

Community Activity Participation Observed Using Goffman's Dramaturgical Theory: A Case Study of a Tai Chi Team in the Chiou-Cheng Community in Taichung

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Abstract

Adopting Goffman's dramaturgical theory, this study conducted participant observation and in-depth interview methods on and established relationship with the participants in a Tai Chi team of the Chiou-Cheng Community in Wufeng District, Taichung City, Taiwan. Individuals' presentation of self in everyday life, including social etiquettes and norms and interpersonal interactions, can all be considered a type of performance, namely theatrical performance.

This study associated role-related ideas in Goffman's dramaturgical theory with the roles in Chinese Opera (i.e., *Sheng*, *Dan*, *Jing*, *Mo*, and *Chou*), each of which corresponds to a specific role characteristic. Using concepts of dramaturgical theory as the basis, this study interpreted and analyzed the behavioral performance of the roles during team activities and their interactions to faithfully demonstrate the community participation and daily performance under a theatrical structure.

The analysis process accorded with the plot of the performance. We explored the beginning of the team and the face-to-face interactions of the participants during the performance. Then, in a closing scene, the participants' contingent approach in

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the face of crises completed the drama. The participants acted themselves faithfully, rather than purposefully. Therefore, the messages revealed during the performance were genuinely reflected on the participants' corresponding roles without image modification or maintenance for the performance.

Finally, the researchers identified the possibility of continual maintenance of the Tai Chi team because of the strong participation motivation of the participants. Although the participants played different roles, they share a strong identity to the Tai Chi team. They tacitly provided individual services to the team, created and maintained warm atmospheres, and showed unique unification and harmony of the community.

Keywords: Goffman's dramaturgical theory, Community participation, Face-to-face interaction, Presentation of self, Tai Chi team