

Phenomenology and ecological systems theory- Lit Review

development	experiences	“fit”	Social constructs	Meaning
<p>Variability and consistency typify processes of life-course human development. As lives unfold, human development and learning occur in wide-ranging social and physical contexts (Spencer, 2006, p. 696).</p>	<p>Diverse settings provide unique and repetitive as well as positive and challenging experiences, depending on an individual’s physical and personal characteristics (Spencer, 2006, p. 696).</p>	<p>Thus, the degree of “fit” between an individual’s physical and social contexts and his or her personal characteristics becomes important because it influences not only the nature of social interactions but the makeup of attitudes and beliefs about “self” and others (Spencer, 2006, p. 696).</p>	<p>Socially constructed environments are communicated both formally, through language and social-cultural traditions, as well as informally, and require constant processing and interpretation (Spencer, 2006, p. 696).</p>	<p>The meanings construed have important implications for actions since individuals perceive and act on their perceptions (Spencer, 2006, p. 696).</p>
<p>Thus, “meaning making” is an ever-present aspect of the human development process, and as such, deserves to be unpacked and examined for fully grasping its relevance to life-course human development (Spencer, 2006, p. 696).</p>	<p>Individuals come to understand and respond to their world through interactions with others, although it is not the interactions themselves that determine life outcomes but rather the meaning that individuals make from their social encounters (i.e. their perceptions) (Spencer, 2006, p. 696).</p>	<p>Assumptions gleaned, inferences made, and subsequent coping patterns enacted result from the quality of fit between the individual and the diverse contexts encountered (Spencer, 2006, p. 697).</p>	<p>It is these unavoidable and life-course processes that signal the need to combine fundamental human development thinking with basic phenomenological tenets and ecological perspectives (Spencer, 2006, p. 697).</p>	<p>In other words, they infer meanings, engage in responsive coping processes, and construct both formal and informal “action plans” (Spencer, 2006, p. 696-697).</p>

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<p>From the beginning, life-course human development experiences are unavoidably shaped by both objective reality and perception (Spencer, 2006, p. 696).</p>	<p>The study of phenomenology has been around for centuries and embraced across continents, as any simple web search or dictionary exercise demonstrates (Spencer, 2006, p. 697).</p>	<p>Social settings are important whether one most appreciates the individual-context interaction perspective offered by Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1985) or the more basic view provided by the early ecological psychologists (e.g. Barker & Wright, 1954) who emphasized the character of settings (as cited by (Spencer, 2006, p. 697-698).</p>	<p>This is noteworthy because categories describing human diversity often represent socially constructed meanings (Spencer, 2006, p. 697).</p>	<p>These processes are unavoidably associated with emotions since human variability represents both successes and failures of human coping processes (Spencer, 2006, p. 697).</p>
<p>Thus, within the social contexts of development, the character of perceptions made, or meaning making inferred, contributes to the variability of human coping and identity formation outcomes as lives unfold across the</p>	<p>It includes significant controversies around meanings and research applications across disciplines (Spencer, 2006, p. 697).</p>	<p>It is unavoidable, then, that individuals have experiences, perceptions, and coping processes that represent active meaning making as a function of the quality of individual-context interactions (Spencer, 2006, p. 698).</p>	<p>And, due to the social construction of race-defined (and still salient!) social groupings, the framework is helpful because it provides a way to interpret and understand how behavioral outcomes and coping strategies are linked to the social</p>	<p>A synthesis by Wilson (2002) posits that phenomenology is a branch of philosophy that attempts to understand how individuals make meaning from their diverse experiences (Spencer, 2006, p. 697).</p>

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<p>life course (Spencer, 2006, p. 697).</p>			<p>experiences and meaning making processes of humans given their inter-subjective and relevant encounters with others (Spencer, 2006, p. 697).</p>	
<p>A basic role taking or social cognition perspective assumes that perceptual processes begin at birth and gain acuity across the life course due to problem-solving of progressively complex sets of social experiences (e.g. maturation dependent cognitive processes contribute to a growing awareness of different perspectives or points of view) (Spencer, 2006, p. 697).</p>	<p>Thus, an individual's perceptions about settings and their experiences in them matter (Spencer, 2006, p. 697).</p>	<p>PVEST encourages the critical analysis of human development processes that unfold in multilevel contexts over time (Spencer, 2006, p. 698).</p>		
	<p>However, as used here and synthesized from a broad array of philosophers and</p>	<p>Additionally, social inequalities that may impact context experiences are not</p>		<p>A fundamental component includes the concept intersubjectivity, which</p>

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	translations, phenomenology is conceived as the study of “phenomena” – literally, appearances as opposed to reality (Spencer, 2006, p. 697).	only seen as a potential category of risk but also as a source of daily challenge (Spencer, 2006, p. 698).		suggests that we experience the world with and through others (Spencer, 2006, p. 697).
	PVEST combines social cognition relevant phenomenology themes with ecological systems theory to provide a heuristic device for understanding the unique experiences of diverse group members as had at varying developmental periods (Spencer, 2006, p. 698).			Given the significant role of cognition, affect and biology in the social interactions and interpersonal experiences of human, phenomenology communicates important opportunities for understanding differences in human “meaning making” as lives open up across the life course (Spencer, 2006, p. 697).
				Human perception is important, and, whether taking a basic social cognitive perspective (e.g. Flavell, 1968) or a traditional phenomenology point

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				of view (e.g. see Rogers & Kelly as reviewed in Schultz, 1976), individual-context interactions matter (Spencer, 2006, p. 697).
				Sociologists might label the phenomenon 'role enactment' while psychologists might discuss social perspective taking (Spencer, 2006, p. 697).
				The basic notion from either a phenomenology or social cognition standpoint is that basic perceptual processes are active and contribute to how people "make sense" of situations and experiences as one negotiates progressively complex social interactions over time and place (i.e. their meaning making

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				processes) (Spencer, 2006, p. 697).
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