

Saarth

E-Journal of Research

ISSN NO: 2395-339X

Environmental Psychology
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Environmental psychology is an interdisciplinary field that focuses on the interplay between individuals and their surroundings. The field defines the term environment broadly, encompassing natural environments, social settings, built environments, learning environments, and informational environments. Since its conception, the field has been committed to the development of a discipline that is both value oriented and problem oriented, prioritizing research aimed at solving complex environmental problems in the pursuit of individual well-being within a larger society.^[1] When solving problems involving human-environment interactions, whether global or local, one must have a model of human nature that predicts the environmental conditions under which humans will behave. This model can help design, manage, protect and/or restore environments that enhance reasonable behavior, predict the likely outcomes when these conditions are not met, and diagnose problem situations. The field develops such a model of human nature while retaining a broad and inherently multidisciplinary focus. It explores such dissimilar issues as common property resource management, wayfinding in complex settings, the effect of environmental stress on human performance, the characteristics of restorative environments, human information processing, and the promotion of durable conservation behavior. Lately, alongside the increased focus on climate change in society and the social sciences, there has been increased focus on environmental sustainability issues within the field.^[2] This multidisciplinary paradigm has not only characterized the dynamic for which environmental psychology is expected to develop. It has also been the catalyst in attracting other schools of knowledge in its pursuit, aside from research psychologists. Geographers, economists, landscape architects, policy makers, sociologists, anthropologists, educators, and product developers all have discovered and participated in this field.^[1] Although "environmental psychology" is arguably the best-known and most comprehensive description of the field, it is also known as human factors science, cognitive ergonomics, ecological psychology, ecopsychology, environment-behavior studies, and person-environment studies. Closely related fields include architectural psychology, socio-architecture, behavioral geography, environmental sociology, social ecology, and environmental design research.

History

The origins of this field of study are unknown, however, Willy Hellpach is said to be the first to mention "Environmental Psychology". One of his books, *Geopsyche*, discusses topics such as how the sun and the moon affect human activity, the impact of extreme environments, and the effects of color and form. Among the other major scholars at the roots of environmental psychology were Jakob von Uexküll, Kurt Lewin, Egon Brunswik, and later Gerhard Kaminski and Carl Friedrich Graumann. The end of World War II brought about a higher demand for developments in the field of social psychology particularly in the areas of attitude change, small group processes, and intergroup conflict.

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This demand caused psychologists to begin applying social psychology theories to a number of social issues such as prejudice, war and peace. It was thought that if these problems were addressed, underlying notions and principles would surface. Although this period was crucial to the development of the field, the methodologies used to carry out the studies were questionable. At the time, studies were being conducted in a laboratory setting, which caused some doubt as to their validity in the real world. Consequently, environmental psychologists began to conduct studies outside of the laboratory, enabling the field to continue to progress. Today environmental psychology is being applied to many different areas such as architecture and design, television programs and advertisements.

Problem oriented

Environmental psychology is a direct study of the relationship between an environment and how that environment affects its inhabitants. Specific aspects of this field work by identifying a problem and through the identification of said problem, discovering a solution. Therefore, it is necessary for environmental psychology to be problem oriented.

One important aspect of a problem-oriented field is that by identifying problems, solutions arise from the research acquired. The solutions can aid in making society function better as a whole and create a wealth of knowledge about the inner workings of societies. Environmental psychologist Harold Proshansky discusses how the field is also “value oriented” because of the field’s commitment to bettering society through problem identification. Proshansky discusses the importance of not only understanding the problem but also the necessity of a solution. Proshansky also points out some of the problems of a problem-oriented approach for environmental psychology. First the problems being identified must be studied under certain specifications: it must be ongoing and occurring in real life, not in a laboratory. Second, the notions about the problems must derive directly from the source - meaning they must come directly from the specific environment where the problem is occurring. The solutions and understanding of the problems cannot come from an environment that has been constructed and modeled to look like real life. Environmental psychology needs to reflect the actual society not a society built in a laboratory setting. The difficult task of the environmental psychologist is to study problems as they are occurring in everyday life. It is hard to reject all laboratory research because laboratory experiments are where theories may be tested without damaging the actual environment or can serve as models when testing solutions. Proshansky makes this point as well, discussing the difficulty in the overall problem oriented approach. He states that it is important, however, for the environmental psychologist to utilize all aspects of research and analysis of the findings and to take into account both the general and individualized aspects of the problems.

Environmental psychology addresses environmental problems such as density and crowding, noise, pollution, sub-standard living, and urban decay. Noise increases environmental stress. Although it has been found that control and predictability are the greatest factors in stressful effects of noise; context, pitch, source and habituation are also important variables. Environmental psychologists have theorized that density and crowding can also have an adverse effect on mood and may cause stress-related illness. To understand and solve environmental problems, environmental psychologists believe concepts and

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principles should come directly from the physical settings and problems being looked at.^[5]For example, factors that reduce feelings of crowding within buildings include:

- Windows - particularly ones that can be opened and ones that provide a view as well as light High ceilings
- Doors to divide spaces (Baum and Davies) and provide access control
- Room shape - square rooms feel less crowded than rectangular ones (Dresor)
- Using partitions to create smaller, personalized spaces within an open plan office or larger work space.
- Providing increases in cognitive control over aspects of the internal environment, such as ventilation, light, privacy, etc.
- Conducting a cognitive appraisal of an environment and feelings of crowding in different settings. For example, one might be comfortable with crowding at a concert but not in school corridors. Creating a defensible space (Calhoun)
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Personal space and territory

Having an area of personal territory in a public space, e.g., at the office, is a key feature of many architectural designs. Having such a 'defensible space' can reduce the negative effects of crowding in urban environments. The term, coined by John B. Calhoun in 1947, is the result of multiple environmental experiments conducted on rats. Originally beginning as an experiment to measure how many rats could be accommodated in a given space, it expanded into determining how rats, given the proper food, shelter and bedding would behave under a confined environment.

Under these circumstances, the males became aggressive, some exclusively homosexual. Others became pansexual and hypersexual, seeking every chance to mount any rat they encountered. As a result, mating behaviors were upset with an increase in infant mortalities. With parents failing to provide proper nests, thoughtlessly ditching their young and even attacking them, infant mortality rose as high as 96% in certain sections. Calhoun published the results as "Population Density and Social Pathology" in a 1962 edition of *Scientific American*.

Creating barriers and customizing the space are ways of creating personal space, e.g., using pictures of one's family in an office setting. This increases cognitive control as one sees oneself as having control over the competitors to the personal space and therefore able to control the level of density and crowding in the space.

Systems oriented

The systems oriented approach to experimenting is applied to individuals or people that are a part of communities, groups, and organizations. This approach particularly examines group interaction, as opposed to an individual's interaction and it emphasizes on factors of social integration. In the laboratory, experiments focus on cause and effect processes within human nature.

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Interdisciplinary oriented

Environmental psychology relies on interaction with other disciplines in order to approach problems with multiple perspectives. The first discipline is the category of behavioral sciences, which include: sociology, political science, anthropology, and economics. Environmental psychology also interacts with the interspecializations of the field of psychology, which include: developmental psychology, cognitive science, industrial and organizational psychology, psychobiology, psychoanalysis, and social neuroscience. In addition to the more scientific fields of study, environmental psychology also works with the design field which includes: the studies of architecture, interior design, urban planning, industrial and object design, landscape architecture, and preservation.

Space-over-time orientation

Space over time orientation highlights the importance of the past. Examining problems with the past in mind creates a better understanding of how past forces, such as social, political, and economic forces, may be of relevance to present and future problems. Time and place are also important to consider. It's important to look at time over extended periods. Physical settings change over time; they change with respect to physical properties and they change because individuals using the space change over time. Looking at these spaces over time will help monitor the changes and possibly predict future problems.

There are a variety of tests that can be administered to children in order to determine their temperament. Temperament is split up into three types: "easy", "difficult", and "slow-to-warm-up". Alexander Thomas, Stella Chess, Herbert G. Birch, Margaret Hertzog and Sam Korn created an infant temperament test in the 1950s and rated them using nine temperament criteria. By finding out a child's temperament at birth, it enables us to know what to expect as the child progresses into adulthood.

Refrance

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