

Toxic Masculinity Explication: A YouTube Analysis

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Toxic masculinity is the phenomenon in which boys and men are expected to behave according to strict norms, severely restricting their ability to express their full range of emotions (Liu, 2016). Toxic masculinity, specifically men's emotional suppression, can reinforce rape culture, misogyny, and homophobia (Banet-Weisler & Miltner, 2015). Our goal with this project is to explicate toxic masculinity by analyzing social media.

We decided to study YouTube comments. We established criteria for selecting videos which we believed would have comments displaying toxic masculinity. The videos were from mainstream sources, published recently, and about topics likely to elicit discussions about toxic masculinity in the comments. Through reading, discussing, and re-reading the comments, the authors came to an agreement on 12 codes defining toxic masculinity: psychological strength, physical strength, power, aggression, stoicism, anti LGBTQ, competition, financial success, rejection of femininity, gender roles, and other. We also established five codes addressing toxic masculinity: dire consequences, women expect toxic masculinity, "toxic" language, misconceptions, and other.

One example of "stoicism" is: "I want a big masculine man. I don't want a cry baby who can't take charge." This comment reinforces the notion that "real men" cannot show emotion, especially sadness. This comment also exemplifies the "women expect" code. We found that some women reinforced these rigid definitions of masculinity, and that men often believed that women expected men to behave according to these guidelines.

Toxic masculinity greatly restricts men, leading to extreme groups such as "men going their own way" and incels. It can stunt men's emotional development, as they are unable to express or work through their emotions. This can escalate to violence and can in some cases, be a factor to school shootings.

References

- Banet-Weisler, S. & Miltner, K. M. (2015). #MasculinitySoFragile: culture, structure, and networked misogyny, *Feminist Media Studies*, 16(1), 171-174.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2016.1120490>
- Liu, W. M. (2016, April 14). How Donald Trump's 'toxic masculinity' is bad for other men. *Time*. Retrieved from <http://time.com/4273865/donald-trump-toxic-masculinity/>