Twitter and Aam Aadmi Party: Collective Representations of a Social Movement Turned Political Party

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Abstract: Social movements in many nation states have utilized social media platforms to garner support and to maintain coherent communication with their constituents. One such movement is the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in India. The party grew out of an anti-corruption social movement. The unprecedented rapid rise of the political party was received with enthusiasm in the country, particularly among the younger generation. On acquiring political power, the Party continued to stay connected with its supporters through Twitter. We analyzed the tweets from the time the AAP came to power to the time they resigned from political office. The Party presented itself as an abrupt and powerful change from the political status quo and emphasized that it was grounded in the experiences of common people. We also found that as the party faced political defeat, it began to define itself in opposition to its concrete political adversaries, as opposed to the faceless opponent of corruption.

Keywords: Social movement, Aam Aadmi Party, Twitter, collective identity, Social Media, Group Identity, Indian Political Party

1. Introduction

Social movements around the world survive and thrive by inspiring participants to achieve their common goal of changing a cultural norm, a pattern, or a political situation. Movement activists and leaders utilize a variety of media and communicative strategies to further their objectives, maintain an ongoing relationship with their constituents, and to recruit more participants to the continuing work. Such a process necessitates that a movement has a clear identity that makes a powerful connection with its audience both substantively and symbolically. Identity is an important factor influencing all facets of a movement from initiation to results (Polletta & Jasper, 2001). Beyond a collective identity, movement participants also cohere around a common grievance (Snow, 2013).

In recent times, various nation states have experienced protest movements that addressed the grievances of its populace. Some examples include the Umbrella Protests in Hong Kong (Bhatia, 2015), Occupy Wall Street in the U.S. (Preston, 2011), and the Iranian election protest (Morozov, 2009). Social media featured prominently in sustaining these movements through ongoing communication with its audience.

One such social movement that became a political party is Anna Hazare's anti-corruption movement in India which grew into the Aam Aadmi Party. The anti-corruption movement, fashioned along the lines of Gandhi's non-violent movement, was focused on fighting the rampant corruption in all walks of Indian life. Although India ranks 85th out of 175 countries

on the perception of corruption scale (Transparency International, 2014), the citizenry is acutely aware of corruption in their nation's structures and systems. Furthermore, India's vibrant culture of democratic protest makes it possible for its citizens to demonstrate and rally against corrupt practices.

While Anna Hazare had no political intentions, Arvind Kejriwal with clear political goals, took the movement to a political level. Thus on November 26, 2012, a new political party, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), with a focus on anti-corruption was formed. The unprecedented meteoric rise of the political party created excitement in the country, particularly among the youth. The party received mixed responses from the mass media. While some media outlets, both TV channels and newspapers, eulogized the AAP, others have criticized them. Responding to the media and the public at large, the AAP utilized Twitter as one of the channels to communicate with its constituents. With a growing following, the AAP effectively took control of its story about the fight against corruption.

Here we analyze the Aam Aadmi Party's use of social media as the party changed from an anti-corruption movement to a political party and won the first round of elections. The paper begins with an account of literature on group identity and the use of Twitter in recent social movements. Next we describe our content analysis of tweets. By analyzing Twitter feeds from the AAP, this study makes important contributions about the changing self-presentation of the party as it grappled with significant challenges in the early stages of political life.

2. Literature Overview

2.1. Group Identity

Group identification is a consciousness of similarity, in group distinctiveness, and shared future with those who belong to the same group (Brewer & Silver, 2000). Group identity influences its members' thoughts, emotions, and actions (Terry & Hogg, 1996). Clearly, a movement has to invest considerable effort to develop and present a collective identity that resonates with its audience and creates cohesion among its constituents (Melucci, 1989; Snow, 2001).

According to Bernstein (1997) a collective identity is essential for a movement and may be utilized as a political strategy to achieve cultural and political movement goals. A movement also maintains a clear demarcation between itself and the others, and conserves a common awareness that prioritizes its own interests and develops strategies of resistance (Fominaya, 2010; Gamson 1995; Hunt & Benford, 2004; Taylor & Whittier, 1992). The collective identity of a group is often highly contested in the public sphere. Social movements in particular can find themselves framed in unfavorable ways in the media (Gitlin, 2011). The collective identity of a group is also highly contested in the realm of the social media as well (Haciyakupoglu & Zhang, 2015).

2.2. India and Its Political Context

India, an ancient civilization, gained its independence after a non-violent struggle, from the British in 1947, and became a secular, socialist, democratic republic (Guha, 2007). India's

economy has advanced rapidly; since 1991 its economic growth has ranked in the top 10% of the world's countries (Growth in India, n.d.). It has 24 official languages and the world's largest print media in 101 different languages (To know more about Indian languages, n.d.). While Hinduism is the majority religion, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism, and syncretic tribal faiths are also practised in India. The country is the second most populous and the largest functioning democracy in the world. Indian elections are held regularly preceded by clamorous political campaigns, with political parties reaching out to an engaged electorate. Although the Indian National Congress and the Bharatiya Janata party are the two major parties, several other political parties also contest the national and state elections in a parliamentary system.

2.3. The Rise of the Aam Aadmi Party

The Aam Aadmi Party's rise as a political force in Delhi was meteoric. The timeline below, for the period of our analysis, illustrates this meteoric rise from the date of the party launch to winning the Delhi election, and its eventual resignation from government.

November 26, 2012	Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) is launched
December 8, 2013	AAP wins 28 seats of 70 in Delhi state elections
December 17, 2013	AAP solicits feedback via social media as to whether it should try to form the next government.
December 22, 2013	AAP forms coalition government with "conditional support" from Congress.
December 28, 2013	AAP led coalition government takes power. Kejriwal is inaugurated as chief minister.
January 4, 2014	AAP announces that it will contest Loksabha elections for national parliament.
January 20, 2014	Kejriwal and ministers launch Dharna to protest Police Actions and to demand that police should come under the control of the Delhi government.
January 21, 2014	30 hour Dharna ends after Center suspends two police officials.
February 13, 2014	Jan Lokpal bill is brought to floor.
February 13, 2014	Delhi cabinet approves Delhi Lokpal 2014 Bill.
February 14, 2014	AAP resigns from government.

In its first contested election barely a year after its inception, AAP had seized 28 of the 70 seats in the Assembly. Correspondingly, BJP had been awarded 31 seats, Congress a mere 8 and 3 seats went to independents or minor parties. Once in power, the Aam Aadmi party had to take on the role of governance. Furthermore, it had to sustain its momentum and reach its constituents through a variety of means including the social networking tool, Twitter.

This rapid rise of Aam Aadmi's political fortunes presented considerable tensions within the collective identity for the social movement turned political party. Suddenly, it was not merely a voice of the "common person", but it was the lead partner in a coalition government in a state. The rapid rise of the party's fortunes required the party to adapt its understanding and

self-presentation within a very short period of time. We expected that the responsibilities for governance would lead to significant changes in the group's presented identity via its Twitter account within such a condensed period.

2.4. The Intersection of Political Movements and Twitter

Social media have often been cited as the moving force in some recent political upheavals. Although released only in 2006, Twitter currently has over 316 million active users worldwide (The Statistics Portal, 2015). Twitter users send short messages called tweets, limited to 140 characters, which are read by other Twitter users (Fox, Zickuhr & Smith, 2009). About 6,000 tweets are tweeted on Twitter every second which corresponds to about 200 billion tweets per year (Internet live stats, 2015). Twitter users who receive a message in their feed then have the option to share information using 'retweet' or 'favorite' functionality to share messages they may find important or entertaining. Users can post updates to each other, and also use the hashtag feature to communicate with specific audiences (Jansen, Zhang, Sobel & Chowdury, 2009).

In the case of India, by 2014, Twitter had approximately 18 million users in the sub-continent.   This gave India a second place rank among Asian nations when it came to the number of Twitter users (The Indian Express, May 28, 2014). However, given that India has some 1.2 billion inhabitants this translated to less than 2% of the population of India in 2014 – the period analyzed in our research. With regards to political influence, some political observers such as Sunil Abraham, the executive director of the Bangalore-based Center for Internet and Society dismissed the reach and importance of social media: "It is not really a true dipstick. It is only a dipstick of the elite" (Patel, March 31, 2014).

This sentiment, however, concealed the increasing momentum and consequentiality of social media in Indian elections, especially as it has related to AAP's campaigns. The Aam Aadmi Party was particularly innovative in using Twitter to organize events and rally support among Delhi's youth and middle class. AAP party leader Arvind Kejriwal had accumulated more than 1.2 million followers by the time of the AAP's first administration (BBC Trending, January 21, 2014). In the first months of 2014, Arvind Kejriwal or the Aam Aadmi Party produced 27% of the Tweets of the tweets done by national parties and candidates, compared to a mere 4% of the Congress Party that held power a majority in parliament prior to the election (Thane, May 31, 2014).

In an interview featured in *Quartz*, Rishi Jaitly, Twitter's head of operations in India exuberantly declared that the 2014 elections in India were the "Twitter election" (Richard, May 14, 2014). He opined that Twitter was transforming modes of political organizing and the daily practice of journalism related to campaigns: "Twitter is providing a bountiful window into the roar of the crowd in India. For instance, one of the things we've enabled in the run-up to this election is ensuring Twitter Trends are available in many more Indian cities. You can now see Twitter trends in 22 Indian cities from Amritsar to Pune to Trivandrum. So when I talk to journalists who for years were perhaps unable to get such a real time public window into the mood in any particular city, now they're able to go on Twitter and search the conversation in real time" (para 25). He also states, "The biggest sea change in the last five years is that people now have power. Citizens now have an unparalleled ability to make their own choices about

what kind of information, people, and organizations they want to follow, and have the ability to influence and create media and narratives with political parties, with candidates, with news organizations in an elections context" (para 14).

The Aam Aadmi Party has continued to be recognized for its use of Twitter as a part of its campaigns. In December 2015, the Times of India recognized the Delhi legislative elections of February 2015 as the second most notable Twitter event of the year in India. This was the occasion of AAP's resounding victory in the State of Delhi in which it won 67 of 70 seats. During the 30 day period of the assembly elections there were nearly 11 million tweets related to the Delhi election (Times of India Tech, December 7, 2015). As of April 2016, more than 7.6 million followers followed Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's Twitter account and more than 2.4 million people followed the AAP account which this study drew on.

The Aam Aadmi Party Account is particularly appropriate for this investigation because it involved a political movement that has directly solicited involvement and feedback from its supporters via Twitter. More importantly, it has been quite successful in doing so.

2.5. Research Questions

RQ#1: How did AAP present itself as a movement and a political party via its Twitter feed during its first brief stint in power?

RQ#2: How did the patterns of movement self-presentation change in conjunction with and in response to important events during the period?

3. Method

A mixed methods design was employed in the study. The hashtags that appeared in the AAP account tweets were coded using a predefined coding system that is characteristic of quantitative studies. The tweets were also analyzed for their collective identity themes utilizing an inductive methodology that is characteristic of qualitative studies.

The sampling period for the tweets ranged from the period of December 14, 2013 through February 25 of 2014. There were approximately 1200 tweets in the official Twitter feed of the AAP during this period. Retweets, which constituted about 35% of the total tweets, were removed from the analysis. In addition, Hindi only tweets, which constituted about 25% of the total tweets, were eliminated. This left a total of 503 tweets in the sample from the 73 day period on the official AAP party account.

All of the hashtags in the sample were first identified. The dates on which the hashtags were used were recorded along with the total number of times that the hashtag appeared in the sample. A total of 64 different hashtags were used in 409 instances. Each hashtag was coded for whether it was oriented toward praising the party or candidate (Acclaim), attacking a political adversary (Attack), defending against an attack or criticism, or merely conveying descriptive information such as a party's name or location of an event (Descriptive). The content of the tweet was utilized to determine the orientation of a hashtag. For instance, the hashtag #Teamwork, which might be coded as acclaim in some contexts, was coded as an attack

because the tweet itself referred to collusion between the opposing parties. This coding system has been widely employed in more than 50 published analyses of political discourse including a wide variety of communication media such as campaign debates, political advertisements, direct mail letters and social media posts (e.g., Benoit et al., 2003).

The results of the hashtag analysis appear below in Table 1 below. The Hashtags are ordered in terms of when they first appeared to display emergent patterns in Hashtag use.

Table 1. Twitter Hashtag Frequency & Coding During First Aam Aadmi Administration

Hashtags	Date Appeared	Last Date	N	Duration of Use	Coding
TrustDeficit	24-Feb	Same	2		Attack
KejriwalnHaryana	23-Feb	Same	12		Descriptive
NCPSscaredofAAP	22-Feb	Same	1		Attack
Shame	22-Feb	Same	1		Attack
ScaredofAAP	22-Feb	same	4		Attack
PolkholByAAP	20-Feb	Same	4		Attack
CronyCongBJP	19-Feb	Same	3		Attack
AAPYogrendrainMI	18-Feb	Same	1		Descriptive
YoBJPCongsoConstitutional	18-Feb	Same	2		Attack
Teamwork	18-Feb	Same	1		Attack
WhyLS Blackout	18-Feb	same	3		Attack
CongBJP	18-Feb	Same	1		Attack
Corruption	18-Feb	Same	1		Attack
Telegana	18-Feb	Same	1		Descriptive
CheaterCongBJP	14-Feb	Same	4		Attack
Anarchist ConBJP	13-Feb	14-Feb	25	2	Attack
Anarchy	13-Feb	14-Feb	2	2	Attack
ConBJPBhaiBhai	13-Feb	Same	1		Attack
Anarchistparliament	13-Feb	Same	4		Attack
Doublespeak	13-Feb	14-Feb	4	2	Attack
AAPPromisesDelivered	12-Feb	Same	2		Acclaim
Rilgas	11-Feb	Same	1		Descriptive
RilGasScam	10-Feb	11-Feb	9	2	Attack
Janlokpal	11-Feb	14-Feb	4	4	Descriptive
WilnaMoAnswer	10-Feb	21-Feb	13	12	Attack
Saheb	10-Feb	Same	1		Descriptive
Mydhanna	9-Feb	Same	1		Descriptive
JantarMantar	9-Feb	Same	1		Acclaim
SafewomenSafeDehli	4-Feb	Same	1		Acclaim
Polkhol	4-Feb	Same	4		Acclaim
IAMSantosh	2-Feb	same	3		Acclaim

Santosh	1-Feb	Same	1		Acclaim
1CroreAAPians	30-Jan	same	3		Acclaim
AAPKaLokpal	29-Jan	same	5		Acclaim
BBM	25-Jan	Same	1		Descriptive
AAPDrama	20-Jan	Same	1		Defend
KrantiKariAAPGovt?	19-Jan	21-Jan	18	3	Acclaim
Proud pf AAPGovt	18-Jan	19-Jan	11	2	Acclaim
CongBJPQuitIndia	17-Jan	Same	1		Attack
UnitedWithAAP	15-Jan	16-Jan	8	2	Acclaim
KnowtheTruth	15-Jan	Same	1		Defend
AAPkiAmethi	11-Jan	13-Jan	3	3	Acclaim
MainBhiAamAdmi	10-Jan	Same	1		Acclaim
Vote4AAP	9-Jan	Same	1		Acclaim
AAP4India	9-Jan	Same	11		Acclaim
HDL	7-Jan	Same	1		Descriptive
AAp4LS2014	4-Jan	5-Jan	4	2	Acclaim
Thankyou	4-Jan	Same	1		Descriptive
BJP	2-Jan	18-Feb	3	47	Descriptive
VoteofConfidence	2-Jan	Same	1		Acclaim
TrustVote4AAP	1-Jan	2-Jan	2	2	Acclaim
AAPInAction	30-Dec	3-Feb	18	35	Acclaim
AAPGovtinDelhi	28-Dec	22-Feb	48	57	Acclaim
MyCMKejriwal	28-Dec	Same	4		Acclaim
OperationKejriclean	26-Dec	Same	1		Acclaim
JantaDabaar	26-Dec	Same	1		Acclaim
JoinAAP	25-Dec	1-Feb	4	39	Acclaim
Christmas	24-Dec	NA	1		Descriptive
AAP4People	21-Dec	same	2		Acclaim
ProudofUArvind	20-Dec	NA	1		Acclaim
ShouldAAPformGovt?	17-Dec	19-Dec	3	3	Descriptive
ShudAAPForm Govt?	17-Dec	Same	2		Descriptive
AAP	17-Dec	26-Feb	124	All	Descriptive
NoOneKilledJonLokPal	14-Dec	Same	2		Acclaim
			405		

　　　The sample of 503 tweets was first read through to identify tweets that contained overt content that made some assertion about the collective identity of the AAP as a party or social movement. To be chosen for further analysis, a tweet and/ or the associated hashtags had to have asserted or projected a particular identity for AAP and its mission, or defined the identity of AAP relative to their opponents. A total of 124 tweets were selected for further analysis (25% of total). These particular tweets were further examined for their collective identity related

themes following the parameters of applied thematic analysis which is an inductive bottom-up approach to content analysis that codes in larger units than grounded theory analysis (Guest, MacQueen & Namy, 2012).

4. Results

4.1. AAP's Self-Presentation on Twitter

One striking finding in the initial perusal of the tweets and their associated hashtags is that AAP used Twitter to directly appeal to its members as a primary audience. Not unexpectedly, there were numerous appeals for citizens to join the party or to give money to the party. In addition, however, the Twitter feed was also used to pose questions and solicit opinion from the citizenry. For instance, on December 17, 2013, AAP's Twitter account posed the question about whether AAP should take the lead in forming the new government. Party members were requested to register their votes via texting. Subsequent tweets within a couple of days reported that the opinions were pouring in and eventually the tweets reflected the ultimate results of the canvas. Soliciting people's responses went as far as requesting people to share their personal experiences with police requesting bribes in a January 20, 2014 tweet: *"Has a cop ever asked you or anyone you know for a bribe? If yes, RT and reply with your story."*

In the sample of 503 tweets selected for our analysis, we found that hashtags appeared a total of 405 times. Some tweets had two or more hashtags, but many tweets carried no hashtags. Not surprisingly, the hashtag #AAP was the most frequently used hashtag. It appeared 124 times and accounted for about 27% of the occasions that a hashtag was used. During the period, 64 different hashtags were used. Forty-six of the hashtags (70%) appeared for a single day.

In terms of their orientation, 27 (42%) of the hashtags were acclaiming, 20 or 31% of the hashtags were attacking, 2 hashtags or 3% were defending, and 15 or 23% were descriptive. The "Acclaim" hashtag category is illustrated by a February 12 example, #AAPPromisesDelivered. The "Defend" category is exemplified in a hashtag that was utilized to defend a party leader who was supposedly quoted out of context – #KnowtheTruth. Likewise the category of Attack can be found in the example #CongBJP with the two parties – one being a former coalition partner and the other being the opposition, lumped together as one and the same thing.

Several prominent themes emerged in the analysis of collective identity. Perhaps the most prominent theme was that of declaring the party's unity or solidary with the "common person", consistent with the party's "Common Man" name ("Aam Aadmi" means "Common Man" in Hindi).

This common man theme is particularly prominent in the early days of the AAP party administration, as characterized by this January 1, 2014 tweet, "AAP is trying every effort to fulfill its promises done with common people. Aam Aadmi will fulfill dreams of Aam Aadmi. ?#TrustVote4AAP". In addition, party leaders renounced the status accompaniments of political office that symbolically elevated them above the common person. One week into Kejriwal's administration, a January 4 tweet announced that the Chief Minister "Will not move into the two duplex flats allotted to me: @ArvindKejriwal."

On multiple occasions the true hearted common person is exhorted to join AAP in its fight to defeat corruption, as in this January 15 tweet, "All honest & good people should come together to save this nation. "#UnitedWithAAP." As opposition to AAP's administration begins to crystallize, citizens are warned that they must maintain a unified front against those who are motivated to disrupt this unity between the people and the party, "They will try every effort to divide us but we will have to be #UnitedWithAAP." Likewise, citizens are counseled to resist thinking of AAP as an external objectified entity: "Don't let feel AAP as an alien, it has emerged from the frustration of aam aadmi like u & me." In other words, AAP not merely identifies with the common person, its very being is rooted in the experiences of the common person. We also note that this appeal is based upon a shared experience and not a shared mystical communal characteristic or ideology. Under AAP, there will be a restoration of popular democracy, as promised in this February 1 tweet, "Democracy is popular self-rule, but the current practice of democracy negates this ideal. We aim to restore power to the people". This theme remained prominent from the beginning of the sampled period, though it was particularly prominent during the first half of the 11 week period.

A parallel theme that was particularly prominent in the early days of the AAP administration was that AAP was intensely committed to its stated goals and values. This theme drew a distinction between AAP and the other political parties. AAP was not just another political party but it was a social movement that would challenge the establishment rather than accommodate it. A January 9 tweet declared, "Aam Aadmi Party is not just a political party, it is a reform movement which will spread across India."#AAP4India." The language of implacable resolve characteristic of social movements is illustrated in a January 5 tweet quoting Arvind Kejriwal as saying, "There is no question of compromising on corruption. I will put my life at stake, but will not compromise on the issue,"?@ArvindKejriwal said. The commitment to fighting corruption is presented as a singular solution to a multitude of issues including economic issues, as is illustrated in this February 6 tweet, "Our economic policy can well be summed up in just two words 'Honest Politics.'

A third prominent theme is that AAP is introducing monumental revolutionary changes and not mere incremental improvements. The movement declares broad and ambitious plans. A January 9 tweet declared: "Aam Aadmi Party sets bar high, lays bare its fund details". Great expectations are raised and results are both promised and claimed in very short periods of time. On December 28, his first day in office, the AAP team is declared to be active and ready to launch, "Team Kejriwal brimming with new ideas at the helm in Delhi". The hashtag #AAPInAction was attached to a December 30 tweet celebrating AAP's campaign pledge to provide a certain amount of free water to each household: "As promised, 20K Liter of water will be supplied for free to Delhi #AAPinAction." Later tweets heralded the accomplishments of AAP at the end of the first week and at the end of the first month. On January 18, a mere three weeks into its administration, the AAP Twitter feed declares, "Aam Aadmi Party is delivering what it promised in Delhi." The party's bold declaration of very specific promises and its emphasis on frenetic action communicate a deep impatience with the way things are and a rejection of counsel to take a cautious and measured approach to introducing political and economic changes.

4.2. Changing Patterns of Self-presentation

Over the observation period, only 7 of the 64 hashtags were employed for longer than three days. Other than the use of the AAP party acronym (#AAP), the hashtags *#AAPGovInDelhi* and *#AAPInAction* were the only hashtags that were used with some frequency over time. Both hashtags were applied to tweets that extolled party accomplishments in the first days of its administration or highlighted the party's future plans. Otherwise, the hashtags and tweets were temporally isolated – in anticipation of or in response to a particular event.

As one can see in Table 1, however, there was a salient shift in the tenor of the hashtags during the last two weeks that were sampled. Prior to the initiation of the debate of the Jan Lokpal bill, the hashtags were almost uniformly positive (i.e., hashtags coded as Acclaim). However, for hashtags initiated after February 9, 2014 the hashtags were quite negative and aggressive (i.e., hashtags coded as Attack). The Jan Lokpal bill debate, vote and aftermath was a watershed event in the self-presentation of the party. This bill was designed to attack political corruption and make public officials much more accountable. After this point, the focus shifted from the virtues of AAP to the concrete evils of its political opponents.

Prior to the Jan Lokpal debate, the content of the hashtags includes sparse references to the other Indian political parties. The Bharatiya Janata Pary (BJP), the primary opposition party is mentioned only twice in the 9 weeks prior to the assembly debate beginning February 13 and Congress is mentioned only once through the end of January 2014. In fact, a January 11 tweet explicitly denied that either Congress or BJP are opponents. Indeed, it authoritatively declares that the only opponent is corruption: "Our fight is not against BJP or Congress. We are against 'Corruption'. That's it."

As political opposition to the Jan Lokpal bill began to emerge, however, the hashtags began to explicitly identify both Congress and BJP as concrete and dangerous opponents. More strikingly, the two parties are depicted as being brothers linked in a sinister conspiracy, "#ConBJPBhaiBhai", as anarchists (#AnarchistConBJP), as cheaters (#CheatersCongBJP) and as corrupt cronies (#CronyConBJP), or simply as being on the same team and virtually identical (#CongBJP).

The 'Attack' claim that their opponents were "anarchists" was intensely and consistently repeated during the contentious assembly debate of the Jan Lokpal bill. Indeed the label was used 31 times in hashtags on February 13 and 14 (i.e.# Anarchistparliament, #Anarchy, and #Anarchist ConBJP), as these labels had previously routinely been applied to AAP as a group that only knew how to protest and knew nothing concrete about governance. The tweets during the two days of debate amplify this charge as the following February 13 tweet illustrates: "Those who called the #AAP govt. inexperienced were probably referring to #AnarchistCongBJP expertise in disrupting the assembly." The AAP Twitter account turned the insults and criticisms that it had endured through the first 8 weeks of governance and heaped identical labels upon its political opponents. So much for faceless corruption being the enemy, now Congress and BJP were icons of and synonymous with corruption.

5. Discussion

These results show that the Aam Aadmi Party utilized a variety of strategies to reassure its constituents that it continued to represent and promote the interests of the common man. In appealing to the "good" people through Twitter, AAP reached out to its audience members' personal identity (Klandermans, 2014) as decent citizens. Furthermore, the tweets reinforced the group identification and that they shared a similar identity. The Twitter messages also tapped into the citizens' collective grievance against corruption by seeking stories of their personal experience with police corruption.

The 'Acclaim' messages included specific and ambitious plans to make everyday life easier for the ordinary citizen. The 'Attack' messages, however, changed from focusing on the abstract entity of corruption, to focusing on the party's very concrete political opponents in the Delhi Assembly. While it had previously been able to portray itself as being aloof from the political fray, the Aam Aadmi Party increasingly displayed itself as deeply engaged in both attacking its political adversaries as well as defending itself from their attacks.

The analysis also revealed that even within the limitations of the 140 characters of Twitter, the Aam Aadmi Party communicated a distinctive party identity. Throughout the period it represented itself as being firmly grounded in the experiences and interests of the common person. Once in power, it portrayed its program as one that represented real and abrupt change – an immediate disconnect from the politics of the past. The party also continued to present itself as a social movement, and not merely a political party. It remains to be seen if the party will be able to sustain or even find it advantageous to maintain its social movement identity.

5.1. Implications for Methodology

On a practical methodological matter, we note that Twitter posts and hashtags are a rich source for content and thematic analyses. This may be a surprising conclusion to some because of the severe limitations on message length. However, the format may encourage communicators to be particularly strategic and to create singular messages with crystal clear themes. Moreover, our analysis shows that while a single tweet taken alone may be limited, when viewed in totality, when taken together, the tweets revealed a detailed and nuanced view of how the collective identity of the party was presented and how that presentation evolved over time.

5.2. Study Limitations

The current study is an exploratory analysis of a larger project dedicated to a longitudinal comparative analysis of how social movements evolve or fail to evolve in their collective self-presentations (i.e., projected collective identity). The sample comes from a relatively brief period of time and excludes both retweets and Hindi language tweets. The limited duration of the analysis raises the question of whether the observed changes in patterns of acclaiming and attacking were of relatively short duration with a regression back to the mean or reflected a more permanent change.

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