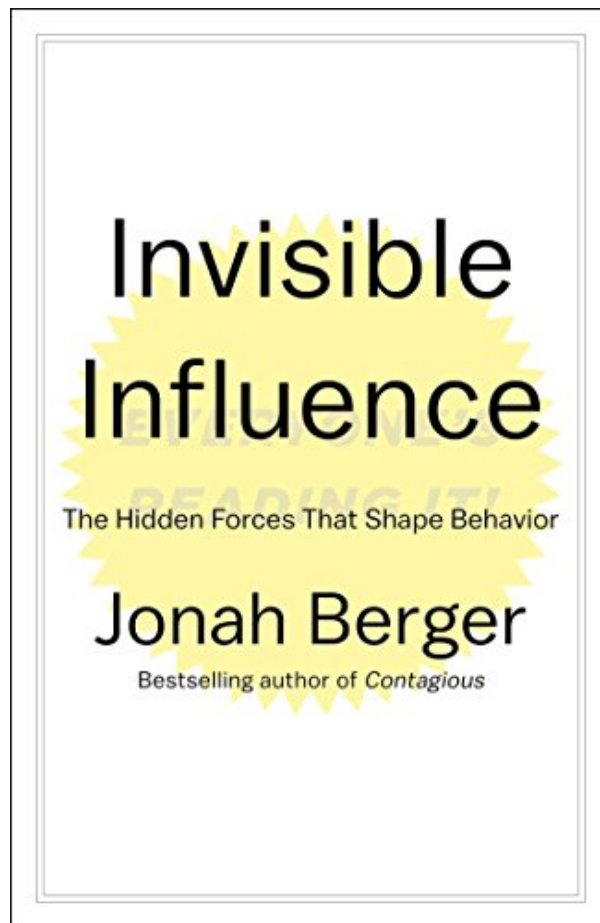


INVISIBLE INFLUENCE: THE HIDDEN FORCES THAT SHAPE BEHAVIOR BY JONAH BERGER



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Invisible Influence

The Hidden Forces That Shape Behavior

Jonah Berger

Bestselling author of *Contagious*

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INVISIBLE INFLUENCE: THE HIDDEN FORCES THAT SHAPE BEHAVIOR BY JONAH BERGER PDF

The New York Times bestselling author of *Contagious* explores the subtle, secret influences that affect the decisions we make—from what we buy, to the careers we choose, to what we eat—in this fascinating and groundbreaking work.

If you're like most people, you think that your choices and behaviors are driven by your individual, personal tastes, and opinions. You wear a certain jacket because you liked the way it looked. You picked a particular career because you found it interesting. The notion that our choices are driven by our own personal thoughts and opinions is patently obvious. Right? Wrong.

Without our realizing it, other people's behavior has a huge influence on everything we do at every moment of our lives, from the mundane to the momentous occasion. Even strangers have a startling impact on our judgments and decisions: our attitudes toward a welfare policy shift if we're told it is supported by Democrats versus Republicans (even though the policy is the same in both cases).

But social influence doesn't just lead us to do the same things as others. In some cases we conform, or imitate others around us. But in other cases we diverge, or avoid particular choices or behaviors because other people are doing them. We stop listening to a band because they go mainstream. We skip buying the minivan because we don't want to look like a soccer mom.

In his surprising and compelling *Invisible Influence*, Jonah Berger integrates research and thinking from business, psychology, and social science to focus on the subtle, invisible influences behind our choices as individuals. By understanding how social influence works, we can decide when to resist and when to embrace it—and how we can use this knowledge to make better-informed decisions and exercise more control over our own behavior.

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Most helpful customer reviews

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.

especially his proposition that most of us are pretty good at noticing when others succumb to social pressure
By Educ Prof

“The notion that our own personal thoughts and opinions drive our choices seems so obvious that it is not

even worth mentioning. Except that it's wrong." (Inside book jacket)

Jonah Berger cites his own research, research done by his colleagues, and other published research as well, illustrating their findings with interesting, surprising, and even startling, examples.

As someone who believes that he is a logical and data-informed decision-maker, the author's assertions were not always welcomed by me, especially his proposition that most of us are pretty good at noticing when others succumb to social pressure, but that almost all of us cannot see the same effect in ourselves (p. 5). Yet, his arguments were persuasive and the information is, in fact, good to know. If our decisions are, indeed, shaped by certain social groups or circumstances, then awareness of that fact can certainly be helpful. Conversely, if you wish to influence other's decisions; e.g. lifestyle choices, voting, purchasing, or support for a particular policy; this book helps one consider effective ways to do so.

The book is slightly complicated, but that is because people are complicated and Berger does not oversimplify. Yet, the author's reasoning and writing style are clear, interesting, and compelling. There are some truly fascinating findings and conclusions to be found throughout the book. I anticipate that this book will, at the very least, become optional reading for my doctoral students who are interested in becoming more effective leaders.

32 of 35 people found the following review helpful.

Here are the "simple, subtle, and other surprising ways that others affect our behavior"

By Robert Morris

Actually, the invisibility to which the book's title refers is — in my opinion — a misnomer. Influence in this instance is not so much a matter of others deceiving us (although that may be a motive) as it is a matter of our failure to recognize that influence when it occurs. We don't "see" it only because we don't recognize and understand it for what it is.

Jonah Berger shares what he has learned during fifteen years of research that involved countless surveys, experiments, and interviews and additional surveys, experiments, and interviews based on what he learned from their predecessors. As is also true of all other sciences, the science of social influence is evidence-driven. Berger is determined to do all he can to prepare as many people as possible to become mindful of the nature and extent of influence that others have and that was not previously recognized.

As I began to work my way through the narrative, I was again reminded of a book I read years ago, *Denial of Death*, in which Ernest Becker acknowledges the inevitability of physical death but asserts that there is another form of death than CAN be denied: that which occurs when we become wholly preoccupied with fulfilling others' expectations of us. (I also thought of Becker's book when I first read Robert Cialdini's classic, *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion*.) Why do people try to influence others' behavior? Berger suggests a number of different motives that, I think, tend to fall into one of two categories: those that are altruistic and those that are self-serving. It is important to add that not all influence initiated with the purest of intentions is necessarily good advice. Also, at least some influence can be of benefit to everyone involved.

To what extent are those who attempt to influence others fully aware of doing that? To what extent are the "others" fully aware of that influence? Why are some people more receptive than others? This is an immensely complicated subject, certainly much more than I realized prior to reading Berger's book. As he explains, "Social influence has a huge impact on behavior. But by understanding how it works, we can harness its power. We can avoid its downsides and take advantage of its benefits." That is why he wrote this book.

These are among the dozens of passages of greatest interest and value to me, also listed to suggest the scope of Berger's coverage:

- o Familiarity (Pages 10-11, and 160-162)
- o Mimicry (30-35)
- o Harry Potter books (44-46)
- o Music website experiment (46-49)
- o Parking preferences (49-52)
- o Differentiation (63-97)
- o Birth order (64-70)
- o Social class (86-96)
- o Signals (101-128)
- o Academic performance and race (117-120 and 141-142)
- o Novelty (164-171)
- o The Goldilocks Effect (166-171)
- o Optimal distinction (171-181)
- o Social facilitation (189-196)
- o Winning and losing in sports (204-208 and 211-218)
- o Low-income housing (223-229)

It remains for each reader to ask and then answer questions such as these: "Where do you see influence? How do others around you shape your life and how are you shaping theirs? Understanding these often invisible [or previously unrecognized] influences can make us all better off." Of course, the scope and depth of impact of the information, insights, and counsel that Berger provides will vary from one reader to the next but my own opinion is that this material can be of substantial *practical value* to parents and their children as well as to supervisors and their direct reports, to classroom teachers and their students as well as elected public officials and their constituents. In fact, that is only a partial list. Near the top of any list of benefits would be substantially increased self-awareness. More specifically, developing the "growth mindset" to which Carol Dweck and the "mindfulness" to which Ellen Langer have devoted so much productive attention in their own work.

Social influence that is unrecognized by no means has less impact; if anything, it may have greater impact because none of those involved is aware of it. What I call "enlightened influence" has almost unlimited potentiality for good or ill. The choice is ours, once we fully realize that we have that choice and fully appreciate its implications. Thank you, Jonah Berger, for increasing and enriching our enlightenment.

1 of 2 people found the following review helpful.

Be Influenced by Invisible Influence

By Chris Heivly

What I love most about Invisible Influence is the ease in which Jonah explains why we do what we do. Based on his research as well as research from studies over the past 100 years, Jonah artfully brings you on a journey through the choices we make every day.

From why hurricanes influence kids names to why married people look alike, you will find an story that crawls inside your brain. Do me a favor, read the book and then rethink how you and your business attempt to influence customer behavior.

Then read the part about Calvin Coolidge and his wife - my favorite new story that will go into my storytelling repertoire immediately.

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