

# Narratives on migration and political polarization: how the emphasis in narratives can drive us apart

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*In this paper we investigate how much political polarization is driven by the depiction narratives make of immigrants vis a vis the natives. Furthermore, is polarization rooted in private preferences over the narratives or in how they are endorsed in public settings and social media? Our empirical strategy consists of a survey experiment in the upcoming of the 2021 German elections and a field experiment on Twitter. To build our narratives, we manipulate either the policy position - hostile or in acceptance of migration - or the emphasis - on the out-group, on the in-group or on economic reciprocity. We find that political polarization is driven both by the policy position and by the emphasis in narratives. On Twitter the out-group emphasis drives supporters of different parties apart and the corresponding hostile narrative becomes the only one going viral. In the survey right-wing participants prefer the reciprocity emphasis more, but we still find evidence of more polarization when going public.*