Cdn. Jnl. of Anth./Rev. Cdnne. d'Anth.
Vol. 1, No. 2, Winter 1980

Inter-group Conflict and Community Solidarity: Sikhs and South Asian Fijians in Vancouver

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Abstract: A limited degree of inter-group conflict can be an effective means of generating social cohesion and ideological solidarity within a given group. However, the relationship between inter-group conflict and group solidarity is dependent upon the *perception* of conflict and this perception is not mechanically linked to the actual level of conflict. Sikhs and South Asian Fijians in Vancouver perceive very different degrees of hostility being directed against them despite a high probability that this is not so. Sikhs are much more likely than Fijians to be convinced that they are the objects of prejudice and discrimination. These differences in perceived conflict are largely the consequence of divergent pre-emigration sociocultural contexts.

Résumé: Un certain degré de conflit entre groupes peut s'avérer un moyen efficace d'engendrer cohésion sociale et solidarité idéologique au sein d'une communauté. Cependant, la relation entre conflit entre groupes et solidarité de groupe dépend de la *perception* que l'on a de ce conflit, et il n'existe pas de relation mécanique entre cette perception et le niveau réel du conflit. Les Sikhs et Fidjiens de Vancouver perçoivent à un degré nettement différent l'hostilité dont ils sont l'objet, alors que cette hostilité est probablement la même. Les Sikhs, beaucoup plus que les Fidjiens, sont enclins à penser qu'ils sont l'objet de préjugés et de discrimination. Ces différences de perception du conflit sont dûes principalement à une divergence des contextes socio-culturels antérieurs à l'émigration.

Key words: **ethnicity, Sikhs, Fijian Indians, inter-group relations, social solidarity.**

It is well known that a limited degree of inter-group conflict can be one of the most effective means of generating social cohesion and ideological solidarity in a given group.[1] Conflict and threat often heighten social identities, increase ethnocentrism, tighten inter-group boundaries, and lower communication between groups.[2] Nevertheless, the relationship between conflict and social cohesion is highly variable. There are many instances where individuals fail to coalesce into cohesive groups, even in the face of substantial real conflict; lack of strong group solidarity among native people and North American classes are immediately brought to mind. Neither is it a unidirectional relationship, for identity bred by strong group solidarity can sensitize individuals to possible threats and can lead directly to conflict with others. Although a number of attempts have been made to generate an overall theory of conflict and group solidarity, a coherent theory seems far from being realized.[3] We believe that one of the important factors which has made the achievement of an overall theory of conflict and group cohesion difficult has been an overwhelming preoccupation by theorists with *real*, as opposed to *perceived* conflict.[4]

In overview, beyond difficulties posed by numerous empirical exceptions, realistic conflict theories of group cohesion seem to be particularly weak at several points in the causal chain which is presumed to connect the former to the latter. Such theories center on the translation of "real conflict" into its perception, or more generally on the means whereby information about the world is incorporated into the world view of individuals. A moment's reflection on the concept "real conflict" will make it evident that the framework within which such conflict is real is necessarily that of the observer; it is an etic concept. Real conflict theory rightfully assumes that people are normally rational and will react to threat by showing concern and perhaps by developing means to deal with it. Unfortunately, it also frequently assumes incorrectly that the information which individuals use to make rational decisions about the presence or absence of conflict are those of the observer.

In two important respects this is a weak assumption. First of all, people in etically similar conflict situations may differ considerably in their past experience and cultural heritage, part of which is a culturally-specific notion of group relations with others and the place of conflict within it. Information derived from cultural background and one's life history are fundamentally involved in the recognition of intergroup conflict, in the assessment of its scope and consequences, and in decisions about what to do about it, yet these are rarely considered by conflict theorists. Secondly, such theories infrequently take into account precisely how individuals come by information about the presence of inter-group conflict. Few conflict situations are so direct that they involve each group member in physical violen-

ce with members of other groups. Often conflict involves only a few group members in very specific social situations.

We would like to develop these points by reference to two recent South Asian immigrant groups in Vancouver – Sikhs and Fijians. Basically, our argument follows the following format: In Section I we show that the individuals in our Sikh and Fijian immigrant samples are very similar with respect to a number of major demographic and socioeconomic variables. Section II presents evidence to support the conclusion that the *objective* (real) frequency of inter-group conflict between Sikhs and others is essentially the same as it is between Fijians and others. Subsequently (Section III), we show that despite the parallels discussed in Sections I and II Sikhs and Fijians see their place in Canadian society (and in particular the level of hostility shown against them) very differently. Section IV argues that these differences cannot be attributed to either their socioeconomic statuses or to the Canadian context. Rather, these different perceptions of conflict are largely the consequence of differing aspects of social organization in the source countries from which Sikh and Fijian immigrants come; these aspects minimally include (1) the nature of historical inter-group relations, (2) the form and frequency of alliance formation within the group, (3) the structure of group identities, and (4) group solidarity in conflict with others.

In order to assess Fijian and Sikh attitudes about their relations with others, we developed a formal questionnaire, which was administered in 1977 - 1978 to 100 Sikh and 110 Fijian adult males. Because we were dealing with a rather sensitive area of life, we employed a Sikh and a Fijian to conduct the interviews in the two, respective communities. These data augmented those derived from fieldwork carried out between 1974 and 1977.

I. SOCIOECONOMIC STATUSES OF FIJIANS AND SIKHS IN VANCOUVER

Methodological difficulties precluded the development of a specifically random sample of the Fijian and Sikh populations of the Vancouver area.[5] Nevertheless, comparison of the demographic data that were collected on age, occupation and marital status with Canada Employment and Immigration Statistics showed that our samples were quite representative.[6]

But, what is really of consequence for our argument here is that we developed two sample populations that were very closely comparable. For instance, 58.6% of Fijian respondents had been here 6 years or less; the comparable figure for Sikhs was 61.6%. The mean age of the two samples was about 27 (Fijian) and 30 years (Sikh), the difference is largely accountable by the presence of a few long-time (old) immigrants in the Sikh sample. Educationally, Sikhs and Fijians were quite close, with Sikhs having more individuals at the extreme ends of the spectrum than Fijians.[7] Most of the individuals in both samples were home owners, and even their respective geographical distributions in the Vancouver area were very similar.[8] Most importantly, their occupational distributions were markedly parallel (see Table1).

Although the specific occupations volunteered by informants indicate that Fijians have a slight occupational edge in the skill level of their jobs (in blue collar work especially), both Fijians and Sikhs are heavily concentrated in blue collar work of approximately the same sort. This fact is of some consequence for our general argument, for it is reasonable to assume that for working males in particular the work situation will figure heavily as a context where individuals receive information about others and interact with them. These parallels are our support for the contention that any differences in the perception of threat and conflict evident between these two groups cannot be directly accountable by reference to socioeconomic position.

II. THE HOST CONTEXT AND INTER-GROUP RELATIONS IN IT

But what of social relations? Is social interaction between Sikhs and others the same as it is between Fijians and others? No survey instrument can measure this sort of thing directly, and we have therefore relied rather heavily in this section on fieldwork observations, with some survey support. Let us first consider the Vancouver context itself from the 'other' side of the ethnic boundary. There is now abundant evidence that despite an overall high level of acceptance of cultural difference on the part of Canadians, all groups do not receive equal esteem. In particular, several studies have shown that South Asians are generally considered to be more different from self than any other category of immigrant.[9] We believe these feelings to be particularly strong in Vancouver.

In essence, all South Asians in Vancouver must deal with a fairly prevalent stereotype which characterizes South Asians as socially distant, argumentative, and uncommitted to Canadian life, among other things. For

TABLE 1

Sikh and Fijian Occupations, by Sector.

Occupational Sector	*Sikhs* %	*(Number)*	*Fijians* %	*(Number)*
Unskilled Blue Collar	40.0	(32)	39.4	(43)
Skilled & Semi-Skilled Blue Collar	31.3	(25)	33.0	(40)
Skilled & Semi-Skilled White Collar	15.0	(12)	18.3	(20)
Professionals	3.8	(3)	1.8	(2)
Independent Businessmen	6.3	(5)	–	–
Not Working	3.8	(3)	3.7	(4)
Total	100.0%	(80)	100.0%	(109)

our purposes here the important thing is that at least in Vancouver this stereotype does not distinguish one variety of South Asian person from another. Most Vancouverites know nothing of Fijians or Sikhs, and those that do frequently do not appreciate the substantial differences in language, history, religion, etc. which exist between them. To a good level of approximation this means that *anonymous* interaction between Sikhs, Fijians, and others will be such that the other individual will operate with the same stereotype regardless of the ethnicity of the South Asian individual with whom he or she interacts. As a result, the objective levels of discrimination experienced by Sikhs and Fijians should be about the same.

There are, however, some contextual distinctions beween Sikhs and Fijians that complicate what might otherwise be a rather tidy mental experiment. For one thing, a substantial minority of Sikhs in Vancouver continue to differentiate themselves from the rest of the population in their appearance. For religious reasons some males continue to wear the turban and let their hair and beard grow long in accord with the traditions of Sikhism. Fijian males have nothing analogous to this and wear western dress. Sikh women in public also are more likely to wear Indian dress than Fijian women. It is reasonable to believe that Sikh dress conventions do generate more frequent expressions of prejudice against Sikhs than Fijians in certain circumstances.

Similarly, patterns of social interaction are not identical. Everything else being equal, Fijians tend to have more constant and multidimensional interaction with other Canadians than Sikhs. On the whole, Fijians have greater English language facility than Sikhs, and more significantly have come from a social context where interaction across ethnic lines was an everyday fact of life (more on this later). All in all, these considerations make it reasonable to expect that Sikhs will realistically see the level of hostility and prejudice shown to them as being somewhat greater than Fijians. Still, these differences are not basic, especially in the light of the similarities mentioned previously.

III. PERCEPTUAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SIKHS AND FIJIANS

Perceived threat and conflict are difficult concepts to cover in a survey, for they are fairly abstract ideas. We chose to focus more narrowly on Sikh and Fijian perceptions of discrimination and upon Sikh and Fijian notions of where they and other immigrant groups fit into Canadian society.

The differences are very striking indeed. Consider the following responses to a question about the frequency with which individuals experienced discrimination (see Table 2).

Sikh and Fijian responses were almost directly opposite ($r = -.97$). These differences were not explainable as being functions of age, time of residence, type of occupation, marital status, or differential sensitivity to different types of discrimination.[10] Ethnicity was the key variable.

These perceptions of discrimination are aspects of much larger pictures of Canadian society and of ethnicity and conflict within it. Consider Table 3, which gives the average scores of responses by Fijians and Sikhs to questions of the sort "How are other Canadians disposed towards the _____?"[11]

When one considers the rank order of groups selected by Sikhs from the most to the least esteemed by other Canadians one can see several related tendencies at work. First, Sikhs believe that "other Canadians" (whoever they might be) are operating with a specifically British ideal type. *Uniformly*, the groups at the lower part of the list are those which diverge culturally or biologically the most from the British.

Secondly, it is telling that of all types of people, Sikhs place *themselves* at the very bottom of the list. They consider themselves the least liked group of those available upon which to voice an opinion. This gives further support to the finding that a high proportion of Sikhs feel that they are frequently the victims of discrimination. It also suggests a folk reason for why they think they *are* the victims of discrimination — because of their divergence from British norms. This observation was constantly confirmed by our fieldwork discussions with Sikhs of all sorts. It should be noted that this perception is not altogether spurious. This Sikh ranking corresponds very closely ($r = -.87$) to that derived from Berry's (1977:106) national survey of ethnic attitudes[12] (see Table 4).

Fijians, on the other hand, see the Canadian ethnic mosaic quite differently. On the whole, Table 3 shows that Fijians were inclined to consider "other Canadians" to be more tolerant and accepting of all groups than were Sikhs. They were correspondingly less polar in their evaluations, for all groups averaged a neutral (2.0) score or better, with the exception of Sikhs. Looking at Table 3 more closely, Fijians seem to believe that other Canadians tend to use a 'right action' assimilative model of acceptance, as opposed to a specifically racist model. Most importantly, Fijians put themselves right up near the top of the list, in sharp contradiction to Sikhs, who put themselves at the bottom. Moreover, Fijians clearly distinguish their own social standing from that of Sikhs and Ismailis.

Tables 5 and 6 were tabulated from responses to the open-ended question "What do other Canadians think of

TABLE 2

Sikh and Fijian Perceptions of Discrimination.

Experience Discrimination	*Sikhs* %	*(Number)*	*Fijians* %	*(Number*
frequently	45.4	(45)	19.1	(21)
occasionally	35.1	(34)	25.5	(28)
rarely or never	18.5	(18)	55.4	(61)
Total	100.0%	(97)	100.0%	(110)

TABLE 3

Sikh and Fijian Perceptions of the Attitudes of Other Canadians to various Ethnic and National Groups

Group	*Sikhs*		*Fijians*	
	Score	*(Rank)*	*Score*	*(Rank)*
British	1.11	(1)	1.22	(1)
Americans	1.28	(2)	1.25	(2)
Germans	1.40	(3)	1.47	(7)
Italians	1.58	(4)	1.36	(4)
Fijians	–	–	1.44	(6)
French	1.64	(5)	1.50	(8)
Eastern Europeans	1.69	(6)	1.50	(8)
Portuguese	1.85	(7)	1.39	(5)
Chinese	2.18	(8)	1.34	(3)
Filipinos	2.19	(8)	1.64	(9)
West Indian	2.30	(9)	1.70	(10)
Indigenous People	2.70	(10)	1.65	(9)
Ismailis	–	–	1.98	(11)
Sikhs	2.74	(11)	2.34	(12)

TABLE 4

Sikh Perceptions of the Attitudes of Other Canadians to Various Ethnic and National Groups, as Compared with Berry's (1977) National Survey

Group	Sikh Score	Survey Rank	National Score	Survey Rank
British	1.11	1	.52	1
Americans	1.28	2	–	–
Germans	1.40	3	.02	3
Italians	1.58	4	-.20	5
French	1.64	5	.47	2
Eastern Europeans	1.69	6	.10 to -.13	4
Portuguese	1.85	7	-.25	6
Chinese	2.18	8	-.26	7
Filipinos	2.19	9	–	–
West Indian	2.30	10	-.52	9
Indigenous People	2.70	11	-.46	8
Sikhs	2.74	12	–	–
East Indians	–	–	-.95	10

Sikhs (or Fijians)"? These tables more or less confirm those that were put forward previously – especially that Sikh and Fijian perspectives are very different. Indeed, the lumping process required to assemble these tables actually loses a measure of how different the responses actually were. For example "hard working" would normally be put forward as a reason that others *liked* Fijians, whereas Sikhs would frequently suggest that it was a reason why others *disliked* them.

To summarize these differences between Sikh and Fijian perceptions of other Canadians and their relationships to them, Sikhs see other Canadians as being extremely ethnocentric; that ethnocentrism is such that visible minorities like Sikhs are discriminated against and have little chance to minimize that discrimination by changing their behavior. Sikhs in Vancouver see themselves to be in a minority situation of high conflict, and feel themselves to be stigmatized by others. Many Sikhs thought that little could be done about the situation.[13]

Many Fijians also seem to work on a premise that "other Canadians" do not automatically accept others who they see as different from themselves. Nevertheless, they perceived other Canadians as for the most part tolerant of Fijians. This perception carried over to Fijian beliefs of how Canadians evaluated other groups. In separate questions it became clear that on the whole Fijians also believed that whatever hostility there was between Fijians and others could be moderated by changes in Fijian behavior, notably by increasing social interaction with others, or conversely by not associating exclusively with other Fijians. These responses also confirmed our fieldwork data.

In short, neither Fijians nor Sikhs see their social situation quite as it is. Sikh perceptions of the degree of conflict and threat which exists between themselves and others is much overdrawn, while the typical Fijian view is overly optimistic. Nevertheless, these perceptions cannot be dismissed simply because they are inaccurate. As part of Fijian and Sikh world-views these ideas are models for action, to say nothing of their psychological impact. It goes without saying that such perceptions frequently tend to be self-fulfilling; once stigmatized and sensitized to possible inter-group conflict and threat, individuals often see the expression of prejudice and hostility everywhere. Similarly, in-

TABLE 5

Fijian Perceptions of What other Canadians Think of Them

	%	*Number of Responses*
Good people, like them	40.2	(41)
Hard working	24.5	(25)
Friendly	15.7	(16)
Neutral	5.9	(6)
Mistake for others	4.9	(5)
Don't like them	2.0	(2)
Don't know	6.0	(7)
Total	100.1%	(102)

TABLE 6

Sikh Perceptions of What Other Canadians Think of Them

	%	*Number of Responses*
Object to different Sikh behaviour	30.9	(30)
Hard working	19.6	(19)
Ignorant, stupid	16.5	(16)
Good people, like them	13.4	(13)
Object to use of different language	8.2	(8)
Cause unemployment	6.2	(6)
Object to Sikhs on racial grounds	5.2	(5)
Total	100.0%	(97)

dividuals who expect to be treated tolerantly frequently see tolerance in the same act that others may label discriminatory. What is perhaps more central to our argument is the fact that these distinctly different perceptions of minority relations in Vancouver are likely to have consequences for Sikh and Fijian group cohesion, a point to which we will return at the conclusion of the subsequent section.

IV. CONFLICT, COHESION, AND IDENTITY IN FIJI AND PUNJAB

As mentioned, it is not possible to argue that these profound differences between Sikhs and Fijians stem from the Canadian context itself. Rather, we suggest that they are almost entirely dependent upon the differing historical contexts out of which these two groups came. In outlining these differences we will concentrate on four aspects in particular: the nature of inter-group relations, group solidarity, social identity, and intra-group alliance formation.

Most Fijian immigrants are the descendants of people from the Indian subcontinent who were brought to Fiji as indentured laborers between 1870 and 1920.[14] They were collected from all over India and hence, originally did not constitute a group in any real sense. The severe, uniform subordination of these people under indenture erased many cultural and caste differences, and thus provided the potential for the development of strong group solidarity and group identity.

For several reasons this solidarity never materialized. For one thing, the economy of the post-indenture period worked against the rise of collective action and other expressions of group solidarity. The dominant sugar company of Fiji very early found it expedient to break its extensive plantation holdings down into small leaseholds, which were given over to Indian tenant farmers. This policy eliminated the potential for class solidarity which the stratified nature of plantation systems frequently generates.[15] Strict tenancy contracts isolated one Indian farmer from the other and to a certain extent made all tenants competitors with each other for land, which was in very short supply.

Moreover, the economic and social stabilization brought about by the rise of small scale Indian cash crop farming (1920's and 1930's) allowed individuals to reestablish religious, ethnic, and cultural differences which had been submerged by the indenture experience. Religious leaders were brought from India to instruct people in "orthodox" practice; linguistic and cultural groups sorted themselves out as being somewhat distinct from each other; even though most Indians were at that time extremely poor, there was sufficient wealth available to generate incipient class stratification within the Indian community.[16] All these things mediated against the formation of a strong overall Fijian Indian identity and against the possibility of any sort of truly universal collective action.

Neither were there any long term conflicts with either the colonial government or the elite European population of the sort sufficient to generate much group solidarity. The British colonial government in fact consistently refused to recognize Indians as a group. Taxes, the law, even rules about settlement and education dealt with Indians only as individuals; this was a sharp contrast to government policy with respect to native

Fijians.[17] Moreover, the always small (mostly Australian and New Zealand) European population was more or less invisible to most Indians, insulated as Europeans were in the elite areas and occupations of the urban centers. As in many colonial societies, the small, aspiring Indian middle class oriented their lifestyles to that of the British colonizers, which in turn further limited the rise of a specifically British versus Indian conflict situation; potential Indian leaders were quickly co-opted.

Indeed, the primary sense of inter-group conflict felt by Indians was not with Europeans at all but was with native Fijians. Beyond the rather conscious manipulation of this possible external threat by the colonial government, there were (and are) very real differences in the socioeconomic statuses of natives and Indians.[18] A complete explication of these differences is outside the scope of this paper, but it is useful to list some of the more salient ones here. Native residence groups own 85% of the land surface of Fiji in perpetuity, yet most cash crop agriculture is done by Indians; Indians are 51% of the population in comparison with 42% native Fijians, yet natives control the independent government. Indians control small scale commerce, transportation, and a range of skilled blue collar occupations, while natives predominate in government service, wage labor in the tourist business, and in gold mining.

These and other aspects of the Indian experience in Fiji have created a moderately strong group solidarity, but has rarely created the prerequisites for collective action. Neither have the social mechanisms been developed to unite Indians easily in collective action — a point to which we will return shortly.

All this is consistent with the way Fijians understand Canadian society. Fijians tend to minimize the importance of conflict between themselves and European Canadians. Although they feel relatively secure in their Fijian identity, it has not been an identity developed in an environment of threat (at least not *vis à vis* Europeans) and it does not lead many Fijians to turning inwards or to social isolation.

Moreover, there are some profound *social* consequences of this Fijian experience which are likely to affect the future course of Fijian inter-group relations for some time to come. As it stands, the "Fijian community" of Vancouver socially reflects patterns of community organization in Fiji. For one thing, the Vancouver Fijian community profoundly lacks social cohesion and group solidarity except in a network sense. Fijians associate with each other very frequently, and are highly dependent on each other for social and psychological support. Nevertheless, they are not an ethnic *group* in the normal sense of the word. Individuals tend to associate with each other on a one-to-one basis, and on the whole have few means whereby a substantial number of the thousands of such personal networks can be aligned towards a common goal. Hence, in addition to having a perspective on the world which minimizes their perceptions of inter-group conflict and threat, Fijians also lack the mechanisms to develop a substantial measure of group solidarity even if such a threat were to be perceived. They have no social means to provide easily for their collective defense.

Sikhs have evolved in a very different milieu. Theirs has been a heritage of constantly activating Sikh identity in conflict with others. It would not be going too far to suggest that Sikh identity has been largely defined in terms of what it is *not*.

As a religious movement Sikhism arose and evolved (in the early 1500's) in direct reaction to political and religous domination.[19] Under its first leader, Guru Nanak, Sikhism preached a doctrine of religous universalism, making the claim that both Hinduism and Islam worshipped the same God, but that both were chained to empty rituals which blinded them to the true nature of God.[20] Under Guru Nanak, Sikhism also practiced social universalism, to the extent that specific mechanisms were developed (such as ritual food sharing) to break down extant markers of differential status between believers.

Although these beliefs and practices remain current in Sikhism today, their application has been extremely restricted in several significant respects. First of all, the meaning attached to these forms of universalism has been almost totally inverted. At first, these were meant to be reasons why people of different persuasions and statuses should set aside their differences and come together in one faith. Today their use is largely to signify *exclusivity* rather than universality — these are things which Sikhs do, in *opposition* to others. Indeed, these practices have been largely restricted to the function of affirming Sikh distinctiveness and group unity in the face of others.[21]

Much of this remarkable ideological evolution had occurred by the time of the tenth Guru (Govind Singh), who finalized a trend already long established.[22] Guru Govind Singh imbued Sikhism with all the characteristics one might wish for in the construction of a religion for the militant defense of group privileges. It was Guru Govind Singh who named all male Sikhs "*Singh*" (lion) and women "*Kaur*" (princess). It has been traditionally said that it was he who provided male Sikhs with what are now the visual markers of Sikhism — long hair (*kes*), a dagger (*kirpan*), a steel bracelet (*kara*), short breeches (*kachchh*) and a comb (*kanghha*). While the turban was not strictly a religious marker *per se*, it was incorporated as such in folk tradition.

While these markers have (relatively weak) religious rationales for their existence, they also are important devices for the maintenance of a separate Sikh identity. These markers unite Sikhs while at the same time they serve to define the distinctiveness of relationships between Sikh and others.

These specifically religious developments paralleled profound changes in the socioeconomic situation of Sikhs. In the early 18th century, already strong Sikh identity was given even fuller expression in their slow and at first intermittently successful military consolidation of large areas of Punjab.[23] During no less than ten Persian invasions (1738-67) Sikh Jats organized themselves into effective small scale military units which further increased group solidarity. In the subsequent period of British rule (1849-1947) Jats slowly came to political and social prominence with respect to other local ethnic and religious groups in Punjab.

It may seem paradoxical that a good deal of Sikh social cohesion continues to be dependent upon constant *intra*-group conflict. Sikhs are too numerous to act as a group, but Jat Sikhs (who are politically and socially dominant) come about the closest to it that any population of several millions can. Large scale informal

political alliances (*paartis*) span the Punjab and involve many thousands of individuals.[24] In what has always been an extremely turbulent area Jat Sikhs have developed very elaborate systems of patron-client relationships which constantly throw individuals into mutual interest-generated association with others in conflict with those of other factions. As elsewhere, this constant factionalism has developed among Jat Sikhs a heightened sense of honor and its defense.[25] It should be noted that most Sikhs in Vancouver are Jats.

Hence, among Sikhs there has arisen a very polar calculus of friends and enemies. Friends are to be rigourously supported and enemies are to be despised; there are no neutral people. Having common enemies is often the primary bond of friendship. Morality works similarly. Good and bad are criteria relevant to everything; nothing is without its moral consequences.

Like Fijians, these notions have been brought over into the Canadian context, where their operation explains much about Sikh attitudes to Canada and Canadians. Sikhs are extremely sensitive to discrimination, which they see to be something that they have done nothing whatever to provoke. They have a powerful conviction that their behavior is proper and right, and are reluctant to change what they do simply because others do not like them doing it. In addition, their strong sense of group identity also seems to generate among Sikhs a considerably greater degree of ethnocentrism than is prevalent among Fijians, as well as a higher prevalence of social introversion within the group.

Finally, Vancouver Sikhs differ from Fijians in having established all the social mechanisms necessary to generate a substantial degree of social cohesion and group response to collective threat. They have already shown this in their historical responses to the ban on South Asian immigration (1908), the movement to allow their wives and children to immigrate (1908-1923), stopping the deportation of illegal Sikh immigrants (1936-1941), and achieving the vote in British Columbia (1945-1947).[26]

SOME THEORETICAL AND SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

We believe that the following theoretical points are suggested by this study:

1. Perceptions of intergroup conflict are not likely to coincide with actual levels in type or degree in situations of short term contact, high social distance, or differing background.
2. Perceptions are the basis for action, nevertheless.
3. In new interactional situations, *a priori* models of conflict and means of alliance formation will be used until the liability of so doing are seen to be too great.
4. Perceptions of conflict and threat will only lead to group solidarity where social mechanisms are available for such solidarity to be expressed. In situations of recent contact, these mechanisms will largely be those already in place.
5. There is a degree of mutual causation between perceptions of threat, social solidarity, and group identity. In a minority situation, high group solidarity and strong identity make individuals much more sensitive to threat.

The social implications of this study for inter-group relations theory are obvious. Very little of the relationships between conflict and perception discussed here are specifically Sikh or Fijian; of necessity, similar relations must exist in regard to any minority group. It would be fair to say that recent immigrant groups in particular are therefore especially prone to develop ideas of their societal place which are at variance with reality. Participating in two worlds, immigrants are psychologically marginal and frequently feel out of place in their new homeland. This potential gap between the reality and perception of conflict can (and does) reinforce these feelings of marginality.

Moreover, this gap can be (and is) exploited by "ethnic group leaders" and others; by making group individuals more sensitive to "discrimination" and "prejudice" their positions as middlemen between the government and the ethnic group are thereby stengthened and legitimated. The benefits accruing to group members are frequently marginal indeed.

Finally, there is no reason why this disparity between perception and reality cannot be used to the betterment of the situation of minority group individuals. To return to our empirical examples, many Canadian Sikhs are burdened with a social stigma which must signficantly degrade their psychological standard of living in comparison with Fijians. At this time, there is no evidence that this stigma is in any way productive to Sikhs in lessening actual tensions and conflict between themselves and others – it may actually exacerbate them. Any informational or social interactional programs which could effectively reduce these feelings of stigma among minority groups would inevitably lead to an amelioration of conflict between group individuals and others.

1. This observation was substantially developed by Sumner (1906) three quarters of a century ago.
2. See Sherif *et al* (1961) and Murphy (1957) on ingroup solidarity, Coser (1956; 1957:104-110) on identity, Levine & Campbell (1972) on ethnocentrism, and Barth (1971) on intergroup boundaries.
3. Boulding (1962), Beals and Siegel (1966), Berkowitz (1962), Bernard *et al* (1957), and Heider (1958).
4. For instance, Levine and Campbell (1972:30-1) note that the proposition that "real threat causes hostility to the source of threat" is frequently seen to be "too obvious to need stating".
5. Neither Sikh nor Fijian origin are coded in census forms, and nothing like a total list of individuals of either group in the Vancouver area has been compiled. We used a random sample of individuals with recognizably Sikh names derived from a local South Asian telephone directory to develop a list of Sikh respondents. The Fijian sample was drawn from a list developed by one of us (N. Buchignani) during fieldwork in the Fijian community.
6. When an allowance is made for changes stemming from residence in Canada, figures for age, occupation, and marital status derived from the Department of Employment and Immigration (formerly Department of Manpower and Immigration) immigration statistics (1968-1977) agree quite well with our samples.
7. The educational breakdown of our Sikh sample reflects changes in immigration patterns over the last decade; a considerable number of earlier Sikh immigrants were highly educated independent immigrants. Recently almost all are family class immigrants who have less education than their predecessors.
8. Among both Fijians and Sikhs there was a heavy geographical concentration in working class East Vancouver.
9. See Berry *et al*. (1977:106), or Henry (1978).

10. In fact, within either the Sikh or the Fijian sample none of these variables appreciably affected the frequencies or various responses to this question. There were slight tendencies for older Sikhs and (young) student Sikhs to report less discrimination than others. Both Sikhs and Fijians complained of the same sorts of discrimination, notable in regard to jobs, name calling and vandalism, and social isolation.
11. Four answers were possible: favorably disposed to ___(value = 1), neutral (value = 2), unfavorably disposed (value = 3), and don't know. To make these scores the "don't knows" were discarded and averages were constructed for each sample.
12. Because our scale and Berry's were inversely ordered with respect to what constituted approval (a lower value for us, a higher one for Berry) the correlation is negative.
13. The most frequently given cause of the prevalence of negative stereotypes of themselves given by Sikhs was bad coverage in the media (Indra 1979).
14. Tinker (1974), Andrews & Pearson (1916), Gillion (1962).
15. Jayawardena (1963).
16. Mayer (1961).
17. Thomas (1974), N. Singh (1977).
18. Mamak (1974), Fisk (1970), Belshaw (1964).
19. K. Singh (1977).
20. D. Singh (1968), Loehlin (1964), Archer (1946), I. Singh (1969).
21. Leaf (1972:152-167).
22. T. Singh (1963).
23. K. Singh (1977:1-103).
24. Pettigrew (1975), Leaf (1972:203-229).
25. See Black- Michaud (1975:190-207) and Peristiany (1965) on feuding in the Mediterranean and Middle East.
26. Buchignani (1977:1-76).

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