Queering Popular Culture:
A Cultural Studies Approach Towards Recent Television Series in Japan and Taiwan

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Looking, HBO 2014
**Queer and Gender Trouble**

- **What is Queer?**
  - Against the “norm”.

- Judith Butler (1990) suggested that there is a compulsory order of **sex, gender and desire**.
  - Sex is to be fixed.
  - Gender is a performativity experienced by the individual as a natural identity.
  - Sexual Desire is constructed in the terms of discourse and power, where power is partially understood as heterosexual conventions.
Queer Readings

- Queer theorists have been reading both connotative and denotative meanings in popular culture context as the challenge to heterosexual hegemonic structure of mainstream opinion and representation.

- The relationships between queerness and popular culture are not just about queer representation and queer identity, but the fundamental ideas of the complexities of gender trouble as well. The produced queer popular discourse might not target at the minority itself. Some of its purpose is to reach the fantasy of those heterosexual norm audiences.
**Ike-para (2007)**

*Ike-para*, Fuji Television 2007

*Hana-Kimi* volume 1 1996
The storyline in *Ike-para* is about how the protagonist, Mizuki Ashiya, cross-dressed as a boy in order to attend a all-boys’ boarding school so that she can approach to her athletic idol, Izumi Sano. Mizuki and Izumi then room together in the dorm and develop a deep relationship, and eventually to a romance as the narrative goes when Izumi discovers her true gender.

Actress Maki Horikita as protagonist Mizuki
**Ike-para (2007)**

- “Gender Bender” is a subgenre under the shojo manga that features cross-dressing characters in a series or the cross-dressing character being the protagonist (Kornfield 2011: 214). While the narrative itself is not focusing on any homosexuality theme, Gender Bender genre consists of the element that gender is indeed troublesome.

- Gender bending in Japanese entertainment is historically linked to *Kabuki Theater*, where woman has been impersonated by male actor called *onnataga*. 
Ike-para (2007)

Bando Tamasaburo, a famous and celebrated onnataga in Japan

Holy Grail by Versailles, a Japanese Visual Kei Band
Ike-para (2007)

Gender Identity

Patriarchal Society

Fantasy
Two Fathers (2012)

Two Fathers, SET 2012
Two Fathers (2012)

- *Two Fathers* is a typical “idol drama” series that casts popular actors in the entertainment industry in Taiwan as one of the production and promotion strategy. The storyline is about two single men forming a family and raising a daughter together. Even thought there is no apparent gay or same-sex oriented content in the plot, the series still raise several discussions towards family unit constitutes two fathers and how traditional Taiwan society respond to it.

- Playing with “bromance” and homosociality.
**Two Fathers (2012)**

- From “bromance” to gay romance?
- Fantasy
- Family unit and marriage equality

Fan-art creation of *Two Fathers*
Executive Yuan of Taiwan government proposed legislation granting same-sex marriage under Human Rights Law in 2013. However, this action has arisen large controversies and debates in the country.
Queer, Entertainment and Culture

about the festival

It's about time! Taiwan International Media and Education Association (TIMEA), in conjunction with Portico Media, is proud to present the 1st Taiwan International Queer Film Festival. The Festival will include a total of 60 films from 30 countries, and will begin in Taipei and end in Kaohsiung during the 12 days of end of September to the beginning of October. Whether you are gay or straight, foreigner or local, we hope you will take some time to check out the movies and the activities we have planned during this time. Your support and your suggestions are greatly appreciated and please share this information with your friends, classmates, colleagues and family members. And with that, Let the Films Begin!

1st Taiwan International Queer Film Festival 2014
• In both cases, queer readings can be depicted in different contexts and contents. Whether it is gender performativity or same-sex family structure debate, mainstream television provides the opportunity for the society to discuss and pay some awareness to the diversity of sex and gender identity.

• It is important to note how the entertainment industries evolve with the culture and society, both influencing each other and representing diverse perspectives.
Thanks for your attention.