Interest in applied ethnomusicology has increased considerably in recent decades. However, theorization of the field is still in its early stages. Building on initial work in this direction (see Sheehy 1992, Titon 1992, Pettan 2008), this article formulates an epistemological basis for understanding a complex series of applied ethnomusicologies that are diverse in conceptual and discursive approach to research and practice. The aim of this article is to discuss diversities of epistemology by examining different definitions of applied ethnomusicology as proposed by practitioners in the field. I propose the concept of the epistemic community as a method of theorizing about the field as well as a methodology to be used on the field in efforts to analyze the methods of scholars and other people involved.

From North American and comparative international perspectives, I analyze epistemologically informed directions of applied ethnomusicology, as represented in English-language literature, primarily from the 1990s to the present. My focus is on the implications of different conceptualizations, guidelines, and definitions of the emerging field that have been proposed by scholars. Such ideas and discourses are based on a whole range of practical actions. Today, it is often required of humanistic studies that they demonstrate their usefulness; knowledge as such seems to be less valued. Therefore, applied ethnomusicology will probably be more frequently part of ethnomusicology curriculums in the near future. Ongoing discussions of the features of applied ethnomusicology indicate a complex and dynamic field that is reacting to social and cultural changes. Understandings of the validity, method, and scope of applied ethnomusicology, including its disciplinary influences, differ noticeably and fluctuate over time among individual scholars, scholarly collectives, national contexts, institutional political contexts both academic and corporate, and field research sites. How can ethnomusicologists understand the diverse epistemologies of applied ethnomusicology vis-à-vis efforts to formulate common goals? How is
the field of applied ethnomusicology defined and presented by its practitioners
and, more precisely, which kinds of epistemologies and epistemic communities
can be identified in it?

The term “epistemic community” refers to a collective of people—including,
for instance, ethnomusicologists, musicians, community members, or people
from other disciplines—who work together toward solving and analyzing
a particular problem or issue-area whose terms are epistemologically defined
(developed from Haas 1992). Epistemology refers to processes of “understand-
ing such concepts as belief, memory, certainty, doubt, justification, evidence
and knowledge, and . . . enquiring into the criteria for the application of such
terms and so, in particular, the criteria for identifying, in Bertrand Russell’s
phrase, ‘the scope and limits of human knowledge” (Cooper 1999:1–2).

Applied Ethnomusicology: Academic Disciplinary Influences

Several disciplinary histories of applied ethnomusicology’s definitions and
guidelines involve what I will identify as productive areas of difference in epis-
temology: theories of knowing in relation to validity, method, and scope. After
Steve Fuller, I am less interested in “what people ‘really believe’ (whatever that
means) than in how knowledge operates as a principle of social organization—
for example, by motivating people to act in certain ways with regard to each
other and their environments” (2002:x). Thus, I will expand on work relevant to
ethnomusicology and on epistemology by Cook (2006), Hoffman (1978), Feld
(1994), and many others. Analyzing people’s motivations for acting in certain
ways in their interactions with each other and their environments is essential
to understanding music’s applications in different localities and sociopolitical
realities, as well as in regard to applied ethnomusicology or ethnomusicologies.
Although the development of applied ethnomusicology as a set of practices is
contingent and emergent, applications in general could be much more critically
informed with regard to epistemology.

Academic disciplinary influences on applied ethnomusicology show evi-
dence of at least two interrelated branches of the field that have engaged different
questions and debates about epistemology—one involving applied anthropology
and the other public folklore. The discipline of applied anthropology has been
influential within the International Council for Traditional Music (henceforth
ICTM). In 2007, forty-four ethnomusicologists from around the world gathered
to form the society’s Study Group on Applied Ethnomusicology, and in the pro-
cess defined applied ethnomusicology. Using a definition of applied anthropol-
ogy from Spradley and McCurdy (2000:411) as a guide, founding chairperson
Svanibor Pettan—a Slovenian ethnomusicologist whose applied work has had an
impact in his native Croatia—collated ideas from the group into the following
definition: “Applied ethnomusicology is the approach guided by principles of social responsibility, which extends the usual academic goal of broadening and deepening knowledge and understanding toward solving concrete problems and toward working both inside and beyond typical academic contexts” (http://www.ictmusic.org/group/applied-ethnomusicology, accessed 25 May 2012).

Recommendations of field methodologies for applied ethnomusicology that engage with applied anthropology or related cultural theory have emerged in the context of national and international debates about distinctions between "pure" and "applied" research. Applied ethnomusicology, one might argue, including its critical discourse on exactly this point, began with the origins of ethnomusicology as a discipline. Alan Merriam famously asked whether the ultimate aim of any study of man . . . [involves] . . . the question of whether one is searching out knowledge for its own sake, or is attempting to provide solutions to applied practical problems” (Merriam 1964:42–43 in Davis 1992:363).1 Recent discussions, which I will interpret as showing differences and tensions related to methodology and epistemology, also build on Daniel Avorgbedor, who, quoting George Foster’s definition of applied anthropology—which stresses the use of “theoretical concepts, factual knowledge, and research methodologies” (emphasis in original) in order “to ameliorate contemporary social, economic, and technological problems”—wrote that the distance between value-laden and “value free” research is not as great as proponents of the latter might lead us to believe (Foster 1969:vii in Avorgbedor 1992:49). As Robert Merton argued in 1973, “The initial formulation of the scientific investigation has been conditioned by the implied values of the scientist” (Merton 1973 in ibid.).

In Applied Ethnomusicology: Historical and Contemporary Approaches, the first book explicitly about the field of applied ethnomusicology, Ana Hofman—a Serbian scholar who lives and works in Slovenia—went so far as to argue (Hofman 2010:23) that all ethnomusicological research is value-laden because scholarly work is a “‘socially produced interpretation’ (Stanley 1992:7) in which every representation of the ‘Other’ (the observed) is also the construction of the ‘self’ (the observer) (Geertz 1973:14, 15).” Citing works from anthropology, feminist sociology, cultural and postcolonial theories, intersubjective concepts of fieldwork, and ethnomusicological epistemologies in which fieldwork is defined as “knowing people making music” (Titon 1997:91) as demonstrated by Veit Erlmann, Timothy Rice, Jeff Titon, Virginia Danielson, and Jonathan Stock, Hofman explains that collaboration during ethnographic research implies an applied perspective of the ethnographic method:

As Homi Bhabha suggests, it is a question of political maturity to understand that there are many forms of political actions that obscure the division between the “theoretical” and the “activist” (Bhabha 2004:32). These attitudes destabilise the dichotomy between academic and applied work, . . . show that social interventions
and ethical problems are associated with both of these concepts, and challenge
the idea of knowledge being produced “inside” intellectual communities on the
one hand, and practical “action,” outside of them, on the other (Titon 1992, 315),
confirming that all ethnomusicological work is fundamentally applied and that all
ethnomusicologists are applied ethnomusicologists. (Hofman 2010:24–25)

Indeed, arguments that “all ethnomusicology is applied ethnomusicology”
thread throughout the applied ethnomusicology literature.

Many scholars have argued against a distinction being made between so-
called pure and applied research. Anthony Seeger states practical reasons for
this: “The dichotomy of ‘theoretical’ and . . . ‘applied’ ethnomusicology is false.
The most abstract research can have practical benefits and the most practical
projects can stimulate abstract thinking” (2008:286). Even research seemingly
kept silent on library shelves can be “applied” (Araújo 2008).

Debates about the role of subjectivity in ethnomusicological research are
part of a larger coming-to-terms with the role in the discipline of the epistemic
turn in the humanities since the 1980s and earlier that has challenged positivist
insistence on researcher neutrality and objectivity (cf. Hesse 1980:196), and has
emphasized more self-critical and politicized approaches to the production of
knowledge (Araújo 2009:33–40). Yet the debates’ appearance in applied eth-
nomusicology brings into focus one area of epistemological difference—in the
form of differing epistemologically informed views published by ethnomusicolo-
gists—regarding the scope of research. Part of this concerns the question of to
what extent, for work to be considered applied ethnomusicological, research
questions must be defined in ways that may ameliorate concrete social issues, as
in many recent interpretations of applied ethnomusicology at the ICTM Study
Group on Applied Ethnomusicology, where questions of the research are essen-
tially questions about social problems that engage music (see Harrison, Pettan,
and Mackinlay 2010). In relation to fieldwork methodology, the issue is to what
extent any socially critical application of ethnomusicological skills constitutes
applied ethnomusicology.

Hofman suggests that, in the process of addressing concrete problems
in intersubjective and collaborative ethnomusicological research methodolo-
gies, the socio-political positioning of the research subject interacts (to a degree
whose quantity can be debated) with the researcher’s articulations in a manner
that is part of a very real working out of these problems. She offers the example
of her research on folklore performances and identity politics in the socialist
former Yugoslavia, where scholars were actively involved in the promotion and
development of folk culture in the context of state projects that constructed and
implemented national policy, and therefore the “problem” of governance (Hof-
man 2010:30–31).

By contrast, Brazilian ethnomusicologist Samuel Araújo has critiqued no-
tions of social hierarchy in applied (social) anthropology work, for instance in the subject’s first university level courses—offered by Radcliffe Brown in 1920s South Africa—which aimed “to provide trained personnel to posts in the colonial administration as a way of counterweighing difficulties or even failures in public policies, in other words between administrators and administrated peoples. While both the legitimacy and asymmetry of this relationship were to remain for the most part unquestioned, it opened a new job market for trained anthropologists and at least one reputed ethnomusicologist, John Blacking” (Araújo 2008:16). The previous and following statements situate Araújo’s presentation of four case studies from Brazil that show how local community demands have affected objectives and approaches to knowledge production in ethnomusicology. Araújo questions “applied anthropologists’ frequently uncritical acceptance of ‘modernization’ or ‘development,” and draws an epistemological contrast between involved “commodity driven worldviews” (ibid.:16) and his own building of horizontal social connections through participatory research strategies inspired by Paulo Freire. The former would include scholarly expertise as a commodity, which could be read into another adaptation of Spradley and McCurdy by Pettan that identifies four directive moves in applied ethnomusicology:

1. Action ethnomusicology: any use of ethnomusicological knowledge for planned change by the members of a local cultural group. 2. Adjustment ethnomusicology: any use of ethnomusicological knowledge that makes social interaction between persons who operate with different cultural codes more predictable. 3. Administrative ethnomusicology: any use of ethnomusicological knowledge for planned change by those who are external to a local cultural group. 4. Advocate ethnomusicology: any use of ethnomusicological knowledge by the ethnomusicologist to increase the power of self-determination for a particular cultural group. (Pettan 2008:90, after Spradley and McCurdy 2000:411)

Increasingly dominant, though, is the encouragement of “theorisation of applied ethnomusicology categories and approaches that centre on horizontal and intercultural dialogue together with musical communities, including with musical practitioners who are highly skilled in different, culturally valuable domains” (Harrison and Pettan 2010:16). This is evidenced by terms that address the impact of ethnomusicology and “are more bottom-up than top-down,” such as engagement, advocacy, and activism (Bithell 2011:235).

The history of applied ethnomusicology further includes various scholars who have been influenced by discourses of folklore and folk music—which in turn, involve social, cultural and political differences of epistemology. For instance, in Finland folk music scholars and ethnomusicologists became politically active in the 1960s, which, as Vesa Kurkela writes, led in 1979 to the founding of the Institute of Workers’ Music that, for purposes of music preservation and promotion, initially focused on “multi-track recordings of ethnic music
in fieldwork conditions, the making of phonographic records [and] organizing festivals” (1994:405). In the 1970s, politics and activities in Finnish music research were caught up in strong, conflict-ridden pressures toward and away from communism that shaped the academic and intellectual circles of Finnish society. In 1981, the Institute of Workers’ Music was renamed the World Music Centre, with the key tasks of “collating, recording and distributing information about global music culture” (http://www.globalmusic.fi/, accessed 13 February 2012). It was common to see what Kurkela calls political U-turns away from a socialist promotion of folk culture when being communist was no longer beneficial. Like most European folk music research, the Finnish case was grounded in comparative musicology, especially in the early 1900s (in the scholarship of Ilmari Krohn, Armas Launis, and A. O. Väisänen, among others), and since the 1970s, methodological models of music anthropology within an intellectual atmosphere of a national interest in folklore (ibid.).

In the United States, by contrast, a history of scholars who did applied work while straddling ethnomusicology and public sector folklore is well documented by Daniel Sheehy and Jeff Titon. From the late nineteenth century to the 1960s, these included John Lomax, Robert Winslow Gordon, Benjamin Botkin, Charles Seeger, Herbert Halpert, and Alan Lomax (see Sheehy 1992:325–29); since the 1950s, they include Ken Goldstein, Bess Lomax Hawes, Bill Ferris, and Ralph Rinzler (see Titon with Fenn 2003:131), for example. Public sector folklore—a subcategory within the discipline of folklore devoted to applied work—was particularly influential in shaping the mission statement of the Applied Ethnomusicology Committee of the Society for Ethnomusicology (henceforth SEM). Martha Ellen Davis and Doris J. Dyen, who later became co-chairs of the proposed SEM committee when the SEM Board approved it, drafted the mission in 1998. Thirty-eight founding committee members then ratified the mission. At the time, Davis was associate director of Latin American Studies at the University of Florida, while Dyen was Director of Cultural Conservation at Steel Industry Heritage Corporation in Homestead, Pennsylvania. Davis had already proposed guidelines for applied ethnomusicology based on public sector folklore; they focused on music conservation and saw ethnomusicologists addressing the general public through performances (including programming) and publications (small-scale works for mass distribution) in the domains of the auditorium, the festival stage, and the popular print and broadcast media (Davis 1992), and Dyen had years of experience in putting this into practice. “In discussing the title for our proposed committee,” Davis recalls, “[Dyen] chose not to call it ‘public sector’ . . . which did not accurately represent the many venues of applied work, such as the private non-profit she was working for. So we decided on ‘applied’ even though applied ethnomusicology was a very unpopular concept among ethnomusicologists at the time” (email, Mar-
tha Ellen Davis, 23 April 2010 and 15 February 2012). The committee mission statement read, “The Applied Ethnomusicology Committee joins scholarship with practical pursuits by providing a forum for discussion and exchange of theory, issues, methods and projects among practitioners and serving as the ‘public face’ of ethnomusicology in the larger community.” Applied ethnomusicology was thus defined in relation to the academy and ethnomusicological interactions outside of the academy.

This mission statement has been maintained since the committee became a section of SEM at the end of 2001. Until 2010, the section's webpage also drew on public folklore when indicating a difference between academic and public applications of ethnomusicology:

The Applied Ethnomusicology Section is devoted to work in ethnomusicology that falls outside of typical academic contexts and purposes. Similar to what is known in the discipline of folklore as work in the “Public Sector,” applied ethnomusicology entails work in areas such as festival and concert organization, museum exhibitions, apprenticeship programs, etc. Members in the applied ethnomusicology section work to organize panel sessions and displays at SEM conferences that showcase this kind of work and to discuss the issues that surround it, as well as to foster connections between individuals and institutions. (http://webdb.iu.edu/sem/scripts/groups/sections/applied/applied_ethnomusicology_section.cfm, accessed 11 November 2010)

Such statements were made in the context of specific historical attitudes toward public folklore and folk music. Perhaps the majority of folklorists in the 1990s accepted the view that academic folklore and public folklore—particularly as done outside of academe—were opposed or separate, although there were efforts not to label academic practitioners as “unapplied” (Baron and Spitzer [1992] 2007:viii). Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett traced the history of the split in the United States to 1970s folklorists such as Richard M. Dorson, who fought to establish folklore as an autonomous discipline, but was “opposed equally to ‘popularization,’ which he saw as largely commercial and exploitative, and to ‘applied folklore,’ which he credited with the nobler aim of making the world a better place.” Kirshenblatt-Gimblett critiqued a disassociation from applied folklore of academic folklore programs that tended to maintain the dichotomy in the 1970s and 80s (1988:140–41). Introducing a parallel example from Europe, Austrian ethnomusicologist Ursula Hemetek writes of the rejection of “applied” music research in eastern bloc countries due to its association with the promotion of folklore, including European folk music, and the political instrumentalization of that kind of research (Hemetek 2006:36). Today, however, many folklorists see public and academic folklore as complementary realms. It also can be remembered that many early members of the SEM applied ethnomusicology committee did not themselves always or ever adhere to the dichotomy. Martha Ellen Davis herself did music conservation work in her academic fieldwork sites of
the Canary Islands and the Dominican Republic (Davis 1992), later being hired to start an oral history program at the Dominican National Archive. Applied ethnomusicologists associated with the SEM section today use methodologies that include and reach far beyond folklore.

Epistemologically informed differences in applied ethnomusicology have specific historical origins. They are often resisted and mediated. The first sentence of the above quotation from the Applied Ethnomusicology Section’s webpage was revised in 2011 to: “The Applied Ethnomusicology Section is devoted to work in ethnomusicology that puts music to use in a variety of contexts, academic and otherwise, including education, cultural policy, conflict resolution, medicine, arts programming, and community music” (http://webdb.iu.edu/sem/scripts/groups/sections/applied/applied_ethnomusicology_section.cfm, accessed 2 November 2011). At the same time, other scholars have adopted the term “public ethnomusicology” to refer to “ethnomusicological activities undertaken primarily outside of universities and directed toward the public” (Seeger 2008:287).

The question of whether applied ethnomusicological work conducted inside and outside the academy is a “mistaken dichotomy” (see Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 1988) or whether the distinction can be usefully made begs discussion. Perhaps the question can be productively reframed as: What are the relationships between the two contexts? One can ask this question vis-à-vis the validation of applied ethnomusicological work, for instance. Nothing comprehensive has been published, for example, on the financial, political, and institutional influences on the currently growing interest in applied work in ethnomusicology. As research funders in contexts of government and industry in the West increasingly privilege real-life applications of knowledge that have market value, often via neoliberal political values, this informs and contributes to the privileging of knowledge that can be applied. Such funding bodies in North America increasingly invest in research areas such as health, science, and technology that have marketable research outcomes and positive economic implications for nation states and corporations. In certain countries that fund and sponsor research that has specified benefits and applications for the nation—as in the Australian government’s funding of four national research priorities through its Australian Research Council—resultant ethnomusicological work is frequently “applied” in that sense.2 On the one hand, how applied ethnomusicologists negotiate the epistemic turn toward applied knowledge on the level of government and industry research support involves not only the perspectives that researchers have agency to create, but also researcher perspectives about applied knowledge that are encouraged by the funders (which may be in conflict with the former).

In universities and colleges, on the other hand, how is the applicability of ethnomusicological research to the institutions and beyond shaped by quanti-
fied research and publication results that are used to evaluate the “progress” and (economic) worthiness of academics to the schools? Drawing a relationship to the corporatization of the university, Martha Ellen Davis has argued that an “emphasis on productive quantity as well as fads in theory discourages risk-taking and scientific diversions—precisely the sources of new ideas—as well as applied projects” (1992:367). Ethnomusicological work also is influenced by universities’ and colleges’ encouragement of teaching pedagogies that stress the application of (ethnomusicological) knowledge by students; these pedagogies include community service learning or community engaged learning (Usner 2010), which are associated with especially good learning outcomes (Alviso 2010) and high student retention. The validation of applied approaches to ethnomusicology and the lack thereof have dynamic histories that flow between governmental, industrial, and educational institutions.

A second set of epistemological differences surrounds the nature of applied ethnomusicology work that is influenced by public sector folklore. Public folklore has been, as Titon puts it, a means “to influence mainstream cultural and economic policy” through promoting cultural tourism and economic development. After all, “particularly in light of the decline of manufacturing jobs, . . . tourist attractions such as folk festivals, ethnic food fairs, exhibits, and the like which feature expressive culture can bring a good deal of money into the local economy” (Titon with Fenn 2003:129). Titon critiques the commercial emphasis of ethnomusicology projects that promote music-cultural tourism, because “professionalization in music is encouraged when cultural tourism is the goal, and professionalization quickly becomes commercialization” (ibid.).

Titon’s critique points to the issue of who defines the scope and method of applied ethnomusicology projects, particularly with regard to employment, for instance in tourism and the cultural and creative industries. Applied ethnomusicology work that responds to certain community needs, or that aims at participating in or developing projects that address problems or develop possibilities, already is defined to a considerable extent by the needs and participants, though not to the exclusion of musicological questions. In the cases where ethnomusicologists are employed to do specific projects, the employer may define parameters of engagement. In the United States, three employer types outlined below facilitate what Tom van Buren identifies as the general areas of endeavor and experience in applied ethnomusicology:

1. the public sector of national, state, and county level arts agencies, museums, and archives;
2. commercial applications, publishing, or music production and promotion; and
3. the research and public programs of regional independent not-for-profit intercultural arts organizations, often known as folklife centers. (2003:61; emphasis added)
In the current ethnomusicology job marketplace in North America, where tenure-track openings have significantly decreased since the Wall Street crash of 2008 and new Ph.D.s increasingly seek employment outside of the university, the question of how non-academic employers define the nature of applied ethnomusicological work is increasingly relevant. Internationally, an epistemological diversity involved in the spectrum of (possible) public sector, commercial, and not-for-profit employers promises further divisions of social, cultural, and political valuation in applied ethnomusicology. Epistemological differences constitute essential information for the theorization of methods and discourses of applied ethnomusicology as the field becomes increasingly variegated in value-infused approaches.

Another set of contrasting approaches to applied ethnomusicology also touches on folklore and applied anthropology but involves definitions. In a special issue of *Folklore Forum* on applied ethnomusicology, Portia Maultsby noted that, for her, applied ethnomusicology includes “[a]ll kinds of work related to presenting, interpreting, representing, and educating broad audiences about different cultures in various contexts, such as schools, museums and archives, public media, public celebrations, and community culture events. Educational activities include public programs, community outreach, curricular and educational material development, teacher training, etc.” (2003:15). Lucy Long, whose understanding of ethnomusicology in the United States was influenced by applied folklore, proposed that “applied ethnomusicology applies scholarly concepts and ethnographically based knowledge of specific traditions to musical presentations for the general public” (2003:100). These definitions elaborate the idea that applied ethnomusicology is “work in ethnomusicology that puts music to use in a variety of contexts” as stated on the webpage of SEM’s Applied Ethnomusicology Section. They contrast this definition to that of the ICTM Study Group on Applied Ethnomusicology, which in 2007 defined applied ethnomusicology as an approach guided by social responsibility principles that works towards solving concrete problems inside and outside of academe (see the definition quoted earlier in this article).

The question of whether applied ethnomusicology puts music or associated research to use (cf. Araújo 2008), or uses ethnomusicology toward solving concrete problems, can be understood as one of the largest schisms in applied ethnomusicology internationally. However, the two approaches can also be seen as part of the same thing, the second approach being a specifically focused take on the first.

Concepts that seem to be most open to possibility in applied ethnomusicology are those that use polyvalent language. Titon introduced the notion of ethnomusicology in the public interest (which to him described certain public sector, applied, active, and practice ethnomusicology) to refer to work that “in-
volves and empowers music-makers and music-cultures in collaborative projects that present, represent, and affect the cultural flow of music throughout the world” (1992:315). From this point of view, many professionals—in addition to ethnomusicologists—could be thought of working for the public interest, which Titon left open to definition: music therapists, managers of symphony orchestras, and rock critics, for instance. Quoting Sheehy, he wrote that “the history of applied ethnomusicology in the United States includes many academics who may not think of themselves as working directly in the public interest but who have, at one time or another, ‘gone out of [their] way to act for the benefit of an informant or a community they have studied’” (Sheehy in ibid.:316–17).

Amy Caitlin informally offered the following motivation for applied ethnomusicology: “ethnomusicology with a sense of purpose, and the purpose is to engender change, to participate fully as scholars in the world of practitioners, and to collaborate with them in the design and creation of new modes of musical being, using all the intellectual tools available to the otherwise ‘normal’ ethnomusicologist” (Caitlin email in Alviso 2003:95). How might one define the polyvalent term “benefit” in the previous characterization and “change” in the latter? In such polyvalent language, epistemological differences are concealed, but may emerge in the scope of multiple interpretations of the language.

**Polyvalence**

Different meanings of the same words and phrases—including the described and numerous other denotations of “applied” and “applied ethnomusicology”—have become bases upon which to (re)envision the historical foundations of applied ethnomusicological work. Gage Averill, for instance, conceived of applied ethnomusicologists as types of “public intellectuals” (Collini 2002:210) within a sense of purposefulness in and responsibility to the public sector. Averill locates his view as being “consonant with Jürgen Habermas’ notion of a rational public sphere of reasoned, democratic, collectivist discourse (‘communicative reason’) and enlightened citizenship” (Averill 2003:50; cf. Averill 2010). Titon located one history of applied ethnomusicology in the history of the anti-theoretical movement of the 1980s. “Applied” then connoted the elevation of practice over theory, what Rorty called “small-p pragmatism,” an idea in line with then-current theorists (Michel Foucault, Edward Said, Hayden White, Roland Barthes, Susan Stewart, Stanley Fish, etc.) who conceived of “truth” as shifting and grounded in situational human experience, but within Rorty’s famous perspective that philosophy was dead (Titon 1992:320). A different history of applied ethnomusicology, shaped by different working conditions, has been articulated in Vietnam. At the second symposium of the ICTM Study Group on Applied Ethnomusicology in Hanoi in July 2010, Vietnamese participants observed that although Vietnam
has not had any office or formal training institute in applied ethnomusicology, activities relevant to possible definitions of applied work have been conducted since about 1960 through the engagement of the Vietnamese state in music matters, and have been supported through ethnomusicological training provided by the country’s Folk Culture Research Institute and its Institute of Cultural Research. Many national histories of applied ethnomusicology, such as this one, have been informally articulated so far.

The discourse of applied ethnomusicology methods arguably is held together by the polyvalence of notions of applied (ethnomusicology) and associated terms as well as by polyvalent aspects of institutionalized definitions and widely shared guidelines. For instance, the notion of social responsibility, articulated in the ICTM’s Study Group on Applied Ethnomusicology’s definition of applied ethnomusicology, involves a complex bundle of epistemological associations. The financial and corporate influences on applied ethnomusicology have been inadequately explored. Interestingly, the term “social responsibility” is most frequently used within business management and in the phrase corporate social responsibility. Corporate social responsibility was defined by Keith Davis in 1960 as referring to business “decisions and actions taken for reasons at least partially beyond the firm’s direct economic or technical interest” (Davis 1960 in Carroll 1991:39–40). In 1961, Eells and Walton argued that corporate social responsibility refers to “problems that arise when corporate enterprise casts its shadow on the social scene, and the ethical principles that ought to govern the relationship between the corporation and society” (Eells and Walton 1961 in Carroll 1991:39–40). Some writers have shifted the focus to the social responsiveness movement, which emphasizes corporate action, pro-action, and implementation of a social role. Some of a proliferation of definitions of corporate social responsibility in the 1970s included the idea that the corporation has not only economic and legal obligations, but ethical discretionary ones as well. Since the mid-1970s, the notion of corporate social performance has encompassed corporate social responsibility, responsiveness, and the spectrum of social engagements that corporate business might entail (Wood 1991; see also Carroll 1999).

Social responsibility theory, another concept evoked by the definition of applied ethnomusicology that mentions social responsibility, is a domain of media theory. The notion—dating from mid- to late 1940s America and deriving from libertarian theory—emerged from the belief, as Peterson articulated it in 1956, that “[f]reedom carries concomitant obligations; and the press, which enjoys a privileged position under our government, is obliged to be responsible to society for carrying out certain essential functions of mass communication in contemporary society” (Peterson [1956] 1963:74). Three relevant aspects of social responsibility theory have been: “(1) servicing the political system by providing information, discussion, and debate on public affairs; (2) enlightening
the public so as to make it capable of self-government; [and] (3) safeguarding the rights of the individual by serving as a watchdog against government” (ibid.).

Social responsibility theory is an activist stance emerging from the belief that the press was deficient in performing these tasks. While social responsibility theory accepts these and other tenets of libertarian theory, such as supporting an economic system and providing entertainment through media, its notion of economic support should not take precedence over the first three objectives, and any entertainment should be “good” entertainment (ibid.). The notions of both corporate social responsibility and social responsibility theory were, at different points, critiqued for their emphases on collective interests, and accused of communist and Soviet alliances (see Friedman 1970; Nerone 1995:78), but within capitalist corporate and media situations. In using the term social responsibility, definitions of applied ethnomusicology connote other scholarly discourses that, based in social valuation, have been factionalized in different ways.

The term initially proposed at the founding of the ICTM study group was not social responsibility, but rather social justice, which was then changed. Social justice is also important to applied ethnomusicology—for example, in Christian strategies in which students are trained at the (Jesuit Catholic) University of San Francisco’s Performing Arts and Social Justice program. Theories of social justice form another epistemological influence on applied ethnomusicology studies, for instance, in applied ethnomusicological work on community service learning (Alviso 2010; Averill 2010), which typically combines

Classroom learning; volunteer work that responds to community-identified priorities; and structured reflection activities that challenge students to make connections between what they are studying and their experiences in the community... Students engage in service activities that contribute to the fulfillment of [an] organization’s mission and goals while learning about the community setting and its predominant issues. The goals are to provide needed labour to the community (the service goal) while at the same time inspiring students to reflect on how their academic knowledge and their personal experiences combine to further their understanding of issues in the community and their roles as citizens (the learning goal). (UBC Learning Exchange 2009)

Overlaying and within the disciplinary-informed definitions, there are guidelines for applied ethnomusicology that reproduce polyvalence in relation to applied work. Sheehy’s four strategies of applied ethnomusicology are perhaps the best known example. Sheehy writes, “Most strategies tried to date that are aimed at affecting the community of origin of a given music... may be viewed as having at least one of four basic qualities: (1) developing new ‘frames’ for musical performance, (2) ‘feeding back’ musical models to the communities that created them, (3) providing community members access to strategic models and conservation techniques, and (4) developing broad, structural solutions
These four strategies draw on sociologist Erving Goffman’s notion of culturally determined frames, whose meanings change between situations and viewers (1974), and on folklorist John Szwed’s referential frames for mapping performer-audience relationships as they may differ in terms of ethnicity, class, occupation, regional culture, generational culture, and other cultural variables (1979). The strategies have been evoked by Australian ethnomusicologist Jennifer Newsome, in relation to Indigenous music research currently being undertaken in Australia, especially that involving recognizing cultural and intellectual property rights, incorporating Indigenous perspectives in research, welcoming Indigenous peoples and communities to consent to and monitor research processes, and allowing Indigenous peoples and communities to acquire tangible benefits as a result of research (2008). According to Titon, these strategies are also implied by Bess Lomax Hawes in her effort to catalyze a musical renewal among unaccompanied African-American gospel quartets in the Birmingham, Alabama, region: a “gospel concert offered a new performance frame in that the accompanying historical booklet became a bureaucratic currency and legitimized performances in other venues such as schools; it fed back to the singers and their families the musical model of the gospel reunion, and it reunited some groups that had ceased performing; and the concert and booklet ‘empowered’ the community studied, allowing the development of legitimate pride” (Lomax Hawes 1992 in Titon 1992:317).

Sheehy’s strategy of “developing new frames for performance” has been evoked in the case of public presentations of European folk music types that were collected by researchers because they were understood to be dying out (Hemetek 2010). As Ursula Hemetek points out, all of Sheehy’s strategies implicate the role of empowerment (Hemetek 2006:37).

What holds applied ethnomusicologies together beyond the polyvalence of terms and guidelines about applied ethnomusicology continues to be a site of negotiation. Pettan (Slovenia) and I (Canada) have suggested that applied ethnomusicology scholars often seek to extend and complement the academic domain, the theoretical (intellectual, philosophical) domain, and ethnographic, artistic, and scientific research (Harrison and Pettan 2010:16–17). Many scholars who self-identify as applied ethnomusicologists also share dissatisfaction with engaging in ethnomusicological research with the primary objective of contributing only new knowledge to the discipline. One perception concerns approaches to ethnomusicology—especially when they are about synthesizing, collating and re-framing knowledge that is available in domains outside of ethnomusicology or has been presented by other scholars already in non-published forms—that benefit the individuals who claim the knowledge, and others invested in institutionalized academic systems of knowledge production and circulation (a.k.a. “academic imperialism” or “scientific imperialism”; see Davis
This view is corroborated by definitions of applied ethnomusicology that, as Jonathan Stock (UK) puts it, focus on “a primary intended output of musical or social benefits, rather than the increase of original scholarly knowledge” (2008:202) although the increase of ethnomusicological knowledge is useful if ethnomusicologists want to work toward enhancing the effectiveness of future applications. Scholars who do applied ethnomusicology projects but take different ethnomusicological approaches while working within the academy do not always critique the flow of knowledge inside intellectual communities.

**Differences in Applied Ethnomusicology**

When theorizing methods of applied ethnomusicology, it is essential to keep in mind that ethnomusicologists, their collaborators, and practitioners “applying” music will make particular evaluations of the terms on which any interventions will be based, and that these evaluations are epistemologically informed by the points of the view of the social actors, which may in turn be influenced by the possible positions and priorities of funders and employers. Different types of situations that present opportunity for evaluation—for example, decolonization (Newsome 2008), racial marginalization (Lomax Hawes 1992), musical sustainability (Impey 2002; Titon 2009), holistic education in “world musics” (Rammarine 2008), and conflict (O’Connell and Castelo-Branco 2010)—will bring together distinctive collections of social, political, and cultural values that apply in specific ways in each instance (possibly diversely in different locations and deeply divergent sociopolitical realities) but can go far beyond the scope of this article to address any of the complex elements that make up contemporary life.

In applied ethnomusicology, scholars may choose to use critical awarenesses of epistemology and epistemological difference as analytical tools. This may serve to enrich scholarly understandings and activities in the horizon of music’s and ethnomusicology’s possible applications.

To this end, I propose that social, cultural, and political epistemological differences in applied ethnomusicology can be associated with different analytical frames of approach that emerge through different epistemologically engaged actors, disciplines, and interests, as well as funding and employment contexts. As Francesca Polleta explains, drawing on the extensive literature on frames in discourse, frames are “interpretive schemata that enable individuals to locate, perceive, identify, and label occurrences within their life space and the world at large” (Snow and Benford 1992:137; Snow et al. 1986:464; see also Tarrow 1994; Zald 1996). Frames combine a diagnosis of the social condition in need of remedy, a prognosis for how to do that, and a rationale for action (Benford and Hunt 1992; Snow and Benford 1988)” (Poletta 1998:139). Different applied ethnomusicologies
can embrace, for instance, musical projects that advocate for the rights of what Pettan (2008) identifies as the five focal groups of contemporary and applied ethnomusicology research—minorities, diasporas, ethnic groups, immigrants, and refugees—or projects that negotiate an axis between the groups’ disempowerment or empowerment. In one direction is Ursula Hemetek’s work on the music of Roma in Austria, who historically suited Max Peter Baumann’s definition of a minority having “the lack of power to define itself, thus leading to its being defined by the dominant majority” (Baumann 2000 in Hemetek 2006:480). They were denied the legal rights of ethnic groups under Austrian legislation, which was possible under the Volkgruppengesetz (Ethnic Groups Act) since 1976 and under Austria’s constitution since 1955. In order to qualify for these rights, the legal designation of Volkgruppe was needed. This required a group to prove that it is an ethnic group, but as Hemetek explains, nation states in Europe from the nineteenth century onwards were defined by ethnic criteria. Recognized Volkgruppe in Austria could easily identify “national” traditions deriving from a former “homeland” as well as “national” cultural practices. A Romani political movement began in 1989 around achieving Volkgruppe status, in which ethnomusicological research was used to make the link between Roma identity and ethnicity while Roma publicly self-identified as ethnic and worked to dispel discrimination. Hemetek acted as a non-profit agent for one Romani singer, promoting her at Austrian folkloric festivals as a performer who offered well-founded information on the Roma. Hemetek also published research on Burgenland Roma music in Austria with the intent to promote the self-identification of Roma (Hemetek 2006). In another direction is the work of Kirsty Gillespie, an Australian ethnomusicologist in an interdisciplinary team of researchers that was contracted by Lihir Gold Limited (henceforth LGL), a large-scale gold mining operation, to develop the Stepping Stones for Cultural Heritage Program for the Lihir Island Indigenous group in Papua New Guinea. Stepping Stones, a ten-day workshop, developed the Lihir Cultural Heritage [Management] Plan—the suggestion of a social impact assessment conducted when the mine decided to increase output to one million ounces of gold per annum. LGL is a signatory to the International Council of Mining and Metals’ ten principles of sustainability, which are corporate social responsibility guidelines that include “[r]espect [for] the culture and heritage of local communities, including indigenous peoples.” The cultural heritage plan resulted in numerous cultural initiatives that so far LGL has funded in an effort to mitigate rapid modernization experienced by Lihir since mining began (Bainton, Ballard, Gillespie, and Hall 2011). In general, however, debates engaging the history and scope of applied ethnomusicology are challenging the role of ethnomusicologists and researcher-researched collaborations in capitalist, imperialist, or colonialist enterprises while also placing different perspectives of intellectual and socio-cultural value on politicized inquiry and social hierarchy.
In life activities, as compared to published snapshots of epistemological attitudes in ethnomusicology scholarship on applications, epistemological attitudes are more fluid and interrelate in complex ways as live humans from different subject positions act and musical activities emerge. The flows of epistemology and difference in applied ethnomusicology-in-action invite further investigation and theorization. For instance, which processes may constitute an epistemologically informed group that does or is the subject of applied ethnomusicological work?

**Epistemic Communities of Applied Ethnomusicology**

As a means toward working further with difference and epistemology in applied ethnomusicology, the notion of the epistemic community is potentially useful. This idea is directed at the addressing and solving of concrete problems and issues, and offers a way of understanding some recent developments of applied ethnomusicology method.

The epistemic community is a notion that has been around for some time, posed by Holzner in 1968 and Ruggie in 1975. John Ruggie borrowed the term *episteme* from Michel Foucault, “to refer to a dominant way of looking at social reality, a set of shared symbols and references, mutual expectations and a mutual predictability of intention” not to the exclusion of the idea that intentions are shaped and re-shaped by social actors (Ruggie 1975 in Haas 1992:26–27). This means that epistemological cohesion is a choice by social actors that occurs within larger fields of epistemological difference that also can influence actors who in turn may choose to refigure an epistemic community or try to influence other epistemic communities.

My definition of an epistemic community, elaborated from political scientist Peter M. Haas’s work in the context of international policy coordination, specifically the provocative idea that ideas inform policies, may describe the activities of scholars of applied ethnomusicology and music practitioners (whose applications ethnomusicologists may research) who work toward addressing or solving concrete problems or issues: an epistemic community is a network of people with expertise and ability in a particular domain and an authoritative or working claim to knowledge within that domain or issue-area. Although an epistemic community may consist of engaged participants from a variety of backgrounds, they have (1) a shared set of normative and principled beliefs, which provide a rationale for the social action; (2) shared causal beliefs, which are derived from analysis of practices leading or contributing to a problem or set of problems which then serve as the basis for elucidating the multiple linkages between possible actions and desired outcomes; (3) shared or accepted notions of analysis for the action; and (4) a common enterprise—that is, a set of common practices associated with the problem or problems to which their
competence is directed, presumably out of the conviction that human welfare will be enhanced as a consequence (inspired by Haas 1992:3).

The main difference between my definition and Haas’s is that I have chosen to include not only “knowledge-based experts” (ibid.:2), but also people with working and authoritative claims to knowledge. Both have roles to play in articulating the cause-and-effect relationships of complex problems that involve music, and in working toward their solution through action and research. Problem solving through musicking (Small 1998) happens normally via groups whose members can have varying levels of expertise and ability. Second, I have tried to build in flexible language with regard to causality. Causality can have many informing factors and many outcomes. I recognize that many applied ethnomusicology scholars explicitly seek to inform theory through practice. One example is the work of Finnish ethnomusicologist Hanna Väätäinen (2009), whose creation of performances with a group of handicapped dancers has been used to develop concepts of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. The special issue of *Ethnomusicology* on Music and the Public Interest (Titon 1992) provides additional examples.

The acknowledgement of epistemic communities may serve as a useful starting point for initiating and examining processes involved in (valued) problem-solving—rationales for social actions, understandings of involved practices, and analyses of results. 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.

In the field (Barz and Cooley 2008), an epistemic community might form around working towards addressing or solving a given issue or set of problems through music—for instance, involving addictions in inner city Indigenous populations (Harrison 2009). Ethnomusicologists may research epistemic communities, may take leadership roles in creating them, or may participate in them. Collections of ethnomusicologists working together on a similar issue may constitute an epistemic community. The notion of the epistemic community offers a framework for understanding and organizing coordinated actions relevant to applied ethnomusicology. Recognizing an epistemic community invites approaching critically its epistemological aspects. Thus, the concept also is useful critical self-reflection on any kind of applied ethnomusicological project.

As Anthony Seeger observes, the successes and failures of applied ethnomusicology projects are often severely underreported (2006:228). Also, applications of ethnomusicology are frequently not well coordinated among scholars. When
developing among ethnomusicologists, epistemic communities surrounding particular “applied” topics can enable the coordination of result analysis (for example through compiling lessons learned about related applications), the coordination of different applications, and the enhancement of understandings of music as it relates to applications.

Some applied ethnomusicologists have already worked toward developing epistemic communities. Kathleen Van Buren (UK), who researches HIV/AIDS in Nairobi, Kenya, and Sheffield, United Kingdom, recently proposed a “to-do” list, after Seeger (2008), for an ethnomusicology of HIV and AIDS. Van Buren encourages applied ethnomusicologists to: “research more; speak more ([in order] to simulate further study and action); unite ([in order to be] effective in . . . research and . . . applied work); collaborate with others in and out of academia (in fact, we may need to collaborate in order to be effective as scholars and activists); act, act, act (we can become more engaged in applied activities); remember that AIDS is not the only issue in need of attention” (2010:218–19; emphasis in original). The five-year Australian research project Sustainable Futures for Music Cultures: Towards an Ecology of Musical Diversity is another example: “led by the Queensland Conservatorium Research Centre (Griffith University, Brisbane) in collaboration with the International Music Council (Paris), the Music Council of Australia (Sydney), the World Music & Dance Centre (Rotterdam), and five other universities around the world, . . . [the project] aims to inform the development of tools and to support vibrant music cultures. These tools include a model to identify and describe the factors affecting sustainability of music genres and an online resource to help communities address challenges to sustainability on their own terms” (Grant 2010:50). If scholars working on HIV/AIDS and music, and on musical sustainability were to make a self-reflection and evaluation in terms of the idea of the epistemic community, they would collectively define their methods, common goals, shared analytical frameworks, and analytical progress on working toward addressing or solving a problem or set of issues in order to avoid, in Anthony Seeger’s words, “reinventing the wheel every time we face a community” (in Grant 2010:50). This would assist with the effectiveness of problem solving through scholarship. The scholars also would be explicit about the epistemological bases for their activities—for instance, regarding how they were conceptualizing notions such as belief, certainty, doubt, justification, evidence, and knowledge—and, in so doing, identify the scope and limits of their community of knowledge. Yet it may be that different communities applying and analyzing music in regard to the same issue or issue-area—which may exist among diverse groups of scholars or communities in the field—have different epistemological bases, or that the communities differ in terms of their methods, goals, and notions of analysis. The identification and understanding of multiple
epistemic communities can assist the ethnomusicologist in communicating and intellectually moving between them, and in contributing to problem solving through an awareness of epistemological difference.

As Haas stresses, epistemic communities should be distinguished from the broader scientific community as well as from whole disciplines and professions. These may share causal approaches and a consensual knowledge base, but they do not share the normative commitments of epistemic communities. Members of a particular sub-group of an academic discipline, however, “may constitute an epistemic community on their own and systematically contribute to a concrete set of projects informed by their preferred views, beliefs and ideas” (1992:19).

Conclusion

This article has described a struggle with regard to epistemology in applied ethnomusicology during recent decades. A comparison can be drawn between this struggle and early debates in the journal _Ethnomusicology_. From the mid-1950s to the 1960s, there was much back-and-forth among scholars about the definitions, descriptions, and purposes of ethnomusicology vis-à-vis musicology and anthropology (for key literature see Kolinksi 1957; Rhodes 1956; Seeger 1961). Alan Merriam suggested that what was “happening in ethnomusicology [was] but a reflection of what happens in almost every field of scientific endeavor as the discipline grows, defines its terms more sharply, and begins, eventually, to develop away from the more specific to the broader and more general” (1960:107). Yet the discipline showed epistemological differences even before it was formally organized. In the 50th Anniversary Commemorative Issue of _Ethnomusicology_, David McAllester told a story about driving together with Willard Rhodes and Alan Merriam to meet Charles Seeger in New Haven, CT, in order to discuss forming what became the Society for Ethnomusicology. McAllester writes, “Willard and I began to while away the time by feeding each other Peyote songs. Alan said, ‘Must you sing?’ He hadn’t heard of bimusicality” (2006:200). An analysis of the epistemological turning points in ethnomusicology in general warrants further investigation.

The struggle to formulate a shared epistemology in applied ethnomusicology since the 1990s has involved the validity, method, and scope of applied ethnomusicology, and is evident in scholarly discourse concerning conceptualizations, guidelines, and definitions of the field. The definitions and guidelines have generally been formulated retrospectively to reflect a much longer history of applications of ethnomusicology.

Certain conceptualizations, guidelines, and definitions that draw on applied anthropology and folklore have involved epistemological differences involving
method and scope. Some debates have considered to what extent research questions must be defined in ways that may ameliorate concrete problems for the work to be considered applied ethnomusicology. They also have shown evidence, in methodologies promoted by researchers, of a conflict between commodity-driven worldviews—which include conceiving of the ethnomusicologist as (paid) expert—and methods that build horizontal social connections, for instance through participatory research strategies. Another epistemological difference involving scope, existing especially in one context in the 1990s, was whether applied ethnomusicological work happens outside of the academy or integrates “applied” aspects into university-related research and teaching, or both. This fissure was articulated in terms of public folklore, which also has inflected (methodological) judgments about the commercial nature of applied ethnomusicology projects that promote cultural tourism and economic development. What may be seen as a schism in applied ethnomusicology internationally exists between those scholars who believe that applied ethnomusicology refers to the application of music or associated research, and those who focus on the solving of concrete problems through ethnomusicological approaches. However, the second category may be interpreted as a subset of the first. Many scholars also identify with polyvalent terminology for ethnomusicology’s applications.

I have questioned who defines and influences the scope and method of applied ethnomusicology research projects—the research funders, the employers, or the researchers and project participants. This question refers to method of application and indexes systems of validation. All of the epistemological differences articulated by applied ethnomusicology scholars in relation to the method and scope of the field have to do with validating what is (desired as) applied ethnomusicology and what is not. Valuation of applied ethnomusicologists’ applications of music exclusive from research has not been discussed extensively in the scholarly literature in English. Applied ethnomusicology, from the standpoint of the epistemological differences elucidated in this article, is still developing a shared set of normative and principled beliefs and a common enterprise. In this way, applied ethnomusicology currently consists of a series of applied ethnomusicologies.

In this article, I have argued that beyond some basic shared sentiments and (polyvalent) terminologies of applied ethnomusicology, what can unite groups of applied ethnomusicologists and applied ethnomusicologists with communities are epistemic communities. The methodological notion of the epistemic community has been proposed here as part of a vision for the enhanced coordination of scholars’ efforts, and for the increased critical understanding of applications of ethnomusicology and music. The theorization of approaches to applied ethnomusicology, including relevant polyvalent dimensions, international disciplinary
histories, and epistemological associations, thus becomes possible as we examine analytical frames of applied ethnomusicology in themselves and in terms of issues of social, cultural, and political power.

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Notes

1. Because this is an American journal, I do not point out the nationality of the American scholars quoted.
2. The Australian government’s four national research priorities are at the time of writing: “an environmentally sustainable Australia; promoting and maintaining good health; frontier technologies for building and transforming Australian industries; and safeguarding Australia” (excerpted from http://www.arc.gov.au/pdf/nrps_and_goals.pdf, accessed 2 November 2011).
3. Many ethnomusicologists who work in a practical way on issues claimed by applied ethnomusicology identify with applied ethnomusicology, but some do not. That is another epistemological difference.
4. Some scholars have questioned whether applied ethnomusicology should place particular value on particular ethics. Titon asks on a blog: Should applied ethnomusicology include ethnomusicological research put to use in torturing political prisoners? It so happens that the United States [military] bombards Muslim “detainees” with loud music, in their efforts to break their resistance and obtain information. Evidently hip-hop is especially loathed, especially Eminem. 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 . . . For the moment applied ethnomusicology can afford, in my view, to be inclusive and expansive. I can imagine a time when it may not be so easy for me to take this view. http://sustainablemusic.blogspot.com/2011/04/curry-lecture-applied-ethnomusicology.html (accessed 24 February 2012)

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