How to Quantify the Unquantifiable
The Methodology of Gender and Intersecting Dimensions of Identity
Feminist Scholarship Division, LGBTQ Studies IG, Mass Communication Division

In the field of media and communication studies the methods we apply are informed by the theoretical paradigms of our investigations. Mass communication research on media users in long-running national surveys or media effects experiments are often tasked with reducing complex theoretical constructs to quantifiable categories. Similarly, research on representations in media applies categorical systematics to assess how gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, disability, class, age, and other dimensions of identity are depicted across media outlets.

On the one hand, research applying standardized methods usually falls short in acknowledging the social construction and blurring boundaries of these categories. On the other hand, scholarship informed by deconstructivist theories has aimed to identify examples and patterns of media realities, but are sometimes criticized for including far-reaching conclusions without generalizable evidence.

Our keynote speaker, Prof. Dr. Susanne Kinnebrock (University of Augsburg, Germany) will open the pre-conference with an overview of how the concepts of gender and sex have historically evolved within our research traditions and how closely related our methodological approaches to these developments have been. This will set the stage to elaborate and think about ways to critically appraise gender and its intersecting dimensions within the quantitative paradigm.

Overall, the pre-conference aims to bring together scholars with different approaches to the same issues with the intention of informing as well as inspiring collaborative approaches across disciplines and paradigms. We invite innovative thinking on what methodologies are open to us, both when we ask questions concerning large populations or when we seek to quantify complex ideas. What methodological approaches can we productively employ while assessing matters of gender, sex, race, ethnicity, and class in a thoughtful manner?

In order to reach this goal we aim to

(a) highlight the newest developments in communication, media, and journalism studies by showcasing current research;

(b) include a workshop on how gender, sex, sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, disability, nationality, and other dimensions of identity are discussed within different cultures and research traditions; and

(c) open the floor for roundtable discussions with reports and questions from the scientific community on best practices concerned with questions of how to assess gender, sex, sexuality, race, ethnicity, or class within mixed or standardized methods.

We invite scholars who study gender and its intersecting dimensions and who use or would like to use new methodological approaches to participate and present their findings. To facilitate the roundtables, we ask participants to submit position papers on the pre-conference’s issues, research questions, or research problems that participants would like to
discuss with other scholars. Scholars with an interest in methodological triangulations, mixed
methods, replications, validation studies, and intersectional research are welcome to
participate.

How to participate

We invite three types of submissions:

1. **Research reports** that share findings of systematic research projects that use,
   challenge, or subvert constructions of gender and other dimensions of identity. Please
   submit an abstract (approx. 500 words).

2. **Position papers** that discuss methodological issues in a current project, general
   conceptual issues, or possible questions to contribute during our roundtables on the
   advancement of investigating gender and other intersecting dimensions. Please submit
   an abstract (approx. 500 words).

3. **Workshop proposals** that suggest a workshop concept with activities, discussion
   questions, and other materials. A possible approach to the workshop can include a
   focus on examining specific concepts of identity dimensions in research traditions,
   paradigms, or historical periods of communication studies as a discipline. Other topics
   fitting the theme of the pre-conference are welcome (approx. 500 words + materials).

**Please email all submissions and questions to sabine.reich@ijk.hmtm-hannover.de.**
**Submissions are due by December 15, 2016, 11:59 EST.** Please clearly mark the
submission type before the title and in your e-mail. Notifications of acceptance will be sent
out by February 20, 2017.

**Pre-conference Organizers**
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Music, Drama and Media, Germany
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Natalia Rybas, Department of Communication Studies, Indiana University East, USA
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**Sponsors**
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