

[*Author Note:* Versions of these exercises appear in Dalton, Elias and Wandersman's *Community Psychology* text (2007), p. 162-163. Here they are adapted for use in any course that covers the ecological concepts of Barker, Moos, Kelly, and Seidman. They are worded as instructions to students.]

Ecological Concepts: Exercises

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1. [Moos, Seidman, Kelly] Choose two classes you have taken (at any level of education), one that you enjoyed and one you did not. Try to choose classes that are at similar levels of difficulty.

Describe how these two classes differed as settings. List as many differences as you can (e.g., reliance on lecture vs. group activities, competition vs. cooperation among students, differences in physical classroom or size of class, student skills needed for effective adaptation in each class, social regularities as defined by Seidman).

Using Moos' dimensions of social climate, compare your perceptions of the two classes on strength of relationships among students and with the instructor(s), what aspects of personal development were promoted or not promoted in each class, and how each class was structured for system maintenance and system change.

Consider Seidman's concept of social regularities, and identify some social regularities in each class, especially if they are different for the two classes. What do these reveal about the processes of power in each class?

Using Kelly's concepts of interdependence and cycling of resources, describe the amount of interdependence among students in each class, and what resources (e.g., information, emotional support, help with learning) were cycled among students in each class.

What skills did students need for effective adaptation (another Kelly principle) to each class? How were these different in the two classes?

Finally, consider that different students learn best in different types of class environments. For the two classes you described, suggest the types of students who might learn well or be happier in each class.

2. [Barker, especially Barker & Gump, 1964] Think back over your life experiences, and choose an optimally populated behavior setting, in which members equaled or outnumbered available roles, and an underpopulated setting, in which roles outnumbered members. (If you have no immediate ideas, start by analyzing your high school's extracurricular activities).

Did the optimally populated setting generate more marginal members who were not involved or committed to the setting (as Barker and Gump would predict)? Were vetoing circuits common?

Did the underpopulated setting "pull" its members into roles through which they developed new skills, or greater self-esteem? Did it generate a greater sense of involvement or commitment among members? Were deviation-counteracting circuits common?

Which setting was more enjoyable for you as a member? Why?