

## Social Networks of Nashville Country Music Producers

Lingo, E.L., & O'Mahony, S.O. (2010) "Nexus work: Brokerage on creative projects."  
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*Abstract: This study examined how brokers on creative projects integrate the ideas of others. We use the term "nexus work" to refer to brokerage requiring synthesis or integration, rather than just communication or transference of ideas. With an ethnographic investigation of 23 independent music producers in the Nashville country music industry, we examined how producers in the brokerage role fostered the integration of others' contributions throughout four phases of the creative process. We discovered that ambiguity was an inherent part of the collective creative process and identified three types: (1) an ambiguous quality metric (What makes a hit or constitutes success?); (2) ambiguous occupational jurisdictions (Whose claim of expertise entitles them to control the process?); and (3) an ambiguous transformation process (How should the work be done?). We show when each type of ambiguity became acute in the creative process and identify the practices producers used to leverage their brokerage role depending on the type of ambiguity confronted. In doing so, producers moved between two ideal conceptions of brokerage—as strategic actors extracting advantage from their position and as relational experts connecting others to foster creativity and innovation—to foster a collective creative outcome.*

**Excerpt:** "Brokerage in this sense focuses on joining previously unconnected parties to facilitate coordination, collaboration, and pursuit of common goals—the *tertius iungens* orientation (Obstfeld, 2005). ... By examining the creative process over time, we identified when producers acted as *tertius iungens*, bringing certain people together, and when they acted as *tertius gaudens*, keeping certain people apart. Producers navigated between *tertius iungens* and *tertius gaudens* approaches, depending on the stage of the process, the ambiguity present, and the parties involved. Both approaches drew on brokers' positional power but were employed to encourage collective creativity."