

Teacher as a Hero in Tragedy: An Analysis of Newspaper Coverage of the Parkland School Shooting and the Sewol Ferry Disaster

Hong, Sookyeong; Kean, Linda

Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version

Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Hong, S., & Kean, L. (2020). Teacher as a Hero in Tragedy: An Analysis of Newspaper Coverage of the Parkland School Shooting and the Sewol Ferry Disaster. *Media Watch*, 11(3), 337-385. <https://doi.org/10.15655/mw/2020/v11i3/202926>

Nutzungsbedingungen:

Dieser Text wird unter einer CC BY-NC-ND Lizenz (Namensnennung-Nicht-kommerziell-Keine Bearbeitung) zur Verfügung gestellt. Nähere Auskünfte zu den CC-Lizenzen finden Sie hier:

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/deed.de>

Terms of use:

This document is made available under a CC BY-NC-ND Licence (Attribution-Non Commercial-NoDerivatives). For more information see:

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0>

Teacher as a Hero in Tragedy: An Analysis of Newspaper Coverage of the Parkland School Shooting and the Sewol Ferry Disaster

Sookyeong Hong¹ and Linda Kean²

¹Hansei University, South Korea

²East Carolina University, North Carolina, USA

Abstract

Unfortunately, tragedies occur all around the world every day. It is perceived by many as particularly devastating when children are the victims of the tragedy. When these events do occur, the media is likely to cover them in part due to the innocence and vulnerability of the victims. In reading media accounts of tragedies involving children, we often hear stories of bravery and heroism on the part of teachers. Teachers' images in the media are not always positive, but their capacity to serve as heroes can be seen in the coverage of these tragic events. Campbell discusses the hero monomyth in terms of separation, initiation, and return. In this vein, we look at the stories of hero teachers before, during, and after two specific incidents in order to conduct a comparative, cross-cultural study. We consider two tragic incidents in two different countries—the sinking of the Sewol ferry in South Korea in 2014 and the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, in 2018. In this research, we look at media accounts of three hero teachers in each incident and make comparisons from a sociocultural perspective through the lens of a hero narrative.

Keywords: Hero, teacher, news, tragedy, Sewol ferry, Florida school shooting, newspaper, media

Introduction

“One child, one teacher, one book, one pen can change the world.” In this quote from Malala Yousafzai's book, “I Am Malala,” the author illustrates the concept of the importance of education held by most societies around the world. The child and teacher are inexorably linked in this quote and the educational process. In South Korea, traditionally, the teacher has been regarded as the king and the father. In the U.S., teaching has been characterized as a profession in which one receives a calling to serve (Dewey, 1987, p.18). In both cultures, teachers are expected to not only share information with students to increase their knowledge in a given subject but also encourage, support, and feed their spirits. In most cases, people believe that the teacher guides students and provides the appropriate education to improve society.

In some extreme cases, teachers have gone beyond these expectations and have been driven to self-sacrifice to save their students. A teacher's courage to save a student often may surpass the altruism or sacrifice we see occur typically in our society. That is, in the moment of the crisis, teachers protect and care for their students through actions that

Correspondence to: Sookyeong Hong, Department of Media and Advertising, Hansei University, Hansei-Ro 30, Gunpo-Si, Gyunggi-Do, Republic of Korea.

are not only courageous but also heroic. Tragic incidents, where children are victims, are socially devastating and cause the public to suffer from sorrow, pain, and despair. To overcome these traumas, to comfort each other, and to elicit public participation to resolve the problems, various factors are needed. Among them, the teacher who plays a hero becomes the source of comfort to the victims, the survivors, the community, and the public.

On a day-to-day basis, the media image of teachers is complex and often mixed. Some negative images (Polat, & Unisen, 2016) in both news and entertainment portrayals often focus on the salacious and scandalous stories that represent a tiny minority of teaching experiences. On a positive side, because the members of this profession feel “called” to the job and have a passion for the profession and are dedicated to their students, the story we often hear in the news media is of teachers going to tremendous lengths to support their students (Krausz, 2002). This is particularly true in the media coverage of the teacher as a hero in tragic events.

This study investigates new media coverage of two tragedies that involved students and teachers—the sinking of the Sewol Ferry in Seoul in 2014 and the school shooting in Parkland, Florida, at Stoneman Douglas High School in 2018. The images created through the media narrative are analyzed within the framework of the social expectations of the teacher and the role of the teacher hero in tragedy in these two cultures.

The Status of Teachers in South Korea and the U.S.

As materialism has dominated and various social values have spread, in many cultures teachers have become less respected. However, in South Korea, teaching is still regarded as the most wanted job since 2007 among middle and high school students, according to the education ministry annual survey (Park, 2017). This results from both the traditional lauded perception of teachers as well as the job stability. Although teaching is sometimes regarded as less exciting as an occupation, students recognize that becoming a teacher requires a high level of professionalism, a lot of studying, and tremendous competence (Kang et al., 2014). According to data from the 2013 Teacher Global Status Index Survey, South Korean teachers are highly respected, and parents attempt to inspire their children to become teachers (Dolton, & Marcenaro-Gutierrez, 2013). To become a teacher in Korea, candidates need to obtain a bachelor’s degree in education or a master’s degree in graduate schools of education. Also, they are required to pass the national teacher qualification exam, which is extremely competitive (You, Kim & Lim, 2017). South Korean teachers retire at the age of 62 with a pension.

Teachers in the U.S. do not enjoy the same status as those in South Korea. In the 2013 Global Teacher Status Index, Dolton and colleagues report that in surveying participants in 21 countries, the U.S. ranks 8th in its perceived status of teaching as a profession. To locate the U.S. on a scale, teachers in China, South Korea, and Greece all were rated higher in perceived status, whereas teachers in Israel, Brazil, and Czechia were at the low end of the scale among the 21 countries reviewed. This lack of status in the U.S. may be one reason why most high school students do not express interest in teaching as a profession. According to the Education Writers Association, the ACT reports that only 5% of those students taking the ACT are interested in teaching and are among those that tend to have performed lower than average on this standardized test for college admission (Neufeld, 2015). In terms of salary, according to the National Center for Education Statistics, in 2015-2016, the average salary for a teacher in the U.S. was just over \$58,000 (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Although this sounds like a decent wage, in a report in *Money* magazine, out of 10 areas of study including engineering, communication,

humanities, mathematics and sciences, and education; education ranked last in terms of projected starting salaries in 2016 (Poppick, 2015). Engineering topped the list at over \$64,000 for an average starting salary. Agriculture/National Resources came in 5th at almost \$49,000, and education was 10th with an average projected starting salary for 2016 of \$34,891.

Finally, in regards to parents encouraging their children to seek teaching as a profession, South Korean parents were much more likely than were U.S. parents to encourage their children to become teachers. Among South Korean parents, almost 50% would encourage this occupation while in the U.S., the number was just over 30% (Varkey GEMS Foundation, 2013). Overall, teachers in South Korea are of higher status compared to other occupations that teachers in the U.S. and the profession are more encouraged.

Images of Teachers in the Media

Attitudes towards teachers and the teaching profession in society are influenced by many things, including media representations. Traditionally, in Korean society, a teacher was recognized not only as a scholar but also as a figure who is respected by others. The South Korean media shows the social expectations of teachers role as a preventer of school violence, counselor, a specialist in communication, facilitator, guardian (caregiver), educator of the character, educator of the knowledge, educator of the socialization, and educator of career education (Oh & Kim, 2017). In T.V. dramas, the teacher appears as a person whose primary goal is to improve the human nature of students instead of academic achievement, and his or her duty and philosophy are centered (Park & Kim, 2015). In sum, the current image of teachers has not changed much from the traditional image and expectations. In Korean society, the ideal teacher is respectable, morally, and personally superior in addition to being academically excellent. Students also expect a teacher as a “life guider” rather than a simple “school teacher” (Kim, 2005). These representations are found in the media as well as discussed in the home.

In the U.S., media images of teachers may focus on severe negative behaviors or may tell stories of extreme altruism. Some negative images (Polat, & Unisen, 2016), in both news and entertainment portrayals, often focus on the shocking stories that represent a tiny minority of teaching experiences. Images of teachers in the media have been connected to issues of bullying, school violence, racism, sexual harassment, etc. Other images in the film depict teachers as unskilled or malicious in their treatment of students (Krausz, 2002; Dalton, 2013). In these media depictions, teachers find their students boring and approach education as drudgery, relying on the outdated, standardized curriculum or no curriculum at all (Dalton, 2013). These negative images occur in news media as well as film and entertainment television. Stories of teacher-student sexual involvement are often excessively covered in the news media. Angelides (2010) argues that particularly the female teacher/male student relationship is of extreme interest to news media. Accounts of female teachers’ inappropriate relationships with their students see a great deal of media attention when incidences are reported.

On the other hand, the dedication teachers have to their students is also a story often seen in the news media and entertainment programming. In many movies depicting teachers, there are images of self-sacrifice on the part of the teachers (Krausz, 2002). Examples include providing students with needed school supplies out of the teacher’s salary, offering food and clothing for students in need, and an overall interest in helping disadvantaged students. Teachers are also depicted as role models, offering not only information on subjects studied in the classroom but also life lessons. Teachers befriend students and take a personal interest in all aspects of the students’ lives (Ambrosetti, 2016).

Overall, the perception people have of teachers is influenced by several factors, including personal experience, culture, tradition, salary, job duties, and the media. The similarity in themes between the U.S. and South Korea is the expectation that teachers will go far beyond their roles of imparting knowledge and will take on the duties of moral guide and caretaker. This study is interested in one particular media image that may grow out of these expectations which is that of the “teacher hero.” Here we analyze how the news media construct images of self-sacrificing teachers in extreme and tragic circumstances and how those images compare across two cultures.

Hero in Tragedy

Zimbardo (2007) argues that heroism is atypical and, therefore, should be held in high regard. Heroic behavior is unusual and deserves to be praised because it is rare, exceptional, and out of human nature. The emergence of heroes in tragic news stories comforts people and helps them move toward healing and having hope to overcome a crisis. Typically, being a hero means that not only did the person perish, but they are also very special in that their behavior is prosocial (Franco, Blau, & Zimbardo, 2011). The hero has entered a struggle to preserve the essential values of society. A heroic act is voluntary, risk-taking, in service to other people or the community, and does not expect any reward at the moment of the act (Zimbardo, 2007). These heroic actions give hope and relief to those who are grief-stricken. In this regard, reporting the tragic incident in the media performs a positive role by finding heroes and recounting their behavior. This can help members of the community to overcome the collective social trauma. After a tragic accident, communities are in chaos and are eagerly seeking a hero for peace and harmony (Belkin, 1972). The hero saves people and communities without anticipating any gain, although his or her life is in danger. Heroism is a social activity, but it is also a personal, solitary, and existential decision (Franco, Blau, & Zimbardo, 2011).

The hero is an archetype of myth (Jung, 2014) and resolves problems by protecting the weak, giving hope to people, and leading the dual confrontation of good and evil to the triumph. Many studies on heroes have been conducted in literature, psychology, and communication. In particular, studies on the types and the role of heroes are typical. The concept of heroes includes how they should be, how they act, and how they build the narrative structure (Goethals & Allison, 2012). Previous studies found that people recognized clearly who the hero is in a story (Keczer et al., 2016; Stevens et al., 2003). That is, a hero protects and saves people and shows courage.

Moreover, their heroic behaviors appear spontaneously because, in most cases, heroes are in an urgent situation where they have to make decisions quickly without having time to think over (Kinsella et al., 2015). Joseph Campbell writes about the hero from the perspective of a narrative journey. Using the term monomyth, Campbell lays out the process of the narrative story of a hero and the stages of the iconic narrative. In Campbell’s explanation of the hero’s journey, the hero goes through many stages that can be subsumed under three broader categories: separation, initiation, and return. Broadly, separation is the phase in which the hero lives an ordinary life. In the initiation phase, the hero is met by an obstacle or tragic event that calls them to action. Finally, in return, the hero comes back elevated as a beacon for the community (Campbell, 1972).

During a tragedy, there are many who are affected and need healing. Even for those not directly involved in a tragedy, there can be negative effects. Because of current technology/media, we can witness and be involved in tragic situations that occur half a world away. People are exposed indirectly to tragic incidents through the media, which

may cause social trauma or PTSD (Saylor et al., 2003; Neria & Sullivan, 2011). This is particularly likely when the victims of the tragedy are children/students. In this case, if the media depict the hero who fought to save the young people even though the heroes' lives are in danger, the message can help to heal the social trauma (Goren, 2007). Often, when the victims are children or young people, the hero appears in the form of a teacher. The teacher hero can serve as a balm to soothe the hurt experienced collectively when young people are the victims of the tragedy. Thus, the media coverage of these teacher heroes is important (Hobfoll et al., 2007).

Background on the Tragedies

The Sewol Ferry Disaster occurred at 9 am, April 16th, 2014, on the way from Incheon to Jeju island in South Korea. There were 476 passengers, and most of them were students of Danwon High School in Ansan for the field trip. Among them, 304 passengers and crew members died. During the incident, the captain and main crew members escaped without any efforts to save the passengers. However, most of the teachers, a few crew members, and some passengers showed heroic actions and sacrificed themselves for the lives of others. At the time, the Korean government had little response to the accident, particularly in terms of investigating the cause of the tragedy or seeking justice for the students, teachers, and crew members who perished. The government's inappropriate response to this incident provoked public anger and caused the social movement against the government's response. Ultimately, eleven teachers who died in the accident were recognized as having perished while on duty and so were buried in the Daejeon National Cemetery (except for one teacher whose family wanted their son to rest in the Catholic cemetery). This is an incredible honor made available to very few. Eventually, the Supreme Court sentenced the ferry captain to life imprisonment and other crew members to imprisonment for 18 months to 12 years.

In the U.S., another tragic incident involving the death of many young people occurred in 2018 at a Florida high school. On February 14, 2018, Nicholas Cruz, a 19-year-old high school student, entered Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, and shot and killed 17 classmates and teachers and wounded 17 additional individuals. Three staff members that perished were hailed as heroes due to their efforts to hide and shield students as well as attempt to disarm the gunman. Cruz was arrested just over two miles from the scene and has been charged with multiple accounts of premeditated murder and attempted murder. After the incident, many survivors from Stoneman Douglas, have participated in protests and argued for increased gun control legislation.

Research Questions

Based on our understanding of the perceptions of teachers in U.S. and South Korean society, images of teachers in the media, and what we know about the hero's narrative, we wanted to investigate the images of the teacher as a hero in these two tragedies. Are the teachers who sacrificed themselves in these tragedies described as heroes? What language and imagery are used to evoke the idea of heroism? We are also interested in the hero's journey developed by Campbell. Do the layout of the article the teachers' behaviors in terms of a journey, or do we just get information on one point in time. Finally, our interest was in how the news media narrative constructed the teacher as a hero and what the similarities and differences were between cultures. Because there is not a great deal of literature investigating the teacher as a hero, particularly in cross-cultural studies, we determined that research questions were best. Therefore, we posed the following research questions.

RQ1: How were the teachers' actions depicted in the stories?

RQ2: Do the articles written about the tragedies follow typical hero narrative structure of separation, initiation, and return? How?

RQ3: What are the differences between teacher hero narratives between the U.S. and South Korea?

Methodology

In this research, we are interested in how the media has depicted the teachers' actions in their attempts to save the students in their charge. As reviewed, in tragic news stories, we often see the portrayal of heroes who work to save those in peril. In both Korea and the U.S., there is an image of teachers going above and beyond expectations to serve their students. In this paper, we reconstruct the images of the teacher hero in the news accounts of two tragedies and connect these to the traditional hero narrative.

This study examines newspaper coverage of the Sewol ferry sinking and Florida school shooting and focuses on the teacher as a hero narrative. For the Sewol ferry sinking, we selected articles from *HankukIlbo*, *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, and the *Hankyoreh*. For the Florida shooting, we selected articles from *The Washington Post*, the *New York Times*, and *USA Today*. These papers were chosen as they are all read by a national audience. We selected all articles that discussed the tragedies and the teachers who perished in the month following the incidents. Twenty-seven articles were reviewed on the topic of the ferry sinking, and 17 articles were examined on the school shooting.

While the Sewol ferry was sinking, eleven teachers sacrificed their lives, saving and protecting the students. Among them, we chose three teachers who were often mentioned in the news. Yoon-Chul Nam, Hye-Jeong Choi, and Chang-Seok Ko. Yoon-Chul Nam was a 35-year-old, single and catholic English teacher, in charge of the 6th class of junior at Danwon High School in Ansan. Hye-Jeong Choi was a 24-year-old single female teacher in her second year of working as a teacher after graduating from university. She was a homeroom teacher of the 9th class of junior at Danwon High School. Chang-Seok Ko was a 43-year-old married male teacher who taught athletics at Danwon High School.

During the Florida school shooting, there were three teachers who died trying to save the lives of the students at the high school. Scott Beigel, Aaron Feis, and Chris Hixon. Beigel was a 35-year-old male who taught geography and coached the cross-country team. Aaron Feis was working at the school as a security guard and also served as the assistant football coach. Hixon was 49 years old and served the Athletic Director at Marjory Stoneman Douglas, coached the wrestling team, and worked as a security guard.

Ultimately the newspaper articles were used to create a picture of the teachers as heroes and consider this with the typical hero narrative. We chose to specifically review the stories through the lens of the hero's journey of separation, initiation, and return. Therefore, we broke up our analysis into three areas, before, during, and after the tragedies. Lastly, we examine the similarities and differences between American teacher heroes and Korean teacher heroes to understand the socio-cultural context between the two countries.

Results

We were interested in how the news media constructs the image of the hero and whether this follows the narrative of separation, initiation, and return. Overall, we found that the language and imagery were very much focused on the ideals of heroism. Accounts of the event, as well as the personal characteristics of each teacher, often focused on bravery

and heroism that goes beyond the ordinary. Additionally, although the articles were not in the same sequence as the typical hero's journey, we see evidence of separation, initiation, and return in the telling of the teachers' stories. Because journalistic practice is to start a story with the most recent events first, the order of the events was often flipped depending on when the article was written and what the focus was. For example, if the article was referencing a memorial being built or the delivery of a eulogy, then the last phase of the hero's journey, the return, was often the first part of the article. That then leads to a description of the tragedy—the initiation. Additionally, in the recounting of the tragedy, the teacher hero's background was reviewed, which revealed the initiation.

In addressing research questions 1 and 2 in our analysis, we review the content of the articles and the descriptions of the teachers' characters and actions. Additionally, we go through the stages of Campbell's monomyth, starting with the coverage of the teacher heroes' separation or their experiences in their routine lives. Consistently, news articles discuss details about the teachers before the incidents and share details of their lives. In these stories, we get a sense of each teacher as an individual. The news articles reconstruct the hero teachers' lives based on the testimony of students, family, colleagues, and friends. These stories include details and anecdotes about the teachers as young people, in their school, and as adults. They include personal details about family and friends. This includes their education, career, religion, and family situation. Their personality and philosophy are also presented. This was the case in both the U.S. and South Korean news media.

One of the South Korean teachers, Nam, was discussed in terms of his hard work in pursuing education and his devotion to helping others achieve this goal. Nam graduated from Kookmin University with an English teaching degree; while he was working as a teacher, he was attending the Digital Seoul Culture Arts University department of Korean language and culture. In Ansan, there were many foreigners and immigrants, and he wanted to help them and their children. He often said, "Teachers should always love students." His philosophy as a teacher was, "As much as I am a precious child for my parents, every student is a precious child for his or her parents, therefore, and I should treat them keeping this in mind." He was a popular teacher among students because of his caring and kind personality, and he was regarded as a real teacher who was able to communicate with students.

Choi had a caring and sympathetic character. She was a good sister and a daughter. She was a good-hearted, diligent, and graduated summa cum laude from the College of Education. She double majored in history and English and passed the teacher selection tests while she was in senior year of university. After graduation, she commenced working as a teacher at Danwon high school. She was very athletic and was interested in saving other people. When she was a college student, she learned lifesaving in the sea.

Ko was polite, always wore formal clothes instead of sportswear, and groomed his hair. Even though some students misbehaved, such as drinking or smoking, he chose to be friendly, listening to them and inviting them to eat with him rather than scolding them. He was thoughtful to his wife, who was a middle school teacher. He was a great teacher, a good husband, and a father.

All of the teachers are remembered as being consistently selfless and heroic, champions for others, and mentors to their students. This was clear in the articles about the teachers in the Florida shooting as well. At Scott Beigel's memorial service, his father eulogized his son, who saved his students during the shooting at the high school. He focused on Scott as a hero. Beigel's father commented that "heroism was his entire life," not just during the tragedy (New York Times, February 19, 2018). In addition to the image of lifelong hero, accounts showed Beigel as a mentor and role model. Scott Beigel's story consistently focused on his second job as a counselor at Camp Starlight in Pennsylvania and how important he was to the staff and campers there.

Chris Hixon came to Marjory Stoneman Douglas after serving in the Navy for 27 years. His service was often referenced. We tend to think of those in the military as heroes, and so this vital detail from Hixon's life matches the narrative associated with his actions during the shooting. In addition to his heroism in military service, Hixon was also remembered for his support of the students. Students and friends told stories of Hixon giving kids rides home from school and bringing in food to those who needed it. Many stories made it clear that Hixon's role in the students' lives went beyond that of the teacher or coach and that he served as a mentor.

The third teacher hero from the U.S. tragedy, Aaron Feis, was an alum of Marjory Stoneman Douglas and lived in a nearby community with his wife and daughter. He was described as kind and generous, and Christian. Again, quotes from students and colleagues indicate that heroism was a life-long attribute.

A common thread in the stories of all teachers who perished was their lifelong service to others and selflessness. In portraying these individuals as heroes throughout their lifetimes, a reader may feel that the death of these teachers was inevitable. While no one would argue that these deaths were acceptable, the fact that the stories tell of individuals who were compassionate and altruistic throughout their lives may serve as a balm for the emotional wounds of the readers.

Next, we reviewed how the news articles depicted the heroic actions of the teachers during the tragedy. In terms of the hero monomyth, this would be the initiation phase where the hero sets out to meet the challenge. In all stories, it is clear that the teacher heroes are active actors in the events. They all take charge in some way to address the events as they unfold. However, overall there is very little detail about the events of the tragedy. The coverage of the actions is limited and lacks specificity. Because the teachers and students were in an urgent situation, and there were few witnesses during the moment of crisis, the stories are repetitive and straightforward. The clear picture is presented, however, is the quick thinking and bravery on the part of the teachers.

While the Sowel ferry was sinking, Nam was near the emergency exit of the cabin. However, instead of escaping, he commanded students to put on the life vests and made them get out of the ferry. When the students were trembling with fear, he comforted them and made them calm down. One of his students later recounted, "He made us get out of the ferry, but he has swept away while he was escaping" (HankookIlbo, April 18, 2014). He led his students until the last minute, but he could not save his own life.

Choi pacified the students leaving messages in the group chat that she would go out after them. When the ferry was sinking, she left a note saying, "Don't worry. I'll be out after you". Choi saved about 10 students' lives but had no time to put on her life vest and save herself (Kyunghyang Shinmun, April 22, 2014).

During the ferry incident, Ko devoted himself to the students even while water began to fill the ferry quickly. He distributed the life vests to students and helped them to get out of the ferry. At the moment of death, he took off his vest and gave it to his student and screamed, "Wear the vest and get out of the ship." (Hankyoreh, April 17, 2014). These were the basic details that were played over repeatedly in the media discussions of the events of that day.

The stories written about the Florida shooting contain the same facts from story to story and are fairly rudimentary as well. Aaron Feis was one of the three teacher heroes in the Florida school shooting and was one of the first people to realize that a shooting was taking place on the school grounds. A student saw Cruz (the gunman) loading a weapon and ran to tell Feis. Feis took the student on his golf cart to the baseball field away from the school and told him to stay there. Feis then continued to shuttle students to safety throughout

the incident. Articles speak of Feis using his body as a shield and report that the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School football team sent out a tweet saying, “He died a hero and will forever be in our hearts and memories” (USA Today, February 16, 2018).

Another teacher that perished during the Parkland, Florida shooting was Scott Beigel. Scott Beigel’s story focuses on the chaos of the situation and his quick thinking to get his students into a locked room. Earlier on the day of the shooting, the school had taken part in a typical safety drill. Therefore, when the alarms went off due to the shooting, students and teachers believed they were participating in a second drill and so left their classrooms to exit the building. Shortly after leading his class out of their room, Beigel realized the truth of the situation and hurried the group into another classroom. While he was able to open the room and get his students inside, Beigel was shot before he could enter the room. To illustrate his heroism, one student’s story was found repeatedly in the media: a female student described the steps leading up to the teacher’s death and said, “He’s my Superman. Superman saves lives, and that’s what Mr. Beigel did” (Washington Post, Feb 17, 2018). These necessary details were provided in multiple stories, always depicting Beigel’s actions as fast-thinking and heroic. He is consistently attributed with saving the lives of those students who hid in the room he opened. Little additional detail can be found regarding his actions, and all three news agencies provided almost identical details.

Chris Hixon, the third teacher-hero in the Parkland, Florida tragedy, also worked to direct students to safety and died when he was shot as he drove his golf cart at full speed at the gunman trying to disarm Cruz. The details regarding Hixon’s actions are the sparsest but are always described in terms of his bravery at the moment. Overall, we get very few details of what occurred during the incident or a clear timeline, and it is difficult to draw an accurate mental picture of the events as they unfolded.

These details from the tragedies repeatedly appear in multiple news outlets and consistently use terms related to heroism and bravery. The use of the term hero and similar attributes are common throughout the articles’ retelling of the events. Consistent among the reporting is the heroism of the teacher’s actions and the lives saved.

The third image news articles created that we were interested in reviewing was the “after” portion of the teachers’ heroic actions. This relates to the return on the hero journey. Of course, tragically, our heroes don’t return physically. Still, the stories of their bravery are situated in a way that makes clear that the deaths of the heroes have a lasting impact on the communities. Stories about monuments, funds, scholarships, and awards are included in the media. Often the stories take the form of a silver lining or good that comes from this tragedy.

On April 17, 2014, Nam’s body was found inside the ferry, and his funeral was held three days later. His father said that he was proud of his son for devoting his life to the students. His mother said, “That’s enough because it was a righteous death.” His alma mater, Kookmin University, canceled all the events and mourned him. Also, at the Alumni Association of Cheongju Shinheung High School (Nam’s alma mater), a memorial stone, a proud alumnus prize, and a scholarship named after him were discussed as ways to honor Nam’s bravery. Choi’s body was found on April 17, 2014 and her funeral was the first among victims of the Sewol ferry. Her righteous behavior and sacrifice to save her students were recounted in the stories at her funeral and in the media.

A February 17, 2018 *Washington Post* article talks about the actions of the Stoneman Douglas High School wrestling team in which they are trying to do their best to honor their coach Hixon through their sport. One of Hixon’s fellow Athletic Directors in the area said he was “going to try to be more like Chris” (USA Today). Two scholarships were created in

Hixon's name, and ESPN is awarding "Coach of the Year" to all three coaches—Beigel, Feis, and Hixon. In the news coverage of these tributes, the heroism and lifelong compassion of the three teachers were referenced.

When a tragic event occurs, people are traumatized, and society falls into a state of confusion (Berkowitz, 2010). As people feel helpless, the hunger a hero reaches its peak (Bennett, 2004). People need a hero to achieve the closure of the tragedy and return to normal life (Berkowitz, 2010). Heroes give hope to our society, practice justice, and save people in trouble (Allison & Goethals, 2013). As a response to the need of society, the media tries to find heroes (Klapp, 1969). The hero's narratives comfort people in mourning, give hope to the society in trauma, and back to everyday life. The stories written about these tragedies provide multiple heroes for the readers.

Additionally, in the telling of the narrative using separation, initiation, and return, readers may be captured by the monomyth with which we are familiar. This recognizable way of telling the story of the can help readers to find comfort in the hero's journey. This analysis provides evidence for the existence of the hero monomyth in the news articles and helps us to answer research question #2. Regarding how the teacher heroes are portrayed in terms of the hero narrative, we can say that all three stages are found in the media content. We hear about the lives of the teachers before the tragedy—separation, the actions they took on the day of the tragedy—initiation, and the way they were honored posthumously—return. Because of the journalistic device of telling the most recent news first, the stories did not necessarily follow a chronological pattern. Still, the aspects of the hero monomyth are indeed encapsulated in the stories.

Our ultimate question asks was whether this narrative structure of the teacher hero transcends cultural boundaries. Within the analysis of the text, we found many similarities in the teacher heroes' story between the U.S. and South Korea. First of all, teacher heroes put students' safety as a priority and are not afraid of sacrificing their lives in the moment of crisis. In the Sewol Ferry incident, Nam chose to stay with the students instead of escaping; eventually, he was swept away. Choi did not have time to wear her life vest to save her students, and Ko took off his vest to give to his student. In the Parkland, Florida incident, Beigel ushered his students back to the classroom for shelter and was shot in the doorway, trying to lock the students in for safety. Hixon directed kids to safety and attempted to disarm the gunman, and Feis was physically shielding students from the shooter. In these cases, every teacher put the students' lives as their priority above their own and fought fearlessly without stepping back during sinking or shooting incidents.

Secondly, they show not only self-sacrifice but also powerful leadership and strong responsibility during the incident. In Nam's case for example, Nam was near the emergency exit of the cabin while the ferry was sinking. Instead of escaping, he commanded students to put on life vests and made them get out of the ferry. Choi pacified the students and directed them to go up to the deck, saying that she would go out after them. Ko distributed the life vests to students and helped them to get out of the ferry. In the American teacher heroes' cases, when Scott Beigel realized what was occurring, he thought quickly and ushered students to a nearby classroom. Beigel directed his students to the shelter and tried to lock the door but was shot in the doorway. Chris Hixon directed the students to safety and sped to disarm the gunman. Aaron Feis was trying to shuttle students to safety throughout the incident and physically shielding students from the shooter to protect them. All teachers put plans into action quickly to protect as many students as possible. Teacher heroes made efforts to ensure students' safety until the last moment. They considered students' safety more important than their own lives throughout the incident. The news narratives highlight their sacrifices, leadership, and responsibility as a heroic act during the crisis.

Lastly, teacher heroes were depicted as always having a heroic attitude throughout their lives. The hero is born as a hero, and their mission different from ordinary people from the beginning, according to Campbell. This characteristic follows the archetype of the hero from the myth. The hero grows up with a heroic face and exerts their power at the moment of crisis. Thus, teacher heroes' narratives also follow the hero's story plot, that is, birth, growth, suffering, overcoming the crisis and return and which conveys messages about courage, love, and self-devotion to the people conveying the messages of courage, love, and self-devotion. This life-long devotion to courageous behavior can help to heal the community after the tragedy. The story takes on a sense of fate on the part of the heroes' journey. Because these individuals were always looking out for others and participating in self-sacrifice, readers may feel that the outcome of these tragedies was, in some way, inevitable for these heroes. This sense of dedication on the part of the heroes can help the community reconcile the brutality of the tragedy.

As noted, there are many similarities in the telling of the stories of the hero teachers' actions during these tragic events. We were also interested in learning what the differences were in teacher hero narratives between the U.S. and South Korea? We found that in the Korean news articles, the educational background of the teacher heroes is mentioned and is considered to be important. They cover the university the teachers attended, and this takes the lead in honoring the heroism of the teacher. This can be explained as a result of the social context in which competition for teachers is intensive and academic clique is important in Korea. On the contrary, it is hard to find information about the teacher's educational background in American articles. Only Feis's educational background is mentioned because he is an alumnus of the school at which he worked, and the shooting took place.

In the articles, a somewhat different language was used to describe the teachers at times. The Korean news outlets used the term 'true teacher' to directly describe the heroism of teachers. This reflects the perception of Korean that the teacher's work is still considered as a vocation to lead students to the right path. In other words, in Korean society, the highest praise of teachers is 'the true teacher,' and the real teacher is recognized as a great man. In the United States, on the other hand, in the news narratives, the term 'hero' is often used to depict the teacher hero, and also the term 'Superman' appears. The American teacher heroes are recognized as a hero by their laudable behavior; however, unlike the Korean teacher heroes, there is no expression for the American teacher heroes themselves.

Discussion and Conclusion

Tragedies often show us who the real heroes are. In this study we reviewed news articles written after two tragedies involving the deaths of students and their teachers. We compare media from two countries that are seen as fairly different from each other in many ways. For example, the reverence of the teaching profession is much stronger in South Korea than the U.S. Although teachers are seen as "called" to the profession in both cultures, in South Korea, the image of the teacher is held in higher regard than it is in the United States. Particularly in the U.S., there can be negative images of teachers in the media that might taint the image of teachers in the culture.

However, although these tragedies occurred in two different countries with seemingly very different cultures, the bravery of the teachers was similar, as was the media coverage of their bravery. Several teachers acted as heroes to save the children in their care. It was clear they saw this as their duty. Teachers acted as heroes during the tragedy, and this was clear in the news accounts. We also noticed that the descriptions of these

teachers indicated that they had acted selflessly and heroically throughout their lives and that their students were always a priority. Because we see teachers as selfless individuals who often go above and beyond for their students, their courageous acts during these horrific events seem in some ways to make sense for us. As these teachers acted throughout their lives, they did so leading up to their deaths as well. The telling of the stories in this way can seem to make sense of the deaths of the teachers who saved so many lives. By sharing the before, during, and after of the teachers' stories, we get a sense of their journey as heroes. All six individuals were described as consistent advocates for their students and others. They then perished living out their lifelong philosophy and are ultimately remembered as heroes for their acts of bravery. This hero's journey narrative can allow communities and readers to grieve the loss of the students and the teachers but also get some healing from the sense that these born heroes were responsible for lives being saved as well.

References

- Allison, S. T., & Goethals, G. R. (2013). *10 Reasons Why We Need Heroes*. Retrieved from <https://blog.richmond.edu/heroes/?s=10+Reasons+Why+We+Need+Heroes>
- Ambrosetti, A. (2016). The portrayal of the teacher as mentor in popular film: Inspirational, supportive and life-changing? *M/C Journal*, 19(2). Retrieved from <http://journal.media-culture.org.au/index.php/mcjournal/article/view/1104>
- Angelides, S. (2010). Hot for teacher: The cultural erotics and anxieties of adolescent sexuality. *Media International Australia*, 135, 71-81.
- Belkin, G. S. (1972). The teacher as hero. *Educational Theory*, 22(4), 411-419.
- Bennett, S. (2004). Psychoanalytic reflections on heroism in a time of fallen heroes. *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, 192(3), 171-177.
- Berkowitz, D. (2010). The ironic hero of Virginia Tech: Healing trauma through mythical narrative and collective memory. *Journalism*, 11(6), 643-659.
- Block, A. (2014). Hey, I'm No Superman: The Teacher as Hero. *JCT (Online)*, 30(1), 30.
- Campbell, J. (1972). *The hero with a thousand faces* (Vol. 17). Princeton & New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Dolton, P.D., & Marcenaro-Gu, O. (2013). 2013 Global Teacher Status Index. Retrieved from <https://www.globalteacherprize.org/media/2787/2013globalteacherstatusindex.pdf>
- Dewey, J., & Small, A. W. (1897). My pedagogic creed (No. 25). EL Kellogg & Company. Retrieved from <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/moa/AET9744.0001.001?rgn=main;view=fulltext>
- Dalton, M.M. (2013). *Bad Teacher* is bad for teachers. *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, 78-87.
- Fiske, S. T., & Taylor, S. E. (2013). *Social cognition: From brains to culture*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.
- Franco, Z. E., Blau, K., & Zimbardo, P. G. (2011). Heroism: A conceptual analysis and differentiation between heroic action and altruism. *Review of General Psychology*, 15(2), 99-113
- Goethals, G. R., & Allison, S. T. (2012). Making heroes: The construction of courage, competence, and virtue. *Advances in experimental social psychology*, 46, 183-235.
- Goren, E. (2007). Society's use of the hero following a national trauma. *The American journal of psychoanalysis*, 67(1), 37-52.
- Hobfoll, S. E., Watson, P., Bell, C. C., Bryant, R. A., Brymer, M. J., Friedman, M. J., & Maguen, S. (2007). Five essential elements of immediate and mid-term mass trauma intervention: Empirical evidence. *Psychiatry: Interpersonal and Biological Processes*, 70(4), 283-315.
- Hong, Eun-Kyoung (1994). The analysis of the perception of teacher's self-image, Master's Thesis. Changwon & South Gyeongsang: Kyungnam University.
- Jung, C. G. (2014). *The archetypes and the collective unconscious*. Abingdon-on-Thames & England: Routledge.

- Kang, Hye Young, Lee, Ji Eun, Song, Yun Sim. (2014). Analysis of the Perception of Preferred Jobs by Middle School Students. *The Journal of Career Education Research*, 27(3), 95-116.
- Keczer, Z., File, B., Orosz, G., & Zimbardo, P. G. (2016). Social representations of hero and everyday hero: A network study from representative samples. *PLoS one*, 11(8), e0159354.
- Kim, Byeong Chan. (2005). A Qualitative Case Study on Exploring the Desirable Image of Contemporary Teachers. *The Journal of Korean Education*, 32(4), 57-90.
- Kinsella, E. L., Ritchie, T. D., & Igou, E. R. (2015). Lay perspectives on the social and psychological functions of heroes. *Frontiers in psychology*, 6, 130.
- Klapp, O. E. (1969). *Collective Search for Identity*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Krausz, P. (2002). Does the cinema represent teachers fairly? *Australian Screen Education*, 30, 62-67.
- Lee, Yun Sik, Kim, In Jeong. (2008). A Study on College Students' Perception of Desirable Teacher's Model. *The Journal of Korean Teacher Education*, 25(3), 303-323.
- National Center for Education Statistics. Fast Facts. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=28>
- Neria, Y., & Sullivan, G. M. (2011). Understanding the mental health effects of indirect exposure to mass trauma through the media. *Jama*, 306(12), 1374-1375.
- Neufeld, S. (2015). What happens when young people don't want to be teachers? Education Writers Association. Retrieved from <https://www.ewa.org/blog-educated-reporter/what-happens-when-young-people-dont-want-be-teachers>
- OECD (2018). Education at a glance: Teachers' statutory salaries. *OECD Education Statistics* (database). Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/b43a4622-en>
- Oh, H., Kim, K. S. (2017). Social Expectations of Teacher's Roles: Trend Research on Teacher's Role Expectations with Content Analysis of the Newspaper Articles from 2007 to 2016. *The Study of Teacher Education*, 34(3), 139-166
- Park, M., & Kim, H. (2015). Teachers' Educational Perspectives in T.V. Drama: Focus on Seasons of T.V. Drama "School". *Journal of Educational Innovation Research*, 25(2), 151-171.
- Park, S. (2017). Teacher: most wanted job of Korean students for 11 straight. Retrieved from http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/special/2017/12/181_241430.html
- Polat, H., & Unisen, A. (2016). An analysis of teacher news in Turkish printed media within the context of teachers' image. *Cogent Education*, 3(1), 1179614.
- Poppick, S. (2015). Here's what the average grad makes right out of college. *Money*. Retrieved from <http://time.com/money/collection-post/3829776/heres-what-the-average-grad-makes-right-out-of-college/>
- Saylor, C. F., Cowart, B. L., Lipovsky, J. A., Jackson, C., & Finch Jr, A. J. (2003). Media exposure to September 11: Elementary school students' experiences and posttraumatic symptoms. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 46(12), 1622-1642.
- Stevens, J. A., Lathrop, A. H., & Bradish, C. L. (2003). "Who is Your Hero?" Implications for Athlete Endorsement Strategies. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 12(2), 103-110.
- You, S., Kim, A. Y., & Lim, S. A. (2017). Job satisfaction among secondary teachers in Korea: Effects of teachers' sense of efficacy and school culture. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 45(2), 284-297.
- Zimbardo, P. G. (2007). *The Lucifer effect: Understanding how good people turn evil*. New York: Random House.

Sookyong Hong received her doctorate from the School of Communication and Information from University of Paris 2, France. She is an Associate Professor at Hansei University, Korea. Her research field is a multicultural society, media content analysis, risk communication, and storytelling.

Linda Kean is a Professor and the Director of the School of Communication at East Carolina University. Her research focuses on media effects and health communication.