

Response and responsibility: mainstream media and Lucy Meadows in a post-Leveson context

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Abstract

In this paper, I focus on misgendering through pronoun use through a case study of news reporting on Lucy Meadows. I collect two corpora of newspaper articles and use these to identify keywords – words that occur more frequently in the Lucy Meadows texts than might be expected from examining the collection of general news texts. I explore patterns of pronoun use in the media representation of Lucy Meadows, and argue that press misgendering can take more subtle forms than the reporter's use of 'using inappropriate pronouns or placing the person's identity in quotation marks to dismiss the veracity of the subject's identity' (Trans Media Watch 2011: 11). This article offers a detailed examination of strategies accounting for the majority of male pronouns use: selective quotation of key interviewees, repetition and metacommentary.

Keywords:

pronouns, media representation, misgendering, news reporting, transphobia, transgender studies

Introduction

In March 2013, a woman named Lucy Meadows was found dead at her home. Meadows, a teacher, was transitioning from male to female. In December 2012, the school announced her decision to return to work after the Christmas break as Miss Meadows. This was reported in the local press and quickly picked up by the national press. Three months later, Meadows was found dead. Her death came at a time when the press was under intense scrutiny due to the Leveson Inquiry, and prompted discussions of responsible media reporting, press freedom and the contributions of transgender people to society. I focus on Lucy Meadows, and her

pronouns in particular, for three reasons. As outlined above and in section 1, her life and death was reported at a sociopolitically significant time. Secondly, I offer a case study of British reporting rather than US reporting (c.f. Capuzza 2015; Schlitt and Westbrook 2009). Thirdly, by focusing on pronouns, I offer a detailed, systematic examination of easily identified and socially significant lexical items. Pronouns are words that can replace proper nouns; for example, *she*, *him*, *they* and *it*. In English, third person singular pronouns are usually gendered as *she*, *her*, *he*, *his* and *him*. There is also increasing use of non-gendered singular pronouns such as *zie*, *hir* or singular *they*. Pronouns are especially significant for trans people: many trans people change their pronouns during their transition in order to better reflect their identity. Pronouns also reflect other people's perceptions of our gender, something particularly salient in this study. Wayne (2005: 87) locates pronouns as a particular site for erasure, non-signification and violence, observing that "[i]f transgendered people cannot speak they are nonetheless spoken to and about, and here pronouns not only fail to signify but can lead to violence against the subject who is estranged within the binary sex/gender system".

Within a journalistic context, pronouns are one of several strategies that are used to question, undermine or validate a transgender person's gender identity – and, indeed, impose limits on what gender identities it is possible to express (Barker-Plummer 2013; Squires and Brouwer 2002). Barker-Plummer (2013: 717) argues that pronouns in news media serve to establish a "dynamic of (unintentional?) gender containment by journalists and sources" in which pronouns reflect political, as well as linguistic, choices about which genders are recognised, validated and made visible in culture. Billard (2014) also addresses issues of validation in discourse in mainstream US media; in the article, pronouns are one of 15 key "legitimacy indicators" examined. Billard (2014: 4198) identifies use of a transgender person's preferred pronouns as a legitimising strategy and use of those reflecting the gender they were assigned at birth a delegitimising strategy.

An examination of pronouns, therefore, not only reveals how Meadows was perceived before and after her death but offers an insight into the violence, erasure and invalidation enabled by such perception.

1. The Leveson Inquiry

Prompted by the revelation that phones belonging to family members of people dead as a result of murder, terrorism and war had been hacked by journalists, the Leveson Inquiry, chaired by Lord Justice Leveson, was set up to investigate "the culture, practices, and ethics

of the press" (Leveson 2012: 5). Part 1 of the Leveson Inquiry was opened on 14 November 2011; Lord Justice Leveson published the report resulting from the first part of the Inquiry on 29 November 2012. Trans Media Watch submitted evidence as a specialist organisation monitoring newspaper reporting of transgender people and offering advice to journalists. Three pieces of evidence were submitted: "The British Press and the Transgender Community" in December 2011, an additional submission in February 2012 (Trans Media Watch 2012) and oral evidence by Helen Belcher of Trans Media Watch on 8 February 2012. The Leveson Inquiry report (2012: 448) highlighted their evidence, noting that:

transgender people are subject to disproportionate and damaging press attention simply by dint of being members of that group, rather than in consequence of anything they might have said or done, and because of what they describe as an obsession in parts of the British press with 'outing' members of the transgender community

In the "The British Press and the Transgender Community", Trans Media Watch outlined four key strategies used by the British press: the routine use of previous names; the routine use of "before" photos; demeaning and intimidating language for comic effect; and misgendering. Trans Media Watch (2011: 11) identified misgendering as follows:

using inappropriate pronouns or placing the person's identity in quotation marks to dismiss the veracity of the subject's identity. This approach [...] serves to invalidate the individual's experience, expressly to give the writer an implicit licence to demean. It makes of the transgender person a liar - and liars are ripe for parody and ridicule

As I will argue, misgendering through pronoun use is not necessarily straightforward. Instead of being solely enacted through the journalists' use of misgendering pronouns in their own writing, I argue that selective, repeated quoting of key interviewees contributes to tabloid misrepresentation of trans people's authentic, lived genders.

2. Negative media representation's effect on mental health

It is important to note that negative media representations have a devastating effect on an already vulnerable population. The Trans Mental Health Study (McNeil *et al.* 2012) is a detailed insight into the mental health of British transgender, non-binary and agender respondents. It found that ideas concerning the abnormality of trans people were pervasive, with 92% of respondents having heard such (McNeil *et al.* 2012: 41). Trans Media Watch's

Leveson submissions (2011: 8) highlighted the emotional effect of negative media representation on respondents:

- 67% of respondents said that seeing negative items in the media about transgender people made them feel "angry".
- 51% said that these items made them feel "unhappy".
- 35% said that they felt "excluded".
- 20% said that they felt "frightened".

Trans Media Watch's survey also found that trans people linked representations of trans people in the media to negative reactions from family and friends (34%) and at work (19%), and to verbal (21%) and physical abuse (8%). As these figures indicate, negative media portrayals of trans people have consequences. Family, friends, colleagues and wider communities are often informed by media representation of trans people - and this has tangible, devastating consequences for trans people when these portrayals are poor.

3. Using corpus linguistics to examine social discourses

In this article I use corpus linguistics, an approach that, very broadly, utilises computer programs to search for patterns in large collections of machine-readable text. These patterns may focus on the lexis used, grammatical functions or semantic associations of the words. Hunston (2002: 109) explains that "[p]atterns of association – how lexical items tend to co-occur – are built up over large amounts of text and are often unavailable to intuition or conscious awareness" and as a result, "can therefore convey messages implicitly and even be at odds with an overt statement". In contrast to traditional ways of reading a text horizontally, as a whole, coherent and unique piece, and for its content (Tognini-Bonelli 2004: 18), corpus linguists read texts as mediated through computer programs such as WordSmith (Scott 2012) or AntConc (Anthony 2014) to identify these recurring patterns.

Corpus linguistics is often combined with other approaches to analysis. A particularly useful approach has been to combine corpus linguistic and (critical) discourse analysis: an online bibliography lists some 600 items (Gabrielatos 2016). As Mautner (2009: 32) argues, these two methodologies for analysing texts have "a shared interest in how language 'works' in social rather than merely structural terms". This focus on naturally occurring language and reading for language as a social, discursive phenomenon is at the heart of both approaches.

One way in which these two approaches can be used together is by acknowledging ways in which their strengths can be used to complement each other. Corpus linguistics, in its focus on large collections of texts, avoids some of the issues of researcher bias and cherry-picking data associated with discourse analysis. Because so many texts make up a corpus, it is necessary to form interpretations which account for frequent patterns in the data. Corpora are also invaluable for searching for very subtle patterns in language use. For example, Baker (2006) offers the example of a sailor who uses a wheelchair praised in a newspaper article for their courage; it is only when looking at a large collection of texts that the assumption that wheelchair users are not expected to be physically active and independent becomes clear. Baker (2006) argues that the use of corpora enables the researcher to examine the incremental effect of discourse and explore resistant and changing discourses -- both areas that critical discourse analysis has investigated extensively.

In turn, critical discourse analysis (for example, Fairclough 1992, 2000, 2001; Reisigl and Wodak 2001) often supplies the concepts and intellectual framework used in this "methodological synergy" (Baker *et al.* 2008). A considerable body of work utilising critical discourse analysis and corpus linguistics demonstrates that combining these approaches can reveal different features and thus complement each other in linguistic analysis. Approaches combining corpus linguistics and (critical) discourse analysis¹ have been used to explore the discursive construction of concepts or groups of people. Recent work focusing on the media representation of (often minority) groups includes work on refugees, asylum seekers, immigrants and migrants (Baker *et al.* 2008; Gabrielatos and Baker 2008), feminism (Jaworska and Krishnamurthy 2012), Muslims (Baker *et al.* 2013a, 2013b), migrants (Taylor 2014) and the suffrage movement (Gupta 2015). While corpus linguistics have been used to explore gender (c.f. Baker 2005, 2008, 2014), these have tended to focus on the construction of cisgender gay identities² with little attention given to transgender identities.

Using corpus linguistics, I am able to explore the cumulative effect of misgendering. As I will demonstrate later, there are consistent patterns in what pronouns are used to describe Meadows at different points in the news narrative. However, it is only when looking at a lot of news texts reporting Meadows' transition, death and its aftermath that striking changes can be revealed.

¹ I include the parentheses because not all discourse analysts work within a critical discourse framework; however, much of the work I cite does explicitly examine inequalities in power and how power is expressed, maintained and challenged in texts.

² e.g. Baker's (2005) examinations of House of Lords reform on the age of consent and British tabloid representation of gay men.

4. Lucy Meadows

Lucy Meadows was a primary school teacher working in Accrington, Lancashire. In winter 2012 she stopped working in a male role; in December 2012, the school newspaper announced her decision to return to work after the Christmas break as Miss Meadows. Three months later, on 19 March 2013, she was found dead at her home. The coroner leading the inquest into her death recorded a verdict of suicide, but condemned the media response as intrusive, sensational and a factor in the distress she had experienced in the months leading to her death. The coroner was rebuked for his comments in August 2013.

Lucy Meadows' death and the inquest into it came at a time when the press was under intense scrutiny in the Leveson Inquiry. Meadows' transition had been reported in the local press in December 2012 and picked up by the national press. The initial reporting was swiftly followed by commentary, most significantly by Richard Littlejohn, about the suitability of transgender people for teaching in schools. Littlejohn's comments, published in the *Daily Mail* and titled "He's not only in the wrong body... he's in the wrong job", argued that pupils would be "forced to deal with" Meadows' transition which would have a "devastating effect" on them. Littlejohn concluded that rather than transition at work, Meadows should have resigned from her job, "disappear[ed]" and reappeared as Meadows in a different school. He concluded that Meadows' failure to do so indicated a lack of concern for "the sensibilities of the children he is paid to teach". Littlejohn's comments attracted vigorous rebuttal online but, at the time, attracted little press attention.

Meadows' death three months later was also reported in the local and national press. Many news sources discussed the announcement of her transition in December 2012 and revisited older articles written about her. Littlejohn's comments were also revisited, this time in the context that they were not only transphobic, but were implicated in Meadows' suicide. After her death was reported, an online petition for the withdrawal of Littlejohn's article and protest outside the *Daily Mail* offices was organised; both the *Independent* and the *Guardian* reported on this response.

As discussed in section 1.2, considerable numbers of transgender people reported anger, unhappiness, exclusion and fear as a result of poor media reporting on transgender issues. This link was made by Michael Singleton, the coroner in the inquest into Meadows' suicide. *The Times* quoted him extensively, describing his comments as 'a tirade against journalists':

"It seems to me that nothing has been learnt from the Leveson inquiry," he said [...]

He added: "I'll be writing to the Government to consider now implementing in full the recommendations of the Leveson report in order to seek to ensure that other people in the same position as Lucy Meadows are not faced with the same ill-informed bigotry as seems to be displayed in the case of Lucy."

Following these comments, the *Daily Mail* and *Daily Telegraph* reported that Singleton had been rebuked. However, *Media Lawyer* reported that he had received informal advice from the Chief Coroner, explicitly identifying this as not a disciplinary sanction.

As this brief description of events shows, Meadows' transition, death and the aftermath of her death were widely reported in the UK press. By focusing on an individual trans person rather than commenting more widely on transgender issues, the press has the ability to discuss Meadows' experiences -- and Meadows herself -- in individual, personal terms. As I will show, this makes pronouns an illuminating part of speech to examine in greater detail.

5. Data

I use two corpora: a small, focused corpus (166 texts, 108,643 words) of news texts reporting on Lucy Meadows between October 2012 and October 2013, and a reference corpus (7000 texts, 3,954,808 words) of general news texts. The Lucy Meadows corpus was collected from Nexis, an online database of news stories, using the search term "Lucy Meadows" and were collected from the UK newspaper section. They include broadsheet, tabloid, local and online news reporting, and include articles published both in print and on UK newspapers' websites. The reference corpus is composed of news texts sampled within the same time frame, also from Nexis, also from the UK newspaper section and also including broadsheet, tabloid and local print and online newspaper reporting.

Figure 1 is a visual representation of the timeline of events from December 2012 to October 2013 and indicates the months in which Meadows is discussed in the corpus. As the figure shows, events were reported simultaneously: for example, articles discussing the media response, remembrance events, the inquest into her death and news stories about other trans women were published in May.

Figure 1: Timeline of events, Dec 2012 – Oct 2013

	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct
Meadows' transition											

Meadows' death											
Media response											
Remembrance											
Other trans women											
Inquest											
Coroner's rebuke											

However, Lucy Meadows' death was mentioned in other contexts and was used to launch other news stories. This included criticism of some newspapers and columnists by other newspapers and columnists, defences of previous reporting, and metacommentary discussing the roles and responsibility of the press in covering sensitive stories. Finally, Lucy Meadows is discussed when reporting on other transgender women, primarily Chelsea Manning.

6. Keywords

In corpus linguistics, keywords are words that occur more frequently than expected in a target corpus than in a reference corpus. They are generated by calculating the actual occurrences of words in a target corpus, calculating the actual occurrences of the same words in a reference corpus, then calculating the expected frequency of those words in the target corpus based on the reference corpus. Keywords can be both positive (more frequent in the target corpus than expected) and negative (less frequent in the target corpus than expected).

A list of the words in a corpus ranked by frequency will usually contain function words in the top 50 words; typically, *the*, *and*, *a* and *to* are in the top five. Keywords, however, indicate what is different about a target corpus from the reference corpus and instantly offer an insight into the "aboutness" of the target corpus. Reference corpora therefore have to be carefully chosen to highlight meaningful differences. For this reason, the reference corpus was built using the same criteria as the Lucy Meadows corpus, but without the focus on Meadows. In this particular piece of research, the target corpus is the small Lucy Meadows corpus (166 texts, 108,643 words) and the reference corpus is the corpus of general news texts (7000 texts, 3,954,808 words). A corpus tool, WordSmith 6 (Scott 2012) was used to calculate keywords.

The most frequent key words tend to be concrete words and tend to be nouns. They are often proper names: *Meadows*, *Lucy*, *Upton*, *Accrington*, *Littlejohn*³. Some describe job titles, such as *teacher*, *teachers* and *coroner*. Others describe her place of work: *school*,

³ Littlejohn refers to the author of a particularly transphobic commentary; I will discuss this text further in section 7.2

primary and *Magdalen's*. Some describe gender, such as *transgender*, *gender* and *trans*. Some describe the manner and aftermath of her death: *suicide*, *press* and *inquest*. There are a small number of words associated with the online platforms on which her transition, death and aftermath were reported such as *http*, *twitter* and *com*. Finally, there are two pronouns, *her* and *she*. It is these pronouns that I will examine in greater detail.

7. Lucy Meadows' pronouns before and after her death

In the Lucy Meadows corpus, there are 2,515 third person singular gendered pronouns, of which 1,512 are used to describe Lucy herself. Significantly, gendered pronoun use shows a very clear trend, as indicated in Table 1. These are presented as raw figures in order to better represent the volume of coverage of Meadows before and after her death.

Table 1: Frequency of gendered pronouns before and after Meadows' death

Pronoun	Total frequency	Frequency used before death	Frequency used after death
<i>her</i>	670	6	664
<i>she</i>	471	20	451
<i>he</i>	162	121	39
<i>his</i>	156	90	63
<i>him</i>	53	50	3
Total	1,512	287	1,220

While the total number of the feminine pronouns *she* and *her* are most frequent overall, they were rarely used to describe Meadows before her death. Instead, there is a striking tendency for the masculine pronouns *he*, *him* and *his* to be used to describe Meadows while she was alive. These masculine pronouns continue to be used after her death, albeit less frequently; I will explore the reasons for this in section 8.

Of the 670 occurrences of *her* used to describe Meadows in the corpus, only 6 occurrences (0.9 per cent) were used to describe her before her death. In contrast, 664 (99.1 per cent) of the occurrences of *her* when used to describe Meadows were used after her death. Similarly, of the 471 occurrences of *she* used to describe Meadows in the corpus, only 20 (4.2 per cent) were used to describe her before her death. However, 451 (95.8 per cent) occurrences were used to describe Meadows after her death. What this quantitative evidence shows is that while she was alive, Meadows was overwhelmingly described, through pronoun

use, as male. Before her death, the corpus evidence shows that the pronouns used to describe her reflected her female identity a mere 26 times; instead, pronoun use represents her as male a total of 261 times. It is only after her death that Meadows is typically described, through pronouns, as female. These shifts in pronoun choice demonstrate a striking change in the way Lucy Meadows was represented in the press.

8. Accounting for masculine pronoun use

In this section, I will account for newspapers' use of masculine pronouns to describe Meadows. As shown in section 6, the frequency of *she* and *her* differ dramatically in frequency before and after Meadows' death. However, the masculine pronouns *he*, *him* and *his* tend not to exhibit the dramatic reversal in frequency seen in *she* and *her* and continue to be used to describe Meadows after her death. There are a variety of strategies employed when using masculine pronouns; particularly significant is the use of direct and indirect quotations and journalists' repetition of quotations. I address indirect quotations in section 8.1, direct quotations in section 8.2 and repetition in section 8.3.

8.1 Tabloid misgendering

Tabloid misgendering is one of the four strategies identified by Trans Media Watch (see outline in section 1.1) and is defined as "using inappropriate pronouns"; these are understood as pronouns that do not reflect an individual's stated gender identity. In this section I am focusing on pronoun use when paraphrasing Meadows, for example in "he told staff and parents he was changing sex". In this sentence, *he* appears to reflect the journalist's reporting of Meadows' gender.

The use of *he was* and *he will* in the corpus is particularly revealing. These are different tenses of the same verb (*to be*) and are particularly significant in the context of gender transition; *was* describes a past state of being while *will* describes future intentions and possibilities. In the corpus, *he was* and *he will* are used to paraphrase Meadows' explanations to her pupils, the school's announcement and explanation to parents and some speculation about her future medical treatment; these uses indicate something about how the newspaper conceptualised Meadows' identity in the process of explaining her shifting gender presentation.

Concordance 1: occurrences of *he was*

1. CHER who told staff and parents he was changing sex and coming ba
2. e Church of England school that he was born "with a girl's brain
3. ws. He explained to pupils that he was a "born with a girl's brai
4. Upton, 32, says he always knew he was born into the wrong sex. Y
5. ws. He explained to pupils that he was "born with a girl's brain
6. who told parents and colleagues he was changing sex and coming ba
7. who told parents and colleagues he was changing sex and coming ba
8. er, 32, who announced to pupils he was changing sex is found dead
9. er, 32, who announced to pupils he was changing sex is found dead
10. Upton, 32, says he always knew he was born into the wrong sex. Y
11. Upton, 32, says he always knew he was born into the wrong sex. Y

Concordance 2: occurrences of *he will*

1. school teacher has told pupils he will return after the Christma
2. nuing sex change. It is thought he will undergo hormone therapy a
3. school teacher has told parents he will come back next term as a
4. s a sex change op at Christmas. He will return to the primary sch
5. nuing sex change. It is thought he will undergo hormone therapy a
6. school teacher has told pupils he will return after the Christma

Significantly, the notice in the school newsletter quoted by some newspapers (and which largely accounts for the 20 occurrences of *she* before the reporting of Meadows' death) reads "Mr Upton has recently made a significant change in his life and will be transitioning to live as a woman. After the Christmas break, she will return to work as Miss Meadows". While this statement uses both masculine and feminine pronouns, it elegantly shifts between them to indicate that the masculine pronoun "his" refers to Meadows' life before her transition and that feminine pronouns are to be used from then on. If the newspaper reporting followed this usage, we might expect *he was* – indicating Meadows' previous presentation as male – and *she will*, indicating her future intentions, potential and possibilities⁴. Instead, there are six occurrences of *he will*, indicating a male future for Meadows' and a lack of recognition of her trans future.

8.2 Selective quoting

A second significant choice in newspaper reporting is deciding who to quote, and, in doing so, deciding whose point of view to reproduce to a wider audience. As Table 2 indicates, quotes accounted for a significant percentage of uses – a minimum of 42.6 per cent in the case of *he* and a maximum of 70 per cent in the case of *him*.

⁴ See Pearce (2016) for a detailed analysis of trans time, and specifically transfuturity

Table 2: Frequency of masculine pronouns in direct and indirect quotes

Pronoun	Direct quotes	Indirect quotes	Percentage accounted for by quotes
<i>he</i>	60	9	42.6%
<i>his</i>	71	20	58.3%
<i>him</i>	27	10	70%

The people quoted include parents of Meadows' pupils, Meadow's former wife's parents and Meadows' pupils themselves. It is important to note here that use of masculine pronouns does not necessarily indicate an insult: for example, some uses are from Meadows' former father-in-law. Meadows' father-in-law, Mr Smith, is quoted extensively in the *Daily Mail* on 19 December 2012; this is one of the first articles to be published reporting Meadows' transition. In it, he says:

'He is a lovely person as well and we will support him no matter what [...] If he was a rubbish teacher then they would not have stood by him. All the time he has been teaching as a he or she, everybody has said what a good teacher he is. When we first heard it was a shock yes but we are going to stand by him.'

This quote clearly affirms Smith's high regard for Meadows, and in its use of "he or she" acknowledge that Meadows has been presenting as a gender other than male. However, this quote also reveals one of the issues in using quotes from people who know the person transitioning: that they sometimes have not adjusted to using pronouns which accurately reflect the transitioning person's gender identity. Similarly, a child is quoted in several newspapers:

One ten-year-old pupil said: 'He spoke to us and said he's going to be changing into a woman and wearing women's clothes after Christmas. We were all a bit shocked.'

Again, this quote is more likely to indicate the child's current understanding of their teacher's gender rather than any hostility on their part. A grandmother voices approval for Meadows' transition, describing Meadows as "brave" but uses masculine pronouns:

A grandmother, collecting her seven-year-old granddaughter from the school, said: "It has been handled very sensitively by the school and I think it's a very brave thing for him to do."

A mother of a child attending the school also uses masculine pronouns to describe Meadows but does so in a context of normalising Meadows' transition as something that has been done

before and describing her children as "happy", possibly responding to claims that Meadows' transition would upset and confuse children:

One mother was quoted by the Mail as saying: "My children are happy. I don't see anything wrong with it. He's not the first and he won't be the last."

The four quotes discussed in this section so far appear to reflect a naïve usage of masculine pronouns: it is unlikely that Mr Smith, the school pupil, the parent or grandparent would expect their words to be used in order to attack or undermine Meadows. However, there are also usages in the corpus which reflect a more hostile response to Meadows' transition. The four quotes below from Wayne Cowie appeared more than once in the corpus:

Wayne Cowie, whose ten-year-old son has been taught by Mr Upton for three years, said his children were worried and confused. 'My middle boy thinks that he might wake up with a girl's brain because he was told that Mr Upton, as he got older, got a girl's brains.'

Dad-of-three Wayne Cowie said: "I didn't think I'd need the birds and the bees talk with my sons until they were at high school, and now they are coming home asking about transsexuals. "My lad is very confused and upset about it. He should have taken a couple of years off to sort himself out."

Wayne Cowie, 35, a father of three who has a child at the school, said: "I have not forced my way of life on to him so why is he forcing his on to my kids? He went for the job as a man. The kids are all going to be laughing and giggling at him. He is still Mr Upton but in a dress. He should start a new life in a new place and at a new school."

Talking about Mr Upton, Mr Cowie said: "I have not forced my way of life on to him so why is he forcing his on to my kids? We all knew what he was. My partner saw him dressed as a woman. This has been forced upon us. I can't fault the school but I'd like to see how it's doing in a year."

In these quotes, Cowie rejects Meadows' identity: he explicitly identifies her in terms of her past male identity but "in a dress", as an object of mockery in her workplace, as a man and, significantly, consistently uses masculine pronouns. While Cowie's is one of the most quoted parental responses and therefore has more presence in the corpus, other parents also undermine Meadows' gender identity as something that could be confined to her private life and from which children needed to be shielded:

A mum said: "It's his life, but he can dress as a woman in his own time. It's just going to confuse the children." And another said he should have changed schools. She said: "I think he should have left St Mary's and joined another school with his new name for a fresh start."

While there are examples of naïve use of masculine pronouns to describe Meadows, these uses of masculine pronouns combine with transmisogynist tropes invoking the figure of trans women as 'men in dresses' to undermine Meadows' professionalism, the seriousness of her need to transition and her female gender identity.

As I have discussed in this section, a significant number of occurrences of masculine pronouns can be accounted for by quotes, thus enabling journalists to use masculine pronouns and position Meadows as male in the guise of reporting opinions. By examining these quotes in more detail it becomes apparent that some speakers are supportive of Meadows; however, the cumulative effect of such quotes is that Meadows is only recognised as female in pronouns use after her death. It is very much worth considering who gets quoted and why.

8.3 Repetition

The third strand in accounting for newspapers' use of masculine pronouns to describe Meadows is the use of repetition. As I discussed in section 2, a particular strength of corpus linguistic analysis is identifying repeated patterns; pronoun use, as discussed in sections 8.1 and 8.2 is one such pattern. Quotes are also recycled extensively which means that a quote misgendering Meadows as male may be repeated across different newspapers, on different days, and be resurrected at a later date.

One ten year old pupil's comment, "He spoke to us and said he's going to be changing" was found five times in the corpus. This comment was initially printed in the *Lancashire Telegraph* on the 19 Dec 2012, before being reproduced in the *Daily Mail* (20 December 2012), *Irish Daily Mail* (20 December 2012) and *MailOnline* (20 December 2012 and 12 March 2013) thus establishing its spread across different regions, news platforms and time.

Similarly, Cowie's statement of "My middle boy thinks that he might wake up with a girl's brain because he was told that Mr Upton, as he got older, got a girl's brains" was found six times in the corpus. This statement was repeated twice in the *MailOnline* on 20 December 2012 – once in a report attributed to James Tozer and Nazia Parveen and once in Richard Littlejohn's commentary before being used in the *Daily Mail* (20 December 2012), *MailOnline* (21 December 2012), *Daily Mail* (21 December 2012) and *Daily Mail* (12 March

2013). Again, this shows that the statement was reproduced across a number of days – even months – later, across both print and online platforms and in both news reports and commentary.

The most repeated set of words in the corpus was the title of Richard Littlejohn's commentary, "He's not in the wrong body...he's in the wrong job". 23 occurrences of this phrase were found in the corpus. Littlejohn's commentary was published on 20 December 2012 on *MailOnline* before being printed by the *Daily Mail* on 21 December 2012. It was subsequently quoted in the immediate aftermath of Meadows' death: the first occurrence after her death was on the website Liberal Conspiracy on 21 March 2013 in a piece titled "Lucy Meadows, and the tabloids that harassed her". The *Independent* quoted Littlejohn's title in an article on 22 March 2013. The *Guardian* also quoted it in two articles also published on 22 March 2013, one reporting Meadows' death and one reporting on the petition to fire Littlejohn for his comments. On 23 March 2013, the *Independent*, the *Independent's* online coverage, the *Huffington Post* and the *Guardian* quote the phrase in reports on "intrusive press coverage" (the *Independent*) and that Meadows "was 'monstered' by media after transition became public" (the *Guardian*), thus contextualising her death and this quote within emerging concerns about press ethics. Finally, this line is quoted during the coroner's inquest into Meadows's death. The *Huffington Post* quotes it on 29 May 2013 in a report on the inquest and the *Guardian* uses it in an article published on the same day reporting that the "*Daily Mail* [was] singled out over 'ridicule and humiliation'". The line is also quoted by Rod Liddle in the *Sun* on 30 May 2013 arguing that the coroner was the one guilty of bigotry rather than the press.

It is clear from the context that the line is often quoted in order to critique it. Littlejohn is described as "a polemicist" with a "prurient interest in transsexual people as far as asking how they take a pee" going "on the offensive" who "accused" Meadows of not caring about the children she taught. The *Daily Mail* is described as "showing little contrition" but as having removed the commentary after Meadows' suicide. However, in critiquing the article, news organisations also reproduce the text they condemn. Repetition, therefore, poses a problem. As this data shows, particularly in combination with the selective quoting discussed in section 8.2, use of misgendering pronouns can be widely disseminated across different newspapers, platforms, regions and time periods and perhaps even more widely than they would otherwise. This is particularly striking in the case of Littlejohn's comments which were reproduced in May 2013, almost exactly six months after they were first published. Reproduction of such obvious transphobic comments, even if to condemn

them, risks legitimising them and may serve as a reminder that Meadows' gender was subject to hostility and rejection.

Conclusion

By examining the language used to describe transgender identities by the mainstream UK press, I am able to investigate issues of minority representation, press tactics of negative representation, and the interactions between press, public, reporters and reported. I demonstrate that the use of the wrong pronouns, while a key part of negative media portrayal used to dismiss trans peoples' gender identities, is more complex than the hostile use of quotemarks identified by Trans Media Watch.

Through repetition of selected direct quotes, the press is able to reinforce some voices and not others. In doing so, reporters are able to evade direct responsibility for misgendering while continuing to produce the effect of undermining a trans person's gender identity. This was particularly noticeable in journalistic quotation of Wayne Cowie, a parent of a child attending Meadows' school. Cowie strongly rejected Meadows' transition and female gender identity, describing her as "Mr Upton but in a dress" and stating that "He [Meadows] should start a new life in a new place and at a new school". By quoting from Cowie so extensively, newspapers are able to voice transphobic attitudes without being directly responsible for their expression. Several of the people quoted – included those close to Meadows – use masculine pronouns. While they often express support and praise Meadows' teaching ability and bravery, their use of masculine pronouns contributes to the startling lack of realisation of Meadows' female identity through pronoun use seen before her death.

It is crucial to recognise that the reporting of Meadows' transition, death and its aftermath took place shortly after the Leveson Inquiry; by December 2012, Lord Leveson had already published the first part of the report. Trans Media Watch had submitted both written and oral evidence to the Inquiry identifying press strategies for misgendering trans people. As discussed, use of pronouns in quotemarks was a tactic singled out by Trans Media Watch as particularly widespread and used to undermine trans people's stated genders. This tactic was not found in texts discussing Lucy Meadows; instead, the writing about her could be just as hostile but expressed through different, non-journalist voices and with an elision of journalistic responsibility. From this study it is clear that there are emerging strategies for the production and reproduction of transphobia in news texts. As transgender experiences and

voices become more widely discussed, the expression (and mechanics for expression) of transphobia also has new possibilities of which we must be aware.

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