'Defector' as Socio-Lexical Labeling: A corpus-based discourse analysis of North Korean defector narratives in South Korea

Claire Yi
cyi2@wellesley.edu

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‘Defector’ as Socio-Lexical Labeling: A corpus-based discourse analysis of North Korean defector narratives in South Korea

Claire Yi

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
PREREQUISITE FOR HONORS IN PEACE AND JUSTICE STUDIES

April 2015

WELLESLEY COLLEGE
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First of all, I thank Lewis Carroll for this quote that got me through the thesis process:

“Begin at the beginning, and go on till you come to the end; then stop.”
- King of Hearts from Alice in Wonderland

But I know that neither the beginning nor the end, and not even the going-on between the two, would have been possible without all those who helped me through the way.

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PART I.

A Comparative Analysis of Defector Narratives
I. Introduction

In December 2013, a North Korean defector who had arrived in South Korea in 2011 crossed the border once again and returned home (Chung 2013). Soon, she appeared on the North Korean news alleging that she was treated as subhuman during her two years in South Korea. She was not the first to make this choice, however. In fact, twelve other such ‘double defectors’ had already stood in front of North Korean cameras denouncing their experiences as defectors living in South Korea (Chung 2013). Even being aware that the North Korean news mainly serves as a propaganda tool of the regime rather than as independent journalism, I could not stop but wonder: if North Korea is truly ‘the hermit kingdom’ or ‘the rogue state’ as the international society defines it; if defection really is a life-risking choice by people who used to long for freedom or a humane life, why would anyone even consider the option of going back? What exceeds the threat of punishments that await them?

Another defector in South Korea addressed my questions in an interview with The Guardian. The anonymous defector shared his wish to go back to North Korea, claiming that “the South Korean media portray [defectors] as people who want to be seen as a victimized minority with a sense of entitlement… The government here won’t accept how difficult it is for defectors to adapt to life in a free-market economy, and for that [defectors] are treated with contempt” (McCurry 2014). The interview opened my eyes to the way in which the South Korean media and government create public discourse about defectors and affect individual defectors’ lives.

In particular, I became interested in how the media and government narratives create and confer new identities to defectors. Defectors gain South Korean citizenship as soon as they enter the country. However, citizenship is more than the legality, and involves a “set of practices (juridical, political, economic, and cultural) which define a person as a competent
member of society” (Turner 1993, p.2). Defectors meet the challenge of fulfilling this definition of citizenship due to the cultural differences and discrimination. Thus, defectors are no longer North Koreans legally, not yet South Koreans culturally, yet still Koreans ethnically. The fluctuating boundary of what it means to be a Korean causes paradoxical ways of labeling defectors. How do South Koreans and defectors make sense of this identity confusion? It is with this question that I planned this research, which looks into various narratives about defectors and examines their labels and representations. This research hopes that defector narratives will provide a valuable explanation of how defectors are placed in the South Korean society, and how the new identity translates into their life experiences.

Studying the narratives of defectors in South Korea is significant on three levels. First is the human rights perspective. Defectors, while in North Korea, suffer from lack of resources and freedom. They risk their lives in crossing the border, only to be faced with the constant threats of deportation to North Korea and human trafficking. By the time defectors enter South Korea, most of them recount experiences of starvation, loss of a family member, and physical violence. Although the world must be aware of this reality, how can the stories of human rights violations be told in a way that is not, as Sontag puts it, a voyeuristic “spectacle, something being watched (or ignored) by other people” (Sontag 2003, p.42)? Even innocuous portrayals often cause unintended negative consequences by perpetuating victimization and numbing the minds of people (Mihr & Gibney 2014; Apel & Smith 2007; Ledbetter 2012). How then can we approach and make known the stories of defectors? This basic challenge of talking about human rights has shaped my initial take on studying the narratives about defectors.

The past and distant human rights violations are not the sole problems that defectors face, especially since defectors constitute one of the most heavily marginalized and stigmatized minority groups in South Korea. As of December 2014, there are 27,518
defectors living in South Korea, which is around 0.05% of the entire population (Ministry of Reunification [MOU] 2015a). Defectors have an unemployment rate of 6.2%, which is double that of South Koreans; even those working have a monthly income of 1,471,000 Korean won (1,357 USD), less than two-thirds of what an average South Korean earns every month (MOU 2015b). Such challenges may in part be explained by the stigma attached to the defector group. A study by Choi and Kim reveals that 77.0% of South Koreans have negative images on defectors, including inferiority and immaturity (Choi & Kim 2013, p.209). But how are defectors, with less visible markers than the racial or gender categories of differentiation, identified and otherized by the South Korean society? The defector narratives offer a valuable example to this question regarding the minority studies perspective.

The significance of a study on defector narratives is also related to the final, international conflict perspective. This year marks the 70th anniversary of the two Koreas’ division. The long-lasting conflict on the Korean peninsula exemplifies the multi-faceted definition of a “protracted social conflict” suggested by Azar, Jureidini and McLaurin (Azar, Jureidini & McLaurin 1978, p.50). The two Koreas’ hostile interactions extend over a long period of time. The conflict involves high stakes of national identity and social solidarity, since defining each other as the evil, wrong, and inferior enemy was the basis of the two Koreas’ state building in the 1950s. As a result, affect (hatred and fear) exists in the mindsets of the people living in the two societies. The link between the adversarial national identity and negative affect reflects the salience of a broader structure on individual emotions and actions (Galtung 1969; Lederach 1997; Farmer 2001). Thus, South Korean people’s prejudice against defectors should be considered as more complex and learned than individual and scattered. How can we then reveal the more hidden historical and geopolitical systems of the Korean conflict that exists beyond and behind individuals? Defector narratives, created by the media and reflective of social values, are an important piece of this puzzle.
Stemming from these three intellectual goals, the purpose of this research is to examine the assumptions and attitudes demonstrated through various defector narratives, especially paying attention to how defectors are labeled and represented. The research is divided into two parts. In Part 1, I compare the South Korean news and the defectors’ online media corpora to analyze the narratives and identify recurring themes. In Part 2, I generate a conceptual model to understand defector narratives in South Korean popular culture, using reality television shows, movies, and television drama series that feature defectors.

Immediately following this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 lays out the theoretical grounds of the research. The chapter explores the history of the South Korean government’s legal definitions of defectors. It also outlines the traditional discourses surrounding defectors and suggests the possibility for a new approach. Chapter 3 then lays out the methodological ground by explaining the linguistic concepts used for the quantitative and qualitative analysis of corpus-based discourse analysis.

Chapter 4 discusses the findings from the quantitative analysis. The chapter first examines the frequency list, or words that are used more frequently in either the South Korean news media or the defectors’ online media corpus. Then it analyzes the contextual information using collocate search, especially paying attention to the verbs or nouns with which the words ‘defector’ and ‘defection’ occurs the most often.

Turning to the second part of the research, Chapter 5 lays out the theoretical ground of using popular culture in a social studies research. The chapter especially pays attention to why popular culture is important in understanding public discourse and why popular culture is best studied qualitatively than quantitatively. For a qualitative analysis, Chapter 6 integrates the findings from Chapter 4 and generates a conceptual model for understanding defector narratives.
Chapter 7 provides the results of the qualitative analysis. The chapter first provides the demographic distribution of the defectors portrayed in the reality television shows, movies, and television drama series. Then, by applying the conceptual model from Chapter 6 to explore each media source, it suggests three models of defector representation: defectors as windows on North Korea in the reality television shows, as symbols of blurred identity in the movies, and as dramatic tools in the television drama series. The chapter also analyzes the gendered assumptions of popular culture’s defector narratives.

Finally, Chapter 8 concludes the research by restating that defector narratives have been constrained to certain conceptions about defectors. The mix of quantitative and qualitative analysis in this research reveals that defectors are often represented as tools rather than as agents, and as symbols of North Korea rather than as humans. This research hopes that understanding such limitations will provide valuable suggestions for change in the existing defector narratives. Acknowledging the mutuality of social labeling and the intragroup identities of defectors is the first step towards such change.
II. Literature: The labeling of defectors

In July 1953, the army commanders of the Korean War signed the Korean Armistice Agreement. But the Armistice could only bring the war to a pause, not an end. The Korean peninsula was still a war zone, divided by the Military Demarcation Line which no one was allowed to cross. Those who dared to switch sides were severely punished if caught, and used as subjects of public propaganda if they succeeded. Despite state and social sanctions, more and more people from the northern side of the line strived to move to the other side. This was the birth of a social group known as ‘the North Korean defectors’.

With a new social group came a new political agenda to create the right term to refer to the group. Due to the unique relationship between South and North Korea, each new term carried a subtle political connotation, rising into and falling out of usage based on the shifting political context.

The first South Korean law on defectors was proclaimed in 1962. The Patriots, Veterans, and Defectors to the South Special Protection Law categorized defectors as “those who have worked to protect the nation and the people” along with war heroes and prisoners of war (KWW Law (No 2715) 1962, Article I). Kwiswunca, the term used to refer to defectors, literally means a person (ca) who used to be an enemy but has abandoned the position (act of kwiswun). Legally, it meant a soldier or a civilian who brought North Korea’s important secrets to South Korea (KWW Law, Article III clause 8). Because of the two Koreas’ ideological war at this time, kwiswuncas were welcomed and treated with respect. Kwisuncas were provided compensations as well as support in jobs, education, and housing.

In 1978, the Brave Soldiers Defecting to the South Special Reward Law was introduced carrying a similar sense of respect toward defectors. It still referred to defectors regarding the act of kwiswun. However, it moved from defining defectors as simply persons
(kwiswun’ca’) to brave soldiers (kwiswun’yongsâ’) who demonstrated the act of kwiswun. Consequently, the law newly added “a surrendered and converted secret agent sent by the puppet regime of the North” into the category of defectors (WTP Law (No 3742) 1978, Article II clause 1). It implemented the screening of a person’s motivation for defection and compatibility to democracy (WTP Law, Article II clause 2). Compensation and life support were still provided, but dependent on one’s status in North Korea and contribution to South Korea as a HUMINT (human intelligence) defector (WTP Law, Article V clause 1).

At the turn of the following decade and into the 1990s, the fall of the Soviet Union and the uprising in Eastern Europe inevitably affected the Korean peninsula. North Korean elites who were sent out to Russian lumber camps or German schools began to move massively to the South. For the South, the need for ideological propaganda using defectors decreased. Implemented at this time, the Defected Compatriot from North Korea Protection Law replaced the brave soldier with tongpho, meaning a compatriot. The law diminished both the military connotation and the public utility of defectors, consequently changing their treatment. Whereas the previous laws indicated that compensation will be given, the new law stated that “settlement support may be paid based on settlement conditions and ability to maintain livelihood” (emphasis added, KPP Law (No 4568) 1993, Article IV).

With the Death of Kim Il Sung in 1994 and the following food crisis, North Korea’s lower class rapidly began defecting for survival. The situation caused defectors to be considered as the needy and led to the Law on Protection and Settlement Support for Residents Escaping from North Korea. Pwukhan.ithalcwuomin, a term used here to define defectors, carries a humanitarian connotation. As a result, the law focused on what South Korea could provide for defectors. It established settlement support facilities (PPC Law (No 12039) 1997, Article X, XV) and social adjustment education and local adaptation centers (PPC Law, Article XV). It also expanded support into recognizing defectors’ level of
However, the year 1994 brought more than a mere change of legal terms. In April 1994, the South Korean government announced that they would bring in North Korean laborers who had escaped from Siberian lumber camps. Soon a debate ensued on whether the South Korean government’s acceptance of defectors promoted kwiswun, an ideological act of abandoning the North Korean regime, or mangmyeng, an economic decision of running away for survival. In an effort to use a value-neutral term that is not so polarized, the media coined the term thalpwukca, literally meaning ‘an escapee from North Korea’ (Chun 2011, p.222-3).

Ironically, while created to be a value-neutral term, thalpwukca eventually absorbed all pre-existing connotations from the defector history: as an ideological threat from the 1960s to the 1980s, as a needy refugee in the 1990s and onwards, and as a neglected minority throughout the years. In response to the negative connotations, in 2005 the Ministry of Unification suggested to replace thalpwukca with saythemin, meaning settlers into the new land. Yet, thalpwukca remains more prominent in the public discourse.

The change of the terms goes beyond altering defectors’ status from a brave soldier to a pitied refugee. Rather, it constitutes what Caldas-Coulthard and Moon term as “lexical labeling”, which is a form of linguistic categorization imposed by the society upon the minority groups (Caldas-Coulthard & Moon 2010, p.125). Caldas-Coulthard and Moon argue that “linguistic categorization is an instrument of control in two directions – it is ‘control over the flux of experience of physical and social reality… and society’s control over conceptions of that reality’” (Caldas-Coulthard & Moon 2010, p.111). Thus, every language choice is made with an ideological implication. And every language choice impacts the mindsets and behaviors of the people exposed to it. Media, law, and education are the major domains
associated with such language choice. Based on the authors’ theory, such domains create and protect social power through everyday discursive reproduction that defines who belongs in the less powerful group and what social identity the group represents.

In essence, this process creates what is known as a discourse, or “a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on that in some way together produce a particular version of events” (Burr 1995, p.48). The same applies to the labeling of *thalpwukca*. As it had absorbed three historical connotations of defectors, it led to three dominant discourses each defining *thalpwuca* as a political defector, a refugee migrant, and an ethnic minority. And each discourse has particular meanings and implications in the way defectors have been studied in the academia and discussed in public policy.

The first discourse values the political and ideological significance of defectors. Lankov, in the famous essay “Bitter Taste of Paradise”, suggests that the fall of defectors’ political utility had caused the South Korean policy to shift from explicit encouragement to quiet discouragement of defection (Lankov 2006, p.55, 70). The political utility refers to defectors’ contribution to reunification, as potential link between the two Koreas. This discourse, as Lankov also acknowledges, leads to South Korea’s inconsistent policies. When the government puts reunification as a priority, it may enact policy changes in favor of incoming and existing defectors. Yet, at other times, it may reject defectors in order to maintain good relationship with North Korea and prevent any national security threats. Based on the first discourse, defectors are tools of politics between the two states.

The second discourse deems defectors as poor and powerless migrants suffering to adjust to South Korean society. Studies based on this discourse establish hypotheses on why adaptation may be difficult for defectors. Jeon’s comprehensive interviews with defectors reveal that defectors’ difficulties stem from their own suspicion of others, rigid ways of thinking, and lack of will, as well as the prejudice of the South Korean society (Jeon 2000,
Jeon formulates policy suggestions to address such factors, such as a payment system to incentivize defectors to work hard, or an education program that teaches relevant technological skills. The second discourse reinforces the construction of defectors as those naturally misfit and lacking, who must depend on government support for their success.

The third discourse views defectors as an ethnic minority in the South Korean society, focusing on their linguistic and cultural differences. Choo emphasizes the history of the two Koreas to illustrate this point (Choo 2006, p.580-581). In the absence of ethnic differences, South and North Korea had to create state-based nationhood that was defined by positioning the other side as the polar opposite. Defectors thus become part of ‘the other’ and are required to lose their quasi-ethnic markers in order to be accepted as South Korean citizens. Otherwise, they often constitute second-class citizens, who have not performed the required military service or paid taxes, and thus are looked down upon by the so-called first-class citizens. This final approach positions defectors as fundamentally different and clearly distinguishable from South Korean citizens.

The labels and discourses mentioned above are subject to two main criticisms. First is to their focus on the unilateral process of social labeling. The three discourses on defectors are all power-centered. The political defector discourse turns defectors into mere topics of high-level diplomacy and politics. The refugee migrant perspective defines defectors as misfits needing government support. And the ethnic minority perspective views defectors as inherent, and even natural, victims of prejudice and discrimination. Collectively, the existing discourses look at how the more powerful group defines the less powerful. Yet, “any theory of social labeling which does not provide the conceptual framework for analyzing the properties of self-labeling accompanying the social process is incomplete”, as Rotenberg points out (Rotenberg 1974, p.339). Thus, I argue that the alternative media forms created by defectors, largely absent in previous literature, offer useful insights into this mutual process.
of social labeling.

The second criticism addresses the assumption of defectors’ homogeneity. The South Korean government’s constant revision to defectors’ labeling was especially based on this assumption. During the earlier decades when most defectors were upper-class men, all defectors were to be called ‘brave soldiers’; in recent times when most defectors are lower-class women, all defectors are to be called ‘economic refugees’. However, such group generalities cannot fully explain the experiences of individual defectors. Stets and Burke argue that “the different roles that one assumes in a group may increase or reduce identification with the group, depending on (for example) power and status” (Stets & Burke 2000, p.234). As such elements of power and status, Anthias identifies that “gender, race/ethnicity and class are central elements structuring resource allocation” (Anthias 2001, p.377). Thus, I argue that the gender/class intragroups within the defector group matter in shaping individual defectors’ life experiences.

The two critiques are in essence questions about seeing defectors as humans. The often unilateral and power-centered discourse surrounding defectors deprives them of their own agency in self-identifying with certain labels. The monolithic definition of the defector group also takes away defectors’ individuality, especially regarding their unique life experiences coming from their gender identities and socioeconomic status. Thus, this research suggests a fourth discourse surrounding defectors, acknowledging defectors as social agents that are both placed into certain social identities and act their way in or out of the identities. To that end, this research employs corpus-based discourse analysis in order to compare the South Korean and the defectors’ own narratives on defectors and identify different identity groups within the single label of ‘a defector’.
III. Methodology: Corpus-based discourse analysis

The comparative approach to this research is best served through corpus-based discourse analysis. First suggested by Baker and McEnery, the method was adopted by the authors to introduce a corpus approach to critical discourse analysis. Critical discourse analysis has been used to understand social power, dominance, and inequality through the analysis of texts. Corpus approach to the analysis involves the use of mass collections of texts as research data. According to the authors, gathering large representative data and conducting quantitative analysis allow an objective study into the patterns of language (Baker & McEnery 2005). Thus, the two pillars of this new approach are corpus, or a large body of text that is representative of the society’s discourse, and computational algorithm, which detects repetitive patterns of language.

Two previous studies suggest meaningful and applicable computational algorithms. First, Caldas-Coulthard and Moon analyzed the gendered language use in a British tabloid magazine, the Sun, through a method known as frequency list (Caldas-Coulthard & Moon 2010). By comparing frequent adjectives used in the Sun and broadsheet journalism, the authors found that the Sun uses more informal, colloquial, and diminutive adjectives that are related to sexuality and childish languages. In addition to the different adjectives used, the authors also discussed different meanings with which certain adjectives such as ‘curvy’, ‘hunky’, and ‘kinky’ are used in the two sources. Through frequency list, the study revealed important findings about the Sun’s general tone and attitude in relation to gender.

In another study, Baker, Gabrielatos and McEnery examined Muslim representations in the British press through contextual information of the word ‘Muslim’ (Baker, Gabrielatos & McEnery 2013b). The authors first focused on the word ‘Muslim’ and its frequent noun collocates, which are nouns that are habitually juxtaposed with the word ‘Muslim’. The
authors also analyzed the meanings of ‘Muslim world’ and ‘Muslim community’ through concordance, which is a table of certain key words in their immediate co-text. As opposed to the previous, more generic study, the study illuminated the more proximate context of certain preselected words. Thus, the study used contextual information through collocate search of the specific word ‘Muslim’, as a reflection of Muslim representation.

Based on the two different yet equally powerful methods of corpus-based discourse analysis, this research raises the following research questions:

RQ1. How are defectors represented in the South Korean news media corpus?
RQ2. How do defectors represent themselves in their online media corpus?
RQ3. Are there differences/similarities/influences between the two corpora?
RQ4. Using the model for understanding defector narratives, how does South Korean popular culture represent defectors?

The first three questions search for comparative and widespread patterns of language in the South Korean news and the defectors’ online media corpora. Thus, Part 1 explores these questions through frequency list and contextual information. On the other hand, the final question involves popular culture, a more complicated context under which defectors are represented. Thus, Part 2 answers this question through a qualitative discourse analysis using the conceptual model for understanding defector narratives.

**Part 1: A comparative analysis of defector narratives**

Part 1 examines the frequency list and contextual information of the two corpora, which have been collected through an online search of written materials. The South Korean news media corpus includes articles from one major conservative newspaper (*The Chosun Ilbo*) and one major liberal newspaper (*The Hankyoreh*), and reports from three daily news programs. Specification of the media sources is presented in Table 3.1. Each data has been chosen by Bauer and Gaskell’s criteria of relevance and synchronicity (Bauer & Gaskell 2000,
Relevance to this research is maintained by collecting articles or reports with the word *thalpwukca* (defector). Synchronicity is ensured by compiling texts dating from January 1st, 2005 to August 31st, 2014. The time frame has been set up by considering two facts. First, some news sources were not available to the public before 2005. Second, the Ministry of Unification decided to replace *thalpwukca* with *saythemin* in January 2005, and thus the use of the term *thalpwukca* after that time signifies a purposeful language choice.

In contrast to the South Korean news media corpus, the defectors’ online media corpus comes from three alternative media sources: the largest online community of defectors founded in 1999, the first defector-run radio station founded in 2004, and the first defector-run online newspaper founded in 2011. Specification of the defectors’ online media corpus is presented in Table 3.2. In line with the Bauer and Gaskell (2000) principles and the South Korean news media corpus, relevance and synchronicity have been observed. The corpus contains only the materials written by defectors in South Korea, which excludes the small number of materials written by those still hiding in China. In addition, all available documents in the defectors’ online media corpus have been published between November 8th, 2004 and August 31st, 2014.

The compiled texts were processed using U-tagger, a program developed by Ulsan University’s Korean Language Processing Lab with the accuracy of 98.0 percent (Shin & Ok 2012). The resulting tagged corpus could be read by a concordancer that post-processed the texts into the desired lists of words. The concordancer used in this research is YConc v2, developed by Professor Jang of Wellesley College. Once the texts went through the U-tagger, they were broken down into linguistically discernible *ecels*, a space-based unit of Korean language that is similar to a word unit in English. Each *ecel* is marked with a part of speech tags that represent its grammatical function. ‘/NNG’ is attached in the end to indicate common nouns, ‘/NNP’ to indicate proper nouns, and ‘/NNB’ to indicate bound nouns.
### Table 3.1 Types of data collected for the South Korean news media corpus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Corpus</th>
<th>South Korean news media</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Source type</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>Television News</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source name</td>
<td>The <em>Chosun Ilbo</em></td>
<td>The <em>Hankyoreh</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of texts</td>
<td>2,260</td>
<td>1,569</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of <em>ecells</em></td>
<td>607,108</td>
<td>495,157</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 3.2 Types of data collected for the defectors’ online media corpus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Corpus</th>
<th>Defectors’ online media</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Source type</td>
<td>Online community</td>
<td>Online radio station</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source name</td>
<td><em>Thalpwukca tongcihoy</em> (Association of the North Korean Defectors)</td>
<td><em>Cayu pwukhan pangsong</em> (Free North Korea Radio)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of texts</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of <em>ecells</em></td>
<td>233,305</td>
<td>25,224</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Part 2: A conceptual model for understanding defector narratives

Part 2 conducts a qualitative analysis of popular culture. For the purpose of this research, popular culture includes reality television shows, movies, and television drama series. Such media differ from those used in Part 1 in that they incorporate the words, actions, and lives of defectors in a setting constrained by South Korean media producers. The materials are mostly colloquial and spoken, often in shortened utterances, discontinuous or redundant phrasal units, or ellipses. Thus, it is difficult to process spoken language and extract quantitative information. Also, there is lack of resources that computationally process agglutinative languages such as Korean that includes various inflectional forms. Therefore, a qualitative rather than quantitative examination of popular culture is more helpful in identifying the subtleties of language use. The analysis is conducted using a conceptual model for understanding defector narratives, derived from the findings gathered in Part 1.

The collected data has been transcribed. Reality television shows and television drama series were all transcribed. As for movies, the scripts were first collected and modified by hand. Sample screenshots of transcribed and modified data are available in Figures 3.1 and 3.2.

Figure 3.1 Transcribed data from a reality television show, Star Friend

Caption: Il Kim (16 years old, 4 years since coming to South Korea)
PD: Who do you miss the most in North Korea?
IK: Grandfather! You know, with my mom, when we have left over food, ah, we want to bring this to North Korea, people would eat it so well in North Korea... since we have grandfather and all, we want to give, you know... let's meet again when Korea gets reunified. Ah, this drives me crazy.
Embassy officer: You shouldn’t. You shouldn’t do this. You’ll get arrested, Mr. Yongsoo Kim.

YK: I’m telling you I don’t have time. I need to get home even if it’s by getting arrested. Let me go!

Let me go! June (name of YK’s son)!

A panoramic view of Korea outside the windows of an airplane

Yongsoo sitting in the airplane to Korea

**Figure 3.2** Modified data from a movie, *Crossing*

The chosen television shows are from terrestrial broadcasting channels, which are accessible to anyone without paying for service. The chosen movies are all commercial movies, which are screened in major theaters across the country. In parallel with Part 1 corpora, the transcribed corpus observes the principle of Bauer and Gaskell (2000). Relevance is maintained by selecting sources that depict defectors for at least five percent of the production’s total duration. The cut-off is used to distinguish whether the defectors are merely mentioned or actually took part in the story, and is approximately two to three minutes for television shows and five minutes for movies. Synchronicity is naturally maintained since the earliest appearance of a defector in popular culture was in 2001, and the second one was in 2005. All media sources used in Part 2 date between 2001 and 2014.

The first group in the data is composed of two reality television shows in which 17 actual defectors participated. The second group includes five movies about the lives of 16 fictional defectors. The final group comes from eight television drama series with 17 fictional defectors. When these data are taken together, popular culture analysis involves narratives about 50 different defectors living in South Korea. More information about each media form is available in Table 3.3.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Original title</th>
<th>English translation</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Episodes (#)</th>
<th>Length (min)</th>
<th>Number of defectors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reality television shows</td>
<td><strong>Namca.ui cakyek</strong></td>
<td>Man’s Qualification</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>(main), 1 (sub)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Pyel chinkwu</strong></td>
<td>Star Friends</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>(main)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movies</td>
<td><strong>Kwukkyeng.ui namccok</strong></td>
<td>South of the Border</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>2 (main), 5 (sub)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Khu.losing</strong></td>
<td>Crossing</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>1 (main)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Phwungsan.gay</strong></td>
<td>Poongsan</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>2 (main), 2 (sub)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Yong.uica</strong></td>
<td>The Suspect</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>1 (main), 2 (sub)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Tongchang-sayng</strong></td>
<td>The Commitment</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>1 (main)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>16</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television drama series</td>
<td><strong>Wulika naminkayo</strong></td>
<td>Are We Strangers</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>1 (sub)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Sarang.un kiceki philyohay</strong></td>
<td>Loves Needs a Miracle</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>1 (sub)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Khain kwa apeyl</strong></td>
<td>Cain and Abel</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>2 (main)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Poseidon</strong></td>
<td>Poseidon</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>6 (sub)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Nay salang napi pwuin</strong></td>
<td>My Love Madame Butterfly</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>1 (sub)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Himmay.yo Miste Kim</strong></td>
<td>Cheer Up Mr. Kim</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>1 (sub)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Ssuliteicyu</strong></td>
<td>Three Days</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>1 (sub)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Takte Ipangin</strong></td>
<td>Dr. Stranger</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>2 (main), 2 (sub)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>50</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3.3** Types of data collected for the South Korean popular culture analysis

*‘Main’ means defectors that appear as main characters of the particular show/movie and ‘sub’ means those who are not main characters but still exceeded the threshold of significance (5% of duration) discussed previously.
IV. Findings: The mainstream versus the self

The previous chapters have established the complexities of labeling defectors and the potentials of corpus-based discourse analysis in exploring the question. This chapter now consults frequency list and contextual information, two previously introduced techniques within corpus-based discourse analysis. Each test is discussed through the general trends in the two corpora and the issues of mutual labeling and intragroup identities.

Frequency list

In order to extract meaningful words of high frequency, I only consider nouns, which account to 68.30 percent of total 1,534,515 ecels. From the frequency list of nominal elements, 100 top frequency nouns were selected for each corpus. Raw frequency had been converted to percentages in consideration of the different numbers of nouns used in each media source. Then, I compared the two lists, choosing the 25 most frequent nouns with at least twice higher percentage in one corpus than in the other. Part of the resulting frequency list of 25 nouns from each corpus is shown in Table 4.1. A complete frequency list is also available in Appendix A.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>South Korean news media</th>
<th>Defectors' online media</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequent noun</td>
<td>English translation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>인권__01/NNG</td>
<td>human rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>정부__08/NNG</td>
<td>government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>문제__06/NNG</td>
<td>problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>미국__03/NNP</td>
<td>United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>주민/NNG</td>
<td>resident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>의원__05/NNG</td>
<td>senator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>단체__02/NNG</td>
<td>organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>복송__02/NNG</td>
<td>repatriation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>외교__01/NNG</td>
<td>diplomacy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1 Sample screenshot from frequency list of the two corpora
Each word from the frequency list forms the basis of the analysis to follow. However, before turning to the micro-level analysis of specific nouns, it is important to gather a macro-level understanding of the two corpora’s frequency lists. The two lists focus on different themes regarding defectors. Thus, I identified the sections of news and topics of writing in which the frequent nouns appear. Based on the observation, the frequent nouns can be classified into rough groupings based on the broad frames of the news categories, ‘politics’, ‘economy’, ‘individual’, and ‘society’. The distribution of the frequent nouns in the four frames is remarkably different in the two corpora, as shown in Figures 4.1 and 4.2.

**Figure 4.1** Distribution of the frequent nouns in the South Korean news media corpus

![Pie chart showing distribution of frequent nouns in South Korean news media corpus](image1)

**Figure 4.2** Distribution of the frequent nouns in the defectors’ online media corpus

![Pie chart showing distribution of frequent nouns in defectors’ online media corpus](image2)
The two corpora demonstrate a notable difference in the frequent frames. While 83% of the frequent nouns in the South Korean news media corpus are vocabularies in politics and social (criminal) news, only 22% of the vocabularies in the defectors’ online media corpus discuss similar issues. On the contrary, 3% of the frequent nouns are used in economy news in the South Korean media corpus, and the frequent nouns in the economy domain of the defectors’ online media corpus are more than 7 times more prevalent. The defectors’ online media’s frequent use of the ‘individual’ frame is due in part to the fundamental difference between news and personal writing, but is all the while striking.

The two corpora’s difference is not merely in the percentage of the frames used, but also in their attitude toward each frame. Among the nouns in the same frame of ‘politics’, those from the South Korean news media corpus depict defectors as political topics, while those from the defectors’ online media corpus describe defectors’ mission. In the ‘society’ frame, nouns from the South Korean news media portray defectors as social problems, while nouns from the defectors’ online media refer to defectors’ social interactions. To generate evidence for these differences, micro-level analysis based on individual nouns must follow.

**South Korean news media corpus**

Table 4.2 shows the 25 most frequent nouns in the South Korean news media corpus categorized under the four frames discussed previously. The high frequency of the ‘politics’ frame is reiterated in the large number of nouns in the frame. The frame depicts defectors as topics of government policy or diplomatic controversies. It also relates defectors to national security threats such as the army, secret agents, or nuclear weapons. Other frames also fit into such constructions of defectors as topics and as threats. The one noun in the ‘economy’ frame is related to the government’s settlement support policies; the ‘society’ frame describes defectors as criminals or deviants.
Table 4.2 Frequent nouns used in the South Korean news media corpus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frames</th>
<th>Frequent nouns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economy</td>
<td>support (<em>ciwen</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>resident (<em>cwumin</em>), origin (<em>chwulsin</em>), woman (<em>yeseng</em>), information (<em>cengpo</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Society</td>
<td>problem (<em>mwunce</em>), organization (<em>tan.chey</em>), recent (<em>choy.kun</em>), incident (<em>sa.ken</em>), investigation (<em>cosa</em>), situation (<em>sanghwang</em>), prosecutor’s office (<em>kemchal</em>)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘Government’ (0.67%) is the second most frequent noun in the South Korean news media corpus. In the articles that use the word, defectors are expressed as major political and diplomatic concerns for the stakeholder governments, including the East Asian countries and the United States. The ‘United States’ (0.57%), especially, is the fourth most frequent word in the corpus, often depicted to be the trend setter of defector policies. Various political figures such as Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Ambassador Robert King, former President George W. Bush, and President Barack Obama are quoted with their stance on North Korea. Efforts by U.S. nongovernmental organizations are highlighted when discussing movement for defectors’ ‘human rights’ (0.71%), which is the most frequent noun in the corpus. Policy measures or specific actions taken by the U.S. government are often discussed in relation to the irresponsible or slow South Korean government.

As suggested in the ‘politics’ frame, the core question of the South Korean news media corpus is how defectors influence the governmental policy toward North Korea or the international dialogue on nuclear weapons and human rights. This is comparable to the ‘individual’ frame. The South Korean news media corpus identifies defectors as North Korean ‘residents’ (0.43%), a word which immediately follows the list as the fifth most frequent noun. Most defectors are addressed in the news media as interviewees or witnesses.
to certain events in North Korea. Others appear as proofs of statistics on the North Korean society. In such news reports or articles, the terms ‘defectors’ and ‘North Korean residents’ are used interchangeably, implying that even defectors currently living in South Korea are still residents of North Korea.

An exception to this identification is defectors who have succeeded in the South Korean society, such as politicians, doctors, and businessmen. Such successful defectors may be called politicians of defector ‘origin’ or doctors of defector ‘origin’ (0.21%). In other words, certain measures of success are considered to be signs of adaptation and consequently of the defectors’ new identity as ‘former defectors’. Defectors on the other end of the spectrum are portrayed as criminals. Such defectors cause ‘problems’ (0.58%) or ‘incidents’ (0.20%) which lead them to ‘the prosecutor’s office’ (0.16%) for ‘investigation’ (0.19%). The motivations of their crimes are often identified as financial difficulties or mental problems caused by the inability to adapt to South Korea. All of the usages combined, defectors in the South Korean news media corpus cause political challenge, economic drain of resources, and social disorder because of their status as outsiders.

*Defectors’ online media corpus*

Table 4.3 shows the 25 most frequent nouns in the defectors’ online media corpus based on the four identified frames. The ‘economy’ and ‘individual’ frames are much lexically richer than in the South Korean news media corpus. In contrast to the news that depicts defectors as those that need to adapt, the defectors’ online media corpus self-identifies defectors as contributing and valuable members of the society. Similarly, the ‘politics’ frame also demonstrates more focus on defectors’ political agenda and mission and the ‘society’ frame places defectors as interactive members of the South Korean society.
Table 4.3 Frequent nouns used in the defectors’ online media corpus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frames</th>
<th>Frequent nouns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>South Korea (<em>namhan</em>), political party (<em>tang</em>), reunification (<em>thong. il</em>), country (<em>nala</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy</td>
<td>money (<em>ton</em>), living (<em>saynghwal</em>), house (<em>cip</em>), school (<em>hak. kyo</em>), life (<em>salm</em>), office (<em>hoysa</em>), study (<em>kongwu</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>human (<em>salam</em>), thought (<em>sayngkak</em>), heart (<em>ma. um</em>), first (<em>che. um</em>), now (<em>cikum</em>), degree (<em>cengto</em>), self/confidence (<em>casin</em>), time (<em>sikan</em>), road (<em>kil</em>), night (<em>pam</em>), story (<em>iyaki</em>), hometown (<em>kohyang</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Society</td>
<td>friend (<em>chin. kwu</em>), world (<em>seysang</em>)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘Money’ (0.42%) is the fourth most frequent noun in the frequency list of the defectors’ online media corpus. In contrast to the South Korean news media’s emphasis on the economic support structure such as settlement funds, the defectors’ online media corpus reveals defectors’ own efforts. The defection stories begin with defectors having financial difficulties in North Korea and crossing the border with the goal of earning money. However, defectors face difficulties even in South Korea due to discrimination in access to education and jobs. Therefore, defectors describe their efforts of ‘studying’ (0.12%) at a ‘school’ (0.23%) or making a ‘living’ (0.37%) at an ‘office’ (0.20%). They also focus on accumulating wealth to start a business or to reunite with the family.

While family reunion is an important motivation for defectors, ‘reunification’ (0.25%) is also a major part of their personal calling. There are two broad types of writings in the defectors’ online media corpus. One addresses the defector community, and the other addresses the general public that is predominantly South Koreans. The first type of defector writings considers success in South Korea as a cornerstone of preparing for reunification and encourages other defectors to persevere and succeed. The second type of defector writings asks South Koreans to understand defectors, who are striving to bring peace on the Korean peninsula. Most texts in the defectors’ online media corpus take pride in the potential role that defectors may play in bringing smooth reunification.
Because defectors establish themselves as forerunners of reunification, their personal relationships are regarded as proxy reunifications. This belief leads to the importance of South Korean ‘friends’ (0.31%). ‘Friends’ may refer to either actual people who accept defectors and help them financially or socially, or to South Korean people in general. The defectors’ online media corpus discusses friendship and love stories with South Koreans that serve as anecdotes of successful interaction between the two Koreas. With this concept of South Koreans being friends of defectors, the defectors’ online media corpus transforms the portrayal of defectors from political topics to agents with individual efforts and social interactions, or more simply, to humans (1.35%).

The collective ‘we’

The two corpora do not always use completely different words. An example of nouns frequently used in both corpora is *wuli*, the pronoun ‘we’ in English. ‘We’ takes 0.50% of all noun occurrences in the South Korean news media corpus and 0.72% in the defectors’ online media corpus. However, the use of ‘we’ shows contrastive usage in the two corpora’s definition of the social boundary. In order to observe the use of ‘we’, a randomized sample of one hundred sentences has been selected from each corpus and resolved the antecedents of ‘we’. Table 4.4 presents a part of the resulting examples of randomized sentences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Sentence with 'we' (우리)</th>
<th>Antecedent of 'we'</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MBC</td>
<td>우리는 단단해도 우리는 계속해서 북한 인권을 위해서...</td>
<td>Activist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chosun</td>
<td>…박영철(32) 워드류 대표는 ‘우리 혼자 강당하기엔 어려웠지만…</td>
<td>Defector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chosun</td>
<td>‘심심에 따라 남으로 온 우리를 개인도 못하게 했었다’고 주장했다. ‘</td>
<td>Defector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hangyereh</td>
<td>우리야 한국에서 고생하며 몸으로 대를 수 있지만, 아이들까지…</td>
<td>Defector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KBS</td>
<td>우리가 고양으로 돌아가면 모두 감격해 울려가 죽는다고 합니다.</td>
<td>Defector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KBS</td>
<td>우리는 그런가 모르나가 이 사회에 왜서 보},${username} 를 이렇게 할 수 있구나…</td>
<td>Defector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MBC</td>
<td>우리는 지금은 알수록 많이 더더욱 우리가 어떻게 적응해요?</td>
<td>Defector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBS</td>
<td>우리 북한 사람들에 대해 우리도 오갈수 있어요.</td>
<td>Defector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chosun</td>
<td>우리 군(軍)은 2006년 보고서에서 ‘북한 해커 부대가…</td>
<td>SK army</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4 Sample screenshot from 100 randomized examples of ‘we’ in the two corpora
Based on the antecedent identification, Table 4.5 demonstrates the different usages of ‘we’ that occurred more than once in each corpus.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>‘We’ in South Korean news media</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>‘We’ in defectors’ online media</th>
<th>#</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>South Korean government</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>personal (group of people)</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korean society</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>defector</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korean country</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>two Koreas</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korean institution</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>South Korean country</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korean army</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>South Korean society</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>defector</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>activist</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korean side</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>North Korean country</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korean people</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>North Korean people</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>two Koreas</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>South Korean institution</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.5 Meaning of ‘we’ in the randomized examples

The South Korean news media corpus has an overwhelming percentage of collective identity based on exclusively South Korean identities. The news articles and reports often employ phrases such as ‘our government’, ‘our side’, and ‘our army’. This ‘our’ is used to distance South Korea from North Korea and other nations. Even further, ‘we’ is used to distance South Korea from defectors who attempt to join the South Korean society.

Although they decided to defect after watching our television drama series, the prejudice in the Korean society made them move elsewhere… We ought to look back to our society’s prejudice toward North Korean defectors that forces defectors to choose a third country.
-SBS (November 20th, 2011), “Defectors come to South Korea after watching television drama series: but faced with different reality”

In the example above, ‘our society’ is one that inflicts prejudice upon ‘them’, who eventually fail to become a part of ‘our society’. In relation to the ‘different reality’ mentioned by the SBS news report, The Chosun Ilbo offers the following view.

A government official argued that “although defectors have not adapted easily to the competitive market economy system, it is also true that there are invisible walls in our society that prevents their settlement and employment.”
Reacting to the ‘invisible wall’ yet still perpetuating the ‘us vs. them’ distinction, The Hangyereh poses the following question.

‘The era of 10,000 defectors’, how can we accept them as our neighbors?
- The Hangyereh (February 15th, 2007), “The era of 10,000 defectors’ They are also neighbors”

Just as the South Korean news media corpus bases ‘we’ on the South Korea-specific definitions, it is natural that the defectors’ online media corpus often uses ‘we’ as the collective pronoun of defectors. The prevalence of memoirs in the defectors’ online media corpus also explains the high percentage of personal meanings attached to ‘we’. However, unlike South Korea’s exclusive interpretation of ‘we’, defectors extend their sense of collective identity to the South Korean society and the two Koreas. Defectors also have a unique understanding of their inclusion into the ‘we’. In contrast to the South Korean news media corpus that struggles to find how defectors can be included in the South Korean ‘we’, defectors’ sense of ‘we’ seems to begin as soon as they arrive in South Korea.

As I got off the airplane and entered downtown, I was surprised to see the parade of cars flowing like river, people everywhere, and prosperity that I might have seen in some foreign movies.
“Is this really our country, where our people live?”
- Young Sun Yim (November 18th, 2004), “Thinking about the value of beads of sweat” from Association of the North Korean Defectors

Defectors also focus on the common historical and cultural roots of the two Koreans in explaining their place in the South Korean society.

We all inherited the same bloodline from one ancestry and lived in one country, one land. But then how is it that one side has an overflowing happiness while the other side is living under the constant nightmare?
- Hwa Yoo (November 19th, 2004), “The freedom I found” from Association of the North Korean Defectors

While frequency identifies unique patterns of language in the two corpora, the lexical usage of the pronoun ‘we’ highlights a contextual difference between the two. Focusing on this new finding, I now examine the contextual information of the word ‘defector’ and ‘defection’.
**Contextual information**

In order to analyze the immediate contexts of the words ‘defector’ and ‘defection’, this section examines their neighboring collocates. Collocates are words that are habitually juxtaposed with key words, in a way that suggests semantic association. The three key words used in this research are those that refer to defectors, *thalpwukca* and *saythemin*, and one that refers to defection, *thalpwuk*. In order to facilitate the contextual analysis, I limit the window of collocates to five front-to-back *ecels*. Per the key words, a KWIC (Key Word in Context) list has been generated as demonstrated in Table 4.6.

| 나 같은 | 탈북자가 | 넘겨는 한국 사회의 평견이 너무나 높았다. |
| 현재까지 우리의 단체를 통해 입국한 | 탈북자가 | 8,000명 가량이다. |
| 면 훗날 통일된 한반도에서 98식이 원치 | 탈북자가 | 어떠한 사람인지, 하나밖에 원치, 수용소가 원치… |
| 재살 탈석 탈북자가 | 탈북자가 | 인건재상인 한국에 와서 받은 느낄가는 것도… |
| 함께 일하던 사람들이 | 탈북자가 | 무로 대학이나고 반정치지지만 나는 하루 3시간도… |
| 그러던 것이 488명의 | 탈북자가 | 그것도 한번에 한국으로 돌아오다니 경박… |
| 그게서 | 탈북자가 | 집합 경우 모든 방법들은 동원해서 일단 구출부터… |
| 그 할머니처럼 연세가 많은 모두 | 탈북자는 | 남한국인과 복 갈은 사회적 배려를 받고 살아요. |
| 그러나 한국 입장에서 볼 때 | 탈북자는 | 동일의 사각입니다. |
| 한나의 난 잡 나온 | 탈북자는 | 손가락 하나부터 모든 것을 다 준비해야 한다. |
| 이 세상 무엇과도 부딪혀 보고 싶었다 | 탈북자는 | 목숨 걸고 왔기에 생명에 대한 의지가 강하다… |
| 어떤 탈북자는 | 탈북자는 | 이 과정 중 검문을 한 번도 받지 않았다고 하고… |
| 학생 30명을 | 탈북자는 | 나 혼자였는데, 김종혁 유언가 대부분 믿어고민… |
| 아직까지 대한민국 국민들이 알고 있는 | 탈북자는 | 막을 것은 재대로 막지 못해 고생하며 찾아온… |

**Table 4.6** Sample screenshot from the KWIC list of the two corpora

A KWIC list catalogs all the cases in which the key words appear. From the general KWIC list created for each of the three key words, separate sub-lists have been derived, each delineating the cases in which the word ‘defector’ is used as a subject and an object in a sentence. The resulting lists provide a valuable insight into the verb collocates associated with the words ‘defector’ and ‘defection’ under different circumstances. Another sub-list has also been generated, compiling the cases in which the key words appear as part of a compound noun. The list allows a look into the noun collocates of the key words. The following analysis describes the findings from each sub-list.
Defectors as subjects versus as objects

The word ‘defector’ is used as a subject more often than as an object in both corpora. Sentences that use ‘defector’ as their subjects also employ more diverse verb collocates. Figure 4.3 below exhibits the frequent verbs that accompany the word ‘defector’ used as a subject of a sentence. Detailed information about each verb is available in Appendix B.

![Graph showing frequent verbs accompanying defectors as subjects (in percentage)](image)

**Figure 4.3** Frequent verbs accompanying defectors as subjects (in percentage)

The verbs are used in opposing frequency rankings in the two corpora. For example, the South Korean news media corpus has especially high frequency of verbs such as ‘to increase’ and ‘to say’, for which the defectors’ online media corpus demonstrates one of its lowest frequency values. In contrast, verbs such as ‘to receive’ are the most frequent in the defectors’ online media corpus, while relatively infrequent in the South Korean news media corpus. The only outlier, ‘to come’, is used frequently in both corpora to talk about defectors entering South Korea.
Lexical usage in the South Korean news media corpus presents three major themes: defectors as witnesses, defectors as movers, and defectors as numbers. Under the first theme, defectors are seen as witnesses to the political or humanitarian situations in North Korea. Verbs such as ‘to say’ and ‘to witness’ are used particularly often when defectors are interviewed in news reports about North Korea. Under the second theme, defectors are placed in the various stages of movement across countries. Verbs such as ‘to repatriate to North’, ‘to come’, ‘to settle’, ‘to enter country’ are examples in this theme. The previous two themes support the findings of the frequency list that discussed defectors’ identity as source of information and as topic of political or diplomatic challenge. However, under the final theme, defectors are portrayed from a new perspective, as numbers. The verbs ‘to increase’ and ‘to go beyond’ are used to introduce mass defections or statistics about defectors. These news reports mention the rapidly increasing number of defectors to suggest a potential breakdown of the North Korean regime or a significant challenge facing the South Korean government.

The defectors’ online media corpus describes defectors under different themes: defectors as have-nots and defectors as receivers. The first set of verbs includes ‘to not exist’ or ‘to lack’. According to the collocates of the verbs, the examples of what defectors lack are competitive edge, willingness, ability, skill and knowledge, and experience in the South Korean society. Instead, what defectors do have, based on the collocates of ‘to exist’, are pain, mental crisis, sad story, and calling. The positive qualities that defectors do not possess and the negative qualities they do possess lead to the second construction of defectors as receivers. The verb ‘to receive’ is particularly meaningful under this theme. Out of the seventeen uses of the verb, nine are about receiving something negative, such as inspection, treatment, punishment, and feelings. The remaining eight uses of ‘to receive’ are about receiving something positive, such as education, money, support, and benefit.
Defectors’ semantic role as receivers remains the same even when the term ‘defector’ is used as an object in a sentence. When used as a subject of a sentence, defectors are receivers; when used as an object of a sentence, defectors are for whom one provides. Thus, the previous discussion of defectors as receivers is reiterated in the broader themes of the lexical usage of the word ‘defector’ as an object of a sentence. Figure 4.4 highlights the verb collocates that accompany the word ‘defector’ used as an object. Detailed information about each verb is available in Appendix C.

![Figure 4.4](image)

**Figure 4.4** Frequent verbs accompanying defectors as objects (in percentage)

Both corpora exhibit both similar verb choices and similar rankings of the frequent verbs used. The two most frequent verbs in the defectors’ online media corpus, ‘to care for’ and ‘to help’, are also relatively frequent in the South Korean news media corpus. In fact, 28.31% of the verbs in the South Korean news media corpus and 37.35% of those in the defectors’ online media corpus involve verbs such as ‘to help’, ‘to care for’, ‘to take in’, ‘to accommodate’, ‘to support’, and ‘to protect’. The verbs position defectors as receivers of help,
care, support, and accommodation from South Koreans. When the word ‘defector’ is used as an object of a sentence, the helpers are South Korean people and the support and accommodation come from the South Korean government. This finding is at odds with the lexical usage of the grammatical subject ‘defector’ used in the defectors’ online media corpus, which acknowledged the reception of both positive and negative traits.

The next most frequent noun in both corpora is ‘to meet’, which reveals defectors’ interpersonal relationships. The verb ‘to meet’ is used in the context in which reporters, politicians, or ordinary citizens meet defectors for the first time and learn something new about North Korea or defectors’ situations. The interaction leads to the South Korean person’s mission to stand for the cause in supporting the defectors. The verb ‘to see’ also operates under a similar theme, with a function that is more figurative than literal. The verbs ‘to see’ and ‘to think’ are followed by the prevalent images of defectors as refugees, illegal immigrants, misfits, economic migrants, and criminals. Then the two verbs are followed by the comments that challenge these prejudiced views and suggest changes to the South Korean society’s perspective on defectors.

In sum, the two corpora define defectors, whether grammatical subjects or objects, as receivers from South Koreans and as providers of information. Both corpora describe South Koreans as the helpers and supporters of defectors, while the defectors’ online media corpus recounts receiving negative treatments. In addition, both corpora describe defectors as providers of information and influencers of South Koreans’ activism. The two perhaps paradoxical constructions lead to a question on what makes the defectors’ role differ. What types of defectors are seen as weak and needing help and support, and what types of defectors are seen as powerful speakers enlightening and moving South Koreans? In order to answer this question, this research now examines the compound noun usage.
Compound nouns

In Korean, two or more nouns that frequently accompany each other are often used as compound nouns. Although each noun is still used independently, the resulting compound noun functions as one nominal unit. Thus, analyzing compound nouns can be a method of identifying the noun collocates that accompany the key words. Tables 4.7 and 4.8 are lists of nouns that frequently form compound nouns with the words thalpwukca and thalpwuk.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>South Korean news media</th>
<th># (%)</th>
<th>Defectors’ online media</th>
<th># (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>organization (tanchey)</td>
<td>134 (35.17)</td>
<td>association (tongchilloy)</td>
<td>7 (20.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>upper class (kowuy)</td>
<td>62 (16.27)</td>
<td>newspaper (sinmun)</td>
<td>5 (14.29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>association (tongchilloy)</td>
<td>49 (12.86)</td>
<td>support (ciwon)</td>
<td>4 (11.43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>problem (mwunce)</td>
<td>30 (7.87)</td>
<td>(us (wuli))</td>
<td>3 (8.57)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>support (ciwon)</td>
<td>22 (5.77)</td>
<td>North Korea (pwukhan)</td>
<td>3 (8.57)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>abducted (nappwuk)</td>
<td>14 (3.67)</td>
<td>origin (cwulsin)</td>
<td>2 (5.71)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>coalition (yenhap)</td>
<td>11 (2.89)</td>
<td>problem (mwunce)</td>
<td>2 (5.71)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>refugee (nanmin)</td>
<td>9 (2.36)</td>
<td>(secret agent (kanchepe))</td>
<td>2 (5.71)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>multiculture (tamwunhwa)</td>
<td>4 (1.05)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>policy (cengchayk)</td>
<td>4 (1.05)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>381 (100)</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>35 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.7 Frequent nouns forming compound nouns with thalpwukca (defector)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>South Korean news media</th>
<th># (%)</th>
<th>Defectors’ online media</th>
<th># (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>woman (yeseng)</td>
<td>107 (18.35)</td>
<td>woman (yeseng)</td>
<td>8 (22.86)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>migrant (icwuca)</td>
<td>81 (13.89)</td>
<td>youth (chengsonyen)</td>
<td>8 (22.86)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>refugee (nanmin)</td>
<td>62 (10.63)</td>
<td>fellow (tonglyo)</td>
<td>4 (11.43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>youth (chengsonyen)</td>
<td>47 (8.06)</td>
<td>(society (sahoy))</td>
<td>3 (8.57)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>support (ciwon)</td>
<td>39 (6.69)</td>
<td>(scientist (kwahakca))</td>
<td>3 (8.57)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organization (tanchey)</td>
<td>36 (6.17)</td>
<td>process (kwaceng)</td>
<td>2 (5.71)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>process (kwaceng)</td>
<td>19 (3.26)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>orphan (koa)</td>
<td>16 (2.74)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>re (cay)</td>
<td>14 (2.40)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fellow (tonglyo)</td>
<td>11 (1.89)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>583 (100)</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>35 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.8 Frequent nouns forming compound nouns with thalpwuk (defection)
Two observations can be made from the tables above. First, the defectors’ online media corpus has much less occurrences of compound nouns. There were less than ten nouns that occur more than once. Several nouns with rare instances (two or three times) are by the same speaker in the same text and not reflective of a widespread language use. The nouns ‘us’ and ‘secret agent’ in Table 4.7 and ‘society’ and ‘scientist’ in Table 4.8, each marked by the parentheses, may be disregarded for this reason. The disparate noun usage is in part caused by the compound nouns’ function as identification tags. Most compound nouns are used to introduce individual defectors as part of a certain category, such as ‘abducted’ or ‘refugee/migrant’, or to discuss a group of defectors, such as ‘organization’, ‘association’, and ‘coalition’. Consequently, these compound nouns are used to reference someone else and are thus more often employed in the South Korean representations of defectors rather than in the defectors’ self-representations.

Secondly, the compound nouns using the words thalpwukca and thalpwuk are similar across the two corpora. As highlighted in the tables above, the frequent nouns in the South Korean news media corpus reappear in the defectors’ online media corpus list, with a similar frequency ranking. Among the compound nouns using the word thalpwukca, nouns such as ‘association’, ‘support’, and ‘problem’ are frequently used. Among the compound nouns using the word thalpwuk, nouns such as ‘woman’, ‘youth’, ‘fellow’, and ‘process’ are common. Such frequent nouns also demonstrate the prevalence of identification that accompanies the words thalpwukca and thalpwuk. ‘Association’ is used to address defectors as a collective group. On the other hand, ‘woman’ and ‘youth’ are used to identify defectors with certain qualities.

Since the words thalpwukca and thalpwuk form compound nouns with identification tags, it is important to understand the demographic characteristics of defectors in analyzing the compound nouns. Thalpwukca is often joined with words about socioeconomic status
such as ‘upper class’, ‘refugee’, and ‘origin’. *Thalpwuk* is more often used with words about personal identifiers, such as ‘woman’, ‘youth’, and ‘orphan’. Other such words include ‘student’, ‘college student’, and ‘girl’. The two types of compound nouns confer different identities to the defector being mentioned; ‘upper class defector’ refers to a person of power who can be the spokesperson of North Korea and other defectors, while ‘woman defector’ is a person in need, more disadvantaged and marginalized than other defectors.

Such intragroup identities influence the contexts in which the compound nouns appear. As emphasized through Figure 4.5, the compound noun ‘upper class defector’ is predominantly followed by the quotation marks. Within the quotation marks, the upper class defectors provide the ‘insider’ comments regarding the military and political situations in North Korea. Similarly, the compound noun ‘upper class defector’ is often associated with the verbs ‘to say’ and ‘to witness’ that have been discussed in the verb collocate study. The South Korean news media corpus frequently uses such verbs because it has higher reliance on upper class defectors as interviewees and sources of information than does the defectors’ online media corpus. Upper class defectors, therefore, are associated with the military and political issues between the two Koreas.

![Figure 4.5 Contextual information of ‘upper class defector’](image-url)
On the other hand, ‘defector woman’ is the most common intragroup identity in the compound noun use of *thalpwuk*. The contexts of the phrase demonstrate two gendered assumptions illustrated in Figure 4.6. The first assumption is the emphasis on the sexuality of female defectors. Throughout these articles, sexual abuse and trafficking are depicted as the common experience of female defectors during defection, and prostitution and sex work as the means with which many female defectors make their living. Often, the women are seen to have been allured into the illicit activities because of their difficulties in adjusting to the South Korean society. The second gendered assumption rests on female defectors’ dependence, especially on male. Many female defectors are accompanied by their husbands or children. They are discussed as incapable or too weak to stand as witnesses in public. Their place is in the private, with the family.

The ‘upper class’ and ‘woman’ tags denote specific identities within the labeling as ‘defector’. Such intragroup identities shape the contexts in which defectors are discussed. ‘Upper class defectors’ have power and provide political and military information, while ‘women defectors’ are weak and must be supported so that they are not sexually exploited. The compound noun usage supports the existence and significance of intragroup identities in defector representation.
Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to observe the differences between the mainstream media and the alternative, self portrayal of defectors. Thus, I analyzed the two corpora through quantitative approach using frequency list and contextual information.

According to the frequency list, the South Korean news media corpus has a political emphasis on defector narratives, describing defectors as topics of political and diplomatic challenges, potential secret agents, and consequently those who must be trained and adapted. This attitude is reflected in the contextual information, which shows that the South Korean news media corpus represents defectors in terms of the numerical or physical details or the information they can provide on North Korea. On the other hand, the defectors’ online media corpus has an economic and social focus in the frequency list, describing defectors’ efforts in becoming meaningful members of the South Korean society. The two causes for their hard work are to bring their family members from North Korea and to give back to the South Korean society that has supported them. The contextual information aligns with the finding through the construction of defectors as receivers from South Koreans.

The unique cases of the collective label ‘we’ and the sectional labels within the defector group demonstrate the importance of labeling in defector narratives. The South Korean news media corpus requires defectors to adapt first in order to become part of ‘we’, while the defectors’ online media corpus claims to have achieved the collective title which then leads them to work hard and contribute. Yet, in both corpora, the intragroup identity of defectors as either ‘upper class’ or ‘women’ affect the way they are discussed. Thus, the defector narratives are influenced both by the different perspectives of the corpora and by the different identities of the individual defectors.
PART II.

A Conceptual Model for Understanding
Defector Narratives
V. Literature: Defectors in popular culture

The first part of this research analyzed South Korean public discourse on defectors, with examples drawn from mainstream news and alternative online sources. In order to examine how the public discourse permeates people’s everyday lives, the second part now turns to popular culture. According to Shepherd, popular culture creates both the stories “about the world and our place in it” and the social norms that are “(re)produced in and through the stories” (Shepherd 2012, p.3). Therefore, popular culture serves as a powerful tool of both understanding and influencing people’s assumptions and attitudes. This belief in the significance of popular culture in social science research forms the basis of the second part of the research.

Defectors, however, have been absent from popular culture until the 21st century. According to Song, popular culture has avoided depicting defectors for fear of being looked away by the consumers. Song attributes such consumer behavior to apathy and detachment on the defector issue in general (Song 2009). Yet, the trend has been changing since the success of the television shows and films about defectors that were produced in the 2000s. Therefore, it has become important to analyze how defectors have emerged and are represented in popular culture. Following this history of defector representation, this research identifies television shows and films as examples of popular culture, because they provide the largest and the most accessible data amidst the rarity of popular culture defector narratives.

Television shows and films are unique as research data, especially compared to news and online sources. The first difference is in the method of communication. News and online sources are written media, recorded and shared in writing. Even the television news reports in this research are published online as texts, from which the anchors and reporters read. Consequently, data from news and online sources has been collected through an online search
of written texts. Yet, television shows and films are spoken and performed media. Although they may originally be based on written scenarios or scripts, they add interpretive and visual representations. Thus, data from television shows and films has been annotated with intonation, body language, and non-linguistic signifiers such as images and icons, in line with Shepherd’s methodology of popular culture analysis (Shepherd 1992, p.9).

The second difference is in the setting of communication. News and online sources are told by an individual speaker. Although they may quote other people, the quotes are only used as supporting evidence to the speaker’s underlying claim. Thus, parts of texts can be used to identify the tone and purpose of an entire text. However, television shows and films involve different actors in interaction and conversation. A single character cannot carry on the show without the surrounding characters. Even a single sentence becomes meaningful only in the context of the specific situation, preceding questions, and following comments.

The two previous differences arise from the difference in the purpose of communication. News is a formal domain of information for the general public. Online posts analyzed in this research are also formal writings about the defectors’ stories and the gravity of the North Korean human rights issues. As a result, news and online sources in this research employ formal language. However, popular culture is, based on Hall’s definition, the vulgar, the informal, and the popular (Hall 1993). Television shows and films especially use colloquial language that is more familiar to the audience but more muddled grammatically.

With television shows and films being visual, contextual, and colloquial settings of language use, a qualitative approach proves useful in the following analysis. The remaining chapters will thus introduce a conceptual model for understanding defector narratives and explore defector narratives in popular culture through the model.
VI. Methodology: Conceptual model

Although the findings from Part 1 are meaningful on their own, the purpose of this research is to apply the quantitative results to more comprehensively understand defector narratives. As a way of organizing the previous findings and preparing for the qualitative analysis of Part 2, this chapter introduces the conceptual model for understanding defector narratives, suggested in Figure 6.1.

Figure 6.1 A conceptual model for understanding defector narratives

‘Identity and labeling’ of defectors is the starting point of the qualitative analysis. Then, the three mediating factors of ‘adaptation level’, ‘role in society’, and ‘interaction with South Koreans’ intersect and lead to the final observation regarding ‘media message’. Each of the five themes of understanding defector narratives is derived from the quantitative analysis of Part 1 and leads to the guideline for qualitative analysis provided in Appendix D.

Identity and labeling

Media representation and message are first derived from the identity and labeling of defectors in the particular representation. Contextual information from Part 1 reveals that defectors are often defined in terms of their intragroup identities such as ‘woman’ and ‘upper
class’. Thus, I note defectors’ personal details such as name, age, gender, place of birth, social
class, family relations, and defection history. Frequency list from Part 1, on the other hand,
introduces the South Korean news media’s concept of ‘defector’ and ‘North Korean resident’
as interchangeable identities. Thus, I observe popular culture’s labeling of defectors in two
steps. First, I record all instances in which defectors are called by pronouns, nicknames, and
adjective descriptions other than their names. Then, I identify whether defectors are labeled
as opposing categories to South Koreans. The specific identity and labeling of defectors
influence the three mediating factors that follow.

Adaptation level

Frequency list of the South Korean news media corpus demonstrates that the
perceived level of adaptation of a defector affects the media’s attitude toward the defector.
When a defector is proven to have high level of adaptation, the defector evolves from being a
‘defector’ to a ‘former defector’ and becomes part of the South Korean ‘we’; when a defector
is involved in criminal, sexual, or drug-related deviant behaviors, the behaviors are explained
through the defector’s difficulty in adjusting to a new life.

Perceived level of adaptation may be supported either explicitly or implicitly. An
explicit claim of adaptation is defectors’ self-identification, whether as South Koreans, North
Koreans, both, or neither.

An implicit evidence of adaptation is defectors’ language use, based on Skutnabb-
Kangas and Philipson’s theory of linguistic human rights (Skutnabb-Kangas & Philipson
1994). According to these authors, majority groups have negative perceptions about minority
language because of the threat it poses to the unity of the nation-state. The majority groups’
perceptions influence unequal distribution of power and resources based on linguistic and
ethnic lines, and eventually compel the minority groups to assimilate into the majority
language. Similar circumstances affect defectors. In the defectors’ online media corpus, some defectors describe their experiences of being refused employment or enrollment in schools merely because of their linguistic markers. Even more defectors share their efforts to speak like South Koreans in order to be like South Koreans. Thus, the degree to which a defector demonstrates traces of the North Korean dialect is significant under this theme.

Role in society

Frequency list of the defectors’ online media corpus, on the other hand, emphasizes defectors’ role in society. Several words involve education and work, with which defectors focus on proving their effort, worth, and contribution as legitimate and meaningful members of the society. Thus, from defectors’ point of view, the important aspect of their life in South Korea is not how they adapt to the differences but how they perform in society. Since the defectors’ online media corpus emphasizes education and work, I pay attention to defectors’ occupations in South Korea as a meaningful measure of their role in society. For a systematic identification of different occupations, I incorporate the International Standard Classification of Occupations by the International Labour Organization and add the categories of unemployment and student.

Special attention must be paid to the changes in the occupation, as some defectors may move from one category to another over the course of the narrative. Especially those involved in elementary occupations often have multiple jobs at multiple points of the media portrayal. In addition, I observe the degree of significance that defectors’ work plays in the overall narrative. Some may only briefly mention the occupation, while others may be depicted mostly in their work place or with their colleagues.
Interaction with South Koreans

Contextual information of verb usage supports the value of understanding the interaction between defectors and South Koreans. Verbs frequently used in the South Korean news media and the defectors’ online media corpora establish South Koreans as the helpers or savers of defectors. The South Korean news media corpus often depicts South Koreans meeting and talking to the defectors for the first time and beginning to advocate for their cause. The defectors’ online media corpus often mentions South Korean friends or lovers as significant parts of defectors’ lives. Such interpersonal situations and underlying power dynamics have an important implication to defectors’ experiences. Thus, the different situations in which defectors encounter South Koreans also plays a significant role.

Media message

Media message is the endpoint of this research that connects the three mediating factors explored previously. It may be either explicitly argued by the media producers or implicitly conveyed through the attitudes of the South Korean characters that appear with defectors. Due to the absence of previous literature on media’s assumption, attitude, and message regarding defectors, I apply the concepts from the literature on South Korean people’s attitude toward defectors. The four categories of emotion defined in the study by Choi and Kim are tolerance/acceptance, problem/criticism, vigilance/suspicion, and sympathy/rescue (Choi & Kim 2013, p.203). Using the four emotional categories and the four preceding themes of the conceptual model, the qualitative analysis concludes with an analysis of the media message.
VII. A window on North Korea, a blurred identity, or a dramatic tool?

With the significance of popular culture discussed in Chapter 5 and the conceptual model introduced in Chapter 6, this chapter now explores the qualitative analysis of defector narratives in South Korean popular culture. Each of the total 50 defectors, 17 from reality television shows, 16 from movies, and 17 from television drama series, are recorded and compared using a guideline in Appendix D. The three media forms incorporate different defectors into different environments which lead to different media messages. This chapter first discusses the basic distribution of demographic traits and personal backgrounds of each defector before exploring individual media forms in depth.

**Demographic distribution**

The demographic distribution of defectors is crucial to understanding the media’s perspective and attitude toward defectors. Defectors in popular culture are mostly fictional characters created according to the media producers’ pre-existing conceptions of defectors. Even in the reality television shows which feature actual defectors, media producers have specific purposes in mind while selecting the defectors and editing their appearances. The demographic details of the defectors directly correspond to the tones of the media form and the underlying assumptions about defectors. Therefore, it is useful to note the gender and age composition of the defectors together with their socioeconomic, geographic, and familial backgrounds.

Gender distribution of the total fifty defectors across all media is fairly equal with 23 male and 27 female defectors. However, that of each media form differs significantly. The seventeen defectors in the reality television shows are entirely women and children. One show features eleven women defectors, mostly in their twenties, and another features six
children defectors (four male and two female), whose average age is 13.5 years old. By contrast, the five main character defectors in the movies are all men in their late teens to their thirties. In fact, ten out of a total sixteen defectors in the movies are male. The remaining six female defectors are family members, lovers, or barmaids related to the male defectors. No one in the movies is under 18 years old. In the television drama series, the distinction is less clear as the defectors are both male and female, young and old, and main and minor characters. Out of the seventeen defectors in the television drama series, nine are male, eight are female, and five among them are children (four male and one female).

The distinct gender and age composition of the defectors is also combined with their different socioeconomic status. In the reality television shows, many women and children defectors come from poor, lower social class families with lack of food and opportunities. The select few who come from a higher social class had all been involved in cultural occupations, such as singers, musicians, and dancers. In the movies, four out of five main character defectors come from elite background. The one exception is a male defector shown to lack access to medicine and food, thus having lower socioeconomic status. Among the other four, two had received trainings as secret agents, one was a high profile politician, and one came from a wealthy family. Defectors in the television drama series rarely describe their socioeconomic status in North Korea. Even among the ones that do provide the information, there is not a general trend of certain socioeconomic status.

The geographic background aligns with the socioeconomic status. Since the seventeen defectors shown in the reality television shows are all actual defectors, they represent a wide variety of geographic origins. There are two defectors from Pyongyang, the capital of North Korea, whom the show describes as coming from the ‘top one percent’ status precisely because they lived in Pyongyang. In the movies, almost all defectors come from Pyongyang. Four out of five main character defectors in the movies spent most of their times
in Pyongyang before defection. The same background applies to the families and lovers of those defectors. The one exception is the same one as discussed in socioeconomic status, who comes from Musan, in the Northern Hamkyung province. Musan is right across the Tumen River from China, and thus there actually are many defectors from the region. Also as in socioeconomic status, the specific hometowns are often not mentioned in the television drama series. Out of the seventeen defectors, six talk about their hometowns, three from Musan and three from Pyongyang.

Most defectors across media settings share the pain of having at least one member of a family back in North Korea. While the children defectors in one reality television show generally followed their mother through defection, three of them talk about grandparents in North Korea as their main cause of guilt and sorrow. Many women defectors in another reality television show share the story of defecting alone, including one who left her parents and younger sister. In the movies, nine out of fourteen defectors have a family member or a lover back in North Korea. Among the five main male defectors, two left a wife and a child, two left a lover, and one left a younger sister. Reuniting with these lost ones becomes the main driver of the movies’ plot. In the television drama series, ten defectors are known to have left someone behind in North Korea. They work multiple jobs and hire brokers to bring the lost ones to South Korea.

Because the characteristics and backgrounds of the defectors represented in each media form are so vastly different, it is nearly impossible to derive a single model of defector narratives. The reality television shows, movies, and television drama series are created with different motivations and place the defectors under different lights. Therefore, with the demographic distribution as the vantage point and the conceptual model as the tool of analysis, the following sections will discuss each of the media forms in order to identify their defector narratives.
**Reality television shows**

The two reality television shows on defectors are *Man’s Qualification* and *Star Friend*. *Man’s Qualification* was a Sunday evening show that lasted from March 2009 to April 2013. Throughout the total of 205 episodes, a group of six male celebrities was given 101 bucket-list-type tasks in order to prove to ‘be a man’. The projects ranged anywhere from running a half marathon to adopting abandoned dogs. The specific task named ‘meeting North Korean women’ was aired in August 2012. The episodes involved a talk show with ten young women defectors and one mother of three of the young defectors.

*Star Friend* was a two-episode pilot show that was introduced during the Lunar New Year holidays of 2014. The purpose of the show was to create ‘a reunification school’ in which four South Korean children celebrities would interact with six children defectors. The ten children met in a classroom to get to know each other and ask questions, and then went on ‘a friendship camp’ along with three South Korean celebrities as the ‘teachers’. Although there have been discussions on making this show regular, there have not been any subsequent reality television shows on defectors.

Figure 7.1 outlines defector narratives in the reality television shows.

Figure 7.1 Model of defector narratives in the reality television shows

The defectors featured in the reality television shows are women and children from low socioeconomic
status, labeled and framed by the reality television shows as ‘North Koreans’ as opposed to ‘defectors’ or ‘South Koreans’. Based on the labeling, the reality television shows focus on gaining insight into North Korea. Consequently, the defectors’ experiences of adaptation, social contribution, and interaction in South Korea are all rarely mentioned. Even when briefly mentioned, the defectors are shown to be tied to the North Korean culture and have difficulty interacting with South Koreans. Thus, the reality television shows feature defectors in order to facilitate understanding about North Korea and bring cultural reunification. The South Korean celebrities exhibit innocent curiosity regarding the secretive North Korea and strong mission to achieve reunification through interpersonal understanding.

The defectors’ identities as North Korean women and children affect the way they are shown in the media forms. In *Man’s Qualification*, the talk show setting creates a forum in which the South Korean male celebrities are the ones asking the questions and the women defectors are the ones offering insights into North Korea, however sexist and condescending the questions may be. The atmosphere in *Star Friend* claims to create a more interactive conversation between the celebrities and the defectors, since the show was created to introduce new friends for the two lonely groups of children, one from South Korea and one from North Korea. Even then, the defectors are the ones who are bombarded with questions often assuming North Korea’s inferiority. One defector even complains that the conversation they were having resembled ‘the National Intelligence Service investigation’. Yet, unlike the investigation aimed to understand the individual defectors’ identities and motivations for defection, the questions asked in the reality television shows target general information about North Korea, such as ‘what do North Koreans think about South Korea?’, ‘do you really have a nuclear weapon?’, ‘would I be popular in North Korea?’.

Because the defectors in the reality television shows are largely seen as the sources of valuable information about North Korea, they are more often called ‘North Koreans’ than
‘defectors’ or ‘South Koreans’, which they legally are. As an illustration, Table 7.1 demonstrates the labels used in Star Friend.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Label</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collective</td>
<td>youth defectors, North Korean friends, defector friends, defector children, unique friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wonhyuk L.</td>
<td>a North Korean boy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eunbyeol W.</td>
<td>the sensitive one, the cold one, the scary one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dongmin K.</td>
<td>a real man of North Korea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Il K.</td>
<td>a defector representative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jinhyuk B.</td>
<td>the brave one, our kid, a North Korean kid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soonmi C.</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.1 Labels of children defectors in the reality television show

The labeling as ‘North Koreans’ is juxtaposed to being ‘South Korean’, as mutually exclusive categories of identification. For example, ‘North Korean boy’ is used with ‘South Korean girl’, when Wonhyuk falls in love with a young South Korean actress. A potato peeling competition between Soonmi and one of the celebrities is dubbed ‘South-North Korean potato peeling competition’. Similar labeling is used in Man’s Qualification, when a South Korean comedian remarks ‘I realized that whether North Korean women or women in South Korea, they are all talkative’. By ‘North Korean women’ he refers to the defectors in the show, implying that they are not part of the category called ‘women in South Korea’. Throughout the show, Man’s Qualification refers to the defectors as ‘North Korean women’, ‘North Korean beauty’, and ‘North Korean female’. The labels effectively separate the defectors from being either ‘South Koreans’ (identity) or ‘in South Korea’ (belonging) and place the focus on the past experiences of the defectors as ‘North Koreans’.

With the eyes set on the past, the two shows do not discuss the defectors’ current experiences of adapting to South Korea. The majority of the conversation is directed towards understanding North Korea, which does not allow the defectors to talk about their lives after crossing the border. Thus, the defectors’ language use provides a useful insight to their level
of adaptation. In *Star Friend*, all children defectors use the North Korean dialect, or at least have a distinguishable trace of it. In *Man’s Qualification*, four out of the eleven female defectors use North Korean dialect. Although small in number, they provide explicit comments about their language use. The following example is a dialogue between two South Korean comedians, Joonho and Kookjin, and two defector women, Sunghee and Seohee, discussing their thoughts about the North Korean dialect.

Joonho K.: But you don’t speak in North Korean. What we know as North Korean is ‘(North Korean dialect) What are you doing?’
Sunghee M.: (North Korean dialect) Oh, we don’t speak that way.
Kookjin K.: Are we exaggerating?
Seohee H.: It sounds a bit foolish.
Kookjin K.: Ah, really? Can you show me the actual dialect?
Seohee H.: Well, Seoyoong came most recently but sounds the most like a Seoul person.
Kookjin K.: I know. I think Sunghee has the most trace of the dialect.
Sunghee M.: (North Korean dialect) Well, language used in Pyongyang is not necessarily a dialect.

Indeed, language used in Pyongyang is the standard language in North Korea. Yet, the conversation above is cut off to a new scene right after Sunghee’s sentence and she is prevented from explaining her argument. Throughout the show, Sunghee exhibits strong linguistic ties to North Korea. She defines her language as non-dialect based on the North Korean standard. She also does not actively practice or try to change her accents. This behavior, shared by all defectors in the reality television shows that speak with the North Korean dialect, will be a major contrast to the defectors in the television drama series.

Naturally following the absence of a discussion on the defectors’ adaptation to the South Korean society, the defectors’ role in society is also almost never discussed. Out of the seventeen defectors from the two shows, the five that engage in paid work are all professionals (three accountants and two performers), one is retired, and the remaining eleven are all students. Six children defectors attend public schools and five women defectors are enrolled in universities. However, their occupations are only briefly mentioned in self introductions. Afterwards, the one sentence about being an accountant leads to the
conversation on North Korea’s tax systems, and the one sentence about majoring in theatre in a university leads to the conversation on North Korea’s theatre and comedy.

Jinok K.: My name is Jinok K., and I’m a senior at Choongang University majoring in theatre.
Taewon K.: Where’s your hometown?
Jinok K.: I’m from Chongjin, Northern Hamkyung province.
Junho K.: Were you an actress in North Korea as well?
Jinok K.: No, I had a lot of interest in culture and sports…
Junho K.: North Korean comedy is all comic talk, right?
Youngshim P.: It’s just one person playing the male role, the female role, the child.

Just as in this brief dialogue, neither show offers any extended discussion about the defectors’ work or education experience in South Korea.

The defectors are also seen to have no or limited interaction with South Koreans. *Star Friend* begins with the children defectors’ comments about their lack of social interaction with the peers.

Soonmi C.: The most difficult thing would probably be friendship. We have nothing to talk about.

Soonmi’s confession is described as the motivation behind the program, which attempts to initiate friendship between South Korean celebrities and defector children. This attempt, however, is met with tension and misunderstanding between the two groups of children. The tension between a defector girl and the South Korean celebrities form the major part of the show. During the question and answer session between the two groups of children, Eunbyeol expresses distress. The following example is from the dialogue between Enbyeol and the South Korean celebrities.

Caption: But! The South and North Korean friends are upset because of the unexpected misunderstandings…
Eunbyeol W.: The fact that I defected is not the best thing to talk about, isn’t it?
Sangwoo C.: I can’t look at you in the eyes. I’m just, you’re scary.

*Man’s Qualification* also introduces one woman defector, Seohee, as ‘a North Korean woman in love with a South Korean man’. While talking about the relationship between Seohee and her South Korean boyfriend, Seohee discusses obstacles to the relationship including her
lover’s suspicion and his friends’ inconsiderate remarks.

Seohee H.: He said his colleagues told him to be careful at night, if we get married. So I asked, why? Then ah, she might cut your throat with a knife if you get in a fight. I think people see me as a scary secret agent if I say that I’m a North Korean… When I first met my boyfriend and said I’m from North Korea, from Pyongyang, he said ’ah, I see,’ and was very calm on the outside, but he secretly investigated my background. He thought I might have purposefully approached him because I was a secret agent…

Both reality television shows establish that interaction between defectors and South Koreans is nonexistent, or to the very least difficult, in real life. Then they claim to promote a space of interaction.

Yet, whether the space is actually interactive is a matter of separate discussion. To that end, it is important to look at the reality television shows’ message, summarized by the main South Korean celebrities’ comments given in the final episodes. The first quote below is from *Man’s Qualification* and the second quote is from *Star Friend*.

Kyoungkyu L.: As a man’s qualification, we need to know the place called North Korea. Caption: Reunification will come nearer when we start understanding each other!

…

Kyoungkyu L.: We need to know about North Korean women. Reunification comes when we know and understand each other.

Sonha Y.: They are only ten children in total but seeing them get along so well I thought that reunification really depends on our minds, and that I hope a day comes quickly when more people can get closer.

Both comments above call for more understanding on North Korea, on the part of the South Koreans for the purpose of reunification. Throughout the process, the defectors represent North Korea. Their interactions and insights lead to the alleviation of the clashes and uncomfortable feelings that exist between North and South Koreans. Consequently, the understanding asked of South Koreans is based not on the defectors’ unique status as defectors, minorities, or migrants in South Korea but on their unchangeable identity as North Koreans.

Combining the five themes of understanding, the reality television shows represent
the defectors as windows on North Korea. All defectors in the reality television shows are women and children who are identified as North Koreans and as the less fortunate than the South Koreans in the shows. In fact, the defectors’ adaptation level, role in society, and social interaction are rarely mentioned and the defectors are still seen to be closely tied to the North Korean society and culture. Thus, in the reality television shows, an understanding of the defectors depends on their identity as North Koreans; the shows claim that South Koreans must understand North Korea through the defectors to prepare for reunification. The defectors do not take agency in the reality television shows. They merely respond to the South Koreans’ requests and questions, and become causes for the South Koreans to take action. Such portrayal reinforces South Korean people’s perception of defectors as inferior, and is put in contrast to the elite defectors represented in the movies.

**Movies**

Despite the concern of being a box office failure, there has been a steady supply of movies about defectors in the past decade, all of them featuring defectors as main characters. The first, *South of the Border*, was released in 2006. It follows the story of a wealthy defector who had to leave his lover behind in North Korea and defect with his family. After years pass and he gets married to a South Korean woman, his lover defects from North Korea. He is torn between the person whom he had loved in North Korea and the one whom he now loves in South Korea. Soon after this first defector movie but in a completely different genre, *The Crossing* was released in 2008. Based on a true story, it follows a poor defector who, while in Northern China to get medicine for his wife’s tuberculosis, accidentally enters the South Korean embassy. He desperately wants to return to North Korea but is sent to South Korea; he never feels at home in South Korea but cannot go back. He hires a broker to bring his family to South Korea, but his wife is already dead and his son also dies on the way.
With popular culture’s increasing interest in defectors, Poongsan followed in 2011. Poongsan is a mysterious character that cuts across the demilitarized zone and connects divided families on either side. When asked by the South Korean intelligence agency to bring a high-profile defector’s wife from Pyongyang, he develops feelings towards the woman and gets swirled into the two Koreas’ intelligence schemes. In 2013, two movies The Commitment and The Suspect were released. In The Commitment, a young man in a concentration camp in Yoduk, North Korea, is forced to become a secret agent and fake defector to South Korea, for his sister to receive medical treatment. He is eventually abandoned by the North Korean regime and killed by the South Korean intelligence agency. The Suspect is a reverse story; a secret agent of North Korea is abandoned by the regime and defects to avoid punishment. However, following the murder of a high-profile defector, the South Korean intelligence agency begins to hunt him down on the grounds that he may be a secret agent.

**Figure 7.2** Model of defector narrative in the movies

Figure 7.2 outlines the defector narratives in the movies. Defectors featured in the movies are mostly men from elite and wealthy class with military or political backgrounds. Many of them are related to intelligence schemes and missions. This identity symbolizes the oddity of dividing the two Koreas. How can the manmade demarcation line divide families, emotions, and memories existing on both sides; how can a defector or a secret agent form
new identities in a new land? The question of unclear identity permeates the movies’ defector narratives and thus affects the three mediating factors. The defectors identify themselves as belonging to neither of the two Koreas. They have some, but not stable, role in society. They are also observed with some level of interaction with South Koreans but mostly through support from or fight against the intelligence agency rather than with ordinary citizens. Consequently, the movies reinforce the view that the defectors may be dangerous people. The defectors are seen as physically strong and psychologically unstable. They also have the potential of being secret agents in disguise or criminals on the run, or in general, threats to the society. Yet, the movies add more complications to the story which require the audience to ask questions and be vigilant.

The defectors’ identities as men with suspicious and uncertain allegiance affect their labeling. The five main character defectors in the movies, in contrast to the women and children defectors in the reality television shows, are not referred to as either ‘South Korean’ or ‘North Korean’. Rather, they are more often depicted as those in-between or those outside the two Koreas. Table 7.2 summarizes the labels conferred to the five main character defectors in the movies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Label</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sunho K. (S.of the Border)</td>
<td>an armed secret agent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yongsoo K. (Crossing)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NA (Poongsan)</td>
<td>a refugee man, still attached to that side, that… sir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myounghoon L. (Com’nt)</td>
<td>Yeonbyeon*, cosencok**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dongcheol L. (Suspect)</td>
<td>a defector, a strong suspect, a defector under special care for suspicion of being a secret agent, a target, a defector who came in 2010, a potential suspect as a secret agent, a suspect on the run, a former North Korean special forces, a secret agent taking North Korea’s orders, a dangerous person, a scary person</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Yeonbyeon: a region in Northern China where many ethnic Koreans live and where many poor migrants in South Korea come from

**Cosencok: a term (often derogatory) used to describe the people living in Yeonbyeon; they use dialect similar to that of the defectors
The use of the labels ‘Yeonbyeon’ and ‘cosencok’ is notable from the list. Distancing the defectors’ identity to China, the labels avoid defining the defectors as either a North or a South Korean. Even among the labels that are in the context of the two Koreas, most raise a question about the defectors’ allegiance. Many of them relate to the government and ideology, such as ‘still attached to that side’ and ‘secret agent taking North Korea’s orders’. Others relate to the military, such as ‘armed secret agent’ and ‘former North Korean special forces’, which identify the defectors as national security threats.

Just as the defectors are labeled into ambiguous identities, their self-identification shows a lack of attachment or belonging to either country. None of the five main character defectors are in South Korea based on their choice. In South of the Border, Crossing, Poongsan, and The Suspect, the defectors are ousted by the North Korean regime; in The Commitment, the defector is planted in South Korea by the North Korean regime. All of them describe themselves as abandoned from both sides or belonging to neither side. As a result, several defectors consider the option of fleeing from the two Koreas. The following two quotes are from The Commitment and South of the Border, both spoken by the defectors to their lovers.

Myounghoon L.: Hyein… remember that time? You said you wanted to go to a place where no one knows and live a new life… you asked if I wanted to go with you… Yes… if only that was possible…

Sunho K.: Let’s leave here. Let’s leave South Korea. The United States or China, and if not there, wherever accepts us.

Myounghoon wanted a happy life with his sister and Sunho with his family. Both of them know, from their experiences in South Korea, that their dreams cannot come true anywhere in Korea. Thus, they look for the solution outside the two Koreas. The defector from Poongsan gives an even more explicit speech about his identity.

NA: What are you? North or South? Me? I don’t have such a thing anymore! That’s why I’m so worried and lonely! Because I’m on neither side!
This defector constantly fears that he may be murdered by North Korean agents, and this speech is the rationale behind his fear. The defectors’ language use also proves their weak adaptation level. Out of the sixteen defectors in the movies, eleven always use the North Korean dialect and four use the dialect when they are speaking to other defectors. None are actively practicing or trying to change their accents, just as in the reality television shows.

With the age group of the defectors significantly higher than that in the reality television shows, the defectors shown in the movies are more engaged in paid work than in education. Out of the sixteen defectors, one goes to a public school. Among the twelve who do have paid occupations, one is in managerial (large business) role, six in managerial (small, private-owned business) role, one in professional role, two in machinery occupation, and two in elementary occupation. Most defectors are economically insecure as their works are part-time, unstable, and easily replaceable by others. Especially those in the machinery and elementary occupations (two barmaids, a factory worker, and a driver) are looked down upon by the South Koreans in the movies. In addition, those in other categories of occupation are working in industries specific to North Korea. The defectors in managerial roles are a chairman of a business targeting North Korea and owners of a North Korean restaurant. One in a professional role is an intelligence officer assisting the South Korean agency in identifying North Korean secret agents. Therefore, although the defectors demonstrate more significant role in society than in the reality television shows, their work is still not acknowledged or appreciated much in the media portrayals.

The exclusive nature of the defectors’ social contribution also leads to very weak interaction with South Koreans. Half of the defectors have absolutely no contact with any South Korean person. Among those who do have an interaction, the largest number of them is with the South Korean intelligence agency. The defector in *Poongsan* is protected and provided for by the intelligence agency, which attempts to extract valuable information about
North Korea from him. The two barmaids in the movie are also seen with intelligence officers, who make jokes about the barmaid being secret agents. In both *The Commitment* and *The Suspect*, the intelligence agency is the main enemy of the defectors. Some defectors in the movies do interact with ordinary South Korean citizens. In *South of the Border*, the main character gets married to a South Korean woman. In contrast, the defectors in *The Commitment* and *The Crossing* are depicted as outsiders within the group of South Koreans: in *The Commitment*, through the hostile relationship with some school bullies, and in *The Crossing*, through the factory workers’ criticism, quoted in the following excerpt.

Worker A: What’s up with him?  
Factory owner: He apparently doesn’t watch soccer because it reminds him of his son back in his hometown.  
Worker B: Oh, then I wonder how he crossed the border without that precious son. In the end he came here, abandoning all his family, to eat well and live well by himself…

In all cases, the defectors’ relationship with South Koreans is certainly not the major part of the movies and most defectors either stay aloof or work against the South Korean characters in the movies.

Overall, the movies overwhelmingly depict male defectors who may not be the most trustworthy people. The two most prevalent qualities related to the defectors in the movies are violence and suspicion. Most defectors in the movies are depicted with their physical strength, military training, and exertion of physical and verbal violence. In addition, regarding the suspicion toward defectors, *The Suspect* provides the famous quote that has often been reiterated in the media after the movie release: “defectors are potentially people under suspicion of being secret agents”. Such repeated albeit fictional stories of defectors being potential secret agents or criminals may contribute to South Koreans’ fear or avoidance of defectors. However, defector narratives in the movies reach beyond such simple message and raise some important questions about the mainstream discourse on defectors. An example is a news clip shown in *The Suspect*. 

65
Reporter: Dongcheol J., the suspect on the run, is a former North Korean special force member and is suspected to be a secret agent taking North Korea’s orders even until now. The government warned that Mr. J is a dangerous person with long military training…
Interview: I don’t know… I feel like we might be too receptive of them…
Interview: Why would they let such a scary person live… (sigh) What’s the police doing…

For the audience watching the movie, Dongcheol is clearly an innocent victim of a political scheme. Thus, the audience can detect the misleading and even manipulative use of the broadcast news from the example above. The same mechanism is used in all other movies. Because the defectors are the main characters, the audience sympathizes with them and perceives them as humans, with confusion and suffering of their own. The main characters of South of the Border and Crossing regret defecting. Poongsan shows that even the high-profile defector struggles with fear; The Commitment shows that even the fake defector agonizes over his secret missions; The Suspect shows that even the seemingly dangerous defector can in fact be innocent. The movies’ somewhat incompatible depictions of defectors as dangers and as humans create more vigilance and mystery toward defectors in general.

Combining all five themes, the movies use the defectors as symbols of blurred identity. In contrast to the reality television shows, the movies do not identify the defectors as North Koreans. Instead, most defectors are unclear about their place in the South-North dichotomy. They identify themselves as neither South nor North Koreans, engage in insecure jobs, and constantly face the South Korean intelligence agency that is suspicious of their allegiance. The movies put a human face to the artificial division between the two Koreas; the main characters have loved ones on both sides of the Military Demarcation Line that they cannot choose to be on either side. At the same time, the movies both perpetuate and question the common construction of defectors as national threats. Having witnessed the contrasting identities and narratives of the defectors in the reality television shows and movies, it is now worth examining the television drama series that uses a mix of gender identities and social backgrounds.
**Television drama series**

There are three types of television drama series on defectors. The first type is daily or weekend drama series that target families watching the television together, in which the defectors become a part of the South Korean main characters’ family. The second type is the action/thriller genre, in which the main characters are South Koreans and the defectors are victims of an issue that the main characters are trying to solve. The final type is the romance genre, in which the defectors are the main characters. Because the tones and purposes are so different, I will first examine the labeling in each type separately and then discuss the general model.

**Defectors as family**

There are four television drama series in the first type, which depicts the defectors as part of a family. In *Are We Strangers*, the male defector is a very distant relative of the main family of the drama series. While earning money to bring his parents to South Korea, he stays in the family’s house and eventually gets married to a nurse that works in the family’s hospital. In *Love Needs a Miracle*, the female defector stays in the main character’s house ever since she lost all her settlement fund from a fraud. In *My Love Madame Butterfly*, the female defector stays in the main character’s house while she earns money to bring her mother and boyfriend to South Korea. She eventually gets married to the main character’s brother-in-law. In *Cheer Up Mr. Kim*, the male defector searches for his brother who defected earlier and meanwhile stays in the house where the main character gathers and cares for children without parents. The defector eventually falls in love with the home owner’s granddaughter. With somewhat repetitive storylines, the labels used for these defectors are also mostly analogous.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Label</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Piljae H. (<em>Are We...</em>)</td>
<td>a secret agent, brother compatriot, a funny person, like a foreigner, that man who came from the North, such a person, an orphan, a strange person, a human like us, a South Korean citizen, a conservative man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mimi (<em>Love Needs...</em>)</td>
<td>a dowdy thing, Mimi compatriot, a poor soul, a friend who defected, a fool, a defector girl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kookhee L. (<em>My Love...</em>)</td>
<td>the needy, an admirable thing, bean, my sister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheolyong L. (<em>Cheer...</em>)</td>
<td>cosencok, such person, a kid with a weird accent, this kid from North Korea, such kid, not a South Korean, you bastard, a national money-drainer, a North Korean, a kid who defected, a bastard from I don’t know where, a North Korean buck, you know who, that Cheolyong or Samryong or whatever, a Yeonbyeon person, my son</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.3: Labels of defectors in the television drama series – (1) family formation

A significant proportion of the labels are derogatory terms. Many of these labels come from the defectors’ closest group of people. Piljae from *Are We Strangers* is called ‘a funny person’ and ‘like a foreigner’ by his family members. Mimi from *Love Needs a Miracle* is called ‘a dowdy thing’ by her co-worker. Kookhee from *My Love Madame Butterfly* is called ‘the needy’ by the main character’s mother. Cheolyong from *Cheer Up Mr. Kim* is called ‘a kid with a weird accent’ and rejected housing by the family of the home owner.

The labels suggest the important roles of the defectors in the television drama series. As dowdy and needy people, they become the beneficiaries of the main characters’ unconditional kindness. As people like a foreigner and with weird accent, they exemplify the diversity and the inclusiveness of the main characters’ family. In other words, the defectors appear as part of the main characters’ family in order to demonstrate certain characteristics of the main characters. Because of such roles, all defectors are eventually integrated into the families despite the initial hostile relationships. All of the defectors in the first type of dramas left behind or lost their family members during defection, and thus they create new families in South Korea as their support structure.
Defectors as victims

There are two dramas in the second type, which depicts the defectors as victims. In Poseidon, the main characters are marine police officers. A particular case they deal with throughout the series involves a criminal gang, which turns out to be sponsored by the founder of a defector center. The six defectors shown in Poseidon are all those who greatly respect, and are supported by, the founder. In Three Days, the main characters are body guards of the South Korean President. A particular case they deal with throughout the series involves a national security threat, to which a defector is the witness in support of the main characters. However, the defector is killed as soon as he reveals himself.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Label</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Myeongsik (Poseidon)</td>
<td>a poor kid, a defector kid, saythemin, a victim, a smuggled kid, a North Korean, the disadvantaged, saythemin or something of that sort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myeonghwa (Poseidon)</td>
<td>a poor kid, a defector kid, saythemin, a victim, a smuggled kid, a North Korean, the disadvantaged, saythemin or something of that sort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changgil K. (Poseidon)</td>
<td>that bastard, a boy who left the center without adapting, thalpwukca</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seungchan (Poseidon)</td>
<td>the future of the police, my son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heegon C. (Poseidon)</td>
<td>A secret agent, the kid who came through the tough road to live a new life, my son, a youth defector, a former thalpwukca</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NA (Poseidon)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheolkyu L. (Three Days)</td>
<td>Commander Lee, that person, a secret elite agent acclaimed in North Korea, an illegal defector, a North Korean commander</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.4 Labels of defectors in the television drama series – (2) victims

The second type of the television drama series distinguishes the terms saythemin (settlers to the new land; term suggested in 2005) and thalpwukca (escapees from North Korea). Saythemin is used particularly often in Poseidon, to refer to the two children who were smuggled in a boat. Thus, the term is associated with children, or the ‘poor kid’ and ‘victim’. The defector children are sympathized and cared for by the South Korean main characters. When portrayed as criminals, however, the defectors are referred to as thalpwukca. Yet, even the criminal defectors are seen as victims of discrimination by South Koreans, and thus result in the South Korean main characters’ sympathy and self-reflection.
Defectors as lovers

Two dramas are in the final type that depicts the defectors as lovers. *Cain and Abel* is a love story between a female defector and a man who appears to be a defector. He is actually a South Korean doctor who was sent to Mongolia by his envious brother and lost his memory. Because he enters South Korea and lives for a while as a defector, he is included in this research. The male main character in *Dr. Stranger* also has a complex identity. Born in South Korea, he follows his father, a renowned cardiologist, into North Korea to save Kim Il-Sung’s heart and grows up there as a skilled cardiologist himself. Later he defects to South Korea, where he is reunited with his lover from North Korea, now a North Korean secret agent.

Although neither of the main characters are strictly defectors, they are labeled as defectors both by the screenwriter and other characters, and thus included in this research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Label</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Youngji O. <em>(Cain&amp;Abel)</em></td>
<td><em>thalpwukca, cosencok, saythemín</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choin L. <em>(Cain&amp;Abel)</em></td>
<td>a secret agent, that bastard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoon P. <em>(Dr. Stranger)</em></td>
<td>of North Korean origin, <em>thalpwukca</em>, a communist, a bastard who ran away to live well on his own, a garbage blinded by money, a defector doctor, a stranger, beanpole, water bottle, this guy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaehee S. <em>(Dr. Stranger)</em></td>
<td>your lover, your girlfriend, a secret agent, a North Korean kid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changyi L. <em>(Dr. Stranger)</em></td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NA <em>(Dr. Stranger)</em></td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 7.5* Labels of defectors in the television drama series – (3) lovers

The labels used in this type also include derogatory perspectives. Hoon from *Dr. Stranger* is especially subject to the derogatory labels; he is called ‘water bottle’ because he once delivered water bottles to the hospital, ‘garbage blinded by money’ because he came to work in the hospital, and ‘a bastard who ran away to live well on his own’ because he is a defector, and ‘a communist’ because he is from North Korea. He is ‘a stranger’ in the hospital regardless of his skills and actions. Thus, the derogatory terms used in the third type situate the defectors as misfits who are not supposed to take part in the elite group of South Koreans.
Modeling the three types

Despite the clearly different genres and plotlines, the common thread across all types of television drama series is that the defectors are used and discussed as simply one among many other disadvantaged groups. Such labeling also influences the overall defector narrative model, outlined in Figure 7.3.

\[\text{Figure 7.3 Model of defector narratives in the television drama series}\]

In contrast to the reality television shows, the defectors in the television drama series rarely talk about their lives in North Korea. \textit{Dr. Stranger, Cheer Up Mr. Kim, and Three Days} are the only television drama series in which the defectors mention their time in North Korea. Most defectors are introduced after a considerable amount of time in South Korea and with relatively high adaptation levels. Nine out of the seventeen defectors express self-identification, and all but one as South Koreans. Also in terms of linguistic adaptation, out of the fourteen defectors that speak in the dramas, six do not have any accent and three actively practice ‘speaking like a South Korean’.

The defectors in the television drama series also have relatively significant role in society. Out of the seventeen defectors, three are in managerial (small, private-owned business) roles as non-North Korean restaurant owners. Two are in professional roles as doctors in a university hospital. All five of them are, whenever depicted in the drama, in their
workplace or with their colleagues. Five other defectors start from elementary occupations in the beginning of the drama but are promoted as the drama progresses. Piljae from *Are We Strangers* delivers food at first but becomes a certified technician after studying by himself. Mimi from *Love Needs a Miracle* works as an event model but later becomes an actress. Kookhee from *My Love Madame Butterfly* is introduced as a restaurant server but becomes the store manager for a designer brand. Changyi from *Dr. Stranger* does anything from water delivery to cleaning, but becomes the café manager in the end. Even the students in the television drama series are praised for their hard work and ability. The main characters of *Cheer Up Mr. Kim* compliment Cheolyong for receiving scholarship for college, and Seungchan in *Poseidon* is called a valedictorian and ‘a future of the police’.

The defectors’ interaction with South Koreans also plays a major role in the television drama series. Thirteen out of the seventeen defectors have a South Korean supporter. For the first type of the television drama series, the supporters are the ones that provide home and new family for the defectors. Consequently, the defectors are evidences of the main character’s kindness. In the following quotation, a main character of *My Love Madame Butterfly* is praised for her attitude toward a defector.

Kookhee L.: Nabi’s the only one who took me in as a human Kookhee L., without any prejudice on me being a defector, when I just arrived from North Korea and had nothing under the sky.

In the second type of the television drama series, the supporters also provide benefits and protection, but for selfish motivations. In *Three Days*, the supporters are the body guard and the South Korean President, who protect the defector only to prove their own innocence.

Taekyung H.: No, he(the defector)’s alive. He’s alive and in Korea. If you use him, you will be able to do what you want, Mr. President.

The third type of the television drama series highlights the defectors’ romantic relationships as part of a support structure. Five defectors in the television drama series establish romantic relationships with South Koreans. Despite the complications caused by their identities as
defectors, all of them reach a happy ending and build new families.

The three types of interactions demonstrate that the characters do not actually have to be defectors. The defectors self-identify, and are recognized as, South Koreans. Their difficulties come from discrimination based on their perceived incompetence, which can still be achieved if they are from any other marginalized group, such as orphans or the poor. Instead, what matters in the television drama series is that the defectors are the disadvantaged, constantly facing challenges and requiring South Koreans to be the saviors. When the defectors suffer from discrimination, the South Korean main characters fight for the defectors. When the defectors become victims of certain evil South Koreans, the South Korean main characters reveal the illegal activities and rescue the defectors. Lastly, when the defectors are rejected by the families of their South Korean lovers, the lovers resolve the difficulties facing the couple. Miae, the South Korean lover of Piljae from *Are We Strangers*, gives the following speech that summarizes South Koreans’ role as saviors.

Miae S.: I want to get married to Piljae immediately… Piljae needs me with him. That will make him study harder and I want to protect him so that no one can disdain him. There are so many things that Piljae by himself is at a disadvantage… I’m going to be smarter. I’m going to fight instead of Piljae. You understand, right, Miyeon?

With the defectors being the disadvantaged and the South Koreans being the saviors, the television drama series’ use of defectors functions as a dramatic tool. The dramatic tool is used for two purposes: to prove the main characters’ virtue and to create conflicts for the storyline. First, although the defectors in the television drama series demonstrate high adaptation, significant role in society, and active social interactions, they still face several challenges. The South Korean main characters, with unconditional kindness or heroic action, protect and fight for the defectors. Second, the defectors are exposed to difficult relationships or life circumstances because of their identities as defectors. Often central conflicts of the plotline, these difficulties are again resolved by the South Korean main characters.
**Gender and nation in defector narratives**

The three different defector narrative models in the three media forms indicate the lack of a single way of categorizing and stereotyping the defectors in popular culture. Rather, defector narratives are created from various perspectives, seeing the defectors as pitiful economic refugees, dangerous political defectors, or the disadvantaged population to be integrated into the South Korean society. Each of these perspectives is heavily influenced by the individual media form’s and defector’s characteristics.

In this research, I especially focus on the defectors’ identities as a factor causing the different approaches. This research began with a hypothesis that the intragroup identities within the defector group would affect media’s defector narratives. The first part of the research proved the existence and the significance of the intragroup identities such as gender, age, and socioeconomic status of defectors. The identities were incorporated into the starting point of the conceptual model for understanding defector narratives. As a result, the second part of the research returned different models of defector narratives based on the intragroup identities of the defectors featured in each media form.

The defectors in the reality television shows are entirely women and children, lacking power and adaptation. On the other hand, the defectors in the movies are overwhelmingly men, possessing power and threat. The cleavage between the narratives of women and children defectors and those of male defectors supports Enloe’s coinage of the gendered category known as ‘women and children’ (Enloe 1990). According to Enloe, women and children are grouped together into constructions of femininity, as those who are helpless and in need of protection by men.

Across all media forms, women and children defectors are depicted to have come from lower socioeconomic status. All eleven defectors in the reality television shows conform to this assumption. They are all women and children and most of them (except two) are from
low socioeconomic status. Among the nineteen fictional women and children defectors, all except five are from low socioeconomic status. The five exceptions are relatives and friends of the elite male main characters. The women and children defectors are also strongly tied to the North Korean culture. 21 out of the total 35 women and children defectors in all media forms cook North Korean food or perform North Korean music and dance at several points of the media portrayal. Depicted as passive members of the society, the women and children defectors often depend on their male relatives or lovers. Out of the 27 female defectors, twelve are depicted as either married or in love, many of them with South Korean men. All of the eight children defectors are under the protection of South Korean men.

On the other hand, male defectors are depicted to have come from higher socioeconomic status with elite education or training. Thirteen out of fifteen male defectors across all media forms conform to this assumption. Among them, one used to be a political elite, five used to be financially rich, and four underwent special military training in North Korea. Because of these positions of power that these male defectors hold, they are considered to be threats to the South Korean society. As a result, male defectors have hostile relationship with the South Korean intelligence agency. Out of the total fifteen male defectors, nine have relationship with the intelligence agency and all of them are negatively influenced. Despite the dangers and difficulties, the male defectors also perform the role as protectors of their female family members or lovers. Out of the total fifteen male defectors, seven are married to or in love with North Korean women and one has a sister in North Korea. The defectors fight desperately to save their North Korean women from potential danger.

Young’s theory of protective masculinity/subordinate femininity is evident across the defector narratives in popular culture. Based on Young’s definition, male defectors are the masculine protector who “faces the world’s difficulties and dangers in order to shield women from harm” (Young 2003, p.4); in response, female defectors are the feminine subordinate
who “adores her protector and happily defers to his judgment in return for the promise of security that he offers” (Young 2003, p.5). Thus, the basic gender assumption of all media forms associates women and children with weakness, culture, and ‘the protected’ and men with strength, threat, and ‘the protector’.

Yet, the protective relationships, when applied to the defectors in popular culture, reach beyond gender categories. The women and children defectors in popular culture depend on South Korean men for protection. On the other hand, the male defectors in popular culture protect their loved women in North Korea. The male defectors can assume the protecting role because they are in South Korea at the moment, as opposed to their loved women. Thus, although the acting individuals are defectors, the act of protection flows from South Korea to North Korea. This observation suggests simultaneously reinforcing gender and national relationships. South Korea is the masculine protector of defectors who are the feminine subordinate. Also, male defectors are the masculine protectors of the women back in North Korea, the feminine subordinate.

To put in other words, the gendered assumptions extend beyond individual characteristics and to the political power among states and identity groups. Therefore, as Peterson succinctly points out, “identity groups (whether based on race/ethnicity, religion or nationality) that have been most closely associated with (state-centric) political power have also been based on (heterosexist) gender inequality” (Peterson 1999, p.38). The power relationship between South and North Korea is also constructed based on heterosexist gender assumptions; South Korea is seen as more powerful because it is related to masculine that is required to love and protect the feminine.

The concept of gendered states is especially meaningful to the ongoing conflict on the Korean peninsula. For the male defectors, their loved women serve as symbols of the nation that they are strongly attached to and attempts to protect. Under this construction, the
male defectors are what Elshtain calls the ‘just warriors’ (Elshtain 1989). According to Elshtain, the just warriors protect their women and children from the enemy. Out of the thirteen movies and television drama series studied, seven feature defectors as main characters and all of them are based on the heroic story of the male defectors’ efforts to protect ‘their women’. Three of such depictions involve the male defectors’ desperate attempts to bring their lovers to South Korea. In the remaining four, the male defectors simply struggle to save their female family members’ or lovers’ lives. In addition, Elshtain describes that because the purpose of the fight is to protect, not to conquer, the just warriors go to war to die for the cause. Similarly, in popular culture’s defector narratives, the male defector in The Commitment dies, five face near-death situations, and one loses all his money.

Thus, the women also become “what is worth fighting – even dying – for” (Peterson 1999, p.48), or the casus belli, for the male defectors. The women are Elshtain’s ‘beautiful souls’, a counterpart to the ‘just warriors’ (Elshtain 1989). According to the ‘beautiful soul’ narrative, women are the innocent causes and resulting prizes of the war, depicted as “fragile, removed from reality, and in need of the protection provided by men” (Sjoberg 2010, p.55). Thus, some women are depicted in the male defectors’ home, fulfilling the feminine tasks, and others are depicted in the male defectors’ flashback memories, fueling the male defectors’ mission to fight. Yet, no woman is either aware of or involved in the male defectors’ brave battles. The final scene of The Suspect is a great example of the ‘beautiful soul’ narrative. After a deadly battle with the South Korean intelligence agency, the main character finds his five-year-old daughter, exploited at an illegal factory in China. The young girl, not recognizing her father, stares at him for a while and returns to work. The main character runs toward the factory, ready to fight again, and the movie closes.

The defector narratives do not end at the traditional ‘beautiful soul’ narrative. They add another beautiful soul for the male defectors. More painfully, the second beautiful soul
comes from the enemy’s side, which, for the defectors in popular culture, is South Korea. In *South of the Border, The Commitment*, and *Dr. Stranger*, the male main characters are faced with two women, each representing South and North Korea. In these stories, the just warrior does not know for which beautiful soul to fight. Unable to choose one between the two, the romantic dilemma extends to the uncertainty about the defectors’ attachment to either of the two Koreas. The identity confusions of the male defectors in popular culture are often caused by this reason. Also, the symbolic love triangle sometimes leads to actual political or military battles; in *Poongsan*, one female defector causes a proxy war between the two Koreas’ intelligence officers.

The gendered assumptions of popular culture’s defector narratives operate on several layers. On the most basic level, the popular culture narratives establish women and children as the protected and men as the protector. Yet, because the narratives are situated in the geopolitical power relations between South and North Korea, the gendered assumptions are also complicated by state power relations. The defector narratives establish South Korea as the masculine and the protector, while North Korea is the feminine and the protected. As a result, the male defectors in South Korea become the ‘just warriors’ for their ‘beautiful souls’ in North Korea. The battleground, naturally, is the defectors’ lives in South Korea. The different portrayals of female and male defectors underscore the significance of the defectors’ identities in the narratives. Therefore, considering defectors as a monolithic group can only be a naïve understanding. Instead, it is important to acknowledge that the three defector narrative models are derived from different intragroup identities situated in different environments.
Summary

In an attempt to analyze popular culture representations through the conceptual model for understanding defector narratives, this chapter analyzed 50 different defectors that appear in South Korean reality television shows, movies, and television drama series. The analysis generated three defector narrative models from each media form.

In the reality television shows, the women and children defectors from low socioeconomic status are treated as windows on North Korea. Their value in the information they provide about the North Korean society accompanies low adaptation level, minimal role in the South Korean society, and lack of or difficult interaction with South Koreans. In the movies, male defectors from high socioeconomic status become the symbols of blurred boundary. Their uncertain identity accompanies gray zone adaptation level, unstable role in the South Korean society, and some interaction with South Koreans, usually with the intelligence agency. The television drama series feature more varied identities, with defectors playing the role of family members, victims, or lovers. Despite the diverse labels involved, the defectors are commonly used as dramatic tools and demonstrate high adaptation level, significant role in the South Korean society, and frequent interaction with South Koreans.

Although with three distinct models of defector narratives, the three media forms are not without similarities. The one commonality that this research focused on is the narratives’ dependence on the gendered assumptions. The women and children defectors’ role as the protected and the male defectors role as the protectors extend to the power relationship among South Korea, defectors, and North Korea. The gender- and nation-based representations are also explained through the ‘beautiful soul/just warrior’ narrative that uses women as men’s causes and prizes for a battle, and quite literally in this case, for the conflict on the Korean peninsula.
VIII. Closing remarks

This research began with two critiques to the existing literature on defectors. One pointed to the unilateral labeling imposed by the South Korean society and another to the monolithic grouping of defectors. In response, this research was organized so that each of its two parts would address each of the two mentioned critiques.

Part 1 analyzed mutual social labeling by comparing the South Korean news media and the defectors’ online media corpora. It used corpus-based discourse analysis to distinguish disparate themes in the two corpora. It examined the two corpora’s frequency list of all nouns and the contextual information of the terms ‘defector’ and ‘defection’. The quantitative analysis revealed that the two corpora have different focus on representing defectors and different mechanisms of positioning them in society. It also discerned the intragroup identities of defectors, such as socioeconomic status and gender.

Part 2 discussed diverse defector narratives based on the mentioned intragroup identities. It used the conceptual model for understanding defector narratives that has been derived from the findings of Part 1. It surveyed defector narratives in South Korean popular culture, namely reality television shows, movies, and television drama series. The qualitative analysis generated three models of defector narratives based on the different intragroup identities of the featured defectors. It particularly emphasized the impact of gendered assumptions in the media representation of defectors.

Bringing the two parts together and concluding this research, I now retrace the three perspectives that I began this research with – human rights, minority studies, and international conflict – in the reverse order. Each of the perspectives suggests implications of this research and potential avenues for peace and justice on the Korean peninsula.
This research reveals meaningful findings related to the international conflict perspective on defector narratives. Over the past seven decades, the Korean conflict has established exclusive national identity and negative mindsets against ‘the other Korea’. Defector narratives are created under this social construction and with strong power imbalance; South Korea is seen as the masculine protector while North Korea (and its defectors) is seen as the feminine subordinate. The gender- and nation-based discourse has its root in the Korean conflict. Thus, this research proves that broader social structure and history are meaningful to the understanding of defector narratives.

Yet, while South Koreans see themselves as the chivalrous protectors, defectors argue otherwise. Based on their own narratives, defectors are friends of South Koreans and foregoers of reunification, who are unfairly subject to negative treatment. Such contrastive portrayal is reflective of defector narratives’ value in the minority studies perspective. Defectors’ experiences as minorities cannot be discussed with the South Korean narratives alone. Rather, the incompatible worldviews between the South Korean rendition of reality and the defectors’ perception of reality are what causes defectors’ disillusionment. Thus, this research proves the importance of analyzing defector narratives through a comparative lens.

The two worldviews are significant because they dictate different ways in which defectors are represented. Media’s role in labeling individuals relates back to the initial question in the human rights perspective. Concerns about human rights voyeurism toward defectors exist because defectors are considered to be mere topics or interviewees of the South Korean narratives, not independent creators of their own. However, defectors’ self-labeling and individuality found in this research suggest the significance and possibility of seeing defectors as social agents. Thus, this research proves the role of narratives in examining human rights, and defectors’ agency in shaping the narratives.
In the end, this research calls for a more comprehensive perspective on defector narratives. First, it has to be acknowledged that South Korean narratives on defectors are restricted by geopolitical environment and social boundary. Second, defectors must be understood as humans rather than as tools or topics. Without the self-reflection of the South Korean media’s narratives and the recognition of the defectors’ own narratives, there cannot be a just and lasting peace on the Korean peninsula – not to mention in South Korea.

This research is still not without limitations, especially regarding the methodology. Corpus-based discourse analysis poses some limitations to the interpretation of this research. When introducing corpus-based discourse analysis, Baker, Gabrielatos and McEnery acknowledge that “we can make no claim about the ways that readers internalize the repeated sets of associations (the prosodies) in newspapers” (Baker, Gabrielatos & McEnery 2013b, p.275). Thus, repetitive linguistic patterns found in this research are not to be used as proofs of psychological intentions by the media producers or effects on the audience. Rather, this research highlights the strong correlations between social categorization of defectors and language use.

The correlation invites several meaningful avenues of further research. One direction would be to expand the type of media studied. Mass media includes diverse forms, including newspapers, magazines, books, television, radio, and the Internet. This research focused on the sources that had the largest and the most accessible data. However, the South Korean news media and the defectors’ online media corpora serve different purposes with different characteristics. Thus, a comparison between the defectors’ online media and the South Korean online media may be an interesting point of investigation. The media forms that I selected and described are certainly not meant to be an exhaustive list.

Another meaningful study may involve the international media. A major difficulty of this research has been in defining the concept of a defector. The term used throughout this
research, *thalpwukca*, literally means a person who escaped North Korea, often including people who are living in China, Southeast Asia, the United States, and even Europe. For more consistent and relevant analysis, this research restricted the use of *thalpwukca* to those living in South Korea. Yet, there have inevitably been some data that referred to those outside of South Korea as *thalpwukca*. Therefore, such confusion and potential error would best be avoided by expanding the research into the study of the international media’s narratives on defectors in the international setting.

I undertook this research with a belief that there needs to be much more academic attention paid to defectors living in South Korea. They are victims of human rights violations, members of a stigmatized minority, and keys to understanding the Korean conflict. Therefore, I conclude this research, but I expect this to be an introduction to many other efforts to follow in understanding the issues surrounding defectors.
### Appendix A. Complete frequency list

<table>
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<tr>
<th>South Korean news media</th>
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<th>English translation</th>
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<td>당/14/NNG</td>
<td>political party</td>
<td>0.27%</td>
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<tr>
<td>대북/02/NNG</td>
<td>toward N. Korea</td>
<td>0.26%</td>
<td></td>
<td>처음/NNG</td>
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<tr>
<td>군/05/NNG</td>
<td>army</td>
<td>0.24%</td>
<td></td>
<td>지금/03/NNG</td>
<td>now</td>
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<td>정도/11/NNG</td>
<td>degree</td>
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<td></td>
<td>자신/01/NNG</td>
<td>self/confidence</td>
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<td>여성/01/NNG</td>
<td>woman</td>
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<td>동일/02/NNG</td>
<td>reunification</td>
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<tr>
<td>정보/06/NNG</td>
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<td>시간/04/NNG</td>
<td>time</td>
<td>0.24%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0.20%</td>
<td></td>
<td>집/01/NNG</td>
<td>road</td>
<td>0.24%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>support</td>
<td>0.20%</td>
<td></td>
<td>학교/NNG</td>
<td>school</td>
<td>0.23%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0.20%</td>
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<td>밤/01/NNG</td>
<td>night</td>
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<tr>
<td>국제/02/NNG</td>
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<td>이야기/NNG</td>
<td>story</td>
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<tr>
<td>조사/30/NNG</td>
<td>investigation</td>
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<td>삶/NNG</td>
<td>life</td>
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<tr>
<td>상황/02/NNG</td>
<td>situation</td>
<td>0.19%</td>
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<td>세상/01/NNG</td>
<td>world</td>
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<tr>
<td>유엔/NNP</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
<td>0.18%</td>
<td></td>
<td>회사/04/NNG</td>
<td>office</td>
<td>0.20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>간첩/01/NNG</td>
<td>secret agent</td>
<td>0.17%</td>
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<td>나라/01/NNG</td>
<td>country</td>
<td>0.20%</td>
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<td>검찰/02/NNG</td>
<td>prosecutor’s office</td>
<td>0.16%</td>
<td></td>
<td>고향/02/NNG</td>
<td>hometown</td>
<td>0.20%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>핵/NNG</td>
<td>nuclear</td>
<td>0.16%</td>
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<td>공부/01/NNG</td>
<td>study</td>
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</table>

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### Appendix B. Frequent verbs accompanying defectors as subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>South Korean news media</th>
<th># (%)</th>
<th>Defectors’ online media</th>
<th># (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>to say (<em>malhata</em>)</td>
<td>114 (5.11)</td>
<td>to receive (<em>pat.ta</em>)</td>
<td>17 (7.50)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to be (<em>ita</em>)</td>
<td>95 (4.26)</td>
<td>to exist (<em>it.ta</em>)</td>
<td>11 (4.85)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to repatriate (<em>pwuksonghata</em>)</td>
<td>82 (3.68)</td>
<td>to not exist (<em>epta</em>)</td>
<td>7 (3.08)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to come (<em>ota</em>)</td>
<td>78 (3.50)</td>
<td>to come (<em>ota</em>)</td>
<td>7 (3.08)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to increase (<em>nulta</em>)</td>
<td>73 (3.28)</td>
<td>to not be (<em>aniita</em>)</td>
<td>6 (2.64)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to go beyond (<em>nemta</em>)</td>
<td>49 (2.20)</td>
<td>to go (<em>kata</em>)</td>
<td>4 (1.76)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to settle (<em>cengchakhata</em>)</td>
<td>47 (2.11)</td>
<td>to become (<em>toyta</em>)</td>
<td>4 (1.76)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to exist (<em>it.ta</em>)</td>
<td>37 (1.66)</td>
<td>to see (<em>pota</em>)</td>
<td>4 (1.76)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to witness (<em>cung.enhata</em>)</td>
<td>37 (1.66)</td>
<td>to lack (<em>pwucokhata</em>)</td>
<td>4 (1.76)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to enter country (<em>tul.eota</em>)</td>
<td>33 (1.48)</td>
<td>to be caught (<em>caphita</em>)</td>
<td>4 (1.76)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2229 (100)</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1371 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Appendix C. Frequent verbs accompanying defectors as objects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>South Korean news media</th>
<th># (%)</th>
<th>Defectors’ online media</th>
<th># (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To help (<em>topta</em>)</td>
<td>143 (10.43)</td>
<td>To care for (<em>cayngkita</em>)</td>
<td>14 (18.67)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To repatriate (<em>pwuksonghata</em>)</td>
<td>102 (7.44)</td>
<td>To help (<em>topta</em>)</td>
<td>10 (13.34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To take in (<em>patatulita</em>)</td>
<td>77 (5.62)</td>
<td>To meet (<em>mannata</em>)</td>
<td>5 (6.67)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To meet (<em>mannata</em>)</td>
<td>54 (3.94)</td>
<td>To see (<em>pota</em>)</td>
<td>4 (5.34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To care for (<em>cayngkita</em>)</td>
<td>53 (3.87)</td>
<td>To condemn (<em>maytohata</em>)</td>
<td>2 (2.67)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To send (back) (<em>tolyeponayta</em>)</td>
<td>47 (3.43)</td>
<td>To take in (<em>patatulita</em>)</td>
<td>2 (2.67)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To accommodate (<em>swuyonghata</em>)</td>
<td>45 (3.28)</td>
<td>To think of (<em>sayngkkhata</em>)</td>
<td>2 (2.67)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To support (<em>ciwonhata</em>)</td>
<td>43 (3.14)</td>
<td>To hide (<em>swumkita</em>)</td>
<td>2 (2.67)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To protect (<em>pohohata</em>)</td>
<td>27 (1.97)</td>
<td>To arrest (<em>cephohata</em>)</td>
<td>2 (2.67)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To see (<em>pota</em>)</td>
<td>24 (1.75)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1371 (100)</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>75 (100)</td>
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</table>
Appendix D. Guideline for qualitative analysis (Complete one for each defector)

1. Extract all available personal information on the defector. (Include name, age, gender, place of birth, social class, family relations, defection history)

2. How is the defector called by South Koreans, including the producers?

3. Is the defector ever represented in juxtaposition with South Koreans? If so, how?

4. With what group does the defector identify oneself?
   A. A South Korean
   B. A North Korean
   C. Both
   D. Neither

5. In what language does the defector speak?
   A. Common South Korean language
   B. North Korean dialect
   C. Mixed
   D. Other

6. What is the defector’s occupation in South Korea?
   A. Managerial (large business)
   B. Managerial (small, private-owned business)
   C. Professional
   D. Clerical
   E. Sales-service
   F. Plant and machinery operators
   G. Elementary occupations
   H. Unemployed (specify how long)
   I. Student (specify institution, level, and field)

7. How often is the defector shown in the occupation setting?
   A. 75~100% (almost always)
   B. 50~75% (relatively often)
   C. 25~50% (not so often)
   D. 0~25% (rarely, include mentioning of occupation)

8. What is the defector’s relationship with South Koreans?
   A. South Korean family
   B. South Korean lover
   C. South Korean friend
   D. South Korean supporter
   E. South Korean enemy
   F. No relationship

9. What is the media’s overall attitude toward the defector?
   A. Tolerance/Acceptance
   B. Problem/Criticism
   C. Vigilance/Suspicion
   D. Sympathy/Rescue
   E. Other
References


Kwiswunpwukhantongpho pohopep [KPP Law] [Defected Compatriot from North Korea Protection Law] (No 4568) 1993, National Assembly of Republic of Korea.

Kwukkayukongca mith welnamkwiswunca thukpyelwenhobep [KWW Law] [Patriots, Veterans, and Defectors to the South Special Protection Law] (No 2715) 1962, National Assembly of Republic of Korea.


