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Danziger, Kurt

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Basic Biographical Information

Kurt Danziger's innovative contributions to the history of psychology have received widespread international recognition. He was born in Germany in 1926 and emigrated to South Africa at the age of 11. After receiving degrees in Chemistry and Psychology from the

University of Cape Town, he continued his studies at the newly established Institute of Experimental Psychology at the University of Oxford in England. His work there involved standard 1940s psychology experiments using laboratory rats (e.g., Danziger 1953). On completing his doctorate, he joined the University of Melbourne in Australia where he did research in developmental psychology, studying children's understanding of social relationships (e.g., Danziger 1957).

Major Accomplishments/Contributions

In 1954, Danziger moved back to South Africa where social psychology soon became his main area of research. Following a 2-year stay as Visiting Professor at Gadjah Mada University in Jogjakarta, Indonesia, Danziger returned to South Africa as Head of Psychology at the University of Cape Town. There, he conducted some groundbreaking studies inspired by the sociology of knowledge (e.g., Danziger 1963). This research is still cited and was continued by others for many years (e.g., Du Preez and Collins 1985; Finchilescu and Dawes 1999). Danziger's time in Cape Town and his eventual departure from South Africa were marked by his opposition to the apartheid policies which were being enforced with increasing violence and brutality. This active opposition, both within and outside the academy, eventually led to threats and reprisals on the part of what was becoming a repressive police state. He left South Africa for Canada in 1965 and was prohibited from returning until the collapse of the old system after 1990.

Danziger took up an appointment as Professor of Psychology at York University, Toronto, where he continued to work in social psychology. His publications from this time include a textbook, *Socialization* (Danziger 1971) and a monograph, *Interpersonal Communication* (Danziger 1976), both of which were translated into several languages.

Danziger had a longstanding interest in the history of psychology and began intensive study of primary sources in the early 1970s. He became particularly interested in Wilhelm Wundt's work. Around the time of psychology's "centennial," marking the establishment of Wundt's laboratory in 1879, Danziger published a number of chapters and articles related to

this topic (e.g., Danziger 1979). However, during the 1980s, he became increasingly interested in the history of psychological research methods (e.g., Danziger 1985). This interest culminated in what is probably Danziger's best-known book, *Constructing the Subject: Historical Origins of Psychological Research* (Danziger 1990). Danziger was also interested in the history of psychological concepts and categories, and in a later book, *Naming the Mind: How Psychology Found Its Language* (Danziger 1997), he traced the historical origins of modern psychological concepts like "behavior," "intelligence," "attitude," "personality," and "motivation." He has continued this line of work in his most recent book, *Marking the Mind: A History of Memory* (Danziger 2008) with a detailed study of one of the oldest psychological concepts in existence.

Danziger has always been critical of historical accounts that celebrated currently fashionable disciplinary trends. He regards insights derived from work in the philosophy, history, and sociology of science as the indispensable foundation for a more critical approach to the history of psychology. In spite of this, he is committed to working from within psychology, largely because of the institutional separation that exists between the various fields which study science and science itself (Danziger 1994). It was this commitment that led him to play a central role in establishing the graduate program in history and theory of psychology at York University.

A symposium on Danziger's work was held at the annual meeting of the Canadian Psychological Association in 1995. The papers from this symposium were included, together with others, in a special issue of the *History and Philosophy of Psychology Bulletin* titled, "Tribute to Kurt Danziger" (Dzinas 1995). In 2000, the European Society for the History of the Human Sciences devoted a two-part symposium to Danziger's work in which nine papers were presented by scholars from Europe, North America, and South Africa. These papers formed the basis of an edited collection, *Rediscovering the history of psychology: Essays inspired by the work of Kurt Danziger* (Brock et al. 2004). Also noteworthy is an interview with Danziger, which appeared in the journal, *History of Psychology* (Brock 2006). More recently, he has published an autobiography (Danziger 2009) and there is now a website devoted to his work (www.kurtdanziger.com).

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Frederic Darley had a distinguished career in several areas of communicative disorders. After receiving his Ph.D. in speech pathology and audiology from the