

National Penalties Reversed: The Local Politics of Citizenship and Politician Responsiveness to Immigrants

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Local politicians can play an important role in promoting citizenship, but their helpfulness varies considerably across local councils. Do politicians discriminate against immigrants seeking to naturalize in ways that public opinion and national citizenship debates would suggest? In two correspondence studies fielded in Germany, we find no evidence that features that are salient in national debates and public opinion predict responsiveness. Specifically, signals of national identification and attachment play no role. Instead, we document a reversed national penalty: politicians are 50% more likely to assist a large low-status group (Turks) than a small high status-group (Canadians). When probing mechanisms via elite interviews, we find that the desire to promote integration and electoral participation can counteract biases that typically generate discrimination. Among politicians, factors associated with group size can therefore help reverse penalties against low-status groups. Research on citizenship and discrimination must consider these disconnects between public perceptions, national debates, and local politics.

Many democracies debate questions about immigration and immigrant integration. In these discussions, citizenship acquisition and its impact on integration loom large (see Bloemraad, Korteweg, and Yurdakul 2008). Yet despite the value of citizenship, many immigrants do not naturalize. In Germany, the country with the largest foreign-born population in Europe, citizenship legislation has liberalized, but naturalization rates—the percentage of foreign nationals who become citizens—remain low. At the same time, they vary across immigrant groups and municipalities. A recent study found that, within states, naturalization rates in one municipality could be five times higher than those in another, leading to the conclusion that “differences between municipalities are even more glaring than those between states” (Thränhardt 2017).

Some of this variation has been tied to the actions of local politicians. Although unelected bureaucrats decide citizenship applications, elected officials can shape the environment in

which these decisions are made and how bureaucrats interpret the law, which often leaves room for discretionary judgments (Thränhardt 2008). They can also play a more direct role in actively promoting naturalization. For example, they sometimes seek to raise naturalization rates by organizing informational meetings, sending encouragement letters to noncitizens, or hiring additional staff to process applications.

Given the importance of citizenship, its variable adoption, and the varied involvement of local political actors in its implementation, we investigate how politicians approach citizenship acquisition on the ground. Prior scholarship has illuminated that views about ethnicity, national identity, and integration guide citizenship legislation at the national level (e.g., Bloemraad et al. 2008; Brubaker 1992). Do these factors also influence local politicians who come face-to-face with prospective citizens? We lack answers to this question, in part because research on citizenship has been more likely to assess the crafting of national laws or the individual-level effects of

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For generous financial support we thank the Mamdouha S. Bobst Center for Peace and Justice and the University Center for Human Values, both at Princeton University. This research was approved by Princeton University’s Institutional Review Board (7288 and 7342) and by the ethics committee of the Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin. Data and supporting materials necessary to reproduce the numerical results in the article are available in the *JOP* Dataverse (<https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataverse/jop>). An online appendix with supplementary material is available at <https://doi.org/10.1086/711056>.

naturalization than it has been to study the behavior of local political actors.¹ Additionally, it is difficult to elicit whether conceptions of ethnicity, national identity, or integration status bias how politicians approach the local practice of citizenship. Although some have suggested that the biases of local elites can influence how national citizenship law is implemented on the ground (see below), systematic evidence about the extent and nature of these biases and whether they produce discriminatory behavior is currently missing.

To address these questions, we turn to correspondence studies between local politicians and immigrants hoping to naturalize, as well as interviews with elected officials and bureaucrats. Correspondence studies have been widely used to unmask discrimination (Gaddis 2018), and we thus conducted a two-stage correspondence study in which fictitious immigrants sent emails to nearly 4,000 local councilors asking for assistance in the naturalization process. In the first study, we tested whether politician biases tracked national public and partisan debate about citizenship and therefore varied immigrants' degree of *national identification* and *nationality*. Critics of eased requirements and, in particular, dual citizenship, argue that too many applicants do not truly identify with Germany and instead seek a German passport for pragmatic reasons, thereby cheapening citizenship (Gerdes, Faist, and Rieple 2007).

However, such critiques often have Germany's Turkish-origin population in mind and at times boil down to whether it is desirable for a group that Germans associate with low social and economic integration status (henceforth "status") to become German nationals at all (Luft 2010; Sauer 2013). Accordingly, we vary the status of the sender and contrast emails sent by Turks with those sent by Canadians. Germans associate Turks with low and Canadians with high status, an intuition we validated with an original survey. Turks are also a much larger group, so this test assesses whether low-status groups can overcome typical biases when they are sizable, an outcome that would be in line with politicians' interest in immigrants' electoral participation and integration, but that would go against much of the existing scholarship on group threat and discrimination. In addition to status, we vary the degree to which emailers signal their identification with Germany priming, respectively, emotional attachment versus pragmatic reasons and single versus dual citizenship.

We find strong evidence that immigrant characteristics shape responses, although not in ways that past research would suggest; expressions of national identification have no impact. Rather, nationality proves most consequential. Yet unlike existing research documenting ethnic and national penalties (Baert 2018;

Costa 2017) and in contrast to national citizenship debates, we find that the usual penalty against low-status groups is reversed: the average response rate is 50% higher when an email is sent by a Turk versus by a Canadian.

To better understand why national identification, attachment and status do not shape local politician behavior in ways that public debates and opinion would predict, we carried out a second correspondence study. Canadians and Turks differ in terms of status but also in other group-level characteristics, most notably size and salience. Accordingly, the second study examines two group-level mechanisms that may underlie the higher responsiveness to a sizable and salient low-status group: electoral incentives and integration need. Paired with interview evidence, these studies yield results consistent with the idea that both the electoral participation of immigrants and their overall integration play a role in how local politicians approach citizenship acquisition. Moreover, we find that responsiveness to Turkish senders rises with the size of the local Turkish population across conditions. We thus conclude that enhancing the legitimacy of local democracy and the desire to promote integration are goals that could help reverse typical biases against low-status groups when these groups are sizable.

Our study contributes to existing research in several ways. First, it adds to our understanding of discrimination. Scholars overwhelmingly find that low-status minorities are targets of discriminatory behavior. Many of these studies are about the economic sphere, demonstrating how national origin, religiosity, or race affect callbacks for jobs or housing (Adida, Laitin, and Valfort 2016; Baert 2018; Vernby and Dancygier 2019). In Germany, Turks suffer from discrimination when compared to, for example, Americans or ethnic Germans (Kaas and Manger 2012; Sawert 2019; Tjaden, Schwemmer, and Khadjavi 2018). Additionally, a consistent finding at the mass level holds that discrimination increases with the relative size of the low-status group (Blalock 1967; Quillian 1995). Particularly pertinent, Hainmueller and Hangartner (2013) show that Swiss voters are more likely to deny citizenship to Turks as the size of this group rises. Yet by turning to elite behavior in the citizenship realm, we show that attributes that incur penalties in private markets or social interactions can bestow advantages in the political sphere.

Our focus on local politicians thus reveals an important disconnect between, on the one hand, public perceptions and national debates and, on the other hand, politician behavior in municipalities tasked with integrating immigrants. Local politicians likely harbor similar prejudices as do voters or employers, but they also confront integration and electoral incentives. Group size can therefore pull politicians in the opposite direction than it does private citizens and potentially even counteract biases against low-status groups. That expressions of national identification have no effect on responsiveness, even among

1. But see Hainmueller and Hangartner (2019) and Thränhardt (2017).

center-right politicians who frequently demand identification with Germany as a prerequisite for citizenship, further underlines this disconnect.

Second, we advance knowledge about citizenship acquisition. Although scholarship has addressed policy making (Goodman 2014; Howard 2009) and public opinion (Hainmueller and Hangartner 2013; Hopkins 2015), we are only beginning to learn about the influence of local politicians, who are often on the front lines of policy implementation. Relatedly, research on citizenship practice has emphasized that an assessment of naturalization obstacles must address the gap between legal requirements and administrative implementation (Bauböck et al. 2013; Huddleston 2013). We concur and add to this literature by examining variation in the behavior of elected officials. These actors are particularly interesting because they can serve as bridges between noncitizens and bureaucrats, but unlike bureaucrats, they are also representatives of their parties, which espouse widely varying views about what characteristics aspiring German citizens should possess.

Finally, we contribute to work on representation and constituency service. Correspondence studies isolating attributes of a constituent's background (e.g., Broockman 2013; Butler and Broockman 2011; Gaikwad and Nellis 2020; Grohs, Adam, and Knill 2016; McClendon 2016; White, Nathan, and Faller 2015)—frequently ethnicity or nationality—have significantly enhanced our understanding of representational inequalities. We take a similar approach to study German municipal councilors and innovate by adding national identification and attachment, theoretically interesting dimensions that are salient in citizenship and immigration debates but that have not been manipulated in correspondence studies.² Furthermore, we go beyond most existing work by replicating and expanding our findings with a second correspondence study, carrying out an original survey verifying citizen attitudes, and conducting elite interviews to probe mechanisms.

CITIZENSHIP IN GERMANY: THEORY AND PRACTICE

Questions about immigration and citizenship are contested across Europe, and Germany presents a significant and representative case, with its migrant population mainly consisting of refugees and labor and family migrants. Those with Turkish roots represent the largest group (about 3 million residents), and tend to be particularly salient in public debates. In this way, Germany resembles other democracies where immigration from poorer, often Muslim-majority countries, has been politicized (Adida et al. 2016; Dancygier 2010). Turning to citizenship, Germany was once known for its restrictive,

ethnicity-based nationality code (Brubaker 1992), but reforms (e.g., birthright citizenship, reduced residency times) have eased requirements. While most non-EU adults still cannot obtain dual citizenship, this rule can be relaxed (see below). In spite of these reforms, Germany's naturalization rate ranks near the bottom among West European countries (Bauböck et al. 2013; Thränhardt 2017).

Although the reasons for this development are varied (Weinmann, Becher, and Babka von Gostomski 2012), some have blamed an unwelcoming political environment. Notwithstanding increased legal permissiveness, prominent political voices continue to question whether even eligible noncitizens are deserving. These politicians, often on the Right, fear that liberalization dilutes the value of citizenship by allowing residents who do not identify with Germany to naturalize for pragmatic reasons (e.g., easier travel, access to certain jobs). National identification should, however, be one precondition for naturalization, which is seen as the hard-earned reward for successful integration. By contrast, proponents of a more liberal approach, largely on the Left, view naturalization as a tool that spurs integration (Gerdes et al. 2007; Sauer 2013).

The debate about dual citizenship reflects these contrasts. For some, relinquishing a foreign citizenship signals attachment to the nation, while failure to do so hints at divided loyalties at best and disregard for the German nationality at worst. For instance, a high-ranking center-right politician recently warned that dual citizenship reduces German citizenship to “a piece of junk” that “people just pick up along the way.”³ Center-left parties are less likely to raise such concerns (Gerdes et al. 2007). Accordingly, we hypothesize below that local politicians, especially on the Right, will be more responsive to immigrants who express attachment to and identification with Germany.

Abstract in principle, discussions about dual citizenship in practice frequently relate to Turks who are often the target of discrimination and prejudice. Correspondence studies consistently find that Turks are discriminated against in the German labor and housing market (Kaas and Manger 2012; Sawert 2019). In these studies, fictitious applications are sent to employers or landlords, with correspondence being identical except for the sender characteristic that is thought to be the source of discrimination. Differences in response rates caused by differences in characteristics are typically interpreted as discrimination (Ditlmann and Paluck 2015; Gaddis 2018). The persistent anti-Turkish bias reflects a general result: across countries, correspondence studies find discrimination against low-status minority groups, and more recently this finding has

2. Butler, Karpowitz, and Pope's (2012) experiment includes a question about citizenship, but tests service against policy requests.

3. Andreas Scheuer, General Secretary of the Christian Social Union; “CSU: ‘Der deutsche Pass ist kein Ramschartikel.’” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, August 23, 2016.

been extended to politicians and bureaucrats. Table 1 presents a summary of these findings (see app. A for a detailed breakdown; apps. A–G are available online).

If similar prejudices play out in the citizenship process, Turks might encounter significant hurdles when trying to naturalize. At the same time, naturalization constitutes one of the few policy levers that politicians can actually pull to affect integration, and its liberalization has accordingly been informed by the goal to integrate Turks (see Sauer 2013).

Naturalization can also have electoral consequences, and electoral incentives may sway politicians to promote the naturalization of Turks who—due to their size—can be an important voting bloc. Politicians who anticipate to benefit from Turkish voters might therefore encourage their naturalization, irrespective of integration concerns. Applied to our study, integration and electoral incentives can thus pull politicians in different directions than mass-level prejudice (see Dancygier 2017), a tension that is embodied in the hypotheses we formulate below.

Specifically, we examine whether features that are prominent in national debates and public opinion—national identification and attachment—trickle down to the local level or if a different set of concerns guides politicians on the ground. Germany is covered by one citizenship law, but this law is implemented in thousands of municipalities. Applications are processed locally, and where immigrants live can make a difference in whether they naturalize. For example, in 2016 state-level naturalization rates were .98 in Bavaria compared to 1.59 in Schleswig-Holstein. Still larger differences emerge at the municipal level, even within states (Statistisches Bundesamt 2018; Thränhardt 2008, 2017). In North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany’s most populous state, the 2016 naturalization rate was 1.91, but several localities scored above 3, while others were nearer to 1.⁴

This variation arises in part because implementation guidelines allow discretion with respect to assessing integration, the suitability of application documents, or the granting of dual citizenship. The latter is technically only permitted for Swiss and EU citizens, but local officials can deviate from this rule, for instance, when applicants face difficulties renouncing their nationality (e.g., due to administrative hurdles). In 2017, 17% of Turks who naturalized thus kept their Turkish citizenship, some perhaps due to favorable local conditions (Statistisches Bundesamt 2018; Thränhardt 2008). As one German politician noted, “there’s a lot of . . . room that . . . allows you to make naturalization-friendly decisions” (Tjaden 2013, 19).

4. See http://www.integrationsmonitoring.nrw.de/integrationsberichterstattung_nrw/Integration_kommunal/Dateneubersicht_Indikatoren/Ausgabe_2017/Indikator_2_2.pdf, accessed May 8, 2019.

Table 1. Response Rates to Lower-Status Groups in Audit/Correspondence Studies

Domain	Number of Studies	Lower (%)	Same (%)	Higher (%)
Labor market	45	93	7	0
Housing market	8	88	12	0
Bureaucrats	8	50	50	0
Politicians	8	75	25	0

Note. Response rates relative to higher-status group. See app. A for the full list of studies.

Anecdotally, these “naturalization-friendly decisions” often occur where local politicians deliberately promote citizenship. Some councils have developed information campaigns. Others get involved directly by contacting eligible immigrants who have not yet naturalized. In the city of Kassel, the mayor sent out encouragement letters to each of the city’s 17,000 eligible foreign nationals, and he expanded naturalization ceremonies. Four months after the campaign’s start, naturalization inquiries increased by 25%.⁵ In Hamburg, similar letters were sent to over 150,000 noncitizens.⁶ In Bremen, politicians launched a poster and leaflet campaign in which naturalized residents advertised the value of citizenship, and they hired additional caseworkers to raise the number of naturalizations via a more efficient bureaucracy.⁷ Similar initiatives have been undertaken elsewhere, in large cities (e.g., Stuttgart) and in smaller towns (e.g., Landau). But they are not the norm, and many noncitizens still do not possess adequate information about naturalization procedures (Weinmann et al. 2012).

In short, although local politicians do not make naturalization decisions (bureaucrats in naturalization offices do), they can affect how supportive the environment is in which citizenship acquisition occurs, suggesting that politician biases may affect who becomes a citizen.

EXPERIMENTAL STUDIES

Our central question is whether features that are prominent in the national debate and public opinion also shape local politicians’ approaches to citizenship, or whether these actors are driven by electoral or integration considerations. Answering

5. See <http://www.stadt-kassel.de/aktuelles/meldungen/22940>, accessed May 8, 2019.

6. See <http://www.hamburg.de/pressearchiv-fhh/3187392/2011-12-08-sk-einbuengerungskampagne>, accessed May 8, 2019.

7. See <http://landesportal.bremen.de/senat/43272596>, accessed May 8, 2019.

this question requires methods that can tease out causal effects as well as mechanisms. Individuals, and particularly politicians, experience pressure to hide biases and to behave in socially desirable ways. They may also have unconscious biases of which they are not aware. Simply asking politicians whether they prioritize certain groups or individual traits in the citizenship process is therefore problematic. Correspondence studies are powerful tools that can sidestep potentially hidden biases (Gaddis 2018). Moreover, since we want to learn about actual politician engagement with immigrants, this type of experiment is much closer to the behavior that we want to illuminate than are attitude surveys, for example. To uncover which types of biases might be at work, we sent emails to local politicians asking about assistance in the naturalization process in which we randomly vary different characteristics of the immigrant sender and his group. Furthermore, taking our cues from the theory and practice of citizenship in Germany reviewed above, we focus on characteristics that are contentious in the citizenship debate (study 1) as well as integration need and electoral considerations (study 2).

While correspondence studies excel at causally identifying biases operating in actual behavior, they can be less well equipped to establish mechanisms. We therefore adopt a multi-pronged approach: We conduct surveys to probe the plausibility of elements of our correspondence study; field two correspondence studies, with the second study building on the results of the first one; and carry out interviews with politicians and bureaucrats.

Study 1

In our first experiment we manipulated three factors: emotional ties to Germany (feeling German vs. pragmatic motive), passport choice (renouncing vs. keeping original nationality), and nationality (Turkish vs. Canadian). The goal of study 1 was to understand whether immigrant characteristics that have been salient in the citizenship debate and academic research—national identification and nationality—affect politician responsiveness.

Hypotheses and treatments. First, following the academic literature and public debates about the importance of national belonging, we expect that signals of *national identification* increase responsiveness. To manipulate national identification, we contrast immigrants who state they want to naturalize because they “feel German” with those who emphasize legal benefits, thus pitting motives related to affective attachments to the nation against a more utilitarian rationale. Our second national identification treatment taps into dual citizenship. Renouncing one’s nationality should signal a higher degree of national identification than holding on to it.

H1. Response rates will be higher if immigrants indicate they feel German than when they state pragmatic motives for citizenship.

H2. Response rates will be higher if immigrants state that they want to renounce (vs. keep) their prior nationality.

H3. In line with the partisan differences outlined above, we expect effects in hypotheses 1 and 2 to be larger among politicians on the Right.

Second, we hypothesize differential response rates based on sender *nationality*, although the direction of this effect is unclear ex ante. On the one hand, and echoing previous findings, local politicians may discriminate against a group perceived to be of low status, but on the other hand, they may be particularly eager to help this group integrate via naturalization or to benefit from this group electorally once its members are naturalized, especially if the group is also high in salience and large in size.

H4. Response rates will differ based on the status of immigrant nationality.

H5. We again expect partisan effects, with politicians on the Right being less likely to respond to lower-status nationality groups than politicians on the Left.⁸

Since Turks feature so prominently in citizenship debates, our experiment examines responsiveness to this group. To place the Turkish case in context, we include another group, the selection of which was not straightforward. Given the nature of the integration debate and the position of Turks in German society, we were most interested in comparing responsiveness on the basis of status. As such, it would have been ideal to choose a group that is similar in most respects but that differs in status. Such a group does not exist.⁹ Sizable groups that share a guestworker history (such as Italians or Greeks) tend to be EU citizens who are entitled to dual citizenship. When considering non-EU migrants, we opted against dark-skinned residents (e.g., from African countries) because we

8. In the study 1 preanalysis plan, we formulated hypotheses about models that include the main effects of treatment factors that we tested here but also interaction and municipality effects. Since we present a second experiment, discussion of these introduces a degree of complexity that goes beyond the scope of this article but is part of a separate paper (Alizade, Dancygier, and Ditlmann 2017). We modified our multiple comparison tests accordingly.

9. We did not consider Russians since many are “ethnic Germans” who, historically, have been entitled to German citizenship.

were concerned that in small municipalities, politicians would know whether these more visible migrants lived in their town. We also considered Serbs, a large non-EU group, and developed a survey measuring whether perceptions of Serbs differ markedly from those of Turks. Relying on a variety of indicators, our results show that, on the whole, Germans do not rank Serbs substantially more highly on social and integration outcomes than they do Turks (see app. C).

In light of these similarities, we sought a non-EU group whose perceived status would clearly exceed that of Turks. Our survey therefore also included rankings of Canadians. As suspected, Germans rate Canadians more highly on all dimensions and expect Turks to be more frequent targets of discrimination. In an additional online survey we also pilot-tested Australians. Although there were no meaningful differences between Australians and Canadians, having to settle on one group, we chose Canadians.

The advantage of the Turk-Canadian contrast is the clear difference in status across fields, amid the same legal context. Our survey covers many dimensions (e.g., language, education, competence, honesty, warmth, sector of work, desirability of naturalization, cultural similarity, religion), and on each one Canadians rank more highly or similar to Germans. One potential drawback is that because Canadians are a small group, requests for citizenship by Canadians will be rare and hence might not be credible. Anticipating this concern, we asked survey respondents to rate the credibility of the email, randomly varying sender nationality. We found that emails from both senders were seen as credible overall, and that those sent by Turks were rated as only somewhat more credible (5.5 vs. 4.9 on a seven-point scale). Second, we are able to replicate our main results when we limit analyses to the subset of locations in which Canadians reside (see app. A). Third, presumed rarity did not appear to affect how soon and with what qualitative content politicians replied.¹⁰

Finally, while the Canadian-Turkish comparison presents interpretation challenges, it also reflects empirical regularities: In the European setting high-status non-EU groups are rarely sizable. In both the real world and in our experiment, nationality is thus a compound treatment proxying status and size. Study 1 cannot separate these two, but we discuss below how this limitation informs our design of study 2 and additional analyses we conduct.

10. If rarity caused greater hesitance or suspicion, we would expect longer response times and more inquiries about the Canadian. However, among responses, the average time was 2.90/2.98 days to Canadians/Turks, and 9.64%/9.66% of responses to the Canadian/Turkish sender indicated suspicion (e.g., asking for the immigrant's address).

Box 1 contains the treatment emails and assignment proportions. We selected male sender names from a list of common names for each nationality (avoiding names signaling Kurdish or Alevite origins). Turkish women are frequently portrayed as constrained by patriarchal structures that discourage contact with out-group men (Dancygier 2017). German politicians—many of whom are men—could therefore perceive a Turkish (but not a Canadian) woman who reaches out to them as more assimilated than they would a comparable man. Since we do not have sufficient statistical power to test such interactions, we used male names only.¹¹

To create a realistic-sounding text, we translated the German text into English and then asked students from a German-as-a-second-language-class to translate the text back to German. We used their translations to determine the appropriate writing level and to insert a few grammatical and punctuation errors.

All emails mention the politician's participation in the naturalization ceremony. It is common for local politicians to attend these ceremonies, making the request realistic and plausible. To avoid forwarding to naturalization offices (since they sometimes cover several municipalities, which could lead to spillover and unnecessarily involve additional people), we selected a question targeted at the local politician, and we indicate a pending meeting with the naturalization office. Finally, to ensure that the email was appropriate and realistic we pilot-tested several versions in another survey of German citizens (see app. C).

The sample. The study 1 sample is composed of 2,074 municipalities (covering 75% of Germany's population). To be included, a municipality had to have a population of at least 2,000 residents and politicians' email addresses or contact forms had to be listed on the council or local party website (see app. D for details). In each municipality, we randomly selected one politician from a center-left or a center-right party, oversampling center-left parties. Germany's center-left parties take more immigrant-friendly positions, and immigrants are more likely to support (and hence probably to contact) these parties. However, we still include center-right politicians; the CDU/CSU (Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union) is competitive among a significant share of migrants, and it has sought to make inroads among German Turks (Dancygier 2017). For each politician, we recorded their estimated age, special roles (e.g., mayor), and if their name was foreign

11. See also Butler and Tavits (2017) on the hijab's effect on politician-citizen interactions.

Box 1: Email Text and Assignment Proportions (Study 1)**Email Text**

Subject line: Question about naturalization in [name of municipality]

Hello [Mr./Ms. name of councilor],

My name is [Ahmet Özcan/Onur Özdemir/Jim Groves/Mark Hughson], and I live in your town. Because I [feel German/want to enjoy the same legal benefits as Germans] I want to naturalize. At the same time I want to [keep/renounce] my [Turkish/Canadian] citizenship. I already made an appointment with the naturalization office. I heard that local politicians sometimes participate in the naturalization ceremony and wanted to ask whether it would be helpful for my citizenship application if I met with a local politician.

With best wishes,

[Ahmet Özcan/Onur Özdemir/Jim Groves/Mark Hughson]

Assignment to Treatment Conditions	Nationality	
	Canadian	Turkish
National Identification		
Feel German		
Single citizenship	1/8	1/8
Dual citizenship	1/8	1/8
Legal benefits		
Single citizenship	1/8	1/8
Dual citizenship	1/8	1/8

sounding (this applied to only 2%).¹² This procedure yielded a treated sample of 1,530 (75%) center-left and 470 (23%) center-right politicians.¹³

Table 2 shows how our sample of municipalities compares to all German municipalities with more than 2,000 residents: it has larger populations, is more urban, more diverse, and more likely to be in the former West Germany. We thus oversample locations where immigrants actually reside, and a request from an immigrant is most likely. Limiting our sample to municipalities with at least 2,000 residents in turn means that it is unclear whether our study generalizes to smaller municipalities, although treatment effects do not vary when we subset our sample to municipalities with small populations (up to 5,000 residents). Furthermore, we analyzed whether technical aspects could account for the absence of politicians' email addresses and hence exclusion from our sample. Breaking down mu-

nicipalities by broadband access, we indeed find that where politicians' email addresses are unavailable, households have systematically lower rates of access. In other words, our sample underrepresents locations where, due to technical barriers,

Table 2. Municipality Characteristics

	Sample	Germany Overall (Population ≥2,000)
<i>N</i>	2,321	5,159
Population	26,078 (73,372)	14,742 (50,441)
Population density	451 (618)	310 (460)
Foreign population (%)	5.91 (4.01)	4.64 (3.76)
East German (%)	12.24 (32.78)	19.56 (39.67)

Note. Means with standard deviations in parentheses (for more details see table A4). *N* in Sample column encompasses all municipalities treated in studies 1 or 2: 2,035 municipalities were treated in study 1, 1,759 in study 2. The number is lower in study 2 mainly because we excluded municipalities where we could not sample a politician from a party that was not already treated in study 1. We also dropped municipalities in study 2 in which politicians who were treated in study 1 forwarded our email to other politicians or bureaucrats (see app. D for details).

12. When no politician from the assigned party was available, a randomly selected politician from a party with a similar ideological orientation served as replacement (e.g., Greens replaced Social Democrats).

13. We exclude 35 Free Democratic Party (FDP) politicians from the analysis of partisan differences because on citizenship they cannot clearly be categorized as center-left or center-right.

the use of email is probably less likely. Our results thus do not easily generalize to those types of locations (see app. A for details).

Experimental procedure. We adopt an unmatched, between-subject design and allocated one politician from each municipality at random to one of the eight treatment conditions (box 1; we chose this design to avoid spillovers). Using a domain with a generic name (direktemail.de) that we created, we simultaneously sent all emails on May 10, 2016 (with the exception of municipalities that used preset forms to be completed online [contact forms], which were sent in the following days; see fig. A2a for balance checks; figs. A1–A5 are available online).¹⁴ Our main dependent variable was whether politicians responded (autoreplies do not count as a response).

To contextualize our results and because we could not find a prior correspondence study with German local politicians, we tried to establish baseline response rates. Politicians in a subset of municipalities (22%) received a neutral email in which a local male resident with a German-sounding name inquired about the date of the next local election.¹⁵

We monitored responses for four weeks. If an email required a response, we sent the following email: “Thank you for your kind answer. Due to unforeseen, personal circumstances, the issue is no longer relevant for me right now, but thank you again for your kind response.”

In addition to measuring responsiveness in a binary way, we coded responses to make sure that they can indeed be understood as helpful or encouraging (Hemker and Rink 2017). We used three categories: information provision (e.g., listing requirements or referring to the correct office); offer to help (e.g., proposing to meet or to go over the citizenship test); and positive affect (e.g., wishing good luck or expressing happiness that the person intends to naturalize). For each category we created a dummy and a count variable (number of information provisions, help offers, or positive affect expressions). Two independent coders manually coded all emails using categories and rules developed by the authors (Cohen’s Kappa values: .70 for information provision; .83 for offer to help; .84 for positive affect).

Ethical considerations

Before turning to our results, we discuss ethical considerations. Correspondence studies, as all covert research, raise ethical concerns because participants cannot consent. Numerous professional associations therefore clarify the conditions under which covert methods are nonetheless justified (Zschirnt 2019). The

EU Code of Ethics for Socioeconomic Research identifies correspondence studies as one type of permissible covert research because they are often the only way to avoid eliciting socially desirable behavior (Dench, Iphofen, and Huws 2004). But of course these methods should be used as carefully as possible.

Three primary ethical concerns thus guided our research. First, the request should be designed to minimize the politician’s time (Butler and Broockman 2011). In our pilot study we read responses closely to ensure that they did not contain detailed information. We found that emails were typically brief, and if information was included, it was frequently a link easily obtainable online. During the main study, if a response gave us any indication that the politician was planning to spend more time (e.g., suggested gathering additional information), we responded immediately with a generic (Institutional Review Board [IRB]-approved) text noting that the request was no longer relevant. Also, to reduce the chances of involving additional officials, the initial email stated that the immigrant had already contacted the naturalization office.

A second concern was that our emails might make it more difficult for future immigrants to obtain information. We thus responded to all emails that required a response with a very friendly, grateful message. A third consideration was privacy protection. Because immigrant integration is a politicized topic, politicians might face reputational penalties if it became public that they did not respond to an immigrant in need. To guard privacy we switched account passwords several times, encrypted files during transfers and deleted personal information once data collection ended.

Despite our best efforts we realized that any question about naturalization spawns lengthier responses than, for example, simply informing a citizen when the next election takes place. Thus, in addition to minimizing harms (i.e., time spent), we followed the beneficence principle by maximizing benefits. We innovate by providing a public good: disseminating information for immigrants who want to naturalize. From the responses we learned that local politicians are sometimes an untapped resource and also under what conditions they are likely to respond. Based on these insights and assisted by a graphic designer, we produced a leaflet containing information (in German, Turkish, Arabic, and English) detailing how local politicians can and cannot be helpful in the naturalization process as well as general information about naturalization (see app. E). We will distribute the leaflet to nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) working with immigrants. The leaflet can furthermore wash out any potential residual effects of our study if it causes a higher-than-normal number of immigrants to email local politicians.

After much reflection and undergoing IRB review in Germany and the United States, we concluded that the benefits of

14. We chose a week when almost none of the states had school holidays.

15. Appendix A shows the composition of the baseline sample.

Table 3. Mean Response Rates by Treatment Conditions (Study 1)

Treatment Condition	N	Response Rate (%)	Ratio	95% CI (Ratio)	Difference	SE (Difference)	p (Difference)
Nationality:							
Canadian	1,017	24.48	1.54	[1.35, 1.76]	13.14	2.032	.000
Turkish	1,018	37.62					
Citizenship:							
Single	1,014	29.98	1.07	[.94, 1.22]	2.15	2.057	.296
Dual	1,021	32.13					
Motivation:							
Feel German	1,020	30.78	1.02	[.89, 1.16]	.55	2.069	.790
Legal benefits	1,015	31.33					

Note. 95% confidence intervals (CIs) are based on nonparametric bootstrapping with 10,000 samples. *P*-values for mean differences are based on two-tailed Welch's *t*-tests.

our study outweighed potential harms. We currently observe severe inequalities in the naturalization process, and our goal is to study their potential drivers. Furthermore, engaging local officials, as email recipients and later with the published study, is a good way to reduce some of the barriers that immigrants who want to naturalize face at the local level.

Results of study 1

We received 632 replies, generating a response rate of 31.06% (the treated sample consists of 2,035 observations; see app. D for sources of attrition).¹⁶ Our baseline email, which asked a simpler question, yielded a higher response rate of 50%.¹⁷ Left politicians responded to 33.53% of naturalization emails, while right politicians replied to only 22.98% (SE = .023, $p = .000$). Yet this gap also emerges in responses to the baseline email ($b = .108$, SE = .048, $p = .026$). We therefore cannot conclude that it is the naturalization request that produces this difference.

Table 3 displays mean response rates by treatment conditions. In contrast to our predictions, we found no evidence that feeling German or indicating that the sender seeks to renounce their current passport yields higher responsiveness. Pragmatic motives or the desire for dual citizenship are not punished. By contrast, the nationality effect is large, and it favors the lower-status group: 24.48% of politicians respond when they receive an email from a fictitious Canadian, but this number rises to

37.62% when the sender is Turkish (SE = .020, $p = .000$).¹⁸ This 13-point difference represents a 50% increase. It is very sizable in absolute terms as well as when compared to other correspondence studies (Costa 2017). Most strikingly, we find a penalty against the high-status group.

Our hypotheses stated that emailers with low national identification and of Turkish nationality should receive lower response rates among center-right politicians. Figure 1 reveals no significant difference for any of the three treatments in how often center-right versus center-left politicians responded. While descriptively it appears that the nationality gap is smaller among center-right politicians, table 4 shows that none of the interactions of the treatments with partisanship are significant. Although our treatments achieved good balance, in column 2 we nevertheless include additional controls. The results remain largely unchanged.

We next estimated OLS regressions based on our qualitative codings, with our three categories (information provision, offer to help, positive affect) as dichotomous and count outcomes. Results generally parallel outcomes using the binary response measure (see app. A).

Summing up, the central result of study 1 is that features that are prominent in national debates and public opinion—national identification and attachment—do not shape responses of local politicians. National parties vigorously debate the significance of emotional attachment and dual citizenship, but these factors do not affect how local politicians actually engage with prospective citizens. Coupled with the absence of notable partisan treatment effects, this suggests that

16. This is about half the responses that fictitious German constituents received in an audit study with German members of parliament (see Bol et al. 2015).

17. Increased responses for a simpler email are consistent with results by White et al. (2015).

18. Results in this section hold up when correcting for multiple comparisons except the partisan difference in the baseline condition (the baseline sample is much smaller than the experimental sample (see app. B)).

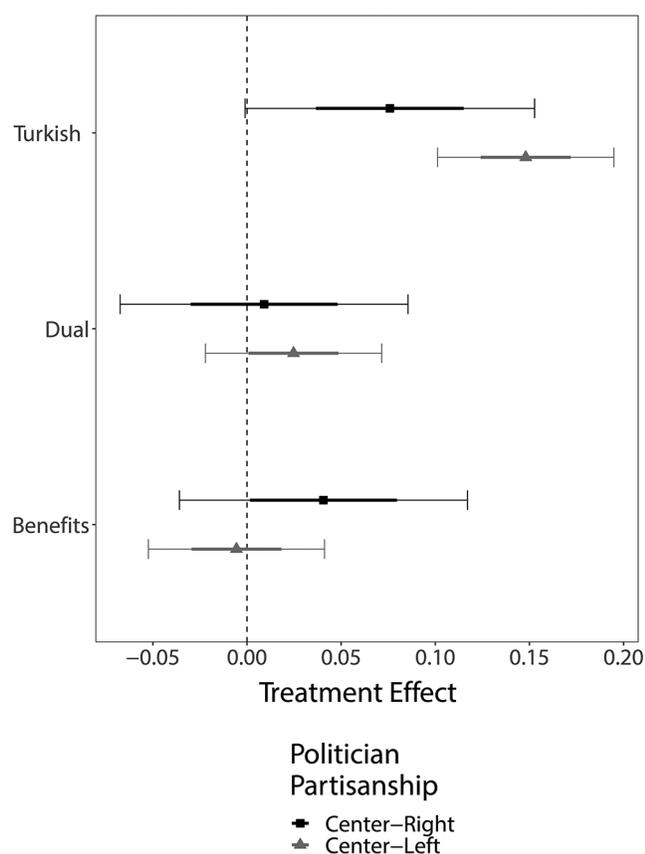


Figure 1. Treatment effects by politician partisanship (study 1). OLS estimates with robust standard errors (*thick lines*) and 95% confidence intervals. Dependent variable is *Response* (0/1). CDU/CSU was classified as center-right; the SPD, the Greens, and the Left as center-left. Models exclude FDP politicians ($N = 35$) because on citizenship the FDP cannot be easily classified as center-left or center-right. *Turkish* is coded 1/0 if the sender is a Turkish/Canadian national. *Dual* is coded 1/0 if the sender wants to keep/renounce his citizenship. *Benefits* is coded 1/0 if the sender mentions legal benefits/feeling German. CDU/CSU = Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union; FDP = Free Democratic Party; SPD = Social Democratic Party.

local politicians are guided by a different set of concerns.¹⁹ For local politicians, nationality—not emotional attachment or dual citizenship—is key, with Turks being favored, even among the Right. Observing a penalty against a high-status group, particularly among center-right politicians, is extremely rare. Although, as mentioned, we cannot tease out what drives this nationality effect, this finding raises the possibility that local politicians expect to benefit from serving Turks (a large, salient group) more than Canadians (a small, nonsalient group). We seek to unpack this intuition in study 2.

Study 2

The first experiment revealed the key role of nationality, which proxies both integration status and salience and size. Our aim

19. See also Holtkamp (2006) on how national party ideology affects local politician behavior.

in study 2 is therefore to assess whether and how integration need and group size influence responsiveness even while holding nationality constant. In study 1 we had hypothesized that the direction of the nationality effect was unclear *ex ante*, since local politicians might be interested in helping a group that is poorly integrated. In study 2 we directly prime local integration need: in one condition, the Turkish emailer states that he is contacting a councilor because municipalities often address integration problems of Turks.

We address the role of size in two ways. First, if size has a positive effect, this may be because elected officials are more responsive to constituents when they stand to benefit electorally (Broockman 2013). This is also plausible in Germany, where most local elections allow for the casting of personal votes.²⁰ Although the value of one vote is identical, helping an individual who belongs to a sizable group and is embedded in group networks can have multiplier effects. Furthermore, parties—especially on the Left—can benefit from the symbolic value of having the support of an immigrant group that is salient in public debates, as large, low-status groups often are (Dancygier 2017). This logic could underlie the higher response rates to Turks. Second, in addition to the experimental prime, we investigate observationally whether responsiveness increases with local group size. While informative, this analysis cannot fully uncover the mechanism—electoral or otherwise—behind group size, and we consequently carry out interviews to probe this issue further.

The main goal of study 2 is to zoom in on what drives responsiveness to Turks, but for robustness we also wanted to replicate the reverse national penalty. Study 2 thus featured four conditions, not fully crossed. In one condition we primed the integration need of Turks (for plausibility this was sent only by Turks). In a second and third condition we highlighted vote intentions of a Canadian and Turkish emailer, respectively. In a fourth, control condition, a Turkish sender requested help without a prime. We randomly assigned one politician (a different one than in study 1) per municipality to one of these four conditions.

Hypotheses and treatments. Study 2 tests the following hypotheses:

H6. Among emails from Turkish senders, the integration need and the electoral incentive emails will yield a higher response rate than a control email.

H7. The email from the Turkish sender may yield a higher response rate if it highlights electoral incentives

20. This applies to 98% of politicians in our sample.

Table 4. Treatment Effects by Politician Partisanship (Study 1)

	Dependent Variable: Response	
	Without Covariates (1)	With Covariates (2)
Turkish	.076 (.039)	.074 (.039)
Dual citizenship	.009 (.039)	.014 (.039)
Legal benefits	.041 (.039)	.042 (.039)
Center-left politician	.084 (.043)	.068 (.044)
Turkish × center-left politician	.072 (.046)	.075 (.046)
Dual citizenship × center-left politician	.016 (.046)	.020 (.046)
Legal benefits × center-left politician	−.046 (.046)	−.047 (.046)
Constant	.167*** (.037)	−.138* (.070)
State FEs	No	Yes
R ²	.032	.069

Note. OLS coefficients with robust standard errors in parentheses. Dependent variable is dichotomous (0/1). $N = 2,000$. We used multiple imputation (with 20 imputed data sets) for 16 missing values in covariates. FE = fixed effects. For a list of covariates, see table A4.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

rather than integration need, especially among center-left politicians.

If politicians only consider the value of one vote, and if electoral incentives mainly guide responses, then the electoral incentive treatment should reduce the gap between the Canadian and the Turk. More plausible, however, is the notion that politicians view individuals as rooted in groups and that the electoral incentives to respond are stronger when the message comes from a Turkish sender, leading to the following hypothesis:

H8. In the electoral incentives condition, response rates will be higher if the email is sent by a Turk compared to when it is sent by a Canadian.

Importantly, as before, the Turk-Canadian comparison is subject to interpretation challenges. Yet given that the liter-

ature overwhelmingly finds discrimination against low-status groups, we repeat the comparison to ensure that the reverse national penalty is a robust finding.

The choice of names and the crafting of the email text mirrored procedures of study 1. We also kept the request fairly similar; although to avoid detection, we used different names and did not reference naturalization ceremonies. To reinforce the electoral incentives prime, the emailer mentions the politician's party affiliation and that he and many of his friends intend to vote for this party. By implication, ignoring the email could generate additional electoral penalties if the sender informs his friends that the politician is unresponsive. In the integration-need treatment we made salient the role of the councilor as a representative of the municipality, and we highlighted the integration problems of Turks (see box 2). One difficulty we face is that these features were likely already on politicians' minds in the first study. In theory, we could have juxtaposed opposing statements (i.e., vote intention for a different party/Turks do not face integration problems), but this approach would have been neither ethical nor plausible. To help assess the plausibility of the proposed mechanisms, we therefore supplement our experimental findings by interviewing local politicians and bureaucrats.

The sample. We used mostly the same municipalities as in study 1, but to avoid spillover, we sampled at random from a different party in the same municipality than in study 1 (in some instances this was not possible; see app. D). Since study 1 oversampled center-left politicians, we had a surplus of center-right politicians to sample from. Partly because of this technical consideration and partly to better test for treatment effects by party, we sampled center-right and center-left politicians in an equal balance. We retrieved email addresses following the procedure used in study 1 but used a different random numbers scheme to select politicians, yielding 902 (51%) center-right and 857 (49%) center-left politicians.²¹

Experimental procedure. Again in an unmatched, between-subject design we allocated one politician from each municipality at random to the treatment conditions (box 2). In a baseline email we inquired about the cost of the municipal dog tax. Our goal was to address a matter that is handled at the municipality level and that would not be forwarded

21. Since it was difficult to sample additional politicians from the FDP and the Left Party, these parties are excluded in study 2. In study 1, Left Party and Social Democratic Party (SPD) politicians did not differ in response rates or treatment effects (note that analyses in fig. 1 and table 4 exclude the FDP [$N = 35$]).

Box 2: Email Text and Assignment Proportions (Study 2)**Email Text**

Subject line: Naturalization in [name of municipality]

Hello [Mr./Ms. name of councilor],

My name is [Mehmet Demircan/Mustafa Yilmaz/Ryan Morgan/Dylan Hall]. I am [Turkish/Canadian] and would like to naturalize.

[I am contacting you because you belong to [party of politician], the party that I, and many of my friends, want to vote for during the next local elections.]

Or (only for emails sent by a Turk):

[I am contacting you because you are a municipal representative and municipalities sometimes concern themselves with the integration problems of Turks.]

I will soon have an appointment with the naturalization office and a friend told me that local politicians can also be helpful with the naturalization process. Is it helpful for me to meet with a politician?

With best wishes,

[Mehmet Demircan/Mustafa Yilmaz/Ryan Morgan/Dylan Hall]

Assignment to Treatment Conditions	Nationality	
	Canadian	Turkish
Control (no reference to vote or integration)	NA	1/4
Vote intention	1/4	1/4
Integration problems	NA	1/4

to higher-level administrators. Furthermore, since the dog tax represents a very small share of municipalities' revenues (0.05%),²² we can rule out that budgetary incentives drive responses. Using accounts from new domains (again with generic names: webnewmail.de and onemails.de), we simultaneously sent all experimental emails on March 29, 2017, and baseline emails ($N = 406$) two days later (see fig. A2b for balance checks).²³ We monitored responses for four weeks, and when emails required a response, we followed the same procedure as in study 1. As before, we measured response rates in binary form, and we created codings for information provision, offer to help, and positive affect (Cohen's Kappa values: .77, .78, and .81, respectively).

Results of study 2

We received 560 replies, generating a response rate of 31.84%, very similar to that in study 1. Our baseline email yielded a

response rate of 66.75%. The average response rates to the naturalization request emails were 25.17% for center-right and 38.86% for center-left politicians ($b = .137$, $SE = .022$, $p = .000$) and 60.94% for center-right and 71.96% for center-left politicians for the baseline email ($b = .110$, $SE = .047$, $p = .019$).

Figure 2 presents response rates across conditions. In contrast to hypothesis 6, among Turkish senders highlighting vote intentions and integration need did not increase responsiveness. The control and vote intention emails (Turkish sender) receive a relatively high and statistically indistinguishable response rate of 35.06% and 36.16%, respectively. This could be because electoral incentives are salient even without being primed.

Priming vote intentions does cause a greater degree of responsiveness (a marginally significant effect) than making reference to integration problems (we address the interaction with partisanship below). When a Turkish emailer states vote intentions, he receives replies to 36.16% of emails. This falls to 31.21% when he mentions councilors' involvement in addressing integration problems ($b = .049$, $SE = .032$, $p = .121$).

22. See <https://www.test.de/FAQ-Hundesteuer-Antworten-auf-die-wichtigsten-Fragen-4836779-0/#question-2>, accessed May 8, 2019.

23. We chose a week when none of the states had school holidays. The treated sample included 1,759 observations; see app. D for details on attrition.

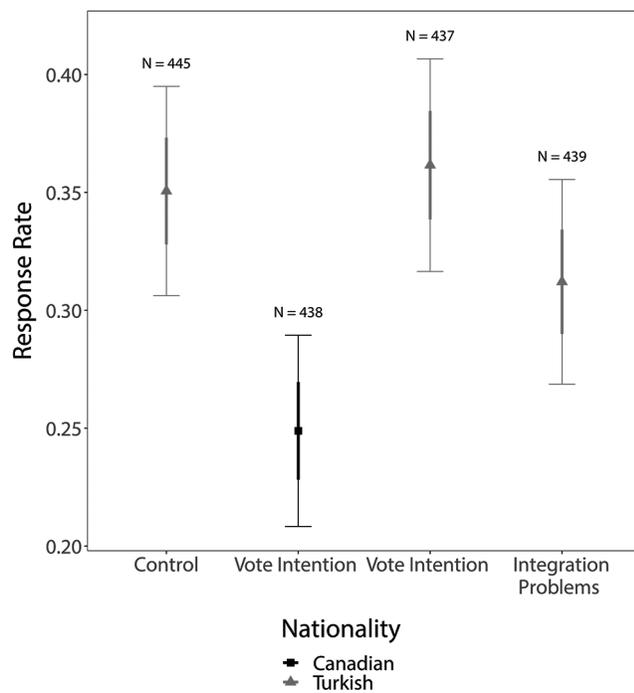


Figure 2. Mean Response Rates by Treatment Conditions (Study 2)

Results further replicate the nationality effect, confirming hypothesis 8: Canadians receive fewer responses in the electoral incentives condition ($b = .113$, $SE = .031$, $p = .000$), and this difference (.113 points in study 2 and .131 in study 1) is quite similar across studies. When we weight the analyses to obtain the same partisan balance across studies, the nationality difference in study 1 is .114, almost identical to study 2. Finally, as in study 1, the qualitative results largely complement the results for response rates (see app. A).

Turning to partisanship, our hypothesis stated that the effect of the electoral incentives treatment (when compared to the integration treatment) should be stronger among left-of-center politicians (hypothesis 7) because center-left parties tend to benefit more from being associated with Turkish voters and, further, because left politicians might perceive fewer integration problems. Analyses in table 5, which restrict the sample to the integration and electoral incentives conditions (among Turks), show that no such interaction is present.²⁴

Probing mechanisms. Overall, group-level factors associated with nationality are important: Even when Canadian emailers mention vote intentions, politicians are much less likely to respond to Canadians than they are to Turks. The reverse national penalty persists. The results are less clear,

24. As in study 1, the partisan difference in the baseline was the only result that did not hold up once we adjusted for multiple comparisons (see app. B).

however, in pinpointing what type of group-level factors are relevant; when testing for the presence of one mechanism we cannot easily rule out the presence of another. Researchers often encounter such confounds. Even if experimental designs randomize treatments, they sometimes cannot isolate the causal pathway in a way that maintains realism (in our case, eliminating electoral incentives). We therefore probe further by examining contextual variation in our treatment effects and with evidence from elite interviews.

We first test whether response rates are sensitive to the size of the Turkish population. Table 6 breaks down response rates by treatment condition and the Turkish population size (coded “large” when the share of Turkish citizens in a municipality is at or above the sample median and “small” otherwise).²⁵ Response rates to Canadian emails do not vary by the size of the Turkish population. By contrast, politicians are more likely to respond to a Turkish sender when they are elected in municipalities that contain a large share of Turks ($p < .01$). These differences are substantively large, ranging from .12 to .19 points, representing increases of 43% to 77%.²⁶ They also suggest that among politicians, group size can potentially reverse national penalties that are widespread among the public at large. However, response rates to Turks rise across conditions, making it difficult to isolate or confirm the electoral incentives pathway.²⁷

INTERVIEWS

To investigate mechanisms further, we carried out elite interviews. Given the sensitivity of immigration and citizenship, the purpose was not to arrive at a representative picture of elite opinion, but to ascertain the plausibility of mechanisms. Moreover, since events on the ground—elections, migration developments—can influence elite responses, we opted for a brief recruitment window (six to eight weeks). Anticipating a low response rate and aiming to complete 20 interviews, we sent 245 recruitment emails to 83 municipalities (of various sizes, partisanship and immigrant diversity) and conducted 23 semi-structured phone interviews. We contacted local politicians (avoiding those included in the experiments); employees in

25. A measure of naturalized Turks is not available. Another measure—the number of residents with a Turkish migration background—is only available for Bavaria. Here the correlation between this variable and the number of Turkish citizens is .99.

26. In study 1, response rates also rise with the Turkish population and do so more steeply for emails sent by Turks, but the difference across sender nationalities is not significant.

27. All mechanism results hold up when adjusting for multiple comparisons except the interaction of the integration treatment with Turkish population size, and the interaction of the Turkish vote with Turkish population pass the Benjamini but not the more conservative Bonferroni correction (app. B).

Table 5. Treatment Effects of Vote Intention vs. Integration Problems by Politician Partisanship (Study 2)

	Dependent Variable: Response	
	Without Covariates	With Covariates
Vote intention (Turkish)	.066 (.042)	.070 (.042)
Center-left politician	.139** (.044)	.113* (.045)
Vote intention (Turkish) × center-left politician	−.026 (.064)	−.031 (.063)
Constant	.243*** (.029)	−.009 (.114)
State FEs	No	Yes
R ²	.021	.070

Note. OLS coefficients with robust standard errors in parentheses. Dependent variable is dichotomous (0/1). Sample is restricted to observations that received the Integration Problems (Turkish) or Vote Intention (Turkish) treatment. $N = 876$. CDU/CSU was classified as center-right; the SPD and the Greens as center-left. We used multiple imputation (with 20 imputed data sets) for 22 missing values in the covariates. CDU/CSU = Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union; SPD = Social Democratic Party; FE = fixed effects. For a list of covariates see table A4.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

naturalization offices or in organizations working in the naturalization field; and individuals advising the municipality on integration (*Integrationsräte*; see app. F for details).

The interviews confirmed that correspondence studies are better suited for exposing bias: despite our consistent evidence of a reversed national penalty, most interviewees denied that politicians or bureaucrats targeted certain groups in their

naturalization efforts. Turning to mechanisms that could lead to higher responsiveness to low-status groups, we found support for the idea that local political actors considered naturalization an important aspect of integration. More than half who answered this question agreed that the political establishment viewed naturalization as a tool to foster integration. According to one politician, integration was the “most important argument for naturalization.” While one bureaucrat bemoaned that politicians too often misunderstood citizenship as the endpoint of integration and a few others declared that naturalization was simply not an issue in their municipality, on the whole, a majority felt that local stakeholders viewed naturalization as spurring integration rather than the prize to be awarded upon the completion of a long integration process.

Responses were more mixed when it came to the electoral connection. A minority explicitly ruled out the possibility that politicians considered naturalization for electoral gains. One respondent stated that the process simply took too long to deliver short-term electoral rewards. Another did not dismiss this mechanism in principle but noted that the numbers in his municipality would be too small for it to be plausible. Some respondents speculated that naturalization would benefit leftist parties, but, with a few exceptions, they did not go so far as to say that electoral calculations were driving efforts to promote naturalization.

A more frequent comment referred to electoral participation—irrespective of what party would benefit. Respondents remarked that politicians generally liked to increase turnout and underlined that the naturalization of large groups of long-time residents and their subsequent electoral participation was important for the legitimacy and representativeness of local democracy. As one put it, naturalization “produces more voters. That’s a good thing.” The head of a local naturalization office specifically referenced a federal constitutional court

Table 6. Mean Response Rate by Treatment Condition and Size of Turkish Population (Study 2)

Treatment Condition	Turkish Population	N	Response Rate (%)	Ratio	95% CI (Ratio)	Difference	SE (Difference)	p (Difference)
Vote intention (Canadian)	Small	199	23.62	1.10	[.79, 1.55]	2.43	4.148	.558
	Large	238	26.05					
Control (Turkish)	Small	209	24.88	1.77	[1.35, 2.38]	19.19	4.414	.000
	Large	236	44.07					
Vote intention (Turkish)	Small	206	29.61	1.43	[1.11, 1.88]	12.75	4.570	.006
	Large	229	42.36					
Integration problems (Turkish)	Small	201	24.88	1.49	[1.12, 2.02]	12.15	4.396	.006
	Large	235	37.02					

Note. 95% confidence intervals (CIs) are based on nonparametric bootstrapping with 10,000 samples. P -values for mean differences are based on two-tailed Welch’s t -tests. There are six missing values in the Turkish population variable.

ruling, which stipulates that the resident population should not deviate too much from the electorate, as weighing on his office's approach to naturalization. Councilors in his city had organized a successful naturalization campaign and also developed an "Integration Plan" which highlighted the need for immigrant electoral participation and, by implication, naturalization. Interestingly, almost all our interviewees denied that there was a partisan-political dimension to integration in their municipality. Such claims are consistent with the null effects we obtained for emotional attachment and dual citizenship in study 1.

Taken together, our evidence does not rule out that electoral motivations exist, but neither does it confirm that strategic electoral calculations significantly shape how politicians approach citizenship acquisition. The interviews provide more direct support for the idea that politicians welcome the naturalization of sizable groups—even if integration status is low—because enfranchising large numbers of residents enhances the legitimacy of democracy.

This latter finding in turn underscores that citizenship scholars should turn their gaze to local politics and be cognizant of politician biases. Indeed, the interviews proved helpful in validating that local politicians can and do play a role in naturalization, but that their involvement varies significantly. A small number of respondents indicated that there was a red line between the administration and elected politicians: the council and the naturalization office were independent entities that had no contact with one another. Yet other interviewees indicated that exchanges between the naturalization office and the council were periodic and informal, or even frequent and systematic. One politician stated that he was in "constant contact" with the naturalization office to discuss specific cases; an administrator assisting immigrants in the naturalization process told us that local politicians sometimes referred cases to her and that the mayor had paid the naturalization office a visit. An integration officer (*Integrationsbeauftragte*) remarked: "Local politicians of course play a role at times . . . for example, when they make public appearances and say 'hey, more naturalizations would be terrific!'" Respondents further noted that the council signaled its support via naturalization ceremonies with elected officials. Bureaucrats emphasized that the council could affect naturalization rates by making funds available to assist in disseminating information and support. In localities with naturalization campaigns, respondents said it was vital that the council approved such campaigns in the budget. In a municipality where little was being done to promote naturalization, a bureaucrat noted that the naturalization office lacked the resources to identify the eligible population and therefore could not send out encouragement letters. She attributed this dearth of resources to a lack of political will in the mayor's office.

In sum, although politicians and bureaucrats act within the same legal context, our interviews corroborate that this context leaves ample room for politician engagement; that local politicians shape the climate within which naturalization occurs; and, speaking to our experimental results, that immigrants' integration and their electoral participation present two plausible mechanisms that drive politician responsiveness to sizable, lower-status groups.

CONCLUSION

Citizenship is a critical part of immigrant integration, but its uptake varies significantly across groups and localities. Our article sheds light on one source of such variation: the behavior of local elected officials. Local politicians can affect the environment in which citizenship acquisition occurs, but to date we have no systematic knowledge about whether politician biases shape who receives help in the naturalization process. This article offers the first set of field experiments carried out with German local elected officials that investigate politician responsiveness in the context of citizenship acquisition.

One important finding is the sharp disconnect between public debate on the one hand and the behavior of local politicians in email communication on the other hand. National identification features prominently in partisan rhetoric and public opinion. We consequently developed two treatments that signal national identification and attachment, but found that these hardly shape politician responsiveness on the ground. Instead, immigrant nationality emerges as most consequential. Even here, however, public discourse or stereotypes do not predict politician behavior: we observe a persistent reversed national penalty.

These findings produce several implications. First, they are disconcerting from the perspective of individual migrants who are looking for ways to advance their integration. Although, unlike existing work, our study documents discrimination in favor of the low-status group, like other work we find that fixed, group-based factors trump behavioral attributes over which individuals have control, including a rather costly signal to renounce one's prior passport. This null-finding echoes labor market studies, which often find that productivity or assimilation signals do not close gaps between minority and majority group applicants (Baert 2018; Vernby and Dancygier 2019). Instead, an immigrant's nationality evokes associations and potential biases that exceed the effects of characteristics that individuals can modify.

Second, our results underline the importance of distinguishing between domains and levels. We find that a group that is discriminated against in the economic and social sphere receives comparatively less discrimination by politicians (keeping in mind that the majority of politicians do not respond,

irrespective of the group). Differentiating across levels is also critical: Attributes that are singled out in national debates – nationality, national identification, dual citizenship – either play no role at all or have the opposite effect than national debates, public opinion, and citizenship research would suggest. These findings match up with studies about immigrants’ political incorporation. For example, while European Muslims face considerable labor market barriers and are highly stigmatized, local parties court this group when its members can deliver pivotal votes – even if their national counterparts are more reticent or even hostile (Dancygier 2017). More generally, though public opinion is frequently predisposed against sizeable, low-status groups (Hainmueller and Hangartner 2013; Quillian 1995), we find that these groups may not always suffer disadvantages in the context of local democracy. This evidence should invite future research that isolates and interacts the roles of status and size across domains and levels.

Third, our research opens up avenues for studying how national citizenship and integration laws are implemented locally. Prior research on a range of countries has noted gaps between legal guidelines and practice (Bauböck et al. 2013), giving us confidence that our findings can generalize. Specifically, our experiments and interviews call attention to the importance of local elected officials. Though more research is needed, we provide the first evidence of its kind about how and why local politicians influence disparities in citizenship acquisition. As such, our results are particularly relevant in the contemporary European context, where the recent refugee inflow has generated national integration policies that are carried out locally. Since our findings demonstrate that the stances formulated by national parties do not predict the behavior of local politicians, our study highlights that future work on citizenship, integration, and discrimination must keep local elected officials and mismatches between national platforms and sub-national incentives in mind.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

For helpful comments we thank Winston Chou, Naoki Egami, Nikhar Gaikwad, Don Green, Marc Helbling, Joan Ricart-Huguet, Yang-Yang Zhou, four anonymous reviewers, and the editors. For valuable research assistance we are grateful to Quinn Albaugh, Ruben Below, Karen Gallagher-Teske, Benjamin Gerloff, Jelena Jovicic, Magdalena Scheibner, Nicolas Reinoso Schiller, and Yixin Sun.

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