

Divisions in the Newsroom

Why camps form

Where we differ in values, we will differ in vision. Where we have differences in identity (“I’m a visual thinker,” “I’m a wordsmith”), we easily feel threatened and are likely to act defensively.

If we have different expertise, we may disagree about how things ought to be done. (“It should be a photo essay.” “I see it as an infographic.”)

We feel most comfortable belonging to a group, with people we identify with. The more powerful the common identity we share (“We’re the mighty online crew!”), the more different we perceive others to be.

Why camps endure

Our differences in vision lead to major differences on the basic issues to be addressed and projects to be undertaken.

We treat anyone outside our identity group as inferior. We look down on those whose perspectives and values are different from our own.

We tend to devalue their contributions and reject their experience and knowledge because it comes from a different perspective.

We also gladly attribute failure to their shortcomings and successes to our intelligence and skill.

Consequences of camps

We have a strong sense of belonging, so strong that we may suppress any doubts we have about our group or its vision. The illusion of unanimity means we may discount any warning signs that the group’s view needs revision.

We may disapprove of and discount those who question our work methods.

We may characterize others in far harsher terms than makes sense. We may stereotype the actions of outsiders as stubborn, stupid or lazy, which means we can’t learn from them and our progress is limited.

Poynter.