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How Polarization Punishes Open Minds

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Open-mindedness is often celebrated as a virtue, but in today's hyper-polarized political climate, even the act of engaging with opposing viewpoints can come at a social cost. New research by Mohamed A. Hussein, an assistant professor at Columbia Business School, reveals that people tend to look down on members of their own political party who show curiosity about their opponents' ideas, such as by reading their online posts or articles. Strikingly, this judgment persists regardless of the ideas' substance or merit.

"So it's not about the information itself; it's about who it's coming from," says Hussein. "It's really about an us-versus-them mentality and the negative stereotypes that people have about the opposing group, regardless of what they're saying."

The findings may hold a clue as to what is causing the yawning political gap in the US and why it is growing wider. If people are scared that being receptive to or

engaging with the other party will hurt their reputation among their in-party peers, Hussein says, they will likely refrain from doing so.



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