Policy Formation, Ethics Statements and Ethics in Ethnomusicology: The Need for Increased and Sustained Engagement

Muriel E. Swijghuisen Reigersberg
Goldsmiths, University of London

This article explores the relationship between policy formation in higher education, ethics statements and ethical frameworks of professional conduct, within the discipline of ethnomusicology, from a UK and USA-based perspective. It will argue for an increased and sustained engagement with the formation of ethics statements on subjects of ethical concern and that this needs to be done through learned societies and critical mass. This, so I argue, will help inform UK and USA higher education institutions, funding bodies and sponsors on how best to approach the assessment of ethical rigour in ethnomusicological research activities.

The article’s introduction will explain the 2015–16 context in which it was written, because the paper is designed to offer an historical snapshot of ethnomusicology’s engagement with ethical policy and is therefore time-sensitive. It will then explore ethnomusicological engagement with higher education’s ethical assessment processes and compare this to similar engagement by anthropologists. I examine the role of learned societies in promoting ethical conduct and policy formation by looking at ethical statements from both anthropological and ethnomusicological learned societies. Here I will show why it is important that ethnomusicological learned societies such as the British Forum for Ethnomusicology (BFE), Society for Ethnomusicology (SEM) and the International Council for Traditional Music (ICTM) provide sustained engagement with the ethical concerns of their discipline, using concepts of meta, normative and applied ethics. I conclude by providing examples of common ethical concerns that are not well-understood by medically-oriented ethics committees and offer suggestions as to how ethnomusicologists might engage with these.

1 The conference paper version of this article (Swijghuisen Reigersberg 2015) was originally presented at a forum of the Society for Ethnomusicology (SEM) and International Council for Traditional Music (ICTM) held September 13–16, 2015 Limerick, Ireland, in collaboration with the European Seminar for Ethnomusicology (ESEM). The theme and title of this conference was Transforming Ethnomusicological Praxis through Activism and Community Engagement.
Introduction

In this article, I seek to explore how recent developments in the UK higher education sector have meant that researchers and institutions are required to become more rigorous in the ways in which they evidence ethical research conduct, and how this may or may not conflict with the ethical dilemmas faced by ethnomusicologists during their professional lives as students, teachers and researchers.

I examine this topic from two angles simultaneously: that of an applied/medical ethnomusicologist having conducted fieldwork with vulnerable populations, and that of an experienced UK administrative university research development and policy manager and member of Goldsmiths, University of London's ethics committee. I seek to highlight some of the common points of contention that I have identified in my routine work with academics, senior management and government officials, such as mandated anonymization and sometimes destruction of research data; definitions of authorship and the co-creation of ethnography; the inability of ethnographers to replicate their research outcomes as in the exact sciences; and issues of copyright, intangible cultural heritage and how these do, or do not, map on to institutional ethical approval processes. Basing my arguments on anthropological theory and the anthropology of law, I shall demonstrate that some of the legalistic aspects of research integrity and ethical clearance should be viewed as context and culture-specific, but are often not within the higher education sector, which in the UK and USA bases its compliance forms on research ethics models from the hard and behavioral sciences and Western (Anglo-centred) codes of conduct.

More importantly though, my paper advocates that learned societies such as the Society for Ethnomusicology (SEM) and the International Council for Traditional Music (ICTM) as well as the British Forum for Ethnomusicology (BFE) should consider either creating their own ethical codes of conduct as well as ethics training materials and blogs (ICTM and BFE) or should revise older ethics statements (SEM). This, I argue, would ensure that members of these learned societies have examples and statements of good practice to turn to, that are in keeping with developments within the discipline, which has come to include applied, medical, cognitive, advocacy and action-based research models, sometimes in ethically precarious or challenging fieldwork situations.

It would benefit ethnomusicologists to be able to cite and share these codes of conduct and examples of good practice when seeking ethical approval or when teaching within their institutions. Codes and examples of good ethics specific to ethnomusicology can be shown to institutional review boards (IRBs, as they are called in the USA) or research ethics committees (RECs, in the UK). These codes provide evidence of how ethnomusicologists have thought deeply about the ethical implications of their professional activities. Statements of this kind are often used
in other disciplines like sociology\textsuperscript{2}, psychology\textsuperscript{3} and anthropology to provide the critical mass needed to convince IRBs and RECs that the individual researcher applying for ethical approval is operating within a well-established disciplinary framework that has its own discipline-specific approaches to and history of ethical engagement.

Given the nature some current research undertakings\textsuperscript{4} and student requests for support,\textsuperscript{5} I argue such new or revised ethical statements and training materials cannot come soon enough. My contribution is a set of initial observations based on extensive administrative and academic work experience in the UK higher education sector, spanning 10 years. This paper offers the reader suggestions on how they might engage effectively with ethical clearance and institutional engagement issues on an individual level and through learned societies. My article will not address at any length examples of good ethical practice, which I recognize exist in abundance in ethnomusicology,\textsuperscript{6} and are already enshrined within the discipline, our practice and our written texts. Rather, this text focuses on my research on policy formation in relation to ethical ethnomusicological codes of conduct in the UK and USA.

**Contextualization and Novel Research Methods**

Before moving on, it is useful to elaborate on my methods of analysis as they are not commonly used in ethnomusicology, but stem from science and technology and higher education studies. My application of them here is therefore novel. The study of academic practice from an emic, insider, perspective was pioneered by anthropologist and sociologist Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar.\textsuperscript{7} Using fieldnotes and ethnographic methods they documented and analyzed scientists at work in their laboratories. Through this process they demonstrated that the construction of scientific “fact,” is not an objective process, but influenced by external factors such as funding, technologies and modes of scientific writing. Their method introduced a reflexive approach to the study of the academic enterprise within higher education that previously had been absent.

\textsuperscript{2} British Sociological Association 2002.

\textsuperscript{3} British Psychological Society 2009, 2014.

\textsuperscript{4} Papers presented at the Society for Ethnomusicology (SEM) and International Council for Traditional Music (ICTM) held September 13–16, 2015 Limerick, Ireland are good examples. Presenters included Oliver Shao (Indiana University, USA), who looked at refugee camp policies in Kenya; Andrew McGraw (University of Richmond, USA), who works with detainees in Richmond City Jail; and David A. McDonald’s (Indiana University, USA), who researches how ethnomusicologists are moving towards an activist-oriented critical discipline.

\textsuperscript{5} Students conducting research with refugees using ethnographic methods came to me for support on how to work with their research subjects. Others that I spoke to in the past have conducted covert research in Scotland among violent football team factions; in Northern Ireland, student colleagues were confronted by militant IRA members and their often hostile political ethos.

\textsuperscript{6} For example: Swijghuisen Reigersberg 2010, 2011; Barney 2014.

\textsuperscript{7} Latour and Woolgar 1986.
Rather than specifically critiquing academic-intellectual outputs, Woolgar and Latour explored what it means be a researcher in a higher education institution. I apply Woolgar and Latour’s method of critically examining academic practice to the formation of ethical policies at a meta- not micro-level, using my ethnomusicological training to do ethnographic analysis. This approach has meant that, for ethical reasons, I have opted to provide broad, non-detailed descriptions of public conversations had on the subject of ethics, to preserve the professional integrity and anonymity of research subjects.

In this way, I present research that is the result of more than 10 years of sustained work experience as a research development professional overseeing the acquisition of UK grants income and ethical approval processes. The institution in which I work as a research development and policy manager—Goldsmiths, University of London—is an institution specializing in arts, humanities and social science research. It is through my job in research development that I deal regularly with UK and USA research ethics applications and policy formation. Additionally, I conduct research in ethnomusicology, currently being affiliated with the Goldsmiths’ Music, Mind and Brain research center. This article also draws on personal experiences gained when submitting my own research projects for ethical approval: it is auto-ethnographic. I complement my auto-ethnography with observations made and discussions had during ethnomusicological conferences of the BFE, SEM and ICTM.

Ethical Awareness in Ethnomusicology, Administration and Codifying of Ethical Conduct

Ethnomusicologists have sporadically explored how they are engaging with ethics. Mark Slobin in his 1992 paper⁸ writes about the SEM committee on ethics. He observes that the SEM handbook on ethics was specifically designed to cater to the needs of “Western” scholars working in “non-Western” situations. In the 1990s it seems, ethics in US ethnomusicology was considered an ethnocentric enterprise. Slobin, disliking the state of affairs in 1992, thought that there was a lack of discussion surrounding the notion of whose ethics we abide by and that the ethical implications of contemporary research are not adequately covered. In 2012 ethnomusicologist Klisala Harrison, in her article on epistemologies in applied ethnomusicology writes:

Analyses of epistemic communities and epistemologies including ideologies involved in applications of music can serve as bases for analyses of ethics of applications of music and ethnomusicological research (Whose welfare? How is welfare defined?). The

---

notion also importantly puts a focus on shared approaches around which practice and discourse can cohere. Epistemic communities result in knowledge as well as action.\(^9\)

In 2013, Kay Kaufman Shelemay identified many of the challenges that I discuss here. My intention on this occasion is to make an applied “intervention” into current ethics practices by ethnomusicologists and of scholarly societies for the field. Shelemay writes that during a time when collaborative research increases in ethnomusicology, ethical questions are multiplied and the complexity of these questions heightened.\(^10\) Many such ethical questions are also not necessarily musical in that they, for example, may make reference to the bureaucracy that accompanies doing fieldwork in and with corporate institutions and recording companies, such as permission and consent documentation.\(^11\) Shelemay situates ethics in ethnomusicology within a broader philosophical frame of thought and commentary, complementing these with specific examples and tracing the SEM’s history of ethnomusicology’s engagement with ethics from the 1970s onwards.\(^12\) A panel at the SEM’s annual meeting in 1972 led to the establishment of the Society’s Committee on Ethics. From the 1980s onwards, ethnomusicologists began to acknowledge the ethical challenges inherent in their work. To this day, there is no a substantial body of literature addressing research ethics in ethnomusicology.\(^13\)

Shelemay also draws attention to the variety of areas where ethical concerns may crop up, including archival work, and the medical, applied and activist domains. What she does not focus on is the processes by which individual researchers must and do obtain ethical approval through their own organizations and the hurdles they may face. Neither does she discuss the role that ethics statements from learned societies such as BFE, SEM and ICTM can play in supporting and validating the ethical choices made by ethnomusicologists or why codes of good practice and ethics training are crucial to promoting the health and safety of our students, fieldwork partners and collaborators. These are the subject of my contribution here.

Shelemay’s excellent paper, however, has not led to a sustained, critical review of ethnomusicology’s meta-level debates around policy formation for the benefit of our own discipline. Apart from two interesting and provocative panels at SEM’s annual conference in 2014, Pittsburgh, which explored fieldwork-specific ethical challenges and concerns in some detail, I have yet to see any recent activism and change in this area where the administration of our learned societies is concerned. In terms of the production of theory around ethics; guidelines and training materials and their engagement with higher education policy, anthropologists have a head start on sustained engagement. As early as 1971, for example, anthropologist

\(^9\) Harrison 2012, 522.
\(^10\) Shelemay 2013, 793.
\(^11\) Ibid., 794.
\(^12\) Ibid., 789–792.
\(^13\) Ibid., 790.
Joseph Jorgensen "attacks" the assertion that an ethical code for professional scientists\textsuperscript{14} should be based on scientific models and principles. Jorgensen challenges the ontological status that some of his colleagues accorded science and the imperative to "advance" it.\textsuperscript{15} His point of departure is clear: he will not approve of ethical assessment processes that enforce a system which only favors the use of scientific paradigms, the Gold Standard or, in other words, a system which insists on replicability of results, and the use of quantitative methods, when these are inappropriate methods for the enquiry at hand.

In 2005, anthropologists Ian Harper and Alberto Corsín Jiménez in their article on interactive professional ethics, acknowledged that anthropology as a discipline is entangled in "complex institutional and political structures which extend beyond the dialogical relationships of fieldwork."\textsuperscript{16} They argued for an ethics beyond legalism that is less based on committees and paper work and more on assessing actual ethical concerns on a sustained basis without being reactive to crises. They supported an ethical approach that goes beyond legalism, which should ideally emerge from a sustained commitment to a discipline. The authors advocated for a continual updating of ethical guidance rather than sporadic engagement by committees and individuals in response to crises. Harper and Corsín Jiménez suggested that the application of any ethical guidelines should not be about taking sides, but instead must emphasize a learning and thinking-through process. Such a system, they opined, must be predicated on principles of its own self-actualization. The approach favored by the authors is not legalistic, reactionary, restrictive and adjudicative.\textsuperscript{17} Otherwise, as the authors wrote, "ethics become less a quality of relationships than an aspect of managerial processes and outcomes."\textsuperscript{18}

As Harper and Corsín Jiménez point out, ethics approval processes have the ability to help a researcher think through her or his ethical approach, anticipating any social, practical and legal challenges. This will help a researcher to adequately prepare for fieldwork. When exploring the different codes of ethics of other learned societies, I have found "adjudicative" thinking from anthropology, which relies on the law, particularly inspiring. What is the relationship between law and institutional ethical reporting and clearance, and how are these culture-specific, varying from country to country and from institution to institution? As early as 1748, Montesquieu in his \textit{The Spirit of the Laws} wrote, "Laws should be so appropriate to the people for whom they are made that it is very unlikely that the laws of one nation can suit another."\textsuperscript{19} I would add that this not only applies to countries, but also to academic

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{14} Here he uses the European definition of the word science, which includes research in all disciplines. By European definitions, ethnomusicologists and historians are also scientists.
\item \textsuperscript{15} Jorgensen 1971, 321–322.
\item \textsuperscript{16} Harper and Corsín Jiménez 2005, 10.
\item \textsuperscript{17} Ibid.,11.
\item \textsuperscript{18} Ibid.,10.
\item \textsuperscript{19} Montesquieu 1748 quoted in Falk Moore 2005, 13.
\end{itemize}
disciplines. Colleagues at Goldsmiths argue that ethics forms, the law and its implementation have very little to do with ethics. Based on my work on ethics, this I do not think is entirely correct. I agree that the law requires some form of consensus as to what counts as a misdemeanor in relation to a culture and a person’s rights and roles within it. These decisions and what counts as appropriate behavior, under what circumstance, and by whom, is then encoded in some agreed form. Consequently, the law may, but does not always, essentialize categories, fix identities, to the detriment of one party or another.

The need for an evidence and paper-based legal system is however the problem, not necessarily the making of legal judgments. When attending seminars by barristers held at Goldsmiths for the Department of English and Contemporary Literature as part of my administrative duties for example, I learnt that very often judgments are made based on moral decisions which are formed through ethical debate and cultural preferences, not the letter of the law or concomitant paperwork. The legal framework is there to assist this moral and ethical debate, and to provide guidance. The law itself of course, is also subject to change, and does, in response to new societal developments and localized requirements. So should good ethical codes of conduct and statements or guidance.

In terms of the research administration of ethics, the need to implement legal frameworks has led to the design of forms, policies, guidelines and committees. Their role, ostensibly, is to monitor an institution’s ability to evidence that it is facilitating ethical research to the best of its ability. Ethical clearance mechanisms are treated and viewed as means of achieving legal compliance, not what they should be: opportunities to improve the rigor of research methods and to reflect on the ethical implications of work-to-be-done. This led Economic and Social Research Council board member professor Linda Woodhead, at the 2015 UK Research Integrity Office conference to assert that ethics committees “strangle social science research” if not managed properly. There are reasons why Professor Woodhead feels this, perhaps unreasonably, is the case.

Historically, ethical clearance pertained more to the biomedical sciences than social sciences or the arts and humanities. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that the prevailing models of ethical scrutiny and training, for better or worse, are medicalized. Now that the social sciences, arts and humanities are being reviewed more rigorously in terms of their ethical practice, new ways of working need to be developed that marry the ethical codes of conduct prevailing in the biomedical world with those more appropriate to the social sciences. Ideally even, codes of conduct should be discipline-specific. In my administrative experience, achieving this discipline-specific approach to ethical clearance is challenging. No administrative form will ever cover all normative, day-to-day ethical challenges across all disciplines working within one institution. Similarly, no ethics policy (which is operationalized through committee systems, procedures and forms) would be able to cover all ethical debates in its wording. Such a policy would be in constant need of revision and never-ending. Yet, funding bodies and government
require ethical clearance and misconduct still occurs, so naively abolishing ethics committees, policies and assessment altogether would not be a workable solution either. What is needed is a culture change that appreciates the value of assessing ethical rigor. Simultaneously, discipline-specific solutions might be found that address appropriately disciplinary differences in ways of working, which might inform ethics policy formation. Here learned societies such as BFE, ICTM and SEM have important roles to play.

The Importance of Learned Societies in Facilitating Discipline-Specific Administrative Change

Learned societies can take the key role of supporting their membership when lobbying for changes in ethical assessment processes. Those in senior positions of authority within disciplines and on ethics committees can provide advice or examples for workable, acceptable alternatives for administrators and science colleagues. Like Harper and Corsín Jiménez suggested in 2005, I believe researchers should be less defensive, and engage with others outside the academic profession or their discipline to facilitate positive, ethical change. As a research development professional who has retained a career as a researcher, I work for and with other ethnomusicologists (as evidenced by this article-as-“intervention”) as well as administrative colleagues in efforts to ensure that my discipline and other arts, humanities and social science researchers receive a more balanced treatment at ethics committees that are not always well-designed to meet their needs. In order to do this though, it would help if I had at my disposal statements that demonstrated ethnomusicology’s approach to assessing ethical issues.

Currently, it is the case that the BFE, with my own input, has been developing an ethics statement over the past three years. The initial draft of the BFE statement was based on the SEM statement from 1998, with permission from the SEM ethics committee and SEM President in 2012 (Beverley Diamond). The new BFE committee, however, on receiving the SEM statement, opined that it needed modification before it could serve as a BFE statement for ethics. It has since been revised, and I am pleased to say, shared with the current SEM committee and President.

The ICTM has no statement or guidance for ethical issues. Some issues about formulating one are: Can and should there be ethics guidelines for an organization affiliated to UNESCO, which already has its own overarching ethical protocols? Or is there a more discipline-specific ethics model that might be developed in order to complement existing memoranda and guidelines? Of the UK, and contexts of the BFE, which is a national organization affiliated with ICTM, one may ask: How does the BFE-ICTM relationship influence the creation of an ethics statement for either organization? How would other national learned societies devoted to ethnomusicology need to engage with an ethics statement issued by
ICTM? Would an ethics statement from ICTM, a body with many international sub-groups (e.g., a World Network of national and regional committees; study groups on ethnomusicological sub-topics), lend exceptional weight to ethnomusicology’s endeavors and commitment to ethics? These questions need answers that can only be arrived at through a discussion at the ICTM Executive Board level.

The SEM position statement on ethical considerations, from 1998, needs to be revised to make allowances for newer practices such as covert, applied and medical ethnomusicological research. The SEM statement addresses some concerns BFE members voiced when advocating for an ethics statement, namely that: ethical systems differ among ethnomusicologists; ethical values affirmed by an SEM statement do not necessarily represent those of all practitioners of ethnomusicology everywhere; and ethical systems and values may differ between ethnomusicologists and their field consultants.

SEM’s ethics position statement on ethical considerations is complemented by SEM’s “Position Statement on Ethnographic Research & Institutional Review Boards, January 16, 2008”\(^{20}\) (IRBs or Research Ethics Committees (RECs) in the UK). Here, the SEM joined other USA scholarly societies in calling for changes in the application of IRB guidelines for ethnographic research, asking that these be revised to include an increased sensitivity to ethnomusicology’s scholarly objectives and methodology. Authors of the statement ask that this new protocol be more consistently and appropriately applied. The SEM viewed the IRB situation in 2008 as threatening academic freedom, and as detrimental to the spirit and practice of ethnography. Authors offer useful descriptions of methods used by ethnomusicologists and recommendations for review panel make-up in order to ensure that ethnographic research is not assessed using biomedical ethical models and by non-ethnographers. The SEM also has additional statements available online.

These include statements on torture (discussed in detail below); music and fair use; copyright and sound recording; and anti-discrimination, anti-harassment and sexual discrimination.

The BFE has no equivalent of SEM’s position statement on IRBs, and none is currently being considered. If it were to be, it would necessarily differ from SEM’s in that IRBs in the USA ultimately report directly to governmental organizations. In the UK, higher education institutions have far more autonomy in how they report on ethical conduct within their own organization. Whilst research ethics and integrity are auditable functions for, for example the Research Councils UK and the European Commission, no set guidelines are mandated by government. Instead, UK institutions wishing to receive research income must sign up to the

---

“Concordat to Support Research Integrity,”21 a high-level policy document that sets out broad guidelines as to what type of conduct is expected of researchers and their employers. Organizations such as the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO) then offer guidance and impartial support when necessary for their members. This is not to say, however, that no position statement on research integrity and ethics clearance processes is needed from BFE, as ethnomusicologists still must contend, on some occasions, with ethics and integrity committees that contain no social scientists and are based only on biomedical models of ethics clearance.

As a research development and policy manager specializing in ethics at a UK higher education institution, I believe that the SEM’s position statement on IRBs could easily be modified to suit UK and even EU policy frameworks. One or more lobbyists might then be able to, for example, take this type of statement to the European Commission, where the current ethics focus is on addressing the absence of appropriate discipline-specific guidance for arts, humanities and social science researchers.

Here again we might learn from our anthropological colleagues. The ethical support offered by the American Anthropological Association (AAA) to its members is comprehensive. The AAA manages an ethics statement provides blogs, gives examples for classroom exercises alongside case studies and training and maintains lists of literature and other resources.22 Anthony Seeger, in his keynote “Changing Praxis and Ethical Practice: Lessons for Ethnomusicology from Applied Anthropology” at the SEM-ICTM Forum in 2015,23 recommended that ethnomusicologists view the Society for Applied Anthropology’s “Statement of Ethics and Professional Responsibilities.”24 Like myself, in the Forum conference paper on which my article is based, Seeger argued that a well-conceived and frequently reassessed written code of ethics is essential to our changing praxes as ethnomusicologists. The Association for Social Anthropology (ASA) has even gone so far to act as an independent advisory body for members who require support in ethical disputes, where appropriate and necessary.25 I am not suggesting that

21 Universities UK 2012. It should be noted that as of October 2015, Universities UK (UUK) and the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO) are assessing whether the Concordat to support Research Integrity (a high-level policy document that sets out broad guidelines as to what type of conduct is expected of researchers and their employers) is in need of revision.

22 American Anthropological Association n.d.

23 Seeger 2015.

24 Society for Applied Anthropology n.d. Personally, I am less taken with this statement’s initial wording as it reads more like a mandate: “This statement is a guide to professional behavior for the members of the Society for Applied Anthropology. As members or fellows of the society, we shall act in ways consistent with the responsibilities stated below irrespective of the specific circumstances of our employment.” Although billed as a guide, it does not, in its wording, sympathetically recognise tensions that may exist between employer guidelines and employee ethical concerns and the difficulty in navigating these. It states that applied anthropologists will seek to act on the guidelines “irrespective of the specific circumstances of our employment.” The statement also emphasizes on informed consent, which in some cases is difficult to achieve. It also has no publication or ratification date, making it difficult to assess how current it is. However, the statement also emphasizes the importance of student training and ethical conduct towards other (academic) professionals.

ICTM, SEM and BFE go as far as that because doing so can compromise the neutrality of a learned society, bringing with that potential for time-consuming and costly legal wrangles for which there may not necessarily be appropriate expertise, funding or time. A decision to become this way involved must be taken carefully. The SfAA, AAA and ASA are actively engaged in lively debate and pro-active ethics training for and with their membership. I believe ethnomusicologists ought to follow suit.

**Why Create (New) Ethical Statements, Guidance and Policies for Ethnomusicologists?**

I believe we need new ethical statements because in ethnomusicological circles, existing ethical statements no longer cover the diversity of research activity undertaken. Kaufman Shelemay’s 2013 article supports this view. Additionally, in an excellent paper I attended at SEM 2014, Stephen Millar26 lamented that his covert research methodology was never problematized in ethnomusicological discussions on ethics, let alone acknowledged in ethical statements. He critiqued the emphasis on informed consent, openness and honesty, asking that his audience to consider reviewing sociologist Alan Fine’s 1993 article the “Ten lies of ethnography.” Fine questions the morality of ethnography and ethnographers extensively. He explores covert research methodologies and argues that these are taken from privileged positions of power, information and control. He reminds us that, to some extent, ethnographic research is always secret in some respects, because field collaborators can never know everything there is to know about the research enterprise.27

I would add that this pertains not just to ensuring that participants are fully aware of the implications of their involvement in a research project and having research collaborators sign pieces of paper or give verbal consent where this is possible and appropriate. Here I am referring to differences that exist between the various ways of knowing and learning across cultures, such as written versus oral traditions, or doing versus reading practices. Ethnomusicologists, from Mantle Hood 197128 onwards are no strangers to the idea that people learn and embody knowledge in different ways. Explaining ethnomusicological theory to non-academics can be challenging, however. For example, one of the most difficult things I have had to do during a fieldwork period was to try and explain Western post-colonial theory to ageing Australian Aboriginal choristers. They had just come to sing in a choir I was facilitating as part of practice-based research into the construction of Aboriginal Christian identities, and were curious to know why I was asking what

26 Millar 2014.
28 Hood 1971.
to them seemed odd questions about topics they had never really considered. A lot of my consent-seeking discussions turned into layman’s mini-lectures in post-colonial theory, which I am not entirely sure elucidated my reasons for being in the community. In the end, I remained “the choir lady” from Rockhampton (Australia) rather than the practice-based researcher from Roehampton University, London, leaving me to wonder whether they had actually consented to being part of the undertaking that is “academic research,” in its fullest sense. In my particular case, I briefly considered giving up the doctoral enterprise as a result.

Similarly, Irish colleagues (then students) worried they had not received adequate support in how to deal with difficult situations in which their musical activities became inadvertently and unintentionally intertwined with Irish political divides and violence. Music can be harmful and incite or accompany violence.

In recent decades, scholars have begun criticizing (ethn)musicology’s lack of engagement with music’s role in social crises as well, alongside the assumptions “that its preoccupations as a field with music immunized it from the crises affecting other disciplines within and without the academy” as if music were an innocuous art form never related to, for example, attempts at manipulation for political ends and violent acts, such those described by Anna Papeati and Morag Grant in their thematic issue of the journal Torture on music in detention, and Susan Cusick’s work on music and torture. Admittedly, certain events have led SEM to respond to crises, such as its “Position Statement on Torture” from February 2, 2007.

Discussing the impetus for this statement in relation to applied ethnomusicology, its ethics, definition and endeavours, Jeff Todd Titon writes:

Should the definition [of applied ethnomusicology] include, for example, ethnomusicological research put to use in torturing political prisoners? The United States bombards Muslim “detainees” with loud music, in their efforts to break their resistance and obtain information. … The Society for Ethnomusicology’s Executive Board, on the recommendation from the Society’s Ethics Committee, put out a statement on the SEM website publicly condemning the use of music for torture. … It so happens that I was the one who brought the matter before the Ethics Committee in the first place, and I found nothing but strong support for my position all the way through to the publication of the statement—the first time that SEM has taken such a public political stand, be it said. But can I find an ethical principle that will exclude this appalling use of ethnomusicological research (I don’t know that any ethnomusicologists were directly involved in the government’s decision to use hip-hop to torture political prisoners, of

---

29 I cannot provide the exact details for fear of the safety of individuals concerned. Suffice it to say that they inadvertently encountered factions of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) that were known for their uncompromising, sometimes violent political attitudes, towards non-IRA members.

30 See, for example, Swijghuisen Reigersberg 2011 and Cusick 2013.


32 Papeati and Grant 2013.

33 See, for example, Cusick 2013.

course; my guess is that they consulted the literature of music psychology primarily) and not exclude ideologies that embrace social justice? This is more than a technical question.35

This SEM statement against music's use for torture was discussed at the recent BFE one-day conference on Ethnomusicology and Policy, hosted in Newcastle, 31 October 2015, not long after the SEM-ICTM Forum. Here two excellent papers by Katia Chornik and Manuel Guerrero36 and Morag J. Grant37 explored the relationship between torture, music, legislation and policy. Definitions and understandings of the term “torture” were critiqued and examined, and music and sound’s roles in torture contexts explored. Towards the end of the presentations, an appeal was made to the BFE chair, encouraging the BFE to formulate a statement similar to SEM’s, which explicitly: a) calls for full disclosure of US government-sanctioned and funded programs that design the means of delivering music as torture; b) condemns the use of music as an instrument of torture; and c) demands that the United States government and its agencies cease using music as an instrument of physical and psychological torture. It was felt by the speakers that the BFE ought to present a statement to the UK government because British troops have also been involved in torture using music.

In subsequent discussions at the Newcastle conference, it became clear why BFE felt it would need to tread carefully, resonating with Titon’s question above as to whether he is able to find an ethical principle that might exclude music from torture contexts. Concerns were raised about the nature of such a position statement against music and torture, and whether it would reflect the opinions of all BFE members, given that BFE membership is diverse. Equally, signing up for BFE membership indicates a willingness to subscribe to the society’s codes and statements. Therefore, any statement or code of conduct should ideally reflect the views of BFE membership at large, or so it was felt. It is by no means certain whether all members might object to music being used as torture in certain circumstances (although I believe if there are any, they would be in the minority), and even whether all members might object to torture in certain critical circumstances related to national security and the safety of large numbers of people.

Such profoundly ethical questions must be considered before any such statement is crafted by a learned society. Similar arguments were put forward by BFE committee members over the past three years when it was suggested that BFE should have an ethical code of conduct or ethical statement. We were back to the “Whose ethics?” question. There were also general concerns about such statements being too prescriptive or not accounting for all of the potential ethically challenging questions members might face. However, this is somewhat missing the

35 Titon 2011.
36 Chornik and Guerrero 2015.
37 Grant 2015.
point in the case of an overreaching ethics statement or policy for a learned society. Policies and statements can be written in such a way that they acknowledge the diversity of opinion within a group’s membership. Policies, by their very nature, cannot feasibly be made as a set of instructions with every eventuality specified. Good functional policies are aspirational guiding documents crafted using broad-brush strokes. They can be successfully implemented according to local circumstance and should take into consideration the operational and procedural needs of those affected by them as best possible, in this case the membership of ethnomusicological learned societies.

Any ethical statement should be offered as a set of guiding principles, which are presented for consideration, not as a diktat with a long list of dos and don’ts. As the SEM has done, general ethics statements should acknowledge that a diversity of opinions might exist amongst the membership. A diversity of opinions on ethical matters, provided this is acknowledged and positively supported, is to be encouraged. Not having an ethics statement or taking no action because of a diversity of opinions seems to me unsound reasoning. Provided that a policy or statement is carefully worded and regularly revised in response to change, much is possible. A similar stance might be taken to writing a statement on torture or music's application during torture, by BFE for example.

Given the above, clearly, ethnomusicologists conducting field research are deeply engaged in ethical issues, and are seeking support from their learned societies to champion ethical engagement and social justice causes. Many colleagues, particularly early-career and post-graduate researchers, need advice on ethics as well as training in how to achieve ethics clearances. The two are not the same. Here I am again in agreement with Harper and Corsín Jiménez who write that “our experience suggests that the diversity of ethical issues faced by graduate students should be a rich source of input and comments from the field.” I will add that student fieldwork should provide the impetus for reviewing ethical guidance and statements on a regular basis, as it is students who stand most to lose (education, career and research chances) if their research does not go well due to ethical challenges.

**Ethical Domains and Ethnomusicological Scholarship**

The absence of ethical statements and guidance from some of our learned societies, however, should not be taken as evidence of a lack of ethical awareness. Ethnomusicology’s concern with ethical issues is woven into the field’s publications and is, more often than not, context-specific and related to particular research enquiries and relationships between the researcher and his/her fieldwork partners.
and collaborators. This evidence is what Jorgensen and Kaufman Shelemay refer to as “normative ethics”: it adjudges day-to-day actions and decisions as being “good” or “bad” or both depending on points of view. Literature in our field abounds in such materials that we might use to compile readings lists that will help provide case studies and training texts for students or examples for meta-ethical debates.

Meta-ethical studies or questions, according to Jorgensen, are concerned with the meaning, function or nature of normative judgments and means by which they are justified, and how these may change according to context. Meta-ethics examines the broad meanings and origins of ethical principles, such as the concept that our ethical values are influenced by our religions, and philosophical and cultural backgrounds of our thinking. Ethnomusicology has not engaged much with meta-ethics. Kaufman Shelemay notes that there appear, however, to be “shared assumptions about the meta-ethics of studying world music that implicitly guide ethical philosophy in ethnomusicology.” She goes on to write that this includes notions of human and scholarly responsibility and the idea that ethical issues emerge from Western cultural values, most conspicuously cultural relativism.

A third category added by Kaufman Shelemay is applied ethics, which examines specific issues through an ethical lens. In some cases, applied, normative and meta-ethics may overlap in ethnomusicological work. Discussions on intellectual property including copyright tend to feature here, as they pertain to law-formation, modes of knowledge and music creation, and musical and intellectual ownership. The ways in which notions of moral rights and ownership of music are formed can be both a normative and meta-ethical question, especially in debates surrounding intangible cultural heritage. Seeger, in his article on the shifting ethics of intellectual property (IP) addresses this issue head-on when he writes:

There is a singular peril in making practical suggestions in a scholarly journal—they are even more obviously time and situation sensitive than most of our theoretical speculation. Some of the suggestions proposed below will probably be rendered ineffective by future laws; others will later be considered suspect through shifting ethical stances in certain areas. Yet issues of intellectual property touch at the foundations of “free” speech and song, and are at once practical, emotional, and philosophical. Like all other articles, this one should be read as a moment in an evolving discussion within the field about an important facet of music.

In order for ethnomusicologists to address some of the concerns they have with IP, copyright, and rights to culture with IRBs and RECs, they need to produce more meta-ethical theory, supported by many normative and applied ethical examples,

---

39 Jorgensen 1971, 322.
40 Shelemay ibid., 787.
41 Ibid., 787–788.
42 Ibid., 787.
such as those provided in case studies and discussions of musical ownership. It is this type of material that will help support requests for adjustments to ethical policy and protocol so that they become appropriate to our disciplinary needs. Meta-ethical arguments have the advantage of demonstrating why a particular system of ethical assessment may be at best unhelpful to our discipline. Normative and applied examples can too easily be swept aside with the argument that they only present a small, singular instance of system-tension, thereby not warranting an adjustment of the larger system as a whole.

Conclusion: Common Contentious Issues of Ethical Review and a Way Forward

To conclude then, the question arises: What exactly are our disciplinary needs for change, and how are they not being met by many ethical committees and IRBs? Ethnomusicologists do much good individually and in collaboration with co-researchers and collaborators, but we have yet to truly make use of our combined strength in the academy by providing external ethics committees and IRBs with good, regularly revised ethics statements that reflect the complexity and nature of our discipline and its difference from science subjects. In order to effect change, we need critical mass, which is what learned societies provide. Ethnomusicologists are very good at being reflexive about the communities in which they work as most constantly scrutinize their own ethical motivations, influenced by cultural relativistic theories. Ethnomusicologists as a group, however, have yet to address, through praxis, advocacy and engagement, ethical review processes that may challenge their productivity via their home institutions, for example. Lack of ethnomusicological activism may account, to some extent, for the inappropriate ethical policies and ethical assessment forms. Using our critical mass, I propose ethnomusicologists help to educate our own university administrations, RECs and IRBs. This, in turn, would help inform debates and ethics policy formation in the arts, humanities and social sciences more broadly.

I will therefore identify and discuss areas of ethical review that learned societies might be able to influence. A few of these are already referred to in the SEM position statement on IRBs. My list here is not intended to be definitive, but provides examples of topics that, as a university research development and policy manager, I hear colleagues comment on when preparing their ethical assessment forms in places where biomedical models prevail:

- A demand for anonymity: Many social scientists and medical researchers insist that all research data be anonymized, especially where personal data is collected from research participants, which might be included under the UK 1998 Data Protection Act, such as name, age, and gender. A lot of ethnomusicological

44 See, for example, Barney 2014.
research however, requires that collaborators are identifiable in our publications, especially when they share their musical heritage. Anonymization is often not just impossible, it would even be unethical.45

- Informed consent and consent forms: Many ethics review boards insist on informed consent being practiced, and written consent forms being used where this might not be appropriate. Many review boards are very wary of covert research, and find it difficult to grasp that field collaborators might be illiterate or averse to official documentation, making obtaining informed consent difficult or impossible.

- Data destruction: Many hard scientists refer to their data being “dead” after it has been analyzed and the necessary articles have been written. In the UK, new legislation demands that personal data is destroyed after 7 years and research data after 10, unless research data is regularly accessed. For many social scientists and ethnomusicologists their “data,” that is fieldwork notes, film footage and photographs, for example, remain valuable and their destruction often not desirable. Equally, laws like this vary between countries. Researchers should remain abreast of these differences.

- “Lack” of replicability of research methods and outcomes: Many ethnomusicologists and qualitative researchers are critiqued at ethics review for the lack of replicability of their methods or subsequent verification of results by medically oriented researchers. In our field it is well-known that musical learning and experience are valuable ways of gaining new insights, but these methods and their outcomes are so context and person-specific that replication is not possible. Performative methods however, have demonstrated they are capable of producing new insights of value such as how identities can be shaped and wellbeing promoted through choral facilitation and education by the researcher.46 Replicability is not an appropriate criterion when assessing the merits of performative methods.

- Authorship and co-creation of ethnography: Biomedical researchers have clearer definitions of what authors are and why. In scientific journals, “authors” may not have written texts, but instead might have contributed to experimental design or other aspects of the research. By this definition, sometimes ethnomusicologists are questioned about who exactly has generated the ideas and data in applied research? In other words, who counts as “an author” of a text, if the text has been shaped by the thoughts and actions of others during the research process? Due to the arts, humanities and social sciences’ emphasis on monographs and edited volumes, relatively few articles are ever co-authored and no clear definitions exist as to what counts as an author. This can confuse scientific colleagues.

45 See, for example, Keegan-Phipps 2014.
46 See, for example, Swijghuisen Reigersberg 2010.
• IP, copyright and rights to culture: With the implementation of open access mandates in the UK for publications as well as research data, this forms one of the most pressing ethical issues for researchers in the UK and beyond. If institutions and funding bodies demand that researchers make their field data openly available via the internet or institutional repositories, this could lead to serious ethical concerns on a variety of levels related to appropriate archiving locations, levels of access, and rights to musical ownership. Many institutions retain some IP rights over research data created by researchers, and therefore musical data that belongs to research collaborators. This is not yet a well-understood area as it is relatively new, but already causing much concern among ethics committees and national funders.

So how might we engage with such issues and dilemmas as a group of researchers via our learned societies? Here I provide 5 possible ways in which researchers could involve themselves:

1. Generate more theory on meta-ethics and compile reading lists of good examples of normative ethics.
2. Prioritize the creation and maintenance of ethics statements, training materials and dialogues. Update these regularly. Share these internationally.
3. Create a critical mass of sustained and sustainable activity to help get the message across, to those outside ethnomusicology, that their ethical assessment processes need tweaking: national funding bodies, governments, etc.
4. Train students in how to deal with discipline-specific ethical challenges, including newer trends in medical ethnomusicology, covert research, etc.
5. Actively and positively engage with professionals outside the academy plus other social scientists in order to effect change

It heartens me to say that leading figures within SEM and ICTM were in attendance when I gave my paper at the SEM-ICTM Forum in September 2015 and subsequently encouraged me to facilitate the sharing of the BFE draft ethical statement with them. The BFE chair approved this suggestion and the draft statement went to the SEM Board of Directors in October 2015, which immediately decided that a revision of the older SEM statement was needed. The BFE chair and committee were also not opposed to the idea of sharing their statement with the ICTM at a later stage, once it has been finalized. It is therefore not impossible that, in the future, three learned ethnomusicological societies may be able to provide the critical mass and support needed for their membership in what are increasingly bureaucratic, data-driven times. Much remains to be done though, on an ongoing basis by all ethnomusicologists. I hope to herewith to have provided some reasons why this is necessary and how it might be done.
References


Grant, M. J. 2015. Preventing the music to torture: From research to policy. Conference paper, British Forum for Ethnomusicology (BFE), 31 October, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, UK.


Titon, J. T. 2011. The Curry Lecture: Applied Ethnomusicology. <sustainablemusic.blogspot.co.uk/search?updated-min=2011-01-01T00:00:00:00&updated-max=2012-01-01T00:00:00:05:00&max-results=20> (visited 16 June 2016)