

Self-positioning in gender-normative comment sections

This paper reports on different forms of (non)normative gendered self-positioning and respective negotiations in participatory online spaces relating to period discourse (Frank, 2020). Period discourse, here, is chosen as an appropriate backdrop against which to study strategies of positioning that disrupt cis-gendered norms. Following a corpus-assisted discourse analytical approach, the study investigates positioning strategies set within the interactional framework of YouTube videos and comment sections (Androutsopoulos & Tereick, 2015).

An initial keyword analysis was used to observe relevant linguistic patterns of positioning within the comments. Subsequently, a qualitative approach focused on strategies of self-positioning when negotiating gender norms, gender normativity, and gender activism.

Findings suggest that self-positioning within the normative frame of period discourse occurs in community building strategies (1), or when the commenter is negotiating their participation (2).

- (1) *I'm not the sticking something in your vagina kinda girl*
 (2) *From a 34 year old lady, thank you so much for making this video.*

Commenters further choose to disclose their gender when they disrupt gender expectations either in viewing and potentially intruding in cis-gendered spaces (3), or participating in menstruation (meta)practices (4). Other forms of self-positioning strategically target gender normativity by meta-discursively interacting with the video (5) and other comments.

- (3) *I'm a cis dude, why am I watching this* ☒
 (4) *I'm male BUT I do have a daughter*
 (5) *thanks so much for the gender neutral language, signed, an agender person who has periods :)*

In sum, the paper investigates the dialogic interaction between pretext (gender normativity) and text (comment sections), based on the platform's affordance of providing unmarked participation to its users. I focus specifically on instances where users strategically disrupt this by self-positioning their gender for a variety of purposes and show how digital spaces can be used to negotiate social change.

Androutsopoulos, J., & Tereick, J. (2015). YouTube: Language and discourse practices in participatory culture. In *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Digital Communication*. Routledge.
 Frank, S. E. (2020). Queering Menstruation: Trans and Non-Binary Identity and Body Politics. *Sociological Inquiry*, 90(2), 371–404. <https://doi.org/10.1111/soin.12355>

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