"I'm not a virus": A Critical Reading of 'the Women with the Issue of Blood' through the Eyes of Asian Women in Australia beyond COVID 19 Pandemic

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Abstract
The story of the woman with the issue of blood (Mark 5:25-34) is often read with an emphasis on holistic healing, which includes a transformation of identity from a disease-carrying outcast. In light of the intensified COVID 19-related 'Asian-hate' and the micro and macro racial discriminations towards Asian diaspora in Western countries like Australia, while reading this story, Asian diaspora Christian women found themselves caught in the tension of yearning for transformation but empathise with the transgression of these women in the current reality of their lives. Knowing Jesus restored this woman enhanced faith but acknowledging the pain in the waiting is critical to the healing and transformation of the Asian diaspora women. To better understand how this experience interacts with one's reading of the story, this article asks, "what does the identity of the women with the issue of blood pre her healing mean for us as Asian diaspora women in Australia beyond COVID 19 pandemic." This article records the authors' personal reflection of being marginalised to empathise with the story of the women with the issue of blood using a narrative criticism method. By examining the intersectional factors which affect the formation of identity, the article discusses how the image of the woman with the issue of blood pre her healing exemplifies the experience of the Asian diaspora women.

Keywords: Women with the issue of blood - Asian diaspora women - COVID 19 - identity

Introduction

COVID 19 pandemic has heightened ethnocultural targeted racism against people of Asian appearance in Western countries such as the United States and Australia.[1] Extensive cases of

[1] Thomas K. Le et al., "Anti-Asian Xenophobia and Asian American COVID-19 Disparities," *American Journal of Public Health* 110, no. 9 (September 2020): 1371–73, https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2020.305846; Yu Tao and Cheng Yen Loo, "Chinese Identities in Australia amid the COVID-19 Pandemic: Backgrounds, Challenges, and Directions for Future Research," *Journal of the British Association for Chinese Studies* 12, no. 1 (January 26, 2022):

anti-Asian abuse and racist attacks have been reported in Australia since 2020.[2] Microaggression such as avoidance of interaction with Asian demographics due to the fear of catching COVID 19 was displayed, especially in the early stage of the pandemic.[3] With the re-surge of Xenophobia, people of Asian heritage as the stereotyped "model minority" are impacted across countries and exposed to scapegoating practices, stigmatising, and dehumanisation.[4] As Asian diaspora women, the experience of living in the backdrop of COVID 19 provides us with new insights into resonating with the woman's story with the haemorrhage in Mark 5.

The woman with the issue of blood in Mark 5:25-34 is seen as an archetype of a woman of faith in the gospel of Mark. The reading of this woman often stresses her transformation by contrasting that to her previous suffering with her desperation in the middle as a catalyst for a miracle from Jesus. Particularly, her desperation was seen as a benchmark for others to seek miracles. However, this paper challenges this simplified understanding by examining the nuances of her desperation using narrative criticism methods and discourse on intersectionality. This paper argues the identity of the woman has more depth than simply a sick and desperate moment. Rather than simply brushing through the transgression of this woman to focus on her restoration on the other side of healing, this article weighing on the suffering in her waiting with the belief that was lack of acknowledgement of the pain pre her healing undermines the significance of the grace of Jesus. Additionally, the reality of Asian diaspora women in Australia, particularly during the COVID 19 pandemic, resonates mostly with the pre healing experience of the woman. Still waiting for restoration to the community and healing to occur, the authors will use their personal experience of marginalisation to shed a different light on the woman's identity in her transgression in the hope it will bring some hope to the marginalised diaspora women.

1. The women with the issue of blood: An outcast with faith

Although often seen as an example of the divine restoration for the impure outcast, the woman's story with the issue of blood is an archetype of faith. In the Gospel of Mark, faith is one of the motifs depicted throughout the text. According to James R. Edwards, two types of faith were portrayed in the text: first, the people who showed enormous confidence in acting upon their

129–33, https://doi.org/10.51661/bjocs.v12i1.179; Bing He et al., "Racism Is a Virus: Anti-Asian Hate and Counterspeech in Social Media during the COVID-19 Crisis," in *Proceedings of the 2021 IEEE/ACM International Conference on Advances in Social Networks Analysis and Mining* (ASONAM '21: International Conference on Advances in Social Networks Analysis and Mining, Virtual Event Netherlands: ACM, 2021), 90–94, https://doi.org/10.1145/3487351.3488324.

[2] Tao and Loo, "Chinese Identities in Australia amid the COVID-19 Pandemic."

[3] Xiao Tan, Rennie Lee, and Leah Ruppanner, "Profiling Racial Prejudice during COVID-19: Who Exhibits Anti-Asian Sentiment in Australia and the United States?," *Australian Journal of Social Issues* 56, no. 4 (2021): 464–84.

[4] Amanuel Elias et al., "Racism and Nationalism during and beyond the COVID-19 Pandemic," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 44, no. 5 (April 9, 2021): 783–93, https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2020.1851382.

faith found in the circle outside Jesus' peers.[5] The second one was more cautious and required repeated affirmation found in Jesus' inner circle, such as his disciple.[6]

The title of the story identified the woman as the woman with the issue of blood, which has been deduced that her haemorrhaging is a type of menstruation flow that does not stop.[7] Based on her cultural context, even though she did not have a contagious disease, she needed to stay away from society as she was seen as ritually impure.[8] The woman's story is believed to demonstrate the first type of faith. Her story was told by using the Markan intercalation stylistic device to emphasise the kind of faith that Jesus was advocating.[9] The kind of faith that the woman showed came from simple hearsay from the crowd, yet she was confident that Jesus could heal her.[10] In contrast, Jesus' disciples showed at the moment of the miracle by condescendingly answering Jesus when he inquired who had touched him, showing their failure in their act of faith.[11]

Moreover, Joel Marcus described this kind of faith as not simply an intellectual understanding but a significant commitment that may be translated into the word "trust".[12] For this reason, Jesus' encounter with the woman gave an example to Jairus, who needed to trust the words of Jesus alone when he heard the news that her daughter had passed.[13] With this understanding, this paper examines but looks beyond this' woman's opposing reality to draw out her resistance and transformation due to her faith. By empathising our diaspora stories of being the voiceless foreign others with the woman's story as she desperately seeks Jesus in the middle of her obscurity and marginalisation, we hope the woman's example of faith will bring hope to Asian diaspora women like us.

2. The intersectional reality as a framework

Being Asian immigrant women in a Western country like Australia, our lived experience is framed by and demonstrates an intersectional reality. The intertwined factors such as language, race, ethnicity, gender, geopolitical position, socioeconomic status, and educational experience impact our outlook and form our perceived image inside and outside our communities.[14]

[5] James R. Edwards, *PNTC*, The Gospel According to Mark (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2002), 17.
[6] Edwards.
[7] Robin Gallaher Branch, 'A Study of the Woman in the Crowd and Her Desperate Courage (Mark 5:21-43)', *In Die Skriflig* 47, no. 1 (January 2013): 319–31.
[8] Branch.
[9] Adela Yarbro Collins, *Hermeneia*, Mark (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 284.
[10] Holly J. Carey, 'Women in Action: Models for Discipleship in Mark's Gospel', *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 81, no. 3 (July 2019): 429–48, https://doi.org/10.1353/cbq.2019.0139.
[11] Carey.
[12] Joel Marcus, *AYB*, vol. 27, Mark 1-8 (London: Yale University, 2008), 360.
[13] Robert A. Guelich, *WBC*, vol. 34A, Mark 1-8:26 (Dallas: Word Books, 1989), 304.
[14] Reshmi Lahiri-Roy and Nish Belford, "'Walk like a Chameleon': Gendered Diasporic Identities and Settlement Experiences," *South Asian Popular Culture* 19, no. 1 (2021): 47–62.

Interpreting the story of the women with the issue of blood in Mark 5 through a lens framed by intersectional realities allows the authors to reflect on their identity as Asian diaspora women in Australia in the story. Initiated by US black legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, intersectionality as progressing heuristic and analytical method and a disposition moves beyond any particular social position[15] and provides a framework for ethnic minority women like us to reflect on our experience contextually relevant manner critically.[16] By moving beyond the simplified categorisation of the impacting factors such as ethnicity or gender, Jang considers intersectionality in a more general sense "as the various ways in which multiple social categorisations interact to shape the dimensions of the experiences of individuals".[17]

The acknowledgement of the complex realities in individuals' experiences in the intersectional framework sheds light on the subordination and invisibleness of Asian women, which is overlooked in the Western-centric framework of feminism.[18] The subordination and invisibleness of Asian diaspora women is often not just an experience in their interactions with those outside their ethnic community, resulting from the 'otherness' of their immigrant status. The tension in navigating the marginalisation and subordination of their age and gender within the ethnic community and the invisibleness in the broader context contributes to the diversity of individual experiences. Holvino developed a more flexible and dynamic approach to the multifaceted concept by contending the necessity of giving voice to the ethnic minority while addressing the internal and external factors as well as how these factors impact each other.[19] Further, Hwang and Beauregard emphasise the fluidity and complexity in contextualisation and address the need to acknowledge the socio-communal nuances in one's relationship to its context that could affect their experience.[20] Factors such as the stereotyped, perceived language proficiency and the assumed submissive nature of the ethnic minority women negatively impact their professional development and reinforce the status quo.[21]

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[15]Carbado, Devon W., Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, Vickie M. Mays, and Barbara Tomlinson. "INTERSECTIONALITY: Mapping the Movements of a Theory1." *Du Bois review: social science research on race* 10, no. 2 (2013): 303-312.
[16] Hwang, Seonyoung, and T. Alexandra Beauregard. "Contextualising intersectionality: A qualitative study of East Asian female migrant workers in the UK." *human relations* (2021): 0018726721989790.
[17] Jang, Sung Tae. "The implications of intersectionality on Southeast Asian female students' educational outcomes in the United States: A critical quantitative intersectionality analysis." *American Educational Research Journal* 55, no. 6 (2018): 1268-1306.
[18] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," *Die Philosophin* 14, no. 27 (2003): 42–58.
[19] Evangelina Holvino, "Intersections: The Simultaneity of Race, Gender and Class in Organization Studies," *Gender, Work & Organization* 17, no. 3 (2010): 248–77.
[20] Hwang, Seonyoung, and T. Alexandra Beauregard. "Contextualising intersectionality: A qualitative study of East Asian female migrant workers in the UK." *human relations* (2021): 0018726721989790.

[21] Hwang, Seonyoung, and T. Alexandra Beauregard. "Contextualising intersectionality: A qualitative study of East Asian female migrant workers in the UK." *human relations* (2021): 0018726721989790.

The intersectional framework also acknowledges the fluidity of disadvantage and privilege that women who belong to multiple subordinate group memberships may also experience. It addresses the significant variation in the individual experience of ethnic minority women within the same ethnicity caused by critical issues of gender, ethnicity and socioeconomic status.[22] The authors of this article share different ethnic identities with simultaneously belonging to two subordinate ethnic groups. However, in the meantime, the authors' diasporic experience, education, and qualifications reflect and position us in a comparably more privileged place than others in the ethnic community, which results in our unique experience of subordination within well as outside of our community. Thus, the awareness of the fluidity of disadvantage and privilege enables a more profound understanding of interpreting the authors' personal experiences.

3. Narrative criticism as a method

Analysed using the narrative criticism method, the authors' reflections reported in this article were interpreted by drawing Song's realistic empathic reading into a biblical character.[23] By legitimising the attachment of readers' emotions in reading a text, Song emphasises the necessity of "empathy" as a method to deepen readers' understanding as one puts oneself in another's shoes.[24] By exercising this method, this article extrapolates the exegesis by comparing existing scholarship on Mark in the passage and then identifies the elements of struggle that the women have been through and then from the authors' experience.

The empathic reading in the narrative criticism method focuses on how the authors' experience relates to the story of the woman. Echoing with the acknowledgement of the significance of "empathy", this article reads the story of the woman with haemorrhages by empathising with her voicelessness and namelessness in the text from the experience of Asian diaspora women.

Johansson, Marjana, and Martyna Śliwa. "'It is E nglish and there is no Alternative': Intersectionality, Language and Social/Organizational Differentiation of Polish Migrants in the UK." *Gender, Work & Organization* 23, no. 3 (2016): 296-309.

[22]Alberti, Gabriella, and Francesco E. Iannuzzi. "Embodied intersectionality and the intersectional management of hotel labour: The everyday experiences of social differentiation in customer-oriented work." *Gender, Work & Organization* 27, no. 6 (2020): 1165-1180.

Fernando, Weerahannadige Dulini Anuvinda, and Laurie Cohen. "Exploring career advantages of highly skilled migrants: a study of Indian academics in the UK." *The International Journal of Human Resource Management* 27, no. 12 (2016): 1277-1298.

Liu, Helena. "Re-radicalising intersectionality in organisation studies." *Ephemera: Theory and Politics in Organization* (2018).

[23] Angeline Song, 'Heartless Bimbo or Subversive Role Model?: A Narrative (Self) Crucial Reading of the Character of Esther', *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 49, no. March (2010): 56–69.

[24] Angeline Song, *A Postcolonial Woman's Encounter with Moses and Miriam* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 58.

By reading through the critical lens of their own empathic experience, this article aims to examine the parallelism and differences between the author's identity and the woman to develop a relevant understanding of the scripture.

As mentioned, the story of the haemorrhaging woman was a re-emphasis echo with the type of faith expected within the Gospel of Mark. Positioned at the centre of Markan intercalation, this woman's story was used by this stylistic device to exemplify a key message on faith and identity transformation.[25] Resonating with the tension about identity and faith presented in this story, this article examines the women's image as an example of faith to understand and articulate the tension that diaspora Asian women in Australia experienced during COVID 19 pandemic but beyond the pandemic. The analysis identified two main issues that the Asian diaspora women are resisting in their context: the problematic labelling of being marginalised, which needs to be challenged, and the stereotyped identity of being subaltern. To exercise the type of faith demonstrated by the women with haemorrhages in seeking transformation, we choose to see hope in our navigation of their uncertain identity as a human, despite the imperfection and the complexity in the intersectional reality of Asian diaspora women.

4. Marginalised as an imposed labelling

Before empathising our stories with that of the women with the issue of blood, it is necessary to analyse the labelling of this women's identity. The woman was firstly labelled as the haemorrhaging woman, and the disease was her only form of identification. Due to the disease, she was marginalised in her socio-cultural community (she was alone).[26] Although the author wrote no specifics on the type of bleeding and it was assumed it was connected to the menstrual flow in Leviticus.[27] The phrase "the fountain of her blood" used to describe her ailment is believed to be similar to the phrase in Leviticus, which shows ritual uncleanness.[28] Adela Yarbro deduced that the word "flow of blood" in Greek ρυσις αιματος was used as a pathological discharge from the womb.

Consequently, this medical condition resulted in the labelling of impurity of this woman in her cultural context.[29] She was called a *zuv* (זוב) and needed to be expelled from the community according to the Law in Numbers 5:1-4.[30] However, this perspective has recently been disputed

[25] Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 16.
[26] Branch, 'A Study of the Woman in the Crowd and Her Desperate Courage (Mark 5'.
[27] Robert H. Stein, *BEC*, Mark (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 488.
[28] Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 357.
[29] Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, 296.
[30] Barbara Baert, Liesbet Kusters, and Emma Sidgwick, 'An Issue of Blood: The Healing of the Woman with the Haemorrhage (Mark 5.24B-34; Luke 8.42B-48; Matthew 9.19-22) in Early Medieval Visual Culture', *Journal of Religion & Health* 51, no. 3 (September 2012): 663–81, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-012-9618-5.

by Matthew Thessian as an inappropriate reading of Mosaic Law surrounding the women's condition. Thessian disputed that the law was not to exile the woman from the camp compound but simply the tabernacle area.[31] Therefore, based on the law, she was not a social exile, she was in a state of impure for the holy places such as the temple. Yet, the argument that this paper is suggesting is not simply assessing her "exclusion" from others based on the Mosaic law. This article is looking primarily at Mark's text and how she is associated with this impurity, and that state became a label on her as a person. It is noteworthy that the woman has not spoken at all in the unfolding of the plot, and she is voiceless and nameless in the story.[32]

The labelling of illness, impure and marginalised as the woman's identity, is not a discovery. However, it needs to be highlighted that these labels were essentially imposed by the gospel's author and somewhat enhanced by the current scholarship. The mainstream discourses regarding this woman mainly focus on the type of bleeding she might have had rather than who this woman is. The comparably less interest in the woman's identity beyond the cause, level, or type of "marginalisation" enhanced the stereotype of the woman being weak and less of a person outside of her marginalised social status. For example, Benny Lieuw commented that women in Mark were seen as the backup for the men in society, but their identity has never been freed from the association with household duties and under the patriarchal rule.[33]

A similar experience can be found in the author's experience as Asian diaspora women. Through the analysis of our experience, we identified that the labelling of Asian diaspora women with a condescending identity such as 'disease' spiked up during the COVID 19 pandemic but exists beyond the pandemic.[34] The marginalised reality became an imposed identity to Asian diaspora women by the "external" context where they reside and are seen as the foreign 'others' and within the "internal" context of the community that shares commonality with them ethnically and culturally, and linguistically.[35] Further, both the hostile or sympathetic attitude towards the "marginalised" status of Asian diaspora women[36] could enhance the stereotyping of these women and further suppress the individuals and collective voices.

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[31] Matthew Thiessen, *Jesus and The Forces of Death* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020), 73.
[32] 'Literary Comparisons and Contrasts in Mark 5:21-43/Literêre Vergelykings En Kontraste in Markus 5:21-43 - ProQuest', accessed 10 January 2022, https://www.proquest.com/docview/1757264459/fulltextPDF/A20304B84D34420PQ/1?accountid=44543.
[33] Tat-Siong Benny Liew, *A Postcolonial Commentary on The New Testament Writings*, ed. Fernando F. Segovia and R.S. Sugirtharajah (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2009).
[34] Jianhua Xu et al., "Stigma, Discrimination, and Hate Crimes in Chinese-Speaking World amid Covid-19 Pandemic," *Asian Journal of Criminology* 16, no. 1 (2021): 51–74.
[35] Amit Sarwal, *Labels and Locations: Gender, Family, Class and Caste–The Short Narratives of South Asian Diaspora in Australia* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015).
[36] Graham Joseph Hill, *Sunburnt Country, Sweeping Pains: The Experiences of Asian Australian Women in Ministry and Mission* (Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2022).

5. Marginalised Reality in the general context

Much like the woman with the issue of blood, who was named after the disease she was suffering from, disease and danger were labelled onto the Asian community, particularly during the beginning of the COVID 19 global pandemic between late 2019 and 2020.[37] The COVID 19 global pandemic intensified and further exposed the already existing marginalisation of the Asian diaspora women in the global West. The association of the COVID 19 virus and "yellow faces" (populations with Eastern, South Eastern Asian heritage such as Chinese, Korean, Japanese, and Peranakan) was explicitly displayed through macro aggression such as violence, verbal aggression, and microaggression such as body language, eye contact, facial expressions.[38]

Apart from the media exposure of the various violent attacks on Asian senior women in the United States, both authors, as educated young Asian women in Australia, have directly and indirectly experienced prejudice-cased aggression against Asian women of Chinese heritage. This includes the witness of discrimination, including seeing young Korean women being yelled at on the train by white Australian women to "go back to China" and hearing casual comments from non-Asian about staying away from "Asian neighbourhood [because] you may catch the virus", or experiencing people covering their mouth or stepping aside in the public place upon our presence before social-distance rule in place despite our precautionary mask-wearing. Another type of aggression includes the exposure to excessive use of images of Asian faces in the early reporting of the COVID 19 crisis even though it has already impacted countries outside Asia,[39] the trolling and abuse of the Asian community on social media and the Internet, and the reports on incidents of 'Asian-hate' related attack in Australia.[40] One of the particular incidents includes coming across footage on social media of Indonesian women being pushed around and attacked by an Australian white man on the street of Sydney and yelled at with racial slurs.

6. Problematise "marginalised" as an imposed identity

The exposure to Covid-related, racially-targeted violence toward Asian diaspora women enhances their perception of being marginalised. The consequential expectations of how the "marginalised" should react and respond could further deepen the marginalisation if no further

[37] Sarwal, *Labels and Locations*.

[38] Lindsay Y. Dhanani and Berkeley Franz, "Unexpected Public Health Consequences of the COVID-19 Pandemic: A National Survey Examining Anti-Asian Attitudes in the USA," *International Journal of Public Health* 65, no. 6 (2020): 747–54; Sarwal, *Labels and Locations*; Angela R. Gover, Shannon B. Harper, and Lynn Langton, "Anti-Asian Hate Crime during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Exploring the Reproduction of Inequality," *American Journal of Criminal Justice* 45, no. 4 (2020): 647–67; Simone Villa et al., "Stigma at the Time of the COVID-19 Pandemic," *Clinical Microbiology and Infection* 26, no. 11 (2020): 1450–52.

[39] Xu et al., "Stigma, Discrimination, and Hate Crimes in Chinese-Speaking World amid Covid-19 Pandemic."

[40] Elias et al., "Racism and Nationalism during and beyond the COVID-19 Pandemic"; Tan, Lee, and Ruppanner, "Profiling Racial Prejudice during COVID-19"; Shamim Ahmed Khan, Mohammad Zainuddin, and Masnun Mahi, "Rising Xenophobia and Anti-Asian Racism amid COVID-19: A Theoretical Lens," *ICS Analysis*, 2021.

consideration of intersectional nuances and individualities were given. This assumed perception results in the stereotyping of "voicelessness" of Asian diaspora women,[41] which can lead to two extreme types of reactions: delegitimising the experience of racism (voiceless therefore can be neglected);[42] and/or expecting radical activism (voiceless therefore has to fight to be heard).[43] The former causes exclusion, while the latter pressures individuals by promoting a somewhat narrowing, exclusive way of achieving justice, disregarding the difference in their intersectional reality. The dichotomous views and reactions take away the voice of these women and add tension to the Asian diaspora women's already challenging experience of navigating their own identity in the current climate.

The woman in Mark 5 seems to face the same tension of deciding the "correct way" of handling herself and pursuing identity-related acceptance. The external tension she was experiencing came from her expectation to stay away from the general public and the association of healing and public actions (announced to the public as clean).[44] In contrast, the internal tension was her struggle to navigate and pursue the transformation of her life condition by exhausting all available sources and the reality of sickness in light of the paradoxicality in the external perception of what she should do.[45] It also needs to be highlighted that these tensions and pressure resulted from the perceptions of how to treat the marginalised and how the marginalised should carry themselves were from both the ethnical community she belonged to and those outside of her community.[46]

In our experience, those tensions often are manifested in the form of microaggression. For example, in a church community event Qianwen attended, she made a courtesy remark to another non-Asian congregation member about the inappropriateness of his comment about not going to a particular suburb in fear of covid. Later Qianwen was told she was being "too sensitive", and the joke was "what Aussie does". The casualty and condescending attitude in the comments and the defensiveness when being confronted tell the expectation for the marginalised women to remain silent when facing racial injustice. Much like the woman's experience with the issue of blood, the speculation about her ailment made others believe she

[41] Kate Bagnall and Julia T. Martínez, *Locating Chinese Women: Historical Mobility Between China and Australia* (Hong Kong University Press, 2021).
[42] Elias et al., "Racism and Nationalism during and beyond the COVID-19 Pandemic."
[43] Nish Belford and Reshmi Lahiri-Roy, "Negotiated Voices: Reflections on Educational Experiences and Identity by Two Transnational Migrant Women," in *Women's Studies International Forum*, vol. 70 (Elsevier, 2018), 24–31.
[44] Baert, Kusters, and Sidgwick, 'An Issue of Blood'.
[45] Collins, *Mark*, 281.
[46] Nisha Nair, Deborah Cain Good, and Audrey J. Murrell, "Microaggression Experiences of Different Marginalized Identities," *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal*, 2019.

deserved to be on the fringe of society and that she should make any objections because.[47] The author's resistance was ridiculed because the exclusiveness towards the Asian community was justified due to the origin of the contagious disease.

Another type of microaggression the author experienced was the narrowing expectation for the marginalised Asian diaspora women to respond to racial injustice in one particular Western-centric way without considering the intersectionality in their lives. Both authors experienced the pressure of being expected to "speak up" and to "call out" during the peak of COVID 19-enhanced "Asian hate" because of their colour, race, education and social position. The radical "voice out" was perceived as the best way to confront racial injustice and created pressure from the people who belong to other minority groups and some of our ethnical communities and is primarily related to one's intersectional reality. This experience was not an isolated incident but shared amongst the millennial Asian diaspora women around us. A woman strongly advised Qianwen from a non-Asian ethnical group that if she does not speak up in the public space, she has not done enough for her community, despite the author's explanation about the cultural difference in the style of confrontation. The haemorrhaging woman in Mark 5 is seemingly voiceless in the crowd. Still, her resistance to marginalisation was done in a quiet but persistent way: she sought solutions for a long time. She invested lots of effort trying to turn her identity into an outcast.

Similarly, the seemingly quiet Asian diaspora women often focus on utilising soft power and bringing change in the long term. The actions to facilitate changes include focusing on establishing a good perception of their work ethics, which wins them respect or concentrating on the next generation's education to raise them to take positions in critical places in society and thus changing their social status. The oversimplified expectations of how marginalised Asian diaspora women should react to oppression do not always consider the nuances in the differences between culture, socioeconomic status, education, and individuality. It took away their unique voices unintendedly rather than restoring voices to the Asian diaspora women.

7. Challenge the stereotyping of "subaltern" identity

The woman with the issue of blood already carries the label of a subaltern woman beyond her medical condition. In the first century, the stereotype in her context labelled her as someone dependent, less intellectual, and fragile because of her potential inability to produce an heir due to her unmarriable status, which ultimately positioned her in a vulnerable state.[48]

[47] John R. Donahue and Daniel J. Harrington, *Sacra Pagina*, vol. 2, The Gospel of Mark (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2002), 206.
[48] Boring, M. Eugene, *TNTL*, Mark (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 158.

Even in the space of feminism, the Asian diaspora is often identified as the "Third World Women" who are not only being subdued by their own patriarchal context but the foreigners as well.[49] Moreover, Asian Diaspora women are being stereotyped by their own "western feminist" sisters that "Third World" women can still not stand up on their own, as these sisters act as the benign bridge.[50]

Similarly, the stereotyping and aggression toward Asian diaspora women are normalised in their daily lives beyond the COVID 19 pandemic. As an Indonesian Peranakan woman, Sarah is the "lesser" or "outcast" citizen of the nation because she was a result of intermarriages and a hybrid of cultures. The hybridised heritage means she is neither pure Chinese nor pure Indonesian. The Chinese community thought of her as the "lesser" of a Chinese descendant, and the Indonesians excluded her culturally because she is "Chinese". The country's intertwined socioeconomic and socio-political complexities and the stereotypes that the ethnic groups hold towards each other ridiculed her for being an outsider to both communities. Though repetitively vocalising her Indonesian-ness, Sarah feels she was not always heard and seen as the "descendant of foreigners" in her own country.

The subaltern stereotype is also reflected in the belief of women's lack of credibility because of their age and the assumed lower intellectuality.[51] This perception is held beyond the ethnic groups the Asian diaspora women belong to but is particularly highlighted within their ethnic groups.[52] Being a young woman who gained a doctorate in her 20s, Qianwen experienced multiple incidents of being "mansplained" about subjects she specialised in by less qualified men despite the demonstration of her expertise. Within her Chinese community, women pursuing a doctorate are often demonised and ridiculed to be the "outcasts" because they are seen as a threat to the presumed credibility of men. Sarah had similar experiences when questioned about her theological understanding by a man in her church with a condescending tone, despite her demonstration of knowledge about the particular field of study she had been studying in her bachelor's degree.

The stereotype of the Asian diaspora women's role in society and a family is also prevailing in their ethnic community. This stereotype is often related to their ability to have children or when

[49] Leela Ghandi, *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introuction*, 2nd ed. (New York: Colombia University Press, 2019), Loc 1515. Kindle.
[50] Ghandi, Loc 1246.
[51] Jilana Jaxon et al., "The Acquisition of Gender Stereotypes about Intellectual Ability: Intersections with Race," *Journal of Social Issues* 75, no. 4 (2019): 1192–1215.
[52] Jaxon et al.; Yuhang Shu et al., "Gender Stereotypes Are Racialized: A Cross-Cultural Investigation of Gender Stereotypes about Intellectual Talents.," *Developmental Psychology*, 2022.

to have children.[53] The issue of blood was more than a disease that caused impurity, but also took away the woman's ability to have children. Gallaher argues it was the reason that the text did not mention anyone accompanying her pushing through the crowd.[54] Furthermore, Eugene Boring stated that it is probable for her to be prohibited from entering a marriage or that her state of disease was enough ground for her husband (if she has any) to be divorced.[55] Her suffering from the illness was emphasised by the inability and additional hurt of many physicians who were supposed to cure her, this adds to her humility in having to go through such a difficult journey.[56] This can also indicate that she had probably depleted all her assets and resources to get her disease cured.[57] Having to suffer under many physicians is the way the author gives an ironic remark towards the reality of physicians in the first century, that with the way doctors or physicians at that time will most likely provide inappropriate treatment to a woman with such condition.[58] Then it can be identified why the woman wanted to come to Jesus was probably from hearing the story of the miracle that had happened to people, such as the moment from Mark 3:10.[59]

The expectation about childbearing is also dominating in both authors' cultural contexts. For a Chinese woman, one's ability to have children is often connected to social identity and acceptance. Child-bearing is an unspoken expectation that is seen as normality and a must. There is an expectation of the appropriate age for marriage and starting a family.[60] Child-bearing is seen as the fulfilment and satisfaction of womanhood. Infertility is often seen as shameful and unacceptable. Much like the women in the story, couples, especially women, bear financial, physical, and emotional pressure to seek a cure. The inability to have a child and, most of the time to have a son is often seen as the women's fault in marriage by the husband and his family. Consequently, childless women are often abandoned and mistreated because they are seen as the reason for breaking a family lineage and name carrying.[61] Childlessness is also seen as a

[53] Mimi MH Tiu et al., "Lived Experience of Infertility among Hong Kong Chinese Women," *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-Being* 13, no. 1 (2018): 1554023.
[54] Branch, 'A Study of the Woman in the Crowd and Her Desperate Courage (Mark 5'.
[55] Boring, M. Eugene, *Mark*, 159.
[56] Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary*, Ebook (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2012).
[57] Collins, *Mark*, 281.
[58] Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 358.
[59] Collins, *Mark*, 281.
[60] Tianhan Gui, "'Leftover Women' or Single by Choice: Gender Role Negotiation of Single Professional Women in Contemporary China," *Journal of Family Issues* 41, no. 11 (2020): 1956–78; Makiko Hori and Yoshinori Kamo, "Gender Differences in Happiness: The Effects of Marriage, Social Roles, and Social Support in East Asia," *Applied Research in Quality of Life* 13, no. 4 (2018): 839–57.
[61] Xiaoshan Li et al., "Infertility-Related Stress and Life Satisfaction among Chinese Infertile Women: A Moderated Mediation Model of Marital Satisfaction and Resilience," *Sex Roles* 82, no. 1 (2020): 44–52; ChunYing Cui, Lie Wang, and XiaoXi Wang, "Effects of Self-Esteem on the Associations between Infertility-Related Stress and Psychological Distress among Infertile Chinese Women: A Cross-Sectional Study," *Psychology Research and Behavior Management* 14 (2021): 1245; Shu et al., "Gender Stereotypes Are Racialized."

concern for the possible failure of senior care in the future as married women are often seen as no longer a member of their maternal family, and without children, they have nobody to rely on for financial support and care in their late years of life.[62] With such a stigma as the backdrop, Chinese women who pursue a career often will not have a family at a young age. This choice is also mocked as being "abnormal" on social media by men and women in their ethnic community.[63] Qianwen's choice of not having a child immediately after her marriage but to continue pursuing her study and career was seen as "not natural" and was consistently pressured by the women in her maternal family. Sarah's experience in the Indonesian-Peranakan context was much the same. Having an ambitious pursuit of a career path outside of the household resulted in her being questioned aggressively about her decision by her family and friends. Although immigrating to Australia created some space for her not to be consistently verbally scrutinised by her family, Sarah still experienced the internal struggle because her choice did not fall into the expected subordination of women.

8. Navigating Uncertain Identity with Hope

As mentioned in the article earlier, the woman with a haemorrhage in Mark 5 represents a type of faith that the author repetitively highlighted. Yet, in the woman's pursuit of healing and restoration physically as well as socially (transformation), she struggled to find who she is in the tension between the limiting and reductive 'marginalised' identity ("take away") imposed onto her, and the hopeful life-giving and restored ("give back") future.

As Asian diaspora women, we also see our challenges of navigating identity in a foreign country and our ethnic communities reflected in this woman's struggle. Both authors of this article have been navigating the experience of feeling like outsiders in their ethnic and cultural communities and in Western societies like Australia. We see ourselves as the anomalies of the cultures and the "in-betweeners" in our context. While in our cultural communities (heavily influenced by Chinese culture), we are considered too ambitious and too "Westernised".[64] The perceptions of us as less resourceful, intellectual, and reliable physically, emotionally and mentally created limitations and excluded us from accelerating our full potential in contributing to society beyond the Covid pandemic. The stereotypes also primarily affected our perceptions about who we are and how we should perform for the acceptance of the community around us. The navigation in the tension between the imposed limiting perceptions and who we are and who we are can somewhat echo the woman's experience with the bleeding.

[62] Tiu et al., "Lived Experience of Infertility among Hong Kong Chinese Women"; Hong Yao, Celia Hoi Yan Chan, and Cecilia Lai Wan Chan, "Childbearing Importance: A Qualitative Study of Women with Infertility in China," *Research in Nursing & Health* 41, no. 1 (2018): 69–77.
[63] Yao, Chan, and Chan, "Childbearing Importance"; Jing Zeng, "'Smart Is the Nü (Boshi) Sexy': How China's PhD Women Are Fighting Stereotypes Using Social Media," *Mediated Interfaces: The Body on Social Media*, 2020, 157.
[64] Alanna Kamp, *Intersectional Lives: Chinese Australian Women in White Australia* (Routledge, 2022).

Sarah describes her experience of embracing and learning about Western feminists' "more progressive thinking" as a cure to help her navigate who she is but ends up having more doubts because the theories do not acknowledge her disposition as a woman who belongs to multiple ethnical groups. She found herself resonating with the woman's effort of seeking healing elsewhere from the physicians, who promised that she would be free from her ailment, but experienced multiple disappointments.

Qianwen experienced a more specific alienation in the academic scholarship space apart from her shared experience with Sarah in daily life. Qianwen as an early career researcher focuses on the field of enriching the Western-centric Australian university education with Chinese intellectuality. However, despite her practical experience in examining and developing the relevant practices in actual classes, the type of comments she often receives from Australia-based scholars is that her work is impractical to the Australian context. At the same time, those based in China consider her work to be too Westernised, privileged and idealistic.

The conflicting reality illustrated above is nothing new for many Asian diaspora women. Our diasporic identity conditions us to a relevant place of privilege and disadvantage simultaneously,[65] which hinders us from achieving a meaningful sense of belonging without being seen in the light of exclusive stereotypes from both external and internal to our ethnic communities. The diversified intersectional factors in our individual lives as diaspora women determine our approach's diversity in navigating the uncertainty of who we are and the transformation of who we can be. Yet, the fruit of the determined but imperfect faith in the woman's struggle of navigating similar uncertainty and breaking away from the limiting status quo gives us hope in our situation.

It needs to highlight that in the woman's desperate struggle to transform her identity, she did not approach the source of transformation with perfect faith. Scholars argue it is quite common for the woman to have a superstitious belief that touching a holy man such as Jesus can heal her.[66] Although it may start from the point of superstition, it is undeniable that the woman's certainty in receiving healing from the moment she touches Jesus' clothes drives her to be a reckless, desperate and audacious person despite being in an impure state amid crowds.[67]
As she immediately healed from touching Jesus' robe, the language used to describe that the blood had dried up also shared a parallel with Leviticus 12:7 that can deem someone to be ceremonially clean.[68] Jesus then realised that power had gone from Him, Yarbro stated that it

[65] Kamp.
[66] Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 163.
[67] Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, 297.
[68] John R. Donahue and Daniel J. Harrington, *Sacra Pagina*, vol. 2, The Gospel of Mark (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2002), 208.

was not merely a touch but a touch to be healed and have complete trust towards Jesus.[69] Yet the way the disciple reacted to Jesus' inquiry showed the lack of understanding of Jesus' work and instead asked a somewhat mocking question back to Jesus.[70] One commentary suggested that the reason Jesus was insistent on finding the woman was because He was not satisfied to give the needs of someone, but He wanted to encounter the person and make himself known to the person.[71] However, it can be assumed that Jesus has the ability of clairvoyance, which signifies His supernatural capacity in searching for the woman.[72]

Despite the imperfection of the woman's faith and her breaching of social rules in the pursuit of identity transformation, Jesus healed her and also gave this voiceless woman a voice to speak of her own identity.[73] Despite her human frailty in the presence of divine power.[74] Also, despite her fear and guilt of the exposure of her unlawful practice, Jesus accepted her with compassion and invited the woman into the community of believers by calling her daughter.[75] The transformation was completed not because of the woman's effort but God's grace which acknowledges her transgression and accepts her complex intersectional reality.

9. Conclusion

The relevance of the woman's story with haemorrhage to the stories of us as Asian diaspora women lies beyond our shared transgression but covered by the same divine grace and arrives at the shared awe at the kindness of God.[76] The woman's encounter with Jesus resulted in a miracle healing that extended to the renewal of her identity and, consequently, her social status. She was no longer voiceless with a marginalised label but made visibly, heard and empowered through the transformative kindness and compassion of Jesus to the woman. By challenging the stereotype and the labels imposed on this woman with an intentional acknowledgement of the intersectional realities in her life, we also find healing and liberation in our own.

The story of ethnocultural prejudice is not new for a minority like us, and its implication would not disappear unless the "otherness" created and enhanced by systemic discrimination and socioeconomic injustice is resolved. Yet the healing and transformation story of the woman with a haemorrhage gives us hope in genuinely challenging the adversity in our navigation of identity and inclusion.

[69] Collins, *Mark*, 283.
[70] Stein, *Mark*, 493.
[71] Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 165.
[72] Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 359.
[73] Branch, 'A Study of the Woman in the Crowd and Her Desperate Courage (Mark 5'.
[74] Donahue and Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark,* 208.
[75] Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 360.
[76] Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, 298.