

Thomas, R. K. (2001). Florene Mary Young (1901-1994). *The Feminist Psychologist*, 28, 27, 32.

Manuscript Version



Florene M. Young was described as a "Pioneer in Clinical Psychology in Georgia" and in the "Southeast" (Hammock & Beach, 1989; 1992). Young laid the foundation for the development of the Ph.D. program in Clinical Psychology at the University of Georgia (UGA), and she played a vital role in gaining approval for the six-story Psychology Building that opened in 1969. Other achievements included being a member of the Georgia State Board of Examiners (1953-1968), Director of the UGA's Psychology Clinic (1950-1969), and, in 1963, being named Woman of the Year in Athens, GA, (city where the UGA is located). In conjunction with her 20<sup>th</sup> retirement year and 88<sup>th</sup> birthday, 17 November 1989, the Mayor of Athens issued a proclamation designating it to be "Florene Mary Young Day." In addition to being widely known and respected within Georgia, she was a Fellow in APA's divisions of Clinical and Developmental Psychology and a Diplomate of the American Board of Examiners in Professional Psychology.

In her 20<sup>th</sup> retirement year, a booklet chronicling her life and career, *...I choose to write on human hearts...* (Anonymous, 1989) was published in her honor and the Florene M. Young Award was established at UGA. The Award is given annually to the graduate student in the UGA Clinical Psychology Program who best embodies Dr. Young's values for "(1) a solid grounding in the empirical principles of the science of psychology and (2) a deep and abiding compassion for individuals who are suffering."

Florene Mary Young was born in Oak Hill, Alabama, 17 November 1901, the daughter of John Todd Young and Elizabeth Tindal Young. John Young soon returned the family

to their ancestral home in Due West, SC, so that he could attend Erskine Seminary there. After one year, he transferred to the United Presbyterian Seminary in Xenia, OH, and upon graduation (1905) he held his first pastorate in East Greenwich, NY. Florene started first grade there in 1907.

Later, she wrote, "having already learned to read, I was allowed to assist the beginners and at this early state, I decided that I wanted to be a teacher." (Young, 1988, p. 3). Her father then served a pastorate in Philadelphia, PA, but when her mother nearly died of pneumonia, the family was advised that she must not spend another winter in Philadelphia. So, they moved to Greenwood, SC, when Florene was 12 years old. The family remained in South Carolina, thereafter.

With the aid of competitively obtained scholarships, Young earned an A.B. degree in 1923 at Winthrop College (Rock Hill, SC). She taught briefly in the public school in Belmont, NC, which strengthened her desire to make teaching a career. With the aid of a loan from family friends, supplemented by tutorial work and baby-sitting jobs, in 1926 she earned an M.A. in psychology at Teacher's College, Columbia University.

She obtained a teaching position at the State Teachers College in Athens, GA and planned to repay the loan and save funds to return to Columbia in 1929 for doctoral study; however, with the onset of the Great Depression, that plan was changed to the more practical one of attending Peabody College in Nashville, TN. After a year at Peabody College due to worsening economic conditions she had to return to her teaching position in Athens. Teacher salaries were reduced 34% in two years, with the result that Young was unable to complete her Ph.D. at Peabody until 1938. In addition to teaching in the State Teachers College (1926-1933), she taught summers 1927-1929 at Wake Forest College and summers 1930-1932 at the University of Mississippi.

The University System of Georgia, which included among other institutions UGA and State Teachers College, cut costs further by consolidating some departments, and eventually the State Teachers College was merged with UGA (Brooks, 1956). In 1933, Young was appointed Assistant Professor of Psychology at UGA (Young, 1988, p. 9). She was welcomed warmly to the UGA Psychology Department by Dr. Austin S. Edwards (1885-1976; a 1912, Ph.D. graduate under E. B. Titchener's supervision) who needed assistance badly, both to teach classes and in the Psychology Clinic. Young was appointed Assistant Director of the Clinic in 1936 and Director in 1950, a position that she maintained until retirement, in 1969. She was promoted to Associate Professor in 1943 and to Professor in 1948. Not wishing to be distracted from her Clinic responsibilities, she agreed reluctantly to serve as Acting Department Head for the academic year (1951-1952) immediately following Edwards' retirement.

Young's publication record was modest (23 articles in refereed journals) but as she replied when questioned about that in an interview,

"....I didn't do enough research because I was overloaded [with clients]....I was criticized for that and it was justified. But I said that I choose to work with people and if I choose

to write on human hearts instead of on paper I make that choice. You've made your choice and I've made mine" (Jurgensen, 1988-89, p. 7).

In 1969, subsequent to her mandatory retirement at age 67 from UGA, she opened a private practice in Athens. She continued this until 1978, when, following a slight stroke, she elected to retire. She recovered fully and continued to be active, including writing a departmental history (Young, 1985) and, at the Department Head's request, her autobiography (Young, 1988) which was a primary source for this biographical sketch. In the interview mentioned above, she was also asked, "What would you like to see as your legacy as a psychologist?" She replied, "I don't think I've left any legacy. I've just tried to live a life of helping others. That's all I have done." (Jurgensen, 1988-89, p. 7)



### References

Anonymous (1989). *...I choose to write on human hearts...*, Athens, GA: Athens Psychological Information Services.

Brooks, R. P. (1956). *The University of Georgia under sixteen administrations, 1785-1955*. Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press.

Hammock, J. C., & Beach, S. R. H. (August 1989). *Florene Young: Pioneer in Clinical Psychology in Georgia*. Paper presented at the 97<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the American Psychological Association, New Orleans, LA

Hammock, J. C., & Beach, S. R. H. (March 1992). Florene M. Young. University of Georgia. In H. W. Moon (Chair), *Eminent Women In Southeastern Psychology*. Symposium conducted at the annual meeting of the Southeastern Psychological Association, Knoxville, TN.

Jurgensen, R. (1988-89, Winter). A candid conversation with Dr. Florene Young. *Profiles*, 1, 4-7.

Young, F. M. (1985). *History of the Department of Psychology of the University of Georgia*. Unpublished manuscript, University of Georgia at Athens.

Young, F. M. (1988). *Autobiography of Florene M. Young*. Unpublished manuscript, University of Georgia at Athens.