

Minority Influence and Moscovici's Study

Minority Influence

Main factors: consistency and confidence

A minority group can also strongly influence an individual, this is more likely when the minority are the 'in group', possibly due to social status or age, or they are acting out of principle and have made personal sacrifices in the pursuit of their beliefs.

Moscovici designed an experiment to investigate the influence of a stooge minority, that is a group of people who have been 'planted' in the experiment. The stooges will already have been told what to say by the researcher.

In this experiment, volunteers had to judge the colour of slides that were blue-green. If the minority were consistent, for example, saying "green" all the time, they had a definite influence in changing the opinions of others in the group.

Experimentation: MOSCOVICI

Aim:

To see whether a consistent minority of participants could influence a majority to give an incorrect answer in a colour perception test.

Procedure:

1. 172 participants in total were involved. All had good eyesight
2. Six participants at a time were asked to estimate the colour of 36 slides
3. All the slides were blue, but of differing brightness
4. Two of the six participants were accomplices of the experimenter
5. There were two conditions
6. consistent: the two accomplices called the slides green on all the trials
7. inconsistent: the two accomplices called the slides green 24 times, and blue 12 times

Results:

1. Participants in the consistent condition yielded and called the slides green in **8.4%** of the trials
2. **32%** of participants in the consistent condition reported a green slide at least once
3. Participants in the inconsistent condition yielded and called the slides green in only **1.3%** of the trials

Conclusions:

1. It is important that those in a minority behave consistently if they are to influence a majority to change its viewpoint
2. Individual members of a minority must maintain a consistent viewpoint and there needs to be agreement among the different members of the minority group
3. Inconsistent minorities lack any real influence on majorities.

Their opinions are viewed as groundless

Criticisms:

- The artificiality of the laboratory setting is unlike real-life situations where minorities such as pressure groups exert their influence on the prevailing majority opinion
- Minorities must also avoid appearing rigidly inflexible