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## **TWITTER REACTIONS TO THE UN’S #HEFORSHE CAMPAIGN FOR GENDER EQUALITY: A CORPUS- BASED DISCOURSE ANALYSIS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Previous research has shown that conducting a corpus-based analysis of Twitter data presents several methodological challenges (McEnery *et al.*, 2015; Zappavigna, 2012). This paper exemplifies one possible approach: analysing keywords to identify discourses. Twitter presents difficulties not only to corpus-based discourse analysts; researchers have argued that many not-for-profit organisations struggle to maximise the potential of social media sites such as Twitter (Lovejoy *et al.*, 2012). This paper analyses a corpus of tweets containing the hashtag #HeForShe which were posted between 2014-09-20 and 2014-10-02. The main aim is to consider public opinion of the United Nation’s HeForShe campaign for gender equality, immediately after the campaign launch. The analysis reveals that discussion of the campaign is largely positive; however, it is possible to identify unexploited opportunities, that is, ways that the campaign could have utilised Twitter to increase public engagement. This paper therefore makes several recommendations that future similar campaigns by not-for-profit organisations should ideally be aware of, in order to exploit these opportunities where possible. The analysis of discourses also enables a more general discussion of how concepts such as gender and feminism are portrayed in the corpus.

### **KEYWORDS**

gender; equality; twitter; not-for-profit

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# TWITTER REACTIONS TO THE UN'S #HEFORSHE CAMPAIGN FOR GENDER EQUALITY: A CORPUS-BASED DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

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## 1. Introduction

On 2014-09-20, Emma Watson, in her role as United Nations (UN) Women's Goodwill Ambassador, gave a speech at the UN Headquarters, formally launching the UN Women's HeForShe campaign to promote gender equality. In this speech, Watson addressed the issue of feminism; she argued that feminism has begun to be seen as a women's issue and that the term 'has too often become synonymous with man-hating'. However, she defined her view of feminism as 'the belief that men and women should have equal rights and opportunities' and therefore argued that it is in both men's and women's best interests to view themselves as feminists. She explained that this is the purpose of the HeForShe campaign: to make as many people as possible see gender equality as their issue too, regardless of their gender. During her speech, in an attempt to begin achieving this aim, she reached out to men and asked them to be 'advocates for gender equality' – to be the 'he' for 'she' (Watson, 2014).

Once the campaign had been formally launched, it relied heavily on social media to raise initial public interest. For example, HeForShe utilised three popular social media platforms (Twitter, Facebook and Instagram), establishing official accounts and posting messages asking people to use social media to show their support for the campaign. HeForShe is an ongoing campaign; to date, these social media accounts remain active. However, research has shown that although many organisations, particularly those that are not-for-profit, seek to use social media to their advantage, many do not maximise its potential (Lovejoy *et al.*, 2012; Messner *et al.*, 2013; Muralidharan *et al.*, 2011). Furthermore, in order for organisations to ensure successful use of social media, they must understand how they have been perceived and presented by the public in the past, particularly on social media. This paper therefore seeks to consider public reactions to the HeForShe campaign launch, with the aim of engaging in what Baker (2014: 155-156) calls 'action research'. Baker (2008: 257) argues that for academics' work on language and gender to transform the wider society, it is important that the research be linked to real-life concerns; he stresses the need for more research of this kind.

In the past, many studies of issues related to public opinion have relied primarily on more traditional forms of media, for instance press reports (Gamson and Modigliani, 1989). However, recent technological advancements have provided an opportunity to study opinions shared online. This has several benefits; for example, it enables the opinions of a wider range of people to be captured, provides insights into views with very little time delay and can be used in diachronic studies (Potts *et al.*, 2014; Tumasjan *et al.*, 2010). McEnery *et al.* (2015: 1) argue that it is important for researchers to combine these two approaches, for instance, to consider the role the press plays in forming reactions on social media. However, this combined approach would not be particularly fruitful in the case of the HeForShe campaign, as the campaign launch received very little press coverage.

Despite the lack of press coverage, people talked about the campaign on social media, largely via the social media platform Twitter. Twitter allows users to post tweets — messages that, over the period of data collection, could consist of up to 140 characters. Users can include hashtags within their tweets. Hashtags are terms used within tweets that are prefixed by the # character and do not contain spaces (e.g., #news). Hashtags trend when their frequency of use across Twitter has recently greatly increased. It is clear that many people turned to Twitter to talk about the HeForShe campaign in the immediate aftermath of Watson's speech, as the hashtag #HeForShe began trending. The public were also using other social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram to discuss the campaign. The analysis here, however, focuses solely on Twitter data, as it is possible to collect large amounts of this data automatically. Furthermore, it is possible to use search terms to collect targeted data. Unfortunately, at the time of data collection, this was not yet possible for data from Facebook or Instagram.

In this study, I take a corpus-assisted discourse studies approach. Discourse analysis aims to find patterns in language that help form discourses, in order to explore how these are used (Baker 2006: 1). However, variation exists among definitions of discourse in previous work (cf. Foucault, 1972: 32; Stubbs, 1983: 1; Van Dijk, 1985: 4). This study follows Burr's (1995: 48) definition of discourse; it is seen as 'a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on that in some way together produce a particular version of events'. Baker (2014: 6) argues that much discourse analysis of gender and language remains qualitative, being based on small datasets; he further argues that there are advantages to combining discourse analysis with corpus linguistics. For example, Johnson and Ensslin (2007) explore representation of gender in the media, using a corpus taken from two British newspapers. Their use of corpus linguistic methods made it possible to consider a larger number of texts; the scope of their study was expanded and, arguably, its potential impact grew. This study likewise combines these two approaches, in order to explore the discourses surrounding the discussion of the HeForShe campaign on Twitter.

## 2. Corpus collection

The data were collected via DataSift (2013) a service that, at the time of data collection, allowed users to make bulk downloads of very large numbers of tweets and other online data, after using search terms to filter the DataSift archives. I opted to use hashtags as search terms to collect this data. Hashtags have several functions; one function is that they can show that users wish to discuss a particular topic (Zappavigna, 2015: 276). By signalling the topic of their post through a hashtag, a user encourages other users to join in conversations about this particular topic. Twitter allows users to search and view all posts with a particular hashtag, so that they can respond to these existing posts as well as creating their own posts using the hashtag (Page, 2012).

As noted above, in the immediate aftermath of the HeForShe campaign launch, the hashtag #HeForShe trended on Twitter. The following tweet from Emma Watson, posted on 2015-10-08, comments on the popularity of this particular hashtag:

- (1) Between 20th Sep & 2nd Oct there were 1.1million #HeForShe tweets from 750K different users, reaching 1.2 BILLION unique Twitter users

Although not everyone who tweeted about the campaign during this period necessarily used the hashtag, it is clear that many people did. I therefore decided to collect all original tweets containing the hashtag *#HeForShe*, regardless of capitalisation, that were posted between 2014-09-20 and 2014-10-02 inclusive. In total, 172,259 tweets were identified; these formed a corpus containing 180,477 words types and 2,996,388 tokens. This data was compared to a reference corpus consisting of a random sample of 79,000 original tweets posted between 2014-02-03 and 2014-02-10 inclusive, containing 123,003 word types and 1,098,095 tokens (Baker & McEnery, 2015). Both corpora contain only original tweets, that is, tweets that are exact duplicates of earlier posts have been excluded.

In any research using such corpora, it is important to be mindful of certain features typical of this medium. For instance, as well as hashtags, tweets may also include usernames to refer to, or draw the attention of, a particular Twitter user. Twitter usernames begin with @ and do not contain spaces (e.g., *@BBCNews*). Usernames at the start of tweets indicate that the tweet was intended for that specific user. Elsewhere in the tweet, they are typically referential, as in the following example:

(2) Do I ever love @EmWatson <3 #HeForShe speech was on point. What an inspiration.  
#brilliant

Often, as in Excerpt 1, hashtags and usernames are used in such a way that they are essential in understanding the tweet. I therefore did not remove this information when compiling the corpora, and treated them as standard words (e.g., *UN*, *@UN* and *#UN* were all counted as the same word). I also made no attempt to remove or standardise other features typical of the medium, such as URLs or non-standard spellings.

### 3. Analytic approach

There are several corpus linguistic approaches that can be used to identify discourses. Following the approach of Baker and McEnery (2015), my analysis is based on keywords. Other corpus-based discourse analysis investigations into gender and language have combined keyword analysis with other methods, such as collocation analysis (cf. Bowker, 2001: 593). However, due to the absence of tweet-boundary markup in my corpora, it is not possible for corpus software to identify where one tweet ends and another begins; yet this is vital for collocation analysis. If collocates are calculated using a corpus without boundary markup information, a word that occurs near the boundary of a text may collocate with a word from a preceding or following text. Because tweets are so small, a very high proportion of the corpus would be within range of a boundary. Collocation analysis would therefore be unreliable, and unpredictably so, as it would be difficult to accurately judge the extent to which this issue has swayed any particular result. I therefore focus my analysis solely on keywords.

I calculated keywords using AntConc 3.2.4w (Anthony, 2011). In order to establish which words were key, I used a robust log likelihood cut off of 15.13 to calculate statistical significance. Therefore, all keywords considered in this study are significant at the level  $p < 0.0001$  (Rayson *et al.*, 2004: 7). Once I had established which words were key, I sought to focus my analysis on the keywords with the greatest effect. I therefore used log-ratio as an effect-size measure; this measure ranks keywords based on the binary logarithm of the ratio of relative frequency in the HeForShe corpus to the relative frequency in the reference corpus (Hardie, forthcoming). I analysed the top 100 keywords

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this process identified; however, I excluded any keywords that did not also fit the criteria of occurring at least 100 times in the HeForShe corpus. This limit was imposed simply to ensure that there was enough concordance data for a meaningful analysis of each keyword considered.

As Gries (2006: 192) notes, frequency data, or statistics derived from frequency data, may be misleading. It is therefore important to reflect on several methodological points concerning sampling and representativeness, as these issues affect any frequency data generated from a corpus. Firstly, the number of retweets in a corpus will affect any frequency data that are generated. Twitter distinguish between two different types of retweets. To create a standard retweet (RT), a user can press a button to post an exact duplicate of another user's tweet. To create a modified retweet (MRT), a user copies another user's tweet into their own writing box, so that they can change the text if they wish to before they post it as their own tweet. RTs and MRTs obviously affect frequency data generated, as the decision to include or exclude them from a corpus impacts the number of word types and tokens counted in that corpus.

Several researchers have begun to investigate retweeting practices (Honeycutt & Herring, 2009; Suh *et al.*, 2010). However, perhaps because there is still relatively little research in the field, there appears to be little agreement amongst researchers as to how to handle retweets when studying corpora of Twitter data. For example, McEnery *et al.* (2015) focus their analysis on a corpus that includes MRTs, considering MRTs to be largely new texts because they have potentially been modified and thus individualised. They group RTs in a separate corpus, and consider these separately, arguing this analysis enables the consensus of ideology and opinion to be interpreted. On the other hand, Zappavigna (2012: 22) argues that, depending upon the type of analysis being carried out, it can be beneficial to remove instances of repetition. In the case of this study, both corpora under consideration contain no exact duplicates. It was necessary to exclude exact duplicates from the HeForShe corpus, because the reference corpus (which, as Section 2 explained, was constructed prior to this study) contained no exact duplicates. As the corpora contain no duplicates, they capture the range of opinions but not necessarily the popularity of ideas as captured by the rebroadcasting behaviour of the RT.

Secondly, the HeForShe corpus contains tweets in several languages, but the reference corpus only contains tweets in English. I only consider words in English, as this is the only language for which there is sufficient data in both corpora to carry out a solid statistical analysis. However, this may have a skewing effect on some proper noun frequencies. For example, proper nouns, such as UN Women, can occur in tweets where all the other words in the tweet are in a language other than English. Such tweets boost the frequency of English proper nouns but not of other words, which may increase the keyness of these proper nouns. However, due to the size of the corpus, it is not practical to remove all tweets that are in different languages. This is therefore a limitation to be noted.

Thirdly, it is not ideal that my reference corpus is small relative to the corpus under study, especially as the population that it is meant to represent (the language of Twitter) is extremely large. When using a small reference corpus, the relative frequency estimates for low-frequency words become less accurate and, in turn, the log ratio values are also less accurate. For example, consider a target corpus of 80,000 words and a reference corpus of 10,000. The word *happy* may occur 64 times in the target and once in the reference corpus. The relative frequencies are 0.8 per thousand and 0.1 per thousand;

the log ratio is three. Assuming the margin of error in the reference corpus is one occurrence, the actual frequency within the target population of the reference corpus could be 0.2 per thousand; this would give a log ratio of two. As explained above, in this study, log ratio has been used to determine the top 100 keywords. Therefore, in cases where keywords have low relative frequencies, the log ratio score has a higher degree of imprecision, and as a result the ranking of the top 100 keywords list may be inaccurate to a degree.

There is not yet a publicly available better alternative reference corpus for Twitter data. Therefore, it is necessary to take steps to mitigate the possible impact on the results of the issues outlined above. First, when considering the top 100 keywords, the ranking of items within it will not influence my analysis. As a result, any imprecision in the ranking of the keywords will only impact whether or not words are included in the analysis — not how they are then analysed. It is thus possible that I will analyse some keywords that actually would not be within the top 100 were the reference corpus larger. But we should bear in mind that although many studies choose to focus on the top 100 keywords (Gauton & de Schyver, 2004; Jordanous, 2010; Kang & Yu, 2011), this figure is arbitrary. Overall, although the reference corpus is clearly not ideal, given its size it is possible to mitigate its shortcomings sufficiently to be confident that its nature does not invalidate my analysis.

## 4. Analysis and discussion

### .4.1. *Categorising the top 100 keywords*

Following the approach of Baker and McEnery (2015), I began my analysis of the top 100 keywords through sorting them by hand into categories. Baker and McEnery (2015: 249) suggest that although this is a subjective process, relying heavily on the researcher's intuition, it can be a useful starting point for identifying discourses. Table 1 shows the top 100 keywords, grouped based on the categories that I identified.

Using this categorisation as a starting point, I then examined a greater number of concordance lines for each keyword, to identify discourses. Each of the following subsections will discuss one of the discourses found.

### .4.2. *Celebrities discourse*

As Table 1 shows, several of the top 100 keywords are referential terms for celebrities. A number of these are referential terms for Emma Watson: *hermione1*; *emma*; *watsons*; *watson*; *emmawatson* and *emwatson*. Many of the tweets that mention Emma Watson discuss her in relation to the campaign, either by positioning her as the head of the campaign or by discussing her speech through which she formally launched the campaign:

- (3) #EmmaWatson is an amazing inspiration, love the #HeForShe equality campaign. Such a shame about the haters, they can shut it.
- (4) #EmmaWatson killed the #heforshe speech, I have the upmost respect for you!!

This suggests that Emma Watson's endorsement of the campaign met its aim in the sense that she succeeded in encouraging the public to talk about the campaign. Furthermore, the vast majority of tweets appear to evaluate Watson positively. For example, Table 1 shows that the majority of evaluative terms within the top 100 keywords are positive,

and many of these (e.g., *eloquent*; *rolemodel* and *weloveyouemma*) are frequently used in regard to Watson.

Category	Keywords
Referential terms for the HeForShe campaign and its officials	<i>hermione; goodwill; campaign; movement; un; emma; watsons; watson; emmawatson; heforshe; unitednations; heforshecampaign; unwomen; emwatson; phumzileunwomen</i>
Terms relating to the campaign's launch	<i>speach; speech; emmawatsonunspeech; ifnotmewho; ifnotnowwhen; unspeech; emmawatsonspeech</i>
Desired outcomes of the campaign	<i>equals; freer; equality; equalrights; womensrights; equalityforall; genderequity; genderequality; womensucceed; iamafeminist; relationshipgoals; uniting; committed; supporting; sparking; traction; brazilsupportsheforshe; pfw</i>
What may inhibit these outcomes	<i>womenagainstfeminism; gamergate; inequality; compelled; submissive; patriarchy;</i>
Bloggers/media outlets	<i>leepacey; vanity fair; barnersgunner; huffpostwomen; pennyred; dayofthefishdr; judgybitch; dadchat</i>
Celebrities	<i>crowe; hiddleston; simonpegg; jimstweetings; mattedavelewis; russellcrowe; mattedamon; loganlerman; realkiefer; asktom; asknash</i>
Evaluative terms	<i>kickass; brilliantly; eloquent; eloquently; rolemodel; seduces; weloveyouemma; feminismisawful; emabigggestfans; yesallwomen; itsonus</i>
Ideology descriptors	<i>feminism; feminist; feminists; synonymous; gender; sexes; gender; masculinity; inadvertent;</i>
Play on words of HeForShe	<i>sheforhe; sheforshe; weforwe; heandshe; weforall;</i>
Topics that were trending on Twitter alongside #HeForShe	<i>icrematch; nbvotes; prayersforbama; iffriendswasbritish; gothampremiere; gotham; pcdiscoveries; sexyspace; equaliser</i>

**Table 1:** Top 100 keywords in the HeForShe corpus, sorted by semantic category

However, very few tweets seem to discuss ways in which Watson could help achieve gender equality. For example, several of the top 100 keywords are verbs that signal actions that could potentially achieve the desired outcomes of the campaign: *uniting*; *committed*; *supporting* and *sparking*. I sought to consider whether Watson was positioned as an agent of these verbs. As the corpus is not grammatically tagged, it is difficult to automatically retrieve all instances of subject plus verb sequences or other grammatical patterns indicating agency. Instead, I searched for a pattern consisting of the word *Emma* or *Watson* (the terms most frequently used to refer to her) followed by one of those verbs, and manually checked which results were examples of agency. I also followed this procedure for *Emma* or *Watson*, followed by any one or two words, followed by those verbs; this captures examples where agent and verb are separated by auxiliary verbs, e.g., *Emma is committed*. Table 2 shows that she is very infrequently positioned as the agent of these verbs. This suggests that her involvement in the campaign appears to be viewed positively simply because she is a celebrity, rather than because people consider her to be achieving the aims of the campaign.

Verb	<i>F</i>	<i>f</i> with <i>Emma</i> or <i>Watson</i> as agent
uniting	112	1
committed	6,772	1
supporting	19,071	9
sparking	112	0

**Table 2:** Instances of ‘Emma’ or ‘Watson’ positioned as the agent of actions that would help achieve the goals of HeForShe

Emma Watson did not engage with the public on Twitter during the time period studied, in order to encourage a positive response from the public; the data set contains no tweets posted from Emma Watson's official Twitter account using the hashtag, suggesting there were none. This suggests the impact of Watson's support of the campaign could have been extended further still. For instance, Watson could have used Twitter to present examples of how she was trying to achieve gender equality, that is, as an encouragement for the public to follow her lead rather than simply operating to attract publicity for the campaign.

Not all evaluation of Watson was positive. The minority discourse that was positioned as opposing Watson seemed to be created largely by users who also aligned themselves with 4chan and GamerGate. 4chan is an internet message board where users post anonymously. Just prior to the launch of HeForShe, 4chan users claimed responsibility for leaking explicit personal images of several female celebrities (Farrell, 2014). Hours after Watson's speech launching the campaign, a website entitled Emma You Are Next was created. The website showed three images: a picture of Watson, the logo of 4chan, and a countdown timer, implying that explicit photos of Watson would soon be posted on the website (Anderson, 2014). Some Twitter users posted messages supporting this website and therefore, implicitly, positioned themselves as opposing Watson's involvement with HeForShe:

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- (5) "That feminist bitch Emma is going to show the world she is as much of a whore as any woman." #4chan leak #emmawatson #heforshe

GamerGate is a controversy on social media that has been current at various degrees of intensity since 2012, albeit not always under that name. The arguments of GamerGate developed over time, but were originally sparked by the belief of some within the video gaming community that women should not be part of this community (Wernick, 2014). The following tweet is an example of a Twitter user who simultaneously aligns themselves with GamerGate and against HeForShe:

- (6) #GamerGate #HeForShe #FeminismIsAwful #WeMustDissent Via @thesecondben RT  
<http://t.co/PB0Gpov5tQ>

Table 1 shows that Emma Watson is not the only celebrity frequently referred to in tweets about the campaign; several other celebrities' names are also keywords. Of these keywords, the majority are celebrities who have shown active support of the HeForShe campaign (*crowe; hiddleston; simonpegg; jimstweetings; mattdavelewis; russellcrowe; mattdamon; loganlerman* and *realkiefer*). When these celebrities are mentioned in tweets, it is often to reference their support for HeForShe:

- (7) @EmmaWatson's #HeForShe campaign is growing thanks to famous supporters:  
 @russellcrowe @Mattdavelewis , @twhiddleston #gottalovetheinternet

This suggests that the support of celebrities influenced the popularity of the *#HeForShe* hashtag, by having encouraged people to post tweets about the topic. Further analysis reveals that the opinions of celebrities are considered to be important. For instance, the keywords *asktom* and *asknash* were both hashtags used to engage with particular celebrities (Tom Parker and Nash Grier) in order to ask them if they would show support for the campaign:

- (8) @TomTheWanted do you support Em Watson on her campaign #HeForShe ? #AskTom

As with Watson, the majority of tweets do not appear to discuss ways in which the celebrities could help the campaign. It is the plain fact of an expression of support, or lack thereof, which is the focus. The exception to this is the discussion of Karl Lagerfeld, a fashion designer for Chanel, through the hashtag *#PFW* (Paris Fashion Week). Lagerfeld showed his support of the HeForShe campaign by arranging for the models in Chanel's catwalk show at Paris Fashion Week to hold banners and megaphones, so that the models appeared to be staging a pro-feminist rally (Cartner-Morley, 2014). Tweets containing the hashtag *#PFW* focus on what Lagerfeld had done to support the campaign, rather than simply on his having shown support for the campaign:

- (9) Anyone see the @CHANEL show and want to scream GIRL POWER!?! #Chanel #pfw  
 #GIRLBOSS #HeForShe

It is also worth noting that all the celebrities discussed are male; this will be explored further in the following sub-section.

### .4.3. Gender discourse

Many tweets that explicitly discuss gender contain quotes from the speech Watson gave when launching the campaign. For example, the keywords *freer*, *compelled* and *submissive* all appear within Watson's speech:

If men don't have to be aggressive in order to be accepted women won't feel compelled to be submissive. If men don't have to control, women won't have to be controlled. [...] It's time that we all perceive gender on a spectrum instead of two sets of opposing ideals. If we stop defining each other by what we are not and start defining ourselves by what we are —we can all be freer (Watson, 2014, emphasis mine)

Although *spectrum* is not one of the top 100 keywords, it does occur 587 times. The vast majority of these occurrences are due to users quoting or paraphrasing the penultimate sentence in the extract above. It is possible that this is simply a sign that people appreciated the wording of Watson's speech. The keywords *eloquent* and *eloquently*, frequently used to describe her speech, appear to support this conclusion, as do the other keywords *ifnotmewho* and *ifnotnowwhen*, which are hashtags clearly influenced by extracts of Watson's speech: 'I am inviting you to step forward, to be seen to speak up, to be the "he" for "she". And to ask yourself if not me, who? If not now, when?' (Watson, 2014).

However, it is also possible that people use quotes from Watson's speech to discuss gender because they find that it is a difficult concept to define and discuss in their own words. Some tweets that did not use extracts from Watson's speech challenged the campaign's view of gender. For example, although 152 tweets use the term *both genders*, 62 tweets instead refer to *all genders*, suggesting that the authors disagree with the belief that there are two distinct genders ('he' and 'she'). A minority discourse criticized the campaign on this account, as the tweet below shows:

(10) Hey, look! Another feel-good gender equality movement that completely erases non-binary people! How unexpected. #HeForShe

Even in tweets that do not appear to challenge the concept of two genders, the division between these genders is still a source of disagreement. For example, Table 1 shows that several keywords play with the phrase HeForShe; two of these examples (*weforwe* and *weforall*) appear to question whether it is useful to have the divisions 'he' and 'she'.

(11) @PrivWhiteGirl what do you think about this? #heforshe #genderequality #allforall #weforwe #sheforwe #notsheforwe <http://t.co/oculVhldmd>

Another defining feature of this discourse is that men are frequently presented as having a greater amount of power than women. Although this finding is simplistic, in the sense it does not consider how power is negotiated within individual interactions on Twitter (Baxter, 2003), Baker (2008: 113) argues that there are benefits to considering overall patterns in the way men and women are positioned through discourses such as this. Many tweets suggested that men have greater power than women generally within society, for instance:

(12) @rapebombing 1 in 4 women experience domestic violence and 85% of domestic violence victims are women. #heforshe

In some cases, men were also presented as having a greater level of power than women with regard to the HeForShe campaign. For example, 50 tweets suggested the aim of the

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campaign was to help women, whereas only 20 suggested it was to help men. Furthermore, there is some evidence that men were more frequently positioned as the agents of this help than women. For instance, using the method described in Section 4.2, I found men were positioned as the agents of the keyword *supporting* 185 times whereas women were positioned as the agents of this 13 times. This was also seen in the celebrities discourse; all of the celebrities who had shown, or were asked to show, support for the campaign were male.

Is this what the campaign wanted? On the one hand, yes. Watson, in her speech launching the campaign, argued that women are not treated equally to men and that, for gender equality to be achieved, this needs to change (Watson, 2014). The campaign also clearly set out to engage men; on their website, they asked men (not women) to sign a commitment to gender equality (HeForShe, n.d.). On the other hand, no. Watson also argued in her speech that men are not treated equally to women, and that this too needs to change. She clearly stated that HeForShe aimed to be a uniting movement, bringing men and women together to tackle gender inequality (Watson, 2014).

A minority discourse criticised the campaign, suggesting that it had encouraged this positioning of men as more powerful. For instance, several tweets, such as the one below, questioned the campaign's title:

- (13) #heforshe is being plugged as a solidarity movement between men & women. I hope they clarify, I don't want men speaking FOR me, but WITH me

This can also be seen through the keywords of the alternative hashtags *sheforhe*, *sheforshe* and *heandshe*. It is also worth noting that the portrayal of men as more powerful than women in the tweets may not be intentional. For example, there are 1694 occurrences of the phrase *men and women* yet 295 occurrences of *women and men* (Freebody & Baker, 1987: 98). This is arguably a sign of gender bias; however, the phrase *men and women* has become conventionalised, meaning that users may not be consciously biased.

#### **.4.4. Feminism discourse**

In her speech launching HeForShe, Watson argued that popular opinions on feminism are negative:

The more I have spoken about feminism the more I have realized that fighting for women's rights has too often become synonymous with man-hating [...] For the record, feminism by definition is: "The belief that men and women should have equal rights and opportunities. It is the theory of the political, economic and social equality of the sexes." [...] my recent research has shown me that feminism has become an unpopular word (Watson, 2014).

She later stated that advisors had suggested that she avoid using the word 'feminism' in her speech, as it might have alienating consequences (Blair, 2015). However, the majority of tweets containing the word *feminism* were arguing against these negative connotations, praising the campaign for trying to tackle these negative views and expressing their own positive views. For example:

- (14) #Feminism is NOT a bad word. You go @EmWatson #HeforShe #equality  
<http://t.co/vLiOE8D5Li>

As with gender, when tweets attempted to define the concept of feminism many of them relied on quoting or paraphrasing Watson's speech, equating feminism with gender equality; again, perhaps this suggests that people also find feminism a difficult concept to define clearly in their own words.

A minority discourse positioned feminism negatively. For example, 109 tweets contained the hashtag *#FeminismIsAwful*. On closer examination, these tweets can be attributed to a relatively small group of people: only 36 users tweeted using that hashtag, and 18 of the 109 tweets were sent by one particular user. Several of these tweets simply combine the hashtag with other hashtags of a similar sentiment, for example:

(15) *#antifeminism #WomenAgainstFeminism #FeministsAreUgly #FeminismIsAwful #HeForShe* <http://t.co/Xc59MGMEfB>

As in the example above, a number of these tweets use hashtags to associate feminism with being ugly and unattractive. For instance, six tweets combine the hashtag *#FeminismIsAwful* with *#FeministsAreUgly*. By tweeting combined hashtags in this way, the user simply asserts their opinions without presenting a justification for their views. Some tweets containing the hashtag *#FeminismIsAwful* did attempt to offer a justification for their opinion, however, as in the example below:

(16) *#heforshe is just the 21st century version of WOMEN AND CHILDREN FIRST just without the children only women matter now #FeminismIsAwful*

Tweets such as this do not appear to view feminism in the way Emma Watson defined it, as an attempt to gain equality for all. Instead, they appear to consider feminism as an attempt to make things better for women, to the detriment of men.

The hashtag *#WomenAgainstFeminism* was also used to position feminism negatively. This hashtag occurred 1,387 times, but these tweets can also be attributed to a relatively small group of users: only 225 people posted using this hashtag. Women Against Feminism is a movement that attempts to bring together people to discuss the negative impact that they believe feminism has had on them. This movement existed before the launch of the HeForShe campaign (Young, 2014); it is therefore perhaps unsurprising that a number of tweets criticize the campaign using this hashtag.

Interestingly, it appears that this hashtag is not used exclusively by women. To establish the sex of the users posting with this hashtag, I considered a random sample of 20 tweets. I looked at the Twitter biographies — short descriptions users write about themselves — of the people who had posted these tweets, to see if these users identified as male or female. Although it was not possible to identify the sex of the user in 11 instances, six identified as women and three identified as men. These results should be interpreted with some caution, as it is possible for a user to lie in their Twitter biography and the sample size is limited. However, it suggests that there may be more to this hashtag than its wording immediately suggests.

It remains clear, however, that tweets containing this hashtag do not equate feminism with equality, but rather see it as an attempt to prioritise women's issues over men's. This is evident in the following tweet:

(17) *#HeForShe because having a cunt means you should have everything handed to you too. #WomenAgainstFeminism #TranswomenAgainstFeminism*

Like [17], many tweets containing the hashtag *#WomenAgainstFeminism* do not explicitly criticise the HeForShe campaign; rather they imply criticism by equating the campaign with their negative view of what feminism is.

A small number of occurrences of both *#FeminismIsAwful* and *#WomenAgainstFeminism* were actually in tweets arguing against that negative minority discourse, for instance:

(18) Also disgusting about @Twitter: start typing #fem & 1st 2 results? #FeministsAreUgly & #FeminismIsAwful. Wtf is wrong w ppl? #HeForShe

(19) #HeForShe because everyone needs to fight for gender equality and feminism. (Also read #WomenAgainstFeminism if you want a good laugh)

As with feminism, there were mixed views on feminists. For example, while *feminism* occurs 12,269 times, *feminist* occurs 4,682 times; this perhaps suggests that the concept is more often treated as an ideology rather than an identity. However, many tweets containing the term *feminist* do in fact assert that the tweeter identifies as a feminist. For instance, *I am a feminist* occurs 453 times, *I'm a feminist* occurs 361 times, and the hashtag *#IAmAFeminist* occurs 301 times. Some tweets offered a particular reason for identifying as feminist, as the tweet below shows:

(20) #IAmAFeminist because am tired of my brothers being called a girl & am tired of being treated unequally simply because I am GIRL. #HeForShe

Excerpt 20 also exemplifies how posts such as this represent a feminist as something you either decide to be or decide not to be, rather than any alternative portrayal, such as it being a cline of relatively more or less feminist identification. In the majority of cases where people identify as feminist they use first person personal pronouns, and it is therefore unclear whether they are male or female. There is some evidence that the majority discourse believe that both men and women can appropriately identify as feminist. For instance, *male feminist* occurs 59 times and there are 33 instances of *feminist man*. However, a minority discourse suggests that only women can identify as feminist. For example in the following tweet, the author considers feminists to be a separate and opposing group to men, implying that they are women:

(21) #HeForShe is some sexist patriarchal bull crap. Feminist coerce men into supporting women just like our ancestors. This is not equality.

In comparison to the tweets that contain the term *feminism*, there appears to be a higher proportion of critical tweets containing the term *feminist*. A minority discourse criticised the campaign by associating it with their prior negative beliefs about feminists, for instance:

(22) #HeForShe is the same old feminist pack of lies with a new face on it. Same feminist shit, different day, different face. #FeminismIsAwful

#### **.4.5. Change discourse**

Table 1 shows that a number of keywords are verbs that signify actions or processes that might be needed for the HeForShe campaign to be successful, for example, *support\**, *stand* and *engage*. When concordance lines of these verbs are analysed, the majority are

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instances of users showing support for the campaign's agenda and/or signalling that they will, or wish to, help the campaign bring about change. For instance, the word *support* occurs 9,703 times. Most instances are users explicitly stating that they support the campaign, or encouraging others to do so. For example:

(23) I support Emma Watson and #HeForShe

However, as in the example above, the majority of these tweets express a general, abstract support; there are very few concrete examples that give explicit statements of how people have helped or could help bring about the change under discussion. A minority discourse questions this lack of clarity. For example:

(24) @EmWatson I would love to help, more, a lot more. What can I do to be a bigger part of #HeForShe??

A portion of this minority discourse goes further and criticises the lack of discussion of clear and achievable aims:

(25) @ManleyMan3 So they will sack all of their male staff and re-employ women? How much redundancy outlay is that? Get real!! #HeForShe

This finding suggests that the impact of the campaign might have been increased if organisers has attempted to encourage a discourse where people share concrete examples. For instance, if people had used the hashtag *#HeForShe* to tell stories of times they have experienced and challenged inequality, this might have served to inspire others and show potential ways that they could take action.

There is some evidence that the campaign did attempt to encourage this type of discourse. For instance, the following tweets were sent from the official @HeForShe account:

(26) We're excited to share a few stories of #HeForShe heroes who've taken action to promote #genderequality. Tell us why you're a #HeForShe.

(27) #HeForShe In Action: A Zimbabwean man started a 'husband school' to educate the village's husbands abt #domesticabuse. What will you do?

However, HeForShe sent 27 tweets during the period studied, of which these two are the only ones that encouraged people to share stories of how equality could practically be achieved. HeForShe posted a further two tweets that also posed questions, aimed at encouraging people to show support for the campaign. For instance:

(28) Are you a #HeForShe? Watch our new video, join at <http://t.co/c6wmNWrsJR> & post a pic or video to show your support! <http://t.co/Thl3GWCvgr>

However, although these tweets do encourage conversation to start, there is little evidence that HeForShe attempt to continue the conversation with users. For instance, on Twitter it is possible to start a tweet with a username, as a way to address a particular user, or group of users, thereby starting or continuing a conversation with those users. Only one tweet did this:

(29) @katebosworth Appreciate the support! Let's get to 100,000. <http://t.co/z9VYsM2XQM> #HeForShe

This evidence seems to support Lovejoy *et al.*'s (2012) findings that not-for profit organisations typically use Twitter as a one-way communication channel, as the majority of tweets sent by HeForShe were simply announcements of information about the campaign. For instance:

(30) Thrilled for our 'Special Event' with @EmWatson tonight! We'll be live tweeting here. Visit our @HeForShe Insta for pics! #HeForShe

When considering how the campaign influenced the discussion of change, we could also look towards tweets posted by Emma Watson, given her position as a UN Ambassador and advocate for the HeForShe campaign. Section 4.2 suggested that the influence of celebrities in the context of this campaign is high and showed that discussion of Emma Watson was generally positive. We might thus strongly suspect that her tweets could potentially positively have impacted public engagement with the campaign and influenced discussion of change. However, Emma Watson did not post any tweets containing the hashtag *#HeForShe* during the period studied.

The analysis of this change discourse suggests that there are several ways that HeForShe could potentially have increased public engagement with the campaign on Twitter during the period studied. These findings remain relevant to the campaign, so long as it continues to exist. For example, posting a higher proportion of tweets sharing, and asking others to share examples of HeForShe in action, may encourage a larger number of concrete responses from users and impact the critical minority discourse discussed. Furthermore, to fully utilise Twitter as a two-way communication channel, HeForShe could post a higher proportion of tweets that respond to users, to attempt to continue conversations. Finally, Emma Watson could be asked to tweet more frequently about the campaign, to encourage more users to join in the conversation.

## 5. Conclusion

Previous research has shown that there are multiple challenges associated with analysing Twitter data; unsurprisingly, this study has faced many of these difficulties. Often, these difficulties stem from the fact that tweets, as a medium of online discussion, contain features such as hashtags and usernames that pose potential problems for current corpus tools and techniques. It is necessary for any study to establish clear rules concerning how such features will be treated, but this alone does not fully overcome the challenge. For example, as explained in Section 3, I decided not to include tweets that were exactly duplicated in my corpus. In the past, researchers have argued both for and against retweets being included; however, no study has yet fully compared and evaluated the effects of including or excluding retweets. It is important that such methodological studies are undertaken in the future, if corpus linguists are to come to a consensus on best practice in the field; without such a consensus, it is doubtful that the results of different corpus studies of tweets will be easily comparable.

Following the approach of Baker and McEnery (2015), I have focussed my analysis on keywords. There have been several benefits to this approach. For example, peculiarities of Twitter data do not affect the reliability of keyword statistics. In contrast, the lack of boundary markup in my corpus would make the statistics behind other commonly used techniques, such as collocation analysis, flawed. Furthermore, this method has enabled the identification of a number of both prominent discourses and minority discourses. Although the analysis relied heavily on researcher interpretation of particular

examples, it was possible to gather additional contextual information to inform this interpretation. For instance, users' biographies proved useful in approaching the hashtag *#WomenAgainstFeminism*. This exemplifies the truth of Partington's (2017) postulate that contextual information can help to discover unpredictable findings.

Previous research has shown that not-for profit organisations often do not take full advantage of Twitter; previous researchers have offered general advice to not-for profit organisations on how to do better. For example, Lovejoy *et al.* (2012) find that the not-for profit organisations typically use Twitter as a one-way communication channel; they recommend that such organisations engage in conversations with Twitter users to increase stakeholder involvement. My research supports this finding; the analysis showed that only one of the 27 tweets written by HeForShe during the period studied was in response to a user. However, a corpus approach enables more specific suggestions to be made. Section 4.5 presents several recommendations on how the campaign could have altered its use of Twitter to potentially increase public engagement with the campaign. For instance, I argued that, as Emma Watson was positioned positively in most tweets, and the influence of celebrities in this campaign is seemingly high, if Emma Watson had tweeted about the campaign more frequently, it might well have encouraged more users to join in the conversation. Similar future campaigns could possibly use suggestions such as this as guidelines. Conclusions such as this exemplify how corpus methods can be used to enable action research, as Baker (2008: 257) call for.

The data has also enabled a more general discussion of how concepts such as gender and feminism are portrayed in the corpus. Unsurprisingly, these concepts were a source of disagreement amongst discourse participants. However, the disagreement seemed largely to consist of people defining these terms differently. For example, many tweets arguing against feminism did not explicitly argue against equality between sexes, but argued against women's issues being prioritised at the expense of men's. This, along with the high frequency of words and quotes lifted from Emma Watson's speech, may suggest that people struggle to define these concepts.

While this paper has addressed the HeForShe launch, it would obviously also be of interest to collect more recent social media data, to see how people have discussed the HeForShe campaign on Twitter since the launch. HeForShe have clearly developed the campaign over time. For instance, the HeForShe website now encourages everyone, not just men, to sign the commitment. Furthermore, the commitment states 'HeForShe believes gender isn't binary. How would you like to be counted?' (Stand Together, 2016). This research showed that a minority discourse perceived the campaign's view of gender as binary, and criticised it for this; the development — or maintenance, or disappearance — of this discourse over time is another point that would bear further investigation.

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## Competing interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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