"Be a man – grow a beard": Investigation into public responses to the Gillette advert on YouTube and Reddit

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There seems to be a strong connection between hegemonic and toxic masculinity in relation to attributes such as toughness, power, heterosexuality, competitiveness and authority *used* at the expense of women (and those who do not embody these traits) in a variety of institutional contexts (see Connell 1995, Coffey-Glover 2019). This coincides with an increasing awareness of how gender roles operate in private and public spaces. The advert launched by Gillette in January 2019 fits within this discourse, aiming to promote 'positive […] versions of what it means to be a man'. This paper explores public responses to this advert from two online platforms: YouTube and Reddit. We have built two corpora (totalling 5 million words ca.) investigated through Lancsbox (Brezina, McEnery, Wattam 2015). From corpus-based and corpus-driven approaches (Tognini-Bonelli 2001), we explore a range of terms, through concordance and collocation analysis, which seems to construct particular representations of and around toxic masculinity, gender and, more broadly, women and men. Qualitative analysis compliments quantitative with the goal of providing insights into how some specific linguistic constructions are conceptualised by the users (e.g. *toxic masculinity is, lack of masculinity is*). Other preliminary findings from the corpora suggest that users are re-building a gender *appropriateness* scale through terms such as *soy boy**.

References

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