Participatory Ethnomusicology: An Epistemic Approach to Social Justice, Human Rights, and the Sustainability of the Traditional Arts of Minorities

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Abstract: A range of unfortunate circumstances—violence, poverty, unemployment, drug trafficking, displacement, and the like—driven by the forces of conflict, climate change, natural catastrophes, and pandemic have tremendously affected minority groups living across the globe. Social stereotyping, exclusion, stigmatization, discrimination, domination, and prejudice equally impact minority groups based on ethnic identity, race, religion, language, and/or political opinion. This article examines the three key interconnected issues of social justice, human rights, and the sustainability of the traditional arts of minorities in the context of such circumstances. It reflects on the applied ethnomusicology-guided approaches employed in ethnomusicological research in minority studies, including inquiry into new epistemological scenarios in ethnomusicology. It also refers to the theoretical and methodological idea of Participatory Action Research (PAR). Grounded in the principles of applied ethnomusicology and the PAR paradigm, this article proposes and discusses 'participatory ethnomusicology' as an epistemic approach to social justice, human rights, and the sustainability of the traditional arts of minorities. The article presents a participatory collaborative research project conducted with the Nepalese minority immigrant community of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada and demonstrates how the community became the primary actors in the study with shared roles and authority over decision-making at all stages of the research—identifying the key issues of the community and planning, implementing, and reflecting on the research project.

Keywords: *participatory ethnomusicology, Participatory Action Research, social justice, human rights, sustainability of traditional arts*

Introduction

In recent years, we have witnessed devastating waves of the global COVID-19 pandemic, increased risk from the climate crisis, adverse events of natural catastrophes, and depeening conflicts between groups and nations across the world. These ongoing undesirable events and situations are resulting in war, violence, forced migration, immigration, poverty, unemployment, drug trafficking, ethnic cleansing, genocide, and the like, which are profoundly impacting people and communities across the globe—specifically, minority communities.

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Driven by these factors, including discrimination, domination, deprivation, stereotyping, and prejudice based on ethnicity, race, religion, language, gender, and political opinion, minority groups face unique socioeconomic, sociopolitical, and sociocultural challenges pertinent to social justice and human rights (Hemetek, 2006, 2010, 2015; Araújo, 2006; Pettan, 2010; Reyes, 2010). At the same time, such factors are rapidly endangering traditional arts—affecting social functions and intangible expressions, as well as individual and collective identities, embedded languages, and practices—against the will of minority people and humankind in general (Titon 2009a, 2009b; Grant, 2014, 2016; Schippers, 2016)

Ethnomusicologist Timothy Rice (2014), in his persuasive essay 'Ethnomusicology in Times of Trouble' asks, 'Why has it taken so long for ethnomusicologists, and only a few of them at that, to come to grips with an ethnomusicology of troubled times [war, disease, climate change, violence, and tragedies] and places?' (p. 192). The concerns he raised about the times and places of trouble, specifically as it pertains to minorities, are imperative. The question he posed vis-à-vis the role of ethnomusicological studies in such situations is equally or even more relevant today for scholars of ethnomusicology—both mainstream and applied.

This article problematizes and discusses issues of social justice, human rights, and the sustainability of the traditional arts of minority groups. It refers to the growing body of knowledge in the field of ethnomusicology, particularly of applied ethnomusicology, reflecting on the applied work carried out by ethnomusicologists in addressing such issues. It draws ideas from the paradigm of Participatory Action Research—hereafter PAR (Fals-Borda, 1991; McTaggart, 1997; McIntyre, 2008; Kemmis et al., 2014; Lawson, 2015)—and carries out careful observation of the ongoing inquiry into new epistemological scenarios, including the question of reconsidering current practices of theory and method in ethnomusicology (Barz and Cooley, 2008; Araújo, 2008, 2021; Hofman, 2010; Dirksen, 2012; Mackinlay, 2015; Harrison, 2016). The article discusses the relevance of active collaboration, symmetrical relationships, joint decision making, shared authority, and the egalitarian participation of minority researched groups—all of which I refer to in this article as 'participatory ethnomusicology'—in ethnomusicological research. The article further discusses participatory ethnomusicology as an alternative epistemic approach to social justice, human rights, and the sustainability of the traditional arts of minorities. Finally, the article presents a case from my own research engagement with the Nepalese minority immigrant community of Edmonton, Alberta, and elucidates how the local minority community (including community organizations, cultural leaders, traditional knowledge-keepers, local musicians, youth, and children) engaged in an intense participatory ethnomusicologic research project with shared roles and authority in decision-making at all stages of the research—understanding the key cultural issues of the community and planning, implementing, and reflecting on the research outcomes.

Minorities and Social Justice, Human Rights, and Sustainability of Traditional Arts

Human rights, social justice, and the sustainability of traditional arts are interconnected terms. The United Nations defines human rights as:

> rights to all human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status. Human rights include the right to life and liberty, freedom from slavery and torture, freedom of opinion and expression, and the right to work and education, and many more. Everyone is entitled to these rights, without discrimination (United Nations, 2022, Para 1).

Human rights are the rights set out in 'International Human Rights Law', which nations are bound to respect and fulfill. Meanwhile, social justice is a concept or value that refers to the distribution of equal opportunities—health, wealth, public benefits, employment, security,

personal and professional development, and the like—between people in a society (United Nations, 2006). The United Nations defines social justice as:

> an underlying principle for peaceful and prosperous coexistence within and among nations. We uphold the principles of social justice when we promote gender equality, or rights of indigenous peoples and migrants. We advance social justice when we remove barriers that people face because of gender, age, race, ethnicity, religion, culture or disability (United Nations, 2020, Para 1).

The principle of social justice is based on the elements of human rights. To achieve the goal of social justice, the elements of human rights are essential. Thus, human rights are powerful tools to achieve the goal of social justice.

Human rights and social justice have a direct influence on the practice and sustainability of a people's traditional arts. Here, human rights and social justice become key factors for the sustainability of traditional arts. Ethnomusicologist Huib Schippers (2016)—whose work deals greatly with the sustainability of music cultures and who is the developer of the 'five domains framework'[2] for the sustainability of music cultures—defines music sustainability as 'the condition under which music genres can thrive, evolve, and survive' (p. 7). Similarly, among the pioneers of 'sustainability' terminology in the discipline of ethnomusicology, Jeff Todd Titon (2009a) adds an ethical dimension, arguing that, 'all the peoples and their cultures have a right to survive, even to flourish' (p. 6). Titon views music as a biocultural resource (a product of human life) and argues that 'music-making deserves to be encouraged and supported' (p. 6) as it benefits humankind. Ethnomusicologist and developer of the 12 Music Vitality and Endangerment Framework (MVEF) to measure the endangerment level of a music genre, Catherine Grant (2014) uses the term 'music sustainability' to describe the vitality and viability of a music genre. To have such conditions—described by Schippers, Titon, and Grant—where music traditions (or traditional arts in general) can thrive, evolve, survive, and remain at a high level of vitality and viability, a favorable environment is crucial for the music and culture bearers, one in which they can practise, transmit, flourish, and cultivate their traditional arts. These conditions and this environment are arguably maximised when music and culture bearers are treated equally in a society vis-á-vis health, wealth, public benefits, employment, security, and personal and professional development without fear, tourture, discrimination, domination, deprivation, stereotyping, and prejudice. Thus, as mentioned at the begining of this section, human rights, social justice, and the sustainability of traditional arts are interrelated terms.

Ethnomusicologists have explored multiple cases where minority groups have been deprived of basic human rights, and some cases even illustrate their suffering of extreme torture, attacks, abuses, and discriminations in violation of the international human rights law and principles of social justice. For example, Ursula Hemetek's (2006, 2010, 2015) ethnomusicological work on Roma, Slovenes (autochthonous minority groups—groups that have certain cultural and political collective rights), Bosnian refugees, and Turkish immigrants elucidates the prejudice, stereotyping, social exclusion, and discrimination faced by these minority groups in Austrian society. In a similar vein, Britta Sweers (2015) remarks on Neo-Nazis' attack on Romanian Roma asylum-seekers and Vietnamese contract workers, who were residing in a multi-story building in Rostock (East Germany), in August 1992. Sweers's other two case studies on the migrants in the cities of Münsingen and Bern, both in Switzerland, reveal the intolerance and anti-immigrant sentiment among the dominant groups. A myriad of similar human rights violations and social injustice cases occur in different parts of the globe

[2] The five domains are: 1) Systems of learning music, 2) musicians and communities, 3) contexts and constructs, 4) regulations and infrastructure, and 5) media and the music industry (Schippers, 2016).

for minorities, which has led to the decline and disappearance of their traditional arts practices. For example, in a case from West Africa, thousands of Liberian people were forced to migrate due to conflict and civil war from 1989-1990 and 1999-2003 and are compelled to live a precarious life due to poverty, unemployment, disease, domestic violence, malnutrition, limited education facilities, and a lack of adequate potable water and sanitation in the Buduburam refugee camp (Frishkopf, 2018). In one example from South Asia, a case of the minority ethnic group Ghandharva (also called Gaine—a group of musicians) of Nepal illustrates the practice of untouchability, caste related stigma, absolute poverty, and social exclusion (Moisala, 2013).

Applied Ethnomusicology and its Relevance for Minority Traditional Arts Studies

Since the beginning of the 21st century, several ethnomusicologists have taken a step away from conventional ethnomusicology and centered their work on advocacy, consultancy, accountability, and reflexive engagement in addressing human problems; serving the needs of humankind; and attempting to better the human condition, benefit the community, and engender change through various ethnomusicological interventions. Ethnomusicologists who adopt an applied approach in their research posit that applied ethnomusicology is not a new concept. They trace the emergence of such an approach in music research to the late 1800s and early 1900s (Native American research) in the United States (Dirksen, 2012; Titon, 2015) as well as in Europe (Hemetek, 2010; Pettan, 2015). As this applied approach has gained significant interest in the field of ethnomusicology, many scholars have shifted their ethnomusicological work towards using this approach as a theoretical and methodological tool. Specifically, their key argument for employing this body of knowledge is the use of ethnomusicological scholarship, knowledge, and understanding for societal usefulness (e.g., Alviso, 2003; Barz, 2006; Seeger, 2008; Pettan, 2010; Van Buren, 2010; Barz and Cohen, 2011; Frishkopf, 2018, 2021). However, the tension of the dichotomy between the researcher and researched, academic and non-academic, theorist and practitioner, insider and outsider, and native and neutral foreign observer arises from time to time in the discipline. As interrogations into the scholarly legitimacy of the applied approach informing ethnomusicological research still remain in the field, many ethnomusicologists have expressed concerns about these binaries and called for the reconsideration of theory and method in ethnomusicology (e.g. Barz and Cooley, 2008; Araújo, 2008, 2021; Hofman, 2010; Dirksen, 2012; Ostashewski, 2014; Mackinlay, 2015; Harrison, 2016; Frishkopf, 2021). A working definition and mission statement of applied ethnomusicology says:

> APPLIED ETHNOMUSICOLOGY is the approach guided by principles of social responsibility, which extends the usual academic goal of broadening and deepening knowledge and understanding towards solving concrete problems and toward working both inside and beyond typical academic contexts.[3]

The establishment of a study group, development of the above working definition and mission statement, and publication of two volumes—'*Applied Ethnomusicology: Historical and Contemporary Approaches*' edited by Klisala Harrison, Elizabeth Mackinlay, and Svanibor Pettan (2010) and '*The Oxford Handbook of Applied Ethnomusicology*' edited by Svanibor Pettan and Jeff Todd Titon (2015)—made critical contributions to drawing the attention of scholars to applied ethnomusicology.

Although ethnomusicology has rich historical roots (1970s/80s) in minority studies, the applied aspect of informed research—which this section particulary deals with—in minority

[3] ICTM, 39th world conference, Vienna, July 4-11, 2007. (https://www.ictmusic.org/group/applied-ethnomusicology, accessed 10 July, 2022)

studies has started relatively recently. Most of the works prior to the 2000s in ethnomusicological minority studies have been directed by the conventional theory and method, which do not engage minority communities or are not centred on the goal of benefiting minority traditional art practices. Pioneers of applied ethnomusicology in the context of minority studies (e.g., Ursula Hemetek and Svanibor Pettan) see a great deal of relevance of the applied approach to minority research. In recent years, scholars have used various strategies, such as promotion, public presentation, and teaching/performance activities (see Hemetek, 2006, 2010, 2015); audio production, documentary display, festival showcase, and CD production (see Sweers, 2015); and cultural education and ensemble creation (see Pettan, 2010). These applied activities have also made noticeable positive impacts on minority communities by introducing their music and culture to dominant groups; creating intercultural dialogue with dominant groups and authorities; and encouraging the minority groups to continue practicing their traditional arts. They have also helped to provide recognition to the minority groups and are causing dominant groups to rethink the prejudices against minority groups based on ethnic background, socio-economic circumstances, race, colour, religion, and national origin.

These works certainly provide a strong indication that applied ethnomusicology has become a powerful tool in minority studies. By taking into consideration the ongoing increased pandemic, climate change, conflict, and other such global issues and the consequences they have on human rights, social justice, and the sustainability of the traditional arts of minorities, applied ethnomusicology can play an influential role.

Participatory Action Research (PAR)

The heart of the Participatory Action Research (PAR) model is collaborative commitment, grassroots participation, symmetrical relationships, joint decision making, collective action, and positive social change (Mclntyre, 2008; Frishkopf, 2017). PAR is one among many different kinds of action research that centers its main idea on shared ownership, its collective effort on identification of the social problem, and its collective action towards the improvement of that problem (McTaggart, 1997). It offers an egalitarian notion in rese arch, and the fundamental groundwork to achieve this goal is a transformation of the relationship from subject/object to subject/subject (Fals-Borda, 1991). PAR rejects theory-laden observation and the idea of objectivity in research through 'the recognition of the capacity of people living and working in particular settings to participate actively in all aspects of the research process' (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 4). Ethnomusicologist Michael Frishkopf (2017) writes, 'As is typical of PAR, each project phase entails a cycle of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting, involving the network as a whole' (p. 44). Scholars and practioners across the world who have used this methodological model have not only transformed the notion of relationship and participation in social sciences research, but have also created positive change in certain societies through PAR research.

PAR Model and (Applied) Ethnomusicology

In the context of achieving the theoretical goals of applied ethnomusicology, PAR can be a powerful paradigm (Frishkopf, 2017). The concept of PAR has been used by various ethnomusicologists in their ethnomusicological work. For example, Michael Frishkopf's (2018) work in the Bududuram Liberian refugee camp near Ghana's capital, Accra; Angela Impey's (2002) work in the Dukuduku region, northern KwaZulu Natal, South Africa; Marcia Ostashewski's (2015) work in the Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, Canada; and Samuel Araùjo's (2006, 2008) work in the favela area of Maré, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Highlighting the interconnectivity between PAR model and applied ethnomusicology, Frishkopf (2021) proposes a 'Music for Global Human Development (M4GHD) model' that is based on

‘grassroots, collaborative, and project-based participatory action research in ethnomusicology’ (p. 49). While admitting the restrictions of the participatory approach (time consuming, slow process, difficult to sustain), Impey (2002) also argues that in using the participatory model in applied research (ethnomusicology), ‘we [ethnomusicologists] may have the advantage of being in close proximity to communities’ (p. 22). Similarly, by adopting the participatory strategy based on Brazilian educator and philosopher Paulo Freire’s dialogic research, Araùjo emphasizes the equal engagement/authority of people/community in research and calls for ‘new ethnomusicological praxis’ (Araùjo, 2021, p. 71), arguing that ‘no adjectives (applied, advocacy, engaged, public, etc.) are needed to properly qualify politically engaged scholarship in ethnomusicology’ (p. 81). In the past few decades, there has been a tremendous amount of change in the methodological approaches used for knowlege production in scientific research. Rapidly changing events and circumtances around the world have also significantly influenced the theories and methods used in research. In the case of the ethnomusicology discpline, the growing interest in the applied approach in the last two decades among ethnomusicologists suggests that the discipline could benefit from encompassing a greater variety of theoretical and methodological apporaches.

Participatory Ethnomusicology: An Epistemic Approach

To a great degree, applied ethnomusicology has already constructed an impression that ethnomusicological knowledge can be useful for societal benefit through various applied approaches without abandoning the fundmental concept of the discipline. The examples presented above demonstrate how applied ethnomusicological research has been helpful for documenting, recording, and showcasing at festivals the traditional arts of minorities. The examples also illustrate how ethnomusicologists took applied approaches in advocating for the recognition of minority groups and creating intercultural dialogue with dominant groups and authorities. However, while enacting applied projects in such kinds of situations with minority groups—and researched groups in general—there is always a risk of ethical concerns arising. Ana Hofman (2010) highlights the issue of ethical dilemmas while conducting applied research and remarks, ‘protecting and/or empowering other communities through the use of our own models of modernity and development can prove rather problematic’ (p. 27). Her main concern is the risk of imposing the researcher’s ideological concepts onto the communities or individuals who are involved in the research.

Another potential challenge in applied research is hierarchies in relationships. In some contexts, applied ethnomusicological projects/interventions have been driven by ethnomusicologists or nonprofit organizations. In such projects/interventions, in the process of promoting or presenting minority or marginalized music cultures, there is a possibility of a power hierarchy between ethnomusicologists/nonprofit organizations and researched communities. This diminishes and restricts the active participation of a minority researched community. Ana Hofman (2010) cautions, ‘By acting as “agents” for our partners in research through the promotion of them and their musics, we as researchers still maintain their subordinate position and rob them of their right to self-promotion and self-representation’ (p. 26). This tendency that Hofman cautioned against may achieve the goal of benefitting minority people but fail to involve them in the process of achieving such a goal.

Drawing on the framework of the PAR paradigm and the applied ethnomusicology approach, I propose ‘participatory ethnomusicology’ as an epistemic approach that further helps to fill this theoretical and methodological gap and achieve a higher goal in minorities research. The primary idea of participatory ethnomusicology is ‘research with people, not for people’. This idea of participatory ethnomusicology encompasses both the participatory (egalitarian and grassroots) notion of PAR as well as the main principle of applied ethnomusicology (use of ethnomusicological knowledge for societal benefits). In the context

of social justice, human rights, and the sustainability of the traditional arts of minorities, the partipatory ethnomusicology model can be understood chiefly through three key aspects: 1) power relationship and ownership, 2) appreciation and use of local knowledge, and 3) renewal of traditional arts.

With regard to power relationship and ownership, the first fundamental goal of participatory ethnomusicology is grassroots participation and the shared authority of minority groups in ethnomusicological research. This means their active involvement and equal decision-making role in all phases of research—from identifying the problem/need, formulating the project, and implementing the project through to evaluating the project and disseminating the results. This approach helps the minority groups to identify their own needs, become more confident, and overcome the feeling of being powerless. Lewin (1946) remarks on the lack of confidence and self-esteem of minority groups due to their experience of discrimination. The equality in power relations encourages ownership over ethnomusicological research, and this ownership can be a 'responsible agency in the production of knowledge and improvement of practice' (McTaggart 1997, p. 29). Rice (2014) suggests that this equal partnership is essential in ethnomusicological research today:

> Studying music in conditions of gross social and economic inequality can drive ethnomusicologists to rethink their methods and move them away from vertical knowledge structures to horizontal ones in which knowldege is created in equal partnership with communities and community musicians (p. 204).

According to Rice's analysis of the current and developing contexts of war, disease, climate change, violence, tragedies, and such that have created deep social and economic inequalities, including discrimination, domination, deprivation, stereotyping, and prejudice—especially in the case of minorities—the current (vertical) methodological model needs to be shifted to horizontal. In the same vein, in the view of these scenarios, Samuel Araújo argues that the 'old roles played out through research (insider/outsider; engaged native/neutral foreign observer) [should] be thought over carefully and replaced by new' (p. 13) roles.

The second component of the 'participatory ethnomusicology' model is an appreciation and use of local knowledge in ethnomusicological research. The idea of 'objectivity' in ethnomusicology is already discussed in earlier sections of this article. A brief reference to Brazilian educator and philosopher Paulo Freire's (1921-1997) 'banking concept of education' is appropriate here. Freire states, 'In the banking concept of education, knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing' (p. 72). Freire argues that this authority of knowledge (subject) as a 'false understanding of men and women as object' (p. 77) creates ivory tower isolation. By alienating the research participants—minorities, in this discourse—from the research, it displays the researcher's ignorance of their knowledge and reinforces an authoritarian image that only creates gaps. Most of the time, minority research participants will not have the same university/academic training as ethnomusicologists. However, they have great potential to contribute to the research by offering their local knowledge. While designing the project, implementing the project, or evaluating the results, minority research participants can bring valuable knowledge into the research. Thus, ethnomusicologists have to be respectful and ready to appreciate and use the local knowledge in their research. These two components of 'participatory ethnomusicology' can be powerful tools in achieving social justice and the human rights of minorities in ethnomusicological research.

The third and last component of 'participatory ethnomusicology' is the renewal of traditional arts, which is closely interlinked with the idea of the sustainability of the traditional arts of minority groups. Titon views music culture as a 'renewable resource'—a product of

human life. He argues that a periodical renewal of music culture builds resilience against the endangerment or risk of a music culture being lost or disappearing, working towards achieving the goal of sustainability (Titon, 2009a, 2009b, 2015). While actively participating in the reseach process, minority research participants can bring their traditional knowledge into the research. This may include musical skills, pedagogical knowledge, traditional stories, myths, and history, to name but a few. In the process of designing, planning, implementing, evaluating, and reflecting on an ethnomusicological research project, musical knowledge and skills informed by traditional arts can richly contribute. This use of knowledge can help to build resilience through the renewal of traditional arts. Thus, 'participatory ethnomusicology' can be a tool to support the sustainability of the traditional arts of minority peoples.

The Project

In this second part of this article, I present a work—I would say a work in progress, as the PAR paradigm suggests that action-guided research is a spiral of cycles of self-reflection (Lewin, 1946, Kemmis et al., 2014)—in which I am engaged with the Nepalese minority immigrant community of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. Through this research, I attempt to demonstrate how the idea of 'participatory ethnomusicology' can serve as a possible epistemic approach—theoretical and methodological model—in the context of social justice, human rights, and the sustainability of the traditional arts of minority groups. I begin this part of the paper by situating the Nepalese immigrant community within the wider context of minorities in Canada.

Minorities in Canada are defined as 'persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour'[4]. For the purpose of demographic categorization, Statistics Canada has grouped visible minorities as South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino, Latin American, Arab, Southeast Asian, Korean, and Japanese (Statistics Canada, 2016a). Historically, Canada has not been a favorable country towards minority immigrants. Due to racialized and exclusionist immigration policies minority immigrants have faced several challenges at different points in time (see Hawkins, 1991 and Wayland, 1997).

Canada adopted a multiculturalism policy in 1971. With the underlying issues of cultural shock; housing, employment, and health services-related challenges; and requirement of specialized skills, education, and language abilities, Wayland posits:

> The ethnic groups which originally fought for a multiculturalism policy were mainly white, European, and had resided in Canada for some time. Their needs were principally expressive, namely cultural promotion and language retention. Canada's newest residents, however, particularly racial minorities, wanted a more ambitious multiculturalism. According to them, the policy viewed ethnic groups as culturally interesting while at the same time denying them full political and economic membership in Canadian society (p. 40).

The multiculturalism policy was later transformed into the multiculturalism act in 1988 with the key ideas of freedom; equitable participation; equal treatment; and recognition of the existence of diverse communities, their culture, language, and heritage.[5] However, a number of studies still report several socio-economic, cultural, psychological, and racial challenges faced by these visible minorities because of stereotypes based on race or color, lack of social and mental health support, devaluation of foreign credentials, discrimination, social exclusion,

[4] Government of Canada, Employment Equity Act (S.C. 1995, c. 44). https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/E-5.401/section-3.html (accessed 22 September 2020).

[5] Canadian Multiculturalism Act 1988, Section 3 (1). (https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/c-18.7/page-1.html (accessed 15 July 2022)

and institutional barriers (see Naidoo, 1992; Basran and Zong, 1998; Reitmanova and Gustafson, 2009; Huffey and Lai, 2009; Agrawal, 2013).

The quest for better living conditions and various socio-economic, socio-political, and environmental factors—encompassing an armed civil conflict between 1996-2006, political turmoil, depressing economy, low employment opportunities, and natural disasters—have prompted a wave of Nepalese migrants to flee towards different destination countries. Better living conditions, more affordable medical care, a safer environment, and a strong education system have made Canada a favorable targeted destination for skilled Nepalese immigrants (Giri, 2021, forthcoming). Canada eliminated racial criteria for immigration in 1962 and shifted to a language, education, occupation based 'points system' (Wayland, 1997), and Nepalese immigrants to Canada started to increase after the 1980s (see immigration pattern in Table 1).

Total Population	**Period of Immigration**					
	Before 1981	**1981 to 1990**	**1991 to 2000**	**2001 to 2005**	**2006 to 2010**	**2011 to 2016**
14,390	45	100	615	1,925	4,210	7,500

Table 1: Nepalese minority immigrant total population and immigration pattern during different time periods based on the 2016 Census from Statistics Canada. (https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/hlt-fst/imm/Table.cfm?Lang=E&T=21&Geo=01, accessed 21 January 2022)

According to data from the most recent census, the majority of Nepalese immigrants (7,605) live in Ontario, whereas Alberta (3,915) and British Columbia (1,035) have the second and third largest population sizes across Canada (see Table 2).

Province or Territory	**Total Population of Minority Nepalese Immigrant on 2016 Census**
Ontario	7,605
Alberta	3,915
British Columbia	1,035
Quebec	560
Saskatchewan	435
Manitoba	325
Nova Scotia	235
Prince Edward Island	115
New Brunswick	85
Newfoundland and Labrador	65
Northwest Territories	15
Yukon	0
Nunavut	0

Table 2: Total number of Nepalese minority immigrants residing in Canadian provinces and territories based on the 2016 Census from Statistics Canada. (https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/hlt-fst/imm/PRTerr-eng.cfm?Lang=E&T=21, accessed 21 January 2022)

In the case of the Nepalese minority immigrant community of Edmonton—the research site where the project is ongoing—their population is 1,520 according to the 2016 Census (Statistics Canada, 2016b). This small community is comprised of diverse caste and ethnic groups of people who immigrated during different spans of time between 1981 and the present day, from different parts of Nepal (Figure 1).

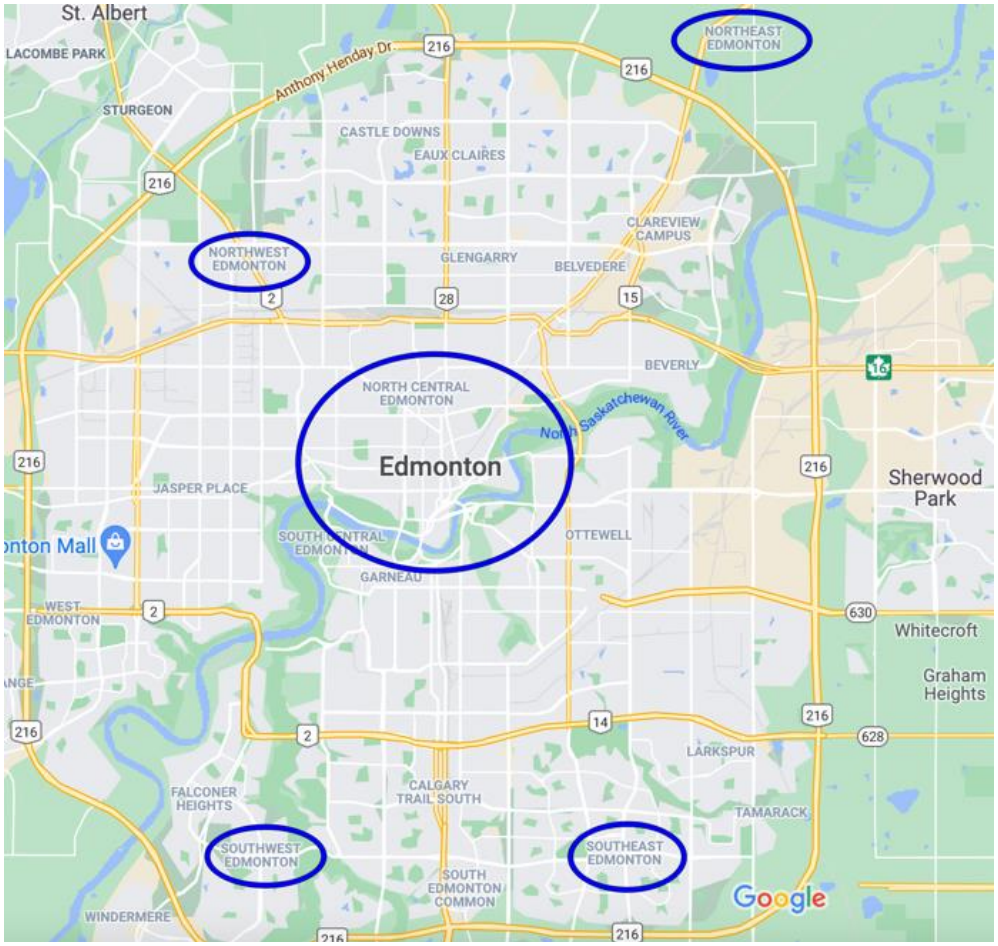

Figure 1: Map of Edmonton, Alberta. Blue highlighted circles—areas that minority Nepalese immigrant people reside. (Google maps, 2022. https://www.google.com/maps/@53.5475033,-113.3579383,11.19z, accessed 22 January 2022)

There is no data available, nor research carried out, regarding the situation, socio-economic and socio-cultural status, employment, income, and/or other factors of Nepalese immigrants after their arrival in Canada, other than their population statistics in Census Canada (presented above). Nepalese immigrants experience the above discussed racial challenges, race or color based stereotypes, and institutional barriers faced by other visible minority immigrants in Canada. In addition—as raised in many of my informal discussions and meetings with the Nepalese community of Edmonton as well as Calgary, Winnipeg, Vancouver, Toronto, and other parts of Canada—Nepalese immigrants expressed that they have a deep concern about their homogenization under neighboring South Asian communities. Their cultural identity has been often blurred or fused with and defined under Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, and Bangladeshi populations. In addition to the population size and recency of arrival compared to the other South Asian immigrant communities, Nepalese immigrants are significantly different

in language and culture. The identity crisis and quest for public recognition have been major issues for the Nepalese immigrant community.

Community Needs Assessment

I came to Edmonton in September 2016 as a graduate student of Ethomusicology at the University of Alberta. As I am a native Nepalese with Nepalese cultural and linguistic competence, it did not take long for me to integrate into the Nepalese community of Edmonton. Since my arrival, I have been actively involved in almost every musical and cultural activity of this community. During these activities and events, I worked with a wide range of people in the community, including community organizations, community leaders, local musicians, cultural knowledge keepers, writers, and children and youth. During those instances, I both observed and was informed by the community about their various concerns vis-á-vis lack of public recognition, generalization based on culture and language, and declining musical and cultural practices. The community is very small in its size and is underrepresented socially, culturally, and politically. After community members expressed continuous concerns about strengthening cultural identity and minimizing the future risk of its endangerment, they demonstrated an interest in developing a long-term initiative to support their music culture. These initial discussions and consultations guided us to an idea of initiating a collaborative participatory research project. In order to identify the real socio-cultural issues of the community and develop the right initiative to address them, we (I and community collaborators) conducted formal consultations and dialogues in the form of semi-structured interviews from November 1, 2019 to January 11, 2020 with forty community members, including community organization representatives, cultural leaders, local artists, musicians, songwriters, and youth of the community. We conducted a subsequent informal dialogue and several informal meetings from January 11, 2020 to February 11, 2020 (Figure 2).[6]

[6] This is my doctoral research project. This study (Pro00092143) has been reviewed and approved by the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board. A signed informed consent form was collected from each of the participants (children, youth, and collaborators) who appeared and are mentioned in this article.

Figure 2: Group discussion with community members while accessing and identifying community needs. Photograph by anonymous, Action for Healthy Community Hall, Downtown, Edmonton, Februray 11, 2020.

Through this process, several issues were identified, including: 1) fear of loosing identity due to overgeneralization based on culture, language, and heritage, 2) lack of public recognition and representation in Canadian socio-political and socio-cultural milieu, 3) declining practice of cultural heritage due to host cultural and language influences and lack of enough resources (such as space and infracture), cultural trainings, and promotions, 4) depression arising from challenges with the recognition of professional qualifications, credentials, and experience in the Canadian labour market, and 5) immigrant-related stressors occuring from financial concerns, isolation barriers, and the adaptation to a new culture and a new language.

Formulation and Implementation of the Projects

Right after the completion of the community needs assessment, Canada was hit by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. The research project could not progress because of the disruption, uncertainties, and government-implemented series of measures as a response to this global pandemic. In March 2021, the research project resumed within a new reality of virtual fieldwork. We (community organizations, cultural groups, musicians, song writers, community representatives, traditional knowledge keepers, and I) carried out multiple dialogues and consultations from March 1 to March 31 through Zoom meeting, email, and phone (see Figure 3).

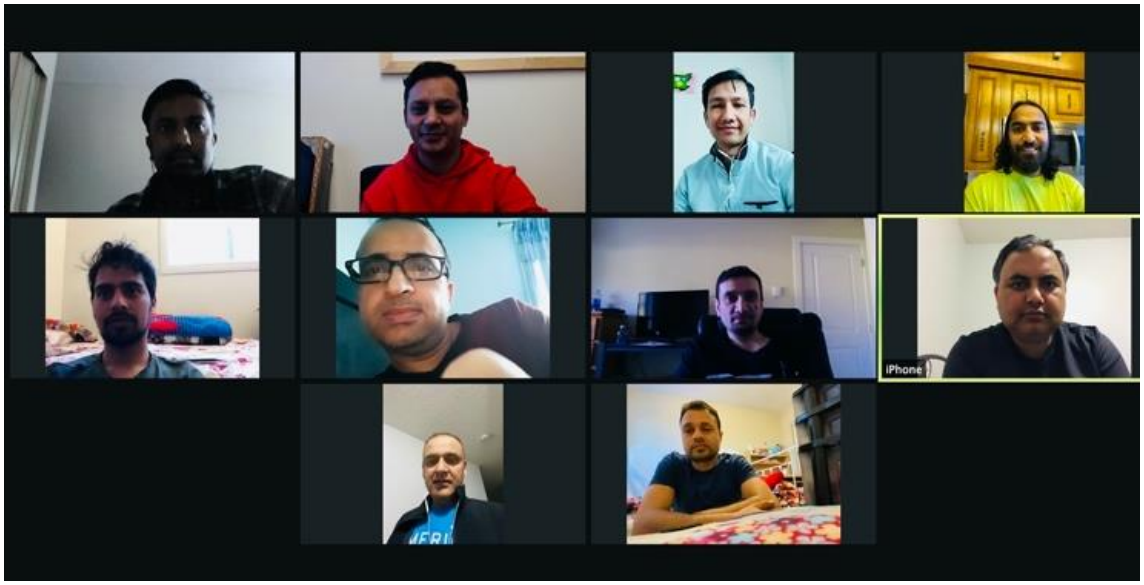

Figure 3: Project formulation discussion with board members of the community organization 'Nepal Heritage Society', on Zoom. Screenshot by author, March 14, 2021, Edmonton, Alberta.

During these discussions, all the community members actively participated and freely expressed their ideas. After these series of dialogues were carried out with the community, three intervention projects were formulated based on the immediate needs of the community: 1) the Traditional Music Teaching Project, 2) the Heritage Music Ensemble Project, and 3) the Digital Community Archive Project. As the third project is still in its early stages, I present a synopsis of the first two projects and their activities here.

1) Traditional Music Teaching Project

The first project entailed oral transmission-based traditional music training passed on from community musicians to the newer generation. In the first phase of implementation, community members worked by themselves using their own traditional skills, knowledge, and resources to develop and prepare the teaching and learning materials needed for playing traditional instruments and singing (see Figures 4, 5, and 6).[7]

[7] Link to the teaching materials - https://subashgiri.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Booklet.pdf.

Figure 4: Community songwriters discussing the creation of culture themed songs for teaching the newer generation of youth and children. Screenshot by author, April 5, 2021, Edmonton, Alberta.

Figures 5 (left) and 6 (right): Community musician Bom Rana crafting flutes. Photographs by author, August 29, 2021, Edmonton, Alberta.

As the preparation of teaching materials was being completed, the participants (children and youth between 5 to 24 years old) were recruited from June 1, 2021 to September 30, 2021. The community organization 'Nepal Heritage Society'[8], the cultural family group 'Barha Ghare'[9], and the spiritual musical group 'Nepali Bhajan-Kirtan Samuha'[10] initiated the recruitment process of the participants. A total of 60 children and youth participants were recruited for the traditional music teaching project. The project ran from October 2021 to March 2022, and due to the volume of participation and COVID-19 restrictions, the classes were conducted virtually on the Zoom meeting platform on Saturdays and Sundays, 6:00 pm to 7:00 pm (see Figures 7 and 8).

[8] Nepal Heritage Society (NHS) is a non-profit organization that has been actively working to enhance Nepalese immigrants' culture and heritage since 2014 in Edmonton.

[9] Barha Ghare is a Nepalese family cultural group originally created in 2013. Barha means 'twelve' and Ghare means 'families' in Nepalese language.

[10] Nepali Bhajan-Kirtan Samuha is an Edmonton-based local Nepalese spiritual musical group that performs traditional bhajan and kirtan.

Figure 7: Newer generation children and youth participants attending the traditional drum ‘madal’ training on Zoom. Screenshot by author, January 23, 2022, Edmonton, Alberta.

Figure 8: Community musician Bom Rana demonstrating and describing a traditional Nepalese short-necked lute instrument called the Sarangi. Screenshot by author, October 24, 2021, Edmonton, Alberta.

2) Heritage Music Ensemble Project

The second project entailed the formation and establishment of a Nepalese immigrant traditional music ensemble, which primarily practices the traditional and folk music of their homeland as well as redefines it with new arrangements and new non-traditional instruments (Figure 9). During the project formulation process, the participants (local musicians) outlined several of the key activities: 1) regular weekly music-making, 2) sharing musical knowledge and skills, and 3) collecting traditional musical instruments and looking for resources. Among these activities, first, everyone agreed to start regular weekly music-making—the regular practice and performance of native traditional music. Second, the group demonstrated a willingness to enhance the musical knowledge and skills that they have—e.g., learn to read and write notation, study music theory, and explore new traditional repertoires. Third and last, the group decided to find/gather traditional musical instruments and everyone agreed to look for resources, such as apply for grants and seek community supports.

Figure 9: Members of Heritage Ensemble in a regular practice session. Photograph by author, April 10, 2022, Nepalese Canadian Society of Edmonton Hall.

Preliminary Findings

This is an ongoing research project. Based on the individual and collective reflections at different points in time during the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of these projects, in this section, I discuss some preliminary findings, particularly drawing attention to the chief issues of social justice, human rights, and the sustainability of the traditional arts of minorities—which this article is centered on. Further, I relate these findings to the theoretical and methodical model of 'partipatory ethnomusicology' that I am proposing in this article. In this participatory collaborative research work, the Nepalese minority community members were able to freely expressed their opinion at all stages of the reseach project. They took the power to decide on what intervention to formulate and how to implement it based on their needs and available local resources. Importantly, this grassroots participation, shared authority, and equal decision-making role developed a deep sense of ownership among the community members, helping engender a commitment to continuing these initiatives with the goals of social and cultural recognition, strengthening cultural identity, maintaining community well-being, and sustaining cultural heritage (see Figures 10 and 11). This resonates with the first key aspect—'power relationship and ownership'—of the 'partipatory ethnomusicology' model.

Figure 10: Community collaborators preparing for the final concert after the six months of the long traditional music training initiative. Photograph by author, April 3, 2022, Southminister-Steinhauer United Church, Edmonton.

Figure 11: Community collaborator Krishna Neupane instructing the youth performers before their performance. Photograph by author, April 3, 2022, Southminister-Steinhauer United Church, Edmonton.

These community members brought different sets of cultural, musical, literary, leadership, and management knowledge, skills, and strengths to the project. For example, in the case of the traditional music teaching project, the songwriters created culture-themed songs for youth and children. The local musicians crafted musical instruments and contributed to developing a curriculum for teaching. They were also actively involved during the teaching phase—demonstrating traditional instruments and explaining their cultural roots and values to the youth and children. The younger generation demonstrated the singing and traditional drumming they actively learned from the community musicians during the six months of traditional music teaching (Figure 12).[11]

[11] The performances can be accessed through the YouTube links below–

1. Traditional Foods Song - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=542isIDRBvE
2. Nepalese Kinship Song - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3RbbqO6J7No
3. Nepalese Season Song - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YgziWCBhYCM
4. Drumming (Nepalese hand drum – Madal) - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9weEQ35Fdas, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2dBv5BpPpvg

Figure 12: Youth and children demonstrating traditional drumming learned during the six month of the traditional music teaching project. Photograph by Devon Riel, April 3, 2022, Southminister-Steinhauer United Church Hall, Edmonton.

These activities and roles performed by the community knowledge keepers demonstrated the 'appreciation and use of local knowledge' that the participatory ethnomusicology model suggests. Whilst collaborators valued the local knowledge and set about using it—songwriting, instrument making, and teaching—in the project, it assisted in a 'renewal of traditional arts'—renewing, recreating, and using the musical, cultural and other skills and knowledge of the community members. It also built cultural resilience that works towards sustainability, which 'participatory ethnomusicology' suggests as the third important component of its model.

In the context of social justice, human rights, and the sustainability of the traditional arts of this minority community, the project brought positive impacts to negotiating a path of gaining cultural identity, promoting cultural heritage, and improving community well-being. For example, for the cultural and musical demonstration day after the teaching project's completion, the collaborators invited people from the host as well as other neighbouring communities. The musical performances and demonstrations generated curiosity about Nepalese music, culture, and language among those audiences. Later, the collaborators and community members widely shared the YouTube videos of the performances (see footnote 11) to their social media. This significantly helped to obtain the attention of their fellow community members and friends. As a result of the project, the performers received an invitation to perform in the 'Annual Newcomer Celeberation Day 2022' in September 2022, organized by Edmonton Newcomer Zonal Outreach (ENZO) at the City of Edmonton Hall in the presence of the Edmonton Mayor, city councillors, and provincial and federal representatives. This is one of the important achievements of this collaborative initiative in the process of introducing and promoting Nepalese cultural identity to the ethnically mixed audiences of Edmonton.

In another example, the performance on July 30, 2021 of the heritage ensemble at the 'Edmonton Heritage Festival—World Music Week 2021' at the Heritage Amphitheatre, Hawrelak Park equally contributed to the process of public recognition of Nepalese musical

heritage in Edmonton. The performance at the Edmonton Heritage Festival injected enormous energy and confidence into the ensemble members. After the festival performance, one of the ensemble member, Bishnu Gnawali, wrote in a Facebook group message: 'It was a very satisfying performance today[.] [W]ell done team[.]... [L]et's continue the same team spirit and introduce our heritage music to the rest of the world' (Bishnu Gnawali, July 31, 2021). The Amphitheatre was full of ethnically mixed audiences. The organizer presented a short introductory video clip of Nepalese culture, which they also shared to their social media platform. The musical performance of the ensemble at one of the well-recognized festivals played an important role in promoting Nepalese music and culture. The heritage ensemble also received an invitation to perform at the Canadian Federation of Music Teachers' Association (CFMTA) 2023 national conference 'Our rhythm runs through it', happening on July 5-8, 2023 in Edmonton, where a wide range of people across Canada are expected to gather to attend the conference.

The community collaborators decided to measure the effectiveness of the interventions after the completion of the project. I led a survey that was carried out with the project collaborators, youth participants, and parents of children participants after the completion of the project. A total of 21 questions were asked to evaluate the efficacy of the project and 55 respondents (67.3% male and 32.7% female) participated in the survey. Figures 13, 14, and 15 illustrate three of the survey questions and their outcomes. To a great degree, the survey indicated that the project had a positive impact on the effectiveness maintaining cultural heritage, strengthening community social bonding, and minimizing immigration-related stressors.

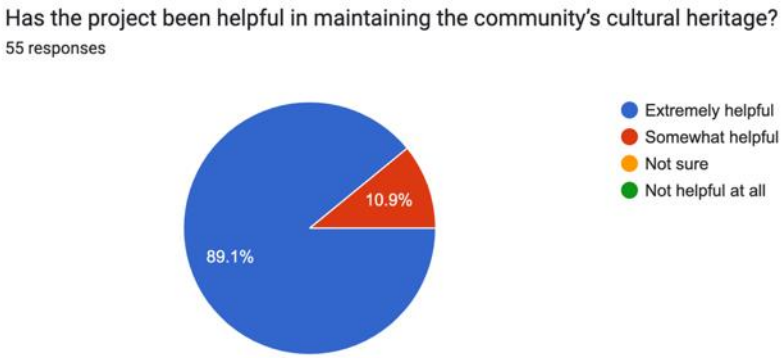

Figure 13: Aggregate responses to survey question regarding cultural maintenance.

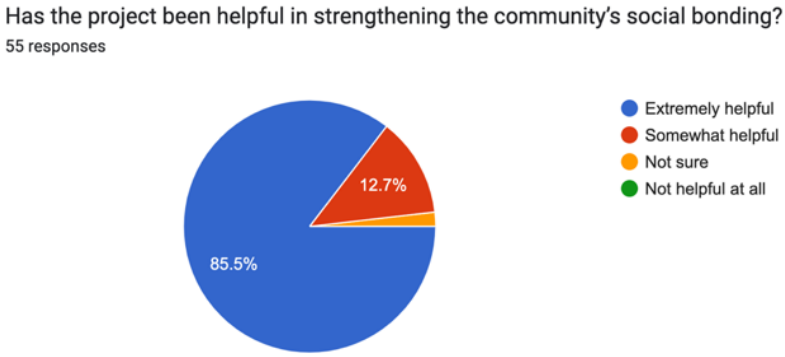

Figure 14: Aggregate responses to survey question regarding social bonding.

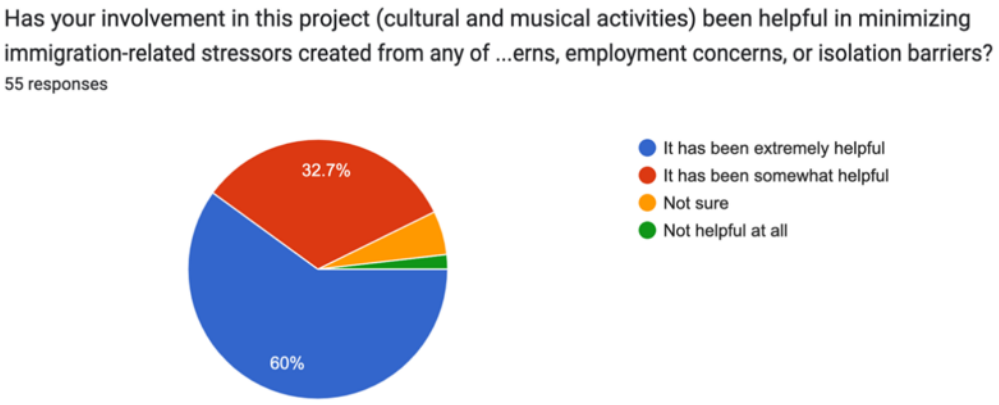

Figure 15: Aggregate responses to survey question regarding immigration-related stressors. The survey question in full reads: Has your involvement in this project (cultural and musical activities) been helpful in minimizing immigration-related stressors created from any of the following factors: separation from homeland, adaptation of new language and culture, financial concerns, employment concerns, or isolation barriers?

Conclusion

This article has examined the three interlinked key issues of social justice, human rights, and the sustainability of traditional arts with regard to minorities. Based on the theoretical principle of applied ethnomusicology with the integration of the PAR paradigm, the article has proposed 'participatory ethnomusicology' as an alternative epistemic approach—both a theoretical and methodological model—to fill the theoretical and methodological gap in minority research through the three key elements of: 1) power relationship and ownership, 2) appreciation and use of local knowledge, and 3) renewal of traditional arts. The article has presented two participatory collaborative case studies—'Traditional Music Teaching Project' and 'Heritage Music Ensemble Project'—initiated with the Nepalese minority immigrant community of Edmonton, Alberta, and has discussed how those three key elements of the participatory ethnomusicology approach have aided in advancing human rights, social justice, and the sustainability of the traditional arts of that minority community. Harrison (2020) suggests, 'Capabilities enable human rights. If one has more capabilities, one enjoys more human rights more fully' (p. 190). By proposing participatory ethnomusicology as a possible model, the article has argued that this approach can enhance capabilities for minority researched groups to have more agency in ethnomusicological research through symmetrical relationship, shared authority, shared ownership, grassroots participation, joint decision making, and the appreciation and use of local knowledge. This approach can be an effective tool to address all three key issues of social justice, human rights, and the sustainability of traditional arts, contributing to filling the gap of unequal power relations—in ethnomusicological research as well as real life—and ameliorating the problems/situations of minorities.

Acknowledgements

This article is based on my doctoral research. The research has been supported by the Society for Ethnomusicology (SEM) '21st Century Fellowship Award 2021', the Society for Asian Music (SAM) 'Graduate Student Small Grant Award 2021', and the University of Alberta International 'Edmonton Consular Corps Award 2021'. I am grateful to Dr. Michael Frishkopf and Dr. Marcia Ostashewski for their guidance and support in my doctoral research. Their inspiration helped me to write this article. I am also very grateful to Dr. Catherine Grant, editor

of this special issue, for her invaluable suggestions and comments, which gave much more clarity and direction for this article. I appreciate the anonymous reviewers whose feedback assisted me in writing this article. My sincere thanks to all the community collaborators (Nepal Heritage Society, Barha Ghare Family Cultural Group, Nepali Bhajan-Kirtan Samuha, community songwriters, and community musicians) and participants (children, youth, and their parents) of the Nepalese minority immigrant community of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

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