



**3rd International Conference
on Public Policy (ICPP3)**

June 28-30, 2017 – Singapore

Panel

Policy Narratives and Public Policy

Title of the paper

Demonetization in India: deconstructing the “common man”

Author(s)

Gautam Prateek, Arizona State University, gchoubey@asu.edu

Dr. Richard C Knopf, Arizona State University

Date of presentation

June, 30th, 2017

Abstract

The policy of demonetization announced by the Government of India on November 8th, 2016 has created intense debates and discussions around all sections of the society in India and abroad. Amidst all these discussions, the common man has emerged as the central character used by the ruling and opposition parties as well as the print media to defend or oppose the policy. Using insights from narrative policy analysis and the Narrative Policy Framework, our article analyzes the narratives around the characteristics of the common man as created by the ruling and opposition parties. We have specifically investigated the characteristics of the common man as depicted in the assertions of the ruling and opposition parties by conducting a content analysis on a sample of 768 newspaper articles published by four leading English newspapers in India. Our analysis reveals that the narrative strategy of the ruling parties has been to defend the policy by focusing on diffused benefits to the common man by invoking values of bravery, vigour and sacrifice. The opposition parties have adopted a strategy of focusing on the diffused transaction costs to common man by appealing to various identities like the housewives, small traders, vendors, middle-class, poor, farmers and people in rural areas. The print media appears to be playing a neutral role by catering to opposition and ruling parties as well as the common man. Finally, our analysis also reveals an urban bias in the depictions of common man by the ruling and opposition parties as well as the print media coverage on the issue of demonetization.

Keywords : Narrative policy analysis ; narrative policy framework ; demonetization ; common man.

1. Introduction

Research in neuroscience, cognitive psychology, communications, policy studies, and many other fields of social sciences argues about the importance of narratives or stories in human life. Narratives help with cognition and communication in daily life, and serve as important tools in understanding and analyzing a public policy (McBeth and Jones, 2010). In this context, the analysis of stories surrounding a policy forms a way to examine the spectrum of actors or groups, and their strategies around policy processes.

In this article, our attempt is to offer an analysis of narratives around the recently announced policy of demonetization of 500 and 1000 currency denominations by the government of India with effect from mid-night of November 8th, 2016 to fight against illegal money, counterfeit currency and tax evasion (GoI, 2016). The official announcement stated that the citizens of India had time till December 30th, 2016 to exchange and deposit (subject to certain conditions) these denominations in banks and post offices. Beyond banks and post offices, certain other outlets related to healthcare (public hospitals), transportation (bus, train and flight ticket counters) and public utilities (electricity, water providers, Municipal Authorities), were allowed to accept the old, demonetized 500 and 1000 currency denominations. These denominations i.e., 500 and 1000, constituted around 86% of the total cash currency in

circulation (RBI, 2016), and the cash-GDP ratio in India is third highest globally (Rogoff, 2016).

Given the importance of cash in Indian economy and the huge informal sector¹ this policy change has created a multitude of reactions from all sections of the society in India. It is beyond the scope of this paper to summarize all the discussions on the merits and demerits of this policy that has been amended 54 times in a span of 42 days, between November 8th and December 20th, 2016 (Gupta, 2016). Amidst all the debates in the parliament, public and private arenas, and all the press conferences, press releases and media coverage, a central character has emerged around the narratives of defenders and protesters of demonetization policy.

Narratives involve a central character besides a plot where there is a sequence of connected events, exemplary symbols, and a moral of the story (Shanahan, McBeth and Jones, 2014). In the narratives around demonetization, we will argue that the *common* man has emerged as a central character, manifest in government's arguments as well as counter-arguments of the opposition parties. This central character has emerged as a symbol in the plot involving black money, counterfeit currency and inequitable growth, a sequence of policy adjustments, and moments of support and opposition of demonetization in India.

This leads our analysis into asking: who is this *common man* that has been invoked regularly in the rhetoric of both the ruling and the opposition parties? What are the characteristics of this *common man*, recently used by the highest court of India as a reference to judge the demonetization policy? Is the *common man* a brave citizen, who is not ready to buckle up in the declared fight against corruption? Or, is the *common man* already too frail to fight? Is the *common man* a brave soldier, who can fight against the evil of black money and counterfeit currency at the call of ruling party? Or, is the *common man* suffering hardships and inconveniences, and he must protest at the call of the opposition parties?

We do not have any of the answers. However, by analysing the narratives that the ruling and opposition parties have constructed around the idea of a *common man*, we can hope to deconstruct the idea of *common man* as used in the past month or so and test three hypotheses related to the narrative strategy. Thus, this paper is divided into four sections. Beyond the first introductory section, the second section will deal with a review of literature on the use of narratives in the analysis of policy processes. The third section deals with the methods used in this article and the fourth section comprises results, followed by a discussion of results in the fifth section. Finally, the sixth section of this article will present a summary of the findings and conclusions.

2. Literature Review

Narratives, or stories, are essential to meaning making in human lives, thereby, showing as well as shaping our realities (Lejano, Ingram, H., and Ingram S. 2013; Shanahan, Adams,

¹ Around 55% of the workers in India are engaged in AGEHC (i.e., part of agricultural sector excluding growing of crops, plant propagation, combined production of crops and animals) and non-agricultural sector. Of these, around 72% are employed in the informal sector (NSSO, 2012).

Jones, and McBeth, 2014). Shanahan, Adams, Jones, and McBeth, (2014) specifically cite the example of popular stories in the Western world like Romeo and Juliet, Odysseus and Penelope, and Cinderella and the Prince for their influence in shaping cultural expectations about gender roles in relationships. Moreover, studies in cognitive psychology and neurosciences also attest to the importance of narratives in shaping and communicating realities in daily life as well as politics (Herman, 2001; Shanahan, Jones, McBeth, and Lane, 2013; Western, 2008).

In the context of policy making, narratives serve the purpose of creating policy realities (Shanahan, McBeth, and Jones 2013). Therefore, it is not surprising that President Barack Obama had used the power of personal stories to garner support for the healthcare reform (McBeth and Jones, 2010), and had expressed the desire to be a good story teller in his second term as President of USA (Shanahan, McBeth and Jones, 2014).

Although the study of discourse in policy analysis has been a long tradition (Fischer and Gottweis, 2012), the focus on narratives as the unit of analysis has gained traction after the conceptualization of Narrative Policy Framework (McBeth and Jones, 2010). Before the Narrative Policy Framework (NPF), many studies in policy analysis have looked into the role of narratives by building on the foundational work by Roe (1994). Drawing from structural as well as post-structural approaches, Roe (1994) had argued for the centrality of narrative analysis in policy studies.

Further, without using the NPF *per se*, many scholars and theories have treated policy processes as exercises in construction of social reality by drawing on the idea of social constructivism (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). The theory of Democratic Policy Design (Schneider, Ingram, and DeLeon, 2014), the concept of policy paradoxes (Stone, 2002), the concept of pathways approach to sustainability (Leach, Scoones, and Stirling, 2010), and the contextual model of policy analysis (Lejano, 2006) are noted in this regard, among many others. Even NPF has been used as an explanatory tool in the Punctuated Equilibrium theory (PET), and similarly NPF has also used theories like PET, Advocacy Coalition Framework theory (ACF), Multiple Streams Approach theory (MSA) and Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) framework in a number of studies (Shanahan, McBeth, and Jones, 2014).

Drawing from the structural approaches in narrative policy analysis and literary theory, narratives can be defined as comprising a setting that provides the context of the story, characters or actors that animate the setting, a plot that defines relationship between the characters in the setting and a moral of the story (Shanahan, McBeth, and Jones, 2014; Roe, 1994). For instance, in this article, the setting is the demonetization policy recently announced in India, the characters focused are ruling parties, opposition parties and the *common man* (focus of analysis), while the plot to be deconstructed is the constructions of *common man* in defence as well as opposition of the demonetization policy, while the moral of the story is arguably the benefit of the common man for both the ruling and opposition parties.

This article draws from the idea of social constructivism and NPF as the analytical framework for the analysis of narratives around *common man* by the ruling and the opposition parties at the national level in India.

The NPF considers three levels or units of analysis: micro (individual), meso (group or coalition) and macro (institution, culture) (Shanahan, McBeth, and Jones, 2014). At the micro level, it builds on the idea of Homo narrans i.e., human beings as story tellers and story makers. The micro-level of analysis has been addressed by several publications in the NPF tradition using surveys, observations, experiments and quasi-experiments. It essentially believes that narratives play a central role in how individuals process information, communicate and reason.

At the Meso level, this idea gets translated as Agora Narrans where Agora pertains to the policy subsystems comprising of actors such as interest groups, lobbyists or political parties. At the Meso level, the approach of content analysis has been used extensively, and we are following the same in this article. Content analysis has predominantly been textual, and to that, we are adding the analysis of images in this article similar to the use of videos in McBeth, Shanahan, Anderson, and Rose (2012).

We are dealing with the meso level of analysis that involves ruling and opposition parties in India at the national level. Three of the hypotheses in the meso level of analysis related to narrative strategy of issue expansion, issue containment and media role will be tested in this article. The first hypothesis or H1 is: when groups perceive themselves as losing, they will try to expand the issue by diffusing the costs and concentrating the benefits. The second hypothesis or H2 is: when groups perceive themselves as winning, they will try to contain the issue by concentrating the costs and diffusing the benefits. And, the third hypothesis or H3 is: whether media is playing the role of a conduit or contributor to the policy process (Shanahan, McBeth, Hathaway, and Arnell, 2008).

Thus, our objective in this article is two folds. Firstly, drawing from the structural approach to narrative analysis, we will analyze the construction of *common man* by the opposition and ruling parties in India around the demonetization policy. Secondly, we will test, the three hypotheses, by testing whether the ruling party is trying the narrative strategy of issue containment by concentrating costs on others, and diffusing benefits on the *common man*. Secondly, we will test whether the opposition parties are trying the strategy of issue expansion by diffusing the costs on *common man* and concentrating benefits on others. Finally, we will test whether the print media is playing the role of a conduit or contributor in the demonetization debates.

We will assume the ruling parties as winners, and opposition parties as losers, in testing the hypotheses because the demonetization policy has been implemented in spite of all the opposition in the past one and a half month. This assumption is purely analytical as we do not have any other means, such as published literature, to categorize the winners or losers in the demonetization debate in India. So, the assumption of winner is essentially about maintaining

the status quo by the ruling parties, and not rolling back the policy as demanded by a faction of the opposition parties.

3. Methods

The two objectives of the study are to deconstruct the *common man* as found in the narratives constructed by the ruling and opposition parties and testing three hypotheses related to the narrative strategy of political parties and the role of media respectively. Therefore, we have used content analysis in this study following the widely-used approach of content analysis in the studies on narrative analysis of policy processes (Shanahan, McBeth and Jones, 2014). In addition, we have also used analysis of images, which has been less explored in the field of policy analysis within the analytical framework of NPF.

To gather the content or data, we focused on four leading English newspapers in India by circulation and national presence, and collected articles between November 8th and December 18th, 2016. The four leading newspapers were: Times of India (<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/>), The Hindu (<http://www.thehindu.com/>), Hindustan Times (<http://www.hindustantimes.com/>) and The Indian Express (<http://www.indianexpress.com/>). The first three are leading English language newspapers in India by circulation according to the Audit Bureau of Circulation in 2016 (ABC, 2016). The fourth newspaper i.e., The Indian Express was selected due to its widespread presence across the country.

Different newspapers have different ways of archiving articles in their database. Our focus was on demonetization and common man. Thus, in case of *Times of India* and *Hindustan Times*, we searched their archival database using the keyword “demonetization”, and downloaded all the articles. In case of *The Hindu*, we searched the database using the same keyword “demonetization” and downloaded the first 200 articles, while in case of *The Indian Express*, we searched the database using keywords “demonetization and common man”, and downloaded all the articles. The searches yielded a total of 768 articles after disposing certain irrelevant/unrelated articles that appeared with the keyword searches: *Times of India* (229); *Hindustan Times* (116); *The Hindu* (171); and, *The Indian Express* (263).

3.1 Coding

The analysis was done on both the text as well as images used in the 768 articles. Beginning with images, both the title and description of images was used for analysis. The first column of the coding sheet contained titles and the second column contained the description of images. Now, in case of text, the objective was to capture *common man* as described by the leaders of the opposition and ruling parties. Hence, in all the articles, the sentence, phrase or paragraph that captured a description or appeal to common man was extracted and used to populate the first column in the coding sheet. This yielded a total of 247 unique extracts by eliminating the duplicate extracts where the same person was quoted by different newspapers or the same person saying the same about common man in two instances.

The second column was used to code it into two pre-decided categories², ruling parties and opposition parties. The decision for ruling and opposition parties was made by ascertaining whether the person affiliated to the party was in favour or against the demonetization policy, thus rendering categorization into ruling parties or opposition parties respectively.

Continuing with the coding scheme, we populated the third column in the coding sheet with the characteristics of common man mentioned in the corresponding extract. Carrying out this process, we came up with 167 extracts of the opposition and 56 extracts of the ruling party that were used to list out the characteristics of common man, as shown in **Figure 2** and **Figure 3**, for the final analysis of text.

3.2 Limitations

A total of 768 articles were considered for analysis in this article by downloading articles from the four leading English newspaper websites using demonetization as the keyword. However, using customized Google News search, it was found that between 8th of November and 18th of December, 2016, a total of 1091 articles were published online that had demonetization as a keyword anywhere in the text. Thus, with reference to the total available sample, we have considered around 70% of the total sample available online for our analysis.

Further, our focus on English language newspapers indirectly excludes other languages like Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Bengali, Malayalam, and many other languages, which have significant presence in specific regions of India.

4. Results

As mentioned, the narratives were extracted from two sets of data: one, images used in the newspaper articles; and, two, the corresponding text in the newspaper articles. Both were treated as separate sets of data in the analysis.

The images were analysed quantitatively as well as qualitatively. In terms of quantitative analysis, only descriptive statistics was used to analyze the broader themes that have been captured by the images, as shown in **Table 1** below.

² It is to be noted that all the political parties categorized in opposition are not the parties opposing the policy as such. There are two factions between them. One faction is opposing demonetization *per se*, such as the Trinamool Congress Party and Aam Aadmi Party and demanding a roll back of the policy. And, the other faction is opposing the hasty or faulty implementation of the policy such as the Congress Party and Janata Dal (United) Party, and not opposing demonetization as a policy *per se*. However, in this analysis, we have considered both these factions within the category of opposition parties. Similarly, all those parties that are in favour of this policy, and its implementation, have been categorized as ruling party in the analysis.

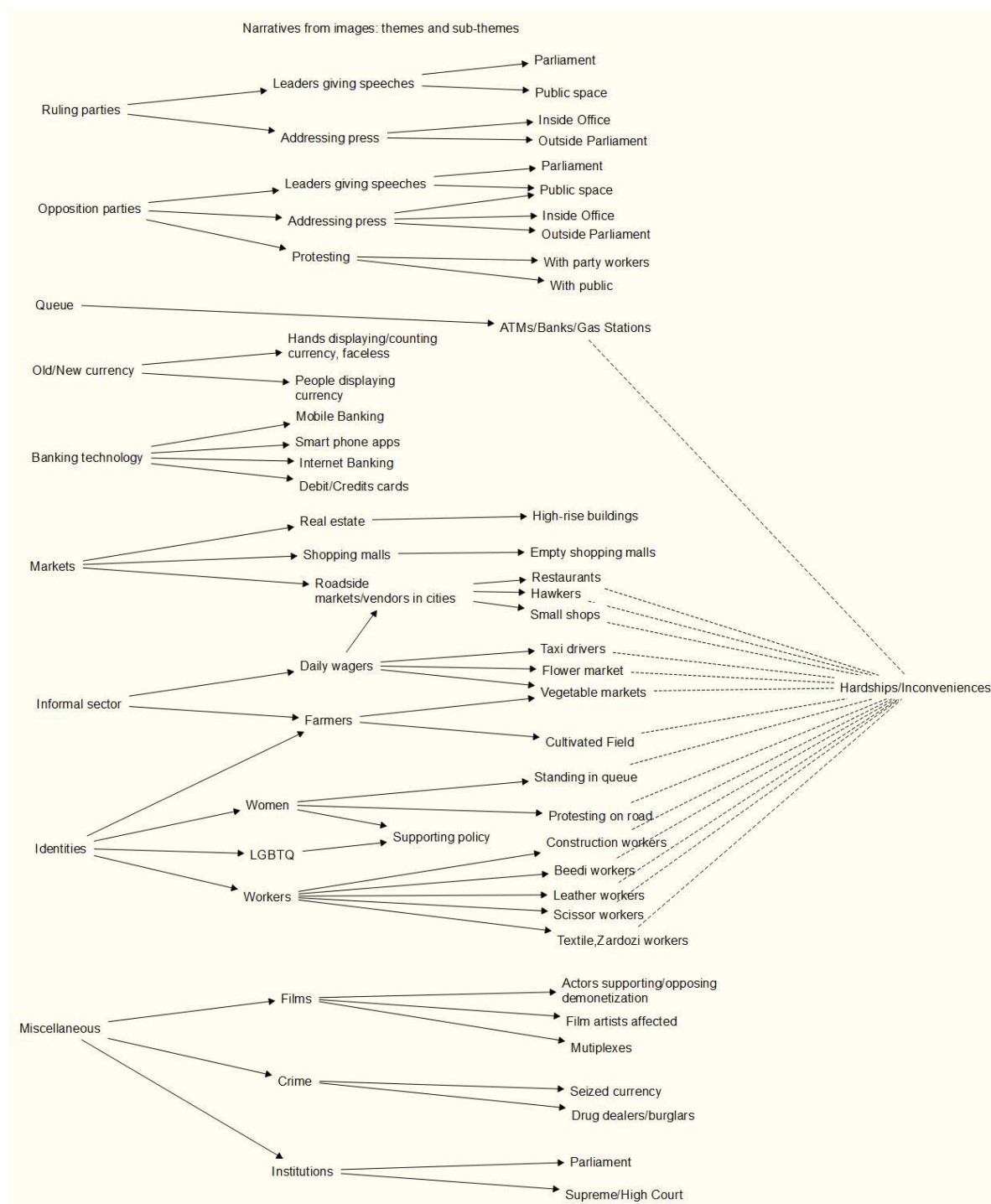
Table 1 showing percentage coverage of themes					
Themes	Times of India (n=200)	The Hindu (n=119)	The Indian Express (n=251)	Hindustan Times (n =115)	Total (n=685)
Ruling parties	12.00	16.80	23.50	19.13	18.24
Opposition parties	8.00	26.05	39.04	11.30	23.06
ATM/Bank/Gas station queue	9.00	15.96	13.54	22.60	14.16
Old/New Currency	26.50	5.04	10.75	24.34	16.64
Rural/Farmer/Workers/Vendors	6.00	14.28	0.39	4.34	5.10
Mobile/Internet Banking, Credit/Debit cards	2.50	0.84	1.19	3.47	1.89
Wedding/Jewellery	3.50	0	0.79	0.86	1.45

For qualitative analysis, the sub-themes within the broader themes were captured by use of software named Scapple, as shown in **Figure 1** below. Although, all the themes captured in the images have been shown in the figure, the focus was on common man i.e., the themes besides Ruling and Opposition parties will be focused in the discussion section.

It should be noted that the theme “ATM/Bank/Gas station queue” consists of images where people are shown in queues outside ATMs, Banks and Gas Stations. Quantitatively, the number of images pertaining to ATM and Bank queues is far more than the queues in Gas stations. In case of the theme Old/New Currency, the images are mostly faceless, showing only hands and the old and new currency being exchanged, deposited or seized by law enforcement. The theme “Rural/Farmer/Workers/Vendors” captures different identities that have been shown by means of images in the news articles. Interestingly, within this theme the proportion of rural workers is very less compared to their urban counterparts. Furthermore, the categories of urban workers shown are also more than the corresponding workers in rural areas. Since, the debates around demonetization have also included support and opposition towards cashless economy, the images shown in the theme “Mobile/Internet Banking, Credit/Debit cards” depict aspects of cashless banking technology using cards, mobile and internet. In case of “Weddings/Jewellery” the images have shown film scenes of wedding, real wedding photographs as well as images of jewellery and jewellery shops which are very

popular during the wedding season around this time of the year in India. Further, detailed analysis of images is show in **Figure 1** below.

Figure 1 showing different themes captured in image analysis of print media



Besides images, the data gathered as text from newspaper articles was analyzed qualitatively by focusing on extracts about common man. A total of 167 extracts of the opposition parties and 56 extracts of the ruling party were considered for final analysis by use of Scapple, as

used in case of images. The analysis corresponding to the ruling parties, or parties in favour of demonetization, has been shown in **Figure 2**, while the **Figure 3** depicts the analysis conducted in case of the opposition parties.

Figure 2 showing narratives of the common man from ruling parties

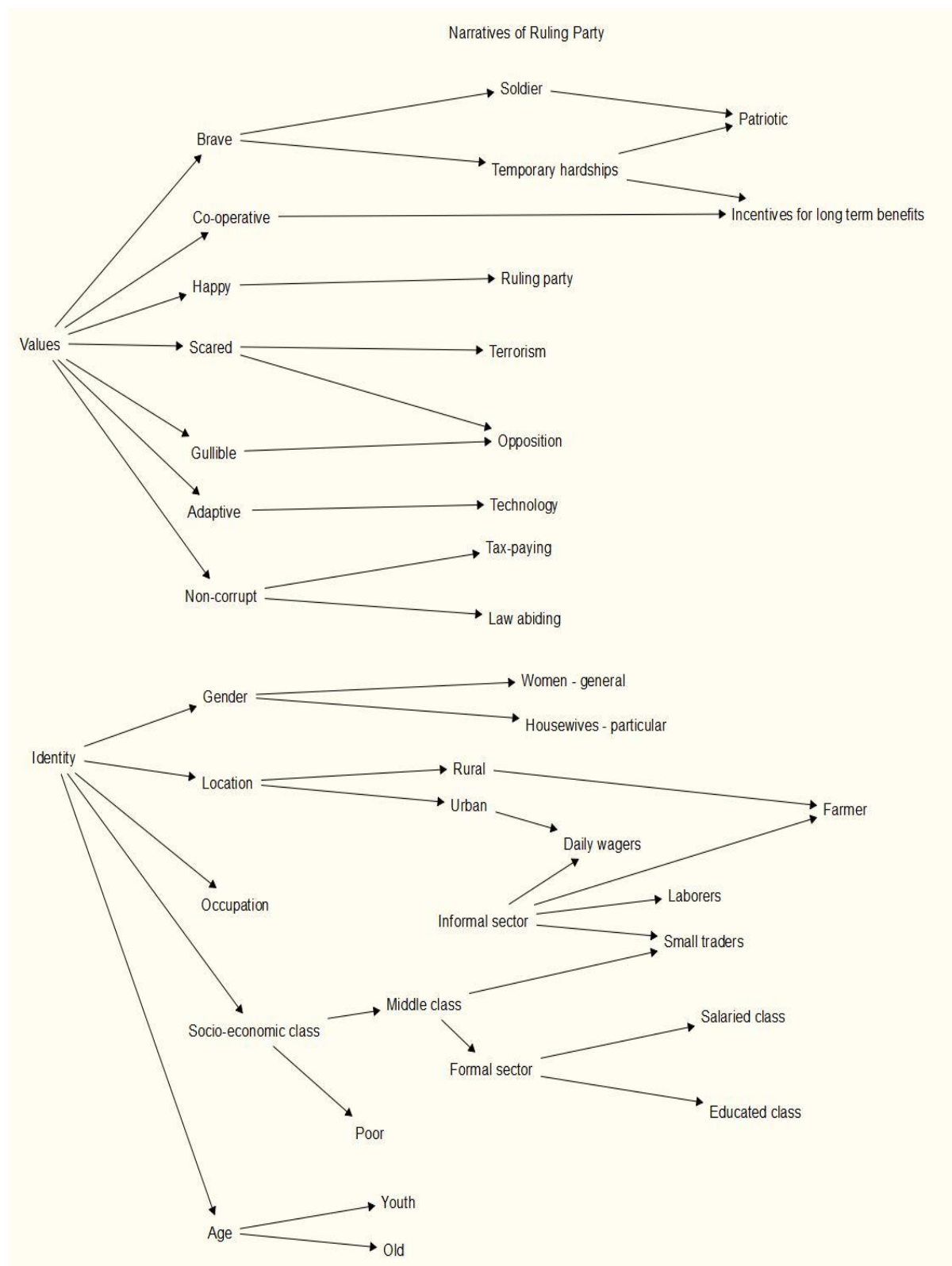
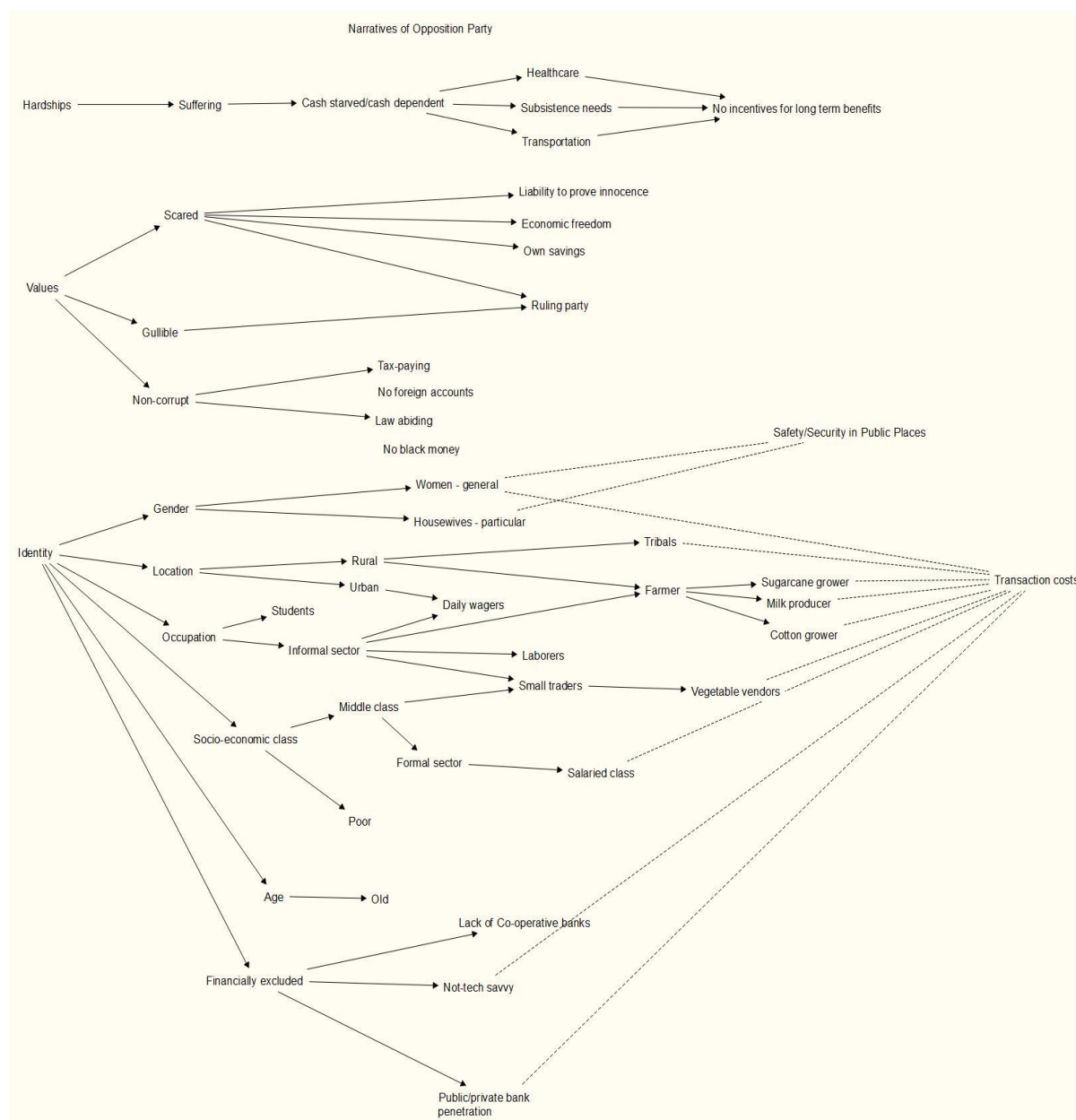


Figure 3 showing narratives of the common man from opposition parties



5. Discussion

5.1 Image Analysis

Quantitatively, in case of both image and textual analysis, the coverage of common man was high. For instance, in case of image analysis, the images directly referring to the common man were all the categories beyond the ruling and opposition parties that together constituted 41.3%. Beyond these two categories, the other themes, mentioned in Table 1 and Figure 1, refer to the various narratives around the common man. The analysis of these themes has reflected two dominant trends in the images portrayed by the newspapers, as discussed in the following section.

5.1.1 Urban bias

The broader theme that captured much of the aspects related to the common man was the hardships that the common man is facing. And, interestingly, both the ruling and opposition parties are unequivocally similar in case of inconveniences that the demonetization policy has caused to the common man.

The most common imagery reflecting the hardships and sufferings of common man was ATM/Bank queues. Based on limited existence of ATM/Banks in rural parts of India (Jain and Merwin, 2016), this imagery captured most of the urban aspects of suffering and hardships. Beyond a farmer's protest, one farmer overseeing his field and a paddy field, the rural India was conspicuous by its absence in the images.

The urban bias was also apparent in case of the theme market, where most of the images were of high-rise buildings, empty shopping malls, grocery and jewellery shops as well as road side restaurants and hawkers in an urban market. However, in case of identities, the beedi-making, leather processing, granite cutting and Zardozi industry workers can be argued to be more of a reflection of small towns and rural India, rather than urban India.

5.2 Multiple Identities

Gendered effects of demonetization had a presence in terms of images showing both women in ATM/Bank/Gas station lines as well as protesting the policy in a demonstration. While showing the bank officials, the news items have captured images of women who spoke in favour of the demonetization policy. Also, in the informal sector, while showing images of males working in the construction industry, leather industry and granite industry, there were also images of women workers in textile, jardozi and beedi industry.

The presence of LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender and Queer) community in the images also showed that it is not only the gendered identity, but also the other marginalized identities that the images have captured. However, in case of ruling and opposition parties, there were only two women leaders, one from each, captured by the images. And, this was much less than the number of male leaders captured in the images.

Overall, the images have predominantly shown an urban bias in depicting the hardships and inconveniences faced by the common man. At the same time, there was no apparent male, heterosexual bias in terms of the images. So, the common man, as depicted in the images, was more of an urban person, found in both the formal and informal sector, covering multiple identities, and less of a small town or rural person working in the field.

5.2 Text Analysis

In case of text analysis, the phrase "common man" appeared 579 times in the 768 articles considered for textual analysis. This is almost three times in every four articles, alluding to the use of common man to oppose, defend, or discuss its effects regarding the demonetization policy.

As shown in Figures 2 & 3, the narratives about and around common man were classified into ruling parties' and opposition parties' narratives to compare and contrast the common man depicted by both the factions respectively. The narratives have been presented in terms of similarities and differences between values and identities of common man as these two broader themes summarized the depictions of both the ruling and the opposition parties.

5.2.1 Similarities

In terms of values, both the ruling and opposition parties have emphasized that the common man is secular, non-corrupt, apolitical and gullible. In the speeches of both the factions, common man has never been questioned in terms of its honesty. Repeatedly, both the factions have asserted that the common man is not the one who hoards money, or has any money stashed in tax havens abroad. The common man regularly pays taxes and does not operate in the shadow economy. Interestingly, even when the large numbers of gold transactions immediately after the demonetization announcement were reported throughout the country, no one questioned the honesty of the common man. Similarly, both have described a category of elites who are powerful, dishonest, tax evaders, and people with huge sums of money in tax havens abroad - a complete contrast to the common man.

In terms of political inclination, both the parties have depicted the common man as apolitical. In other words, common man is someone who does not have a political agenda, and is therefore gullible to the assertions of both the opposition and the ruling parties.

However, with the same values in the common man, the call of the ruling and opposition parties has been different. For instance, the ruling party has repeatedly appealed to the non-corrupt, apolitical, gullible and non-elite common man to side with the them in the fight against corruption and black money of the elites and the dishonest. Similarly, the opposition has also used the same image to assert that despite such high values, the common man is bearing the brunt of this alleged fight against corruption and black money of the elite and the dishonest.

Even in case of identities, as shown in **Figure 2 and Figure 3**, both the factions have appealed to almost all socio-economic categories in the country. For instance, the farmers, poor and the middle class have been invariably present in much of the instances when the ruling and opposition party leaders invoked the common man. The gendered identity has also been paid attention to, especially as housewives. However, a working woman, either in urban or rural area, seems to have been missed by the ruling and the opposition party leaders, given the considered sample of articles.

5.2.2 Differences

Although, in general, both the ruling and opposition parties have emphasized on values and identities of the common man, the emphasis of ruling parties has been more on values, while the opposition parties have focused on specific identities of the common man. The rationale behind ruling parties' emphasis on values of the common man as brave, youthful, co-operative, patriotic, soldier like and technology-friendly has been deliberate, because it is

based on these values that the ruling parties have emphasized the survival of common man amidst the hardships caused by sudden demonetization. On the other hand, the opposition has picked on different identities to make specific cases of the hardships suffered by different identities of the common man. For instance, the opposition has used the case of housewives, students, farmers (sugarcane, cotton, milk producers), tribal, vegetable vendors, hawkers, small traders, salaried class, and non-technology-friendly people in rural and urban areas to bring out the hardships being faced by these identities of the common man.

On similar lines, picking on the same values, the ruling parties have asked for the co-operation of the common man by repeatedly asserting “short-term pain for long term gains”. And, the opposition has used the hardships of specific identities to ask for changes in the policy and it has worked given the fact that the rules associated with the demonetization policy have been changed 54 times in a span of 42 days.

Overall, the ruling party claims the non-corrupt and brave values of the common man in this fight against black money and corruption of the elites because the pain is short term while the gains will be all for the common man. Similarly, the opposition parties are appealing to the hardships of specific identities of the common man and claiming that the pains are not worth the cost the common man is paying in this policy whose ultimate beneficiaries will be the corrupt and powerful elite class.

5.2.3 Hypothesis 1: Issue containment by winner?

According to this hypothesis, the winner of a policy debate tries to contain the issue by concentrating costs on few and diffusing benefits on the many. On the basis of our analysis, we have found support for this hypothesis with reference to ruling parties on the following grounds:

- a) The ruling party is focusing on the values of the common and the redistribution benefits that will accrue to the common man due to the elimination of corruption and tax evasion by their policy of demonetization. The narrative propounded by the ruling parties is talking about welfare benefits like affordable housing, healthcare, accessible education and elimination of inequity due to the policy of demonetization.
- b) Despite opposition about hardships caused due to the cash crunch, the ruling parties have repeatedly talked about the “short term pain and long term gain” with reference to the policy of demonetization by appealing to the values of bravery, honesty, youthful vigour and sacrifice of the common man. In defence of hardships, they have also talked about elites as the ones facing trouble due to their illicit money, and common man being carefree due to the honest source of its income.

Thus, overall, this hypothesis finds support in our qualitative analysis of the narrative strategy of the ruling parties that are trying to contain the issue by invoking values and talking about diffused benefits to the common man due to their demonetization policy.

5.2.3 Hypothesis 2: Issue expansion by loser?

According to this hypothesis, the loser of a policy debate tries to expand the issue by diffusing costs on many and concentrating benefits on few. On the basis of our analysis, we have found support for this hypothesis with reference to opposition parties on the following grounds:

- a) The opposition parties are focusing on the costs to the common man by emphasizing on different identities such as farmers, housewives, vendors, small traders and informal sector workers who are facing various hardships due to the policy of demonetization. Their contention is that the common man, which is in majority, is paying the price of this policy while the elite are going scot free. Thus, the costs to the common man outweigh the benefits that may accrue due to this policy of the ruling party.
- b) The opposition parties are focusing on the hardships, and specifically highlighting the magnitude of transaction costs for the common man due to this policy of demonetization. They are emphasizing on the man hours being lost and the GDP growth that is going to stall due to this policy.

Overall, the hypothesis that the loser in a policy debate tries to expand the issue finds support in our analysis where the opposition parties are trying to highlight the massive costs to specific identities of the common man due to the policy of demonetization by the ruling parties.

5.2.3 Hypothesis 3: Media as conduit or contributor?

Our analysis shows that the print media is acting more like a conduit rather than as a contributor in the policy debates around demonetization on the basis of the following reasons:

- a) The coverage given to the ruling and opposition party leaders by the four newspapers in aggregate is not much different with 18% to the ruling parties and 23% to the opposition parties in our sample.
- b) The coverage given to hardships faced by the common man is quantitatively more in terms of images, but the coverage of marginalized communities like LGBTQ who were shown pro-demonetization as well as women bankers who were also pro-demonetization shows that media is acting more like a conduit for ruling, opposition and the common people in India.

Overall, the media is playing the role of a conduit for all the actors involved in the demonetization debates. While the hardships faced by the common man has been quantitatively more, the coverage given to certain marginalized communities which are pro-demonetization shows that media is playing more of a neutral role in the narratives around demonetization.

6. Conclusions

Beginning with the ruling party, the twitter handle of our Prime Minister carried the official announcement of demonetization on 8th November, 2016. Among the four objectives of

demonetization, the announcement mentioned the idea of poor, neo-middle and middle class citizens as the common citizens or the *common man*. Thus, the official announcement considered the *common man* as an economic class that stands to reap the benefits of demonetization in diverse ways. In defence of demonetization, a ruling party leader also argued that the move will reduce economic inequality, thus re-iterating the rich and poor binary that considers *common man* as an economic class.

Thereafter, the *common man* for the ruling party has evolved from an economic class, to a class of citizens having attributes like honesty, integrity, bravery, vigour and altruism, and finally into citizens with specific identities, who need relief measures like the housewives, people in rural areas, informal sector workers, people with or without bank accounts, mobile or internet banking etc., - as manifest in different relief measures for different sections.

The opposition, operating in two factions, has created the idea of a *common man* around law abiding citizens in urban and rural areas who are facing inconveniences, while the elites are going scot-free. Thus, the *common man* for opposition parties has been captured by specific identities with metaphors of drudgery and burden.

Irrespective of the political affiliation, no one has associated common man with corruption and presented a clean image by various metaphors and imageries – the use of anti-elite contrast has been instrumental in creating this narrative by both the ruling and opposition parties.

Essentially, both the ruling and opposition party consider the *common man* as a social being who can co-operate for the common good. In case of the ruling party, the greater good that the co-operation can usher will benefit the *common man*, thus invoking metaphors of bravery and youth like vigour in support. While, the opposition insists that the greater good is inimical to the interests of the *common man*, thus invoking drudgery and burden in opposition.

The analysis reveals how the proverbial *common man* has been constructed by the ruling and the opposition parties by using certain similar positive values and specific identities to justify their respective positions. The ruling party stands to lose if the policy narrative around demonetization does not touch the *common man*, while the opposition cannot falsify the claims of the ruling party without creating its idea of a *common man* that is suffering unnecessarily.

Furthermore, the analysis also shows that the narrative strategy being adopted by the ruling parties is that of issue containment by diffusing benefits on the common man and concentrating costs on the elites. Similarly, the opposition parties have adopted a narrative strategy that is stressing upon the huge transaction costs to the common man and benefits to the elites. Finally, the media seems to be playing a neutral role, or as a conduit for the ruling and opposition parties as well as the common man in the debates around demonetization.

Therefore, it is immaterial whether the *common man* is brave and prepared for the greater good, or is already struggling with incentives to sacrifice for the greater good. The analysis, with attendant limitations, reveals that the *common man* is context-dependent, and this

amorphous and fluid form has been co-opted across the entire political spectrum in India, at least in the demonetization debates. Interestingly, this *common man*, who is more of an urban person, has been assumed to be quite gullible by one and all. However, the coming days will reveal more about the veracity of this assumption.

References

- Audit Bureau of Circulations. (2016). Highest Circulated amongst ABC Member Publications (across languages) between January and June, 2016. Retrieved from [http://www.auditbureau.org/files/Highest%20Circulated%20amongst%20ABC%20Member%20Publications%20\(across%20languages\).pdf](http://www.auditbureau.org/files/Highest%20Circulated%20amongst%20ABC%20Member%20Publications%20(across%20languages).pdf)
- Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T. T. (1966). *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge*. New York: Double and Company.
- Government of India (GoI). (2016). The Gazette of India: Extraordinary. PART II—Section 3—Sub-section (ii). Retrieved from <http://finmin.nic.in/172521.pdf>
- Fischer, F., and Gottweis, H. (2012). *The argumentative turn revisited: Public policy as communicative practice*. Duke University Press
- Gupta, M. (2016). 54 demonetisation changes in 42 days: Here are 9 major ones you need to keep up with. *India Today*. Published on December 20th, 2016. Retrieved from <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/demonetisation-changes-8-major-currency-announcements/1/839305.html>
- Herman, D. (2001). Narrative theory and the cognitive sciences. *Narrative Inquiry*, 11(1), 1-34.
- Jain, M., and Merwin, R. (2016). ATMs in rural areas are still a far cry. The Hindu BusinessLine. Newspaper article published on November, 24th, 2016. Retrieved from <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/money-and-banking/atms-in-rural-areas-are-still-a-far-cry/article9382683.ece>
- Leach, M., Scoones, I., & Stirling, A. (2010). Governing epidemics in an age of complexity: narratives, politics and pathways to sustainability. *Global Environmental Change*, 20(3), 369-377.
- Lejano, R. P. (2006). *Frameworks for policy analysis: Merging text and context*. Routledge.
- Lejano, R., Ingram, M., & Ingram, H. (2013). *The power of narrative in environmental networks*. MIT Press.
- McBeth, M.K., and Jones, M.D. (2010). A Narrative Policy Framework: Clear enough to be wrong? *The Policy Studies Journal* 38(2): 329-353
- McBeth, M. K., Elizabeth A. Shanahan, Molly C. Anderson, and Barbara Rose. (2012). “Policy Story or Gory Story: Narrative Policy Framework Analysis of Buffalo Field Campaign’s YouTube Videos.” *Policy & Internet* 4 (3–4): 159–83.
- National Sample Survey Office (NSSO). (2012). Informal Sector and Conditions of Employment in India, 68th round (July 2011- June 2012). Ministry of Statistics and

Programme Implementation, Government of India. Retrieved from mospi.nic.in/sites/default/files/publication_reports/nss_rep_539.pdf

Roe, E. (1994). *Narrative policy analysis: Theory and practice*. Duke University Press.

Rogoff, K. S. (2016). *The Curse of Cash*. Princeton University Press.

Reserve Bank On India (RBI). (2016). Retrieved from https://rbi.org.in/Scripts/BS_PressReleaseDisplay.aspx?prid=38520

Schneider, A., Ingram, H., & deLeon, P. (2014). Democratic policy design: Social construction of target populations. *Theories of the policy process*, (105-149). Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press.

Shanahan, E. A., McBeth, M. K., Hathaway, P. L., & Arnell, R. J. (2008). Conduit or contributor? The role of media in policy change theory. *Policy Sciences*, 41(2), 115-138.

Shanahan, E. A., Jones, M. D., McBeth, M. K., & Lane, R. R. (2013). An angel on the wind: How heroic policy narratives shape policy realities. *Policy Studies Journal*, 41(3), 453-483.

Shanahan, A.S., McBeth, M.K., Jones, M.D. (2014). In Sabatier, P. A., & Weible, C. (Eds.). (2014). *Theories of the policy process* (225-266). Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press.

Shanahan, E. A., Adams, S. M., Jones, M. D., & McBeth, M. K. (2014). The Blame Game: Narrative Persuasiveness of the Intentional Causal Mechanism. In *The Science of Stories* (pp. 69-88). Palgrave Macmillan US.

Stone, D. (2002). *Policy paradox: The art of political decision making*, revised edition. London and New York, NY: WW Norton and Company.

Westen, D. (2008). *Political brain: The role of emotion in deciding the fate of the nation*. Public Affairs.