Profile of the President

Melvin L. Kohn: Linking Social Structure and Personality

by Glen H. Elder, Jr.

W.I. Thomas once wrote a thoughtful essay during the Great Depression which outlines a framework for the study of social structure and personality. This framework soon came into its own spurred on by research during the Second World War and subsequent era. Mel Kohn's sociological career had its beginnings in the buoyant postwar era of social science and represents a pioneering bridge to many aspects of contemporary study in the field of social structure and personality.

Kohn

Across more than 30 years of inquiry, Kohn and his colleagues have directed our attention to the explication of relations between people's location in the social order and their behavior. Two perspectives are involved. One focuses on the process by which the social imperatives of a position make a difference in how people actually function—how they think, feel, and behave. The other examines the choices of the individual, such as the selection of a job, marital partner, and method of parental discipline. Values provide clues to such choices and their origins are often found in the imperatives of social roles and positions. Both perspectives are expressed in Kohn's sociological works.

From the 1950s to the present, Mel Kohn's explanatory orientation has brought challenging questions to the relation between social order and personality. Once a goal in itself, descriptions of this relation soon became merely a point of departure for explicating the association and building a theory of how it works.

More striking yet is the research "project" which Mel has directed over so many years, especially as Chief of the Socio-Environmental Studies Laboratory at NIMH. Where have we seen a more steadfast pursuit of interrelated questions across minefields, potholes, and culs-de-sac? Some of us learn at the knee of gifted mentors and Mel was generously endowed in this respect at Cornell University—Robin Williams, Urie Bronfenbrenner, Leonard Cottrell, William Foote Whyte, and John Clausen. As Robin Williams (1/28/86) recently observed, "The whole Cornell group at this time was imbued with a faith in the future of social science, and insistence on 'evidence, an unwillingness to accept any a priori limitations on what could be learned through research on complex problems.' We had a self-image of being tough-minded, empirical, breaking new ground. It was a heady atmosphere."

In this heady atmosphere, Kohn served an apprenticeship with the Cornell Program in Intergroup Relations. This group proposed a model in which both personal dispositions and situational constraints accounted for discriminatory or nondiscriminatory behavior. Kohn's doctoral dissertation ("Analysis of Situational Patterning in Intergroup Relations," 1952) contributed to this model. Even in the dissertation, though, Mel was beginning to shift the focus of his attention to the greater leverage afforded by larger social structures.

Other developmental features of Mel's Cornell experience should be mentioned, including his first role as an assistant to Robin Williams on the first edition of *American Society;* seminars with Alexander Leighton that led to a Nova Scotia study of social change and mental health; and coursework with Leonard Cottrell and Urie Bronfenbrenner. William Foote Whyte hired Mel to do participant observation in an Elmira printing plant and expanded his knowledge of work. In combination, these experiences and mentors seem to anticipate Mel's future career. For example, the prominence of values in his research owes much to the influence of Robin Williams. Likewise, the association with Leighton's project seems to anticipate Mel's subsequent work on schizophrenia.

In the midst of the Korean War, Mel accepted an offer from John Clausen, who had left Cornell for the National Institute of Mental Health to establish a Laboratory of Socio-Environmental Studies. He was soon engaged in the task of establishing a field station for NIMH in the city of Hagerstown, MD. This field position brought Mel a commission in the Reserve Corps of the Public Health Service and most importantly, access to valuable Public Health Service records. These records came from the pioneering studies of an epidemiologist named Antonio Ciocco who had investigated illness among Hagerstown school children in the 1920s. Mel used the records to design a study for comparing people who were later hospitalized for schizophrenia with matched controls selected from the same school class.

In collaboration with Clausen, Mel's work on this study raised some important methodological issues and paved the way for the Washington study of social class and child rearing. The first issue stemmed from the Faris and Dunham inference regarding the connection between social isolation and schizophrenia. The Hagerstown analysis found this connection, but also obtained evidence suggesting that social withdrawal was a consequence rather than an antecedent of schizophrenia. A second issue had to do with the conditional influence of city size on the correlation between occupational status and rates of schizophrenia. Kohn and Clausen found no association in Hagerstown, and this led to their discovery of the city size effect in the research literature.

The third issue posed a riddle that eventually led to the 1955 study of middle- and working-class families in the city of Washington, DC. The riddle centered on the relation between the families of schizophrenics and their class position. Parent-child relationships in these families did not vary by class. Moreover, their family relationships were characteristic of working-class families and differed markedly from normal families in the middle class. All of this raised challenging questions about the effects of social class on family interaction and structure. Satisfactory answers could not be found in the literature. Thus, with Clausen's encouragement, Mel decided to plan a study of social class and family relationships. Parental values were proposed as the linking element between class structure and parent behavior.

The Washington study explored relations between class and child socialization, and exposed some of the links between the two in a rudimentary but provocative formulation. The first published analysis showed that the qualities parents desire in children are related to their position in the stratification system. Middle-class parents were more likely to value qualities of self-direction, whereas working-class parents placed more emphasis on conformity to external standards. Subsequent studies of parental role allocation and discipline identified parental values as a promising link between social class, and parental practices.

Instead of beginning with the parent-child relationship and working back to social position, Kohn begins with social position and specifies a process that bears upon parent-child relations. The first option entails some risk of excluding objective conditions from the model, a common deficiency of studies based in psychology. The other option risks inadequate treatment of parent-child relations and child personality. Kohn has always launched his analyses of social structure and its effects without losing sight of family or psychostructural processes. Thus, in an important 1963 paper, "Social Class and Parent-Child Relationships: An Interpretation," the model begins with different conditions of life in the middle and working class which give rise to corresponding parental preferences on child qualities. Such value differences, in turn, have important consequences for parent-child relations. It is a testament to the challenge of this model and to Mel's inner-directedness that much of his current research reflects the legacy of the 1963 essay.

This essay marked the beginning of a new era in Mel's research on social structure and personality, as did his 1960 transition to Chief of the Laboratory of Socio-Environmental Studies at the National Institute of Mental Health. John Clausen established the laboratory in 1951 and quickly assembled an extraordinary group of talented investigators, including the late Erving Goffman and William Caudill, Carmi Schooler, Morris Rosenberg, Leonard Pearlin and Marian Radke-Yarrow. Among other achievements, the Lab became a prominent voice for social science in the halls of NIMH. With a thriving research program underway, Clausen accepted the challenge of directing the Institute of Human Development at Berkeley. Robert Cohen, NIMH Clinical Director, wisely chose Mel as a successor to John, though his youth (he was then only 32 years old) and his bearded appearance generated some apprehension. John Clausen's move to Berkeley produced a bond of indebtedness between Mel and me that continues to this day. I refer here to a shared indebtedness to John for opening doors and socializing us into the wisdom of social structure and personality. Just as he cast the pathways of Mel's career by inviting him to NIMH in the early 1950s, he shaped my professional career by inviting me to Berkeley during the 1960s. Needless to say, this common experience includes stories that get better by the decade, but I could not improve upon John's reports about the pathbreaking work taking place at the Lab under Mel Kohn's direction. How I struggled to reach that pinnacle!

The initial empirical basis for Mel's post-1963 work is a 1964 nationwide survey of men which viewed occupational conditions and adult psychological functioning as interdependent processes. With Carmi Schooler, Mel launched a thorough investigation of the interrelationship of social stratification, job conditions, and men's orientations/values. The analyses show that occupational self-direction (made up of substantive complexity, routinized work, and closeness of supervision) was consequential for adult values, self-conception, and social orientation. Education also had strong effects on self-directed orientation. The Washington research of the 1950s, selected analyses of the 1964 survey, and some cross-national comparisions with Len Pearlin's Turin study were assembled in *Class and Conformity* (1969), Mel's first major volume.

The 1964 study opened up a new way of thinking about social structure and personality, or more specifically, about working and men's thinking and values. The paradigm featured a multidimensional model of social stratification and work. Following the *Dictionary of Occupational Titles*, men were grouped according to whether they worked with ideas, people, or things. But more fundamentally, they were compared in terms of objective, structural imperatives of the job. Collectively these imperatives define the social and psychological realities of work. The list now includes 14 imperatives, headed by those that index occupational self-direction, the most powerful influence on worker personality according to evidence from the project and from a growing body of international studies.

Ultimately the 1964 venture left many issues unresolved and surely added fuel to the next phase, a 1974 follow-up of men from the original survey along with a sample of their wives and children. The follow-up represented a major advance by establishing a two-wave panel which brought time and process into models of the relation between work and personality, but a good many limitations remained for the consideration of social science.

Looking back over the years, I think of Mel's research up to the early 1970s as offering a pathbreaking view of the relation between social structure and personality, a view of problems and possibilities that depart sharply from conventional models.

The years since 1973-74 have followed the systematic course of normal science in which models are clarified, elaborated, tested, and revised. All of this work reflected the guiding hand of a paradigmatic model from the prior years, the substantial contributions of a talented research staff, and able colleagues from other countries. Joanne Miller and Karen Miller were instrumental in assisting Mel and Carmi Schooler with applications of the general model to women's paid employment; to housework for men and women; to the educational task experiences of children in school; to the worklives and psychosocial functioning of men in different age groups; and to the world of leisure.

Observing

Postlude to the 1986 Election

The 1986 presidential elections brought out a record number of candidates, but did not alter noticeably the number and percentage of members voting. A number of inquiries by members has led to the decision to offer this retrospective on the election; I hope it will answer most of the questions that might have arisen and not been answered by the article in August 1986 *Footnotes*. I will proceed in the following way: (1) review voting patterns over the past seven elections; (2) describe in detail the Hare Method as it was employed in the 1986 election; (3) present two tables with the votes cast round by round for the 1986 election. ASA employs the Hare Method in order to avoid special second mailings for run-off elections.

TABLE 1: PRESIDENTIAL VOTE TOTALS, 1980-1986

1980—3861	1983—3348
1981—3422	1984—3147
1982—3547	1985—2689
	1986—3213

Table 1 reports the vote totals for the presidential elections 1980-1986. There were three candidates for the presidency in 1982 and again in 1983. To some extent, the decline in number of votes cast between 1980 and 1984 may be a function of the fact that the size of the voting membership decreased by slightly more than 10 percent during this period. It then grew slightly in 1985 and 1986.

About 75 percent of ASA members are eligible to vote. Persons in the categories "Associate Member" and "Student Member" are not eligible to vote. The percentage of eligible members actually voting during the period 1980-1986 has ranged from a high of 45% in 1980 to a low of 36% in 1985; in the 1986 election 39% of the eligible voters cast ballots for the presidency. On the average, about 40% of the members eligible to vote have voted in the ASA presidential elections during the past seven elections. The relatively low proportion of members participating in elections suggests that there is a large degree of passive consent for the system. I welcome reader reflections on this observation.

on those ballots.

If no candidate has attained a majority at the end of the second round, the process is repeated, with the then lowest ranked candidate being dropped from the contest, and her/his votes redistributed. In later rounds it is probable that some of the choices to be redistributed are earmarked for the candidates already dropped at the end of the first or second round. In this case, those ballots are redistributed to the next viable choice. The process continues until a candidate receives a majority of all votes cast in a round.

Table 2 presents the results of the voting in the 1986 election. Please note that the final vote totals for Gans, Etzioni and Smelser are different from the results published in August *Footnotes*. Due to a computer error, the count was stopped at the lower number previously reported when a majority for Gans was assured. When this error was discovered, the votes were recounted and all ballots checked; the results published here are official and final. In accord with the ASA Constitution, all envelopes and ballots are retained in storage for 18 months.

Table 3 presents the voting patterns from another vantage point. It shows the number of votes received by each candidate for each rank. Table 3 helps answer the question whether there might have been a candidate who was everyone's second choice, the fact of which might have been obscured by the Hare Method. For this election, at least, Table 3 supports the pattern that emerged with the Hare Method, at least as regards the relative strength of the top three candidates.

Many people asked if it would be better to rank order all candidates or only vote for the one or two people about whom they felt most strongly. The fact that it took all five rounds to achieve a majority suggests that in the majority of cases those who ranked all candidates had more voice in the outcome than those who did not. It is not the case, of course, for those whose first choice was Etzioni or Gans.

Given the fact that the percentage of eligible members voting has ranged

TABLE 2: 1986 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION, BY ROUNDS

	Round 1	Round 2	Round 3	Round 4	Round 5
Borgatta	399	457	X	—	—
Etzioni	779	842	952	1040	1373
Gans	680	760	873	1150	1543
Reiss	360	X	—	—	—
Smelser	493	571	723	830	X
Wallerstein	502	529	567	X	—
Number of votes cast*	3213	3159	3115	3020	2916

Since not all voters indicated six preferences on their ballots, the number of votes cast becomes progressively smaller.

TABLE 3: VOTES RECEIVED BY EACH CANDIDATE FOR EACH RANK

	1st Choice	2nd Choice	3rd Choice	4th Choice	5th Choice	6th Choice	Total
Borgatta	399	386	379	419	452	410	2445
Etzioni	779	430	389	357	326	347	2628
Gans	680	696	481	408	332	112	2709
Reiss	360	389	506	472	433	301	2461
Smelser	493	502	526	421	372	215	2529
Wallerstein	502	360	285	247	336	807	2537
TOTALS	3213	2763	2566	2324	2251	2192	15309

In the Hare Method of voting, voters are asked to rank order the candidates. This insures that at some point one candidate will emerge with a majority of the votes cast in a particular round. At the end of round 1, the candidate with the lowest number of votes is dropped from the contest, and her/his votes redistributed according to the second choice rankings

from 36% to 45% regardless of the number and gender of the candidates, we may now ask who elects ASA presidents? Since the envelopes and the ballots have long since been separated, we may be able to shed some light on this question with a small-scale study. We promise to keep you informed.—
WVD'A □

Kohn, *continued*

Carrie Schoenbach, among others, worked closely with Mel and Carmi in cross-national extensions to Poland (1978) and Japan (1979). The Polish survey used methods similar to those employed by the Lab research team and involved the primary leadership of Wlodzimierz Wesolowski, who conceived of the study, sponsored and supported it. Kazimierz Slomczynski carried out much of the survey planning and analysis with American colleagues at the NIMH Lab in Washington. Atsushi Naoi and Ken'ichi Tominaga conducted the Japan survey. All in all, the post-1974 era witnessed an extraordinary effort to determine the generalizability of the interpretive model linking job conditions and psychological functioning. As presented in *Work and Personality* (1983), Mel, Carmi, and their colleagues found the model held up remarkably well across groups and cultures.

If we ever doubted philosopher Adam Smith's assertion on the molding influence of occupational life, the Lab's research on work and personality has given us more reason to believe. From every conceivable angle of analysis, the storyline remains the same; work affects personality, and personality influences work or job conditions. Mel first drew this conclusion from his cross-sectional survey in 1964, but he could not in fact begin to demonstrate such a reciprocal link without the longitudinal data provided by the 1974 study and the newly developed methods of confirmatory factor analysis and linear structural equations modeling. (Here, Mel and Carmi were helped immensely—as they have often acknowledged—by Duane Alwin and Ronald Schoenberg.)

Work not only affects personality; it does so across stages of the life course in very similar ways, especially through the most powerful component, occupational self-direction—involving substantively complex work, low supervision, and a job that is not routine. Complex work with minimal supervision and variation from day to day allows a high degree of autonomy and self-regulation. All of this amounts to a challenging job, and, as Mel has put it, a good many people "thrive" in meeting occupational challenges. Men and women who are self-directed in their work are likely to hold favorable views of self and a flexible orientation toward self and others.

Just as some people grow from challenging assignments, Mel's research shows that a number actually seek challenge. Men who score high on intellectual flexibility tend to be attracted to work settings that favor this quality of mind, those that offer substantively complex work with little supervision and routine.

Over the years, Mel has been a tireless advocate for the best possible science, both in his project and in the field at large. This is a fitting description, as well, of his support for students and colleagues, co-workers and multiple causes that promote a better world. He has opened countless doors of opportunity and knowledge for inquiring students at all levels. A great many colleagues and collaborators also have been helped along in some way by Mel's initiatives. As president of the NIMH Assembly of Scientists, Mel served as a leader of the anti-Vietnam War movement among government employees. He also promoted women's rights and has been a long-term member of Sociologists for Women in Society.

Mel's service to social science extends to all corners of the community, from the editorial boards of journals to various selection committees (e.g., for di-

rector of NIA, scholars-in-residence at the Fogarty International Center) and major advisory boards, such as at the Max Planck Institute for Education and Human Development in Berlin. He has served as vice president of the Society for the Study of Social Problems, as president of the Sociological Research Association, and as president of the Eastern Sociological Society.

Sociology is an international forum in Mel's view, and he has devoted much of his time and energy to fostering cross-national ties and ventures of one kind or another, especially through the International Sociological Association. Currently, he is both a member of the Executive Committee of the ISA and the US delegate to the ISA Council. In the spirit of his cross-national theme for the Chicago meeting of 1987, Mel is busily engaged in developing cross-national thematic sessions involving scholars from many countries.

Many honors have come Mel's way, including the Ernest Burgess Award for Family Studies, an invitation to the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, and election as fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. But if I know Mel correctly, none of this can possibly match his satisfying intellectual journey in the Laboratory of Socio-Environmental Studies and the rewards of pursing an elusive problem across the thickets of longitudinal research. Mel's remarkable career in the laboratory's history has come to an end, but the chase continues in Mel's new quarters at Johns Hopkins University. This academic setting seems appropriate for what is likely to be Mel's greatest gift, especially to graduate students; that of his investigative example in the never-ending quest for knowledge and understanding. As the next president of the American Sociological Association, Melvin L. Kohn promises to direct this pursuit to time-honored questions of cross-national significance, one of the central tasks of our discipline. We look forward to a vintage year.

*Many colleagues and students have contributed in some way to this essay which had to be reduced to meet space limitations. In particular, I wish to thank Robin Williams and John Clausen for their recollections of times past. One of Urie Bronfenbrenner's graduate students, Nancy Darling, graciously shared her seminar essay on Mel with me, and I am very grateful for her willingness to do so. □

Monograph on Branch Campuses

The ASA Teaching Resources Center has commissioned several monographs on important issues in teaching sociology. One monograph focuses on the special context of the branch campus. In many states, the major state research university has branch campuses around the state. These faculty are governed by the main campus, although they may have little contact with the sociology department there.

If you teach in a branch campus or have comments and information about such an arrangement, please communicate with: Dr. Juliet Saltman, 844 Frederick Boulevard, Akron, OH 44320.

She is interested in governance policies for the branch campus, inequities with the main campus, special strategies that exist to support branch campus faculty, faculty development programs, and other information about teaching in the branch campus environment. Please send your ideas to her. □