**Participant Observation of a Chinese Wedding**

Juan Rodriguez

NJCU

Assessment and Evaluation

Dr. Carnahan

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Chinese traditional weddings are a rare spectacle that few people can experience. However, I had an opportunity of being invited to the reception of a traditional Chinese wedding where the couple committed to their bond by stating their wedding vows. About 70 to 80 guests graced the function. Even though there were about twenty tables in the dining hall, all guests at the ceremony had a chance to eat and interact with others in an open space. I took this opportunity to conduct my observations and analyze the meanings of their tradition and the reasons for their cultural practices.

One of the most striking observations I made was the colorful traditional attire people wore. Apart from the bride, groom, and their families, all the guests wore a blend of brightly mixed colors, matched with stylish hats for women and simple traditional gowns for men. For example, the groom wore a simple black silk coat with a dragon robe and a conventional cap, while the groom's-men wore tuxedo suits with white bow ties and tails. On the other hand, the bride wore a deep red dress and was accompanied by the bride's-maids who wore traditional golden dresses with tints of red and yellow. Moreover, the groom's family sat on one side, with the bride's family sitting opposite. However, they interacted after the couple finished stating their vows.

The event's setting was also as colorful as individuals' attire. The wedding hall and the dining room were full of decorations, classic Chinese portraits, and seething pictures, accompanied by low tunes of Chinese cultural music and wedding sounds. Nevertheless, the sounds of people chatting and moving around could be heard in traditional Chinese songs, playing a pivotal role in brightening the surrounding environment. Everything was decorated using conventional Chinese styles, from the tables and seats to the walls and ceilings. Even though everyone celebrated joyously, they interacted respectfully as individuals occasionally bowed before starting conversations with others. The bride and groom's parents sat at a table prepared explicitly and decorated with several traditional artifacts. At the end of the ceremony, everybody danced while the bride and groom joined in to interact. Nonetheless, the bride and groom had been sidelined at their table with their parents the whole time. The ceremony was similar to a great feast as the families had prepared food that people were welcome to eat as soon as they arrived.

**Analytic Section**

Participant observation is reliable when collecting information about individuals' behavior and practices in their immediate settings, as it limits an investigator's interference with participants and informant bias (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). As a result, the Chinese wedding was a fantastic event to apply the technique. The following section is an analysis of the observations and an interpretation of their meanings.

One of the most notable characteristics of a Chinese wedding is its respect for traditions and value for cultural practices. Everything I observed at the wedding had a touch of Chinese tradition, from their attire, wall decorations, table decorations, and sitting positions. Although all guests present could interact freely, the bride's and groom's families sat separate from each other and only interacted after the couple had bonded through their vows. Their interaction after the wedding vows symbolized that they were now unified into one big family and were ready to work together to make the relationship successful (Shine, 2019). Moreover, it showed that they had welcomed the marriage and were willing to offer support.

Even though the wedding was hosted in a modernized venue with several technological devices, television screens, and cutting-edge dining and meal preparation solutions, the families preferred preparing traditional food at home and delivering it to the wedding. Additionally, the bride, groom, and parents paid attention to what was required of them by sitting at one table and interacting throughout the ceremony until it was time to dance and celebrate. Upon further research, I discovered that the arrangement symbolized their unity and peaceful co-existence, as individuals who disagree can hardly sit together at a table for the whole day (DeSantis, 2018). As a result, spending the entire ceremony together and interacting when the ceremony was about to end was evidence that there was no bad blood between the couple's parents.

Moreover, everyone at the event deeply respected Chinese customs and traditional practices. For example, there are several instances where the bride and groom were forced to sit down on pillows, especially when stating their wedding vows. Likewise, individuals behaved respectfully and even bowed to each other before communicating. According to Kawulich (2005), the level by which a researcher participates in the phenomenon under study determines the amount and quality of data collected. Therefore, I noted the different approaches to individuals' communication by interacting with a few people during the ceremony. Subsequently, I discovered that everyone was familiar with most requirements as they transitioned gracefully from one conversation to another.

Another characteristic I observed was the high degrees of symbolism adopted in the wedding ceremony. From an observer's perspective, the attire was colorful, classy, and glamorous. However, more profound meanings are associated with all colors present during the wedding. For example, gold and white symbolize wealth and prosperity in Chinese culture. On the other hand, red represents happiness and good luck (Long, 2018). As a result, the bride, groom, and individuals accompanying them included all these colors in their attire to represent their positive perceptions of the unison. Additionally, bright colors symbolize happiness and good faith in the marriage. Therefore, most guests wore bright colors to show they appreciated the ceremony and agreed to the couple's union.

Although celebrations are always a part of all ceremonies full of happiness, the Chinese uphold merry-making and celebrating throughout their events. For example, after inquiring from some individuals in the ceremony, I discovered that celebrations are the most crucial part of the wedding because the families take pride in showing off. During ancient times, feasts at royal weddings could last weeks and months to show people that it was a glorified union (Shine, 2019). However, individuals prefer feasting throughout the event, as holding a feast for weeks or months would be unreasonable. Nonetheless, like every other couple, the Chinese couple gets to travel and spend their honeymoon in their preferred destination. Subsequently, a wedding's success is measured by the quality of interactions, especially between the bride and groom's families. Therefore, the event I attended was successful, as there were no issues between the families or guests.

Participant observation is less costly and reliable than other models that collect information about social constructs. It can help researchers observe the intrinsic features of individuals' relations and practices (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Unfortunately, I experienced some setbacks as I was also forced to be a part of the wedding rather than an observer on the sidelines. However, I learned a lot from the experience, as the technique allowed me to pay attention to detail and observe qualities that only some individuals would be keen to see. Overall, I learned that everything done at traditional Chinese weddings bears meanings that have stayed the same for centuries. The Chinese substantially uphold their culture, value human relations, believe in symbolism, and respect each other. As a result, they incorporate most of these values into their events.

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