

Evelyn hooker



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& Number: Dr. Evelyn Hooker (Stereotyping and Labeling of Homosexuals)

12 November (Estimated word count – 654) Dr. Evelyn Hooker was an imminent American psychologist considered by some as the founder of modern studies in human sexuality, more specifically a study of homosexuals. Previously, homosexuality was considered as an aberration or a deviation from normal social behavior and at various times in the past had been labeled as an ailment or a sickness. Most of the self-described homosexuals considered themselves as perfectly normal people, contrary to popular opinion held by most people. The theory before she pioneered modern scientific study of homosexuality was that gays and lesbians are essentially maladjusted persons who need the help of society to be re-integrated and to have normal lives like most people.

Her personal and professional life was influenced to a big extent by her mentor with name of Prof. Karl Muenzinger who encouraged her to pursue further studies on behaviorism, in particular the sub-topic of homosexuality. Her interest in this particular subject was due to her making friends with one of her students (name was Mr. Sam From) who was homosexual and challenged her to study him and other homosexuals to disprove commonly-held notions. Her various experiments disproved homosexuals as socially maladjusted people; her studies in effect showed this group to be well adjusted socially no different from the general population. Her studies were used by the gay rights movement to promote their own advocacies.

Her personal life starting from her high school years, through college, to the masters program and eventually, the doctorate program influenced her research work because she saw all these as a way to get out of poverty and the drudgery of house work. She was quite lucky to be acquainted with

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professors who encouraged her to do groundbreaking research work but by her own admission, she did the research more out of curiosity and empathy. Her anonymous fellowship for a year of study in Europe gave her valuable insights to the events happening there at that time, specifically the persecution of the Jewish people at the hands of Hitler and Nazi Germany. She further traveled to Russia at around this time also and saw with her own eyes and through direct experience social injustices such as the rampant and overt discrimination against certain ethnic minorities. This gave her impetus to focus her studies on clinical psychology which gave birth to her almost exclusive concentration on the study of homosexuality in which this group of people are discriminated against as deviants. A turning point in her career was when she was granted a study grant by the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), at the height of the McCarthy era when homosexuality was punished severely as a psychiatric and emotional disorder (The American Psychologist 1).

Other groups of stigmatized people would be those afflicted with autism and gypsies who are generally classified to be lower class of people due to their being homeless, itinerant and generally unkempt appearance and lack of personal values held dear by most societies. A large portion of these people are being unfairly portrayed as undesirable, like autistic people who have a hard time adjusting to some simple activities of daily living (ADL) although a lot of the autistic persons are sometimes extremely gifted too. There are a lot biases exercised on these people just as homosexuality was before Dr. Evelyn Hooker championed their cause and proved to the world they are no markedly different from most of us (Dunlap 1). Today, a lot of the gypsies or Roma (as most of them originally came from Romania) are being evicted

from their host European countries like France and Germany as undesirable aliens, the reason being given was that the places where they concentrate or set up temporary camps (as refugees or as economic migrants) breed prostitution and a host of other crimes. Public perception of these gypsies must be corrected as not all of them can be stereotyped or labeled as undesirables.

Works Cited

Dunlap, David. "In Memoriam: Evelyn Hooker, 89, Researcher on Homosexuality." *The New York Times*. 22 Nov. 1996. Web. 12 Nov. 2011. The American Psychologist. "Evelyn Hooker: A Biographical Sketch." *The American Psychologist* 47 (1992): 499-501. Print.