

# What makes a good journalist? Empathy as a central resource in journalistic work practice

## Abstract

*Empathy performs a central role in regulating social relations. This equally applies to journalistic work routines. To explore the concept of empathy in the understanding of journalists, 46 interviews were conducted using a cross-cultural approach between the UK and India. From this it became clear that empathy occupies a central place in news production, fulfilling multiple roles. It serves to achieve a comprehensive access to information and to news protagonists at the interpersonal level. Without this “invisible” mode of communication, qualitative and ethical news journalism cannot be achieved; and authenticity and emotionality of news packages would be diminished. Empathy varies on the individual level, but especially in sensitive journalistic work fields it represents a “naturally present” core skill for journalists. A final empathic dimension is found in the imaginary empathy towards the audience which provides essential guidance for journalistic news products. Cultural differences between India and the UK are apparent in this study, but results also indicate considerable similarities in the role of empathy in different journalism cultures.*

**Keywords:** empathy, news, journalism, television, emotions, UK, India

## Introduction

Jean Seaton, BBC historian and keynote speaker of the 2015 Future of Journalism conference in Cardiff, BBC historian reminded the audience that academic journalism research can be characterized by a reserved anxiety towards integrating any subject related to feelings. This clearly reflected in the titles and abstracts of the conference contributions – none but one contained the terms “emotion”, “feelings”, “sensations”, “sentiment”, “affects” or the closely linked “empathy”.

The discussion of empathy in journalism is necessary to understand the ways in which it contributes to comprehensive and engaging news coverage. Empathy provides the ground for dealing with emotions of news protagonists, using it as a means in reporting, and also affecting the emotional regulation of journalists during news production.

This gains momentum in an age where ‘serious’ news journalism in the Anglo-American world and beyond remains ideologically tied to the normative guiding principles of factuality, impartiality and objectivity<sup>1</sup> (Schudson 2001) (Schudson, 2001) (Schudson, 2001) (Schudson, 2001). But striving for the ideal of a detached objectivity appears to be increasingly contradicting the general social trend of emotionalization (McQuail 2010, 357) (McQuail, 2010: 357) (McQuail, 2010: 357) (McQuail, 2010: 357), described in Furedi’s(2004)(2004)(2004) (2004) “therapeutic culture” or Richards’ “emotional public sphere”. There, emotions are seen as part of the political realm in debates and opinion formation (Richards 2009) (Richards, 2009) (Richards, 2009) (Richards, 2009) . Others note that journalistic output has experienced an increasing visibility of emotions (e.g., Pantti 2005, Pantti and Wahl-Jorgensen 2011) (e.g., Pantti, 2005; Pantti & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2011) (e.g., Pantti, 2005; Pantti & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2011) (e.g., Pantti, 2005; Pantti & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2011).

With emotions in news coverage leading to fears of a downgrading of news quality via “infotainment” or “tabloidization”, this makes a look at journalistic competencies in dealing with emotions absolutely necessary. Here, empathy takes a core role. Empathy is related to perceiving the emotions of others, but also to the deployment of emotions in news and in engaging audiences.

Empathy can be a mediator between the prevalent self-understanding of journalistic practitioners as “messenger of reality” (Pantti, 2010) (Pantti, 2010) (Pantti, 2010) (Pantti 2010) and journalists reflecting about emotions (Schiller 2012) (Schiller, 2012) (Schiller, 2012) (Schiller, 2012); between the ideal of detached passionless reporting and a “strategic ritual of emotionality” in which journalists “outsource” emotional expressions into storytelling or emotional statements of news protagonists to keep personal subjectivity out of a story (Wahl-Jorgensen 2012) (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2012) (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2012) (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2012). Journalists in “serious” news journalism acknowledge the existence and function of emotions, but try to deal sensitively with them in order to uphold professional values of objectivity and impartiality.

This paper will focus on empathy as a central element of journalism practice. So far, empathy has been a neglected concept. It has been neither addressed in journalistic work practice nor in relation to the debate about emotions in journalism. In the following, I will explore and theorize what role empathy plays in journalistic work practices. A two-country comparison between British and Indian television journalists examines empathy in a cross-cultural context. Is empathy maybe after all not such a different thing, but rather a universal means for “good journalism”?

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<sup>1</sup> Stemming from a 19<sup>th</sup> century US tradition of “scientified” journalism based on scientific rationalism, objectivity diffused in different shapes into European as well as Indian journalism cultures, where objectivity is associated with neutrality, balance and reporting the facts (see Yadav 2011, 6). In the British context, it is deeply anchored within the BBC but less with the press (Hampton 2008).

## Theorizing empathy and emotional labour in journalism

Empathy appears central to journalistic work routines. A journalist *without* a well-developed empathy might excel in fields like stock market analysis or data journalism, but would presumably face difficulties in more “human” scenarios. The central position of empathy is reflected in the following example of a bereaved woman who just lost a close person, being interviewed by a television team. Narrating her story, she suddenly breaks down and bursts into tears. This scenario raises ethical questions over the correct response required of a professional journalist. A credo like “tears are good for business” and professional role understandings may be in opposition to the journalist’s own subjective (empathic) emotions. Empathy is present in telling the story, in creating authenticity, and in relating to the news source as a human being. This scenario shows one of several dimensions where journalism requires empathetic understanding alongside ethical and pragmatic considerations.

Empathy is considered one of the fundamental resources of emotional and social intelligence (Goleman 1995) (Goleman, 1995) (Goleman, 1995) (Goleman, 1995), celebrated as a “communicative capability” (Köppen 2016) (Köppen, 2016) (Köppen, 2016) (Köppen, 2016) and as “universal solvent” of interpersonal problems (Baron-Cohen 2012) (Baron-Cohen, 2012: 132) (Baron-Cohen, 2012: 132) (Baron-Cohen, 2012: 132). Relations are central to all forms of life, and empathy acts in this regard as adaptation for managing complex social relations. It allows fitting in.

Empathy is generally seen not as an emotion per se, but closely tied to emotions. It contributes essentially to the perception of emotions in others while not necessarily leading to a sharing of those emotional states (Köppen 2016) (Köppen, 2016) (Köppen, 2016) (Köppen, 2016). The original term “Einfühlung” was coined by Lipps (1903) (1903) (1903) (1903), in which he referred to projecting oneself into the situation of another person or her aesthetic art work. Today, there exist at least eight competing definitions of empathy (Batson 2009) (Batson, 2009) (Batson, 2009) (Batson, 2009).

Empathy is usually seen as a multidimensional and complex concept, roughly consisting of a cognitive component (recognizing feeling states and thoughts) and an emotional component (empathic participation or response, see Baron-Cohen 2012) (empathic participation or response, see Baron-Cohen, 2012) (empathic participation or response, see Baron-Cohen, 2012) (empathic participation or response, see Baron-Cohen, 2012). De Waal’s (2009) (2009) (2009) (2009) useful approach differentiates it further into affective (autonomic) elements, cognitive (reflective) elements, and perspective-taking.<sup>2</sup> De Waal understands the non-cognitive or affective element of empathy as a pre-linguistic form of inter-individual linkage, which enables emotional contagion. It is related to the mirror neuron system which allows people to non-cognitively adapt their emotions and actions to each other by sheer observation (Rizzolatti and Sinigaglia 2008) (Rizzolatti & Sinigaglia, 2008) (Rizzolatti & Sinigaglia, 2008) (Rizzolatti & Sinigaglia, 2008). Differences in empathic understanding can be explained by biology and socialization (Baron-Cohen 2012) (Baron-Cohen, 2012) (Baron-Cohen, 2012) (Baron-Cohen, 2012).

Empathy can and needs to be distinguished from related concepts like sympathy, pity, compassion, and primitive empathy. Sympathy (in today’s sense) can emerge based on empathy and focuses mostly on distressed situations of others, making the emotional state of the other one’s own (Morrell 2010) (Morrell, 2010) (Morrell, 2010) (Morrell, 2010). Pity is understood by Nussbaum (2001) (2001)

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<sup>2</sup> A similar approach is followed by Morrell’s (2010, 64) process model of empathy in which he distinguishes between non-cognitive, simple and advanced cognitive processes.

(2001) (2001) as a prerequisite of compassion. Compassion is regarded as thought about the well-being of others, where one is affected by the sorrow of another person, and one feels passionate about social justice, leading to show compassion (Garber 2004) (Garber, 2004) (Garber, 2004) (Garber, 2004). Finally, primitive empathy refers to one's own emotional arousal instead of others which leads to either personal distress and/or emotional contagion.

Dealing with personal distress or any kind of necessary emotional regulation as a consequence of empathy leads us to another relevant theoretical concept which informs this paper – Hochschild's "emotional labour". Emotional labour can be understood as the difference between a subjectively felt emotion and a professionally required emotional adaptation and display (Hochschild 1979, 2003) (Hochschild, 1979, 2003) (Hochschild, 1979, 2003) (Hochschild, 1979, 2003). It can lead to feelings of alienation from one's own (authentic) emotions, and therefore to emotional dissonance. Hence, the necessary management of emotions is influenced by social and cultural norms. Hochschild's concept helps to describe and contextualize the emotional requirements emerging during journalistic work practice and to think about its further implications for the health of the individual journalist.

I argue that both phenomena – empathy but also emotions within journalistic work practice of individuals and groups – can be understood in the tradition of emotional labour. Be it to secure and enhance access to information, to performative elements for a news package, or imagining the audience – in each of these cases empathy is required by the journalist to achieve a situation of cooperation or appropriate journalistic adaptation. Empathy cannot be left out in sensitive journalistic interviews where people face a varying degrees of distress. In case it does not arise "naturally", it needs to be performed to accomplish a work task. This can lead to the risk of draining out emotionally, as both cognitive and emotional processes and labour are involved in establishing an empathic mode.

It can be summarized that while empathy appears as method of basic social bonding, at the same time it can lead to distressing emotional "performances" for journalists (Richard and Rees 2011) (Richards & Rees, 2011) (Richards & Rees, 2011) (Richards & Rees, 2011). In the next sections, I will outline journalistic understandings about empathy and relate it to further theoretical ideas, while the background for this is provided by a cross-cultural comparison.

## **Research interest & method**

In order to explore empathy in journalistic work practices, I investigated the reflexivity of journalists about the subject. This primarily concerned discourses of journalists with regard to empathy, but also touched the field of required emotional regulation. Journalistic perspectives are then combined with theoretical approaches towards empathy.

Qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted with 46 television journalists. Interviews were conducted in India mainly from December 2014 to January 2015, while British journalists were interviewed between April and August 2015. The age range in the sample varies between 26 and 61 years. While the Indian sample contained an equal relation of male and female journalists, the British side is marked by a slight dominance of male journalists. The professional positions range from junior reporters, managing mid-level editors to the top-level of the respective broadcasting organisations. The participants and their statements were anonymized and numbered; British journalists start with B, Indian with I.

This study draws upon the comparative research tradition in order to explore the ways in which a seemingly universal resource, such as empathy, differs locally, revealing socio-cultural constructions

that vary within the complex media ecologies of British and Indian television news cultures. As Markus and Kitayama (1994) suggest, distinctive “core cultural ideas” shape “customs, norms, practices and institutions” (p.4) thereby determining the reflections and decision-making processes of journalists.

Cultural psychology points to a key cultural difference ... British and Indian journalist cultures could be viewed as operating within societies that are characterized by different types of social relations. Markus and Kitayama have proposed a model of independence versus interdependence in the human conception of the self. The independent, autonomous self is viewed as bounded, stable and separated from its social context, and this view emphasises self-expression and the promotion of one’s own goals. On the other hand, the interdependent self is viewed as connected to its social context, flexible, and variable; this interdependent view emphasises external indicators (e.g. status, roles, relationships), aims to integrate with a social group, where it often promotes the goals of others.

According to Markus and Kitayama’s view, independent social relations would dominate within the Anglophone context, while Southern Asia would be marked by concerns of the socio-centric interdependent self and social relationships. Furthermore, several studies reveal that social contexts influence emotional experiences more within interdependent cultures than independent ones (see Misra, 2010). In my paper, I will focus on two core questions:

- 1) Is empathy perceived as an essential part of journalistic work, and what types of empathy emerge?
- 2) Does empathy across the sample appear as a universal concept, or do the statements of the journalists reflect socio-cultural differences?

## **Findings & Discussion**

### **1. Views on empathy in British and Indian news contexts**

A first area of research interest comprises the relevance of empathy in journalistic work from the perspective of television news producers. All journalists considered empathy as a central quality of their work. Journalists in both United Kingdom and India agreed unanimously that empathy in general forms a “very crucial part of it ..., a trait that you need to be able to be a journalist” (I14, CEO). It is therefore a basic skill and requirement for journalists in general and has even been institutionalized in the case of public service broadcasting in the UK, as for “the BBC, it has been used on a quite humanitarian basis; to empathize with famine victims or civilians, refugees as victims of conflict” (B02, director general).

At times, it is seen as an indispensable marker for a successful professional career as a journalist, as “the difference between a good journalist and a great journalist will be that level of empathy” (I18, editorial director). It is the way one deploys empathy as a resource, which leads to exceptional journalism, narrates this former BBC journalist:

*“I remember in [a conflicted Eastern European country], when me and [another journalist of the same channel] were up all night, talking to people, trying to sort of tell their story in a very sympathetic way. And another reporter came*

*in the room – ‘Look it is 11 o’clock, I want to get my 8 hours of sleep, can you guys stop interviewing people?’ So, I think you got to be, got to go the extra mile.” (B15 editor in international news/world affairs)*

Can empathy be learned on the job or is it a naturally given resource? Journalists agreed here also largely in understanding empathy as something which is “universally” given – or not. A British senior journalist described it to be a “natural empathy, natural talent; to be a reporter or a journalist, they need to have those central sort of human skill where – empathy is absolutely essential! And I have seen many times reporters – you know they are not going to make it, because they just haven’t got the human skills to ever get [there]” (B15, editor in international news). Amongst Indian journalists, a similar view prevails which moreover emphasizes the medium and a strong audience orientation:

*“You can be an ok journalist, and you can probably get a job as a journalist, but I don’t think that you find them among who are the stars – the stars will always be the ones who go a bit more, work beyond [...]. I think television is an emotional medium. [...] [Empathy] is a layer you have to have. I mean if you don’t have it... A journalist should want to tell stories because he or she cares. Otherwise what is the point for that?” (I18, editorial director)*

Not all journalists believed empathy to be necessary in every field of journalism – it is rather partially applicable, as certain professional subfields are characterized by a higher sensitivity while others suffice with schematic journalistic scripts without having to draw on the resource of empathy. This differentiated view is represented also across the UK sample, with a British deputy editor recounting that ‘I have known both. And both had their qualities. And you can survive. And you can be a great journalist without empathy. At some point it will catch you out, because you will misjudge a situation (B05). “Most journalists need to understand people, and get on with people” in areas which require an understanding of the impact on the audience, like in human interest news, foreign or health reporting. But “if you are doing a purely analytical role, then it is less important”, and “you could be a sort of financial markets journalist without being particularly empathetic” (all by B02, director general). The Indian journalists did not mention this division at all, instead saw empathy as a general element of any journalistic work, with the aim to engage the audience as

*“You can’t be seen as the same with your reporting on murder, a child’s death, and the stock markets. There has to be a level of emotional involvements which is different according to each news story.” (I18, editorial director)*

It can be concluded that journalists in the UK and India see empathy as an essential part of immediate journalistic work routines in news journalism, having an impact on the quality of news coverage and even the career prospects of individuals. Differences are marginal;

Differences are marginal; journalists from both countries only disagree when they relate empathy to journalistic fields. While the British accept financial news, for example, as partially “unempathetic” journalism, this does not apply to Indian journalists. They see the empathy required in more general terms, as they consider it an essential resource with which to engage the audience. The journalist acts as a mediator between the news event and the audience.

## **2. Dimensions of Empathy**

From the interviews it also emerged that empathy is a multidimensional work routine in journalism practice. Empathy can be deployed with varying focus – towards the news story protagonists, the audience, and also within the production context. By combining theoretical approaches and qualitative interviews it was possible to identify four main dimensions of empathy within journalistic work practice: epistemological, instrumental-strategic, performative, and imaginary.

**1. Epistemological dimension:** The journalistic commitment to the professional norms of objectivity and accuracy, or – a search for “truth” – translates in practice into establishing an intersubjective reality. “You need to be able to get into the shoes who is there. Otherwise, why would we care about them” (B13). Journalists seem to follow most closely Lipps’ original notion of empathy as a “feeling into” with retaining a sense of self, where identity and alterity go together, or, what Honneth (2003) (2003) (2003) (2003) named “functional empathy” as it refers to taking a reflective intersubjective perspective:

*“It is fundamentally about human stories. [...] if you can’t understand why this matters to people, and why the actors involved, the characters involved would have been upset or affected or angry of something. If you can’t understand that then you can’t understand the story. Cause it always should come back to the people involved.” (B07, reporter VJ)*

Empathy is a tool for the mediation of subjective individual experiences and wider context to an audience:

*“If a person is trying to tell their story to the world, it is I who should be able to understand what the person is going through, so that I can relate that story, I can give that story to the viewers. Unless I do that, I don’t think a viewer can understand the emotions of what the person is going through.” (I20, producer, anchor)*

To approach a holistic understanding of reality, a journalist first engages with the story of the subject and then establishes an intersubjective perspective by stepping back to reflect about the subjective cognitive and emotional experience that the subject’s narration does to him (Willis, 2003) (Willis, 2003) (Willis, 2003) (Willis, 2003) (Willis, 2003), while retaining the “protective” illusion of neutrality (Willis 2003). This resembles the mode of interaction between a therapist and patient (Jaenicke 2006) (Jaenicke, 2006) (Jaenicke, 2006) (Jaenicke, 2006).

**2. Instrumental-strategic function:** As we have seen, empathy shapes journalistic interactions with news protagonists. This has an impact also on information gathering, aiming for accuracy and an intersubjective reality. But only by creating a situation of co-operation with the news source can information be acquired. How cautious a journalist has to act is especially important in conflict or trauma scenarios, in several ways:

*“What if that person is a complete third-grade scum? How you are being empathetic with them. [...] Somebody is sitting in front of you and saying the most outrageous things – how do you nod your head. That took some training actually, frankly. That is what I learned with the Ayodhya movement, with these guys sitting and saying [...] ‘You know I think we should murder all of them.’ [...] Your natural reaction is to say – are you out of your mind. But if you are trying to get the guy to talk [...] then the only way you can investigate is by actually functioning like a secret agent, right?” (I14, CEO)*

The necessary trust-building between journalist and interviewee can sometimes lead to personal distress for the journalist. This can be seen as emotional labour, as journalists need to regulate their emotional reactions according to their professional role. However, they are not detached observers with low-empathy condition (Edge 2015) (Edge, 2015) (Edge, 2015) (Edge, 2015), as they might claim to be, rather, they display high empathy. Emotional labour also occurs when journalists face situations being close to their own living world, such as female journalists being more empathic to rape incidents in India (I15).

Building up a relationship of trust with a news protagonist is “up against the deadline”, so journalists are aware that “it sometimes takes a while to settle them down, to persuade them, to console them”, (B03). This pressure to establish a necessary trustful and equal climate of conversation within short time requires a high degree of skill and sensitivity:

*"It helps. There had been interviewees including last week [about 7/7] that said if they didn't feel that I was relating to what they had gone through in terms of the trauma, they would never have agreed to speak to me. So, and this has happened time again and again." (B18, senior correspondent)*

*"If they don't believe that you CARE, you won't get the best interview. [...] Truly cares. Isn't just doing their job, but actually cares. You get a better interview. Your reputation will be better; you have more chance of getting other stories in the future. [...] Empathy really comes across. So I think it is vital." (B19, producer)*

Here, empathy helps in contributing to the recognition of the other as human subject and as "equal" in a social relation (Edge 2015) (Edge, 2015) (Edge, 2015) (Edge, 2015). This serves deeply the democratic function of journalism. However, this mode of interaction also benefits the interviewed individual, as it allows him to be understood in one's own frame of reference, of being comforted and, finally, allowing a reduction of stress in traumatic moments (Howe 2013) (Howe, 2013) (Howe, 2013) (Howe, 2013).

**3. Performative Dimension:** How engaging a television news package or interview is appears not only dependent on the type of story, but relies heavily on news protagonists, image selection, and sound bites. This shapes the performative value of empathy. As "television is a visual-emotional medium; it appeals to the visual sense", journalist I18 (Editorial Director) sees empathy as core in this process of news production. Only a trust-containing interview situation between journalist and news protagonist led by empathy can provide the required engaging news features which lends a story authenticity, such as a strong sound bite or emotional display (Wahl-Jorgensen 2012) (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2012) (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2012) (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2012). Ideally, here empathy facilitates creating an adequate (emotionally authentic) situation.

*"You don't get the same result. I have done hundreds of door knocks where people have died. [...] If you actually are sensitive and behave like a fellow human being instead of a robot who wants a picture, then you are more likely to get a picture." (B03, head of news)*

However, there is also a "dark side" to it. Empathy with news sources can be deployed not only in an authentic sense, but overlap with manipulative or deceptive objectives. This "functional" or "tactical empathy" (Terpe and Köppen 2011, Ciaramicoli 2001) (Ciaramicoli, 2001; Terpe & Köppen, 2011) (Ciaramicoli, 2001; Terpe & Köppen, 2011) (Ciaramicoli, 2001; Terpe & Köppen, 2011) raises strong ethical questions.

**4. Imaginary empathy:** This mode of empathy focuses solely on the audience. Audience ratings matter essentially to any television station, not only in a highly competitive market like India with several hundred news channels, but also in the UK. Therefore, engaging the audience is a primary task of news coverage especially. Surprisingly, a number of European journalists tend to rather ignore the impact on their audience (Richards and Rees 2011, Pantti 2010) (Pantti, 2010; Richards & Rees, 2011) (Pantti, 2010; Richards & Rees, 2011) (Pantti, 2010; Richards & Rees, 2011).

Audience reactions remain still time-delayed and fragmentary, commonly shared via Twitter, email or personal feedback. As news teams during the production process rarely encounter a chance to share synchronous time and space with the audience, they tend to deploy an imaginary working construct. This is what I call "imaginary empathy", a mode of relating to the audience with no material existence as it remains virtual in editorial rooms and mobile editing suits. The type of empathy which is dominant here is Batson's (2009) description of how another is thinking and feeling (perspective taking), with strong cognitive-reflexive, but less affective components ("reenactive empathy" with Hollan 2012) ('reenactive empathy' with Hollan, 2012) ('reenactive empathy' with Hollan, 2012) ('reenactive empathy' with Hollan, 2012).

Journalists use imaginative techniques from different realms. These two British and Indian journalists draw strongly from their personal sphere:

*"I am thinking through what clips I would use, what pictures I would use – I have got my mom and another friend. And my other friend says, 'Ah, sometimes I can't watch [your channel] because – they seem to make you want to just feel everything!' And I kind of use my friend and my mom as my barometers." (B19, senior reporter)*

*"You also have to go home and talk to your family [...]. And when you talk to the family, then they view emotions. That does not necessarily mean that we have to build our opinion based on the people who WE are close to talk to us, but it gives us some idea, from the people who we trust; what is going on in THEIR minds." (I21, senior executive editor)*

## Conclusion

As empathy is fundamentally embodied in human social relations, this paper takes a first step in applying the concept of empathy in journalistic work practice, looking at it from two different journalism cultures.

I suggest that empathy forms an indispensable though "invisible" part of journalistic work. In the journalistic discourses presented here, empathy is not regarded as in conflict with the ideal of a largely detached passionless reporter in serious news journalism. Instead, its central qualities for journalistic storytelling as well as a successful journalistic career are consciously emphasized.

Therefore, empathy in journalism can excel as "emotional capital", as art of diplomacy and co-operation. To guarantee a qualitative and ethically sensitive news coverage, television journalists by and large require skills of empathic perception and understanding in their daily work. Although "empathic interest" can be trained to a certain extent (Köppen 2016, 290) (Köppen, 2016: 290) (Köppen, 2016: 290) (Köppen, 2016: 290), this did not reveal itself in the discourses, where empathy is either "there" – or not.

Empathy is required in multiple work processes during news production. One is the strategic-pragmatic establishment of relationships of trust with news protagonists. This serves information gathering and news package performance, but also the epistemological realm of knowledge generation where journalists aim to establish a holistic intersubjective perspective, incorporating empathy as another means of access to figuring out what "actually happened" during an event. The other main dimension of empathy can be found in the "imaginary empathy" towards a largely invisible audience in order to generate a cognitively and emotionally engaging news coverage.

The comparative approach between the UK and India has demonstrated a large transnational agreement about the normative-ethical value and relevance of empathy in journalistic work practices. This unity among journalists from two different media ecologies, with Indian television displaying clearly more sensationalist and emotional features, allows us to reflect on the question to what extent journalism cultures may have converged here. This can be left for further analysis. (2007)

With culture as an influential factor on human behaviour, minor differences appeared in the way empathy was cross-culturally highlighted. News journalists in India tended to regard empathy as deeply anchored in all areas of news production, with a clear link to the audience. This higher stance of empathy in the Indian context might be explained by the emphasis of socio-centric self and emotions in Asian societies.



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