

Dr Usha Manchanda Rodrigues

Senior Lecturer in Communications, Deakin University

1. Why do you think culturally diverse journalists are underrepresented in Australian TV journalism?

*This is a complex question. Please use whatever is useful for you...*

*I think you would have to look at the foundational structure of the media industry in Australia – a very high level of concentration of commercial media ownership and the existence of the two public service broadcasters to mitigate the agenda of commercial media. To some extent all of the responsibility of being fair, balanced and representative of Australia has been relegated to the two public service broadcasters.*

*In addition, Australia's demographic mix has changed over the past 2-3 decades, but the commercial media executives have not yet made a commitment to change the make-up their newsrooms to tell stories about a large proportion of Australians, who have mixed ethnic backgrounds. Perhaps, the executives believe that covering news stories of those from culturally diverse backgrounds is the two public service broadcasters' agenda, while commercial media needs to remain focused on 'mainstream' Australia.*

*This is a miscalculation on the part of commercial media, which are already reeling from increased competition from social media as a source of news and the entry of international media competitors (at the national level news), and of course the shifting of advertising dollars to online platforms.*

*There is also the issue of – that most of the senior executives and board members are from Anglo-Celtic background, which then gives rise to an argument that they do not have the lived experience of people from cultural diverse background to drive them to put policies in place to recruit journalists from a variety of backgrounds to tell news stories of all Australians.*

*This is counter-productive in today's competitive conditions for the commercial media. Their lack of dynamism or changing with times, is driving some of their potential audiences away, impacting on their bottomline.*

*Study has shown that Australians from multicultural backgrounds access news on social and online media more often than the general population and trust social media sources more than the general Australian population.*

*Link: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17475759.2017.1411289>*

2. Is racial/cultural diversity improving at journalism schools? Are they being trained to become journalists and fail to get jobs, or are they not going to journalism schools in the first place?

*A decent number of students from cultural diverse backgrounds are studying journalism and media courses in universities across Australia. Many of them are born in Australia. However, the pipeline to getting a job in journalism is very narrow. There are very few attractive internships that go to students from culturally diverse backgrounds.*

*These students also feel that they do not have a chance of getting that coveted job in television news, when they do not see many role models in commercial news. This pushes them towards the ABC and the SBS, which have limited positions to fill in these times of budget cuts.*

*What is needed is establishment of targets to train and recruit some of the journalists from culturally diverse backgrounds. And, various media, community organisations and governments to sponsor mentoring programs for graduating journalists from cultural diversity backgrounds, to ensure that they do not give up on entering the industry.*

*Although some news producers say that they do not receive many applications from journalism graduates of culturally diverse backgrounds, the news organisations need to work with universities to provide opportunities to these students. The SBS has such a successful mentoring program with Macquarie University and Ethnic Communities' Council of NSW. Deakin used to run a similar program with the SBS and ECCV too.*