



Research Fellow 

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Doing feminism through creative cultural practices: zine-making, East and Southeast queer feminist communities, and anti-racial discrimination activisms in the UK

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'It's not just a zine; it's a part of me, the unspeakable self that I am crafting.' In one of the twenty-five interviews with Chinese diaspora zine makers from East and Southeast feminist (ESEA) feminist communities, Fang (25, consultant) depicted the relations between zine and herself as such. In her description, a zine is an embodiment of her lived experiences of being a queer feminist, being a Chinese diaspora amid covid-19, and being a migrant after Brexit in the UK. This depiction of 'crafting self' penetrates this research project, resonating with the many stories of living in the UK as an ESEA queer feminist.

Zine, the small scrapbook-like booklet, is made from images and words cut from various types of printed materials, magazines, tabloids, and newspapers. Through the remaking and rearranging of images and texts, zine makers' ideas can be expressed (Chidgey, 2013, Creasap, 2014, Kempson, 2015, Schilt, 2003). It is a creative product done by individuals or small groups and reprinted for small circulations (Chidgey, 2009, Poletti, 2005, Zobl, 2009). In Fang's zine, as well as many other zines in this research project, the words and pictures extracted from the colourful misogynistic tabloids, the meticulously designed museum and art gallery brochure, and yellowed newspapers filled with white middle-class heterosexual couples, have been transformed into a new narrative. Resonating many scholarly works (Clark-Parsons, 2017, Gray, Pollitt, and Blaise, 2022, and Comstock, 2001), Zine in this research becomes a channel for conveying zine makers' observations of the fabric of reality and their sentiments. It documents the many underground discussions around feminism, race and ethnicity, and migrants.

Blending cultures outside the Anglo-American mainstreaming contexts and individual observations on constraints on Asian women and queer, I found zine functions as a tool for resistance, to resist the regulated women's sex and sexualities. It travels beyond the geographical borderlines and addresses the life journeys of migrants that

are filled with uncertainty and constant negotiation with immigration systems and societal institutions. The process of making Zine, an accessible creative expression, plays an important role in building community care, particularly during the pandemic.

Encountering zine-making workshops in ESEA feminist community during the pandemic, I am interested in how this creative practice, a practice blended with feminist appeals and anti-racial discrimination, becomes a community response to covid racism and gendered constraints beyond the borderlines. This report is therefore about documenting this type of feminist grassroots expression and analysing how this cultural and creative practice addresses multi-marginalised groups' struggles and functions as a form of resistance against the sexism and racism prevalent in British society.

Categorized into five sections, this report will firstly revisit and restate the context of rising racism targeted at ESEA heritage people living in the UK. Second, I will explain how I conduct this research through semi-structured interviews and reflect on the dynamic power flows within these interviews. I found subtle hierarchy is built in a conversation around feminism and anti-racism between me as the researcher and the zine makers as the research subjects due to different levels of familiarity with mobilizing a set of feminist language. Next, I will turn to my fieldwork findings of how zine as a cultural creative practice becomes a tool to do feminism (section 3) and to combat racism (section 4). I will articulate that zine makers' recognition of the mainstreaming feminist discussion in the UK cannot fully address Chinese diasporic feminists' appeals and thus they blend their own culture into zine-making to seek a distinct pathway to feminism. I argue this is a form of multi-marginalised feminism, which addresses the particular struggle that ESEA queer women in the UK face due to the intersecting multiple marginalised identities. It addresses these young women's unsettling life experiences as a temporary resident and a migrant in the UK, the subtle aggression and blunt racism towards their identity as the so-called 'model minority' in the UK, the situations of far-from-being-able-to-celebrate queer identity due to the cultural constraints, and the emphasise on trans-inclusive community. Finally, I will conclude Zine as a creative practice plays a role in fostering connections within underground East and Southeast Asian feminist communities, weaving individual feminist practices into a collective understanding.

This report sheds light on the long-ignored ESEA communities' struggles that are masked by the label of 'model minority' and documents how ESEA communities use cultural and creative activities like zine making to respond to covid racism and rising xenophobia after Brexit. I argue that understanding ESEA communities through their creative practices can help to challenge the prevailing monolithic description of "Asia" and notice the vibrant community creative collaborations and community care responding to the xenophobic sentiments in British society. The community, although many times underfunded, struggles to seek a path to continue its activities of doing cultural and creative practices to combat racism and sexism and to respond to multi-marginalised groups' needs.

1. Context

In the context of covid-19, many scholars found that UK has witnessed increasing instances of racist abuse and hate crimes towards East and Southeast Asian (ESEA) people (Schumann and Moore, 2023, Gray and Hansen, 2021, Yeh, 2020). Specifically, for the first three months in 2020, the reported hate crime against Chinese-heritage people almost tripled in the UK (Lovett, 2020). Reported racial hate crimes against ESEA individuals increased by nearly 50% from 2018 to 2020 and have remained above pre-pandemic levels (EVR, 2022).

Under the staggering statistics, it is the living individuals within the ESEA community who experience all these various forms of violence (verbal, sexual, and physical) because of their looks. Many can still remember incidents of Jonathan Mok (a student who was attacked by a gang of men who state 'We don't want your coronavirus in our country'), Wang Peng (a university lecturer who was beaten by a group of men in Southampton when he went jogging), Chinese restaurant owner (who was spat by a teenager boy who came to their restaurant and kept harassing him by repeatedly asking whether he was a carrier of covid). This surge in anti-Asian racial violence cases since the outbreak of the coronavirus in Wuhan, China, has resulted in trauma among ESEA communities in the UK and beyond (Ren and Feagin, 2021, Choi and Lee, 2021, Tessler, Choi and Kao, 2020). Not only the

individuals among ESEA groups but also the local businesses started by ESEA migrants in London Chinatown experienced a significant drop (Gao and Sai, 2021).

Witnessing the ongoing incidents against individuals of East and Southeast Asian heritage, the continuous confrontations against them contribute to the formation of a perceived identity – merely appearing Asian becomes a justification for blame and abuse. As argued by Jin and Ni, racialized bodies, such as those that 'look Chinese,' often serve as triggers for racial violence (2021). This means not just Chinese people but many other ESEA people living in the UK become parts of the racialised subjects and the targets to attack. Further their experiences of campaigning in Trafalgar Square, ESEA groups' anti-racism activisms are often left behind and considered as the non-mainstreaming agenda in local anti-racism activisms.

Responding to the rising covid racism, Diana Yeh (2021) pointed out the emerging 'East and Southeast Asian' appeared as a pan-Asian identity that tackling anti-Asian racism within cultural and creative industries. She underlined the need of scrutinising the racism that happened underneath the label of 'model minority' and re-confirming ESEA people's autonomy and agency to make a political change by using ESEA as a more collective and inclusive distinct political identity. She pointed out the important role of community care and love within this political identity as well as its racial approach of making a change in cultural and creative industries. Resonating with Yeh's work and focusing on anti-Asian hate activism in the post-Brexit and during pandemic, Hongwei Bao (2021) further pointed out the need of using ESEA to understand the fabric of reality and but also not considered it as an inherent or fixed category but considered as an open, flexible, and dynamic category to build up solidarities among people. Bao (2021) confirmed the need of ESEA while at the same time focusing on the meaning generated from ESEA anti-racial activisms. Building on Diana Yeh and Hongwei Bao's discussions, I will adopt this label 'ESEA' in my report to discuss creative practices to address the political appeals among pan-Asian communities and further adds zine-making workshops in ESEA communities into Yeh's previous discussion on performance from ESEA communities' response to covid (2020) and Bao's documents on anti-racism campaign in Birmingham (2021).

Witnessing the mushrooming zine making sessions in the post-Brexit and post-pandemic British society as well as the emerging use of the label ESEA in feminist communities, I have been curious about the question:

How do ESEA feminist communities use zine-making workshops as a type of cultural and creative practice to combat racism and sexism?

I aim to supplement Yeh and Bao's discussion on ESEA's political activisms by specifically underlining the young feminists' active contributions and creativity in their creative cultural practices. Distinct from focusing on professional artists or full-time performances in Yeh's work, I focus on non-professional feminist zine makers who are part of the ESEA community and the emerging feminism among ESEA community. Situated in this context of rising covid racism, xenophobic sentiments in a post-Brexit UK, and the emerging ESEA anti-racial violence activisms, this report focuses on this combination of creative practice, anti-racial violence, and feminist identity. As Yeh (2014) discussed, to understand this context and the reality faced by ESEA communities helps to shed light on the often-overlooked exclusion that exists beneath the label of 'model minority'. To understand these situations amid covid and Brexit is to gain a better understanding of the particular position of Chinese diasporic feminists in the UK, a perspective often neglected in mainstream feminist discussions and discussions on racial discrimination in the UK.

However, this rising queer feminism among ESEA communities seek a trajectory that distinct itself from the mainstreaming feminism discussion in the UK/ US context. In Sarah Banet-Weiser's work, she pointed out that Western society witnesses a new trend of feminism, and she concluded it as 'popular feminism', a type of feminism with catchwords of women empowerment widely circulated on media (2018). As Banet-Weiser (2018) criticised, it is a type of feminism that is palatable, occupying an empowering label but bypassing the core of doing feminism – rallying for a change in the existing gendered social structure. Banet-Weiser's critique resonates with Rottenberg's arguments on the rising neoliberal-logic-blended feminism of women working on themselves to create more opportunities (2019) and McRobbie's work as the need of well-organising life (2007). With this trend of feminism becoming popular, the rising 'love your body' discourse appears as an empowering message circulated

on social media, and feminist scholars like Ros Gill, Ana Sofia Elias and Shani Orgad criticised it as a type of empowering discourse reinforcing the gendered regulations on women's body (2014, 2015). While resonating with these feminist critiques, the feminism discussed in the following report also underline its differences due to these young women's very different position in the UK society.

Taking inspiration from black feminism on the discussions around sisterhoods (hooks, 2014) and intersectionality (Collins and Bilge, 2020), I found that the emphasis on intersecting identities and the development of identities forged at these intersections have become integral to ESEA feminism. This emerging feminism emphasizes the unique challenges created by cultural constraints and different political climates. This feminism also addresses the particular difficulties of coming out as queer in an East-Asian family. Expressing their queer identities and avoiding pressure to enter heterosexual marriages have become significant aspects of their feminist identity.

In an effort to contribute to the ongoing discourse on body, images, and regulations, queer Chinese feminists in the UK emphasize their pursuit of a distinct feminist trajectory. Specifically, they seek a form of queer feminism in the UK that diverges from mainstream feminism in the global North (Liu, Huang, and Ma, 2015), and refrains from being blended with the rising nationalist and nativist sentiments (Zhang, 2020). They call for a solidarity between feminists from the south. They highlight the intersecting identities that underscore their feminist practice, particularly navigating being Asian amid covid and being a queer feminist amid rising misogynistic sentiments. I will analyse this detail with fieldwork findings.

2. Methodology

With the hope of documenting the ESEA zine-making workshops emerging during the pandemic and afterwards, I conducted twenty-five semi-structured in-depth interviews with Chinese diaspora who are participating in these zine-making workshops. Each interview lasts one to three hours. Most of them were conducted in the participants' mother tongue, Mandarin. I then transcribed the interviews,

translated them into English, and analysed these translated transcripts to grasp the themes from these transcripts. These twenty-five zine makers are Chinese diaspora in the UK. Twenty-three of them self-identify as a queer woman. Only three of them have full-time contracted jobs and most of them work in retailing workshops and waitresses in Chinese restaurants to be part-time artists. Some of them (ten out of twenty-five) are still students. I made a poster for recruiting participants, circulated it on ESEA zine making workshop social media group chats, and started recruitment with my acquaintance and then it started snowballing. Their names and occupations in this report are all pseudonyms due to ethical considerations.

This report covered their twelve different zine-making workshops in the ESEA communities that happened in London, Birmingham, Bristol, Cambridge, and Edinburgh and twenty-one individual zines made outside the collective zine-making workshop. The content of these zines includes asexuality, transfeminism, memories in London Chinatown, being an Asian migrant in the UK, Asian life beyond the geographical border, safe space, anarchist He-Yin Zhen, the vagina monologue zine, ESEA artists in Europe, memorizing bell hooks, anti-racial harassments activisms, Chinese in the pandemic, ESEA feminist activisms in the UK and beyond, home cooking in Asia, and an imaginative utopia space without political oppression, among others.

Most of the interviews happened online to fit into participants' working schedules or fit into their lunch breaks. Three of them happened in person in London and Leeds separately. For these interviews, I adopted a creative research method, the walking interview method to conduct interviews. I invited participants to walk me through the places where they made zines and shared pictures of the zines and the journeys of making zines with me. We will sit down in a café they picked to talk about their experiences with zines. Picking walking interviews as well as semi-structured interviews, I aim at giving the power of talking about zines for zine makers and the arena of mobilizing the power of talking to them to narrate their stories (Evans and Jones, 2011, Jones et al., 2008). The reasons why I chose semi-structured interviews and walking interviews are to avoid establishing hierarchy within the interviews and to allow participants to have some degree of discourse power,

enabling them to share what they feel (Yost and Chmielewski, 2013, Doucet and Mauthner, 2008, Westmarland, 2001, Harding, 1987).

Many of these zine makers are ESEA allies and my acquaintances from the previous zine making workshops. I get their consents of joining our interviews before recording our conversation. But I still found I was ill at ease when I started recruitment. I worry that I turned my allies into objects to obtain their knowledge without fully acknowledging their discomfort of being in the research, although I picked a research method for giving participants more spaces to share their thoughts and designed interview questions. I hope to minimize the hierarchal relations between the researcher and the participants. But unexpectedly, most participants have enthusiastically told me 'We would like to help'. They responded my research interests with offering help. It is these young feminists who support and nourish me to finish writing this project. Without these young women and ESEA community care, this report cannot be done.

3. Feminism for Chinese diaspora in zine

Two prominent themes that appear in the zine-making workshops are feminism and anti-racial violence activism. So far, I have talked about how the data has been collected, and I will now focus on the fieldwork findings, specifically the emerging feminism in the zines in this section. This type of feminism challenges the gendered expectations rooted in East Asian culture, embraces the difficulties of coming out as a queer in an East Asian family, and combines a firm stance of building solidarity with trans people. It is a type of feminism that blends with the resistance against cultural constraints residing in East Asian culture and the attempt to seek a trajectory of doing feminism that is distinct from mainstream feminism in the UK. This feminism holds the goal of breaking away from traditional cultural norms in the South and rejecting mainstream feminist narratives in the North at the same time. In short, it is a type of feminism that particularly addresses the struggles of being an ESEA queer feminist in the UK.

Breaking body taboo

Body autonomy is an important part of emerging ESEA feminism. This idea of body autonomy mainly underlines the necessity of rephrasing the taboo-attached words for women's bodies in an East Asian context and the need to validate each community member's feelings about their body. I contend that zine, as well as the discussions in the zine-making workshops, function as a creative medium to make the unspeakable topics of women's bodies talkable. Speaking the taboo is becoming a way of breaking the taboo and becoming a way of resistance.

In the discussion of 'love your body' discourses, Elias and Gill (2014) criticised this seemingly empowering discourse and proposed a more nuanced way of rethinking this type of uplifting discourse. They criticised this positive LYB discourse for re-emphasising the dominance of the idealised feminine body via a reliance on a predefined feminine body image and a small shift from the dominant beauty standard; it also emphasises prevailing body dissatisfaction among women, which therefore leads to new mental requirements for women to have a beautiful mind (2014). What I would like to underline here is that the rising body autonomy in zine-making workshops does not mean these young feminists positioned their feminist appeals at the opposite of the feminist critiques in the global north (like Gill's critique). I found ESEA feminists on the one hand, address the need to embrace the body by speaking more about the body taboo in a particular East Asian context; on the other hand, I conclude that this feminism critiques the popular LYB discourse as a way of dominating the discussion around women's body liberation. I found that they emphasise that body autonomy does not mean creating the sense that one must conform to certain standards imposed by the global north to achieve liberation. I argue that this is a more careful critique that challenges the West as the liberated (sexually liberated, embracing self) and the rest as the non-liberated (sexually constrained, regulated). It proposes a way of emphasising body liberation to challenge these taboos in East Asian cultures and to distinguish itself from the Love Your Body discourse. This further adds a perspective from the ESEA community to supplement Gill and Elias' critique of the mainstreaming love your body discourse.

For example, zine makers transformed the remembered scenarios of women's bodies being tabooed and used them to construct a type of normative femininity for their creative activities. Pointing out the taboo to challenge the sensitiveness and the unease of discussing women's body autonomy becomes a way of unwinding the taboo.

'Menstruation, for example, is expressed as "distant relatives" or "da-yi-ma (paternal aunt)". "Vagina" is referred to as "that thing". We have always been taught what it means to be a woman in heterosexual society, but we have never been taught how to embrace ourselves or how to be happy about ourselves. Sex and sexual pleasure are always taboo. Junior high school biology class will tell you that this is the reproductive organ; it will tell you that you are fertile, but it will not tell you where your happiness lies. My pleasure is made and built to make somebody else's happiness. But within your zines, you will talk about all these regulations and rephrase all these.' (Min, student, 24)

'Our group made a hairy woman. You can see her unshaved arms, unshaved legs, and no hair removal. No body shame. Why are we shameful for our hair?' (Kuang, artist, 28)

'We picked this picture of a woman tied by a wooden pillar. Because it matches the feeling of being a woman. The sense of restriction where you can only dance in the approved range.' (Rui, Retailor, 29)

The references to body parts—such as menstruation, vagina, and breasts—have often been replaced with more vague concepts in the participants' mother tongue, Mandarin. Through these zine-making workshops, inspired by the localised 'Vagina Monologues,' zine makers speak out and highlight the importance of embracing the proper names for body parts. The shame associated with these expressions, with their multiple meanings and ambiguous references to covered body parts, contributes to the construction of an image of womanhood within pre-established gender norms. Speaking the unspeakable in the East Asian context and breaking free from the stigma attached to it become feminist practices in these zine-making

workshops. Saying it out is a form of resistance, confronting the shame attached to the bodies and the imposed ideas of being subordinate to serve somebodies' pleasure. As Rui signalled, the needs of acknowledging the limited activity circle created by a gender identity and the response of resisting such situations are underlined.

Moreover, in the interview with Ou (27, coach), she remembered that one of the zine makers described how moaning, as well as the right way for women to moan during sex, is used to rethink body liberation for migrant women. She described how this theme from the Vagina Monologue performance has been used by the group members to rethink the relations between the change in the resident regions and the change in perspectives on sex. One question that emerged in this group discussion is what it means to talk about the untalkable in the global north and how ESEA communities can collaborate to work in a distinct way to move away from an image that is created in the global north—the simplified image of celebrating and embracing. I found Ou and the other zine makers tried to underline the distinct pathways of talking about body autonomy from the mainstreaming 'love your body discourse', not falling into the dichotomy of following the new rules of being liberated simply by talking about sex and specialities more but validating the more complexities and meaning-makings under the discussions. The agency of making a political change and the East Asian women's autonomy have been underlined. I argue such discussion on body autonomy is an alternative approach, distinct from mainstream discussions of love your body discourses that Chinese diaspora feminists employ in their feminist critiques. Through their zines, young feminists underline memories of their bodies being regulated, tabooed, reformed, and moulded to conform to certain ideals (of being a woman in a heterosexual-dominant society). In contrast to the prevailing narrative of self-acceptance in the UK, participants underlined the regulations persist in their cultures, particularly within family settings, digital platforms, and state narratives. Zines serve as a tool to reshape these narratives from a feminist perspective, reshaping the understanding of bodies within their pages.

An implied queer identity

Apart from championing body autonomy, zine makers use zine to express the particular difficulties of coming out as a queer in an East Asian family. It is a distinct approach to pointing out the more nuanced discussions under the increasing visible queer feminist content (Banet-Weiser, 2018). It is indisputable and important to make queer content visible and more accessible, but what I would like to underline is that the queer migrants in this report pointed out their sandwiched position. I borrow this expression of 'sandwiched position' from Liu, Huang, and Ma's description of queer Chinese feminists who seek a trajectory of doing feminism by breaking from a well-rounded government and staying away from mainstream Western feminism (2015). I used the sandwiched position here to describe ESEA queer zine makers' particular position. It's a specific position that involves being part of the celebrating culture in the UK while also recognizing the challenges of coming out to their families in China. I contend zine functions as a creative approach to turning the specific un-acceptableness (in many scenarios, not understood by mainstream festivalising queer culture in the West) for ESEA queers to become acceptable in this creative workshop. It is an approach built on the shared understanding of these less-discussed difficulties for ESEA queers and the collective efforts of sharing the similar complexities of negotiating with generational pressure and the ambiguous cultural expectation of obeying parents in East Asian families. Within this process of shared understanding and mutual respect, community care is done. For example, 'One of the pages has a mouth added to the picture of my love because my love is unspeakable. My relationships are not acceptable. Although I embrace myself and my queerness, my parents won't accept me. They won't understand lesbianism and won't accept my existence. Another page features a pair of upside-down eyebrows, symbolising the way I perceive my life—upside down. I like describing it this way. There's also one zine I call an 'ugly zine' because I created it using materials that I consider ugly as an act of rebellion against established rules.' (Hong, student, 23)

This direct rejection in Hong's case is further expressed in a way that blends ways of speaking in East Asian culture. In the interview with Fen (artist, 25), she used this food cooking technique of mixing cornflour and water to make a porridge-like mixer

for smoothing the sauce to describe the struggles of Chinese queer women coming out, far from celebrating queerness in public:

'In the Chinese context, coming out of the closet is a very long tug of war and a complex process. You don't have to say things directly. You always tell your parents, 'I will find someone; I will marry someone.' In an Asian context, there's a process by which everyone knows the situation, but we won't say it out loud. You don't reveal things openly. Revealing something becomes a challenge.'

Fen highlighted the efforts made to maintain the balance of not revealing themselves and preserving harmonious family settings. They blurred and postponed the process of expressing who they are and what lesbianism means to avoid expected family arguments. The worry of coming out, blended with the Asian food cooking technique, paints a different picture that Fen described as 'visible queerness in public in the UK.' For Fen, the relative unacceptability of lesbianism and the duty of maintaining the position of the innocent daughter at home in an East Asian context are different from the content of embracing queerness that circulated in the UK. With the ambiguous remarks on sexuality and intimate relationship, Fen can gain some breathing space and thus avoid a family quarrel of further encountering more heterosexual dominant comments and postponing possible blind-dating arrangements.

What I would like to emphasise in this section is that feminist zine makers hope to use the discussion space to rethink the popular idea of embracing oneself while also addressing the difficulties of talking about oneself in East Asian culture. As Martin (2021) argued, Chinese young women students in Australia often refer back to situations at home and discuss them. However, the feminist zine-making workshop provides a more subtle setting than referring back home; it allows for reflection on the dynamic identities created by mobilization. It connects with feminism in the UK while also highlighting the distinct focus of being an ESEA queer migrant created by their intersecting identities.

‘Our trans-inclusive manifesto’

Building upon my previous discussion of embracing the body and queer identity, a trans-inclusive perspective emerges as a significant element to construct a trans-feminism in the zines. This trans-inclusive feminism deliberately extends beyond the boundaries of the global North, addressing language barriers for ESEA trans people to use queer-friendly health care facilities in the UK and the particular symbol for trans people to avoid triggering censorship systems in China. Simultaneously, the trans feminism is paired with its openness to correction and its commitment to fostering a more inclusive conversation. It is a dynamic and fluid process of developing an inclusive discourse with a firm stance of being trans allies.

For example, Ju (student, 24) created a trans-zine featuring a group of cats. In the Chinese language, discussions about queer feminist topics can sometimes trigger censorship (Bao, 2020, Wang and Driscoll, 2019, Han, 2018, Yang, 2009). Consequently, Feitianmao, a cat that can fly, has become a symbol for female-to-male transgender individuals. Ju used cat images to form a community, but she also included a rabbit. She explained,

‘Many trans friends don't conform to binary gender expectations in their clothing choices, yet people often make assumptions about their gender based on their appearance. We cannot use this to determine someone's gender. On the second page, a group of cats discusses the moon within their community. This serves as a metaphor and signal as well. It's okay not to feel entirely comfortable within a community. It's okay to remain silent.’

However, Ju also expressed her concern about ‘speaking for trans’ and worrying that she might inadvertently offend some trans friends by not fully addressing their situations. Similar to Ju, Hao (student, 23), a zine workshop organiser, shared her hesitations and uncertainties:

‘We are students who passionately support trans and non-binary individuals. Our goal is to create a more inclusive environment for discussing issues that

might not be addressed elsewhere. I want my trans friends to know they have a space where they can discuss their concerns in their own languages and find like-minded people. This is our trans-inclusive manifesto. But at the same time, I worried about not supporting them correctly or how our voices covered theirs.'

Ju and Hao both addressed a concern about speaking for trans friends as a trans ally, and they expressed the uncertainty and the need for continuing to create discussion spaces regarding ESEA trans' particular situation. In Linda Alcoff's article *The Problem of Speaking for Others*, she proposed a more nuanced way of seeing the action of 'speaking for' those who are in a more marginalised position than the speaker (1991). She argued that while a statement may be suspect due to the speakers' relatively more privileged social positions, it cannot, by itself, be enough to completely dismiss or invalidate that statement. Building on Alcoff's argument, I point out that the carefulness in this project indicates zine makers' awareness of the problem residing in the act of speaking for others. At the same time, they used creative practice to build a space that is open and dynamic for supporting their trans allies.

4. Anti-racial violence activism

Apart from emerging feminism, the experiences of being a migrant and expressing anti-racial violence appear as another important theme for ESEA feminist zine-making workshops. In the twelve collective zine-making workshops participants mentioned, they used zines to document their discussions on negotiating with the immigration system, the stress of the haunting fear of visa applications to stay for work and for life, and the lingering unanswered question about the methods of 'blending in'. Zine makers in this research weave their own stories into their creative products and document the collective resistance and response to the subtle aggression and blunt racism in their everyday lives. I will now describe three different stories that record zine makers' resistance against heterosexual-dominant immigration systems, racialized university bureaucracy, and the myth of adjusting oneself to blend in the 'mainstreaming society'. I found that zine functions as a

medium to raise awareness regarding race and ethnicity and documents the complicated process of individual and collective responses to the system.

Starting with a zine-making workshop with the theme of living in the UK as an ESEA migrant, Ma (student, 24) described the experiences of hearing the needs of justifying the existence of lesbian relationships in the workshop and memorised how one of the lesbian couples shared how their relationship was scrutinised by the immigrant system when they tried to apply for a partnership visa. Ma remembered the way this lesbian couple was questioned, which led to a feeling of 'whether there is always a need for a straight man in a relationship to make this relationship real'. Ma Le also shared that the zine discussion covered the struggles of lesbians getting married in a situation where one person stays in a European country where same-sex marriage is not legal, and another person stays in a country with legalised same-sex marriage. Ma described queer intimate relationships as 'fragile' even in an environment with visible rainbow flags that embrace queerness and a seemingly inclusive system. Showing her zine called 'S*** Life Passport', Ma memorised the experiences of the lesbian couples in the workshops:

'Many shared the anxiety of violating the rules set by the different visas, the feeling of being regulated, and the worries of not being able to join some activities for work in the EU. I blended all these feelings, the stories of lesbian couples, as well as my own experience of becoming a migrant without parents' support, into my zine. I find this person who looks like she tried to pick something from the ground and make her life more organised. I hope my life as a migrant—a lot of things and feelings mixed together—can be better organised. The second page is a picture of a door. I feel it is also like a tomb. It can be opened. I hope I can open this door to another life. This described my situation of not being able to come out at home, but I hope to live in a space that makes me feel somehow a bit welcoming of my lesbian identity.'

Ma depicted the collective sharing of experiences as a queer migrant and her vision of actively engaging with available resources while seeking like-minded people in a more inclusive community. Her portrayal encapsulates the struggles and barriers that queer migrants often face in various scenarios, as well as the emotional labour they

endure. However, at the same time, Ma used the imagery of a door and an active individual to convey what she can do and hopes to become. In this context, resistance doesn't imply an overnight transformation of the heterosexual dominant system but rather points towards the potential for change and what lies ahead through action and collective community efforts.

Apart from negotiating with the immigrant system, two participants faced barriers to justifying the need for ESEA existence in universities and shared their experiences of talking about these negotiations at zine-making workshops. In one of the workshops, Ju and Lan talked about their action of starting an ESEA student community at the university and debating with the university about the situation of being an ESEA student during the pandemic.

'That's the beginning of the pandemic and the outbreak of covid-19. We were thinking of starting a queer student community that can make students who cannot go home and who experience Asian hate crimes feel better. We were rejected twice by the university because they think there is already a LGBTQ+ community on campus and there is no need to start another one. So, we think about writing the rejected proposal again to emphasise why an ESEA community is needed, what happened to East and Southeast Asian students, and why our focus is being an Asian queer. Also, many of the discussions on the current queer community do not address our desired discussion.'

The lack of understanding regarding the struggles faced by ESEA students, who couldn't return home during pandemic and experienced continuous direct racism on the street, became a barrier to start this specific community. Juju and Lan continuously rewrote proposals in response to the university's rejections, aiming to address the problematic requirement of asking queer Asians to 'blend in'.

On a smaller scale, Lan recalled one of her experiences of asking the university to put some leaflets regarding anti-racial harassment on campus after her friends and herself experienced much street violence, which she discussed in one of the migrant zine-making workshops. She wrote the proposal as the university requested, but later her suggestions of creating information leaflets were rejected because they

tend to ruin the university's reputation as 'signalling East and Southeast Asian students on campus will definitely experience this'. Lan stated in our interview that

'In that moment, I feel the university system cares more about its own reputation than what we, you know, the quiet queer Asian women's needs and experiences. Although my friend experienced racial harassment, which led to severe mental health issues, the university still thinks it is unnecessary. Later, I said there is a need for increasing awareness and making ESEA students feel more comfortable. But the university said I could call the police. I don't have much trust in the system, but I will never stop supporting my friends by any means I can.'

Seeking help from the university system is rejected as the particular struggle for ESEA students is not acknowledged. But within the zine-making workshops and the time Fen went through her zine with me, she shared this story of keeping battling with the rising covid racism.

On a more individual level, the racialized actions that signal the simplified West and the rest have been recorded in the zine. As Ming states:

'I feel my experience is very different in the UK and elsewhere. My lesbian identity is more welcome here. But at the same time, if you see the next page, I talked about something other than my name. When I came to the UK, everybody asked my name. I give them my English name, Layla. Nobody is happy. They asked me further what your real name was as part of their awareness of doing decolonization. My name cannot be pronounced in English, so I chose an English name for the sake of convenience. Why does a name matter? I am still the same person. I start having many reflections of living in the UK as an Asian woman.'

The necessity of cooperating with the rules—even the decolonization rules made by this society—creates extra discomfort. autonomy and their own decision are considered an unconscious decision of choosing an English name; not following the advanced act of decolonising enough, which is not the case, becomes a way of

educating the colonising legacies and awareness. For convenience's sake, Ming is well aware of the problem of unanimously using English names, but it becomes a stage for her colleagues to underline her lack of awareness and require her to comply with the new correct rules of decolonization that are acknowledged as the norm here. Ming put that into her zine-making.

The fight against everyday racism has been documented in the zine-making workshops to reflect the tension of acknowledging the existence of ESEA and the different struggles ESEA groups faced. In many scenarios, Ting described a question:

'This is very uncomfortable. We experience other women of colour yelling at us, "Go back to your China." But every time you talk about racism, your tutor and friends don't like the difficulties of the Chinese diaspora group's experiences and the hate crime my friends and I experienced. They avoid the trauma-related discussion and don't seem comfortable to see all these in our art pieces. Well, they claim they are anti-racism. But we are expected to express racism in a palatable way. In a resilient way. It is like telling children to eat vegetables and you need to hide the important carrots in a sandwich with cheese and peanut butter bread with chocolate spreads. But within your zine-making sections, you can talk about all these struggles.'

Ting described the ways of explaining anti-Asian violence that need to be done in a way that is approved and understood by the current society, while at the same time avoiding the discomfort of acting out to win the mere respect of another human being. Teaching others to respect ESEA people is not a responsibility that needs to be done by Chinese diaspora members who experienced racial violence. Ting called for a change in the monolithic and oversimplified perception of Asia, particularly in this scenario, China, in her zine. So far, I have depicted how zine and the discussions beyond zine, but in zine-making workshops, address anti-racial violence and how the Chinese diaspora responds to the immigrant system, universities, and individual everyday racism.

5. Conclusion

This creative practice of making zine that directly addresses the particular situation created by the intersecting identities of being an Asian queer woman, being a migrant, and being a feminist. The creative art-based workshop forms a space with 'shared pleasure' and 'feeling-at-home-ness', as nineteen zine makers depicted. Most of these zine workshops are not funded, not simply because of organisers' unfamiliarity of available fundings but because of the lack of prestigious backgrounds and writing skills to make their activities to become funded. What is more important is that their fatigue from dealing with misogynistic sentiments, the immigration system, and university bureaucracies leaves them with limited capacity to secure funding for this creative practice. It is a healing activity for them. The need and necessity of having a space and community like this is underlined by almost every participant (twenty four out of twenty-five) in this report. Although much of the labour to make such art-based workshops happen is done without getting paid, and many participants emphasise it is important and necessary to 'have a space like this and let conversation continue'. It is a community built on collective efforts, group contribution, and shared care.

It is a community with genuine exchange and heated debates on contentious topics. In the midst of these discussions and questions, zine makers engaged in the process of making and remaking feminism in their own narratives. Although not everyone knew each other initially, their shared interests in feminism and anti-racial violence activism formed bonds, giving rise to allyships and friendships. The hope for an ESEA feminist community as well as the zine-making workshops are juxtaposed with participants' awareness of its potential demise due to the harsh reality of inadequate funding and resources to sustain such activities. Feelings of 'being healed' and 'growing together' run parallel to the anxiety of losing such a space. Uncertainty looms over whether ESEA feminist community can survive and how long this cherished space can endure. This pervasive concern underscores the unsettling reality within the ESEA queer feminist community.

Overall, I began this report with the context of rising covid racism where zine-making workshops happened and discussed the use of the identity of ESEA and the importance of using it to address ESEA people's agency (section 1). I then turned to the discussion of method and methodology and included some fieldwork reflections of doing feminist interviews (section 2). I have explored the role of zines as a creative practice within ESEA feminist communities, serving as a means to construct a unique form of feminism and anti-racial violence activism, particularly during the pandemic and in the post-Brexit era. I have argued that these zines as well as the discussions emerged in the zine-making workshops form a specific type of feminism, particularly address the unique challenges faced by ESEA queer migrants in the UK (section 3). I have also demonstrated that the discussions within these zine-making workshops create a particular space to do anti-racial violence activism. During these sessions, I have seen participants discuss topics such as the racialized immigration system in the EU and beyond, the shortcomings of the UK university system in meeting the needs of ESEA students, and the ongoing negotiations between the pursuit of systemic change and the introspective journey of self-improvement (section 4).

As Chidgey (2014) discussed, the accessibility of zines and the utilization of crafting zine workshops as a means of nurturing communities, gathering like-minded individuals, and transcending beyond physical creative products to reconsider the social structures that contribute to members feeling excluded. This cultural and creative practice constructs a specific form of care for this multi-marginalized group in the UK. These underground and decentralised activities create safe spaces for everyone to blend their cultures creatively into creation and to make their voices heard. As what CIRCE advocated, zine-making workshops functions as a cultural and creative practices to tackle the social issues and make increasingly divided societies more inclusive. Zines, as non-professional and accessible grassroots creative activities, have become a potent tool to address these problems. Drawing inspiration from the numerous moments I have experienced in CIRCE activities to describe the zine-making workshops and ESEA communities, these communities nourish us, and we store these powerful moments and share them with a broader society.

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