

I so much wish I could be present to see my friend be recognized by the society. But alas. I hope that these words via video will achieve a small piece of what I would have liked to say in person.

As I remember it, it was a chilly fall night in Columbus Ohio and we had just returned, as we did almost every evening in graduate school, from a sumptuous dinner at Wendy's Restaurant (the city was, after all, the testing ground for the highest echelon of fast food chains and Trish and I routinely did our bit for food research by consuming a nontrivial number of strangely textured burgers and florescent milk shakes). We had returned, also as usual, to our desks located under the bleachers of the football stadium at Ohio State, where we would remain until late into the night.

That evening, my friend and officemate Trish Devine, had told me that she was going to subliminally prime stereotypic concepts about Black Americans to see if such unconscious activation would affect reactions to subsequent racially ambiguous information.

"You've got to be kidding me", I thought, even though I'm sure I found something supportive to say. Her idea came crashing down because we didn't talk about stuff like that. There was something illicit about it. And it seemed to me nothing but an invitation to trouble when perfectly good research on "person memory" awaited. Trish could continue to counterbalance hundreds of sentences about John and Mary's behavior and test memory for them and nobody gets hurt. But now that she had suggested the unthinkable, how could one not wonder about what would happen, what the ramifications would be, if it turned out that the result she had imagined did actually obtain.

Trish was my dear friend, somebody whose hand I had held, so to speak, since the day we had met and it was my instinct to pull her away. Except that it was too late – I too now had to know the answer to the question she had posed.

To put my feelings into context, remember that this was 1983. We still wore t-shirts that said “Help stamp out disco in our lifetime”, we were certain that Ronald Regan would lose the election, we were about to watch Michael Jackson’s hair catch on fire during a Pepsi commercial. It is fair to say that what we now know to be such well-established facts about dissociations between conscious and unconscious feelings were hard to imagine, let alone about race, because they involved aspects of the mind into which experimentation hadn’t yet been fully ushered. The methods to study such topics were available in dribs and drabs. In the late seventies, a few studies of amnesic patients showing dissociations between explicit and implicit memory existed (like the work by Warrington and Weiskrantz); with ordinary people, not much evidence existed except the landmark work on semantic priming by David Myers and Jim Neely’s dissertation, but the most outrageous they had gotten in terms of the content, was to test if “bread” primed “butter”. A few papers on subliminal perception were also available (did the word “king” prime “queen”?), but in 1983 we didn’t believe such results any more than we believed that a virus that caused AIDS would soon be found.

So what I can say with certainty is that I had no idea that my remarkable friend was about to make a breakthrough that would open up the gates to theorizing and experimentation about the doubly dark side of the mind. There were those who studied one of the darks -- the mental unconscious where processes unfolded without conscious awareness, without conscious control and without intention or self-reflection. There were also those who had studied the other kind of dark – our attitudes and beliefs about human beings with dark skin. But Trish would put these two together, and in her work the scientific method was applied to a barely touch aspect of psychological reality. She excavated for all to see a new layer in our understanding about human social groups and

our representations of them. Representations that couldn't be known through the usual ways of knowing.

The first experiments showed evidence for unconscious negative beliefs towards Black Americans in those of us who seemed unaware that we had such beliefs. When the mode of questioning bypassed the conscious mind, it seemed that we all looked more alike. Now, it is more than 28 years later and this information is such old news.

Today, as a science, we know a whole lot more about the nature of the nonconscious ways in which we think about social groups, and race in particular. After Trisha's studies, I myself had joined the clean up crew to figure it out. It was impossible to do anything but.

That's the impact Trish had. A whole generation of people followed this remarkable kid from Schnectedy NY who had no aspirations other than herself to follow her heart and to do experiment after experiment that at the time seemed slightly insane. I am proud to have been there, in the chair next to her in that office that she persuaded me to paint in the middle of the night the day before my own thesis was due. I am grateful that she remains such a force for good in our discipline today. And I am just delighted that I have her as my sister, one to whom I can pay the highest of compliments one scientist can pay another when I say "Trisha, you changed my mind".

Congratulations my friend on this supremely deserved recognition. And thank you to all of you at SESP for putting up with this video.