



Scope and Challenges of environmental psychology: A Review

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Abstract

Environment is derived from the French words "Environ" or "bnvironner" meaning "around", "round about", "to surround, "to encompass". All these terms originated from the old French word "Virer" and "Viron", which means " a circle, around an organism, including humans. In the common parlance environ is limited to only the "surrounding neighbourhood of a specific place, the neighbourhood or vicinity", Thus environment is a broad concept encompassing the whole range of diverse surroundings in which humans perceive, experience and react to events and changes. It includes the land, water, vegetation, air and also the social system. It also includes the physical and ecological environment. It concerns man's ability to adapt both physically and mentally to the continuing change in environment. Environment is not static, but dynamic and the changes occur even if there is no human interference. The environment of any region is in state of dynamic equilibrium. This is called the balance of nature.

Key words: humans, equilibrium, environment, psychology etc

Introduction

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. One may also ask, what is the scope of environmental psychology? Environmental psychology is an interdisciplinary field focused on the interplay between humans and their surroundings. The field defines the term environment broadly, encompassing natural environments, social settings, built up environments, learning environments, and informational environments.

Impacts of the Environment on Humans



A large number of psychological and other effects of physical environments on human beings are assumed or expected and have been empirically demonstrated. Some of these effects are relatively direct, whereas others are modified by person characteristics and mediated by intrapersonal psychological processes. The social environment is another mediator of effects of the physical environment. In large part because of its potential health outcomes, a dominating research focus in environmental psychology concerns the detrimental effects of environmental stressors such as noise, crowding, and extreme temperatures as well as threats of natural disasters, technological catastrophes, or accidents. Such effects are extensively documented in self-report, physiological, and performance measures. A complementary research focus which more recently has attracted attention is the study of beneficial effects of environments, for instance, the restorative and stress-reducing potentials of the natural environment. The recurrent finding that sensory deprivation may have positive effects bears theoretically on this current research with important practical implications. Another research focus is the study of groups of people acting and interacting in physical settings (see Community Environmental Psychology). The impact of the physical environment is sometimes mediated by the social environment, for instance, when scarcity of space leads to excessive social interaction with adverse consequences. In other cases the physical environment facilitates social contact with positive effects on, for instance, residential satisfaction

Scope

Although "environmental psychology" is arguably the best-known and more comprehensive description of the field, it is also known as environmental social sciences, architectural psychology, socio-architecture, ecological psychology, ecopsychology, behavioral geography, environment-behavior studies, person-environment studies, environmental sociology, social ecology, and environmental design research; each advanced by different researchers, sometimes used interchangeably, sometimes with recognized gaps and overlaps between the terms. This multidisciplinary field draws on work in a number of disciplines including anthropology, geography, ekistics, sociology, psychology, history, political science, engineering, planning, architecture, urban design and, of course, aesthetics.



The varied names for the field accurately reflect an ongoing debate about its proper scope, for example, whether or not it includes study of human interaction with the natural environment. "Environmental design" is generally understood to describe design activities focused on the natural environment and sustainability as well as concern with the planned environment which humans build - the "artificial" or designed physical environment - and its ability to meet community needs. Only a small portion of the built environment is attributable to architects, so a focus on "architectural psychology" is seen as too narrow. Generally speaking, individuals associated with the field are interested in better understanding the relationships between people and their environments so that this knowledge can be applied to problematic real-world situations.

Applied Environmental Psychology

Applied Environmental psychology aims at better management of the environment for better life and psychological growth. It studies effective ways of conserving the natural environment, better ways of designing towns and cities and means of promoting environmental awareness among people.

Psychology has a great deal of application in town planning. 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 is essential.

The Psychology of Architecture studies how architectural styles reflect the needs and preferences of people and how different designs mould and shape behavior. A proper investigation of cultural, social and personal needs of potential inmates is required before an acceptable design can be made. An effective design should maximize freedom of behavior, mobility and flexibility. Some of the other considerations are possible use and misuse of space, and contrasting needs of privacy and socialization. Training people for effective space utilization and follow-up studies of the effectiveness of various types of designs are necessary. Knowledge of modern points of view regarding how an office, school or hospital should function is essential while preparing a design for the purpose. A detailed knowledge of the kinds of activities and programmes and patterns of human interaction that are expected to take place in the type of building is necessary for successful architectural design.



It has been shown that closeness to elements of nature like pools, plants and trees 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.

Challenges in Environmental Psychology

Environmental psychology is the sub discipline of psychological science that deals with psychological processes engaged in encounters between people and the built and natural environment. It covers all aspects of human behavior and mental life in relation to the sociophysical environment, whether considered as ambient environmental factors, specific behavior settings, the basic infrastructure of everyday life, or in a broader sense, with regard to landscape and the relationship between built and natural aspects of human environments. Human behavior and mental life include, but are not limited to, perception and cognition, emotion, stress and mental fatigue, decision making, and social interactions, as manifest in covert and overt behavior. In short, environmental psychology is concerned with the facts of bi-directional influence in people-environment interactions; it considers how the sociophysical environment influences people and how people influence the environment.

Global climate change is currently one of society's grand challenges. Psychology cannot by itself slow or halt global warming, but it can explain why people sometimes engage in pro-environmental behavior that can mitigate climate change and it can help citizens overcome the psychological barriers of sustainable behavior. A grand challenge for the environmental psychologist is to study, explain and predict how people's behavior can be changed to promote environmentally sustainable behavior, environmentalism and conservation. One approach to this grand challenge involves the use of normative messages, framings, social norms and educational programs to reduce people's environmental footprint through communication and information interventions. While the social psychological view has unquestionable merits, I envision a practicable way toward scientific breakthrough is to reintroduce this classic, ecological approach in environmental psychology and apply it to the modern problems of society.

The current anthropogenic global warming is coupled with an exponential human population growth that is placing tremendous demands on agricultural and natural resources. Environmental psychologists will play an important role in providing society with needed insights in several areas, including how to handle the social dilemmas of sharing resources in



sustainable ways, how to implement techniques to mitigate the effects of increased energy demand and how to understand the psychological consequences of scarcity. One way to deal with the consequences of the population growth is to build megacities with high residential densities, as there are gains in energy and transportation efficiency to be made which can help to mitigate the negative effects of human activity on the environment

Understanding Climate and Environmental Psychology

At first glance, you might think that climate and environmental psychologists work to stop global warming, protect endangered species and conserve clean water supplies.

While these psychologists are concerned with environmental protection and conservation, climate and environmental psychologists focus their research and work on better understanding how human behavior affects our world. They study human responses to natural and technological hazards and examine the influence of different environments, such as offices, homes and urban areas, on loneliness and stress, for example.

Conclusion

Environmental psychology is the study of transactions between individuals and their physical settings. In these transactions, individuals change their environments, and their behavior and experiences are changed by their environments. It includes theory, research, and practice aimed at making the built environment more humane and improving human relations with the natural environment. Considering the enormous investment society makes in the physical environment and the huge cost of misusing nature and natural resources, environmental psychology is a key component of both human and environmental welfare. fundamental psychological processes like perception of the environment, spatial cognition, and personality as they filter and structure human experience and behavior, the management of social space: personal space, territoriality, crowding, and privacy, and the physical setting aspects of complex everyday behaviors, such as working, learning, living in a residence and community, and human interactions with nature and the role of psychology in climate change.

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