



The ABC of Political Audiences: Are Public and Commercial Viewers Distinctive?

Clive Bean
School of Humanities and Human Services
and
Centre for Social Change Research
Queensland University of Technology

**Paper presented to the Social Change in the
21st Century Conference**

**Centre for Social Change Research
Queensland University of Technology
29 October 2004**

Abstract

One of the most profound influences on social and political change over the course of the last half century has been the development of the electronic mass media, especially television. The advent of television has changed the way that politics, and in particular election campaigns, are played out. Scholars have researched the political role of television in many respects and looked at the influence of television as a whole on politics. However, there has been little if any investigation of distinctions that might occur between public and commercial television audiences, despite the various political implications such distinctions may have. In Australia, where the national public broadcaster is distinguished from privately owned television channels by not running paid advertising and by having a greater emphasis on serious political journalism, and there is another publicly funded channel with a broader world and multicultural focus, the prospect that the audiences of these channels might differ from those of the commercial stations is particularly intriguing. This paper uses data from the 2001 Australian Election Study to explore differences between viewers who rely on different television channels for election news. The paper investigates not only whether the different audiences are distinctive in socio-demographic terms but also whether they vary in terms of political orientations and leanings.

Note: The author is grateful to an anonymous reviewer for comments on the paper.

Introduction

One of the most profound influences on social change over the course of the last half century has been the development of the electronic mass media, especially television. Television, for example, has changed the way that politics and election campaigns are played out. Increasingly, it would seem, election campaigns are waged via the reporting of the activities and statements of the leaders of the major parties on television news and current affairs programs. Few would thus disagree with the argument that television 'has literally transformed the very practice of politics' (Ward 1995: 227). At the same time, accurately estimating the influence of campaign activities and the role of the mass media as a vehicle for conveying campaign material has proved notoriously difficult for researchers (Forrest and Marks 1999; McAllister 1985).

One of the things that is needed in order to improve our ability to judge the political impact of television is a better understanding of the nature of the audiences who watch television for election information. In particular, in Australia where the national public broadcaster, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) is distinguished from privately owned television channels by not running paid advertising and having more of an emphasis on serious political journalism and there is also a publicly funded broadcaster with a broader world and multicultural orientation, the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS), the prospect that the audiences of these channels might differ from those of the major commercial channels, Seven, Nine and Ten, is particularly intriguing.

Scholars who have undertaken investigations into the role of television in politics have tended to focus more on the effects of television as a whole and less on distinctions between, for example, public and commercial television audiences (Western and Hughes 1983). Furthermore, while media audiences are difficult to define (Craig 2004: 59-61), the kinds of general audience research that tend to be undertaken largely focus on factors such as the size of television audiences (Tiffen 1989: 53), their preferences and potential as consumers of other products (Ward 1995: 139) and what else they are doing while they are watching (Turnbull 2002: 85), rather than who they are in terms of their socio-demographic and political profiles.

Yet, knowing who the different audiences for political news are is potentially important. With programs like the weekday *7.30 Report* and *Lateline* and the weekly *Four Corners*, the ABC has established itself as the leading Australian television broadcaster of serious political journalism. SBS also has a distinctive niche with its emphasis on world news in its bulletins. But are these orientations reflected in the profiles of the audiences of the various television channels and do such audiences tend to have particular political biases? The advent of programs such as *Vote for Me* on Channel 7, for example, in which potential senate candidates vied for a prize of substantial financial backing for their campaign in the 2004 federal election, makes it all the more relevant to know the representativeness of such audiences, given the implicit role of democratic ringmaster that a television station plays through a program like this. The purpose of this paper is to provide some empirical evidence on the

political and social composition of the audiences who rely on the different Australian television channels for election news. Given the nature of the ground being covered, the paper adopts an exploratory approach rather than one of testing explicit hypotheses.

Television Election News Audiences

This analysis relies on data from the 2001 Australian Election Study, a nationally representative mail sample survey of 2010 electors (Bean, Gow and McAllister 2002), which contained two key questions on the sources of television news respondents watched to gain information about the 2001 federal election campaign. We already know from other data that voters pay more attention to television for news about election campaigns than they do to other major news media, such as radio and newspapers (Bean and McAllister 2002: 272) and that this is true for other countries as well as Australia (Dalton 1996: 24). The survey asked: 'During the election campaign, which local TV news bulletin would you say you relied on the **most** for election campaign news? And which national news bulletin did you rely on most?' The list of possible responses was Channel 7, Channel 9, Channel 10, SBS, ABC and None. The column for voters to respond to the first question was headed 'Local (evening) news bulletin' and the column for responses to the second question was headed 'National (late night) news bulletin'.

Table 1 presents the responses. It shows that three television channels between them attracted nearly three quarters of the local, evening audience. Channel 9 was the most popular television channel for local bulletins, with 28 per cent of the sample saying that they relied on it the most for election campaign news. Channel 9 was followed closely in popularity by the ABC, which was the television station of first choice for evening election campaign news for 25 per cent of respondents. Channel 7 came next, attracting 20 per cent of the sample. Trailing some distance behind was Channel 10 with only 9 per cent of the evening audience, while only 3 per cent of respondents tuned into SBS for evening news about the election campaign. Some 15 per cent reported not watching any local television news bulletin for information about the election campaign.

Table 1: Percentage of Electors Who Watch Different Television Channels for Local and National Campaign news

	Local (evening) news bulletin	National (late night) news bulletin
Channel 7	20	8
Channel 9	28	16
Channel 10	9	11
SBS	3	6
ABC	25	24
None	15	35
Total	100	100
(n)	(1915)	(1560)

Source: Australian Election Study, 2001 (n = 2010).

That number is more than doubled in the second column in Table 1, in which 35 per cent of respondents said they did not watch any late night news bulletin for election campaign news. This number is by no means surprising given the hour of such bulletins combined with the proportion of Australians who express little interest in election campaigns anyway (Bean and McAllister 2002: 272). Furthermore, this is very likely a significant underestimate of the true proportion for whom the correct response is 'none', since over 20 per cent of the sample did not record an answer to this question and it is reasonable to assume that the vast majority of those left it blank because they did not have a substantive choice to indicate. Nonetheless, the ABC audience held up very well in this context, with almost the same proportion as for evening news – 24 per cent – saying that they watched the ABC late night news for election campaign information. Among other things this figure probably reflects the fact that the ABC gives the most concentrated political coverage at this time of night. Channel 9 was second, with 16 per cent of the late night political audience and Channel 7 was third with 8 per cent. This of course represents an appreciable drop in the audience shares of both these channels compared to the earlier news bulletins, while the Channel 10 share increased a little, to 11 per cent. SBS, on the other hand, doubled its share of the audience in the later at night period, although even in doing so it remained the least watched channel.

From the broad outline of the proportions of the electorate who watch the different channels for election campaign news, we now move to consider the profiles of the different audiences according to a number of political and socio-demographic indicators, in order to address the title question of this paper: are public and commercial viewers of television political news distinctive? For this exercise we concentrate on the local/evening news bulletins, since the numbers watching those are greater, while noting that further analysis shows that the patterns are broadly similar for the national/late night news bulletins (further details are available from the author on request).

Political Orientations

We start by considering a range of political orientations, including political interest, ideological location and ratings of political parties and leaders (Table 2). The first line in Table 2 shows the percentage of each channel's election news audience that claimed to have 'a good deal' of interest in politics. The key reference point is the figure in the final column of the table, which represents the combined percentage with a good deal of interest in politics among all those who answered this question (which is virtually the same proportion as for the whole sample). Thus 33 per cent of all respondents to the question said they had a good deal of interest in politics. By contrast, but as might be expected, among those did not watch election campaign news on television only 12 per cent said they had a good deal of interest in politics.

Viewers of the commercial stations were close to, but slightly down on, the average level of political interest, with 26, 29 and 31 per cent of viewers of Channels 7, 9 and 10 respectively saying they had a good deal of political interest. SBS and ABC viewers, however, showed considerably more interest:

45 per cent of SBS viewers and 54 per cent of ABC viewers reported having a good deal of interest in politics. This represents quite a range among the viewing audiences, with over twice the proportion of ABC viewers as Channel 7 viewers – more than half compared to a quarter – registering interest in politics. Of course both the interested and the less interested are important in the context of any election campaign, particularly in the light of evidence that more voters are now making their final voting choice during the campaign period and that there are connections between interest and timing of the vote decision (McAllister 2002: 27-30).

Table 2: Interest in Politics, Left-Right Position and Attitudes towards Parties and Leaders by Local TV News Bulletin Watched for Campaign News

	Channel 7	Channel 9	Channel 10	SBS	ABC	None	Total
Percentage with a good deal of interest in politics	26	29	31	45	54	12	33
Mean position on left-right scale (0=left, 10=right)	5.4	5.9	5.4	4.2	4.9	5.0	5.3
Mean rating of parties on 0-10 scale:							
Liberal	5.6	6.3	6.4	4.5	5.1	4.9	5.6
Labor	5.8	5.4	5.4	6.3	5.8	4.9	5.5
National	4.8	5.2	5.0	3.9	4.5	4.4	4.7
Greens	4.2	4.2	4.4	6.1	5.4	4.7	4.7
One Nation	3.1	2.7	2.8	1.8	1.9	2.9	2.6
Democrats	4.4	4.5	4.5	5.7	4.9	4.5	4.6
Mean rating of leaders on 0-10 scale:							
John Howard	5.6	6.3	6.1	4.4	5.1	4.8	5.6
Kim Beazley	5.9	5.6	5.5	6.6	6.4	4.8	5.7
John Anderson	4.8	5.2	5.4	4.6	4.8	4.5	4.9
Bob Brown	3.8	4.0	4.1	5.4	5.2	4.3	4.4
Pauline Hanson	3.0	2.6	2.6	2.1	2.0	2.8	2.6
Natasha Stott Despoja	4.8	4.9	5.0	5.7	5.4	4.9	5.0

Source: Australian Election Study, 2001 (n = 2010).

Where do the different audiences line up on the ideological spectrum? This is measured in summary by a scale which runs from 0 to 10, where 0 is the furthest left and 10 the furthest right. Thus any score above 5 implies a rightward leaning and any score below 5 a leftward leaning. For the whole sample who responded to this question, the average score was 5.3, suggesting that overall the electorate is a little to the right of centre. Viewers of Channel 7 and Channel 10 were very close to the average, while Channel 9 viewers were noticeably of a more rightward persuasion, with a score of 5.9. SBS viewers, on the other hand, scored well to the left of centre, on 4.2. ABC viewers were only a slither to the left of centre, although that makes them somewhat to the left of the norm for the Australian electorate, as measured by these data.

When it came to rating political parties on a similar scale, on which 0 represents strongly dislike, 10 strongly like and 5 is the neutral point, Channel 7 viewers averaged scores very close to the overall total in the right hand column, although they were a little less in favour of the Greens and more sympathetic to One Nation than other viewers. Channel 9 viewers were

similarly unimpressed by the Greens, but were also clearly more favourable than most towards the Liberal and National parties, consistent with their rightwards location on the left-right scale, although they were not especially against the Labor Party. The Channel 10 viewer profile was similar. SBS viewers were quite different. Compared to other political television audiences they were strongly in favour of Labor, the Greens and the Democrats and commensurately against the Liberals, the Nationals and One Nation. The ABC viewer profile was similar in direction to that of SBS viewers, but a much fainter version of the pattern.

These viewer attitudes towards parties are reinforced very much by their ratings of the party leaders. Again, Channel 7 viewers were similar to the overall norm, except for scoring Bob Brown lower and Pauline Hanson higher than average. Channel 9 and 10 viewers tended to be favourable towards the conservative party leaders, while SBS and, to a milder degree, ABC viewers favoured Kim Beazley, Bob Brown and Natasha Stott Despoja – and not Pauline Hanson.

The above data reflect attitudes that are not mutually exclusive. It is possible for respondents to express positive attitudes towards parties of different political leanings, for instance. In Table 3 we present data from a stricter test of partisan allegiances, whether 'generally speaking' respondents usually think of themselves as identifying with one party or another. This 'party identification' is closely related to voting behaviour but represents a longer term attachment to a party (Aitkin 1982; McAllister 1992). The data in Table 3 broadly reflect the results in Table 2. The Channel 7 political audience once more displayed a pattern close to the general distribution for the whole sample. Channel 9 viewers were more inclined than any others to identify with the Liberal Party, but not at the expense of a good representation of Labor identifiers. Instead, non-identifiers were underrepresented among the Channel 9 audience. The balance among Channel 10 viewers was slightly tipped towards the Liberals and away from Labor, but not strongly. The ABC viewer profile was unremarkable, displaying, like Channel 7 viewers, perhaps a marginal bias away from the Liberals and towards Labor, plus a slight overrepresentation of Green identifiers. SBS viewers were the most distinct. Most obviously, this took the form of low representation of Liberal and National identifiers (none of the latter were found among SBS viewers of evening election news in the sample) and high representation of Australian Democrat identifiers and those who identified with no party, plus to a lesser extent Labor identifiers. Finally, those who did not watch election campaign news on television were also more inclined not to identify with any party, at the expense of the two major parties.

Table 3: Party Identification by Local TV News Bulletin Watched for Campaign News

	Channel 7	Channel 9	Channel 10	SBS	ABC	None	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Liberal	36	46	41	23	36	29	38
Labor	38	37	34	42	38	25	36
National	5	3	2	0	4	3	4
Democrats	1	3	2	9	3	3	3
Greens	1	1	2	4	5	5	3
One Nation	3	2	4	2	2	3	3
Other	0	1	2	2	1	1	1
No Party	16	8	12	19	13	30	15

Source: Australian Election Study, 2001 (n = 2010).

Social Structure and Political Audiences

The next three tables contain data which switch the focus from political orientations to the socio-demographic characteristics of election news viewers. We begin by looking at sex, age and education (Table 4). Taking sex first, we see that the ABC viewer profile was similar to the norm, while Channel 7 and Channel 10 viewers were disproportionately inclined to be women rather than men. Channel 9 had more male viewers than would be expected, while the SBS viewing audience contained quite a large bias towards men.

Table 4: Sex, Age and Education by Local TV News Bulletin Watched for Campaign News

	Channel 7	Channel 9	Channel 10	SBS	ABC	None	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Male	41	51	41	59	48	43	46
Female	59	49	59	41	52	57	54
Under 25	10	6	12	4	3	13	8
25 to 44	37	37	37	44	33	40	36
45 to 64	36	36	36	38	38	37	37
65 and over	17	21	15	15	26	10	19
No post-secondary qualification	45	39	35	32	25	40	36
Non-degree qualification	44	47	49	34	39	40	43
University degree	12	13	16	34	36	20	21

Source: Australian Election Study, 2001 (n = 2010).

In terms of their age profiles, Channels 7 and 9 were both close to the overall pattern (as represented by the final column in the table), although where they diverged slightly it was in different directions, so that Channel 7 had a somewhat younger profile than Channel 9. Channel 10 was similar to Channel 7, but with a tendency towards a younger audience again. SBS had lower representation than would be expected among both the youngest and oldest

age groups and a higher proportion of viewers than expected among the 25 to 44 cohort. Easily the most distinctive age profile is that of the ABC audience, which was strongly skewed away from the young and towards the over 65 year olds. Other more general research on ABC television audiences shows a similar skew (Jacka 2002: 338).

The ABC audience is also distinctive with respect to the educational background of its members. ABC viewers were much more likely to have a university degree than those of the commercial channels and comparatively few had no post-secondary qualification at all. The SBS educational profile was similar but not as extreme, while at the other end of the spectrum Channel 7 attracted the audience with the lowest rate of tertiary qualifications, while the audiences of Channels 9 and 10, in that order, had slightly higher levels of education. Of all the factors considered in this investigation, education stands out as one on which the public and commercial audiences stand strongly apart.

Table 5 has data for four other social structural variables, occupation, employment sector, trade union membership and subjective social class. The Channel 7 political audience has something of a 'working class' character, in that it had more people in manual occupations than the norm and more labelling themselves as working class, although its viewers also had a lower than average percentage of union members within their ranks. The Channel 9 viewer profile conformed closely to the norm across all four variables in Table 5. Like Channel 7, Channel 10 had a working class tinge to its profile, less clearly in the cases of occupation and subjective class, but with a good compliment of union members in addition. SBS tended towards a similar direction. But, again, the ABC stood out from the other stations. Fully 80 per cent of the ABC audience was from the non-manual occupation group and only 20 per cent manual. Again, this reflects other evidence about the 'middle class' nature of the ABC television audience (Jacka 2002: 338). Further reinforcement comes from the 64 per cent of ABC viewers who gave their self-assessed class as middle rather than working. On the other hand, 30 per cent were union members. Furthermore, only 44 per cent of ABC viewers were employed in the private sector, while for all the other channels the equivalent figure was around 56 to 57 per cent; and 32 per cent of ABC viewers were public sector employees, compared with the overall figure of 24 per cent.

Table 5: Occupation, Employment Sector, Union Membership and Subjective Class by Local TV News Bulletin Watched for Campaign News

	Channel 7	Channel 9	Channel 10	SBS	ABC	None	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Manual	43	38	40	40	20	38	35
Non-Manual	57	62	60	60	80	62	65
Self-employed	16	17	14	13	22	21	18
Private sector employee	57	56	56	56	44	57	53
Public sector employee	20	22	23	27	32	20	24
Employed in family business or farm	7	4	8	4	2	3	4
Union member	21	24	30	27	30	18	25
Non-member	79	76	70	73	70	82	75
Subjective working class	60	50	57	56	36	54	50
Subjective middle class	40	50	43	44	64	46	50

Source: Australian Election Study, 2001 (n = 2010).

The last set of variables we consider includes residential location, religion and ethnic background (Table 6). With respect to location, the only particularly distinctive pattern is for SBS, 83 per cent of whose viewers were from urban (large city) areas, compared to the norm of 69 per cent. Channel 10 was also slightly up on urban viewers, while Channel 7 had a slightly larger proportion of rural viewers than the total figures would predict.

Table 6: Region, Religious Denomination, Religiosity and Birthplace by Local TV News Bulletin Watched for Campaign News

	Channel 7	Channel 9	Channel 10	SBS	ABC	None	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Rural	34	30	26	17	32	31	31
Urban	66	70	74	83	68	69	69
Catholic	30	28	37	30	25	24	28
Anglican	28	29	20	7	26	22	26
Uniting	13	16	14	6	11	10	13
Other	17	14	11	30	11	14	14
No religion	13	12	18	28	27	30	20
At least monthly church attendance	18	20	13	30	22	15	19
At least yearly church attendance	21	22	34	13	20	19	22
Less than yearly church attendance	17	20	17	17	17	18	18
Never attends church	44	37	37	41	42	48	41
Born in Australia	77	78	73	52	75	79	76
Born in British Isles	8	7	7	9	12	7	9
Born in Europe/Asia	13	12	16	31	9	8	12
Born elsewhere	3	3	4	7	4	6	4

Source: Australian Election Study, 2001 (n = 2010).

Turning to the figures on religious denomination, Channels 7 and 9 displayed profiles close to average, albeit both having a certain underrepresentation of non-religious voters. Channel 10's audience was inclined towards Catholics rather than Anglicans and the ABC's audience had an overrepresentation of

the non-religious and a slight underrepresentation of Catholics. The diverseness of the SBS audience is apparent in these data, which show a preponderance of members of 'other', largely non-Christian, religions watching SBS, as befits the broadcaster's multicultural focus. The SBS audience also contained disproportionate numbers of those with no religion and very low numbers of Anglican and Uniting church adherents.

The data for church attendance also separate SBS viewers from the rest. Thirty per cent of the SBS political audience attended church at least once a month, compared to the average across all viewer groups of 19 per cent. This figure is probably linked to the high proportion of members of 'other' faiths watching SBS. At the other end of the spectrum, only 13 per cent of Channel 10 viewers attended church at least monthly.

SBS's distinctiveness is continued in the results for ethnic background, as indicated in the survey by country of birth. Whereas over three-quarters of the full sample were born in Australia, the same was true of only 52 per cent of viewers of SBS election campaign news. Moreover, fully 31 per cent of SBS viewers were born in the main non-English speaking background catchments of continental Europe and Asia. The sample-wide proportion born in Europe or Asia was 12 per cent. None of the three commercial channels or the ABC diverted much from the general pattern on this variable, except that Channel 10 had slightly more audience members from Europe or Asia and slightly less born in Australia, while the ABC was a little up on British and down on European/Asian immigrants.

Multivariate Analysis

The final part of the analysis involves putting together all the variables we have considered in the preceding bivariate analyses into a multivariate analysis in order to obtain a more statistically robust picture of which of the election campaign news audiences are distinctive and how. To achieve this, the audience variable has been broken up into separate dummy variables for each television channel watched and then each one regressed on the set of political and socio-demographic variables considered in Tables 2 to 6. The analytic procedure is logistic regression and to simplify the presentation of results only those variables achieving statistical significance at the 5 per cent confidence level are shown in Table 7.

Table 7: Logistic Regression Analyses of Local TV News Bulletin Audiences

	Channel 7	Channel 9	Channel 10	SBS	ABC
Age	-	-	-	-	.024**
Education	-.671*	-.450*	-	-	.663**
Occupation	-	-	-	-	.654**
Urban-rural	-	-	-	-	-.456*
Interest in politics	-	-.588**	-	-	.932**
Left-right position	-	.268**	-	-	-.151**
Liberal Party rating	-	-	.264**	-	-
National Party rating	-	-	-.152*	-	.117*
Bob Brown rating	-	-	-	-	.174**

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; - not significant.

Source: Australian Election Study, 2001 (n = 2010).

Indeed only nine of the 26 separate variables reached significance in any one of the equations for each channel. Education had a significant impact in three of the five equations, showing Channel 7 and Channel 9 viewers to be significantly less well educated and ABC viewers to be significantly more well educated than other respondents. On the basis of these results, the ABC clearly has the most distinctive viewer profile, with eight social and political variables recording significant effects. Once the effects of all the variables in the analysis are held constant, we see that net of other factors, older people, the better educated, those in non-manual occupations, rural residents, the politically interested, those tending towards the left of the political spectrum, people who favour the National Party and who favour the Greens leader Bob Brown all have a significant tendency to watch the ABC for election campaign news. The significant effects for Channel 9 are very much a counterpoint to those for the ABC, with the less well educated, those with little interest in politics and right-wing voters being significantly more likely to view the Channel 9 election campaign news. Channel 10, interestingly and once other factors are controlled for, attracts both those who favour the Liberal Party and those who dislike the National Party, a finding that may reflect the urban bias in this channel's audience. Finally, notwithstanding the distinctive features of the SBS viewer profile revealed in the bivariate tables, no statistically significant factors emerged in the multivariate analysis for that channel, which probably reflects the small numbers in the SBS audience and serves as a reminder that the patterns in the earlier tables must be interpreted very tentatively, even though they make intuitive sense.

Conclusion

The analysis in this paper has shown that, to varying degrees, the political audiences of the different television channels in Australia are distinguishable from one another. Of course, the data in this analysis focused particularly on audiences for coverage of election campaign news, but it is not unreasonable to assume that by and large these data would reflect the audiences of the various channels more generally. The ABC audience has the most distinctive profile, especially in socio-demographic terms, with a noticeable bias towards older, better educated, more 'middle class' respondents, who are also politically interested and to some extent tend to be more 'left wing' than the norm. The latter, though, is reflected in a generalised ideological positioning and not specifically in terms of political party preferences.

Among the commercial channels, Channel 7 probably has the audience that is most different from that of the ABC. Its audience tends to draw more on those from some of the lower socio-economic strata. The Channel 9 audience is similar, but probably more socially middling than that of Channel 7, although, in counterpoint to the ABC audience Channel 9 election news viewers tend to sit more to the right of the political spectrum. In turn, the Channel 10 political audience is similar to that of Channel 9, although Channel 10 tends to attract younger viewers and Channel 9 older. And, finally, as we have seen, despite the uncertainty of the statistical evidence for the SBS audience, the data nonetheless imply, as we would expect from its broadcasting mandate, an audience of diverse cultural, religious and ethnic backgrounds.

There are at least two ways in which the results in this paper have more general significance. The first lies in the implications they have for how political campaign messages may be interpreted by different television audiences. If, for example, certain audiences are more interested in political affairs than others and more of their number have higher levels of education they could be expected to be more knowledgeable and sophisticated consumers of political information. This in turn might suggest that political leaders should adjust their pitch to suit different audiences, instilling greater detail and complexity in their arguments before some audiences and presenting a simpler, more straightforward message to others. Appropriately different strategies might likewise be pursued for audiences that have different political leanings. Of course, while these suggestions sound logical in theory, the question would remain as to how viable it would be in practice to adopt such varied approaches to the delivery of political messages.

The second way in which the results are important is that they help lay an evidential foundation for the difficult task of analysing the influence that television has on politics in general and voting behaviour in particular. Scholars have struggled with this task and evidence that television audiences differ may assist in refining techniques to analyse their responses to political cues. One possibility, for example, is that the audiences of some channels may be more responsive to televised election campaign messages than others.

References

- Aitkin, D. 1982. *Stability and Change in Australian Politics*. 2nd ed. Canberra: Australian National University Press.
- Bean, C., Gow, D. and McAllister, I. 2002. *Australian Election Study, 2001: User's Guide for the Machine-Readable Data File*. Canberra: Social Science Data Archives, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University.
- Bean, C. and McAllister, I. 2002. 'From Impossibility to Certainty: Explaining the Coalition's Victory in 2001' in M. Simms and J. Warhurst (eds) *2001: The Centenary Election*. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press.
- Craig, G. 2004. *The Media, Politics and Public Life*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.
- Dalton, R.J. 1996. *Citizen Politics: Public Opinion and Political Parties in Advanced Western Democracies*. Chatham, New Jersey: Chatham House Publishers.
- Forrest, J. and Marks, G.N. 1999. 'The Mass Media, Election Campaigning and Voter Response: The Australian Experience', *Party Politics*, 5: 99-114.
- Jacka, E. 2002. 'The Future of Public Broadcasting' in S. Cunningham and G. Turner (eds) *The Media and Communications in Australia*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.
- McAllister, I. 1985. 'Campaign Activities and Electoral Outcomes in Britain 1979 and 1983', *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 49: 489-503.
- McAllister, I. 1992. *Political Behaviour: Citizens, Parties and Elites in Australia*. Melbourne: Longman Cheshire.
- McAllister, I. 2002. 'Calculating or Capricious? The New Politics of Late Deciding Voters' in D.M. Farrell and R. Schmitt-Beck (eds) *Do Political Campaigns Matter? Campaign Effects in Elections and Referendums*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Tiffen, R. 1989. *News and Power*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.
- Turnbull, S. 2002. 'Audiences' in S. Cunningham and G. Turner (eds) *The Media and Communications in Australia*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.
- Ward, I. 1995. *Politics of the Media*. Melbourne: Macmillan.
- Western, J.S. and Hughes, C.A. 1983. *The Mass Media in Australia*, 2nd ed. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press.