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Abstract

This article examines Chinese cyberspace debates over the racial and national identity of a television show contestant Lou Jing, a biracial woman of Chinese and African American descent. We argue that the online commentary about her offers a productive entry point into contemporary Chinese cultural struggles over race. In particular, we consider how the Internet and other digital communication technologies are being mobilized as discursive sites for articulations of Chinese anti-black racism, as well as discursive sites of contestation, knowledge production, and cultural exchange regarding Chinese constructions of race and nationality.

Keywords

cyberspace, Lou Jing, racial formation and contestation, Chinese digital media, Chinese anti-black racism

During the fall of 2009, Lou Jing (娄婧), a contestant on a popular Shanghai television show and music competition, moved to the centre of online Chinese discussions. For numerous users, Lou Jing's claims to Chinese nationality were overridden by her caramel complexion and identity as a biracial woman of Chinese and African American

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descent. Within the debates over her racial and national identity, however, were anxieties over other issues, particularly questions about who can be Chinese, who can produce Chinese children, what kinds of interracial relationships are acceptable for Chinese women, and the impact of foreign immigration by people of African descent into China.

This article argues that the online commentary about Lou Jing offers an entry point into contemporary Chinese cultural struggles over race. Specifically, it provides a valuable, though bounded, porthole to how the Internet and other digital communication technologies are being mobilized as discursive sites of contestation, knowledge production, and cultural exchange regarding Chinese constructions of race and nationality. We maintain that unpacking the ideologies and discourses – of the naysayers who rejected Lou Jing's claims to Chineseness and those who supported her – supplies a productive site to consider the different ways perceptions and attitudes regarding race take shape in Chinese digital media and moreover the inevitable clashes between Chinese society's growing racial and cultural diversity and conservative constructions of Chinese racial identity. In short, while the online post commentary about her showcases the pervasiveness of Chinese anti-black racism and the discursive logics through which Chinese and black bodies are unevenly categorized in China, it also conveys how racial ideologies and racial formations are both shaped and contested within digital media. Amid a population where to a large degree racial difference and multiracial understanding are still evolving discourses, it was primarily online where the most constructive conversations about Lou Jing and Chinese attitudes about race took place.

This article begins by briefly contextualizing Chinese perspectives on race and blackness and the 20th-century experiences of people of African descent in China as a means to properly situate the cultural context in which the Lou Jing affair came to life. We then move to the article's central line of analysis. We explore the different, though intersecting, articulations and racial formations that people mobilized within Internet online commentary to make sense of Lou Jing's significance. While some people conveyed an aversion to her complexion, a dominant proportion of the racist backlash she received was organized around themes that extended beyond skin colour. Moreover, in the face of these attacks, Lou Jing received a great deal of online support from people who argued that mixed-race status did not prevent a person from being Chinese. Lou Jing correspondingly employed digital media as a means to respond to her critics; via the Internet and her television performances she enunciated an alternative, albeit nonetheless problematic, racial construction of being Chinese. This article consequently argues that comprehending the different and contending articulations about race and nationality that were made across these digital media requires multifaceted consideration.

Oriental angels and Chinese ideologies of blackness

During the 2009 summer season of Dragon TV's *Let's Go! Oriental Angel* (加油! 东方天使), Shanghai's equivalent to the Western television show *American Idol*, Lou Jing became one of the show's stars. A college student and aspiring singer, Lou Jing would go on to receive much prized non-performance camera time, and be written about in the international press, on Internet sites, blog posts, and Twitter feeds.¹ Her popularity, however, did not stem from the quality of her singing. Tagged by the show's hosts as 'Our

chocolate girl, Lou Jing' (我们的巧克力女孩), China's 'black pearl' (黑珍珠) and 'Halle Berry of the East' (东区哈莉贝瑞), it was Lou Jing's skin colour that distinguished her from the show's other contestants.

As the daughter of a Chinese mother and an African American father, Lou Jing's mixed-race background received top billing. The show's producers, believing that the incredibility of her story would capture greater viewership, thus devoted substantial air-time to publicly examining the backstory of her consummation and birth, bringing Lou Jing's mother onto the show to interview her about her relationship with Lou Jing's biological father. It was revealed that the two met while attending college and that after the relationship dissolved, Lou Jing's father left China unaware of Lou Jing's mother's pregnancy. The latter ended up raising Lou Jing singlehandedly; Lou Jing and her father never met.

In the months that followed, Chinese publics – most primarily on the Internet – were transfixed with Lou Jing. What emerged online was a national, and later international, debate surrounding Chinese national identity and Chinese perspectives on blackness. For numerous people, Lou Jing's skin colour marked her as 'black' (黑), a racial classification that they believed overrode her claims to Chinese nationality. In a nation where over 90 per cent of the population self-identify as being of Han ethnic lineage, it was argued that her skin colour and black parentage prevented her from being a 'real' or 'true' Chinese national (中国人). Some of her worst critics dubbed her a 'black chimpanzee' (黑色黑猩猩), 'black devil' (黑鬼), and as polluting the larger Chinese national body. Her mother was also accused of engaging in an extramarital affair and denigrated for this act, as well as for involving herself in an interracial relationship with a black man and participating in publicizing her and Lou Jing's story.

Ultimately, the heightened nature of this online commentary brought to light the challenges China, and numerous other countries, face concerning racial difference. Furthermore, it forces China experts and critical investigators of race to consider how ideologies of racial difference are shaped and disputed within Chinese user-generated online content and exchanges. The issue of how China treats racial difference in social life, particularly within online chat rooms, blogs, and posts, is an important question. It brings to the fore the issue of how China is engaging the world through digital media. How will a nation, which at times has premised its definition of citizenship, ethnicity, and race through a somewhat, though not exclusively, culturally homogeneous frame, further open itself and prepare its citizens for a planet that is becoming more ethnically and racially diverse and where global multicultural and intercultural exchange is far more unbounded? And what role is Chinese use of the Internet playing in either facilitating or obstructing such development, most centrally an evolution in Chinese understandings of race and nationality?

The racist denunciations of Lou Jing build on a complex history of Chinese attitudes about blackness and engagement with groups of African descent. From late antiquity onward, within Chinese politics, education, science, and popular culture, Africans and blacks were frequently depicted and described as the 'black slave race' (黑奴种族).² This was congealed through depictions of Africans and Africa as ahistorical.³ Moreover, fundamental to these Chinese understandings of blackness were biological and teleological arguments about China as a nation of the 'powerful yellow race' (强大的黄种人).⁴

Yet with the establishment of the Chinese communist regime in 1949, the government rhetorically distanced Chinese culture from such overt articulations of anti-black racism.⁵ Nonetheless, over the past 60 years African foreign exchange students and residents, as well as African American visitors and expatriates in China, have remarked on experiencing racial discrimination. African immigrants, for instance, have received the harshest treatment.⁶ And while this population has been targeted as drug dealers and criminals, and syphilis and AIDS have been racialized as African illnesses that ‘pollute’ the ‘pure’ blood of Chinese people, African American, Afro-Canadian, and Afro-European expatriates have also mentioned encountering negative attitudes about blackness, particularly within the employment and educational sectors.⁷

With the exception of a few scholars, though, rigorous analysis of Chinese racial nationalism and anti-black racism remains sparse.⁸ While various works have examined Chinese constructions of ethnicity, there is relatively little interrogation of the racial components of these negative attitudes – that is to say, how these attitudes also reflect ideas and arguments about race and how they represent contending ideas over the ongoing evolution of China as a potentially multiracial society.⁹ This lack of deep scholarly investment in unpacking the presence and impact of racial ideologies and practices in China has consequently meant very little exploration of how such ideas about race also circulate online among Chinese Internet users.

Many researchers have argued that the Chinese Internet has become a safety valve for political venting by everyday persons.¹⁰ Whereas anti-government voices are often censored, nationalist and anti-Western and anti-Japanese expressions are allowed or even promoted online. For instance, Yuezhi Zhao explains that the Internet has played a leading role in ‘the re-emergence of nationalistic consciousness’ in China, the Internet becoming one of several ‘channels by which the most globalized segment of the Chinese population, namely educated urban youths, express the multifaceted discourse of Chinese nationalism’.¹¹ This attention to the role that the Internet plays in facilitating and amplifying nationalist sensibilities and anti-Western outlooks, however, does not immediately illuminate the racial contours of such ideologies online.

Interested in the latter dynamics, Yinghong Cheng has recently examined racial nationalism within Chinese Internet use, exploring explicit anti-African commentary on Chinese blogs and cyberspace posts. Specifically focusing on online essays and blogs produced by Chinese citizens who have travelled, worked and lived in Africa, he highlights how these netizens use anti-African stereotypes to depict China as racially pure and modern and Africa as backward, deviant, and pathological. Recalling the attacks on Africans on Chinese campuses during the 1980s, Cheng concludes that “‘cyber racism’ has [now] replaced “‘campus racism’”.¹²

Scholars examining racial practices in other regions agree that the participatory culture enabled by the Internet must be taken into consideration when examining how ideas about racial difference become widely accepted and are challenged.¹³ The Internet is often celebrated as a non-discriminatory, de-racialized space of inclusion and participation where racial difference and racial ideologies neither prevent a person’s access nor hinder his/her user experience. But such illusory myths of the Internet as a race-less utopia and colour-blind, virtual and disembodied world belie several realities: (1) that the terms and terrain through which people of different stripes access and are active on the

Internet are never even or equal, but rather impacted by structural conditions and material privileges and constraints; and (2) that the Internet is not disconnected from the categories, classifications, and cultural understandings and distinctions that organize social life, but rather fuelled by them, which thus makes the Internet a site for both the articulation and negation of diverse forms of embodiment and consciousness.

Racial formation – the processes by which racial categories and racial dynamics are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed, and through which resources are reorganized and redistributed along particular racial lines – is therefore a central facet of the Internet and new media.¹⁴ In sum, race is frequently mobilized online to distinguish and separate bodies and create social meanings. Lisa Nakamura explains, ‘Race, as vexed a term as that has come to be, is an indispensable part of the “root” that warrants, anchors and conditions the lives of actual users in cyberspace to the world offline.’ According to Nakamura, ‘digital racial formation’ best describes the different processes, projects, and spaces of online communication and identity formation through which racialized constructions and understandings are made and unmade.¹⁵

Competing racial formations

Within the various websites that covered the debates about Lou Jing were competing racial formations and projects, people employing Lou Jing as a means to make different arguments about race, nationality, and nation.¹⁶ Both users and creators of these sites in effect shaped the post/blog sections, commentary forums, and bulletin board discussions into racial representational spaces – points from which to affirm or contest dominant constructions of Chinese national and racial identity. Within their articulations, Lou Jing’s raciality came to be imagined and signified through different formations, some which affirmed nationalist racist narratives of Chinese nationality and others that confronted such perspectives by suggesting that she instantiated a more flexible, multicultural Chinese identity.¹⁷ In the end, computer-mediated communication provided these people with an interactive platform to make competing claims about Lou Jing’s significance.

For instance, among some netizens, it was predominantly Lou Jing’s claims to being ‘Chinese’ that were at the centre of their online discussions. On *NetEase*, several netizens asserted that she and other mixed-race Chinese people risked ‘contaminating’ and ‘diluting’ the blood of the nation. ‘She is not Chinese. It’s not about discrimination of ethnicity.... No matter what, she has the blood of a foreigner,’ one person commented. ‘Although her nationality is Chinese and she grew up in China, she has a foreign parent! ... I think the child deserves a real identity.’ Another posted, ‘We can never accept mixed-blood people. Generation after generation, in the future, all Chinese will turn into black- or blue-eyed [people], how could this happen? I suggest that a law be enacted not to give Chinese nationality to mixed-bloods, in order to keep our ethnic purity.’¹⁸ These posts reveal some of the ways that Lou Jing’s critics understand and construct Chinese identity. For these people it is not shared membership in a political community (citizenship in the state and civil society) that determines a person’s Chineseness. Instead, Chinese identity is framed as being based on shared racial/ethnic heritage. Moreover, these constructions are grounded in idealist assumptions of racial purity and arguments about the racial

aesthetics of being and looking Chinese. For Lou Jing's critics, then, her having grown up in Shanghai and her familiarity and ease with Chinese culture were contradicted and overridden by her race and being born of a foreign parent. In short, her skin and the foreignness of her lineage were identified as symptoms of an alien force that was invading China and attempting to adulterate a supposed pure Chinese identity. Ultimately, these responses to Lou Jing are similar to Chinese nationalist and culturalist frameworks that frame Chinese engagement with the world under the banner of, either, 'Chinese culture and society under siege by the West', or as displaying the resilience of a pure, unified Chinese nation against foreign encroachment. In both discourses, Chineseness and Chinese society are flattened out, evacuated of their global, hybrid and multifaceted, contradictory and contested features. As Yuezhi Zhao explains, such 'discourses assume a unified "Chinese national interest" and a (self)-orientalizing "dehistoricized and desocialized" understanding of "Chinese culture." What is lost here is any discussion about ... exactly what it means, and who can be its legitimate representatives.'¹⁹

Another important feature of some of these condemnations was that netizens denigrated Lou Jing's mother for having a relationship with a black man and for allegedly engaging in an extramarital affair. On the website *Youku*, one person distanced himself/herself from attacking Lou Jing, but placed the blame on Lou Jing's mother. 'Actually, her skin colour is not a problem, what's problematic is morality,' the person explained. 'Extramarital affairs are always spurned.... After all, we hate the infidelity of Lou Jing's mother as much as the black guy.'²⁰ Similar commentary was made on the website *ChinaSmack*. 'Having this kind of woman as a mother is truly lamentable,' one user wrote. 'Chinese girls, please have a little more self-respect.' Two others affirmed this view. 'I am not racist, but if her mother really was married first and got involved with a black person, then that is indeed low ... truly both low and deplorable,' the first stated; whereas the latter commented, 'Society's norms and values haven't become so non-mainstream have they? ... If I were that girl, I would be so restrained ... how could I possibly come out and show my face, seeking attention and sympathy?'²¹

From these negative comments, what becomes clear is that the disparaging remarks about Lou Jing and her mother were about more than the colour of Lou Jing's skin. They encompassed a variety of important issues: struggles over what it means to be identified as Chinese, as well as debates over women's interracial relationships with foreigners and the increase of mixed-race Chinese children. To properly conceptualize the racist criticisms of Lou Jing and her mother, it is therefore vital to gender blackness, or better stated, to understand how Lou Jing's critics framed her racial identity in relation to ideas about gender and anxieties about globalization and immigration's impact on conventional markers of Chinese identity.²²

For one, critiques of Lou Jing's mother rest on opposition to married females' participation in extramarital affairs and resistance against romantic and sexual relationships between Chinese women and black men. Like other societies, outlooks on extramarital affairs and relationships in China are weighed heavily in favour of men. In imperial China, concubines and mistresses were status symbols for Chinese men, part of what Don Lee explains as a '2-millennium-old tradition of "golden canaries," ... because, like the showcase birds, mistresses here are often pampered, housed in love nests and taken out at the pleasure of their "masters"'.²³ Despite the PRC outlawing concubines in the

Maoist era and the 2003 modification of China's 1980 Marriage Law to now forbid married persons from cohabitating with a third party (the original 1980 law liberalized divorce, introduced China's notorious one-child policy, instructed courts to favour the interests of women and children in property distribution in divorce proceedings, and legalized marriage with foreigners and interracial marriage), it is nonetheless common knowledge that some Chinese men have taken to having a second wife. In a paper on Chinese extramarital affairs, Zhenmei Zhang and Yuanting Zhang conducted a content analysis of Chinese newspapers and found that in Chinese popular media, 'Men's extramarital behaviours were portrayed as natural or sometimes necessary.... On the other hand, female initiators are usually described as "loose" women.'²⁴ High economic growth and social and cultural transformations in Chinese society have made way for progressive changes and opportunities for Chinese women, especially in protecting married women's rights. Nonetheless, among some Chinese publics, it is socially and culturally unacceptable for married women to have lifestyles similar to that of a philandering husband.

In addition, there has been a history of hostility to romantic relationships between Chinese females and black males.²⁵ Barry Sautman opined years ago that Chinese women involved with foreign men are 'often considered traitors or prostitutes ... especially where the foreigner was black'.²⁶ Professor Yu Hai of Fudan University agrees, adding that intimate relationships with black men are also viewed through the lens of class and status. 'If a Chinese woman dates a white man it is social climbing. If she is with a black man, it is "stepping down",' Hai relates.²⁷ One user on *NetEase* brought this issue up, remarking how such criticisms of interracial relationships between Chinese women and black men were gendered and reflected a double standard not applied to Chinese men involved with black women. The latter relationships, the person maintained, rarely ever received the same kind of criticism and rejection among Chinese publics. 'If it were an affair between a Chinese man and a black woman, then there would be applause instead of criticism.'²⁸

In any case, for several of Lou Jing's online critics, it was not just having a romantic relationship with a foreigner that was considered essentially wrong, but having one with a foreigner whose race was deemed to be below that of China on the global racial hierarchy. Their anger was representative of a deep-rooted cultural angst over the potential decrease in China's international prestige, a contemporary version of what many Chinese refer to as 'losing face'.²⁹ For these netizens, media coverage of Lou Jing's story and Chinese interracial relations with people of African descent signified a blemish to China's international image. 'The virtues of our nation are destroyed,' one *ClubChina* user posted. 'From now on, many people will take the daughter and mother as role models.' Others agreed that Lou Jing and other black people in China defiled the country's honour. While one person stated that this reality represented 'black people begin[ning] to "blacken" China', other netizens concluded that 'Our nation shall never accept the existence of this kind of shame' and that 'She [Lou Jing] has made all Chinese lose face'.³⁰

These sentiments were also framed around arguments about beauty. For example, the aforementioned netizen's use of the idiom 'blacken' – a term that is anything but race-neutral – to describe how Lou Jing was tainting China's international image must be read in relation with Chinese societal codes that have historically privileged pale white

skin over darker complexions. One online user bluntly relayed this outlook: 'In China, the brighter the skin colour the more beautiful a girl is. White represents jade and white embraces the meaning of health, beauty and cleanness.' 'So if a girl is a mixed-blood of a Chinese and a European who is white, then [this] issue would never exist. People would consider a girl a gorgeous beauty.' Another user added, 'Is this a new aesthetics standard for the Eastern people?'³¹ Such statements testify to both the localization of Eurocentric notions of beauty among some Chinese and the continued prevalence of problematic, historical Chinese associations of skin colour with beauty (or lack thereof), class position, and ethnicity.³²

Ultimately, as these denunciations of Lou Jing's Chineseness and criticisms of her and her mother mushroomed, a number of Chinese journalists and scholars jumped to their defence.³³ However, it was from online users that Lou Jing and her mother received the most support, many of these people just as assertive in supporting Lou Jing as her disparagers were in condemning her. For one thing, various people protested against the multitude of racial discrimination that Lou Jing received online. One person commented, 'Strongly despise people who are racial discriminators!!! China is a tolerant nation' and 'We are all Chinese. Don't bother about what others think of you or how they categorize you. Be yourself!'³⁴ Others seconded this call. 'She is a Chinese, she should have the rights of a Chinese citizen, as well as the dignity,' another person commented. Two others maintained, 'It's not her fault, let's accept a Chinese with a different skin colour' and 'She is a lovely Chinese girl! ... The only difference is the skin colour.'³⁵

As the aforementioned posts convey, many of Lou Jing's supporters affirmed her identity as Chinese. Also intriguing is that several of these commenters explicitly championed her for publicly calling into question the naturalization of uniraical and monocultural representations of being Chinese. 'Don't be so narrow-minded! Our nation will never become truly strong unless we learn how to tolerate difference,' a netizen proclaimed. Other users similarly maintained that Lou Jing and other mixed-race Chinese were evidence of the need to expand the narrowly defined notion of being Chinese. Citing historical evidence of intercultural and interracial contact between China and the world, many users argued that it was necessary for China to open itself to the global politics of difference, that is, to the costs of global cultural flow and engagement with the world. 'The sea admits hundreds of streams for its tolerance,' one user asserted. 'Communication propels the world forward. Have you seen any ethnic group that can make progress without communication with the outside? Multiculturalism is already an unstoppable trend.'³⁶ It was this kind of openness to difference that led another netizen to maintain that Lou Jing was testament to the reality that 'the world is converging gradually'.³⁷ A *ClubChina* user similarly alleged that Lou Jing's mixed-race status was representative of a larger, unspoken reality. 'There are millions of mixed-blood kids in China,' the person claimed. 'Are you going to criticize them one by one?'³⁸

Other netizens spoke favourably about Lou Jing's mother, lauding her for courageously raising a mixed-race child in a culture not known for celebrating people of interracial heritage. 'I think this mother is still very great/admirable,' one netizen posted. 'A single mother able to bring up a daughter is already very difficult/impressive, much less one with a different skin colour.'³⁹ Another person commented, 'Her mother should be considered brave to overcome all the great pressure to bring her up.'⁴⁰ In line with this

support, other online users highlighted the fact that much of the criticism Lou Jing's mother received was the result of gender bias against women. In comparison to male adulterers, women were unfairly judged as immoral. Consequently, the allegations of the mother's infidelity worked to heightened many netizens' denunciations of her; she was perceived as being representative of an out-of-control Chinese female body and sexuality. One of her supporters explained, 'It's important to remember that there's racism as reaction and racism as a mode of thought. Chinese aren't necessarily against mixed-blood couples; it was the adultery that led to racist comments.'⁴¹ Another stated, 'Women have affairs ... what's the difference if the one with whom they have the affair is Chinese or a foreigner? Isn't this narrow nationalism and patriotism? What about men? Are they allowed the exceptions?'⁴²

Yet ironically, while quite a number of Lou Jing's supporters gave merit to the observation that Lou Jing and her mother were victims of Chinese patriarchy, others explicitly emphasized the importance of not downplaying race when examining the gender politics of these criticisms. Commenting on the previously cited post, one netizen asserted, 'I don't buy that distinction at all... Obviously, the adultery is a factor in the outrage of the commenters, but so is the racial aspect, obviously. If this girl's mother had had an affair with another Chinese guy, would we even know about it? Would it ever have ended up on this site? Would people be saying she shouldn't show herself in public?'⁴³ Another person seconded this argument. 'I think Lou Jing should not be condemned,' they maintained, 'and if her father was an American white person, she probably would not be discriminated against. In the end, it is still racism.'⁴⁴ In short, by bringing attention to the different ways Lou Jing's mother's alleged adulterous affair would have been perceived had she been romantically involved with a fellow Chinese national or with a white person, these online users underscored how the critiques of her parents' relationships were embedded in particular racialized understandings. They maintained that had Lou Jing's father been non-black, the criticisms of her and her mother might have been potentially less harsh and widespread.

People also pointed out that some of the criticisms of Lou Jing were the consequence of particular ideologies about globalization. Wealth and resource disparities on the global stage and discourses about modernization and development functioned to racialize Lou Jing and other mixed-race Chinese in very particular ways. In short, attitudes about what it means to be 'modern' and 'developed' rely on racial discourses, where non-whites, particularly groups of African descent, are frequently classified not just as economically and politically backward, but correspondingly as also racially and culturally backward as a result of their economic and political woes. It was thus through such developmentalist logic that one user framed her criticisms of Lou Jing's mother. 'Europe is a developed community, a mixed-blood Chinese with European ancestry would be viewed with pride,' the user wrote. 'Lou Jing's mother made a mistake of choosing the black guy.'⁴⁵

Overall, the above online commentary relates that Lou Jing's racial identity was articulated through multiple formations – as rigidly non-Chinese, as a marker of illegitimate and looked-down-upon interracial relations, as negatively impacting Chinese aesthetics of beauty and China's status within world relations, as primarily demonstrating gender oppression against Chinese women, and as a symbol of Chinese multiculturalism and racial inclusion. Invested with different social meanings, Lou Jing's racial identity and

representation within popular culture therefore became a serious site of contention and contestation, a forum for numerous claims about what she and other mixed-race black-Chinese nationals mean within larger Chinese debates over nationality, race, gender, and globalization.

Amid this battleground of articulations and criticisms, Lou Jing took to the Internet to defend both her and her mother. In a video interview with *NetEase*, one of the biggest news portal sites in China, she briefly reflected on how being of mixed-race impacted her life.⁴⁶ Despite fantasizing about her father as a child, Lou Jing was taught from a young age to self-identify as native Chinese. However, a key reminder that she did not fit easily into this social formation was the nickname childhood friends and classmates had for her: Xiaohei (Little black). Although meant to be a pet name of endearment, the nickname was one of several public methods of differentiating her from other Chinese youth and disjoining her from the imagined, homogeneous Chinese collective body. In addition, people's awareness of her difference was further heightened when she spoke Chinese. Lou Jing's distinct Shanghaiese accent and comprehension of her national language served as a central mark of her alienation. She explained, 'People would say, "how come her skin colour is different?" ... It was okay if I didn't speak. When I talked, people would start to discuss it.'⁴⁷ As Lou Jing related, for some of her compatriots, to hear a voice that they identified as Shanghaiese spoken from the mouth of a person they identified as black was alien to their understanding of what it meant to be Chinese.

Interestingly, it was these same traits – skin colour and fluency in her national language – that Lou Jing mobilized in a unique way when introduced on *Let's Go! Oriental Angel*. Standing out from the pack of other contestants, she performed a poetic rap:

My name is Lou Jing,
I usually like singing,
I occasionally also enjoy dancing.
When I am bored I can't stop eating,
So I have to go on a diet.
Happiness is my goal
And nothing else matters.

While the lyrical content of the rap was straightforward, the cultural politics surrounding it were multifaceted; ultimately it was not the lyrics that mattered most, but the language, dialect, and ideas about race associated with the genre. Employing a genuine and unquestionably Shanghaiese accent, Lou Jing situated herself as definitively Shanghaiese and moreover as a Chinese national. But by performing a rap, a musical genre based in black American and Afro-diasporic hip hop artistic and cultural practices and whose impact has been felt and reshaped globally, Lou Jing employed a particularly racialized and Western transnational mode of expression. In sum, a performance style identified dominantly as 'Western black' was ironically her means of introducing herself to her Chinese audience. This, though, was made more complex by the fact that over the following weeks she went on to sing tunes ranging from classical Chinese opera compositions to contemporary Chinese pop hits. Performing Chinese music consequently proved fruitful in situating her identity within common understandings of what it means to be Chinese.

Thus in some respect, Lou Jing's performances subtly engaged people's uneasiness with her claims to being Chinese and worked to make intelligible what some people viewed as the inconsistencies between her skin colour, her voice, and her performance of Chinese identity. Through her performances, China was not constituted by notions of ethnic homogeneity, but rather through language and diversity of cultural experience and influence. Her convincing performance of her native tongue, the music native to her homeland, and a foreign musical form worked in tandem to confront her alienation and dislodge the reification of essentialist constructions of Chineseness. Her acts consequently enunciated the range of influences, cross-cultural contact, and understandings of race that exist in being and living as Chinese.

Conclusion

It is important to note that the considerable media attention, blog and post commentary devoted to Lou Jing's story tie into a growing trend in China where both government and private interests have attempted to frame China as becoming more sensitive to the cultures of groups of African descent. Perhaps prompted by Chinese government and private industries' investments and trade relations with Africa, African immigrants' allegations of mistreatment in China, and China's attempts to refashion a new cosmopolitan international image of itself, the PRC has taken several steps within the cultural arena. Most recently, the first African hair salon was opened in Beijing. And as African American, Afro-European, and African professional basketball players obtain contracts to play for different teams within the Chinese Basketball Association, a few African American and African musicians and producers have found success within Chinese popular culture.⁴⁸ But probably the most glaring example is the government's selection of Ding Hui, a 22-year-old biracial Chinese citizen of Chinese and South African ancestry, to China's national volleyball team.⁴⁹ This decision by the government to allow a mixed-race national to represent the country on the international stage has been articulated in other cultural venues, for instance in representations of the nation at the annual CCTV Spring Festival Gala.⁵⁰ Alongside the aforementioned growing visibility and popularity of this small but rising number of black celebrities in China, Lou Jing's unusual life story therefore made her useful in promoting an image of a more culturally inclusive China.

But even more, she represented a niche commodity within a competitive market of mediated entertainment. How her story was transmitted – a mediated spectacle that fed on multiple publics' curiosity for extramarital affairs, mixed-race romantic relationships, and the experience of a mixed-race Chinese woman – consequently played a foundational role in setting the context for how the message was received, circulated and debated in cyberspace. By privileging race in the portrayal of Lou Jing and sensationalizing her story, *Let's Go! Oriental Angel* and other media entities capitalized on some netizens' racist outlooks about black people. They therefore, to some degree, provoked the online fiasco that ensued regarding Lou Jing's claims to being Chinese. Furthermore, in many ways, Lou Jing is part of a recent fad of grass-roots celebrity (草根名人), a trend that parallels the rise of network-based participatory culture and facilitated by popular *American Idol*-like competition shows such as *Supergirl* and *Dream China*.⁵¹ These

popular forms mark a turn from the haughty propaganda media of one official voice to a multivoiced, more pluralistic, commercialized and profit-oriented media and entertainment scene that often focuses on sensational and personal stories of ordinary people. It was this broader cultural shift that made the discussion about Lou Jing and moreover about race possible in Chinese entertainment media.

What is also significant to note is that in their focus on racializing Lou Jing as mixed-race Chinese, both the television show and Lou Jing relied on global commoditized images of blackness, representations primarily controlled and circulated by multinational corporations and identified primarily with black American culture. While the racial signifiers that the television show employed framed Lou Jing as 'Halle Berry of the East', in interviews Lou Jing positioned her race and musicality as primarily influenced by international entertainment moguls Beyoncé and Jay-Z. These were representations that Chinese audiences could view as foreign and cosmopolitan, yet most importantly, non-threatening, an image that juxtaposed with the dominant Chinese view of other black populations, in particular African expatriates.⁵² In so doing, both the television show and Lou Jing paid no attention to the extreme, quotidian repression experienced by numbers of Africans and mixed-race Chinese persons in China.⁵³ Several netizens brought this issue to light online. One person asked, 'She is a showpiece for Chinese "diversity" but how is she treated in day-to-day life?'⁵⁴ Such blatant silences were also furthered by Lou Jing's reticence about racial discrimination and its impact on her life. Throughout the airing of the television show and later in her interview with *NetEase*, she continuously stressed that she was an 'ordinary Chinese girl' who just happened to be of mixed race, which conveyed, to some degree, her reluctance and discomfort in acknowledging the prevalence of Chinese racism and anti-black attitudes.⁵⁵

Thus, from one perspective the debates surrounding Lou Jing displayed the tendency of entertainment media to employ commoditized images of race as a means to obtain viewership while simultaneously scandalizing and exploiting neo-nationalist attitudes. Moreover, as the various people who commented about Lou Jing online demonstrated, cyberspace, with its anonymity and accessibility, is definitely not an ideal Habermasian public sphere where cultural power is openly negotiated, struggled over and contested. To a certain extent, the nature of the entertainment media and of the digital space in which the discussion about Lou Jing unfolded magnified and worsened the racial discrimination experienced by Lou Jing. She subsequently became a site for some people to rearticulate anti-black racist outlooks and neo-nationalist conceptions of being Chinese.

However, this was not the only result of the online consumption and circulation of her story. Both Lou Jing's critics and supporters online, as well as Lou Jing herself, showcased the understandable difficulty and omissions involved in participating in a critical and constructive discussion of race, a conversation that has been historically marginalized within Chinese culture, politics, and media. Furthermore, the debates surrounding Lou Jing displayed the unique characteristics of debates concerning race and blackness in China, that is, the specific set of questions race and blackness engender in the Chinese context, and subsequently their implications for contemporary Chinese struggles over national identity and culture. While the anti-black racism of many of Lou Jing's critics ties into and reflects the global treatment of black bodies where discrimination, structural inequality, and articulations of black inferiority reign supreme, Lou Jing's supporters

convey the complexity and multifaceted aspects of Chinese constructions of identity. Interestingly, it was a modern version of Chinese identity as citizenship in a nation-state (as opposed to the traditional cultural conception of Chineseness as shared skin colour, language, heritage, and racial purity) which provided the resource for this population in endorsing Lou Jing's Chineseness and calling for greater expansion of what it means to be Chinese. That these different responses and standpoints took the greatest shape in cyberspace therefore demonstrates the role of the Internet as a significant contemporary space for power struggles over Chinese racial and national identity by everyday people.

Ultimately, for China to persist as an emerging international space for cross-cultural exchange, diversity, and global cultural flow and moreover to engender greater racial equality in the country, Chinese netizens will have to continue to enlarge their cultural scope, understanding of racial difference, and acceptance of the increasing heterogeneity of Chinese civil society. 'She is a beautiful human being ... she sounds well adjusted ... smarter than many of the people who are making racist remarks about her. Let us have a kinder and gentler world ... just as she [Lou Jing] inferred,' one netizen remarked, referencing the lyrics of Lou Jing's rap and encouraging Chinese citizens to broaden their perceptions about race. 'Good luck Lou Jing,' the netizen concluded. 'Given the re-emergence of China on the global stage, your unique quality will make you a great image to project to the world of a new 21st-century China ... a confident, inclusive, and kind global power.'⁵⁶ As this person points out, efforts to make Chinese publics more racially sensitive bodies can only serve to boost the nation's aptitude for intercultural communication and contact. The Internet is an important site for such discussions and cultural sharing. However the participatory culture enabled by the Internet must simultaneously be seriously engaged. Critical reflection over how individuals and groups perform their national, racial, gender and class identities online can produce more meaningful opportunities to unpack how nationalism, racism, and hegemony are articulated and legitimized through specific discourses about difference. If, as several scholars note, 'the digital is altering our understanding of what race is as well as nurturing new types of inequality along racial lines', then it is also important to mine how race functions in digital contexts, that is, to interrogate how people cultivate and use this space to construct and promote both dominant and resistant ideas.⁵⁷ The reality of Chinese popular nationalism and moreover of China's slow but growing racial publics requires greater investigation and the digital is one of several central public forms to begin both this critical work and the more important project of celebrating, rather than demonizing, China's evolving multiracial future.

Notes

1. What is especially surprising is that Lou Jing was able to accomplish all of this despite not even becoming one of the show's 12 finalists.
2. Frank Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992, 15–17.
3. In a classic 1920s Chinese work such as Du Yaquan's *Dongwuxue da cidian* (Great dictionary of zoology), for instance, the author stated, 'the "black race" ... have a shameful and inferior way of thinking, and have no capacity to shine in history'. See Du Yaquan et al. (eds) *Dongwuxue da cidian* (Great dictionary of zoology), Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1927, 15.

4. The importance of yellow (*huang*) to China's evolving racial consciousness can be discerned, for instance, simply through the names of China's Yellow River (*Huang he*), descriptions of China as the 'yellow centre' (*huang zhong*), and the 'Yellow Emperor' (*Huangdi*), the Chinese cultural hero mythologized as the paramount racial and ethnic antecedent of all Han Chinese. See Frank Dikötter, Racial identities in China: Context and meaning, *The China Quarterly*, no. 138, 1994: 404–12; Barry Sautman, Myths of descent, racial nationalism and ethnic minorities in the People's Republic of China, in Frank Dikötter (ed.) *The Construction of Racial Identities in China and Japan*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997, 75–95.
5. Racism, the CCP maintained, was a Western disease that China was combatting through support for the African American civil rights movement and internationalist solidarity and trade with African liberation movements. In the process, the Chinese government subsidized African students' study at Chinese educational institutions and trained African armies and revolutionary groups in military operations and guerilla warfare.
6. The most serious documented attacks on African immigrants and students in China occurred in 1962, 1979, 1980, 1988, 1989, 2009, and most recently in 2012. See Emmanuel J. Hevi, *An African Student in China*, London: Pall Mall Press, 1963; Barry Sautman, Anti-black racism in post-Mao China, *The China Quarterly*, no. 138, 1994: 413–37; Michael J. Sullivan, The 1988–89 Nanjing anti-African protests: Racial nationalism or national racism?, *The China Quarterly*, no. 138, 1994: 438–57; Richard Lufrano, The 1988 Nanjing incident: Notes on race and politics in contemporary China, *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* 26(1–2): 83–92; George T. Crane, Collective identity, symbolic mobilization, and student protest in Nanjing, China, 1988–1989, *Comparative Politics* 26(4), 1994: 395–413; and Zhen Jinghui, Feizhou ren zai Guangzhou (Black people in Guangzhou), *Nanfengchuang* (South reviews magazine), 11 September 2009, www.nfcmag.com/article/1648.html, accessed 13 January 2010.
7. See Frank Dikötter. A history of sexually transmitted diseases in China, in Milton Lewis, Scott Bamber, and Michael Waugh (eds) *A History of Sexually Transmitted Diseases and HIV/AIDS in Asia and the Pacific*, Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1997, 67–83; Adams Bodomo, *Africans in China: A Sociocultural Study and Its Implications on Africa–China Relations*, Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2012; Adams Bodomo, The African trading community in Guangzhou: An emerging bridge for Africa–China relations, *The China Quarterly* 203, 2010: 693–707; Brandon Zatt, Black is beautiful, *City Weekend – Shanghai*, 18–31 October 2007, 10–13; M. Dujon Johnson deduces from interviews, surveys and his own personal experiences living in China that Chinese parents and Chinese education officials prefer white Western teachers. Johnson asserts, 'Hiring a teacher other than one who is white leads to that school being considered an inferior teaching institution.' See M. Dujon Johnson, *Race and Racism in the Chinas: Chinese Racial Attitudes toward Africans and African-Americans*, Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2007, 57–8.
8. See Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*; Sautman, Anti-black racism in post-Mao China; Sullivan, The 1988–89 Nanjing anti-African protests; and Johnson, *Race and Racism in the Chinas*.
9. Scholars have examined interethnic perceptions and how Chinese nationalism and the construction of majority identity in China rely upon representations and discourses surrounding minorities. However, terms such as 'minority', when used in the context of China, often are not used in relation to race. When some researchers use minority, they are often referring primarily to China's 56 ethnic minority groups. Minority in such articulations does not include foreign populations residing in China, or biracial Chinese citizens, both of whom are groups generally marked as racially 'other' from what is conventionally identified as racially Chinese. This heightened focus on ethnicity risks silencing the fundamental role race

- and racism play in constructing what it means to be Chinese. For example, Rowena Fong and Paul R. Spickard have examined Chinese attitudes about foreigners by surveying students at Nankai University. The scholars found that while their subjects had high regard for Americans, British, and Germans and viewed them in positive terms, they perceived and described Russians, Mexicans, Japanese, Tibetans and Africans in negative terms. Africans were specifically characterized as 'primitive, uncivilized, threatening, warlike, poor, simple, uneducated, ignorant, and ugly'. Ultimately, Fong and Spickard's study categorizes these Chinese attitudes as 'ethnic questions' and as representing debates over 'the ongoing evolution of China as a multi-ethnic society' (p. 43). See Rowena Fong and Paul R. Spickard, *Ethnic relations in the People's Republic of China: Images and social distance between Han Chinese and minority and foreign nationalities*, *Journal of Northeast Asian Studies* 13(1), 1994: 26–48.
10. See Guobin Yang, *The Power of the Internet in China: Citizen Activism Online*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2009; Guobin Yang, Contesting food safety in the Chinese media: Between hegemony and counter-hegemony, *The China Quarterly* 214, 2013: 337–55; and Xu Wu, *Chinese Cyber Nationalism: Evolution, Characteristics, and Implications*, Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007.
 11. Yuezhi Zhao, *Communication in China: Political Economy, Power, and Conflict*, Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008, 173–4; also see Jack Linchuan Qiu, Chinese opinions collide online: Civil discussions following the US-China plane collision, *Online Journalism Review*, 12 April 2001.
 12. Yinghong Cheng, From campus racism to cyber racism: Discourse of race and Chinese nationalism, *The China Quarterly* 207, 2011: 565, 562.
 13. As a form of media and communication, the Internet is now part of mainstream everyday life, used and creatively cultivated by people of different economic, regional, and cultural backgrounds far and wide. Yet it is also a commoditized form dominated by corporations, governments, and economic elites. For example, Kent Ono and Vincent Pham point out, 'The Internet and new media are constantly changing technologies that are often in tension with the concept of freedom.... New media do not guarantee a "cyberspace democracy".... Freedom on the Internet is not assured, but is, rather, something that is a constant and continuing struggle.' See Kent A. Ono and Vincent Pham, *Asian Americans and the Media*, Cambridge, UK and Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2009, 140.
 14. See Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*, New York: Routledge, 1994.
 15. Lisa Nakamura, *Cybertypes: Race, Ethnicity, and Identity on the Internet*, New York: Routledge, 2002; Lisa Nakamura, *Digitizing Race: Visual Cultures of the Internet*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008.
 16. We translated and analysed post comments from several Chinese and non-Chinese websites and search engines, the majority of which were posted between the months of September and December 2009. The post comments came primarily from four Internet sites. A good portion of the comments came from Chinese search engine Baidu, and websites *NetEase* and *ClubChina*, all of which are portals created specifically for Mandarin speakers. While Baidu is the number one search engine in China, controlling what some approximated in 2010 as 63 to 70 per cent of China's Internet market share, *NetEase* operates 163.com, a web portal that in 2009 was ranked as China's sixth most popular free email service provider. *ClubChina*, on the other hand, is a website administered by Chinadotcom, a Chinese portal network that offers a broad range of online products and services. We also consider commentary from *ChinaSmack* and *Shanghaiist*, two websites devoted to translating news and popular content from Chinese-language websites into English. These two sites were selected because, in

addition to their translation of Chinese-language Internet articles, the websites' translators also select and translate the comments posted by Chinese netizens in response to the articles and topics discussed. For non-Mandarin speakers and readers, particularly Western netizens, *ChinaSmack* and *Shanghaiist* provide online access points to Chinese views and opinions. Nonetheless, it must be noted that numerous Chinese bloggers perceive such sites as particularly sensationalist, devoting attention mainly to translating online forums with highly sensational topics and commentary. It must be noted that in our analysis of these websites we assume a default Chinese user; this of course limits our analysis, because we clearly are not sure that all of these users identify themselves as Chinese. In any case, in our understanding of Chinese identity we acknowledge the differences in Chinese identity and experience. This means that we recognize that many of these users, even if Chinese, represent different regions/provinces of China, although not all of them may be residents of China but instead overseas Chinese. Some users may also be non-Chinese people who happen to read and speak Mandarin and who took an interest in the debates surrounding Lou Jing's national and racial identity.

17. See Ron Eglash, *Appropriating technology: An introduction*, in Ron Eglash et al. (eds) *Appropriating Technology: Vernacular Science and Social Power*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004, x.
18. Post comments on Wangyi zhuanfang Lou Jing: Wo shi tushengtuzhang de Zhongguo ren, (*NetEase's* exclusive interview with Lou Jing: I am a native Chinese), *NetEase* forum, 14 September 2009, http://comment.news.163.com/news2_bbs/5J4GFANS00012Q9L.html, accessed 12 January 2010.
19. Zhao, *Communication in China*, 140.
20. Post comments on Shipin: Lou Jing: Wo shi tushengtuzhang de Zhongguo ren (Video: Lou Jing: I am a native Chinese), *Youku*, 2009, http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XMTE5MTA0MTA0.html, accessed 12 January 2010.
21. Post comments on Shanghai 'black girl' Lou Jing abused by racist netizens, *ChinaSmack*, 1 September 2009, <http://www.chinasmack.com/stories/shanghai-black-girl-lou-jing-racist-chinese-netizens/>, accessed 11 January 2010.
22. Critical race theorist Kimberle Crenshaw describes this as engaging in an *intersectional approach*, that is to say a theoretical lens invested in situating the criticisms of Lou Jing and her mother, as well as the anger over the increasing publicity and exposure of their story, within an analysis of racism, sexism, and globalization. Crenshaw points to the centrality of analysing 'the intersecting patterns of racism and sexism' and shifting away from singular frameworks that are 'shaped to respond to one *or* the other', that is race *or* gender, rather than both simultaneously. But she adds, 'Because the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated.' See Kimberle Crenshaw, *Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color*, *Stanford Law Review* 43(6), 1991: 1241–99; Kimberle Crenshaw, *Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory, and antiracist politics*, *The University of Chicago Legal Forum* (Volume 1989: Feminism in the law: Theory, practice and criticism), 1989: 131–68.
23. Don Lee, 'Second wives' are back, *Los Angeles Times*, 2 November 2005.
24. Yuanting Zhang and Zhenmei Zhang, *Extramarital affairs in China: A feminist approach* (paper presented at Population Association of America 2007 Annual Meeting, New York, 29–31 March 2007).
25. See Sautman, *Anti-black racism in post-Mao China*; Sullivan, *The 1988–89 Nanjing anti-African protests*.

26. See Sautman, Anti-black racism in post-Mao China, 417.
27. Richard Fisher, Racism in China, *Shanghai Star*, 17 April 2003, <http://app1.chinadaily.com.cn/star/2003/0417/cu18-1.html>, accessed 12 January 2010.
28. Post comments on Shanghai 'hei nühai' Lou Jing zouhong wangluo (Shanghai 'black girl' Lou Jing popular network), *NetEase* forum, 2009, <http://bbs.news.163.com/bbs/wsy/150198571.html>, accessed 12 January 2010.
29. A historical Chinese notion regarding respect and shame usually applied to individuals, 'losing face' is also prevalent within Chinese political and cultural circles. David Yau-fai Ho explains that fear of losing face therefore creates a propensity among government and cultural leaders to constantly focus on avoiding shame on the world stage. See David Yau-fai Ho, Wai Fu, and S. M. Ng, Guilt, shame and embarrassment: Revelations of face and self, *Culture & Psychology* 10(1), 2004: 64–84.
30. Post comments on Jiechuan Shanghai 'hei meiren' Lou Jing de manzui huanghua! (Debunking Shanghai 'black beauty' Lou Jing's lies!), *ClubChina*, 2009, http://club.china.com/data/thread/1011/2705/14/57/0_1.html, accessed 12 January 2010.
31. Post comments on Wangyi zhuanfang Lou Jing.
32. In China dark skin tone frequently denotes ethnicity and class; it is often assumed that dark-skinned Chinese persons are non-Han and come from rural poor areas. Regarding the rise of Western beauty aesthetics in China, one good example is the Chinese fashion and advertising industries. Both have recently begun to open their doors more and more to foreign models. However, it is predominantly white American and European models that are being hired. In a *Washington Post* article, Ou Haibin, head of the Yuanjin Modeling Agency in Shenzhen, explained that he never hires black models because 'foreign models' faces are much more three-dimensional, look nicer in pictures', and because his 'clients don't ask for black models'. He rationalized this bias as merely 'an issue of Chinese people's aesthetic view'. This has also had an impact on everyday Chinese life, with more and more Chinese men and women using skin-bleaching creams and ointments. See Keith B. Richburg, Foreign models flock to China, which embraces a Western vision of beauty, *Washington Post*, 26 December 2009, C01.
33. Media mogul and blogger Hong Huang weighed in stating, 'In the same year that Americans welcome Obama to the White House, we can't even accept this girl with a different skin color.' Among many others, Raymond Zhou also defended Lou Jing. Moreover, he has provided a succinct analysis of why some Chinese people responded so negatively to her. Zhou referenced factors such as cultural bias against dark skin, Chinese aesthetics of beauty, and class discrimination. See Shi Yingying, Coloring the debate, 18 September 2009, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/cndy/2009-09/18/content_8706527.htm, accessed 12 January 2010; and Raymond Zhou, Seeing red over black angel, *China Daily*, 18 September 2009, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2009-09/18/content_8711576.htm, accessed 12 January 2010.
34. Post comments on Shipin: Lou Jing.
35. Post comments on Wangyi zhuanfang Lou Jing.
36. Post comments on Shipin: Lou Jing.
37. Post comments on Wangyi zhuanfang Lou Jing.
38. Post comments on Jiechuan Shanghai 'hei meiren' Lou Jing de manzui huanghua!
39. Post comments on Shanghai 'black girl' Lou Jing abused by racist netizens.
40. Post comments on Wangyi zhuanfang Lou Jing.
41. Post comments on Shanghai 'black girl' Lou Jing abused by racist netizens.
42. Post comments on Jiechuan Shanghai 'hei meiren' Lou Jing de manzui huanghua!
43. Ibid.
44. Post comments on Shanghai 'black girl' Lou Jing abused by racist netizens.

45. Post comments on Wangyi zhuanfang Lou Jing.
46. See Shipin: Lou Jing. Although the video was posted in 2009 when the show was still ongoing, it still receives viewers; users might notice that some of its latest comments were posted in 2014, which means that Lou Jing's story still attracts attention and generates debate in cyberspace after five years.
47. Translation of Wangyi zhuanfang Lou Jing: Wo shi tushengtuzhang de Zhongguo ren on *ChinaHush*.
48. See Chinese embrace Beijing's first African hair salon, *BBC News*, 12 February 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-21421956>, accessed 1 March 2013; Jim Yardley, *Brave Dragons: A Chinese Basketball Team, an American Coach, and Two Cultures Clashing*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012; Jimmy Wang, Nigerian finds pop stardom in Beijing, *New York Times*, 15 March 2011; and How a Muslim convert from Detroit became the godfather of Chinese hip hop, *Foreign Policy*, 15 November 2007, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2007/11/14/how_a_muslim_convert_from_detroit_became_the_godfather_of_chinese_hip_hop#sthash.9AJ6D7u3.dpbs, accessed 12 January 2010.
49. See China welcomes Chinese-African player to national team, *Wall Street Journal*, 14 April 2009, <http://blogs.wsj.com/chinarealtime/tag/ding-hui/>, accessed 15 January 2010.
50. At the 2013 CCTV Spring Festival Gala, one of the most important Chinese propaganda-entertainment shows aired annually on the Lunar New Year's Eve, there were an unusually large number of foreign faces. The show included a Canadian singing a classic Peking Opera tune with a Chinese opera performer as well as a dance performance by a Turkish dance troupe. Moreover, the show closed with a group performance by singers of different races: white, black and yellow. Given that there had been very little representation of non-Chinese culture on the show in the past, this change signals a crucial shift in the 'mainstream' cultural industries and state ideologies towards greater globalization and aspiration for a multiracial and multicultural society.
51. See Louise Edwards and Elaine Jeffreys (eds) *Celebrity in China*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010; I. D. Roberts has a chapter (titled 'China's Internet celebrity: Furong Jiejie') in this book in which he discusses Furong Jiejie, one of the first and best known grass-roots Internet celebrities in China, who shot to fame in the Chinese cyberspace in 2005 by posting narcissistic self-description and photos that challenged mainstream morality and female sexuality; also see Lin Zhang and Anthony Fung, The myth of 'shanzhai' culture and the paradox of digital democracy in China, *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 14(3), 2013: 401–16.
52. This is a point also made by Malcolm Moore in China's black pop idol does NOT expose her nation's racism, *The Telegraph*, 5 November 2009. Regarding the differences in terms of the treatment and representation of African Americans versus that of Africans, it must be noted that American citizenship provides black Americans abroad with particular class and geopolitical privileges denied to African expatriates. For example, in China, like most places outside the United States, a black tourist, labourer, student, or professional with a US passport will often be treated in ways superior to that of a Nigerian of similar status. This is not to suggest that African Americans in China do not face racial discrimination, but that the colour of their passport allows them a different range of mobility and a more limited type of surveillance than that enacted on Africans. In China and elsewhere, Africans sadly are often associated with pathologies of crime and poverty. Africans have been largely represented and perceived as impoverished immigrant populations who unfairly gain from Chinese investment and aid.
53. For instance, in Guangzhou, a city where the population of African residents has been growing at annual rates of 30–40 per cent since 2003, many Africans residing in a 13-mile section of the city known as 'Chocolate City' face daily police harassment, the threat of deportation,

- lack of quality housing, food and healthcare, and intense restriction of their mobility. Mixed-race Chinese persons, on the other hand, have to contend with a different set of obstacles. One reporter maintains that a report from the Shanghai Civil Affairs Bureau conveyed that while mixed-race marriages have slowly increased in Chinese cities, Shanghai in particular, effective governance has not matched these numbers. The reporter points out that China's censuses and registers for new births have yet to produce a category for mixed-race Chinese citizens, which consequently in some instances can adversely impact a mixed-race Chinese person's claims to the rights and privileges of Chinese citizenship. See Zoher Abdoolcarim, Race to judgment, *Time*, 8 October 2009, <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1848514,00.html>, accessed 12 January 2010.
54. Post comments on Netizens v. Lou Jing, the half-black oriental angel, *Shanghaiist*, 2 September 2009, http://shanghaiist.com/2009/09/02/netizens_v_lou_jing_the_half-black.php, accessed 12 January 2010.
 55. Mixed-race volleyball player Ding Hui expressed a similar outlook. When asked about the impact his appearance and skin colour has on his everyday life, he responded, 'What I want to say is that I'm a Chinese, I was born and raised in China, it is no big deal that I played for our national team... I don't want people to look at me in a different way, please don't pay too much attention to my looks.' Ultimately Ding Hui hopes to use sport and his talents as tools to convey that his skin colour does not offset his national allegiance. And he is not alone in this endeavour. Xu Genbao, a former player on the Chinese national soccer team and manager of several Chinese soccer clubs, has utilized his youth soccer school, the Xu Genbao Football Base, as a site to cultivate the talent of mixed-race Chinese nationals. Over the last eight years, Xu has trained mixed-race players such as Aili (Chinese-African), Eddy Francois (Chinese-Tanzanian), Nasri Nagi (Chinese-Moroccan), Wolf Schenzirolzi (Chinese-German), Maximiliano Roderige (Chinese-Argentinian), Hugo Veramassan (Chinese-Argentinian), Vladimir Peterovski (Chinese-Russian), Walter Marincosca (Chinese-Serbian), Cardezo Dimo Dargoberlli (Chinese-Panamanian), Qin Yanjiong (Chinese-Brazilian), and Bojan Zievetanovski (Chinese-Bosnian). According to Xu, the goal is to fashion these young men into China's most elite players and prepare them to represent the nation at the international level. Xu boasted, 'Ten years from now, there'll be at least four players from my team selected by our national team.' See Wei Bin, Zhongguo titan ba da hunxue'er: Ding Hui bingfei kaichuang xianhe zhi ren (Chinese sports-world's eight great persons of mixed blood: Ding Hui is not the first), *NetEase Sports*, 15 April 2009, http://sports.163.com/09/0415/11/56UH672I000534N9_8.html, accessed 3 March 2010.
 56. Post comments on Shipin: Lou Jing.
 57. Lisa Nakamura and Peter A. Chow-White (eds) *Race after the Internet*, New York: Routledge, 2012, 2.

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