

'NICE KOREA, NAUGHTY KOREA': MEDIA FRAMINGS OF NORTH KOREA AND
THE INTER-KOREAN RELATIONSHIP IN THE LONDON 2012 OLYMPIC GAMES

by

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Abstract

In this study, I analyze mainstream news-media framings of North Korea and the inter-Korean relationship in the London 2012 Summer Olympic Games. I use this study as a way of exploring the role that media plays in promoting particular understandings of North and South Korean nations and cultures. My research was guided by the following questions: 1) How did mainstream news-media in South Korea and in a selection of other national contexts frame the relationship between North Korea and South Korea in the London 2012 Games?; 2) How was North Korea's involvement in the Games understood and portrayed within different news-media?; 3) To what extent were themes pertaining to the unity of and/or divisions between North and South Korea evident in the coverage?; 4) What differences were there, if any, between the South Korean coverage of these topics and other international news-media coverage?; and 5) What might these differences imply about subjectivity in decision-making processes in mainstream news-media, and/or about how journalists might be implicated in the promotion of stereotypes and/or xenophobia? This study draws on existing research on news media coverage of conflict, sport, and nationalism with particular attention to the interrelated concepts of ideology, hegemony, and Orientalism (Said, 2003). Live televised commentary and newspaper articles from South Korea and other English-speaking nations were collected and analyzed using Norman Fairclough's (1995) Critical Discourse Analysis to examine how language operates in framing events and topics in a manner that may make some points or perspectives more visible than others.

The results illustrate that South Korean and international media covered North Korea's involvement and the inter-Korean relationship during the Games differently. Namely, international media representations of North Korean performance were at times derogatory or

dismissive, and included more discussions of the North Korean government and its associated conflicts and issues (as compared to South Korean coverage). As well, emphasis on division was found more often in international coverage when covering the inter-Korean relationship. The study concluded with commentary on the potential role of sport media producers in peace promotion and in the perpetuation of cultural violence, the potential impacts of the studied portrayals on audiences, and possibilities for developing more critically-informed approaches to creating media messages.

Preface

This thesis is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, L. Yoon.

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Chapter One: Introduction

In this study, I analyze mainstream news-media framings of North Korea and the inter-Korean relationship in the London 2012 Summer Olympic Games. I use this examination of media portrayals as a way of improving scholarly understandings of contemporary relationships between North Korea and South Korea and between North Korea and other parts of the world – and as a way of exploring the role that media plays in promoting particular versions of these relationships. I also consider how an improved understanding of sport media’s relationships to peace and conflict is relevant to debates about whether and how sport unites people and/or exacerbates divisions between them.

My study of these topics and issues is guided by the following research questions: 1) How did mainstream news-media in South Korea and in a selection of other national contexts frame the relationship between North Korea and South Korea in the London 2012 Olympic Games?; 2) How was North Korea’s involvement in the Games understood and portrayed within different news-media?; 3) To what extent were themes pertaining to the unity of and/or divisions between North and South Korea evident in the coverage?; 4) What differences were there, if any, between the South Korean coverage of these topics and other international news-media coverage?; and 5) What might these differences imply about subjectivity in decision-making processes in mainstream news-media, and/or about how journalists might be implicated in the promotion of stereotypes and/or xenophobia?

This work has implications for thinking about the role of sport media producers in peace promotion and reconciliation (and in the perpetuation of conflict and cultural violence), the potential impacts of mass media on audiences, and possibilities for developing more critically-

informed approaches to creating and receiving sport media messages. As McCombs, Shaw and Weaver (1997) explain, it is important to recognize that while news-media cannot explicitly tell readers what to think, it can suggest how and what to think about. It is similarly relevant that sporting competitions are consistently framed as symbolic of broader political relationships (Bairner, 2001; Hargreaves, 2002; Jung, 2007; B. Wilson, 2012). For example, mass media commonly play a role in reinforcing the ‘sport as war’ metaphor through the common and explicit comparison between and ranking of countries – comparisons and rankings which are symbolically important for countries seeking prestige, recognition, and potentially dominance on a world stage (Cho, 2009; Joo, 2012; Larson & Park, 1993; Lee & Maguire, 2009a, 2009b).

The Korean case that is the focus of this thesis study deserves particular attention for various reasons. Sport has been used as a diplomatic tool – for both antagonistic and reconciliatory purposes – by North Korea and South Korea since the two states divided in 1948¹. Even before the divide, sport was considered a symbol of national solidarity and strength, especially throughout the Japanese occupation (Horne & Manzenreiter, 2002; Oh, 2009; Ok, 2007; Podoler, 2008). Of course, sport’s role in the Korean peninsula has changed throughout the years. Following the divide in 1948 to the early 1980s, sport was a site characterized by intense bi-lateral rivalry, with international sporting competitions taking on great importance during this stretch as each country attempted to assert and demonstrate their superiority (Mangan, Ok, & Park, 2011). From the South Korean perspective, and noting that the South Korean economy

¹ In 1945, along with the Allied victory in World War II, the 35-year long Japanese annexation of Korea ended. Following, the United States and the Soviet Union agreed to form a provisional government until an independent Korean government emerged. However, the Soviet Union later refused to cooperate with the elections scheduled by the United Nations, resulting in a semi-permanent communist state in the northern region of the Korean peninsula. Consequently, the United States set up a western-democratic state in the southern region and marked the division of the peninsula along the 38th parallel. The United States and the Soviet Union each supported different Korean leaders, representing democracy and communism respectively; each side claimed power over the whole peninsula, rendering the conflict irresolvable.

started to boom in the 1970s under the military government of Park Jung-Hee, the country's leading politicians were mainly focused on its national growth and put efforts into portraying itself as the only legitimate Korea (Cho, 2009).

Starting in the 1990s, the tense inter-Korean relationship started to ease with the signing of the 'Agreement on Reconciliation, Non-Aggression, Exchange, and Cooperation' of both parties (Chung & Choe, 2008), which led to positive peace-building activities such as the formation of a united team to compete in the World Youth Football Tournament. With the introduction of a new democratic government and the friendly diplomatic policy with the North called the 'Sunshine Policy' (Armstrong, 2005), the 1990s can be considered the decade in which the road to reconciliation seemed most promising. Thus, sport subsequently became a medium through which a friendly discourse of "brotherhood"² (Cho, 2009, p. 358) and unity was emphasized, and a channel through which positive diplomatic recognition was sought (Ha & Mangan, 2002; Lee & Maguire, 2009a, 2009b, 2011).

It is notable here that Lee and Maguire (2009a, 2009b, 2011) describe how changes in the socio-political context in and around North Korea and South Korea were accompanied by changes in sport reporting. For this reason, and noting that the messages promoted through mass media and dominant political ideologies are commonly shown to be linked, it would be useful to delve deeper into this relationship, to seek an understanding of ways that media may reflect existing political relationships, and to consider the role it could play and might be playing in promoting reconciliation and unity – and in perpetuating negative stereotypes, socio-political divisions and xenophobia.

² Directly translated from the Korean word "형제지간", which is often used to reflect a positive, familial relationship between North and South Korea.

In a similar way, this study is needed at a moment when the role that sport can play in peace promotion and reconciliation efforts within divided societies has been gaining significant political and public interest (Giulianotti, 2011). In this context, it is certainly pertinent that Korea is a divided nation³ with a long history of conflict and (more and less successful) attempts at reconciliation.

This study also fills a gap in the sociology of sport literature that explores interrelationships between sport, national identity, and media – what Cho (2009) refers to as the “Symbiotic Triad” (p. 348). To date, several studies have shown how major sport events are covered in mass media in ways that promote nationalism and the nationalistic agendas of those who are covering the event (e.g., Atkinson & Young, 2003; Falcous & Silk, 2005; B. Wilson, 2012). However, studies on these topics: (a) focus predominantly on English language media; (b) have yet to examine the North Korea and South Korea case since the recent and highly publicized change in leadership in North Korea; and (c) focus predominantly on coverage at a particular moment without focusing attention on how portrayals may have changed (in the same media, and over time) as political context has changed (with the exception of a few studies which will be referred to later). Through this study, I broaden understandings of how sport media is implicated in the promotion of particular perceptions of international relationships, and how it may hinder and/or promote peace-building efforts.

³ Since 1948, the Korean Peninsula has been officially divided into the Republic of Korea (South Korea) and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (North Korea), each state with its own government.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Sport and Politics

Bairner and Sugden (1999), in their edited collection *Sport in Divided Societies*, illustrate the role of sport in constructing, reproducing, and challenging national identities in societies with major internal divisions and intra-group dissension of various kinds. These scholars and many others conclude that sport in divided societies will always be a “contested terrain” as it has the possibility to both transcend and exacerbate divisions (Bairner & Sugden, 1999, p. 10). For example, both the 1995 Rugby World Cup and the 2010 FIFA World Cup held in South Africa provided the nation with an opportunity for “the pursuit of symbolic politics – a chance to signal important changes of direction, reframe dominant narratives about the host, and/or reinforce key messages of change” (Black, 2007, p. 261) and showcase “citizens who were being wooed into the nation-building process” (Steenveld & Strelitz, 1998, p. 609). However, and as B. Wilson (2012) notes, these events have been shown to promote certain kinds of temporary unity, while leaving many of the country’s divisions and inequalities largely intact.

Studies on the Olympic Games especially, by authors like Hargreaves (1992, 2002), speak to these connections between the Games and various forms of nationalism and national identity (see also Allison, 2000; Bairner, 2001; Jarvie, 1993; Tomlinson & Young, 2006). Hargreaves (1992) defines national identity as “an expression of difference from others based on perceived membership of a community within a given territory, or of a community with historic claims to a given territory” (p. 123). In a later study, he states that the Olympics are promoted as

an “instrument for the creation of a sense of national identity and as a way of enhancing their state-nation’s prestige and influence internationally” (Hargreaves, 2002, p. 32).

The 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics is a case in point. China, while promoting a “soft power agenda” to create a positive cultural identity and diplomatic relations through the Games, also accentuated nationalist and patriotic sentiments (Chen, 2010; Finlay & Xin, 2010, p. 876; Manzenreiter, 2010). It is worth noting, however, that events such as the torch relay – which brought attention to the controversial relationship between the region of Tibet and the Chinese government – undermined some of China’s efforts to promote a positive image of itself (Preuss & Alfs, 2011). It is important to keep in mind then that perceptions of the Olympics as a “rejuvenator of society” (Hargreaves, 1992, p. 120) and as a forum where hostilities between nations can be overcome is considered to be a utopian ideal by sport scholars who recognize how sport’s relationship with peace and conflict is contextual and always shifting (Andrews & Giardina, 2008; B. Wilson, 2012). This is yet another reason to study how relationships within divided societies change over time, with attention to key historical events.

Sport and Politics – the Korean Case

Sport has been a significant presence in the political relationship between North and South Korea since the divide in 1948 (Ahn, 2002; Chun, 1982; Goh, 2002; Jung, 2007; Joo, 2012; Oh, 2009; Ok, 2007; Podoler, 2008). Despite its unique status as a divided nation, Korea has not been a popular topic – especially compared to Japan and China – in the realm of sport studies and political science, particularly in Western scholarship. There are a few key studies, however, that will be important reference points for this research.

Ha and Mangan (2002), for example, provide an important analysis of the transformation of Korean sport from 1945 to 1992. The authors assert that the modern sport context in South Korea is the “consequence of its political priorities” (p. 213), and note that what started out as a direct product of an anti-Communist ideological project by the military government transformed over time – as sport began to be used to advance national status and image around the world, and to promote a more peaceful relationship with North Korea. In fact, the leader of the military government from 1961 to 1979 – also known as the “Father of Modern Sport” (p. 220) – Park Jung-Hee, put sports at the political forefront as he associated individual physical and mental fitness with national toughness (p. 216). Park was the main driving force behind bidding to host the 1988 Olympics in Seoul⁴, as he strongly believed that this would significantly advance South Korea’s national image in contrast to that of North Korea’s. While the 1988 Games may have achieved Park’s goal of promoting South Korean identity, as subsequent research shows, however, sport’s potential role as a diplomatic tool to promote reconciliation between South Korea and North Korea only started to emerge after the 1988 Olympics (Ha & Mangan, 2002; Goh, 2002; Merkel, 2008).

Pursuing this idea, Merkel (2008) discusses South Korea’s recent use of sport as a foreign policy and diplomatic tool. He obtained the data for his study from the South Korean (then-ruling) OORI Party, several sports governing bodies, the National (South) Korean Olympic Committee, and South Korean academics. He also interviewed government officials, sport administrators and journalists while staying in South Korea for six months. He concludes from

⁴ The path to the 1988 Seoul Games was complex for both Koreas as well as for South Korea’s ally, the United States, and North Korea’s ally, the Soviet Union. Immediately following the announcement that the 1988 Games would be held in Seoul, North Korea strongly voiced its opposition to the decision. Four tension-ridden meetings with South Korea, North Korea, and the IOC – “destined from the outset never to result in an agreement” (Pound, 1994, p. 87) – took place. For more information on the multilateral negotiations from an insider perspective, refer to *Five Rings over Korea* (1994) by Richard Pound.

his analysis that sport has positively contributed to the inter-Korean relationship with unification as the ultimate goal. He comes to this conclusion by exploring various inter-Korean sport encounters, exchanges and programmes, which he describes as being “underpinned and framed by the reunification theme” (p. 292). He further states that sport is a key part of both states’ foreign policy agendas, and has a “versatile symbolic potency” (p. 289), through which each state can send political messages to one another. He does, however, note that sport “is not always the best means of promoting a better understanding and relationship between states” due to its emotionally charged nature (p. 307). Nonetheless, he claims that sport is a way for keeping reunification talks in the public discourse, at least in both Koreas.

While contextualized and engaging, a drawback of this article is that Merkel provides an overly simplistic portrayal of sport’s role as a bridge between the two states. He says little, for example, about how sport has been used to assert superiority over the other by defeating the other in sporting competitions, as was the case during the early days after the divide characterized by bi-lateral rivalry (Mangan et al., 2011). Also, his reference to North Korea’s contrasting reactions to South Korea’s successful hosting of the 1988 Summer Olympic Games and the 2002 FIFA World Cup (antagonistic to the 1988 Olympic Games, pleasant to the 2002 FIFA World Cup), “a rare display of nationalism overcoming deep political differences” (p. 292), is an example of over-simplification. North Korea’s reactions to these events were also not as straightforward as it would seem from Merkel’s article. He overlooked critical and controversial events that unsettled the inter-Korean relationship that happened close to these sport competitions, an example of which is the Battle on YeonPyeong Island on June 29, 2002, which took place during the 2002 FIFA World Cup (Lee, Chan, Pan, & So, 2002). It is also important to note that Merkel’s paper has little to say about the role of sport-related mass media as a forum

where political messages are disseminated. This relationship between sport, media, and politics will be discussed in the next section.

Sport, Media, and Politics

What we see and hear from sport-related mainstream news-media is influenced by various social, cultural, and political factors (Atkinson & Young, 2012; Delgado, 2003; Falcous & Silk, 2005; B. Wilson, 2012). Since ‘the news’ is socially constructed, specific values or facts will always be stressed over others. For this reason, issues covered by journalists will always be ‘framed’ in particular ways (Price, Tewksbury, & Powers, 1997; De Vreese, 2004). Scholars who study media influences, sport-related and otherwise, commonly use concepts like ‘ideology’ and ‘hegemony’ to describe the sets of ideas that are privileged in and distributed through mass media and elsewhere, and the role that media plays in generating consent for these ideas. In this context, and following Lull (2000), ideology can be defined as:

Organized thought – sets of values, orientations, and predispositions that are expressed through technologically mediated and interpersonal communication... internally coherent ways of thinking, points of view that may or may not be "true" (p. 13)

Lull goes on to suggest that the term ‘ideology’ represents the “selected ways of thinking” (p. 14) chosen by those in society with political and economic power – and promoted for the purposes of sustaining the existing power structure (see also Williams, 1976, p. 156).

The generating of consent for particular ideological positions is the core of the hegemony concept – which refers to a situation where a powerful group’s opinions and views, by way of social structure, become the most popular, or the ‘only’ legitimate version of thought (Gramsci,

1971). Hall (1977) views hegemony as the dominant class's way of maintaining their power through constructing reality "within the dominant class' range", setting mental and structural boundaries within which subordinate classes should live (p. 333). Lull speaks to mass media's integral role in the contemporary relationship between hegemony and ideology, suggesting that media disseminates and tends to naturalize the dominant ideology, and convinces people to think in the ways those with power intended. In the process of disseminating particular viewpoints and ideas through media, ideologies gain legitimacy and in some cases "glamour", which, Lull argues, increases the potential social impact of these messages (Lull, 2000, p. 50).

Sport media has been shown to be implicated in various manifestations of ideology and hegemony. The very notion of politics being played out on the contemporary sporting stage is difficult to conceive without media. For example, Delgado's study (2003) demonstrates how the soccer match between the US and Iran in 1998 was presented (and can be understood) in different political frames. Moreover, it is through the reporting of sports mega-events that many people around the world make sense of the politics within sport. With this in mind, Levermore (2004) describes how mass mediated messages commonly reflect and promote a hyper-competitive, antagonistic 'us versus them' ideology, while Atkinson and Young (2012) note that the meanings and significance of events are "heavily prescribed by media framings of them" (p.289).

An example of a type of media framing that may be relevant to this study can be explained with Edward Said's 'Orientalism' (Said, 2003). Through 'Orientalism,' Said challenges conceptions of difference between the Orient (the East) and the Occident (the West), and the European construction of the world and 'other' people. As Said put it:

[N]either the term Orient nor the concept of the West has any ontological stability; each is made up of human effort, partly affirmation, partly identification of the Other... [M]y argument is that history is made by men and women, just as it can also be unmade and rewritten, always with various silences and elisions, always with shapes imposed and disfigurements tolerated, so that “our” East, “our” Orient becomes “ours” to possess and direct (Said, 2003, p. xvii-xviii).

This concept is significant for my study – specifically as a trajectory of how ideology and hegemony are manifested in mainstream news-media – when analyzing international media outlets’ representations and portrayals of North Korea and the inter-Korean relationship, for ‘representing (and reporting) on the Orient’. I am especially interested in Said’s arguments as a way of thinking through the types of portrayals of ‘the East’ offered through various Western media outlets (e.g., consider the name of one of BBC’s news programs: ‘BBC *Monitoring Asia Pacific*’). Orientalism is an appropriate concept to use in line with hegemony and ideology since the history of the portrayals of the Orient – as described by Said – inspire sensitivity to the possibility that narrow and simplistic, and possibly negative and stereotypical, depictions of North Korea and the North Korea-South Korea relationship might be privileged.

However, it is important to acknowledge that Orientalist thinking is not only limited to the gaze of ‘the West’ viewing ‘the East.’ While I refer to Orientalism in this study to explain Western coverage of North Korea and the inter-Korean relationship, Orientalism can nonetheless be examined and applied in multiple ways. For example, the concept underlining Orientalism that a society’s view of another may be used to “sanctify its own institutions and political aggression” (Plumb, 1979) may be applicable to the gaze of South Koreans directed at North Koreans during politically hostile times. As such, this fundamental concept of Orientalism could be used by any group of people or nation, and would contribute to nationalist sentiments.

Sport, Media, and Politics – the Korean Case

Mass media exposure is one of the ways that audiences encounter messages about their nation's culture and politics – messages that may inform their understandings of and feelings about their nationality (Szerszynski, Urry, & Myers, 2000). In the Korean case, this nationality was once a separatist, South Korean-focused one that transformed slowly into a pan-Korean national identity promoted in mass media by the South Korean government. It is thus important to understand the reasons, processes, and implications of such a drastic change, especially since media coverage has been shown to reflect the dominant ideologies (Billings, MacArthur, Licen & Wu, 2009; Larson & Park, 1993; Lee & Maguire, 2011). Levermore's (2004) suggestion that mass media producers are effective at portraying complex issues in simplistic ways – and commonly ascribe particular and narrow sets of values and interests to entire populations – is of particular relevance to the study of sport. Put simply, sport-related media is known to be implicated in legitimizing antagonistic relationships between countries and to naturalizing patriotic versions of sport-related conflicts (Hargreaves, 1992, 2002, p. 127; Billings & Eastman, 2002; Cho, 2009; Mangan et al., 2011). With this context, I observe how national identities and inter-national relations are constructed and represented through sport reporting.

There are three studies that are especially similar to my study with respect to the objectives and methods that I will be building on. The first is Cho's (2009) examination of South Korean media representations of sporting nationalism in the 1968 Mexico, 1984 Los Angeles, and 2000 Sydney Olympic Games. The purpose of his study was to “examine the complex interactions of sport, nationalism and media in South Korea” by questioning how sporting events (re)constitute nationalism (p. 347). He claims that feelings and expressions of solidarity with one's national team unite people internally while excluding others who are out-of-(national)-bounds. Cho introduces the “Symbiotic Triad” concept as a way of encapsulating the

interrelationships between sport, nationalism, and media (p. 348). He emphasizes that this relationship is not static, but rather dynamic; it changes according to “artificial and intentional outcome,” and is “constantly reconfigured in relation to shifting contexts, both national and international” (p. 349). As evident in the transformation of North Korea’s nickname from the “North Monster,” since the divide to the early 1980s, to the “Brother,” from the 1990s, media disseminated cultural and political values providing the audience with a fundamental basis for their national identity and understanding of its northern counterpart (Cho, 2009, p. 352).

The second similar study, by Lee and Maguire (2009a), is an analysis of the unitary Korean nationalism in South Korean media coverage of the 2004 Athens Olympic Games. The researchers’ objective was to examine the discourse in media coverage of the Games around Korean unification. The authors note how the coverage of the 2004 Athens Olympics was similar to that of the 2000 Sydney Olympics due to the fact that the Korean peninsula was still in a peaceful, reconciliatory mood with unitary Korean nationalism as the dominant political ideology. Unsurprisingly, they found that media coverage reflected the governing state belief (of the time) of unitary Korean nationalism. Brotherhood, associations by blood, and national unification were the dominant subjects in the commentators’ broadcasts (p. 860). It is also noteworthy that many historical references were made to times when Korea, as one nation, suffered and eventually triumphed through struggles together before the split in 1948. As they outline, sport’s role in inter-Korean history has been constantly transforming depending on the political context of the time. While similar in analyzing media portrayals of the inter-Korean relationship, Lee and Maguire’s study and my project differ in that I look also at other international media outlets’ portrayals (in addition to South Korean portrayals) of the inter-Korean relationship and representations of North Korea’s participation alone.

Lastly, K.Y. Kim's (2012) research explores representations of Korean women professional golfers in the U.S. and South Korean media from 1998 to 2009. Through document analysis, Critical Discourse Analysis, and intersectional analysis, she found that "globalization, neoliberal capitalism, patriarchy, and colonial and imperial history" (p. ii) framed the women golfers' representations. Specifically, U.S. media portrayals of Korean women golfers comprised of racialized (i.e., 'Orientalist') and gendered 'Other' discourse, while South Korean media representations framed the women golfers as "winners under hypermasculine Western forms of globalization and neoliberal reformation... while at the same time, as keepers and performers of Korean traditional Confucian values" (p. ii-iii). Kim's and my research are similar with respect to the emergence of Orientalism in the results, as well as the method of comparing and contrasting sport media representations of different national contexts. However, my dataset consists of a wider range of international perspectives, whereas Kim's focus was the U.S. media. Also, while Kim's subjects of focus were South Korean women golfers, mine include South Korean and North Korean Olympians, as well as the perceived relationship between North Korea and South Korea by various national media.

Reflections on Existing Literature

A common theme shared by the literature reviewed for this study is that sport media, especially in the Korean peninsula, changes according to the political context. The last study exploring media representations of the inter-Korean relationship in the Olympics was of the 2004 Athens Games. Needless to say, the political atmosphere of the Korean peninsula has changed drastically since then, and this study provides a more relevant perspective for the current political context. Interestingly, the results of this study (reported in the next section) indicate that not all sport news during the London 2012 Games, especially those of South Korean media, appeared to

reflect the seemingly tense political relationships and issues that characterize the current moment. I will elaborate more about this in the next section.

Of course, to understand the relationship between North Korea and South Korea as presented by the various international news-media outlets during the London 2012 Olympic Games, it is important to be attentive to the broad and nuanced history of this connection. While this history will be referred to and interspersed throughout the findings of my study – and some has already been discussed – I provide here a cursory and introductory timeline of key events since the end of the Korean War. The period from 1953 to the early 1980s can be characterized as a time of intense rivalry as each state strived for recognition as the ‘only legitimate Korea.’ With the rapid economic development in South Korea starting in the 1980s, the gap between the two states widened, leading to a less intense rivalry. With the exception of a few incidents, the 1990s leading up to the 2004 Athens Olympics could be considered the most reconciliatory period thus far. Since 2004, the tension between the two states has been quickly increasing with events such as naval battles (e.g., YeonPyeong Naval Battles) and disputes on cultural exchanges (Armstrong, 2005; Merkel & Kim, 2011). Such changes in the relationship have been reflected in some major symbolic sport events, as well as in coverage of these events (Cho, 2009; Larson & Park, 1993; Lee & Maguire, 2011, among others). For example, the two Koreas entered various opening ceremonies as one united Korea from 2000 to 2004. Such reconciliatory interactions, symbolic or otherwise, have not happened since then.

In addition, the inter-Korean relationship is of course not merely an internal matter. Because of concerns about nuclear power developments in North Korea especially, global superpowers are increasing attention on the region. In addition, the change in leadership in North Korea due to the death of Kim Jung-Il in December 2011 adds an extra layer of context for

consideration because of widespread speculation about the domestic and foreign policy directions of North Korea under its new leadership, Kim Jung-Il's son Kim Jong-Un.

Chapter Three: Research Methods

My study builds on existing literature, especially the work of Cho (2009) and Lee and Maguire (2009a), by looking at both the live broadcast and mainstream print news coverage of the London 2012 Olympics. My data consists of live South Korean broadcasts of the Games coverage as well as both South Korean and a selection of international mainstream print and broadcasted news coverage of events and issues relevant to North and South Korea in the Games. The data is interpreted using Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1995). Below, I describe the steps and details of the study and rationalize decisions about data collection and analysis.

Step One. Data Collection

I collected relevant articles from South Korean and other international news-media outlets that emerged during the Olympics. For South Korean data, I used three sources. First, I watched and recorded the live, online South Korean broadcast coverage of the Olympics provided by the three major South Korean television broadcasting networks' coverage (the same footage as one would watch through television in South Korea) – Korean Broadcasting System (*KBS*), Munhwa Broadcasting Corporation (*MBC*), and Seoul Broadcasting System (*SBS*). I focused on particular events relevant to either the inter-Korean relationship or just North Korea, which resulted in 178 minutes and 22 seconds of recorded footage. Second, I followed the three dominant newspapers – *Chosun Ilbo*, *JoongAng Ilbo*, and *Donga Ilbo* – which are read nationwide and can be considered the most influential print media outlets (Cho, 2009). Third, I followed online the 9pm daily news program – which is considered one of the most watched, official, and extensive news programs in South Korea – paying close attention to news-stories

pertinent to North Korea's participation in the Games and inter-Korean politics. I did not record the news footage clips, but rather, saved the transcripts (provided online by the broadcasting companies) on a Word document and the links that lead directly to the actual footage of the news whenever in need.

For perspectives outside the Korean peninsula, I followed various international news-media outlets, which included links to news stories from the London Games official webpage⁵, *Associated Press* (headquartered in New York, USA), *The Guardian* (headquartered in London, England), *1045 the Team* (ESPN radio, headquartered in New York, USA), *ABC News* (headquartered in New York, USA), *Canadian Television Network* (CTV Network, headquartered in Toronto, Canada), and the *Canadian Broadcasting Corporation* (headquartered in Toronto, Canada). It is important to note that such news media originating from different countries may have a national or an international angle. For example, although *Associated Press* is headquartered in New York, USA, it has journalists of different nationalities reporting from all around the globe, and can therefore be considered international. I went on the London Games website everyday from July 25 to August 15, 2012 and searched for articles using keywords such as 'Korea,' 'North Korea,' 'South Korea,' 'Democratic People's Republic of Korea,' and 'DPRK'. The resulting articles on the London Games official website were noted to be from the *Associated Press*, which led me to do the same search on its website every day. I conducted the same search separately on the *Associated Press* website to ensure that I attained all relevant articles that were not featured on the London Games official website. I carried out the same search on *The Guardian* website as well since it is a widely-read paper in the United Kingdom (UK). In addition, after the Olympics ended, I used the Lexis-Nexis database to search for all

⁵ The news stories on the www.London2012.com website were from 'Government Olympic Communications' as well as the *Associated Press*.

English-language articles relevant to either or both Koreas from July 25 to August 15, 2012 resulting in articles from a total of eighteen different newspapers around the world (e.g., *Associated Press, The Guardian, CBC, Agence France Presse* to name a few).

Comparing the South Korean news coverage of the Olympic Games to that of news-media coverage in other national contexts highlight what each news-media source emphasized more (if at all), potentially illuminating what assumptions there may have been and the possible implications of these portrayals for the relationship between North and South Korea (and perceptions of these countries and their relationship). The comparison also functions as a strategy to consider how news may be constructed similarly or differently depending on the source – and offers an opportunity to consider the implications of particular messages being ‘privileged’ in each media outlet.

Step Two. Data Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Fairclough, 1995) was the core analytical tool in this study. The goal of using CDA is to achieve a comprehensive understanding of how particular messages are privileged over others in media and how these ‘favoured’ topics and perspectives commonly reinforce and perpetuate dominant ideologies and power structures (Fairclough, 1995). CDA is a powerful tool for demonstrating how language operates to make some points or perspectives more visible than others (Fairclough, 1995), which fits well with the analytical concepts introduced earlier – ideology and hegemony. I chose CDA to support my attempts to better understand the role of language in promoting a “particular problem definition, interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation” (Entman, 1993, p. 55). Furthermore, CDA in this study also incorporated the “articulation” concept (Hall, 1985). ‘To

articulate' is to give an entity meaning through socio-historical relations (Hall, 1985). Howell, Andrews, and Jackson (2002) note that articulation involves the “deconstruction and reconstruction of a historical context in order to produce a contextually specific map of the social formation” (p. 155). It is through situating in such historical, political, and socio-cultural contexts that any events obtain “meaning and identity” (Howell et al., 2002, p. 155).

Using CDA to analyze the above data consisted, first, of extracting all text (written and spoken, no images) from online and offline news articles (and broadcast footage⁶. This was done separately for the South Korean articles (n=114) and those from other international media (n=45), resulting in two datasets. Following this, I organized the textual data into indices of themes and subthemes according to recurring topics within each dataset (see Appendix for topics and number of articles). This process required many thorough readings of the transcribed data and newspaper articles. Overlapping topics (e.g., North Korean athletes' performance in the Games, the flag blunder, inter-Korean table-tennis match) from both datasets were identified for a more in-depth comparative analysis. I was sensitive to the question of how each media outlet covers the same events/themes – with a particular focus on how North Korea and the relationship between the two Koreas are perceived and represented by each source. I also examined how and what language is used to cover different themes and convey various sentiments. After exploring international coverage, I repeated the process for South Korean data. I then compared the various sets of data and considered what differences and similarities there were between South Korean and other international news-media coverage of events and their representations of North Korea. I was attentive not only to the differences between South Korean and other international

⁶ There is one televised clip in my dataset: South Korea's live-broadcast of the inter-Korean group table-tennis match (Unknown Producer of KBS, 2012). The broadcasters' comments were transcribed verbatim.

coverage, but also the differences among all datasets, paying attention to the source of the coverage.

It is important to note here how the language translation was addressed in this study, as I translated all relevant Korean media data (titles and important quotations) into English. I am a trained and approved Korean \leftrightarrow English language interpreter for the Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration of a Canadian provincial government, and am confident in my translating abilities. Nevertheless, Brislin's (1970) 'back-translation' method – in which the input language is first translated into the target language, and then the target language is translated back into the input language – was applied for a more rigorous approach. In addition to language translation, cultural interpretation is also important in this study as media narratives are heavily imbued with cultural nuances (K.Y. Kim, 2012, p. 69). For example, familial terms such as 'brother' or 'sister' are used to depict tight-knit relationships, as was the case of some South Korean reporting when referring to North Korean athletes. For such terms or ideas that do not directly translate into English, I added footnotes for further cultural explanation.

Reflexivity

It is important for all critical researchers to be reflexive – to examine the way in which their understanding of a phenomenon “changes them and their relation, not only to both the phenomenal world they are observing and their knowledge of it, but also to how they are observing and understanding” the phenomenon (Tripp, 1998, p. 38). I am in a unique position as I have multiple, simultaneous identities with regard to this project: a visible 'Other'; a South Korean citizen; a western-educated student; an advocate for basic human rights of North Koreans; and a citizen of a global society with a critical view. Throughout the recent half of my

life spent in the West (the U.S. and Canada), I have come to both defy and internalize/embody 'the Other' at the same time, which may have increased my sensitivity in identifying 'Otherizing' and essentializing discourse. Alternatively, this also means that I was able to pick up on the nuanced messages underlying media discourse that 'non-Others' may not have, that nevertheless have impact. In a similar vein, my identity as a South Korean citizen who sees the need and value in a unified Korea (achieved in a reasonable manner) could have led to a heightened sense of criticism toward media outlets that are harshly negative about North Korea and its people based on assumptions, or 'facts' that they (the journalists) have also probably heard themselves from media (noting that North Korea is closed off to most outsiders, including journalists).

However, at the same time, I have been Western-educated and I am therefore conscious of Western criticisms of the North Korean government, some of which I agree with. I should make clear that I am in no way defending the North Korean dictatorial regime; my purpose in this media analysis study is to challenge the assumptions that underlie media discourse that may perpetuate stereotyping and xenophobia, which is an issue not limited only to the gaze directed at the Korean peninsula. I feel the need to disclose that I am an advocate for basic human rights, and that I am a volunteer at a non-governmental food aid organization for undernourished North Korean children. I feel very strongly about the issue of famine in North Korea (likely a result of the corrupt authoritarian regime), and I often find myself wondering if harsh, negative media portrayals, that make audience members angry or take pity, would trigger more action. Just as my thoughts are informed and influenced by my multiple identities, I recognize that each South Korean and other international journalist has their own subjectivities. For this reason, I feel that it is crucial to question the current system of media representation and the underlying

assumptions upon which they are founded in order to utilize media for empowering and liberatory purposes rather than perpetuating unjust ideologies and judgment.

Chapter Four: Results

In the following results section, I outline the various topics and themes that emerged from my analysis. Under each topic, I compare and contrast South Korean and international data, providing illustrative quotations and details of the pertinent findings for each. This organizational structure offers the best representation of my research findings. That is to say, the main finding from the study was that South Korean and international media covered North Korea's involvement and the inter-Korean relationship during the Games differently. The distinctions can be seen in the coverage of: North Korean performance; scandals and mishaps involving North Korea during the Games (e.g., the flag blunder); and the interactions between North Korean and South Korean athletes. The purpose in juxtaposing South Korean and international media coverage is not to declare which journalists are more accurate or appropriate in their coverage. Rather, contrasting the two is a way of demonstrating and offering details on a striking pattern in coverage of a highly politicized, sport-related topic, as well as identifying potential implications and consequences of different types of representational work.

A. North Korean Performance in the Games: “Refrigerator for winners, labor camps for losers” vs. “Sport Superpower”

International data. When reporting successful North Korean event results, there were prominent examples of international articles that seemed to search for reasons as to *why* and *how* North Korean athletes could perform well. An *ABC News* story titled “North Korea’s key to Olympic medals: Refrigerators for winners, labor camps for losers” provided the following as one possible reason behind North Korean athletes’ successes:

[T]he success of the country's small contingent of athletes at the Games may be the result of a policy of training them from a very young age at specialized schools, backed up by rewards like cars and refrigerators for winners and the threat of labor camps for losers (J.H. Cho, 2012b).

While assessing the validity of such claim is not an objective of this study, it should be noted that regardless of whether or not this claim is true, such statements could be considered dismissive of the North Korean athletes' efforts and motives for training.

Some articles had titles and associated commentary that would seem to invoke 'suspicion' about North Korea's tactics for attaining success. Consider the following excerpt from an article titled "*Secret to North Korea's Olympic Success*" (italics added):

...Training involved four hours of 'ideological education' per week aimed at cultivating loyalty to the leader... [I]t is a common procedure to open 'review meetings after the sports events in which participants 'assess' their own and each other's games...If during that process the person is determined 'disloyal' to their Dear Leader, the athlete is likely to be expelled from the sports organization and at times sent to labor camps (J.H. Cho, 2012a).

Another article from *Indian Express* offered a different explanation for the success, but with a similarly derogatory reference to the North Korean ruler and regime:

The reason for North Korea's Olympic performance is simple. Its totalitarian rulers may be starving its people, but they at the same time lavish what little money they have on a state-controlled athletic programme designed to produce Olympic medalists (Pei, 2012).

Furthermore, comments such as "Its totalitarian rulers may be starving its people, but they at the same time lavish what little money they have on a state-controlled athletic programme designed to produce Olympic medalists" (Pei, 2012) ironically vilifies the athletes for winning *at the cost*

of other North Korean lives, while at the same time positioning them as passive, helpless subjects or puppets.

It is also noteworthy that international coverage of successful North Korean athlete performances included a focus on the North Korean athletes' victory speeches. A particular emphasis in many cases was on speeches that mentioned North Korea's 'Dear Leader,' highlighting their loyalty. *ABC News*, in an article mentioned earlier titled 'North Korea's key to Olympic medals: Refrigerators for winners, labor camps for losers,' reported the same interview as:

Gold medalist Kim Un-Guk, who set an Olympic record in 62-kilogram weightlifting, dutifully attributed his triumph to their leader Kim Jong-Un. 'I won first place because the shining Supreme Commander Kim Jong-Un gave me power and courage,' he told reporters in London (J.H. Cho, 2012b).

The *Associated Press* went so far as to issue an article titled 'Crediting Kim,' solely devoted to discussing the North Korean athletes' attributing their successes to their 'Dear Leaders.' This article ended with this interview excerpt with Om Yun-Chol, who won gold in weightlifting:

I believe the great Kim Jong-Il looked over me," according to the internal news agency at the Olympic Games. "I am very happy and give thanks to our Great Leader for giving me the strength... it is all because of him (Meredith, 2012b).

Yet another *Associated Press* article titled 'Aloof North Koreans a great Olympic mystery' mentions that "all [Om Yun-Chol] wanted to talk about was the late North Korean leader Kim Jong-Il" (White, 2012). As such, both North Korean athletes', coaches', and staff's remarking of their 'Dear Leader' were often the focal point of many international articles. During this process, the athletes' successes and efforts were deemphasized, and the athletes

themselves were represented as generic, passive, and ‘brainwashed’ by the state, thus reifying the idea that North Koreans have minimal or no agency (Cumings, 2011; Myers, 2012).

In summary, much of the international media coverage of North Korean participation in the Olympic Games was dismissive of the athletes’ efforts and highly politicized. Specifically, the athletes’ accomplishments were deemphasized and often discussed in relation to the North Korean regime. In most international news-media, reporting of successful North Korean performances in the Games seemed to involve an investigation of why and how that was possible. The reasons offered were largely cultural and/or political accounts to do with the North Korean regime, rather than the individual athletes’ training and efforts.

Exceptions. On the other hand, it is important to note that some international media – albeit a minority – did recognize successful North Korean performance in a positive manner, as can be witnessed in the following excerpts: “Continuing a streak of spectacular performances by North Korean lifters in London” (Ritter, 2012, *CTV* and *Associated Press*); “Triumphed to win gold... stunning personal best” (“Records Tumble”, 2012, *Associated Press*); and “Continue the nation’s remarkable surprise performance” (“Job Well Done,” 2012, *Daily Mail UK*). Still, these articles are exceptions to an overwhelming trend towards more derogatory and/or dismissive portrayals.

South Korean data. Most South Korean reporting of North Korean involvement in the Games had to do with their performance results, which were, generally speaking, provided with no explanations or speculations as to how the athletes performed so well. Sentiments of praise were attached in some articles, although they seemed less pronounced as compared to Lee and Maguire’s (2009a, 2009b) reporting of coverage during the 2000 Sydney and 2004 Athens

Games. An article from *Hanguk Ilbo* labeled North Korea a “sport superpower,” and explained how their successful performance is not surprising:

In reality, North Korea’s success should not be a surprise. North Korea has put immense effort into becoming a sport power. The new leader Kim Jong-Un himself is a basketball fan and very interested in sports. There is nothing better than sport when bringing a nation together. North Korean media are promptly delivering news of their successful athletes, and promoting the state with statements such as: “[the North Korean athletes] are serving our Dear Leader Kim Jong-Un honour, as well as giving our army and civilians continuous pride” (G.S. Lee, 2012).

Another South Korean article from *Chosun Ilbo* offers an explanation similar to other South Korean coverage for North Korea’s successful performance. Note that while North Korean state receives some ‘credit’ for their athletes’ successful performance results, negative interventions such as ‘labour camps for losers’ are not mentioned:

Kim Jong-Un put lots of support in weightlifting and other events, which acted as a contributing factor to this success. According to a North Korean defector, Kim Jong-Un, since becoming appointed as the heir in 2009, said that, “Sport is the best way to advertise our country, we need to get out of our old sport system and we need to hire more highly trained, professional coaches (Bae, 2012).

In addition, another South Korean article provided an excerpt from an interview with North Korean weightlifting coach Park Gi-Sung after his athlete Kim Un-Guk won a gold medal, in which the coach says: “We are highly disciplined and we trained and trained and trained some more, which led to this result” (S.H. Kim, 2012b).

Titles such as “North Korea is London’s Dark Horse” (Hong, 2012a); “North Korea *already* has four medals, ranking fifth overall” (Kwak, 2012, italics added)’ and “North Korea is continuing their successful performance right from the beginning of the Games” (Park, 2012) illustrate the positive South Korean media coverage of North Korean performance. In addition,

some South Korean media highlighted how some ‘foreign media’ were wrong in their prediction of North Korea’s performance in the Games:

Foreign media’s prediction that North Korea will only win one silver medal has completely missed (Nam, 2012).

Sports Illustrated predicted that North Korea will maybe win one silver medal, if at all – but they were completely wrong (Kwon, 2012).

Such reporting may suggest the possibility that South Korean journalists felt protective of their northern counterpart.

Furthermore, a large part of South Korean media seemed to be concerned with how the North Korean athletes were perceived by the spectators – while international media said nothing about this. In a *KBS News* story about North Korean weightlifter Kim Un-Guk’s gold medal victory with a world record, the journalist reported an interview with a ten-year old English boy spectator, who said:

[Kim’s lift] was unbelievable. When he set the Olympic and world record, it was just... amazing! (Park, 2012).

The same journalist also described the scene of the victory as follows:

When he lifted the Olympic record of 153kg in the third round, the crowd gave him a standing ovation, welcoming the birth of a new hero (Park, 2012).

As demonstrated here, South Korean news articles recognized that North Korean athletes could be heroic and inspirational for international audiences – a point never mentioned in international coverage.

Like international media, most South Korean news-stories included North Korean athletes' victory speeches as part of a broader news-story about their performance. However, speeches were seldom a focus of the articles, unlike in international coverage. Furthermore, South Korean articles reported other comments the athletes had to say other than, and/or in addition to, attributing their success to Kim Jong-Il and/or Kim Jong-Un. For example, *KBS News* provided an interview clip with the North Korean weightlifter Kim Un-Guk after he won his gold medal, in which he exclaimed, "Thank you. I can't express how happy I am!" (Park, 2012). *KBS News* similarly reported North Korean judoist An Kum-Ae's victory speech after winning Gold: "There is no greater happiness than the thought of having pleased my nation with a gold medal" (Go, 2012). Another example is a *KBS News* interview excerpt with Lim Jung-Shim, a North Korean weightlifter:

The 19-year old was excited, but she showed mature composure – <interview>
Lim Jung-Shim: "there have been tough matches so I've kept up my guts.
I'll train harder to improve in my weak areas to have no mistakes next time
(Yang, 2012).

As demonstrated above, South Korean media coverage of North Korean athletes' performances in the Games was not only limited to the North Korean athletes' accrediting their Dear Leader.

B. Scandals and Mishaps during the Games: "Over-the-top protest after flag gaffe" vs. "These are not children's games...an embarrassment to LOCOG"⁷

There were two especially notable scandals involving North Korea during the Olympics. The first was the 'flag blunder' at the North Korean women's soccer match against Colombia on July 25, 2012, at which the South Korean flag was displayed next to the faces and names of

⁷ London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

North Korean players on the big stadium screen. The second was the Australian newspaper *Melbourne Commuter mX* newspaper's medal tally table that 'nicknamed' North Korea as 'Naughty Korea' and South Korea as 'Nice Korea.' There were almost no similarities between South Korean and international media's coverage of said scandals, although both reported on the incidents. Although the number of articles for each theme is not a focus of this qualitative study, it is worth mentioning that the ratio of South Korean news articles about North Korean performance to those about scandals and mishaps is 26:12, whereas the same ratio for international data is 14:21. The international dataset does include a higher number of media outlets, and each outlet of course has their own country's athletes to follow, which explains the lower number of articles to do with performance results. It is nonetheless noteworthy that scandals and mishaps of the North Korean team received more attention than the team's performance from international media outlets.

In this section, I first explore international media coverage of the 'flag blunder' and the 'nice Korea, naughty Korea' incidents. Following, I outline South Korean coverage of the same mishaps. This delineation of South Korean reporting is much shorter than that of international coverage, which is reflective of the amount of articles that was written about said incidents in each dataset.

International data.

The 'flag blunder.' At the North Korean women's football match against Colombia, the South Korean flag was inadvertently displayed to represent the North Korean team. International media reports covering the flag swap had titles such as: 'London Olympic organizers apologize to North Korea for displaying South Korean flag' ("London Olympic Organizers," 2012);

‘Apology fails to quell North Korea flag row; North Korea raises incident at general assembly of the International Olympic Committee’ (Brown, 2012); ‘North Koreans cry foul over flag fiasco’ (Kelso, 2012); and ‘‘Innocent’ errors can prove deadly for North Koreans; Hermit Kingdom’s soccer players right to stage over-the-top protest after flag gaffe – anything less might have resulted in unpleasant consequences’ (Simpson, 2012). Such focus on North Korea’s reaction expressed in the titles was continued in the content of the articles. For example, *The Daily Telegraph* article reported:

Kick-off in the game at Hampden Park was delayed for an hour after the furious North Korean team refused to emerge from the dressing room following the error, claiming the blunder was a premeditated insult... (Kelso, 2012).

A slightly different North Korean reaction was reported when

Ung, the North Korean Olympic Committee representative, was interviewed:

Asked whether he was satisfied with the apology from London organizers, Chang said, ‘They apologized to the national team, that’s enough’ (S. Wilson, 2012a).

Chang raised the matter at the IOC general assembly, saying ‘I don’t think it’s a big political issue’ (S. Wilson, 2012b).

Lastly, an *Associated Press* article expressed sympathy with LOCOG by stating, “Even with the best of intentions, organizing an offense-free Olympics is nearly impossible” (Bell, 2012). It is also important to mention that only one of these articles from international media reported the result of the said soccer match (North Korea 2: Colombia 0), whereas the majority of South Korean articles did report the match results.

Some international media articles extended the reporting of this flag-swap into a political discussion of the North Korean regime – specifically, the state’s treatment of athletes. UK’s *The Times* article stated:

Back in their dressing room, angry and worried about Pyongyang’s reaction, they considered withdrawing from the tournament altogether (Brown, 2012).

Interestingly, this article also had an interview excerpt with the North Korean coach, wherein he stated:

Winning the game can’t compensate for the mistake... I just want to stress once again that our players’ images and names can’t be shown alongside the South Korean flag (Brown, 2012).

It is unclear where the journalist gathered the information that the North Korean players were ‘worried about Pyongyang’s reaction.’ Also, the idea that the North Korean team considered withdrawing from the tournament was not reported anywhere else.

Furthermore, international media seemed especially interested in the North Korean team’s reaction to the flag mix-up. For example, *The Guardian*, in the article ‘North Korea vs. South Korea: the Opening Olympic Skirmishes,’ speculated as to why the North Korean team reacted the way it did:

It is rumoured that North Korean athletes who embarrass the homeland in international competitions face being sent to labour camps on their return home – one explanation, perhaps, for the excessively long protest launched by the women’s football team at Hampden Park last week (McCurry, 2012).

In similar fashion, *South China Morning Post* published an article titled, “‘Innocent’ errors can prove deadly for North Koreans; Hermit Kingdom’s soccer players right to stage over-

the-top protest after flag gaffe – anything less might have resulted in unpleasant consequences,’ in which the journalist explains the possible reasons behind the North Korean team’s reactions:

But the North Korean team did the right thing. Had they not walked, the repercussions on their return home would be unthinkable... To a North Korean, seeing your flag replaced by that of your enemy evokes anger. *But mostly, it induces fear and you act accordingly.* The footballers did not use the bungle to make a political point, as some claimed... ‘If those footballers had not made the sort of protest they did, they would have a risk of questions being asked when they got back home and perhaps being taken to a not very nice place,’ Korea analyst Aidan Foster-Carter said (Simpson, 2012, italics added).

This article also reported exchanges with Chang-Ung:

‘Of course the people are angry,’ Chang Ung, North Korea’s Olympic representative said. *He was hoping to be heard by his masters watching with equal horror back in the capital Pyongyang.* ‘If your athletes suffered something similar, what happens?’ Ung challenged us. Well, Mr. Ung, of course there would be some anger, plenty of shame, huge embarrassment and official apologies aplenty. There might be a few involuntary smiles at such tense, grave times. But there would not be a walk off (Simpson, 2012, italics added).

This excerpt about Chang-Ung’s reaction differs from the ones provided in the previous section, in which he expressed that it was not a big issue, and that an apology was enough. This article raises questions and curiosity as it is from China, North Korea’s biggest and the most significant political ally. Although it is not certain whether there was only one or multiple interviews, the fact that this information is available only from *South China Morning Post* is noteworthy. It raises questions about the access that some media received to North Korea representatives – as perhaps Chinese journalists had privileged access to Chang Ung that other journalists did not have. Furthermore, the statement (italicized above) “He was hoping to be heard by his masters watching with equal horror back in the capital Pyongyang” is striking for it could be an

assumption made by the journalist, which could then be translated as fact or common sense by the readers.

In addition to centring on the reaction of the North Korean team, most international media coverage of this flag mix-up emphasized the political history between the two Koreas, especially the Korean War and other conflicts that have occurred since the 1953 armistice.

Examples of detailed historical descriptions include:

The two countries are still officially at war fully 62 years after the end of the conflict that led to the Korean peninsula being divided... The countries were formally established as separate entities in 1948, and the bitter Korean War began in 1950. Hostilities flared again in 2010, when North Korean artillery shells killed four people, two from the military and two civilians, on Yeon-pyeong Island in South Korea (Kelso, 2012).

North Korea and South Korea are still technically at war. The fighting from 1950 to 1953 ended with an armistice, not a peace treaty. The peninsula is divided by a heavily fortified border and vast differences in ideologies (Griffiths, 2012).

North Korea and South Korea are *bitter rivals* and are still technically at war because their 1950-53 conflict ended with an armistice rather than a peace treaty (Brown, 2012, italics added).

The Guardian article titled, ‘North Korea vs. South Korea: the opening Olympic skirmishes’ provided the most detailed historical analysis of the articles studied, and also attached political meaning to the inter-Korean table tennis match scheduled for later that week:

The flag mishap set the tone for the early stages of the Games, during which the historical rivals, who are still technically at war, *have maintained a theme of mutual loathing* that will intensify this week in a showdown in the men’s team table tennis... the countries’ separate entrance to the Olympic stadium during the opening ceremony reflects the dramatic deterioration in bilateral relations since they marched together, under the blue-and-white flag of a united Korean peninsula, in Sydney 12 years ago... The thaw was noticeably absent in Beijing, soon after North Korean guards had shot dead a South Korean tourist, and there has been little evidence of rapprochement

in London (McCurry, 2012, italics added).

The title of *The Times* article ‘Hampden highlights North-South divide’ exposed the newspaper’s political focal point. Interestingly (or ironically), this article expressed the misfortune of the Olympics’ turning political:

It is always a shame when politics intersect with sport; it is a shame it had to intervene here, to cast a shadow on a day that otherwise had been an unexpected success... This is what the Olympics is supposed to be about: igniting passion, restoring faith, escaping the world. Too often, the flag, and incidents of its ilk, is what it is actually all about: offence, national pride and realpolitik. In two hours or so yesterday, Glasgow saw both side. Welcome to the Olympic Games (Smith, 2012).

In a similar vein, the political background of the Korean peninsula is highlighted in the title ‘Mistake inflames Korean tensions’ of the Australian *The Daily Telegraph* article (Migliaccio, 2012), which stated in its content, “LOCOG quickly apologised but the mistake only heightened tensions between the feuding Korean nations.”

‘Nice Korea, Naughty Korea.’ One of the most notable scandals revolving around North Korea happened when an Australian newspaper, *The Melbourne Commuter Daily mX*, published a medal rankings table, in which North Korea was called ‘Naughty Korea’ and South Korea was called ‘Nice Korea.’ When reporting the incident, most international media coverage used North Korea as the subject noun, which made the focus of their reporting North Korea’s reactions, rather than the *Melbourne Commuter mX*’s initiating act. For example, *The New Zealand Herald* article titled ‘North Korea angry at Aussie paper’ stated:

North Korea has criticized an Australian newspaper that called the country ‘Naughty Korea’ when listing London Olympics medal standings... Pyongyang’s

official *KCNA*⁸ accused *mX* on Wednesday of a ‘bullying act’ that insults the spirit of the Olympics (“N Korea Angry,” 2012).

It is also noteworthy that this article ended with:

Tensions have been high on the Korean Peninsula since North Korea launched a rocket in April that the United Nations called a cover for a banned long-range missile test. North Korea says it was trying to put a satellite into orbit. North Korea has since threatened to attack Seoul over perceived insults (“N Korea Angry,” 2012).

In *The Guardian* article titled ‘North Korea attacks paper which called nation ‘naughty’,’ the translated text report of *KCNA*’s (North Korean’s state-run media) reaction to this scandal is provided, in which *KCNA* states:

This is a bullying act little short of insulting the Olympic spirit of solidarity, friendship and progress and politicising sports. Media are obliged to lead the public in today’s highly-civilised world where [the] mental and cultural level of mankind is being displayed at the highest level. The paper behaved so foolish [sic] as to use the London Olympics that has caught the world interest, for degrading itself... Editors were so incompetent as to tarnish the reputation of the paper... cooked up a way of moneymaking, challenging the authority of the dignified sovereign state... it will remain as a symbol of rogue paper, to be cursed long in Olympic history (Hills, 2012).

This response from North Korea’s *KCNA* could be interpreted in many ways by different audience members. It is also noteworthy that this official reaction from North Korea is framed under the title “North Korea *attacks* paper which called nation ‘naughty’” (Hills, 2012, italics added).

Other articles reporting this incident were titled ‘Sports politics: North Korea *launch attack* on ‘bullying’ newspaper’ (“North Korea Launch Attack,” 2012, italics added), and

⁸ Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), the state-run media of North Korea.

‘DPRK accuses *Brisbane*⁹ *Metro* of trying to politicise Olympics’ (“DPRK Accuses”, 2012). After North Korea officially issued their reaction through the above-mentioned KCNA report, the *Melbourne Commuter mX* issued an article titled ‘Pyongyang goes ballistic over mX tally’ (Hastings, 2012). *The Atlantic Wire* reported this exchange between North Korea and *Melbourne Commuter mX* through an article titled ‘Australian Commuter Newspaper Goes to War with North Korea’ (Hudson, 2012).

In addition, a South Korean fencer was introduced as from ‘People’s Republic of Korea,’ which is a mix of the two countries’ official names ‘Democratic People’s Republic of Korea’ (North Korea) and ‘Republic of Korea’ (South Korea) (J.G. Kim, 2012). Both ‘mix-ups’ of South Korea as North Korea (which were the reverse of the flag incident) did not receive much attention from South Korean media, and none from the international media, which may imply that the focus of international media was on North Korea’s reactions to such scandals, rather than the scandals themselves.

South Korean Data. Compared to international coverage, South Korean media focused less on scandals and mishaps of the North Korean team. When such topics were covered, however, they were done in a drastically different manner. For example, it is noteworthy that South Korean media reports of the flag mix-up did not include suggestions that the incident led to an increase in inter-Korean tensions, as was reported in the majority of international reporting. Furthermore, South Korean articles covering the flag gaffe emphasized the fact that it was a mistake on LOCOG’s part – rather than focusing on the North Korean team’s reaction. For example, the title of the *Hankyoreh* article reads, ‘These are not children’s games – results reversing, wrong flag – an embarrassment to LOCOG’ (H.S. Cho, 2012), and a *SBS* news-story

⁹ Mistake from the newspaper – correct name is the *Melbourne Commuter mX*, not the *Brisbane Metro*.

stated that this was “a clear mistake of LOCOG’s” (S.H. Lee, 2012). A *Hanguk Ilbo* article extended this focus on LOCOG’s slip-ups by discussing other mistakes that the committee had made, such as displaying ‘Democratic People’s Republic of Korea versus Switzerland’, rather than ‘Republic of Korea versus Switzerland’ during the men’s football group stages competition (H.S. Cho, 2012).

South Korean coverage of the ‘Naughty Korea, Nice Korea’ incident differed drastically from international coverage as well. Among the South Korean media dataset for this study, there was only one article reporting this scandal. This *SBS News* piece reported on some readers’ reactions as follows:

Some expressed that this is ‘funny albeit political’, but other Twitter users expressed that such statement stems from deep-rooted xenophobia and racism (“North Korea called ‘Naughty Korea,’” 2012).

This article used the Australian paper as the subject noun for most of its sentences, indicating that the newspaper/report is the ‘do-er’ of the significant action. As demonstrated above, South Korean media focus on the scandals revolving North Korea was significantly less compared to international coverage, perhaps exposing the difference in their respective interests.

C. Inter-Korean Relationship Portrayals during the Games

In addition to representations of North Korea and its athletes, depictions of the inter-Korean relationship was another topic of focus of this study. Both South Korean and international media provided interpretations of the Korean geopolitics through coverage of various events. The most significant of these were the inter-Korean table-tennis matches. There were two inter-Korean table-tennis matches during the Olympic Games: first, a men’s singles

table-tennis match, which the North Korean player won; and second, a men's group table-tennis competition, wherein the South Korean team won. International media seemed to emphasize the political and diplomatic significance of the match, and at the same time highlighted the divisions between the two Koreas. Conversely, South Korean media coverage of these two matches consisted of both competition-focused and 'political-sentimental' language geared toward unity.

International Data.

Inter-Korean table-tennis matches: "The Grudge Match." International media articles covering the inter-Korean matches tended to emphasize the political division between the two Koreas, as witnessed in the following titles: "Shock in clash of rivals" ("Shock in Clash," 2012); "Koreans declare ping-pong cordiale in London 2012 round of wiff-waff war" (Hyde, 2012); and "The Grudge Match: So, South vs. North Korea at table tennis..." ("The Grudge Match," 2012). *The Guardian* article titled, 'Koreans declare ping-pong cordiale in London 2012 round of wiff-waff war', made several political references, such as:

[I]n a game pretty much hyped as '*winner takes peninsula*'... As you'll be aware, the Bumper Book of Olympic Cliché dictates that we must classify international sport as war by other means... Yet so frenetically, dementedly aggressive is elite table tennis that the question with the Koreas match seemed not so much whether it was war by other means, but whether the entire war between the two nations – technically still going on after six decades without a peace treaty – had not in fact been table tennis by other means. *Nuclear tests, ship sinkings, incursions into the demilitarised zone* – all these seemed faintly tame compared with the extreme whiff-whaff, the stony-faced speed drives and the *North Korean team's insistence on applauding points they'd won for just a couple of unsettling seconds too long* (Hyde, 2012, italics added).

While the excerpt about the North Korean team "celebrating a point for longer than usual" was not reported in any other international or South Korean media reporting – it is worth noting here

as it was a major international source that made the observation. Furthermore, the act of celebrating a point for “just a couple of unsettling seconds too long” is one that may provoke rivalry and hostility between teams at any sporting competition. With this in mind and considering the fact that this was reported from only one source, it is possible that the North Korean team’s prolonged celebration was the interpretation of the journalist, perhaps seeking to emphasize the conflict between the two Koreas.

As evident thus far, the geopolitics of the Korean peninsula was taken up by many international media outlets when discussing inter-Korean table-tennis matches. I would argue that while it might make sense in this context to consider how sport can act as a diplomatic tool, the Korean conflict and tensions were simplified and exaggerated in many articles. Perhaps the reasoning behind discussing the history of the Korean geopolitics was to provide background for, and build up excitement and anticipation for the match. However, there are other implications of this type of reporting (e.g., emphasizing conflict and/or absence of peace), such as shifting the focus away from reconciliation efforts that were, and are, being made (Galtung, 1998; Hackett, 2007; B. Wilson, 2012).

Lastly, some international media coverage assumed that South Korea would win both matches and expressed surprise when North Korea won. For example, in a *Belfast Telegraph* article, North Korea is described as having “gained a shock success over *rivals* South Korea” (“North Surprise the Neighbours,” 2012). Similarly, when South Korea won the team-competition, *The Guardian* reported, “South Korea beat North Korea to go through to the quarter finals, as the form book said they should” (Hyde, 2012).

In sum, division, war, and rivalry were a central focus in international media coverage of the inter-Korean table-tennis matches, and themes pertaining to unity of the Korean peninsula were almost non-existent. With introductions such as “bitter rivals” (Brown, 2012), “winner takes peninsula” (“The Grudge Match,” 2012), and comments such as “the two states have maintained a theme of mutual loathing” (McCurry, 2012), most international media emphasized the divided and “still technically at war” (Meredith, 2012a, Brown, 2012; McCurry, 2012) status of the peninsula, with perhaps an exaggerated sense of aversion between the two states. It is important to consider whether such statements are necessary when discussing performance results, and what possible implications these might bring forth.

Exceptions. It is important to note that there were exceptions to the dominant trend. In an *ABC News* article titled, “South Korea defeats North Korea in Table Tennis,” the following is reported:

Despite the political intrigue for the Koreans, the atmosphere at the 6,000-seat sellout was sporting, with warm applause for each side... South Korean coach Yoo Nam-Kyu, a gold medalist in the 1988 Olympics, said there is always pressure playing North Korea. He described how the two sides chat with each other in the Athletes’ Village, but on the court there is always tension. *‘We are the same people and speak the same language, but politically we are not very friendly at the moment,’* Yoo said. *‘From the history we felt we have to win against North Korea – because it’s North Korea...[but] When we talk, it’s about everyday life. We don’t talk political stuff’* (Wade, 2012, italics added).

Coach Yoo’s comment (italicized above) deviates from the majority of other international coverage of the inter-Korean table-tennis match, which was largely conflict-focused. The fact that this comment was not reported in any other international coverage is noteworthy – for it may demonstrate that some mainstream news-media outlets chose not to report on this (assuming all outlets had access to this interview).

In a similar vein, other articles took a slightly different political approach to the match by discussing the role and/or possibility of table-tennis as a diplomatic tool, also known as ‘ping-pong diplomacy.’ In an *Associated Press* article titled, ‘Ex-NKorean star recalls ‘ping pong diplomacy,’ a former North Korean table-tennis player who was part of the 1991 unified team was interviewed:

Her eyes well up when Li Pun Hui recalls her role in a historic example of ‘ping pong diplomacy... Putting aside politics, the intensely competitive Li paired up with her arch rival, South Korean star Hyun Jung-hwa, in 1991 as part of the first ‘unified Korea’ team to march into international competition wearing the flag of the Korean Peninsula. Li and Hyun fondly recall how they met as enemies and parted as friends, and champions...’ We speak the same language, we’re the same people. We’re Korean. We all had the same goal: To win... ‘I miss her very much,’ said Li, her eyes glistening with tears. She still, 21 years later, cherishes the gold ring given to her by her old doubles partner (J.H. Lee, 2012).

This article, which was also published under the same title in *Fox News*, suggests that perspectives that depart from the dominant trend are indeed possible.

South Korean Data.

Inter-Korean table-tennis matches: “The misfortune of South and north Korea playing each other.” Unlike the majority of international coverage, the word “rivals,” or any other similar word, were not once used in South Korean media to describe the inter-Korean table-tennis matches or the relationship in general. South Korean media articles covering the inter-Korean matches had titles such as: “Men’s first table-tennis match to be a South-North match” (“Men’s First Table-Tennis,” 2012), and “South-North Men’s Table-Tennis: Misfortune of playing one another in first round” (K.M. Kim, 2012). Following the matches, the results were reported in articles titled: “Men’s group table-tennis, victory in South-North match – onto the

next rounds” (“Men’s Group Table-Tennis,” 2012), and “Men’s group table-tennis beat North Korea and proceed to next round” (H.G. Lee, 2012). Other Korean reporting included more information about the political and sentimental significance of the inter-Korean matches, as evidenced in the *Hankyoreh* article which read, “The *misfortune* of South and North Korea playing each other in the first rounds” (K.M. Kim, 2012, italics added). This title suggests the possibility that the journalist had hoped the two Koreas did not have to play each other in the first round so both could be successful and advance together in the beginning rounds. South Korean *KBS News* article titled, ‘South and North intersect again – the two coaches ill at ease’ reported:

The two coaches know each other from when they were players and up to now they’ve always been friendly with each other whenever they met at international competitions. But today was different... there was a peculiar tension between the two (Choi, 2012).

Another KBS news-story sketched out what the atmosphere of the competition was like:

Our senior officials attended and cheered at this significant match... behind a couple of rows sat the North Korean officials who also cheered loudly... After having won the match, North Korea seemed to try to hide their expressions (Shim, 2012).

A *SBS News* article delivered an interview with the South Korean coach:

Coach Yoo Nam-gyu said, ‘The first match is always a lot of pressure; in addition to that, the North Korean team is not easy and there’s a lot more focus on this match due to political reasons...the weight of the already heavy first match has increased all the more because we are playing North Korea... technically, South Korea is the better team but the North Koreans have solid fundamentals due to their Sparta-like training’ (“Men’s First Table-Tennis,” 2012).

Coach Yoo started off the interview mentioning the political significance of the match, then followed up with a competition-focused reasoning to explain the ‘pressure,’ which differs from the majority of international coverage which focused on political tensions for ‘pressure.’

The *KBS* live television broadcast coverage of the men’s team-competition (Unknown Producer, *KBS*, 2012) had several remarks from the commentators that alluded to the political nature of the match. For example, consider:

An unfortunate providence or harsh, ill-fated destiny; South and North.

There is always a grave emotional pressure in inter-Korean matches.

The players are shaking hands now – how wonderful would it be if it was like that always.

Through the unified team in 1991 and also through the South Korean movie ‘Korea,’ the people have been moved – it would be great if the players could be on the same team but the match set-up is already said and done so the game has to be played, and of course, the players need to enjoy this match regardless.

Inter-Korean matches are always difficult to both play [for the players] and even to watch [for the spectators], isn’t it? I’m having a hard time watching... the players definitely feel more pressure compared to playing any other country.

The commentators also mention the competition- and technical-side of the match, such as:

North Korea has a very strong team this year, even outside of table-tennis they’re winning many gold medals, so I anticipate that this will be a good match.

In addition to this traditional political pressure, the fact that North Korea is a good team increases the weight on the players.

In sum, most South Korean media tended to describe the inter-Korean table-tennis matches by focusing on competition while also lamenting the fact that there is not a unified Korea.

Other portrayals of inter-Korean relations. Although both South Korean and international media noted that North and South Korean athletes were estranged during the Games, the difference was that South Korean media acknowledged the historical progression of the relationship from previous Games. Furthermore, reports covering the interactions between North and South Korean athletes outside the sport competition context (i.e., inter-Korean table-tennis match) were found more often in South Korean media. All of them spoke to the distance that has grown between the two states' athletes since the Athens Olympic Games in 2004 when they entered the opening ceremony together under the unification flag. For example, a *SBS News* article titled, "Estranged South and North Korean athletes" claims:

The atmosphere is not like it used to be... in previous international competitions, they used to call each other 'hyung', 'dong-saeng'¹⁰ but now they just say a formal hello and get back to their respective training ("Estranged South and North Korean Athletes," 2012).

The journalist who wrote this article then stated that the inter-Korean athlete interactions were more cordial and at times quite collegial in the 2000 Sydney and 2004 Athens Games, as the athletes during those international games would sit and dine together, and even take voluntary pictures with each other. The journalist then explained that the mood started shifting before the 2008 Beijing Games and now, in 2012, the scene has completely changed. Likewise, a *KBS News* report covering the inter-Korean athlete interactions was titled, 'South and North Korean athletes greet each other with just a nod... growing distance' (S.H. Kim, 2012a). A *Hankyoreh* article reports an interview with a South Korean weightlifting staff who said, "on the 21st [of

¹⁰ 'Hyung' is a familial term in Korean used to address an older brother or man whom you consider to be very close; 'dong-saeng' is also a familial term to refer to a younger sibling or person whom you consider to be very close. They are both terms of endearment and represent tight-knit, familial closeness.

July], we practiced side by side with each other but other than a formal greeting, there were no conversations” (“South and North Athletes,” 2012).

Conversely, some South Korean coverage alluded more to unity than the growing distance between the two states. For example, a *Chosun Ilbo* article titled, ‘South and North Korea’s Golden Relay – Rank #3 if Joint’ (Hong, 2012b) explains that if the two Koreas were to join forces, the synergy would result in a more successful performance. Themes pertaining to unity were found also where both North and South Korean performance were discussed in the same article/news-story in South Korean coverage; consider for example, the title, ‘South and North Korea, smooth beginning’ (“South and North Korea,” 2012). Furthermore, a *Chosun Ilbo* article covering the North Korean weightlifter Kim Un-Guk’s gold medal victory reported:

[Kim Un-guk] showed ceremonial showmanship by putting his fist in the air and shaking it, and when asked about this, he said, ‘*All Chosun people* are joyous, it’s *our* spirit’ and laughed (Bae, 2012, italics added).

The use of the words ‘Chosun’ and ‘our’ are notable here. ‘Chosun’ is the name of the last dynasty of Korea before the Japanese conquest of 1910-1945 and before the split in 1953; a time when the Korean peninsula was not divided into two. To this day, North Koreans often refer to North Korea as ‘North Chosun’ and South Korea as ‘South Chosun.’ Likewise, the use of the word ‘our,’ (“Oo-ri” in Korean) is significant when examining South Korean media coverage relevant to the inter-Korean relationship. The word ‘*Oo-ri*’, which means ‘we’, and/or ‘our’, is used very frequently in the Korean language, and reveals the dominance of the collective culture and identity in Korea. For example, “my mother” directly translated into Korean is “*Oo-ri-Um-Ma*,” meaning “our mother.” Likewise, when speaking about families, friends and homes, it is always said “our family,” “our friend,” and “our home.” Even the fact that one’s family name

comes before his or her given name reflects this culture. When Koreans refer to Korea, they use the term “*Oo-ri-Na-Ra*,” which directly translates into “our country,” rather than “*Dae-Han-Min-Guk*,” which is the official translation of Republic of Korea. This “we” ethos directly sustains the predominant ideology of collectivism underlying (both North and South) Korean society (Yoon & King, 2012).

In a similar vein, it is noteworthy that South Korea’s official name ‘Republic of Korea’ was used when discussing its performance alone or in relation to other countries, but when North Korea was also part of the same discussion or article, it (South Korea) was referred to as ‘South Korea.’ It is possible that this is the case because ‘North Korea’ and ‘South Korea’ allude more to the geographical division between the two, compared to ‘Democratic People’s Republic of Korea’ and ‘Republic of Korea’, which represents recognition of each state as autonomous, separate countries.

Chapter Five: Discussion

As outlined in the Results section, there were three themes that stood out. First, South Korean and international mainstream news-media portrayals of North Korea's participation and the inter-Korean relationship in the London 2012 Games differed drastically. Second, international media representations of North Korea were often dismissive of North Korean athletes' accomplishments and focused on macro-political concerns about North Korea – a contrast to the more positive and less politicized coverage by South Korean media. Lastly, the inter-Korean relationship was viewed differently by international and South Korean media, with the latter having more of a unity-focused lens. In the following section, I will outline how these fundamental study findings inform, and are informed by, existing literature on Orientalism (Said, 2003) and conventions of journalism. As well, the importance of timing and context will be explored by comparing this study's findings to those of other similar studies of media representation. In doing so, this study's implications and contributions to the field will be identified.

Orientalism, Stereotyping, and Sport Media

South Korean and international mainstream news-media portrayals of North Korean participation in the Games differed drastically. While South Korean coverage focused more on North Korean athletes' performance in the Games, most international media coverage tuned more into scandals, mishaps, and victory speeches about the 'Dear Leader,' all of which often led to derogatory political discussions of the North Korean regime. These differences can be explained by Said's theory of Orientalism (2003), a "technological tool and discursive practice in the process of Othering" (K.Y. Kim, 2012, p. 16; Said, 2003). Although there are criticisms and debates about Orientalism such as Said's choice of evidence, monolithic representation of

Western scholarship, and ignoring the role of the ‘native’ in developing the discipline (McHolm, 2013; Poole, 2002; Richardson, 2004), Orientalism is nevertheless useful in my research as a trajectory for understanding how highly selective and often derogatory portrayals of those associated with some Asian cultures and countries are privileged in some mainstream news-media.

Derogatory Orientalist discourse was especially evident as North Korea was defined as the eternal ‘Other’ by many international media outlets. Specifically, the ‘North Korean way of doing things’ – such as their victory speeches, reactions to scandals, and behaviour in interview settings – were underscored as deviant, while the ‘western standard’ was positioned as superior. Such trends can be compared to K.Y. Kim (2012)’s study wherein she analyzed South Korean and U.S. media representations of Korean female LPGA golfers. Kim (2012) found that U.S. media constructed the women “ambivalently within the racial and cultural boundaries of us-Other discourses” (p. 267) through employing contradictory terminology, and both de-sexualized and hyper-gendered representations. While I suggest that there was not much ambivalence in most international media representations of North Korean athletes, the parallel to Kim’s study can be found with respect to the homogenizing and essentializing of athletes to provide an easy ‘us versus them/Other’ comparison opportunity, encouraging a hierarchical, binary value-judgment practice among audience members. Coverage of North Korean athletes’ victory speeches, for example, is a case in point in which the athletes were depicted as passive compared to other international athletes who, by implied comparison, embody agency and freedom. Homogenizing and essentializing North Korean subjects allows for easy binary comparisons and value judgments.

Disparaging media narratives of North Korean athletes can also be compared to portrayals – some historical, some current – of other groups in mainstream sport journalism. These groups include, but are not limited to, female athletes (Markula, 2009; Wilson, 2007), athletes with disabilities (Duncan & Aycock, 2005); homosexual and transgendered athletes (Cavanagh & Sykes, 2006; Hardin, Kuehn, Jones, Genovese, & Balaji, 2009); and ‘non-white’ (especially black) athletes (Grainger, Newman, & Andrews, 2006; Wilson, 1997). Missing from so many of these portrayals, according to critics, is appropriate contextual information. Others point to how these portrayals attain meaning because of their intertextual relationships with other texts – for example, as was evident in the Results section, foreign policy of some (Western) governments may be inscribed in portrayals of North Korean athletes. A possible outcome of such portrayals may be stereotypes, which Davis and Harris (1998) define as “a generalization about a category of people that is negative and/or misleading” (p. 157). The issue is that stereotypes often obscure the possibility of variation within a certain category. For example, in the case of this study, actions and characteristics of the North Korean government, military, citizens, and athletes often get lumped into one – often, a mix of images of the North Korean government. As a result, concerns about such portrayals often emerge from, and are reflective of, broader issues concerning (for example) racism and xenophobia.

Of course, this is not the first time political tensions contributed to negative media coverage in sport. A close comparison to the North Korean case can be found in Canadian mainstream news-media reporting of sporting events during the Cold War era. For example, the 1972 Canada-USSR Summit Series broadcast included several references to World War II. Scholars like Scherer, Duquette, and Mason (2007) argued that these portrayals “mobilized patriotic interest among Canadians like no other cultural event before or since” (p. 163; see also

Gruneau & Whitson, 1993, p. 249). To this day, this hockey series continues to be deciphered with Cold War metaphors (e.g., capitalism versus communism, freedom versus totalitarianism) and associated 'us versus them' terminology.

Most international coverage of North Korean participation has an uncanny resemblance to this. Although the Cold War era has past, the 'capitalism versus communism,' 'freedom versus totalitarianism,' and 'West versus East' metaphors are still valid when considering media coverage of North Korea. As was done for the Summit Series in 1972, patriotic coverage of a sporting event by Western media can be seen to construct a 'common enemy,' and in doing so creates a unified national identity that is defined by what (and who) is not 'on our side.' Bairner (1999) illuminates the processes at work in this case and related cases in his discussion of ways that media was utilized by state authorities to fabricate the behaviours and identities of Irish hooligans (or described in the Irish context as 'social undesirables') to establish and maintain social hegemony and power dynamics. Portrayals of North Korean participation fit within such a narrative as well, further alienating them while highlighting the ideological conflict between North Korea and the rest of the world.

With this in mind, it is easier to see how, as the 'deviant' behaviours of North Koreans are emphasized in sport media, North Koreans may appear increasingly different from "us." In this way, North Koreans become subjects for "thought, surveillance, evaluation, judgment, marking, training, governing, and changing" (K.Y. Kim, 2012, p. 286). In a similar vein, Kim (2012) found that another common construction of Asians in US media was "subjects for education/emancipation" (p. 160). This construction is based on the assumption that the 'advanced, modernized 'us'' (the U.S. in this case) are superior, positioning them in a "saviour position" (p. 175). Portrayals of North Korean athletes examined in this study share some of the

above characteristics and others, such as “unassimilable aliens” and “perpetual foreigners” (K.Y. Kim, 2012, p. 19). However, it does not share other common depictions such as the “model minority” (Daniels, 1988, p. 319; Lee 2005; Noguera, 2003). In fact, North Koreans are far from being considered the ‘model minority.’

This often condescending, derogatory coverage of North Korea by many international media elicits the possibility that North Korea is considered the ‘bête noire’ in the realm of global mass-media. In other words, it would seem that the contentious political status of North Korea – with its isolation and widely-condemned government – leaves it open to politics-related criticisms by Western journalists, even in situations when it might appear that the country’s national and foreign policies are not particularly relevant to the journalist’s story.

Linking North Korean athletes’ performance with ‘Us’ versus ‘Them’ imagery may result in generating consent for a specific way of thinking about issues. In this case, the success of North Korean athletes was attributed to political oppression and fear of punishment – explanations that would seem to diminish and gloss over the undoubtedly complex and potentially inspiring reasons that many North Korean athletes were successful. For example, speculating about reasons such as threat of “being sent to labour camps for losers” behind North Korean athletes’ (surprising) successes is problematic, for it undermines the time and effort that athletes inevitably had to put into their training, as would any champion from any other country. Such sport-related narratives obtain the status of ‘common sense’ when these narratives work alongside similar media narratives offered through other sources. In this respect, these social constructions of the news by international media outlets may contribute to the privileging of specific viewpoints and values over others (Price, Tewksbury, & Powers, 1997; De Vreese, 2004).

The complex cultural and ideological differences between North Korea and the West were portrayed in simplistic ways that may result in further distancing between the two. In an interview with the North Korean coach after the North Korean women's soccer team lost to the U.S., American players posed the question, "What are they doing to be, like, *normal*?" (White, 2012, italics added). Such a question – widely disseminated through mass media – automatically positions the Western standards (in this case, of the U.S.) as the norm, which in turn marks North Korea as 'deviant,' since the "absence of Western principles marks the Orient" (Yeğenoğlu, 1998, p. 103). Much is conveyed through what is not said and what journalists have chosen to foreground here; although there is no explicit comparison made to the Western athlete and training system, the Western standard automatically assumes the empty space that is considered natural and normal. Such a rhetorical strategy positions the North Korean athletes and systems as inferior to the Western standard.

The same news article reported that "all [the coach] wanted to talk about was the late North Korean leader Kim Jong-Il," which inevitably constructs the coach as a 'puppet,' more concerned with carrying out his loyal duties than his responsibilities as a soccer coach – an obviously undesirable characteristic in the West. Dunsky (2008) notes that in news stories that deal with activities considered undesirable, the story "implicitly expresses a value about what is desirable" (p. 8). Furthermore, the use of political labels such as "axis of evil" (Parker, 2012) to describe North Korea further promotes and perpetuates the dichotomy between desirable and other/undesirable. This type of discourse/reporting – perhaps fueled by Orientalism – presents an authoritative value judgment of North Korean behaviour and places it against a Western-defined standard. Yet again, their deviance becomes "a subject of mockery" (K.Y. Kim, 2012, p. 156), further positioning North Korea as the 'bête noire' in most international media coverage.

Evidently, most international media coverage of North Korea(ns) was consistent with a wealth of existing socio-cultural and political representations of North Korea, leaving little room for new or nuanced perspectives to emerge.

Explaining the Differences: Conventions of Journalism

Most international media portrayed the inter-Korean relationship as a conflict-riddled one. Conversely, the majority of South Korean media conveyed the relationship within the frame of the “misfortune” and “ill-fate” of *having to be* divided. The difference between international and South Korean media portrayals of the inter-Korean relationship, as well as of North Korea itself, elicits an examination of conventions of journalism, and reasons why particular journalists produce the stories they do.

First of all, reasons behind the emphasis on conflict in international media may be associated with the fact that sport journalists – in an attempt to create drama by ‘playing up’ conflict and dissent in their sport coverage – may intentionally or inadvertently promote extreme forms of patriotism and Othering (B. Wilson, 2012, p. 181-82). Specifically, journalists may be socialized to write in ways that foreground war-related themes, and accentuate conflict (Atkinson & Young, 2012; B. Wilson, 2012, p. 179). Such tendencies are in accordance with what Dunsky (2008, p. 367) laid out as ‘traditional news values’: conflict, drama, impact, magnitude, and timeliness, among others. These values are part of a set of “formulaic guidelines” that inform the production of “empirical, dramatic, yet superficial snapshots” that the public can “easily recognize and digest...” (p. 367).

Furthermore, Dunsky states that journalists’ framing of events can be considered the link between hegemony and mainstream news-media reporting of conflicts (2008, p. 6). Dominant

media discourse thereby act as “effective mechanisms” for maintaining and propagating such ideological conventions (Fairclough, 1995, p. 96; Lull, 2000). It is important to note here that “hegemony operates effectively, yet outside consciousness” (Gitlin, 1980, p. 257); in other words, this hegemonic process may or may not be operating with purposeful motivation on the part of journalists. The problem of negative and stereotypical media portrayals is only part of a broader issue here. The main concern is that today’s conventions of journalism seem to contribute to the production of “regime of truth about the other” (Said, 1979; Yeğenoğlu, 1998, pp. 89-90).

I am aware that one media outlet’s portrayal of an event cannot be used to generalize about how an entire nation understands the event – and that one media outlet’s coverage may not be consistent with coverage from another outlet in the same country and context. In line with this, Delgado (2003) found in his investigation of media representations of a U.S.-Iran soccer match that the same event can be (and was) framed in multiple ways, featuring different political possibilities of sport in each. Hence, it is important to recognize the multiple ways in which an event can be understood and portrayed.

While it is certainly important to be sensitive to the national and cultural context in which sport-related news is produced – something I discuss later in this section – a heuristic device that may be useful for understanding how journalists ultimately arrive at the decisions they make in featuring selected aspects of events is the ‘hierarchy of influences’ model (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). This model outlines five different ‘levels’ of influences that may impact a journalist’s writing. The first is the individual level, such as one’s socio-demographic background and personal political beliefs. This level allows comparison of individual journalists across different news agencies and countries. The second level is daily work routines that may result in recurring patterns of news. That is to say, there are influences in the work place that may be constraining,

such as technology, time, office space, and norms that are out of the journalists' control. The third level consists of broader organizational factors, such commercial systems that may shape news in accordance with ownership's interests. For example, if a news organization's main goal is economic gain, the news produced may serve the interest of those who are benevolent to the company. The fourth level is extra-media (institutional) influences, such as origins or sources of information. This level acknowledges that news is constructed not only by the news agency, but also other social institutions, such as the government and advertisers. And the fifth level is ideological (socio-cultural), such as values and beliefs the larger society embodies. At this final level, the question of how meanings and common-sense understandings come to be taken as 'natural' can be explored (Hackett, 2007; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996, pp. 221-24; Reese, 2001, pp. 179-183).

This model is helpful for explaining how these multiple levels may interact with one another, enabling an easier comparison between media outlets of different countries. Especially for cases such as this study, where a globally significant event is filtered through prisms of various national news organizations, the hierarchy of influences model can help reveal connections among different structures and processes (Lee et al., 2002; Reese, 2007). Specifically, linking this heuristic device to my results may help in thinking through the potential reasons for the differences in reporting – both between nations and within nations. For example, the difference in opinion between two news agencies in the U.S. may be explained by factors of individual beliefs and/or daily work routines since it can be assumed that both news organizations work under the same national, ideological (socio-cultural) context.

Another potential explanation behind the differences between South Korean and international media coverage can be found in Lorimer and Gasher's (2001) comparative analysis

of 'local' versus 'global' media reporting, wherein they found that international news reported in the U.S. underwent a significant 'filtering' process. For example, sports comprised 23.22% of the news sent out by the Latin American news bureaus whereas sports comprised 0.00% of the Latin American news reported by the U.S. *Associated Press*. Meanwhile, crime comprised 13.81% of Latin American news coverage, whereas it comprised 47.66% of the Latin American news reported by the U.S. *Associated Press*. Such filtering processes demonstrate the value conventions behind story selection by media outlet personnel who decide what news will be most appealing to their respective audience. Assuming South Korean reporting is considered 'more localized' coverage, given its geographical proximity and political relationship to North Korea, my findings reflect those of Lorimer and Gasher's; South Korean journalists covering North Korean participation in the Games were not as focused on scandals and mishaps as their international journalist counterparts.

A further possible explanation for why South Korean and international media coverage of the inter-Korean relationship differ can be found in the fact that South Korea is a direct stakeholder in the relationship. Whether the geopolitics are inflammatory or reconciliatory at a specific moment, the two Koreas are inevitably directly engaged with each other. In other words, it can be assumed that a South Korean journalist writing about North Korea has various issues to consider depending on the socio-political context of the time since an inter-Korean conflict can have direct implications for South Korean journalists. The same can be said for international journalists as well, although the impact would be less direct.

A specific way in which the South Korean coverage differed from international representations (in addition to the fact that it was not condescending nor conflict-focused) is that some South Korean media were interested in how North Korean athletes were perceived by

(Western) spectators. This may be understood as a ‘brotherly act’, with South Korean journalists showing an interest in ways that their ‘kin’ were recognized, especially the more favourable portrayals. In similar sense, and parallel to K.Y. Kim’s (2012) finding, Korean media often referred to and seemed to be sensitive about U.S. media comments on both North and South Korean athletes’ performance.

Coverage Across Contexts: Comparisons and Implications

Although political tensions between North and South Korea were, at the time of the London Games (and currently), high due to North Korea’s on-going threats of nuclear weapon attacks, references to unification and brotherhood were nevertheless present in South Korean media coverage. This mirrors Lee and Maguire’s (2009a, 2009b) findings from their exploration of South Korean media coverage of the 2004 Athens Games, wherein the geopolitics of the Korean peninsula were warm and friendly. Consider the South Korean live broadcast coverage of the inter-Korean table-tennis match, in which the commentators expressed “how wonderful it would be” (Unknown Producer of *KBS*, 2013) if North and South Korean players could play together as a united team. They also commented on the significance of inter-Korean table-tennis matches as a symbolic diplomatic tool, which was also a finding in Lee and Maguire’s (2009a) study.

The contrast between international and South Korean coverage of the inter-Korean relationship can be compared to American mainstream news-media coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In her book *Pens and Swords: How the American Mainstream Media Report the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, Dunsky (2008) demonstrates how the American media she studied tended to overlook important contextual aspects of issues. She states that “mainstream

reporting of the conflict itself rarely goes much beyond superficial details of failed diplomatic initiatives and intercommunal violence in the field – leaving the American public without important contextual information about why the conflict remains so intractable” (p. 3). Parallels can be drawn here in that the majority of international sport reporting of the inter-Korean relationship emphasizes the Korean War, outbursts of violent incidents, and lasting tensions. Much of international coverage bypasses important contextual information, such as the origin of the division of the Korean Peninsula, and the major global superpowers that were involved in the original decision. It also overlooks the reasons that superpowers like the United States, Russia, and China might have a vested interest in keeping the Korean Peninsula divided (Parry, 2013)¹¹. In both cases (reporting of Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the inter-Korean conflict), the dominant framing by international media will continue to shape a broader discourse that may “directly or indirectly influence how those events will continue to unfold” (Dunsky, 2008, p. 4).

Ultimately, the findings of this thesis study raise questions about the role that sport-related media play in the perpetuation of violence in its various forms, and the role that it could play in promoting reconciliation and peace. These questions are pertinent to the body of work in the emerging area of ‘War/Peace Journalism’ (Galtung, 1998; Hackett, 2006; B. Wilson, 2012). This area includes research that examines not only how mass media covers conflicts and reconciliation processes, but also how mass media coverage could be improved in these situations so that reconciliation and peace are more likely.

This body of work is pertinent to the current study in some key ways. For example, thinking about what media could do (as well as considering what it already does) leads to

¹¹ For example, China may have a “strategic self-interest” in keeping the two Koreas separate for many reasons, such as strategic geopolitical power dynamics, and the valuable economic extractions that can be made at very low costs from North Korea (assuming North Korea’s continuous vulnerability to, and dependency on China), such as coal, iron and minerals. See *The Impossible State: North Korea, Past and Future* (Cha, 2012) for more details.

questions about how South Korea's 'friendlier' media depictions of the inter-Korean relationship and North Korean participation in the Games might contribute to (or at least not get in the way of) reconciliation work – or, conversely, how by not asking critical questions, it might be complicit in the promotion of problematic foreign policies or potential human rights violations. On a related note, while international media coverage often offered opportunities for perpetuation of negative stereotypes of North Korea and xenophobia, references to and discussion of the North Korean regime in connection with the athletes' performance can be considered more 'critical.' In other words, although international coverage can be considered less friendly, or derogatory, some might say that through such portrayals, issues that need to be addressed can receive more attention. Therefore, it is essential to question if there is a place for more inflammatory, radical and highly critical media, and what purpose it can serve.

Chapter Six: Conclusion and Future Directions

This study examined South Korean and other international mainstream news-media portrayals of the inter-Korean relationship and North Korea's participation in the London 2012 Olympics as a way of exploring the role that media plays in promoting particular understandings of North and South Korean nations and cultures. This research was also designed to improve scholarly understanding of contemporary relationships between North Korea and South Korea, and between North Korea and other parts of the world. Fairclough's (1995) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) helped me to illuminate the hegemonic processes and ideologies that underlie and perhaps motivate problematic media discourses that may have negative social impacts. With the premise that ideology manifests itself through language, carrying out a comparative analysis of South Korean and international media coverage was useful for demonstrating what was excluded/silenced and what was included in each dataset, and illustrating what aspect of an event or an issue was important for journalists. Said's *Orientalism* (2003) was especially helpful for sensitizing me to problems with the Western-based portrayals of the East.

To enhance understanding of the current and related topics, I offer further questions that need to be addressed. First, while South Korean sport media coverage among different newspapers were similar to one another, it appeared from my superficial examination of other sections of the newspaper (such as politics, economy, and other issues) that opinions expressed may have, in these areas, differed from newspaper to newspaper. That is to say, while newspapers known to be 'conservative' and 'liberal' seemed to provide different stances on political, economic, and other social matters of the time, coverage of North Korean participation and the inter-Korean relationship represented during the London Games were similar across the

spectrum. This relative universality of sport media opinion within South Korea may imply that sport media in South Korea is less critical compared to coverage of other topics. Or, in line with Merkel (2008)'s claim that sport has a "versatile symbolic potency" (p. 289) for both North and South Korea, it may also suggest that sport media in South Korea is a place where a pan-Korean unity perspective is privileged. Future studies could address the important questions of: what place sport media holds in today's news-room, and in South Korea in particular; whether or not this universality in sport media opinion should be taken as non-critical, or as a space in which narratives of unity and peace-promotion are privileged; and finally, what South Korean sport media opinions reveal about the current inter-Korean relationship if anything.

Second, as K.Y. Kim (2012) pointed out, the "double-hermeneutic" (p. 296) – referring to the two layers of interpretation, one from the journalist and the other my own – should be recognized and accounted for in future research. For example, future studies could include interviews with journalists to gain a deeper understanding of their narratives and the reasoning behind their decision-making. In addition, power relations in a newsroom as described by the 'hierarchy of influences' model created by Shoemaker and Reese (1996) and adopted by Hackett (2007) and B. Wilson (2012), should be implemented for a multi-layered understanding.

Acknowledging that the study reported in this thesis can only offer a departure point for thinking about how journalists are, in fact, influenced at these various levels – I suggest that future studies should employ this model as a guide for designing multi-method approaches for how particular news stories come to be produced.

Third, although gender was not a focus of this thesis, it would be worthy of a future study to analyze if and how portrayals of North Korean female athletes reflect the often highly

gendered nature of sport media (Billings, 2008; Liao & Markula, 2009; MacNeill, 2009, among others).

Lastly, audience studies are crucial to enhance understandings of the potential impacts of discursive practices in media (Millington & Wilson, 2010). As an extension, comments on online news websites should be examined. While accessing newspaper articles online as a part of my data collection, I noticed that some online news websites provided sections in which viewers could comment on the news article – in these sections, there were racist comments as well as rebuttals against them. As Hughey and Daniels (2013) note, race and racism exist and persist online “in ways that are both new and unique to the internet, alongside vestiges of centuries-old forms that reverberate both offline and on” (p. 333). Hence, further investigation would offer valuable insight into how audience members accept and/or defy news media messages, and how they interact with other audience members who may or may not agree with their point of view.

An overarching question of this study was how to improve understandings of sport media’s relationship to peace and conflict. This question is relevant to debates about whether and how sport unites people and/or exacerbates divisions between them. As Fairclough (2002) pointed out, the ultimate aim in using concepts like ideology and hegemony to study discourse is to challenge the ways we use language (p. 127). Given the vital role of mainstream mass-media in disseminating persuasive messages through sport journalism, it is also worth considering how to pursue progressive social transformation. Put simply, if we want things to change, the way we talk about them has to change.

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APPENDIX

Topics and number of articles

Table 1

South Korean Media Data

Topic	Number of articles
North Korean Performance in Olympics	26
Scandals and Mishaps	12
Inter-Korean Table-Tennis Match	8
North Korean – South Korean Athletes’ Interactions	6
South Korean Reporting on North Korea’s Olympic Coverage	5
South Korean Reporting on International Media Coverage of both Korea	3
South Korean News Stories (outside of sport) about North Korea during the Olympics	40
Op-Eds on North Korea	4
Miscellaneous	10
TOTAL	114

Table 2

International Media Data

Topic	Number of articles
North Korean Performance in Olympics	14
Scandals and Mishaps	21
Inter-Korean Table-Tennis Match	6
Comment regarding Media Practices	1
Non-Sport News of North Korea during the Olympics	3
TOTAL	45

Total number of articles: 159