

"She Has a Choice; the Other Girls Don't": Gender, Class and the Contest over "Freedom" in Weibo Comments on Lisa's Crazy Horse Show

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"Hon har ett val; de andra flickorna har inget": Genus, klass och striden om "frihet" i Weibo-kommentarer om Lisas Crazy Horse-show



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*To my grandmother, who never once weighed the evidence
before deciding I was the best child in the world.*

And to my partner, who stayed close through every part of this.

*This thesis is about how people judge.
Neither of them ever did.*

Abstract

In 2023, Lisa of K-pop group BLACKPINK performed at the Crazy Horse, a Paris cabaret known for semi-nude shows, and Weibo argued for weeks. This thesis examines how commenters judged the show by contesting the definitions of "freedom" and "art", and how gender and class crossed in that judgment. The material is 5,289 comments under 219 posts, read with reflexive thematic analysis, then critical discourse analysis, weighted by likes as a mark of visibility. Among the most visible comments, argued defences were scarce; "art" was renamed striptease. The heaviest critiques granted "her freedom" and redefined it as distributed by class, holding both lines in single sentences. National words touched more comments; the class critique drew the heaviest likes. The thesis names this vernacular intersectionality: an everyday reading whose form matches the operation intersectional analysis was built on. The claims hold for one event, under a like-weighted reading of hot-sorted threads.

Keywords: Weibo; gender and class; intersectionality; choice feminism; Chinese digital feminism; critical discourse analysis

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Chapter 1. Introduction

Over the past two decades, a particular way of talking about women's bodies has spread through global media culture. In this vocabulary, a woman's body is her own project, showing it is a choice, and choice is the test of freedom (Gill, 2007b, pp. 149, 153). The vocabulary has powerful critics inside feminism. One line of critique argues that it converts structural questions into private ones (Rottenberg, 2014, p. 420). Another account looks at the label itself. Being seen as feminist now carries value, so who counts as one is worth fighting over (Banet-Weiser, 2018, p. 1). Most of this debate has been held on Western material, about Western media. But the vocabulary travels. It lands in places where its credit is not guaranteed, and one of those places is the Chinese internet. Research on Chinese digital feminism describes a field with its own conditions: feminist language and nationalist language run close together there, colliding and merging (Han & Liu, 2024, p. 1). That research works mostly at the level of movements and platforms. What happens to "her body, her choice" when it lands in such a field is the general question behind this thesis.

The case is one loud event. In September 2023, Lisa, the Thai member of the K-pop group BLACKPINK, announced performances at the Crazy Horse in Paris, a cabaret known for its semi-nude shows. Lisa was not a marginal figure in China. She had served as a dance mentor on the Chinese talent show *Youth With You 2*, and on Weibo she was then the most-followed overseas female celebrity (Xie & Wu, 2025, p. 1). The announcement set off weeks of argument in Weibo comment sections. The fight was fought with a small set of words: whether the show was "art" or something lower, and whether performing in it was "her freedom". Both words arrived with the show. Its own promotion described the cabaret as art and its women as free, and the comment sections took the words from there (5.1). This study reads that argument through a corpus of 5,289 comments under 219 posts published between September and November 2023.

The event invites an easy reading, and this study set out expecting it. A foreign star, a Paris cabaret, an angry Chinese public: the easy reading is nationalist backlash, a patriotic crowd attacking a feminist idea from outside. On that reading, critics should reject feminist language

and defenders should carry it. The threads do not look like that. Among the most visible comments, argued defences of the show as a woman's free choice are strikingly scarce. And the loudest critiques do not refuse the language of freedom; they pick it up. "Her freedom" appears inside the attacks, in quotation marks, granted and then turned. What it turns into is a question about position: who on that stage gets the freedom, and who does not. The heaviest critiques hold the gender line and the class line inside single sentences, reading one woman's choice against other women's lack of it. Some of these comments claim the word "feminism" itself, and declare a feminism that treads on poor women fake. The test is position again. By raw count, national and ethnic words touch more comments than class words do. Yet the critiques that drew the heaviest likes argue in class terms. At first contact, the national words seem to do a different job. They draw lines around who belongs in the argument, rather than making the argument. This misfit between the expected reading and the visible one is the puzzle the thesis works on. If the loudest attack on "her freedom" grants the choice and re-describes freedom as something one woman holds and others lack, then something more interesting than backlash is happening.

The question underneath is who gets to define women's freedom when a public argues about one woman's body. That question has weight anywhere. In this setting it has a particular shape, because the argument did not happen in a political forum. It happened in entertainment comment sections, between fan fights and complaints about the trending list. Media research has argued that such places are part of the culture where public judgment lives, not outside it (van Zoonen, 2005, pp. 3–4). Publics on social media often gather through expressions of feeling, in ways that move beyond deliberative logic (Papacharissi, 2015, pp. 118, 125). One platform feature sharpens the stakes. Weibo ranks comments by likes, so whichever reading wins likes sits at the top of the thread. In such a space, a fight over the meaning of "freedom" is also a fight over what a newcomer will find already settled. Reading this event closely therefore speaks to three bodies of scholarship at once. These are the debate over choice and bodily autonomy, the question of how far intersectional thinking travels beyond the academy, and research on Chinese digital feminism. Chapter 3 reviews each of them, and Chapter 6 returns the findings to them.

This study reads the event's comment sections as discourse. The corpus is read in two stages: a thematic analysis first, then a close reading of the comments that carried the most likes. The

reading is weighted by likes throughout, so relative visibility, not the analyst's eye, sets what the close reading treats as central. Two low-like comments enter as a marked exception, chosen for the clarity of a device and reported as such (4.3). Chapter 4 sets out the material, the like weighting, and the two-stage design, and reports the costs of these choices as well as their reasons. The thesis makes no claims about who the commenters are or what they privately believe; it studies positions taken in text. What exactly the study asks, and the boundaries drawn around its claims, are set out next, in Chapter 2, together with the map of the thesis.

Chapter 2. Aim and Research Questions

2.1 Aim

This thesis examines how Weibo commenters judged Lisa's Crazy Horse performance by contesting the definitions of "freedom" and "art", and how gender and class crossed in that judgment. It does so by reading that material twice, first with reflexive thematic analysis, then with critical discourse analysis. The judgment was public and written. Through the autumn of 2023, the discussion under news of the show ran to thousands of comments. This study's corpus holds 5,289 of them (Chapter 4).

Two things make the case worth close attention. The contest was bounded: one event, one platform, one vocabulary fought over in public view. And the vocabulary was not small. "Freedom", "art" and "choice" are words on which larger arguments about women's bodies run, in China and elsewhere.

The scholarly reason for asking is a missing scale. The critique of choice feminism has mostly come from scholars writing about media texts and public debate (e.g., Gill, 2007b; Duits & van Zoonen, 2006). Research on Chinese digital feminism has mostly described activists, influencers or the whole field (e.g., Xue & Rose, 2022; Nakahara & Cai, 2026; Han & Liu, 2024). Intersectionality scholarship meets its concept mostly in organised settings such as courts, movements and classrooms (e.g., Crenshaw, 1989; Collins & Bilge, 2016). What they rarely show is ordinary commenters running such a contest, comment by comment, in one event. Nor do they show how gender and class are read together inside a single judgment (Chapter 3). Seeing either takes a close-up, and that close-up is what this study offers.

What the close-up is a case of should also be stated plainly. Weibo ranks each comment section by likes, so the wording that wins likes is the wording the next reader meets first. When ordinary commenters judge a public event in ordinary words, the platform lifts some of those words into the visible starting point for everyone who comes later. This study reads the

Lisa event as one bounded instance of that process: public judgment in ordinary words, on a platform that decides which words later readers meet. What the scientific community gains from the close-up is a documented case of how that process ran when the words at stake were "freedom" and "art". Later research on other events and platforms can test whether it runs the same way there (6.4).

The questions below did not arrive in their final form before the material. They took that form against it, through the iterative movement 4.4 describes.

2.2 The main question and its parts

The main research question is:

In the hot-sorted Weibo threads this corpus captures, how did commenters judge a female celebrity's body performance by contesting the definitions of "freedom" and "art"? And how did gender and class cross in that judgment?

Three sub-questions divide the work.

Sub-question 1, the contest over definitions. Which discursive strategies did commenters deploy to contest whether the show counts as "art" and "freedom", or as "striptease" and a "grey industry"?

Sub-question 2, the class critique. How did critics invoke class, "privilege versus the bottom", "she stays dressed while the dancers strip", to puncture individual-choice freedom? And what crossing of gender and class does this critique show?

Sub-question 3, the dialogue with theory. What dialogue does that critique open with choice feminism, with academic intersectionality theory, and with research on Chinese digital feminism?

One choice behind these sub-questions needs its reason stated here rather than later. Gender and class are the axes this thesis follows because they are the axes the material worked. In the most-liked critiques, the two lines are held together inside single sentences, and sub-question 2 examines that crossing (5.4). Other axes were present. By raw count, national and ethnic words touch more comments than class words. But these words mostly draw lines around who may join the argument, and the heaviest-liked critiques argue in class terms (5.5, 6.2.6). Race is marked throughout the corpus, but the comments do not work it into the argument, and 6.2.3 defines and defends that distinction. So the pair was not fixed in advance. It was settled against the corpus (4.4), and Chapter 3 gives the theoretical ground for reading such a pair.

2.3 Order and boundaries

The three questions run in one direction. The first watches the definitions being fought over. The second asks how class became the weapon of the critique. The third rises from the findings to a dialogue with theory. Each depends on the one before it, and none repeats it. Each can also be answered from the material at hand: the first two from the coded corpus, the third by holding the findings against the related fields.

Two boundaries hold throughout. The questions are about public discourse in one event: what was written, and what the likes made most visible. They do not ask who the commenters are, what they privately believe, or how Chinese internet users at large think. The design behind this restraint is set out in 4.5. And the questions ask for description before verdict. Whether the critique they trace is right is not among them.

2.4 How the thesis unfolds

Chapter 3 reviews the literatures the questions touch and shows the gap between them. Chapter 4 presents the material, the corpus of 5,289 comments, and the two-stage design that reads it. Chapter 5 answers the first two sub-questions from the coded corpus. Chapter 6 first explains the conditions behind those findings, answers the third sub-question in dialogue with

each field, then weighs the limits of the design and future research. Chapter 7 returns to the main question and states what the study adds.

Chapter 3. Literature Review

This chapter reviews the literature in four steps. First, it introduces the vocabulary in which the show was defended: Western debates on "choice" and bodily autonomy, and theories of how women's bodies are looked at (3.1). Next, it turns to intersectionality, the theory whose form the findings will meet, and its debates (3.2). Then, it focuses on the Chinese digital context of this study and explains the gap this thesis fills (3.3). Finally, it introduces the analytical perspective of this study, and why this data needs it (3.4).

3.1 Bodily autonomy as a contested vocabulary

The debate in this thesis centres on key words: "freedom", "choice", "art", and others. This section discusses these words in two parts. The first part explores where the words come from, and their state when they entered Chinese texts (3.1.1). The second part reviews the theories of looking that stand behind them, because these words all relate to a body on display (3.1.2).

3.1.1 The choice debate

The brief conclusion of this section is that these words were already full of debate when introduced. Western feminist academics have spent decades arguing what they protect and what they hide. This thesis argues that the strongest critique in the corpus does two things at the same time. It connects "freedom" with class, pointing to who can "afford" choices. Also, it works from inside these words, not from outside them.

Gill (2007b) gives a starting point for this debate. She describes a "postfeminist sensibility" in Western media culture (p. 147). In this sensibility, femininity is seen as a body attribute. Women are built as free subjects with choices, and "empowerment" becomes a normal discourse to describe women's bodies. Her work is not praise. This sensibility praises choice, but also trains women to monitor themselves. So bodies are regulated under "freedom". It

also puts a hidden stigma on women who make the "wrong" "choices" (p. 163). In this view, "empowerment" discourse does not remove judgment from women's lives. It puts judgment inside the "freedom" language system. Also, her cases are based on UK and US contexts. She sees this sensibility as a Western feature, not a universal state. What happens when the same empowerment language enters a context that does not trust it? Her account stays inside Anglo-American media and does not reach that question.

Rottenberg (2014) pushes this doubt further. For her, empowerment discourse does more than hide judgment. It turns structural problems into private problems. In the feminist subject she describes, women can clearly see gender inequality. But then they are pushed to turn it "from a structural problem into an individual affair" (p. 420). In this "neoliberal feminism", women must manage work, family, and body as a personal project. Questions about structure are left behind. Banet-Weiser (2018) adds a point about this word itself: feminism now flows in what she calls the "economy of visibility". Views, clicks, and likes act as currency, and being seen as a feminist has value itself (pp. 1–2). This study infers that if this label has value, "who counts as a feminist" is not just an academic question. It becomes something ordinary users have reasons to fight over. Rottenberg also gives a warning that this thesis takes seriously. She thinks saying this new feminism is "not real feminism" is too simple. This judgment assumes people already have the only real definition of feminism (Rottenberg, 2018, pp. 167–168).

The sharpest version of this debate focuses on "self-sexualisation". When a woman shows her body, is this expressing agency or accepting discipline? This disagreement was fought out directly in academic publications. Duits and van Zoonen (2006) compared two moral panics in the Netherlands: one about headscarves, and another about "porno-chic" dress. They found the same structure in both: adults debated girls' bodies over their heads, and institutions redefined girls' practices for them (p. 114). Their conclusion calls for respect: a girl's dress should be seen as her personal speech expression (p. 115). Gill (2007a) replied that this respect is not neutral. If every choice must be accepted as "free", the conditions that shape these choices are ignored. Thus, respect stays "trapped in precisely the individualizing, neoliberal paradigm" it should question (p. 72). On this side of the debate, "choice" ends dialogue rather than starting it. The corpus contains both positions. The defence of the show uses the first discourse. The strongest critique replies with the second discourse, and goes into areas that academic publications have not touched.

"Choice feminism" is the name chosen to refer to this assumption. Budgeon (2015) gives the clearest expression: it asks for respect for women's choices without judgment (p. 303).

However, the woman it imagines is autonomous, individualised, and empowered. This is basically a late modern, Western, and middle-class image (p. 309). For women without these resources, "choice" describes a privilege, not a right. Together, these statements describe a discourse with a specific operating assumption. Its basic unit is "the individual woman who makes choices". Its standard for freedom is the fact that a choice was made. This discourse works only when social structures are left out. After showing research findings, the discussion will re-examine this assumption (see Section 6.2.5). Therefore, the vocabulary system at the core of this thesis was in a specific state when it entered Weibo. Its creators disagreed on what it protected, and core terms could even be used against the women using them.

The research questions of this study are not to judge this debate. They explore which strategies question the show's terms, and how these critiques show the intersection of gender and class. Both questions focus on how commenters "use" these words, not who "deserves" these words. From this view, a comment calling another woman's feminism "fake" is not a wrong idea to fix, or a right idea to support. It is the research object itself.

All these positions share one research object: the choice, whether defended or questioned, is the choice to show the body under the gaze of viewers. How "being gazed at" affects women's bodies has its own theoretical tradition. The debate reviewed above uses this theory without always naming it. The next section will clearly define this.

3.1.2 Seeing the body: the gaze, objectification, and the willing subject

In feminist media studies, looking is not a neutral act. It is a position, and this position has a gender. Berger (1972) got the first simple version of this claim from centuries of European paintings. His summary is well known: "Men act and women appear" (p. 47). Men look at women, and women watch themselves being looked at. He argued that a woman learns to internalise the viewer. She is at once the surveyor and the surveyed (p. 46). She examines

herself with the look she expects to get. Mulvey (1975) turned this intuition into film theory. She pointed out that in classic Hollywood films, three looks combine into one: the camera's look, the male lead's look, and the audience's look (p. 17). The female image on screen exists for this combined view, which Mulvey called "to-be-looked-at-ness" (p. 11). Her theory comes from psychoanalysis, and many of its mechanisms are old. But the structural idea remains. The gaze is not one man's eyes. It is a seat, and the person sitting on it performs its function. This seat can be taken by the camera, the audience, or the woman being looked at. This matters here because the results show commenters who think about this seat and who takes it.

Being looked at goes deep inside. Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) called this process objectification. When a woman's body is regularly treated as an object to look at and judge, she learns to examine herself from an outside view. She examines her body like a bystander. The body is broken into parts, and these parts are ranked for display (p. 175). The cost they recorded is constant monitoring and a readiness for shame (p. 173). Bartky (1990) explained how this look becomes self-control. Using Foucault's discipline theory, she read women's habits, food, postures, and clothes as rules women force on themselves, so no bystander is needed (p. 80). One clear result is that the looker's identity can change while the looking stays. Together, these theories form a vocabulary. It describes a stage where bodies are shown to different degrees, and talk that ranks them.

For this study, the most useful explanation is the newest change. It turns object into subject. Gill (2003) noted that media culture no longer just shows women as passive objects of gaze. In ads for young women, the female image becomes a knowing, active, desiring sexual subject (p. 103). She is not shown as an object to be looked at. She is shown as wanting to be looked at. Gill's early cases were British slogan T-shirts and advertising aimed at young women (p. 100). In both, the figure is a young woman who plays with her own sexual power. Gill called this change "sexual subjectification" and saw it as objectification returning in a stronger form (p. 105). This power comes from the defence it builds in. Once this desire is described as the woman's own, criticism of this setup can always be answered by her willingness. She chose it herself, she enjoys it, and nobody forced her. The sentence "she wants this" makes the structure disappear from view, because critics now seem to attack her instead of the setup. This is the sharpest tool in the postfeminist sensibility reviewed in Section 3.1.1. It turns "her choice" from a description into a shield. This also explains Gill's

worry: respecting a stated will can mean respecting a script. Whether this shield works in these discussions, and how commenters use the language of "will", is an empirical question. Chapter 5 will examine this.

All these arguments have a common limit, which leads to the next section. Each theory focuses on only one woman at a time: one figure in a painting, one star on screen, or one willing model in an ad. But the main photo in this study puts several women in the same picture. They have different poses and different clothes. None of these theories explain what happens when the status of the watched women differs, or when one woman's display is read against another's. Reading such a picture needs a theory built for status and difference.

3.2 Intersectionality: a founding insight and its travels

Intersectionality was created to fix a specific problem. Crenshaw (1989) pointed out that US anti-discrimination law usually reads discrimination one axis at a time, race or sex. Black women are at the intersection of both, so they are excluded from analysis. In her landmark cases, courts recognised claims of race discrimination and gender discrimination. But they could not recognise claims of women facing both. In *DeGraffenreid*, the most famous case, the employer hired White women, so the court decided there was no gender discrimination. But the court also refused to see Black women as a separate group. Their claims fell between the two axes. Crenshaw proposed intersectionality to fight this single-axis reading. The experience at the intersection is "greater than the sum" of its parts, so single-axis analysis cannot reach it (p. 140). Two features of this theory are crucial for this study. First, intersectionality aims to include people ignored by single-axis frameworks. It does not compare different sufferings. Second, it brings anti-essentialism: if position changes the meaning of "women", then "women" is not one position. It has many positions.

Two years later, Crenshaw (1991) expanded her research beyond courts. When discussing violence against women of colour, she separated three types of crossing (p. 1245). Structural intersectionality focuses on position: resources and dangers from position. Political intersectionality focuses on movements: feminist and anti-racist agendas can both push

women at the crossing to margins. Representational intersectionality focuses on images and speech: a person can be erased in photos or in arguments about her. The third intersectionality is most important here, because the bodies this study meets appear in a photograph, and in a defence carried on over their heads. Both papers give a warning: Crenshaw's axes are not interchangeable. These landmark cases show the specificity of one position. They do not give a formula where any line can replace another. This thesis keeps this warning in mind when reading its own case.

Class joined this tradition early, and not as an extra factor. Collins (2000) described oppression as a matrix of domination (p. 23). Race, gender, and class systems do not work one by one. They interweave in the same position. These systems cross each other, so no system can be read alone. This brings two results. Class is a full axis in the matrix, not an addition to gender. Also, these axes affect each other, so the same action can have different meanings in different positions of the matrix. What is modesty, what is showing off, or what is choice depends on the position of the woman. Position changes the meaning of an action, not just its cost. This view is the strongest claim from this tradition for this study.

Today, this concept goes far beyond law. Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall (2013) reviewed this field and answered a question this study relies on. They argued that "analytic sensibility", a way to think about difference and power, makes analysis intersectional, not the use of the word "intersectionality" (p. 795). Therefore, even without using the word "intersectionality", research on discourse can still check if this thinking exists. Collins and Bilge (2016) expanded this concept beyond academia. They separated intersectionality as academic inquiry from intersectionality as practice. They put practice in the view of ordinary people who need better frameworks to understand discrimination (p. 13). Most of their examples are organised: movements, classrooms, and campaigns.

The spread of practice may not need much organisation, and literacy research studies this spread. New Literacy Studies started from a refusal. Street (1984) rejected what he called the autonomous model, where literacy is a neutral technical skill in individual minds. He proposed an ideological model: ways of reading and writing are social practices, learned in use, and linked to power (p. 1). His evidence came from ethnography: in the Iranian village he studied, the same people used different literacy ways for religion and trade, each with its own authority (p. 132). Gee (2008) put the social aspect first. In his view, ways of reading

belong to groups and their shared ways of being (which he called Discourses), before belonging to individuals (p. 154). Barton and Hamilton (1998) rooted this view in daily life: literacy practices of a community are practices people learn from each other, and no one owns them (pp. 6–7). Two limits restrict the use of "literacy" later in this study. The word "literacy" can suggest a skill taught and tested on individuals. That is an autonomous model, which is not the goal of this study. Literacy here is social, a way of reading that settles in a public. The critical literacy tradition after Freire (1970) sees learning to read the world as a step towards organised liberation. Such plans do not appear in this study's materials, and this study does not propose them. How far a shared way of reading can be established outside classrooms and movements is an open question. The corpus of this study, daily entertainment talk, sits at the far end of this scope.

Travel also creates debates, two of which are close to this study. Bilge (2013) warned that intersectionality can fail because of its popularity: when research borrows the concept but quietly drops race, the concept loses meaning (p. 405). Patil (2013) questioned from another side: intersectional research often keeps the nation-state as its unmarked frame, so cross-border processes that shape gender relations stay outside the account (p. 853). These two warnings point in different directions, and this study seeks balance between them. It reads a Chinese case in which, the findings will show, the loudest argued lines are gender and class. Therefore, this study must use evidence, not personal preference, to explain race in China. Also, this study picks a non-Western daily context to discuss travel within a single case framework. The study's response to the first warning is a check on its own practice. This check separates the axes used to build claims of inequality in comments from the axes only mentioned in comments. How this check works is explained in the discussion chapter.

Together, these debates ask three questions for the empirical chapters: can foundational operations appear where the word never appears? What boundaries do the public cross, and what boundaries do they keep? And what counts as using an axis, not just mentioning it? Chapter 5 reads the corpus with these questions, and Chapter 6 gives answers back to theory.

3.3 The Chinese digital field and the research gap

This study is set in celebrity comment sections. One line of research treats such places as worth serious study. van Zoonen (2005) argues that the line between serious politics and trivial entertainment misrepresents both. She notes that if politics separates from daily culture, it becomes an "alien sphere" (p. 3). She points out that fan groups already practise key elements of political life: emotional connection, knowledge accumulation, judgment, and argument (p. 16). Thus, entertainment is one place where people learn and use public judgment. Papacharissi (2015) describes how such publics form on social media. Feeling is what connects the people in them (p. 125). An event, hashtag, or shared mood gathers strangers into a public that reason alone cannot form (p. 118). Neither case is about China, but both fit Weibo entertainment topics. A controversy gathers millions of people who did not come to debate.

The first condition is fan culture. Yin (2020) shows that Weibo fan groups organise around data work. Fans post, rate, and comment for their stars daily, and treat traffic data as an object to care about (pp. 475, 479). Protecting a star's image and regulating discussions are common daily work in this culture. This study focuses on two main points. First, comment sections under celebrity news are spaces led by likes where fans take sides. Second, a topic about a celebrity is never just about her. It is also a place where fans express support or opposition. Chapter 5 keeps both points in view where they surface in the material.

The second condition is what the platform does to visibility. The platform is a censored space. Missing comments may be deleted, not unwritten (Roberts, 2018, p. 138). A corpus from such a space contains surviving content. So, all claims about missing data in this thesis carry this caution. Visibility is uneven in a second way. On Weibo, attention gathers on a small head of accounts and posts, so having spoken is not the same as being heard (Svensson, 2014, p. 170). Censorship and ranking are also conditions for these texts to spread.

The third condition is ready-made language. Chinese online communication keeps a daily class vocabulary. Szablewicz (2014) recorded a famous case of the self-deprecating "loser" meme (p. 259). This label builds on feelings of blocked upward mobility (p. 271). This case

shows that classifying people by status and promotion chances was a common online habit long before 2023. When the corpus uses words like "bottom" and "privilege", it does not create a critical language. It uses language that was already there.

Feminist discussions on Weibo have their own vocabulary. Xue and Rose (2022) studied Weibo feminism from inside. They recorded a long blame of free choice language: it packages downward movement as liberation. Surrogacy and sex work are typical cases of this vocabulary (p. 6). The shortest sentence is 向下的自由不是自由, "downward freedom is not freedom". Their study describes feminists as actors and a movement. But their data cannot show if these sentences also exist in general gossip outside the movement. Meanwhile, Bao (2024) recorded a classification habit: feminist discussions on Chinese social media divide feminism into real feminism and fake feminism (pp. 6–7). Recall Rottenberg's question in Section 3.1. On this evidence, the classification that scholars view as too simple is a common habit in this field.

The work by Han and Liu (2024) is central to this field. They conducted a digital ethnography across major Chinese platforms for thirteen months and proposed the theory of "pink feminism" (p. 2). This is a non-confrontational feminist action. It uses nationalist language instead of fighting it, borrowing its safety in a risky environment for public feminism. Their study keeps a double meaning on purpose. The nationalist shell that protects feminist claims can also limit them. They warn that these strategies may strengthen structures that feminists oppose, and participants themselves may act as discipliners (pp. 1, 7). This warning is central to this thesis. Han and Liu gave this warning at the level of movements and specific controversies, because their data shows this level. When feminist talk disciplines rather than defends women's choices, what form does this discipline take in a single comment? Their study shows this risk, but does not track it. This study reads the risk at the level where it actually happens. One connection matters here. In the corpus this thesis reads, the findings will show, class status is the test of whether feminism counts as real. The risk Han and Liu name and the class critique in Sub-question 2 are not two separate topics, and the gap below connects them.

A second study examines the same limits from the platform level, and it is this thesis's nearest theoretical neighbour. Nakahara and Cai (2026) analysed the 100 most viewed "feminist"

videos on Bilibili (p. 1977). They found that feminist content spreads only when it does not conflict with national identity. They named this limit "misogynistic epistemicide": hostility from male-dominated spheres that destroys feminist knowledge (p. 1992). First, their footnote uses this controversy as an example (p. 1995). Second, they set user comments aside for future study (p. 1994). The corpus in this thesis is that object. Whether the limit runs on this hostile mechanism or on another one is decided by close reading of the comments (6.2.6).

A published study examined the event itself. Xie and Wu (2025) combined interaction data, sentiment classification of over 5,600 Weibo posts, and thematic reading of Bilibili videos (p. 1). Their results give an external test this study cannot run itself. Their readings include exploitation of women's bodies, freedom becoming an accomplice to exploitation, women seen as a group rather than individuals, and charges of abusing influence (pp. 10–11). The corpus of this study fits the same readings. This shows these readings belong to the controversy, not to one sample or one coder. It confirms which readings exist in the event. It does not show their importance. Their Weibo data are original posts (p. 11). So they cannot speak to comment-level visibility, or support any argument about likes in this thesis.

Put together, the studies above weaken the easy reading rather than support it. That reading, which Chapter 1 set out expecting, is a nationalist backlash: critics reject the feminist idea from outside, while defenders carry the feminist language. The reading needs a clear line between the two vocabularies, and two of the studies above blur it. Han and Liu (2024) show feminist claims advancing inside nationalist language (p. 1), so the vocabularies already run together. The critical readings Xie and Wu (2025) record for this event, exploitation and the group put before the individual, are themselves feminist vocabulary (pp. 10–11). If those charges lead the attack, the attack speaks in feminist words. Two questions follow. Do the comments in fact divide into two sides? Do the attacks on "her freedom" run on feminist language? Neither can be settled from post-level counts. Both need the comments read closely.

What this field leaves open is the gap this thesis fills. The gap has four parts: the level of analysis, the tools, a risk named but not tracked, and the form of the judgment. On the first, the field describes events through movements, platforms, and general public opinion. No study reads this event comment by comment, weighted by recorded like counts. On the second, statistics show which readings exist and how common they are. But the small

operations that do the work, a concession, a reversal, a name in quotation marks, disappear in a count. The risk is named by Han and Liu (2024). They warn that feminist talk can itself discipline women, but their data stay at the level of movements and controversies. Inside these threads, is feminist vocabulary used to discipline women's bodily autonomy, and to decide which feminism counts as real? And in what register does this discipline speak? The form of the judgment is the key point of Sub-question 2. The studies above record a charge against "downward freedom" and a habit of dividing real from fake feminism. But none shows how gender and class join in a single judgment in the same event, often in one sentence. None shows how "freedom" is redefined as something women have or lack by position. These four parts build on the three questions that closed Section 3.2, on operations without the word, on boundaries kept and crossed, and on using an axis rather than mentioning it. Those questions set what to look for. This gap sets where and how closely to look. To see any of the four, one must read short sentences closely. That is the perspective the last section of this chapter presents.

3.4 Critical discourse analysis as the lens

This gap asks for a specific method. The actions here are very subtle. A show can change its name in a few words. A freedom can be given and taken away in one sentence. A judgment can be summed up in quotation marks. Aggregated methods can show how common these actions are, but the actions disappear in statistics. This study needs a view that reads a short sentence as a social action. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is made for this. In Fairclough (1992), discourse is a social practice. Language does not just describe the social world; it also helps build it. His framework reads discourse on three linked levels: the text, discursive practice (text production, distribution, and consumption), and social practice (p. 62). Power works partly by making descriptions feel like common sense, a process he calls naturalisation. This comes from Gramsci (1971): common sense is not fixed, but forms through fights over meaning. Hegemony is an unstable balance, not a final rule. It is kept by agreement and can be challenged at any time (Fairclough, 1992, p. 92). In this corpus, this mechanism is visible. Likes are the way descriptions spread and stay in view, until the next reader meets them as already there (3.3). The theoretical side of CDA, the view of discourse and its key analytical concepts, belongs in this chapter; Chapter 4 explains how this study

applies the model. The key point is its scale argument: large positions are built by small word choices repeated across many texts.

In this framework, eight text tools play a key role (Fairclough, 1992; Machin & Mayr, 2012). Each tool catches a key point needed in analysis. Naming and referential choice: how things or people are named can decide the direction before an argument starts, so the fight between "art" and "striptease" can be analysed. Metaphor: borrowing words from business or crime brings their moral rules, so calling a show part of a grey industry sets its moral level without argument. Reference and contrast: a sentence can put two people together, one fully clothed and one lightly clothed, letting this contrast make the judgment. Presupposition: a sentence can treat a debated boundary as a shared fact and hide the result in grammar. Modality: duty and permission show in verbs like must, may, and can. A sentence can use them unevenly so one person must act while another can (Machin & Mayr, 2012, pp. 186–187). Transitivity: sentences assign roles like actor, victim, and beneficiary, so claims about one group gaining from another can be read directly from grammar (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 104). Concession: a sentence can agree with an idea first, then cancel it after "but". Conversation studies call this a "show concession". The granting is performed, and it exists to strengthen what follows (Antaki & Wetherell, 1999, p. 7). A critic who already made a concession is hard to refute. Intertextuality: texts can quote words from other texts in quotation marks and change them, which lets promotion words refute their own event. The same tool has a wider form. A text can run several existing discourses at once, which Fairclough (1992) calls interdiscursivity (p. 85). These tools were picked by one rule: each catches a way to judge in short sentences without stating the argument directly.

The last tool comes from an older origin, and naming it is key for the following analysis. Fairclough's view on intertextuality comes from Bakhtin (1981). Bakhtin's "double-voiced discourse" means speech with two voices at the same time (p. 324). The author can borrow the opponent's voice to answer. The opponent does not need to be present. The answered voice can be absent, quoted, or imagined. Parody is one of Bakhtin's own examples. This study reads mock humility, asking a question one already knows the answer to, the same way. The results show both tactics are common in these discourses. This root gives the warrant: when a comment sounds like its target, this similarity itself becomes an argument.

CDA faces a common critique. This design answers part of it and owns the rest. The critique says CDA reads texts while ignoring the audience. Two features of this design answer part of the critique. Reading the corpus has two stages. The first stage is thematic reading to find which interpretations repeat in the corpus before doing close reading. So, close reading uses pattern-based examples instead of personal preference. Also, comment likes record visibility. They mark which interpretations were most visible. But likes do not mean agreement. Likes are not votes. This corpus has no reply chains, so it cannot fully show audience reception. This boundary is stated here and weighed again in 6.5.

What remains is the analysis itself. It must show how a celebrity controversy turns into questions about class, gender, and the meaning of freedom, comment by comment.

Chapter 4. Material and Method

This study uses a qualitative research design with a two-stage analysis. First, reflexive thematic analysis maps patterns of meaning across the coded material. Second, critical discourse analysis reads selected comments closely.

4.1 Research Design

The goal is not to measure netizen attitudes or produce generalisable statistical findings. The goal is to explore how meanings are constructed, negotiated, and contested in online discourse. Epistemologically, this study relies on an interpretivist paradigm and a social constructivist perspective (Bryman, 2016, pp. 26, 29). From an interpretivist perspective, social reality is not an objective truth waiting for measurement. People understand reality through the meanings they give to their environment (Creswell, 2013, p. 24). Social constructivism shows that these meanings are created and negotiated through language and daily interactions. "Freedom" and "art" are not fixed labels to test with standards. They are contested words. Their meanings are produced, fought over, settled, or left open in online discourse.

4.2 Material and Data Collection

The data in this thesis is a corpus of public comments on Weibo about Lisa's performance at Crazy Horse. Sina Weibo was chosen for two reasons besides its user size. First, Sina Weibo is the main platform for public controversy about entertainment events in China. Hot topics bring together original posts from media, marketing, and ordinary users, forming open comment sections below. Second, this study treats Sina Weibo as a cultural environment, not a comment database, a place where norms and interpretive habits become visible. To study definition fights in public, the platform where the fights happen is the right site.

Weibo's features shape this contest. The hot list decides which posts ordinary users see. The comment section under each post ranks by likes, and comments with the most likes appear first. Studies on Weibo fandom show that fan behaviour works around these numbers: posting, ranking, and comment control are part of daily work (Yin, 2020, pp. 475, 479). Both matter directly here. The like ranking decides the order readers see content, and the analysis design in Section 4.3 relies on this. Also, as Section 5.5 shows, the hot list itself became something commenters argued about. So platform features are part of the discourse, not a neutral channel.

The corpus sits under posts published between September and November 2023, from the show announcement to the end of the controversy. The corpus collection used a retrospective method: searching after the event, aiming at posts in this period. The search used only one term, the event's name, Lisa 疯马秀. The search was done on the Weibo desktop version, in a logged-in session, because a logged-out visitor can load less. The date range was set with the filter on the search page, not applied to the file afterwards. Results were sorted by "Hot", which shows posts with the highest interaction. All original posts found this way in this period were included. Then, Octoparse extracted each post's full text, interaction numbers, and every comment the configured workflow could retrieve at the time of collection, with its like count. Octoparse ran a rule written for this study rather than a stock template, and no page limit was set. The raw file has been kept unchanged, and the working file is a copy of it. No content filter was used in this process. Short reactions, jokes, and off-topic comments were collected with long arguments. The final corpus has 5,289 comments under 219 original posts, and the file is used as collected.

Two features of this process carry into the later analysis. First, the query only has the event name and nothing else. No gender, class or nation words were used to find the data, so the registers in the corpus were not planted by the search. A wider keyword list would catch more, but each added word is a guess about the discussion, and the corpus would inherit these guesses. A single term catches less content, but stays neutral. It makes the collection rule fully transparent and repeatable. Second, search results use hot sorting, and the choice follows the object of study. The platform leads visitors to posts with the highest interaction, and hot sorting enters through the same gate (4.3). The platform decides the ranking, not the researcher. No post was included or excluded for its content. Hot sorting cannot guarantee

full information. Weibo search shows only part of the content. Moderation removes content over time, and posts discussing the event without the event name are outside this single term search. Collection ran on 11 May 2026, about two and a half years after the show. The gap makes the moderation point heavier. Anything removed during those months is outside the corpus, and the size of that loss cannot be measured. Therefore, the corpus is a snapshot of the discussion at collection time. What this snapshot can and cannot support is explained in Section 4.3 and Chapter 6 (6.2.3, 6.5).

All data is in Chinese. Translations in this thesis are by the author for analysis. The findings cite the Chinese original first, then give an English translation close to the original text.

4.2.1 Data Organisation

All data is saved in a single spreadsheet. Each row is one comment with its text and likes. The sheet holds six fields: the comment text with its author name, the comment's like count, the text of the original post, and the post's reposts, comments and likes. Weibo writes large numbers in the form 7.9 万. These were converted, so 7.9 万 becomes 79,000. The form appears in the repost field and in twenty comment like counts.

A like count is missing when the cell is empty, and this holds for 37 per cent of comments. Weibo prints no number beside a comment that has no likes, so an empty cell is the expected trace of a zero. It is also what a failed read would leave, and the file cannot tell the two apart. Treating missing like values as zero is a conservative operational choice rather than a claim that these comments received no likes. Because the reason a value is missing cannot be established, all like-weighted conclusions should be read with this added uncertainty (4.3, 6.5). Eleven comment texts appear more than once, across twenty-five rows, mostly one account posting the same line under several posts. They were kept, because removing them would edit the field the study describes. The 219 posts were checked for duplication on the full post text, and each is distinct.

Analysis records sit in the coding ledger with the corpus (Appendix X). The ledger contains the coding scheme, the coded systematic layer, the tail sample, the summary table, the theme

development sheets, a post reference table, and the second-pass log. A notes sheet records the sampling seed, the missing-like count and the row numbering rule. Row numbers in this thesis count the comments from zero, so the first comment is row 0. In the spreadsheet a row sits two lines lower, because of the header. The ledger uses the same numbering. Thus, every quote in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 can be traced to a numbered row. Every coding decision can be traced to recorded rules.

4.3 Sampling Strategy and Analytical Tiers

This study uses purposive sampling, and the level where it works decides what the sample can claim. According to Bryman (2016, p. 408), purposive sampling selects cases based on relevance to research questions, not statistical representativeness. According to Patton (2002, p. 230), the goal is information-rich cases. Here, the information-rich case is the event itself: one loud, bounded public contest over the meaning of "freedom" and "art". Therefore, purposive selection works at the level of the platform, the event, and the hot-sorted retrieval rule of 4.2. Purposive selection does not work at the comment level. Within the material the workflow retrieved, no comment was excluded for its content.

The reason is analytical. Research on how definitions are contested must separate non-arguments from arguments. This includes jokes, fatigue, and the fan war around arguments. Filtering evaluative content during data collection would decide in advance what the discussion was made of. Keeping all content lets the data answer this question. Two later steps depend on this. Claims about absence, such as how rare an argued defence is (5.2), can only be checked against the record as collected. If non-argument content is removed, rarity becomes an artefact of cleaning. The noise around it is also evidence, because what kind of field an argument rises in matters for reading it (5.5).

The corpus of 5,289 comments cannot be close-read in full, and raw frequency does not describe how a comment section is met. Weibo lowers the barrier to speak, but the chance to be heard stays concentrated in a small elite (Svensson, 2014, p. 170). The weight of a comment depends on its likes, and the analysis follows the order the recorded likes produce. For these research questions, this method is direct: a definition wins in these threads by

standing where the next reader meets it, and likes push it there. One caution travels with this choice everywhere: a like counts as a mark of visibility, not of agreement, because the data shows no reason why people pressed it. Likes are used here as a proxy for relative visibility, not as a record of what any reader saw. Comment order on Weibo can shift with login state, account history, timing and platform intervention. Two selection steps also run in the same direction: hot sorting chose the posts, and the like threshold chose the systematic layer. Both favour high-interaction material, so this study reads the highly visible part of the controversy, not the whole of it.

The analysis design has three tiers, and their combination follows Patton's (2002, pp. 242–243) mixed purposeful sampling logic. Criterion sampling selects the layer where likes concentrate. Then, stratified purposeful random sampling guards against what this criterion might hide. The first tier is the systematic layer: all comments with at least 500 likes (246 comments in total) were read completely and coded one by one. These 246 comments carry 86.9 per cent of all likes in the corpus. The line sits where a census of that layer stays feasible while catching most of what the like counts record. The distribution has no obvious break at this point. Lowering the threshold to 300 would add 97 comments and raise like coverage by four points. The second tier is a check on the first. A stratified random sample of 200 comments was drawn below this line, with 50 comments in each of four bands. Three bands run by like count: 100 to 499, 10 to 99, and 1 to 9. The fourth band contains the comments without like data, because the corpus has no comments with a recorded count of zero. The draw used a fixed random seed of 42, so it can be repeated. The goal is to test whether the head misleads about the tail. The third tier is a purposive supplement of two low-like comments, cited in the findings for their unusual clarity. They are coded in the ledger, but not counted in any statistics. Posts themselves are not a separate coding tier. They only serve as context. The two publicity posts close-read in Section 5.1 are listed in the post reference table of the ledger.

The unit of analysis is a single comment, read against the original post under which it appeared. The judgment comes from the comment itself. The posts bring the event and its names into the comment sections (5.1). What ordinary commenters did with these names was written underneath. The field has mostly been read at the level of movements and platforms, and this study works one level down (3.3). The post reference table in the ledger keeps this link inspectable. The corpus has no reply chains, so this analysis makes no claims about who

replied to whom. Section 6.5 restates this boundary for the findings. The tail tier also checks patterns the systematic layer might have missed. Coding the 200-comment sample found no discourse pattern missing from the systematic layer. Comments without like data were mainly onlooking and plain annoyance, not argument. Finally, the scope of conclusions matches the design. This sampling supports an inventory of the discourse and its visibility in these threads. It does not support claims about Weibo users in general, or claims about the Chinese public in general. In fact, this thesis makes no such claims.

Besides the coded tiers, one further count needs a separate description. Sections 5.5 and 6.2.6 compare the coverage of nation words and class words. This comparison rests on keyword coverage counts: fixed word lists, matched as substrings against all 5,289 comments after removing the username prefix. A comment counts once per list if it contains at least one listed word. A comment can appear in both lists. Missing like values count as zero. The full lists are in the footnote to Section 5.5, with per-word counts and a sensitivity list in Appendix Y. These counts only measure coverage. A keyword match is not a coding decision. Coverage counts are separate from the coded clusters in Table 5.1.

Table 4.1 gathers the selections described above, with the method applied to each and the claims each supports. In total, 448 comments were coded in the thematic stage: 246 in the systematic layer, 200 in the tail sample, and the 2 comments of the purposive supplement. The close reading stage then worked on 29 of these comments.

Table 4.1 Overview of the data selections and the methods applied to each

Selection	Size and rule	Method applied	What it supports
Full corpus	5,289 comments under 219 posts (4.2)	Familiarisation reading by whole threads (4.4.1); keyword coverage counts (5.5, Appendix Y)	The record for absence and coverage claims
Systematic layer	246 comments with at least 500 likes; 86.9 per cent of all likes	RTA coding, one primary and up to one secondary code per comment	Table 5.1 and all claims about the visible head

Tail sample	200 comments below the line, 50 in each of four bands, seed 42	RTA coding with the same scheme	The check that the head does not mislead about the tail
Purposive supplement	2 low-like comments chosen for clarity of device	Coded in the ledger; outside all statistics	Illustration in close reading (4.3)
CDA extracts	29 comments from the coded clusters: 26 systematic, 1 tail, 2 purposive supplement	Close reading with the textual tools of 3.4, quoted in the Chinese original	The word-level claims of Chapter 5
Posts	219 original posts as context; 2 publicity posts	Context reading; the 2 posts close-read in 5.1	The names the event arrived with

Note: Chapter 5 also cites 18 further comments in translation or paraphrase as supporting instances. Their analytical status is their coding in the tiers above, not a separate close reading. All 47 cited comments carry row numbers and can be traced through the coding ledger (Appendix X).

4.4 Analytical Approach: A Two-Stage Design

This study uses a two-stage analysis: first Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2019), then Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Fairclough, 1992, 1995). Both are compatible. RTA is not an independent epistemology here. It works as a pattern-finding tool on the same social constructivist ground as CDA. The order is sequential. RTA shows what recurs across the coded tiers and builds themes. Then, CDA reads chosen comments word by word to show how these repeated meanings are created. The whole process is concrete. The three tiers of 4.3 were coded under a documented scheme. Codes were grouped into candidate themes. Then themes were reviewed, defined, and named. The most instructive

comments in each theme go forward to close reading. Every step leaves a record in the coding ledger (Appendix X). The ledger gives this process structure, and the limit of that structure should be stated. It does not turn the analysis into a coding-reliability design. The coding rules worked as reflexive prompts during coding and as an audit trail after it, never as a measurement instrument (Braun & Clarke, 2019, p. 594).

4.4.1 Phase 1: Reflexive Thematic Analysis

The first stage follows the six phases by Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 87) and uses the reflexive form (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Themes do not quietly wait in data to be found. The researcher interprets and builds them from a specific position, and this process must be recorded (Braun & Clarke, 2019, p. 593). Each phase below states what was done. From phase two, each phase leaves its own sheet in the coding ledger.

Phase one: familiarisation. The systematic layer and tail sample were read repeatedly and completely. The wider corpus was scanned by whole discussion threads without coding. This reading established the range of the material: arguments and jokes exist together, with fan-war positioning, plain annoyance, and reactions only a few characters long.

Phase two: generating initial codes. A coding scheme was drafted first. Each code has a name, definition, and decision rule (ledger sheet P1). The final scheme has thirteen codes. Full definitions and rules are in that sheet. Coding was done comment by comment, through both tiers. Each comment got a primary code, and a secondary code if there was a second clear operation. Every comment in the systematic layer carries a short written rationale (ledger sheet P2). In the tail sample 101 of the 200 do, and the rest are almost all fan-war, annoyance or onlooking comments (F, I or J; the tail sheet). The work followed three rules. Comments were read completely before coding, because parody can invert surface meaning. The dominant discursive act decided the primary code. The boundary between structural class critique (B) and downward levelling (C) is whether the comment argues for those below, not just against the one above. The scheme was not fixed. Code V was added mid-process, for comments that use voluntariness to sharpen blame rather than to excuse. Codes H and I were added later, as residual categories. The freedom code (FR) was rewritten around the defence's

habit of appearing in quotation. Four further decision rules were added during coding, and the ledger dates each of them. Braun and Clarke describe exactly this recursive movement. The ledger keeps every change visible rather than erasing it.

Phase three: constructing candidate themes. Codes were clustered into candidate themes. Each candidate theme is written as a claim, not just a topic. Each candidate theme has a core organising concept and its codes, annotated with row numbers (ledger sheet P3). A cluster that named only a subject, with no claim, could not become a theme.

Phase four: reviewing themes. Candidates were tested in two recorded rounds (ledger sheet P4). The check inside each theme tests whether the gathered comments cohere around its claim. The check across themes tests whether each theme does distinct work. At this phase, candidates were merged, renamed, or demoted.

Phase five: defining and naming. Each surviving theme got a clear definition (ledger sheet P5). Definitions explained what belongs to the theme, what must never be included, and the theme's anchor rows. One deliberate demotion belongs on record. The loud material without argument, the fan war, the annoyance, the onlooking, was written up as a portrait of the field. It was recorded in that same sheet and marked as not a theme, because it recurs without organising any claim.

Phase six: writing the report. The theme map and storyline sheet (ledger sheet P6) ordered the themes to form Chapter 5. Thus, the order follows a documented storyline built on relations revealed in coding, not an arrangement made at the writing stage.

Two working principles were consistent across all six phases. First, coding focused on both semantic content and latent meaning, because sarcasm and quotation were everywhere in the data. Comments could quote the defence to reverse it. Second, comment meaning was never fully covered by its primary code. The one-primary, one-secondary format keeps the coded tiers manageable and traceable, and it is a filing rule, not a claim that a comment carries one fixed meaning. Secondary codes and the written rationales keep these operations visible, and close reading in stage two returned to full texts, not just labels.

4.4.2 Phase 2: Critical Discourse Analysis

The second stage uses Critical Discourse Analysis to analyse extracts chosen from the themes. Thematic analysis shows pattern repetition, but cannot show how language builds this pattern. Critical Discourse Analysis fills this gap: discourse is a social practice that shapes and is shaped by power relations (Fairclough, 1992, p. 64). This stage examines how comments contest the definitions of "freedom" and "art", and how judgments across gender and class are built sentence by sentence in wording.

This analysis uses Fairclough's (1992) three-dimensional model. It links a text to its production and distribution practices, and links both to broader social contexts (p. 62). Extracts were chosen from the themes by the density of definitional work, not length. An extract is a single comment, or sometimes a comment set against the post it appeared under. Each extract carries its row number, so every close reading can be traced back through the ledger to the corpus.

At the textual level, the reading used the eight tools listed in Section 3.4 (Fairclough, 1992; Machin & Mayr, 2012). The principle is the same: word choice carries ideological assumptions, so the wording itself is evidence.

At the level of discursive practice, the analysis asked how wordings travel. Comments quote the posts above them, and they quote the defence in order to handle it. The platform then distributes the results, because like ranking decides which wording later readers meet (4.3). Thus, this level reads quotation and reuse without asserting who replied to whom, as the data cannot support it. Chapter 5 tracks how wordings travel at this level. The publicity's self-description arrives as reported speech (5.1). The defence survives mostly as quoted material, handled by concession, reversal, and re-pricing (5.2). And renamings rise through likes to meet the next reader first (5.1, 5.3).

At the level of social practice, memos and the ledger's rationale notes link the textual findings to the broader context. This level is delivered in Chapter 6, which supplies the conditions (6.1), carries the findings into theory (6.2), and reflects on the site (6.3). The questions here are: what conditions make a specific renaming available? What does it mean when one

definition of "freedom" gains the visible ground? The interpretive vocabulary comes from the theoretical framework, and three mappings kept the work pointed at the research questions. For sub-question one, the naming contest and its outcome were read with Fairclough's (1992, p. 92) account of hegemony as contested and unstable common sense. The register the defence speaks was read against Gill's (2007b, p. 147) postfeminist sensibility. For sub-question two, the single-sentence fusions of gender and class were read with intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989; Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013). They were also read against the charge of downward freedom documented in Weibo feminism (Xue & Rose, 2022, p. 6). The main question ran through the same hegemony account, since that account is built for wins that are local and reversible. Sub-question three asks: what do the findings mean for theory? Chapter 6 answers this directly in the three dialogues of 6.2. The process was not linear: it iterated between raw rows, memos, questions, and concepts until the readings held. The research questions took their final form inside this movement. Chapter 5 records one instance, a planned debate the coding refused (5.2).

4.4.3 Integration of the Two Stages

These two stages connect closely in one direction. RTA provides the map. It finds what recurs across the coded tiers and where each pattern concentrates. Then, this map guides the choice of extracts. This fits the principle of information-rich cases (Patton, 2002, p. 230). For the definition contest, dense extracts are the richest. For questions about the field of the contest, the noise around it is itself the information (5.5). For example, when clustering surfaced the concessive handling of "her freedom" as a recurring structure, its strongest instances went forward for close reading. CDA adds the depth the map lacks. It shows how repeated meanings are built in wording. Combining pattern breadth with language depth is a recognised strength in discourse research (Mautner, 2016, p. 156). Every extract enters through a documented theme, so close reading cannot drift into cherry-picking. Interpretation must show what the map reveals, and each interpretation leaves a position on the map.

4.5 Discursive Positions, Not People

A short conceptual boundary belongs here. This analysis focuses on discursive positions, not people. A comment can attack, defend, concede, or just watch. Weibo accounts are anonymous. The data shows no information about commenters' gender, class, or political stance. Therefore, this study verifies no offline identities. It treats each position as something done in wording, which anyone can take up, drop, or parody. This is not a limitation added later. It comes from the constructivist ground of 4.1 and fits the research questions. The findings hold this line throughout, and 6.5 restates it where it matters most.

4.6 Reflexivity

Sweet (2020) gave a warning that shaped how this section is written. Reflexivity should not become a ritual list of identity traits (p. 922). The important thing is showing how a background shapes the knowledge produced.

The researcher is a Chinese international student trained in Global Media Studies at a Western university. This dual position did specific work in this study. Familiarity with Chinese platform culture made the material readable in the first place. Slang, sarcasm, and jokes about celebrity income are clear to insiders, but outsiders misinterpret them easily. The same is true for the difference between an argument and a fan-war move. The latent-level coding of 4.4.1 relied on this familiarity.

This familiarity brings risks, and two mattered here. The first risk is over-identification. The class critique in this corpus is fluent and familiar. Readers growing up in this context easily move from recording it to using it. Then, interpretation seems natural, not a construction needing analysis. The second risk runs the other way. Following Sweet's (2020, p. 922) use of Bourdieu, Western training brings its own unconscious habits. The risk is judging commenters with a liberal feminist standard and calling the whole event a backlash before reading it. Both risks were managed the same way. Interpretation stayed close to wording. Rationales were written into the ledger as decisions were made. Also, the work moved back and forth between rows, codes, and concepts, without settling too early.

Two constructed lines deserve naming, because responsibility for them is the author's. One is the themes. The other is the line drawn between upward and downward levelling in 5.3. Chapter 5 is written in the first person for the same reason. Reflexive thematic analysis treats the analyst's judgement as the main instrument, so coding and selection are reported as decisions someone made (Braun & Clarke, 2019, p. 594). The other chapters keep the third person, where the writing reports and argues rather than decides. This design does not claim neutrality. Its goal is transparency. An examiner can trace every interpretive decision in the ledger. Its scheme, theme sheets and rulings are in English, and an English rendering of any per-comment note can be supplied on request.

4.7 Ethical Considerations and Limitations

This study uses only public Weibo data, but public data is not ethically neutral. Users posting publicly does not mean they consent to academic study. Also, the discussion covers sensitive topics: gender politics, national feelings, and a named celebrity. Extracting such text without care can expose writers beyond their original setting.

Three safeguards answer this problem. First, usernames do not appear in this thesis. Comments are cited by row numbers. Second, the working corpus is not published. It is stored offline by the author. Anonymised materials can be given to examiners upon request. The coding ledger in the appendix provides the audit trail. Third, this study is strictly observational. The researcher never interacted with, prompted, or provoked any user.

Removing usernames does not make a quotation untraceable. A short Chinese sentence can be searched and matched back to the account that wrote it. Rewriting the comments would reduce that risk, but it would also remove the evidence, because this analysis reads wording. Anonymisation here therefore means that usernames, mentions and profile details were dropped, while the wording itself was kept. The thesis and its appendices will be archived in the university's open repository, and the coding ledger is submitted in full so that every coded decision can be checked. Two things keep this proportionate. The quoted material is public comment under a public event, not private exchange. And the reading stays on positions and wording, not persons (4.5).

Three limitations follow from this design: the like weighting, the moderated field (4.2), and the interpretive method. Chapter 6 weighs them with the results (6.2.3, 6.5). The answer to the third is transparency, not replicability. Reflexive thematic analysis does not seek inter-rater reliability, and no second coder was used (Braun & Clarke, 2019, p. 594). In its place the author re-read the coded material a second time against the written scheme alone. This pass verified row mapping, like conversion and anonymisation entry by entry for all 446 coded comments. It also raised and ruled on twenty-eight coding and citation questions, sorted into four categories, from those affecting cluster totals to those the post cannot settle. Rules, rationales, decisions and the second-pass rulings are in the ledger (Appendix X, sheet B), open to inspection. This fits the interpretivist stance in Section 4.1.

Chapter 5. Findings and Analysis

The analysis in this chapter is based on two layers of coded data and a small purposive supplement. During data collection and analysis, I found that 86.9 per cent of all likes were in Weibo comments with 500 or more likes. This decided my logic for the first systematic layer, which includes 246 comments. The second layer checks whether the coding patterns from the first layer also appear in the low-like layer (fewer than 500 likes). For this check, I used a tail stratified random sampling step. I chose the final purposive supplement after fixing the codes. I did this because a specific coding theme was clearer in the unselected data. All cited comments in this chapter have line numbers and like counts. This ensures traceability and helps readers see their visibility. All citations can be traced back to the coding ledger in Appendix X. Next, under each pattern theme found by RTA, I followed CDA rules to choose a few typical comments for close reading. The other comments support these patterns. During the reading, I noticed that some wordings received likes and became a "candidate common sense." The platform sorts comments by likes. This means high-like wordings stay at the top of the thread. However, the data does not have reply chains. I cannot confirm if later commenters really accepted them. So, I only use "candidate" or "visible," and I do not use "adopted."

Before discussing the first theme, I must explain that this discussion is not the debate between two sides I expected. Much of it is not argument at all. Table 5.1 shows the coding results. The cluster with the most likes is the fan war. Add pure complaints, and together these two non-argument clusters are larger than any single argument cluster. The comment with the highest likes (36,000 likes) is a fan war comment, not part of any argument. In the tail sample, the area without likes mostly has bystander chat and pure complaints (clusters J and I). These clusters cannot be the subject of this chapter because neither of them has expressed the position required for the research question in this debate. Three clusters did not participate in the debate (F, I, J). Setting them aside, the remainder still accounts for 63.3 per cent of the likes in the systematic layer (Appendix X, sheet P4).

In comments with arguments, the focus is not "insulting China", and it is mostly not "objectification" in general. The focus is "art" and "freedom" from the show's promotion, and who can define them. The heaviest line of this argument, which the chapter builds towards,

treats "freedom" as something distributed by class. The structure starts from the fight over defining the show (5.1). It moves to what happens to the defence of "her choice" (5.2), then to the class critique (5.3) and its logic (5.4). It ends with the noisier field around all of this (5.5).

Table 5.1 Coded clusters in the systematic layer (all comments ≥ 500 likes, N = 246)

Cluster (code)	Comments	Total likes
Fan-war positioning (F)	40	151,760
Class critique, structural (B)	29	130,333
Annoyance and abuse (I)	44	117,648
Art-naming contest (A)	22	82,251
Freedom-naming contest (FR)	9	51,098
Nation and ethnicity (E)	13	49,853
Sexualisation and gaze critique (G)	16	49,523
Downward levelling (C)	15	43,810
Voluntariness reversal (V)	11	41,184
Capital critique (B2)	10	39,218
Minors and spread (H)	6	35,088
Onlooking and misc. (J)	28	34,227
Argued autonomy defence (D)	3	2,316
Total	246	828,309

Note: comments with missing like data are counted as zero likes and fall below the 500-like line; the long-tail sample covers that region. Counts in this table are dominant codes, one per comment. A comment may also carry a second code, and 92 of the 246 do. Gaze critique is the clearest case: it is the dominant code in 16 comments and a second code in 18 more.

5.1 Naming as verdict: from "art" to "a slightly classier striptease"

In this discourse event, Crazy Horse gave itself the names "freedom" and "art" in its own promotion. The comment section rejected these names, and the way it rejected them was to rename the show. A viral post quoted Crazy Horse's official response to the controversy: "Crazy Horse has become a symbol of proud, free women" (promotional post, spread with the hashtag #Crazy Horse responds to inviting Lisa#; Appendix X, post reference). Another post cited foreign media to explain why Lisa was invited: the show hoped to "attract young women to become new customers" (media report post; Appendix X, post reference). Proud, free, young women: these are the names the show gave itself. But they reached the Weibo threads as quotes and paraphrases. Before any commenter touched them, these given names already carried quotation marks.

The refusal usually did not argue. This comment just used the word "striptease" to reject the given name:

不懂就问，疯马秀就是高级一点的脱衣舞吗？？ (row 5, 361 likes)

"Just asking, isn't Crazy Horse basically a slightly classier striptease??"

This comment starts with a humble posture: "Just asking." The author plays a person too plain to appreciate the art. This posture is a common opener on Weibo, and readers recognise it as a posture; the humility is a shared irony, not a fake cover. What follows is an equation. Its core is "a slightly classier": the adjective is kept (classy), and only the noun is replaced (art to striptease). "A slightly classier" concedes only class status, the stage and the ticket price. What kind of thing it is depends on the noun, so "art" is removed and "striptease" takes its place. Changing the noun already carries the evaluation, and no further argument is needed. In mainland China, "striptease" names no legal stage genre, and it is one step from the sex trade. The two question marks close the change: on Weibo "???" performs disbelief, the face of someone forced to ask what should never need asking. This comment got only 361 likes. I cite it first because the device is easiest to see at its smallest. There is no argument in this sentence, but renaming alone passes the verdict.

Two other comments got higher likes. They did not just rename by changing the noun. They set a test, a checkable condition for readers to verify the name:

别说疯马秀是艺术、除非让男的也这样边跳边脱，毕竟艺术没有性别界限 (row 473, 30,000 likes)

"Don't call Crazy Horse art unless men also get up there and strip while they dance. After all, art has no gender boundaries."

The word "unless" gives the judgment to a checkable condition: men also strip and dance on the same stage. The condition is almost impossible to meet, so the name "art" fails at once. Then the comment borrows a principle that art claims for itself. "Art has no gender boundaries" is art's own ideal. The comment does not reject this ideal; it accepts it and uses it as a ruler to measure Crazy Horse. It uses the show's own standard against the show. The second version names one specific man:

再说一次疯马秀如果是高级艺术，站在上面的会是姆巴佩。有些粉丝别洗了。(row 1088, 3,480 likes)

"One more time: if Crazy Horse were high art, the one standing up there would be Mbappé. Some fans need to stop whitewashing."

This comment runs a single-variable test. Mbappé is the most famous man in France, at least of Lisa's rank, and the name is chosen on Crazy Horse's home ground. Here Lisa is swapped for Mbappé and everything else is held steady: fame, country, stage. Only the gender of the body changes. If even the most loved man in France is unthinkable up there, then what disqualifies is not status but gender. The comment never says this out loud. It trusts the reader to laugh, and the laugh is the verdict. By its logic, a France that would never put Mbappé on that stage has already answered what that stage is for. The closing line, "stop whitewashing," uses fan-community language. It warns the other side not to clean up the "high art" name from the show's promotion. The warning works because the gender test has already broken the "art" the show claimed for itself. The power of these comments is that they hand the reader a standard to check, not just a stance to take. In row 473, thirty thousand likes went to a comment with no insults in it. There are only the three parts read above: an "unless" condition, a checkable event, and art's own principle as the stick. It ranks third in the whole corpus, and it contains no insult. What it asks of a reader is different: an insult invites agreement with a side, while an "unless" invites a check of the condition.

The next comments run the same two devices, renaming and testing, with the stakes raised: "Only when rich families rush to send their kids to learn it, the way they send them to piano and dance, will I believe Crazy Horse is high art" (row 1606, 871 likes); "A French national treasure, a gem of the arts: then take it to the Paris Olympics opening ceremony" (row 2446, 1121 likes). These run the same procedure, but they swap gender for class and rank: put the name where such names live, elite children's lessons, an Olympic opening. The placement fails on sight. The test works because everyone already knows the placement will never happen, and that shared expectation is the answer. Renaming also comes in different registers, from the blunt ("it's just a 花魁 act," a top courtesan; row 2873, 843 likes) to a classical allusion (玉体横陈, "jade bodies laid out on display"; row 219, 1 like). One comment lays the whole game on the table:

高级理解：疯马秀，普通理解：脱衣舞 (row 480, 557 likes)

"The classy reading: Crazy Horse. The plain reading: striptease."

Two names, two readings, nothing else in the sentence. The two readings price the two names. One, "the classy reading", files "Crazy Horse" as packaging that has to be bought. The other, "the plain reading", makes seeing a striptease the default competence of ordinary eyes. What the line displays is the contest itself: two names for one show, and a reader asked to choose. For at least some writers, what to call the show was the fight, not a step before it.

What changed in this section is not people's opinion of the show but its category. The comments wrote it out of "art," the name its own promotion had given it. Of the two words the promotion arrived with, "art" came apart here. The next section follows the comments as they take "freedom" apart. In these threads, the most visible name was not the show's own; it was whichever renaming the likes lifted highest.

5.2 Freedom in quotation marks: concession, reversal, re-pricing

I planned to design this section as a debate. The promotion words in 5.1 (a show with pride, freedom, and hope to attract young female audiences) could match this. Fans defend Lisa's choice, critics attack it, and both sides argue about "freedom." However, my findings rejected this plan. Among the top 100 comments with the highest likes in the corpus, not one defends her choice. By defence, I mean comments that give reasons, not just simple support in fan fights. If I expand the count to all 246 comments with over 500 likes, three more appear; the strongest got 968 likes. From the tail random sample of 200 comments, five more appear. So defence exists, but it sits far from the focus of the debate. This absence is itself the finding, so it needs care. Several reasons might explain it. First, it could be censorship survivor bias (Roberts, 2018, p. 138). Weibo is filtered by censorship, and the remaining comments are only "survivors," so reasoned defence might have been deleted. Second, it could be fan community norms. Fan culture rewards "loyalty display" instead of reasoning, so defence stays in the fan-fight cluster as "bare support" and does not appear as reasoning. Finally, defence might happen in other posts or on other platforms. None of these three reasons overturns the absence. Among the 8 coded defences, not one mentions that photo or the bottom dancers (see 6.2.5). Even if defence exists, it does not touch the core battlefield of the critique.

Here, the words that use women's free choice as a defence appear only as material to be processed. In other words, they appear because critics quote, rephrase, or copy them.

真的很讨厌粉丝一直在说这是女性自由... (row 476, 2,291 likes)

"I really hate how the fans keep on saying this is women's freedom..."

"Keep on saying" is rephrasing, because the fans say it, not the commenter. "Hate" shows the speaker is a critic. The words of defence surface inside the critics' own sentences, already turned hostile. The fans attacked by this comment do post their defence, but their visibility is very low because of low likes. For example, one comment with 756 likes said people who watched the show found it beautiful and artistic, and added, "Anyway, it was not made for you Chinese people" (row 303). This comment also carries an ethnic-exclusion line, which I take up in 5.5. Another comment asked why people boycott Lisa but not LV, the French luxury brand Louis Vuitton (row 261, 108 likes). Another treated the show as a normal paid job, the same as pleasing any client (row 3528, 968 likes). Another compared it to a life

model in a drawing class (row 105, 238 likes). These are arguments, not simple support, but their total likes are far below the critique. The defence is rare, yet it does exist. The words about free choice, however, sit in a different position. Defenders themselves do not spell them out; the words appear most clearly through the hostile quotes of the critique.

Critics use three operations to process the defence: concession (3.4), reversal, and re-pricing.

Lisa 怎样都是她的自由，但别为了拥护她洗脱马秀 (row 1856, 3,881 likes)

"Whatever Lisa does is her freedom, but don't whitewash Crazy Horse to stand by her."

The first operation is concession. "Whatever Lisa does" means she herself is not attacked. So this comment cannot be read as an attack on her, and the defence is left with nothing to defend. Then "but" closes a door, and everything after it is about what fans may not do with that freedom: turn it into a defence of the show. The second comment goes one step further:

脱不脱是她的自由，但是别扯什么"女性力量与自由"，不需要去跳脱衣舞的自由 (row 1521, 366 likes)

"Whether she strips or not is her freedom. But spare us the 'women's power and freedom' talk; nobody needs a freedom to go dance striptease."

The quotation marks here belong to the commenter. "Women's power and freedom" is fenced off as if it were someone else's words. The freedom in the first part is private (her body). The freedom rejected in the second part is public (as a value or a flag). "Nobody needs" does not deny her choice. It strikes "to go dance striptease" off the list of things freedom is for. Similar short versions repeat down the tail ("Participate or not, but please do not glorify Crazy Horse, thank you": row 2774, 179 likes). This move grants bodily autonomy as a private action but cuts off its ability to articulate into a collective feminist meaning. In 5.1, the limited concession "slightly classier" fixes the naming boundary of the event. In 5.2, the same limited concession fixes the boundary of "freedom."

The second operation, reversal, turns the direction around. It does not fence her freedom in. It takes the strongest fact of the defence (she chose it herself, she is willing) and turns it into the charge:

啊？演唱会期间多次参加疯马彩排？ (row 1275, 15,000 likes)

"What? Rehearsing at Crazy Horse, several times, in the middle of her concert run?"

"What?" is a stumble of surprise. The rest is a schedule (rehearsals, plural, during the concert tour), not an accusation. The schedule comes from the promotion post the comment sits under, relayed by foreign media, about how willingly she rehearsed. The promotion supplied the fact, and the comment supplied the reading. It lets readers do the arithmetic, because nobody rehearses repeatedly for something forced. The commenter exposes the "she is willing" claim. That claim recasts a woman as an actively desiring subject, and uses her surface willingness to move the structure out of sight. Gill (2003, pp. 103–104) calls this sexual subjectification. The commenter turns it the other way. Other comments say the quiet part:

我嘞个豆 她看样真的有点乐在其中 (row 2194, 3,723 likes)

"My god, she really looks like she kind of enjoys it."

真的有人会觉得这是公司强迫的吗... (row 2796, 521 likes)

"Does anyone really think the company forced her..."

These do not deny that Lisa's action is willing. They keep piling up evidence of her willingness, and overturn the moral conclusion usually attached to voluntary choice. Choice is no longer an excuse for the act. It becomes the reason she should answer for it.

The third operation changes the currency. Choice stays in the sentence, but what it buys is renamed:

当有更多的粉丝来为这种灰色产业洗地的时候，其背后的资本就已经赢了 (row 472, 5,923 likes)

"By the time more fans show up to whitewash this grey industry, the capital behind it has already won."

The word "capital" here does not reason with the defence; it prices it. The sentence uses the fan-slang word "whitewash" to show that the more fans defend, the more the "capital" earns. It tells the defence: you think you support freedom, but what you buy is capital's profit. Here, defending choice is re-priced. Another comment gives the organisers' side of the ledger:

疯马秀主办方的目的已经达到了，国内国外一起洗脑这是一场"很正常"的秀 (row 653, 723 likes)

"The organisers achieved their goal: both domestic and foreign audiences are convinced that this is a 'completely normal' show."

"Achieved their goal" prices the outcome, and "completely normal" names what was bought: a show that no longer needs defending.

Far down the tail sits one comment that states the pattern in full, and names it. It drew only 52 likes and was found in the tail random sample:

"新自由主义"的险恶之处在于，把剥削和 QS，包装成自由和艺术。(row 1555, 52 likes)

"The vicious thing about 'neoliberalism' is that it packages exploitation and QS [a pinyin abbreviation, probably 情色, 'pornography'] as freedom and art."

It says that the real thing, exploitation, uses "packaging" as a cover, so that the defence's claim reads as "freedom and art" and people accept it. Then people defend it, because this packaging makes the defence look morally progressive. Commenters rarely reach for an academic word like "neoliberalism"; in this corpus it appears exactly once, here.

她就是享受名气带来的特权啊....她是作为有名的 kpop 艺术家受邀表演.....展现自己的表演自由....穿衣自由.....想去哪表演去哪表演....跟那些只能在疯马会伴舞还不能穿胸罩的舞者可不一样.....踩着穷苦女性的女性主义..... (row 302, 4,508 likes)

"She's just enjoying the privilege fame brings.... invited to perform as a famous kpop artist..... showing her freedom to perform.... freedom to dress..... performing wherever she likes.... not like those dancers who can only dance backup at Crazy Horse and can't even wear a bra..... a feminism that treads on poor women....."

This comment does all of this in a single comment, and its internal order matters more than anything it says. The order runs from freedom talk to class, which is exactly the order of this chapter moving from 5.2 to 5.3. The comment borrows the voice of the defence instead of using its own: "showing her freedom to perform... freedom to dress... performing wherever she likes..." Sentence by sentence, these are real defence lines, only laid down one after another and slightly too many times. The ellipses act like a metronome that reads the words until they go empty. This way of writing, using the opponent's tone and pushing the opponent's words to excess, is how parody works. It has a formal name in Bakhtin (1981, p. 324): double-voiced discourse, where two opposite intentions live in one utterance, and the speaker refutes the opponent by speaking in the opponent's voice. Then, without a break, the dancers enter: the ones who can only dance backup and cannot even wear a bra. The last line names what the voice has become: "a feminism that treads on poor women." At this point the focus moves from one woman's freedom to the class gap that makes that freedom possible.

After these three operations, "her choice" drops from a value to an object under review. In these threads, the public life of "her freedom" is this: far more comments quote it than say it in their own voice.

5.3 "She has a choice; the other girls don't": freedom as something distributed by class

Almost every comment in this section is about a group photo taken after the show. In the photo, Lisa wears a black outfit that shows skin and covers her body. She stands in the centre. The dancers are almost naked around her. They wear body straps and coloured wigs, and two crouch in the front. In the crowd, a man in a suit and bowtie smiles at the camera. The last section emptied "freedom" through parody. This section's comments use the photo to rebuild it.

One comment uses the word "bottom" to recategorize the visual difference in the photo as a difference in social position. It has almost no reasoning. It only completes renaming:

挺讽刺，你穿的重点全遮，别的底层舞者就是上裸下布条 (row 1780, 1,560 likes)

"Quite ironic. You have every key spot covered, while the other dancers at the bottom are bare on top with a strip of cloth below."

The tone "you" speaks directly to Lisa. This is not analysis. It points at the photo and tells you. It only describes what everyone can see: who is covered and who is not. The word "bottom" is used for the uncovered part. The comment does not say "poor" or "class." However, "bottom" turns "who shows skin" into "who is below." Showing skin equals lower position, covering equals upper position. The equation is at its plainest here, and the comments that follow in this section work it harder. Under this photo, the largest argument cluster (class critique, structural: 29 comments, 130,333 likes) reconstructs the meaning of "freedom." These comments redefine "freedom" from the defenders' claim into something distributed by class.

Another comment shows "freedom has class" as a discovery forced by the photo, not a pre-set position, to complete naturalisation through staged discovery:

怎么说呢，如果觉得这个确实解放天性自由什么的，为什么就她穿的有包裹啊，合着这个自由还是有阶级差异的自由。。。。 (row 1187, 7,134 likes)

"How to put it... if you think this really is liberation, freedom and all that, then why is she the one with something wrapped around her? So it turns out this freedom is still a freedom with class differences...."

A few small words do the work here. The beginning "how to put it" looks like searching for right words. It does not make a final judgment. The defenders' words are borrowed, separated by "and all that", and turned into a conditional clause. The comment tries the claim on rather than attacking it. "Why is she the one" sets her apart. The question is not why everyone wears clothes. The question is why only she wears them. Next is "so it turns out", a spoken mark that is hard to translate but worth a try. It shows a sudden realization. The conclusion seems forced by the photo. It does not come from her own pre-set idea. "Still" records a broken expectation: freedom should be the only thing beyond class. The comment ends with four periods, leaving readers to complete it. I have reservations about one word: "wrapped", used to mean Lisa's clothes, closer to "wrapping" than "clothes". This might be casual wording. But it describes dressing as wrapping body parts, which is exactly what the photo shows.

This comment with 7,134 likes looks like just an action of noticing, because it does not curse or demand anything. I cannot know what every person who liked it means. But this comment gives them few things to agree with: no slogans, no punishments, only the photo and that "sudden realization." Like 5.1, the action with the highest likes invites a check, not an emotion.

Another comment completes the redefinition of "freedom." It no longer just describes what the photo means:

看到没，旁边的普通舞者可是脱了的，lisa 做为特权阶级是穿了衣服的 为什么普通阶层站上那个舞台就得脱，特权阶层就可以穿。因为想穿就穿才是自由啊 (row 80, 5,733 likes)

"See that? The ordinary dancers next to her did strip. Lisa, as the privileged class, kept her clothes on. Why do ordinary people have to strip when they stand on that stage, while the privileged class can stay dressed? Because getting to wear what you want, only that is freedom."

Here "see that" calls readers to be witnesses. It lets you see with your own eyes instead of convincing you. After that, two of the three uses of 就 connect to "have to (strip)" and "can

(wear)". In the same sentence, "showing skin" becomes an obligation for one position, and "covering" becomes permission for another position. In "as the privileged class", Lisa represents the whole privileged class position. The photo stops being "a group of individuals". It becomes a chart: everyone marks a class position, and the clothing marks what each position is allowed. "Because getting to wear what you want, only that is freedom" is a positive definition. "Only that is" has exclusivity: only this counts. The comment does not deny Lisa's freedom. It redescribes what kind of thing her freedom is. Freedom stops being a value she expresses and becomes a good she holds. By this definition, she is in fact the only woman on that stage who has freedom, and this is because of her privileged class position. Nobody denies this choice. This comment only asks who else has this choice, and the photo gives the answer. The same asymmetry appears at the top of the cluster. Its most popular comment asks why workers next to the star must expose more, and whether this is the art of capitalists (row 252, 25,000 likes).

The next comment brings a third party back to the centre of the picture: women at the bottom, completely outside the thread. It borrows its moral ground from them:

"艺术", 唉, 艺术。她们真的不懂, 毕竟根本不知道底层女性会遭遇什么事情。(row 254, 8,439 likes)

"'Art.' Sigh. Art. They really don't understand. After all, they have no idea what happens to women at the bottom."

The word "art" appears twice, first inside quotation marks and then without, with a sigh in the middle. This word is no longer opposed. It is just repeated tiredly. Then, pronouns start to work. "They" in the third person refers to the defending fans. "Women at the bottom" refers to a third party completely outside the comment thread. The moral basis of the comment is borrowed from the absent people. Other comments repeat the same action. One comment compares "an actress worth 208 million" with the hardships of ordinary women. It praises the only actress who publicly opposed the show (row 59, 679 likes; "208 million" is a meme about star pay). The most direct version is at the end of the likes: "She has a choice; the other girls don't" (row 5167, 318 likes). The title of this section comes from this comment. This comment was found in the random sample of the long tail. The most direct expression of the theme exists exactly where only sampling can find it.

The same photo also supports the opposite demand, and I have to separate the two. One direction is upward: it fights for the dancers' equal right to be as covered as the star, and this is the reading of "freedom is distributed by class." The other direction is downward:

去都去了就跟别个一样脱呗 怎么还搞特殊 (row 78, 14,000 likes)

"You went all the way there, then strip like the others. Why the special treatment?"

This comment does not question why dancers must strip. It questions why Lisa does not. Its so-called equality means pulling everyone down to the exposed position. On the systematic layer, this demand for equality forms a separate cluster: 15 comments with a total of 43,810 likes. One comment clearly shows how close these two uses can sit:

想彰显同为女人但不同命运吗？好讽刺，既然是艺术大家就一样呗 (row 2141, 2,249 likes)

"Trying to display that women share a sex but not a fate? How ironic. Well, if it is art, everyone should be the same."

Up to the question mark, the same-sex-different-fate reading is the same structural reading of this photo. After it, the demand flips: let her strip too. 14,000 likes give visibility to a reading that runs the other way. What separates the two is not the evidence but the direction of the demand built on it. So the claim I make here is the narrower one. The redefinition of freedom above applies only to the upward reading, the comments that read the photo as evidence of the dancers' missing choice.

In the show's promotion, the word "freedom" appears as a value word that this show and its defenders claim to express. Here, it becomes a distribution word, the name of something one woman on the stage holds and the others do not. Showing skin appears as an obligation of the lower position, and staying covered as a privilege of the higher one. Likes made these the most visible readings in the threads, the ones a reader scrolling from the top meets first. Whether later comments took them up cannot be shown in a corpus without reply chains. There is an easily ignored point in this section's evidence: the argument here mainly happens

between women. The man in the photo is present but has not been made active by the comments yet. The next section is about what happened when commenters brought him in.

5.4 "Layer upon layer of exploitation": the gender line meets the class line

Section 5.3 closed on the man in the photograph, but one strand of the critique has to come first, because it runs without class:

这一系列引发的从之前的男性凝视女性，到如今，变成了男性 + 女性去凝视女性，这就是像 lisa 这种大流量会带来的后果，我只能说，这东西存在就是个错误 (row 475, 5,492 likes)

"What this whole affair has set off: from men gazing at women, as before, to men + women gazing at women. That is what a mega-traffic star like Lisa brings. All I can say is: this thing existing is a mistake."

This comment shows a comparison between before and now. The watcher changes from men to men + women. The plus sign does the counting. It adds women to the audience. The comment treats the gaze as a position, not a man's property. Women are still the object of the gaze; the watchers now expand to include women themselves. The watched woman stays the fixed term, and the watcher's sex is the variable that women can now fill. In Mulvey's account, the active side of looking is coded male, and the woman is styled to be looked at (Mulvey, 1975, p. 11). That male position belongs to the structure of looking, whoever fills the seats. This comment keeps the position and changes who sits in it. The corpus includes this commercial plan. The line cited in 5.1 shows the show wants to "attract young women to become new customers" (media report, Appendix X), and customers watch. This line also gets attention. A comment with 13,000 likes includes only this sentence, cited back as evidence (row 1276). Row 475 views the same recruitment from the other side and sees it as harm. This is the gender line at its cleanest. The watched woman is fixed. The sex of the watcher can change, and the complaint counts this change. The end of the comment, "this

thing existing is a mistake", comes after the math. Another comment finds the same structure in Lisa's career:

刚出道说不敢穿太暴露怕妈妈伤心，现在不敢穿太保守怕男朋友伤心。(row 1468, 7,344 likes)

"At her debut she said she doesn't dare dress too revealing, afraid of hurting her mum. Now she doesn't dare dress too conservative, afraid of hurting her boyfriend."

The two halves are built to match: the same "doesn't dare", the same "afraid of hurting". The only substitution is mum to boyfriend. The direction of dressing reverses. The only fixed thing is that a woman dresses to keep someone else comfortable. Only the inspector changes. The two comments reach the same find at different scales. The role (watcher, inspector) is fixed. Only the person in the role changes. A third comment gives the strand its history. Earlier girl-group generations and today's female producers worked hard to "tear the sexualised label off girl groups, and someone rushes to stick it back on herself" (row 56, 5,398 likes). These comments do not need a class word. Their coordinate is gender alone: who watches, who is watched, who dresses for whom. In the systematic layer, 16 such comments carry 49,523 likes.

Now I show what happens when the independent gender line and the class line cross:

西装革履的白男，穿着比基尼的明星，只能用手挡住胸部的舞者，一层一层的剥削真的体现的淋漓尽致 (row 164, 14,000 likes)

"The white man in his suit and tie; the star in a bikini; the dancers who can only cover their chests with their hands: layer upon layer of exploitation, on full display."

This comment reads the photo piece by piece (suits, bikini, bare chests). Every figure is fixed by what they wear. This chapter has two main lines. The class line is about who gets a choice. The gender line is about what the choice concerns, the exposure of women's bodies to being watched. The next comments hold both at once. If you read each item of clothing twice, the two lines appear in the same words. The suit marks a man, and it marks the one who pays and runs the place. The bikini marks a woman, and it marks fame. The covering hands mark a

woman, and they mark hire. "Layer upon layer" turns a row of people into a stack. A horizontal photo is read vertically. One word needs an honest note: "white man". The comment gives a racial marker to the man at the top of the stack, and nothing else. The sentence goes straight to its verdict. I record this mark because the commenter chose it, and I do not build on it here. A one-word label shows race was noticed, not argued. I return to race once, in 5.5.

The crossing of these two lines is not one writer's trick:

三点全遮的 Lisa，裸胸的舞者，西装革履的男人。(row 1633, 1,023 likes)

"Lisa with all three points covered; the dancers bare-chested; the man in his suit."

Nothing but the stack, with a full stop. And in the long tail, a writer narrates how this reading was reached. The writer had "just been watching the gossip, saying nothing", and thought Lisa was a girl fooled by so-called love. Then came "a textbook picture": the man in his suit, the high-class woman sexy but not exposed, the girls at the very bottom nearly naked. The comment ends with Lisa "using her fame to package the show, for a pass into a higher class, an accomplice in the oppression of women" (row 82, 440 likes). The value of this comment is that the stack is not a ready-made verdict. A writer was forced by the photo to build it on the spot.

The critics give this situation a standard of their own:

向下的自由不是自由。(row 54, 19,000 likes)

"Downward freedom is not freedom."

"Downward" is spatial. It needs positions with heights, which the stack supplies. Freedom that moves a woman down the stack does not count. This sentence got 19,000 likes as it stands, with no example attached. A longer comment supplies the example and the feeling. Watching "women being indirectly exploited by women of the privileged class" in this photo, the writer says, brings "the same furious, helpless feeling as watching some women support surrogacy and call it liberating the womb" (row 1779, 3,996 likes).

Neither phrase is new to Chinese social media. Xue and Rose (2022, p. 6) record "downward freedom" as a standing accusation in Weibo feminism: liberal and consumerist talk urges women to embrace the free choice to become housewives, sell their eggs, do sex work, or carry surrogate pregnancies. The overlap with this corpus is almost item for item. Row 1779 reaches for surrogacy on its own. What the Lisa threads add is a criterion from the bridge comment in 5.2: a feminism built on such freedom is fake, a feminism that treads on poor women. The repertoire existed; this event gave it a photograph.

There is a name for this formal move, and the way to see why it fits is to ask what a one-line reading of the photo loses. Read it on the freedom line alone: a woman exercising her choice, the dancers blurred into scenery. Read it as "objectification" in general: everyone on stage is watched alike, and the difference between the star's bikini and the hired dancers' bare chests disappears. Both readings lose the same people: the dancers. They stand where the two lines cross, women like the star, but at the bottom of the rank, unlike her. The three stack comments above are built so the dancers cannot be lost. Each places every figure on both lines at once. "Layer upon layer" reads the photo as a hierarchy, a ladder of who stands above whom. The intersectional point is slightly different. The dancers occupy a single position that is womanhood and low rank at once, and it reduces to neither. Crenshaw's original formulation makes the same refusal of arithmetic: the intersectional experience is more than its parts added together (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 140). Holding one position on two lines at once is the move intersectional analysis was built for. Crenshaw made the tool at the crossing of race and sex, to show what one-line frames erase, the people at the crossing. The tradition that followed treats it as a way of reading, not the property of a vocabulary (Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013, p. 795). What these comments show is the oldest intersectional point of all: "woman" is not one thing. Split by class, "freedom for women" means opposite things at the top and the bottom of the same stage. The split comment of 5.3 compressed it into one phrase: same sex, different fates. My claim needs its exact width.

Nothing suggests these commenters have read this literature, and I claim nothing about what they think they are doing. The claim is about form: the comments hold two lines in one frame, and that is the move the theory names. One objection belongs here, not in a footnote: is the "interlock" my collage, a gender comment and a class comment stitched together after

the fact? In row 164 the stack is built inside one sentence. In row 82 it is built inside one writer's change of mind. Where there is stitching, it is theirs.

This also settles a question 5.3 left open: why the heaviest critique in the corpus keeps a photograph of women at its centre. The two lines need each other, and the photo is the one object in the event that holds both: rank in the clothes, gender in the watching. Strip the gender line, and the stack is a pay dispute, some staff wearing less. Strip the class line, and the photo falls back to the single-line readings that lose the dancers. The comments that carried the most argument, the class critiques read in 5.3 (rows 1187, 80, and 254, 21,306 likes between them) and the stack comments above, refused both simplifications at once. The refusal sits in their grammar: one sentence, two lines, every figure on both. That, rather than any vocabulary, is what they contributed.

One secondary observation belongs on record, kept in its place. Across 5.1 to 5.4, the critique keeps borrowing the style of talking back to power: the mock-humble question ("just asking", row 5), the unmasking imperative ("stop whitewashing", rows 1088 and 1856), the exposé of the backstage script ("the capital behind it has already won", row 472). This is the voice of the weak addressing the strong. In one sense they are exactly that, single accounts facing a star, a venue, a publicity machine. In another they wrote from the top: these same comments held the highest argument-carrying positions in the threads. I notice this doubleness, but I build nothing on it. To decide what this register does (recruit readers, shield writers, or just perform) would need reply chains, who answered whom and in what voice. The opening of Chapter 5 already noted the corpus does not carry them. The observation stays a feature of the load-bearing critique, not a layer of its own.

Read at the level of practice, these comments installed a coordinate system in the threads. With the fused readings at the top, a body on that stage could be located twice in one look: on the gender line, a woman in front of watchers. On the class line, she holds a rank (star above hired dancer) that sets how much of her must be shown. A defence that answered only one reading was left holding half a case. It needed no leader and no theory: short sentences under a photograph, lifted by likes into the most visible part of the threads.

5.5 What else stood in the threads

The previous four sections read the comments that argue. Much of the corpus head does not argue, and this section reports it, because the argument did not happen in a clean room. The highest-liked cluster in the systematic layer is the fan war (40 comments, 151,760 likes): positioning, policing, and score-settling. The highest-liked comment in the whole corpus is here:

看就看，别洗 (row 251, 36,000 likes)

"You watched it, fine. Just don't whitewash it."

This short comment was under a news post about another Chinese celebrity visiting the Crazy Horse Show. It directly targets the later denial ("she never went"). Its target is not the show, Lisa, or "freedom." It focuses on celebrities and their whitewashing. The arguments in this chapter cannot take away these 36,000 likes. Next to the fan war is plain annoyance (44 comments, 117,648 likes):

能不能把这个女人从我首页拉走，妈的，谁想看她啊，爱脱不脱 (row 1957, 29,000 likes)

"Can someone drag this woman off my feed, who the hell wants to see her, strip or don't."

"Strip or don't" waves the question away. The annoyance refuses the debate's terms instead of joining a side.

These two clusters outweigh everything quoted in 5.1 in raw likes.

National and ethnic topics exist. By count, comments with national words outnumber comments with class words by about 2.65 to one. Still, the class comments have more total

likes (68,459 versus 60,120). Their average likes are three times higher (699 versus 231).¹

The top comment here shows why I do not read it as an "insulting China" story:

为什么国内热搜要放在她身上，中秋节全体国人放假的时候看到这个，这很让人自豪吗 (row 1631, 32,000 likes)

"Why is this on our domestic trending list? All of us are home for Mid-Autumn, and this is what we see. Is that something to be proud of?"

The national frame is present (the holiday, all of us). However, the anger focuses on the trending list. It targets who decided to make this event important during a national holiday. A harder ethnic boundary appears below: "A Thai person should not hurt the eyes of us Chinese people" (row 2115, 2,312 likes). In fact, race and ethnicity appear throughout the corpus: the "white man" in 5.4, stereotypes of Thai people, and relief like "luckily she is not Chinese." But most comments use these labels to set boundaries and exclude people. The ethnic marker's job is to sort who does not belong, not to build a case. So the argued critique the

¹ Counted over all 5,289 comments; a comment counts once if it contains at least one listed word. Each row stores the comment as "username: text". The counts were run on the comment text after the username prefix (up to the first colon) was removed, so keywords inside usernames do not count. Like values written with the unit 万 were converted at one 万 = 10,000. Nation words: 中国, 国人, 辱华, 泰国, 泰女, 华人, 祖国, 国籍, 民族, 爱国 (260 comments, 60,120 likes in total). Class words: 阶级, 阶层, 底层, 特权, 穷, 富豪, 富人, 有钱, 贵族, 平民, 208 (98 comments, 68,459 likes; 208 is the celebrity pay joke quoted in 5.3). The lists were fixed before the counts were run. Comments with missing like data count as zero, as stated in the opening of Chapter 5. Appendix Y gives per-word counts for this list and for a broader sensitivity list (nation 414 comments, 113,849 likes; class 152 comments, 123,220 likes), which is not a superset of the one used here. The pattern holds under both lists: nation words reach more comments, class words carry more likes in total and per comment. These keyword counts measure coverage only. They are separate from the coded clusters in Table 5.1, and a keyword hit is not a coding decision.

corpus produces runs on gender and class, and that is what I track. One comment puts this choice into one sentence:

.....c 位和伴舞的对比，女人和男人的对比.....幸好她不是国人 (row 1191, 2,280 likes)
"...the contrast of centre and backup dancers, of women and men... luckily she isn't Chinese."

The two working axes do the sentence's reading. The ethnic marker sits at the end, and it only shows the writer out. This shows more clearly which axes these discussions activate and which they set aside. The second notable voice is concern for minors: "Thousands or millions of minors now know this thing exists... her biggest mistake is not participating but spreading it" (row 474, 24,000 likes). The harm here is not the action itself. It is the spread. This is a separate moral logic, and other studies should handle it. The sincere defence of 5.2 also sits in this area. It has few likes but really exists.

5.6 Synthesis: the argument in one place

This chapter asks who, in these threads, has the standing to define "women's freedom", a fight guided by words like "freedom", "art", and "choice". The visibility of this fight belongs to the interpretations with the highest likes. This is different from the show's own claims or the fight between two sides I expected. The power moved, comment by comment, to whichever reading the likes lifted highest. The heaviest critique holds the gender line and the class line inside one sentence (5.4), and that form, not any vocabulary, is what these comments contributed. All of this happens in a noisier field of fan fights, ethnic boundary-drawing, and worries about spreading to minors (5.5).

Chapter 6. Discussion

Chapter 5 interpreted comments in the first two dimensions of Fairclough's model, text and discursive practice. The results showed "this happened." This chapter interprets "why this happened" in the social practice dimension. That outcome was not an accident of one comment section. It had social conditions that can be named. This chapter first asks what made this result possible (6.1). It then asks what the result is (6.2). Finally it asks where it lived, which is a finding in its own right (6.3).

Therefore, Section 6.2 also responds to the third sub-question, which asks what the results mean for theory. The findings here serve as evidence only. The complete answers to the research questions belong to Chapter 7.

6.1 From description to explanation: the social practice dimension

Chapter 5 showed that the power to define moved to whichever reading the likes lifted highest, and among the comments that argue, the class reading won. Description shows this happened. It does not show why it could happen, or why the winning reading was a class reading. This chapter explains why, at the third dimension of Fairclough's model, social practice. Three conditions helped this. First, the platform changes the content with the most likes into the default background for the next reader (6.1.1). Second, the critique discourse already existed before the event in three common forms (6.1.2). Third, the event's names arrived as claims that class words were ready to answer (6.1.3).

6.1.1 The platform: likes and the making of a candidate common sense

Weibo ranks the comment section by likes, so comments with likes are promoted first (4.2). A definition with likes does not need anyone to repeat it. The interface repeats it

automatically. This is a simple and mechanical naturalisation. The platform does not persuade new users. It sets the position for her when she enters these threads. Section 5.4 said these readings installed a coordinate system in the threads. This section asks why that coordinate system could become the ground a newcomer stands on, and it calls the product of that mechanism "candidate common sense". Below, this section explains why the cautious word candidate is honest, not modest.

The stakes of that repetition are the ones 3.4 set out: common sense is formed in struggle and can be broken again. Hegemony holds only as an unstable equilibrium (Gramsci, 1971; Fairclough, 1992, p. 92). It allows a small, reversible victory to be a sign of common sense formation. It does not need to claim the war is over. The comment section of a show is a small stage for this struggle, but the structure is the same. What was contested was not only a name but an idea of freedom: the show's individual, choice-based freedom against a freedom read as distributed by class (5.3).

The corpus shows a victory in visibility and a trace of settling. In one of the heavy class comments in Section 5.3, the word "art" appeared once in quotation marks and then without them, with a sigh in between (row 254). This is the trace: inside the comment's own structure, this name no longer needs argument. This is what the theory calls common sense in the making. The reading a new reader meets seems already settled, needing no argument on arrival. This is why candidate is the honest word. What the class reading won is common sense of these threads, on the like-weighted count, among the comments that argue, and nothing more. The naturalisation in this section is at the thread level. It is ongoing and reversible. The Crazy Horse Show keeps its original name everywhere else. What changed is the ground a reader stands on when she enters these threads.

6.1.2 The critique's language: three kinds of words, all older than the event

The previous section explained how the winning reading became a candidate common sense. Now the question is earlier, and it is the social practice question in plain form: what made the class words usable and sayable in these threads at this moment? In the comments read in Chapter 5, the language appears in three common forms, and each existed before the event.

The first type is class words with a Marxist ring: capital, exploitation, privileged class. These words run through the critique in Sections 5.2 to 5.4. The second type is the freedom words claimed by the event itself, quoted and turned back. These include "her freedom" in the concession and "women's freedom" in the complaint that fans keep saying it (5.2). The word "feminism" itself belongs to this type, in the charge that a feminism treading on poor women is fake (5.2, 5.4). The third type is fan-circle policing language: whitewashing and stop whitewashing. In fan fights this language is everyday equipment (5.5). In the critique it is borrowed, as part of a borrowed style of talking back to power (5.1, 5.2).

A single comment does not need all three types, and most do not have all three. Many comments read in Chapter 5 use one type only. Some run two together in one sentence: capital and whitewashing in one line, privilege and freedom in another (5.2, 5.3). Drawing on several existing discourses at once is interdiscursivity in the sense set out in 3.4 (Fairclough, 1992). The quoting and turning is intertextual, and 3.4 traced that idea back to Bakhtin's double-voiced discourse.

These words could be used here because they were already there, and that availability is itself a social fact, not a random factor. Which words lie ready for a public to pick up is not decided by any single writer; Fairclough (1992, p. 93) ties this supply to the standing fights over meaning. Why any given writer picked them up, out of belief, habit or fashion, the corpus cannot say, and no causal claim is made. What the corpus shows is the words in use. Where the supply came from, and why the class words fit this event so tightly, is the next section's question.

6.1.3 Why class words, and why they worked here

One reason the critique could reach for class words lies in how the event arrived. The venue's own publicity spoke of pride, of freedom, and of its hope for young female customers. As 5.1 showed, these lines travelled into Chinese feeds inside quotation marks. A name inside quotation marks is still a claim waiting for judgment, not a settled fact. What is said out loud can be answered back. The event also offered a rival frame first. It entered the hot-search lists

during the Mid-Autumn holiday, and every part of it was foreign: a Thai performer, a Korean group, an old Paris venue. The national frame built on this was the larger one by raw count (5.5). Yet that frame did boundary work rather than argument. It sorted the event as outside and left it there. The work of arguing with the claim stayed open, and class words took it up.

The second reason is plainer: refusal needs its own words, and the Chinese internet kept a set ready. 底层 (the bottom), 特权 (privilege) and 阶级 (class) are ordinary words with a long public life. Research on the Chinese internet has followed this everyday class talk for years (Szablewicz, 2014, p. 271; 3.3). Sorting people by position, and by their chances of moving up, was already a common online habit before this event. The corpus continues that habit but not its register. Here the words are standard terms rather than coined slang; they are plain rather than ironic, and they point at others rather than at the speaker.² Such words need no theory to use. The comments in 5.3 did not have to build a critical language first. The language was there; the photograph gave it something to point at.

Availability says why these words could be used. It does not yet say why they fitted this defence so tightly. The defence spoke of free individual choice and stayed silent on who can afford such a choice. A vocabulary whose everyday work is sorting people by position is exactly the vocabulary that notices that silence. Where such sorting is already habit, a claim about freedom that says nothing about position looks unfinished. It answers only half of a question the habit had trained readers to ask (Szablewicz, 2014, p. 271; 5.3).

These are readings of one event in its context. They are not statistical claims about Chinese users, and they say nothing about what any commenter privately thought. Within that limit, three conditions made the critique possible. The show's name arrived as a claim that could be challenged. Class words were already common property. And entertainment threads place whatever wins likes in front of the next reader first, which is why the critique appeared here, and at this size (6.1.1). Together the three conditions explain why the critique could happen.

² The earlier slang itself is nearly absent here: across all 5,289 comments, 屌丝 appears once, 白富美 once, and 高富帅 not at all. This study records the difference in register; explaining it would need evidence beyond this corpus.

They do not say what the critique was. That question belongs to theory, and the next section takes it up.

6.2 Vernacular intersectionality: the dialogue with theory

The comments that carried the heavy argument in this corpus share one habit of grammar. They hold two lines, class and gender, in a single sentence: the suit, the bikini and the bare chest read at once as ranks and as degrees of exposure (5.4). The theory that names this habit never appears in the threads. Across all 5,289 comments, the word 交叉性 ("intersectionality") occurs zero times, and so does 交叉 ("intersection"). This section argues that the comments still run an operation intersectional analysis can be read against, as a form rather than a vocabulary. This thesis uses the term vernacular intersectionality for that pattern: commenters read gendered exposure and class position together inside one judgment. The term names a formal likeness. It does not claim that commenters knew the theory, or that class can stand in for race in its founding cases. The argument runs in six steps. Steps one to four build the claim. They cover the kind of practice (6.2.1) and the reading the theory was built for, with its limit (6.2.2). They then cover a rule for the axis left unused (6.2.3) and the concept's travel (6.2.4). Steps five and six return the findings to the two nearest fields: the critique of choice feminism (6.2.5) and research on Chinese digital feminism (6.2.6).

6.2.1 From sensibility to everyday literacy

The first step shows the type of practice, and it starts from a distribution fact. The one-sentence, two-line form is not one clever comment. Sections 5.3 and 5.4 record it in six unrelated comments from different corners of the threads. The count needs one honest distinction. The three stack comments of 5.4 are explicit: men are present in the frame, and each figure is placed on rank and on gender in the same breath. The three class critiques of 5.3 are implicit. The picture is almost all female, and the class line is argued in full. Here gender enters as the ground of the comparison, the woman on the stage set against the women

at the bottom, rather than as a separately named axis. This is still work in the sense of 6.2.3, not mere marking. Three explicit cases and three implicit ones, then, not six of one kind. These authors have no visible connection. They are anonymous commenters under celebrity gossip, with no common cause, and they run the same reading.

When strangers repeat the same reading, the evidence is consistent with a literacy. In the social sense set out in 3.2, that means a practice spread across a public, picked up from everyday use, owned by no one (Barton & Hamilton, 1998, pp. 6–7). One rival explanation sits close and has to be met. Unrelated commenters might simply draw on phrases already circulating on Weibo, and Xue and Rose (2022, p. 6) show that the key phrases did stand before this event. That history explains the wording. It does not explain the operation. A repertoire supplies sentences ready to reuse. What the six comments share is the reading itself: visual difference read as social position, and freedom rebuilt through that reading. It appears on a new photograph, in fresh words, from writers with no visible connection to each other. What repeats is the move, and a move that reappears in fresh wording has been learned somewhere. That is the case for calling it a literacy. It is what vernacular does in this chapter's name for the finding: the capacity lives in ordinary talk, not in trained hands.

This account and the platform account of 6.1.1 are two halves of one process, not two rival causes. The literacy names what the public already had: a way of reading, available before the event arrived. The platform names what happened to one use of it: likes selected a version and made it the ground a newcomer stands on (the opening of Chapter 5). Capacity came from the public. Placement came from the machine. Neither alone would explain what the corpus records.

Reading intersectionality as something ordinary people can practise is not this thesis's invention. Collins and Bilge (2016) place the practice outside the academy (3.2). In their words, "ordinary people can draw upon intersectionality as an analytic tool" when they need a better frame for the discrimination in front of them (p. 13). Their examples mostly involve organisation of some kind. This study takes their claim a step further out, into talk not political by name, and finds the same reading already in use.

6.2.2 The reading the theory was built for, and the limit of the analogy

The second step checks if the claim holds, because the corpus has two readings of the photo, and only one fits the theory. The first reading is the stack. "Layer upon layer" turns the photo into a ladder, asking who is above whom, and who profits from whom (5.4). This is a reading about rank and exploitation, and the comment's own word for it is exploitation (5.4). The second reading is the crossing. The dancers stand at a point that is womanhood and low rank at the same time, and no single line alone can reach them. Their erasure is the kind 3.2 called representational: it happens inside a photograph, and inside a defence conducted over their heads (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1245). Take the gender line only, and the dancers blur into the general condition of being watched. Take the class line only, and the photo becomes a pay dispute. The comments that carried the argument refused both cuts: one sentence, two lines, each person read on both at once (5.4). This second reading is the one Crenshaw built the tool for. A single-axis frame erases the people at the crossing, because their position is "greater than the sum" of its parts (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 140). Its deepest consequence is the anti-essentialist one. If the crossing is real, then "woman" is not one position but many. The corpus states this in one phrase: same sex, different fates (5.3). Its redefinition of freedom follows from it. Freedom means opposite things at the top and at the bottom of the same stage: it behaves as what 5.3 called a distribution word. This is the claim 3.2 drew from Collins (2000, p. 23). Position does not only change what an act costs. It changes what the act means, and here that change happens to the word freedom itself.

The claim can rest on form because the theory allows it. What makes thinking intersectional is an "analytic sensibility", not the use of a word (Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013, p. 795). Nothing is claimed about what these writers think they are doing. The claim is that the form of their sentences performs the move the theory was built to name. And 5.4 showed the form is theirs, not a collage assembled by the researcher. One limit travels with the analogy. Crenshaw made the tool at the crossing of race and sex, and the axes are not interchangeable in her account. What repeats is a structural relation, one axis erased by single-axis reading, not the content of any axis. The dancers hold the position of the erased. Which lines carry the argument and which are only present is decided locally. The next step gives the rule for telling them apart.

6.2.3 Worked, not marked: a rule for the unused axis

The third step deals with the axis in the room that exists but is not used. In this corpus, race and ethnicity marks are everywhere. In absolute numbers, they touch more comments than class words (5.5). However, the argument critique uses gender and class. Race information sets borders and excludes people. Section 5.5 reads one line that carries the whole judgment: the first two axes do the reading, and the ethnicity mark at the end expels Lisa (row 1191). Even inside the stack, race is noticed but not discussed. Section 5.4 records the race mark of the top person. The sentence then goes straight to conclusion, and his dress and class finish the work. Nothing is missing. The axis exists, but is ignored.

This contrast gives this study a usable rule, and the rule has to hold when the study defends it. First, look at the objection. Bilge (2013, p. 405) criticises studies that borrow intersectionality but quietly drop race. To her, removing race makes the concept lose meaning. This study reads a case full of race marks, but puts class in the centre. On the surface, this looks like what Bilge warned about. So the objection is: the researcher dropped race. The answer is, the researcher did not drop race. Commenters did not work on race, and this is verifiable. This rule makes verification possible. A dimension counts in intersectional analysis only when worked, used to build claims of unequal status. Just being marked or named without work is not enough. Under this rule, commenters worked class and gender, and used race as border material. Evidence is in 5.4, 5.5, and the coding ledger. This rule does more. It moves axis decisions from researcher choice to comment practice. Whether it can do the same in other cases is open to test.

Two points need attention here. Moderation removes content over time (4.2.1). Whether this produced the weak ethnic argument cannot be verified, because the corpus only contains what remains. Even so, whatever moderation deleted, no competing race argument system was left. The direction follows the conditions in 6.1.3: "bottom" and "privilege" were already common words, while the national frame sorted the event as outside and left it there. Race words appear in this corpus in more than one way, but mostly to place people in or out, and where they sit inside a stack they are left undeveloped. Compared with Crenshaw's cases, what

repeats here is the relation, not the axes. In this controversy the two worked lines were gender and class, and race stayed at the border.

6.2.4 How far the concept travels

How far the concept travels has long been a concern. Applying the concept is criticised for staying in the academic frame of its birthplace (Patil, 2013, p. 853). This case travels far from its origin to a non-Western platform, daily entertainment talk, with no movement and no classroom. What appears here is not vocabulary, but operations. Thus, the scope of this claim remains limited. A single corpus cannot prove the concept is universal, and this case claims nothing like that. It just shows a case where original operations of the concept repeat on local material, with axes chosen locally. From existing evidence, universality of the concept exists at most in its operations, not its axes: every group crosses borders defined by its own language.

The same travel appears on the gender line. In 5.4, commenters treat gaze as a position: the watchers' sex can change, men and women now watching, while the watched woman stays where she is. This move stays close to Mulvey (1975, pp. 11–13). In her account the gaze was a position built into cinema, coded male, and men and women in the audience were placed differently by it. What the threads add is the ground that holds the watched side in place. The dancers stay on stage because they need the wage, and the watching seat opens to anyone who pays. The gaze these comments describe is classed as well as gendered. This is not a theory breakthrough. It is another operation of a Western concept done and adjusted by ordinary people in local talk. Like intersectionality, what travels is the operation, not the axis.

6.2.5 The dialogue with choice feminism: an absence, a test, and a reversal

In the corpus's hundred most-liked comments there is no argued defence of the performance as a woman's free choice. The full systematic layer of 246 comments holds three, and the tail sample of two hundred adds five. The defence exists, but far below the argument's centre of

gravity, and mostly in someone else's mouth: quoted, conceded, reversed, re-priced. This section reads that absence in three steps. First, the defences that survived did not answer the photograph, and they share a shape. Second, the comments that displaced it left something the scholarly critique lacks: a working test. Third, the defence's strongest surviving device, willingness, meets the theory that named it, and the threads turn it around.

The photograph broke the working condition of choice feminism, the discourse reviewed in 3.1: it functions only while structure stays out of the frame (Gill, 2007b, p. 153; Rottenberg, 2014, p. 420; Budgeon, 2015, p. 303). One frame held the covered star and the nearly uncovered dancers, and the comments read in 5.3 said the difference out loud as class. Once the frame contains the people the sentence leaves out, "her body, her choice" stops being a complete answer. It must now say something about the other bodies. In the coded material it did not. The eight argued defences the coded tiers hold stand on work, art, personal liberty, relativism, legality or past record. Not one mentions the photograph or the dancers (Appendix X, code D). This does not show that choice-based arguments cannot address such a photograph. It shows that in these threads the surviving defences stayed with the single performer, and that the defence circulated mainly as quoted material.

Three rival explanations could produce the same absence. Moderation may have removed argued defences; the caution of 6.2.3 applies here too, and the possibility cannot be tested. Fan norms reward shows of loyalty rather than reasons, which fits the bare support the fan war holds (5.5). And argued defences may live under other posts, or on other platforms. What none of the three explains is the grammar of the defences that did survive. Removal, loyalty norms and dispersal would make defences fewer. They would not make every surviving defence stand on work, art or liberty while not one touches the photograph. The one exception would be removal that ran selectively on that very ground, and the corpus gives no sign of it. The absence has a shape, and the shape is the finding.

What the threads did to that discourse is the reverse of what the scholarly critique says it does. Choice feminism converts a structural question into an individual one; these comments converted it back, by asking who gets a choice at all. Where the scholarly critique stops at diagnosis, the threads wrote a test. Budgeon's (2015, p. 303) point, that choice feminism does not ask who gets to choose, names a blind spot. The bridge comment of 5.2 turns the blind spot into a sorting rule: a feminism that treads on poor women is fake (5.2, 5.4). The rule is

operational in a way the diagnosis is not: it takes any claim of the form "this is women's freedom" and asks who is under it.

The defence's strong device deserves its own dialogue, because the corpus attacks it more often than it attacks choice talk itself. The device is willingness. Where the defence survives as quoted material, it leans on her own wanting: she rehearsed for it, she looks like she enjoys it, nobody forced her (5.2). Gill (2003, p. 103) named this figure. Under sexual subjectification, the woman on display is re-described as a knowing, desiring subject. Her wanting then answers every structural question, because criticising the arrangement now looks like criticising her. On that account, willingness is where critique is supposed to stop. In these threads it did not stop critique; it attracted it. The comments of the voluntariness cluster take each mark of willingness and read it as part of the problem rather than an answer to it (5.2; Table 5.1). Her rehearsals become evidence of how normal the arrangement has grown. Her enjoyment becomes what the arrangement trains. The reversal works by refusing the device's premise, that a want belongs to the individual alone and closes the question of where wants come from. That refusal is the operation 6.2.2 traced on the photograph, run here on a person: the individual case is read against its conditions. The scholarly account diagnosed the device from outside. These comments dismantled it in use, and that is a datum the diagnosis did not have.

The width of the claim needs stating. Nothing in the corpus suggests these commenters have read this literature. The one commenter who reaches for "neoliberalism" does so exactly once, far down the like count (5.2). The claim is about structure, not sources. The corpus and the critique arrive at the same point: choice validated, conditions unasked. What the corpus adds is the part the critique had not written down. It is a working test, put as one question of any claimed freedom: who is under it?

6.2.6 The dialogue with Chinese digital feminism

This section brings the findings home to research on Chinese digital feminism, and it brings three things, followed by a note on the instrument this dialogue rests on. The first is a finding about how far a feminist repertoire has travelled. The other two are refinements of the field's

own accounts. Of these, the second, a new variant of how feminist meaning gets policed, is this chapter's main addition to the field.

The critique this thesis has read is not new vocabulary. Its shortest sentence, 向下的自由不是自由, "downward freedom is not freedom", belongs to the Weibo feminist repertoire reviewed in 3.3 (Xue & Rose, 2022, p. 6). What this thesis changes is the level. Xue and Rose write about feminists: activists, campaigns, a movement described from inside. The sentence here is used by ordinary commenters under gossip posts, with no movement in sight. The repertoire has left its activist home and become general equipment. That is a finding about reach, of a kind invisible at the level of movements and campaigns. The sorting habit the test belongs to is also documented at the level of representation: Chinese social media talk splits feminism into a real and a fake kind (Bao, 2024, p. 6). What this corpus adds is one event where the sorting ran on class position: the feminism called fake is the one that treads on poor women (5.2).

The first refinement concerns nationalism, and it keeps the two conditions of 5.5 in view. Research on Chinese digital feminism describes the two currents as entangled, feminist and nationalist language colliding and merging (Han & Liu, 2024, p. 1). This corpus extends that account into one loud event. As 6.1.3 noted, the national register does boundary work while the class register carries the argument. What this section adds is what that division means for the entanglement account: within this event, a division of labour rather than a merger. On a raw count the national story is larger, so the refinement holds only on the like-weighted reading. It is offered as a branch of the entanglement account, not a correction.

The second refinement is about who polices feminist meaning. Nakahara and Cai (2026, pp. 1992, 1994) traced the constraint to hostility from outside feminism, the misogynistic epistemicide reviewed in 3.3, and set user comments aside as a site for further study. The corpus read here is that site, and it returns the constraint with a different engine. The move that cut "her freedom" off from any collective feminist meaning is the concession of 5.2. The act is granted as private, and its public meaning is refused: "it is her freedom, but". The current that runs this move is the same one that claims the side of the women at the bottom of the photograph (5.3). Its language is protective, not hostile, and the corpus gives no ground for calling it misogynistic; who the commenters are stays unknown (6.5). Constraint on

feminist articulation, then, has a second variant, run from inside a protective register, which their account does not theorise. Naming it is this section's addition.

The nearest neighbour study shows the instrument side of this dialogue. Xie and Wu (2025, pp. 1, 11) read the same event with the counting instruments reviewed in 3.3. Comment sections sit outside their data, and sentiment scoring reads direction, for or against, not operations. The machinery reported in Chapter 5, the quoted defence, the concession and its gate, the voluntariness reversal, sits below that instrument's floor. The two studies fit together rather than compete: theirs maps the field's temperature, this one reads its grammar. Where that grammar was read, and why the place itself matters, is the next section's question.

6.3 The site: celebrity gossip as a scene of popular political talk

The strongest class critique in this study does not come from political forums or feminist communities. It comes from comment sections of celebrity gossip, between fan fights and complaints about hot search lists. Media studies have argued this is not as strange as it looks (van Zoonen, 2005, p. 3; 3.3). Entertainment is part of the culture where public judgment already exists. This corpus gives that argument a hard case from a Chinese platform. These posts are not built for debate, and the corpus clearly shows this. The most active groups are fan fights and pure complaints. Their total likes are more than any argument (5.5). Such publics hold together through shared feeling rather than deliberation (Papacharissi, 2015, p. 118). This study finds that strong arguments still exist in such spaces. They float in the noise and get visibility under its rules.

The word "politics" here is just descriptive. It refers to a fight over public meaning: which name the Crazy Horse Show should use, and who can define women's freedom. It makes no stronger claim: no deliberation, no sides, and no movement. This thesis uses three meanings of "dialogue", and they should be separated. The first meaning is dialogue between different readings under the same post. Because the corpus has no reply chains, this is competition for visibility, not real communication (6.5). The second meaning is dialogue with an absent opponent. The arguments of the defence side mainly stay as quotes inside the comments that

answer them (5.2). The third meaning is the dialogue built by the researcher between the corpus and three literatures in this chapter. Because no argued defence appears in the top 100 comments with the most likes, these threads are not a symmetric debate between two camps. Describing them as one would invent a side (5.2).

Each claim above holds among the comments that argue, and on the like-weighted count. The raw-count condition set out in 6.2.6 travels with it.

6.4 What this thesis contributes

This study makes three contributions, and the first is the one this thesis leads with. Section 6.2 names the heaviest critique in these threads: vernacular intersectionality. Next to it stands the second variant named in 6.2.6: a policing of what feminism may mean that runs inside a protective register, not from hostile outsiders. Both names are provisional, and whether they fit anything outside this case still has to be tested.

The second contribution is empirical, and Section 6.3 carried its argument: an event-level, line-by-line reading of where such critique actually lives. This study read one loud event at the level where a repertoire is used, comment by comment, and found the heaviest argument inside celebrity gossip. These threads also left a test of their own, recorded in Section 6.2.5: of any claimed freedom, ask who is under it.

The third contribution is a set of three working tools. The worked, not marked rule in Section 6.2.3 decides which axes count as part of a crossing. It may be useful where several axes are present, though a single case cannot show how far it holds. The like-weighted, tail-checked design in Chapter 4 says where to look in a large corpus, and the two-stage reading then names what stands there. Its costs are real, and Section 6.5 sets them out. Last, candidate common sense, from Section 6.1.1, names a naturalisation that is local, in progress and reversible; it hands later studies something small enough to test.

Read together, the three contributions speak to the class of phenomena named in 2.1: public judgment in ordinary words, on a platform that decides which words later readers meet. What this case adds is one documented instance of how one reading of "freedom" gained the visible ground there, and where that standing can be seen and tested.

6.5 Limitations and future research

Every boundary of this study is a deliberate choice. The largest boundary is the like weighting. In the corpus, 37 per cent of comments have no like data, so they are counted as zero, and the whole reading follows visibility, not volume. The tail sample shows this choice does not hide the critique: the zero-like layer is dominated by onlooking and annoyance, not argument (the opening of Chapter 5). But this choice remains a choice. Counted by raw frequency, nation talk is larger, and a frequency study of the same corpus would tell a different story of the event.

Also, the corpus has no reply chains. Thus the doubleness noted in 5.4, comments in the voice of the weak posted from the strongest positions, stays an observation. Deciding what that register does would need to know who answered whom. The corpus also carries no identities. Nothing can be said about commenters' class or gender, which is why Section 6.2.6 stopped short of naming who speaks in the protective register. The study is also one event, on one platform, at one moment. It describes a conjuncture, not Chinese users at large. Two kinds of counting run through 5.5 and 6.2.6, and they answer different questions: keyword counts measure coverage, coded clusters measure what an argument is doing. Finally, the themes, and the line drawn between upward and downward levelling in 5.3, are built readings, and the responsibility for them is the author's.

Each of these limits marks out the next study. First, a design with reply chains, to test what the weak-voice register of 5.4 actually does: recruit, shield, or perform. Second, the national and ethnic current itself. By raw frequency it is the larger story of this event, and its boundary work, only sketched in 5.5, deserves a study of its own. Third, a comparative design across other controversies and platforms. It would test two things: whether the race axis, unworked here on the rule of 6.2.3, gets worked elsewhere, and whether a candidate common sense like

this one forms again. Fourth, longitudinal. A longer window would show what happens to the redefinition of freedom that stood here as candidate common sense. It may harden into plain common sense, or fade with the event that gave it a photograph.

Chapter 7. Conclusion

This thesis asked how Weibo commenters judged a female celebrity's body performance by contesting the definitions of "freedom" and "art". It asked how gender and class crossed in that judgment. The answer the corpus returned is about distribution, twice over. In content, the comments redefined "freedom" as a good distributed by class (5.3). In mechanism, that reading itself was lifted by likes into the most visible part of the threads, and only so became the candidate common sense of the threads (5.6, 6.1.1). The show arrived speaking of art, freedom and pride, in quotation marks from the start (5.1). It did not keep its names. The corpus was read on a like-weighted count: comments weighed by the likes they drew, not by their number (4.3). Ordinary commenters, working with the class vocabulary their public discourse keeps ready, produced a reading whose form matches intersectional analysis (6.2). For a moment, and in these threads only, they won the fight over how "women's freedom" gets defined (6.1).

The sub-questions can now be answered. First, the contest over definition was settled by renaming rather than debate. "Art" was downgraded and tested until it stood in quotation marks (5.1). The defence of free choice survived mainly as quoted material, conceded, reversed and re-priced (5.2). What the likes lifted became the candidate common sense of the threads (6.1.1). Second, class carried the weight. "Freedom" entered as a value the show claimed and left as a distribution word (5.3, 5.6). It became the name of something one woman on the stage held and the others did not. The judgment held the gender line and the class line inside single sentences, reading each person in the photograph on both lines at once (5.4). It ended in a test: a feminism that treads on poor women is fake (6.2.5). Third, each dialogue of Chapter 6 left something with its field, and what each receives is stated below.

Choice feminism met the loss of its working condition: the photograph put structure back in the frame (6.2.5). Intersectionality theory receives a hard case from outside the academy: its anti-essentialist point reached as form alone, by writers who never used its words, in unpaid entertainment talk (6.2). Research on Chinese digital feminism receives two refinements, offered on the like-weighted reading (6.2.6): in this event the feminist and nationalist registers ran a division of labour, not a merger. And the policing of feminist meaning spoke

in a protective voice, not a hostile one. Social media research receives a site and an instrument: the celebrity gossip thread that held this corpus's heaviest political argument, and the like-weighted close reading that made it visible (6.3, 6.4).

The societal issue underneath is who gets heard when a public judges women's freedom. In these threads, that judgment was made in an entertainment space, in class words, under a visibility logic that promotes some readings over others (6.1.1). What a newcomer meets there as common sense is not a neutral record of opinion; it is the output of that machinery. The point cuts both ways. The threads show that ordinary people can produce weighty political critique in an unlikely place. They also show that what gets heard is the part of that critique the like machinery made most visible. Reading the machinery closely, one comment at a time, is what this thesis has tried to add.

The claims above hold inside boundaries the thesis has set out (6.2, 6.5): one event, one platform, hot-sorted retrieval, a count weighted by likes. The corpus itself is a snapshot of what was still online to collect. The nearest next step is set out in 6.5: a design that can see who answers whom. Within those boundaries, the shape of the event stands. These discussions activated class and set race aside (6.2). They answered a choice feminism whose surviving defences said nothing about the photograph (6.2.5). And what their strongest sentences did, two lines at once, is what this thesis has read as an everyday literacy: a form in use, not a vocabulary (6.2). The plainest version of the answer was never this thesis's to write. It was already in the corpus, far down the like count (row 5167, 318 likes, read in 5.3): 她有选择 可别的女孩没有. She has a choice; the other girls don't.

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