

## Communicating to Change Communication: Alcoholics' Romantic Partners' Mutual-aid Group Attendance in Relation to Communication with their Alcoholic Partners

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*Although the strain that a romantic partner's alcoholism puts on a relationship is well documented, less is known about the ways in which individuals deal with a malfunctioning relationship of this kind. This qualitative study explores one way of coping with a partner's alcoholism: attending Al-Anon, a world-wide network of mutual-aid groups for alcoholics' friends and families. This paper will look at Al-Anon members' perceptions of their communication experiences at Al-Anon in relation to their communication with their alcoholic partners. The research material is composed of interviews with Finnish Al-Anon members (n=19), as well as their writings (n=128), which have been analyzed thematically. The results show that Al-Anon attendance helps individuals to change their ways of communicating with their alcoholic partners by offering informational and emotional support. Furthermore, the organization also works as an arena for practicing these interpersonal skills. As a result, the partners became more accepting, and started to draw boundaries between themselves and the alcoholic. This again shifted the focus of the relationship from the alcoholics' drinking to themselves, and thus clarified their relationship.*

Mutual-aid groups are based on mutual communication of support and are known to have positive effects on the interpersonal relationships (e.g., spousal and romantic relationships) of their members as well as having other benefits (e.g., Cline, 1999; Seebom et al., 2013; Timko, Young, & Moos, 2012; Wright & Frey, 2007). The types of supportive communication that lie behind these relational effects, and the communication that exemplifies the relational effects, remain unclear, however. A unique arena for studying these connections can be found in Al-Anon—a world-wide network of mutual-aid groups for the friends and families of alcoholics, which aims specifically to help members to cope in an interpersonal relationship with an alcoholic. Indeed, the partners of alcoholics are known especially to engage in maladaptive communicative behavior that, in turn, has a negative effect upon their well-being as well as their relationship with the alcoholic (see Duggan & Le Poire-Molineux, 2009; Le Poire, 2004; Marshal, 2003). In Finland, where this study was conducted, more than 40% of the

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population is estimated to be affected by someone else's alcoholism (Al-Anon, 2015; Huhtanen & Tigerstedt, 2010).

The purpose of this study is to examine Al-Anon members' perspectives on their communication experiences at Al-Anon in relation to their communication with their alcoholic romantic partners. Using this approach, instead of merely describing the problems inherent in communicating with an alcoholic, this study sheds light on possible methods for resolving those problems. Of course, these connections are complex and not reducible to clear-cut causes and consequences. For this reason, we chose an interpretivist-oriented qualitative approach (see Manning & Kunkel, 2014) and examined Al-Anon members' own personal views about these connections. This kind of approach sheds light on the members' subjective understanding of their situations.

In order to examine the link between individuals' communication within Al-Anon and communication with their partners, we are utilizing the theoretical perspective of supportive communication. From this viewpoint, social support is seen as being conveyed through communication (Burleson, Albrecht, Goldsmith, & Sarason, 1994; MacGeorge, Feng, & Burleson, 2011). As sociological and psychological research into social support has shown, support benefits well-being (MacGeorge et al., 2011). The communication perspective, in turn, reveals the specific features of the supportive interactions that produce these effects (e.g., Burleson, 2009; Jones & Bodie, 2014). The communication perspective has also traditionally emphasized the relational outcomes of support (MacGeorge et al., 2011), as is the case in this study. The supportive communication perspective thus provides an analytical tool and a theoretical basis from which to view the communication processes in Al-Anon and their perceived effects on communication with an alcoholic romantic partner (henceforth partner).

### The Interpersonal Relationship with an Alcoholic

Alcoholism affects the whole family of an alcoholic negatively (e.g., Copello, 2010; Geddes, 1993; Orford, Velleman, Copello, Templeton, & Ibanga, 2010; Orford, Copello, Velleman, & Templeton, 2010; Schäfer, 2011; Segrin, 2001). In this study, we specifically concentrate on the relationships of alcoholics and their partners, given the negative effects that alcoholism has on such relationships and given that partners form the majority of Al-Anon's membership (Al-Anon, 2012).

In a relationship with an alcoholic partner, communication is a key aspect that is known to deteriorate (Duggan & Le Poire-Molineux, 2009; Le Poire, 2004; Orban, 2001; Segrin, 2001;

Wiseman, 1991). Indeed, the communication patterns of alcoholics' partners are often referred to by the popular term "codependency" (e.g., Cullen & Carr, 1999; Duggan & Le Poire-Molineux, 2009). According to Le Poire and her associates (Duggan, Dailey, & Le Poire, 2008; Duggan, Le Poire, & Addis, 2006), the communication of alcoholics' partners both reinforces and punishes the partner's substance use in an inconsistent fashion. Moreover, according to Le Poire, Hallet, & Giles (1998), the core problem in the alcohol-afflicted relationship is that neither party is able to talk openly about the contradictions in their communication. These kinds of communication patterns can be seen as being symptomatic of an ordinary person who is attempting to cope in a stressful situation (see Orford, Copello, Velleman et al., 2010; Orford, Velleman, Natera, Templeton, & Copello, 2013).

### **Al-Anon's Supportive Communication as a Means of Producing Change**

Although living with an alcoholic partner is highly stressful, the partners of alcoholics often suffer from a lack of outside support (Orford, Velleman, Copello et al., 2010) and thus they often turn to Al-Anon. Although Al-Anon is the biggest global organization offering help to the friends and families of alcoholics (O'Farrell & Clements, 2012), it has been little studied (e.g., Timko et al., 2013). The key message of Al-Anon that is of interest within this study is that the partners (and other loved ones) of alcoholics can learn more functional ways of being in the relationship with the alcoholic, and they can learn to live more satisfying lives, despite the alcoholic's path. Indeed, in a study by Timko et al. (2014), a more satisfying relationship with the alcoholic was reported to be one of the primary reasons for members' initial attendance at Al-Anon. The organization offers a 12-step mutual-aid program, similar to Alcoholics Anonymous, following the ideology that members ought to "lovingly detach" themselves from their alcoholic partners/family members, instead directing their caring actions toward themselves and learning to rely on a power higher than themselves (Ablon, 1974).

The basic framework of Al-Anon consists of weekly meetings, during which members share their personal stories in turn. The interaction is highly structured (see Zajdow, 2002; Roth & Tan, 2007), and direct commenting on others' stories is not allowed. In addition to the weekly meetings, the organization also provides other arenas and ways of receiving and providing support, such as the sponsorship system and the possibility of doing service-work (see Kuuluvainen & Isotalus, 2014). Although the active ingredients of Al-Anon also include elements such as the Al-Anon literature and the

12-step program, we argue that even the knowledge of these is conveyed to new members through communication. Thus, the interactions among members is the foremost element of Al-Anon groups.

In this study, we view these interactions as supportive communication, which Burleson and MacGeorge (2002) define as "verbal and nonverbal communication produced with the intention of providing assistance to others perceived as needing that aid" (p. 374). The point of view of supportive communication was chosen because it has been generally associated with enhanced well-being, the development of coping skills, and greater relationship satisfaction (e.g., Goldsmith & Albrecht, 2011; MacGeorge, Samter & Gillihan, 2005; MacGeorge et al., 2011).

Several types of supportive communication have been identified in previous literature, such as emotional support (which is provided to others "with the intent of helping another cope effectively with emotional distress"; Burleson, 2003, p. 553) and informational support or advice giving (which includes "recommendation about what might be thought, said or done to manage a problem"; MacGeorge, Feng & Thompson, 2008, p. 146). It has been claimed that different types of support are needed to benefit a support receiver, depending on the controllability of the support receiver's situation. That is, problem-focused support has been claimed to be more preferred in relation to controllable events, with emotion-focused support being more preferable where uncontrollable events are concerned (Cutrona & Russell, 1990; Cutrona & Suhr, 1992). Previous research has shown that Al-Anon features both emotion- and problem-focused support (Kuuluvainen & Isotalus, 2013).

More importantly, the kinds of supportive communication that lie behind the specific outcomes of mutual-aid groups generally remain unclear. That is, although mutual-aid groups have been described as being beneficial to their members, the association between the specific aspects of these groups and the outcomes remains vague. In this study, we concentrate on supportive communication as one substantive element of mutual-aid groups, and its perceived association with the specific outcomes related to the partners' communication in the interpersonal relationship with alcoholics. Thus, the following research question was posed:

RQ1: What kinds of supportive communication at Al-Anon do the partners see as being helpful in changing their communication in their relationship with the alcoholic?

## Recovering

Recovery from addictions such as alcoholism has been the subject of a number of studies (e.g., DeLucia, Bergman, Formoso & Weinberg, 2015; Schmid & Brown, 2008). However, it is rarely noted that alcoholics' friends and families can also recover from the effects of the situation, regardless of the alcoholic's abstinence or otherwise. Accordingly, there appears to be a gap in our knowledge about what options are available to people affected by alcoholics. In this study, we understand the term "recovery" to relate to any movement toward improved well-being. Here, attending Al-Anon can be seen as an indicator of recovery.

In general, a relationship with an alcoholic develops under the pressure of conflicting goals (e.g., Holmila, 2003; Wiseman, 1991; Zajdow, 2002). To give a more detailed explanation, according to Orford, Velleman, Copello et al. (2010, p. 51-55), family members affected by alcoholics ultimately have three options for responding to the situation: (a) putting up with it (b) withdrawing and gaining independence, or (c) standing up to substance misuse (see also Orford et al., 1998). Wiseman (1975; 1991) makes a more simple division between those individuals who sink deeply into isolation and despair and the minority of individuals who are able to change their perspectives and gain independence, whilst remaining in a relationship with an alcoholic.

Al-Anon aims to help partners to recover. Indeed, Al-Anon has been reported to enhance members' self-esteem, coping skills, and moods (see Barber & Gilbertson, 1997; Miller, Mayers, & Tonigan, 1999; Rychtarik & McGillicuddy, 2005; Timko et al., 2012). Although it is scarce, the previous research also implies that Al-Anon has positive effects on its members' relationships with an alcoholic partner (Barber & Gilbertson, 1997; Gorman & Rooney, 1979; Miller, Mayers, & Tonigan, 1999; Timko et al., 2012; Timko et al. 2013; Timko et al. 2014).

Accordingly, the final objective of this study aims to link the supportive communication found at Al-Anon with the partners' communication in the relationship with the alcoholic, viewed as one arena for executing recovery. Specifically, through this study, we seek to examine the members' views of the effects that their Al-Anon attendance had had on their communication within a relationship with an alcoholic partner. Furthermore, we seek to explore Al-Anon members' perceptions of what kinds of effects the changes in the partners' communication had had on their relationship with the alcoholic more generally. Thus, the additional two research questions were posed:

RQ2: How do the partners see that they have changed their communication within their relationship with the alcoholic after their Al-Anon attendance?

RQ3: How do the partners see that the change in their communication after Al-Anon has affected their relationship with the alcoholic?

## Method

### Participants and Data Collection

The research material is composed of (a) thematic interviews with Al-Anon members ( $n=19$ ) and (b) written answers given by Al-Anon members to an open question on a questionnaire ( $n=128$ ). Both the questionnaire and the interview data have been taken from several different Al-Anon groups in Finland. The primary purpose of the questionnaire was to collect information about what kind of supportive communication in Al-Anon had helped the partners in changing their relational communication with the alcoholic. The interviews focused more on the partners' relationship with the alcoholic and, in particular, on the partners' ways of communicating in the relationship. In addition, a research journal was kept in order to document the more tentative perceptions of the phenomenon under investigation and to stay reflective of the researchers' predispositions of the subject. The study follows the legal and ethical requirements of Finland and was approved by the Finnish Al-Anon central service.

### Questionnaire

The questionnaire was sent to all Finnish Al-Anon groups through the Al-Anon central service in the spring of 2012. In Finland, there are approximately 140 Al-Anon groups (Al-Anon, 2012) and the questionnaire was offered to all interested parties. Al-Anon does not have a strict membership system, so the percentage of members responding cannot be calculated. For the purposes of this study, answers to one specific question ("Is there something specific about the group members' support that especially helps or has, at some point, helped you in your efforts to change your behavior toward your alcohol-dependent significant other?") were used as data. Of the 188 questionnaires returned, 128 partners of alcoholics answered this question. Of these respondents, 126 were women, one was a man, and one was unidentified. As a point of comparison, a survey of the Al-Anon membership found that 96% of the members were women (Al-Anon, 2012). The respondents' age groups and the number of years they had attended Al-Anon are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1****Questionnaire Respondents' Ages and Years in Al-Anon in Numbers and Percentages**


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<i>Age Group</i>				
Under 30	31 to 40	41 to 50	51 to 60	Over 60
1 (.8%)	14 (10.9%)	20 (15.6%)	29 (22.7%)	64 (50%)
<i>Years in Al-Anon</i>				
Less than 1	1 to 5	6 to 10	More than 10	
9 (7%)	37 (28.9%)	21 (16.4%)	61 (47.7%)	

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**Interviews**

Nineteen members of Al-Anon who were partners of alcoholics were interviewed in 2013 by the first author. At the time of the interviews, eleven of the interviewees were still in a relationship with the alcoholic partner, six were separated/divorced from the alcoholic who was the initial reason for attendance, and two were bereaved. Four of the interviewees who remained in a relationship with the alcoholic partner stated that their partners were currently sober and attended Alcoholics Anonymous. All of the interviewees were women; they ranged in age from 34 to 78 years old ( $M=59$  years) and had been members of Al-Anon for between 10 months and 45 years ( $M=10$  years). The interviewees were recruited by sending a request to participate in the study to all Al-Anon groups in Finland with the help of the Al-Anon central service. A few of the interviewees had also been recruited while collecting data for a previous study on Al-Anon (see Kuuluvainen & Isotalus, 2013). The interviews lasted between 0.5 hours and 1 hour 15 minutes and took place in the interviewees' homes, on private university premises, and in public libraries. The interview frame had three broad themes: life before Al-Anon, life when joining Al-Anon, and life while being a member of Al-Anon. The purpose of this kind of interview frame was to gain information about the changes that had happened in the members' lives after coming to Al-Anon. This structure also resembles the story structure used in Al-Anon meetings (Saulnier, 1994) and thus is a

familiar form for the members used when talking about their experiences.

The three major themes in the interviews included questions about the role of Al-Anon in different phases of the interviewees' lives and in the interviewees' relationships with an alcoholic partner. In general, the interviews focused on the partners' own communication patterns in the relationship. The interviewees were asked frequently to give practical or typical examples of their communicative behavior. In addition, the emphasis was placed on linking the interviewees' accounts about their relationships with their communication experiences at Al-Anon.

**Analysis**

The questionnaire and the interview data was analyzed thematically (Richards, 2005) with the help of Nvivo computer software (see Bazeley, 2007) by the first author. Thematic analysis was chosen because it best suits such unexplored topics as those explored in this study (see Manning & Kunkel, 2014). First, the written transcriptions (175 pages, Times New Roman, 12-point, single-spaced) of the interview data were read several times. The analysis began by tentatively coding the data into two broad categories: "Before Al-Anon" and "After joining Al-Anon." A topical coding of the data within these two categories was performed. Then, the topical codes were again incorporated under clusters that formed more abstract upper-level codes.

Next, the questionnaire data was analyzed to create codes for the forms of supportive communication at Al-Anon that had helped the partners in their relationships with alcoholic partners. The analysis also began by topical coding of the data. After that, the topical codes were grouped together under upper-level codes. The interview data was also coded into these categories. The purpose of doing so was to test the coding system we had developed using the interview data. The interviewees appeared to have similar views as the questionnaire respondents regarding support within Al-Anon. During these analyses, the codes were constantly audited against new data and against each other, and an audit trail of the steps in the analysis was kept. Furthermore, all the codes were checked to ensure that they were in the right upper category, they did not overlap with other codes, and they were generally easy to use.

Lastly, the number of participants to which the main themes/codes were applied were counted in order to demonstrate their salience in the data. These numbers do not aim to claim how much something is expected to be found regarding the phenomena under investigation, but rather "how much a particular theme permeates data" (Manning & Kunkel, 2014, p. 39).

Results

The results will be reported in three sections, according to the research questions. The first section deals with data relating to the supportive communication in Al-Anon that was thought to help the partners to alter their communication with the alcoholic. The second section represents the change experienced by the partners in their communication with the alcoholic after they joined Al-Anon. The third section describes the perceived effects that the partners’ changed communication had had on their relationship with the alcoholic. The results are supported with data excerpts that have been translated idiomatically from Finnish into English. A summary of the coding category is provided in each section, including the salience of the main themes or codes in the data.

Finally, we want to remind the reader that although the results are presented chronologically, they do not aim to present causal connections but rather an overall story of change with the help of Al-Anon as experienced by the members.

Supportive Communication in Al-Anon

Support through Al-Anon presented as being helpful in changing the partners’ ways of communicating with their alcoholic partners included (a) informational support, (b) emotional support, and (c) Al-Anon as an arena for practicing interpersonal skills. A summary of this category is presented in Table 2 and is explained below.

Table 2

A Summary of the Category “The Support of Al-Anon” and Number of Interviewees and Questionnaire Respondents (N=147) to which the Theme/Code was Applied

<i>Themes</i>	<i>Participants</i>
Informational Support to Educate Members	81
Emotional Support to Empower Members	84
Supportive Context for Practicing Interpersonal Skills	76

**Informational support to educate members.** The communication at Al-Anon meetings was presented as a source of education. The other group members’ experiences functioned as practical examples of how to deal with an alcoholic partner:

As they tell their own stories/experiences, how they have ‘struggled’ through, and survived, difficult experiences, something starts ‘sprouting.’ A long time after, I might remember some member’s story and notice that it fits with my situation. I can then try to apply it, and notice that I feel better afterward. (Questionnaire 31)

The members had also been educated about the family disease concept of alcoholism, which enabled them to view their partners,’ and their own, communication patterns as symptomatic of the family disease, and thus also allowed them to accept the behavior: “Often, the mere understanding that alcoholism is a disease changes the way that one acts toward the alcoholic” (Questionnaire 128).

In addition, the partners learned about the 12-step program, a set of guidelines with a specific ideology, supported by slogans, to be used as practical tools while communicating with the alcoholic. One interviewee described the significance of learning the 12-step program thus: “It gives you a clear value system; it gives you clear tools for how to act in different relationships” (Interview 11).

**Emotional support to empower members.** Along with information on how to do things differently, the meetings were described to empower the members to act and think differently: “Al-Anon members accept me as I am. When I learn to accept myself with the help of the group, I am also able to think warmly about the alcoholic” (Questionnaire 114). The meetings were described as being filled with warm looks and hugs, and feelings of mutual trust, acceptance, togetherness, love, friendliness, positivity, and empathy, which all generated the sense of being both heard and seen. In practice, this positivity was described as spreading to behavior at home and to interactions with the alcoholic.

The meetings and the anticipation of upcoming meetings also gave the interviewees the strength to make difficult decisions. In addition, other members’ stories of recovery gave the partners hope for their own lives: “[...] that they have been able to become independent and grow, despite the alcoholic. It gives me hope that one day, I will also be able to do it” (Questionnaire 105).

**Supportive context for practicing interpersonal skills.** In addition to being a source of informational and emotional support, Al-Anon was presented as an arena for practicing interpersonal skills. For example, the meetings were seen as teaching the skills of listening and of tolerating differing views:

It is interesting that by going to the group, one may start to like all of the members in various ways, and then the alcoholic significant other's importance diminishes to the role where he belongs and does not rule one's whole life. (Questionnaire 26)

It was also recounted that at Al-Anon, the members were encouraged to talk about themselves, not the alcoholic, and accordingly were directed to pay more attention to their own behavior: "At Al-Anon, one member said: 'It was the alcoholic's problem that you just described; what about your own life?'" (Questionnaire 156).

In addition, these interactions were also thought to enable members to experience being functional members of a community, instead of being deviant. Al-Anon created a social network through which support also became available in between the group meetings: "My alcoholic significant other makes me nervous easily. A phone call and a conversation have helped me to act intelligibly" (Questionnaire 32).

### **Change in Partners' Communication after Joining Al-Anon**

The changes that took place in the partners' communication after they joined Al-Anon were represented to include a movement (a) from controlling to acceptance and (b) from displaying codependency to drawing boundaries. A summary of this category is provided in Table 3 and is explained below.

**Table 3**

#### **A Summary of the Category "Change in partners' Communication after Joining Al-Anon" and Number of Interviewees (n=19) to which the Theme/Code was Applied**

<i>Themes</i>	<i>Sub-codes</i>	<i>Participants</i>
From Controlling to Acceptance	Controlling	14
	Acceptance	18
From Codependency to Drawing Boundaries	Codependency	18
	Drawing Boundaries	18

**From controlling to acceptance.** The interviewees recounted that before joining Al-Anon, they had made active efforts to control the alcoholic's behavior, including disposing of/hiding the alcohol and enforcing activities that made drinking impossible. Communication that was intended to control the drinking included such tactics as threats, supplication, and blackmail, but these tactics were often ineffective:

It was all wrong; it was just when he was drunk that I started telling him to go to treatment, not like I would think about what was a right moment and we would discuss it appropriately [...] because once the situation was peaceful again, I wouldn't dare to break the peace with anything like attempting to talk about going to treatment. Because then I tried to act in a way so that he wouldn't start drinking again. (Interview 6)

In contrast to attempts to control the alcoholic, the interviewees talked about striving to accept the situation after joining Al-Anon. In general, that meant that the partners had made efforts not to intervene in their alcoholic partners' undertakings:

I dropped the ball. What I mean is, before, I had insisted on justifying the wrongdoings and giving explanations for things like non-appearances or whatever [...] but then I was like, 'OK, you can do what you want to do.' But, of course, it was hard; you cannot change in a minute—but I just tried to act mechanically. Although, in a way, I still had the old tricks in mind. (Interview 6)

The interviewees also recounted avoiding conflicts with the alcoholic after joining Al-Anon. They reported the quiet recitation of the serenity prayer as being of great help in moments of incipient conflict. One member described her method of calming herself down in a moment of crisis: "In addition to the prayer, I think about the group—I hold their hands and they are all there for me, in a way" (Interview 5).

**From codependency to drawing boundaries.** In addition to active attempts to control the drinking before Al-Anon, the partners described themselves as merely reacting to the alcoholic's actions and thus displaying "codependency," explained by one interviewee as follows:

I couldn't be happy if he was not; if he was depressed, then I was, too. So that it [codependency] was strongly visible in the realm of emotions. And I kind of needed his approval for everything, like eye-contact, or anything, so that I could do it without some kind of conflict starting to evolve again. (Interview 4)

The partners described themselves as “out of control,” which included the partner retaliating against the alcoholic’s wrongdoings by attacking him. As a result, many of the partners recalled reaching a point where their own behavior had become so severe that there was no other possibility than to get help. One interviewee described her breaking point, which occurred after her alcoholic partner had said negative things about her:

I had a tantrum and well, I almost threw a can of buttermilk. I thought, what the heck? I’ll take the buttermilk can and throw it in his face. But then I thought, heck, I’ll have to clean it up myself. But I saw this kind of aggressiveness coming from myself and I understood that now I had to do something. (Interview 18)

In contrast, the interviewees mentioned pretending that everything was alright as another way of coping with the situation before Al-Anon. The partners had tried to avoid conflicts by seeking to please the alcoholic or to avoid dealing with the alcoholic altogether through such actions as listening to music, cleaning, or finding things to do outside the home.

Just as before joining Al-Anon, the partners described themselves as living along the alcoholic’s actions; afterward, they had made active efforts to draw boundaries between the alcoholic and themselves. This included actions such as being brave enough to disagree with the alcoholic, or, as one interviewee described, clearing a shelf for her own things in a closet. Another member said that participating in the interview, and also telling her alcoholic partner about it, was an example of the courage that she had found in herself after joining Al-Anon. In addition, the interviewees recounted instances of taking responsibility for their own well-being in the form of new hobbies, exercise, socializing, and so on:

In an alcoholic family, there is often shortage of money—as we had—but you go to movies and to some concerts anyway, and for me, it is important that I can detach myself; that I don’t stay. You stay easily, you see; you come home from work and you stay there. (Interview 18)

Paying attention to oneself also meant that the interviewees had made efforts to change their own maladaptive methods of communication. Indeed, in addition to feeling more serene after joining Al-Anon, the interviewees strived to act serenely toward their alcoholic partners. One member explained how she tried to apply the Al-Anon teachings when her partner was visibly intoxicated:

When you see that the other is drunk—how it brings irritation, hatred, all these feelings to the surface—then I at least try [to act] according to the teachings: somehow, not to criticize. Don’t criticize because the two things that an

alcoholic aims for are making the other person angry and getting the other person to feel guilty. (Interview 17)

The interviewees also talked about avoiding behaviors that would enable the alcoholic’s drinking. Still, they stated that changing one’s deep-rooted ways was extremely difficult.

### **Change in the Relationship with the Alcoholic after the Partners’ Changed Communication**

According to the interviewees, the change in the partners’ way of communicating after Al-Anon affected the relationship with the alcoholic by (a) moving the focus of the relationship from the alcoholics’ drinking to the relational partners’ own lives and by (b) clarifying the status of the relationship rather than lack of communication. The category representing this change is presented in Table 4 and is explained below.

**Table 4**

**A Summary of the Category “Change in the Relationship with the Alcoholic after the Partners’ Changed Communication” and Number of Interviewees (N=19) to which the Theme/Code was Applied**

<i>Themes</i>	<i>Sub-codes</i>	<i>Participants</i>
From a Focus on Drinking to a Focus on Oneself	Focus on Drinking	14
	Focus on Oneself	11
From Lack of Communication to More Clarified Relationship	Lack of Communication	13
	Relationship Clarification	17

**From a focus on drinking to a focus on oneself.** The interviewees reported that before joining Al-Anon the interaction in the relationship with the alcoholic partner revolved around the alcoholic’s drinking. Although some of the interviewees stated that their partner had become sober before they attended Al-Anon, similar patterns were still stated to be visible in the relationship.

According to the interviewees, before Al-Anon the atmosphere in the relationship was characterized by tension due to the unpredictability of the alcoholic’s behavior, including the happiness of the alcoholic’s sober days and the chaos associated with the alcoholic’s periods of drinking. The participants also recounted

that the sober days led to recurrent disappointments, since the sobriety did not last. In contrast to feeling hopeful, the partners feared the next relapse. One interviewee said that, in a way, she wished that her husband would start drinking again so that she could concentrate on something else, instead of monitoring him for signs of intoxication.

After the partners' attendance of Al-Anon, one prominent change in their relationships appeared to be that the focus moved away from alcohol and toward the partners' own, separate lives. In practice, the interviewees (those who had remained together with their partners) talked about living somewhat separate lives under the same roof:

Someone might say, 'What, don't you talk at all for the whole day [laughs]?' Well, you see, I would say that this is a way of accepting someone as they are. That if we are quiet, then we are quiet. We both have opportunities to undertake recreational activities separately because we have a rather big home and there are different rooms for these hobbies. (Interview 4)

In the interviewees' accounts, they reckoned that this kind of separateness brought peace to the relationship. Even those who felt that the atmosphere had not improved believed that such separation gave them inner peace, and thus eased being in the relationship with the alcoholic.

**From lack of communication to more clarified relationship.** Before Al-Anon, the partners and the alcoholics stated that they suffered from a lack of communication. One of the partners explained: "I smelled or saw that he had been drinking and that it was no use talking to him because the next day he wouldn't remember those things. So, it was very quiet; our coexistence became very quiet" (Interview 9). The interviewees stated that the relational communication was not equal or reciprocal and that they failed to connect with their partners or to discuss their problems. Sometimes, communication was totally absent.

After Al-Anon, the partners described the status of the relationship as being clearer. The interviewees told of increased or enhanced communication with their partners, or simply that through intrapersonal communication, they had a clearer view of the relationship.

Two kinds of effects of this clarification were apparent in the interviewees' recounts: renewed closeness to the alcoholic, or, in contrast, negative distancing from the alcoholic. For the first type, the clarification of the relationship had generated new kinds of closeness, which included the restoration of trust and understanding the value of the relationship. Becoming closer was especially the case among

those whose partner had found lasting sobriety and had also attended Alcoholics Anonymous, thus sharing the knowledge of the 12-step ideology:

It probably would be a different story if, well, if, for example, he went to AA and I didn't go to Al-Anon. I'm not that sure that we would still be together. Because there is ... it brings that kind of shared language and a shared view of the issue. (Interview 10)

In contrast, interviewees also recounted that the partners' Al-Anon attendance had generated negative distancing from the alcoholic that was different from the positive separateness that contributed to the relationship's functionality. This negative distancing was especially visible in the realm of physical proximity:

We are like old buddies; like friends, but I don't ... I see that that he doesn't evoke anything in me; there is a total stone wall—like an invisible stone wall there between us, so that if he comes really close [...] then I move a bit further away. (Interview 9)

Some of the couples' relationships had eventually ended in separation or divorce.

## Discussion

The results of this study describe the change experienced by the Al-Anon members, including the active ingredient of supportive communication, which helped to generate change in the partners' communication and, by extension, in the relationship with an alcoholic partner. In addition, these results provide a perspective on the concrete communication behaviors that embody this change. Thus, it breaks down the ideology of Al-Anon into a set of practical maneuvers generating the change. Indeed, the "big story" of 12-step groups (e.g., Denzin, 1987) clearly shaped the way in which the Al-Anon members spoke about their experiences.

The results show the change experienced by the members in a set of continuums, from controlling and codependent communication to the partners' acceptance of the situation and drawing of boundaries. And by doing so, the focus of the relationship moving from the alcoholic's drinking to the relational partners themselves and from the lack of communication to more clarified relationship.

First, it appears that before Al-Anon, the more the partners aimed to connect with their alcoholic partners by controlling and responding to the alcoholic's behavior, the more skewed the focus of the relationship became. The controlling and codependent communication found in this study echo the work of Le Poire et al.



(1998); they maintain that the regulation of immediacy and “altercentrism” function as a partner’s power base in an alcohol-afflicted relationship. That is, the partners regulate reinforcing and punishing communication in order to control the significant other’s substance use. The results also show that before Al-Anon, the partners had been unable to discuss these problems, and the relationship suffered from lack of communication as a result. Similarly, according to Le Poire et al., the basic problem in alcoholic relationships is the relational partners’ inability to recognize and discuss communication problems.

At Al-Anon, the partners learned to see their partners and themselves as separate individuals, thus resulting in the clarification of the status of their relationships (see also Holmila, 2003). The results of this study show, however, that this clarification of the relationship status could also be executed through intrapersonal communication. That is, although not all of the members had experienced actual improvement in the relational communication, they now had a clearer vision of the relationship and the way of communicating within it. Duggan and Le Poire Molineux (2009; see also Duggan et al., 2008; Wright, 2011) suggest that by communicating more consistently, partners can also strengthen the substance abuser’s commitment to abstinence.

Second, this clarification of the relationship status included the partners shifting the attention from the alcoholic and his drinking to themselves. Indeed, Duggan et al. (2006) claim that inconsistencies in partners’ communication leads to the focus remaining upon the substance abuser, thus directing attention away from the partner’s own shortcomings in the relationship. It was clearly visible in the participants’ accounts that in order to improve their way of living with their alcoholic partners, the partners actually had to cease their attempts to change the alcoholics’ behavior. Thus the partners’ way of changing their communication featured more attempts to accept than to change the current situation. This finding echoes the Al-Anon ideal of ceasing to carry the responsibilities of the alcoholic, and starting to take responsibility for one’s own well-being (e.g., Zajdow, 2002).

Interestingly, however, the majority of research studies and treatment programs that involve the families of alcoholics set the sobriety of the alcoholic as their final objective—some explicitly and some more implicitly (see Orford et al., 2013). In these studies and treatment programs, the goal of the family members changing their communication patterns with the alcoholic is usually that the alcoholic would decrease drinking, become compliant to treatment, or something similar. The findings of this study, however, show that focusing on the alcoholic and his drinking was part of the communication problems in the relationship. Instead, the Al-Anon

members participating in this study seemed to think that the key to change could actually be found in accepting the partner’s alcoholism and allowing oneself to live one’s own life. Indeed, although a few of the members who took part in this study reported that their alcoholic partner had become sober, the majority of the partners had learned to live with the drinking partner—or chose to divorce or separate.

In Orford, Velleman, Copello et al.’s (2010, p. 51-55) terms, the change described by the Al-Anon members could be seen as a shift from standing up to the partners’ substance use or putting up with it, to withdrawing and gaining one’s independence. According to Wiseman (1975; 1991), those partners of alcoholics who are able to engage in this kind of perspective change while remaining in the relationship with the alcoholic are in the minority. In this study, the supportive communication within Al-Anon was considered as one possible source of recovery for partners of alcoholics.

Indeed, for the participants in this study, Al-Anon offered an arena for dealing with their problems. All in all, the partners reported that there were three forms of support that helped them to change their communication with their alcoholic partners. Thus, although the optimal matching model (e.g., Cutrona & Russell, 1990) indicates that problem-focused support in controllable matters (such as changing the partner’s own communication, according to the Al-Anon ideology) is preferable, the study participants reported that emotional support was also a beneficial type of support in terms of helping partners to change their communication patterns. It has been suggested that contextual elements, such as an emotional atmosphere, are important support mechanisms when the support receiver is not yet able to process the content of the supportive messages (Burleson, 2009). In summary, even communication with alcoholics themselves, as just one element of partners’ complicated situations, is profoundly complex, and change thus calls for several different types of support (see also MacGeorge et al., 2011; Cutrona & Suhr, 1994).

The results also revealed another element of support at Al-Anon: the provision of a context in which to practice interpersonal skills. Indeed, previous studies have shown that mutual-aid groups can function as arenas for interpersonal learning (see Cline, 1999). The results of this study show how Al-Anon, as a supportive context, offers the opportunity to experience being a functional part of a network of people and to rehearse the skills of self-monitoring, listening, and tolerance. Hence, although Ablon (1974) maintains that Al-Anon groups focus on information sharing, instead of the members’ mutual relationships, the communication perspective taken here reveals the relational level of communication that exists within Al-Anon.

The limitations of this study include, first, the fact that the members who answered the questionnaire and those who were

interviewed were, for the most part, different people. The interviewees and the questionnaire respondents reported, however, that similar forms of support had helped them to change their communication patterns with their alcoholic partners. The second limitation is that those who participated in the study had presumably benefited from Al-Anon in some way, and thus were keen to talk about the organization in a positive manner. As all Al-Anon groups are voluntary, though, we can presume that all participants have benefited from Al-Anon in some way. Finally, it is also important to remember the interpretive nature of the study design. That is, the results of this study represent the researchers' interpretation of the Al-Anon members' subjective experiences as one possible story of change. Further research into methods for helping the families of alcoholics in general is necessary.

### Conclusion

The results of this study suggest that instead of focusing directly on the problems in close relationships, a positive change might also be generated through the relational partners' engagement in supportive interactions outside the relationship, such as in mutual-aid groups. This kind of approach provides an additional possibility to improve on close relationships, especially in situations in which partners are not able to communicate their problems within the relationship. However, the effects that supportive communication has on relationships outside the support situation represent an under-studied area, as the existing research has often dealt with the outcomes that supportive communication has on the relationship between the support provider and the receiver (see Burleson, 2003). Undoubtedly, Al-Anon and other mutual-aid groups for individuals dealing with challenges in close relationships are important contexts for investigating these issues more thoroughly.

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## The Spectacle of Rock and Roll Hybridity in Chiang Mai: An Ethnographic Study of Rock and Roll-ness in Thailand

Scott M. Walus & Nathan E. Furstenau

*Rock and roll has attained canonical status in America by providing a soundtrack for the expression of individualism for the past 60 years. Its current state of stability differs from its first two decades, where novelty and possibility fueled its popularity (Cooper, 2013). In Chiang Mai, Thailand, an influx of American rock and roll has combined with local Thai culture to yield a hybrid music culture. This hybrid rock and roll culture provides the space for the possibilities of collective rebellion through a community that is uniquely Chiang Mai. This study deploys the lens of hybridity to the participant data gathered over the course of 10 months in an ethnographic process. It examines the new hybrid culture of “rock and roll-ness” constructed around the intersection of local Thai and Farang (Westerner) cultures in a shared space. This “rock and roll-ness” favors aural signifiers instead of visual ones, promotes collectivism over individualism, removes the boundary between musician and audience, and ultimately provides a marketable spectacle.*

I grew up in a small town in the Midwest far removed from normative notions of a rock and roll lifestyle. At twelve years old, my father took me to my first rock and roll concert. When Aerosmith took the stage, the mix of coolness, sexuality and anti-establishment energy shot a jolt of empowerment through me. In this moment, I found a voice that I previously lacked. My twelve-year-old self feared expression—emotion was something for my sister—but something about that moment with Aerosmith made me and thousands of others get lost in a moment. I had never before seen so many people openly passionate about something in my life.

From the grassy hill atop which we sat, I peered through a pair of binoculars and watched singer Steven Tyler wail into his microphone. His hair was a wild mess that flashed in front of the oversized, dark-tinted sunglasses which I instantly decided I needed. A purple and orange scarf danced in the air behind him as he sang, “Love in an elevator, lovin’ it up when I’m goin’ downwwn.” In the

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crowd, cropped halter-tops and cut-off denim shorts beckoned my wandering adolescent eyes. From the huge monitors, I could see women and men reaching out to touch the band, even for a glancing moment.

Part of the coolness and sexiness emerged from the stark feeling of anti-establishment. This band of aging men made their living as rock stars, clad in stylish and flamboyant garb. Passionate fans showered them with adoration as they performed their music. As my eyes flirted between the stage and the crowd, I stole sideways glances of the teenagers nearby, wearing acid washed jeans and smoking cigarettes, secretly wishing my dad might disappear, if only for a minute. I wondered who around me was using drugs and what drugs were like. I wondered about tattoos and hair dye and leather jackets, too. I wondered most about what my small, conservative hometown would think of my newest wardrobe desires. Traditional logic did not apply in this situation, as the spectacle I experienced contained its own irrefutable logic.

Years later I would try my own hand at rock and roll. I spent years pursuing larger than life moments and wearing my very own oversized, dark-tinted sunglasses. However, my experiences in small rock clubs around the Midwest differed greatly from those of Aerosmith at the arena. I discovered that what I understood to be rock and roll was composed of spectacular imagery, much like what I witnessed from atop that grassy hill sitting next to my dad. Performing rock and roll was not necessarily cool or sexy or even anti-establishment. The shared experience from the hill was replaced by the cold indifference of local music scenes and a noticeable disconnection between the various audiences and performers.

In 2010, however, I found myself in Chiang Mai, Thailand, immersed in a thriving rock and roll music scene, constructed largely from imported rock and roll symbols. I spent a year in the region, participating with musicians and observing at local music venues. During this immersion, I noticed that performing rock and roll in Chiang Mai was very different from my experiences in the United States and was somehow reminiscent of my Aerosmith concert. While at the Aerosmith concert, I was a mere spectator of the spectacular. In Chiang Mai, both audience and musician shared in a collective construction of rock and roll in a shared space. As a musician I was excited; as an academic I was intrigued.

This study argues that the construction and performance of rock and roll operates within a hybrid third space, which necessitates new and distinctive communication strategies. Specifically, it examines the new hybrid culture of “rock and roll-ness” constructed around the intersection of local and *Farang* (Westerner) cultures in a shared space. This “rock and roll-ness” favors aural signifiers instead of visual ones, promotes collectivism over individualism,

removes the boundary between musician and audience, and ultimately provides a marketable spectacle.

In the next section, I situate the cultural phenomenon of rock and roll within the United States and review Bhabha's (1990) deliberations on hybridity in relation to forms of culture and Debord's (1967) discussion of spectacle.

### Situating the Cultural Phenomenon of Rock and Roll

Rock and roll provides a powerful and enduring cultural resource, as a widely-circulated commodity in American culture. It has long functioned to provide the appearance of individual voice. As musician Patti Smith articulated, "rock and roll [has] given us a voice for the things that we care about" (Conan, 2007, para. 15). The "voice" promotes individuality against the established order. Wenner (1986) suggests, "rock and roll [has] been under constant attack ... by an always hostile establishment" (p. 12). This "hostile establishment" is never directly defined by rock and roll. However, through ethereal references to authority, prevailing social order, and conformity, the establishment provides the enduring negative for rock and roll (Cooper, 2013). Rock critic and glorious madman Lester Bangs (1971/1996) suggested that rock and roll emerged "to score this vast combination Renaissance and psychic urban renewal project" (p. 65). The Renaissance and renewal of rock and roll stand in contrast to the dominant, yet never defined, social order. The path to freedom via rock and roll travels through a patchwork of symbolic resources. Watman (2003) explains that rock and roll "takes from the blues, it takes from folk, it takes from teenage lust, from rebellion, from the generation gap, the desire for a hero, easy money, and rootless cosmopolitanism. It takes and mixes and regurgitates" (p. 17). This "taking" and "regurgitating" provides rock and roll with the flexibility to succeed in new communication contexts.

While rock and roll contains immense flexibility, it has been increasingly canonized over the past three decades in museums and other sites of reverence (Myers, 2015). When the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame opened in Cleveland, OH in 1995, *New York Times* reporter Neil Strauss (1995) attended the grand opening of the hall and suggested that rock and roll music should be "loud, rebellious and impulsive . . . [however it] has come a long way in the last half-century, evolving into one of the world's most popular and significant forms of music, so maybe it's time for it to accept adulthood" (p. 13). American rock and roll currently finds itself firmly entrenched in adulthood and frequently references the possibilities of the 1950s and 60s, a time when it embodied novelty and possibility (Lezotte, 2013). Although rock and roll matured in

America, its sign system can be adopted to a multitude of new contexts, such as in the urban setting of Chiang Mai, Thailand. The transfer of contexts omits certain elements of "rock and roll-ness" (we use the suffix "-ness" in a manner that Barthes [1957] uses it to describe the essential traits of a cultural signifier) while emphasizing others. The impetus for this study actually began when I arrived in Thailand and fell into a conversation with a local resident. After hearing that I played rock and roll back in the states, the Thai man responded, "Rock and roll? Like the Backstreet Boys!" What elements of rock and roll-ness transferred into this new context and what social function did they now perform?

### Hybridity

In its most basic sense, hybridity refers to mixture. The concept has been applied to linguistic (Kuczkiewicz-Frae, 2001; Mäntynen & Shore, 2014) and racial theory (Mitchell, 1997; Puri, 2004), and its use has become commonplace within discussions of multiculturalism (Kuo, 2003; Hoon, 2006; Spencer, 2011), globalization (Kraidy, 2002, 2005; Franklin & Lyons, 2004), and post-colonialism (Puri, 2004; Young, 2005).

In his pioneering deliberations on hybridity and post-colonialism, Bhabha (1990) emphasizes the interdependence of the colonizer and those that are colonized. He describes a "third space of enunciation" (p. 6) and argues that it is here that hybrid cultural systems are assembled. This space rejects a direct interpretation of a cultural phenomenon from its original context. This culture is "not based on exoticism or multiculturalism of the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's hybridity" (p. 7), suggesting the prolonged negotiation of a local culture with an imported phenomenon. The colonized culture, physically or ideologically, never accepts the characteristics of the colonizer in full, resulting in a third hybrid form of culture. The values, appearance, character, and other components of this culture are inherent of neither the colonizer nor the colonized and are negotiated through social processes.

Many researchers have taken Bhabha's considerations of hybridity and applied them to specific forms of culture. Papastergiadis (2005) considers hybridity within the world of contemporary art, noting "hybridity is usually associated with the effects of multiple cultural attachments on identity or the process of cultural mixture" (p. 40). Expounding on the borrowed nature of hybridity, Papastergiadis additionally notes "in the spirit of the moving collage, it gathers form through a mixture of theft and gift, creation and destruction" (p. 61). Elements of the hybrid form provide connections to and separations from both of the original

cultures, often performed through visual and aural styles (Kraidy, 2005). Nacify (1993) articulates the dynamic nature of this hybrid culture, defining it as “ambiguous, dynamic, and unstable, constantly shifting and blending the features of two or more cultures” (p. 2). The negotiations in this borrowing and blending process are what this study explores.

Considering the cultural significance and the aesthetic styles found around the performance and consumption of music, hybridity provides a rather fitting lens by which to examine it. Waterman’s (1990) ethnohistory of West African Juju music, for instance, offers insight to the cultural, social, and political complexities that produced the genre; Juju emerged as a result of both the defiance of repressive 1920s and 1930s Western hegemony and as a social commentary voicing political dissent. Davies and Bentahila (2006) draw parallels between the paths of North African rai music into Western culture, and Western-originating rap genes into North African culture, concluding that “popular musical genres can cross frontiers, evolve, and become integrated into a new context without necessarily losing their original qualities” (p. 390). Similarly, Johnson (2002) suggests that the “national and global commodity of black music has penetrated the boundaries between and among cultures around the world,” and as such, “becomes bound up in an intricately spun web of cultural, social, and political battles over origin, ownership, circulation and performance” (p. 117). In his examination of the performance of country and hip-hop music in the United States, Morris (2011) argues that the Trace Adkins song “Honky Tonk Badonkadonk” manages to “elicit the enjoyment of socially-sanctioned hybridism by pulling Blackness so close to Whiteness that they speak with the same musical voice, but meanwhile uses this closeness to maintain their separation” (p. 481). Morris sees in Adkin’s song the conflation of two very different social and racial cultures. Yet, following the assertions of Bhabha and others mentioned here, suggests that neither completely consumes the other. Instead, a third realm is formed where blackness and whiteness are still separate, but are performed through a single medium.

Han (2007) further underscores this assertion while exploring the convergence of hip-hop and Chinese culture in his case study of the artist Leehom Wang. Han suggests that Wang adopts “the basic elements of hip-hop, which was originated from the black urban culture in the US” and subsequently “appropriates the music styles as well as the Chinese cultural elements and the modern urban lifestyle in the Asian context, giving hip-hop music new meanings” (p. 22). In a similar study, Clarke and Hiscock (2009) examined the hybridity of the growing hip-hop community in Newfoundland. In the artists’ adoption of external musical forms, local Newfoundland musicians had the tendency to adopt those non-local accents

perceived as appropriate to the genre. American rap has not completely assumed the Newfoundland hip-hop scene nor has this happened in the reverse. Instead, through a combination of linguistic usage, a hybrid form of communication practices have been created in a third space.

Following Clarke and Hiscock (2009), this study seeks to interact with both musicians and audience members of the hybrid culture, shifting away from the textually-bound form that hybridity studies often take. Additionally, there is limited hybridity research that specifically considers musical performance, and none consider rock and roll. This study intends to fill this gap and expand hybridity analyses of music away from textual analysis and online ethnography to examining the material practices of the hybrid culture through physical immersion within it.

## The Spectacle of Rock and Roll

The spectacle of American rock and roll provided the catalyst for the hybrid culture in Chiang Mai. The examples of Aerosmith or the Backstreet Boys contained an experiential and irrefutable logic, transferred through the spectacular. When these spectacles find new contexts, hybridity occurs. In the above articles on the hybridity of hip-hop, artists translate different contexts and aesthetics into their localized cultures through communication practices. The visual, aural, and lingual symbols imbue every genre of music with its cultural, social, and economic capital. Bukatman (2006) defines the spectacle as “an impressive, unusual, or disturbing phenomenon or event that is seen or witnessed” (p. 81). The spectacle contains a “to-be-looked-at-ness” (Mulvey, 2004, p. 841) that invites an audience to “stop and stare” (King, 2000, p. 4). Debord (1967) suggests that the presence of the spectacle results from the accumulation of images over a lifetime, and in order to define the spectacle, we must use “the language of the spectacular” (p. 11).

The spectacle simplifies a complex situation down to imagery to which individuals can attach personalized meanings. Contemporary scholars have used the spectacle as a lens to explain the reduction of material reality into image. Yousman (2009) demonstrated how the spectacular violence on the HBO program *Oz* removes the humanity from prisoners and replaces it with pure imagery. Retzinger (2010) suggests that the same process occurs around televisual representations of food production on *How It’s Made* and *Dirty Jobs with Mike Rowe*, which shifts the focus from economic conditions to the dirt-covered spectacle. Kellner (2004, 2007) asserts that both the United States government and Islamic Jihadists used televisual spectacles of terror as propaganda after the September 11, 2001. The spectacle simplified a complex socio-

political situation into an image that resisted scrutiny. The spectacle explains how American rock and roll can be understood through a set of decontextualized signifiers whether in its indigenous context (the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame) or new contexts (Chiang Mai). The increasing deterritorialization of music (Değirmenci, 2013; Connell & Gibson, 2004) occurs in part because of the adaptability of the spectacular to new contexts.

The spectacle flows through each of our examples of rock and roll, as journalists, musicians, and scholars use the language of the spectacular to describe notes and rhythms as a cultural force and a voice for independent expression. The socially articulated importance of the spectacle results in greater value for its commodity sign. The importance of the spectacle explains individuals paying \$27 to see Stevie Nicks' gown from a 1995 Fleetwood Mac tour; gazing upon the spectacular provides pleasure. As Debord (1967) explains, "the spectacle presents itself as something enormously positive, indisputable, and inaccessible" (p. 12). Thus, a cultural phenomenon like rock and roll avoids static definition in its original context, its new context, and its subsequent hybrid. Instead, it relies upon the styles and articulations of a shared aesthetic. It is the marriage of an ideological reality with a material reality (Kellner, 2003), constructed of borrowed components.

## Method

Small (1998) suggests that the term "music" should be considered a verb instead of a noun, since its practices reveal its symbolic attributes. Each musical performance features a complex symbolic environment where musicians, audience members, and venue staff all participate in practicing rock and roll. Only through immersion in these practices, with all of these types of individuals, and within this complex symbolic environment, could I study examine the shared communication practices found in the hybrid culture.

To understand the practices and contexts of audiences and performers, scholars often turn to ethnography. Goodall (1991) played guitar while conducting field work on rock and roll performance. He suggested that in order to understand the meanings circulating around music, immersion was a necessity:

In other words, go to the source, immerse yourself in it, and try to figure out what it means. This is what I call doing basic research, and for me as an interpretive ethnographer, it requires getting out of the office and participating in the culture, acquiring new skills and associating with new people. (p. 9)

Indeed, participating in the culture and associating with people has been an essential trait to benchmark studies in popular music (Willis, 1978; Hebdige, 1979; Cohen, 1997; Myers, 2015), where researchers empirically examined particular elements of a musical subculture through immersion in places where music happened. This immersion is essential for the examination of hybridity. The few studies on the topic employ only rhetorical analysis, with Clarke and Hiscock (2009) as the sole study to examine hybridity through interviews. In order to truly experience hybrid culture, it is essential to immerse oneself into the two cultures responsible for the hybrid form.

As in the above example by Goodall, in ethnographic research, the researcher is the instrument (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). My experiences before moving to Southeast Asia in 2010 shaped my data collection and analysis. As a lifelong musician, I have spent years playing in clubs around the United States and thousands of hours as an audience member, which resulted in tacit knowledge (Potter, 1996) about American rock and roll. This knowledge allowed me the ability to appreciate its hybrid form upon performing and observing rock and roll in Thailand. I lived in Chiang Mai, Thailand, from June 2010 until May 2011. During my time abroad, I was employed as an English instructor by day and spent evenings and weekends participating in the local rock and roll.

I engaged in the participatory ethnography articulated by Thomas (1993) and executed by such music scholars as Goodall (1991) and Myers (2015). I performed in a band (original rock and roll in the all-Western band, The Indicators), played open stage nights, socialized with musicians, and attended venues as a fan. I experienced, inquired, and examined all elements of the practices of rock and roll in Chiang Mai, as suggest by Wolcott (1999). While I spoke with dozens of individuals in the process and observed countless interactions, I conducted thirteen field interviews with audience members, musicians, and those in charge of the various venues. These interactions occurred at three particular music locales: Northgate Jazz Co-op, Monkey Bar, and The Guitar Man. I played over thirty different times in front of live audiences, observed a similar number of both Thai and Western rock and roll performances, and met and interviewed a variety of musicians and spectators. The combination of these experiences resulted in a rich and diverse set of data that started as head notes on various sheets of scrap paper and eventually turned into 63 pages of notes.

Data collection, conceptualization, interpretation, and analysis generally happened at the same time through an emergent process (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). As I collected more data, "defamiliarization" (Thomas, 1993) led to the questioning of naturalized assumptions of both Thai and American culture as it related to rock and roll. To ensure the quality of my ethnographic



observations, I utilized triangulation and member checking (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). The collection of more diverse sources—in this case venues, bands, and audiences—lead to triangulation and a richer understanding. To check my observations, I discussed my findings with other participants in the music scenes, including a fan, an amateur musician, and a professional musician.

### The Spectacle of Hybridity

The communication context of Chiang Mai requires a different set of rock and roll symbols than the naturalized signs circulating in American culture. I witnessed and participated in the creating, packaging, and selling of a hybrid rock and roll on the stages of music bars and clubs in Chiang Mai. Club owners, musicians, and fans deployed strategic visual, aural, and conceptual elements of rock and roll-ness into this new communication context. Specifically, the communication practices of individuals in the Chiang Mai music scene revolve around rebellion done in a communal fashion. The visual elements of symbolic rebellion are informed by an American-ness, but are translated into the new hybrid space with an emphasis on sharing this space. In this shared space, those appearing to be from the West, or *Farang*, occupied a privileged position. This privilege extended beyond the imported rock and roll authenticity to a sense of pride provided by the willing inclusion of the *Farang* into this uniquely Thai space.

### Rock and roll-ness

Club owners, musicians, and audiences negotiate the normative communication practices that surround the symbols of American rock and roll in the context of Chiang Mai. Whereas rock and roll in America has moved away from novelty toward a canonized state of stability (Cooper, 2013), the Chiang Mai music scene is in its developmental stages. The individuals comprising the music scene value its novelty, the talent of the musician, and how it provides a sense of community. These individuals use the recurrent symbols of freedom and American-ness to construct a unified version of rock and roll. However, the translation of rock and roll in this hybrid space devalues the visible fashion and style of America. Instead, individuals focus on the sounds of American music as the valuable element in constructing rock and roll. The hybrid rock and roll manages to maintain its “rebel” persona through this image devaluation in a manner similar to Hebdige’s (1979) punks. Through my experiences at Northgate Jazz Co-op, The Guitar Man, and Monkey Bar, I was able to experience these characteristics and

values, witnessing firsthand the codes and social functions of rock and roll in Thailand and the communication practices that help facilitate these social functions.

Northgate Jazz Co-op is located near the center of Chiang Mai. Like many Thai venues, and unlike many American venues, it is very small. The bar itself seats five, and there are four small, wooden tables in the small seating area that can each accommodate two or three patrons comfortably. There is some seating available in the upstairs loft but only provides enough room for another five to six patrons. In all, around twenty guests can comfortably fit inside Northgate Jazz Co-op. However, with one side of the building completely open to the street, many more guests choose to sit on benches and stools on the sidewalk, or even stand in the street outside the Co-op on popular nights. Similarly divergent from many American venues, the Co-op lacks visual music elements commonly found in American clubs such as band posters, feature advertisements, handbills, or stickers. In fact, outside of the house drum set sitting to one side of the room, nothing suggests the Co-op is a place of music. On my first visit, I actually walked past its location twice before realizing the quaint, modestly decorated establishment was in fact the music-friendly Co-op. While the Northgate Jazz Co-op is first and foremost a jazz club, its most popular evening of the week was jam night where musicians came to play various styles of music on an open stage. Upon arriving each evening, I walked up to the bar to write my name, country of origin, and instrument played on a ripped, stained piece of notebook paper covered in others’ scrawls. Though all styles of music were welcome, rock and roll was most warmly received and what was most often played. Jam night happened on Tuesdays, and the hybridized spectacle of rock and roll music supplied the commodity to routinely fill the bar, loft, benches, stools, sidewalk, and street. Weekend jazz nights featuring Thai musicians usually drew no more than thirty audience members, while these Tuesdays routinely attracted over 100 non-musician audience members. In fact, the Co-op would often utilize traffic cones to block off a portion of the street to accommodate such large audiences. The enthusiasm displayed at the Co-op differed greatly than my experiences in the United States, where Tuesdays or nights devoted to an open stage would typically attract only a few apathetic bar patrons. The cultural form of rock and roll has existed in America for over six decades. Miller (1999) suggests that contemporary rock and roll in America has all the “features of a finished cultural form” (p. 18), and this lack of novelty can be seen in rock clubs around the United States on a nightly basis. In Thailand, however, the spectacle of imported rock and roll provided a spark for the local music scene, as musicians, clubs, and

audiences demonstrate its economic and social value at each performance.

"Nathan, from America, to play the drums" called out the bar owner in a heavy accent as I joined the musicians on stage. Jam nights featured both foreign and local musicians, and each musician typically performed two or three songs before rejoining the audience. I participated in the Co-op's weekly jam session nearly every Tuesday from August 2010 until May 2011 as both a drummer and as an audience member. During that time, I met and played with approximately 50 local and visiting musicians. In the Thai language, there is only one word for anyone of European descent, and I, along with anyone else ever considered to be of Western heritage, was often referred to as *Farang*. This word is not used pejoratively, but instead as a classifier. At the Co-op, where *Farang* often participated in the performance of rock and roll, the audience responded through dancing, clapping, and yelling in appreciation of the infusion of *Farang* rock and roll sounds into the Thai music scene. "All right, Nathan!" someone yelled through the cheers as I took my place behind the drum set. These experiences in the third space resulted in a spectacle that held high cultural value. This audience enthusiasm and participation was noticeably less at Monkey Bar, which featured rock and roll bands composed exclusively of Thai individuals. The lack of *Farang* also meant the lack of spectacle and therefore the lack of pleasure derived from the spectacular.

After getting comfortable and adjusting the cymbals to my liking, I gave the keyboardist a nod. "How about the key of E?" he called, and the bass player, whom I came to know as "Sonny," kicked off the jam. Whereas many of the pleasures I took in American rock and roll had to do with its aesthetic (e.g., Steven Tyler's amazing sunglasses), Thai audiences and musicians routinely focused on the technical performance of the notes of rock and roll and that the individuals playing the notes had also written them. Individuals in the music scene expected original music, even if musicians had to make it up on the spot. While musicians would sometimes cover popular songs, audiences reacted far more enthusiastically to original songs. This stressed the importance of musicians' abilities to *create* rock and roll as well as the importance of the space in contributing to its creation. When I played at the Co-op, musical numbers only started after the keyboardist or bassist called out a musical key. The band even sometimes relied upon the audience for suggestions, requiring improvised, communally-created rock and roll. So many people were attracted to the jam nights because it was not a "band" in the sense of practiced, rehearsed music. The symbolic practices that musicians, audience members, and venue employees performed during the "musicking" process (Small, 1998) occurred in a raw and unfiltered state. Musicians in attendance at the Tuesday night jam sessions had

often never played with each other before, and relied solely on their musical talents to create unpracticed, original rock and roll as the audience watched. These musicians used American rock and roll aural aesthetics, using common 4/4 time signatures and melodies derived from conventional blues traditions to create music in a Thai environment resulting in a hybrid culture that functioned differently for the audiences than either of the two original cultures (solely Thai or American).

Halfway through my first jam, shakers and tambourines made their way into the audience and the immense enthusiasm with which they were utilized nearly caused me to lose the rhythm. I looked to Sonny; he smiled and yelled, "Welcome!" When *Farang* shared musical space with Thai individuals, an excitement ensued from the new resultant culture. Luther, a former studio drummer from Germany, was a crowd favorite because his precise, machine-like, playing style was unique to the Co-op's stage. "New," a frequent local patron, often praised Luther, telling him that he performed "like no Thai drummer" he had seen. In the United States, crowds often favor familiarity over original music, demonstrating excitement upon hearing a song that they recognize from recordings (either of the band performing or popular recording audience). In this sense, the definitive version of a song in American rock and roll is contained in a form of media. In contrast, the Thai audience valued the actual material moment of the song performance as well as its creation. This value arose from the rock and roll being written and performed in a space that the Chiang Mai music scene had helped to create.

In the performance of rock and roll, the Chiang Mai music scene emphasized the need for musicians to unify and share the moments. Specifically, both audience members and musicians routinely policed the sound levels by musicians and audiences during these jam sessions. Within thirty seconds of that first jam at the Co-op, Sonny waved frantically from across the stage to communicate that I was playing too loudly. In the United States, musicians often use volume as a form of expression. At the Co-op, however, volumes were monitored and each musician could very distinctly be heard and judged against his peers, thus emphasizing the simultaneous importance of individual and community. The musicians of the night came out of the audience and went back into it after performing, with the owner of the club (who was also a saxophonist) introducing each musician by first name and country of origin (Nathan, from America!) upon entering and leaving. Every musician had the right to be heard, and every audience member had the right to hear them. The audience members supported this level of volume by stopping conversations as songs would begin. At my first jam night, a regular named "Quick" explained the process to me along with providing much backstage information about every musician participating.

Eventually, the owner called me to the stage, and I played a few songs before again finding Quick at the bar. He immediately congratulated me with a smile and then offered some raw feedback, “You played too loud!” Quick then made me promise to return the following week. In our conversation, he expressed obvious concern for the musical talent of the artists performing as he informed me of who displayed the most and least aptitude on stage. I came to realize that he was not necessarily judging the musicians’ talent so much as he was communicating his integration into the scene. He was welcoming me to the community by sharing his knowledge of its various members and their communal roles. Lack of talent did not preclude an individual from participating as the community accepted them as part of this shared space of creation. Quick’s knowledge about the artists and his self-appointed duty to share it with new members of the hybrid culture demonstrated how rock and roll in Chiang Mai required the communal effort of everyone on stage and in the audience.

While speaking with Quick, I ordered a beer from the bar and was surprised by its high cost. Considering this cost, as well as the lack of television, pool table, darts board, or other common bar installments, it was apparent that there was no real other reason to visit the Co-op other than for the live music it offered. The lone commodity for sale was the original music and the accompanying sense of community shared by the individuals who helped create it. Most audience members knew returning musicians by name and, after leaving the stage, many musicians would join tables of friends in the crowd. The separation between audience and performer, or stage and crowd did not exist. The audience was no longer a separate entity I was trying to manipulate or impress; the audience was part of the production process—calling out keys, shaking tambourines, and educating its new members—and essential to this particular type of hybridity.

Instead of embracing individual rebellion through consumption of clothing or brands of instruments, the Chiang Mai music scene incorporated rebellion into collective acts by individuals in the community. According to Lezotte (2013), the rebellious spirit of early American rock and roll appealed to “the rebellious teenage boy eager for good times, adventure, liberation from restrictive home environments, and sex” (p. 165). It promised liberation on the individual level. However, in the hybrid community, rock and roll provided individuals the ability to collectively rebel. For example, during the time of my observations, the Northgate Jazz Co-op was engaged in an ongoing disagreement with the Chiang Mai Police and Immigration Bureau. Because foreign musicians like myself often played at the jam nights, the Co-op was expected to pay an additional tax to the Immigration Bureau. The Thai ownership of the Co-op

flatly refused to pay this tax. This disagreement escalated to the point that all patrons and musicians were warned of the scenario. In response, a clear anti-establishment attitude formulated in the community, and people continued to perform rock and roll. Music was played right up until the Chiang Mai Police and Immigration Bureau stormed the bar and arrested all foreign musicians on stage, a fate that I literally avoided by five minutes as my set had just ended. Due to the fallout and ongoing disagreement, the Co-op was forced to shut their doors for two weeks following the raid. The community responded in support of the anti-establishment. The Immigration Bureau levied heavy fines on both the bar as a whole and on the *Farang* musicians who were arrested. Both Thai and Western patrons of the Co-op immediately began to come forward with monetary donations to help the bar and musicians impacted by the disagreement.

### The Marketing of the Rock and Roll Commodity Spectacle

While the musicians and supporters of the Chiang Mai music scene valued the collective creation and performance of rock and roll, venues attempted to translate and promote spectacles of American rock and roll. This spectacle of American rock and roll relied on the mythic possibilities of rock and roll. When I was not busy drumming away at the Northgate Jazz Co-op, I was usually practicing songs with a band called The Indicators, a four-piece rock and roll band composed of four *Farang*. The songwriter and vocalist was from Australia, the guitar player was from the United Kingdom, and the bass player was from the United States. The Indicators had been around for some time before I ever played with them and continue to play now that I am no longer in Southeast Asia. During my time as their drummer, we played at a popular venue in Chiang Mai called The Guitar Man, where I often spent my evenings ingesting copious amounts of their famed pizza. Many of the music venues offering Western music in Chiang Mai traded on the commodity of American-ness. Riverside Bar and Restaurant, for instance, was hugely popular and very well known for their Western and Thai fare catering mostly to the tourist or foreign resident. Its website suggests that it has every guest covered, “Dad likes his steak medium, Mom loves Thai food, but not too spicy, little Frank longs for a Cheese Pizza and Aunt Pam goes vegetarian—not a problem at The Riverside,” while its bar claims to have imported craft brews. On weekend nights, Riverside paired these signifiers of American-ness with live music. They seldom mentioned what specific musicians or bands would be performing. Instead, the value of rock and roll could stand alone.

The Guitar Man had a very different aesthetic than the Co-op. The single-story space could hold approximately 60 people

inside, which was quite large for a Chiang Mai bar establishment, and was very dark. Walking inside felt like a stumbling into a seedy music venue back home, complete with a raised stage and full-length bar. While their aesthetics differed, The Guitar Man and the Co-op both marketed rock and roll in a similar manner with a focus on musical talent and community. To communicate the importance of community and musical talent, The Guitar Man emphasized having the best “sound” in Chiang Mai. Musicians and audiences enjoyed The Guitar Man because one of the owners, a musician himself, spent much time maintaining quality speakers, amplification, and acoustic treatment, as well as creating an overall balanced sound within the venue. Musicians felt this awarded the best opportunity to take hold in a music community as it allowed for the best balanced representation of their sound. Audiences valued this balance as they could experience the communal construction of rock and roll. Everyone on stage would have a voice, and by sharing in this communal voice, individuals could engage in a spectacular experience only available in this 60-person capacity location. In Chiang Mai, none of the traditional marketing of posters, drink specials, or media advertisements were required to reach an audience. The spectacle of rock and roll provided enough reason for individuals to attend the venue.

### Social Functions of Rock and Roll

The function of rock and roll in this hybrid space built community between Thai and *Farang* individuals. Northgate Jazz Co-op and The Guitar Man catered to both Thai and *Farang* patrons, each venue acting as a bridge for American rock and roll to cross from its original space into the Thai music scene. Although I spent a great deal of my time at these venues, I occasionally found myself in the audience at venues such as Monkey Bar, which catered specifically to the Thai young adult. At these venues, Thai musicians created pop-influenced American rock and roll for an (almost) exclusively Thai audience. After experiencing these performances I was able to understand the function of rock and roll for Thai bands and audience members at establishments such as Northgate Jazz Co-op and The Guitar Man. I also began to understand the privileged position of the *Farang* musician in the community.

It was clear that the *Farang* rock and roll musician occupied a position of privilege within Chiang Mai. At venues such as Northgate Jazz Co-op and The Guitar Man, active and engaged audiences were present for the performance of rock and roll by *Farang* musicians specifically. At establishments like Monkey Bar, however, performances were coded as Thai via their pop-influenced sound, absence of *Farang* membership/participation, and noticeable

consideration for aesthetics—clothing, style, and instruments became important features of the performance. Watching these performances, I realized that Thai rock and roll musicians do not receive the same admiration or crowd reactions. Unadulterated engagement was reserved for rock and roll performed by the *Farang*. This seems to be partly due to the novelty of experiential moments of rock and roll and also partly due to the incorporation of these *Farang* into the Chiang Mai community, the Chiang Mai family. The audiences and musicians recognized that it was the culture of Chiang Mai that made this hybrid both possible and spectacular. They themselves were instrumental in its collective construction.

Whereas audiences valued the sonic aesthetics of the *Farang*, the Thai musicians at Monkey Bar translated the aesthetics of American rock and roll rebellion to offer a uniquely Chiang Mai rock and roll spectacle, rather than the hybrid one I have been describing. The more pop-oriented Monkey Bar bands would adopt very flamboyant, colorful, and highly-stylized personas on stage. The more rock and roll-oriented bands wore dark colors, leather, and often had dark facial make-up. In each instance, the visual styles utilized by musicians served to garner individual attention and to detach their rock and roll personas from their everyday life personas. In this sense, the Thai musicians appropriated the sights and sounds of rock and roll to reject the hybrid cultures found at the Co-op and The Guitar Man. The cultural artifacts of rock and roll provided the resources for both cultures and the contexts resulted in different cultures.

Eventually, I understood that many of the musicians I knew valued the rock and roll scene for something much different than I ever expected. They valued the “family” of rock and roll. When I first asked fellow musicians why they played rock and roll in Thailand, I received the answers I expected. Thai and Western responses circled around concepts of fun, drinking, partying, and sex. After becoming a member of the hybrid culture, however, I began to see a value of “family” emerge. Most Western musicians I interviewed arrived to Thailand alone, leaving friends and bands behind, and many of them alluded to initially recreating their social lives through inclusion in the local rock and roll music scene. These musicians valued the rock and roll scene for its inclusivity and its family-like construction, where everyone had a role. Sonny, the Thai bass player who first told me I was playing too loudly at the Co-op, reiterated this sentiment with his response: “I know everyone here. This stage is like my home.” This sense of community and family was shared by non-musicians as well. I asked Quick at the Northgate Jazz Co-op why he liked coming to see rock and roll. Initially, he told me that it was because it was “cool.” As he became more comfortable with me, however, he started explaining that he liked

seeing so many Thai and *Farang* that he knew. "Everybody is so happy here," Quick told me on more than one occasion. Other than in English class, Quick had little opportunity to interact with and experience foreign individuals near his own age. When visiting the Co-op on Tuesday nights, Quick could enjoy not only a conversation with a *Farang* but also *Farang* music and culture. Moreover, Quick himself took part in the creation of this hybrid culture. This entire experience was very enjoyable for Quick, and for those others that attended jam nights. As Debord (1967, p. 12) asserts, "the spectacle presents itself as something enormously positive, indisputable, and inaccessible. It says nothing more than 'That which appears is good, that which is good appears.'" It achieves a "monopoly of appearance." The commodity spectacle in this sense is not a monolithic rock and roll based upon image alone. Rather, those selling rock and roll sold access into a participatory hybrid culture as well as an affective experience available only found in a moment and in that space.

## Conclusion

In the middle of the twentieth century, amidst waves of social transgression and an increasingly aware youth subculture, American rock and roll provided a set of signifiers for use in an anti-establishment voice. It promised to empower individuals of a young, frustrated generation through its spectacular sounds, visuals, and words. As Cooper (2013) suggests, rock and roll "seemed to represent different manias and moods ... different ways of confronting or describing unanticipated circumstances, and different efforts at communicating romantic feelings" (p. 401). Rock and roll provided individuals with the voice to explain new experiences and to stand against the establishment. Sixty years later, these spectacular sentiments traveled to Chiang Mai, Thailand to aid in the construction of a new hybrid culture.

Through my participation in the local music scene, I came to recognize an inherently different interpretation of rock and roll in Chiang Mai. While the hybrid culture borrowed visual and aural signifiers from American rock and roll, it did not do so holistically. The definitions, presentations, and receptions of rock and roll which I witnessed were neither intrinsically American nor were they completely of Thai construction in this communication context. I performed, watched, and interacted with rock and roll in Bhabha's (1990) third space, a middle ground between two very different cultures creating and experiencing a single cultural phenomenon. Individuals celebrated technical faculty over visual aesthetics. Original composition was held in the highest regard, and rebellion

was exemplified via collective rather than individual action. Most importantly, rock and roll offered sensation of "community" between both musicians and audience Chiang Mai. In this co-constructed space, musicians and audience members could express their individualism collectively. For me, and many of the musicians with whom I interacted, playing rock and roll in Chiang Mai was something very unique; as Sonny put it, "This stage is like my home."

As I moved through the Chiang Mai music scene, it became clear that the hybrid culture of rock and roll had ultimately become Debord's (1967) spectacle—it was something enormously positive, indisputable, and ultimately, experiential. Audience member and musician came together in this space to create culture they could claim as their own. This experience carried immense importance for building a notion of self through community as well as sharing space with a new music "family." Local restaurants and bars recognized the value of rock and roll and deployed the aesthetic of its hybrid culture to entice patrons into their venues. In the hybrid aesthetic, the *Farang* enjoyed a privileged position. Unadulterated audience participation and engagement was reserved for rock and roll performed by the *Farang* and was not witnessed at establishments that showcased Thai rock and roll for a Thai audience. In reaction to the dominance of *Farang*-dominated hybrid culture, Thai bands rejected the everyday aesthetic deployed in places like the Co-op and The Guitar Man. Instead, they borrowed from American rock and roll aesthetics to make something uniquely their own.

Though this study is limited in genre (rock and roll) and location (Chiang Mai), the negotiation process of hybridity provides a powerful insight into the exportation of a cultural phenomenon and its possibilities in a new communication context. Individuals borrow symbols from each culture in order to suit their needs in the communication context. The creation of this shared space through the selection, emphasis, and omission of symbols demonstrates the active nature of constructing culture. Additionally, this study extends knowledge about how the spectacle functions in culture, as it uses audience data rather than textual analysis. Finally, this article expands knowledge about the lived practices of cultural hybridity, especially in relation to popular music and rock and roll.

Although this study has extended knowledge on hybridity, spectacle, and rock and roll culture, it lends itself to future studies. Subsequent research should study how individuals can use imported symbols in order to construct a uniquely local culture in the same manner that the Thai bands playing for a Thai audience did. Whereas the dominant hybrid culture in Chiang Mai rejected visual rock and roll aesthetics, the Thai bands embraced them in order to create a Thai space. An additional future study should also consider the

possibilities of hybridity in both domestic and international settings and trace the process of how and why hybridity becomes spectacle.

Debord (1967) suggests that the spectacle provides “the sun which never sets over the empire of modern passivity. It covers the entire surface of the world and bathes endlessly in its own glory” (p. 13). When individuals gaze, they draw both meanings and pleasures. They negotiate identity and express individual and collective fantasies. They even construct relationships to each other and to their cultures in this cultural resource. In the third space of this experiential hybrid spectacle, individuals can understand themselves through culture, and ultimately use communication practices to create a culture that provides opportunities to collectively rebel, to extend family, and to take an active role in creating art.

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