Gender and Beyond:
Audiences, Critical Perspectives and Media Literacy

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Abstract: This paper will present the results of qualitative audience research conducted in a media literacy workshop setting in Kyoto, Japan and Brisbane, Australia. The research aimed at examining what critical perspectives are through audience analyses of power relationships in media representations of gender. The workshops were conducted with four groups who analysed texts chosen from a content analysis of the 2003 Japanese General Election and the 2004 Australian Federal Election night television broadcasts. Through analysing the texts, the participants discussed their individual readings as well as issues related to media representations of gender, age and ethnicity in the context of election programs. Transcripts of the workshops were analysed using the open-coding method, which identified dominant themes in the group analysis and discussion. The research found that audiences gain a critical perspective, not only through recognising gender and power relationships in media representations, but also by recognising how age and ethnicity are constructed by media in relation to power. Media literacy workshops provide opportunities for audiences to strengthen and broaden critical perspectives.

Keywords: critical, audiences, media literacy, gender, age, ethnicity, power, election night broadcasts

1. Introduction

Power relations are concerned with who has access to decision-making processes, and thereby, who can participate in democracy. As we increasingly live in mediated democracies (Bennett, 1992), it is crucial to realize that media texts are one site where power relationships are constructed and reinforced (Vavrus, 2002, p. 6). Decades of research has consistently concluded that women in politics and other important social institutions are marginalised by the media (Tuchman, 1978; Byerly & Ross, 2006). Research has also shown that media, and in particular television, is central to politics and the exercise and maintenance of political power (Castells, 1999, p. 62; Dahlgren, 1995). As research consistently confirms this knowledge, we need to look for new approaches and places to strengthen democracy.

The findings presented in this paper build on my previous research (see McLaren, 2004, 2005, 2007) which analysed the content and structure of the election night television programs in Japan and Australia, from a gender perspective. My findings showed that the

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election broadcasts of the commercial broadcasters, in both Japan and Australia present politics as a form of entertainment. In these programs, there is a strong focus on personality, the 'celebritisation of politics' (Street, 2001; Van Zoonen, 2006), resulting in the gender stereotyping of candidates and citizens who appear in the programs. My analysis of the gender representations of candidates found that gender stereotyping exists for both female and male candidates in these programs, but in the case of female candidates, their relationship to power, at all levels, is constructed as problematic and unnatural. In this context, gender representation and power relations are significant. As Sreberny (2005) points out, concerns about stereotypes and narrow representations are not about censorship, they are a human rights issue, "including the right to be represented appropriately" (p. 255). My content analysis showed that media representations of gender and power in politics legitimise and perpetuate male power.

While content analysis of media texts has provided important insights and identified entrenched patterns of construction and representation, this paper takes the approach that audience research is vital to broadening insights and creating new research directions. The audience research that is presented in this paper focuses on the individual readings of the group participants expressed during the analytical discussion in the media literacy workshops. As an approach, it offers transformative potential because media literacy promotes the independence and autonomy of citizens living in media-saturated societies (Buckingham, 2003; Masterman, 1985; Suzuki, 2003). Through examining the results of audience analyses of gender and power relationships in media representations, this paper aims to consider what critical perspectives are.

1.1. Critical and media literacy

Being critical is an important aim of media literacy, and it is a wider aim of this research to consider the meaning of 'critical' and how audiences gain critical perspectives. In the same way that there is no unified definition of what media literacy is, the meaning of critical and its implications in media literacy are also debated in the literature. In Masterman's *Eighteen Principles of Media Education* (1995), he stresses the need for critical autonomy and critical practice. Buckingham (2003) discusses the limitations of a critical perspective at length, noting how it can be perceived as "a dangerous kind of arrogance" and "self-aggrandizing". Two of his main contentions are that a critical stance is often conceived in "purely negative terms" (p. 110) and that "a good deal of what passes for criticism is not actually critical enough" (p. 120). Whilst these limitations are important to consider, they are not absolute within the literature. Many scholars, including Masterman, emphasise the importance of dialogue in media literacy learning – surely a way in which dominant knowledge claims can be negotiated and transcended. Similarly, Suzuki (1997) has emphasised that "critical is creative" (p. 20), that is, critical thinking leads to creative power. Whilst being aware that there are other definitions and functions of 'critical', this paper will focus on one particular aspect of the meaning of 'critical' in media literacy. This research was undertaken using the following definition of critical in a media literacy context - to be critical means to be able to

search for and locate power relationships within society. An example of a critical perspective is the ability to recognize how media construct gender and power relationships.

1.2 The gender perspective

Gender is one of the organizing principles of society; it organizes our identities, structures our interactions, and is the basis upon which power and resources are allocated (Wharton, 2005, p. 9). The media are central to the process of constructing and representing gender. Strengthening gender equality is vital to fully realizing democracy (Ingelhart, Norris & Welzel, 2002; Sreberny, 2005) and the process of media literacy is one way to achieve this, by empowering audiences with critical perspectives (Masterman, 1985; Kellner & Share 2007). As Suzuki has noted (2003), it is not only stereotyping, bias, unfair representation and lack of access that the gender perspective addresses, other minority perspectives, such as age, race, socio-economic class, and ethnicity, can also be incorporated in this approach (p. 15). Therefore, in media literacy the gender perspective also provides the framework in which to analyse texts noting the inter-connectivity with other minority perspectives. The research presented here has aimed to examine this potential through audience research.

1.3 Audiences

The concept and definition of media audiences has changed and evolved within media research. Ruddock (2001) says that the quantitative/qualitative split on definitions of audiencehood is caused by the confusion between theoretical and methodological issues (p. 13). He emphasizes Morley's assertion that any question of audiences is empirical. It is widely agreed upon, however, that different genres and environments create different audiences, making definition and analysis difficult and complex. The research literature identifies three stages in which audiences have been researched; passive, active, and interactive.[1] From a media literacy perspective, audiences are active readers, not passive receivers of media (Suzuki, 1997, p. 21). Though audiences are still often referred to as "media consumers" in the literature, this paper emphasizes their role as citizens with democratic rights. Labeling or identifying audiences as consumers also connotes a one-way consumption process between 'sender' (media) and 'receiver' (audiences). However, a considerable amount of research shows that audiences' relationships to media texts are complex, whilst audience relations with media producers are increasingly interactive and interconnected (Byerly & Ross, 2006, p. 57). The research outlined in this paper was conducted with the rationale that audiences are individuals with unique perspectives, identities and experiences. Additionally, their audience membership may not necessarily be generalizable to their native culture or social membership. In view of this, the research conducted in Kyoto and Brisbane was not intended to essentialize Japanese and Australian audiences, and ascribe national characteristics to the results of the research. Rather, the location and unique individual perspective of each member of the groups constitutes 'audience' here.

1.4 Research location

Audience research was conducted during the latter half of 2007 with four groups; two in Kyoto and two in Brisbane. As the aim of the research was not to produce a quantitative analysis, more detailed qualitative data could be collected with small pre-existing groups, which also kept the number of participant responses manageable. By conducting research on the same topic with audiences in Japan and Australia, this research is not aiming to compare and accentuate the cultural and historical differences between media, politics and audiences in either country. Rather, it takes an Anti-Area Studies approach, which is defined by Morris-Suzuki (2004) as examining "a specific social, political or historical *problem* from *widely differing*[2] geographical vantage points" (p. 101). The aim here is to look at media constructions and representations in Japanese and Australian election broadcasts. Morris-Suzuki (2000) also points out that the Anti-Area Studies approach is more conducive to the investigation of "cultural commonalities, which might link people in widely dispersed geographical locations" (p. 17). Additionally, as a (non-Asian) researcher in Kyoto it is necessary when using this approach to examine the research topic in the ('Western') country that I am from (Australia),[3] in order to avoid the tendency, prevalent in a considerable amount of research, to "other" Japan with westernized norms. Comparative studies, which tend to create a necessary 'other', are vulnerable to criticism that the researcher was unable to fully assess the cultural context of the research because of their racial and social origin (Darling-Wolf, 2004, p. 29) Therefore, by not utilising a comparative approach, and by emphasising the individual perspectives of the participants, I endeavor to avoid the issue of 'othering' Japan. The research took place in two parts – firstly, as a workshop, and secondly, as a follow-up interview. The research presented here focuses on the workshops, where all participants were shown the same texts for analysis.

1.5 Existing research in this area

Studies which focus on audiences, television and politics are few in number, have mostly been conducted in Europe, and tend to be positioned in the field of cultural studies. Most frequently cited in the literature is David Morley's work on the audience of *Nationwide*, a BBC current affairs program. This audience research was based on a content analysis of the programs, and looked at how groups of viewers read one text, an episode of *Nationwide*, from different social positions. Morley (1980) interviewed focus group participants after they had watched an episode of the program. Using the encoding/decoding approach, he was attempting to move beyond the dominant theory of the 1970s that influenced media research, where audiences were "inscribed in the text" (p. 162), or "prisoners of the text" (Ang, 1996, p. 38). Morley unexpectedly found that codes of reading or interpretation could not be matched with groups based on social class. His findings indicated that readings occur within limits imposed by the text, and through socially produced discourses.

Numerous other studies have looked at television audiences and genres such as soap operas, crime watch programs and reality shows (for example, *Dallas*, *Crimewatch UK* and *Big Brother*). Audience studies from a gender perspective have analysed relationships of

female viewers with these genres, mostly in terms of consumption and pleasure. As Byerly and Ross (2006) point out, women have been gendered as an audience, and are seen more as consumers of entertainment style genres than news programs (p. 66). As a result there is very little research on television news audiences from a gender perspective, or other minority perspectives.

2. Research Method

A review of the research literature found two relevant studies which have informed the research methodology put forward in this paper. Firstly, Philo and Berry's (2004) extensive study on the television news coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict which sought to explore its impact on the understanding, beliefs and attitudes of the audience. This was a vast project conducted over three years and is one of the few major studies of audiences and news published in recent years. It consisted of content analysis, focus groups, and questionnaire respondents in Britain, Germany and the US. Philo and Berry's key finding was that audience attitudes changed when they became more informed about the origins of the conflict, with the majority of participants saying their interest in the news increased when they understood more. They also concluded that through viewing images of suffering and injustice, audiences can see through cultural differences and locate a universal perspective based on common values. While the research goal of Philo and Berry's project was significantly different to this one, a number of the qualitative methodological approaches - the audience group makeup and sizes, the emphasis on group dialogue and the analysis of the results - were integral to this study.

There appears to be only one major recent study that has dealt with television audiences, democracy and media constructions of elections. The study by Oates (2006) of Russian television audiences and elections, specifically campaign news coverage, was also expansive. She analysed eight Russian elections between 1993 and 2004. The focus-group research was conducted with groups in Moscow and two provincial towns before and after the 2000 presidential elections. The study aimed to define the values of Russian television audiences in a period of rapid social and political change, as well as how they felt about political advertising and campaign news. Oates found that though they recognized biased coverage, many viewers like and trust Russian television, the state broadcaster in particular, and wanted to see uncritical and positive images of their country, as it develops economically. She also found a correlation between patterns of television viewing and voting preferences in her focus groups. Though Oates' study does not have a gender focus, it is significant to the research presented here because it focuses on how citizens relate to television coverage of elections.

These two studies are distinctive in their scope and approach – they aimed at not only examining how participants analyse particular texts, but what can be done to improve their audiencehood, i.e. what media practices did they identify as satisfying or problematic. Their findings are both positive and surprising, and provide inspiration to seek new approaches and methods for the study of audiences.

2.1 Setting

There are two reasons why a "media literacy workshop setting" was chosen as the research context. Firstly, it was important to ensure that the participants would gain something from the experience, i.e. media literacy learning, rather then be expected to just provide responses to the researcher, and feel that they were "test subjects". Secondly, I wanted to emphasise a more participatory style of research. Much audience research is a one-way interaction, often taking place in pre-screened or sampled focus groups. As media literacy learning aims to be a lifelong process (Masterman, 1995; Suzuki, 2003), the workshop setting was a place to begin this.

2.2 Participants

The research participants came from pre-existing networks and groups,[4] and participated on a voluntary basis. This is similar to the "normally occurring groups" that Philo and Berry (2004) used in their study, which they define as "people who would meet and speak with each other in the normal course of their lives" (p. 200). In both locations, research was undertaken with a community group and a university group. I chose these group contexts because I expected that they would generate a variety of opinions and experiences. However, as the groups formed I ceded control, because it was more important that the groups were normally occurring than perfect random samples. I therefore employed 'typical-instance sampling', which according to Patton (2001), aims to avoid "generalized statements about the experiences of all participants. The sample is illustrative, not definitive" (p. 236). An artificially created group, though possibly more balanced, could have hampered the already existing communicative practices within the groups (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 22). Again, it should be emphasised that because this is not comparative research it alleviates the need to ensure complete diversity of gender, age and ethnicity.

The groups consisted of four to eight participants, the average size of groups that Oates (2006) and Philo and Berry (2004) worked with. They were not sampled or screened beforehand, nor were there any prerequisites or requirements for participation, such as previous media literacy learning.[5] However, they had an interest in the research topic and responded to my request for participants. Participants signed release forms agreeing to allow the data to be used in a confidential manner, i.e. the participants cannot be identified by name or organisation. In order to provide some background for each participant and attribute what they said, the groups are labeled from A to D, and each participant is numbered. This was done randomly and has no meaning other than as a descriptor.

In Kyoto, the research was undertaken with participants from a community network and students from a private university. In Brisbane, a women's discussion group and a group from a public university participated in the research workshops. In the Kyoto community group, and the Brisbane university group, some participants were from different ethnic backgrounds. Overall, the ages and backgrounds of the participants varied, however, it is important to note here that after the groups were formed it became apparent that there was a disproportionate number of female participants. As the groups were not screened, the gender balance could not be controlled.[6]

Table 1. **Group Participants in Kyoto and Brisbane**

Place	G	Participant	Gender	Age	Profession/Occupation	Ethnicity
Kyoto	A	A1	F	40	Small business owner	Japanese
		A2	F	35	University Administrator	Japanese
		A3	M	47	Financial Planner	Japanese
		A4	F	28	Environmental Consultant	Japanese
		A5	F	24	International Relations Major	Korean
		A6	M	31	Economics Major	Japanese
		A7	F	50s	Freelance journalist	Japanese
	B	B1	F	21	Sociology Major	Japanese
		B2	F	22	Psychology Major	Japanese
		B3	M	23	Psychology Major	Japanese
		B4	M	23	Sociology Major	Japanese
		B5	F	22	Psychology Major	Japanese
Brisbane	C	C1	F	77	Secretary	Anglo
		C2	F	73	Teacher	Anglo
		C3	F	60	Nurse	Anglo
		C4	F	60	Nurse	Anglo
		C5	F	89	Interior Designer	Anglo
		C6	F	80s	Teacher	Anglo
		C7	F	78	Nurse	Anglo
		C8	F	81	Medical Clinic Manager	Anglo
	D	D1	M	28	Finance/Spanish Major	Anglo
		D2	F	36	Cultural Studies Major	Italian
		D3	F	21	Communication Major	Chinese
		D4	F	47	Intercultural Communication Major	Japanese

2.3 Workshop Structure

The workshops followed the same format for all four groups in the two locations. The same texts, the program openings and entertainment-style segments (e.g. VTR documents) from Japanese and Australian election programs, were shown in each workshop.[7]

At the beginning of each workshop, there was a short introduction, followed by a mini-lecture on media literacy focusing on the definition, concepts and research model (based on Suzuki, 2003). In order for the groups to be able to discuss examples of television representations of politics and gender representations of political women and men, the groups were asked to analyse texts from election night broadcasts. I chose the texts for the workshops from my content analysis of the 2003 Japanese general election (McLaren, 2004,

***Table 2*. Programs of the November 9, 2003 Japanese General Election & October 9, 2004
Australian Federal Election**

	Broadcaster	Program Title	Broadcast Scheduled
Japan	NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation)	Dai 43-kai Shugi-in Gi-in Sosenkyo Kaihyo Sokuho	20:00–05:00
	TBS (Tokyo Broadcasting System)	Shugi-insen Kaihyo Tokubetsu Bangumi "Hyoketsu! Live 2003"	19:59–03:30
	TV Asahi (Asahi National Broadcasting Company)	Senkyo Station 2003	19:54–02:00
	Fuji TV (Fuji Television Network)	FNN Odoru Dai Senkyo-sen 2003	20:54–23:45 & 00:15–01:50
	NTV (Nippon Television Network)	NNN Shuinsen "Gekisen" Bankisha! Special	19:58–00:30 & 00:45–01:50
Australia	ABC (Australian Broadcasting Commission)	Australia Votes 2004	18:00–24:00
	Channel Nine	Australia Decides: Election 2004	18:30–23:30

2005) and the 2004 Australian federal election night television broadcasts[8] (McLaren, 2007). There was not enough time to show participants the full length of the programs that were broadcast. Instead, participants were shown the openings of the programs because the openings showed the production values of each broadcaster, as well as who would be anchoring, analysing and reporting the results.

A major finding of my content analysis of the election night programs of the Japanese commercial broadcasters was the predominance of short pre-recorded entertainment-style segments called 'VTR documents', which profiled candidates or other election related topics. For the purposes of the research, five VTR documents from two commercial broadcasters[9] which profiled female and male candidates were chosen as texts. The content analysis of the election night program of the Australian commercial broadcaster, Channel Nine, found that whilst there were not any similar VTR document style segments, there were live comedy skits, broadcast once an hour, featuring comedian Matthew Johns as "Reg Reagan", a caricature of the Australian stereotypical 'ocker' male, who regularly appears on "The Footy Show", a sports magazine style program.

The texts are indicative of how the election programs are structured, as well as examples of the way in which democracy, and those who participate in elections (candidates and voters) are represented in them. This selection criteria was informed by the "Portraying Politics" toolkit (2006), which is based on a collection of clips from European news and current affairs programs illustrating "some of the main patterns and tendencies in television's portrayal of women and men in politics" (p. 6). Participants were given text analysis sheets (based on Suzuki, 2003, p. 49) which were divided into two columns, for images and sound. They were asked to make notes about who appeared in the texts, the camerawork, voiceover tone, background music and special effects.

Table 3. VTR texts shown in the workshops

	Broadcaster	VTR Text	Program Title	Broadcast Time
Japan	Fuji TV	Doko e iku? Seikai Taifu no Me [Where are you going? In the eye of the political storm] (Tanaka Makiko)	FNN Odoru Dai Senkyo-sen 2003	21:49:51–21:52:11
	TBS	Arashi o yobu Otoko? [The man who brings on a storm] (Ishihara Nobuteru)	Shugi-insen Kaihyo Tokubetsu Bangumi "Hyoketsu! Live 2003"	20:13:35–20:15:30
	TBS	Kyukyoku no Wakamono Senkyo [Young People's Election] (Izumi Kenta)	Shugi-insen Kaihyo Tokubetsu Bangumi "Hyoketsu! Live 2003"	21:14:28–21:16:33
	TBS	Jiban Kanban Tsukutte iru Hito [A Person making their support base and name recognition] (Takai Miho)	Shugi-insen Kaihyo Tokubetsu Bangumi "Hyoketsu! Live 2003"	21:19:47–21:21:41
	TBS	Wakaki Challenger no Tatakai [The Youthful Challenger's Fight] (Mikazuki Taizo)	Shugi-insen Kaihyo Tokubetsu Bangumi "Hyoketsu! Live 2003"	23:27:17–23:29:03
Australia	Channel Nine	Reg Reagan comedy skit at Wentworth Park Dogs	Australia Decides: Election 2004	18:58:47–18:59:35
	Channel Nine	Reg Reagan comedy skit at Wentworth Park Dogs	Australia Decides: Election 2004	19:32:32–19:33:14

2.4 Data Collection & Analysis Method

The workshops were recorded and later transcribed. The participants also made notes on the image analysis sheets. This written process enabled the participants to record their observations as they watched the texts and have time to think about their ideas before announcing them to the group. However, it was anticipated that participants' spoken answers, analyses, responses and comments would be more detailed and, given the setting, interactive, so the primary focus of this analysis was the transcript of the recording made during the workshop.

The 'open coding method' (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 219) for transcription analysis was used to obtain qualitative data from the workshop. Open coding involves carefully reading through the transcripts and locating parts that suggest a category. This method is also similar to the 'code and retrieve' method, and both are essentially a content analysis of the text, where the coder must look for "patterns of evidence" (Bertrand & Hughes, 2005, p. 92). These methods are part of a grounded theory approach for coding quantitative data, in particular transcribed interviews. Bertrand and Hughes note, that these methods rely heavily on "coder intuition" (p. 93), in contrast to Lindlof and Taylor (2002) who emphasise that this method provides greater interpretive scope (p. 219). Based on these methods, I located frequently occurring topics in the transcripts that formed patterns, and these constitute the

properties which became categories.

3. Results

After coding the transcripts of the four workshops, and translating from Japanese into English where required,[10] the following five categories emerged:[11]

　　1. Program formats
　　2. Sound techniques
　　3. Visual techniques
　　4. Representation of people
　　5. Related topics

Below, examples of the analysis and discussion from each of the four workshops which produced these categories will be presented. 'Incidents' from the transcripts (i.e. quotes from the participants) are attributed to the speaker. (See Table 1 for participant information.)

3.1 Program formats

In all the workshops, participants viewed the program openings (see Table 2), then analysed and discussed the format of the programs, especially those of the commercial broadcasters which produced entertainment-style programs. In the Kyoto groups, participants tended to describe the style of the programs, comparing them to formats and genres that are familiar to them, for example, *Kohaku Utagassen* [New Year's eve singing contest] (A6), horse racing (B3), and quiz shows (B4). The Brisbane groups, also compared the programs to genres they know such as game shows (C4), comedies (C6), sports programs (D4), and reality TV shows (D3). However, when talking about the programs they were more likely to note their personal preferences. For example, regarding the texts from the Japanese programs, one participant said, "I thought they were making a real show out of it. I didn't like it at all" (C4), and when talking about the texts from the Australian commercial broadcaster, another participant said "I like it with no nonsense. You just want the facts" (C1). Whilst the university group in Brisbane located power relationships in the entertainment style programs, they also saw a positive side;

　　D1: I'd watch election programs in Australia if they were more like the Japanese ones.
　　SM: Why?
　　D1: Because it puts a spin on politics and makes it lighthearted, I look at politics as a comedy anyway...I would feel more involved with politics if the programs were like that.
　　D2: I'd appreciate more entertainment in a more ironic way, not to forget the purpose of the program. Because otherwise it becomes like poor entertainment. If I'm watching a program, I'm interested in the results and political issues, and I'd appreciate something entertaining related to that.

The Kyoto groups also tended to evaluate the mood when comparing the programs, noting that the Australian programs were relaxed (A7), more serious (B5), simple (B3) and

had a casual atmosphere (A2), compared to the dramatic (A7) and comic atmosphere (A5) of the Japanese programs. They also considered cultural reasons for differences in the programs. For example, "in Australia, TV is not the only entertainment. They are into being outdoors and playing sport, enjoying themselves like that. TV isn't their main concern" (A3), and "in Japan, there are so many entertainment style programs on in the evening. Japanese people like those kind of shows. It's the television culture" (B3).

3.2 Sound techniques

From their analysis of the texts, the participants talked a lot about how the background music was used to invoke a mood and send a message. In particular, the community group participants in Kyoto and Brisbane reacted quite strongly to the sound techniques. For example, after viewing the text about candidate Ishihara Nobuteru (see Table 3), the Brisbane participants said;

> *C4*: The music was a lot different for him. It was more victorious, like he had already won.
>
> *C8*: It was triumphant.
>
> *C4*: The music conveyed that he had already won.

In Kyoto, after watching the opening to the Asahi election program, participants said;

> *A2*: I couldn't believe the way they announced the voter turnout rates with those sound effects.
>
> *A1*: Yes, it was like 'show time' for voters, but the rates were so low.

In both community groups, participants felt quite affected by the background music. One Kyoto participant said, "It was overwhelming... a flood of sound, like a *pachinko* [slotball machine] parlour" (A2), another said, "suddenly it went from very serious to an upbeat jazz-style, to techno/hip-hop style. There was this kind of continuous tempo" (A7), and in Brisbane, one participant said, "the music was so loud, it was very distracting" (C1).

3.3 Visual techniques

From the text analysis, participants examined the camerawork, editing, use of colour and computer graphics in the texts. In the texts from the Japanese programs, the speed of the visual images concerned the community group participants. For example, some Kyoto participants said; "the editing was at a furious pace, cut cut cut, and moving fast on to the next scene" (A3), "the speed made me feel giddy" (A2), and, "there were so many cuts, they were so short, only about three seconds each. I felt so frustrated with this visual over-stimulation" (A1). In Brisbane, participants commenting on the same texts said, "the speed is so distracting" (C1), "it's too busy for you to take in all the information" (C5), and "the images were dancing around in front of me. There were too many images to take in" (C2). Participants in both groups mentioned the speed of the images in connection to possible subliminal effects and messages. However, they also considered a generational divide, noting that young people have grown up with this style of TV, and for example, "they can take in a lot of information and images very quickly. It's not unnatural for them" (A7).

In the university groups, the speed of the images was less of a focus. Instead, the use of colour in the programs came out in the analysis. For example, in Brisbane one participant thought the Australian programs overused red, white and blue (the colours of the Australian flag) in the graphics to announce the results, saying it was too "nationalistic" (D1). In Kyoto, one participant thought that the use of red and blue in the Japanese programs was significant because it symbolized the two main political parties, and was reaffirming them as winners and losers, "red is authority, blue is the minority" (B5).

Participants in all groups felt that the Japanese programs were more visual, for example; "to show the voter turnout rate in rice...I felt that it was a kind of artistic way to show it, very visual" (A7), and "Australia is verbal, Asia is more visual, non-verbal. So, the Japanese programs are very visual" (D3). One topic debated in the Kyoto community group was whether or not it was good to use computer graphics to animate politicians and party leaders, as in the opening of the TBS program. One participant said that "kids who have been brought up with *anime* [animation] just see characters. They can't see political power" (A1), whilst another argued that "if animating politicians makes kids interested in politics, then I agree with doing that" (A7).

3.4 Representation of people

Participants analysed the way people appeared in the programs. They identified three distinct groups; candidates, citizens and media practitioners. The participants compared not just how gender roles were emphasized, but also how age and ethnicity were represented. In particular, images of the Japanese candidates in the texts shown were a central part of all the group discussions. Participants said from their analysis of the text about candidate Izumi Kenta (see Table 3), "showing those images of Izumi Kenta running around, it was like a performance, the performance of a young and active male politician" (A5), "he looked strong in those images" (C7), "the VTR document about him is like a commercial" (B2), and, "the camera is very close to him, and they show him close to people too, hugging kids" (D3). They contrasted this with how other young candidates were represented, "the media images of the younger politicians made them look so naïve" (D4), "the way they showed (candidate) Mikazuki, was as a father who is trying really hard, someone worthy of support. But for (candidate) Takai Miho they showed her crying, so it was like they were trying to get the audience's sympathy" (A3), and "it's implicit that women need more support, that she can't do politics as easily as a man" (D3). When participants compared the texts about candidates Ishihara Nobuteru and Tanaka Makiko, they said; "the media support him (Ishihara)" (B5), "they show him shaking hands with people. The feeling is that he's a winner (D2), "they didn't show her as much with the public, like they did for him" (C4), and, "she seems alone in the images. Maybe she is dangerous to men" (C8).

From their analysis of who appeared in the Australian texts, and how they were represented, participants in both Kyoto and Brisbane were surprised how "mono-cultural" (D4) the programs were; "Australia is a country of immigrants yet the people who appeared in the programs were all white" (A1). Participants in both Kyoto and Brisbane noted that the

men (on the mostly male) panels of the programs were only wearing shirts and ties, "I think the men on both channels (ABC and Channel Nine) should have had their jackets on. They looked untidy" (C4), "they looked very casual" (C1), and, "why aren't they wearing jackets? Is it too hot? I think they should be. It's a serious program" (B5). One of the Kyoto participants thought that the images of their "casual" presence reaffirmed that it was "natural" for men to be there, in close proximity to politics (B4).

Participants in the Kyoto community group were particularly concerned about the representation of young people in the programs. For example, when discussing the Asahi program opening, "seeing all these young people being stupid made me feel frustrated" (A2), "those stupid-looking twenty year olds made me feel so sad" (A1), and "young people were treated too lightly, without dignity" (A4). One Kyoto community participant thought that the reason for that was because "the media are trying to commercialise us and make fun of us" (A3). However, in the university group in Kyoto some participants thought that these were simply devices to attract younger audiences; "young people can enjoy the programs" (B3), and "they are being aimed at a young audience" (B4).

3.5 Related topics

Through analysing the visual and sound techniques, participants discussed topics related to media and politics, such as information versus entertainment style programs, the emphasis on personality over policy, voter turnout rate, audience ratings, the low number of women in politics, quota systems to increase the number of women in politics, and media control. Using examples from the texts viewed in the workshops, other media and their personal experiences, they also discussed why topics not usually related to election programs were part of the programs, for example, the inclusion of high school girls' fashion in Hokkaido, and the ocker comedian Reg Reagan's live comedy skit from a dog racing track in Sydney. In all the groups, most participants said that the entertainment factor in the Japanese and Australian programs was strongly emphasized.

Some participants said they do not own television sets, or watch television regularly. Analysing and discussing the texts in the workshops reaffirmed their aversion to viewing. For example, participants in Kyoto said, "it takes a lot of time and energy to watch TV...to get the information that you want, you'd have to be in front of the TV for a day" (A4), and "there's no time to think, watching TV like this. It makes me feel passive" (A2). In Brisbane, one participant said, "I don't have a TV. Media for me is an information source, not entertainment. I don't want to be entertained by media like this" (D4).[12]

4. Discussion

The following discussion is based on the results of the five coded categories drawn from the participants' analysis (presented above). The participants analysed standard parts of the election night programs, the openings, as well as segments of the programs (broadcast on the commercial channels) which have not traditionally been part of the broadcasting of

election results. Therefore, the entertainment factor in the programs was a central discussion topic in the workshops. Participants talked about the entertainment focus of the programs in terms of their own viewing habits and preferences. Many participants rejected this style of program but others, especially younger participants, enjoyed the injection of comedy into the programs.

It would be easy to interpret this as a result of the media environment that the younger generation have grown up in, certainly some participants thought this was a factor, and judge it negatively. However, this is surely an indication of how young people are connecting with politics through media. Indeed, the research literature suggests that as popular culture and politics converge, citizens increasingly get information from and connect with politics through entertainment formats (see Street, 2001; Van Zoonen, 2006; Jones, 2005). The fact that younger audience members find the entertainment style elements appealing should not be taken to mean that they lack a critical perspective. Media literacy does not mean that everyone should share one 'correct' critical perspective. As mentioned in the introduction, audiences are made up of individuals with unique perspectives and experiences. A diverse array of perspectives is to be expected, so it is entirely possible that power will be seen in different places and structures. Of course, the problem here is that connected to this 'politics as entertainment' style phenomena are media practices such as gender stereotyping and the trivialization of democratic processes. This should not be overlooked. However, if we are to consider the comments above further, then it is also possible that they see political power and possibly even media power being subverted and destabilised by entertainment style election programs.[13]

Participants in the community groups also looked closely at the representation of citizens in the Japanese and Australian programs, and said they felt trivialized as citizens and voters by these representations. They concluded that their role in the election process was being treated lightly, and that they were being made fun of by these media representations. However, their analysis was also quite concerned with the way young citizens were represented in the programs. Many participants felt that this was an unfair and disrespectful way to represent potential or new voters. In the Kyoto groups, some participants saw this as a national concern, that the trivialization of young people in the programs by media was a way to exclude them from discourse on Japan's future. In Brisbane, some participants thought that these representations would discourage young people from becoming more involved in politics, and would ensure they remained as observers.[14] This shows how the workshop participants analysed age and power relationships.

The media literacy workshop setting was effective because it provided a place, a format and a 'language' with which to analyse media texts, and the participants were able to engage in a meaningful and collaborative dialogue. Initially, it seemed that the participants had not given as much attention to gender issues in the texts. However, from coding the workshop transcripts I found this is not the case. Rather than spending more time analysing the gendered representations in the texts, the participants took the gender focus further and broadened it to include the representation of age and ethnicity in relation to power. In their

analysis, they recognised that older candidates were represented differently to younger candidates, and how the media presence in the programs, which they identified as "male dominant" and "mono-cultural", perpetuates exclusionary social norms about who "naturally" has power in society. For the participants, the issue of media representation of gender in politics, and by extension, the issue of gender equality, is just one factor in improving and strengthening democracy. Their analysis and discussion emphasized that media representations of age and ethnicity are also important, and that issues of gender equality, age and ethnicity are interconnected. In this respect, the media literacy workshop provided an opportunity to strengthen and broaden the critical perspectives of audiences, as well as broadening the scope of the research.

5. Conclusion

This paper aimed to examine the critical perspectives of participants in a media literacy workshop through analysing gender and power relationships in media representations. It found that in the context of such a workshop, audiences not only recognise gender and power relationships, but also recognise how age and ethnicity are constructed by media in relation to power. From this it emerged that the participants considered that gender, age, ethnicity and power are interconnected. However, using a critical perspective, (defined on page 92 of this paper as being able to search for and locate power relationships within society), is not solely about being able to identify stereotypes or bias in media representations. Through participating in the media literacy workshop, participants not only used their critical perspective but also incorporated an awareness of minority perspectives, which included gender, age, race, socio-economic class, and ethnicity. This is advocated by a number of media literacy scholars as an important goal of media literacy, and a way in which to strengthen democracy (Masterman, 1985; Suzuki, 2003; Kellner & Share, 2007). As the research was not intended to be comparative, the makeup of the groups, though lacking diversity as a representative sample. still produced a meaningful and wide-ranging discussion.

The audience groups in Kyoto and Brisbane included participants who were part of a social minority (for example, the Kyoto community group had a Korean participant), which lead to a dynamic and illuminating dialogue. When reflecting on the workshops, many participants mentioned this interaction as having been significant to their experience.[15] This confirms that the relationship between audience members in the context of participating in a dialogue is important. In this sense, the background and experiences of the workshop participants had some bearing on the analytical outcomes and participants' wider application of media literacy learning. This is certainly a topic for further research. Although none of the participants had formally studied media literacy, the examples of the workshop analysis and discussion presented above show that if there is a place, a format and a 'language' with which to analyse media texts, media literacy learning engages people in a meaningful and collaborative dialogue. Therefore, conducting audience research in a media literacy workshop setting proved effective.

This paper concludes that audiences gain critical perspectives not only through recognising gender and power relationships in media representations, but also by recognising that age and ethnicity are constructed by media. As we live in media saturated societies and mediated democracies, a critical perspective has much wider applications and implications, in everyday life, both within and apart from a media literacy workshop setting.

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Notes

1　See Ang (1996), Morley (1992), Ross & Nightingale (2003) for audience research traditions.

2　Emphasis by Morris-Suzuki.

3　Australia occupies an ambiguous place in the region. It has borders as well as major economic, political and cultural relationships with Asia, yet still retains 'colonial' ties to the Commonwealth, with the British monarch the head of state.

4　Access to these groups came through personal connections and introductions.

5　This was emphasised in my initial call for participants, in both Kyoto and Brisbane, as a way to broaden the range of potential participants.

6　As the research question included gender, this could be a consideration for future research project design.

7　Most participants did not have bilingual Japanese and English ability. However, it is not the purpose of this paper to discuss the cross-cultural text selection and viewing (based on Messaris, 1997). This will be elaborated upon in my doctoral dissertation.

8　Unlike the five national Japanese broadcasters, only two Australian national broadcasters produced full-length programs in 2004.

9　This selection is based on the need to show texts which included representations of gender and age, rather than the political stance of each broadcaster. (The participants were already aware of this through the introductory part of the workshop. This data will be presented in my doctoral dissertation). These two broadcasters, TBS and Fuji TV, had the highest number of VTR documents in their programs. NHK, the public broadcaster did not include VTR documents in their broadcast. For further discussion, see McLaren 2004, 2005.

10　All translations from Japanese into English are mine.

11　This method — from coding to categories — was also used by Philo and Berry (2004) in their study.

12　Although this may seem to pose a methodological problem, and appear contradictory to the aims of the research, I think this participation was meaningful. Academic discourse on the media society and even audience studies tends to assume that everyone watches television. It should not be assumed that non-viewers of television do not want to talk about or analyse it.

13　This is an outcome of the research workshop and coding and could be explored further in future research.

14　In contrast to the attitudes mentioned above concerning younger participants' reactions to the entertainment-style programs, it is certainly a topic for future research.

15　This emerged in the second phase of this research — the follow-up interviews — and will be presented in my doctoral dissertation.

ジェンダーとその先にあるもの
―オーディアンス，クリティカルな視点，メディア・リテラシー―

サリー・マクラーレン＊

　本論文は，日本の京都とオーストラリアのブリスベンで行われたメディア・リテラシー・ワークショップの質的オーディアンス研究の結果を提示するものである。本研究の目的は，メディアのジェンダー・リプレゼンテーションにおける権力関係を読み解くオーディアンスの質的分析を通して，クリティカルな視点とはどのようなものであるかを検討することである。4つのグループで実施したワークショップでは，日本の2003年総選挙とオーストラリアの2004年連邦議会選挙が行われた日の夜のテレビ番組を分析対象として使用した。参加者はテクストの分析を通して，選挙番組におけるジェンダーや年齢，エスニシティのリプレゼンテーションに関する問題のみならず，各参加者の読みについて議論した。その内容を文字化したデータは，グループでの分析とディスカッションの主なテーマを明らかにするため，オープン・コーディング・メソッドを用いて分析した。研究の結果，オーディアンスがメディア・リプレゼンテーションにおけるジェンダーと権力関係について認識するだけでなく，年齢とエスニシティが権力と関わってメディアによってどのように構成されるのか認識し，それによってクリティカルな視点を獲得したことが明らかになった。メディア・リテラシー・ワークショップはオーディアンスがクリティカルな視点を強化し広げる機会を提供するものである。

　キーワード：クリティカル，オーディアンス，メディア・リテラシー，ジェンダー，年齢，エスニシティ，権力，選挙番組

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