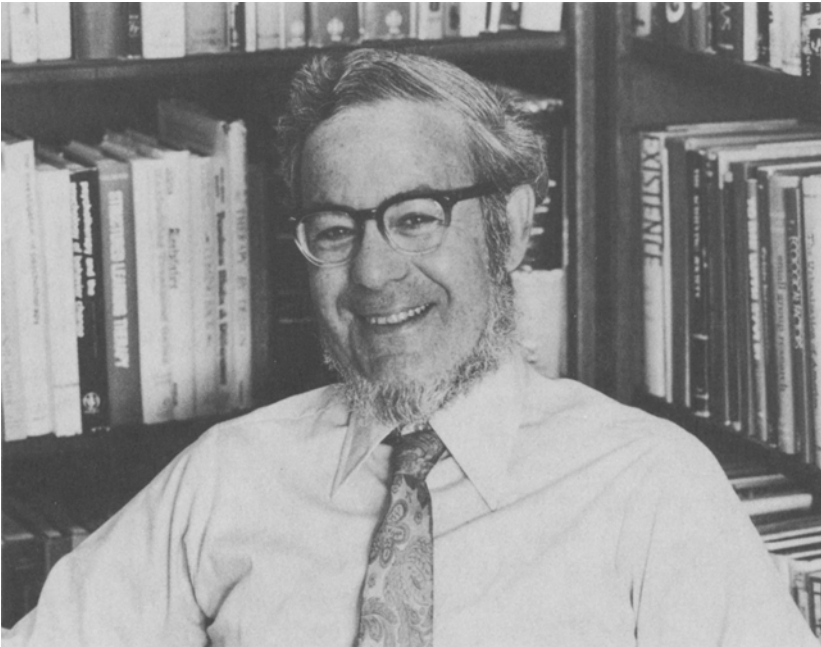


The 1983 Division 27 Award for Distinguished Contributions to Community Psychology and Community Mental Health: Rudolf H. Moos



Rudolf H. Moos

Editor's Note: Rudolf H. Moos was honored at the 1983 Annual Meeting of the American Psychological Association in Anaheim, California, August 26, 1983, receiving the Award for Distinguished Contributions to Community Psychology and Community Mental Health for the Community Psychology Division of the Association. The selection was made by an Awards Committee composed of all the past-Presidents of the Division. Dr. Moos was introduced by Edison J. Trickett.

IN HONOR OF RUDOLF H. MOOS

In both its research and its intervention strategies, community psychology is still grappling with the central intellectual question of how to conceptualize the social context as a factor in human development and a mediator of change. No one has helped focus this question, or done more to stimulate thought and empirical inquiry, than this year's recipient of Division 27's Distinguished Contribution award, Dr. Rudolf H. Moos. It is my pleasure and honor to introduce Rudy today—to comment on his accomplishments, the settings he has created, the support he has received from others, and the influence of his career on psychology in general and community psychology in particular.

Rudy was born in 1934, and received his PhD from the University of California, Berkeley, 26 years later. His dissertation chair, Dr. Joseph Speisman, recalled Rudy at that time as a very bright, analytical, enterprising, and witty graduate student. He went on to offer the following insight:

Now that Rudy is a distinguished looking and indeed a distinguished researcher and practitioner in our field it is easy to overlook what he is really like. Actually, he is a bubbly boy. As a graduate student he looked, and sometimes acted, like a character out of Mark Twain. His good humor was unailing and was even more engaging because he was a bit rounder then; he was boyish and he grinned a lot. I could never understand where he hid all the anxiety a graduate student must have, but he never showed it.

Undaunted by such character analysis, Rudy left Berkeley and, after working as an instructor at San Francisco State College and the University of California, San Francisco, in 1962 became assistant professor in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at Stanford University. He has remained there since that time, assuming the rank of Professor in 1972 and adding the title of Research Career Scientist at the Palo Alto Veterans Administration Medical Center in 1981. It is this latter facility which houses the now-famous Social Ecology Laboratory.

It was shortly after joining the faculty at Stanford that Rudy's productive career as a research scientist swung into high gear. While his first published work was a 1959 article coauthored with Paul Mussen, it was in the fertile soil of Stanford that Rudy found colleagues and a climate that nurtured sustained productive and thoughtful work. Indeed, the six articles published in 1964 were the fewest of any year since then. But more important than the quantity of work which Rudy accomplished was his value as a colleague, a collaborator, one who was able to relate across disciplinary lines, serve as consultant and contributor, and support the research interest and involvements of his colleagues. To quote Peter Houts, the first post-doc in what was to become the Social Ecology Lab: "Both

residents and faculty in Stanford's psychiatry department were unanimous in their respect for Rudy. He has the ability to guide physicians into social science research without threatening their professional integrity."

The substance of Rudy's intellectual contributions to psychology has spanned several areas: a recurring interest in the relationship between physical states and coping, best exemplified in his early research on rheumatoid arthritis and later work on the psychological correlates of menstruation, research on alcoholism and the effectiveness of its treatment, and, more recently, research with the aged. The most dominant theme of his career, however, is embodied in the important setting he created and still thrives in Building 4 of the Palo Alto Veterans Administration Medical Center—the Social Ecology Laboratory. For the past 15 years, this setting has been a research resource for psychology and psychologists as, along with his colleagues, Rudy evolved and extended the paradigm of social ecology as a compelling metaphor for assessing and intervening in the social environment. As resources and ideas expanded, the scope of the Social Ecology Laboratory became greater—the projects became more diverse. Currently, for example, research topics at the Lab range across issues in treatment evaluation; measuring stress, social support, and coping; assessing residential settings for the elderly and their impact; and understanding how people cope with physical illness. Sonne Lemke, long associated with the Lab, comments on this evolution. "Such a list (of projects)," she says, "does not do justice to the degree of integration of (Rudy's) work or its 'organic' development. Each new area of work in the laboratory is an outgrowth of previous work—an extension of familiar methods to new content areas or the development of techniques for examining a familiar issue in a new way. Unifying this ever widening inquiry is an effort to develop an overall conceptual framework."

Yet, as Rudy's work attests, social environments have distinct and characterizable personalities or climates, and the Social Ecology Lab is no exception. Not surprisingly, the tone is set by its director. "Nearly every day," Sonne Lemke continues, " (in sunshine and rain) he arrives in the lab with his rolled-up pants leg, having ridden his bike the 2 miles from his home. Only recently did he upgrade his bike from the heavy duty, basic model he had ridden for years. The most engaging feature of the old bike was the wicker basket on the handlebars, often filled with notes and computer printout. Naturally, the new bike sports a new basket on its handlebars. Inside the lab, however, other qualities stand out." "If there ever was a social environment that was high on order and organization, it was Rudy's lab," reflects Rick Price. "His own need for order and clarity in everything he did pervaded his relationships with those around him and affected their behavior as well. I vividly recall beginning my visit at the

Social Ecology Laboratory with a desk characteristically stacked with papers and books. Before long, I discovered the virtue of filing systems and order and organization too.”

But it was not only in terms of the system maintenance dimensions that psychologists at the Social Ecology Lab recall their perceptions of its environment. Personal development dimensions stood out as well. Josh Holahan, who spent 2 years at the Lab, recalls that “it reflected as a human setting the best of the social climate notion. The lab for me was warm, supportive, cohesive, and human development oriented.” Rick Price adds another dimension of how Rudy simultaneously expressed his dual commitment to quality work *and* the development of persons working with him. Rick writes:

One way Rudy communicated support . . . was that whenever you wrote a paper or conducted research, he would offer to read it and provide you with comments. Now, when most people do this, the comments are seldom helpful and usually done in an offhand manner. Just the opposite was true with Rudy. Never did he fail to take the work that you offered him seriously, and never did he fail to communicate his caring both about you and your ideas through these fastidious, detailed, and thoughtful criticisms. Rather than offering a superficial word of encouragement, he gave you some of the best parts of himself and expressed his unselfishness and caring in this way.”

Rudy also has his own supports who have nurtured both his professional and his personal life in many ways. His wife Bernice has not only worked with him in the lab as a statistician, computer programmer, and coauthor on several joint papers, she has allowed the space and time necessary for such professional productivity. In perhaps the most important collaboration of all, Rudy and Bernice have two children, Kevin, who was born during the time I was a postdoctoral fellow at the lab, and Karen, born a year earlier. Since they are here today, I want to thank them for whatever sacrifices they feel they have made in support of their father’s work. It is often hard for one’s children to see the relevance of their parents’ work for their own lives in any direct way, but I want to share with Kevin, whose interest in sports probably rivals mine, that his father’s Group Atmosphere Scale has been used to improve the morale of high school basketball teams. Whether or not it improves their *performance*, or has simply made the teams feel better about losing, is still unclear.

It is often hard to measure the impact of a person’s work over the long haul, separating out the immediate excitement generated by an idea from its durability and continuing influence on a field over a significant period of time. With respect to the career of Rudy Moos, however, the signs are clear that Rudy’s work has been and remains influential across substantive areas. David Hamburg, President of the Carnegie Corporation, who, as chair of Stanford’s Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences in the early 1960s was influential in attracting Rudy to Stanford, states: “In my view he has been one of the most significant contributors to the behavioral sciences

in the past decade. His conceptual framework of person in social environment is of fundamental importance. That importance is made far more effective by his ability to create useful measures. He has demonstrated elegantly the importance of ecological context for individual behavior.” And, finally, a tribute from Emory Cowen:

No figure has done more than Rudolf Moos to bring the area of the conceptualization and assessment of social environments into salience for the field of community psychology, and then, through clear conceptualization, a high level of scholarship, and doggedly persistent empirical research, to advance its scientific and applied footings. In his work, Moos has pioneered the development of measures of diverse social environments and has charted intriguing networks of relationship between properties of those environments and person-outcomes. That persistent, high-level effort, spanning several decades, has carved out an exciting field within a field, both through its own direct contributions and through its considerable heuristic value for others.

Rudy, you have won the well-deserved respect and admiration of colleagues whom I know *you* respect and admire, and I can think of no greater tribute. On behalf of the Division of Community Psychology, thank you for your work and your acceptance of our invitation to address us today. Ladies and gentlemen, this year’s recipient of Division 27’s Distinguished Contribution Award, Dr. Rudolf H. Moos.

Edison J. Trickett

CONTEXT AND COPING: TOWARD A UNIFYING CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK¹

Rudolf H. Moos²

After offering a conceptual framework to unify the domains of context and coping, some conclusions are drawn about the underlying patterns of social climate and the characteristics of growth-promoting environments. New directions of research on the dynamics of the environmental system are

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