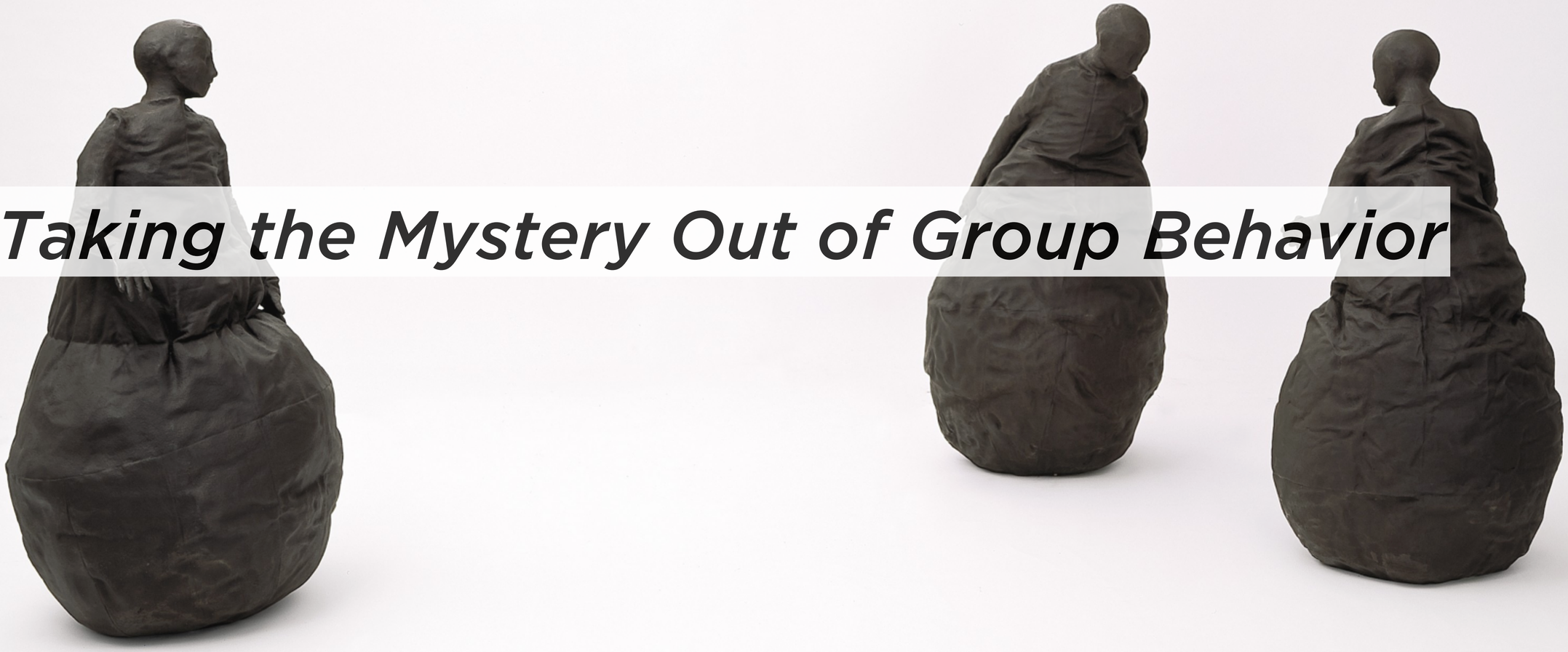
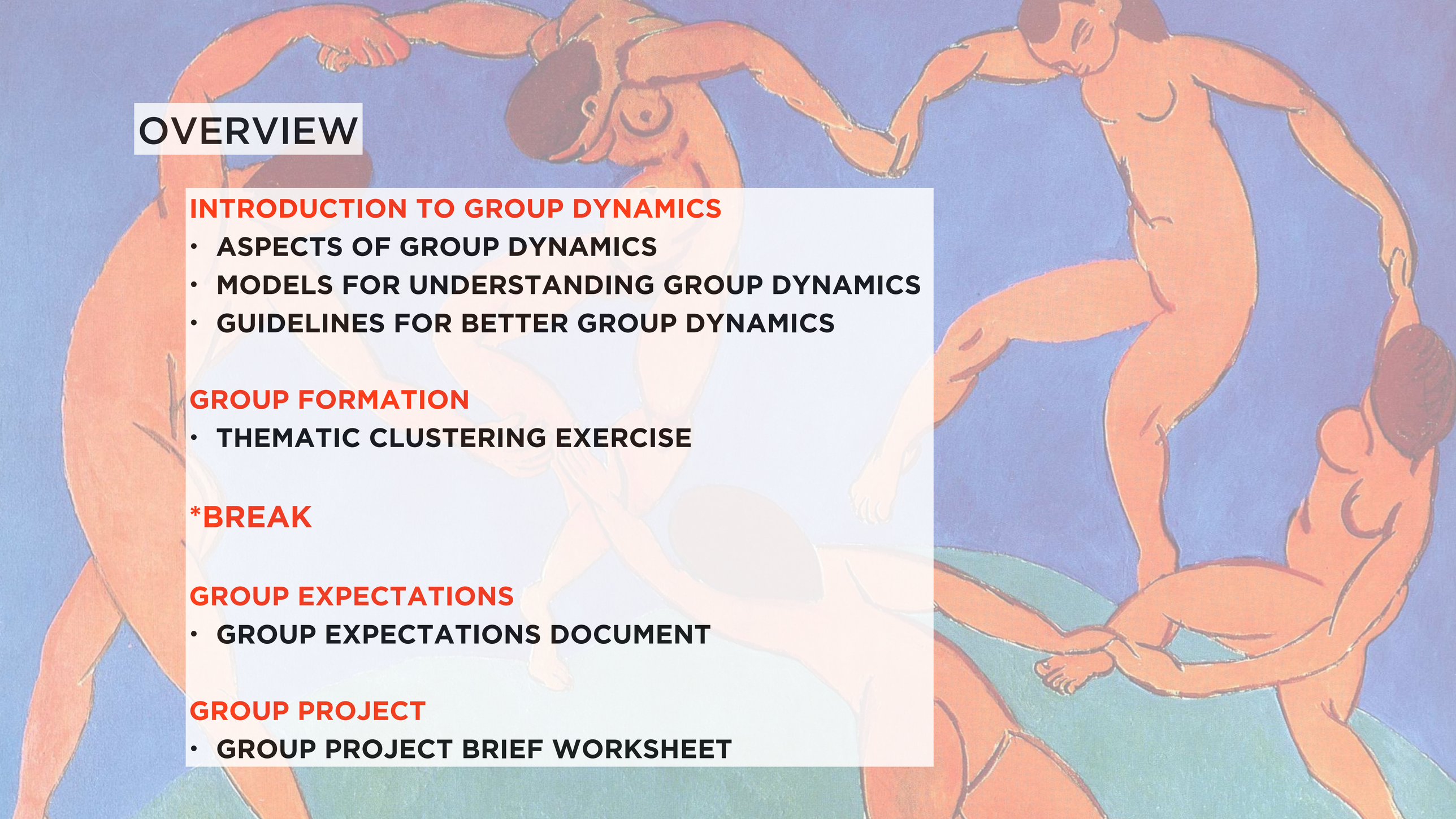
Taking the Mystery Out of Group Behavior





OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION TO GROUP DYNAMICS

- ASPECTS OF GROUP DYNAMICS
- MODELS FOR UNDERSTANDING GROUP DYNAMICS
- GUIDELINES FOR BETTER GROUP DYNAMICS

GROUP FORMATION

- THEMATIC CLUSTERING EXERCISE

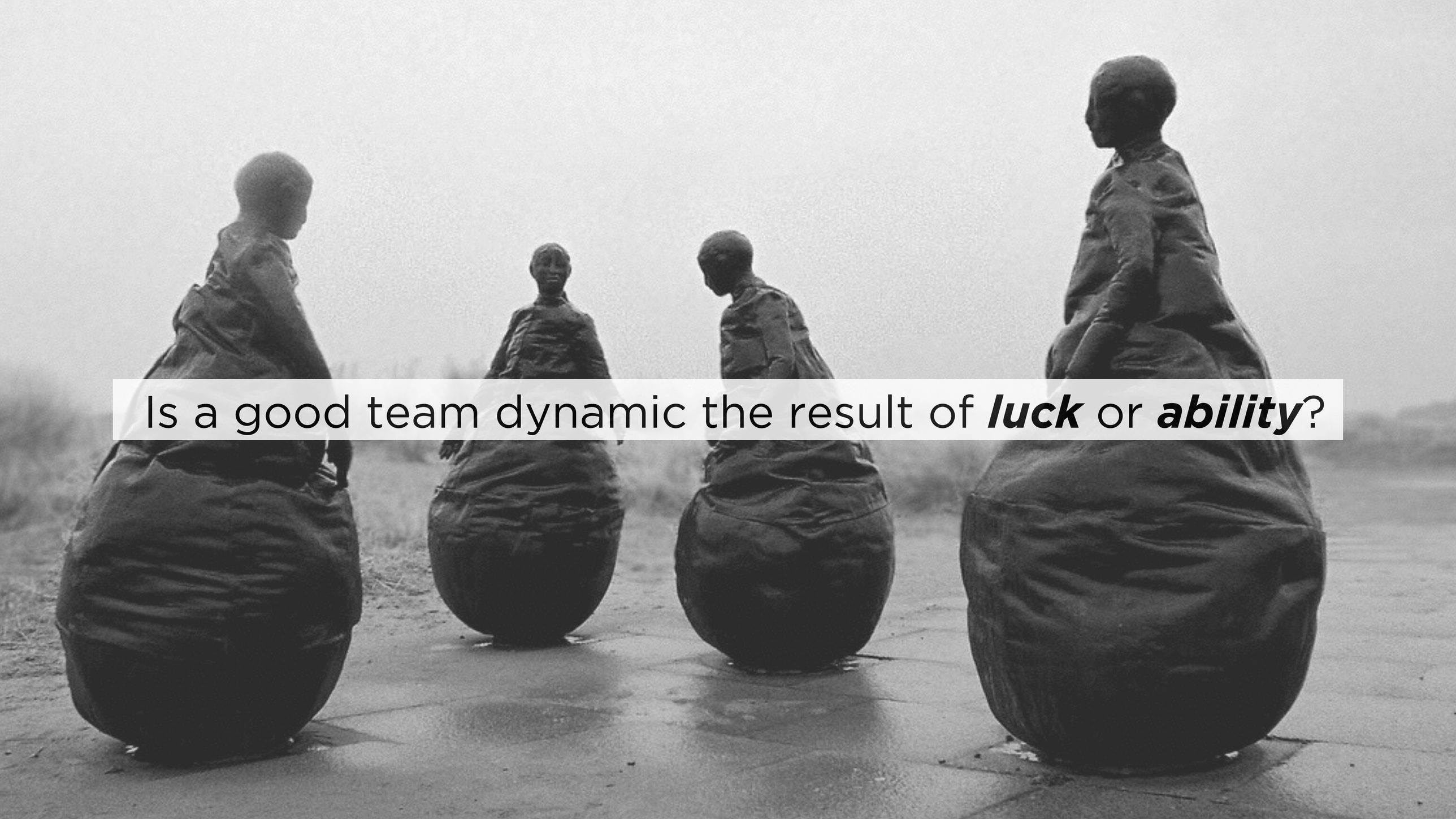
*BREAK

GROUP EXPECTATIONS

- GROUP EXPECTATIONS DOCUMENT

GROUP PROJECT

- GROUP PROJECT BRIEF WORKSHEET


Is a good team dynamic the result of ***luck*** or ***ability***?

Patterns of Dominant U.S. Culture

Communication Style

- English is the spoken language and many are not fluent in a second language
- Speakers often interrupt and do not connect previous comments
- Messages use explicit and direct verbal communication
- Content is intellectual and depersonalized

Conflict Style

- Intent is to find solutions
- Method is logical and unemotional
- Conflict is something to be avoided, or if addressed, to be dominated

Patterns of Dominant U.S. Culture

Individualism/Collectivism

- Relationships start and end quickly; boundaries are loose
- Groups often have marginal and excluded members
- Achievement is valued
- Identity is based on oneself

Task/Relationship

- Things get done by following procedures in a linear manner
- Attention to relationships, feelings, and process is minimal
- Outside authority and empirical evidence is valued

Leadership

- Decision-making is somewhat decentralized.
- Leaders are somewhat directive and tend to individual needs

Table 1. Dominant and Subordinate Groups.

	Dominant	**Subordinate**
Age	middle-aged	youth, elders
Gender	men	women
Race	White	People of Color
Nationality	North American Western European	Eastern European, African, Asian, Latin American
Ability	persons physically/mentally able	persons with physical/mental disabilities
Language	native English speakers	native speakers of other languages
Religion	Christians	Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindi, Agnostics, Atheists, etc.
Sexual Orientation	heterosexuals	gays, lesbians, bisexuals

Andrews, Rita J. “Being the Only”

Table 1. General Characteristics of High and Low Context Cultures.[3]

Low Context	High Context
• Messages are explicit. Words carry most of the information	• High use of nonverbal. Message implicit
• One's identity is rooted in the individual; act for the good of the self	• One's identity rooted in groups; act for the good of the group
• Independence	• Interdependence
• Relationships start and end quickly	• Relationships build slowly
• Focus on *doing* task	• Focus on *being*
• Time is limited (monochronic); time is money commodity to spend/save	• Time is plentiful (polychronic); in its own time; process, belongs to nature/others
• One truth	• Many truths
• Problem-solving	• Continuous improvement
• Space is territorial (farther apart)	• Space is communal (stand close)
• Mastery over nature; free will	• Harmony with nature; predestination
• Emotions are dangerous	• Emotions are desirable
• Human behavior is rational/controlled	• Human behavior is emotional/expressive
• Conflict is depersonalized; withdraw and get on with the task	• Conflict is personalized and must be solved before work can progress

Gallant, Susan M. "Cultural Assumptions in Cross-Cultural Relations"

A father and son are in a horrible car crash that kills the dad. The son is rushed to the hospital; just as he's about to go into surgery, the surgeon says, “I can't operate—that boy is my son!”

“What are the hidden biases of [good people]? They are--for lack of a better term--bits of knowledge about social groups. These bits of knowledge are stored in our brains because we encounter them so frequently in our cultural environments. **Once lodged in our minds, hidden biases can influence our behavior toward members of particular social groups, but we remain oblivious to their influence.**

Banaji, Mazhzarin R., Anthony G. Greenwald:
Blindspot: Hidden Biases of Good People, 2013

Becoming Aware of the Art of Listening

Becoming an Active Listener

- Pay attention, don’t fake your understanding.
- Listen for *total meaning* (message, emotional content, nonverbal behavior)
- Don’t give *advice*, instead offer *feedback*.

Traps that prevent Active Listening

- Encouraging the ‘shoot and reload’ conversation.
- Directing the speaker by bringing the conversation in a direction you want
- Satisfying your personal needs by probing, asking too many questions
- Being judgmental, injecting your personal values and opinions into the conversation
- Smoothing over conflict by making light of the other person’s personal problems
- Parroting back to the speaker exactly what he or she said.

Becoming Aware of Feedback

Guidelines for Constructive Feedback

- **DESCRIBE** vs. interpret the behavior
- Provide **SPECIFIC** vs. general observations of behavior
- Be sure that the feedback is **SOLITICTED** vs. imposed
- **IMMEDIATE** vs. delayed timing
- Address **MODIFIABLE BEHAVIOR** vs. unmodifiable

Guidelines for Receiving Feedback

- Understand what was said
- Be open rather than defensive
- Separate yourself from your behavior

Becoming Aware of Power Dynamics

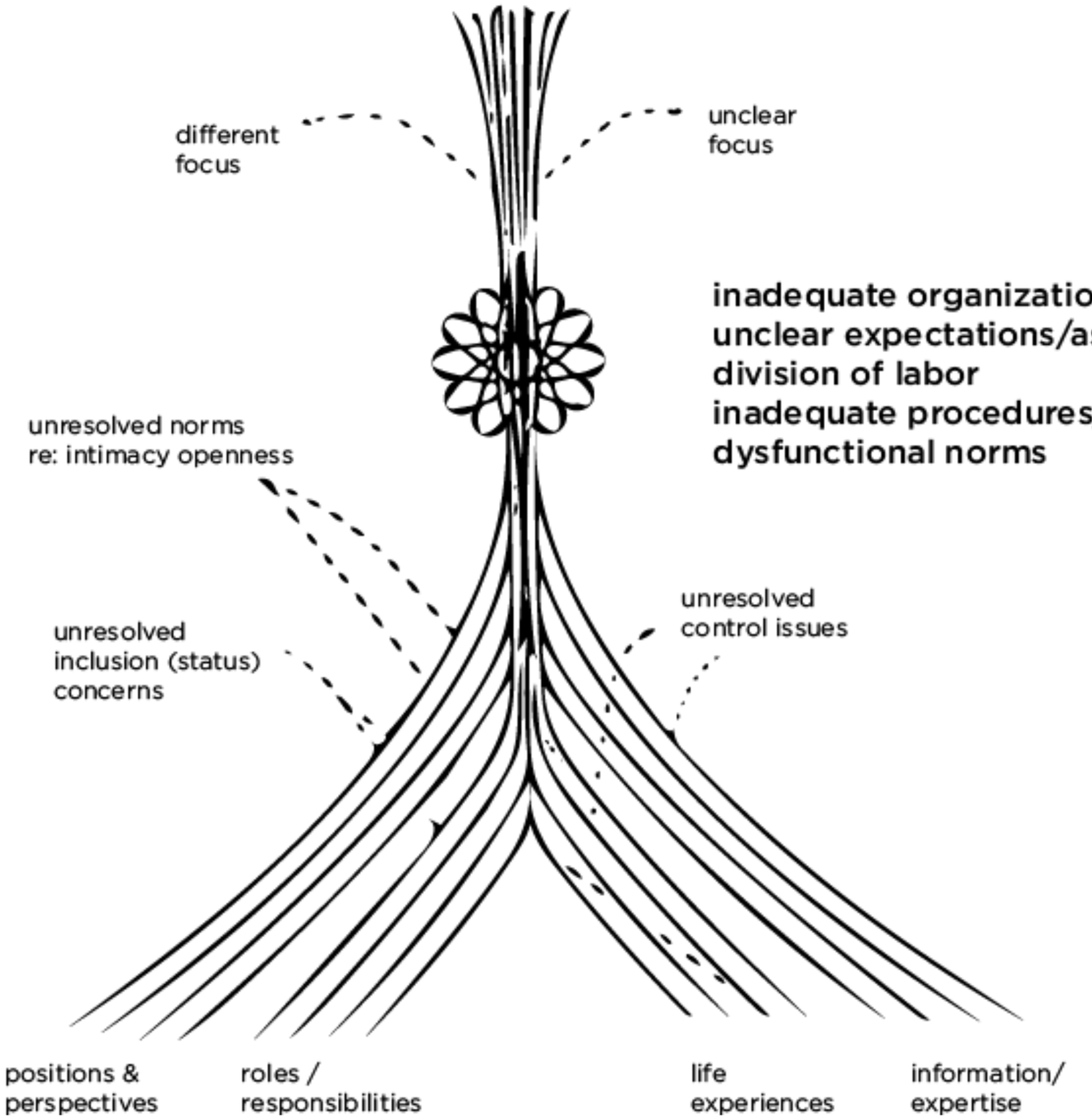
Understanding Power Differently

- Control issues can be more ‘covert’ than ‘overt’
- The “*Plop*”
- Leadership, responsibility, influence, procedure, decision making
- Understanding different personalities (Extroverts vs. Introverts)

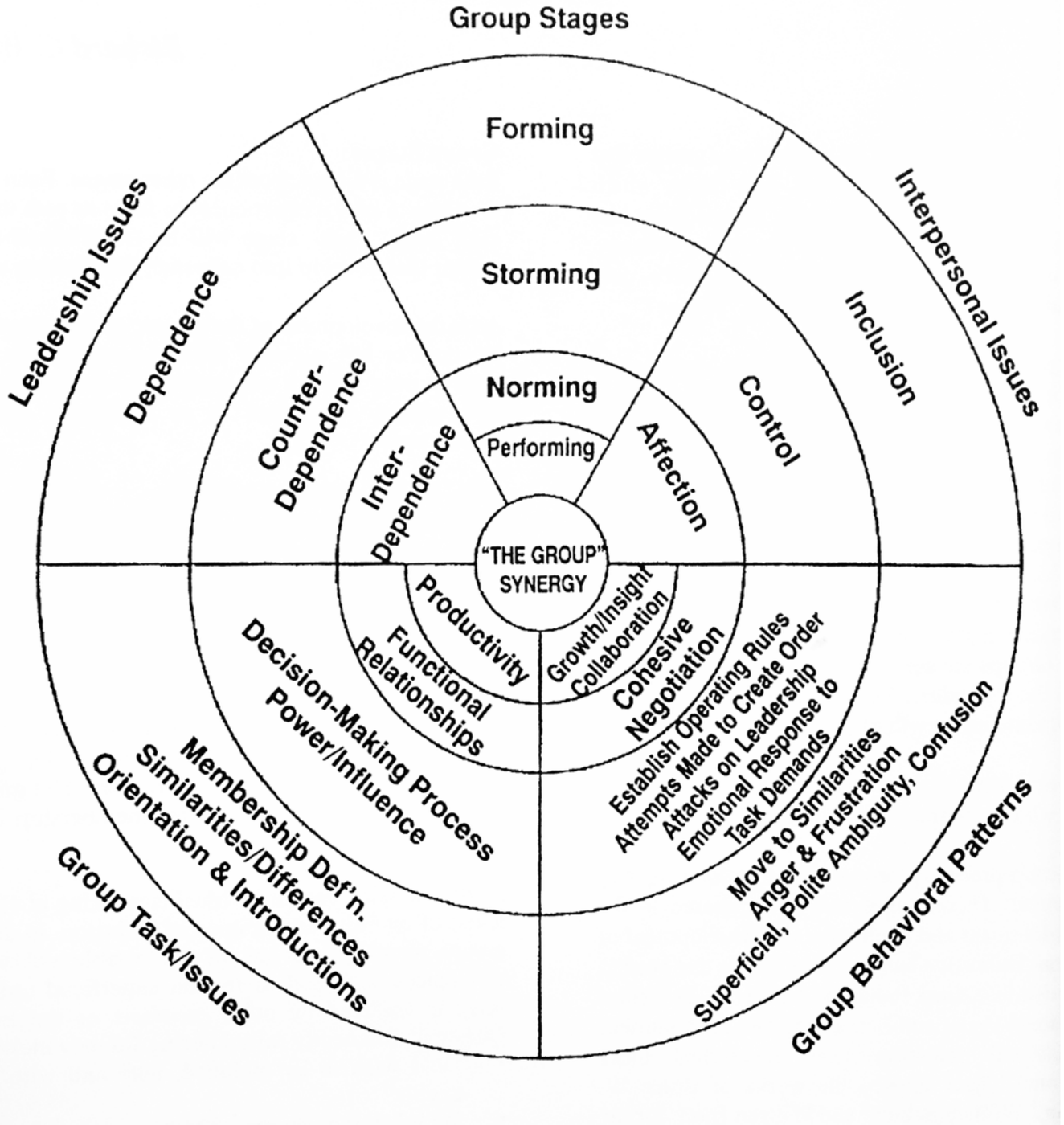
Suggestions for Addressing Power Dynamics

- “Calling the process”
- Balance group work with individual work
- Acknowledge and validate one another
- Create a good work space (be open and discuss expectations)

TASK FOCUS



Klein, Donald C. "Taking the Mystery
Out of Group Behavior: An Energy Flow Model"



Weber, Richard C. "The Group: Opportunity and Reality"

Guidelines for Dialogue

- Honor self & others.
- Be fully present, here and now.
- Practice deep listening.
- Suspend judgement.
- Seek to understand rather than convince.
- Pay attention to your own assumptions and make them explicit
- When you are holding a position, make that clear – hold it gently. Be open to influence. Be open to change.
- Be attentive to the emerging collective meaning.
- Speak your truth and speak from the heart.
- Live in the question and let the answer emerge.

Table 1. Personal/Interpersonal Behaviors to Pay Attention to.

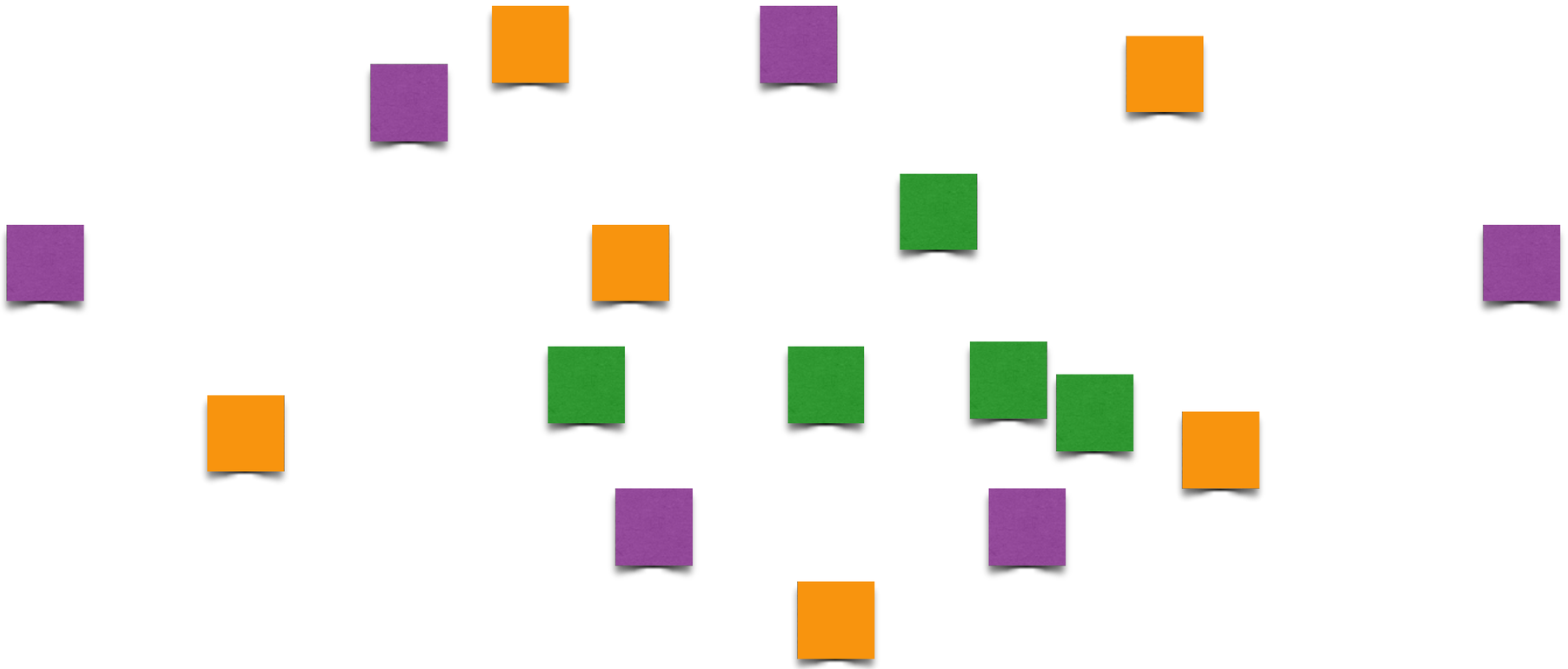
Usually Not Helpful	Usually Helpful
Staying in the **there-and-then**	Moving between there-and-then and **here-and-now**
Speaking **impersonally**	Speaking **personally**
Speaking in **generalities**	Being **specific**
"People," "they," "we"	Using **"I"** statements
Thoughts (except about the process of the group)	**Feelings**
Advice	**Feedback**
Letting comments **"plop"**	**Responding** to others
Staying **uninvolved**	Being **involved**
Playing it **safe**	Taking appropriate **risks**
Making **tacit assumptions**	Being aware of and **checking out assumptions**
"Analyzing" others	**Sharing** self (reactions, feelings, wants, experiences)

Segal, Morley; Greig, Barbara. "T Groups: Some Guidelines for Success"

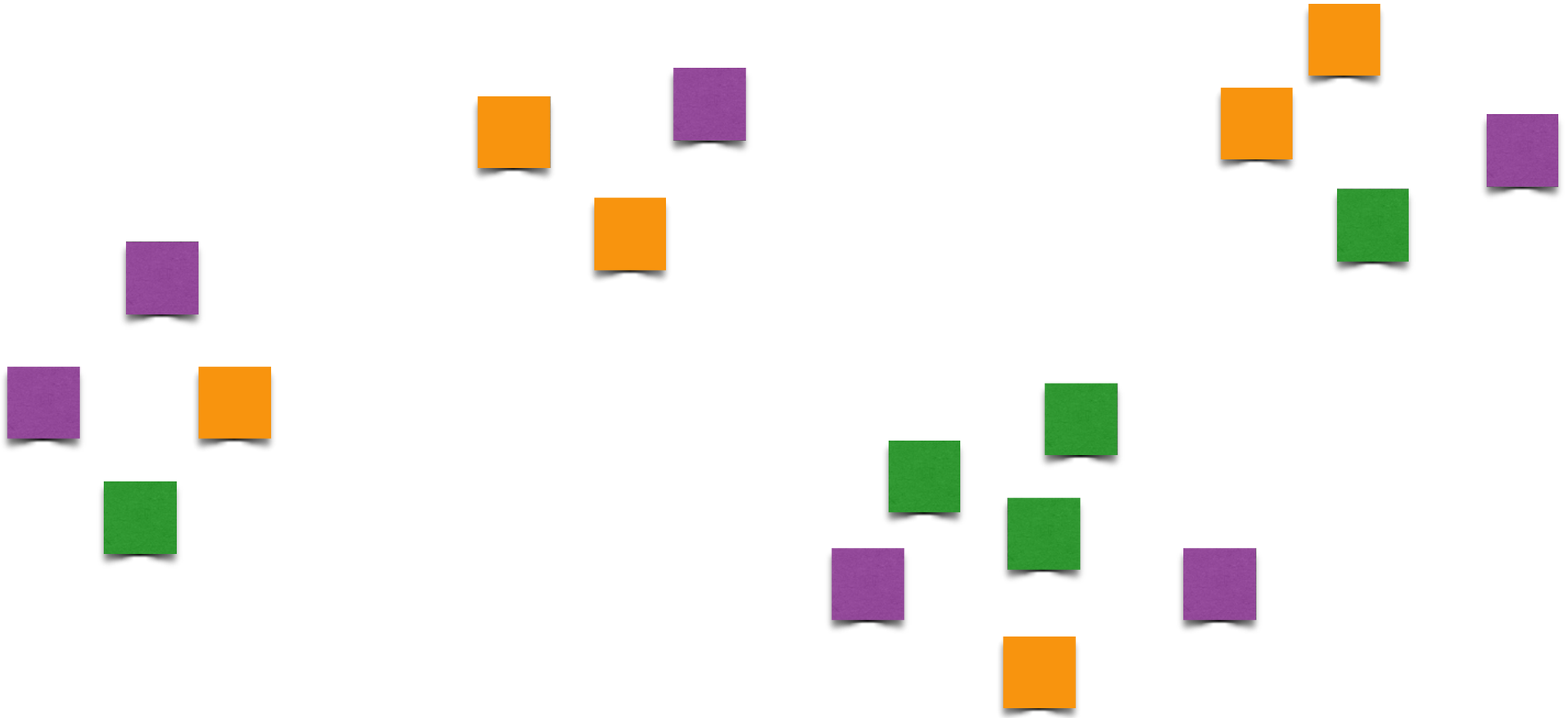
THANKS !

GROUP FORMATION

Thematic Clustering



Thematic Clustering



Thematic Clustering

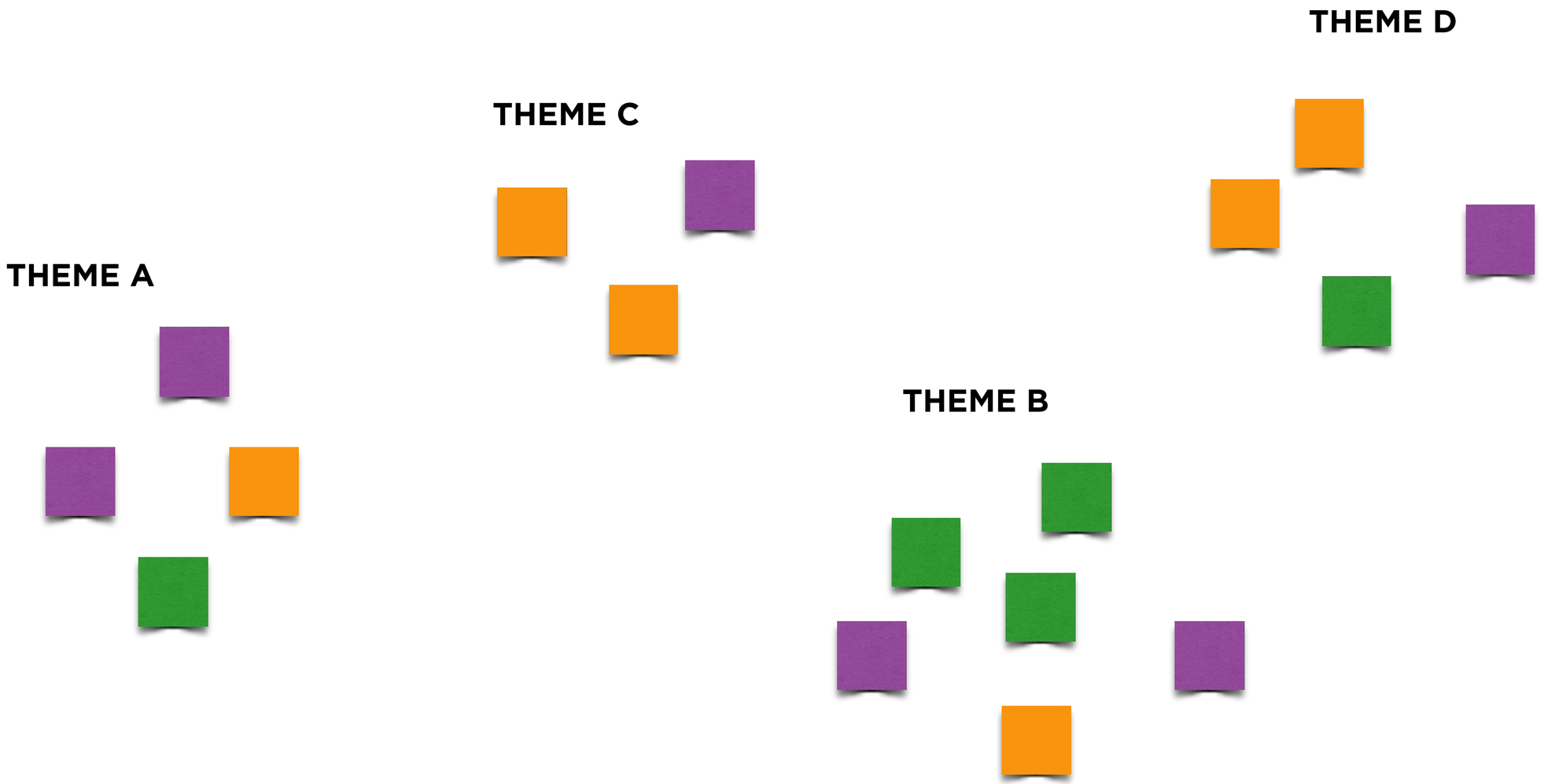


TABLE 3.3

Norm Issues for Team Meetings

Decisions	How should decisions be made? Must everyone agree for consensus? Does anyone have veto power?
Attendance	What are legitimate reasons for missing meetings? How should the team encourage regular attendance?
Assignments	When assignments are made, what should be done when team members do not complete them, or complete them poorly?
Participation	What should be done to encourage everyone to participate?
Meeting times	When do meetings occur? How often should the team meet? How long is a team meeting?
Agendas & minutes	Who is responsible for these activities? What other roles should be set up?
Promptness	What should be done to encourage promptness?
Conversational courtesies	How can the team encourage members to listen attentively and respectfully to others? Does the team need rules to limit interruptions or prevent personal criticisms?
Enforcement	How should the team enforce its rules?

SOURCE: Adapted from Scholtes, P., *The team handbook: How to use teams to improve quality*. Madison, WI: Joiner Associates. Copyright © 1988.