

## MODELING THE ROCK BAND AND AUDIENCE INTERACTION

Kevin E Jones &amp; Patricia Atchison Harvey, Colorado State University

**INTRODUCTION** With increasing enthusiasm of bar patrons in the United States, researchers need a general framework to classify components of interaction to study musicians as performers in typical bar settings. A model can be applied to musicians of various types, by size of unit, and style and character of music performed. Style is classed by the musician's repertoire, such as country, folk and rock, or combined categories like folk-rock and country-rock. The type of music group in this study is the 3-member rock band. The decision to use small rock bands is from the first author's association with such bands as a performing member for 9 years, in amateur, semi-pro and professional settings. The second author suggested the sociological application, based on participant observation.

**DEFINED INTERACTION COMPONENT**

. The success of musicians performing in the typical bar setting varies depending on whose success criteria are applied. Three important groups judge the musician's success with respect to any given performance: 1) management; 2) patrons; and 3) musicians. Management criteria measure the musician's success in securing patronage and sales, which are two of the desired goals of management and prime motivators in the initial solicitation of live entertainment. Experience shows that sales relative to profit is the prime goal of management, while patronage contributes to sales.

. For patrons, criteria of the musician's success are based on technical competence and capacity to entertain. Technical competence is the rather mechanistic concept of the relation between musician and instrument. Technical competence includes such dimensions as selection complexity or perceived difficulty in playing a given piece, arrangement complexity, or the difficulty of synthesizing more

than one instrument into the playing of a piece, length of the selection, and execution, or proportion of combined technical errors to the number of musicians playing a given piece. With more than one musician, there is a form of interactive technical competence which is measured in the execution of arrangement complexity. This form of interactive technical competence is cognitive symbiosis, or in musician's language "tightness".

. Capacity to entertain is an interactive concept which deals with the relation between musician and patron. Capacity to entertain includes such dimensions as humor, intellect, sensuality, adaptability selection, conformity in tempo, volume, lyrical content and style to patron needs, and affective symbiosis or "togetherness" and social harmony manifested among performers. Technical competence can only be experienced by hearing, while capacity to entertain can be judged through multiple senses.

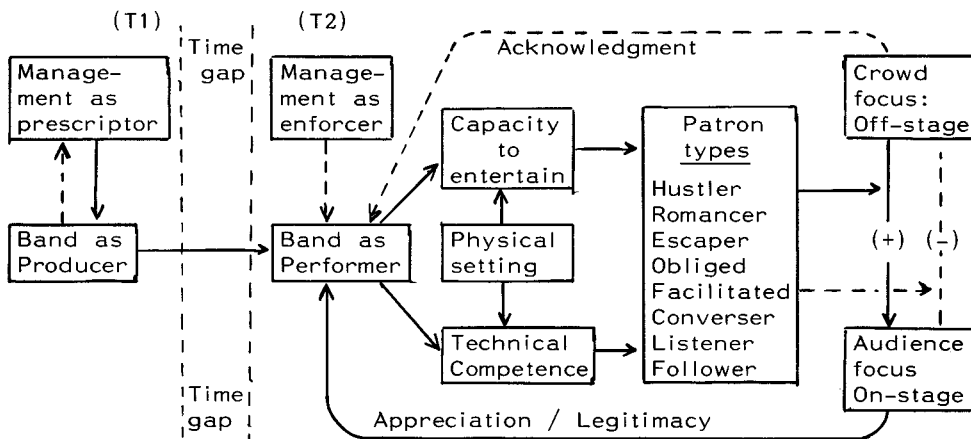
. The criteria on which musicians determine success are based on the ability to create and maintain an audience. In the typical bar setting, musicians are partly obligated to the goals of management. As an employee, the musician cannot ignore management's interest in patronage and sales. To ignore management's needs jeopardizes the musician's chance for future employment. To the extent that creating and maintaining a crowd are directly related to patronage and sales, they are the criteria which determine success.

. A patron is any person within the bar setting who is not a member of that bar's management, nor an employee, nor a member of the performing party. A crowd in this case is nothing more than an aggregate of patrons. An audience is detached from the crowd, in that primary focus is directed toward the band. The creation of an audience, by definition, is a process of directing or redirecting

FIGURE 1: BAR PATRON TYPOLOGY VIS-A-VIS THE BAND

<u>Patron type</u>	<u>Primary focus</u>	<u>Salient aspects</u>
HUSTLER	Non-affective gains	tempo
ROMANCER	Enhance personal affect	tempo, volume, lyrical content
ESCAPER	withdrawal from moods	noise factor
OBLIGED	Unrelated to performance	potential boredom
FACILITATED	Bar as source of drinks	style
CONVERSER	Discussion	volume
LISTENER	Performers as musicians	technical competence
FOLLOWER	Can compare this with band's past performances	performing party

FIGURE 2: PRIME RELATION TO BAND PERFORMANCE IN THE BAR SETTING



to entertain. Usually the band cannot make necessary adjustments in the physical setting at T2. . At T2 the band uses the capacity to entertain and technical competence to elicit patron response. Response may take the form of acknowledgment from the crowd, or appreciation and legitimacy from the audience. Using audience response as an indicator of crowd size relative to audience, the band alters the direction of its performance toward an emphasis on either the capacity to entertain or technical competence. The degree and direction of emphasis depend on that synthesis of success criteria as defined by individual patrons which will 1) maximize movement from crowd to audience, or positive movement, and

2) minimize movement from audience to crowd, or negative movement, as reflected in Figure 2. . In altering performance to maximize positive movement, the band necessarily commits itself to addressing a broader cross-section of patron types than just those of listener and follower. Capacity to entertain includes more aspects which patrons consider valuable to band performance. This applies to more of the patron types than does technical competence. Addressing a broader cross-section of patron types necessarily shifts performance toward emphasizing capacity to entertain. When a performance emphasizes the capacity to entertain, the band's choice of playing material must be made on the basis of selection conformity

to patron wishes rather than selection and arrangement complexity. Consequently, as positive movement increases, the smaller audience, which may have initially considered technical competence as the most salient aspect of performance becomes an expanded audience increasingly concerned with how style, tempo and volume relate to each patron's primary focus. Figure 2 illustrates the redefinition process for primary relations among participants.

#### THEORETICAL FACTORS

. The primary relations in the model have been established within the symbolic interaction perspective. The theoretical framework used to explain these relations comes mainly from collective behavior theory. Because of the small group nature of the typical bar setting, an emphasis has been placed on the emergent norm approach (Turner & Killian 1972). From this point of view, the study of collective behavior need not be concerned with large groups of people, nor must it be a response directed to the solving of some problem. We are looking at a collective orientation and the informal mechanisms whereby the collective focus and decisions related to it are reached.

. In the typical bar setting, patrons make up a solidaristic crowd which has a common objective that one person alone could not attain. For a crowd to have a common objective does not necessarily mean that each patron has the same focus or shares the same reasons to stay in the setting. Crowds with a common objective have mutually supportive relations in which the actions of crowd members are differentiated and supplementary. A hustler cannot fill the hustler role without someone to hustle.

. In addition to differential participation, patrons arrive at T2 with assorted predispositions, to hustle, to converse, or to escape. The band is then faced with the problem of how these predispositions can be overcome by what is

hoped will be a greater predisposition to be entertained. The band may overcome this problem by a strong performance. In other cases, the problem may be overcome by default. The hustler might as well enjoy the music if the potential hustlers are too engrossed in the music to be hustled.

. Predispositions held in common encourage development of a common mood. The band therefore looks for indicators that will clue them as to which patron types, and with them, which predispositions are most common to the setting. One indicator used by the band might be appearance manifest in age, sex, clothing, and hair style.

. The band's attempts to determine common patron types usually take place during the initial part of the performance. The band comes into T2 with a knowledge of what songs will be played during the initial part of the performance, and in what order. These songs will usually emphasize technical competence. Technical competence is stressed because: 1) It is known that it will appeal to at least two patron types, namely listeners and followers. 2) It is highly predictable and is thus something the musician can take as given in what is otherwise a highly ambiguous situation. 3) It has fewer dimensions for the crowd to criticize than does the capacity to entertain. 4) It is in a character inferred from the professional musician's role, and is therefore unlikely to alienate patrons if executed well.

. After assessing patron types, the band assumes the role of keynoter. Keynoting is "the representation of a positive suggestion in an ambivalent frame of reference" (Turner & Killian 1972). In band-audience interaction, positive suggestion is any aspect of the capacity to entertain, and technical competence which directs a patron's primary focus in a positive direction, on-stage. Even though patrons and band members are involved in a mutually supportive

the focus of crowd attention. At the point where a crowd member's attention is focused primarily on the band, s/he is no longer considered a member of the crowd, but has become converted to a member of the audience.

. The complexity of crowd/audience identification arises when we consider that in addition to observing and identifying the direction of a patron's primary focus as being on-stage or off-stage, it is important that the entertainer and the researcher determine the focus of attention. Without some sense of what is drawing a crowd member's focus, the band's ability to create and maintain an audience depends almost totally on its technical competence, while the capacity to entertain becomes a kind of "hit and miss" process which may or may not aid in directing the crowd's attention. If the band can discover sources of patron attraction in the situation, it can alter the performance, directing it toward a broader cross-section of the crowd and increase the possibility of generating an audience.

. The final task in identifying interactional components is to construct a typology of patrons based on each individual's primary focus. Such a typology assumes that each patron has reasons for entering the typical bar setting, for staying, and for leaving. The typology further assumes that a patron's reasons for staying in the bar setting are demonstrated by his/her focus of attention. This focus is observed in the person's attention to other people and items within the setting. Primary focus is used as the main criterion to construct the patron typology. Patron type categories are not mutually exclusive. The types should be independent and finite only to the extent that the researcher can depend on them for observation and description.

#### PRIMARY RELATIONS

. The primary relations among management, patron, and musician as related to band performance, are established in two temporal

zones. At Time One (T1) the primary relation is between management and band. At Time Two (T2) the primary relation is between band and patron. It is necessary that the management-band relation precede the band-patron relation, but the temporal gap between T1 and T2 will vary depending on the pairing of a management with a band. And the proximity of the participants may vary at T1.

. While the relationship at T1 is often conducted in a shared setting with minimal distance between actors, such as the bar in which the band is to perform, the interaction may span remote physical settings by telephone and mail contracts. A large spatial or temporal gap increases the chance for significant communicative gaps to alter the performance at T2.

. Interaction between management and band at T1 confirms and sets the conditions of an obligation. This constitutes a formal or informal agreement that the band will perform at T2. The conditions are physical and social. Physical conditions refer to any aspect of the bar's architectural and interior design that might affect the band's performance, such as table and furniture location, stage type and location, lighting, amplification equipment and access to electric power.

. Social conditions are rules that 1) define performance fee, dates, length and location of employment and 2) establish certain limits within which the band will be expected to perform at T2. Negotiations typically favor management expectations.

. The band-patron nexus assumes the conditions of obligation established at T1, and is directed largely by the criteria of success as seen by each participant at T2. While the role of management does appear at T2, its direct effect on band performance is secondary to those effects resulting from the band-patron relation.

. The physical setting affects patron response because physical conditions aid or inhibit the band's technical competence and capacity

(Concluded on page 138)

Convert people through propagan-  
da or other influences. 3) Force  
people to accept the bureaucratic  
ideology. Thus, violence is the  
undergirding force behind the  
myths of efficiency and progress.

. Studies of individual and organ-  
izational ideological interplay at  
this level are scarce by reason of  
the system ideologies. This raises  
problems regarding the basis of  
social order, individual egoism,  
political structures, and bureau-  
cratic organizations. These prob-  
lems are of legitimate theoretical  
concern at the social psychologic-  
al level and at the cultural socio-  
logical level.

## REFERENCES

- .Demhoff William C 1979 Powers  
that Be: Processes for Ruling-  
Class Domination in America. New  
York. Vintage Books  
.Gouldner Alvin W 1970 Coming Cri-  
sis in Western Sociology. New  
York Equinox Books  
.Kumar Krishan 1978 Prophecy and  
Progress: Sociology of Industrial  
and Post-Industrial Society.  
Harmondsworth England. Penguin  
.Marx Karl, F Engels 1848 Mani-  
festo of the Communist Party.  
.Michels Robert 1915 Political Par-  
ties. Glencoe Illinois Free Press  
.Mills C Wright 1956 Power Elite.  
New York Oxford U Press  
Rossides Daniel W 1978 History  
and Nature of Sociological Theory.  
Boston Houghton Mifflin  
.Saint-Simon Henri de 1964 Social  
Organization, the Science of Man  
and Other Writings. F Markhan  
transl & ed. New York Harper  
.Weber Max 1954 Max Weber on  
Law in Economy and Society.  
transl A Henderson & T Parsons.  
Glencoe Illinois Free Press  
\_\_\_\_\_ 1956 Gesammelte Aufsätze  
zur Soziologie und Sozialpolitik.  
transl J Mayer London Faber &  
Faber

JONES & HARVEY:

(Continued from page 134 )

relation, the situation still is am-  
biguous. Except to listeners and  
followers, the band constitutes an  
ambivalent frame of reference for  
patrons, while the presence of  
varied patron types constitutes an  
ambivalent frame of reference for  
the band. Keynoting is a trial  
and error process in which the  
band tries for a common denomina-  
tor of tempo, volume, lyrical con-  
tent, style, and technical compe-  
tence, which will redirect diverse  
focus among crowd members toward  
one focal point, reducing ambiva-  
lence.

. Ambivalence is resolved when  
highly diverse patron focus is re-  
directed toward one focal point -  
the band. The audience becomes  
an emergent reference group for  
those crowd members experiencing  
ambivalence. Audience over time  
becomes a patron type when pre-  
disposed to be entertained. As  
the audience expands, it becomes  
more normative in character, elic-  
iting conformity from some remain-  
ing patrons, and excluding non-  
conforming others. The result is  
the legitimation of the band and  
the maintenance of on-stage focus.

## REFERENCES

- .Berk Richard A 1974 Collective  
Behavior. Dubuque Iowa W C Brown  
.Blumer Herbert 1957 Collective be-  
havior. J Gittler ed. Review of  
Sociology: Analysis of a Decade.  
New York Wiley  
\_\_\_\_\_ 1962 Society as symbolic  
interaction. 179-192. A Rose ed.  
Human Behavior and Social Pro-  
cess. Boston Houghton Mifflin  
.Goffman Erving 1959 Presentation  
of Self in Everyday Life. Garden  
City New York Anchor  
.Meltzer B, J Petras, L Reynolds  
1975 Symbolic Interactionism: Gen-  
esis, Varieties, and Criticism. Bos-  
ton Routledge Kegan Paul  
.Smelser N 1962 Theory of Collec-  
tive Behavior. NY Free Press  
.Turner Ralph H, Lewis M Killian  
1972 Collective Behavior 2nd ed.  
Englewood Cliffs Prentice Hall