

Can Training Help People Un-learn a Lifetime of Racial Bias?

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Nautilus:

In the 1990s, the block I lived on in New York City was chaotic and seedy. From my window, I'd witnessed many drug deals, one stabbing, and the aftermath of one shooting. The mayhem escalated dramatically on the Fourth of July, when it was a good idea to stay somewhere else for the night. But one sweltering Fourth, my travel plans fell through.

I'm gazing out my second-floor window when two young men on the street below start throwing cherry-bomb firecrackers into the open window of the apartment directly across the street. After a few minutes of that, one of them leaps up, grabs the fire escape ladder and climbs up and through the open window into the apartment. His friend follows him.

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"We're living in a sea of stereotypes that soak into our brains," says University of Washington psychologist Anthony Greenwald, who along with colleagues created the IAT. "The associations that make up implicit biases are acquired over a lifetime."

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Given results like these, academic researchers say that not enough is known about bias to design effective interventions. "If there was a clear, easily implemented solution, anyone could do it," says Gordon Moskowitz, a social psychologist at Lehigh University who studies non-conscious cognition. "But there isn't." There's even some evidence that well-meaning but badly designed efforts to create awareness can backfire, fostering resentment.

Read the whole story: [Nautilus](#)