

# Manufacturing Racialised Misogyny in China's Digital Manosphere

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## Abstract

This article examines the consumption of WNBA (Women's National Basketball Association) games within China's sports fandom through a dual gender-racial lens, using celebrity basketball player Caitlin Clark as a case study. Drawing on a dialectical-relational approach to critical discourse studies, complemented by an intersectional lens on gender and racial injustices, we unpack how Chinese fans co-construct Clark as an ideal sportswoman on Hupu, a popular Chinese-language sports forum, based not on her career accomplishments but on her sexuality, her perceived gender identity as a heterosexual woman, and her racial categorisation as white Caucasian. Accordingly, the manifestly aggressive sporting tactics employed against Clark by her competitors of African heritage are reframed as being driven by gendered and racialised motives. In this context, misogyny and racism not only intersect but are also dialectically linked to distinctly Chinese (re)interpretations of global racial and geopolitical orders. The findings illustrate the context-specific manifestations of gender-racial entanglements in China's sports fandom and their dynamics with global reactionary currents.

## Keywords

Caitlin Clark, celebrity athlete, dialectical-relational approach, intersectionality, sports fandom, Hupu, women's national basketball association (WNBA)

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In recent years, an increasing number of female celebrity athletes have come to the forefront of media attention amid the rapid development of the sports market. However, their personal successes by no means signal the complete eradication of gender inequality in the profession, nor do they translate into opportunities that benefit all sportswomen equally (Gray et al., 2017; Xu et al., 2021). Rather, critical scholarship argues that these celebrity athletes are best described as “entrepreneurial agents,” whose accomplishments are built upon “careful economic, and very much individualised, strategising” within a neoliberal feminist framework (Thorpe et al., 2017, p. 372). Far from contributing to gender equality in sport and beyond, this framework propagates individualistic self-empowerment tropes, paradoxically sustaining the patriarchal capitalist system by encouraging individuals to take a “lean-in” approach that seeks reconciliation with the status quo (Rottenberg, 2018).

To a certain extent, Caitlin Clark provides an up-to-date example of entrepreneurial agents in the sports industry. Undoubtedly, as “a generational collegiate basketball talent,” Clark’s excellence on the court has not only earned her fame but also increased the media exposure of the Women’s National Basketball Association (Judge & Petersen, 2025, p. 29). Compared to 2023, the season before she commenced her professional career, the 2024 WNBA viewership “across national TV networks [...] has tripled”, with attendance increasing “by 17% across the league”, All-Star fan voting growing “by 600%”, and purchases on the official website rising “by 756%” (Sailofsky, 2025, p. 462). While acknowledging the positive impact she has brought to the league (Judge & Petersen, 2025), the so-called “Caitlin Clark Effect” has also been attributed to her racial background as a white Caucasian, her gender identity as a heterosexual woman, and her personal story of “playing for her home state’s flagship school,” all of which position her as the ideal protagonist of an “All-American” sensational media narrative (Sailofsky, 2025, p. 463). As such, an uncritical celebration of Clark’s success risks concealing structural issues within sports and, arguably, across the entire Western world, where the overrepresentation of white, middle-class women’s experiences continues to dominate “mainstream” progressive culture.

Informed by an intersectional perspective, an increasing body of scholarship has offered a dual account of gender and racial inequalities in Euro-American sports fandoms (Anderson & Raney, 2023; Ho & Tanaka, 2023). Turning attention to the East, pioneering research has revealed the localisation of global racial hierarchies within Chinese sports fandom culture and its intersection with gendered patterns of sports participation and consumption (Gong, 2017; Tsang, 2025). However, such intersectional analysis remains marginal in the Chinese context, where racial inequalities have historically not occupied the forefront of public attention. With the country hosting the world’s second-largest basketball market, the visibility of WNBA games has notably increased in China’s sports fandom (Yuan, 2024). In this evolving landscape, the phenomenal rise of Clark in the league and the debates surrounding her provide an ideal-typical case through which to address this knowledge gap.

Informed by a dual gender-racial account of the consumption of women’s basketball, we employ Caitlin Clark as a case study, focusing on how her rivalry with Angel Reese, a fellow WNBA player of African heritage, is framed within China’s sports fandom.

Our empirical data were drawn from Hupu, the most popular Chinese-language sports forum. Drawing on a dialectical-relational approach to critical discourse studies, complemented by an intersectional perspective on the entanglement of gender and racial politics, we unpack how Hupu netizens co-construct Clark as an iconic female athlete not only on the basis of her athletic performance but also with reference to her sexuality and her perceived gender and racial identities. In this process, female African American competitors of the white, Caucasian sportswoman are frequently portrayed in stereotypical terms, with their manifestly aggressive tactics against Clark on the court reframed as driven by gendered and racialised motives. Yet, unlike the far-/alt-right pathways to misogyny and racism in Western societies, this discourse displays distinctive characteristics informed by China's localised gender power dynamics and context-specific nationalist interpretations of the global racial order. On a platform predominantly frequented by male sports fans, this discourse illustrates the prevalence of gender- and race-based discrimination in present-day China and its dialectical relations with popular cultural consumption, nationalism, and international geopolitics.

## Literature Review

### *The Gender-Racial Axis of China's Sports Fandom*

In China, the sports infrastructure was once built primarily to serve the government's nationalist propaganda (Lu & Fan, 2019). The situation has gradually changed in the post-reform era, during which the Party-state incorporated neoliberal tenets into its governing doctrines to revitalise its authoritarian polity (Wallis, 2025). Out of this process, market-driven sports consumption has emerged. While retaining a localised nationalist axis, one that the Party-state continues to exploit to advance its political agenda (Sullivan et al., 2019, 2025), such consumption is simultaneously informed by fans' self-reflexive consumer behaviour, showcasing dynamic interconnectedness with global sports media (Billings et al., 2019a; Chen et al., 2024). Amongst the many imported products, European football and North American basketball have proven to be the most well-received in the Chinese market, providing fodder for the development of late-modern sports fandom culture (Gong, 2017; Shen et al., 2021).

Sports, both in the context of participation and consumption, have historically been entrenched as a masculinist terrain. Ever since the advent of communist rule in the country, gold medallists were officially nominated as "People's Hero" or "China's Glory" to celebrate the national pride they brought home (Lu & Fan, 2019, p. 751). While such titles are not exclusively applied to male athletes, a masculinist undertone has always been embedded in the narrative, tellingly reflected in how the state media problematise femininity as a means of explaining female athletes' failures at international tournaments (Xu et al., 2018). This masculinist undertone has reshaped not only how athletes partake in competition (Lee, 2026), but also how fans across the board consume sports games (Gong, 2017), informing an enduring perspective that regards athletic accomplishments as manifestations of hegemonic masculine qualities. Linked to the overrepresentation of heteronormative male audiences in sports

consumption, it has rendered the pervasiveness of sexism and gender-based discrimination pervasive in China's sports fandom (He, 2025; Sun & Dai, 2024).

Yet, oftentimes overlooked in existing literature is the entanglement of gender with racial politics in China's sports fandom. Attending to this gap, Zhang (2014) examines track-and-field athlete Liu Xiang as a case study, showing how his unprecedented Olympic achievement led Chinese media to construct him as a state-aligned masculine role model. During his prime in the 2000s, Liu became one of the most commercially valuable sports figures, symbolising "China's timely transition to the market economy" (Zhang, 2014, p. 32). Operating beyond the top-down dynamics of propaganda, his masculine persona simultaneously played into market-led nationalist discourse by framing his victories as triumphs for the entire "Yellow race," a narrative that carries racial undertones. Such racial undertones were materialised in popular narratives of his accomplishments that staged a dual protest against the dominance of Black athletes in track-and-field and the hegemony of White Western civilisations outside of the stadium. Within a cultural milieu where such a narrative prevails, Chinese male athletes are compelled to constantly negotiate both their gender identity as masculine men and their racial identity as representatives of the "Yellow race" within the sporting profession (Tsang, 2025). Chinese fans have, accordingly, also developed ambivalent attitudes towards the naturalisation of foreign athletes, in which racialised recognition of the latter's sporting talents coexists with scepticism about their motives, behaviours, and long-term commitments (Sullivan et al., 2023).

The gender-racial intersection oftentimes persists in Chinese audiences' engagement with imported sports media. As Gong (2017) observes, female fans tend to gaze at celebrity European footballers through racialised aesthetics. This racialised gaze is shaped both by global media that continue to project sexual desirability onto white Caucasian bodies and by the localised reproduction of global racial hierarchies in China, informed by official campaigns to "emulate White Western society in its modernisation process" (Gong, 2017, p. 179). Echoing this perspective, Peng and his colleagues (2022) have identified more explicit forms of anti-Black sentiment in China's sports fandom, where male fans employ racist tropes to delegitimise progressive social movements in Euro-American societies, even while idolising elite African American athletes who actively partake in such initiatives. Yet, these studies largely centre on men's sports and rarely address comparable dynamics in women's games. With this gap in mind, this research analyses the trending consumption of the WNBA on Chinese social media, primed by the so-called Caitlin Clark Effect, as a case study.

### *A Dialectical-Relational Approach to the Intersection of Gender and Racial Injustices*

A critical account of the gender-racial entanglement in sports consumption requires an intersectional understanding of structural injustices. Coined by Crenshaw (2017), an intersectional approach probes into the interconnectedness of different categories of injustices through "the relationships amongst multiple dimensions and modalities of

social relations and subject formations” (McCall, 2005, p. 1,771). Amongst the many points of crossing, the intersection of racial and gender injustices is crucial yet easily overlooked. In this regard, African American women’s experience with the US legal system offers a prime example. Their marginalisation is not merely the additive combination of the racism directed at African American men and the sexism faced by white women, as the intersection of the two renders them particularly vulnerable, due to their invisibility within established support infrastructures (Crenshaw, 2017). Thus, scholarly inquiries into this marginalisation must account for how multiple forms of oppression collide in the everyday lives of these women of colour to problematise the whiteness and patriarchal tendencies of progressive initiatives.

By recognising the “vexed dynamics of difference and the solidarities of sameness” (Cho et al., 2013, p. 786), an intersectional approach examines how marginalised groups fall through the cracks of dominant discourses on gender and race. As Crenshaw (2017) explains, this involves identifying the relevant axes of analysis and then attending to different forms of intersectionality. She, in particular, distinguishes between structural and political forms of intersectionality, with the former highlighting how complex socioeconomic structures intersect in practice to intensify existing inequalities, and the latter illustrating how discourses and sociopolitical processes further exacerbate the disadvantage of already marginalised groups (Crenshaw, 2017). Yet, intersectional analysis should not be oversimplified into a tool that divides populations into a binary of privileged versus disadvantaged, or into an individualistic framework that categorises behaviours dichotomously, as such reductions detach the inquiry from the lived experiences of the marginalised (Kanai, 2021). By foregrounding the mutual shaping of gender- and race-based oppressions in real-life contexts, this heuristic approach provides a valuable framework for advancing “disciplinary knowledge production and struggles for social justice,” thereby unleashing its capacity to inform genuinely inclusive interventions (Cho et al., 2013, p. 786).

Despite being rooted in a Black feminist observation of US society, Crenshaw’s (2017) theorisation of intersectionality has potential for cross-border applications. Yet, a strictly orthodox operationalisation of the approach does not necessarily offer a concentrated account of the detailed processes through which intersecting structural issues are reproduced in and through discourse. On this note, Fairclough’s (2013) dialectical-relational approach, sharing a critical epistemological stance with the intersectional framework regarding the interconnectedness and mutual shaping of structural injustices, provides the conceptual language to elucidate the discursive mechanisms that sustain intersectional injustices.

Fairclough’s (2013) dialectical-relational approach complements intersectional analysis through the scope of critical discourse studies. Instead of treating discourse as the totality of meaning-making through signs, he defines it as a socially conditioned form of semiosis that represents the world. While discourse is not merely a matter of language use, it is frequently practised through linguistic means (van Dijk, 1999). Both deriving from and feeding into existing social structures, it communicates a specific perspective that enacts or sustains identities, ideologies, and power relations (Wodak, 2015). Accordingly, Fairclough (2013) advocates a critical realist stance, arguing that

reality is layered, entailing concrete structures, specific events, and subjective interpretations of them. Without reducing the analysis to an oversimplified structuralist paradigm, his approach probes into the dialectical relations between discourse and social structures to critically examine the political relevance of discursive processes.

Using the term “dialectical,” Fairclough (2013) mobilises Marxist language to interpret the mutually constitutive dynamics between structural injustices and their discursive manifestations. In other words, structural issues are not simply additive in nature. Instead, they frequently operate in an ongoing process of transformation that continuously reshapes them. Accounts of such dialectical relations enable discourse analysts to advance a process-oriented perspective that examines the mutual shaping, contradictions, and transformations amongst differing forms of injustice.

Addressing the intersectionality of structural oppressions, the operationalisation of the dialectical-relational approach enables methodological engagement with both linguistic and intertextual analyses. In Fairclough’s (2013) words, analyses of linguistic and intertextual properties articulate how texts are structured upon specific linguistic systems and orders of discourse. While the former purposively examines how a text conveys meanings through its linguistic features, the latter foregrounds how the sensemaking of the text depends upon its connections with other texts (Hart, 2017). Indeed, rarely self-contained, a text is typically structured around explicit borrowings or implicit references to prior texts. By attending to such intertextual properties, the dialectical-relational approach strategically engages with the very characteristics of sensemaking, elucidating how textual fragments from elsewhere contribute to the sensemaking of a given text. In doing so, it transcends an oversimplified understanding of discourse production and consumption, addressing how texts emerge as vehicles of social practice that may perpetuate intersectional oppression.

By mobilising the dialectical-relational approach through an explicitly intersectional perspective, we analyse how sexism and racism collide in China’s sports fandom. By foregrounding the intersection of racial injustice and gender inequality, and their dialectical interactions across discursive practices, our analysis illuminates how gender-racial entanglements manifest in Chinese sports fans’ consumption of Clark as an iconic white Caucasian sportswoman in the WNBA.

## Data Collection and Analytical Strategy

In the present research, data were extrapolated from Hupu. Today, Hupu has the largest userbase in a niche sports market in China, with a particular focus on basketball. Over the years, it has aggregated over 70 million active accounts, around nine-tenths of which belong to men (He, 2025). Without the licence to practise conventional news-making, Hupu relies on its administrative team to curate translations and republications of English-language news stories, mainly sourced from mainstream Euro-American sports media, typically including but not limited to *The Atlantic*, ESPN, and NBC, or prominent sports journalists and NBA teams’ official accounts on X (Peng et al., 2022). Yet, the forum’s commercial success is inseparable from its facilitation of fandom-building, by enabling netizens to post comments and respond to each other beneath

sports reports. Hupu is accessible globally, but evidence suggests that its userbase is primarily located within the Chinese territory (Lyu & Wang, 2025; Yang et al., 2025). With the user demographics in mind, it is not surprising to observe that the forum fosters the exchange of such toxic values as misogyny (Sun & Dai, 2024) and racism in digital China (Peng et al., 2022), rendering it a rich data repository for the current research to elucidate how such toxic values collide in Hupu netizens' consumption of WNBA games.

Using Hupu's default search engine, we located a total of ten news articles published on Hupu concerning the Clark-Reese rivalry over a 12-month period, spanning June 2024–May 2025 (see Figure 1). These articles were selected for their high levels of engagement, as indicated by such metrics as the number of views and comments they attracted. On average, each article was viewed over 258,000 times and generated 172 posts. We collected all posts shared beneath these articles, producing a dataset of 1,721 individual entries, of which fewer than one-fiftieth ( $n = 32$ ) were posted by women. These posts, on average, attracted 25.3 upvotes and 0.6 follow-up comments. One of the coauthors manually collected the data, while the other verified the results for accuracy.

In the present research, each post was treated as the basic unit of analysis. We followed Fairclough's (2013) three-step framework, conducting empirical work at textual, discursive, and sociopolitical levels. At the textual level, we examined how posts conveyed meaning through lexical choices, discursive strategies, and other relevant features. At the discursive level, our primary attention was paid to the intertextual qualities of each post, analysing the genres and prior texts it drew upon and how these were integrated into specific motifs. Finally, at the sociopolitical level, we assessed the broader significance of discourse by focusing on the intersection of gender power relations and racialised worldviews, both within and beyond the Chinese context, and on their dialectical expression in the discursive manifestations of this intersectionality.

To operationalise the analytical framework, we employed a researcher triangulation strategy, with the lead author and a co-author jointly conducting the analysis. Specifically, the sampled posts were first read by the co-author to identify patterns at the textual level, with each post treated as the basic unit of data. The same posts were re-examined by the lead author to generate a second set of codes, which were continually compared with those from the previous cycle to identify discursive patterns. The two authors subsequently convened to undertake a theory-informed, close reading of the data, which enabled sociopolitical interpretations of these patterns. We maintained regular communication throughout every stage of the analysis. Any disagreements were resolved through reasoned debate, with alternative assumptions or interpretations accounted for to accommodate differing perspectives. Without relinquishing our critical stance against misogyny and racism, this analytical procedure ensured that the findings most accurately reflected a genuinely shared understanding, minimising the risk of data cherry-picking during the research process.

## Findings

Two thematic clusters have emerged from the sampled Hupu posts: the first concerns immediate commentary on focal athletic figures, and the second articulates posters'

Story	Headline Screenshots
1	<p><b>这一下够疼！克拉克今日上篮遭到里斯爆头，后者被吹一级恶意</b></p> <p>虎扑篮球资讯 2024-06-17 10:04</p> <p>+ 关注</p> <p>17/06/2024 Views: 734,687 Posts: 492</p> <p><b>What a painful one! Clark's layup was brutally blocked by Reese, who was called for a first-degree flagrant foul.</b></p>
2	<p><b>[流言板]克拉克与里斯新秀赛季的4次交手已经告终，克拉克3-1占优</b></p> <p>虎扑篮球资讯 2024-08-31 10:33</p> <p>+ 关注</p> <p>31/08/2024 Views: 93,784 Posts: 49</p> <p><b>The four rookie-season Clark-Reese matchups have concluded, with Clark leading 3-1.</b></p>
3	<p><b>[流言板]化敌为友！昨日全明星克拉克为里斯送上助攻，二人击掌庆祝</b></p> <p>虎扑篮球资讯 2024-07-23 00:23</p> <p>+ 关注</p> <p>22/07/2024 Views: 127,755 Posts: 30</p> <p><b>From rivals to allies! Clark assisted Reese in yesterday's All-Star game, and they celebrated with a high-five.</b></p>
4	<p><b>[流言板]安吉尔-里斯ins晒出与克拉克击掌的合照，已获8万点赞</b></p> <p>虎扑篮球资讯 2024-07-24 12:10</p> <p>+ 关注</p> <p>24/07/2024 Views: 125,696 Posts: 42</p> <p><b>Reese shares a high-five photo with Clark on Instagram, and it already racks up 80,000 likes.</b></p>
5	<p><b>[流言板]克拉克：看到库里有多强壮让我意识到花更多时间在力量训练</b></p> <p>虎扑篮球资讯 06-22 01:36</p> <p>+ 关注</p> <p>21/06/2024 Views: 225,509 Posts: 243</p> <p><b>Clark: seeing how strong Curry is made me realise I need to spend more time on strength training.</b></p>
6	<p><b>[流言板]克拉克VS里斯！明日狂热对天空平均票价334美元，历史最高</b></p> <p>虎扑篮球资讯 2024-08-30 09:15</p> <p>+ 关注</p> <p>30/08/2024 Views: 97,237 Posts: 53</p> <p><b>Clark vs. Reese! Tomorrow's Fever-Sky game sees average ticket price hit \$334, a record high!</b></p>
7	<p><b>[流言板]坎迪斯-帕克：不喜欢人们把克拉克里斯比成伯德魔术师</b></p> <p>虎扑篮球资讯 05-10 04:29</p> <p>+ 关注</p> <p>09/06/2025 Views: 153,383 Posts: 114</p> <p><b>Parker: I do not like people comparing Clark and Reese to Bird and Magic</b></p>
8	<p><b>[流言板]美媒提问：克拉克和里斯的竞争关系像NBA中的哪对球员</b></p> <p>虎扑篮球资讯 05-19 12:01</p> <p>+ 关注</p> <p>19/05/2025 Views: 277,089 Posts: 329</p> <p><b>US media ask: which NBA players does the Clark-Reese rivalry resemble?</b></p>
9	<p><b>[流言板]足够强硬！凯特琳-克拉克主动恶犯仇家里斯，为队友出头</b></p> <p>虎扑篮球资讯 05-18 08:38</p> <p>+ 关注</p> <p>18/05/2025 Views: 726,743 Posts: 247</p> <p><b>Tough enough! Clark commits intentional foul on Reese to stand up for her teammate.</b></p>
10	<p><b>[流言板]美媒：克拉克vs里斯，谁能赢得今年WNBA的最佳新秀？</b></p> <p>虎扑篮球资讯 2024-05-17 22:24</p> <p>+ 关注</p> <p>17/08/2024 Views: 153,469 Posts: 122</p> <p><b>US media: Clark or Reese, who will win the WNBA rookie of the year?</b></p>

Figure 1. A list of the articles from which the sampled Hupu posts were retrieved

sociopolitical views beyond them. Within the first cluster, two salient discursive patterns have emerged, featuring the trivialisation and racialised objectification of female celebrity athletes. Such sexist and racialised tropes directed at specific individuals are not isolated instances but signal consistent discursive structures through which broader anti-progressive sentiments take shape within China's sports fandom. In this sense, insights derived from the first cluster provide the interpretive foundations upon which the second cluster subsequently draws. Taken together, they construct a coherent imaginary of the prevailing discourse on Hupu, highlighting the gender-racially entangled manifestations of reactionary currents within China's sports fandom and their dynamics with global far-/alt-right momentum.



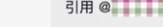

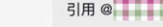

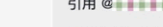
### *Crafting a Gendered Gaze at Women's Sports*

Global sports media typically display two tendencies in their coverage of female athletes, either intentionally or unintentionally downplaying the significance of their achievements, or disproportionately focusing on their appearance (Sherry et al., 2016). Certainly, Chinese sports journalism remains influenced by the country's socialist legacy, producing orthodox portrayals of women's sports as serious competitions that resist an overt male gaze (Xu et al., 2018). Yet this arguably admirable tradition has gradually given way to more gendered content in the reformed market economy (Billings et al., 2019b), priming sexist engagement with female athletes amongst Chinese sports fans today.

In terms of the trivialisation of women's sports, this power dynamic is clearly reproduced in Hupu netizens' consumption of WNBA games, as evidenced by their habitually male-centric foci. As shown in Figure 2, rather than mentioning Clark and Reese by name, many, such as posts 862, 878 and 882, contained explicit references to NBA players who were entirely irrelevant to the discussion. In particular, the thread in question originated from post 858, which invited netizens to reflect on the on-court performances of the WNBA players. Without any restrictive prompt, almost all follow-up posts nevertheless framed male athletes as the primary points of reference for their WNBA counterparts.

Certainly, aspects of the above lexical choices are illustrative of Hupu's user demographics. Provided that the platform primarily hosts male fans following NBA games, they may be interpreted as analogies mobilised by individual posters to inform engagement in a digital environment wherein women's basketball remains unfamiliar to the majority. However, such uncoordinated yet synchronised lexical choices are not confined to the above thread but emerge as a stylised repetition of a linguistic act widely observed. As seen in Figure 3, Stephen Curry and LeBron James (red-rectangle highlights: 150 counts, 80 counts) rank as the second- and fourth-most-mentioned names amongst the sampled posts, only marginally behind Clark and Reese (blue-rectangle highlights: 156 counts, 130 counts), despite not being covered as focal figures in any of the stories.<sup>1</sup>

Regardless of the posters' intentions, the lexical choices employed in these sampled posts effectively frame female athletes' achievements as intelligible only through






Post	Screenshots
858	 <p>2024-08-30 02:17:01 发布于浙江 <b>Post 858 48 upvotes</b></p> <p>谁来解释一下什么水平? <b>Can someone explain what level this is?</b></p>
862	 <p>2024-08-30 02:18:24 发布于山东 <b>Post 862 193 upvotes</b></p> <p>引用 @  发表的: 谁来解释一下什么水平? [图片] <b>Can someone explain what level this is?</b> <a href="#">查看更多</a></p> <p>库里大战詹姆斯 <b>Curry battles LeBron.</b></p>
878	 <p>2024-08-30 02:32:02 发布于新疆 <b>Post 878 116 upvotes</b></p> <p>引用 @  发表的: 库里大战詹姆斯 [图片] <b>Curry battles LeBron.</b> <a href="#">查看更多</a></p> <p>库里大战庄神, 这个李思髓的一批, 克拉克是真有东西 <b>Curry battles Drummond, Reese's skills are rough, but Clark really has talent.</b></p>
882	 <p>2024-08-30 02:43:40 发布于贵州 <b>Post 882 2 upvotes</b></p> <p>引用 @  发表的: 库里大战詹姆斯 [图片] <b>Curry battles LeBron.</b> <a href="#">查看更多</a></p> <p>詹姆斯: 明明就是戴尔库里大战JRs <b>LeBron: It is clearly Dell Curry vs. JRs.</b></p>

**Figure 2.** Posts referencing male NBA players

comparison with men. Such a framing positions female athletes as secondary within the profession, with male-defined standards mobilised to validate their performances. The fact that several of these posts attracted a high volume of upvotes further demonstrates the resonance of such gendered commentary on Hupu. Taken together, they reiterate the marginalisation of women's games, echoing broader scholarly observations on power dynamics within male-led sports consumption (Pope et al., 2022).

Specific to the objectifying trend, this is most tellingly reflected in Hupu posts through their misplaced foci on the physiques of Clark and Reese. Recurring throughout the thread (Figure 4), many sampled posts repeatedly commented on their legs in erotic terms. Amongst these, the thread initiated by post 1,025, retrieved from



Post	Screenshots
500	 <p>里斯这个腿子是真不错 <b>Reese's legs look so sexy!</b></p>
525	 <p>你饿了 <b>You are too desperate.</b></p>
529	 <p>李恩在黑人里也算是眉清目秀了 再加上浑圆的某些位置 发达紧致的肌肉 细腻的皮肤 不说了，我去忙会 <b>Reese is considered pretty amongst Black people, with rounded buttocks, firm muscles, and smooth skin. Never mind, I have got things to do.</b></p>
1025	 <p>都是球队大腿反正 <b>They are both their teams' go-to players.</b></p>
1099	 <p>大腿都不错 <b>Their thighs are indeed pretty good.</b></p>

**Figure 4.** Posts focusing on the physiques of Clark and Reese

persons. In the global digital sphere, this unfolds through Red Pill ideologies that mobilise sex-essentialist tropes and evolutionary psychology to propagate male supremacy, oftentimes finding resonance on such platforms as 4chan that cultivate male-centred assemblages (Botto & Gottzen, 2024). Specific to the sporting context, the

historically entrenched conception of sport as a masculinist terrain has sustained sports fandom as a site for masculine repertoires that cultivate misogyny (Pope et al., 2022). As seen in the analysed posts above, the trivialisation and objectification of female athletes constitute one such masculine repertoire, performed by male Hupu netizens. This masculine repertoire is actively rewarded on Hupu, by such engagement metrics as upvotes and follow-up comments, which function as positive reinforcement in platform-mediated communication. This dynamic resonates with Liao's (2024) observation of the platform logic underpinning digital misogyny in China, where the sociotechnological congregation of men who uphold masculinist views plays a pivotal role in the process.

### *Complicating the Male Gaze With Racial Discourse*

Considering the records of Hupu netizens' investment in masculine repertoires, the incubation of digital misogyny in their consumption of the Clark-Reese rivalry is arguably unsurprising. What is particularly noteworthy, however, are their recurrent linguistic acts of racialisation, which highlight the specific forms of misogyny directed at Reese as an African American female athlete.

Indeed, numerous Hupu posts that exhibit skewed attention to the physical appearances of female celebrity athletes establish a general consensus that Clark is more attractive than Reese (see Figure 5). Amongst them, post 592 stands out for invoking a Chinese idiom, suggesting that it is Clark's fair skin that secures her victory in an imagined beauty contest. However, this preference for whiteness is neither purely incidental nor firmly rooted in indigenous traditions. Instead, it illustrates an alignment of local aesthetic ideals with a global racial hierarchy, as evident in posts 585 and 928, which go further by explicitly referencing the athletes' racial backgrounds to reach their verdict. By demonstrating how notions of sexual desirability become entwined with racialised tropes, the manifest white-fetishism illuminates the deeper sociopolitical scaffolding of beauty standards in the Chinese context.

Beauty standards, situated at the crossing point of the public and the private, allow some leeway for personalised interpretation. As shown in Figure 6, a small number of "deviant instances," such as post 1,638, may occasionally be observed on Hupu, appearing to challenge the dominant negative framing of Reese. However, such "deviant" posts often function as prompts that elicit open objections. As ideal-typed by posts 1,684 and 1,713, more explicit forms of expression extending beyond purely aesthetic considerations frequently emerge from such threads, veering towards overt racism directed not only at the African American athlete but also at Black women in general.

In present-day China, female beauty standards are closely tied to the so-called *wanghong* face, popularised by the fashion industry and the influencer economy. This aesthetic is complex in its formation, shaped by local business practices and transnational fashion flows, with Japanese and Korean popular cultures playing a pivotal role in its crafting (Zhang & Hjorth, 2019). Yet, with a *wanghong* face characterised by "big eyes, double eyelids, white skin, a high-bridged nose, and a pointed chin" (Li,


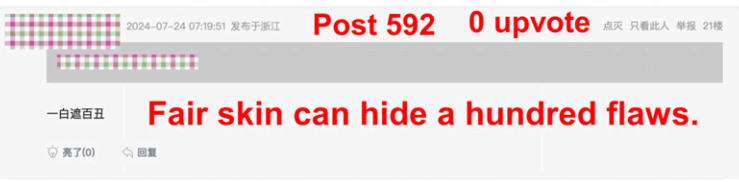

Post	Screenshots
585	 <p>2024-07-24 06:35:12 发布于江西 <b>Post 585</b> <b>12 upvotes</b></p> <p>克拉克有肤色加成啊，但是放在各自人种里就不一样了。黑人里斯是好看的，克拉克在白人里不丑但是也不出彩啊，不过个人没办法抛开肤色不谈只看五官啥的</p> <p>亮了(12) 回复</p> <p><b>Aesthetically speaking, Clark benefits from her skin colour. Amongst Black people, Reese may be considered attractive; compared to White [beauties], Clark is perhaps not outstanding, yet not unattractive either. I find it difficult to set aside skin colour and judge solely on facial features.</b></p>
592	 <p>2024-07-24 07:19:51 发布于浙江 <b>Post 592</b> <b>0 upvote</b> 点灭 只看此人 举报 21楼</p> <p>一白遮百丑 <b>Fair skin can hide a hundred flaws.</b></p> <p>亮了(0) 回复</p>
928	 <p>2025-06-09 23:58:45 发布于江苏 <b>Post 928</b> <b>10 upvotes</b></p> <p>引用 @发表的: 里斯除了身材，其他的都不如克拉克... 克拉克多漂亮，里斯这么丑身材好也不值钱</p> <p><b>Aside from her physique, Reese offers little in comparison to Clark Clark is so pretty, whereas Reese is too ugly that even having a good figure is not worth much.</b></p>

Figure 5. Posts mobilising racialised tropes

2019, p. 3,023), not all of which are necessarily esteemed in traditional East Asian contexts, Euro-American cultural influences are clearly embedded in its underlying architecture. These Western inflections cannot be fully articulated without critical reflection on the sociopolitical logic underpinning the Chinese fetishisation of whiteness.

Imaginariums of the West in China have undergone a turbulent journey over the past two centuries. Since the Opium Wars, when the Chinese Empire was compelled to integrate into the global order through the military aggression of Euro-American colonial powers, ambivalent sentiments towards the West have taken root in Chinese society (Johansson, 1998). With Euro-American powers viewed as political entities and civilisations to be emulated in China’s nation-building projects, their pseudoscientific




Post	Screenshots
1638	 <p>2024-08-17 16:00:54 发布于山东 <b>Post 1638</b> <b>7 upvotes</b></p> <p>引用 @ [redacted] 发表的: 比克拉克好看 <b>[Reese] is prettier than Clark.</b></p> <p>克拉克长得确实一般, 综合身材确实还不如里斯 <b>Clark really does not look that good. Overall, her figure is not even as good as Reese's.</b></p>
1684	 <p>2024-08-17 18:50:29 发布于湖北 <b>Post 1684</b> <b>2 upvotes</b></p> <p>引用 @ [redacted] 发表的: 克拉克这颜值再白人里真不算好看, 太男人相 <b>Clark's appearance is not particularly attractive amongst white people; [she] looks too masculine.</b></p> <p>我的审美眼光:白皮肤女人再丑还是比黑皮肤女的好看. <b>My aesthetic taste: A white-skinned woman, no matter how ugly, is still more attractive than a black-skinned woman.</b></p>
1713	 <p>2024-08-18 06:12:58 发布于湖北 <b>Post 1713</b> <b>2 upvotes</b></p> <p>引用 @ [redacted] 发表的: 那也不晓得你是怎么想的, 另外我有说里思美吗 [图片] <b>I do not know what you are thinking; besides, have I said that Reese is pretty?</b></p> <p>查看更多 <b>Some comments said Reese is beautiful, but I truly do not like someone like Reese with dark skin. Clark is better-looking. She is fair-skinned, and even with masculine features, she still looks good.</b></p> <p>上面评论一大堆说里斯美的。反正我是不喜欢里斯这种黑皮肤的。还是克拉克好看。又白, 也男人像也好看</p>

Figure 6. Posts indicating racialised aesthetics

classifications of humanity, which divided people into distinct races, were adopted into Chinese discourse, producing a localised hierarchy that positioned “the White” as civilised, equivalent to, or even above, “the Yellow,” to which the Chinese were assigned (Li, 2021). Certainly, the Party-state’s three decades of socialist construction were marked by anti-Western propaganda, yet the post-1970s economic reforms reset this dynamic as trade relations with Euro-American democracies deepened, a shift that once again rendered Caucasian female bodies markers of pleasure and power in China’s popular culture, reinforcing the positioning of whiteness at the apex of the global racial order (Johansson, 1998).

Alongside this white-fetish aesthetic is the repudiation of blackness, shaped by the regime’s shifting relations with African nations. In its bid to re-enter the Western-dominated global stage, the Party-state no longer prioritises African nations as Third World allies (Johnson, 2007). Coupled with global migration flows that have produced everyday frictions between African migrants and local communities, this reorientation has fostered the barbaric growth of anti-Black racism on the Chinese-language internet

(Liu et al., 2021). Against this wider backdrop, racist commentary also circulates widely within China’s sports fandom, as evidenced on Hupu by its members’ coordinated backlash against the Black Lives Matter movement, even amongst fans of NBA players of African descent (Peng et al., 2022). Reflected in the sampled posts, the observed anti-Black racism, frequently disguised as aesthetic assessments, reiterates how elements of the global racial order are reproduced within China’s digital misogyny.

### Essentialising Sex to Protest Against Feminism

The dual manifestations of misogyny and racism in Hupu netizens’ engagement with the Clark-Reese rivalry evidently extend beyond targeting individual athletes. Rather, they serve as the discursive foundation for platform-based articulations of broader sociopolitical views, with implications for real-life power struggles. Along the gendered axis, this dynamic is made apparent in the prevalence of posts expressing misogynistic voices in more generic terms.

Of the eight sampled posts with over 1,000 upvotes, three (Figure 7) serve as ideal-typical examples of digital misogyny on Hupu. Contextualised within a situational model structured by story 1 about Reese’s aggressive sporting tactics against Clark, post

Post	Screenshots
4	<p>2024-06-17 03:05:42 <b>Post 4</b> <b>5646 upvotes</b></p> <p>我们集美天生就有爱人的能力 <b>Our jimei are born with the ability to love.</b></p>
14	<p>2024-06-17 03:09:13 发布于浙江 <b>Post 14</b> <b>3611 upvotes</b></p> <p>引用 @ [grid] 发表的: 为什么对他恶意那么大? [图片] <b>Why do they hate her so much?</b> <b>Because she is popular and earns more than others.</b> <b>Well, women are naturally jealous, and it is women who are the harshest on other women.</b></p> <p>查看更多 因为太火，赚的比别人多，女人嘛天生就是爱妒忌，女人对女人才是最狠的。</p>
25	<p>2024-06-17 03:12:20 发布于安徽 <b>Post 25</b> <b>1095 upvotes</b></p> <p>引用 @ [grid] 发表的: 我们集美天生就有爱人的能力 <b>Our jimei are born with the ability to love.</b></p> <p>girls hits girls</p>

Figure 7. Posts mobilising misogynistic tropes

14 functions to entextualise the court event, framing jealousy as an essentialist trait and thereby proclaiming discrimination not towards Reese specifically but against the entire female cohort. Unlike this relatively unambiguous post, the meanings of posts 4 and 25 are arguably open to interpretation, due to their articulation of the central claims through coded language. Specifically, the term “*jimei*,” appearing in post 4 and literally meaning “gathering beauty,” is an internet slang expression for “sisters” (姐妹), coined because of phonetic similarity in Chinese and oftentimes used by women to address one another in a playful manner. Similarly, the idiom “girls hit girls,” invoked in post 25, is a deliberate misspelling of the widely recognised hashtag “girls help girls.” Associated with women’s mobilisation on the Chinese-language internet, both expressions convey female solidarity in their original usage (Yang & Hu, 2024). However, their intertextual associations with such gender-based mobilisation have concurrently rendered them susceptible to misogynistic misappropriation in polarised digital environments. This is indeed the case in these two posts, where the mocking undertones signal a coordinated attempt to ridicule awakened women. Taken together with post 14, which unambiguously articulates gender-based discrimination, they allude to Hupu netizens’ ill-informed interpretations of men’s position in society.

With high levels of engagement, these three posts, upvoted by thousands of netizens, illustrate a broader trend of misogyny on Hupu directed at women’s emancipation. This dynamic is further demonstrated by the posts depicted in Figure 8, where the court event, in which a female athlete employs aggressive sporting tactics against another, is reframed as an instance of female-on-female violence to cast doubt on the idea of female solidarity. In particular, by using the stigmatised term “female fists,” widely recognised on the Chinese-language internet, posts 62 and 387 explicitly call on women, who subscribe to feminist views, to respond to this display of female-on-female violence as a means of discrediting feminist activism. Extending this critique, post 112 constructs an imagined feminist perspective through a masculinist prism, portraying all women as prone to offering one another unquestioning support, even in the event of in-group members committing wrongdoings. The tropes emerging from these three posts point to a recurring theme: framing feminism as a conspicuous ideology that threatens social harmony, a rhetoric that ultimately shores up the Party-state’s stance on limiting grassroots-led mobilisation from below.

The anti-feminist backlash emerging on Hupu sheds light on China’s evolving gender power struggles. Over the past decade, gender asymmetry has become an increasingly contentious issue in China (Liao, 2024). Central to the debate is transgressive feminist rhetoric that calls masculine repertoires into question (Chen & Gao, 2023). Following a series of high-profile cases of sexual harassment and gender-based violence, female netizens, women’s NGOs, and progressive-leaning intellectuals have galvanised feminist activism by adapting aspects of the global MeToo movement to the local context (Han & Liu, 2024). Although influenced by neoliberal consumerism and limited in their representation of underclass women, such practices have nonetheless enhanced feminist dissent on the Chinese-language internet (Chang & Tian, 2021). The visibility of feminist dissent, however, has antagonised a large cohort of men who feel

Post	Screenshots
62	 <p>2024-06-17 03:31:11 发布于辽宁 <b>Post 62</b> <b>26 upvotes</b></p> <p>引用 @ [user] 发表的: 我们集美天生就有爱人的能力 <b>Our jimei are born with the ability to love.</b></p> <p>吃我一 [fist emoji] <b>Take this [fist emoji].</b></p>
112	 <p>2024-06-17 04:17:39 发布于广东 <b>Post 112</b> <b>4 upvotes</b></p> <p>引用 @ [user] 发表的: 我们集美天生就有爱人的能力 <b>Our jimei are born with the ability to love.</b></p> <p>[eating melon emoji] 抛开其他不说, 她就没有一点错吗? <b>[eating melon emoji] Putting everything else aside, did she not make any mistakes at all?</b></p>
387	 <p>2024-06-17 10:45:32 发布于上海 <b>Post 387</b> <b>2 upvotes</b></p> <p>女拳呢? 出来说两句啊 <b>Where are the feminist boxers? Come out and say something!</b></p>

**Figure 8.** Posts mobilising anti-feminist tropes

insecure about their privileged status and have since self-mobilised to mount misogynist opposition (Huang, 2023).

Yet grassroots-led anti-feminist currents are not purely bottom-up but are shaped at the state-market nexus, where a favourable sociotechnological milieu is cultivated. While tolerating and even, at times, amplifying misogynistic voices, domestic digital platforms routinely enforce harsh censorship of feminist content (Liao, 2024). This double standard is not merely a by-product of commercial concerns but is fundamentally structured by the regime's governing doctrines. By prioritising economic growth over social justice, current policymaking has deepened rather than alleviated structural inequalities, including in gendered terms (Zhang et al., 2024). In a climate where the political establishment constitutes the most evident obstacle to women's emancipation, the Party leadership has come to perceive feminist values as a threat to regime stability, with official apparatuses mobilised to suppress women's self-mobilisation. Such targeted measures, combined with authoritarian control of the high-tech sector, have transformed domestic digital platforms into semi-state agents (Liao, 2024). Within this state-market collusion, such platforms as Hupu, which have historically attracted more male netizens, have now emerged as key institutional actors in engineering China's ongoing anti-feminist currents (He, 2025).

## Leveraging Misogyny and Racism to Fuel Transnational Reactionary Currents

With the intersectionality of structural injustices in mind (Kanai, 2021), racism directed at African American female athletes cannot be treated merely as an additive element of the manifest misogyny observed on Hupu. Discriminatory commentaries, operating simultaneously along racial and gendered axes, evidently scale up into gender-racially entangled manifestations of reactionary currents, which are inherently transnational in scope.

As seen in Figure 9, the thread, created in the commentary section of story 1, began with post 44 reiterating a sexist interpretation of Reese's sporting tactics against Clark. This was followed by post 92, which unexpectedly shifted the discussion towards racial politics through the mobilisation of a slur originating from English-speaking contexts. Similar in pattern, posts 481, 561, 594, and 1,514, retrieved from stories 1, 3, 4, and 9, respectively, continue to employ lexical items that foreground the racial backgrounds of Reese and/or Clark. With the former's perceived aggression towards the latter interpreted as a manifestation of power struggles between two racial groups, the storytelling positions Black people as villains who habitually resort to violence, both socially and in sporting terms, yet remain unpunished. What emerges is a recurring motif that frames inclusivity initiatives as merely "political correctness." Given that such inclusivity politics are largely invisible within the local context, it becomes evident that the rendezvous of misogyny and racism established in these posts is shaped by Hupu netizens' engagement with power struggles in Euro-American societies.

In challenging inclusivity politics in Euro-American societies, Hupu netizens frequently invoke the United States as a primary point of reference. This is evident in posts 294, 326, and 388, each retrieved from story 1, wherein the Monkey King is employed as an analogue to depict the status of Black people in US politics (Figure 10). While the Monkey King is widely recognised as a heroic figure by Chinese readers, his identity as a monkey in the Chinese classic novel *Journey to the West* renders these context-specific comparisons deeply insulting to Black people, as it aligns with a racial slur rooted in nineteenth-century Eurocentric pseudo-scientific anthropology, which dehumanised them as less evolved and continues to surface in Western far-/alt-right rhetoric today. Beyond such surface-level racialised tropes, further commentary on additional dimensions of identity politics, including but not limited to gender, continues to accumulate as more users engage in platform-facilitated interactions. Drawing on the surreal qualities of the fictional figure and the new identity categories attributed to him within the discourse, the trolling cycle produces coordinated sarcastic responses to inclusivity initiatives, framing any measures intended to protect the marginalised as inherently laughable and ultimately self-destructive.

Amongst the sampled Hupu posts, those addressing inclusivity politics in a transnational context are in the minority. However, these seeming outliers paradoxically speak to a broader trend in China's public sphere, wherein popular discourses on gender and race are often articulated through intertextual references to international geopolitics (Peng et al., 2022). This trajectory of political critique is dialectically shaped by Sino-US bilateral relations, past and present, which inform a distinctly Chinese

Post	Screenshots
44	<p>2024-06-17 03:20:13 发布于四川 <b>Post 44</b> <b>214 upvotes</b></p> <p>引用 @ [user] 发表的: 我们集美天生就有爱人的能力 <b>Our jimei are born with the ability to love.</b></p> <p><b>Version Tier-0 is unbeatable; Never overestimate women's jealousy.</b></p>
92	<p>2024-06-17 03:56:50 发布于天津 <b>Post 92</b> <b>91 upvotes</b></p> <p>引用 @ [user] 发表的: 我们集美天生就有爱人的能力 <b>Our jimei are born with the ability to love.</b></p> <p>nigger girl 版本T0了属于是 <b>Nigger girl is version Tier-0, for sure.</b></p>
481	<p>2024-06-18 02:18:20 发布于吉林 <b>Post 481</b> <b>0 upvote</b> 点灭 只看此人 举报 479楼</p> <p>白人，话题度高，异性恋，挣得多，球技好，这么多因素集合起来，不打败克拉克打谁呢。联盟其他球员的公敌</p> <p><b>White, popular, heterosexual, high-earning, good at basketball; so many factors combined, if not you, Clark, then who else? Public enemy of the other players in the league.</b></p>
561	<p>2024-07-22 19:09:59 发布于天津 <b>Post 561</b> <b>2 upvotes</b></p> <p>引用 @ [user] 发表的: 里斯真美，就是智商捉急，大学绩点1.98。 <b>Reese is pretty, but her IQ seems a bit worrying. Her college GPA was only 1.98.</b></p> <p>典型黑女，甚至在美帝部分社媒比克拉克还火 <b>As a stereotypical black girl, she is even more popular than Clark on some social media in the American Empire.</b></p>
594	<p>2024-07-24 07:45:04 发布于上海 <b>Post 594</b> <b>0 upvote</b> 点灭 只看此人 举报 23楼</p> <p>感觉就是在黑女对白女的恶意</p>  <p><b>It feels like maliciousness from Black women towards White women.</b></p>
1514	<p>2025-05-18 03:41:59 发布于北京 <b>Post 1514</b> <b>6 upvotes</b></p> <p>这可是黑人，肤色正确啊 <b>This is a Black person. Her skin colour is so correct!</b></p>

Figure 9. Posts exemplifying the rendezvous of misogyny and racism

Post	Screenshots
294	 <p>2024-06-17 09:14:12 发布于上海 <b>Post 294</b> <b>4 upvotes</b></p> <p>引用 @ [user] 发表的:</p> <p>那你是真正的见识少了, 美国有90多种性别分类, 秦始皇来了都统一不了的水平, 异性恋是底端中的底端</p> <p><b>Clearly you have not seen much. The United States has over 90 genders. Even Emperor Qin Shi could not have unified that. Heterosexuals are at the very bottom of the hierarchy.</b></p> <p>西游记的猴哥的身份在他们那儿岂不是无敌 <b>Would the Monkey King from Journey to the West not be unbeatable in their eyes?</b></p>
326	 <p>2024-06-17 09:52:53 发布于安徽 <b>Post 326</b> <b>8 upvotes</b></p> <p>引用 @ [user] 发表的:</p> <p>西游记的猴哥的身份在他们那儿岂不是无敌 <b>Would the Monkey King from Journey to the West not be unbeatable in their eyes?</b></p> <p>不行, 还得 加素食主义 加黑皮猴 加混印第安血统 加同性恋 加亚非儿童 加动物保护主义 猴哥buff还是太少了。</p> <p><b>No, that's still not enough. We need to add vegetarianism, dark skin, mixed Native American ancestry, homosexuality, Asian and African heritage, and animal rights. The Monkey King's buffs are still too few.</b></p>
388	 <p>2024-06-17 10:46:05 发布于四川 <b>Post 388</b> <b>16 upvotes</b></p> <p>引用 @ [user] 发表的:</p> <p>不行, 还得加素食主义加黑皮猴加混印第安血统加同性恋加亚非儿童加动物保护主义猴哥buff还是太少了。  </p> <p><b>No! We still need to add vegetarianism, dark skin, mixed Native American ancestry, homosexuality, Asian and African heritage, and animal rights activism. The Monkey King's buffs are still too few.</b></p> <p>素食, 动保这些猴哥都有, 猴哥直接石头里出来的, 你不能定义他的性别, 因为是石头孕育出来的, 跟其他妖怪不一样, 属于少数民族裔, 信仰佛教, 还是佛教护教者, 倡导扑灭火焰山还是个环境保护主义, 受天庭压迫还不断反抗, 还是位不惧强权的平权主义战士和反种族歧视者</p> <p><b>The Monkey King already has vegetarianism and animal protectionism. He was born out of a rock, so you cannot define his gender. He counts as an ethnic minority, follows Buddhism, and even acts as a defender of the faith. Advocating the extinguishing of the Flaming Mountain fire makes him an environmentalist. Oppressed by the Heavenly Court yet constantly resisting, he is also an egalitarian warrior unafraid of authority and an anti-racism fighter.</b></p>

Figure 10. Posts showing an alignment with western far-/alt-right rhetoric

understanding of the West in both political and civilisational terms today. With the United States emerging as the sole superpower in the post-Cold War global order, it was established as a symbolic benchmark of modernity during the early phase of China's economic reform (Li, 2021). The idealisation of the United States as the pinnacle of political and civilisational modernity prevailed in China, especially amongst the broadly liberal-leaning fractions of the citizenry, until the past decade, despite recurrent points of discord in bilateral relations (Zhang, 2024). Yet, since the current leadership assumed power in 2012, the Party-state has recalibrated its relationship with the West. This shift is twofold: the rise of far-/alt-right politics has rekindled Cold War mentalities in Euro-American democracies, fostering economic protectionism in policymaking and xenophobia amongst the public (Wodak, 2015). Simultaneously, high-profile instances of the regime's human rights violations have further alienated it from the international community (Zhang, 2024). Against this backdrop, the Party leadership has adopted a hawkish stance in foreign affairs to reinforce domestic governing objectives (Schneider, 2018). Unlike earlier nationalist campaigns that overwhelmingly emphasised the nation's historical suffering under colonial powers, contemporary propaganda, bolstered by decades of rapid economic growth, increasingly centres on the East-rising-West-declining trope (Zhang, 2024). At the grassroots level, such propaganda exerts a centripetal pull, uniting pro-regime constituencies not only around the United States as a perceived adversary but also around an imagined sense of China's strategic advantage in current Sino-US competitions. Combined with platform-based censorship and surveillance, it has turned the Chinese-language internet into an echo chamber for nationalist politics (de Kloet et al., 2021).

Nationalism is epistemologically at odds with inclusivity politics, with the tension oftentimes manifesting along both gendered and racial lines. Gender-wise, the Party-state draws on traditional Chinese norms to revitalise family values, whilst simultaneously repressing feminist and LGBTQ+ activism to curb grassroots discontent (Tan, 2023; Zhao and Bao, 2024). Racially, its sustained promotion of xenophobia has contributed to violent attacks on foreign nationals, incidents previously rare in China (Zhang, 2025). A hallmark of China's official propaganda is its habitual framing of domestic progressive-leaning grassroots actors as either foreign agents or segments of the population susceptible to Western influence. This framing not only generates hostility towards progressive agendas but also intertextually links such politics to the established antagonism towards the West in mainstream public opinion (Huang, 2023). Combined with the East-rising-West-declining trope, these dynamics have oriented China's grassroots reactionary currents as an antithesis of Western far-/alt-right politics, attributing the perceived decline of the United States to the domestic influence of inclusivity politics (Yang & Fang, 2023).

In illiberal China, nationalist masses frequently draw on global debates, ranging from refugee crises and religious conflicts to feminist activism and inclusivity politics in Euro-American societies, to articulate their positions on domestic issues (Zhang, 2024). In this process, Euro-American far-/alt-right rhetoric is vernacularised, intertwining global and national concerns to fuel reactionary currents. This involves constructing a shared crisis of the majority culture, portraying marginalised groups as

common threats, thereby adapting transnational metaphors to local contexts, to legitimise exclusionary agendas (Yang & Fang, 2023). Such cross-border connections between Chinese nationalists and Euro-American far-/alt-right movements are double-edged: while they risk undermining official monopoly on public discourse, they more often consolidate the Party-state's authority by fostering grassroots endorsement of reactionary policymaking. The gender-racial entanglement evident in Hupu posts, thus, points towards an emergent transnational reactionary alliance across the Global North and South, with significant repercussions for the future of inclusivity politics within and beyond the Chinese context.

## Concluding Remarks

In this article, we have examined how Caitlin Clark's mediated rivalry with Angel Reese is consumed on Hupu, the popular Chinese-language sports forum, to shed light on the negotiation of gendered and racialised meanings within China's sports fandom. Building upon a dialectical-relational approach to critical discourse studies, complemented by an intersectional lens on gender and racial politics, the analysis uncovers how portrayals of both WNBA players are shaped at the intersection of misogyny and racism, in ways distinctive to present-day China. Beneath the overtly sexualised and racialised compliments directed at a white, Caucasian sportswoman in contrast to her African American peer, it is Hupu netizens' nationalism-structured expressions of masculinism and anti-Black sentiment that underpin their contestation of broader progressive values, both within China and across Euro-American societies. By tracing these dynamics, this study underscores how digital sports fandom not only reproduces but also localises global reactionary currents, reflecting the rendezvous of popular culture, gender politics, and racial discourse in the Chinese context.

As Jenkins (2013) observes, contemporary fans constantly negotiate their position within popular cultural industries and, by extension, wider society, through self-reflexive consumption. In doing so, they periodically produce derivative texts based on shared content that help generate new meanings. Yet, this self-reflexive engagement remains dialectically constrained by social structures, leaving these derivative texts vulnerable to structurally shaped biases (Anderson & Raney, 2023). Amongst the many genres, sports fandom, predominantly composed of men eager to perform masculinity, is particularly susceptible to the rise of manosphere culture (Botto & Gottzen, 2024). With exclusionary views on all fronts interconnected, coinciding in the marginalisation of subordinated groups, such fandom culture provides the contextual grounds for misogyny and racism to simultaneously incubate, reflecting the intersectionality of structural inequalities that consistently reinforce the hegemony of the privileged.

Parallel to global trends, China's sports fandom offers a petri dish for examining the dynamic interplay between gender- and race-based discrimination (He, 2025; Peng et al., 2022; Sun & Dai, 2024). However, understanding this gender-racial entanglement requires attention to the specifics of localised gender and racial politics shaped at the state-market nexus. Regarding gender inequality, the Party-state brands itself as a progressive force, yet paternalistic tendencies have long persisted in its gender-related

policymaking and in its crackdowns on feminist and LGBTQ + activism (Tan, 2023; Zhao and Bao, 2024). In terms of racial politics, the Party-state once embraced cosmopolitanism, at least rhetorically, but increasingly relies on nationalist approaches to govern the population and address foreign affairs (de Kloet et al., 2021; Schneider, 2018). This has produced a Chinese worldview that regards major Euro-American democracies as advanced economies and civilisations, whilst engaging them in intensified geopolitical rivalry (Li, 2021). Anchored in its reactionary governing doctrines and nationalist propaganda, the Party-state has cultivated a social milieu receptive to the transplantation of Western far-/alt-right rhetoric, portraying majority culture as under threat and propagating exclusionary views in both gendered and racial terms (Yang & Fang, 2023). In this sense, the misogyny and racism observable on Hupu are not merely additive to one another. Instead, they demonstrate that gender and racial politics always operate in tandem, manifesting both as masculinist values inherent in populist nationalist rhetoric and as the broader male dominance of grassroots-led nationalist politics (Huang, 2023), phenomena that reflect the paternalistic nature of the platform created by the state-market complex (Liao, 2024). While these intersectional expressions of exclusionary voices are China-specific, their simultaneous deployment of Euro-American far-/alt-right rhetoric bears the potential to foster global reactionary alliances (Zhang, 2024). Accordingly, this article responds to Zhao & Bao's (2024: 5) call for "a crucial scholarly shift to deconstruct the hegemonies of Chineseness, colonialism, ethno-nationalism and West-centrism" by investigating the gendered manifestations of nationalism within China's sports fandom and their dynamic intersections with broader exclusionary politics in a transnational context.

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### Note

1. Figure 3 illustrates the frequencies of words containing two or more characters in Hupu posts. Single-character words were excluded, as they are mostly function words that provide grammatical structure rather than lexical meaning.

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