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# A comparative analysis of conservative and liberal South Korean newspapers' coverage of public protests against the import of U.S. beef

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**A comparative analysis of conservative and liberal South Korean newspapers' coverage of**

**public protests against the import of U.S. beef**


By

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A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of


Master of Science (Journalism and Mass Communication)


Iowa State University

2012


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## ABSTRACT

A content analysis of 187 articles published in the conservative newspaper *Chosun Ilbo* and 228 stories from the liberal-leaning *Hankyoreh* was conducted to determine the frames used and the sources cited by these publications in their coverage of the "candlelight protests" in South Korea in 2008. The analysis, which covered an eight-month period (from February to September, 2008), found that civic protest and public outrage were the most dominant frames employed by the two newspapers. There was a difference in the two newspapers only in terms of the second frame used. Government officials were the most commonly cited sources of information in both newspapers. However, there was significant difference in the two newspapers in terms of first and second sources cited. The findings indicate serious weakness in newspaper coverage of the protests. It showed bias, sensationalism, and highly polarized debates. Both papers offered inaccurate information from politicians and government officials instead of risk information supplied by science.

**Keywords:** risk communication, newspapers, frames, sources, import U.S. beef, protest

## CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

After hosting the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games, South Korea started to import substantial quantities of beef from other countries (Korea Meat Import Association, 2008). The authority to import meat products and to designate annual quotas for such imports is shared by the Livestock Promotional Marketing Organization (LPMO) and the country's simultaneous buy/sell (SBS) system. The LPMO, established in 1988, is the recognized state trading agency for beef (World Trade Organization, 2003). To further regulate beef imports, the SBS system was introduced in 1985. In this system, foreign suppliers and importers simultaneously submit bids. The Livestock Industry Promotion Corporation then allocates quotas in descending order to the countries with the highest bids. Prior to 1988, the SBS system was applied only to frozen beef products. Today, the policy is in place for all forms of meat products, allowing the government to protect the domestic beef industry by restricting imports of products whose quality does not conform to government standards and consumer preferences (Kerr et al., 1994).

In the early 2000, South Korea imported over 250,000 tons of beef from countries such as the United States, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada. Of these, the U.S. market's share had been over 60%. The U.S. and Canada are the two main sources of high quality beef in the Korean market. In 2003, the U.S. became the largest exporter of beef to South Korea with 199,409 tons of meat shipment recorded on an annual basis, an amount that constituted 68% of all beef imports (Korea Meat Trade Association, 2008).

In December 23, 2003, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) reported for the first time that the American cowherd has been infected with bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), commonly referred to as mad cow disease. As a result, about 40 countries decided to

suspend all beef imports from the U.S. On December 27, South Korea completely banned U.S. beef and related products following the same announcement from Japan. USDA and trade officials soon initiated discussions with the Japanese over the terms for readmitting American beef. On October 23, 2004, the U.S. and Japan announced they had reached agreement on a framework for resuming two-way beef trade. U.S. officials had characterized this statement as an accord that could lead to a resumption of U.S. exports within months if not weeks. The Japanese appeared to view the announcement more as a progress report. The joint statement included the following stipulations:

1. Japanese beef would be permitted in the United States following relevant U.S. food safety procedures.

2. The United States would establish, with Japanese concurrence, an interim marketing program that would enable a resumption of some U.S. exports to Japan by certifying that all beef shipments were from cattle under 21 months old. The United States also would expand its definition of cattle parts having a higher risk of harboring BSE. These "specified risk materials" (SRMs) would include the entire head of cows (except tongue and cheek meat), tonsils, spinal cords, distal ileum, and parts of the vertebral column for cattle of *all ages*. This roster of materials is broader than the current U.S. SRM definition, which applies mainly to cattle over 30 months old.

3. The two countries would evaluate this interim marketing program by July 2005, based in part on a scientific assessment by international health experts, and will modify it if appropriate (Becker, 2005).

South Korea adopted the same standards in its beef trade talks with the Americans.

The conditions were changed, however, following the election of President Lee Myung-bak, who visited the U.S. for a summit talk with President Bush on April 16, 2008. Within two days of the visit, he announced the resumption of the beef trade between the two countries the terms for which drastically reduced the established restrictions. He justified this move in terms of what he called "comparative advantage." That is, opening the South Korean market to U.S. beef offers the country an open market for its cars and electronics under a Free Trade Agreement environment.

Hearty consumers of beef, South Koreans have always been anxious about mad cow disease. According to Heejong Woo, a professor of veterinary medicine at Seoul National University and a reputable animal health scholar, the risk materials specified under the previous restrictions (i.e., the brain, skull, eyes, trigeminal ganglia, spinal cord, parts of the vertebral column, the dorsal root ganglia, the tonsils and distal ileum of the small intestines) could be transformed into proteinaceous infectious particles or prions that can cause BSE. President Lee's announcement effectively opened the door to such risks, according to health experts, a demonstration of how the administration can readily dismiss public health concerns for the sake of economic gain.

In the midst of the government's rapid policy changes regarding agricultural imports, the South Korean Broadcasting Company aired a special edition of its investigative news program, the *PD Notebook*, which alleged that an American woman, Aretha Vinson, probably died recently due to neurodegenerative disease symptoms characteristic of those who are suffering from a variant of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (vCJD), the human form of BSE. (The U.S. Centers for Disease Control later announced on May 5 that Ms. Vinson did not die of the disease.) The program also claimed that BSE-infected cows are best identified by "downer" cow

symptoms, a patently incorrect statement because the majority of downer cattle do not have mad cow disease.

Perhaps fueled by these inaccurate reports, South Koreans took to the streets to protest the resumption of the beef trade with the U.S. amid worries of a health threat. These series of public protests took place from May 2 to June 8, 2008. According to the Korea Economic Institute, these public demonstrations of outrage resulted in an economic loss of about U.S. $2.9 billion, roughly 0.4% of the South Korean gross domestic product, and considerably eroded public confidence especially in the ability of the government to protect its citizens from food-borne diseases.

Study after study has shown that the mass media are the public's key sources of information about risk issues. In fact, many scholars (i.e., Verbeke et al., 1999; Fleming et al., 2006; Janneke et al., 2010) have suggested that public perception of risk is very much a result of exposure and attention to mass media reports about such risks. In South Korea, mass media portrayals have been shown to play an important role in informing the public about this controversial and sensitive food safety issue and in motivating people to join social protests. This study aims to compare two South Korean newspapers, *Chosun Ilbo* and *Hankyoreh,* in terms of their coverage of this public health-related issue.

The *Chosun Ilbo* is one of the major newspapers in South Korea. With a daily circulation of over 2.2 million, it has undertaken annual government inspections since the Audit Bureau of Circulations was established in 1993. *Chosun*.com is ranked as the No. 1 Korean news website by the Internet survey company Rankey.com. Foreign language versions of the *Chosun Ilbo* are published on the Internet in English, Chinese, and Japanese. The newspaper has been strongly criticized for its history of collaboration with the Japanese military government, and

later with the authoritarian governments of Park Chung-hee and Chun Doo-hwan. Partly owing to its overtly conservative stance on issues, media pundits opine that *Chosun Ilbo* is not seen as a highly credible news source by the Korean public.

The *Hankyoreh* was established in 1988 after widespread purges forced out dissident journalists. It was envisioned as an alternative to newspapers regarded as unduly influenced by the authoritarian government at the time. When it was launched, it claimed to be the "the first newspaper in the world [that is] truly independent of political power and large capital." The newspaper was originally established as *Hankyoreh Shinmun* on May 15, 1988 by ex-journalists from the *Dong-an Ilbo* and *Chosun Ilbo*. At that time, government censors were in every newsroom, newspaper content was virtually dictated by the Ministry of Culture and Information, and newspapers had nearly the same articles on every page. *Hankyoreh* was intended to provide an independent, left-leaning, and nationalist alternative to mainstream newspapers regarded as blindly pro-business, pro-American, and opposed to national reunification. To underscore its patriotism and its break with tradition, the *Hankyoreh* became the first daily to completely reject the use of Chinese characters in favor of the native script; it continues to make only limited use of the Latin alphabet and limits the use of words "loaned" from foreign languages. It was also the first newspaper in the country to be printed horizontally instead of vertically.

This study aims to offer insights into the role of the mass media in fomenting a crisis situation and in mitigating conflict during times of crisis. In conducting a comparative analysis of newspaper performance, this study also attempts to identify concrete strategies for risk communication management and policy formulation.

The findings of this study may be important to risk communication strategists because the media serve as the core route they take to manage issues and bring their messages to the

general public. As such, the results of this study may be employed to develop ideas about how government agencies and their information officers can work with the media in helping to attenuate public risk perception and anger over health-related policies. The findings may also provide insights as to how regular consumers of information regarding health risks and food safety may be more discerning in the way they attend to news and other information items that will influence the day-to-day decisions they make regarding their diet and the food items they consume.

**CHAPTER 2**

**LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This chapter synthesizes what has been investigated before regarding the mass media's performance when it comes to covering risk issues that generate considerable public attention. In doing so, it also explores the literature on how the media cover social protests with emphasis on the Korean context. This chapter ends with the study's research questions.

**Risk communication and risk reporting**

According to Lofstedt (2003), risk communication has its roots in risk perception, a field developed by Gilbert White in the 1940s. White's work on natural hazards and that of Baruch Fischhoff, Paul Slovic and other scholars on technological hazards in the 1970s showed that members of the lay public perceive some risks differently from experts for a number of reasons. These include the degree to which people perceive the risk as being within their control, the risk event's perceived catastrophic potential, and the extent to which the risk or risk event appears familiar to them. In the late 1980s, risk communication was defined as "the back and forth flow of information and evaluations between academic experts, regulatory practitioners, interest groups, and the general public" (Leiss, 1996, p. 85). Thus at its best, risk communication is conceived differently from the traditional approach of treating it as a top-down process that emanates from the experts to the lay public, but rather a constructive dialogue among all those involved in a particular debate about risk.

Despite this well-rounded definition, the outcomes of various risk communication programs relating to environmental hazards in Europe and the United States have largely been ineffective in producing guidelines for the effective handling of risk situations (Lofstedt, 2003). For example, the public remained hostile to the local siting of waste incinerators and nuclear

waste dumps in both continents, a reaction that was not significantly altered by risk communication programs. Lofsted (2003) posits that while such responses may be attributable to the lack of funding that ignored the value of proper evaluation, the failures are more attributable to the inability of such programs to work together with the public rather than simply "educate" them.

It is often said that the mass media are the major sources of people's knowledge about issues with scientific and technological underpinnings after formal education ends. Unfortunately, however, when it comes to risk coverage, it seems that the mass media can do nothing right (Dunwoody, 1992). Reporters and journalists are regularly accused of bias, sensationalism, inaccuracies, indifference, and of being simplistic and highlighting only highly polarized debates. According to Dunwoody (1992), when journalists go about constructing risk stories, they frame their stories based on their individual knowledge of information relevant to risk. How reporters frame stories are also influenced by journalistic occupational norms. In a series of content analysis studies, Dunwoody (1992) found that the media's coverage of scientific and technological risks has looked more intensively at the products rather than at the process of story construction. She detected two major patterns. The first is that media coverage of risks does not mirror reality, as defined by the researcher (e.g., Combs and Slovic, 1979; Greenberg et al., 1989). The second is that risk stories contain very little risk information, as defined by science (e.g., Sandman et al., 1987; Singer and Endreny, 1987).

Dunwoody (1992) suggests that although journalists write about risks quite often, they rarely define their accounts as stories about risk. Instead, they employ a host of other frames to make sense of the information. When information is framed as something other than a risk story, it may contain little information about the risk component. On the other hand, if it is framed

initially as a risk story, then it might contain a great deal of information about the risk, information determined in large part by the individual journalist's knowledge of the situation and of risk as a scientific and social construction.

Journalists might frequently omit details about risk from an account that contains a risk dimension not because they are ignorant but because the information has activated a knowledge structure that does not include risk as an attribute (Dunwoody, 1992). In addition, when an account is framed as a risk story, the types and extent of risk information provided are heavily influenced by the writer's expertise. This is an important weakness considering that successful communication of information about scientific and technological risk depends heavily on systematic knowledge gleaned from the scientific culture, and on a greater understanding of how people go about making personal judgments about what to do when confronted with risky situations. Gaps in understanding often lead to confusion and, in some cases, major public protests.

**Media coverage of social protests**

According to Corbett (1998), social protests are a time-honored tradition in American society, but societal institutions, including the mass media, do not necessarily welcome social protest and the social change they engender. This is because the media do not fundamentally challenge the dominant power structure of which they are a part. Thus, according to critical theorists, the media function, for the most part, to maintain and preserve the system and to exert social control (e.g., Corbett, 1992). Indeed, numerous studies have documented the media's reluctance to attack important advertisers, individuals or institutions (Weis & Burke, 1986) and the media's deference to the power structure through heavy use of authority sources (Corbett, 1993 and 1998b).

According to Corbett (1998a), instead of acting as public interest "watchdogs," the media more accurately act as "guard dogs" (Donohue, Tichenor & Olien, 1995), protecting those in power and attacking those in vulnerable or weaker positions who threaten the power structure. When conflict surfaces, the media often selectively use or suppress information using the so-called gatekeeping role, or distribute information and apply pressure to selected groups, increasing the likelihood that the larger system will respond accordingly (Olien, Tichenor & Donohue, 1984). In this way, the media are able to either reproduce the status quo in a conservative manner or promote selected reforms.

The media's coverage of social protests is, therefore, both symbiotic (Molotch, 1979) and interactive (Gamson & Wolfsfeld, 1993). While they have been known to support the dominant ideology, the media also receive useful, newsworthy information subsidies (Gandy, 1982) from protest groups and gain access to resources controlled by protest organizations (Ball-Rokeach et al., 1990). Social protest is a valuable news commodity for practical reasons: A protest fits into existing news frames and is supplied as non-institutional news. Yet, the fundamental asymmetry of this relation (Gamson & Wolfsfeld, 1993) is such that protest groups need the media more than the media need these groups because the media can sway public opinion because of the positions they take in public policy debates. After all, despite the increase of information outlets on the Internet and elsewhere, the mainstream mass media remain "the primary link between the public and the political system" (Ball-Rokeach et al., 1990, p. 254).

According to Boyle et al. (2005), a number of journalistic, organizational, and environmental factors shape the news, including the media's coverage of social conflict. These factors also contribute to news coverage that is often critical of social protest groups. Moreover, this coverage typically contains characteristics that serve to marginalize groups engaging in

conflict while simultaneously reinforcing the status quo, forming what has been referred to as the protest paradigm. Boyle et al.'s (2005) findings show that the protest paradigm is rooted in the notion that media outlets act as agents of social control, particularly when the protest group opposes the status quo by attempting to change current conditions, norms, policies, and regulations. The resulting news coverage forms a pattern replicated across various contexts: the more a group deviates from the status quo regarding its goals, tactics, or appearance, the more likely the media will act to marginalize and deprecate the group. This is a function, to some extent, of the journalists' goal of creating interesting news. In doing so, they often seek out unusual actions and individuals, and they tend to rely on expert and official sources who often serve to discredit protesters and their actions. Although these journalistic decisions may at times be considered conscious ways of enforcing the status quo, they are also likely the product of learned techniques and behaviors reflecting the routine nature of newsbeats and journalistic habits.

Research on social protests suggests a pattern of news coverage that reflects the implementation of the protest paradigm in response to threats to the status quo (Boyle et al., 2005). The resulting description bias inherent in the protest paradigm is evidenced in news in a number of ways. For example, deviant groups tend to be treated more critically in both headline and body of newspaper articles. Reporters use labeling as a means of marginalizing and accentuating the oddities of "deviant" groups. Further, different types of frames are typically employed to marginalize or delegitimize groups that challenge the status quo. Thus, McLeod and Akhaveb-Majid (1984), in their study of the Minneapolis anti-pornography movement, found that the coverage became both more plentiful and more critical when anti-pornography forces switched tactics from working within the system through zoning efforts to more aggressive

forms of civil disobedience. Similarly, coverage of protests against the Reagan administration's decision to send troops to Honduras was more critical when more radical groups of a larger coalition participated.

### The South Korean political background

In the past century, few nations have experienced a history as turbulent and dramatic as Korea. Emerging from Japanese colonization (1910-1945), the Korean War (1950-1953), and the Cold War, South Korea was one of the world's poorest nations in the early 1960s. Despite the division with the North that remains to this day, South Korea has made great economic strides.

South Korea has achieved industrial progress for the past five decades in close relationship with the U.S. As a staunch ally during the Korean War, the U.S. has been regarded as a strong trade partner and a huge commodity market. Thus, most government and military officials and business leaders hold very favorable attitudes toward the U.S. and its government. This faction is often conservative in its political orientation. Over time, however, progressive political parties and civil activist groups have been increasingly criticizing the U.S. for meddling with an independent and sovereign state. These two parties—the conservatives and the liberals—have generated other unique ideological conflicts anchored on their diametrically opposed perspectives about the relationship between the two countries.

Tai & Peterson (1973) define anti-Americanism as "collective actions and statements to protest against, criticize, or negatively sanction the USA and its citizens" (p. 470). Shin (1996) argues that anti-Americanism has several manifestations: "criticism toward American culture, political and economic resentment against U.S. policies, and ideological rejection of American values and the materialistic manifestations of the American lifestyle" (p. 789). To Kim & Hur

(2009), the issue-oriented aspect of anti-Americanism emphasizes policy disagreements with the U.S.

The pressure to open up the South Korean market to U.S. beef and grain exemplifies what the liberals call undue American influence on Korean internal affairs. Shin (1996) describes this as follows:

> As soon as South Korea achieved a trade surplus with the USA in the mid-1980s, Washington demanded greater market access for U.S. agricultural products and capital goods. In particular, opening the rice market provoked nationalist sentiment because it was perceived as an assault on Korea's pride (pp. 794-795).

Kim (2002) suggests that the rise of anti-Americanism resulted from shifts in the demographic structure of South Korea:

> As the Korean War generation is aging and the democratic movement generation has emerged as the leading group in society, the US is perceived more and more as the supporter of authoritarian regime and thus a hindrance to democratization. It is seen less and less as the allied partner the Koreans fought with during the war (p. 113).

On the other hand, the conservative camp of which the current president's administration is a part has emphasized national security and economic interests of which the U.S. is an active partner. The conservatives equate anti-Americanism with violent and dangerous actions or thoughts that threaten the government and the fabric of South Korean society (Kim & Hur, 2009).

According to Doucette (2010), the catalyst for the protests against current South Korean president Lee Myung-bak was his quick negotiation of a deal with the US to resume imports of U.S. beef by eliminating many of South Korea's existing quarantine procedures against BSE. This concession, viewed by many South Koreans to be an unfair deal, led to what were at first

small protests that escalated into the largest acts of civil disobedience. According to Doucette (2010), part of the reason why the protest swelled was because "Lee's government sought to blame the protests on leftist or hidden forces, thus brandishing what were actually a hybrid mix of participants, including high school students and members of civil society groups, online clubs, the clergy, and labor unions" (p. 25).

Thus, the candlelight protests can be construed as part of the ongoing political and ideological conflict between the progressive camp, which is more nationalistic in its orientation, and the conservative camp, which supports national economic growth through a strong partnership with the Americans.

It can also be said that the social unrest was fomented by the failure of the newly formed Lee government to revitalize the economy. Jho (2009) observes that many were disappointed with Lee's policy of favoring the conservatives when appointing top-level government officials, a preference that resulted in political and economic bipolarization.

Considering the foregoing issues, one wonders whether the massive public outcry witnessed in early 2008 was indeed brought about by public worry about mad cow disease. The results of a survey conducted by Lee (2009) show that people joined the demonstrations primarily to express dismay with the errors in government policy (Table 1). Table 1 shows that at that time, the South Koreans considered the U.S. beef fiasco as only the third most important issue that triggered the protests (Lee, 2009). This indicates that the protesters were not just miffed by the beef trade but were genuinely angry and disappointed at President Lee's other policies.

Table 1. Main goals of the protests (Lee, 2009)

| Stated main reason behind the candlelight protests | June participants[1] | July participants[2] |
|---|---|---|
| Renegotiation of imported U.S. beef | 22.3 | 20.4 |
| Anger toward the government and the president | 29.2 | 27.4 |
| Opposition to other government policies | 23.9 | 27.7 |
| To impeach the president | 17.1 | 15.4 |
| Felt sorry for the other protestors | 1.6 | 1.2 |
| Curiosity | 1.4 | 0.4 |

[1] The sample (N=1,025) was composed of those who joined the candlelight protest at Seoul City Hall Square on June 6 and 8, 2008.

[2] The sample (N=997) was composed of those who joined the candlelight protest at the Cheong-Gye Square on July 17, 2008.

## Framing the news

Like most issues, the beef fiasco has been framed by the mass media in several ways. Entman (1993) defines framing as a process that "essentially involves selection and salience. To frame, according to him, is to "select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described" (p. 52). As such, frames function to define problems to audiences, diagnose the causes of these problems, help people make moral judgments about a problem or issue, and suggest remedies or solutions to the identified problems.

Framing is performed by journalists and reporters who determine how to construct news stories. Gitlin (1980) suggests that frames enable journalists, when they are dealing with information, to "recognize it as information and to assign it to cognitive categories" (p. 21). Journalists build meaningful structures with selected information. Thus, frames are "active, information-generating, as well as information-screening devices" (p. 21). Gitlin (1980) explains

that media frames represent how journalists come to identify and classify information "to package it for efficient relay to their audiences" (p. 7).

Scheufele (1999) suggests that media frames can be studied as dependent variables that may be influenced by several factors, including journalistic routines, organizational constraints, social norms, professional values, pressure from interest groups, and journalists' orientations. On the other hand, media frames may be examined as an independent variable, which may affect individual frames or how the public comes to understand a given issue. This general path of influence is shown in Figure 1. This study adopts the first approach, examining frames as the outcomes of different journalistic routines, organizational ways of doing things, and individual as well as organizational ideologies.

Figure 1. Framing theory (Scheufele, 1999)
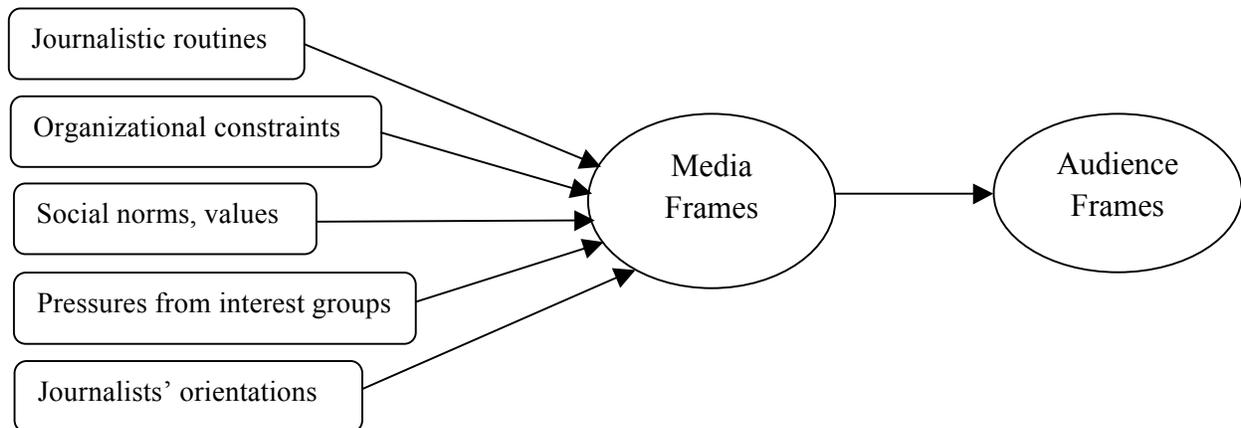
## Sources of information

How journalists come to frame a story is often assisted by the sources they cite in their news reports. Because journalists refer to these sources for facts, ideas, interpretations and evaluations, these news sources have a great tendency to shape how the news is framed. According to Signorielli (1993), U.S. science and medical news coverage is highly dependent on official sources, especially governmental officials and leaders of physician and health care organizations. Due to journalistic characteristics such as limited space allocated to stories and stiff deadlines for the filing of news reports, elite sources who are readily available are often featured in the news. Such a practice reduces the propensity to interview multiple sources who may have different perspectives on issues (Nelkin, 1987 and 1995; Wilkins, 1987 and 1989).

Newspaper readers lose the opportunity to develop a broader background or context, or seek fresh angles to an issue because there is the tendency for journalists "to follow a compelling news story by relaying the results of continuing, daily news conferences or relying on news releases generated by major governmental agencies, large companies, or well-organized public interest organizations" (Logan et al., 2000b, p. 7).

Studying how the South Korean press covers science, medicine, or public health, Kim (2001) pointed out that two obvious characteristics of Korean journalism were a reportorial detachment toward news sources and an emphasis on removing personal opinion from news coverage. Chang, Lee and Oh (2001) explain that Korean journalists' tendency to cover news conferences and events set up for the press sometimes prevented major news organizations from attributing a social, economic, ethical, educational, historical, and public policy context to news reports. Korean journalists have been criticized for amplifying the voice of a limited number of officials and elite news sources, especially their excessive use of governmental leaders and

representatives from influential professions as generators of facts and interpretations (Baek, 2001; Kang, 1990; Lee, 1991). This tendency comes from the Korean journalists' special obligation (within an ongoing, high-profile series of events) to report the reactions, or actions, of national governmental spokespersons and leaders within elite professions (Park, 2002). As such, it has been observed that Korean journalism's important news frameworks are stories based mostly on self-contained reactions by Korean government officials and dominant sources (Kim, 2001). Kim (2003) also observes that Korean journalists tend to frame "reaction" news stories within three different genres: (1) slightly edited reports from statements issued originally by prominent social actors; (2) verbatim reprints of information provided by government officials; and (3) verbatim reprints of information provided by prominent nongovernmental sources or social actors.

Logan et al. (2004) notes that "the tendency to gravitate toward elite news sources and to frame stories narrowly has been perceived to generate (1) a scarcity of stories devoted to sociological, cultural, ethical, historical, and educational issues within routine reporting; (2) an excessive use of governmental officials and representatives of elite professions as sources; and (3) less use of other potential news sources. In Korea, the tendency for news to gravitate toward all three types of reaction stories additionally suggests limited opportunities for journalists to report underlying sociological, cultural, ethical, historical, and educational issues.

Figure 2. How sources influence media frames.
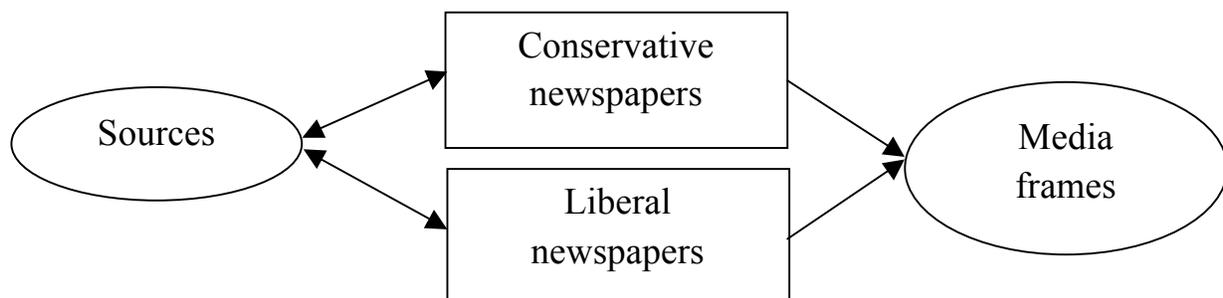
**Research questions**

Based on the above literature review, this study asks:

RQ1: What frames did *Chosun-Ilbo* and *Hankyoreh* use in their coverage of the candlelight protests? Is there a difference between these two newspapers in terms of the frames they employed to cover the same issue?

RQ2: What sources of information did *Chosun-Ilbo* and *Hankyoreh* cited in their coverage of the candlelight protests? Is there a difference between these two newspapers in terms of the sources they used to cover the same issue?

# CHAPTER 3

# METHOD

This study aims to examine how two South Korean newspapers of opposite political orientation covered the public protests ostensibly against the government's move to open the local market to U.S. beef. It aims to do so by investigating the newspapers' coverage three months before the onset of the street protests and six months immediately following a series of public demonstrations that gained worldwide attention. The purpose of the study is two-fold: 1) to identify the frames the newspapers used to inform the public about this issue, and 2) to determine the sources cited to get a sense of the extent to which various stakeholders were able to frame or shape the newspapers' discourse about the topic.

## Study design

The method used to collect data is a content analysis of news articles. The population of this study was composed of newspaper stories that discussed what is now popularly known as the "candlelight protests" against imported U.S. beef. The entire newspaper article was the unit of analysis. A search for these stories published from February 1 to October 31, 2008 produced 1,208 articles—510 from *Chosun Ilbo* and 698 from *Hankyoreh*. The stories from *Chosun Ilbo* were taken from the newspaper's data archive that has its own search engine. The articles from *Hankyoreh* were collected through Naver, the first web portal in South Korea with its own proprietary search engine.[1] For each search engine, the term "미국산 쇠고기 수입" (U.S. beef

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[1] Among Naver's features is "comprehensive search," launched in 2000, which provides results from multiple categories on a single page. The website has since added new services such as "knowledge search," launched in 2002. It also provides Internet services, including a news service, an e-mail service, an academic thesis search service, and a children's portal (*IT Times,* 2007).

imports) was used as the keyword. The distribution of the articles by month is shown in Table 1.
All collected articles were included in the sample, except for stories published in May, June, and
July. For these three months, 20% of the articles were selected by simple random sampling. Only
straight news reports and feature stories were analyzed. Editorial pieces and commentaries as
well as articles that discussed the topic only tangentially were discarded from the sample. Table
2 lists a monthly breakdown of the number of stories included in the final sample.

Table 2. Distribution of articles analyzed by month

| Month, 2008 | Number of articles collected | | | Sample | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *ChosunIlbo* | *Hankyoreh* | Total | *Chosun Ilbo* | *Hankyoreh* | Total |
| February | 6 | 5 | 11 | 6 | 5 | 11 |
| March | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| April | 25 | 35 | 60 | 25 | 35 | 60 |
| May | 134 | 278 | 412 | 27 | 56 | 83 |
| June | 168 | 211 | 379 | 34 | 42 | 76 |
| July | 103 | 99 | 202 | 21 | 20 | 41 |
| August | 46 | 34 | 80 | 46 | 34 | 80 |
| September | 17 | 22 | 39 | 17 | 22 | 39 |
| October | 11 | 14 | 25 | 11 | 14 | 25 |
| Total | 510 | 698 | 1,208 | 187 | 228 | 415 |

**Operational definition of variables**

A *frame* is the overarching story plot or idea that holds the entire article together. Because an article can exhibit more than one frame, the two most dominant frames employed in each newspaper article were coded. A frame is considered dominant if it is observed in 80% or more of the total number of paragraphs that constitute a complete story. A cursory analysis of the stories reveals frames that were often used. However, more frames are expected to be identified following an emergent coding technique. A brief description of the common frames detected and examples of each are outlined below:

**1. Korea-U.S. diplomatic relations.** This frame talks about the historical and ongoing mostly friendly relationship between the two countries. It also discusses the unprecedented strains this alliance of more than 50 years has been experiencing over time. The following are examples of paragraphs that exhibit this frame:

Although a revised bill currently being discussed focuses on the domestic animal infectious disease control law, it gives more power to the Minister for Food, Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries in specifying the conditions for and the regulations pertaining to the importing of beef. If the revised bill passes the National Assembly, beef imports will be restricted and may cause anxieties in relations between Korea and the United States (*Chosun Ilbo,* Aug. 21, 2008).

Most groups that participated in the candlelight protests had chips on their shoulders over perceived inequalities and abuses in the Americans' dealings with Korea over the years. For example, 25 organizations, including the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions, Pyeongtongsa and Minjoong Yeondae, had joined the protests in memory

of the tragic deaths of Hyosun and Misun [middle school girls who were killed in an accident involving an American armored personnel carrier in June 2002]. Some also complain about the expansion of American bases in the country (*Chosun Ilbo*, May 5, 2008).

**2. Korean government debate over trade practices with the U.S**. This frame discusses the tension and contentious discussions between and among politicians and political parties over South Korea's trade practices with the U.S. specifically involving the import of agricultural products. Mostly, the debates focus on what many consider as questionable policies related to the entry of American beef into South Korea as implemented by previous and current administrations. This frame also assigns blames for mistakes and risky measures taken. The following excerpts exhibit the government debate frame:

A government official who was part of the Korea-U.S. Trade Agreement talks was quoted as saying that "Korea-U.S. beef negotiations should not move forward because the Americans have failed to comply with international trade requirements and protocols" (*Hankyoreh*, May 2, 2008).

In July 2007, the Ministry for Food, Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries under the Moohyun Roh administration said there was a negligible link between eating meat from animals suspected of having mad cow disease *(Chosun Ilbo,* Sept. 23, 2008).

**3. Public health implications**. This frame involves the government's efforts to protect public health in general and its concern over health risks related to mad cow disease in particular. Examples of paragraphs demonstrating this frame follow:

Concerned about the health of military personnel, the Ministry of National Defense announced it will supply those in the military service with domestic beef instead of imported beef (*Hankyoreh*, May 11, 2008).

The government announced there was no problem in importing U.S. beef which, according to established protocols, undergoes field inspection, epidemiology inspection, sensory evaluation, and comprehensive checks (*Chosun Ilbo*, May 6, 2008).

**4. Civic protest and public outrage**. This frame highlights the public's reaction, mostly in the form of protest and demonstrations, to government moves to open the domestic market to American beef. This frame includes demonstrations of disapproval over government actions from all sectors of Korean society, including religious groups. Examples of items that demonstrate this frame follow:

Citizens in candlelight protests occupied the streets of Seoul on May 25, incensed over the government's move to import U.S. beef. About 2,000 citizens walking around downtown Seoul clashed with police forces at about 1 a.m. on the 26th. More violent encounters ensued when the police tried to round them up. Some were injured. Ten were placed under arrest (*Chosun Ilbo*, May 25, 2008).

The Seoul Central Prosecutors' Office arrested Lim, a public official, who joined the candlelight protest (*Chosun Ilbo*, Aug. 26, 2008).

The Catholic Priests Association for Justice held a mass in the Seoul City Hall Square on the night of June 30. Afterwards, the priests joined a hunger strike "to share in our neighbors' suffering and concern" over mad cow disease and "to act as a bridge between the government and the public." Close to 30,000 citizens joined the mass as part

of the ongoing candlelight protests. A street demonstration followed the mass

(*Hankyoreh, July 1, 2008).*

**5. National economic impact**. This frame discusses the direct and indirect impacts of the

mad cow issue on South Korea's economy. This frame is evident in the following examples:

> The Ministry for Food, Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries announced it will take
>
> measures to make up for the reduction in the market price of domestic calves. Currently,
>
> the market price for calf is 1,475,000 won, below the 1,650,000 won that is
>
> recommended to stabilize production. Thus, the Ministry will make up for the 175,000
>
> won per calf lost as a result of the price decline (*Hankyoreh,* Oct. 1, 2008).

> The value of imported beef stocks rose rapidly after beef negotiations between
>
> Korea and the United States were settled (*Chosun Ilbo*, June 24, 2008).

**6. Korea-U.S. trade relations**. This frame covers how Korea and the U.S. negotiated the

re-entry of American beef, suspected as originating from animals with mad cow disease, into

South Korea. This frame includes discussions about how the beef issue was an integral part of

the Free Trade Agreement signed by the two countries. The following are examples of

paragraphs that show this frame:

> As it negotiates trading terms with the U.S., the Korean government accepted the
>
> domestic beef association's suggestion to allow the import of boneless beef from cattle
>
> herds older than 30 months. This clause was included in a statement of requirements
>
> finalized in March 2006. This stipulation goes against the government's original refusal
>
> to renegotiate trade agreements when there are major concerns about the public's safety
>
> (*Hankyoreh,* May 28, 2008).

The government considers the beef issue an integral part of the ratification of the Free Trade Agreement with the United States. Korea trade minister Kim Jonghoon said that "Congress will not deliberate on the FTA without any agreement on the beef issue. However, there is no scientific evidence against importing U.S. beef." It is unlikely for the FTA to be ratified if a Democrat with a negative view of the FTA wins the presidential election (*Chosun Ilbo*, Feb. 2, 2008).

**7. The American perspective**. This frame focuses on the Americans', including Korean-Americans', reaction to the beef incident, whether they are in Korean or American soil. The paragraph below is an example of this frame:

Donald Gregg, the former United States Ambassador to Korea, explains that "modern Korean society still has deep roots in its agricultural tradition, and Koreans can get very defensive about any issue that seems to threaten the livelihood of grandpa and grandma back on the farm, even if this causes them to pay twice as much for inefficiently produced Korean beef as they would for foreign imports" (*Hankyoreh,* June 18, 2008).

**8. Media performance**. This frame describes, lauds, or critiques how the issue was covered by the local and foreign media. The following items exhibit this frame:

An official of the Ministry for Food, Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries refuted claims about a Korean gene characteristic [which ostensibly makes Koreans more susceptible to the human variant of the mad cow disease] stated in a report by the TV program *PD Notebook.* The disbelieving official asked: "How could have two million Koreans who live in the U.S. and eat beef survive if such is the case?" (*Chosun Ilbo*, May 2, 2008).

CNN reported that the protest paralyzed the Myungbak Lee administration only four months after seizing power. It likened the protests against American beef to the wave of public outcry generally known as the 6.10 Democracy Movement [When Roh Tae Woo was named president by a regime-appointed council on June 10, 1988, Koreans took to the streets, asking for direct elections and democratic changes]. A citizen said, "The president took us back 21 years. The conditions looked the same, the reason why I joined the protest." The *Washington Post* reported that demonstrators included folks young and old, workers and professionals who were angry with the president. "The real problem is his leadership," a protestor said (*Hankyoreh,* June 11, 2008).

**9. Other**. Frames that cannot be categorized will be coded as falling under the "Other" frame.

*Information sources* refer to persons, organizations, groups, government entities, and the like, who were cited in the news reports as sources of information, data, interpretation, opinions, or analysis. The first two sources of information cited in each newspaper article will be coded. Because the sources play an important role in how the story is framed, the source attributions indicate the extent to which the two newspapers favored the voices or points of view of various stakeholders. The sources cited were categorized as follows:

1. Government officials. This category includes the president of S. Korea or the United States, officials of the Ministry of Health and Welfare and other individuals who work for government authorities and instrumentalities on an appointed capacity.

2. Government agencies. Used when government individuals were not identified, this category includes mentions of specific government bodies and entities, such as the Korea Agro-Fisheries Trade Corporation and the Ministry for Food, Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries

3. Industry organization. This category includes commodity groups and other occupational associations such as the Agricultural Cooperatives Association and the Korean Restaurants Association, but does not include representatives of the beef industry.

4. Beef representatives. This category exclusively refers to individuals who work for organizations that make up the beef industry. The organizations under this category include the Korea Meat Imports Association, the Livestock Industry Cooperation Association, and the National Cattlemen's Beef Association.

5. Advocacy groups. Also called pressure groups, lobby groups, interest groups or special interest groups, the organizations under this category use various forms of advocacy to influence public opinion and/or policy. These groups vary considerably in size, influence and motive; some have wide ranging and long-term social purposes, others have a more focused scope and are often established in response to immediate issues or concerns. Examples of these are the Anti-Mad Cow Association, the National Human Rights Commission of Korea, and the Citizens' Organization for the Impeachment of Lee Myungbak.

6. Scientists and scientific groups. This category includes scientists from universities, colleges, and research centers, whether they are government- or private-controlled. This category also includes scientific journals and other scientific and technical publications.

7. Ordinary citizens. This category is populated by members of the general public who may or may not have participated in the candlelight protests. These sources are often found in news reports that feature people-on-the-street interviews.

8. Labor unions. This refers specifically to workers' unions that advocate for labor rights. They include the Korean Government Employee's Union, the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions, and the Korean Teachers and Educational Workers' Union.

9. Law enforcement agencies. This category includes the police and other members of the military.

10. Media. This category of sources includes newspapers, magazines, the online media, television, radio, and wire agencies, such as Reuters, Agence France Presse, the Associated Press, within and outside of S. Korea. This category does not include scientific journals and other technical publications.

11. Others. Sources that cannot be identified or cannot be classified under any of the above categories fall under "Other."

### Inter-coder reliability

To achieve appropriate inter-coder reliability, the coding scheme was pre-tested. The author and one female PhD student who majored in Human development and Family Studies were trained on the coding procedures. They coded a random sample that constitutes 5% of the 1,208 stories originally collected for the study. Disagreements were discussed and the coding protocols were refined after each of the three pre-tests conducted. To determine inter-coder reliability for nominal variables, Scott's pi was computed (Wimmer and Dominick, 2006) in which

$$\text{Scott's pi} = \frac{(\% \text{ observed agreement}) - (\% \text{ expected agreement})}{1 - (\% \text{ expected agreement})}$$

Table 3. Distribution of subjects by coders and coding categories.

| | | Coder A | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Coder B** | **Frame 1** | **Frame 2** | **Total** |
| **Frame 1** | a | b | B1= a+b |
| **Frame 2** | c | d | B2= c+d |
| **Total** | A1= a+c | A2= b+d | N=A1+A2=B1+B2 |

Therefore, for two coders coding for frames, Scott's pi is calculated as follows:

% observed agreement = (a+d)/N,  'a' is the sum of each coder's coding frame.

$$\% \text{ expected agreement} = \left(\frac{(A1+B1)/2}{N}\right)^2 + \left(\frac{(A2+B2)/2}{N}\right)^2$$

The results indicate highly acceptable inter-coder reliability: 0.73 for frames and 0.87 for information sources.

**Data analysis**

Descriptive statistics, including frequency distributions and measures of central tendency, were used to answer the two research questions. To ascertain whether the conservative and progressive newspapers differ in terms of number of frames used and number of sources cited, independent samples $t$-tests were conducted. To determine whether the two newspapers differ in terms of actual frames used and sources cited, chi-square tests were performed. The data were analyzed using the statistical package Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 20.

**CHAPTER 4**

**RESULTS**

This study investigates two South Korean newspapers' coverage of the so-called "candlelight protests" that shook the nation's largest cities in 2008. This series of demonstrations was ostensibly triggered by public outrage over the return of U.S. beef in the local markets, products that were suspected of being contaminated with pathogens likely to cause the human variant of the dreaded mad cow disease. The current study aims to determine differences in (1) the frames used by two nationally circulated newspapers, the conservative *Chosun Ilbo* and the liberal-leaning *Hankyoreh,* to report on the phenomenon; and (2) the sources cited in their reports.

Analyzing the coverage of the topic over a ten–month timeframe (from February to October 2008), 187 articles were collected from *Chosun Ilbo;* 228 stories were gathered from *Hankyoreh*. A simple random sample of articles constituting 20% of the stories published in both newspapers from May, June, and July—the peak months of coverage—was chosen.

**Frames used**

Because a story can exhibit more than one frame, the first two frames detected were coded. As shown in Table 4, *Hankyoreh* applied considerably more frames (456) to shape its discourse about the topic; its conservative counterpart produced a lower number of frames (374).

In both papers, the most frequently occurring frame was that about civic protest and public outrage, found in 31.0% of the stories published in the *Chosun Ilbo* and in 32.5% of the articles featured in the *Hankyoreh.* The next most frequently used frame in *Chosun Ilbo* was the national economic impact frame (46 or 12.3%), followed by the trade relations frame between

the U.S. and Korea. Both frames adopted a positive slant, signifying the newspaper's regular stance of supporting government initiatives in the economic front, particular with regard to the maintenance of a strong trade partnership with the Americans.

In *Hankyoreh,* the next most frequently occurring frame was about the implications of the re-entry of U.S. beef, perceived to be a risky proposition, to public health (54 or 11.8%). This suggests that *Hankyoreh* was more likely to stress the negative impact of allowing U.S. beef back in the local markets. Although *Chosun Ilbo* also made use of this frame, it was detected in only a few stories (31 or 8.4%). In the conservative paper, stories that exhibited this frame were more likely to focus on the negative impact of the protest on the national economy, upholding the safety of U.S. beef by publishing technical risk assessment reports that emphasize the view that contracting the human variant of the mad cow disease by eating American beef is but an imagined risk.

*Chosun Ilbo* made more use of the Korea-U.S. trade relations frame (34 or 9.1%), while *Hankyoreh* focused on the debate in the Korean government over trade practices with the U.S. frame (48 or 10.5%). In general, *Hankyoreh* displayed the American perspective frame more prominently, and used this frame more frequently than its conservative counterpart. Its articles, however, displayed a stronger anti-U.S. stance.

*Chosun Ilbo* employed more frames that focused on the diplomatic relations between Korea and the United States, national economic impact, Korea-U.S. trade relations, and media performance (Table 4). This implies that *Chosun Ilbo* laid more stress on the negative impact of the protests on the bilateral relationships between Korea and the U.S.

In *Chosun*, the American perspective was the least used frame; in Hangkyoreh, the media performance frame was rarely detected.

A chi-square goodness of fit test was conducted to compare the frequency of occurrence of each frame in the two papers. A significant difference was found ($\chi 2$ = 35.893, df=8, p=.000), indicating that the two papers differed in terms of the intensity with which they used each frame listed in Table 4.

Table 4. The frequency of occurrence of the frames used

| Frames | Chosun Ilbo | | Hankyoreh | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Frequency | % | Frequency | % | Frequency | % |
| 1. Korea-U.S. diplomatic relations | 18 | 4.8 | 8 | 1.8 | 26 | 3.1 |
| 2. Debate over trade practices with the U.S. | 32 | 8.6 | 48 | 10.5 | 80 | 9.6 |
| 3. Public health implications | 31 | 8.3 | 54 | 11.8 | 85 | 10.2 |
| 4. Civic protest and public outrage | 116 | 31.0 | 148 | 32.5 | 264 | 31.8 |
| 5. National economic impact | 46 | 12.3 | 42 | 9.2 | 88 | 10.6 |
| 6. Korea-U.S. trade relations | 34 | 9.1 | 24 | 5.3 | 58 | 7.0 |
| 7. The American perspective | 13 | 3.5 | 44 | 9.6 | 57 | 6.9 |
| 8. Media performance | 18 | 4.8 | 6 | 1.3 | 24 | 2.9 |
| 9. Other | 66 | 17.6 | 82 | 18.0 | 148 | 17.8 |
| Total | 374 | 100.0 | 456 | 100 | 830 | 100.0 |
| $\chi^2$ =35.893, df=8, p=.000 | | | | | | |

***Other frames.*** As the coding progressed, new frames or storylines were detected. For example, *Chosun Ilbo* has been observed to criticize the presence of the protesters' tents that were illegally pitched in Seoul's public spaces. The conservative paper also called for greater respect for Lee Myungbak, the sitting president, and his office. The paper's editorials also

charged that incorrect information about American beef was deliberately being circulated by the Korean Teachers and Educational Workers' Union, which the paper considers a formidable leftist organization. These emergent frames bolster *Chosun Ilbo's* pro-government stance.

On the other hand, *Hankyoreh* emphasized the lack of authenticity in Lee's statements defending the re-entry of American beef, calling them "very unreal" and dismissive of the adverse impact of meat-borne diseases on public health. The liberal paper was harsh in its assessments of the President's policy, characterizing it as nothing more than measures intended to keep South Korea subordinate and subservient to the United States.

### Sources cited

Based on the premise that the sources cited influence the frames journalists use to report on news events, the two newspapers' sources of information were identified. Because an article can cite more than one source, the first two sources detected were coded.

As the results outlined in Table 5 suggest, *Hankyoreh* cited considerably more sources in its coverage of the candlelight protests. An analysis of the source mentioned in the newspaper articles showed that the overwhelming majority was made up of government officials. Government officials and personnel were cited in 20.3% of the total number of citations found in *Chosun Ilbo* and in 27.9% of the attributions recorded for *Hankyoreh*. This category includes the president of South Korea or the United States, officials of the Ministry of Health and Welfare, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, and other individuals who work for government authorities and instrumentalities on an appointed capacity.

The least cited sources were labor unions and scientists and scientific groups, which may explain the lack of scientific or science-based frames as well as worker-related frames in both newspapers' coverage.

*Chosun Ilbo* was more likely to cite law enforcement agencies and media sources, while *Hankyoreh* more frequently mentioned advocacy groups and ordinary citizen sources. *Chosun Ilbo* displayed the "violence" angle more, interviewing civilian protesters ostensibly hurt or injured by the police and other law enforcement officials. *Hankyoreh* relied more on the facts, opinions, commentaries and interpretations offered by advocacy groups such as the Anti-Mad Cow Association, the National Human Rights Commission of Korea, and the Citizens' Organization for the Impeachment of Lee Myungbak (Table 5).

A chi-square goodness of fit test was conducted, comparing the frequency of occurrence of each mentioned source. The results suggest that *Chosun Ilbo* and *Hankyoreh* were significantly different in terms of the source cited ($\chi2$=94.679, df=10, p=.000).

***Other sources.*** The emergent coding scheme also produced a number of sources and source categories that were not previously identified. *Chosun Ilbo,* for example, showed a propensity to cite prominent individuals such as well-known poets, novelists, and former leaders of foreign governments (e.g., the former prime minister of the United Kingdom). It also featured the comments of regular citizens, such as American orchestra members and those who work in a slaughter house in the state of Nebraska, but these citations were few and far between.

*Hankyoreh* was more inclined to mention ordinary citizens, including chefs who operate an online food site, a polling company, a Korean professor who resides in Japan, university student organizations in Seoul, and officials of the U.S. Meat Export Federation. Both newspapers cited U.S. trade representatives and officers of the U.S. Department of Agriculture as other sources.

Table 5. The sources cited in the news reports

| Sources | Chosun Ilbo | | Hankyoreh | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Frequency | % | Frequency | % | Frequency | % |
| 1. Government officials | 76 | 20.3 | 127 | 27.9 | 203 | 24.5 |
| 2. Government agencies | 17 | 4.5 | 22 | 4.8 | 39 | 4.7 |
| 3. Industry organization | 14 | 3.7 | 8 | 1.8 | 22 | 2.7 |
| 4. Beef representatives | 21 | 5.6 | 10 | 2.2 | 31 | 3.7 |
| 5. Advocacy groups | 33 | 8.8 | 80 | 17.5 | 113 | 13.6 |
| 6. Scientists and scientific groups | 8 | 2.1 | 4 | 0.9 | 12 | 1.4 |
| 7. Ordinary citizens | 23 | 6.1 | 60 | 13.2 | 83 | 10.0 |
| 8. Labor unions | 5 | 1.3 | 14 | 3.1 | 19 | 2.3 |
| 9. Law enforcement agencies | 60 | 16.0 | 13 | 2.9 | 73 | 8.8 |
| 10. Media | 47 | 12.6 | 24 | 5.3 | 71 | 8.6 |
| 11. Others | 70 | 18.7 | 94 | 20.6 | 164 | 19.8 |
| Total | 374 | 100 | 456 | 100 | 830 | 100 |
| $\chi^2$ =94.679, df=10, p=.000 | | | | | | |

# CHAPTER 5

# DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This study examined how two South Korean newspapers of opposite political orientation covered the public protests ostensibly against the government's move to open the local markets to U.S. beef. The purpose of the study was two-fold: (1) to identify the frames the newspapers used to inform the public about this issue, and (2) to determine the sources cited to get a sense of the extent to which various stakeholders were able to frame or shape the newspapers' discourse about the topic.

The method used to collect data was a content analysis of news articles. The population of this study was composed of newspaper stories in the two newspapers that discussed what is now popularly known as the "candlelight protests" against imported U.S. beef. The entire newspaper article was the unit of analysis. A search for these stories published from February 1 to October 31, 2008 (three months before the onset of the street protests and six months immediately following the series of public demonstrations) produced 1,208 articles—510 from *Chosun Ilbo* and 698 from *Hankyoreh*. All articles collected from February to April and from August to October were included in the sample. Twenty percent of the stories published in May, June, and July, the peak months of coverage, were selected by simple random sampling.

## News frames

In the conservative newspapers *Chosun Ilbo,* the most frequently occurring frame was that about civic protest and public outrage, which constituted 31% of the frames identified. In *Hankyoreh,* this frame made up 32.5% of the total frames detected. This emotionally charged and highly sensational frame contains attributes generally considered to be high in news value

because of its focus on public outrage, but carries little risk information. Dominant in the two newspapers, the frame shows the social impact of the protests by emphasizing the sheer number of people involved in the street demonstrations. The frame was essentially time-bound or time-sensitive, was exploited for its recency, and was newsworthy because of the proximity of these public outpourings of dismay to the nation's capital. Strife has always been considered newsworthy, and this frame carries large doses of conflict. The widely used civic protest and public outrage frame, however, offers little context or background, and provides little information about the scientific dimension of this phenomenon.

Although the two publications have been known to have opposing political orientations, there was no significant difference in their use of civic protest and public outrage as the most dominant first frame. They differed, however, in how this frame was applied. *Chosun Ilbo* criticized the civic protests' negative impact on the national economy, while *Hankyoreh* supported the demonstration of public outrage, stressing the importance of being vigilant about safeguarding public health. *Chosun Ilbo* was more likely to uphold the safety of U.S. beef, citing the findings of technical risk assessments that indicate no significant risk of contracting the human variant of the mad cow disease by eating American beef. *Hankyoreh* stressed more the notion that the civic protests represent the public's negative reaction against a foreign trade relationship that places South Korea in a subordinate role with respect to the United States.

Closely related to the public outrage frame was the economic impact frame, which was the second most frequently occurring frame in *Chosun Ilbo.* The protests' impact on the national economy constituted 12.3% of the frames in *Chosun* and 9.2% of the frames observed in *Hankyoreh.* This frame discusses the economic loss to the nation resulting from the loosening of beef import restrictions, the fall in the value added of local meat products, the predicted decrease

in the consumption of beef, and the increase in consumption and prices of substitute meats. The frame also includes the economic impact on particular sectors and within those sectors. Newspaper reports using this frame forecast the extent to which real producer cattle prices might fall and the general outlook for producers in the wake of the public demonstrations. This generally led to discussions of how to cushion local beef producers from the negative effects as sales are expected to be slow. *Chosun Ilbo* reports that the short term benefits of ending the export ban is more likely to come from increased consumer confidence in beef.

As expected, both newspapers displayed hefty doses of their analysis of the president's performance, which fell under the "other" frame. Of all frames, this newly identified storyline demonstrated how the political leanings of these two newspapers were diametrically opposed. For instance, *Chosun Ilbo* called for greater respect for the sitting president, chastising protestors that their acts of dissent are inappropriate and uncalled for. The paper's editorials also charged that incorrect information about American beef were deliberately being circulated by labor unions and anti-establishment leftist organizations. This emergent frame bolsters *Chosun Ilbo's* pro-government stance. On the other hand, *Hankyoreh* emphasized the lack of authenticity in Lee's statements that defended the re-entry of American beef, calling the president's pronouncements "very unreal" and dismissive of the adverse impact of meat-borne diseases on public health. The paper was harsh in its assessments of the president's policy, characterizing it as yet another measure intended to keep South Korea subordinate and subservient to the United States.

The least used frame in *Chosun Ilbo* was the American perspective frame, which talks about the Americans' (including Korean-Americans') reaction to the beef incident, whether they are in Korean or American soil. Clearly, the newspaper did not consider this a valuable

perspective with which to illuminate the debates. The least used frame in *Hankyoreh* was that about media performance that describes, lauds, or critiques how the issue was covered by the local and foreign media. *Hankyoreh* also stayed away from discussions about an alleged Korean gene characteristic [which ostensibly makes Koreans more susceptible to the human variant of the mad cow disease] mentioned in the popular TV program *PD Notebook*.

The results of statistical tests indicate that the two newspapers did not differ much in terms of the use of specific frames. However, a qualitative look at the valence of these frames suggests a marked difference in terms of how they were specifically applied. Pro- and anti-government perspectives can be present in each frame, a pattern that was abundantly clear in the two newspapers' reports about a single topic or issue. In short, there were permutations within a frame, which can be presented in ways that may privilege or marginalize one point of view as opposed to another. The application of the same frame, therefore, can lead to different interpretations or "readings" of the same topic or event.

**The sources**

In both papers, the most frequently cited sources were government officials perhaps because of their accessibility to the news media. The stiff deadlines for filing news reports often prompt reporters to resort to the so-called "elite sources" (such as government officials) who are readily available for facts, opinions and interpretations (Nelkin, 1987 and 1995; Wilkins, 1987 and 1989). Reporters often seek government sources in situations that engender public protests because events can unfold rapidly, and audiences must be reached quickly. This finding supports that of Logan et al. (2004), who found an excessive use of governmental officials and representatives of elite professions as sources in news reports. The result suggests that government sources play an important role in emergency situations because they often provide

authoritative information about safety precautions and aid, among other topics. Study after study shows they dominate the source menu of journalists even for issues that have strong scientific or technical underpinnings, but about which they have little training.

Although government officials, organizations, and instrumentalities may be appropriate spokespersons or "point agencies" for political issues, economic topics and foreign affairs, they may not be the best sources of information, commentary and interpretation in the coverage of events such as health crises and emergencies, whether these crises are real or perceived. The dominance of government sources, particularly in science reports and in the coverage of health or environmental risk, places the quality of such news reports in question. The likelihood is high that, lacking credentials and expertise, such sources can misinform the public by coloring facts or scientific statements with political opinion.

Another noteworthy finding is the preponderance of "other" sources that made up 18.7% of the identified sources in *Chosun* and 2-.6% of the total sources coded in *Hankyoreh*. This may be attributed to diverse perspectives from a number of stakeholders. For example, *Chosun Ilbo* showed a propensity to cite prominent individuals such as well-known poets, novelists, and former leaders of foreign governments. *Hankyoreh* was more inclined to mention ordinary citizens, including chefs who operate online food sites, a polling company, a Korean professor who resides in Japan, and university student organizations in Seoul. This category was also populated by unidentified sources or those who refused to be identified, suggesting the politically sensitive nature of dealing with public uprisings.

The two newspapers were significantly different from each other in terms of the third frequently cited source. The conservative *Chosun Ilbo* was more likely to cite law enforcement agencies, such as the police and other members of the military who often lament the "violent

nature" of the "illegal civic protests," while the liberal *Hankyoreh* was more inclined to cite advocacy groups such as the Anti-Mad Cow Association, the National Human Rights Commission of Korea, and the Citizens' Organization for the Impeachment of Lee Myungbak. These sources constitute 8.8% of the identified sources in *Chosun* and 17.5% of the total sources found in *Hankyoreh*. These information sources, abundant in *Hankyoreh,* generally supported the public's outpouring of outrage against a perceived one-sided beef trade policy and buttressed the public's disappointment with the government's inability to handle the crisis. The presence of these sources further polarized the issue, and increased the disparity in the coverage of the two newspapers.

Labor unions, traditionally seen as being anti-establishment, were the least cited sources in *Chosun Ilbo*, while scientists and scientific groups, who repeatedly stress the lack of a scientific basis for the public's worry over BSE contamination of American beef, were the least cited sources in *Hankyoreh*. This pattern of sourcing strongly suggests *Chosun Ilbo*'s pro-business and pro-government stance. *Hankyoreh,* on the other hand, was more inclined to use sensational statements from industry organizations and their representatives instead of scientific sources whose statements generally contradict the public's clamor to ban U.S. meat from the local meat supply.

It is important to note that the scant use of scientists and food experts as sources of information may have led to the dismal coverage of the health risk dimension in the two newspapers. The strong showing of advocacy groups in the news reports ensured that each frame presented a slant that is negative about government initiatives. Both newspapers, however, failed to offer their audiences decent coverage of the scientific and technological issues that should have been a reliable basis for any food safety-related debate.

**Implications of the findings to theory and to the journalistic practice**

Experts agree that the successful communication of scientific and technological risk depends heavily on systematic knowledge gleaned from the scientific culture, and on a greater understanding of how people go about making judgments about what to do when confronted with risky situations. The findings indicate serious weakness in newspaper coverage of the candlelight protests. It showed bias, sensationalism, and highly polarized debates. It offered inaccurate information from sources with more political objectives instead of risk information supplied by science. These characteristics of journalistic coverage may have led to the amplification of public perceptions of risk that resulted in massive street demonstrations. Perceptions of risk also may have been amplified by the perceived high dread factor associated with meat products that are generally characterized as unsafe and not wholesome (Slovic, 1987). At the very least, media reports should have provided information about the probability of harm and the nature of the hazard as defined by science, and allowed the public the opportunity to evaluate its implications for their own safety and wellbeing.

The findings in terms of the use of frames demonstrate that media organizations' political orientation largely dictated how specific frames were applied in this case. The results lend support to the proposition of framing theory that media frames are likely to be influenced by journalistic routines, political ideologies, and external pressure from government and advocacy groups.

The findings suggest that the media, because of their structural connectedness to the seats of authority, can extend the function of the government in times of crisis or social ambiguity. During risk events, the government has a responsibility concerning its own actions and has the task of stimulating others, like producers and consumers, to take responsibilities. In South Korea

where the public took to the streets in droves to protest the re-opening of the local market to American beef suspected of being contaminated with BSE, the government was both the risk information provider and risk regulator. This case shows how a food safety issue became a critical trigger that aroused anger, dissatisfaction, and a loss of trust in the agri-food system, which eventually led to social disarray. Part of this disarray may be directly blamed to the miscommunication of core information during the crisis, which led to the public's loss of faith on the risk regulatory system. After all, the regulation of food is not only a matter of economics and politics. Quality assurance and protection of consumers against food-related diseases are critical issues for regulatory policy.

## Limitations of the study

This study has some methodological limitations. First, the sample contained news items from only two newspapers, which limits the generalizability of the results to the entire population of South Korean newspapers. The extent to which *Hankyoreh* and *Chosun Ilbo* are representative of the country's print media is also in doubt. Only 20% of the articles published in May, June, and July were included for analysis while for the other months, the entire population of articles published was coded. Sampling during the months of peak coverage may have deflated the presence of the = public outrage frame. The clash of ideas between the conservatives and the liberals, and the clash between law enforcement officers and citizens on the streets may have sparked heavy media coverage in the first place. This is why the findings of this study can be considered conservative.

Second, the frames *per se* failed to capture the valence of the coverage because valence was assumed. In other words, the same frame can demonstrate positive and negative angles. For example, in using the civic protest and public outrage frame, *Chosun Ilbo* focused on the violent

and illegal nature of the civic protests, while *Hankyoreh* zeroed in on the riot police's crackdown of street protests and the injuries this caused to civilians who participated in them. It is also possible that the two newspapers may have applied a frame in a neutral fashion. Valence, in this study, was not coded.

Third, the study did not analyze TV and radio coverage of the street protests. The frames used in these two media may differ from those found in the newspapers. The risk frames used by the broadcast media would have been valuable to risk communication research.

Fourth, chi-square tests work under the assumption of independent observations. Given the nature of media frames, this assumption cannot be upheld in this study.

One of the strengths of framing analysis as a mechanism with which to understand news media coverage of issues is that it creates discrete categories of classification and measurement. However, the presence of more than one frame in a story requires more astuteness in assigning dominance to one frame over the next. Future studies should focus on how to resolve this methodological difficulty.

## Suggestions for future research

The results of the current study point to several suggestions for future research. First, to investigate media effect, future studies should explore audience frames and offer stronger evidence that media frames indeed helped shape the way audience members come to understand issues. Second, researchers can further investigate the cultural factors or determinants of audience frames developed under highly threatening risk situations. Third, future studies should be able to unpack the strength of the contributions of different media in the shaping of audience frames. Such studies can compare the performance of the online media in heavily wired South Korea against those of the traditional media such as newspapers, TV, and radio.

This study focused on an event that is not exclusively risk-oriented. In other words, this multi-faceted issue has political, economic, and foreign affairs dimensions. Future studies should also compare media performance in covering other public health threats that may have stronger scientific bases.

Even in a quantitative project, qualitative analysis help extend data interpretation. Future investigations should experiment with a more robust blend of quantitative and qualitative methods in framing research.

The results of a content analysis are, by nature, limited to an evaluation of media performance. More studies that examine the impact of frames on audiences' cognitions, attitudes, and behavioral intentions will provide stronger evidence for the strength of this theoretical formulation.

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**APPENDIX**

**Coding Sheet for Content Analysis of Newspaper Articles**

| Variable Name | Variable Label | Values |
|---|---|---|
| **ID** | Number each individual article consecutively | |
| **Coder** | Coder's first name | |
| **Paper** | Newspaper name | Enter as a string variable |
| **Date** | Date of article publication | Enter as month, day, year (i.e., 06-08-08) |
| **Headline** | The headline of the story | Enter as a string variable |
| **Frame1** | First general theme that structures the story | 1=Korea-U.S. diplomatic relations<br><br>2=Korean government debate over trade practices with the U.S.<br><br>3=Public health implications<br><br>4=Civic protest and public outrage<br><br>5=National economic impact<br><br>6=Korea-U.S. trade relations<br><br>7=The American perspective<br><br>8=Media performance<br><br>9=Others |
| **Frame2** | Second general theme that structures the story. | 1=Korea-U.S. diplomatic relations<br><br>2=Korean government debate over trade practices with the U.S. |

| | | 3=Public health implications |
| | | 4=Civic protest and public outrage |
| | | 5=National economic impact |
| | | 6=Korea-U.S. trade relations |
| | | 7=The American perspective |
| | | 8=Media performance |
| | | 9=Others |
| **Source1** | First source cited within the story | 1=Government officials |
| | | 2=Government agencies |
| | | 3=Industry organization |
| | | 4=Beef representatives |
| | | 5=Advocacy groups |
| | | 6=Scientists and scientific groups |
| | | 7=Ordinary citizens |
| | | 8=Labor unions |
| | | 9=Law enforcement agencies |
| | | 10=Media |
| | | 11=Others |
| **Source2** | Second source cited within the story | 1=Government officials |
| | | 2=Government agencies |
| | | 3=Industry organization |
| | | 4=Beef representatives |

| | | 5=Advocacy groups |
| --- | --- | --- |
| | | 6=Scientists and scientific groups |
| | | 7=Ordinary citizens |
| | | 8=Labor unions |
| | | 9=Law enforcement agencies |
| | | 10=Media |
| | | 11=Others |
| **Other source** | Sources that cannot be identified by any of above categories | Enter as a string variable |

## ACKNOWLEGEMENTS