

REFERENCES

- Cory, Donald Webster. 1951. *The Homosexual in America*. New York: Greenberg (quotations are from the 1963 Paperback Library edition).
- Cory, Donald Webster (Ed.). 1953. *21 Variations on a Theme*. New York: Greenberg.
- Cory, Donald Webster, and John P. LeRoy. 1963. *The Homosexual and His Society: A View from Within*. New York: Citadel Press.
- D'Emilio, John. 1981. *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Duberman, Martin. 1997. "The 'father' of the homophile movement." *Harvard Gay and Lesbian Review* 4(4):7-14. Revised version, pp. 69-94 in *Left Out: The Politics of Exclusion*. New York: Basic Books, 1999.
- Ellis, Albert. 1951. *The Folklore of Sex*. New York: Boni.
- Humphreys, Laud. 1972. *Out of the Closets: The Sociology of Homosexual Liberation*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Sagarin, Edward. 1962. *The Anatomy of Dirty Words*. New York: L. Stuart.
- Sagarin, Edward. 1966. *Structure and Ideology in an Association of Deviants*. Doctoral dissertation, New York University. Facsimile published in 1975 by the Arno Press, New York.
- Sagarin, Edward. 1969. *Odd Man In: Societies of Deviants in America*. Chicago: Quadrangle Books.

Evelyn Gentry Hooker (1907-1996)

Sharon Valente



Evelyn Hooker, nee Gentry, was an instrumental figure in bringing about changes in attitudes about homosexuality in the scientific community and envisioning a future where homosexuality would not be diagnosed as a "severe and pervasive emotional disorder."

She was born in her grandmother's house, which sat next to Buffalo Bill Cody's house, on September 2, 1907, in North Platte, Nebraska, the sixth of nine children. Her mother, who had completed schooling only through the third grade, had traveled to Nebraska in a covered wagon and inspired Evelyn to "get an education—they can't take that away from you." Her parents eked

out an existence as farmers and Evelyn's only exposure to books occurred during her attendance of a series of one-room schoolhouses. She loved to tell of a "sun bonneted child named Evelyn Gentry, being perched on the front seat of a covered wagon, a genuine prairie schooner, moving with her parents and eight siblings from North Platte to their new home in Sterling" (Shneidman, 1998). Sterling, Colorado, boasted of its position as the county seat and had a large high school. As a senior, Evelyn enrolled in the honors program with a course in psychology. She planned to attend a Colorado teachers' college, but the faculty recommended she attend the University of Colorado instead.

In 1924, she became a freshman at the University with a tuition scholarship but no money for board and room; she paid for this by housecleaning. Her entry into psychology was initially opportunistic. After learning that seniors in the psychology department could become paid teaching assistants in quiz sections, she concluded that this kind of teaching seemed far superior to earning her way by housekeeping, and so she became a psychology major. In a course on comparative psychology with Karl Muenzinger, she

was inspired by and intrigued with the notion of the scientific investigation of behavior. The University, upon her graduation in 1928, offered her an instructorship and she began her studies on her master's degree with Muenzinger. Her master's thesis in 1930 examined vicarious trial-and-error learning in rats. At the American Psychological Association meeting, the president, Edward Tolman, used graphs from Hooker's thesis to illustrate his discussion of vicarious learning in rats.

In this era, discrimination against women commonly prevailed in higher education. Although she preferred to attend Yale for her doctoral work, the psychology department chair there refused to accept a woman. Muenzinger suggested that instead she study with Knight Dunlap at Johns Hopkins even though Dunlap did not generally approve of women doctorates (Shneidman, 1998).

Her faculty at Hopkins discouraged further study of learning in rats; instead, she concentrated on humans. She earned her PhD in psychology in 1932 at Johns Hopkins in experimental psychology with a dissertation on discrimination training. She was elected to the honor societies of Phi Beta Kappa, Sigma Xi, and Phi Gamma Mu. Her first academic appointment was at the Maryland College for Women where she taught from 1932 to 1934, when she was diagnosed as having tuberculosis. With support of her friends, she came to a sanitarium in California for two years of reading and recuperation. Faculty positions for women were hard to find in the Depression era, but she did teach part-time at Whittier College for a year after leaving the sanitarium.

She then received a fellowship to study psychotherapy in Berlin. Although her fellowship was interesting, the events in Germany and other parts of Europe were even more captivating. She lived with a Jewish family and viewed Germany through their eyes. After seeing the rise of Nazism and traveling to Russia with a tourist group after the purge of 1938, she was impressed with the impact of totalitarian regimes and dedicated herself to make her life count in helping to correct social injustice (APA, 1992).

After returning to Whittier College for a year, she applied for a faculty appointment in psychology at UCLA. Her request was denied because they already had three women faculty and the faculty were unwilling to consider another woman. She found a more receptive hearing in the UCLA Extension Division which appointed her as a research associate in psychology. She taught in UCLA Extension from 1939-1970 and never was on a tenure track and was not necessarily a full-time teacher. This fact probably allowed her considerably more freedom in her own research than otherwise would have been the case and allowed her to delve into topics that academic psychology departments would not touch. Teaching was a source of reward and pleasure, and she was well respected as an excellent teacher. She also taught

herself to be a qualified clinical psychologist and she became a diplomat in clinical psychology (Shneidman, 1998).

Her studies on homosexuality were the earliest within the psychological community to break with standard stereotypes of homosexual men—who were then considered maladjusted or mentally ill, were forcibly ejected from government jobs, and were arrested in police raids. The prevailing psychiatric opinion about the adjustment of homosexual men was illustrated by a quotation from the Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry: “When such homosexual behavior persists in an adult, it is then a symptom of a severe emotional disorder” (GAP, 1955, p. 7). At this time, few clinicians ever had the opportunity to examine homosexual subjects who did not come from psychiatric agencies or prisons. The one major exception to this was George Henry’s 1941 study, but he was too much part of the psychiatric mainstream to see the similarities between homosexuals and heterosexuals that Hooker did. Those patients diagnosed as homosexual by psychiatrists were usually sent for drastic treatments, including electroshock therapy, to reverse their perversity.

Hooker’s exposure to homosexuality was serendipitous. While teaching a class in the UCLA Extension in 1943-1944, Hooker had a gay male in one of the classes with whom she later became friends. The student, known as Sam From, introduced Evelyn and her then husband, Donn Caldwell, to a number of his homosexual friends. According to Shneidman, From told Hooker that she had a moral responsibility to study his “condition.” She asked what his condition was and upon hearing it was homosexuality, she noted that she knew nothing about it. From responded, then “you’ll have to learn” (Shneidman, 1998). As he introduced her to the topic, she came to the conclusion that the men she met were as well adjusted as any of the heterosexual men she knew.

Her marriage to Donn Caldwell was short lived; he died from a heart attack with her at his side six months after their marriage (Shneidman, 1998). She remarried in London, England, in 1951 to Edward Hooker, a distinguished professor of English at UCLA. Encouraged by some of her colleagues and friends in the gay community as well as her new husband, she began her investigation of homosexuality despite the stigma associated with such studies. Much to the surprise of many of her colleagues, she even obtained government funding from the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH). In 1953, she applied to NIMH for a six-month grant to study adjustment of nonclinical male homosexuals and a comparable group of heterosexuals. Intrigued by such a remarkable proposal, the chief of the grants division, John Eberhart, came to Los Angeles to meet Hooker. This grant application was extraordinary, particularly because this was the height of the McCarthy era, when there were severe legal penalties for homosexual-

ity. Eberhart was interested in such a study because scientific data about normal homosexuals from nonclinical and nonprison environments was nonexistent. He told her that they could give her the grant but that "you may not receive it and you may never know why and we won't know why." She later learned that her project was referred to as the "Fairy Project" by some of the federal grant officials. NIMH continually renewed her funding until 1961 when she obtained a Research Career Award.

While prior research by psychologists and psychiatrists had used clinical samples of psychiatric patients or military or prison inmates, the studies by Alfred Kinsey had already challenged most such conclusions, and both she and NIMH felt that mental health professionals needed to know more about the topic. Hooker selected a sample free of psychopathology and examined thirty homosexual men and thirty heterosexual men matched for age (from twenty-five to fifty), education, and IQ. She carefully selected homosexual subjects who would have been classified as a five or six on the Kinsey scale, and heterosexuals who would fall in the zero to one category and who were not receiving psychotherapy. Since finding such homosexual subjects was not easy because of the closeted nature of so many of her potential subjects, she sought assistance from the Mattachine Society, whose members volunteered as subjects and enlisted their friends also to do so. Hooker precisely details the data on selecting the homosexuals but notes that the "heterosexual subjects came because they were told that this was an opportunity to contribute to our understanding of the way in which the average individual in the community functions, since we had little data on normal men" (Hooker, 1992, p. 144).

She administered a series of standard projective tests including the Rorschach, which then was believed to be the best measure of personality and was instrumental in diagnosing homosexuality, the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT), and the Make a Picture test (MAP) to the sample. After removing all the identifying information except age from the test results and profiles, she arranged them in random order. Then three expert outside clinicians reviewed the tests and described the personality of the subject and then attempted to distinguish the homosexuals from the heterosexuals. The judges, who were unaware of the subjects' sexual orientation, were unable to distinguish the homosexuals from the heterosexuals on the basis of the projective tests. The two experts reviewing the Rorschach agreed only on the sexual orientation of sixteen of the sixty cases, and then they were mostly wrong. After completing the judging, the expert clinicians commented that the profiles did not resemble those of the homosexual men they saw in clinical practice.

One of Hooker's conclusions was that clinicians should be very skeptical about the so-called homosexual content signs in the Rorschach. Hooker called Dorr Legg, one of the gay men in the study, and reported that although he did not know it, the evaluators had determined that he was a heterosexual. Findings of the study where none of the experts (even after one repeated his analysis) could do better than chance were presented at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association in Chicago in 1956 and published in the *Journal of Projective Techniques* the following year. Although this was not a widely read journal, these findings helped set the stage for removing homosexuality as a disorder in the diagnostic manuals of psychiatry and psychology. Her conclusions included:

Homosexuality as a clinical entity does not exist. Its forms are as varied as those of heterosexuality. Homosexuality may be a deviation in sexual pattern, which is within the normal range psychologically. The role of particular forms of sexual desire and expression in personality structure and development may be less important than has frequently been assumed. (Hooker, 1992, p. 154)

Her critics alleged that she had a biased sample because her sample of homosexuals came from gay rights and advocacy groups and these groups were better adjusted than the average.

As a sign of the times, when Hooker began her study she received a letter from the chancellor at UCLA identifying her as a faculty member and researcher in the event of a police raid or arrest. Even before the publication of her projective technique study, she had published an article suggesting that homosexuals think of themselves as members of a minority group with a separate culture. In the process she became one of the first published ethnographers on the topic in English. Impressed by her findings, the NIMH initial grant expanded into a Research Career Award which she held until she retired in 1970. Subsequently, she opened a clinic practice serving mostly gay men and lesbians.

Probably her most important contribution was as chair of the Task Force on Homosexuality established by NIMH in 1967, which provided a stamp of validation and research support for other major empirical studies (APA, 1992). The report recommended, among other things, that homosexuality be decriminalized through the repeal of sodomy laws. She worked, albeit indirectly, with Judd Marmor to have homosexuality removed from the list of clinical diagnoses of the American Psychiatric Association in 1973 and from the American Psychological Association terminology in 1975. In short, she was instrumental in changing the definitions (Shneidman, 1998).

The task force argued that homosexuality presented a major problem for American society because of the amount of injustice and suffering it entailed not only for homosexuals but also for those concerned about them. Unfortunately, by the time the report was ready the Nixon administration was in power in Washington and publication was delayed. This led to its publication instead by the *One Institute Quarterly*. The task force also encouraged better public education on homosexuality.

She went on to become a devoted if somewhat reticent spokesperson for gays and lesbians. During her later years, she was much honored by the gay community, and one of her subjects, Wayne Placek, left a bequest for her to administer designed to encourage research into homosexuality.

She had a rich life and many episodes of high drama. According to Shneidman, she, like some of her subjects, was once arrested and booked in the Los Angeles County jail (Shneidman, 1998). At another time, she passed as a male to enter the bathhouses to interview homosexual subjects.

The Division of Clinical Psychology of the American Psychological Association (APA, 1992) honored her with the Award for Distinguished Contributions. She also received the APA Award for Distinguished Contributions to the Public Interest. The Association of Gay Physicians recognized her for contributions also. In 1992, Dave Haughland and Richard Schmiechen made the documentary film *Changing Our Minds: The Story of Evelyn Hooker*. It was nominated for an Academy Award (Shneidman, 1998). She told the *Los Angeles Times* that the documentary "Gives a kind of finality to one's life, doesn't it? I don't exactly say my last goodbye to the world on film, but it does sum me up like nothing else" (Oliver, 1996). The Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Community gave her its highest honor in 1989.

Many homosexual men have reflected that she changed their lives by removing stigma and allowing societal and self acceptance. Shneidman (1998) comments that her life, first in an academic setting as an experimental psychologist and then in community action, raises important questions about the role of psychology in the making of social policy.

Although she wrote comparatively little in refereed journals and published fewer than twenty articles, and most of the publications are in collections edited by others, it was more what she did than how much she wrote. For more than three decades she was a tireless advocate for an accurate scientific view of homosexuality. The University of Chicago honored her for establishing homosexuality as a field of study by establishing the Evelyn Hooker Center for the Mental Health of Gays and Lesbians.

She died at her home in Santa Monica, California, at the age of eighty-nine.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- American Psychiatric Association. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual: Mental Disorders DSM-IV*. Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association, 1952.
- American Psychiatric Association. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV)*. Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association, 1994.
- American Psychiatric Association. "Evelyn Hooker: Biographical Sketch." *American Psychologist* 47 (1992), 499-501.
- Boxer, Andrew A., and Joseph M. Carrier. "Evelyn Hooker: A Life Remembered." *Journal of Homosexuality* 36 (1998), 1-17.
- Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry. (GAP) Report on homosexuality. Committee on Cooperation with Government (Federal) Agencies. *Report No. 30*, January 1955, p. 7.
- Henry, George W. *Sex Variant: A Study of Homosexual Patterns*. New York: Hoeber, 1941.
- Hooker, Evelyn. "The Adjustment of the Male Overt Homosexual," *Journal of Projective Techniques* 21 (1957), 18-31.
- Hooker, Evelyn. "The Adjustment of the Male Overt Homosexual." In W.R. Dynes, S. Donaldson (Eds.), *Homosexuality and Psychology, Psychiatry, and Counseling, Studies in Homosexuality*, Volume 11 (pp. 142-145). New York: Garland Publishing, 1992.
- Hooker, Evelyn. "The Case of El: A Biography," *Journal of Projective Techniques* 25 (1961), 252-267.
- Hooker, Evelyn. "An Empirical Study of Some Relations Between Sexual Patterns and Gender Identity in Male Homosexuals." In J. Money (Ed.), *Sex Research: New Development* (pp. 24-52). New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965.
- Hooker, Evelyn. "Male homosexuality." In N.L. Farberow (Ed.), *Taboo Topics* (pp. 45-55). New York: Atherton, 1963.
- Hooker, Evelyn. "Male Homosexuals in Their Worlds." In J. Marmor (Ed.), *Sexual Inversion: The Multiple Roots of Homosexuality* (pp. 83-107). New York: Basic Books, 1965.
- Hooker, Evelyn. "Parental Relations and Male Homosexuality in Patient and Nonpatient Samples," *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 33:2 (1969), 140-142.
- Hooker, Evelyn. "A Preliminary Analysis of Group Behavior of Homosexuals," *Journal of Psychology* 42 (1956), 217-225.
- Hooker, Evelyn. "Reflections of a 40 Year Exploration: A Scientific View on Homosexuality," *American Psychologist* 48:4 (1993), 450-453.
- Oliver, M. "Evelyn Hooker: Her Study Fueled Gay Liberation." *Los Angeles Times*, November 22, 1996, p. 32.
- Shneidman, E.S. "Evelyn Hooker (1907-1996)," *American Psychologist* 53:4 (1998), 480-481.