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Land acknowledgement

While we acknowledge that it does not undo the history of colonialism on this land, Working papers in Applied Linguistics and Linguistics at York (WALLY) would like to invite the reader to take a moment to consider the history of the land that you are located on and the Indigenous peoples that have traditionally stewarded that land.[1]

WALLY is published by York University Libraries. Both the publisher and the journal's editors are located in Tkaronto and so we would like to acknowledge that this land has been care taken by the Anishinabek Nation, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, and the Huron-Wendat. It is now home to many First Nation, Inuit, and Métis communities. We acknowledge the current treaty holders, the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. This territory is subject of the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement to peaceably share and care for the Great Lakes region.

As we acknowledge these relationships, we invite the reader to consider how we may all work to build better relationships with the land and the Indigenous people who have long lived on and taken care of these lands. We thank the peoples of the many traditional territories from which we have the privilege to share this publication.

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[1] You can find information about the Indigenous peoples that have traditionally stewarded lands across Turtle Island at https://www.whose.land/

Supporting literacy development of multilingual language learners with limited or interrupted education

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Abstract: As more migrants enter Ontario's education systems, supporting new students learning English becomes increasingly important. Multilingual Language Learners (MLLs) come from a variety of backgrounds and have diverse needs. Of this group, adolescent migrants whose families have been forcibly displaced are a particularly vulnerable population who face unique educational challenges in English literacy development, especially if they are students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE). This lack of access to formal education may result in relatively limited literacy skills in adolescent MLLs' first language(s). This paper reviews literature on relevant frameworks to literacy development; analyzes empirical and conceptual studies on MLLs' literacy development; and offers pedagogical practices that can help facilitate adolescent MLLs' reading development in English. The paper concludes with recommendations for future research to optimize adolescent MLLs' integration and success into the public education system.

Keywords: multilingual language learners; students with limited or interrupted formal education; sociocultural theory; interactive model of reading; translanguaging pedagogy; literacy development

1 SLIFE definition and situated context

1.1 Introduction

As more migrants enter Ontario's education systems, supporting new students learning English becomes increasingly important. Many of these students are Multilingual Language Learners (MLLs), a term which recognizes that students already know multiple languages, dialects, and/or varieties, working to develop their competencies in English and other languages concurrently. MLLs come from a variety of backgrounds and have diverse needs. Of this group, adolescent migrants who have been forcibly displaced are a particularly vulnerable population facing unique educational challenges in English literacy development, especially if they are students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE). This lack of previous formal education may result in relatively limited literacy skills in adolescent MLLs' first language(s).

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Through the lens of Sociocultural Theory and social constructivist learning, this paper reviews the literature on relevant frameworks for literacy development, including the Interactive Reading Model, Translanguaging Pedagogy, and the Mutually Adaptive Learning Paradigm, analyzing empirical and conceptual studies on MLLs' literacy development to offer pedagogical practices for facilitating adolescent MLLs' reading development in English. In this paper, we propose that the integration of aspects from multiple pedagogical frameworks improves literacy outcomes for adolescent MLLs, particularly those who are SLIFE. The paper concludes with recommendations for future research for optimizing adolescent MLLs' integration into the public education system and scaffolding success with literacy development.

1.2   Programs currently in place in Ontario

Students who have experienced forced displacement and migration have distinct needs from students whose families have voluntarily migrated; however, their needs are unfortunately often conflated with all students who are labelled MLLs and placed in English as a Second Language (ESL) programs (Van Viegen, 2020). As the focus of this paper is MLLs who are also SLIFE, we use the term SLIFE MLLs in recognition of the unique challenges of this group. Ontario offers two programs for SLIFE MLLs in high school. While all MLLs are given an initial assessment test (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007a), SLIFE MLLs are usually placed in the English Literacy Development (ELD) program pending availability. After progressing through the 5 levels of ELD, SLIFE MLLs then follow a 4-level ESL program (with an optional 5th level) before being placed in mainstream workplace, college, or university preparatory English classes (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007b). Unfortunately, however, the foundational ELD programs are not always available, or ELD programs may be combined with ESL classes. Furthermore, SLIFE MLLs are also required to take at least one and up to three mainstream courses per semester following Ontario's integration policy for all MLLs (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007a).

Therefore, supporting students' literacy development within mainstream classrooms is paramount. The first step to implementing differentiated instruction for SLIFE MLLs is to recognize that they experience unique challenges with literacy needs distinct from other MLLs; furthermore, all teachers, regardless of subject and literacy training, are also required to integrate SLIFE MLLs into their classes and support their development of academic reading skills.

2   Theoretical frameworks

2.1   Sociocultural theory and MLLs' experiences

Sociocultural Theory (SCT) provides a useful framework for conceptualizing SLIFE MLL adolescents and their literacy development in the Canadian education context. Similar to previous authors, this paper views SCT as a cornerstone of constructivist pedagogy, in which knowledge and understanding are socially co-constructed through the development of higher-order thinking, experiential learning, and collaborative inquiry (Cummins et al., 2011). Although SLIFE MLLs may have minimal L1 print literacy and academic knowledge, they bring other skills developed in the context of their ontogenetic experiences (i.e., an individual's collective lifelong experiences and development). However, these skills and real-life experiences developed through other societal contexts may not align with central expectations in Western secondary school classrooms (DeCapua & Marshall, 2011), particularly the privileging of print literacy over oracy and the focus on abstract academic content and schemata of scientific concepts; in addition, SLIFE MLLs' emotional and cognitive life histories may provoke cultural dissonance and cognitive fatigue when they are first immersed in Western learning norms (DeCapua & Wintergerst, 2016), and SLIFE MLLs may exert their agency by withdrawing participation if left in unsupportive classroom

conditions with community rules and roles they do not understand or value (Swain et al., 2015). To support SLIFE MLLs within social constructivist learning, intersubjectivity and scaffolding are key concepts in fostering literacy internalization and development through the uptake of mediational means, such as culturally responsive teaching and translanguaging with collaborative dialogue. These mediational means serve as affordances, which are opportunities provided in the language learning environment (Swain et al., 2015). In this paper, we will examine work by Marshall and DeCapua (2013) who integrate all these aspects in the Mutually Adaptive Learning Paradigm (MALP) specifically developed to support SLIFE MLLs. MALP builds on Geneva Gay's (2000) framework of Culturally Responsive Teaching, and Gloria Ladson-Billings' (1995) work on Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, which have been shown to be successful for all students, while taking them a step further to construct a framework specifically to support SLIFE MLLs.

2.2   Interactive model of reading and SLIFE MLL challenges

As noted by Marshall and DeCapua (2013), formal Western education strongly privileges print over the oral transmission of knowledge and accordingly, Canadian secondary schools emphasize reading comprehension as a primary means of knowledge construction. The interactive model of reading posits that "reading comprehension is a combination of identification and interpretation skills" (Alyousef, 2006, p. 63) where readers simultaneously attend to grapho-phonemic, morphological, and lexico-grammatical features while monitoring for meaning through semantic contextual cues and applying global knowledge (Nassaji, 2003).

Although adolescent SLIFE MLLs may have strong oracy skills in their L1, and even in L2 English, they may simultaneously lack familiarity with age-appropriate textual literacy capabilities (Montero et al., 2014), which may include basics such as the concepts of grapho-phonemic correspondence and textual structure. In secondary school, SLIFE MLLs require additional lower-level text supports that their peers generally no longer need, in skills such as grapho-phonic automaticity and lexico-grammatical knowledge. At the same time, they also may need support with higher-level syntactic and semantic components to make sense of the lower-level information. When these bottom-up and top-down reading processes both require conscious cognitive capacity, higher-level reading comprehension may be compromised as attentional resources focus on decoding and lexico-grammatical recognition (Nassaji, 2003). However, instructional strategies can bolster SLIFE MLLs' reading comprehension by leveraging "a variety of cognitive, linguistic, and non-linguistic skills" in the constructivist classroom context (Nassaji, 2003, p. 261).

3   Pedagogical implications

3.1   Supporting language development for SLIFE MLLs in all classes

3.1.1   *Accessing prior knowledge in L1: Translanguaging pedagogy and oral communication*

Through an SCT lens, activating students' prior knowledge before introducing the next steps in learning is a well-established teaching practice across educational sectors. However, this mediational means offers a limited amount of useful scaffolding to SLIFE MLLs in a monolingual environment, especially in mainstream content courses. As MLLs' prior knowledge is often accessed through their L1, it is important to encourage students to use their L1 to draw upon their funds of knowledge (Cummins, 2008). When SLIFE MLLs voice their ideas in their L1, it gives peers or the teacher an opportunity to translate those ideas into the L2 and helps SLIFE MLLs develop English vocabulary. Furthermore, as Ontario's learning norms privilege print literacy, SLIFE MLLs with limited L1 literacy face significant barriers as they may struggle to read a text

even if it is L2 text translated into their L1. Therefore, building on students' prior knowledge of the topic, and leveraging students' oracy skills, are key mediational means for student engagement, especially for learning content knowledge. Li et al. (2021) demonstrate that read-alouds of text, as well as levelled questions (moving from simpler to more complex questions) are particularly effective methods to develop students' reading comprehension. These tools are even more useful for SLIFE MLLs as they allow students to start their reading journey and learn content through hearing texts, questions, and responses out loud. This means of social reading participation is vital at this stage when SLIFE MLLs are required to integrate into mainstream classrooms (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007a), even though their literacy skills do not yet afford the learning of content from reading text (Montero et al., 2014). Hearing vocabulary prior to learning written text is a critical stage in L2 development, as vocabulary is stored phonologically more easily than orthographically (Coltheart, 2006), and this is especially true for SLIFE MLLs of limited L1 literacy who are unable to use text translation tools and bilingual notetaking. Furthermore, learning to engage with text orally through levelled questions and improved comprehension skills also develops higher order thinking skills in a social learning environment.

We suggest that all teachers actively take a translanguaging approach and develop a plurilingual pedagogy (Lau & Van Viegen, 2020). This pedagogical approach encourages students to talk amongst themselves in whichever language(s) they prefer as languaging develops comprehension of the read-aloud texts and personal self-expression. A translanguaging approach aligns with students' regular practice of using their entire language repertoire to make meaning of the world and communicate in new social environments. When teachers promote a translanguaging pedagogy "for teaching and learning curriculum content, they create social space for the multilingual language user, what Li (2018) has called *translanguaging spaces*" (Van Viegen, 2020, p. 65). In this space, SLIFE MLLs can utilize their agency to use all their language resources, which affords further comprehension and understanding of the course content.

In addition, teachers can also take on some burden of comprehending students' translingual voicing (whether it is through asking other multilingual students for translations or using voice recognition translation software), as this eases the cognitive load on MLLs. Taking this step also creates a positive affective space for the SLIFE MLLs in the classroom to voice their ideas about texts studied in the read-alouds. Furthermore, this valorizes students' knowledge in their L1 oracy, positioning SLIFE to have more confidence in themselves, rather than being in an environment that might inadvertently mark students as deficient in language and knowledge (Binogi Pedagogiskt Forum, 2018).

3.1.2 Language acquisition needs: BICS, CALP, and CULP

To successfully graduate high school, SLIFE MLLs need to develop lexical and discourse competence with various kinds of language, categorized by Cummins (1979) as Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) or everyday language, and Cognitive Academic Linguistic Proficiency (CALP), which describes the academic English needed to effectively comprehend and discuss academic concepts in content classes. Cummins (1981) also theorized that developing skills in any language develops students' Cognitive Underlying Language Proficiency (CULP), which supports the language development in all their languages as various knowledge transfers from their L1 into their L2 based on sociolinguistic conditions, including the transfer of scientific conceptual elements, metacognitive and metalinguistic strategies, pragmatic aspects of language use, specific linguistic elements, and phonological awareness. However, SLIFE MLLs' limited development of CALP and CULP in their first language affords less L1

CULP transfer into L2. Therefore, supporting SLIFE MLLs requires not only translanguaging in the classroom, but trans-semiotising as well (Lin et al., 2020). To invite trans-semiotising into the classroom, we must consider the value of multimodal texts and expressions to develop reading comprehension and multiliteracies, further described below.

3.1.3 Trans-semiotising practices & the multimodalites-entextualisation cycle

Lin et al. (2020) propose the "multimodalities-entextualisation cycle (MEC)" as a model of learning that can benefit SLIFE MLLs by building on translanguaging pedagogies to develop students' BICS and CALP concurrently (p. 89). In this cycle, teachers start by creating an experiential context through multimodal resources, then engage students in reading and note-making in both everyday and academic language in their L1 and L2 before finally guiding them in entextualising these experiences in the target language. Lin et al. (2020) suggest that teachers "create a rich experiential context, which would use multimodal texts, including images, videos, graphic organizers and action and activities" (p. 89). Furthermore, teachers should "engage students in reading & [*sic*] note-making," which is described "using a combination of everyday and academic language in students' L1 and L2" (Lin et al., 2020, p. 88), essentially assuring a trans-semiotic reading experience. Students can develop reading notes as bilingual notes, graphic organizers, or even mind maps, visuals, or comics. Thus, students' "reading notes" can also be visual representations of their understanding. We suggest that where students have even rudimentary literacy in their L1, teachers can use students' L1 and L2 when developing questions, organizers, and other texts that students use to develop their L1 and L2 literacy skills concurrently as both will contribute to their CULP (Cummins, 2008). Fitzsimmons and Tharmaseelan (2025) also suggest practical trans-semiotising methods, conveying meanings through multiple mediums (text, images), which we recommend Ontario teachers use in their practice for scaffolding SLIFE MLLs' emerging literacy. These include text engineering (i.e., breaking up and emphasizing text in various ways to draw focus to words and develop comprehension), sketchnoting (i.e., creating sketches while notetaking to show comprehension), and the Picture Word Induction model (i.e., taking a picture and labelling aspects of the picture to develop vocabulary) (Calhoun, 1999). Furthermore, all these multimodal methods of learning can be combined with translanguaging to enhance student comprehension.

3.2 Supporting literacy for SLIFE MLLs in ELD and ESL classrooms

3.2.1 Guided reading, running records, and support for early reading instructional methods

Students should be exposed to symbols, the alphabet, and phonics as soon as possible to develop and automatize their lower-level reading processes. SLIFE MLLs need their ELD and ESL teachers to shift their focus from literature study to literacy study and attend to teaching "the reader, not the text" (Montero et al., 2014, p. 61). Once students are able to blend sounds and connect to orthography, guided reading using levelled readers (books that increase in difficulty level in terms of phonics, word count or syntax) is a powerful tool for developing literacy skills. Guided reading consists of students vocalizing text passages softly to themselves with the teacher nearby to provide guidance as required (Montero et al., 2014). Guided reading allows teachers to model reading and comprehension practices in a zone of proximal development, as well as apply dynamic assessment (Swain et al., 2015) in observing students processing texts as they read, helping students develop reading skills and strategies (Fountas & Pinnell, 2012). Furthermore, guided reading, combined with running records, which are continuous notes by the teacher on a student's reading performance, and paying attention to noting gaps that may need attention and

review can demonstrate where students may be struggling in their reading practices so that teachers can plan appropriate further instruction.

Montero et al. (2014) trained and studied a Canadian teacher's use of levelled readers in guided reading practices, integrating early reading instructional methods. Using running records, the authors determined that this teacher's SLIFE MLLs made gains of 3-13 reading levels in this program, compared to SLIFE MLLs in a semester that the teacher taught 3 years prior without these methods, where gains were only 1-3 reading levels (See more detailed comparisons in Figure A1). The power of using guided reading practices, running records, and early reading instructional methods, therefore, cannot be overstated.

3.2.2 *The mutually adaptive learning paradigm (MALP)*

DeCapua and Marshall's (2023) mutually adaptive learning paradigm (MALP) is a framework that encompasses all previously recommended components: combining SLIFE MLLs' oracy skills, developing their literacy skills, and preparing students to engage with schooling through print medium instruction. MALP outlines two ways of learning. The first way is learning on topics of immediate relevance that are interconnected to people's lives; it views learning as a shared responsibility through oral transmission, where a speaker and listener work together to develop knowledge, and it focuses on pragmatic tasks based on lived experiences. The second way of learning is through formal education that often teaches topics of future relevance to students and requires a level of independence and individual accountability while students learn from the written word; learning in this way is often based on decontextualized texts and focuses on academic ways of thinking (DeCapua & Marshall, 2023).

MALP suggests that we combine both paradigms of education by first accepting learner conditions and ensuring topics of learning are of immediate relevance and connected to their lives, then by combining learner and formal education processes by having students learn through oral transmission in groups as well as individually through the spoken word. In addition, MALP advocates for a shift from pragmatic task learning to targeting academic learning and formal education activities with familiar language and content (DeCapua & Marshall, 2023). This paradigm affords teachers with the mediational means to conceptualize SLIFE MLLs' needs as these students enter our school systems, as well as help them adapt to our education system and transfer into literacy-based knowledge development. First, building on Gay's (2000) culturally responsive teaching and Ladson-Billing's (1995) culturally responsive pedagogy principles of using texts and curriculum that are relevant to students' lives while holding them to high academic standards, SLIFE MLLs' learner conditions are recognized by MALP, foregrounding learners' need to read text content with immediate relevance to them. In addition, teachers operating within this paradigm must develop and maintain a positive classroom community conducive to students' social reading practice, a cognitively demanding task that requires a learning environment of much care and support. MALP then emphasizes the need for teachers to scaffold students by combining the learning processes of shared responsibility and oral transmission of knowledge, a process which may be more familiar to SLIFE MLLs, with the newer process of learning from the written word and having individual accountability for that learning. Ultimately, this paradigm affords teachers and SLIFE MLLs the structure for targeted learning of decontextualized tasks and academic ways of thinking, especially when learners are simultaneously developing literacy skills.

3.2.3 *Assessment practices*

The current assessment practices for SLIFE MLLs in Ontario show some gaps and limitations in terms of the focus and testing methods. Traditional assessment models in Ontario,

especially in subject area courses outside of the ELD/ESL class, often reflect a monolingual-dominant and deficiency-focused approach without considering the complex linguistic repertoires or educational histories of SLIFE MLLs. Official guidance for Ontario secondary schools outline "Program considerations for English language learners" and includes suggestions for adapting the program to the MLLs in the classroom along with instructional strategies and assessment practices (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013, p. 39). Instructional strategies include "extensive use of visual cues, graphic organizers, and scaffolding; previewing of textbooks; pre-teaching of key vocabulary; peer tutoring; strategic use of students' first language" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013, p. 39). Assessment accommodations include "granting of extra time, use of oral interviews, demonstrations or visual presentations, or tasks requiring completion of graphic organizers or cloze sentences instead of essay questions and other assessment tasks that depend heavily on proficiency in English" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013, p. 40). In other words, policy seeks only to ensure that texts are simplified and accessible to MLLs. Although some strategic use of students' first language is encouraged, especially as it relates to translation of vocabulary, the curriculum does not encourage students to develop their understanding of content through other languages outside of English. Nor do assessment accommodations suggest students demonstrate their knowledge through languages other than English. Indeed, all the suggestions move toward simplification of assessment requirements.

This, however, is a monolingual English-dominant and deficiency-focused approach that does not consider the complex linguistic repertoires or educational histories of SLIFE MLLs. This approach dramatically fails to capture students' actual capabilities, especially when assessing literacy in English, as it assumes uninterrupted prior schooling (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015; Van Viegen, 2020). As a consequence, ESL/ELD programs in Ontario tend to be largely focused on "standard" English proficiency benchmarks for placement and progress tracking purposes. For instance, in the initial assessment procedure, school board staff evaluate English language proficiency through a structured interview for oral communication skills (listening and speaking), as well as assessments of reading comprehension and writing (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007a). However, these types of Western formal assessments might be unfamiliar testing formats to students and not allow them to showcase their holistic abilities, such as practical knowledge, problem-solving skills, social strengths, or their actual learning and progress (Pentón Herrera, 2022). Although early reading instruction experts within the Ontario Ministry of Education (2003) appreciate the development of literacy skills in L1, and later suggest "where possible, at least part of the initial assessment should be conducted in the student's first or dominant language […]" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007a), these initial assessments might fail to address the gap in uninterrupted learning experiences even in L1 to offer a more nuanced picture of SLIFE MLLs' literacy potential.

We instead advocate for a broadening of the texts used in class, as well as a broadening of the linguistic repertoire that students are allowed to use during assessment. They would be able to learn and demonstrate their knowledge more completely by using their full linguistic repertoire in assessment, which is not suggested in current curriculum documents. These gaps and limitations in assessing SLIFE MLLs can be addressed effectively by adopting an inclusive, culturally responsive, and adaptable approach to meet the needs of these students. Teachers should consider avoiding excessive use of high-stress product-based assessments, like tests and quizzes, with SLIFE MLLs and diversify assessment practices. DeCapua and Marshall (2011) advocate for oral and written modalities to prioritize process over product, along with the idea of a gradual transition to academic-focused assessments using MALP. In Ontario, especially in the cases of limited or no

literacy in L1, this could include students using actions, verbal explanations, and visual representations to show comprehension as early reading strategies (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2003). Therefore, a combination of standardized testing, running records, and qualitative methods (e.g., observations, interviews, and content analysis of instructional materials) (Montero et al., 2014), as well as classroom-based tools (e.g., systematic skills assessments, unit examinations and quizzes, portfolios, performance tasks, and report cards), could help educators explore learners' cognitive processes and generate their comprehensive literacy profiles efficiently (Short & Boyson, 2012). Other suggested assessment practices by Cohan and Honigsfeld (2017) include continuous formative assessment in both English and content areas, differentiated assessment materials, and a collaborative evaluation process with social workers, guidance counsellors, and teaching assistants who support the academic and social development of SLIFE students. Above all, translanguaging serves as one of the most effective pedagogical tools since it allows students to demonstrate their literacy skills across languages through access to their linguistic repertoire, bilingual assessment tools, bilingual dictionaries, or technology (e.g., Google Translate, image searches, assistive technology, etc.) (Van Viegen, 2020). In sum, assessment practices should be reconceptualized by means of the collective support of the aforementioned practices to achieve a flexible, holistic and culturally relevant assessment approach for SLIFE MLLs.

4   Suggestions for next steps and future research

As supported by SCT, MALP, and translanguaging pedagogies, a dynamic, multilingual approach to literacy development for SLIFE MLLs requires redirection of both classroom practices and broader educational structures. Future research can examine how to better adapt pedagogical approaches and system-level adjustments to maintain equitable and inclusive literacy development.

For further research, more empirical studies are necessary to track the reading trajectories of SLIFE MLLs across time and educational contexts. The significance of targeted interventions is evident in Montero et al. (2014) and Nassaji (2003), who investigated foundational reading skills. Additionally, more studies on action research implementing multimodal applications, such as a study with digital multimodal composing in storytelling activity using voiceovers, visual elements, textual components, and creative layouts by Tour et al. (2024) or plurilingual pedagogies, and as seen in a study with the use of heritage languages in book creation, classroom presentation or plurilingual poetry writing by Liggins (2023), proved to help plurilingual students develop their full linguistic potential, increase confidence, and develop literacy skills.

When it comes to the educators of SLIFE MLLs, they need professional and systemic support in their instructional approach. Since they carry the heavy responsibility of juggling course learning outcomes and the unique needs of SLIFE MLLs, action research projects and teacher training initiatives could provide them with the knowledge and skills to apply targeted pedagogies, such as translanguaging, through "informed professional practice" (Costley & Leung, 2020, p. 11). More specifically, teachers might also need training in developing and implementing creative ways to incorporate non-traditional assessments that consider SLIFE students' backgrounds and learning progress to implement effective assessment practices (Cohan & Honigsfeld, 2017). Most importantly, while implementing an inclusive program for SLIFE MLLs, comprehensive professional development opportunities are prerequisites for helping teachers develop culturally responsive practices and socio-emotional support; furthermore, we should assess the impact of continuing professional development on teachers' ability to address the needs of SLIFE MLLs (Kray & Burns, 2024). Therefore, the successful implementation of constructivist, asset-based, plurilingual, and culturally responsive pedagogies depends on sustainable teacher professional

development. Although there are policies in place to include professional development days in the year, there should be more research to assess whether sufficient professional development for literacy development of SLIFE is in place, and further, if that learning is then implemented in the classrooms.

Ultimately, there is a dire need for more research on current policy and planning in the province. Further research needs to address how these education policies block or carve the path to fill the gaps in the literacy development of SLIFE MLLs going into mainstream courses. At the policy implementation level, there should be a separate categorization of SLIFE MLLs in data reporting and tracking to provide more tailored interventions to improve literacy skills by lifting the linguistic and social barriers, as seen in California, Massachusetts, and New York (California Department of Education, 2020; Kray & Burns, 2024; New York State Education Department, 2019). The Ontario Ministry of Education (2008) also acknowledges these policy gaps, namely inconsistent assessment practices, inadequate teacher training, insufficient curriculum adjustment, and lack of financial and human resources. Therefore, researchers and practitioners should keep advocating for curricular transformations, such as revising assessment policies, updating curriculum to reflect corresponding pedagogies, and revisiting funding for targeted mediation to serve English language learners with limited prior schooling.

5   Conclusion

SLIFE MLLs require more than language instruction. They can be fully supported only through a holistic, culturally responsive and equity-focused approach. The Ontario Ministry of Education (2014) urges schools to integrate differentiated instruction, inclusive classroom practices and collaboration among educators, families, and communities. To bridge the foundational gaps and thrive in a new educational environment, learners need academic and socio-emotional support from educators. Throughout this paper, we have addressed potential frameworks to support SLIFE MLLs achieve better reading outcomes and experience better learning experiences within and beyond the classroom.

An integrative approach that combines SCT, Translanguaging Pedagogy, and MALP into teaching and learning could benefit adolescent SLIFE MLLs in Ontario secondary schools through better literacy and reading outcomes. SCT supports the idea that social interactions and cultural backgrounds shape learning; therefore, reading instruction and assessments should value students' cultural and linguistic strengths. MALP focuses on the gradual adjustment to match students' experiences and knowledge; therefore, reading instruction and assessments should follow a process-oriented approach that meets students where they are. Translanguaging Pedagogy recognizes the multiple languages students use to understand and show their learning; therefore, reading instruction and assessments should encourage them to use all their language skills to help them show their true abilities. All in all, each framework provides distinctive but interconnected strategies that have the potential to address the complex linguistic, cognitive and social-emotional needs of SLIFE MLLs.
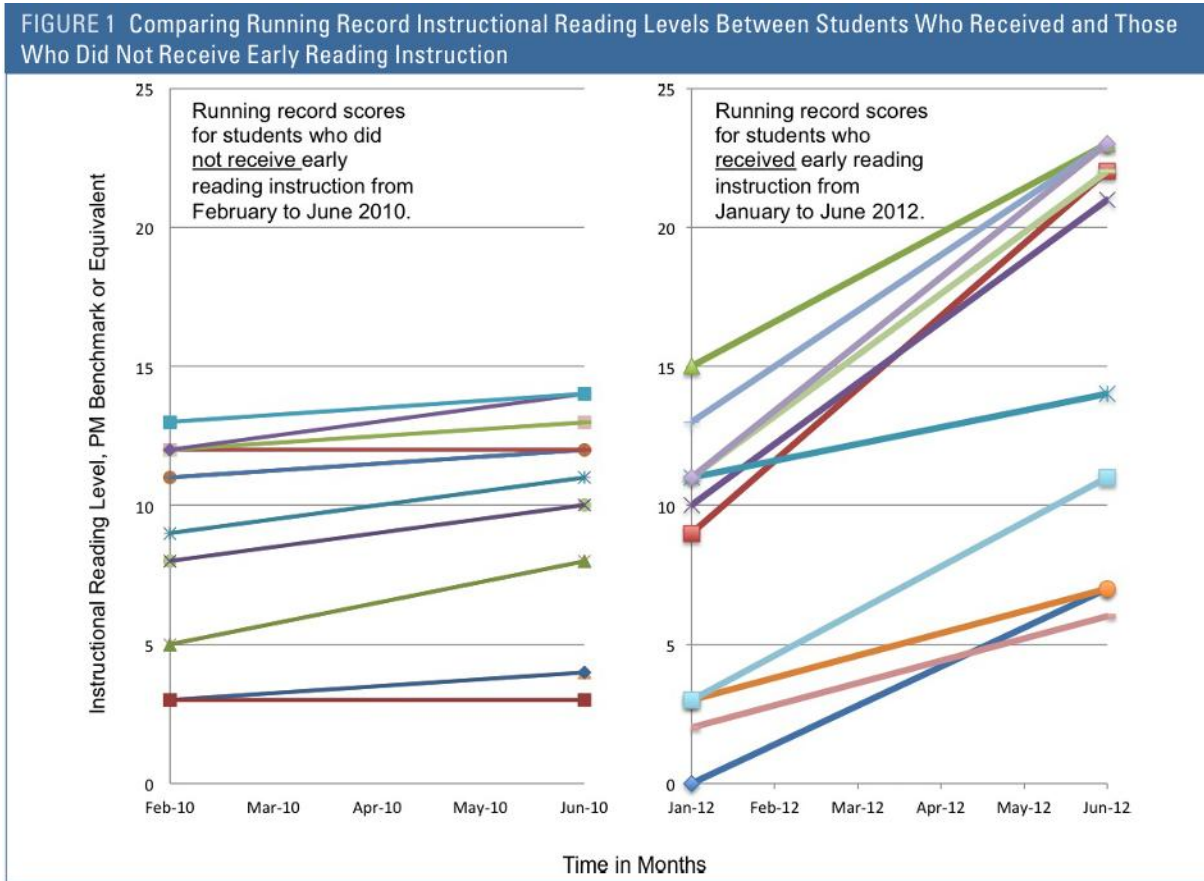
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Appendix A: Chart comparing the effects of early reading instruction on students' reading levels

FIGURE 1 Comparing Running Record Instructional Reading Levels Between Students Who Received and Those Who Did Not Receive Early Reading Instruction

Note. This figure compares the running record scores of students who received and did not receive early reading instruction and has been reproduced from Montero et al. (2014) under the sharing and reproduction licensing agreement between York University and Wiley.

Feminist satire and redefinition in the digital age: Man Who Has It All

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Abstract: Man Who Has It All is the online persona behind a satirical Facebook page that offers a look into a world where gender roles have been reversed and men are constantly bombarded with the same kinds of condescending and sexist ideas women face in real life. This presentation describes and analyzes the strategies utilized by Man Who Has It All (and the community in his Facebook comments) to satirize patriarchal and misogynistic gender ideologies, identified in general as *reversal*, *allusion*, *distillation*, and *collaboration*. These strategies, taking advantage of the multimodal affordances of social media, operate on both a linguistic and paralinguistic level. My analysis focuses especially on the use of strategic reversal to bring the absurdity of deeply entrenched sexist attitudes to the level of conscious awareness, and on the role of language in reproducing gender ideologies.

Keywords: satire; language and gender ideologies; social media; multimodality

Introduction and background

1.1 Man Who Has It All and other feminist satire

The online influencer Man Who Has It All (MWHIA) is (seemingly) a busy working dad juggling a domestic life and a career, on a mission to offer helpful advice to similarly frazzled fathers as well as ask genuine questions about gender such as "How are men's brains different from normal brains?" (Figure 1). In reality, MWHIA is a satirical online persona whose posts offer a look into a version of our world where gender roles have been reversed and men are constantly bombarded with the same kinds of condescending and sexist ideas women face in real life.

While certainly a popular and successful example, MWHIA did not invent this brand of satire. Such pointed and strategic reversals of gender roles for the purpose of ridicule can be found elsewhere in our broader media environment. On Tumblr, The Hawkeye Initiative redraws Hawkeye (a male superhero) in the same oversexualized outfits and poses as a variety of female superheroes to point out their ridiculousness and impracticality (The Hawkeye Initiative, n.d.). The French film *I Am Not an Easy Man* (French: *Je ne suis pas un homme facile*) follows a typical womanizing misogynist who is transported to an alternate universe where institutional sexism operates in reverse. The protagonist finds himself newly on the receiving end of many of the sexist practices and attitudes he was once indifferent to, including social pressure to marry, marginalization in the workplace, and sexual harassment from the opposite gender (and the trivia-

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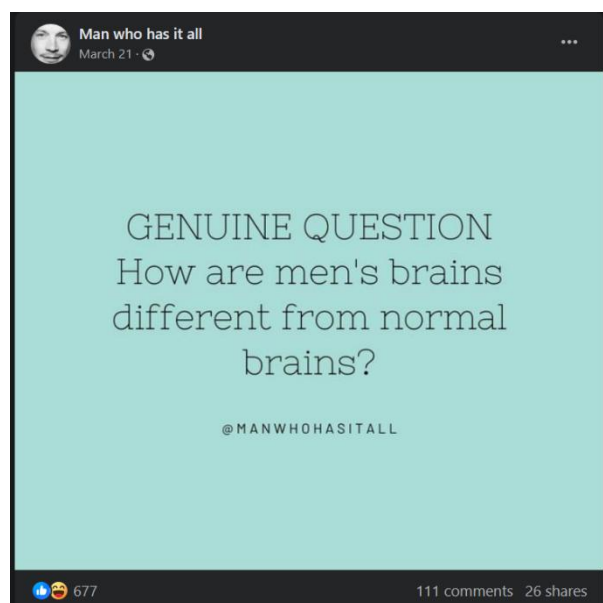*[1] Corresponding Author: qcui25@uwo.ca*

Figure 1. MWHIA Facebook post, posted March 21, 2024.[2]

lization thereof). In another non-English example, a 2018 Chinese short film, several young men take part in job interviews from an all-female panel who ask a series of sexist and condescending questions such as "Will you cry if you face too much pressure at work?" "Would you be okay with not having children within the next three years?" and "Will you be requesting time off during that time of the month?" while the interviewees visibly grow increasingly confused and uncomfortable (時報金像獎 & 金手指獎, 2018). In terms of television, the *Baroness von Sketch Show* episode "Dinxxx" (the name of the fictional strip club where the sketch takes place) has the characters behaving as if gender stereotypes and relations have been reversed: the two female detectives talk in a stereotypically gruff and masculine way and objectify the scantily-clad male dancers, calling one of them "sweet cheeks" and flirtatiously asking another one to call them (CBC Comedy, 2018). In the science fiction novel *The Power* by Naomi Alderman, women have gained the ability to shoot electricity from their hands, which they use to overthrow the patriarchy and establish a new social order. 5,000 years in the future, a male author struggles in the matriarchal publishing world and is told by a female author that he should use a female pen name to have his work taken seriously.

In popular culture, there is a name for this type of story: the "persecution flip"—and it can operate along other axes as well, such as race and sexuality.[3] In general, all of the above examples use the persecution flip story to subvert hegemonic norms, often to humorous effect, which can be considered a kind of critique in that it turns sexism into a punchline—something worthy of ridicule. While MWHIA's satire similarly treats institutional sexism as something to be mocked, it is unique from these examples in its use of the collaborative nature of social media (see Section 3, "Discussion").

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[2]
https://www.facebook.com/MANWHOHASITALL/posts/pfbid0HYyzXj63MrpamEnBBJBEknc6NFLrhiHNZSbV2LH8iQBCtSF1yydcxcqajokaEW51l
[3] https://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/PersecutionFlip

1.2 The history and satire of Man Who Has It All

In addition to running a Facebook page with posts dating back to October 2015 (Man who has it all, n.d.), an X (formerly known as Twitter) account since May 2015 (@manwhohasitall, n.d.), an Instagram account since October 2018 (@themanwhohasitall, n.d.), and a Bluesky profile (@manwhohasitall.bsky.social, n.d.), MWHIA also sells clothing including men's slogan tees that read "Not Just a Pretty Beard" (manwhohasitall, n.d.) and has authored two satirical self-help books titled *From Frazzled to Fabulous: How to Juggle a Successful Career, Fatherhood, 'Me-Time' and Looking Good* (Man Who Has It All, 2016) and *The Man Who Has It All: A Patronizing Parody of Self-Help Books for Women* (@ManWhoHasItAll, 2018). The social media accounts are clearly labelled as satirical in their respective bios; however, there are very few other indications that MWHIA is just a persona. The anonymous creator of the page remains in character when giving interviews (e.g. Gorman & Archer, 2022; Knight, 2016; Murphy, 2018), completely breaking character only on rare occasions, such as on the C&W Agency website:[4]

> I live an ordinary family life in the UK with three children and my partner… Everywhere I go, every conversation I have and everything I read is material. No one and nothing is spared. If you follow @manwhohasitall, get the joke, comment and play along, although I am anonymous, you already know me. Through shared experiences and shared anger, we are connected. We are, ahem, brothers, doin' it for ourselves.

Only in MWHIA's most recent book, *Flipping Patriarchy: Imagining a gender-swapped world*, does the creator explicitly identify herself as female, or more specifically as "just another woman having to write bloody books about 'this exasperating, time-wasting bullshit'" (Man Who Has It All, 2025). In this book, she goes on to discuss her experiences growing up as a girl and navigating the world as a woman and identifies the main functions of MWHIA as critique of patriarchy and "a place of refuge and comedic relief, lessening the pain at the same time as making you laugh" (Man Who Has It All, 2025).[5]

As of August 2025, MWHIA's Facebook page has amassed 669,000 followers. He is a prolific poster (as of August 2025, he posts about 3–5 times per day) but does not seem to interact directly with the hundreds of comments he receives. MWHIA has received media attention from several websites including Feminism in India (Bandyopadhyay, 2019), the *New York Post* (Dawson, 2015), and *The Independent* (Ritschel, 2019; Wills, 2016).

Both MWHIA's posts and the social media community he has cultivated envision an alternate universe in which institutionalized misogyny and patriarchy have become institutionalized misandry and matriarchy: men are expected to keep themselves looking youthful and beautiful for women (but also remain modest), tokenized by women in fiction and in the workplace, and assumed to be biologically predisposed to fatherhood and domestic servitude. MWHIA often phrases his posts as discussion questions, inviting commenters to take part in the joke. These commenters (most of whom appear to be women) roleplay as inhabitants of this alternate universe, casually throwing around gender-flipped sexist talking points.

The goal of this paper is to describe and analyze the ways in which MWHIA, as well as the community that has developed in his Facebook comments, identify and satirize—that is, ridicule and criticize—patriarchal and misogynistic gender ideologies, taking into account the multimodal nature of the posts and the collaborative nature of Facebook. I argue that MWHIA

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[4] https://cwagency.co.uk/client/man-who-has-it-all
[5] This paper refers to the real person using she/her, but to the persona using he/him.

employs strategic reversal in order to make us aware of the absurdity of the deeply entrenched sexist attitudes in our society that we have internalized, thus challenging and delegitimizing them. MWHIA also provides a space for women and AFAB (assigned female at birth) individuals to feel understood and validated in their anger towards patriarchy. I also discuss the role of language in constructing gender roles; MWHIA acknowledges language as an important vehicle for the reproduction of gender ideologies, and so androcentric language—gender-flipped to gynocentric language—is a frequent topic.

The structure of the remainder of the paper as follows: Section 2, "Methodology and data," outlines how I selected the data to be analyzed and the scope of my analysis. Section 3, "Discussion," defines some of the strategies MWHIA uses to satirize misogyny and patriarchy, then explores a few major recurring themes, followed by an examination of what makes MWHIA's critique emotionally impactful and effective. The paper concludes with Section 4, which summarizes the significance and impact of the page on feminism in the modern age.

Methodology and data

The data I am using for analysis are drawn from the MWHIA Facebook page, as well as the comments under his posts. Over the course of the data collection, several strategies were impressionistically identified, as well as some recurring themes (defined and explicated in more detail below in Sections 3.1, "Strategies," and 3.2, "Themes," respectively). The data reproduced in this paper was selected to exemplify these strategies and themes, as well as show commenters' uptake and interpretation of MWHIA's style of satire (see Section 3.3, "The significance of Man Who Has It All," below). Though MWHIA has presences on several social media platforms (and runs other websites), for simplicity, my analysis here is limited to Facebook. Some of the selected posts are very recent, while some are much older. As the scope of this paper is relatively small, and as the Facebook page contains approximately 10 years of data and still posts frequently, the discussion is necessarily limited, and my qualitative analysis and observations are fairly impressionistic: a more detailed and complete analysis should take into account more data, potentially using collocations and other quantitative and experimental methods.

The gender categories of "man" and "women" are frequently treated as binary and oppositionally defined, as well as conflated with biological sex; therefore, many of the heterosexist and cissexist ideologies intertwined with gender ideologies feature prominently in MWHIA's posts. In addition, the majority of the photos posted feature white subjects, and the sexist ideologies satirized by MWHIA were produced within a white-centric culture. An analysis of the histories and intersections of these ideologies as they relate to these posts would also be worthwhile; however, this is beyond the scope of the present paper.

Discussion

5.1 Strategies

In this discussion, four main strategies utilized by MWHIA (and his audience) are identified; for the purposes of the present analysis, I have termed them *reversal*, *allusion*, *distillation*, and *collaboration*. These strategies are defined and explained in more detail below alongside some illustrating examples. Though I define them individually below, these strategies are most often used in combination. These strategies are utilized across multiple modes, both linguistic and paralinguistic; in the case of MWHIA's Facebook page, these paralinguistic features are visual and include features such as font, colours, photos, and graphics, which is facilitated by the multimodal nature of the internet (Jewitt, 2013; Vásquez, 2019).

5.1.1 Reversal

The most salient and all-encompassing strategy employed by MWHIA is his *reversal* of the gender roles and stereotypes we are socialized into: characteristics and functions traditionally associated with one gender are pointedly treated as belonging to the opposite gender. Instead of masculine words being treated as the default, "firewoman" is matter-of-factly presented as a gender-neutral word that encompasses both male and female firefighters (Figure 2); men in the workplace are subject to scrutiny, objectification, and strict dress codes imposed by their female superiors (Figure 3); and the term "testerical" has replaced "hysterical" to refer to overly emotional men (Figure 4; the reference to testes mirrors the etymology of the word "hysteria," from the Greek *hystera*, "uterus" [Merriam-Webster, n.d.-a], which references female reproductive anatomy). In the fictional world constructed by MWHIA and his commenters, androcentrism has become gynocentrism, women freely sexually objectify and police men from their positions of power, and men are pathologized for their emotions and reactions to their own subjugation. This strategy is discussed further in Sections 3.2, "Themes," and 3.3.2, "Reflection, defamiliarization, and de-invisibilization."

5.1.2 Allusion

Often, MWHIA satirizes misogyny through parody—that is, he *alludes* to sexist culture and media by selecting elements of his source material (e.g., common phrases, talking points, visuals and graphic design features) and humorously referencing them or integrating them into his posts, recontextualized. The first and perhaps most obvious intertextual reference appears in the name of the page: "Man Who Has It All." The concept of women "having it all," which has basically come to refer to having both children and a career, seems to have been popularized by the publication of Helen Gurley Brown's book *Having It All: Love, Success, Sex, Money… Even if You're Starting With Nothing* in 1982 (Szalai, 2015). The way in which the media sometimes
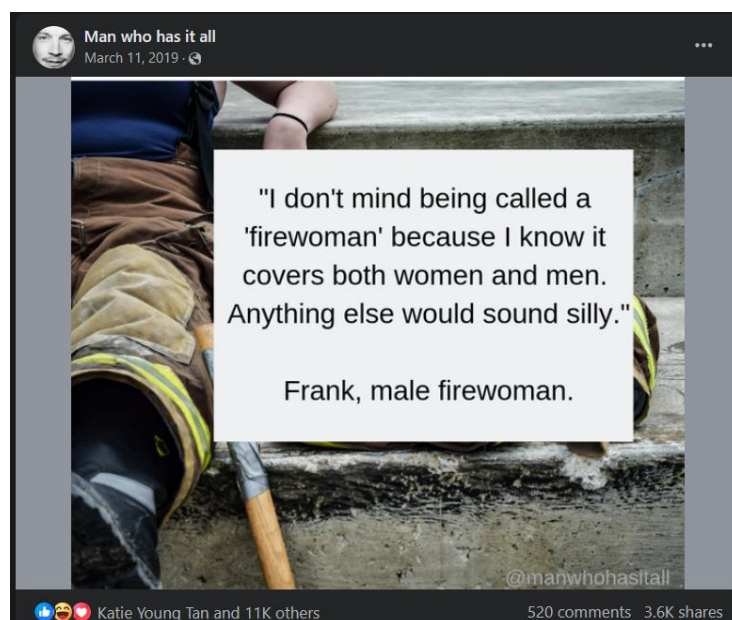

Figure 2. MWHIA Facebook post about the phrase "male firewoman," posted March 11, 2019. [6]
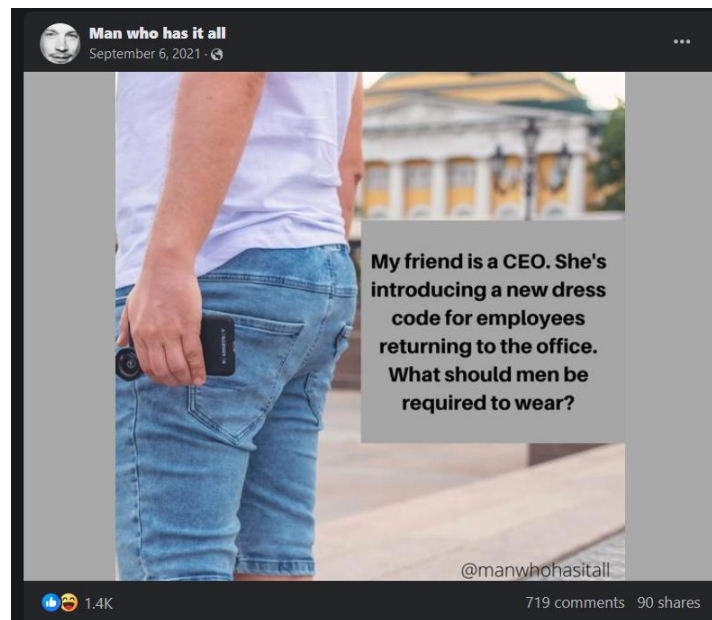
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[6]

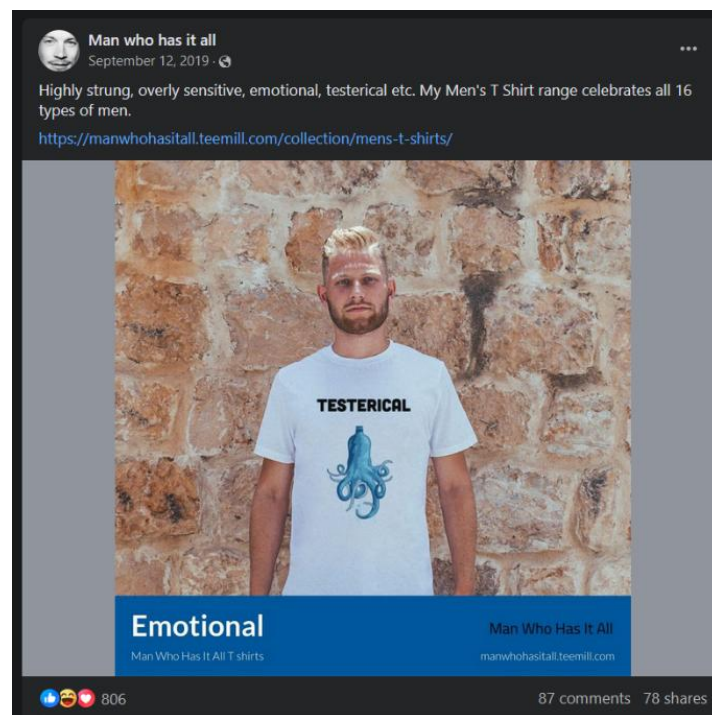Figure 3. MWHIA Facebook post about workplace dress codes for male employees, posted September 6, 2021.[7]

Figure 4. MWHIA Facebook post about the term "testerical," posted September 12, 2019.[8]

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[7] https://www.facebook.com/MANWHOHASITALL/posts/pfbid0369AdVQgB4E28HBuAm7oRKGbhqYC2dz42mKoNAGCEwEMGeuNiACnPVvHZigCsmBsSl

[8] https://www.facebook.com/MANWHOHASITALL/posts/pfbid027xCpHfSzQNtjKdygTqPp6VTzHjPUgJTCKhbokzTGNfMADqgUPvGkinrg9NEBxqdfl

uses this phrase has been criticized as sexist: for example, in 2023, when Jessica Ardern resigned as New Zealand prime minister, the BBC responded with the headline "Jacinda Ardern resigns: Can women really have it all?" The BBC faced immediate backlash, prompting them to change the headline and issue an apology (BBC, 2023; T. Wong, 2023). Cosslett (2023) points out that the wording of this concept as "having it *all*" "suggests a uniquely feminine greediness," and that the framing of these conversations perpetuates a double standard against women, as it is "virtually never asked of fathers" whether they can have both children and a successful career. I would argue as well that these conversations perpetuate the idea that women's primary value is as mothers. Often, it is silently assumed that all women want to have children (in order to feel truly complete and have it "all"), and that a career will interfere with their supposed most important functions in society: birthing and taking care of children. A man's ability to have children while also having a career is not questioned, perhaps, because it is assumed that the responsibility of raising the children he fathered will rightly fall to his wife.

While the recent BBC controversy demonstrates that some still uncritically put forth the question of whether women can "have it all" well after the 1980s, MWHIA and his community have instead taken up this phrase ironically, with one commenter mock-innocently asking whether a man really can "have it all" and wondering whether the "rigors of academia" will impede his ability to be a good husband and father (Figure 5).

Some of the other kinds of texts *alluded* to by MWHIA and his commenters include sexist advertisements from the 1950s, as well as websites, Facebook pages, and Facebook groups offering business and lifestyle advice to busy mothers. MWHIA borrows both the language and the aesthetics of these texts. In Figure 6, an advertisement for paint dated around 1950, the woman featured in the ad is condescendingly referred to as a "clever girl" who "painted it herself," while a post by MWHIA (Figure 7) features a woman drawn in a similar art style, wearing a similar style of clothing, and discussing gender in a similar old-fashioned-sounding way. Figures 8 and 9 provide examples of genuine Facebook groups for so-called "mom bloggers," while Figures 10 and 11 are taken from Facebook posts offering unironic self-care tips for mothers such as "wake
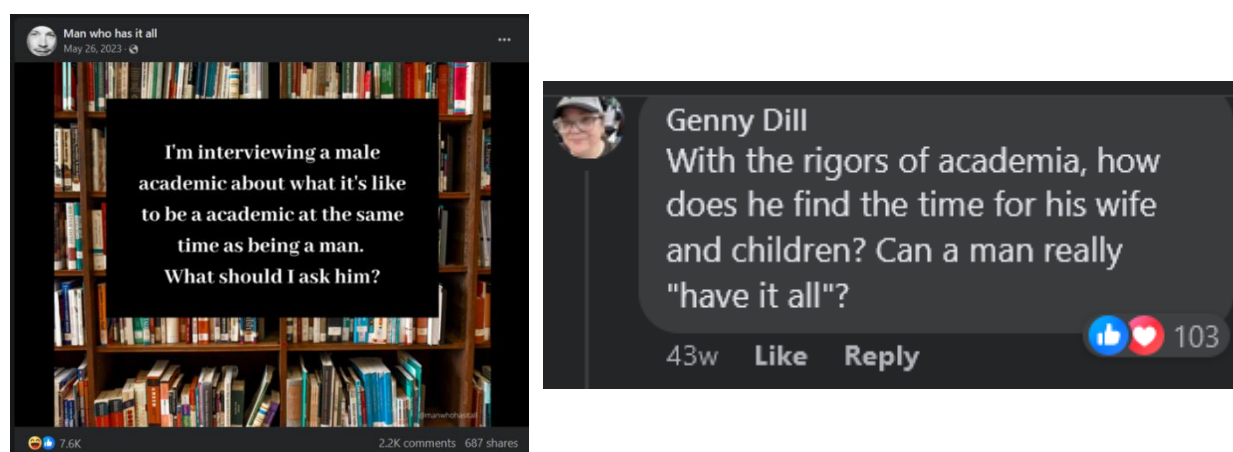

Figure 5. MWHIA Facebook post about being a man in academia, posted May 26, 2023 (with comment). [9]

Figure 6. Advertisement for paint, dated c. 1950 (archived at Alamy).[10]

Figure 7. MWHIA Facebook post about men's reproductive rights, posted December 29, 2022.[11]

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[10] https://www.alamy.com/stock-photo-advertisement-featuring-woman-having-painted-her-house-with-darkaline-32308663.html

[11] https://www.facebook.com/MANWHOHASITALL/posts/pfbid02gqoMo8JjjL7QzmGjS3D77KbBjtbdGixiwkuw3zh1Kxv2xGtqK3NcbgfmoJnqU9wvl

Figure 8. Facebook cover image for the group "Blog & Business: Moms who do it all."[12]

Figure 9. Facebook cover image for the group "Ready Set Blog for Traffic (From Mom to Mompreneur)."[13]

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[12] https://www.facebook.com/groups/blogandbusinessmoms/
[13] https://www.facebook.com/groups/momtomompreneur/

Figure 10. Image from smartsimplemom.com, shared by the Facebook page Powerfully Essential on April 11, 2020.[14]

Figure 11. Facebook post by LifeCell on November 12, 2023.[15]

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[14] https://www.facebook.com/powerfullyessential/posts/i-recently-came-across-this-self-care-tips-for-busy-moms-and-thought-how-appropr/3035937083300357/?paipv=0&eav=AfZ_xXGZU2rJHUV1pslsMsE91vjZmwLIp7uIZwam9kgB3DS9lo_nih57em5yQ8-gI2o&_rdr

[15] https://www.facebook.com/LifeCellInternational/posts/1400451060569003/?paipv=0&eav=Afap8TneHKKAb-lSK6xqkOwabnQzVqy3_HfmZ0xONMc5tgh0Scjxco6AUTc0TapvDdc&_rdr

up before your kids," "do [your] hair and makeup in the morning," and "schedule your 'me' time." MWHIA designs his posts in Figures 12 and 13 using similar bright and cheerful colours, cutesy handwriting-style fonts, cartoonish graphics like a smiling sun, and images of idyllic domestic life such as a tidy living room. These posts make linguistic reference to the sites in Figures 8–11 as well, using phrases and tips like "me time" (this is borrowed by the commenter in Figure 14 as well) and getting up before the wife and kids.

Figure 12. MWHIA Facebook post about chores and other responsibilities men have, posted August 31, 2019.[16]

Figure 13. MWHIA Facebook post about men's chores and "me-time," posted October 5, 2021.[17]

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[16] https://www.facebook.com/MANWHOHASITALL/posts/pfbid02JVaybNGzRw2CZGn2Sxjs2AhGx8pTu7NZ6bdYW7n6a1JeQgMKLbpmw8agYNwm4oRzl

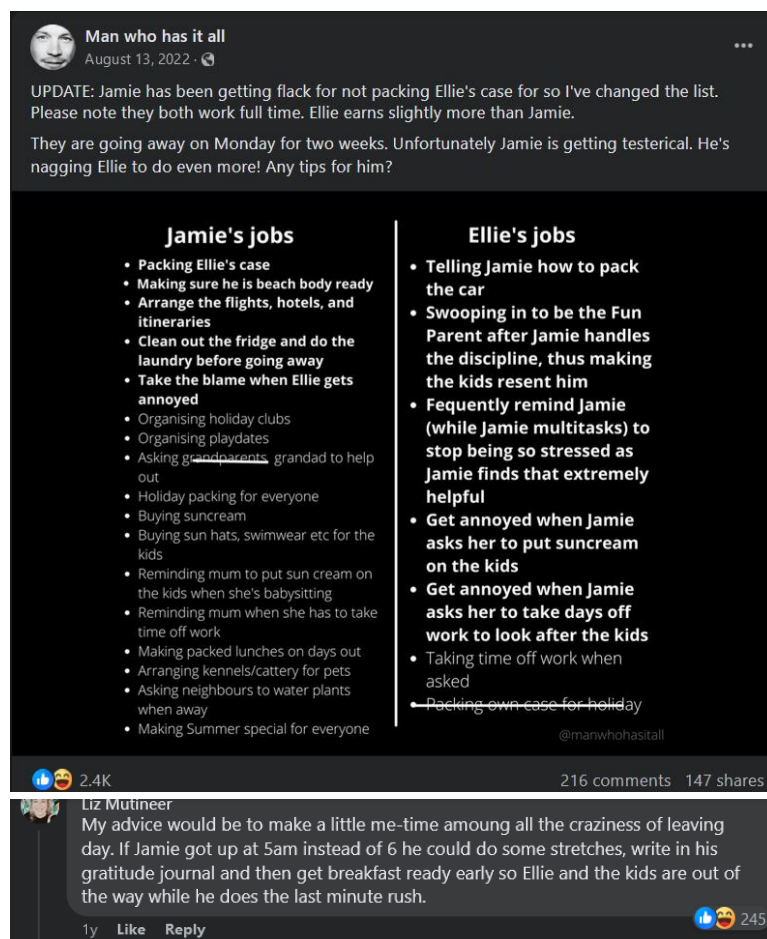[17] https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=4339092296209728

Figure 14. MWHIA Facebook post about domestic responsibilities, posted August 13, 2022 (with comment).[18]

It may or may not be MWHIA's intent to critique these kinds of "mom blogs" and lifestyle pages specifically, but it is clearly his intent to critique the overarching attitudes of the culture that produced them: namely, that women ought to first and foremost be mothers and domestic servants who complete their daily chores effortlessly, all while keeping themselves adequately attractive and maintaining a positive attitude.

In general, these *allusions* serve to both situate MWHIA's satire in our broader culture, and to identify the elements of that culture, such as gender roles and ideologies, that MWHIA seeks to critique.

5.1.3 *Distillation*

MWHIA's posts are not necessarily hyperbolic per se; rather, they make the implications of sexist talking points explicit by *distilling* them to a brief statement and/or taking them to their logical extreme, such as in Figure 15, which points out the absurd and sometimes contradictory beauty advice given to women by placing the phrases "avoid opening your eyes" and "don't close

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https://www.facebook.com/MANWHOHASITALL/posts/pfbid028pmYXVteEs6EQaYen1v273wJsdoV8w8gasWdv7mKi562J44p6FpyNQjzAePVag5El
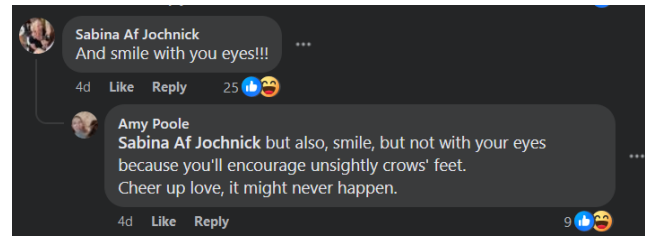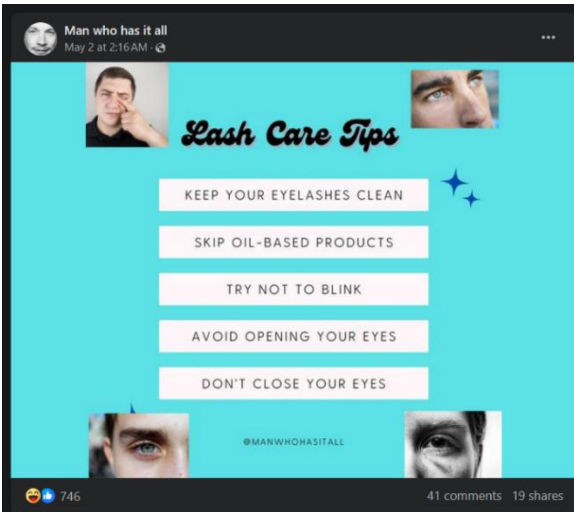
Figure 15. MWHIA Facebook post about eyelash care tips, posted May 2, 2024 (with comments).[19]

your eyes" one after the other; the comments catch on to this, telling men to both "smile with you [*sic*] eyes" and "smile, but not with your eyes because you'll encourage unsightly crows' feet." His posts are very short-form, most often a single image with a few lines of text that state his point plainly. Part of this may be motivated by the nature of social media, where users tend to scroll through their timelines rapidly and not spend much time on any one post in particular, so longer posts might not be as successful (Gligorić et al., 2019); however, it also has the effect of giving his posts a humorously blunt and matter-of-fact tone, as if these gender roles are simply common sense (Figure 16).

Figure 16. MWHIA Facebook post about men and humour, posted April 21, 2024.[20]

[19]

https://www.facebook.com/MANWHOHASITALL/posts/pfbid0Gbq73CkMLFpDLwuZwa2TB72zCj3QxR9ay3Bfy qTXwVsTLVeVc1vkSb7STyP2tzudl
[20]

https://www.facebook.com/MANWHOHASITALL/posts/pfbid02QLU1JiVrqoiGD5M2g1w7sww1YTFbDj2ff19X Mian28zbUgUBW2UFezmxefffFpjiJl

When the posts themselves are somewhat more open-ended and/or offer the floor to commenters, the comments are often willing to take on the task of *distilling* the sexism by being more explicit: one commenter, in response to a question about men over 50, simply states "Obviously they're void of any *real* merit, (what man past thirty is valuable anyway?)" (Figure 17). Bandyopadhyay (2019) identifies this "aggression" and pointed "lack of political correctness" as a notable feature of MWHIA's comments section.

5.1.4 Collaboration

Social media is designed to be participatory: Facebook users can directly interact with posts by liking/reacting, sharing, commenting, and replying to other comments. Users can see each
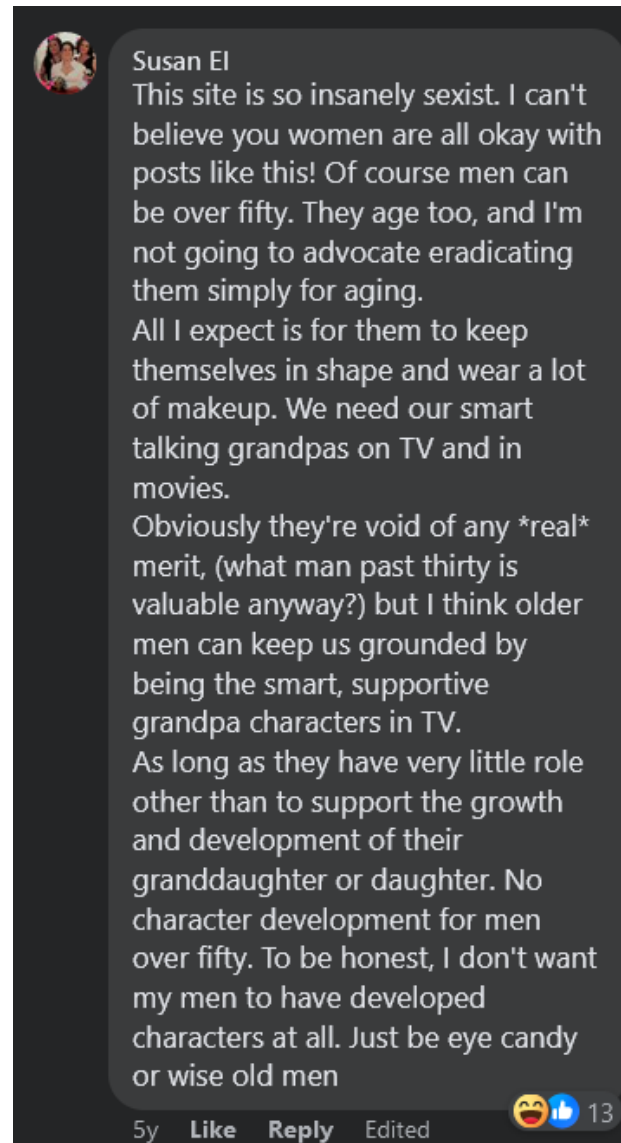

Figure 17. MWHIA Facebook post asking commenters about men over 50, posted January 13, 2019 (with comment).[21]

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[21]

other's reactions, shares, and comments, and are therefore able to interact not only with the page, but also with each other. Commenters are offered an opportunity to co-construct an alternate universe with different social rules by roleplaying as its inhabitants and effectively create their own satirical texts that adopt and reuse elements of the original posts and other comments, *collaboratively* forming a network of intertextual satire across MWHIA's Facebook page. Given how short-form and minimal the posts themselves usually are, and given that these posts are sometimes explicitly formulated as discussion questions (Figures 18–20), commenters are often just as essential a part of the satire as the posts themselves.

Figure 18. MWHIA Facebook post asking commenters about vocal men, posted March 31, 2024.[22]

Figure 19. MWHIA Facebook post asking commenters about older men having sex, posted March 11, 2024.[23]

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[22] https://www.facebook.com/MANWHOHASITALL/posts/pfbid0ThjU48fZ14RcVFsvxpQ9cdbfj75TWzetQ4CgTJk6mNFJrGEoNFArJM6s2kZftYsZl

[23] https://www.facebook.com/MANWHOHASITALL/posts/pfbid02AM2ydfBHDW5A9m1gxf1YEQtbpbdPg3s3PKyuXAkCEWcmaMYBtG2PreoMp3xPntYwl

Figure 20. MWHIA Facebook post about urban planning for men, posted May 2, 2024.[24]

5.2   Themes

MWHIA's posts discuss a range of subject matter, including professional roles, domestic roles, the role of language in enforcing gender stereotypes, physical appearance, biological essentialism, sexist infantilization, and policing of men's bodies. Two of the most prominent recurring themes were broadly identified as follows: 1. gynocentrism, and 2. the intersection of domestic and professional roles (Sections 3.2.1 and 3.2.2, respectively).

5.2.1   *Gynocentric language and worldviews*

In the real world, many cultures and languages operate under androcentric paradigms: in English, for example, words like "mankind" are assumed to apply to all of humankind, occupation names like "policeman" are touted as gender-neutral, and prescriptive grammarians have argued for the generic, supposedly gender-neutral "he" over other options like "he/she" or singular "they" (Bodine, 1975). In MWHIA's universe, these paradigms are *reversed*: the word "matron" replaces the word "patron" (which derives from the Latin *pater*, "father" [Merriam-Webster., n.d.-b]), "woman and husband" replaces the phrase "man and wife" at weddings, and "womankind," "countrywoman," and "firewoman" have become supposedly gender-neutral (Figures 21, 22, and 23, respectively). As he often does, MWHIA poses questions to his audience, inviting them to *collaborate* in the satire (Figures 22 and 23).

Such gender biases extend beyond—and are reinforced by—language. Clinical trials, for instance, have historically underrepresented women (Holdcroft, 2007). In Figure 24, this is again *reversed*: a female scientist states that they only use "normal humans" in their clinical trials. In Figure 23, a commenter specifically claims that gynocentric language exists because women are simply more competent: "important roles in a company or organisation usually have the word woman in the name of the role… because women are the best qualified for these positions." Language is inextricably tied to other gender ideologies and biases: for example, the ideology that

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[24]

https://www.facebook.com/MANWHOHASITALL/posts/pfbid02jDqmfJHsBxd8mqPmPHGjQGU5mDxa2WCCwrdhw24Hapz3VWPWM7wiSWh39GA44g1yl
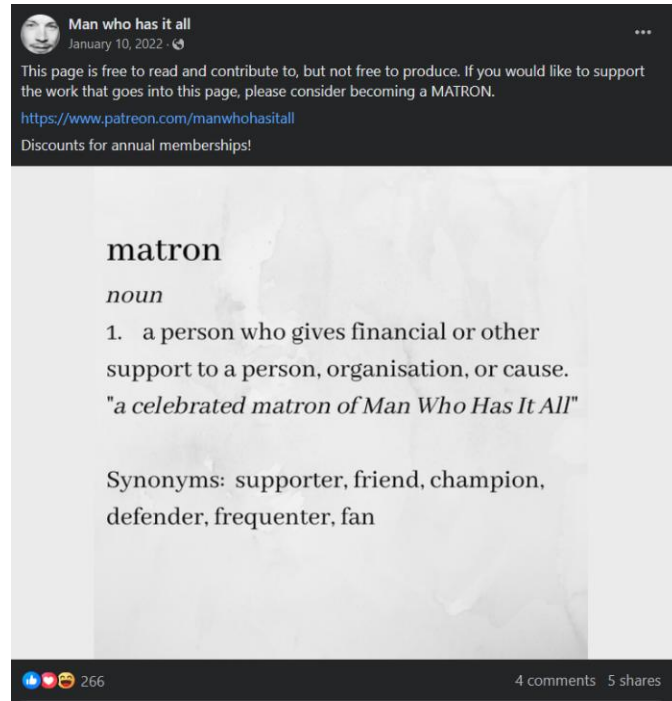
Figure 21. MWHIA Facebook post asking followers to provide financial support through the site Patreon, posted January 10, 2022.[25]

Figure 22. MWHIA Facebook post about the phrase "woman and husband" (a parody of "man and wife"), posted April 4, 2021.[26]

25

https://www.facebook.com/MANWHOHASITALL/posts/pfbid022ZERXzCYiJeLsori2WUYbkQdkZf8gjXRdvipC
U43dJ97jdVpGJLqtshmQL8gLUEPl
26

https://www.facebook.com/MANWHOHASITALL/posts/pfbid0ogXR1KvoNABKRauLDGd8MpiZPpftf7sV2B7x4
FXiobpqEDjgsyRSNFaeYjQQvnuKl

Figure 23. MWHIA Facebook post about gynocentric gender-neutral terms, posted March 23, 2024 (with comment).[27]

Figure 24. MWHIA Facebook post about gender bias in clinical trials, posted October 11, 2019.[28]

27
https://www.facebook.com/MANWHOHASITALL/posts/pfbid0q1zWGoYXpe95oWrWFN1GyQ4fXoFi8vgHrCNEhgEvr75TuNHP73S4SX6TE2vPb7kBl
28
https://www.facebook.com/MANWHOHASITALL/posts/pfbid0aGSWpLbCpNSPEaKSaVH9Bwi1FvX7JC4pSQ4mD7GyYbiVjQkiA8kZA15yDfGJntgTl

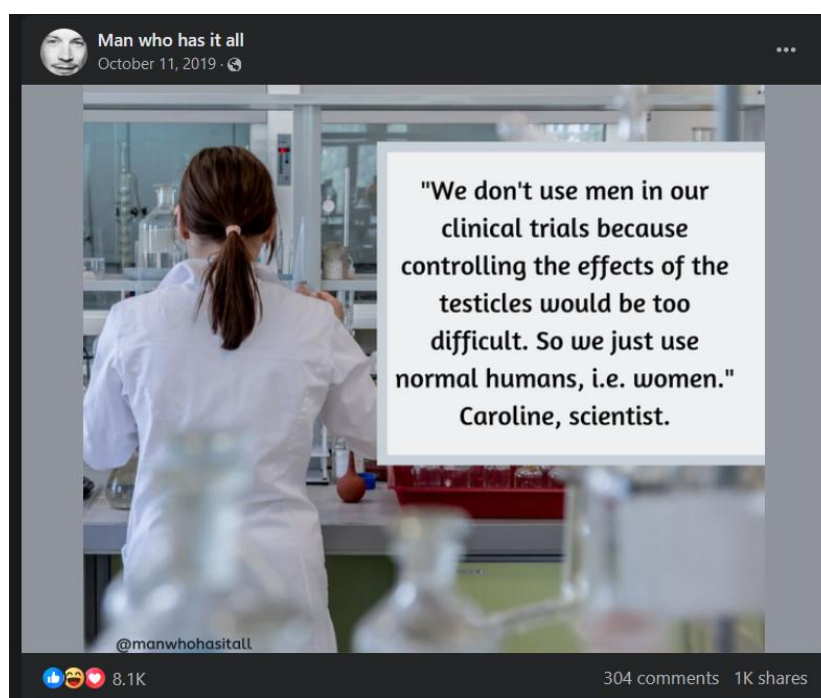men are the unmarked gender and women are the marked gender contributes to assumptions that a man in a senior position was simply and straightforwardly the most qualified candidate, but that a woman in a similar position must have been put there for some secondary reason having to do with her gender, such as political correctness or a diversity quota. The commenter in Figure 23 *distills* these kinds of sexist assumptions into a straightforward, matter-of-fact statement that women are simply "the best qualified" for these positions, which is supposedly natural reflected in language.

While the above examples (Figures 23 and 24) have more to do directly with medicine and the workplace than with language, language is still a tool that reinforces common-sense ideologies about gender. In Figure 25, like in Figure 24, women are explicitly referred to as "normal": in Figure 24, the opposition is between "men" and "normal humans," while in Figure 25, it is between "'male board member[s]'" and "normal board members." By explicitly labelling women as "normal" (and men, implicitly, as deviations from normal), these posts *distill* the tacit the tacit assumption in medical research, language, and our wider culture that men are the default, meaning that anything that is true of men should be generalizable to the rest of the human population. As well, they draw attention to the role of language in normalizing androcentric social structures.

5.2.2 Domestic and professional roles

As discussed in Section 3.1.2, "Allusion," patriarchal belief systems often value women only insofar as they are able to carry and raise children. Women are relegated to domestic and mothering roles, while men are supposedly better suited to professional and leadership roles. MWHIA identifies these ideologies and *reverses* them. In Figure 26, he strongly implies that a man sounds "comic and fraudulent" when he advertises his doctorate. This phrasing directly

Figure 25. MWHIA Facebook post about the term "male board member," posted April 5, 2017.[29]
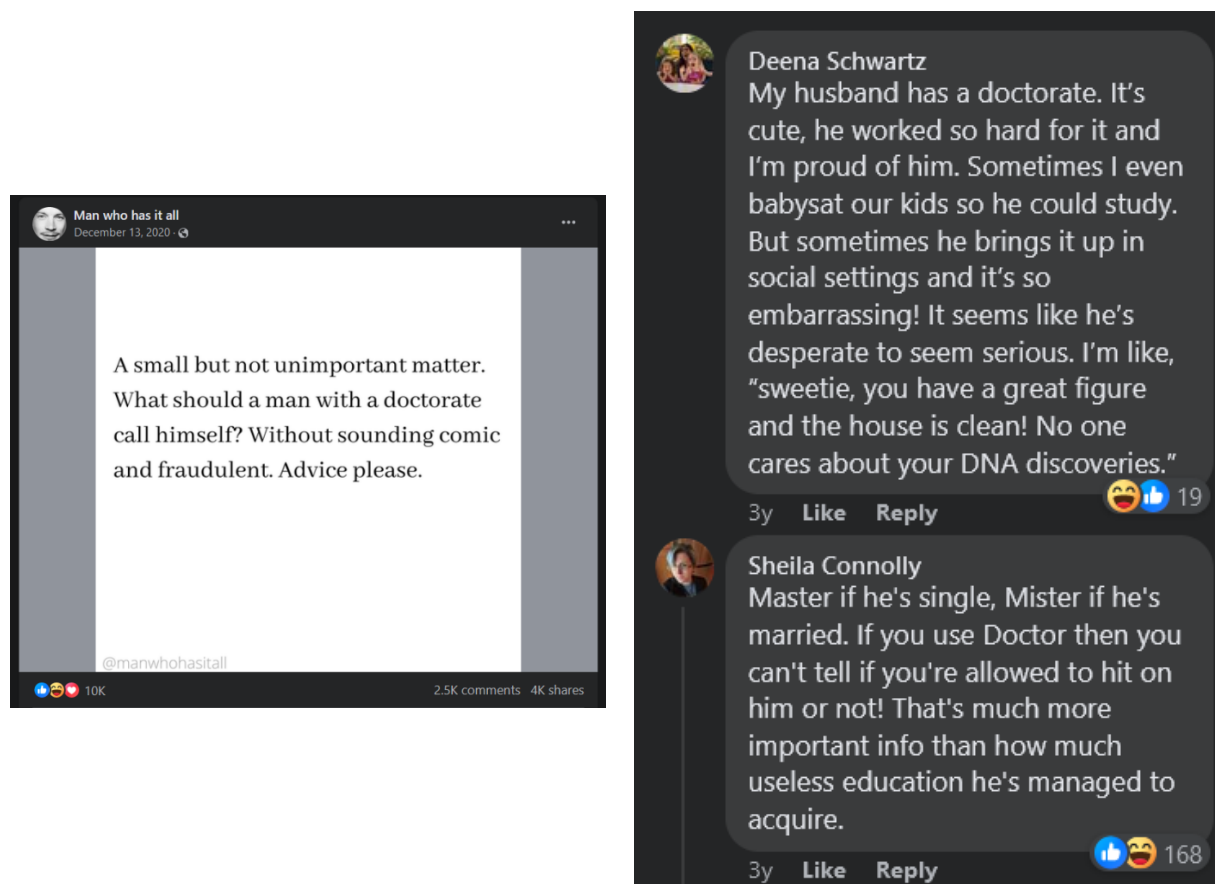

Figure 26. MWHIA Facebook post about men with doctorates, posted December 13, 2020 (with comments).[30]

alludes to Joseph Epstein's *Wall Street Journal* opinion piece, published just two days earlier, in which he claims Jill Biden calling herself Dr. Biden "feels fraudulent, even comic" (Epstein, 2020).

This is not an isolated occurrence; women in academia are often viewed with skepticism and scorn and reminded that their place is supposedly in the home. The community surrounding MWHIA recognizes this supposed incompatibility between professional and domestic roles, even when domestic labour and fathering are not mentioned explicitly in the original posts. Under this same post, a commenter mentions that she has bluntly told her PhD-holding husband "'No one cares about your DNA discoveries'" because "'you have a great figure and the house is clean!'" Another commenter explicitly points out the devaluation of women's accomplishments, as well as how patriarchy strips women of personhood in their own right by defining them through their relations to men, by claiming that a man's marital status is "much more important info than how much useless education he's managed to acquire." Under another post about men in academia (Figure 27), commenters stress the importance of men's "fatherly and husbandly duties" and "find[ing] the time for his wife and children," all while infantilizing them by referring to them as

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https://www.facebook.com/MANWHOHASITALL/posts/pfbid0baznAQfDbuwBadVuQ7rEQSGCWdbGUHYyTS2xZYRG1LnCKRhY2Rwp2PuW4ebRgs8kl
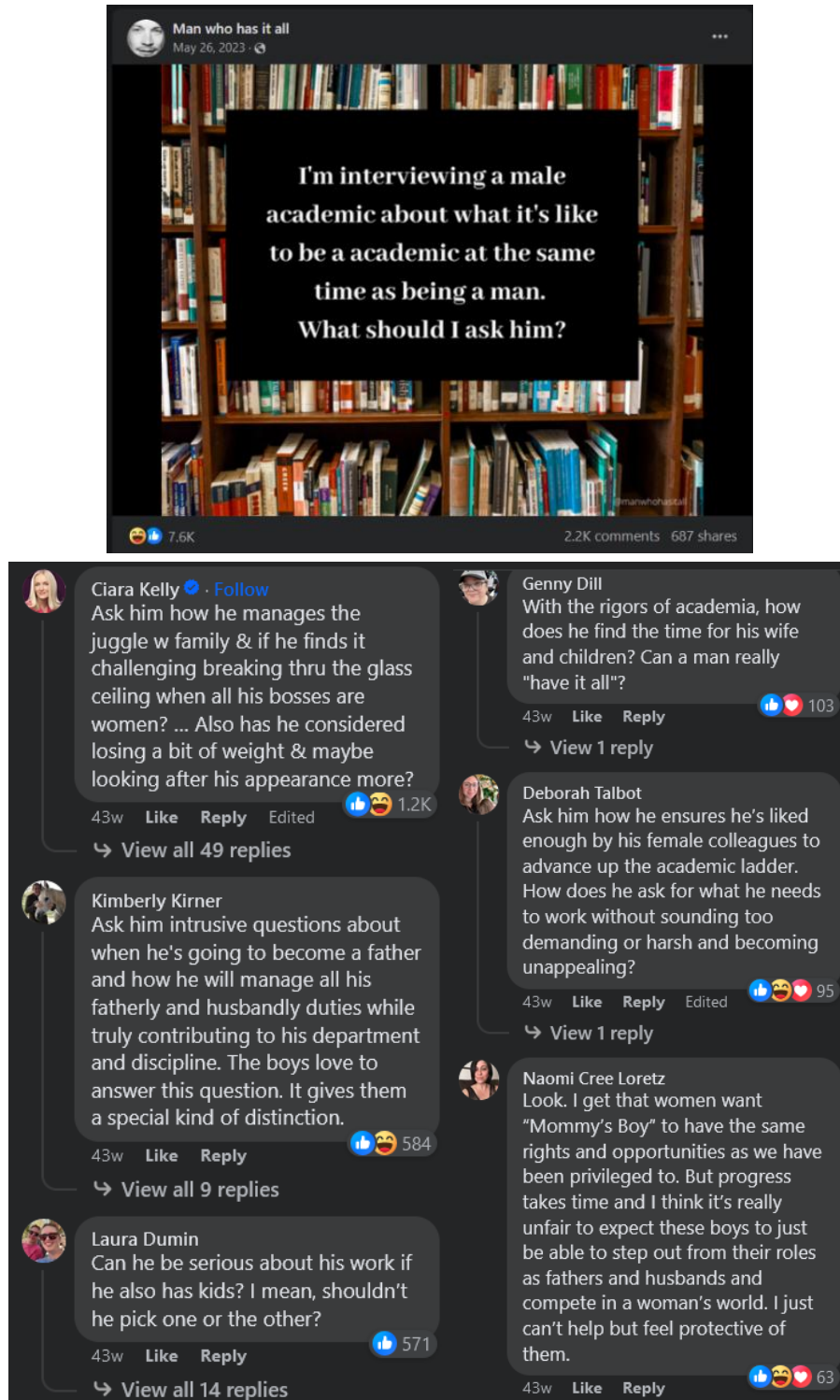
Figure 27. MWHIA Facebook post about being a man in academia, posted May 26, 2023 (with comments).[31]

"boys." Finally, in Figure 28, under a post sarcastically celebrating men in the tech industry that includes infantilizingly cute cartoon images of men, a commenter claims to be a "male System Administrator," to which another commenter, completely unprompted, brings up his supposed responsibilities as a father: "don't you feel bad about what you're doing to your family?" The *distilled* implication is that all men ought to prioritize their real calling, fatherhood, over any individual personal goals such as professional success.

In Figure 29, MWHIA claims that "men have a natural talent" for domestic work. This mirrors the stereotype that a woman's place is in the home, while also evoking the pseudo-benevolence and condescending praise offered to women who do domestic labour for being supposedly "equal but different" to men in ways that "we should absolutely celebrate"; in this case, being supposedly universally good at household chores, whereas men are universally incompetent. This particular justification for gender roles—that they are merely reflections of innate biology—is prevalent; it has been claimed in popular discourse that women have better language skills than men, for exam ple, often with appeals to neuroscience research. This is in spite of research indicating that sex-based brain differences are neither as pronounced nor as binary as the popular discourse would lead one to believe (Cameron, 2014; Saguy et al., 2021). The comments take up this bio-essentialist argument, feigning objectivity by claiming that it is "just a fact" and "genetic," so it "can't be changed," while also asserting that earning money "is harder and more important" than domestic labour, one even admitting to weaponizing their perceived incompetence to ensure that their spouse remains the one who has to clean the house: "'I 'do it wrong' so that I don't have to do it."[32] These comments, along with the absurdity of the idea that an entire group of people could be biologically hard-wired for a task as hyper-specific as "cleaning the house before guests
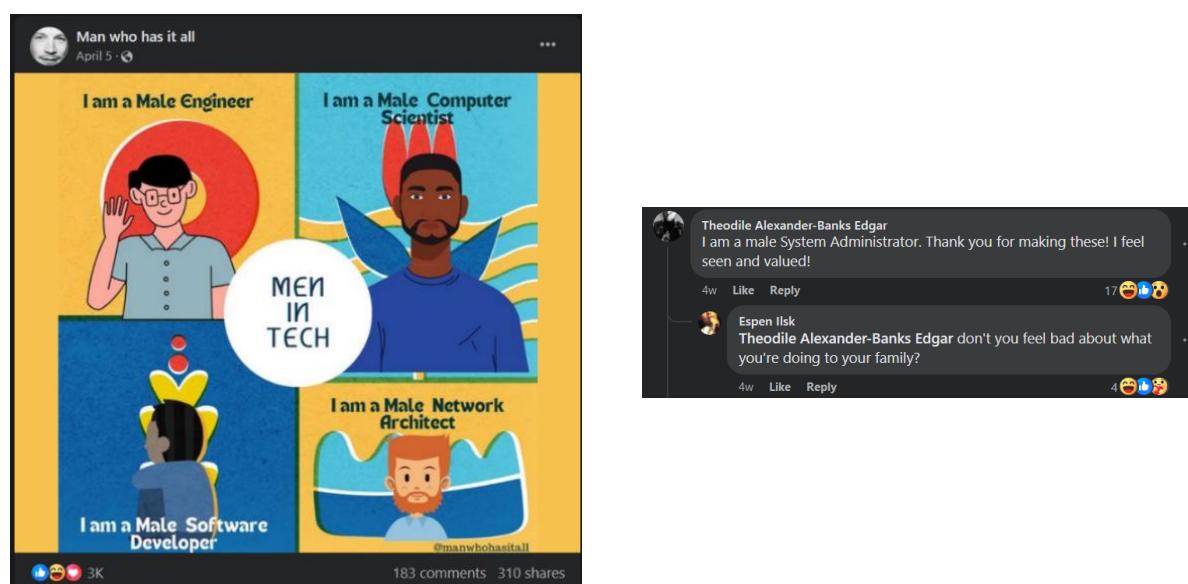
Figure 28. MWHIA Facebook post about men in tech, posted April 5, 2024 (with comments).[33]

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[32] B. Wong (2022) defines the concept of "weaponized incompetence" as the "act of feigning incompetence at any one task… to get out of doing it"; it has been taken up by social media to criticize husbands who contribute to domestic inequality.

[33] https://www.facebook.com/MANWHOHASITALL/posts/pfbid0P1h7EEBMnu4Qo446ZDcZbZU9rgF6XQ2oMZqDzZaQTBzrhwC4xVMRSEt8NHfrV2UUl
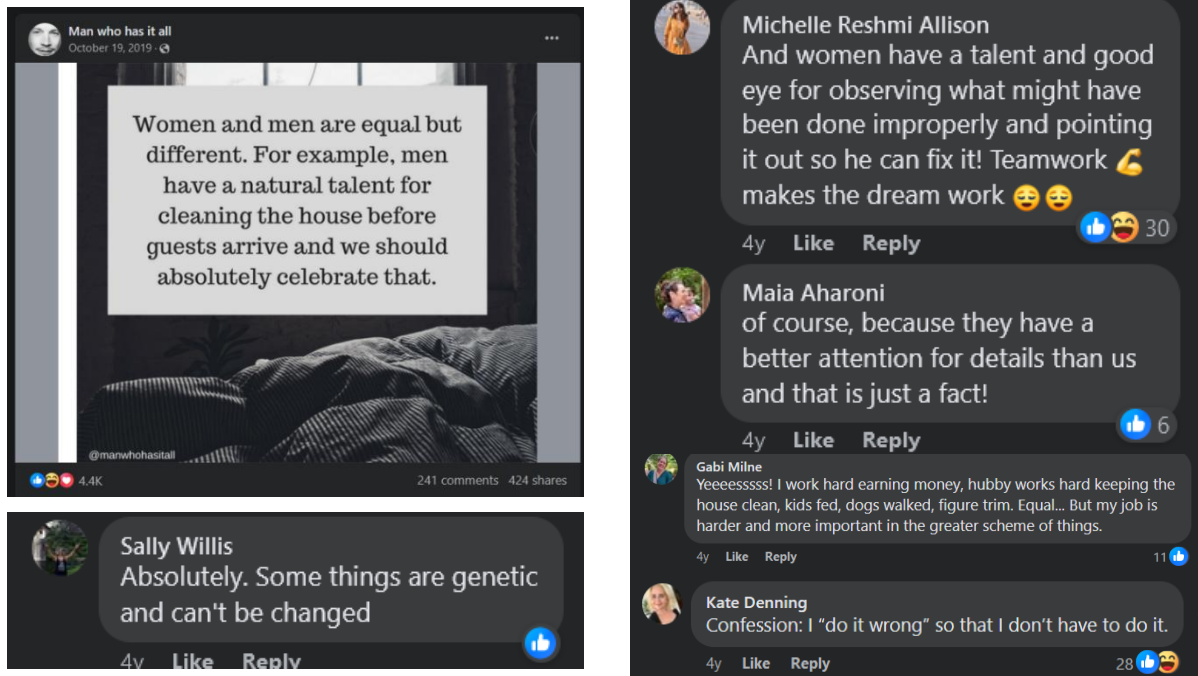
Figure 29. MWHIA Facebook post about men's supposed natural talent for domestic tasks, posted October 19, 2019 (with comments).[34]

arrive," *distill* and reveal this argument for what it is: uncritical support for a status quo that devalues women's autonomy and labour.

Functionally, the bio-essentialist argument for gender roles is simply a means of reinforcing existing power structures that limit the spheres of life in which women can be seen as legitimate actors and keep women out of positions of power. In addition, painting men as innately incompetent at chores gives them an excuse to not even attempt to accept some domestic responsibility while simultaneously trapping women in their role as homemakers. This is a recurring asymmetry in such bio-essentialist talking points: whereas some supposed innate biological difference denies women agency and power, the same supposed difference as applied to men relieves them of responsibility. Cameron (2014) notes a similar asymmetry in her discussion of ideologies of brain sex: "Some women may be flattered, or consoled, by the idea that they excel in verbal communication, while for some men the idea that they are naturally poor communicators may serve as a convenient excuse for insensitive behavior" (p. 293).

5.3 The significance of Man Who Has It All

Finally, it is worth discussing how MWHIA's strategies help contribute to feminist resistance and redefinition. Below, I consider what MWHIA does for the individuals within his Facebook community, as well as how his satire prompts us to reflect on our lived reality in the binaristically gendered world we occupy together.

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[34]

https://www.facebook.com/MANWHOHASITALL/posts/pfbid02KtQGsLnDRcnYTekbXmqQwGsCVruo2uG4Rf1wZjqQ5QbYa1TGEYUxnoJuvUHU7Jf6l

5.3.1 Community, support, and lived experience

Because the internet is such a heterogeneous place, consisting of users across a range of backgrounds with a range of beliefs, MWHIA's audience is probably likewise heterogeneous, and it cannot be assumed that all or most commenters have the same goals in mind; it is possible that some see the page as mostly a source of entertainment. However, after reading through the comments section of several dozen posts, some general patterns do seem to emerge.

As seen in the samples of data, based purely on names, most commenters appear to be women and/or AFAB (though of course this is difficult to verify for every commenter). Most often, they simply play along with the joke and take on the role of fictional misandrists. However, some will occasionally break character to express how the page has personally helped and comforted them as victims of patriarchy and misogyny. For example, in 2019, the official Facebook page for IRONMAN England (a full-distance triathlon) announced a side event called "Iron Girl" (Figure 30), drawing social media backlash (Smith, 2019). In response, MWHIA posted a parody of this announcement, turning "Iron Girl" into the equally infantilizing "Iron Boy," which he mockingly

Figure 30. Facebook post by IRONMAN England announcing Iron Girl on January 17, 2019.[35]

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[35] The original IRONMAN England post is no longer available; screenshot archived by Smith (2019)

called a "woke side event" (Figure 31). One professional female athlete commented under MWHIA's post to express gratitude, mentioning that "we really do have all these arguments and more levelled against our participation, earnings and equal treatment on a daily basis, so seeing a thread of people unanimously rip the piss out of them has made my day!" Under a different post mocking the asymmetry and paternalism of the phrase "man and wife" by *reversing* it to "woman and husband," another woman commented a personal anecdote about a sexist minister who lectured her about a wife's submission to her husband, simply because she refused to be introduced as "Mrs." followed by her husband's name. She added that this incident "still makes [her] boil with anger" and that MWHIA is her "happy place," and other women replied with sympathy and similar stories (Figure 32).
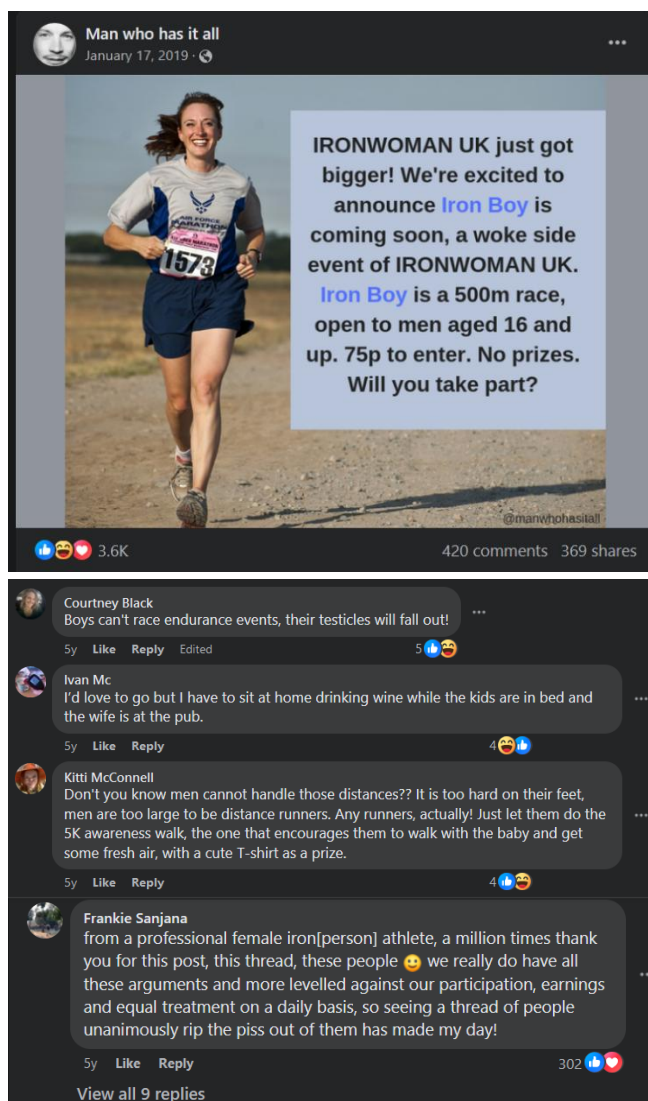
Figure 31. MWHIA Facebook post in response to the Iron Girl controversy, parodying the original post, posted January 17, 2019 (with comments).[36]
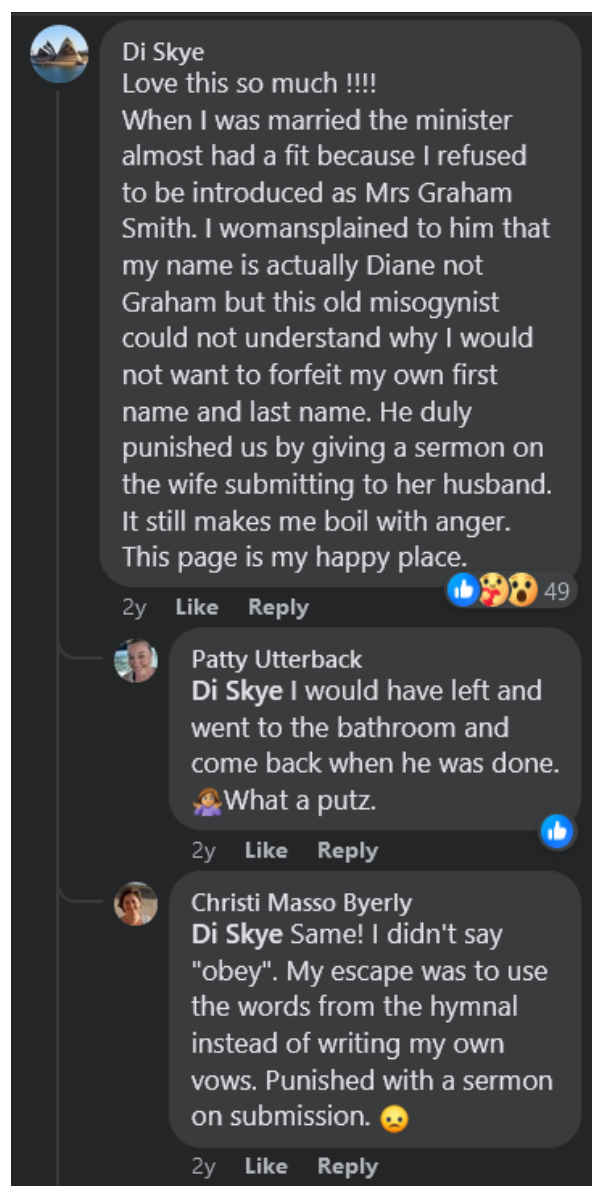
Figure 32. MWHIA Facebook post about the phrase "woman and husband" (a parody of "man and wife"), posted April 4, 2021 (with comments).[37]

Even when comments stay in character, they often carry bitter and aggrieved undertones, likely because the real-world subject matter referenced by the posts is a source of a great deal of pain and frustration to many women and AFAB individuals: under a post about men in clinical trials, a commenter claims that "men just imagine their pain" in a sarcastic mirror of how women's pain is often dismissed by doctors (Figure 33). In a different post about self-care for men, one commenter coins the term "wife stitch," a reference to the husband stitch, a medical procedure

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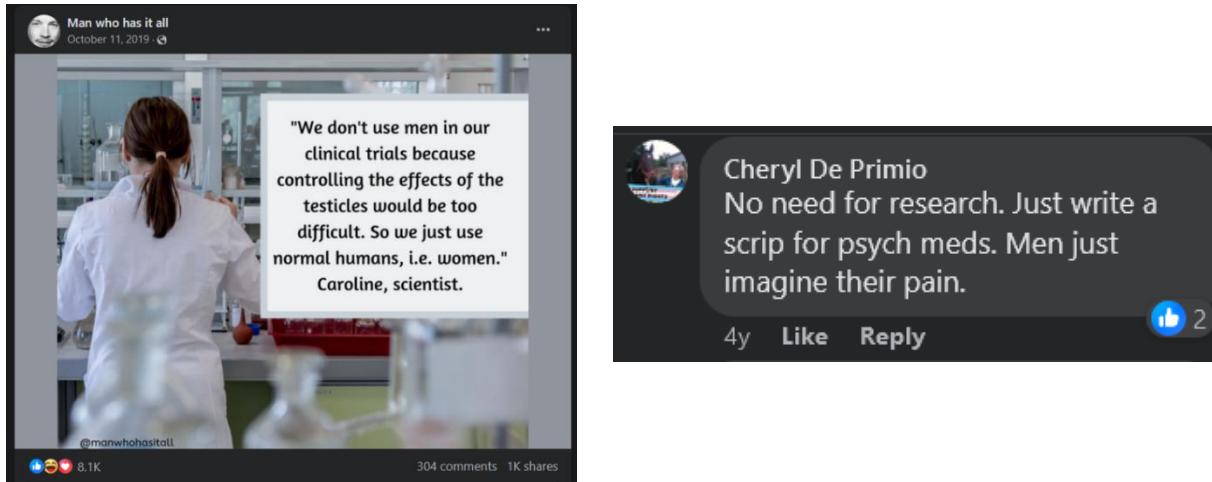
Figure 33. MWHIA Facebook post about gender bias in clinical trials, posted October 11, 2019 (with comments).[38]

sometimes undertaken after vaginal births in which tearing has occurred; in this procedure, one or more additional, non-medically necessary sutures are added in order to tighten the vaginal opening and thereby increase sexual pleasure for the woman's husband during future intercourse (Kosi, 2025). Another commenter replies to this point with a graphic description of childbirth—"spending 20 hours forcing a screaming human out of their private parts (without the use of pain medicine, of course, for the full 'men empowerment experience')"—and scathingly remarks that "a good husband would be making sure to think about how to please his wife at all times" so that his wife does not "[leave] right after the kid is born because a man is no longer desirable after all that" (Figure 34). Under the same post, another commenter wonders if "we laugh at these [posts] because when we think about what they really mean for women we would either revolt or sob uncontrollably."

The *New York Post* claims that MWHIA's posts are "funny because they're true" (Dawson, 2015); I would go further and argue that they are also funny because that truth—the reminder of the lived reality of women and AFAB people—hurts. To some commenters, MWHIA provides a place to vent their anger towards patriarchy and commiserate with a community of people who have similar lived experiences and can empathize. Bandyopadhyay (2019), writing for Feminism in India, describes her experience of browsing the page:

> When I first went through the page, I felt a sudden, powerful surge of relief. The world created was convincing enough to strip me of the fear of harassment every time I stepped out, to make me feel that my beauty wasn't the only thing the world cared about, to make me feel the way the dominant sex can currently afford to, for a half hour. I would find myself returning to it every time I needed a mental break… If I was no longer using my time and energy, thinking of ways to escape sexual harassment, that would free up a lot of my physical and mental space. I understood what it truly was to not feel that threat anymore, and understood what privilege the dominant sex still has… This page opens one's

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[38]

https://www.facebook.com/MANWHOHASITALL/posts/pfbid0aGSWpLbCpNSPEaKSaVH9Bwi1FvX7JC4pSQ4mD7GyYbiVjQkiA8kZA15yDfGJntgTl

Figure 34. MWHIA Facebook post about masculine self-care, posted August 29, 2021 (with comments).[39]

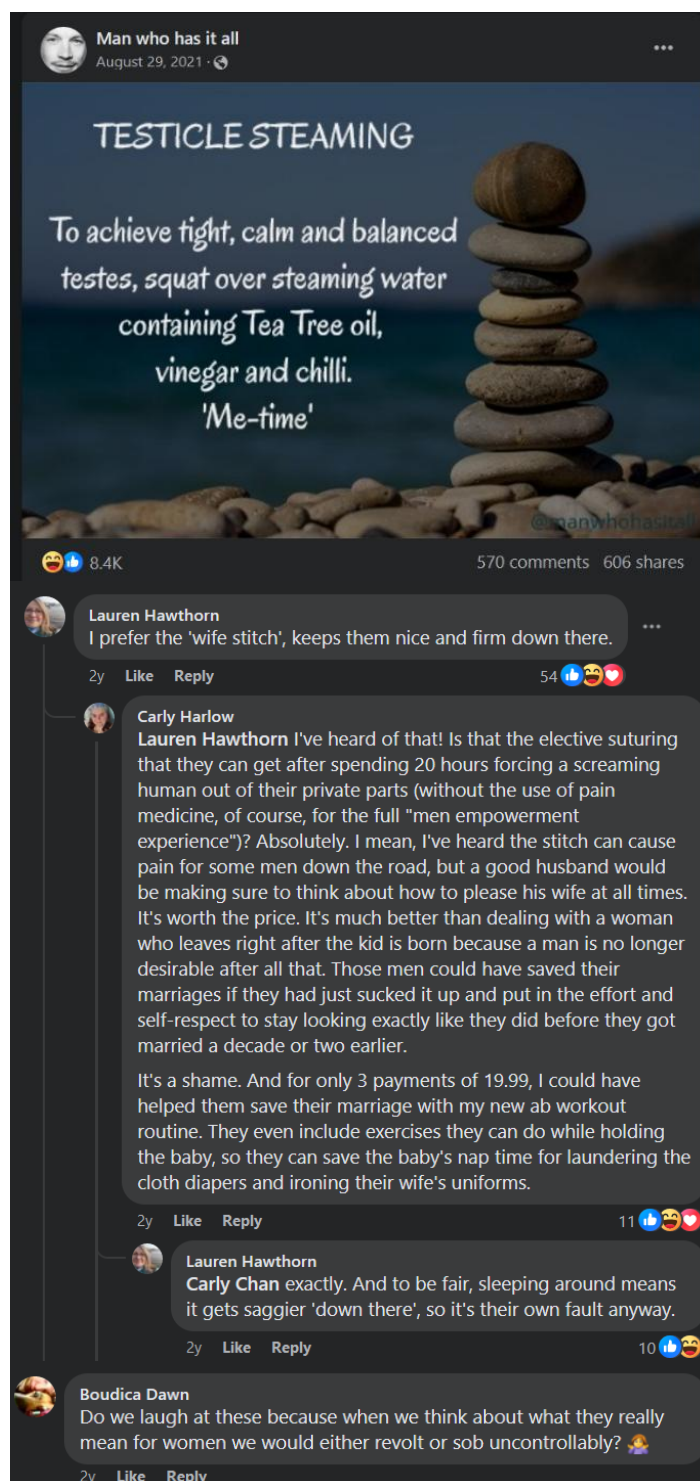eyes to how large the gap still is between the sexually privileged and the unprivileged, now in 2019… (Bandyopadhyay, 2019)

For her, the experience of reading through the page was simultaneously a comforting escape from the sexist world she lives in and a source of reflection. Temporarily stepping into the fictional role of a person who does not live in constant fear of gender-based harassment and discrimination allowed her to understand the injustice of our non-fictional world on an emotional rather than just an intellectual level. It appears that browsing MWHIA's posts can serve multiple purposes for different people, and that these are not at all mutually exclusive: coping with and temporarily escaping from patriarchy, finding like-minded community and thereby validation and comfort, and becoming more aware of sexist double standards, both on an individual and a community level.

5.3.2 *Reflection, defamiliarization, and de-invisibilization*

This paper has argued, in line with Ochs and Schieffelin's conceptualization of language socialization (e.g., Ochs & Schieffelin, 1984; Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986), that language and its usage are deeply intertwined with socialization—that is, the process of learning the norms, conventions, and practices of a society. As we are socialized into a sexist world, and as its sexist practices and norms become unremarkable everyday conventions, the social inequalities propped up by these practices and norms have a tendency to become invisible to us. The kind of satire constructed by MWHIA serves to make these issues more salient to us; it de-invisibilizes these inequalities through defamiliarization. MWHIA provides a mirror image of our world where gender roles are transposed onto the "wrong" gender. This *reversal* helps us look at these roles from a new angle. While the roles themselves are usually unchanged (e.g. men, rather than women, are relegated to parenthood and an unremarkable domestic life; see, for example, Figure 29)—and indeed, they must be familiar and recognizable to us for the satire to be intelligible—the reversal of genders makes them suddenly seem comical partly because they instinctively feel "wrong." The phrase "woman and husband" (Figures 22 and 32), for example, probably sounds silly and awkward to many when they first hear it, and therefore humorous; however, when one stops to consider the real-life phrase that it brings to mind, "man and wife," it raises the question of why the latter should sound "normal" when the former sounds "wrong," despite the fact that they are, on a linguistic level, asymmetrical in basically the same way. This reaction of amusement is ultimately an aesthetic judgment conditioned by patriarchal values; rather than being a reflection of the "natural" order of things, it is a reflection of language's role in invisibly naturalizing the social order of gender. Similarly, the mental image of a man staying at home and cheerfully doing chores (Figures 9 and 10), or steaming his genitals "to achieve tight, calm and balanced testes" (Figure 34) is ridiculous and laughable at first glance, even though this is no more ridiculous and laughable than the idea that all women should be relegated to the domestic sphere, or that they need to use specially formulated products to clean their vulvas and control what the company Vagisil has called "period funk" (Gunter, 2021; Smothers, 2021). The difference is that our patriarchal society has not conditioned us to think of male domestic servitude or testicle steaming as normal, correct, and unremarkable. Only when we reverse the reversal and reflect on the world we actually live in is the absurdity obvious and recognizable, with the help of the increased critical distance afforded to us by defamiliarization. Suddenly, the wrongness of a society where these things do in fact happen to women regularly becomes apparent, though perhaps less laughable (as one commenter in Figure 34 points out: "Do we laugh at these because when we think about what they really mean for women we would either revolt or sob uncontrollably?").

Although individual social actors are shaped by the society they are raised in, cultural attitudes are not static and fixed, nor are language or the people who use it. While there is a tendency for many to react to social change with anxiety and resistance, it is possible to pause and reflect on the status quo, then disrupt and challenge it by rethinking how we conceptualize and reproduce gender relations, both in language and in other modes of social meaning-making. It is not enough to merely change words themselves: as Ehrlich & King (1994) demonstrate, the malleability of meaning goes both ways, and terms intended to be non-sexist "can undergo a kind of 'semantic reversal' (Seidel's 1988 term) in the mouths of a sexist culture" (p. 72). Though language can be a useful tool of resistance, as seen in the potential of MWHIA's sarcastic gynocentrism to provoke thought and reflection, language reform by itself will not necessarily dismantle patriarchy; the attitudes that inform how we use language must also be reformed. Recognizing that a problem exists is a prerequisite to begin addressing it; the defamiliarizing power of MWHIA's pointed reversal of gender roles can help create mental space for that recognition to occur.

Conclusion

MWHIA's satire is conceptually quite straightforward: he simply takes the institutionalized sexism we have become far too familiar with and transposes it onto the opposite gender. In so doing, he provides room for us to step outside ourselves and the invisibly normalized ideologies we hold about gender roles and relations. He helps bring the absurdity of our asymmetrical gender relations to the level of conscious awareness, and he does so on social media, where anyone with uncensored internet access can read and actively contribute. By envisioning a world where patriarchy is flipped and matriarchy rules, MWHIA helps us better see our own world and deconstruct our ideas of "normal."

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That is so like a woman! (*Tai niangmen le/*太娘们了): A reclamation effort

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Abstract: This study examines the reclamation of the sexist slur *niangmen* (娘们), meaning "like a woman." Although this term's adjective form is predominantly pejorative, it appears to be undergoing reclamation, a process where slurs are reconceptualized to neutralize or subvert their discriminatory connotations. With content analysis from a critical perspective, we find that, on Xiaohongshu, a female-dominated platform, the term is predominantly used positively and is metadiscursively framed as feminist activism, whereas on Hupu, a male-dominated platform, it remains exclusively pejorative and does not provoke metadiscourse. Therefore, at this stage, reclamation appears to be limited to in-group contexts despite reclaimers' ambitions of valorizing women broadly. We also suggest that the morphological relation between *niangmen* and other *niang*-stemmed slurs points to broader (trans)misogynist ideologies, which will play an important role in the feasibility of *niangmen*'s full reclamation.

Keywords: reclamation; (trans)misogyny; feminist discourse; Chinese

1   Introduction

Niangmen (娘们) is a term frequently used in northern Chinese dialects to refer to women or femininity. It is derived from the morpheme *niang* (娘), which historically referred to women, including being used as a kinship term for female relatives. As a noun, *niangmen* can be, and often is, used as a neutral term. However, as an adjective, it is often used pejoratively to connote traits such as weakness, procrastination, emotionality, pettiness, and gossipiness—traits commonly associated with women and femininity. Phonetically, the term has many variants across different dialects in Chinese, but it is most commonly written as *niangmen* (娘们) or in its rhotacized variant *niangmener* (娘们儿).[2] It can also appear in affixed forms, such as *niangmen(er)-jiji* (娘们[儿]唧唧/叽叽) and *niangmen(er)-xixi* (娘们[儿]兮兮), which carry the same meaning.[3] In general, the

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[2] This type of rhotacization is associated with Northern dialects.

[3] The morpheme *jiji*, an onomatopoeic expression for repetitive sounds and annoying speech, carries the meaning of chatteriness and gossipiness, which is already included within *niangmen*'s connotative scope. In usage, *jiji* is

use of *niangmen* is similar to *girly* or *sissy* in English. However, since *niangmen* does not specifically refer to young girls but rather to adult women or women in general, we follow the usage observed in our data: where adjectival *niangmen* is translated into English, it is rendered as "like a woman" or "womanly."

Niangmen can be compared with the term *yemen* (爷们), which uses the same plural morpheme (*men*), but in using *ye*, not *niang*, refers to men and masculinity. While neutral as a noun, *yemen*'s adjectival usage is often complimentary, connoting traits such as strength, toughness, decisiveness, authenticity, and loyalty. As seen in the example below (Figure 1), the term *yemen* is used as a compliment to reference girls being "loyal and supportive to each other," while *niangmen* ("like a woman") is used as a pejorative to reference boys for being the opposite, that is, not loyal.

方寸以礼 🐻

25-2-14 03:30 发布于 福建 来自 iPhone 13

＋关注

部门在说聚餐的事情。

对我很好的同事姐姐和我说"现在办公室里女生们反而更肝胆相照，更爷们。男生们都太娘们了。"

我立刻就感觉不对劲了，明明在夸女性，"娘们"却是贬义词。

刻板印象仍然存在，但开始被意识到就是好事。我宁愿敏感一点，过激一点。

[...] a colleague [...] said: "Now the girls in our office are more loyal and supportive to each other, more *yemen*. Boys are all too *niangmen*." I immediately felt something was wrong: they were clearly complimenting women, yet "*niangmen*" is a derogatory word. [...]

Figure 1. Screenshot of a Weibo post[4] (left) and its main text translation (right).

In Figure 1, one can see not only the pejorative use of *niangmen*, as discussed in the previous paragraph, but also a metadiscursive engagement with the term: the poster questioned why a term referencing women, i.e., *niangmen*, is used derogatorily in everyday language practices, even in situations where women are being complimented using other terms. This metalinguistic awareness serves as evidence that contemporary Chinese feminists are sensitive to the sexism embedded within aspects of linguistic practice that are often taken for granted. In fact, such metadiscourse is taking place within a growing feminist language reform effort on Chinese-language social media. Among other strategies which we outline in brief below, this reform has also involved calls to reclaim *niangmen* to neutralize or subvert its discriminatory connotations. In this study, we aim to critically investigate this reclamation effort, its metadiscursive framing, and its uptake.

2 Background

2.1 *Niang* in Chinese language and culture

The morphological stem for the term *niangmen* is *niang* (娘)*,* a morpheme that has undergone semantic change through history (Yu, 2002). Historically, it was used as a common noun referring to young women, a meaning which can still be seen in words such as "girl," *guniang*

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semantically redundant when it is attached to *niangmen*. The morpheme *xixi* is an emphatic particle following negative adjectives.

[4] Retrieved June 10, 2025, from https://weibo.com/5966022846/Pegd5o7QU?refer_flag=1001030103

(姑娘). It then gained the meaning of "respected and married woman," which can be seen in modern words such as "her royal highness," *niangniang* (娘娘) and "parents," *dieniang* (爹娘). In general, the morpheme *niang* was traditionally used to refer to women with neutral sentiment. This traditional meaning is still evident in many modern *niang*-stemmed words—primarily nouns—that refer to women and femininity, as discussed above.

However, in modern Chinese, the usage of both *niangmen*—particularly in adjectival forms—and *niang* in compounds has shifted significantly from solely referring to women to being able to be directed at men, often with a pejorative tone. This shift reflects an extension of the term(s) from women/femininity to traits stereotypically associated with women (and often socially devalued), such as being naggy, overly concerned with appearance, or overly aggressive, and ultimately to men who are perceived to be displaying such devalued feminine traits (Ding, 2022). Adjectival *niangmen* has been particularly subject to this pejoration process. Further, accompanying the semantic pejoration of *niang* and *niangmen* has been the emergence of a number of *niang*-stemmed slurs that almost exclusively refer to men, including "effeminate tone," *niangniangqiang* (娘娘腔[5]) and "effeminate men," *niangpao* (娘炮[6]). Even the official newspaper of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, *People's Daily*, has publicly discussed the phenomenon of "wussification," *nianghua* (娘化), i.e., the social trend of men dressing and behaving like women, which is perceived as a threat to the young generation and to society's healthy development (X. Peng, 2018). This pervasive devaluing of traits associated with women and femininity—particularly in men—suggests an overarchingly (trans)misogynist (Serano, 2021) social structure in which femininity is systematically devalued, and is particularly reviled when perceived to arise in men.

2.2 *Niangmen* reclamation in Chinese digital feminism

Despite its predominantly pejorative usage, adjectival *niangmen* appears to be undergoing reclamation, particularly on social media, the site which forms the focus of this study. For example, in Figure 2 below, the poster describes and comments on a scene in a reality TV show where guests raced each other in different sports for entertainment. Referring to a swimming match, the poster calls a 70-year-old actress a "girl" and a 20-year-old actor an "old man," because the actress easily lapped the actor. In praising the actress, the poster exclaims "That is just so like a woman (*niangmen*)! (*Tai niangmen le*/太娘们了)" and "the womanliest woman to ever woman." In other words, here the term *niangmen* is used positively; in fact, it is used in a way that is highly similar to *yemen*.

Who hasn't watched Liu Xiaoqing swim in *The Blooming Journey*! A girl at her 70th quickly lapped an old man at his 20th [LOL][LOL][LOL] That is just so like a woman (*niangmen*)! The womanliest woman to ever woman!
[...]

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[5] First seen in the 1910s according to the BCC corpus (Xun et al., 2016).

[6] First seen in the 2000s according to the CCL corpus (Zhan et al., 2019).

Figure 2. Screenshot of a Weibo post[7] (left) and its main text translation (right).

The reclamation of the sexist slur *niangmen* is taking place within the broader context of the rise of Chinese (digital) feminism that seeks to challenge these ideologies—albeit with limited reach. In addition to reclaiming feminine terms, feminist language reformers have also begun circulating neologisms such as "a smell of fatherhood," *diewei* (爹味; L. Zhang & Mu, 2024), "male virtue," *nande* (男德; Hu & Wang, 2025), and "nymph of locust," *nan* (蝻; Zhang & Zhang, 2022). All of these neologisms aim to reveal and challenge the sexism and patriarchal ideologies embedded within Chinese language and society by creating words or metaphors to devalue men, patriarchy, and/or masculinity—mirroring the stigmatizing treatment that has been imposed on women. In other words, these efforts seek to establish gender equality in the social semiosphere by returning the harm done to women rather than dismantling it. By contrast, the reclamation of *niangmen*—another effort of Chinese feminists—targets the same ultimate goal, but by attempting to dismantle the stigmatization of women and femininity by reversing the semantic pejoration of a woman-related term.

3   Reclamation

Closely matching what has been observed with *niang*, feminist linguists have identified patterns of semantic derogation/pejoration such that terms referring to women and femininity tend to become associated with more negative connotations/sentiments over time (Schulz, 1975). Similar pejoration trajectories can also be observed in the euphemism cycle (Taylor, 1974) around terms for other marginalized groups such as people of colour and people with disabilities such that the broader social devaluation of these groups tends to "rub off" on the terms used to describe them, making previously neutral terms of reference increasingly negative and burdened by associations with oppression. Often, this effect inspires language reforms that produce new terms of reference aimed to be more respectful or laudatory, even as such terms are often subject to the same cycle of pejoration. An alternative approach to contesting such pejorative connotations, however, is that of reclamation—a metaphorical "taking back" of words in which the people to whom the words negatively refer try to take control of their use and meaning, at least within in-group spaces. While some argue that slurs neither can nor should ever be reclaimed because of their histories of harm (see Brontsema's, 2004, summary of perspectives on reclamation), reclamation nonetheless takes place.

While definitions (and labels) differ from scholar to scholar, such reclamation is typically understood to be one of two types: out-group/pride reclamation or in-group/insular reclamation (Brontsema, 2004; Coles, 2016; Jeshion, 2020).[8] Pride reclamation focuses on neutralizing or ameliorating the connotations of a slur, claiming it as a non-negative label for the group previously slurred by it (Jeshion, 2020). These neutralized terms can then be used by both in-group and out-group members to refer to the relevant category. We can think for example of the terms *gay* or *queer* which were reclaimed such that they now serve as relatively neutral category terms for gay/queer people as well as, in the case of *queer*, for a whole field of study (queer theory). By contrast, insular reclamation does not extend to the out-group. In fact, in such cases the slur often

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[7] Retrieved May 27, 2025, from https://weibo.com/1672345901/Pfs2xrhOF?refer_flag=1001030103_

[8] While there are some differences in the proposals of Brontsema (2004), Coles (2016), and Jeshion (2020), their two categories of reclamation broadly align. Because of their concise and evocative nature, we use Jeshion's (2020) labels for the categories here.

remains highly offensive if used by out-group members, but within the group that has been slurred by it, the term becomes a tool for solidarity. This solidarity seems to emerge from the terms' ability to evoke shared experiences of marginalization while simultaneously speaking back against them—as if to say "you cannot hurt us with a word that we claim for ourselves" (Jeshion, 2020). Jacobs (2002) describes such forms of reclamation as "chiastic slaying," analyzing the in-group use of the n-slur as a mode of speaking across and against pejorative uses of it, taking back the power of the word, and contesting the power structures that enable it to be used as a tool of marginalization in the hands of members of dominant social groups. Key to the distinction between these types of reclamation are (1) whether the reclaimed form is able to be used by only the in-group or also out-group members and (2) whether the reclamation aims to make the term positive/neutral or works within its negative connotations for political purposes. Thus, while pride reclamation may appear to have more success when measured in terms of language change, insular reclamation can be understood as highly subversive and equally politically engaged even if its impact on society-wide language practices is less measurable. As a result, rather than seeing all reclamation as a progression towards total neutrality/positivity, this theoretical backing allows us to understand reclamations as potentially having different end points, not because of relative success or failure, but instead as a result of differing orientations, methods, and goals.

In the context of *niangmen*, then, we ask: what kind of reclamation is taking place and what potential does it have for contesting sexist language and social structures in (digital) Chinese-speaking spaces?

4   Methodology

4.1   Data collection

4.1.1   *Xiaohongshu and Hupu*

Because we first identified tokens of plausibly reclaimed adjectival *niangmen* on Chinese social media, we turned to such sites as our primary data course. While Weibo is one of the largest social media sites in China, and did yield some interesting examples of this phenomenon, which we treat as supplementary data, we focused instead on Xiaohongshu and Hupu. These two sites have been identified as being strongly gendered and, as such, provide a valuable proxy for in-group (woman-dominated Xiaohongshu) and out-group (man-dominated Hupu) contexts for the use of *niangmen*.

Xiaohongshu (Little Red Book or RedNote) is a multifunctional social media platform that integrates e-commerce and experience-sharing communities built on its user-generated content (UGC). Its layout is similar to that of Pinterest. As of August 2025, Xiaohongshu had over 300 million active users, among which 70% are women (Qiangua.com, 2025). By contrast, Hupu, a blog-based social media platform initiated as a sports fandom, has gradually developed into a multidisciplinary community of predominantly straight men (A. Y. Peng & Sun, 2022; S. Zhang, 2023). Its layout is similar to that of *Reddit*. These strongly gendered user profiles correspond with arguably gendered patterns in the UGC, user behaviours, and marketing strategies on each platform (Chi et al., 2022; Yin, 2023). In other words, regardless of the users' actual gender(s), user behaviour and content on these platforms have been found to align with social expectations for the perceived dominant gender group on each platform. Therefore, Xiaohongshu and Hupu can arguably be seen as gendered platforms, as Xiaohongshu is (young) woman-focused and Hupu is (straight) man-focused. Because of this gendering, these two platforms have considerable value for analyzing gender-based language use and language practice, like the reclamation of gendered

pejoratives like *niangmen*. To support our analysis of these relatively gendered sites, we also surveyed Weibo, a gender-neutral social media platform similar to X (formerly known as Twitter).

4.1.2 Corpus building

To compile the data used in this analysis, we conducted a keyword search for the term *niangmen* (娘们) using the search engine of each platform. This approach returns UGC that contains *niangmen* in either the main post or the comment section of a given post. As noted above, although the term has multiple phonological variants, it appears in writing only in two forms: *niangmen* (娘们) and its rhotacized variant *niangmener* (娘们儿). Sometimes it also appears with suffixes, such as *niangmen(er)-jiji* (娘们[儿]唧唧/叽叽), but retains the same meaning. We therefore chose *niangmen* as the search term in order to capture these variations—all of which include the key characters 娘们. We used incognito mode for the search on Hupu to minimize algorithmic bias based on user history. As Weibo and Xiaohongshu do not support incognito search, we registered new accounts to avoid biasing the search through prior account activity. We then manually extracted posts which used *niangmen(er)*, and screened the data based on the criteria below:

a) Posts where *niangmen* was used only in the comment section were excluded, because the comments are often too short or too decontextualized for the viewer(s), us included, to tell how the term is used.

b) Noun form uses were excluded, since the noun form can be and often is used as a neutral gendered reference towards women in Northern dialects, as noted in the introduction section, and does not appear to be a primary target for reclamation due to its relative neutrality.

Since this reclamation effort is still in its fairly early stages, the total number of adjectival uses found on Xiaohongshu was 26. Therefore, we capped data collection for the other two platforms, Hupu and Weibo, at the same number to maintain comparability,[9] resulting in a total of 78 posts being collected for analysis.

Once the data were selected, we coded each item type (i.e., either metalinguistic discussion of the term—*mention*—or simple usage—*use*), their sentiment (i.e., either positive, neutral, or negative), the referent (i.e., in-group in terms of the potential reclamation—women—or out-group—men), and the poster (i.e., in-group or out-group as above). While we focused on only the parts of the post which contained *niangmen(er)(jiji/xixi)*, full posts were retained for contextual analysis, along with the timestamp of publication. Because of the gendered tendencies of the platforms outlined in the previous section, posters on Xiaohongshu were coded as in-group (i.e., women), and Hupu as out-group (i.e., men), unless explicitly indicated otherwise, through selfies, gendered self reference, or other explicit markers of poster gender within the social network. Here, we consider gender as performed rather than assigned, which means we make no claims as to the posters' sex or gendered presentation outside of the social networks under consideration; instead, we coded solely on the basis of how gender is performed on the internet through their posts. The sentiment and referent were determined based on the context of full posts. For example, if a post

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[9] The search results on Hupu and Weibo are ranked by a multi-faceted algorithm that prioritizes relevance and popularity. Based on this algorithmic ranking, we collected the top-ranked 26 instances from each platform.

used the term in a complimentary manner towards the referent, such as being collocated with other complimentary terms or visual cues, it was coded as expressing positive sentiment. If the term was used to refer to a woman referent or to materials related to femininity (e.g., a feminist film), it was coded as an in-group referent (i.e., women or femininity). If it was hard to tell the sentiment and/or the referent, it was coded as neutral or unclear, respectively. To ensure coding reliability and maintain objectivity, we consulted two additional native Chinese speakers, one with linguistic training and one without, to confirm codes that had a lower confidence level. The coding information is listed in Appendices A, B, and C.

5   Analysis

While differing uses were observed across all three platforms, overall, some clear trends emerged: Xiaohongshu posts were primarily cases of positive use, and the platform also had the highest proportion of metadiscursive mentions, all of which were positive or neutral. By contrast, Hupu posts were predominantly negative uses, with only one metadiscursive mention. Weibo, on the other hand, offers more balance between the two with both mention and use and with positive, negative, and neutral sentiment. Across all three platforms, positive uses and metadiscursive mentions of *niangmen* tended to be produced by in-group posters and/or in reference to in-group referents; in contrast, out-group posters and referents demonstrated no reclaimed usage of *niangmen* and only one case of metadiscursive discussion. Most of the reclaimed usage of *niangmen* appears in posts that were made since 2024, further confirming that this change in the use of adjectival *niangmen* is in its very early stages.

Below we provide more detailed analysis by platform and explore how these sentiments and use versus mention patterns do or do not reflect forms of reclamation.

5.1   Xiaohongshu

5.1.1   *Positive sentiment towards in-group referents*

On this woman-dominated platform, 21 out of the 26 instances of *niangmen* were associated with positive sentiment. This is the highest proportion of positive use of all three platforms, suggesting that there is something about this woman-dominated platform that makes it particularly prone to positive uses of the term. A closer look at the posts reveals that these positive usages are restricted to cases with in-group posters and in-group referents, meaning that women used it positively to refer to women or women-related subjects or engaged in positive metadiscourse around the term (see Section 5.1.2). For example, in Figure 3 below, the poster shared a poster of a film directed by a woman, which tells a story of women struggling through abusive marriages and fighting back against sexism and patriarchy. In the body of the text, the poster reviews the film and recounts her interaction with her younger sister in the context of the film. Not only does the poster rate the film highly for reflecting the struggle and plight of women, but she also expresses explicit positive sentiment towards her sister and women in general for being "born" empathetic and supportive. In the title of this post, she summarizes her sentiments towards the film as *niangmen*, clearly using the term with positive sentiment towards film as a feminist project valorizing women as women.
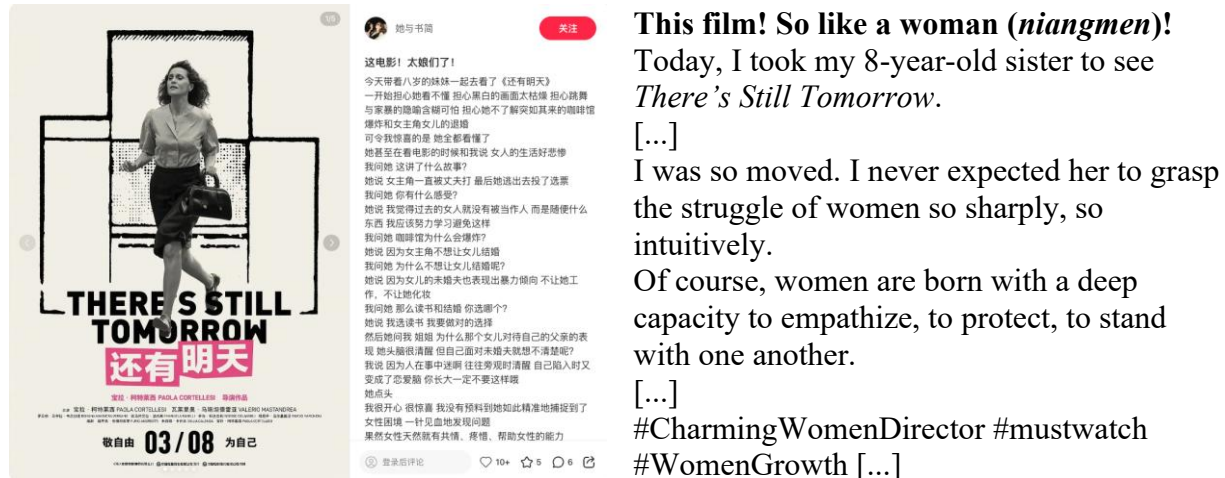
Figure 3. Screenshot of a Xiaohongshu post[10] (left) and its main text translation (right).

5.1.2 Metadiscursive discussion of the term

Roughly a quarter of the posts featuring *niangmen* on Xiaohongshu (7 out of 26 posts) involve a metadiscursive discussion of the term. Many of these posts explicitly frame the positive use of *niangmen* as a reclamation effort and as a part of broader feminist activism. For example, in Figure 4 below, the poster posted a self-made sticker which depicts a woman flexing her muscles with the embedded caption "真娘们儿" (*zhen niangmener*) which can be translated to "so like a woman" or "such a woman." The sticker associates a powerfully flexed muscle—a symbol of power and strength, traits that are normally connotated with men/masculinity (*yemen*/爷们)—with *niangmen*. This visual association is further explained in the body of the post, in which the poster states that *niangmen* should be reclaimed as a positive term because it refers to women who are "brave, strong, and proud." Interestingly, the "you" in the post title is written with the "woman" radical (女) rather than the more common "person" radical (亻), morphologically gendering the addressee as female. In modern Chinese, *you* is typically gender-neutral, and the feminized form using the "woman" radical (女) is rarely seen, making its use here a marked and deliberate choice. Similarly, in the body of the text, the poster uses "she" as an anaphor for the term *niangmener*, instead of the gender-neutral *it*, which is the more common and default usage in expressions like this. It could be argued that in UGC like this, the poster is using multimodal, linguistic, and metalinguistic strategies to actively reclaim the term *niangmen* by associating femininity with more socially valued (and traditionally more masculine) traits, thus challenging the sexist hegemony that marks the female sex as the second and inferior sex. In other words, in addition to reclaiming the sexist term *niangmen*, what these posts are really advocating for is redefining the linguistic expression—and eventually the social evaluation—of femininity. It is notable, however, that the strategy taken here is in contrast with feminist approaches that valorize traditionally feminine traits. Instead, here, the poster appropriates traits associated with masculinity and thus with higher social status and value for women, which is reminiscent of Mao-era feminism that,

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[10] Retrieved May 13, 2025, from
https://www.xiaohongshu.com/explore/67cc1637000000000900e4c5?xsec_token=ABryytd_HRcxRgAF_TDqt4KgS
UMWgXqf4bq3w8-MMx5zQ=&xsec_source=pc_search

instead of valorizing femininity, advocated for women to be able to also act as men, that is, strong enough to perform in physically demanding contexts (Leung, 2003).

Sticker | You are so like a woman (*niangmener*)!
Hi girls, this sticker is for you.
Who gets to define whether a word is positive or negative?
"*Niangmener*" is a positive term. She is defined by countless brave, strong, and proud women.
[...]
#GirlsPower #FeminismInIllustration [...]
#SoLikeAWoman #FeministIllustration [...]

Figure 4. Screenshot of a Xiaohongshu post[11] (left) and its main text translation (right).

Despite the metadiscursive work we observed being carried out to promote the reclamation of *niangmen*, this reclamation is still in its very early stages—as suggested by the relatively low number of instances in the reclaimed sense even on Xiaohongshu—so it is not surprising that the reclaimed usage does not yet seem to have spread to out-group members (see Section 5.2 below for further discussion of the out-group represented by Hupu users). Nonetheless, we identified an interesting instance where a poster proclaims the success of the reclamation in at least one woman's interpretive framework, regardless of the speaker's intent and/or awareness of the reclamation. As seen in a post screenshotted in the Figure 5 below, the poster describes her friend's subconscious interpretation of *niangmen* as a compliment regardless of the speaker's intent. In fact, the framing of the interpretation as "subconscious" points to a strong likelihood that the intent was just the contrary—this was not the intended or surface-level interpretation, but in fact the result of a successful project to associate womanhood (*niangmen*) with positive rather than negative meanings. While the post does not make it clear, this may point to a somewhat different mode of reclamation than was articulated in Figure 4 above. Rather than associating *niangmen* with valued masculine traits, the poster's friend seems to have revalued the very denigrated traits that have traditionally been the target of *niangmen*—she heard the highlighting of this constellation of traits not as highlighting negative aspects of her behaviour, but instead as complimenting these same traits.

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[11] Retrieved May 13, 2025, from
https://www.xiaohongshu.com/explore/66d2805b000000001d03a0f8?xsec_token=ABMVP3RmGPKvE74k71XwCZJ5tyyKmeXW3xd-9X8pbcrdg=&xsec_source=pc_search

So-called feminism has long been commodified into fast fashion.
[...]
I feel like feminism has been reduced to something just to boast about, a product unique to Xiaohongshu, an ideal concept too far to reach, completely disconnected from reality.
I once believed all that.
//(But) "Last time I heard people say I'm so like a woman (*niangmener*), I subconsciously thought it was a compliment." My friend said this to me one day.
[...]

Figure 5. Screenshot of a Xiaohongshu post[12] (left) and its main text translation (right).

5.2 Hupu

5.2.1 *Negative sentiment towards out-group referents*

In contrast to what we found on Xiaohongshu, almost all of the usage on Hupu, a straight man-dominated platform, is pejorative (24 out of 26 posts), and most of the pejorative usage is directed towards the out-group referent, that is, men or (failures of) masculinity (20 out of 24 posts). This suggests that the reclamation has not seen uptake from out-group speakers at this point. An example can be seen in Figure 6 below, where the term *niangmen-jiji* is used pejoratively and collocates with other negative adjectives, i.e., "ignorant," "disgusting," "pretentious." Based on the video the poster uploaded with this text, the term *niangmen* here is being used to refer to an effeminate male host, criticized by the poster for lacking masculinity from the perspective of straight men.

[...]
Although this dude can't help it, I'm still so annoyed by his ignorant, disgusting, pretentious, womanly (*niangmen-jiji*) behaviour.
[...]

Figure 6. Screenshot of a Hupu post[13] (left) and its main text translation (right).

In addition to the predominantly negative usage towards male referents, there is also one neutral use and one negative use for women referents on Hupu. Unlike the predominately positive uses on Xiaohongshu, which either attributed valued traits to womanhood or deemed traits

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[12] Retrieved May 13, 2025, from
https://www.xiaohongshu.com/explore/67cfb031000000002803dfbd?xsec_token=ABhB_LdTD6KqjMcY9SKogBjFpF3vrTatOFexzpo8d3vZ8=&xsec_source=pc_search
[13] Retrieved May 13, 2025, from https://bbs.hupu.com/62145482.html

stereotypically associated with women to be valuable, this latter use shows a more traditional negative evaluation of traits associated with femininity. As seen below in Figure 7, the speaker criticizes a female tennis player, Iga Świątek, for being weak and soft on court (Iga Świątek was ranked world No. 4 at the time of this post and rose to world No. 1 three weeks later). In this post, the poster equates negative traits for a professional athlete's play, i.e., weakness and softness, with the term *niangmen*, and essentially with femininity. This shows that, at least in athletes, these traits are seen as negative even when embodied by the gender that is expected to display them.

斯瓦泰克真的娘们 7回复 / 5亮 13161 浏览

亚当斯科特 （34级） 楼主 2022–03–11 14:40:01
斯瓦泰克真的娘们 由 亚当斯科特 发表在 网球场

打球软绵绵
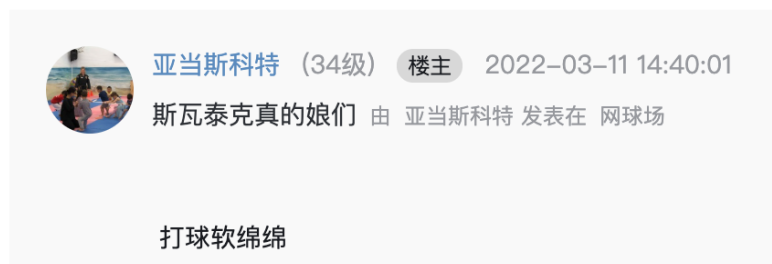
Świątek is really like a woman (*niangmen*)
Świątek is really like a woman *(niangmen)*
Her tennis is soft and weak.

Figure 7. Screenshot of a Hupu post[14] (left) and its main text translation (right).

The expression of negative sentiment towards female referents using this term, however, is relatively limited. Most of the negative usage targets male referents, indicating that femininity is not only perceived as negative, but seen as especially so when embodied by men. This creates an interesting tension in terms of the reclamation effort as the women who are aiming to reclaim this term which ostensibly refers to their demographic group are not actually the main target of its offensive use. Unlike other targets of reclamation like the n-slur for Black people and *queer* and the f-slur for members of the LGBTQIA+ community, which, while available for use against out-group members, were at their most offensive when directed towards in-group members (by out-group members), this terms seems to be mainly used to directly insult men by associating them with "inappropriate" or "unacceptable" feminine behaviour. This is similar to the English *pussy,* which, while referring to feminine genitalia, is most commonly and most offensively used against men who are deemed to be insufficiently brave, strong, or masculine.[15]

5.2.2 *Rare metadiscursive discussions*

Also in contrast to what we found on Xiaohongshu, there were substantially fewer metadiscursive discussions surrounding the term on Hupu—only 1 out of 26 posts. We identified an ambivalent discussion that appears to address the usage of *niangmen* as seen in Figure 8 below, though it is not entirely clear whether this refers to adjectival or nominal use. In this post, the poster posed a question and initiated a poll regarding whether *niangmen* is a sexist term. Fifty-seven users participated in this poll (including one of the authors, who selected "yes," as the results were only visible after voting), and more than three quarters of them believed that *niangmen* is not a sexist term. Despite the prolific negative use of the term on this platform, this is not entirely unexpected. As Cashman (2012) attests with the Spanish anti-gay slur, *maricón*, many users reject

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[14] Retrieved May 13, 2025, from https://bbs.hupu.com/52436692.html

[15] This term was the subject of an attempt at reclamation through the 2017 Women's March in the USA and the wearing of "pussy hats" at this and other feminist protests, but its reclamation does not seem to have moved beyond that narrow context (May, 2020).

the proposition that their use of this term to attack straight men is somehow homophobic. Instead, they claim that it is just an insult with no homophobic connotation, or even that it is just part of their linguaculture. Presumably the same men would agree that the term was homophobic if they knowingly applied it to a gay man as a way of insulting his gayness, but when directed to out-group members, as was *niangmen* on Hupu, the term seems to acquire plausible deniability insofar as it can be claimed to have a purely insulting sense that is not necessarily tied to the original referent.

Is "*niangmen*" disrespectful to women? What's your opinion towards this term?
[...]
Yes (selected): 14 users, 24.6%
No: 43 users, 75.4%
@X: Well, not sure if I can say this, but I go on Hupu because of football, the Premier League, and we often describe a team with this term. So it doesn't necessarily refer to women, right?
@X: *Niangmen*, *gemen* (bro), *yemen* (man)—these are just references for certain groups of people. They are not positive or negative per se. If you think they are, then you probably have assumptions about the group. Otherwise, you could just say: "I'm a woman. I'm a *niangmen*. Isn't your mom a *niangmen* too?"
@X: As long as you don't hold double standard for *yemen* (man/like a man).

Figure 8. Screenshot of a Hupu post[16] (left) and its main text translation (right).

This notion is reinforced by the three comments under this post, all of which assert that the term *niangmen* is not inherently sexist. Some even suggest that only the biased assumptions associated with its usage are—i.e., "it is only an insult if you think I am using it to say something bad about women" (as opposed to using it as a general insult). While these comments may, at first glance, appear to echo the metadiscursive discussions observed on Xiaohongshu—which argue that *niangmen* and the femininity it represents are not inherently pejorative—none of them

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[16] Retrieved May 13, 2025, from https://bbs.hupu.com/630269544.html

acknowledge the fact that *niangmen* is indeed being widely used as a slur. They also overlook how such biased usage is rooted in misogynistic and transmisogynistic ideologies, a connection that is made explicit in the metadiscursive discussion on Xiaohongshu. In other words, this post and its comments do not represent reclamation efforts. Despite the appearance that they also agree *niangmen* and femininity are not inherently negative, their failure to engage with the actuality of its use as an insult (even if that insult is not directed towards women) represents a significant blind spot that allows them to see *niangmen* as unproblematic—even as it is used negatively and perpetuates sexist and transphobic discourse on this very social network—and thereby to fail to see the need for reclamation in the first place.

5.3 Weibo and summary

In addition to these gender-skewed platforms, similar patterns were also attested on Weibo, a more mixed-gender platform. As seen in the other platforms, on Weibo, the positive sense of the term was used to develop solidarity within the in-group communities, while the term remained pejorative when used outside of this community. In other words, at this stage, *niangmen* is only reclaimed by women when referring to women. Within this reclamation, the way that posters reclaim *niangmen* is not limited to redefining the term as pointing to more socially valued traits but in some cases also challenges sexist hegemony by revaluing the traits that have been traditionally associated with *niangmen*. Through metadiscursive discussion, in-group posters insist that *niangmen*, along with the femininity it represents or invokes, is not inherently negative, but inherently positive, regardless of the user's intent. In doing so, these posters explicitly and consciously reclaim the term, making this effort part of a broader feminist project aimed at debunking the sexist hegemonic ideologies that position the female sex as inferior to the male.

5.4 Reclamation mechanics

Considering the distribution of positive uses of *niangmen* described above, the reclamation appears to be a case of insular or in-group reclamation. Only in-group members seem to be using the re-valenced positive form, and they only seem to be using it for in-group members, while out-group members continue to use the term as an insult, though notably directed mainly at other out-group members. Unlike much insular reclamation, however, this reclamation does not appear to be drawing on the shared experience of being slurred by the term to build solidarity. Instead, based on the metadiscourse around the reclamation on Xiaohongshu, this appears to be an attempt at pride reclamation or neutralization, i.e., changing the connotation to a neutral or positive one for all users including out-group members. Unlike *bitch*, the n-slur, or the f-slur which still retain an edginess as a result of the persistent negative baggage associated with the slurs despite insular reclamation, reclaimers of *niangmen* argue that the term itself is to be understood as positive, as seen in Figure 4. Further to this, the poster's friend discussed in Figure 5 even goes so far as to understand the term as complimentary even if uttered by an out-group member and regardless of the utterer's intent. This is in stark contrast with many insular reclamations within which the slur remains highly offensive when uttered outside of in-group solidarity contexts. It seems then that this reclamation aims to follow a trajectory more in line with terms like *gay* or *queer* which, while still capable of being used in insulting ways (particularly when applied to those who do not self-ascribe to the label), are broadly seen as neutral or even positive words to describe a certain set of identities or ways of being.[17] In fact, if anything, these reclaimers seem to be going even further

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[17] Whereas for the English terms, adjectival forms have been reclaimed despite nominal forms remaining more offensive (Jeshion, 2020, frames this in terms of "vocatives" vs. "non-vocatives," but it can equally be understood as a distinction between adjectival and noun forms as all provided "non-vocatives" are adjectival), in the Chinese case,

and aiming to reframe *niangmen* as referring to positive traits regardless of who is supposedly enacting them and being described by the term.

6   Discussion and conclusion

While adjectival *niangmen* remains pejorative in all surveyed references to men and all posts by men analyzed in this study, we have identified a striking trend amongst women users of social media who are explicitly reclaiming this term and casting it not as an insult to be used towards men for their "womanly" behaviour, but instead as a term of compliment or praise for women. This phrase is often framed with the connotation of the women exhibiting socially valued (i.e., masculine) traits like strength, athleticism, bravery, etc. In contrast with the more conflict-oriented approaches to language reform outlined in the introduction section (i.e., the creation of neologisms that devalue men), this more positive approach has the potential for greater uptake insofar as it appears as progress and avoids offending members of the hegemonic group (as the neologisms expressly aim to do). But such uptake does not guarantee impact upon social power structures. As argued by Cameron (1995), language reform is not just a way of reducing harm to those marginalized by language, but also has important political potential in terms of its capacity to draw attention to problematic (but taken for granted) social structures and norms. In this sense, the very likelihood of unproblematic uptake of this "positive when used to describe women" sense of *niangmen* is precisely what may circumscribe its political potential, particularly within the context of a language pervaded by associations between women (*niang*/娘) and socially stigmatized traits or behaviours.

In fact, as evidenced by the wide range of *niang*-stemmed transmisogynistic slurs introduced in Section 2.1, what underlies the pejorative usage of *niangmen* is likely actually a persistent sexism that evaluates femininity as negative, especially in men, while masculinity is evaluated as positive, even in women (see discussion of *yemen* in the introduction to this paper). That said, none of these pejorative *niang*-stemmed slurs other than *niangmen* are being reclaimed, nor is there any sign of efforts to reclaim them in the near future. Therefore, we question whether, in a semiotic landscape where femininity is systematically devalued, reclamatory metadiscourse can genuinely contest this devaluation and succeed in reclaiming *niangmen* as a neutral or empowering term for women, not to mention have any impact on the broader pattern of societal (trans)misogyny. On the one hand, the reclamation of sexist slurs like *niangmen* is achieved by explicitly challenging hegemonic gender ideologies, raising awareness of how language subconsciously encodes sexism that stigmatizes femininity. On the other hand, the continued use of *niang*-stemmed slurs other than *niangmen* to stigmatize femininity reflects a deeper, unaddressed misogyny and transmisogyny that may remain a substantial barrier to both the reclamation process and broader feminist efforts.

Acknowledgements

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the nominal forms were often neutral, whereas the adjectives are now undergoing attempted reclamation. In this sense, the term may be understood as perhaps more similar to *girl/girly*, which, while not currently being reclaimed in English, follows a similar pattern of insulting uses such that *girly* is most offensive when applied to men, but can also be used to criticize stereotypically feminine traits in women.

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Appendix A: Coded data of *niangmen* on Xiaohongshu

Type	Sentiment	Time	Referent	Speaker	Text
mention	positive	2024-05-10	unclear	in-group	学到的新的夸人用语！ 在小地瓜评论区学到的新的夸人用语：太娘们了 哈哈哈哈我喜欢 #女性主义 #发现我的女性力量
mention	positive	2023-06-16	unclear	in-group	在探讨《红楼梦》里元春省亲时说"娘儿们一会"，李少红版读成"娘们儿一会"为什么是错的这个过程中，我忽然意识到"娘们儿"与对应的"爷们儿"区别有多大，"爷们儿"在口语里是如此伟光正的存在，比如富大龙老师在电影《紫日》里的台词"老子是爷们儿，是中国的爷们儿"，这个台词给人印象太深刻了，我记了好多年。而"娘们儿"却是连词典都认可的带贬义的说法，比如"你个娘们儿你知道什么"、"你个大老爷们儿和个娘们儿计较什么"，这个词甚至可以形容男人"你怎么娘们

					儿兮兮的" 好心梗 #女性
mention	positive	2024-12-26	unclear	in-group	想要更多娘们儿用的表情包！ 以前:太娘们儿了（贬义） 现在:太娘们儿了（夸夸） 还有—— 雌性中的雌性！太蒂了！雌鹰！大姥！大女人！ #女性友好 #女性 #最爱的表情包 #女性力量"
use	positive	2025-02-25	in-group	in-group	姐太娘们儿了 被姐帅晕了😍😍😍😍 秃炮怪字幕组的姐妹们辛苦了！ #母狮
use	positive	2025-03-08	in-group	in-group	这电影！太娘们了！ 今天带着八岁的妹妹一起去看了《还有明天》 一开始担心她看不懂 担心黑白的画面太枯燥 担心跳舞与家暴的隐喻含糊可怕 担心她不了解突如其来的咖啡馆爆炸和女主角女儿的退婚 可令我惊喜的是 她全都看懂了 她甚至在看电影的时候和我说 女人的生活好悲惨 我问她 这讲了什么故事？ 她说 女主角一直被丈夫打 最后她逃出去投了选票 我问她 你有什么感受？ 她说 我觉得过去的女人就没有被当作人 而是随便什么东西 我应该努力学习避免这样 我问她 咖啡馆为什么会爆炸？ 她说 因为女主角不想让女儿结婚 我问她 为什么不想让女儿结婚呢？ 她说 因为女儿的未婚夫也表现出暴力倾向 不

					让她工作，不让她化妆 我问她 那么读书和结婚 你选哪个？ 她说 我选读书 我要做对的选择 然后她问我 姐姐 为什么那个女儿对待自己的父亲的表现 她头脑很清醒 但自己面对未婚夫就想不清楚呢？ 我说 因为人在事中迷啊 往往旁观时清醒 自己陷入时又变成了恋爱脑 你长大一定不要这样哦 她点头 我很开心 很惊喜 我没有预料到她如此精准地捕捉到了女性困境 一针见血地发现问题 果然女性天然就有共情、疼惜、帮助女性的能力 就像电影结尾 女儿在人群中一眼看到母亲 穿过人海给她选票 就像电影结尾 一群女人用坚定勇敢的目光瞪住那个卑鄙的男人 要受教育而不是穿婚纱 要投选票而不是接情书 要靠自己而不是等男人 要去战斗而不是被拯救 **因此，我期待更好的明天** 💞 #电影 #每天一部好电影 #女性导演的魅力 #热映电影推荐 #都给我去看 #电影观后感 #野生影评人 #女性成长 #还有明天#高分电影
use	positive	2024-12-04	in-group	in-group	太娘们了！！！泪目！！！ 我和好闺闺们 出了四个全奖！物理系！女！博士生！！！ （好吧虽然我人在 CS 系，我心依然是物理心） 另外一个找到了超级好的工作！

					翻以前的相册，19岁的我们是否能够料到我们的今天？ 眼眶湿润，想对当年的自己说： 在迷茫中继续前进吧，一直向前走就好，你会看见那束光的。 #物理 #博士生日常 #闺蜜 #太给力了
mention	positive	2025-02-26	in-group	in-group	表情包｜妳真娘们儿！ Hi，这是给女孩们的表情包。 一个词语的褒贬，由谁来定义？ "娘们儿"是个褒义词，她被无数个勇敢强大昂首挺胸的女性们所定义。 🎴 壁纸原图请 ❤️+留言 ⚠️ 原创作品©禁止商用 转载请注明出处 #小红书生活画家 @画画薯 @艺术薯 #表情包 #原创表情包 #GirlsPower #女性力量 #插画中的女性主义 #来自星星的艺术家 #真娘们 #女性主义插画 #高清手机壁纸
use	positive	2025-03-22	unclear	in-group	太娘们了！💪💪💪 强壮娘娘保佑🙏 就是要强！ 就是要力量💪 #娘们儿要战斗 #健身人健身魂 #女性力量 #健身日常 #礼物推荐 #春日秀场 #创意礼物 #力量训练 #力量与柔韧的结合 #她力量
mention	neutral	2025-03-04	unclear	in-group	又来问一些奇怪的问题了 "娘们儿唧唧的"的性转版是什么？ 嗯…总不能是"爷们儿磨磨的"吧？？？（磨磨唧唧）字面上对仗了但是意思完全不对啊！ #提问 #我真的不理解 #不懂就问 #纯粹个人想法吐槽 #不明白就问 #稀奇古怪的想法 #发

					自内心的疑问 #畅所欲言贴 #大家畅所欲言 #乱七八糟的想法
					太娘们了！厌女时代的女作家真不容易 弗吉尼亚·伍尔夫在《一间只属于自己的房间》中提出了一个假设：如果莎士比亚的妹妹朱迪思拥有与兄长相同的天赋，她是否能够取得同样的成就？ 答案是否定的，因为朱迪思从未被允许接受教育，她的才华被埋没在家庭琐事中。 1️⃣ 历史偏见与女性写作困境 亚里士多德、尼采等学者曾暗示女性天生不适合写作，这种偏见一度让女性在文学领域举步维艰。 但随着《呼啸山庄》等优秀作品的出现，这种偏见逐渐被打破。 伍尔夫在书中指出，女作家稀少的原因主要有两个： ·贫穷：19 世纪前，英国女性没有可支配财产，忙于生存和家务，根本无暇创作。 ·社会限制：社会要求女性依附丈夫，嘲笑写作的女性，让她们承受巨大的精神压力，最终放弃写作。 2️⃣ 物质基础和独立空间的重要性 伍尔夫认为，女性写作需要两样东西：每年五百英镑和一间属于自己的房间。 ·五百英镑：提供心智自由，让女性不必为生计发愁。 ·自己的房间：隔绝外界干扰，让女性能够专注创作。
use	positive	2025-03-01	in-group	in-group	

					她以自己和简·奥斯汀、夏洛蒂·勃朗特等女作家为例，说明贫穷和缺乏独立空间对创作的巨大阻碍。 3️⃣ 女性写作传统与发展 女性写作缺乏传统支撑和适合的文学形式，相比男性写作面临更多困难。不过，从简·奥斯汀到当代女性文学，写作正变得越来越自由。 伍尔夫那一代女性争取到诸多权利，如今的女性也在为后代铺路，努力成为各行业的先驱者。 伍尔夫的观点让我意识到，女性的独立不仅仅是经济上的，更是精神上的。 拥有一间属于自己的房间，不仅是物理空间，更是心灵的栖息地。 作为女性，我们要勇敢追求自己的梦想，打破偏见，成为自己生活的主角！ #女性在写作 #女作家 #文学 #书籍分享 #伍尔夫 #一间只属于自己的房间 #女性主义书籍 #女性意识崛起 #女性必看 #女性主义者
use	positive	2024-05-15	in-group	in-group	最娘们的一集 #雌鹰般的女人
mention	positive	2025-03-16	unclear	in-group	所谓的女性主义早已变质成为一种时尚单品//今年的三八节好像格外热闹。 我的大数据推送里满满当当的"大女人"与"雌鹰"，仿佛女权主义早已在全世界百花齐放姹紫嫣红，女性的权益终于得到保障，男女平等彻底成为已经过时的老生常谈。 但现实是女性仍然在职场里处处碰壁，在婚

| | | | | | 姻中步步惊心……所有糟糕的黑暗的事情仍然在**继续发**生，一切保持原状。

似乎女性主**义**只是用来夸夸其**谈**的**时**尚**单**品，是小**红书这**个女性社区特有的**产**物，是**飘**在天上的空中楼**阁**，与**现实**完全割裂。

我曾**经这**么**怀**疑。

//"上一次听**见**有人**说**你好娘**们**儿，居然下意**识**地**觉**得**这是**一句**赞**美。"我的朋友在某天突然**这样**和我感慨。

事**实**上我和她都是很浅薄的人，在生活中只是很庸俗地**讨论**吃喝拉撒，抱怨**讨厌**的天气，咒**骂**考**试**和早八，**我们**没**读过**波伏娃，不理解**结**构性**压**迫，不知道父权制的建立与崩塌。

但是很本能的，看到**卫**生巾**频频**出**问题时**我**们**会感到**愤**怒，看到"囚禁"被曲解成"收留"**时**我**们**会**说这**是不**对**的，看到"毒打致死"被美化**为**"被面**汤呛**死"**时**我**们**会**呐**喊**这**不公平。

这些**愤**怒可能很短**暂**地持**续**几天就会不了了之，没有人会因**为愤**怒就爬上市政府的大楼去自焚抗**议**，我也**绝**不支持个体**为**了群体的利益而自我**牺**牲。

但我**们**会默契地不再**购买**那个牌子的**卫**生巾，下意**识**地把**钱**像**选**票一**样**投**给**那些声称**为**女性**发**声的商家，哪怕他**们**根本不知道波伏娃。

//沉默往往被定**义为**逃跑，但**这**次的娜拉不再出走，她要留下，她要**攥**紧手里的**选**票，要把它投**进**一个被期**许**的未来 |

					沉默，温和，但**坚**定不移。 //当你**过**度肥胖的**时**候担**忧节**食**过**度是不合**时**宜的，我的意思是，当天秤明**显**偏向另一**边**的**时**候，中立也是不合**时**宜的。 "正**义**只能被炒作，否**则**就会被埋没。" 女性主**义**也是如此。 所以我宁愿激**进**一些，**过**火一些，宁愿整个世界不**厌其烦**喋喋不休地重复那些概念。 **罗马**不是一日之内建成的，社会的改良也不是一蹴而就的，就在**这**些反反复复的絮絮叨叨之中，有些**东**西在悄然改**变**。 **还**有明天，**还**有明天。 #女性 #**还**有明天 #女性主**义**者 #**为**女权**发**声 #女性主体意**识**
use	positive	2025-03-20	in-group	in-group	被**评为**未来**领导**人，这可太娘们了 和好朋友们的作品被选入 LCF25 未来**领**袖专题，谢谢 Diet Paratha，咱们娘们儿生来就是要做**领导**的 💋 #我的多重身份 #未来**领**袖 #老有范儿啦 #新的女性力量的崛起
use	positive	2025-02-06	in-group	in-group	太娘们了！ #女性力量
use	positive	2025-03-08	in-group	in-group	太娘们了 祝所有的女性同胞妇女节快乐 🎉 祝你永远有自己的路走 🎉 祝你今天不只是因**为**妇女节快**乐**，祝你每一天都快**乐** 祝你有力量，祝你有机会，祝你千千万万

					抽 3 个女宝🎁电影票看最近上映的《初步举证》或者《还有明天》 抽 8 个女宝🎁18r 点杯奶茶快乐一下或者 38r 我们家的优 hui💰 啊啊啊啊啊啊啊啊啊啊初步举证和还有明天大家如果感兴趣都去看啊啊啊啊啊啊啊啊 #吃我一波 lolita 安利 #娘们儿要战斗 #三八妇女节 #太娘们了 #妇女节快乐#MIAMILIA 原创设计
use	positive	2025-03-08	in-group	in-group	太娘们了 喜欢炼中的青筋手💢💢 三八节快乐！ #娘们儿要战斗 #三八节 #我的健身日常 #女生肌肉 #居家健身
use	positive	2024-04-11	in-group	in-group	多多说我今天娘们儿唧唧的 娘们儿娘们儿点儿怎么了！
use	positive	2024-06-06	in-group	in-group	太娘们儿了 来学校校招宣讲的公司在隔壁学院面前说不招女生，但是打开她们年级排名发现年级前十名全是女生，而且她们是工科专业哈哈#女性 #太娘们了
use	positive	2025-03-14	in-group	in-group	校园女性活动！好！太娘们了！！ 大学老师中午下班看到学校有妇女活动，兴奋参与并留言了😁 我撕掉的标签仿佛也是为我设置、等我撕掉的，刚好在我眼前！《生孩子有什么痛的？忍忍不就好了？！》 好！太娘们了！ #三八妇女节 #女性活动策划 #女性支持女性 #祝你成为不被定义的女性 #拒绝设限我的青春自有花样 #女性意识崛起 #不被定义的女性 #女性的自由 #撕掉关于女性的那些标签 #校

					园女性主义一角
use	negative	2025-02-04	unclear	in-group	职场斗争请勿使用娘们打法 直播说不打招呼 跑国会去叫委屈 闵熙珍下的这一步棋实在是够娘们 打的大老爷们哭笑不得 我想知道 if real 不打招呼怎么了，小学生因为这个告老师，老师都不会理的程度 Right now 很好听
use	positive		in-group	in-group	感觉自己太娘们了！ 马桶堵了用尽各种办法通不开，根据网上教程自己把马桶拆了把不小心掉进去的异物取出来又安上了，完成最后一步上胶之后感觉自己超娘们！怒省两百多！#牛 #厉害女人 #生活技能
use	neutral	2024-12-27	out-group	in-group	你们老公跟猫也娘们儿唧唧的吗？ 自从大喜到家之后 我的 186 东北老公 出现了一系列以前从没出现过的声音行为和叠词 让我为之瞳孔震惊#帮我家宠物出名 #德文卷毛猫 #猫 #老公 #东北
use	negative	2024-10-10	in-group	in-group	娘们唧唧的，真无语
use	positive	2024-11-28	in-group	in-group	太娘们了！ 前些天，刷到邵艺辉穿着 200 块 🍑 买来的裙子、平底鞋去走金.鸡.奖的红毯。 上一个在大场面穿得这么随性自在，是打雷姐，格莱美颁奖典礼，塑料鞋+商场淘来的平 价裙子。 再上一个，是张曼玉，2004 年戛纳电影节，

					白色背心+牛仔裤（她就在这届获封亚洲第一个戛纳影后）。 推翻所谓的"不得体"认知，打破规训，拒绝被物化。 女子好！太娘们了！ 邵艺辉导演的新电影《好东西》，也是传达了这么一种不被社会伪命题所困的女.性.主.义。 女强人、恋爱脑、友宝女都只是标签，爱情、事业也都只是生活的一部分，女性本身自然而然的思想独立、"我本位"意识才是最重要的。 没有条条框框定义下的"好女人"，想成为怎样的人，想过怎样的人生，应该由我们自主决定，而不该被他人定义。 正如电影里王铁梅（宋佳饰演）模仿的大法官金斯伯格说的："男.女.平.等的本质是女性的选择，女性要成为自己人生的决策者。" 邵艺辉导演不愧是我们的天才女友，太懂得女性想看的是什么了。《好东西》不苦情也不煽情，用很轻盈的方式，把女性的 kun 境，两性认知的偏差等展现出来。 女性的笑点与泪点，如此同频，像呼吸了一大口新鲜空气，让人愉悦治愈但又不失去思考。 周末看过点映，正式上映后还想二刷.

					#张曼玉 #邵艺辉 #宋佳 #电影好东西 #这才是我们大女人看的好东西 #钟楚曦 #电影推荐 #发现我的女性力量
mention	positive	2024-03-11	unclear	in-group	女书，夸人的正确方式 A：你也太娘们了吧 我：谢谢夸奖
use	negative	2023-11-15	in-group	in-group	避免"老娘们儿"气息 今天跟一个朋友聊天，感觉她有了很明显的"老娘们儿"的气息，可能随着年龄增长，多少都会有点吧，但还是反省自己，一定要避免这种感觉，不太好。 第一，不要怨气太重，四处抱怨。 第二，不要心眼太小，斤斤计较。 第三，不要随意传播和评价别人的家长里短。 综上，今天跟她聊天后的自省。还有没有别的很"老娘们儿"的行为啊？一起注意，一起避免。

The dates of some posts are missing because the post was deleted or made private before the authors collected the date, which occurred two months after the original data collection in April 2025.

Appendix B: Coded data of *niangmen* on Hupu

Type	Sentiment	Time	Referent	Speaker	Text
use	negative	2021-11-19	out-group	out-group	集美们，帮我看看这个"娘们"啥意思 不是男女朋友，今天先是指出我的缺点，我叫她继续说，您猜怎么？结果说了很多我的缺点、做的不好的地方。后面就发生了如下对话(右边是我,本人男)，我想看夜景怎么就变成娘们唧唧了？！（你咋这么娘们呢）
use	negative	2025-02-08	out-group	out-group	他们人挺好，就是娘们唧唧的
use	negative	2024-12-13	out-group	out-group	尼克杨口中的林书豪，竟然是如此的娘们儿唧唧的
use	negative	2022-07-	out-group	out-group	娘们唧唧的就捶死你

		15			
use	negative	2020-03-02	out-group	out-group	黄志忠**发飙** 狂彪**脏话** 大骂学员：比 tm 娘**们**还娘**们**儿
use	neutral	2020-05-04	in-group	out-group	女朋友娘**们**唧唧的怎么**办**
use	negative	2020-04-08	out-group	out-group	龙岭迷窟里胖子的扮演者，姜超，真有点娘**们**唧唧的感**觉**，越看不适感越 真不如精**绝**古城那个，豪爽。 但是**这**遮胡哨真他**妈帅**！网文男主的最佳演**绎**
use	negative	2020-05-10	out-group	out-group	为什么朱正廷娘**们**就挨你**们骂**？刘雨昕**爷们**你**们**反而夸？求解惑？ 别**说实**力**问题** 婷婷正**经**八百的上**戏**重中国舞**专业**第一 还有八**块**腹肌
use	negative	2020-11-24	out-group	out-group	王猛怎么**说话**非得娘**们**唧唧的
use	negative	2020-08-02	out-group	out-group	一群大老**爷们**儿娘**们**儿唧唧的 你可以**说** jkl 这几**场**状态不好，状态下滑，操作失**误**多，意识慢。但你**们说**他以前就是二流 ad. 混子 ad? 真就一**场**论啊，**输**几**场**就把他以前的荣誉就剥**夺**了。**电**子**竞**技**赢**了夸，**输**了**喷**很正常，你**们**可以开帖分析他哪里打的不好，但是别冷嘲**热讽**的好吧。 前段**时间** shy 哥打的不好的**时**候，冷嘲**热讽**的也是你**们**这帮人吧，现在吹 shy 哥**贬** jkl 的还是你**们**这帮人吧？
use	negative	2021-04-16	out-group	out-group	这兄弟怎么娘**们**唧唧的
use	negative	2023-06-30	out-group	out-group	艾**顿**就是不积极，不愿意去干**脏**活累活，**进攻**上也娘**们**叽叽，今年季后**赛**杜兰特的一个妙**传**，面**对**一个空**篮**不愿意去扣，而且是**选**

					择上篮，以至于那球**还**被帽了，真的气，**换**了个教**练**就能解决**吗**？看着杜**兰**特这么累很心疼
use	negative	2022-12-30	out-group	out-group	黄志忠怒批小**鲜**肉化**妆**迟到:比娘们还娘们
use	negative	2021-12-31	out-group	out-group	蔡徐坤怎么**还**在走娘们路线
use	negative	2024-12-16	unclear	out-group	那些**喷** 17 的你**们难**道不是中国人？那么小小个事情有那么纠结**吗**？屁大点事娘们唧唧的一个个。由 17 爱鬼 发表在绝地求生 现在踏马的 17 飘柔 微博那几个 pcl 代表的是中国队在外面比赛呀。是个中国人都应该给他们加油好吧，希望中国队都能发挥的好，冠军留在中国最好希望小鬼在绽放一下🙏🏻🙏🏻🙏🏻
use	negative	2021-04-09	unclear	unclear	xdm 闲鱼遇到过这么娘们唧唧的人吗？ 真的把我无**语**到了 搞烦了都
use	negative	2021-04-09	unclear	unclear	虽**说**这货不是故意 但是**这**种没文化**还有**这种做作恶心的娘们唧唧的形象**还**是令我十分不适
use	negative	2024-05-13	out-group	out-group	怎么拉黑这个破壁老**头**杯帖子，不能纯正的看个比**赛**嘛，娘们唧唧的，天天撕逼
use	negative	2022-03-11	in-group	out-group	斯瓦泰克真的娘们 打球**软绵绵**
use	negative	2020-08-17	out-group	out-group	看到**这**个视频 我知道**为啥说** nba 是娘们联赛了
use	negative	2023-05-11	out-group	out-group	**为啥**没比**对**手多十多个**罚**球，就娘们唧唧的说我没**练**过假摔 之前**说过**我得**练习**假摔了。为啥这次**还**说我**换**了无数次**队**，都没**练**过假摔
use	negative		out-group	out-group	这才叫**篮**球，不像 NBA 那些，娘们唧唧的

use	negative	2023-08-21	out-group	out-group	4AM，指挥 ZPY 必须背锅，磨磨唧唧你比娘们还娘们！ 你们可以去，慢慢仔仔细细，看看每一吧比赛，都是怎么死的，就没怎么开过枪，个种抽象死法，怂成狗，见人就趴，完全是怂死的！
use	negative	2024-12-07	out-group	out-group	TT 就跟老娘们一样，队内又有一个耐倒王更娘们是真的托
use	negative	2021-01-24	out-group	out-group	罗杰斯 3 档大空位不敢跑，太娘们了
mention	neutral	2022-10-29	out-group	in-group	"娘们"这个词是不是对女性的不尊重？如何看待"娘们"这个词

The dates of some posts are missing because the post was deleted or made private before the authors collected the date, which occurred two months after the original data collection in April 2025.

Appendix C: Coded data of *niangmen* on Weibo

Type	Sentiment	Time	Referent	Speaker	Text
use	negative	2025-03-24	unclear	unclear	打扮的好看上班都有动力[awsl] 和人说话都轻声细语的 唯一的点就是 wyc 不夸我漂亮反问我为什么穿的娘们唧唧的[微笑]
use	positive	2024-12-27	in-group	in-group	徐娇！雌性中的雌性，弘扬社会正能量，大女人真是太娘们了！[送花花][good][good]
use	negative	2025-03-21	out-group	unclear	一直不喜欢长得娘们唧唧的男生，但是何秋事也太可爱了啊，啊！！而且性格也好好！！看了一晚上他抖音连麦摘特效，简直是平等的帅死每一个人啊！！！！！！！
use	positive	2025-02-22	in-group	in-group	#关晓彤事业心# 关晓彤这女的太娘们了，具体原因请看：
use	neutral	2024-10-19	unclear	unclear	只要队友长得够娘们，褚宇也有演偶像剧不被退货的春天
use	positive	2024-08-03	in-group	unclear	#郑钦文奥运女单冠军#

					啊啊啊啊啊，见证历史了！恭喜霸气如猎豹的郑钦文！太娘们了！
use	positive		in-group	in-group	突然生理期也坚持跑完马拉松[彩虹屁]李美珍这才是真的拒绝月经羞耻[彩虹屁]女人中的女人！太娘们了！
use	negative	2025-03-21	out-group	unclear	娘们唧唧爱生气的男的怎么都他妈那么恶心呢
mention	positive	2025-03-14	unclear	unclear	太娘们了不应该是句脏话 太娘们了应该是句夸奖！！！
use	neutral	2025-03-11	out-group	in-group	周围朋友都说俺给派派穿的太娘们了，最近给他采购了一批爷们的衣服，以后就走硬汉风了[doge][doge][doge]
use	positive	2025-03-19	unclear	in-group	看到更多品牌在妇女节做女性力量的传播，更多女性拒绝女字旁文字被污名化，拒绝有杰出贡献的女性被称为"先生"，真的太娘们了！最近看女性意识崛起的事太多了太兴奋了，爽！
use	negative	2024-05-03	unclear	unclear	真的够娘们的 没走几步就头晕了[融化][融化]
mention	positive	2025-03-22	unclear	unclear	大家可以试着开始在刷到的一些网络上有人做了好事善事的事件下面评论"女士大义""真棒！真够娘们！""像娘们一样正义凛然又有一颗温柔的心！"，我反正先这么干了。
use	positive	2024-07-04	unclear	unclear	每次我男人无法共情我的时候都要发疯。这辈子一定要培养一个够娘们的男人。[微笑]
use	neutral	2020-05-18	unclear	unclear	一个男人终其一生都没有忘记一个死去的女人，这个男人再婚的后女人说了一番话：一个死去多年的女人都能让这样的男人这么痴痴记挂，啥叫男人，这就是男人。女人和男人，我也搞不明白到底是女人真男人还是男人真女

					人，感觉都够爷们，也都够娘们，厘不清啦！
use	positive	2025-03-03	in-group	unclear	谁干的？！出来挨夸太娘们了！
use	positive	2025-02-21	in-group	unclear	谁还没去一路繁花里看刘晓庆游泳！七旬少女速度抛二旬老人一圈[笑cry][笑cry][笑cry]简直太娘们了！女人中的女人！[彩虹屁][彩虹屁][彩虹屁]
mention	positive	2025-02-14	in-group	in-group	部门在说聚餐的事情。 对我很好的同事姐姐和我说"现在办公室里女生们反而更肝胆相照，更爷们。男生们都太娘们了。" 我立刻就感觉不对劲了，明明在夸女性，"娘们"却是贬义词。 刻板印象仍然存在，但开始被意识到就是好事。我宁愿敏感一点，过激一点。
use	negative	2025-02-09	in-group	in-group	我发现我还真不适合谈恋爱 我这个人 太娘们唧唧了 优容寡断 一谈恋爱就会认真 虽然表面笑嘻嘻[揣手] 一点都做不到敢爱敢恨的大女人 我应该像庆奶一样 像包晓莉一样就好了 [awsl][太开心]
use	negative		unclear	unclear	#辛云来#到底谁在说辛云来丑，我真的黑人问号脸[黑线]明明就是很帅啊，说丑的是不是平时爱看娘们唧唧的，或者爱看刘宇宁啊……
mention	positive	2024-07-29	unclear	unclear	非——常讨厌一些用"老公姐"、"老公是一种感觉"这种沾男的称谓来形容女人的行为，说出这样的话的时候，就已经把"强大、健壮、帅气、有力量"等特质与男性绑定了，默认这些是男性独有的，尽管表现出这些特质的是一位女性。 而很多和女性相关的称谓却偏偏表达的是贬低

					的含义，"爷们"是用来夸奖别人强壮、豪爽、有担当的，"娘们"就成了蔑称，这些文字上的刻板印象真该改改啦！用"真女人""够娘们"来夸女人难道不是理所应当吗？
use	positive	2024-07-14	in-group	in-group	今天刚看完泳者之心，别名老娘与海……我更喜欢老娘与海这个称呼，因为够娘们，够伟大。 在正式写影评之前，我有一段话要说： 我希望全世界的女性从婚姻和糟糕的原身家庭里挣脱出来，去抢！去争！去对抗，去打破这些年在自己身上的枷锁，去塑造一个独一无二的自己，你不必做一个温婉听话懂事的女人，你不必非要附属于一个他人，你可以狡猾，可以贪婪，可以凶猛，可以粗俗，你也可以高谈阔论，对那些自大喜欢当爹告诉你怎么做好一个女人的人一脚踹开，竖起中指嘲笑对方，去你爸的，老娘不需要你当面放屁。 说实话，老娘与海很优秀，但又没有那么优秀，它优秀在讲述了一个女英雌的故事，真正的女英雌的成长的故事，讲述全世界和她对抗，讲述她如何面对压力即使是抛弃性命也要敢于做自己的故事。 但……它太童话。 大概是故事改编的问题，它太过于童话。 真正活在底层的女性一路走来，是不可能得到那么多支持，当她说出我要成为历史上第一个游泳过英吉利海峡的女人时，不会有人去支持。 不知道原本真人故事是怎样，但我知道她面临的阻碍美化了数百倍，可光是美化数百倍，在电影里看来，依然透露着窒息。 我印象最深刻的，是女主和她母亲的故事，当

					她母**亲**说出那句，我惧怕你的勇敢，因**为**它**让**我感到害怕**时**，我忍不住拍手鼓掌了起来。 女主的母**亲**是一个**传统**女人，符合那个**时**代也是**这**个**时**代好女人的要求，即使是**这样**，在她看到女人因**为**不会游泳，只能在船上等死的新**闻**后，即使女性学游泳是个笑**话**的**时**代，她母性的本能，迫使她冒着所有人嘲笑**让**自己的两个女儿去学游泳。即使糟糕的丈夫宁愿**买**一个没用的**电话**也不愿出**钱给**女儿学游泳，她也要自己**补贴**做活凑**钱给**女儿学防身的游泳**术**。 出于**对**孩子天然保**护**的本能，即使那是所有人反**对**的**项**目，她也愿意和身上的枷**锁**抗争。 但**经历过**的我知道，**这样**的母**亲**在我看来，是**童话**，是近乎不可能的存在，所以我**觉**得**电影**里的**这**个母**亲**，与其**说**是指人，倒不如**说**是泛指女性。 母系氏族的**传**承，女人与女人之**间**的**传**承虽然被男权社会用各种手段**斩**断，但那些刻在骨子里的本能**驱**使**让**她去保**护**身**为**同性别的下一代，就像我**们**的那些**为**了把女性和男性享有平等权利写**进**法律里革命女英雌**们**一样，即使自身背**负**沉重的枷**锁**，**为**了后来，**为**了以后的女性可以作**为**一个真正独立的人去站在太阳下自由呼吸，愿意**为**之付出一切。 **现实**里的女主成功了，**还**打破了男性的**记录**，虽然她也因此付出了代价，**彻**底的失**聪**，但她却真正的成**为**了自己，成**为**了英雌，用自己的行**动证**明了，人之所以**伟**大，就在于**创**造不可能。 做自己的道路上孤独的，是有无数阻**拦**的，而权力……不会从天而降，不是别人施舍的，是靠争取，靠**抢**的。就像**电影**里关于学游泳**这**件

					事，一开始，是女主不停的**骚扰**耍赖才**赢**得父**亲**同意去**买**了泳衣，如果没有她**这**个开始，一切的故事就将不复存在。**现实**里也一**样**，我**们**想要什么，就只能去抗争，去**抢夺**。 你不想**进**入婚姻，那你就告**诉**他**们**你不想，即使他**们说**你不完整，即使他**们觉**得你**疯**了，即使整个社会都在**给**你暗示你不走入你就是失**败**，就是可怜…… 但…… 那又怎**样**呢？ 老娘不在乎！ 老娘只在乎做自己，只在乎自己的世界，老娘没空和你**说**哪条路是好是坏，老娘**时间**宝**贵**，垃圾别挨**边**。 老娘的世界很大很**宽**，光是开**垦**自己的世界，去冒**险**，去探索的**时间**都不够用了，和狭窄的，只知道**围绕**屎尿屁的井底之蛙是不一**样**，我**们**不在一个**层**次，所以滚一**边**去。 所以身**边**的女孩**们**，女人**们**，不要害怕自己的不一**样**，不要害怕做自己，有人反**对**，**说**明是他**们**害怕了，他**们**怕你的勇敢无畏，怕你的强大灼**伤**他**们**脆弱的心灵，他**们**做不到，就只能**选择**打压。 你要做的，就是老娘不在乎，**转**身将那些垃圾抛下，去面**对**自己的世界，把**时间**精力都用在自己身上，尽情的探索，尽情的活出自我，那**样**即使下一刻你就死了，那也不枉此身，至少你死的那一刻，无人拘束你自由的灵魂……
use	positive		unclear	unclear	真娘们 娘们中的**战斗机**[并不简单]中**药**一口闷
use	negative	2025-03-14	unclear	unclear	见面没有打招呼或者没笑脸就觉得自己心里受委屈，那么玻璃心就去 🔼 吧，娘们唧唧的玩意

| use | negative | 2025-03-24 | unclear | unclear | 哎呦！！！吐槽鬼娘们唧唧的，把我拉黑了。笑死了。当初转我微博说我说得对的话都忘了。要不要给你回顾一下，你说的朋友！是朋友里有台 d。藏 D 恨国党。你被小球提拔，知遇之恩无以为报。太好笑了。另外，@冬亚只有我朝你妈脸上丢钱的可能，你想见我家里人？你配吗？你妈和小球的事，你好好回忆下[嘻嘻] |
| use | neutral | 2025-03-24 | unclear | unclear | 娘们唧唧的一天 |

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