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Ningfeng Zhang¹

Abstract

As the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent social distancing measures have rendered online communication a "new normal" in the post-pandemic era, the production and consumption of internet memes have also emerged as a significant communicative paradigm in this context. However, academic discourses on internet-mediated meme-ing have tended to focus on socially oriented macro-perspectives with a pursuit of positivistic objectivity, leaving the experiential and subjective aspects of "everyday internet-mediated memeing" vis-à-vis individuals in a lifeworld less explored. To address this gap, this study uses structured vignette analysis (SVA) coupled with individual-oriented phenomenological reflexivity to elaborate on how internet-mediated memeing reveals itself as a meaningful lived experience for a "solitary conscious self" in the overall context of social distancing. It seeks to demonstrate the phenomenological applicability of the SVA as an autoethnographic method

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as well as highlight the individual-oriented phenomenological substantiality of meme-ing that involves self-other relations in social distancing.

Keywords

autoethnography, phenomenology, internet-mediated meme-ing, solitary self, social distancing

Introduction

The popularity of internet memes as a phenomenon of modern digital culture (Vitiuk et al. 2020) has been analyzed by many scholars (e.g., Denisova 2019; de Saint Laurent, Glăveanu, and Literat 2022; Grundlingh 2018; Shifman 2014) in light of their socio-political, linguistic, and communicative values. In this respect, internet memes have been understood as a new form of digital artifacts for political communication, a value-laden expressive repertoire, a means of identity-building, an internet language, and a shared social phenomenon (Literat 2021).

As a social phenomenon, the online production and consumption of internet memes, namely internet-mediated meme-ing (hereafter "meme-ing"), can be examined through human experiences with the assumption that social forces and relationships shape humans (Chang 2022), creating a relational subjectivity in the recognition of others and a *self* that discovers voice through the relationships involved (Gannon 2022). Meme-ing may also assume various forms and be perceived, imagined, anticipated, or recollected from different perspectives (Zahavi 2019) with subjective experiences of life (Pitard 2019). However, most epistemological approaches adopted by meme scholars underscore a comparatively naturalistic third-person description (Moran 2017) highlighting the "conceptual distinction between researcher subjectivity and participant objectivity" (Chang 2022, 53). They see "internet memes" as a distant analytical sample. Thus far, the naturalistic-oriented objectivity espoused by some social science research may be conceptualized as a rhetorical posture adopted within a written text, and this stance is marked by a set of rhetorical conventions that involve the suppression and omission of specific details to project an air of neutrality and objectivity (Ellis 2009; Gannon 2022). Such a tendency privileges objectivity stemming from the positivistic paradigm (Creswell and Creswell 2018) and might have overlooked the value of meme scholars' personal experiences as sources in understanding memeing as a phenomenon. Meme scholars are fully engaged with the participatory digital culture and have fewer restrictions to access their own experiences

and related socio-cultural contexts (Chang 2022). Thus, a phenomenological understanding is needed for the process through which meme-ing has become a shared social phenomenon based on the personal experiential richness of individuals' everyday lives.

As the post-pandemic social distancing context has enhanced the role of meme-ing in producing and exchanging symbolic expressions, I conducted an empirical autoethnographic investigation through a phenomenological lens to explore the experiences of meme-ing with its embodied and relational significances for a solitary self in a confined residence in Finland from April 2021 through to April 2022. Within my online communication contexts, this study mainly focuses on my memetic interaction with friends and my romantic partner in China through the use of WeChat (微信), one of the most popular social apps in China (Thomala 2022), as well as my followers on Jike (即刻), a niche Chinese interest-based online community. The structured vignette analysis (SVA) has been adopted as the autoethnographic method with which to foreground my unique perspective as a single Chinese male living in Finland who faces challenges returning to China. These challenges are due to current Chinese epidemic prevention policies. Using eight autoethnographic vignettes, ¹ I aim to present my phenomenological self-reflexivity on the meaning-making journey of meme-ing, placing myself within the online social context to answer the central research question:

How is "meme-ing" revealing itself as a meaningful lived experience to a solitary conscious self with social needs when facing social distancing?

This research question has personal implications as it may help me to understand my self-positionality in various meme-related contexts, including as a friend in a friendship, a romantic partner in a sadomasochistic relationship, and a netizen with an academic background in an online community. With a reflexive self-monitoring of my biases, beliefs, feelings, and experiences impacted by the dynamics of meme-ing, I seek to offer a "critical mode of affirmation" (Adams, Jones, and Ellis 2022, 5) to resist ontological attempts asserting the singularity of truth in human experience as an analytical unit in social phenomena.

Nevertheless, this research does not seek to diminish the contributions of previous scholars in meme studies but rather intends to provide a new exploratory perspective in the area researched. Using an autoethnographic approach, instead of an objectivity-oriented one, does not claim that I may produce better research than those who use other methods, but rather that I may conduct different research (Adams et al. 2022) highlighting distinctive ontological

and epistemological aspects of personal experience by including those perspectives in my work.

The article is structured as follows: there is a literature review of memeing, autoethnography, and their phenomenological reliance, followed by a presentation of the SVA, the sampling criteria and collecting method of data, as well as the analytical procedure. In "Findings and Discussions," I provide a detailed phenomenological analysis with three of my autoethnographic vignettes as examples concerning my first personal meaning-making journey of meme-ing. Lastly, I discuss the results in "Conclusion."

Defining Internet Memes

Coined by Richard Dawkins in 1976, the term "meme" refers to a "new replicator, a noun conveying the idea of cultural transmission, or a unit of imitation" (Dawkins 1989, 192). This unit ranges from a simple or concrete expression, joke, mannerism, or catchphrase to a complicated or abstract idea, ideology or faith, and it composes the eternity of human culture by "imitation" (Dawkins 1989, 192). This term has evolved from the Dawkinsian definition and now primarily refers to user-generated multimodal online media forms, such as images, pictures, sounds, texts, videos, emojis, and GIFs, that are shared, (re)produced, remixed, and re-semiotized by internet users through social media platforms (Jenkins, Ford, and Green 2013; Vitiuk et al. 2020). With the centrality of human-involved and human-driven reproduction and dissemination of memetic media elements, the term "internet memes" that are based on the Dawkinsian ground of genetic replication have emerged in cyberspace with user participation, viral circulation, and formal variation as its distinctive features (Leiser 2019; Shifman 2014).

Meme-ing as an Analytical Unit of Phenomenology

In today's digital culture, meme-ing has become a new and specific expressive mode of communication (Shifman 2014) with the digitalization of memes allowing for information and ideology-sharing, as well as open and horizontal communication (Huntington 2016; Vitiuk et al. 2020). This phenomenon has arisen from people's primitive desires for communication, entertainment, and distraction from monotony and life problems, creating a new relational basis rooted in the "affectability" of meme-ing (Jenkins 2014, 448) for social symbolic production and exchange among digitalized individuals (Smith and Linker 2021).

As both an expressive mode and a phenomenon, meme-ing can illustrate a virtual reality that can be seen as a relational structure extending via the

circulation of internet memes across media and viewers (Jenkins 2014). Though the memetic forms, contents, stances, contexts, and the audience may differ in their actualizations, meme-ing as an expressive mode crosses them all, enabling the audience to see snapshots of life for life-likeness (Jenkins 2014). Such a mode contains a relational capacity to affect individuals and be affected, activated, and energized in encounters with others (Deleuze 1988; Jenkins 2014).

In the process of meme-ing, felt affections result from actualizations of the memetic mode, from individuals' embodied experiences of orienting according to this mode (Jenkins 2014). As an expressive mode of communication, meme-ing carries a holistic repertoire that is replete with embodied interactive experiences with which meme prosumers may orient themselves to their perceptions and cognitions of the lifeworld they are inhabiting. Thus, the orienting process of embodied experiences in meme-ing can be considered an analytical unit of phenomenology whose essence is to study lived experience in a *lifeworld* (Husserl 1970) lived by a person, and to describe the orientation of him/herself to lived experience (Van Manen 1990). As Stoller (1997) stresses how cinema screens provide the means for viewers to understand and perceive a lifeworld through a phenomenological reduction, Provencher (2014) asserts that similar phenomenological reductions are also necessary to understand meme-ing. As such, studying meme-ing as a phenomenon permits researchers a phenomenological lens with which to consider personal bodily experiences. This means that the "memer" and "memes" are not independently examined as they are methodically interconnected, but engaging through embodied manners within a lifeworld (Jenkins 2014).

Applicability of Autoethnography as a Phenomenological Tool

As a qualitative method that has been widely used for describing, recording, conceptualizing, and analyzing first-person experiences, autoethnography contains three inherent components. The "auto" stands for "self," the "ethno" culture, and the "graphy" signifies writing a representation or story. It encourages researchers to speak from the heart about existential crises and transformational experiences (Anderson 2006). Despite facing controversies about its objectivity and self-indulgence (Chang 2007), autoethnography still functions as a useful tool enabling researchers to probe into personal experiences on a meaningful, accessible, and evocative ground (Ellis, Adams, and Bochner 2011). Harding (2015) and Gorichanaz (2017) also stress that research communities usually operate from a particular standpoint or "bias" that is impossible to overcome, and it is deceptive to ignore such a standpoint

under the guise of disinterested neutrality and objectivity. Embracing this standpoint helps to reveal previously hidden phenomena and biases (Gorichanaz 2017). As assumptions of neutrality and objectivity have increasingly become unattainable requirements for, and unrealistic expectations of, conventional social scientific research, acknowledging researcher positionality is progressively encouraged in social sciences to challenge oppressive cultural beliefs, norms, and practices, producing new knowledge concerning their phenomenological lifeworld (everyday reality) (Adams et al. 2022; Berry 2022).

While scientific methods excel at precisely defining matters, most entities studied in human and social sciences possess an inherently vague and morphological essence, which Zahavi (2019) calls an "essential vagueness" (43). Thus, adopting naturalistic methods that aim for mathematical precision to study phenomena in the lived experience may lead to only approximative classifications and descriptions of these entities (Zahavi 2019). Heidegger (1993) argues that scientific rigor cannot be equated with mathematical precision and it is wrong to assume that domains without mathematical exactitude are less valuable or less real. Similarly, for Husserl (1969), it is dangerous to be dazzled solely by the "absolute norm" of being "true" and "real," which is typically constituted by the methodology and ideals of the exact sciences. Instead, we should be guided by that which is given to us in its purity in our experience, without the accidental properties of the given that are often extracted by a third-person scientific perspective (Zahavi 2019). This is because our experiential world has its own criteria of validity and truth, which do not require the approval of science, although scientific findings do not necessarily conflict with our everyday experiences (Moran 2000; Zahavi 2019). Furthermore, our experiential subjectivity and scientific objectivity may coexist because, within a phenomenological framework, the worlds of experience and science are the same world appearing in two different ways (Husserl 1982; Strasser 1963). After all, "any objectivity, explanation, understanding, and theoretical modelling presupposes the first-person perspective as its precondition" (Zahavi 2019, 53). Consequently, an applicable method in a phenomenological inquiry is to follow what happens to us, what we see with our own eyes, what we feel with our own bodies, what we experience at a pre-reflective experiential stage at the moment, and not to follow our prejudices and preconceptions (Husserl 1965).

Autoethnography is not inherently phenomenological, but its in-depth descriptive account can produce real-world knowledge that originates from first-person experience (Husserl 1970) and is experienced by the person at the center of the experience (Pitard 2019). It is self-focused, subjective-centered, and context-conscious (Brisini and Simmons 2022), and shares a relevant epistemological ground with phenomenology. This connection underscores

the idea that personal experience is viewed as something that happens to the individual, is consciously reacted to in the moment, and is subjectively interpreted (Pitard 2019).

Method and Data

Pitard's SVA as an Autoethnographic Method in Phenomenological Inquiries

Vignettes were first used by Alexander and Becker (1978) to elicit people's responses to a hypothetical scenario, which could be a photograph (Lanza and Carifio 1992) or a short story (Finch 1987). It is commonly used in social sciences to explore people's perceptions of a complicated situation and to navigate social problems and prejudicial decision-making (Cheah and Koay 2022; Reedy and King 2019).

Jayne Pitard (2016) expanded the concept of a vignette and developed a six-step autoethnographic framework called SVA to analyze vignettes that she experienced as an Australian teacher in Timor-Leste in 2013. The SVA enables researchers to uncover multiple layers of personal awareness through self-writing in the form of *layered accounts*.² For Pitard (2016), a vignette is created using a written *anecdote* "to tell something noteworthy or important about life" (Van Manen 2014, 250), giving voice to the unconscious, profound, and phatic sensations experienced by autoethnographers during their phenomenological reductions (Pitard 2019).

While the anecdote allows researchers to express the lived experience in immersivity with its trance-like state of writing (Pitard 2019), it is still too personal for readers to penetrate the pre-reflective substrates of our lived experience to discover the ontological core of our being (Van Manen 2014). Therefore, autoethnographers should reflect on and analyze their innermost stimulating moments, described as their vignettes in anecdotes, to connect the personal to the cultural (Pitard 2019). By doing so, autoethnographers can provoke understanding from readers with their innermost feelings, transporting them to the experienced moment of truth of the researcher with a logically presentable and extractive voice (Pitard 2019). In Pitard's example (2016), her SVA's six-step framework enables her to reflect on and analyze her innermost cross-cultural teaching experience as a vignette. The six steps include the following: (1) context, (2) anecdote, (3) emotional responses, (4) reflexivity, (5) strategies developed, and (6) conclusive comments on layers.

Context. Context is crucial to understanding processes, time-dependent changes, and emergent patterns (Dervin 2003). It plays a vital role in the negotiation of truth and the shaping of data (Pitard 2016). By considering the

context relevant to each vignette, readers can gain insight into the researcher's evolving perspective over time (Pitard 2016).

Anecdote. Narrative anecdotes allow researchers to revisit the pre-reflective experiential impact as a reminder of the conditions experienced before conscious reflection, restoring contact with the lived experience (Van Manen 2014). To gather narrative data and edit experiential accounts into exemplary anecdotes, Van Manen (2014) proposes a set of guidelines stressing that an anecdote should be short and simple, describe a single incident, begin close to the center of the experiential moment, include significant details and quotes about what has been said and done, end after the climax of the described incident, and finish with a punchy line (252).

Emotional response. As a subjective, involuntary, and unconscious experience, emotional response refers to an immediate physiological and emotional response experienced by the researcher as existential experiences unfold (Pitard 2016). This response helps the researcher recall noteworthy emotional details during shifts in their cultural understanding.

Reflexivity. Reflexivity is a continuous process of internal dialogue and critical self-evaluation regarding a researcher's positionality, which can impact the research process and its outcome (Berger 2015). In autoethnographic studies, reality may be in a constant state of flux as it is observed with this internal dialogue beginning when the researcher experiences something (Pitard 2016). The practice of reflexivity involves being attentive to this internal dialogue and learning to control it (Pitard 2016). According to Berger (2015), researchers can achieve this by focusing on self-knowledge and sensitivity, gaining a better understanding of their self-positionality in the process of knowledge creation, mindfully monitoring the impact of biases, beliefs, and personal experience, and maintaining a balance between the personal and the universal.

Strategies developed. Pitard (2016) used this specific layer account in the autoethnographic study of herself as a teacher in a cross-cultural teaching process in 2013. It was based on her reflexivity and recorded her change of approach when interacting with her students to better accommodate the cultural differences prevalent at the time.

Conclusive comments on layers. According to Pitard (2016), a holistic integration of different layer accounts provides a concise summary of the effects of

the studied experience and the development of the researchers' understanding of the experience they have lived.

In summary, while other autoethnographic methods have faced criticism for being excessively subjective, overly descriptive, and filled with esoteric jargon (Adams et al. 2022), the SVA maintains an academically presentable reflexive voice (Pitard 2019), rather than an introspective self-indulgence distancing readers from the researcher's experiential presentation and interaction (Chang 2007). Its hermeneutic kernel allows researchers to achieve a high level of self-awareness, externalize, and articulate their innermost experiences in qualitative research (Benjamin 2014).

My Own SVA-Based on Pitard's Perspective

As a phenomenological inquiry is an open-ended and demanding process that allows for further modifications upon new evidence (Zahavi 2019), Pitard's SVA cannot be viewed as a fixed framework, but rather as an experience-dependent instrument that enables different researchers to modify its layer accounts based on their own experiences, interests, and professional practices (Pitard 2019). Therefore, in this article, I propose my own SVA framework based on Pitard's perspective as a research method.

In my SVA, I have chosen to omit the layer account of "strategies developed" as I believe it is unnecessary for my focus on my sense-making journey of meme-ing. Instead, I have retained the other five in my SVA framework: context, anecdote, emotional response, reflexivity, and conclusive comments on layers.

Using WeChat and Jike as Data Sources

WeChat is considered one of China's most popular social apps. It has a limited global reach but enjoys high domestic popularity (Harwit 2016), boasting nearly 1.3 billion active users as of the first quarter of 2022 (Iqbal 2022). It is often referred to as a Chinese "Swiss Army Knife" social app (Clover 2016), as it combines features of WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, PayPal, and Apple Pay into one platform, offering instant text, voice, image, and video communication among users.

Jike is a niche interest-based Chinese online information-sharing community that supports both iOS and Android platforms (Liu 2020). It also offers social functionality, allowing users to follow information, events, and other users they like, and to post multimodal user-generated media content for public comment (Liu 2020).

As a solitary Chinese living in Finland during the COVID-19 pandemic, I mainly used these two apps to engage with my friends, relatives, and intimate partners in China, satisfying my social communication needs through memetic interaction.

Sampling Criteria for Anecdotal Moments in My Memetic Interaction Vignettes

I established a set of criteria for defining the anecdotal moments of my memetic interaction, and these criteria include the following:

- (1) They should be pre-reflexive experiential incidents.
- (2) They should involve the act of meme-ing with internet memes.
- (3) They should have significant concrete details.
- (4) They should provoke my immediate physiological, emotional, and/or bodily responses.³
- (5) They should have a mnemonic impact when recalled.

Method and Process of Data Collection

To capture the pre-reflective experience of meme-ing, I took screenshots of my memetic interactions on WeChat and Jike whenever they stirred up emotional or bodily responses. This data collection occurred between April 2021 and April 2022. These screenshots functioned as visual journal entries, providing the physical evidence that could help me recall critical experiences (Chang 2022; Pitard 2019), and capturing "snapshots" of the moments that impacted me the most (Muncey 2010).

To immerse myself in these experiences, I entered a "trance-like state" (Pitard 2019), allowing me to revisit the exact point of the experiential impact and better understand my reflexivity. To aid in this process, I wrote notes in Chinese on each visual journal entry. This created a repertoire of eight written vignettes as my autoethnographic data for my SVA.

Relational Ethics in Autoethnography

This autoethnographic study is focused on my personal experiences and sense-making journey of meme-ing, but these experiences did not happen "in a relational vacuum" (Chang 2022, 61). Given the interactive nature of meme-ing, addressing the relational ethics that arise from involving others is important. To this end, I followed the examples of Chang (2022) and Cutler (2023), by informing all implicated others of my research purpose, data

collection and analytical procedures, and data management plan. During my writing, I was mindful of anonymization to protect the privacy of those involved, preventing any potential impact of self-disclosure on their personal or professional lives. The use of screenshots involving others for analysis and presentation in this paper was given with prior informed consent from those involved.

Analytical Procedure

I conducted a two-phased analysis, as shown in Figure 1, of my vignettes on meme-ing. The first phase involved re-familiarizing myself with my self-indulgent descriptive notes on my vignettes and categorizing them into four scholarly presentable layer accounts: context, anecdote, emotional responses, and reflexivity for each vignette. This process helped me revisit the pre-reflective moment of each experience in its purity, a stage of *epoché* (Husserl 1970), by suspending my preconceived judgments, habits of thought, prejudices, and theoretical assumptions through bracketing or phenomenological reduction (Pitard 2019; Van Manen 2014). The goal was to return to the experience itself (Zahavi 2019) and perform a philosophical technique called *eidetic variation*⁴ (Husserl 1977a) using imaginative contemplation to vary the experiences and strip away their accidental features. Through this process, I identified an array of keywords that were highlighted in a bold italic style in the "Reflexivity" section that concluded the invariable properties of my first-person meme-ing experiences in each vignette.

In the second phase, I used a phenomenological lens to briefly review these keywords and the four preceding layer accounts in each vignette. The phenomenological lens allowed me to reflect on the keywords employing phenomenological theories and thoughts. It helped me to reveal the essential structure of meme-ing as a lived experience for myself and develop my own understanding of the phenomenology of meme-ing. I then documented my brief reviews in the fifth layer account called "conclusive comments on layers" in each vignette and further elaborated them as a whole with phenomenological contemplations substantiated by theoretical references as my findings in the "Findings and discussions" section.

Findings and Discussions

Meme-ing reveals itself as a lived experience in terms of an internet-mediated manner of expressive engagement that can actualize an embodied act of self-presenting face-work and a mutually engaged and negotiated relational coupling in sharing and exchanging social, cultural, political, and emotional

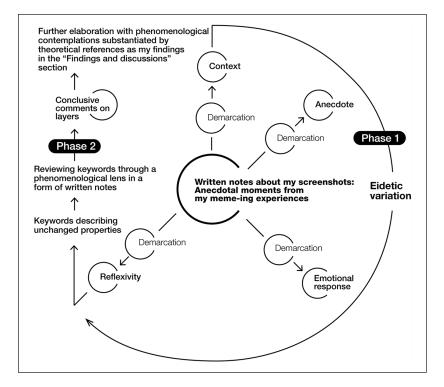


Figure 1. A two-phased procedure.

meanings between self-aware subjects via producing, disseminating, receiving, and reacting to internet memes within a latent intersubjective and intercorporeal reciprocity.

Meme-ing as an Embodied Act of Self-Presenting Face-Work and a Mutually Engaged and Negotiated Relational Coupling

As popular cultural artifacts, internet memes aim not to trigger human aesthetic appreciation but rather to mimic *life* in an unconventional way (Kariko and Anasih 2019). Life in the digital realm can take on diverse forms, as individuals may project identities and characteristics distinct from their real-world personas. However, this does not imply that their *digital self-construction* lacks authenticity (Deumert 2014). Individuals possess intricate and varied personalities. Producing and consuming internet memes allow them to express

their uniqueness and connectivity by personifying the contents, forms, and stances of internet memes as embodied memetic lexicons of the digital self (Kariko and Anasih 2019). Figures 2 and 3 demonstrate my meme-ing experience and its vignette as examples of an embodied self-presentation.

Internet memes serve as a shared collective language, but meme-ing also represents a single individual's embodied expression (Petrova 2021). Through meme-ing, one can convey ideas, personal experiences, and even worldviews, allowing others to glimpse one's individuality beyond mere appearance (Cavarero 2005). In Figures 2 and 3, readers can see that I created a meme featuring myself with my ideological thoughts that are transformed into the form of multimodal *linguistic clownery* (Bakhtin 1984). By doing so, I creatively utilized a variety of modes (image, text, color, font) beyond linguistic texts to construct a memetic self-presentation used for meme-ing at will. Essentially, I aimed to demonstrate to my Jike followers that I am a witty, stylish, ideologically aware, and culturally enriched artist. In this context, the centrality of my embodied presentation focused on the concept of my face. This presentation process can be conceptualized as akin to the facework defined by Goffman (1967). The term "face" encompasses not just its literal interpretation but also represents a constructed image of oneself defined by socially sanctioned qualities (Dolezal 2017). More precisely, my "face" denotes the self-image I purposefully project when engaging with fellow individuals (Dolezal 2017).

In Figure 2, the linguistic responses of my Jike followers provide validation for this meme-ing experience as an embodied self-presentation. Notably, their laughter and attention directed toward the "Trollface" smile are key indicators of this self-presenting context. The preexisting visual and cultural signs (the Trollface, the Wehrmacht uniform, the "Schaftstiefelgrotesk" typeface, and the altered title of *Mein Kampf*) and forms of speech (German political slogans in referential, emotive, and conative tones) were playfully remixed, creating new self-voices and meanings to reflect a carnivalesque mood (Deumert 2014). Moreover, the carnivalesque mood may reflect a taste of the grotesque realism (Deumert 2014, 37) which is considered the language of the marketplace (Bakhtin 1984, 154), challenging the prevailing social norm in a specific cultural realm where this topic may be taboo (Deumert 2014). In this grotesque realism, the multimodal attribute of meme-ing enables the grotesque to move beyond the market language to a visual depiction of my creatively modified and presented grotesque body (Bakhtin 1984, 317). The memetic image in Figure 2 highlights the embodied carnality of the grotesque body via its visible body gestures (smiling, standing, and arm-raising) and sexuality (male). With these two grounds, my meme-ing experience can reveal itself as an embodied act of self-presenting face-work.

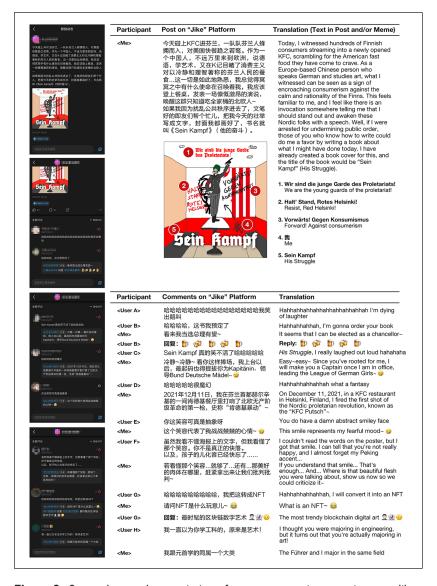


Figure 2. Screenshots and transcription of my meme creation experience on Jike.

The purpose of my embodied face-work on Jike aimed to establish an ideal synchrony between what I passively "gave off" and what I actively intended to "give" to strangers via the mimeticized body imagery in online interactions. Within this dynamic, a latent intersubjective connection may



Vignette: Sein Kampf- Wake up Finns, don't give in to American consumerism!

Context

On the afternoon of December 11, 2021, I visited a shopping mall in Espoo, Finland. As I approached the entrance, I noticed an unusually long queue of people waiting to get in. This was a relatively rare sight in Finland in general. After squeezing through the crowd, I discovered that a KFC restaurant had just opened in the mall. This was this news for the locate.

the mall. This was big news for the locals. Since the COVID-19 outbreak in early 2020, I had been stuck in Finland due to the Chinese pandemic quarantine policy that blocked my return to China. Even in Finland, I had grown accustomed to the unexpected quarantine and the masked crowds in the streets and lanes. Other than these, there had been no surprises in my sollarly life here. However, the sight I witnessed earlier that day at the mall truly surprised me. I was shocked by the eagerness of Finns to rush to the KFC, an American fast food brand that is already ubiquitous in China fast food brand that is already ubiquitous in China fast food brand that is already ubiquitous in China fast food brand that is already ubiquitous in China fast food brand that is already ubiquitous in China fast food brand that is already

ublquitous in China. In my impression, Finnish people rarely follow trends and tend to keep a low profile. Therefore, the unusual Finnish fervor for KFC inspired me to be creative. I was eager to share my experience and feelings about this fervor and its reflection of American consumerism with my followers on my favorite Chinese social media obattom." "Sike".

Anecdote

Despite feeling a bit disoriented, I found myself becoming increasingly intriqued by this scane. As I watched the crowd. I began to notice patterns and behaviors that piqued my interest. I saw people of all ages and backgrounds waiting in line, and I wondered what drew them to this particular restaurant. As I stood there, taking it all in, this experience started to inspire many cinematic scenes filled with provocative and emotionally charged moments that that thir me like a bot fighting - Hiller's speech scenes in "The Rise of Evil". Ernst Thailmann's overwhelming street manch scene (Solidarthy Song) in "Frast Thairmann's Green Schlering Solidarthy Song) in "Frast Thairmann-Führer senior Klasse" (Ernst Thailmann-Leader of His Class), Erich Honecker's speech scene in the former "Palast der Republik" in Berlin with cheers and flowers, and some Chinese films osenes featuring bravery communist revolutionists when confronting nationalists and fassist revolutionists when confronting nationalists and fassist revolutionists when confronting nationalists and fassist revolutionists when confronting nationalists of some starting bravery communist in the melody of "Die Internationale erkamptif das Menschernecht". Suddenly the melody of "Die Internationale erkamptif das Menschernecht". Suddenly the melody of "Die Internationale erkamptif das Menschernecht "Suddenly the melody of "Die Internationale erkamptif das Menschernecht "Suddenly the melody of "Die Internationale erkamptif das Menschernecht us like those bravery Chineses ervolutionists! I livas a political romanticist bearing antithetical ideologies (I found it very artactive)! I was a foal point with charismatic sellence in the crowd at that moment! I felt like I had the power to influence the entities of the service of the provent of the crowd at that moment! I felt like I had the power to influence the entities of the service and the provent of the crowd at that moment! I felt like I had the power to influence the entitle of the service and the provent of the crow

and charismal I felt a strong urge to capture the feeling of this moment and convey it in a way that would resonate with people. If first wanted to convey it with a rational voice based on convincing academic arguments saying why consumerism is bad, but I felt difficult to form any logical and rational argument due to the bursting excitement of immediate expressivity that eliminated my patience to form long and redundant logical arguments. In this moment, I suddenly realized the limitation of my language and the ubiquity of the power of consumerism. A complex mixture of excitement, powerlessness, and a complex mixture of excitement, powerlessness, and the work of the control of the contr

I rushed to my home while humming the old DDR songs, including "Jugend Erwach" (Youth Awake), "Vorwarts, du junge Garde des Proletantast" (Forward, You Yong Gaurde to Proletantast), and "Half" Stand, Rotes Madrid" (Reisst, Red Madrid), As I sat in front of my computer screen, I entered a state of extending the state of the communist revolutionsts keep poping in my mind. I pictured them as a whole, typing the lyrics of the old DDR songs as the political slogans in my meme. As I continued to work on the meme, I began to feel a sense of idealism creeping in. I wanted to use this creation to build and present my social media persona: a humcrous, creative, and thoughtful digital persona that showcased my ideal self-identity with an ironic twist. I then delibitartly transplanted my face with the infamous "troilface" to create a sense of black humor. After 40 minutes of work, In the "post" button and watched my creation go ut into the cyber world of "Jilke".

Emotional Response

As I watched my followers on Jike begin to respond to my post one by one. I felt a sense of joy at the success of the image I deliberately presented. This sense of joy reached its climax when I saw that people started laughing at my replies about my intentional fabrication of the book title "Sein Kampf". Their opinions of "my" strange smile with the "tollface", and their willingness to convert my meme into an NFT artwork brought me a sense of accomplishment in showcasing myself in the virtual digital world.

Was that vanity or narcissism? I hated to admit it, but I did find a sense of anticipation in each of the responses since they objectively endorsed the image I wanted to present to my imagined audience on Jiker serious core wrapped in popular memetic language, a multi-layered intellectual personality, and a humorous and funny artist.

Reflexivity

As a longtime internet user and media researcher, I know that the internet provides a rather "playful space. In this space, meme-ing with internet allows people to become almost any being they want to be. I keep recalling what I have been doing with internet memes: I've used them to communicate. disseminate opinions and ideas, extend my bodily expressivity, and demonstrate nonsensical emotional states. All uses of meme-ing contain one substantial core for myself - to present. The presenting objects may vary, as they are accidental and changing properties, but the essence of the core, namely ar embodied presenting act, remains unchanged. In this case, my presenting act on Jike with a meme may be seen as a playful self-presentation or identity construction through which I can become a desired self, an ideal and self-expected "self" with the imagination of how I want my imagined audience to perceive me

Conclusive Comments on Layers

I created a desired version of myself through meme-ing and hoped to build joyful social relations in cyberspace with numerous possibilities to encounter the imagined others. I would asy that meme-ing on Jike was a conscious strategy to manage how the self appears to others in terms of appearance and comportment. In this "desired self", I embodied a digital self as a presented conscious subject. This subject has a visibility of the body (at rollface male in a German visibility of the body (at rollface male in a German with the provided of the provided of the provided and provided of the provided of t

Figure 3. The vignette of my meme creation experience on like.

emerge, wherein my feeling could be empathetically felt and my seeing could be perceptively seen.

However, the aforementioned process underwent a reversal and intensification when I received and reacted to internet memes from unfamiliar individuals. In this context, I assumed a passive role as a perceiver, encountering a memetic interaction. Simultaneously, I adopted a reflexive position as a respondent, utilizing my bodily actions informed by my historical, social-cultural, and political underpinnings to assert my immediate presence and engage with these unknown others.

Figure 4 illustrates a memetic interaction, wherein I established a "point of contact" by presenting snapshots of my immediate life moments through the embodied presentation. This presentation, in turn, "inspired" and "elicited" a bodily response from User A, who actively engaged in meme-ing a vodkathemed meme as a direct response to my original post, demonstrating User A's recognition and empathetic connection to my vodka picture. Moreover, it reflects the "signifyingness of the irreducible otherness of others" (Diprose 2017, 28). This *otherness* derives from the fact that we are not entirely transparent to ourselves and we are often not in conscious control of much of what our body communicates (Dolezal 2017). In this case, when User A's bodily presence to me was incarnated as a vodka meme and an array of visual-electronically displayed texts on an online social platform, there has always been certain aspect of his embodied memetic presence that may escape his thematic control due to his inherent inner idiosyncrasies and the "ambiguity of the body" (Diprose 2017, 27) with the unknowability and unique value arising from his sharing of cultural and emotional meanings. The unknowability and unique value then provoked my desire to keep engaging with User A. Yet, the shared meanings derived from User A's presence extended beyond the explicit content of his meme and texts, encompassing likewise my own historical experiences and socio-cultural context.

In Figure 5, my anecdote illustrates how my historical and socio-cultural experiences shaped my perception and reaction to the vodka meme and User A. Receiving User A's vodka meme immediately triggered various associations related to User A's memetic presence, including body language, ideology, personality, and lifestyle. What started as a mere appreciation for vodka evolved into an endorsement of Soviet socialism, transforming User A's memetic presence from an anonymous internet user into a warm, generous, and sincere "comrade" driven by universal love. These qualities were not inherent in the vodka meme or User A, nor were they merely products of my imagination imposed on the world without origins. Instead, they were ideas brought to life from existing socio-political imaginary worlds (Merleau-Ponty 1968), shaping my corporeal—spatial—temporal expression of meaning through socio-political values and ideas that we collectively signify and experience (Diprose 2017).

Likewise, User A's perception of my *otherness* as a stranger was revealed through my linguistic and memetic response to his vodka meme and other



Figure 4. Screenshots and transcription of my meme consumption experience on like.







Vignette: A vodka-themed self-presentation and meaning-sharing

Context

On March 19, 2022, it was just a typical Saturday in Finland. After many days of winter gloom, signs of spring Finland. After many days of winter gloom, signs of spring Finland, signs of the spring spring the spring spr of touch with social life in China. In addition, Finland has a small population, and locals are not quite talkative, and the Chinese frencts around me have also gradually returned become even stronger. That's why! I needed the healing power of sunshine. While having breakfast, I took the opportunity to call a friend in Shanghai, but was surprised to hear that Shanghai has also been hit hard recently due imported COVID-19 cases. The number of local COVID-19 imported COVID-16 cases. The number of local COVID-16 cases has been rapidly increasing, and although the city has not yet been locked down like Wuhan, people in Shanghai are still anxous. Moreove, 698 of International inbound flights to Shanghai have been cancelled, making in thou may be supported to the control of the

chopped ingredients before cooking also looked lively and beautiful.

After Upon Learning paragrand the ingradients, after upon Learning paragrand the ingradients, after upon Learning Learning

Perhaps everyone's expectations and perceptions of life were similar, and that was why I received many "likes" regarding this post, which I condidered a recognition and praise for my way of life.

The period of the interfect of the interfect, eliding me that I received a text comment with a meme. It just depicted the effect of vodka on me perfectly. It was also my state at the time - I was initially feeling down due to the news about the domestic epidemic, but after drinking a few shots of vodka and enjoying the delicious braised beef hooves, I graduot of vodka and enjoying the delicious braised beef hooves, I graduot be the period of the hope and sunshine.
As I looked at those men and women depicted in this GIF

hope and surshine.

As I looked at locations are men and women depicted in the GIF—

As I looked at locations merching in the

1977 Moscow Fled Squire parade—they also walked with

1977 Moscow Fled Squire parade—they also walked with

their heads held high and their chests putfled out, just like

the men and women in the mene who started off dejected

but became confident and self-assived under the influence

of vocka. I imagined that those soldiers in Moscow were

submachine guins. Their faces were flushed, their influence

of vocka as the submachine guins. Their faces were flushed, their breath

was heavy with alcohol, and they exuded a unique, rough

socialist spirit that was distinctly Russian. For me, the

stranger's comment deepened my already overwhelming

manipanton. I felt a rather strong locatigic feeling when I saw

text that spelled out the Russian pronunciation of "vocka"

and the meme, an atmosphere of Soviet socialism and a

series of cultural and visual symbols representing the height

of Soviet power in the 1970's began polying like a movied

my mind. I felt as of the work of the control of the Morrians. I could hear the

bowling winds of the hearth winter in Stallingrad and smell the

scent of the Ukrainian black soil and wheat straws. I felt like

uses in the classroom of the Peoplese "Friendship bulversity

of Russia, surrounded by students with hopeful smiles and

the sound of 'Davarish' calls. Most importantly, I saw my dream girl, the blonde-haired Natascha, who was not only my comrade but also my beloved!
I couldn't help but take another sip of alcohol, and I could fell my cheeks burning hot, with the alternating of the could fell my cheeks burning hot, with the alternating in my mind. My tongue was overflowing with a sweet, mally favor, and I exhaled a strong, pungent heat. I felt like this stranger on the internet was one of my few kindred spirits, so I couldn't help but address him with the ideologically charged term 'comrade,' while also boasting about my alcohol tolerance. In my eyes, he have considered to the control of the

was like an old friend I had known for years, sharing his current life situation and his preference for drinking. There was no sense of being strangers who had just unapologatic love for volka, he was right about one thing, drinking should be done with high-strength alcohol like vodka. It should be just like a simple Ukraina farmer, on need for too much fuss, just let yourself same, no need for too much fuss, just let yourself same, no need for too much fuss, just let yourself same, no need for too much fuss, just let yourself service, no need for too much fuss, just let yourself service, no need for too much fuss, just let yourself service, no need for too much fuss, just let yourself service, no need for too much fuss, just let yourself service, no need for too much fuss, just let yourself service, no need for too much fuss, just let you will be service, in the service of the service, in the service of the service of the service of the service, in the service of th memes to express what I felt. Helt that our conversation was like an interpersonal exchange between socialist comrades, without defenses or concealment, and converse of the property of the p

Emotional Response

I never expected to receive a meme about yodka in I never expected to receive a meme about vocka in the comments section of my post on like, and it was surprising and joyful, even a little bit touching. The intention of sharing my life photos on like was to showcase the parts of my life that I wanted to share with strangers, to let them know that I am happy, carefree, and free-spirited, and that I know how to please myself.

This was originally a self-presenting behavior to rescue myself from a low mood by sharing snapshots of my life in pictures. Receiving more than 50 likes from strangers already made me feel satisfied, but the chance reception of the voldar meme has transformed my mixed emotions of "vanity," self-entertainment," and francissismi lino of "vanity," self-entertainment, and francissismi lino of the stranger's self-attitude and a sharing of cultural and emotional meanings. This sharing contained a repetitive and cyclical meaning between two conscious subjects - we repeatedly displayed our "intentionality" towards an object (volda, and its aw this repetition of meaning reflected in others in a latent intersubjective contact with embedded social and historical experience influencing my self-presentation and response to the presentation of others. influencing my self-pre-presentation of others

Conclusive Comments on Layers

Through the use of memes, a combination of text and Through the use of memes, a combination of text and imagery in self-expression, I shared my experiential understanding of the world with others and so did tothers to me. When we find a "receptiveness" in the experiential meaning shared with each other, we may experience a sense of belonging in the world around us. This sense of belonging exists as an "atmosphere world in which we live, as we navigate our lives within our bodies and it influences our perception of the world in which we live, as we navigate our lives within the comtext of the latent intersubjectivity of meaning.

Figure 5. The vignette of my meme consumption experience on Jike.

comments. This manifestation prompted User A's immediate embodiment of meaning, influenced by his historical and socio-cultural trajectories, as he continued to interact with me through his responsive action. Consequently, we engaged in a reciprocal relational coupling, characterized by a negotiated receptiveness to circulating meanings embodied in others through the memetic presence and an outward orientation where one's history did not dictate the world but shaped how one responded to and influenced others (Diprose 2017).

Meme-ing as Latent Intersubjective and Intercorporeal Reciprocity

Figures 6 and 7 illustrate how a meaning-loaded meme-ing experience can establish an intersubjective relationship in an accidental context. For Dolezal (2017), intersubjectivity is a relational medium involving communication and the relation between self-aware subjects. In this case, before I memed, I, as an individual subject, recognized the existence of another (Miss A); thus, I had lived in a *prior intersubjectivity* (Taipale 2014, 74). The interactive structure of my meme-ing experience also implies the existence of others in this world, suggesting that each perceptual experience connects to potential anonymous co-perceivers (Ratcliffe 2007).

The meme-ing experience demonstrated in Figure 6 echoes the twofold nature of encountering others. First, I encounter others as animate organisms, as psychophysical objects in the world (Husserl 1977b). Meanwhile, I acknowledge and experience them as subjects for this world (Husserl 1977b). Similarly, others also experience me as a subject in the same world I experience (Dolezal 2017). Thus, the *lifeworld* locates itself in the way members of social groups (cultures and/or linguistic communities) structure the world into objects (Beyer 2022).

According to Beyer (2022), intersubjectivity occurs through empathetic acts; thus, intersubjective experience is an empathetic experience. In other words, it occurs when we consciously attribute intentional actions to other subjects and place ourselves in their shoes. For example, Figure 6 shows that Miss A "placed herself in my shoes" by sending me a sexy meme for sexual seduction, along with the statement "You will love this." In response, I acknowledged her empathetic ascription by replying "You do know how to find memes." At that moment, she saw me as a partner with sexual needs and social willingness, recognizing me as a conscious subject and perceiving me as appropriate for her sexual arousal as well as her experience of sensual pleasure and emotional intimacy.

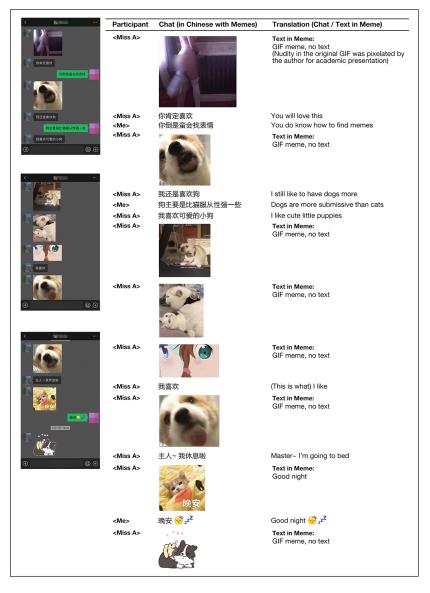


Figure 6. Screenshots and transcription of my meme-ing experience with Miss A on WeChat.



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Vignette: I perceive memes as if I experience your body.

Context

On February 15, 2022, the Chinese Lantern Festival took place, marking the second Chinese Lunar New Year I spent alone in Finland since the COVID-19 outbreak. Although the Chinese New Year holiday typically lasts for two weeks, from February 1 to February 15, the lack of adherence to the Chinese lunar calendar in Finland meant that the holiday felt particularly lonely and boring for me, as I was plagued by solitude and homesickness. These feelings were compounded by the eight-month-long period of dark, sunless winter days in Finland, which only served to intensify my yearning for friendships, family, and love

My loneliness not only stirred up a desire for spiritual connections and companionship with distant friends and family members, but also for physical intimacy with a partner. This need for physical intimacy is common among social animals like humans, and as a solitary male living overseas, it has been particularly acute for me. After two days of suffering, I felt compelled to reach out to Miss A, my sexual partner in China, via WeChat. She and I have been in a sadomasochistic relationship for some time.

Anecdote

Our online interaction started smoothly as if we both knew exactly what we wanted to say to each other. We used various means to express our lovelormess and affection to each other, and behind every seemingly inconsequential filiratious word and sexy voice, there lay a hidden sensual purpose with social and sexual urges. We both knew what we were longing for, and this seemingly uneventful padding of words was building up the energy for sexual arousal in both of us. I could feel that my blood start to boil, and my body started to heat up. I was like a diesel engine waiting for the moment of ignition, always keeping a low rumble before powering up, ready to roar.

Suddenly, Miss A sent a GIF meme showing a woman wearing an animal tail-like butt plug and wriggling her hips. "You will love this." she said. My heart suddenly started pounding rapidly, and there was a hot current rushing to my lower abdomen. I felt like there was a bone stuck in my throat, forcing me to keeps swallowing my saliva, even my breath came in snuffles. But I had to play it cool as a "dominant master" should. I forced myself to give a calm but affirmative response to her meme.

Then I suddenly started to face a bombardment of memes from her: a puppy clinging to a kitty, a puppy licking, a girl licking a boy's face with her tongue, and a kitty covered with a quilt, etc. While I was enjoying the connotative messages signified by these memes, she suddenly stopped and said to me: "Master, I'm going to bed."

I interpreted this truncated teasing with memes as naughty submissive signs and sexual messages in this sadomasochistic relationship. I felt like as the dominant "master" in her eyes, and I looked at her meme as if I was looking at

her body and experiencing her psychological postures: a submissive sexual partner, a submissive "objectified pet", and an intimate relational couplet that I could totally control.

If internet memes may be seen as digital artifacts, then in this memetic interaction, I perceived them not just as digital artifacts, but also as an outreach of physical expressivity, or rather, a perceivable extention of the other person's body.

Emotional Response

I must admit that I enjoyed the tacit and sensual eroticism that was remote to me, as it mobilized my bodily sensations in my solitary life. The memetic images of the woman with a butt plug and the submissive dog struck me so deeply that I felt as though I were seeing the fleshly given body of my sexual partner. This memetic interaction between Miss A and me also spurred my body into action, and I found myself masturbating while looking at the memes (I personally do not consider this long-distance relationship a healthy relationship, and masturbation might also induce potential health risks. Therefore, I do not recommend readers to attempt this kind of relational pattern). Miss A later told me that she did the same because my calm and confident linquistic reply with a little "master-like" condescending twist turned her on. I then felt as though we were having sex with each other at that moment

Reflexivity

Miss A and I engaged in an empathic practice through meme-ing, which allowed us to "put ourselves in each other's shoes". We recognized each other's existence and assumed the "use-value" as agents of sexual arousal. We fantasized our sensations of a bodily touch through memetic language, and self-pleasure, specifically masturbation.

This remote and later confirmed sexual act enlivened our bodies because it revealed, through language, and memetic simulacra of other human and animal bodies in digitalization, the potential corporality of each other's flesh to ourselves. This process forstered an fantasized intercorporal reciprocity, which reinforced our intersubjective relationship with intercorporality intersubjective relationship with intercorporality.

This memetic communication between Miss A and me was more than an intersubjective encounter of the other; it was an embodied intercorporeal phenomenon that enriched potential intercorporeal experiences in our daily life.

Conclusive Comments on Layers

During this process of meme-ing, I repeatedly experienced Miss A as an animate organism with subjectivity, and she experienced me in the same way. As embodied human subjects cooperated and intertwined in a manner of fantasized intercorporaeilty within a sadomasochistic relationship.

In such a relationship, I experienced fantasized, but potentially existing intercorporeal emotions such as lustfulness, sexual attraction, submissiveness, domination, and self-satisfaction, which related our bodies to one another.

Figure 7. The vignette of my meme-ing experience with Miss A on WeChat.

My response in Figure 6 and my masturbatory act, mentioned in Figure 7, indicate that I have also apprehended her in a similar way. My masturbatory act can illuminate an intersubjective use-value as it was an immediate bodily response to Miss A's bodily act, driven by an *empathic attunement* (Husserl 1977b). This attunement causes a *phenomenal pairing* (Dolezal 2017), wherein the sense of one body is intrinsically bound to the sense of another person's body as the same (Ratcliffe 2007). Within this memetic interaction, we were in a lifeworld where we shared the same intersubjective context and language, and meme-ing as linguistic conduct was intersubjectively effective for us (Etelämäki 2016).

The intersubjective aspect of language becomes evident in our interpretation of meme meanings, which hinges on a shared cultural backdrop (Kariko and Anasih 2019). In this cultural context, the memetic lexicon that pertains to our first-person experiences evolves through our reciprocal engagement in a collective socio-historical tradition. Furthermore, our behavior as subjects (I) can be influenced by the reciprocal participation of others (Miss A), who share the same meaning as ourselves (Schütz 1953).

In Moran's (2017) account, the *body* is a convergence site for our sensorial channels, wherein the senses are tuned and transformed by the body's diverse corporeal movements, gestures, and overall integrity. Different senses may overlap, and Merleau-Ponty (1964) used this property of overlapping to define *flesh*. He speaks of the *flesh of the world* (Merleau-Ponty 1964) and the *flesh of things* (Merleau-Ponty 1968) to demonstrate the reciprocity and communality between the lived body and the multisensorial world, to whose properties our senses are finely tuned (Moran 2017). The flesh of the world embodied in sensuousness mirrors our embodied flesh, suggesting that the availability of the world to perception and human perceptual systems is correlated with human subjects, who are part of this world and are also perceived (Moran 2017). My meme-ing experience depicted in Figures 6 and 7 likewise shows such intercorporeal reciprocity constructed in the form of sadomas-ochism in this multisensorial world.

The *body* presented in this meme-ing experience possesses a twofold nature. For one, my romantic partner Miss A on WeChat has an undeniable physical presence. I know her and I am aware of her existence in reality, and her memetic presence also implies an actual location, gravity, and embeddedness (Moran 2017) of her lived body in my perceptual domain, which likewise reveals my lived body. Moreover, during our interaction, she used a meme featuring sexually oriented nudity and a series of animal and cartoon memes as an extended form of bodily expressivity, an avatar to present her own lived body. This *lived body* presents itself in a peculiar way, as an imagination, a fantasy, an erotic reverie, a "calling to mind"

referring to "all appresentations which are not direct perception of something bodily given in the flesh" (Moran 2017, 285), and a form of presence in the absence (Bachelard 1971).

In Figure 7, I used the term "memetic simulacra" to refer to all the bodies presented (human and animal) in this meme-ing experience because of their absence in the flesh. However, these simulacra did activate, as defined by Moran (2017), my subjective exploration regarding the lived body of Miss A through mindful focusing, concentrating, and imagining of bodily action. Such a subjective exploration refers to an intercorporeal phenomenon wherein a lived body interacts through meme-ing with another lived body in the overall context of intersubjectivity (Moran 2017). Furthermore, the subjective exploration of the memetic simulacra caused, as I wrote in my vignette, a behavior of phone sex masturbation in which I was the dominant and Miss A was my submissive controlled object. This embodiment of a sexual experience as intercorporeality suggests that such an embodied act is not a private affair, but "is always already mediated by our continual interaction with other human and nonhuman bodies" (Moran 2017, 286). As Sartre (1995) emphasizes, the caress brings alive the other's lived body for me and for the others, and in my case, Miss A's body came to appear and was experienced by my body as a lived flesh, and vice versa.

Conclusion

Using autoethnography to interpret meme-ing as a first-person lived experience through a phenomenological lens, this article not only illuminates the applicability of a specific autoethnographic method as a phenomenological tool in externalizing a subjective meme-ing experience in an academically presentable way but also reveals the existential significance of meme-ing as a considerable part of the structure of human sociality. This involvement in meme-ing includes embodied self-presenting face-work, mutually engaged and negotiated relational coupling, latent intersubjectivity, and intercorporeality in a solitary and confined environment under the overall context of a controlled society.

The SVA coupled with the Husserlian eidetic variation has enabled me to externalize my intentional act and suspend preconceived judgments and prejudices. It involves stripping away the accidental properties of meme-ing from its discursive, communicative, cultural, political, and semiotic positionalities whenever the meme-ing experience happens to me, thereby experiencing what is given to me in its purity and revealing its unchanged properties in my first-person experience.

The property of meme-ing as an embodied self-presenting face-work and mutually engaged relational coupling illuminates the agential context of the lifeworld where consciousness and self-other relations are possible. The property of meme-ing as a latent intersubjective and intercorporeal reciprocity depicts a complex layer of embodied responsivity, expressivity, and communication supporting our intentional relations to others through intersubjectivity and sociality. Both properties involve communication and relations between self-aware subjects. In this way, even when people, such as myself, have located themselves in social distancing overseas, in which other animated organisms in their cultural field (in my case, China) have become homogenized and remote biological entities with whom they may not initiate actual physical contact, they may still use meme-ing as a form of the shared vocabulary of our body idioms (Dolezal 2020) to establish possible intercorporeal communication on a potential intersubjective basis. Thus, the presentational, relational, intersubjective, and intercorporeal properties of meme-ing may enact empathic reciprocity enabling the mutual transfer of feeling, emotion, and even kinship between self-aware subjects with agency stemming from the needs of sociality. In this context, the phenomenology of meme-ing involves encountering and interacting with other intercorporeal beings through internet memes, creating a reciprocal relational assemblage that reveals each other as lived bodies in an intersubjective world.

However, as an autoethnographic inquiry in phenomenology with few cases, using the structured vignette analysis with the Husserlian eidetic variation is context-dependent. This article does not claim an infallible source of insight about meme-ing in general nor does it seek to reach a statistical generalization, which has long been mistaken as an important objective of qualitative inquiries in a positivist paradigm (Gorichanaz 2017). The Husserlian eidetic variation is a demanding and open-ended process, and the insights streaming from it always possess a certain provisionality and presumptiveness, remaining open for further modification based on new contexts and evidence (Zahavi 2019). Single-case research seeks to challenge the positivist-rooted generalization of a singularity of truth by striving for an analytical generalization (Yin 2014), and an epistemological transferability to other specific cases and contexts on a case-by-case basis (Maxwell 2005). Thus, according to Gorichanaz (2017), it provides an accessible manner to study new contexts, as well as a point of entry to document a particular context and epistemological idiosyncrasies that may not have emerged in group studies.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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Statement of Data Transparency

Other than the data presented in the main text as examples with the informed consent from certain involved human participants of this paper, other data, not granted the right to be publicly shared by the remaining human participants, have been stored on an online archive. Access to these data is only meant for editors and reviewers. They can be found at: https://chocolate-frown-ala.notion.site/Vignettes-Archive_-799adaf 625be43a7961f657832ef91f8.

Informed Consent

All examples of screenshots involving other human participants used for analysis and presentation in this paper have been given by the involved others with their prior informed consent.

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Notes

- Other than the data presented in this paper as examples with informed consent from involved human participants, other data, not granted the right to be publicly shared, have been stored on an online archive. The access is only meant for reviewers.
- 2. According to Ronai (1995), a layered account is a postmodern ethnographic reporting technique offering an impressionistic sketch with which to hand layers of experience to readers to enable them to fill in the spaces and construct an interpretation of the writer's narrative (396).
- 3. Before the implementation of social distancing measures, engaging in internet-mediated meme-ing was an ordinary experience I "lived" in a mode of "taken-for grantedness" (Van Manen 2014, 31). I did not give it much reflection. However, within the broader context of solitude in a socially distant environment, memeing ceased to be ordinary for me. It took on an elusive, almost illusory quality, accompanied by emotional and bodily effects. These effects made me aware of thoughts, feelings, or emotions that had always been there but were previously ignored. This research context transformed meme-ing from once a mundane experience into something of meaningful significance. In this way, the emotional and physical aspects served as a phenomenological "accelerant," allowing me to recognize, as Van Manen (2014) describes, "the phenomenal phenomenality of a phenomenon" (31) within a specific context.
- The Husserlian eidetic variation involves starting with what is given to us and using our imagination to alter it through a play of fantasy. It is to obtain eidetic

knowledge in the form of *eidos*, the "idea in the Platonic sense" (Husserl 1977a, 54). By repeatedly imagining variations of what is given, we move from one variation to another. This continuous advancing of new multiplicities of variation is characterized by its optional nature, and within the form of *optionalness*, the same eidos must result "again and again" in the same universal essence "tone" being universally adopted (Husserl 1977a, 55). The optionalness of the same eidos is the accidental property of what is given, and the universal "eidos" is the invariant structure forming the essence of what is given (Zahavi 2019, 45).

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