Title:
Ethnographic findings on the State of Beedi Rolling in Maharashtra, India

Subtitle:
Lessons from the Socioeconomic Impact of Public Health Initiatives

Abstract:
Female *beedi* rollers occupy the lowest rung in a niche sector of the dying tobacco industry in India. Global public health anti-tobacco initiatives have made significant headway in India. This is considered a significant public health achievement, and existing literature has outlined the policy and sociocultural changes driving the success of this movement. The adverse ramifications of the anti-tobacco movement and the changing sociopolitical landscape disproportionately burden female beedi rollers who are already one of the most vulnerable populations in the unorganized labor industry. Even so, there is a distinct paucity of research on the effect of current trends in the tobacco industry in the context of beedi rollers. This study utilizes ethnography and semi-structured interviews with female beedi rollers in Pune and Solapur, Maharashtra, to outline the many perceived factors affecting this population in the social, economic and political realms. Though limited in sample size, this report adds to the existing literature by highlighting the perspectives and attitudes of a unique labor group faced with the micro-level challenges that are spurred by changes in the macro landscape. These findings on agency, employment behaviors, and “unorganized” labor relations may be used to inform future policy and public health endeavors. As this investigation was conducted in fulfillment of the Research Capstone requirements for the Department of Anthropology, and was generously funded by the Plimpton Experiential Learning Fellowship, the report will also cover my personal insights and experiences conducting the field research.

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