuses' which bring the boundaries into play. (Boulter, 1977)

Barth suggests, on the basis of this analysis a different procedure for the study of ethnic groups. "By concentration on what is socially effective, ethnic groups are seen as a form of social organization." (Barth, 1969)

First we give primary emphasis to the fact that ethnic groups are categories of ascription and identification by the actors themselves, and thus have the characteristic of organizing interaction between people. We attempt to relate other characteristics of ethnic groups to this primary feature.

Second, the essays all apply a generative viewpoint to the analysis: rather than working through a typology of forms of ethnic groups and relations, we attempt to explore the different processes that seem to be involved in generating and maintaining groups.

Third, to observe these processes we shift the focus to ethnic boundaries and boundary maintenance. (Barth, 1969)

Ethnicity then is the primary identification, which is developed within the social interaction between one or more groups. Ethnicity becomes visible as a social organization, which is organized and perpetuated over time through the maintenance of boundaries, which may have

one or more focuses, economic, cultural, etc. It is ethnic status then which is the primary factor governing the status of individuals in relation to each other. Ethnic identification grows out of the social interactions which define and develop differences between one group and another. Those differences are seen as a property of the groups and of the individuals in the groups, but arise not out of isolation, or cultural characteristics in particular, but out of ascribed characteristics which are agreed upon by all groups involved in the social negotiation.

Barth attempts to provide for an examination of the ethnic groups over time, through both a theory of ethnicity and the development of a method which allows for the examination of differences among ethnic groups. Although he differentiates his work from social anthropologists by defining the differences as a social interaction rather than a set of cultural characteristics, in fact he concentrates on the visible differences of ethnic groups in much the same way as the anthropologists he criticizes. Barth's enterprise and those he criticizes are essentially the same; it is to explain the visible differences of ethnic groups. Social anthropologists attribute this difference to the isolation of groups from each other, and then proceed to describe the differences as a property of the group. According to Barth an ethnic group is differentiated first by the maintenance of boundaries and then by the distinctive characteristics which are a property of the group.

In the organization of the social interaction between ethnic groups, Barth argues, the ethnic status is prior in determining status in the society which surrounds the ethnic group, or between ethnic groups. In cases where groups share a common economic organization, the group that controls the economic organization, is the group that has the higher

status. However, where groups do not share a common organization, other social interactions are part of determining the relative status of the individuals in the groups to one another. Boulter argues in her paper that Barth in this part of his argument, conceals the relation between class and ethnicity:

Therefore it can be seen that Barth does three things:

1. he postulates that ethnic status is superordinate and imperative and thus all other statuses are subordinate to ethnic status.
2. he begins from a relational construction of ethnic boundaries and he uses a static descriptor for showing the ethnic status as indeed superordinate: and
3. in order to account for the obvious ethnographic differences or discrepancies he develops a category of variation within which to place any anomalies. (Boulter, 1977)

Barth in his analysis has raised a debate in the literature over the relation between class and ethnicity in determining the status of individuals in a society. The debate revolves around whether class or ethnicity is prior in determining status.

In the debate Barth has been read as providing a method for understanding ethnic groups which is subjective, that is, which depends primarily upon aspects of how individuals see themselves. He is seen by theoreticians who use his work to have placed objective features, such as class outside this frame. I think that this is a misreading or misunderstanding of Barth, at least as far as I have been able to understand his method and procedural recommendations. I understand him to suggest that the factors which emerge in the definition of boundary maintenance in each specific instance will determine the factors relevant to the determination of the differences in the ethnic group. Then insofar as economic relations were relevant to the maintenance or determination of boundaries, these factors would indeed be relevant.

However, a considerable amount of the literature proceeds on the basis of the understanding Barth as not accounting for 'objective'.

Van Den Berg, for example, argues with him with respect to method, but suggests that economic criteria ought to be introduced to bring objective aspects of any ethnic group into the frame. (Van Den Berg, 1975)

He argues that both class and ethnicity must be introduced in the study of ethnicity and that both are relevant in determining status.

Van Den Berg suggests that class is generated by non-ethnic factors. However, many factors which determine class are linked to or are ethnic characteristics. At the same time aspects of ethnicity are independent of power and production relations which constitute class. Thus class and ethnicity are linked, but are two distinct phenomena.

Robbins enters the debate in a somewhat different way. He suggests that it is necessary to begin by locating the ethnic groups in the context "of a definition of the structure of the whole society." (Robbins, 1975) In this way it is possible to discover "whether ethnic groups are super-ordinant, derivative, or, perhaps, irrelevant." (Robbins, 1975) Ethnicity, he argues, is effectively a cultural or ideological value or set of prescriptions by a group about itself. Class, however, is independent of the perceptions that individuals have of themselves.

Robbins suggests that in American sociology; class is understood in a way which confuses and conceals the structural relations in the society. This is precisely what is revealed by a class analysis. Class, Robbins argues, is a complex of concrete relationships of individuals to the productive and structural organization of the society. These relationships, he suggests, are prior to and determine status. He concludes on the basis of his work in Walbush, Newfoundland:

Ethnicity defined important social divisions among people but class explained why these divisions were important. Class was more critical in defining social patterns than ethnicity. Emphasis on ethnicity alone would reify cognition, but would not root it in the concrete structural relations which shape and define that cognition. Class analysis, by engaging the problem of production as the basic aspect of social formation, roots that analysis in the concrete without ignoring the role of cognition. (Robbins, 1975)

Despres deals with the problem of ethnicity and class in this way:

If ethnicity is viewed as one form of social stratification, it needs to be emphasized that social class is quite another. Ethnic stratifications derive their structural features from categorical status descriptions. By way of contrast, class stratifications are more evidently based on status identifications which are achieved. In theory, these two forms of stratification exist in contradiction. In fact, they may co-exist in complex ways according to the historical, techno-environmental, economic and political parameters of the particular societies in which they are found. (Despres, 1975)

Thus Despres suggests that the analysis of class and ethnicity proceed in a way that considers both ascribed characteristics and economic characteristics. Material resources become significant for the determination of status when groups are in a situation to compete for them. This is the economic dimension which provides for the use of class as well as ethnicity in understanding the stratification of ethnic groups.

I want to try to draw out the two significant features of the literature under review. The first is that all the analysis focuses on accounting for the differences among or between ethnic communities. Secondly the literature is concerned to understand the position of individuals who are members of ethnic groups, within the society in which the group is located, taking ethnicity into consideration.

What we can see in the literature is that ethnic communities appear and are seen as populations which are different from the society which surrounds them. The communities are visible as a result of the difference



between the ethnic organization and the dominant community, or the community which they relate to. These populations are more than simply groups of individuals who are culturally different, as a personal characteristic, they are organized patterns of relationships, which may include cultural, economic and political concerns. The ethnic community as presented in the literature is a set of definite social relationships, which appear to be visible through or at the point of interaction with another community. The procedure is to focus the difference, either through an examination of boundaries, as in the case of Barth, or through a combination of social and economic factors. Boulter summarizes this point as follows:

Ethnicity, as conceived by the theorists discussed below, consists of a group of individuals who are and conceive of themselves as being different from other groups of individuals. This difference is manifested in dress, language, social customs and morals, etc. These visible differences are the cultural diacritica which are seen as a part of the ethnic community and as belonging to them as a group. In other words, the visible difference is attributed to the group by others and by themselves. This attribution of difference is the point at which most ethnic theorists begin. (Boulter, 1977)

When the ethnic community is seen as a set of interactions, which make one or more ethnic groups visible, a central question arises with respect to the relationship of the ethnic groups and individuals from the ethnic groups to the larger society and to each other. It is at this point that the issue of status is raised. Boulter suggests that status is considered because the researchers are attempting to understand the differing positions of individuals in the status hierarchy. (Boulter, 1977)

The debate in the ethnicity literature is over what criteria are relevant in establishing the status of individuals in the society. In some cases ethnicity is considered primary in determining status, in others class is considered central. In still other cases, it is argued that a combination of class and ethnic factors are responsible for the status ranking of an

individual.

In my introduction, I suggested that in my work, when I began to look at the internal relations in the community, I did not find that the group was homogenous, and furthermore found that the internal relations in the groups were important with respect to an understanding of how the group appears as an ethnic community. At this point in the consideration of the literature I want to explore how ethnic theorists, in their work, come to focus their work away from the internal organization of the community and on to the relationships between the community and the society which surrounds or relates to it.

The focus of ethnicity theorists on the concepts of class, ethnicity and status constitutes both a misunderstanding of 'what is being seen' and an analytic procedure which conceals the relations as they actually are. By concentrating on describing the differences among ethnic groups, it is not possible to see how the groups arise or exist together except as a matter of ascription. This ignores the relation of the group to the society in which it is located except as a set of status heirarchies.

Focusing on status maintains the analysis at a level that requires a mapping out of the various positions of individuals as they are obvious in the society. Hence in trying to determine the status of individuals imposes a conceptual order on what is already visible, inequality among the positions of individuals in the society. I see this as problematic since it neglects the question of how these inequalities arise and are visible in this way. I consider the enterprise to go beyond one of description.

## Toward An Alternative Method

When we look at an ethnic group, we see that it is different from the society that surrounds it, or from other groups that it relates to. This difference is seen by sociologists and anthropologists as well as individuals in the society, although the understanding or interpretation of the difference may not be identical. As sociologists and anthropologists we begin with the visible difference. Then we go on to describe the group as different and we try to develop a theory which provides for how the different group arises and is maintained.

### A. The Social World We See

I want for the moment to examine the fact that we recognize a group as different and explore what we are seeing. Some of Smith's work provides a useful procedure to ask some questions about the social world we see when we go out into it as sociologists. In doing this, I am not attempting to draw attention to a problem of bias, or interest on the part of sociologists. Rather I am beginning to draw attention to how it is that the social world we see is ordered for us, when we go into it to study and analyse aspects of it.

Smith in her work develops a critical procedure for sociology, which is drawn from the method which Marx used to do a critique of political economy. This procedure involves:

Not a criticism which identifies problems in the discipline, or in the way that the discipline proceeds, but is itself an inquiry, which focuses on the sociological practice which are among those practices which are productive of knowledge in society. (Smith, 1977a)

Smith describes what she draws on from Marx:

Knowledge of society, for Marx involves not the renunciation of the world of theory for that of the practical knowledge of the experienced world, but passing beyond or through the world of theory to return again to the world of actual living individuals. (Smith, 1974)

However Smith cautions us with respect to how to read her work:

In returning to Marx I have been concerned with how to make use of his work. Therefore although I have tried to be faithful in presenting what he said, this cannot be treated as an exegesis or relied upon as an interpretation. I have approached his work to find out how to think about society, and thus at every encounter have developed not simply his text, but the understanding which is my preliminary use of it as a means to think with. (Smith, 1974)

Smith distinguishes between ideology and knowledge in her work in a way similar to Marx:

The ideological practice is one which creates a rupture in the relation between the forms of thought and the practical activities of men. Concepts become constituted as a kind of currency--a medium of exchange among ideologists. (Smith, 1974)

Smith points out that the method that is used by ideologists is to separate the concept from the actual activities of individuals and to make the concept into merely that.

When concepts are detached from the relation in which they make the world of living men observable, they become a means of operating selectively upon it and of sorting out in ways which preserve the ideal representation. Ideology can be viewed as a procedure for sorting out and arranging conceptually the living world of people so that it can be seen as we already know it ideologically. This is a characteristic of any ideological practice of thinking regardless of its place in the political spectrum of ideas. It is a practice which has the effect of making the fundamental features of our own society mysterious because it prevents us from recognizing them as problematic. The concept then becomes a substitute for reality. (Smith, 1974)

Smith draws to our attention that the social world which we look at is different from the one which Marx examined. Thus to apply his analysis directly to the present circumstances, would not be useful, even if Marx's method of work suggested that we do this. Smith articulates the special nature of the world as we see it now:

What is special about our kind of society is that much which we recognize as that which we know, much which is classifiable as what here has been called 'observable'; is already worked up and produced in a process which mediates its relation to what men have actually done in the place where the process begins. That mediating process itself is a practical activity. (Smith, 1974)

Thus the social world that the sociologist looks at is already ideologically structured for her when she observes it. As well sociologists have a part in the ideological structuring itself:

The world as we know it and experience it is already ideological. The social facts in terms of which we work, with varying degrees of sophistication are constituted prior to our examination by processes of which we know little. They are constituted in a mode which separates them from the actualities and subjective presences of individuals. The ordinary forms in which the features of our society become observable to us as its features--mental illness, neighbours, crime, riots, leisure, work satisfaction, stress, motivation, etc.; these are already constructed, some as administrative products, others by our sociological predecessors. They are the coinage of our discipline. Our primary world as professionals is thus an appearance. (Smith, 1974)

How we know the social phenomenon and how it is organized for us to see must then become central questions in the sociological enterprise. Smith further argues that social phenomena must arise out of the activities of individuals:

Thus whatever becomes observable to the social scientist under whatever form of thought has no existence other than as it is constituted by what men do. Men do not invent the ordering of the relations in their heads and put them into practice. The ordering or relations arises out of the practical activities in the context of the actual material conditions of that practice. Those conditions become conditions in the context of a practice and are themselves the product of practical activities. (Smith, 1974)

#### B. The Work of Description

Part of the work we do as sociologists and anthropologists is the work of description. Description Smith has argued is, part of the procedure for "working the world up" ideologically. (Smith, 1974)

Smith and Jackson have examined some of the properties of description in their study of news (Smith, 1977a, Jackson, 1977). It is this work that I will make use of to draw out one of the properties of description.

Description, as we use it as sociologists and anthropologists, is a

method of referencing the social world. Smith shows us how this works as a method of reading:

One of the constraints of the descriptive reading is that we take the description to be a description of something, that is that there is an actuality and...the method of reading that we use is that we 'pass through' the description to an actuality on the other side of it as if it were in some sense available to us by virtue of the description.... This method of reading, is a very definite practice of reading which we make use of in reading factual accounts.... (Smith, 1977a)

The difficulty that I am pointing to is not confined to the description that the sociologist or anthropologist makes of the social phenomenon, but is also part of the data gathering process. In the first place our informants do a description for us:

When the sociologist is working in the field and makes use of informants, and asks an informant to tell her what is going on, what is elicited is a particular kind of talk. It is identifiable quite readily as descriptive talk...we treat the way terms mean in a distinctive way--we tend to treat this as the only way words mean as well--that is that they reference, so that we can pass through the term to the real world. (Smith, 1977a)

Thus when informants describe to us some aspect of a social phenomenon, in our case an ethnic group, we understand that in a particular way:

It is with this understanding that a sociologist proceeds with the interpretive work, by supposing that what is named in the description to her by an informant has its reference in the actuality of what is being described. This is how she does her work--they take for granted that they are talking about the world and describing it to you, and that in their description you can somehow reference that actuality which is intended by their description. It is a work that tends in some ways to objectify the actuality and places it before the reader or hearer without the subjectivity of the informant.  
(Smith, 1977a)

As sociologists, we often work by means of informants who already work in a descriptive mode. These informants are individuals who work in or produce descriptive forms of knowledge as part of their work. These individuals include police officers, teachers, and social workers, who produce as part of their work factual representations of their own and

other individual's activities.

Smith shows how this descriptive work gets done:

How the describer; who knows the original setting and is a competent member of it, does her work is controlled by her knowledge of the socially organized processes which the terms serve to describe. This knowledge enters into the ordering of the description, the way the description is done, it is essential to the sense that is made by the description. (Smith, 1977a)

However the description itself does not make visible these socially organized processes. Rather it obscures them. When we pass through an account to find on the other side an actuality, either in reading or interviewing an informant, the actuality on the other side is constituted for us as an object.

Jackson points out:

What happens in this process of reading through is the aspects of the method being used become transferred to the actuality as its features. It becomes impossible to distinguish features of the actuality from features of the method used to represent it. Smith has called this process one of transference.

We will focus on one outstanding characteristic that is transferred by the descriptive method, which is the sense that what lies beyond the description is a 'thing', that is, the method tends to objectify--to make objects of--various features of the social process which are not originally objects at all, but rather have their existence only in the practical activities of individuals. (Jackson, 1977)

Thus for us the aspect of description that I want to focus on in how we do our work is that description of a social phenomenon constitutes those phenomenon as objects not as practices. Moreover, in making objects of phenomenon, which are indeed socially organized practices, we conceal the social relations and lose track of the world as it is lived.

### C. Arriving at a Description of Inequality.

I want now to use what we have learned about description, as an ideological practice to look at status, as it is used by ethnic theorists. What I am going to suggest is that both the procedures for arriving at

status and the description itself produce an account of the lived world of actual practices and activities of individuals, into objects, things, which it would seem as Jackson suggests "can be gathered like mushrooms." (Jackson, 1977)

Status is a description of the visible differences among individuals in a society. The concept of status and the procedures for arriving at the description are drawn, in sociology, from the field of social stratification theory. Ethnic theorists use status to describe the inequality that is visible in the participation of members of ethnic groups in the society that surrounds the group, or in relation to another ethnic group.

The enterprise of describing status or rank differences among individuals in society has several established procedures. Scales for determining status have been constructed and variously consider occupation, income, education and membership in organizations and perceptions of individuals about the importance of positions in the society. The purpose of this activity is to describe the society as it is visible:

The field of social stratification in sociology is broadly concerned with questions pertaining to the forms, functions and consequences of discernable systems of structured social inequality. (Stolzman and Gamberg, 1974)

Social stratification is concerned then with developing criteria, which can then be used to order individuals into graded status categories. This procedure is something of the order of locating cities on a map with flagged pins, with each of the flags bearing a different colour, to indicate the size of the city. The location of the pins stand in for the actual location of the city, and the colour stands in for the number of people who live in the city. What is before us is an object, a geographic representation.



When we do status rankings we do something very similar. We gather data about individuals and order the data into status rankings. We represent the social relations between individuals as the status of an individual and treat as characteristic of that individual, as criteria, education, occupation, income, etc. Thus the social relations between individuals become something else. They become objects rather than activities, statuses. Status is a location in the society in similar way that a city is a location on a map. In doing this, representing actual activities as objects in this case status, the actual activities, the lived relations, are no longer visible and are treated as something else.

Concealing the lived relation, constitutes a reification of the social relations among individuals in the society. Reification is the naming of the practice of treating as a thing something which is not a thing. (cf. Rubin, 1974 for a full discussion). In this case the procedures through which status descriptions are arrived at treat social relations (actual activities) as things. To describe individuals in terms of status then is to reify the social relations, to treat the social relations (actual activities) as things (objects).

Commonly, in American and Canadian sociology, one of the procedures for determining status is called class:

For American sociologists, class came to refer to a series of quantifiable and measurable behaviours and attributes. As a result, there could be no clear structural position as such, only specific modes in social continuum, each derivative of more general social phenomena. Social categories, including class, were defined as statistical categories, based on stipulated criteria (Warner 1957). Class although based on Income was a social mode only insofar as it allowed for a different style of life a different education and other socially 'valued' properties of life. (Robbins, 1974)

Thus when social stratification theorists use the term class, they

are talking about a ranking of individuals usually with respect to 'factors' such as income, education, occupation etc.

In multi-ethnic societies, sociologists also consider ethnicity as significant in determining the status of individuals in the society. As we have seen however, there is a debate over the significance of class and ethnicity in determining status when ethnic groups are visible in the society. I want to point out that the critique which I have just done applies now both to the use of ethnicity as a procedure for determining status and class as a procedure for determining status; both reify actual social relations. The enterprise is one in which the issues cannot be understood precisely as a result of the method used by sociologists themselves, in doing their work. This method leaves their work at the level of description, with all the attendant difficulties which I have pointed out.

I want now to begin to propose an alternative method for proceeding, one which I will use in the examination of the East Indian community in Vancouver. This will involve treating ethnicity and class as actual social relations.

### Marxist Method of Work

The method of work that I am going to propose as the method for studying ethnic phenomena is one which relies primarily on the work of Smith and Marx. It involves learning about social relations as actual practices of individuals located in actual places, in specific period of time. It also involves learning about the naming of objects within particular social relations and learning that this naming produces for us what I have called social things, that is, things which are constituted as things in the specific social relations in which they are named. Further we must

learn that class is a social relation. This involves us learning about socially organized practices, which develop and name social phenomena, but have no other basis than in the practices themselves.

I have already drawn on Smith's work to point out how concepts are separated from actual practices and become abstractions. Smith points out that the concepts as well as social phenomena arise out of actual practices of individuals. (Smith 1974) She further recommends a method for returning the concepts to the actual practices from which they arise. (Smith, 1977b) I want now to provide for you a brief account of the materialist method which is the starting point for Smith's method in sociology.

#### A. Materialist Method

The method of work, first developed by Marx and Engels, in The German Ideology and used by Marx throughout his later work is one that begins from the premise that there are only actual individuals, living together in any particular period of time, and that their practices are the only basis on which the social world as we see it can be known and understood. (Marx, Engels, 1974) This premise dictates the procedure for doing intellectual work. At the same time that the activities of individuals cannot be understood outside the context of their lives, a separation of individuals from the historical period in which they live cannot be made in theory, if the intellectual work is to be anything more than ideology.

A scientific understanding of the relations among individuals and the development of human history only arises out of a procedure which examines the actual activities of individuals in their specific material conditions. If it appears for example, as the German Philosophers suggested, that Ideas developing through history produce the activities of people,

this appearance arises out of definite activities of individuals which includes the activities and life circumstances of philosophers themselves.

The production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness, is at first directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men, the language of real life. Conceiving, thinking, the mental intercourse of men, appear at this stage as the direct efflux of their material behaviour. The same applies to mental production as expressed in the language of politics, laws, morality, religion, metaphysics, etc.--real, active men as they are conditioned by definite development of their productive forces and of the intercourse corresponding to these, up to its furthest forms. Consciousness can never be anything else than the conscious existence, and the consciousness existence of men is their actual life process. If in all ideology men and their circumstances appear upside-down as in a camera obscura, this phenomena arises just as much from their historical life-process as the inversion of objects on the retina does from their physical life-process. (Marx, Engels, 1974)

At this point I want to include a cautionary note; I do not understand Marx and Engels to be suggesting that ideas cause actions or activities, but that ideas and the production of ideas are as much a part of the material processes as the production of other goods. This understanding is in direct contrast to many Marxists. Smith clarifies this point in her work on ideology and knowledge:

One difficulty is that we work with a sociology of knowledge which identifies ideology with a situationally determined and interested social theory. If the perspective and concepts of the knower are determined, not by the object of knowledge, but, for example by his class position and his class interests, then it is argued that knowledge is irremediably ideological and 'knowledge' a term which must be continually resolved back into ideology. This difficulty is our heritage from Mannheim and from Marxists--but not I shall hold from Marx. It is precisely from Marx that I want to go to find an alternative way of thinking about ideology. (Smith, 1974)

I do not want to take up the task of interpreting either Marx or Smith, rather I want to try to make clear the methodological implications in the work of Marx, and Engels.

## B. Social Relations\*

Smith draws on a second aspect of Marx's work in order to see how the premises developed in the materialist method became part of a procedure that Marx used to do his work. (Smith, 1977b) In Capital, which Marx subtitled a Critique of Political Economy, Marx begins with the work of political economists, (Adam Smith, Ricardo and others) and works back to find the actual practices of individuals which provide for the concepts that they use. In this work he uncovers the practices of social relations.

The work of political economists suggested that there were two sets of relations,--social relations, which were relations among people and economic relations, which were relations among things. It was the economic relations that they made the topic of their work. Economic relations were a system of relations among things,--labour, commodities, capital and rent. The relations were described through categories, production, exchange, distribution and consumption. The political economists suggested that these relations existed in their present and were 'discovered' by them. They further suggested that these economic relations were present throughout history.

Marx in his work began from the categories production, exchange, distribution and consumption and worked back to ground these relations not in things, but in the actual practices of individuals. He thus clarifies that these categories name specific social relations among individuals which can be seen and described empirically. They did not originate in categories

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\*In previous sections of the thesis, when I have used the name social relations, I have used it in this way, to mean specific and actual activities.

developed by the political economists. Marx describes exchange as an actual activity, an event between two individuals which does not exist outside this relation:

It is plain that commodities cannot go to market and make exchanges of their own account. We must, therefore, have recourse to their guardians, who are also their owners. Commodities are things, and therefore without power of resistance against man. If they are wanting in docility he can use force; in other words he can take possession of them. In order that these objects may enter into relation with each other as commodities, their guardians must place themselves in relation to one another, as persons whose will resides in those objects, and must behave in such a way that each does not appropriate the commodity of the other, and part with his own, except by means of an act done by mutual consent. (Capital, Vol. 1 undated)

Marx concludes this paragraph,

The persons exist for one another merely as representatives of, and, therefore, as owners of, commodities. In the course of our investigation we shall find, in general, that the characters who appear on the economic stage are but the personifications of the economic relations that exist between them. (Capital, Vol. 1, undated)

Thus, when political economists saw economic relations as relations among things, they were describing relations among people that took the form or had the appearance of relations among things. When Marx went to locate the relations in actual practices, he found that these practices were relations among individuals, that is they were social relations.

He further specified that social relations are practical activities involving specific material conditions, which are named by the categories that political economists used. Thus the categories that political economists used, were not simply 'objective' analytic tools, but were part of actual and specific social relations. The specific character of the social relations that are named by production, exchange, distribution and consumption is such that the activities of specific individuals are organized to appear as relations among things, commodities, capital, rent and labour.

What is at issue here is that social relations are actual activities, which must be specified. That procedure for specifying the activities is to begin with the categories or concepts which describe the phenomena we see.

### C. Socially Constituted Things

Smith draws on Marx's understanding of socially constituted things in developing her understanding of socially organized practices. (Smith, 1977b) I want to try to make this visible for you. To do this I want to go back to Marx's discussion of exchange and commodities, and to the claim that political economists made for their work. The claim was that the things which make up the economic sphere and were related through the analytic categories they used, were relations which were present throughout history and were present in economic relations irrespective of the historical period.

What Marx discovers in grounding the relations in the activities of individuals is that things as commodities exist only in particular settings. Hence a thing has the particular character of a commodity only under particular circumstances.

Every product of labour is, in all states of society, a use value; but it is only at a definite historical epoch in a society's development that such a product becomes a commodity, viz, at the epoch when labour spent on production of a useful article becomes expressed as one of the objective qualities of that article, i.e. as its value. (Capital, Vol. 1 undated)

Thus the categories which political economists use to describe all economic relations throughout human history only apply to a particular historical period. Their conclusions derived directly out of the method which they used to go about their work. This method Marx and Engels had identified earlier as idealist. (Marx and Engels, 1974) This method is

one which takes as given the relations of the society as they appear and neglect to locate the work of inquiring itself in the material activities characteristic of a given historical epoch. The idealist procedure is to abstract the understanding gained in observing the society in which the thinker is located and to link those abstractions logically without regard to the particular circumstances in which those observations apply. Hence social relations as actual activities among individuals become unobservable.

Marx found then that particular activities of individuals must prevail, before things as commodities can come into being. A commodity is the social form of a thing, which is produced within socially organized activities. The social form has nothing to do with the material properties of the object and stands as a social production.

A commodity is therefore a mysterious thing, simply because in it the social character of men's labour appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labour; because the relation of the producers to the sum total of their own labour is presented to them as a social relation, existing not between themselves, but between the products of their labour. This is the reason why the products of labour become commodities, social things whose qualities are at the same time perceptible and imperceptible by the senses. In the same way the light from an object is perceived by us not as the subjective excitation of our optic nerve, but as the objective form of something outside the eye itself. But, in the act of seeing, there is at all events, an actual passage of light from one physical thing to another from the external object to the eye. There is a physical relation between physical things. But it is different with commodities. There the existence of things qua commodities and the value relation between the products of labour which stamps them as commodities, have absolutely no connection with their physical properties and with the material relations arising therefrom. There is a definite social relation between men, that assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things. (*Capital*, Vol. 1, emphasis mine)

I want to emphasize that the aspect of Marx that I have drawn on is part of what Marx saw as a complex social process, that was not causal or sequential, but worked together to bring about the society in the form



and with the appearances that it had in his time. I have tried to draw out the method that he used to do a critique of political economy, to demonstrate how I am proceeding on the basis of Smith and Marx. However I do not want to suggest that this is a full or adequate representation of Marx's work.

#### D. Socially Organized Practices

In the "Ideological Practice of Sociology," Smith outlines one of the special features of the kind of society in which we live. Although I have quoted this passage previously, I am going to do so again, so that we can have it before us as we work.

What is special about our kind of society is that much which we recognize as that which we know, much which is classifiable as what here has been called 'observable' is already worked up and produced in a process which mediates its relation to what men have actually done in the place where the process begins. This mediating itself is a practical activity. (Smith, 1974)

Socially organized practices are the practical activities which Smith identifies as mediating the 'observable' and what men have actually done in the place where the process begins.

Smith treats 'fact' as a social organization:

I shall suggest that factual organization brings about a definite relation between knower and some actuality which becomes thereby the object of her knowledge and that this also brings about a determinate relation among knowers. (Smith, 1973)

She points out that;

The factual property of a statement is not intrinsic to it. It is the knower's method of reading a statement and using it or a teller's method of arriving at a statement which lends itself to that method of reading. (Smith, 1973)

Changing statements "I think and I believe" into factual statements is a,

social accomplishment, not merely a syntactic or logical transformation. It changes the relation between the knower and known, teller and hearer. (Smith, 1973)

Facts are socially organized:

Facts then are not to be equated with factual statements. Nor are they the actuality which factual statements represent.... The fact is not what actually happened in its raw form. It is that actuality as it has been worked up so that it intends its own description. (Smith, 1973)

And;

These categorial and conceptual procedures which name, analyse and assemble what actually happened become (as it were) inserted into the actuality as an interpretative account which organizes that for us as it is or was. (Smith, 1973)

We have seen in the section on 'Socially Constructed Things', that commodities are only such inside a particular social organization, the relations of exchange. Smith illustrates the way in which the construction of a statement as 'fact' mediates the relations among persons by making use of Marx's demonstration of the way in which commodities mediate the relations among individuals.

We might indeed rewrite parts of his account to do some work for us. He says:

'A commodity is therefore a mysterious thing simply because in it the social character of men's labour appears to them as an objective character stamped on the product of that labour' (Marx, Capital, undated)

Rewrite that substituting 'fact' for 'commodity' and making other appropriate changes and we get: 'a fact is.... a mysterious thing simply because in it the social character of men's consciousness appears to them as an objective character stamped on the product of the consciousness'. (Indeed later in the same paragraph Marx draws a like analogy with religion.) The objectification of labour in the commodity is brought about as relations of exchange. Relations between individuals come to appear as relations between commodities. Similarly we can think of relations between subjectivities appearing as facts and as relations among facts. (Smith, 1973)

Thus the practices which produce the 'fact', mediate our relation to 'what actually happened':

Subjectivities are necessarily implicated in the accomplishment of facts, but disappear in their product. Through the fact we are related to that other or those others whose observations, investigation or other experience were the source of its original. But that does not appear. Through the fact they are related to us. But that does not appear. Through the fact we are related also to other knowers who have known it and who may know it, since the social organization of fact we enter a relation of knowing in which it does not matter who we are, where we stand, for we constitute it as known the same. Constituted as fact our knowing is subordinate to what is there. The practice of fact and the social organizational contexts which construct it (as commodities are constructed in the social organization of exchange) creates not an intersubjective world known tacitly among those sharing a here and now of co-presence, who as Shutz said, 'grow older together' (Shutz, 1962), but a world in which subjectivities are constituted as discrete and in opposition to the objectively known. They are separated from each other in the social act which creates an externalized object of knowledge--the fact. This social organization of knowledge depends upon but transcends the primary intersubjective participation in and constitution of a world known in common. (Smith, 1973)

The practical accomplishment of 'fact' is critical to us in our understanding of social phenomena. Smith and Jackson in their work on news and Smith in her work on mental illness demonstrate that these are not simply social phenomena, but are socially organized phenomenas. Let us look at the understanding that Smith suggests for mental illness. In an article on statistics on mental illness, Smith points out that statistics present 'facts' about mental illness as already constructed. She points out that when we read statistics as facts we read through to a reality we take then to represent, in this case the reality of mental illness. Smith suggests that:

We must drop the idea that we can track back through the statistics on mental illness to find out about a reality hidden behind them which they represent. They are figures which are not put together to draw a representation. We can't reach in back of them or through them as if they were a dirty glass through which we could have a perfect picture if we could only clean it up. (Smith, 1975)

The alternative to reading statistics as 'facts' about mental illness, is to ask:

How is it that these varieties of relations between psychiatric facilities and community can produce a coherent and apparently unproblematic collection of statistical information? How does all this mess get cleaned up so that it can be presented as it is and used as it does so often get used? I think we have to think about the figures differently and in fact much more straightforwardly. We have to begin by asking questions about how they are produced. (Smith, 1975)

Smith then provides a general picture of the processes involved in bringing the statistics on mental illness into being. I will briefly summarize the points for you here.

Statistics are produced out of extensive record keeping processes which governments have in order to gather specific information about the state programs in relation to individuals who use the services which are provided. Their interest is in the main concerned with costs and usage. This gives shape to the kind of information which is gathered, and which Smith points out researchers make secondary use of.

The character of the information which is gathered is intended to transform "the raw material of the world" into data which fits and can be processed in professional and bureaucratic organization. This work is done by professionals who in their training learn how to understand what individuals who come to them tell them in terms of the professional discipline. These are terms that are used to describe and talk about patients as well as they are the terms that professionals use to talk to each other. They are important in the process of articulating everyday life to the programs of the hospital of psychiatric facility:

The world that people live in and in which their troubles arise is 'entered' into systems set up to control it by fitting them and their troubles to standardized terms and procedures under which they can be formally recognized and made actionable.  
(Smith, 1975)

Psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers and other mental health

workers articulate the abstracted procedures and terminology of their discipline and their particular work setting to the individual who they are caring for. They shape up the particular situation to fit the setting and the discipline. In this process a constant relation with the everyday world is maintained and as problems arise in a changing world, new psychiatric 'constituencies' are developed, and with them new agencies and programs. The theories and therapies are not confined to the trade, to professionals, but are also become part of the ways that individuals learn to think about themselves and others, through various institutions and programs educational and media coverage.

The statistics, then, do represent something which is real about the troubles which people have, but what is real cannot be separated from the professional and administrative operations which make those troubles actionable. These operations which make those over, tidy up sort out and shape what is actually happening with people into properly recognizable forms. (Smith, 1975)

Thus we begin to see that 'mental illness' arises out of socially organized practices. This is not however to say that mental illness does not exist or that it is caused by psychiatrists and mental health workers themselves. Rather it is to say that for the problems that an individual has in her daily life to be known, understood and identified as mental illness, there must also be present, (but not necessarily directly related to her) the socially organized practices which bring the 'naming' of problems that she has into being as mental illness. Clearly the everyday problems do exist, and they may be very serious, so much so that an individual is unable to go about her daily life. However this is not sufficient to name these problems as being intimately related to her, in fact part of her: to name her mentally ill. The socially organized practices must exist as well.

Socially organized practices may not be present as visible in social

phenomena as we study and describe them. Often they are taken for granted part of our world as we know it. In doing descriptions of social phenomenon we often treat these practices as a property of the phenomenon. This is not visible to us until we return the phenomenon to all the practices which are part of constituting it as a phenomenon.

The method of work which is prescribed by Marx and Smith and which I will make use of in my work is to begin from the material conditions which are part of carrying out these activities. The implication is that we must ground in the day to day practices of individuals the theories, ideas and concepts we as sociologists use to describe the social phenomena which we see around us.

Smith makes a methodological recommendation which is drawn from Marx's working method:

So then as a stipulation, although not a formal one, we have to be able to go back from what there is for anyone as a taken-for-granted aspect of their world to demonstrate how it is organized by processes which are not directly available within it and which are articulated to a larger social and economic process of which it is a part. Then the concept of social class in this context provides for us the key linking term between the conditions and social organization of the everyday world and these externalized relations which determine them, which are the relations of the mode of production of capitalism. (Smith, 1977b)

The method Smith recommends that we use to return to the world of actual activities is called substructuring. This she describes as building underneath the concepts that we normally use to understand the social phenomena we are looking at; to return the relation between concepts and the activities and circumstances of individuals which are named in that way. (Smith, 1977b)

To do this we begin from within the 'head world' (Smith), with the

terms and concepts that we use to describe the phenomena and track back to find the social relations that constitute the phenomena.

These social relations as we have learned from Marx and Smith will be actual activities of individuals. These relations are the socially organized practices which generate the phenomena. In tracking back in this way to the actual activities of individuals it is important to see that administrative processes and intellectual activity are part of what we are examining. Thus the procedures of research and the organizational practice of institutions are part of the actual activities that we examine when we begin to uncover the relations which produce a phenomena.

#### Class and Ethnicity - An Alternative Conception

Rather than approach the debate on class and ethnicity as a matter of which is prior in determining status, I want to reformulate the conceptions and begin to account for how-what is visible as ethnicity comes into being, rather than simply describe it. The alternative approach is to focus on class and ethnicity as practices rather than categories for analysis.

The focus then is on the practices which bring class and ethnicity into being and make them invisible or visible as social phenomena. This involves the concepts that I have discussed above, the materialised method social relations, socially constituted things, and socially organized relations all as actual practical activities in which individuals are engaged. These are the concepts which I want to apply directly to class and ethnicity.

The first concern then is one of method. The materialist method provides an alternative to moving from the actuality by substituting ideas

for the actual activities of individuals. Rather, the procedure is to look at how things are actually organized, to locate the social relations among individuals and to see how individuals actually proceed in their activities. Further, we must locate the concepts that we use to name these activities in the actual relations themselves, rather than to locate them as an abstraction, description or representation of the activities. Thus the method is a work of inquiry, an inquiry into the actual social relations, the actual practices by which to relate individuals to one another. When ethnic theorists study ethnic groups, they are able to locate the group as a result of its visible difference from the society in which it is located. They study the group on the basis of the difference. The difference between the groups and the society in which it is located is attributed as a character or property of the group itself. Furthermore, the basis for the participation of the group in the surrounding society is understood to depend upon on the basis of the difference.

I also found that the East Indian community was different from the community which surrounded it. It is quite possible to describe what appears as an ethnic group. This description however represents the actuality in a way that required the concept of ethnicity or ethnic groups before you can name the difference.

I am suggesting that the naming of a group that is different as an ethnic group names a particular social relation, names a particular set of organized practices, outside of which ethnicity or ethnic groups are simply an abstraction. Furthermore the social relations and activities which are named as an ethnic group are not confined to or only relations within the group itself, but rather exist in the practices of the social and economic institutions of the society. That is ethnicity names a



difference between one group of people and another; which is produced as a socially organized practice.

The socially organized practice of treating certain individuals as different from others in the society is done by the activities of social service agencies, schools, police, press, labour market and business community as they organize the participation and articulate individuals to the work practices of those organizations. Universities and social scientists are also part of the social institutions which engage in these practices.

When we begin with the actual social relations among individuals, we do not encounter the problem which is raised in the debate over class and ethnicity, when they are treated as categories. This is because we examine the actual social relations which are in themselves activities which individuals are engaged in, which are visible and identifiable.

Class is a social relation, not a category. That is as I have suggested earlier, all relations are social relations. Some social relations appear as relations among things as a result of organized practices in which things mediate the relations among individuals. Thus there is not a dichotomy between economic relations and social relations or a dichotomy between the economy and the community as such. However, the relations in the economy and the relations in the community are mediated differently. Thus social phenomena, commodities, gifts, tables, ethnic, class, money, profit, etc. all come into being in social relations and are constituted as what they are in social relations which are concrete practices.

Class relations are generated out of the particular relations between labour and capital. Class is a particular social relation. It is the practice of organizing the relation between individuals who control and

organize the social means of production and those who are organized by or as part of it.

When I examined the social relations, that is the activities of individuals in and related to the East Indian community in Vancouver, I found that the relations were such that there is a ruling relation within the community. The relation is such that the bourgeoisie class of East Indian individuals have hegemony over the East Indian working class in the community. It is out of this relation that the community in part arises. This relation is organized and supported by practices of the business community, social institutions and laws.

Thus then in examining ethnic groups on the basis of actual activities I found in the case of the East Indian community in Vancouver that what are seen as ethnic relations were particular forms of class relations; such that the class relation (relation between labour and capital) is mediated by the socially organized practices of social institutions and the labour force which organize East Indians as different from other individuals in the society. Thus their class relations, (which are social relations) appear as and are concealed by ethnic relations. Ethnic relations then are class relations which are mediated by the practices which organize certain individuals as ethnic (different).

## CHAPTER II

### FIELDWORK, OVERVIEW OF THE 'COMMUNITY'

#### FIELDWORK

The initial fieldwork was done May through August 1976, in Vancouver. Originally my work was connected to a research contract which was given by a government department. The department concerned with the different rates at which different ethnic groups applied for citizenship and wanted to discover the causes of the varying time periods which different ethnic groups waited before applying for citizenship. (Canive, Kazinski, 1976)

The study we conceptualized began from the assumption of an ethnic group and concentrated on looking at the social and economic factors which surrounded the emmigration from the country of origin and the situations in which individuals found themselves in Canada. I was assigned the community study. We planned this as an ethnography of the ethnic community. In the context of this project the ethnography was not completed or used.

I began my work by concentrating on the community, attempting to define the community from the point of view of members. In doing this I interviewed community leaders, social workers, other social service workers, police, teachers, community businessmen and then began to interview the 'ordinary members of the community'. It was at this point that I realized that there was something wrong with how I was going about the study. I had assumed that there was a community, and that individuals saw themselves as belonging

to the community. I was looking for the things which held the community together and the things which differentiated the community from the surrounding Vancouver community.

At one level the homogeneity of the community as I have described it in the introduction existed, at another it did not. It then began to occur to me that the community was 'produced' in a way that I was not seeing. In addition the religious and cultural differences that I thought would be discussed with me did not seem to be important to individuals who were part of the community. Rather, individuals had difficulty in negotiating the day to day transactions which were necessary in their lives; this was important to 'ordinary members of the community'. Social agencies described this as a problem of 'background'. My questions became: how did the community fit into the larger society? Was the distinctiveness of the community a feature of the preferences and organizational behaviour of individuals as we suggested by community leaders, governments agencies and the police, or was it something different?

The very way in which I originally organized my work, prohibited me (as I have described in the Introduction) from seeing how the relations were in practice organized. I assumed what had to be explained, namely how a community existed at all. I had to go back to look for the actual material relations which produced this. The explanations given me for its existence varied, but for the most part it came down to the question of the backgrounds of individuals. Certain members of the community did not have backgrounds which hampered them in the participation in Vancouver affairs; others did. Issues of language, education, parental positions in India, were all seen as causal factors in the location of Indians here. As I began to have a glimpse of the lives of working class immigrants, I began to be suspicious

of this explanation.

Thus I began to look at how I went going about my work, to begin to see how I had a part in producing the information that I was working on. In January and February I went back to talk to members of the community again. I asked different questions.

The data was gathered through indepth interviews, corporate research informal interviews, observations of settings, and some documentary information including other studies, police reports, newspaper, immigration statistics, reports and material from the East Indian community media. The data was compiled in handwritten notes with a few exceptions. The notes in many cases were not taken verbatim. In some cases I wrote a transcript of the interview and gave it to the person who was interviewed for alteration or correction. This provided a useful initial check on the process of recording interviews, I found that individuals did not alter the material significantly when I gave it to them so I discontinued this as regular practice.

I decided not to tape the interviews. This was done partly on the advice of my key informants who felt that individuals who were not used to being interviewed would be uncomfortable with this. Also they felt that the individuals might be less candid if there was a taperecording being made of the interview. I think that these were valid points. Particularly since in many cases individuals were very concerned about confidentiality and were concerned that they not be identified in my work.

In addition in many interviews translation was necessary and thus tapes would not have been all that useful. The interpreters were in all cases, members of the community, although their location in the community varied greatly. In some cases interpreters were friends informants brought

along, in others they were persons I contacted. When I went to use my field work if I quoted individuals directly and had not taken their statements down fully I checked my reconstruction of their statements with them to be sure that it is an accurate reflection of what they said. Also I have indicated where material is drawn from translations.

In cases where individuals have asked that material not be quoted because they felt that it was very contentious or that they could be identified I have respected their wishes. In the presentation of my field work I have protected the anonymity of my informants. This was a concern throughout my information gathering because the community in some ways is very small and has a communication system which relies a great deal upon individuals knowing and identifying each other. In the presentation of the field work where I thought that individuals might be identified I have not used those field notes directly. I have tried to present my field work in a way that identifies the sources of my information without revealing the identities of the individuals themselves by changing background characteristics, etc., which might serve to identify individuals.

#### Indepth Interviews

I did eighty-nine indepth interviews. Most of these interviews were done with the respondent and a translator present. This was normally necessary, but also I think that the presence of another individual who was East Indian gave me more credibility with the person interviewed and also made the respondent more comfortable.

The interviews were done in two groups as I have indicated. Fifty-five were done in the May through August period and the rest in January and February of this year. I tried to interview as many people as possible and

cover a broad cross-section of occupations, particularly among wage workers.

The interviews broke down as follows:

ELECTED OFFICIALS	2	RAILWAYWORKERS	2
COMMUNITY LEADERS	9	FARM WORKERS	4
SOCIAL SERVICE WORKERS	13	JANITORIAL WORKERS	4
PROFESSIONALS	5	CANNERY WORKERS	4
BUSINESSMEN	8	PARKING LOT ATTENDENTS	4
GROUPS	3	MILL WORKERS	10
POLICE	5	HOUSEWORKERS	16
PRESS	1	GARMENT and other FACTORY WORKERS	8
ACADEMICS (also studying ethnic relations in Vancouver)	6	DOMESTIC WORKERS AND BABYSITTERS	9
BUSINESSMEN (Non- East Indian)	6	GAS STATION ATTENDENTS and GARAGE WORKERS	6
UNION OFFICIALS (elected and staff)	7	CLERICAL WORKERS	4
		SERVICE WORKERS	11

The interviews varied in length from two hours to four hours. In one case I interviewed individuals on two separate occasions for several hours each time. I contacted individuals through my key informants in some cases and in others contacted them myself. I identified individuals through talking to my informants and by asking individuals whom I interviewed if they knew people whom I should talk to. In addition I interviewed individuals who were consistently identified as important community members for one reason or another.

I did not work from a formal interview schedule, but I did have a few general areas which I asked about. I did not ask everyone the same questions. Often individuals whom I interviewed would initiate discussion themselves, particularly when I had failed to ask them about matters they saw as important. Generally I asked about the community, how it was a community and who was important in the community. I asked about their own

personal participation in organizations and asked them to describe the community organizations to me. I asked questions about the membership in organizations and who was on the executive.

I asked questions about the work that the individual did; how it was done, how they got the job, how long they held it and what training they had. I asked about their income and about their formal and informal education. I asked questions about their immigration to Canada and about their first experiences in this country. When I interviewed individuals in their homes I tried to speak to all members of the household separately although this was not always possible.

I asked individuals what they knew about government services, which ones they used and which they had contact with. I asked them to describe the occasions that they met with professionals or government officials. I asked them questions about the immigration laws and about social service regulations and asked them where they got their information about programs and law.

I talked to almost all individuals who were interviewed about the management of their households, who managed the money, how the work was done, who was in charge of what work. I also asked them if they owned or rented their home and how they had found it. I asked about the mortgage arrangements and about their rent if they were tenants. Individuals who were interviewed in their business, professional or leadership capacities were not always questioned about this. Often when they were, they found the questions puzzling or irrelevant. I asked about where individuals came from in India; what their obligations were in terms of their families in India; about the responsibilities that they had to other members of their family who immigrated and to describe the arrangements that they made to



bring members of their family here.

Individuals talked about their work easily and described at length both their situation here and the problems that they encountered when they came and at present. They gave detailed information about the community and all had opinions about what the community was and how it worked. Individuals in the working class had very little information about government programs or Canadian law and often the information that they did have was incorrect. They depended heavily on information from other members of the community for making decisions. Family organization differed and individuals reported varying difficulty with schools and social agencies. Many had had no contact.

There was a great deal of vagueness about who was part of the community. As well there was a great deal of disagreement about how the community came to be. The leadership of the community held views about the working class which individuals in the working class did not hold of themselves. Consistently the leadership of the community and professionals who were in a service capacity to the community and were East Indian, spoke of the community and of members of the community as 'they'. When I asked them if they thought that they were members of the community they often responded that they were in a different way and normally explained their cultural and religious interests.

The interviews were for the most part unproblematic, however on a few occasions some problems were encountered; these are described next.

#### Interview Problems

I felt particularly with respect to the women that I interviewed that the translation was a problem. This is not to suggest that I do not think that the translation was accurate, however I often felt that I could not ask

as many questions as I might have if I had been able to speak Punjabi.

The problem that I encountered with translation was that I did not feel that I could establish as good a relationship with respondents when I was not able to speak with them directly. Thus I often refrained from asking questions which I felt were too personal when the majority of the interview was being translated. Interpreters were both men and women.

I got into difficulty in several interviews as will be seen in my fieldnotes in the body of the thesis. Some individuals, particularly men, got very angry when they were questioned about housework and about their comments on their wives. Some individuals also got angry when I suggested that other informants had disagreed with them.

At times one of the individuals who was translating would engage individuals who were being interviewed in arguments. This happened when there were disagreements about aspects of the activities of the community. On some occasions this turned out rather badly, on others it was very revealing.

Some individuals, although they agreed to interviews, were what could only be termed hostile. They avoided being interviewed for days sometimes weeks, missing appointments and rescheduling them several times. These interviews were revealing but difficult.

#### Corporate Research

As part of my field work I examined the publicly accessible documentary information on some of the East Indian owned companies, which were part of the community. (By the time that I did this I included companies as part of the community when they were owned by East Indian individuals, employed East Indian individuals in majority in their work force of the company,

or/and had East Indian individuals as their primary market). One source of the information was the Provincial Registrar of Companies.

Information which can be gained from this source includes an estimate of the assets of the company, the names of the members of the Board of Directors, the company's constitution, which includes the stated aims and the nature of the enterprise, the annual reports of the company, and the companies, financial institutions and individuals from whom the company has borrowed money. With respect to the companies indebtedness, only loans for which the company has mortgaged itself and therefore placed its assets as security for the loan are registered. Thus this source does not necessarily provide an accurate assessment of the credit position of the company, or actually of its actual assets. It is possible to identify all companies which are owned wholly or partially by an individual, or groups of individuals. However this is a very time consuming task since companies are registered in their name, not in the name of the owner, and companies are not cross referenced to their owners.

Other information on companies was gathered from the clipping service of the Vancouver Public Library. The business section of the library clips, the financial pages of the newspapers and files this according to the type of business and the name of the company. The expansion of companies is normally reported in the financial pages of a newspaper, as well as mergers, other business transactions and in some cases bankruptcies. This source is also important for information on the real estate market.

The credit position of companies is officially evaluated by two companies in Vancouver. These companies will provide, primarily to other business enterprises, assessments of the credit ratings of a given company. This is done for a fee. The information which is obtained gives a rating,

however it does not provide data on the actual holding of companies. Although I found out about this source, I was not able to make use of it in my work.

Initially I was interested primarily in the corporate research to investigate East Indian owned enterprises in the forest industry, agribusiness and janitorial contracting. I found that a good deal of the information that I wanted could not be secured through these sources, and that in order to make information from these sources useful to me I would have to find a way of investigating these enterprises quite differently. This involved a great deal more time and work.

Part of the problem was that with the exception of enterprises in the forest industry, many of the businesses either were not registered in Victoria, or could not be located. As well numbers of employees, salaries, company holdings and employee practices could not be gained from these sources. This information was more readily available from union research officers and from union contracts which are filed with the Department of Labour and are publicly available. These sources are not sufficient to fully examine business enterprises in a way that would reveal the relation between the labour and the profits and assets of the company as well as begin to reveal the links between enterprises enough information from the unions about employee wages and working conditions in some cases.

I did not go further with this type of research because it was taking me beyond the boundaries of the study that I had set out. However this information I think is essential to do a full assessment of the East Indian business community and of the relations among the East Indian business community and the Canadian business community. As well I think in part it is the starting place for understanding the organization of what I describe later in the thesis

as the East Indian bourgeoisie.

### Informal Interviews

I talked to a large number of people informally as I met them at gas stations, on the street, in restaurants, stores and other public places. This proved a very important source of information particularly I think because people were relaxed and were not in a formal interview situation. Some of the individuals interviewed this way were East Indian individuals, some were not. Many people were in their working situations. We talked casually, usually for not more than ten minutes about their work, how they got their job, what their plans were. In some cases when the individuals were not East Indian I asked them if they had any East Indian friends or had been in contact with East Indian people through their work or other situation. Normally people would give me their opinions: about East Indian people without very many questions. East Indian immigration was a topic that individuals whom I talked to all had an opinion about.

East Indian individuals who were interviewed in this way spoke English. They were candid about their situations and often gave detailed accounts about how they got their jobs and what they thought they would like to do in the future. They were all conscious of being different and spoke about this. Normally this came up when I asked them how they liked Canada and what differences they found in their lives here. In this interview process I made the error that Canadians normally make with respect to identifying East Indian persons; that is many of the persons who had the physical characteristics of East Indians, were not East Indians. They were immigrants from many other countries who had originally been from India but had emigrated from their first country of immigration, to Canada, e.g. East

Indians from Uganda. For the most part they are not part of the East Indian community as I am examining it. It is true however that at the street level individuals do not make this distinction.

In these interviews I began to get a sense of how immigration worked for East Indians who are part of the working class in Canada. As well I got a good deal of information about the kinds of work the people that I talked to did in India and how they came to decide to come to Canada. Individuals often suggested that they intended to go home after they had made some money, but when asked about the likelihood of this said that they felt that it may not be possible. Young men interviewed in these circumstances were often more optimistic about their possibilities.

A great deal of information was gathered about farm workers and about janitorial workers in this way. I met many individuals who were or who had been farm workers and I met many individuals who were or had been janitorial workers. The work situations of janitorial workers and farm workers is very difficult and individuals are often unwilling to discuss their situations for fear of repercussions from their employers. In this interview situation I did not know the names, where they lived, where exactly they worked or who specifically they worked for. This does present a problem of validity if this had been the only source of information, however I have interviewed individuals in other circumstances and have gathered information from individuals who have done other research in this area. In any case these interviews were valuable because they gave more specific information on labour contractors and on working conditions than did the other interviews and respondents were not as concerned about confidentiality in this situation.

Individuals who were interviewed who were not East Indians were almost always negative about East Indian people. Some were mildly critical saying

that East Indians were very different from them and did not fit into the society well. Others felt strongly that East Indians took jobs from them, were dirty, smelled, were depressing wages, and received special treatment from government which other Canadians did not receive. People often expressed resentment that their taxes were being used to pay for special language and training programs for East Indians. I met several people who had small property holdings who rented them. Some of these people did or had rented to East Indian people, others said that they would not rent to East Indian people. In both cases people held similar views of East Indians; that they were dirty, destroyed the property value, always lied, always had more people in the house than was 'reasonable', and were generally bad tenants. Generally people who had neighbours who were East Indian did not like their neighbours. Some people reported disagreements and open hostility and others said that they wouldn't have anything to do with East Indians.

The exceptions to this view were some employers whom I met and individuals who lived in wealthier areas of the city. The employers felt that East Indians were good employees, but had to be watched because they could not be trusted. They however agreed that they had not had difficulty with East Indian employees. They said that they hired East Indian individuals for various business reasons; that they could not get other people to work for the wages and in the conditions they provided, that they had a policy to hire a 'cross section of employees' to serve various needs in the community or that East Indian persons had come to ask for jobs and they had hired people who came to them.

I found that this source of data was at times unreliable and did find that some of the information could not be verified in other parts of my

research. This information is not included in this work. For the most part however this source of information provided very valuable checks on data, new information and informed some of my questions in the indepth interviews, particularly in January and February. I did run into difficulty on some occasions when I interviewed non-East Indian individuals who were very hostile on the subject of East Indian immigrants. These however were few and although uncomfortable were very revealing.

#### Visits to Work Places

I visited two sawmills, one garment factory and one luggage factory during my research. I arranged these through the management of the companies involved. As part of the agreement to visit these work sites I assured the management that I would not reveal the companies involved. I told each employer what my research involved and although each agreed that I would be able to see their business operation, all were very concerned about confidentiality. I did not in any case offer to show them my research or to let them alter my data as I did in many of the indepth interviews. I did however agree that specifics of the source of my information would remain confidential.

I made two visits to each of the enterprises. This was because on the first visit in each case I felt that the tour had been too artificial. That is I felt that the employees had been informed and that many of the practices were not visible to me on the first occasion. This I know is always a problem when you enter a setting in which you are an obvious visitor, however I felt that this was overcome to some extent in the second, impromptu visit. The reactions to my second visit were varied. Some individuals were pleasant and accomodating, others were surprised and somewhat annoyed.



On all occasions I was shown the production by a member of the management. I talked to management and to the foremen on the job. On each occasion I asked to meet with the elected union officials on the job and was able to in all but one case, where the employer refused to allow the workers to be absent from their work. The production was in progress at all times during my observations.

Visibly in all cases there was job segregation. Workers had various jobs which paid differing rates. I asked for and was given in all cases the wage scale for the production workers. I asked about the obvious segregation between East Indian workers and other workers on the job, which was most visible in the mills. I asked about the work organization and about how the decisions on the work organization were made. Employers were also asked about hiring procedures and promotion procedures.

I spent two full days in each of the mills. I was left alone for several hours to observe production, in an area specified by management. At first it was difficult for me to understand the work process because the organization of the production floor is not ordered so that it is immediately obvious how the production works. However after a few hours it became clearer how the process was ordered. The work always involved individuals cooperating with each other and work was done in groups. Some jobs were identified as more skilled than others and were paid more highly. All of the jobs with the exception of the trades jobs were learned in the mill. Employers estimated the training period for jobs to be three days at the most, however there was a thirty day probation period which presumably was the official time that a worker was given to learn any one job.

Promotions to more senior jobs in the mill was done in consultation with the union. Hiring was done through a hiring officer, however there

were in all cases a variety of recruitment methods used. Formal applications were not a significant part of the hiring procedure, but were used, sometimes after the decision to hire the individual had been made.

Employers were concerned with the frequency with which workers went on compensation. They reported that East Indians were more often on compensation than other workers. This was a concern they reported because the Workers' Compensation Board had expressed concern at the cost of compensation. I asked employers if the largest number of accidents occurred in any particular job in the mill. They thought that it was possible that there were more accidents on the green chain where the majority of East Indians work. They suggested however that this was because East Indians were less skilled workers than others and that many accidents were false.

In the garment factory there were primarily two groups of workers. Although they did the same jobs they were segregated in the production organization. The employer said that this was for purposes of efficiency, because the workers spoke different languages. This work site is the one in which I felt least sure of my information. Workers when interviewed in other situations reported working conditions which were not visible in this work site. I think that I needed a lot more time to do observations to be able to see how the work organization was managed. On the two occasions I was in the work place I was not alone and I spent less than three hours on each occasion. At least half of this time was spent in the management offices.

The luggage factory was a similar experience. Although management was cooperative and pleasant, they did not leave me to do observations. As well they did not show me all the facilities on the plant. This was the first observation that I did and I was not very sure about how to go

about it. In addition I antagonized the personnel officer when I asked questions about recruitment and hiring. There was very little difference in the salaries of individuals, although individuals did do different work. Hiring procedures were very informal and the employer reported a high turnover in staff.

The visits to work sites although brief did provide a great deal of information which I then used in the indepth interviews and in my analysis. These visits were supplemented with interviews with union officials, and workers in which I checked my perceptions and understandings of the work organization and the hiring and promotion procedures. The interviews with employers and management were very informative although I think that it would have been valuable to see these work settings in operation without management accompanying me. I have used this information to begin to put together a picture of the labour force organization.

#### Documentary Research

There were several studies of the East Indian community which I found and which I have listed in the introduction and in the bibliography. I did not do a great deal of library research nor did I do an exhaustive search of the literature for material on the East Indian community in Vancouver or other East Indian ethnic groups situated in other places.

I talked to several individuals who had been or were working on studies in Vancouver and talked to individuals who were attempting to do organizing work in relation to the East Indian community particularly in relation to the conditions of farm workers and janitorial workers. This research was very interesting although much of the information was general rather than specific.

I read the clipping files at the Vancouver Public Library and some files that individuals had put together on the topic of the East Indian community. Both the UNESCO and Singh reports were informative with respect to providing background for the analysis of press material. (UNESCO 1975, Singh, 1975) Much of this work has not been used in this work largely because of considerations of length.

The police reports were the most interesting. I asked to look at them because I found in my interviews with the police that some of the incidents that they used to illustrate their police work in relation to the community seemed to be similar to the press reports. I found that many of the news reports were drawn from police reports. This led me to be interested in the way in which police reports were made and the way in which they were important to the work that police officers did and the subsequent understanding that they had of the community. The police force were extremely helpful in explaining in detail how the reporting process worked and provided blank samples of reports to show me how they were structured. I have not done detailed analysis on this aspect of my work, but this research provided me with the first concrete examples of socially organized practices of factual reporting. The officers were very clear about how reporting was connected with their work and were helpful in teaching me how to understand the process. This proved very valuable when I went back to social service agencies to ask individuals to describe their work, rather than the community as I had first done.

I found that both in the interviews with police officers and in the examination of their work they were the most precise of all the professionals interviewed in terms of their work practices and organization. They also were very insistent that for the most part they did not find their work in the

East Indian community very different from the work they did in the regular community. This proved to be a very valuable perception for me, because it challenged in very definite and concrete ways the initial definition of the East Indian community that I had made.

### Summary

These, then were the sources of information through which I gained my knowledge of the East Indian community in Vancouver. The various sources of information provides a diversity of perspective and information about the community. It is this knowledge about the community that provides the base from which I will work on the analysis. I have put together an overview description which will serve to introduce individuals reading this work to the community which I studied.

### Overview of the Community

East Indian immigrants in Vancouver are known collectively as the East Indian community. They are seen as an independent social and cultural community, existing within a modern industrialized urban setting. The community is understood as a typical 'ethnic phenomena' common to Canadian society. It is recognized by social service agencies, schools, businesses, political parties and government departments, all of whom have developed policies, programs and business practices which take into account the existence of a culturally distinct ethnic community.

When the community is viewed from the location of government agencies, East Indian and Canadian businesses, schools and political organizations, the community appears like a constituency. That is it is distinctive and different from the community that surrounds it. The difference becomes apparent when

the patterns of friendships, business transactions, membership in organizations, media and organizations of educational and social services are examined in relation to the community. In addition there also appears to be a number of cultural characteristics which hold the community together. These involve common physical characteristics, dress, food, language, traditions and religious affiliation.

The community has however no specific geographic location, so that membership in the community is something which is not in some ways easily determined, or understood. Individuals who are counted as members of the community live all over the lower mainland. There is a concentration of East Indian immigrants living in Vancouver South and some parts of Richmond and Surrey. Wealthier members of the community are not likely to live in these areas, but are more often residents of Burnaby, Point Grey, North and West Vancouver and in some cases, Shaughnessy.

In many of my interviews, I began by asking what the community was or how it was a community. Although responses were varied, with respect to the most significant aspects of the community, all agreed that there was a community.

Yes, there is a community, but it is not an area. It is a common culture, people's backgrounds bring them together here. They relate primarily to each other, are friends with East Indians, do business with East Indians, go out together, even choose to go to banks for example that have East Indian staff over ones that don't. When they come from India, they don't know about Canada, so they want to be with each other. Even after they learn what it is like they keep the same patterns. It is a matter of preference. You see it is very different here and they want to retain some of their past traditions. Also there is a problem of adjustment. That is something that some never get over. They always think that this can be like home.

Other individuals agreed that there was a community, but had mixed feelings about the implications of the existence of the community.

The East Indian community has grown up recently. Before there were only a small number of Indians here and we were integrated into the mainstream. We had some of our own organizations and groups, originally, we brought with us I guess, but these changed here, they are really more Canadian than Indian. Now with this immigration and all the trouble there has been I feel things are not the same. There are so many Indians, they don't fit in, they are different from other Canadians, and they make themselves different. They don't want to learn or can't, I don't know, but it makes it hard. Naturally there are problems when such a large group of people come to a country which is so different. And these people prefer their own families. And they want to keep old ways.

Another view is that the new immigration, rather than being a problem for East Indians who have been here longer, is really a new means to gain position, prestige and wealth:

The big immigration was terrific for the East Indian businessmen and professionals. They now had a ready-made clientele. Look at the telephone book, of East Indians, that is their livelihood and they think the people who come to them are peasants, really and embarrassment to their sophisticated Western ways, but the reality is that the peasants are making them rich. Who else would? I think things like the telephone book make people conspicuous, and it is done so that the community is visible for business. That is what I think at least.

When individuals talked about the community I began to see that they were talking about a framework or context within which they were able to talk about a specific group of people and their activities. Who those individuals were, varied depending on who you were talking to in the community. The variation in response to the nature and value of the community led me to ask individuals about the history of East Indian immigration to B.C. I did not do extensive historical research. Rather I asked older East Indian immigrants to tell me about their knowledge of East Indian immigration. The following account is drawn, in large part, from their stories and recollections of East Indian persons.

## Historical Roots of The East Indian Community in Vancouver

East Indian immigration to Canada began in the early part of the century. The largest group came in 1807-08 (Lal, 1976). However, immigration was impeded by Canadian Immigration Law and regulations which prohibited immigration from India, except through direct passage from India. Since there was no direct steamer from India to Canada, this regulation effectively controlled immigration. The Kamagata Maru incident, recently characterized by Sharon Pollock in her play by that name, illustrates the firmness of the Canadian Government policy with respect to Indian immigration. (Pollock, 1975)

Immigrants began to trickle into B.C. inspite of the restrictions and increased as regulations were loosened informally. Immigrants were from Punjab province, many of whom were Sikhs and Hindus from other parts of India. Punjabis, historically have been the largest immigration group from India, and are the largest group at present. Indians were referred to by the Canadians as "HINDUS".

My grandfather came here early, I don't know exactly. But he went back to India. He worked with Chinese and Indians in the forest industry. He said that they were all paid different rates. Hindus got the middle price. After he worked for a while he left. One of the men who came stayed. They built a business here.

(translated)

In early immigration it was common for men to come and return home after they had worked for a while. The census figures for the period indicated a large return migration for a number of immigration groups. (Lal, 1976). Men who came found work in logging camps and mills, but few became permanent residents. East Indian immigrants who came in the fifties established themselves in B.C. and found work in small non-union coastal and interior logging operations and mills, working with other immigrants and Native Indian workers. East Indian workers led several organizing drives and were



successful in extending unionization of the industry to smaller operations.

After many jobs I found a job at Gibson, in a mill. This experience made me a union man. I went to work as a trimmer and found that I was working with ten to fifteen whites, fifteen Japanese, ten Portugese, a small number of Natives, I can't remember exactly and fifteen East Indians. I lived in a bunkhouse with other East Indians, and we had to pay the company. I got \$1.40 an hour.

Soon I found that everyone had different rates. Whites got \$1.90, Japanese and Portugese \$1.65, Natives \$1.50 and East Indians \$1.40, like I told you. Whites got the top rate. I asked the foreman about this and he told me that whites lived more expensive and thus they had to have more money. I told him I could live more expensive if I had more money too.

I decided that I would do something, so I called up the union, and told them to come down and sign us up. I had worked on one other union job before so I knew about this. I took too long and people were frightened. The company heard about it and they were very angry. Boy oh Boy! I managed to stay on and eventually we got the union. I got laid off three days later so I came back to Vancouver.

Several East Indian workers related stories about their experiences in the forest industry in the late fifties and early sixties. It seems that the larger operations did not at this time hire immigrant workers, or at least not East Indians, and many immigrants went to work in small, somewhat marginal sub-contracted logging operations. In these situations the pay was poor and there was not a single rate for the job. One man explained what happened:

Some became union men, some saw that this was a good deal and got into it themselves.

A small number of East Indian immigrants gradually established businesses in the forest industry (small mills and logging operations on contract to larger enterprises) and in some related industries. Labour for these businesses was provided by East Indian immigrants. Owners of firms were able to sponsor immigrants under the existing Immigration laws. This meant that the employer could bring immigrants to Canada provided that they could supply jobs. The employers would often advance money for the trip to Canada and the

immigrant would repay the sum out of his earnings. (Immigrants who came in this way were men.) Immigrants who came in this way were generally distant relatives and friends of the family of the employer in India.

I came to work for a distant relative. He paid my way and gave me a job. I was to pay him back out of my salary. I don't know how much I paid, but I worked for five years at \$1.91, and later \$2.14 an hour, when others were paying one to two dollars more. I didn't know about how deductions and all that worked so I took what he gave me. At first I was grateful, but after five years that wears thin and I left. He won't speak to me now and neither will some of the people who work there. It did give me a start, but, well that is it. (translated)

Employers see this situation differently than the workers:

Look these people are happy for the jobs. I did them a favour, brought them out here. I don't do it any more, it doesn't pay, they leave....

- Q. Do you think that they might stay if they had working conditions similar to that in the rest of the industry?
- A. What do you mean? We pay O.K. These people don't need as much money. They only send it home. Anyway in the past it cost me a lot to bring them. That is what you are asking about, isn't it? Well that was the way.
- Q. Why didn't you hire workers who were already here if it was so expensive?
- A. There weren't any. It was boom time, not enough workers.

Sponsorship provided the means for many immigrants to come to work in Vancouver and the jobs meant that they could establish themselves in Canada with less concern for job hunting and managing in a strange place. Although their working conditions and wages were very different to those accorded to Canadian workers in the industry, their isolation meant that their only means of comparison was their former situation. In addition men who came in this way intended to return home permanently after saving some funds which would be used to improve their standard of living at home.

I came to make some money, but I found that I had to live rough to do that. I didn't know anyone but East Indians for six years. I saw little of my pay and I didn't know for a long time that anything was wrong. Some still don't, even if I tell them. It seemed good to me in many ways. I was helping at home, and although I got very little money, what was sent home meant a lot. It was worth a lot more of course. Some of the union people helped me out of that situation. If it wasn't for them I would still be there I guess. But like others probably told you, well it seems hard for people to understand. Also, you are afraid that you won't have any friends. That is what I felt.

The immigration laws, employer practices, location in Vancouver and future plans all contributed to determining the position of sponsored immigrants as cheap labour for employers:

I didn't speak any English and didn't learn for a long time. It was as if the new country was the old one in some ways, except that I was lonely. I didn't know how I got here actually, like I thought that my relative had done me a favour, and I guess he did. I didn't know I could have become a Canadian, for instance. I didn't know anything about Canada.

Often immigrants did not return to India, nor did they find their position in Vancouver improving. Their location in a primarily East Indian work force provided most of their friends and thus neither their social life nor work life afforded them the contact with Canadians that would have been required to begin to learn English. This meant, of course, that the major source of information about Vancouver came through the employer. He interpreted their immigration status, job possibilities, and quality of their working conditions to them. These conditions tended to maintain East Indian workers in dependent positions in relation to their employers.

I thought I could be kicked out if I didn't have a job. I thought that the way that it worked was that I would go home after I finished working. But I would have spent all the money I had saved to go home so that it wouldn't have helped. So I sent the money and stayed.

The way things work in India is that you have to know someone. If you don't, that is it. If you do, you have to be important. Here I thought it was the same. So do other people. But I know now that it is a little different.

In the late sixties, with the changes in the Immigration laws, access to Canada became much easier. Immigrants who were formerly sponsored were able to bring their families to Canada and individuals were able to immigrate without sponsorship. There followed an increase of immigration of East Indian people to Vancouver, as well as other parts of Canada. Men got jobs in the forest industry and were not dependent on East Indian employers for jobs.

When I got here it was the sixties depression, and there was not very much work. Worked for East Indians at a dollar less than other places. But there was no choice. Later I got other work, but when I came back to Vancouver, I had to take a job in one of the mills. I got \$2.11 an hour for a skilled job. I was supposed to work all week and Saturday work one day free. There was a union so I avoided Saturday work, saying I was busy until I passed the thirty days and was in the union. Then I told him, no free work.

There was a lot of pressure to work and many suggested I quit if I didn't want to work one day free. My house was close and one Saturday some of the men came by and took me with them to work. I worked twelve hours. I told my friends that that was all, no more free work. Monday I went to the regular job. The foreman tried to push me around and make me quit. I went to the union. Then they tried to say that I was a poor worker, and sent me home to think about the job. This went on until the depression was over and I found another job.

#### Present East Indian Community

As the East Indian population grew the East Indian business community expanded into other areas, import/export business, stores specializing in Indian foods, restaurants, travel agencies able to make immigration arrangements, and investments in real estate and commercial buildings. East Indian businessmen also began to work in real estate and insurance businesses, where they had a ready made clientele in the increasing numbers of East Indian families who were settling in Vancouver. In addition there has been an increase in the numbers of East Indian professionals, lawyers, doctors and graduates of business schools who serve the varying needs of the business

schools who serve the varying needs of the business sector and families, as well as other professionals, such as public school teachers, teachers of special language programs, social workers, and health care workers, who work in the school system and in government agencies, usually directly associated with the East Indian population. In addition, East Indian people have been hired in Vancouver businesses as clerks, bank tellers, and loan officers in order to serve the special needs of East Indians who cannot speak English and whom they could not have as customers if they did not provide their service in Punjabi. People who are employed in these ways are either immigrants who have come with university educations or are sons and daughters of immigrants who have been educated in Canada.

I think that it first became a community in the real sense with the last immigration in the seventies. I mean from the sixties to the mid-seventies. Something changed in that time I think. I'm not sure what it was. Certainly the businesses developed to serve the immigrants, sell them houses, food, clothing, do the legal work, none of this really existed in any major way before. I wonder about it though. I'm not sure that it is only that there are more people. Before I'm not entirely sure how people managed, but no one did these things for them. They spoke little English but they managed. I think that East Indians don't 'need' the community as is always suggested. But I can actually see how they come to do things this way. The community is really the businessmen and others providing service to the new immigrants. Participation in organizations and so-called cultural events is small, you know. This cultural community I wonder about.

The community has diversified as immigration has increased. Individuals have emigrated from other parts of India and have different religious and family backgrounds. There is as a result a small Hindu part of the community, which has a temple and separate organizations from the Punjabi part of the community. Immigrants whose country of origin was India at one time but who had immigrated to Uganda, Fiji, and the Philippines have also immigrated to Canada during the last ten years. Some of these groups have

integrated into the community as in the case of Ugandan businessmen, but for the most part Fijians, and Philipinos have a separate community and are not part of the community which we are investigating. At the level of the street this distinction is often not made, so that all persons who have the physical characteristics of East Indians tend to be treated in the same way.

Canadians think that everyone who looks like an East Indian is an East Indian and is part of the community. In fact that is not so. Fijians for example have their own community. It isn't as large as the community that East Indians have, but it is separate. The same with Phillipinos. The Ugandans in some respects have become part of the community. People who have come from Uganda have been shocked at the treatment that they have received here. They are used to being treated differently. To treating others as we are treated here I think. Canadians treat everyone who looks like us the same. And that is a real shock for some. Also it is not true, if you see what I mean.

Hindu and Ugandan immigrants have come to Canada with educations, professional training and often in the case of Ugandans, have some capital. However the majority of Indian immigrants still come to B.C. from the Punjab, have rural backgrounds, low levels of formal education, little or no job training or work experience which is relevant to an industrialized work force and speak no or very little English. A few of the men have had some work experience in industrialized settings in India, but this is unusual.

As the number of Punjabi immigrants has grown, social, business and cultural organizations have developed and expanded. A second Sikh temple was built in the early seventies as a result of a series of political and religious disputes among the members of the community which centered around orthodoxy in dress and behaviour versus the concern to integrate into western business and cultural setting. The leadership of the new temple began to be involved in politics within the community and began to be recognized by B.C. and Vancouver political leaders as the leadership of

a community.

The two temples arose because of a struggle over integration into Canadian society. The more orthodox members wanted to maintain the traditions, about hair, dress and so on. Other members wanted to fit in better so they wanted western dress, hair cuts, etc. This was purely connected with business I think. The result was that one group walked out. That is how Ross Street started. People were told that it would be nicer, a community center, a better place. And it was the ordinary people who paid for it in the main. They gave through their work, and thought that it was important to have a new, beautiful temple that would make people respect them. Whether that has happened is a matter of opinion I guess, but a lot of money was spent for very little change if that was the main reason.

The East Indian community came to the attention of the police in the early seventies, when they began to answer an increasing number of calls from East Indian families and Canadian families involving family disputes, quarrels with Canadian neighbours, vandalism of homes of East Indians, and verbal abuse and assaults on East Indian men, women and children. Many of these events were reported in the press. The leadership of the temple was able to call East Indian immigrants together to discuss problems, explain the situation to immigrants and also represent the community to the police, city government and the press. These events were broadly reported in the press. Thus in this way the events brought to the attention of the public, in an official way the existence of the East Indian community.

When the trouble started the leadership began to come out in full force and the divisions in the community began to appear. The leaders basically said that the problem was with the new immigrants who were not fitting into the setting properly. Others began to call the attacks racism. They didn't like that. They didn't think that this had anything to do with East Indians as a group, certainly not with them. To have agreed with it as racism would have meant that they might be implicated. There have been a lot of court cases over those days and a lot of family quarrels. But it was important, the first cracks in the old guard have begun to appear. That I think means there may be positive things happening with people themselves.

As the economic situation has worsened in Vancouver, East Indian men

cannot easily find work in areas that were formerly open to them. Many East Indians (along with other workers) have lost their jobs in the forest industry and in other labouring areas as a result of layoffs. Many immigrants have been forced to take jobs which are low paying and insecure. Some of these jobs are provided within the community itself, others are in the service sector as gas station attendants, parking lot attendants, assistants in fast food restaurants, dishwashers and janitorial workers. Often jobs which are available are part-time jobs which then require men to do more than one job to provide sufficient money for the family. Increasingly women are being forced into the work force in order to contribute to the family income.

I got laid off three months ago. But I had to find another job, we have three children, a house and it is not possible to live on UIC. I had trouble finding work, so my wife got a job, washing dishes in a restaurant, and I am doing three jobs. It is hard, but I hope it won't be for long, I mean maybe we will get hired on again. I think the layoff is temporary. I hope so because my wife does not like working, she complains about it. I tell her it is only for a while, but I really don't know. But this means our house is upsidetown. What a problem. Dinner not ready, house not clean, you know when everyone is working, things change.

The financial pressure and increased economic insecurity are seriously affecting the ability of families in these positions to meet their financial commitments to their families in Canada and in India. Families are finding that their responsibilities to recent immigrants are hard to meet. Recent immigrants are having problems become self-supporting and their dependance on their families is greater than they expected. Working women are finding that they are not able to meet their household responsibilities in the same way as in the past. Family relationships are changing. All these situations contribute to family quarrels, difficulties in relationships between husbands and wives and in relationships between recent immigrants and families which are supporting them. Many of these problems end up with calls



to the police or requests to social agencies.

I went to get help, because I couldn't stand it any longer. The house was full of people and I had to do all the work. Others helped, but they did not do the cleaning, washing, ironing, mending and so on. They thought it was enough to make a meal and leave the dishes or do the shopping. I have two small children and I work. My husband's relatives were always criticizing me for the state of the house and how the children were. My husband said I was lazy and not a good wife. It was just too much. They (agency) didn't help much really, but I don't think they can, but at least the family saw there was a problem.

In response to the problems in the early seventies, a number of programs and agencies were set up to provide services to East Indian immigrants. The services were intended to bridge the gap in government services to East Indian immigrants and to decriminalize many of the complaints the police were called on but which were considered by the police as matters that could be better solved by follow-up, counselling and other services, which they were not equipped to handle. The Vancouver Police Force were significant in influencing governments in the creation of at least one of the social service agencies set up to serve the East Indian community.

Many of the calls we answered were beyond our scope. Trouble with neighbours, family disputes and so on. They aren't different from other calls that we get really, but you know when the language is different and you really don't know what is going on. We went to the temple to talk to the people about it and eventually called a meeting of the three levels of government to get them to provide more service.

We can't do any follow-up. Of course the situation does not end when the police come. All we can do is see if anyone wants to lay a complaint and take a report on the problem. We made some changes as well. I think the Team Policing is much better, the officers get to know the neighbourhood and know what is happening. Also we have hired some officers for the community. But that isn't necessary any longer. The officers didn't like the special assignment and you can't blame them.

Having a service to refer people to has helped a lot. We meet with the social service people and try to coordinate our work. I think the problem has been solved. There will always be problems, it happens everywhere, no more often with the East Indians, it is pretty well

the same I think throughout the population.

The services now available do both referral as well as direct service, which takes the form of translation, counselling assistance with relations with government agencies and schools. The services are set up within agencies or are provided through field workers hired by departments or with grants who often work through volunteer organizations in the community. Agencies vary in their way of working, but for the most part they do referral work. That is a family or individual is referred from the school, police or other agency, and received counselling, support of assistance in working with the other social service agencies. There are five programs which deal specifically with the community. Some of the programs are located with the regular line services of government, others are programs set up through grants and private societies. In one case outreach workers are funded to work in the community. The problems that are dealt with by the agency depend upon the specific agency and upon the location of the agency on the overall organization of social services.

Beginning with this Overview of the community we will now hope to look at several aspects of the community in some depth. The next chapter will begin to examine the social services available to East Indian Immigrants and the relations of individuals to the social service agencies. Subsequent chapters are concerned with other aspects of the East Indian Community.

## CHAPTER III

### SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

#### Introduction

The naming of an individual as an East Indian Immigrant names a social relation which is, in itself a series of actual activities, a set of practices. These practices originate the naming, not, as we might imagine or might be led to believe in the personal identities of East Indian individuals (in their heads) or in their activities. These practices originate in the immigration and citizenship laws of Canada, which are made by actual individuals in Parliament and are administered by actual individuals in the Departments of Manpower and Immigration and in the Citizenship Branch of the Department of the Secretary of State. These practices are ones which organize individuals as different, as immigrants, and locates that difference in relation to the country of origin. Aspects of individual's biography are attributed to them as part of their legal status, in this case then an East Indian immigrant.

In relation to social institutions in Canada individuals' (socially organized) legal status as East Indian immigrants already establishes them as different from Canadian born citizens. This socially organized difference provides the basis on which individuals must be treated as differently (as a matter of law and regulation) within the practices of the social institutions themselves.

Part of organizing East Indian immigrants as different from Canadian born citizens within the practices of social institutions is to treat individuals as persons who are East Indian immigrants--that is their status as East Indian immigrants becomes a social identity. Accomplishing this is an

active process with the social institutions. Part of what is drawn upon in accomplishing this work are the visible differences between the majority of Canadian born citizens and East Indian immigrants, skin colour, dress and language differences, which have already been socially organized as differences, prior to in some senses their being immigrants (that is these differences between persons born in India and persons born in Canada are socially organized historically and have come to be treated as personal characteristics of individuals in the present). It is these differences which first become available as the relevant factors in establishing 'East Indian immigrant' as a socially organized (ethnic) identity.

Thus when certain individuals in this society come into contact with the line workers in social institutions (police officers, teachers, social workers, community workers), they are already organized and understood within the institution's practices (in law and regulation) as different; and specifically different as East Indian immigrants, with colour, dress and language as social descriptors of their social identity in place. At this point however, their full social identity, as individuals with an ethnic identity and belonging to an ethnic community is not fully realized. (I remind you that this is so in order to bring to your attention that I am describing a process and in doing that, steps which are logically prior are not necessarily prior in practice.)

The practices of line workers in the social institutions in organizing East Indians in special ways, providing special programs, giving special grants, developing special procedures and agencies, excluding them from other programs: that is, the practice of treating them differently--organizes ethnicity and the ethnic community as social phenomena.

These practices are ideological practices, which organize East Indian

immigrants as different from other individuals in the society, and differentiate in the treatment of East Indian immigrants in relation to one another. This differentiation is part of organizing the class relation within the "East Indian community".

These practices which produce the ideological organization, the ethnic community, conceal the class relation which originates in the social organization of the labour force. This class relation is not only present in the community, but is in part organized and extended in the community by these ideological practices. I want to draw your attention to a point that I have stated, but not accounted for; the differences in treatment of individuals who are East Indian immigrants, within the socially organized practices of the social institutions. That is to say, a class analysis is not yet fully present in my analysis. This aspect of the relation between individuals who are East Indian immigrants and the socially organized practices of social institutions will be described in the chapters on the family and the East Indian business community and community organizations. This is in part because the class nature of these relations (the relations between East Indian immigrants and the socially organized practices of the social institutions) are only fully realized in the family and in the relation between the East Indian business community together with the community organizations and their market, East Indian working class immigrants.

In this chapter then I want to examine the social agencies, school and police and the relations between each of these organizations in Vancouver as they are relevant to East Indian immigrants. I have provided some examples of the socially organized practices of social service agencies. Neither the time nor the data has been available to explicate all the socially

organized practices of these agencies, which are part of the composite of the social institutions. However I have provided a full account in the example that I have done so that the procedure for explication is clear and it can be seen at least how this would be done with the other descriptions I have provided.

### SOCIAL AGENCIES

There is a distinct separation among the approaches of the social service agencies, whose practices are part of organizing the East Indian community. The services which are directly part of an official government department, or are staffed by several government departments which hire and second staff to work together in an agency, focus their work to assisting East Indian families accomodate themselves to the policies and procedures of the social institutions to which the families relate as part of their daily lives. Other agencies, funded through government grants of a variety of types but which do not have professional staff or permanent funding, attempt in part to act as advocates for individuals who come to them for assistance.

Since these agencies do not provide services directly, (with the exception of translation services) individuals in these advocacy agencies must contact the appropriate social agency, government department or commission in their attempt to resolve the difficulty for the East Indian immigrant who has come to them. This places the individuals working in these agencies in a difficult position in relation both to those for whom they are acting as advocates, and the agencies from whom they are asking assistance. I will begin by describing and explicating some of the practices of the line social service service agencies and then describe the social agencies which do advocacy work. The social agencies which do advocacy work however to interpret

the material conditions, which I will now describe in the same way as the line social service agencies.

### THE LIVED RELATION

I want to begin by drawing attention to the material conditions under which East Indians immigrate to Canada and some of the attendant material obligations, and in addition to some of the material conditions of East Indian immigrants in Vancouver which provide for and in part give form to the social relations which I will identify and explicate in the socially organized practices of social agencies.

#### A. Men Immigrate to Canada Alone in the Case of the Working Class

Men immigrate to Canada alone, in one of three circumstances; their family in India pays their fare and the immigrant comes to relatives or friends in Canada, relatives in Canada pay their fare the immigrant comes to live with the relatives, or employers sponsor immigrants (distant members of their family and acquaintances from their villages) who come to work in their business and normally live with friends or distant relatives at least. The latter instance is not common at present; the other two examples are the general pattern for immigrants who are from rural or newly urban families, in India.\*

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\* My concern here is to give a general understanding of the situation from which immigrants come. The bibliography has references which give more complete descriptions of the process.

This description is in part drawn from my field work although it is not in every aspect grounded in my field work. For purposes of brevity I have not included extensive field notes in this section. The points are supported however in accounts that individuals gave me which are quoted from at length in other parts of this work. Part of this description is also drawn from information gathered from interviews with immigration officials and unofficial immigration reports which I will not quote for reasons of confidentiality and anonymity, which I assured informants of in my interviews with them.

The family makes the investment in the son on the understanding that he will improve the standard of living of the family in India, with part of his income from Canada and/or will bring other members of the family to Canada as he is able. When the immigrant arrives in Canada he is supported by his relatives or friends until he is settled. This is both a legal obligation if they have sponsored him under the Immigration Laws and a financial necessity as a result of the family's financial situation (in India) and the Indian Immigration Laws which restrict the amount of money that can be taken out of the country. The immigrant then comes with a set of material obligation to his family, and initially relies upon relatives who are committed to support him.

When the new immigrant joins his relatives in Canada, he is taken care of as a male member of the family, which means that he is not responsible for any housekeeping, cleaning, cooking or care of his clothes. The male member(s) of the family help him find a job and introduce him to other East Indians in Vancouver. As well male members of the family and male friends whom he has met, help him to learn to get around, teach him to drive, and teach some English and support him in situations where he has not learned enough English to get by. The man may live with the family until he marries or more recently may move into a rented house or apartment with other men in similar situations to himself, once he has a job and friends. While he is living with his relatives he is not obligated to contribute to the family income.

At his job and on the street he learns that "East Indians stick together". These are three examples, from my field notes, of how this is expressed:

I work in a gas station. Sometimes I work with one other person and we get along O.K. We're not friends. He says he doesn't like East Indians but he likes me. I don't see him outside of work. The people who come (to buy gas) are O.K. but you don't get to know them. Some make remarks but I just don't listen. They think I'm not as good as them.



We stick together at work. We eat together and don't both the rest of them. I've been told about fights but I haven't seen any. The other workers keep to themselves, they sometimes joke about 'Hindus' and stuff, but, well, I need my job.

I first came up against racism when my cousin's neighbour broke some windows in our house. We couldn't prove it was him but I know it was. His kid was always beating up on my cousin's son. We caught him once. I get yelled at by white, you know, at night, in pubs here and there.

A new immigrant's friends are other East Indian men in material situations similar to his and his family's and their friends'. Initially he meets friends through the family and at one of the temples, normally one of the Sikh temples.

When I first came I lived with my uncle. He took me to the temple and introduced me to people. People who could help me get a job and also I met other friends. After I had friends I didn't go there anymore except on special occasions. My friends and I live together, it is better than with my uncle because we used to have some problems. Now I go there to eat, visit, it's better.

As young men begin to have friends, a job and participation in social activities they begin to change. They may date women, drink and 'westernize' in other ways, (clothes, hair, etc.) As they get jobs and establish themselves financially they usually decide to get married.

#### B. Women come to Canada as Wives

Although East Indian immigrant men, in many of their practices have 'westernized', they usually marry women who are from India. The marriage is arranged in one of two ways; the man may go home to visit and meet women

his parents have chosen for him, marry in India, and bring his wife to Canada, or he will ask his family to choose a wife, pay her air fare to Canada, and they will marry here. In either situation women are dependent on their husbands for their support and for introducing them to their new home.

Women who immigrate as wives do not enter their marriages in the same way they would at home. Their families do not come with them and they are thus separated from family, friends and from situations with which they are familiar.

I didn't know what to expect. I certainly didn't think it would be like it is. I knew nothing when I came. Everything was new and different. (translated)

When wives arrive the couple may live with the husband's relatives for a short period of time until they arrange their own housing. New wives fit into the pattern of the household. It is often a strain, both for the family and for the woman. The new wife is not able to contribute to the housework in the way that she would in a similar situation at home.

In these situations the new man is in the lowest position in the family. She is subject to her husband who she does know very well and do the other women in the house. The work for the woman in the household is increased and in addition the family is not always able to meet the extra financial costs. Quarrels and disagreements arise. Women are often seen to cause the problems:

We live in our own house now and it is better. The women didn't get along that well. You know how women are.... well my brother-in-law and I got along fine, but the women couldn't work it out.

When the couple moves into their own house or apartment other problems arise. Any supports in learning how to manage a household, which were present formerly, are outside the immediate situation. The people she does know may not live close to her, but even if they live in the neighbourhood, she may not want to appear incompetent to manage her job. The house or apartment that she

moves into is not familiar and she has little control over how it will be physically constructed. Outside her home she encounters problems shopping, taking buses, even walking on the street.

These are two examples of how women talked about this:

Taking busses? not very often. I would get lost. I don't speak English and I am afraid. I don't need to because my husband goes with me. Or my friend, she drives, we work together, she got me my job and we go to work together.

My husband did not want to go shopping with me after the first times, but I wanted him to. I can't get the money right and it is a long way to go. I can't drive the car and it is too far.

(translated)

Initial problems arise in the relationship when the wife is not able to do the housework and cooking properly. Men have trouble understanding why this is the case.

Sure it is different. But it is a lot better than at home. Much easier, faster, you don't have to spend so much time. There is less work.

Q. How do you know?

Well there is. She doesn't have anything to do compared to India. I shop with her, we do the washing at the laundromat. It is only six blocks but she won't go alone. That's O.K. But what have I got a wife for. To look after the house. If she can't do that, what good is she?

Q. Can you cook, clean?

Sure anyone can. Well I see what you mean, I haven't done it but I know I could. You're on the side of her I can tell.

Men for the most part have not ever been required to cook, clean, or care for the organization of the house. It is regarded as something women can do. He takes for granted that she can do that here as well as in India. He sees that there are differences but those differences are seen only as that "It is better here." Some of the differences are obvious to him: stoves, floors, refrigerators and so on. But the significance of this in terms of the organization of the work of the home is not apparent to him. He does not

have to decide how much detergent to use, what heat to have the burner on, how to make food with entirely different utensils with ingredients packaged and prepared differently.

Thus although the husband comes from the same setting as his wife he does not see what the problem is. He takes for granted the activities of managing of a house, in a similar way that a Canadian man would. He sees that the woman is incompetent, can't do her job. She is sometimes considered lazy, or stupid; she will not go out to do things which involve providing for the management of the home outside the house without him. This means that he must do more work than he used to. In part it seems O.K. At the same time he feels that she does not fit in very well. Quarrels often arise over the housework. Gradually they settle into a pattern of doing some things involving the managing of the household together. The result of course is that women then take for granted that their husbands will shop with them, will pay the bills, go to the laundromat with them, take them to the doctor when necessary and manage the money.

Thus wives initially at least are never in a situation where it is necessary for them to learn even "survival" English. In her home situation, all conversation is in Punjabi and even as the stores and laundromat become more familiar she is not necessarily willing or able to go alone. She does not as in the case of men, have women to 'orient' her, and support her in learning some basic English. Her dependence on her husband to help her accomplish her work then becomes a common feature of their lives. In time she ceases to be seen as incompetent, she learns how to manage inside her home perfectly well. However, she depends on her husband to bring into the home the things she needs to work with in it.

As a final note, I want to point out that the East Indian women's fear of going out alone is not ungrounded. Incidents of being accosted or disturbed on the street were frequently reported. The distance from shopping combined with not driving is a real barrier to her independent functioning in her household. Thus her dependence is one which is directly related to the material conditions in which she finds herself. As she doesn't use money for example she doesn't learn how to handle it. Her dependence in these ways determines her lack of independence in relation to her husband.

#### Husbands Have Two Standards

Men carry on two lives, once they have married. They retain their single friends and go out with them; they have their responsibilities to their wives. Their social activities are divided between their single friends and their relatives and married friends. Women do not have friends of their own (in the beginning at least) and are dependent on their husbands to introduce them to friends.

The recent immigrant wife finds herself alone a good deal, both during the time when her husband is working and when he is out with his single friends. Her situation gives her very little means with which to influence this situation. She cannot find him if she wants to reach him. She probably doesn't know where he might be. If she does and could telephone she might appear as a bad wife, checking up on her husband; more likely she does not know where he is and can't use the telephone. If she raises this with him she probably does not get a positive response. She is not seen as having the right to tell her husband what to do, or the right even to request that she be

informed of his plans and activities. She has few people to talk to about this. Normally she does not complain to her husband's family or friends, she would be seen as disloyal. Her own family are not here to help sort out the situation. Her own isolation in the home means that she cannot go out herself.

The East Indian immigrant woman enters the marriage on a much different basis than she would if she were in India. Although dowery arrangements are not as formal or as significant in the case of poor people as they are in the case of wealthier families, nevertheless her family would have established their daughter's contribution to the marriage. This would have been done in material contributions which would only be significant in the particular setting, and are not convertible into cash. This material basis however small is significant in India in establishing the place of a wife in her home. In addition her relation to her husband would have also been related to her own family in terms of the history of both their family's association, how they worked, what their position was in the community and so on. All these relations are altered in her new setting. Her family cannot act as a support to her in her 'adjustment' to her marriage. The family is not present to act as a control on the husband in his treatment of his wife, to explain her, to help in marital disputes and to provide help in organizing their relation to each other. At the same time in Canada relations between men and women are constituted in a more legal and abstract way (through socially organized practices), so the relations in Canada do not 'fill in' any of the missing links about how to reorganize the relations. Rather her reaction to her husband is organized for her, by the social relations which are the socially organized practices of organizing her as an "East Indian immigrant women; and as a member of the "East Indian Community" the material conditions of her life determine her relation to her husband.

## Socially Organized Practices of Social Services Agencies

Line workers in social service agencies responsible for the delivery of social services to East Indian immigrants, have difficulty in providing assistance to East Indian immigrant families who are referred to them for assistance by one or other of the line workers in other social institutions (police officers, teachers, school counsellors or other social workers), or by individuals acting as advocates for immigrants in particular difficulties. This is a serious difficulty, when East Indian immigrants, as immigrants, are not eligible for the majority of the statutory services,\* which include direct financial assistance of a variety of kinds and in varying amounts, depending on the particular circumstances of the individual or family, and services to the family or individuals in the family which are paid for by the government department, which include homemakers (women who go into a home and assist a woman with housework and teach her how to do it), day care allowances, special individual tutoring for children with special learning problems, etc.

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\*Technically, by the way, under the present law, immigrants, if they meet the financial qualifications, are eligible for financial assistance at least, but actually accomplishing this for an individual requires a social worker to enforce the law, in contradiction to the informal policy, in the department of Human Resources in British Columbia. The British Columbia statutes read to the effect (I paraphrase here) that all persons, who meet the financial qualifications are eligible. The cost sharing arrangements, between the Federal Government and the Provincial Government do not allow financial assistance for persons who are immigrants to be cost shared with the Federal Government. It is this regulation of the cost sharing arrangements for financial assistance, which is used as the basis for the informal policy. The directive to supervisors of social works in this matter simply informs supervisors of this consideration in extending financial assistance benefits to immigrants.

Yet, these are precisely the material services which immigrants cannot afford and in some cases as will be demonstrated in the chapter on family relations, the financial assistance, which women or the family needs to change their material conditions. However the workers in social service agencies have been hired, in point of fact, to develop non-statutory services for immigrants to 'bridge the gap' in services for East Indian immigrants. (This applies both to workers in 'special line agencies' and to workers within regular line agencies hired to serve the East Indian community.) Thus workers in social service agencies are required to treat East Indian immigrants as different from Canadian citizens, at the same time deliver services to them. How this is accomplished now becomes the subject of our inquiry.

#### A. Social Service Agencies, A. General Account

I want to begin by providing a general account of the practices of social service agencies. The particular problem faced by agencies is that they must treat immigrants differently and at the same time deliver services to them. This problem will be taken up specifically after we examine the general case.

I am using the model that Smith used for mental illness in providing this account. (see Chapter II pp 31 and Smith, 1975) However, the information for the account comes from my field work and my own knowledge of social services. I will do this briefly, in order to locate the specific practices of the agencies in question.

In the first place the social service agency is part of an overall system of social services which is connected to both the provincial department of Human Resources and to the Department of Health and Welfare of the Government of Canada. The agencies are often directly connected to the



provincial department or in the case of Vancouver at present are part of a city-wide social service delivery system which operates directly under the legislation of the provincial government. The provincial and federal governments are connected through cost-sharing agreements for the payment of social services.

As part of this the Government of Canada places guidelines on the type and quantity of services which will be paid for by the government at this level. This has an influence upon the delivery of services at the provincial level as we have already seen. It influences specifically the services that the province will provide and in doing so influences the categories and organization of services in such a way that the delivery of services will 'fit' the federal guidelines.

The provincial government sets the regulations and policies for the delivery of social services in the agencies. These regulations and policies become the working practice of social workers and other social service workers in their daily work. These practices include specific procedures for determining the eligibility of potential recipients of services, record-keeping procedures to recode the relevant information with respect to recipients, information about the programs that have been given the recipient and what problems the individuals had which warranted these programs. There are files kept on individuals which record the work of social workers and other social service personnel as it relates to 'clients'. These files represent the work of the social service workers as well as develop a set of records through which the work and the services can be evaluated in terms of 'cost effectiveness' and 'usage' by government departments.

In addition an important part of a social service agency is the financial or accounts branch which is normally located outside the agency itself,

in a central office which services all agencies. The accounts branch prepares the financial assistance cheques for social service recipients and the salary cheques for employees as well as is in charge of other expenditures with respect to the operation of the service. The financial and accounting part of the social service delivery system is organized so that it can give a review of expenditures on request and at specific times during the year. In order for money to be issued for any purpose a set of procedures must be fulfilled which are part of the work procedures of all social service workers and financial workers as well as accountants and other financial officers. These procedures articulate the policy and regulations as well as the legislation to the budget and financial expenditures.

Social service workers all receive training. Some training is done in the office itself and other training is the professional training received by qualified social workers. This training prepares social workers for their day-to-day work in agency offices. It teaches workers to relate to individuals as 'clients' on the settings of offices and homes of clients when necessary. It teaches workers the assessment procedures for understanding the problems of individuals in terms of the legislation and in terms of the work of a social service agency.

As well the training helps workers develop the professional terminology which is part of the way in which clients are assessed and related to. This professional terminology is not unimportant to the conduct of the work. It is general and abstract and hence, as Smith points out, "independent of the particular, the individual, the idiosyncratic and the local." (Smith, 1975) This is part of the process where 'cases' are worked up, typified and cited in journals and textbooks as to 'handle' and understand the problems of clients. This is a continual process which is part of the work of the

profession itself. It develops and maintains standards for professional practice.

In the agencies this training and the procedures in the office itself come together to articulate the general abstract policy, procedure and social service theory to the individual client. The problems that the client is seen to have by the agency which refers them or that they themselves are seeking assistance with are worked up to fit the categories and work procedures themselves. When the problem cannot be categorized into the existing programs and procedures available, the 'case' becomes inactionable. Over time new categories and programs may be developed when the problem can be worked up and understood within the work and policy frame. This work is done by social service workers and evaluation experts who look at the operation of the agency. As well this work is done more generally by members of the departmental staff and by academics who study the society and conceptualize social phenomenon in such a way that they become actionable within the context of the categories and working practices of the state.

#### B. East Indian Immigrants Become Inactionable

East Indian immigrants have a series of difficulties in functioning in this society. These difficulties come to the attention of social service agencies in a variety of ways. When the members of an immigrant family come into contact with one of the social institutions it is probable that the working procedures of the institution are not equipped to deal with East Indian individuals who may not know how to relate to the institutional practices. This is common in terms of schools and in relation to the police in particular, but is also true in relation to Unemployment Insurance, The Workers'

Compensation Board and other agencies. It is common that these agencies refer individuals who have difficulty relating to their work practices to a social service agency. This arises for a number of reasons. In cases of the police, they are not equipped nor do they have the authority to deal with many of the calls that they receive with respect to East Indian families. They have a policy that in family disputes they try to get help in the form of counselling at least, for families in difficulty.

In some cases, although according to the records of social service agencies these are very few, individuals come to social service agencies with problems that they themselves have identified and are seeking assistance. Thus through numerous relationships with aspects of Canadian society, individuals are referred to or go to social service agencies. As I have suggested earlier, as a result of problems that regular agencies had in dealing with the individuals who were East Indian some special services have been set up.

The lived reality, that is the material difficulties of East Indian immigrants which arise directly out of their location in Canadian society is the problem that individuals bring to social service agencies. As I have already demonstrated, the statutory services, available to Canadian citizens are not available to immigrants. The problems then that are brought and could be met in some respects at least by statutory services are transformed through the practices of social service agencies themselves into something else. The material difficulties are transformed into problems of social adjustment caused by the different backgrounds, cultural and social values and traditions of East Indian immigrants as individuals. Here is an example of how the material difficulties, described earlier are described by a social service agency:

The major problems are family problems, relations with husbands' relatives, which can be a real problem, really social adjustment problems I guess. There are different social values, different backgrounds, younger children for example are a real problem for parents. The parents have trouble understanding that they are growing up in a different society.

In naming the family problems as problems of 'social adjustment' the worker is naming the relation between the state and East Indian working class families which is brought into being and exists in the socially organized practices of the agency itself as it organizes this social relation as a practical activity. Although none of my informants stated it explicitly, they were talking about East Indian working class families. This becomes clear in relation to the descriptions I have given and also in some of the elaboration provided in response to questions:

Yes, there are different situations in the community, but the ones we know are those with problems. Other families don't have the problems I guess. You know it is hard to generalize. People are not all in the same situation, but immigrants from the rural Punjab are those who have the most problems.

Women in particular are described by social service agencies as having the most problems. They are seen by social service agencies as having serious social problems as immigrants. These problems arise according to the social service agency, as a result of a conflict of social values and of a traditional understanding of relationships:

Women have been brought up in the culture to depend completely on their husbands and father. When a girl is growing up she is taken care of by her father until she marries. She is taught all her life that she will have her husband to take care of her, she expects it. When she comes here and finds that this is not the case, there are always problems. Her husband has been here before her and has become westernized. He drinks, has cut his hair and continues to go out with his single friends after he has married. Men have two standards, one for their wives and another for themselves. They think that they should be able to do whatever they wish and that their wives should stay home to look after the house and wait for them to come home. As well they expect women to work.

The woman will not expect to work outside the home. She often does not want to. She wants to do as she expected she would; look after the house and be looked after by her husband. When this does not

happen she feels that she is not being treated well, but there is not much for her to do about it.

In a traditional marriage women are very dependent on their husbands. It comes from how they are brought up.

Here is another account that a social worker gave:

Well East Indian women are very traditional, they really don't know what the country is all about. They tend to be quite isolated, they don't learn to speak English and they don't know their rights in this country. It is very difficult for them. Their husbands have two standards, one for their wives and one for themselves. This creates many family problems. Wives can't help their children at school and can't understand the changes in their children. It is hard for the children as well. They grow up in two worlds, one which is the one of their parents, the other the school, where the other kids are different and they want to be like them. There are really a lot of family problems which no one wants to recognize. People in the community think of families as close and supportive, this is just not so.

Let us contrast this with a woman's account of her own situation:

I had to learn everything when I came and that was not easy. We lived with my husband's relatives and it was hard because they all thought I was lazy, and did not want to learn. I was so ashamed that I didn't know anything. As we got money we moved into an apartment. Then it became really bad. My husband went out at night and I didn't even know when he would be back. He sometimes didn't come home.

One day he said that I should work. I did babysitting for a while, then I worked for a relative cleaning. I was afraid to go on buses, because once I got lost. So I walked two miles. My husband began to come home drunk and beat me. I was so sad. I wondered what would happen to me. Sometimes I would stay in bed and cry all day. But there was no one to tell and nothing to do. I couldn't go home, my brothers were not here to help me so I just learned.

My husband always goes shopping with me because I can't go alone. I can't get all the groceries home and in the beginning I couldn't count the money. I got a better job, washing dishes, but it was at night and I always had to ask my husband to pick me up, and he said that I was trying to keep him from going out. Then I got a job in the factory. It is much better, there are people to talk to and I am getting to know people. I wouldn't want my husband to know, but I like some of them a lot and they have taught me a lot of things. I like them better than my husband's relatives.

We have two children now and they stay with the relatives during

the day. It is a lot of work so I am tired. But I am going to try to take a language course, maybe in a year, so I can talk English. My husband beat me the last time I told him about it, but I'm going to find a way, sometime soon. It is just that I am always so tired. He says that I am lazy, won't work, but well I feel that I have learned a lot. But since I don't speak well and don't drive or have my own money, it is hard to do many things. (translated)

From the accounts of the social service workers, we see that East Indian women are characterized as traditional, dependent and in some sense backward. This dependency is attributed to her as a result of her background, her cultural background in this case. In the account the woman gives of her situation, she describes the practical activities that her husband must help her with if she is going to get them done. Her material circumstances as she has described them leave little time or opportunity for her to learn how to do these tasks. The combination of working, keeping her house and looking after her children takes up all her time. As well her husband clearly objects to her beginning to learn these things.

However, this material reality is not accounted for in the descriptions of social workers as a material difficulty arising out of her location in Canadian society, rather it is accounted for in her cultural upbringing. Thus aspects of a woman's material setting are attributed to her as an aspect of her character as a person. They are however first conceptualized as cultural background and attributed to her immigrant status, then seen as part of the traditional way in which East Indian immigrant women behave. Her problem is then seen as insoluble:

Women are traditional, but they are often badly abused by their husbands. The police are concerned, we are concerned, but there is not much to be done. The women can't leave home, they cannot manage. On occasions the police have got a woman to sign a complaint and have booked the husband. This is just not reasonable. We cannot really get help for these women.

If they qualify for programs, we can get them in sometimes, but as immigrants they qualify for very little. The husbands have so much control and women do not know their rights, and if they do, do not exercise their rights, so that the situation continues. Women just have to become more Canadian before we can help.

We do a lot of counselling. But given the situation we try to get the man to see the differences and how hard it is for his wife. We try to get him to see her situation. We also tell him that he is not allowed to beat his wife here, it is the law and the law here is different from India. They shrug most of the time and say it is his house. Probably the wife is beaten for coming to us.

We counsel women mostly. We try to tell them their rights and to help them adjust. As she is better in the house and understands more, usually her situation improves.

In this we can see that the agency in finding the problem insoluble supports the husband in his control over his wife. There is no administrative way in which they can enforce any change in his relations to his wife, thus they see the problem as insoluble. The wife is counselled to accommodate herself to her husband. There is no attempt to take her out of the situation. The implicit policy of the government department which is to keep families together, and to keep men in a position where he supports his wife is followed. If she is on welfare she is a burden on the state. She may very well qualify for welfare, but this is often not explored, except in desperate situations. In numerous situations, of course, women are told by the courts that they must go home to give their husbands another chance, when they make custody applications through the courts for custody of their children.

We find that 'social values' and different 'backgrounds' are the terms that describe the actual ways in which social workers transform material problems into problems which are inactionable within the social service agency. The activities however are not fully present in the activities of social workers in their day-to-day practices, but are part of their training and the development of conceptualizations by academics, which draw relations



between individuals and their 'backgrounds and cultures'. These relationships have already been drawn out in work previously done and are readily available for use by social workers.

If we return to the naming of material activities as social adjustment problems we can see that this is a socially constructed image, which put into practice in a social service agency becomes the construction of a problem as insoluble and inactionable.

Let us begin with some accounts of women learning to do practical things:

When I first came, I was very lonely and felt very strange. I didn't know my husband's family and did not know how to fit in. In my country it would be different. I would know the family a little and my family would be there, I knew how to work. Here I didn't know anything.

We moved into the home of his relatives. I couldn't do what I was told. I didn't know how to cook or clean or do anything. It's not that I didn't know but well I didn't know here. Stoves were not the same, the food was different....not different but making it was different.... When we went to the store I didn't know most of the things in it, and when we found the things we wanted to buy, they were, oh, I don't know. I think everyone thought I was no good, you know not a good wife, lazy. I would sit and wonder what to do, I would do it wrong. One day I washed the floor, I used a lot of Spic and Span. I'd seen my aunt do it. When it dried we couldn't lift our feet off the floor. Everyone laughed, me too, but for me it wasn't funny. I couldn't even wash floors!

The family was good, but we used to fight, over things around the house, or other things. It is better now that we live in our own house.

I was walking down the street and some boys started to follow me, call at me. They were laughing and I didn't know what they were saying. I couldn't remember where I was going or what I was doing. My sister-in-law told me that men were bad here and I didn't know what would happen to me. I wanted to go home. I lost my place. No one could understand me or help me. After that I didn't go out alone. At first I did go to a store near my house, but now my husband and I go shopping together to supermarkets.

The 'social adjustment problem' arises in the relation between a woman who has the status of an immigrant and an agency who has the job of

accomodating her to the society in which she is now located. She must be accomodated however in a very special way. She must not receive the same assistance that Canadian citizens receive, but she must be given services. What follows then is what we have discussed already.

The kind of assistance given women and men is counselling. Social service workers go to the homes of individuals and visit neighbours of East Indian families to attempt to 'adjust' individuals who are East Indian to the society and to explain East Indian persons to people that they come into contact with and encounter difficulty in relating to. The assessment that is given is as I have outlined it. Social service agencies try to get East Indian individuals to change and accomodate themselves to the schools and police, the laws and the practices of other agencies. In doing this they find themselves in conflict with some of the practices of the established leadership and the established communications system in the community. Thus agencies often feel that they must struggle with the 'traditional patterns of the community' which mean that East Indian immigrants may be suspicious of agencies. The agency feels that this suspicion is related to the lack of experience that individuals have with modern social services.

This explanation is one which is difficult to fully assess on the basis of my data. However individuals did report that they felt that agencies betrayed them on occasions and that they (the agencies) were not really interested in the problems. Examples of this included occasions when individuals went to inquire about matters relating to immigration status. They did not want to go directly to immigration, because they were concerned that they might have difficulty or might have broken some of the rules. When they went to the social service agency they found that they were seen immediately by an immigration officer who was part of the agency. Other examples included

lack of assistance of any kind when they went for help and referral to several agencies for assistance which took them out of their areas of competence in terms of language and knowledge of situations.

Agencies did express concern that individuals were not integrating well into Canadian society. They did see that aspects of their own work had some part in preventing this integration. However, they saw the isolation of East Indian individuals into an ethnic community as a matter of personal preference. In general they accounted for this preference as the problems of adjustment between two cultures:

People have trouble adjusting to Canada, particularly if they are poor and have come from poor backgrounds. But many of them don't want to change and choose to have only friends from their own groups. Often it is from the former links in India.

Women in these situations do not have family and they must get along with the husband's family. In terms of the work that they do often they have trouble learning it. It is so different here. With neighbours, we try to get people to cooperate. Like we go and talk to all concerned. We tell East Indians that they ought to conform to standards of Canadian yards, etc. So that they should mow their lawns and not throw garbage in their back yards. People do cooperate.

Education, the ways in which men and women have been taught to live and conduct their activities are different in India. It is seen that immigrants do not have the same experiences as individuals brought up in Canada. The different education and experience are then seen as problems of background, which cause the inability to manage practical activities in Canada. It is true of course that individuals do not know how to do things in Canada. It is also true that their training fits them to function in another setting. However, the fact remains that women do not know how to use an electric stove because they do not know how, they have never been taught. It is not because of her background. Background, meaning her past experience is attributed to her as a part of her personality, part of her 'self', which

prevents her from being socially adjusted.

Thus, agencies feel that the community remains very much intact and homogenous as a result of the preferences of individuals. The problems arise out of the differences in circumstances and the traditions which East Indians are trying to hang onto in this country.

People would be better off if they were part of Canada like other Canadians. Their cultural traditions are not a problem then. But with the community, they don't learn anything, so they depend on gossip and rumour, never find out what the case is. For a long time people thought that they were not entitled to UIC or Welfare, or that it was a disgrace to take this. Gradually information is filtering in and we have more families receiving help who need it. But there are lots of families who really need help and are afraid to ask. This is traditional and a direct result of the closeness of the community. Leaders in the past have been misinformed and advised people badly in some cases. Not deliberately I don't think, but just because they didn't know either. That is changing, but it has been really hard.

Much of the discussion of the leadership and organizations of the community by agency personnel suggests that there is a competitive relation between the leadership and the agencies. The leadership has been the people who provided information to many individuals in the community over a long period of time. The agencies are attempting in some respects to take over some of the responsibilities that the leadership had in the past. Although this is not an open conflict as far as I could determine, it was clear that the agencies were trying to make the information available to the members of the community in a more official and authorized way than the leadership. The agencies were not challenging the leadership in terms of their political role, or their role in representing the community. However agencies did think that the leadership ought to understand the problems more and to see how the agencies worked to help people.

The community is in transition I think. There are many areas where the old organizations and ways of doing things are just not appropriate any longer. We are trying to get people to see the problems and not

say that there are none. Not all families have problems, but many do. This cannot be ignored nor treated as incidental because their lives are so much better here than in India.

When the leadership talks to government I think often they are out of touch. Not so much that they are wrong, but that they do not see the problems as they are.

Some of the problems that the agencies were concerned about in addition to the family situations were employment. The agencies were dealing with a number of cases with the Workers' Compensation Board and with particular employers. They described how they worked.

Well the Compensation Board thinks that Indians have a higher accident rate than other workers.

This may be true. They are not used to working with machinery, but also they have hard jobs. We try to explain both sides and go with people to the Board. That way at least people can try to understand each other.

In employer disputes, when there is no union, we try to make each side understand one another. This is the key. Usually things can be worked out. You see we get referrals from the schools, UIC, Workers' Compensation, VRB, and the Community Police Team. Most of our work is like that. We have to deal with this case by case and try to solve problems as they come.

The agencies were all concerned about the situation with women who were farm workers:

Yes women do work, but you probably know the situations in which they work. But they don't think it is so bad. They say that it is the money which is a help in the home and besides the work is not as bad as the conditions in India. When it is pointed out that this is Canada and things are different, they just shrug. You see I don't think that they will be able to improve their condition until they speak English. And learning that is a real problem. They think they don't have to know it, that they get along fine, if their children learn that is all that is important. With that kind of attitude, it is hard to convince them that it would be important to them.

Other problems were also described:

Work situations are also a problem, also tenant relations, neighbours, all those sorts of things. It is really the language problem that is the root cause I think, because people don't know anything about the society and can't learn. They depend on rumour, on other people's

stories, on people who they respect, but who don't know what is going on, besides often the people that they ask don't want to tell them the right information, even if they knew it.

Q. What are the work problems that you deal with?

I guess the major problem is discrimination. But it is hard to know what is going on sometimes. Like when individuals have been discriminated against, they come to see everything from that point of view, and they react to little things which makes it difficult for them, I think.

But there are a lot of real problems too. People exploit on work permits, individuals who do not get their pay, employers who threaten to have people deported, which usually they can't, but people don't know. I think that East Indians are also a problem on the job often. Like they do favours for the boss so that they will get along and things like that, those all cause problems. It is a matter that things are not done here the same and people don't understand.

However, although there was considerable concern and consciousness about the situation of East Indians, and a lot of knowledge about the community, and the lives of individuals, the agencies were not able to deal with these realities within their work practices.

### Advocacy Agencies

These agencies run on grants; the staff may in some cases have professional training, but for the most part the programs are staffed by individuals who have begun their work as 'concerned citizens', sometimes with university education, but no professional training. The staff is not well paid. They are paid salaries which the grant allows. The services performed by these agencies are often termed access services. The agencies attempt to provide individuals assistance with other agencies. They will fill in UIC forms, go to job interviews with clients if they have time, help with immigration problems, try to relate them to the appropriate agency. The agency has a mixed role, in part they are advocates for clients, in part they interpret policy of agencies to clients and help the client accomodate to the service.

The advocacy role invariably gets staff and the program into trouble with other agencies.

I went with one woman to the VRB offices to see about family court and getting welfare. I was not permitted into the interview because I was not a professional social worker. The worker persuaded the woman to go home and try again. After that there was nothing I could do, really. I asked the worker if the woman qualified for welfare and I was told that it was a confidential matter, I was not authorized to handle that information. We just can't deal with these people. The amount of time it took me to be told that I was no help, or was not qualified to help, made the situation impossible. Everyone will tell you that East Indians do not want welfare, it is a disgrace within the community, not many people are on welfare, all that. Well I think lots of people need it and they aren't given it. Workers talk women out of leaving their husbands, talk them out of applying. It is always implied that because they are immigrants they don't qualify. That isn't so, you know, but it is senseless to send people if they are just going to get the run around. As you can see we have trouble with some of the agencies.

The view of the formal agencies is different:

The people who work on grants are well meaning and are good at some things, but they are not qualified to do professional counselling. They don't have the training, they get too involved in the cases, too emotionally involved, they can't be objective. I think that they should do translation and referral, but often they come down here and want to tell us what clients need. That is our job. Also, they don't see the overall implications of things, women for example, can't exist without their husbands, not East Indian women at least.

The grants programs run into problems with UIC, Immigration, all kinds of agencies that they deal with on behalf of their clients:

UIC, that is another problem. They are so officious. They make all kinds of mistakes, they don't care. They won't want to know about people's problems.

On the other hand the grants programs also get people to accommodate themselves to the agencies that they have to deal with. An aspect of this is that the grant renewal often depends on evaluations from other agencies as well as community leaders. So that if agencies begin to complain about the operations that can be very serious in terms of grant renewal.

However, these groups do accommodate agencies as well. They redirect

clients if they know the policy will not be able to help them. They tell clients when there is no help for them. In this way they support the existing patterns.

The professional agency does mostly referral and community work. There is a multi-professional team, which works with schools, agencies and the police. Their work is professional and they interpret the community to the agencies and sort out problems with the schools, in families and with neighbours.

The view of the agencies about the community is one that we have seen before. The community is very traditional. People still have their old ways. I want to look at how the actual conditions that we talked about in the first sections are seen by agencies.

In these descriptions, the agencies demonstrate both how they understand the material problems and how they deal with them in the face of no material services being available to East Indian immigrants. The difficulties that they identify are also completely beyond their authority to assist with. Thus the problems are accounted for in other ways and are seen to be problems associated with individuals themselves. What is missing from their account is the relations the actual practices which bring these problems into being, as problems.

### Summary

As East Indian immigrants relate to the social service agencies, police and schools, the practices of treating them differently are developed within the work procedures of the agencies, police and schools. These procedures depend upon both the day-to-day implementation, but as well on the training of the individuals who implement the procedures. That is in the job of



articulating the general policy and procedure to the particular setting, in this case the East Indian community in Vancouver, the training of social workers and the work of intellectuals is significant in developing and providing conceptualization of problems or situations which fit them into the administrative bureaucratic framework.

## CHAPTER IV

### FAMILY RELATIONS IN THE EAST INDIAN COMMUNITY

#### Introduction

The practices of social institutions and government departments create the social construction of East Indian immigrants, as different from other individuals in the society. Their practices with respect to administering programs to East Indian immigrants are part of how the activities of East Indian immigrants are brought into being as an ethnic community. When you examine the community from the location of social institutions and government agencies you understand and see the community as homogenous and united by virtue of the backgrounds and preferences of individuals, you see that certain individuals in the community have problems fitting into the broader society as a result of their backgrounds and personal preferences, which both create the community and bring them into conflict with the individuals in the society and in the social institutions. They have these problems of "members" of the community are seen as arising from the fact that they do not follow the socially accepted practices of the society.

From this perspective the community does indeed appear in this way. However, understanding the community in this way, arises as we have seen, out of socially organized practices which bring this into being. At the same time these practices create a veil over the class division in the community itself. That is these practices conceal the internal organization of the

community by concentrating on new "members" are differentiated from the rest of society, that is on their ethnicity and their cultural similarity to each other which arises out of their country of origin.

When you begin to focus not on the ethnic community as different from the rest of the society and not on the cultural similarities of individuals within the community, but on the difference between individuals within the community, a class division becomes visible. I am going to look at the differences in families' material circumstances and family relations to make this visible to you. This material difference arises out of the different relation of East Indian families to the labour market. The material difference is I argue consequential to the material security of the family and the family relations themselves.

The class division also becomes visible in the relations between men and women and in the relation of parents to their children. The difference in these relations arise out of the different relation to the social institutions, including the school, social agencies, the police and government departments. The difference in these relations is consequential for women in their location in relation to and subject to men in the family. The differences in the relations between the family and the social insdstitutions is consequential for children in relation to their parents as well as for the organization of the home itself.

#### Family Relations In The East Indian Community

East Indian families are very, very close. They are really the core of the community. The family is the most important part of the lives of individuals. They love their children, men are very caring about their wives and they care for parents with concern and love. Really the families are not transient as in the case of Canadian families. They really hold together.

We are increasingly concerned about East Indian families. We feel there is increasing family violence particularly toward wives.

Children are a constant disappointment to their families and are often ashamed of their uneducated parents. Men often have two standards which is really a problem with wives who are new here. Men are often discouraged and demoralized as a result of their work situation and take it out on their families. The worst part of this situation is that people don't want to admit this is a problem. (Drawn from interviews with Social Service workers)

There are two distinct sets of family relationships in the East Indian community; those of business and professional families and those of families where men and women work in service and labouring jobs. In this description I want to draw out the differences and expand in some detail on the families where men and women have working class jobs. Thus I will describe four family situations.

Three situations are families in the working class, where men work in industrial and services jobs and where in two cases women work outside the home. The fourth family situation is drawn from families who are not in the working class, but who gain their income from professional jobs or as owners of businesses.

The fourth family situation provides a contrast to the other three. The contrast points out how the descriptions given me by many informants were descriptions of working class families, although in no case did informants make this explicit in the interview itself. When I first interviewed a professional family, after I had completed the working class interviews, I was struck by the enormous differences between the two family situations. These differences included the physical surroundings, the family relationships, and the relationships that the family had with the school, community organizations, government agencies, and business. This directly observable difference became a matter for considerable investigation. At first I named it simply a class difference, but as I worked on the problem I began to see its implications in a way I had not before understood. I began to see class not as a

category, but as an organized social relation as I have described earlier. (Chapter 11, pp 37).

In each of the family situations I have focussed on the position of women in the family and how the relations between her husband, her children and herself are arranged. Jobs, schools, religion and social life are all background to the family. These descriptions are intended as a base from which we can proceed to examine how these relations arise.

#### Families Where Women Do Not Work Outside the Home

In families where the husband's job is more or less permanent by virtue of seniority and other job protection, and where the wage is sufficient to pay for the family's needs, women in the working class do not work outside the home. East Indian men normally have jobs in the forest industry in this case. Families in this situation normally have been in Canada more than ten years and have children in the upper grades at school. The man speaks English well enough to manage at work and to handle his financial affairs in English. He is not necessarily fluent but for ordinary purposes of his daily life he is literate in English. His wife will speak little or no English. English is taught in Indian schools only after the fifth grade, so in many cases people who come from the Punjab have no or very little English in their education. They will own their own home, normally an older home in south east Vancouver and will have some savings.

We came to Canada in the fifties, and my husband came first and I followed after he had made a start. It was very difficult at first because there was a lot of unemployment and my husband was out of work a lot. I haven't learned to speak English, there just was no time nor opportunity, nor reason really I guess. I look after the house and I don't work. I did a while ago, but it was hard and my husband said we didn't need the money really so I didn't do it anymore. (Translated)

The family unit consists of the wife, husband and children. In some cases one or other parents live with them permanently, but more often both the husband and wife have parents for lengthy visits (six months or a year), which they finance. Frequently the family is responsible for relatives, who are recent immigrants, but again this is normally for only a year or perhaps two years at any one time. Thus the size of the family unit and the number of individuals supported on the wage varies from year to year.

We have been able to bring both our parents here on visits and we have been back once. Neither of our parents came here permanently. I think I would like it but it is hard for them and also sending money home makes more sense in many ways. It goes farther and our parents can live comfortably with other parts of the family. My nephew came here and now is married and several of my husband's relatives have come. They have lived with us from time to time. I am happy that we have been able to help others get settled here, but it has been a lot of work for me and my husband. (translated)

Wives manage the house, cooking, cleaning and caring for everyone who is in the home. If other women are in the home they are expected to work in the home under the direction of the wife unless it is either of their mothers or her husband's older sister. In most instances of immigrant relatives, they are men so that the work for the most part falls on the 'woman of the house'. Women do all the laundry, mending and sew their own clothes and often some clothes for the children. In cases where there is a young immigrant woman in the house (usually for very short periods of time) she is also responsible for orienting her in new ways of managing the house.

The work I do? Well you must know. Cleaning, cooking, sewing and all that. No. My husband does not help. The house is my job. He does shop with me and we buy most of the things together. But I do the housework, he earns money.

Q. Is it hard being in the house all the time and not going out?

Well, yes sometimes, but I found that it was harder to go out. I didn't like it. I mean I don't speak English and that is difficult when others don't speak Pubjabi. But I do go out with my husband

to visit friends, sometimes to celebrations for weddings, those things. And I always go out for shopping. (Translated)

The house has a washing machine and dryer, electrical appliances so that the wife is not required to go out to do the washing and has a convenient kitchen. The house is modestly furnished, often with furniture bought when the house was first set up. If there are carpets, they are inexpensive and there is not a great deal of decoration in the form of ornaments or paintings in the house. The house is as it was built, with few renovations. The yard is tidy, well kept, but not elaborate in terms of landscaping or gardens.

Women in these situations do not drive cars nor do they manage the money for the house or the family. Shopping is done with the husband. She will rarely go out alone, except if she has friends who live very close to her. For the most part, she only leaves the house with her husband, and has no friends whom her husband does not also know. She has no Canadian friends.

No, I don't have Canadian friends. It is not possible. I'm not sure that I want to. I do sometimes think that I would have liked to be in India, maybe we will go back for our old age, I don't know. Here there are other things. But it is not the same.

Q. Can I ask who handles the money?

My husband. He is better at it than I am.

Q. What would have happened in India?

It would be different. But everything is different.

The husband has friends whom he has met at work. They are almost exclusively East Indian. He may be active in his union, in which case he knows some non-East Indian workers in this context. Occasionally he and his family may attend a union function which is also attended by non-East Indian workers and their families, but this will probably be the limit to his connection socially with non-East Indians. Men usually have other members of their family in Vancouver. These are brothers, cousins or uncles, who

also have families who are also the personal friends of the family. Beyond this there are personal friends from work and this is usually the limit of both the husband and wife's social life. It is not usually that the wife has permanent family here except if her parents are here.

Our friends? Well my husband's relatives, and some people he has worked with for a long time. That is all. We have friends at home too, but we of course don't see them. We do if we visit.

Q. Do you have friends of your own?

Yes, these people are my friends, but you mean different, no, not really, one woman lives close and I visit her sometimes during the day. But her husband knows us too and we visit together. There is a lot to do in the house and I usually go out with my husband. We have family dinners, and that sort of thing. (Translated)

Participation in East Indian community organizations is infrequent. The family participated in and holds activities at one of the Sikh temples on special occasions, weddings, family events, etc. They however do not participate in the leadership of the temple except in infrequent cases where they are very orthodox in their religious practices, in which cases they may participate in the more 'traditional' temple.

I know that lots of people say that the 11th Avenue Temple involves more working class people. It is supported by some political elements that think that is so, and in some respects I guess this is true, or used to be. But really I think it is a figment of people's imagination. That temple is the same as the other, just the issues are different, and they keep some of the traditions, that others are embarrassed by, because they think that they are not in keeping with Canada.

The other temple is different, but it is politics too. There are kingmakers behind the leaders and those people are bought by the big people. Bought in one way or another, with friendships, jobs, all sorts of things. (Translated)

There are other organizations in the community, literary clubs, women's groups, and business clubs, but it is unusual for men or women in these situations to participate. At the same time men and women do not organize



their own formal social or cultural organizations.

Some of the organizations I have just learned about from you. I don't belong to any of them and neither do any of the people I know. They are not organizations for us. They are for people who have time and money to do that sort of thing. I don't know what they are for. I think that those people need something to do, they don't work and so they have to find other things. That is the way I see it anyway.

(Translated)

Some members of organizations reported that they wanted to broaden and increase their membership.

We really want to get more women involved in our group. But it is difficult because their husbands don't want them to do anything that distracts from their work. In one case a woman who I have been trying to encourage to join asked her husband and he said that she didn't have time. She had to learn English and get a job, after that she could think about other things. That is the case in many situations. In others, the women just don't think they can go out by themselves. I mean without their husbands.

English is not spoken in the home except in the case of an English speaking visitor, such a visitor speaks to the man. The woman is not present except to serve tea or a meal. Children do not learn English until they go to school, and are often in special classes or held back in their grades as a result of the school being conducted in English. The relation between the children and their mother and father is altered as a result of the child's participation at school.

The children have trouble at school. At first I didn't know about it, but when the teacher came I did. The children are not good at school. I don't know what to do, the teachers say that it is because of our home. I don't know. I think if they learn English and other things to get a job that is enough. They don't like school and don't want to go. It is hard to get them to go. Sometimes I just let them stay home.

The school takes for granted that children will come with certain skills and knowledge of how to behave and certain understandings of the place in which they live.

Children from East Indian families have difficulty adjusting. Thus they do not develop skills as quickly as other children. This places them at a disadvantage as you know.

The child is likely to have difficulty at school not only as a result of the language problem, but as a result of relations with other students and inability to meet the expectations of teachers. East Indian children do not fit these expectations. As children learn to fit into the school, they fit less well into the family. They often are ashamed of their parents, seeing them as different. Their mother cannot relate to the school at all unless there is a teacher or community liaison worker who speaks Punjabi. The child's relation to her mother is altered in that they no longer share the same world and the world of the child is very much different than her mother's. Children will often not listen to their mothers, thinking that they are strange, an embarrassment or an ignorant person.

I think that schools here are wrong. They want the children to do all things at school. If they do that what can they do at home? My children were good before they went to school, now they are different. I don't like the school. I will be glad when they are finished, when they can work and not bother with that.

Look, my parents are immigrants. Now I see their problems and the things they face, and what I face too. But three, even two years ago, I wouldn't go on a bus with my mom, I was ashamed of her, I didn't want to be seen with her. My dad too, but less so. We used to really fight with each other and I know my mother was really hurt. I think that she actually understood, but it was hard. Now that I am working it is different.

In later years at school, young adults often confront isolation and ridicule at school. Young men are often in fights with other Canadian youngsters about being 'hindus' or 'ragheads'. As a result parents are often confronted with the police and the school. Neither parent is very well equipped to deal with these situations. Problems between children and parents often follow. The authority of parents, particularly the women, over their children is

eroded by the children's participation at school. This contributes to some of the most serious problems in families in this situation.

I dunno, my mom and dad, well.... They are different, and that makes me different. At school the whites don't like us and we don't like them. They call us ragheads and hindus. I took it long enough. Now some of the others and me take care of that.

The police are always around here. My parents try to keep me home because they came to see them about me. They think the police are right and I have to stay out of trouble. But they don't know what it is like, they don't know what; well just that. I can't stay home all the time the way they do and I can't just accept it the way that they tell me to.

In this family situation the women's responsibility and authority in the family tends to be confined within the home itself. She must primarily be concerned with the care of the needs of the family and care of any additions to the family for periods of time. Outside the home, even when shopping for groceries and other things for the home and her personal purchases, she must depend on her husband to assist her. Her husband makes all the financial decisions including travel and lending money to relatives for down payments on houses and other equipment to get new immigrants started. Not only does her husband earn the money, but he, for the most part, determines how the house is operated, while she works in it.

#### Families Where Women Work Inside The Community

Immigrants who have come within the last ten years have found that their economic situation is not as stable as that of immigrants who came earlier. Particularly in the last four years, well paid, secure work has not been available in the forest industry or in other labouring areas. Men have found work as labourers within the community or as janitorial workers, parking lot attendants, etc. in the regular labour force. In these situations women have more and more been required to work outside the home.

Families in these situations either rent or make payments on their newly acquired home. In either case the family has little control over where the house is located, or how convenient it is, either in location or in the interior organization. It is normal that their house payments are very high as a result of buying mortgages at high interest rates or that their rent is high. It is normal that the family has commitments to recent immigrants, who share their home and expect that the family will support them during their first year or so in Vancouver.

We rent this house and are hoping to buy, because the rent is so expensive, \$550.00. My nephew is here and his wife will come soon, so it is too crowded. But until we have more money that is not possible. If I can borrow the money, I think that our payments would be the same, but the house would be mine.

(Translated)

The house is not well or conveniently equipped. It does not have a recent model stove, fridge, and labour saving devices like vacuums, washer and dryer.

When you ask me about these things some of them I have only seen. I don't use them in my house, some of my relatives have them, but I don't, maybe sometime later. But I don't know how to use a vacuum. My husband wants them, but I don't know.

(Translated)

If the family has already invested in these things it may be that they have bought them on credit, which increases their financial commitment. In any case, the house is an older house without the easy care features of recently built houses. Thus care and upkeep is both hard work and time-consuming. Seldom are there people to help the wife, since relatives who are recent immigrants are young men. If the recent immigrant also has a wife there will be some help with the housework, but this means that there is an extra person to be supported.

How long I work in the house? All day. I never thought about how long it takes. It takes all day. Now that my niece is here she works with me. She cleans and I cook and cleans. But she will be glad to have her own house, and then I will do it all as before.

In these cases where immigrant women speak no English it is very difficult for them to get a job outside the home unless their own language is sufficient for the job. Jobs like this are available within the East Indian business community. Women can get jobs as farm workers, janitorial workers, chambermaids in hostels and motels owned by members of the community, babysitters and houseworkers.

I babysit for a friend of mine while she works. It is easier than the work that I did before. It means that I can be at home and don't have to travel far to work.

(Translated)

Much of this work is seasonal and all is very low paid.

I clean rooms. I can do that during the day and be home to clean the house and make meals before my husband comes home. Before I was working at night and I was always tired.

I work in the fields in the summer. I have for two summers and I will this summer too. It is the work that I can get. I can help with the costs and I get out with other people. It is not as hard as in India.

Getting the work depends on knowing someone who can put you in contact with employers. There are always large numbers of people available to do the work so that a contact person is very important initially to get the job.

I got the job through a friend of mine who was working there. It pays better than what I used to do. I know that you think that it is too little, but it is hard to get jobs and they do not think that we are worth more. They can always hire someone else. So I guess they are right.

(Translated)

Some of the work is organized by labour contractors who pay the workers and sell their labour to farmers for a higher hourly wage than the workers receive. In return for the portion of the worker's salary, the labour

contractor gives them a job and transports them to the farm to work. The work involves very long hours and poor working conditions. Although the pay is low, women working in these jobs add much needed income to the family. Men are often doing similar work to the women and as well may work at several part-time jobs in the service area. In this way a family income is brought together. The family thus tries to meet its commitments to house payments, or rents, grocery bills, heat, light and to furnishing the house; as well they try to keep commitments to relatives and try to begin to save some money.

Having the women working outside the home places a lot of stress on the family, particularly on the relationship between the husband and wife. She is not able to keep the house as she is expected to, and the man finds that either he must help with the household work or it does not get done. This creates resentments and arguments. When there are parents or other immigrants in the house it becomes hard to manage both organizationally and financially.

I think that the man should do some of the work and that some of the others should pay for some of the things. Others do you know. My friend says that she has got her husband to do some of the work and that some of the pay that their relatives get goes to the house. But my husband thinks that she is lying. He says her husband says she is lying. I don't know, but I don't see that we should pay for everything and I can't do all the work. My husband complains a lot about this and we fight a lot about this. (Translated)

The husband is not able to show off his wife and home in the way he might expect to. She is not an ideal wife and he finds himself doing unheard of work, caring for children, cleaning, cooking. It seems to him that his wife is not really a competent person. She does not do her work in the house and just because she is working is no reason to let the house go.

My wife is lazy. I don't think that she knows how to keep house, look at it. It is always like this.

Q. But your wife works too....

Yes, but it is her job to keep the house. She only works eight hours. I work too and I can do my things. I don't see why she can't. I think it is because she is not used to it here. I hope it will change.

Q. What do you do?

I earn money, I take her shopping, take her to do the laundry, buy things. That is more than I had to do before. Getting married is more work and it is supposed to be less.

Q. Who says?

Well, that is how it is for most men. They can relax at home, have friends over, I can't, the work is never done, she says that she is tired. So I just go out.

On her part, the woman begins to feel that she is a servant in her own house. She works outside the house all day and when she comes home the men in the house are waiting for her to clean the kitchen and get dinner. It seems that the work will never end.

I am so tired sometimes I just cry. My husband doesn't understand. He is very angry because he says that I made his relatives unwelcome, made them leave. He thinks that I am lazy and that I can't work. I'm glad that the relatives left, it is less work. I guess I did make them leave, in some ways, by pressing on his wife, but she must work too.  
(Translated)

Both the husband and wife often find that it is not possible to manage the extended unit. They are not able to pay for individuals outside their own home. They must ask relatives to pay part of the household expenses, and help with the house. Recent immigrants have often had trouble getting jobs. This has meant that their ability to contribute to the family income or to move out of the house is very limited. Everyone seems trapped. Family quarrels arise out of many of these situations. Sometimes the police are called, which humiliates all concerned. Often the woman is placed under more pressure.

She is often seen as the centre of the problem; if she were doing her job, it would not be as much problem to be at home. In many ways she can see that this seems true, but, she is working because they need the money.

When all the relatives were here it was awful. Fights all the time. About money, how much work was or was not done, all those things, and they would bring up things about home, and drink. I hated it. I work and don't have the time to look after everyone. They had to go. My husband feels that I caused the fights and I think that if I could have been at home it would have been easier. One time the wife was cooking and put the electric kettle on the stove and ruined it. I was so mad. But when I think about it how would she know? But at the time I really fought with her. Those things. I was too tired to think about it.

Wormen working outside the home changes the family organization. Food must be quick to prepare. Things, like laundry that could be done outside the home when there was more time, must now be done in the home if it is at all possible to buy laundry appliances. The number of persons in the house must be limited or they must contribute to the family income or work in some way. Older parents may feel that their children are not taking care of them properly, younger immigrants may be resentful of the responsibilities placed upon them. Their priorities are to marry or meet commitments to relatives in India. Helping with the family finances in Canada was totally unexpected. Both the husband and wife feel that they are not able to fulfill what they see as responsibility, which makes them both feel very badly.

We don't have any relatives with us now. We had a lot before, but they have all moved into their own homes. That is much easier for us. My husband won't really ever feel right about it I guess because we did not take care of them as we should have, but we just didn't have the money or time, really. I feel badly because we don't get along so well even today, but I think that will change. I hope so anyway. (Translated)

The social life of the couple centers around the family, and friends that the husband has made. Sometimes in these situations the wife may make friends at work and the husbands may not know each other. Normally these



friends remain the wife's friends and she only sees them at work or occasionally over tea if they live in the same neighbourhood. Their participation in temple activities is confined to special occasions, and they rarely participate in the leadership of the temple or in any other organizations unless there happens to be a union at their place of work in which they might participate. For the most part the woman's social life is tied to her husband's.

Children in school have many of the same difficulties that were described in the earlier section. However, in a house with more people in it more individuals get involved, and children often get direction from many people all at once. If the school personnel or police visit as a result of school problems all members of the family counsel the child, and the parents in what should happen. Family quarrels often result over children.

The biggest problem with a house full of people is that the children have many parents. This is not a problem of ownership, really but rather a problem that relatives all participate in the problem. Then everyone thinks different things. Older relatives always think the school is right, they always think that the child is wrong. Everyone wants something different. At some point, I had to tell my husband that we had to decide alone. Everyone else was hurt.

Although the woman works outside the home, it is not the case that she has more control over her circumstances than women who do not work outside the home. Her job does not afford her the opportunity to learn English and does not provide her with experience for advancement. Problems at home increase and often the woman is blamed for the problem. She is sometimes beaten, forced to try to keep up the standards and to be a 'good' wife, to work full-time both in the house and outside the house. She does not manage the money for the house or in general for the family. Her own income is handled by her husband. She does not drive so that she and her husband normally shop together and she relies on him to take her to all appointments outside the home and to

work. She depends on her husband for her personal friendships and does not have friends of her own except on rare occasions.

I don't live that way now, but I did. I didn't go out and I didn't even have my own bank account, all my money went to my husband. I couldn't even count the money properly. I changed that and we are both happier for it, but many women are still in that situation, many of our friends.

The family relations are very strained over finances and the difficulties of organization and getting work done. The problems that arise in this context often bring women to social agencies for help, although usually women are quite fearful that their husbands should not find out. Fights among members of the family particularly over money have been quite serious in some cases and these situations have brought the family into contact with the police.

#### Families Where Women Work Out of the Community

When it is necessary for women to work outside the home those women who have some English or some work experience try to find work outside the community. Women in this situation may have learned some English at school in India or in classes for new Canadians in Vancouver. They may find out about jobs from someone in the community or may find out about jobs through a government agency. Through these channels, the woman works as a dishwasher, cook, worker in a cannery or garment factory, or a chambermaid. The wages for these jobs are usually better than jobs for women in the community, and sometimes there is some job security. However, over-all the pay is poor and working conditions are notoriously bad.

I learned a little English here, and I practise. I don't really need English for my job, but I need some English to get back and forth to work. I can tell you from my own experience, that it is impossible to work outside the community if you don't have some English. This

is because you are so frightened, not so much because you need it for the job. On my job all the people are Indian and we talk Punjabi to each other.

As in the former situation the organization of the home must change as result of the woman working. Many of the situations already described arise. The house is not kept in the manner that it would be if the woman were at home looking after it. Relatives and parents do not have the services that they would normally have and quarrels arise between husband and wife as a result. In addition, other problems arise. When the woman works outside the community she has more contact with the law and customs of the mainstream of the society. She may have a union in her place of work, she may learn about women's position from her fellow workers and she may make friends in her work place whom she may see outside the work hours. Other women give her support about her situation and she begins to consider that she wants to change her relation to her husband in a number of ways. For example, she wants to make a change in the financial arrangements, to have a say in what is bought with her money and in general what is bought for the house, and how the family's money is spent. She begins to have her own friends and to go out with them on occasion. She insists that her husband and relatives begin to do some of the work around the house. As well she begins to suggest that her husband cannot make commitments, financial and otherwise to friends and family without her participation.

I am learning a lot in my job, not just the job, but from other women. We have decided to do things differently. And I told my husband. He was very angry, but I am determined to change the situation. It is just not possible for me to do all the things I used to do. I want to do more like other Canadian women. I have enrolled in language classes and he doesn't know. He will be angry, saying I just want to get out of doing the housework. But that isn't true.

These tentative steps toward independence are usually resisted by

her husband. He often reacts violently.

It finally became too much for me, I would have bruises that I couldn't cover, cuts, all sorts of black eyes. I told him I would leave.

Q. What did you fight over?

It began before I started to work, when I first came. He drank, something men don't do in India, and he would go out with his friends and I would be at home and would not have anyone to talk to or have any idea of where he was or of what would happen to me if he didn't come home. One night that happened, he didn't come home. When he did I was so frightened that I told him how I felt. He said I was a bad wife and that I didn't know my place and other things, and he hit me. After that when he would come home he would always hit me and say that I was useless.

Q. What happened then?

I got a job. We needed the money and as well I was very lonely. That meant that I had some company and when I came home and did all the work I was too tired to care what he did. Then it was O.K. for a while.

Q. What did you do?

For work? I worked in fields. My husband knew someone who had that kind of work and I had done it at home.

Q. What then?

Well, I was pregnant and I couldn't work the next summer. My husband wanted the money and wanted me to work anyway. I said that I couldn't. It was just too much. Then it started again, also I was home and was lonely again. I used to go out for walks, but my husband caught me and also it was not always nice because boys and men would yell at me and I was afraid. He beat me and I just put up with it, he said he would send me home and I decided that anything was better than that, because it would be a terrible disgrace. So I just went ahead and put up with it. I just thought that I had a bad husband. So that was that. After I had the baby my husband wanted me to work and I did too. So I got a job, the one I have now. It is full time and I like it.

Q. What happened then?

Well, I listened to the women at work and some of them began to listen to other women. Canadian women. One woman who is my good friend now began to teach me some English. I had learned a bit and she encouraged me and helped me a lot. She told me

that I did not have to let my husband do those things.

Q. How did she know?

I told her. Also I would have bruises and she suspected. Then I told my husband, that he couldn't do that. He said he would send me home on a boat with animals. I told my friend that and she said that he couldn't do that and we would find out and she did find out and it was true that he couldn't do that. When I told him he really beat me. I couldn't go to work. I just about got fired. So my friend who came to my house said that it was enough and took me to her house and talked to the boss.

Q. But you are home now?

Yes, my husband went to my work and he found out where I was and he came over and threatened us. He hit my friend's husband. She called the police. But they didn't do anything except they told my husband that he could go to jail for hitting the man.

Q. Did you go home then?

No, but I couldn't stay with my friend for ever. We talked it over. My husband said that he would not hit me any more. My friend said that her husband had hit her and she had left and he stopped after that. We didn't know, but then you see I couldn't afford to pay for rent and food and all that, with the baby. So I decided to go back. But I will leave if he ever does that again.

She is seen to be ungrateful, a poor wife and not worthy of such a good home. He has become accustomed to making the decisions and to give them up seems to be a reduction in status. He had made all these decisions since he and his wife have come to Canada and he does not see why that should be changed. His relatives support him in his stance.

My wife went to the bank to open a bank account. They 'phone me and I told them no. I told her that I am the man and I will handle the money and will run the family.

Q. She makes money doesn't she?

Yes, but she is married to me. It is my house and my family.

Q. How is that the case if she pays for part of it?

Because I am the man. She is only thinking this because she works with those people who tell her wrong things. I talked with my

relative and we agree. That is it. And if she tries that again she will find out who is the man. (Translated in part)

As well he is probably concerned that his wife is working. Although they need the money and he sees that many Canadian women work, he is still uneasy about not supporting his wife and children himself. Further challenges to his place in the household are very problematic. However, the wife is in the situation where her husband may spend the money according to his priorities, rather than hers or their joint priorities. When she challenges this she is likely to be beaten. His family will not support her in her attempts to participate more in the household, or to be more independent in her friendships.

I know that my husband feels bad because I work. But it is necessary. He made me get a job in the first place. He says I can quit when we have the house paid for. But I don't want to quit now I want to get a better job. We are having trouble because I want him to do more work and I want a bank account or an account with him. He says no. I want to be able to spend money myself and I don't want him to buy whatever he wants. I had to go to work because he bought this big car. No more. His relatives 'phoned me and told me I was a bad wife, at first I felt bad, then I thought so what! They don't have to work to pay for the car.

Together they will have financial commitments to their mortgage, relatives and children. Too much disruption of the household makes everyone's life unbearable. The woman has no way to enforce her concern for change. Other matters are also pressing; the children may be having trouble at school, she does not see any way that she could possibly escape from the situation so she stays. Her relation with her husband is one which is a mixture of fear, love and hate. They relate to each other in a way that makes him the boss. Everything in her situation supports his authority.

I know that some women leave their husbands for things like this. At least some women have told me, but not East Indian women, they can't; it is too much. I can't at least.

Her English does not improve as a result of her job since often she finds herself working with other East Indian women who speak Punjabi to each other. She is not able to get a better job unless she is able to learn English and she has no time to go to classes. She depends on her husband to do the shopping with her since she does not drive and she depends on him to drive the children to the doctor, dentist, etc. A few experiences on the buses have taught her that it is not comfortable for East Indian women to walk on the street or take buses alone. There is no place for her except in her home. Her husband threatens to send her back to India if she does not continue to be a good wife. She sees no other choice.

#### Families Where Incomes Are Made In Professions and Business

When I first was in a home of a professional East Indian family I began to realize that the people that social workers and community leaders were talking about were the working class families.

In these East Indian families, the family relations are very different and problems that are a normal part of an individual's life in working class families do not arise. Women are not isolated from each other; they participate in social groups, work in professional, clerical and semi-professional jobs, organized households, manage money and own part of the family business. Women hold a place of authority in their households and a place of respect and authority in the community, at least among other women.

You think this home is different? Oh yes from others. Well I suppose it is, but then they are different. We really care about our home and have worked hard to make it nice. That is the difference. But it is not different from other Canadian homes really. Some of the art I suppose and some tastes.

But other than that, everyone has different tastes, some people have none.

Homes are modern, either new or renovated to the family's needs. They are equipped with the appliances found in other homes where families have comparable incomes. The homes are convenient and cared for more easily than homes without appliances like dishwashers, vacuum cleaners, washers, dryers, efficient new electric stoves which are self-cleaning. The houses don't require constant washing of walls to keep the kitchen looking nice; freezers allow food to be bought in advance and in large quantities and refrigerators are self-defrosting. The house is organized so that the living room is available for entertaining, it is decorated with art, furniture which is purchased for its appearance and good taste. There are private bedrooms for the children and a guest room. There are areas for the children to play and study.

Extended families do not live together except in cases where either of the couple's parents live with the family. Usually parents come for extended visits. Men will have close family in Vancouver and often they have business partnership or close business associations. It is not usual for the family to have recent immigrants living with them so that the size of the family is stable. Women are in a position to have paid help with their household work and often do, particularly when they work, their children are small or when there are guests in the house. The labour for paid housework is drawn from the East Indian immigrant community.

Both our parents have visited us, several times, for a few months. My parents are considering another visit, perhaps to come and stay.

Q. How will you organize that? Do you want them to come?

Yes, I would like it very much, although it would mean some differences. I guess I'm worried about who they would have as friends and what they would do. There are not too many old people here. They have money and they would like other members of the family to come and then we



could be together. My brother is here already and is married. What else?

Q. How would you organize it?

Well, they could live with my brother or with us. It would probably be with us for a number of reasons. My brother is just starting so there would not be enough room really. Also here there would not be enough room, we need a spare room and the house would have to be enlarged generally for more people. But we are thinking of building a new house anyway so that would be no problem. Anyway we have to see what is going to happen.

Their home is located in an area of Vancouver where other professional and business families live. Their neighbours will not necessarily be East Indians but will have interests in common with their neighbours and while they may not be close friends, the relations will normally be cordial. They will have a common interest in their property, landscaping, children's schools and the general conduct of the neighbourhood.

Yes, we know our neighbours, you know as neighbours do, hello in the yard and as we go out. The neighbours on the other side are very nice and we know them best. We have a drink together occasionally and the men do some business together I think. One of our other neighbours down the block is our children's doctor, but we see them rarely, we are too busy.

In older families, women may not do paid work outside the home, however, they will be active in social clubs which sponsor cultural events, in organizing temple events, (which varies a good deal in that not all families are Sikhs in this situation, they may also be Hindu or Ishmali), and in entertaining friends and the husband's business associates in their home. Women in this situation will often speak English as a result of their formal education. As well it is possible that they have been educated in English schools in India.

Younger women have also learned to speak English as part of their education. Often they have university degrees which may have been awarded in India and do not qualify them to do professional work in Canada. Thus

their job status and their educational level may not be matched as well as it might be in cases where women are university educated at a western university. Women educated in India are not as likely as their brothers to have been sent away to school in England or in North America. Women who have educations from India and who speak English often work in clerical or paraprofessional positions. This might be in the family business as a secretary, travel agent or store clerk, or in employment outside the community, but serving the community as a bank teller, health worker or paraprofessional social worker or receptionist in a government department or agency.

I have a B.A. from India, but I cannot count all of it here. So I am working in a bank. It is interesting and I like the people. It gets me out of the house. We really don't need the money but I like to have my own money. I worked before for my husband, but he didn't pay me and I decided that I should be paid. He laughs that I prefer to work for the bank and says that it was the best thing, now he has a competent staff. I tell him that is fine.

As well, young women who are educated in Canada to the level of secondary school graduation and have clerical training also hold clerical jobs. These women are the daughters of professional and business families. These women often have young families or are just getting married and participate in the same social organizations as the older women but have less authoritative positions in the organizations.

I work in a government office, it is only while we are getting started, when I have a family we probably won't need me to work. But right now I work, and it is good that I work where I do because when East Indians come in I can help them. Sometimes they don't know anything and don't bring anyone with them. Now more and more they don't bring anyone with them because I am there.

Women who are professionally educated either in India (and have upgraded credentials in Canada) or in Canada have been able to get jobs in agencies and

and projects which serve the East Indian community. They are able to help plan agencies and may also influence the services that are provided. The services that they work in may be looked upon with some suspicion by the leadership of the community and by the community at large, but they will hold a place as a trained professional and will be influential in the organizations of the community as well as in the office in which they work. Young women who complete university education in Canada do so in areas like teaching, social work, psychology, child care and sociology.

I teach in a special program for immigrant women. I went to university and graduated last year. It was really good, I had no trouble getting a job. It is necessary for people teaching in special programs to have the understanding of the community to help these people. I don't know their experience exactly, but I can understand it better.

Husbands in these families are either business or professional. They have built businesses from their base as worker immigrants many years ago in some cases, but in others, they have come to the country with capital and have started businesses on that basis. Others have entered businesses with the backing of established Canadian business. This applies in the insurance and real estate business, which has been increasingly important as there has been an increase in immigrants to Vancouver. There is also a more recent group of businessmen who are opening small businesses that are not exclusively directed to the East Indian community. These might be investments in retail outlets or larger franchising operations or independent grocery, furniture and hardware stores. Wives provide important labour for these small businesses.

Professional men in the community are located in law or medicine. I should note here that there are East Indians who live in Vancouver who are not part of the community. They have occupations and/or business that do

not relate to the community, and they do not participate in any of the community organizations. They are integrated into the society, in terms of friends, school, etc.

In the case of law a great deal of their work is done within the community or about the community, in terms of work for individuals and businesses. The medical professions are not as integrated into the community through their practices, but are nevertheless important in terms of the community organizations.

Children of these families complete high school and often go on to university. Young women work in the areas described earlier, and young men often enter their father's business and do so after taking professional training in business administration, law or a field related to the particular business that they are entering. Marriages are still arranged for children in many cases, however, this is not a rule any longer. Young men and women are changing in the Canadian context and their marriage arrangement will depend on their parents and their own wishes. Nevertheless, marriages normally take place among East Indian individuals, either by choice or by arrangement.

Our children do disappoint us in many ways. They don't hold to the traditions. Our daughter is dating a Canadian boy and her father and I would rather that she didn't. It is not that we don't like him, but we would be happier if she chose someone else. We don't think that she needs to marry someone we choose, but we would rather he be more acceptable.

The schools that children go to and the neighbourhoods that they live in are important in terms of their future careers as businessmen and professionals. It is significant that they go to schools that have strong academic programs and that they are given help and encouragement at home with respect to their studies. Their parents are able to meet with the school and are able to follow their progress and help in terms of problems

with teachers and other students, if they arise. Their mothers are able to participate in the activities of the school and see that they are appropriately dressed and gowned. The school does not cause a problem between parents and children as in the cases discussed earlier. In the first place parents know about the school and generally approve of the program and rules that the schools set for the children. As well they are concerned that their children fit well into the school and organize their home life so that this happens. The relations among children are different as well. In the neighbourhood, their parents know each other and the children's parents are not openly hostile toward each other. Kids get along better as well. Thus the kind of fights which arise in terms of children being referred to by their peers in a derogatory manner are much less and when they do arise, parents are very disapproving of the children's actions. East Indian children thus receive support for their different cultural identity and in the context of the schools they are likely to fit in for the most part the same as other children. They have probably learned English at home or at an early age at nursery school or in a child care arrangement.

The responsibilities of women for the household are very important in terms of the husband's position in the community. Their authority over the house is supported by their husbands and by the material realities of being quite independent in terms of managing the household, money, driving, meeting friends and managing the children's education. It is true that in all cases the woman may not earn money, but the arrangements for her support are made in a way that gives her a personal and household budget and decision-making authority over a definite part of the family affairs.

I have worked in my husband's business, but now it is too big, he needs full-time trained staff and I have other interests. The work for the family and my other things are enough. I think that there is more work than there used to be. We entertain more and we go out more and have more guests. That is all as a result of the business growing. I tell my husband that he is going to have to pay me a salary for all the entertaining we do.

Q. Does he pay you a salary?

No, I was only joking.

Q. How is the money organized then?

What do you mean? I have a bank account. I buy what I need. He puts money in. Actually it is both our accounts.

The family corresponds in most respects to Canadian families where men and women have similar jobs and incomes. There are differences in their social patterns and I speculate that there are also differences in business and friendship associations. The social differences center around the community of which the East Indian families are a part. Their friendships are with East Indian families who are in similar positions in the community. Also, family ties are close and provide a large number of close friendships as well as a family relationship. The business community have business associations separate from the regular Canadian business associations, but East Indians will belong to the regular business and professional associations as well. They have not, in the past at least, participated in the leadership of these organizations. East Indian businessmen do not belong to any of the business-social clubs which is a normal practice of successful Canadian businessmen. Their social life is in many ways parallel to the business life which is established in part within the East Indian community in most cases. It is not integrated into the social activities of Canadian families in similar positions, but is of the same character.

This description illustrates the class difference among members of the

community as it can be seen from the location of the family. It is visible in the relation of family members to one another, in the appearance of the house, in the facilities that are available in the house for its maintenance and in the relation that the family has to the government agencies and organizations with which members of the family come in contact. This division does not become visible when the community is examined from the location of community organizations, community leadership, common cultural characteristics or patterns of business association. From these conceptions the community does appear integrated and homogeneous. East Indian families do belong to community organizations and attend community events. They all frequently deal with businesses and professionals in the community itself. However the class division becomes visible to us when we focus on the organization of the family and the circumstances under which the family participates in the community. This is not available to be seen when we focus on the study of an ethnic community.

There is a distinct difference between the business family and the family of any of the first three descriptions. In the first three family situations one of the distinguishing features is the lack of control over their situation. This extends to uncertainty in income, the amount, how it will be made, whether an adequate income can be made at all; what kind of living accommodation the family can get, what kind of credit they can get given their job situation. It concerns how the family can understand and be understood by the school, social agencies, government programs like Unemployment Insurance, for example, and the police. Their relationships with their neighbours are uncertain and their ability to manage their affairs depends upon people who speak their language who also speak English and who are willing to help them.

Business and professional families in contrast have income which are not simply stable but increasing; their life time earnings will reach their peak in their later years. Men and women in blue collar jobs are not in that situation. The housing and credit that is available to a professional or business family provides them with the opportunity to have choices in their housing, which is consequential for the work that women do in the home and for what she is free to do outside the home. The relations to schools, social agencies and the police are not problematic with respect to language or the conduct of the home itself. These differences I am suggesting are class differences.

We can begin to see in the description that this is a process of organization. Men and women in the professional or business family are actively organizing their own lives. In their jobs they are active in organizing the lives of others, specifically, the lives of individuals in the three working class family situations. This is done through their position in the authorized agencies and organizations of the state and business. The position that they hold in authorized enterprises also provides them with the security, money and knowledge to organize their own lives, rather than having their lives organized for them.

These individuals stand in a bourgeois relation to one another. By this I mean that the real active process of organizing and being organized is one in which the class relation is one of having power and being powerless. This relation is not present in the structural sense in which Stolzman and Gamberg, and Robbins discuss it, as a context or framework within the activities of individuals proceed. Rather the actual activities of individuals, as they are given shape or form by their material circumstances produce the relations which we have caught a glimpse of in the description. Social



relations are not a context, but they are a real active process of individuals. The class relation is not a category, nor is it a context or framework, but it is an active relation, present in the particular activities and supported by individuals actively organizing this relation in their everyday lives.

In effect I am suggesting that their relation to schools, agencies, the police and the East Indian community organizes their family situations and their lives. I am going to suggest later that it is their ethnicity and their particular place in the immigration pattern that determines their relation to jobs.

In the professional and business family I am suggesting that their position allows them to organize their relation to the schools, social agencies, police and allows them to some extent to organize the community. They are able to organize the 'cultural' activities and form a business organization which serves the East Indian working class immigrants, because the immigrants are in the position that they are. The class division is constituted in the community and can be seen in the relations and organization of the family itself and in the relations of the family to institutions and business.

This is not fully developed in the description but begins to be visible. I now want to pull out parts of the description and examine them in relation to how they are understood in particular circumstances. Further I want to make visible the activities that lie behind the organization of the family as it appears in the descriptions. Our question then continues to be: how do the activities of individuals come to appear in the form that they are in, that is, as an ethnic community.

Summary

The class differences in the ethnic community are clearly visible in the family situation, family relations and in family organization. These differences arise as the individuals in the family relate to the labour force, but also as they relate to the social institutions as we have seen. In the next chapter, I will begin to look at the labour force situations of East Indian men and women.

## CHAPTER V

### LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION OF EAST INDIAN WORKERS

#### Introduction

The participation of individuals in the labour force gives form to their lives, apart from their work roles. I want to focus here on the organization of the labour force as an active process of organizing class relations, which is the basis for the working class. This is not to suggest however that the relations as organized in the family, the community and through the social agencies as I have and will discuss are not also active processes of class organization, they are.

The participation of East Indian immigrants in Vancouver in the labour force, is one which organizes their class position in relation to social production and organizes their location in the working class. East Indian workers are segregated in their participation in the labour force and are thus segregated within the class. This constitutes a division within the class which finds its basis, first in immigrant status of individuals and the material reality which that implies and secondly in the organization of the ethnic community as a distinct and different social organization within the society. In the labour force the ethnic basis of the segregation of the labour force are partially concealed under 'objective criteria' which employers have developed for defining and describing jobs, as well as hiring procedures and credential requirements which provide entry to jobs. (cf. Marsden, Smith, 1976, and Campbell, Cassin, 1977 on women.)

East Indian workers are segregated on the job through work organization itself and through the practices and procedures which are used for promotion. These procedures and practices involve the participation of Canadian workers and unions as well as employers. Thus members of the working class participate in the practices which organize the division within the working class. The basis for this participation lies within the organization of the workplace and the unions. It further lies within the identification of individuals, as East Indian immigrants, with particular characteristics and practices. This is accomplished through socially organized practices which bring East Indian immigrants and the East Indian community into being as different, and visible and is recognized by other workers in the actions of East Indians, with whom they come in contact.

#### Participation of East Indian Men in the Labour Force

East Indian immigrant men share with a small number of other immigrant groups, the lowest paid, least skilled and most insecure jobs in the labour force in Vancouver. East Indians are parking lot attendants, gas station attendants, clerks in all night grocery stores, workers in fast food outlets, janitors, and labourers. In the forest industry where they have formerly been able to find jobs, they work almost exclusively on the green chain in sawmills and shingle mills. They rarely hold jobs as tradesmen or as skilled workers.

With the present economic climate they are increasingly insecure in their jobs and often put their income together doing several part-time jobs or entering into janitorial contracts in which they use the labour of their family to fulfill the work provisions of the contract. I have already sketched how immigrants come to Canada, now I want to examine how they hold

these jobs on the labour market.

#### Access to Jobs in the Vancouver Labour Market

Access to jobs is governed by objective criteria in the form of qualifications and experience. These criteria set out educational and training qualifications as well as experience in particular work areas which are the minimum entry requirements for jobs. Essentially this means that the criteria must be met before an individual can be considered for the job in question. Increasingly these criteria are being used to define jobs. Thus both the availability of jobs and the entrance qualifications shape the jobs which are suitable to individuals.

East Indian Immigrants have very low formal education and few have job training or experience. In cases where they do have experience and/or job training, the credentials are not transferable to the Vancouver situation. Thus for many industrial and trades jobs, East Indians immediately do not qualify.

There are of course training programs offered in colleges by the Department of Manpower and programs which individuals can apply for themselves. These programs all have minimal literacy requirements which must be met for entry. Thus in order to qualify for entry into training programs which might in the end give access to well paid, secure, unionized jobs in the labour force, East Indian men must do both English training and upgrade their academic skills to the high school level.

If an individual is accepted for the Manpower Programs, which have assessments of potential, as well as certain requirements in terms of residency and immigration status, then he can go through the program on a training allowance, which might be as high as \$450.00 per month. The process would

take several years and entry into each step of the process is not assured. To face the prospect, of long years before earning adequate money, and no assurance of support to complete. The program, is often impossible. Particularly it is impossible in the face of the financial and moral commitments that immigrants have when they arrive, and the commitments which may be forced upon them with respect to the family they are living with. In addition of course, recent immigrants do not qualify for these programs and paying for them alone is simply out of the question. Gaining access to good jobs, through education even over a period of time is not feasible in terms of the life situation of recent immigrants.

Thus the situation is that he does not qualify for jobs on the basis of being willing to work, and the formal routes of meeting the qualifications and training criteria are practically not available to recent immigrants. This then means that the jobs which are (theoretically) available are those which do not have entrance requirements which do not take for granted a Canadian education and experience. These jobs correspond to the lowest paying least secure jobs in the economy. They are jobs which are learned while doing the job and often do not involve speaking English on the job. These jobs exist, in Vancouver, in parts of the service industry, and in labouring areas of industry.

#### The Community Provides Access To Jobs

Access to jobs is further limited to jobs where formal applications and interviews are not necessary. East Indian immigrants are not able to go to formal job interviews; the language problems, plus inexperience with the procedures are barriers to them feeling comfortable with the situation. In addition, when they come to Vancouver they probably normally will not be

looking for a job in this way.

I work in a gas station. When I first came I didn't know anything about finding a job. But my relatives introduced me to people and I met people at the temple. I got this job, because someone I met was also working here and they needed someone else, and he suggested me. I don't think I will stay too long, but it is job, and jobs are hard to get.

Jobs are regularly found in this way. Men meet other men who work and ask about getting their friends jobs at their own work place. Family and friends, put out the 'word' and help recent immigrants look for work. This means that the formal interview process is avoided and the application becomes a formality, which the man can be assisted with by friends or individuals in the place of work after the job arrangement has been made.

The organizations which do not have high qualifications and experience requirements often depend for employees on just those informal processes which are practised in the East Indian community. Normally gas stations would not have formal applications nor would they in most cases advertise their jobs formally in the paper. Thus the two processes fit together. East Indians already employed are able to help their families and acquaintances get jobs and the employers are provided with a steady supply of labour.

The informal 'contact' procedure of finding a job is general among East Indian immigrants. Sometimes individuals who are employed are able to ask their employers for work for their family and friends when there are job vacancies, and in other cases they are able to introduce their friends to foremen who have some influence in the hiring process. In other situations individuals, on occasion community leaders, are able to contact persons inside and outside the community who are able to make a job contact for them.

As well there are jobs within the community itself. As the East Indian business community grows there are jobs for East Indians in these businesses. In the past many East Indian workers were employed in the sawmills and related

businesses owned by East Indian businessmen. During the period of increased immigration, they ceased to be a numerically significant employer of East Indian immigrants, although these firms still employ almost exclusively East Indian labour. Other jobs exist in the community, farm work, (which more men are beginning to work at as they are unemployed or cannot find work), and service work in a variety of Ugandan and East Indian owned firms. Generally workers who are not able to get work in the regular job market are employed in these situations and in this way become a cheap labour supply for East Indian businessmen.

The majority of East Indian men, however are employed outside of the community. They gain their jobs through contacts in the community. Hiring in the forest industry, the British Columbia Railways and other employers of East Indian labourers has been done in the past in similar informal ways. These employers have become known as 'willing' to employ East Indian workers and this is held as common knowledge in the community.

These hiring procedures are part of industries that need a large labour supply that does not require a great deal of training and can provide work even for short periods of time. The employers depend on a cheap labour supply and usually on informal referral and hiring procedures. The East Indian employee does not see this however. He sees that he is fortunate to have a job. He sees that other jobs may not be available to them and feels that his friends have done him a favour and that the employer has done him a favour in hiring him. This then is an understanding that workers commonly bring with them to their work places.

#### A Cheap Labour Supply for East Indian Owned Businesses

East Indian workers, particularly those who are recent immigrants with



no English at all have special difficulty in finding work outside the community. They are often employed inside the community itself, in saw mills and associated businesses, in service jobs, and as farm workers (farm workers are mostly women and children, but in the past few years, there has been an increasing number of men who are unemployed or recently arrived in Vancouver who do this work). The relation of men in these positions, to the job market, is such that they have few other choices. Many of the employers pay very poor wages. The jobs are not covered by union contracts in most cases and as in the case of farm workers, are not covered in the provisions of minimum wage laws in B.C.

Workers in these jobs can do little about their working conditions or wages. The businesses that they are employed in are in some cases very competitive and might fold if wages were forced up. Whether or not this is the case this is a threat which is believed by employees. In addition there are usually more people who want the jobs than there are jobs to be done, so that workers know that they can and will be easily replaced. Finally workers would have trouble finding another job. Workers leave these situations as soon as they are able, but while they are in them, they do not try to change their conditions.

Look, once I was unemployed, I came back from the interior and had to take a job with a particular employer. I was asked to work for free Saturdays. I said I wouldn't that I was busy. This happened for three Saturdays. Then the fourth Saturday some of the guys came to get me, we joked around and I went and worked. I moved as soon as I could. But people they would say, 'he's O.K. (the employer), during the week we work for the union, Saturday we work for him. We got jobs!' But you couldn't do anything. They wouldn't admit it outside. That is the way it still works.

Unions that were interviewed reported problems in policing their contracts in East Indian owned businesses.

We have a real problem with those operations. You know all contracts have to be policed, and it is up to the membership to do so. All employers try to get away with things, it isn't just these employers, but these situations are particularly bad....

Q. What do you mean?

The pay provisions of the contract are routinely not met. Money is deducted or paid back to the employer under all sorts of made up excuses. But the blame is on both sides. The workers there don't believe the union I guess or they don't know the contract. So if we don't get grievances we don't, we can't do anything. But we know what goes on. It's just that we can't prove it and the workers won't help us.

The company practices which were reported included paying half-time for Saturday work, no payment for statutory holidays, laying workers off when machinery breaks down, and transferring workers to non-unionized jobs in companion companies owned by the same family. Workers felt that they would be fired if they submitted grievances to the union and this has been the experience of some workers.

Workers are not aware of how the labour laws and their own contracts work. They are dependent on someone to interpret it to them. Thus a number of things happen as a result of misinformation.

On a statutory holiday he did not pay us. I found out about it and told the others that we were to be paid. By the time we agreed to grieve a week had past and the grievance had to be made within a week. But mostly they are scared people there, they stay six months and move on, once they get into other businesses they see it can be different.

Employers saw the situation differently:

You don't understand these people like I do. You don't see where they come from, they are happy to work for me. Their wages are good, they can live better than they ever could back home.

Q. But I have been told that you pay very low wages and have been to the labour Relations Board on numerous occasions for various of your employer practices.

Oh they were just trouble makers who got mad at me and reported things. You see, you don't understand yet and we have been talking a long time. These people are peasants, they don't have anything like this at home. They don't expect more. I give them jobs, that

is something. They are satisfied, you expect more, so you wouldn't want to work here, well you'd have a hard time any way, but it is a free country, you get what you expect. They can go work somewhere else if they don't like it.

Q. But it is very difficult I understand, to get work and many people who work for you don't speak English.

So that is the way it is. It is not my fault, I can't take on those problems. I'm in business. I pay a fair wage, they can go back if they think they have it so bad, and I can tell you that you won't find them doing that!

Employment inside the community is a dependency relation where individuals do get jobs, but their wages and working conditions are poor. They provide cheap labour for the businesses. There are few other options, in the beginning at least, so that the situation continues in this way. The majority of East Indian immigrant men do not however work in the community, thus the community businessmen are not significant only as employers. The labour which the businessmen employs at a low price enables him to build a business, and become a community leader. As an employer he does not affect the majority of the East Indian population, as a community leader he does.

#### East Indian Workers Participation in Jobs in the 'Regular' Economy

In the jobs that East Indian workers get with non-East Indian employers, there is a cut-off point that East Indian workers do not get promoted past. Thus we see that after considerable periods of time East Indian workers are in the same positions that they were in as recent immigrants, they do not get promotions on jobs and they do not participate broadly in a range of jobs in the economy. We considered earlier the training possibilities and the matter of qualifications. Now I want to consider the work organization in two areas where East Indians men work, labouring jobs and service jobs. The data is gathered from workers, union officials and management. The labouring situations are in saw and shingle mills and railway labouring jobs. The

service jobs are wider ranging, janitors, gas station attendants, parking lot attendants, dishwashers, workers in restaurants and clerks in grocery stores. I have divided the work situations into labouring jobs and service jobs because the work organization in each is quite different.

#### East Indian Workers in Labouring Jobs

In sawmills workers are hired at a base rate on the green chain, which is the lowest paying job in the mill. East Indian workers have been hired as chain workers in mills and have stayed in this position. Their hiring has usually been through an individual who has talked to the foreman. Workers come on the job then not having had very much if any industrial experience and usually no union experience. They feel that they are fortunate to have the job and that the foreman and their friend has done them a favour to get the job for them. This initially gives the worker a concern to show that he is grateful for the job, that he can do a good job, and that he appreciates the opportunities that have been given him. This leads to trouble on the job:

I wanted the foreman to know that I was happy to have the job and that I would return the favour of hiring me. I would speak to him and do anything that I could to help. Then some of my friends told me not to do that. It made other workers angry. I didn't understand it for a long time.

This kind of behaviour is interpreted by non-East Indian workers in this way:

Yeh, well they're good workers for the boss. They'll do anything to keep the job, and they are sneaky about it to! A few years ago we had trouble with them doing overtime at base rate. They wouldn't admit it so we couldn't catch the company, but we told the guy to lay off. They just work for the money. It doesn't seem to matter. Now they don't suck up to the boss at work, but they do in other ways.

Q. Like what and how do you know?

Well, I can't prove anything, but one of the foremen got a color TV for Christmas one year a while back and some of 'em regularly put a

few dollars each payday in another guy's car window. I ain't seen it but I know it goes on.

Q. How do you know? What difference does it make?

You just know these things, if you work here. And it makes a lot of difference, it is bad for the work. We can't have suck holes on the job. They work good you know, I'm not saying that they don't, but boy do you have to watch 'em.

Workers do not always do these things particularly where there are elected union plant chairman and committeemen who are East Indian, who are concerned to explain the job and the union to workers when they come on the job. The view of East Indian workers as bad union members prevails in plants even though practices which are seen to be anti-union or anti-solidarity do not occur.

They work here, lots of them do, but they cannot be trusted.

Q. Why? I have been told that sometimes East Indian workers do things on the job which annoy other workers, like being too friendly with the foreman for example. Is that what you are talking about?

No, they don't do that. Just in general. They come to union meetings to vote, but for their own people. You never know what they will do. I may be prejudiced, but I just don't think that you can trust them, that is all.

On the job workers who are East Indian are separated from other workers. In the first place there is a language barrier and East Indian workers do not mix with other workers at lunch or over beer after work. In one mill there are two lunch rooms which separate the workers by informal agreement among the workers, in other situations, East Indian workers might eat in the mill and others in the lunch room. The significance of this is that they do not, with few exceptions, get to know each other personally.

East Indian workers then make no contact outside the East Indian community through their jobs. If anything they are re-routed back into the community as a result of their experience on their jobs:

On immigrants work in production. And I think we get the worst jobs. But you don't see Canadian workers in production. They have better jobs, tradesmen, get promotions if they begin in production. It is immigrants who produce and do the hard work.

Their friends may include East Indians who they have met at work, but it is likely that they will never talk to the other workers on the job. Their opinions of the other workers will be formed by incidents like the one described by a Canadian worker.

You mean Hindus. They work on the job. Funny lot they are. Always on edge. Sometimes we joke around, you know calling names and making fun. Everyone does. One day one of the guys was hasln' this young Hindu. He didn't realize he didn't speak any English, the guy's friends were real mad. I guess the young guy was scared. It was bad. I dunno, they don't seem to be bad guys to me, but how the hell would you know, can't talk to them. I personally don't think that they should be let in if they don't speak English. They just can't get along.

This separation in the work force also means that East Indian workers don't learn more English on the job. Thus they have little opportunity to move from their jobs or qualify for job training.

The separation of the work force extends to the actual work itself. Few East Indian workers work in any other part of the mill than the green chain. The jobs more senior to the green chain are gained as a result of seniority in the mill, that is the way in which workers qualify to work as a chipper, grader, etc. is through experience in the mill. Many East Indian workers have seniority but they have not been promoted. A union official and workers on the jobs said that East Indian workers did not bid on jobs, and thus did not get better jobs in the mill. One East Indian worker saw it this way: I asked him why East Indian workers did not hold skilled jobs in the mill he worked in:

There are lots of reasons. With some on the green chain, foremen don't think they are fit for jobs above the green chain. If someone applies they are put on a new job and the trainer is told to

make the worker scared. This makes the worker nervous, the trainer is insulting, this makes it difficult to learn.

Q. What does that mean to make him scared?

Well if the worker is learning to use the saws, or do some other work, the trainer will say that it is dangerous, will say that you can be hurt, will talk too fast so that the Indian will not know what is being said. Then he feels himself that he is not smart enough for the job. Management keep East Indian workers on the green chain because they work well and make money for the company. Other workers won't stay on the green chain. They know it is dangerous, the most dangerous job in the mill. The only jobs that require special training for East Indians are truck jobs. They don't know how to use them. But other than that all the jobs can be learned very quickly. But we are prevented from learning them. We are kept on the green chain. More skill is not needed. It isn't right to call it more skill. Workers never need more skill, they just have to work harder to produce more. On the green chain they always try to speed up the work, speed up the chain.

Q. You said earlier that you got new equipment, does that help the work?

New equipment gives an excuse to speed up production. You see scientists don't think how to make work better, they think how to improve production. It does sometimes help work a little bit, but mostly they try to lower wages when the work is made easier by machines or they try to get along with fewer men. Another thing is that they bring in other workers, immigrants from South America who are not conscious workers. They work harder, will do more overtime, get better jobs. They just want us for the green chain 'cause we work and we don't quit'. They can't get other workers to do that.

Another worker explained it this way:

When a worker has seniority he can apply for jobs that are open in other parts of the mill. I have been trying to get East Indian workers to apply. But they don't. We had a problem recently. The worker applied for the job but didn't get it. He grieved the decision and he was the most senior guy and they had to give it to him, but on the job he had a 60 day period before he had the job. In that time he could be removed if he was not competent. The other workers would not cooperate with him and so he was incompetent and he went back to his old job in three days. That makes a big impression on other workers.

Q. How is it decided who will get the promotions?

The management decides and clears it with the plant committee. They must agree, so you see this is also an on the job problem.

Q. Can't the Union do something about this?

Well the plant committee is the union. The local doesn't get involved unless there is a grievance and there is trouble around the grievance. The workers have to be responsible for the contract on the job. So if the workers on the committee agree with management and other workers don't want to work with the East Indians there is not much right now we can do.

Q. What is happening to change this?

Well the union officers are becoming more conscious of this, but it is a hard problem. To begin to be hard line would be divisive. Then the boss benefits.

Q. But doesn't the boss benefit the way it is?

Well yes, but other workers don't see that. They are not conscious enough yet. As everyone becomes more conscious it will change. But right now it is a problem and people are beginning to admit it.

Thus for the most part East Indians are not promoted on the job. This means that they receive the base rate in the mill and what increases are negotiated in the contract plus now the Cost of Living Increases (COLA). Contract increases are often percentage increases which have the effect of increasing the pay differentials between higher and lower paid workers. Thus effectively the lowest paid workers fall behind other workers in the mill year by year. The COLA increases have lessened this effect to some extent because they are across the board set increases. However, the fact remains that the lowest paid workers do not benefit as much from percentage increases as higher paid workers. This effectively holds East Indian workers in relatively the same economic position over time.

The job experience which workers in sawmills and in other labouring jobs get suits them only for other labouring jobs. As well if they change jobs they do not do so with seniority. Thus the job itself, gives access only to internal promotion, not access to better jobs in other parts of the



industry or in other firms on the basis of experience. Thus the workers are in many ways trapped in their jobs on the green chain.

The separation of workers on the job perpetuates the stereotypes of both East Indian and other workers and gives East Indians no access to friends or relationships outside of East Indian friends. As well the separation on the job is part of the hiring and promotion patterns on the job, which both management and unions participate in. Some of the comments of workers are directly discriminatory, but the practices are for the most part 'objective' practices of applying for jobs, seemingly matters of choice over who to eat lunch with and so on. These practices form a veneer over the on the job discrimination which prevents East Indian workers from being promoted within the industries they work in.

#### Service Jobs

Service jobs are for the most part dead end jobs to begin with. In a gas station for example, there are attendants, and if the station does repairs, a mechanic. Often the attendant does 'non-skilled' jobs around the station, changing oil in cars, doing small repairs and so on. The other person is the owner of the station. The only real promotion is to become an owner. To become a mechanic it is necessary to take training and an apprenticeship, which requires access to the apprenticeship training programs. The same situation applies to most restaurant jobs, to parking lot jobs and to clerks in grocery and other stores. The possibility of a worker earning and saving the capital to buy into a gas station franchise, or other business on the salary he earns in any of these jobs is quite remote. One man explained:

I don't know what I will do. The job only pays \$125.00/week, not much, but right now it is a job. I would like to get my own business but not on these wages. If the jobs open up I can get a better job and earn enough to buy a business. But right now I don't know.

Another family explained their problem:

I have three part-time jobs. I work down the streets nights at the Seven/Eleven and at a gas station during the day, then I work on days off as a dishwasher. It is quite a job keeping it all straight. My wife works too and with that we manage. But we have to pay for our house and my nephew is here and I try to send some money home.

Q. What about the future?

Well right now we are managing. I hope my children will do better. But if the jobs improve I'm sure I will be able to do get a better job. But it is hard I have grade 10 in India and there that is good, but here it is nothing. I try to improve my English, but I don't get much practice. My wife and I don't have time to go to school, but if we get a better job maybe we can. Right now, well we just manage.

Workers in these jobs work only with a small number of other workers and meet the public only briefly. This means again that they do not make friends outside the community.

I work in a parking lot. Just see the boss sometimes and the guy who works the next shift. That is all. The people well, they don't like East Indians. They make comments, but mostly they just drive on. I want to go home after I have made money. Canada is not for East Indians.

Another man also explained:

I work with one other guy. He says he doesn't like East Indians, but that I'm O.K. We had a beer together once, but he has his friends, I have mine. We work together, that's it.

These jobs are not unionized, thus there is a very little income improvement and no real possibility of promoting a union. There are lots of people for the jobs and there are few other jobs around, except in the same situation. People are 'holding on' until the job situation gets better or until they can find some better job to do. If individuals stay in the job

over a period of time, they may get a raise, but this is on the discretion of the owner, or the boss. Most of these operations work on very marginal basis and depend on very cheap labour, so that long term employees are not really an asset.

Of special consideration, because of the implications, I want to explore janitorial work in a little more detail than other service jobs. Some janitorial work is unionized and comes within the work done in an organization. Schools, university and hospitals, and some firms work in this manner. However, increasingly janitorial work is contracted out to janitorial firms who take the responsibility for cleaning office buildings, banks and other places of business. Then janitorial employees are not part of the firm or organization itself, but are employees of the janitorial organization. This practice is called 'contracting out'. East Indian workers work mainly in firms which have contracts to clean office buildings, etc. They do not 'qualify for jobs' in organizations where the competition for jobs is stiff and where the hiring procedures are very formal.

In the 'contract business' there are two forms of work organization. One is where a janitorial firm employs workers directly, the other is where the firm 'contracts out' its work on subcontracts. In the first case workers are paid an hourly wage and work under the company's supervision. The wages are very low and the work involves night work almost exclusively. Many of the janitorial firms are unstable operations and fold without paying workers their salaries. In other cases workers do not receive their full promised wage because the company does not have enough money. After the work is done and with no union and little knowledge of labour legislation, workers are forced to accept the wage offered. The companies can declare bankruptcy and then re-open under another name and registration, which is a normal

practice at present in the business.

In the cases of subcontracts, East Indians have paid several thousand dollars for a subcontract, which gives them the work, cleaning supplies and equipment. The contract often requires much more work than one person can do, so the man must find other workers to work for him to get the work done. The money involved in the contract considering these things is then very small. As well this practice is largely unlegislated and not supervised by labour practices. Thus there are many cases of East Indians paying for the subcontract and not receiving the work.

These situations spell disaster for East Indian families. They also have implications for how parts of the work force are being organized. That is parts of organizations are being split off by the 'contracting' procedure and thus many jobs which formerly were becoming well paid and protected are now divided off from organizations. The jobs that exist in unionized and protected sectors are in high demand and the jobs in competitive sectors are low paying and insecure.

### Summary

On the basis of what has been presented here, the situation of East Indians in the work force is not an accident. Rather their location in the labour force is determined by the objective criteria used for hiring and access to education and training. Better jobs in the economy assume that individuals will have education, training and skills which are commonly available to Canadian workers, they are not however part of the experience available to East Indian workers. The jobs which are available to East Indian workers are those which do not have strict training and education qualifications attached to them. In addition, the job range is further narrowed by the

difficulty that East Indians have in attending formal interview and competition processes. This places them in the position of needing the supports that the community provides them both in informal job hunting and providing jobs which give them their first work experience. The work that is available to them is dead end work, either as a result of the work organization as in the case in the sawmill or in the character of the work as in the case of the service industry. Further, these jobs do not give access to friendships or personal relationships outside of the East Indians that may work on the job. This in part is shaped by the relations on the job itself and by the lack of contact with individuals on the job.

In the work that men do there is always more supply of labour than there are jobs, which helps to keep the jobs insecure and unorganized. As well the changes in the patterns of employment as in the case of contracting out means that as gains are made in some jobs, the qualifications for the jobs increase. Thus immigrants are excluded from jobs that were formerly available and at the same time jobs develop outside the secure and well paid sectors. These insecure and low paid positions become available to immigrants. Thus over periods of time the situations of East Indian immigrants does not appear to have much possibility of improving.

The relations which give form to the position of East Indian immigrant men are developed out of the relations in the Vancouver labour market itself. Access to training and education, which would provide the 'taken for granted access' to jobs to East Indians is practically not feasible in their situation as immigrants. Individuals then, remain in their positions both as a result of the managerial practices and of the union practices, both of which take for granted that East Indians have the backgrounds available to Canadian workers. Thus the position of East Indian immigrants as workers is assumed

under the general assumptions made by unions about 'the working class', in a similar way to that which Smith describes in her work on women (Smith, 1977). The result inside unions, is that no action is taken to combat action by other workers on jobs that is discriminatory, and the union does not control management in areas, where they are clearly engaged in discriminatory practices, that are glossed over by 'objective criteria'.

The result is what we see. East Indian workers do not improve their earning power or positions in the work force significantly over time. They live inside an ethnically defined community which provides them a support to get jobs and a social life outside their jobs. But to see this as a matter of preference is to neglect the conditions which produce the 'ethnic community'. East Indian immigrants remain inside the community because they have no routes out of it. Their relation to jobs, their access to housing credit and social supports all come from this association, as we shall see.

#### Working Class Women's Participation in the Labour Force

As in the case of men, women's access to the labour force is governed by qualifications and experience. This takes for granted a level of access which may be available to Canadian women but is not available to East Indian women. I want to review the labour situation of Canadian women so that we can see how East Indian women are located in the labour market.

In the first place the labour market is already sex segregated, men have access to some jobs, women to others. The greater number of jobs that are available to women are in clerical, service and special areas of the industrial work force. These jobs are low paid and require broad skills which are taken for granted as part of the skills that all women have. In clerical work, for example, women are expected to be well organized, be able to have discreet

relations with people who they work with and who they meet as part of their jobs, to know what is expected of them intuitively. In addition, of course, they must be able to type, answer phones, make coffee and in general keep the office running smoothly. Many of the skills which are taken for granted are skills which are developed through young women's long apprenticeships in their homes and with their brothers and sisters.

Relatively large numbers of women have these skills. They are seen as characteristic of being a woman, and are obvious only when they are not part of a particular woman's personality and skills. Thus there are always seemingly an unlimited supply of women to fill the jobs in the labour market. This has consequences for the levels of pay and for the job security which are part of these jobs.

East Indian women do not have the taken for granted skills and understandings which are part of a Canadian woman's upbringing. As we have seen she must learn to manage her house under entirely different circumstances and has lost a great deal of her independence of movement in things that an ordinary Canadian would take for granted, taking buses, doing laundry, handling money, etc. All these factors lessen the opportunities for East Indian women in the job market.

East Indian women are forced into the job market as a result of the circumstances that their husbands find themselves in. Women's location, not only in the general job market available to women, but the narrower job market available to East Indian women as a result of their particular position in Vancouver makes them a cheap source of labour for the jobs in the economy that 'can be done by anyone'.

## Access to Jobs

Again as in the case of men access to jobs are governed by qualifications and experience criteria. However, in addition, there are a number of taken for granted skills in jobs for women which do not appear as qualifications or education background. These include some of the considerations in the introduction, and in addition implicit understanding about the relations of men to women in the society; many of the things in an office and other work place that women would do in the home.

In addition the job description and categories which are part of how an individual is understood by an organization do not allow for East Indian women's ability to learn a job as they get experience in it, nor does it provide any entry below prescribed levels. Thus access to jobs that are available to Canadian women are much more difficult for immigrant women. Women who come from families that have been able to provide them with a western education in India or in Canada do compete favourably for these jobs, however, the great majority of immigrant women have not had these opportunities, and do not meet the education requirements.

Job training is also a problem. In the first place married women with working husbands are a low priority for job training in the Department of Manpower, where supported training is available. As well, the training which would make women qualified formally for jobs would require extensive upgrading and long training periods. The priority for government job training programs is to get people on the job market as quickly as possible. In addition, of course, largely as a result of the circumstances under which East Indian women must look for work, this is a priority for them as well.

Thus East Indian women who get into job training programs, do so in



areas like dishwashing in restaurants, chambermaids, and sewing occupations in the garment industry. There have been some new programs which proved English training for women in a small number of garment factories, while they are working and these do begin to provide some possible opportunities for the future. However, at this time, the programs are small in number and do not reach many people.

There have been several innovative programs in English instruction for women, where day care has been provided and where the programs attempt to reach non-working women who may join the labour force in the future. These programs are new and often have trouble with recruitment particularly if the individuals running the program have little access to the community. What remains at present is that women provide a labour supply for the East Indian community itself and work in low paid and insecure work outside the community.

### Hiring Practices

The hiring of women for jobs both inside and outside the East Indian business community depend on the community's informal communications network. As in the case of men, workers already employed are the best source of information for women about work. Each of the employment areas works somewhat differently so I am going to sketch in some of the cases.

#### A. Garment Factories

Women get jobs in garment factories through the Department of Manpower referral, sometimes after a training program in the factory itself or in a job training program. Some get their job on the basis of referral from a worker already working in the factory or a person who knows a hiring officer at the factory. Rarely do women go by themselves to apply for a job.

In cases where they make formal applications, it is customary for a worker from one of the service agencies to go with them. However, the incidence of this is quite small, because of the time required to do this and the fact that the agencies are normally engaged with crisis cases involving UIC or Social Insurance.

Women enter work in the garment factory at a base rate and do receive salary increases on the basis of union negotiated increases, if there is one, and on the basis of learning the other jobs in the factory. There are in the industry however a narrow range in the rates and there are only a small number of different jobs which have different rates. At times the factory is organized on a quota and piece rate basis. This may bring some extra income if the woman is a very fast worker, however piece work is not kindly regarded by unions in the industry and there are not many work situations where this system prevails as the only system of pay.

Work in a garment factory gives women experience to work in other garment factories, probably which have the same pay and work procedure as the one in which she already works. The industry is notorious for its insecurity and fly-by-night operations, which close if there is serious union pressure. Women are thus in the position of having little leverage to make their working conditions better. As well there are many situations where there are large numbers of women who want to work so that women are placed in the position of accepting their pay and working conditions or leaving. In view of their financial situation in the home, it is often a matter of hanging onto the top job at any cost.

B. Housekeepers, Babysitters and Service Workers in the Community

This work is done on a very informal basis. Women do not have any official employment status and are paid in cash, receiving no unemployment insurance benefits, contribution to CPP, etc. This means that women never build any official work experience and if she wants other work must depend on the employers to recommend her to someone else or to be able to contact someone else in the community who will give the same work.

I babysit five days a week for a woman who has three children. The work is not hard. I tidy up, play with the children and prepare the meals for them during the day. I get \$175.00 a month and that is important to our family. It is a good job and I don't want to work outside, because I have problems getting to work, also I don't think I would make more money.

Q. What will you do in future?

Well, I don't know. Right now we need the money, but when my husband gets a better job we won't and I will be able to stay home.

Q. How long have you been doing this?

You mean this work or.... Well I have been working in this place for a year. Before I have worked in other places, for about five years.

Women do feel that the jobs they get in this work are temporary, but consistently I found that women worked relatively long periods of time in this kind of work. This informal work is much easier on women in many ways in that they are in positions with which they are familiar and with people who speak their language.

I asked women about the lack of formal work experience and benefits:

Well I don't know much about that really. Since I will not work for long I don't think it will matter. I don't think I would ever work in other places.

Women in this situation felt that they could not work outside the home and that they were fortunate to have their situations. They did not know a

great deal about their work possibilities outside these situations, and had very little access to information about other situations:

I don't think that there is other work. This is not hard and the money is needed. I don't think I really can work other places.

Q. What about English lessons, job training?

I don't think I can do that as an immigrant. I am only here because of my husband and I don't want to hurt our place here. Anyway our children will learn and that is the most important. Me, I don't think I will speak English. That is O.K., we can manage, my husband speaks and we can manage.

In addition women work in small apartment buildings and motels in some cases as chambermaids and cleaners. The situation of women is various in this circumstance. At times the business is owned by a member of the family and there is a work arrangement where women look after the building along with other members of the family in return for their residence. The business in this case is often not owned by her husband, but by a member of her husband's family. Similar situations apply with small hotel businesses.

In all cases, the woman gains no formal work experience. As well it is a kind of hidden labour force, on which the businesses and households who employ women in this way depend. Women who work in these situations have no security or recourse if something happens with respect to their pay or working conditions. Since they do not pay income tax and since there is little possibility of working outside the situation they feel fortunate to have the job. This, however, also means that their work is quasi-legal and are afraid of repercussions if they are in any relationship with government agencies.

I think this is a good situation for me. I am able to get money and I'm not sure what else I could do.

Q. But you have said that you work six days a week and often more than eight hours a day. Don't you think that your work is worth more than your rent?

No, it gives us a place to live and soon we will be able to have our own home. You see if I got money maybe I would have to give

it to the government. Then it would be less.

Q. Not necessarily. Also you would have experience to work other places.

I'm not allowed to work, and I won't always have to work this hard.

Q. But you are allowed to work. You are a landed immigrant, people in that position are allowed to work.

I don't know, I just know that it might mean trouble.

Lack of information and hope that the future will be better both contribute to women remaining in these situations. As well their English and ability to function outside a protected situation is very low, as such many of their perceptions are accurate for their situation.

#### C. Farm Workers

Seasonal farm work in market gardens and the Fraser Valley fruit orchards supply a great deal of part-time and seasonal employment for women. The work arrangements are made through labour contractors who are East Indian men in the community, they hire women, children and some men to work on fruit and vegetable harvests. Alternative arrangements can be made through the Department of Manpower, but these arrangements are not used by East Indian workers as a general rule.

The work is described by one women,

The truck picks me up near my home at 5:30 or 6:00 depending. We go to the farm and begin work as soon as we get there. I take the children, they pick and play sometimes. It just depends.

Q. How much do you earn?

It depends on the crop. Usually eight to fifteen dollars a day. It varies. I'm glad of the work, I've been doing it for five years and it is recently much better.

Q. How did you first come to do this?

Well, when I was first here my cousin knew someone who hired

Q. Is the work hard?

Well, I'm used to it. I don't think that you could do it right away but you could get used to it. The only thing is that there are not always enough trucks and then the ride out is very crowded. At night when we are tired, the children are tired, it is hard, that is the worst. But now also there is unemployment and so that is good.

Q. Do you think the contracts make a lot of money?

I don't know. They give us jobs and pay us. I don't know how he gets paid.

Q. The working conditions and pay are quite poor compared to other work. Do you think you should be paid more?

We are paid more than we used to be. Sometimes some people said before that we should be paid more and that some said that they weren't paid fair, but I don't keep track. I think he gives us our wage.

Did the people think that they had been paid less than they had worked? What happened?

Yes, they did. They said they kept track. He said that he had made government.... what, yes the government's money. I didn't get involved. They were mad. I don't think those people worked last year. I really don't know.

Q. Have you ever felt that you didn't get paid what you were supposed to?

As I said I didn't keep track. I want to work....

Few individuals will discuss the problems around farm labour and those who will are concerned in most cases that they not be quoted. My findings can be summarized as follows, there are five to seven thousand East Indian Immigrants who do farm labour in B.C. each year. Both East Indian immigrants and Chinese immigrants work as farm labourers, but they work in separate operations.

Workers are primarily women and children, although men who are unemployed and having difficulty finding employment do work as farm labourers but they are not in the majority. All work done is paid on a piece work basis, normally at \$1 per flat. The size of a flat varies with the product

being harvested. Other farm work, which might be preparing the fields, weeding, or hoeing is paid on an hourly basis. This work however is done by a very small number of people at the beginning or end of the season.

Workers travel one and one half to two hours each way to get to work and work ten to twelve hour days. If the worker is experienced and very good, she will be able to pick one and one half flats per hour so that her own daily wage will be eighteen dollars. Her children's pay is added to hers so that the cheques issued to workers are often not reflective of the wage that they actually receive.

Farm workers are employed by labour contractors, who in the case of the East Indian workers are East Indians themselves. Labour contractors collect people to work, transport them to the fields and return them to town at night. They sell the labour of their workers to the farmers for approximately \$2.50 per hour. They are obligated to make employee contributions to UIC, CPP and Revenue Canada, although it is normal for contractors to avoid this by persuading individuals to be responsible for their own CPP and Income Tax contributions. If the workers work eight weeks, they do in most cases make the UIC contributions. Workers then receive at the end of their work a separation certificate which entitles them to UIC benefits. There are a series of recurring problems around the CPP, UIC and income tax contributions. Workers have been known to pay for their separation certificates for example. In other cases, CPP and income tax contributions are not made and individuals do not understand their obligations in this respect.

Farm workers along with domestic workers are not covered by existing labour legislation. The law that is brought to bear on their working conditions are laws governing health regulations at work places and laws governing the safe transport of persons. Even these laws are not strictly adhered to.

Transportation is provided through a combination of trucks, panel vans, and buses of a type similar to school buses.

I was picked up at 5:30 at my street. There were already twelve people on the van. We picked up eight more people and headed to a central depot outside the city. In the van we sat on wooden benches which were not fastened to the truck and were very uncomfortable. There was not enough space for everyone to sit on the benches, so some people sat on the floor. There were no windows and it was very hot. People were visibly exhausted and spoke very little, some slept.

At the depot, we were transferred into a bus which was also overcrowded--many more people than there were seats for. Coming back it was worse, I guess because I was so tired, it seemed more crowded, I don't know.

A woman describes her experiences:

The truck comes at five forty-five, I'm lucky because I'm one of the last to be picked up and first dropped off. There are forty more or less on the truck and we go straight to the field. The ride is about an hour, a bit more I guess, and it is uncomfortable, hot or cold, we are overcrowded, but you get used to it.

On the work site there are supposed to be provision of toilets and running water for drinking. This is usually adhered to but facilities are located as much as a mile and a half from where a worker is working. This means that the use of the facilities involves a long walk and loss of work time which comes directly off the potential earnings. Thus although normally the provisions of health regulations are formally adhered to, in practice on the job the use of facilities is rendered very inconvenient and time-consuming.

There has been concern about the conditions of farm work from many groups and individuals in Vancouver, but there has been very little improvement in the conditions of work or in the regulation of the activities of labour contractors. The federal Department of Manpower attempted to re-organize farm labour through an agricultural labour pool at Abbotsford



last year. They were able to receive from UIC, the names of workers who worked on the job last year and contacted them to report to the labour pool and register for work. The program was unsuccessful however and the majority of workers worked with labour contractors as in past years.

The women and children who work in the jobs get their jobs informally as described. The procedure of registering with a government department is one which is very difficult for women under their living conditions and levels of English which they have. The position of women both in the family and the community militates against the success of programs like the one the Department of Manpower tried. As well the level of information that women have and the places where information is available also prevents them from assessing their situation.

#### D. Cannery Workers

The canning season begins in April and lasts through October. There is also work in the winter but it is not as plentiful so that there are only a few workers with the most union seniority who are able to work year round. For the most part however the work is seasonal and most of the canneries are unionized.

Women get jobs in the canneries through the routes in the community that have been described before. There have been situations where labour contractors have tried to make informal arrangements around transportation and job access with the women who worked or wanted to work in the canneries. These arrangements have not worked over time largely as a result of the vigilance of the unions.

Cannery work is probably the best paying, and most secure work available to

East Indian women. The work provides them with seniority in their union and thus they are assured jobs from year to year providing there is work. However, the experience does not provide women with access to other jobs nor does it provide opportunities to learn additional skills or to learn English.

As in the case of farm workers, East Indian and Chinese women are employed in the industry in the lower mainland. As a rule Chinese women have been working in canneries longer and thus have relatively the better positions in the canneries. On the job East Indian workers and Chinese workers are separated, although it is common for them to work in the same cannery.

Work organized in this way gives East Indian women little access to meet other workers who speak English and who live outside the confines of an ethnic community. Thus women do not make friendships through their work which give them alternative sources of information, support or experience from that which they already have. This means then that although this job is substantially better than other work which is available to women in the East Indian community, it still pushes her back to the community for support and friends as well as not providing any job experience that would mean that she could get jobs outside the industry.

#### E. Service Work

As women are able to learn some English or they receive training from Manpower, they are getting jobs in the service industry outside the community. These jobs are located in restaurants, hotels, and motels, as dishwashers, chambermaids, cleaners and in some cases short order cooks. Again this work has the character of the service work that men do. It is poorly paid, and does not provide opportunity for advancement. However, in relation to other jobs available, the work seems to be better.

I work as a dishwasher. I get minimum wage and work evenings, which lets me be home during the day. That is good so that I can get the housework done and be with the children. The job is better than being a babysitter because the pay is better and the hours are set and shorter. I took a short training course with Manpower, and got this job.

There are several problems that can be foreseen in this work. In the first place as there are more people with the official training the jobs will be harder to get as the work will then require the special training. In addition as unionizing attempts are successful and wages rise, the qualifications for the job will be increased, if past experience is an indicator. Thus these occupations, which do allow women to get out of situations which are often worse, do not allow them to compete well with Canadians for jobs if and when wages rise or credentials are increased. The job training that they have received gives them immediate access to jobs, but it doesn't provide any long term stability in terms of women's ability to compete with Canadian workers.

#### F. Janitorial Work

As I described in the section on Janitorial work in men's employment, there are two ways that East Indians are employed in janitorial work, either as workers in a contracted operation, or as subcontractors. Women work in the subcontract situations, where they do virtually unpaid labour in order that their husband or relative is able to fulfill the contract.

Essentially the operation works as in this example:

I paid \$5,000 for the contract. I get the equipment and some of the cleaning supplies for that, the contract is worth \$15,000. It is a contract to clean five banks. These banks all must be done between six and midnight because of the alarm systems. My wife and children, the oldest two, we work together and do them.

The contracts in fact assume that the subcontractor has a cheap supply of labour to do the work. And it is women who provide this labour for these

operations.

### Summary

When we review the specific situations of men and women, it is possible to see how, in the context of Vancouver, East Indian immigrant women are produced as a group of dependent poorly paid workers. Their skills are not appropriate to the qualifications and educational requirements of jobs and they thus become cheap labour for the East Indian business community and candidates for jobs in the economy that 'no one else will do'. Their labour is further concealed by the organization of the work that they do as domestic and child care workers in private homes, and in janitorial work. Their jobs provide no opportunities to learn the skills that would allow them to compete with Canadian women for jobs, nor do they provide access to friends or information outside the community in which they live. Their jobs trap them in their families and within the community.

This has the effect of permitting the relationships between their husbands and themselves to proceed on a basis of material dependency and provide no material means for altering their position with respect to their families or their husbands. The income that she earns is given to her husband and he continues to make the financial decisions for the household down to her own decisions about clothing and other personal items. The income that she makes in any case cannot support a family and the jobs that she does do not provide her with the experience, qualifications or education which might make it possible to get better paying work.

At the same time her ability to organize around her work to improve her working conditions is very poor. Not only is the work that she does 'able to be done by anyone' but if gains are made in the particular job area that she

works in the possibility is that she will lose her job as a result of increased job criteria or at the very least other women in her position will no longer have access to those jobs. Thus the family situation and the work situation that she finds herself in constitutes a trap, one that is almost impossible to escape from.

The community enforces her dependency on her husband in its very organization. Her family is not in Candda, her friends are formed through contacts that her husband makes for her. Her work is confined by her home or by the community and there are no organizations that she participates in independently from her husband in the community or outside the community. Her lack of access to training and education are a combination of her responsibilities in the home and the work she must do to contribute to the family income.

The relations between men and women in the family that we have read about in the previous chapter can now be brought into focus in terms of the labour force, but it is a necessity. However her relation to her husband is not improved by her working outside the home. She does not have relatively more independence, nor does she organize more of her own activities. Women and men have their relations to one another organized outside their own individual relation as we have seen in both chapters. Their work relations, the pay they receive, the relative contributions in wage terms to the household, the responsibilities for housework all organize their relation to each other. Thus to say for example that their relations are 'traditional' ignores that their relations to each other are formed in particular material contexts.

## CHAPTER VI

### BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS OF THE EAST INDIAN COMMUNITY

#### Introduction

The class division within the community, which can be seen from the location of the family is a division between the East Indian working class and the East Indian bourgeoisie. The East Indian ruling class is a bourgeoisie in the classic sense. It is a group of owners of small businesses, industrialists, who own enterprises connected to transportation, the forest industry and construction, real estate and insurance businessmen, and professionals who are concerned with the business enterprise. These individuals act like a classic bourgeois class; they belong to the same organizations, are friends and women in the class organize the family social life, the home and community organizations which support the position of bourgeois men in the community, and, in addition women are often involved in the business both as staff and as owners of parts of the business. The East Indian bourgeoisie through their business practices and through their leadership of community organizations are active organizing the class relation of the community, internally.

The community organizations are organizations of the bourgeoisie which constitute both the official representation of the community in Vancouver and B.C. politics and the communications patterns of the community on which the working class depend heavily for advice, information and contacts for jobs and their personal business. The organization of and participation in the

community organizations provide the basis for men to become known as both community leaders and businessmen. As community leaders they are able to represent the community and interpret the community in the political and official press context.

As well the community organizations and media, which include radio, press and publication of telephone books listing East Indians, provide the basis for East Indian businessmen to identify and meet potential customers. The working and living conditions of East Indian immigrants as I have described them leave little opportunity for men and women to engage in activities that give them an understanding of the way in which personal finances are handled in Vancouver. Although it is quite probable that they could manage their affairs in the ways the Canadian born citizens do, there is not the opportunity for them to learn to do so. It is normal for East Indian families to manage their affairs through East Indian businessmen and through Canadian businesses that have Punjabi speaking employees, who often come from families of the bourgeoisie.

Thus working class families form the major number of clients and customers for East Indian real estate brokers, insurance salesmen, store owners, travel agents and lawyers. Owners of these enterprises provide service in Punjabi and assist and facilitate the management of the families personal finances, make credit arrangements, and arrange for purchases and provide merchandise and services which make shopping easier, if more expensive. In this way the East Indian working class is organized as a market for East Indian businessmen. This arrangement, although it does support East Indian immigrants in the conduct of their daily lives, it at the same time contributes to the organization of East Indian working class immigrants as different and as part of an ethnic community.

I would place much of what I am going to discuss in the context of consumer market already organized in a class relation, and it may be that the credit and housing arrangements accorded the rest of the working class may be similar. I would suggest, however that the situation of working class East Indians is relatively worse with respect to the consumer market than that of the Canadian working class.

The practices of East Indian businessmen with respect to the organization of working class men and women in the labour force has already been discussed at some length, in the last chapter. I want now to look at the specific aspects of the businesses and community organizations. At the end of the chapter I have included a section which looks at some of the practices of certain Canadian businesses in relation to working class East Indian immigrants. This work is not fully developed, but I am adding it because it sketches in some of the relations which are important in maintaining the community as it is.

However I will not deal with the relations among the East Indian bourgeoisie or the relations between the East Indian bourgeoisie and the Vancouver, B.C. or Canadian ruling class except, where I have discovered them in my work (which was not focused in this way) and where I have found them consequential for the working class. I consider these relations very important and feel an investigation of them would contribute to and broaden this analysis however this endeavour is limited to the relations and organization of the East Indian working class.

### Community Organizations

The most significant community organizations are the temples. There are three temples, which are part of the community, one Hindu temple and <sup>five</sup> two Sikh



temples. These are religious-social organizations which have cultural as well as religious concerns. The largest temple is the Sikh temple on Marine drive in Vancouver. The temples have religious, cultural and social activities for their members. Membership in the temples is informal although presently there are attempts to formalize membership at one temple. Each of the temples has an executive that is responsible for the organization and financial management.

Individuals interviewed about the temples were vague about the manner in which individuals became members of the executive of the temples. As well individuals were not certain about the numbers of people and families who used the temples. This is in part because the religious organizations are less formal than western religious organizations.

Individuals who were interviewed agreed that large numbers of individuals did not use the temples frequently. <sup>Not here</sup> It was also agreed that professional and business people made use of the temples more than the majority of East Indians. It is important to understand at this point that the Hindu membership in the community is not large in numbers and is largely professional, well educated and in many respects integrated into Canadian society. There are exceptions to this but for the most part this generalization holds. Thus the remarks are primarily descriptions of the Sikh temples. There are other religious affiliations that members of the community have. It is not that these have been completely overlooked as much as they are not part of the organization of the working class, which is primarily Sikh.

In addition to the temples I identified thirteen community organizations. These included women's groups, organizations concerned with presenting cultural events and festivals, philanthropic organizations concerned with funding projects to assist people, often in India, business clubs, and intellectual

groups. The membership in these groups is almost exclusively business and professional men and women. East Indians who do service and manual work are not usually part of the organizations and are not on the executive of the temples with some exceptions in the case of the Ross Street Sikh temple.

There were many differences of opinion about what the role of the organizations and the temples are in the community:

I think the organizations and the Temples are the community. That is what can be seen. The working class do not participate in these organizations. They aren't for them, they are for the upper class. They don't have the problems that the working class has. They can afford to have these luxuries. The women need something to do and the men need to have common groups so they can meet and talk things over. Also it is through the organizations that the leaders of the community are recognized, and they organize it like a club. I'll help you this year, you support me next! That is the way it goes. And these people get to tell the officials, the mayor and the other officials about the community. They can tell other people about the East Indian community. Well there are two communities theirs, the nice comfortable homes, clubs, businesses, etc. Sometimes they talk about this community, sometimes they talk about them, and then is that other part of the community, the people that they consider the peasants. You see it is really a class problem and you have to talk about it that way.

Other people when they talked about the community organizations and the Temples saw it differently:

I think that the community organizations are very important in providing the basis for the community to reflect its culture and background. I think that the community gains a lot of respect from the community at large when they see that the community is organized. This is also important for people in the community, they have an identity and this is important here when we are cut off from the country we know. You asked who belongs and I know that membership in organizations is quite small and the whole community is not involved in that way. However the events are attended. I think it would be better if there were more people who belonged, but you can't force people to belong.

Q. When I asked who belonged I was thinking about what I have already been told, which is that people who belong are people who do not have the problems that we have discussed that is that the organizations are not organizations of everyone.

Yes, that is true as I have said. I don't think that very many workers belong for example and their wives just can't go out without their

husbands. I think that it will be a long time before women who are so traditional join organizations.

Generally people agreed that the organizations were run by business and professional people:

The Temples are politics, there is no religion. There are social functions on Saturday and Sunday and young men, just here go and meet other people. They think they are getting help finding a job, but really the businessmen are making their business contacts. Businessmen can make themselves important by making suggestions to these people that anyone who has been here six months can make it. But the new immigrants who don't really know think that they are getting a big favour.

The businessmen go to the Temple for their own business. People who meet them feel that they know someone who can help them. Of course the businessmen are only too happy for them to think that.

The temple is the place that men give propaganda against the union. They tell men not to go in the union, it is bad. Well it is bad for their business, but it is not bad for workers. There are always political fights. And the opposing sides make deals among themselves. The organizations are not run democratically. *Maybe.*

*Not true*

Many individuals who were not part of the organizations shared this view of the temples. They felt that the organizations were anti-union which hurt individuals who worked as labourers directly, by influencing them to be poor union people. Many workers pointed out that without a union the workers would be worse off than they are presently. This they pointed out was a problem for people on the job:

The preaching that goes on at the temple about unions is bad. It influences men on the job. They don't behave like union men and the other workers get mad. It doesn't help much by explaining. In my plant we try to treat everyone equally, but some of the East Indian workers are just, well a real problem, and other workers are resentful, I think it is a direct result of the temple. That is one of the problems at least.

The Temple is all politics. Those guys who run it are out for themselves, not any different from their kind who are white men just out for themselves. The new immigrants go and they don't know any better. The executive build their business and the workers get told to work in their own worst interest.

Other people interviewed thought that the businessmen gained

influence as well as business by being connected with the temple:

Look, they get to be leaders, not just of the community but big shots in other politics too. I think that they gain influence with City Hall, with political parties all that sort of thing. You know there is more to this than over the table business. They get the leadership of the temple and that is a springboard. Like one year they went to Ottawa on Temple funds to meet with the Immigration Minister, supposedly to get a better deal for East Indians, did that happen? No! It was all a big deal so that they could get more influence and get some concessions for their plans. They don't care about ordinary Indians, they care about themselves, and the ordinary Indians are just a pawn.

*opinion about just  
are temple'*

Individuals described the Temples as being connected with party politics through the party affiliations of the important members. They argued that disagreements in the Temple which they said were frequent, were around the control that the leadership could exercise on behalf of a particular political party. Another informant, described similar events, and summarized his position:

The temple is politics not religion. There are three or four temples in B.C. All are involved in politics, not religion. There are social functions on Saturday and Sunday, where there is food, socializing and a lot of business. Businessmen become known here and develop their business connections here. Young men can make connections for jobs. The travel agents attend the temple functions to get business. Businessmen do favours for people. They used to give letters saying that immigrants would have jobs when they came and therefore they could get into Canada easier. One community leader built his position in the community this way. He never gave people jobs though, but everyone was grateful. There is a lot of politics against unions, at the temple. Saying they are bad for business, bad for people. When there were organizing drives on in some of the mills owned by the leadership, all the businessmen talked about how bad the union was. The leadership is opposed to unions. There have been some scuffles recently among factions of the businessmen, but these are not serious. I think that they make deals among themselves. Nothing is democratic. Last year they went to Ottawa on temple money to speak about the immigration bill. They didn't help everyone they made personal arrangements, I think.

*O. about  
just one'*

The leadership are conservative and liberal. A third group are N.D.P. They all fight for control of the temple. It is landlord politics, to see who can control the community. The temples don't differ much. There are the kingmakers and the front men. The detail of the struggles are different in detail, the same in substance. If there are people

who challenge and are successful the others buy them, one way or another, just as they buy the people with letters that don't mean anything.

The other organizations seemed to be important in organizing many cultural events in the community. As well in some cases organizations had some concern for services and solving problems in the community. These organizations were notably the women's organizations. In addition to the cultural events and education work done by women's organizations the organizations try to assist members of the community who are in difficulty. These organizations are often given assistance from government agencies in the form of personnel and grants.

The Temples also provide some social services. Particularly in the case of new immigrants, the Temple provides a familiar place where young men can meet other men and can learn about job possibilities in the community and outside. One young immigrant explained:

I know that many people think that the temple is a political hotbed. And I think that I agree, but I don't think that it is only that. When I first came I learned a lot there and I met people. That was important because I only knew my relatives. It was O.K., but I needed to meet men my own age. That happened there. And later I bought my house from someone whom I met there, but that was because I needed to buy a house and I would rather go to someone whom I have met than a complete stranger. So what others say about the business aspects I suppose is true in a way but it also helps.

There are two other political organizations which are part of the community in some respects. These organizations are concerned with both Indian and Canadian politics and one organization does do work among working class people. This work involves assisting with grievances, acting as advocates in cases with the Workers Compensation Board and with other government agencies. The work involves men primarily and both organizations have some working class membership. Both organizations have been active in

presenting the issues around the new Immigration Laws and have worked on consciousness raising around Canadian and Indian politics. The reaction to the organizations is mixed.

I think that one organization in particular causes more trouble than they do good. People can't believe the things that they say and I think that they give the community a bad reputation.

One of the organizations is very active in the community itself, and although I know a lot of people don't agree with them or some of their tactics I think that they do a good job. They will try to help workers when no one else will, push the unions and so on. But we need more of this not so much external politics. Our problems are right here. For this reason I don't join.

Both the organizations are necessary, but I don't think that they have much working class support yet. That is where they have to work so I am going to see. The best thing so far is the union as far as I am concerned.

From what I learned about community organizations I found that they did not include all members of the community. Moreover they did not in many senses represent the community either. Working class East Indian generally do not belong to organizations except for their unions if they are in one. It is further clear that organizations are connected in some respects at least to businesses in the community. There are business clubs but other organizations seem to be connected at least with contacting a clientele. This is probably not peculiar to organizations in the East Indian community.

### East Indian Business

The East Indian business community is varied and quite extensive. It includes sawmills and businesses related to the industry, including trucking and some logging on Vancouver Island and in the interior, real estate brokers, who are normally attached to large real estate firms, life insurance agents, again usually part of one of the major insurance companies, travel firms, specialty grocery and clothing stores, small motel and hotel businesses,

restaurants, and investments in residential and commercial property, small businesses. Many of the investments are quite recent and I did not do very much research on them. I was told that they involve a number of Ugandan businessmen who have come to Canada with capital but I have not done any corporate research in this area.

A number of the firms are large, with registered holdings up to \$45 million while others are much smaller. In addition to the firms, there are a number of professionals, lawyers, doctors and managerial professionals whom I have included in the business community.

The businesses relate to the community in two ways; they secure their labour for their businesses from the community and thus provide jobs to some East Indian immigrants and they have the East Indian community as their customers and clients. East Indian immigrants come to work in the businesses through their contacts in the community. They come to do business with East Indian businessmen also as a result of contacts in the community, largely through the organizations that I have described.

This situation is explained by people in various ways:

I think that East Indians feel more comfortable with East Indian businessmen. They can use their own language and they can conduct business in a way that they are accustomed. This is very important to them.

I don't think it is a bit peculiar. I mean what does it matter where you buy your house, if people want to buy it from an East Indian that is their business. I think that it is a matter of preference.

I bought my house from a broker, yes East Indian. It was easier. I just told him to find me a house. Then he did, and arranged everything. That is better for me. I don't want to try to do business without knowing who I am dealing with.

Although responses varied the explanation was similar; it is the preference of East Indians to deal with East Indian businessmen.

#### A. Real Estate Enterprise

Immigrants try to buy houses as soon as they are able to get financing to do so. They get access to housing and to mortgages through East Indian real estate agents. East Indian real estate agents work in large real estate firms or in some cases may have a small firm of their own. They become known in the community through their activities in community associations, an important activity being the temple. As well they may sponsor community events with other businessmen and advertise in the newspapers, telephone book and various other publications of the community businessmen. In these ways they become known as community people, community leaders as well as individuals knowledgeable in real estate.

When an individual decides to buy a home he will go to one of the community people. His choice of individual will depend on whom his relatives and friends have bought from and how he assesses the individuals in his contact with them through the community media or any personal contact he may have had with them at a community function or event.

The real estate broker will help him find a house, arrange financing through a mortgage broker and normally, will conduct all the business in Punjabi. The mortgage rates that the individual will get will be the highest and in addition he will pay a brokerage fee to the mortgage broker, normally around \$1,500. Often individuals do not know either that they are paying a brokerage fee or what the total cost of their mortgage is. On the matter of the fee, legally the firm must make a disclosure of the amount of their fee, and they do, in writing and in English. This is of little help to an individual who does not read English.



The significance of this is not so much that there is anything dishonest about this; technically the procedures are legal. However, the individual considers that the Real Estate agent has done him a favour by arranging the financing and further that the agent is an influential and important man who has been able to provide a very good deal. Neither of these things are true. Rather, the East Indian pays a very high cost to get the home and is tied into an expensive and long term mortgage. In many cases, the individual may have difficulty qualifying for mortgage money and the Real Estate agent is able to show individuals how to qualify technically. Again this is not necessarily a practice that is either illegal or unique to the practices of the East Indian businessman. Rather it is consequential for the East Indian client in two ways. First the prestige and control of the Real Estate Agent is increased by doing this work, and individuals feel indebted to the broker, and return that indebtedness in a variety of ways including encouraging family and friends to buy houses from him, to support him as a leader of the community, to seek his advice on matters beyond housing and encourage other people to do so as well.

Individuals take on financial commitments in these ways often well beyond those they can comfortably handle. This has consequences as we have seen for the family relations and the working practice of the individuals involved. Thus in the securing of homes to live in East Indians do their business with East Indian brokers who depend for their business and their community position on working class East Indian families who bring him their business. What is arranged through Real Estate Brokers are mortgages which are very expensive and which place the family under social obligation to the agent. East Indians do not in general know the details of the arrangements that are made for them and consider themselves indebted to the Real estate brokers. East Indians do

not explore other sources of money for homes, through banks, or credit unions. This may in fact not give them any better financial arrangement with their mortgage, but it would cut out the brokerage fee. As well East Indians don't generally get to make private arrangements which are very often done by individuals who sell houses privately and arrange financing themselves. The effect of this is to place East Indian families in a situation where the family is heavily financially committed over a long period of time.

Real Estate agents regard this as a 'normal' business arrangement:

Everyone is in debt, I get people into houses that is my job. What do you expect when they only have five thousand or less for a down payment. That's the way the system works. Sure they could get better deals if they had more money, but they don't. They are in debt, who isn't?

Q. Do you think that individuals could do better at a bank than through a broker?

It depends, I don't know. A lot of people don't qualify except as very high risks so it is hard to get the money.

Q. Do you think that individuals might need some advice, like to wait a bit?

I think they would just go to someone else, what good would that do me or them? They'd get the same deal.

Q. I have been told that there are very serious problems for people making their payments and that their financial commitments are something that they may not have understood when they got into it?

Who says? Look, my job is to sell houses. I'm not a welfare office.

Q. But people do generally trust you to help them....

Well, that is their business, mine is to sell houses.

Q. Are most of your sales to East Indian families?

Not all. But people come to me. I get them houses and financing. It is easier than with agents who don't know how these people work.

Q. But you also advertise in the community media and are generally around the community a lot....

Well that is good business. Besides no one else can deal with these

people. They don't know anything, they need someone like me.

Q. People feel obligated to you when they buy a house from you. They also think that you know about other things, immigration, UIC, things like that.

Sure, but I only tell them what they ask me, they are different, they still think they are in India.

Q. You don't think that you help them to think that they are obligated to you?

How? I just do my job.

Q. Well like not telling them about mortgage brokers fees or not making clear what the mortgage involves, letting them think that this is something other than a business arrangement, that you have done them a favour.

Well I have. Most of them couldn't get houses if I didn't help them.

What I want to point out here is that the obligations that individuals feel are not a figment of their imaginations. The relations do proceed in that way. Real Estate Brokers do expect that people will send their friends and will support him on other ways in the community. Materially it is possible that East Indians could deal with non-East Indian brokers, but their experience in the society and their lack of knowledge about how the society works is certainly a block to this. As well Canadian brokers do not necessarily want to work with East Indians:

East Indians, we got a couple of brokers who deal with them.

Q. What happens if an East Indian is interested in a house you are handling?

That hasn't happened. I don't deal with their housing.

Q. What does that mean?

Well they buy houses in south and certain kinds of housing, we list those houses with people who can sell to them.

Q. Well would you work with an East Indian if they came to you?

I don't know really. It has just never happened. I don't know

what I would do. I'd have to talk it over with the others.

The organization of the housing market and housing listings are also part of how East Indians come to deal with East Indian brokers. It is not simply an individual choice. A set of relations determine that this is the case, and this is not only the preferences or the limitations of East Indians themselves.

Down payments for houses are also a community matter. If possible the individual family will try to save the money for the down payment. It is also common for families to borrow from more established or wealthier relatives. These relations also carry with them social indebtedness. In some instances the family will not agree with the relative that has lent them the money. The disagreement might center around support of a particular leader or a family matter. The relative that lends the money expects that the borrower will always agree with him. When this does not happen bad family relations develop. Often the lender feels he has been betrayed, law suits have been known to result in some of these situations.

As well families who lend the money may find themselves in financial difficulty and are not able to continue to lend the money. The borrowing family may not be able to repay the money quickly enough. Again family problems result from this situation.

Increasingly families are obliged to rent housing, either for short periods of time while they save or borrow a down payment or for longer periods of time because they are unable to get the money together for a down payment. Finding housing has been difficulty:

East Indians, I wouldn't rent to them. The rest of the people would move out. It is just practical business. Personally I don't care, but I have to protect my business.

Q. There are laws against discrimination you know.

Well then are there laws against running the business the way you can make money? Look, I can't have a bunch of Hindus in here cooking curry and living three to a room. It would ruin the place. *Sachin*

A family explained their rent situation:

It was hard to find a house. A lot of people I don't think want East Indians. We had to pay three months rent in advance and the house is not very good as you can see. It costs \$543, which I think is a lot. So we share it with another family, we can't afford to live here otherwise. Yes and the guy will probably kick us out if he knows. He said only us. But well you see we just can't pay the rent alone.

Housing that is available for rent is often very expensive for families and many people felt that they were paying more than Canadian families would if they had rented the place. This perception is borne out in at least one case:

Yes, I rent to East Indians, I'm not prejudiced.

Q. What is the rent?

Depends.

Q. Do you charge more? Do you think that they are riskier tenants.

I just take into consideration how they live and charge accordingly. I know there is going to be a lot more of them than they say and that the property value will go down. I just look at the fact and charge accordingly.

Q. What do you mean the property value will go down?

Well after you can't rent to anyone else. No one wants to live in a curry house that those people lived in.

Q. But it seems to me that your property value goes up. You charge more.

Only to cover expenses etc. You know how it is.

Increasingly East Indians rent from other members of the community or from individuals or firms that they know will rent to them. Knowledge of this is based on word of mouth and personal experience, which becomes 'common knowledge' in the community. We can see here the beginnings of what is fully

developed in the case of buying housing. East Indians have difficulty renting housing in part because they lack many of the skills in English, and knowledge of the way to go about finding housing. They also have difficulty in finding landlords who will rent housing to them. Knowledge of who will rent becomes available through the community, and as well East Indian businessmen are able to buy into the rental housing market and have ready made renters. Thus in the future it may well be that East Indians rent largely from East Indians. This may well be interpreted as another example of how close the ethnic community is, but I think that we can see from the situation which is developing here that this is not necessarily the case. In fact the development of East Indian businessmen who have rental housing will have been accommodated by the relations in the society, and the 'market' will have been produced out of the material difficulties that East Indians have had getting housing. Finally the present rental housing situation for East Indians means that there are real necessities involved in buying a house as quickly as possible, at whatever cost.

#### B. Insurance

The insurance business works similarly in the community to the real estate business. To begin, Canadian businessmen in the insurance field are not able to work with East Indians in Punjabi. The large insurance companies have hired East Indians to work for them and these businessmen cover the community. They are able to provide the verbal part of the business transaction in Punjabi and become known in the community as knowledgeable people and community leaders through the media advertising, participation in cultural and religious organizations and through the relationship that they have with their clients, who also see them about matters beyond insurance.

Their business covers life insurance, annuity and retirement savings programs, and home insurance. The work of the East Indian Insurance businessmen again is increasingly concerned with East Indian families. The 'market' gets produced in a similar way as the real estate market. Canadian businessmen leave the East Indian population to East Indian insurance people. They are hired by the large insurance companies and work for them in a similar way to a Canadian Insurance executive. East Indians buy their insurance from East Indians in part because it is a service offered partly at least in the language with which they are most comfortable and in part because the 'market' is covered by them.

#### C. Travel Business

East Indian families do travel home for visits if they are able. In the case of the working class family few are able to travel as a whole, so that one member of the family will travel. In the case of single men they will travel home as soon as they are settled and have some money, both to visit their families and to find wives.

The more significant travel is that of immigrants to Canada, where families will have travel agents make arrangements to bring their parents for visits or make the arrangements for a relative to come as an immigrant. In these situations East Indian travel agents are very important to working class families. The travel agent will assist them with the immigration forms, often will get the appropriate documents, and will assist in making arrangements in India, often through a travel agent who runs a similar operation in India. Fees for these services vary. In India there is a charge to assist perspective emigrants with their arrangements. In Vancouver accounts varied. Travel agents were very vague about how much

of this kind of work they do. Individuals said that they used travel agents extensively for this purpose, but were vague about the fees or arrangements. Individuals felt that the arrangements of travel agents were essential in getting their relatives here.

They pointed out that they did not know how to make these arrangements themselves and that the travel agents had connections which would allow the arrangements to be made easily and quickly. In addition travel agents do a good deal of translation for which they charge nominal fees. They also assist with filling in other official forms, UIC, applications, passports, tax rebates. It is not common for them to do income tax or financial forms.

Again these are services provided by travel agents which make them more than a business in the strict sense. They are services that a Canadian travel agency probably would not perform. The market is provided to the travel agents in part as a result of Canadian agencies not providing these services and as a result of the place that the travel agents have in the community. The work that is done by travel agents with respect to translation, form completions, etc. is also done by some of the social services so that travel agents are not primarily responsible for these services. However until the agencies were opened, it was not possible for individuals to get these services except through community people like travel agents.

The travel firms have developed as the population of East Indian immigrants has risen and as more immigrants have been able to follow their relatives. The pattern is however the same. The market is produced by the immigration and by the absence of service in Punjabi to recent immigrants in the regular business community. Given the limitations



on individuals learning English in their everyday lives, the client population remains somewhat captive.

#### D. Service Businesses

The service businesses are movie theatres, grocery stores specializing in Indian foods, and speciality import shops dealing in clothing, furniture and art. These businesses are quite recent in terms of the immigration, and have a dual clientele, Canadian and East Indian. The restaurants are frequented by young single men who may be living on their own, and Canadians. It is not a practice for East Indians to eat out in restaurants.

The specialty grocery stores, which buy rice, curries, dried vegetables and other spices in the form that people would be able to buy it in India are also quite recent. These stores have a ready made clientele in women who find it difficult to shop in supermarkets, and who wish to buy food in forms which are more familiar to them. This however also means that people pay more for their food, since these shops are more costly. If the shop is near a neighbourhood where a number of East Indian families live it will make it possible for women to shop for groceries themselves. If it is farther away it probably will not make a great deal of difference to women in their relation to their husbands and the shopping practices.

The movie theatres and import shops provide to people access to popular culture and Indian clothes, furniture and art for their homes. Not all of this business is either directed toward or exclusively made up of working class East Indian families. The theatres have made a difference in the social lives of East Indian working class families, because there are now some events that can be attended outside the temple and sponsored cultural events.

Canadian Business Relations with the East Indian Working Class

We want to be community minded, to serve the people in the area. In a multi-ethnic area we hire people who can speak the language of the people and can help them get their business done. Otherwise how could we expect to have the ethnic business.

This policy is a few years old now. I think it was done informally before, but now we have a formal multi-cultural policy. It is part of being a good citizen.

Almost all banks and credit unions share this policy in their branch management. The ethnic employees that they hire are either well educated immigrants who are in majority women from the business and professional groups, or are young East Indian Canadians who have been educated here and are sons and daughters of the same families.

Their work in these organizations is primarily meeting the public. They are tellers, and office workers and in a few cases loans officers. Their work in the banks and credit unions goes beyond their defined jobs however:

Our ethnic staff is invaluable. You are studying who? East Indians, yes we have a lot of East Indian business, a lot live around here. They are good customers, save, pay their loans. Our business has really improved in that area since we have hired East Indian staff.

Q. Has your East Indian staff attracted the business?

Yes, because these people don't speak English so they can do their business in Indian.

Q. Do the East Indian staff members help in loan practices, decisions?

Yes, that is a good point. As well as attracting business, the staff also explain these people. They tell us whom to contact who might know them, help us check them out, creditwise you know. Some of these people are illiterate, so we don't know whether to lend them money, don't know what they will do if these lose their jobs. One young lad who works here is very good. He interviews, translates and advises us whether to proceed.

Q. Do you do much mortgage work?

No. Funny we don't, I don't know why, mostly we do loans, cars,

sometimes furniture, other things of that nature.

Q. What interest do you charge?

That is confidential. What do you mean? Like we have set rates. Cars, you must have  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the value and we will lend you the rest at 13 $\frac{1}{2}$ % more or less. The car is collateral. Other things it varies. If you have cash or collateral, well, we could negotiate. Mostly we lend according to our policies which are laid down.

East Indian employees in banks and credit unions interpret the community and the place of individuals in the community to the loans officers and management of the bank. The interpretation of the community is from the point of view of the business and professional part of the community.

My staff have explained East Indians to me, they are very traditional. They operate as if they were in India, not all but most, those that we deal with at least. They don't trust everyone, but they do have close families, and they stick together. If we offend one we will be in trouble with lots of them. So we are very careful in our loans policy for example. We check people out within the community and make sure that there is support for them. Just good business practice you know.

The staff provide loans officers with community leaders who can tell the loans officer about the individual and can recommend the individual to the bank. This policy is generally followed not as a formal rule, but as an informal practice among banks and credit unions. One staff member explained:

I help the manager and loans officers with East Indian customers. Often customers don't know anything about banks or policies. They think they can get loans by talking to me. In India things are done by 'knowing someone'. They don't understand that it is not like that here. So I tell them what they have to do and explain to them the policy. I have to teach them about the statement and about the cheques and in general how the bank is run. Also I explain them to the others, translate, you know. Sometimes I suggest that the loans officers talk to other people in the community who know more than I do.

Q. What people for example?

Well, people who are businessmen or who know more. Who can assess the situation for us. These people are immigrants you know and are

funny sometimes. They don't really understand how things are done. We need to know about them, if they are reliable, things like that.

Q. Is this normal for all customers?

I don't know, I think it must be. But it is different for Canadians. They know more and they can understand. One woman came in and wanted money. The bank account was in her husband's name. We couldn't give her any. She was crying, and I had to tell her that she had to get her husband or she had to have her own account. She said the money was hers and she wanted it. I couldn't do anything, she didn't understand why she couldn't get it. It was a good thing we didn't give it to her, her husband came in later to say that she was not to have her own account. Things like that. They are different. We must be careful not to upset people or to damage their relationships.

I asked several bank employees about women:

The men do the finances. Often they don't want their wives to know. It is hard sometimes when women come in, I think sometimes that they should be able to know. Often her pay goes into his account. But when the account is in one name, it is hard to explain. Once I explained to a women that she could have her own account and put her money in it. Her husband came down here and complained to the manager. I learned it is better not to interfere.

In this way banks support the positions of men in families. Women do not have access to independent bank accounts or to the management of their own money.

### Summary

The East Indian business community and community organizations are tied together in a way that relates the business enterprises to their market. The community organizations provide both the procedures for organizing the market (which has already been organized and isolated by the practices as we have seen) and the basis for businessmen to be visible to the market. Some of the community organizations are not as directly involved in the market organization as others. Some organizations related more directly to the organization of hegemony of the bourgeoisie over the working class in matters of representation to the Vancouver community, cultural display, unity, etc. In either

case the community organizations are of and for the East Indian business community.

The Vancouver business community supports the development of East Indian businessmen as we have seen. As well the business community develops business practices which both reinforce the existing patterns and organize East Indians back into the community. These practices can also be seen to support men in relation to women in all cases. Thus the Vancouver business practices support and help organize the community.

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

I have argued that ethnic relations, at least in the case of East Indian immigrants are a particular form of class relation in this society. Aspects of an individual's culture, biography, geographic location of origin, skin colour, habits, etc. are organized as ethnic characteristics and become attributed to individuals as ethnic characteristics which are aspects of their personalities. Individuals who are part of an ethnic culture are treated differently from other Canadians. Treating them differently I argue is part of concealing the class relation of individuals under the organization of ethnic relations. Thus the ethnic relations, are organized as individuals are treated differently than other Canadians in the same class position by the state institutions and the labour market. The problem I posed then is to specify these relations in the actual activities of individuals.

The legal identification of individuals as immigrants provides an initial differentiation between individuals born in Canada or those who are Canadian citizens and those individuals who are not. However all immigrants are not equal in Canada and all are not treated identically. Certain groups of individuals are singled out for differentiated treatment which is visible in Canadian society as an ethnic community. The examination of the delivery of social services to East Indian immigrants in Vancouver begins to reveal some of the practices which constitute the differentiation among individuals and organize aspects of the relations between men and women in working class families. As well the practices of the delivery of social services to East Indian immigrants conceptualize, interpret, and explain the East Indian immigrants as a community to other agencies and institutions and assist in

developing practices of differentiation in other institutions. Part of both the conceptualization and organization is of the community as an homogeneous constituency to which service is delivered.

From the location of the home and family the class division in the community itself becomes visible, and it becomes clear that the school/family, police/family and social agency/family relations are of a class character. When we look at family organization we can see that the schools and social service agencies in particular and to a lesser extent the police are engaged actively in organizing working class families differently than ruling class families. Two aspects of this are important; class is a relation that is not only organized in the labour market, but also in the community relations, that is the institutions of the state are active in the organization of class relations. Further that the family organization and the relation between men and women in the family is organized in part at least, externally to the family and exhibits aspects of a class relation.

The participation of individuals from the East Indian community in the labour force is organized in such a way that their "ethnicity" is treated as and becomes a relevant feature in their selection and location in the labour force. The practices of employment and promotion which have been described begin to clarify how it is that East Indian individuals are located in the way they are. What is suggested, but not fully articulated is how the "ethnicity" of an individual appears more relevant than class in the work practices of workers themselves. It is clear however that this inequality in access to jobs and promotion in jobs constitutes a division in the working class itself.

Part of the specifications of how the different treatment of "ethnic groups" in the labour market is organized depends on a full historical account of the development of the labour processes and organization of work in

corporate capitalism, specifically in British Columbia. In addition, it depends on an historical account of the development and organization of immigration. These at a minimum are necessary to fully develop how the class relations are mediated by ethnic relations. They are not present in this work.

I have described aspects of the hegemony of the East Indian bourgeoisie over the East Indian working class. I have provided an account of how in the labour force organization and in the organization of family life the working class are in part organized as a market and constituency over which the East Indian bourgeoisie can exercise the hegemony. Canadian business organizations also participate in this as I have suggested.

To strengthen this account, the relations of the East Indian bourgeoisie must be explored further and as well the relations between the East Indian bourgeoisie and the Canadian ruling class must be articulated. Thus I am suggesting that this is the beginning of work rather than a completed work. I have tried to provide a full account of my method so that individuals who read my work are able to see how it was done and perhaps find it helpful in their own work. In areas where I have been able to develop aspects of the argument fully I have done so. In other areas, some of which I have just pointed to I have tried to focus the problem.



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