

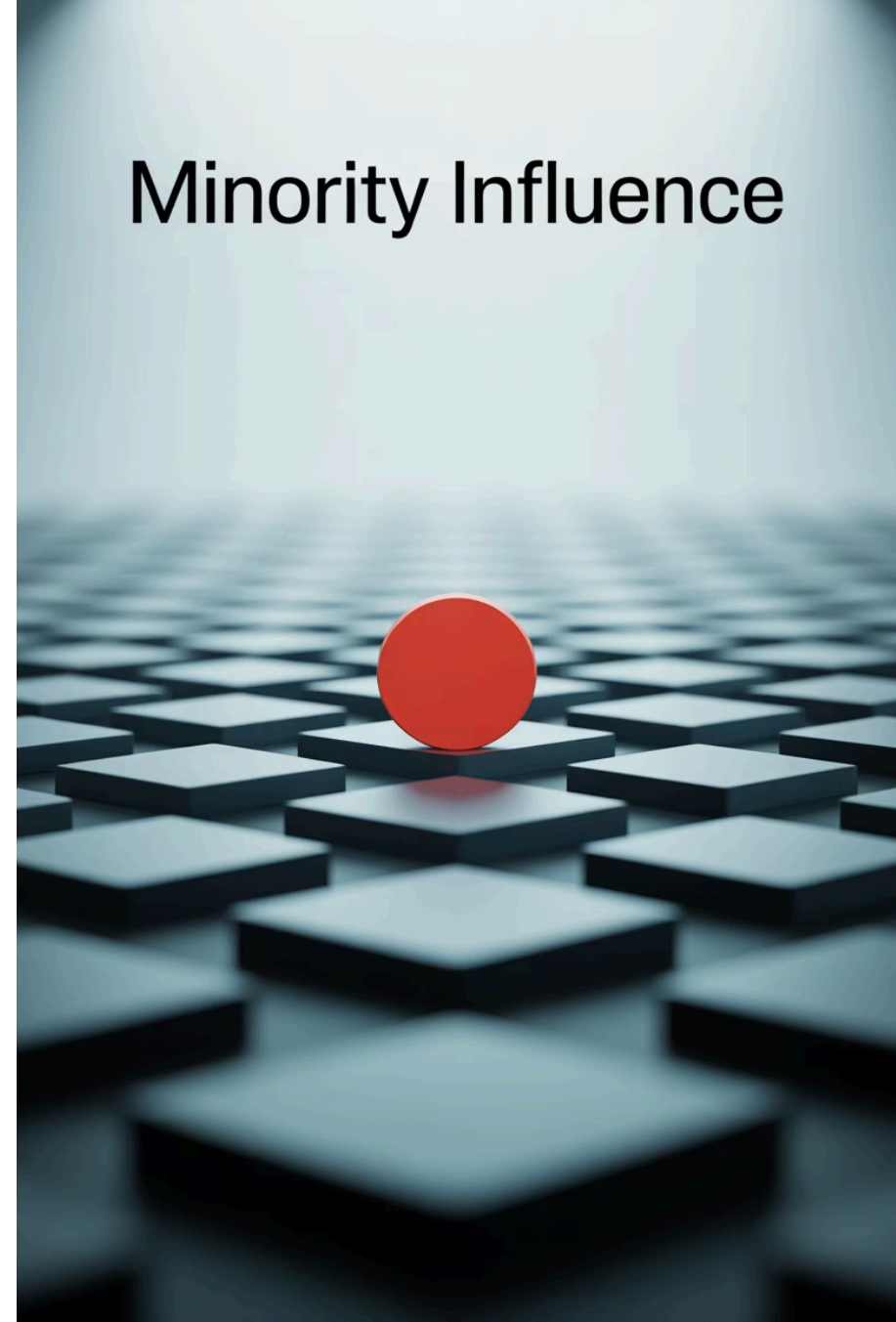
Minority Influence

What is Minority Influence?

Minority influence occurs when a small group influences the opinions or behaviour of a larger group.

Unlike conformity, this influence often results in internalisation — people adopt the minority's viewpoint privately after deeper consideration.

 **by Stephen Renwick**





Key Factors That Make Minority Influence Effective

1

Consistency

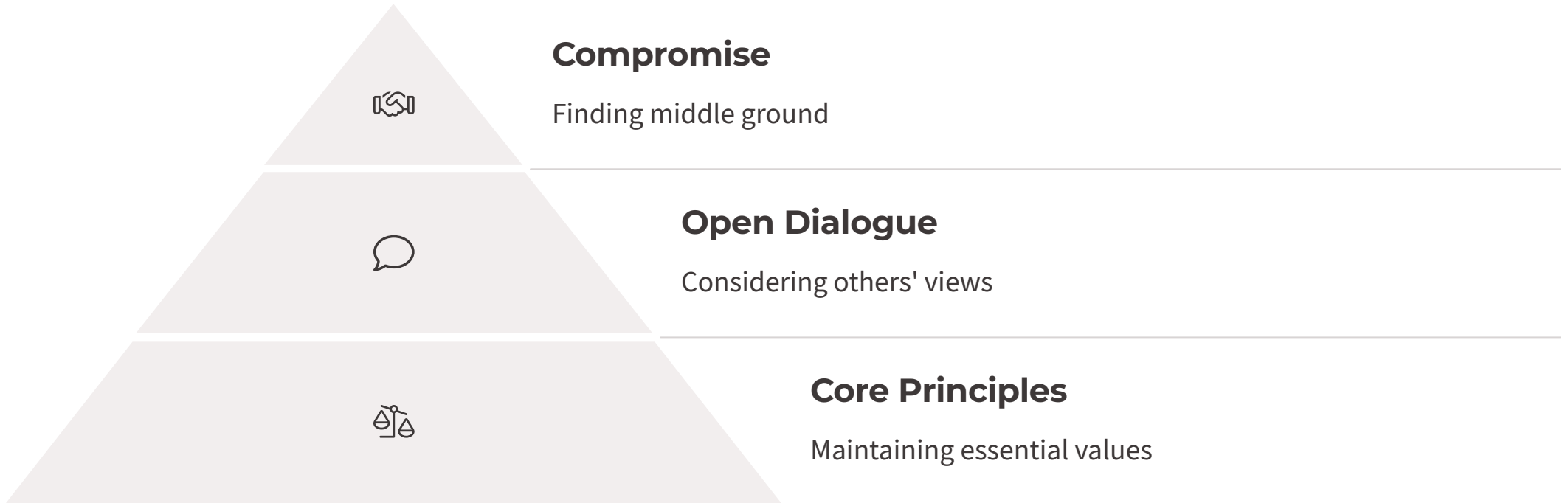
Minorities must express the same views over time and within the group. This shows confidence and commitment.

2

Commitment

Sticking to beliefs despite difficulty is persuasive. This "augmentation principle" amplifies the message through sacrifice.

The Power of Flexibility



Minorities must not be too rigid or dogmatic. Willingness to compromise while keeping core messages intact proves more persuasive than inflexibility.

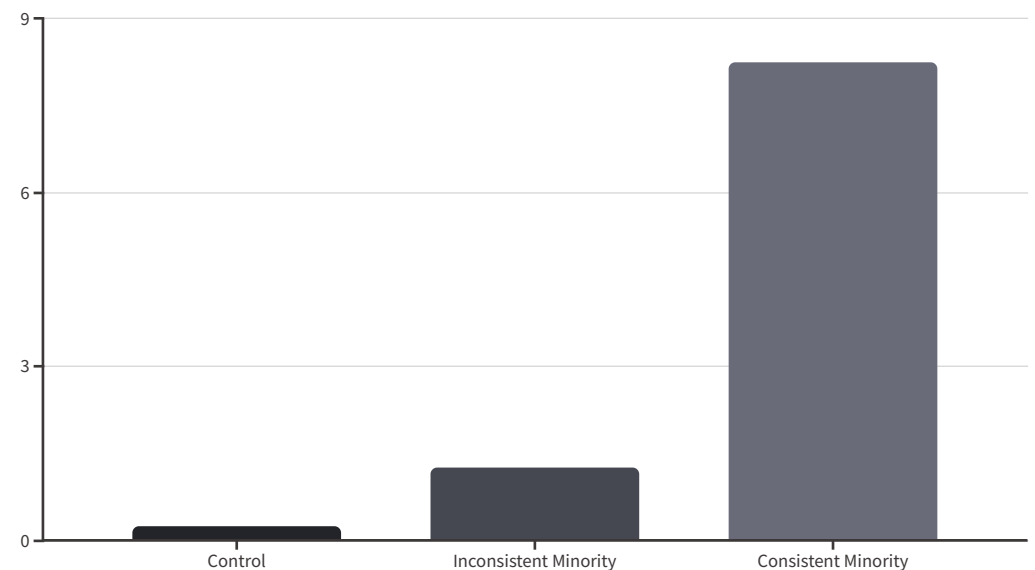
Moscovici et al. (1969)

Procedure

- **Aim:**
To investigate whether a consistent minority could influence a majority in a situation involving visual perception.
- **Participants:**
 - 192 female participants in groups of six.
 - Each group included four real participants and two confederates.
- **Task:**
 - Participants were shown 36 blue-coloured slides of varying brightness and asked to state the colour aloud.
 - The real task was always blue, but the minority confederates gave incorrect answers on purpose.
- **Conditions:**
 - a. Consistent minority: Confederates said “green” on all 36 trials.
 - b. Inconsistent minority: Confederates said “green” on 24 trials and “blue” on 12 trials.
 - c. Control group: No confederates; all participants judged the slides on their own.

Findings

- **Consistent condition:**
 - Participants gave the incorrect response (“green”) in 8.42% of trials.
 - 32% of participants were influenced at least once.
- **Inconsistent condition:**
 - Yielded only 1.25% agreement with the minority view.
- **Control group:**
 - Less than 1% of responses were incorrect.



Conclusion

- A consistent minority is significantly more influential than an inconsistent one.
- This supports the idea that consistency is key in minority influence and social change.
- The study demonstrated that a minority can influence the majority, but the effect is often subtle and gradual.

Further Research

Nemeth & Brilmayer (1987) *Support for Flexibility*

- In a simulated jury study, a minority arguing for alternative compensation for a person involved in a ski-lift accident had no effect when they were rigid and uncompromising.
- However, when they showed flexibility—by compromising a little—they were more influential.
- This supports the idea that flexibility, alongside consistency, is crucial for minority influence.

Nemeth (2010) *Dissenters Liberate People*

- Found that exposure to minority dissent can stimulate divergent thinking.
- This helps people consider more options, be more creative, and escape group conformity.
- Suggests minority influence has real value in encouraging independent thought.
- Supported by Van Dyne and Saavedra (1996) who researched work groups and dissent roles. Findings showed that groups made better choices when exposed to the minority's point of view.

Mackie (1987) *Majorities May Prompt More Processing*

- Argued that people are more likely to deeply process the views of a majority because they assume the majority is likely to be correct.
- Minority views, by contrast, are often dismissed or seen as irrelevant.
- This challenges the idea that minority views always lead to deeper cognitive processing.
- Typically, people don't spend too much time processing the minority's message, and this means it tends to be less influential.

Xie et al. (2011) *Tipping Point for Majority Change*

- Used computational models and found a tipping point: Once 10% of people held a consistent minority view, it quickly spread and influenced the majority opinion.
- Supports how consistency in minority influence can lead to rapid and large-scale social change.
- Tipping the majority into the minority view is known as the snowball effect.



Evaluation of Minority Influence

Strengths

- Research evidence supports consistency
- Explains real-life social change
- Accounts for civil rights progress

Limitations

- Lab studies lack ecological validity
- Artificial tasks like colour judgments
- Real change often takes significant time

Questions

Briefly explain what is meant by 'minority influence'. (2)

Outline what is meant by consistency, commitment and flexibility. (6)

Describe and evaluate research into minority influence. (16)

