Indian Women in South Africa: From 1904 to the 1950's

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Indian women in South Africa constitute a small minority of the population, but as a group Indians in South Africa shed light on the longstanding history of colonialism and apartheid that maintained its hold over this region and show how marginalized or immigrant communities respond to such a history. Indian women in particular show how there is a great degree of nuance and complexity in gender and cultural norms for even small groups and immigrant communities, as showcased through the primary and secondary literature on this topic. It is also well known that, as a marginalized community of non-white South African citizens/immigrants, Indians faced discrimination, violence, and exclusion from access to basic resources (such as healthcare) and job opportunities that likely impacted their health. Indian women doubly faced this issue as they were limited in their ability to find work, as most decently paying positions open to women were limited to white women, and oftentimes were separated from their husbands due to migration policies and imprisonment during the early colonial period during which the passive resistance movement occurred. Even afterwards, it is clear from the secondary literature on reproductive health in South Africa that Indian women were excluded from access to the same healthcare resources that their white counterparts had access to. Information is available regarding abortions due to the work of Helen Bradford and Catherine Burns and other area of women's health, but little information regarding Indian women as a subcategory of women's health.

In this paper I focus on the issue of Indian women's health in South Africa as part of a greater discussion regarding the health of women and the health of Indian communities in South Africa. I am focusing on the period between 1904 and the 1950s, as much of the primary literature I reference comes from the Indian Opinion which started in 1904 and the secondary literature I reference discusses women's health in the context of the 1950s in South Africa. There

has been secondary literature regarding the health of nonwhite women in South Africa, as well as some literature regarding Indian communities in South Africa, but there is a silence in the secondary literature regarding Indian women in South Africa and more information is readily available through archives regarding the early colonial period and the period of Indian indentured servitude as opposed to later on. Additionally, much of the primary literature that is available is muddled by inconsistent racial categorizations and indirect references to issues of women's health as well as stigmatization of women's health issues. For the primary literature that does exist surrounding Indians in South Africa, there is a greater degree of nuance and opinions presented in the primary literature that aren't necessarily represented in the secondary literature. Through an analysis of primary and secondary literature in this field, I discuss both this silence as well as surmise what information I can regarding the experience of Indian women in South Africa during this period of time and the subsequent health impacts that result from this.

Ultimately, I hope to highlight many of the nuances and silences that exist around this topic rather than offer a definitive answer or history regarding this issue, but I think that this approach lends itself to my argument that it is reductive to do so and that, even in historiographic works, it is important to be mindful of nuances in these conversations (past and present) and avoid portraying the culture or history of a group as a monolith. In the quest to provide a definitive history on a topic, it is important to consider that the lived history of individuals might differ from representations presented in historiography and that these differences speak not to individual outliers but that there are nuances in ideology and culture that might cause these differences.

Indentured servitude in the early 1900's and late 1800's resulted in the introduction of Indians to South Africa, with the first few Indian indentured servants arriving between 1860 and

1911 as cheap labor to work on sugar plantations[1]. Indentured servants faced brutal treatment and beatings, along with a large gender disparity as they were mostly men and this wouldn't change for some time due to the fact that Indian men were viewed as cheap labour to replace or work in competition with native South Africans in the area; women were not as valuable in the eyes of the colonial system of indentured servitude[2]. This gender disparity resulted in intermarriages between Indian indentured servants and native South African women, resulting in some cultural interchange and even transition of medical customs with records of Indians in South Africa filing for licenses to practice as inayangas with support from local chiefs[3], but due to economic competition fostered by the British use of underpaid non-white labourers between Indians and South Africans there was a great deal of tension between these groups that still remains today and played a large role in affecting the health and safety of both Indian and South African populations[4]. In 1911, due to the severe and brutal mistreatment of Indian indentured servants, India prohibited the export of Indians to work as indentured servants in Natal, but there was significant pushback from Indian citizens due to the brutal conditions that they faced in colonial India; a life in South Africa promised financial independence and income without the exorbitant taxes and near famine that plagued many Indians[5].

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[1] "Indian Indentured Labour in Natal 1860-1911 | South African History Online," accessed May 13, 2021, https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/indian-indentured-labour-natal-1860-1911.

[2] Karen Flint, *Healing Traditions: African Medicine, Cultural Exchange, and Competition in South Africa, 1820-1948* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2008), 142.

[3] Karen Flint, *Healing Traditions: African Medicine, Cultural Exchange, and Competition in South Africa, 1820-1948* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2008), 147.

[4] Thomas Blom Hansen, *Melancholia of Freedom: Social Life in an Indian Township in South Africa,* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 35.

[5] "Indian Indentured Labour in Natal 1860-1911 | South African History Online," accessed May 13, 2021, https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/indian-indentured-labour-natal-1860-1911.

However, as indentured servants that had been working in Natal gained independence and requested land rights, they started to gain a better quality of life and requested to have their wives join them, which population growth lead to many fears about the "Indian penetration" in South Africa and that Indian men would start to become too familiar with white women, undermining both the racial hierarchy that allowed the British to maintain control of South Africa and the ideology that justified the mistreatment of nonwhite groups in South Africa[6]. This fear led to the infamous ruling that all non-christian marriages were not legally recognized as marriages by the South African government, essentially prohibiting any Indian who was not christian and married under christian marriage tradition from bringing over their family to South Africa[7]. Furthermore, this pushback and animosity towards Indians from white South Africans resulted in the enactment of a weighty tax on all Indians who decided to remain in Natal after their period of indentured servitude ended, coercing Indians (even those who were second generation and had grown up in South Africa) to return to India, which tax would eventually expand to all members of the families of former indentured servants[8]. However, as many Indian merchants came to South Africa separate from the system of indentured servitude, to exert

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[6] Thomas Blom Hansen, *Melancholia of Freedom: Social Life in an Indian Township in South Africa,* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 33.

[7] Kalpana Hiralal, "'What Is the Meaning of the Word "Wife?"' The Impact of the Immigration Laws on the Wives of Resident Indians in South Africa 1897-1930," *Contemporary South Asia* 26, no. 2 (June 2018): 206–20, https://doi.org/10.1080/09584935.2017.1354814.

[8] Susanne Maria Klausen, "The Formation of a National Birth-Control Movement and the Establishment of Contraceptive Services in South Africa, 1930--1939 - ProQuest" (Dissertation, Anne Arbor, Queen's University (Canada), 1999): 70, https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.lib.davidson.edu/docview/304545238?pq-origsite=primo.

pressure on the Indian population as a whole this was passed simultaneously with legislation that helped bar Indians from obtaining trading licenses[9].

Much of the secondary literature on Indians in South Africa and some secondary literature on women's health (Maria Klausen's work on birth control[10] and Catherine Burn's *Reproductive Labors*[11]) provide this same background and context as the backdrop for subsequent factors that affected Indian women's health, effectively demonstrating how a system of colonialism founded on racial and power hierarchies as well as specific policies targeting Indians affected Indian health. As Thomas Blom Hansen mentions in his anthropological work, *Melancholia of Freedom: Social Life in an Indian Township in South Africa,* Indians faced violence as part of the system of indentured servitude and as a group that became the target of growing animosity from both black and white populations in South Africa, and this violence can be assumed to affect both Indian men and women[12]. Hansen's work is more comprehensive in its discussion of cultural and societal factors that affected Indian women in South Africa, but most sources rely on the implied connection between Indian health overall and Indian women's health specifically. Regarding most of the secondary literature on women's health, Indian women are mentioned under the category of coloured women that suffered from inequitable access to

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[9] *Ibid*.

[10] Susanne Maria Klausen, "The Formation of a National Birth-Control Movement and the Establishment of Contraceptive Services in South Africa, 1930--1939 - ProQuest" (Dissertation, Anne Arbor, Queen's University (Canada), 1999): 69-70, https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.lib.davidson.edu/docview/304545238?pq-origsite=primo.

[11] Catherine Burns, "Reproductive Labors: The Politics of Women's Health in South Africa, 1900-1960" (Evanston, Northwestern University, 1995), https://search.proquest.com/docview/304223011/fulltextPDF/42C2E486C8434322PQ/1?accountid=10427.

[12] Thomas Blom Hansen, *Melancholia of Freedom: Social Life in an Indian Township in South Africa,* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 33.

healthcare[13], limited access to birth control/contraception[14], as well as cursory mentions of Indian women receiving abortions in secondary literature regarding abortions and birth control[15]. Additionally, it is difficult to deduce overall maternal mortality and infant mortality statistics for Indian populations because of, as Burns mentions in her dissertation on women's health in South Africa, many hospitals didn't keep records of nonwhite births and deaths[16] and those that did had vacuous racial categorizations that lumped Indians in with other non-white/coloured groups or under the term "asiatic."[17] This makes it difficult to understand how women's health issues are affecting Indian women in particular. Burns also implies that for the data that was available (from 1911), the distinction of "asiatic" was created in part due to a movement to distance Indian populations from white populations, which timeline coincides with the passage of more strict immigration laws regarding Asian immigration and growing animosity towards Indians in South Africa[18]. By analyzing the connections between both of these historiographical sources, it seems that growing animosity towards Indians in South Africa may have resulted in separate data recording regarding the infant mortality and birth rates for Indians (or at least asian immigrants)

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[13] Catherine Burns, "Reproductive Labors: The Politics of Women's Health in South Africa, 1900-1960" (Evanston, Illinois, Northwestern University, 1995), https://search.proquest.com/docview/304223011/fulltextPDF/42C2E486C8434322PQ/1?accountid=10427.

[14] Susanne Maria Klausen, "The Formation of a National Birth-Control Movement and the Establishment of Contraceptive Services in South Africa, 1930--1939 - ProQuest" (Dissertation, Anne Arbor, Queen's University (Canada), 1999): 1-372, https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.lib.davidson.edu/docview/304545238?pq-origsite=primo.

[15] Helen Bradford, "Herbs, Knives, and Plastics: 150 Years of Abortion in South Africa," in *Science, Medicine, and Cultural Imperialism* (MacMillan Academic and Professional LTD, 1991), 136-137, https://www.dropbox.com/s/sma568r75zbbsth/Herbs%2C%20Knives%2C%20and%20Plastics.pdf?dl=0.

[16] Catherine Burns, "Reproductive Labors: The Politics of Women's Health in South Africa, 1900-1960" (Evanston, Illinois, Northwestern University, 1995): 85, https://search.proquest.com/docview/304223011/fulltextPDF/42C2E486C8434322PQ/1?accountid=10427.

[17] *Ibid*., 87

[18] Kalpana Hiralal, "'What Is the Meaning of the Word "Wife?"' The Impact of the Immigration Laws on the Wives of Resident Indians in South Africa 1897-1930," *Contemporary South Asia* 26, no. 2 (June 2018): 210, https://doi.org/10.1080/09584935.2017.1354814.

in some areas similarly to how separate racial categorizations for Indians played a role in the realms of academia and zoning/housing as a means to distance whites from Indians, thus the emergence of an Indian identity in South Africa was one that was defined counter to whiteness, and thus Indian womanhood emerged as a category separate from white womanhood[19]. However, due to the fact that there is a limited body of historiographical work on the specific topic of Indian women's health, separate from larger discussions of Indians in South Africa or larger discussions of women's health in South Africa, this connection wasn't explicitly laid out in the text because the text was dedicated to discussions of reproductive health in South Africa overall rather than discussing Indian women specifically.

Furthermore, the information (however sparse) that is available regarding specific contraceptive clinics open to Indian women, alongside abortion rates amongst Indian women, isn't included in discussions in literature regarding Indians or Indian women in Natal, which is counter to the portrayal of Indian women as submissive or severely limited in their career and educational prospects by a patriarchal culture, relegated to a very traditional, conservative role where abortions and contraceptive use would be heavilt frowned upon[20,21]. This viewpoint is apparent in Nasima Carim's work *Gender and Cultural Identity Work of Unmarried Indian Breadwinner Daughters in South Africa,* where she discusses how Indian women are socialized to become guardians of their and their families honor, and then discusses how this guardianship necessitates limited interaction outside the home and thus generally limits Indian women from

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[19] Thomas Blom Hansen, *Melancholia of Freedom: Social Life in an Indian Township in South Africa,* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 33.

[20] Nasima Mohamed Hoosen Carrim, "Gender and Cultural Identity Work of Unmarried Indian Breadwinner Daughters in South Africa," *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 47, no. 4 (2016): 441–62, http://www.jstor.org/stable/44109639.

[21] Thomas Blom Hansen, *Melancholia of Freedom: Social Life in an Indian Township in South Africa,* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 179.

pursuing careers except in cases of poverty[22]. Carrim goes even further and contests that "Indian culture has also been instrumental in repressing women," which is an interesting viewpoint to hold modern-day given that writers for the newspaper *Indian Opinion* in 1903 strived to refute this very accusation from white South Africans, recognizing how this stereotype was being used to justify the mistreatment of Indians in South Africa and existing racial hierarchies that relied on ideas of white supremacy[23].

It is also important to note how the discussion of this viewpoint regarding Indian women frames Indian women's lives as being shaped by patriarchal and cultural influences, but doesn't discuss how Indian women maintained and gained autonomy in these cases, or all of the cases to the contrary that are present in the primary literature where Indian women had a very active role in society and worked as advocates, teachers, and business owners in South Africa. In general, there is little mention of the autonomy of Indian women in secondary literature regarding women's health or Indians in South Africa, in regards to how Indian women responded to cultural, societal, and legal challenges that faced them. It is clear that there is little conversation between scholarly works regarding Indians in South Africa and women in South Africa, which in turn leads to contradictions where either women's health or women in general aren't considered in discussions surrounding Indians in South Africa, or if they are these mentions are cursory and lack nuance, allowing or relying on generalizations to fill this information gap. In discussions

[22] Nasima Mohamed Hoosen Carrim, "Gender and Cultural Identity Work of Unmarried Indian Breadwinner Daughters in South Africa," *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 47, no. 4 (2016): 441–62, http://www.jstor.org/stable/44109639.

[23] "The British Indian in South Africa - Orange River Colony," *Indian Opinion*, June 18, 1903, World Newspaper Archive.

surrounding women's health in South Africa, Indian women become a footnote or a vacuous group within another broader racial categorization such as "asiatic" or "colored."

Karen Flint, in her book *Healing Traditions:African Medicine, Cultural Exchange, and Competition in South Africa, 1820-1948,* discusses in her last chapter, which is focused on "African-Indian encounters and their influence on African therapeutics" that, due to the near taboo nature of discussions surrounding women's health, it becomes difficult to search archives and obtain information regarding Indian health and health practices[24]. Similarly, research regarding abortion and contraceptive use is also stigmatized and socially taboo, so researching topics that are generally taboo in a very small immigrant community (with severe gender disparities during the early colonial period) becomes difficult. Generally, Burns and Bradford had to rely heavily on interviews and access to government archives to procure information regarding Indians in South Africa, and this silence regarding Indian populations in South Africa and women's health has compounded to produce an information vacuum regarding Indian women's health in South Africa. This vacuum then allows for speculation and reliance on broader generalizations, which can suffer from a lack of nuance and thus provide an incomplete understanding of the complexity and diversity of lived experience of Indian women.

One of the best sources of information regarding the lived experience of Indians in South Africa during the early colonial period comes from *Indian Opinion*, which was a newspaper run by Indians in South Africa regarding Indian perspectives on global and domestic affairs, in particular regarding issues that affect the Indian population. From the language used by the paper

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[24] Karen E. Flint, "African-Indian Encounters and Their Influence on African Therapeutics, 1860-1948," in *Healing Traditions: African Medicine, Cultural Exchange, and Competition in South Africa, 1820–1948*
(Athens, OH, UNITED STATES: Ohio University Press, 2008), 141, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/davidson/detail.action?docID=1743601.

to refer to sexual encounters it is clear from the language used that discussion of these issues was a taboo that could not be broken[25], but a survey of other literature from non-Indian authors demonstrates that it was uncommon for any group to discuss openly matters of sexual relations or rape as part of formal writing. report on indentured servitude, instead heavily implying such encounters[26]. However, in the *Indian Opinion,* there are female writers whose writing showcases the taboo surrounding discussions of rape and sexual relations[27]. Furthermore, despite the discussion in secondary literature of Indian culture as a patriarchy that polices gender roles heavily, socializing women to protect their dignity by not working, and the portrayal of Indian women as passive participants in this culture, a survey of the writing in this newspaper alone showcases that there is far more to this discussion.

One particular case that showcases the diversity of Indian thoughts and opinions on the subject of gender roles, discussions of sexuality, and the way in which Indian women respond to legal and cultural challenges is the topic of education and women's enfranchisement. There are numerous articles in the *Indian Opinion* that discuss the education of Indian children, detailing the history of how education came to be segregated along racial lines for Indian children and contesting mixed gender schooling that arose as a result. An article titled "Indian Female Education" showcases the exact argument that Carrim makes about Indian society and how Indian society socializes women into domesticity and reinforces patriarchal gender roles, where the article argues that "women cannot become clerks and attend public offices" with their education, but that educating women makes them "an upper servant in *(their)* husband's house,

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[25] "The Evil of Mixed Schools," *Indian Opinion*, December 9, 1911, World Newspaper Archive.

[26] John Edward Jenkins, *The Coolie: His Rights and Wrongs* (The Carribean Press 2010, 1871), http://caribbeanpress.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/John-Edward-Jenkins-The-Coolie-His-Rights-and-Wrongs-Complete-Text.pdf.

[27] "The Evil of Mixed Schools," *Indian Opinion*, December 9, 1911, World Newspaper Archive.

(they) are its mistress; and instead of being in subjection to her lord, she is his helpmate.[28]" This article shows one opinion regarding women's education in the Indian community, that women should be educated so that they can become better housewives, and the reinforcement of clear patriarchal gender roles is clear when a woman's husband is referred to as her "lord" and she is minimized to a secondary role even in regards to her household. But this article is outnumbered by the multitudes more that advocate for equal access to education between boys and girls, the creation of an Indian Women's Education Committee to help teach young women and in turn allow them to become teachers[29], as well as articles that support women pursuing careers such as clerkships[30]. Furthermore, these opinions in support of women's education and equal treatment of men and women are ever present, both predating and following the aforementioned article. There are also numerous articles that advocate for Indian women working as teachers in Indian schools, as opposed to white women[31], and one which details how the Indian community financially supported Indian women whose businesses had been negatively impacted by forced relocation into the "unsanitary area" during a plague outbreak[32]. This advocacy for women's activism, pursuit of education and careers, as well as equal treatment portrays a perspective present in the Indian community that, despite being unrepresented in the secondary literature, is shown to be far more common in comparison to the perspective that Indian women were barred from pursuing careers save in the case of poverty. However, the pushback against mixed gender schools for the reason that there are implied inappropriate relations that happen between Indian

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[28] M. Jameson, "Indian Female Education," *Indian Opinion*, February 3, 1906.

[29] "Indian Education in Natal," *Indian Opinion*, November 21, 1908, World Newspaper Archive.

[30] "Transvaal Notes," *The Indian Opinion*, January 28, 1910, World Newspaper Archive.

[31] "Durban and District Indian Educational Advisory Committee," *Indian Opinion*, November 4, 1921, World Newspaper Archive.

[32] "The Insanitary Area," *Indian Opinion*, October 29, 1903, World Newspaper Archive.

students of different genders highlights how taboo the topic of relationships and sexuality was during that time[33].

Furthermore, the silence in secondary literature regarding Indian women's response to legal and societal challenges, alongside broader causes such as women's enfranchisement, is astonishing given the multitude of articles that detail how Indian women took initiative and fought against policies that were adversely affecting them. In one front page headline, Indian women wrote a telegram as a coalition addressing the racist implications and discriminatory nature of the 1913 ruling that declared all non-Christian marriages as invalid[34]. Had the *Indian Opinion* not supported this independent undertaking by Indian women, they would not have printed the telegram and an article of support on the front page. Furthermore, there was another article that described how Indian women in Natal had arranged a protest in support of women's suffrage, and this article not only commended their representation of Indian women in the fight for enfranchisement, but specifically highlighted the racial disparities present in the fight for women's suffrage[35]. The *Indian Opinion* expressly criticized the lack of reciprocal solidarity and support from white women for the enfranchisement of all women, regardless of their race[36].

Then, the question remains, if the vast majority of articles that address women do so in a context of support for women and this perspective remains unrepresented in secondary literature, what else can be surmised from the primary literature that isn't covered in the secondary literature on this topic? While Hansen's work has a limited discussion of almirahs and the systems through which Indian women maintained their financial stability and autonomy, as well

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[33] "The Evil of Mixed Schools," *Indian Opinion*, December 9, 1911, World Newspaper Archive.
[34] "Indian Women as Passive Resisters," *Indian Opinion*, May 10, 1913, World Newspaper Archive.
[35] "A Truly Great Procession," *Indian Opinion*, August 5, 1911, World Newspaper Archive.
[36] Ibid.

as contributed to generational financial stability, the extent to which immigration to South Africa undermined this system of intergenerational support is only minimally discussed[37]. An article regarding immigration in the *Indian Opinion* discussed how an Indian woman was stripped of her prized golden bangles, which were used as a form of financial stability in the form of investing money into jewelry, on her voyage between Natal and India and that if colonial governments were to be fair then this practice could not stand[38]. However, articles in the *Indian Opinion* also showcase far worse abuse that may have occurred on the passage over and upon arrival that wasn't discussed in the secondary literature. One article discusses how women are stripped down to the hip in the presence of men and that, upon needing to use the restroom, no such facilities are present and thus men, women, and children are forced to relieve themselves out in the open on the beach (to the disgust of passersby and shame of those subjected to this abuse) and utilize the sand to clean themselves[39]. It is clear that part of the process of immigration to Natal from India involved abuse (beatings when asking about rations), insanitary conditions that spread disease, and possible sexual abuse.

Nowhere in the secondary literature regarding either women's health, nor regarding Indian populations, did I see an explicit mention that Indian women feaced sexual abuse or assault during migration. Perhaps this might be because there was not the explicit mention of sexual assault in literature which makes researching this topic difficult and more speculative, which in turn prevented this from being mentioned in the secondary literature. Regardless, this discussion of sexual violence against Indian women and the resistance of Indian women to

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[37] Thomas Blom Hansen, *Melancholia of Freedom: Social Life in an Indian Township in South Africa,* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 36.

[38] "Robbing the Poor," *Indian Opinion*, May 7, 1920, World Newspaper Archive.

[39] "Indians in Natal," April 30, 1904, World Newspaper Archive.

violence is important for understanding different factors that have affected the health of Indian women. Generally, any discussions of sexual violence that were mentioned in the secondary literature only discussed violence against Indian women by Indian men[40], which might in part be due to the South African government propagating this stereotype and aggresively documenting any scenarios of violence against women by the Indian community because it lends fuel to the system of segregation that was present[41].

The weaponization of this stereotype regarding Indian men is most apparent when two men and a woman tried to accuse an Indian man of rape for financial gain, where the man was acquitted but the accusation shed light on the way in which stereotypes regarding Indians provided political fuel for racist policies and discriminatory practices[42]. One article in the Indian Opinion even described how the South African government accuses Indians of thinking women were "soulless" which the *Indian Opinion* finds the need to contest[43], indicating that not only did Indians find it necessary to state that they advocated for equal treatment of women and men, but that the South African government utilized these accusations to gain political leverage for stricter immigration policies and taxation. The biased nature of reporting by the South African government is best portrayed in the recurring discussion of crime statistics that occurs in the

[40] Thomas Blom Hansen, *Melancholia of Freedom: Social Life in an Indian Township in South Africa,* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 179.

[41] "The Bulwark of Justice," *Indian Opinion*, March 31, 1906, World Newspaper Archive.

[42] Ibid.

[43] "The British Indian in South Africa - Orange River Colony," *Indian Opinion*, June 18, 1903, World Newspaper Archive.

Indian Opinion, where the *Indian Opinion* frequently highlights how contentions that non-white individuals are more violent or prone to criminality are not bared out by the data[44].

Furthermore, in the same vein as violence against Indian women by the South African government, it is clear that Indian women and children were subjected to abuse and horrible conditions in the "gaols," where Indians were sentenced as part of their involvement in either the passive resistance movement or their inability to pay the increased tax rate that was imposed[45]. One woman's obituary was printed in the *Indian Opinion*, where she and her baby died while imprisoned in the gaols[46]. *Indian Opinion* also highlights the importance of education in this regard, where the South African government lowered the age of who was considered an adult to 13 for Indian girls and 16 for Indian boys[47], which meant that they would have to pay taxes at this age without necessarily having access to a paying job or having completed their education. The *Indian Opinion* stated just as much, that taking away access to education for the Indian community, pairing this with higher taxes and new legislation that taxed children, and policing personal relationships by retroactively dictating marriage law would disempower the Indian community and prevent them from being able to advocate for their rights[48]. To combat this, according to the same article, Indian women and men would need to be educated and advocate for their rights. This was also paired with laws that required registration of children once they turn 8 with the government, paired with a hefty fee that most families would not afford, which the article contends would result in infanticide[49]. Given the aforementioned anxiety amongst the

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[44] "Outrage by Natives," April 30, 1904, World Newspaper Archive.

[45] "Reuter's Message from Blemfontein," *Indian Opinion*, November 12, 1920, World Newspaper Archive.

[46] "Notes and News," *Indian Opinion*, April 14, 1922, World Newspaper Archive.

[47] "Mr. Gokhale's Congree Speech," *Indian Opinion*, May 29, 1913, World Newspaper Archive.

[48] "Our Future," *Indian Opinion*, February 6, 1920, World Newspaper Archive.

[49] "Written in Blood!," *Indian Opinion*, March 31, 1906, World Newspaper Archive.

white population that I discussed earlier in this essay, it is clear that many of these policies were intended to reduce the Indian population one way or another and Indians at the time recognized this and fought back how they could, such as through the passive resistance movement[50].

All of this taken together shows that there are a large number of complexities and nuances to existing contentions that Indian society inherently represses women in academia (which given the history aligns with racist contentions by the South African government[51]), as well as a diverse array of opinions that are present in the Indian community. Another layer of complexity is added when one considers the divide between different religious groups, which sometimes had differing socioeconomic statuses (with many wealthy Muslim traders having migrated separately to conduct trade) that resulted in each part of the community being targeted in different ways[52]. The *Indian Opinion* is also far from an unbiased source, as it was heavily related to the legal fight that Indians were waging in courts for their rights, so it had a vested interest in appearing fair and unbiased, but given the fact that Indian writers for the newspaper frequently criticized white society[53], it is clear that this newspaper was largely for and by Indians. These were likely educated, upper class Indians, but they were nevertheless Indians that were speaking on behalf of the community, and frequently featured writing from other community members. Therefore, at the very least the paper provides a variety of perspectives

[50] Susanne Maria Klausen, "The Formation of a National Birth-Control Movement and the Establishment of Contraceptive Services in South Africa, 1930--1939 - ProQuest" (Dissertation, Anne Arbor, Queen's University (Canada), 1999): 70, https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.lib.davidson.edu/docview/304545238?pq-origsite=primo.

[51] "Asiatic Commission," *Indian Opinion*, April 23, 1920, World Newspaper Archive.

[52] Thomas Blom Hansen, *Melancholia of Freedom: Social Life in an Indian Township in South Africa,* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 179.

[53] "Outrage by Natives," April 30, 1904, World Newspaper Archive.

that could have existed in the Indian community, even if they might have varied in their popularity with socioeconomic status, education, or other factors.

In conclusion, this essay addresses the secondary literature in the field of women's health and Indian populations, silences regarding Indian women's health, as well as greater nuances that are present in the primary literature regarding this subject that are not represented in the secondary literature. Given this diversity in opinion, the static notion that Indian women have remained cloistered in conservatism and restricted to traditional gender roles is at odds with the actual diversity of opinion that is present in the Indian population in South Africa regarding women's rights and health issues. This calls into question the notion that Indian society has only changed recently, as presented by Carrim[54], and notions of societal progress over time. Rather than assuming that Indian populations in Natal were against women's enfranchisement or activism and that the acceptability of both these practices is a more modern attitude, it seems that segments of the Indian population did hold more conservative ideas as presented in "Indian Female Education[55]," and portions of the Indian population held opposing views in the period between 1904 and 1950.

[54] Nasima Mohamed Hoosen Carrim, "Gender and Cultural Identity Work of Unmarried Indian Breadwinner Daughters in South Africa," *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 47, no. 4 (2016): 441–62, http://www.jstor.org/stable/44109639.

[55] M. Jameson, "Indian Female Education," *Indian Opinion*, February 3, 1906.

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