

# How the group changes what we think by shirley wang

Sociology



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The paper "How the Group Changes What We Think by Shirley Wang" is a worthy example of a sociology article. In Shirley Wang's article, "Under the Influence: How the Group Changes What We Think," Wang divulges into theories that attempt to explain how norms within groups alter the way that people think and behave. Human behavior is shaped by what people around them consider to be appropriate or desirable. Social norms not only influence our behaviors but also our attitudes, and even the preferences that we keep private. Researchers are interested in understanding the evolution of behavioral norms in groups in the hopes that they can help to influence the promotion of health, marketing products, and reducing prejudice.

Researchers have focused continuously on how norms and new ideas are introduced and spread within a group. While many scientists have discovered that, especially in relation to health behaviors, group pressure is a powerful influence. If one person in a group, usually the 'leader,' smokes, then the pressure is on for the rest of the people in the group to start smoking. Furthermore, the more public a behavior is, the more likely, and more rapidly, it is to spread. An example in the article is the bright-colored rubber bracelet worn to support cancer survivors and the search for a cure. The bracelets make visible to others what the individual keeps private; during the process, others join in. Another theory of the spreading of norms in a group is that others will simply follow what others are following. This was revealed in a study that involved participants being directed to a website where they listened to and rated songs and then downloaded the ones that they like. Different worlds were created, with one world that allowed participants to rate songs without input from others, and the other worlds

that allowed participants to see what others were rating. As researchers expected, the participants in the other worlds were influenced by the others' ratings. Songs were often rated based on what the first ratings were. Thus, researchers believe that this is the primary course of a norm within a group.