

People influence us -- we don't realize it

Yale University scientists say how people express their views exerts a contagious, strong influence on other people, often without them even realizing it.

Yale psychology Professor John Bargh and Ph.D. candidate Erin Williams say when they showed individuals a picture of a library, participants began to speak more softly, without being aware of why. Similarly, when primed to be rude, individuals interrupted a speaker, while those primed to be polite did not.

The researchers say we should not assume we are aware of most of the important influences on our behavior and judgments, and to accept that there are influences we do not know about. Only then, they said, would one have a chance at counteracting those influences and regaining control.

The article appears in the latest issue of *Current Directions in Psychological Science*.

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