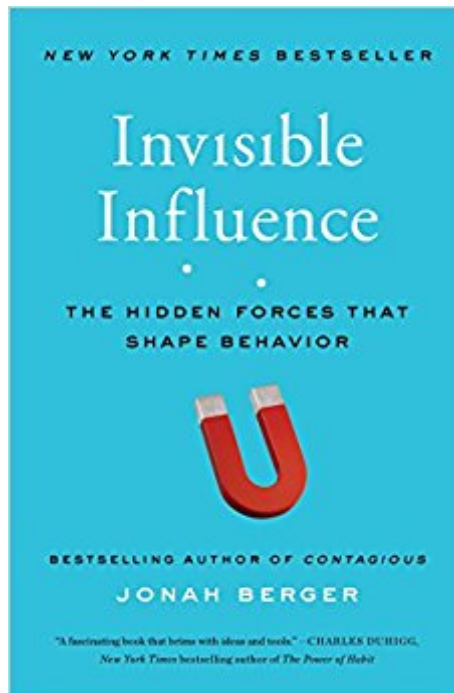




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# Invisible Influence: The Hidden Forces That Shape Behavior



## Synopsis

Jonah Berger, the 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 his latest New York Times bestseller that is a “rare business book that’s both informative and enough fun to take to the beach” (Fortune.com). If you’re like most people, you think your individual tastes and opinions drive your choices and behaviors. You wear a certain jacket because you liked how 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. Even strangers have an 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). But social influence doesn’t just lead us to do the same things as others. In some cases we imitate others around us. But in other cases we 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. By understanding how social influence works, we can decide when to resist and when to embrace it—and learn how we can use this knowledge to exercise more control over our own behavior. In *Invisible Influence*, Jonah Berger “is consistently entertaining, applying science to real life in surprising ways and explaining research through narrative. His book fascinates because it opens up the moving parts of a mysterious machine, allowing readers to watch them in action” (Publishers Weekly).

## Book Information

Paperback: 272 pages

Publisher: Simon & Schuster; Reprint edition (June 20, 2017)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1476759731

ISBN-13: 978-1476759739

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.7 x 8.4 inches

Shipping Weight: 9.1 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.9 out of 5 stars 68 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #22,511 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #25 in Books > Business &

Money > Marketing & Sales > Marketing > Research #54 in [Books > Business & Money > Marketing & Sales > Consumer Behavior](#) #129 in [Books > Medical Books > Psychology > Social Psychology & Interactions](#)

## Customer Reviews

“With great insight, Jonah Berger removes the cloak of invisibility from powerful sources of influence and resolves fascinating mysteries of human behavior.” —Robert Cialdini, author of *Influence* “If you want to know what really influences your behavior, read Jonah Berger’s latest eye-opening book, packed with thought-provoking research, memorable stories, and powerful insights. A terrific read!” —William Ury, author of *Getting to Yes with Yourself* “As he did with *Contagious*, Jonah Berger takes us deep beneath the surface of things, with mesmerizing results. *Invisible Influence* is a book with the power to transform the way we see ourselves and our place in the world.” —Arianna Huffington, author of *Thrive* “Jonah Berger has done it again: Written a fascinating book that brims with ideas and tools for how to think about the world.” —Charles Duhigg, author of *The Power of Habit* “From the very first page, this book will change the way you look at yourself and others. Eye-opening and thoroughly engaging.” —Amy Cuddy, author of *Presence* “Whether you want to influence others, make smarter decisions, or just better understand the mystery that is human behavior, this book will show you how. A terrific, insightful read.” —Tony Hsieh, CEO of Zappos “Berger offers an engaging guide to the concept of social influence. Berger’s prose is consistently entertaining, applying science to real life in surprising ways and explaining research through narrative. His book fascinates because it opens up the moving parts of a mysterious machine, allowing readers to watch them in action.” —Publishers Weekly “Berger picks up where his *Contagious: Why Things Catch On* (2013) left off to explore why we desire what we do and more, why we act as we do, politically, socially, economically, and emotionally | he does a good job of distilling scientific insights into easily understood object lessons on social psychology.” —Kirkus Reviews “Jonah continues to be one of the most innovative psychological researchers publishing today. His insights are not only thought provoking and counter-intuitive, he manages to express them in a practical and pragmatic way. I’ll read anything he writes and use it too.” —Ryan Holiday, author of *Trust Me I’m Lying* and *Growth Hacker Marketing* “Invisible Influence is that rare business book that’s both informative and enough fun to take to the beach.” —Anne Fisher,

Fortune.com. “Grab one or both of his books and read them through the lens of your own business. Just maybe you will become more effective at influencing your customers.” •Inc.com “This winding exploration of our collective psyche is fascinating...” •The Washington Post

Jonah Berger is an associate professor of marketing at the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania. His research has been published in top-tier academic journals, and popular accounts of his work have appeared in The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, Science, Harvard Business Review, and more. His research has also been featured in the New York Times Magazine, “Year in Ideas.” Berger has been recognized with a number of awards for both scholarship and teaching. The author of Contagious and Invisible Influence, he lives in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Actually, the invisibility to which the book’s title refers is *invisible influence*—in my opinion *invisible influence* 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” *invisible influence* “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.

While this book brings up many good ideas it is a horrible writing style. One story after another to explain a point made in one sentence. Then on to the next point with three stories. Skim a lot and get to the meat. In that sense it is worth it.

How the inner self makes the outer self. Easy read, s/t fascinating. Made for the beach/ cocktail party/amaze your friends.

Although, if you do have some knowledge on the topic, there are probably only two or three new things to grasp.

This book is a good primer to get you to think more about certain social psychological factors in decision making. Examples are interesting and frequent. What is lacking is any kind of conclusion about best practices based upon multiple research studies of same hypothesis.

This book was very different than I expected and left me wanting. I was not able to complete it but will do so in the future.

“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.

Good insights about some of our collective behavior, without being too academic

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