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Nationalism on the Net: Exploring the ideology of India's Bharatiya Janata Party

Adrienne Lee Atterberry
Syracuse University

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Abstract

India's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) created the first political website in India during the year 1998 and continues to maintain an active online presence. The two most popular places for computer and Internet usage are college campuses and offices—places frequented by members of India's growing middle class. As the BJP's supporters have traditionally come from middle-class, upper-caste social backgrounds, this group has particular importance to the BJP's political success, thus the BJP's online publications may establish hegemony of the middle class and its ideals. For these reasons, studying the BJP's online group-identity and political message has salience.

May 2004 to May 2009 marks the first point in the 21st century that the BJP did not form the national government. Research shows that when a political group lacks the power it seeks to attain it will work harder to expose its opponents' weaknesses and gain political support, which may involve an enhanced communications campaign and use of mass media. Thus, this thesis textually analyzed 62 documents published between May 2004 and May 2009 related to how the BJP constructs its group identity and its political message from the "About Us" and "Speeches" section of www.bjp.org.

From conducting this research, this author found that the BJP constructs their political opponents as inherently bad for India because of their poor national security, development, and social policies. Meanwhile, the BJP constructs themselves as the political party best able to help India reach success through nurturing an 'integrated' society that cares for people from all socioeconomic backgrounds, development initiatives, and a strong national security policy.

The Internet enables the BJP to control the content, distribution and discussion around their ideas in the construction of their own version of social reality that has the potential to reach those living in India and those Indians living abroad. This is a troubling idea in as far as the ground-reality of life in India differs from the messages presented by the BJP and the Internet serves as a silencing device for those who lack the material means to speak out against the BJP's messages.

NATIONALISM ON THE NET:
EXPLORING THE IDEOLOGY OF INDIA'S BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY

by

Adrienne Lee Atterberry

B.A., University of Pittsburgh, 2009
B.S. University of Pittsburgh, 2009
Certificate of Advanced Study, Syracuse University, 2011
M.A., Syracuse University, 2012

Thesis

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The media began to play a more important role in Indian political campaigns during Rajiv Gandhi's 1984-bid for the position of prime minister after the assassination of his mother, Indira Gandhi (Chopra, 2006). Gandhi's successful election-bid served as the most-advanced use of media in Indian political campaigns at that point in time (Gould, 1986; Karan, 2009). Since Gandhi's successful 1984 media-led campaign, mass media continue to play a significant role in Indian politics (Karan, 2009).

Gandhi's 1984 campaign created avenues for politicians to use more advanced forms of media during political campaigns, which include (but are not limited to) use of the Internet (Karan, 2009). The increased importance of the Internet for political purposes parallels the growing trend in Internet usage within India. According to a World Bank (2009) report, the number of personal computers owned in India increased from 0.50 per hundred persons in 2000 to 3.30 per hundred persons in 2008. In addition, Internet users have increased within India from 0.50 persons per 100 in 2000 to 4.50 persons per 100 in 2008 (World Bank Report, 2009). Thus, because of the increased use of the Internet by both political groups and their potential voters, studying the use of the Internet by political groups in India has significance.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) created the first political website—within India—during the 1998 election season and twelve years later continues to maintain an active online presence (Karan, 2009). According to Robert Hardgrave (1993), the mass media have an important role to play in the BJP's ability to shape and project a pan-Indian Hindu national identity. Mass media do so by allowing the BJP to project a single image that reaches its wide constituency, which allows disparate groups to overlook their differences and unite according to a shared ideology (Hardgrave, 1993). As a relatively recent development in Indian political

campaigns, Kavita Karan (2009) suggests that one of the gaps in the literature concerns research on the Internet's impact on the electorate and its ability to construct a homogenous political identity for party supporters. As such, this paper hopes to fill this gap in the research by considering the following research questions and sub-questions:

RQ1: How does the BJP use its Internet site to construct its political message?

> **RQ1a:** How does the BJP construct its group identity?

> **RQ1b:** How does the BJP construct its political message?

RQ2: How does the Internet enable the BJP to spread its political message?

The BJP promotes a Hindu-nationalist (Hindutva) ideology. In Hindi, Hindutva means "Hindu-ness" and when used in a political context the term denotes equating "Indian-ness" with "Hindu-ness".

India's middle class serves as one target audience for the BJP's online message of Hindu nationalism (Hindutva), because it represents one of the most dynamic, growing populations within India. As of 2011, the middle class comprised 13.1% of India's population (PTI, 2011). Estimates claim that the middle class will account for 20.3% of India's population by 2015-2016 and 37.2% of its population by 2025-2026—thus comprising a plurality of the population and the electorate (PTI, 2011).

Aside from estimates of its growth, there exist other reasons that make the middle class significant to any political organization interested in broadcasting its ideology online. A report by the *Internet & Mobile Association of India* states that offices and college campuses represent two of the most popular locations for Indians to access the Internet (IAMAI, 2007). These also

happen to be locations frequented by the middle-class. In addition, even though it may be more common for middle class individuals to access the Internet while at work, this group owns 53.2% of all personal computers within India (PTI, 2011). Consider that fact in tandem with the idea that 70.0% of those familiar with personal computers use the Internet and that 25.0% (as of 2007) of Internet users access the Internet daily, then this provides ample reason for the BJP to target a middle class audience with the propagation of its online ideology (IAMAI, 2007).

In summary, India's middle class represents a group of growing importance. Because of the increased usage of the Internet within India and the importance of the Internet in politics, studying the political usage of the Internet within an Indian context has significance. This paper will textually analyze the Internet site used and maintained by the Hindu-nationalist BJP. The purpose of this textual analysis study is to understand the construction of the BJP's political message on its website: www.bjp.org.

The following two chapters will provide further examination of the theoretical constructs used in this paper, as well as the paper's methodology. Chapter 2, the literature review, will provide an understanding of the BJP's political ideology and its relationship to India's middle class. After reading Chapter 2, the reader will understand the significance of the middle-class to Indian politics and how the Internet functions in propagating the BJP's political message. Chapter 3 will explore the rationale for undergoing a textual analysis of www.bjp.org. After reading this chapter, the reader will understand why textual analysis serves as the best method for understanding the construction of the BJP's political ideology and how I chose to analyze the website's contents.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Prior to India gaining independence in 1947, foreigners frequently shaped India's national and international image in such a way that it on occasion supported the idea of India's exoticness and justified the maintenance of colonial rule (Dirks, 2004). For example, after the Great Revolt of 1857, British colonial powers deemed it increasingly important to understand how criminality manifests itself in India and did so by constructing a taxonomy—according to race and caste—that provided the groundwork for managing perceived criminals (Brown, 2001). In other words, part of the pre-independence colonial project involved the domination of the British through the careful construction and maintenance of a particular image of the Indian-subject (Brown, 2001).

Post-independence, Indians could shape India's national and international image according to their own dictates. One of the earliest debates concerning India's image involved a discussion of whether India should be represented as a Hindu-state or a secular-state. Mounting tensions within the Congress Party over this issue forced some of this group's communally-inclined members to form the Jana Sangh, which would later become the Bharatiya Janata Party (Chhibber, 1997).

Overview of Hindu Nationalism (Hindutva)

In the ideology's founding text *"Hindutva—or who is a Hindu?"* Vinayak Damodar Savarkar elaborates on the definition of Hindutva (Bhatt & Mukta, 2000). His definition states that only Hindus—those of a common Aryan race, nation, and civilization—may take an active role in the nation's state craft, while permanently relegating all others to the position of outsiders (Hansen, 1999).

Savarkar's message of Hindutva has prominence today through political organizations such as the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The BJP espouses a form of Hindutva—or Hindu

nationalism—that advocates for the Indian state's organization according to "Hindu" dictates (Bhatt & Mukta, 2000). This idea's vagueness enables its potency as it allows the BJP to define the meaning of "Hindu" and "Hindu-ness" for its voting public, whose definition actively shapes the BJP's social and political agenda (Fernandes & Heller, 2006; Oldenburg, 2011).

Hindu nationalism's prominence within India continues to grow since its formal inception in 1923. As such people have literally fought and killed on behalf of Hindu nationalism. One of the worst cases of violence to-date would be the riots that occurred in 2002 after the deaths of 60 Hindu pilgrims in Gujarat in which 1000 people—the majority of those Muslim—were killed. This event does not overshadow other incidents such as the killing of an Australian missionary (Graham Staines) and his two sons in 1999 and the 2000 deaths that resulted from riots across India in the aftermath of the destruction of the Babri Masjid in 1992. Despite the violence associated with this political ideology, organizations such as the BJP derive their success in-part through establishing Hindutva as a common ideology of modern Indian politics.

Hindu nationalism and the middle class

The history of India's middle class extends to pre-independence when the colonialists actively sought to construct Indian subjects who could help with the colonial project of governing (Fernandes, 2006). The upper-caste, middle-class community constructed during colonialism relied heavily on its English-language training in order to access increased economic power (Fernandes, 2006). Because of their lack of economic and political leadership—in conjunction with experiences of persistent racial discrimination—India's middle class began to enact its identity through the public sphere (Sarkar, 1983). Often the middle class image within the public sphere centered on the discourses of temperance, appropriate gender roles,

respectability, and moral degeneration (Fernandes, 2006). While the middle-class preached about morality in public, this group's private sphere became increasingly politicized along the lines of religion as this group began to establish a strong Hindu identity as a perceived antidote to the threat posed by the Christian colonialists (van der Veer, 2002). Therefore, the middle class simultaneously developed an increasingly public persona and a deeper attachment to its Hindu identity.

Post-independence, India's middle-class continued to flourish under Nehru's leadership and his state-led development initiatives. Nehru fostered the growth of the middle class via subsidized education and access to government jobs (Fernandes, 2006; Nigam, 2009). Despite the positive work of Nehru in helping to maintain India's middle class, disenchantment with state-led development began to take root during the late 1980s and into the early 1990s.

During the 1980s, Rajiv Gandhi moved India away from state-led development and towards market-led development. Because of this shift, many of those individuals within the middle class—especially those of the upper castes—began to experience some of the benefits of liberalization: such as access to more commodities and better paying jobs. This resulted in India's middle class yearning for more of the privileges offered to them via economic liberalization. The BJP sensed this desire amongst the middle class and so established itself as *the* pro-liberalizaton party and so, aligned itself with the interests of the middle class (Fernandes, 2006).

Beyond establishing itself as pro-liberalization, the BJP also began to advocate for members of the middle class—particularly those of the upper castes—along cultural lines. After the release of the Mandal Commission Reports and the subsequent affirmative action policies established throughout the country, members of India's upper caste, middle class communities

began to protest (e.g. self-immolation) what they felt was discriminatory treatment (Bhatt & Mukta, 2000). In addition, middle class sentiment began to think of the Congress Party as the political playground of the lower-castes and religious minorities. Due to feelings of marginalization and the increased enfranchisement of lower caste communities, the middle class needed a party able to represent its desire for economic liberalization paired with social conservatism (Bhatt & Mukta, 2000).

India's Middle Class & Globalization

The need for a social ordering device became more necessary because the contours of what constituted India's middle class began to change due to the processes of globalization. For example, the US Immigrant Act of 1965 allowed for a higher quota of Asian Indian immigrants and so encouraged the migration of individuals out of India and into the US (Chopra, 2006). Thus, 1970s India witnessed a large migration of talented individuals out of India to the US (Chaturvedi, 2005). Unlike the Nehru-generation that thought of India's diaspora as traitors to the process of nation-building, in the 1980s Rajiv Gandhi sought to incorporate this group into the new national project of India's liberalization (Chopra, 2006). As such, this group began to embody the very promises of globalization through their ability to gain enough human capital to migrate to other countries in order to gain additional educational and professional opportunities. Concurrently, as the character of the middle class began to develop and change, its need for a mechanism to establish social order became increasingly pronounced.

While India redefined the parameters of the nation under globalization, Asian Indian Hindus began to redefine their social identity within their new country of residence (Robinson, 2004). Scholars point to several reasons underlying Asian Indian Hindus' desire to redefine their social identity within their new country of residence: (a) feelings of marginality; (b) a sense of

cultural detachment; and (c) fear that their children will not grow up with the correct cultural roots (Kurien, 2004). As a result, some turn to Hindu nationalist (Hindutva) organizations to find answers to their cultural questions or to culturally educate their children in what it means to be a Hindu (Kurien, 2004).

Identity construction & the Hindu diaspora

Roots and routes have great importance in the process of identity construction (Murgi, 2008). According to Karim Murgi (2008), roots have a backward orientation and typically describe where someone is from, whereas routes typically have a forward orientation and describe the process of identity formation. These two concepts play a dynamic role in the process of an individual's identity construction (Murgi, 2008).

The idea of connecting one's past to the present has particular salience in immigrant communities. In an immigrant's country of migration she will confront new social norms that differ from those found in her culture of origin (Phinney, 2000). These new social norms dynamically interact with the cultural norms of an immigrant's respective country of origin, especially in terms of enabling the immigrant to then construct roots and routes.

The process of immigrant identity construction does not take place exclusively at the level of the individual. The formation of a group whose members purport to share a similar identity has an important role in the immigrant experience of identity construction. Diaspora serves as a term often used to describe such communities (e.g. Bhatia, 2007; Varma, 2007; Lal, 2008; Kapur, 2010; Prashad, 2000). Rogers Brubaker (2005) clearly defines a diaspora in terms of three criteria: (a) dispersion: a settled group of people that lives outside of a perceived homeland; (b) homeland orientation: where a specific (real or imagined) place serves as a point of reference in the process of value-and identity-construction; and (c) boundary maintenance: the continued transference of cultural values across generations that enables a group to define

itself in relation to others. In other words, the term diaspora describes a group of people who live outside of a real or imagined homeland, who continue to use (the idea of) that homeland as a source of identity construction to define themselves in relation to members of that same group, as well as perceived outsiders.

Three terms have special significance in the process of talking about the diaspora as it relates to the South Asian experience: *non-resident Indian (NRI)*, *person of Indian origin (PIO)*, and *Overseas Citizen of India (OCI)* (Brubaker, 2005; Murgi, 2008). India's Ministry of Home Affairs neatly defines all three terms and their differences. An *NRI* is a person of Indian citizenship, who holds an Indian passport, but resides outside of India; meanwhile a *PIO* is a person of Indian descent, who has the nationality and citizenship of another country, and is a foreign passport holder (Comparative Chart). The last term: *OCI*— represents a *PIO* from any country who never held citizenship in either Bangladesh or Pakistan and does not have family members (up to four generations prior) who held citizenship in either of these countries.

All three terms serve to acknowledge an individual's life in a new country but actively work to maintain an individual's connection with both a physical and psychically constructed homeland. Thus, the work of Hindu nationalist groups in constructing a strong network of Hindus in the diaspora mirrors the efforts of the Republic of India in figuring out additional ways to tie members of the (more general) Indian diaspora to the subcontinent.

Public relations, agenda-setting, framing & the Internet

The Internet enables politicians to communicate with their publics in ways that other media (e.g. television) do not allow. For example, the Internet enables senders to have complete control over the message that they want their audience to see at a limited cost (Park & Choi, 2002). The Internet also enables political groups to gain increased visibility because information

on their site can be accessed virtually anywhere by anyone with an Internet connection, which can help political groups in their ability to foster understanding and build relationships with their audience (Kenski & Stroud, 2006; White & Raman, 2000). Some scholars argue that websites function as a status symbol for the communities they serve in that possessing a website is indicative of a group's quality (White & Raman 2000). Thus, having a website is important to an organization such as the Bharatiya Janata Party because it enables the BJP to better connect with its supporters and serves as an indicator to the public of the group's social and political significance.

Aside from serving as a signaling device, having a website enables the BJP to display the content that it views as important. As such the BJP can use their Internet site as a way to attempt to influence the public agenda by creating its own political agenda via its website. Agenda-setting describes the media's ability to influence the public by making certain issues seem more important (Weaver, 2007). This process of agenda-setting has two different levels: the first level of agenda setting refers to the importance of particular issues; whereas second-level agenda-setting refers to the importance of particular attributes that describe an issue (Agee, Ault & Emery, 1991). As such, the mass media can influence not just what its audience thinks about certain issues (first-level agenda-setting) but also *in which ways* the audience comprehends certain social phenomena (second-level agenda-setting). Second-level agenda setting is more relevant to the discussion of the BJP's website, because through its website the BJP influences its audience to think about issues on its political agenda in a certain way.

Second-level agenda setting has conceptual ties with framing: a process that involves elites (e.g. political, media) shaping issue-debates by identifying the underlying problems within certain social phenomena (Nelson, Oxley & Clawson, 1997). According to Entman (2003) the

framing process consists of three elements: (a) defining the problem; (b) interpreting the problem; and (c) morally evaluating the problem and/or recommending a solution to said problem. This has importance in that how the media presents information may encourage its audience to support certain politicians and their policies, by influencing how they think about an issue (Chong & Druckman, 2007). In the framing process these elites create *media frames*.

Media frames serve as the end result of the framing process. They enable the elite to define, evaluate, and proscribe a solution to the problem at hand that may influence the public's understanding of that issue (Entman, 1993; Matthes, 2011). For those reasons, some refer to framing as a *bridging* concept because of its ability to connect elite's interpretation of an issue to public understanding (Chong & Druckman, 2007).

Frames' effectiveness derives in-part from their ability to grant importance to a certain idea (problem) and influencing how others think about that problem (Nelson et. al., 1997). While frames do not necessarily provide new information about an issue they have the potential to: (a) impact the mental recall of new beliefs about an issue; and (b) make certain beliefs more salient (Chong & Druckman, 2007). Frames do not exist in a vacuum and they must struggle for viability amidst the vast array of other interpretations of a social phenomenon. As such, those frames that the public believes present the best rationale for a particular issue are considered *strong frames* and so the job of the political and media elite would be to craft *the* understanding of an issue that its audience considers *the* best (Matthes, 2011). In this way, the political and media elite would have the ability to influence audience interpretations of an issue in such a way that supports their reasoning.

According to Entman (2003) media frames have at least four locations: (a) the communicator; (b) the text; (c) the receiver; and (d) the culture. In addition, the salience of a

particular news frame is affected in-part by the credibility of the source providing that information. As such, this thesis examines the communicator (e.g. BJP) and the texts used by the BJP (e.g. Internet-published speeches and propaganda materials) in crafting its interpretation of issues (media frames). Because the BJP's website enables the political group to control the dissemination of information to the public, this enables them to frame social phenomena. As a result, they have the capability to influence *what* issues are discussed and *how* they are discussed amongst the public.

The extent to which members of the public will be affected by the media's agenda depends upon an individual's mental state and *need for orientation* (McCombs, 2006). Both the relevance of an issue and the uncertainty present within an individual about that issue influence the need for orientation (McCombs, 2006). For example, a person with a high level of uncertainty about a relevant topic will have a high need for orientation; whereas an individual with a low level of uncertainty about a very relevant topic will have a moderate need for orientation (McCombs, 2006). In summary, even though the media does have an influence on the public's agenda, individuals' current mental state mitigates this process.

While the Internet may enable political groups to engage with their audience in novel ways by enabling them to more easily locate, communicate with, and mobilize their supporters, evidence suggests that those individuals more likely to use the Internet as a source of political information are those who are already politically engaged (Park & Choi, 2002). Therefore, while the Internet may offer political parties new avenues through which they can engage their audience, this medium may not necessarily revolutionize the way constituents engage with politics. In fact, the Internet may help solidify divides already present because of the financial

and technological hurdles (e.g. computer ownership) that must be overcome in order to access information online (Kenski & Stroud, 2006).

While the Internet may not make citizens more politically active it does encourage them to be so. It accomplishes this by making more information more accessible to more people (Park & Choi, 2002). In addition, the Internet can facilitate community formation that is not bound by more *traditional* borders such as time-zones or geography in that the information online can be accessed virtually anytime, anywhere, and by anyone (Bimber, 1998). For these reasons—as well as those mentioned in other sections of this thesis—it becomes clear why a group such as the Bharatiya Janata Party would want to develop an online presence.

Having a website grants the BJP an unprecedented level of visibility on an international scale—something that it could not have accomplished as easily without the use of Internet technology. In addition, a website grants the BJP a greater amount of prestige and respectability. Beyond those factors, the BJP's website enables it to more easily encourage cohesive group formation amongst its disparate supporters—those in India as well as abroad.

Hindutva on the Internet

Globalization destabilizes a firm understanding of individual and group identity because it blurs the boundaries between socio-political entities: such as citizens and nation-states through processes of migration (Scholte, 1996). As a reaction to the destabilization of identity and the need of some members of the Asian Indian diaspora to define their identity within their countries of migration, there develops a need to reassert an identity (Robinson, 2004). Hindu nationalist groups stand ready to serve this need through offering information about what it means to be a *Hindu* to those who need it. This process of self-definition serves as an important component of group formation as it also enables an individual to align with people with whom she shares

similar characteristics (Stets & Burke, 2000). Thus, due to the processes of globalization and the destabilization of a firm identity, there emerges a need for self-definition. In addition, how members of India's diaspora choose to define themselves has the potential to be influenced by the rhetoric published by Hindu nationalist groups online.

Aside from creating the conditions for groups to define themselves, globalization also enables the means for identity construction amongst India's diaspora. As a mechanism to spread Hindutva ideology, the Internet serves as the perfect communication tool because it grants the BJP unforeseen social and political prominence on a national and international scale by enabling individuals across the globe to access its content and learn more about it (Kurien, 2004; Rajagopal, 2000). In addition, the English-language dominance of the group's website allows it to reach its elite, middle-class supporters within India and abroad (Haynes, 1997; Kinnvall, 2004). These attributes work to further foster the maintenance of the Hindu nation.

The need to define a globally understood "Hindu-ness" typically results in the construction of a homogenized and simplified version of the religion. The construction of a pan-Hindu identity serves the needs of some members of the diaspora because having a codified resource that they can turn to for their own (as well as their children's) education on Hinduism thus represents a valuable resource (Jaffrelot & Therwath, 2007). In light of changed social circumstances due to migration, this desire for a simplified version of Hinduism enables groups such as the BJP to construct a version of this religion that overlooks the inherent divisions (e.g. caste) within Hinduism and construct a social framework that continues to promote the desires of its traditionally upper-caste, middle-class support base (e.g. economic liberalization and social order), while also incorporating members of subordinate groups (Fernandes & Heller, 2006). The Internet serves as one of the ideal locations to spread the message of Hindutva to members

of the diaspora because of its easy accessibility across the globe and simplified dissemination of information. Thus, members of the Hindu diaspora can use sites created by Hindu nationalist groups to maintain contact with one another, as well as keep abreast of any current events that concern Hindus, India, or any other pertinent topic (Jaffrelot & Therwath, 2007).

The power dynamics inherent in the Internet as a global media tool indicate an overall shift from members of India's Hindu population being controlled by the images constructed *of* them by the British crown to being able to construct their own self-image. Despite the rather democratic character of the BJP's use of the Internet, the power of identity construction still primarily resides in the hands of the socially, politically, and economically elite—marginalizing the discourse of subordinate groups. Thus, rather than constructing a new *ideology* of the Asian Indian online, I would argue that the BJP's website constructs, perpetuates, and maintains a political image that caters to the *hegemony* of the upper-caste, middle-class.

Middle class hegemony and Internet Hindutva

Anotonio Gramsci first articulated the concept of hegemony and since its inception it has gained salience in a wide range of disciplines including social and international relations (e.g. Uberoi, 2008; White, 1987). The term hegemony describes the process through which members of different groups within society negotiate the meaning-construction of their social reality (Sturken & Cartwright, 2001). Hegemony serves as a form of social control that caters to the needs of the elite within a capitalist society and operates via civil society by actively working to gain the consent of individuals to influence their adoption of a particular understanding of the social world (Femia, 1981; Sen, 1972). The Internet and other mass communication tools allow for the wider spread of a group's hegemonic message.

The BJP constructs the socio-political world according to what they define as economic and social ideals: economic liberalization and Hindu nationalism (Jost, Federico, & Napier, 2009; Knight, 2006). The Internet enables the spread of ideas to individuals across different spatially bound territories and enables the BJP to construct and assert a hegemony of India's middle class that reaches people throughout the world. This thesis will discuss how the Internet enables the BJP to construct an ideology that works to assert a global upper-caste, middle class hegemony. Therefore, this thesis will explore the construction of the BJP's political image online and relate this idea to the hegemony of the middle class in India.

The next chapter of this thesis will discuss the methodology adopted to explore the construction of the BJP's online identity. Subsequent chapters will present my findings, analysis, and any pertinent conclusions.

Chapter 3: Method

I conducted a longitudinal textual analysis of the Bharatiya Janata Party's website (www.bjp.org) to explore the group's political message between the years May 2004 and May 2009. As a methodology, textual analysis allows researchers to analyze a given text while focusing "on the underlying ideological and cultural assumptions of the text" (Furisch, 2009, p. 240). In other words, conducting textual analysis enabled me to conduct exploratory work, while paying attention to the environment that allowed for its production without needing to be concerned with making my work generalizable (Furisch, 2009).

While conducting textual analysis provided me with the benefit of allowing me to link the text to its context, there exist several weaknesses of the method. Some suggest that researcher bias may affect what texts are chosen and how they are analyzed (Mason, 1996). This could potentially lead to the researcher not accounting for any nuances in the text and only providing her audience with a one-sided, possibly inaccurate argument (Prior, 2008). Other researchers believe that studying a phenomenon strictly based on its textual account provides a limited understanding of the event and that textual analysis should only be used in conjunction with other methodologies (Philo, 2007). All of the aforementioned issues concern the validity of using textual analysis as a method for understanding the propagation of the BJP's political ideology, which will be addressed in a later section.

Textual analysis of websites

With traditional texts (e.g. books, articles) there exist clear boundaries of what constitutes the text and how to read it (Mitra & Cohen, 1999). What makes online texts (e.g. websites) different from their traditional brethren concerns their impermanence and the use of hyperlinks

that allow a reader to navigate the site in a non-linear fashion (Coiro, 2003). For the aforementioned reasons, this places the impetus on what constitutes the beginning and end of the text on the researcher. In order to determine which segments of www.bjp.org to analyze, I considered what aspects of the website may yield the most valuable information about the BJP's political message from a reader's perspective.

Sampling technique

When approaching a new topic of research or discovery, readers may have different levels of prior knowledge. According to study results, prior knowledge does impact how a user navigates a website. Individuals with high levels of prior knowledge navigate websites more easily, and they tend to do so in a nonlinear fashion (Chen, Fan & Macredie, 2006; Mills, Paper, Lawless & Kulikowich, 2002). I assumed that the fictitious reader navigating the BJP's website has some level of prior knowledge about the organization, because she must either know the site's URL or have interests in topics related to the BJP to have found its website. The aforementioned characteristics ensure that the reader does not select links that disrupt her learning strategy and increases the likelihood of her navigating the website in a linear fashion.

In addition to being concerned with the level of prior knowledge, researchers identified three reading strategies that people engage in when using hypermedia texts for learning purposes: coherence, interest, and default screen position (Salmeron, Kintsch & Kintsch, 2010). A coherent reading strategy involves the selection of hypertexts that relate to the material previously read, while an interest-based approach concerns a reader strictly choosing links that interest her and choosing less interesting links later in the search process (Salmeron, Kintsch &

Kintsch, 2010). The default screen position involves a reader clicking on the first hyperlink she notices on the webpage (Salmeron, Kintsch & Kintsch, 2010).

I used the coherence and interest reading strategies in this study. I used the interest-based strategy to initially determine which hyperlinks to pursue on the website's mainframe-- afterwards, adopting the coherence approach. I constructed this fictitious reader as being interested in the BJP's overall ideology, especially between the timeframe May 2004 to May 2009—when it was not in a position of political dominance.

Sample

Based on my sampling technique, my sample consists of links attached to the hyperlinks "About Us" and "Media Resources, Speeches" on www.bjp.org. Some of the materials related to these hyperlinks have dates, while others do not. I first examined all dated and non-dated material produced from May 2004 to May 2009. I chose this timeframe because May 2004 represents the first time in the 21st century that the BJP lost its political dominance to the Congress Party.

Steven Wilkinson (2005) makes the argument that the Congress Party's defeat of the BJP may actually hide underlying weaknesses in the Congress Party's ability to rally political support and provided that the BJP capitalizes on these weaknesses, they may be successful in the next election season. Capitalizing on the Congress Party's weaknesses may involve a more aggressive communications campaign, as the BJP attempts to rally support. Thus, starting the analysis of the site's contents in May 2004 has the potential to yield more information than if I were to conduct analysis of material on their site from earlier years. I continued analysis of the

website through the May 2009 election season, because the BJP (again) lost this election to the Congress Party.

As mentioned previously, the impermanence of material found on websites may pose problems for researchers, as the material may change or be deleted. In order to counteract experiencing such problems all information found on the BJP's website beginning in May 2004 until May 2009 was saved as PDFs and printed out so that both an electronic and paper copy of the forms exist.

Data analysis

Analysis of the data consisted of reading the texts in a systematic fashion. I first read all dated and undated documents produced by the BJP between May 2004 and May 2009 that fell under the categories of "About Us" and "Media Resources, Speeches". I then performed a thematic analysis of the data: conducting open-coding to find emergent themes (Schwandt, 2007).

After this initial reading, I then reevaluated the documents I uploaded from the website to determine which articles I would use for further analysis. I chose to analyze 14 documents in the "About Us" section that came under the following headings: *BJP Philosophy*, *BJP History*, and *BJP Constitution*. From the "Media Resources, Speeches" section I chose 48 articles to analyze. Because in the year 2004 between May and December only eight unique articles were published by the BJP, I chose to only examine the first 8 unique articles provided for each year. This would prevent any analysis from giving too much importance to one year and prevent any bias on my part in regards to the type of articles selected for analysis.

Thus, I analyzed 62 documents published by the BJP on its website www.bjp.org. I began with material in the "About Us" section that provided a more general overview into the BJP, its ideology, and its mission in India. I then analyzed the dated yearly material provided by the "Speeches" sections.

Threats to validity

Conducting textual analysis of the information on the BJP's website creates the possibility of threats to validity. One of these threats includes researcher bias, which involves both the researcher: (a) choosing a narrow set of texts that does not accurately reflect the BJP's political ideology; and (b) not having theoretical sensitivity to the texts and only analyzing them with preset ideas regarding their significance and meaning (Mason, 1996). To counteract this, I achieved communicative validity by discussing my findings with recognized experts in my area of research (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). In addition, I used thick descriptions when discussing the findings of my research, clarified any bias through discussing my background as a researcher, and presented any information that may contradict the themes of my research (Creswell, 2009).

Role of researcher

I approach this research as an African-American, female graduate student who has had the opportunity to travel to the subcontinent on three separate occasions and live in the country's northwest region for more than a year. During my time in India I had the chance to observe the political process first-hand and meet with a representative of the Bharatiya Janata Party. That withstanding, I do not have a personal stake in the outcome of India's elections or in the success (or failure) of the BJP; however, I do have a general interest in the economic growth of India and the mobilization of this country's citizens around the globe. Thus, I am concerned outsider who

has a different set of cultural and political values, whose life has only been superficially impacted by the Bharatiya Janata Party.

I hope that by exploring the topic of the BJP and its online presence, I will provide better understanding regarding the importance of global mass media (such as the Internet) to political groups.

Chapters 4: Results

The mainframe of the Bharatiya Janata Party's website (www.bjp.org) takes its viewers into a particular brand of Indian (Hindu) nationalism. The site's color scheme of white, orange, and green serves as its most noticeable aspect—primarily because these are also the colors of the Indian flag. Thus, there can be no mistaking the national origins of this party or the group of people it purports to serve. The BJP also leaves no question about the values it supports— clearly listing these in a chart: good governance, cultural nationalism, development, antyodaya (services to help the socially marginalized), and security (in order).

While clearly establishing itself as an Indian political party through its color-scheme and value-chart, the BJP also provides links to detailed information about itself. For example, the mainframe has links that provide more information about the BJP's ideology, organizational structure, and role in Indian politics. Links such as these serve a more informational purpose.

Aside from the information-sharing links, the website also has links that enable a viewer's greater involvement in the organization. For example, a www.bjp.org user may sign up to become a member of the BJP's website, donate money, or find more information via Facebook, YouTube, or iTunes.

Both types of links provide users with an ability to gain more knowledge about the BJP and be active in their support of this group's cause. Thus, it appeals to both active and passive site-users by providing them with access to a plethora of knowledge and ways to involve themselves with the goings-on of this political group.

Amidst the wide-variety of material that may be gleaned from the website, this thesis examined written documents produced by the BJP between 2004 and 2009. To be more specific,

this paper analyzed 62 documents from the "About BJP," and "Media Resources, Speeches," sections of the website. The following pages present my findings from my analysis according to the first research question posed at the beginning of this thesis.

Part I: About Us

This section of the BJP's website discusses the group's ideological framework (e.g. Hindutva), its leadership, and its views on the West and religious minorities. This segment has significance because it not only tells its site-users about the history of the organization but also what social values the BJP promotes.

About BJP, BJP History. The BJP uses the BJP History section to discuss the origins of the organization and its leadership.

Idealistic political group. The site begins to inform its users of the BJP's history through the "About Us" page. This segment of the website informs viewers of the BJP's mission for India, its ideology, and its principles. Therefore, a viewer will learn that the BJP "advocates" for "welfare social social policies [duplication in text], self reliance, robust economic growth, foreign policy driven by a nationalist agenda, and strong national defense" (About Us, About BJP, p. 1). The BJP roots these policies in "India's ancient culture and values," which it believes will "build up India as a strong and prosperous nation" (About Us, About BJP, p.1). In addition to desiring India to be both a strong and prosperous nation, the BJP also "aims at establishing" India as "a democratic state" committed to the "equality of opportunity and liberty of faith and expression" (About Us, About BJP, p. 1). In other words, the BJP does not represent a political party interested in putting the needs of Hindus over those of other religious communities; rather, it is interested in creating a fair state that provides everyone with an ability to express their identity.

The image crafted by them borders the ideal—as they construct an image of an inclusive nation state that relies on the values of India's past as it gains prosperity in the future.

History of great leadership. This segment discusses the professional history of two important men within the BJP—the first being Deendayal Upadhyaya. The webpage states that he served as a "source of ideological guidance and moral inspiration for the BJP since its inception" and "His treatise on Integral Humanism […] a critique of both communism and capitalism provides an alternative perspective for political action […] consistent with the laws of Creation and the universal needs of the human race" (Ideologue: Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya, p.1). This statement serves manifold purpose. For instance, it places this man as one of the leaders of the BJP and someone that crafted its current ideology. Aside from that it links him with the idea of nation building as it refers to Upadhyaya's work on Integral Humanism, which serves as a rejection of both US capitalism and USSR communism. Thus, this represents Upadhyaya's attempt at creating a third ideological space that exists in complete distinction from the two overarching ideas of communism and capitalism.

The webpage also constructs Upadhyaya as a scholar connected to both Hindu-religion and India. The site refers to him as being from "the sacred region of Brig" and his father being "a well-known astrologer" (Ideologue: Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya, p. 1). In addition they describe the good fortune he had in school by stating that "he took a Government conducted competitive examination in dhoti and kurta with a cap on his head, while other candidates wore western suits" and "at this exam he topped the list of selectees" (Ideologue: Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya, p. 1). In other words, his success as a student involves his connection to India that others around him allegedly rejected—as illustrated by their choosing to wear western (as opposed to Indian) dress. Because his time studying for his BA and other higher degrees coincides with his participation in the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)—a paramilitary

pro-Hindutva group—it may also be gleaned that his participation with groups such as the RSS enabled his academic success.

The website next discusses Syama Prasad Mookerjee, whom they state served as the founder of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh—the BJP's political predecessor. The site constructs this man as rejecting other socio-political movements that may damage the Indian nation. For example, it states that "He became the opposition leader when Krishak Praja Party—Muslim League coalition was in power" (Syama Prasad Mookerjee, p. 1). The Muslim League represents one group that advocated for the partition of India and the construction of Pakistan— an event that continues to disturb some members of the Hindu-right who typically advocate for the maintenance of India's geographical integrity.

Mookerjee would eventually work for *inclusive, Hindu* organizations. For example, after leaving the Progressive Coalition Ministry, Mookerjee "emerged as a spokesman for Hindus and joined the Hindu Mahasabha" where later "he became the President;" however "he wanted the Hindu Mahasabha not to be restricted to Hindus alone" (Syama Prasad Mookerjee, p. 1). In other words, through these organizations, Mookerjee hopes to work for the betterment of all India. Thus, the site constructs him as a man who cares about Hindu issues but will also use his faith—and the socio-political power afforded him because of it—to enhance the well-being of all Indians.

This section connects the greatness of these two men to their work on behalf of India's Hindu community.

About BJP, BJP Philosophy, Hindutva. Here the BJP defines Hindutva by simultaneously stating what this term means and contrasting it with what the term's definition

does not include. Thus, in this section the BJP constructs Hindus as a 'hurt' community, trying to regain power after the detrimental effects of both Muslim and Christian leadership in the country. In addition, the BJP portrays itself as a political party that aims to unite (and represent) all of India's diversity, which the Christian and Muslim religious minorities prevent and by doing so impede the progress of the nation.

Hindutva and national unity. The BJP goes through great efforts to construct Hindutva as a socio-political term and not a religious one. From the opening page of the Hindutva section, a line reads "Hindutva is a nationalist, and not a religious or theocratic concept" (Hindutva, 2009, p.1). Instead "What Hindutva does is to remind its people of a common past in a common civilization" (Give us this day, 2009, p. 3). The BJP believes that, "For a people and a nation to rise to the highest, they must have a common memory of great heroes and exploits" (Give us this day, 2009, p. 1). The BJP constructs the project of Hindutva as uniting all the people of India because—through Hindutva—the BJP will be able to reconstruct a shared past for all people that will result in India flourishing. Thus, they make the term Hindutva less potent by attempting to remove the religious connotations of the term and place it in the realm of the political.

Christians and Muslims as a threat. On several occasions the BJP constructs both Christians and Muslims as a threat to India'a development; however, when addressing how both these communities negatively impact India, they do so through different means. For example, as it concerns Christians the BJP claims that the term secularism serves as "a weapon by which the evangelists […] have been pushing to the wall the plural tradition of our country, the tradition founded in the basic world-view of Hinduism" (The Hindutva Judgments, 2009, p. 3). In other words, the BJP believes that the idea of secularism enables Christian groups to attack the fabric

of Indian society. In this example, it constructs Indian society as a Hindu society. Thus, Christianity poses a threat to practitioners of Hinduism, and those who claim Indian citizenship.

The BJP also constructs Muslims as damaging to India's progress. As an example of this, the BJP sites the Babri Masjid case. The group asks readers to, "Imagine if the Muslim leadership had agreed to shift the site and build a temple in Ayodhya. How much Hindu-Muslim unity there would have been in India? India could then have used that goodwill to solve the major religious, caste, and economic issues facing the country" (Hindutva: The Great Nationalist Ideology, 2009, p. 3). The BJP places the blame for Hindu-Muslim animosity on Muslims and claims that animosity led to India's inability to solve its social problems. In other words, Muslims hold responsibility for many of India's continued social ills.

While the BJP construct both Christians and Muslims as dangerous to the social fabric of India, it also creates a distinct hierarchy between them. A quote from the BJP states that "now in the Christian West, the state and the society are largely powered by commerce and technology" and that "While the Christian West has evolved dynamically over the past few centuries, the story of Islam is one of 1500 year of unmitigated stagnation" (Semitic monotheism, 2009, p. 4). So even though Christianity has the potential to harm Indian (Hindu) society, its position in the BJP's mythology places it above the perceived Muslim threat. At least there exists a reason to respect the Christian West—it has the ability to change and develop—which the Muslim countries allegedly lack.

Adding emphasis to this point the BJP claims that anyone within the Muslim community that takes the first steps towards progress "was disposed of with such severity that it set an example and a warning to anyone who would dare to cross the line" (Semitic monotheism, 2009,

p. 4). Thus, not only do Islamic countries (people) fail to progress, they actively suppress any attempts at doing so. These statements both reinforce the idea of Christian and Muslim communities being a threat to the Indian nation, while also placing the Christian community above the Muslim—portraying Muslims as the group that should be most despised.

Superior to the West. Part of the BJP's message involves it claiming India to be superior to the West. It does so by first claiming difference from monotheistic countries (read: countries that practice either Christianity or Islam, and reside in the West) before asserting its superiority. The BJP claims that in the West "the most important, and often the only, link between different institutions of the society was the state," whereas for India "the society or the group, at whatever level it functioned, was the dominant reality and the state was a residual authority" (Semitic Monotheism, 2009, p. 1). Through this, the BJP begins to make its claim for India being different from the West. It claims that the West relies on the government to drive the functioning of the state, whereas India does not. On this basis of difference, the BJP then begins to construct its argument for India's superiority.

The website also constructs members of the West as lacking self-control. For example it states that societies from that part of the world "never knew how to live by self-regulation" and they "never knew how to exist together" (Semitic Monotheism, 2009, p. 1). This ability to regulate oneself contrasts with the self-regulating society of India, which serves as the basis of the country's "proud history of tolerance for other faiths and respect for diversity of spiritual experience" (Hindutva: The Great, 2009, p. 1). The conflation of the West with monotheistic religions (as previously discussed) helps inform the discussion of India's alleged superiority to the West. The BJP claims that an India built upon Hindu principles respects members of all religions, while those who practice Christianity and Islam do not have this characteristic. Thus,

the discussion of India's superiority to the West helps cement the distrust of Christians and Muslims.

 Hindu hurt. Several times the articles in this section of the website portray Hindus as a weak community that falls under the threat of others—particularly religious minorities. For example, one article mentions the Babri Masjid. The BJP claims that the construction of a temple at Ayodhya represents "the creation of a monument to a nation hero, a legend whose fame and respect stretched outside of the borders of India […] even into Muslim Indonesia" (Hindutva: The Great, 2009, p. 2). In other words, this temple represents something of great importance to all people—not just Hindus. The site has importance for Muslims as well. Thus, the BJP believes that Muslims not only hurt Hindus in their refusal to dismantle the Babri Masjid, but also those of their own religion.

 In reference to the Babri Masjid the article then states that Hindus "expected […] that freedom from the political and economic chains of Great Britain would mean the systems and symbols that had enslaved India […] would be obliterated" but "Hindus realized that their freedom was yet to come" (Hindutva: The Great, 2009, p. 2). In other words, freedom here only concerns Hindu-freedom and not the needs or rights of other communities. Aside from this, the BJP constructs the mosque as a sign of not just Hindu's—but India's—continued enslavement through the connection made between the destruction of the mosque and independence. Thus, the BJP constructs Hindus as a community that suffers under the constant reminders of symbols that allegedly oppress them. Only at the removal of these symbols of Hindu oppression will India as a nation-state (not a particular religious sect) gain true freedom. This essentially serves to create the Hindu community as a hurt majority that suffers under the power of a minority religious community.

About BJP, BJP Philosophy, Integral Humanism. Aside from Hindutva, the BJP discusses another tenet of its ideology on its website: Integral Humanism. The group gives credit for this term's origination to a man they call Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya. According to the website the history of this term dates back to a four-part lecture series given in April, 1965 in Bombay (Integral Humanism). Through reading the lectures—broken down into four chapters on the website—four themes emerge: critique of capitalism and communism, the troubled West, integration of the individual and society, and national identity.

Capitalism and communism. According to the BJP both systems of government leadership and economics have inherent flaws that cannot be modeled by India. The BJP describes capitalism as an "economic structure" that "is not merely consumption oriented but is clearly leading to destruction" before stating that the capitalist "economic system and system of production are fast disturbing this equilibrium of nature" (Integral humanism, p.22). The BJP constructs the western system of capitalism as a system that will eventually self-implode due to its inability to maintain balance and self-correct.

In addition, the BJP believes that the capitalist system does not value all individuals equally. They state that under the capitalist system "elimination of the weak is considered just and natural" and so "the economic power accumulates in the hands of a few" (Integral humanism, p. 25). Within the capitalist system only the economically elite will prevail, whereas the poor will be eliminated and duly forgotten about. Thus, capitalism lacks genuine concern for humankind and the betterment of all members of society.

Whereas the flaws with capitalism lie in its overproduction of goods and the inherent elimination of the economically and politically weak, the problem with communism lies in its

inability to allow the flourishing of individual talent and motivations. The BJP states that in the communist system "The State is made supreme and sole authority in all matters. Individual citizen is reduced to mere cog in this giant wheel" (Integral humanism, p. 25). Thus, the communist system (like the capitalist one) does not work to serve the betterment of different individuals; rather, it only exists to foster the needs of the state apparatuses and treats individuals as needing to be "regulated by rigid rules, and incapable of any good unless directed" (Integrated humanism, p. 26). In other words, the communist system does not grant agency to the individual and slightly mistrusts its citizens as well—as seen through its need to construct rules and provide directions.

Thus, through its critique of both the capitalist and communist systems, the BJP makes it clear that they will not construct India as "an imitation of Russia or America" (Integral humanism, p. 27).

The troubled West. While having managed to critique the two major economic systems found in the *western* world, the BJP goes further in the construction of its image of the West as troubled and incapable of providing leadership to India. One aspect of this argument begins with the idea that the West lacks internal leadership. For example, the BJP claims that "It is itself groping. Therefore simply to follow the West would be an instance of a blind being led by another blind" (Integral humanism, p. 7). While the BJP acknowledges India's need to change its policies in order to have a prosperous future, the BJP claims that the US cannot lead India, because it does not know what the future holds.

The BJP claims that the West's lack of leadership capability stems from several sources. For one, the BJP states that western ideologies "are not necessarily universal" and "that those

who claim to reform society by removing dead traditions, themselves fall prey to some outdated foreign traditions" (Integral humanism, p. 6). The BJP levels this critique specifically at those individuals who believe that India will achieve development and advancement through the adoption of western ideas, because they lack universality and represent old traditions that no longer serve a purpose. Thus, the idea of removing an old tradition based in India and replacing it with a western tradition will not result in progress.

While the BJP makes claims as to why India should not look to the West for leadership, at points it does concede that the value of some western ideas have merit. For example, the BJP acknowledges that if "we can reconcile the various ideals of the western political thought then it would be added advantages for us. These western principles are a product of revolution in human thought, and social conflict. […] It is not proper to ignore them" (Integral humanism, p. 7). So after denigrating western thought, the BJP also acknowledges that it may have some merit and inform their thinking about India's development. Despite this acknowledgement, the BJP does not grant western thought a privileged position. While western traditions and thought should be taken into consideration, there exist constant reminders that the "thoughtless imitation of the West must be scrupulously discarded" and the West "is itself at crossroads unable to decide what is good" (Integrated humanism, p. 5).

Integration (of society and individual). While the West lacks the ability to help direct India and the economic systems of both capitalism and communism remain flawed, the BJP begins to construct an image for how it believes society should operate. At the core of this image lies the idea of integration—the integrated individual and integrated society.

The BJP states that integration has importance to society. It claims that "The first characteristic of Bharatiya culture is that it looks upon life as an integrated whole. It has an integrated view point" (Integrated humanism, p. 7). In other words, India [Bharat] sees life as made up of many indivisible parts that adequately create the country's society.

The idea of integration manifests itself via the individual—as well as society. As it concerns the individual the BJP claims that it "thus considered the life of an individual in a th[o]rough and integrated manner. We have set the aim of developing body, mind, intellect, as well as soul in a balance way" (Integral humanism, p. 11). Thus, one of India's social projects involves care of the individual person and ensuring that that person develops with proper attention being paid to said person's physical, spiritual, and intellectual development.

The properly integrated person then may become a member of the properly integrated society. The BJP expresses this idea by stating that "The individual comprising of body, mind, intellect and soul as not limited to singular "I" but is also inseparably related to the plural "We"" (Integral humanism, p. 11). Thus, individuals live within a society that involves many different aspects too—as the BJP claims "Society too has its body, mind, intellect, and soul" (Integral humanism, p. 12). Thus, the society operates as an individual but on a much larger scale. Thus, the various needs of society must be acknowledged and attended to for its proper functioning and maintenance. So the BJP makes the argument that the key to a proper-functioning society lies in treating society as integrated segments, not segregated parts.

Unity. The idea of integrated individuals living in an integrated society will inevitably foster the idea and creation of a unified country that operates with minimal conflicts. The BJP believes that the construction of a "national identity" for India has utmost importance because

without it India "cannot recognize and develop all" its "potentialities" (Integral humanism, p. 3).

It then goes onto state that "The basic cause of the problems facing Bharat is the neglect of its

national identity" (Integral humanism, p. 3). Thus, in order to overcome the present ills

inflicting the nation, a national identity must be constructed. Through this, the potential of

Indians and India may be realized. So in the opinion of the BJP, the construction of a national

identity remains vital.

In conjunction with the idea of unity the BJP equates national unity with dharma (read: a

natural rule). It does so quite succinctly when it states that "National unity is our Dharma"

(Integral humanism, p. 20). As dharma, the idea of national unity includes all members of

society—from the very influential to the very weak. The concept of "Dharma is not necessarily

with the majority or with the people. Dharma is eternal" (Integral humanism, p. 20). Thus,

dharma exists above democracy and the opinion of the majority—it also seems to lack bounds in

terms of time and space (eternal). To drive home the significance of dharma (specifically

dharma as national unity) the BJP even makes the bold statement that "Actually God cannot act

contrary to Dharma. If he does, then he is not omnipotent" (Integral humanism, p. 18). The BJP

claims that if God cannot escape the bounds of dharma then neither can the common person.

Thus, all individuals must act according to dharma—especially as it concerns the project of

building national unity.

Aside from simply stating the importance of dharma, the text on integral humanism also

discusses the means necessary to achieve unity in India. They claim that unity for India will be

achieved via the maintenance of the poorest individuals via the availability of jobs and the

implementation of "suitable machines for Bhartiya conditions," as well as a system of

governance that values the development of the individual (Integral humanism, p. 26). While the

paper claims to discuss integral humanism, it does not clearly define the term—but the aforementioned components of national unity may be read as foundation blocks of this concept.

Through this text, the BJP accomplishes both discrediting western forms of leadership and economic systems, while offering a possible alternative. It does so in order to construct the image of India as capable and self-efficient—with something to offer the world in terms of cultural and leadership values.

About BJP, Constitution and Rules. The BJP dedicates one page on its website to a discussion of the group's organization. This section of the website serves the purpose of informing interested individuals as to how the organization runs, how many members comprise the group, and other day-to-day operations of the political party. While the BJP may use this page on its website to discuss the operations of the political party, its ideology also becomes apparent here too. The major theme reiterated in the discussion of its constitution and rules concerns equality.

Equality. The BJP advocates for equality in terms of gender, class, and caste. They repeat this theme when talking about the different components of the BJP's hierarchy. As it concerns caste and gender, they always make sure to state that women and/or members of the scheduled castes or scheduled tribes will have representation by saying things such as "there shall be at least 4 women and 1 SC/ST" (Constitution and rules, p. 4). Thus, the group acknowledges gender and caste discrimination in positions of power and they actively work to correct this social flaw.

The idea of promoting social equality comes across in another way, too. On its website the BJP published a copy of its membership form. The person seeking membership must pledge

that s/he does "not believe in discrimination based on caste, sex or religion" and does "not observe or recognize untouchability in any shape or form" (Constitution and rules, p. 10). Thus, the BJP once again attempts to construct an image of itself as a group that remains above all the social qualms that divide individuals from different groups within society. They ask their members also to value each person and to not discriminate against others on the basis of the aforementioned characteristics. In this way, the party works to shape its own positive social agenda centering upon a unified nation that does not let demographic differences divide its people.

The BJP constructs itself as a political group that advocates on the behalf of Hindus, while being inclusive of religious minorities. It also believes that India's greatness—and the greatness of the party—stems from its espousal of Hindutva. In the opinion of the BJP, India has the potential to become an inclusive, united, nation that has its own identity distinct from the two overarching ideologies of communism and capitalism.

Part II: Media resources, Speeches.

Between May 2004 and May 2009, the BJP published 169 speeches on its website—with the vast majority (99) being published in 2008. In the process of analyzing the BJP's speeches, I initially read all 169. After which I decided to limit my sample to the first 8 unique articles published on its website for each year as the BJP only published 8 unique articles between May and December 2004. I did this so that my analysis would not be biased in favor of any one year. After conducting a second reading of these 48 articles, I organized my data thematically in order to create a picture as to how the BJP constructs its political messages via speeches during this 6-year time period.

Opposition

Congress Party

Congress leadership as incompetent. Despite the Congress Party (CP) winning the 2004 election—or perhaps because of it—the BJP actively makes the case for the CP's incompetency as political leaders. For example, they make the argument that the CP government does not represent the needs of the people. They claim that "betrayal is acutely felt every time a common man goes to the market to buy items of daily need, every time a housewife bring a new cylinder of cooking gas, and every time a kisan [farmer] purchases diesel to run his pump" (Ranchi, 2004, p. 6). In other words, because the BJP discusses such a wide variety of people, they make it clear that the CP government's policies may negatively impact the many people that come in contact with them (e.g. all of India). This hyperbolic statement supports the idea that CP lacks the necessary leadership skills to run India successfully.

CP and terrorism. As it concerns terrorism, the BJP describes the Congress Party as weak and ineffective. In a discussion of Maoist violence the BJP claims that "The lack of a

comprehensive, consistent, coordinated, and centre-led strategy is the biggest hurdle in India's

fight against Maoist violence" (Speech by Shri L.K. Advani at National, 2007, p. 2). Because

the CP fails to appropriately utilize its role as the party at the center of national politics, it

enables terrorism to flourish. Thus, the BJP constructs an image of the CP as weak in terms of

fighting terrorism.

CP and communalism. According to the BJP the Congress Party represents a communal

organization through its willingness to help members of the minority population—specifically

Muslims. One quote states that "In July 2004, the newly elected Congress Government in

Andhra Pradesh announced its decision to introduce 5% reservation for Muslims in government

jobs and educational institutions" (Empowerment, 2007, p. 3). Thus, the CP willingly engages in

programs geared towards the benefit of the Muslim religious minority and even though this

measure "was struck down by the judiciary as unconstitutional" the CP "Nevertheless," makes

"this promise […] in one form or another" (Empowerment, 2007, p. 3). In other words, the CPs

desire to help members from the Muslim religious community extends beyond any rational

means for aid to the point where it would threaten the decrees of Indian institutions (e.g.

judiciary) to advocate on behalf of this group.

Aside from simply granting the Muslim community seemingly unfair advantages, the BJP

also claim that the CPs treatment of this group puts India at risk because it enables terrorism to

flourish. For example, they site of the issue of Afzal Guru and state that the "UPA is sending out

wrong signals by adopting a soft attitude towards terrorism" and "the latest" example "being the

mishandling of the hanging of Afzal Guru, the main accused in the dastardly Parliament attack"

(Salient points from Former BJP President, 2007, p. 1). In other words, the BJP believes that the

CP fails at appropriately managing terrorism even when it has the chance to kill someone

perceived to be guilty of harming India(ns). The BJP goes further to state why they believe the CP acts in this way. They claim that "vote bank politics" dictate the actions of the CP (Salient points from Former BJP President, 2007, p. 1). Alternately stated, the CP only wants the votes of the Muslim religious minority; they "were never interested in their welfare" (Speech by Shri L.K. Advani at mass chanting, 2007, p. 4). The attitude of the CP constructed for them by the BJP makes it seem as if the CP both lacks the political power to effectively rule, but also that their alleged concern for members of religious minority populations lacks merit. They present this idea as strictly a superficial claim that the CP makes annually in order to be reelected.

CP and national unity. On occasion the BJP discusses the significance of national unity and how the Congress Party does not enable national unity to grow within India. For example, the BJP states that "Vande Mataram—is a patriotic eulogy of Mother India" and that their "Congress and Communist friends, and also some fundamentalist Muslim organizations, raised such a hue and cry over the singing of Vande Mataram" (Saundaryalahari, 2007, p. 4). Here the BJP constructs this song as a representative of the nation. They also claim that the Congress Party's (CP) connection with Muslim-affiliated organizations prevented Indian citizens from being able to display their national unity.

CP and India's geographical integrity. In addition to putting the future of the nation at peril through its *alleged* active role in maintaining socioeconomic divides, the Congress Party also serves as a threat to India's geographical integrity. The BJP accuses the CP of allowing migrants from Bangladesh into the country. As a result, the BJP states that "many areas bordering Bangladesh have been demographically altered by the illegal immigrants and reducing the indigenous population to a minority, in the process thereby creating social tensions coupled with serious security implications" (Rajnath, 2008, p. 16). In other words, the inability of the CP

to protect India's borders does not just result in a threat to India's internal security, but also serves to alter the social fabric of those areas of the country that share a border with Bangladesh.

Regarding J&K, the primary issue concerns the CPs inability to integrate this geographic region into India definitively. The BJP claims that the CP started this problem during the early days of independence and now everyone in the country knows "about the heavy price that India is continuing to pay because of the non-resolution of" this issue (Jabalpur, 2008, p. 2). While the CP may have started this problem, they fail to work in an adequate fashion to fix it, and rather continue to "enhance separatist feelings" (Rajnath, 2009, p. 15). Thus, the CP represents a political party—at least in the mind of the BJP—incapable of adequately maintaining the geographic integrity of the nation.

Communist Party

Communists as unstable. The BJP also presents its leftist opponents as being relatively unstable as it concerns their relationship with its coalition partners—the Congress Party. The BJP states that a leftist leader "expressed his 'disappointment' over the performance of the Manmohan Singh ministry in the first 100 days in office" and that "Now it is being reported that the Left is satisfied with the performance of the government" (13 October, 2004, p. 1). The BJP makes these statements before asking the question "So what is the Left's stand?" (13 October, 2004, p. 1). The BJP makes the case for the leftists' unwillingness to make one statement and stick to it as indicative of their wavering tendencies. This may be extrapolated to mean that the BJP believes that due to the Leftists' wavering opinion of their coalition partners, then they would also fail to make good political leaders for India. Thus, the BJP once again makes the case that the leftists do not represent good leadership for India.

Communists as poor representatives of India. While the BJP makes the case for the CPs incompetence in positions of political leadership, it also makes the case for communists not being true representatives of India. For example, they state that "For the Communists, Stalin's Soviet Union was their Socialist Fatherland, whose defence was more important than even the independence of our own Motherland" (Rashtriya Suraksha, 2004, p. 2). According to the BJP the Communists—the CPs alliance partners—do not represent India because they did not actively work to secure India's independence from the British. There also exists the idea that their ideology has foreign origins, which further makes the case for its lack of alignment with India's needs.

Communists as not good for India. The BJP discusses communists in terms of them not being beneficial to India's development, while being supportive of reforms that help India's neighbors. For example, the BJP states that "if China has achieved impressive economic growth over a sustained period, it is only because they implemented policy reforms, each of which the communists in India have opposed and are continuing to oppose" (CII annual, 2005, p. 4). Thus, the BJP cites that while India's communists may be intellectually in-line with countries such as China—they lack a willingness to implement the policies that have made China successful. The BJP sees the communists' position as follows: "It is okay if China becomes a nuclear weapon nation, but India must not" (CII annual, 2005, p. 4). In other words, the Communists residing within India do not value India's development or national security; but rather, they place the needs of foreign countries over their own.

Characteristics of the BJP

BJP as forward thinking. Whereas the CP and leftists represent incompetent forms of leadership, the BJP represents a progressive party in need of change. Because the BJP lost the

last election, many of their statements pertain to their need to reevaluate themselves and then make changes in order to provide India with better leadership. For example, they state that they have made "the decision to begin a Party-wide discussion, right from the central level down to the mandal level, on the 'TASKS AHEAD' document" and that through this document they have "identified a wide range of duties for strengthening the Party ideologically, politically, and organizationally" (Ranchi, 2004, p. 9). In other words, the BJP understands that they need to make changes to their party—in response to their recent loss—and they portray this need as something that will impact the entire party organization. Aside from that, the idea of creating a document about the execution of future tasks constructs this party as one concerned with its future progress.

BJP as unique. The BJP continuously makes the argument for its difference in comparison to other political organizations. For example, in one document it states that "At a time when most of the political parties in the country have been reduced to the position of personal fiefs of a few leaders, BJP stands apart as a party which passes through a process of natural evolution and developments in the organization" (Presidential address Rajnath, 2006, p. 1). In other words the BJP's difference stems from its ability to *naturally evolve*, which also enables it to make dramatic changes to India's political scene. The group also claims to stand apart from other political parties because of its ability to work and change as an *organization,* which stands in contrast with the idea of their political competitors as being more concerned with personal power and prestige.

BJP as revolutionary party. In talking about their revolutionary character, the BJP also cites how they changed Indian democracy. They state that "the BJP has succeeded in demolishing the one-party supremacy of the Congress and transforming Indian polity into a bi-

polar formation" (Presidential remarks, 2005, p. 2). In other words, the BJP represents the only

political party able to fundamentally change Indian democracy in a positive way.

Coherent leadership. The BJP creates the idea of having consistent leadership amongst

all levels of Party leadership. For example, they state that they expect "its leaders and

karyakartas at all levels to conduct themselves with honour, restraint and dignity" (BJP national

council, 2004, p. 5). In other words, the BJP has an established code of conduct under which all

individuals within the Party must follow. This creates the idea of there being a coherent

leadership culture amongst the group.

Party with integrity. Part of the BJP's claim to uniqueness involves it perpetuating the

idea of the party representing an ideologically united group of individuals who work on behalf of

fulfilling a joint mission. They claim that "There can be no scope for […] negativity within the

organization" and that "expeditious steps should be taken to address internal dissensions,

factionalism, etc., for which there can be simply no place in" their political party (National

council, 2008, p. 3). In other words, the BJP does not condone differences of opinion within

their organization. They make this claim by stating that they will actively take steps to quell any

form of dissent that arises within the organization. One reason the BJP may take such active

steps to quell dissent may be that they view the "atmosphere of unity, fervor and self-

confidence" as the "hallmark of the BJP" (National council, 2008, p. 1). Thus, the party strives

to maintain an integral identity.

Commitment to growth. The BJP believes that in order to excel, the Indian economy

must continue to grow. They claim that during their rule from 1998 to 2004, "The rapid pace of

development was set in motion" but now due to the CP being in power, their "prestigious

developmental projects have been put on the back burner" (National executive meeting, 2006, p. 8). In other words, while constructing the CP as a group not concerned with India's growth, they construct themselves as a group that puts the idea of India's growth at the forefront of their concerns.

Inclusive party. The BJP's vision of India's future includes the idea of India being accepting of people from many different social backgrounds. The BJP claims to have "a proud record of having the largest number of MPs from Dalit and tribal communities" (BJP national council, 2004, p. 9). Their willingness to count members from marginalized segments of society amongst their political roster shows that the party has a strong commitment towards the construction of a unified national image. Meanwhile, at the same time that they claim to work for a unified India, they express reluctance as it concerns to the needs of lower-caste individuals. They express this by stating that "caste-based politics is not good for democracy, nor is it in the national interest" (Mumbai Venkaiah Naidu, 2004, p. 10). The BJP's reason for not engaging with *caste-based politics* involves their concern over the "promotion of individual leaders, their families and vested interests" (Mumbai Venkaiah Naidu, 2004, p. 10). The BJP makes the argument that in order to ensure the inclusiveness of India they cannot engage with caste-politics as those will only serve the special interests of a few. Thus, the BJP subsumes all things under the top priority of building an inclusive nation that does not appeal to the special needs of any group—even if that group may be one that *needs* help.

Guardians of history. While advocating for the development of an integrated India, the BJP also pays homage to its past and recognizes the importance of protecting it. As it concerns the 1977 Emergency declared by Indira Gandhi, the BJP states that "Young Indians should know who did it. They should know why it was done. And how it was done. They should also know

who resisted this strangulation of democracy. And why. And how" (Function to commemorate, 2006, p. 4). The BJP believe that the young people of India "are not told about this dark spot in the life of Free India," which puts them in a position to lead the country towards making the same mistake again (Function to commemorate, 2006, p. 4). Thus, the BJP advocates for the *proper* telling of history—which (in this situation) conveniently places them in the position of national hero.

Advocates of responsible foreign policy. While claiming to be the exemplars of responsible leadership within India, the BJP also constructs an image for itself as trying to extend this form of leadership abroad. As it concerns the security situation in Nepal (a neighboring country), the BJP states that the "UPA government" is "responsible for the present complicated situation in Nepal because this government failed to take any meaningful and constructive initiative on the issue" of Maoism "in time" (National executive meeting, 2006, p. 3). The BJP points to the errors of the present-reigning political organization and states that it should have wielded its political energy in Nepal in order to prevent the powers of terrorists from badly impacting the country (and possibly India as well, since the subcontinent does experience problems due to this group). Thus, the BJP claims that with their opponents in command, India fails to create a constructive foreign policy that would reduce the terrorist threat in the region.

Representatives of Hindutva. The BJP consistently position themselves as the protectors of Hindu people and Hinduism. The BJP makes a bold statement that "if anybody tries to take the cover of secularism to indulge in anti-Hindu politics and statecraft, the BJP will stand in their path like a rock, prepared to make any sacrifices" (Ranchi, 2004, p.5). If one were to forget the BJP represents a Hindu nationalist organization, then the party ensures that they have a reminder for said people. They refer indirectly to their main opposition—the CP—when

they bring up the issue of secularism. By doing so, they also make the argument that the CP does have an anti-Hindu stance and that those of the Hindu faith will not find protection amongst CP leadership. Thus, the BJP create an image for themselves as the only representatives—if not defenders—of Hinduism.

BJP's importance to India

National security. In reference to national security, the BJP specifically talks about the history of nuclear energy in the country—especially in regards to the Pokhran II tests that it conducted in 1998. As it concerns national security the BJP states that they initiated these tests in order to "safeguard" India's "national interest […] and to reject the notion that it is the security of only some in the world that was important and all others were irrelevant" (Pokhran, 2005, p. 2). In other words, the BJP needed to conduct those tests because it was important to the Indian nation that they make a statement to *others* (read: other countries) that India's national security has importance. Therefore the BJP "had to boldly and resolutely assert the autonomy of" their "decision making" (Pokhran, 2005, p. 2). In other words, the BJP felt that they did not have another option regarding a nuclear weapons test and in the interest of the nation they had to act alone.

Will lead India to prosperity. According to the BJP, under their leadership the "government had opened the doors for all round development of the country," which led to "The prestige of India" increasing "in the world" (Parliament annexe, 2008, p. 3). While they no longer form the government at the center, the BJP makes the claim that "If the people give" them another opportunity to govern, then" they "will effectively establish India's rise before the entire country and the rest of the world" (Rajnath, 2008, p. 6). Thus, the BJP claim that having them at

the country's political helm will lead to India's growth in prosperity and prestige as they begin to wield power in world affairs.

BJP and equality. The BJP advocates fair treatment of all members of society including members of religious communities, women, youth, and those belonging to scheduled castes and tribes (SC/ST). They repeatedly make claims such as wanting "to see the progress and empowerment of every Indian, irrespective of the caste or community or region they belong to" (Empowerment, 2007, p. 2). This quote creates the idea that the BJP represents an inclusive polity that it will nurture in order for India to experience success.

In regards to youth, the BJP envision them as the future of India and thus they state that they "need to better utilize their energy" and "make them use their abilities" (Parliament annexe, 2007, p. 6). They also go so far as to refer to youth as "the nation's biggest reservoir of energy" and "the base of" the BJP's "organization" (Parliament annexe, 2007, p. 6). Thus, the BJP recognize this relatively neglected population with hopes of crafting its energy into something productive for the nation.

While the BJP propounds the idea of inclusivity, they do take this idea too far— especially as it concerns members of religious minority groups. For example, the BJP at one point states that "The party is committed to provide reservation for the SCs, STc, and OBCs in minority institutions, which is currently denied" (Parliament annexe, 2007, p.7). In this example, the term minority refers to religious minorities—such as the Christian and Muslim communities in India. In their quest to seek equality, the BJP fails to acknowledge the importance of some special interest groups' decisions to set up organizations that advocate upon the behalf of certain segments of India's population.

Promoters of India's cultural heritage. While the BJP holds organizational integrity as an important characteristic of their organization, they also value the protection of India's cultural heritage. The BJP states that "India's democratic tradition and" its "approach to conflict-resolution […] have been fundamentally influenced by Hindu philosophy and cultural ethos" (Democracy and conflict, 2008, p. 5). Thus, the BJP explicitly derives a connection between democracy, conflict-resolution, and Hinduism, which means that the BJP fundamentally represents values grounded in Hinduism. Thus, through their political work, the BJP promotes Hindu-based values.

The idea of protecting India's cultural heritage also extends into language politics. In a speech by Advani, he claims that in regards to "Hindi," which is a "national language" he is "immensely proud," while at the same time "dismayed by the fact that Hindi has not yet received the kind of recognition, both within India and internationally, that it so richly deserves" (Democracy and conflict, 2008, p. 1). The overall statement attests to the BJP's activist-like role in ensuring that they discuss those things viewed as vital to India's cultural heritage are brought to the forefront of discussions. This includes at least granting lip-service to the idea of promoting Hindi throughout India and the world.

BJP and national identity/unity. The BJP claims to advocate for a national identity and to accomplish this via building national unity. This sense of national unity and national identity will lead to India's prosperity. For example, in their discussion of the beginning of Tata Steel, the BJP states that its founder "was encouraged by many patriotic Indians" (Speech by L.K. Advani FICCI, 2007, p. 2). Thus, those people who enact a form of pride that stems from the nation encouraged what would eventually become one of the largest companies in India. Therefore, the BJP constructs the idea that India's success stems not only from the great minds

that live within the country, but also through those individuals who connect their efforts to the nation-state.

India's future. The BJP constantly stresses its concern with India's future, whether that is through the promotion of policies related to economic development, youth, or other reforms necessary for maintaining India's vibrancy. In regards to India's relatively young population, the BJP states that, "when job losses have become widespread due to economic recession, the greatest concern of young India is employment" therefore, the BJP's "economic policy must […] ensure productive employment to every able-bodied individual" (Advani On National Youth Day, 2009, p. 4). The BJP places an emphasis on the opportunities available to young people in this country throughout the documents it produced during its 2009 campaign. They present this emphasis on India's youth population by emphasizing the concerns that this population may face in the future. The BJP seeks to ensure that youth will have a good future in India because they believe that there exists a relationship between a healthy future for India and the country's youth.

As it concerns India's economic development, the BJP stresses the importance of creating an *Indian* model of development and political leadership. They state that they "will have to think of a new model for India which imitates neither the USSR nor the US, so that while India develops, it also shows to the world the path of development" and "By explaining the ideas of Gandhi in accordance with the current age, the economists can present [an] Indian economic model of development before the world" (Presidential speech Singh, 2009, p. 8). The BJP cites both the US and USSR because of their opposing, but highly popular forms of social and economic development—the former being a capitalist country and the latter being a communist country. The BJP hopes to construct a new form of economic development that does not strictly follow either of these two ideologies. In that way they will be able to educate the world in how

to develop. Thus, the future of India according to the BJP involves harvesting memories of their past and utilizing them to promote India's economic and political leadership within the world.

And last, the BJP explicitly mentions the need to reform India's education system. They discuss the need to educate more of its youth and to better equip teachers for the classroom. They claim that "Teacher training, teacher welfare and social security for teachers will receive never-seen-before commitment" (Advaniji's speech Gujarat, 2009, p. 4). The BJP plans to take this and other measures in order "to attract the best talent for teaching profession," which will hopefully improve "the condition of […] children," who the BJP belief "are" their "greatest asset" (Advaniji's speech Gujarat, 2009, p. 4). Thus, the BJP emphasizes the need to attract better teachers to the profession in order to ensure that Indian children receive a high-quality education, because how they perform inside (and then outside) of the classroom has importance in shaping India's future.

BJP and the common person

Work on behalf of the people. The BJP claims to not put their interests ahead of the nation. For example, they say that "We have taken the pledge of continuously dedicating ourselves in the service of Bharat Mata with or without power" (Parliament annexe, 2008, p. 9). Thus, they state to not work for their own political (or other) ambitions, but rather to serve the nation (e.g. Bharat Mata). The BJP further clarifies what they mean in terms of service to the nation by identifying groups in need of their help: farmers, the *common* person, and women.

Concern for farmer. The BJP makes the claim that the CP ignores the welfare of farmers—leading to the ultimate downfall of the agricultural sector of the economy. The BJP claims that "The entire country was ashamed to witness incidents of the food providers

committing suicides. […] If the neglect of agriculture and farmer is not immediately halted, the pace of development in the country will get arrested" (Presidential speech Singh, 2009, p. 6). The BJP cites two important things in this example: farmers' suicides and India's development. They link the two through Congress' neglect of both. This linkage enables the viewer to see a connection between India's lack of development and the deaths of farmers. The BJP therefore successfully places these two social ills under the jurisdiction of the CPs leadership (or lack thereof).

Create awareness amongst the common person. The BJP continuously stresses its desire to be a party that advocates on behalf of the common person. This feeds into their desire to build a strong and cohesive nation. As such they advocate for members within the party to "Go among the people and explain to them the governments' achievements" (National council, 2008, p. 3). By doing so the BJP hopes to create awareness about their initiatives and successes amongst all levels of the party establishment, so that they may better present these ideas to the common people. Again in their effort to create awareness about their political ambitions amongst the general public, they advocate that their "Chief Ministers should emphasize on the issues that bring the common people nearer to them and they are made aware of the government's work" (Parliament annexe, 2008, p. 4). Again, the BJP's emphasis remains not solely on working on behalf of the common person, but also broadcasting what they have accomplished for this demographic.

Importance of women. In an effort to promote the idea of gender equity, the BJP discusses the role of women and the positive impact that they can have within the Party and the nation. The BJP begins by stating that "If Indian culture has survived and thrived all the twists and turns of history, it is because of the Indian Woman" (Mahila Morcha, 2004, p. 1). As a

group that claims to represent Indian culture, the fact that they give such credence to women as the group that has enabled Indian culture to survive means that they believe (or will at least grant lip-service to the idea) that women play an important role within the nation. As such, the BJP plans to create an "environment free from injustice and violence in the public as well as the private sphere," in hopes that they can enable "women to contribute to every walk of life" (Mahila morcha, 2004, p. 2). Thus, part of the BJP's plan to create a better India involves the equal participation of women in society. They plan to actively ensure that this happens through creating a woman-friendly social environment.

BJP as the correct choice.

Better than CP. Often times the BJP makes comments aimed directly at their primary electoral competitor: the Congress Party (CP). They do this in order to show the ways in which the CP lacks in its leadership capabilities, while simultaneously displaying their strengths. For example, in one statement the BJP claims that "There is not a single corner in the country where terrorist attacks have not taken place. Terrorists kept challenging the establishment of the country. […] But the UPA government kept turning a deaf ear towards this" (Presidential Speech Singh, 2009, p. 3). The BJP makes this statement to illustrate how the CP not only fails to adequately handle India's problems, but blatantly ignores them as well. In contrast the BJP states that "The BJP never played politics on the issues of terrorism. The NDA enacted POTA to facilitate capturing terrorists and to easily bring them to book" (Presidential Speech Singh, 2009, p. 3). In other words, while the CP will ignore the issue of terrorism in India, the BJP—through its alliance in NDA—has repeatedly taken steps to ensure that one of India's largest problems may be resolved in an efficient manner through the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA). By

stating this, the BJP constructs their leadership as capable in contrast with the *seemingly* less competent CP.

In another example, the BJP discusses the construction of three states under its leadership. They claim that "When we formed three new states in 2000—Chhattisgar, Jharkhand, and Uttarakhand—we ensured that this was done smoothly. This had never happened when the Congress formed new states in the past" (Salient points Advani, 2009, p. 4). The BJP directly contrasts its accomplishments with those of the Congress in order to make it more apparent to the audience that they offer a responsible form of leadership, which greatly contrasts that which they could receive from the CP.

Assured of victory. The BJP's overall message may be summed up according to one word: victory. They make statements such as "the manner in which the BJP is achieving important electoral successes one after the other, clearly indicates that the people's support for the UPA government is melting in favour of the BJP" (Rajnath, 2008, p. 1). The UPA government, headed by the CP, represents the BJP's greatest political enemies; provided that the CP no longer has popular support, then the BJP will be assured of victory. Not only will the BJP be assured of victory because of the CPs allegedly waning popular appeal, but also because their opponent's support base will be transferred to them.

Summary

According to the BJP, they represent the *only* correct form of leadership for India. They have a strong stance on national security, development, and national integrity, while also making a pledge to work for a unified nation, concerned with the development of *all* its citizens. The BJP's belief in Hindutva enables it to accomplish these goals as they believe that India will only

be able to reach its potential provided that it looks to its *Hindu* history, which the BJP states that

only it can construct.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Organizations within India's Hindu nationalist movement understood the importance of constructing a global identity for the Hindu population relatively early. For example, the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP)—the global cultural component of the RSS—formed in the 1960s according to the following mission statement: (a) to consolidate and strengthen Hindu society; (b) to promote and protect Hindu values; and (c) to help organize Hindus abroad as a means to protect their Hindutva (Robinson, 2004). The VHP aims to construct a global, homogenous understanding of Hinduism that enables Hindus from disparate sections of the world to connect based on a shared identity—an idea that fits well with the Hindu Right's desire to eliminate barriers such as caste, locality, and socio-economic status in its construction of a Hindu-nation both within and outside of India (Mukta, 2005).

The importance of reaching the global Hindu community has not been lost on the political arm of the RSS: the BJP. The BJP formed after the dissolution of the Janata Party in April 1980. This group then rose to power during the early 1990s by adopting a pro-liberalization stance and catering to the dictates of India's emerging *new* middle class identity (Fernandes, 2006). In 1998 the BJP won its first national election and was granted the ability to form the government at the center. This same year marks the year the BJP became the first political party within India to operate a party website (Karan, 2009).

BJP & framing

The BJP's use of the Internet has significance because it grants them the power to frame issues of (primarily) local significance on a global scale. Joseph Nye (2011) discusses the term soft power in his text <u>The Future of Power</u>. One aspect of soft power concerns the ability to *shape* the terms of the discussion, possibly before it begins (2011). The BJP's use of the Internet

could be seen as an exercise of their soft power through the online publication of their

interpretation of significant events in India. A successful use of their soft power would enable

the BJP to discuss events of significance to them in terms that highlight the group's best

attributes and thus attract a larger number of supporters.

For example, through publishing their ideas on a globalized mass medium the BJP

effectively shapes (frames) the context of understanding their political rivals (e.g. Congress Party

and Communists). This may then influence how others interpret the BJP's political rivals, as

well as impact the way in which these groups engage with the public. While studies would need

to be done to test this hypothesis and examine the extent of the BJP's ability to set the news

media's and public's agenda, it should be noted that the presence of the BJP's website on the

Internet does not prevent its rivals from also developing an online presence of their own—which

the Congress Party has done. So, the BJP's website should be thought of as existing within an

on-going communications network where it rivals others for attention, prominence, and

ultimately the ability to set the agenda on important events related to the Party and India.

As an example of how the Internet enables the BJP to engage in framing, I will discuss

the group's history of violence. As mentioned in this documents introduction, the BJP has

become known for inflaming religion-based violence—with one of the more recent examples

being the 2002 riots in Gujarat. While many may know of this group's history of religion-based

violence, there fails to be any mention of this on the group's website. Thus, through the decided

failure to include information about its own violent history the BJP frames their political identity

as relatively non-violent with a penchant for inclusiveness. This may have further ramifications

in regards to agenda-setting and how members of other elite organizations (e.g. news media) and

the general public discuss the BJP.

BJP & identity formation

Because of its relatively wide reach, the Internet has the potential to shape identities, reshape the structures of power and inequality, and establish new forms of social organization (DiMaggio et. al., 2001). Within a globalizing world, the Internet's potential to shape identities takes on added significance because it enables the decoupling of identity formation from a specific territorial location (DiMaggio et al, 2001). The Internet also enables members of the diaspora to remain connected to one another. Because of its ability to be accessed by anyone from virtually anywhere, the Internet enables members from the disparate Hindu diaspora to access information that can further connect them to India. However, the point to be made does not concern how members of the Hindu diaspora use the Internet to connect with one another and the subcontinent, but rather why.

Some of the new possibilities afforded by an immigrant's country of migration may conflict with the values learned in said person's country of origin (Mitra, 2005). According to Ananda Mitra (2005) the differences between the socio-cultural norms of an immigrant's country of migration and country of origin may result in stress as an immigrant negotiates her identity in her new place of residence. This tension, coupled with a lack of public information regarding a person's home country and cultural heritage may result in immigrants seeking alternative media through which to remain connected to their country of origin. Because of this, the BJP harnesses the power of the Internet as a means to present its own interpretation of social reality through its appeal to a monolithic Hindu community that stretches across many disparate locales and gives political expression to those who see themselves as members of India's Hindu nationalist movement (Robinson, 2004; Scholte, 1996).

Myth construction

The appeal to this monolithic Hindu-nation over the Internet represents a form of cultural myth construction. Myths operate on multiple levels. The primary level of myth construction contains the factual elements (e.g. time), while the secondary level actively engages in meaning construction (Trifonas, 2001). Myths utilize both levels of meaning construction in order to naturalize elements of culture into common sense (Trifonas, 2001).

Myth construction relates closely with an understanding of ideology. Ideology represents a form of cultural interpretation contingent upon myth construction, because it serves as a way to make sense of the world via arbitrary meaning-making (Trifonas, 2001). The Internet enables the process of ideological social construction and meaning-making to take place void of any referent to social reality (Trifonas, 2001). This has important implications when it comes to understanding the significance of a Hindu-nationalist ideology and the subsequent adoption of a Hindu-nationalist identity.

The diaspora's status as geographical outsiders understandably complicates the process of translating and presenting an indigenous interpretation of India (Bhabha, 1994). With no first-hand referent to the social conditions within India, the significance of a social mediator becomes that much more important. The Internet enables members of India's diaspora to access rhetoric constructed by Hindu-nationalist groups such as the Bharatiya Janata Party that present an interpretation of national and international phenomena through a very specific ideological lens.

Hindutva represents the lens of interpretation used by the BJP. As an ideology, Hindutva promotes the supremacy of Hindu culture and the need for group unity as a means for Hindus to defend themselves against outside threats (Wirsing & Mukherjee, 1995). As a Hindutva organization, the contents of the BJP's website work to support this ideology by presenting

factual events and their interpretations in an easily understood format. This presentation of pre-interpreted material serves as a way to construct, translate, and naturalize meaning within an ideological structure that actively supports the status quo by discouraging audience reflexivity (Trifonas, 2001).

In addition to discouraging audience reflexivity, the BJP's use of the Internet discourages certain members from even being part of its audience. For example, by choosing to use the Internet as the device to relay their message, the BJP prevents those who lack the financial means to access a computer and use the Internet from being privy to their ideas. This also prevents those who lack the knowledge of how to navigate a website from accessing the information that can be found online. In addition, if an individual knows how to use a website but does not know either English or Hindi, then that individual cannot access the content of the site. Thus, through their website the BJP carefully crafts its message towards a specific group of people, which are those of the means to have access to the Internet and have knowledge of either Hindi or English.

Even for those who have the ability to navigate the site, they have limited ways of interacting with it. The website does not have a forum in which site-users can chat or reflect about the information found on the site and so, the BJP presents its information in a one-way fashion from sender to receiver. As seen throughout the results section, the BJP's ideology works to support an image of India as a Hindu-nation and their legitimacy as India's rightful leaders. As it concerns the United States, the BJP (and other Hindu nationalist groups) receives a good deal of financial support from those well-off members of the Hindu Indian Asian diaspora (Chopra, 2006). This creates a back-and-forth mechanism of mutual support where BJP supporters exchange dollars (or rupees) for pro-Hindutva messages.

Because of the material support provided by members of India's national and international Hindu populations to the Hindutva movement—this creates the need for the BJP to espouse an ideology that reflects the needs of its audience. Upper-caste, middle-class Hindus comprise the BJP's traditional support base and so it is not surprising that an appeal to traditional middle-class sensibilities may be ascertained from this website. Not only that, but through its website the BJP constructs a hegemony of upper-caste, middle-class ways of understanding their world. They do so by advocating for a conservative social structure, while also promoting a liberalized development strategy. In other words, through its website the BJP constructs an ideology geared towards the desires of members of India's middle-class.

Ideology becomes hegemonic through the process of negotiation by which members of a dominant group gain and exercise intellectual and moral leadership over those deemed subordinate to them (Fermia, 1981). The users of the BJP's website have the role of intellectual and moral leadership thrust upon them in that not everyone has access to the information found on this webpage. Therefore site-users exercise a form of intellectual and moral leadership through the de facto exclusion of those who lack the ability to adequately operate computer and Internet technology, as well as understand the messages posted on www.bjp.org. Thus, the messages presented on the website have the potential to only be shared amongst a select group of individuals.

As noted in the Literature Review, the BJP's derived its initial support from India's middle-class, upper-caste members through their vocal support of liberalized economic policies and conservative social policies. In more recent (post-2004) elections, the BJP has had to recognize lower-caste groups through their support of candidates from those castes and even though they grant lip-service to the idea of lower-caste empowerment, essentially their message

still appeals to the same ideals of their more traditional audience—only now, the BJP incorporates lower-caste individuals (and women) into the dream of what was seen previously as distinctly *upper-caste*, middle-class desires. The salience of the BJP's messages (online and otherwise) and the hegemony of the BJP's pro-middle class ideology becomes most apparent through the pro-BJP voting practices of some members of economically and religiously marginalized groups (Engineer, 2000; Gupta, 2005)

The hegemonic quality of the BJP's pro-middle class stance has greater implications when seen in reference to the group's desire for India's assent to the world's stage. Globalization, economic liberalization, and mass communication present the BJP with an unprecedented variety of ways to share its ideology with people from around the world. Given the fact that the Internet enables the BJP to construct an image of India for those who may not have a first-hand referent to this country, this enables the BJP to construct an image of India according to their perception. Thus, the BJP may use the Internet as a cultural filter as it concerns outsiders' perceptions of the nation-state.

While the BJP may be in the cusps of figuring out how to reconcile the differences between its traditional support of upper-caste, middle-class values (especially in the Hindi belt) with the ascent of the increasingly vocal lower-castes, examining the messages propounded by the BJP has importance (Jaffrelot, 2008). The messages presented by the BJP may inevitably influence outsiders to believe the messages propagated by the BJP's myth-production machines and possibly support an organization that may not necessarily act in the best interests of the majority of its national constituency.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

It cannot be overlooked that in the same year that the BJP won the chance to form the central government for a full term, they also performed India's second nuclear missile test—Pokhran II—which launched them onto the global stage and into the comity of nuclear powers. In this same year (1998) the BJP decided to launch their official online presence. Given the ability of the Internet to be accessed wherever there lay the proper cable connection, then the launch of the BJP's website may be seen as an extension of their aim to craft out a place and an image for India's social and political ascension. For those reasons, studying how the BJP chooses to define both itself and India has importance, because the ideas presented by the BJP online have the ability to impact how Indians (those living in the country of India and abroad) view themselves in relation to others, as well as influence how others view India.

This thesis highlighted the growing significance of mass communication technologies in the area of politics and identity construction by discussing the importance of Internet technology in the construction of a conception of the Hindu-nationalist community that includes members of the diaspora. Analyzing the myth construction of the BJP's website only serves to better illustrate how the BJP constructs its political message. Considering its myth construction in tandem with India's global Hindu diaspora and global media technologies serves to highlight the possibilities for nation-building.

This paper textually analyzed a small portion of the information the BJP publishes on its website: www.bjp.org and does not consider other multimedia tools (e.g. video clips) used by the BJP to relay its political message. In addition, while this thesis connects current research on globalization, Hindu nationalism, and Internet usage as a way to rationalize the importance of the Internet in Indian politics, it cannot prove that there exists a definitive link between any of the

aforementioned theoretical concepts and Internet usage. These limitations necessitate future

research to further explain the significance of websites created by political groups in India.

Future research should analyze usage of www.bjp.org, as well as the effects (e.g. money

donation) of the BJP's online political message among its supporters in India and abroad, as well

as examine how usage of this website aids in political activism, social awareness, and identity

formation, while being attentive to how the members of India's diasporas and its indigenous

populations differently respond to these messages. However, most importantly future research

should focus on understanding the depth and diversity amongst India's middle class in order to

enable better understanding of India's middle class' social reality and the social phenomena (e.g.

globalization, immigration) that affect them. A more comprehensive understanding of India's

middle-class will yield more insightful research.

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Adrienne Atterberry
atterberrya@gmail.com

Education:

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY—SYRACUSE, NY, December 2012
Master of Arts, Media Studies

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY—SYRACUSE, NY, August 2011
Certificate of Advanced Study, South Asia

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH—PITTSBURGH, PA, April 2009
Bachelor of Science, Economics

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH—PITTSBURGH, PA, April 2009
Bachelor of Arts, English Literature

Teaching Experience:

Syracuse University—Syracuse, NY
Graduate Instructional Associate for COM 107 (Fall 2009, Spring 2010)
Assisted professor by attending each class, writing each midterm, grading quizzes, and addressing any student concerns.

University of Pittsburgh—Pittsburgh, PA
Undergraduate Teaching Assistant for Economics and the Media (Spring 2008)
Assisted professor in implementing her *Economics and the Media* course
through research, one-on-one meetings, and an in-class presentation.

Conference papers:

AEJMC—Top paper: 1st Place *(Summer 2011)*
Invited to present a paper titled "Press Coverage of Indira Gandhi" for the History Division at the annual conference hosted by the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication.

AEJMC—Top Paper: 3rd Place *(Summer 2010)*
Invited to present a paper titled "Understanding Orientalism: The construction of the 'Other'" for the International Communication Division at the annual conference hosted by the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication.

Undergraduate Conference in Literature *(Spring 2008)*
Co-presented a paper titled, "Textual Metamorphosis: Effect on Textual Production and Reader Response," at the 1st annual undergraduate literature conference for the University of Pittsburgh's English Department.

National Women's Studies Association—Honorable Mention *(2007)*
Invited to present a paper titled "A Dichotomous View of Motherhood" at the 28th
Annual National Women's Studies Association Conference.

Academic Honors:

Critical Language Scholarship *(Summer 2012)*
Received a US government scholarship to continue Hindi language studies in Jaipur,
Rajasthan via the American Institute for Indian Studies

Critical Language Alumni Development Scholarship *(Spring 2012)*
Received a grant from the US State Department to complete readings on the topic of
Indian politics in diaspora under the supervision of Professor Sangeeta Sharma.

Catherine L. Covert Award, 2nd Prize (2011)
Received a cash prize for the second-best communications paper written using a
historical methods approach within the Newhouse School. Award received for the paper:
"Press coverage of Indira Gandhi".

American Institute of Indian Studies Hindi Fellowship *(2011/2012)*
Received an academic year fellowship to further my Hindi studies while in Jaipur,
Rajasthan, India.

Critical Language Scholarship *(Summer 2011)*
Received a US government scholarship to continue Hindi language studies in Jaipur,
Rajasthan via the American Institute for Indian Studies.

Foreign Language and Areas Studies Fellowship *(2010/2011)*
Received an academic-year fellowship to participate in South Asia area studies and Hindi
language studies.

Teaching Mentor *Alternate (2010/2011)*
Participated in training and orientation implementation workshops with the purpose of
providing me with the necessary skills to orient new teaching assistants to the Syracuse
University community.

Jerome C. Wells' Award *(2009)*
Award given to two of the most promising undergraduate students who graduate from the
University of Pittsburgh's economics department each year.

Outstanding Senior Award *(2009)*
Award given to a group of the most talented undergraduate students who graduate
from the University of Pittsburgh's economics department each year.

Volunteer Experience:

Mohanlal Sukhaida University, Udaipur—Guest speaker *(January 2012)*
Gave a presentation on the role of retired women in America for a conference discussing issues related to retired women in India.

Slutzker Center Peer Assistant *(Summer 2010)*
Assisted the staff of the Lillian and Emanuel Slutzker Center for International Services with orienting newly arrived international students with their adjustment process to Syracuse University's campus.

El Centro Latino Volunteer, Carrboro *(September 2005-December 2006)*
I helped students with their homework and engaged them in afterschool activities.

Other Awards:

Girl Scouts of the USA—Lifetime Member
Women and Girls of Distinction Award for Leadership *(2005)*
Gold Award *(2005)*