Edited by **Linda Steg** and **Judith I. M. de Groot**

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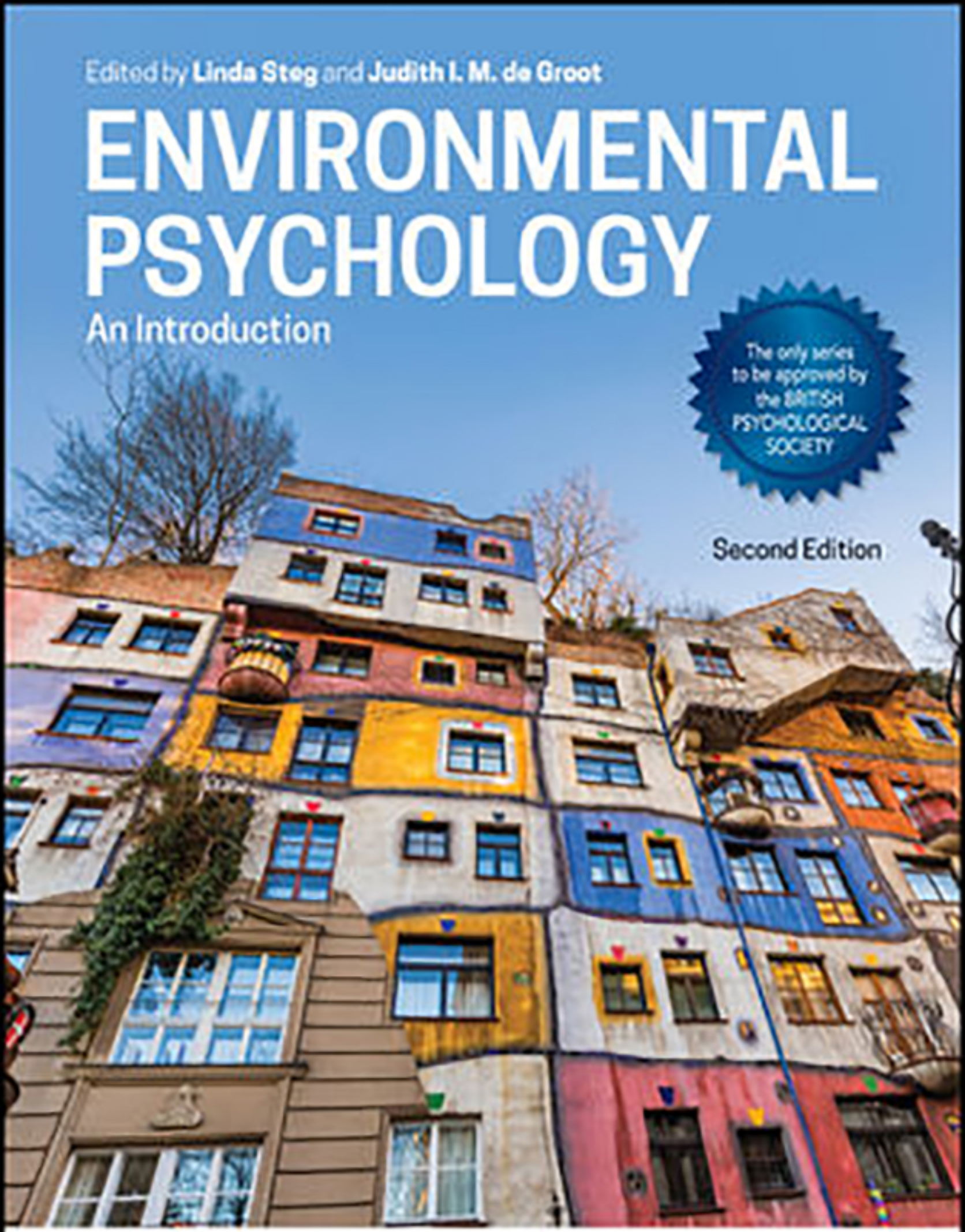

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Environmental Psychology

An Introduction

Second Edition

Edited by

LINDA STEG

and

JUDITH I. M. DE GROOT

WILEY

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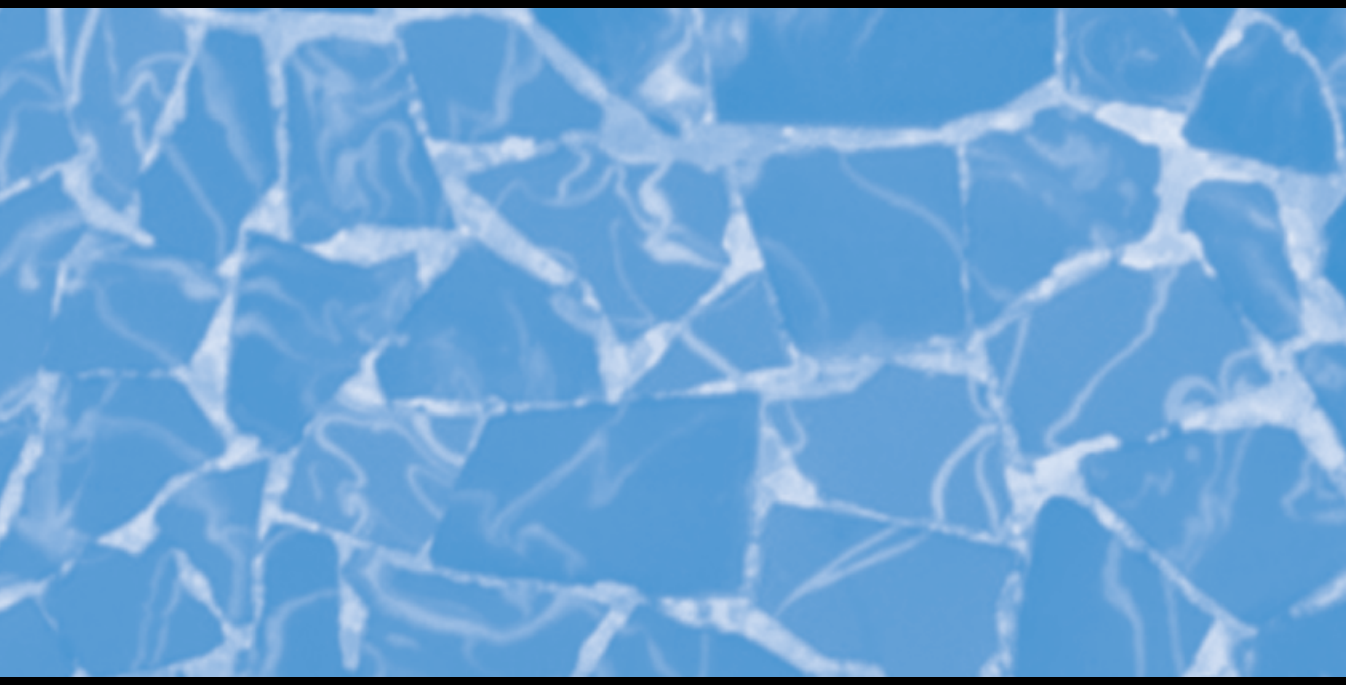
1 Environmental Psychology: History, Scope, and Methods



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1.1 INTRODUCTION

This book aims to give an introduction in environmental psychology. We define **environmental psychology** as the discipline that studies the interplay between individuals and the built and natural environment. This means that environmental psychology examines the influence of the environment on human experiences, behaviour, and well-being, as well as the influence of individuals on the environment, that is, factors influencing environmental behaviour, and ways to encourage pro-environmental behaviour. This second edition of the book gives a state-of-the-art overview of theories and research on each of these topics.

In this introductory chapter we first give a brief overview of the history of the field of environmental psychology, followed by a discussion of characteristics of the field and a description of the main methods used in research. The chapter ends with an outline and rationale of the book.

1.2 HISTORY OF THE FIELD

Environmental psychology has been recognized as a field of psychology since the late 1960s and is therefore a relatively 'new' field in psychology (Altman 1975; Proshansky et al. 1976; Stokols 1977, 1978). Hellpach was one of the first scholars who introduced the term 'environmental psychology' in the first half of the twentieth century (Pol 2006). Hellpach (1911) studied the impact of different environmental stimuli, such as colour and form, the sun and the moon, and extreme environments, on human activities. In his later work, he also studied urban phenomena, such as crowding and overstimulation, and distinguished different types of environments in his work, including natural, social, and historical-cultural environments (Pol 2006). Although the topics of Hellpach are typical of the field of environmental psychology as it has been practised from the 1960s onwards, it was still too early to speak of an independent field of systematic research into human–environment interactions.

Brunswik (1903–1955) and Lewin (1890–1947) are generally regarded as the 'founding fathers' of environmental psychology (Gifford 2007). Neither of these scholars had significant empirical work that we would classify today as environmental psychology. However, their ideas, such as the interaction between physical environment and psychological processes and studying human behaviours in real-life settings instead of artificial environments, were influential for many later studies on human–environment interactions (see Box 1.1).

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