Danziger, Kurt

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Kurt Danziger (b. 1926) is Professor Emeritus of Psychology at York University in Toronto, Canada. He is a Fellow of the Canadian Psychological Association (CPA) and the Royal Society of Canada. He received the CPA Education and Training Award in 1994, having played a major role in establishing the graduate program in history and theory of psychology at York University.

Danziger began his career in comparative psychology but he became skeptical of the value of much of this research and began to do Piagetian-style research with children. A long-lasting engagement with social psychological topics produced two books, a widely used textbook on socialization, which was translated into several languages, and a monograph on interpersonal communication. Since the 1970s he has concentrated on the history and theory of psychology.

He produced several important papers on Wilhelm Wundt around the time of the Leipzig "centennial" in 1979 and the main focus of his work during the 1980s was the history of psychological methods. His book on this subject, *Constructing the Subject: Historical Origins of Psychological Research* (1990), has received widespread international acclaim. The main focus of Danziger's work since the 1990s has been the history of psychological concepts and categories. In his book *Naming the Mind: How Psychology Found its Language* (1997), he examined the historical origins of common psychological terms, such as behavior, learning, intelligence, personality, and motivation. Perhaps the most surprising thing about them is that they did not acquire their modern meaning until the nineteenth or even the twentieth century. This may be typical of psychological concepts and categories in general but there are some exceptions to the rule and, in his next book, *Marking the Mind: A History of Memory* (2008), he examined the history of one of the oldest psychological concepts in existence.

Danziger was born in Germany and emigrated to South Africa at the age of 11. He continued his education in Cape Town up to the masters level and then completed a doctorate in experimental psychology at the University of Oxford in England. His first teaching position was at the University of Melbourne in Australia. He subsequently spent eight years at two South African universities, a period that was interrupted by a two-year stay at Gadjah Mada University in Indonesia. His active opposition to the apartheid system in South Africa led to threats and reprisals on the part of what was becoming a repressive police state. He moved to Canada in 1965 and was banned from entering South Africa for over 25 years. This situation changed with the transition to democracy in the early 1990s and he now regularly divides his time between Toronto and Cape Town.

SEE ALSO: Communication; Socialization; Wundt, Wilhelm

References

Danziger, K. (1990). *Constructing the subject: Historical origins of psychological research*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Danziger, K. (1997). *Naming the mind: How psychology found its language*. London, UK: Sage.

Danziger, K. (2008). *Marking the mind: A history of memory*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Further Reading

Danziger's website: www.kurtdanziger.com