

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: White Representation in Black-context Film

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Project Description

Traditional research on race and media in Western societies typically emphasizes the monolithic stereotypes of ethnic minorities in light of a White majority cast. Such stereotypes include the asexual, model-minority Asian, the African-American coon or buck, and the Arab terrorists. Through the theoretical lens of whiteness, these stereotypes are understood to be congruent with traditional articulations of racial identity and promote an ideology of White supremacy. Contemporary scholarship on race and identity, however, challenges researchers to examine the representations of whiteness in light of an ethnic majority cast. Whereas scholars have examined themes of whiteness in Asian-oriented contexts, this particular study focuses on the representation of Whites in Black-context films. The present study examines the following research question: *How are White characters portrayed in Black –context films?*

For this study, we will conduct a content analysis (a scientific method used to objectively measure elements of messages and texts) of about 120 films featuring Black majority characters. The content analysis includes two phases: 1) locating white characters throughout each Black-context film, and 2) coding of personality traits for each White character in the Black-context film. We are currently seeking one student who will be able to code these films which includes recording on codesheets the location of each character, 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 data will then be transferred to SPSS where the student can perform data analysis techniques including labeling data points, finding low, mid, and high points

within a variable, and run statistical analyses such as frequencies, chi square, and crosstabs. The student will also be involved in refining the standardized codebook for the personalities of the White characters in Black-context film. This will involve testing the definitions of key terms as described in a preliminary codebook, verifying these observations with the Researchers, and deliberating with the Researchers to formalize the codebook and codesheets for the personality traits. Research Advisors include Omotayo Banjo, Assistant Professor and Director of the Media Research Lab in the Department of Communication, and Nancy Jennings, Associate Professor and Director of the Children's Education and Entertainment Research (CHEER) Lab.