
Maureen O'Sullivan (1939–2010)

The death of Maureen O'Sullivan on May 20, 2010, marked the passing of a pioneer and a highly respected figure in the field of emotion research. Given the flourishing state of this research area today, it is difficult to imagine that it wasn't always this way. However, when O'Sullivan began her work, psychology was in the throes of behaviorism, with the cognitive revolution still on the horizon. In the textbooks of the day, if emotion was even mentioned, it was subsumed under other topics such as motivation and stress. But this was all about to change. In the late 1960s, O'Sullivan joined a small group of scientists who gathered around Paul Ekman at the University of California, San Francisco. This group leveraged the methodological breakthroughs in measuring facial movements made by Ekman and his colleague Wallace Friesen and used this powerful tool to reboot the field of emotion research.

O'Sullivan was born on February 13, 1939, in New York to William Leo O'Sullivan and Mary (Molly) Mitchell O'Sullivan. She received her doctorate in 1965 from the University of Southern California, studying with J. P. Guilford and specializing in psychological measurement. With Guilford, she advocated for the view that there was a "social" intelligence that could be discriminated from "cognitive" intelligence and that was measurable. This theme of assessing individual differences in the emotional realm was to become a powerful motif that resounded throughout much of her subsequent research. She completed a clinical internship at Los Angeles County Hospital and, starting in 1967, was a clinical professor at the Langley Porter Neuropsychiatric Institute at the University of California, San Francisco. In 1972, she joined the faculty in the Department of Psychology at the University of San Francisco, where she remained until her retirement in 2009. During that period, she served as Associate Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences and served two terms as chair of the Department of Psychology. A wonderful teacher and a gifted administrator, she was honored with a University Distinguished Teaching award in 1987 and a Leadership in Service award in 1994.

In her research, Maureen was drawn to the study of individual differences in the more social aspects of intelligence. Long before the term *emotional intelligence* was popularized, she did groundbreaking work on differences among people in their ability to detect emotion in others and to make judgments about other people based on emotional information. In the 1980s, her work began to focus increasingly on the detection of deception, leading to an influential series of papers on nonverbal clues to deceit.

Over time, she was drawn to the issue of individual differences in the ability to detect deception, which led to her studies of "truth wizards" who were particularly gifted in this domain. This latter work received broad coverage in the scientific and popular press and has had enormous practical implications for work in law enforcement.

I have many vivid, personal memories of Maureen, beginning in the 1981–1982 academic year when I came to the Bay Area for my first sabbatical and she hired me to teach a course in social psychology at the University of San Francisco. She was a person of towering intellect and radiant good humor. In many seminars, casual conversations, social events, and professional occasions over the years, my encounters with Maureen were always memorable, filled with her interesting ideas, rapid-fire associations, sparkling wit, and profound warmth.

As I think back over her life, two visual images remain most vivid. First, she was one of the "models" who posed for the set of photographs of prototypical emotional facial expressions that have launched thousands of research projects over the decades. Her expression of sadness is particularly moving, having a Mona Lisa quality that draws one to wonder about what could have caused such a strong woman to experience such grief. And second, she was strikingly tall and was a proud member of a local social group that required its members to be of similar stature. One New Year's Eve she invited me to a party at the beautiful home she owned in Sausalito, nestled at the end of an impossibly steep and narrow street, literally hugging the shore of the San Francisco Bay. As midnight approached, I remember looking toward the Bay and seeing this room full of Maureen's amazingly tall friends and the varied cast of characters who shared this grand house by the Bay with her. As the clock struck midnight, I saw the silhouettes of Maureen and her partner gliding gracefully across the living room floor. It was a moment that, for me, captured the strength, grace, and beauty of a remarkable life lived by a remarkable person.

Maureen's husband, Robert C. Wilson, passed away in June 1998. She is survived by her son Michael, her brother, a nephew, and many cousins. Her kindness, loyalty, and wise counsel touched the lives of countless students, colleagues, and friends, who remember her with great fondness and respect and mourn her passing.

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