

The History of Crime Among People of Indian Origin in South Africa

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ABSTRACT This paper is about stimulating an interest that has been inadequately researched by scholars who study people of Indian origin in different parts of the world. Its focus is on crime and what might be viewed as unsociable behaviour, particularly in the countries where they have settled from the nineteenth century, mainly as indentured labourers. We retrace through a brief historical overview, the paradigms that have been used since the middle of the twentieth century, to describe their uses and limitations in capturing data on the Indian diaspora. Our view is that these paradigms have developed a reputation for producing a generally romanticized view of cultural persistence and adaptation among Indians wherever they settled. While we do not offer an alternate model, out of choice, at this juncture, we stress that one important issue that has not acquired sufficient attention in the research about them is crime. Since Indians have settled and integrated into their host societies, their engagement in mainstream economic and social processes have also brought them to succumb to criminal behaviour that has been precluded from the models that have been used to describe them. It is argued here that new paradigms on the study of Indians overseas begin to focus on this issue as well.