**ENVIRONMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY: HISTORY AND SCOPE**

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**Abstract**

This chapter discusses the history, scope, characteristics, importance, significance, challenges, major theorists, and concepts involved in Environmental Psychology. Climate and environmental psychologists try to improve how people interact with the world around us. The study also focuses on the primary and secondary phases of rapid growth in environmental psychology. Environmental psychology has been recognized as a branch of psychology since the late 1960s and is, therefore, a relatively new branch of psychology. The researchers worked in areas as diverse as human responses to natural and technological hazards, conservation, environmental awareness and perception, loneliness, stress, and design. Hellpach was one of the first scientists to introduce the term environmental psychology in the first half of the 20th century. Environmental psychology as a discipline examines the interaction between individuals and the built and natural environment. This means that environmental psychology studies the influence of the environment on human experiences, behavior, and well-being, as well as the influence of individuals on the environment, i.e. factors influencing environmental behavior and ways to encourage environmentally responsible behavior.

**Keywords:** Geographical Determinism, Ecological Biology, Behaviorism, Gestalt Psychology

**I. History Of Environmental Psychology**

Climate and environmental psychologists try to improve how people interact with the world around us. They work in areas as diverse as human responses to natural and technological hazards, conservation, environmental awareness and perception, loneliness, stress, and design. Quality of life is an integrative concept located at the interface between human and social sciences and health; it combines the concept of happiness, which is of philosophical origin, with that of subjective well-being, which comes from psychology, and that of physical and mental health, which comes from the medical sciences. Environmental psychology as a discipline examines the interaction between individuals and the built and natural environment. This means that environmental psychology studies the influence of the environment on human experiences, behavior, and well-being, as well as the influence of individuals on the environment, i.e. factors influencing environmental behavior and ways to encourage environmentally responsible behavior.

Environmental psychology has been recognized as a branch of psychology since the late 1960s and is therefore a relatively new branch of psychology (Altman 1975; Proshansky et al. 1976; Stokols 1977, 1978). Hellpach was one of the first scientists to introduce the term environmental psychology in the first half of the 20th century (Pol 2006). Hellpach (1911) studied the influence of various environmental stimuli, such as color and shape, the sun and moon, and extreme environments, on human activities. In his later work, he also studied urban phenomena such as overcrowding and sensory overload, and in his work distinguished different types of environments, including natural, social, and historical-cultural environments (Pol 2006). Although Hellpach's topics are typical of the environmental psychology practiced since the 1960s, it was still too early to speak of an independent area of ​​systematic research into human-environment interactions. Brunswick (1903–1955) and Lewin (1890–1947) are generally considered the founding fathers of environmental psychology (Gifford 2007). None of these scholars had any significant empirical work that we would classify today as environmental psychology.

Egon Brunswik (1903-1955) was one of the first psychologists to argue that psychology should pay as much attention to the properties of the organism's environment as to the organism itself. He believed that the physical environment affects psychological processes outside of people's consciousness. He strongly advocated research that included all aspects of the person's environment that we are trying to understand, and not the fragmented and artificial environments that typified psychological studies of the time. (Steg & de Groot, n.d.)

Kurt Lewin (1890–1947) similarly argued that research should be driven by real social problems. He introduced the term social action research, which entails a non-reductionist, problem-focused approach that applies theories to practice while emphasizing the importance of discovering research pathways to solving social problems (Benjamin 2007). Furthermore, like Brunswick, Lewin conceptualized the environment as a key determinant of behavior. He propounded that behavior is a function of the person and the environment (Lewin 1951). Lewin focused primarily on the social or interpersonal influences rather than the physical environment (Wohlwill 1970), but he inspired various students to continue and expand his ideas.

Among these students were Barker and Bronfenbrenner, both considered to be precursors of environmental psychology. Around the late 1940s and 1950s, systematic research into everyday physical attitudes and psychological processes slowly increased, with some seminal studies such as human factors in job performance (Mayo 1933), home lighting (Chapman and Thomas 1944), and behavior of children in natural settings (Barker and Wright 1955). Therefore, it was not until the late 1950s and early 1960s that human-environment interactions were slowly recognized as a full-fledged discipline. Since most studies have focused on how different environments affect people's perception and behavior, they have been termed architectural psychology studies to show the difference from more traditional forms of psychology (Canter 1970; Pol 2007; Winkel et al. 2009).

The second phase of rapid growth in environmental psychology began in the late 1960s as people became increasingly aware of environmental issues. This resulted in studies on sustainability issues, i.e. studies on the explanation and change of environmental behavior to create a healthy and sustainable environment. The first studies in this area focused on air pollution (De Groot 1967; Lindvall 1970), urban noise (Griffiths and Langdon 1968), and environmental quality assessment (Appleyard and Craik 1974; Craik and Mckechnie 1974). From the 1970s onwards, the topics expanded to include questions of energy supply and demand (Zube et al. 1975) and risk perception and risk assessment of (energy) technologies (Fischhoff et al. 1978). In the 1980s, the first studies were conducted that focused on efforts to encourage conservation behavior, such as relationships between consumer attitudes and behavior (Cone and Hayes 1980; Stern and Gardner 1981)

**II. Environmental Psychology and its importance**

Environmental psychology is an interdisciplinary field that studies how people interact with their environment. It examines how our natural and built environment shapes us as individuals. Environmental psychology is concerned with how people affect the environment and how the environment affects human experiences and behavior. It is strongly associated with architectural psychology, socioarchitecture, behavioral geography, environmental sociology, social ecology, and environmental design research. Environmental psychology was not recognized as an independent science until the late 1960s. (Sachdeva, 2016)

Since its inception, the field has dedicated itself to creating values- and problem-oriented discipline. Recently, there has been a greater focus in this field on environmental sustainability issues. It prioritizes research aimed at solving complex environmental problems for the benefit of the individual in the context of a larger society. Climate and environmental psychologists work in non-profit organizations, government agencies, companies, and non-governmental organizations. They often apply their expertise in areas such as urban planning, environmental and interior design, and climate change. Those interested in academia can teach in social or developmental psychology programs, where they apply psychological theories to environmental behavior.

Environmental psychologists are often researchers studying how people interact with and react to the world around them. Her research could ask why some people choose to recycle, what motivates people to adopt environmentally responsible behaviors, and why certain environments make people feel happy and productive. Climate and environmental psychologists don't necessarily work in office environments; Many work outside or in zoos, parks, or within the community. Many are working to reverse the problems of pollution, climate change, and biodiversity loss. How does the physical environment affect your mood, whether it's a day hiking in the wilderness or cooped up in a poorly lit office? This is a research question for environmental psychologists. What about the impact we have on the environment? Climate and environmental psychologists are studying ways to encourage pro-environmental behavior in each of us, from household recycling to large-scale public policy. When this subfield of psychology began almost 40 years ago, environmental psychology was primarily concerned with offices, homes, and urban areas and studied how people worked and interacted in these environments. Now this work is significantly expanded. As we become more concerned about humankind's impact on climate and nature, environmental psychologists' research is shaping norms and policies that can sustain the globe for generations to come. (Steg et al., 2018)

**III. Characteristics of Environmental Psychology**

The capacity to investigate to discover answers by recognising issues is one of the most significant qualities of a problem-oriented field. The solutions can help improve the functioning of society as a whole and generate a wealth of knowledge.

Environmental psychology must represent real society rather than one generated in a lab. It is important to consider both the general and the specific aspects of the problems. It discusses four key aspects of environmental psychology that define the field in its current form: an emphasis on human-environment interactions, an interdisciplinary approach, an applied focus, and a range of methods addressing overpopulation, noise pollution, and substandard living conditions, and urban degradation. It also works with the design industry, which includes architecture, interior design, urban planning, industrial and product design, landscape architecture, and heritage preservation. The job of an environmental psychologist is to study everyday problems. They believe that concepts and principles should be derived from their environment.

The path to becoming an environmental psychologist typically follows these three steps:

1. Earn a bachelor's degree in psychology

2. Earn a master's degree in the subfield, if offered

3. Earn a doctorate, usually a Ph.D.

Few graduate programs focus on environmental psychology. However, each program has a different orientation, eg architectural or ecological. Be sure to research each institution's focus before applying to ensure you're headed in the direction you want. Students enrolled in a program that does not have an environmental focus can often apply their environmental interests to graduate work or dissertations. For students pursuing a career in environmental psychology, it is important to complement their psychology studies with subjects such as environmental science, cultural geography, and natural resource management. (Cheuvront et al., 2022)

## IV. Concepts involved in Environmental Psychology

Environmental psychology is filled with ideas regarding how and why we act the way we do in our environment, but they all seem to fit into one of four broad categories:

* Geographical Determinism
* Ecological Biology
* Behaviorism
* Gestalt Psychology

Geographical determinism is the idea that the foundation and lifespan of entire civilizations are dependent on environmental factors, like topography, climate, vegetation, and the availability of water.

According to this school of thought, too much environmental challenge destroys civilizations, while too little difficulty results in cultural stasis. Furthermore, environmental influences can have a significant impact on what we value as a society as well as how we live and work together.

The ecological biology viewpoint is founded on biological and sociological notions of organism-environment connection. Organisms are considered as integrated aspects of their surroundings rather than as independent things from this perspective. This allows for the investigation of interdependencies between the two and throughout the entire system.

Behaviorists emphasised context in the discussion, arguing that both environmental and human context (e.g., personality, dispositions, attitudes, opinions, experience) are important determinants of behaviour. Although behaviourism went out of favour as the dominant psychological paradigm, its improved emphasis on environmental elements persisted.

Finally, Gestalt psychology was the polar opposite of behaviourism; although behaviourists frequently evaluated just behaviour, Gestalt thinkers were more likely to consider perception and cognition. Instead of seeing environmental stimuli as 100% objective factors, the focus was on how people perceivedandthought aboutthese stimuli. (E. Ackerman, 2022)

Several concepts related to humans' innate connection to natural environments have been uncovered by environmental psychological research. Nature connection has been shown to play an important role in predicting overall pro-ecological and pro-social behavior in humans. The term nature-deficit disorder was recently coined to describe a lack of connection to nature caused by a lack of conscious identification and natural separation. The following are some concepts of environmental psychology:

**A. Nature restoration:** Nature Restoration studies showed that patients with a view of nature from their hospital window recovered faster than patients with a brick wall, showing the extent to which nature has mental and physical restorative properties, which was a central branch of the field. The most cited theory is the Attention Restoration Theory, which claims that nature is a gentle fascination that restores the ability to direct attention. Because humans come from nature, according to stress reduction theory, this type of environment is calming and better adapted to the senses. The method of conditioned recovery consists of associating nature with relaxation and regaining that relaxation when exposed to a similar stimulus.

**B. Place identity & attachment:**Place identity has traditionally been defined as a substructure of a person's self-identity, consisting of broad knowledge of the physical world in which the individual lives. Each person's everyday experiences are shaped by their cognitions, which define their perceptions, feelings, thoughts, memories, personal values, and preferences toward a range of physical situations. A person's environmental history develops as they encounter aspects that fulfill them physiologically, socially, mentally, or culturally. The sense of place is converted into a cognitive database from which each physical environment is experienced. Time and experience in a place are necessary to deepen the meanings and emotional ties at the heart of the person-place relationship, while a place tie is defined as an emotional or affective attachment to a place and seen as the result of a long-term connection with one specific environment. This differs from a simple aesthetic response, such as saying that a certain place is special because it's beautiful and creates a sense of place.

**C. Impact on the built environment:**There is a debate within the architecture industry about the role and influence of architecture on human behavior. The laboratory-experimental paradigm has been rejected by environmental psychologists because of its simplicity and biased view of human actions and experiences. People's perceptions range from assuming they will adapt to new architectural and urban forms to believing that architects cannot predict how buildings will affect people. The whole architectural genre of retail shops and other commercial venues capable of altering client moods and behaviour has been dominated by environmental psychology. The development of eco-cities requires knowledge of the interactions between ecological, economic, political, and socio-cultural factors based on ecological principles. Future urban planning will make extensive use of environmental psychology. (Swim et al., 2011)

**V. Environmental Psychology’s Challenges**

The term "environmental psychology" may be vague or disingenuous. It's a relatively new subfield with many opportunities to grow and interact with other disciplines. Environmental psychology studies how individuals interact with their environment. The goal is to understand how and why our circumstances affect us, how we can use this information to our advantage, and what we can do to improve our interaction with the world around us.

Environmental psychology is far too understudied to be classified as a branch of psychology. It's not advanced enough to compete with fields like social, personality, learning, and cognitive psychology. Because there is no clear definition or goal, becoming an interdisciplinary field is a challenge. Some research is based on untested assumptions about human cognition, and the topic is difficult to integrate into organizational systems.

Guido Francescato described the field in 2000 as a bewildering array of different methodologies, conceptual orientations, and interpretations that make it difficult to define with any precision the field and its contribution to the construction of society and the unfolding of history. In the study of environmental psychology, it is difficult to grasp the influence of human behavior on climate and climate change. Determining why some individuals engage in pro-environmental action can help predict what it takes to engage others in long-term change. The field has received far too little attention to be called an interdisciplinary field within the discipline of psychology.

## VI. Significance of Environmental Psychology

Environmental psychological discoveries about how people perceive and respond to their surroundings have far-reaching and long-term implications for areas such as urban planning, architecture, landscaping, and environmental sustainability. Field observations can help demonstrate how changes in how individuals use their environment and how environments are designed can improve people's lives at the individual and population levels. Unlike other areas of psychology, environmental psychology focuses on micro-entities of the environment, such as the home, neighborhood, and work and community contexts.

Environmental psychological research combines the scientific goals of analyzing and explaining the nature of human-environment transactions with the more practical goal of improving and even optimizing the relationships between people and their daily environment through better urban planning and environmental design Environmental psychology is ergonomics, the scientific inquiry creating products and environments optimal for human use.

In addition, addressing environmental challenges such as pollution, climate change, deforestation, etc. has become increasingly important in recent years. Environmental psychology also aims to change behavior in ways that help the environment and address environmental issues, while guaranteeing human well-being and maintaining a high quality of life. This leads us to the concept of sustainability, which is a central tenet of environmental psychology. Today, environmental psychology encompasses a variety of issues. ("Handbook of Environmental Psychology and Quality of Life Research", 2017)

Environmental psychology deals with the negative and positive effects of places on the people who occupy them. People can become stressed by their environment, which can lead to poor health, decreased selflessness, increased behavioral and cognitive deficits, and a lack of awareness of the environment itself. The ability to deal with incoming stress-inducing stimuli is a key benefit of living in a private place. We can also try to control our environmental stress by managing it or developing strategies to analyze and understand such stimuli, and then share what we have learned with others. (DHARMARAJ, 2022)

The topic of environmental psychology had attracted sociologists and psychologists alike from the start. In Europe, the social approach began to prevail more and more than the psychological one. This impact came through the shift from a structural methodology (functionality, cognition, etc.) to a more symbolic one (happiness, attachment, etc.). inspiration for the emergence of the discipline. However, what triggered this shift was the increasing number of publications on environmental global change and related attitudes and behaviors. These papers showed that environmental management was primarily the management of human social behavior.

The early aspirations of environmental psychology were to improve the quality of life; However, the fact that our resources are being exhausted at an alarming rate trumps initial aspirations. Under the umbrella of sustainable development, the interests of the world's leading institutions seem to be growing. Although the common man is still more worried about his daily life, awareness seems to be growing day by day. Although psychologists know a lot about human nature, they don't know how to deal with it. For example, raising awareness has helped us focus on goals such as energy efficiency in living environments, household waste reduction, collaboration, etc. This approach is more individualistic than institutional. Another crisis that environmental psychology seems to be going through is the label debate.

Some psychologists believe that Green Environmental Psychology should be renamed as Ecological Psychology. The others suggest sticking with a broader term with subcategories such as architectural psychology and green psychology. The origin of environmental psychology is relatively recent, and it is characteristic of such a young field to experience such hurdles. What is not okay, however, is to forego a potential discipline that will make the work of architects and users much more efficient and holistic. (Tolani, 2022)

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