

Reporting Across Differences

The [Maynard Institute for Journalism Education](#) has found that the most common societal fault lines that have ruptured American society mirror demographic lines. What are fault lines?

- Race
Gender
Class
Generation
Geography
Sexual Orientation
- An expansion of fault lines includes people with disabilities, as well as political and religious alignment, among physical and social identities that can influence how someone lives in and sees the world.

Maynard offers training that helps us identify our own fault lines as a journalist and human so we can recognize and address our own bias, as well as better understand the responsibility of caring, talking, reporting and writing across differences.

"Fault Lines are the social, cultural, and identity-based factors that shape each of our individual perspectives. They influence how news is reported and consumed. This framework focuses on identity-based biases that shape newsroom culture and coverage, offering a structured approach to reduce bias and help everyone feel a sense of belonging."

Equitable representation in newsrooms that reflects communities journalists have the privilege of covering helps ensure accurate reporting and a fuller picture of complex people and issues. Following riots and uprisings, the 1968 Kerner Commission report concluded: Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white — separate and unequal.

The news industry subsequently agreed to a plan to ensure racial parity in newsrooms. More than 50 years later, that commitment remains unrealized. Conversations about a racial reckoning, justice and equity resurfaced after police killed George Floyd. Can you share examples where real change has happened or examples of how we are failing as an industry?

[Kerner Commission report summary](#)

[Full report](#)

Snapshot of resources:

[Asian American Journalists Association](#)

[Indigenous Journalists Association](#)

[National Association of Black Journalists](#)

[National Association of Hispanic Journalists](#)

[National Center on Disability and Journalism](#)

[NLGJA: The Association of LGBTQ+ Journalists](#)

[Cross-Cultural Journalism and Strategic Communication: Storytelling and Diversity](#): Edited By Maria Len-Rios, Earnest Perry

Contributor Keith M. Woods: Talking Across Difference

What happens to information when it passes through the filters of a journalist, marketing director or public relations specialist, who crafts it into one storytelling form or another, then sends it out to be consumed and interpreted by an extraordinarily diverse public? It's a wonder most days, given all the variables at play, that we ever communicate successfully. Professionals can gain some great insights into what goes on when people discuss tough topics by deepening their knowledge about *cognitive dissonance theory*, confirmation bias, and the study of listening. What they all point out is that there is a part of human nature that can lead people to distort information they receive, no matter how objectively it's presented. We'll look at three overlapping frames for explaining this dynamic in journalism and strategic communication:

Frame 1: Meanings can change, depending upon speaker, listener or context.

Frame 2: *Attribution* is bigger than the story.

Frame 3: *Talking across difference* is a skill you can master.

The first thought, the idea that what we say can mean something different depending upon who says it, who hears it and when, can be a destabilizing one for people in the business of communicating. But it happens all the time, this shifting meaning, especially across any of the significant differences that complicate our world.