

AHRC/ESRC Library of Congress Scholarship Competition statement:

Using the LoC collections, I will research how and why family planning in India became central to the agendas of government and international agencies, c.1947-1994. Using Indian demographic writings; population control campaign material; private papers; and birth control publications, I will investigate what problems family planning was seen to solve in India, and why. In particular, I will examine the links between overpopulation, poverty, development, modernity and family planning. I will also examine how Indian women were perceived and represented within overpopulation and family planning discourse, and how and why they were targeted for family planning interventions.

Family Planning [FP] in India became central to the agenda of numerous state and international agencies as discourses of 'overpopulation' and strategies of population control emerged as a priority concern in the post-WWII period. My project investigates FP in India c.1947-1994, between Independence and the International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo (viewed as a landmark event in coalescing ideas about women's reproductive health and rights into population policy). During these years, FP was increasingly regarded as the solution to 'overpopulation', viewed by sections of the Indian and international community as a threat to security (Alison Bashford 2008; Sunniva Engh 2002); an impending Malthusian crisis (Mohan Rao 2004); and an obstacle to poverty eradication and economic development (Sarah Hodges 2004). However, FP projects too often employed coercive measures in pursuit of their goals (Marika Vicziany 1982, 1983; Matthew Connelly 2008; Betsy Hartmann 1986). Moreover, FP programmes disproportionately targeted poorer sections of Indian society, particularly poor women. Following the criticism of development projects put forward by James Scott, I argue that FP interventions in post-colonial India can be seen an example of 'high-modernist' thinking which, when combined with the structures of state power in the newly independent nation, proved coercive and oppressive to the very people they sought to emancipate (Scott 1998).

Scholarship by Connelly, Bashford and Rao provides valuable insights into the politics of population control. However, my work examines FP more closely in the context of the newly independent Indian nation. Sitting at the intersection of modern South Asian, post-war development, and reproductive health history, my project seeks to understand how FP in India became a crucial strategic site for intervention. Why was FP so crucial to Indian programmes of development and modernization? And why exactly was India so important to global discourses of overpopulation and development? Furthermore, my project investigates how Indian women in particular were represented and targeted by FP programmes, and how Indian women responded to and influenced FP agendas.

I examine the way in which population and FP in India were envisioned in demographic literature; government and NGO reports, correspondence, and FP campaign material. Since beginning my research in October 2009 I have conducted research in several London archives, on the basis of which I will present 3 conference papers this Spring which examine the link between demography and FP in post-colonial India. I will spend the rest of year 1 researching in the UK, then research in India for 9 months during year 2, where important archives include the National Archives of India and the National Institute of Health and Family Welfare. I will also carry out an oral history project in India to complement my archival sources. Following this I will spend July-September 2011 researching in LoC, before returning to the UK to complete the write-up of my project during year 3.

Primary LoC collections to be accessed are: a series of pamphlets in the South Asia ephemera collection published 1950-2002 on 'Population control in India' (9 parts, 106 microfiches), and 'Demography of India' (3 parts, 11 microfiches). Posters in the Prints and Photographs Division from India about population control. Manuscript papers of: Fairfield Osborn (environmentalist and population control advocate); Margaret Sanger (birth control campaigner); Caspar W. Weinberger (leader of US delegation to Bucharest World Population conference 1974) and Daniel P. Moynihan, (Ambassador to India 1973-1975), both of which include correspondence with Indira Gandhi. Materials on 'Overpopulation' and American 'Population assistance', including reports and hearings in US Congress regarding population assistance to developing countries; USAID and international population assistance; population growth and world economy. Motion pictures, including 'A Great Problem', an animated cartoon which stresses the need for FP in India; 'saparva—an era of yearning', film on Indian FP campaigner R. D. Karve. Titles under subject headings 'India—Birth Control', and 'India—Population' including Government of India reports; publications on Indian demography; publications from organizations such as the Family Planning Association of India. The South Asia collection also includes a number of titles on Birth Control in Hindi, which I am proficient in. Additionally, LoC holds a large collection of history of medicine, modern South Asian, and development studies titles, which will enable me to continually situate my findings within the secondary literature as I research.

Access to these collections would add considerable value to my current and planned research. I have identified those titles on India's demography in LoC which are not available in the UK, which will add depth to the research I am currently conducting. These materials will help me to answer how India's population became

perceived as a problem, and FP as the solution. Alongside planned research in India, the ephemera collections and films will help me to understand how Indian women were perceived and targeted within FP programmes, and what vision of modernity was promoted in FP campaigns. The Osborn, Sanger, Moynihan and Weinberger papers will aid me in understanding why and for whom FP was important. Alongside my archival work in London and India, these papers and LoC collections on US government and international population assistance will aid me in mapping out the international networks of family planners who contributed to activities in postcolonial India, and in understanding their agendas and relationships. It will allow me to assess the nature of international FP efforts, why India was so important to international agendas, and to what degree US, UK and India-based bodies shared similar perceptions and fears of Indian women and their fertility. Additionally, time spent at LoC will also afford a valuable opportunity to network with other researchers. Towards the end of my visit, I propose to give a presentation at the Kluge Center based on my research at LoC. This will enable me both to share my findings and to receive valuable feedback from Kluge scholars.