Digital Ethnography and Goffman's Theory of Self:

The Case of Product-Promotion Videos on YouTube[*]

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This study explores how digital ethnography helps researchers apply language-related theories originally designed for face-to-face communication to digital social interaction. It provides an empirical case study on YouTube to illuminate some of the ways digital ethnography proves the analytical appropriateness of theories modeled on language use before the computer era, or from relatively old computer-mediated discourses, to technology-mediated communication. By investigating product-promotion videos created by YouTuber Chien-Chien, this study draws on Goffman's theory of self (1959) to investigate online interaction between Chien-Chien and viewers based in Taiwan. Specifically, I analyze how this YouTuber crafts personae to increase purchases, while maintaining some consistent characteristics of her authentic self. As I conducted research on Chien-Chien's YouTube channel starting in 2021, I employed three primary digital ethnography techniques: participant observation, analysis of electronic logs of data, and contextualization of data with constellations of sociocultural realities. The analysis shows four primary practices Chien-

Chien discursively uses to present the diversity of self: code-switching, her "signature move," establishing herself as a professional eater, and giving detailed sensory descriptions of food. The first strategy, code-switching, mostly between Mandarin Chinese and Southern Min, projects a "girl next door" image. The second is a gestural flourish she developed to promote her brand and celebrity status. The third and fourth strategies go hand in hand: Chien-Chien demonstrates a healthy appetite and a proclivity for evaluating food multimodally. That is, to engage viewers' attention she uses actions and verbal descriptions of culinary experience through which viewers can vicariously eat with relish. Distinctive dimensions of Chien-Chien's self are on show: She presents as amiable, professional, ebullient, and a person who banters with friends and displays a theory of mind from viewers' perspectives. These techniques together illuminate the self in digital presentations.

Participant observation has given me a clear view of microcelebrities' interactions with viewers. By joining their online communities regularly, I take a natural approach to comprehending the self and its construction in situated communications. A byproduct of this extended participant observation has been the accumulation of an electronic archive of data. Retaining that data in a synchronic collection, I can revisit videos and comments produced in a specific spatiotemporal configuration. Additionally, social context adds depth to my interpretation of the data. Along with consideration of the viewers, other microcelebrities, and sponsors, contextual features help me arrive at a pragmatic and interactional interpretation of the connotations of self in YouTube videos.

The contributions of this study are threefold. First, it reviews how the theory of self has been applied to digital interaction. Second, I explore the anthrolinguistic nuances of YouTubers' and viewers' language use in relation to a concept of self that is less discussed in the current scholarship on Mandarin Chinese social media. Furthermore, this study offers methodological inputs for digital ethnography as an effective means of analyzing community-based interaction and the interpretation of meaning on social media platforms.

I. Introduction

Erving Goffman (1959) suggested that the urge to make an impression on those with whom one interacts is an element of human nature and that people are motivated by the desire for a particular self, whether it is displayed explicitly or subtly in face-to-face or Internet-mediated communications (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010). Given the growing interest in the impacts of technology on people's understanding of the world, this study discusses how digital ethnography supports the application of Goffman's theory of self to social media, and how this application reveals the anthrolinguistic nuances of technology-mediated communication. Just analyzing happenings collected from the Internet does not constitute digital ethnographic work; rather, ethnographic research is grounded in small data "collected relationally and dependently upon a negotiation between the ethnographer's engagements in the field and what the field can provide" (Forberg and Schilt 2023). Drawing upon my research experience with social media in recent years, I provide a case study on a Taiwan microcelebrity, Chien-Chien, to explore how digital ethnography can anchor analysis of diverse presentations of self and viewers' perceptions of them. By using Goffman's notion that communication and social relationships are intertwined with cultural genres (Hogan 2010; Miller et al. 2016), I analyze how Chien-Chien crafts personae in product-promotion videos to both present her sensory presence and drive purchases. This study aims to enrich current scholarship on linguistic anthropology, sociolinguistics, and communication and offers insights into an empirical and theoretical void that I conceive as: How has social media extended the influence of Goffman's theory of self, and how may digital ethnography play a role in (re-)interpreting the self?

Social media provides avenues for people to rise to fame by engaging in (self-) celebrification practices (Driessens 2012; Jerslev 2014; Littler 2011), and this has real-world impacts such that microcelebrity endorsement is becoming a marketing tool (Dhanesh & Duthler, 2019; Tolani & Sao, 2020). Driessens initially defines celebrification as "the changes at the individual level, or, more precisely, the process by which ordinary people or public figures are transformed into celebrities" (2012: 643). Later, from a macro-social perspective, he formulates celebrification as a form of capital that is accumulated by "media visibility through recurrent media representations" (2013: 553), and the influence of such celebrity capital extends from one field to others. This study investigates how digital ethnography can unravel microcelebrities' constructions of self, and how that influences communication between microcelebrities and their viewers. Interaction between the two sides is important, because it represents an individual's "line" — "a pattern of verbal and nonverbal acts by which he expresses his view of the situation and through this his

evaluation of the participants, especially himself" (Goffman 1967: 5). Even as digital innovations continue to evolve, I consider interpersonal relationships to remain the primary concern and so emphasize the interplay between the construction of self and user interaction.

This discussion will proceed as follows: I begin by presenting the essence of Goffman's theory of self; I then review digital ethnographic research on the self, particularly its performative nature online and offline. I next delineate my methodology and go on to analyze Chien-Chien's videos and viewers' comments. The conclusion summarizes my findings and discusses methodological and theoretical considerations of self on social media.

II. Goffman's theory of self

Self is expressive of one's understanding of a real situation, and it is embodied by one's effort to make behaviors considered appropriate in the eyes of others. Following Durkheim's notion of morality as an important component of a society (Stets and Carter 2012), Goffman adopts a micro-sociological perspective to study how people from all walks of life adhere to social norms. Goffman discusses the self via the metaphor of everyday life as theatre. When "actors" appear on stage, they commit to conveying "either no impression or an impression that is compatible and consistent with the overall definition of the situation that is being fostered" (Goffman 1959: 51). Being on stage demands competence at adapting the actors' selves to different types of audience; being offstage, likewise, involves a set of social protocols. Location or context, therefore, plays a central role in how people create public images and manage impressions. In Goffman's formulation, front stage actors consciously perform actions that will maximize their chance to receive favorable reviews from the audience. Interpreting their roles appropriately demonstrates that actors know how to fulfill an audience's expectations. This is in accordance with Goffman's definition of performance as an activity "which occurs during a period marked by… continuous presence before a particular set of observers and which has some influence on the observers" (Goffman 1959: 22).

Compared to the high degree of standardization in the action at center stage, other dimensions related to performance are meticulously cultivated behind the scenes. Actors can be more relaxed during activities that take place here. For example, acting skills are honed, dress rehearsals are conducted, dramatic plots are discussed, and new actors receive coaching. Most importantly, actors in this space feel free to ignore decorum, and be the self of an individual rather than the self of a performer. In Goffman's description, the actor can "drop his front, forgo speaking his lines, and

step out of character" (Goffman 1959: 112). The division of the stage into "front and back" is important. Actors need space invisible to the audience to practice and rest sufficiently to perform well. Audiences, on the other hand, by being kept away from the backstage area, have limited or no opportunity to watch preparations or experience uncomfortable feelings by observing the dramas and relationships behind the scenes. Thus, the frontstage and backstage are separated by a passage in theaters, which is sometimes guarded, so that active and supporting performers can help and cover for each other as needed. Goffman further indicates that many institutions adapt this structure to control what is to be presented and what is to be hidden. This also holds true for individuals and can lead to various and elaborated selves.

These descriptions of stage performance are eventually applied to daily interactions, in particular "the structure of social encounters… whenever persons enter one another's immediate physical presence" (Goffman 1959: 254). A performance in a theater is rehearsed and relatively controlled, but it is less so in daily interactions because the immediate social environment changes. Therefore, the self may be represented by a multitude of images and impressions that accord with the social situation at hand.

III. The Self on Social Media

Compared to traditional media, which is monitored by a relatively small number of people, social media invites ordinary people to present themselves via participatory engagement (Herring 2013; Murthy 2012). Web 2.0, a term introduced by DiNucci (1999), features user-generated content and social networking. Through social media, an individual "gains access to a variety of multimedia tools that enable the possibility for more controlled and more imaginative performances of identity online" (Papacharissi 2001: 307). These "localized notions of identity, privacy, and sociality" (Hjorth 2012: 237) tally closely with the well-established scholarship of Goffmanian notions, such as self and face work, in mediated communication. Dihraj Murthy shows that Goffman's key concepts on face-to-face relationships are useful in theorizing "talk" on Twitter, which creates an interactive context of vast unknown recipients of short messages in standard formats of texting and retweeting. The three core elements of Goffman's approach to communication—ritualization, participation framework, and embedding—function as "a set of tools which can be developed to understand social media" (Murthy 2012: 1066).

Hogan (2010) discusses differences between face-to-face and online interactions, suggesting that supplementing Goffman's dramaturgical framework with an exhibitional approach can improve the investigation of self-presentation in digital

environments. Photos, videos, or status updates shown to diverse audiences who may respond asynchronously do not give users simultaneous access to their audience's reactions. Given this, users tend to go with the lowest common denominator to present coherent and slightly different versions of the self. Furthermore, social media's filtering, ordering, and searching functions redistribute information to a particular sector of audiences. These technological affordances have redefined frontstage and backstage, transforming Goffman's definition of communication as a real-time performance into an artifact that can be reviewed.

Alongside performance, the Wenigner and Li study on celebrification (2023) demonstrates that stance and style constitute effective analytical approaches to the ways a semiotic performance becomes a performative social act (Bauman and Briggs 1990). Examining videos of the microcelebrity Papi Jiang in China, the authors identify recurring linguistic elements she deploys, and they further contextualize the strategies behind the video contents. Via (non-)verbal resources such as makeup and video effects, Papi Jiang adopts a satirical stance on social issues in Chinese society, and this cynical style has attracted a large number of followers.

Self can also be performed by geocoded information. Advancing a "spatial self" as a theoretical lens through which to understand online representations, Schwartz and Halegoua (2015) presents digital ethnography that shows how locative media applications allow users to strengthen networks by revealing their whereabouts. Through such "a stylized repetition of acts" (Butler 1988: 519) depictions of self are collaboratively constructed by users and their audiences' perception of locales. Beyond providing precise geographic information, location-based messages are "a bricolage of personal and collective, private and public meanings and narratives of place" (Schwartz and Halegoua 2015: 1649) and a means by which a self is signified.

Lin's work on Matsu residents' use of *mazuwang* (Matsu Islands website) illustrates that the border between online participation and everyday life is porous (2023). *Mazuwang* provides citizens not only with updated information on a wide range of socioeconomic issues, but a space to offer opinions on possible directions for the future development of Matsu. The participatory culture partially removes the social constraints imposed by the military presence on the islands; moreover, the website constitutes a venue where Matsu people can network, display various selves, and transform online discussion into social movements.

IV. Methods

To show how digital ethnography works with YouTube videos, I focus on celebrification practices and viewers' responses. Each of the three techniques I use—

participant observation, analysis of electronic logs of data, and the contextualization of data in constellations of sociocultural realities (Boellstorff 2008; Pink et al. 2016)—contributes to illuminating the digital presentation of self.

To understand a phenomenon under study, the researcher immerses herself in the environment to explore related sociocultural factors (Mann and Stewart 2000). Participant observation allows the investigation of essential attributes of the phenomenon in physical and virtual worlds as well as the dynamics among them. Virtual space parallels and engages the physical world, contributing to the ethnographer's knowledge of the research participants and events (Hine 2015). On-site participant observation requires presence in a field location and being socially acceptable to community members; in virtual settings, likewise, an ethnographer does not just log onto a platform, but takes part in the social protocols of the online community.

I subscribe to several YouTube channels, including Chien-Chien's, and have conducted ethnographic fieldwork on her channel since 2021. Over the course of my participation, I have watched videos, read discussion threads, and written comments to interact with Chien-Chien and other viewers. YouTube provides users with a digital presence that requires few technical skills and since Chien-Chien's channel has neither gatekeepers nor paid membership, little negotiation was required to enter this field site.

Chien-Chien's product-promotion videos are my key focus, primarily because of her popularity, which is reflected in both the number of subscribers and heated discussions around her videos. Having participated in this community for years, I have acquired emic knowledge, such as how often she updates the videos and her speech repertoire. Chien-Chien is a female YouTube microcelebrity whose videos focus on food. Aged 30-35 during my research period, she grew up in Erlin, a farming town near Changhua City. Her father is a traditional Taiwanese man and her mother an immigrant spouse from Thailand. Due to her family background, she was bullied when she was little, an experience that fed her desire to appear optimistic in public. She teases herself when embarrassed, and she offers polite comments when food is not delicious. Her non-aggressive commentary style makes her one of the most considerate YouTubers. [1] Before becoming a full-time YouTuber, Chien-Chien was a nurse whose favorite leisure activity was enjoying street food. She made a reputation for herself when she participated in an eating competition in Japan, which was videotaped and went viral as the first time a female tourist had won a medal in

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1 An Internet survey shows Chien-Chien is popular among YouTube users (https://reurl.cc/8jo4jo).

this traditional competition. Chien-Chien's normal background, professional work experience, and her humble attitude have attracted a large number of viewers. They enjoy watching her cook, eat, and comment on food.

In almost every production-promotion video, Chien-Chien makes the brand sponsorship clear by verbally stating it or providing information in description boxes below the videos. Viewers can make their own judgments about her opinions and the validity of her endorsements. I was careful not reveal my role as a researcher, since under the norms of her community, participants talk about themselves only in appropriate circumstances, and those rarely occur. Therefore, I did not make my "ethnographic presence" explicit to Chien-Chien or other participants in her community.

V. Findings and Analysis

Chien-Chien discursively uses four celebrification practices to present the diversity of self: code-switching, her signature move, taking the role of a professional eater, and giving detailed sensory descriptions of food. Since identity is indexed by semiotic resources (Ansah 2022; Auer 2005; Woolard et al. 2013) and her videos have data in multiple modalities, I focus on (para-)linguistic features and embodied actions to delineate the (co-)construction of self. In the following, I first describe data and present analysis; then I discuss how participant observation, digital logs of data, and the contextualization of data help me build my arguments.

A. Code-Switching and a Signature Move

When Chien-Chien describes food, she alternates between Mandarin Chinese, Southern Min, and sometimes Japanese. The act of switching from Mandarin Chinese to Southern Min, or *tâigí*, a vernacular widely spoken in Taiwan, presents Chien-Chien as an amiable and genuine professional capable of empathic communication with her audience. By employing this strategy on videos about Taiwanese cuisine, such as braised pork belly rice, *luroufan*[2] , Chien-Chien reinforces her relatability, and because Southern Min is associated with hometown flavor, she shares this familiarity with her viewers (Hsiao 2022). The bumper video that runs at the beginning of nearly all of Chien-Chien's presentations manifests code-switching as well as her second celebrification strategy, a signature physical move. In the bumper video, Chien-Chien introduces herself by speaking Southern Min to promote her channel and reminds viewers to like and

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2 An example is the video 'Gourmet home food' released in 2021 (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VQtf0-h2ldk).

subscribe to it. This introduction finishes with a series of gestures: taking a deep breath, clapping her hands in front of her chest, stretching her arms wide, and ending with a Kung-Fu pose.[3] Emblematically, this move communicates Chien-Chien's confidence that she will impress viewers with her food commentaries.[4] Moreover, it has been referenced by other microcelebrities and mentioned by viewers. An example of cross-referencing is featured by TsaiAGa on 'I will try TsaiAGa's recommendation of hometown flavor in Taipei' released in 2022.[5] In this video, Chien-Chien invites TsaiAGa to recommend hometown specialties of Chiayi from the perspective of a native who has lived in Taipei for decades. After naming the small restaurants and street vendors he will introduce, TsaiAGa teases Chien-Chien by imitating her gesture while uttering:

> *shihla siangchin A* [臺語發音，字幕'是啦鄉親啊']，這就是我蔡阿嘎推薦的士林區的美食，おすすめ [日語發音，字幕'喔試試咩']，你就去試試咩 All right, folks [spoken in Southern Min], that's it. These (the aforementioned) are the delicious foods I recommend (and will show you in detail) in Shilin District (in Taipei). おすすめ [spoken in Japanese]. Try them.' (3'04"-3'09" in the video)[6]

Co-occurring with these verbal expressions is his physical parody:

Photo 1　TsaiAGa's imitation with his utterance 'All right, folks'

Photo 2　TsaiAGa's imitation and Chien-Chien's response 'You are annoying'

3　The bumper video can be seen at 0'13"-0'20" on 'Having meals in the Legislative Yuan' released in 2024 (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gQlMEY2Ni3g). Screenshots of Chien-Chien's signature move are also presented on my publication, Hsiao (2022).

4　An example is at 0'16"-0'18" on 'My all-time favorite and "hidden" restaurants' released in 2024 (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2WvBGRNKEhk).

5　The video can be accessed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LuS9v_t4btk. Photo 1 and Photo 2 in the following analysis are screenshots taken from this video and they were taken by Chi-hua Hsiao.

6　In the transcriptions of this article, each utterance or text is presented in the original spoken or written form: Mandarin Chinese, Southern Min, English, Japanese, or other semiotic forms. I then translated the data into English. To enhance the readability of the translation, I added additional English words, physical movements, or metalinguistic features accompanied by utterances or text in brackets, when necessary.

As shown in the transcription, TsaiAGa uses Southern Min to make the attention-getting utterance *shìhla siangchin A*, and he alternates between Chinese and Japanese to repeat the title of one of Chien-Chien's video series, おすすめ, meaning in Japanese 'I will try the recommended food.' Upon seeing TsaAGa's imitation, Chien-Chien bursts into laughter and says:

> 你超煩 [發出笑聲], 現在每個人看到我都這樣子'
> You are annoying [laughing loudly]. Everyone does this (the gesture) when he/she sees me.' (3'11"-3'12" in the video)

Such banter and playfulness helps contextualize this single event in other video contexts and shows this exchange to be part of a layered spatiotemporal discourse comprising different interlocutors (Leeuwen 2008). TsaiAGa's mimicry of Chien-Chien's gesture transcends mere repetition. More than what he did is *how* he did it, namely, the performativity that transforms this gesture into a form of social practice by which he recognizes Chien-Chien's status as a microcelebrity (Butler 1988). A social action is infused with emotion and attitude (Berger and Luckmann 1966), and Chien-Chien's response "You are annoying. Everyone does this (gesture) when he/she sees me" suggests that the parody leaves her nonplussed and that this signature gesture has come to stand for her celebrity in a way that surprises her. The contextualization cues (Gumperz 1992), such as laughter, further indicate Chien-Chien's complaint is not a real one but rather a positive self-irony that builds rapport between her and TsaiAGa (Dynel 2018; Norrick 2001).

Viewers also mention Chien-Chien's signature move:

> 最喜歡看阿嘎的千千拍手 (影片三分鐘處)
> 'I like AGa's (imitation of) Chien-Chien's clapping the most (the clapping occurs at 3'00" in the video)'
> (by @TracyHuang 211 on 'I will try TsaiAGa's recommendation')

> 以後我看到千千都要一直拍手 ww
> 'From now on, if I see Chien-Chien (in person), I will keep clapping ww.'
> (by @user-ij6mi3kd2m on 'I will try TsaiAGa's recommendation')

TracyHaung 211 specifies the timing of the video scene with a clapping icon in the comment; user-ij6mi3kd2m uses hyperbolic language and the Japanese Internet expression *ww*, which is the equivalent of the English *haha*, to show her liking for Chien-Chien's signature move. Their opinions echo that of TsaiAGa in that they

find the intentional mimicry of Chien-Chien's clapping funny and perhaps an acknowledgement of a recognizable feature of self.

These interpretations of the two celebrification strategies—code-switching and an embodied action—are derived from my participation in Chien-Chien's YouTube community, the digital archive of videos and comments, and information appropriate to contextualizing the data. These methods intertwine to lay bare the complexity of self, communicative style, parody, and authenticity.

B. The Role of A Professional Eater and Detailed Descriptions of Food

Another aspect of self is crafted through the third celebrification strategy: Chien-Chien takes on the role of a professional and competitive eater with a fine appreciation of food. Her debut in a Japanese eating contest, in which she consumed massive amounts of food, attracted a substantial number of fans. Her success manifests not only in her YouTube community but also has been a bellwether for a trend in videos on binge eating in Taiwan. Many YouTubers have acknowledged following in her footsteps.[7] However, after her initial exposure as a champion eater, Chien-Chien decided to make a turn on her career path. The label of competitive eater, *daweiwang* ('big stomach king' or glutton), has negative connotations in Mandarin Chinese, and she faced disparaging comments about overeating and wasting food.[8] She then initiated a different series of videos, in which she comments on ingredients and cooking methods, and more importantly, she exudes a sense of "treating myself in this moment" as she eats. In recent years, Chien-Chien has built a new image as a foodie with a culinary appreciation and appetite for good food, rather than merely being a big eater.

In the video 'One-meter-long pizza box for a one-person party' released in 2023,[9] Chien-Chien is thrilled to be unboxing a giant pizza and will enjoy it alone.

> 大家好，我是美食水水千千，不知道大家是不是常常派對聚餐的時候，不知道要吃些什麼呢。[拍手] 今天大家有福了，因為今天呢，我要來開箱必勝客的一公尺派對巨飽盒。但是由於呢，這個派對巨飽盒是我一個人可以吃得完的 [字幕特效:我一個人剛好可以吃完]，所以今天算是我一個人的party [拍手]

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7   Qu (2021) traces the origin of videos on binge eating to South Korea and addresses this issue in China, based on global socio-economic factors. I consider the development of this video genre in Taiwan to be similar to China because Korean popular culture has been one of the dominant international cultural flows in Asia since the early 2010s.

8   One of the media sources on Chien-Chien's self-disclosure on the adverse effects of being a *daweiwang* is https://www.cw.com.tw/article/5097377?template=fashion.

9   The video can be accessed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ipk-XQmRv5o. The following Photo 3 is a screenshot taken from this video and it was taken by Chi-hua Hsiao.

piupiupiu [煙火手勢][字幕特效: 普天同慶]⋯大家是不是想說，這是自肥特輯嗎，因為派對巨飽盒其實上市有一段時間，怎麼會是自肥特輯呢 [打開紙盒] wow wow，好幸福喔，我的媽呀 [字幕特效: 自肥特輯無誤]。一個人的派對大家可能會覺得有點鼻酸，有點寂しい [日文'寂寞']，但是怎麼會呢

Hi everyone, I am the foodie beauty (*meishi shuishui*) Chien-Chien. I wonder whether this often happens to you when you host a party: What foods should I prepare for it? [clapping] Well, today must be your lucky day, because I am unboxing a Pizza Hut one-meter-long pizza. That said, I can empty this pizza box by myself [subtitles with special effect: 'I can just polish off the whole thing myself.'], it is going to be a one-person party, [clapping] *piupiupiu* [making a sound and hand gesture to signify fireworks] [subtitles with special effect: The moment of celebration]…Since the one-meter-long pizza box has been available for a while, you must be thinking that I am (making this video to) satisfy my own appetite. How could that be? [lifting the lid of the pizza box] Wow wow. Oh my God, this is so great [subtitles with special effect: This video is indeed about satisfying her appetite.] A one-person party might seem a bit sad and 寂しい ['lonely' in Japanese], but how could that be so? (0'20"-1'10" in the video)

Chien-Chien describes herself as *meishi shuishui* ('foodie beauty'), an appealing professional. The expression *shuishui* is a Chinese colloquialism and an Internet orthography of the Southern Min phrase, 'a pretty girl.' The Southern Min pronunciation is described by Su (2009) as Stylized Taiwanese-accented Mandarin, which often invokes a feeling of playfulness. While this self-description is intended to be humorous, Chien-Chien constructs this self and demonstrates flexibility by balancing her epistemic authority as a professional with expressions of delight. She begins by enjoining viewers to consider their anxiousness when hosting ('I wonder whether this often happens to you when you host a party: What foods should I prepare for it?'). What follows is her statement that this super-sized box of pizzas is a perfect choice for a party. That said, Chien-Chien continues with the exclamation that since this package satisfies her craving for delicious food (Photo 3), she is throwing a one-person party.

Photo 3　Chinese subtitles *wo yigeren ganghao keyi chiwan*
('I can just polish off the whole pizza myself.')

Subsequent utterances multimodally portray her as a food expert. She first gives voice to everyone's view that this promotion of the jumbo pizza meets her desire to consume it then she immediately scoffs at the idea ('How could that be?'). Meanwhile, Chien-Chien's production team uses Chinese subtitles to contradict and tease her and amuse the viewers ('This video is indeed about satisfying her own appetite.'). After stating that people who eat alone seem lonely ('A one-person party might seem a bit sad...'), Chien-Chien disagrees with another rhetorical question ('But how could that be so?'), which suggests she has a "pure relationship" with food and that purity is unmediated by others. As displayed in the video, the subtitles emblazoned in red and shown in a large font highlight Chien-Chien's capacity as an eater. The other post-production video effects, such as the accompanying sound effects, attest to Chien-Chien's ability to consume copious amounts of food.

The professional self is crystalized via the fourth celebrification practice: Chien-Chien uses sensory descriptions and subjective experience to appraise food.

> 這次的派對巨飽盒，我覺得它有一個很優秀的點，因為它是方型的，所以它的料很平均之外，你也很方便拿取，你每一口都是料…每一個邊的交界都非常剛好 [將食物移至鏡頭前]…[鏡頭聚焦滿足的表情] 韓式泡菜燒真是永遠的神，很好做轉場的味道，膩了就換有點酸酸微辣的那種泡菜味道…喔你看這一塊，有多美 [鏡頭聚焦]…烤雞是我以前去必勝客吃到飽，我最喜歡一直狂嗑的一個品項，因為我覺得他們家的烤雞熱熱的超好吃，嗯，你看這個肉 [鏡頭聚焦]，鹹度很高喔，然後又很香，皮的那個油脂味很剛好
>
> This type of packaging has an advantage. [The pies] are square cut, so the toppings are evenly distributed; it is easy to pick up, and you get the ingredients with every bite... and the crust of every piece is just right [bringing a square cut closer to the camera]...[The camera then zooms in on her expression of satisfaction with a mouth full of food.] Korean kimchi roast pork pizza is divine. Its taste is a great change if you are tired of any other flavor: A little bit pungent and sour, the taste of kimchi will save you... Oh, check this out. It is beautiful. [The camera zooms in on another slice.] ...Fried chicken used to be one of my favorites at Pizza Hut's buffet, because it was super tasty when served hot. Well, look at the meat [The camera zooms in.] It is salty and smells good. The fat of the chicken skin tastes just right.' (3'58"-7'26" in the video)

Here Chien-Chien describes the appearance, aroma, and taste of the food as well as the ingredients, texture, and cooking methods. To be authentic and professional, she uses the first-person pronoun *wo* ('I') to evaluate the pizza and convince viewers of the validity of her opinions. To engage viewers, the second-person pronoun *ni*

('you') is employed in speech acts as inviting (as in 'check this out') and asking the viewers to imagine the scenario ('it is easy to pick up, and you get the ingredients with every bite…'). Furthermore, such multimodal enactments (Sidnell 2006) like verbally describing in detail food flavors, physically bringing food closer to the camera, and presenting a pleased expression all stimulate viewers' sensory responses and persuade them to participate in this delight (Choe 2019). These verbal descriptions and actions make Chien-Chien a competent microcelebrity who not only provides viewers with information, but also gratifies them with her multisensory culinary experiences.

VI. Discussion and Conclusions

Chien-chien's four celebrification techniques discussed above engage her viewers' attention by using embodied actions and verbal descriptions to help them envision eating food with relish. Self is a versatile semiotic that reflects how one perceives oneself and can present an image in line with others' expectations. In Chien-Chien's videos, the self is indexed by the semiotic resources of code-switching, her signature gesture, and her various practices around food (Ansah 2022; Auer 2005; Woolard et al. 2013).

Distinctive dimensions of Chien-Chien's self are on show: she presents as an amiable, professional, ebullient, and a person who banters with friends and anticipates interest and concerns from her viewers' perspectives. Some dimensions of this self are curated to promote products; others are more like her genuine personal attributes in that they typify who she is in private life. Chien-Chien faithfully presents her sensory experience and creates product-promotion videos to increase sales and stay current. On the other hand, viewers refer to the consistency of Chien-Chien's behavior on and off camera, which testifies to her credibility. For instance, one viewer enjoys Chien-Chien's videos because they reveal *richang xiaoquexing de meihao* ('the little joys of everyday life').[10] Some viewers who have met Chien-Chien in person say that the way she eats and chats with street vendors in her ordinary life is virtually identical to her behavior in the videos.

Flexible boundaries between online performances and behavior in real life are evident in social media contents, which have been characterized as Discourse 2.0.[11]

10　The comment is written by @nanami3449 on the video 'Shipai night market in the Beitou area' released in 2023 (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UiWhIYMtlew).

11　The term *Discourse 2.0* refers to discourses created in the Web 2.0 environment. Sociolinguists Deborah Tannen and Anna Trester used it in the conference preceding title of the 2011 Georgetown University Round Table on Languages and Linguistics.

The notion of context collapse, the phenomenon of multiple audiences with diverse backgrounds occupying the same virtual space, blurs the borders between public and private spheres. Context collapse increases communicative difficulties in the sense that it "complicates our metaphors of space and place, including the belief that audiences are separate from each other" (Marwick and boyd 2010: 115). The heterogeneous self inhabits a distinctive space because it is created for context collapse. Beyond this feature, the contents of Discourse 2.0 are diverse. Users chat, evaluate microcelebrities, cross-reference each other's comments, share opinions, (dis)like videos, and (un) subscribe from channels. Moreover, participation frameworks emerge dynamically (Pihlaja 2011; Vettorel 2014). Plenty of users (a)synchronously "talk to" each other by writing comments, sending private messages, clicking the thumbs-up button or typing emoticons in response to each other.

To tackle the "problem" of context collapse (Szabla and Blommaert 2020), microcelebrities and social media users try to fulfill the needs of various audiences. Chien-Chien, for instance, often reminds viewers that culinary preferences are, after all, an individual choice,[12] and she adopts a compromise solution as a polite gesture to sponsors and audiences. For instance, in the video on pizza, one of Chien-Chien's descriptions of fried chicken is, 'It is salty.' My cumulative knowledge acquired via digital ethnographic methods shows that a lack of direct compliments in Chien-Chien's repertoire is significant, because it shows her backing away from outright endorsement. If she enjoys food, she praises it directly, such as 'It smells good' (from the same video) or 'The saltiness of the chicken is just right… yummy.' [13]

Moreover, presentations of self are often weighted for authenticity in the genre of product-promotion videos. While authenticity is used to convey the attributes of "pure" and "objective," scholars have redefined it as a dynamic and relative concept (Abidin 2015; Chen et al. 2020; Garcia-Rapp 2017; Jerslev 2016; Lauri and Lauri 2023; Marwick 2015). Banet-Weiser's remark on authenticity is pertinent to the context of product-promotion videos. She considers it to be "a symbolic construct that, even in a cynical age, continues to have cultural value in… how we make decisions about how to live our lives… there are spaces in our lives driven by genuine affect and emotions, something outside of mere consumer culture" (Banet-Weiser 2012: 5).

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12 Please refer to 1'13"-1'19" on the video 'Keelung Miaokou night market gourmet' released in 2023 (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rkbqkP4CkLc).

13 An example of Chien-Chien's preference for non-salty food is fried chicken on the video 'Shipai night market in the Beitou area' in 2023. The specific descriptions occur at 1'39"-1'46" and 2'08"-2'13" (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UiWhIYMtlew).

As context collapse and the issue of "appearing real" create an interactive ethos on social media that is different from face-to-face communication, Discourse 2.0 motivates scholars to adopt more integrated ethnographic methods to understand user-generated content and also to recognize the explanatory power of Goffman's theory both in its original treatment and in digital modification (Gottschalk 2018; Hsiao 2022; Hogan 2010; Schwartz and Halegoua 2015; Walsh and Baker 2021; Weninger and Li 2023).

This analytical and reflective study demonstrates that the three techniques of digital ethnography can produce a nuanced understanding of the digital self. Participant observation gives a clear view of microcelebrities' interactions with viewers. Participating in their online communities regularly, I take a natural and "iterative-inductive" approach (O'Reilly 2012) to comprehend self and its constructions in situated communication. A byproduct of systematic participant observation is an electronic archive of data. Retaining data in a synchronic collection, I revisit videos and comments produced in a specific spatiotemporal configuration. Various contextual meanings also add depth to my interpretation of the data. Along with considerations like viewers, other microcelebrities, sponsors, and contextual features such as how Chien-Chien makes an enthusiastic endorsement help me arrive at a pragmatic and interactional interpretation of the connotations of self in YouTube videos. These techniques intermesh and contribute to a "luxuriously composed record" (O'Reilly 2012) of qualitative analysis. Embedded in the virtual sphere and the real-world environment, self must be interpreted within micro-level interactions as well as macro-social contexts. Thus, inquiry into researchers' sense-making processes remains an ongoing project for anthropologists and sociolinguists.

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數位民族誌於高夫曼自我理論之應用：
以YouTube商品行銷影片為例

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　　本文探討數位民族誌如何協助研究者運用高夫曼自我理論於多媒體分析，以探究科技中介溝通的自我概念及語言互動。此論文從分析與反思之雙重角度出發，詳探作者近年來遇到的挑戰：數位民族誌如何擴展或侷限發展於網路普及前的語言人類學理論？再者，數位民族誌在社交媒體平台之自我建構與觀眾回應，扮演什麼角色？本文以YouTube影音頻道台灣網路名人千千的食物行銷影片為例，討論她如何透過名人化策略建構自我形象並促銷商品，以及觀眾如何回應她的名人化策略。分析結果顯示了四種常用策略。第一，語碼轉換，千千經常交換使用在臺華語及閩南語，建立鄰家女孩可親形象，並且強化食物在地連結。第二，招牌姿勢，用以強化名人氣勢，展現推薦美食之自信。第三個策略和第四個策略經常並用，分別是呈現暨懂門道也懂享受之專業美食家形象，以及使用豐富的五感經驗描述食物風味。本文立基於作者自2021年以降在千千YouTube社群的數位民族誌研究，詳探三個民族誌方法－參與觀察、建立數位資料檔案、脈絡化資料詮釋－如何協助作者理解自我的動態建構。本文提供三方面貢獻。本文耙梳多媒體研究對自我概念的文獻；其次，本文從語言人類學和社會語言學的取徑分析中文文獻較少討論的多媒體自我呈現；再者，本文探討數位民族誌的方法運用，以及自我概念運用於多媒體之理論考量。

關鍵詞：名人化，數位民族誌，商品行銷影片，自我，科技中介溝通