

SOCIAL INFLUENCE: MOSCOVICI

MINORITY INFLUENCE

Aim:

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

Procedures:

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

Findings:

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

Conclusions:

- It is important that those in a minority behave consistently if they are to influence a majority to change its viewpoint
- Individual members of a minority must maintain a consistent viewpoint and there needs to be agreement among the different members of the minority group
- 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