Changing Patterns of Cooperation in Occupational Communities:

A Multi-Level Analysis of Songwriter Career Strategies

By

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To my father, Donnie Skaggs, who I've watched pursue his songwriting dreams.

To my mother, Rose Skaggs, who supports his dreams and mine.

To David Carlson. His dreams and mine are intertwined.

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CHAPTER 1

PRELUDE: GIRLS IN TRUCKS

On July 15, 2014, two separate emerging female country music acts each released a song. Solo recording artist Maggie Rose, 26 at the time, released "Girl in Your Truck Song." In the chorus of this song, Rose sang:

> Tonight, tonight I wanna be the
>
> Girl in your truck song, the one that makes you sing along
>
> Makes you wanna cruise, drink a little moonshine down
>
> Leave a couple tattoos on this town
>
> Chillin' out with a cold beer, yeah, hanging with the boys round here
>
> Gonna take a little ride, that's my kinda night - you and me gettin' our shine on
>
> I wanna be the girl in your truck song.

In the song, Rose embodies the woman that a country man should want as a companion in his truck, and includes a series of direct lyrical allusions from bro-country songs. Bro-country, a style of country music identified in 2013, is characterized by a turn from the stoic, serious style of older country music toward irreverent hookup-culture and cliché redneck motifs (Rosen 2013). "Girl in Your Truck Song" had the initial backing of prominent country radio DJ Bobby Bones and began to climb the Billboard Charts. However, "Girl in Your Truck Song" never entered the weekly Top 40 after hitting its peak at number 58.

The other song, titled "Girl in a Country Song," was released on July 15, 2014 as the debut single from the girl-group Maddie and Tae. The duo sings in the chorus:

Bein' the girl in a country song

How in the world did it go so wrong?

Like all we're good for

Is looking good for you and your friends on the weekend

Nothing more

We used to get a little respect

Now we're lucky if we even get

To climb up in your truck, keep our mouth shut and ride along

And be the girl in a country song

This song, also filled with direct lyrical allusions from bro-country songs, was heralded as the "bro-country backlash" by the Atlantic (Dalfonzo 2014). The song would go on to top the charts and was only the second song by a female country duo to ever hold the number one country chart slot.

What made "Girl in a Country Song" beat out "Girl in Your Truck Song" on the Billboard charts? Though Maggie Rose's song had more initial success while emphasizing adherence to the way women are traditionally portrayed in country music, fans loved Maddie and Tae's "cheeky appropriation" of themes, lyrics, and phrasing from current country songs (Dalfonzo 2014). The duo's music video featured heavy young men in cutoff jean shorts and situated the women in a more powerful position than female artists are generally allowed to occupy. Critics might want to make the song's "cheeky" commentary on women in country music a larger feminist statement, but the duo comes off as "cute" rather than revolutionary in the song and its music video. Further, the president of the group's record label, Scott Borchetta said of the song, "Females are going to love this record…every guy that we've played it for laughs at it" (Dalfonzo 2014). Though the song

subverted country music gender norms, it did not lead to any more serious or substantive intra-industry critique of gender equity.

Beyond the songs themselves and their differing approaches to answering the question of women's place in country music is the political economy of the situation that determined which song prevailed. The structural relations and distribution of copyright ownership of each song also tells a story about why one song might have become more successful than the other. Maddie and Tae co-wrote their song with their producer, Aaron Scherz. Their collaboration in writing this song determined who owns the royalty streams that would come with any song sales that Maddie and Tae made. The producer's role in creating a record is analogous to that of a film director (Daley 1998), so Aaron Scherz's role in this process led him to both co-writing this song and including it on the record, thus assuring that he would have a financial stake in its success from recurring copyright royalties in addition to earnings from his role as producer. Further, Big Machine, a prominent indie record label that signed artists like Taylor Swift and Florida Georgia Line, along with Maddie and Tae, more than likely signed the duo under what is known as a 360° deal. This kind of contract allocates ownership of "360 degrees," that is, a portion of all of a recording artist's revenue streams, to the record label. Whereas in the past record labels earned revenue primarily from their roster's album sales, in recent years the structure of 360° deals has allowed record labels to earn revenue from an artist's merchandise sales and song copyright holdings among other sources of revenue. In sum, the pattern of copyright ownership from "Girl in a Country Song," meant that the song's artists, producer, and record label all split the earnings from any song sales or performances.

"Girl in Your Truck Song," in contrast, was an "outside cut," that is, a song that was not written by the performing artist. Since it was an outside cut, Maggie Rose's record

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label would not benefit from the song's sales and radio spins. In fact, since Rose was not a co-writer on the song, it is almost assuredly true that her record label, RPM Records, has no financial stake in the song's copyright. The three songwriters who collaborated to write this song were Caitlyn Smith, Gordie Sampson, and Troy Verges. According to a recent profile in the New York Times, Caitlyn Smith is pursuing a career as a recording artist in addition to her work as a "hitmaking Nashville songwriter" (Pareles 2018); the majority of Smith's career success has been in songwriting rather than as a vocalist. Gordie Sampson is a singer-songwriter whose success at writing songs, like Caitlyn Smith's, has surpassed his work as a recording artist. Troy Verges is a professional songwriter and has not pursued a career as an artist.

Though it may seem counterintuitive that "Girl in Your Truck Song" was written by three songwriters, none of whom are the artist of the song, this arrangement has been typical in the production of country music since at least the 1970s. Daley (1998) says that in the 1970s, co-writing was "an obsession" and began to be:

> viewed as a means for young writers to enhance their chance of getting recorded; a way for veteran writers to stay current; as an evil that dilutes copyright value by publishers; a productivity expander to meet the needs of a voracious genre; a way for recording artists to participate in the publishing royalty stream from their own recordings; and most recently, at a time when more recording artists write their own songs, as a way for publishers to sign perspective recording artists whose songwriting abilities may not be developed—or present at all—but who offer the potential for generating their own cuts if and when they make their own records. (Daley 1998:152).

The goal of co-writing, then, and the qualities that determine who will be a good co-writer, depends on the era. In some periods wherein outside cuts are common, songwriters may try to collaborate with others who are deep in the artistry or "craft" of songwriting to entice recording artists into licensing their songs. On the other hand, in eras wherein recording artists are obligated to co-write some of their music, songwriters are incentivized to co-write with artists in order to ensure that their songs have a better chance of being included on a record. Tensions between art and commerce are nothing new, but the pull between the two can be quite instructive in illuminating the patterning of the collaborations that govern songwriters' careers.

CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCTION: PATTERNED COOPERATION IN OCCUPATIONAL
COMMUNITIES

INTRODUCTION

Careers in culture industries are precarious and more volatile than traditional

"organization man" style careers, but career pathways outside of the arts are beginning to

resemble artistic careers. Research shows that work and employment relations in the

United States have been trending toward precariousness and away from stability. Since

around 1980, workers—even those who are employed at huge corporations—have

increasingly had to think of their career paths in more entrepreneurial terms. Because of

changes in the working relationship between employers and employees, as well as efforts

by corporations to "trim the fat" in order to become more efficient through maintaining the

minimum number of personnel to conduct business effectively, workers cannot assume that

they will spend their entire career with one employer. This shift in the standard

employment relationship means that even workers who are not self-employed must act like

free agents. In comparison to employees with a long-term relationship to a corporation, free

agents take on a combination of projects and roles in, around, or outside of bureaucratic

organizations. Ideally, workers will use their preferred combination of these work

arrangements and employment relations to pursue the American Dream throughout their

career. I will refer to this period of around 1980 until now as the post-bureaucratic era of

work and employment to distinguish it from the bureaucratic era of work and employment

(from about the end of WWII until about 1980) which was characterized by stable, long term careers with one organization.

While America's workforce is feeling the strain of wage stagnation, less permanent terms of employment, and an increase in the prevalence of lower-paying service jobs, artists have worked for years within a system that is characterized by a scarcity of jobs with most workers being paid low wages for work that is typically short-term with no promise of permanence. For these reasons, artists are familiar with the norms of collaborative work, gigging, and acquiring work on the basis of reputation rather than credentialing. In fact, while some commercial arts industries are experiencing an overall decline in revenue, individual artists are finding more ways than ever to incorporate entrepreneurial strategies into their repertoire of business and entrepreneurial skills.

Scholarship on careers in creative industries is based heavily on studies of either cultural and industry dynamics, mostly tied to artistic product markets (e.g., Bielby and Bielby 1994, Kersten and Verboord 2014) or the experiences of individuals and small groups of cultural producers (e.g., Craig and Dubois 2010, Freimark 2014, Fürst 2016). Despite the presence of high-quality scholarship that examines industry-level career outcomes and individual-level worker aspirations and careers, these studies do not fully situate or connect processes that govern individual careers within cultural industries. This is a gap that I seek to fill in my own research into careers in culture industries. Without connecting these two levels of analysis, it is difficult to determine how career pathways are structured with respect to individuals operating in a particular labor market.

My dissertation seeks to link the macro and micro processes that govern career pathways in cultural industries through a three-level systematic longitudinal analysis of the careers of Nashville's most highly successful songwriters. Within the structure of their

industry, songwriters participate in an informal system of co-writing songs that is the norm in country music and must undertake a variety of strategies to maintain their careers. In this manuscript, I focus on the patterning of instances of co-writing between professional songwriters and recording artists as an example of employment management work (Halpin and Smith 2017). The collected strategies of employment management work are the individual yet relational process of "managing employment experiences" by using resources and planning or strategizing how to improve work outcomes (Halpin and Smith 2017: 340). For songwriters, choosing who to write with is a key strategy for improving work outcomes in that it can lead to writing a better song and/or having connections to the right people who can get the song recorded and released on an album.

As a whole, this dissertation constitutes a three-level, mixed-methods study of songwriter career pathways. This chapter lays out the theoretical and methodological structure I use to answer the question of how songwriters attempt to direct their co-writing efforts into a coherent and stable career in context of the reputational labor market that is embedded in the country music industry. This research brings traditionally separate literatures into conversation. First, I discuss the literature on cultural production and jobs in culture industries followed by a discussion of relevant theory and findings from the study of post-bureaucratic work and employment. Lastly, I add theory from the study of social networks to address gaps between the structure of cultural industries and the agency of workers within the larger structure. The remainder of this chapter focuses on my research questions that stem from the gaps I identify in the current literature, the novel methods and data I use to address these questions, and finally the contributions that this dissertation will make to the discipline of sociology.

LITERATURE

Art Worlds and Change in Art Worlds

Howard Becker (1982) made a case for treating the production of art as a collaborative process rather than as made only by the artist whose name is credited on a final work. He defines an art world as, "all of the people whose activities are necessary to the production of the characteristic works which that world, and perhaps others as well, define as art" (1982:34). Becker suggests that scholars should consider works of art as the joint product of all the people whose labor ended up creating the work, a process that he calls patterned cooperation. From a visual arts perspective this would include the paint and canvas manufacturers, the painter, patrons, the owner of the gallery where it will be displayed, and still others. This idea is central to understanding cultural production as a process embedded in an industry comprised of workers making and selling products or services.

The art world of the country music industry has a complex occupational division of labor. Historically, the division of labor in the music industry was based around the following model: songwriters write music and lyrics, studio musicians (often separate from a touring band) play the music on a recording, engineers and sound mixers work to record and process an analog or digital recording, producers serve as project managers who bring together the elements of a song or collection of songs to make it into a marketable product, and record labels serve as venture capitalists by funding musical projects. There exists a plethora of specialized occupations held by people who manage the production and distribution of commercial music in jobs that include tasks like marketing the music, designing album artwork, arranging live tours, and dealing with the legal framework of copyright and licensing, and yet musical works are mostly credited to the performing artist

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in the minds of audiences. Though the occupation of performing artist is the most visibly tied to monetizing music, there are many more people involved in the production and distribution of songs.

The art worlds framework and the theory of patterned cooperation is exhaustive in considering the impact and contribution of every occupation related to the production of art in a given medium or specific art world, but empirical research on careers in the arts is typically executed at a somewhat more specific unit of analysis, studying one artistic occupation at a time. It lays the theoretical groundwork that allows scholars to talk about art not only as a cultural product made by one inspired artist but rather as the product of collaborative work by interdependent, networked groups of talented specialists. In general, the art worlds theory is widely cited as justification for a scholar to examine non-superstar artists, however, I have a major critique of the use of this theory in subsequent research. There is a lack of research that actually examines patterned cooperation between members of art worlds who occupy different occupational roles. Though Becker's theory has been cited thousands of times, it is primarily used by scholarship that seeks to justify a technical occupation's membership in art worlds rather than actually examining the patterned, inter-occupational cooperation that makes art worlds work. A chief theoretical concern in this dissertation is an attempt to build on the Art Worlds theory through examining the patterning and re-patterning of collaboration between songwriters and recording artists in the music industry.

Levels of Analysis in the Culture Industry Research

Much work around cultural production uses the industry as the level of analysis for studies into specific processes and mechanisms that govern art worlds. As opposed to an art

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world, which is somewhat amorphous and widely inclusive of workers and companies providing all of the services that support the creation, distribution, and criticism of a particular type of art, an industry is a bit more specific in that it is made up of the discrete collection of firms and workers who work to produce a specific good or service. Just like other industries that sell goods and services, culture industries work to produce and sell art. Also, like other industries, culture industries want to minimize risk and uncertainty so that they can make a profit on their products.

As Menger (2006) says, nobody knows which products will be successful as tastes can shift rapidly; in response, industry organizations, like record companies, engage in strategies to spread their risk over a number of projects. Some of these strategies could include releasing more songs or financially backing more artists than they believe will be successful, diversifying the types of products they sell, for example, having artists on the roster who produce different sub-genres of music or fall into different demographic categories, or engaging in so-called "co-option" of industry gatekeepers through legal means like marketing or illegal means like payola. Payola, the practice of bribing radio stations to play particular songs, has been policed at varying levels over time. Rossman (2012) expected that songs would spread in a networked way through diffusion from high-status influencer radio stations to stations in smaller and lower-status markets, but he found that in times when payola is low or mostly nonexistent, the Billboard Hot 100 charts are actually what influence radio stations to play new songs. Radio stations are more willing to play what is already popular than to take a chance on a new song. This is similar to Bielby and Bielby's (1994) finding that television programmers are more likely to greenlight production of shows that have elements or contributors that have been successful in the past. In sum, individuals who make choices about which artistic works will be chosen for

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distribution to audiences are risk-averse and likely to engage in business practices that are perceived to mitigate financial risk. As cultural industry workers try to create career pathways within risk-averse industries, the norms, business practices, and regulatory structures that govern a particular industry have effects on the way workers are able to navigate the system.

Careers

In stark relief to a bureaucratic division of labor that formally separates tasks into jobs and distinct roles or occupations, creative industry workers typically have "DIY" careers marked by a personal responsibility to choose projects, manage the bureaucratic aspects of a career, and produce creative work (Scott 2012). Because of the increased agency that creative industry workers have in their self-assembled careers, the roles that they assume in the artistic and business process can vary from project to project, vary over time, or vary from person to person based on skills, interests, abilities, and opportunities. Baker and Faulkner (1991) show that roles in collaborative projects can also vary, separate, or consolidate based on exogenous factors, which they say leads to artistic "hyphenate" roles (e.g., singer-songwriter). Cornfield (2015) finds that the workers in Nashville's music community are connected by an "indie ethos of mutualism". In other words, as opposed to an ecosystem of art world specialists, music industry workers in the post-bureaucratic era take on multiple roles as music generalists in a way that facilitates cooperation and reliance on the community of workers that makes up the music industry.

Self-employment is the most common employment status in creative industries (Menger 1999), and creative industry workers are able to act agentically to create their own career paths without the benefit or constraints of an external structure imposed by an

employer. According to Abreu et al., "Creative careers follow a less conventional pattern which requires a longer investment in time to be successful," and workers who wish to have jobs in a creative industry must, "invent their own career, build a 'portfolio; and establish their name before a monetary reward follows" (2012: 308). Another important dynamic of creative labor markets is that there are far more aspirants producing cultural goods than can be supported by the market. Both Menger (1999, 2006) and Townley et al. (2009) point out that it is common for both employment and unemployment to rise simultaneously in cultural labor markets because, even as a successful area of market expands, more aspirants will be drawn into that labor market than can be supported by its growth.

Social roles have measurable effects on cultural workers and their chances of success. Being female, not being white, and being self-employed disadvantage cultural workers in the market, and having formal educational training does may or may not affect workers' economic success in cultural industries (Abreu et al. 2012, Martin and Frenette 2017). These factors are persistent and contribute to precarity for workers in creative industries. Issues such as union membership, sociodemographic characteristics, and the oversupply of talented musicians is often framed as an individual problem in the work lives of musicians, but in reality there are systemic, structural elements to these challenges (Vaugeois 2007).

Producing a piece of art for sale in commercial cultural industries often takes the form of collaborative, short-term projects. Since this type of work is based around projects instead of long-term employment, a portfolio of past work that shows both worker skills and the prestige of the projects they have worked on serve as their chief set of credentials (Abreu et al. 2012, Neff, Wissinger and Zukin 2005). Rather than relying on a formal

resume, this informal credentialing system prevails because cultural producers generally work within a relatively small network of people in their industry.

Strategies for Occupational Mobility

When it comes to planning for a career path in a culture industry, strategies that help workers get ahead in other industries may not be advantageous. Since formal education is not an assured path to success in a cultural industry, other types of career development like experimenting with new creative forms and business practices, networking, and the opportunity to work with sincere mentors are beneficial to self-employed workers in cultural industries (Raffo et al. 2000). Another practice that can lead cultural producers to career opportunities is public performance or display of their work. Performing or displaying artistic work is crucial to creative economies and is a site of network formation and maintenance (Craig and Dubois 2010). Public performance can serve as a type of apprenticeship, social networking event, and a venue for established and unestablished artists to meet.

In industries with minimal formal employment structures and an oversupply of workers, cultural producers have to network in every social situation with others from their industry (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2010). Networking, as a verb, is the blended social-professional act of building occupational ties to others toward the end of advancing one's career through capitalizing on opportunities presented by the people they meet. Networking is generally conceptualized as an individual-level microsociological process. Neff et al. indicate that networking and the social aspects of work in cultural industries makes work "more lifestyle than labor" (2005: 322). Hesmondhalgh and Baker reiterate the idea of work as a lifestyle. Work-related socialization makes it difficult to separate work and life,

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and "[a]ll hours become work hours" (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2010: 15). Networking and work-related socializing is expected as an extension of the workday. Getting drinks or going to a party after work can serve as a way to bond and socialize with coworkers or as a way to meet prospective clients and employers—a self-employed worker must be on the lookout for both (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2010, Neff 2005).

Collaborative project-based employment is common in cultural industries, so cultural workers must collaborate often with peers in their industry. Through collaboration, workers can learn new skills or techniques relevant to their industry or learn of other job opportunities or resources that could be beneficial to their careers (Zuckerman and Sgourev 2006). The strategies for getting ahead in culture industries are varied and not guaranteed to actually help workers in their career paths. As opposed to the relatively well-established value of formal credentials in organizational careers, network and portfolio-based strategies for advancement are subject to interpretation from potential employers or collaborators.

While networking and the other strategies employed by workers in culture industries are generally accepted as an important way of establishing and maintaining a career in a culture industry, the reasons that individuals pursue their careers and their orientation toward their careers vary. Cornfield (2015) developed a typology of artist-activists that describes individual and collective approaches and responses to the communities they are a part of. He describes the enterprising artist, artistic social entrepreneur, and artist advocate as three distinct responses to shifting norms and the shifting context that surrounds the Nashville music industry. In this typology, artist orientation toward risk, success, audience, and career inspiration leads to artists assuming one or more of the three artist activist roles. While past research on strategies for occupational mobility in culture industries tend to focus on specific tasks that workers in

culture industries undertake, Cornfield's typology allows for a broader analysis of worker strategic orientation toward community building but does not focus on issues surrounding individual benefits from networking in an occupational community or the structural web that underpins the communities created by artist activists.

Post-Bureaucratic Work and Employment

Though some cultural sociology research analyzes labor market dimensions and employment relations of worker in culture industries, the sociology of post-bureaucratic work and employment can provide insight into the ways that work is structured for free agents who weave careers out of short-term projects or collaborations in and outside of corporations.

According to Hipple and Hammond (2016), 10.1% of the US workforce was self-employed in 2015. While this is not a majority of the workforce in this country, it is a meaningful empirical starting point in understanding trends in employment and work. Horowitz (2015) finds that 1 in 3 American workers earn at least some of their pay in employment outside of the traditional bureaucratic employment relation. Since workers increasingly hold a series of different jobs throughout their careers and will not necessarily spend their career with one employer, they must keep a résumé and consider ways that they might make themselves marketable in the event that they lose their job or want to move up in either status or compensation (Smith 2002). While about 10% of workers are self-employed, theoretically all workers are self-employed in the post-bureaucratic era. It is essential for workers to actively manage their career and look for opportunities for promotions in their current job or seek occupational mobility through finding another, better job. They are also subject to the risk and potential rewards that come from managing

their labor as a commodity to be traded between corporations or repeatedly tested on the free market.

Careers Without Ladders

The bureaucratic employment relation is characterized by mutual loyalty between a worker and a corporation, an internal labor market that leads to opportunities for mobility within a well-defined career ladder, and rationalized hierarchies tied to a specific division of labor (Cappelli 2001, Kalleberg 2011). In a drastic change from the mutualism of the bureaucratic era, Cornfield et al. (2001) cite statistics that say that in 1995, over two-thirds of workers surveyed felt that employers and employees were less loyal to one another and that their coworkers are more competitive than cooperative. The shift from the standard bureaucratic employment relationship toward workers generally feeling little sense of loyalty or mutualism with their employer did not happen because of one monolithic change. Rather, a series of changes have effectively coalesced in the period of around 1980 to the present that have led to new expectations and understandings of how workers relate to their work and their employers or, in the case of free agents, their clients.

Though the name post-bureaucratic insinuates that the age of the bureaucracy is over, bureaucratic organizations still exist and still employ the majority of American workers. What has changed is the way that workers interact with bureaucracies. The major areas of work that have changed, according to Williams (2013), are, the casualization of the employment relationship, increased contingency for workers, boundaryless careers characterized by reliance on external labor markets for occupational mobility, project-based work, less hierarchal organizations, and the general demise of the traditional career ladder.

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Another way to characterize the shift in the organization of work and careers is that jobs in the post-bureaucratic era are characterized by both functional flexibility (i.e., ways of structuring work that build in employee involvement and exploit accumulated knowledge of how the organization works) and numerical flexibility (i.e., the decline in the standard permanent employment model) (Smith 1997). Smith says that these two types of flexibility are self-perpetuating and rely on each other. When employers lay off workers, work intensifies for those who remain, which then requires them to use their accumulated knowledge about how things need to be done in order to fill the roles left behind by the laid off employees without a rise in compensation to match their new responsibilities.

The nature of jobs is highly variable in the post-bureaucratic era, so it should be no surprise that the nature of job acquisition also varies. Since employment relations are increasingly contingent, workers in this post-bureaucratic era come into contact with the labor market multiple times throughout their working life. Workers whose continued employment and mobility depends on external labor markets find different logics to structure how they manage their employment and new job or project acquisition. Research has shown that contract workers are especially cognizant of the effect that "downtime" between contracts has on their financial security and employability. Thus workers who are involved in this type of employment relation manage their work commitments so that there is little time between contracts (Barley and Kunda 2006, Evans, Kunda and Barley 2004, Osnowitz 2010). The repeated necessity or choice to enter the market in search of a new job or assignment is an ongoing structuring force in the life of workers.

The reputation of corporations is still important for workers and their credibility. Even individuals whose primary work is not as an employee of a bureaucratic corporation can reap status benefits by being associated with a well-known company. Lin says that

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"identification with a more reputable group also enhances an actor's own reputation" (2001: 153). Associating one's reputation with a company that is known for producing high quality work generally enhances a worker's reputation. For instance, Neff (2012) found that workers think about how the startups they work for are perceived in the business community when deciding how long to stay before reentering the external labor market. When a company that a contractor has worked for does well, it raises the status of the worker while if the company does poorly or folds, reputation by affiliation might be somewhat diminished, making it harder for a worker to get their next job or command a higher salary.

Career Pathways

In terms of promotions and the general progression up a career ladder, there is no one path that free agent workers all take. In the absence of a long-term career with one organization, workers weave their careers inside and out of organizations. Barley and Kunda (2004) say that many software engineers will begin their career as employees of large companies, become contractors when they have established enough connections and lined up enough work to make the move financially viable, and reenter corporate employment when they feel that their compensation in a management role will exceed their value on the market. Similarly, in the music industry, young workers may use internships as a way to gain experience within a structured environment even if their ultimate career goals are not tied to a record label or (Frenette 2013).

An important factor in making decisions that structure careers outside of the traditional employment relationship is the ability and willingness to keep up with new technologies, business models, and industry trends. For software engineers, new

technologies are constantly being released, and contractors are highly aware of the diminishing market value of old technology (Barley and Kunda 2004; Osnowitz 2010). While seniority and incumbency were keys to mobility in the bureaucratic era, corporations contracting with software engineers only care about the worker's skill level in the technology that their company is currently using (Barley and Kunda 2004). Younger or less-experienced workers may even have an advantage in terms of their employability since they likely have training in newer technology systems (Osnowitz 2010). Osnowitz (2010) and Barley and Kunda (2004) find that contractors spend many unpaid hours learning new technologies; taking a management role at a company is seen as a "way out" of contracting that allows contractors to use their knowledge of a particular industry while being able to step away from the required skill building required to maintain a career as a contractor (Barley and Kunda 2004). Music industry workers may likewise spend time improving upon technical skills like recording and editing tracks using Protools software, practicing an instrument, or simply listening to new, popular music.

There is not one cohesive way to describe the potential career paths of all workers in the post-bureaucratic era other than the following: workers both in and outside of corporations must be thoughtful about how they will stay employable. Workers who maintain connections with others in their industry, continually build skills, and cultivate a good reputation are likely to be able to craft a more stable career path over the course of their career.

Social Network Dynamics

Social networks are an essential piece in understanding how individuals partake in group life. While social network analysis in its current form is a newer development in

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sociology aided by massive increases in computing power and the ability to collect large data sets, the theory that underlies the study of social networks originates in the work of Georg Simmel. Simmel (1964) believed that triads, groups of three individuals, were the basis of social life and of inequality, homogeneity, and reciprocity. As discussed above, *Art Worlds* (Becker 1982) sets the stage for understanding both the process and the impact of a network of individuals working to collaboratively produce, market, or distribute art in order to essentially create the industry that supports their work. While the art worlds framework is useful for conceptualizing cultural production as work and as the product of much more than the efforts of only "the artist" strictly defined, his work does not provide the theoretical or empirical framework necessary for a full understanding of the power of social networks in the careers of individuals within art worlds.

The concept of social capital is essential to understanding the social organization and distribution of workers into jobs. There are quite a few scholarly traditions that fall under the label of social capital. According to Alejandro Portes (1998), the multiplicity of definitions of social capital can tend toward it being used as a "catch-all" term to describe the positive benefits of social networks for individuals and communities. His review comes to the conclusion that there are three basic functions of social capital: social control, support within families, and a source of benefits in networks outside of the family. Both James Coleman (1988) and Nan Lin (2002) contribute to understanding more about the social distribution of workers into particular working arrangements through social capital.

Coleman (1988) emphasizes that social capital, which he defines as a type functional resource that facilitates action within a social structure, is the social mechanism through which things get done. He uses the example of trust embedded in social networks to illustrate how social capital facilitates work and work relations. The New York City

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wholesale diamond trade, markets in Cairo, and women's savings circles in developing countries all operate on the basis of trust and reciprocity. Particularly in the case of the diamond traders in NYC, the workers in this industry are also members of a tightly woven Jewish community. Coleman argues that without the embeddedness of these workers in their particular community and family social network, the diamond business would not operate as efficiently.

While the example of the wholesale diamond business reflects social capital inside the bounds of strong family and religion-based community ties, he argues that even outside of family networks, social capital facilitates the flow of information through networks. Additionally, research among the French financial elite a group that is homogenous in terms of schooling and shared high socioeconomic status, (Frank and Yasumoto 1998, Kadushin 1995), group members rely on a sense of generalized trust and reciprocity in engaging in or abstaining from hostile actions in business.

Nan Lin defines social capital as, "resources available through social connections" (1999, 2001) and states that social capital is an embedded resource that can only be accessed through the network. His social resources perspective also proves useful for understanding work and workers as he and his colleagues found that social resources, in the form of personal connections and their own resources, structure occupational status attainment for workers. Through utilizing social resources, workers may gain access to prestigious jobs (Lin, Ensel and Vaughn 1981), but research also shows that informal channels for finding jobs are not inherently better than formal channels (Lin 2002).

Reputational Labor Markets

Reputation is an another important social determinant of how people are sorted into job opportunities in the post-bureaucratic era. In the absence of required credentials, past work experience, or rationalized bureaucratic hiring procedures, individual and collective assessments of potential workers become the opportunity structure within which prospects for work or exposure are distributed (Menger 2006). Lin (2002:153) defines reputation as, "the aggregate asset of recognitions received. It is a function of the extent to which one receives recognition in a social group". Barley and Kunda (2004) call reputation the "currency of social capital" and point out that an important part of contract work is networking with others in one's industry to find more job opportunities.

Networking is listed as an important part of the job for workers in the post-bureaucratic era because it is a key to successful, repeated encounters with external labor markets (Barley and Kunda 2004; Osnowitz 2010; Smith 2001). Following Granovetter (1973), Lin (2001) says that reputation can enhance resource sharing, which, for workers in external labor markets, facilitates the sharing of tips about who is hiring, what skills to work on in order to remain employable, and other important work-specific information. As a whole, these informally structured mechanisms through which individuals with better reputations have greater access to opportunities for work and collaboration are called reputational labor markets (Menger 1999).

Reputational labor markets exist mainly outside of formal workplace bureaucracies and govern the matching of entrepreneurial individuals to freelance or project-based work situations in which they remain free agents rather than employees of a business or organization (Evans, Kunda and Barley 2004, Zafirau 2008). In practice, workers in reputational labor markets must provide high quality goods or services as well as build a

reputation based on valued characteristics like organization, punctuality, and social characteristics among peers and potential customers.

Weber (2013) describes status as a social estimation of honor allows us to understand hierarchal stratification based on numerous personal characteristics outside of a person's wealth or power. In more recent scholarship, status is conceptualized as affording social advantages or levying disadvantages on the basis of personal characteristics (Webster Jr and Hysom 1998). Ultimately, the distinctions drawn between individuals from assessments of their social worth in different areas create status orders which place individuals within hierarchies determined by status characteristics. Within reputational labor markets, assessments of worker status have an effect on their success. Workers must maintain high status in their occupational community or face difficulty in finding work or potential collaborators.

Townley (2009: 946) found that "for creative ideas to function as capital their worth must be recognized, they must be capable of being traded (for economic or symbolic capital), otherwise they remain creative ideas." Without professional social networks, those kinds that make up art worlds, creative industries could not function successfully. Status is so important in project-based work that it "is not so much for whom but with whom a worker will labor" (Rossman, Esparza and Bonacich 2010). Since who one works with is so important to success and status attainment in industries with minimal formal credentialing, "word-of-mouth recommendations about the competency of individuals are important" (Zafirau 2008: 123).

Status and reputation comes from multiple sources in culture industry labor markets. They are formed from a combination of peer, critic, and consumer approval and can come from commercial popularity as well as peer or industry recognition (Debenedetti

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2006). It seems that peers must first accept an aspiring cultural producer so that the aspiring worker can find work and collaborators as well as gain access to the distribution channels that lead to commercial popularity. After obtaining access to professional networks and distribution channels a cultural worker can build up his or her portfolio with projects that could go on to gain commercial popularity. When both types of status are high, they are self-perpetuating; commercially successful work attracts more "good" jobs that are likely to become commercially successful (Menger 1999). Consumers reinforce the "success breeds success" model of status acquisition by purchasing things that they are familiar with; producers respond by falling back on trends, fads, and producers who have been successful in the past (Dowd 2004a, Kasaras 2012). The "success breeds success" mentality is an outcome of the uncertainty that cultural producers face, and sticking to what is known or has been previously legitimated in the industry is a common heuristic for making quick decisions about who to work with or hire (Zafirau 2008). Reputation and status come with uncertainty, and reputation must be continually proven and reinforced for a worker to keep getting called for jobs.

Homophily and Network Dynamics—Who Gets to Work?

The fact that behaviors and personal characteristics tend to cluster in groups is both intuitive and supported by decades of scholarly research. The term for this type of clustering in groups is homogeneity, and that when groups are homogenous on one or more measures, people with the same behaviors and characteristics share group membership at a rate that is higher than would be expected at random. We know that in terms of homogenous network composition, social networks typically consist of people who are more or less alike in terms of race and ethnicity, socioeconomic status, age, religion,

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gender, and other seemingly less meaningful characteristics like a preferred type of music, shared alma mater, or shared state of origin (McPherson, Smith-Lovin and Cook 2001, Wimmer and Lewis 2010).

The most frequently cited mechanism that is said to cause this localization of sociodemographic qualities is homophily. McPherson et al. (2001:416) define homophily as, "the principle that a contact between similar people occurs at a higher rate than among dissimilar people," and De Klepper et al. (2010) call the same process social selection. Each of these definitions gets at the idea that people form social ties with people who are already like themselves. In general, the strong-tie networks of Americans are characterized by dense, homogenous networks made up of a high proportion of kin (Marsden 1987).

Kadushin (2011) cites Burt's assertion that there are two main causes of homophily. The first is that common norms or values bring people together, and the second cause is that people who share characteristics tend to live and conduct activities in similar locations and thus are more likely to meet and form a tie (Kadushin 2011:19-20). The idea that geographic location or otherwise general availability of potential alters allows ties to form is called propinquity (Kadushin 2011). De Klepper et al. (2010) say that these two processes, homophily and propinquity are the baseline for friendship; by extending their argument, it is easy to see how being around people who are already like you in a place where you both frequent is the baseline for how most ties are formed. What is more, Bearman et al. (2004) found that homophily on only one behavior among high school students allowed for the construction of large network structures that would not have formed otherwise. Feld (1982) found that people with more similar interests, beliefs, or activities are more likely to form ties, and similarly, McPherson et al. (2001) say that if multiplex relations overlap for individuals, homophily gets stronger. These findings are in

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line with Simmel (1964). Simmel notes, "As a rule an overlapping of group-affiliations cannot occur if the social groups involved are too far apart with their purpose and in terms of the demands they make on the individual (Simmel 1964:146). When individuals are tied through multiplex relationships, that is, multiple distinct types of relationships or ties, their personal networks and purposes become more homogenous and thus more cohesive.

While homophily might seem like a value-neutral process since it stems from natural affinity, it is one of the keys to the relational basis of inequality. Homophily based on race and ethnicity, according to McPherson et al. (2000:416), "creates the strongest divides in our personal environments, with age, religion, education, occupation, and gender following in roughly that order…It comes to typify 'people like us.'" If people are generally grouped into networks that are relatively homophilous by socioeconomic status, gender, or race, it is easy to see how there might be fewer resources to go around in some networks and more resources in others. More privileged groups of people know each other and have fewer ties to less privileged groups and the converse. Another study shows that individuals with lower levels of socioeconomic status have smaller networks (Kadushin 2011). Taken together, it is not difficult to imagine that people with lower socioeconomic status will have fewer people to turn to when they need information about job openings or are looking for collaborators for a new project.

Apart from homophily, another defining characteristic of groups is their density. Marsden (1987) says that density is an indication of how closed a particular network is. Denser networks are those in which more members are tied to each other; the implications of having more members tied is that normative pressures are stronger (Marsden 1987) and more cohesive (Kadushin 2011). Kadushin also notes that, typically, smaller networks are denser and thus more cohesive. The types of relationships between individuals can be

characterized by their importance to ego; we typically call this the distinction between a strong and a weak tie (Granovetter 1973). Granovetter says that the, "strength of a tie is a (probably linear) combination of the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual confiding), and the reciprocal services which characterize the tie" (1973:1361), though these findings are potentially specific to the context of the United States (Sharone 2014, Song 2013).

On the whole, social network research gives a great deal of insight into the informal structuring of opportunity in accessing work opportunities. Lin (2002) finds that cumulative advantage and cumulative disadvantage are not uncommon when it comes to social capital-based work outcomes. He found that since men are already in higher social positions, they have access to better social capital than do women. Lin says that while men tend to reach out to other men in their social network, women tend to reach out to other women; this pattern leads to men accessing the better social capital held by other men while women access lower quality resources from the women in their networks. Because of this structural disadvantage and the tendency toward homophily, women have "inferior status attainment" outcomes (Lin 2002:85). In the reputational labor markets of Nashville songwriters, it is widely known that most writers are straight, white, Christian (or ambiguously Christian) men. Menger (2006) says that popular music is one of the only areas of cultural production that is proportionally balanced by ethnicity but also that musician is the only artistic occupation that has not seen growth in the proportion of women.

The Case: Nashville's Country Music Songwriters

I use the case-in-point of Nashville songwriters, artists who work in a

geographically concentrated labor market to formulate questions that will guide my research about collaboration in career pathways situated within a post-bureaucratic employment relation. According to Billboard Magazine, Nashville is home to 27,000 music industry workers, which at 7.8 music professionals per 1,000 residents gives it the highest concentration of music industry workers in the United States (Peoples 2013). The high density of music professionals makes Nashville a good case for examining the field of music production. Songwriting is a collaborative business in Nashville, and most hit country songs are co-written. In a typical co-writing session two or more writers will toss around ideas, melodies, and lyrics until they determine that the song is complete. Some writers specialize in either lyrics or music, but many are generalists who contribute to both aspects of a song (de Laat 2015). The qualities of a highly sought after co-writer are likely more complex than only the ability to write a good lyric or melody as co-writing groups may form or persist based on status characteristics based on other characteristics like reputation for being easy to work with, status as an established or up-and-coming recording artist, or social distance from powerful industry executives.

Nashville songwriters often talk about "writing up" and are explicitly aware that they need to collaborate with high-status, well-connected writers to raise their own status and thus, their chance of success in the music industry. Songwriters may have a staff songwriting job as an employee of a publishing company, but for the most part, songwriters are free agents. In an interview with the director of a local trade organization, I was told that whereas there were about 1000 staff songwriting positions in Nashville in the 1990s that now there are closer to 300. As I will explain in more depth throughout this dissertation, the political economy of the music industry has undergone a great deal of change since the turn of the century. In turn, the career chances, strategies, and pathways

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that songwriters pursue have likewise shifted to meet the industry's new standards and norms. In many cases, aspiring songwriters have to figure out the unwritten rules industry on their own as there are no educational requirements, few paths to a formal education in songwriting, and for the fact that there is an oversupply of both labor and product. In fact, it would be near impossible for songwriters to go on strike or collectively bargain for changes in working conditions as there are thousands of aspirants willing to pitch their songs to artists and an even larger supply of high-quality songs from song publishers' back catalogues that could fill the needs of recording artists for years. Aspiring songwriters quickly figure out that building a good reputation and collaborating with others is the key to career maintenance and, hopefully, upward mobility.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The theoretical gap that I address is in connecting individual worker agency and industry structures such that clear career pathways emerge even as there are no formal career ladders. We understand how individuals experience their careers in culture industries and the dynamics that govern cultural production, but it is less clear how structure and agency connect. This study focuses on the social network as the site of labor market relations and thus, social relationships and collaboration as the basis of the opportunity structure.

This study examines songwriters' career pathways in a triangulated, systemic way that accounts for individual enactment of employment management work, networked labor market dynamics, and larger trends in the music industry based in whose music sells and whose music is recognized among occupational peers. The social network, as the labor market, serves to sort individuals or "match persons to jobs" (Sorenson and Kalleberg

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1976) even in the absence of formal employment relations, hiring procedures, or contracts. Through each writer's individual social capital, the embedded resources of the network become powerful tools for connecting individual songwriters with the recording artists, institutions, and organizations that make up the country music industry.

The gaps I have elaborated upon to this point lead me to the following research questions:

Question 1: *How do industry conditions affect patterns of collaboration among songwriters?*

Question 2: *To what degree do social and personal characteristics of songwriters, including patterns of collaboration, affect their chances of writing a song that achieves a high level of success?*

Question 3: *In what ways does the structure of songwriters' collaboration networks facilitate or inhibit individuals' chance of success?*

DATA AND ANALYTIC STRATEGY

In this section, I discuss the ways in which I collected and analyzed my data as well as introduce my concept of the network-based sampling frame, a novel sampling method I developed and utilize to retain variation in my sample that would otherwise be uncaptured in snowball sampling methods. First, I describe the data collection process for the industry level sample. Second, I discuss the process of constructing a whole-network model from industry level data. Next, I introduce the network-based sampling frame and discuss how I solicit and collect individual-level interview data. Finally, I discuss my overall analytical strategy. Some of this information will be re-conveyed in relevant chapters to remind readers of the data and analytic strategies that are unique to the given chapter, but this

section of writing should be referred to as the primary location of my methodological approach for this project.

Population of Interest

The population of interest for this study is the most highly successful country songs and their writers from 2000-2015. Scholars lament the difficulty of defining who empirically "counts" as an artist (Lena and Lindemann 2014, Menger 2006), but this is a discrete group of individuals in that membership in this group is determined by an outside source and based on success in the occupation of interest. The production logics that govern the music industry vary throughout time and have a significant impact on the likelihood of diversity, even within a particular genre (Dowd 2004a). Because of the significant technological and market changes that accompanied the digitization of music, I limit this study to 2000-2015.

By defining my population in this way, I have a distinct, knowable set of respondents who have at one point or another attained the highest levels of success in their line of work. Additionally, because I am interested in studying career paths in songwriting, selecting writers who have achieved high levels of success at least once will ensure that the writers I study are in fact members of the loosely bounded reputational labor market of Nashville songwriters. Nashville is a particularly good case for understanding careers in a collaborative, highly concentrated and localized, reputational labor market because songwriters in the country genre typically live and work in Nashville. Because of the high concentration of country music production in Nashville, writers' geographic co-location means that all aspiring and successful songwriters have about the same opportunity to interact with each other as with others. This means that any geographic barrier to

collaboration or attending the types of social-work hybrid activities like record label parties and songwriter showcases is diminished compared to music genres with a wider geographic patterning across the country or globe.

Levels of Analysis

For this project, I undertake three levels of analysis in order to examine the careers of songwriters and to address the three research questions. Though songwriters operate in a mostly self-directed, free-agentic labor market, there are clear instances of patterned cooperation and norms that govern behaviors and strategies for getting ahead or maintaining a career. Each level of analysis, the individual, network, and industry level map onto and facilitate analysis of my research questions. At the most basic level, the individual level, songwriters' own strategies for advancement structure decisions that facilitate their career and work over time. Individual songwriters operate at the network level within a reputational labor market of collaborations between co-writers in order to produce music and lyrics. At the highest and most bureaucratically organized level, the industry functions as the explicit structuring force that facilitates the production of music for commercial audiences.

Data Collection: Industry Level

At the most macro level (Question 2) I ask to what degree do social and personal characteristics of songwriters, including their patterns of collaboration, affect their chances of writing a song that achieves a high level of success. By industry, I mean to refer to the recorded music industry and, more specifically, the overarching formal organizations like record labels, publishing houses, trade organizations, performance rights organizations

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(PROs), and other entities that make up the formal organizational structures of music production and distribution. I compiled a dataset that captures distinct measures of commercial popularity, peer recognition, critical acclaim, and Grammy nominations from 2000-2015 for songs and songwriters. Country songs that achieve the highest levels of commercial popularity are listed on the Billboard Magazine Year End Hot 100 chart. Billboard's methodology for determining the commercial popularity of songs is currently based on audience impressions (measured by Nielsen BDS), sales (measured by Nielsen Sound Scan), and streaming activity (collected by Nielsen BDS). As an organization, Billboard has had to change its metrics to keep up with the way audiences consume music. These changes over time mean that over the course of the 16 years of this study, a variety of measures were considered in the compilation of these charts. Though the charts for each year are potentially made up of data collected from different sources, Billboard still released all of the charts under the title "Year End Hot Country Songs." This choice indicates that despite the necessity to update data sources to keep pace with commercial consumption patterns, the chart measures the same thing over time: the commercial popularity of songs in the country genre. Many scholars use Billboard data in their research and state that it is the most prominent and consistent chart that covers music popularity in the United States (Dowd 2004a; Lena and Pachucki 2013).

Lang and Lang (1988) define recognition as "the esteem in which others in the same 'art world' hold the artist," and unlike data for commercial popularity or critical acclaim, which are more commonly compiled and released to public audiences, direct measures of peer recognition are more difficult to obtain on a large scale. When it comes to peer recognition among songwriters, the Nashville Songwriters Association International (NSAI), the largest international trade organization for songwriters, allows its professional

songwriter members to vote annually on the top "Songs I Wish I had Written." NSAI then releases the results at an annual awards event and publishes them online. I use the results of these songwriter-recognized songs as an indication of which writers are esteemed among their peers. The vast majority of songs that appear on this annual list are in the country genre with only two notable non-country exceptions since the list began in 1990. In 2010, the Nashville-based rock group The Kings of Leon made the NSAI list with their song "Use Somebody," which won the Grammy award for Best Rock Song in the same year, and in 2012, the Whitney Houston cover of country singer-songwriter Dolly Parton's song "I Will Always Love You" made the NSAI list, likely due to Houston's death in February of that year.

To collect data on critically acclaimed songs, I used the *Nashville Scene*'s annual Critic's Picks poll of music critics. The poll began in 2000 and was originally published in *Country Music Magazine*, which folded in 2003; at this point, the *Nashville Scene* began running and publishing this poll (Country Music Television 2003, Himes 2004). I attempted to acquire back issues of the poll from *Country Music Magazine* but was unsuccessful, so the data I was able to collect from the *Nashville Scene* covers critic picks from 2002-2015. Lastly, I collected data on the songs nominated for the Grammy Award for Country Song of the year for the entire period of study.

After collecting the top songs in each of these domains, I expanded the data to include the songs' writers from data hosted on Wikipedia[1]. All writers were listed, so there were no missing data. This complete data set creates a population study of all of the most

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[1] Very few songs were not listed with the information I needed on Wikipedia. In these cases, I looked up their writers or other relevant variables on the PRO websites (https://www.ascap.com/; https://www.bmi.com/; https://www.sesac.com/).

successful songs and their writers in the country genre from 2000-2015. In all, there are 1197 songs written by 941 songwriters.

Data Collection: Network Level

Question 3 asks in what ways the structure of co-writing networks facilitate or inhibit songwriters' chances of success. This is the network level of analysis for my study and is the important link between the macro processes that govern the country music industry and the career paths of individuals in the music industry. For songwriters, the level (or perhaps, a level) that connects individuals and the industry is the connections between co-writers. I argue that this is the actual labor market in which songs are produced. Since the majority of country songs meant for commercial audiences are co-written, participating in co-writing is inherently what constitutes participation in the labor market. There are a few thousand people who consider themselves to be professional country songwriters, but the sampling frame that defines this network is based on the industry-derived measures of success listed above.

Within this framework, I have mapped out the network ties between the all successful songwriters from 2000-2015. Network analysis has been criticized for overlooking multiplexity, the fact that individuals can be tied on more than one relationship or on one but not another, but given what we know about reputational labor markets and homophily, the fact that the individuals in this network chose to collaborate is probably meaningful when it comes to understanding their affinity for each other. Likewise, we know that they have achieved similar levels of financial success due to the way royalties are equally distributed within co-writing groups (de Laat 2015). In my data, the average number of co-writers is 2.45 per song.

To construct the network-level data, I wrote edgelists that connect all co-writing groups over time into network diagrams, for each domain of success and for the overall network. This process maps known network ties between individuals by linking their assigned ID numbers from industry level data. For instance, the chart-topping hit "Live Like You Were Dying," sung by Tim McGraw, was written by Tim Nichols and Craig Wiseman. Nichols is ID number 854 in my data, and Wiseman is number 190. By writing in "854 190" I create a link between these two writers that can be modeled and tied to any other writers that either man collaborated with. This structure is based on the co-writing relation and can only speak to the network dynamics based on the co-creation of highly successful songs in the period of study.

Due to my sampling frame that focuses on selecting successful songs rather than directly selecting writers, there are some instances of successful songs that are written by only one writer. In network terms, these individuals are isolates—they are not connected to the network structures on the basis of the relationship I am studying. This does not mean that they are not tied to the network on another relational basis, but their presence in the network is exciting since it will allow observations of instances of success that is not based on a co-writing relationship. Only 142 songs (11.8%) in the period of this study were solo-written, but some of their writers collaborated on other hit songs throughout the period of study.

Data Collection: Individual Level

Question 1 asks how industry conditions affect patterns of collaboration among songwriters. My individual-level data is made up of 38 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with songwriters sampled from the network substructures of the network I diagrammed

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based on the industry-level data for this project. A common method of sampling for interviews is snowball sampling, wherein the researcher interviews a person from his or her target population and asks the interviewee to recommend someone else that would be a good person to interview based on the topic of interest. Then the researcher repeats this process (hopefully with multiple "snowballs") until he or she collects enough interviews.

From a network-perspective we might call it something like tie-to-tie sampling because it essentially maps network ties between individuals. Network research is very sensitive to bias; if a researcher misses a network individual when mapping a network, it cuts off everyone that person is tied to, thus significantly restricting variation. Additionally, since we know that homophily has a strong effect on personal ties, sampling frames that rely on recruiting people from recommendations have the tendency to lead to many participants who have similar personal characteristics. For example, if I were to sample songwriters and use snowball sampling, I would likely find that each of them had attained about the same level of success, that they are around the same age, and that they are mostly the same race and gender. When a researcher hears the same story from many participants in a study, he or she may believe that the answers obtained from participants are generalizable to the population of interest when in fact they may differ from others in the population of interest who are not in the subnetwork that the researcher has tapped into. These reasons are why snowball sampling does not always generalize to a larger population, and while it is a good method for recruiting hard-to-find groups, I believe that my proposed method will improve on snowball sampling's weaknesses.

I derive my sampling frame by first using the lists of collaborations between songwriters that is embedded in the quantitative data about successful songs to list all members of the network and map the connections and ties between them. Next, I contacted

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members of the network and interviewed them according to the interview schedule

presented in Appendix A. Since I know what the structure of the network looks like and

have a defined sampling frame, I was able to pick and choose who to interview, avoiding

interviewing too many people closely tied to one subgroup of the network. This also

allowed me to characterize my understanding of participants' structural position in the

network during analysis. This network-based sampling frame also allowed for my

interviews to include isolates—those who write highly successful songs alone—and to be

constructed and directed independently of the recommendations of other writers.

Though I expected to still rely on snowball sampling to solicit interviews, I

ultimately ended up soliciting most interviews from cold call emails after finding writers'

contact information on their personal websites. I conducted the interviews in a variety of

places around Nashville (record labels, recording studios, union headquarters, personal

homes and studios, coffee shops) and over phone calls, facetime, and Skype. I made an

audio recording of each interview with the permission of the interviewee, which was then

transcribed by an online transcription company. I give each songwriter interviewee in this

manuscript a pseudonym and anonymize any specific personal identifying details including

song titles, artists who have performed their work, and co-writing collaborators.

Analytic Strategy

Following data collection, I used these sets of quantitative, network, and qualitative

data to analyze and comment on the ways in which the structure of the music industry,

social network dynamics, and individual writers' agency come together to allow writers to

build a career in songwriting. Throughout this dissertation, I use three methods, each to suit

the types of data I collected. Chapter 2 address the individual level of analysis; I used

ATLAS.ti to sort, code, and systematically analyze interviews. I rely on an inductive

coding scheme (Miles and Huberman 1994) with consideration to previous theory and to the other data that I have collected. After deriving codes from the raw interview data, I grouped codes thematically and worked to understand the strategies and pathways that songwriters use to create careers within their reputational labor market in the changing political economic context of the 2000s.

Chapter 3 addresses the industry level of analysis by performing logistic regression analyses on both songs and songwriters' songs using SAS in order to understand industry effects on songwriting careers. I used my interviews with songwriters as a grounded theoretical justification for which variables influence careers over time (Glaser and Strauss 1967).

Chapter 4 address the network level of analysis; I use UCINET to model network properties and display visual representations of the opportunity structure presented by connections between co-writers. Furthermore, I calculate traditional network measures with a focus on cohesion and small world properties. These measures allow me to describe the network structure which I argue is the primary opportunity structure that serves as the labor market for the creation and sale of songs. Lastly, in this chapter I conduct a series of logistic regression analyses to build on the findings in Chapter 3 with individual songwriter-level measures of network centrality. The sum of this chapter's findings will contribute to an increased understanding of network centrality as a structuring force for songwriters' opportunity and will elaborate the effects of individuals' structural position on their likelihood of success.

CONCLUSION

Previous research in the sociology of work has established that careers are

becoming more precarious and that workers have to imagine themselves as free agents to

self-manage their careers (e.g., Cornfield, Campbell and McCammon 2001, Kalleberg

2011, Smith 2002, Williams 2013). Lines of inquiry into the production of culture have

established the characteristics of careers in the arts (e.g., Abreu et al. 2012, Becker 1982,

Cornfield 2015, Dowd 2004b, Menger 1999, Menger 2006), which have operated in a post-

bureaucratic manner for many years. Despite the knowledge established from these areas of

research, they are each missing key information and approaches from the scholarship of

social networks that would enhance their analytic and theoretical power to describe how

individuals enact careers in informal post-bureaucratic labor markets. My dissertation uses

a novel network-based sampling frame approach to analyze how individuals enact their

careers in a larger industry through patterned cooperation that, in aggregate, creates up the

opportunity structure for their occupational community.

Empirically, this research contributes a new case-in-point for understanding

reputational labor markets in culture industries and also has implications for other work

based on temporary, informal collaborations. What is more, this case provides a three-level,

longitudinal look at pathways to success in a reputational labor market. It also examines

career pathways and strategies within the system in which they are embedded.

Theoretically, this dissertation presents the social network of workers in a specific

occupation as the opportunity structure of reputational labor markets. Though the case of

Nashville songwriters may be extreme in that most are self-employed and collaborations

have the potential to only last a day or two, the theoretical basis of treating the network as

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the main site of opportunity is useful for scholars of post-bureaucratic work and employment more broadly.

Methodologically, I am contributing a network-based sampling frame that will correct for many of the biases of typically used snowball and convenience sampling techniques. This method is especially apt for use in the era of internet research and provides a new way for researchers who study collaboration, informal organizations, or social networks to systematically collect and analyze qualitative data within a larger known frame of reference.

This research also has implications for working artists, particularly songwriters, culture industry leaders, and policymakers. It gives a picture of career chances in a commercial cultural industry and has implications for understanding the needs of workers, especially in terms of structures of compensation that have arisen in the digital age. In the absence of the formalized mutualism between an employer and employees provided by a bureaucratic employment relation, it is important for scholars and workers to understand the informal relational dynamics that structure less formal systems of work and collaboration.

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CHAPTER 3

DESPERATION MODE: SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ECONOMIC CHANGE IN AN
OCCUPATIONAL COMMUNITY

*My first write in Nashville. I'm going to write with this artist and I'm going into the room
and the publisher on the way in is like, 'Hey, like so-and-so upstairs is cutting and we need
like an upbeat song about tractors. You think you can write an upbeat song about
tractors?' And I was new in town, so I was like, 'Fuck no.' I don't know anything about
tractors. I've never ridden a tractor in my life. I was like, "I don't know anything about
tractors. I don't actually know anything about tractors." And I could tell he was really
annoyed with that you know, and he was like that's the thing… it's gonna be all about like
tractors and all this kind of stuff. And I was like, 'These people are idiots, like this is
ridiculous.' So I wrote this terrible song with a guy. Ten months down the road there's a
ton of these tractor songs, and then I'm like, these guys are geniuses! They saw this stupid
trend coming, and how did they know? But the answer is, there's only three labels and
there's only three people deciding what actually gets cut. And if those three people decide
that tractor songs are going to be the next thing, then they put that down the road. They put
out the request.*

[Brandon Simpson[2], critically acclaimed writer]

INTRODUCTION

Harlan Howard, the "archetype of the professional Music City songwriter,"

famously said that country music is made up of "three chords and the truth" (Kingsbury

1998). Chet Atkins, a founding father of country music, once said that the Nashville Sound

is the sound of coins jingling in a pocket (Cusic 1994). Despite Howard's poetic assertion,

the commodification of country music that Akins refers to is nothing new, and the genre,

has always been an intentional money-making endeavor (Peterson 2013). Any set of three

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[2] All names of interviewees are pseudonyms. Personal identifying information, including
song titles and the characteristics and names or collaborators have been anonymized to
protect the identities of my interviewees.

chords and the truth ultimately need to lead to the sound of jingling coins since country is a commercial genre. Therein lies the inherent tension between art and commerce in cultural fields (Bourdieu 1993).

As I discussed in the introduction to this dissertation, I am interested in how inter-occupational patterned cooperation can change between members of art worlds. This chapter examines patterned cooperation (Becker 1982) between songwriters and recording artists during a period of change in the music industry. The purpose of this chapter is to show that (1) the political economy of the digital music industry in the country music genre has shifted such that as revenues have decreased, (2) the contractually formalized role of recording artists has changed to include a requirement to write their own songs, which in turn (3) alters songwriters' chances of having an "outside cut", which (4) has increased the prevalence of recording artists co-writing songs with teams of professional songwriters, a process that (5) makes songs more homogenous, that is, alike in terms of their lyrical themes and musical styles. After establishing this base of understanding about the industrial context and occupational role of Nashville songwriters at this moment in time, subsequent chapters will focus on how, within this context, songwriters strategize and act in agentic ways in order to collaborate with the people who are most likely to be able to help build and maintain their career.

DATA AND ANALYTIC STRATEGY

In this chapter, I engage with scholarly publications, articles from popular and

music industry-focused press, along with data from interviews with 38[3] songwriters

inductively coded in ATLAS.ti to elucidate the individual strategies of songwriters within

their industrial context. The writers interviewed for this chapter were selected according to

my sampling frame that includes all of the most successful country songs from 2000-2015

according to commercial market indicators (Billboard Hear End Hot Songs), peer

recognition (Nashville Songwriters Association International's list of 'Songs I Wish I Had

Written'), critical acclaim (Nashville Scene's Critics' Picks), and from the Grammy

Country Song of the Year nominees. The songwriters who appear on this list are highly

successful, thus the most likely to have made a career out of songwriting in this period.

Without attaining the requisite achievement to appear on this expansive list, a songwriter

probably did not make much money or attain much status in the country music genre

during this period.

This sampling frame and my choice of only including interview data from writers

who appear in my quantitative data is not to say that songwriters who do not appear in my

data are not professional songwriters, just that they were not responsible for writing any

songs deemed most successful by commercial audiences, their peer songwriters, music

critics or the Grammy nominating committee from 2000-2015. Therefore, the songwriters

in this sample are those most likely to have been central in the songwriting occupational

community during this time period. In turn, those who do appear on the list are the most

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[3] In total, I conducted 46 songwriter interviews, but 8 interviewees were not part of my
sampling frame and are not included in these results except for Natalie Reynolds who was
part of a joint interview with a songwriter who is in my sampling frame.

likely to have been members in the Nashville songwriting community during this period of time. In fact, since reaching out to songwriters for interviews on the basis of this sampling frame, I find that it is perhaps more inclusive than necessary. Of the 73 songwriters who I have interviewed or who have agreed to but not yet scheduled an interview, 4 have told me that they are either not a "Nashville writer", not a country writer, or even not a songwriter at all. One responded to my email asking for an interview saying, "I'm not a Nashville Songwriter. I'm a music producer, and have written some successful songs over my career, but I'm based out of Los Angeles," and another repeatedly emphasized in writing over email and during our interview that he was not a "wildly successful writer." My choice to only sample from this bounded list of highly successful songs and their writers gets me closer to the goal of examining the career pathways of individuals who have made a living as professional songwriters and is ultimately more conservative about the challenges that songwriters face as these individuals have had the most success of any during this period of study and are the most likely to have made a career from songwriting.

Even among my sample of highly successful songwriters, the group that I interviewed is exceptional in terms of the success they have had over the years. If anything, they have thrived in comparison to their peers and especially as compared to the entire group of songwriters in Nashville during this period of consolidation and increasing competition in the country music industry. These 38 writers (4% of my total sample) are responsible for writing 111 successful songs in my database (9% of my total sample). Nine of the songs that these 38 writers penned were nominated for the Grammy Country Song of the Year; 22% of their songs were recognized as a 'Song I Wish I Had Written' by their peer songwriters; 21% of their songs were picked by music critics as the Nashville Scene's year end critics' picks; their average Billboard year end rank is 91. The average number of

cowriters on the songs they wrote is 2.67; about one third of their songs were co-written by

at least one recording artist; and only 13% of the copyrights for the songs written by this

group is held by a recording artist. Table 3.1 shows these characteristics as they compare to

the total sample of songs and songwriters.

Table 3.1: Characteristics of Successful Songs and their Writers from 2000-2015

	Interviewed Songwriters	All Songwriters
Number of Writers	38	941
Number of Songs	111	1197
Nominated for Grammy for Country Song of the Year	8%	6%
Peer Recognized	22%	13%
Critically Acclaimed	21%	23%
Average Billboard Year End Rank	91	139
Average Number of Cowriters Per Song	2.67	2.44
Percent Songs Co-Written with a Recording Artist	32%	48%
Percent Copyright Held by Recording Artists	13%	25%

The Production of Culture Perspective

Music is not created in a vacuum. Indeed, it is easy to see from lyrics that implicate

current political issues, jargon, and fads, that music both contributes to and responds to

culture. A line of theory in sociology, the production of culture perspective, posits that

cultural products are, "shaped in the mundane processes of their production" (Peterson and

Anand 2004:312). The perspective offers a six-facet model, which Dowd (2004) calls the

six constraints of cultural production. These factors are: organizational structure, industry

structure, occupational careers, markets, technology, and law (Dowd 2004, Peterson and

Anand 2004). I will take these six constraints together and label them as the political

economy of the music industry. The six come up throughout this chapter, and the way I

conceptualize them is that markets, technology, and the law are external forces that shape

the specific internal organizational structure, industry structure, and occupational careers

within Nashville's country music industry.

I will describe ways in which markets, technology, and the law changed at the turn

of the 21st century, leaving record labels to change their business approach, thus affecting

the contractual obligations and occupational roles of recording artists, which then affected

the way that songwriters had to approach their career and day-to-day writing strategies in

co-writing sessions. All of these forces and changes influence the content and style of

songs that the country music industry produces, and both fans and critics have strong

feelings about lyrical and stylistic trends in music. Tyler Mahan Coe is the host of a

podcast on 20th century country music. He lays out the changes in country music eras after

declaring, "The story of music radio from its beginning until now is a story of

homogenization" (Coe 2017). He says:

I'm sure many of you remember in the '90s, older country artists talked a lot of trash about what was being played on the radio. Waylon Jennings may never have really used that extremely vulgar simile to describe Garth Brooks' music but he did say very critical things about Garth Brooks. Now, you go listen to the trash Luke Bryan puts out and tell me that doesn't make Garth Brooks sound like Buck Owens. Well, that's not what a lot of fans of "real country" thought in the '90s when Garth Brooks "ruined country radio." Or, in the '80s, when Urban Cowboy "ruined country radio." Or, in the '70s when Olivia Newton-John won a CMA award for Most Promising Female Vocalist of the Year and a bunch of traditional country acts, like Porter Wagoner and Conway Twitty, all got together at George Jones' and Tammy Wynette's house to form the Association of Country Entertainers to protest smooth pop "ruining country radio." But, in the '60s, the Nashville Sound had already "ruined country radio." And that started in the '50s because Elvis Presley "ruined country radio." When drums started showing up on more country records in the '40s, well, it flat out "ruined country radio." And that only happened because in the 1930s people like Bob Wills couldn't settle the hell down and play some nice, pure country music, like Jimmie Rodgers or The Carter Family. (Coe 2017)

Coe's podcast is meant to cover country music before 2000, the year my study begins. The songs during the period of my study are homogenous too; they cohere around the style known as bro country, which Coe talks about as the "trash Luke Bryan puts out" (Coe 2017). I am not a country music critic and do not set out to make any aesthetic judgment about the quality of music during this or any period. My concerns are in the structural underpinnings of the production of songs, and my approach to understanding homogeneity in music is based on underlying patterns of collaboration in the creation of songs driven by temporally-specific political economic factors.

A SHIFTING POLITICAL ECONOMIC LANDSCAPE

There are three major stakeholders in the music industry who stand to profit from selling music: songwriters, recording artists, and record labels. Each of these three entities is essentially gambling on the likelihood that their product will sell. The songwriter writes songs and owns the copyright on the songs that he or she writes. Songwriters only get paid if their song sells a copy (mechanical royalties, paid periodically by an agency, typically Harry Fox), is performed[4] (performance royalties, paid quarterly by the writer's Performance Rights Organization or "PRO"; ASCAP, BMI, or SESAC), or if they license their songs for television, film, or video games (synchronization or "sync" royalties, to be negotiated for each individual license). Streaming royalties is still a contested point, but it is generally paid as like mechanical royalty but far below the set rate. Recording artists and record labels split the money that the recording artist earns along contractually negotiated

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[4] A performance is an expansive category that includes, most commonly, live performance and radio spins.

lines. The record label acts as a venture capitalist, supporting the artist's development and in producing, releasing, and marketing the recording artist's music.

Arts industries are characterized by uncertainty. The executives and investors who invest in cultural products want to make money, but it can be difficult to predict which products, in this case, songs, albums, or artists, will sell. When an industry is growing, stakeholders are more likely to invest more and to allow artistic choices that might seem riskier since, on the whole, the spread of their investments are likely to turn a profit. As is visible in Figure 3.1 below, from the mid 1980s until the peak of the market in 1999, the record industry doubled its revenue in real dollars. However, the political economic context that surrounded their industry would shift drastically. In the year 2014, there were no albums certified platinum by the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) (Freimark 2014, McIntyre 2014, Michaels 2014). A Platinum certification from the RIAA is awarded to albums that sell one million copies. This was not an uncommon achievement for popular albums in the 20th century. In fact, in the record sales boom of the 1990s, the RIAA had to introduce a new award, the Diamond certification, for albums that sold ten million copies (RIAA 2017). The factors that led to a year without a Platinum record can be traced back to specific legal, technological, and economic factors that characterize the political economy of this era in music.

The 1990s were a boom period for the music industry in terms of revenue and growth, but shifts in the legal, technological, and market contexts at the turn of the 21st century would leave the music industry in a state of chaos as industry stakeholders tried to meet the changes. Perhaps the first major change in the political economy of the music industry that set the stage for consolidation and decline was the Telecommunications Act of 1996, a neoliberal policy that replaced legislation from 1934, thus changing the legal

landscape and potential for corporate consolidation in the radio business. The effect of this

legislative overhaul was that, unlike the previous law that limited any one company to

Figure 3.1: RIAA Chart of U.S. Recorded Music Revenues by Format Over Time
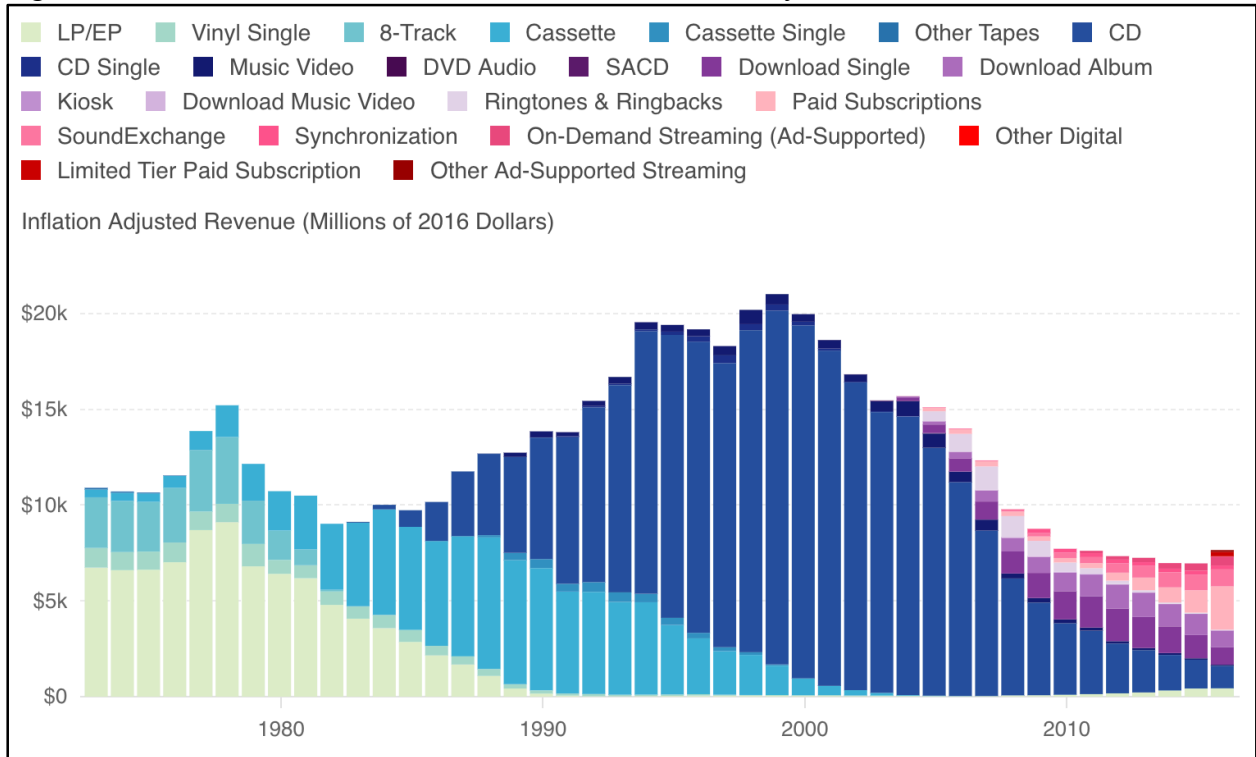
Source: Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) U.S. Sales Database
https://www.riaa.com/u-s-sales-database/

ownership of no more than 20 AM radio stations and 20 FM radio stations, companies

could now own far more radio stations (Rossman 2012). The winner in this oligopolistic

game is iHeartMedia, formerly known as Clear Channel Communications. The mega-

conglomerate's website touts the company's ownership of more than 850 radio stations

over 150 markets in the United States (iheartmedia 2017). A benefit of owning so many

stations is that companies like iHeartMedia can broadcast the same programming on

multiple stations at once, thereby achieving economies of scale and cutting costs (Rossman

2012). If only a few centralized radio programmers have control over 850 stations in 150

markets, music will be more homogenous and less tailored to individual markets. Instead of 150 radio markets having 150 different country stations and thus 150 unique country playlists, iHeartMedia can broadcast the same country playlist to all 150 markets simultaneously. This was the first in a series of consolidating forces levied on the music industry during this period.

The second blow to the music industry occurred in 1998 when the peer-to-peer file sharing platform Napster came onto the scene, followed by similar platforms like Kazaa, Morpheus, and Limewire which allowed users to upload and download digital music files outside of legal distribution channels (Bender and Wang 2009). Audiences get music for free from the radio, but the business model of radio is designed to sell products to targeted demographic groups through commercials between songs. The revenue from companies placing ads on the radio pays for the music that then inspires audiences to tune in. File sharing sites, on the other hand, offered free music to audiences without a mechanism to compensate copyright owners for the music that the platforms hosted and distributed. Though some users outright referred to file sharing as stealing (Kasaras 2002), many users of file sharing sites felt justified in downloading "free" music from the site because either they viewed it as a music discovery tool, not as taking away from a paying user base, or because users saw themselves as only taking potential income from rich artists and the corporations (Levin, Dato-on and Rhee 2004). Further complicating the matter, the music industry was late to embrace digitization, so for tech-savvy music fans who wanted to acquire and store music digitally, there was no easy legal option. iTunes did not have major record label catalogues until 2003, though the mp3 format had been presented to the labels in the 1990s (Moreau 2013). Other sites where music could be legally purchased as a

downloadable mp3 file were diffuse and did not offer the selection of music that per-to-peer sites hosted (Kasaras 2002, Moreau 2013).

Ethics notwithstanding, in many genres of music, the users who thought that their music consumption habits would only affect already wealthy recording artists would not be totally incorrect. Recording artists who model the self-contained band structure common in rock music generally write and play the music on songs that they record, perform, and sell to their fans. For a self-contained artist or band, revenue lost from file sharing would primarily hurt the band as majority owners of the entire copyright and the master recordings of their music. Not all recording artists were against freely distributing their music. In high profile examples of the polarized responses from recording artists, the recording acts Metallica and Dr. Dre both famously sued individual fans who were illegally downloading their music, while Public Enemy and Prince released free albums online (Kasaras 2002, United States District Court 2001). In country music, unlike genres that follow a self-contained band model of unified songwriting and artistry, songs are generally written by professional songwriters who have no intention of being major label recording artists. As the music industry began to sell fewer albums and radio playlists became standardized across markets, country songwriters who earned their money from royalties based on song sales and radio spins had fewer structural opportunities to exploit their copyright in either way.

A third key shift in the political economic landscape in the music industry has been the shift from physical or digital ownership of music (whether legally or illegally obtained) toward streaming as the primary way digital music is consumed. As the digital music ecosystem has become more developed, companies like YouTube, Pandora, Apple Music, and Spotify meet the needs of many of the individuals who used file sharing platforms for

music discovery, free music, or the convenience of digital music listening. These services each offer more than 10 million songs (Blanco 2016), so the minimal differences between them amount to branding different musical experiences (Morris and Powers 2015). Streaming music services earn money and pay for the right to use music either through ad-revenue that can be more demographically micro-targeted to users by using their online data or through a subscription model (Morris and Powers 2015). In a mobile, Wi-Fi enabled society, streaming is convenient for users. In comparison to storing music on a device, which takes up significant digital storage space, streaming services allow people to access music remotely across a variety of platforms and devices (Morris and Powers 2015).

Services like Spotify and Pandora do compensate rights holders (i.e., songwriters and publishers), but research has mixed findings in terms of the revenue impact of streaming to the music industry (Aguiar and Waldfogel 2015). While streaming's impact on the overall economic strength and promise of the music industry is mixed, some individual artists and songwriters are vocally opposed to what they say are unfair royalty rates. One study that indicates that streaming services are revenue neutral for the industry reports that streaming depresses the rate of singles sales at a rate of 1 lost singles sale for every 137 streams (Aguiar and Waldfogel 2015); fewer sales and low royalty rates for songwriters means that while some stakeholders are getting paid, those who create songs are having their traditional income channel undercut. Streaming platforms face continued legal pushback from the music industry, whose constituents are unhappy with the payout rate from these websites (Barnett and Harvey 2015, Christman 2015). One of the songwriters I interviewed comments on his experience with compensation from streaming services:

From a new artist standpoint, streaming is great. You know it, look at all this, you know, the exposure that it gives to the music, but, I think for songwriters, it's robbery. And, it's absolute robbery I mean, for example, I had a song that was a Top 20 hit on the radio, and

it did great and everything. That same song, and this pales in comparison to other numbers, this is an example. My song had almost, like almost, over half a million streams and it paid like $180.00. You know there's just, there's something really, really wrong with that.

[Dylan Robertson, commercially popular writer]

The story that Dylan tells is not unique, and both recording artists and songwriters have come forward to show the public how little they are compensated for their music when it is streamed. The current royalty rate, while mostly unregulated and obfuscated from view, is fractions of a penny per stream. Since copyright law is the purview of the federal government, songwriters, recording artists, and record labels must directly lobby congress if they want to change the payout rate. There is no avenue for an individual songwriter to request more money from any entity that licenses their work other than joining in the collective industry-wide struggle for copyright reform. Songwriter Michael Lewis passionately described to me one of his trips to Washington, DC to lobby congress:

I took this to congress one time to show them and, for a quarter, which is three-month period, [my song] gets played around 17 million times, okay. So either people have requested or they played 17 million times, my song. My part for that was a $103 for 17 million plays, and that's what I'm talking about that it has to catch up…We're not trying to make a huge amount of money. We just want it to be fair.

[Michael Lewis, commercially popular and peer recognized songwriter]

Michael would go on to describe how he stood in front of congress and played one of his songs without a guitar strap, forcing him to stand "like a conquistador," with the neck of his guitar pointing toward the ceiling. This was a big moment for him, but he told me that he was readily dismissed so that voting could continue, with little recognition or notice of his presentation to his representatives. It was a tough crowd.

Bill Moore is a writer who has had hits in Nashville since the 1980s. He has been nominated for Grammys, won songwriter of the year awards from numerous organizations,

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and is both critically acclaimed and peer recognized. He feels strongly that the post-file-

sharing economy has had lasting effects on the music industry:

It's a business. It's not about music. It's about music to the people out in the world, but people out in the world don't purchase music like they used to. And kids don't know, they don't have that concept because they never had to. It's always just been free. And that's great, but nothing else is free. I can't go to the grocery store and get free food, I can't get free shoes but everybody wants to get free music. Well, you're killing an art form.
[Bill Moore, commercially popular, peer recognized, critically acclaimed, Grammy-nominated writer]

Bill has been more successful than most songwriters could ever hope to be, and yet he is

not being greedy or overstating the impact of declining revenues on his financial situation.

Bill has, on five separate occasions, paid off and subsequently re-mortgaged his home to

make ends meet during lean times between hits. He has seen the value of his work, the

value of his hits decline over the decades. His lament also gets at the fact that young

audiences, those who began independently consuming music after 2000, have never had to

pay for music. He believes that this means they do not and cannot see the value in

purchasing recorded music, which ultimately means to him that the music industry,

revenues from songwriting in particular, will never return to their former heights.

The Record Labels' Response

The financial loss to the music industry from declining sales was not just felt by

songwriters. At the same time as songwriters began to see lower performance royalties

from radio and decreased mechanical royalties from album and single song sales, record

labels saw large losses in their own revenues. In turn, they became increasingly financially

conservative and risk-averse. This is visible in the number of acquisitions and mergers that

record labels underwent during this time period. The record label ecosystem contracted

such that the so-called "Big Six" shrunk to the "Big Five" are now the "Big Three," and

from 2000 to 2007, over 5,000 record label employees were laid off (Hiatt and Serpick 2007, Kasaras 2002, Moreau 2013). The major record labels were responsible for 80% of the music that was sold around the world in the early 2000s (Zhu and MacQuarrie 2003). At this point in the music industry's history, it was not business as usual, and record companies scrambled to redesign their business model.

Michael Lewis describes the shifting earnings landscape in the music industry:

Traditionally, the songwriter makes their big money off of radio—terrestrial radio. The artist makes their big money off of live concerts. Labels make their big money off of CD sales, which are not happening. So what has happened in the last ten years is that labels have signed acts with what's called a "360 deal," which means they own a little bit of everything that artist does. So they want that artist to write their own songs because they make more money when they do that, and it makes up for what they lose the CD sales on that side.

[Michael Lewis, commercially popular, peer recognized songwriter]

Even as labels became more consolidated, they became increasingly conservative in terms of their investments in new recording artists. The structure of contractual obligations for recording artists began to change, and in turn the roles and responsibilities of the artist morphed into the 360˚ deal that Michael mentions. Under the contractual terms of the now ubiquitous 360˚ deal, record labels own a piece of everything that the recording artist does. This includes, but is not limited to, publishing and merchandise sales in addition to any music sales (Marshall 2013, Pierson 2010). Remember, in country music, recording artists were generally not the writers of their own songs. Now artists are now contractually obligated to write some of their own music so that they, and importantly so that their label, will have a stake in their music's copyright.

Artist development was once an important piece of the record label's investment in a recording artist. Now new artists are expected to have a fully developed brand and be ready to market themselves from the moment they sign their record deal. Instead of a full album

contract, newly signed artists may only have the record label's backing to record a single or

two with the potential to record and release more music if the single(s) do well in

commercial markets (Leeds 2007). Ben Stevens, a 28-year-old aspiring artist and writer

who has written one hit song recorded by another artist sums up the changes in the artist

development process since the industry has gotten more conservative:

[Record labels] would find an artist or would scout an artist, sign that artist, develop that artist write with that artist, then produce a record, then launch him. And, that doesn't happen anymore because the business model has changed so much. Nobody's buying albums as much as they were, so they really want you to show a finished product. They want to throw very little money at it, take very little risk.

[Ben Stevens, commercially popular writer]

Record labels, in search of good investments in a time of reduced revenues, would

rather sign an artist who already comes with a readymade fan base in tow. With the advent

of social media and reality TV shows like American Idol and The Voice, record labels

could now quantitatively measure their potential new artists' extant fan base through the

number of views or friends or followers a new act already had. Labels viewed early-stage

fan base development as a piece of their traditional investment that they could cut as a cost-

saving measure. Bill Moore describes the reality of what this new business model can mean

for an aspiring recording artist in Nashville.

I had an artist, actually a kid I took to one of the labels, and they were going to give him a record deal. They actually gave him some money to cut some songs. By the time he cut them and brought them back, they got one of the kids on American Idol, because they had a contract and those labels had a contract like with the top five people in when they had American Idol. And they said, "Well, this kid from American Idol got your slot," because it's a slot he fit for the label. He says, "Your guy's better, but our guy's got a million people that love him. So we had no work to do, we didn't have to put any money in the promotion."

[Bill Moore, commercially popular, peer recognized, critically acclaimed, Grammy-nominated writer]

Bill goes on to say that the label was saving $250,000 for a male recording artist or $500,000 for a female recording artist in the cost of promoting a new single if the recording artist already has a fan base, say from American Idol or from loyal followers they have collected through YouTube before signing a contract with a record label. Record labels carefully consider the type and variety of artists that they will sign onto their roster because they do not want to invest in the careers of artists that will be in direct competition with each other. They think about their roster in terms of "slots" that are filled by recording artists who fit particular profiles according to age, gender, whether it is a group or solo act, and past success or career stage. A healthy stock portfolio would not carry too much risk by investing in potentially volatile, unknown entities. Similarly, Bill's artist could not be signed because the label had found a more bankable artist to fill the emerging male artist slot.

The relationship between record labels and recording artists is patterned cooperation. Together, they both contribute essential pieces to the process of creating music from commercial consumption. Just as the record labels were strategically responding to the political economic pressures that they felt in the changing music industry economy, their move toward the 360˚ deal affected the ways that others in the music industry patterned their own cooperation.

Competition and Closing Opportunity

In the quote above, Bill mentioned that record labels effectively balance their artist roster by having "slots" for different kinds of artists. For example, a label may have one 20-something bro-country solo recording artist, but they probably would not have two of this kind of artist. There is only one slot for this kind of artist because the record label does

not want to compete with itself to promote and sell music by this kind of artist.

There has been a similar "slot" process that governs what kinds of songs get cut and released on a recording artist's album. Given the turn from physical album sales, the physical constraints that limited songs to a finite number per album disappeared. If an artist wanted to release 100 songs as an album, there is no physical or technological constraint standing in their way. This fact, in addition to the iTunes model of allowing single-song purchasing led to albums being "forcibly unbundled" (Zhu and MacQuarrie 2003). Despite the lack of physical limits in the number of songs that is released as an album unit, industry norms still dictate how many songs will go on a record. Danny Berker talks about how slots apply to curation of songs on an album.

It seems like everybody's trying to fit everything into that one little window, you know. Well, let's say like back in the day, Alan Jackson was cutting a record. He's probably gonna put like twelve songs in a record and you start to think, "Okay, well, the A&R people are probably gonna come up with five songs, Alan was probably gonna write three or four." Yeah, and then so that leaves maybe two slots over, you know. How am I gonna get in that little window, you know?
<div align="right">[Danny Barker, commercially popular writer]</div>

The "little window" that Danny identifies is the space for outside cuts on an artist's album. If the majority of the slots on an album are already filled by songs that the artist and his or her record label have pre-selected or written, the chances of any songwriter having an outside cut on the record is slim.

In the past, to get into that "little window" of opportunity, the quality of the song was key. Logan Ellis describes this system:

If you didn't write a great song, you didn't have a snowball's chance in hell of getting on a record. I mean, as a whole—I mean there were a few artist writes going on back then, like an album cut or something like that—but man if you were making a record and gonna be a hit on a radio, that song was pretty well written. I mean just pretty stinking well written, because it had to be.

As Logan reveals, country artists did co-write some of their music in past decades, but for the most part, songwriters were focused on writing an excellent song so that it would be selected and included on an album. The criteria for song selection in the past was more focused on the song's quality.

Before the political economic turn that is detailed in this chapter, having a cut on an album meant that many songwriters would earn royalty income whether or not their song was the single. The structure of mechanical royalties pays 9.1 cents per song sold, to be divided by the song's writers and the songwriters' publishers. This meant that for a song on a platinum album that was written by two staff songwriters, each writer could expect to make approximately $20,000. Getting a few album cuts each year would be enough for writers to make a decent living even without having a chart-topping single or having their song play on the radio even once. That too has changed though in the time since sales have dropped and streaming has prevailed because of the "unbundling" of albums I described above. Jack Fraser describes the impact this change has had on how songwriters try to "hit that little window" of opportunity to get a song on an album.

You might not be the guy just hitting it like for that window that people want, but you could make a great living and still make a lot of money but have integrity and commercial success. I think that's gone away. I don't think there's, without album sales, the only way as a songwriter to make money now is through singles. Everybody is trying to write the same song. And it's very much narrowed. Whereas used to, you could have artistic writers that could do their thing, and that's kinda gone away. You know, you take away albums— and I'm not complaining, I'm just saying this is how it is—With the streaming and the downloading and there's so much music coming from everywhere. It's just a different game. And with labels taking publishing from anybody that they sign [as a recording artist], everybody is a songwriter now.

[Jack Fraser, commercially popular, peer recognized, critically acclaimed, Grammy-nominated writer]

When album sales were high, more songwriters to make a living from writing a more diverse set of songs. While constraining, the system of "slots" on an album allowed for a more varied array of music to be profitable for Nashville songwriters. Perhaps a song would not be the right fit for radio but could still merit a slot on a recording artist's album as a quiet ballad or quirky novelty song.

In light of changes in the political economy of the music industry, songwriters now face a more competitive market for getting songs cut and feel that there has been a closing of opportunity, particularly to get outside cuts, that is, having a song recorded by an artist that is not also co-written by the recording artist. Writing a good song is no longer enough to make a living or a career as a songwriter. As the industry has changed to meet the new consolidated digital political economy of the current era, songwriters too have had to change the way they do business.

In the Room

The forces of radio consolidation, low record and single sales, the rise of streaming services, and the 360˚ deal have coalesced into an opportunity structure that is more competitive and narrow than in past eras. Record labels found a way to adapt to the changing landscape through re-tooling the structure of contracts and investments in artist development. Songwriters do not have the capital or leverage to change the structure of their economic relationship to their intellectual property without lobbying congress. Since songwriters have no tools through which to directly alter their economic stake in the music they write, they cannot command more value from the songs they create. Instead, they have had to find ways to shift their strategic orientation toward co-writing in order to continue

getting cuts and to exploit their copyrights. This is an entrepreneurial shift from the past occupational role expected from a professional songwriter.

The response that songwriters have taken toward the goal of getting their songs cut in the new political economy of declining sales and 360˚ deals is to write as much as possible with recording artists—both established artists and potential up-and comers.

Songwriters must now strategically consider who is "in the room" for co-writing sessions since there are fewer outside cuts. Dan Stone indicates the degree to which his personal schedule of co-writing appointments has changed on a day-to-day basis.

In the 80s and 90s, and even the early 2000s, four days out of five, I would write with other professional writers or one other professional writer to try to get an outside song cut. Maybe one of those days, I'd write with an artist or a band. And I'd say that's reversed, that it is more like three days out of five, I'd write with an artist or a band, and two I might write with another professional writer.

<div align="right">

[Dan Stone, commercially popular, critically acclaimed, Grammy-nominated writer]

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There is more to the strategy than simply writing with established artists who are more likely to guarantee spins and streams on the songs they release. Cultivating a relationship with emerging artists is a strategy that many songwriters employ. It is more of a gamble in terms of opportunity cost to write with a new artist or one who does not yet have a record deal, but the dividends are higher for songwriters who establish themselves as part of a new artist's "camp" or close collaborators early on. Logan Ellis says:

Any writer in town will tell you right now, we're all hashing it out with every young artist that comes through town. I mean if they think they're going to get a record deal, you know you wanna hit it off with them and you wanna write that song that's their first single or you wanna write that song that you know they love and cut, and then hopefully the next record deal you get to write something else that they love and cut and, hopefully you get to latch on to somebody that you'll have that run with.

<div align="right">

[Logan Ellis, commercially popular, critically acclaimed writer]

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Not all emerging artists are as talented at writing songs as they are at singing and providing the brand under which to release music. Drew Ross, who had a successful career as a recording artist before transitioning to a career as a songwriter in the 1990s, penning country standards and numerous hits, laments the compromises that come with eschewing writing with long-term collaborators for the flavor-of-the-moment young artists. He feels that better songs are ignored in service of the financial bonus that labels receive if their recording artist is a co-writer on the songs they produce.

I mean, after all the dozens or hundreds of songs I've written with a few different people, even if we've had a couple of cuts we all have to look at reality and say, "What's the chance that the two of us are gonna write something that will outweigh a song that this young artist wrote with somebody?" And the artist— I use the word loosely, because I think Bob Dylan is an artist and the Beatles are artists, so it's just a term like quarterback or halfback—But so these young writers, artists now wanna be writers. And so, if you're not in the room with them you better write "The House that Built Me" or "Humble and Kind" because they don't need another [up tempo song]. It's true, but most of the time an artist is going to try to write his own songs and you got to have a really powerful song to bump one of his off. I think it hurts the business. Everybody in my position thinks it hurts the business because [recording artists] may be turning down a better song to record a song they help write.

<div align="right">[Drew Ross, commercially popular writer]</div>

The actual job and role remains the same for songwriters whether they are writing with other professional writers or working with recording artists in the room: spend three of four hours penning the music and lyrics of a song that, should both inspire and move people as well as be a commercial, thus financial, success. Though the goal remains the same, the ways in which songwriters get to writing the song have at times had to change. Jack Fraser calls the strategy of having a writer in the room, "a game" when he refers to the change in approach that he and his peer songwriters had to make in order to continue getting songs cut in the new political economic system.

And so the game of having had the artist in the room, I mean that was a huge change for me when all of us realized that we couldn't just write songs by ourselves or with our buddies that we respected anymore. We had to have an active role. That's a tough thing when somebody's 20-years-old with a record deal and they don't have the craft but they're calling the shots. It's a little backwards.

[Jack Fraser, commercially popular, peer recognized, critically acclaimed, Grammy-nominated writer]

The reality that songwriters need to write with an artist in the room to get a cut has shifted the business strategy for Nashville songwriters, but it has also changed the dynamics of power over creativity in the writing room. Whereas professional writers set out to have a career in the craft of writing good songs, artists have a much narrower range of what they might create or write. Songwriters talk about finding "threads of truth" or about writing songs that touch on universal feelings, but recording artists have a more tailored vision of what kinds of song fit their brand and strategy as a performing artist. Songwriters have had to alter the way they create and write in the room in order to meet this change head on. Again we see the tension between Harland Howard's "three chords and the truth" vision of country music as art and Chet Atkins's coins jingling in a pocket vision of country music as commerce.

Jack Fraser speaks to the sleight of hand and misdirection that he and his co-writers employ at times when writing with an artist in the room.

When you're writing with these young artists, first off they don't have experience. [That is why] you're there. If they didn't need you, the labels, the publishers wouldn't put you in the room with them. So you show up and they're there with a blank slate and you're supposed to have the idea know enough about them to come. And then they tell you yes or no basically. You are supposed to have the lead on the ideas, so that's why you see so many three way co-writes where there's two lead writers and the artist. Because the writers have to work with each other to make it happen and deal with [the artist's] ego… It goes to the point where me and a writer would get together the night before. We would have several things already written…and…when the artist's ego got in the way and they needed to have something, we'd kinda go with that and then back at it. Like say a co-writer says something, and the artist didn't like it. And it was good five or few minutes later down the

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session I go to the artist, "What was that you said?" And make it their idea. It's a total manipulation dance.

[Jack Fraser, commercially popular, peer recognized, critically acclaimed, Grammy-nominated writer]

In the case that Jack Fraser describes, the recording artist ultimately can be a hindrance or a roadblock that the other two co-writers have to navigate in order to get a song written. They need the artist to put a song of his or her record, and thus the artist is in the room. Despite his or her presence in the room, however, the artist is not always a major contributor to the song.

Throughout my conversations with songwriters, the theme of pre-writing or at least bringing semi-developed ideas into the room with an artist was not uncommon. Logan Ellis told me, "*I mean, and we've all done it. We've all written songs and brought an artist in on them. We've all done it.*" It does not appear that the pre-writing "manipulation dance" that writers sometimes perform is the modal situation for co-writers with artists, but most songwriters expressed that is does happen from time to time. A conversation I had with Brandon Simpson and Natalie Reynolds, two hit writers, shows a worst-case scenario of the "made to order" songwriting that can occur in the room.

Brandon: *Like writing for other people, I mean it's even changed since we got here. Like it used to be—we came in and saw the tail end of where you would write songs to get pitched. Now it's like you just write songs in the room with the artists. And the reason for that really is because there, the artist doesn't make any money, so now in order for them to make money they have to have a piece of the writing. But no, most of them can't really write.*

Natalie: *So they just kind of like narrate what they want to write about. Yeah, they are like taking, they are like taking an order.*

Brandon: *Yes, placing orders. It's like yes, so then you write a song for them, but they are a writer on the song.*

Natalie: *They totally are, and their presence in the room is affecting it one way or the other*

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you know.

Brandon: *Sometimes for good. Occasionally, and there are exceptions where like, I remember when we wrote with one [female recording artist] it was like we were expecting, they've been putting us with like lots of girls in development that couldn't write. And so we were used to just rewriting it. And then we wrote with her, and we kind of did that at first just to get the thing going you know and everything, and then I remember her throwing something out, it was like, "Oh, she can write, my God, this is uh, this is awesome," and like we should give her some room.*

<div align="right">

[Brandon Simpson, critically acclaimed writer;
Natalie Reynolds, not in sampling frame]

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Brandon and Natalie do note that some artists are great songwriters; unfortunately, their surprise in finding a good songwriter in their artist co-writing session reveals that the norm is artists whose writing leaves something to be desired in the room.

Like Jack Fraser, Bill Moore recommends that writers "do their prep work" in terms of bringing some more developed ideas and parts of songs already mostly complete to writing appointments when collaborating with a recording artist but is a bit more informative about why that might be necessary. He says:

I've tried years ago to write with a couple [of recording artists] on the road, but it was after I had a single with them. One of them, for example, I go out I had single, and this artist brings a new artist. And so went out on the bus with them on Wednesday he was going to come back on a Sunday. The thing is, if you're going to write with these people, these artists, the smartest thing you can do is do your prep work. Have a song partly written. It isn't always true, but you feel a lot better off if you do it because the chances are—and some of them can write, but they're busy. They're signing autographs, they're doing endorsements, they're going to go the shopping mall you know. You got sound check you know they're 'just they got stuff to do.

<div align="right">

[Bill Moore, commercially popular, peer recognized, critically acclaimed,
Grammy-nominated writer]

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The time that Bill spent on the road with his recording artist co-writer was jam packed for the artist, whose many roles required him to perform concerts, meet with fans, and appear

at promotional events. The occupational roles of the recording artist are all encompassing, and writing songs for his or her next album is simply another box to tick off on a given day. Bill points out that the quality of a co-writing session it is not just a matter of a recording artist's writing chops, but their capacity to even be physically present for enough time to really write a song. It is clear that the job recording artists do is incredibly demanding. Mason Morgan, a recording artist who writes some of his own music told me:

So I've got a lot on my plate…I mean in the midst of designing new merch, I'm doing a lot of publicity stuff. I had to reorder CDs 'cause I sold them all. Which is awesome. I'm also doing like rehearsals for my band. I'm doing the routing, the scheduling, rentals, flights, hotel rooms, you know just routing in general. What time we're leaving, when do we need to be there. I'm doing the events and production. Working with the agency on contracts and specifics and writers and production aspects and getting with the stage managers. And it's like so, things are like really—I have not had a moment where I wasn't driving, on stage, loading in and loading out, eating or sleeping. And that's literally truth, like, I mean people say, "Dude, of course you had time to pick up your phone" and I'm going, "Honest to God, really truly I haven't."

[Mason Morgan, commercially popular writer]

Writing with the artist in the room is an inversion of the typical balance of power. Groups of professional songwriters talk about coming into the room as equals and the idea that leaving "ego" out of the equation makes everyone more creative. Songwriters value the creative freedom and process of throwing out ideas that others can build on and editing each other's thoughts until they can agree on what makes for the best hook, melody, or verse, so the group's collective creative work is generally more important than any one person's "ego" or ideas dominating the group's creative process. This is not the case in the facilitated or bespoke process of an artist co-write. Since the recording artist is an arbiter of which songs go onto his or her record, songwriters may be less likely to edit the recording artist's ideas or change parts of the song that they would otherwise guide toward a different final song.

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If I'm writing with somebody who could be or is an artist, and I use that word loosely, I'm definitely gonna give them a lot of deference. "Does this feel like something that fits your wheelhouse?" You know what I mean. No matter how strongly I might feel about an idea, there's no sense forcing it on somebody that you hope might record it. I find myself less inclined to force myself on my thoughts.

[Drew Ross, commercially popular writer]

Drew communicates that he is open to the fact he will defer to the artist during co-writes since the artist has to like the song and have a positive vibe in the co-writing session to want to record the song. Lucas Lane, on the other hand, is more clear in his distaste for what sessions such as these can become. He says, *"I've been with some other famous people and they do, they bring their ego into the room and be like, you just, I don't know. It's just there's not enough oxygen for the song to survive the ego."* Artist co-writes could be difficult for any number of reasons, but structurally, they do hold different roles and more power than professional songwriters do. Their structural position in the music industry and their goals as a recording artist, not just as a songwriter, must be considered in considering the nature of inter-occupational patterned cooperation.

Why Artists Have Different Goals

Despite what professional songwriters told me, Artists' goals are not all motivated by ego. Recording artists have a set of pressures and expectations for their work and music that differ from what songwriters have to consider in the writing room. The majority of a recording artist's income comes from live performances and touring, so the nature of live performance is part of their consideration when writing songs. Whereas a songwriter might be concerned for writing the best song, period, a recording artist is likely trying to write the best song that will be well-received in a multi-thousand-person arena show populated by the fan base he or she has worked so hard to target and cultivate.

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Dan Stone, though not a recording artist, identifies the goals that artists have in mind when they write.

One big difference now is that songwriters, because artists are so involved in the songwriting process, some artists are very aware of the live audience, the concert audience. Why are they at the concerts? What do they want to hear? Where do they want to see you? When before, radio was way more of a driving force. And it still is an important force, but it's the live audience, the live show song is a huge part of what we consider.

[Dan Stone, commercially popular, critically acclaimed,
Grammy-nominated writer]

Concerts have changed, too, further pushing songs toward only those party anthems that, as Jack Fraser puts it, can work "energy wise" for a crowd of 30,000 people. Logan Ellis comments on the reduction in diversity even in a single concert set list:

It used to be a show you go to and they kick it off and they'd rock you for a couple songs, and then they'd sing a ballad. And then they might, you know, couple more songs and they'd sing another ballad. And it was that ebb and flow, ebb and flow and now it's just straight across. I mean it's just like, 'Oh my gosh don't sing a ballad.'

[Logan Ellis, commercially popular, critically acclaimed writer]

The requisite up-tempo party atmosphere that keeps the energy up in arena concerts and contributes to the lack of a good "ebb and flow" between ballads and tempo songs further pushes music toward a homogenous musical style. Though continuing to write songs for the stage in order to financially maintain a career in songwriting, some writers express displeasure in sacrificing diversity in songs to achieve the recording artist's goals. Lucas Lane, the songwriter who finds recording artists' egos to be, at times, suffocating says:

Artists only really make money now through touring. So they play these huge vacuous spaces, you know, of at least 18,000 to sometimes, you know, 60,000, 100,000. So, you know, you know, "He Stopped Loving Her Today" would not, is not, gonna work really in a huge space like that. You've gotta have simpler songs and simpler lyrics, with faster tempos to fill these huge vacuous spaces. I mean it's just a compounding problem. But, you

know, if you and I or the manager or an artist, we'd be like, 'Okay. I get that you wanna hear, you know, "Fire and Rain." I get that you love "Fire and Rain." "Fire and Rain" is not going to work today. So don't pitch us "Fire and Rain" when you go to the publishers.' And the publishers don't tell the writers, 'Don't write "Fire and Rain."' Um, yeah, it's just [the publishers say] 'So, you know, what we want is ACDC, "Highway to Hell."'

[Lucas Lane, commercially popular, peer recognized, critically acclaimed, Grammy-nominated writer]

Jack Fraser agrees with the sentiment Lucas expressed, saying, "*I don't know that country was ever meant to be arena-sized. I should say that I wish there was a little more room for everything.*" The belief and assumption that underlie Jack's statement is that there is no room in country music for songs that do not fit into the narrow window of up-tempo songs that are written with a mind toward live performance.

Bro country, the most characteristic style of country music during the period of my study, relies on the kind of songs with "hooks that lean toward pop and hefty guitars that tilt toward rock" (Rosen 2013). The production of culture perspective requires that we think of the importance of political economic factors in what kind of cultural product will be created. Crooners could come to dominate radio airwaves because of microphones, and electronic music could not have been created without technological advancements in digitized sound. Likewise, Bro country's characteristic rhythms and sounds that synthesize hip-hop rhythms and, rock sounds, and pop lyrical hooks were made for artists by artists through their collaborations with professional songwriters with the express purpose of being played live in front of a large audience. What political economic conditions encouraged the production of this kind of cultural product? Song sales are down and revenue for live music performance is up. Further if the artist and his or her record label gets a portion of the revenue from beer sales, you can bet that they write songs that make people want to party and buy the brand of beer with the best revenue kickback.

Why Hit the Same Notes?

There is a shrinking opportunity to get on radio playlists after corporate

consolidation, decreasing chance to make money on album cuts because of the shift to a

singles-driven and streaming music model, and the pressure to write with recording artists

to increase the chances to get a cut at all. The result of this is that songwriters are all

writing toward the same, small target, both lyrically and musically, according to their artist

co-writer's goals. The uncertainty of markets for songs can lead record label executives

toward trying to recreate what was successful in the past, which results in the landscape of

commercial music being more lyrically and musically homogenous. Songwriters recognize

this tendency. Sam Clark says:

*So, you get A&R people just chasing something in their safety zone as whoever has written
the most hits lately. So, well, we had a [hit songwriter] song. We had a [prominent female
recording artist] song. We had a, whatever. It should've worked. We did our part.*
<div align="right">[Sam Clark, commercially popular writer]</div>

For each new album, songwriters indicate that record label executives try to hedge their

bets until something new breaks the mold, at which point, everyone works toward

recreating the success of the song that broke the mold. Brandon Simpson adds:

*And it's this self-fulfilling situation. It's also really weird cause when someone blows that
away, they try and imitate it, like with Miranda, when Miranda put out that song, "House
that Built Me." Before that, the idea of getting an acoustic song cut was, you know,
ridiculous. But then after that, everybody wants, uh, 'We are really looking like House that
Built Me kind of thing, like acoustic, maybe a singer.' And the reason for that is because
she made it work. But then those four people decided that's the order that they are going to
place, and that order goes down that line and then you end up with all the [same] stuff.*
<div align="right">[Brandon Simpson, critically acclaimed writer]</div>

Logan Ellis, a writer who has had multiple number one songs, says, "*I hope we're

getting to it the point where some of that stuff's gonna change. I don't know if we are or*

not. All us guys that are writers want it to, but we don't know. I mean all we can do is wait and see you know." It is fascinating that Logan, someone who has penned the music and lyrics to many hit songs, says that all he and his peers can do is wait and see. That is not a phrase spoken by someone who has creative freedom. Songwriters' agency is constrained by the structure of the music industry and can only be enacted cooperatively through their collaborations with other songwriters and recording artists. The constraints of the political economic system shape the content and style of music that is released and the way collaboration is structured in producing the music.

Logan goes on to tell me, *"I mean I don't begrudge anybody for what they're doing, but as a whole the music's, it's not as good."* How can a hit songwriter, someone who drives to work every day and writes a song say that the music is not good and that he and his peers will have to "wait and see" if it changes? There is a definite tension that songwriters face in writing the music that they want to write and writing music that will allow them to make a living. Drew Ross comments on the tension he feels between trying to write a great song and, as he told me, trying to "write his retirement".

It's a fine line between sitting down every morning and trying to write something fun and sounding like the radio and sitting down and writing, trying to write, something from your heart that you think is gonna impact people deeply, emotionally change a life. And we'd all rather write those life changing songs, but we hear what we're up against, with the tailgates, and the ice cold beer, and the trucks, and feet on the dashboard, and all those clichés. So, there is a balancing act between trying to write something that's catchy on the radio and something that really means something.

[Drew Ross, commercially popular writer]

Many songwriters do not like writing in the bro country style. Bill Moore says, *"They're not singing about anything."* He then sang to me in a mocking tone, *"I'm 18. I'm in a cornfield. I've never been with a woman, but I'd sure like her in my seat. And I just drink*

corn liquor." He stopped singing and said, *"I mean it's all bullshit.*" Jack Fraser tells me

that "*country is a genre that has lost its way.*" With similar displeasure at the state of

country music, Sam Clark resolutely says, "*I think we've dumbed down music pretty big*

time. Where you just say, "I'm from the country," and everybody goes, "Woooo!"

Some songwriters do not find a tension between writing music that they like and

writing commercial hits oriented toward the radio and live performance. On more than one

occasion, writers expressed to me that some of their peers just truly find joy in writing this

type of music or that a co-writer of theirs has always been writing the music that is popular

now because "the market met them." Cole Parker tells me about how he deals with writing

songs that might not be life-changing music.

I think the good thing is I have never taken it too seriously. To me it's, I mean, special that
it's still somebody barbequing to [my songs]. You know there is still somebody on a beach
laying there, and they are going through a heart break and they need [music]. I try and
stay not too serious about it because it's just country music. I mean there is "She Thinks
My Tractor's Sexy" by Kenny Chesney. I loved that song. I am like why do I love this song?
It made me smile, and to me—country music—the moment you start trying to make it a
Picasso you are probably screwed.
                    [Cole Parker, commercially popular, critically acclaimed writer]

Whereas some songwriters can stick it out writing music that is squeezed and shaped

by the forces of the current political economy, other cannot. Many songwriters mused to

me that the closing of opportunity has meant that we have "lost" good talent and good

music as a result. Many of my interviewees are no longer songwriters despite their

successful career histories. Jack Fraser does not currently have a publishing deal and only

writes periodically. He told me:

To be honest, I grew wary of trying to show up every day and write music I didn't like.
Yeah and that's what you do in the music business because you don't want to sell anybody
out. I don't want to write with people that I can't stand their music anymore that's not...
like that's soul crushing after a while when you get up every day and go in to write…You

are in your 40's and you are trying to not only please somebody that's 21 but trying to act like you fit in with them, which you don't, or understand them It's very odd.

[Jack Fraser, commercially popular, peer recognized, critically acclaimed, Grammy-nominated writer]

Logan Ellis continues to have incredibly high levels of commercial popularity but laments the fact that many of his peers did not have commercial popularity and left the business to pursue income elsewhere:

For me, just as a lover of music, I think the town as a whole has suffered because of that. I've seen a lot of great song writers leave town, you know, that just weren't willing or able to get in the right groups and cliques and camps or whatever you wanna call them. It's sad because there's been some really great song writers just move on to do other things. And some I've known and then I've sat in a room with some of these guys that have hits and that stuff and I just go, 'Man I can't believe so and so couldn't make it happen, but you're the guy with [this hit song or that hit song]" you know and I just scratched my head and go, man, this is crazy.

[Logan Ellis, commercially popular, critically acclaimed writer]

The implications of losing good songwriters extends beyond those individuals and their livelihoods. Dan Stone mentions that we are not just losing songwriters but also losing artists who are not and do not want to be songwriters.

So if you lose the non-performing songwriter songs. You lose the, the Gerry Goffin, Carole King, the non-performing songwriter, Leiber and Stoller from the 50s. Then you lose the entire spectrum of non-songwriting artists. Which would include the McGraws and the George Strait fellows. He is trying some [writing] now, but he is not doing very well at it…You lose a whole section of American culture.

[Dan Stone, commercially popular, critically acclaimed, Grammy-nominated writer]

Even beyond losing the musical contributions of non-writing performing artists, Lucas Lane waxes poetic on the loss of serious, important music in society at large.

Songs matter, you know. Every social change, certainly in America, has been accompanied by a soundtrack, you know. From the American Revolution, to the Civil War, to, World War I to World War II, to the Vietnam War, to Martin Luther King, to, you name it. I mean

it's, you know, music is important.
<div align="right">[Lucas Lane, commercially popular, peer recognized, critically acclaimed,
Grammy-nominated writer]</div>

Homogeneity, in both lyrical tropes and musical styles, is a consolidating force that limits the possibility of expression and the individuals who are able to express themselves. One writer, after telling me point blank that the music coming out of the country genre today is homogenous, tells me what he thinks it means when music is homogenous in a particular genre. Cole Parker says:

If you see—there has always been style chasing that went on in music—but if you see a format that seems even more repetitive than before I think that's because everybody is in more of a desperation mode than a free to create mode.
<div align="right">[Cole Parker, commercially popular, critically acclaimed writer]</div>

Patterns of cooperation and the political economic forces that structure them have an effect on the styles and content of music that songwriters will create. Some songwriters feel pushed out of their genre because of a mismatch in their personal tastes in lyrics and music while others are happy to apply their skills toward market demand. Likewise, some songwriters are unhappy with the turn toward an opportunity structure focused around collaborating with recording artists while others see it as a necessary part of their work.

DISCUSSION

The production of culture perspective leads us to expect that the cultural products within a genre in a particular time period will cohere around similar themes and styles. As Cole Parker puts it, "there has always been style chasing." The unpredictability around what will be successful in culture industries means that people in an industry will try a variety of tactics to recreate success. The difference that we see in the interviews with

<div align="center">82</div>

Nashville songwriters who were successful in this time period is the change in their relationships with recording artists. Rather than individuals in distinct occupations working to create and recreate successful songs, the industry's declining revenues resulted in contractual changes for recording artists that inherently changed the opportunity structure for professional songwriters. The resulting shift in creative power from the songwriter to the recording artist means that the content of country songs has also shifted toward artists' goals and needs.

Figure 3.2: Patterns of Cooperation between Professional Songwriters and Recording Artists
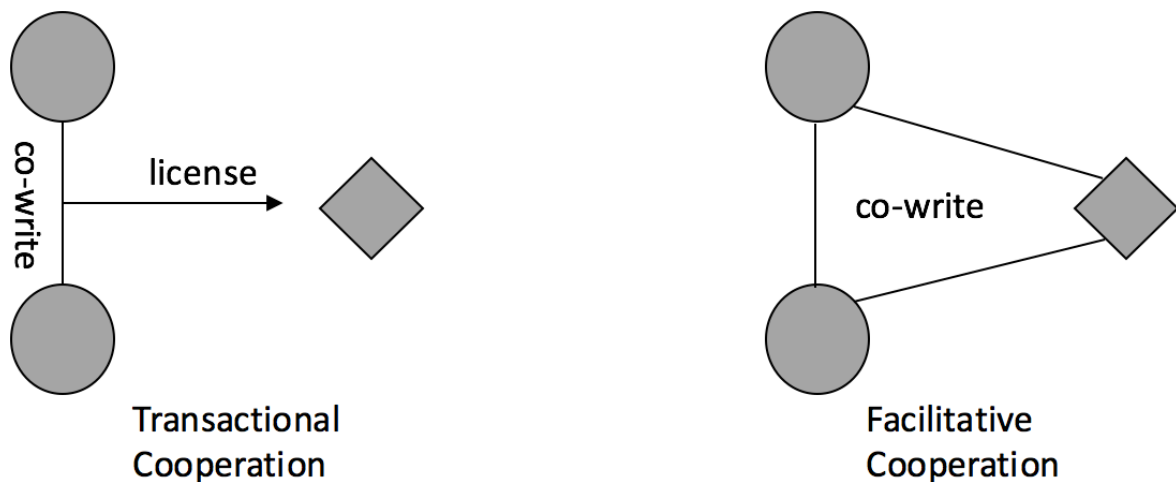
Transactional Cooperation

Facilitative Cooperation

Note: Circles represent professional songwriters and diamonds represent recording artists. Lines represent an instance of collaboration. The nature of cooperation is specified in text.

The initial character of patterned cooperation between professional songwriters and recording artists was transactional. The outside cut model meant that professional songwriters would write songs and recording artists would select the songs they liked best for their albums. The cooperation between songwriters and artists was based on the recording artist licensing the rights to the songwriter's intellectual property. This is a

transactional relationship. Changes in the political economy of the music industry re-patterned cooperation between songwriters and recording artists. The opportunity structure for having a song cut and released on a record is now linked to the recording artist themselves. However, not all recording artists are good songwriters, and they often need professional songwriters to facilitate the creation of a song that fits their needs. A recording artist's needs are often determined by their personal brand and with a mind toward a live performance audience. These two patterns of cooperation are displayed in Figure 3.2.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS ON POLITICAL ECONOMY, PATTERNED COOPERATION, AND HOMOGENEITY

In my interviews with songwriters, there emerged a clear series of events that caused their co-writing strategy to shift. Because of decreasing music industry revenues, the 360° deal became the norm for recording artist contracts. This new kind of contract further closed the window of opportunity for songwriters to get outside cuts on recording artists' albums. In response, songwriters increasingly choose to co-write with recording artists toward the artist's personal branding and live performance goals. While songwriters and recording artists initially had a transactional pattern of cooperation, their relationship following these changes is one of facilitative cooperation.

My findings are anchored in the tradition of the production of culture perspective (Dowd 2004, Peterson and Anand 2004) and in the art worlds theory of patterned cooperation (Becker 1982). The production of culture perspective, applied to the case of the Nashville music industry, explains why exogenous factors (markets, technology, and law) changed the structure of the music industry (organizational structure, industry structure, occupational careers) during this period. Of these six factors, whose effects

emerge from within their specific musical context (Dowd 2004), occupational careers are the most important to my work. The art worlds theory's (Becker 1982) perspective on occupational careers is that they are patterned between workers in different roles to create cultural products, but Becker focuses on patterned cooperation driven by aesthetic choices between collaborators rather than the "mundane" forces in the production of culture perspective.

In the face of mundane yet cataclysmic political economic changes, songwriters can no longer distinguish themselves by their craft alone. How then do they make decisions and strategize about how to create a career in their chosen industry? In the chapters that follow, I present evidence from quantitative songwriter career histories that consider the impact of characteristics of songs, recording artists, and songwriters on the likelihood of success. I also examine the odds of success in terms of time period and whether a song was successful commercially, among peers, among music critics, or in terms of Grammy nominations. Next, I consider the statistical impact of collaboration on likelihood of success. Finally, I will bring in songwriters' voices again as they detail their strategies and the obstacles they have faced throughout their careers.

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CHAPTER 4

CHARTING CHANGES IN CO-WRITING FROM 2000-2015

"As the business has tightened up so much, it's become so important to write with either an artist or somebody who has artist potential. Even though some of these co-writers are my oldest friends in Nashville and even though I've had success with them, all of us are letting our publishers put us together with up and comers. If not established artists, then people that have potential. It is a strategy and it's like, it's not just me. I can think of this group of people that I know pretty well and that I've written a lot of songs with and they're my age roughly. We are not getting together nearly as often because we are all trying to create new contacts and find new situations. My publisher has been really good and really proactive lining me up with a lot of... like the young man I'm writing with today. We've written one song and it was good, and it was easy. He clearly has a really good voice and he's a big, strong, good looking kid that could be the next Luke Brian or the next Lee Brice."

[Drew Ross[5], commercially popular writer]

INTRODUCTION

There is an unmissable focus in my interviews with songwriters on changes in the

music industry and new strategies for picking co-writers. As Drew Ross states in the quote

above, the business has "tightened up" so much that he needs to write with recording artists

or people who might become recording artists instead of writing with his own established

group of co-writers. The goal in this strategic shift in collaboration is geared toward having

a better chance of getting a song recorded and released on a recording artist's album.

Recording artists have increased agency to direct the collaborative creative process in the

writing room because of their structural relationship to the means of production and

distribution of music. Songwriters who I interviewed said that the recording artist's

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[5] All names of interviewees are pseudonyms. Personal identifying information, including song titles and the characteristics and names or collaborators have been anonymized to protect the identities of my interviewees.

direction in a co-writing session is generally either active and targeted toward personal branding and live performance or passive and removed from the primary act of creating a song. In either case, songwriters' and recording artists' patterns of collaboration have changed.

While the previous chapter focuses only on the effects of changes in the music industry over time on songwriters' co-writing strategies, this chapter additionally considers the "domain" or arena in which success occurs. This perspective recognizes that success in any cultural field is multifaceted and status-segmented. I also further investigate my previous claim that the shifting political economy of the music industry has changed the nature of collaboration between professional songwriters and recording artists by attending to how the conditions of success for songs and their writers shift over time.

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate the shifting social patterns that underlie co-writing and songwriter agency using statistical analysis. My research questions and hypotheses are related to the factors that promote song and songwriter success, with a mind toward understanding whether the pattern of professional songwriters co-writing with recording artists has indeed increased in recent years. Further, I question how patterned cooperation varies according to which domain of success (commercial, peer, critic, Grammy) a song achieves. These lines of inquiry can be grouped into two categories—temporal and domain-specific.

Domains of Success

There are many ways that we can think about what it means for a given song to have attained success, but for the purposes of this project, I identified four different "domains" in which a song might attain some objective measure of success. These domains

are as follows: commercial popularity, peer recognition, critical acclaim, and Grammy nomination. Each of the four domains represent one organization's assessment of which songs were successful in a given year. Songs that are included in any one of these domains, either by attaining high levels of commercial popularity or through receiving a designation or award, are certainly "successful" in comparison to the rest of the songs in a given year that did not receive such benchmarks or accolades.

A continuing thread in my research is an attempt to understand the overlap between various domains of success for artists and their work. Bourdieu advocates for an understanding of artistic fields that segments art into restricted and large-scale fields of production. His theory accounts for status segmentation that applies to artistic products, but I found evidence that field theory, as it stands, does not apply to the artists who create art that will, if successful, ultimately be only included in either a restricted or large scale field (Skaggs 2014). That is to say that while songs might only be able to attain high levels of success in one domain, songwriters are afforded the flexibility to write songs that attain success in more than one domain. I call this finding about the nature of status acquisition in the careers of artists "field spanning" and maintain that this phenomenon is what makes it allowable and even potentially advantageous for artists to be status generalists in their careers. Field spanning, according to my research, contributes to long-lasting careers in the arts for those artists who are able to accumulate and exchange capital accumulated in various domains.

Beyond this more macro-level theory of status distribution, many sociologists have examined the factors that lead to success in arts and entertainment industries including status orders based on attaining commercial success (Cornfield 2015, Lang and Lang 1988), peer recognition (Anheier, Gerhards and Romo 1995, Cornfield 2015, Lena and

Pachucki 2013, Scott 2012), critical acclaim (Schmutz 2005, Schmutz 2009), and through

being given awards (Anand and Watson 2004, Rossman, Esparza and Bonacich 2010,

Watson and Anand 2006). In short, each of these studies contributes to a larger

understanding that status, success, and opportunity are all distributed according to logics

within a particular field, occupation, or organization. There are a variety of gatekeepers and

social closure processes that operate within any industry, and they may have conflicting

hierarchies that they use to distribute status to their members. Including all four domains of

success is an empirical and theoretical choice in my research that allows me to be more

inclusive of what counts as career success for songwriters without simply accepting that

one domain is *the* domain of success that counts most. The issue of whether and to what

degree various domains of success contribute to long, resilient careers merits its own

examination and is not considered in this chapter.

Second, I am interested in how the distribution of song and songwriter success are

patterned across three time periods (2000-2005, 2006-2010, 2011-2015). Analysis of the

temporal change in the pattern of songwriter and recording artist co-writing collaborations

will extend the qualitative findings from Chapter 2. A quantitative approach to analyzing

change over time will further contribute to understanding the shift between the

transactional to the facilitative pattern of cooperation and help me to discern how to

theorize re-patterning of inter-role cooperation over time due to external political economic

factors.

The primary focus of my research is on the impact of collaboration and

collaborative groups on career success, but there is no doubt that individuals' personal

demographic characteristics and career histories also impact their potential for building and

maintaining a strong career. When it comes to personal demographic characteristics, men

and white individuals have a structural advantage in comparison to white women and both men and women of color (Abreu et al. 2012, Martin and Frenette 2017). These differences are inherently structural and systemic (Vaugeois 2007), and these dimensions should be considered in a rigorous assessment of the factors that contribute to success.

As I discussed in Chapter 1, I see a gap in Becker's concept of patterned collaboration in art worlds and in the way scholars have used this concept. The closest research I have found to work that critically examines the concept of patterned cooperation is Baker and Faulkner (1991). They discuss how artistic and business-focused roles in Hollywood come to be grouped or separated based on the political economy of the moment, and though they cite *Art Worlds*. Despite their proximate focus on the issues and theory of how workers in different roles come to collaborate, they do not discuss their findings in terms of patterned cooperation. In general, other research that cites Becker's patterned collaboration theory tends to use it as a theoretical justification for inquiry into the employment management work and career pathways of artists who are not famous or other behind the scenes workers in culture industries.

The case of changing co-writing strategies across time and across domains of success is an ideal case to examine patterned cooperation. The following model specifications rely heavily on Becker's theory as I attempt to use them to parcel out the unique variation that individuals in various occupational roles bring to bear when co-creating a cultural product.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

Even given the findings I outline above, gaps persist in understanding how patterned cooperation varies in particular domain- and temporally-specific ways. I propose

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three research questions and matched hypotheses to guide my research. I ask, *to what degree does having the recording artist as a co-writer on a song affect the odds of success across domains?* By comparing across domains of success, this research question will guide analysis into which domains reward songs that are co-written by their recording artists. As discussed above, different domains rely on different hierarchies and measures in distributing success. Commercial popularity on the Billboard charts is linked to market characteristics (Klein and Slonaker 2010). Peer recognition on the NSAI list is based on voting by other professional songwriters. Critical acclaim is based on critic votes. Grammy nomination is voted on by a broad constituency of individuals who are involved in creating music. They may be but are not necessarily familiar with each member of nominated co-writing groups (see Anand and Watson 2004:80 for an in-depth discussion of the Grammy nominating and voting process). Based on this knowledge, I hypothesize that songs and songwriter-songs that attain success in commercial popularity and critical acclaim will be the most likely to have increased odds of success due to having a recording artist co-writer. This hypothesis also predicts that songs attaining peer recognition and Grammy nomination will have comparatively lower odds of success based on having a recording artist co-writer (H$_1$).

Each prediction in this hypothesis is based on the fact that these domains are defined by specific organizations in the field of country music. This is why I believe that domains where songwriting is expected from recording artists for contractual or financial reasons (commercial popularity) or aesthetic reasons (critical acclaim) will be more likely to reward artist co-writes than domains where songwriting is understood as an occupational role that is separate from that of the recording artist (peer recognition) or a domain where

the people distributing success are less unaware of the underlying collaborative dynamics that are specific to each song (Grammy nomination).

I established in Chapter 2 that the music industry underwent a significant change beginning around the turn of the millennium that restructured the patterns of cooperation that underlie the production of songs. Toward quantitatively adjudicating claims made about the changing nature of collaboration in songwriting, I ask *to what degree does having the recording artist as a co-writer on a song affect the odds of success differently over time?* My findings presented in Chapter 2 established the following trajectory: industry decline led to the development of 360˚ deals that restructured recording artists' contracts such that they needed to write the songs on their own records. Because of this change, professional songwriters who want to have their songs included on records have to collaborate with recording artists. Based on these findings, <u>I hypothesize that having a</u> <u>recording artist co-writer in Period 1 (2000-2005) will have no effect or a negative effect</u> <u>on the likelihood of success in comparison to Periods 2 and 3 (2006-2010 and 2011-2015,</u> <u>respectively) (H_2).</u>

Finally, *I ask what characteristics of a songwriter's song make it more likely to be performed by one of the song's co-writers?* Songwriters' assert that having an artist co-writer is key to accessing the opportunity structure of the Nashville music industry. Given this assertion, it is important to understand what characteristics of recording artists, songs, and songwriters contribute to the odds of a song being created in the pattern of collaboration most likely to result in success. When 360˚ deals were introduced in the mid-aughts, it was primarily new recording artists' contracts that were affected. Additionally, we know from theories of cumulative advantage, like the Matthew Effect (Merton 1968), that already-established individuals in a field are more likely to get to work on new projects

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and be thought of as key contributors to a field. For these reasons, <u>I hypothesize that songs co-written by their recording artist will have higher odds of being co-written by less incumbent recording artists and more incumbent professional songwriters (H_3).</u>

DATA AND ANALYTIC STRATEGY

Data

A key concern in constructing my data was to define "success" in a way that accounts for the fact that cultural fields award status on the basis of different logics that may ultimately reify or recognize different cultural products in the same general field in the same time frame (Bourdieu 1993). For this reason, when I refer to a song being successful, I mean that it is a member of an overarching category that includes songs which attained the highest levels of recognition in the following four "domains of success": commercial popularity, peer recognition, critical acclaim, and Grammy nomination. Data concerning which songs are successful in these domains was compiled from the Billboard Magazine Year End Hot Country charts to represent commercial popularity, data compiled from the Nashville Songwriters' Association International (NSAI) annual "Songs I Wish I Had Written" list to represent peer recognition, the Nashville Scene's list of annual "Critic's Picks" to represent critical acclaim, and the Grammy nominated songs in the country songs of the year category to represent the genre's most selective annual award. A note on how to read "success" in this manuscript: If I refer to a song being "successful," it is a general comment on the song's inclusion in one or more domain of success. This is a collective term for all of the songs in my data. If I am referring to success attained in a particular domain, I will specifically refer to single-domain success by name as follows: commercial popularity, peer recognition, critical acclaim, Grammy nomination.

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A characteristic of this data is that it is organized into two different units of analysis. I collected the data about successful songs and also organized the data into songwriter-songs. A songwriter-song is a unit of analysis that attributes a song to each of its writers. Most country music songs are written by more than one songwriter, and each songwriter retains partial ownership of the song's copyright. This means that songs in the data are likely to contribute to the career trajectories of multiple songwriters. For example, the song "Love Like Crazy" was performed by Lee Brice and written by Tim James and Doug Johnson. In the songs data, this song constitutes one entry, but in the songwriter-songs data, it is entered twice, once under Tim James and once under Doug Johnson. Though copyright ownership is split between co-writers, the way songwriters discuss songs is not in terms of partial ownership. Even though most songs are co-written, songwriters talk about their writing credits in terms of the song, not part of the song.

The research aims of this chapter seek to answer questions both about what makes a song successful and what makes a songwriter successful. Careers in songwriting are based on the success of songs, and focusing on the likelihood of success for a songwriter's song rather than on the songwriter's individual likelihood of attaining some level of success during the period of the study the songwriter-song allows for (1) more variation and predictive power in the statistical models, (2) the data to be periodized in a meaningful way, and (3) a way to account for the collaborative nature of shared contributions and ownership of songs. As such, questions about what qualities make a songwriter and his or her songs successful are instrumental for analyzing my songwriter-songs data.

I use logistic regression analyses to estimate the models, as all of my outcome measures are dichotomous. Pseudo r-squares present the variance explained by each model (Allison 2014), and tabled results show the odds ratios for each model (Lewis 2011).

Measures and Analytic Strategy

The dependent variables for this chapter can be divided into three categories to match the research questions. For each of Hypothesis 1 and 2, the outcome variables for their first set of analyses represent whether a song attained success in a given domain (1=yes; commercial, peer, critic, Grammy; each model in reference to the other three domains) or periods (1=yes; Period 1, Period 2, Period 3; each model in reference to the other two periods). For the second sets of analyses on both Hypotheses 1 and 2, the outcome measures indicate songwriter-song success in the four domains (1=yes; commercial, peer, critic, Grammy; each model in reference to the other three domains) and periods (1=yes; Period 1, Period 2, Period 3; each model in reference to the other two periods) as in hypotheses one and two. The outcome measure for adjudicating Hypothesis 3 is whether a songwriter-song was performed by one of its co-writers (1=yes), and the reference group for this set of models is songwriter-songs not co-written by their recording artists.

Four variables in these analyses assess song-level characteristics; these are used in adjudicating each hypothesis. Artist Gender (dichotomous; 1=female) is a measure of whether or not the song's recording artist is a female[6].To approximate an artist's past career success and its impact on the outcome variables, Artist Incumbency (count) measures the artist's total number of career years at the time a song or songwriter-song was

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[6] If the song was performed by a group rather than a recording artist, I counted the group as female in the artist's gender category. In a conversation with recording industry executives, I heard an anecdote that guided this choice. When talking about the success of female acts in country music, one executive brought up Sugarland, a group with one male and one female member. The other executive said that they counted as a female act.

released since the time of his or her first success on the Billboard Year End Hot Country charts, which go back to 1985. If the artist never appeared on this chart, Artist Incumbency is measured from their first success in the domains of peer recognition, critical acclaim, or Grammy nomination. The variable Number of Co-writers (count) represents the total number of songwriters who wrote the song. Artist Co-writer (1=yes) represents whether at least one of a song's co-writers is also the song's recording artist. I also collected data on the performing artist's race, but due to incredibly low numbers of non-white individuals in the data and the disproportionate success of Darius Rucker, an African-American recording artist and songwriter, I do not include the performing artist's race as a predictor in any of these models. Because of Rucker's success, these models showed that being a race or ethnicity other than white was the largest predictor of success, which we know to be far from the lived experience of individuals in this industry context.

In models that analyze songwriter-songs, there are additional variables representing the individual characteristics of a given songwriter. To consider a songwriter's career history, Writer Incumbency (count) is measured from their first appearance on and domain of success from 2000-2015 and Songwriter Success before 2000 (1=yes) indicates whether the writer of a given song has a career history that included either a year end top 10 Billboard hit song or a "Songs I Wish I Had Written" award from 1990-2000 as a conservative indication of career incumbency before the period of this study. Songwriter Gender (1=female) is a measure of whether or not a writer is a female. Lastly, Songwriter is the Recording Artist (1=yes) indicates whether a particular songwriter is also the song's recording artist. Results of analyses where both "Artist Co-writer" and "Songwriter is the Recording Artist" are modeled together should be interpreted as parceling out the variance from (1) the song-level impact of having an artist co-writer in addition to (2) the individual

songwriter-level impact of being the recording artist co-writer on the overall likelihood of

success.

RESULTS

Before examining the factors that predict success in each of the four domains, it is

helpful to understand the degree of differentiation between these domains. Generally, there

is a low level of correlation between success in the four domains (see Table 4.1).

Commercial popularity is not correlated with peer recognition and it has a negative

relationship to both critical acclaim and Grammy nomination. This indicates that the songs

that attain commercial popularity are not those most likely to be critically acclaimed or to

be nominated for Grammy awards. Peer recognition is positively correlated with both

critical acclaim and Grammy nomination, indicating that songs recognized as the best by

songwriters are also somewhat likely to be critically acclaimed and to be nominated for a

Grammy award. Critical acclaim and Grammy nomination have a positive correlation,

indicating that critically acclaimed songs are somewhat likely to also be nominated for a

Grammy award. These findings reinforce my empirical decision to include all four

measures of success and suggest that there may be different characteristics of songs and the

patterned cooperation between the individuals creating the songs that vary by domain.

Table 4.1: Pearson Correlation Coefficients between Songs by Domain of Success
(n=1197)

	Commercial	Peer	Critic	Grammy
Commercial Popularity	1.00			
Peer Recognition	0.01	1.00		
Critical Acclaim	-0.49 ***	0.19 ***	1.00	
Grammy Nomination	-0.10 ***	0.31 ***	0.21 ***	1.00

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

To what degree does having the recording artist as a co-writer on a song affect the odds of success across domains?

In response to my first research question, I conducted two sets of logistic regressions to determine whether having a song's recording artist as one of its co-writers contributed to its odds of success. First, I conducted these analyses at the song level and in addition to examining the impact of patterned cooperation also considered factors relating to the song and the song's artist. The primary finding of this analysis (see Table 4.2) is that commercially popular and peer recognized songs with a recording artist co-writer are less likely to be successful, critically acclaimed songs with an artist co-writer are more likely to be successful, and there is no impact on the likelihood of a song being Grammy nominated based on whether it was co-written by its recording artist. I will now detail the full findings, by domain, for each model.

When it comes to commercial popularity, indicated by appearing on the Billboard Year End Hot Country Songs chart, the artist's gender, artist incumbency, number of songwriters, and whether the recording artist was also a co-writer on the song all impacted the song's likelihood of success. Songs performed by female artists were 76.3% less likely to attain commercial popularity. Every year of incumbency in an artist's career increased a song's likelihood of being commercially successful by 4.4%. The number of songwriters had the largest impact on a song's likelihood of commercial popularity, as with each additional co-writer, a song's chance of commercial popularity increases by 151.7%. Lastly, if the song's recording artist co-write the song, its likelihood of commercial popularity decreases by 51.5%. These findings indicate that, in comparison to successful songs that did not attain commercial popularity, commercially popular songs are more likely to be performed by male artists and more established artists. They are also more

likely to be written by a larger number of songwriters but are less likely to have been co-written by the song's recording artist.

When it comes to peer recognition, indicated by a song being voted as a "Song I Wish I Had Written" by pro-songwriter members of the Nashville Songwriters' Association International (NSAI), the number of songwriters and whether the recording artist was also a co-writer on the song both impacted the song's likelihood of success. For each additional co-writer, a song is 71.4% less likely to attain peer recognition, and if one of the song's writers is also its recording artist, a song is 34.2% less likely to be peer recognized than are songs that attained success in other domains. Commercial popularity has no effect on whether a song will be recognized by peer songwriters as a top song.

For songs appearing as one of the "Country Songs Critic's Picks" in the Nashville Scene, the artist's gender, number of co-writers, and whether the recording artist was also a co-writer on the song both impacted the song's likelihood of success. If a song is performed by a female artist, it is 91.8% more likely to attain critical acclaim. Songs with a higher number of co-writers are 17.6% less likely to be critically acclaimed and those co-written by their recording artist are 87.6% more likely to achieve success in this domain. Lastly, should a song attain commercial popularity, it is 95.2% less likely to become critically acclaimed.

When it comes to whether a song was nominated for the Grammy award in the Country Song of the Year category, the artist's gender, the artist's career length, and the number of writers who collaborated on the song all impacted likelihood of success. Songs performed by female artists are 134.8% more likely to be nominated for a Grammy, and for each additional year of the recording artist's career incumbency, songs are 4% more likely to be nominated. For each additional writer, a song is 26.7% less likely to be nominated for

a Grammy. Songs that are commercially popular are 45.8% less likely to be nominated for

a Grammy award.

Table 4.2: Logistic Regression Odds Ratios for Artist and Song Characteristics on
Likelihood of Song Success by Domain (n=1197)

	Commercial	Peer	Critic	Grammy
Artist Gender (1=female)	0.24 ***	1.33	1.92 ***	2.35 ***
Artist Incumbency	1.04 *	1.00	1.02	1.04 *
Number of Co-Writers	2.52 ***	0.71 **	0.82 *	0.73 *
Artist Co-writer (1=yes)	0.49 ***	0.34 ***	1.88 ***	1.09
Commercial Popularity		1.28	0.05 ***	0.54 *
Pseudo R-Square	0.10	0.04	0.02	0.02

* $p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$, *** $p<0.001$

When it comes to the factors that promote success, four distinct profiles emerge as

to the characteristics of songs that attained domain-specific success in comparison to the

other domains. Commercially successful songs are likely to be performed by an established

male vocalist and is likely to be written by a larger group of professional songwriters but

not by the artist himself. For songs that attain commercial popularity, recording-artist and

songwriter characteristics are both significant. Songs that peer songwriters recognize as the

best are likely to be written by a smaller group of professional songwriters who are not the

song's recording artist. Critically acclaimed songs are the most likely of all four song types

to be performed by a solo female artist who also wrote the song, either alone or with a

group of collaborators. Songs that are nominated for a Grammy are most likely performed

by a female recording artist who is somewhat established; these songs are likely to be

written by a smaller group of co-writers. Like songs that attain critical success, singer-

songwriters are more likely to attain success in this domain than, say, in commercial or

peer domains of success where professional songwriters are more likely to write successful songs.

To what degree does having the recording artist as a co-writer on a songwriter's song affect the odds of success across domains?

The factors that predict which songwriter-songs will be commercially successful shift somewhat from those that predict song success (see Table 4.3), though the key variable of interest, having an artist as a co-writer remains distributed as it was in Table 4.2. In addition to regressing the variable of whether a song was co-written by its artist onto songwriter-song success in these models, the structure of the data allows for an additional variable to examine the impact of an individual's status of either being the song's recording artist or not on his or her song's likelihood of success. By including both the song-level and songwriter-level variable in these models, we can see the overall personal and group impact of patterned cooperation. The individual-level effect of being the recording artist was only significant for commercially popular songs, wherein recording artist co-writers were 36.5% less likely to have a successful song.

Songs performed by a female artist are 78.9% less likely to attain commercial popularity. For each additional co-writer, a song is 80.4% more likely to attain commercial popularity, and, as stated above, songwriter-songs penned by the performing artist are 36.5% less likely to attain commercial popularity. Additionally, for songwriters who are themselves the recording artist, their songs are 32% less likely to attain commercial popularity. There is no change in the variables that predict songwriter-song success among peers from the model displayed in Table 4.2. For each additional writer, a song is 28.9%

less likely to be peer recognized, and songs co-written by their artist are 62.2% less likely to be recognized as a top song by peer songwriters.

Songwriter-songs are more likely to be critically acclaimed if they are performed by a female (158.5% more likely) and by a more established artist (2.2% more likely for each additional year of incumbency), or if the songwriter is also the recording artist (88.5% more likely). Songwriters' songs are 22.9% less likely to attain critical acclaim for each additional writer in its co-writing group, and if written by a songwriter who had career success before 2000, songwriter-songs are 23.9% less likely to attain critical acclaim.

The factors that predict Grammy nomination for a songwriter's song are the same as those predicting song likelihood of Grammy nomination. Songs that are performed by a female artist are 108.8% more likely to be Grammy nominated, and for each additional year of an artist's career incumbency, a songwriter's song is 4.5% more likely to become Grammy nominated. As is the case for critically acclaimed songwriter-songs, songs take a 31.1% penalty for each additional co-writer in their likelihood of becoming Grammy nominated.

When it comes to the variance explained by these models in comparison to the similar models presented in Table 4.2, these these models similarly explain only some of the variation in what leads to songwriter-song success across domains. The relatively small pseudo r-square figures indicate that there is quite a bit of unexplained variance in what leads to song success that is not captured by these models. That being said, these findings still give insight into the factors that predict which songwriter's songs will be successful across domains.

Table 4.3: Logistic Regression Odds Ratios for Artist, Song, and Songwriter Characteristics on the Likelihood of Songwriter-Song Success by Domain (n=2927)

	Commercial	Peer	Critic	Grammy
Artist Gender (1=female)	0.21 ***	1.26	2.59 ***	2.09 ***
Artist Incumbency	1.01	1.00	1.02 *	1.05 ***
Number of Co-Writers	1.80 ***	0.71 ***	0.74 ***	0.69 ***
Artist Co-writer (1=yes)	0.64 *	0.38 ***	1.89 ***	0.83
Songwriter Success before 2000 (1=yes)	1.40	1.00	0.76 *	0.93
Songwriter Incumbency	1.03	1.01	0.99	1.00
Songwriter Gender (1=female)	1.03	1.18	1.15	1.48
Songwriter is the Recording Artist (1=yes)	0.68 *	0.98	1.11	1.17
Pseudo R-Square	0.07	0.04	0.06	0.02

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Compared to songs that attained success in non-commercial domains, songwriters' songs that attain commercial popularity are likely to be performed by a male artist, written by a larger group of writers, and are less likely to be co-written by the song's recording artist. Songs that are peer-recognized are likely to be written by smaller co-writing groups that do not include the songs' recording artists. Compared to successful songs in other domains, critically acclaimed songwriter-songs are the most likely to be performed by a female artist and an established artist, are likely to be written by a smaller co-writing group, and are the most likely to be written or co-written by their recording artist. Grammy nominated songs are likely to be performed by a female artist and a more established artist and are generally written by a smaller group of co-writers.

To what degree does having the recording artist as a co-writer on a song affect the odds of success differently over time?

My second research question seeks to understand whether the patterned cooperation between songwriters and recording artists changed over the period of study. The patterned cooperation between professional songwriters and recording artists does change over time. In Period 1 songs with an artist co-writer are 34% less likely to attain success in comparison to songs in Periods 2 and 3. Other song and artist characteristics also contributed to a song's odds of success over this period. Songs with a female recording in Period 3 had a 25% reduction in their odds of success than in Periods 1 and 2. The odds of success for songs based on their recording artist's incumbency were highest in Period 2 wherein for each additional year of an artist's incumbency, the odds of a song's success rose by 3%. The odds of success for songs Periods 1 and 3 do not vary based on artists' incumbency. The size of co-writing groups had shifting impacts on success over time such that successful songs in Period 1 had a 60% decrease in the likelihood of success for each additional co-writer while in Period 3 each additional co-writer raised a song's odds of success by 139%. Table 4.4 displays each of these findings related to the shifting dynamics of which characteristics, including having an artist co-writer on a song, affect a song's odds of success.

These findings, taken together support the idea that there is an increasing trend toward artists co-writing their songs and the idea that rather than the recording artist already being a skilled writer, he or she is benefitting from collaborating with professional songwriters. This inference comes from the fact that, in comparison to Period 1, successful songs in later periods were more likely to be co-written by their recording artist in a larger co-writing group. If the recording artist was a skilled songwriter, he or she would likely choose to write alone or with a smaller co-writing group so that their proportion of copyright ownership would be higher. Another finding related to song success across

periods indicate that Period 2 was likely a significant period of transition for the industry, as the variance explained by the model is only .004 in comparison to the 11% variance explained by the models for Periods 1 and 3. In Period 2, the only factor that raised a song's odds of success was it being performed by an established recording artist. Lastly, the finding that in Period 3 female artists' songs are 25% less likely to be successful than in the other two periods indicates a potential structural barrier to success and career maintenance for female artists.

Table 4.4: Logistic Regression Odds Ratios for Artist and Song Characteristics on the Likelihood of Song Success by Temporal Period (n=1197)

	Period 1 *2000-2005*	*Period 2* *2006-2010*	*Period 3* *2011-2015*
Artist Gender (1=female)	1.14	1.14	0.75 *
Artist Incumbency	0.98	1.03 *	0.99
Number of Co-Writers	0.40 ***	0.95	2.39 ***
Artist Co-writer (1=yes)	0.66 **	1.15	1.24
Pseudo R-Square	0.11	0.01	0.11

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

To what degree does having the recording artist as a co-writer on a songwriter's song affect the odds of success over time?

After modeling how specific artist- and song-level variables affect the odds of success for over the period of study, I apply this same technique on the odds of songwriter-song success (see table 4.5). At the songwriter-song level, there is no difference over time as to the impact of patterned cooperation between songwriters and recording artists on the odds of success. Despite this finding, there are a number of other variables that do shift and change over time in their impact on the odds of songwriter-song success. Artist

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incumbency in Period 1 negatively impacted a songwriter-song's likelihood of success by 3% per year of incumbency, but for songwriter-songs in Period 2, each year of recording artist incumbency raised songwriter-songs' odds of success by 2%. As was the case shown in Table 4.4, co-writing group size negatively affected odds of success in Period 1 and increased odds of success in Period 3. While in Period 1, each additional co-writer decreased a songwriter-song's odds of success by 57%, in Period 3 additional writers raised the odds of success by 108%. Songwriters who were successful before 2000 were 1415% more likely to have a successful song in Period 1, but they were 89% less likely to have success than songwriters whose career began after 2000 to have success in Period 3. The effect of incumbency during the period of study contributed to the odds of success such that in Period 1, each year of post-2000 incumbency lowered a songwriter's odds of success by 42% while it raised the odds of success in Period 3 by 31% per year of incumbency.

The temporal context in which a songwriter's song was released proves to be somewhat reflective of the predictors of song success shown in Table 4.4, but in these models, the addition of writer-specific variables doubles the variance explained by the models for Periods 1 and 3. In Period 2, the variance explained remains at virtually zero; though the variables in the model for Period 2 do not explain much variation in song success, comparing it to the relatively large proportion of variance explained for Periods 1 and 3 reinforce the idea that Period 2 was a time when the shifting context of production made the industry and the strategies of artists within it less patterned.

Table 4.5: Logistic Regression Odds Ratios for Artist, Song, and Songwriter Characteristics on the Likelihood of Songwriter-Song Success by Temporal Period (n=2927)

	Period 1 *2000-2005*	*Period 2* *2006-2010*	*Period 3* *2011-2015*
Artist Gender (1=female)	1.07	1.05	0.85
Artist Incumbency	0.97 **	1.02 *	1.00
Number of Co-Writers	0.43 ***	0.92	2.08 ***
Artist Co-writer (1=yes)	0.80	1.13	1.06
Songwriter Success before 2000 (1=yes)	14.15 ***	0.98	0.11 ***
Songwriter Incumbency	0.58 ***	1.01	1.31 ***
Songwriter Gender (1=female)	1.00	1.01	0.99
Songwriter is the Recording Artist (1=yes)	0.84	1.02	1.15
Pseudo R-Square	0.35	0.00	0.27

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

What characteristics of a songwriter's song make it more likely to be performed by one of the song's co-writers?

Following insight from interviews with hit songwriters, it was clear that there is a common strategy among hit writers toward the aim of co-writing songs with a recording artist in hopes of having a greater chance of the song actually appearing on an artist's record. To examine whether this anecdote is reflected in the empirical patterning of songs and writers, I estimate three models to understand the factors that predict the likelihood of a songwriter's song being co-written by its recording artist (see Table 4.6).

Model 1 examines the impact of artist incumbency and gender, co-writer group size, writer career incumbency, and the songwriter's gender on the likelihood of a songwriter's song being co-written by its recording artist. Each of the variables in this model have a significant impact on the likelihood of having an artist co-writer. For each year of an artist's incumbency, a songwriter-song is 10.7% less likely to have an artist co-

writer, while for each additional writer in the co-writing group makes it 64.4% more likely that one of the writers will also be the song's performing artist. For each additional year of writer career incumbency, his or her song is 5% more likely to be written by its recording artist, and if the writer is a female, her song is 30.3% more likely to have an artist co-writer.

Model 2 examines the impact of artist incumbency and gender, co-writer group size, writer career incumbency, and the songwriter's gender on the likelihood of a songwriter's song being co-written by its recording artist; additionally, this model estimates the effect of the domain(s) in which a song attained success on the likelihood of it being co-written by its recording artist. In this model, a songwriter's gender is no longer predictive of the song's likelihood of being co-written by its recording artist, but the other variables carried over from Model 1 remain significant with artist's career incumbency and writers' career incumbency both being negative predictors of an artist co-writer (10.8% and 10.8% less likely, respectively) while a higher number of writers positively predicts a song having an artist co-writer (68.7%). Female writers are 30.3% more likely to be written with an artist co-writer. When it comes to the impact of the domain in which a song attained success and the likelihood of a songwriter's song having been co-written by its recording artist, all findings are in reference to songs that attained commercial popularity. Peer recognized songwriter-songs are 73% less likely to be co-written by their artist, critically acclaimed songs are 155% more likely to be co-written by their artist, and Grammy songs are no more or less likely than commercially successful songs to have been co-written by their recording artist.

Model 3 adds temporal period as a predictor. In comparison to songwriter-songs that attained success in Period 1, songwriter-songs in Periods 2 and 3 were more likely to

be co-written by their recording artists (42.4% and 38.6%), respectively. Each variable

carried over from Model 2 retains its significance and the direction of its relationship. The

full model (Model 3) in Table 4.6 explains 18% of the variation in a songwriter's song's

likelihood of being co-written by its recording artist.

Table 4.6: Logistic Regression Odds Ratios for Artist, Song, Songwriter, Domain, and
Temporal Characteristics on the Likelihood of Songwriter-Song Being Co-written by its
Recording Artist (n=2927)

	Model 1	*Model 2*	*Model 3*
Artist Gender (1=female)	1.08	0.95	0.96
Artist Incumbency	0.89 ***	0.89 ***	0.89 ***
Number of Co-Writers	1.64 ***	1.69 ***	1.62 ***
Songwriter Success before 2000 (1=yes)	0.88	0.92	1.04
Songwriter Incumbency	1.05 ***	1.05 ***	1.03 *
Songwriter Gender (1=female)	1.30 *	1.28 *	1.28 *
Peer Recognition		0.27 ***	0.27 ***
Critical Acclaim		2.55 ***	2.49 ***
Grammy Nomination		1.29	1.31
Success in Period 2 (2006-2010)			1.42 **
Success in Period 3 (2011-2015)			1.39 **
Pseudo R-Square	0.13	0.17	0.18

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this chapter was to use a quantitative approach to further investigate

how patterned cooperation between songwriters and recording artists is structured across

time and domain of success. Past research on status attainment shows that artistic products

are likely to only attain high status among a limited group of stakeholders (e.g., Bourdieu

1993); songs, from this perspective would not be likely to attain success in multiple

domains. This was borne out in my analysis, especially when it comes to the correlation

between commercial popularity and other domains of success. This finding supports my further analyses that consider the domain of song or songwriter-song success and the patterning of co-writing groups.

My first hypothesis predicted that the odds of commercial and critical success would both be raised with a recording artist co-writer while peer and Grammy success would not have a positive association with the addition of a recording artist co-writer. The hypothesis was partially supported, as the odds of critical acclaim are increased with a recording artist co-writer and both peer and Grammy success are not more likely with an artist co-writer. However, commercially successful songs do not benefit from a recording artist co-writer in comparison to songs in other domains. I believe that this finding is partially due to the cross sectional nature of this analysis.

The patterns that emerge from these findings about both songs and songwriter-songs produce a typology of domain-specific co-writing strategies and song types (see Figure 4.1). Across this typology, the status-segmented nature of each domain is extended into specific profiles of the ideal or typical kind of collaboration and kinds of collaborators that lead to success. For success on the Billboard charts, the profile of a modal successful song is one written by a large group of professional songwriters and performed by an established male artist. The songs chosen as the "Songs I Wish I Had Written" by the pro-songwriter members of NSAI are likely to be written by smaller groups of professional songwriters. The songs music critics are most likely to pick are those written by an established female recording artist along with her small less established co-writer or group of co-writers. Lastly, Grammy nominated songs are likely to be written by small groups of co-writers that could include the artist or not; they are likely to be performed by an established female recording artist.

Figure 4.1: Typology of Domain-Specific Patterned Cooperation and Song Characteristics

Commercial Popularity	Peer Recognition	Critical Acclaim	Grammy Nomination
Domain-Specific Pattern of Cooperation			
Recording artist co-writer decreases odds of success	Recording artist co-writer decreases odds of success	Recording artist co-writer increases odds of success	Recording artist co-writer has no effect on odds of success
Domain-Specific Typical Song Characteristics			
Songs with more incumbent male artists written by larger co-writing groups made up of only professional songwriters	Songs written by smaller co-writing groups made up of only professional songwriters	Songs performed by more incumbent female artists that are written by smaller, less incumbent co-writing groups that include the recording artist as a co-writer	Songs performed by more incumbent female artists that are written by smaller co-writing groups

My first hypothesis was focused on domain-specific patterned cooperation, but the second hypothesis contributes to the theory of change in patterned cooperation that I set out to build in Chapter 2. The information presented in Figure 4.2 incorporates the findings from this chapter with the two patterns of cooperation that I described in the last chapter, transactional and facilitative, by temporally mapping them according to the findings from Hypothesis 2. The second hypothesis predicted that the odds of success for songs in Period 1 (2000-2005) would be diminished from including a song's recording artist in the co-writing group in comparison to Periods 2 and 3 (2006-2010; 2011-2015).

Figure 4.2: Dominant Patterns of Cooperation between Professional Songwriters and Recording Artists from 2000-2015

Period 1 2000-2005	Period 2 2006-2010	Period 3 2011-2015
<u>Transactional Cooperation</u> in which recording artists and their record labels select the songs they wish to license for a recording artist's album. Professional songwriters create a product which is effectively purchased by recording artists.	Period of change from transactional to facilitative cooperation	<u>Facilitative Cooperation</u> in which recording artists co-write their songs with professional songwriters for their own albums. Professional songwriters help recording artists express their personal brand and messages through the songwriting process.

This hypothesis was partially supported; the analyses on successful songs supported it while the analyses of songwriter-songs showed no difference between the periods. Despite the mixed support for this hypothesis in the quantitative results, the significance of the song analyses combined with the qualitative findings lead me to chart the following theory of change. In Period 1, a transactional cooperation pattern between songwriters and recording artists was most prevalent. During this time, professional songwriters collaborated among one another to craft songs; recording artists licensed the songs that best fit their goals and personal brand. In Period 2, the industry was undergoing organizational changes related to a consolidating and contracting economy, including the effects of the Great Recession. During this period, many different cooperative patterns were tried, but none dominated. Lastly, in Period 3, the facilitative pattern of cooperation emerged as the most common. Professional songwriters and recording artists collaborate in-person to co-create songs. Songwriters facilitate the creation of a song that fits the needs of the recording artist's personal brand and live show plans.

CONCLUSION

It is notoriously difficult to predict which cultural products will ultimately attain success. While I cannot make an argument using this data as to whether songs about girls and beer, up-tempo songs, or songs recorded by artists who wear a cowboy hat and boots are more likely to be successful, I present these findings as an argument toward understanding the effects of patterned cooperation on a song's likelihood of success. Hit country songwriters say that one of their strategies toward having a hit song is to write with a recording artist, and this empirical evidence supports their claim. After 2005, songwriters whose songs are co-written with the recording artist are more likely to attain success. What is more, the finding that an artist's career incumbency is a negative predictor of their being a co-writer on the song suggests that newer artists are more likely to be affected by 360° deals, which contractually obligate the artist to co-write at least some of their songs. More established artists are likely able to negotiate better terms in their contracts and potentially just prefer to keep their role as the artist separate from the writing process. It is also possible that record labels select newer artists who express interest or talent as a songwriter; however, being that songs written with a recording artist co-writer are also written by larger co-writing groups than are songs solely written by a group of professional writers, it is likely that these patterns do reflect an artist being "in the room" with a group of professional writers.

The findings in this chapter revealed that the patterning of cooperation between professional songwriters and recording artists has shifted to meet changes in the industry more broadly, again reinforcing the qualitative findings presented in Chapter 2. After telling one hit writer about the higher number of co-writers on songs written in more recent years, she replied, "Oh, that is because there is an artist in the room." Songwriters are

aware of the increasing importance of writing with a recording artist if they hope for their

songs to be cut, released, and to attain success. The findings presented in this chapter

reinforce the validity of the interview findings in the previous chapter and give some

insight into the kinds of strategy that recording artists and songwriters might be using when

they decide whether and how to collaborate on a song.

What do these findings mean for songwriter agency in structuring their careers?

While my findings show that there are dominant patterns of cooperation and typical

patterns of personal characteristics for artists and songwriters who create successful songs,

these findings are not proscriptive. However, it is important to also consider the informal

structured social channels that sit underneath the patterns I discovered. These findings

show categories and trends rather than illuminating pathways toward building or

maintaining a career.

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CHAPTER 5

WILL THE [SOCIAL] CIRCLE BE UNBROKEN: THE CONCENTRATION OF
OPPORTUNITY IN SOCIAL SPACE

*"It used to be [about] writing a great song. If you wrote a truly great song, it was probably
going to get recorded by somebody. Now there's a writing method, "six degrees of
separation," either with the producer or the artist himself… That's why probably
networking is more important now than it's ever been, because you get to use everybody's
strength that they bring to the table. To me, the connection is more important. Honestly I
wouldn't care if they even knew how to write a song. I would [write with anyone] if they
have those connections."*

[David Watts[7], commercially popular writer]

INTRODUCTION

 In the introductory quote, David Watts says that he honestly does not care if his co-

writers know how to write a song as long as they have social connections that can help to

get his song cut. Why would songwriters choose to collaborate on the basis of their co-

writer's success rather than on the basis of their creativity, inspiration, or connection to a

relevant musical zeitgeist? I believe this sentiment gets at the larger issue of where

opportunity is concentrated. In a system where collaborators are valued for "who they

know," it is likely that opportunity is concentrated in social space. How then should we

think about and measure the impact that social connectivity has on a group of songwriters

and the music and lyrics that they compose together?

 If institutions and organizations are the top-down organizing structures of social

life, social networks are the reciprocal, bottom-up organizing structures. Based on

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[7] All names of interviewees are pseudonyms. Personal identifying information, including
song titles and the characteristics and names or collaborators have been anonymized to
protect the identities of my interviewees.

aggregate connections built through person-to-person dyadic relationships, social networks remind us of John Donne's famous poem that insists, "no [one] is an island." It is precisely the structural nature of social connectedness which makes it a compelling site of analysis to understand the duality of both how changes in society affect connectedness and how the influence of individuals connecting to one another can affect larger patterns in society.

Simmel's assertion that individuals are related to one another through connections forged on the basis of similarities, preferences, and affinity is the theoretical basis for understanding the influence of one's social ties for individual outcomes (Simmel 2010). More than fifty years later, Kadushin (1976) applied this theoretical frame to the puzzle of understanding the hidden elements of social connectedness among communities of artists. According to Kadushin, everyone in a social circle is tied indirectly such that if members of a circle were at a party together they would find, to their surprise, that they had many friends in common. Even more recently, this phenomenon has been described at the paradox of small worlds in social networks (Watts and Strogatz 1998). We are often surprised when someone we apparently randomly meet already knows the people we know and frequents the places where we go; however, we should not be surprised in these situations.

A key point of Kadushin's social circles argument was that for artists, social connectedness is essential for job seeking since work is distributed informally and is frequently obtained through discovering new information about opportunities among one's social ties. As opportunity is distributed on the basis of reputation in arts industries (Menger 1999, Rossman, Esparza and Bonacich 2010), and since reputation is a key form of social currency in job seeking (Lin 2002), the dense web created by social network ties

becomes the opportunity structure. As the primary space of opportunity, social networks structure the labor market of informal, collaborative occupational communities.

Centrality and the Individual in the Network

How then does opportunity "flow" through social networks, and under what circumstances is opportunity blocked from moving to some people? A particularly important piece of research in this field details that work opportunities generally come from weak ties (Granovetter 1973). Individuals who are able to use their weak ties to take advantage of a structural hole (Burt 2004) in a network are more likely to get information that leads to a new work opportunity. These weak ties are useful for job acquisition precisely because they can link people to information that is unlikely to come from strong ties. Whereas information from strong ties, like family members or close friends, already overlaps with one's own knowledge, information from weak ties is likely to have little overlap with what one know and thus have a higher potential for being novel. In more recent scholarship, Uzzi and Spiro (2005) show that among one artistic production network, the degree of small world characteristics in the network affected the critical and financial success of artistic works. Taken with Kadushin and Granovetter's findings, this suggests that there are important network dynamics that can determine the success or failure of artistic producers beyond some semi-objective measure of the quality of their work.

Network centrality is a measure of how tied an individual is to his or her social network. It is well-established that centrality is important for building and maintaining weak and strong ties and is directly connected to the job opportunities that an individual will receive. Centrality is a measure of "how often traffic flows through a node and how

long things take to get to a node" (Borgatti and Everett 2006: 467). There are three main types of centrality in social networks (and many sub-types of centrality that calculate it in more specific and less generalizable ways): degree centrality, closeness centrality, and betweenness centrality. Degree centrality is the easiest measure to calculate. It is the sheer number of connections that a particular individual has in a network (Borgatti and Everett 2006, Kadushin 2011). A subtype of degree centrality, eigenvector centrality, characterizes ties based on their relevance in a particular network. Borgatti and Everett (2006) say that this measures the extent that an alter knows everybody who is anybody rather than someone who knows everybody. The second common measure of centrality is closeness centrality, a measure of the average path length between alters (Kadushin 2011). Lastly, those with higher betweenness centrality coefficients are those who are advantageously positioned between networks such that they have more access to and control over resources and information (Borgatti and Everett 2006). Each of these methods has particular meaning and use based on a researcher's goals and questions.

Aggregating Individuals into a Whole Network, Cohesion, and Homophily

The social ties that link central and peripheral group members are generally based on things like affinity, propinquity, or shared interests. The extent to which a these more or less central individuals are grouped together into a whole is known as cohesion. Whereas centrality is a measure of an individual's place in the network and their connections to others, cohesion is a property of the whole network. Cohesion within social groups can speak to how the group as a whole is connected rather than conceptualizing the social location of any one member. At the most basic level, cohesion is the "knittedness" or connectedness of a group in terms of the "number and size of components in the network"

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(Borgatti et al. 2018: 150, 153). The more that all network members are condensed into one main component rather than many smaller, disconnected components, the more cohesive a network it thought to be.

Why do groups cohere? Cohesive groups are likely to contain people who are alike, and overlapping interests or multiplex ties is a feature of more cohesive networks. The more things a group of people have in common, the more cohesive they will likely be as a whole unit. The phenomenon of homophily, sameness among network members on a variety of characteristics, is emphasized in more cohesive networks and emerges in a variety of networked groups (see e.g. Lena 2012, Lizardo 2006, McPherson, Smith-Lovin and Cook 2001, Murray 2017).

Another property of tightly linked networks is that increased cohesion facilitates the transmission of ideas and behaviors among group members. Networks are said to have contagion effects wherein behaviors and characteristics like happiness (Fowler and Christakis 2008) or body weight (Song, Pettis and Piya 2017) can be affected by personal networks because of the degree to which the network sticks together. Speaking to group dynamics in social networks, Kadushin (2011) says that when hierarchies emerge in groups, those who fit the mission of the group most closely are those who will be more central. Given his assertion, we might expect that in times when communities are changing, the composition and distribution of the community's social ties would cohere around the new rules, values, and goals that accompany the change. For example, when a political economic change in the music industry makes closeness to a recording artist a valued status, it would not be surprising to see the social networks of songwriters cohere around those individuals who either are recording artists or who have access to recording artists.

Cohesion and Centrality in Songwriter Networks

I will now return to the example of David Watts, the quoted songwriter from this chapter's introduction. This subsection is an example of an ego network analysis as it is focuses the unit of analysis on one individual and his or her network ties outside of the larger context of a whole network. This chapter is empirically focused on the whole network, but ego network examples can illuminate important concepts. In my sampling frame, David Watts only had two successful songs. Both were in Period 1, both were commercially successful only, and neither was co-written with the songs' recording artists. All of the co-writers on the two successful songs David wrote only had success in Period 1 and only were successful with the songs they co-wrote with David.

Figure 5.1 displays David's songwriting career during the period of this study. He (the gold circle) is connected to two other professional songwriters (gray circles) by an instance of co-writing a successful song (indicated by the black lines). The numbers displayed within each of David's co-writers indicates that individual's total number of co-writers (degree centrality). As a whole, this ego network diagram shows that the co-writing networks of David and his collaborators is relatively small and not embedded in any larger networks.

Figure 5.1: Ego Network Visualization of David Watts's Co-writing Ties
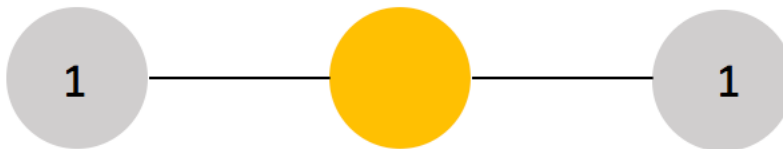
Compare David Watts' career to that of James Cooper. James first had success in Period 2 and was again successful in Period 3. Each of the times he had success in my study, it has been in collaboration with his songs' recording artists through facilitative cooperation. None of James's successful songs follow the pattern of transactional cooperation. Additionally, when James does have another professional songwriter as a collaborator, that songwriter has a high degree centrality compared to the average (3.84). Figure 5.2 illustrates James (gold circle in the center) in the context of his co-writing ties to recording artists (diamonds) and other professional songwriters (circles). His social ties are illustrated by connecting him to his seven co-writers with the solid lines. The numbers printed within each co-writer indicate how many co-writing network ties they have in total (degree centrality), and the dashed line between two of the co-writers represents the fact that the two writers had a successful song that they wrote without James.

Figure 5.2: Ego Network Visualization of James Cooper's Co-writing Ties
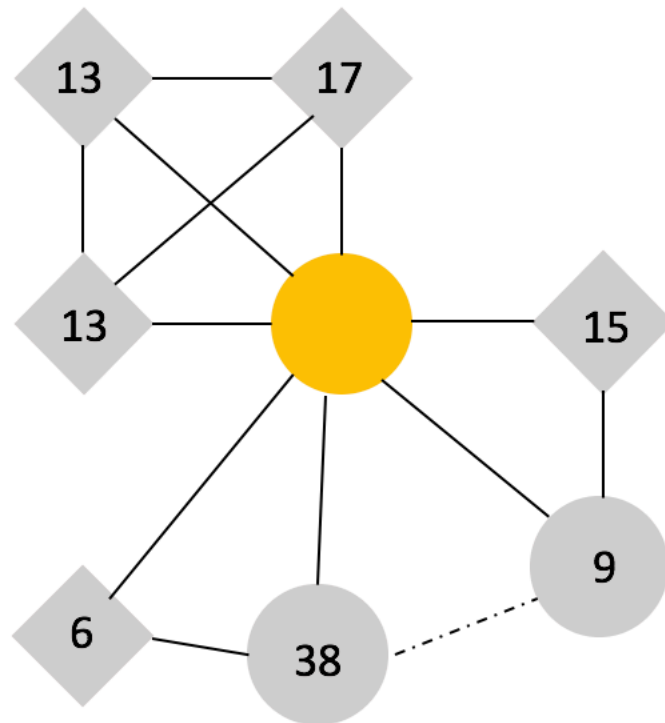
In comparison to James Cooper's network ties, David Watts is less connected, both in terms of the number of his connections and the quality of his connections in terms of their structural position in a larger network of songwriters. All of his patterned cooperation with artists is transactional because recording artists licensed David's songs for use on their albums. Because of his purely transactional cooperation with recording artists, David's structural position is more distantly connected to the means of production and distribution of his work. Moreover, David's co-writers did not write successful songs with anyone other than him during the period of study. As a result of David's structural position, he is the most central person in his network but likely would have difficulty using his successful co-writing ties to connect to other successful songwriters. Remember, David's quote at the beginning stressed the importance of "six degrees of separation," emphasizing that he realizes the impact of the invisible interconnectedness of social groups. James, on the other hand, is ultimately less central in his network since he is not the only individual whose social ties bridge distinct groups of people. This is evident because, even in this simplified diagram, you can see that some of James's co-writers have collaborated without him, further knitting together their sets of social ties.

As a whole, the interconnectedness of James's co-writers makes his network more cohesive than David's. The co-writers that make up James's network collaborate with each other to make a densely interconnected social space relative to David's two co-writers who are not themselves collaborators and who are not tied to other songwriters other than David. It is also visible that comparatively, there is more opportunity concentrated in the social space that surrounds James than there is in the social space around David.

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The line of scholarship I have laid out above provides a perspective that accounts for networked behavior around the production of artistic works. When opportunity is concentrated in social space, people seeking opportunity will try to collaborate with highly connected people in the network. If we further incorporate Becker's (1982) concept of patterned cooperation between individuals holding different occupational roles in art worlds, it is apparent that collaboration between individuals holding different occupational roles could streamline the social pathways that connect individuals to opportunity. This is the likely the way that James Cooper attained music of his success, as his network diagram in Figure 5.2 displays that his co-writing ties are split between professional songwriters and recording artists, increasing the inter-occupational cohesion between individuals who bring the craft of songwriting and individuals whose greatest assets could be their connection to the system of production and distribution of songs.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

By incorporating the knowledge gained in the previous chapters about the impact of political economic changes on patterns of collaboration with the literature on social networks as structuring forces, we come to an interesting question:

What is the effect of the macro political economic or industry conditions on how workers in informal occupational communities collaborate and how, in turn, does a worker's structural location in a social network of collaborators affect his or her likelihood of career success?

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To answer this research question, I conduct analyses based on the following hypotheses using my novel data about successful songwriters from 2000-2015. As presented above, we know that group hierarchies bestow status on members who fit the mission of the group most closely and that these members will be more central. Given the financial and career motive of co-writing and the changing political economic conditions of the music industry driven by the transition to a digital economy and the 360˚ deal arrangement, I expect to find that the network of successful co-writers will shift from more distinct, small groups of co-writers in earlier periods toward a more interconnected, cohesive network dominated by one large component (group of tied individuals) with fewer small components or isolates (individuals who had success without co-writing). Succinctly, I expect to find that co-writing networks will become more cohesive in each subsequent period (H$_1$).

Past research is clear that individuals' direct ties to others and their ties' ties are meaningful predictors of who will be presented with work-related information and opportunities. Songwriters rely on their co-writers for connections to artists, A&R executives, producers, and other influential members of the music industry who may be able to help them get a song cut and released on a record. As such, I hypothesize that centrality will increase a songwriter's odds of success and that, in comparison to Periods 1 and 2, centrality will contribute the largest positive increase in a songwriter's odds of success in Period 3 (H$_2$).

Lastly, individuals' status in an occupational community can be derived from various achievements and associations. My study is based on data from four distinct sources that each distribute status according to their own needs and principles. One of my data sources is a measure of commercial popularity that is derived from market metrics

while the other three are awards or recognitions chosen by a group of gatekeepers, peers, or other stakeholders. My findings in Chapter 3 lead me to believe there is little overlap in these four status-segmented arenas, so I believe that centrality will have a different impact depending on domain of success. Specifically, <u>I hypothesize that centrality will increase the odds of success for songwriters in the commercial and peer domain, but not in the critic or Grammy domain (H_3)</u>.
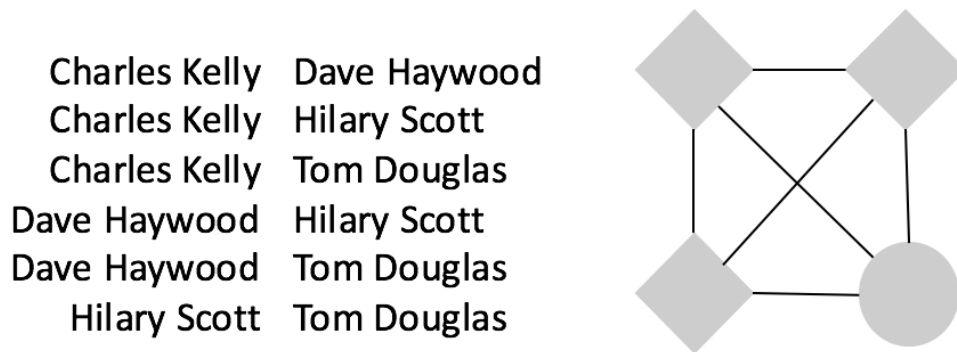
DATA AND ANALYTIC STRATEGY

Data

Given the social-structural nature of my research questions and hypotheses, it is essential that I use social network methodologies to arrive at relevant empirical answers. Data used in social network analysis (SNA) is generally structured as a matrix or in an edgelist format; in either form, it is written to reflect structural patterns in relationships between people. The data for this chapter was extracted from social network ties based on instances of co-writing between successful songwriters from 2000-2015 and written into an edgelist format. This data is from the same four sources (Billboard Year End Hot Country Songs, Nashville Songwriters Association International list of Songs I Wish I Had Written, Nashville Scene's Country Critic's Picks, and Grammy Nominees for Country Song of the Year) as is the quantitative data analyzed in Chapter 3. I collected the co-writing data from Wikipedia after initially cataloging the title, artist, year released, and other relevant details from the four sources. For the very few songs that were not listed on Wikipedia, I tracked down songwriter credits through ASCAP, SESAC, or BMI. Ultimately I was able to find this information for each song in my data. I then structured the data in the edgelist format according to each songwriter's ID number. For example, the 2009 number one Billboard

Year End Hot County Song was "I Run to You", performed by the band Lady Antebellum.

It was written by band members Charles Kelley, Dave Haywood, and Hillary Scott, along

with professional songwriter Tom Douglas. The edgelist data for this song would be

structured as shown in Figure 5.3 to explicitly list each relationship between co-writers.

The visualization of these relationships, displayed in Figure 5.3 would be a network

diagram that shows four nodes, each connected to one another by edges. There are no

arrows on the end of the edge lines, which indicates that all relationships are undirected

representing that the nature of these co-writing ties is reciprocal[8]. This information could

also be conveyed by not including any arrow points on lines, as you will see in my larger

network visualizations in this chapter. In total, my network data is made up of 2926 edges,

so I made the choice to simplify the visual field given the size and density of ties.

Figure 5.3: Example of Edgelist Structured Data and Resulting Network Visualization of
Co-writing Ties

Charles Kelly	Dave Haywood
Charles Kelly	Hilary Scott
Charles Kelly	Tom Douglas
Dave Haywood	Hilary Scott
Dave Haywood	Tom Douglas
Hilary Scott	Tom Douglas

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[8] Though not employed in this research, networks of directed ties (e.g., representing an
organizational hierarchy in a corporation of who reports to whom) are indicated by an
arrow pointing toward the individual who is "receiving" the relationship of interest to the
study.

I divide my data into three periods: 2000-2005, 2006-2010, and 2011-2015. There is an enduring question of the rate of network "decay", which considers for how long nodes should remain active or tied in a network analysis. This is an important theoretical question with empirical implications, as people do enter and leave networks rather than automatically remaining actively linked to others in perpetuity. I base my choice to periodize my data on Uzzi and Spiro's (2005) analysis. It used a seven-year period of inactivity among workers on Broadway plays as a cutoff point to define the period of elapsed time without recorded network ties when someone should count as having left a network. They found similar results for five and ten year periods in subsequent analyses. My data spans a much shorter time than Uzzi and Spiro's, but their findings lend support to my choice to periodize my data into three 5-6 year segments, as there may be changes in which actors appear in the network during that time, but yet year-to-year changes and apparent inactivity may not be meaningful given the difficulty of attaining a hit song. Periodizing the data as I have done will more clearly indicate career maintenance rather than "one hit wonder" status.

Analytic Strategy

Network data, when analyzed, can stand alone to provide insight into an overall structure or character of a group of people. Alternatively, or additionally, data about individual members of a social network can be exported from the network analytic software and incorporated as a variable into other kinds of quantitative analyses. This chapter employs network data in both ways. As the purpose of this chapter is to argue for understanding the social network as the site of concentrated opportunity for songwriters, the analysis requires a dual approach to empirically understanding the interplay between

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the music industry and individual workers that is enacted at the social network level. Toward this end, I adopt two different SNA approaches. My data include the population of all songwriters who wrote a successful song from 2000-2015 according to measures of commercial popularity on the Billboard Year End Hot Songs, peer recognition on the Nashville Songwriters Association International list of Songs I Wish I Had Written, critical acclaim from music critics voting on the Nashville Scene Annual Country Critics' Picks songs, and Grammy nominations for Country Song of the Year.

First, I analyze data on the whole network level to characterize the structure of co-writing relationships and the change in this structure over time. I use UCINET to calculate measures that assess changes in the connectedness and cohesion of the co-writing networks of songwriters over three periods (2000-2005, 2006-2010, 2011-2015). The nodes in my analysis are individual songwriters, and edges represent each instance of co-writing between two individuals that later resulted in a successful song. The outcomes that I am interested in comparing between periods center around network cohesion. I choose to present a number of measures to describe the degree to which songwriters in Periods 1, 2, and 3 are directly connected to one another (average degree centrality) and in aggregate (degree centralization, density), the "clumpiness" of social groups (components, component ratio, fragmentation, compactness), and a comparison of the small world characteristics of co-writing networks in each period (a ratio of distance/clustering).

In my second set of analyses, my goal is to examine the impact of network centrality on songwriters' likelihood of success. The unit of analysis for this section is the songwriter-song, to allow for variation in song, recording artist, and songwriter characteristics. I use UCINET to calculate the degree centrality score for each songwriter in each period, export these scores into my larger data set of songwriter-songs, and estimate a

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series of logistic regression models in SAS to uncover the effect of network centrality on individuals' career success across domains of success (commercial popularity, peer recognition, critical acclaim, Grammy nomination) and across time (2000-2005, 2006-2010, 2011-2015). In my initial statistical models, I calculated estimations based on degree, betweenness, eigenvector, and closeness centrality. I only present findings from analyses using the degree centrality and eigenvector centrality measure, both for ease of interpretation and to use the more illustrative measures to distinguish the number of ties a songwriter has from the level of influence a songwriter has in the network.

RESULTS

Network Cohesion

In order to understand the question of network cohesion and potential change over time, I examined statistics and visualizations from an initial network analysis of each period. This analysis considers only the structure of songwriters' co-writing ties without yet adding in attributes, control variables, or social factors to contextualize findings. As I introduce visualizations of the co-writing networks, there are some things to keep in mind as to how these figures should be interpreted. Each node, shown as a blue square, represents one songwriter who wrote or co-wrote a successful song during the period indicated in the figure label. Songwriters who were the sole composer and lyricist of a successful song are shown on the far left of each figure. These "isolates" are not, in the period displayed, connected to any other songwriter through co-writing ties. Other songwriters are connected through short black lines. The lines, called "edges," represent an instance of co-writing between two songwriters. Connections through co-writing ties can form dense structures of directly and indirectly connected songwriters in the main

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component (shown on the right in these figures). Alternatively, some groups of songwriters are only connected to a few others or are part of a smaller group that is not connected through co-writing ties to the main network. In my figures, these smaller clusters of writers are shown in a crescent pattern between the isolates on the left and the main component on the right.

The spatial orientation of these network diagrams is ordered according to social clustering, not geography or any other meaningful patterning force. The spaces, distances, and ordering of boxes and lines that are not connected to each other should not be interpreted other than in knowing that they are not connected and that the hazard of them connecting in the future is not known or possible to calculate at the individual level. As I will discuss later in this chapter, these diagrams only indicate connectedness on one dimension: successful song co-writing ties. It is very likely that many of these songwriters know each other in different contexts and may have substantial personal, affinity, familial, organizational, or other ties to each other outside of the context of successful song co-writing ties. Just as statistical analyses admit to only explaining some of the total variance in their dependent variable through their models, these network analyses should not be understood to explain relationships that are not explicitly modeled.

The network diagram shown in Figure 5.4 lays out the initial structure of co-writing ties and can serve as a reference when examining changes in network cohesion over time. I would like to present the information on this diagram in three parts: isolates (left), small components (middle), and the main component (right). There are 41 isolates in this diagram (9.4% of the network), 85 small components in the middle (207 individuals, 47.7% of the network), and the main component is displayed on the right (186 individuals comprising 42.9% of the network). In general, the main component appears to contain

many of the nodes, but the majority of successful songwriters in Period 1 are not tied to the main component. The main component itself is stretched out such that you can see many nodes who are only connected to a person who is connected to a person who is connected to a person who is structurally located in the more densely packed center of the main component.

Figure 5.4: Network Visualization of Co-Writing Ties Between Successful Songwriters 2000-2005 (Nodes= 434; Edges=821)
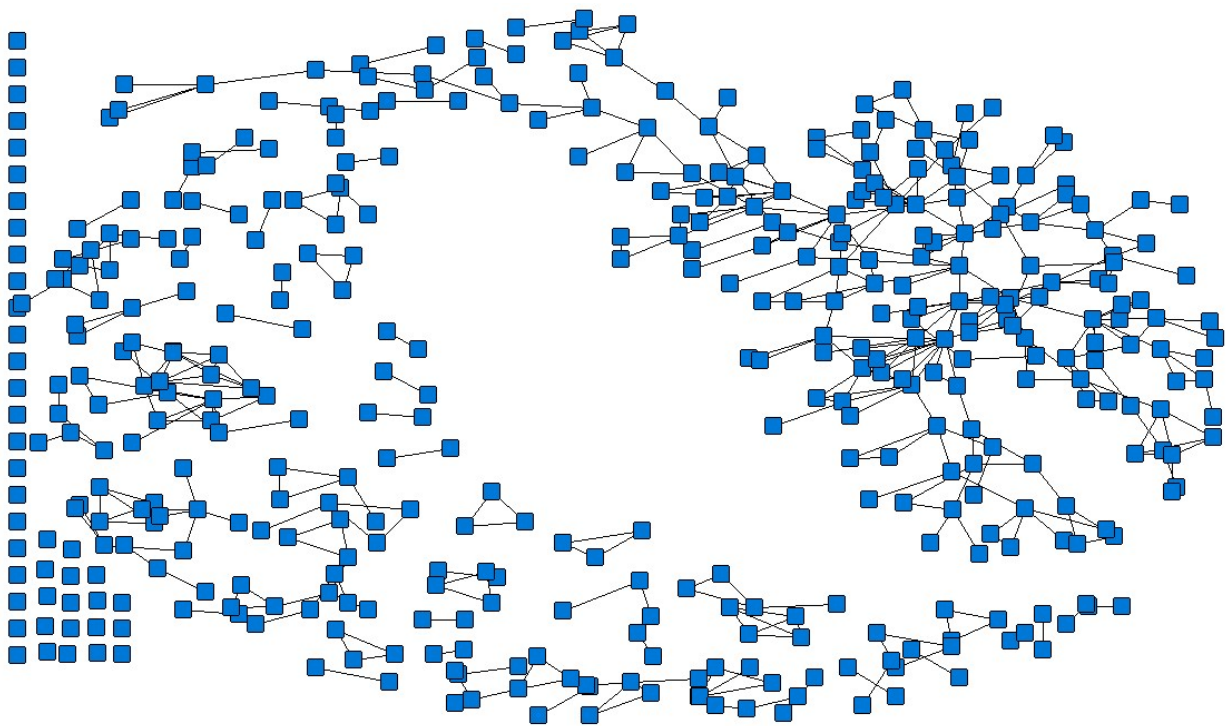
It is clear from looking at Figure 5.5 that the structure of co-writing ties began to change in Period 2. There are fewer isolates (17 individuals, 4.6% of the network). There are 52 fewer small components (62, comprised of 128, 34.2% of the network) than in Period 1, and the main component is made up of 61.2% of the songwriters in the network (229 individuals). Compared to Period 1 when songwriters were more likely to find success

co-writing in a small component or as an isolate in comparison to being tied to the main

component, in Period 2 the majority of successful songwriters belonged to a social group

tied to the main component. There are 13.8% fewer songwriters in this network than in

Period 1 (434 in Period 1; 374 in Period 2), and yet there are only 0.8% fewer co-writing

ties (821 ties in Period 1 and 815 ties in Period 2). Even a cursory look at the network

diagram in Figure 5.5 shows increased clustering in the main component, fewer and denser

components in the middle, and only two-thirds as many isolates as in Period 1.
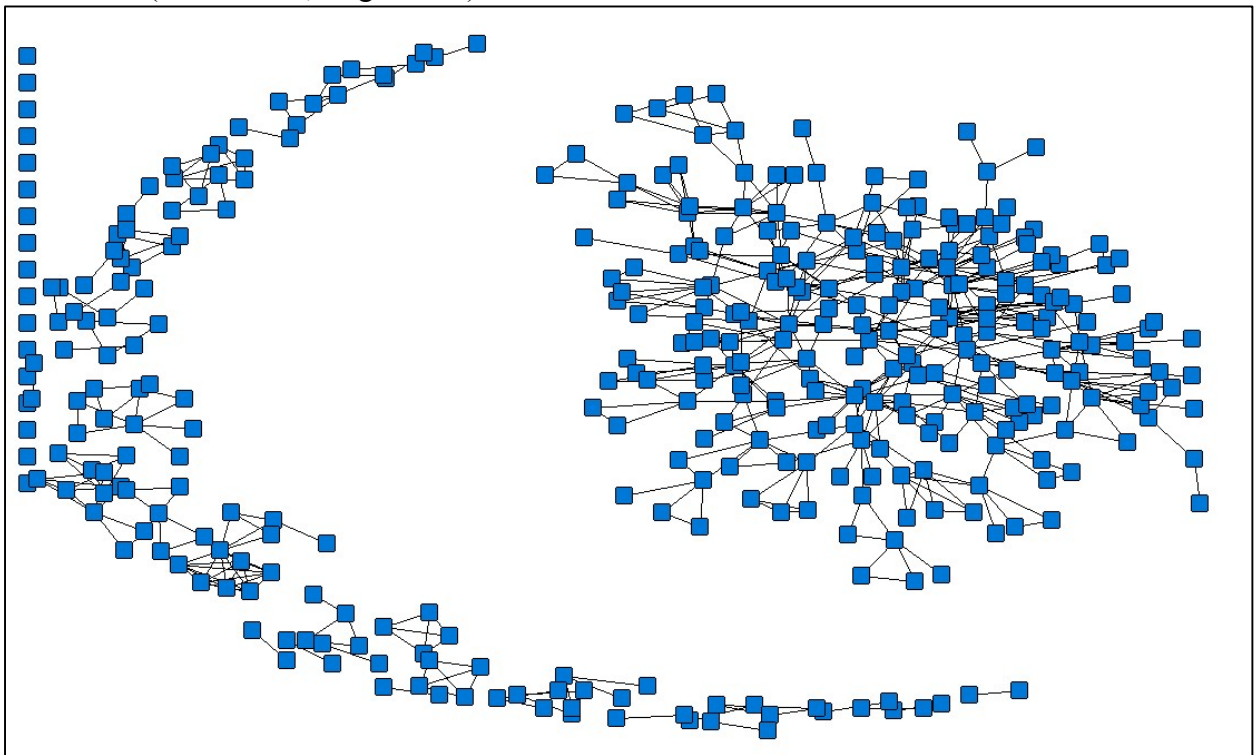
Figure 5.5: Network Visualization of Co-Writing Ties Between Successful Songwriters
2006-2010 (Nodes=374; Edges=815)

The initial differences in cohesion that we see from Period 1 to Period 2 are

magnified in Period 3. Figure 5.6 shows only nine isolates (1.9% of the network), 36

components in the middle (110 individuals, 23.2%), and a more highly cohesive and

closely connected main component on the right made up of 74.9% of the network (356 individuals). In this period of time, only a quarter of the successful songwriters were not tied to the main component. In comparison to Period 2, there are 127% as many songwriters (434 in Period 3 increasing from 374 in Period 2) and 158% as many co-writing ties (1290 in Period 3 up from 815 in Period 2). Both the number of songwriters and the cohesion between them increased significantly in this period, and this increased cohesion is visible in the tight, compact main component and the sparsely populated middle and left sides of the diagram.

It is visually apparent that there were a number of changes in the structure of co-writing ties in the three periods that span the 16 years of this study. Despite the compelling nature of the apparent changes from Period 1 to Period 3, it is helpful to quantify these changes and compare the mathematical degree to which the co-writing networks of songwriters changed over this period of time. Table 5.1 displays the network properties related to connectedness, cohesion, and clustering by period and give insight into how to think about the changes that we see in the figures above.

Figure 5.6: Network Visualization of Co-Writing Ties Between Successful Songwriters 2011-2015 (Nodes=475; Edges=1290)
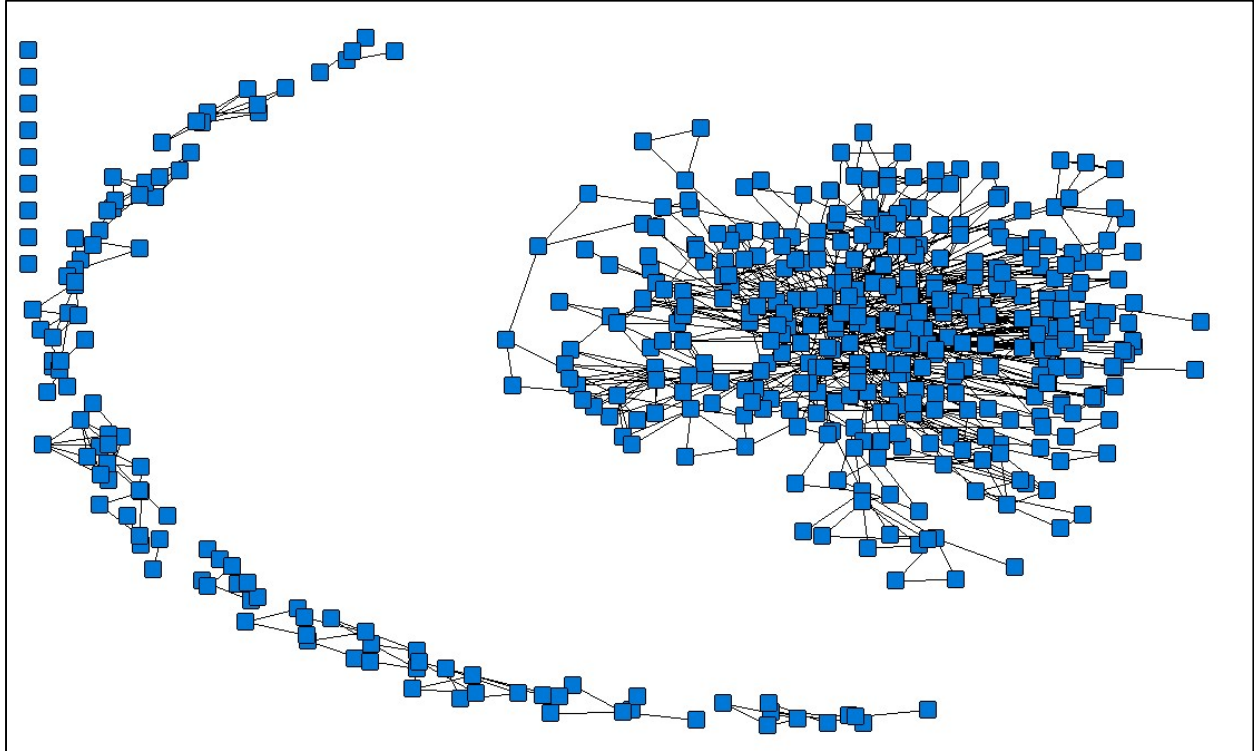
Table 5.1: Whole Network Properties of Successful Songwriters 2000-2015

	Period 1 2000-2005	Period 2 2006-2010	Period 3 2011-2015
Nodes	434	374	475
Edges	821	815	1290
Percent Isolates	9.4	4.6	1.9
Percent tied to small components	47.7	34.2	23.2
Percent tied main component	42.9	61.2	74.9
Average Degree	2.01	2.91	4.03
Components	113	61	46
Component Ratio	0.26	0.16	0.10
Connectedness	0.19	0.37	0.56
Fragmentation	0.81	0.63	0.44
Compactness	0.04	0.09	0.15
Average Distance	6.69	5.09	4.28
Overall Clustering Coefficient	0.80	0.92	1.11
Small World Characteristics	8.36	5.57	3.87

A simple measure of cohesion in a network is comparing the average number of other people with whom any given person in the network has a relationship. This is called the average degree. There are changes over time in the co-writing network such that average degree is higher in each subsequent period as it moves from an average of 2.01 in Period 1, to 2.91 in Period 2, and 4.03 in Period 3. On the whole, successful songwriters had a higher number of personal co-writing ties in later periods than in earlier periods, and it is likely that the average songwriter from 2011-2015 had twice as many co-writing ties as did the average writer from 2000-2005.

As discussed in reference to Figures 5.4-5.6, the number of components, the discrete social groupings of co-writers or isolates, decreases in each period. In Period 1 there were 113 components, in Period 2 there were 61 components, and in Period 3 there were 46 components. Relatedly, the percent of isolates in the co-writing networks drops in each period from 6.2% in Period 1, 4.6% in Period 2, and 1.9% in Period 3. Further, the number and density of ties between successful songwriters that make up the main component increasingly dominate the network structure with growth from 42.9% of co-writers making up the main component in Period 1, 61.2% in period 2, and ultimately 74.9% in Period 3. The shift in the site of social ties provides still more information indicating that co-writing networks became increasingly cohesive during this period of time.

The component ratio in a network is an inverse measure that indicates increasing cohesion as its numeric value declines; the measure is not very sensitive to change, and "a large number of networks that vary in cohesiveness may have the same score on this measure" (Borgatti, Everett and Johnson 2018: 153). Despite this measure's known sensitivity issues, the component ratio in these co-writing networks declines in each period

(Period 1 .258, Period 2 .159, and Period 3 .095). This again indicates that over time the co-writing network became increasingly cohesive.

More sensitive than the component ratio measure is connectedness and its inverse measure of fragmentation. These measures indicate what percentage of nodes in a given network are able to connect over any series of edges (connectedness) or not connect through any existing pathway (fragmentation). In my data, connectedness rises in each period from .19 in Period 1, to .37 in Period 2, and .56 in Period 3. This means that while only 19% of songwriters had a path to reaching each other in Period 1 (81% could not), in Period 2 37% could connect (63% could not), and by Period 3 56% of successful songwriters were connected by an existing co-writing relationship pathway (44% were not). Again these findings point to increasing cohesion over time.

The average distance in a network calculates the average number of pathways or edges between nodes are needed to connect members of the main component. This, for example, is the measure from which the popular six degrees of separation theory is derived (Travers and Milgram 1967). For this data, we see that the average path length between nodes decreases in each period. In Period 1 the average distance is 6.687, followed by 5.081 in Period 2, and 4.275 in Period 3. This means that the network of successful songwriters becomes more closely connected over time due to the decreasing average path length between individuals.

Not all distances can be defined in networks with multiple components. Just as I indicated that you cannot make inferences on the network diagrams in Figures 5.4-5.6 based on the spatial distances between disconnected nodes and components, it is not possible to mathematically calculate the average distance between disconnected nodes and components. For this reason, an inverse weighted measure of path length called

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compactness is sometimes used instead of average distance to understand the average path length in networks with multiple components. Like average distance, compactness in the co-writing network increases over time. We see that it goes from .04 in Period 1, to .09 in Period 2, and finally .15 in Period 3. Since the compactness and average distance of this network can both be interpreted toward understanding the distance between nodes shortening in each subsequent period, I will only refer to the more easily interpreted measure of average distance as I go forward.

In addition to overall measures of cohesion, considering the distribution of cohesive and not cohesive areas of the network are important for understanding how social ties are structured in a given network. The clustering coefficient estimates to what degree a network has areas of high and low density. In the co-writing networks from Periods one through three, the clustering coefficient increased in each period (Period 1 clustering = 0.801; Period 2 clustering = 0.915; Period 3 clustering = 1.112). Further, we can calculate a ratio of cohesion and clustering to gain further insight into network properties. Taken together, the average distance divided by the network clustering coefficient provides a ratio that is interpreted as the degree to which a network is a "small world". In comparison to other kinds of networks (neural, electrical, etc.), social networks among humans exhibit a paradox in that their connections are "both clumpy and short-pathed" (Borgatti, Everett and Johnson 2018: 156-157). Small world characteristics do increase per period in this network. In Period 1, the ratio of average distance to clustering is 8.36, in Period 2 decreased to 5.57, and in Period 3 decreased further to 3.86. This lends strong evidence that connectedness between individuals within progressively cohesive co-writing networks increased in the periods from 2000-2015.

Network Effects on Individual Career Success

The initial network visualizations I present in this chapter illustrate the increasing cohesion among successful songwriters over the course of the 16 years of this study. Beyond simply showing patterns of shifting cohesion in the network as a whole, this kind of diagram can give additional insight into the structural positions of distinct individuals in the network by altering the shape, color, and size of the nodes that represent individual songwriters. My second hypothesis is that network centrality will increase a songwriter's odds of success and that the effect would be strongest in Period 3.

The network diagram in Figure 5.7 shows that there are highly central songwriters in the main component but also in the smaller network components in the middle. It appears that men are the most likely to have a high level of degree centrality compared to female songwriters and that professional songwriters are more likely to be central compared to recording artist songwriters in the main component and in the smaller components in the middle of the figure. Over time, this picture begins to shift. In Figure 5.8, we again see that the main component begins to dominate the social structure and that there are fewer small components in the middle. Apart from one highly central female songwriter, males appear to again be most likely to have success and to be more central. In this period, there is still a wide range of centrality levels in the small components. Lastly, Figure 5.9 shows the highly cohesive main network component with far fewer small components and isolates. Within the small components, the social ties between songwriters are less complex, and there are no highly central writers in the small components. No female songwriters are highly central, but we do see that professional songwriters appear to be more central to the network than are recording artist songwriters.

Figure 5.7: Network Visualization of Co-Writing Ties Between Successful Songwriters 2000-2005 (Nodes= 434; Edges=821)
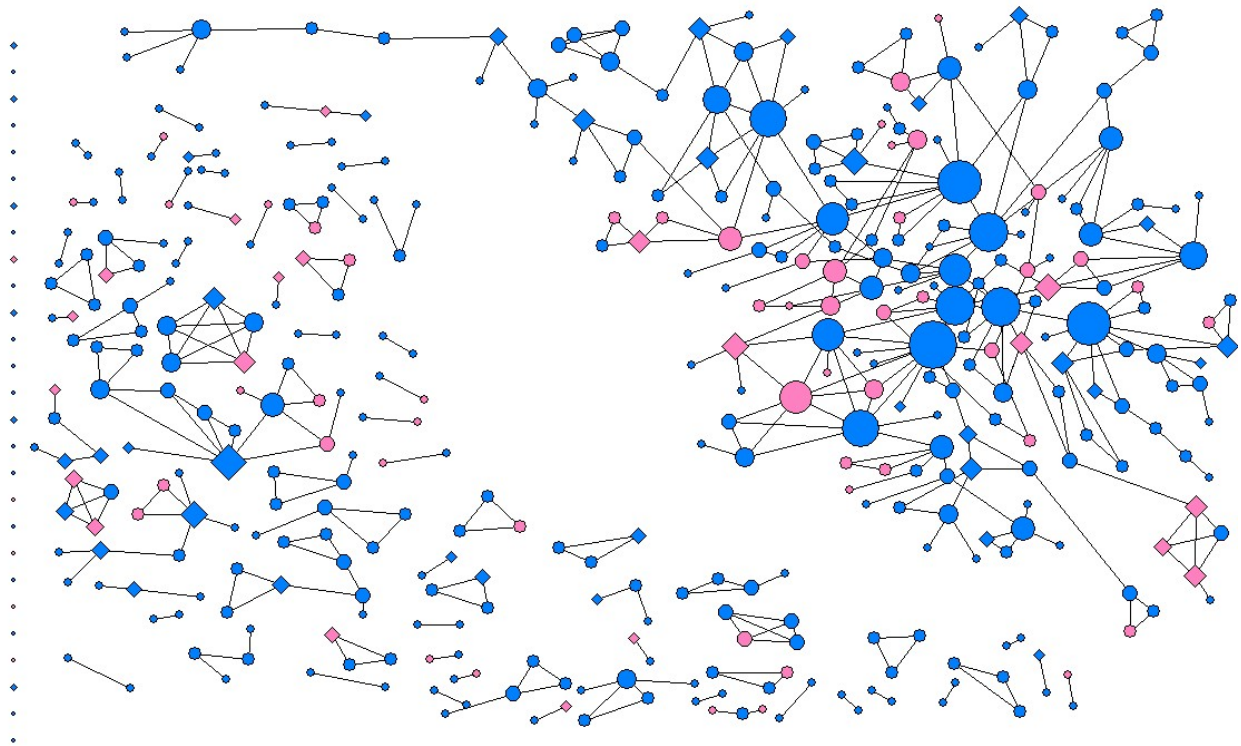
Note: Node color indicates songwriter gender (blue-male, pink-female); node shape indicates songwriter role (circle-professional songwriter, diamond-recording artist songwriter); size of node indicates degree centrality (larger nodes are more central)

After getting an initial look at the structure of co-writing networks with an eye toward the individual characteristics of network members, it is necessary to estimate statistical models that predict the odds of success based on song and songwriter characteristics while considering the influence of degree centrality on individuals' chances of success. In Chapter 3, I estimated logistic regression models to examine the factors that predict success in each of Periods 1, 2, and 3. They modeled the effect of song characteristics (Artist Gender, Artist Incumbency, Number of Co-Writers, Artist Co-writer) and the effects of songwriter characteristics (Songwriter Success before 2000, Songwriter Incumbency, Songwriter Gender, Songwriter is Recording Artist). While these models attempt to account for social factors through proxy measures like the number of cowriters

and whether the song's artist was also one of its writers, these models were missing a true

measure of centrality. The following analyses use direct measures of network centrality

calculated in UCINET and include the initial variables from Chapter 3 so that I can

adjudicate the effect of network centrality among co-writers on success in each period.

Figure 5.8: Network Visualization of Co-Writing Ties Between Successful Songwriters
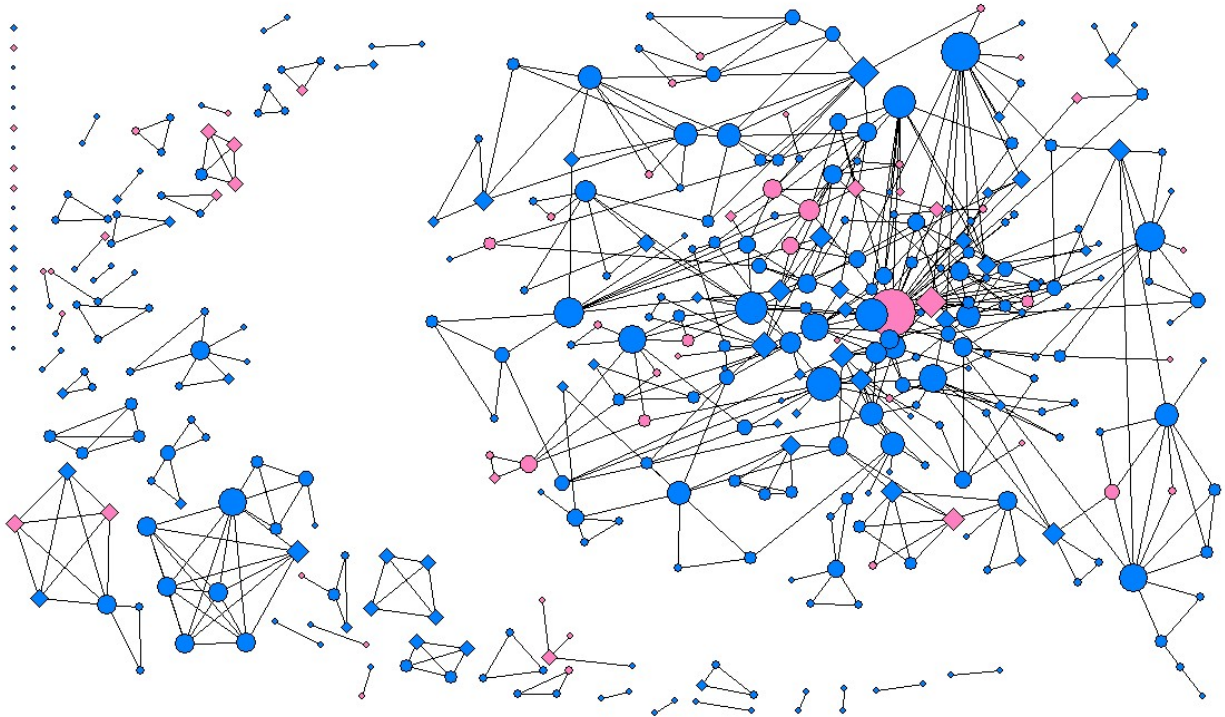2006-2010 (Nodes=374; Edges=815)

Note: Node color indicates songwriter gender (blue-male, pink-female); node shape
indicates songwriter role (circle-professional songwriter, diamond-recording artist
songwriter); size of node indicates degree centrality (larger nodes are more central)

Table 5.2 elaborates the effect of the size of a songwriter's direct network using the

count measure called degree centrality. Table 5.3 estimates the effect of each songwriter's

influence on the network in a measure called eigenvector centrality, which is a specific

kind of of degree centrality that is a good measure of the quality of one's ties over quantity

of ties. A node's score on this measure is influenced by its direct ties' centrality in the

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network. A songwriter who is only tied into the co-writing network by collaborating with a highly central co-writer would have a higher eigenvector centrality though their degree centrality would only be one. Using degree centrality and eigenvector centrality scores for each songwriter in each period, this chapter can speak to the statistical effect of social position on success.

Figure 5.9: Network Visualization of Co-Writing Ties Between Successful Songwriters 2011-2015 (Nodes=475; Edges=1290)
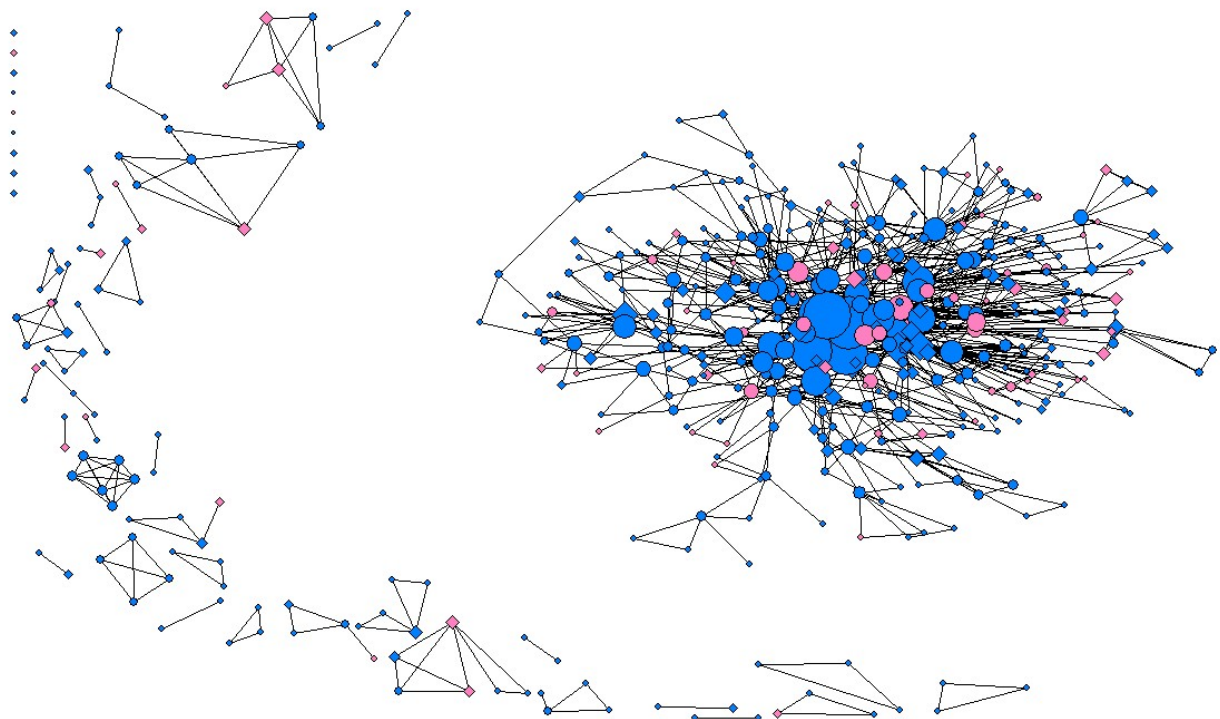

Note: Node color indicates songwriter gender (blue-male, pink-female); node shape indicates songwriter role (circle-professional songwriter, diamond-recording artist songwriter); size of node indicates degree centrality (larger nodes are more central)

The results of my first logistic regression analysis is shown in Table 5.2 and displays the effect of song characteristics and songwriter characteristics, along with songwriters' degree centrality on the likelihood of attaining success in each period compared to the other two periods. For songwriter songs in Period 1, the recording artist's

career incumbency is a negative predictor such that for each additional year of an artist's career a song is 3% less likely to be successful than in subsequent periods. When it comes to the number of co-writers on a given song, the effect varies significantly by period. In Period 1, for each additional writer on a song, the likelihood of success decreases by 58%. In Period 3, each additional co-writer on a song raises the song's likelihood of success by 110%. Understanding the effect of songwriters' career incumbency on a songwriter's song's success is twofold. First, career success before the beginning of the period of study has the largest positive impact on the likelihood of success in Period 1. Songwriters whose songs who attained success before 2000 were 1340% more likely to have written a successful song in Period 1 than were those who did not have such a career history. However, this same measure of entrenched incumbency appears to be a liability in Period 3 as those with success before 2000 were 90% less likely to be successful in Period 3 than writers whose careers began after the beginning of this period of study. To further extend understanding of career incumbency's effect on songwriter success, in Period 1 songwriters' additional years of career incumbency beginning in 2000 introduced a 42% reduced chance of success in comparison to the impact of additional years of success in other periods. In Period 3, for each additional year of career incumbency during the period of this study (beginning in 2000), a songwriter enjoys a 33% increase in likelihood of success. Lastly, when it comes to the size of a songwriter's network, this evidence shows that degree centrality is not a large predictor of success in any of the periods. It is only significant in Period 3, wherein each increase in degree centrality is accompanied by a 1% lower chance of attaining success.

Some variables in these models did not impact the likelihood of a songwriter's song attaining success. The effects of a song having a female artist, a writer who is also its

recording artist, having a female writer, or being the artist co-writer do not significantly effect a songwriter's song's likelihood of success. As was the case in the similar model presented in Chapter 3, these models describing the factors that predict success in each period explain a moderate amount of variance in Period 1 (35%) and Period 3 (27%) but are not at all predictive in Period 2.

Table 5.2: Logistic Regression Odds Ratios for Likelihood of Songwriter-Song Success by Temporal Period (N=2927)

	Period 1 2000-2005	Period 2[9] 2006-2010	Period 3 2011-2015
Artist Gender (1=female)	1.07	1.05	0.86
Artist Incumbency	0.97 **	1.02 **	1.00
Number of Co-Writers	0.42 ***	0.92	2.10 ***
Artist Co-writer (1=yes)	0.81	1.14	1.05
Songwriter Success before 2000 (1=yes)	14.40 ***	0.99	0.10 ***
Songwriter Incumbency	0.57 ***	1.01	1.33 ***
Songwriter Gender (1=female)	1.03	1.02	0.96
Songwriter is the Recording Artist (1=yes)	0.85	1.03	1.14
Degree Centrality	1.01	1.00	0.99 *
Pseudo R-Square	0.35	0.00	0.27

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Though the sheer size of songwriters' personal co-writing networks was not highly predictive of their likelihood of success during this period of study, it is essential to understand the effect of their structural position in the network. Toward this goal, I

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[9] This model is presented in red because it should be interpreted with great caution. Please note that the model for Period 2 was not significant. Its results are very similar to the same (significant) model of the same variables, minus degree centrality, that is presented in chapter 3, but it should still be interpreted with caution and does not constitute strong evidence for the predictors of success from 2006-2010. For this reason, I do not discuss the results of this model in the text elaboration of the table. See Chapter 3 for a more in-depth discussion of why this may be the case in the particular political economic context of this period.

conducted three logistic regression models to estimate the effect of song and songwriter characteristics. These models (see Table 5.4) include eigenvector centrality's effect on the likelihood of a songwriter's song being successful in each period in comparison to the other two periods.

Before diving into the statistical findings for this set of models, I present three network diagrams that illustrate the distribution of eigenvector centrality throughout the main network component in each period. This measure of centrality is only computed in the main component. Figure 5.10 is a visualization of eigenvector centrality in Period 1. It shows that the area in which eigenvector centrality is most concentrated is in the bottom middle area of the figure. While some women are highly central and one male and one female artist appear to be central, the majority of central nodes are male professional writers and only a small proportion of main network co-writers are central at all.

Figure 5.11 shows that in Period 2 there is a more dispersed and more extensive network of central co-writers wherein one female professional songwriter is most central, though most of the central co-writers are male. Lastly, in comparison to Period 1, there is a greater proportion of central recording artist songwriters in Period 2. To be sure, the distribution of eigenvector centrality changed between these two periods.

In the final network diagram shown in Figure 5.12, the social landscape of eigenvector centrality shifts again. As in the first two figures of this series, professional songwriters are more likely to be highly central than are recording artist songwriters. In this period, compared to Period 2, it appears that women are less central. Lastly, it is apparent that in this highly cohesive network structure, more songwriters have some level of eigenvector centrality than did in Periods 1 or 2.

Figure 5.10: Main Component Co-Writing Ties Between Successful Songwriters from 2000-2005
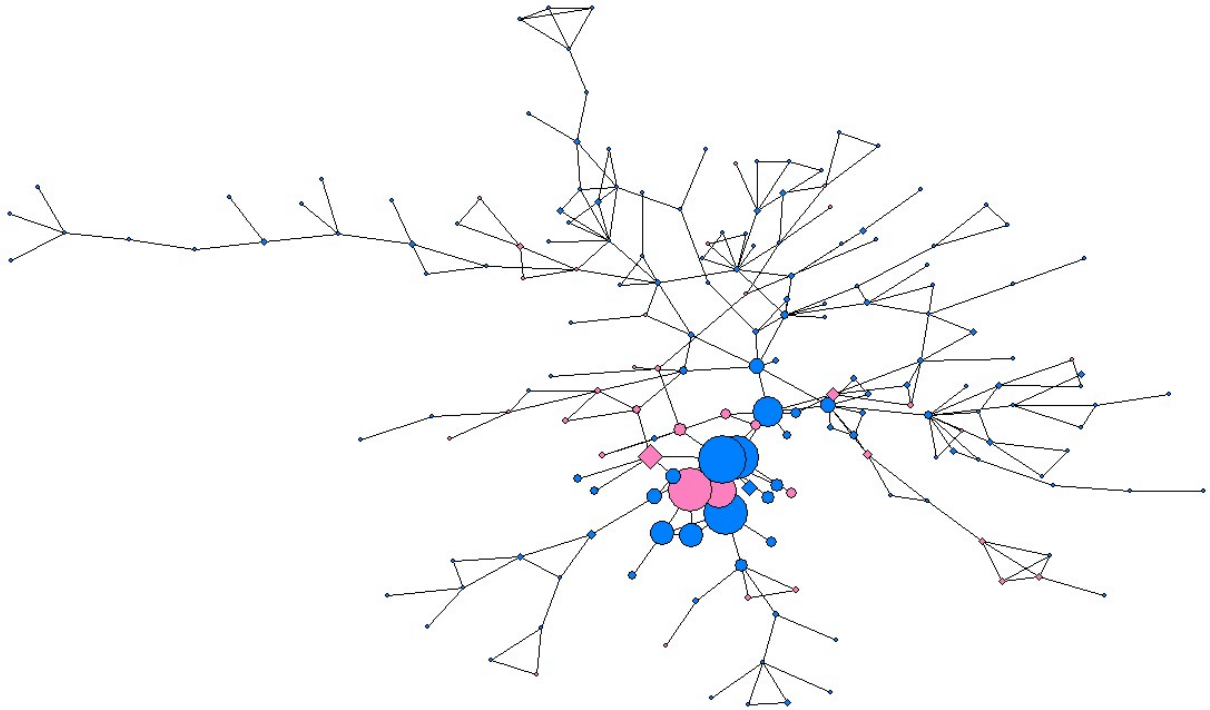
Note: Node color indicates songwriter gender (blue-male, pink-female); node shape indicates songwriter role (circle-professional songwriter, diamond-recording artist songwriter); size of node indicates eigenvector centrality (larger nodes are more central)

The impact of an artist's incumbency in Period 1 has a negative effect in comparison to Periods 2 and 3 such that for each additional year of incumbency during the period of study the songwriter song has a 3% decreased likelihood of success. In Period 2, artists' years of incumbency offer songs a 2% increased chance of success. A song's increased number of writers has a negative impact on song success in Period 1 (56% decrease per additional co-writer) but increases the chance of success in Period 3 (101% increased chance of success per additional co-writer). In comparison to Periods 2 and 3, songs with an artist co-writer in Period 1 are 24% less likely to be successful. Songwriter incumbency is again more difficult to tease out. Success before the period of study had a major impact on songwriter songs' success in Period 1, adding a 1228% increased

likelihood of success for songwriters who had success before 2000. In comparison, in Period 3 songwriters who were first successful before the period of study were 87% less likely to be successful than in the other two periods. Career incumbency for songwriters during this period of study had a negative impact in Period 1 (39% decreased chance of success in comparison to incumbency's effect in Periods 2 and 3) and a positive impact in Period 3 (28% increased likelihood of success per year of career incumbency since 2000). Lastly, eigenvector centrality had large impacts in each period. In Periods 1 and 2, eigenvector centrality has a negative impact on likelihood of success in comparison to the other periods. However, in Period 3 this kind of centrality of influence in the co-writing network is the largest predictor of success[10].

 As was the case in the models displayed in Table 5.2, some of the variables in these models were not predictive of songwriter song success. The gender of the song's performing artist, the gender of the songwriter, and whether a songwriter was also the song's recording artist had no significant impact on likelihood of success in any period. Just as in the previous three models, the variance explained in these models is much greater in Period 1 (36%) and Period 3 (28%) than in Period 2 (1%) though the model for Period 2 was significant and can be interpreted with confidence in comparison to the other two models presented in Table 5.3.

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[10] A note on interpreting eigenvector centrality. Not all songwriters have a non-0 score on this measure, because this is only measured in the main component. The giant percent impact of this measure in Period 3 is because of the modal score of 0 and the high upper end scores on this measure coupled with the increase in the importance of this characteristic in comparison to its importance in Periods 1 and 2. For these reasons, and the fact that despite this measure's high odds ratio it only adds 1% to the variance explained in each model in comparison to the models in Table 5.3, I only elaborate on the trends in text rather than speaking to the extraordinary odds ratios presented in Table 5.4.

Figure 5.11: Main Component Co-Writing Ties Between Successful Songwriters from 2006-2010

Note: Node color indicates songwriter gender (blue-male, pink-female); node shape indicates songwriter role (circle-professional songwriter, diamond-recording artist songwriter); size of node indicates eigenvector centrality (larger nodes are more central)
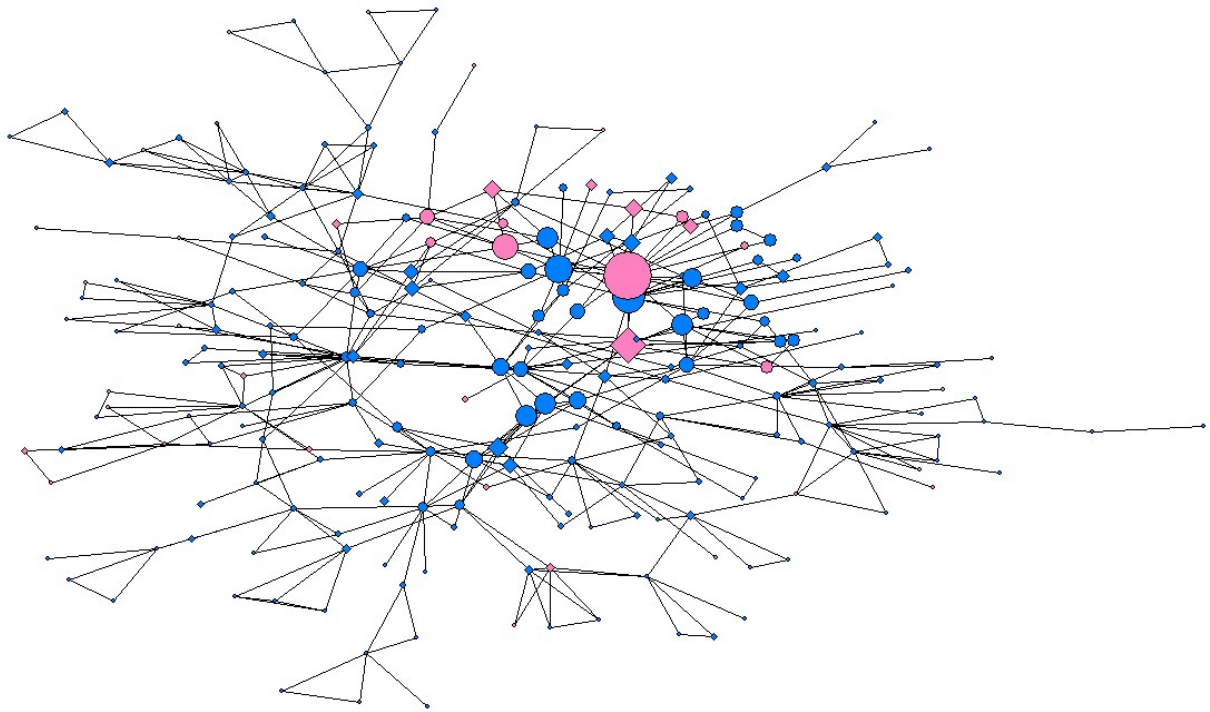
Figure 5.12: Main Component Co-Writing Ties Between Successful Songwriters from 2011-2015
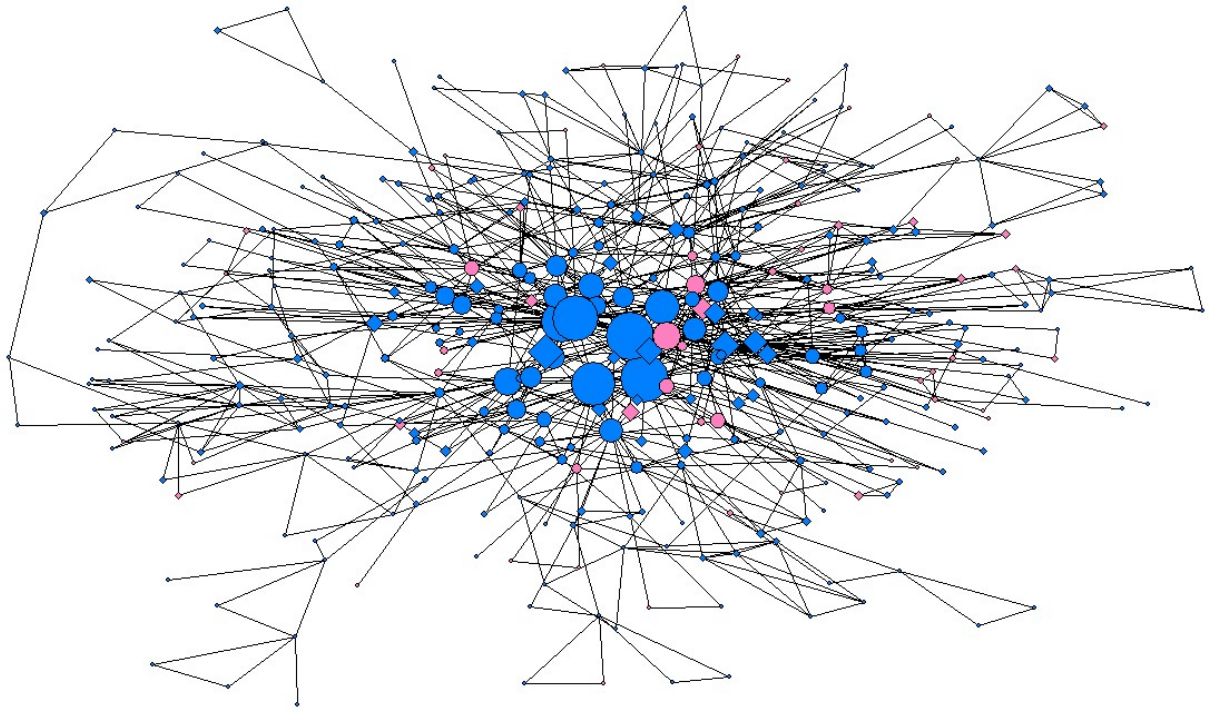
Note: Node color indicates songwriter gender (blue-male, pink-female); node shape indicates songwriter role (circle-professional songwriter, diamond-recording artist songwriter); size of node indicates eigenvector centrality (larger nodes are more central)

Table 5.3: Logistic Regression Odds Ratios for Likelihood of Songwriter-Song Success by Temporal Period (N=2927)

	Period 1 2000-2005	Period 2 2006-2010	Period 3 2011-2015
Artist Gender (1=female)	1.07	1.06	0.84
Artist Incumbency	0.97 **	1.02 *	1.00
Number of Co-Writers	0.45 ***	0.94	2.01 ***
Artist Co-writer (1=yes)	0.76 *	1.12	1.10
Songwriter Success before 2000 (1=yes)	13.28 ***	0.94	0.13 ***
Songwriter Incumbency	0.61 ***	1.02	1.28 ***
Songwriter Gender (1=female)	0.93	0.98	1.07
Songwriter is the Recording Artist (1=yes)	0.85	1.01	1.19
Eigenvector Centrality	0.00 ***	0.15 **	69.82 ***
Pseudo R-Square	0.36	0.01	0.28

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

The Impact of Centrality on Success across Domains

A last consideration for this series of analyses is whether centrality has different effects on the likelihood of a songwriter's song attaining success in different domains. The selection criteria for attaining success in each domain varies according to each organization's self-defined metrics, and it is possible that some selection metrics are more socially patterned based on co-writing ties than are others. Toward this goal, I present Table 4 to consider song and songwriter characteristics, including degree centrality, on success in commercial popularity, peer recognition, critical acclaim, and Grammy nomination from 2000-2015 and Table 5 to consider the effect of song and songwriter characteristics, including eigenvector centrality on the same outcomes in the same 16-year Period. What emerges is a greater understanding of the relative importance of the differences in patterned relationships between songwriters and recording artists as well as structural centrality in attaining success in each of these domains.

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When it comes to songwriter songs that attained commercial popularity, a combination of song and songwriter characteristics emerges as significant predictors in the model. Songs that are performed by a female artist are 78% less likely to attain success than songs performed by women that attained success as given by peer songwriters, critics, or by the Grammy nominating committee. For each additional co-writer, songs were 63% more likely to attain commercial popularity. If the song's artist was also a co-writer, it was 32% less likely to attain commercial success compared to songs (co-)written by their recording artist(s) in the peer, critic, or Grammy domains of success. There is 37% decreased likelihood of having a commercially successful song for songwriters who themselves are the recording artist of their song. Lastly, for each additional co-writing connection in a songwriter's direct personal network, he or she has a 9% increase in the likelihood of commercial success in comparison to success in other domains. Neither artists' nor songwriters' career incumbency or songwriter's gender significantly contributed to songwriter songs attaining commercial success. This model explains 8% of the variation in commercial success relative to peer, critical, and Grammy success.

On the dimension of success according to peer recognition, songwriter songs suffer a 28% reduction in likelihood of success for each additional co-writer on a song and a 62% decrease in chance of success if the song's recording artist was also one of its writers. Variables that did not significantly impact likelihood of success in this domain were artist's gender, artist's career incumbency, songwriter's career incumbency, songwriter's gender, if the songwriter was also the song's recording artist, and degree centrality. This model only explains 4% of the variation in peer recognition.

Songs that attained critical acclaim had an increased likelihood of success among critics, compared to in other domains, if the performing artist was a woman (159.8%

increase), if the artist was more incumbent in terms of career years (2% increased chance of success per year of incumbency), and if the song was co-written by its performing artist (87% increase). Songwriter songs were less likely to attain critical acclaim for each additional co-writer (25% reduction in chance of success per additional co-writer) and if the songwriter first attained career success before 2000 (25% decreased odds). The variables that did not significantly increase or decrease success odds were the songwriters' career incumbency during the period of study, the songwriter's gender, whether the songwriter was also the song's performing artist, and degree centrality. This model explained 6% of the variation on odds of critical acclaim.

In the final domain of success, the following song and songwriter characteristics impacted the odds of a song being nominated for a Grammy award for Country song of the Year. Songwriter songs performed by women, songs performed by an artist with a longer career history of success, and female songwriter songs were more likely to be successful (108% more likely for female-performed songs, 5% more likely per year of recording artist incumbency since 2000, and 54% more likely for female songwriter songs). For each additional co-writer, the odds of a songwriter's song being Grammy nominated dropped by 33%. The variables that did not impact odds of Grammy nomination were whether the song was co-written by its recording artist, songwriter career incumbency, whether the songwriter is the artist of the song, and degree centrality. This model explained the least variation in songwriter song success (2%) of the four models displayed in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4: Logistic Regression Odds Ratios for Likelihood of Songwriter-Song Success by Domain of Success (N=2927)

	Commercial	Peer	Critic	Grammy
Artist Gender (1=female)	0.22 ***	1.26	2.60 ***	2.08 ***
Artist Incumbency	1.01	1.00	1.02 *	1.05 ***
Number of Co-Writers	1.63 ***	0.79 ***	0.75 ***	0.67 ***
Artist Co-writer (1=yes)	0.68 *	0.38 ***	1.87 ***	0.85
Songwriter Success before 2000 (1=yes)	1.42	0.99	0.75 *	0.96
Songwriter Incumbency	0.96	1.02	1.00	0.99
Songwriter Gender (1=female)	1.20	1.17	1.13	1.54 *
Songwriter is the Recording Artist (1=yes)	0.63 *	0.97	1.10	1.20
Degree Centrality	1.09 ***	0.99	0.99	1.02
Pseudo R-Square	0.08	0.04	0.06	0.02

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

The previous set of four models showed that degree centrality was only a predictor of success in the commercial domain. The results shown in Table 5.5 substitute eigenvector centrality for degree centrality. From the repetition of almost identical odds ratios, significance levels, and pseudo r-square values, it is clear that the impact of structural positioning is only important in predicting commercial success rather than success in the peer, critic, or Grammy domains. The effect of eigenvector centrality on the odds of commercial success are such that increases in this kind of centrality lead to much higher odds of success. Though the odds ratio should be interpreted with caution, in tandem with the network diagram in Figures 5.10-5.12, it is clear that there is an association between songwriters who are most closely tied to influential co-writers and those who have the higher odds of success.

Table 5.5: Logistic Regression Odds Ratios for Likelihood of Songwriter-Song Success by Domain of Success (N=2927)

	Commercial	Peer	Critic	Grammy
Artist Gender (1=female)	0.22 ***	1.26	2.60 ***	2.09 ***
Artist Incumbency	1.01	1.00	1.02 *	1.05 ***
Number of Co-Writers	1.68 ***	0.72 ***	0.75 ***	0.68 ***
Artist Co-writer (1=yes)	0.68 *	0.38 ***	0.19 ***	0.84
Songwriter Success before 2000 (1=yes)	1.48 *	0.97	0.74 *	0.96
Songwriter Incumbency	0.99	1.02	1.00	1.00
Songwriter Gender (1=female)	1.16	1.16	1.13	1.51
Songwriter is the Recording Artist (1=yes)	0.64 *	0.97	1.10	1.18
Eigenvector Centrality	999.00 ***	0.32	0.30	2.98
Pseudo R-Square	0.08	0.04	0.06	0.02

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

DISCUSSION

Network Cohesion

My first hypothesis was that co-writing networks would become more cohesive in each subsequent period of the study. The abundant evidence provided in this chapter shows that indeed co-writing networks of successful songwriters became increasingly cohesive in the periods from 2000-2015. Most convincingly, the percentage of songwriters who are socially tied to the network's main component increased from 42.9% of all successful songwriters in Period 1 to 74.9% of songwriters in Period 3. The rest of the network cohesion measures provide further proof. From Period 1 to Period 3, every measure indicated that cohesion increased among successful songwriters, including the average distance, which decreased by more than two full path lengths in total, and the total number of components, which dropped by more than 50% from 113 in Period 1 to only 46 in

Period 3. Each of these indicators suggest with sureness that this network became more cohesive over time. As such, Hypothesis 1 is supported.

What does it mean to have an increasingly cohesive network and increasingly dominant main component where success is located in an informal network of workers? In the absence of strong employment norms and organizations as the site of jobs, the main network component is the most clearly structured segment of the labor market. Further, we think of this in terms of a social monopoly—the lower the percentage of individuals who were able to find success outside of the main component, the more consolidation exists in the labor market in the period of analysis. Since we know that status and hierarchy in groups is distributed according to adherence group norms, reduced chances of success outside of the main component could suggest an opportunity structure that is unfavorable toward creativity and innovation.

From 2000-2015, the music industry in Nashville had begun to experience sectoral changes due to digitization in music but had not yet seen the full force of sales decline or industry restructuring to meet changes in the new digital music economy. As the shift toward digitization continued in Period 2, the Great Recession amplified the apparent shake out of small groups of co-writers in favor of the more consolidated and centralized main component organization in Period three. While in Periods 1 and 2, a large number of songwriters were able to attain success without being tied to the main component, that opportunity shrunk by Period 3.

Network Effects on Individual Career Success

My second hypothesis was that individual songwriters' centrality would increase the odds of success in each period, with the largest effect size in Period 3. The evidence

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toward adjudicating this hypothesis is mixed. Building on models developed for Chapter 3, I first estimated the effect of degree centrality on songwriter song success and then ran the same model, substituting eigenvector centrality in to understand the effect it has on success. The results of the models using degree centrality were puzzling. They indicate that in no period is degree centrality positively associated with success, and further, it showed that compared to the first two periods, degree centrality decreases the odds of success for a songwriter's song in Period 3. In my second set of models, I found something different in that eigenvector centrality is a significant predictor of success in all three periods. In Periods 1 and 2 the effect is negative but in Period 3, eigenvector centrality was positively associated with success.

I caution readers to interpret these findings conservatively and cannot accept hypothesis two at this time. The pseudo r-square values for these models only increased by about 1% from the models that do not add measures of network centrality, and it is possible that centrality is mediated by another variable in the model such as having an artist co-writer on the song or the total number of co-writers on a song. In short, the impact of networks on success could be a song-level characteristic rather than a songwriter-level characteristic. Even though degree centrality is not predictive and eigenvector centrality is difficult to interpret, direct collaboration with a larger group of artists is important to songwriters. Considering this concept in the scholarly tradition of project-based teams rather than simply individual odds of success could be helpful in detangling this finding.

The Impact of Centrality on Success across Domains

In comparison to the longitudinal findings presented in service of adjudicating Hypotheses 1 and 2, the hypothesis 3 requires understanding cross-sectional differences by

status-segmented domains of success. Since commercial markets dispense success according to different patterns than do the awards bestowed by the songwriter members of NSAI, the independent music critics voting on the *Nashville Scene*'s annual critic's picks, and the Grammy nominating committee, it not surprising that social influence from individual writers' structural positions in their social network would have domain-specific effects.

Whereas degree centrality did not have a large impact on songwriter song success over time, in comparison to its effect on the odds of success among peers, critics, or Grammys, degree centrality boosts the odds of commercial popularity by 9% for each additional co-writer a songwriter collaborated with from 2000-2015. Similarly, over time, eigenvector centrality effects the odds of commercial popularity but not peer, critic, or Grammy success. The massive degree to which eigenvector centrality increases the odds of success should again be interpreted with caution. Since it is only measured in the main component and since the range is so wide, it is perhaps better to use it to guide thinking around the impact of well-connected ties in the network as a whole rather than as a predictor of individual success. Despite these initial findings on the status-segmented effects of centrality on success, the pseudo r-square indicates that the explanatory power of my models is relatively low, so more research is needed into what increases or decreases the odds of success in each of these domains, including aesthetic patterns (melodies and rhythms), lyrical themes, and organizational factors like record labels and producers. Despite these model-specific limitations, songwriter centrality does increase the odds of commercial success but not success in any other domain. Thus, Hypothesis 3 is only partially supported; the only necessary modification is that peer recognition is not affected by songwriter centrality.

These findings suggest that the process of writing a song and getting it recorded is socially patterned by songwriter centrality but that each of the three domains that determine success through award voting processes are not influenced by songwriter centrality. It appears that the commercial popularity measure is likely more reflective of the status characteristics and markers of success in the labor market of songwriting and music production while peer recognition, critical acclaim, and Grammy nomination reflect more on the status and qualities of the song and its recording artist, which is reflected in the concentration of significance indicators in the top half of Tables 5.4 and 5.5 where artist- and song-level characteristics are reported rather than in the bottom of the table where songwriter-level characteristics are reported.

Limitations

This chapter focuses on the social network as the theoretical and empirical link between the macro structures that organize the music industry and the individual songwriters whose work creates the music industry's signature product. By defining, mapping, and analyzing the social network ties that underlie the creation of successful songs, I am able to speak to the general patterning of how songwriters' collaborations with recording artists and with one another. A frequent criticism of SNA is that it does not account for multiplexity of ties, that is, it can only account for one type of relationship at a time while empirically ignoring others. This is certainly the case with my data. The assumptions that structure my SNA are as follows: (1) songwriters' careers depend on co-writing ties with other songwriters, both creatively in the construction of songs and (2) to enhance their statistical likelihood of having a song recorded and cut because of the social connections that each co-writer brings to the table. My assumptions allowed me to

construct a data set that analyzes the effect of ties based on co-writing successful songs but ignores co-writing ties forged through writing songs that were not successful, familial ties like those between the pairs of fathers and sons or husbands and wives that do show up on in my data, and any number of other relationships that could impact an individual songwriter's chances of success in his or her career path. This is a limitation of SNA as a method, but the theory that underlies social networks still stands. We know that the structure that underlies social networks and ties individuals together, both directly and indirectly, is key to understanding how people, particularly in informal labor markets, structure careers. Though this chapter's empirical analysis does not account for multiplexity in the relationships of songwriters, I have selected what is probably the most empirically useful measure, the co-writing relationship, as the basis of inquiry into the power that social connectedness might assert on the careers of songwriters.

Additionally, some of the network measures I use, particularly average distance and calculating small world characteristics based on this figure, present a problem because they are sensitive to networks with multiple components. A strength of my whole-network approach to collecting and analyzing data is that I am able to capture multiple components and isolates alike; in fact, in the whole network analysis, UCINET identified 121 components. Borgatti et al. (2018) suggest that using a measure of compactness, rather than average distance, is more appropriate for analysis in networks that are comprised of multiple components. While I did calculate small world-ness using average distance, compactness has a similar rate of change over time (-0.45 from Period 1 to Period 3) as does average distance (-0.66 from Period 1 to Period 3), so the overall trend of increasing clustering and decreasing path length is maintained regardless of which distance measure is used.

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In future analyses, I hope to explore the effect of using a nested modeling approach to situate songwriters within songs but expect to have some difficulty theorizing how a writer might be nested in multiple songs. If this does not work, I will instead focus on disentangling more of the network structure of co-writers, with emphasis on disentangling the domains of success used in this project. Additionally, I am currently working with my colleagues within the music industry to obtain data related to the "genome" of songs. This data would include song-level characteristics about the timing and patterning of musical and rhythmic dynamics as well as more granular market data relating to each song's travel up and down the charts and subsequent market performance. Adding this data would no doubt add quite a bit of variation to my analyses and allow me to more closely examine the power of networks and the "contagion" effects of collaboration in terms of rhythmic and melodic trends and patterns.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter was to give considerable thought to understanding how macro-level forces and individual chances for success meet, affect each other, and are affected by the structure of social ties that underlie informal collaborative relationships. In the case of successful songwriters in my data, it is apparent that the overall structure of their social ties came to become more cohesive and dominated by a single component of social ties over the period of study. Further, though the exact odds are difficult to interpret, it is clear that the distribution and effect of individuals' centrality within the network of their peers shifted and intensified over time. The temporal findings fit well within the context of collaboration and the increasing emphasis on co-writing that interviewees explained. Reflecting the initial ego network examples of David Watts's network made up

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of three individuals in Period 1 and highly-connected James Cooper who had success in Periods 2 and 3, the network diagrams in this chapter illustrate the concentration of opportunity over the period of this study. During the study period, networks consolidated from a relatively dispersed opportunity structure to one that tightly concentrated opportunity into one component of more cohesive, interconnected individuals.

This research only begins to uncover the social mechanisms that structure collaboration among songwriters, and it does not explain how easy or hard it is to join the main component. Is increasing cohesion and concentration of opportunity among one group of people inherently bad? One way to examine this question would be to examine the effects of increasing network cohesion on how personal characteristics, like race and gender or one's status role as a professional writer versus as a recording artist songwriter, might affect one's ability to form and maintain social ties to others in the occupational community. It is likely that personal qualities that are known to contribute to cumulative advantage are at work in the network as well. One future direction is that this kind of research should look into how structural minorities of all kinds are affected by the informal and socially-driven processes that may block or enhance mobility and job/opportunity acquisition. I would expect that it is through networked relationships, rather than overt discrimination, that women and racial minorities come to be underrepresented in country music.

Further, this evidence and the information that I learned in my interviews with successful songwriters stressed the increasing importance of being tied to a recording artist. As mentioned in Chapter 2, being in a recording artist's "camp" is a step above writing with the artist in the room. More than a one-time collaboration, being in an artist's camp is an ongoing association that links a professional songwriter's status and reputation directly

to a recording artist. I believe that if I were to have data from 2016 to the present, I would find that network centrality and structural power is increasingly likely to be distributed according to camp membership. The process by which opportunity becomes more concentrated in the hands of fewer individuals raises questions of how, if at all, songwriters' careers might come to resemble self-contained units of cultural production as certain artists come to rely on a particular camp over time. Even without these improvements, it is clear that songwriters work in an informal yet highly and increasingly structured labor market wherein opportunity is tied to who you know, and more importantly, who they know.

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CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION: TOWARD A NETWORKED POST-BUREAUCRACY

Commercially, I would be lying in today's market to say that there isn't some strategy involved. It's difficult to have a song recorded commercially without somehow getting creatively involved with an artist or their producer. It still happens occasionally that a song may organically get cut by an artist that has no connection to it but it is not as commonplace as it once was.

[Emily Lee[11], commercially popular, peer recognized, critically acclaimed writer]

INTRODUCTION

My overarching goals in writing this dissertation were to understand how exogenous political economic forces affect patterned cooperation in informal occupational communities, and to what degree the combined impact of personal characteristics (sociodemographic, work history, personal approaches to employment management work) and the structure of collaboration networks facilitate or inhibit individuals' chances of success. This project is one that attempts to link structure and agency, an ongoing goal of sociology as a discipline. For songwriters, whose career pathways emerge from a series of unpaid cooperative efforts, this research uncovers social network structures that underlie songwriters' instances of co-writing. It is through their social network ties that songwriters' agency is enacted within the larger structure of the music industry.

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[11] All names of interviewees are pseudonyms. Personal identifying information, including song titles and the characteristics and names or collaborators have been anonymized to protect the identities of my interviewees.

The sociology of post-bureaucratic work and employment, in the push for understanding the so-called gig economy (De Stefano 2015) or neoliberal economy (Williams 2013), has greatly advanced knowledge of the degradation of the traditional employment relation and the resulting precarity experienced by workers. This line of research has described the conditions of and reasons for an increasingly precarious employment structure (Cornfield, Campbell and McCammon 2001, Kalleberg 2011, Smith 2002). Scholars have indicated how people respond to a changing economy through employment management work (Halpin and Smith 2017), through entrepreneurial action (Ruef 2010) and free agency (Barley and Kunda 2006, Neff 2012, Osnowitz 2010).

Further, we know that the distribution of precarity among workers follows socially constructed hierarchies of cumulative advantage and disadvantage (Kmec and Trimble 2009, Kronberg 2014, Williams 2013). Some have focused on personal branding or identity work (Vallas and Christin 2018) or community building (Cornfield 2015, Schwartz 2018) as a way to lessen the impact of precarity in the post-bureaucratic era. Additionally, there has been high-quality social network research about work that touches on the macro-level structures within and between organizations (Murray 2017), the implications of social networks for workers (Lin 2002, Sharone 2014, Song 2013) and, less commonly, on the outcomes of collaboration between free agentic workers (Uzzi and Spiro 2005). Still lacking is a structural understanding of how individuals enact careers outside of easily mapped organizational hierarchies and chains of command. Empirical and theoretical integration of social networks, particularly whole network approaches, into the sociology of work is essential for constructing a structural understanding of career pathways in a post-bureaucratic era.

Some of the theory that the sociology of work needs to further consider in its understanding of post-bureaucratic careers can be found in the sociology of culture. The similarities between post-bureaucratic workers' precarity and that of artists' careers means that research on the production of culture is particularly instructive in shaping how we understand unstable and informal careers. Despite the potential for crossover from knowledge about cultural production to the sociology of work, there are still gaps to fill, starting with the Art Worlds theory (Becker 1982). Becker's theory of change in art worlds focuses on the idea of aesthetic change in the cultural product. He says that changes have to "succeed in capturing existing cooperative networks or developing new ones" (1982: 300), and though Becker says that artistic changes can alter either the "character of the works produced" or "the conventions to produce them" (1982: 305), his examples focus only on the aesthetic properties and artistic conventions of cultural production. I think Becker does not extend his theory far enough. Indeed, with the addition of the production of culture perspective (Dowd 2004b, Peterson and Anand 2004), patterned cooperation can be thought of as augmenting and being augmented by other, non-aesthetic factors that underlie the production of art and entertainment.

Further extension of the art worlds theory allows us to understand more about how patterns of cooperation can change and shift, not only in terms of the products that collaborations produce, but in terms of the underlying structuring forces that bring collaborators together. Becker's theory invokes aesthetic and artistic convention as the location in which opportunity is concentrated and speaks of collaborators coming together to capitalize on their ability to blend their skills and talents. In application, his theory relies on the combination of collaborative groups' mobilization of primarily human and cultural capitals. My theory of networked post-bureaucracy alternatively sees opportunity as

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concentrated in social space, and collaborations are based on a group's combined skills, abilities, and social ties that can see the product through from its conception to production and ultimately distribution.

Each chapter of this dissertation has focused on examining the underlying patterns of collaboration that structure informal careers in the post-bureaucratic occupational community of songwriters in Nashville, Tennessee from 2000-2015. Chapter 2 began to examine this issue through contextualizing the external industry dynamics that affect the opportunity structure for songwriters. This chapter introduced the idea that the decline in music industry revenues that accompanied digitization led to shifting patterns of cooperation between songwriters and recording artists. Before these changes, the expected patterned collaboration was mostly transactional. The pattern of cooperation in this era was such that professional songwriters wrote the best song they could, and recording artists picked their favorite songs from all available songs to record and release on their albums. Following the political economic shift toward 360° deals, which increased recording artists' contractual obligation to write their own music, recording artists needed songwriters' craft abilities to write good songs tailored toward promoting the artist's personal brand, particularly in a live performance setting. In turn, songwriters needed recording artists for structural access to the means of commercial production and distribution of their work as they see their windows of opportunity shrinking. The pattern of cooperation shifted from transactional cooperation through recording artists licensing songwriters' songs to a facilitation-based pattern of cooperation wherein songwriters craft bespoke, brand-focused songs with the songs' recording artists.

In Chapter 3, I used a series of analyses to show that that interviewees' assertions that patterns of cooperation and factors that predict song success have changed over time

and that they vary by domain of success. This chapter illustrated that the variables that predicted success in 2000-2005 were not predictive of success from 2006-2010. Though some of the predictors from 2000-2005 were predictive of success in 2011-2015, the direction of the variables' impact was not consistent with their initial effects. On the whole, this chapter reinforced the finding that there has been a period of change in the music industry since the turn of the millennium that has affected the composition of the collaborative teams of co-writers who create songs. These findings support the idea of a shift from a recording artist and songwriter relationships as moving from transactional to facilitative.

Toward understanding the social network that underlies the production of songs, Chapter 4 uncovers the socially structured basis for individual songwriters to enact their career strategies within the larger context of the music industry. The impact of changing exogenous political economic factors is visible in the increasingly cohesive web of co-writing ties that structure songwriter careers. This chapter illustrated the consolidation of social ties to the point that by 2011-2015, 75% of successful songwriters were socially linked in one main network component by their co-writing ties—an increase of 32% over the main component's membership from 2000-2005. Findings from this chapter also reveal that a songwriter's centrality increases his or her songs' likelihood of commercial success but not success among peers, critics, or in Grammy award nominations. Further, the quality of songwriters' social ties in terms of their influence, rather than the sheer quantity of connections to others, is highly predictive of success from songwriters who were successful from 2011-2015 in comparison to the periods from 2000-2010. This chapter speaks to the point where structure and agency meet and provide a framework for understanding the structure of opportunity that songwriters had to navigate over the period of study.

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Finally, the purpose of this conclusion chapter is to sum up my study in terms of

theoretical implications, methodological contributions, and future directions in applying

and expanding my research into further policy and scholarship. My findings about changes

in patterned cooperation and network cohesion in one informal occupational community

show that sociologists can conduct research on work and employment outside of

bureaucratic organizations that meaningfully accounts for structure and for hierarchy or

social power in its structure. Though it is somewhat more difficult to collect data about

social networks among occupational community members than it is to map a corporate

chain of command, this kind of structural analysis is essential for understanding the

enactment of careers in informal labor markets. Based on these findings, I call for more

research and scholarly attention toward a theory of networked post-bureaucracy.

THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

Ultimately, external political economic forces structure the production of culture in

a variety of ways (Dowd 2004b, Peterson and Anand 2004), including how collaboration is

organized between the individuals whose job it is to create cultural products. In my

examination of Nashville songwriters, I identified two patterns of cooperation between

professional songwriters and recording artists that are diagrammed in Figure 6.1.

Remember that Becker's (1982) art worlds theory considers what I call transactional

cooperation, like that between a painter purchasing paint from a paint salesperson, to be

collaborative. Transactions that contribute to the production of culture are part of patterned

cooperation. In the music industry, a transactional process of recording artists licensing

songs from songwriters allowed for both the songwriters and the recording artist to

separately contribute to a co-created final product. Music industry professionals call this an

"outside cut" since the song originated outside of the artist or his or her team. The second pattern of collaboration between songwriters and recording artists is what I call facilitative collaboration. Co-writing a song with the artist is a process of facilitating the artist's vision and personal brand to directly speak to the artist's persona and audience. Music industry professionals call songs that originate in whole or partially from the artist and/or the artist's team an "inside cut."

Figure 6.1: Patterns of Cooperation between Professional Songwriters and Recording Artists
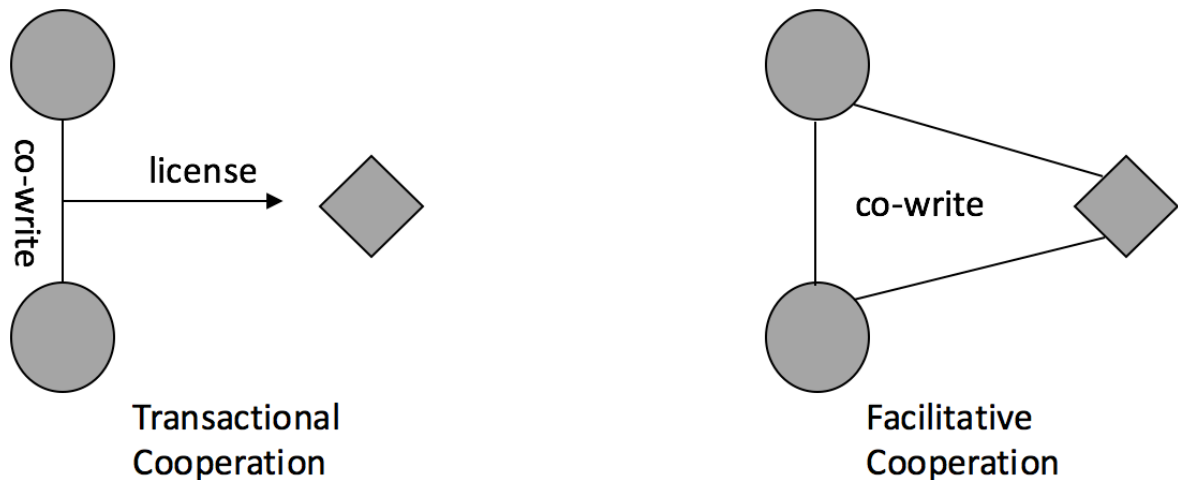
Transactional Cooperation

Facilitative Cooperation

Note: Circles represent professional songwriters and diamonds represent recording artists. Lines represent an instance of collaboration. The nature of cooperation is specified in text.

Why might it be useful to theoretically distinguish transactional and facilitative cooperation? In terms of the sociology of work, this distinction furthers scholars' ability to classify and examine the kinds of patterns that structure informal work. In an era of post-bureaucracy, workers may take on a variety of tasks, projects, contracts, and jobs over the course of their careers. At times they may sell products or complete services for clients and at other times they may be hired onto a team to do similar work. In my introductory

chapter, I argued that all careers have come to more closely resemble those characteristic of work in the arts, so it follows that the ability to discern the kind of cooperative relationship a worker has with his or her clients, collaborators, or employers is useful beyond only describing how cultural projects are made.

Patterned and Re-Patterned Cooperation among Nashville Songwriters

Professional songwriters indicated to me that they felt that the opportunity to have their songs cut and released on recording artists' albums was shrinking due to a larger decline in the music industry's sales and revenue. Jack Fraser's quote on the matter sums up the overall feeling that songwriters expressed to me:

[Y]ou could make a great living and still make a lot of money but have integrity and commercial success. I think that's gone away…[W]ithout album sales, the only way as a songwriter to make money now is through singles. Everybody is trying to write the same song, and it's very much narrowed. Whereas used to, you could have artistic writers that could do their thing, and that's kinda gone away. You know, you take away albums—and I'm not complaining, I'm just saying this is how it is—With the streaming and the downloading and there's so much music coming from everywhere. It's just a different game. And with labels taking publishing from anybody that they sign, everybody is a songwriter now.

[Jack Fraser, commercially popular, peer recognized, critically acclaimed, Grammy-nominated writer]

When Jack says that "everybody is a songwriter now," he is referring to the increasing generalism in occupational roles that resulted from political economic changes in the music industry. Occupational generalism and role hyphenation applied in the context of songwriting means that more music industry workers, who are not primarily professional songwriters, are taking on the title and role of songwriter. In part, the legally regulated compensation structure that springs from copyright law drives individuals toward songwriting as a means to increase their potential for financial compensation.

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The outcome of this financially-motivated process is that recording artists, many of whom songwriters critique as not being "real" or good songwriters, coming "in the room" to co-write songs with groups of professional songwriters. Co-writing duo Brandon and Natalie discussed this in terms of a facilitative process of collaboration:

Brandon: *Like writing for other people, I mean it's even changed since we got here. Like it used to be—we came in and saw the tail end of where you would write songs to get pitched. Now it's like you just write songs in the room with the artists. And the reason for that really is because there, the artist doesn't make any money, so now in order for them to make money they have to have a piece of the writing. But not—most of them can't really write.*

Natalie: *So they just kind of like narrate what they want to write about. Yeah, they are like taking an order.*

Brandon: *Yes, placing orders. It's like yes. So then you write a song for them.*

[Brandon Simpson, critically acclaimed writer; Natalie Reynolds, not in sampling frame]

Songwriters in these "artist co-writes" benefit from increased structural power by collaborating with recording artists and tying their shared fortune together through co-writing songs. Those recording artists, who are not themselves required to be good songwriters to be signed on a 360° deal, benefit from the bespoke craft process of transforming the artist's personal brand into a well-crafted song. Whereas the past political economic iteration of the music industry impelled an occupational role from songwriters that was based around the craft of writing the best song possible and licensing it through a legal transaction, the current political economy has encouraged the occupational role to

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shift toward facilitating a bespoke process tailored to the needs of the artist and the record label if they want to develop or maintain a successful career as a songwriter.

Following my analysis of the qualitative interviews with songwriters identified by the network-based sampling frame, I found that my statistical evidence supports the claims made by interviewees. Co-writing groups that wrote successful songs from 2011-2015 were larger than those in the previous periods. Further, in comparison to the period from 2000-2005, songwriters' songs that were successful from 2006-2010 and from 2011-2015 were significantly more likely to have been co-written by their recording artist. Together, these findings indicate that co-writing groups are larger and more likely to contain a song's recording artist, supporting the idea of an increase in the prevalence of the facilitative pattern of cooperation.

My findings show that the two patterns of collaboration are temporally grouped as elaborated in Figure 6.2. The transactional "outside cut" model of collaboration is the initial pattern that structured songwriter and recording artist relationships in Period 1 (2000-2005) and earlier (see, e.g. Daley 1998 for in-depth discussion of co-writing before the period of this study). Period 2 (2006-2010) was the time when the patterning of cooperation was being restructured due to the introduction of 360˚ deals. None of my models for this time period showed a dominant pattern of collaboration between songwriters and recording artists. An additional characteristic of Period 2 is that, in addition to the political economic changes affecting the music industry due to digitization and financial decline that began to take effect in Period 2, the years for 2006-2010 also encapsulate the time of the Great Recession. We know that it was not just the effects of the recession that re-patterned collaboration within the music industry since the financial decline and restructuring of the music industry began in response to industry-specific

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factors around 2000; however, the recession likely acted as an additional force toward reshaping the opportunity structure for both recording artists and songwriters. In Period 3 (2011-2015), the facilitative pattern of collaboration is the predominant pattern in cooperative relationships between songwriters and recording artists.

Finally, in the social network analyses presented in Chapter 4, I found that the network of co-writers became increasingly cohesive over time. While this chapter spoke more to the idea of network connectedness overall than to network connectedness between professional songwriters and recording artist co-writers specifically, it was not surprising to see the majority of recording artists structurally located and concentrated in the main component of the network visualizations.

The temporally charted patterns of cooperation among Nashville songwriters in Figure 6.2 should be read as accounting for change, particularly in terms of the emergence of the facilitative pattern. However, this typology cannot account for all instances of collaboration or all group members. Some recording artists write their own songs alone and have done so since before Period 1. Some songwriters are able to write songs in small collaborative groups without a recording artist and find success. However, my findings do point to a global shift toward facilitative cooperation as the predominant form of inter-role cooperation between songwriters and recording artists by Period 3.

Figure 6.2: Dominant Patterns of Cooperation between Professional Songwriters and Recording Artists from 2000-2015

Period 1 2000-2005	Period 2 2006-2010	Period 3 2011-2015
<u>Transactional Cooperation</u> in which recording artists and their record labels select the songs they wish to license for a recording artist's album.	Period of change from transactional to facilitative collaboration	<u>Facilitative Cooperation</u> in which recording artists co-write their songs with professional songwriters for their own albums.
Professional songwriters create a product which is effectively purchased by recording artists through the song licensing process.		Professional songwriters help recording artists express their personal brand and messages through the songwriting process.

Opportunity Structures and Network Cohesion

The research I conducted on Nashville songwriters shows that when the opportunity structure of an informal industry changes, the patterned cooperation between individuals will change, and ultimately, in informal social spaces, the network structure comes to mirror the opportunity structure as individuals clamor to collaborate with people who have more valued personal characteristics, occupational skills, and social ties in the new opportunity structure. Initially less than half of all successful songwriters were connected to one main network component, hearkening back to the quotes from songwriters that emphasized that a variety of musical and lyrical styles could end up as a hit during the outside cut era. Remember that they lament the "style chasing" that has resulted from artist co-writers focused on composing songs to be played in arenas. By the final period of my

study about three quarters of successful songwriters were socially tied to the main network component. This shift toward increasing cohesion reflects songwriters' insistence that the window of opportunity is closing for outside cuts and strengthens the claim that the process of getting a song cut is now highly dependent on getting it into the right person's hands.

An increasingly cohesive network is indicative of occupational network tightening wherein opportunity is progressively shared within a shrinking group of successful individuals. This large, cohesive main group of socially connected songwriters accounts for three quarters of successful songs during this period, which is an indicator that it would be difficult for someone to attain success outside of this network. Studies of networking that focus on its importance for job acquisition and mobility (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2010, Martin and Frenette 2017, Neff 2012, Osnowitz 2010) present evidence that networking is a way for workers in informal reputational labor markets to get a leg up on opportunities and helpful leads. In their studies, expanding one's personal occupational network is a helpful tool for increasing the flow of projects into one's queue. Alternatively, my study shows that expanding one's network is not an auxiliary task to enhance one's career prospects. Rather, building and maintaining one's network in a cohesive occupational community is the only way to access its linked opportunity structure.

METHODOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE NETWORK-BASED SAMPLING FRAME

My purpose in developing the network-based sampling frame methodology was to conduct a truly triangulated, mixed methods approach to examining the social dynamics of careers in informal, collaborative occupational communities. It is a theory-driven methodological contribution toward a networked understanding of post-bureaucracy. In

Chapters 2-4, I presented the findings of my qualitative, quantitative, and social network analyses. Each of these chapters is targeted toward examining the issue of collaboration in informal occupations from one methodological approach. The purpose of this section of my conclusion is to evaluate how well the network-based sampling frame can be used as a tool to link findings and insights from each distinct methodological approach.

My network-based sampling frame was constructed first by identifying my research question. I knew that I wanted to study the careers of songwriters as a case-in-point toward understanding how careers can be made from short-term collaborations within an informal occupational community. As careers in songwriting are highly competitive and precarious, this question prompted me to examine successful songwriters, as they are the most likely of all songwriters to have built a career on songwriting rather than finding one-time success with a hit song. In order to fully answer this question with empirical rigor, my question required that I develop the network-based sampling frame as a way to examine workers whose careers, unlike organizational careers, take place outside of the bureaucratic entities and structures that are associated with traditional employment relations. These constraints left me with two main objectives that led to developing my analytical and sampling approach. First, I needed to decide how to measure success in a highly subjective and varied occupational space. Second, I needed to ensure that my data captured variation in collaboration, that is, it had to account for a way to measure a series of complex social ties that link individuals together. These two constraints necessitated that I collect data that would measure success at the individual and at the collaboration level to account for both individual success and the implications of social ties on individual success.

I knew that given these constraints I needed to capture social network ties based on co-writing successful songs, but I also wanted to collect qualitative data to understand

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individuals' strategies and thoughts about collaboration and careers in their field. Had I started from the individual level and used snowball sampling to collect interview and network information, this ego-network approach would have allowed much more subjectivity and variation in levels of success to enter into my work, but would it have been difficult to match with industry level data or account for success in a generalizable way. That ruled out the ego network approach to measuring social ties.

My network-based sampling frame is built on a whole-network sampling process. By externally defining specific cutoff points for who counts and who does not count as a successful writer on the basis of song success rather than songwriter success, I solved both problems (individual and collective measures of success). This approach allowed me to systematically collect data from four discrete, status-segmented domains within the music industry to allow for a more inclusive view of success than I could have gotten from only looking at commercial success. My four-domain data provided increased variation and power in my statistical models. Next, I was able to map out the social ties between the co-writers who collaborated to create these successful songs. This created the webs of social connectedness shown in Chapter 4. In addition to providing the site of analysis for collaboration, by defining success according to externally defined, publically available measures, I was able to scrape data that inherently contained isolates. Had I asked questions about collaboration to individual songwriters in order to build an ego-network analytic structure, isolates would not have been included as their career success was not reliant on collaboration in this particular way. As a result, the network-based sampling frame is able to account for the likelihood of of success without collaboration.

My sampling frame was also meant to solve the recurring issue of snowball sampling bias in qualitative interviews. Because of the effects of homophily, snowball

sampling is known to result in a group of respondents that includes more similarity than may be expected in the population as a whole. Using my network-based sampling frame, I was able to go down the list of songwriters and email or Facebook message them individually without a recommendation or introduction from another writer. The result was a sampling method that freed me from relying on songwriters to refer me to their peers. I found when asking for referrals to other songwriters, the writers who I interviewed were likely to refer me to their collaborators who were less successful or less senior—I can imagine that they may not want their peers to know they talked to me, may not want to put in an ask for someone they do not know well. Why waste social currency by referring someone for my interview?

Instead of relying on referrals, I was able to reach a wide variety of individuals, including one isolate using my network-based sampling frame. Again, without this sampling frame, it would be very unlikely for me to stumble into an interview with someone who found success alone. Songwriters who were excited to recommend me to their peers did so because they knew I was interested in collaboration. Since scholars typically ask for referrals near the end of interviews, it is the interviewee's understanding of what we are trying to study through our interviews that helps them identify who to ask next. Again, this along with the forces of homophily mean that it is easy for scholars to be lulled into feeling that our theoretical sample is meaningful and that we have reached saturation more quickly than may actually be the case. I also believe that anonymity is better preserved in my network-based sampling frame than in snowball sampling as the interviewees do not know who else I am planning to talk with and cannot follow up with connections they may have referred in snowball sampling.

Lastly, after conducting interviews, my network-based sampling frame allows me to examine the structural dispersion of interviewees throughout the network and understand who I have been speaking within a more fully contextualized structural framework. Figure 6.3 shows the network dispersion of my interviewees in blue. The figure shows that I interviewed one isolate, four members of small network components, and 33 songwriters who, by association of their co-writing ties and those of their co-writers, are connected to the main component of songwriters for the period of this study. I will not present any identifying information in the following figures (e.g., gender or whether the writer is also an artist) to increase my commitment to maintaining my respondents' anonymity, but I can speak to each of my interviewees' level of centrality in the network to further situate my understanding of their structural position in the network.

Scholars interested in the network-based sampling frame should note that assessing the centrality and variation in centrality of interviewees will allow additional insight into interviewees' perspective on the issue at hand much as you can speak to their race, class, gender, or other personal characteristics in informing their perspective. Figure 6.4 shows the dispersion of interviewees in the network with degree centrality indicated by size, and Figure 6.5 shows the same dispersion with node size indicating eigenvector centrality. Each of these figures displays my interviewees structural positions and allows me to see that, while I have not interviewed the most highly central songwriters in the network, I have interviewed songwriters from a variety of structural positions who can likely speak to issues of collaboration and socially dependent career pathways from a variety of experiences.

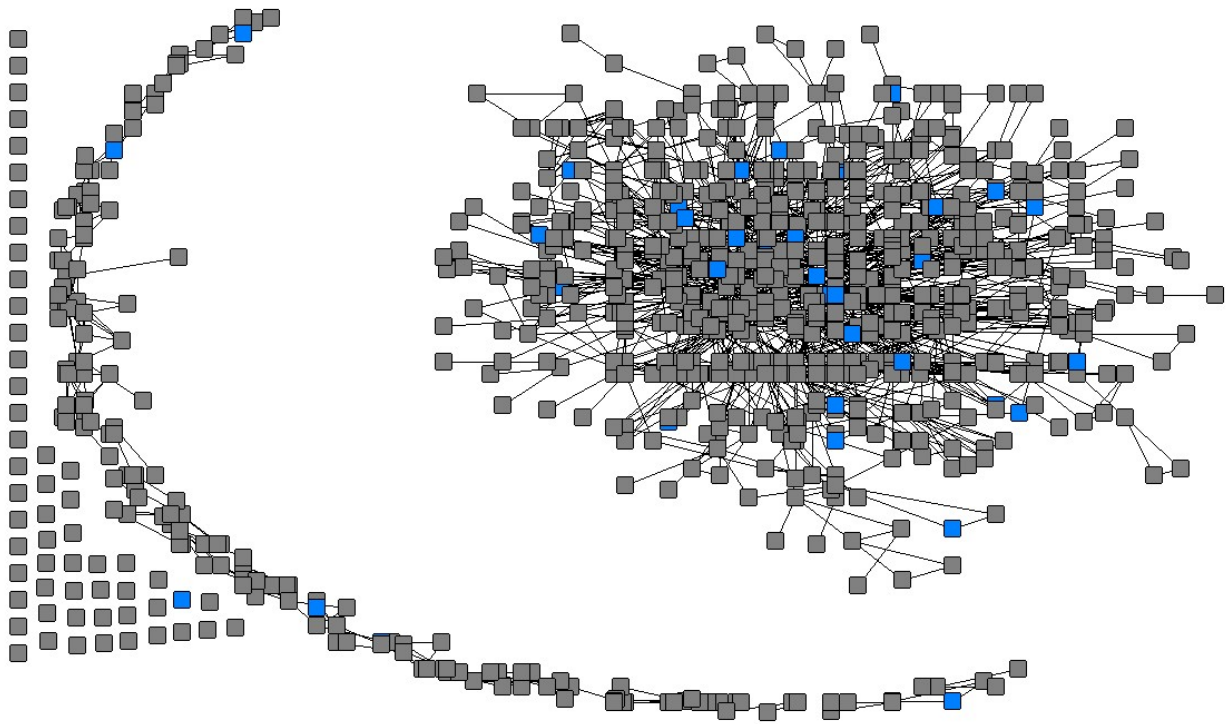Figure 6.3: Structural Position of Interviewees in the Whole Network of Songwriters 2000-2015

Figure 6.4: Degree Centrality and Structural Position of Interviewees in the Whole
Network of Songwriters 2000-2015 (Note: Size of node indicates degree centrality)
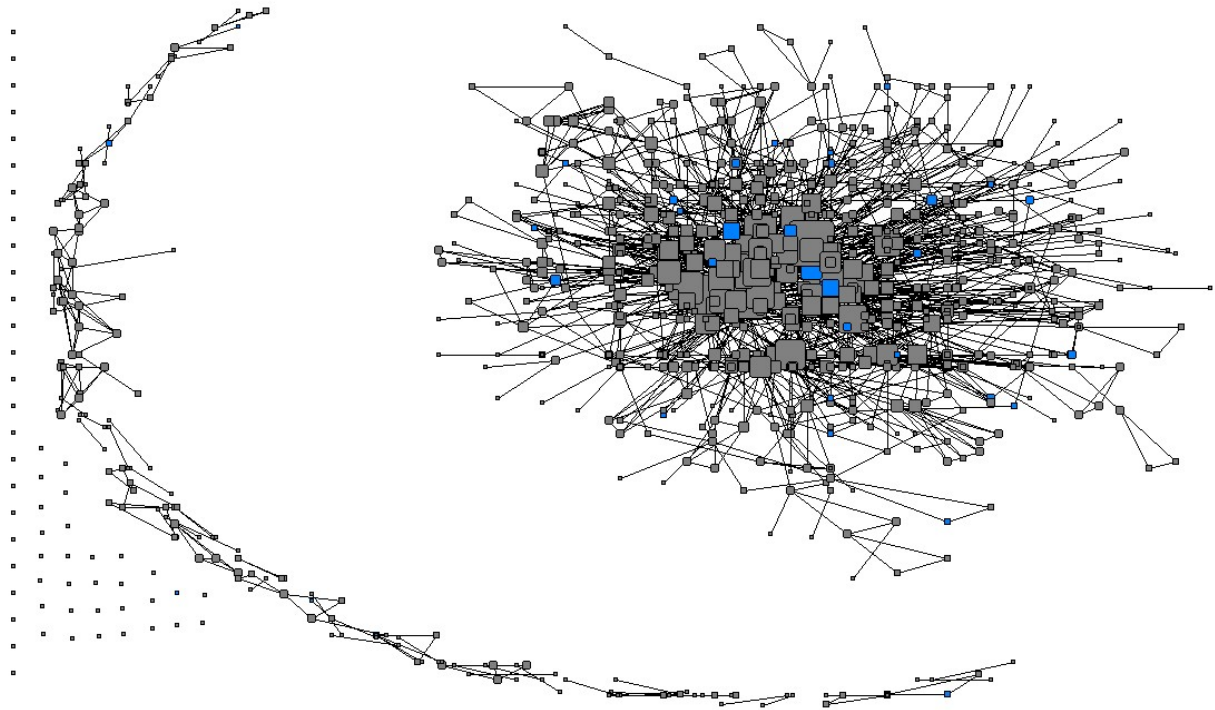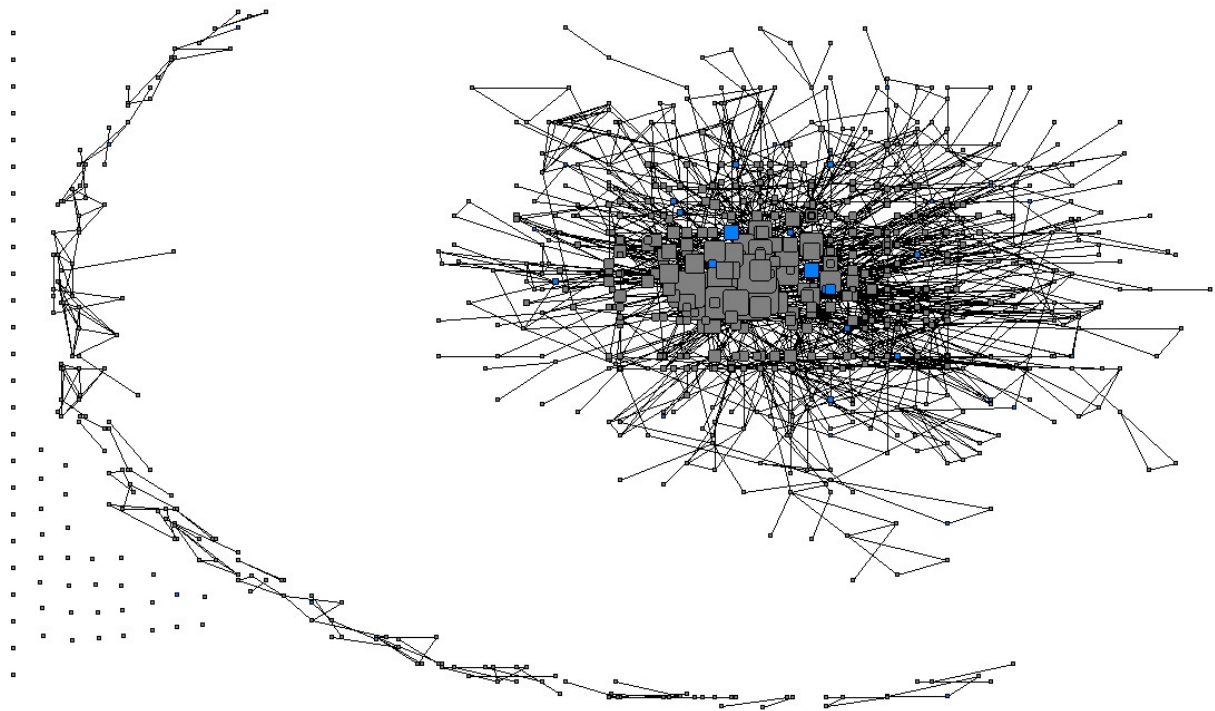

Figure 6.5: Eigenvector Centrality and Structural Position of Interviewees in the Whole
Network of Songwriters 2000-2015 (Note: Size of node indicates eigenvector centrality)

Lastly, my approach allows me to run statistical analyses to determine on what characteristics my interviewees are or are not representative of the group of successful writers as a whole. To this end, I ran a logistic analysis with the outcome variable of whether a songwriter was interviewed (1=yes) and regressed the key songwriter-level variables of interest onto this characteristic. As presented in Table 6.1, I found that the individuals I interviewed are representative of the whole group of successful songwriters from 2000-2015 in terms of writers' years of career incumbency during the period of study, songwriter gender, domain of success achieved by a songwriter, success in all periods, and degree centrality. The group of songwriters that I interviewed is not representative in terms of success before the period of study, individuals who are overrepresented in my sample to the degree that my interviewees are 87% more likely than those not interviewed to have had success before 2000. On the other hand, recording artist co-writers are 91% less likely to appear in my sample of interviewed songwriters than they are in the group of songwriters that I did not interview. This vast underrepresentation certainly affects my ability to speak to the recording artist co-writers' experiences collaborating with professional songwriters. Lastly my study is not representative of songwriters with high levels of eigenvector centrality. When it comes to the low pseudo r-square, unmeasured variance includes, for example, whether a songwriter is still living, whether he or she has publically available contact information, scheduling, and an overall orientation toward being interviewed.

Table 6.1: Logistic Regression Odds Ratio for Differences between Interviewed Songwriters and Songwriters as a whole 2000-2015 (N=2927)

	INTERVIEWED	
Songwriter Success before 2000 (1=yes)	1.87	**
Songwriter Incumbency	1.04	
Songwriter Gender (1=Female)	0.99	
Songwriter is the Recording Artist (1=yes)	0.09	***
Peer Recognition (1=yes)	1.39	
Critical Acclaim (1=yes)	1.11	
Grammy Nominated (1=yes)	1.32	
Success in Period 2 (1=yes)	0.88	
Success in Period 3 (1=yes)	0.89	
Degree Centrality	1.00	
Eigenvector Centrality	0.00	*
Pseudo R-Square	0.03	

* $p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$, *** $p<0.001$

With this knowledge in hand, I can be confident in the limitations of my interpretation of qualitative findings and know to what degree I should consider contacting other songwriters to request an interview. Using this information, I have already begun to reach out to recording artists who are also songwriters in my data in order to correct for this imbalance in my qualitative analysis. As of May 25, 2018, I have successfully interviewed one artist and have had another artist commit to being interviewed. Knowing where my weaknesses in generalization of my qualitative data lie is not a limitation. On the contrary, having the statistical knowledge of where my data is and is not representative strengthens my study's rigor and allows me a fuller picture of what my research can and cannot say. This continuing work speaks to the ongoing nature of the larger project beyond my dissertation.

DISCUSSION

A defining characteristic of bureaucracy is that organizations will fully elaborate upon their procedures and structures, including hiring procedures, missions and goals, and a defined chain of command. Though not formally arranged into discrete or purposive organizations, post-bureaucratic work and employment is also structured. My work shows the mostly invisible but still structured nature of social ties that govern work in one such post-bureaucratic occupational community. My research then can be thought of as contributing to a theory of networked post-bureaucracy. It indicates that in an informal occupational community, the structure of the social network determines the opportunity structure in which individuals will enact careers. By centering social connectedness as a structuring force and as the connecting point between industry structure and individual agency, this theory moves beyond understanding networking as an individual-level microsociological process. Rather than understanding networking as something that is done at industry functions and happy hours, a theory of networked bureaucracy can investigate collaboration and the aggregate of individual social ties into a clear picture of an otherwise nebulous occupational community.

Chapter 1 connects theory on the sociology of work, sociology of culture, and social networks to point out two gaps. First, I define the extant gap in connecting studies of individuals and their careers to industry-level studies about employment trends in informal industries. Second, I identify that scholars who cite Becker's theory of patterned cooperation do not fully examine the cooperation between individuals within different roles in an art world. In most cases, the studies assess intra-role cooperation between individuals doing the same kind of work rather than inter-role cooperation between individuals who contribute to different aspects of cultural production. Chapter 2 elaborates upon how

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political economic factors restructure opportunity within an industry, thus changing the optimal patterning of collaboration between members of the occupational community, in the case of songwriters and recording artists, from a transactional to a facilitative pattern. Chapter 3 speaks to the strength of patterned cooperation in predicting individuals' likelihood of success within their industry. Chapter 4 examines qualities of and changes in the network structure over time and shows that the importance of network centrality for individual careers is temporally- and domain-specific. This final chapter integrates these findings into a theory of networked post-bureaucracy that considers how individual agency can be enacted within a larger industry through social connectedness.

The sociological study of social cohesion and work is present in the scholarship of all of our discipline's founders. Durkheim's work links social cohesion with increasing specialization in the division of labor (Durkheim 1964), Marx is concerned with the alienating effects of a labor process that pools individuals' contributions to a product they do not individually hold ownership over (Marx 2018), Weber's conception of the iron cage indicates the social power and effects of bureaucracies (Weber 2013), and Simmel's theories provide initial insight into the effects of small and large group interactions on individuality (Simmel 2010). My mixed methods approach to examining social connectedness in informal communities of workers contributes a new theory of how to think about the social network as a meaningful and analytically useful point of connection between macro- and micro-sociological processes. A focus on networked post-bureaucracy provides a theoretical position from which to examine the tension between structure and agency in the so-called new sociology of work.

CONCLUSION

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

As I elaborated upon in the section on my dissertation's methodological conclusion, my empirical approach corrects for many of the biases and shortcomings that are inherent in any single-method analytic approach in a novel, systematic way. Despite these advances, my work does have limitations. First, I did not do any ethnographic or observational work in the writing room with songwriters. This kind of focus group observation would greatly enhance my analysis, particularly if I could fit it into my existing network-based sampling frame. Next, as I detailed above, my interviews are not representative when it comes to the representation of recording artists who are also songwriters, songwriters who did not have success before 2000, and on the dimension of eigenvector centrality. As I go forward with this research, I plan to correct for these underrepresented areas.

Another area of representation that I did not include in this work is a comprehensive assessment of racial and ethnic minorities. To be sure, non-white individuals are underrepresented in country music as a whole. Further, though I did interview more than one individual whose ethnic and racial backgrounds are something other than white, there are truly so few non-white individuals in my data that I believe reporting this information in any way more specific than this statement would compromise their anonymity. Likewise, the paucity of non-white individuals skewed my statistical analyses. Recording artist and songwriter Darius Rucker's astronomical success contributes to my quantitative results such that being a race or ethnicity other than white was the strongest predictor of success when I included it in my models. I did not include race and ethnicity in my models

because this skewedness would misrepresent the experiences of people of color other than Darius Rucker (and likely would not truly characterize his experience either).

Lastly, some of my models had quite low pseudo r-squares. It is a limitation to not know what is contributing to explaining the variance in my outcome measures. I believe that some of this variation is due to sonic qualities of individual songs and due to record label-level variables. I do not consider the level of market concentration (e.g., Dowd 2004a) or the effect of radio proliferation (e.g., Rossman 2012). Surely adding such sonic and organizational variables would increase the variance explained in my models and contribute to a clearer picture of how much of a song's success is due to its writers versus other qualities. A study that could parcel out this level of variation would be a major contribution to understanding the process of patterned collaboration.

Future Research: Empirical Utility of the Network-Based Sampling Frame

The network-based sampling frame was specifically developed in service of theoretical questions relating to the networked structure of social relations among an informal occupational community that is not bureaucratically organized. The method allowed me to answer questions relating to hierarchy, power, and group structure in a space where what constitutes the group and who belongs to the group could be contested. This method has natural potential for application in other similar empirical questions that meet three criteria. Ideally, the analysis would focus on (1) a group that can be externally defined based on (2) lists or accounts of collaborative products or projects that (3) list individual contributors. The sampling unit in these studies should initially be the collaborative product or project. By defining the sampling frame around the unit of collaboration, the network becomes a meaningful, defined, and discrete site of analysis.

Examples of collaborative endeavors that could work in a network-based sampling frame include but are in no way limited to patents, collaborative ownership of race horses or race car teams, conference organizers, laws, movies, and academic journals. In a time when workers' careers are increasingly taking place outside of formally elaborated bureaucratic structures, the network-based sampling frame provides one approach to examining the structure of relationships between members of occupational communities, and I hope that others both find the method useful and build upon it to contribute to a richer structural understanding of informal organizations and collaborative working relationships.

The limitations of this method are primarily mirror limitations associated with all social network analysis methodologies. Network analysis is sometimes critiqued as being an "n of one" approach since the unit of analysis is one social network. Relatedly, as discussed in Chapter 4, social network analysis often reduces analysis down to examining one kind or type of relational social tie, which means it ignores the inherent multiplexity of social life outside of an analytic setting. Despite these critiques, the benefits of using a network-based sampling frame correct for each of these limitations to some degree. First, though the first half of Chapter 4 approaches the network as the unit of analysis (e.g., analyzing group cohesion as a whole), exporting centrality scores and using them to analyze the importance of networks to songwriters' individual careers expands the analysis to the individual level. This process takes the n=1 information and applies it to all 941 individuals across the 1197 successful songs they wrote from 2000-2015. Next, situating the network analysis within the structural context of my quantitative analysis and elaborating on the importance of the singular relationship of interest through individual interviews situates what the relationship of interest means in a multiplex reality. Lastly and most importantly, the "unobtrusive measure" (Webb et al. 1999) of initially sampling for

successful collaborative products rather than on the basis of successful individual means that the process of selection into the study is external and controls or brings light to bias in interview sampling through understanding positionality within the network structure. Even if a researcher still uses snowball sampling to obtain interviews, plotting respondents' structural position in the network adds important context and validity to their argument and can allow them to more accurately speak to their study's limits, potential for generalization, and point to important areas of further research for future scholars.

Future Research: Networked Post-Bureaucracy

Nashville songwriters work in jobs where they usually have some freedom to choose who they collaborate with. Publishers do have a role in making introductions and keeping calendars for those songwriters fortunate enough to be on staff at a publishing house, but my interviewees said that they have a lot of control over who shows up on their calendar. I initially thought that my dissertation writing would focus on the concept of "writing up," which is a phrase songwriters use to talk about collaborating with someone who has had more success than they have had. Because of the overwhelming responses indicating that the pattern of professional songwriters writing up within their own occupational community had shifted toward the patterns of collaboration detailed in this dissertation, I did not focus on the ways professional songwriters build and maintain status or choose non-recording artist collaborators.

There remain issues that I did not get to fully examine due to the shift in my research toward a theory of patterned cooperation in response to political economic change. I was not able to focus on songwriters' personal sociodemographic variables, educational experiences, art vs. commerce-orientation, and career histories. All of these are interesting

issues that initially structured my interviews. Of particular importance in these remaining questions is the impact of structural position on entering and staying in a central network position. I worry, though overt racist discrimination appears to be rare, that racial and ethnic minorities are informally excluded from co-writing networks that are tied to the main network component shown in my figures. As I demonstrated, the site of opportunity in the Nashville music industry is increasingly tied to "who you know," so informal and insidious forms of discrimination surely affect who is able to have a career or any opportunity at all to join this occupational community.

Women, as a structural minority in the music industry, absolutely see the effects of informal bias and exclusion in their potential for career maintenance and mobility. I opened this dissertation with a prelude that hinted at ongoing issues of gender bias and sexism in the country music industry. There is ample data in female music industry workers' statements to reporters, women's professional groups, and other publically available information that could be analyzed to get a fuller picture of the effect of bias against women. However, given my findings, I think it is also important to examine how the effects of gender bias are fostered in the informal collaborative processes that characterize songwriting.

While so many studies focus on the precarity of artists in terms of either individual narratives or in terms of overall statistical chances of success or failure, a theory of networked post-bureaucracy would be able to account for the ways in which individuals' characteristics affect the ways they are able to enact careers. To fully develop this theory, scholars of work should look toward research on network dynamics to model the extra-organizational processes like homophily and cohesion that structure access to work opportunities.

Policy Implications

I went up there to see senators and they're in the middle of voting. So they said that, "We got the Nashville songwriters here to sing you a song." So I sing the song and I'm walking down [after singing]. I haven't even gotten down yet, I'm still on the ramp, and a senator comes up, and didn't even acknowledge me. He just starts in on the budget for the Iraq war and he didn't even say anything about me. You realize that, you know, we're up there lobbying, but our little our little three-billion-dollar industry is not on their radar.
[Michael Lewis, commercially popular and peer recognized songwriter]

While I believe that my research speaks to key underlying issues that need to be addressed from within the music industry toward supporting strong, resilient careers, there are a number of current relevant federal and state policies that I can more concretely apply my research to at this moment in time. Below, I detail recent legislative efforts and how my research speaks to the issues that these policies are meant to target.

The State of Compensation: Federal Copyright Legislation

A truly unique aspect of songwriting as an occupation is that the compensation scheme for music licensing is partially enacted through federal regulation. As I elaborated in Chapter 2, there are three ways songwriters can license their music, determined by the ultimate venue or method by which the music will be consumed. Mechanical royalties, from song sales, pay songwriters at a congressionally legislated set rate. Performance royalties are distributed to songwriters by Performance Rights Organizations (PRO; i.e., ASCAP, BMI, SESAC) and are primarily based on live performances and radio spins. Lastly, synchronization ("sync") royalties are lump sums negotiated by songwriters or others who hold an interest in a song's copyright when a song is licensed for use in television, film, or video games. While conflicts over sync royalties are generally litigated

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between two parties on a case-by-case basis, mechanical and performance royalties have an extensive history of ongoing federal regulation.

I present an overarching argument in this dissertation that exogenous economic and technological factors were the catalysts for the shifts in the music industry that ultimately led to the increase in artists collaborating with songwriters. In the early 2000s, plunging revenues from song and album sales were an effect of the music industry's slow response to technological advances in digitization, which laid the groundwork for the proliferation of digital music piracy on web platforms like Kazaa, LimeWire, and Napster. The litigation against these kinds of file sharing sites is effectively settled, but even if it were not, the advent of digital music streaming platforms like YouTube, Pandora, and Spotify have supplanted file sharing technologies when it comes to the way people consume music. While these sites operate legally and do pay copyright holders (primarily songwriters and publishers), their reportedly low compensation rates are contentious. Since the beginning of 2018, three different aspects of copyright law have had considerable legal decisions and press coverage.

First, the digital music streaming platform Spotify lost a class-action suit against copyright holders and were required to pay a sum of more than $112 million in unfulfilled song licensing fees. Despite this settlement, class members were unsatisfied and claim that the sub-market value that the suit places on licensing encourages continued damages to rights holders (Aswad 2018). This suit is not the only legal fight between Spotify and copyright holders (Beaumont-Thomas 2018), and though Spotify is the firm most frequently implicated in these suits, it is not the only site of the conflict between streaming platforms and songwriters.

The second major federal issue this year has been the United States Congress'

efforts to address the numerous issues that have arisen in the new digital music economy.

The system that US copyright law is based upon was written before recorded music existed

and stems from licensing structures meant to govern payouts from sheet music and player

piano music rolls (United States House of Representatives 2018). Though it has been

updated a few times since its inception, there is a fundamental mismatch in the law's

response to compensation given the new ways people acquire music. Toward this end, the

Music Modernization Act (MMA), is meant to update and reconfigure the law to better

serve a modern music economy. It would make the process of distributing licensing

royalties to songwriters and publishers more efficient and timely, consider free-market

conditions in establishing a fair market rate for song licensing, set a standard for

adjudicating market rates, and allow rights holders to establish market rates for their music

by comparison with rates that are being paid in sound recording licensing (United States

House of Representatives 2018).

A related bill tied to the MMA, the CLASSICS Act, means to end the legal practice

of digital radio platforms not compensating rights holders of sound recordings[12] whose

songs were recorded before February 15, 1972. Musician Smokey Robinson testified to the

U.S Senate Committee on the Judiciary on May 15, 2018. He described the effect this

loophole has on his livelihood:

So - as the law stands, SiriusXM pays me when they play my solo hits "Cruisin" or "Being
with You" from 1979 and 1981– but under the federal law, they don't have to pay me or my
brothers in the Miracles when they play any of our records. But those recordings are

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[12] The copyright on sound recordings is separate from the copyright on the compositions.
This is the only mention of the copyright on sound recordings in this dissertation as
songwriters are primarily concerned with copyrights from their compositions.

valuable to these services: Miracles and Smokey Robinson recordings are streamed by the folks who use this federal license over 50,000 times a day, every day. (Robinson 2018)

The MMA and the CLASSICS Act passed unanimously in the House of Representatives and has been introduced in the Senate, though anti-copyright activists have promoted a new bill that would not serve the interests of rights holders (Levine 2018). I can imagine that, should the market value of songs rise again with the passage of copyright reform, patterns of collaboration between professional songwriters and between professional songwriters and recording artists may shift again. Given the empirical evidence from this dissertation and given the current financial success that the music industry is experiencing in the live music sector, record labels may reduce their reliance on 360° deals as a profit-seeking strategy. On the other hand, now that songwriters and recording artists are socialized into mutual reliance and facilitative cooperation, record labels will likely continue to sign artists under 360° deals to continue recouping expenses and expanding profits with the increase in songs' market rate.

The third major issue this year would have most directly affected patterned cooperation among songwriters, and the result of this legislative effort illustrates how regulations surrounding compensation might also affect collaboration. As you have read in this dissertation, songwriting relies on collaborations that are based on affinity between co-writers and on the resources that different songwriters bring to the table, both creatively and in terms of their connections to people who can get their songs recorded. One recent legislative effort meant to end the practice of "fractional licensing," the legal basis for songwriters co-owning the performance copyright of a song, by requiring that all songs be "100% licensed" through one PRO as a supposed antitrust effort (Christman 2018, O'Neill 2018). As it currently stands, PRO membership is in no significant way part of the

calculation of who someone chooses to co-write with on a song. Given its relative triviality in the considerations for what makes a good co-writer, the majority of songs are written by a co-writing group that is represented by multiple PROs. The legislation, as an exogenous political economic factor, would have again changed the ecosystem in which collaborations are enacted among songwriters by making PRO membership part of the calculation of what a co-writer brings to the table. Though appeals were successful at blocking this ruling, it is possible that this kind of legislation could be reintroduced at the federal level.

The State of Collaboration: Tennessee HB 1984/SB 2130

Financial precarity is frequently at the forefront of discussions about the downsides of careers in the arts, but other negative aspects of informal careers result from a lack of organizational structures and benefits provided in bureaucratic employment relations (see Thomson 2013 for musician-specific detail). Fringe benefits for workers who are not employees are quilted together from a variety of regulatory and organizational sources. Music industry free agents, for example, can now get health insurance through the provisions of the Affordable Care Act, can pay into a retirement scheme if they are members of the American Federation of Musicians union, and can take advantage of career and personal services through organizations like the Music Health Alliance, MusiCares, and the Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts. Working outside of a highly structured bureaucracy leaves the individual in charge of organizing many aspects of work and personal life that would otherwise be structured and subsidized by an employer.

One recent issue that has emerged in this post-bureaucratic context is consideration of how to deal with sexual harassment that is work-based but takes place outside of a traditional workplace. The #MeToo movement brought the overwhelming proliferation of

sexual harassment and assault to the forefront of our national dialogue (see e.g., Zacharek et al. 2017). The movement as a whole is meant to empower all women, but cases of inexcusable sexually-motivated interactions in the entertainment industries became particularly high profile. A recurring theme of women's stories in the context of the entertainment industry is that not ignoring, complying with, or acquiescing to inappropriate behavior by male gatekeepers stunted their career potential in addition to being personally damaging. In the informal, collaborative, and project-based context of entertainment industry work, individuals who encounter interpersonal harassment have no avenues through which to lodge complaints other than attempting to pursue legal action.

I conducted all of my dissertation interviews before the #MeToo movement became part of the national conversation. Though I did not ask about sexual harassment or discrimination in my interviews, some of my interviewees did mention aspects of collaboration that are affected by gender relations. In a conversation with commercially popular writer Drew Ross, he explained to me the awkwardness and creative restraint that comes from him, a man in his sixties, co-writing with teenage girls who are beginning their careers as songwriters and recording artists.

Rachel: *We just talked about who the artist might be [for your songs]. Do you also think about who the audiences will be?*

Drew: *Yeah, because I'm always saying, somebody's always saying, "That's not young enough." Somebody starts talking about, "My kids are screaming in the backyard." No, well, I can't write about kids. Obviously sometimes you can and there are contradictions to that, but typically, you've got to think who the audience is and its 20-year-olds. I mean it's people in their 20s. So if you get too far into the baby crying and the washing machine breaking down…I hear myself say it and I hear my co-writers say, "That's not young enough." That's something a 35- year-old would think.*

Rachel: *So is there like a certain age that you... so like teenagers or like*
               young 20s or...?

Drew: *You know, we want to write about romance. I want to write about*
               sex, and the kissing and hugging and etcetera. So, you know, I've
               written with 15- year-old or 16-year-old girls who are developing
               their artistry and they can't go very deeply into the romantic part of
               it. They got to write about having fun with their friends, or that boy
               is so cute and he's looking at me, but you can't go to the front seat
               or back seat.

                                    [Drew Ross, commercially popular writer]

The fact that artists are now signed on 360˚ deals and the fact that youth is valued in artists,

particularly women, means that young girls are going to be in writing rooms with older

men who are attempting to balance their creative goals and an industry mandate to write to

young audiences about sex-adjacent themes. While Drew talks about carefully navigating

sexual themes and not going "to the front seat or back seat," it is clear that the context and

norms of the music industry make for situations that could lead to inappropriate actions

between co-writers. While any sexual harassment, assault, or violence is unfortunate and

unconscionable, when it takes place between people who are acting as co-workers outside

of the structure of a workplace bureaucracy, victims frequently have no legal recourse.

        In Tennessee, two state legislators have introduced policy to define and regulate the

treatment of workplace harassment outside of formal employment relationships. One local

publication lays out the bill's premise as follows:

The new bill defines an employer as "any person regularly employing one (1) or more
persons or regularly receiving the services of one (1) or more persons providing services
pursuant to a contract" and "[a]ny person acting as an agent of an employer, directly or
indirectly," and defines harassment as "sexual harassment, gender harassment, and
harassment based on pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions ... Sexually
harassing conduct need not be motivated by sexual desire." HB 1984/SB 2130 further
defines a contractor as a person who "has the right to control the performance of the

contract for services and discretion as to the manner of performance," "is customarily engaged in an independently established business" and "has control over the time and place the work is performed, supplies the tools and instruments used in the work, and performs work that requires a particular skill not ordinarily used in the course of the employer's work" (Whitaker 2018).

The legislators have explicitly linked their efforts to the issues faced by music industry workers though it is clear that the initiative has implications that would generalize to all individuals in similar free agentic work arrangements. In a conversation with the *Nashville Scene*, Senator Yarbro explained, "There's been significant reporting showing real problems with harassment in parts of the music industry, and it doesn't fit neatly into the way the law treats harassment in a traditional workplace," and went on to say, "Everyone has a right to be safe in the workplace, regardless of whether their job fits the formalities of the current law" (Gervin 2018). While this bill has not had much movement in the legislature since March 2018, it essential that it and similar policies be developed to continue to improve work arrangements for individuals whose labor takes place outside of bureaucratic employment relations.

Final Thoughts

      My research into the Nashville songwriting community is a lifelong project. As the child of a songwriter, I have homegrown knowledge that I have been able to expand and critique using sociological theory and methods. While my father is not in my sampling frame and hence was not one of my interviewees, his influence absolutely guided my thinking on this topic. I can remember one occasion, upon seeing his mechanical royalties statement, wondering if the bank would even let someone cash a check for ten cents. On another occasion, I can remember having to go to the recording studio with my dad because

I was too sick to go to school. It was incredibly boring to me as a child, and any time I visited the studio, I hated that I had to stay totally silent throughout the duration of the recording session. On one particular day though, a group of people who won a songwriting contest were visiting the studio as part of the grand tour of Nashville they had won. I was baffled at their excitement to be in the studio. Why would anyone want to be in this dull place? Despite my boredom and confusion about the music industry when I was a child, these experiences set me up to ask questions about how songwriters are compensated, probe into the reasons why their work is collaborative, and observe change over time.

A challenge in my work has been the overwhelming quality and quantity of data I have collected. Over the course of writing this dissertation, I have had to narrow my focus in order to process and meaningfully analyze what was before me. Though the quotes, coefficients, and statistical models in this dissertation are focused on career strategies with particular emphasis on collaboration, I lament the fact that I have not yet spoken to a wider variety of issues with the data I collected. I could have written three dissertations, one quantitative, one based on qualitative interviews, and one based solely on network analysis, and I am fortunate to have amassed an embarrassment of empirical riches.

Despite the numerous other sociological issues of interest that remain in my data, including the network basis of cumulative advantage (e.g., for recording artist songwriters) and the informal ways that structural minorities (e.g., women and racial minorities) are bypassed in the day-to-day informal relationships that structure collaborative work, I believe that I have made a contribution to understanding co-writing that might give music industry professionals insight into how individuals can better work toward long and resilient careers. The impact of 360° deals has restructured the way that many different roles and occupations are enacted, and it is important for major record labels and indie

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labels to consider the effects that contracts will have on the music industry's occupational ecosystem. More generally, I hope that my contributions to the sociology of work and of culture are meaningful, particularly to scholars interested in post-bureaucratic work and employment and in the production of culture. As work and employment become more precarious for everyone, understanding the logics that organize post-bureaucratic careers will be essential in knowing, rather than being matched to jobs, how persons are matched to opportunities.

On a final note, a quote from one of my first songwriter interviews in a previous, undergraduate-level project has stayed with me since I began this line of inquiry more than eight years ago. She told me that on days when she is feeling down about not having more success, she thinks about what she would be doing if she had a number one hit on the charts. She said that day would be based around sitting in a room with people who inspire her, and they would "make something out of nothing." She went on to say that though she did not have a hit on the charts during our interview, her day went much the same. Her job was to sit in a room with people who inspire her, and they would create something out of nothing. Songwriters are inherently entrepreneurial individuals whose craft is built upon elaborating on a tiny piece of truth that they hope will be understood by large groups of people. Whether the truth that songwriters co-create in the writing room is a melodic line, whether it is another tired play on tan lines and drunk nights, or whether it is a lyric that cuts through someone's pain, the act of collectively "making something out of nothing" really is something.

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Appendix A: Interview Guide

Introduction: Throughout this interview I will ask you questions about your career, career strategies, and goals as a songwriter. Everything you tell me will be kept confidential, and you will be kept anonymous. If a question does not seem relevant to your experience or if you would like for me to clarify what I mean by a certain question, please stop me and ask. You may choose to not answer any question, and you may stop the interview at any time.

1. Job History and Current Line of Work
    a. Tell me about how you became a songwriter and your career path thus far.
        i. Do you have a personal connection who helped you begin your career as a songwriter?
        ii. Years active
    b. Do you work in any other areas of the music industry?
        i. IF YES, what do you consider your primary occupational identity? For example, if you were to introduce yourself to someone you have never met and they asked, "What do you do?" how would you respond?
        ii. How, if at all, does your work in other areas of the music industry impact your career in songwriting?
    c. Do you work outside of the music industry in any capacity?
        i. IF YES, what do you consider your primary occupational identity? For example, if you were to introduce yourself to someone you have never met and they asked, "What do you do?" how would you respond?
        ii. How, if at all, does your work outside of the music industry impact your career in songwriting?
    d. Do you participate in any hobbies or activities that have contributed in any way to your career as a songwriter? [E.g., hanging out at a specific bar, church, internet community]
    e. Did you have any formal education in music or the music industry?
        i. What effect, if any, has that education had on your career?
    f. How, if at all, do you work to improve your songwriting? [People, organizations, personal practices]
    g. What does your job(s) look like on a daily or weekly basis?

2. Songwriting
    a. About how often do you co-write?
        1. What are the benefits and drawbacks of co-writing?
        2. Do you like co-writing?
        3. About how many people do you currently co-write with total (network question, not for a single appointment)?

4. Describe the type of writer you typically co-write with. Are they more established in their career than you, at about the same stage, or less?
5. Give me an example of how a typical co-write works.
    a. Who sets it up? You, them, a publisher? Has this changed over time?
    b. Where do you meet?
    c. How many writers are in the room ideally?
    d. Describe the co-writing process.
    e. When do you know you are done?
    f. Do you split the publishing equally?
    g. What happens to the song after you write it?
6. Is there a strategy to who you choose to write with?
7. Do you prefer working with people who are more, less, or about as successful as you?
    a. Are there benefits or drawbacks to any of these arrangements?
    b. Has this changed over time?
8. Are you friends with your co-writers? Are your relationships more like friendship or like co-workers?
   b. About how often do you write songs by yourself?
1. Why do you write solo?
2. What is the balance of solo vs. co-writing in your own work?
3. What are the benefits and drawbacks to writing alone?

3. Songs
   a. Do you feel like your songs are art, a product, or something else?
   b. How would you describe the songs you write? (Genre, ballad vs. uptune, for men or women to sing, duet/solo/group, etc.)
   c. Do you write music, lyrics, or both? Have you always done this?
   d. Are there certain topics you like to write about?
   e. Are there topics you avoid writing about?
   f. Do you have a particular audience in mind when you are writing a song? (Peers? Commercial Audiences? Artists? Radio)
   g. Tell me about your first hit song.
        i. Was it different than others?
        ii. Through what channels did it become successful?
        iii. What year was that.
        iv. Have you had other hits since this one?
        v. How do you know if your song is a hit?
   h. Tell me about your career since the first hit.
   i. Is it more important to have commercial success or for other songwriters to like your songs?
   j. Do you pay attention to billboard rankings of your songs? Other songs?
   k. Do you pay attention to the NSAI "Songs I wish I had Written" list?
        i. How so or why not?

4. Organizational Membership
    a. Do you have a publishing deal?
        i. IF YES:
            1. How, if at all, does your publishing deal affect your career in songwriting?
            2. How did you get your publishing deal?
            3. How is your career as a songwriter different than if you did not have a publishing deal?
        ii. IF NO:
            1. How, if at all, does not having a publishing deal affect your career in songwriting?
            2. Are you actively seeking a publishing deal? Why or why not?
            3. How do you think your career as a songwriter is different than it would be if you had a publishing deal?
    b. Are you a member of a Performance Rights Organization?
        i. IF YES:
            1. In which PRO are you a member?
            2. Why did you choose to join this PRO instead of the one of the other two?
            3. How, if at all, does being a member of a PRO contribute to your career strategy?
        ii. IF NO:
            1. Why are you not a member of a PRO?
            2. How, if at all, does not being a member of a PRO contribute to your career strategy?
    c. Are you a member of NSAI?
        i. How, if at all, does your membership in NSAI affect your career?
        ii. How, if at all, does your membership in NSAI affect your career strategy?
    d. Do you have anyone or any organizations other than the ones we have already discussed that are helping you to develop your career as a songwriter?

5. Career Goals and Success
    a. Think back to when you decided to pursue songwriting professionally. What were your career goals?
    b. How did you work to achieve those goals?
    c. Did you have to adjust your goals or the way you worked to achieve these goals over time?
    d. What are your career goals for the next 5 years? Long term?
    e. How do you plan to achieve these goals?
    f. How do you define success in songwriting? Like how would I know that a songwriter is successful?
    g. Do you think your goals are typical or different for songwriters in general? Why or why not?
    h. What obstacles will hinder or slow you down in achieving your career goals?

6. Network questions
    a. Who else should I talk to for this project? Contact info?
    b. In the past year, who have you write with most frequently?
    c. Show them the network and ask them to explain it and fill in missing important people?
        i. What story is the network telling or not telling?

7. Final Questions
    a. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about having a career as a songwriter or songwriting in general? Or Were there any questions you think I should have asked but did not?
    b. Do you have any questions for me?

8. Demographic Information
    a. How old are you?
    b. What is the highest level of education you completed?
    c. What is your marital status?
    d. How many children do you have?
    e. How would you describe your racial or ethnic background?
    f. What is your religious background? Denomination? Active?
    g. Where did you grow up?
    h. Do you live in Nashville?
        i. IF YES, how long have you lived in Nashville?
        ii. IF NO, where do you live? How do you split your time between your home and Nashville?

Appendix B: Invitation Email to Prospective Participants

Hi [Name],

My name is Rachel Skaggs and I am a graduate student at Vanderbilt University. I am writing my dissertation on the topic of Nashville songwriters' careers and am looking to interview songwriters about their career pathways, especially when it comes to the importance of co-writing and collaboration. I have been researching successful writers in town and have come across your work. I was wondering if you would potentially be willing to be interviewed for my dissertation—I am keeping all interviews anonymous and confidential, and the interview typically takes about an hour. I know that your time is valuable, so no pressure!

Thanks so much and please let me know if you have any questions!
Rachel Skaggs

Appendix C: Characteristics of Interviewees

ID	PSEUDONYM	INTERVIEW TYPE	GENDER	PERIOD OF SUCCESS (1, 2, 3)	CO-WRITTEN SUCCECCFUL SONG WITH ARTIST (YES, NO, IS ARTIST)	DOMAINS OF SUCCESS (B-COMMERCIAL, P-PEER, C-CRITIC, G-GRAMMY)
1	Bill Moore	In-Person	Male	1, 2, 3	Yes	B, P, C, G
2	Jacob Gutman*	In-Person	Male			
3	Jamie Brooks	Phone	Male	3	Yes	B
4	Emily Lee	Email	Female	1, 2, 3	Yes	B, P, C
5	Nora Russo*	In-Person	Female			
6	Sarah Kennedy*	Skype	Female			
7	Matt King*	Phone	Male			
8	Nathan Harris*	In-Person	Male			
9	Miles Foster	In-Person	Male	3	Yes	B, P, C, G
10	Sam Clark	In-Person	Male	1	No	B
11	Dylan Robertson	In-Person	Male	3	Yes	B
12	Ben Stevens	In-Person	Male	3	No	B
13	Drew Ross	In-Person	Male	1, 3	Yes	B
14	Danny Barker	In-Person	Male	1	No	B
15	Ryan Klein	In-Person	Male	2	No	B
16	Luke Davis*	In-Person	Male			
17	Dan Stone	Phone	Male	1, 2	Yes	B, C, G
18	Alice Pearson	In-Person	Female	3	Yes	C
19	Lucas Lane	In-Person	Male	1, 2, 3	Yes	B, P, C, G
20	Grace Thomas*	In-Person	Female			
21	Jack Fraser	In-Person	Male	1, 3	Yes	B, P, C, G
22	James Cooper	Phone	Male	2, 3	Yes	B
23	Andrew Jones	Phone	Male	3	No	C
24	Cole Parker	Phone	Male	2	Yes	B, C
25	Andy Roberts	In-Person	Male	1	Yes	B, P, G
26	Mason Morgan	In-Person	Male	3	Artist	B
27	Logan Ellis	In-Person	Male	1, 2, 3	Yes	B, C
28	Brandon Simpson	In-Person	Male	2	Yes	C
29	Natalie Reynolds*	In-Person	Female			
30	Reed Cole	In-Person	Male	3	No	B
31	Michael Lewis	In-Person	Male	1, 2	No	B, P
32	Aiden Martin	In-Person	Male	2	No	B
33	Nathan Grant	In-Person	Male	3	Yes	B

34	Joe Dawson	In-Person	Male	1, 2, 3	No	B, P, C
35	Hunter Adam	Email	Male	3	Yes	B
36	Kathy Becker	Facetime	Female	1	No	B
37	Xavier Jacobs	Phone	Male	3	Artist	B
38	Matt Berry	In-Person	Male	3	No	B
39	Nick Dixon	Phone	Male	1	No	B
40	Claire Clarke	Whats App	Female	3	Yes	B
41	David Watts	Phone	Male	1	No	B
42	Alex Hill	In-Person	Male	1, 2, 3	Yes	B, P, C
43	Rich Jared	In-Person	Male	1	No	B
44	Dan Britton	Phone	Male	2	Yes	B
45	Sally Campbell	In-Person	Female	1, 3	Yes	B
46	Trish Nolte	Phone	Female	1	Artist	B,C

Note: * indicates that though this individual was interviewed, they were not in the network-based sampling frame and are not included in the findings of this dissertation. The one exception of this rule is Natalie Reynolds; though she is not in the sampling frame, she was involved in a joint interview with a songwriter who was in the sampling frame.