

CULTURAL ANALYSIS OF HERO FRAMES  
IN AMERICAN AND NORTH KOREAN MEDIA:  
FOCUSING ON TRAGEDY AND GLORIFICATION

Young Mi Kwon

Dr. Sandra Davidson, Thesis Supervisor

ABSTRACT

Both the U.S. media and *The Rodong Sinmun*, the state news website of North Korea, used hero frames to describe each other. The hero frame of the United States described itself as a hero, North Korea and Middle Eastern countries as villains, and the people of those countries and sometimes the United States as victims. Meanwhile, *The Rodong Sinmun* of North Korea used “hero” and “heroic” without a refined symbol system. In *The Rodong Sinmun*, Kim Il-Sung and Kim Jong-Il were the utmost heroes in that they enabled the heroic working class of North Korea to realize their historic importance and led North Korean soldiers in their success against imperialists. The hero frame used to describe Kim Il-Sung included metaphors such as an affectionate father, the sun, and a tiger. The hero frame for Kim Jong-Il used metaphors such as a mother, the sunshine, and a crane. Kim Il-Sung and Kim Jong-Il were perceived to be optimistic heroes who were not allowed in Korean traditional culture, as featured as the emotion of “han” and in the fable “Baby Commander.”