

## INTRODUCTION

# THE FUTURE OF THE HISTORY OF PSYCHOLOGY REVISITED

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In 1994, Kurt Danziger published an article in *Theory & Psychology* with the title, “Does the history of psychology have a future?” The article attracted a great deal of controversy and is now listed on the journal’s website as one of the most cited articles in its history. After providing a synopsis of Danziger’s article, I discuss some of the issues that emerged from the controversy that followed its publication. I also ask whether the position of the history of psychology has changed in the intervening years. We are already in the future that Danziger discussed, even if it is only the near future, and the situation may look different from here. After pointing out that Danziger himself has changed his views on this subject, I suggest that it does look different. The editorial ends with an introduction to the articles in the special issue and some reflections on the importance of understanding the context in which historians of psychology work.

*Keywords:* Kurt Danziger, future of the history of psychology, critical history, historical psychology, controversy

In 1994, Kurt Danziger published an article in *Theory & Psychology* with the title, “Does the history of psychology have a future?” (Danziger, 1994). It is now listed on the website of that journal as one of the most cited articles in its history.<sup>1</sup> This is partly because it has attracted a great deal of controversy. This editorial has three aims. I will begin by discussing some of the issues that emerged from this controversy because they highlight the concerns about the future of the history of psychology that some of its practitioners have expressed. My account will of necessity be selective, but my aim will be to draw out its most important points. A second aim is to ask whether the position of the history of psychology has changed in the intervening years. We are already in the future that Danziger discussed, even if it is only the near future, and the situation may look different from here. After pointing out that Danziger himself has changed his

views on this subject since writing the article, I will suggest that it does look different. Finally, I will introduce the articles in the special issue and end with some reflections on the importance of understanding the context in which historians of psychology work,

Before discussing some of the issues that emerged from the controversy, I will provide a brief synopsis of Danziger’s article for those who have not read it or perhaps read it a long time ago and whose memory of it is vague. The synopsis should not be seen as a replacement for the article itself.

### A Synopsis

The expression “history of psychology” can mean different things to different people, and so it is important to be clear about the way in which Danziger was using the term. For most psychologists, the history of psychology involves a single course (known almost universally as “the history course”) that forms part of a psychologist’s education. Danziger was not using the term in this way. He referred almost

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<sup>1</sup> <http://tap.sagepub.com/reports/most-cited>

dismissively to this situation: "The role that is conventionally conceded to the history of psychology appears to be largely limited to a pedagogical context, an introduction to the discipline's view of itself" (p. 467). What Danziger was interested in was the history of psychology as an area of research, and he rightly pointed out that few psychology departments would accept a doctoral thesis on the history of psychology as grounds for qualifying a candidate in psychology and the standard research journals of the discipline rarely publish articles in this field.

The second point to note is that Danziger agreed with the historian of science, Paul Forman (1991), who wrote that there are two basic moral judgments that we can bring to bear on history and characterized these as celebratory and critical. Again, Danziger was not particularly interested in the former. The problem with celebratory history, as he saw it, is that it can contribute nothing new to ongoing issues in psychology:

This is "feel good" history which will never have any impact on current scientific practices. Its place in the life of the discipline is not in the area of research or knowledge generation but in the area of public relations through undergraduate education or the area of professional socialization through graduate training. These are the services that disciplinary history renders to the discipline and which keep it alive in spite of its ultimate irrelevance to the central scientific tasks of the discipline. (p. 469)

While I have separated the points about the pedagogical role of the history of psychology and celebratory history for the purposes of explanation, it can be seen from this quotation that the two points are related. The same is true of the third point that I will make.

Danziger was concerned with the future of the history of psychology as a branch of psychology rather than history of science. He outlined three different ways in which the sciences relate to their history. One is that of natural sciences like physics and chemistry. They do not engage with their history in any significant way. That task is usually left to the professional historian of science. At the opposite end of the spectrum were social sciences like sociology and economics, which did engage with their history in a significant way. Most of the literature on the history of these disciplines was published by people who were affiliated to those disciplines.

Between these two extremes was a mixed model where the history of a particular discipline was pursued by a combination of professional historians of science and people who were affiliated to that discipline. One example was biology whose history is mainly investigated by historians of science but there were still a few biologists who wrote on the history of their discipline as well. Psychology also followed the mixed model but here the majority of historians of psychology were affiliated with psychology with a comparatively smaller number coming from the history of science. Danziger suggested that this mixed model reflects the ambivalent status of psychology as a natural or a social science.

He was not arguing against the mixed model. His concern was that the common view among many psychologists that their subject is a natural science would ultimately lead to the institutional arrangements that are typical of physics and chemistry:

The great majority of experimental psychologists relate to the tradition of their field in much the same way as physicists. There is no room in their world for a reflective or critical history. They would gladly leave that to the professional historians without any sense of having surrendered something that might have the slightest relevance to their own research interests. In the United States this attitude may be more widespread than elsewhere, and it is certainly accompanied by a growing tendency for the history of psychology to be taken up by historians rather than psychologists, but, of course, the same attitudes are to be found wherever there are psychological laboratories. (p. 472)

This point is related to the future of a critical history of psychology. Danziger referred back to the article by Paul Forman in which he wrote that the institutional independence of history of science makes it independent of the moral authority of scientists and it is this situation that enables a critical history of science to flourish. Danziger did not disagree with this view but he pointed out that this independence comes at a price and that price was isolation from the community of scientists. Historians of science have their own university departments, their own professional organizations, their own journals, their own conferences, etc., and this sends a message to practicing scientists that the history of their disciplines is not their concern. Thus the institutional separation of the history of science from science helps to reinforce the ideology

whereby the history of science is irrelevant to the theory and practice of science itself.

Why should this matter? One reason is that the very objects that science investigates are historical and this is just a true of physics as it is of psychology. Referring to the latter, Danziger pointed out that most psychologists adopt the view of naïve naturalism with respect to their objects of investigation; that is, if there is a word for something in late-20th century English, it must correspond to some “thing” in the external world. As he had already argued (Danziger, 1993), and as he went on to show in more detail in his book, *Naming the Mind* (Danziger, 1997a), many of these objects have a short history and arose in a specific social context. For example, the modern concept of “intelligence” arose in the first decade of the 20th century in conjunction with the practice of educational selection, while the concept of “motivation” was an even later development, and its origins are connected with attempts to make industrial workers more productive. If Danziger was right in his view that these concepts are not natural but human products that are local and temporary, and he provides a great deal of evidence to suggest that they are, it would lead to changes in the kind of questions that psychologists ask (Brock, 2015a).

It is one thing to recognize the undesirability of separating the history of psychology from psychology; quite another to see how it can be overcome. Danziger was well aware that it would require a change in the metaphysical commitments of mainstream psychologists and that this was unlikely to occur. He saw hope in the fact that there were a significant number of psychologists who were outside this mainstream. In this respect, they were “insiders”

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relation to their disciplinary affiliation but “outsiders” in relation to their views:

As long as the moral authority of the scientific community remains unchallenged from within, history will be seen either as irrelevant, or as an occasion for celebration. It is when that authority becomes questionable, when the professional community is divided in some profound way, that a critical disciplinary history has a significant contribution to make. (p. 478)

What is commonly known as “mainstream psychology” is American psychology, which has been the dominant force within the discipline for much of its history. However, psychology had experienced significant growth in other

parts of the world, and there are local traditions that are significantly different from those of the United States. One of them is historical psychology. There is a significant body of literature on this subject in countries like France, Germany, and the Netherlands but, with the exception of Kenneth Gergen’s failed attempt to establish a historical social psychology in the 1970s and 1980s (Gergen, 1973; Gergen & Gergen, 1984), it is virtually unknown in the English-speaking world.

Psychologists in places like Latin America, Africa, and Asia have also been increasingly finding their voice. One of the more interesting developments in these places in recent years has been the rise of indigenous psychology (e.g., Allwood & Berry, 2006). The argument goes that American psychology is not the universal science that it claims to be, but reflects the society and culture in which it was produced. It is therefore inappropriate for their needs and must be adapted or modified to suit the local situation.

Dissenting voices can be found in the United States itself, and Danziger specifically mentioned feminists in this regard. The amount of work on the history of psychology that has been written from a feminist perspective in recent years would seem to bear him out. Although Danziger did not mention it, a similar point could be made with regard to ethnic minorities in the United States. Thus Danziger’s hope for the future of critical history as an area of research within psychology lay in its appeal to these disaffected groups.

### The Situatedness of Historical Knowledge

One of the earliest critiques of the article came from Christopher Green (1996). In an article titled, “The Uses and Abuses of History and Philosophy of Psychology,” he suggested that it was inappropriate to regard history as a means of changing psychology. Referring to Danziger and Forman’s view that history can be either celebratory or critical, he suggested that moral judgments have no role to play in history:

I disagree that moral judgments must lie at the core of best historical thinking. Moral judgments are easy to make and notoriously difficult to justify; so difficult to justify that, outside of philosophical ethics, they are rarely justified but in the most superficial of terms. Typically, the person who employs a moral claim as a

central element in a scholarly presentation must rely more heavily on the assumption that the audience agrees with it in advance, rather than on any explicitly presented justification. This is an assumption that is itself difficult to justify, and of quite limited value even when true. In short, moral judgments are far more likely to topple laudable scholarship than they are to enhance it. (p. 21)

Danziger (1997b) published a reply with the title, “The Moral Basis of Historiography.” Drawing on Donna Haraway’s notion of “god tricks” (Haraway, 1991), he wrote:

Appeals to an interrelated set of polarities—fact versus value, scholarship versus propaganda, dispassionate judgment versus emotion, distance versus commitment, and so forth, have a long history in the annals of rhetoric. . . . All such appeals rely on a radical symmetry between a point of view that is epistemically privileged and another that is not. The privileged viewpoint is one that rises above all social interests, local prejudices, individual weaknesses, and partial perspectives; it is a godlike viewpoint. (p. 31)

He goes on to say that human knowledge is always situated knowledge and hence partial. Being situated in a particular time and place, we should be conscious of the location in which we work:

As long as no one has found a way of eliminating interpretation, eliminating a situated point of view, from the practice of historiography the first essential requirement of good scholarship is surely the recognition of the location from which it is practiced. (pp. 31–32)

In response to the claim that he was using history as a means of changing psychology, he wrote:

I hope it will be clear that when I speak of location here it is to social, and not theoretical, situatedness that I refer. Pursuing the historical study of psychology in order to gain support for a specific theoretical position within the discipline is of course likely to result in a form of Whig history and is not to be encouraged. But this should not be confused with the problem of social location and its attendant moral perspective that the historian of psychology shares with all historians. (p. 32)

This is an important point. In suggesting that historians had a role to play within psychology, he was not arguing for insider history; that is, the use of history to promote a particular kind of psychology. The standards that guided the work of these historians would be no different from the standards that guided the work of historians of science.

The issue of situatedness also arose in Danziger’s exchange with Trudy Dehue (1998). She chided him for discussing the social context of celebratory history but not the social context of critical history. She went on to elaborate her own view, which she called, “symmetric contextualism”:

In emphasizing that historians should not elevate today’s psychological viewpoints to a timeless norm and should write contextualist accounts, Danziger seems to subscribe fully to the new criteria of historiography. However, his own model of critical history seems to imply that historical development is still steered by a pre-given finish and that the contextualism he advances is of an *asymmetrical* kind [emphasis in original]. In Danziger’s model, mainstream psychology is contextualized whereas contemporary nonmainstream psychology still provides an essential gauge. (p. 656)

Danziger (1998) rejected the charge of asymmetry, saying that he had actually devoted more space to discussing the context of critical history than he had to the context of celebratory history. He also suggested that Dehue was being selective in her contextualism because she was not prepared to examine the context of her own knowledge:

The contextualist orientation, which Dehue and I share up to a point, recognized the situatedness of historical knowledge. Where we seem to differ is in our willingness to accept the reflexive implications of that position. The evenhanded practice of what Dehue calls “symmetric contextualism” would be possible only for someone able to step outside all historical entanglements. But that would mean asserting the situatedness of all historical knowledge except one’s own. (p. 671)

He also cited Haraway’s notion of “god tricks,” as he had done with Green (1996), and suggested that an essential requirement of good scholarship is to recognize the location from which it is practiced: “The greatest obstacles to good scholarship are to be found in the ‘god tricks’ that serve to hide and obscure the necessary partiality involved in knowledge production” (p. 671).

### The Politics of Critical History

In arguing that moral judgments have no role to play in history, Green (1996) was dissociating himself from Danziger’s brand of critical history. Another longstanding critic of this approach was Hans van Rappard (e.g., 1993, 1997, 2008). However, much of his criticism centered on the politics of the situation. Critical

historians who were affiliated with the discipline of psychology were biting the hand that feeds them, and psychologists were unlikely to tolerate this situation. He suggested that the influence of historians of science on psychologist-historians had been counterproductive and that they needed to develop their own approach that would appeal to the interests of psychologists and be more congenial to them. This essentially involved using historical texts as a theoretical resource. Just as philosophers still read the work of Kant and Hegel, so psychologist-historians should read the work of figures like Wundt and James.

In her contribution to the debate, [Dehue \(1998\)](#) wrote: “I fear that van Rappard’s condition of history being first of all congenial to psychologists easily amounts to expediency and cynicism” (p. 659). She also pointed out that both Danziger and van Rappard share the view that most psychologists will find critical history unacceptable and took issue with this view:

The assessment . . . that psychologists will not accept anything but mollification might well be largely mistaken. Most probably, cogent histories offering new perspectives, whether affirmative or not, are the ones with the best chances of triggering their object’s interest. There are some reasons to believe (albeit perhaps in hopeful anticipation) that the common tale of scientists only tolerating affirmation is, at least partly, based on misinterpretations. (p. 659)

She concludes that the whole problem is “a largely fabricated dilemma” (p. 659).

Dehue was in a minority of one in holding this view. It may have been more applicable to the situation in the Netherlands than the situation in North America, though even that has to be qualified by saying that van Rappard did not agree with her. All the other commentators were in agreement with Danziger and van Rappard on this point. They include [Bhatt and Tonks \(2002\)](#), who told the story of a graduate student at a Canadian university who had taught the history of psychology course from a critical perspective using [Danziger’s \(1990\) \*Constructing the Subject\*](#) as the course text. The psychologists at this university responded by removing the required status of the course and turning it into an elective. The course was also reduced from a full year to a single semester and the graduate student who had been teaching the course was replaced. They wrote:

One senior faculty member teaching history who has advocated the critical approach indicated he wished to remain “off the record” for fear of reprisal from his colleagues. However he did reveal that he had been told by one of these “backroom architects” of these changes that the main reason for “getting rid” of the courses presenting critical historiography is that they “would not enable him to do the kind of psychology that he wanted to do.” This is because the students had become too critical and he could not convince them that his type of psychology was worth doing. (p. 7)

I am sure that many readers will have encountered stories like this. One that I heard concerned a British historian of science who taught a history of psychology course from a critical perspective and it was popular with the psychology students. The psychologists responded by offering their own history of psychology course, made attendance compulsory for psychology students and scheduled it on the same day and at the same time as the historian’s course.

Problems of this kind undoubtedly exist, though it is difficult to know how widespread they are from these stories which, for obvious reasons, rarely give the names of the universities and the people concerned. The history of psychology is in a dilemma in this respect. As [Danziger \(1994\)](#) pointed out, celebratory history can contribute nothing new to psychology and will ensure that the history of psychology remains a largely pedagogical field. Critical history can address ongoing issues within the discipline but this brings with it problems of its own.

Anecdotes of the kind related above would not have come as a surprise to Danziger. After all, he accepted that most psychologists would not take kindly to critical history and he saw its future in terms of its appeal to disaffected groups, such as feminists and third-world scholars, who were insiders with respect to the discipline but outsiders with respect to their views. Whether or not these groups are sufficient in number to support the field is a different matter.

[Betty Bayer \(2004\)](#) discussed another aspect of the situation. She suggested that some psychologists were so intolerant that they would prevent these disaffected groups from establishing careers in psychology or, if they had established careers, their lives would be made so intolerable that they would either leave or seek a transfer to another department:

Insiders who have left, or who have never been allowed to enter their primary disciplines complicate the story of insider-outside status as in and of itself trans-

formative. Their labors' migration from disciplinary to interdisciplinary locations raises questions about who or what is being transformed. (pp. 123–124)

It seems safe to assume that there is an autobiographical component to this view. Bayer gave her title in earlier publications as “Assistant Professor of Social Psychology” (e.g., Bayer, 1995). By 2004, she was still at the same college but her title was “Professor of Women’s Studies.”

Those readers who have some familiarity with the field of “critical psychology” will know that some of its most prominent representatives do not give their address as “Department of Psychology.” Department of Education is a common alternative but Communication Studies or even Management are not unknown. This does complicate the situation as far as the politics of critical history are concerned. If a lack of tolerance among mainstream psychologists leads to them preventing these insider/outside from entering the discipline or forcing them to leave, it will reduce the potential support for critical history within psychology.

The expression “potential support” needs to be emphasized here. Critical psychologists will not necessarily be interested in critical history of psychology or even be aware of its existence. While the two editions of the edited collection, *Critical Psychology* by Fox and Prilleltensky, contain chapters on critical history of psychology by Benjamin Harris (1997, 2009), the more recent *Handbook of Critical Psychology* contains no less than 49 chapters and not a single one of them is on the history of psychology (Parker, 2015). It seems that at least some critical psychologists do not see critical history as something that is relevant to their work.

### The Pedagogical Situation

As Danziger (1994) noted, the history of psychology is usually considered to be a pedagogical subject by psychologists. While his article did not address this aspect of the subject and was concerned with its future as an area of research, it was almost inevitable that its future as a pedagogical subject would be brought into the debate. The article by Gira Bhatt and Randall Tonks (2002) that I quoted from in the last section was titled, “What lies in the future of teaching the history of psychology?” and it was

clearly intended to be a response to Danziger’s article:

Guru Danziger had assured us of a promising future for the history of psychology. However, beginning around 1994, we witnessed a series of events at two psychology departments which shook us from our security zone. We noticed that the retired history of psychology positions were not being replaced. We noticed that the undergraduate courses on the history of psychology were being “cut” or “reduced” or no longer “required.” We observed that the value of the history of psychology courses was being discounted. We began to wonder if these were random happenings or an indication of a gloomy future for teachers of psychology’s history. Are the undergraduate courses on the history of psychology a case of “here today, gone tomorrow”? It is within this pedagogical context that our paper was inspired. (p. 2)

The authors had access to an unpublished manuscript by Alfred Fuchs and Wayne Viney, which was to become their well-known article in *History of Psychology* on the status of the history of psychology course (Fuchs & Viney, 2002). In this article, they reported the results of a survey of the institutions of higher education in the United States. The results suggested that a substantial number of psychology departments continue to offer a course on the history of psychology at the undergraduate level and many of them were committed to retaining it. There were also healthy student enrolments in the course, even where it was offered as an option, and some of the departments that did not offer the course were actively considering its reintroduction. However, the authors also noticed a “disturbing indication that some psychologists do not value the course sufficiently to commit staffing resources to it, that some departments will drop the course should the present instructor ceased to offer it, and that a number of departments do not require the course for psychology majors” (p. 12).

Bhatt and Tonks conducted a similar survey of Canadian psychology departments and found that 86% offered at least one course on the history of psychology, and 60% had a course that was required but their main focus was the decline of the field. However, unlike Fuchs and Viney, they only provided anecdotal evidence in support of this perceived decline.

It was this situation that led to Marissa Barnes and Scott Greer (2014) attempting to find more reliable evidence. Their article is titled, “Does the future have a history of psychol-

ogy?”, which was also derived from Danziger’s article, and they summarized their findings as follows:

96% of departments surveyed listed it as a course offering, and approximately two thirds of undergraduate programs listed it as a requirement for either a major or an honors degree. Furthermore, a number of graduate programs required the history of psychology for admission. Nevertheless, similar to the findings in the United States by Fuchs and Viney (2002), the results from our surveys showed that the history of psychology course in Canada is currently in danger of being dropped in some departments for the lack of a qualified instructor; in some cases, it has already been cut. (p. 162)

That the situation in Canada is similar to the situation in the United States is not surprising. Many psychologists based in Canada are members of the American Psychological Association (APA) and hold positions of responsibility within that organization, while the APA frequently holds its annual meetings in Canada. There are also reciprocal accreditation agreements between the APA and its equivalent in Canada, the Canadian Psychological Association (CPA), and the flagship journal of the CPA, *Canadian Psychology* is published by the APA.

Anyone who is familiar with the situation in the United Kingdom will be aware that the history of psychology course is nowhere near as common as it is in North America. Brock and Harvey (2015) did a similar survey of psychology departments in Britain and Ireland. Of the departmental chairs in the United Kingdom who responded to the survey, 37% reported that they had a history of psychology course. We also examined the websites of the departments that did not respond and came to the conclusion that this figure was an exaggeration due to the departments that had a course being more likely to respond to the survey than those that did not. Another indication of it being given less importance is that, contrary to the North American practice of offering the course in the final year as a “capstone course” (e.g., Raphelson, 1982; Benjamin, 2010), it was usually offered in the first year as part of a general introduction to psychology. The course was usually taught by instructors who had no formal qualifications and were not actively involved in research in the area in all three countries but another difference was that the course in the United Kingdom was sometimes team-taught by psychologists who covered the history of their own areas.

It was the issue of professionalism that led Danziger and his colleagues at York University in Toronto to establish a graduate program in history and theory of psychology in 1981. It is now the only one of its kind in North America but that was not the case before 2008. There was a smaller but older graduate program at the University of New Hampshire that was discontinued in that year. Part of the problem was that it had difficulty in attracting students (Woodward, 2015). Students may have been deterred from going there by the lack of academic positions in the field. Psychology departments at other research-oriented universities in the United States were unlikely to hire its graduates since none of them had a graduate program in that field. What it did in practice was train its students for a future in liberal arts colleges and universities, which often have heavy teaching loads and provide little support for research. It seems that the price that some people have to pay for having unorthodox research interests is to end up in an institution that does not emphasize research. Another problem is that it was in competition not only with the program at York University, which attracted several American students, but also with programs in the history of science. Students who were interested in the history of psychology, and who had the necessary qualifications, could pursue this interest as part of the history of science at prestigious universities like Harvard, Princeton, and Berkeley.

In 2010, the monthly magazine of the American Psychological Association, the *Monitor on Psychology*, had an article with the title, “Don’t know much about history” (Chamberlin, 2010). It refers to the research of Fuchs and Viney (2002) and to the discontinuation of the graduate program at the University of New Hampshire. The author pointed out that the psychology departments of some major universities, including Columbia University and Stanford University, no longer offer a history of psychology course. Alfred Fuchs was interviewed for the article and he made the valid point that “if the course doesn’t exist, you can’t get interested in it” (p. 44). Another historian of psychology, Dean Keith Simonton was quoted as saying, “history may soon be history” (p. 44). That seems exaggerated. Fuchs and Viney found that 82% of the American departments that responded to the survey offered a history of psychology course and any decline that might have been occurring was gradual rather than sharp.

### Sociopolitical Trends

In 2010, Danziger put together an e-book, *Problematic Encounter: Talks on Psychology and History* (Danziger, 2010a) that could be downloaded from his website ([www.kurtdanziger.com](http://www.kurtdanziger.com)). It consists of some of his key papers and one of them was “Does the history of psychology have a future?” He wrote a new introduction to these papers for the book and this shows that he had changed his views on the future of the history of psychology since writing his article from 1994:

In the intervening years the position of disciplinary historians within psychology has certainly not improved—institutionally it has apparently become more precarious and anxieties about the future persist (see e.g. Bhatt & Tonks, 2002; Chamberlin, 2010). Fifteen years later, it seems that my attempt to assess the future of disciplinary history in psychology was overoptimistic. I had attempted to contextualize reasons for optimism by reference to certain trends within the discipline. But I had failed to take into account the influence that much broader socio-political trends were bound to exert on the discipline. In the meantime, it has become obvious that ever increasing pressures to make the discipline conform to the norms of technoscience and to the demands of visible practical utility will not be favourable to the survival, let alone the growth, of critical historical scholarship within psychology’s conventional disciplinary boundaries. (Danziger, 2010b)

He did not go into any further detail about these sociopolitical trends, but it seems likely that he was referring to what is often called, “the corporatization of the universities” (e.g., Chomsky, 2011). The process is more advanced in some countries than it is in others but it is an international phenomenon. Governments increasingly regard their institutions of higher education not as social services to be funded with money raised through taxation but as corporations that are self-supporting or even profit-making. These institutions must then look for alternative sources of income, such as student fees and donations from wealthy benefactors and corporations. When students have to pay high tuition fees, they usually do it in return for practical skills that will help them to find employment. While psychology may benefit from this situation, it is likely to be the branches of the discipline like clinical, school, and industrial psychology that are relevant to careers. The history of psychology is unlikely to be a priority in this regard and it may even cease to be offered because of a lack of student demand. Also, while it is not unknown for historians of

psychology to receive large research grants, it is relatively rare. Quite apart from the reluctance of funding bodies to support their research, they do not usually need laboratory space, expensive equipment or a team of research assistants.

Another change that will be of relevance to the field is the disappearance of academic tenure. Tenure is not the norm for academics outside Europe and North America. In Latin America, for example, the majority of professors are part-timers who are hired to teach one or two courses. Tenure was formally abolished in the United Kingdom in 1988. Even in the countries like the United States where it still exists, the abolition of tenure has been widely discussed (e.g., Rotherham, 2011; Hernandez, 2014). There has also been what might be termed “the abolition of tenure through the back door.” Many universities are no longer offering tenure-track positions and are hiring people on fixed-term contracts with the result that the percentage of academics with tenure has been declining. The most recent figures on this subject that I have been able to find are from 2000 but these show that, in Germany and Finland, tenured academics comprised less than 50% of the workforce, while in Austria, the Flemish-speaking parts of Belgium, the Netherlands, Norway, and Spain, the figure was less than 60% (Altbach, 2000).

This is of particular relevance to the history of psychology since the vast majority of psychologists who work in the field are self-taught. The usual pattern is that they obtain their qualifications and their academic position in a more orthodox branch of psychology and then turn to history of psychology later in their career, often under the protection of academic tenure. With fewer and fewer academics holding tenure, this protection has effectively been removed and some psychology departments have already made the faculty who work in the less mainstream areas of the discipline redundant. In other cases, the department will simply wait until these faculty members leave or retire and replace them with faculty who work in more mainstream areas of psychology, especially the areas for which there is a great deal of student demand and/or are most likely to attract external funding.

People whose jobs are insecure are usually subject to evaluation. Obtaining external grants, with the amount of the grants being important in

many cases, is just one of several quantitative measures that are increasingly being used. Others are impact factors and citation counts. These measures will inevitably be detrimental to minority interests like the history of psychology. A researcher might produce outstanding work and publish it in some of the best journals of the field but these are unlikely to have high impact factors or be widely cited precisely because they are devoted to minority interests. The popularity of one's area of specialization is rarely taken into account when decisions based on these figures are made.

None of these changes will be particularly friendly toward minority views. It will be remembered that Danziger saw the future of the history of psychology in terms of its appeal to disaffected groups within psychology. These changes are creating more homogeneity within the discipline and making it more difficult for dissenting views to exist. They might go some way towards explaining the situation that Bayer (2004) discussed where psychologists with unorthodox views are finding it increasingly difficult to establish careers in psychology and to stay within the discipline if they already have established careers. They may also help to explain the situation that Bhatt and Tonks (2002) discussed where psychology departments are dropping their history of psychology courses and failing to replace historians of psychology when they retire.

It should be noted that psychology is not unique in this respect. Danziger (1994) used economics as a model of how history can be integrated within a discipline. When he was writing, virtually all the historians of economics were affiliated to the discipline of economics. This situation was about to change. In 2002, a book with the title, *The Future of the History of Economics*, was published, and it expressed similar concerns to the ones that historians of psychology have expressed (Weintraub, 2002). In his review of the book, Leonard (2004) wrote:

The field of inquiry formerly known as "the history of economic thought" and more recently as "the history of economics" is on its last legs. No more necessary to the pursuit of economic research than is the history of chemistry to that field, it is disappearing from the syllabi of doctoral programs all over North America and in many parts of Europe. When its last practitioners retire, it will disappear from the academy, becoming the purview of a handful of isolated historians and independent scholars. (pp. 482–483)

The reasons are similar to those that have affected the history of psychology. There are also signs that the history of economics is being increasingly taken up by historians of science (Schabas, 2002).

### Historical Psychology

In a more recent article, Michael Pettit and Ian Davidson (2014) refer to some of these trends and suggest that Danziger's question should be reformulated:

Twenty years ago, Kurt Danziger (1994) asked, "Does the history of psychology have a future?" In our neo-liberal times when the imperatives of the audit society (Power, 1999) loom large, Danziger's question might be better formulated as "can the history of psychology have an impact?" (p. 709)

Like van Rappard (2008), they express the view that the influence of historians of science on psychologist-historians has been counterproductive. However, unlike van Rappard who wanted psychologist-historians to develop their own approach to the history of psychology, Pettit and Davidson suggest that psychology would be better served by a historical psychology:

Perhaps the best use of historiography in psychology is not directed toward the history of the discipline, but one that draws on historical methods to address psychological questions. Psychology is more of an eventful science than many presume. An eventful psychology looks for its explanations in prenatal hormone exposure, early experience, developmental stages, and trauma. An eventful historical psychology involves no prior commitment to either continuity or rupture, but rather attends to those events that contributed to contemporary forms of subjectivity. (p. 713)

It should be noted that Danziger (1994) discussed the topic of historical psychology in his original article. However, instead of presenting historical psychology and history of psychology as alternatives, he saw a close relationship between the two:

But for psychology there is a particularly intimate connection between the historicity of the subject-matter and the historicity of conceptions about that subject-matter. Human beings, as has often been noted, are self-defining. What we are is expressed in the categories of psychological discourse, so that, as we change, the categories that we use to describe ourselves to ourselves also change. This means that two fields of study, the history of psychological functions and the history of conceptions about those functions, have considerable relevance for each other. That provides the

history of psychology with a potentially significant role in the development of new fields of study, like a historical social psychology or a historical abnormal psychology, for example. Thus, in Germany, the same journal, *Psychologie und Geschichte*, publishes studies in the history of psychology and studies in historical psychology. (pp. 479–480)

In an invited address to the Canadian Psychological Association titled, “Prospects of a Historical Psychology” (Danziger, 2003), he outlined his views on the subject and much of his subsequent work was devoted to historical psychology. This includes his book, *Marking the Mind: A History of Memory* (Danziger, 2008), and the more recent book chapter, “Historical Psychology of Persons” (Danziger, 2012).

That historical psychology is an interesting and worthwhile enterprise is beyond any doubt. However, whether or not it is likely to have an impact on psychology is a different matter. There is already a considerable body of literature on historical psychology. Some of the “classics” in the field include *Problems of Historical Psychology* by Zevedei Barbu (1960), a Romanian social psychologist who was teaching at the University of Glasgow in Scotland at the time, and *Changing Nature of Man: Introduction to a Historical Psychology* by Jan Hendrik van den Berg (1961), a Dutch psychiatrist who was influenced by phenomenology. Ignace Meyerson also promoted the subject in France (e.g., Meyerson, 1987). The Netherlands has had a more recent champion of historical psychology in the form of the late Harry Peeters (e.g., Peeters, 1996), and a veritable avalanche of literature on the subject was published in Germany in the last two decades of the 20th century. The Berlin psychologist, Gerd Jütteman is a particularly prominent figure in this field (e.g., Jütteman, 1988; Sonntag & Jütteman, 1993).

Much of this literature is unknown in the English-speaking world, though a notable exception is Kenneth Gergen’s (1973) article, “Social Psychology as History.” It is well known because of the amount of controversy that it generated. Most social psychologists saw it a threat to the status of their field as “science” and quickly dismissed it (Brock, in press). An edited collection titled, *Historical Social Psychology* (1984), that Gergen subsequently co-edited with his wife, Mary Gergen fell on the same

stony ground as all the other literature in this field.

There is no reason to suppose that historical psychology will have a greater impact on psychology than it has had in the past. It is even possible that in what Pettit and Davidson call “our neoliberal times,” it is less likely to have an impact. At the time of writing, there has been a great deal of discussion over a letter of 8 June 2015 that the Japanese Minister of Education sent to all the state universities in Japan in which he asked them to either downgrade or close their departments of humanities and social science. It was made clear that future government funding would depend on their willingness to comply with this request and 26 of the 60 state universities that currently offer these subjects have indicated their willingness to do so (Grove, 2015). There is nothing unique about this situation. It is merely an extreme example of something that is happening all over the world. The philosopher, Martha Nussbaum, (2010) has written:

The humanities and the arts are being cut away, in both primary/secondary and in college/university education, in virtually every country in the world. Seen by policymakers as useless frills, at a time when nations must cut away all useless things to stay competitive in the global market, they are rapidly losing their place in curricula, and also in the minds and hearts of parents and children. (p. 2)

Faced with this situation, it is likely that psychologists will continue to regard their subject as a natural science. History of any kind, whether it be history of psychology or historical psychology, is considered to be incompatible with this view. Psychology has common interests with many disciplines but these common interests are differentially pursued. Pursuing its common interests with biology or computer science is like marrying into a higher social class, something that is almost universally approved. Pursuing its common interests with history or philosophy is like marrying to a lower social class and it often happens in these situations that the family of the partner from the higher social class will boycott the wedding (Brock, 2014a).

This situation can help to explain why history of psychology has a limited pedagogical role in the discipline, while historical psychology is virtually unknown. The role of the history of psychology has traditionally been to introduce students to the discipline’s view of itself. Psy-

chologists will also take time off from their research to celebrate anniversaries, such as the centennial of the establishment of Wilhelm Wundt's laboratory at the University of Leipzig in 1879 or the centennial of the establishment of the American Psychological Association in 1892. Both are ancillary functions. When it comes to the main business of the discipline, namely its research, history is usually considered to be irrelevant. Historical psychology is at a disadvantage compared with history of psychology in that it is unable to fulfill these ancillary functions.

### Audiences

The article by Pettit and Davidson (2014) was part of a debate in *Theory & Psychology* on historiography in which Danziger (2013), Robinson (2013), Teo (2013), and Brock (2014b) were involved. Around the same time, the historian of science, James Capshew (2014) published a book chapter in which he surveyed the history of psychology since 1945. Referring to the debate in *Theory & Psychology*, he ends the chapter with the following words:

No doubt historians of psychology will pursue these and other themes in the future as they endeavor to make sense of the psychological enterprise in its human complexity. Whether psychologists will listen to them is another matter entirely. (p. 176)

He certainly has a point. I have now been active in the history of psychology for 30 years and I have seen little evidence of psychologists taking an interest in the work of historians of psychology during that time. The incidents referred to earlier where psychologists have cancelled critical history courses or driven critical historians out of their departments may be exceptions to the rule since they directly affect their place of work. On the few occasions that I have engaged in dialog with working psychologists, it has resembled a situation where the adherents of two different Kuhnian paradigms talk past each other.<sup>2</sup>

Historians of psychology will find plenty of like-minded individuals at the conferences of organizations like the Society for History of Psychology (SHP), the International Society for History of the Social and Behavioral Sciences (Cheiron), and the History of Science Society (HSS). There is also no shortage of journals in which we can publish our work. This

might give a false impression of how small and neglected the field is, though the impact factors of its journals should give some indication of that. Another yardstick is membership in professional organizations. The APA had 80,000 members in 2014, the most recent year for which figures are available ([American Psychological Association, n.d.](#)). According to recent correspondence from the membership secretary of its history division, the SHP, its membership is approximately 450.<sup>3</sup> That is equivalent to 0.56% of the membership of APA. Many of these members are not specialists in the history of psychology but psychologists who have a secondary interest in the field. If we take membership of Cheiron as a sign of serious interest in the subject, we are looking at a figure of less than 0.2% of the membership of APA.

There is of course a lucrative market in history of psychology textbooks. These were traditionally written by psychologists whose interests were mainly in another branch of the subject and wrote history of psychology textbooks in their spare time. They still are to some extent but some professional historians of psychology have produced their own textbooks in recent years (e.g., [Pickren & Rutherford, 2010](#); [Richards, 2010](#); [Walsh, Teo & Baydala, 2014](#)). While it does provide an opportunity to reach a broader audience, the market for history of psychology textbooks is crowded. It is also a well-established genre that provides little room for maneuver. The entire history of psychology has to be covered in a single book and the inclusion of certain topics (Wundt, James, Gestalt psychology, behaviorism etc.) is non-negotiable.

In line with Danziger's original intentions, the discussion so far has centered on the future of the history of psychology within psychology. There is a reason for this. While history of psychology may not be a major part of the history of science, its right to exist as a branch of that discipline is not in any doubt. It is in

<sup>2</sup> One example is a "target" article that I recently published in the Indian journal, *Psychological Studies* in which I argued that the ancient wisdom of India and China should not be viewed as "psychology" but should be understood in its historical context ([Brock, 2015b](#)). All the psychologists who commented on the article were vehemently opposed to this view ([Hopkins, 2015](#); [Paranjpe, 2015](#); [Valsiner & Brinkmann, 2015](#)).

<sup>3</sup> Personal communication of February 28, 2016.

psychology where its existence as an area of specialization and research has come increasingly under threat. Even though its future in the history of science is assured, it is not likely to resolve the numbers problem either.

History of science is a small field and it is by no means represented at every university. It also has the problem of the humanities and the social sciences being downgraded that I referred to earlier. Where it does exist, the history of psychology has to compete for space with the history of the physical and biological sciences, which the subject has traditionally emphasized, the whole range of the human or social sciences, and often with the history of technology and medicine as well. Thus the history of psychology as a branch of history of science is small, albeit for different reasons than the ones that have led to the same situation in psychology.

We might think about writing for a more general nonacademic readership. Trudy Dehue has shown that it can be done. Her book, *De depressieve-epidemie. Over de plicht het lot in eigen hand te nemen* [The depression epidemic: On the duty to manage our own destiny] (Dehue, 2008) was a best seller in the Netherlands and it led to her being interviewed on TV, the radio, and in the popular press. It also led to a correspondence with the Dutch Minister of Health who said that he valued her book and repeated that on TV. The international prize-winning documentary, "All we ever wanted" by Sarah Domogala was also inspired by the book. A later book with the title, *Betere mensen. Over gezondheid als keuze en koopwaar* [Better people. On health as a choice and commodity] (2014) has not sold in the same quantities but it was still reviewed in all the main newspapers in the Netherlands and Belgium and it led to more appearances on TV and radio. She continues to be in great demand for public lectures or "lezingen," as her personal website shows ([www.trudydehue.nl](http://www.trudydehue.nl)).

Unfortunately, her work on these subjects is not available in English. She told me that being a public figure now takes up all her time and it is a source of regret that she is no longer in contact with her international colleagues. What it does show is that there is a hunger for knowledge about psychology and psychiatry among the general public and it is a hunger that history and theory specialists are in a good position to satisfy. It comes with a warning however. De-

hue pointed out that writing for the general public is a hit-and-miss affair and that being successful involves a degree of luck. She also said that Dutch academics are usually expected to publish in English for an international academic readership. Doing what she has done would be career-killing for many academics and she only felt safe to do it after she reached the age of 55.<sup>4</sup>

### The Articles Here

The work of Marissa Barnes and Scott Greer (2014) on the status of the history of psychology course in Canada was referred to earlier. One of the results of their study, and the similar studies of Fuchs and Viney (2002) and Brock and Harvey (2015), is that the courses are usually taught by psychologists who have no formal training in the area and do not engage in historical research. Few psychology departments consider it important or necessary to have a historian of psychology on their staff. Because of this, psychologists who have acquired formal training in the field at places like York University find it difficult to get jobs and the program has always had a requirement that students should acquire expertise in a second area of psychology in case they are unable to find a position in history and theory. The majority of psychologists who engage in research in the history of psychology are what Dewsbury (2003) has called, "dabblers" and "retreads." The former are psychologists whose primary commitment is to another area of psychology and who have a secondary interest in history of psychology and the latter are psychologists who acquired their training and academic positions in another area of psychology and adopted the history of psychology as their primary or only interest at a later date, often after having gained tenure. It is now 50 years since Robert Young (1966) described the field as "an avocation with very uneven standards" (p. 18). Although standards have improved during that time, the problem of uneven standards remains and it is not helped by the common view among psychologists that "anyone can write history" (Boring, 1961, p. 15). Barnes and Greer provide an impassioned plea for the area to be treated no differently from any

<sup>4</sup> Personal communication of February 23, 2016.

other area of psychology so that the benefits of formal training and specialization are recognized. I agree with them, and I would like to think that psychologists will listen to them but the realist in me suggests that they will not. Barriers to its recognition include the desire of students to take courses in subjects that are relevant to careers, the difficulty of obtaining large grants for research in the history of psychology and publishing the research in high impact factor journals, and the difficulty of finding a role for history in a discipline that likes to market itself as “science.”

Barnes and Greer have a background in psychology and it is therefore understandable that they would focus on issues of professionalism in psychology. However, there has been a significant degree of professionalization of the area in the history of science. As a branch of the humanities, the history of science has its own problems of recognition but the future of the history of psychology as a branch of the subject is assured. If psychology departments are not willing to hire a full-time specialist, getting a historian of science to teach the history of psychology course would be an alternative but this would be possible in only a few cases since the number of historians of science who specialize in the history of psychology is relatively small. There is also the problem that [Brush \(1974\)](#) and others have recognized that the kind of history that they might teach is not the kind of history that psychologists want or expect.

The second article by Christopher Green is an equally impassioned plea for digital history. As he points out, it is the only area of the humanities that has experienced growth in recent years and this is no doubt due to its association with technology. It is a controversial subject. [Leroi \(2015\)](#), for example, has described it as “the transformation of the humanities into science.” Green takes issue with this view. He uses [Danziger’s \(1990\) \*Constructing the Subject\*](#) to show that quantification has its uses in history. However, the difficulty of doing content analyses of journals without the help of computers limited the figures that he could obtain. Green also suggests that digital history is not merely a matter of quantification. It can also yield visual patterns or clusters that will be of interest to the historian, though these too seem to be based on statistics. He also argues that this kind of history is more likely to arouse the interest of psychol-

ogists because it uses language similar to their own: “Often it is necessary to speak in the listener’s language in order to get the listener’s attention.” Green suggests that there is no need to view digital history and more traditional forms of history as alternatives. They can complement each other. For example, digital history can sometimes produce questions that have to be answered in more traditional ways. He also suggests that, just as psychology students have been able to obtain employment because of their training in statistics, students of the humanities, including the history of psychology, will be able to find employment because of their computer skills. Whatever position we take on this subject, it seems incontrovertible that digital history will be an important part of the future of the history of psychology and of the humanities in general.

I specifically asked for international contributions in the Call for Papers for this special issue and I am pleased to say that the next two articles are from authors in the southern hemisphere. The first is by Wahbie Long and deals with recent events in South Africa. [Danziger’s](#) article appeared just as the system of apartheid was coming to an end and so the intervening 22 years have had more significance in South Africa than they have had elsewhere. There was a great deal of critical history around the time that apartheid was coming to an end but very little historical work has appeared since that time and most this work has had a pronounced “Whiggish” character. He cites a recent article in the *American Psychologist* by [Saths Cooper](#), a psychologist who was imprisoned with Nelson Mandela and is the current president of the International Union of Psychological Science, as an example of this kind of work ([Cooper, 2014](#)). In spite of the elevation of Mandela to something close to sainthood, both in South Africa and elsewhere, the country continues to have many problems. Around half of the population lives in extreme poverty and there are the high levels of crime and violence that often accompany this kind of poverty. The end of apartheid has led to the creation of a new black élite and it continues to be one of the most unequal societies in the world. Corruption is also a major problem. Against this background, Long argues for a Foucauldian critical history of the present, as opposed to a critical history of the past, and suggests that there are signs that

this kind of history is beginning to appear. Although his account is firmly rooted in South Africa, some readers will be able to draw parallels with the situation in other parts of the world, especially in places like Eastern Europe and Latin America that have also experienced significant political change. It also raises more general issues about the relationship between the present and the past.

While the history of psychology seems to be stagnating or going backwards in Europe and North America, in South America it has experienced significant growth. For example, the first graduate program in history and philosophy of psychology was recently established in Brazil (Araujo, Caropreso, Simanke, & Castañon, 2013). I am therefore pleased to be able to include an article by Hugo Klappenbach and Ana Jacó-Vilela on the history of psychology in Argentina and Brazil. After providing an overview of the history of the history of psychology in those countries, they give a comprehensive account of the people and the institutions that are currently associated with that field. This includes archives, journals, professional organizations, and their conferences, and courses on the history of psychology and related subjects. One of the most striking aspects of their account is the existence of “research groups” at various universities. In other parts of the world, historians of psychology tend to work as individuals, often because they are the only person in their universities with an interest in this field. Most of the research seems to be conducted by psychologists, though there was an interesting local curiosity at the University of Buenos Aires where Hugo Vezzetti insisted that his students do their PhDs in history, even though they had a background in psychology and intended to work in that field. These former students are now some of the best known figures in the history of psychology in Argentina and include Klappenbach himself. Another local curiosity is the degree to which psychology in Argentina has been influenced by psychoanalysis and this has inevitably had an influence on the history of the field. It tends to be more closely associated with social psychology in Brazil. While there does seem to be a great deal of interest in the history of psychology in these countries, there are aspects of the situation that will be familiar to historians of psychology elsewhere. For example, not every university has a course in the

area and, where it is offered, it is often taught by professors who are not specialists and have no knowledge of recent developments in the field. This situation is exacerbated by the common practice in Latin America of hiring professors on an *ad hoc* basis to teach a specific course. Also, where the course is elective, it can be difficult to persuade psychology majors that they have anything to gain from taking a history of psychology course.

I am well aware that, Klappenbach’s PhD in history and my own MPhil in history and philosophy of science notwithstanding, all the contributors mentioned so far are associated with the discipline of psychology. This was not my choice. I wrote to about a dozen historians of science to encourage them to make a contribution to the special issue but all of them declined. With the benefit of hindsight, this situation makes sense. It is in psychology where the place of the history of psychology is problematic. One of the main themes of Danziger’s article was the question of whether psychology should follow the pattern of physics and chemistry where the history of those disciplines is the preserve of historians of science and it is worth noting that all the commentaries on his article were written by psychologists. While the history of science might face the problems that beset the other branches of the humanities, the position of the history of psychology within that discipline is not in any doubt. It will therefore be an important part of the future of the history of psychology and I wanted to include at least one contribution from a historian of science. I could think of no one better than the editor of this journal, Nadine Weidman. She read all the submissions to the special issue and all the decisions that we made about them were joint. I subsequently offered to name her as the coeditor of the special issue but she declined. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to acknowledge her editorial work.

### Final Word

One of the more interesting aspects of the controversy surrounding Danziger’s article is the concept of the *situatedness* of historical knowledge that he introduced in his replies to Green and Dehue (Danziger, 1997b, 1998). It is clear that he considered this to be a central issue:

The fundamental issue that I sought to identify in my original contribution to this discussion concerned the *situatedness* of historical studies [emphasis in original]. No matter how hard one tries, one cannot step outside history in order to write about it. Every historian occupies a place in a historical world and can only describe the historical process as it appears from the perspective afforded by that place. (Danziger, 1998, p. 670)

This is no doubt why the future of the history of psychology appeared different in 2010 from how it had appeared in 1994.

Historians of psychology have paid a great deal of attention to the context of psychological knowledge in recent years. This should serve as a reminder to avoid engaging in “god tricks” and pretending that we can transcend our time and place. A degree of reflexivity would be in order here. If Danziger is right in suggesting that historical knowledge is *situated* knowledge, it is surely a matter of importance to understand the situation we are in.

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