

## ENVIRONMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY AND IT'S FUTURE PERSPECTIVE

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### **Abstract**

*A "new Environmental Psychology" has evolved over the past two decades in response to increasing concern over the deteriorating global environment. Environmental behavior is dealt with by with environmental Psychology. Environment influences behavior at different levels. Immediate behavior is a function of the setting in which it occurs. The physical aspect of behavior is dealt with by Environmental Psychology. Environmental Psychology follows the system approach which has become the modern approach in several branches of science. Although scientists, politicians, and others disagree about the severity and urgency of these environmental problems, there can be no doubt that most environmental problems have a basis in human behavior. This means that we must change human behavior in order to solve environmental problems. Therefore, the efforts of psychologists to find ways of changing the environmentally destructive behaviors that lead to global warming, food and water shortage, ozone depletion, acid, rain, and overpopulation may well be the most significant work in the history of Psychology.*

**Keywords:** *Environment, Psychology, globalization, applied environmental psychology*

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## **Introduction**

Environment Psychology is the study of how we, as individuals and as part of groups, interact with our physical settings how we experience and change the environment, and how our behavior and experiences are changed by the environments. In environment Psychology environment includes both natural and built settings, that is natural resources, parks, homes, workplace, public space, from the personal scale to the room, building, neighborhood, urban, wilderness, and global scales. The interaction of people belonging to different branches of psychology is not provoked by environmental psychology. Although there are strong links to other areas of psychology, environmental psychology is unique amongst the psychological science in terms of the relationship it has forged with the social (e.g .sociology, human ecology, demography) environmental (e.g.environmental science , geography), and design(e.g. architecture, planning, landscape) disciplines. The importance of the field has increased in recent years owing to the increased concern with the environment resulting from the pollution problems, problems passed by population exploring, depletion of natural resources, and the felt need to conserve wilderness.

## **Concepts Of Environmental Psychology**

Behavioral Geography studies the cognitive maps of the individual regarding his environment. It traces environmental values meaning and preferences. Behavioral maps are prepared relating activities to the surrounding.

The concept regarding the environment and aesthetic preferences are studied and represented in behavior maps. Recently attempts have been made to relate environmental preferences to personality characteristics, race, and national Character (Berry 1976)

Environmental Psychology (EP) primary goal is to understand individual transactions with their environment, and to use this knowledge to influence policies that help promote sustainable behavior and create a more liveable and green built environment.

The field is psychology in that it focuses on the thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors of individuals and small groups in relation to their environment.

## **A Bit of History**

Although EP is a relatively new branch of science only recognized as a field since the late 1960's - Its modern roots can be traced back to the middle of the 20th century, with the ideas of researchers such as Egon Brunswik (1903-1955) and Kurt Lewin (1890-1944) Brunswik argued that psychologist should focus on organisms environment just as much as the organism itself. Like Brunswik, Lewin

viewed the environment as essential for determining behavior.

The major boom in research on psychological processes and their relation with physical surroundings came around in the late 1940 and 1950s

It was the 1960s when people became concerned about the health of the natural world and societal awareness. During the 1960s, the first EP conference, journal, and Ph.D. program were established as well as the largest environment behavior organization, the Environmental Design Research Association (EDRA). Today, most large national and international Psychology organizations have a section or division devoted to EP.

### **Main threats to the environment that result from human behavior**

#### **Over Population**

Human overpopulation continues to be a pressing problem for the health and viability of the environment, which impacts the survival and well-being of the human population. As the salience of global environmental issues continues to grow, people worldwide are increasingly considering how to mitigate environmentally destructive behavior (Gifford, Nilsson, 2014; Harper, Harpers, & Snowden, 2017). In particular, human overpopulation is contributing to the depletion of natural resources and hindering the resilience of the ecosystem upon which human being depends for survival (Campbell, 2012; Dunlop, Van Liere, Mertig, & Jones, 2000; Engleman 2012; Peacock, 2018)

#### **Resource Depletion**

second major environmental problem involves the rate at which humankind is depleting earth's natural resources. Some of those resources are necessary to our lifestyle, for example, we must have oil and coal (fossil fuels) to maintain our electrified and automobile-driven way of life. But other resources are essential to our very survival (clean air, clean water, topsoil that can be farmed, etc. We consume millions of barrels of oil each day, a thirst that has already resulted in the depletion of half of what is estimated to be our total oil supply.

**pollution** third major insult to the environment comes from the pollution of earth air, land, and water. We have all heard about the problems of acid rain, smog, and high ozone levels, toxic waste, and polluted rivers, lakes, and others. We have also heard about the threat of global warming and the greenhouse effects, which refer to the very real possibility that average temperatures may be increasing because of pollutants (Primarily excessive carbon dioxide and methane)

Environmentalism came into existence due to the Growing evidence of local and global pollution and an increasingly informed public over time and the

environmental movements which generally seek to limit human impact on the environment.

To lower the pollution it is necessary to link pollution to core values. Personal freedom, equality before the law, loyalty to one's family, or cleanliness are examples of core values held in many regions of the world. Moral codes and ethical norms are grafted on to such values, and most people respect them and respond when they are violated.

### **Psychological Approaches to Environment Problems**

It is clear that behavior changes Ultimately offer the primary hope for preserving our global life support system. It is in the arena of human behavior change that psychologists have a critical contribution to make psychology's involvement in environmental concerns comes primarily from two quite different perspectives. The behavioral approach attempts to alter specific target behavior through the principles of learning (especially modeling, positive reinforcement, and punishment). The humanistic approach, on the other hand, emphasizes the importance of promoting changes in cognition and values regarding the environment, which then hopefully affect environmentally relevant behaviors in beneficial ways.

#### **The Behavioral Approach**

The Behavioral Approach focuses on changing specific behaviors by using the principles of learning. An example of a behavioral approach to the new environmental psychology is an experiment by Cope and Geller (1984). This experiment investigated the effectiveness of the use of automobile litter bags to reduce littering. The investigation first observed the percent of cars that had a litter bag when coming through the driven-in window of fast food restaurant. Subsequently, they tested the effect both of asking people to take and use a litter bag and of rewarding with a free soft drink to those who had a litter bag in their automobiles. Both techniques resulting in an increase in the percent of cars observed to have a litter bag in use.

The environmental problem can be solved through a behavioral approach. It can be done through (a) re-examination and expansion of intervention targets, (b) increased focus on long-term maintenance of pro-environment behavior, and (c) more effective dissemination of intervention strategies and research findings (Geller, Winett, Everret, 1982)

**The Humanistic Approach** Compared with the behavioral approach, the tradition of humanistic psychology focuses more on individual beliefs and attitudes. Changes in awareness and attitudes brought about by providing people with new information is based on the assumption that changes in behavior will result from

information and experiences.

One example of the humanistic approach is research to determine how people who are highly ecocentric (focused on the needs of our ecology) differ from people who are egocentric (focused on their own selfish needs). Based upon extensive studies of people who believe in environmental preservation and conduct their life accordingly Richard Bordon (1986) identified eight common characteristics.

1. They had witnessed a sense of unfulfillment in others who are economically successful.
2. They had an introspective childhood that involved significant early (and often private) experiences with nature.
3. They are influenced by role models with some natural history or ecological interests.
4. They had an intense emotional experience with the death card sometimes the birth of animals.
5. They experienced dreams or daydream of being a victim of a nuclear catastrophe.
6. They experienced romantic fantasies derived from specific books, films, or television programs.
7. They had early outdoor experiences such as backpacking, camping, bird watching, hunting, and fishing.
8. They lost magical play place in the out-of-doors (e.g. the cutting down of favorite tree, pollution of stream or beach, etc.)

The hope of this line of research is that it may be possible to encourage an experience that will lead to the development of increased concern for the environment. Ramsey and Hungerford (1989) conducted a study and found that the students who had received the exposure to environmental education had greater knowledge of environmental problems and possible ways to solve these problems. More importantly, these students also reported engaging in a great number of behavior to preserve and protect the environment.

### **Applied environmental psychology**

The basic objective of applied environmental psychology is better management of the environment for a better life and growth of the psychological aspect of the human mind. Effective ways of conserving the nature, correct utilization of the area provided in towns and cities are the general topics covered in this .

Town planning is one of the main fields of application in environmental psychology. Studies on how the community works, the psychological needs of the

people, and their likes and dislikes should be considered while planning the growth of towns. Since the environment shapes and limits behavior, proper planning to ensure maximum satisfaction, efficiency and growth are essential. The psychology of architecture studies how architectural styles reflect the needs and preferences of people and how different designs mold and shape behavior. It has been shown that closeness to elements of nature like pods, plants, and the tree makes people more relaxed hence one of the main considerations of town planners and architects is how to incorporate elements of nature in their designs Baum (1978)

### **Role of environmental psychologist**

Environmental psychologists identifies behavior that can and should be changed to improve environmental quality, determine which factors affect this behavior, and develop and evaluate an intervention to change them.

Most people have some concern for the environment, and this concern stems in part from egoistic, altruistic, and biospheric environmental values (eg Schultz-2001) Knowing what individuals value helps environmental psychologists develop intervention policies.

Environmental Psychologists ask such important questions such as “What prevents people from behaving in a sustainable manner” and what can we do to encourage environmentally-friendly behavior and how can buildings serve the needs of their users?”. Answer to questions like these has already had a significant impact on environmental behavior.

One of the most important challenges that environmental psychologist in helping to overcome is to apply psychological knowledge to help preserve the natural environment. Many threats to environmental sustainability are caused by human behavior, and so targetting human behavior is paramount for protecting nature and natural resources.

### **Multidisciplinary Research and the future of Environmental Psychology**

As a population, pollution and resource depletion pressures continue to threaten the earth’s ability to sustain human life. It will become increasingly important to find ways of controlling the excessive consumption behaviors that are the root of the problem. For society at large, problem analysis, policy decision making, and behavioral intervention programs are of particular importance with regard to climate change as resulting from forced global warming (Lorenzoni, Pidgeon, R Q Connor, 2005) As an enduring societal problem, environmental sustainability covers urban living environments, natural resources wildlife and recreation areas. To ensure environmental security and sustainability, the overall policy goal certain must be to

reverse the trend of gradual environmental deterioration, locally as well as globally. Environmental Psychology has not received nearly enough supporters to be considered an interdisciplinary field within psychology. Horold M. Proshanky (1995) was one of the founders of environmental psychology and was quoted as saying “As I look at the field of environmental psychology today. I am concerned about its future. It has not, since its emergence in the early 1960s grown to the point where it can match the fields of social personality, learning of cognitive psychology. To be sure, it has increased in membership, in the number of journals devoted to it, and even in the amount of professional organizational support it enjoys, but not enough so that one could look at any major university and find it to be a field of specialization in a department of psychology, or more importantly, in an interdisciplinary center or institute.

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