



Producing Power: Ethnicity, Gender, and Class in a Caribbean Workplace

Kevin Yelvington

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In a small, locally owned Trinidadian factory that produces household goods, 80 percent of the line workers are women, almost all black or East Indian. The supervisors are all men, either white or East Indian. Kevin Yelvington worked for a year in this factory to study how ethnicity and gender are integral elements of the class structure, a social and economic structure that permeates all relations between men and women in the factory. These primary divisions determine the way the production process is ordered and labor divided. Unlike women in other industries in "underdeveloped" parts of the world who are recruited by foreign firms, Caribbean women have always contributed to the local economy. Within this historical context, Yelvington outlines the development of the state, and addresses exploitation and domination in the labor process. Yelvington also documents the sexually charged interactions between workers and managers and explores how both use flirting and innuendo to their advantage. Weddings and other social events outside the factory provide insightful details about how the creation of social identities carries over to all aspects of the local culture. Author note: Kevin A. Yelvington teaches anthropology at the University of South Florida and is editor of *Trinidad Ethnicity*.

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