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‘We are happy we welcome this decision what ... our Prime Minister has taken’:

Political subjectivities in populist politics during demonetization (2016) in India.

Abstract

Discursive social psychologists have examined various ways in which political talk and participation in politics is accomplished. In this paper, I examine talk related to a populist policy to examine how it is that members of the general public informally participate in populist political practices. I examined transcripts of broadcast on-air interviews with those experiencing outcomes of a controversial monetary policy in India introduced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, namely demonetization. Discursive psychological analyses show that interviewees and interviewees treated talk on policy as implicating political subjectivities for the interviewees. They flexibly offered various forms of assessments on the policy in ways to negotiate implications that they were pre-disposed to the policy and Modi. Their political subjectivities as those who were ‘Modi supporters’, for example, were attended to and negotiated in ways to accomplish interview participation. The findings show the relevance of personal/subjective assessments and positions in political talk. These are discussed in relation to contemporary understandings of populism.

Key words: Populism, political subjectivities; discursive psychology; demonetization; Modi; India

Social scientists have examined the practices of populist political leaders and of members of the public who participate in populist politics. This has involved examining how political ‘leaders’ might avow commitment to transparent politics, ending corrupt practices, and unsettling ‘elites’, on the one hand, and how the public might perceive economic and/or cultural (in)security on the other (Inglehart & Norris, 2016). Political scientists differentiate between ‘formal’ and ‘informal’ political participation, where the former involves voting and similar behaviours, and the latter involves activities that are not readily seen as political, such as engagement within the community or with both the traditional and the more modern social media (Ekman & Amnå, 2012; Riley, More, & Griffin, 2010). The distinction is particularly relevant because, first, as Lewis, Inthorn, and Wahl-Jorgensen (2005) point out, a decrease in voting turnouts need not necessarily mean a reduction in levels of political engagement among the public. Rather, this could very likely mean an antipathy towards the political parties or choices among political candidates on offer. Second, voting behaviour in itself might be a simplistic means of examining political participation. Rather, examining alternative forms of participation in political practices, where people care to make their ‘voices heard’ (McLeod, Scheufele, & Moy, 1999), might be fruitful.

Social psychologists’ interest is in examining how participation in various forms of politics involve specific forms of social behaviour. Discursive social psychologists are particularly interested in how it is that such participation is discursively accomplished in particular settings (McKinlay & McVittie, 2008). In this paper, I examine how participation in populist politics is accomplished.

Discursive research on political participation

Discursive psychologists are concerned with how it is that people's use of language in specific interactional (or broader societal) settings accomplishes social actions such as identity ascription and negotiation, accounting for political participation, or negotiating group membership. Discursive psychologists have examined political participation as relevant in citizenship (Condor, 2011), social movement / protest participation (Keel, 2017), and formal political practices such as in legislative bodies (Sambaraju, McVittie, Goodall, & McKinlay, 2017). Here, researchers show how it is that participation is an accomplishment that involves making claims, avowing positions, and negotiating particular implications. Discursive researchers argue that various forms of political action involve understandings of, or making claims to who they are as, political actors.

Towards a discursive psychology of political participation: subjectivity and subject positions

Social scientists argue that particular forms of political structures and participation engender particular forms of 'subjectivity' or understandings of 'who we are'. Researchers who are more interested in how broader contexts are implicated in discourse, argue that 'subjectivity' is a useful tool to examine the relations between broader societal or political contexts and individual orientations to these (Hollway, 1989). For instance, researchers identify the role of particular subjectivities in colonial discourses (Neocosmos, 2012) or the absence of subjectivities in terrorism-related discourses (Zulaika & Douglass, 2008) and the outcomes of these for political action.

Researchers also argue that political participation can be understood in terms of the positions that political contexts make available for people, which afford or allow for particular

‘stances’, attitude-avowals, and accounts. For instance, Isin (2009) describes how migrants in France could shift between subject positions of ‘active’ and ‘activist’ citizens in articulating and performing alternative forms of citizenship. For Isin, the latter subject position allowed for social actions such as challenging prevalent notions of ‘integration’ and advancing social justice. Other researchers, who are more interested in the relations between discourse and subjectivities, argue for how the latter involve particular linguistic/discursive forms, such as noun-phrases and argument structures (Cumming, Ono, & Laury, 2011). Kärkkäinen (2006) argues that stance taking itself is a joint accomplishment in interaction. Here, the argument shares much with discursive psychological arguments against invoking ‘internal mental states’ in explicating behavioural phenomena (Potter & Edwards, 2001).

Discursive psychological researchers who examine subjectivity and subject positions similarly do not treat subjectivity as a proxy for ‘interiority’ (Wetherell & Edley, 1999) or as a construct that replaces personality (Branney, 2008). Rather, they point to how this is instantiated in talk or other performances. In their work, Wetherell and Edley (Edley & Wetherell, 1999; Wetherell & Edley, 1999) argue for engaging with subjectivities through a discursive perspective. In analysing issues of masculinity the authors show that masculinity is not merely an ascribed or owned position. Rather, in their various accounts, men *accomplish* masculinity. Wetherell and Edley thus argue for not abandoning concepts of subjectivity or subject positions, but for an examination of how these are accomplished in discourse.

While space constraints preclude an extended discussion of the various debates related to these issues (e.g. Schegloff, 1998; Wetherell, 1998), for present purposes, the approach is to examine how it is that political subject positions are made available, negotiated, and accepted / rejected in specific interactional settings. It does so through an examination of talk involving the implementation of a problematic policy in India, namely demonetization.

The Present Study

The current policy in question, ‘demonetization’, involved declaring illegal [Rupees] ₹500 and ₹1000 currency notes in circulation in India overnight on November 8, 2016 (Ghosh, Chandrashekar, & Patnaik, 2017). These were replaced by ₹2000 notes, which people had the opportunity to exchange for the demonetized currency notes within the next 50 days. However, these were not available to people for varying amounts of time in various parts of the country (Chakravorti, 2017). This meant that for the time period immediately succeeding this initiative several people had to go without access to cash. An estimated 90% of the Indian economy is cash based, of which 86% of cash in circulation was in the notes rendered illegal tender by the new policy (Chakravorti, 2017). The policy thus had a severe short term impact on the public who use cash in their daily life and it had a more problematic impact on small-to-medium-sized businesses, farmers, and daily wage labourers, alongside others who only accept cash for services rendered (Ghosh et al., 2017). Citing quarterly GDP rates and other performance indicators economists note the continued adverse effects of demonetization on the Indian economy (Ghosh et al., 2017).

Demonetizing currencies is generally recommended in problematic economic contexts, such as those marked by ‘hyperinflation’ⁱ or extreme prevalence of corrupt practices (Sharma, 2016). Problematically, neither of these was the case for India in November 2016: it was enjoying relative economic stability and was showing decreasing levels of corruption, as ranked by Transparency International (Sharma, 2016). In addition, explanations and justifications provided by the government and the Prime Minister Narendra Modi have changed from claims to be addressing ‘black money’ⁱⁱ and corruption, increasing transparency, and restricting funding to terrorist organisations, to claims that the policy is aimed at promoting growth (Sen, 2017). Commentators then argue that introducing this policy was aimed at

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promoting Modi as a ‘strong man’ politician who can take necessary steps to ‘defeat’ corruption (Chakravorti, 2017).

Modi’s Bharatiya Janata Party [Indian Peoples’ Party] (BJP) was elected in 2014 with a majority vote not seen since the 1970s in India. Its campaign promised to bring about ‘*acche din*’ [*good days*], which has subsequently involved a commitment to economic development at the expense of social welfare indices (Sen, 2017). While there are several claims about BJP and Modi’s problematic ideology of ethno-centric nationalism, here the concern is on socio-economic matters. In the Indian setting, avowals of commitment to development have a particular political currency. Gupta (2000) argues that one reason for this is the broader understanding of India as ‘underdeveloped’ or ‘behind’ other nations. Demonetization was similarly presented as in the interests of development (Sen, 2017).

Political practices such as those above are identified as *populist* politics by social and political scientists (Subramanian, 2007). While scholars note the difficulty in offering a clear definition of populist politics, most agree that references to ‘people’ are ubiquitous (Gidron & Bonikowski, 2013). Political agents are named ‘populist’ for a variety of reasons in a variety of contexts (Gidron & Bonikowski, 2013), including austerity, agrarian distress, and migration. Previous research has examined populist political practices from the perspectives of political agents (leaders and representatives). However, little research has examined how it is that members of the public might participate in these practices and/or orient to these. This is what provides the focus for the present paper, where the analysis aims to examine how it is that those on the receiving end of a populist policy, namely demonetization, orient to their engagement with such political practices. One way of doing this is through survey research, which shows that despite facing problems because of the policy, people from various socio-economic backgrounds indicated support for demonetization (Khera, 2017). Discursive social psychologists however are more concerned with the accomplishment of social and political

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practices. The present paper therefore examines such accomplishment in one particular setting, namely ‘on-air’ broadcast interviews (Montgomery, 2008) with members of the general public who were affected by demonetization.

Method

Data and participants

The data for this paper come from videos of broadcast on-air interviews (Montgomery, 2008) with the public on their experiences of demonetization. Relevant videos were accessed through Google’s Video Archival Search Engine, where searches were conducted for videos using the search string: ‘demonetisation’ OR ‘demonetization’, AND, ‘people’ OR ‘public’, AND, ‘views’ OR ‘reactions’, AND ‘India’ for the time period November 8, 2016 – March 13, 2017, as this policy was announced on the former date and the latter date marks the removal of any restrictions on withdrawal of new currency. This strategy yielded several pages of results, with 10 hits per page. However, several of these involved talk by politicians and other ‘experts’. Therefore, the first 10 pages (i.e. 100 videos) were scanned for additional criteria on content, language (English, Hindi/Urdu, or Telugu, languages that the author is proficient in), and video sources to ensure that the videos were produced by media news agencies. This strategy yielded 23 videos for the study, which ranged from 3 minutes to 1 hour and 10 minutes in length. For this study only those interactions where the question or comment made by interviewer and interviewees’ responses to this were both recorded, were collated. The resulting videos were transcribed first in the original languageⁱⁱⁱ and then translated into English by me, using Jeffersonian transcription system (Jefferson, 2004).

In the present type of interview, named an *experiential interview* (Montgomery 2008), the interviewer treats the interviewee as less of an active agent and more as a first-hand observer of an event / incident, and therefore the accounts given are hardly disputed.

Analytic procedure

These data were analysed using discursive psychological approaches (Potter & Edwards, 2001), which treat discourse as a topic of study in its own right (McKinlay & McVittie, 2008). The analysis focused on how it is that interviewers and interviewees orient to their talk on policy and its outcomes as implicating particular subject positions. I examined how the interviewer's questions involved eliciting evaluative responses from the interviewees. Subsequently, the analysis focused on how it is that interviewees offered these responses and managed implications proceeding from this.

Given that these interviews involved eliciting and offering personal accounts, the analysis focused on the assessments and evaluations of demonetization given by interviewees. Edwards and Potter (2017) distinguish between assessments that are predicated on features of an object ('object-side'), and those that make relevant the disposition of the speaker ('subject-side'), and the ways in which these implicate different forms of alignment with the actions being accomplished and the management of possible issues. The analysis examined how it is that the use of different assessment forms were involved in the ascription and negotiation of particular subject positions. A central focus then, was how it is that orientations to the policy and its outcomes were treated as implicating or involving particular subject positions (Wetherell & Edley, 1999). The extracts analysed here showcase a diversity of interactions where interviewer questions on demonetization involved interviewees' experiences.

Results

The results show that in these interactions, interviewers and interviewees oriented to demonetization and its outcomes as centrally involving particular forms of assessments in ways that made relevant particular subjectivities for interviewees. These were seen in instances

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where interviewees readily offered support, offered support in the face of possibilities for complaining, and complained about demonetization.

Accounts of support

In this section, two interview accounts where demonetization is supported are analysed. The first extract comes from an hour long video uploaded by 'India Today' to YouTube on November 9, 2016, titled 'People Express Their Views on Demonetisation of Rs500 and Rs1000 Notes'. Here a male interviewer and a male interviewee discuss demonetization in English, in Bengaluru. Appendix I contains a list on transcription notation and other symbols used in the extracts below.

Extract 1

- 1 IR prasad eh- eb- yu you told me that it's alright you don't you're not facing any such
2 problem and you're really happy with this
- 3 IE really absolutely I am we are happy we welcome this decision what the Mist our
4 Prime Minister has taken (.) .hh we are happy we are not suffering anything
5 because we are a salaried people all our transaction was in white we don't have any
6 problem (.) .hh if it improves for our country why not this decision is welcome for
7 us when we can suffer with bandh and everything two days we get hampered
8 strikes so many things happens those things is acceptable why not this one for the
9 support the country's sake we can do it

Extract 2 comes from a video uploaded to YouTube on November 13, 2016 by the news agency 'ZeeBusiness' titled 'Reports on the public's reaction on demonetization'. The interviewee is

in a queue to enter a bank in Mahim, Mumbai. The interview medium here is Hindi/Urdu-English.

Extract 2

- 1 IR sir aapko kya lagta hai iss move ke kya kya faide honge going forward
sir how is it for you this move what benefits will this bring going forward
- 2 IE see: there'll be all advantages henceforth because I really: say Namoh Namaha it's a
3 great move and very very thanks to Mr Modi because I'm very sure that artificial
4 inflation will definitely come down

In extracts 1 and 2, the interviewers treat the interviewees as stakeholders in the policy through inviting their views on 'problems' or 'benefits' of demonetization. In both cases, the interviewees offer favourable evaluations of it.

In extract 1, the interviewee offers a favourable evaluation of demonetization and a subsequent account for such evaluation. The interviewer's question already includes the interviewee's response: 'you told me that it's alright you don't you're not facing any such problem and you're really happy with this' (lines 1-2). The reporting of the interviewee's response back to the interviewee is given in a three-part list (Jefferson, 1990), where each part builds on the latter: 'it's alright', 'you're not facing any problem', and 'you're really happy with this'. Together, the interviewer ascribes to the interviewee a particular subjective position in relation to the policy, through ascribing assessments involving subjective aspects (Edwards & Potter, 2017).

The interviewee, in response, agrees with the interviewer's ascription and proceeds to reciprocate the assessment in emotive terms: 'we are happy' (line 3). He develops this by

welcoming the policy and offers an account at lines 4-9 which involves two notable features. First, the account involves descriptions of the interviewee and unspecified others: ‘we are a salaried people all our transaction was in white we don’t have any problem’ (lines 4-5). The description offered, categorizes the interviewee as participating in formal earning structures and therefore that the policy implementation is not problematic for them: ‘we are happy we are not suffering anything’. The extreme case formulations (Pomerantz, 1986) – ‘anything’ and ‘we don’t have *any* problem’ (line 5) – work to show that his/their membership in this category of people excludes them from possible hardships resulting from this policy. However, interestingly the interviewee does not rule out the possibility of hardships. Rather he mitigates their relevance for himself and unspecified others, referred to by ‘we’ and ‘us’.

Second is the management of the interviewee’s favourable evaluation when it is hard to ignore problems with demonetization. He does this through contrasting demonetization with other issues that also lead to problems for people. These are offered in a three-part listing format (Jefferson, 1990): ‘suffer[ing] with bandh and everything’ (line 7), ‘two days we get hampered’ (line 7), and ‘strikes so many things happens’ (lines 7-8). The interviewee treats these items as having in common the feature that problems such as these are routinely ‘acceptable’ (line 8). In this way, the contrast works to suppress possible complaints over demonetization. Alongside this, treating demonetization as promoting national interests (‘if it improves our country’ (line 6) and ‘why not this one for the support the country’s sake we can do it’ (lines 8-9)) rhetorically works to bolster his account.

In extract 2, the interviewee similarly avows a particular subject position, while managing issues arising. Here, the interviewer’s inclusion of possible ‘benefits’ of demonetization is couched in inviting the interviewee’s personal orientations to demonetization. In response, the interviewee offers a favourable evaluation, which is constructed as an extreme case formulation (Pomerantz, 1986) – ‘see there’ll be *all* advantages

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henceforth' (line 2) – and predicates this on his personal view on Modi, rather than on his experiences of demonetization: 'because I really: say Namoh Namaha' (line 2). While 'Namoh' is readily knowable to the interlocutors and other audiences as **Narendra Modi**, the use of this in conjunction with the praise-phrase 'Namaha', routinely used in Hindu religious rituals and practices, presents the interviewee as a 'devotee' of Modi. While the interviewee here does not offer an explicit avowal of his internal mental states as in Extract 1, the use of this praise-phrase offers inferences on his personal disposition to Modi, which is that of being a devotee.

Subsequently he offers an explicitly favourable object-side assessment of demonetization: 'it's a great move and very very thanks to Mr. Modi' (lines 2-3). This is supported in ways to show that his evaluation is grounded in some technical reasoning: 'artificial inflation will definitely come down' (lines 3-4).

In the extracts above, we see interviewers and interviewees treating mental states, and pre-existing support, as relevant for participation in the interview. In so doing, they ascribe and negotiate these subject positions so as to accomplish support for Modi.

Accounts of mitigated / contingent support

In the two extracts below, other issues become relevant, such as those where the interviewers treat positions that support demonetization as possibly problematic for the interviewees.

In extract 3 below, the interviewer orients to the possibility that an interviewee [IE2] is a supporter of Modi [as seen in Extract 2] and offers a question that allows for possible complaints. The following extract comes from a video uploaded to YouTube by 'OneIndia News' on December 8, 2016. The video titled 'Demonetization: After one month is India with Modi? Watch Public Opinion' involved a male interviewer asking people their views on demonetization as they were standing in queues to access banks. The following exchange is in Hindi/Urdu and both interviewees are male.

Extract 3

- 1 IR acha modi ji ka ye decision kya sahi-ab ek mahine baad ab janta kya sochthi hai
okay Modi's decision is it right now one month after now what does the public think
- 2 IR aap kya kahenge
what will you say
- 3 IE1 sahi hai [ye to
this is a right thing
- 4 IR sahi hai]
right is it
- 5 ((background voices))
- 6 IE2 sar modi ji ne
sir Modi
- 7 IR acha aap bataiye aap bataiye bahut deer se aap bol rahe hain peeche
okay you tell me you tell me for a while you've been speaking at the back
- 8 IE2 bhai [saab
listen man
- 9 IR ek mahina] hogaya hai mera saval sunleejiye
it's been a month please listen to my question
- 10 IE2 haan
okay
- 11 IR ek mahina hogaya hai
it's been a month
- 12 IE2 haan

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- yea*
- 13 IR linee lambi hain mai bhi maant[taa hoon
the queues are long I too accept
- 14 IE2 bilkul]
absolutely
- 15 IR lekin janta ko pareshaani horari hai [uska bhi solution nikala [jaaraha hai
but people are facing troubles a solution for which is being devised
- 16 IE2 bilkul] bilkul]
absolutely absolutely
- 17 IR <kya abhi bhi aap modiji ke samarthan mein hain>[kya kahenge
are you still in support of Modi what do you say
- 18 IE2 bilkul] modiji ke samarthan
absolutely I am in support of Modi
- 19 mein hai ye gadbadi tho bank kar rahe hain saare chalees chalees karod pakada
this trouble is because of what banks are doing forty forty crores^{iv} was caught
- 20 jaaraha hai axis ka bees bees iska giraftar hooraha hai vo kahan se aaraha hai
at Axis twenty twenty^v is being arrested where is this coming from
- 21 IR yaani dikkat jo hai bank se hai
so the troubles are because of banks
- 22 IE2 haan
yes

The interviewer's questions at lines 1-2 and 17, treat the ongoing issues and outcomes of demonetization as consequent for interviewees' support or not, for Modi, rather than making relevant alternative evaluations of the policy.

In the first instance, the question frames the evaluation of demonetization as either ‘right’ or not, to which the interviewee offers a minimal agreement response: ‘this is a right thing’. The interviewer’s repeat formulation at line 4, treats the response as noted and indicative of agreeing that this was a right decision by Modi.

However, the second instance sets up a subject-side response: ‘are you still in support?’. Subsequent to interruptions from unknown members present at the venue (line 5), another interviewee [IE2] self-selects through a hearably relevant articulation: ‘sir Modi did...’ (line 6). The interviewer accepts this selection and treats him as the next interviewee. However, the interviewer notes the expected form of participation from this member, which is that the interviewee has some pre-formed opinion: ‘for a while you’ve been speaking at the back’ (line 6).

In particular, the interviewer’s question treats IE2 as possibly predisposed to the policy because of an already formulated view on Modi: ‘are you still in support of Modi?’. This question then makes relevant possibilities for the interviewee to rescind support for Modi (*cf.* Edwards, 2007), given the sorts of issues included in the question at lines 10-17: lengthy queues and problems for the public, and other irregularities such as trying to come up with a solution for these issues a month later. In treating IE2’s oncoming response as contingent on these matters, the question makes relevant a subject-side assessment of Modi as the relevant response, rather than an assessment of policy in terms of its logistics or timing: ‘are you still in support of Modi’ (line 16).

The first part of the interviewee’s response, at lines 18-20, is given in terms of a subjective account as projected by the question: ‘absolutely I am in support of Modi’. However, as noted by Edwards (2007), such subjective accounts can make relevant issues of personal stake, which then have to be managed. Here, the second part attends to this through describing events external to the interviewee, which account for the issues raised by the interviewer. The

interviewee ascribes these to other agents, such as ‘banks’, in ways that exculpate Modi or demonetization from blame. The descriptions involve unnamed agents and problematic activities involving large sums of money (‘forty crores’ (line 18)), such as that these monies were illegitimate – ‘caught’ and ‘arrested’ (line 18). This offers a contrast between issues for ordinary citizens in accessing their monies and agents who were ‘caught’ with illegitimate amounts of money. The interviewer attributes this to the complicity of banks: ‘where is this coming from’ (line 19).

Together then, the interviewee treats aligning with the ongoing interactional task as involving a subjective assessment on Modi and a description of events in the ‘real world’ that account for the assessment given. This however arises, in part, from the interviewer’s question that treats the interviewee’s account as an extension of his support for Modi.

In extract 4, however, the interviewer’s questions set up an account of the difficulties faced by the interviewee. The extract was taken from a video uploaded to YouTube by ‘India TV’ on November 14, 2016, titled ‘India TV Exclusive: People’s Reaction to Demonetisation of Rs500 and Rs1000 Notes’, is in Hindi/Urdu, and involved all male participants in Gandhinagar, Ghaziabad.

Extract 4

1 IR एक बार मेिन आपने दस हज़ार रुपय निकल दिया आपने

in one go you withdrew ten thousand rupees

2 IE हाँ आपने सेल्फ-चेक से निकाला

yes my self-check was used to withdraw

3 IR और पैसे] किता निकाालेते थे हर हफ्ते आप

and how much would you withdraw every week

- 4 IE vaise hum m chaaless pachaas hazar rupay nikaalte the ab [apne
well generally I forty fifty thousand I used to withdraw through my
- 5 IR to aap bataiye] tees
so you tell me thirty
- 6 hazar ka antar hogaya to farak to pada hoga na aap ke upar
thousand is the difference now so effects you've had to face now no
- 7 IE khub para hoga >par is- par hum isi hum< is baat pe sehmat hain (.)
sure effects were there but I'm I'm with this I'm satisfied
- 8 hume koi is baat se vo lene- koi desh hith ke liye jo kaam kara
I have no issue with this what for the well-being of the country has been done
- 9 vo bahut hi badiya kara Modi
was a great job by Modi

At lines 3-6, the interviewer does more than merely gather the interviewee's views: he works to produce a possible complaint about demonetization. He draws a contrast between possibilities of accessing monies by the interviewee in the previous weeks with those in the current period post-demonetization. At lines 5-6, he implies that demonetization is bound to have had adverse outcomes for the interviewee.

The interviewee orients to this as implicating that his support for demonetization is contingent on personal problems. In response however, the interviewee acknowledges these outcomes but asserts that despite such problems, he is untroubled by the policy: 'I'm satisfied' (line 6) and 'I have no issues with this' (line 7). Of note, is the avowal of a subject-side assessment – 'I'm satisfied' – in contrast to a more objective description on how issues with money shortage were managed. Such an avowal works to pass over details on issues with

money, which might either be open to challenge or just not be accepted (Potter & Edwards, 2017). However, this also raises issues of personal stake, such as that how come the interviewee is satisfied despite a reasonable possibility that there were problems.

The interviewee's subsequent account addresses this through casting demonetization as favouring national interests (line 8). This allows for favourable inferences, which in this case are attributed to Modi. Thus, the interviewee resists the position made available by the interviewer, which attributes a possible complaint on demonetization because of personal troubles being faced by the interviewee, and uses subject-side assessment to take-up an alternative subject position, such as that of favouring national interests over personal concerns.

Accounts of complaints

In the last of the extracts here a negative case is examined, where the interviewee complains about the policy through avowing personal troubles. Here similar issues of personalisation of the policy and its outcomes are made relevant and appropriately managed.

Extract 5

- 1 IR uh (.) modi ne kiya- isse faida kya hoga
uh (.) what Modi did will it be beneficial
- 2 IE1 isse bahut faida hoga kala dhan: jo hai (.) vo hum [log-
this will bring lot of benefits black money what's there we will-
- 3 IE2 kuchh.] nai hona sab nashtan hai
- 4 nashtan

nothing will come of it all will be lost

only lost

5 IR sir sir kuch nai hoga

sir sir nothing will happen

6 IE2 kuch nai hoga

nothing will happen

7 IR jo- jo asli kaale dhan vaale hain vo nikal jaayenge

those those real black money people will slip away

8 IE2 vo:: sab apna k apna kaam karlenge

all those people will their issues will take care

9 IR to aapko koi isse eh aa aap ko lagta hai ki :: yee:: [koi

so for you this eh aa you think that this will have some

10 IE2 pareshaani] hai

this is trouble

11 IR pareshaani hai koi acha kadam nai hai

so this is trouble not a good step

12 IE2 nai

No

Similar to the extracts above, the interviewer casts demonetization and its outcomes as centrally associated with Modi and invites evaluations of demonetization or Modi from the interviewees.

In this case, IE1 offers a favourable evaluation through the claim that ‘this will bring lot of benefits’ (line 2). However, his subsequent description of possible benefits such as those related to ‘black money’, is interrupted by IE2: ‘nothing will come of it’. IE2’s extreme case formulation (Pomerantz, 1986) treats it as readily given that the outcomes of demonetization

will not be beneficial. Rather he offers a particularly problematic evaluation: ‘all will be lost only lost’ (line 3). Subsequently, at lines 6-8, the interviewer and the interviewee negotiate reasons for this evaluation, mobilizing descriptions and accounts of consequences that are external to themselves.

At line 9, however, the interviewer’s question makes relevant a subjective assessment, alongside a more generic assessment from IE2: ‘so for you’ and ‘you think that this will’. Potter and Edwards (2017) show that alongside subject-side and object-side assessments, speakers can also offer combinations of these or ‘fusion’ words as assessments. IE2’s response – ‘this is trouble’ (line 9) – is one such case. It is hearable as a subject-side assessment, delivered however as referring to external events. In this way, IE2 manages to complain about demonetization and Modi (as is seen at line 1), without claiming a subjective disposition to either Modi or demonetization.

Thus we can see how particular forms of assessment that are elicited and given, attend to the management of interactional concerns that arise in these interviews. Below, I discuss the implications of these findings.

Discussion and Conclusions

In this paper I examined talk on a populist policy from broadcast on-air interviews. Here, participants (both interviewers and interviewees) oriented to the talk as political and since engaging with political matters on media is one way of getting one’s political voice heard, these data can be treated as accounts of political participation in a context marked by populism. The accounts were produced in the context of demonetization, a policy that had an immediate consequence of practical troubles for many Indian residents who wished to access their monies, and longer-term consequences for businesses, the agrarian economy, and small-to-medium enterprises (Ghosh et al., 2017). The analysis focused on how it is that these interactions

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involved assessments of the policy, which included object-side (involving the policy or monies), subject-side (involving their personal dispositions: ‘happy’, ‘satisfied’, etc.) or combined (‘this is trouble’) assessments. The latter two were particularly implicated in ascribing and negotiating particular subject positions for interviewees. These subject positions were treated as implicating particular dispositions to Modi and by extension the policy of demonetization. However, interviewees could flexibly offer various forms of assessments in negotiating coming across as particularly predisposed to demonetization or Modi.

The interviewers’ questions invited evaluations and assessments that were contingent on interviewees’ personal situations as is expected in these types of interviews. However, of interest is the type of assessments invited and/or given. These subjectivities carried implications for their avowals of support, contingent support, and complaints on demonetization. Edwards (2007) argues that offering particular forms of assessments make relevant particular issues of stake and involvement, which the speakers then attend to and negotiate.

In the present data, ascribing particular forms of subject-side assessments were treated as involving subjectivities, which the participants had to negotiate. Thus, in Extract 1, ascribing to the interviewee a favourable subject-side assessment and the subsequent acceptance of this, involved claims to being ‘salaried people’ and the inference that the interviewee might not be particularly troubled by the policy. In Extract 3, the interviewer similarly makes relevant a particular subject-side assessment in ways that treats the interviewee as a ‘supporter of Modi’. In response, the interviewee avows being in ‘support of Modi’ and proceeds to exculpate Modi and demonetization from blame for ongoing troubles for people. In Extract 5, the interviewer makes relevant an assessment that involves personal experiences subsequent to a discussion on aspects of the policy external to the interviewee. While a combination of both object and subject-side assessments is given, doing so allowed for managing possible issues with

complaining about the policy or demonetization as an outcome of the interviewees' disposition. In this way, interviewees could negotiate their subjectivities using particular forms of assessments. The present findings point to particular forms of accomplishing subjectivities or stance-taking in interaction (*cf.* Kärkkäinen, 2006). Interviewees could resist such subjectivities or reformulate these, in part, through offering specific forms of object and subject-side assessments. In that for interviewees these were 'live' concerns.

What these analyses demonstrate is that in these interviews, which are designed to extract people's views, first, policy talk happens in ways that makes relevant political subjectivities for interviewees. Their contributions are treated as implicating political subjectivities, such as those of being a 'good citizen', 'Modi supporter', or 'legitimate earners'. Previous findings similarly show the role of subjectivities in accomplishing political action (Isin, 2009; Neocosmos, 2012). Second, interviewers and interviewees orient to these as resources in negotiating participation in these interviews on demonetization. In particular, participants could manage implications of being predisposed to complain about Modi. Rather, they could flexibly offer subject and object side assessments in ways to avow support for demonetization, manage complaining about demonetization despite practical troubles, and manage being seen as complaining because of particular dispositions towards Modi. In this way, participation in this form of politics involved the personal as political. Third, similar to studies on masculinity (Edley & Wetherell 1999; Wetherell & Edley, 1999), the present findings show the relevance of subjectivities in accomplishing social action, which in this case was to *do voicing politics*, that is, for *giving views* on demonetization and/or Modi.

The present data and findings, of course, carry shortcomings in being specific to the Indian setting and to one particular policy. Moreover, the present analysis cannot engage with the broader issue of how these interviews were planned and a script of interview questions was

designed. However, the present findings point to how informal participation in the form of voicing politics on a populist policy involved particular political subjectivities.

These forms of interviews, along with surveys of Governments such as approval ratings of Presidents in the U.S.A and other countries (Lebo & Cassino, 2007), increasingly contribute to relating people to governance structures through psychological aspects, such as being 'pleased' or 'dissatisfied' (Hawkins, 2003). While there are claims that manipulation through online and social media are implicated in constructing the 'cult' of leaders and thereby contribute to populism (Engesser, Ernst, Esser, & Büchel, 2017), the present findings point to certain discursive practices that involve people themselves. The present findings offer insights into how people themselves orient to political leaders and their practices . They also raise questions on whether social psychology, and particularly discursive social psychological approaches, can offer more situated and nuanced understandings of political phenomena such as populism.

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Accepted Version

Appendix I: Transcription notation and other symbols

Appendix 1:

Jeffersonian Transcription Notation includes the following symbols:

[Jeffersonian Transcription Notation is described in G. Jefferson, “Transcription Notation,” in J. Atkinson and J. Heritage (eds), *Structures of Social Interaction*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984.]

Symbol	Name	Use
[text]	Brackets	Indicates the start and end points of overlapping speech.
=	Equal Sign	Indicates the break and subsequent continuation of a single interrupted utterance.
(# of seconds)	Timed Pause	A number in parentheses indicates the time, in seconds, of a pause in speech.
(.)	Micropause	A brief pause, usually less than 0.2 seconds.
. or ↓	Period or Down Arrow	Indicates falling pitch.
? or ↑	Question Mark or Up Arrow	Indicates rising pitch.
,	Comma	Indicates a temporary rise or fall in intonation.
-	Hyphen	Indicates an abrupt halt or interruption in utterance.
>text<	Greater than / Less than symbols	Indicates that the enclosed speech was delivered more rapidly than usual for the speaker.
<text>	Less than / Greater than symbols	Indicates that the enclosed speech was delivered more slowly than usual for the speaker.
°	Degree symbol	Indicates whisper or reduced volume speech.
ALL CAPS	Capitalized text	Indicates shouted or increased volume speech.
underline	Underlined text	Indicates the speaker is emphasizing or stressing the speech.
:::	Colon(s)	Indicates prolongation of an utterance.

(hhh)		Audible exhalation
? or (.hhh)	High Dot	Audible inhalation
(text)	Parentheses	Speech which is unclear or in doubt in the transcript.
((<i>italic text</i>))	Double Parentheses	Annotation of non-verbal activity.

In addition, the following symbols were used to refer to participants:

IR – interviewer

IE – interviewee

IE1 & 2 – interviewee 1 and 2, when there are more than one interviewee participating

U – unidentifiable members in the background

ⁱ Hyperinflation is characterised by ‘extremely rapid’ inflation in a country’s economy. A problematic outcome of this is that the country’s currency loses value and hence needs to be replaced (Investopedia, n.d).

ⁱⁱ In the Indian context, monies that are ‘illegitimate’ are referred to as ‘black’ monies and those that are legitimate are referred to as ‘white’. Clearly, these referents are as problematic as referents such as ‘black humour’.

ⁱⁱⁱ In Indian life, language alternation between various languages (Gafaranga & Torras i Calvo, 2001) takes place to achieve a ‘medium’, which in the data is Hindi/Urdu-English, Hindi/Urdu-Telugu, or Telugu-English.

^{iv} Crores is a South Asian term for counting large amounts of money or other items. It is equal to 10 million units.

^v This probably refers to Axis bank, which is one of the leading private financial service providers in India.