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Millennial identity within the U.S. and India: Students' identities and role in democracy

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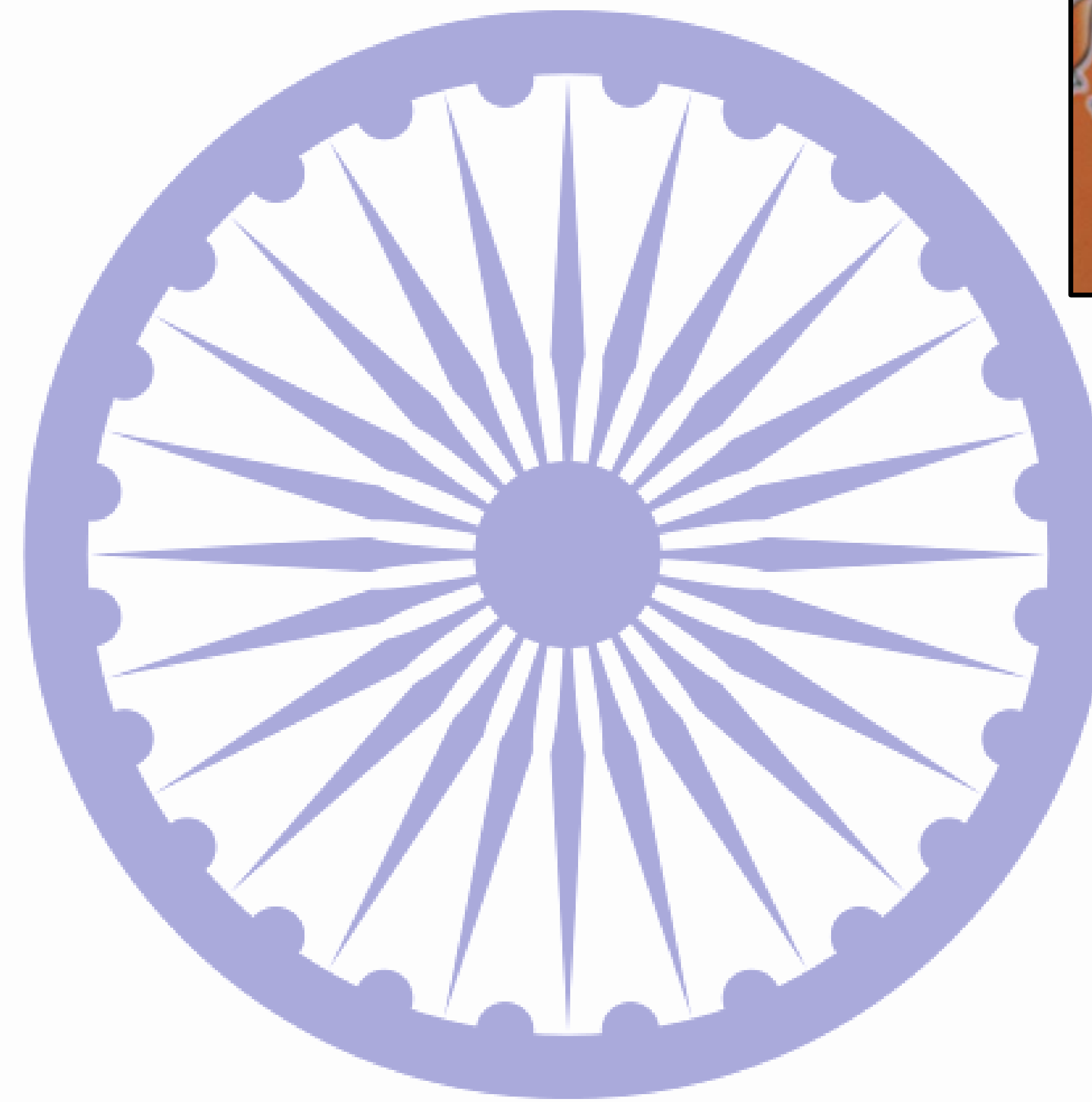
STUDENTS' IDENTITIES AND ROLE IN DEMOCRACY

Independent Learning Project:
Study Abroad, India 2014

Research Description

Research began in January, 2014 in Calcutta, India, in the peak of that country's parliamentary campaign season. It also coincided with the beginning of the U.S. midterm election season. Our objective was to gauge the similarities and differences between political perceptions and engagement in Indian and U.S. college students.

Our sample population included six students from each group; the Indian students were from St. Xavier's College and U.S. students from CSB/SJU. This qualitative study focused on students' own perception of how their political participation and role in democracy was affected by their local- and national-level identities.



Narendra Modi,
Prime Minister of India



Mamata Banerjee,
Chief Minister of West Bengal



Comparing the United States and Indian Political Systems

U.S.:

- ◇ Presidential System
- ◇ Bicameral Legislature
(Senate, House of Representatives)
- ◇ Two Party System:

- ◇ Democratic party
- ◇ Republican party

India:

- ◇ Parliamentary System
- ◇ Bicameral Legislature
(Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha)
- ◇ Multi-Party System:
 - ◇ Bharatiya Janata Party
 - ◇ Indian National Congress party

Interview Questions/Prompts:

- ◇ Please tell us about your *voting experience*.
- ◇ How would you *define democracy* in India/U.S., and how do you, as an individual and a student, *fit into that definition*?
- ◇ Tell us anything you know about India's *upcoming elections*.
- ◇ Can you draw any *parallels* between the U.S. and India on the *basis of democracy*?

Findings:

- ◇ Common themes of socialization: family and friends influenced to vote
- ◇ Democracy is defined by voting.
 - ◇ Little more than an action - not actually meaningful
 - ◇ Should vote if informed, but not an obligation
- ◇ However, not able to make impact with one vote
- ◇ Political involvement party-centric in India, but most students not politically involved yet
- ◇ Corruption was main issue facing Indian students