

William Allison Davis



Psychologist, Social Anthropologist,
Author, and Educator
Scott # 2816
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William Allison Davis was born on October 14, 1902 in Washington D.C. He graduated from Williams College in Massachusetts in 1924. He received a Masters in English from Harvard in 1925 and a Masters in Anthropology from Harvard in 1932.

After leaving Harvard, Allison worked as a anthropological researcher in the south, studying the relationship between class and caste in a small southern town. (In 1941, Dr. Davis wrote a book based on this experience, "Deep South : A Social Anthropological Study of Caste and Class.")

From 1935 to 1939, Dr Davis worked as a professor of anthropology at Dillard University in New Orleans. Dr Davis was hired by the University of Chicago in 1939 and served as an assistant professor in the Center for Child Development. He earned his doctorate in 1942 and was designated as an assistant professor of education. He became a full professor in 1948 and was also granted tenure.

Dr. Davis was deeply troubled by the fact that children from poor families had to attend understaffed and poorly equipped schools. He spent most of his career promoting better education for American children. Dr. Davis published many pioneering studies on education including a report that pointed out the inadequacies of intelligence tests for accurately measuring the educational potential of children from low income families. He believed that standardized tests reflected middle and upper-class values and emphasized concepts that had meaning only for those children. His studies helped to inspire programs such as Head Start and other developmental programs for disadvantaged children. Dr Davis developed the Davis-Ellis Intelligence Test, a measure of mental development that was relatively free of class bias.

He was appointed as a member of the Conference to Insure Civil Rights in 1965 and served on the White House Task Force on the Gifted in 1968. Dr. Davis was the first person from the field of education to be elected into the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, (1967). He retired in 1978 and began writing what proved to be his last book. Leadership, Love and Aggression, a study of four black leaders was published in November of 1983 and Dr. Allison Davis died after a failed heart surgery on November 21.

Sources:

Encyclopedia Britannica
Encyclopedia Africana

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