

**Department of Communication
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES**

**SUMMER RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES
FOR UNDERGRADUATE WOMEN**

APPLICATION DEADLINE: March 1, 2012

The Department of Communication is pleased to offer the following research project for the summer of 2012. Interested students are urged to contact the faculty member(s) directing the project that most interests them. By contacting the faculty member, you can discover more about the project, learn what your responsibilities will be and, if possible, develop a timetable for the twelve-week research period.

PROJECT TITLE: Research on Whiteness and Black Entertainment

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Project Description

African-American households watch more television than Hispanic and White households according to Nielsen Ratings (<http://nielsen.com/content/dam/corporate/us/en/reports-downloads/2011-Reports/2010-2011-nielsen-television-audience-report.pdf>). Moreover, Black viewing is higher among all age groups reported from children to adults than Hispanic and White households (<http://nielsen.com/content/dam/corporate/us/en/reports-downloads/2011-Reports/2010-2011-nielsen-television-audience-report.pdf>). Given that Black viewers have more exposure to television content, research to examine the messages these viewers experience is particularly important. Traditional research on race and media in Western societies has focused on the image of Blacks in different genres including television news, television advertising, and prime-time television. However, contemporary scholarship on race and identity challenges researchers to examine the representations of whiteness in light of an ethnic majority cast, particularly in programs most watched by Black viewers in the U.S. Therefore, this study focuses on the representation of Whites in Black-context television programs. The present study examines the following research question: *How are White characters portrayed in Black –context television programs?*

For this study, we will conduct a content analysis of television programs featuring Black majority character. The content analysis includes three phases: 1) Identifying which television programs to be considered as Black-context programs based on a definition derived from previous research, 2) locating white characters throughout each several Black-context episodes of television programs and Black-context film, and 3) coding of personality traits for each White character in the Black-context television programs and

Black-context film. The coding used for the Black-context films will serve as a tool to develop an appropriate codebook for Black-context television episodes. We are currently seeking one student who will be able to locate Black-context television programs in under the guidance of research advisors and then code these programs and some Black-context films which includes recording on codesheets the location of each character by following a guidebook prepared by the Researchers. After locating the characters, the student will be responsible for entering the data into an excel spreadsheet for analysis. The student will also be involved in refining the standardized codebook for the personalities of the White characters in Black-context television programs and film. This will involve testing the definitions of key terms as described in a preliminary codebook, verifying these observations with the Research Advisors, and deliberating with the Research Advisors to formalize the codebook and codesheets for the personality traits. Research Advisors include Nancy Jennings, Associate Professor and Director of the Children's Education and Entertainment Research (CHEER) Lab, and Omotayo Banjo, Assistant Professor and Director of the Media Research Lab in the Department of Communication.