

ENVIRONMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY AND CONSERVATION: CONSOLIDATING A NEW FIELD OF RESEARCH AND INTERVENTION

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Environmental Psychology is an area of Psychology that studies how physical and social aspects of the environment influence the behavior of people, and seeks to understand how human behavior changes one's surroundings (Corral-Verdugo, 2005). Initially, Environmental Psychology emphasized the study of built environments; in recent years, it began to investigate pro-environmental behavior, climate change, place attachment and interactions with the environment (Gifford, 2014). This emphasis on the environmental impact of human behavior, understood positively, that is, as a concern with promoting preservation behavior, has generated a series of debates in Psychology on the following questions: 1) Should a new field of study be created? 2) What is the scope of this field of study? 3) How should this new field be called? (Brook, 2001). In response, the concept of Conservation Psychology arises (Myers, 2001; Clayton & Brook, 2005; Clayton & Myers, 2009; Wiggins, Ostenson, & Wendt, 2012). Inspired in part on Conservation Biology (Saunders & Myers, 2001), many scholars conceived Conservation Psychology as a psychological field related to Environmental Psychology but which differs from the latter for focusing more specifically on natural environments and incorporating studies of sustainability from several areas of Psychology (Myers, 2001). Corral-Verdugo (2005), in turn, believes in the possibility of Conservation Psychology being structured as a *specialized Environmental Psychology*, whose objective would be to study determinants and consequences of an environmentally responsible behavior.

A different proposal can be found in *The Oxford Handbook of Environmental and Conservation Psychology*, edited by Susan Clayton and published by Oxford University in 2012. In the introductory chapter, Clayton and Saunder (2012) advocate the integration of Environmental Psychology, understood by the authors as a sub-discipline of Psychology, with Conservation Psychology, understood as a field of research and application of Psychology, which includes knowledge from sub-disciplines such as Social Psychology, Developmental Psychology, Cognitive Psychology, as well as Environmental Psychology. The book is structured as follows: an introductory chapter and five parts, with the last one being a concluding chapter.

In the first part, entitled "Thinking about environments", there are ten chapters that present classical themes of Environmental Psychology such as Environmental Perception, Environmental Attitudes and Environmental Values. Topics from Developmental Psychology, like Attachment, and Social Psychology, like Identity, appear related to the Environment. A topic from General Psychology – Emotion – is studied from its connection with the Environment. The relationship of Children with Nature is analyzed as part of the intersection of Studies of Human Life Cycle and the psychosocial study of the meaning of Nature. Finally, it is worth highlighting the chapter written by Harry Heft on the foundations of an ecological approach to Psychology, in which he defends the central place of the matter of meaning in psychological phenomena, from a transactional worldview.

The second part, entitled "Specific environments", contains eight chapters which predominantly address topics related to Architectural Psychology. Thus, themes like Cities, Residential Places, Health

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Care Environments, Correctional Environments and Extreme and Unusual Environments are discussed. A more conservationist topic appears in the chapter on Natural Landscapes.

In the third part, which treats of the relationship between environment and well-being, there are eight chapters as well, which cover the following themes: Noise, Responses to Environmental Disasters, Environmental Injustice, Therapeutic Uses of Nature, Restorative Environments, Healthy Physical Activity and Eating, Environmental Epiphanies and Natural Environment in Residential Settings.

The fourth part – A Sustainable Relationship between Humans and Nature – presents the following chapters: The Development of Conservation Behavior in Childhood and Youth; Promoting Pro-Environmental Behavior; Protecting Natural Resources; Collaborative Processes in Ecosystem Management; Learning Our Way out of Unsustainability; Psychology and Climate Change.

In the fifth and last part, a chapter written by Susan Clayton points directions for the future in the area. The author lists four areas: theory, measurement, methodology and application.

The book edited by Clayton is quite comprehensive, covering major themes in the area. It is limited for presenting a Western view of the issue, without considering the specificities of contexts such as Latin America and Asia, for instance. Nevertheless, it is a very important book and should be translated and adapted for our country.

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