1.5 Minority Influence: Consistency, Commitment and Flexibility

AQA 7182 · about 60 minutes · Write-in edition

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer all questions. Write full sentences for extended responses and the final 16-mark essay. Time guidance: 60 minutes total.

1 Define flexibility and name associated researcher.

(Total for Question 1 is 2 marks)

2 Evaluate two methodological limitations of Moscovici's study.

(Total for Question 2 is 4 marks)

3 Outline supportive research for flexibility in minority influence.

(Total for Question 3 is 4 marks)

4 Explain synchronic and diachronic consistency.

(Total for Question 4 is 4 marks)

5 Define commitment and the augmentation principle.

(Total for Question 5 is 2 marks)

6 Outline Moscovici's procedure in the blue-green slide study.

(Total for Question 6 is 4 marks)

7 Explain the augmentation principle with an applied example.

(Total for Question 7 is 3 marks)

8 Evaluate the claim that consistency alone explains minority influence.

(Total for Question 8 is 4 marks)

9 Discuss research into minority influence. In your answer, you should describe relevant empirical studies and theoretical ideas, evaluate their strengths and limitations, and consider how the three factors of consistency, commitment and flexibility interact to explain when minorities succeed. Refer to research and theory throughout your answer.

(Total for Question 9 is 16 marks)

10 Apply minority influence factors to a workplace scenario.

(Total for Question 10 is 6 marks)

Mark scheme · 1.5 Minority Influence: Consistency, Commitment and Flexibility

Question 1

flexibility: minority willingness to adapt, compromise and negotiate rather than being rigidly uncompromising oe **B1**

credits Nemeth as the researcher arguing flexibility increases persuasiveness of a minority oe **B1**

Answer: Flexibility is the minority's willingness to adapt and negotiate rather than being rigid; Nemeth is identified with arguing that flexibility enhances minority persuasiveness.

Question 2

identifies a methodological limitation, e.g. artificial laboratory setting and trivial task oe **M1**

explains why this matters: judging slide colours is low-stakes and may not reflect complex real-world influence such as political campaigns oe **A1**

identifies a second linked limitation, e.g. sample limits: all female samples or student participants oe **M1**

explains effect on generalisability: findings may not generalise to male populations, workplaces or broader communities oe **A1**

Answer: A key limitation is the artificial laboratory setting and trivial colour-judgement task, which is low-stakes and may not capture the complexity of real-world minority influence. Also, Moscovici used female student samples, limiting generalisability to other genders and populations.

Question 3

names a relevant study or researcher e.g. Nemeth's work on simulated juries or related lab studies oe **M1**

outlines the method briefly, e.g. tasks where a minority negotiated rather than insisted, such as juror group problem-solving studies oe **A1**

states the finding: flexible minorities that showed willingness to compromise were more likely to shift the majority or to influence discussion than rigid minorities oe **M1**

explains implication: flexibility aids persuasiveness by appearing reasonable and stimulating deeper processing of the minority view oe **A1**

Answer: Research by Nemeth using group decision tasks found that minorities who showed flexibility and willingness to compromise were more likely to influence group discussion and sometimes change majority decisions, implying that flexibility can be more persuasive than rigid consistency.

Question 4

synchronic consistency: the minority shows agreement among its members about the view, e.g. all members give the same opinion oe **M1**

explains that synchronic consistency makes the minority appear confident and united, increasing its credibility oe **A1**

diachronic consistency: the minority maintains the same position over time, repeatedly voicing the same view oe **M1**

explains that diachronic consistency suggests commitment and reliability, persuading others the view deserves attention oe **A1**

Answer: Synchronic consistency is when minority members agree with one another, making them appear united and credible. Diachronic consistency is when the minority keeps the same position over time, signalling commitment and reliability which can persuade others.

Question 5

commitment: the minority shows dedication often through costly or risky acts that demonstrate belief in their position oe **B1**

augmentation principle: costly or risky commitment increases the perceived validity of the minority's view, augmenting their influence oe **B1**

Answer: Commitment means the minority shows dedication, often by undertaking costly or risky acts. The augmentation principle states that such costly commitment increases others' perception that the minority truly believes its view, making the minority more influential.

Question 6

female participants were tested in groups including two confederates who formed the minority oe **M1**

the group judged the colour of a series of blue slides, reporting whether each slide was blue or green oe **M1**

on critical trials the two confederates consistently called the blue slides 'green', creating a consistent minority position oe **A1**

the number of times naive participants agreed with the minority answer was recorded as the measure of minority influence oe **A1**

Answer: Moscovici tested female participants in groups containing two confederates. The group judged whether a series of blue slides were blue or green. On critical trials the confederates consistently labelled blue slides as green and researchers recorded how often naive participants agreed with this minority answer.

Question 7

explains augmentation principle: costly or risky acts by the minority make observers attribute stronger conviction to the minority oe **M1**

applies to example: e.g. a campaign group staging a cold-night vigil in poor weather is costly, suggesting strong commitment oe **A1**

explains why this matters: observers see the cost and infer genuine belief, making them more likely to take the minority seriously oe **A1**

Answer: The augmentation principle says that when a minority carries out costly or risky acts, observers attribute stronger conviction to them. For example, a small campaign staging a cold-night vigil shows commitment through hardship, so bystanders infer the group genuinely believes its cause and are more likely to pay attention to its message.

Question 8

states a strength such as empirical support: Moscovici found consistent minorities were more influential than inconsistent ones oe **M1**

explains why this supports consistency as important, e.g. consistency increases perceived confidence and forces deeper processing by majorities oe **A1**

states a weakness such as evidence for other factors: Nemeth's work shows flexibility is also important, and augmentation principle highlights commitment oe **M1**

explains why this weakens the claim that consistency alone is sufficient to explain minority influence oe **A1**

Answer: A strength is Moscovici's finding that consistent minorities were more influential than inconsistent ones, supporting consistency as an important factor because it signals confidence and attracts attention. A weakness is that other research, notably Nemeth, shows flexibility matters and the augmentation principle highlights commitment, so consistency alone cannot fully explain when minorities persuade majorities.

Question 9

Level 4 Detailed knowledge and accurate understanding of research into minority influence. Evaluation is thoughtful and well developed, addressing methodological issues, theoretical alternatives and real-world implications. The answer integrates discussion of consistency, commitment and flexibility and uses appropriate empirical examples, such as Moscovici and Nemeth, to support points. **13-16**

Level 3 Good knowledge and understanding of research into minority influence with some evaluation. Discussion addresses several relevant studies and ideas and links at least two factors, but analysis may be less thorough or slightly unbalanced. **9-12**

Level 2 Some relevant knowledge of minority influence research is present but limited. Evaluation is present but superficial, and links between theory and studies are partial. Few empirical examples used or applied. **5-8**

Level 1 Very limited knowledge of research into minority influence. Little or no evaluation. Answer may be a list of brief points with weak linkage to studies or theory. **1-4**

Level 0 No creditable content. **0**

Indicative content:

- AO1: Moscovici's blue-green slide study procedure and findings: consistent minority produced a small but notable influence; inconsistent minority produced little influence.
- AO1: Definitions of synchronic and diachronic consistency, commitment and the augmentation principle, and Nemeth's argument for flexibility.
- AO2: Application of Moscovici to theory: consistency draws attention and causes deeper processing, supporting conversion rather than mere compliance.
- AO2: Application of commitment and augmentation: costly or effortful minority acts signal conviction and increase perceived validity, attracting converts.
- AO2: Application of flexibility: Nemeth's group decision work suggests minorities that negotiate persuade more effectively by stimulating discussion and not provoking rigid rejection.
- AO3: Methodological evaluation: Moscovici's lab tasks are artificial and use limited samples so external validity is limited; however lab control allows causal inference about consistency effects.
- AO3: Supporting and challenging evidence: replications and variations show sometimes small effects and cultural or contextual moderators; some later studies show stronger effects in realistic contexts while others find limited change.
- AO3: Theoretical integration: consistency, commitment and flexibility interact; consistency and commitment attract attention and credibility, while flexibility determines whether the majority will engage and adopt at least some points, leading to a snowball effect over time.
- AO3: Practical implications and limitations: minority influence research helps explain how social change can begin, but translating lab findings to complex real-world campaigns requires caution; ethical and contextual factors also matter.

Question 10

identifies synchronic consistency: they speak in unison and present the same proposal oe	**M1**
justifies that synchronic consistency makes them appear united and credible to others oe	**A1**
identifies commitment: they have trialled the rota privately, showing investment/effort oe	**M1**
explains this shows augmentation, increasing perceived sincerity of their proposal oe	**A1**
identifies lack of flexibility: they refuse to compromise when managers suggest small changes oe	**M1**
explains that inflexibility is likely harmful because Nemeth argues minorities that negotiate and adapt are more persuasive, so rigid refusal may reduce their influence oe	**A1**

Answer: They show synchronic consistency by speaking in unison, which makes them appear united. They show commitment by trialling the rota privately, signalling investment. They lack flexibility because they refuse to compromise; according to Nemeth this rigidity is likely to reduce persuasiveness and slow any snowballing of support.