



LEHIGH
UNIVERSITY

Department of Psychology



Dr. Melissa Ferguson

Cornell University

Can we change our implicit mind? New social-cognitive evidence for when and how we can undo our implicit first impressions

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The scientific as well as lay assumption about first impressions is that they are difficult to change. This is especially the case for implicit first impressions (those that are unintentionally and uncontrollably activated from memory). Decades of work from social cognition suggest that our implicit evaluations of others (their goodness or badness), once formed, can be changed only with extensive, repeated exposure to counter-evidence. They have been argued to be largely resistant to new evidence that is brief and involves propositional reasoning. This raises the possibility that our implicit first impressions of others are not always updated sufficiently with new learning and may therefore represent erroneous signals for how we should behave. In contrast to this view, our lab has shown that implicit first impressions can be completely reversed when even a single piece of new propositional evidence is highly diagnostic of the target. Our findings show when and how implicit positive first impressions can be reversed, as well as when and how implicit negative first impressions can be reversed. This work reflects a new direction in research on learning, person perception, and implicit cognition.

All are welcome

For more information contact:

Department of Psychology ▪ 610-758-3630 ▪ cms310@lehigh.edu