

The Humanistic Psychologist

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Online First Publication, May 9, 2019. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/hum0000141>

CITATION

DeRobertis, E. M., & Bland, A. M. (2019, May 9). Lifespan Human Development and “The Humanistic Perspective”: A Contribution Toward Inclusion. *The Humanistic Psychologist*. Advance online publication. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/hum0000141>



Lifespan Human Development and “The Humanistic Perspective”: A Contribution Toward Inclusion

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Humanistic psychology has a long tradition of developmental thought. Yet, no place has been reserved for a specifically humanistic perspective in developmental psychology textbooks. This article presents a humanistic perspective to serve as a convenient guide for the potential creation of a textbook entry. A highly condensed account of Existential-Humanistic Self-Development Theory (EHSDT) is outlined and compared with the theories that most frequently garner coverage in developmental textbooks. Suggestions for further research on the major themes of EHSDT are also provided. These include the role of the imagination in shaping the trajectories of lifespan development, the intercorporeal and multicultural embeddedness of the narrative imagination, the self-cultivation process, cooperative culture creation, thriving amid paradox, and the ways in which motivational dynamics operate within diverse social contexts. Carefully planned rollout of such research should help prevent further marginalization of explicitly humanistic developmental theory on the basis that it challenges some of the fundamental assumptions of the established theories and, accordingly, tends to be met with resistance or, at best, indifference.

Keywords: lifespan development, Existential-Humanistic Self-Development Theory, imagination, self-cultivation, phenomenology

This article is part of a larger, ongoing effort to ameliorate an unfortunate gap in the psychological literature left by the near exclusion of explicitly humanistic viewpoints in the study of lifespan development. In accordance with Lefrancois (2001) and Crain (2005), we believe that humanistic psychology has made significant developmental contributions to psychology since its inception, not the least of which are its numerous explications of the growth process inherent in human health (see Bland & DeRobertis,

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We thank Joseph Cali for his conscientious reading of this article.

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2017; DeRobertis, 2000, 2008, 2012, 2015b, 2017; DeRobertis & McIntyre, 2016). In Crain's (2005) words, "There is one place where the developmentalists' concerns are seriously expressed. This is in humanistic psychology" (p. xvi).

For example, foundational humanistic thinkers including Wilhelm Dilthey (see Teo, 2003), Edmund Husserl (see Allen, 1976), Maurice Merleau-Ponty (Merleau-Ponty, 2010), Abraham Maslow (Maslow, 1987, 1999; also see Bland & DeRobertis, 2017), Charlotte Bühler (Bühler, 1967; Bühler & Allen, 1972; also see DeRobertis, 2008), Alfred Adler (see DeRobertis, 2012), and Carl Rogers (see DeRobertis, 2008) all wrote about child psychology and human development in general. Especially within the existential-phenomenological branch of the humanistic movement, entire volumes have been dedicated to the study of human development involving varied foci, from quantitative and qualitative research to the establishment of conceptual models for approaching the lifespan (e.g., Bühler & Massarik, 1968; DeRobertis, 2008, 2012, 2017; Knowles, 1986; Schachtel, 1959; Simms, 2008; Welsh, 2013). Moreover, a parallel current of phenomenological thought in the domain of pedagogy has been developing for some time (van Manen, 2014).

Despite all this, humanistic developmental thought continues to be vastly underrepresented in the developmental literature. At least in recent years, this seems attributable to the general marginalization of the humanistic perspective in a culture that values predictability and technocratic utility (Dewell & Foose, 2017; Van Kaam, 1966). The numerous parallels between humanistic theorizing and conventional developmental theory and research (see Bland & DeRobertis, 2017) notwithstanding, to date, the appearance of an explicitly humanistic perspective in a developmental text remains unusual (DeRobertis, 2008), likely because historically the perspective has been too "outside the box." Similar things can be said of the limited coverage of humanistic psychology in educational psychology textbooks, which tend to give little more than brief mention of Maslow's hierarchy of needs in connection with the importance of motivation in teaching and learning (e.g., Woolfolk, 2016).

To be fair, humanistic psychologists are partly responsible for this estrangement. Founding humanistic psychologists (e.g., Maslow, 1987; May, 1967; Van Kaam, 1966) preferred that the existential-humanistic approach not be taken up as a separate school or subfield of psychology but rather as a basis for psychology itself. Because several aspects of foundational humanistic theorizing—particularly its developmental focus (e.g., see Bühler, 1967; Bühler & Allen, 1972)—have become embraced (albeit in narrow-band empirical form) by conventional psychologists since the final third of the 20th century, today several of its once-radical propositions have either become commonplace and/or treated as revolutionary by contemporary psychologists who coopt and repackage them. Despite this, the humanistic community generally has not adequately sought to accentuate and advocate for its developmental acumen, and research on developmental theory in humanistic psychology has been stagnant in the new millennium (as noted by one of the reviewers of this article) since the rollout of seminal process research in the second half of the 20th century (e.g., Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Kegan, 1982; Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson, & McKee, 1978; White, 1966). All the while, many broader-band humanistic principles that are typically taken for granted within the humanistic community remain obscure to most mainstream psychologists.

Accordingly, in this article we provide an introduction to humanistic developmental thought by using an approach that is long overdue. Specifically, we outline a highly condensed "humanistic perspective"—specifically, Existential-Humanistic Self-Development Theory (EHSDT; see DeRobertis, 2008, 2012, 2015b, 2017)—to serve as a

convenient guide for the potential creation of a textbook entry. Our aim is to provide conceptual raw material to act as a stepping-stone for professionals who can use their expertise to bring humanistic developmental thought to students at varied levels of study. Conceptually, this article is a follow-up to DeRobertis and McIntyre's (2016) introduction to humanistic developmental thought, which was written for an audience of undergraduate readers in particular and which emphasized that: (a) human beings have teleological goals that undergird individual development, (b) human awareness and knowledge are experientially graded and ever-expanding, and (c) empathetic, accepting relationships found children's abilities to develop into confident, fully functioning social beings. In addition, we compare and contrast EHS DT with several theories that have become regularly featured in developmental college textbooks in the interest of familiarizing the reader with the overall character of a "new" old perspective. By pointing out both connections and areas of divergence between EHS DT and the traditional models and research with which most psychologists and students should be familiar, humanistic psychologists' contributions to and influence upon the mainstream may become better appreciated, and areas of further exploration better contextualized and understood.

Existential-Humanistic Self-Development Theory (EHS DT)

The strong influence of existential-phenomenology in humanistic developmental thought in general, as well as our own background in existential-phenomenology, have prompted us to speak of an *existential-humanistic* approach to development. The term *existential-humanistic* is borrowed from Van Kaam (1966) and is combined with the term *self-development* to accentuate the theory's nonreductive, nondeterministic orientation. EHS DT is an open-ended, holistic, macrolevel approach to human development that has interdisciplinary origins in philosophy, anthropology, education, pedagogy, sociology, and history (see DeRobertis, 2008, 2012, 2015b, 2017). EHS DT values philosophical-anthropological reflection and metapsychological rigor, and it also acknowledges the importance of being guided by data. For example, we have previously demonstrated the validity of EHS DT principles—specifically those espoused by Maslow—by connecting them with both classic and contemporary research findings in developmental psychology (Bland & DeRobertis, 2017). In addition, Bland and McQueen (2018b) provide empirical support for the role of intimate relationships in self-development.

Here, EHS DT is presented using six broad metathemes. First, EHS DT is a theory of the whole developing person-in-context with a focus on the core integrational system of the developmental process: the self-system. The holism of the theory is undergirded by a notion of the developing person as a situated network of meaningful relationships and projects, the relative integration of which is a function of the imagination (Murray, 1986, 2001). Second, the unfolding of human development is viewed in process-oriented terms, as an ever-diversifying connectivity. Third, healthy human development or thriving in the process of becoming oneself entails competent negotiation of paradox throughout the lifespan. Fourth, the dialectical tension between stability or sameness and change throughout the lifespan is understood on the basis of a dynamic motivational complex. Fifth, this motivational complex originates within a social context that is at once highly tactile and linguistically structured. On the basis of this social-contextual orientation, EHS DT sees self-development in terms of *self-cultivation*. Sixth, EHS DT values pluralism in research, with an overriding preference for phenomenological data that are sensitive to direct human involvement in the lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*).

An Existential-Phenomenological Systems Orientation

EHSDT's holistic approach to human development represents a particular kind of systems orientation in which the organism is regarded as a multifaceted, relatively organized whole capable of responding "intelligently" and flexibly to varying life circumstances. Human development refers to a dynamic gestalt that is ever in flux—but more than this, it refers to a *certain someone's* development, that is, a specific person in the perpetual process of becoming more fully human (i.e., tolerant of ambiguity, creative, spontaneous but not impulsive, or mindful but not compulsive). A person-in-process is an active participant in a lifestyle marked by intentionality and the coming-to-awareness of one's own being. These two features are indicative of EHSDT's overarching phenomenological and existential characteristics, respectively.

Adopting the holism of this approach means refusing to compartmentalize even those very broad aspects of psychological life that are normally referred to as "objective behavior" and "subjective mental processes." Instead, development is viewed in terms of ever-unfolding *experiaction* (von Eckartsberg, 1979)—the functional inseparability of experiencing and acting—that serves as a concrete touchstone for any exploration of developmental part-processes. This means that the study of human development by way of its various constituents (e.g., genetic precursors, sensitive periods, information processing systems, temperamental predispositions, attachment patterns, and so forth) begins and ends with experiencing, acting persons in the process of negotiating and/or constructively responding to their discrete circumstances. Emphasis is given to unfolding, living relations with self, other, and world at large. The process of development is, thus, held to involve a perpetual holonic (i.e., part-whole unfolding; see Wilber, 2000) dynamic.

Placing the unique developing person-in-process living in and through his or her life circumstances at the center of EHSDT's concerns has two implications. First, it means that EHSDT must rely on a dialogue between the general and the particular when it comes to data collection, of which more will be said later. Second, the consideration of isolated aspects of development fulfills its scientific potential when these aspects are properly contextualized as part of a meaningful, value-laden human reality. Psychological life is describable on the basis of many levels of functioning, from the molecular and cellular to the cultural and historical, all of which play varied roles in the formation of an all-encompassing developmental context (Wilber, 2000). However, these formative dimensions of development's context taken in their pregiven (i.e., "objective") aspects alone cannot reveal that context's full phenomenal reality.

A developmental context is given its decisive shape once it is taken up by a developing person engaged in the process of co-constituting its continually unfolding meaning. Here, developmental context denotes an intricately intertwined fabric of meaning evokers, delimiters, modifiers, and amplifiers. In each case, developmental context refers to the platform and the occasion for relative change to commence, a setting of the stage for a unique project of human becoming. Human development is *radically situated*, implying a state of being that cannot be captured by the antinomy of merely being subject to an environment's many compelling forces versus the intellectual manipulation of that environment like a scientist-in-training. These opposing extremes are projections of a rationalizing scientific consciousness, and neither approaches the issue of developmental context with an appreciation of its relationship to situated human consciousness as it realistically operates within the lifeworld. Rather, for EHSDT, *living* human consciousness is characteristically world-disclosing and world-invested as its default state, viscerally and affectively "caught up" in the day-to-day life of meaningful interchange before

the developing person is reflectively aware of his or her involvement. From the perspective of this highly “molar” synthetic-relational approach, the developing person-in-process is a meaningfully structured network of unfolding relationships and projects. He or she is a situated (nonabsolute) freedom, taking up positions that both structure and are informed by the world qua referential totality of meanings. Conceptualized in this way, there is no hard-and-fast distinction to be made between person-in-process and world-in-process; together they form a figure-ground nexus. With varying degrees of awareness, the person-in-process is ever co-constituting world meanings and, beyond that, co-creating culture.

Thus, EHSOT approaches the *organizational achievement* of a developing person’s being, as *a total being-in-the-world*, in terms of the ongoing evolution of the self-system (sometimes called the *proprium*; Allport, 1955) in human development, the essence of which is integrative and imaginative in nature (Frick, 1971; Murray, 2001). Human development is dependent upon the concurrent and relatively harmonious functioning of numerous physical, emotional, cognitive, social, and moral subsystems on an ongoing basis. That is, healthy development entails a workable center of gravity among the subsystems (see Wilber, 2000). The manners in which humans engage and operationalize these subsystems at any given time can be portrayed in broad species-typical and culture-typical terms as a matter of course. However, the overall form of this harmonization is ultimately determined by the developing person’s characteristic world-openness, which is marked by an irreducible imaginative-integrative impetus and awareness (i.e., the self—Who am I? Who am I becoming?). Meantime, here the *imagination* does not refer primarily to fantasy or to the mere manipulation of mental images, but rather to a genuinely teleological creative-productive power. Likewise, EHSOT does not restrict its understanding of the imagination to special instances of creative productivity. Rather, the imagination is the most fundamental form of cognition—embodied, affectively attuned, and socially emergent (Bolton, 1982).

Human Development as a Differential-Integrative Process: Diversifying Connectivity

For EHSOT, the myriad subsystems at work in human development are mutually interdependent comparable with the transparent pages in an anatomy book that illustrate the circulatory, digestive, respiratory, nervous, and other systems working in tandem. The subsystems’ deeply intertwined nature is most evident at the outset of development. However, there is not an absolute zero point of total indistinction, either. The imagination is hard at work straightaway, as early experience comes to be populated with primitively organized figures differentiated from their backgrounds (Koffka, 1931). The global state of the self-system displays this same quality, manifesting as an evolving figure-ground nexus in its world-relations fit with prototypical manifestations of operational body schema and perceptual body image from infancy (Gallagher & Meltzoff, 1996). As Straus (1975) observed, with the first breath, the child establishes a lived inner-outer *relationality* that will persist throughout the lifespan. Development is founded upon an implicit separation-in-connection or belonging-in-opposition that is mediated by the affectively experienced undulations of the body across the medium of the flesh. The child is not born in an autistic state completely shielded by a stimulus barrier. Rather, he or she turns toward the world with interest (Schachtel, 1959). “Primary creativeness, i.e., when an individual engages in an activity which results in the discovery of new potentials, is

observable from about the infant's second week of life" (Bühler & Marschack, 1968, p. 93).

In this turning toward the world, the child does not lapse into a kind of quasi-symbiotic confusion with the subjectivity of the caregiver. As Bühler (1968) noted, newborns display a selectivity of perception that is observable within the first 4 to 5 days of life, and this perceptual selectivity "forces us to assume the existence of a primary individuality, even a singularity of personality" (pp. 28–29). Of course, the infant has a way to go before he or she can grasp the highly abstract conceptual distinction between "inside" and "outside" that has come to pervade Western adult consciousness (Romanyshyn, 1989). As implicated by Kegan (1982), experiential organization in early infancy has an "adualistic" character, not in the sense of displaying a total inability to differentiate self from other, but in the sense that it operates outside the artificial antinomy of the inner and the outer that results when the connective bonding medium of living flesh is habitually covered over by the literal dividing boundary of the anatomical epidermis. Beginning with a highly embedded sense of experiential organization, part-processes are increasingly differentiated (with varying degrees of rapidity and salience) and are then sooner or later reintegrated when conditions are ideal to form a more dynamically responsive world openness (see Bowen, 1978; Firestone, Firestone, & Catlett, 2013). As development unfolds, thus, one witnesses an evolving pattern wherein personal organization is repeatedly destabilized and then reorganized to create a more multifaceted style of integration, giving healthy human development the character of *a diversifying connectivity*. For empirical support of this principle, see Bland and McQueen (2018b) and DeRobertis (2017).

To be sure, the assimilation of highly rationalized third-person views of self and world is part of what it means to develop in a contemporary Western cultural landscape. However, for EHSOT, such assimilations merely serve the increasing articulation of unfolding self-development as part of a perpetual dialectic between more embodied and embedded forms of knowledge and more salient, intellectualized forms of knowledge (i.e., *diversifying connectivity*). There are many subtle gradations of salience in experiential world-relatedness as development proceeds. These result from differential-integrative accomplishments like the gradual realization of upright posture, confronting the world face-to-face, investigating it with increasingly agile hand-eye coordination, qualitative refinements in imitative abilities, and improvements in both receptive and expressive language. With the refinement of each of these abilities comes the potential for a new, more sophisticated form of personal integration to emerge—but only a relative potential. That is, notions of "not me" become increasingly integrated as *possibilities* into the self-concept and enacted as situations demand (Combs, 1999; Combs, Richards, & Richards, 1988). Moreover, optimal development depends on improvements in one's ability to connect to the object world in a manner that does not result in (inter)subjective disconnect and a denuding, alienating, stultifying loss of holistic perspective (a threat that pervades contemporary technologized culture). In the end, the optimization of the growth process depends on the *unity-building power* of the imagination (Murray, 1986) and its potential for adopting a sufficiently vitalizing, ambiguity tolerant, inclusive style of integration reminiscent of Maslow's self-actualizing personality (see Bland & DeRobertis, 2017).

Regarding diversifying connectivity as *social connectivity*, in recent times there has been a heightened recognition of the fact that humans are born with an integrative capacity and that certain senses of self are already differentiating soon after birth. This recognition is due in large part to the efforts of Stern (2000), whose arguments fit in well with the tradition of humanistic developmental thought because of his characterizations of devel-

omental differentiation and integration as a perpetual function of the interpersonal. In his words, “The most important point is that a primary intersubjectivity starts from the beginning, as does the sense of an emergent self, as does the sense of a core self” (Stern, 2000, p. xxii). Around 9 months, the sense of intersubjective self begins to become salient, followed by the sense of verbal self around 18 months and the narrative self at approximately 3 years. Stern’s assertions regarding the timing of the narrative self-fall squarely within the period that the child is beginning to take up a globally integrative, generalized goal orientation within his or her social world (Adler, 1979; Kohut, 1977). By about 8 years of age, the child can not only engage complex social interactions with the third person perspective of a generalized other, but he or she can also integrate skill specific notions of self-efficacy into a global self-concept, resulting in the consolidation of an overall sense of self-esteem (Harter, 1999; Tischler, 2010). Moving toward adolescence, the child then begins to develop a more socially reflective form of differential-integrative awareness with the development of identity. Commitment and fidelity then become the issues that found the highly self-transcendent differential-integrative opportunities of adult development, including love, care, and wisdom (Erikson, 1963; Knowles, 1986) that enable one to be at ease in multiple social roles without assuming an off-balance center of gravity whereby one life domain (e.g., work) becomes accentuated at the expense of others (e.g., family, health, and recreation; see Bland & McQueen, 2018a; Erikson, 1959/1994; Frankl, 1983; Sweet, 2014).

Thriving Amid Paradox

Self-development, as the evolution of one’s imaginative-integrative impetus and awareness, is uniquely suited to the lifelong process of handling those growth opportunities that specifically call out for *mediating* creative-productive potentials. This implicates the challenges of thriving amid paradox as a significant metatheme. The entire process of human development is paradoxical from the point of view of EHS DT in two fundamental senses. First, building upon von Eckartsberg’s (1998) “*existential-phenomenological paradox*” (p. 15), EHS DT assumes that human development simultaneously exhibits trans-individual (essential) regularities that nonetheless always present as concretized (existential) particulars (see Friedman, 1964; Natanson, 1970). Human becoming is best described as a *situated becoming oneself*, marking the insertion of the unique developing person within the natural world (DeRobertis, 2015a). Second, as discussed, EHS DT approaches human development as involving both differential and integrative processes.

Beyond these global characteristics, there are many other manifestations of the paradoxical throughout human development, each presenting a particular bipolar reality that must be competently negotiated for growth to commence. Birth introduces the dynamic tension of stability or sameness and change, with the transition to life outside the womb being one of the most radical changes in one’s lifetime. Thereafter, throughout the lifespan, humans are faced with needs for predictability and safety on the one hand, and normative eustress, age-appropriate progress, and overall growth on the other. The risks involved in growth implicate the perpetual tension between life and death or being and nonbeing (see May, 1977), from the highly embedded awareness of vulnerability experienced during infancy to the articulated fears of death that manifest in old age (see Erikson, 1959/1994). The comforting presence of others first emerges as a means of containing the threat of nonbeing, giving rise to the lifelong dynamics of interdependence and independence.

In the calm, opening presence of comforting primary caretakers, self-investigatory bodily awareness soon gives rise to the discovery of additional paradoxical realities. The child discovers that he or she not only is a lived bodily presence to the world-with-others, but that he or she also *has* a body that is subject to various degrees of objectification. In its various objectified forms, the body might be that which is deliberately manipulated or experienced as that which exerts control over one's functioning. This marks a polarity between *being* and *having*, which has transformed into what is perhaps the major crisis of contemporary American culture: the tension between caring participation (as a way of being) and egoistic consumption (as a kind of having; see Fromm, 1976). The body itself has not been immune to the problems associated with a failure to navigate this paradox, as is most evident by the extent to which the body has come to be objectified (Romanyshyn, 1989) and made the object of consumption. This is especially pronounced with regard to femininity; thus, implicating the paradox of human androgyny and the many challenges it has posed (as discussed at length within the psychoanalytic movement and as recently taken up by Newsom, 2015).

That the body can sometimes enable willing action or prove to be an obstacle introduces a juxtaposition of freedom and limitation, as well as the tension between activity and passivity throughout human development. Still other bipolar realities emerge upon the realization that the body can be used for creation or destruction and, later, for good or evil. Optimally, the child embarks on a progressive path toward an ever-widening creative expansion wherein destruction plays the facilitating role of helping to undo outmoded forms of integration. This progression then calls forth the paradox of pursuing an increasing sense of completion in a life that forever points to an "always more to come," giving human happiness the character of incomplete-completion (Strasser, 1977). The pursuit of incomplete-completion itself evokes the question as to the *meaning* of human affairs, including their ultimate meaning in the face of the possibility of their potential meaninglessness. Here, one is confronted with the difficult issue of contending with the desire for certainty in a world that is full of ambiguity, which requires a mutual respect for both evidence and mystery (including the pervasive role of faith in human living).

To reiterate, for growth to occur, these dualities must be *faced*, engaged, truly encountered, negotiated, and made productive. Otherwise, they become frustrating, growth-stifling dualisms (Schneider, 1990, 2013). Opposition must be preserved in dialectical relatedness and in that way "overcome" (hence, the *relative, differential* nature of the integrative process). It is in this dialectical capacity that the imagination actualizes its specialized mediatory role, giving rise to the proliferation of certain psychological strengths, exemplary characteristics of healthy self-formation, exhibiting outstanding integrative power. Such strengths include hope, vitalizing bodily awareness, will, social interest and relatedness, purpose, biophilia (the urge to affiliate with other forms of life; Wilson, 1984), the capacity for wonder and awe, creative transcendence, competence, identity, fidelity, integrity, love, socioecological rootedness, care, wisdom, gerotranscendence, discerning prudence of judgment, and the development of an overarching frame of orientation in life.

Human Becoming: Being-in-Time and Its Dynamic Motivational Complex

As noted, at a broad level of analysis, EHSDT approaches self-development via a hermeneutic of being in time involving an ongoing dialectic between stability/sameness and the possibility of being different or *changing* who one is moving forward into the future. Selfhood is seen in terms of *both* the desire to maintain or reestablish a certain order of being-in-the-world as well as the striving to transcend and become "other than"

any given order throughout the lifespan. In this regard, human development involves a dynamic complex of overlapping, interpenetrated motivational tendencies.

Insofar as human beings seek to discharge certain states of tension and return to prior states of relative calm, they can be said to display homeostatic tendencies. Inasmuch as they also seek to “self-regulate” by coping with challenges, fitting in with their surroundings, and attaining a sense of security in the world, they can also be said to display reactive adaptational tendencies. Developmental theory and psychology at large have made much of these modes of comportment, both of which envision the person as adjusting to change with the purpose of maintaining sameness. Alone, however, these motivational tendencies are inadequate to describe healthy development. In contrast, EHSDT and humanistic psychology at large have insisted that a more complete understanding of motivation involves accounting for those motivational tendencies that welcome and/or propagate creative change (Bühler & Allen, 1972; May, 1975).

Human development also involves a tendency toward self-enrichment. The purpose of the self-enriching motivational tendency is to attain and cultivate a personally agreeable quality of life and experience as a being-in-the-world. Here, interactions with one’s own body, oneself, others, and the world at large are pleasing, not merely because tensions are removed, but because the sustained interaction itself is invigorating. As growth proceeds and the world takes on its more objective characteristic, the self-enriching tendency will be joined by a burgeoning self-transcending motivational tendency. *Self-transcendence* refers to the desire to be in contact with the world out of a care, concern, or dedication that is aimed at things and others on their terms. Self-transcendent aims prevent the self from becoming a system of self-concern, closed in upon itself. The purpose of the self-transcending motivational tendency is to relate to things and others in the most meaningful and profound manner, overriding (without necessarily eliminating) concern for one’s own enjoyment or self-interest. Under the galvanizing, streamlining auspices of self-enriching and self-transcending motivational tendencies, homeostasis recedes in overall significance and gives ground to something more akin to von Bertalanffy’s (1968) *steady state* or Goldstein’s (1995) *equalized centering*. Likewise, reactive adaptation recedes in overall significance in comparison to proactive adaptation. The self-system can, thereby, uphold a vitalized tendency toward enhanced forms of organization with maximum efficiency.

EHSDT emphasizes understanding self-enriching and self-transcending motivational tendencies, as they are most indicative of world-openness, openness to the future, growth, and (as their names indicate) evolving selfhood. Historically, terms like *self-realization*, *self-actualization*, and *self-fulfillment* have been used to highlight this growth-oriented view of human development. For EHSDT, these terms refer to the dynamically motivated process of *situated becoming oneself* in relation to time. To illustrate, EHSDT is more profoundly appreciative of the present in comparison to developmental viewpoints rooted in the natural sciences. For the latter, the present is an isolated “point” in time that is the mere residue of past causes. For EHSDT, the present is not interpreted exclusively in terms of the mere maintenance of what has been. The present may also be functionally autonomous of the past. Optimally, the present is a gift, so experienced on the basis of an affirming presence to self, others, and the world. The present is the paradoxical place where *what has been* (one’s past) and *what may be* (one’s future) as deemed by “me in my circumstances” coningle and are realized. The meaningful, experiential dynamics of the here-and-now are, thus, considered more central to understanding human development in terms of becoming oneself than clock time or “real” time, as it is sometimes called. In childhood, time is lived primarily in the here-and-now and progressively spirals outward as growth proceeds (DeRobertis, 2008; McAdams, 2015).

The past, in turn, is brought to life in the present looking forward to what is coming from the future, whether immediate or distant. Human being is *historical* being, but not in the mere sense of historical determinism. The meaningful learning experiences of the past co-contextualize future growth. At the same time, how the person imaginatively projects himself or herself toward the possibilities of future becoming provides a frame of reference for interpreting the nature and significance of the past (i.e., what is deemed “memorable”). One’s past and one’s future have a reciprocal relationship through the medium of the present. To paraphrase May (1983), as people creatively construct their future by shaking off defensive and/or habitual means of dealing with life circumstances, they also reconstruct their past.

Finally, the future is not the temporal emptiness of quantified, measured time. The future is pregnant with meanings to be fulfilled and can be motivating. Although it can incite dread, it can also captivate and call one forward into the process of becoming oneself. This perspective rests on the notion of a situated freedom engaged in the *genuine* pursuit of aims, goals, and purposes throughout the lifespan. It requires the acknowledgment of human of intentionality in the specifically phenomenological sense of that term, what May (1969) referred to as “the structure which gives meaning to experience . . . our imaginative participation in the coming day’s possibilities” (pp. 223–224).

Social Context and Situated Becoming Oneself: Self-Cultivation

EHSOT insists on the primacy of the subject-subject relationship (Strasser, 1969) in light of the fact that the aforementioned motivational tendencies require an adequately nurturing field within which to emerge and operate. The infant’s vital functioning and corresponding “functioning intentionality” (Husserl, 1969, p. 157) must be met with welcoming for growth to ensue. Birth affords but a precursory experiential organization, which is only secured and readied for growth by holding and handling that is perceived to be tender and capable of modulating the proximity of the potentially overwhelming postnatal world (DeRobertis, 2008, 2012; Jaffe, Beebe, Feldstein, Crown, & Jasnow, 2001; Strasser, 1969; Winnicott, 1965). The caregiver’s comportment co-constitutes and is ultimately interwoven within the child’s lived, owned body via the invitations of his or her contact. Through his or her empathically discerning touch, the caregiver creates a field within which the object world at large and the objective bodily characteristics of self and others can become integrated within the child’s emerging consciousness in a calm, open, nonthreatening way. Embodied cobeing emerges from a tactile “point of departure” that establishes the hope, confidence, self-acceptance, self-respect, and self-worth necessary for sustained world-openness and the evolution of a cooperative, cocreative disposition toward being-with-others in the process of becoming throughout life.

Since becoming oneself is situated in a broader, cosmic-ecological setting, human development is dependent upon culturally constructed meanings and customs that provide structure and orientation in a world subject to infinite interpretations. These meanings are co-constituted and co-transmitted via narrative means, attesting to the centrality of the imagination and its creative power in human development at both the individual and collective levels. Situated becoming oneself involves the emergence of a unique life story nested within a multitude of larger stories, the nature and quality of which is subject to infinite variation (Fancher, 1995/2017). Not all narratives are equal when it comes to human development, however (see Wilber, 2017). Space constraints do not allow an extended analysis of the relative quality of life narratives, but a few words may be said based on what has been covered thus far.

According to EHS DT, the structure and orientation that narratives provide best serve self-development when they enhance one's ability to connect to a wider world of meaning and, thereby, achieve a more multifaceted, ambiguity-tolerant style of personal integration. Optimal narrative form secures a valued place for difference and for otherness while paradoxically supporting the imaginative-integrative impetus of the self as one opens to the manifold possibilities of *relatedness* in the sense of authentic presence, participation, dialogue, and encounter. This kind of relatedness respects and preserves dialectical process in the fluid realm of the in-between where the full reality of paradox becomes manifest and the integrative strengths that allow one to make creative-productive use of tension and/or conflict are promoted.

Sympathetic to this view, EHS DT has advanced the concept of *self-cultivation* as exemplary for designating the unfolding process of human development conceived in terms of situated becoming oneself (DeRobertis, 2015b, 2017). In doing so, phenomenological data are available to support EHS DT's notion that self-cultivation thrives where personal narratives bespeak (i.e., shape and are shaped by) a developmental partnership between manifold forms of learning and creativity (DeRobertis, 2017). These reflect an ever-expanding, hierarchically ordered system of values (see Bland & DeRobertis, 2017; Wilber, 2017).

Research Orientation

As noted earlier, placing the unique developing person-in-process living in and through his or her life circumstances means that EHS DT values and relies on a dialogue between the general and the particular in data collection. Given that life circumstances among individuals will share certain similarities (i.e., "each person's inner nature is in part unique to [oneself] and *in part species-wide*"; Maslow, 1999, p. 5, emphasis added), the general or nomothetic is important. However, because the uniqueness of one's life process is never *fully* comparable (Strasser, 1977), to complement traditional and nontraditional (e.g., modeling) quantitative methods that focus on the general level of normative trends, one cannot ignore the rich potential of case-based, idiographic or morphogenic, and microgenetic analyses to maintain contact with the variety and nuances of situated psychological life (Bühler & Allen, 1972; Maslow, 1966).

The importance that EHS DT places on having a proper liaison between the general and the specific by way of situatedness in the lifeworld has played a major role in its having prioritized phenomenological data collection and analysis at the psychological level of meaning. To illustrate, as Giorgi (1975) has developed phenomenology for psychological application, the research process begins at the idiographic level with situated findings and then moves on to derive general structural (eidetic) descriptions of phenomena in a transition to the nomothetic level. His method is systematic, rigorous, and open to dialogue with quantitative methodologies (Giorgi, 2009). With its phenomenological emphasis, EHS DT insists that developmental research should not remain exclusively tied to impersonal, third person, explanatory approaches to development. Rather, data collection ought to be sensitive to the dynamics of the whole developing person and include disciplined descriptive attempts to grasp development as a meaningfully structured individualized process. The striving to articulate anonymous predispositions, laws, trends, norms, and so forth, are part of science as a matter of course, especially as conceived as a natural science. For EHS DT, however, a counterbalancing *human* scientific strategy is needed so that one may work with data that bring us ever-closer to the living reality of the whole organism rather than spiraling off in the direction of increasing

abstraction. As Gurwitsch (1974) put it, “The sciences find the subject matter of their study in the life-world; their purpose and sense are to provide a theoretical account of the life-world” (p. 139). Phenomenology gives EHS DT research footing in the lifeworld rather than the world as construed by the scientist in the abstract, looking on as a disinterested, uninvolved observer.

Theoretical Comparisons and Contrasts

Several theoretical perspectives have become standard inclusions in developmental textbooks. Garnering greater or lesser degrees of coverage, these theories include Freudian psychosexual theory, Eriksonian psychosocial theory, behavioral learning theory, social learning or social-cognitive theory, Piagetian theory, and the theories of Vygotsky and Bronfenbrenner as eco-sensitive alternatives for developmental theory. In this section, we will briefly outline ways in which EHS DT is similar to and different from each of these approaches. Before proceeding, it should be noted that we are engaging each theory in response to what is regularly presented in college texts. It is beyond the scope of this article to engage the larger debate over whether what is presented in college texts represents the best, most accurate version of each theory (see Abramson, 2013; Bland & DeRobertis, 2017; Churchill, 1988; DeRobertis & Bland, 2018; Ferguson, Brown, & Torres, 2018; Henry, 2017; Weiten & Wight, 1992).

Freudian Psychosexual Theory

The typical developmentally oriented introduction to Freudian thinking in college textbooks highlights the “instinctual” origins of development along with the tripartite system of id, ego, and superego. Unconscious motivation is often stressed, including some mention of defenses like fixation and regression within the context of the five psychosexual stages of development. EHS DT is in agreement with this viewpoint inasmuch as human development is about desire and affect long before dispassionate, distanced intellect becomes a potential mode of behavior. Human development is embodied, and this includes pleasure-seeking or tension-reducing (homeostatic) tendencies, especially as one faces transitions and setbacks (Bland, 2018b; Bland & DeRobertis, 2017). EHS DT also sees the mental life of the developing person as graded and dynamic rather than naively transparent. Moreover, like Freud, EHS DT also conceptualizes adult consciousness as having a historical context, and that this context (i.e., one’s life history) normally involves a degree of tension and conflict.

However, while EHS DT concedes that the psychosexual in human development cannot be outstripped, it does not give overriding priority to the drive character of development or to homeostatic motivational tendencies. The entire embodied, affective life of the developing person is an integral part of a triune consciousness involving affection, cognition, and volition simultaneously (Tallon, 1997, p. 202). In other words, affective bodying forth operates within an intentional matrix that is nuanced beyond what can be captured by the rigid bifurcation of mental life into animal impulses set against rationality (adaptive or defensive).

EHS DT does not ascribe to the historical determinism of psychosexual theory either, nor does it focus on fixation or regression beyond one’s life circumstances having precluded the possibility of optimal functioning (Bland & DeRobertis, 2017). The past is not assumed in advance to have precedence over other temporal modalities. Pathology, even as Freud’s (1965) psychopathology of everyday life, is not prioritized over health.

Rather, EHSDT holds that conflict can be a productive, progressive force in development. Further, the conflictual unconscious is not assumed in advance to have precedence over other unconscious processes, prereflective processes, or conscious processes responsible for the creation of healthy tensions and integrative syntheses. Finally, EHSDT assigns an important role to the development of genuine conscience as a self-transcendent process and is not reducible to the superego's fear of punishment (Allport, 1955).

Eriksonian Psychosocial Theory

Eriksonian psychosocial theory is regularly presented as a modern alternative to traditional psychosexual theory. The aspect of Erikson's work that is almost always given focal attention is the manner that he revisited the psychosexual stages of development and supplemented them with psychosocial stages revolving around ego needs (i.e., ego crises). In addition to supplementing the five psychosexual stages, his work identifies and details three stages of adult development. EHSDT aligns with psychosocial theory in that embodied being, including the psychosexual, is socioculturally embedded. There is further agreement concerning the notion that ego functioning in its many forms can contribute important developmental support for growth and health.

Whereas Erikson approached development by taking the ego in its social adaptability as his point of departure, EHSDT follows Knowles (1986) in suggesting a broader approach to development that gives greater emphasis to the self's "relationship to Being" whereby "the person is not completely determined by others and the world nor does he or she have complete control over them" (p. 15). That is, one does not have control over to whom one is born, when, where, in what social class, and so forth. On the other hand, one also is responsible for not becoming "lost in the 'they,' forgetting [one's] own views and conforming to [society's] views" (p. 16) and/or distracting oneself from "basic issues, such as . . . death" via mechanical "involvement . . . [in] everyday tasks" and "the ego aspects of prediction and control" (p. 11).

Finally, although EHSDT is welcoming of stage conceptions of development, it is important to note that contextually embedded experientialism tends to exceed what can be captured by such frameworks. As we have noted elsewhere (DeRobertis & Bland, 2018), Erikson was aware of this. The identification of discontinuous stages has not always been meant to rigidly carve out certain times of life to deem them dictated by a certain kind of psychological structure. Freud (1949) likewise rejected "clear-cut" stages (p. 26). EHSDT holds that formalized developmental stages are socio-culturally emergent heuristic devices (Bühler, 1968; DeRobertis, 2012). What are normally considered time-specific developmental issues are "worked on in some manner during all of the major periods of development" (DeRobertis, 2008, p. 199).

Behavioral Learning Theory

The behavioral principles that take center stage in developmental texts are the same as what one finds in most other introductions to behaviorism. The core concept of association is presented as a function of classical conditioning and then again as a function of operant conditioning with its various consequences for behavior. Concepts like extinction, spontaneous recovery, and Premack's principle may also be presented. The overall gist of this coverage is that human development is a passive process of being "shaped" by environmental contingencies.

Phenomenologically oriented views like EHSDT have more in common with learning theory than may be assumed. As Kvale and Grennes (1975) observed, both behavioral and

phenomenological orientations reject the bifurcation of psychological life into an intracranial introspectionist or representationalist realm and a separate public sphere of worldly interaction. Both have adopted a highly dialectical-relational epistemology of action that highlights the critical role of learning in human development (DeRobertis, 2017). Finally, as Skinner maintained throughout his career, radical behaviorism (like phenomenological human science) places a premium on disciplined, systematic description over hypothesis testing.

However, EHSdT departs from behavioral learning theory in that it envisions the developing person-in-process as more than an object of environmental control and manipulation. Human development involves the emergence of intentional, meaning-making, world co-constituting consciousness. This intentionality is embodied without being reducible to the anatomical functioning of bodily processes, as humanistic psychologists such as Maslow have sought to demonstrate (Arons & Richards, 2015). With EHSdT, there is no move to eradicate the subjective pole of human psychological life. Healthy developmental progress gives rise to an experiential (reflective, reflexive, contemplative) “inner” quality that endows one’s being-in-the-world with the quality of intimacy (Strasser, 1985, p. 113). Thus, from the perspective of EHSdT, the study of any given conditioning process remains incomplete without some form of attention being given to the experiential, meaning-bestowing dimension of the learning process. Here, conditioning becomes experiential and, thus, psychophysically neutral rather than purely behavioral. Thus, the question of conditioning becomes, “What are the meaningfully structured experiences involved where environmental contingencies are felt to be exerting an influence on a developing person’s attempts to take up positions with respect to his or her total bio-psycho-social-spiritual situation?” To be sure, learning as such in its many typological variations has a phenomenologically derived experiential structure that is highly valued by EHSdT, but remains foreign to behavioral theory (DeRobertis, 2017).

Finally, EHSdT does not stress environmental influences on development to such an extent that organismic structure is disregarded. Human development is supported by a plastic, adaptable structural architecture displaying varied and changing needs that give rise to general motivational tendencies (Bland & DeRobertis, 2017; DeRobertis, 2008, 2012; DeRobertis & Bland, 2018). The unfolding of human becoming does not begin as behaviorism’s blank slate, nor does it occur by fiat, as in Sartrean existentialism (May, 1981; Strasser, 1963).

Social Learning or Social Cognitive Theory

Social-cognitive theory, formerly known as social learning theory, is presented in introductory texts as a contemporary alternative to traditional learning theory. Bandura’s (1971) work is the standard for coverage, which typically highlights triadic reciprocal causation as opposed to the strict stimulus-response (S-R) model inherent to conditioning theories. The environment and behavior are now joined by a “person” (P) variable, which includes various processes like attention, representation, and motivation, as well as issues related to performance (e.g., optimal arousal and self-efficacy). The observation of others is offered as a means by which the person internalizes models of potential behavior, which then potentiates latent learning. Should the person find himself or herself vicariously reinforced by what he or she witnesses, the modeling effect is more likely to occur than otherwise.

EHSdT and social-cognitive theory concur that the person is important for understanding behavior as it occurs within specific environmental niches. They both assume that representational activity (e.g., language) is important in mediating person, behavior, and environment interactions, as well as the learning process in general. They are in further

agreement regarding the critical role of other human beings in codetermining psychic structure and the development of one's sense of competence. Proponents of both theories have argued in favor of the human capacity to create self-regulatory processes from a continuous flow of social interaction impacting the learner's motives, values, and goals (Bandura, 1971; DeRobertis, 2017). As stated by the phenomenologist Plessner (1964):

Imitating and objectifying proceed from one source, namely, [people's] capacity to detach [themselves] and to transform [themselves] into something else—in other words, [individuals'] remoteness from [themselves] of which [they are] fully cognizant, this is [their] eccentric position. (p. 66)

However, whereas social–cognitive theory looks upon language as a mere representational tool, EHSOT considers language to be a formative aspect of both culture and self-cultivation, operating on many levels of awareness simultaneously. The child is born into a world that is replete with languages that offer prefigured meanings, which affect (i.e., structure) experiential possibilities of different kinds to varying degrees. Language is more than an instrument of Bandura's "P" variable (the person) to be used in effecting causative reciprocation. Language is a living historical force that houses the means by which a developing person may interpret and integrate the various aspects (physical, cognitive, emotional, social, moral, and agentic) of his or her being-in-the-world. Human development is narrative in nature, and the development of every person's life narrative takes its lead (though not its final form) from the myths, metaphors, and symbols furnished by culture. For example, the Hindu *namaste*, for which there is no immediate English equivalent, typically requires several English words and sometimes a discussion thereabout to comprehend by a novice whereas it is readily understood in Indian culture. The person-in-process emerges from within a field where there is already a language-in-process imbued with tendencies toward revealing some meanings, concealing others, and influencing the power dynamics of his or her limited, situated freedom. In this sense, language "has" the developing person long before he or she has language and, thus, is never reducible to a mere possession, even though the final form of human development requires the creative participation of the individual embedded within his or her particular linguistic meaning-making matrix.

In effect, social–cognitive theory has not offered an account of language that is profound enough to properly account for the creative power inherent to human development. From the perspective of EHSOT, social–cognitive theory is intellectualist leaning, and by virtue of this intellectualism, it cannot shed light on the dynamics involved in the embodiment of cultural meaning. Despite its laudable work in the areas of learning and agency, social–cognitive theory shows little appreciation of depth, life's paradoxes, or conflict. The drama of human development goes largely unarticulated. And yet, somewhat ironically, the intellectual life that plays such an important liberating role in social–cognitive theory is denigrated by Bandura (1989, 2008), who dismisses the concepts of freedom and autonomy on the basis of the straw man argument that such notions deny human embeddedness within worldly conditions. Thus, as Deci and Ryan (2000) observed, social–cognitive theory "is not equipped to deal with a more complex and meaningful conceptualization of agency" (p. 257):

[Because Bandura's] theory does not distinguish between autonomous and controlled behaviors, it maintains, at least implicitly, that people who are pawns to reward contingencies or to other controlling events are agentic so long as they feel able to carry out the activities they feel coerced or seduced into doing. (p. 257)

Piagetian Theory

The work of Piaget has long been the exemplar for introducing students to the study of cognitive development, and this introduction typically begins with an overview of concepts such as schemas, assimilation, accommodation, and equilibration. What will inevitably take center stage, however, are his qualitative distinctions among sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational, and formal operational thought along with several associated developmental achievements (i.e., object permanence, decentration, conservation, and abstract thinking, respectively).

EHSDT shares Piaget's reliance on and inclination toward the use of qualitative research, which is rarely highlighted (Giorgi, 2009). As Lourenço and Machado (1996) observed, "Piaget believed that science begins with description, not explanation" (p. 149). EHSDT shares Piaget's conviction that the development of the intellect emerges from bodily and perceptual engagement. Further, EHSDT and Piagetian theory hold that intellection and reason can take on more concrete or more abstract forms (i.e., what EHSDT refers to as relative embeddedness or salience).

EHSDT does not abide by the standard textbook presentation of Piaget, which only allows for his qualitative distinctions in cognition to be understood as a rigid, stage-like ordering. Taking a lead from Chapman's (1989) reading of Piaget, EHSDT looks upon Piaget's qualitative distinctions as first and foremost characterizing different forms of engagement involving varying manners of information gathering rather than positing lockstep phase shifts. For EHSDT, Piaget provided a language to articulate various cognitive configurations involved in one's situated, ever-changing world-relations. Given the developing person's life situation, he or she may require any one or some combination of sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational, and formal operational thought for intellectual growth to occur. Rather than seeing sensorimotor knowledge as de facto "primitive" or formal operations as de facto superior to other forms of cognition, EHSDT first withholds (i.e., phenomenologically "brackets") value judgments and asks how different kinds of engagement and information gathering suit or are not suited to the developing person's given life situation. Following Stern (2010), no overriding priority is given to the achievement of an abstracting intellect. As psychological life becomes more differentiated, increasingly withdrawn (i.e., abstract), salient forms of knowing complement without necessarily "overriding" or negating more embodied and embedded forms of knowing. As Strasser (1977) put it:

The process of withdrawal is simultaneously positive and negative. Positively, it signifies the progressive differentiation, stricter articulation, and greater objectivating power of experience; negatively, it signifies the estrangement and splitting of the natural unity of the person. An ever increasing withdrawal would endanger the unity of the person. From living experience [*Erleben*] "living-asunder" [*Zer-leben*] would develop. The various "withdrawals" must be reincorporated into the wholeness of personal life. (p. 93)

To state the matter in Schachtel's (1959) terms, more relatively *autocentric* forms of perceiving and knowing are joined by more relatively *allocentric* forms of perceiving and knowing. However, the value of either of these cognitive modalities is a matter of *goodness-of-fit* for the activities at hand. For EHSDT, optimal developmental progress is marked by the capacity to add new nuances to one's personal integration without losing touch with the fresh, vital, holistic perspectives that preceded their arrival. EHSDT's recoil from stage myopic Piagetianism rejects the implication that human development involves a global transition from phenomenism to Kantian, scheme-based idealism.

The emphasis that EHS DT places on preserving the integrity and value of embedded cognition increases the relative importance assigned to the socioemotional aspects of cognitive development. So, for example, Werner's (1948) term "sensory-motor-affective" (p. 101) is preferred over the Piagetian term *sensorimotor* when referring to embedded cognizing. Further, EHS DT places greater importance on the role of motivation in learning and cognitive development, particularly regarding the need for *belonging* (Maslow, 1987, 1999) or *relatedness* as it is sometimes called (Alderfer, 1972; Ryan & Deci, 2004). To illustrate, Topál et al. (2008) showed that infants' A-not-B errors are triggered by the communicative cues given by the experimenter (e.g., eye contact, gaze shift, and addressing) rather than the age-based cognitive deficiencies suggested by a Piagetian account of the phenomenon. Thus, the error is a function of the inherently social character of human learning and the normal bonding processes inherent to a positively functioning learning environment (DeRobertis, 2017).

Topál's study touches upon a further point of divergence between EHS DT and Piagetian theory, which is that EHS DT sees cognition as operating more squarely in light of the language and communication systems the child has been born into as he or she strives to author a workable and fulfilling life story. Schiff's (1983) study of conservation using a classic Piagetian estimation task can further illuminate the relative importance of language that is at issue here. Schiff (1983) found that children (ages 3.5 to 5.5 years) who were unable to conserve length when given verbal instructions but could then conserve length with parallel nonverbal tasks did *not* fail to conserve because of centration, misleading perceptual information, or immature cognitive operations. Rather, the children did not yet possess the verbal skills to understand what exactly was being asked of them in performing the task. In the light of such data, EHS DT looks upon what Piaget referred to as "preoperational" less in terms of a more primitive advancement toward logical operations and more in terms of a symbol-driven transformation of the imagination that must remain accessible through adolescence and into adulthood in moving toward the integration of postformal cognition (see Arnett, 2016). Here, the last of EHS DT's divergences from Piagetian thought is exposed, which is EHS DT's greater emphasis on the imagination in cognitive development. In Piaget's work, the productive power of the imagination ("the opening up of new possibilities") is not truly appreciated until "preadolescence" or thereafter (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969, pp. 149–150). For EHS DT, this power is a core focus throughout the lifespan. As Bolton (1982) observed:

It may be supposed that in the normal process of conceptual development the child will progress all the more when the situation captures his imagination. A good example of this is provided by the literature on the attainment of conservation. As is well known, Piaget and his colleagues (see, e.g., Piaget & Inhelder, 1969) found that children below the age of six or seven were unable to solve conservation problems. However, Donaldson (1978) was able to make the test situation more meaningful to the child by simplifying it or by introducing a "naughty teddy" to carry out the transformations. Under such conditions children of 4 or 5 years admitted conservation. I would like to suggest that what made the situation more meaningful for the children in these experiments was not just the simplifications introduced. What appears to be crucial is that the new settings for the Piagetian tasks were such as to allow the child to be present to the situation through his imagination. He could respond with his feelings as well as with his thought. (p. 16)

Two Eco-Sensitive Alternatives: Vygotsky and Bronfenbrenner

The work of Vygotsky is typically presented in developmental texts as an alternative to what is widely considered classic Piagetian thought. Bronfenbrenner, who was influenced in part by Vygotsky, is typically presented thereafter. The Vygotsky coverage will offer zones of proximal development as an alternative to stages of development. The highly influential, mediational nature of cultural tools will be noted, along with ideas

concerning the way in which learning is a function of the languages being utilized in the student–teacher relationship. This will usually include some information about the pedagogical value of scaffolding. Finally, Vygotsky’s account of language development will be discussed, consisting of highly social beginnings, eventually transitioning toward inner speech. Bronfenbrenner is then mentioned with little more than reference to his ecological systems model, spanning the microsystem through to the chronosystem.

Based on his analysis of cultural tools, Vygotsky (1986) found Piaget to have created a developmental theory wherein the social is primordially “alien” to the child (p. 44). This sort of critique has immediate and compelling appeal to humanistic- and phenomenologically oriented thinkers who share a social-contextual emphasis (e.g., DeRobertis, 2012; Packer & Goicoechea, 2000). Given the important role that language, narrative, and self-cultivation play in EHS DT, it is sympathetic to the Vygotskian emphasis on cultural tools, which is stronger relative to Piagetian thought. EHS DT is no less sympathetic to Bronfenbrenner’s attempt to articulate the intricacies of the developing person’s contextual field as a network of nested systems, the interactions among which serve as protective and risk factors that enhance and/or preclude the possibility of optimal development taking place (see Bland & DeRobertis, 2017; Masten, 2014).

Of all the theories mentioned above, it is the most difficult to speak to those of Vygotsky and Bronfenbrenner because much of their theories are not mentioned in introductory textbooks at all. So, for instance, as the first author has discussed elsewhere (DeRobertis, 2012), EHS DT shares Vygotsky’s convictions concerning the important role of the imagination in human development, as well as his Adlerian insight that “a creature that is perfectly adapted to its environment, would not want anything, would not have anything to strive for, and, of course, would not be able to create anything” (Vygotsky, 2004, p. 29). Such ideas are nowhere to be found in textbook coverage. Similarly, Bronfenbrenner (e.g., Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) speaks to the way in which characteristics of the person affect proximal processes (i.e., particular forms of interaction between organism and environment) throughout development. This line of analysis could form the basis of a dialogue with EHS DT, but it is not mentioned in textbook introductions to Bronfenbrenner’s theory.

The dearth of material on these two theories in introductory texts makes the prospect of speaking *critically* about them even more problematic. To engage in a critical dialogue in a manner that does justice to each theory would require an entire discussion of their lesser-known aspects, which far exceeds the scope of the current article. The case of Vygotsky is particularly problematic, as controversies abound concerning the adequacy of his translation into English (van der Veer & Yasnitsky, 2011). Generally, critiques of Vygotsky tend to focus on the unfinished nature of his work, which have purportedly resulted in lingering ambiguities in certain of his concepts (e.g., the zone of proximal development). When viewed in terms of the concerns of EHS DT, this criticism has relevance with respect to Vygotsky’s view of the imagination. As Saifer (2010) has noted regarding Vygotsky’s analysis of play, “rules predominate in Vygotsky’s argument, while the role of the imagination and the development of higher order thinking is secondary” (p. 40). This seems to contradict the important role that Vygotsky assigns to the imagination in human development, as previously mentioned. Saifer then goes on:

Vygotsky’s essay on play ends with the enigmatic statement: “Superficially, play bears little resemblance to what it leads to, and only a profound internal analysis makes it possible to determine its course of movement and its role in the preschooler’s development.” This implies that he left more to be uncovered to fully understand play. Vygotsky’s protégé Daniel Elkonin did pick up the charge in his work, *The Psychology of Play* (2005), in which he argued at

length that the imaginary situation is the most prominent and vital aspect of play with the greatest impact on development. However, this view does not appear to be widely accepted and is not impacting practice. (p. 41)

Thus, in the light of Elkonin's (2005) work, it appears that what looked to be a divergence between EHSDT and Vygotskian theory has become a point of convergence. How Vygotskian theory will handle EHSDT's concerns with the mediational role of the imagination in negotiating life's many paradoxes and motivational growth tendencies remains to be seen.

EHSDT has similar, perhaps more serious concerns with Bronfenbrenner's work. Bronfenbrenner tended to associate both imagination and creativity with fantasy, which is common among natural scientific psychologies (e.g., Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Bronfenbrenner (1979), for example, cited Piaget as rightfully assigning a certain constructive role to the child's imaginative effort by noting that the child's imaginings are a kind of "fantasy" that create frustration and thereby motivate the child to overcome his or her confusion of "the subjective and objective features of the environment" (p. 10). It has become commonplace that the imagination is discussed in child psychology with terms that denote the illusory, such as imaginary friends, imaginary play (i.e., "make believe"), or imaginary audience. EHSDT deviates from this trend in considering the imagination to be an ever-present and vital component of the real as socially co-constituted, that is, the developmentally appropriate means by which children make sense of their world; thus, deserving of a more robust explication of its significance in the incarnate child's world-relatedness.

Concluding Remarks

EHSDT's future development will depend on further research in at least five general areas to demonstrate the validity and/or viability of its principles. Particularly, attention needs to be given to EHSDT's assumptions that differ from the more conventionally accepted but typically narrower-band theories reviewed above.

First, more research should be conducted on the role of the imagination in shaping the trajectories of lifespan development, including emphases on narrative imagination, its intercorporeal (i.e., interpersonally embodied) and multicultural embeddedness, and the dynamics of meaning disclosure (i.e., meaning's evocation, delimitation, modification, and amplification). Second, this research ought to extend to the area of creativity, a topic that is almost as neglected as the imagination and all too often studied from a merely utilitarian point of view (e.g., as a means of "solving problems"). Readers are encouraged to consult Arons' writings on humanistic-existential-phenomenological approaches to creativity as a starting point (see Bland, 2018a). Third, further research efforts ought to focus on the *diversifying connectivity* characteristic of healthy human development, particularly as it relates to the self-cultivation process. This work would necessarily revolve around the dynamic interrelatedness of learning and creativity (see DeRobertis, 2017), resting on a notion of intentionality as cooperative way-of-life (i.e., culture) creation (see von Eckartsberg, 1989). Fourth, paradox negotiation deserves systematic study throughout the lifespan in conjunction with the self-cultivation process. Fifth, all this work should be adjoined to research on human development's dynamic motivational complex operating within diverse social and cultural contexts.

Moving far beyond the reductionistic, homeostatic, and adaptive foci of natural scientific psychology, such research requires the integration of human scientific, phenom-

enologically oriented methods. From there (see Barrell, Aanstoos, Recharls, & Arons, 1987), once operational criteria are established and/or measures developed (as appropriate), quantitative methods are also recommended to present a convincing case to conventional developmental psychologists in a form most of them tend to value or, at least, are more familiar with. This will help prevent further marginalization of explicitly humanistic developmental theory on the basis that it challenges some of the fundamental assumptions of the established theories and, accordingly, is likely to be met with resistance or, at best, indifference. Thereafter, it seems inevitable that further reflection and subsequent qualitative inquiry will be in order, to further deepen the research base for EHSDT and to continue its dialogue between the general and the specific.

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Received June 12, 2018

Revision received October 5, 2018

Accepted March 11, 2019 ■