**Real life examples of social change**

* The Green movement
* Christianity
* Suffragette movement
* Nazism

**Exam questions**

Outline and evaluate the role of minority influence in social change. (12 marks)

**AO2 Application of knowledge and understanding:**

**6 marks:** There is effective use of material to answer the question and provide informed commentary about the role of minority influence in social change.
There is effective evaluation of research.
A broad range of issues and/or evidence in reasonable depth, or a narrower range in greater depth is presented.
A clear expression of ideas, good range of specialist terms and few errors of grammar, punctuation and spelling are apparent.

**5–4 marks:** Reasonable evaluation
Material is not always used effectively, but does produce a reasonable commentary about the role of minority influence in social change.
There is reasonable evaluation of research.
A range of issues and/or evidence in limited depth, or a narrower range in greater depth is apparent.
A reasonable expression of ideas, a range of specialist terms and some errors of grammar, punctuation and spelling are apparent.

**AO1 Knowledge and understanding:**

**6 marks:** There is an accurate and reasonably detailed description that demonstrates sound knowledge and understanding of the role of minority influence in social change. There is appropriate selection of material to answer the question.
Presentation of material is clear and coherent.

**5–4 marks:** There is a less detailed, but generally accurate description that demonstrates relevant knowledge and understanding of the role of minority influence in social change.
There is some evidence of selection of material to answer the question.
Presentation of material is in an appropriate form

**Answer A:**

While majority influence serves to maintain social order, minority influence helps to bring social change. This happens because minority influence can change attitudes and behaviour over time by affecting big changes in people’s belief systems. This allows innovation to occur and new ideas and practices become adopted as mainstream ones. For example, when Greenpeace started many years ago most people saw them as cranks, but over time people thought about what they were saying and came round to their way of thinking. Nowadays the kind of environmental beliefs that Greenpeace proposed have become mainstream beliefs.

The gradual process by which minority opinions turn into majority ones is called social cryptoamnesia, where converts are initially few and occur slowly, but as more people convert to the minority, the pace quickens and the minority gains status and acceptability, until they are the majority.

To affect such change minorities must be consistent and this was shown by Moscovici (1969) who found more participants agreed with a wrong answer that was given consistently by a minority than inconsistently. Moscovici also showed that consistent minorities greatly influence private attitudes, as in another condition where participants gave answers privately there was even more agreement with the wrong answer. This suggests that minority influence affects thinking, which leads to changes in belief systems, which in turn can affect social change. Support came from Martin et al. (2003), who found that messages supported by a minority group were more resistant to change than if supported by a majority group, which suggests that cognitive processing of minority opinions creates attitudes that are strong enough to bring social change.

One criticism of Moscovici is that he only used female participants and Eagly & Carli (1981) showed that females conform more easily, so perhaps males wouldn’t be as easy to convince by minority opinion and agree to social change.

AO1: 6

AO2: 4

TOTAL: 10 MARKS

*Examiner comment:*

The candidate focuses on minority influence well. The use of examples is a very good idea and can really clarify theoretical ideas. There is an accurate description here and while there is always more that could be said, in the context of an examination this would get a very good mark. The evaluation here uses research evidence very effectively. The last point could perhaps be elaborated a little and there needs to be more of a focus on evaluating the role of minority influence.

**Answer B:**

Minority influence is different to majority influence, as majority influence keeps things the same, while minority influence changes them. This takes time as people need to be persuaded more by a minority than they do by a majority.

Minority influence can still be considered a type of conformity, just a different one to majority influence. Minority influence affects your thinking and can get you to change your attitude to things. If enough people do that then social change can occur.

Moscovici did a famous study on minority influence. Minorities of two girl confederates attempted to persuade larger amounts of girls to say that blue slides were green. 8% did if they consistently said the slides were green, but only 1% did if they did this inconsistently. It wasn’t difficult because when there were no confederates giving wrong answers nobody said they were green. This shows that minority influence does affect people if the minority is consistent, but it was a bit unethical as deceit was involved. The confederates weren’t real participants and if you have deceit then you can’t get informed consent. On way round this is to get presumptive consent by asking people similar to the participants whether they’d take part in the study after giving them all the details.

It was all girls in the study too, so we’d have to test boys too and see if the results were the same for them.

Social change is usually good, but sometimes it’s bad, like the Nazis gradually coming to power and persuading people that the Jews had to be exterminated. So maybe minority influence isn’t always such a good idea.

AO1: 2

AO2: 2

TOTAL: 4 MARKS

*Examiner comment:*

The candidate knows something about whatto write, but hasn’t given careful enough thought to howto write it effectively. It is not clear what is description and what is evaluation – it is never a good idea to leave it up to examiners to make their own mind up about such things! The study is relevant but not used effectively and the evaluation has only a vague focus on the role of minority influence. All in all, there is a lack of coherence to this answer.