

Social Psychology

Minority Influence & Social Change



Social Psychology

Lesson Objectives:

- To outline and evaluate three aspects of **minority influence**, including:
 - **Consistency**
 - **Commitment**
 - **Flexibility**



Five, Four, Three, Two and One

Task: On a mini-whiteboard complete the following tasks:

1. Name **five** factors affecting obedience.
2. List **four** of Milgram's Variations.
3. List **three** of Asch's Variations.
4. Name **two** types of conformity.
5. Name **one** study, other than Milgram, which examined obedience.



Tackling Obesity

- Jamie Oliver has been trying to change attitudes for a long time. He has had a lot of success in changing attitudes towards food.
- **Question:** How has he managed to be successful?



Minority Influence & Social Change

- You have examined the role of majority influence including types of **conformity – compliance, identification and internalisation**. You now need to examine how **minority influence** can lead to social change...



Minority Influence & Social Change

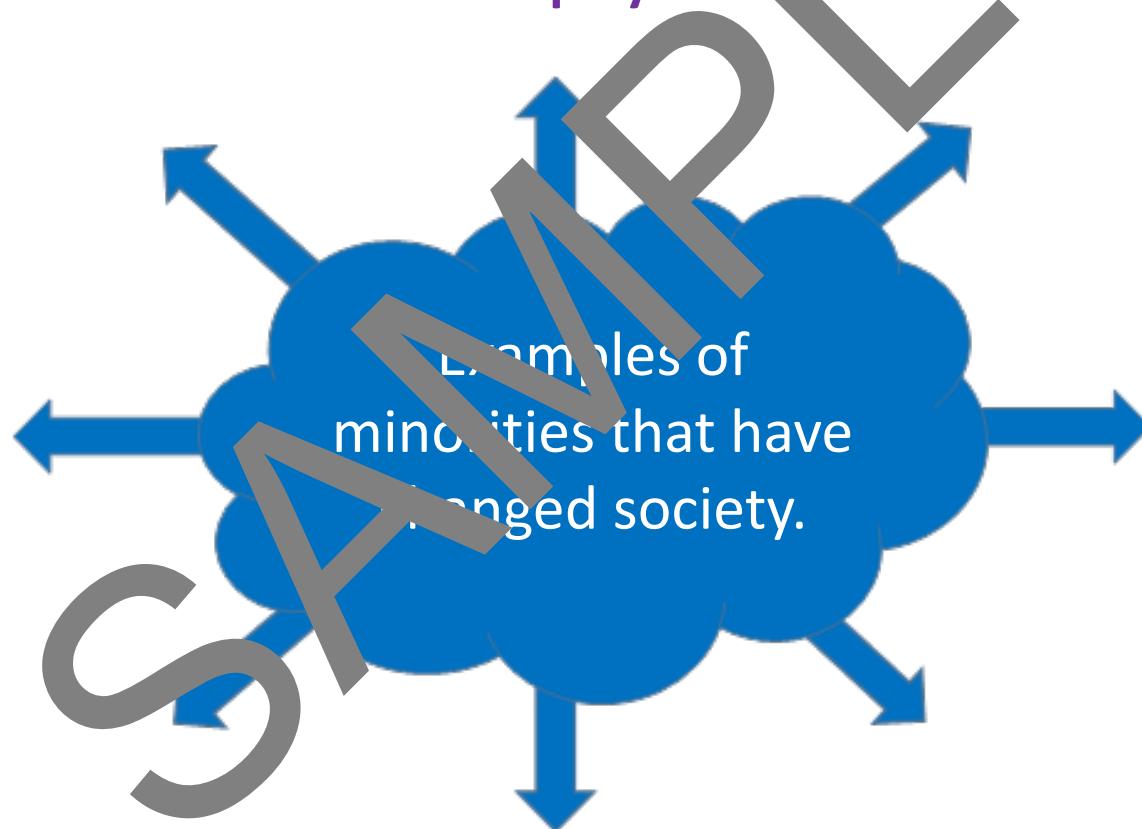
- **Minority influence** is a form of social influence where a **persuasive minority changes the attitudes and behaviours of the majority**.
- **Social change** is when a **whole society adopts a new belief or way of behaving which then becomes widely accepted as the norm**.

Here's a classic example of social change: In the 1950s a small number of environmentalists emerged. They had these 'radical ideas' about recycling and pollution which were dismissed. However, now their attitudes about the environment are the norm and *most* people believe that recycling and looking after the environment is a good thing.



Minority Influence

- Task: Using the mind map on your handout detail all of the minority groups or individuals that have played a role in social change.



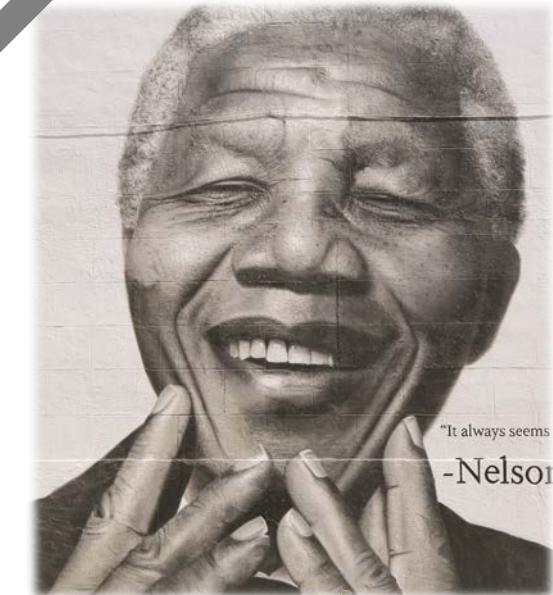
Minority Influence

- Question: Who are these three individuals? Why are they famous?



~~SAF~~

What characteristics do these individuals have that has made them bring about social change?



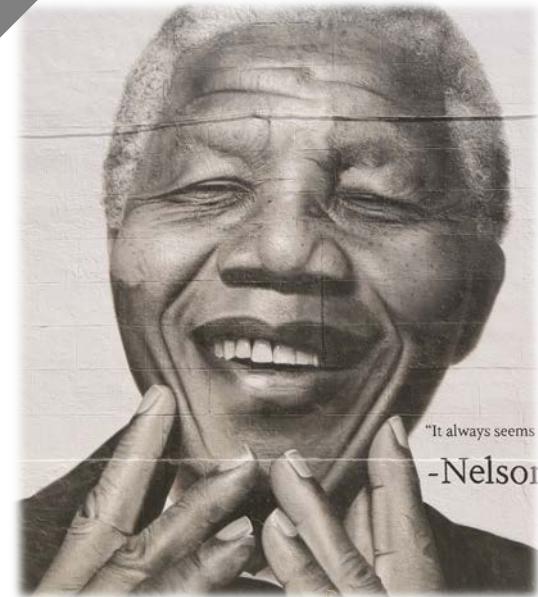
"It always seems
-Nelson

Minority Influence

- Question: Who are these three individuals? Why are they famous?



Consistent
Committed
Flexible



Consistency, Commitment & Flexibility

- Task: Match the following definitions (below) with the key terms consistency, commitment and flexibility on your handout.

A minority must be **dedicated** to their cause. The greater their dedication, the greater their influence.

Although a minority must be consistent, they must show a **willingness to compromise** when expressing their opinions.

A minority must be **stable** in their opinion over time and there must be agreement among the members of the minority.

Definition (AO1)	
Consistency	
Commitment	
Flexibility	

Consistency, Commitment & Flexibility

	Definition (AO1)	Supporting Evidence (Research or Case Study)	Explanation (AO3) How does this research or case study support this definition?
Consistency	A minority must be stable in their opinion over time and there must be agreement among the minority.		
Commitment	A minority must be dedicated to their cause. The greater their dedication, the greater their influence.		
Flexibility	Although a minority must be consistent, they must show a willingness to compromise when expressing their opinions.		

Ski Lift Accident

- **Imagine the following:** Mr Turner has been involved in an accident on a ski lift which wasn't his fault. As a result of the accident he broke one of his legs.
- He has taken the ski lift operator to court and a jury of four have to decide on the amount of compensation that Mr Turner will be awarded.
- You will work in groups of four to decide on the amount of compensation that you will award Mr Turner. However, you must follow these very strict rules:

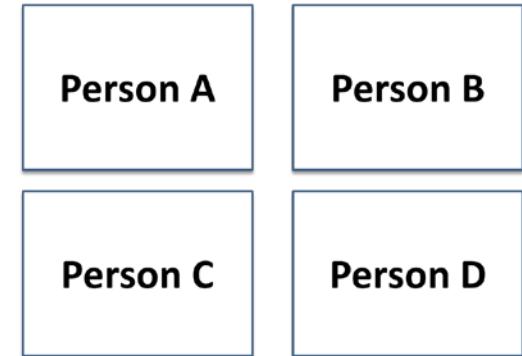


Ski Lift Accident

- Each person in your group will be provided with one of four cards. You must read your card but not show it to anyone else in your group.

The Rules:

1. You can only decide on an amount if a majority – at least three of your group – agree on an amount. The average amount of compensation, in such cases is £10,000.
2. You must take turns to speak and not interrupt one another. Person A will start. You should listen to each other's arguments and only respond when it's your turn (A → B → C → D, etc). You must continue discussing until you reach an agreement.



Ski Lift Accident

- **Question:** How much did your group award Mr Turner and why?

As always, I had to **deceive** you. There were two different types of group. **Was there a difference in the amount of compensation awarded for these two groups?**

Person A – Flexible

You are Mr Turner's lawyer. You want him to receive £15,000 in compensation, but know that most cases only get £10,000.

You must argue for £15,000 but are prepared to settle for anything higher than £10,000. Try to persuade the others to get the highest possible amount.

Person A - Stubborn

You are Mr Turner's lawyer. You want him to receive £15,000 in compensation, not a penny more or a penny less.

You must argue for £15,000 and NOT differ from this amount! Try to persuade the others and ensure he gets £15,000. Don't settle for any other amount.

Nemeth (1986)

Aim: To investigate whether a flexible minority could influence a majority to give less compensation to a victim of a ski-lift accident.

Method: Participants were placed in groups of four and had to agree on the amount of compensation they would give a victim of a ski-lift accident. One of the participants in each group was a confederate and there were two conditions: 1) when the minority argued for a low rate of compensation and refused to change its position (inflexible); 2) when the minority argued for a low rate of compensation, but compromised by offering a slightly higher rate of compensation (flexible).



Nemeth (1986)

- **Results:** Nemeth found that in the inflexible condition, the minority had little or no effect on the majority; however, in the flexible condition, the majority was much more likely to compromise and change their view.

Questions: While Nemeth's research appears to support the idea of flexibility, are there any issues with this study?



Moscovici (1969)

- **Task:** Read the summary of Moscovici and then answer the questions on your handout.

10 Minutes

SAMPLE

Moscovici (1969) - Blue/Green Study

Aim: To see if a consistent minority can influence a majority to give an incorrect answer in a colour perception task.

Method: 172 female American participants, were told they were taking part in an experiment on colour perception. Six participants at a time were asked to estimate the colour, out loud, of 36 slides (which had 11 different shades of blue). Two of the six participants were confederates. There were two conditions: 1) Consistent: the two confederates called the slides green on all the trials; 2) Inconsistent: the two confederates called the slides green 24 times, and blue 12 times.

Results: Participants in the consistent condition were influenced by the minority as they called the slides green on 8.4% of the trials. Participants in the inconsistent condition only called the slides green in 1.3% of the trials.

1. Moscovici has been criticized for using a biased sample. Why is this an issue?

2. Outline the key findings of Moscovici's study?

3. Which of the three factors of minority influence does Moscovici provide support for? Why?

4. Edward Sampson (1991) criticises laboratory research examining minority influence for a number of reasons. He argued that participants in laboratory experiments are not 'real group'. They are mostly groups of students who do not know one another, whereas members of women's rights group, gay rights groups, pressure groups like Greenpeace are exceptionally different. This means that these experiments lack ecological validity. Do you agree with Sampson? Why?

Now that you have completed the questions on Moscovici, add this study to your table above.

Evidence of Minority Influence

- Task: Using the research / case studies examined in this lesson complete the final two columns on the table started earlier.

Moscovici (1969)

Aim: To see if a consistent minority can influence a majority to give an incorrect answer in a colour perception task.

Method: 172 female American participants, were told they were taking part in an colour, out loud, of 36 slides (which were all different shades of blue). Two of the six participants were confederates. There were two conditions: 1) Consistent: the two confederates called the slides green on all the trials; 2) Inconsistent: the two confederates called the slides green 24 times, and blue 12 times.

Results: Participants in the consistent condition were influenced by the minority as they called the slides green on 8.4% of the trials. Participants in the inconsistent condition only called the slides green on 1.6% of the trials.

Real Life Case Studies - 1

- History has provided many real life examples, where consistent individuals have challenged and questioned the valued norms of society (*and have been criminalised for their views*).
- Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela, led civil rights movements and were **consistent** in their views against apartheid for many years, which help bring about social change – demonstrating that a consistent minority can lead to social change.



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Nemeth (1986)

Aim: To investigate whether a flexible minority could influence a majority to give less compensation to a victim of a ski-lift accident.

Method: Participants were placed in groups of four and had to agree on the amount of compensation they would give to a victim of a ski-lift accident. One of the participants in each group was a confederate and there were two conditions: 1) where the minority argued for a low rate of compensation and refused to change his position (Inflexible); 2) when the minority argued for a low rate of compensation, but compromised by offering a slightly higher rate of compensation (Flexible).

Results: Nemeth found that in the inflexible condition, the minority had little or no effect.

Real Life Case Studies - 2

- Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat to a white man on a bus in 1950s America. A white driver then arrested her for violating segregation laws. This event helped trigger the civil rights movement and the racial segregation laws in America, at a national cost to Rosa.
- Rosa's **sacrifice** and her arrest helped lead to social change.



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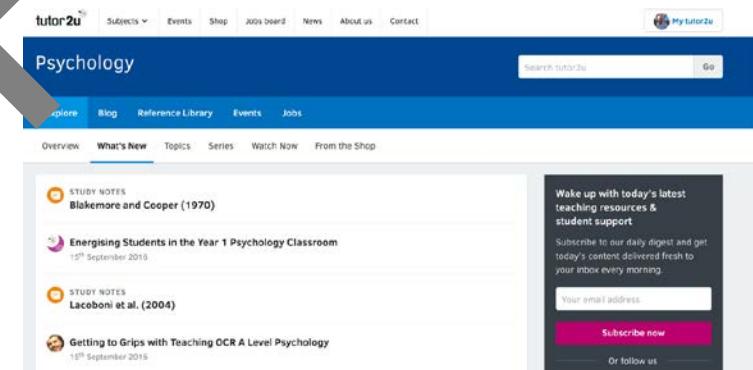
The key to minority influence is consistent commitment and flexibility below.		
Reporting Evidence	Research or Case Study	Explanation (AO3) How does the research or case study support the definition?

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Person B

You are on the jury representing the Ski Lift Company. You know that Mr Turner is entitled to at least £10,000, (you are prepared to go higher if his lawyer can convince you). However, you must reach a consensus (agreement) on the amount that you will award him.

Person C

You are on the jury representing the Ski Lift Company. You know that Mr Turner is entitled to at least £10,000, (you are prepared to go higher if his lawyer can convince you). However, you must reach a consensus (agreement) on the amount that you will award him.

Person D

You are on the jury representing the Ski Lift Company. You know that Mr Turner is entitled to at least £10,000, (you are prepared to go higher if his lawyer can convince you). However, you must reach a consensus (agreement) on the amount that you will award him.

Person A – Flexible

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Real Life Case Studies - 2

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- Rosa's **sacrifice** (being arrested) helped lead to social change.

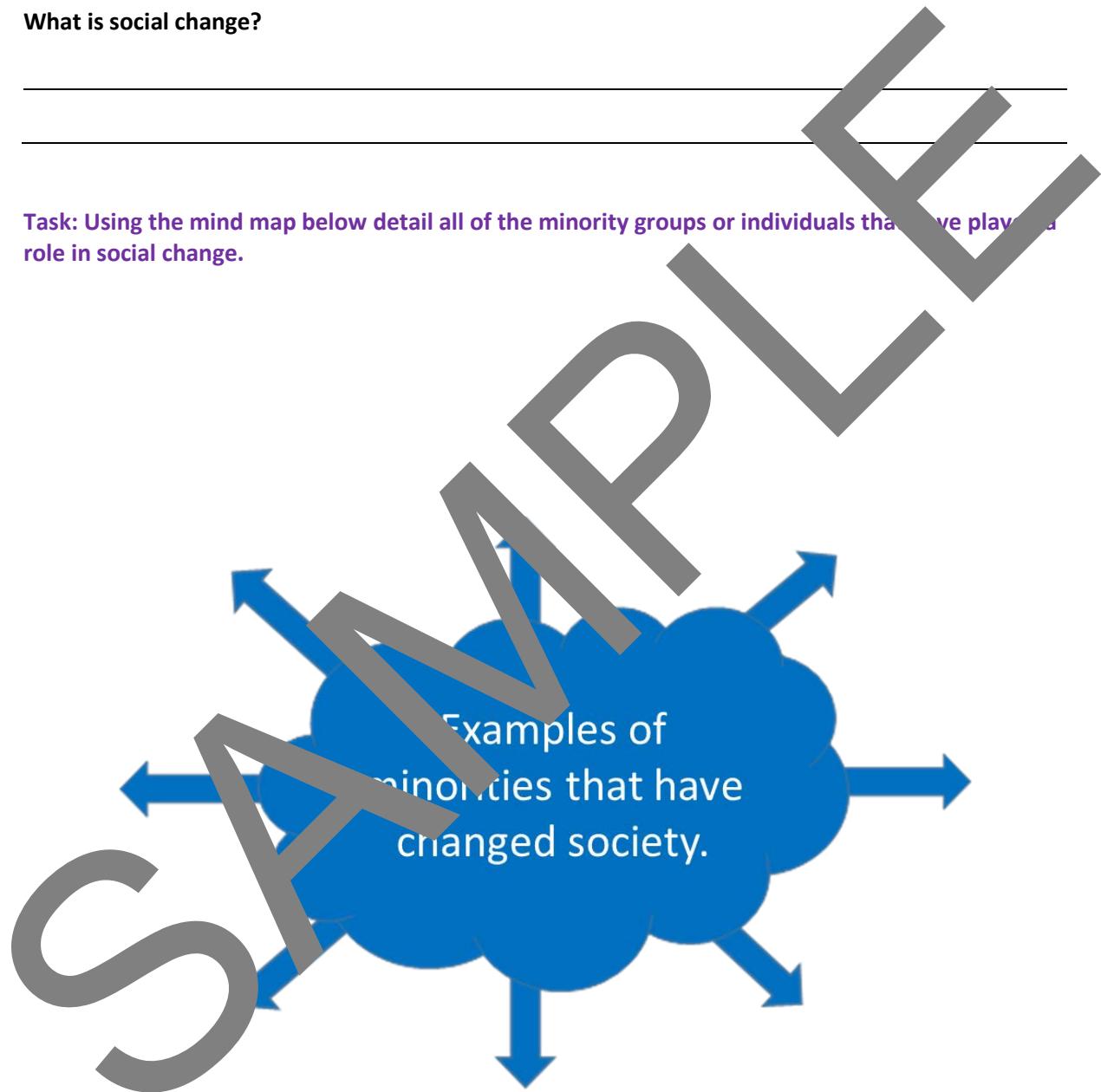


Minority Influence & Social Change

What is minority influence?

What is social change?

Task: Using the mind map below detail all of the minority groups or individuals that have played a role in social change.



Task: Match the definitions of the whiteboard with the key terms consistency, commitment and flexibility below.

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