

5 On Values and Life's Journey through Music Reflections on the Eriksons' Life Stages and Music Education

The premise of this chapter is that the values that guide music education and the objectives and methods consistent with them should be tailored to people at each phase of life. Thinking of a theme, "Life's journey through music," I sketch different values that should guide music education throughout the adult phases of life proposed in Erik and Joan Erikson's psychosocial stage theory, namely, young adulthood, adulthood, old age, and gerotranscendence, respectively. Practical implications of the differing objectives and approaches commensurate with these values are suggested and a critique of the analysis is offered.

Erik and Joan Erikson (Erikson, 1980; Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997) posit nine stages of life from birth to old age. Five of their stages focus on the early years from infancy to young adulthood that are the focus of music educational systems around the world; four describe the years from young adulthood that lie beyond the school age years. The Eriksons originally formulated eight life stages but Joan realized that they needed to describe yet another, gerotranscendence, and expanded their life stages from eight to nine. Their theory was developed in two phases. First, Erikson (1980) links the eight life stages – infancy, early childhood, play age, school age, adolescence, young adulthood, adulthood, and old age – to "basic strengths," or what I prefer to think of as values, of hope, will, purpose, competence, fidelity, love, care, and wisdom, respectively. Second, the ninth stage of gerotranscendence, added later by Joan (Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997, p. 124), features a trio of values of grace, communion, and transcendence – a sense that one is "on holy ground."

My focus in this writing is on the Eriksons' four final stages, namely, young adulthood, adulthood, old age, and gerotranscendence. I sketch possible links between these life phases and the values that suggest differing purposes and approaches for music education throughout this part of life's journey and critique the analysis with reference to its usefulness for music education thought and practice focused on adults rather than children. The term "andragogy" was coined by Malcolm Knowles (Knowles et al., 2015) to focus on adult education in contrast to pedagogy that focused on children and youth. Rather than regarding andragogy and pedagogy as dichotomous, I prefer to think of a continuum stretching from pedagogy centered on the children and youth to andragogy focused on adults. Even then, pedagogy tends to homogenize the experience of infants, children, and youth, as andragogy tends to homogenize the educational experience of young, middle aged, and old adults. This categorical distinction between pedagogy and andragogy can be ameliorated by accounting for the various phases of life through which people pass and the related specific values (with their implicit objectives and approaches) that obtain at each phase of life (see, e.g., Overstreet, 1949; Cohen, 2005).

My own experience of life leaves me uncomfortable with describing life as a series of hard-and-fast, categorical stages, and the Eriksons do not see them this way. Rather, their stages are general and exploratory and dynamic rather than specific and definitive and static. These phases seem to flow from and merge with one another. I see these phases as ideal types in the sense that they offer archetypal characteristics of each phase (Jorgensen, 1997, p. 34). Their interest is not in atypical instances and they describe their phases at a high level of generality. People may arrive at or leave different phases earlier or later than others. They may never arrive at all phases. These phases serve a comparative purpose as general guideposts marking points throughout life and are described in terms of White people in the West. Since their analysis is framed by their White and Western heritage and experience, the examples I cite are consistent with their theory. Accordingly, I draw on typical rather than atypical instances of White, Western, working, and middle-class music education. The Eriksons are relatively silent on issues of culture, race, gender, social class, the differently gendered and abled, and I regard these problematics as lying beyond

the focus of their theory. Accordingly, since I seek the common humanity that underlies significant societal differences in the ways in which age affects beliefs, values, and practices in music education, I sketch their theory employing examples consistent with it, and then move to a critique that accounts for complexities with which they do not grapple (Gaita, 2002; Yob & Jorgensen, 2020).

In reflecting on the Eriksons' life stages and music educational values, my focus is not upon those values that characterize professional musicians throughout a working lifetime because it is obvious that values such as artistry, skill, taste, and style will remain important throughout life. Rather, I am concerned in this writing with those music educational values that will be important to the great majority of people who, while they may be active musicians, regard music as an avocation and follow it for the love of it rather than out of the need to create and sustain a musical livelihood. Some of this public will be skilled musicians by the time they reach young adulthood; others may possess some or little skill as music makers. Whatever their level of skill and irrespective of the specific role music plays in their lives, all are likely to participate in music in some ways throughout their lives. Music educators desirous of enriching music's role in people's lives will be necessarily interested in the values that may be important throughout the adult phases of life's journey for this vast proportion of people. Here, I illustrate the various values and the ways in which values in music education may apply differently at each phase. Space prevents the more exhaustive goal of highlighting all the differing purposes and approaches to music education for those who may differ in terms of gender, race, ability, social class, gender identification, ethnicity, and musicality throughout adulthood.

I begin with the Eriksons' association of values with the phases of adulthood. They see four principal values – one corresponding to each phase of adulthood – as of overriding importance. They begin with the value of love in young adulthood as young people find a life partner and determine which passions they will pursue in their life work. In adulthood, they regard the value of care as of crucial importance during the time that people are bringing up their families and pursuing their careers. In old age, they underscore the value of wisdom as people are able to bring to bear the knowledge and experience they have acquired throughout their lives.

In gerotranscendence they value grace in the infirmity of the very old, the sense that things may begin to fall apart, and a growing closeness to their mortality.

In counterpoint with the Eriksons' quartet of values and associated stages, I see a different array of values for music education. For example, corresponding with the Eriksons' emphasis on love in young adulthood, I think of curiosity, imagination, desire, friendship, pleasure, loyalty, community, artistry, style, skill, and taste as among the prominent values in musical education, particularly in schools, colleges, and universities. During adulthood, in counterpoint with the Eriksons' value of care, I see values of happiness, joy, inclusion, community, restraint, dignity, spirituality, community, artistry, and skill that need to be evident in amateur musical organizations. In old age, parallel to the Eriksons' emphasis on the value of wisdom, I consider values of wisdom, spirituality, joy, energy, inclusion, and community in music education. And in gerotranscendence, in counterpoint with Joan Erikson's emphasis on grace, I see music educational values such as consolation, courage, equipoise, inclusion, hope, reverence, and community. With this overview in mind, I reflect on each of the Eriksons' life phases in turn.

Young Adulthood

The Eriksons see this period as a time in which love is a preeminent value in the minds of young people. They are finding mates, beginning in the world of work, finding places and homes in which to live, and in advanced societies, often completing their formal education in colleges, universities, and apprenticeships. Values of love, friendship, pleasure, and desire resonate especially at this phase. Particularly in formal education settings, values of artistry, acquiring a sense of style and taste, and polishing the artistic skills that they have already begun to acquire are important values. Within higher education, artistic and aesthetic values are compelling aspects of a broad liberal education, as they should also be in advanced vocational programs. The emphases on artistry, style, taste, and

skill may differ, but artistic values need to be present in every educational setting.

By young adulthood, many have already developed inclinations toward differing art forms, but imaginative programs of study that enable students from a broad array of disciplines and academic, professional, and vocational interests to participate in music and broaden and deepen their interests are vital to a well-rounded education. I think, for example, of innovative musical subjects for study at Harvard University and ways in which this university seeks to ensure that students broadly come to know music in its many traditions and genres (Harvard Alumni Association, 2017). Building on the curiosity, imagination, and acquisition of knowledge at this point in life and making intersections between the fine and performing arts, humanities, and sciences, among other fields, are crucial for music education.

Instead of thinking just of elite and selective music courses and ensembles offered at educational institutions, informal and formal opportunities for participating in music within colleges, religious institutions, commercial enterprises, and families and communities are also important (Jorgensen, 1997). These institutions offer important opportunities for music educators to foster musical and social experiences for young adults. Many young people are particularly interested in the musics of our time, and opportunities to engage these immediate impulses and interests need to be abundant. In a time of globalization, it is also critical that young adults participate in the traditional musics of their places so that these diverse local and regional practices are conserved and thrive. Young adults have choices in the ways they participate musically, therefore, the onus on music educators is to present relevant and attractive opportunities that meet the musical, social, and psychological needs at this point in life.

Adulthood

For the Eriksons, adulthood is a period of procreativity where care constitutes a compelling value. At this point, attention turns to home and family, earning a livelihood, and making one's way in the world. Family

members are committed to caring for young and old alike and hopefully seeing their children grow into adulthood. For those without children of their own, there are familial ties to other relatives who also need affection and care. Work also constitutes an important focus during this period, and the claims of work or the want of it impacts one's livelihood and sense of wellbeing, identity, and self-worth. Surviving or thriving is dependent in large measure on being able to successfully navigate work and family life. For much of history, women's activities have been prescribed by the need to care for the home and the family members and raise much of the food for the family. Today, women's participation in the world of paid work may be equally challenging where home work also continues as it did before (e.g., Azcona et al., 2020). In too many places, the absence of work, especially industrial work for men, places even greater strains on families and on the relationship between men and women (e.g., Broman et al., 1996).

At this point in life, music offers places and times to be, at least temporarily, free from care. Values of happiness, joy, inclusion, and a sense of community are particularly compelling in their appeal to adults who seek respite from the sense of care that often weighs upon them. Among the historical examples of amateur musical organizations that seek to be a source of joy and happiness, I think of the Welsh choirs comprised of coal miners, the amateur choral organizations of the English midlands comprised of working people, the working people's singing schools in France and in New England and Appalachia (Keene, 2009; Rainbow & Cox, 2006). Singing is a particularly apt vehicle of musical expression because the human voice provides an opportunity for immediate self-expression. Still, the amateur bands and orchestras established throughout North America, Australasia, and Europe are important alternatives. I mention inclusion and community because adults enjoy the sense of belonging and the opportunity to achieve immediate musical results, especially where work is too often competitive, repetitive, and, especially following the advent of online employment, solitary.

Throughout adulthood, there is a desire for spirituality, artistry, and additional skill. For this reason, the amateur singing movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were populated by adults who sought

additional knowledge and skill and were led by musicians with an understanding of how to create a communal artistry that was deeply moving to participants. This is still the case in the twenty-first century, and music educators are needed to foster ensembles and informal learning opportunities that enable individuals to be part of something magical and greater and larger than themselves. These experiences are possible in community, musical, religious, political, and commercial settings.

Old Age

The Eriksons see old age as a phase characterized by the value of wisdom. In the best of worlds, wisdom derives from the capacity to integrate prior life experience into a unity. I see their emphasis on wisdom as profoundly optimistic. In societies that revere the aged, the presumption that people who have lived long lives are in the position to have learned from their experience leads their younger to value their insights and perspectives. At least, we would hope that they would have acquired wisdom. Maybe this hope makes us disappointed to encounter foolishness in those who are not suffering dementia and should know better. Technology has helped to both lengthen life and increase the possibility of mental decline and dementia in some parts of the world. Still, many people are living in good health and continuing to make contributions to society well into old age. It ought to be the objective of music educators to take advantage of the many opportunities to involve the old in music-making and taking (e.g., Creech et al., 2013). For example, doing so is the objective of the New Horizons International Music Association (2020) and choruses in American retirement centers, and in the music-making opportunities in the civic centers I saw in China with elders playing traditional Chinese instruments and taking group dancing lessons.

Regarding the values that need to obtain at this point in life, my sense is that while optimistic, wisdom is an important value in enabling elders to integrate their life's musical experiences. This is a time for effecting closure and integration in life. By closure, I do not mean closed-mindedness. Rather,

I refer to completing a circle of life that validates one's past musical interests. For those who are fortunate, retirement offers an opportunity to take up musical pursuits that had to be laid aside earlier in life for want of time or opportunity. I have met many in their 60s, 70s, and 80s who have rejoined choirs, taken up instruments they played early in life, pursued new musical interests, taken music classes at their community colleges and universities, and traveled to other countries with music as the focus of their interest. Joy, the energy that is derived from making music, inclusion that invites people into a musical group, and community and the attendant sense of belonging become especially important at times when elders may otherwise be lonely or discouraged. Old age is not for the faint hearted, and with a growing sense of one's mortality, spirituality rather than religiosity is particularly important. Watching choirs of elders whose faces light up as they sing reminds me of the ways in which making music that highlights these values can directly meet the needs of this age group. At this point in life, since there is less of it left than has been lived, using one's time to best advantage is especially important. Musical education for old age should present as an attractive and social opportunity that is thoroughly enjoyable and stimulating.

Gerotranscendence

I have yet to live into this stage, so I have Joan Erikson's ideas in mind as I contemplate the values that seem particularly apropos to this life phase. I also draw on my memory of the many occasions when, as a young musician, I performed in care facilities for the aged, nursing homes, and retirement centers. As Joan puts it, "At ninety the vistas changed; the view ahead became limited and unclear. Death's door, which we always knew was expectable but had taken in stride, now seemed just down the block" (Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997, p. 4). Things began to fall apart. This is a time when more people need assistance in living their lives and nursing care. One might hope to "live long and die short," and while some might live in excellent health until shortly before death, the last stage of life

often requires the help of others. The deaths of spouses, family members, and close friends are distressing, as is the increasing awareness of physical frailty. It is understandable when the very old withdraw into a comfort of smaller and more intimate spaces that seem to be cocoons offering warmth and safety. At this point, death looms closer as does the spiritual world of mind, memory, and possibility. One remains the person one has been only more so. In memory's eye, I see my aunt, in her 100th year, listening raptly to music, happy with her lot at a retirement home, playing the piano for her fellow residents, and being a source of inspiration to family, friends, and the residence staff. Despite strokes and falls, she remains eager for what life offers, and her habitual optimistic attitude sustains her now that her world has shrunk.

Joan Erikson (Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997) notices the grace and transcendence in the very old. Although bodies and minds may betray them, they somehow rise above their physical limitations to exult and find solace in the memory of times past and people they treasured. I wish to add to Joan's values, those of consolation, courage, equipoise, inclusion, hope, and reverence. Contemplating one's imminent death, as I have known elders to do, requires the consolation of finding joy amidst memory of a life lived, courage to face the existential angst of contemplating "ceasing to be" in this life, equipoise to find a steadiness and balance of mind, soul, and body, inclusion in the accessibility of musical experience to all in this situation, hope in the religious faith or philosophy to which one adheres, reverence in the bittersweetness and preciousness of this present moment, and community in knowing that one is not alone but is valued and understood by others who share one's experience. Music needs to be a vital part of experience at this phase of life. Singing the songs that one knew in the past and evoking individual and shared memories is very important. The texts of songs need to be hopeful, spiritual, and evocative.

Hearing music, even if one is unable to play or sing, positively affects the mind, soul, and body in ways that contribute to wellbeing (e.g., Creech et al., 2013; Lehmberg & Fung, 2010; Tabei et al., 2017). I can never forget a dying woman surrounded by her family and close friends who, in one of her last sentient moments, requested that we sing some well-known songs. Playing the piano for the family who sought to sing while she lay

mouthed the words brought tears to our eyes. I was never so grateful for the ability to improvise and play as when I led the singing that day. Music needs to be a part of every hospice and place where people are dying. We should remember its therapeutic value, especially for the very old, and its consolation to the dying and those who are dear to them.

Critique

Notwithstanding the beguiling simplicity and clarity of this four-stage model with its associated music educational values and policy implications at each life phase, things are not this simple. As I have noted, the Eriksons were untroubled by the complexities of cultural distinctions both in terms of how age is viewed and practiced from young adulthood to adulthood, old age, and gerotranscendence and in the differing experiences of women, minorities, the differently abled and gendered, the homeless and dispossessed, the immigrants and strangers at every stage of adulthood. These difficulties are also compounded by the fact that my examples at each stage do not encompass all the differing musical cultures and experiences of music education. This is the case especially in young adulthood where for many young people around the world, this phase is compressed, and they move into the world of work at a very young age. I think of a family of brickmakers in Cambodia beside the Mekong with whom I visited: Every able-bodied child is put to work in the family's operation. For too many young people, apprenticeships and tertiary educational opportunities are worlds apart, they marry at an early age, and their lives are consumed by care from childhood. Since the values I have sketched are parasitic on the Eriksons' life stages, aside from a short period around puberty, young adulthood as the Eriksons see it may be almost non-existent. The same may also be true of experiences of Western music education that cannot pretend to encompass every musical tradition in the West let alone the entire world.

Although my examples may be valid and important when seen through Western and White eyes, it is important to also acknowledge the limits of

one's experience and invite different others to describe how, in their cultures and societies, these life phases would be exemplified in music educational values. Although I have seen adults in Asia, Africa, Australia, Europe, and South America experience music education in some of the self-same ways I have described, I have also seen important differences. For this reason, the perspectives from these other musical cultures and societies are needed in conversations about the intersections between values, music education, and the various phases of adulthood. Although I have lived much of my musical life within the classical tradition of the West, I have seen many synergies and consonances between this tradition and other classical and vernacular traditions. Nevertheless, exponents of other musical traditions need to articulate the differing insights they bring to how values, music, and the stages of adulthood should intersect. These conversations can highlight the complexities of intersections between values, life stages, and music education, enable musician-educators around the world to listen to the differing yet authentic experiences of others, and contribute to the richness and variety of adult music education around the world.

The broad and catholic approach I am advocating resonates with what Deanne Bogdan (2020) calls a "situated sensibility." This approach acknowledges that one's perspectives are necessarily framed by specific situations. One may write authentically about one's values, experience, and expertise but there are limits beyond which one should not go in seeking to shape the values that others hold. While there may be broad generalizations on which people may agree, there are also important specific distinctions. Practically speaking, musicians and educators need to be guided by the claims of the specific situations in which they find themselves.

In seeking differences, it is possible to fall into stereotyping people and failing to grasp important nuances. This realization came home to me while on a life-changing trip to China. I had previously thought of the elders in China as being held in high esteem, possibly higher than was the case in the West. The reality was quite shocking when we toured places with concentrations of elders isolated by distance from younger members of their families. After the onset of COVID-19, I began to understand something of how they may have felt this isolation. Like these Chinese elders who felt warehoused in places alien to them, separated from their younger family

members, I realized that too many Americans were willing to isolate their elders to get back to the lives they wanted to live. I began to grasp that this sense of isolation may be common to Chinese and American elders – much more so than I thought beforehand. Likewise, realities of high unemployment among young adults and adults around the world may differ significantly from one race and culture to another. Still, the experience of poverty, lack of self-worth, and anger at those with wealth unites those who undergo it. While these life phases and their associated music educational values may be manifested in differing circumstances, nevertheless there are common threads that bind us together as members of the human family. So, it is crucial to think of these phases and values generously, inclusively, and to avoid drawing narrow distinctions on the one hand and overgeneralizing or stereotyping them on the other.

It is also important to carefully examine psychological and educational tendencies to sort human beings and draw distinctions between them in terms of such things as age, gender, social class, intelligence, and musicality. Julia Koza (2021) excavates the historical linkage between White supremacist and eugenicist movements and music education. Such thinking has penetrated music educational ideology in North America and elsewhere to the detriment of an egalitarian and inclusive approach to music education. Importantly, linkages between race and gender privileged white males and devalued women and girls and other minorities. Music education's construal to focus on childhood and young adulthood marginalizes or excludes those not yet of school age or those who are beyond it. Sorting people into age categories turns out to be a blessing and a curse. On the one hand, by highlighting the extent to which music educators have ignored adult music education, it may prompt a redefinition of music education as a "lifelong" enterprise. Expanding the notion of music education to a lifelong enterprise multiplies the challenges for music education and complicates its *raison d'être*. On the other hand, it may be tempting for some to double down on a narrow construal of music education as school music and regard musical education in the rest of life as something else, for example, community music. Intersections of race, class, gender, among the other differences among people, may only exacerbate the privileging of some and the marginalization or exclusion of others.

Notwithstanding these important caveats to the Eriksons' theory and the implications for music educational values and practices that I have sketched, it is worth rescuing the central claims of the Eriksons' view of life as unfolding in phases. By taking account of the differences through adulthood, it is useful to tailor the aims and methods of music education to the compelling interests and values likely to resonate at each phase. Putting this theory to the test by including multiple gendered, racialized, and cultural perspectives can enrich the theory. This comparative approach can forward a broad view of music educational values, beliefs, and practices that is truly lifelong and inclusive.

Life's journey needs to be full of music from beginning to end. Music has an important place from birth to death, on formal and informal occasions, through joy and sadness, in privilege and deprivation, and in war and peace. Expanding our sights as musicians and teachers beyond the school age years to adulthood enables us to take advantage of the rich possibilities of andragogy as well as pedagogy and to grasp music's vital place in the whole of life rather than as a decontextualized object of study in schools. Our role is to preserve, foster, and transform music and its publics and ensure that we attend carefully to every phase of life's journey. In so doing, as we touch and enrich the lives of all with whom we make and take music, we help to create a more humane society. We effect positive social change and leave the world a better place for our being here.

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