

## ***This Week's Citation Classic***

**Barker R G.** *Ecological psychology: concepts and methods for studying the environment of human behavior.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1968. 242 p.

**Empirical evidence is presented that behavior settings constitute the relevant environment of human molar behavior. Methods of identifying and describing behavior settings are given in detail, and a theory of the relationship between behavior settings and behavior is developed. [The *Social Sciences Citation Index*<sup>®</sup> (*SSCI*<sup>™</sup>) indicates that this book has been cited over 305 times since 1968.]**

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"This book had its beginning in the early 1940s on a passenger train of the Illinois Central Railroad. As an assistant professor at the University of Illinois, I was assigned to teach a class in child psychology at the state college in Carbondale. I was young and eager to bring to Little Egypt the truth about children from the laboratories and clinics where I had been trained. The I.C. train south passed through many small towns. They fascinated me. To my laboratory-conditioned eyes they were activity cages walled in by miles of almost uninhabited space so that most of the behavior of the towns' children occurred within the cage walls. As I observed the towns week after week, the awful truth dawned upon me that although I was well informed about the behavior of children when confronted with

tests and experiments devised by scientific investigators, I knew no more than a lay person about the situations and conditions the towns provided their children and how the children behaved.

"I began to see that I was a defective child psychologist, and formed the intention to investigate the environments of children and their behavior in the community cages where they live their lives far removed from psychologists' laboratories and clinics. Almost a decade passed before the opportunity arose to establish a field station to do this at the University of Kansas in cooperation with Herbert F. Wright. We soon discovered that behavior comes not only in the form of stable, discriminable patterns of the *individual* behavior of Tom, Dick, and Harry, but also as stable, discriminable patterns of *extra-individual* behavior in connection with Bethels service station, the high school boys basketball game, and the city council meeting, and that these entities constitute the environment of individual behavior which I first sought on the trip to Carbondale. This book is about behavior settings.

"Our first report<sup>1</sup> appeared well before the great surge of interest in the environment. The present book was published near the beginning of the widespread concern for the built environment and probably accounts for the extent of the citations, for it provided a toehold of methods and theory for architects, town planners, community experts, and so forth. In recent years we<sup>2</sup> and others<sup>3</sup> have extended and modified the methods and theory of behavior setting research "

1. **Barker R G & Wright H F.** *Midwest and its children: the psychological ecology of an American town.* New York: Harper and Row, 1955. 532 p.
2. **Barker R G & Schoggen P.** *Qualities of community life: methods of measuring environment and behavior applied to an American and an English town.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. 1973. 562 p.
3. **Wicker A W.** *An introduction to ecological psychology.* Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole. 1979. 228 p.