

# Media Reporting of the “Sandy Hook Elementary School Angels”

by

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## Abstract

On December 14, 2012, Adam Lanza, age 20, fatally shot twenty children and six adult staff members and wounded two at Sandy Hook Elementary School in the village of Sandy Hook in the town of Newtown, Connecticut. Given this recent tragedy, no scholars to date have examined the words used by the media to describe the child victims of this tragedy. This study has three major goals, and we offer a conceptual framework to meet these goals. The following three questions were foundational to this study: (1) How often do the most-frequented Internet sites use the word “angels” to refer to the 20 White child victims in the Sandy Hook Elementary School massacre of 2012? (2) What words does the public use to describe the 8 Black child victims who died in Chicago in 2012? (3) What implications underlie the words used in media reporting of murdered Black and White child victims? Supportive content data are presented in connection with these headlines.

**Key Words:** Black; African-American; Angels; Children; Critical Race Theory; Discrimination; Media; Newspapers; Race; Racism; Sandy Hook Elementary School; White Supremacy

On December 14, 2012, Adam Lanza, age 20, fatally shot twenty children and six adult staff members and wounded two at Sandy Hook Elementary School in the village of Sandy Hook in the town of Newtown, Connecticut. The massacre was the second-deadliest school shooting in United States history, after the 2007 Virginia Tech massacre. It also was the second-deadliest mass murder at an American elementary school, after the 1927 Bath School bombings in Michigan. Given this recent tragedy, no scholars to date have examined the words used to describe the child victims of this tragedy. This qualitative study has three major goals, and we offer a conceptual framework to meet these goals. The first goal of this study is to examine how often the most frequently visited sites on the Internet used the word “angels” to describe the child victims of the Sandy Hook massacre. To accomplish this goal, we examined the headlines provided by 53 of the most-frequented Internet sites as well as the sources of these sites. The second goal of this study is to examine the circumstances by which Black children are murdered in Chicago 2012, as well as the words that are used to describe these victims. The third goal of this study is to discuss racial implications that underlie the words used in the media to report the deaths of Black and White child victims.

This topic is important for two reasons. For one, negative portrayals of Blacks in the media (Dixon, 2008) have resulted in the wanton stereotyping, unwarranted fear, intense criminal sentencing, mass incarceration, and death of members of this group (Alexander, 2010; Armour, 1997; Peffley & Hurwitz, 2013). Furthermore, negative perceptions of Blacks have been shown to negatively affect the health of members of this group (Muennig & Murphy, 2011; Pieterse, Todd, Neville, & Carter, 2012), and is the impetus that drives the overt and covert forms of racism they frequently experience (Bell, 1992; Bonilla-Silva, 2009; Bryson, 1998; Chaney & Robertson, 2013; Dottolo & Stewart, 2008; Elicker, 2008; Karenga, 2010). To further complicate the effects of racism, the physical characteristics of members of this group have been associated with more harsh criminal sentences. To make this point clear, Blacks with darker skin tones and more Afrocentric facial features receive harsher sentencing outcomes than those with less “Black” (e.g., lighter skin and less Afrocentric features) facial features (Blair, Judd, & Chapleau, 2004; Maddox & Gray, 2004). Together, the media, the phenotypic characteristics of Blacks, the harsh sentencing of Blacks, and overt and covert forms of racism sustain and protect White Supremacy by legitimizing White life and minimizing Black life. This paper extends the work of Perry and Roesch (2009) and Malcolm (2010) and at the crux of our argument is that race and skin tone, and not necessarily age, are the primary reasons the child victims in the Sandy Hook Elementary school shooting were referred to as “angels” and why the same phrase is not used to refer to young murdered Black child victims. Thus, this research extends current scholarly dialogue by focusing on the words used to describe White child victims of a school shooting in 2012 versus murdered Black children in inner-city Chicago in 2012. In order to determine how Black and White children are perceived in the media, this study focuses on the adjectives that are used to describe White and Black child victims. In the section that follows, we provide a comprehensive overview of scholarship related to the media and race, race and skin tone, angels, White Supremacy, and connect these scholarly foci to the basic premise of our argument.

## Review of Literature

The media is a powerful presence in U.S. culture and creates the very public opinions it seeks to reflect in its news. For example, subtle nonverbal cues of newscasters influence voting behavior (Anastasio, Rose, & Chapman, 1999), and the race of individuals appearing on television influence perceptions of that group (Haider-Markel et al., 2007). However, the media's portrayal of African-Americans has been less than favorable. Research has revealed the American news media tends to depict African-Americans in a deleterious light and to emphasize poverty in African-American families (Gilens, 1998; Haider-Markel, Delehanty, & Beverlin, 2007). Such delineations contribute to the desensitization of Whites toward the plight of African-Americans and are associated with decreased support for social safety nets (e.g., welfare) because these are generally perceived as abused by undeserving Blacks (Gilens, 1998). By portraying a world in which people's opinions are based on their ethnic or demographic group membership, the media subtly and powerfully creates the very opinions they seek to reflect (Anastasio, et al., 1999; Baker, 1996; Beaudoin & Thorson, 2006; Oliver, Jackson, Moses, & Dangerfield, 2004). Even more recent studies have found the relationship between news use and social capital to be less positive for Blacks than for Whites as well as the relationship between entertainment TV viewing and social capital to be more negative for Blacks than Whites (Beaudoin & Thorson, 2006).

Previous scholars have focused on the criminality of African-Americans in the media. Sadly, Blackness and criminality are so entrenched that Whites reported seeing a Black suspect at the scene of a crime when none was actually present (Oliver & Fonfash, 2002). In his examination of whether exposure to the overrepresentation of Blacks as criminals on local news programs, attention to crime news, and news trust predicted perceptions of Blacks and crime, Dixon (2008a) found attention to crime news was positively related to concern about crime. Furthermore, attention to crime news was positively associated with harsher culpability ratings of a hypothetical race-unidentified suspect but not a White suspect. Finally, heavier consumption of Blacks' as criminals on local television news has been positively related with the perception of Blacks as violent (Dixon, 2008a).

To support Anastasio et al's (1999) earlier work, Dixon (2008b) conducted a random survey of nonstudent adult residents to determine whether exposure to network news had a demonstrable effect on racial attitudes and perceptions of African-Americans. After controlling for a number of factors, these scholars revealed exposure to network news depressed estimates of African-American income, network news primarily increased the endorsement of African-American stereotypes, particularly the view that African-Americans were poor and intimidating, and was positively associated with higher racism scores (Dixon, 2008b) and capital-sentencing outcomes (Eberhardt, Davies, Purdie-Vaughns, & Johnson, 2006). The following year, Mastro, Lapinski, Kopacz, and Behm-Morawitz (2009) conducted a two-study experimental design to investigate the relationship between exposure to television news portrayals that intersect race with violent crime and viewers' real-world racial judgments.

These scholars revealed both the gender of the viewer and the race of the TV news suspect influenced subsequent judgments, including attributions about the perpetrator and victim, and the race of the depicted suspect had a significant effect on attitudes toward Blacks in the larger society, beyond the mediated context (Mastro et al, 2009). Interestingly, even though Blacks are four times more likely to be presented as criminals than police officers on television, this proportion is inconsistent with recent statistics provided by the U. S. Department of Labor Statistics (Masto, Lapinski, Kopacy, & Behm-Morawitz, 2009). In spite of this reality, the media's portrayal of African-Americans as poor, dangerous, and criminal is deeply embedded in the American consciousness.

Extant scholarship has revealed race and skin tone to be salient predictors of the experiences of Blacks in the United States. Historically, Blacks with lighter-skin had greater wealth than Blacks with darker skin. To support this, Bodenhorn and Ruebeck (2005) examined more than 15,000 households interviewed during the 1860 US federal census and found sharp differences in wealth holdings between White, mulatto, and Black households in the urban South. Although Black wealth was only 20% of White wealth, mulattoes, or light-skinned Blacks held nearly 50% of Whites' wealth, and the favoritism shown to Blacks with lighter complexions resulted in their elevated socioeconomic standing (Bodenhorn & Ruebeck, 2007). Even contemporaneously, lighter skin tones have been positively associated with more favorable socioeconomic outcomes (Celious & Oyserman, 2001; Essed & Trienekens, 2008; Hochschild, 2006; Keith & Herring, 1991); higher levels of racial identity attitudes (immersion/emersion) among Blacks (Coard, Breland, & Raskin, 2001); and have been shown to positively influence visual representations of political candidates (Caruso, Mead, & Balcetis, 2009), regardless of their political ideology. In addition to the aforementioned, skin tone has been related to perceived attractiveness (Baron, 2005; Hill, 2002; Mayo, Mayo, & Mahdi, 2005). For example, Caucasian models were rated as significantly more attractive than African-American models and these negative perceptions regarding African-American models transcended into higher racism scores (McDermott & Pettijohn, 2008). Moreover, skin color among Blacks has been found to play a considerable role in their favorability among Whites. In particular, the skin tone of a Black applicant has been shown to be more highly regarded among Whites than these Black's educational background or prior work experience (Harrison & Thomas, 2009). Interestingly, color discrimination has proved psychologically damaging to the psyche of Blacks in that some members of this group (and other people of color) have been motivated to alter their skin tone through bleaching (Hussein, 2010; Parameswaran & Cardoza, 2009; Pierre, 2008).

Conversely, negative perceptions of dark skin have been deleterious to the lived experiences and psyches of many Blacks. For example, perceived negative (dark) skin tone, or skin tone discrimination, has been shown to negatively affect early personality formation (McDonald, 2006); the negative self-concept of Blacks (Averhart & Bigler, 1997; Benson, 2006; Levin & Banaji, 2006; Maddox, 2004; Maddox & Chase, 2004); and has been found to be a major threat to the mental health of Black women (Keith, Lincoln, Taylor, & Jackson, 2010).

Furthermore, race and skin tone has also been associated with social stereotyping (Strom, Zebrowitz, Shunan, Bronstad, & Hoon, 2012); violent crime has been frequently associated with more Afrocentric (dark-skinned) than Eurocentric features in news stories (Oliver, Jackson, Moses, & Dangerfield, 2004); and heavy television news viewers are more likely than light viewers to feel emotional discomfort after being exposed to dark-skinned Black perpetrators. Moreover, heavy news viewers, regardless of prior news exposure, found the perpetrator more memorable when the perpetrator was a dark-skinned Black male (Dixon & Maddox, 2005). A year later, Dixon (2006) found heavy television news viewers exposed to a White suspect to find an unambiguously guilty suspect culpable. Heavy news viewers exposed to either light-, medium-, or dark-skinned Black suspects were more likely than heavy news viewers exposed to White suspects to find an ambiguously guilty suspect culpable (Dixon, 2006). Even more recent studies have found Whites reacted more negatively toward Blacks with darker skin tones and more prototypical facial features (lip thickness; nose width) than Blacks with lighter skin tones and less prototypical facial features (Hagiwara, Kashy, & Cesario, 2012; Strom, Zebrowitz, Shunan, Bronstad, & Hoon, 2012); Hispanic children as young as five years old have a bias toward pro-light skin (Kaufman & Wiese, 2012); and that among blind and sighted individuals, race and racial thinking are embedded within social practices that train people to think a certain way about and 'see' race (Obasogie, 2010). Although recent scholars have pointed to heightened multiculturalism and multiracism in the renaming of crayon colors (Roth, 2009) or questioned whether humans live in a "color-blind society" (Esposito, 2009), both historically and contemporaneously, race, skin tone, and more important, perceptions of White as attractive and superior has deleterious consequences on the psychological and social standing of Blacks in the United States.

Extant research on angels has drawn from a large body of various disciplines and fields of thought. For example, researchers have examined the characteristics of angels (Tolmie, 2011); have associated angels with heaven (Canales & Krajewski, 2012; Hutchinson, 2012); the domestication of women (Crouse-Dick, 2012); the service of mankind (Canales & Krajewski, 2012); two early Jacobean history plays (Stilma, 2011); the ability of angels to successfully oversee and rule mankind (Casto, 2012); the tenets of Christian theology (Esteve Faubel & Petrauskaite, 2010; Martin, 2010; Scott, 2012; Skolnick, 2010; Wassersug, 2009; White, 2005); biblical accounts of angels in theatre and film (Navon & Navon, 2010; Nutu, 2006; O'Leary, 2011; Riley, 2009) and abortion (Holcombe & Holcombe, 2006).

Other scholars have focused on the religious themes provided by the public when referring to an iconic individual. For example, Perry and Roesch (2009) examined the religious themes provided by fans one week after the death of Fred McFeely Rogers (aka "Mister Rogers"), the star of Mister Rogers' Neighborhood on the PBSkids.org Web site. In addition to referring to Rogers as "saintly," "an angel," and "sent from Heaven," fans used religious language and included comments about prayers and blessings, highlighted the program's moral values as well as Rogers' "compassion" and "personal character."

As related to the goals of this study, these scholars revealed these fans reflected on Rogers' noble character by participating in a social reality constructed of religious metaphors (Perry & Roesch, 2004). Even more recent research has related angels to heaven. In his qualitative examination of 49 children's storybooks that touch on the existence of heaven or a spiritual afterlife, Malcolm (2010) revealed heaven to be simplistically portrayed as a place high in the sky with bright lights, angels, and clouds. Furthermore, depictions of heaven and angels in these children's storybooks have been found to help young children cope with death-related grief (Malcolm, 2010).

White supremacy is a pseudo-scientific notion that the White race is inherently superior to all other races (Painter, 2011). This notion, created in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, was more than just a set of thoughts and predispositions, but is a new social order that legitimized oppression and criminal acts against indigenous peoples and Africans in America (Roediger, 2010). Racism is an important corollary of White supremacy because it gives its beneficiaries the power to discriminate (i.e., deny opportunities to qualified/deserving individuals) based on the ideological belief that the White race is superior (Feagin, 2010). To support this, Karenga (2010) posits racism includes the denial of a people's past, humankind, and right to freedom based exclusively on the erroneous concept of race.

Henry Laurens' negotiation of the Treaty of Paris of 1783, which ended the revolutionary War, included vernacular that has been perceived as the intellectual undergirding for the scientific defense of White supremacy (Roediger, 2010). In particular, the treaty called for the British upon withdrawal to refrain from carrying away Blacks who were American property (Roediger, 2010). The aforementioned was vital because it not only facilitated the legal and later extra-legal slave trades which underwrote the growing insurance industry, capital for Northern investors, and the establishment of elite Northern universities (which established pseudo-scientific theories to seemingly legitimate White dominance), but also set the stage for contemporary expressions/manifestations of White supremacy (Loewen, 2007; Roediger, 2010; Wise, 2010).

One of the most visceral displays of White supremacy during the nadir (1890-1940) period of race relations were lynchings (Feagin, 2010; Loewen, 2005) or public murders (Loewen, 2005). Thousands of lynchings occurred during the nadir period despite the fact that the accurate number of lynchings that occurred was difficult to pinpoint (Blackmon, 2009; Loewen, 2005). Perhaps surprising to some, and regardless of the propagation that said practice was primarily a Southern phenomenon, a substantial number of lynchings occurred in Northern cities (e.g., Duluth, Minnesota) (Blackmon, 2009; Loewen, 2005). Finally, lynchings can be considered the ultimate demonstration of White supremacy because they occurred in public, the participants and spectators were immune from legal prosecution, and the victims were often burned, mutilated, and their body parts were sold and displayed in stores as souvenirs (Loewen, 2005; Roediger, 2010).

The media has been a powerful creator of racist thought and action. Widely viewed as one of the most racist movies of all time, D.W. Griffith's *Birth of A Nation* (1915) offered a White supremacist caricature of African-Americans as savages that threatened the sacred American way of life as well as the well-being of White women (Loewen, 2007). President Woodrow Wilson was so enamored with the content of this movie that during a private screening of the film in the White House, he lamented, "It is like history written with lightning, and my only regret is that it is all so true" (Loewen, 2007, p. 21). Considered to be an American cinematic classic by some, the film has been historically interpreted as the apex of media framing of Blackness in a negative light on a grand scale, which culminated in the devaluation of Black life. To buttress the aforementioned, soon after the film's release there was a resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan, and numerous race riots across the United States which resulted in the loss of thousands of Black lives (Loewen, 2005, 2007).

It should not come as a surprise that White supremacy creates negative media portrayals of people of color as criminals, disproportionately incarcerates and racially profiles people of color, and is the impetus behind the growth of the prison industrial complex which is an outgrowth of slavery (Blackmon, 2009; Butler, 2009; Tonry, 2011). This mass incarceration has emasculated and resulted in caste-like status for African-American males to such a degree that legal scholar Michelle Alexander described this phenomenon as a modern Jim Crow system (Alexander, 2010).

Media marketing pioneer Tom Burrell (2010) suggested portrayals of innate Black inferiority in the media desensitize the American public to the deaths of Black youth. Burrell (2010) refers to this situation as the "paradox of progress" (p. 4), which essentially fuels the erroneous notion that our nation has moved beyond the issue of race. Therefore, when Black and Latino families are trapped in crime-ridden, blighted urban communities, their condition is viewed as a result of their own pathological cultural practices. On the one hand, when children of color in these communities are killed, their deaths are practically seen as excusable, however when White children lose their lives, the media promotes these deaths as national tragedies (Burrell, 2010; Butler, 2010; Tonry, 2011). Not surprisingly, Loewen (2007) noted "that for the first time in this century, young White adults have less tolerant attitudes toward Black Americans than those over thirty" (p. 171). Moreover, perspectives such as, "if they were not pathological," or "if they possessed strong family values" these types of things would not occur become the norm.

Finally, negative portrayals of Black life and Black deaths in the media support the concept of negrophobia, which is an unfounded fear (buttressed by negative media portrayals of Blacks) of Blacks, the normalization of Black deaths, and that Whites will be the victims of Black on White violence (Armour, 1997). Conversely, Burrell (2010) contended the media's Black inferiority campaign desensitized Blacks to the death of members of their own group, made them unconcerned about Black-on-Black violence in their own blighted urban communities, and made them considerably more likely to rally around the issue of White on Black crime.

## **Significance of Current Study**

This study is significant because it bridges the race, sociological, communication, and religious literatures to examine the inherent differences regarding how murdered Black and White children are described in the media. To accomplish the goals set forth, this study focused on the adjectives that are used to describe White and Black child victims. The following three questions were foundational to this study: (1) How often do the most-frequented Internet sites use the word “angels” to refer to child victims in the Sandy Hook Elementary School massacre of 2012? (2) What words does the public use to describe murdered Black child victims in Chicago in 2012? (3) What implications underlie the words used in media reporting of murdered Black and White child victims?

## **Methodology**

The methodology utilized in this study involved five steps. The first step involved conducting a Google search using the key words “Sandy Hook Angels.” The second step involved identifying all websites that used the phrase “Sandy Hook Angels” in their title. The third step involving identifying the source of all websites that used this phrase. This step was a lengthy one and involved reading all Internet stories that used the phrase “Sandy Hook Angels,” and identifying whether the website was related to an obituary, art, philanthropy, or social media. In cases where the Internet link was a Facebook, Twitter, or YouTube video, the decision was made to consolidate these various technological forms under “social media.” The fourth step involved identifying a particular geographic region in the United States that had deaths somewhat comparable to that of the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting. Although we could not find a particular incident in which a gunman murdered a group of young Black children, we did identify Chicago as a major metropolitan city with an exceptionally high number of deaths per capita. This analysis revealed Chicago had 108 deaths, which was the highest number of deaths in 2012, and of this number 8 Black children, or 7%, were under the age of 7. To further establish the validity of the study, the decision was made to categorize the White murdered children of Sandy Hook Elementary School with the 8 Black murdered children age 7 and younger from Chicago. The last step involved establishing reliability. After the first author identified the primary Internet themes, reliability was determined by having the second author elicit the same themes. In order to establish the validity of the themes identified by the first author, reliability was determined when the authors agreed on at least 80% of the aforementioned themes. Reliability in this study was 98% and suggests the themes identified by the authors were valid and that the findings presented in this study were accurate.

## Results

Twenty [20] (or 77%) of the 26 victims of the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting of 2012 were non-Black children under the age of 7 [See Table 1 for the Name, Age, Date of Death, Community, and Cause of Death among Children Aged 7 and Younger in the Sandy Hook Elementary School Shooting in Newtown, Connecticut in 2012]. Eight children or 7% of victims in the Chicago murders of 2012 were Black children under the age of 7 [See Table 2 Name, Age, Date of Death, Community, and Cause of Death among Children Aged 7 and Younger among the 108 Youth and Children Killed in Chicago in the Year 2012]. Fifty-three (53) of the most frequently visited sites on the Internet related to the Sandy Hook Elementary School Shooting were linked to Art, Fundraising, Memorandum, and Social Media. Through various visual modes such as pictures, paintings, drawings, songs, music videos, iPhones, and music concerts, the faces, names, and lives of the Sandy Hook Elementary victims are immortalized. Twenty-four or 45% of sites were devoted to this theme. The “Social Media” theme is related to Internet links related to email, Facebook, YouTube or Twitter accounts. Eleven sites or 21% of sites were devoted to this theme. The “Memorandum” theme is related to Internet links that highlight the pictures, birthdates, or hobbies of the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting victims or commentary related to this tragic incident. Ten sites or 19% of sites were devoted to this theme. The “Fundraising” theme is related to Internet links that solicit and accept financial contributions for the victims of the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting. Eight sites or 15% of sites were devoted to this theme [See Table 3 for the Source, Headline, and Link Regarding the Sandy Hook Elementary School Shooting Victims in Newtown, Connecticut].

Table 1 – Name, Age, Date of Death, Community, and Cause of Death among Children Aged 7 and Younger in the Sandy Hook Elementary School Shooting in Newtown, Connecticut in 2012

NAME	AGE	DATE OF DEATH	COMMUNITY	CAUSE OF DEATH
(1) Charlotte Bacon	6	12/14/2012	Newtown	School Shooting
(2) Daniel Barden	7	12/14/2012	Newtown	School Shooting
(3) Olivia Engel	6	12/14/2012	Newtown	School Shooting
(4) Josephine Gay	7	12/14/2012	Newtown	School Shooting
(5) Ana M. Marquez-Greene	6	12/14/2012	Newtown	School Shooting
(6) Dylan Hockley	6	12/14/2012	Newtown	School Shooting
(7) Madeleine F. Hsu	6	12/14/2012	Newtown	School Shooting
(8) Catherine V. Hubbard	6	12/14/2012	Newtown	School Shooting
(9) Chase Kowalski	7	12/14/2012	Newtown	School Shooting
(10) Jesse Lewis	6	12/14/2012	Newtown	School Shooting
(11) James Mattioli	6	12/14/2012	Newtown	School Shooting
(12) Grace McDonnell	7	12/14/2012	Newtown	School Shooting
(13) Emilie Parker	6	12/14/2012	Newtown	School Shooting
(14) Jack Pinto	6	12/14/2012	Newtown	School Shooting
(15) Noah Pozner	6	12/14/2012	Newtown	School Shooting
(16) Caroline Previdi	6	12/14/2012	Newtown	School Shooting
(17) Jessica Rekos	6	12/14/2012	Newtown	School Shooting
(18) Avielle Richman	6	12/14/2012	Newtown	School Shooting
(19) Benjamin Wheeler	6	12/14/2012	Newtown	School Shooting
(20) Allison N. Wyatt	6	12/14/2012	Newtown	School Shooting

Table 2 – Name, Age, Date of Death, Community, and Cause of Death among Children Aged 7 and Younger among the 108 Youth and Children Killed in Chicago in the Year 2012

NAME	AGE	DATE OF DEATH	COMMUNITY	CAUSE OF DEATH
(1) Neriyah Beller	4	12/29/2012	North Lawndale	Arson
(2) Julia Duda	2 mos.	9/15/2012	Belmont Cragin	Child Abuse
(3) Emonie Beasley-Brown	3 weeks	8/15/2012	West Englewood	Child Abuse
(4) Iyonna Davis	1	7/28/2012	Roseland	Trauma
(5) Heaven Sutton	7	6/27/2012	Austin	Gunshot
(6) Armaney Cotton	2	4/14/2012	Englewood	Child Abuse
(7) Aliyah Shell	6	3/17/2012	South Lawndale	Gunshot
(8) Christina Thomas	6 mos.	1/2/2012	Englewood	Child Abuse

Table 3 – Source, Headline, and Link Regarding the Sandy Hook Elementary School Shooting Victims in Newtown, Connecticut

Source	Headline	Link
Social Media (Television)	TVHS sends angels to watch over Sandy Hook	<a href="http://www.reformer.com/ci_22308436/tvhs-sends-angels-watch-over-sandy-hook?source=most_viewed">http://www.reformer.com/ci_22308436/tvhs-sends-angels-watch-over-sandy-hook?source=most_viewed</a>
Social Media (Facebook)	Remembrance of the Sandy Hook Elementary School Angels	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/RemembranceOfTheSandyHookElementarySchoolAngels">https://www.facebook.com/RemembranceOfTheSandyHookElementarySchoolAngels</a>
Fundraising	Connecticut State Grange Establishes Sandy Hook Angels Fund	<a href="http://articles.courant.com/2013-01-03/community/hcrs-69527hc-statewide-20130102_1_local-granges-communities-through-service-projects-donations">http://articles.courant.com/2013-01-03/community/hcrs-69527hc-statewide-20130102_1_local-granges-communities-through-service-projects-donations</a>

Art (Song)	Girl sings like an 'angel' for Sandy Hook tribute	<a href="http://www.thesunchronicle.com/news/local_news/girl-sings-like-an-angel-for-sandy-hook-tribute/article_fb509876-5692-11e2-aaaa-001a4bcf887a.html">http://www.thesunchronicle.com/news/local_news/girl-sings-like-an-angel-for-sandy-hook-tribute/article_fb509876-5692-11e2-aaaa-001a4bcf887a.html</a>
Art (Song)	Demi Lovato Sandy Hook Tribute, Singer Dedicates 'Angels Among Us' To Newtown Shooting Victims (Video)	<a href="http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/12/26/demi-lovato-sandy-hook-tribute-dedicates-angels-among-us_n_2365606.html">http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/12/26/demi-lovato-sandy-hook-tribute-dedicates-angels-among-us_n_2365606.html</a>
Fundraising (Sporting Event)	SBHS Softball for Sandy Hook, CT "20 Angels"	<a href="http://fairlawn-saddlebrook.patch.com/blog_posts/sbhs-softball-for-sandy-hook-ct-20-angels">http://fairlawn-saddlebrook.patch.com/blog_posts/sbhs-softball-for-sandy-hook-ct-20-angels</a>
Art (Photography)	Heart-wrenching photo collage shows the 'little angels' slain in Conn.	<a href="http://now.msn.com/sandy-hook-children-killed-are-honored-in-viral-photo-collage">http://now.msn.com/sandy-hook-children-killed-are-honored-in-viral-photo-collage</a>
Memorandum	Sandy Hook: The angels for whom the bells toll	<a href="http://www.shorelinetimes.com/articles/2012/12/29/opinion/doc50df50f7b8f88802414971.txt">http://www.shorelinetimes.com/articles/2012/12/29/opinion/doc50df50f7b8f88802414971.txt</a>
Art (Angel)	Sandy Hook children depicted as angels in Christmas decorations December 25, 2012	<a href="http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/ens/2012/12/25/sandy-hook-children-depicted-as-angels-in-christmas-decorations/">http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/ens/2012/12/25/sandy-hook-children-depicted-as-angels-in-christmas-decorations/</a>
Fundraising	NFL Angel JJ Watt Gives Sandy Hook Children a Special Gift	<a href="http://www.godvine.com/read/jj-watt-129.html">http://www.godvine.com/read/jj-watt-129.html</a>

Art (Angel)	<u>Sandy Hook Angels @SHESangels</u> We're heartbroken, but faithful. There's 20 little angels watching over us.	<a href="http://bigfrog104.com/andy-griggs-bobby-pinson-write-20-little-angels-for-sandy-hook/">http://bigfrog104.com/andy-griggs-bobby-pinson-write-20-little-angels-for-sandy-hook/</a> ... <a href="#">#SandyHook</a> <a href="#">#Newtown#ChooseLOVE</a>
Social Media (Twitter)	<u>Sandy Hook Angels @SandyHookAngels</u> This all has just touched America's heart.	<a href="#">#PrayForNewtown#sandyhookangels</a> <a href="https://twitter.com/SandyHookAngels">https://twitter.com/SandyHookAngels</a>
Art	Sandy Hook Angels A Virtual Cemetery created by: 天使	<a href="http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=vcsr&amp;GSvcid=345436">http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=vcsr&amp;GSvcid=345436</a>
Art (Pictures)	Angels lost too soon: Sandy Hook shooting victims remembered (12/17/12)	<a href="http://pix11.com/2012/12/17/angels-lost-too-soon-sandy-hook-shooting-victims-remembered/">http://pix11.com/2012/12/17/angels-lost-too-soon-sandy-hook-shooting-victims-remembered/</a>

Art (Music Video)	<p><u><a href="#">Nashua native releases music video as tribute to Sandy Hook victims</a></u></p> <p>6 days ago – A screen shot from "26 Angels," a music video tribute to the victims of the Sandy Hook Elementary shooting.</p>	<p><u><a href="http://www.nashuatelegraph.com/.../nashua-native-releases-music-vi">www.nashuatelegraph.com/.../nashua-native-releases-music-vi</a></u></p>
Social Media (Facebook)	<p><u><a href="#">Precious Angels of Sandy Hook Elementary   Facebook</a></u></p> <p>I haven't posted anything on this page as I was out of town for week but tomorrow I will post! Just because I didn't post, didn't mean I wasn't thinking about the ...</p>	<p><a href="http://www.facebook.com/preciousangelsofsandyhookelementary">www.facebook.com/preciousangelsofsandyhookelementary</a></p>
Art	<p><u><a href="#">Woman Collects 'Angels' To Send To Sandy Hook Victims   NBC 4i</a></u></p> <p>Jan 3, 2013 – A local woman is offering more than just hope for the victims of the Newtown, Conn. school shooting. She's taking action.</p>	<p><a href="http://www2.nbc4i.com/.../woman-collects-angels-send-sandy-hook">www2.nbc4i.com/.../woman-collects-angels-send-sandy-hook</a></p>
Art (Quilt)	<p><u><a href="#">Sandy Hook Angels - QuiltBug Quilt Shop</a></u></p> <p><a href="http://quiltbug.com/pdf/sandy-hook-angels.pdf">quiltbug.com/pdf/sandy-hook-angels.pdf</a></p> <p>Sandy Hook Angels. Here is a suggestion for a quilt to be made to honor the 26 Sandy Hook angels. It features an open center which measures. 36-1/2" x ...</p>	<p><a href="http://quiltbug.com/pdf/sandy-hook-angels.pdf">quiltbug.com/pdf/sandy-hook-angels.pdf</a></p>

<p>Memorandum (Protection)</p>	<p><u>Hell's Angels protect Sandy Hook School yesterday. - <a href="#">Imgur</a></u> Hell's Angels protect Sandy Hook School yesterday. ... It's a mixture of a lot of people, Hells angels, patriot guards, police and firemen from all over the tristate ...</p>	<p><a href="http://imgur.com/gallery/LT0o5">imgur.com/gallery/LT0o5</a></p>
<p>Art (iPhone)</p>	<p><u>For the Angels of Sandy Hook - iPhone Art</u> 50% of print sales of "For the Innocents Lost" will be donated to a Sandy Hook relief fund for the siblings and classmates of the victims.</p>	<p><a href="http://www.tjthomas-iphoneart.com/#!angels/c1pya">www.tjthomas-iphoneart.com/#!angels/c1pya</a></p>
<p>Art (Video)</p>	<p><u>Video: Nashua musician's tribute to Sandy Hook victims - '26 Angels ...</u> 6 days ago – Nashua native Ben Proulx and filmmaker and songwriter Justin Cohen have released their music video tribute to the victims of the Sandy Hook ...</p>	<p><a href="http://www.unionleader.com">www.unionleader.com</a> &gt; <u>NH Angle</u></p>

Fundraising	<p><u>Give Back: 5 Ways to Honor the Angels of Sandy Hook Elementary ...</u>  Dec 19, 2012 – But in addition to mindful compassion, here are five ways to honor the angels of Sandy Hook Elementary School today, whether you want to ...</p>	<p><a href="http://philanthropistas.com/give-back-5-ways-to-honor-the-angels-o">philanthropistas.com/give-back-5-ways-to-honor-the-angels-o</a></p>
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Fundraising (Cookies)	<p><u>Angel Cookies for Sandy Hook Elementary School</u>  Dec 16, 2012 – Angel cookies dedicated to the memory of those who lost their lives at Sandy Hook Elementary school.</p>	<p><a href="http://www.sweetsugarbelle.com/.../to-the-angels-of-sandy-hook-ele">www.sweetsugarbelle.com/.../to-the-angels-of-sandy-hook-ele</a></p>
Memorandum (Guestbook)	<p><u>Sandy Hook Elementary Angels Guest Book: sign their ... - Legacy.com</u>  Sign and view the Guest Book for Sandy Hook Elementary Angels, leave condolences, send flowers, or find funeral service information. J A Snow Funeral Home ..</p>	<p><a href="http://www.legacy.com/.../guestbook.aspx?n=sandy-hook-angels">www.legacy.com/.../guestbook.aspx?n=sandy-hook-angels</a></p>

Social Media (Facebook)	<u><a href="#">Angels of Sandy Hook CT   Facebook</a></u> We were collecting donations for the "My Sandy Hook Family Fund" by creating ornaments in memory of the children and teachers at Sandy Hook School.	<a href="http://www.facebook.com/AngelsOfSandyHookCt">www.facebook.com/AngelsOfSandyHookCt</a>
Social Media (Pinterest)	<u><a href="#">Sandy Hook Angels</a></u> Julie is using Pinterest, an online pinboard to collect and share what inspires you.	<a href="http://pinterest.com/julesbamagirl/sandy-hook-angels/">pinterest.com/julesbamagirl/sandy-hook-angels/</a>
Social Media (YouTube)	<u><a href="#">Sandy Hook Angels</a></u>	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mwGvSbD3PIU">www.youtube.com/watch?v=mwGvSbD3PIU</a>

Art (Clothing Item)	<u>R.I.P. Angels of Newtown Sandy Hook Shooting T-Shirt - We're praying for. R.I.P. Angels of Newtown Sandy Hook Shooting</u>	<a href="http://skreened.com/.../r-i-p-angels-of-newtown-sandy-hook-shootin">skreened.com/.../r-i-p-angels-of-newtown-sandy-hook-shootin</a>
Art (Song)	<u>Andy Griggs' New Song '20 Little Angels' Honors the Children of ...</u> 4 days ago – When I first learned of what was happening at an elementary school in Connecticut, I was numb.	<a href="http://keanradio.com/andy-griggs-new-song-20-little-angels-honors-">keanradio.com/andy-griggs-new-song-20-little-angels-honors-</a>
Fundraising	<u>Connecticut State Grange establishes Sandy Hook Angels Fund ...</u> PRLog (Press Release) - Jan. 2, 2013 - December 14th is a day no one in Connecticut will forget. Thoughts and prayers go to every victim, student, faculty ..	<a href="http://www.prlog.org/12052018-connecticut-state-grange-establishes">www.prlog.org/12052018-connecticut-state-grange-establishes</a>
Memorandum	<u>Angels Among Us Supports Sandy Hook Elementary Teachers ...</u>	<a href="http://mommysmemorandum.com/angels-supports-sandy-hook-elem">mommysmemorandum.com/angels-supports-sandy-hook-elem</a>

Art (Slideshow)	<p>16 hours ago – The Sandy Hook Elementary tragic event opened our hearts and left us in disbelief. <u><a href="#">Pictures - Sandy Hook Angels in Heaven continued - Fort Worth ...</a></u></p> <p>View a slideshow of 'Sandy Hook Angels in Heaven continued' and other Fort Worth Healthy Recipes pictures.</p>	<p><u><a href="http://www.examiner.com/.../sandy-hook-angels-heaven-continued">www.examiner.com/.../sandy-hook-angels-heaven-continued</a></u></p>
Memorandum (Tribute)	<p><u><a href="#">December 20 – Tribute to the Angels of Sandy Hook Elementary ...</a></u></p> <p>Columbia County's tribute to the Angels of Sandy Hook Elementary will go on, rain or shine, at 6 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 20, at Evans Towne Center Park The event ...</p>	<p><a href="http://evanstownecenterpark.com/?p=557">evanstownecenterpark.com/?p=557</a></p>
Fundraising	<p><u><a href="#">Support Sandy Hook Angels - Razoo</a></u></p> <p>Also fundraising for this cause. Joe's Fundraiser for the Victims of Sandy Hook Elementary Tragedy · Hope and Love for Newtown. 2% complete. Compassion for ...</p>	<p><a href="http://www.razoo.com/story/Support-Sandy-Hook-Angels">www.razoo.com/story/Support-Sandy-Hook-Angels</a></p>

<p>Memorandum (Obituary)</p>	<p><u>Sandy Hook Elementary Angels - Dignity Memorial</u> Obituary for Sandy Hook Angels, ... Sandy Hook Elementary Angels photos. There are 26 photos in the gallery. View Photo Gallery. In Memory of ...</p>	<p>obits.dignitymemorial.com/dignity../obituary.aspx?pid...en</p>
<p>Social Media (Pinterest)</p>	<p><u>Twenty Six Angels: remembering Sandy Hook Elem. in Newtown ...</u> My Family, my Hopes, and my Dreams. Beauty and Faith, Sorrow and Love..yeah, that's me. Jill is using Pinterest, an online pinboard to collect and share what .</p>	<p>pinterest.com/.../twenty-six-angels-remembering-sandy-hook</p>
<p>Social Media (YouTube Video)</p>	<p><u>Sandy Hook Angels - YouTube</u> <u>4:00</u> www.youtube.com/watch?v=vOdc8VrVpLI Dec 17, 2012 - Uploaded by TeeHee780 To all those lost at Sandy Hook elementary in Newtown, Connecticut. Two of the children didn't have photos.</p>	<p>www.youtube.com/watch?v=vOdc8VrVpLI</p>

Art (Snow Angels)	<p><u>"Snow Angels (after Sandy Hook)" by Sarah McKinstry-Brown ...</u></p> <p>The weatherman can't predict accumulation. He can only tell you it will be cold. Expect ice, wind, snow, expect delays. Your daughters play outside, dancing ...</p>	<p><a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vOdc8VrVpLI">www.youtube.com/watch?v=vOdc8VrVpLI</a></p>
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Memorandum	<p><u>Sandy Hook shooting victim Olivia Engel was an angel taken too early</u></p> <p>Dec 15, 2012 – Six-year-old Olivia Engel was supposed to be an angel in Friday night's live nativity performed at St. Rose of Lima Roman Catholic Church.</p>	<p><a href="http://www.thetranscript.com/.../sandy-hook-newtown-shooting-victi">www.thetranscript.com/.../sandy-hook-newtown-shooting-victi</a></p>
Memorandum	<p><u>In Memory Of Sandy Hook Angels</u></p> <p>To all the families who lost loved ones in the Sandy Hook School shootings, my heart and prayers go out to all of you.</p>	<p><a href="http://www.heritagefuneralhome.us/obituary_page.php?id=505">www.heritagefuneralhome.us/obituary_page.php?id=505</a></p>

Memorandum	<p><u>hilary brady starts “Angels Among Us” for Sandy Hook Elementary ...</u>  16 hours ago – hilary brady starts “Angels Among Us” for Sandy Hook Elementary ...Angels Among Us Supports Sandy Hook Elementary Teachers · Live ...</p>	<p>mommysmemorandum.com/angels..  ..sandy-hook.../hilary-brad</p>
Social Media (Facebook)	<p><u>The Sandy Hook Angel Project   Facebook</u>  The Sandy Hook Angel Project, Sandy Hook, CT. 547 likes · 505 talking about this.</p>	<p>www.facebook.com/...Sandy-Hook-Angel.../5476893519253</p>

Art	<p><u><a href="#">Angels Represent Sandy Hook Victims at National Cathedral ...</a></u>  chevy Chase Patch.com/.../angels-represent-sandy-hook-victims...  The angels will be on display in the Children's Chapel of the Washington National Cathedral through Jan. 6, 2013.</p>	<a href="http://chevy Chase Patch.com/.../angels-represent-sandy-hook-victims">chevy Chase Patch.com/.../angels-represent-sandy-hook-victims</a>
Social Media (Facebook)	<p><u><a href="#">Angel Action- Sandy Hook   Facebook</a></u>  Westboro Baptist Church is planning another attack of hateful words, protesting the funerals of the 20 children and 7 adults who died yesterday at Sandy Hook ...</p>	<a href="http://www.facebook.com/events/398024316947100">www.facebook.com/events/398024316947100</a>
Social Media (Facebook)	<p><u><a href="#">Sandy Hook Angels : Candle Light Vigil   Facebook</a></u>  Sat, Dec 14 - First Parish Church 923 Main st Fitchburg Ma  I would like us all as a Community to come together and have a vigil and remembrance of the innocent lives lost to this Tragedy please join me.</p>	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/events/574310519252653/">https://www.facebook.com/events/574310519252653/</a>

Art (Angel Ornament)	<p><u>Angels of Sandy Hook CT - Can You Help? - Newtown, CT Patch</u>  Dec 19, 2012 – We came up with idea for an ornament to memorialize the fallen at Sandy Hook School. Our page is  <a href="http://www.facebook.com/angelsofsandyhookct">www.facebook.com/angelsofsandyhookct</a>.</p>	<a href="http://newtown.patch.com/.../angels-of-sandy-hook-ct-can-you-help">newtown.patch.com/.../angels-of-sandy-hook-ct-can-you-help</a>
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Fundraising	<p><u>Family Therapy Turns Into Sandy Hook Angel Project - Newtown Patch</u>  Dec 28, 2012 – One family's creative coping mechanism has turned into a successful local fundraiser.</p>	<a href="http://newtown.patch.com/.../therapy-turns-into-sandy-hook-angel-p">newtown.patch.com/.../therapy-turns-into-sandy-hook-angel-p</a>
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Art	<p><u>Woman Collects 'Angels' To Send To Sandy Hook Victims - Local ...</u>  Jan 3, 2013 – Columbus — A Central Ohio woman is offering more than just hope to the victims of the shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in ...</p>	<a href="http://www.msnbc.msn.com/.../woman-collects-angels-send-sandy-h...">www.msnbc.msn.com/.../woman-collects-angels-send-sandy-h...</a>
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Memorandum	<p><u>Blessings to the Sandy Hook Angels   WBNG-TV: News, Sports and ...</u>  My mom and I wanted to do something to send our love and remembrance to the children and teachers of Sandy Hook Elementary School.</p>	<a href="http://www.wbng.com/younews/185164481.html">www.wbng.com/younews/185164481.html</a>
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Art (Video)	<u>Special Little Christmas Angels Of Sandy Hook ... - Examiner.com</u> View a video of 'MUST WATCH: Special Little Christmas Angels Of Sandy Hook Elementary School' and other Fort Lauderdale Parenting Teens videos.	<a href="http://www.wbng.com/younews/185164481.html">www.wbng.com/younews/185164481.html</a>
Art (Photography)	<u>Good guy Obama with siblings of the Sandy Hook angels - Imgur</u> Good guy Obama with siblings of the Sandy Hook angels.	<a href="http://imgur.com/gallery/4SMFo">imgur.com/gallery/4SMFo</a>
Art (Wooden Angels)	<u>27 Sandy Hook Wooden Angels In Memory Of Fallen   ImgAce</u> Dec 17, 2012 – 27 angels near sandy hook school memorial twenty seven wooden angels memorial with teddy bears stand near sandy hook elementary ...	<a href="http://imgace.com/.../27-sandy-hook-wooden-angels-in-memory-of-...">imgace.com/.../27-sandy-hook-wooden-angels-in-memory-of-...</a>
Art (Wristband)	<u>Angels of Sandy Hook Wristband - Hope Faith Love - Newtown ...</u> Wristband Connection has donated 1000 wristbands for remembrance of the Sandy Hook Elementary tragedy.	<a href="http://www.wristbandconnection.com/angels-of-sandy-hook-memori">www.wristbandconnection.com/angels-of-sandy-hook-memori</a>

## Discussion

This qualitative study had three major goals. The first goal of this study was to examine how often the most frequently visited sites on the Internet used the word “angels” to describe the child victims of the Sandy Hook massacre. To accomplish this goal, we examined the headlines provided by 53 of the most-frequented Internet sites as well as the sources of these sites. The second goal of this study was to examine the circumstances by which Black children are murdered, as well as whether the word “angels” is used when referring to these child victims. To accomplish this goal, we examined the words used by the media to describe the murdered Black children in Chicago in 2012. The third goal is to discuss racial implications that underlie the words used in the media to report the deaths of Black and White child victims. In the subsequent paragraphs, we discuss the implications of the word “angels” in respects to race, the media, racism, and the experiences of people of color in the United States. To further these aims, we offer a conceptual framework that describes how White Supremacy subtly supports the idea that the death of some children grants them “saintly” status, while merely referring to others as “the deceased,” or “victims.” However, before we do this, we feel it necessary to outline two realities.

First and foremost, we were shocked, saddened, frustrated, and angered by the massacre that occurred at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown Connecticut on December 14, 2012. Although this is not the first school shooting to occur in the United States, scholars have noted an increase in these incidences over the past 15 years (Borum, Cornell, Modzeleski, & Jimerson, 2010; Donahue, Schiraldi, & Ziedenberg, 2004; Leary, Kowalski, Smith, & Phillips, 2003). The media has offered several explanations regarding why this massacre occurred, and has blamed everything from bullying, to untreated mental illness, to the need for stricter gun control laws (New York Daily News, January 14, 2013). In the face of these very public debates, however, the fact remains that the media’s frequent use of the word “angels” when referring to White victims was a constant (conscious and unconscious) reminder that these children were innocent, pure, and did not deserve what happened to them. While we wholeheartedly agree with this sentiment, as Black scholars we are trained to evaluate how historical and everyday events directly or indirectly support the superiority of one race over another. Therefore, thorough academic exploration and consideration, and not contempt for Whites or desensitization to those directly affected by the Sandy Hook Elementary School tragedy, was the impetus for this scholarly endeavor. Second, as we continually worked through our feelings of shock, sadness, frustration, and anger, we could not help but notice the word “angels” has not been used in the media to refer to murdered Black child victims. What accounts for this difference? As Black scholars, we believe the use of the word “angels” is deliberate and is a subtle yet very powerful form of racism that creates inequities in how the lives of these children are viewed. More clearly, the word “angels” makes the death of White children synonymous with innocence, purity, and cleanliness, while castigating Black children and other children of color to an inferior state where their deaths do not elicit the same degree of public shock, sadness, frustration, or anger.

## **Racial Implications: Underlined Words Used to Report Murdered Child Victims**

As previously mentioned, this study builds on the previous scholarship of Perry and Roesch (2009) and Malcolm (2010) and links the word “angels” with Whiteness, innocence, religious piety, and heaven. Although one might argue the phrase “angels” was appropriate given the ages of the child victims of the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting, as well as the circumstance of their death, why was the word “angel” also used to refer to Fred McFeely Rogers (aka “Mister Rogers”) (March 20, 1928 – February 27, 2003), a man that died at the age of 75? So, does age make an individual worthy of the title “angel,” or does race and color? Interestingly, while the phrases “saintly,” “an angel,” and “sent from Heaven” were used to describe this elderly iconic figure in children’s television, as evidenced by the sources provided in Table 3, the same phrases were used to refer to the White child victims of Sandy Hook Elementary. Even Malcolm’s (2010) research related to the existence of heaven or a spiritual afterlife revealed heaven to be a place inhabited by those who are morally superior. Essentially, at the root of this Judeo-Christian belief is the belief that “angels” are good and deserve automatic entrée into heaven, however, to whom are good “angels” compared? Given the power of the media to determine how Blacks and Whites are perceived (Anastasio, et al., 1999; Baker, 1996; Beaudoin & Thorson, 2006; Dixon, 2008a; 2008b; Eberhardt, Davies, Purdie-Vaughns, & Johnson, 2006; Mastro et al., 2009; Oliver, et al., 2004), it is plausible that while the word “angels” can help the family and loved ones of these murdered children better cope with their loss, it could simultaneously support the goals of White Supremacy by elevating young White murdered child victims to a superior position not historically or currently occupied by young Black murdered child victims in the media. Thus, White lives are “sacred and angelic” and Black lives are corollaries of Black deviance.

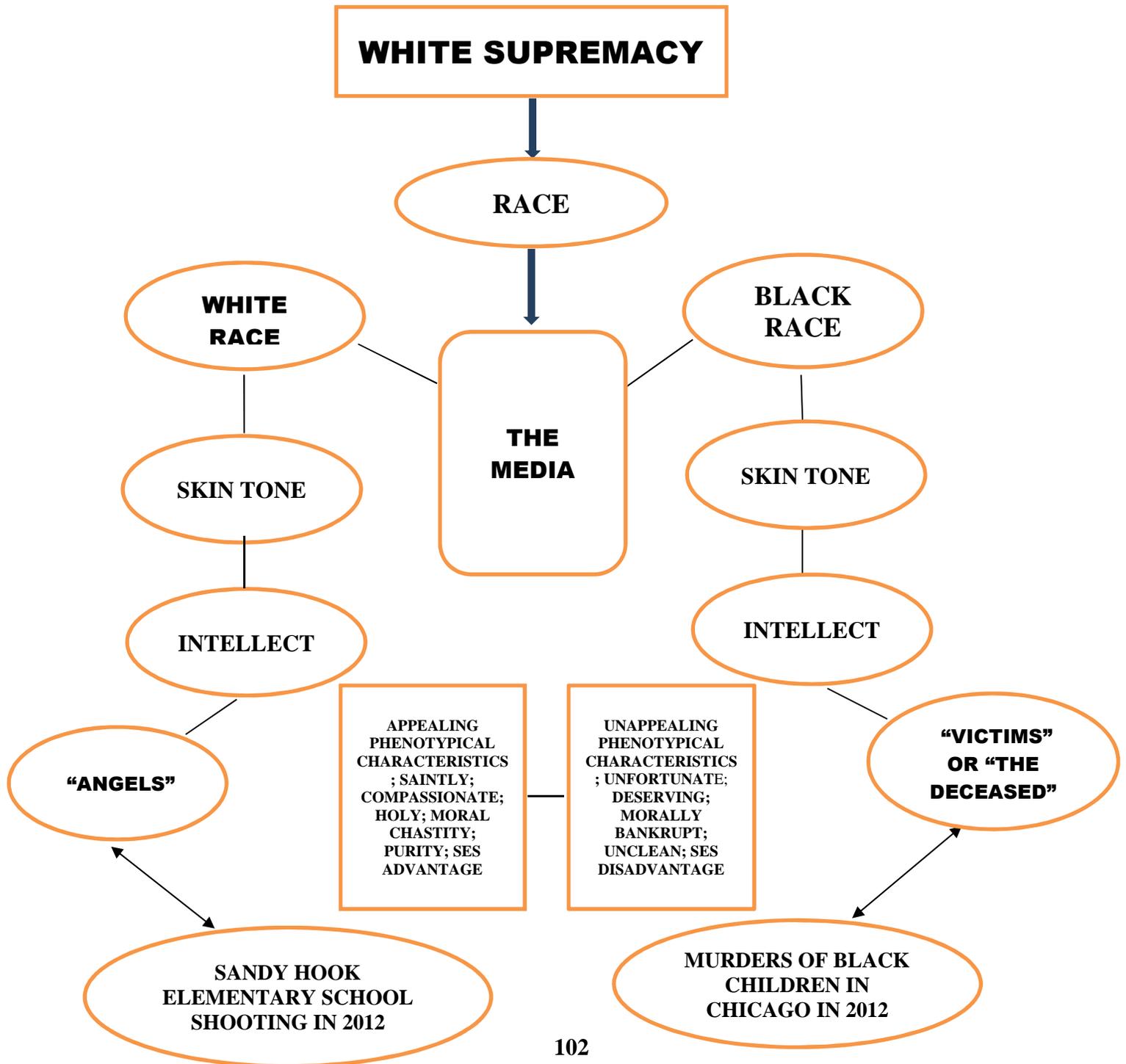
### **Conceptual Framework**

In this section, we discuss our conceptual framework which is built on White supremacy, race, and differences in how the media present and discuss the deaths of White and Black child victims. Foundational to this framework is White Supremacy which is based on the notion that the White race is inherently superior to all other races (Gilens, 1998; Painter, 2011). Thus, the skin tone, intellect, and socioeconomic advantage of White children deem them appealing, compassionate, holy, morally chaste, pure, and ‘angelic,’ while the skin tone, intellect, and socioeconomic poverty of Black children render them unappealing, unfortunate, deserving of misfortune, morally bankrupt, and unclean. Why didn’t the media use the word “angels” to describe the 8 Black children (Neriyah Beller, Julia Duda, Emonie Beasley-Brown, Iyonna Davis, Heaven Sutton, Armaney Cotton, Aliyah Shell, and Christina Thomas) that lost their lives in Chicago in 2012? We believe there are three reasons why the media did not use the word “angels” to describe these Black child victims. First, *White Supremacy* posits the physical characteristics, intellect, and character of White children is superior to that of Black children.

Second, the media, as an extension of White supremacy, can be employed to keep White supremacy entrenched in the American social fabric because it serves to reify the virtues of Whiteness, depicting White people and White lives as more valued than non-White lives (Dixon, 2007; Jensen, 2005). Since White Supremacy primarily controls *the media*, this agent has the power to dictate the language, images, and frequency by which certain news stories are covered. Stated another way, the White-controlled media determines which stories are presented, how often these stories are presented, as well as the facts they want the public to know about these stories. Related to this point, since Newtown and Chicago families generally represent divergent ends of the socioeconomic spectrum, this may distort how children from both groups are perceived by the public. To make this point clear, as the families of Newtown, Connecticut were generally wealthy and well-educated, the media may infer the rich, educated, and hard-working are less deserving to die than the poor, who are generally seen as a societal drain on the nation's resources. Lastly, the 8 Black children murdered in Chicago in 2012 lost their lives in ways that suggest the adults who were entrusted with their care did not take this responsibility seriously. In other words, since these Black children lost their lives due to child abuse (4 children); gunshot (2 children); arson (1 child); and trauma (1 child), this suggests deficits in the moral character of the Black adults whose responsibility it was to care for these children, and thus suggests the lives of these children were less valuable than those of White children who died at the hands of a deranged gunman. Since the public may perceive these deaths as preventable (child abuse; gunshot; arson; trauma), they may reason the White child victims of Sandy Hook Elementary deserve more public sympathy because these children died at the hand of a perpetrator that was White, mentally ill, and a member of their own racial group [See Figure A for our White Supremacy-Angel Conceptual Framework].

Figure A

## White Supremacy-Angel Conceptual Framework



As previously mentioned, 53 of the most frequented sites on the Internet related to the Sandy Hook Elementary School Shooting were linked to Art, Fundraising, Memorandum, and Social Media. As it relates to art, through pictures, paintings, drawings, songs, music videos, iPhones, and music concerts, the faces and names of the Sandy Hook Elementary victims are immortalized and forever etched into the American consciousness. In addition, given the widespread appeal of social media, particularly in regards to email, Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter accounts the families of the victims, and the community of Sandy Hook receive unconditional emotional, psychological, and spiritual support during the day or night, or when they most need it. Furthermore, through the establishment of “memorandums,” the American public is constantly reminded that these children did not deserve what happened to them, and that it is the nation’s responsibility to protect children who fit the same demographic. Thus, by highlighting their pictures, birthdays, and hobbies, America is constantly reminded that, although very young, these children were growing into adults that would one day make their parents, families, and communities proud. Lastly, the “Fundraising” theme speaks to the outpouring of financial support for the families of the victims of Sandy Hook Elementary School as well as a community that, to this day, finds it very difficult to accept this malicious and unfathomable act.

In their work, Perry and Roesch (2004) noted fans of “Mister Rogers” left messages that were peppered with prayers and blessings and that drew attention to the “compassion” and “personal character” of this iconic man. Thus, by praying for and publicly acknowledging the personal characteristics of “Mister Rogers,” this no doubt comforted the family, friends, and fans of this legendary television figure. Perhaps more important, those that loss their loved ones in the Sandy Hook tragedy are constantly reminded that thousands of people that they never met (and will most likely never meet) are thinking of them and frequently praying for them (Perry & Roesch, 2004). In addition, and perhaps more important, the angels featured in the Art, Fundraising, Memorandum, and Social Media outlets comfort family, friends, and community members of Newtown and constantly remind them that their deceased is in heaven (Malcolm, 2010), is close to God, and is lovingly watching over them. Thus, by praying for and reminding others about the current ‘angelic’ status of their deceased loved one, families can experience an outpouring of public love and support, better cope with death-related grief, and eventually be healed.

## Conclusion

White supremacy, racism, and the media create a climate in which White life is valued and Black life is devalued. This chronic devaluation has been shown to negatively affect the health of members of this group (Muennig & Murphy, 2011; Pieterse, Todd, Neville, & Carter, 2012), and is the impetus that drives the overt and covert forms of racism they frequently experience (Chaney & Robertson, 2013; Bell, 1992; Blair et al., 2004; Bonilla-Silva, 2009; Bryson, 1998; Dottolo & Stewart, 2008; Elicker, 2008; Karenga, 2010; Maddox & Gray, 2004; Malcolm, 2010; Perry & Roesch, 2009). This research focused on the words that were used to describe White child victims of a school shooting in 2012 versus murdered Black children in inner-city Chicago in 2012. Clearly, the ‘angelic’ status attributed to the White child victims of Sandy Hook Elementary School is a constant reminder of the societal (e.g., race, skin tone, and socioeconomic) privilege generally enjoyed by these children. However, Black life is just as important as White life, the untimely deaths of *all* children are tragic and the families, friends, and communities of *all* children suffer in unimaginable ways, and thus need support for the grief they have experienced (Malcolm, 2010). While the media has provided abundant support for the Sandy Hook Elementary School community, it is time for the media to minimize the grief and contribute to the healing of Black individuals, families, and communities by creating a new narrative surrounding the death of poor, Black children in the inner-city. After learning about and showcasing the joys, pain, and lives of these children, their families, and communities, perhaps the day will soon come when the media will, like their Sandy Hook Elementary counterparts, also publicly refer to poor Black children in the inner city as “angels.”

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