



Dr. Frank Kessel

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Frank Kessel is a Professor in the College of Education at the University of New Mexico (UNM), where he is also a Senior Fellow and member of the leadership team in the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Center for Health Policy. Prior to joining UNM Kessel completed a 12-year spell as Program Director for the Culture, Health and Human Development Program at the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) in New York. Also responsible for SSRC initiatives at the intersection of the social, psychological and bio-medical sciences, he has advised the National Cancer Institute on its “Science of Team Science” initiative, contributed to numerous national/international conferences and publications in the area of Inter/Trans-Disciplinarity (ID/TD), Most recently -- as a Mellon Visiting Fellow at the University of Cape Town – Kessel worked with various groups there on new ID/TD initiatives. And building on his work with the SSRC’s Program on the Arts, he guided the School of American Ballet through a process that resulted in significant institutional innovation.

With a primary interest in human development and ancillary issues in the philosophy and history of psychology and the social sciences, as well as matters at the intersection of psychology with education and the humanities, Kessel has held academic positions at the University of Houston, the University of Alberta, and the University of Cape Town. He has also been involved in international early education efforts, first as Research Director of the Early Learning Centre in Cape Town and then as Scientific Associate at the Bernard van Leer Foundation in The Hague. His further connection to the philanthropy sector came as Senior Program Associate at the William T. Grant Foundation in New York.

A major thread in most of these endeavors is Kessel’s commitment to facilitating creative conversations across conventional disciplinary and sub-disciplinary lines. This has been reflected in the numerous conferences and symposia he has organized and the range of volumes he has edited, but perhaps most completely in Kessel’s programmatic work at the SSRC. There he helped bring to fruition the collective work of a variety of inter-disciplinary, sometimes international, groups of scholars. In a related vein, he has consistently been concerned with the reciprocal engagement of research and scholarship with broader social issues.

Kessel is an elected Fellow of both the American Psychological Association and the Association for Psychological Science and a member of several other professional organizations. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota and his M.A. at the University of Cape Town. His wife, Marion, trained as a classical pianist and percussionist, directs and produces documentaries on the performing arts (focussed on artists such as Edward Albee, Christoph Eschenbach, Maurice Sendak, and Robert Wilson); she has also directed multiple cameras for live videocasts of opera performances.