

Introducing Carmi Schooler: 2016 Cooley-Mead Award recipient

**Introduction of Carmi Schooler: Recipient of the 2016 Cooley-Mead Award**

**Gary L. Oates**

Bowling Green State University  
[oatesg@bgsu.edu](mailto:oatesg@bgsu.edu)

2061 words

**Introduction of Carmi Schooler: Recipient of the 2016 Cooley-Mead Award**

This year's Cooley-Mead awardee, esteemed social psychologist, my mentor and friend Dr. Carmi Schooler, would have been no less deserving of this honor in any one of several preceding years. In acknowledging this truth, I intend no slight to the wisdom of prior selection committees or to the deservedness of any awardee in relevant preceding years. That one with a record as stellar as Carmi's has waited as long for this most fitting turn speaks to the fineness of scholarship produced by many in our area.

Carmi is one of a remarkable 15 or so Schooler family members with graduate training in psychology—a number including his wife Nina, two children Jonathan and Lael, and only sibling Miriam (Schooler and Schooler 2007). He may or may not address the relative contribution of genetic versus socio-environmental factors to this intriguing family trait in the accompanying article; but it's worth noting that findings of his own research seemingly bear on the answer. In virtually all of his many publications examining the relative impact of socio-environmental versus “individual” factors on each other—the latter category bearing a stronger ostensible connection to genes—the measured impact of socio-environmental factors exceeds or parallels that of individual factors. These investigations feature the advanced linear structural equation modeling technique Carmi helped pioneer in sociology. In our *AJS* article with Mesfin Mulatu, for example (Schooler, Mulatu, and Oates 2004), the contemporaneous impact of occupational self-direction on intellectual flexibility in the “single group” model combining all ages is significantly positive (.26\*), while the reciprocal impact is non-significant. Occupational self-direction and self-directed orientations exert significantly positive effects on each other in the same sample—the impact of the job characteristic on the personality orientation being .33\*\*, and the reciprocal impact being .34\*\* (Figures 2 and 3).

## Introducing Carmi Schooler: 2016 Cooley-Mead Award recipient

Thus there are likely several *socio-environmental* factors that helped mold Carmi into the Schooler family member we honor this year with sociological social psychology's premier award. Personal roots render me particularly intrigued though by the dynamic, stimulating, social and cultural environment that the West Gun Hill Road area of the Bronx and larger New York City environment where Carmi grew up—circa mid-1930s through early 1950s—would most certainly have been. Pre-elementary and elementary school stints at Lower Manhattan's *The Little Red School House* and a Bronx Yeshiva, followed by high school at *Bronx Science*, likely only intensified the richness of the early social environment that was Carmi's. In such a context, the desire Carmi tells me he expressed to a close friend at around age 10—to get a job when he grew up that would involve studying the lives and experiences of “all the different kinds of people” they were seeing that “made them behave like they did”—is entirely understandable. This childhood professional aspiration was evidently realized spectacularly. The adult Carmi would come to postulate, in a perhaps misleadingly monikered “rough-hewn theory” on the impact of environmental complexity, that multiple and diverse environmental stimuli and “demand characteristics” are intrinsic to such complexity. Diversity of stimuli, multiplicity of decisions required and considerations involved in those decisions, and ill-defined and relatively contradictory contingencies, all promote environmental complexity. To the extent that such environments reward cognitive effort, individuals are motivated to develop intellectual capacities that can then be applied and reinforced in novel situations (Schooler 1984).

As a psychology graduate student at NYU, Carmi interacted with renowned Prof. Marie “Mitzi” Jahoda. A to-this-point unheralded contribution of hers to sociology is her quiet advice to Carmi that, given his extraordinary curiosity about phenomena emphasized in this discipline, he should trek up to Columbia and take a class or two with another social scientist of some

## Introducing Carmi Schooler: 2016 Cooley-Mead Award recipient

renown: Robert Merton. These seminal graduate school experiences help to explain why Carmi, throughout his stellar career, has identified as strongly with us in sociology, as he has with psychology where his doctorate is from—“50-50” he puts it.

Carmi’s scholarly record, compiled primarily during a near-50 year tenure at the National Institute of Mental Health, is splendid: He is author of a hefty 117 publications, first- or sole-author of 47 of 75 total peer-reviewed articles, and first- or sole-author of 24 of 29 total chapters in edited volumes or annual reviews. Two of his articles have been declared *Current Contents Citation Classics* (Pearlin and Schooler 1978; Schooler 1972). He is probably the only person to have published in both the *American Sociological Review* and *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*. He is Co-editor of 5 volumes and one special journal issue; and co-author of two books, including the venerated *Work and Personality* with Melvin Kohn, the 1992 Cooley Mead awardee. He is co-developer with Mel of the dominant Kohn-Schooler approach to research on the interrelationship between social structural location, work, and personality—an approach that is also an archetype in the broader social structure and personality area of social psychology (Spenner 1988). Research in the Kohn-Schooler tradition pinpoints the reciprocal causal interplay between self-directed work (involving substantively complex, non-routine, autonomous activities) and psychological and cognitive functioning as a central mechanism through which inequality is perpetuated across social strata.

Carmi has also had a vital collaborative role in three celebrated streams of social psychological research distinct from the Kohn-Schooler/work and personality stream that he is identified with most closely. Note specifically (a) his pioneering work alongside Leonard Pearlin formulating the hegemonic model for research addressing the relationship between stressors, coping resources, and mental health (Pearlin and Schooler 1978); (b) his work alongside 1989

## Introducing Carmi Schooler: 2016 Cooley-Mead Award recipient

Cooley-Mead awardee Morris Rosenberg that infused methodological advances into Manny's trailblazing research on the self-concept (Rosenberg, Schooler and Schoenbach 1989; Rosenberg, Schooler et al 1995); and (c) his work, with Japnologist-Anthropologist William Caudill, and subsequently with Japanese sociologists Atsushi and Michiko Naoi, that yielded some of the most insightful findings on US-Japanese distinctions regarding the interrelationship between socio-cultural factors and personality attributes (Caudill and Schooler 1973; Naoi and Schooler 1990; Schooler and Caudill 1973; Schooler and Naoi 19880). In his letter nominating Dr. Schooler for this award that effusively lauded Carmi's contribution to these celebrated collaborations, Mel Kohn shared this decisive insight: "...as his collaborators all knew and freely acknowledged, our *own best work* was done in collaboration with Carmi Schooler." Carmi's achievements have previously been recognized by our ASA's Social Psychology Section, which elected him Chair for 2001-2002. Has is also a Fellow of the American Psychological Society and the Japan Society for the Advancement of Science, and recipient of a Japanese Government Research Award for Foreign Specialists.

Another important distinction of Carmi's—one I would be remiss to exclude—has been his consistent generosity with his time and skill alongside scholars much junior to himself. I pen this tribute as an eternally grateful and proud beneficiary. Other beneficiaries of this empowering generosity include fellow NIMH alumni Leslie Caplan, Karen and Joanne Miller, and Mesfin Mulatu. Many of Carmi's collaborations with us and others—primarily investigations incorporating the work and personality and stress and coping paradigms—have appeared in premier outlets for sociological work (e.g., Caplan and Schooler 2006 and 2007; Miller, Kohn and Schooler 1985 and 1986; Miller, Schooler, Kohn and Miller 1979; Mulatu and Schooler 2002; Schooler, Miller, Miller and Richtand 1984; Schooler, Mulatu and Oates 2004).

## Introducing Carmi Schooler: 2016 Cooley-Mead Award recipient

The impressive volume of social-psychological research involving Carmi in lead- or pivotal roles inspires several intriguing unresolved questions. The ones addressed here evoke the nontrivial possibility of empirical patterns being *inconsistent* across groups at different social structural locations. Research led by Carmi, for example, points to substantively complex work becoming increasingly consequential to intellectual functioning as people age (Schooler, Mulatu and Oates 2009). Mel Kohn characterized this pattern as having “profound implications for social structure and personality, for the social psychology of gerontology, and most directly pertinent of all, for lifecourse analysis and theory” in his nomination letter. Whether substantively complex unpaid work or leisure activities also enhance the intellectual functioning of older persons especially, whether this disproportionate impact extends to other critical realms of psychological functioning such as mental health, and whether age also conditions the impact on intellectual functioning or mental health of dealing with complex financial or physical health-related issues, are questions that would nontrivially enhance what is known about the aging process if pursued.

In the context of the stress and coping framework to which Carmi lent an aforementioned developing hand, substantively complex work—and self-directed work more broadly—is construable as a coping resource, with access influenced significantly by social class, race and gender (Schooler 1996:339; Schooler Mulatu and Oates 2004:191-92). Whether mental health or psychological well-being benefits tied to self-directed work hinge upon social class origin, gender, and race is equal parts intriguing and under-explored. Fittingly enough, a thought-provoking foray into this realm yielded one of Carmi’s most recent major sociology journal appearances. Alongside Leslie Caplan, he finds that complex household work induces more self-confidence and less self-deprecation in women, but less self-confidence in *men* (Caplan and

## Introducing Carmi Schooler: 2016 Cooley-Mead Award recipient

Schooler 2006). An earlier self-concept focused investigation of ours uncovered a particularly pronounced association between self-deprecation and subsequent closely supervised work among younger persons (Schooler and Oates 2001). More empirical investigations in this mold—into variations among dominant and subordinate groups in the causal interplay between self-directed work and psychological functioning—would further texturize the incisive responses Carmi’s work has generated *consistently*, to quintessentially social psychological questions he has been articulating since childhood in World War II-era New York City.

Thank you, Carmi Schooler.

References

- Caplan, Leslie J., and Carmi Schooler. 2006. "Household Work Complexity, Intellectual Functioning, and Self-Esteem in Men and Women. *Journal of Marriage and Family* 68: 883-900.
- Caplan, Leslie J., and Carmi Schooler. 2007. "Socioeconomic Status and Financial Coping Strategies: The Mediating Role of Perceived Control. *Social Psychology Quarterly* 70:63-78.
- Caudill, William, and Carmi Schooler. 1973. "Child Behavior and Child Rearing in Japan and the United States: An Interim Report. *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease* 157:323-38.
- Miller, Joanne, Carmi Schooler, Melvin L. Kohn, and Karen A. Miller. 1979. "Women and Work: The Psychological Effects of Occupational Conditions." *American Journal of Sociology* 85:66-94.
- Miller, Karen A., Melvin L. Kohn, and Carmi Schooler. 1986. "Educational Self-Direction and Personality." *American Sociological Review* 51:372-90.
- 1985. "Educational Self-Direction and Cognitive Functioning of Students. *Social Forces* 63:923-44.
- Mulatu, Mesfin and Carmi Schooler. 2002. "Causal Connections between SES and Health: Reciprocal Effects and Mediating Mechanisms. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 43:22-41.
- Naoi, Michiko, and Carmi Schooler. 1990. "Psychological Consequences of Occupational Conditions among Japanese Wives." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 58:100-16.
- Pearlin, Leonard, and Carmi Schooler. 1978. "The Structure of Coping." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 19:2-21.
- Rosenberg, Morris, Carmi Schooler, and Carrie Schoenbach. 1989. "Self-Esteem and Adolescent



Introducing Carmi Schooler: 2016 Cooley-Mead Award recipient

- Problems: Modeling Reciprocal Effects. *American Sociological Review* 54: 1004-1018.
- Rosenberg, Morris, Carmi Schooler (corresponding author), Carrie Schoenbach, and Florence Rosenberg. 1995. "Global and Specific Self-esteem: Different Concepts, Different Outcomes." *American Sociological Review* 60:141-56.  
<http://www.psychologicalscience.org/index.php/publications/observer/2007/december-07>
- Schooler, Carmi. 1984. "Psychological Effects of Complex Environments during the Life Span: A Review and Theory." *Intelligence* 8:259–81.
- Schooler, Carmi. 1972. "Birth Order Effects: Not Here, Not Now!" *Psychological Bulletin* 78:161-75.
- Schooler, Carmi. 1996. "Cultural and Social Structural Explanations of Cross-National Psychological Differences. *Annual Review of Sociology* 22:323-49.
- Schooler, Carmi, and William Caudill. 1964. "Symptomatology in Japanese and American Schizophrenics." *Ethnology* 3:172-78.
- Schooler, Carmi, Joanne Miller, Karen A. Miller, and Carol N. Richtand. 1984. "Work for the Household: Its Nature and Consequences for Husbands and Wives. *American Journal of Sociology* 90:97-124.
- Schooler, Carmi, and Gary Oates. 2001. "Self-Esteem and Work across the Lifespan." Pp. 177–97 in *Extending Self-Esteem Theory and Research: Sociological and Psychological Currents*, edited by T. J. Owens, S. Stryker, and N. Goodman. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schooler, Carmi, Mesfin S. Mulatu, and Gary Oates. 1999. "The Continued Positive Effects of Substantively Complex Work on the Intellectual Functioning of Older Workers." *Psychology and Aging* 14:483-506.

Introducing Carmi Schooler: 2016 Cooley-Mead Award recipient

—2004. "Occupational Self-Direction, Intellectual Functioning, and Self-Directed Orientation in Older Workers: Findings and Implications for Individuals & Societies." *American Journal of Sociology* 110:161-97.

Schooler, Carmi, and Atsushi Naoi. 1988. "The Psychological Effects of Traditional and of Economically Peripheral Job Settings in Japan." *American Journal of Sociology* 94:335-55.

Schooler, Carmi, and Nina Schooler. 2007. *Observer* 20, December.

Spencer, Kenneth I. 1988. "Social Stratification, Work, and Personality." *Annual Review of Sociology* 14:69-97.