

## CHAPTER 2

# IN SEARCH OF METHOD

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## INTRODUCTION

Since the early 1980s the historiography of psychology has undergone a significant transformation. The social contextualization of the history of psychology has been a defining component of this change, the acknowledgement of and search for the historical roots of psychological knowledge in specific social settings. One of the first publications to explore and plead for a recognition of the social origins of modern psychology was the edited book, *Psychology in Social Context* (Buss, 1979). The title of this volume, and the aims outlined in its opening chapter, signal its debt to the sociology of knowledge. Buss stated that

Psychology as practiced by professional academicians occurs within a social context; psychological knowledge is tied to the infrastructure of a society of socially defined groups. (p. 2)

As a social activity, the construction of knowledge also has a historical dimension:

To properly understand and evaluate the validity of ideas, theories, and concepts of psychology, one must adopt a sociohistoric interpretation. (p. ix)

Thus psychology had to pay attention to its social basis, and had to acknowledge that external forces had an impact on internal developments in the discipline.

In this essay I wish to return to the influence of the sociology of knowledge on these early developments. I will argue that this tradition can still be recognized in current debates, even if it is just in the recognition of overtones of constructivist epistemologies in them. Certainly, the “contextualist” analysis of psychological concepts and methods extends the tradition in some versions of

social constructionism. The work of Kurt Danziger has played no small part in this process, and his chapter in Buss (1979) forms a pivotal transition point in his own work on the history of psychology. Indeed, his curriculum vitae shows a clear break around this time: he published this chapter (1979a), and “The positivist repudiation of Wundt” (1979b), and since then has published only in the history of psychology. The chapter in *Psychology in Social Context* in particular forms a bridge between his interest prior to his first publications in the history of psychology and subsequent publications. The present chapter will address the work done prior to his switch to history and theory, mostly in South Africa before 1965.

The key point here is that much of his South African work reflects a strong background in the sociology of knowledge, in which the figure of Karl Mannheim has loomed large. It will be argued that there are a number of continuities between these early publications and his historical/theoretical work. I will attempt to show that Danziger was steeped in this tradition long before he turned to history and theory of psychology. Indeed, one conclusion will be that his approach is consistently “sociological”, and that the early work on empirical aspects of the sociology of knowledge informed his later work on the history and theory of psychology.

## SOCIOLOGY OF KNOWLEDGE

What is the nature of the link between the kinds of knowledge produced and the social conditions under which it is produced? How are such relationships investigated? These are questions about the social roots of intellectual structures, which typically resort under the sociology of knowledge. Karl Mannheim has been a central figure in the study of the relationship between ideas and the structure of society. He defined one of the foremost problems of the sociology of knowledge as

how and in what form did all the ways of thinking, currents of thought, meanings of concepts, and categories of thought come about that constitute the present state of our knowledge and the totality of our world views? (1986, p. 48–9)

In response to the epistemological question mentioned above, he arrived at the concept of “style” to group together ideas in terms of their form and content (Nelson, 1992). Ideational trends can be regarded as styles of thought, and he proposed that the analysis of styles of thought formed the basis of the sociology of knowledge. The empirical task for the sociology of knowledge was

to reconstruct its historical and social roots; to explore the change of forms in this style of thought in relation to the social fates of the bearing groups. (Mannheim, 1986, p. 189, emphasis in original)

These styles are borne by specific social groups in response to their experiential conditions, influenced by that group's standing in wider society at a particular time in history. This is a formulation of social context as something socio-historical.

Mannheim's book on conservative thought was supposed to work out what an empirical sociology would look like. Nevertheless, his approach to the sociology of knowledge did not deliver fully on its empirical promise. After a reconstruction of Mannheim's research program, Nelson (1992) concludes that such a program could be realized, and that Danziger's work (1963b) in this tradition points to the way forward.

### DANZIGER'S EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATIONS OF STYLES OF THOUGHT

How does one study long-term psychological changes that are important in a historical context? How does one investigate empirically how macro-social factors and the development of knowledge are related? These are the methodological questions Danziger posed in the 1950s and 1960s, when he turned to Mannheim's sociology of knowledge (e.g. 1936) as a source of inspiration.

In one sense, South Africa presented an ideal "context" to investigate such questions. Social relations in the country were troubled and insecure. In *Ideology and Utopia* Mannheim analyzed a not too dissimilar state of affairs in the Weimar Republic, about an intellectual crisis situation within the context of a social and political crisis in the latter stages of the Republic. According to Nelson, Mannheim argued that

in situations of group conflict the underlying worldviews, or more exactly the fundamental designs, of the groups involved will form the cognitive basis for the articulation of styles of thought that explicitly defend the reactive or proactive lifestyle 'commitments' of the groups. Large-scale economic changes which displace the mode of living of social groups stimulate the production of styles of thought as groups realize that their existing ways of life are threatened. (1992, p. 36)

In all the studies discussed below, Danziger used existing socially-defined "race" groups in South Africa to produce the material for analysis. The reasons for this he gave himself (Danziger, 1963b). Firstly, there are historically specific factors that made race important in South Africa. Secondly, the social distribution of privileges occurs along racial lines, and is maintained by making race the principal administrative concept. Thirdly, race extends to all aspects of life; in fact, it is the foundation concept of the social and political order in South Africa. It was a society where no compromises were made about its racial structure, and where economic, political and social positions were rigidly defined. This made it relatively easy to detect and describe different styles of thought. Following Mannheim then, different

groups in South Africa ought to hold different social theories, and the question becomes an empirical one: how to detect them in different groups.

Three studies led up to Danziger's "Ideology and Utopia" paper (1963a). In the first study (1958a), Danziger started to explore the association between the social position of a group and its view of social structure and social causation. He asked two groups of students, whites and blacks, to write an autobiographical essay, imagining themselves in 50 years time. Thus it was an autobiography projected into the future, to allow them greater opportunity to discuss their lives in a wider social setting, and to obtain information about their life goals and aspirations. By asking participants to focus on the future rather than the present or the past, the instructions managed to avoid any argument over which view was "objectively correct"—a problem for the sociology of knowledge throughout its history. Earlier Allport and Gillespie (1955) also asked students to write about their plans, hopes and aspirations for the future, and this work followed that practice. In a later paper (1963c) Danziger thanked Allport and Gillespie for making available their sample of South African autobiographies.

Danziger however also was interested in individual processes, such as how manifestations of group differences entered into the personality of individuals. If they did, it ought to be possible to show empirically that individuals from different social groups differed in the values they held and the goals they set for themselves. To explore personal values, respondents were asked to respond to questions such as: "For what end would you be willing to make the greatest sacrifice of personal comfort, time, and money? (1958a, p. 318)." One of the consistent differences between the white and black (black African and Indian) students was that white students were concerned with private goals and aspirations, while black students mentioned benefits to their communities much more frequently, and had aspirations to serve that community. Allport and Gillespie (1955) similarly found a greater degree of what they called "privatism" among Americans, white South Africans, and New Zealanders, than among Egyptians, black South Africans, and Mexicans.

In a follow-up part of the study, these main results were given to the students a few months later and they were asked to account for them. The groups also differed in terms of the explanations they gave for this finding. Whites tended to explain the differences that emerged in terms that downplayed the existence of conflict between groups: they ascribed the differences mainly to factors related to group inferiority, and group traditions. Blacks gave more conflict type explanations for these differences, such as political and economic discrimination, and barriers to individual achievement. Thus it seemed as if the groups adhered to two types of social causation, tied to their position in society.

These findings provided support for some of the basic premises of the sociology of knowledge, Danziger argued. Whites, as beneficiaries of the social arrangement, were more conservative in their outlook, while blacks stressed the factor of social conflict, with the implication that things might change. Mannheim

defined ideology as “those complexes of ideas which direct activity toward the maintenance of the prevailing order” and utopia as “those complexes of ideas which tend to generate activities toward changes of the prevailing order (Wirth, 1936, p. xxiii). The white group’s dislike of social change led them to deny the element of social conflict with its possibilities of social change (ideology), and the black group stressed conflict, with the resulting possibilities of change (utopia). Indeed, one might say that a difference of implicit social theory has been detected, in terms of how people conceive the structure of society and the relationships between groups.

In the second paper (1958b), group differences in the definition of the social situation were examined. In South Africa, this meant examining the evaluation by whites and blacks of the dominant pattern of their society, captured by the term “white civilization”. White and black students were presented with a list of 14 features which “different people have claimed to be highly characteristic of white civilization in South Africa” (Danziger, 1958b, p. 340). They were asked to indicate which of these features they considered to be really characteristic of white civilization and which not. In addition, they were asked to respond to the same questions identified in the previous paper, and to complete an abbreviated version of Adorno’s F scale.

Once again, differences in “styles of thought” could indeed be demonstrated between privileged and non-privileged groups in South Africa. Whites, as the beneficiaries of the social order (i.e. “white civilization”), overall tended to evaluate it more favorably than blacks, whom the system reduced to second class citizens. It showed also why South Africa was such a good example to study, because of the domination of a white minority over power. In a homogeneous society members shared a much more common definition of their social situation: “their position in the world, their goals and how to achieve them; they have a similar evaluation of their society as a whole and of their position in it” (Danziger, 1958b, p. 339). In a society split by conflict, opposing groups could be expected to define the social situation very differently.

The existence of styles of thought did not rule out the possibility that sub-systems existed within groups as well. Danziger examined differences within the white group, and found that the proportion of favorable valuations was much less among university students than among technical college students. The technical college students, Danziger speculated, might be more representative of the population as a whole, while the university students came under the influence of a more critical attitude at university. Differences also occurred within the black group: the proportion of unfavorable evaluations was slightly greater among African than Indian respondents. Africans had even fewer civil rights in South Africa than Indian respondents, and this difference in social position could explain this result.

Furthermore, the groups differed in the nature of the favorable items they chose to characterize “white civilization”. Whites chose items such as “high

standards of morality in the sphere of family life”, and “respect for law and order”. This indicates that they perceived the social order as moral and just, as “white civilization” could claim some moral advantage. Blacks were only prepared to concede that it delivered material advantages to whites, by choosing items like “a superior system for the production of material goods”. They rejected its claims to moral excellence; in fact, they rated it as immoral and unjust, by choosing items like “unjust oppression of nonwhite people”. Phrased in more psychological terms, one could say that this is a difference in attitude, but “attitude” is conceived in a much more holistic and social fashion in this study than was the case in the more typical attitude surveys of the time.

Answers to the questions about personal values confirmed the previous finding that whites are more “privatistic” and blacks more “communal”. How to understand this link? Danziger suggested that a group’s orientation was determined by “certain positive pressures towards redressing real and perceived limitations on the group by means of group action.” In less privileged groups, who were discriminated against, members “tend to internalize the social aspirations of the group so as to turn them into individual aspirations for each member” (Danziger, 1958b, p. 343). This convergence of social and individual goals occurred when the social system limited or blocked individual aspirations, simply because of the group they belonged to. For dominant groups, on the other hand, a conflict between public duty and individual interests emerged. For example, none of the white respondents mentioned a change in the social order as one of their personal desires. Some of them recognized the injustice of this order, so for these respondents there was a discrepancy between the definition of the social order and their personal aspirations. Whites resolved this by agreeing with statements about “abstract helpfulness”, such as “reducing human unhappiness”. The commitment therefore remained abstract and imprecise, which was quite convenient, because it was unlikely to lead to action. The more specific the social aim, the more likely it would lead to social action. In line with this, the black respondents mentioned aspects of specific helpfulness much more frequently, e.g. “establish a clinic in an African area”.

As long as the aim remains abstract and formal, its function may not really be that of re-orientating the individual towards social action, but rather that of assuaging the guilt that arises from the conflict between social ideals and private interest. For the socially oriented person, on the other hand, social aims naturally assume a concrete content, as they arise directly out of the demands of a specific external situation that have become identified with his individual interest. (ibid.)

Those white participants who gave the most favorable responses to “white civilization” tended to get higher scores on the F scale, as one could predict. Their acceptance of social discrimination and approval of the existing social situation were linked with authoritarian values and fascism as estimated by the F-scale. In the black group, authoritarian values were frequently associated with a critical

attitude to the existing social order, which Danziger argued had to do with the need for group solidarity. Thus one had authoritarian values espoused by both white and black groups, but for totally different reasons. To explain this, one had to go beyond the narrow confines of psychology again: "The interpretation of the pattern of 'authoritarianism' must always take into account the wider social context" (Danziger, 1958b, p. 345).

In the third paper, Danziger (1963a) used the future autobiographies as a method of assessing another aspect of the inter-relationship between macro-social factors and ideas. "Economic growth", and the differences in growth patterns between countries, were not areas in which social psychologists showed much of an interest. Apart from McClelland's work on achievement motivation, psychologists had little to say about the requirements of economic growth, particularly in "under-developed" countries.

The question then becomes how to investigate psychological factors that are associated with sociological factors involved in economic growth. The future autobiographies were seen as a promising technique to measure the presence of "action tendencies" (Danziger, 1963a, p. 17) in individuals, which could be linked to certain sociological factors, such as participation in modern economic and administrative processes. The action tendency in this study turned out to be the tendency toward self-rationalization.

Max Weber (1947) identified one of the core components of modernization in terms of a growing process of rationalization of various spheres of society. It is characterized by elements such as specialized institutions, the adoption of bureaucratic standards, the separation of private and public, and secularization. Danziger used the term rationalization to indicate the organization of "actions into a system which constitutes the optimum arrangement of means for bringing about a certain end" (Danziger, 1963a, p. 17). In such a system custom was no longer blindly accepted as a justification for organizing society, and was gradually extended, as the economy in these countries became more industrialized and administration more bureaucratized.

As larger areas of social life are rationalized, individuals become "rationalized" as well. Mannheim (1940) recognized this, and called the change in the individual's own attitude to his/her life "self-rationalization". Life has to be seen as a long-term enterprise, in which each step has to be planned and calculated in terms of how it will contribute to achieving ultimate goals. The criterion for the rationality of the actions of individuals in this context was how it contributed to career success. It involved the "calculating control of impulse in the interests of a deliberately formulated life-plan" (Danziger, 1971, p. 292). For Danziger, this implied a rigorous control of impulse, and the application of a strict, objective time scheme to one's life. It stands to reason that individuals would differ in the degree to which they manifested these tendencies, and it should therefore be possible to measure these individual differences. Self-rationalization is associated with larger

social processes through a group's involvement in rationalized economic and administrative processes. Where members of a group have been exposed to such processes over a long period of time, higher levels of self-rationalization should be present when compared to groups where this exposure has been recent and incomplete, argued Danziger.

The instructions for the autobiographies were slightly different from before. Students were asked to begin at the present, and to write a few paragraphs concerning their expectations, plans and aspirations for the future. From these essays, an index of self-rationalization was calculated from 7 variables, such as: ego-reality statements (realistic statements about the writer's personal future); non-career values (the writer's commitment to values that conflict with the pursuit of pure self-interest); objective time reference (rationing of time for its most efficient use); and time structure (the number of distinct stages on the life path). The presence of these seven variables in the biographies was scored and weighted, resulting in a scale on which 25 was the highest possible score and 0 the lowest. Individuals who were high in self-rationalization would exhibit

a very realistic level of planning, a relative absence of unrealistic fantasy and of non-career goals, a concentration on personal rather than community goals, a pre-occupation with economic incentives, and the use of a well-articulated temporal structure shown by precise time references and orderly succession of life stages. (Danziger, 1971, p. 292)

The hypothesis that participation in rationalized economic and administrative processes will be substantially related to self-rationalization was supported. First, African males manifested a far lower level of self-rationalization than English-speaking white males because, Danziger argued, of their incomplete involvement in rationalized social institutions and the special limitations imposed upon them by an irrational system of social domination. When compared to Allport and Gillespie's (1955) data, these differences between black and white South Africans ran parallel to the differences between respondents from highly developed and the "underdeveloped" countries these authors used. Furthermore, Allport and Gillespie showed Afrikaans-speaking students to be significantly below English-speaking students on the mean index of self-rationalization, reflecting their differences in degree of involvement in the modernizing sectors of the economy. By the time of Danziger's study, however, this difference was no longer significant, in line with Afrikaans speakers' increasing participation in the modernizing economy.

Thus the future autobiography seemed to provide a technique for objectively assessing a pattern of rationalization in large groups of respondents. Once such a technique was available, it became possible to investigate the psychological aspects of the pattern of self-rationalization. In this paper the economy was brought into reciprocal influence relation with the psychology of the individual.



The key paper in this series was published in 1963(b). The title, "Ideology and Utopia in South Africa" was a deliberate reference to Mannheim: "I called the paper in the British journal 'Ideology and Utopia in South Africa' which is a direct take on Mannheim's book" (Danziger, in Brock, 1995, p. 13). He asked (mostly) university students (84 African, 51 Indian, 53 Afrikaans-speaking white, and 251 English-speaking white) to write essays projecting future social changes in South Africa (Danziger, 1963b, pp. 65–66).

From these "future histories" he analyzed the styles of thought of the different social groups. For the analysis of the future autobiographies collected in this study, he devised a five-fold typology of styles of thought, or dominant type of historical orientation: Conservative; Technicist; Catastrophic; Liberal; and Revolutionary. The assignment of student writing content to one of these styles was determined by the presence of four characteristics in their essays: (a) the attitude to and interrelationship of the present and the future; (b) interrelationship of historical means and ends; (c) the conception of social change; and (d) the conception of social causality. The essay was assigned to one of the five types in terms of which one occurred most frequently in terms of the four criteria.

The Afrikaans-speaking white students mostly exhibited Conservative and Technicist orientations to the future, while English-speaking whites were mostly Catastrophic and Conservative in their orientation. Indian students were Liberal and Revolutionary, while African students were Revolutionary and Liberal. Thus "the frequency of the various types of historical orientation conforms broadly to the position of the different groups in the social structure" (1963b, p. 70). The Afrikaans-speaking group was at the head of the power hierarchy and had the highest frequency of conservative types, while the African group, which was lowest in the hierarchy, produced the highest frequency of revolutionary types.

As in the 1958(b) paper, findings clearly showed that differences existed within groups as well. Afrikaans-speaking white students, for example, who tended to adopt either conservative or technicist historical orientations, included some catastrophic or liberal orientations. In addition, the extent of this range varies for different groups at different times. In societies that were undergoing rapid social change, Danziger believed future autobiographies provided a valuable technique for establishing "the crucial links between changes in social structure and changes in personality structure" (p. 27).

These studies showed clearly that it was possible to detect differences in contemporary thought styles, especially in highly stratified, unstable societies, using empirical methods as described. Danziger came to the conclusion that the range of available thought was socially determined, and that social position determined the range of available historical orientations for the members of each group. Furthermore, the situationally transcendent ideas that were identified could be regarded as attempts at subjectively mastering the basic tensions in society.

In 1963 samples from future biographies collected in 1952, 1956 and 1962 from a total of 162 African high school students were analyzed. Danziger (1963c) had no less a target than a “historical psychology” in his sights; a psychology concerned with “that deeper surge of change represented by the reconstruction of values and perspectives in the context of complex historical developments” (p. 31). The application of quantitative methods of content analysis in this regard was very different from the conventional employment of these methods.

At the time that the first autobiographies were collected, apartheid still had some degree of flexibility, though it became more and more coercive and uncompromising as the years progressed. By 1962, the last time that the autobiographies were collected, the lives of black Africans were under the complete control of the apartheid system. In 1961 political activity in the black community went underground, and acts of sabotage began toward the end of 1961. This led to more repressive measures from the apartheid state. The empirical question in this publication was: How would these changes in imposed social control and repression affect the psychological future of African high schoolers?

The results again provided support for an interpretation sympathetic to the sociology of knowledge. For a start, a massive majority of essays expressed complete opposition to government policies, with not a single statement of identification with the system. Forty-six percent predicted a violent overthrow of the regime. These percentages did not change from 1950 to 1962. There was also a consistent increase in a preoccupation with socio-political problems, and a tendency to see the future in social rather than individual terms. It is not too difficult to see these developments as reactions to changing conditions of political repression. The content of the psychological future as reflected in the future autobiographies also changed as a result of these structural changes. Both the goals of economic success and community service declined over time, to be replaced by political activity goals, expressed in the cause of African nationalism. “The intensification of authoritarian political control is having the effect on the individual educated African of defining his future in political terms” (Danziger, 1963c, p. 39).

These empirical studies were conducted during one of South Africa’s most politically repressive periods. The National Party had started to implement its apartheid policies vigorously and systematically since its election into power in 1948, which led to large-scale confrontations with black resistance organizations in the 1950s and 1960s. Thus this period of extreme social instability in the country was an almost ideal-typical setting to examine Mannheim’s theories regarding the role of situationally transcendent ideas about the future of society. Apartheid ideology and practice structured racial and political consciousness of different groups to such an extent that they failed to develop a shared style of thought. For the most part whites saw the situation as “normal” and generally acceptable, while blacks saw it as ripe for radical change. Danziger’s empirically based historical psychology reconstructed the social and historical roots

of these ideologies and utopias in terms of the positions of the groups holding them.

The discussion of these studies identified and emphasized the sociological influences in Danziger's work. But what about psychological influences? The social psychology of Kurt Lewin certainly deserves some mention in this regard. One clue to its influence on the early work of Danziger is provided by the prominence given in his empirical papers to "the psychological future" as experienced by respondents. Danziger hypothesized that one of his findings, the decline of the use of a temporal framework by his black respondents, could be explained in terms of special limitations placed on them from 1950 to 1962. He ascribed to Lewin (1954) the hypothesis that a decline in the "differentiation of the psychological future may well be the result of externally imposed frustration" (Danziger, 1963c, p. 37). In Lewin's work, the psychological meaning of actions was emphasized, which was derived from the larger structure within which such actions were embedded. For example, the state of the person and that of his/her environment were not independent of each other—the person lived in a psychological environment (Lewin, 1954, p. 918). For Lewin the behavior of a person always was part of the larger situation, and thus the object of investigation in psychology had to be the "person-in-a-situation". The psychological meaning of an action therefore was not fixed, but depended on the context within which it occurred. For example, in Lewin's studies in the 1930s at Iowa on "group climates" (Lewin, Lippitt & White, 1939), major differences emerged between the boys in the "authoritarian", "democratic", and "laissez-faire" conditions. In other words, differences in their behavior depended on differences in the social conditions in which they found themselves.

Additional resemblances between Lewin's and Danziger's work are the tendency to confront significant social issues in their research, and the acknowledgment that human actions take place in a temporal domain as well, rather than being a characteristic of a static "personality".

Lewin's work formed a bridge to Gestalt psychology for Danziger. His work on group climates point to Lewin's preference to work with holistic units in a non-elementaristic fashion. Individuals were not studied in isolation, but as participants in whole situations. As Danziger wrote in *Constructing the Subject* about Lewin, "types of psychological context" (p. 177) rather than individuals become the real objects of psychological investigation. Another linkage to Gestalt theory is through Solomon Asch's attempt to develop a psychology of social life through using Gestalt theory. For Asch, one level of human motivation was that human beings "crave society" (1952, p. 324)—they have a "social interest". Behaviorist and psychoanalytic theories of social interest firstly

find no place for precisely the phenomenon with which enquiry should begin—the presence of a direct overflowing interest in other human beings, in the life of groups, and in the need to participate actively in them. (p. 332)

From this brief discussion of psychological influences in the early empirical work in the sociology of knowledge tradition, one can say that they were European rather than Anglo-American in origin, despite the fact that Danziger received his formal training in the latter.

## FURTHER EMPIRICAL STUDIES

In the 1980s and '90s a number of studies revisited Danziger's empirical sociology of knowledge approach, to study psychological concomitants of political change in South Africa. Du Preez, Bhana, Broekmann, Louw and Nel (1981), Louw (1983) and Du Preez and Collins (1985) provided time series data on social orientation. They established that Afrikaans-speaking whites had changed most over time, from a conservative position (nothing will change politically) to a liberal position (gradual, controlled change will take place). African and Indian groups changed the least in future orientation. In addition, there was no dominant or transcendent historical perspective that could unite all groups. Whites predominantly saw the future as catastrophic, while black groups were more optimistic. These studies were conducted at a time when the country again was in turmoil, as a result of the apartheid state's military response to black resistance, and in the mid-1980s several states of emergency were declared to quell popular uprisings.

In February 1990 Nelson Mandela was released from prison into a very polarized society. As the negotiations for a new political dispensation started, levels of violence actually increased, and were particularly high between 1992 and 1994. The political solution reached at these negotiations during the first part of the 1990s culminated in 1994 in the first democratic elections in South Africa. During this time, Finchilescu and Dawes (1999) asked adolescents, both prior to and after the foundation of democracy in South Africa, to write an essay in which they predicted the future of South Africa in the next decade. Only two future scenarios appeared in the essays: Catastrophic and Liberal. The Revolutionary outcome virtually disappeared from the essays written by black African youth, and they now expected Liberal futures—society would be peacefully transformed under government guidance. The orientations produced by coloured and Indian adolescents shifted from 1980 to 1996 to be more similar to whites than they were to Black Africans. These groups produced high percentages of essays with a Catastrophic orientation to the future: the future held chaos, violence, and social upheaval. Thus the authors established again that wide differences in the perceptions of the youths from the various population groups existed. Finally, there also were a large number of essays without clear future themes, many more than in previous studies. They ascribed the latter finding to the lack of a clearly defined structural conflict, and a state of confusion about the future.

In these studies we again recognize the important elements of the historical-psychological approach Danziger had in mind earlier. The differences in the perspectives between social groups, and the changes they represented, must be studied and understood “in the context of complex historical developments” (Danziger, 1963c, p. 31).

## IMPLICATIONS

Danziger’s early empirical studies in the sociology of knowledge contain at least three continuities with his later work in the history and theory of psychology. These are concerns with history, context, and method.

The first continuity refers to the recognition of history. Indeed, the strength of the sociology of knowledge, in Mannheim’s tradition, is its recognition of the importance of socially transcendent ideas—ideas that point to the past or the future. Danziger similarly concerned himself with the subjects’ temporal orientation—past, present, and future. He argued that the temporal dimension was in fact the dominant stylistic dimension, as events are ordered on a time scale (Danziger, 1963b). For example, a revolutionary style of thought emphasizes present tensions, which will be removed in future by social disruptions at one or more strategic moments. Thus a concern about the future of society, as indicated by future biographies or future histories, introduces temporal orientation as a dimension into empirical research.

Context assumed two meanings in these publications. In one sense, Danziger worked in a specific political context himself, which allowed him research possibilities not so available elsewhere. Two prominent aspects relating to the South African setting of this work can be identified. First, disciplinary boundaries were much less rigid than they were in American social science at the time. In an interview (Brock, 1995, p. 11) he said, referring to South Africa,

That was the other thing that began to strike me at that time: the tremendous hold that disciplinary loyalties had on social psychologists in North America when compared to their counterparts in some other parts of the world. For us it really wasn’t that important whether a person was a psychologist or a sociologist or an anthropologist.

This made it easier to follow research avenues suggested by the sociology of knowledge when one looked for explanations of human actions.

A second contextual factor linked South Africa to the recognition of history in this work. In the “underdeveloped” (as they were still called) countries of the world social relations often were unstable enough to cast doubt on how they could be maintained in future. Where the future of society was in doubt, situationally transcendent ideas flourished like in the Europe of old, Danziger argued. South Africa of the 1950s and 1960s was a country where doubt about the future of society

was intense, because few could see a way out of the conflicts created by the race-based policies of the government at the time. Rigid social distinctions based on race dominated all aspects of life, so much so that situationally transcendent ideas developed in the society could be expected to be virtually mutually exclusive, depending on the positions of the contending groups. This is a classic situation for the sociology of knowledge.

Context also was used in a sense much closer to how it would be used later in historical-theoretical work. The 1958(a) paper recognized explicitly the possibility that social context may play a more important role in psychology than generally accepted. Black South Africans expressed a stronger desire for social equality and social freedom than for the satisfaction of immediate private needs, and this reflects on psychological theories of human motivation. This is more in agreement with Asch, says Danziger, and less in agreement with some of the traditional biologicistic theories of motivation. In his *Social Psychology*, Asch (1952) identified the "biological doctrine" as one of the explanations of the social nature of human beings. This explanation entered psychology under the aegis of behaviorism, argued Asch, and as a result, human social actions were learned because "they bring the individual directly or indirectly the gratification of primary needs" (p. 13). For Danziger, however, there is another implication here: "one can only raise the question of the extent to which even supposedly scientific theories in psychology are affected by the social context in which they arise and flourish" (1958a, p. 323). Also, in explaining the pattern of authoritarianism exhibited by his respondents, the wider social context had to be taken into account (Danziger, 1958b, p. 345). Such a contextualist position is of course part and parcel of the sociology of knowledge, in which concepts have a basis in specifiable contexts.

Methodologically, two aspects of these studies deserve mention. Danziger was searching for empirical methods in social psychology that were responsive to the factors of history and context. A major concern was that the methods used by social psychologists, in attitude surveys for example were too reductionistic. Attitude surveys normally start off with a collection of separate elements in order to arrive at a measure of the whole. In addition, they place respondents in the role of passive selectors of pre-structured categories. In *Constructing the Subject*, he pointed out that the standard laboratory experiment, with its emphasis on isolating individual "stimuli", also was reductionistic in its approach. The value and attractiveness of Mannheim's approach lay in its reversal of this practice: it was concerned with social totality, and with its active construction by social agents. Ideological or utopian attitudes were treated as wholes, since they arose when the future of society as a whole was in doubt. The meaning that social events had for the individual was determined partly by the kind of ordering used by the social groups s/he belonged to.

South Africa again provided fertile ground to show that a tendency toward an individualist orientation and away from a socially oriented interpretation will lead

to meager insights. The psychological aspects of personal lives in countries like South Africa often were of a secondary nature. There were larger scale, macro-sociological factors that had to be considered first. Also, to look for the starting point of social change at the level of individual motivation was simply a mistake. For example, in terms of factors retarding economic growth, he argued that

As far as South Africa is concerned, one cannot dismiss the possibility that the forcible stifling of political aspirations is indirectly responsible for the low level of discipline, morale and enthusiasm of many African workers. (Danziger, 1963d, p. 397)

Thus an understanding of “the problem of African workers’ productivity” cannot first be sought at an individual level. By the same token, however, sociological factors were not the only ones operating here. They interfaced in a complex pattern with individual characteristics of persons. Take for example the operation of laws that barred black people from advancing beyond the lowest level jobs:

... if no amount of personal achievement will lift the individual beyond the social status of a second-rate creature who is not capable of determining his own future, then we should not be surprised if interest in achievement remains at a low level. Large-scale individual efficiency and the maintenance of a system of social stratification based on inborn characteristics like skin color would seem to be largely incompatible. (p. 398)

The challenge of conceptualizing the relationship between the individual and social interpretations of course remained with social psychology up to the present (see the discussion on levels of explanation below).

In the chapter in Buss (1979), Danziger merges the three elements of history, context and method. History now takes central stage, for the first time in his publication record. The methodological focal point now shifts away from empirical methods in social psychology to historiography: how to practice the history of psychology. In this practice, the influence of the sociology of knowledge is still clearly discernable. I have already indicated that Buss placed the text squarely within the sociology of psychological knowledge, in particular in the debate between “internal” and “external” historians of psychology. Danziger approaches this debate by analyzing the institutionalization of American and German psychology. The rise of the discipline of psychology, Danziger argued, depended on the invention of a role that did not exist before, that of the professional practitioner of the new science. This new role depended on the society in which such roles were established, with the result that what was defined as “psychology” differed quite substantially between the USA and Germany. The reasons for this were clearly not just internal to the discipline. German and American psychologists had to take into account the norms and interests of existing power groups in their quest to institutionalize psychology, but the power groups psychologists had to address were very different in the two countries. In Germany, it was an academic and professional establishment

dominated by philosophy. In the USA, however, universities and the resources they controlled were much more allied to the business sector, or to politics. The difference in social context determined the different forms that psychology took in quite fundamental ways in the USA and in Germany.

In this connection Danziger evoked the concept of legitimation. This terminology too has its background in a publication on South Africa, when he published a paper (Danziger, 1971) in which analyzed strategies of legitimation of social power, using the successive legitimations of apartheid as a case in point. He now draws from a slightly different tradition in the sociology of knowledge, that established by Max Weber.

### INTELLECTUAL INTEREST

In the examination of legitimation strategies that led to differences in the institutionalization of psychology in Germany and the USA, Danziger tried to overcome the dualism created between internal and external factors in the development of the discipline. To accomplish this, he introduced an important historiographical device that would link these two opposing poles, in the concept of intellectual interest. Intellectual interest mediates between external and internal forces operating on the development of a discipline, he argued. It faces both inward and outward:

outward, in that it serves to legitimate the activities of its practitioners vis-à-vis significant target groups; inward, in that it establishes the norms by which the work of practitioners is judged. (Danziger, 1979a, p. 38)

In Germany, psychologists had to convince an academic and professional establishment dominated by philosophy of the acceptability of the knowledge claims of the new discipline. In the USA, however, if psychology was to emerge as a recognized, independent discipline, it had to present itself as acceptable to business or political power groups. Thus psychologists presented themselves as the scientists of behavior, and ultimately had as their goal the “prediction and control of behavior”.

Intellectual interest therefore is the instrument of legitimation, both “internally” and “externally”. Internally, it holds together the practitioners of a field around the subject matter, goals and methods of the discipline. Outside the discipline, it represents an attempt to convince powerful groups of the acceptability of the discipline’s work, because there is a compatibility of intellectual interests between the new discipline and these powerful groups. The concept of intellectual interest thus makes it possible to overcome the absolute separation of “social factors” and “intellectual content”, that was so troublesome in a positivist sociology of science (e.g. Ben-David & Collins, 1966). Indeed, Danziger (1979a) turns to



“intellectual interest” as a device to understand “context” after strongly criticizing the positivist approach of these two authors.

In the 1980s Doise (1986) called this a problem of levels of explanation or analysis. Doise argued that by framing the relationship between the individual and the social in terms of a dualism, one faces the charge of reductionism at either extreme. He argued for four levels:

- Intra-individual levels of analysis are normally characterized as “psychological” explanations, such as the authoritarian personality.
- Inter-individual or situational levels of analysis involve processes between individuals, such as social comparison theory.
- Positional levels of analysis regard differences in position or social status, normally based on factors such as gender, race or class, to account for findings of a study
- Ideological levels of analysis emphasize the general conceptions of social relations that serve to legitimize the existing social order.

Those who criticized mainstream social psychology in the 1980s, at least as it was practiced in the USA, stated that it typically focused on the first two levels of analysis.

The sociology of knowledge approach chosen by Danziger for the empirical studies in social psychology made it possible to include all four levels of analysis in the explanation of his findings. But the dualistic framing of a choice between internal and external developments in psychology in the historiography of psychology also implied a level of analysis problem. What Danziger did by introducing the notion of intellectual interest was to reunite the internal and the external; to show that the problem arises when it is formulated in terms of a choice to be made. The tendency for psychology to give preference to individualistic levels of analysis has been discussed earlier. The sociology of knowledge, on the other hand, privileges macro-social structures, and social relationships within those structures. Sociologists of knowledge generally imply that in the relationship between knowledge and society, “the social” has primacy. In his chapter in Buss (1979), Danziger tried for the first time to overcome this dualism in regard to the history of psychology by showing how the intellectual interests of the community of specialist psychologists will mediate the relationship between psychological knowledge and interests and structures in the wider society.

## CONCLUSION

In later years, this way of surmounting implied dualisms via mediating devices, became quite a familiar way of working for Danziger. In *Constructing the*

*Subject* (1990), and other publications (e.g. Danziger, 1993), he used the notion of investigative practices to perform a similar historiographical function to that of intellectual interest. Earlier he spoke of different patterns of investigative practice, such as the Leipzig and Paris models, and “American innovations” (Danziger, 1985). Investigative practice has a logical dimension in guiding the research work of psychologists, but it also has a social dimension. For example:

the individual investigator acts within a framework determined by the potential consumers of the products of his or her research and by the traditions of acceptable practice prevailing in the field. Moreover, the goals and knowledge interests that guide this practice depend on the social context within which investigators work. (1990, p. 4)

The social context includes

the pattern of social relations among investigators and their subjects, the norms of appropriate practice in the relevant research community, the kinds of knowledge interests that prevail at different times and places, and the relations of the research community with the broader social context that sustains it. (p. 5)

This typical way of working can be discerned in *Naming the Mind* (Danziger, 1997) as well, where the growth of attitude research is ascribed to two main factors. The first of these came from outside the discipline in the form of public interest, while the second factor was internal to the discipline and involved finding a way to measure attitudes. Thus investigative practice becomes the primary medium through which social forces have shaped the discipline.

Although investigative practices are claimed as the media through which social interests have been reflected, the analysis in later years went a little further, to include the construction of psychological objects themselves, and how investigative practices constituted such objects (Danziger, 1993). The embeddedness of psychology in extra-disciplinary contexts has implications for the very objects of psychological study. For example, with regard to personality and its assessment,

Their construction of ‘personality’ or ‘character’ as an object of knowledge was strictly confined by the rather severe limitations of the social context in which their investigations originated. (Danziger, 1990, p. 171)

To be perceived as legitimate, psychology and the objects of its study could not stray too far from the local cultural definitions of their task. And here we are back to the ideological component of psychological knowledge, that different aspects of psychology will be sanctioned by different societies, and that psychology will build its cultural values into its procedures. For Danziger, the world of psychology

is a constructed world, and historians of psychology must study the constructive activities that produced it.

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