

**“Immigrant Sisters Organising for Change”:  
The Gujarati Mahila Mandal, 1930-2010**

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**ABSTRACT** The formation of women’s groups, clubs or networks has played an important role for ethnic and immigrant women in the construction of their cultural and religious identity. It has also served as a vehicle for adaption and acculturation, creating a ‘home away from home’. This article traces the history and activities of a women’s group, the Gujarati Mahila Mandal (GMM) which was established by Gujarati-speaking immigrant women from India in 1930. This article argues that, while it played an important role in sustaining ethnic identity, the GMM did not preclude women from empowering themselves. It provided women with a social platform: to meet, to socialise, to engage in decision-making, public speaking, fundraising, confidence building and to co-ordinate activities as well as opportunities for income generation and networking. This article will make an important contribution to the history of immigrant women to Natal, the role of women in public life, the history of women’s organisations and the construction of ethnic identity in the context of religion and language.