Social Psychology

Minority Influence & Social Change

Martin Luther King
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.

Examples of minorities that have changed society.
Minority Influence

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

What characteristics do these individuals have that has made them bring about social change?
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.
# Consistency, Commitment & Flexibility

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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 to 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.

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Moscovici (1969) | Blue/Green Study
--- | ---
**Aims:** To see if a consistent minority can induce 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 of 36 slides (which had 6 different shades of green). Two of the six participants were confederates. There were two conditions: 1)Instructions to two confederates: called the slides green on all the trials; 2) Inconsistent: the two confederates called the slides green 26 times and blue 13 times.

**Results:** Participants in the consistent condition were influenced by the minority as they called the slides green on 84% of the trials. Participants in the inconsistent condition only called the slides green in 13% 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 (2004) criticized laboratory research examining minority influence for a number of reasons. He argued that participants in laboratory experiments are not 'real groups'. They are mostly groups of students who do not know one another, whereas members of women's rights groups, 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.

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| Nemeth (1986)       |                                                                                 |
| Aim: To investigate whether a flexible minority could influence a majority. Compensation they wished 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) when the minority case for a low rate of compensation weakened their case and change his position (Nemeth, 1986). 2) when the minority argued for a high rate of compensation and the majority compromised by giving a slightly higher rate of compensation. |
| Results: Nemeth found that in both conditions the minority had little or no effect. |

**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 criticized 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.

- Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat to a white man on a bus in 1950s America. This action was regarded for violating laws. This event helped to raise civil rights awareness of the racial segregation laws in America, with additional cost to Rosa. Rosa’s sacrifice helped America and changed lead to 1960s change.
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- OCR Psychology Teachers
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Person A - Stubborn

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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

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

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

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**Results:** Participants in the consistent condition were influenced by the minority as they called the slides green in 8.4% of the trials. Participants in the inconsistent condition only called the slides green in 1.3% of the trials.
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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 helped bring about social change – demonstrating that a consistent minority can lead to social change.
Real Life Case Studies - 2

- Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat to a white male passenger in 1950s America. The bus driver had her arrested for violating US law. This event helped trigger the civil rights movement to end the racial segregation laws in America, at a personal cost to Rosa.

- 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.

Examples of minorities that have changed society.
Task: Match the definitions of the whiteboard with the key terms consistency, commitment and flexibility below.

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