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Elections Politics in the USA and India

This study examines issues of elections and voting in the USA and India. I spoke with youth in both countries to understand what elections, voting, and politics mean to them. The purpose of this study is to compare the views of Indian citizens and American citizens about elections, voting, and politics. It explores how they feel about action and their capacity to make a change through elections and voting.

I focused specifically on the youth in the USA and India because they are the future's leaders. They matter; and how involved they are in politics also matters. This study involved face-to-face interviews with 11 students in India and the USA. Over time, I plan to take these conversations beyond the friends I consulted in person. I am making an iPhone iOS app that poses questions of elections, voting and politics to all youth. Their answers can help us learn how politics are affecting youth worldwide. I think this exposure is a step towards a better understanding our democratic systems and their functioning.

Each interview started with the interviewee's demographics ; all eleven participants are of voting age and are between 17-24 years old. The income bracket of the Indian youth range from upper middle class to upper class. The American students are middle to upper-middle class. All have access to or own a smartphone, speak English, and had a secondary and post-secondary education. For the purpose of this study, they are taken as a representative sample of youth in India and the USA.
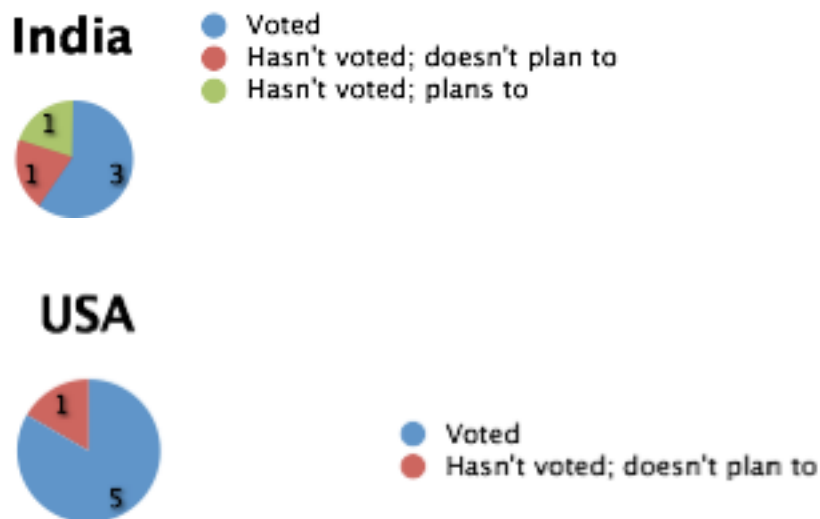
I understand that a sample size of 5-6 people per nationality is too small for statistical significance. There are three reasons for the small sample size. One, it was challenging to bring people together and speak about their political views. A large section of middle- and upper-class Indian youth is indifferent to politics and elections. In fact, most don't bother to vote or form personal opinion on politics. On the other hand, American youth are reserved about their well-formed political opinions. When a school-wide email was sent about this experiment, a very small percentage of students opted in. The politics issue is personal and many students were hesitant to publicly attach their name to their opinions. This limited the sample size significantly. Second, the limited timescale for this semester meant that the number of interviews was scaled to a manageable number. These challenges are a mix of my personal limitations and society's outlook on politics discussions. In spite of these obstacles, these conversations can still continue on a crowdsourced platform. I think these questions are important for youth to consider. I think many youth, that have similar views, do discuss the elections, voting and politics. But a crowd-sourced platform also brings exposure to dissimilar beliefs, thus providing a holistic view of international politics beyond news magazines and news media. Their opinions are personal but

they reflect the aspirations and struggles of young citizens in countries everywhere. The iPhone app is expected to provide this space for young people to express their thoughts and hear others.

Third, the project is limited by the socioeconomic backgrounds of the participants. All are in middle or upper class in their respective country. I chose this section of society because I wanted to interview young people who have access to a smartphone. In both countries, smartphones are available to the middle class and upper class. My interviewee selection was somewhat flawed in the India group because they are all upper-middle and upper class citizens. The skew towards upper class led to the convergence of some opinions in the India group after five interviews. Convergence of opinions also occured in the American group after six interviews. These people are from the elite, educated class in India and the USA. They have similar hopes and expectations from the government in the social, political, and economic spectrums. In the future, as technology becomes more affordable and apps are accessed by a broader socioeconomic population range in both countries, we should witness more divergent opinions.

The pie charts below give a summary of the results. The USA pie chart has a greater proportion of people who have voted, while the India pie contains a less proportion of those who voted. For the Indians who haven't voted yet, a distinction is to provided as to whether they'll vote in the future.

While elaborating on which elections they voted in and why they were there, we see that the

India
- Voted
- Hasn't voted; doesn't plan to
- Hasn't voted; plans to

USA
- Voted
- Hasn't voted; doesn't plan to

Americans behaved agentically while the Indians were encouraged by their family. What exactly does this mean? Well, when I look at the responses of the American students, they remember exactly what elections they voted for (national, local, or state) and/or they have an absentee ballot submitted. As one student says, "Once for a new senator and once in the general elections--president, and all others that are in the ballot." On the other hand, the Indians mention that their family – usually parents – convinced them to go to the election booth. Some sample statements: "I was there with my mom and brother", "First – it was for the experience of it – didn't have much of an idea and used mom and dad's ideas", "my dad said he'd buy me dinner if

I voted so I might as well." Thus, here lies an interesting paradigm in a person's political preferences. It is very clear that the American youth see politics and voting as an individual activity. On the other hand, the Indian youth are being exposed to elections for the first time when their parents take them to the booth.   In the large scheme of things, I think this leads to different behaviors from the youth in these places. As Americans grow older, I hypothesize that they will take it upon themselves to continue voting. There is an intrinsic motivation for them to cast their ballot. On the other hand, with Indians it could be situation-dependent. Once Indian youth grow older and leave their parents' home, it is doubtful whether they will continue voting. From these interviews, it seems they need external motivation from influential people or groups in their lives. If their support systems change, there is no guarentee they will continue voting. The national voting pattern in India corroborates my views. The percentage of people exercising their franchise in cities, where a majority of affluent and youth live, is considerably lower than the national average.

An issue with this analysis is how this upper-class youth in India and the USA compares to youth in lower income brackets. The Indians of elite backgrounds are urged to vote by their family members. However, for many non-elite Indians, voting can require agentic behavior because different needs and values are at stake. Voting for non-elite Indians is less about the political ideology of parties and more about the need for short-term needs. For them, voting could secure water or electricity connections in their community. When I spoke to two older women (in their 40s) who work as maid and cook in India, they mentioned the following reasons for voting.

Kamala, a house maid, said "Everything if they (the leaders) do correctly it would be nice. A few things are: many of us don't have a lot of education and they should do more for us – build dormitories, encourage us to study more. There are even more poor people than myself, then if they help them, it will be nice for them. It's fine for us, I have a job . There are people without anything, they need help." In this case, Kamala earns well enough that voting doesn't decide her day-to-day survival. Yet she points out that there are people who need the votes to matter – it can decide whether they can afford education for the next four years. In India, there are income brackets that vote for access to basic needs. For them, voting is a much higher priority and it can define their standard of living for the next four years.

Adding on, Vijaya, a part-time cook mentions issues of infrastructure. She states, "If basic facilities such as water, cooking gas are fulfilled, then I will be happy with them." Vijaya places greater importance on the basic necessities and it does sway her vote. However, being from an older generation, being a mother and household earner, her priorities may differ from a youth's priorities. However, it is clear that from a lower socioeconomic status, the accessibility to basic amenities is an issue in India. And it is possible that a voter's decision is more likely swayed by these issues in the low-middle and labor class.

The youth were questioned about the physical process of voting. Neither side had much trouble at the booths.

One story that did stand out, however, is the commotion at the Indian voting booths. As one voter states, "When I voted last time, me, my brother my mom were the last ones going to the booth. There are so many guys that are standing there waiting for you and they whisper into your ear. They bias what you think. And right outside the booth, they have all the emblems of the people – and they say all sorts of words – "Diamond ring, broomstick, etc." You don't even know what is which …"

This atmosphere is put on by some of party members to confuse people or influence the way they think. A similar situation in Goa, India invited some media attention. The police in the area were accused of biasing the voters to Congress (one of two main Indian parties – the other is BJP). The excerpt said, "BJP supporters claimed the presiding officer was openly asking elderly people to press the top button. The top button on the electronic voting machine was of the Congress (Poll officers accused, 2012)."

Students were asked to recount their emotions when they think about elections and voting. They answered the questions: "Why do you vote (what does it signify to you)?" and "How do you feel just after you step out of the voting booth?" I framed these questions to get some emotion-backed responses.

On a broader level, both Americans and Indians agreed on the following. One, they all felt that casting your vote is an expression of opinion and "it is kind of fun; you see people and you are doing things together." The youth enjoy seeing other people in their community coming together and participating in an event. Other people in their community may not vote for the same people but irrespective of the outcome of the elections, the youth were happy to see mass participation. Second, they all mentioned in different ways that elections provide power to the people. What this means is that for majority of time, political parties call the shots on how the country is run. During election time, the power shifts to the people. That's the time when you "get a sense of what all people want." The interviewees mention that if you don't vote, you have no reason to complain for the next 4 years. Essentially, it is the responsibility of the common citizen to seize the moment and make the most of it.   Finally, the youth feel that voting is not only an opportunity to be taken advantage of, but also a fundamental duty – the way the system works, democracy gives you some ways to voice your opinion. In civil society, "you have some restrictions but you also have some freedoms." So, exercise that freedom and vote.

The American students had one overarching theme that Indians neglected to mention. The price of casting a vote is free and the cost is about an hour of time. "It's a low cost investment and it is a privilege", someone said. Another student mentioned that while his individual vote is not important (in part because it alone doesn't matter), it is true that each individual 'impulse' adds

up to make a loud 'on/off' signal. His explanation is in engineering terms.   To elaborate on the analogy: each individual's addition is insignificant until many of those insignificances add up to something that is significant. In essence, the individual voices are heard as a greater voice that speaks for the collective group. At the time interviews were conducted, the American presidential elections just concluded. This year, more than any other, social media played a huge role in the advertisments by presidential candidates, in the excitement communicated by voters, and in organization of political rallies. I was curious to see if the interviewees felt the same optimism and inspiring emotions as their compatriots. I was also interested in seeing how citizens of two influential countries, one that is arguably the most powerful country in the world and the other that is the world's largest democracy, felt about being in the position of electing leaders of these nations.

Research shows that based on a citizen's emotional outlook on the political scene, they may get involved differently. For example, two contrasting emotions are Enthusiasm and Anxiety. MacKuan and Marcus propose that enthusiasm provokes the participation in activist political campaigns. Instead anxiety leads them to learn more about the political scene (in an effort to lower the anxiety) (MacKuan, Marcus.). As I conducted my study, there are definitely those who thrive in the community spirit generated by the elections; these are people who are high on the enthusiasm scale. On the contrary, there were people who felt indifferent about the elections. They perhaps felt emotions more along the axis of anxiety and need for reassurance. Research by MacKuan and Marcus shows that they perhaps feel modest to non-existent influence on candidate preferences and they tend to choose the candidate that makes them less nervous.

Interviewees were asked to imagine it was Election Day and they were waiting in line to enter the voting booth. They step in, find the ballot, fill in their candidates of choice, and step out. That moment when they step out of the voting booth, how do they feel? When interviewees imagined this scenario and answered, two themes were shared by Americans and Indians.

The first was absence of emotion: "nothing really;" "I mean, I don't know. You get in there, you do your thing, you walk out;" or "I know I have no control over the situation – it's like getting a blood test."

The second was of belonging: "You get excited that you get that mark on your finger. You see celebs doing it so you feel cool. I felt good about it and that I was part of a trend." Another voter stated, "I feel part of the community. Everyone from the district is there…" And finally, "I feel part of society, I like it; it is exciting."

It is interesting because the nonchalance in the first excerpt is dominated by how insignificant each person's vote really matters in the large scheme of things. The American youth attributed it to the presence of the Electoral College and how their vote just feeds into deciding the electoral votes for the state. Many felt that it is just another chore to take care of. These people exhibit hints that they lie on the Anxiety-Reassurance axis. They don't have much influence over what

the candidate plans for the future, and thus they are mostly at the election booth to have their say count and to choose the person who makes them less nervous.

A few felt a sense of community and gathering of people. In this case, the intervieweees acknowledge the spirit of people congregating to cast their vote. It is clear that they are reminiscent of the short-term benefit of voting – bringing society to one place. It is possible that their enthusiasm can influence their level of mobilization during election period. Perhaps they are the type of people to attend a political rally. Certainly, they were very interested in doing this interview, as it lets them express their thoughts on the elections.

The youth who showed nonchalance perhaps didn't feel a dramatic emotional shift because their vote doesn't go far in having a direct impact on the elections.

The third facet of our conversation was about how a person decides on their vote. We spoke about the parameters that affected their decision to vote for a party and the struggles they faced when they approached the elections.

In general, both sets of youth gave more importance to national politics than local politics. In the USA, the idea is to look more at what the ideology of a party is and where they stand on issues such as pro-choice, international relations with Israel, women's rights. As one person put it, "On a national level, I do moral litmus tests on the candidates as a way of choosing."

While ideology is a parameter considered by Indians, the effectiveness of the party in the previous term mattered more. One Indian said that he looked at what the previous party did and what the new parties could offer. He mentioned that while the poorer people would elect those t who gave them free goods, it was up to the middle class and upper class families (like his own) to elect based on the economic growth the party could provide. And "for that, we compared to what the previous guy did. And every four years you end up seeing what your party did and then you switch back to the other guy. These days at least people are seeing what they can do for you in terms of not just free stuff."

This belief that people elect parties based on economic growth and their service to society is highly tied into one analytic framework hypothesized by Partha Chatterjee that explores middle class and lower middle class interplay in politics in India. According to Chatterjee, there are two societies that the government caters to. One is the civil society -- made up of middle and upper class families that focus on the potential economic growth under the government. The other is the political society -- or the peasantry and labor class. They are more focused on receiving public goods and maintaining their livelihood. Both societies co-exist and it is true that the laws apply equally to all people. But in practice, the way in which these two societies interact with the government greatly differs.

Civil society is the set of literate people who are aware of what their rights are and how to make use of them. They worry about economic growth and development of the country. With this

group, the state uses the appropriate legal framework and processes. The Indian interviewees in this project fell into civil society.

Political society -- encompassing street vendors and allowing squatters on the roadside -- is the management of non-corporate capital. Here, society is treated outside of the constitutional framework, "with temporary, contextual arrangements arrived via political negotiations."

Per Chatterjee's proposal, the capitalistic class has hegemony over civil society today. It influences the government and exercises its rights to promote economic growth. If India was made up entirely of civil society, it would be a Western democracy like the USA.

With this civil society pushing for increased economic growth, there is bound to be a synonymous rise in primitive accumulation -- the seizure of the land and resources from the peasantry, or the political society. Interestingly, this hasn't led to a suffocation of the peasantry. Instead, they've risen up to the injustice of land and resource allocation. According to Chatterjee's hypothesis, the spread of government technology means that the state (and civil society) is no longer an external entity with absolute power over the peasantry. Instead, they are the ones providing free public goods -- like water, education, food, health -- and have intertwined themselves into the peasantry life. The peasants have, in turn, started pressuring the government to deliver these benefits consistently to them. This has led the government to heavily invest in "primitive re-compensation to peasantry with anti-poverty programs" that the interviewee earlier mentioned. This compensation has come in the form of microcredit, low-interest loans, subsidized food in ration shops, and more (Chatterjee).

Thus, this civic society mentality is a reasonable explanation for the Indian interviewee's need to factor in economic growth as a measure of party performance and future success. He is speaking as part of the urban middle class and thinks of the political future in conjunction with economic prosperity.

Now let's look at how current party performance affects the decision of middle-class Americans. They also agree that the majority of public are swung by the current party's performance. One interviewee says, "It depends on how influential the candidate is. If it seems like they really have the power in the party to influence decisions (like Obama does), that also swings the general population's opinion." They also attribute the candidate's influence within the party to the Presidential primaries that lead up to his candidacy. For example, in the Republican primaries, there was a slim majority through which Romney won the candidacy. This means that if he actually got voted to office, he would have a large minority opposing his leadership – diluting his ultimate influence in the Republican office.

Another facet of the interview was the political structure in the country. Interviewees spoke about their participation in the elections. Yet, there are imperfections to the democractic election system and here, the youth talk about what directly impacts them.

This is an interesting section because it presents a juxtaposition of what American youth feel about their political system and what Indian youth like in the American system and long for in India.

A common theme is the two-party system in the USA. There are two sides to this coin and we see both here. One is from an Indian: "In the US it's pretty clear cut there are Democrats and Republicans. There's a few instances where their beliefs cross over. In India there are so many parties. One believes in God the other doesn't .. whatever." As a writer in the CNN puts it, "Indians look at the two party system in America with the ache of longing. Indian national elections, which are due in 2014, is a festive circus of dozens of parties." He claims that there probably isn't a single political journalist in the country who can name all the political parties that contest in the national elections (CNN). This outlook on American politics is fascinating. Apart from the fact that Indian youth aspire to become more American-ized (which intrinsically may play a role in this opinion), the abundance of Indian parties in the elections is burdensome to him. Each of these parties shares political ideology with one of two main parties in India – BJP or Congress – but has some variation in some of the specifics. These variations have led to numerous independent parties in India that crowd the ballot. Technically, they give the voter a tremendous opportunity to find the party that fits their political views. Sadly, too much choice has led Indians, like this young man, to avoid doing the research and instead he sticks to the main competitors.

Now however, speak to an American about this issue and they'll say that it is a struggle for them when they approach the elections. "Yes, it is overly and underly simplified. It is oversimplified because of the two-party system. A person isn't just a Republican or a Democrat – it isn't just one way or another. For example, my senator switched from one side to the other a few years ago". And they add that with just the 2-party system, there is a mix-up of a bunch of issues that each one thinks about differently. For example, "In the USA you have pro-choice movement. But now it is destructive. They are mixing into that, issues like taxes and how you feel. It's not good." As she explains later, she mentions that with economics and border control, she is Republican. With women's rights and the pro-choice issue, she is Democratic. People are complex in their political views and according to the interviewees, the two-party system is a silly oversimplification.

These juxtaposed situations show that the political stage in a country could vary from hundreds of small parties up to 2-3 main monopolizing parties. However, there are also similarities between the American and Indian political scenes. As mentioned above, there are two monopolizing parties in India -- the Indian National Congress (Congress) and Bharat Janata Party (BJP). Congress has overt and covert socialist tendencies. It is willing to help the poor at the expense of the middle class. The party is, in theory, liberal and supports social welfare. The other major party, BJP, is largely conservative, capitalist, middle-class force that is often baffled over why it is so hard for people to accept that India is a fundamentally Hindu country. Congress has center-leftist policies and in some ways can be likened to the American Democratic

party. On the other hand, the rightist BJP party is closer to the Republican party on the political spectrum. BJP and Congress dominate national politics in India, with the 100s of smaller parties affiliated with them peripherally. Now let's hear another Indian address this issue. He mentions that at a national level, it is difficult for a party to represent everyone. In this situation, he advocates the importance of a regional party. He mentions that when you elect for the lowest level that directly impacts you (the panchayat, or village leader), it "molecularizes" the issue and you choose what's best for you. However, while you may vote for a small party that directly affects you, its ties to larger parties on the national scale may be difficult/unknown to trace. At that point, you end up with "the lack of a cohesive coalition among different groups of people, and the unnecessary abundance of a bunch of utter idiots that are elected into power."

Speaking of the political framework in general, one American student objectively mentions: "There's a math proof that shows there is no perfect voting system in the world. Every voting system requires 5 key aspects to be fulfilled and no system has that at the moment."   He believes that for the major parties that are in the elections, to be fair to more than just 2 parties, there ought to be some sort of bracket that these parties are elected through before they get to the final 2-party showdown.

And finally, interviewees opened up about their political views in general. The major questions they addressed here are: promising areas in the politics of the country, the problematic areas, and the role of youth in politics today. The Indians also elaborated on the middle class's influence in the political situation and talked about the areas of Indian politics that need reigning.

When we speak about the promising areas in politics in the USA vs. India, the points I heard were mostly about the masses. Americans mentioned they like how the "public is not stuck in their ways" and are willing to heed the actions and thoughts of both the Democrats and Republicans every 4 years.

On the other hand, the Indians spoke about the youth. The youth care now. They care because they want to be vocal and transparent about the political system. In fact, they are pressuring the government for openness and transparency. Recently, youth have been revolting against the government's protectionist economy and insensitivity to social issues. Groups like 'India Against Corruption' held protests in Delhi in the past 6 months. Events like this are forcing the government to be clear about their stand on issues.

Of the world's major countries, India has the youngest population and the oldest political leaders – with a 4 decade gap between both. History has shown that such an age divide creates political unrest and shakes up the country (Is a Youth Revolution, 2012). However more recently, it is teaching the political parties that youth are important to have in their ranks. Youth Congress and Youth BJP parties are slowly emerging. Whether they will be a promising step for the future is unsure. But the attention is being given. Finally, they spoke about how the media and internet

are exposing the holes in the government rule today. Websites like ipaidabribe.com are bringing more exposure and accountability to the political parties.

Media opinion of the current two-party system in the USA has gotten increasingly critical, in conjunction with the interviewees' views in this project. The initial premise of the two-party system was that it would operate on the rationale of quid-pro-quo. The idea was that Democratic and Republican parties, having supposedly opposing views on what the government should do, will bargain with each other until agreement which satisfies both parties is reached (thewilkesbeacon). Unfortunately, that bargaining step has been completely off the agenda in recent years. The incumbent tends to disregard any criteria proposed by the opposing party.

What makes this situation more shocking is that most Americans are discontent with the two-party system. According to Gallup polling data, in 2011 only 27 percent of Americans identified themselves as Republicans and 31percent as Democrats, while 40 percent considered themselves independent (thewilkesbeacon). I believe this was dubbed as 'discontent' not because Independent parties are the answer, but because once you leave the arena of the Big 2, your vote's ability to have an impact drops significantly. It is a bid for one of many Independent parties that probably won't reach a majority win anyway. Even if the 40% of US population coordinates this effort, they will spread over many Independent parties. It is unlikely there is a unanimous victory for a single party outside of the Democratic and Republican parties.

If we look at it from a historical bias, the two-party system has become so ingrained in American politics that many people cannot envision politics without it. Some continue to accept the system because it allows them to choose the "lesser of two evils." However, by accepting that there are more than just two candidates for the presidency you effectively kill this bias and open up the future to entirely new dimensions of possibility (the wilkesbeacon).

The areas of concern in Indian politics lie in the realm of development and the urban-rural gap. Surprisingly, the issue of corruption isn't as pressing to some. Instead one person said, "let's think about the ones [issues] that bring India to the 21st century. ...This corruption thing really doesn't bother me – at least at the end of the day the work gets done." The feeling seems to be that corruption is an accepted way-of-life. Having lived in India, I can vouch for that. It is harder to correct the political and social mindset regarding corruption – where corruption is publicly condemned but silently carried out – than it is to go with the flow, accept that corruption exists, partake if needed, and go about life. Corruption in India is all pervasive – from the laborers that work in the train stations to the beaureaucrats to university presidents, parlimentarians. A history of the caste system that offered the wealth of fruition to higher castes, a period of colonialism under British rule that swamped the country – these are a few examples of how opportunities and democracy in India have been in the hands of the rich and powerful. Even after the 1991 liberalization of the economy, you need to be an "insider to get opportunities." These opportunities haven't been coming fast enough for the poor. On the other hand, to invest in entreprenurship and make your own opportunity is a difficult endeavor with little chance of

success   (WSJ article:). In our country, it is about connections to the powerful, the ability to tap into the weakness of corruption in everyone, and it is each man for his own.

Another broadly-spoken topic is of the poorer people in India . Indian interviewees felt forced-voting (for a specific party) is widespread in villages. In addition, many votes are bought by political parties. They offer the poor "free gifts and subsidies" and rations to buy their vote during the election campaign. As one person states, "the lower class is the one that takes sides; there's a lot of voting-for-money going on." In addition, "if you analyze where the parties place their rallies and get their funds – they only go to the rural places." He also mentions that as these subsidies grow and the rural people are moving into the middle class economic tier, politicians need to tap into their changing needs differently. And with private companies and social media spreading more awareness, this will hopefully change soon.

With respect to the middle class's participation in the elections, the Indians had a lot to say about their country. Some of these opinions were slightly contradictory. While one person says that the "lower middle class are the strongest vote for all biggest parties" and that "the middle section of the middle class – the government servants vote," another disagrees. He says that "the middle class has their right and takes it perfectly." Either way, they both notice the lower middle class being swayed by subsidies and goods while the middle class has the government-affiliated people voting. This ties in with the claims that Chatterjee has made in his research -- the gap between civil (middle class) society that is yearning for economic growth and the political (rural, poor) society that is losing their resources to the industrialization -- leads to this division of interests between the low- and middle-income groups in India.

Finally, it was important to also gain insight from those people who have never voted. An American who never voted before mentioned three reasons why: 1. Politics create an argumentative situation, and she isn't confrontational; 2. They fight over the debt just to be annoying; 3. She voted for the school budget and other issues where she has a more significant impact. When it comes to my Indian friend, she touches upon more cultural and historical reasons for her disassociation from voting and politics. In her words, "As a person who has the right to vote, but never has exercised this right, my main concern is the essential nature of politics in India. The political system places heavy emphasis on divide and rule. It encourages, propagates the caste system, and pits one cultural group against another." This Indian is dissastisfied by the conduct of politics in India. It sounds like political parties in India just try to keep control over civil and political society and minimize uprisings. They maintain a very short-sighted attitude; it is aimed at meeting the needs of all major stakeholders and maintaining a relationship with them.   It is given precedence over removing ill-conduct and introducing reform that can benefit civil and political society. Moreover, as the main political parties in India draw closer to elections, it becomes clear that vote-gathering takes priority over civilan rule.   These

behaviors exhibited by both the BJP and the Congress in India, lead to disillusioned youth like this interviewee, and they decide it isn't worth voting for either party.

Overall, these interviews have helped me synthesize the major themes that relate and differentiate American and Indian youth in the space of elections, voting, and politics. Among the upper-middle and upper-class interviewees, the Americans are more agentic about voting and the Indians are motivated by their families. The structure of the two-party system was criticized by the Americans and admired by Indians. In the political system, Americans felt that the oversimplified two-party system needs a rework. The Indians see the need to close the urban-rural gap in India's socioeconomic classes. The issue of voting in the elections resulted in a consensus between both groups. Americans and Indians think it is a right we should exercise and appreciate how the participation brings unity to the local community. In order to continue these conversations and expand them to youth all over the world, I am developing an iPhone app as the primary channel. The app will trial a few sample questions before addressing more complex issues. Below is a list of questions that will kickstart the conversation on the iPhone app.

1. What initially motivated you to vote? Reason to ask: there seems to be a divide between the Indians and American as to intrinsic vs. extrinsic (family) motivation to visit the voting booths.

2. How do you feel just after you step out of the voting booth? Reason: we got two types of responses from these interviews. Will they diverge? Or will students continue to feel similarly?

3. What are things you think about when before voting for a party? Reason: Americans look more at policy while Indians look more at previous performance

4. What are struggles you face when you approach the election? Reason: The Americans feel strongly about the two-party system while the Indians think about the rural masses, the abundance of parties, and lack of middle class engagement.

The future plan is to trial the app with some interviewees and get feedback on the usability of the app and whether the idea is a 'go' or 'no-go'. If this trial is sucessful, the app will be made interactive and gain additional features that allow people to communicate globally. This paper is a synthesis of the opinions of some youth and hopefully the iPhone app can bring richer content forward from the USA, India, and the other countries of our world.

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APPENDIX

Interviews with Indian Youth

❖ Are you of age to vote in India?

Yes – 21 years old, studying medical school in Chennai. Went to AISC beforehand

Yes – 21 years old, studying engineering at NIT Trichy. Went to Chettinad Vidhyashram in Chennai before

Yes – 24 years

Yes – 22 years old; I can vote

❖ If you are, have you exercised your right to vote? If not, do you plan to vote in the elections in the future?

Yes – in the recent elections; 2 times. I was there with my mom and brother. Once for chief minister (mid 2012 I think) and MP…I'm not sure what I voted for though.

Not yet. Yes I plan to in the future. Next year, currently in college so it's hard to apply for a card and all that.

Yes – voted 3 times till now. First – experience of it – didn't have much of an idea and used mom and dad's ideas and didn't think so much about it. Persay you are supposed to but yeah. Second: final year of college – all of us had a campaign and we voted from college. In hostel, had small team where we spoke about the statistical growth from the perspective of students, not common person. Our task was to gather info on educational reforms and for example, if BJP came into power they would introduce religion into the schools – so its about looking that way.

SM Krishna – did a lot to Bangalore because of him its where it is now. He hasn't concentrated on rural Karnataka and thus he lost votes next time.

I have never exercised my right to vote. I do not plan on voting in the future

❖ Why do you bother to vote? In other words, what meaning does voting carry for you?

Honestly for me it's to show that I do care or something. In the US its pretty clear cut there are Democrats and Republicans. Theres a few instances where their beliefs cross over. In India so many parties. One believes in God the other doesn't .. whatever. I voted because I wanted t oshow that I voted. I'm doing my responsibility as a citizen. I don't pay taxes and we have to do that too so I might as well vote.

Idk, if we are a democratic state, I think people should exercise their right to vote. Exercising your opinion – If in majority, good, otherwise its fine.

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I think it's a fundamental duty to vote – you have some restrictions, you have some freedom, to respect what you are doing and what others are doing. Broad: because of your vote, you get to decide how you live for the next 4 years. Party A will say: we will reduce income tax by 1%. Party B: we will pave roads in your rural village. If you were a villager, then you would ask for the roads!

First time – curiosity to see what its like, for the experience. Second time – more to look at the regulations.

N/A

❖ Tell me a bit about how you've made your decision to vote for a party? (I.e., What are the different parameters you take into account when you decide on a candidate or party?)

I think about what the previous party did, what new parties can offer. IN Chennai, with the low economic group its about religious stuff.. and with bribing them. One party will give rice for 1rs. And the other party will add on a laptop with that. In terms of educated population, its mostly about what they can do for us in terms of economic growth. For that, we compare to the previous guy did. And every 4 years you end up seeing what your party did and then you switch back to the other guy. These days at least people are seeing what they can do for you in terms of not just free stuff.

Generally, I am not really aware of whats going on in the local level. In the national level, if it's a social issue, I have an opinion about that. If I think the the national people have a decent opinion, then I agree with them. For me its more about the people than the party.

Decisions: what is their motto. If they win the elections, sort of, who will take charge of the party? --- its not a big point actually, they are like puppets (don't do anything). More: how did they perform last time, what reforms did they bring, will they get Central govt. support? – that's the biggest thing. Biggest thing: their past.

N/A

❖ Voting in India comes with complexity. There are cultural, linguistic, ethnic and religious diversity of the Indian society, as well as the federal nature of the Indian state. This makes elections complex for the common man to understand. What are some struggles you personally face when you approach the elections?

Add in economic factors too. In the US they think about rich class and middle class; here they think about the poor because they are the masses who vote. We don't care about Rs.1 rice we'd rather have the better Rs. 5

When I voted for AIADMK, me my brother my mom were the last ones going to the booth. There are so many guys that are standing there waiting for you and they whisper into your ear. They bias what you think. And right outside the booth, they have all the emblems of the people – and they say all sorts of shit – "Diamond ring, broomstick, fuck you, etc." You don't even know what is which – they are all associated with the bigger party (the small one) and they are representing the bigger state party. So you have to think about what the larger group you support is and then you have to figure

out which smaller party to vote for. If that bigger guy isn't listed on the ballot, you just have to find the smaller guy who represents the biggest guy and put a vote. They have all sorts of emblems and you really have to be on top of where you live – not only in the country or in the state but also in your district. You have to know what exactly the parties are there and within my neighborhood and which ones are supporting the parent party.

At the end of it, you are just glad to put some stamp on there and leave. On top of that theres the propaganda.

For regional parties, the diversity is less because they are catering to a regional cohesion. National parties find it a challenge to cater to person A who may not be like person B. But I think they do a good job.

There are many levels. As an individual, you elect in the lowest level – for your district. It actually makes it easier. Molecularizing is good – because your panchayat is directly ruling you, so that's what matters.

As a person who has the right to vote, but never has exercised this right, my main concern is the essential nature of politics in India. The political system places heavy emphasis on divide and rule. It encourages, propagates the caste system, and pits one cultural group against another. Despite being a member of the so called
upper class brahmin community, I do not believe my existence is defined by my caste. Hence I do not seem to find any sort of appeal in the current class of politicians.
People of my age seem to have similar outlooks, from my experience. I think the main think the main problem in Indian politics is the lack of a cohesive coalition among different groups of people, and the unnecessary abundance of a bunch of utter idiots that are elected into power.

❖ And specifically in terms of the physical process to go and cast your vote, can you tell me what difficulties you face?

Its much easier now than before. You go to your local place, show your voting card (photo, name, address), and there they cross check that you are there. And they check you off. If you don't want to vote, you have to sit there and write a letter for why you don't want to vote. It's better to press a random button and get out of there.

Not really – very easy process. Put your vote and you just come and they put ink on your finger.

N/A

❖ How do you feel just after you step out of the voting booth?

[Laughs]: I mean, I don't know. You get in there, you do your thing, and walk out. You get excited that you get that mark on your finger. You see celebs doing it so you feel cool doing that. When I first got that mark, I took a picture and put it up on bbm.   I felt good about it and that I was part of a trend.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5UpKfBNNjuc – Has the entire year's scenario. They captured everything in that. The youth are getting more involved in politics. They are seeing that they need to vote for the people that can make a difference. Theres always the party of IIT guys but they get drowned out by the big guys. So people would rather vote for the party they know has a shot of winning.

I feel more Indian. It's a nice feeling that you've done something, you've not just voted but also out of consciousness to feel that I did it on my own behalf. Leading up, percentages shown – contribute to +ve percentage.

❖ Now, let's broaden out into the political system in India in general. There are issues all over the place -- cash for votes scandals, corruption, religous differences (i.e., Narendra Modi coming into power and possibly contesting for PM). There are also new people coming up from the youth.

Are there any outstanding issues to you that India needs to address about voting? (If required, say, "I know it is a broad question, but please answer as best you can.")

Theres a lot but mainly id think about the ones that bring India to the 21st century. Mainly the rape thing – being open. This corruption thing really doesn't bother me – at least at the end of the day work gets done. Look at Tirupathi Balaji – you can either pay to see him Rs.300 to see him faster, but the guy paying Rs.10 gets to see him too – just later on in the day. I'm not for corruption for personal gain but for getting work done. The whole caste thing, the affirmative action, and it brings the 'how can we beat the system'. Unfortunately they use it still. And now we've moved on from it and now we see where the system falls. There's the guy who did well in school but doesn't get the same education treatment as the guy who is of higher caste.

Medical field: the guy from the village has been mugging the exam forever and gets into the good school. The guy who does well and knows English, gets shafted.

If caste is taken care of, all these little parties will also get eliminated.

I think there are a lot of rural issues – there are people who have right to vote but are forced NOT to – not the same as not deciding to vote. Forced no-voting in rural India. Other than that, theres a lot of campaigns now to educate the youth to vote. There are a lot of private campaigns now – like with Tata who help you register to vote and educate you about parties. They are social media campaigns and the make people feel closer to whatever is happening. Politicians have twitter too.

Amount of influence in the villages especially in the lower middle class. The awareness there is so little. Each party publishes own facts, and they don't look at if the citizen knows about every other party that is on the ballot. Its individual at the end but awareness is important.

Indian politics needs to get a grip on the following:
a. Play on strengths of people.
b. avoid divisive political decisions.
c. get the younger generations involved a lot more.
d. About voting in specific, I guess there should be stricter measures in place, regarding buying of votes and bullying voters into voting for specific people

❖ What about Middle Class not voting?

They participate a lot – lower caste and lower middle. They are the strongest vote for all the biggest parties. The middle section of middle class – the government servants and they vote. Middle-upper class doesn't really care about votes. Upper class doesn't really care unless they have some business involved in this. If theres a big movie release on tv, the party with the power will get the tv rights. Peoplew ill vote because they know where the trend is going, not really because of belief in it.

They don't stand out; the lower class is the one that takes sides, theres a lot of voting-for-money going on. Not much violence in TN but its about giving cash to people to get votes. In the north, Bihar has violence. The middle class has their right and takes it perfectly; I don't see any major improvement in that.

People have this conception that urban people don't go to vote. The parties try to address the rural. If you analyze where the parties place their rallies and get their funds – they only go to rural places. Now that I'm studying in Trichy, I see it. When I was in Chennai, Blore, Bombay, I never saw rallies – middle class doesn't want to see this nor is there a place for it. Now that more rural people are moving into the middle class economic tier, the politicians need to think differently to start tapping into this growing middle class/job market. I don't know how, but they need tos tart thinking differently about it.

❖ What are the more promising areas in the country -- with regards to elections, politics in general?

The youth are actually caring now; the government isn't good and they actually want to do something now. What will actually happen, only time will tell. Rahul has been elected as head of congress. He has his mom as advisory role, but still this is good. There's a lot that he won't do, but you never know what he can do either. Its all because he's young. Theres a lso a young guy who is Chief Minister for UP and that's the trend – they are young, and educated. And the old guys are fading away and dying – Karunanidhi and Bal Thacakarey.

Now youth are saying that they shouldn't be silent anymore when they are mad; in terms of physical change its happening. With Jayalalithaa she is putting her people in heads of government and if a common man goes and complains that someone isn't performing, she fires them. Her cabinet reshuffles every few weeks. ECR looks really nice now. So even though her party does things that are wrong, they are also doing things that are right. In terms of us seeing change, its about physical change…we can't sit down and say, "What schemes are in place for me?" Instead we look at frequent water quality and lesser power cuts. We don't really understand the implementation of the policies, like that Lok Pal bill, there's so much corruption inside an anti-corruption bill. So it's kind of stupid, whatever. That whole Nirbaya case – the rape was wrong, but I was laughing at the whole ordeal. They tried to make her live because she wanted to try and live – but if

Indian politics is probably the most entertaining of all types. You see general trends, sooner or later you just don't care anymore. As long as our wellbeing doesn't depend on that, but the poorer people care. They have to find a way of survival for 4 years, so their livelihoods really depend on that. It affects the guys in the middle and the servants. That's why people say that politics is about loyalty – the people inthemiddle feel like they wont make money if they don't get the same guys to power again.

Various media – TV and internet – making people aware of their options and it helps people figure out who is being a hypocrite. They are being able to cater to the upper classs and lower class. Earlier it used to just be election rally campaigns so u didn't really know what to do. Now everything is recorded, its making the politicians aware of whats going on. There are negatives too: they don't always portray the whole story, some new stands are taking political sides too.

I think the internet is doing very well: ipaidabribe.com (bits pilani), tata lageraho(?). Lot of govt. legislators are going online and now we can pay things online. And it does cater to juts us, but we are the ones that complain a lot. Now I can pay my parking tickets online and it makes me feel better. If more can happen online with regards to campaigning, it could be a bright ufutre.

Voting educates you, it gives you a reason – you know why you are doing it, what you will get out of it in the next 5 years. People don't really discuss who you voted for even with closest friends – its individualistic feeling that you get. I think in democratic country its important.

Many times, parties are attaching themselves to youth parties. So a group youth union is being vocal about a reform, then if the party sees them, the youth are given a lot of importance. They are a strong force. Hardly 10% of people in my college voted – if that could be positively influenced, it would make a lot of difference.

I do not follow Indian politics much these days. I really would not care to hazard a guess.

❖ How do you feel about the youth and politics today?

They keep saying Youth Congress. But I think we still need more time. There is speculation that Rahul Gandhi will lead Congress but hes 42 and hes not youth. I haven't seen any influential youth in any big position. I don't see any youth influencing the parties.

Deplorable. I have seen enthusiastic and intelligent people unable to make a difference, because of their caste/upbringing. Even if sacrifices are made, the general public is more than content to play along in this current farcical scenario.

❖ How does party's performance today affect your vote for the upcoming election?

Well, as long as they keep the free gifts and subsidies flowing, it seems as though anything goes, really.

Interviews with American Youth

1. Are you of age to vote in the US?

Yes – freshman at Olin, 17 years old, Jaime

Yes – senior at Olin, 21 years old, Arjun

Yes – senior at Olin, 23 years old, Andrew

Yes – senior at Olin, 21 years old, Caroline

Yes – senior at Olin, 21 years old, Molly

No – junior at Babson, 21 years old

2. If yes, have you exercised your right to vote? If not, do you plan to vote in the elections in the future?

I voted in the primaries at home in March. And then I voted in the presidential elections in MA (absentee ballot) when I was at Olin in the Fall.

I voted for President of the USA this year and Connecticut state officials.

Voted twice – both during the presidential elections – and also voted for all the other things on that ballot. And once in a primary – Paul needed help

Yes, I voted most recently in the 2012 election and everything else on the same ballot – House of Reps., City Council, Governor. For home, I am on the permanent absentee ballot list and on a handful of smaller ones – government bonds, etc.

Yes I've voted. I registered in MA because I moved here and I would be here for 4 years anyway; might as well register. I voted 2x's. Once for the new senator (the last one died) and once in the general elections (president, and all the others the are in the ballot).

I haven't voted because: I am too lazy to go to the polls, I don't follow for my own opinion, there's paperwork involved. If it was online and then I got to vote for Obama, I'd do it. I would only vote if my vote has straight impact – but it's not even that now.

Things I have voted for –SGA at Babson – where I was on the Board that votes on funding.

However, I do make sure I watch the Presidential Debate – because otherwise I'm left out of discussions with other people and I also need to be able to understand the SNL skits on TV!

3. Why do you bother to vote? In other words, what meaning does voting carry for you?

Although we will not make a difference, it is our duty. You don't have a right to complain if you don't put in effort. Is the system faulty? Yes, but it is still allowing expression of opinion.

I might as well vote; it doesn't cost anything. The way I see it – if you isolate my vote, it is the same as others. It matters when they all aggregate. It is like many impulses and each of them are like a full-on or full-off signal. Any single impulse doesn't matter. When they all aggregate, then it makes a noise that is heard.
I put in as much time into it as my vote matters. I vote all for one way – making the biggest impact I could. I voted for Obama this past time because I thought he would win, so I voted for him. Romney is dumb and so I didn't vote for him.

For me, it's like looking at Starbucks vs. Pete's Coffee. Which building do I want to enter? Basically, it would be the building that doesn't have more shit on the door handle. You guys are both as bad, but which one is better is the question.

Yeah it's kind of fun. You see people and you are doing things together. You make important decisions, but not really because it doesn't really matter. It's like a game. You do your part – your one vote could (in little probability) change things. '

I wanted to vote before I was 18. It's a low cost investment, and it should be treated as a privilege. It is what you do. People my age feel that they don't make an impact.

Ideally everyone votes so that we get a sense of what all people want. If we don't vote, they don't know. It's also very easy, only takes an hour. They hold voting times during the day. This becomes difficult for the poor because they can't take time off work to go vote.

4. What are the different parameters you take into account when you decide on a candidate or party?

More specifically, I like to think about it in terms of economics, the society (especially women's rights), and support of Israel – what are their opinions on this and their approach to the Israel relationship.

On the national level – I am picky. I won't vote for a candidate that is pro-choice. I will instead look for a lame Republican or 3rd party. Basically on a national level, I do moral litmus tests on the candidates as a way of choosing.

On a local level – thinks like pro-choice don't really matter. I prefer the incumbent if they are doing really well. They ought to have endorsements for legitimacy.

On a state + local level, I want to look for people who don't come from a background of politics. What that says to me is that they actually have a "means to an end" in politics. Otherwise, they are just doing politics for the sake of politics.

Who is smarter, whoever will get more done. Basically sift through the bullshit.

I don't think parameters is the right word. I think it is just 'things.' I look at their policies – what do they stand up for? I usually don't agree with everything but agree with the women candidates more.

And usually I vote for one of the big 2. I'd rather have my vote count than give it to a 3rd party.

5. Voting comes with some complexity. What are struggles you personally face when you approach the elections?

Yes, it is overly and underly simplified. It is oversimplified because of the two-party system. A person isn't just a Republican or a Democrat – it isn't just one way or another. For example, my senator switched from one side to the other a few years ago.

Actual voting is really. How much time do I put into the voting process At the national level – I put in a lot of time. I talk to people, I read about the candidates. When I discuss with people, I push them to clarify their thoughts and opinions to me.   Below the state level, I don't really care. Sometimes I browse through the voter's guide.

6. In terms of the physical process to go and cast your vote, can you tell me any difficulties you face?

The only thing is that when I vote with an absentee ballot and I mail it in, I don't get any feedback as to whether they got it. Did the mail fail to get it in? I never know.

The process is basically this: the district has a list of names in their book of who is in their district. You walk in, show them your driver's license – and the last time I was there, they didn't actually ask for any form of ID – and you step into the booth and cast your vote. If it is an absentee ballot, you receive it in the mail a few weeks earlier and you fill it out and mail it back.

Physical process is pretty easy. Lines are short in Needham and at home. I'm a registered voter of MA now anyway. When I went to vote for Barack Obama, I didn't get asked for my ID to be checked before I stepped into the booth. It was really weird.

Oregon has no voting booths, so I've never been to one. By mail, I send it in 2 weeks early. But honestly, it would have made a difference in whom I chose to win, if I could send in my vote on voting day. For some reason, the state/local politics do experience shifts closer to voting day. That's the real downside that I see.

7. How do you feel just after you step out of the voting booth?

I feel part of society, I like it; it is exciting.

Usually I've vote by mail and I haven't felt anything. I guess it feels like an age thing. But also, I have no control over the situation – it is like getting a blood test for AIDS.

Emotion – nothing really. I feel a little giddy – very little.

I feel part of the community. Everyone from the district is there, I see them in our community. I meet and talk to weird and wealthy people from around here.

8. Let's broaden out to the political system in general. Are there any outstanding issues to you that the US needs to address about voting?

There are social and economic factors that one candidate doesn't realize. My views are cross-parties.

The election system is terrible. The two-party system is bad – when there are 2+ parties, you need something like a bracket system to pit them again one another. Also, there's a math proof that shows there is no perfect voting system in the world. Every voting system requires 5 key aspects fulfilled. [Look it up on Wikipedia.]

Also, local elections are like popularity contests. No one knows who will win really or cares. And at the national level, its all about how much $$ you have.

In the US, you have pro-choice and pro-life-choice. But now it is destructive. They are mixing into that, issues like taxes and how you feel. It's not good. I wish we could write our reasons for 'why we voted

for this person' on the ballot (of course its not ideal). But the two-party system mixes a bunch of stuff within each other which doesn't help.

Also, there's the fact that people are doing politics just for the sake of it – and that is causing harm. They win because of the title and not because they want to implement. People look at politics and don't see the policies. How can get things actually done when they are always running for office? Right after they get elected, they start fundraising for their next election.

Social security isn't thought of. The thing is that our generation has the problem of lack of good management of social security. We can't be the senators of today in the years to come. We need to start watching out for future generations more. And same with Medicare – its another big issue and it isn't addressed well. But at least people are thinking about it – I get emails about Planned Parenthood once in a while.

9. What are the more promising areas about the country?

The fact that the party people vote for keeps changing. The public isn't necessarily stuck in their ways.

It's not corrupt; they count the votes. Some think otherwise of course. I feel like its accurate and the candidates are okay.

For one, Obama opened the door for not being a conventional president. It's more than just old white men now and that's something I agree with. He may not always uphold what he says when he's actually up there, but at least it's a start. Also, I'd like to see women next maybe?

10. How do you feel about youth and politics today? **seems to be an India question **

Youth are assumed to follow one party – they are all in the same boat. If you don't have opinions, you follow the majority of the youth. If you have opinions, well that's good.

Wellesley girls do great stuff for politics. They volunteer for campaigns and they just care a lot. For some reason, I just don't care. People here don't express themselves (at Olin). If they want to care even. At Wellesley, they do express themselves.

I think the youth – we are brainwashed. We watch too much TV. Today, youth are more liberal. However, while in the 20s they used to smoke weed all the time, weed is still illegal today. Youth are becoming more liberal, but the laws aren't.

The Olin bubble doesn't really feel like a problem in the Olin Bubble. We are pretty aware and worldly. However, when I went to Wellesley the other day and asked the other students what they thought of the

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Pope resigning, they all gave me blank stares! And I was like come on, do you guys not watch the news at all?

Well, kids don't get to vote. If you have similar interests to people who can't vote yet – then its something to keep in mind. Both ten year olds and us want Social Security, for example. So its something to keep in mind. I wrote an essay about this when I was 16.

11. How does the current party's performance affect next election's vote? In what way?

It swings the vote of the general population. It also depends on how influential the candidate is. If it seems like they really have the power in the party to influence decisions (like Obama does), that also swings the general population's opinion.

Moderate voters move to the other side of the fence every time. And of course, the Rightists stay to the right.

On a national level, don't expect much change. Republican party doesn't really know what they'll do – depends on the individual candidate. In the USA – Obama can basically do what he wants right now. On the other hand, Romney was a tough choice for the Republicans to elect through the primaries – meaning that he wouldn't have much of a say if he came to office.

Look up Grover Agreement.

It certainly affects country's perception. Personally, it doesn't affect mine. I regard myself as socially liberal but fiscally conservative. So I like Scott Brown maybe. Unless the Republicans go more liberal, I'm not for them.

12. Personal political opinions?

With economics and border control, I am Republican. With women's rights and abortion issue, I am Democratic. In general, it is quite easy to open up a discussion on politics. At Olin, it is more difficult because everyone assumes that everyone else is Democratic and that is definitely not true.

How politics/elections work in the USA in general:

1. There is the Electoral College. Each state is given a proportional 'x' number of votes (based on their population). People vote to send those 'x' number of votes either to the Republican party or

Democratic party. There are some swing states where the result is very narrow and many times it decides which party actually wins.

2. Before the elections, there are the primaries. This is where you have several candidates on the Democratic and Republic sides all vying for the candidacy spot (1) on the party. All of the Republicans come out to the Republic primaries and vote on their top candidate. This time, it was Mitt Romney.

3. Sometimes with the Electoral College system you have controversy. With the Al Gore and George Bush election, Al Gore won the popular vote of the people in the country. But George Bush won the electoral college votes of the swing states by a slight margin.

As someone who hasn't voted in the elections:

1. If you say anything about politics – there are arguments. I'm not so confrontational.

2. And there are fights over the debt and where the $$ should go. It's for the sake of being annoying

3. I did vote in the school budget – the whole gets around it. People bring doughnuts and coffee to incentivize you to vote. I was on a team of students organizing it and if you were a senior and didn't come in to vote, you were an asshole. So, people did it to avoid being harassed. And here I voted because the school budget directly impacts me.