

On Authorship Criteria in Music and Minority Studies, Ethnomusicology, and Related Disciplines: An Editorial

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Abstract

This editorial discusses selected aspects of Music & Minorities' (M&M) policy on "Authorship, Contributorship, and Artificial Intelligence," providing background on the rationale behind the policy and situating the discussion within the broader contexts of music and minority studies, ethnomusicology, related disciplines, such as social and cultural anthropology, and academic publishing. The focus is on authorship criteria. After explaining why authorship criteria are an important issue and deserve closer attention in music and minority studies and ethnomusicology in general, the editorial discusses the specific set of criteria issued by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE). The ICMJE criteria are among the most widely used authorship criteria in academic publishing, if not the most widely used. Thanks to their adoption (or adaptation) by major publishing corporations, these criteria have spread to disciplines far beyond their original domain of medical publishing, including ethnomusicology. In line with this consensus, M&M's authorship criteria are derived from the ICMJE criteria and adapted to suit the scholarly practices of the journal's specific field. Based on the discussion of the standard ICMJE criteria, three aspects of M&M's policy are addressed in more detail: the general authorship criteria, non-author contributorship, and the special provisions for co-authorship by non-academic research partners.

Music & Minorities (M&M) has recently issued its policy on "Authorship, Contributorship, and Artificial Intelligence" (M&M n.d.). As the managing editor of M&M, I would like to take this opportunity to discuss the issue of authorship criteria in ethnomusicology and the related disciplines in which music and minority studies are situated in more detail.

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M&M generally bases its editorial practices on the guidelines laid out by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE). The COPE position statement titled “Responsible Research Publication: International Standards for Editors” contains the following demand:

Journals should have a clear policy on authorship that follows the standards within the relevant field. They should give guidance in their information for authors on what is expected of an author and, if there are different authorship conventions within a field, they should state which they adhere to.

For multidisciplinary and collaborative research, it should be apparent to readers who has done what and who takes responsibility for the conduct and validity of which aspect of the research. Each part of the work should have at least one author who takes responsibility for its validity. For example, individual contributions and responsibilities could be stated in a contributor section. All authors are expected to have contributed significantly to the paper and to be familiar with its entire content and ideally, this should be declared in an authorship statement submitted to the journal. (Kleinert and Wager 2012: 322–323)¹

Are there clear and established standards of authorship in our field? As far as I could ascertain, major ethnomusicological or other musicological societies do currently not have any elaborate stance on authorship, if they have any explicit statement at all. I actually found only two somewhat pertinent, but not very substantial passages. In its “Position Statement on Ethical Considerations,” the Society for Ethnomusicology (SEM) demands that ethnomusicologists in their publications “give credit to consultants, colleagues, students, and others where appropriate” (SEM 1998). The “Ethics Statement” of the British Forum for Ethnomusicology (BFE 2016) includes an almost identical statement.

A survey of the websites of 36 larger and smaller journals in ethnomusicology and other musicological fields was conducted to determine if they had an authorship policy.² The results are similar. As of July 2025, 15 of the journals did not have a policy. Without mentioning the issue of authorship in particular, five journals make general references to their alignment with the ethical standards for publishing set out by COPE, which is somewhat circular with regards to authorship policy, as should be obvious

¹ See also the related “International Standards for Authors” (Wager and Kleinert 2012) and subsequent statements regarding authorship by COPE (2014, 2019).

² The journals are (in alphabetical order): *19th-Century Music*, *Acta Musicologica*, *African Music*, *Asian Music*, *Cahiers d’ethnomusicologie*, *Current Musicology*, *Early Music*, *Ethnomusicology*, *Ethnomusicology Forum*, *Ethnomusicology Ireland*, *Ethnomusicology Review*, *International Review of the Aesthetics & Sociology of Music*, *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, *Journal of Musicology*, *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, *Journal of the Society for Musicology in Ireland*, *Latin American Music Review*, *Min-Ad: Israel Studies in Musicology*, *Music & Letters*, *Music Perception*, *Musica e cultura*, *Musicae scientiae*, *Musicologica austriaca*, *Musicology Australia*, *MUSICULTURES*, *Die Musikforschung*, *Popular Music*, *Popular Music and Society*, *Psychology of Music*, *Revue de Musicologie*, *Rivista Italiana di Musicologia*, *Schweizer Jahrbuch für Musikwissenschaft*, *Traditions of Music and Dance*, *TRANS – Transcultural Music Review*, *The World of Music*.

from the above quotation.³ Other journals adhere to the generic authorship policies of their respective publishers without any field-specific adaptations.⁴ Four journals are subject to the University of California Press' (UC Press) "Statement of Publication Ethics," which requires:

Authors of articles published in all UC Press journals must have contributed significantly to the research resulting in the publication of an article, and should be able to certify that they have contributed to the entire manuscript, where necessary attributing work to relevant co-authors or contributors. All persons designated as authors should qualify for authorship, and all those who qualify should be listed. Each author must have participated sufficiently in the work to take public responsibility for the content. (UC Press n.d.)

11 journals, including *Ethnomusicology*, *Ethnomusicology Forum*, and *Traditions of Music and Dance*, are governed by variations of the widely-used criteria of the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE; discussed in detail below) issued by their publishers. Three of these journals are published by Cambridge University Press (CUP), another three by Taylor & Francis, two each by Oxford University Press (OUP) and Sage, and one by University of Illinois Press (UI Press). One journal, *Asian Music*, has a journal-specific policy that is also a variation of the ICMJE criteria.

A first conclusion from this survey is that there are no established standards of authorship in ethnomusicology and the wider field of musicology based on deliberate reflection of issues particular to the research practices of these disciplines. This conclusion is drawn from the large number of journals without any authorship policy and the large number of journals with generic authorship policies prescribed by the respective publisher. The prevalence of generic policies based on the ICMJE criteria suggests a tacit acceptance of these criteria within the (ethno-)musicological community. Accordingly, we also used these criteria as a starting point for developing M&M's policy. However, we did so with critical consideration of the particularities of research practices in music and minority studies. Sharing the considerations that informed the design of our policy will hopefully contribute to a wider awareness of and discussion about authorship and encourage more nuanced and thoughtful conceptions of and practices regarding authorship within music and minority studies and our wider disciplinary surroundings.

The next section outlines why the seemingly dry matter of authorship criteria is an issue that scholars in music and minority studies and beyond should care about. This is followed by a critical discussion of the ICMJE criteria. The ICMJE criteria, the initial version of which was included in ICMJE (1988), are among the most widely used authorship

³ Until our policy was recently issued, M&M did not mention the issue of authorship in particular either. Our "Research Ethics and Research Integrity" policy refers to the *Guidelines for Good Scientific Practice* published by the ÖAWI (Austrian Agency for Research Integrity). These guidelines contain some general remarks about authorship criteria (ÖAWI 2015: § 2 para. 1 no. 4–5).

⁴ These generic authorship policies are sometimes mentioned in the immediate context of the journal-specific website content, and other times only indirectly in the general content on the publisher's website.

criteria in academic publishing, if not *the* most widely used. Thanks to their adoption (or adaptation) by major publishing corporations such as Taylor & Francis, CUP, OUP, and Sage, the criteria have spread to disciplines far beyond their original domain of medical publishing, including, as seen above, ethnomusicology and other musicological disciplines. Based on the discussion of the ICMJE criteria, three aspects of M&M's ICMJE-derived policy are addressed in more detail: the general authorship criteria, non-author contributorship, and the special provisions for co-authorship by non-academic research partners.

The Relevance of Authorship Criteria

M&M is a scholarly journal operating within the 21st-century international academic system. It is published by institutions that are firmly embedded in this system: the Music and Minorities Research Center (MMRC) and mdwPress, both of which are subunits of the University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna (mdw), a public Austrian university. The journal is managed by scholars working within this system, and most of its published content is produced by individuals like them. The academic system is – at least nominally – organized on a meritocratic basis.⁵ Therefore, correctly and consistently attributing achievements, such as publications, to individuals is essential for the system to function; it is a matter of *research integrity*. As Adil E. Shamoo and David B. Resnik observe, “most of the tangible rewards in academic science, such as tenure and promotion, contracts and grants, honors and prizes, and status and prestige, are based on a person's publication record” (2022: 107). Within this system, where authorship credits are a type of cultural capital, it is important to ask: Is *everyone* mentioned in the byline deserving of credit? And are *only* those mentioned deserving of credit? It is evident that such correct and consistent attribution hinges on well-conceived, valid, and widely accepted criteria.

Of course, there are good reasons to doubt whether academia is actually a meritocracy.⁶ These reasons include unequal starting points and an uneven playing field for competing actors, largely due to a systemic interplay of differences in individual economic and educational family backgrounds, economic and prestige-related inequalities within and between different national higher education systems, as well as discrimination based on factors such as gender or ethnicity. I suspect that many of M&M's readers also perceive issues, whether minor or major, with the current system's supposed meritocracy. Rarely, however, do we question the system fundamentally, perhaps verbally,

⁵ See Abbot et al. (2023) for an illustrative summary of the meritocratic account of the contemporary academic system as well as a somewhat fundamentalist and biased defense of the supposed status quo and the underlying ideals and principles. See furthermore the critical discussion of this article's argument in Stewart (2023).

⁶ For criticisms of the meritocratic account, see, among others, Clauset, Arbesman, and Larremore (2015), Wilk (2017), Münch (2018), Zivony (2019), and Leighton (2020). On the idea of meritocracy in general, see Mulligan (2023).

but not in our actual professional practice. Similarly, M&M operates largely within the established boundaries of academic publishing, albeit without blindly and uncritically embracing all aspects of this subsystem of academia. This positioning of the journal, its authors, and most likely also the majority of its readers implies a largely reformist stance toward the academic system rather than a revolutionary one. From a reformist standpoint, well-formulated authorship criteria and a reflective understanding of them ensure, and hopefully improve, the reliable operation of a crucial part of this system: the attribution of author credits.

Apart from these systemic considerations, I posit that reflecting on authorship criteria can also nurture collaborative authorship practices. In recent years, collaboration in knowledge production has become a central topic of discussion in ethnomusicology.⁷ In many cases, collaborative research practices are explicitly endorsed. Collaboration can occur in various forms throughout the ethnomusicological research cycle, including the creation of publications;⁸ and it can happen among different individuals, including academics and non-academics, such as practitioners of the musics being studied. Apart from ethnomusicologists' intentional engagement in collaborative research, some argue that a significant portion of ethnomusicological research in general is, and has always been, collaborative. According to Judah M. Cohen, there is a "collaborative nature of ethnomusicology" (2008: 163), whether or not the individuals involved are aware of this fact or if it is visible through author credits. Muriel Swijghuisen Reigersberg notes that "musical experiences and knowledge are often co-created by the ethnomusicologist and their interlocutors in the field context" (2019: 319; see also Nettl 1984: 176) and argues that acknowledgement of this should have concrete consequences for ethnomusicological authorship attribution practices.⁹ Focusing on collaboration between scholars in ethnomusicological fieldwork rather than collaboration between scholars and members of the field studied, Deborah Justice and Fredara M. Hadley observe that "while acknowledgement sections overflow with gratitude, in the main the people who support fieldwork are not ascribed equal status as co-investigators or co-authors in resulting publications" (2015: 66). Overall, and in parallel with developments in social and cultural anthropology dating back to the "crisis of representation" debates (see, e.g.,

⁷ See, among others, Seeger (2008), Araújo and Cambria (2013), Curran (2013), Barney (2014), Justice and Hadley (2015), Cambria, Fonseca, and Guazina (2016), Gilman and Fenn (2019), Diamond and El-Shawan Castelo Branco (2021a, 2021b), Stock and Diamond (2023), and Stepputat and Morgenstern (2024). At the same time, collaboration is far from being a new issue in ethnomusicological discourse (see, e.g., Feld 1987; Shelemay 1988; Widdess 1994; Lassiter 1998).

⁸ See Sharif (2024) for a scientometric study of collaborative authorship in post-World War II ethnomusicology.

⁹ Similar arguments can be made about other disciplines rooted in ethnographic methodology. For example, cultural anthropologists Mounia El Kotni, Lydia Z. Dixon, and Veronica Miranda echo Swijghuisen Reigersberg's assessment in asserting that "fieldwork and writing are never really things we do alone – we just do not always openly acknowledge the various voices and support that go into our processes of data collection and knowledge production"; and they see in "collaborative writing . . . an attempt to be more open and explicit about the many influences that permeate our writing" (2020).

Marcus 2001: 520–521; Lassiter 2005: 48–75), the veracity and normative appeal of the once prevalent idea of “the lone (male, white) ethnographer and the solitary writer” (El Kotni, Dixon, and Miranda 2020) has increasingly been questioned in ethnomusicology.

The increased awareness and explicit pursuit of collaboration in research renders the question of authorship attribution and collaborative authorship practices more urgent in ethnomusicology. However, focused reflection on these issues remains scarce, with a few exceptions (see, for example, Justice and Hadley 2015; Swijghuisen Reigersberg 2019; Savage et al. 2023; Sharif 2024). The development and critical examination of formal authorship criteria contributes to this discussion and helps clarify our understanding of and expectations for collaborative authorship. Consequently, it may encourage the broader adoption of participatory authorship practices. Conversely, this process also enhances our understanding of non-author contributions, hopefully improving the appropriate acknowledgment of crucial work that often falls below the authorship threshold.

The ICMJE Criteria

The current version of the ICMJE recommendations stipulates that authors must fulfil the following requirements:

1. Substantial contributions to the conception or design of the work; or the acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of data for the work; AND
2. Drafting the work or reviewing it critically for important intellectual content; AND
3. Final approval of the version to be published; AND
4. Agreement to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved. (ICMJE 2025: 2)

ICMJE further comments that “all those designated as authors should meet all four criteria for authorship, and all who meet the four criteria should be identified as authors” (ibid.). The criteria therefore rule out frowned-upon practices like honorary, gift, guest, or forged authorship (see Khezr and Mohan 2022: 2–3; McNutt et al. 2018: 2558), where people receive credit without fulfilling all – especially not the first – or any of the criteria.

The ICMJE recommendations also clarify that the criteria should not be weaponized to withhold authorship credits from substantial contributors (“orphan authorship,” McNutt et al. 2018: 2558), as defined by the first criterion:

The criteria are not intended for use as a means to disqualify colleagues from authorship who otherwise meet authorship criteria by denying them the opportunity to meet criterion #s 2 or 3. Therefore, all individuals who meet the first criterion should have the opportunity to participate in the review, drafting, and final approval of the manuscript. (ICMJE 2025: 2)

The intention of the ICMJE criteria is thus to discourage certain exploitative practices. One example is when a principal investigator of a research project writes a manuscript that draws heavily on the work of a project employee but does not invite the employee to become a co-author.

The ICMJE criteria have been criticized for being susceptible to abuse that facilitates ghost authorship (see, for example, Moffat 2013). This is a particularly salient problem in biomedical research, such as pharmaceutical studies. For instance, an employee of a pharmaceutical company could contribute data on one of the company's drugs or write all or part of a manuscript, but then deliberately fail to fulfil criteria 3 and 4. Consequently, the employee would not be mentioned as an author. According to the ICMJE's (2025: 3) recommendations, someone falling short of meeting all four criteria only needs to be mentioned in the acknowledgments and is not obligated to disclose conflicts of interest. In response, it has been noted that these types of ghost authorship violate more fundamental norms of research integrity, regardless of any particular authorship criteria. Even if the ICMJE criteria could be deliberately misinterpreted to allow such practices, they are still considered unacceptable (see Ali 2021: 290). In the context of music and minority studies, a somewhat more likely scenario would be a scholar hiring a professional ghost writer whose work is submitted as the scholar's own in order to meet the requirements of a tenure agreement or add an article to a cumulative PhD thesis, for example. In this case, too, the hired writer and the nature of the services provided must be correctly reported in the acknowledgements. However, this would undermine the original plan by showing that the scholar is not justified in claiming authorship due to a lack of substantial contributions (i.e., non-fulfilment of criterion 1). In fact, the text would have no legitimate authors because neither the professional writer nor the commissioning scholar fulfils all four criteria. If the professional writer and the services are not mentioned or are misleadingly reported, this would, according to the general consensus regarding ghostwriting, constitute a breach of research integrity, again regardless of the authorship criteria. If uncovered, this deception would entail serious professional consequences.

Another potential point of concern worth discussing in the present context is criterion 4, which was added to the existing set of criteria in 2013. At the time, the ICMJE explained its reasons for introducing this new criterion:

Authorship involves not only credit for the work but also accountability. The addition of a fourth criterion was motivated by situations in which individual authors have responded to inquiries regarding scientific misconduct involving some aspect of the study or paper by denying responsibility ("I didn't participate in that part of the study or in writing that part of the paper; ask someone else"). Each author of a paper needs to understand the full scope of the work, know which co-authors are responsible for specific contributions, and have confidence in co-authors' ability and integrity. When questions arise regarding any aspect of a study or paper, the onus is on all authors to investigate and ensure resolution of the issue. (ICMJE 2013)

One might have reservations about this requirement in highly multi- or interdisciplinary contexts, which can occur in music and minority studies, or in research involving a significant division of labor in the empirical work. Is it reasonable to expect every co-author to be held accountable for all the content in a publication when some elements extend far beyond their field of expertise or the scope of the empirical work in which they were directly involved (see COPE 2014: 3; Ali 2021: 289)?

In the vast majority of cases, I agree with the ICMJE “that each author remains accountable for the work as a whole by knowing who did what, by refraining from collaborations with co-authors whose integrity or quality of work raises concerns, and by helping to resolve questions or concerns if they arise” (ICMJE 2013). While I problematize this position with regard to non-academic co-authors below, I see no problem with this demand for professional scholars. The latter can reasonably be expected to establish a mutual understanding of the publication’s contents, which, combined with well-founded trust in each other’s integrity, would allow them to feel comfortable being jointly accountable. Creating such a working basis would undoubtedly be in their best interest. It would also be important to appropriately indicate in the context of a publication when, for example, certain parts are based on the field experience of a single individual. In such cases, the public would clearly see that individual accountability is limited, while each co-author would still be responsible for determining whether their colleagues are trustworthy.

M&M’s Authorship Criteria

The previous discussion has established that there are no compelling reasons to reject the ICMJE criteria as a basis for defining authorship in the context of M&M. M&M’s authorship criteria are:

1. Substantial contributions to the conception or design of the work; or the creation, acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of data for the work; AND
2. Drafting the work or reviewing it critically for important intellectual content; AND
3. Final approval of the version to be published; AND
4. Agreement to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved. (M&M n.d.)

In line with the critical evaluation set out in the previous section, these essentially represent the current ICMJE criteria.¹⁰ Only “creation of data” has been added to the list of

¹⁰ The criteria of *Ethnomusicology* and *Ethnomusicology Forum*, defined by the generic policies of their publishers UI Press (n.d.) and Taylor & Francis (n.d.), differ in non-essential ways from the ICMJE version. The CUP (2023: 6) criteria used by *Traditions of Music and Dance* connect the first three criteria with a non-exclusive “and/or.” This makes their interpretation ambiguous, and they seemingly permit problematic authorship practices, like honorary, guest, or gift authorship, by allowing individuals to be listed as authors who have not contributed substantially to the work.

accomplishments in criterion 1. Since research data in music and minority studies is often co-created or generated through the social interaction integral to ethnographic research rather than acquired, as discussed above in relation to ethnomusicology in general, we deemed it appropriate to explicitly include this item.¹¹ Furthermore, creation of data in a narrower sense can play an important role. For instance, musicians or dancers may perform specifically to create extensive documentary recordings intended for in-depth analysis. It goes without saying that “creation of data” refers only to the creation of legitimate research data, not to the forging or deceptive manipulation of data. Interpreting our criteria in such a misleading way would conflict with the generally accepted standards of research integrity affirmed in M&M’s policy on “Research Ethics and Research Integrity.”

Furthermore, M&M endorses the ICMJE-derived standpoint that “[a]nyone who fulfils these criteria must be listed as a co-author” and that “individuals who meet the first criterion should be given a realistic opportunity by the corresponding author to fulfil the remaining three criteria and thereby become co-authors” (M&M n.d.). To promote transparency in the attribution of credit and accountability, co-authored texts published in M&M “should be accompanied by an Authors’ Contribution Statement that describes each co-author’s role in the work” (ibid.).¹²

Non-Author Contributorship

M&M’s general position is that only individuals who fulfil all four criteria should be listed as authors. Our policy also includes guidelines for acknowledging non-author contributorship (see also ICMJE 2025: 3). Those who meet only some of the criteria, particularly criterion 1, should be mentioned in the acknowledgments section of an article. Other individuals who made relevant contributions not mentioned in the authorship criteria may also be mentioned. These contributions “may include, but are not limited to, provision of feedback on the manuscript, creation of translations, digitization of analogue sources, supervision, or project administration” (M&M n.d.).

M&M did not adopt the Contributor Roles Taxonomy (CRediT), which might seem like a suitable solution for this purpose. Developed by the National Information Standards Organization (NISO), CRediT was approved as an American National Standard by the American National Standards Institute in 2022 (ANSI/NISO Z39.104-2022; see NISO 2022). CRediT is intended to enable more inclusive, consistent, transparent, and standardized recognition of contributions to research beyond what is conventionally covered

¹¹ Of course, other activities can occur that can adequately be characterized as acquisition or collecting of data, such as archival research or surveying of social media content. See McNutt et al. (2018: 2558) for an adaptation of the list of accomplishments tailored to research practices in the natural sciences.

¹² The policy also includes guidelines on name ordering and on providing evidence that every author mentioned is informed of a submission and endorses it. These elements of the policy can be ignored in the context of the present discussion.

by authorship (ibid.: 7). However, CRediT is a closed system of predefined roles modeled on STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) research. Because of this, it may not fit well with research processes and roles in music and minority studies. For example, performing for a documentary recording would have to be classified as “Resources – Provision of study materials, reagents, materials, patients, laboratory samples, animals, instrumentation, computing resources, or other analysis tools” (ibid.: 8) because performing provides “study materials.” It is entirely unclear which of the 14 roles should be assigned to someone providing music or dance lessons to a scholar, as none of the roles cover “training” or similar services. In a field that counts “learning to perform” (Baily 2001) to be one of its core methods, this is a significant shortcoming. Nevertheless, it is worth consulting the CRediT standard and related discussions to broaden one’s perspective on the numerous vital tasks that support research yet often go unrecognized as they do not qualify for claiming authorship.

The Special Provisions for Co-Authorship by Non-Academic Research Partners

What has been said so far applies unconditionally to academic (co-)authors and academic non-author contributors. “Academic author or non-author contributor” refers to individuals who have finished or are pursuing an academic degree. These individuals often work or seek careers in higher education and research; and they are involved in the research underlying a given text because of their particular academic – scientific, scholarly, or artistic – background. For these individuals, a journal article is usually a prestigious piece of work and a form of cultural capital – or at least, it generally counts as such within the scholarly community. As discussed above, attribution of authorship therefore has to be consistent and in line with widely accepted standards. The four authorship criteria must be applied without any exceptions, as relaxing them would open the door to undesirable practices.

However, M&M’s policy contains special provisions for co-authorship with non-academic research partners. “Non-academic research partners” refers to close collaborators who do not have and are not pursuing an academic degree, and whose primary life activities take place outside of, and for purposes other than, academic scholarship. As mentioned above, these partners often play an indispensable role in the essentially collaborative production of knowledge that characterizes much of ethnomusicological research.¹³ In this sense, these research partners are co-creators of data and interpretations. In addition to this factual assessment, there is a normative view that continuous in-depth and eye-level collaboration between academic researchers and members of the social groups under study is an urgent ethical and political responsibility of pro-

¹³ For a more detailed discussion, see Sharif (2024: 106–107).

gressive research in ethnomusicology. This point has been made in several presentations and discussions during the seminal ICTM Dialogues of 2021, for example.¹⁴ Similarly, MMRC's guiding principle of "dialogic knowledge production" (MMRC n.d.) reflects this stance. If these considerations are accepted, one could argue that key non-academic partners in the field often make a "substantial contribution" in the sense of criterion 1 of the ICMJE/M&M authorship criteria. In accordance with these policies, as well as in line with the normative stance on collaboration in ethnomusicology, key non-academic research partners should therefore be actively enabled to qualify for authorship – as long as they are willing.

Assuming a willingness to be involved as co-authors, to what extent can such key non-academic research partners be expected to fulfil the other three criteria and actually attain authorship? Firstly, participating in the collaborative creation of a scholarly article is time-consuming, involving several iterations of writing, reading, and revising until a manuscript is deemed ready for submission. After peer review, further minor or major revisions usually follow that the author team must agree upon. Non-academic research partners may not always have the time to contribute to this work alongside their other more urgent obligations, especially since scholarship is not their profession.

Secondly, collaborative authoring in contemporary academia depends on the availability of appropriate IT technology (such as computers and word processors) and internet access (for exchanging drafts or working on online writing platforms). While many non-academic research partners will easily meet these technological requirements, there are plenty of regions around the world where they are unavailable. Additionally, the practical knowledge necessary to understand and comply with the workflows, tasks, conventions, and requirements of collaborative scholarly authoring should not be underestimated. These processes may appear opaque to outsiders of academia and have an exclusionary effect.

Thirdly, meeting criteria 2–4 requires a sufficient level of language proficiency. Like most ethnomusicology journals, M&M only accepts manuscripts written in English. The existence of such a widely accepted lingua franca undoubtedly enables extensive international exchange within the scholarly community. At the same time, however, it creates an imbalance between scholars who are native English speakers or who have had access to high-quality English-language instruction, and those who have not, disadvantaging the latter in their ability to contribute to international discourse. Clearly, the requirement to publish in English can create similar, if not higher, barriers for non-academic research partners.

Fourthly, not just any English language skills are needed. Rather, one must have a passive and active command of specific academic techno- and sociolects, as well as the corresponding discursive rules, in order to critically understand and contribute to an

¹⁴ See Tan and Ostaszewski (2022, especially dialogues 4, 11, and 12); see also Araújo (2008), Gilman and Fenn (2019: 22), or Hemetek and Kölbl (2023: 33). For a more critical perspective on the turn towards collaboration in ethnomusicology, see Teitelbaum (2022).

academic text. Non-academic research partners are – by definition, so to speak – unlikely to possess these skills.

Finally, as previously discussed, even academic scholars may feel insecure outside their specific fields of expertise. Therefore, they may be reluctant to take responsibility for other authors' contributions, as required by criterion 4, in multi- or interdisciplinary constellations. Non-academic partners are even more likely to feel this unease because they have a more fragmented understanding of the academic knowledge mobilized by their co-authors, which provides the fundamental framework of a scholarly text. Furthermore, non-academic research partners may not be able to accurately assess the potential reputational damage that could arise from being associated with texts or individuals whose integrity is called into question. While this potential damage would primarily concern the context of the scholarly community, it may also have consequences for non-academic research partners in the non-academic world in conceivable cases.

In many cases, it may therefore not be feasible for non-academic research partners to attain authorship, if they are treated equally with academic authors. They would rather be relegated to the acknowledgements section. Would such equal treatment be fair? Our policy asserts that “the denial of proper co-author status may be deemed an unfair structural devaluation of a non-academic research partner’s crucial contributions to the work” (M&M n.d.). Therefore, the policy states that “exceptions may be made from the general criteria and co-authorship may be credited without complete fulfillment of all four criteria” (ibid.). Since this option is only available in the case of non-academic research partners, i.e., individuals who operate outside of the academic system, such exceptional treatment does not represent a problematic circumvention of the meritocratic standards prescribed by the system for those operating within it.

Our policy states that “M&M encourages co-authorship with non-academic research partners, such as musicians or dancers who belong to a minority discussed in the article, as a way to facilitate dialogic knowledge production in scholarship” (ibid.). However, we do not want to encourage scholars to exploit the cultural prestige of their non-academic research partners for career advancement by merely adding their partners' names to the byline without giving them sufficient opportunity to co-create the text, or at least approve it. In this context, it is important to note that the involvement of non-academic co-authors does not necessarily diminish an academic author's perceived merit. When, for example, two *academic* authors collaborate, some observers, such as tenure evaluation committees, may deem the resulting publication less valuable. The rationale is that co-authored publications involve less work for the individual co-authors due to labor division – a debatable argument to begin with. However, having a non-academic co-author in the byline may be interpreted by other scholars as an indicator of an academic's presumed ethical – as well as scholarly and politically progressive – approach to research, lending epistemological weight and credibility to the academic's arguments. In Les W. Field's words, the text is endowed with a “collaborative glow” (1999: 21). Thus, in an ethnomusicological environment that values collaboration, including a non-academic co-author can confer cultural capital upon academics, which

may subsequently translate into tangible benefits. In this regard, there is an incentive for ethnomusicologists to instrumentalize the names of non-academic research partners, though not necessarily to involve them closely in the creation of the text.

Such a practice would be ethically problematic and should be avoided. Accordingly, the option to make exceptions from the authorship criteria should not enable superficial forms of academic/non-academic co-authorship that lack substantial collaboration beyond the original empirical research. To prevent this, our policy requires corresponding authors to “do everything in their power to involve every mentioned co-author as far as possible in the creation of the manuscript, for example, by discussing the content face-to-face and obtaining oral feedback” (M&M n.d.). For transparency and accountability purposes, any “exceptions should be clarified and justified in the Authors’ Contribution Statement” (ibid.).

How to facilitate the involvement of non-academic research partners as co-authors in music and minority studies, and how to efficiently document this process, is a case-by-case matter. Different constellations require different solutions, and scholars in the field must develop and test practices with their research partners.¹⁵ M&M will gladly offer a forum for reports and discussions about successful and unsuccessful attempts in this regard.

Nevertheless, there are existing models to build upon. While I cannot provide an exhaustive review in this editorial, I would like to mention two examples. The first, “Piman Songs on Hunting” (Bahr, Giff, and Havier 1979), is quite old. The article includes the following statement:

The coauthors of this paper brought different skills to bear on it. They came together on the subject of songs in 1976. Manuel Havier, a Papago, sang the deer and cow sets. He has been singing songs for Bahr, a white anthropologist, since 1973, but more intensively since 1976 when Bahr decided to take up songs in earnest with Joseph Giff’s help. Giff is a Pima.

Havier is a man of few spoken words at this stage in his life as a master singer. In this he is like other Piman singers who seem to have songs on their minds most of the time, and to speak very little. He was not asked to pass on the interpretations in this paper, but was simply asked for his approval to be listed as coauthor in a publication aimed primarily at whites. Havier’s skill, in short, is the learning and singing of songs. He keeps scores of sets of curing songs in his mind, is able to call them up on a few minutes notice, and is able to sing them through flawlessly.

Giff and Bahr discussed the two sets of Havier’s songs in the course of nearly weekly meetings from 1976 to the present. The meetings have been devoted to a variety of musical topics. Bahr chose to build a paper around these two sets out of the great many songs from various singers that he and Giff have discussed. Giff’s poor eyesight prevented him from reading a final draft of the paper. It was written by Bahr and read to Giff for his approval. He does not necessarily stand behind every word of interpretation although he didn’t reject any of it. The interpretation is best taken as Bahr’s work, which

¹⁵ See also the discussion in Lassiter (2005: 144–146).

could not have been done without Giff's comments and explanations and without the songs of Havier. (ibid.: 268)

This is quite remarkable for the time it was published. The statement explains who did what and why each person is listed in the byline. It clarifies that Havier contributed as an expert performer but was not otherwise involved in the article. Therefore, readers know not to hold him accountable for the content of the article beyond the song performances. In terms of M&M's authorship policy, he only fulfilled criterion 1. Since Bahr collaborated more closely with Giff on the analysis and interpretation of the songs, and made reasonable efforts to obtain his feedback and approval of the manuscript (criteria 1–3), it can be assumed that Havier was not excluded in bad faith, but had indeed no interest in participating. However, Bahr seems to have felt it was important to mention Havier as a co-author in such a scholarly article given his crucial role, unless Havier had explicitly declined. Notably, Bahr does not hide behind the cultural authority of his Indigenous research partners to immunize his work against criticism. He does not present himself as merely communicating their knowledge and interpretations; rather, he hints at partial disagreements and bears the brunt of the responsibility.¹⁶ Thus, only Bahr fulfils criterion 4, which seems honest and ethically responsible. Assuming the account in this statement is truthful, the practice and the documentation thereof could still serve as a possible model for implementing and documenting co-authorship with non-academic research partners today.

A more recent example is “Cultural Precedents for the Repatriation of Legacy Song Records to Communities of Origin,” by Sally Treloyn, Matthew Dembal Martin, and Rona Googninda Charles (2016). In addition to information about the three co-authors' collaborative work underlying the article, which is provided in the main text (ibid.: 96), the article contains the following note:

A version of this paper was prepared by Treloyn with Martin and presented (by Treloyn) at the Annual Meeting of the Society for Ethnomusicology at the University of Pittsburgh, USA, 13–16 November 2014. The paper that appears in print was further developed by Treloyn, with Martin and Charles, in 2015 and 2016. Charles reviewed the completed manuscript with Martin in the Mowanjum Community prior to submission, and Treloyn, Charles and Martin met in June 2016 to discuss the revised manuscript following receipt of peer reviews. The introduction and conclusion are authored by Treloyn; the main body of the paper is co-authored by Treloyn, Martin and Charles, however any error remains the responsibility of the lead author. (ibid.: 100)

Though less verbose than the example by Bahr, Giff, and Havier (1979), this note nevertheless contains concise information on how each co-author contributed to the article, how the process of collectively creating the manuscript was implemented (including, especially, on-site meetings), and the extent to which each co-author should be held accountable. Judging from the statement, all co-authors fulfil criteria 1–3. However, only

¹⁶ It is also noteworthy that the main body of text contains differentiating indicators like “we,” “Bahr and Giff,” or only “Bahr” when making certain statements.

Treloyn, the professional academic and presumably the driving force behind the article, completely fulfils criterion 4.

These are just two examples that may serve in some cases as models or sources of inspiration. Different situations may require different solutions to facilitate and document co-authorship with non-academic research partners. Clearly, such co-authoring is rarely a simple task, requiring a significant amount of careful work by everyone involved. Yet, scholars should not shy away from it out of convenience. Extending collaborative scholarly practices to publishing is not only recommended from specific ethical or political standpoints, but also epistemologically promising in that it extends dialogicity to the ultimate stages of scholarly analysis. This does not necessarily have to result in a consensus, but could potentially lead to a polyphony of diverging or even contradictory interpretations. These interpretations might actually represent complex socio-cultural phenomena and states of affairs more accurately than a glossed-over monophonic account. The transparent documentation of such authoring and publishing efforts will hopefully result in their increased recognition within the meritocratic system, such as during tenure-track evaluations (see also Swijghuisen Reigersberg 2019: 339).

Conclusion

Much more could be said about authorship criteria and authorship in general in music and minority studies, ethnomusicology, and related fields. Our new policy also addresses the use of AI in research and writing, a topic not even touched upon in this editorial. This is a discussion that will have to wait for another occasion, as it extends well beyond questions of authorship. For now, suffice it to say that generative AI chatbots, such as ChatGPT and Claude, cannot qualify as authors according to the policies of M&M and the ICMJE because they lack consciousness, which is essential for *critically* reviewing and *approving* a text, as well as *agreeing* to be accountable for all aspects of the work. Some may argue that, like humans, machines can make substantial contributions, as defined by criterion 1, as long as this is not understood as being necessarily grounded in conscious effort. However, machines are never able to fulfil criteria 2–4. Accordingly, our policy states that “authors are unconditionally accountable for all manuscript content, underlying data, and analyses or interpretations created by or with the help of AI, including full responsibility for potential plagiarisms or fabrications” (M&M n.d.).

I hope that the discussions and considerations outlined in this editorial will encourage a broader debate on the concept of authorship and experimentation with authoring practices in music and minority studies, ethnomusicology, and beyond. As critical discussions unfold and practices evolve, our policy will also need to evolve based on the collective theoretical and practical wisdom of our field. This would be a very welcome long-term result of the efforts of our journal.

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