

Safety Culture:

What it is,

Why its different.

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Overview

- Safety culture
 - Importance
 - Definition
 - Nature
- Assessment issues to consider
- Conclusions



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Organizational failure

- Despite the adoption of a full range of safety arrangements, complex systems broke down disastrously, because the people running them failed to do what they were supposed to do
- These were not simply individual errors, but malpractices that corrupted the social system and organizational functioning.

Lee (1997)

Safety culture

- Abstract concept that was created to describe a collective failure to implement know controls to prevent catastrophic events.
- Prior to the event people believed they were safe
- Safety was a priority for organization
- Useful in understanding low probability high consequence events (disasters and fatalities)

Safety Culture is:

the shared

values attitudes behaviour

*that determines the
effectiveness of*

safety management

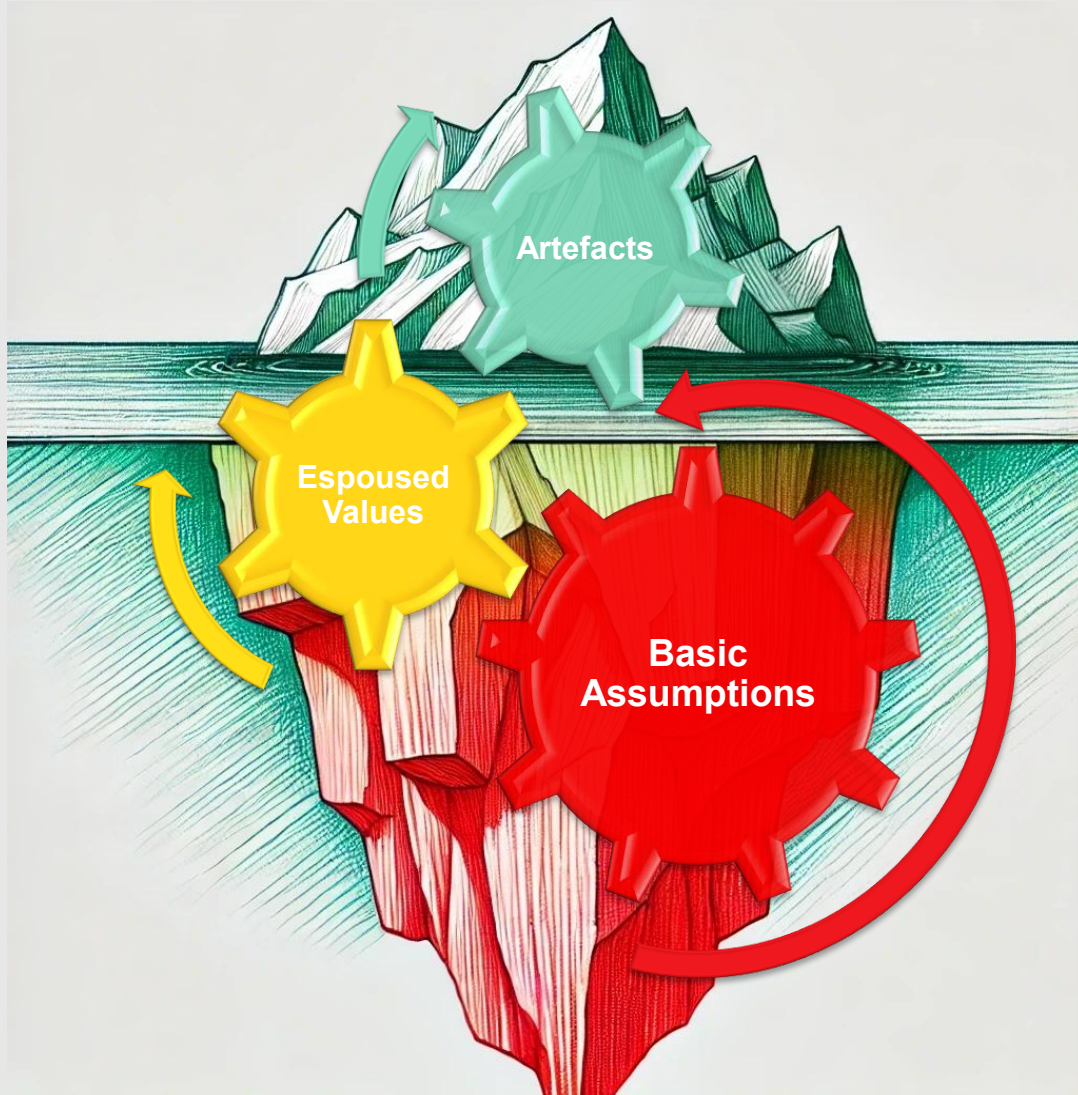
Key elements of safety culture definitions

- It is something that people share
- Organizational rather than individual level construct
- It is multi faceted and complex
- Includes values, attitudes, beliefs, norms practices related to risk and safety
- It influences safety practices and behavior

Nature of safety culture

- Construct not an object
 - Helps us think about the nontangible aspects of safety
 - Represents shared values and norms
- Influences how group members think about risk and safety
 - What is the nature of safety
 - How is safety viewed (problem, process, business driver)
 - Who has agency and power
- Not directly observed but inferred from indicators
- High degree of variability

Culture Model



- **Artefacts:**
Visible manifestations of safety culture such as behavior, documents, signs.
- **Espoused values:**
Stated values, attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs about safety. What people say is important.
- **Basic Assumptions:**
Taken for granted beliefs about safety and the understanding of reality. These assumptions are the drivers of safety culture.

Safety Culture Assessment / Evaluation

API 1173- 10.2.4

- A comprehensive evaluation involves multiple methods
 - Surveys
 - Interviews and focus groups
 - Document analysis of policies, procedures, risk assessments, reporting and learning processes
 - Observation

Challenges

- Abstract construct, cannot measure, it is inferred from indicators
- Easy to misinterpret the data out of context
 - 75% agree leaders are committed to safety, expressed as 25% of managers are not committed
- Perceptions are not facts, so require interpretation
- Humble inquiry requires openness and self criticism, which could be used against you
- Diverse range of approaches, some with questionable validity



What is the height of the Eiffel Tower?

320.75m (+/- 15cm)



How much fun are we having?

Average rating of 7.25 on a 0-10 scale

320.75m is a very different type of number than 7.25

Perception-led multi method

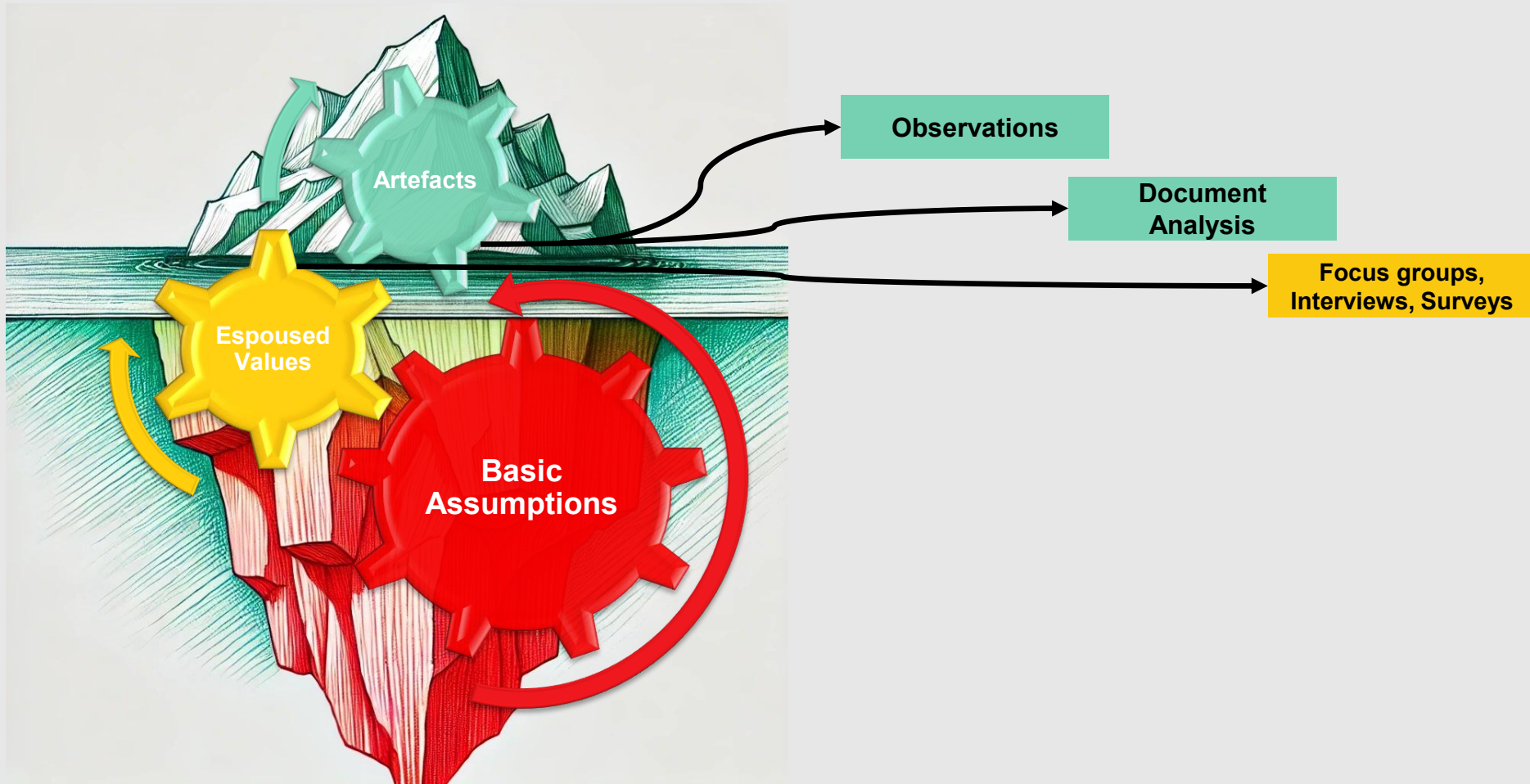
Strengths

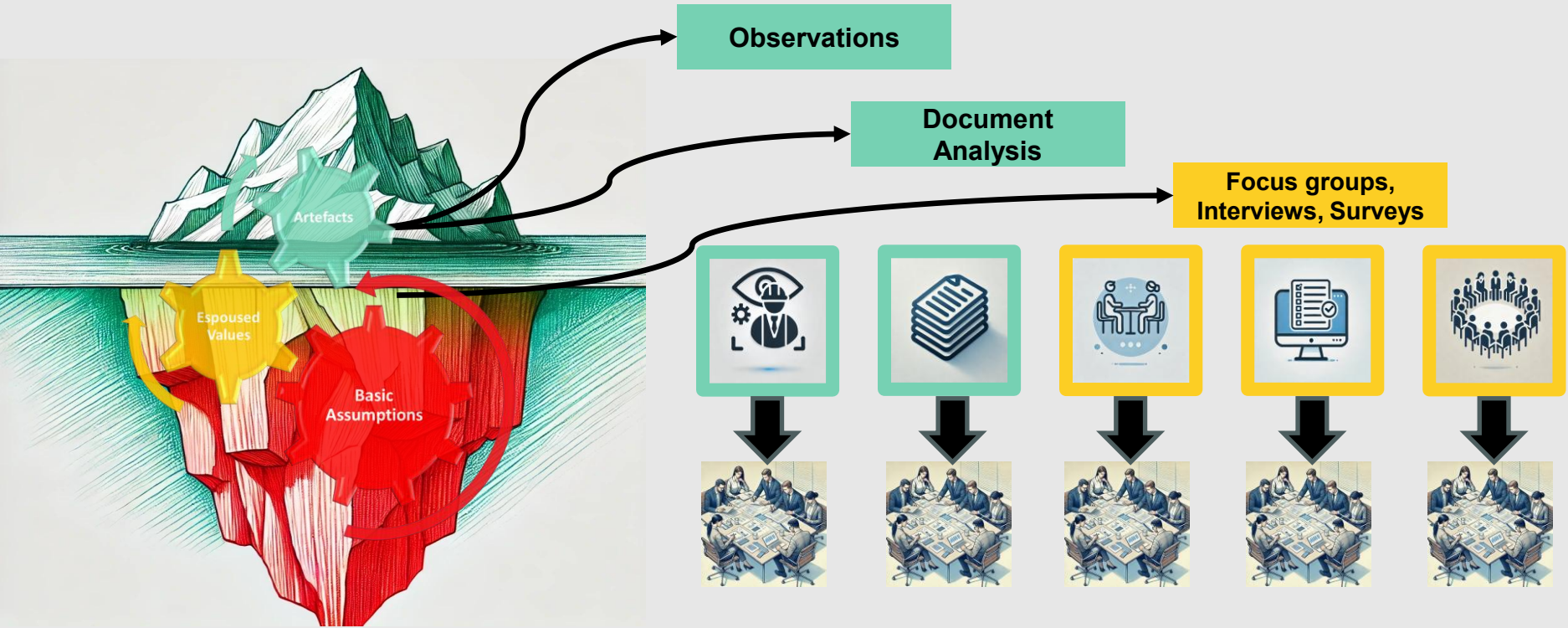
- Uses multiple methods (document analysis, observation, focus groups)
- Can provide insight into the drivers of perceptions

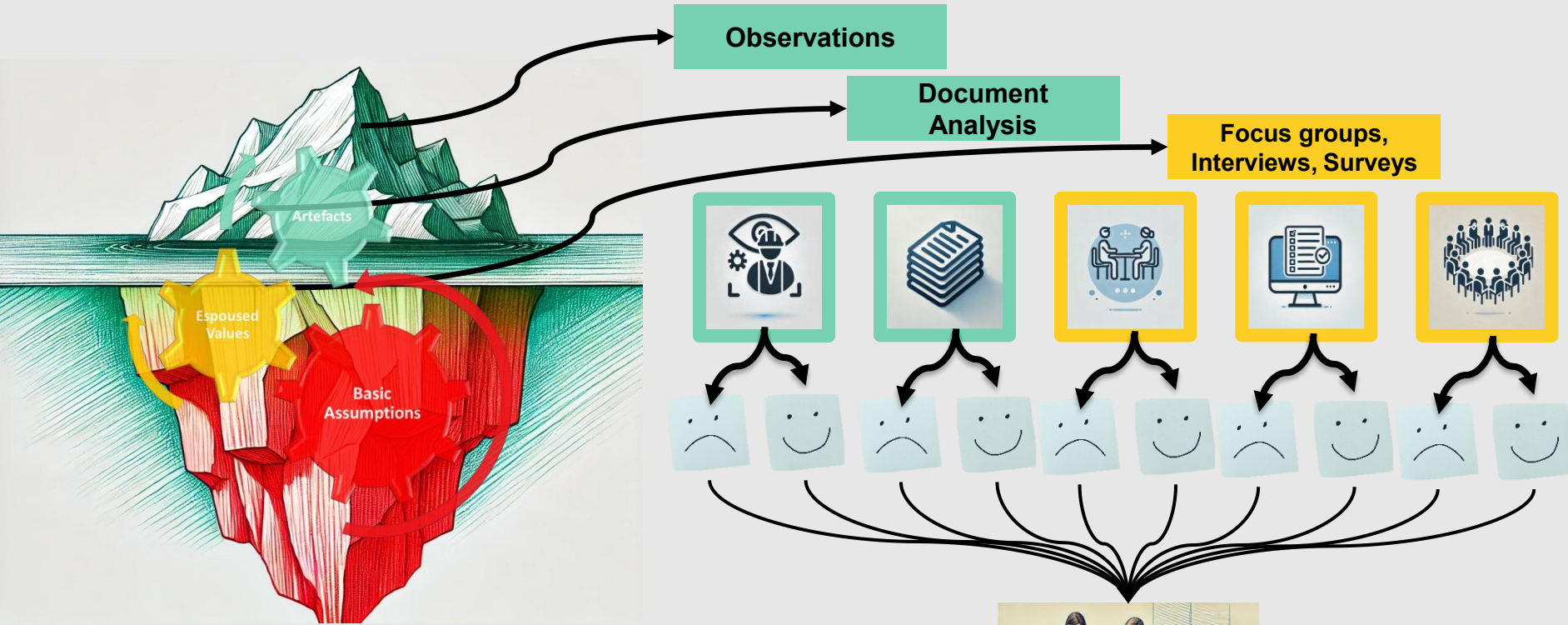
Limitations

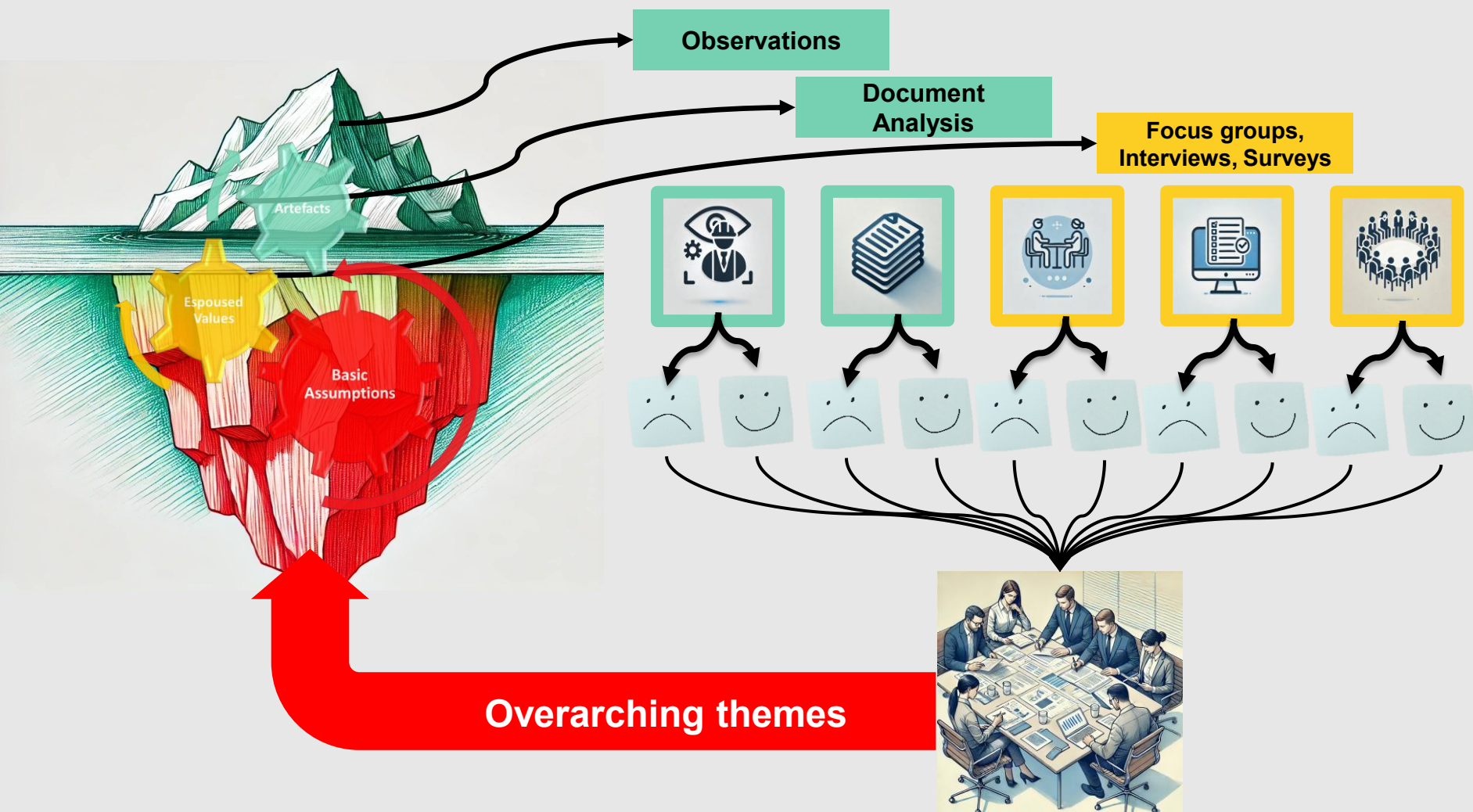
- Assessment is limited to the initial results obtained from the survey
- Improvements focused on changing perceptions
- Occupational safety concerns often dominate
- Tends not to get at basic assumptions

Comprehensive assessment









Comprehensive approach

Strengths

- Provides insight into basic assumptions and drivers of safety culture
- Based on solid theoretical foundations
- Consistent with safety culture frameworks
- Flexible

Limitations

- Very resource intensive
- Need knowledge of safety culture to understand findings
- Assessment does not provide a list of tangible improvement actions
- Lack of competent providers

Improvement

Regulator

- Broad and shared understanding of safety culture and capacity
- View safety culture as a construct vs. object
- Awareness of limits of control
- Balancing desire for quick improvement with duty holder ownership
- Able to deal with knowing too much

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- Broad and shared understanding of safety culture and capacity
- View safety culture as a construct vs. object
- Improvement vs. compliance orientated
- Actively seeking out cultural threats
- Seeking insights from many stakeholders

Summary

- Safety culture is an important construct, but not an object
- Avoid simplistic approaches
 - Beware of delusion of objectivity
- Develop a sophisticated understanding of safety culture
- Assessments should produce insight, not a good-bad classification



Thank you



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