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Does Dual Citizenship Increase Naturalization? Evidence from Indian Immigrants in the U.S.*

Daniel Naujoks†

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Abstract

This paper shows that the availability of dual citizenship, or here Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI), leads to higher naturalization rates in the country of residence. The analysis is based on three distinct naturalization rates, calculated on the basis of annual *immigration flows* and naturalizations seven years later; the resident *population eligible for naturalization*; and naturalization records for specific *immigrant cohorts*. To isolate effects specific to India as the country of origin from general factors in the U.S., the development of naturalization rates for Indian, or India-born, immigrants is juxtaposed with the respective rates for all Asian immigrants to the U.S. and for all immigrants to the U.S. as comparison groups. It is further argued that we need to contextualize the naturalization decision, considering factors in the country of origin, destination, as well as in the migrant community alike.

Although general factors in the U.S. might have influenced the overall increase in Indian immigrant naturalizations, comparison with Asia-born and other foreign-born immigrants indicates that there is a significant OCI-related *newcomer effect* for India-born immigrants, resulting in faster acquisition of U.S. citizenship and higher levels of naturalizations for newer immigrant cohorts. However, the data suggest that the *bulk effect* for older immigrant cohorts is less strongly articulated than the *newcomer effect* is for more recent ones. Depending on the metric used, the naturalization rate of Indian immigrants grew stronger than that of the chosen comparison groups by 2 to 12.8 percentage points.

Keywords: Dual citizenship, naturalization, nationality, migration, emigrant citizenship, Overseas Citizenship of India, diaspora, political incorporation.

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1 Introduction

Becoming a state citizen by naturalization is an act that has attracted much attention, both by public opinion and academic research. It is acknowledged that the decision to naturalize is embedded in a complex socio-economic and cultural process and that characteristics of the individual, immigrant community, receiving context and country of origin are chief determinants in this regard. Immigrant naturalization is closely connected to democratic norms and providing full state-membership status to long-term residents, as well as to fears of changing values and social norms by granting political rights to people who may have different values from those of the native majority population. The interdependence between the acquisition of a legal status of a citizen and social, economic and cultural integration in the country of citizenship are of chief importance. The relationship has political overtones and is a battle ground of opposed beliefs. Recent research has shown that naturalization per se leads to a higher income and the extra income is referred to as 'naturalization premium'.¹ In a recent study, I have shown that the effects of naturalization are independent from the motivation to naturalize (Naujoks 2011). For example, people who naturalized for solely practical reasons, such as the ease of traveling, witnessed a considerably increased identification with the country of citizenship and a change in relevant behavior once they had naturalized. This reminds us not to draw conclusions too quickly from statements regarding the reason individuals apply for citizenship or to argue that practical motives would undermine the value of citizenship.²

One important question that has not garnered sufficient research is the effect of dual citizenship laws on immigrant naturalization. Generally, scholarship asserts that the shape of nationality laws in the countries of destination, as well as in the country of origin affects the decision to naturalize (Schneider 2001:74) and that dual nationality increases naturalization rates.³ Studies have approached this question from different angles, *inter alia* by surveying immigrants, by comparing naturalization rates in different countries of origin or for immigrants from countries with different policies allowing or restricting dual citizenship or by examining the effects of certain policy changes.

Indeed, the increasing number of countries that have adopted some form of special emigrant citizenship provides us with good opportunities to continue in-depth studies of the related phenomena and individualize under what conditions policies

¹ Chiswick (1978); Bratsberg *et al.* (2002); Akbari (2007) confirm such a naturalization premium in the U.S., Steinhardt (2008) in Germany and Bevelander and Pendakur (2012) in Canada and Sweden. However, Scott (2006) cannot find such a premium in Sweden. For an overview, see Steinhardt, Straubhaar and Wedemeier (2010:9–10).

² For a discussion on these claims, see Naujoks (2008) and (2009b).

³ This has been argued by Hammar 1985; Goel 1998; Jones-Correa 2001; Woodrow-Lafield *et al.* 2004; Faist 2004; Mazzolari 2005; 2009; Böcker and Thränhardt 2006; Thränhardt 2008a; Faist and Gerdes 2008; Naujoks 2008; 2009b, to name a few.

generate what results. In the last two decades, a large number of emigration countries have adopted certain membership policies. In this regard, several new forms of emigrant or expatriate citizenships have emerged that combine different political and economic rights (Barry 2006; Fitzgerald 2006; 2008), which range from special ethnic-status ‘cards’ like the Turkish Pink Card, the Ethiopian Origin Identity Card, the Pakistan Origin Card or the Hungarian Ethnic Identity Card, to nationality schemes without political rights and the recognition of full dual citizenship.⁴ India provides one such examples and—to the best of my knowledge—its impact on Indian-American naturalization rate has not yet been analyzed.

In 2005, India changed its Citizenship Act, 1955, introducing a new diasporic⁵ membership status, the *Overseas Citizenship of India* (OCI).⁶ OCI gives people of Indian origin without Indian citizenship the right to live and work in India without granting any form of political participation. Another, slightly more restrictive membership status is the *Person of Indian Origin card* (PIO card), available to persons of Indian origin since 1999.⁷ Thus, OCI is not full dual citizenship, but it fulfills its function, though sometimes in a limited way and not for everybody. My qualitative study on Indian immigrants in the U.S. showed that the Indian government initially marketed OCI as ‘dual citizenship’ and that many overseas Indians in the U.S. regard it as a worthy surrogate (Naujoks 2011). For these reasons, I believe that the results of this study can be generalized beyond the effects of OCI; they address the wider question of how a policy change toward the acceptance of dual citizenship by the country of origin or the introduction of a citizenship-like diasporic membership status affect naturalization patterns in the country of residence. This paper attempts to answer the question: What can we learn from the Indian-American experience about whether dual citizenship policies in the country of origin increase naturalization in the country of residence? In an attempt to answer this question, I will elaborate on several ways to calculate meaningful naturalization rates and showcase the need to carefully contextualize the naturalization decision, considering factors in the country of origin, destination, as well as in the migrant community alike.

⁴ In recent years, the following states have fully or partly recognized some kind of dual citizenship or nationality: Sri Lanka (1987), Columbia (1991), Italy (1992), Hungary (1993), the Dominican Republic (1994), Costa Rica (1995), Ecuador (1995), Brazil (1996), Mexico (1998), Australia (2002), Ghana (2002), Congo (2002), Pakistan (2002), Finland (2003), Philippines (2003), Algeria (2005), Vietnam (2008) and South Korea (2011). On the other hand, there is still debate about the normative justification for expatriate political rights and its implication for democracy theory, see Bauböck (2003; 2005); Barry (2006); Spiro (2006).

⁵ The term ‘Indian diaspora’ and the adjective ‘diasporic’ refer to all persons of Indian descent living outside India, as long as they preserve some major Indian ethno-cultural characteristics. A similar concept is used by Sheffer (2003); for a discussion on the term, see Naujoks (2011: Chapter 1).

⁶ Technically, OCI was introduced by the 2003 Citizenship Amendment Act. However, only after the 2005 amendment India started registering overseas Indians under the OCI scheme.

⁷ For more details on the privileges and limitations of OCI and the PIO card see Naujoks (2011:50-55, Chapter 3); and Xavier (2011).

2 Underlying reasons for an naturalization increasing effect of OCI

There are four reasons why a status like overseas citizenship can increase the number of naturalizations. First, people who need (or think they need) a secure legal status in India for land ownership, business or other purposes, but who live permanently in the U.S., find it easier to naturalize in their country of permanent residence while safeguarding their interests in India with the overseas citizenship. In other words, a dual status decreases the costs of naturalization, which makes it rational to expect a higher inclination to naturalize. Second, the decision to naturalize and to give up one's citizenship is often not considered a normal administrative act or a simple switching in visa status. As I have argued in Naujoks (2011), emotional attachments and 'wrenched feelings' about giving up the old citizenship matter. Although overseas citizenship is not full dual citizenship, for many it comes close enough to lessen the emotional discomfort and ease their decision to naturalize in the U.S.

Third, those people who plan to move back to India, but who would like to keep their right to return to the U.S. as a back-up option, find it convenient to get a status like citizenship in the U.S., which guarantees them the right to go to the U.S. at any time, but also to have a status in India, which frees them from all bureaucratic and formal obligations and lets them be "as good as any Indian," except for political rights and government employment.

There is a fourth reason why the availability of a citizenship-like status at home might increase naturalization rates. Bloemraad (2006) develops a social perspective on the ascension to citizenship, in so far that social networks and community organizations affect naturalization by providing services and generating norms favoring citizenship. As I have argued in Naujoks (2011), Indian-American community organizations show an interest in promoting U.S. citizenship among Indian residents in the U.S., some of them actively helping Indian immigrants with their naturalization procedures. Given a status like overseas citizenship of India, these organizations have another argument in favor of U.S. citizenship, which in turn positively affects the immigrants' inclination to naturalize.

On the other hand, some interviewees claim that OCI had not the least influence on their decision. They state that OCI did not affect their decision at all "because it doesn't offer anything more than a visa" or they just feel that they would have taken U.S. citizenship anyway.

Böcker and Thränhardt (2006) show for the Netherlands and for Germany that the "toleration of multiple citizenship, thus, does not carry much importance, neither for people who are very comfortable with their citizenship nor for people who feel they are extremely unsafe. It is the large group between these extremes where multiple citizenship is important for their willingness to naturalize." While Böcker and Thränhardt have the adoption of multiple citizenship in the *country of residence* in

mind, for the concept at hand, we could formulate that OCI does not carry much importance for people who are very comfortable with Indian citizenship nor for those who are sure to naturalize in the U.S. anyway, but rather for the group between these extremes. The size of this group is the main thrust of this paper.

Woodrow-Lafield *et al.* (2004) assume that immigrants from China, Cuba, India and Korea may be less willing to take on U.S. citizenship because they would have to give up their original citizenship. In many countries of immigration and for many countries of origin, it is found that foreign-born or foreign individuals claim that the lack of dual citizenship is one of the main obstacles to naturalizing. In a 1991-poll in Berlin, 61 percent of the Turkish and 72 percent of the Yugoslav respondents said they would apply for German citizenship if they could keep their original citizenship (Barbieri 1998:67-8). A similar result is found by Böcker and Thränhardt (2006:124) who analyze the inclination to naturalize among many long-term immigrants in Germany and the Netherlands. Based on 68 interviews of second-generation Indians and Pakistanis between 15 and 35 years of age in Germany, Goel (1998:32-3) finds that the major reason for not applying for German citizenship is that the participants did not want to lose their Indian citizenship and that the option of dual citizenship could be a trigger for naturalization.

While these findings are based on the statements of migrants who do not naturalize, other studies focus on differences in naturalization rates and the effect the admission of dual citizenship in the *host country* may have on the naturalization of immigrants. Although the processes involved may differ from the adoption of dual citizenship by the *country of origin*, the findings describe a similar scenario in which dual citizenship may affect naturalization behavior. Thränhardt (2008:29-31) studies the experience in the Netherlands where dual nationality was accepted for naturalized citizens in the 1990s but then rejected again. Thränhardt shows a clear increase in the naturalization rate for the period when multiple citizenship was permitted.

Under German citizenship law, dual citizenship is recognized for citizens of several countries, such as other EU countries, Iran, Morocco and Afghanistan.⁸ In Naujoks (2009b), I find a strong correlation between naturalization rate and recognition of dual citizenship when comparing non-EU countries of origin whose citizens are allowed to have dual citizenship, such as Iran, Morocco and Afghanistan, and non-EU countries whose citizens are not generally allowed to keep their former nationality, e.g., Turkey.⁹ Comparing different naturalization rates in Germany, Green (2005) finds that

⁸ Contrary to common perception within and outside of Germany, in 2003-2008, half of the newly naturalized citizens were allowed to keep their former citizenship (Naujoks 2008; 2009b).

⁹ It has to be noted, however, that 16 percent of all Turkish immigrants who became naturalized German citizens in the period 2004-07 were allowed to remain Turkish citizens too.

citizens of countries that allow dual citizenship form a higher share of naturalized individuals.¹⁰

Despite this well-established research that the option of dual citizenship eases the decision to become a citizen, and despite the intrinsic logic of such an effect, a word of caution is warranted. It might well be that most of those who say that one major factor in their decision-making process was the possibility of retaining a citizenship-like status in the country of origin, would have naturalized even if that status had not existed. The question is not whether dual citizenship or a status like OCI *ease* the decision to change passports (the obvious answer to this question would be ‘yes’), but how far does the availability of such a status affect those who would otherwise not have opted for U.S. citizenship? In fact, the self-assessment of interviewees that they would not have taken U.S. citizenship if OCI had not existed need not necessarily reflect their true behavior. Despite those uncertainties, my study and existing research strongly suggest that the existence of OCI increases naturalization rates because two groups are induced to naturalize who otherwise would not have become U.S. citizens. First, those who plan to stay on in the U.S. but who, without OCI, would not have naturalized, and second, those who naturalize in order to return to India with OCI. The first group can be called ‘OCI-induced naturalizers’ and the second ‘return naturalizers.’¹¹

3 Empirical studies on dual citizenship and naturalization

The main thrust of this paper is to quantify a possible naturalization increasing effect of OCI with statistical data on Indian naturalizations in the U.S. I start by giving a brief overview of studies on similar effects of dual citizenship before I discuss concrete Indian naturalization data in the subsequent sections.

Several scholars have attempted to assess empirically the effect of dual citizenship schemes on the propensity to naturalize. In order to determine the naturalization effect of dual nationality, Jones-Correa (2001) compares naturalization rates, in the U.S., of immigrants from nine Latin American countries before and after the recognition of dual nationality in the respective sending country.¹² He finds that naturalization rates rose by an average of 105 percent in the aftermath of the recognition of dual citizenship, ranging from 22 percent (Peru) to 300 percent (Ecuador). Jones-Correa observed a stronger increase in cases where allowing dual citizenship was the

¹⁰ Due to the availability of data and the approach commonly taken, Green (2005), Thränhardt (2008a) and Naujoks (2009b) calculate the naturalization rate as naturalizations divided by the total foreign population from the respective country.

¹¹ Also, without a status such as PIO card or OCI, people could have chosen to become U.S. citizens in order to return to India. Thus, one could differentiate between OCI-induced return naturalizers and certain return naturalizers. The latter are individuals who would have obtained U.S. citizenship in any case in order to return to India and who would have dealt with work visa and foreigners’ registrations upon their return. For the sake of simplification and the given research focus, I will refer only to OCI-induced return naturalizers, labeling them simply as return naturalizers.

¹² The nine countries examined by Jones-Correa (2001) that had formally recognized dual citizenship between 1965 and 1997 are Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Mexico, Panama and Peru.

result of a bottom-up initiative from the migrant community (average of 197 percent) in contrast to a top-down state-driven decision-making process (72 percent). However, this approach shows some flaws. Most importantly, it does not take into account all those who are eligible for naturalization, nor the time-varying factors in the countries of origin or in the United States that (may) affect the propensity of immigrants to naturalize.¹³

In a so-called difference-in-differences approach, Mazzolari (2005) attempts to identify the effects of the recognition of dual citizenship on the propensity to naturalize. In the 1990s, several Latin-American countries recognized dual citizenship. On the basis of the 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census data, Mazzolari compares the change over time in naturalization rates of immigrants coming from countries that newly allowed dual citizenship (target group) to the change over time in naturalization rates of immigrants from countries that did not change their law (comparison group).¹⁴ Naturalization rates are calculated as those naturalized in a given year divided by the estimated number of legal residents from that country. According to Mazzolari's findings, the naturalization rate of immigrants from Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Costa Rica, Brazil and Mexico increased by 3.8 percent between 1990 and 2000, while it increased only by 0.9 percent for all other immigrants.¹⁵ Under the assumption that in the 1990s there was no contemporaneous shock that affected differently the naturalization rate of immigrants coming from the two groups, the difference between the two changes (2.9 percent) is interpreted as an estimate of the effect of allowing dual citizenship by the country of origin.

On the other hand, there are a few studies that do not find that dual citizenship increases naturalization. DeVoretz (2006:11) concludes from Canadian census data that dual citizenship does not have a positive effect on the propensity of becoming a Canadian citizen.¹⁶ Based on 1980 U.S. census data, P. Yang (1994) estimates that the recognition of dual citizenship by the country of origin actually *decreases* the likelihood of recent immigrants to naturalize by 20 percent, when compared to countries of origin who do not allow a multiple membership status. Yang explains this result by the possible perception that dual citizenship creates additional responsibilities and duties.

¹³ Howard (2005: FN 6) and Mazzolari (2005:18) criticize this. For instance, Jones-Correas' estimates do not consider important changes in the U.S. policies, such as the Green Card Replacement program of 1992, the Citizenship USA program of 1995 and the restrictions in social benefits for non-citizens of 1996 (Mazzolari 2005:9–16).

¹⁴ It could be argued that the comparison group is not chosen ideally. As I discuss below, the existing level of naturalization may affect the extent of increases. Immigrants from Latin American countries generally show a lower share of naturalized citizens, making increases easier. Also, the share of irregular immigrants from Latin America is much higher than for most other countries of origin. Correcting these flaws by estimating the number of irregular immigrants and by restricting the analysis to those who immigrated at least 20 years earlier, as Mazzolari (2005) does, is problematic because the data basis from existing estimates on illegal immigration is not ideal. Further, the naturalization behavior of newer immigrant cohorts might be more interesting than that of older cohorts and both are likely to differ. However, lacking ideal ways of estimating naturalization rates and behavior, the difference-in-differences approach has to be considered a valuable heuristic tool.

¹⁵ However, the results are mixed for the case of Mexico.

¹⁶ DeVoretz's (2006) calculations are based on the 2.8 percent sample of the Canadian Census Public Use Microdata Files.

Within the cohort of immigrants who arrived in 1977, de la Garza (1996) compares naturalization rates of immigrants from countries recognizing dual citizenship and from those that do not. He finds that by 1992 there is only a slightly higher naturalization rate for those countries that do recognize dual citizenship.

Both Yang and de la Garza see differences for different countries of origin. However, their approach does not explore other factors related to country of origin or immigrant community that might explain the variation. The approaches chosen by Jones-Correa (2001) and Mazzolari (2005), though very different, can be regarded better indicators for the extent of a naturalization effect for immigrants in the U.S. Their empirical findings on the existence of such an effect and its scale, thus, appear more convincing.

4 Empirical findings on the effect of OCI

In this section, I will analyze the available data in order to explore the quantitative basis of the *naturalization effect* of OCI. That is, is there a naturalization increasing effect of OCI and if yes, then how large is it? Before I discuss trends in several naturalization rates that shall shed light on the phenomenon, I give some considerations for the data analysis and distinguish two theoretically important effects—the *bulk effect* and the *newcomer effect*.

4.1. Considerations for the data analysis

When looking for changes in naturalization rates following a certain event, such as the recognition of dual citizenship or, here, the introduction of OCI, we have to consider that pinning down a clearly visible increase in a short period of time is difficult for three main reasons. First, as discussed in detail below, the administrative process and speed of getting citizenship may change over time, and in fact, did change over the examined period in the U.S., thus affecting the output of citizenship grants even though there were no changes in the underlying decisions to naturalize and citizenship applications. In particular, backlogs of citizenship applications and changes in the process practice may distort the analysis of naturalization rates that are based on flow data. Although backlogs and efforts to speed the process up may affect the number of issuances in a given year, this only postpones a certain number of applications and cannot be expected to have a significant effect on the medium-term naturalization rate.¹⁷ Keeping the importance of administrative procedures in mind, singular hikes in data should be suspicious, whereas sustained higher levels of naturalizations might indicate a change in the naturalization applications.

Secondly, interviews I conducted with ethnic Indians in the U.S., as well as with U.S.-returned Indian-Americans have shown that those who naturalized before OCI or

¹⁷ Unless we assume that an anticipated long process time makes individuals refrain from applying.

the PIO card were available had also said that “the debate and pronouncements” on dual citizenship were “factored into the decision to take the U.S. passport. In fact, I thought we would get a passport in India.” This was pronounced by almost all interviewees who naturalized between 1999 and 2006, i.e., before OCI was actually available. One has also to consider that since the early 1990s, diaspora groups in the U.S. have been actively demanding dual citizenship. Since 1999, there has been the PIO card; in 2002, the High-level Committee on the Indian Diaspora recommended the adoption of dual citizenship; and since 2003, assurances by political leaders to grant that status were widely publicized and discussed. Thus, it appears likely that migrants might have naturalized in anticipation of the actual availability of OCI.¹⁸

In India’s case, not only anticipation but also insufficient information and research might have led to an increase before the actual operationalization of OCI from December 2005. Although many seem to do research on the availability of OCI and dual citizenship, interview data and an assessment of online fora for overseas Indians suggest that quite a few people naturalized after they read in the newspaper that India had recognized ‘dual citizenship,’ complaining and regretting in retrospect that their expectations were not met. This underlines that an increase in naturalizations may in fact predate the actual adoption of such a status, let alone its implementation. Needless to say that a gradual increase is more difficult to trace in the data.¹⁹

Further, the “many fits and starts” of the OCI program, as perceived by many overseas Indians, led clearly to a smaller demand for OCI cards than it could have been expected if the program had been fully implemented after the legislation first passed in 2003. The conducted interviews suggest that this is rather the case for old cases who are U.S. citizens for many years already. Although this is not grounded on my interview analysis, it may be argued that this also decreases the number of OCI-induced naturalizations, especially for those who do not see too many immediate benefits of U.S. citizenship.

Another difficulty in looking at trends in the data is the rarely expressed but often implicitly understood *ceteris paribus* assumption. That is, we assume a steady level of naturalization and look for rising, falling or stagnating trends upon a certain event, such as the launch of the OCI scheme. With regard to Indian immigrants in the U.S., there are three important factors that—at least at a theoretical level—could *lower* the naturalization rate. First, a major difference between immigrants who had to decide whether they should naturalize or not in the early 1990s or earlier, and more recent immigrants, is that today, return migration in the individual’s prime working years is a real option. Thus, relying on a work visa in India can be seen as a significantly higher

¹⁸ Mazzolari (2005:30) sees this concern for countries in which the recognition of dual citizenship originates through the demands of the diaspora.

¹⁹ As Mazzolari (2005) notes while assessing the effect of citizenship-related legislation on naturalization trends, one has to take into consideration the fact that certain upward trends in naturalization rates may predate the passage of the law, or that some unobservable factors drive both the events.

cost of naturalization now than it was in the past, when Indian immigrants found that returning to India was not an option and getting visas for family visits was not a problem. Thus, the cost of losing Indian citizenship has increased and the absence of a special status such as PIO card or OCI might have led to fewer naturalizations. In fact, while I have described the strategy of getting U.S. citizenship for moving back to India and keeping the U.S. citizenship as a back-up option for a possible return to the U.S., this appears to be not a universal strategy. Other interviewees, who relocate to India without U.S. citizenship and with the intention of staying in India for good, do not consider the loss of their green card dramatic, because they are sure about India's long-term economic growth. It can be speculated that 10 or 15 years ago, those individuals might have obtained U.S. citizenship owing to the lack of professional opportunities in their country of origin.

A third reason, why today's Indian immigrants in the U.S. could be less inclined to naturalize than immigrants 20 or 30 years ago, is that the social pressure to assimilate and show integration through a formal status may be perceived as less strong today. Thanks to the large-scale presence of Indian immigrants, Indian culture as part of the mainstream culture (including Bollywood movies, Indian cuisine, Ayurvedic medicine and yoga) and the generally good reputation of Indians as an ethnic group ('model community'), the pressure to acquire citizenship may be reduced.²⁰

For these reasons, one can assume a *decreasing* momentum of the naturalization rate for Indian immigrants in the U.S. Thus, a stagnating or, in extreme cases, even a decreasing naturalization rate could be associated with a positive, *naturalization increasing effect* of OCI, if without its availability the naturalization rate would have been (even) lower. While it is virtually impossible to quantify these effects, it is nonetheless important to keep this in mind while assessing the available data.

The last point I want to raise is that we may ask whether or how far a potential OCI or dual citizenship effect is *path-dependent*. In other words, does the existing level of the naturalization rate have an effect on a potential increase? One consideration here, is that it might be unlikely that in any given community all members will obtain citizenship. That means in the absence of extreme shocks, there could be something like a *natural level of saturation* beyond which a further increase in the naturalization rate is unlikely. Thus, for an immigrant community that already has a high naturalization rate, one could expect that a further incentive to naturalize has a lesser impact than for an immigrant community that has traditionally shown a low propensity to acquire citizenship.

As I have shown in analyzing the decision to naturalize in Naujoks (2011: Chapter 4), for many Indian immigrants who plan to stay for a longer period of time in the U.S.,

²⁰ On the other hand, as I have reported in Naujoks (2011: Chapter 4), the terrorist attacks of 9/11 have added pressure on non-White immigrant groups to naturalize and show formal commitment. Also Maira (2004; 2008) finds strong evidence for this being a driving factor among working-class Muslim immigrants from South Asia.

naturalization is the ‘default option.’ This is confirmed by community-level data. The naturalization rates of Indian immigrants in the U.S. have traditionally been far above the average. Cornwell (2006) compares naturalization rates based on flows (Legal Permanent Residents’ admissions and naturalizations) and stocks (share of naturalized citizens). For the 1975 and 1995 immigration cohorts who had naturalized by the year 2004, he finds that flow-based naturalization rates for Indian immigrants were 71 and 58 percent respectively for the 1975 and 1995 cohort, whereas the same rates for all countries of origin were 13 and 12 percentage points less. A similar tendency is shown in the stock-based naturalization rate. Ninety-five percent of those Indians who had entered the U.S. in 1975 had naturalized by 2004 and 32 percent of those who immigrated 20 years later. The respective rates for all immigrants are 19 and 4 percentage points less than the respective Indian rates (Cornwell 2006).²¹ Furthermore, the naturalization rates calculated below confirm that Indian immigrants show a significantly higher propensity to naturalize than most other immigrant groups. Reviewing the empirical evidence on the general inclination to naturalize, it is safe to say that Indian immigrants in the U.S. have an above-average tendency to acquire citizenship. Thus, the scope for an overwhelming *naturalization increasing effect* of a status such as OCI is limited.

In concluding these introductory considerations, it shall be stressed that the analysis in this section is descriptive in nature. Owing to limitations in the existing naturalization data, it is not possible to control for individual and concrete group characteristics, such as age, education and profession. For this reason, conclusions drawn from the descriptive data analysis do not constitute empirical evidence in the strict sense. They offer, however, valuable information about trends and patterns, and together with qualitative information and theoretical deliberations, provide a sound basis for an in-depth assessment.

Bulk effect versus newcomer effect

While analyzing naturalization trends and the effect of the recognition of dual citizenship, two different effects have to be distinguished—the short- and medium-term *bulk effect* and the medium- to long-term *newcomer effect*. Upon the recognition of a dual status, the accumulated number of persons of all previous immigrant cohorts who were reluctant to take the host country’s citizenship until then, have an incentive to naturalize at once. Even if only a fraction of them does so, one could expect a bulk of dual citizenship-induced naturalizations immediately after the recognition. This *bulk effect* should lead to visibly higher naturalization rates calculated on the basis of annual naturalizations divided by the number of persons who obtained Legal Permanent

²¹ The INS Statistical Yearbook (1997:140) reports that by the end of 1997, 65 percent of the Indian immigrants from the 1977 immigration cohort had naturalized. Overall, the naturalization rates ranged from a high of 69 percent for Chinese to a low of 19 percent for German immigrants, placing Indians in the top of the spectrum. Barkan (1983), Jasso and Rosensweig (1984), DeSipio (1987) and Schneider (2001) confirm these trends for earlier cohorts and earlier periods.

Residency (LPR) status seven years before the given year of naturalization.²² This effect should also appear while analyzing naturalization trends based on the number of immigrants who are eligible for naturalizations.

The bulk effect is also illustrated by Mazzolari's (2005) analysis of naturalization rates for immigrants who have been in the U.S. for at least 20 years. She shows that the naturalization-increasing effect of dual citizenship is significantly larger for older cohorts of immigrants (plus 10 percentage points, or 24 percent) than for all immigrants (plus 3 percentage points, or 11 percent). From these results, Mazzolari deduces that long-term, not-naturalized citizens are the natural group in which to identify the effects of allowing dual citizenship.²³

On the other hand, there is an effect on those who become eligible for naturalization only after dual citizenship is allowed. These *newcomers* never had to refrain from taking citizenship because of the eventual loss of their erstwhile passport.²⁴ Due to the lower costs of naturalization in the case of dual citizenship one could expect higher naturalization rates for newer cohorts. Their naturalization behavior should be more linear and only the existence, not the act of adopting dual citizenship, should affect their propensity to become citizens.

Bulk and newcomer effects explain that the mean or median time between immigration and naturalization is not a clear indicator for naturalization trends. The bulk effect leads to an *increase* of the average time between immigration and naturalization, whereas the newcomer effect *decreases* the average waiting period for naturalizing. This is because the bulk effect is caused by naturalizing migrants who have been in the country for many years, showing obviously a long time since their first entry in the U.S. Since the barriers for immigrants who freshly meet eligibility criteria to naturalize are decreased under the newcomer effect, they can be expected to naturalize more readily and quicker than earlier cohorts, with a respective decreasing trend of the mean period between entry and citizenship acquisition. It is difficult to estimate which effect is stronger, but the opposed tendencies should be included in the analysis of available data.

Three sets of naturalization rates

In assessing the quantitative extent of OCI-induced naturalizations, we encounter two difficulties. First, we have to calculate meaningful naturalization rates. The second difficulty lies in isolating the effect of OCI from other factors. As I will discuss more in detail, all naturalization rates that can be calculated on the basis of existing data are

²² This would also be the case for naturalization rates calculated on the basis of the stock of the foreign or foreign-born population.

²³ Assessing the effect a change of laws—either in the country of origin or residence—may have on the propensity to naturalize, the bulk effect can be expected to be much stronger for five to ten years after the change of rules.

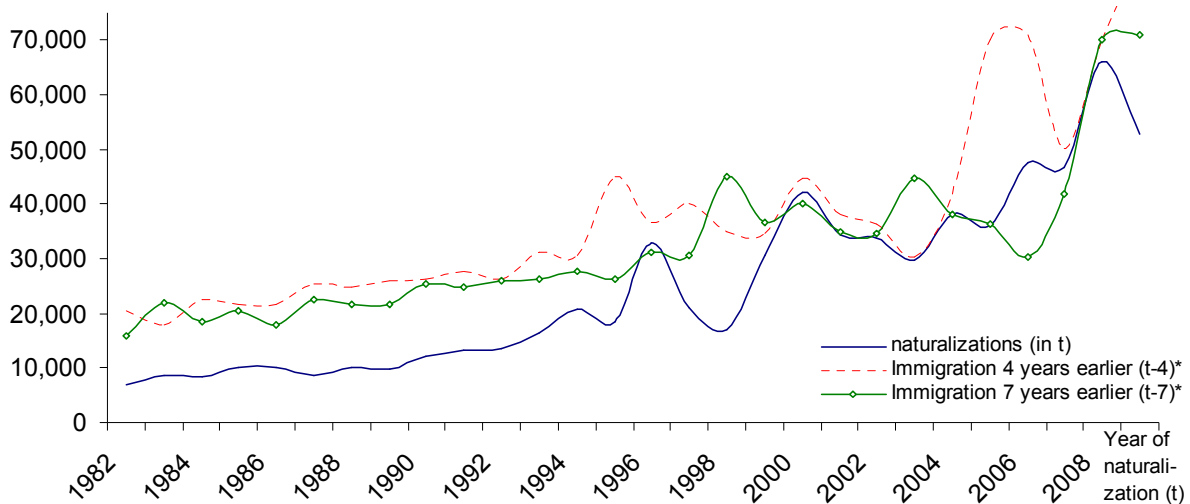
²⁴ Or in the case of OCI, newcomers had a to take a limited choice between OCI and U.S. citizenship on the one hand, and full Indian citizenship and U.S. green card, on the other.

flawed. In order to minimize the unavoidable limitations, I compute and analyze three distinct rates based on different data sets. These are (1) Naturalization rates based on annual legal permanent residents (LPR) *flows* and naturalizations seven years later; (2) naturalization rates based on the resident *population eligible for naturalization*; and (3) naturalization rates based on the naturalization records for specific *immigrant cohorts*.

4.2. Immigration and naturalizations—flow-based naturalization rates

A first assessment of the naturalization behavior and its change over time shall start from the development of naturalizations in the U.S. Figure 1 shows that since the early 1980s, naturalizations by India-born immigrants increased steadily. The development had three visible peaks, the first in 1996 with almost 33,000, the second in 2000 with over 42,000 and the last in 2008 with almost 66,000 naturalizations.²⁵ Also from Figure 1, we can see the development of admissions of India-born immigrants.²⁶ For didactic reasons, I have displayed the admissions of legal permanent residents (LPRs) as four and seven years before the respective year of naturalization. That means, in the year 2007, the naturalization graph gives the number of Indian naturalizations in that year (t), whereas the immigration graphs show the number of Indian immigrant admissions in the year 2003 (t-4) and 2000 (t-7).

Figure 1: Development of Indian Naturalizations and Immigration in the U.S. (1982–2009)



Source: Own calculations based on data from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Notes: The naturalization graph displays naturalizations in the year given on the x-axis (in t). Immigrant admissions are displayed as 4 and 7 years before the respective year of naturalization. E.g., in 2007, the naturalization graph gives the number of Indian naturalizations in that year (t), whereas the immigration graphs show the number of Indian immigrant admissions in the year 2003 (t-4) and 2000 (t-7). Naturalization data for persons aged 18 and over.

²⁵ The naturalization data are based on naturalizations of persons aged 18 and over. You may contact the author for obtaining the data used in this paper.

²⁶ For a broad overview of Indian migration and diaspora patterns, see Naujoks (2009b). On the Indian community in the U.S. see Nayyar (1994), Jha (2003); and Kapur (2010).

As elaborated further in the *Appendix*, the period of seven years was chosen out of theoretical and empirical considerations. The minimum period before which new immigrants can naturalize is three years if immigrants are married to U.S. citizens and five years in other cases. Only a small fraction of Indian citizens naturalize as spouses of U.S. citizens. Based on existing data on process times, it is safe to assume an average process time of one-and-a-half years. In addition, in the period 1985–2009, Asia-born immigrants spent a median number of seven years as green card holders before they naturalized.

The interval of four years ($t-4$) was not chosen because of its theoretical relevance, but because from a graphic analysis, it appears that this period illustrates that the development of naturalizations follows the trend of immigration $_{t-4}$, as can be seen in Figure 1.²⁷

However, whereas immigration four years before any given year of naturalization seems to explain the *trend* of the naturalization graph, it is of greater import that the *percentage* of green card holders who naturalize four years after obtaining LPR status appears to increase dramatically from 1999 onward. The area between the immigration and the naturalization curves indicates those who obtain a green card and do not become citizens for reasons that include mortality and emigration. Whereas the naturalization and the immigration $_{t-4}$ graphs run parallel until the late 1990s, with a significant gap between the two graphs, the two graphs converge between 1999 and 2004. The decreasing area between the two indicates a significantly higher proportion of those who naturalize.²⁸

This relationship is clearer when I calculate flow-based naturalization rates. Figure 2 illustrates the development of the naturalization rates for immigrants born in India and two comparison groups. The naturalization behavior of Asia-born immigrants is often found to be similar to that of Indians (INS Statistical Yearbook 1997:140; Woodrow-Lafield *et al.* 2004; Cornwell 2006), which is why the first comparison group comprises immigrants born in 20 South, East and South-East Asian countries and territories.²⁹ The second comparison group includes all foreign-born immigrants, except

²⁷ The visible bump of the LPR admissions $_{t-4}$ curve in 2005–2006 is caused by the large increase in India-born immigration four years earlier, that is, in 2001–2002, when immigrant admissions jumped from 42,000 in 2000 to over 70,000 in each of the following two years. As can be seen in the analysis of the 2001 cohort in Section 4, after four years, only 5 percent had naturalized, leading to a large difference between the immigration $_{t-4}$ and the naturalization curve.

²⁸ On the interval 1983–1998, the average annual integral between the immigration $_{t-4}$ (immigration $_{t-7}$) and the naturalization curves is 14,197 (11,019), whereas in the period 1999–2003 it is 2,751 (4,178). Considering the difference between the immigration $_{t-7}$ and the naturalization curve in the latest period, over 2004–2009, it is striking that the difference is 28. Thus, there appear to be hardly any immigrants left who did not naturalize.

²⁹ These are Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei, Burma, Cambodia, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, North and South Korea, Laos, Macau, Malaysia, Nepal, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam. Immigrants from Pakistan and the Philippines have been omitted because both countries recognized dual citizenship for their nationals living in the U.S. in 2002 and 2003 respectively.

those born in India or in a country that recognized dual citizenship after 1998.³⁰ The naturalization rates are based on the number of naturalizations in t and LPR admissions seven years earlier ($t-7$). As discussed above, the process time for naturalization applications changed considerably, first increasing with the growing backlog at CIS offices and then decreasing from 2004 to 2006 due to the Backlog Elimination Plan and its implementation. For this reason, I calculate averages for four-year periods, which decreases the margin of error due to changing process times.³¹ Further, this focuses on trends and patterns rather than on single-year peaks and plunges. I complement the data analysis by examining the growth rates of the naturalization rates, as well as by comparing the differences in the growth rate of India-born immigrants and each of the two comparison groups.

In order to interpret the changes in naturalization patterns, we have to assess the main driving factors, both in the country of immigration and in the country of origin. The 1992 Green Card Replacement Program,³² the 1996 welfare reform³³ the 1995–1996 Citizenship USA program,³⁴ as well as the passing of the so-called Proposition 187 in California in 1994³⁵ are not likely to have had a significant influence on the period after 1999 and especially not from 2005 onward. Instead, significant factors in the U.S. that might have affected the likelihood of naturalizing are generally seen in the following five incentives. A general U.S.-related naturalization factor is connected to the terrorist acts of 9/11 in 2001. As argued above, these events and the subsequent reaction of U.S. society

³⁰ The following countries have recognized dual citizenship in one form or another for their nationals living in the U.S. and are thus excluded from the comparison group: Mexico (1998), Australia (2002), Pakistan (2002), Finland (2003) and the Philippines (2003). Mexican immigrants are further omitted because their immigration and naturalization pattern is a case apart (Portes and Rumbaut 2001:276–80) and very different from the Indian pattern. Representing the single largest group of naturalizing individuals, their consideration would distort the data analysis. Countries that have recognized dual citizenship before 1998 are not excluded from the count—these are Columbia (1991), Italy (1992), Hungary (1993), the Dominican Republic (1994), Costa Rica (1995), Ecuador (1995) and Brazil (1996).

³¹ In addition, with regard to the backlog elimination statistics, one has to consider that the elimination of the backlog is also due to re-definitional attempts by the USCIS, who removed those pending applications from the count that were awaiting customer responses or that could not be completed by the USCIS because of factors outside their control (USCIS 2006). The USCIS Ombudsman (2006) draws attention to some further re-classifications that were not prompted by an increase in processed applications but nevertheless affected the backlog statistics.

³² It is believed that instead of replacing their old green cards with new, more counterfeit-resistant cards, many immigrants chose to become citizens (INS 2002:199; Mazzolari 2005:13).

³³ The reform was passed by the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, which restricted many social and public benefits to U.S. citizens only, providing a clear incentive for naturalization (Mazzolari 2005:10; van Hook, Brown and Bean 2006). In fact, Borjas (2002) finds that the national origin groups most likely to receive public assistance witnessed the largest increases in naturalization rates after 1996.

³⁴ From August 1995 to September 1996, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) implemented the 'Citizenship USA' program, an initiative to reduce the backlog of pending naturalization applications by speeding up application time to six months and focusing on five key districts, namely Los Angeles, New York, San Francisco, Miami, and Chicago. In total, more than one million applications had been processed, especially from Latin American immigrants (U.S. Department of Justice 2000). The Citizenship USA program has been criticized for its alleged political purpose to create Democratic voters for the presidential elections of November 1996. The U.S. Department of Justice's Inspector General (2000) delivered a detailed report on the matter and the procedural shortcomings.

³⁵ Proposition 187 was passed in order to curtail social services to irregular immigrants. Even though the proposition was declared unconstitutional by several courts, it is commonly speculated that a certain anti-immigrant perception of the related debate prompted many legal residents to naturalize in order to safeguard their rights (P. Martin 1997; U.S. Department of Justice 2000; Mazzolari 2005:13).

and public security institutions can be seen a factor in increasing naturalization of immigrants whose physical appearance might be looked upon with suspicion.³⁶ Further, the Department of Homeland Security explains the all-time high in immigrant naturalizations in 2008 by a surge in applications the preceding year in advance of a fee increase and efforts to encourage eligible immigrants to naturalize (Lee 2010). The application fee of USD 330 was increased to USD 625 at the end of July 2007 (Chishti and Bergeron 2007).³⁷ The fee had already been raised in 2002, from USD 225 to USD 260. In 2003, it was increased again (by USD 60) to 320 USD, and in 2005 (by another USD 10) to USD 330 (Gelatt and McHugh 2007). Beside the 2008 increase, these fee hikes were comparatively small and had only minor impacts on naturalization applications (Gonzalez 2008).

Another factor for increasing trends in naturalization patterns are seen in several community campaigns that foster citizenship acquisition. Apart from the 2005 'New Americans Initiative' by the state of Illinois, partnering with a major migrant community organization, the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR), there were similar campaigns, such as the 'Ya es hora, ¡ciudadanía!' (It's time, citizenship!) campaign launched in 2007 by the National Organization of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials' (NALEO) Educational Fund.³⁸ Further, the divisive public debate about immigration reform and irregular immigration in 2006–2007 may have prompted many legal permanent residents to naturalize (Bergeron and Banks 2008).

In August 2007, the USCIS announced that approximately 750,000 lawful permanent residents carrying green cards without expiration dates had to apply for a new Permanent Resident Card. Although the USCIS has not taken concrete steps to implement this program, community organizations observe that this may have motivated several green card holders to naturalize (Vargas 2008:48).³⁹

Importantly, the effect of most incentives on the naturalization rates for India-born immigrants should be the same as that on Asia-born and all foreign-born immigrants if the comparison groups are well chosen. Thus, under the assumptions of no exogenous shocks on the comparison groups and no changes in the socio-economic composition of either group, we can isolate the effect of factors pertaining solely to the

³⁶ Maira (2004; 2008) finds strong evidence for this being a driving factor among working-class Muslim immigrants from South Asia.

³⁷ The effect of the fee increase results clear from the fact that immediately before the higher fee was applicable in after 30 July 2007, in June and July, naturalization applications were nearly 3.5 times of the number in the same period in 2006 (Gonzalez 2008; Bergeron and Banks 2008)

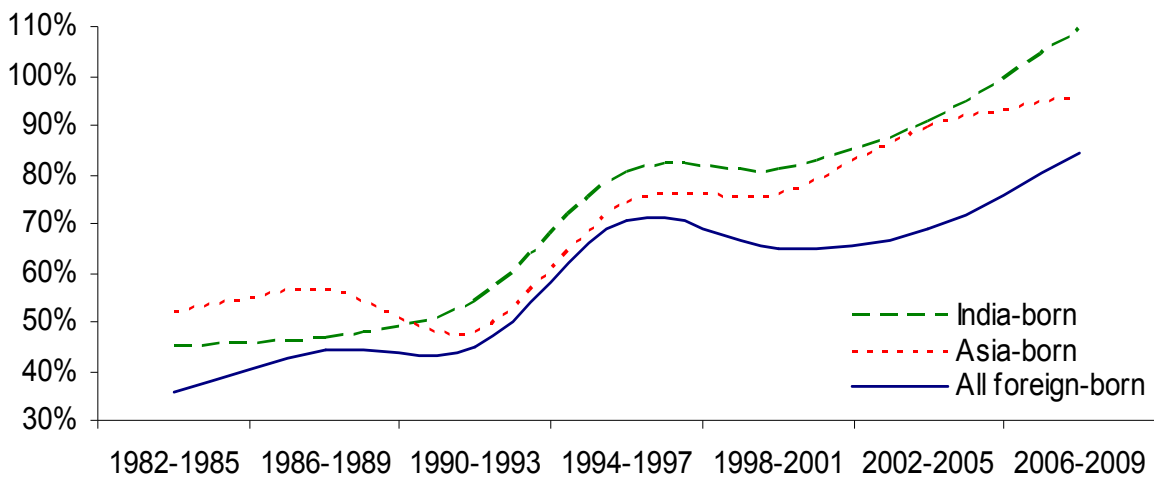
³⁸ According to NALEO Educational Fund's executive director Arturo Vargas (2008:41–4), the campaign brought together over 400 national and regional organizations, including community- and faith-based organizations, unions, public and private agencies, law offices and attorneys, elected and appointed officials and private businesses in order to inform, educate and motivate eligible permanent residents to apply for U.S. citizenship. More information on the campaign is accessible at www.yaeshora.info (accessed on 22 February 2012; archived at www.webcitation.org/65eV7TpFc). Commentators speculate that community organizations had a special interest in increasing naturalization before the 2008 presidential elections (Bergeron and Banks 2008).

³⁹ This is with reference only to green cards issued before 1989, as cards issued later on have a validity of ten years. As briefly noted above, the 1992 Green Card Replacement Program is believed to have had a naturalization-increasing effect. See *supra* FN32.

target group by comparing the trends for these groups. It has to be noted, thus, that the community campaigns mentioned appear to have particularly affected the naturalization pattern of Latino immigrants. The same might be true for naturalization increases owing to the heated public discussion over irregular migration focused on persons of Latin-American origin, particularly Mexicans.

Apart from the adoption and implementation of the PIO card in May 1999 and the OCI card scheme in December 2005, other factors that are connected to India or the Indian diaspora community in the U.S. have changed over time. The economic boom and growth of the technology industry in India have made return plans more feasible, affecting the value of U.S. citizenship as a back-up option. Since 1999, the Indian government’s rhetoric toward overseas Indians has changed and increasingly, enabling diaspora policies are being set in place, *inter alia* the annual diaspora conference Pravasi Bharatiya Divas since January 2003.⁴⁰ This again may have affected the community. For example, the negative stigma of giving up Indian citizenship that was connected to the old ‘traitor tune’ has vanished with the new policy paradigm of embracing the diaspora. Further, in 1998–1999, the Indian-American community witnessed the first large-scale lobbying success against U.S. sanctions in the aftermath of India’s Pokhran II nuclear tests. This could have caused the community to encourage more naturalizations in order to grow in electoral strength. This is, however, a theoretical argument, as strong social mobilization has not been shown in the Indian-American community.

Figure 2: Flow-based Naturalization Rates (1982–2009)



Source: Own calculations based on data from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Notes: Naturalizations of persons aged 18 and over. The naturalization rate is calculated as naturalizations in t divided by LPR admissions in t-7 and given as a 4-year average.

Asia-born include persons born in Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei, Burma, Cambodia, China (incl. Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan), Indonesia, Japan, North and South Korea, Laos, Malaysia, Nepal, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam.

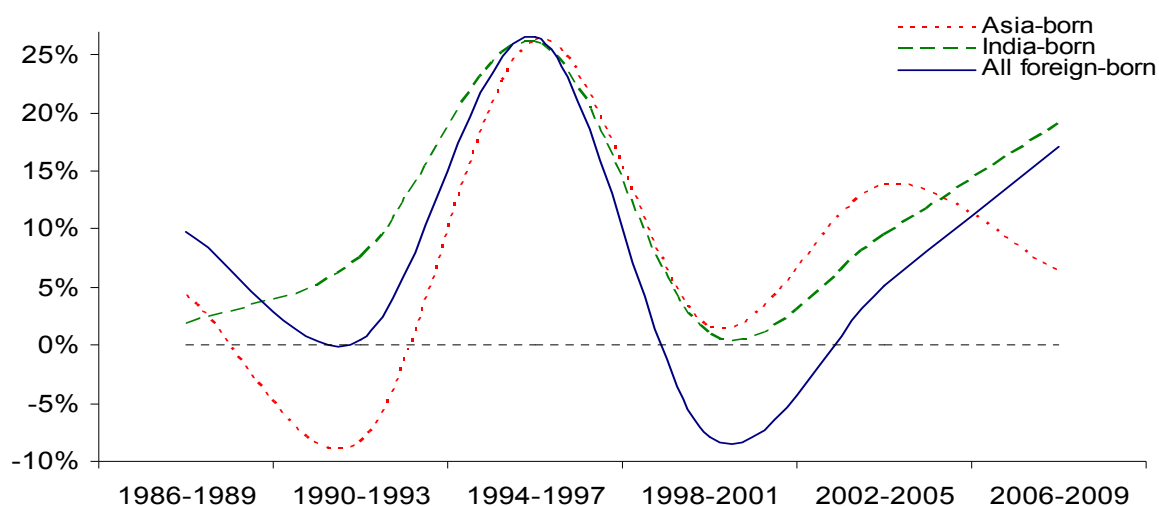
All foreign-born exclude persons born in Australia, Finland, India, Mexico, Pakistan and the Philippines.

⁴⁰ In Naujoks (2010), I have described the general shift in the overall policy paradigm in the Indian political system.

As can be seen from Figure 2, the naturalization rates for all examined groups were significantly lower in the 1980s and early 1990s, remaining below 55 percent until 1994–1997. Since 1990–1993, India-born immigrants have displayed constantly rising naturalization rates and constantly higher rates than Asia-born and all foreign-born. The India-born naturalization rate reaches a local maximum in 1994–1997 with 80 percent, stagnates during the following four-year period and increases then significantly to 90.5 percent in 2002–2005 and 110 percent in 2006–2009, that is when the OCI card scheme was implemented. Although the backlog elimination had an increasing effect in 2004–2006, the strong, sustained multi-year increase is clearly caused by a change in naturalization pattern. Interestingly, a large increase starts in the early 2000s, which could be connected to the introduction of the PIO card in May 1999. In fact, it is only from 2002 onward that the PIO card became reasonably priced, leading to an increase in the number of takers—which could be considered a reason for the increase of the naturalization rate after 2002.⁴¹

Figure 3 illustrates the growth rate of the calculated naturalization rates. It shows that only the India-born naturalization rate was rising constantly, whereas the rate for Asia-born fell—leading to negative growth—in 1990–1993, as did the rate for all foreign-born in 1998–2001. Figure 3 highlights the strong growth of the India-born naturalization rate from 2002–2005 onward, showing a 9.5 percent growth in 2002–2005 and whopping 19 percent in 2006–2009.

Figure 3: Growth Rate of Flow-based Naturalization Rates (1986–2009)



Source: Own calculations based on data from U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

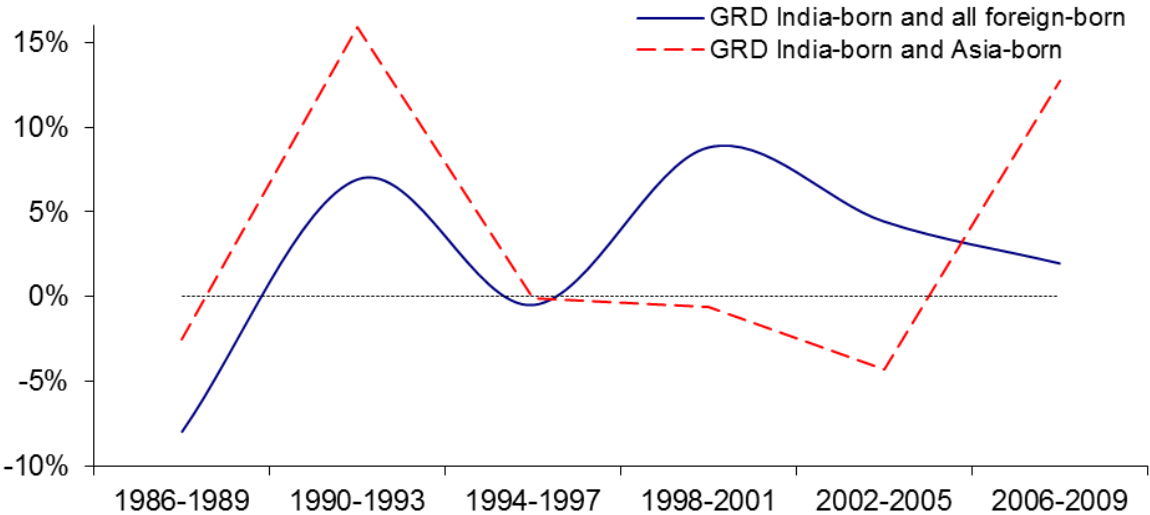
Note: The growth relates to the respective preceding four-year interval. For further explanations, see notes to Figure 2.

Most important for determining the effect of OCI on this development is the comparison between India-born immigrants and the two chosen comparison groups. Figure 4 represents the Growth Rate Differences (GRD) between the target group of

⁴¹ As described in Section 2.3.5, until May 2001, there were not more than 110 registered PIO card holders (High-level Committee on the Indian Diaspora 2002:359).

India-born immigrants, on the one hand, and Asia-born and all foreign-born immigrants, on the other. As can be seen from the GRD curves, since 1998–2001, there has been a steadily positive GRD between the naturalization rate of India-born and other foreign-born immigrants, i.e., a higher growth of the Indian rate. The largest difference between the two rates (almost 9 percentage points) is in 1998–2001 and is largely due to a decreasing naturalization rate for all foreign-born, which is clearly visible in Figure 3. However, despite the much lower level of the naturalization rate of all foreign-born immigrants, which is more than 20 percentage points below the rate for India-born immigrants (see Figure 2) and thus, leaving scope for larger increases, and despite of the significantly rising growth rate between 2002 and 2009 of first 5 and then 17 percentage points for all foreign-born (Figure 3), the naturalization rate for India-born immigrants still grows at a higher rate—of 4.5 and 2 percentage points in 2002–2005 and 2006–2009 respectively (Figure 4). It must also be considered that since 2005, special incentives for Latino immigrants may have increased their inclination to naturalize. Although Mexico-born immigrants are excluded from the calculated naturalization rate, the remaining Latin-American immigrants may still affect significantly the overall naturalization pattern. Without these incentives, it can be assumed that the naturalization GRD in favor of India-born immigrants would be even higher.

Figure 4: Growth Rate Differences of Flow-based Naturalization Rates (1986–2009)



Source: Own calculations based on data from U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Notes: The graph displays the Growth Rate Differences (GRD) in the four-year average naturalization rates for India-born immigrants with other Asia-born and all foreign-born immigrants. See notes and explanations Figure 2.

While the growth of the naturalization rate for Asia- and India-born immigrants is almost identical between 1994 and 2001 (Figure 4),⁴² the strong growth of the former results in a negative growth difference of 4.3 percentage points in 2002–2005. However,

⁴² The naturalization rate for Asia-born immigrants grows slightly faster, the growth rate difference being -0.1 percentage points in 1994–97 and -0.6 percentage points in 1998–2001.

in the period following the adoption of OCI (2006–2009), the naturalization rate for India-born immigrants grows stronger by 12.8 percentage points.⁴³ It is convincing that in the period 2006–2009, it is chiefly the availability of OCI that contributed to the growth rate difference of 2 and 12.8 percentage points between India-born and all foreign-born and Asia-born immigrants respectively. As said above, this analysis does not allow us to disentangle the effect of the membership policies OCI and PIO card from other factors regarding the Indian community in the U.S., such as India's economic development and possibly increasing social mobilization.

4.3. Naturalization rates based on eligible resident population

One of the most meaningful metrics for measuring the inclination to naturalize is centered around the number of immigrants who are eligible for naturalization. It appears that so far, there have been no calculations of the naturalization rate on this basis. Although computing naturalization rates as the proportion of residents who actually naturalize among all those eligible for citizenship in a given year is a good measure in theory, its practical use is limited by the fact that in order to estimate the correct stock of eligible legal permanent residents, their emigration and mortality rate has to be estimated. As several scholars have noted, there is no systematic data for this, rendering estimates less well founded (Liang 1994:529; Schneider 2001:71; Mazzolari 2005:12).⁴⁴ However, since 2002 the Office of Immigration Statistics at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security has provided estimates on the number of legal permanent residents that are eligible for naturalization.⁴⁵ The naturalization rate is calculated as the number of naturalizations of Indian citizens in a given year divided by the number of India-born immigrants that were eligible for naturalization at the beginning of the same year.⁴⁶ As one can see from Table 1, the estimates are rounded, making quantitative analysis even less compelling.⁴⁷ However, general trends might be discerned.

Looking at the naturalization rate between 2002 and 2008, three clear hikes can be observed. The first hike was seen in 2004, the year after the adoption of the first Indian legislation on OCI, when the naturalization rate increased by more than 5

⁴³ It deserves mention that this higher growth takes place despite the already higher naturalization rate of the India-born group (Figure 2).

⁴⁴ Liang (1994:529) reports that the INS stopped collecting data on emigration in 1957. The INS Statistical Yearbook (1997:138) confirms that data are not collected on the emigration and mortality experience of legal immigrants.

⁴⁵ The estimates include estimates on emigration and mortality. However, information on what the estimates are based is not provided.

⁴⁶ The estimated LPR population eligible to naturalize is estimated for January 1st of any given year. Naturalization numbers are given by fiscal year. That means that naturalizations until the end of September a given year will be counted. It thus appears appropriate to take the eligible population in t as the denominator. I shall stress though, that in the period under scrutiny, the estimated number of India-born LPRs eligible for naturalization does not change significantly. For this reason, the rate calculated on the basis of the eligible population in $t-1$ does not vary significantly from the rate given in Table 1.

⁴⁷ Upon my inquiry, the Department of Homeland Security's Office for Immigration Statistics clarified that more detailed estimates were not available.

percentage points, from less than 15 to 19 percent. Importantly, the new level was sustained the next year. One year later in 2006, that is, the year following the adoption of the second legislation on OCI and the actual granting of the status, the naturalization rate showed another hike from 18 to almost 24 percent, amounting to an increase of nearly 6 percentage points, which was again sustained the next year. The third and last hike was witnessed in 2008.⁴⁸ The naturalization rate climbed by almost 8 percentage points when nearly one-third of the entire eligible population obtained U.S. citizenship (30 percent). Compared to the very high naturalization rate in 2008, the rate for 2009 showed a slight decrease. However, with 26.4 percent the level is still significantly higher than the rate in 2007 and earlier.

Table 1: Naturalization Rate based on India-born Immigrants Eligible for Naturalization (2002–2008)

Year	India-born LPRs eligible to naturalize	Naturalizations	Naturalization rate*
2002	217,000	33,774	15.6 %
2003	200,000	29,761	14.9 %
2004	200,000	37,975	19.0 %
2005	200,000	35,962	18.0 %
2006	200,000	47,542	23.8 %
2007	210,000	46,871	22.3 %
2008	220,000	65,971	30.0 %
2009	200,000	52,889	26.4%

Source: Own calculations on the basis of data from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Note: * Naturalization rates are calculated on the basis of naturalizations in a given fiscal year, ending September 30, and the immigrant population eligible for naturalization as of January 1 the same year.

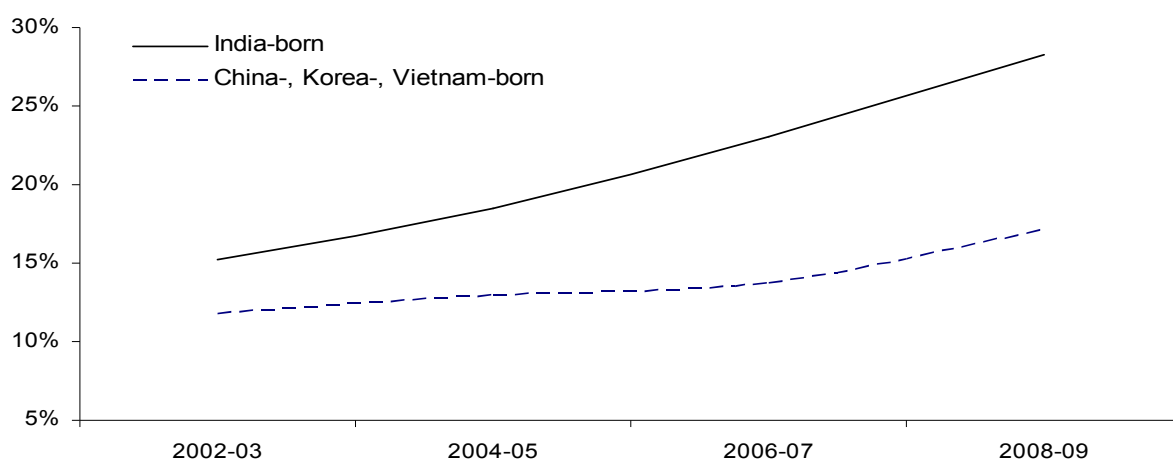
These calculations of steadily and steeply rising naturalization rates confirm the trend in naturalization rates based on LPR admissions as computed above. While increases in 2004–2006 can also be caused by the active elimination of pending naturalization cases during that period and the quicker process times,⁴⁹ the sustained levels afterwards indicate that the increase is not a function of administrative processes alone.

As mentioned above, because of changing process times, it is more appropriate to examine average rates for several years instead of single year rates. Figure 5 illustrates the development of the naturalization rate based on the eligible LPR population for 2-year averages. The constantly rising rate of naturalization can clearly be observed from the figure.

⁴⁸ As noted above, a significant fee hike in August 2007 led to the overall growth in the naturalization applications until July 2007 and the high naturalization numbers in 2008.

⁴⁹ For more information on the backlog and its elimination, see *Annex*.

Figure 5: Naturalization Rate based on Eligible India-born and Selected Asia-born Immigrants (2002–2009)



Source: Own calculations on the basis of data from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Notes: Naturalization rates are given as the average for a 2-year period. Immigrants from Korea include those from North and South Korea.

In order to isolate factors that affect the target group of Indian immigrants, I compare the development of their naturalization rate with the naturalization rate of selected Asian immigrants. For an oft-found similarity of naturalization behavior, the size of naturalizations and the availability of data, I have chosen Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese immigrants as the comparison group, none of which allowed dual citizenship in the period under scrutiny.⁵⁰ Figure 5 shows that although the Asian naturalization rates are constantly rising too, their growth is less pronounced than that for Indian immigrants.

Table 2: Growth Differences for the Indian and Asian Immigrant Naturalization Rate calculated on the basis of Immigrants Eligible for Naturalization (2002–2009)

Period	Naturalization rate (in percent)**		Growth in the naturalization rate (in percentage points)			
	India-born	Asia-born*	Growth interval	India	Asia*	Difference
2002-02	15.2 %	11.7 %	2002-03 to 2004-05	3.3 %	1.3 %	2.0 %
2004-05	18.5 %	13.0 %	2004-05 to 2006-07	4.6 %	0.7 %	3.8 %
2006-07	23.0 %	13.7 %	2006-07 to 2008-09	5.2 %	3.4 %	1.8 %
2008-09	28.2 %	17.1 %	Average annual growth 2002-03 to 2008-09	1.6 %	0.5 %	1.1 %

Sources: Own calculations on the basis of data from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Notes: * Due to the availability of data, the Asian control group includes only immigrants from China, (North and South) Korea, and Vietnam. ** Naturalization rates are calculated on the basis of naturalizations in a given fiscal year, ending September 30, and the immigrant population eligible for naturalization as of January 1 the same year. Naturalization rates are given as the average for a 2-year period.

⁵⁰ This includes data for North and South Korea; however, immigrants and naturalizations for persons born in North Korea are minimal. However, South Korea passed a law allowing dual citizenship in April 2010, which came into effect in January 2011. Vietnam approved dual citizenship legislature in November 2008.

This is even clearer from Table 2 which shows a 2.0 percentage points stronger increase from 2002–2003 to 2004–2005, a 3.8 percentage points stronger increase from 2004–2005 to 2006–2007 and a 1.8 percentage points higher increase for the 2006–2007 to 2008–2009 period. In the period under scrutiny, the naturalization rates for India-born immigrants increased by an annual average of 1.1 percentage points more than that for Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese immigrants. This is likely to be caused or at least largely influenced by the availability of OCI in India.

4.4. Naturalization rates based on immigrant cohorts

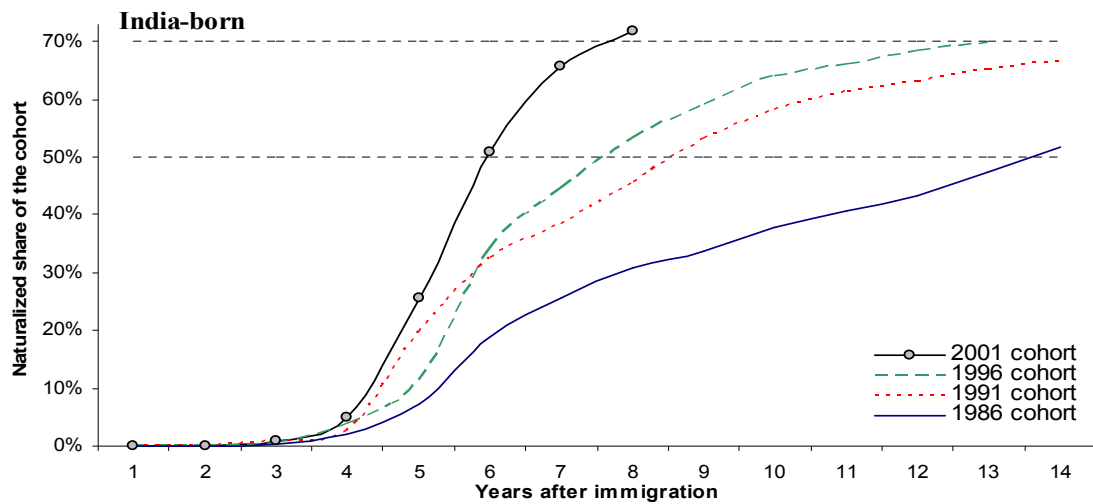
Another promising approach for tracing changes in the naturalization behavior is based on cohort data. Matching flow data from immigrant cohorts against naturalization records, the Department of Homeland Security's Office of Immigration Statistics provides information on how many of each immigrant cohort naturalized in each given year. I analyze the naturalization pattern of India-born immigrants from four cohorts, namely of those who obtained LPR status in 1986, 1991, 1996 and 2001.⁵¹ The 1986 cohort counted 21,000 immigrants who were born in India; the 1991 cohort, 40,000; the 1996 cohort, 36,000; and the 2001 cohort 61,000.⁵² As is clearly visible in Figure 6, from 1986 onward, each subsequent immigration cohort displayed a quicker ascension to U.S. citizenship. It is important to note that the upper limit of the cohort naturalization rates is unknown. The INS (1997:138) speculates that emigration alone might reduce the size of each cohort by roughly 30 percent. After six years of residency, only 19 percent of the 1986 immigration cohort had become U.S. citizens. After the same time in the country, already a third of the 1991 and 1996 cohort (33 and 34 percent respectively) had naturalized, while the 2001 cohort displayed a particular rush toward citizenship, counting 51 percent of naturalized cohort members six years after receiving their green card. Only eight years after immigration, the 2001 cohort counted almost 72 percent of U.S. citizens, a share so far reached only by the 1991 cohort after 18 years of residency.

At the time of their immigration in 2001, the PIO card already existed. Ethnic Indians in the U.S. were informed about the recognition of the so-called 'dual citizenship' in 2003 and when they were ready to naturalize in 2006, OCI was newly launched and implemented. Though other factors, such as shorter process times at the USCIS, India's economic development, plans to return and naturalization as a back-up option are likely to have played a role too, it can be assumed that the naturalization-increasing *newcomer effect* of OCI is reflected in this remarkably fast conversion to citizenship. It has to be considered too, that the actual size of the 2001 cohort is very large, being thrice the size of the 1986 cohort and more than a third larger than the other two examined cohorts.

⁵¹ The data provided by the Department of Homeland Security is restricted to persons who were 18 years or older at the time they obtained LPR status. This makes naturalization patterns more representative of voluntary naturalizations by adults. You may contact the author for obtaining the data used in this paper.

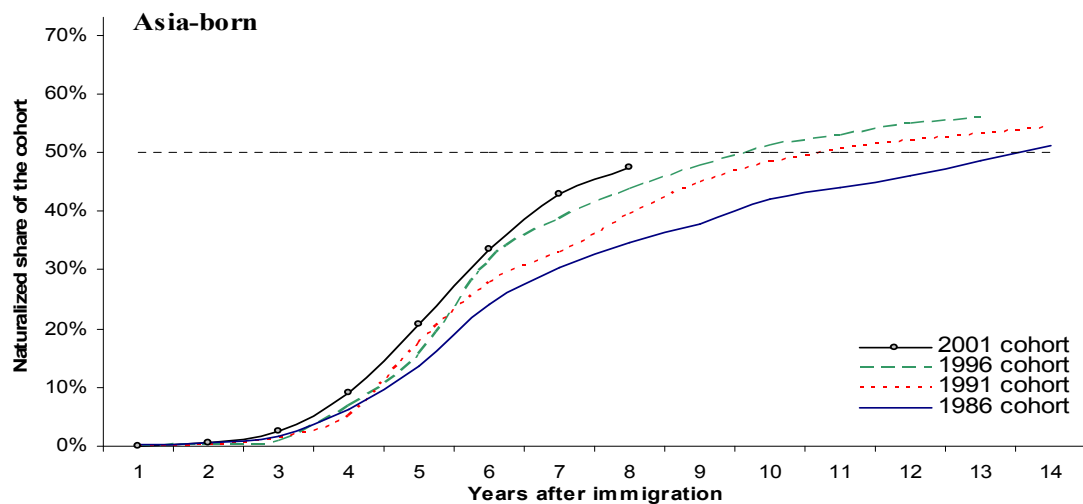
⁵² The exact numbers are 20,947 (1986), 39,887 (1991), 35,669 (1996) and 60,563 (2001).

Figure 6: Acquisition of U.S. Citizenship by India-born Immigrant Cohorts according to Years after Immigration (Cumulative Naturalization Rate in Percent)



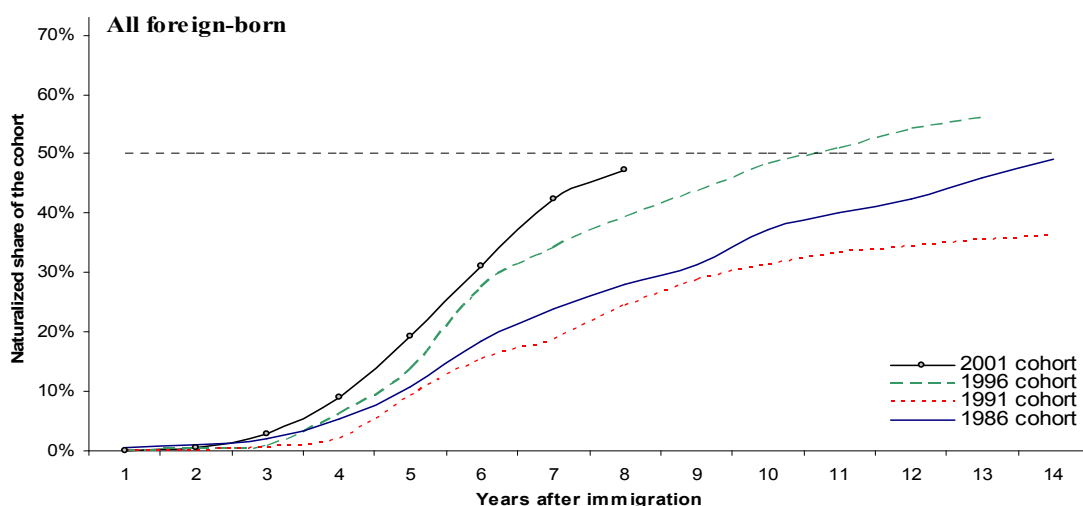
Source: Own calculations based on data from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Figure 7: Acquisition of U.S. Citizenship by Asia-born Immigrant Cohorts according to Years after Immigration (Cumulative Naturalization Rate in Percent)



Source: Own calculations based on data from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Figure 8: Acquisition of U.S. Citizenship by all Foreign-born Immigrant Cohorts according to Years after Immigration (Cumulative Naturalization Rate in percent)



Source: Own calculations based on data from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Figure 7 and Figure 8 show the same cumulative naturalization rate for Asia-born and all foreign-born immigrants.⁵³ It can be observed that the naturalization pattern of both comparison groups for the 1986 cohort is similar to that of Indian immigrants. The Asian immigrant naturalizations confirm the general tendency that newer cohorts have steeper naturalization curves, indicating quicker ascension to citizenship. However, whereas the Asian immigrant naturalization curve shows only moderate naturalization acceleration, the 1991, 1996 and particularly the 2001 cohorts of India-born LPRs display a significantly higher propensity to naturalize. For example, eight years after immigration, 72 percent of the India-born immigrants from the 2001 cohort had naturalized whereas the figure for other Asia-born and foreign immigrants is only 47 percent. This can be taken as evidence for an existing *newcomer effect* of OCI.⁵⁴

The development of cohort naturalizations over time should provide us also with some evidence on the *bulk effect* discussed above. If there was such an effect in the aftermath of the adoption of OCI, a sudden increase in the cohort's naturalization rate should be observable in Figure 9. Figure 9 a)-c) illustrate the change to U.S. citizenship for the 1986, 1991 and 1996 cohorts over time, comparing the development for India-born, Asia-born and all foreign-born immigrants.⁵⁵ The information on naturalizations is normalized as a share of the total cohort in order to compare naturalization patterns rather than their actual numbers. In the graph from the oldest cohort, 1986, one can see that India-born immigrants appear to be less affected by the mid-1990s policy of restricting social benefits to U.S. citizens (Figure 9 a). On the other hand, their naturalization increased significantly in 1999–2001, when compared to Asia-born and all foreign-born immigrants. This could be influenced by the availability of the PIO card from May 1999 onward.

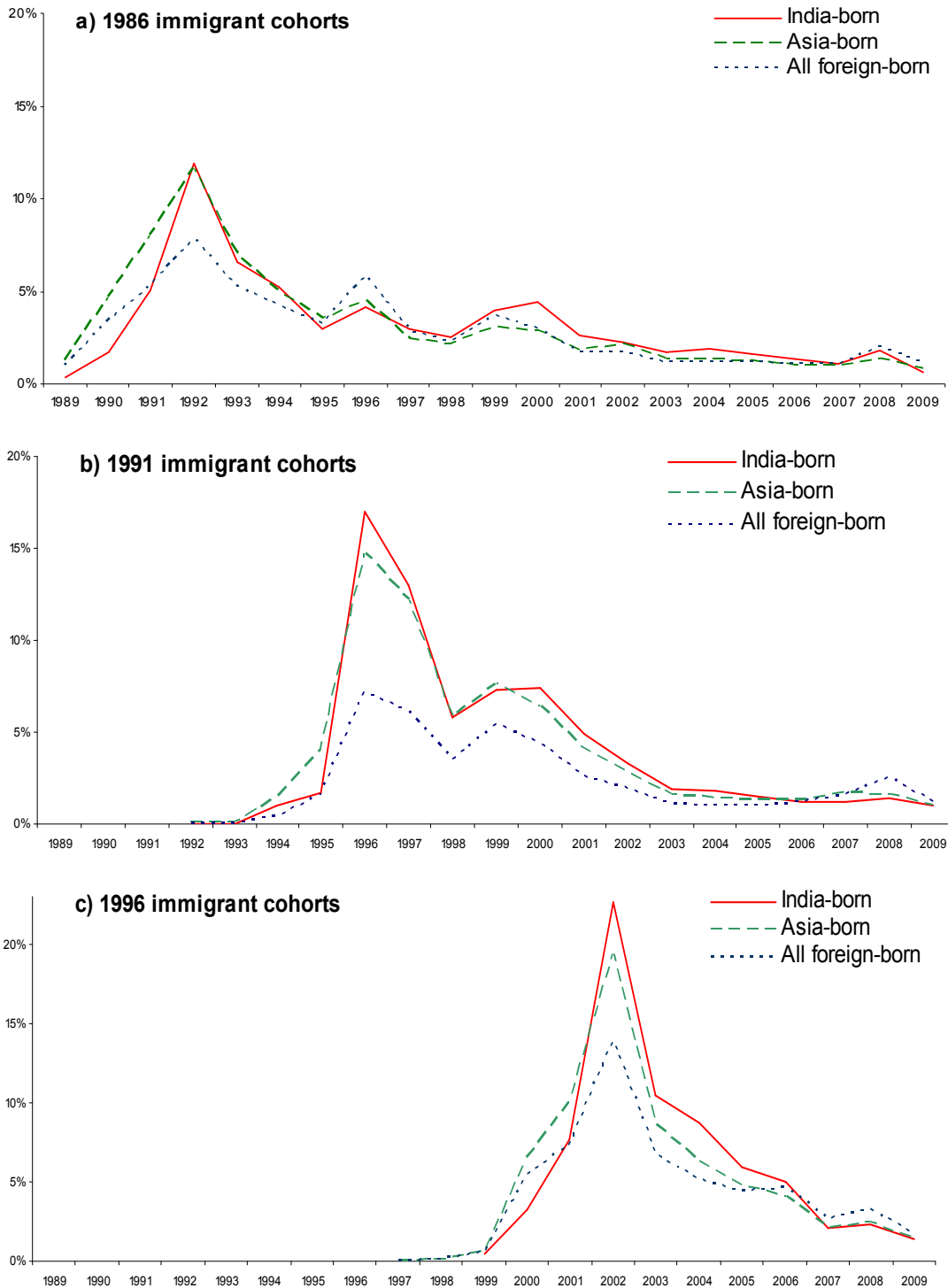
As a general observation, it shall be noted that the naturalizations of Asia-born and India-born immigrants from the 1991 and 1996 cohorts are significantly higher than for all foreign-born immigrants. While Indian naturalizations in 2000–2002 are slightly but visibly higher than those of other Asians, they do not appear to increase in 2006–2007 when a bulk effect of the introduction of OCI could be expected. The increase that is perceivable in 2008 for all three cohorts and all three groups corresponds to an all-time high in citizenship applications for all immigrants, explained by the Department of Homeland Security as a consequence of a naturalization fee hike in 2009.

⁵³ In both comparison groups, India-born immigrants are excluded. Due to the availability of data, Asia-born immigrants include persons born in Pakistan and the Philippines. Citizens of both countries have been allowed dual citizenship since 2002–2003.

⁵⁴ This evidence goes as far as the descriptive analysis allows, as we cannot control for differences in individual characteristics such as education, age, wage, occupation, marital status, etc.

⁵⁵ Again, Asia-born and all foreign-born data do not include India-born immigrants.

Figure 9 a)–c): Naturalization Pattern of India-born, Asia-born, and all Foreign-born Immigrant Cohorts over Time (in Percent of each Cohort)



Source: Own calculations based on data from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

In fact, neither the adoption of OCI legislation in 2003, nor the adoption of the second legislation and its implementation in late 2005, appear to have triggered higher naturalization numbers for India-born immigrant in the 1986 and 1991 cohorts. However, the 1996 cohort shows a slight ‘naturalization bump’ in 2004–2005, which diverges from the graphs for the two comparison groups. On the other hand, in 2007–2009, the 1991 and 1996 India-born cohorts display even a lower naturalization rate than

both comparison groups.⁵⁶ It can be seen from this analysis that a certain moderate bulk effect can be observed in the aftermath of the adoption of the PIO card whereas it is not perceivable after the adoption of OCI.

5 The extent of OCI-induced naturalizations—a summary

My calculations confirm the finding from several other studies that the availability of dual citizenship, or here OCI, leads to higher naturalization rates in the country of residence. In this paper, I have calculated three distinct naturalization rates, namely, naturalization rates based on annual legal permanent residents (LPR) *flows* and naturalizations seven years later; naturalization rates based on the resident *population eligible for naturalization*; and naturalization rates based on the naturalization records for specific *immigrant cohorts*.

In order to isolate effects specific to the country of origin from general factors in the U.S., I juxtapose the naturalization rates for Indian, or India-born, immigrants with the respective rates for comparison groups. Obviously, the degree of comparability between target and comparison group determines the validity of the conclusions drawn from the analysis. Due to a general similarity in the naturalization behavior, Asian immigrants appear to be the most appropriate comparison group. Despite significantly different group characteristics and a considerably lower naturalization rate, which—as argued—is likely to affect its growth, by aggregating naturalization data for immigrants from all countries, unrelated factors regarding countries of origin are leveled out. However, where the data permitted, countries that adopted dual citizenship in the period under scrutiny are excluded from the analysis. It should be emphasized that the descriptive analysis on the basis of general naturalization data does not make it possible to control for individual characteristics of the naturalizing persons, such as education, age, wage, occupation, marital status, which is why the evidence may express trends rather than exact relationships.

My calculations of the naturalization rate based on the India-born immigrant population that is eligible for citizenship show a continuously and significantly increasing naturalization trend since 2002. In comparison with Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese immigrants, the naturalization rates for India-born immigrants increased by more than 2.4 percentage points in 2002–2004 and 3.2 percentage points in 2007–2008. This corresponds to the adoption of OCI-related legislation in 2003 and the official launch of the OCI scheme in early 2006.

Comparing the growth of the flow-based naturalization rate for India-born and selected Asia-born immigrants, I found a significantly higher growth for the target group in the period following the introduction of OCI in 2006–2009. The growth rate difference for that period amounted to 12.8 percentage points, which may be interpreted

⁵⁶ This could be explained by a higher share of Indian immigrants who previously had naturalized (cumulative naturalization rate), leaving less scope for a large increase. See Figure 6 to Figure 8.

at least partly as a result of the facilitating effect of OCI. Compared to all foreign-born immigrants, the growth rate of naturalization for India-born immigrants showed the strongest growth rate difference in 1998–2001 of 8.8 percentage points. Even in the period after the PIO card was available at a reasonable fee in 2002, and after the launch of OCI in 2006, the India-born naturalization rate grew stronger than the rate of all foreign-born by 4.5 and 2 percentage points, respectively. This occurred despite a naturalization rate that was 20 percent higher than that of all foreign-born immigrants and despite special naturalization incentives for Latino immigrants.

Lastly, the analysis of cohort data revealed that more recent immigrant cohorts from India ascend much faster and in greater numbers to U.S. citizenship. Seventy-two percent of the 2001 cohort had naturalized eight years after immigration, whereas the rates were much lower for the comparison groups of Asia-born and all foreign-born immigrants. This is a substantial first evidence for the existence of the *newcomer effect* of OCI, which facilitates a quick conversion of citizenship upon immigration and a higher degree of naturalizations among new immigrants. On the other hand, when examining the development of cohort naturalizations over time, no significant increases in naturalizations for older immigrant cohorts can be observed in the aftermath of the implementation of OCI. Apart from a temporary two-year increase of naturalizations in 1999–2000, which can be observed for the 1986 and 1991 cohorts, there appears to be no further visible increase after the adoption of OCI. This suggests that the *bulk effect* for older immigrant cohorts is less strongly articulated than the *newcomer effect* is for more recent ones. As discussed earlier, apart from flaws in the data, this could be explained by the scattered adoption of diasporic membership statuses by the Indian policy system, announcing and adopting different cards and schemes from 1999 to 2006. Further, an already high level of naturalization in the Indian community leaves less scope for large increases. As we can only match the general characteristics of the target and comparison groups, but not control for socio-economic differences and the economic integration of the groups, these differences might well underlie differences in naturalization behavior too.

In summary, the examined naturalization data show a large increase in Indian naturalizations in the U.S. since 2000, and since then, continuously increasing naturalization rates. Although general factors in the U.S., such as greater incentives post-9/11, community and public naturalization campaigns, public immigration debates and fee hikes, might have influenced the overall increase, the comparison with Asia-born and other foreign-born immigrants indicates that there is a *newcomer effect* for India-born immigrants, resulting in faster ascension to citizenship and higher levels of naturalizations for newer immigrant cohorts. Depending on the metric used, the Indian naturalization rate grew stronger than that of the chosen comparison groups by 2 to 12.8 percentage points. Although other factors related to India or the Indian-American

community, such as India's economic development, the changing rhetoric toward the diaspora and political aspirations of the community, might have contributed to the increase in the naturalization rate, and despite the limitations of the data, the observed increase is likely to be influenced predominantly by the availability of OCI.

I have argued that there are several reasons for which one can expect a *decreasing* tendency of the naturalization rate for Indian immigrants in the U.S.⁵⁷ Hence, it has to be acknowledged that the *naturalization increasing effect* of OCI might be even larger than observed from the descriptive analysis.

While the availability of data limits the application of the methods described here to determine changes in naturalization behavior in many countries, the naturalization rates discussed in this paper may be explored fruitfully in other countries, as well as for other immigrant communities in the U.S. For example, it would be interesting to know to what extent these effects can be generalized across nationality regime types.⁵⁸ On the other hand, we might focus research efforts on subsequent questions, such as what are the effects of naturalization when immigrants can have citizenship or a diasporic membership status in their countries of origin? Contrary to notions of conflicting attachments, Levitt and Jaworsky (2007) find that recent scholarship suggests that multiple memberships can enhance each other and social incorporation rather than compete with or contradict each other. This is confirmed by my recent study, in which I show that Indian-Americans generally feel that their different group memberships have additional character and that their cumulative identifications are non-conflicting. In fact, I have shown that in the naturalization process, some immigrants obtained a patriotic attitude toward the U.S., even though they had naturalized merely for practical reasons (Naujoks 2011). Other important effects of growing naturalization trends are the 'naturalization premium', described above as an income increase following the acquisition of citizenship, as well as political consequences that are associated with citizenship, as well as membership statuses in the country of origin. The increasing number of countries allowing dual citizenship or diasporic membership statuses will provide numerous opportunities to further our general understanding of these delicate relationships and their normative implications.

⁵⁷ For Indian immigrants in the U.S., this could be the case because of the growing professional opportunities that facilitate a return to India and the related increase in the costs of losing (full) Indian citizenship.

⁵⁸ Janoski (2010) shows for a sample of 18 industrialized countries that nationality regime types exist in the long-term and determine the institutions and norms, and by this means, the naturalization rate.

Appendix

Calculation of the Average Time between Immigration and Naturalization for Indian Immigrants in the U.S.

The minimum period before which new immigrants can naturalize is three years if immigrants are married to U.S. citizens and five years in other cases.⁵⁹

Another factor influencing the period before citizenship status is granted is the administrative processing time for naturalizations, which differs both over time and with regard to different states and cities. Schneider (2001:71) reports that by the end of fiscal year 1998, waiting two years for the naturalization decision was the rule. In October 2003, the overall process time for naturalizations was 14.5 months; in July 2005, it was 11.6 months (USCIS 2004:1); and in August 2004, 12 months (USCIS 2006:8). By the end of 2006, there was no backlog in citizenship applications and the process time was less than six months (USCIS 2006:2).⁶⁰ This corresponds to the official cycle time goal for naturalization applications, which is six months for the administrative decision process and one month for the oath of allegiance to be scheduled and taken (USCIS 2006:6). These are, however, average national processing periods, which can vary considerably across different states, districts and service centers. As the USCIS Ombudsman (2006:7) reports, in 2006, the periods varied from an average of less than three months in Cincinnati, Ohio, to more than 16.5 months in Green, South Carolina. While around three-quarters of the district offices reported process times under six months, only a few reported times that were longer than a year, among them, however, centers with high shares of Indian naturalizations.⁶¹

Assuming an average process time of one-and-a-half years for applications and considering that applications can be submitted 90 days before the period of continuous residency is fulfilled, the minimum period for acquiring U.S. citizenship for Indian immigrants is 4 years 3 months for immigrants married to a U.S. citizen, and 6 years 4 months for other immigrants. In the period 1997–2000, a mere five percent of all naturalizations by Indians were granted based on special provisions, most importantly

⁵⁹ Other exemptions from the five-year minimum period of residency are not important for the group under scrutiny.

⁶⁰ The backlog is defined as the number of pending cases that exceed acceptable or target-pending levels for each case type (USCIS 2006). Mazzolari (2005:12) reports that backlogs began to rise significantly in the early 1990s. As a result of the Citizenship USA program, backlogs dropped considerably in 1996, before a slowdown in naturalization processing led to large backlogs from 1997 onward that reached a high in January 2004. Schneider (2001:71) reports that by the end of the fiscal year 1998, the backlog of naturalization cases that were pending at the INS had reached almost 1.9 million. The reduction in the process time between 2004 and 2006 is the result of efforts from July 2004 onward to eliminate the backlog of naturalization (and other administrative) decisions by the Backlog Elimination Plan. In July 2005, the backlog of naturalization cases was 270,423, which was completely eliminated by the end 2006 (USCIS 2006:9).

⁶¹ In the period 2003–2008, of the total 264,000 naturalizations among Indians, 153,600, or 58 percent, took place in five states, namely California, New Jersey, Illinois, Texas, and New York. Almost 200,000, or 75 percent, of naturalizations were granted in the top ten states, which additionally include Pennsylvania, Virginia, Michigan, Georgia, and Florida. In 2006, the naturalization procedure was longer than scheduled in New York (600 days), Chicago, Philadelphia (>500 days), and Dallas (>400 days), cf. USCIS Ombudsman (2006:7).

because of marriage with a U.S. citizen.⁶² The remaining 95 percent were naturalized according to general provisions, i.e., with a five-year waiting period. Considering the discussed process time, this suggests looking at the LPR admissions seven years before any given year of naturalization data (t-7). The relevance of the seven-year interval is confirmed by the fact that in the period 1985–2009, Asia-born immigrants spent a median number of seven years as green card holders before they naturalized.⁶³

⁶² Until 2000, the INS yearbook contained data on naturalizations by general and special provisions. Naturalizations of individuals married to a U.S. citizen account for 98 percent of all special provision naturalizations in 1997–2000. Children of U.S. citizens and military personnel account for the rest. In the period 1988–1998, only 5.4 percent of all naturalizations in the U.S. were granted to spouses of U.S. citizens.

⁶³ The number is given as the average for the indicated period. Until 2000, this was based on several years of the INS Yearbook; for 2001–2009, on Lee (2010, Table 7). The average for 2005–2009, is 6.3 years only.

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