If Racism Is a Public Health Crisis, What Does That Mean for My Work?

A Discussion With Dr. Camara Jones

An Anti-Racism Webinar Brought To You By
The Black@Abt Employee Networking Group

IF
racism is a public health crisis
THEN
what does that mean for my work?

Camara Phyllis Jones, MD, MPH, PhD

Invited Speaker
2021 Black History Month Speaker Series
Abt Associates

Via Zoom from Atlanta, Georgia
February 10, 2021

National Campaign Against Racism

Jones CP. Toward the Science and Practice of Anti-Racism: Launching a National Campaign Against Racism. *Ethnicity and Disease* 2018;28(Suppl 1):231-234.

National Campaign Against Racism

Name racism

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National Campaign Against Racism

Name racism

Ask "How is racism operating here?"

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National Campaign Against Racism

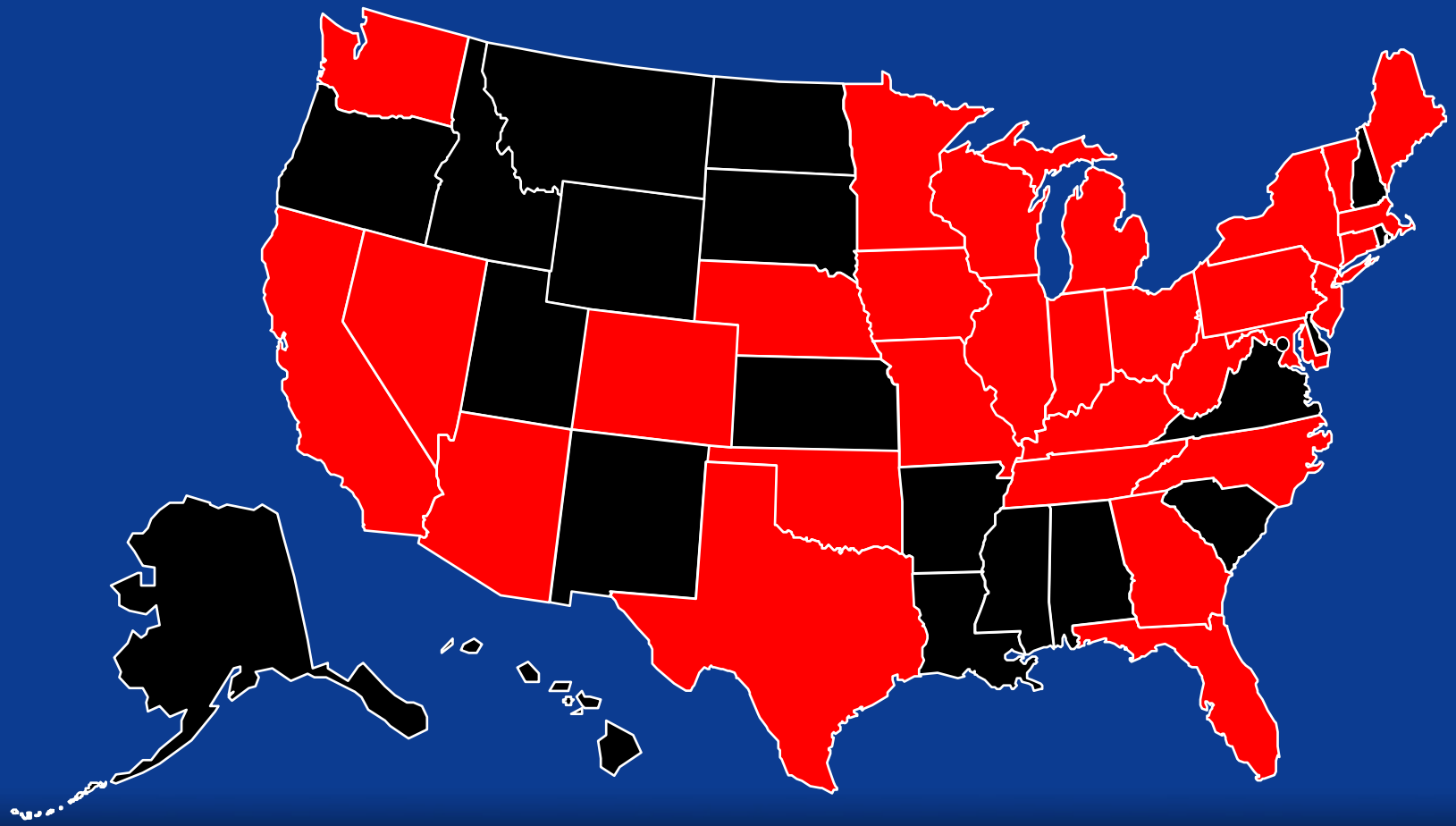
Name racism

Ask "How is racism operating here?"

Organize and strategize to act

Jones CP. Toward the Science and Practice of Anti-Racism: Launching a National Campaign Against Racism. *Ethnicity and Disease* 2018;28(Suppl 1):231-234.

States with jurisdictions declaring "Racism is a public health crisis"



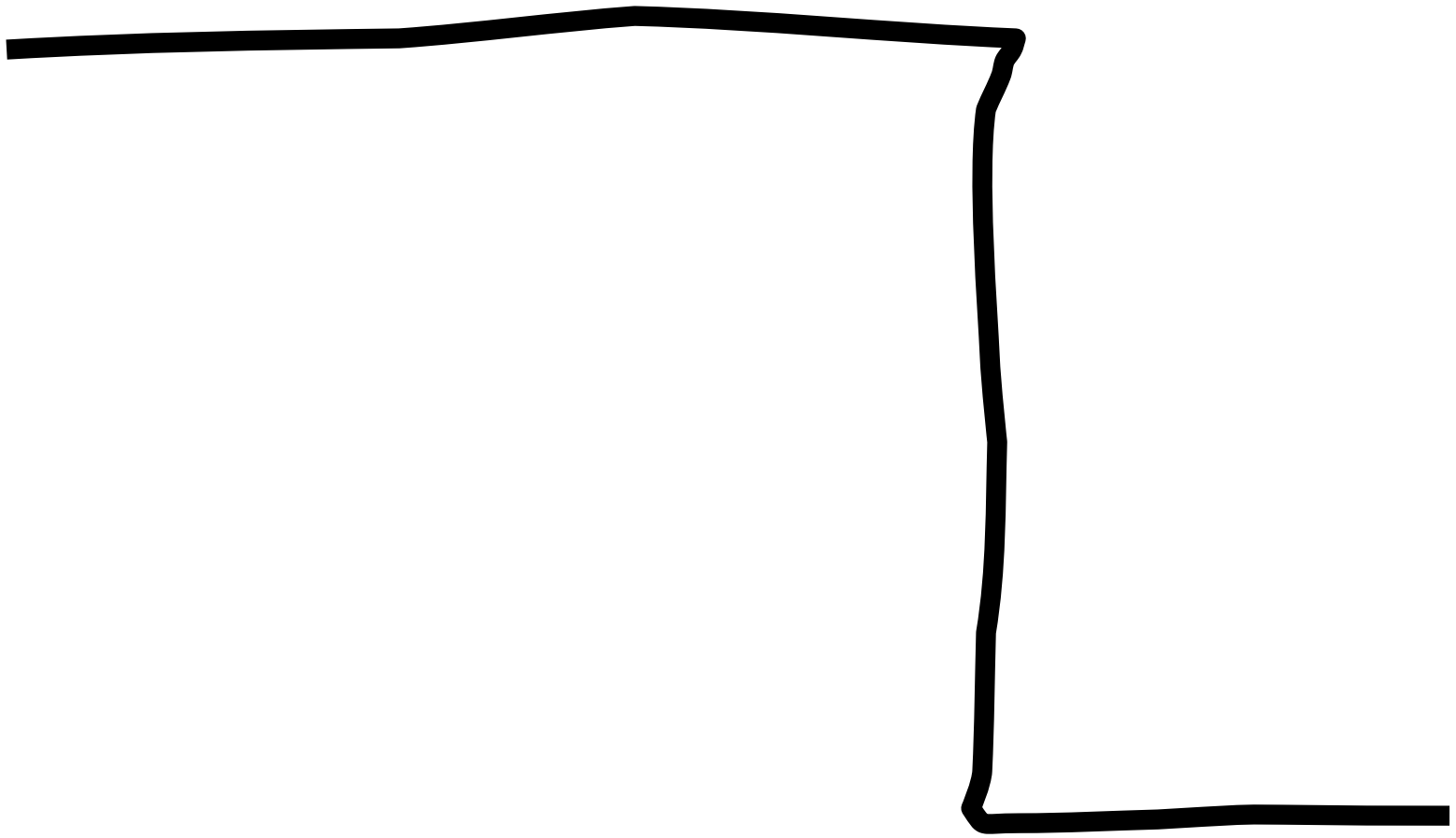
ARIZONA 1, California 27, Colorado 3, Connecticut 17, Florida 2, Georgia 1, Illinois 5, Indiana 3, Iowa 1, Kentucky 1, Maine 1, Maryland 3, Massachusetts 12, MICHIGAN 18, MINNESOTA 4, Missouri 2, Nebraska 2, NEVADA 3, New Jersey 1, New York 2, North Carolina 11, Ohio 24, Oklahoma 1, Pennsylvania 4, Tennessee 3, Texas 4, Vermont 1, Washington 6, West Virginia 1, WISCONSIN 12

Data source: https://www.apha.org/topics -and-issues/health -equity/racism -and-health/racism -declarations (02/08/21).

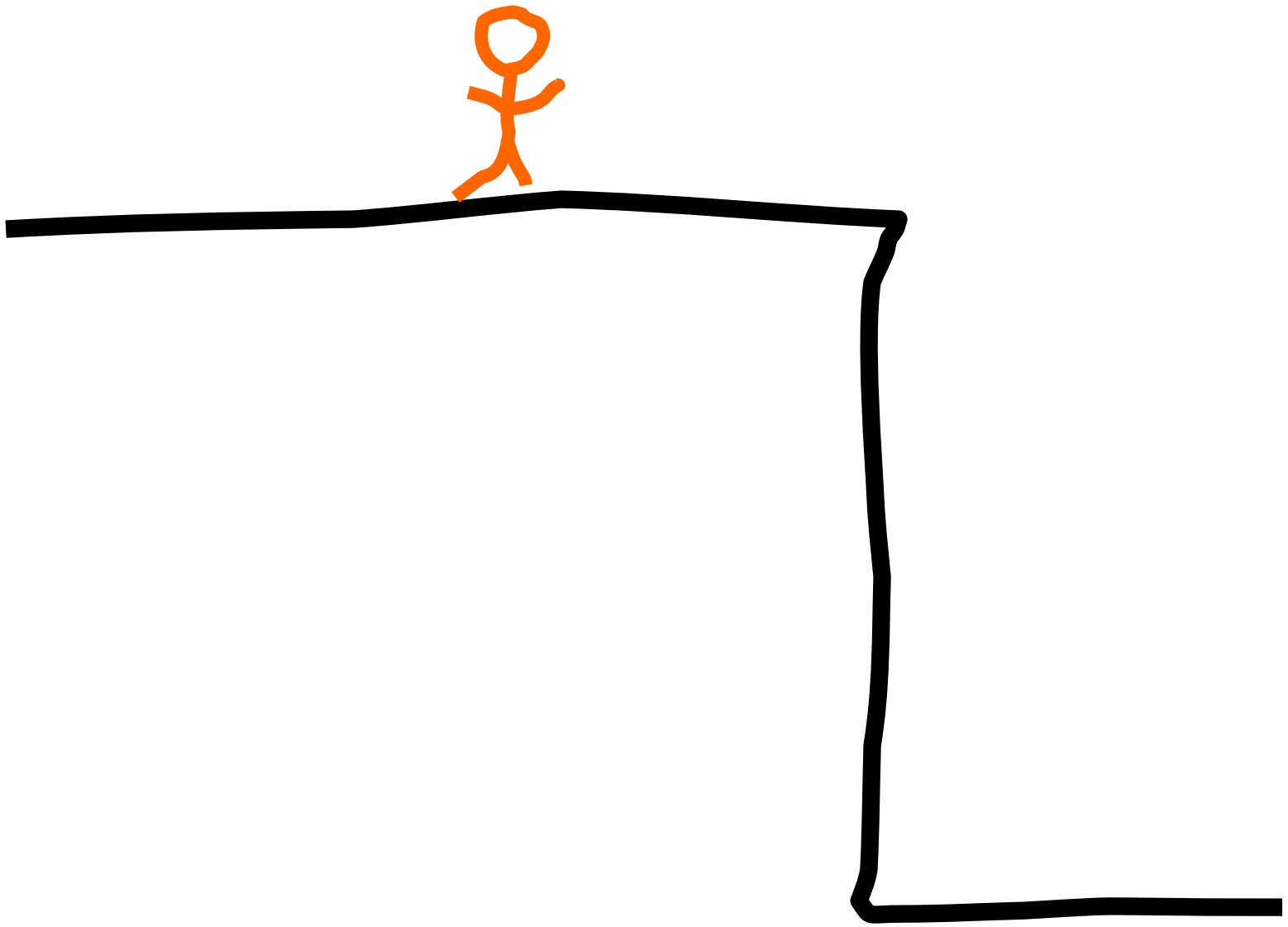
Our roadmap

- **Framing the work**
  - *Levels of Intervention: A Cliff Analogy*
- **Naming racism**
  - *Dual Reality: A Restaurant Saga*
  - *Levels of Racism: A Gardener's Tale*
- **Moving to action**
  - *Cement Dust in Our Lungs*
  - *Life on a Conveyor Belt: Moving to Action*

Levels of health intervention



Jones CP *et al.* ***J Health Care Poor Underserved*** **2009.**



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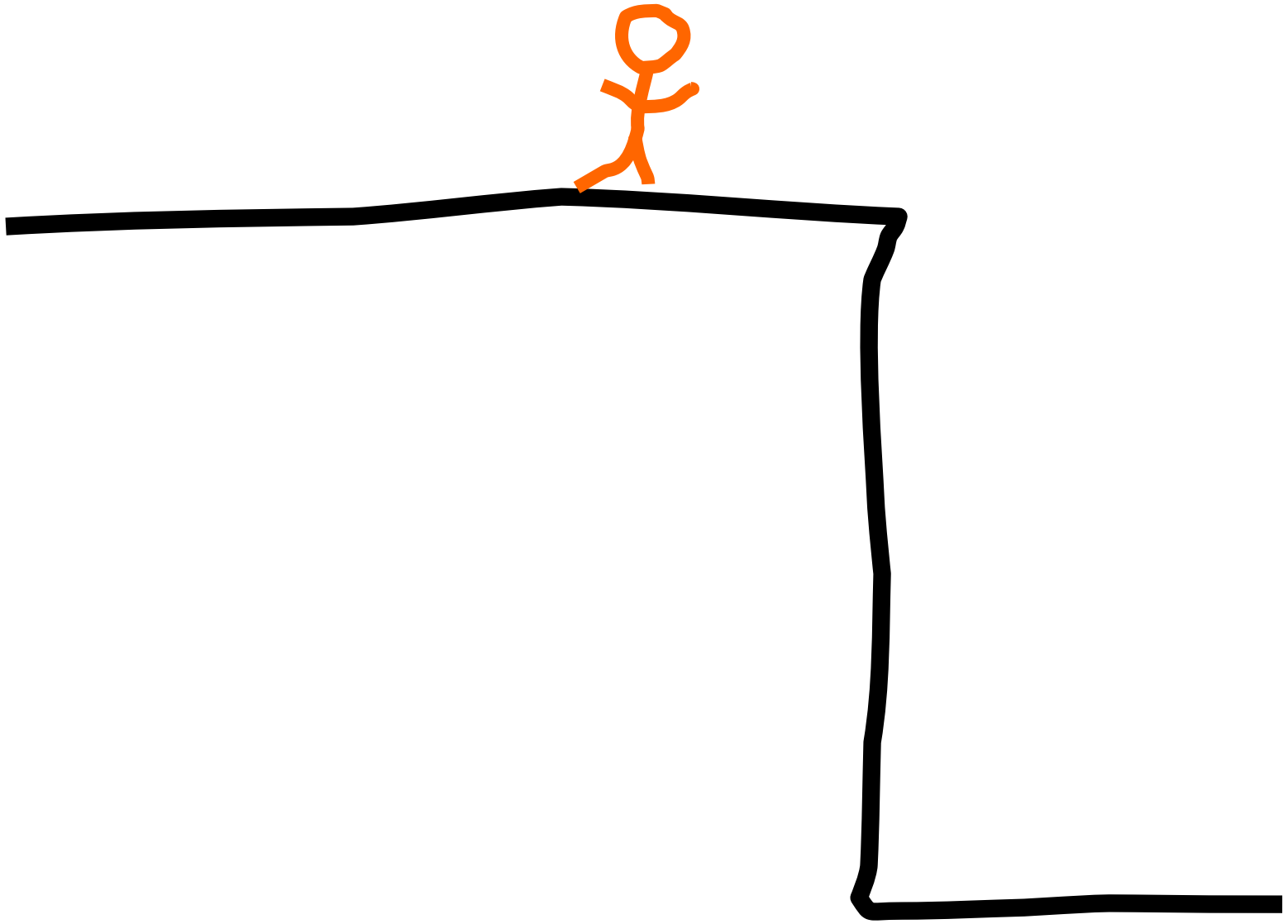

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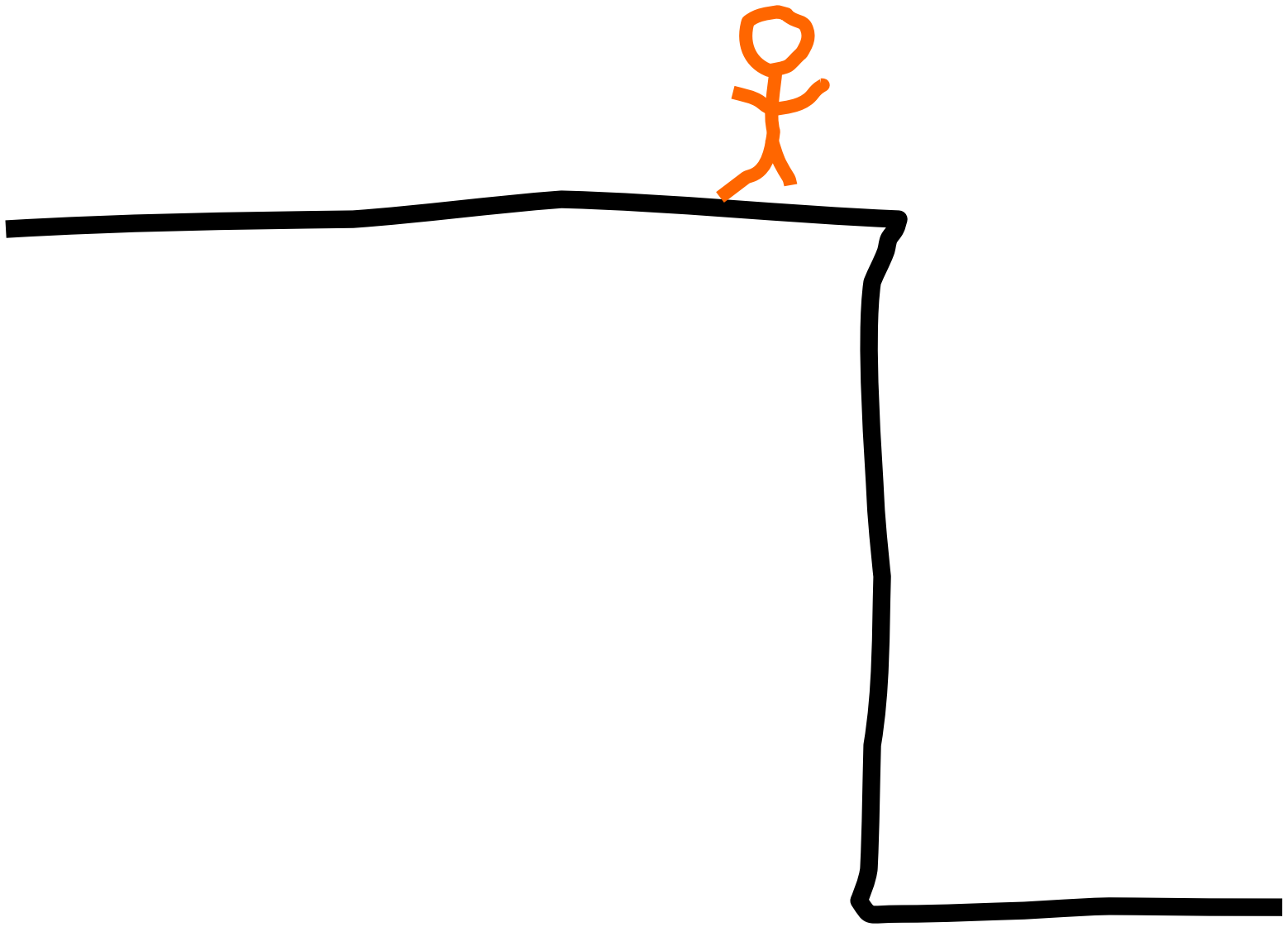

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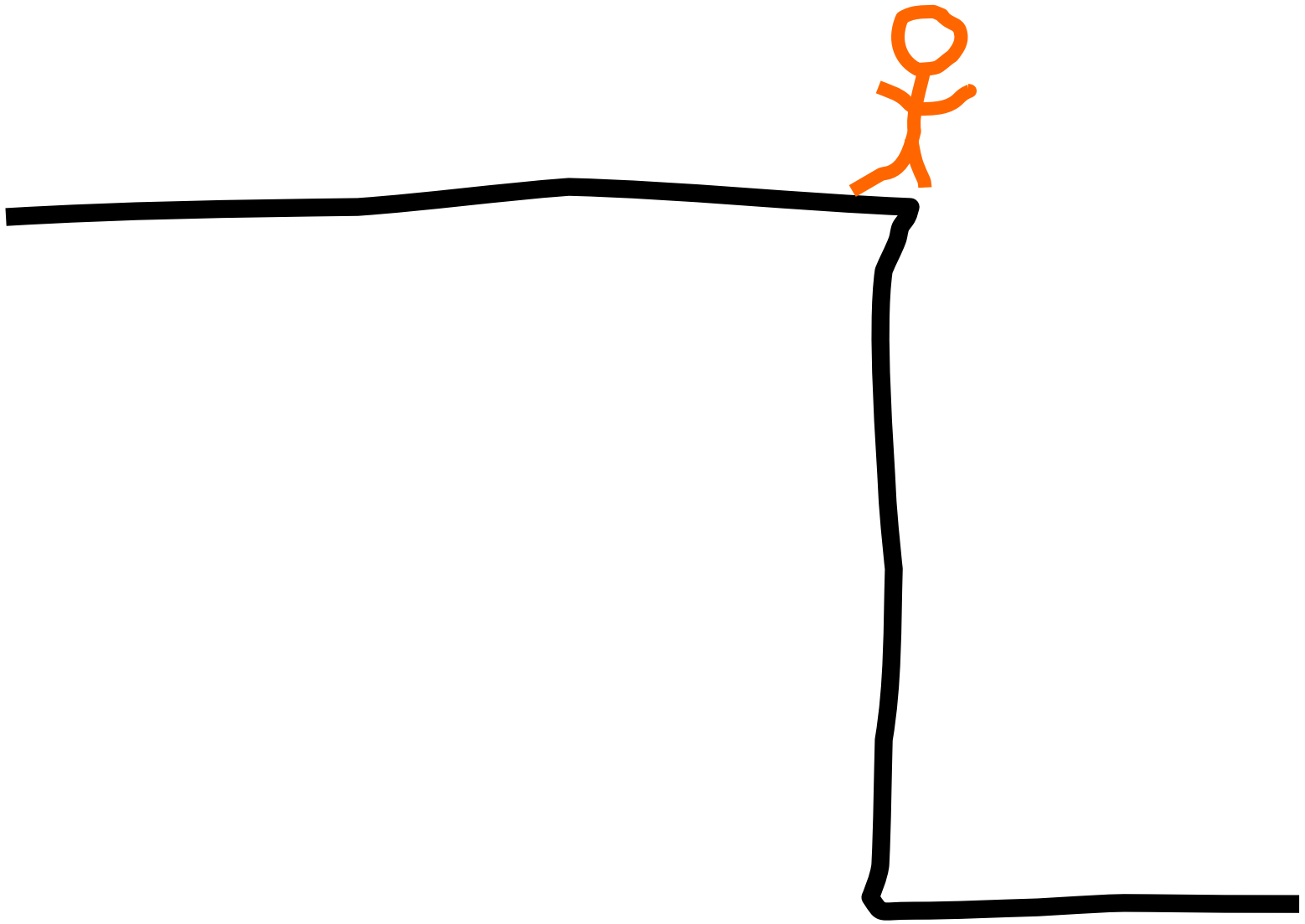

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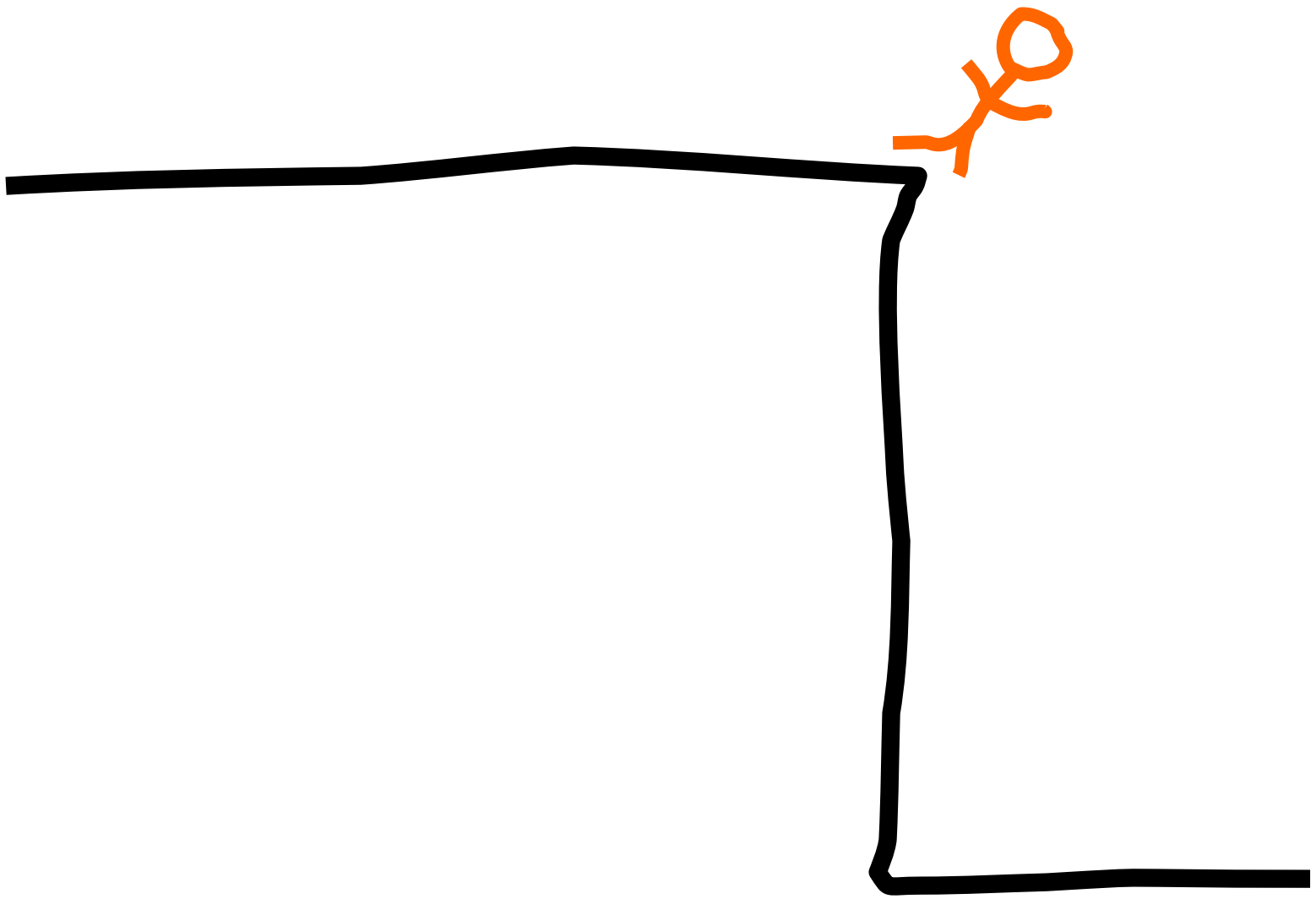

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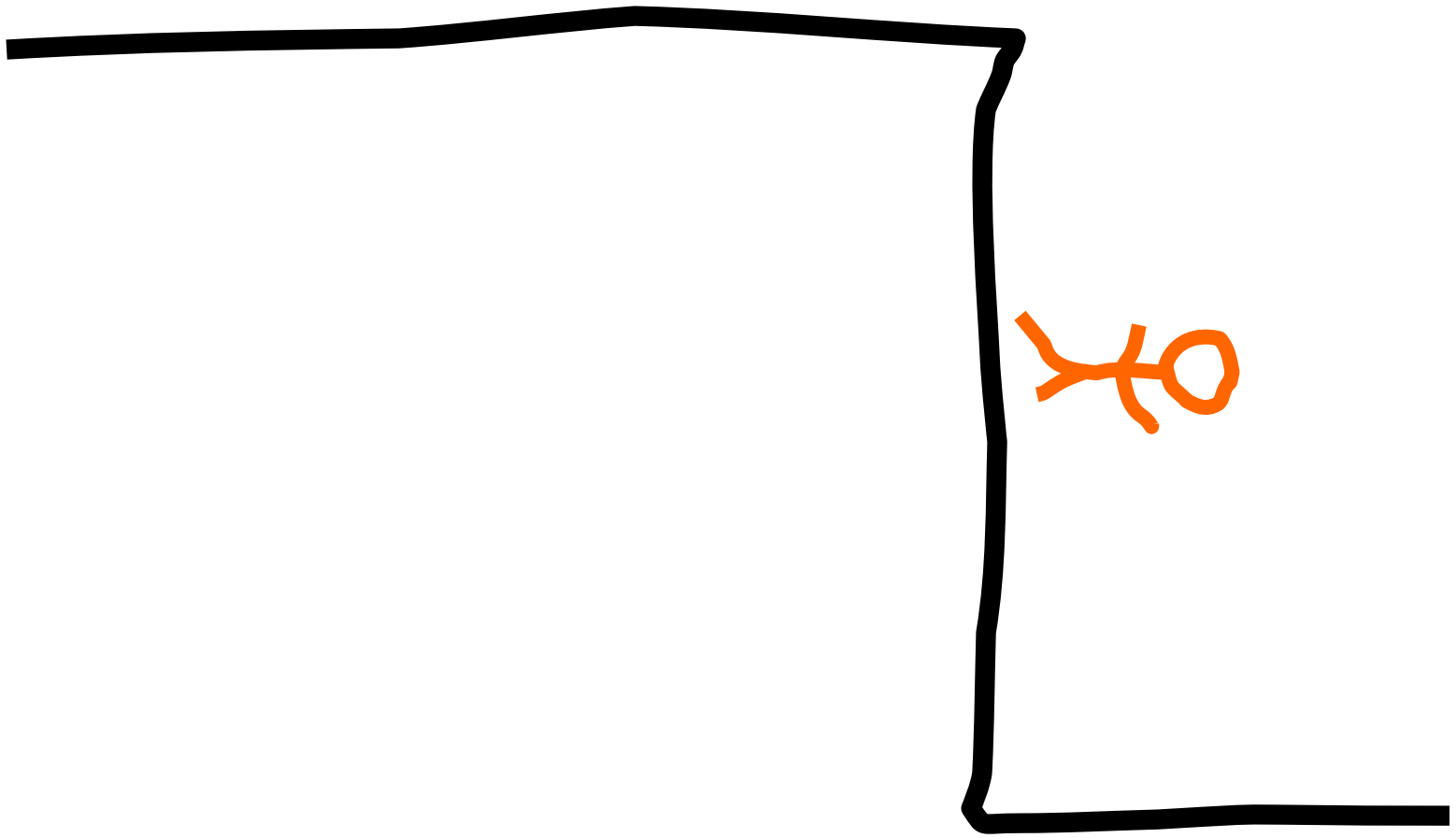

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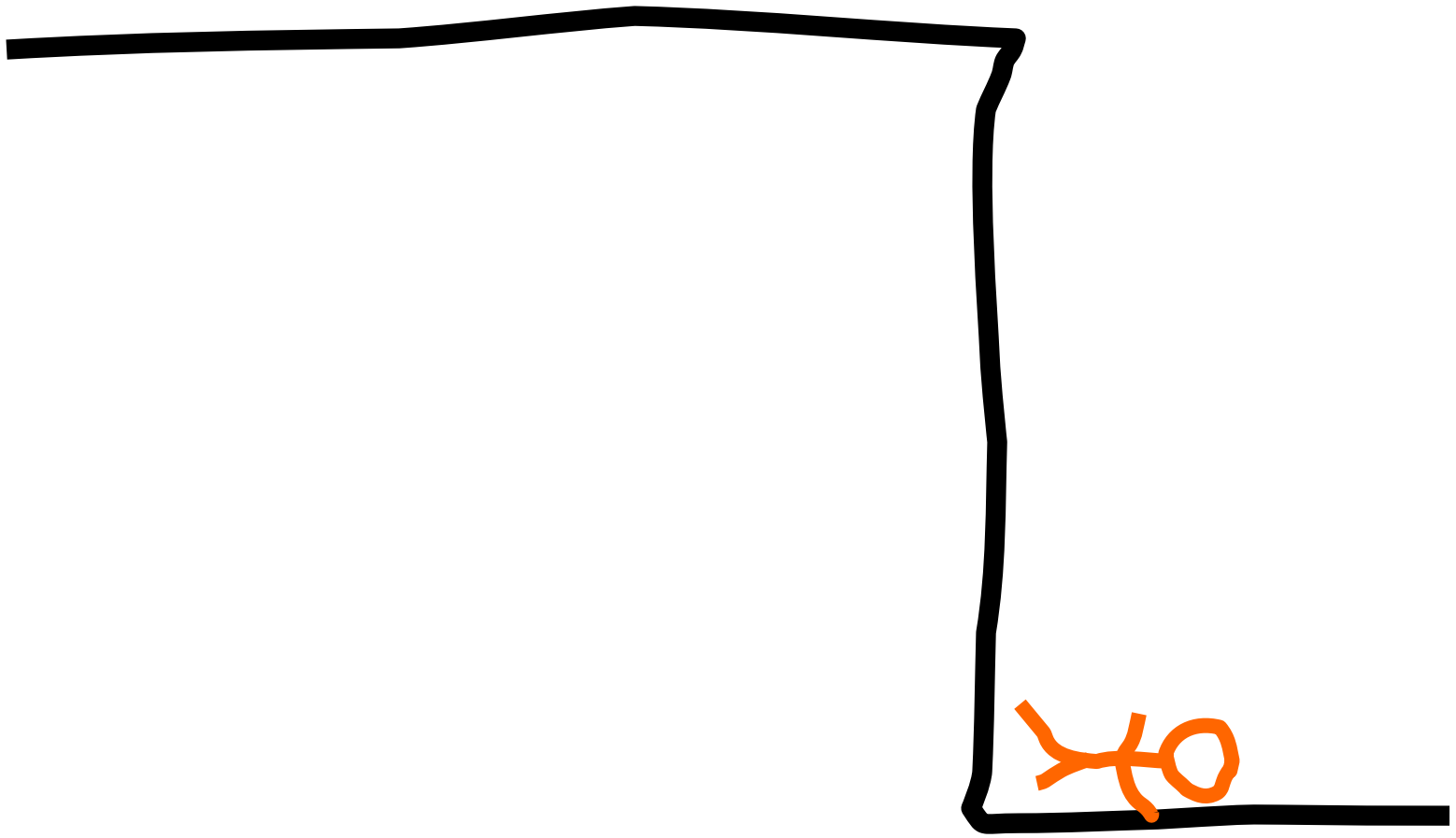

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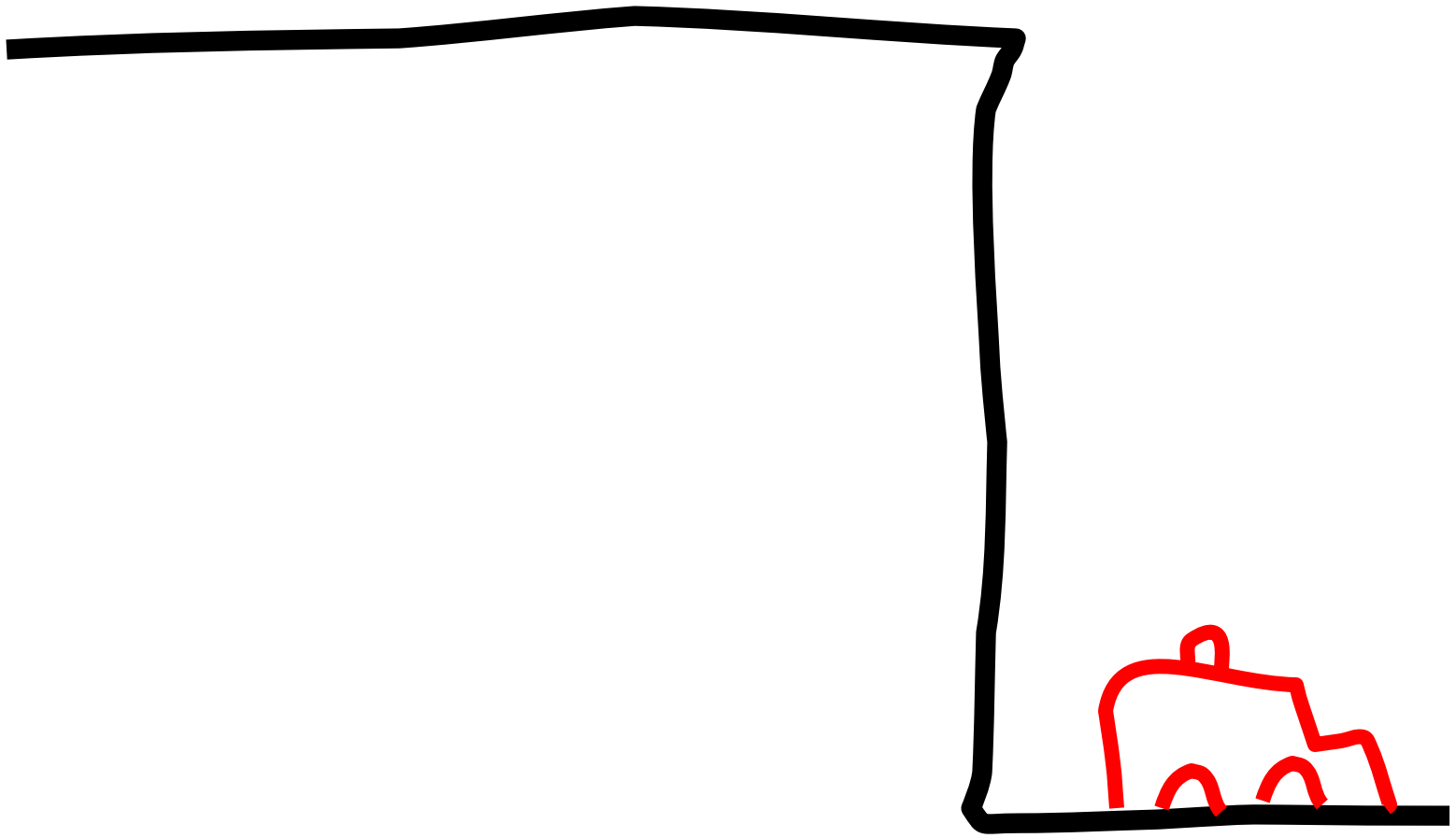

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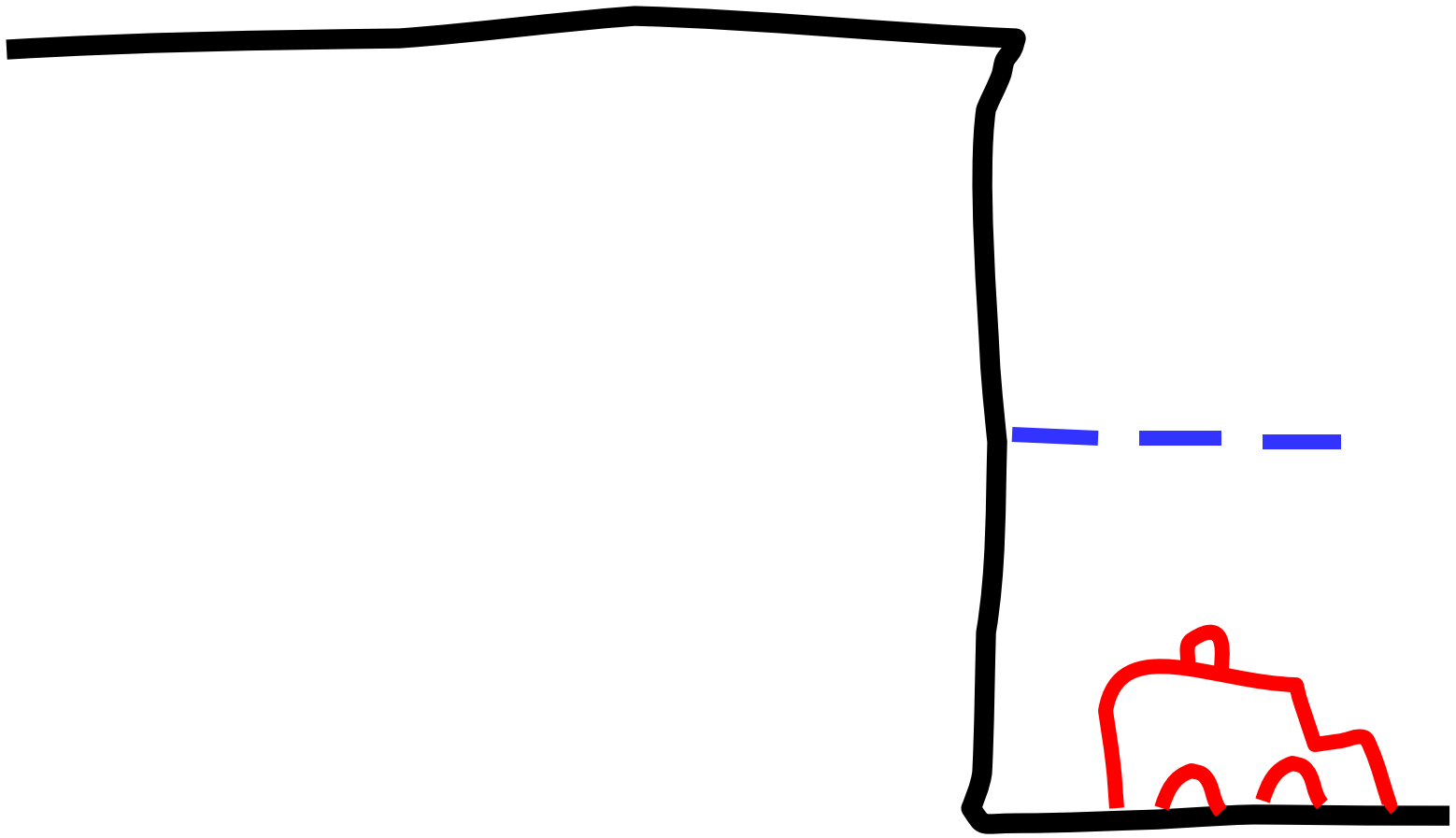

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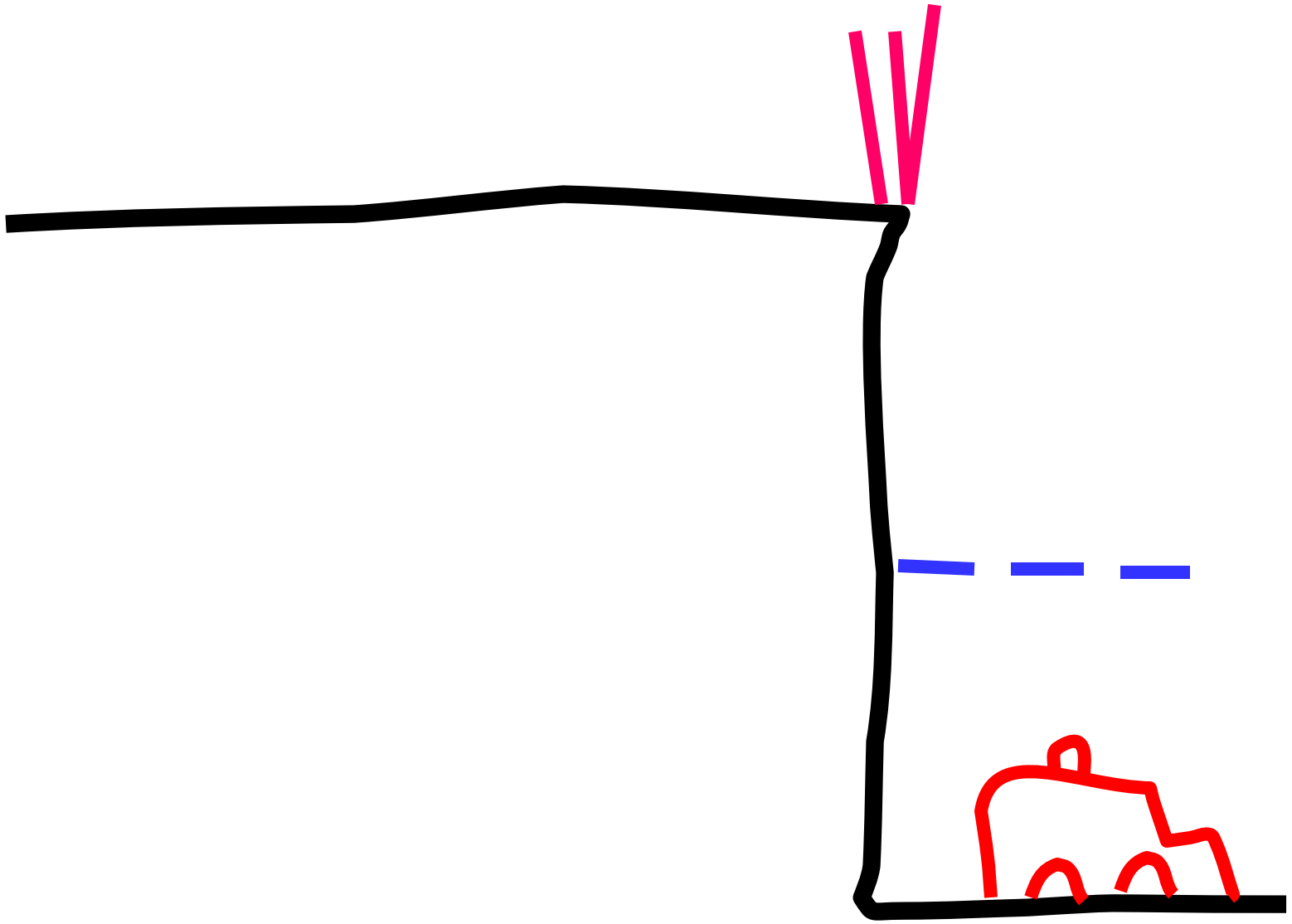

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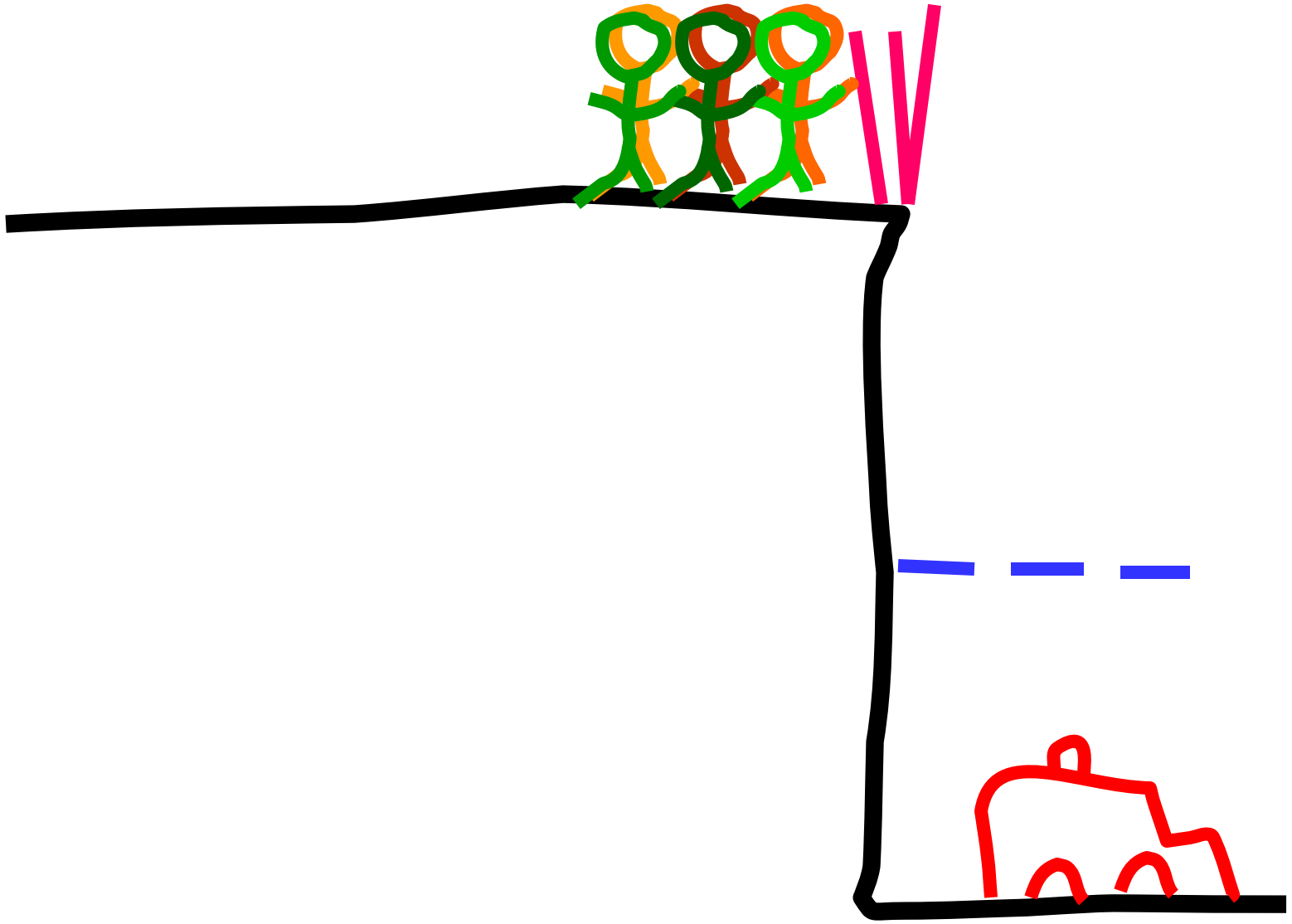

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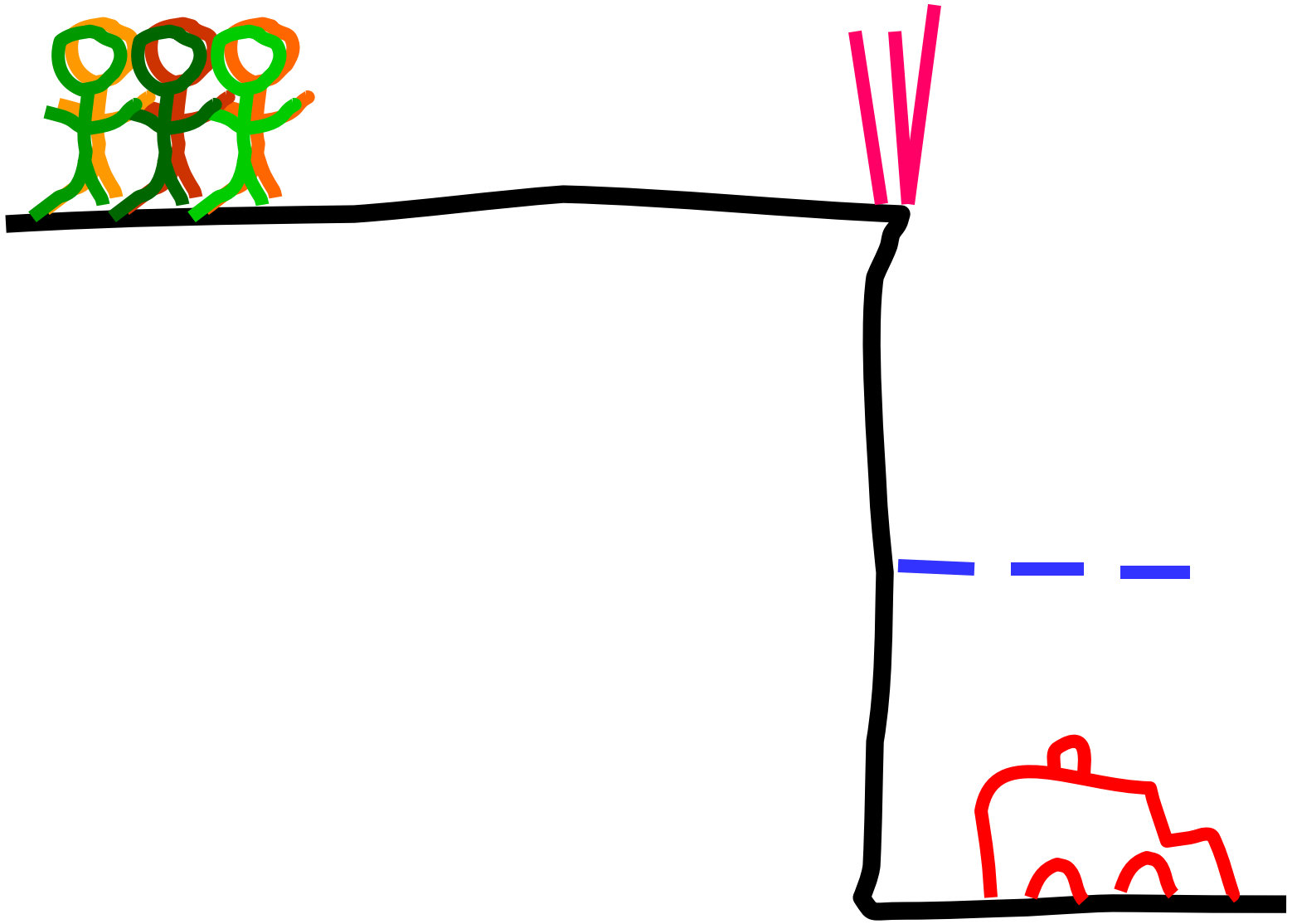

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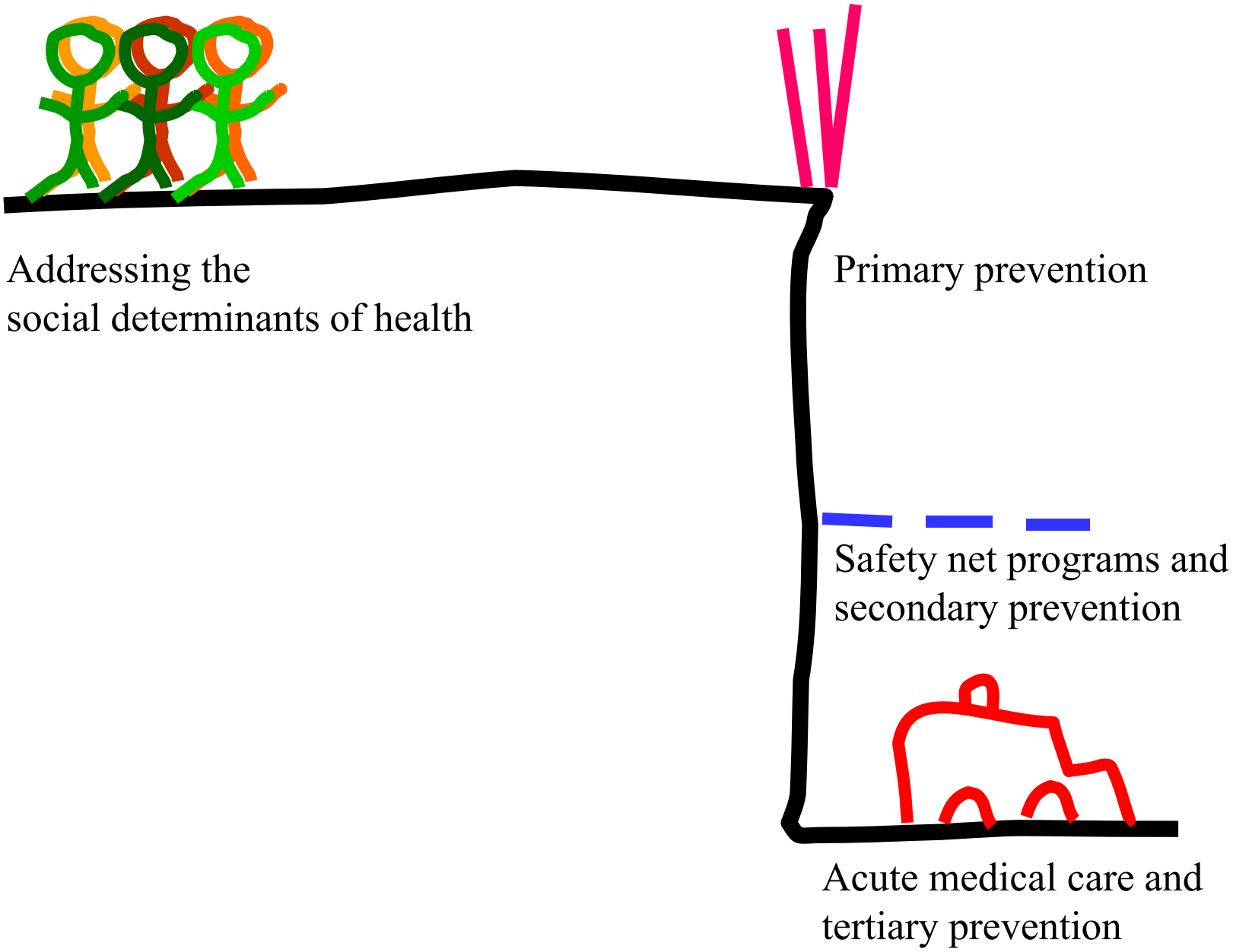


Jones CP *et al.* ***J Health Care Poor Underserved* 2009.**

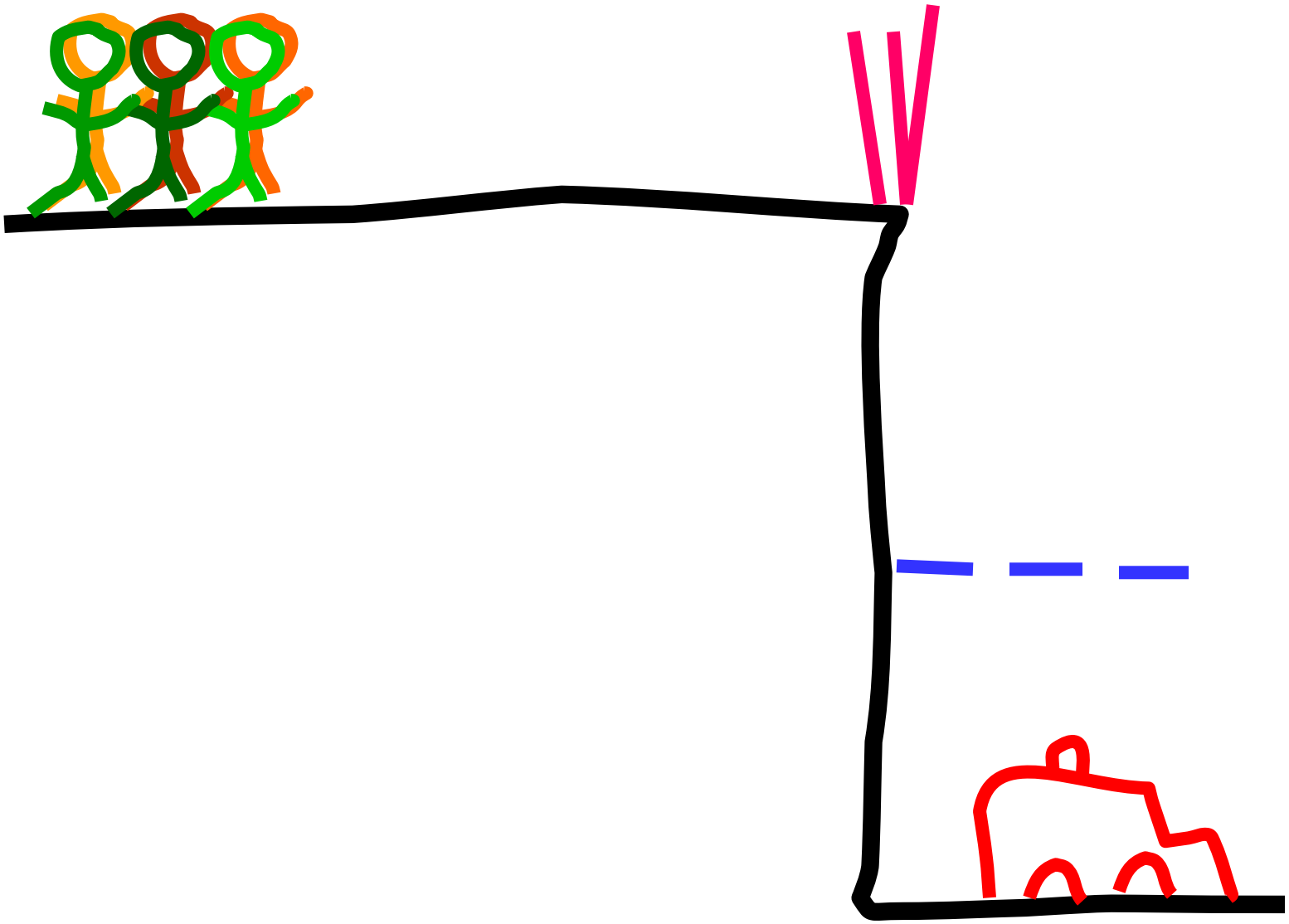
But how do disparities arise?

- Differences in the quality of care received within the health care system
- Differences in access to health care, including preventive and curative services
- Differences in life opportunities, exposures, and stresses that result in differences in underlying health status

Phelan JC, Link BG, Tehranifar P. Social Conditions as Fundamental Causes of Health Inequalities. *J Health Soc Behav* 2010;51(S):S28-S40.

Byrd WM, Clayton LA. *An American Health Dilemma: Race, Medicine, and Health Care in the United States 1900-2000*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2002.

Smedley BD, Stith AY, Nelson AR (editors). *Unequal Treatment: Confronting Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health Care*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2002.



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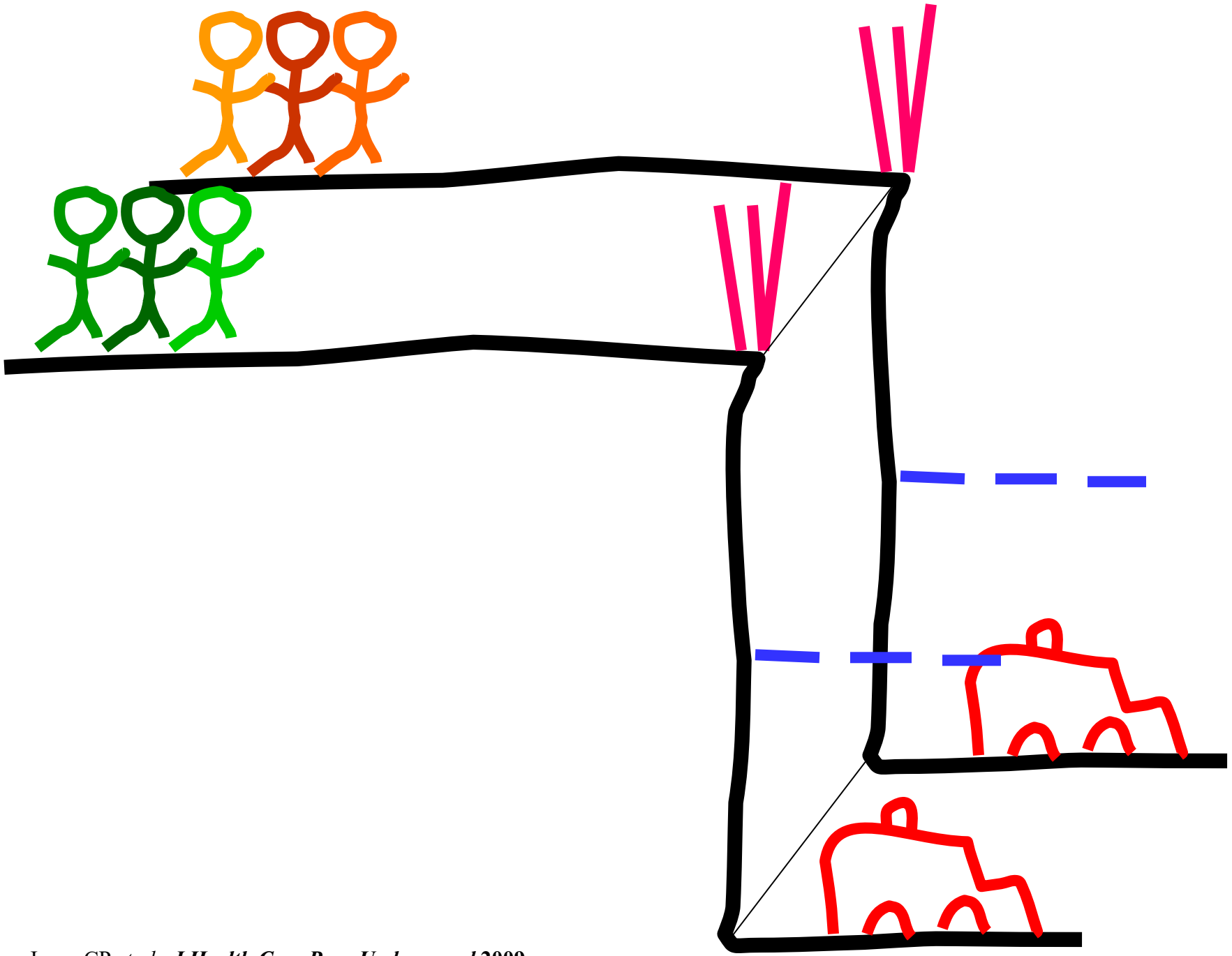

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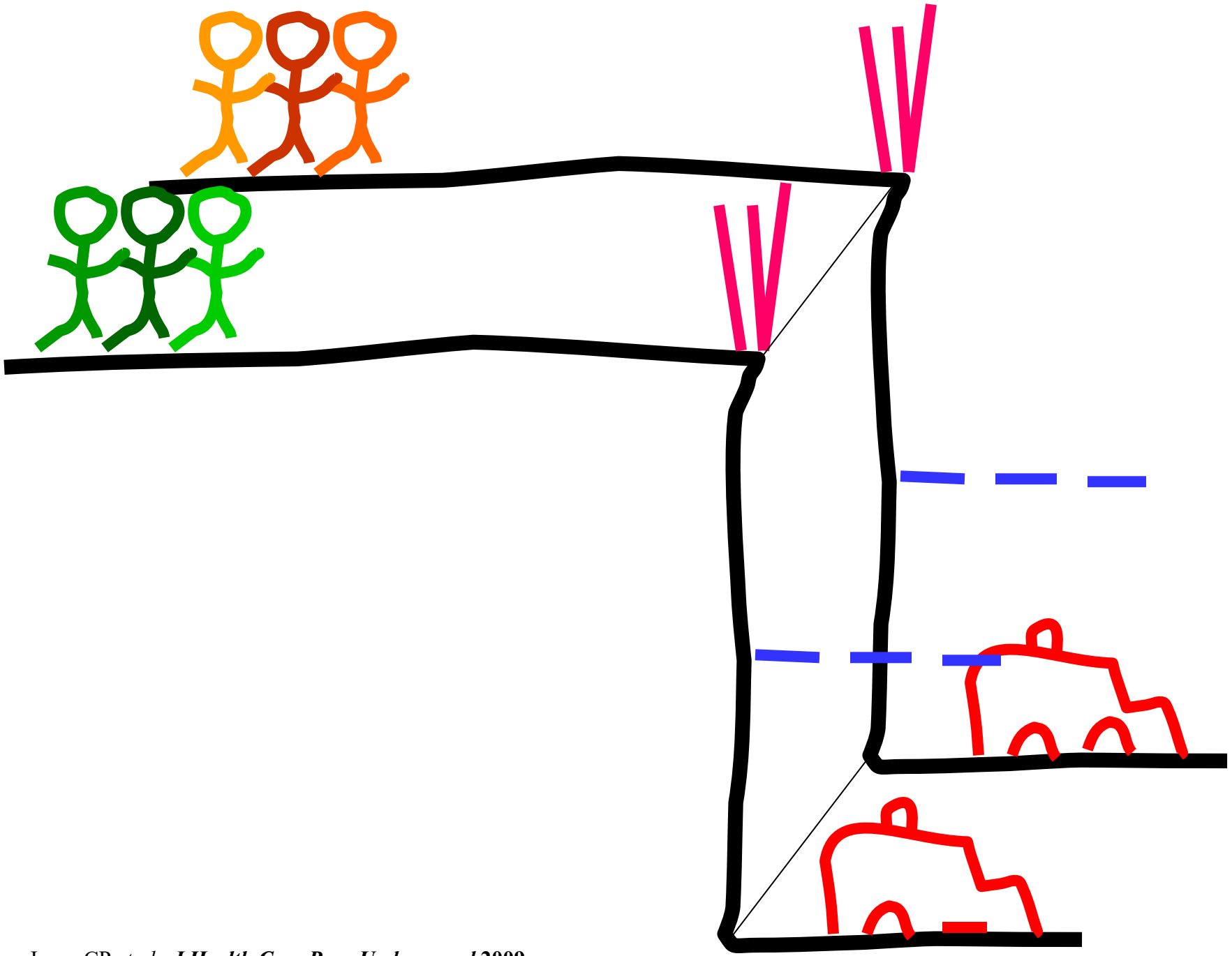

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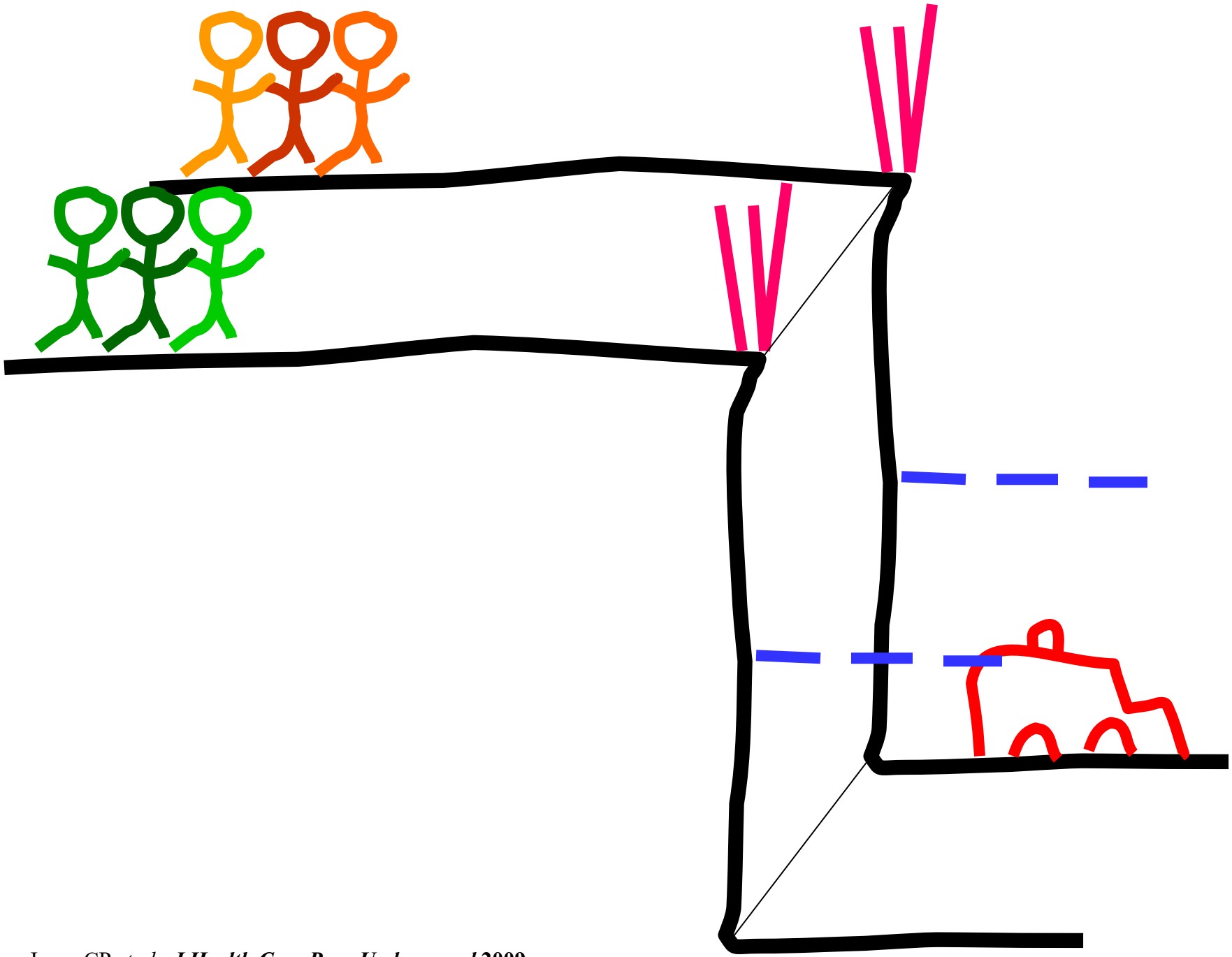

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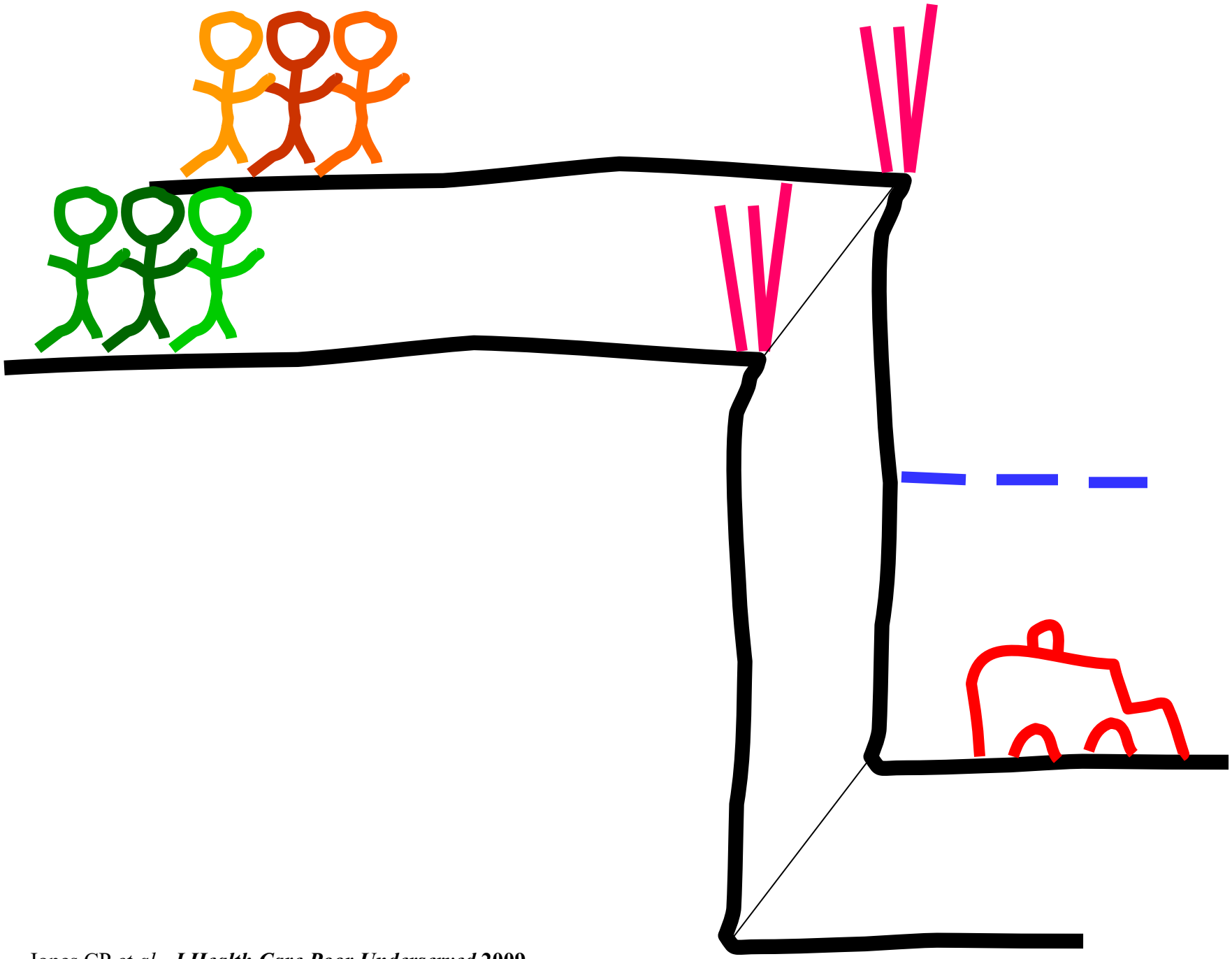

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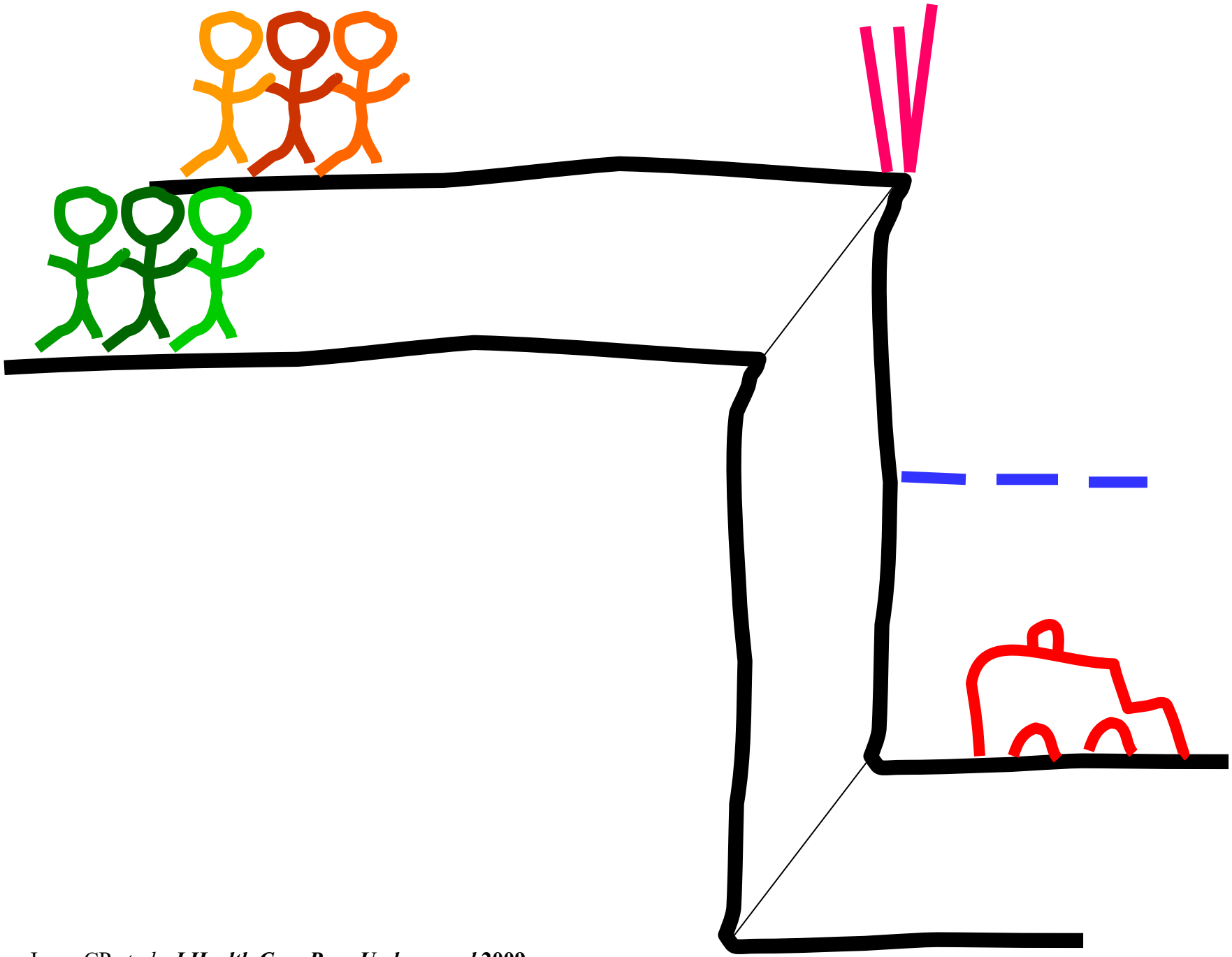

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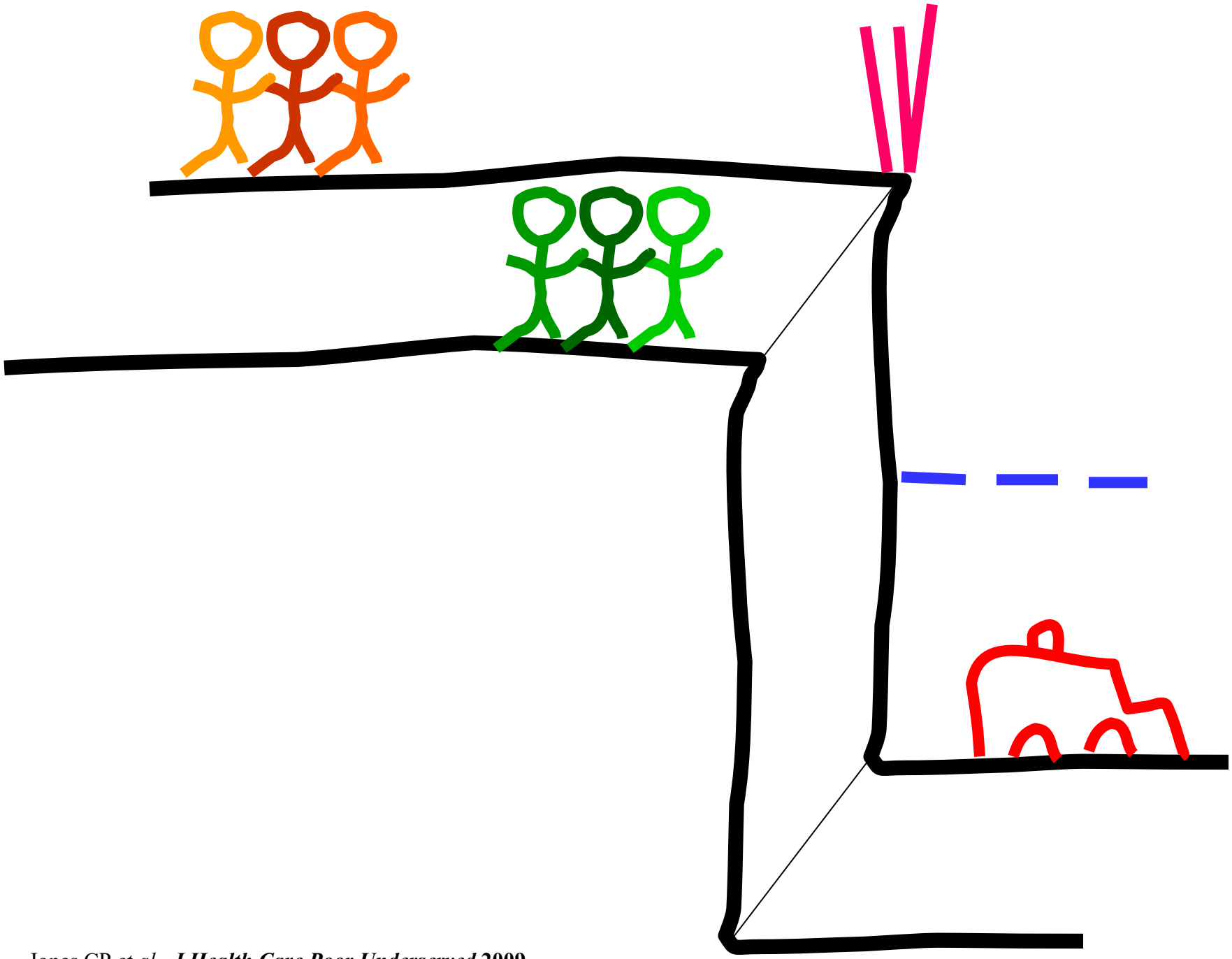

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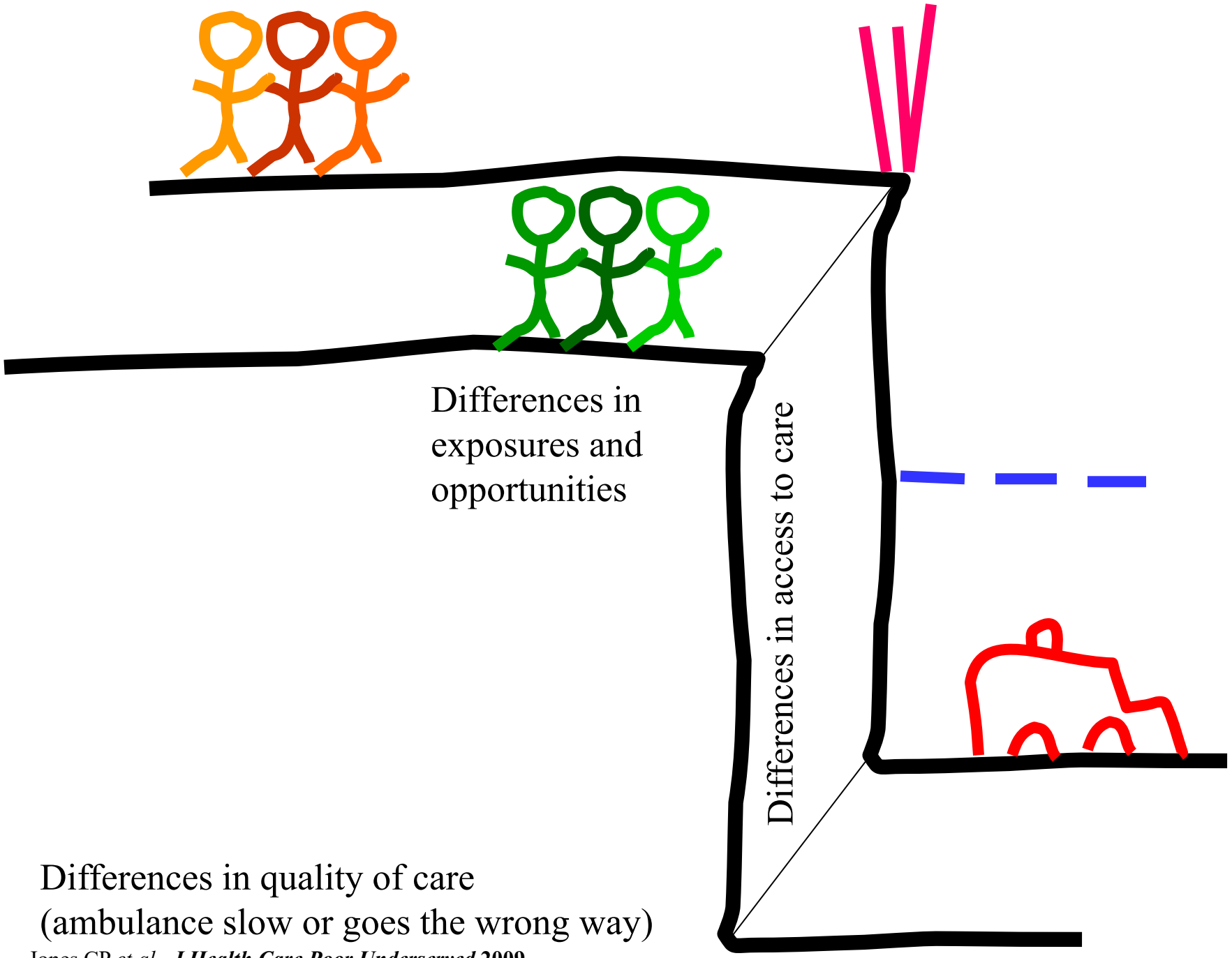

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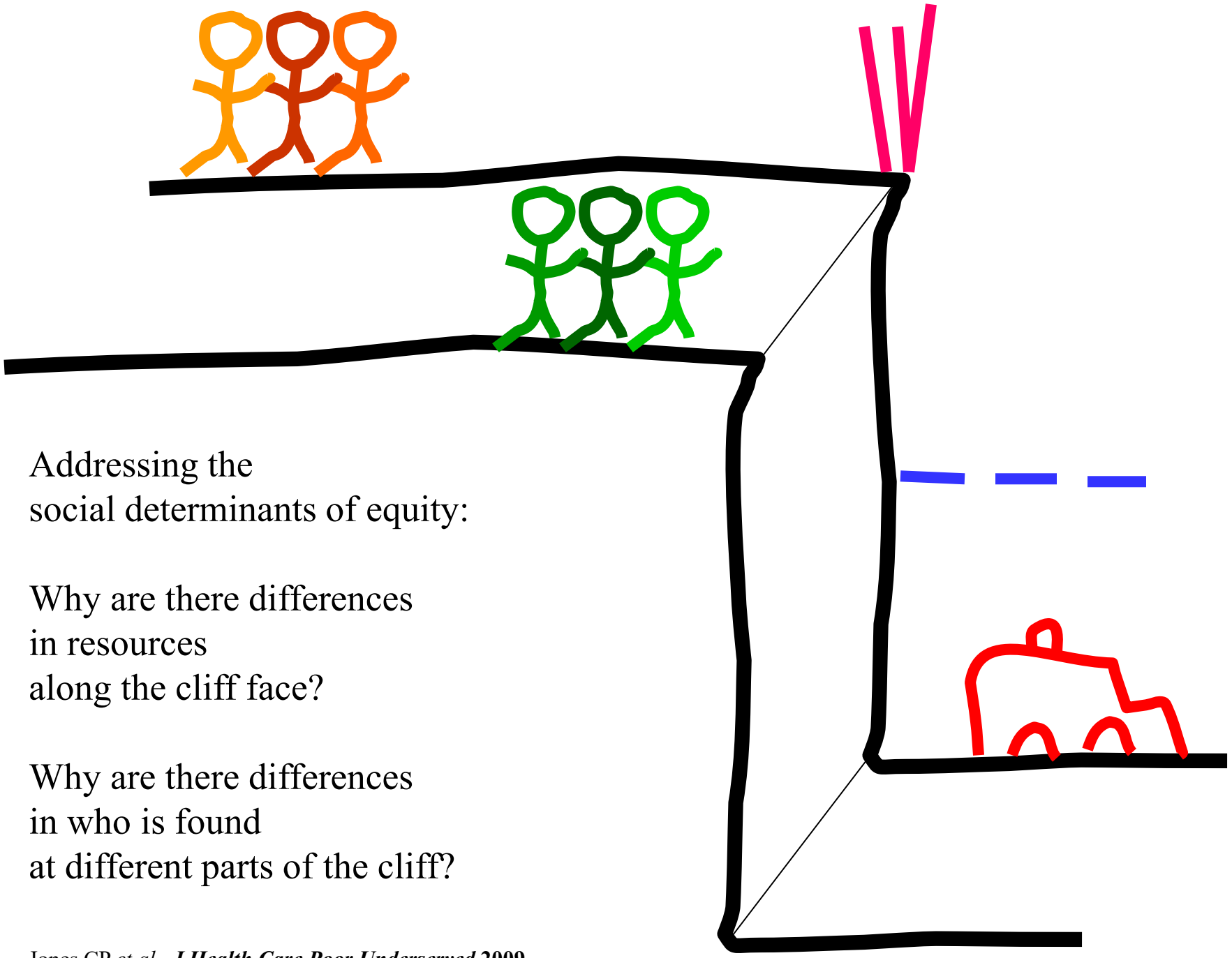


Addressing the
social determinants of equity:

Why are there differences
in resources
along the cliff face?

Why are there differences
in who is found
at different parts of the cliff?

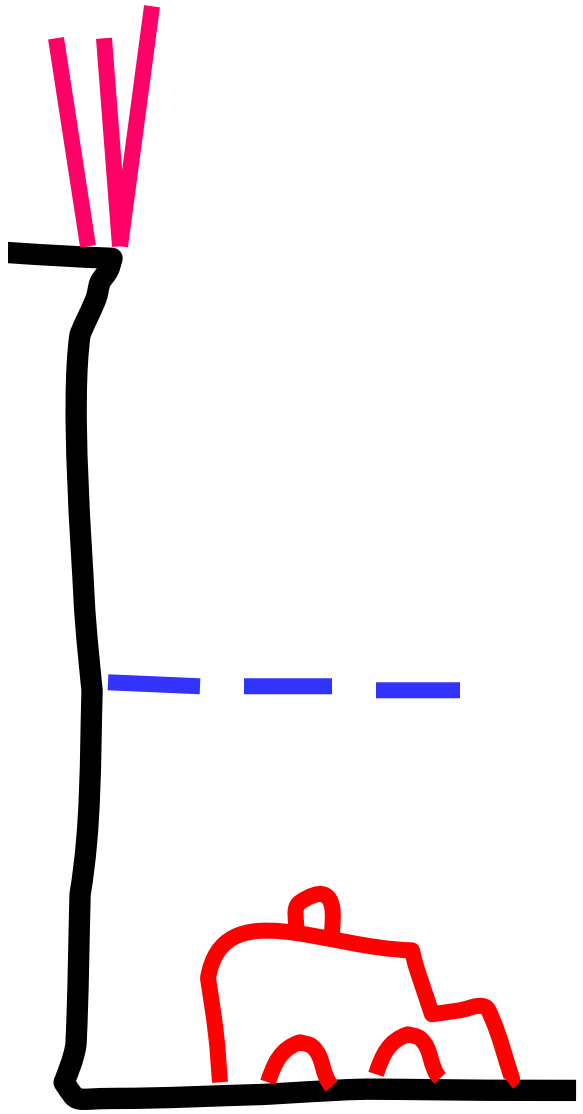
Jones CP *et al.* ***J Health Care Poor Underserved* 2009.**

3 dimensions of health intervention

Jones CP *et al.* ***J Health Care Poor Underserved*** **2009.**

3 dimensions of health intervention

Health services



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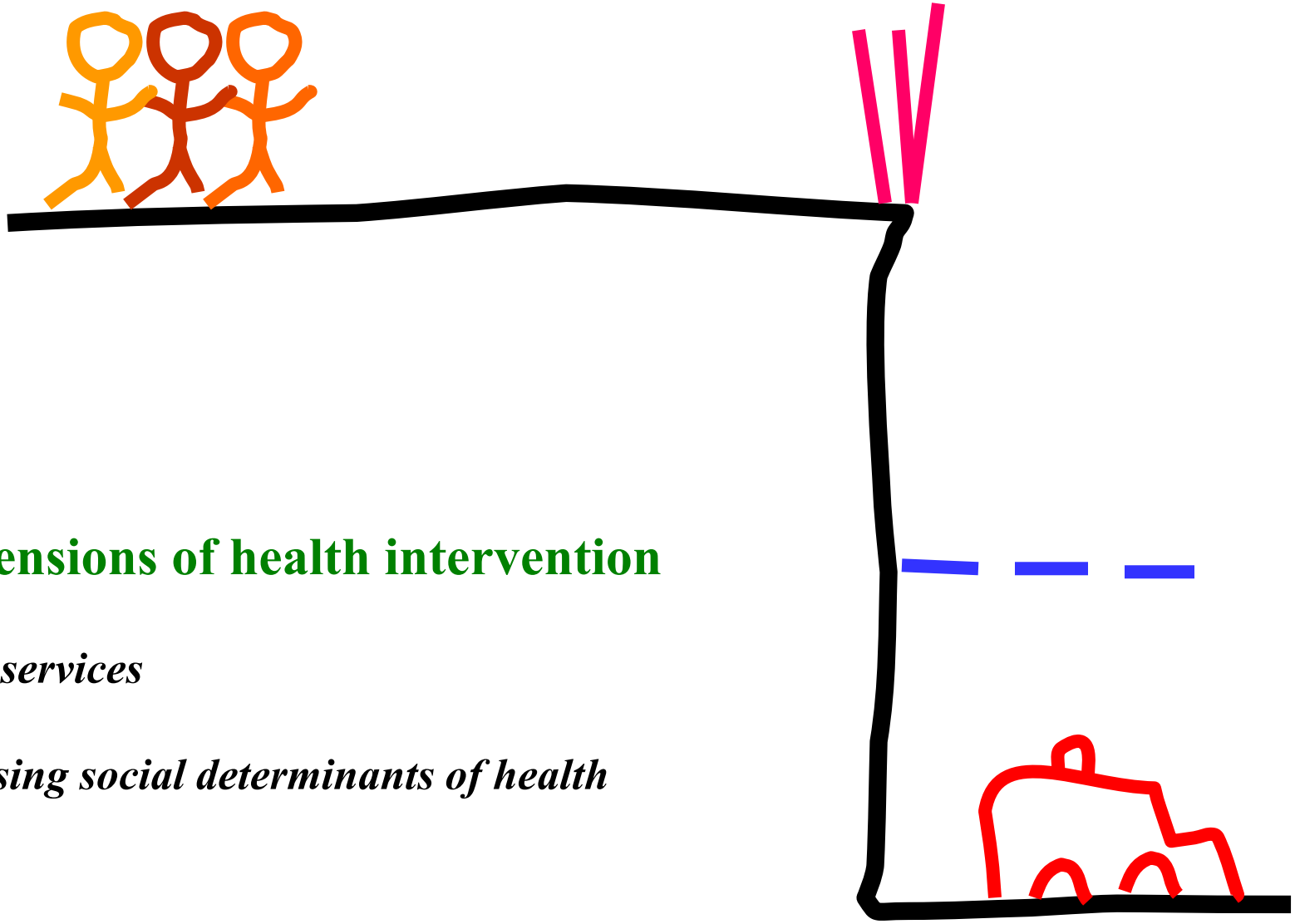
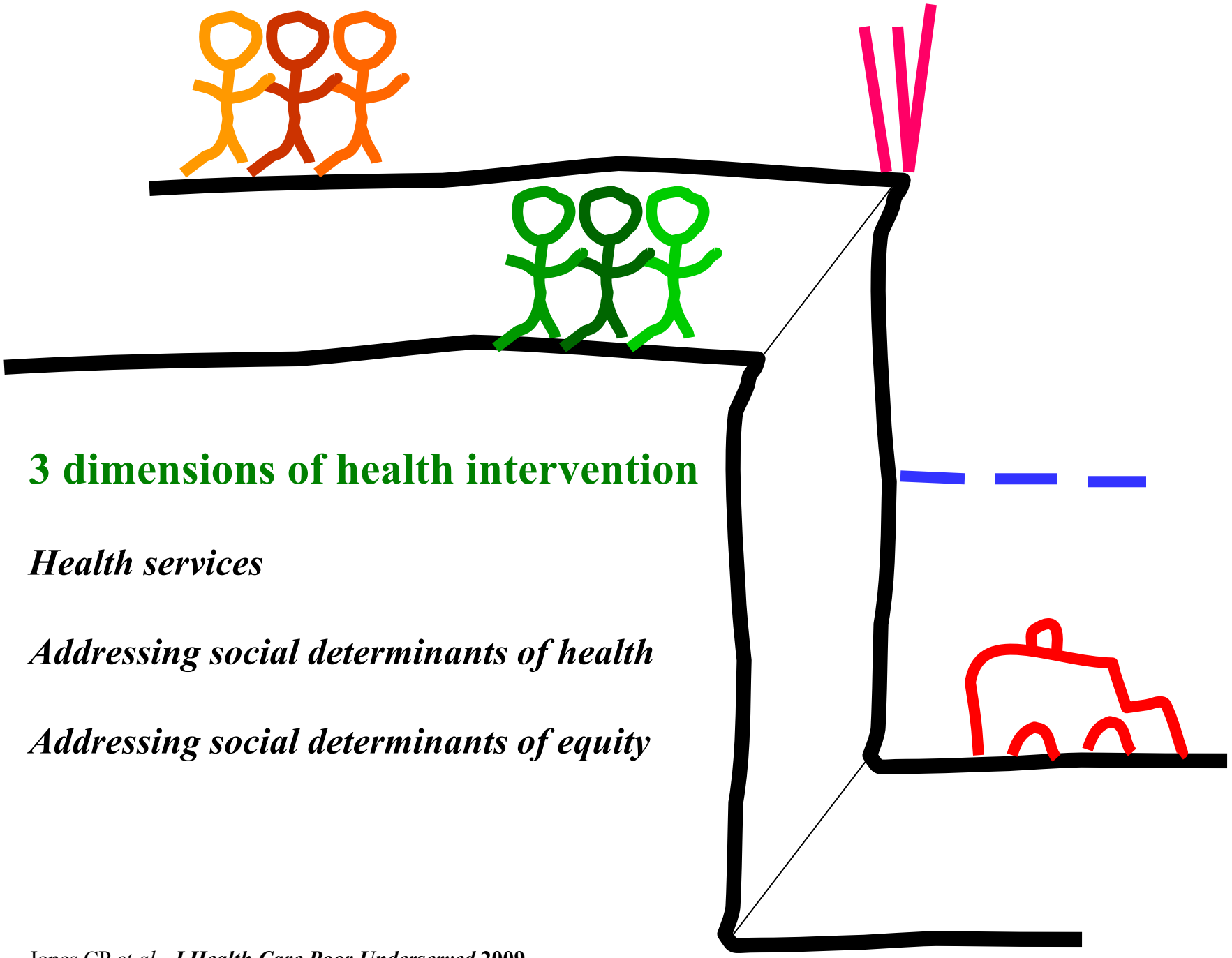


3 dimensions of health intervention

Health services

Addressing social determinants of health

Jones CP *et al.* ***J Health Care Poor Underserved* 2009.**



3 dimensions of health intervention

Health services

Addressing social determinants of health

Addressing social determinants of equity

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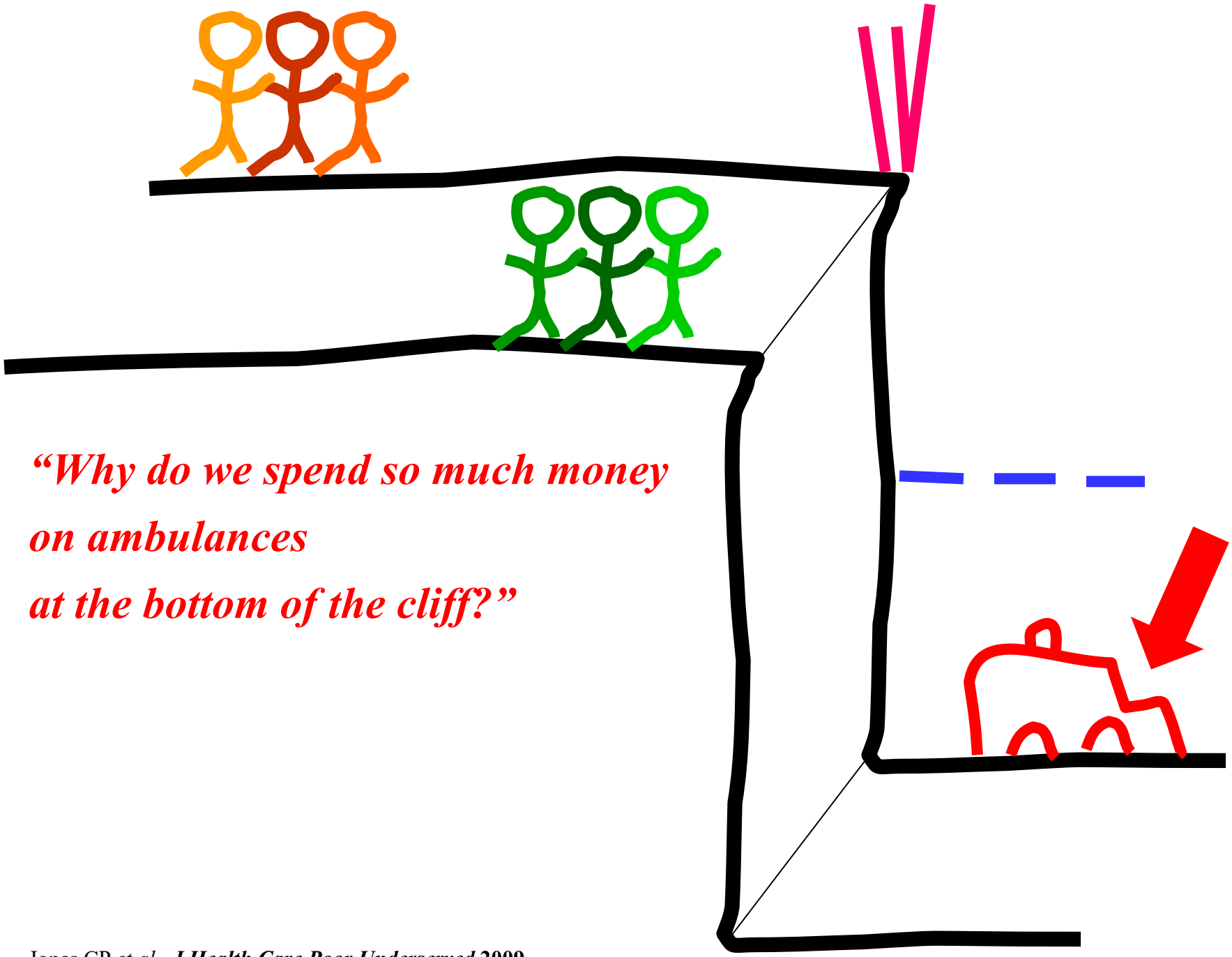
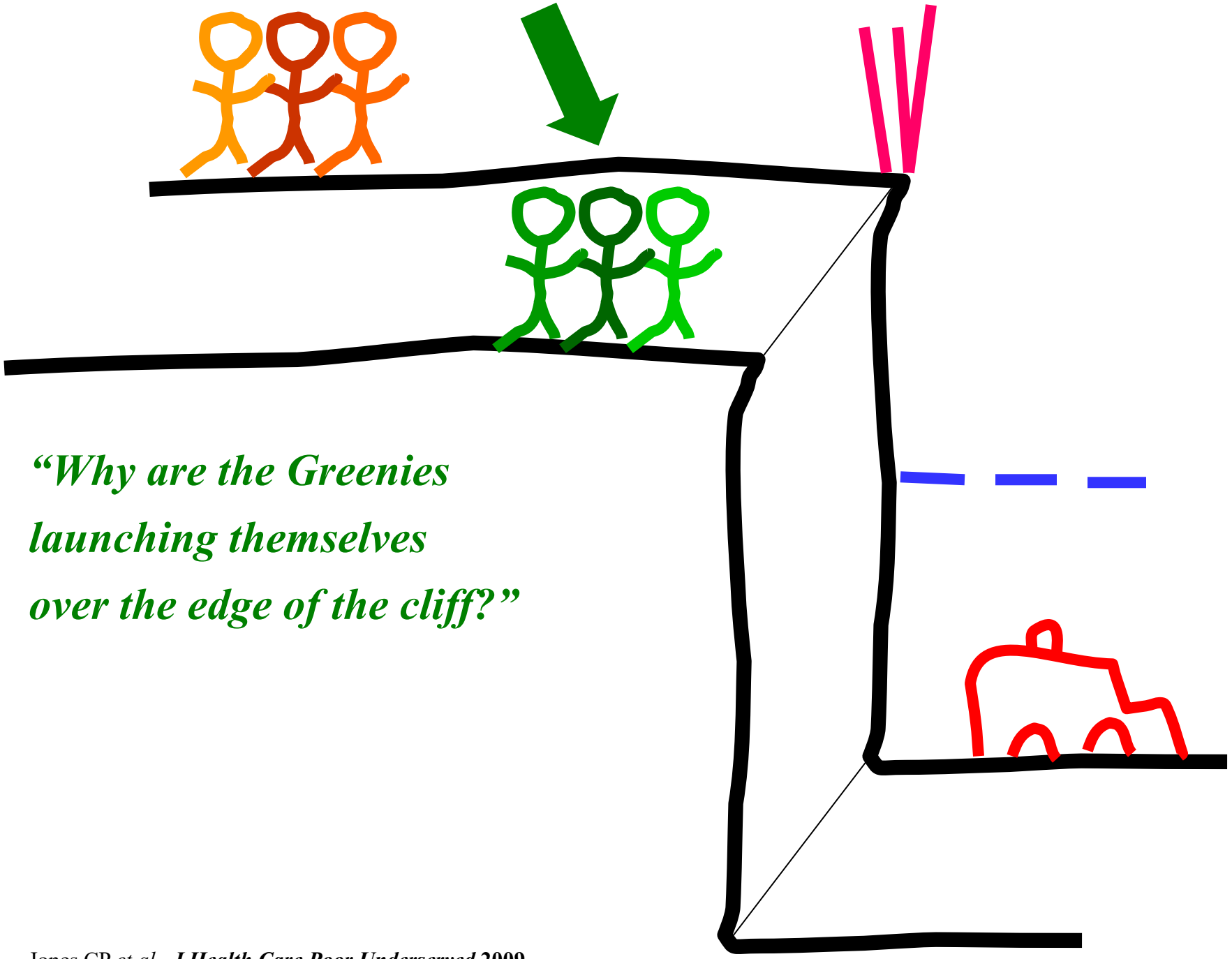


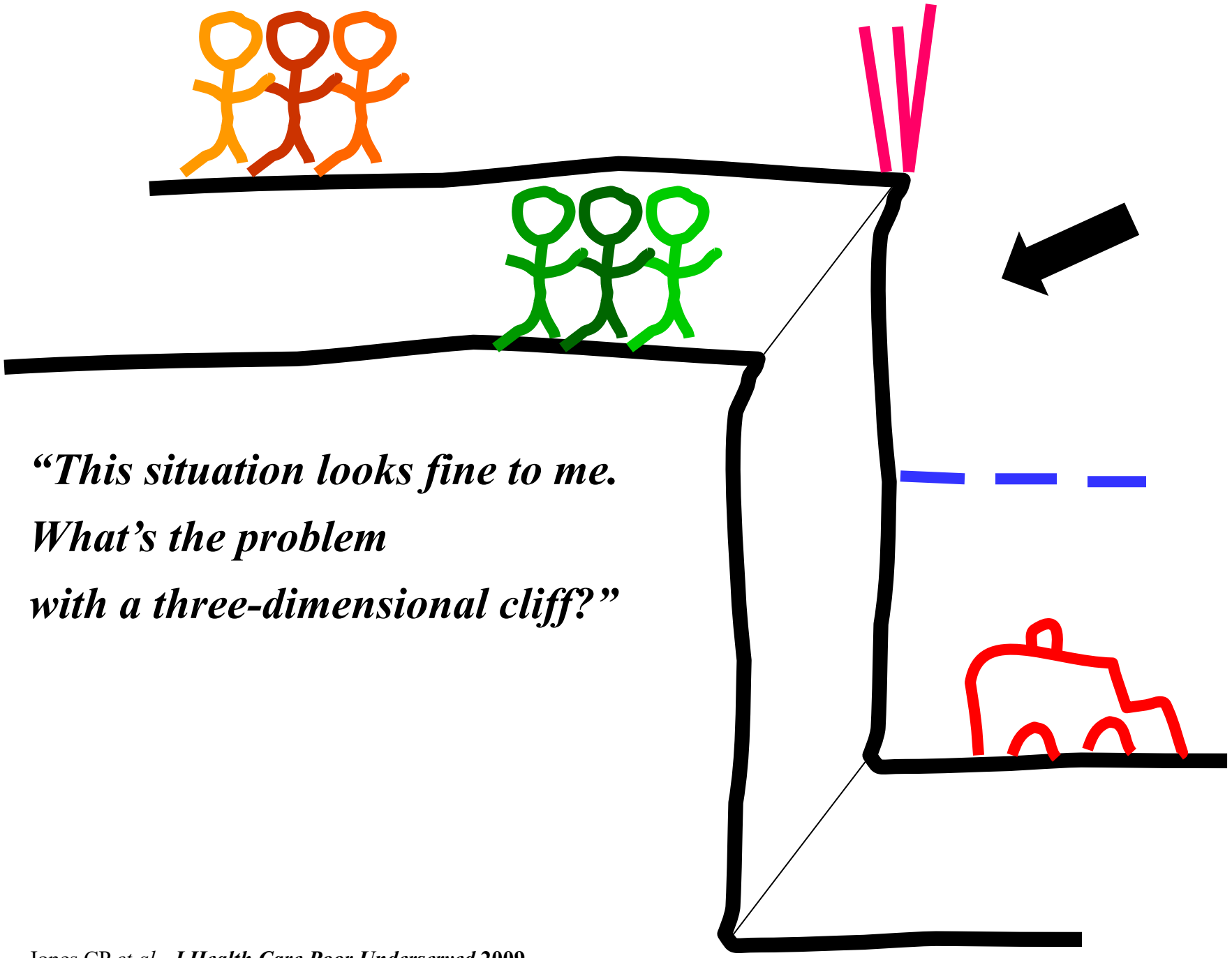
"Why do we spend so much money on ambulances at the bottom of the cliff?"

Jones CP *et al.* ***J Health Care Poor Underserved* 2009.**



"Why are the Greenies launching themselves over the edge of the cliff?"

Jones CP *et al.* ***J Health Care Poor Underserved* 2009.**



"This situation looks fine to me. What's the problem with a three-dimensional cliff?"

Jones CP *et al.* ***J Health Care Poor Underserved* 2009.**

Pause for discussion

Key messages

Key messages

Racism exists

Key messages

Racism exists

Racism is a system

Key messages

Racism exists

Racism is a system

Racism saps the strength of the whole society

Key messages

Racism exists

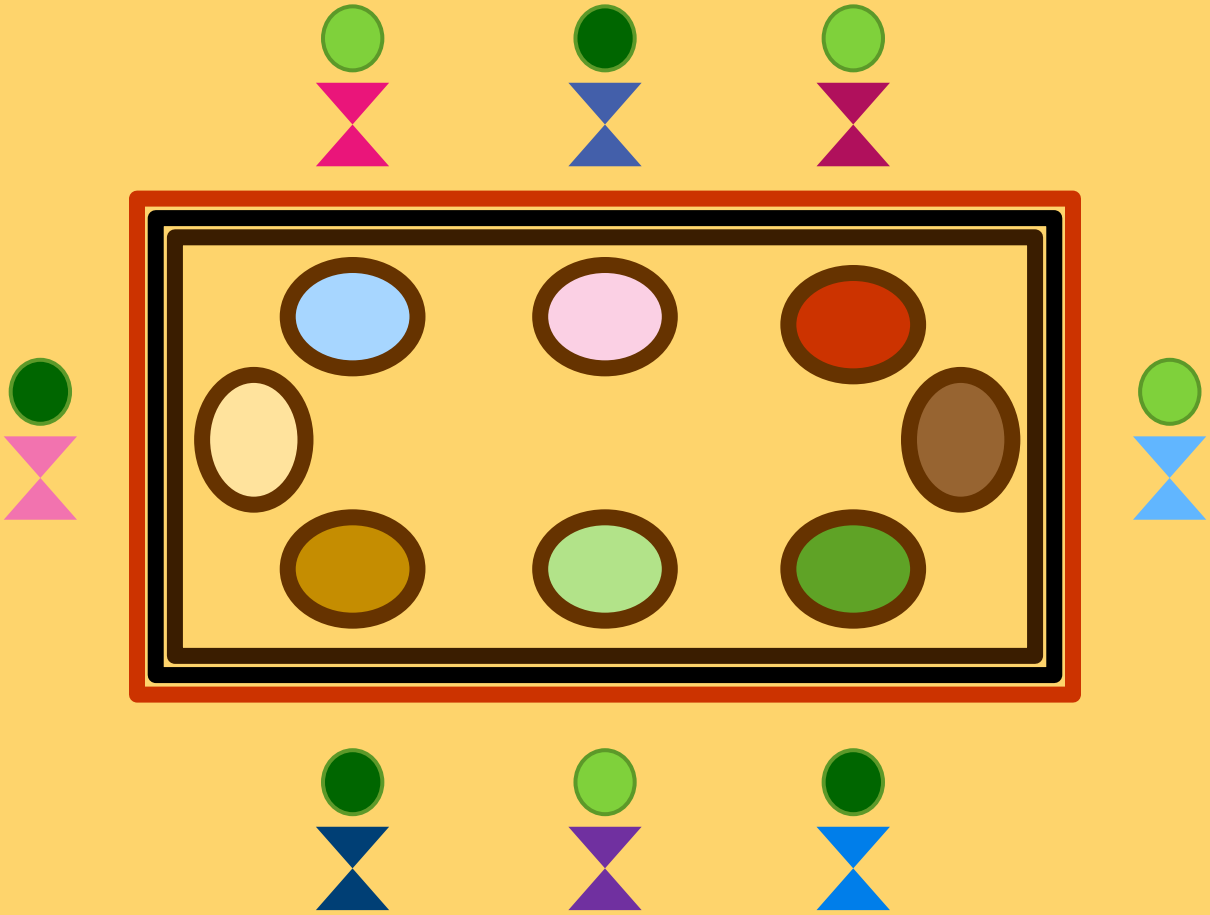
Racism is a system

Racism saps the strength of the whole society

We can act to dismantle racism

Dual Reality: A restaurant saga

Jones CP. *The Nation's Health*, February 2016.



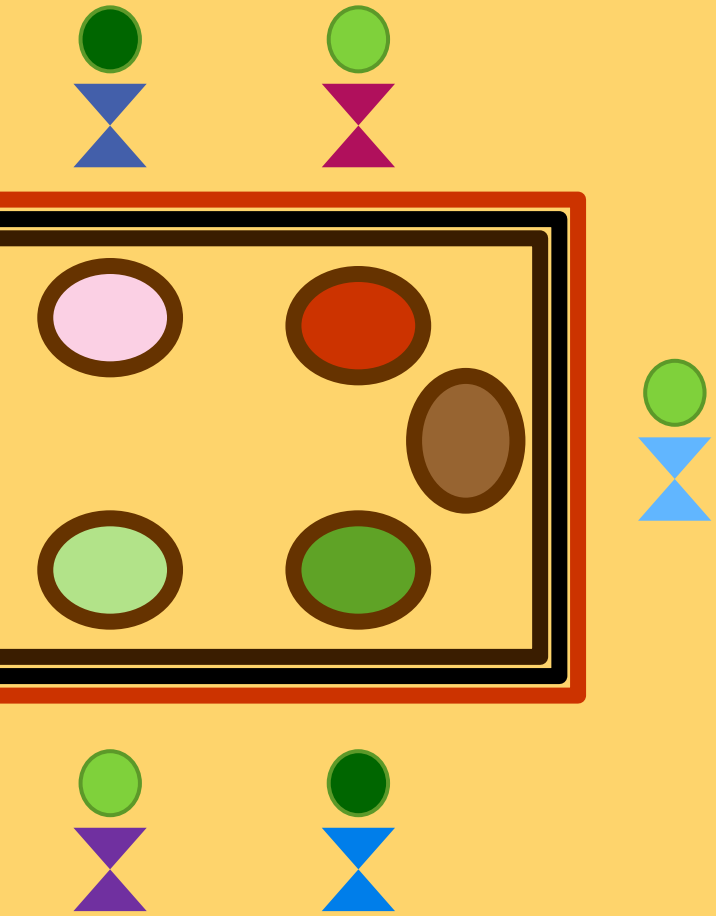
I looked up and noticed a sign . . .

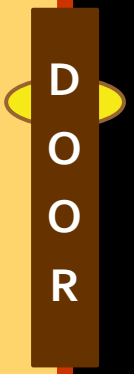
Jones CP. *The Nation's Health*, February 2016.

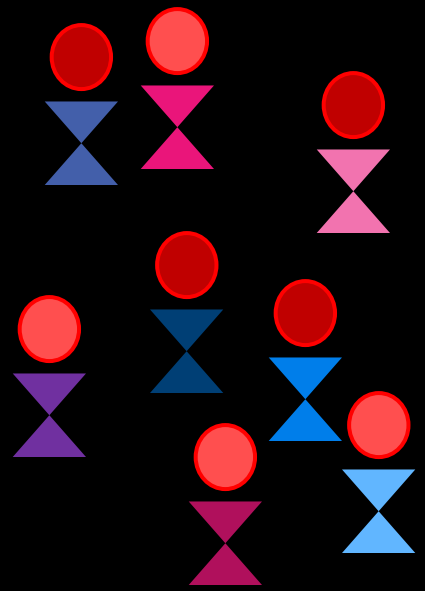
Jones CP. *The Nation's Health*, February 2016.

Racism structures "Open/Closed" signs in our society.

Jones CP. *The Nation's Health*, February 2016.



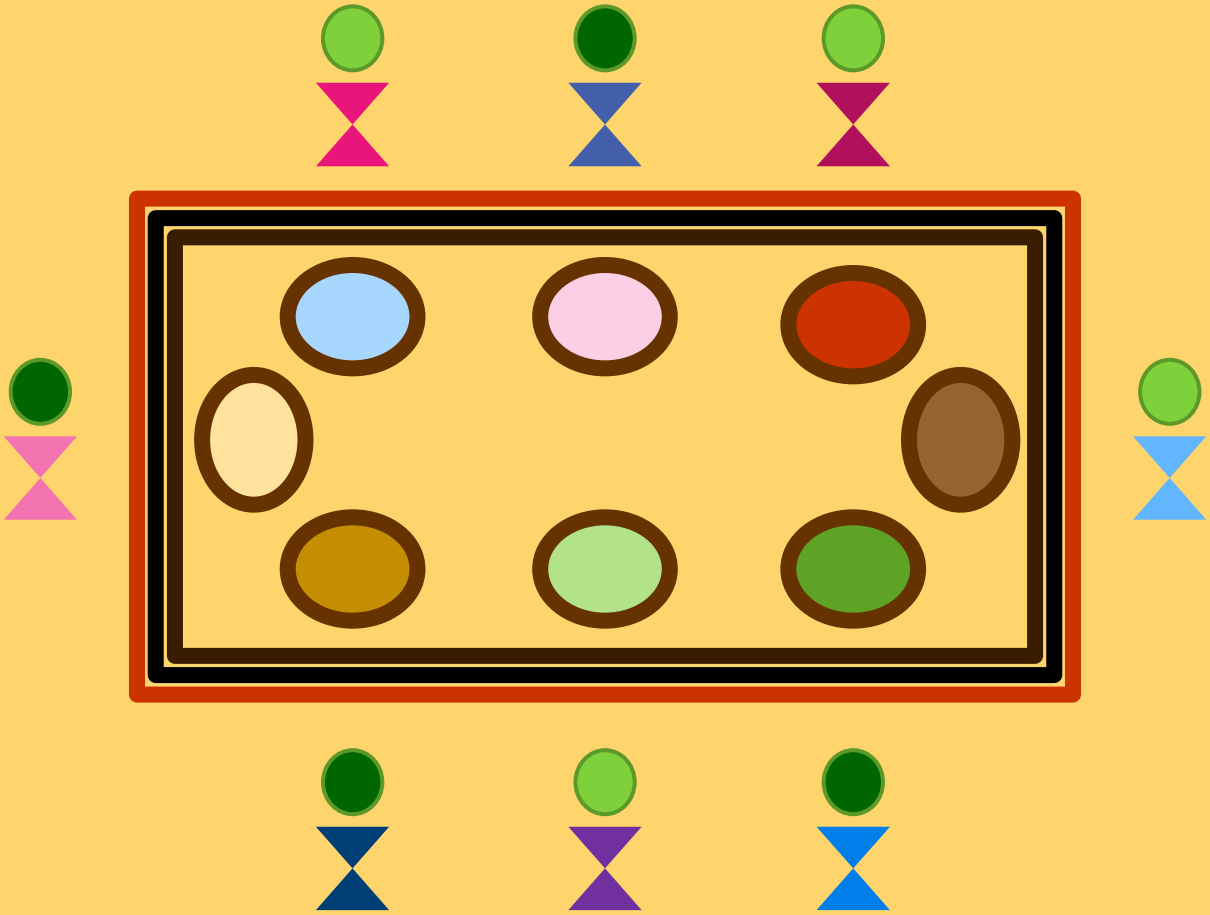




It is difficult
to recognize
a system of inequity
that privileges us.

Those on the outside
are very aware of the
two-sided nature
of the sign.

Jones CP. *The Nation's Health*, February 2016.



Is there really a two-sided sign?

Hard to know, when only see “Open”.
A privilege not to HAVE to know.
Once DO know, can choose to act.

Jones CP. *The Nation's Health*, February 2016.

What is racism?

A system

Jones CP. Confronting Institutionalized Racism. *Phylon* 2003;50(1-2):7-22.

What is racism?

A system of structuring opportunity and assigning value

Jones CP. Confronting Institutionalized Racism. *Phylon* 2003;50(1-2):7-22.

What is racism?

A system of structuring opportunity and assigning value based on the social interpretation of how one looks (which is what we call “race”)

Jones CP. Confronting Institutionalized Racism. *Phylon* 2003;50(1-2):7-22.

What is racism?

A system of structuring opportunity and assigning value based on the social interpretation of how one looks (which is what we call “race”), that

- Unfairly disadvantages some individuals and communities

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- Unfairly advantages other individuals and communities

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What is racism?

A system of structuring opportunity and assigning value based on the social interpretation of how one looks (which is what we call “race”), that

- Unfairly disadvantages some individuals and communities
- Unfairly advantages other individuals and communities
- Saps the strength of the whole society through the waste of human resources

Jones CP. Confronting Institutionalized Racism. *Phylon* 2003;50(1-2):7-22.

Levels of Racism

- Institutionalized
- Personally-mediated
- Internalized

Jones CP. Levels of Racism: A Theoretic Framework and a Gardener's Tale. *Am J Public Health* 2000;90(8):1212-1215.

Institutionalized racism

- Differential access to the goods, services, and opportunities of society, by "race"
- Examples
  - Housing, education, employment, income
  - Medical facilities
  - Clean environment
  - Information, resources, voice
- Explains the association between social class and "race"

Jones CP. Levels of Racism: A Theoretic Framework and a Gardener's Tale. *Am J Public Health* 2000;90(8):1212-1215.

Personally-mediated racism

- Differential assumptions about the abilities, motives, and intents of others, by "race"
- Differential actions based on those assumptions

- Prejudice and discrimination
- Examples
  - Police brutality
  - Physician disrespect
  - Shopkeeper vigilance
  - Waiter indifference
  - Teacher devaluation

Jones CP. Levels of Racism: A Theoretic Framework and a Gardener's Tale. *Am J Public Health* 2000;90(8):1212-1215.

Internalized racism

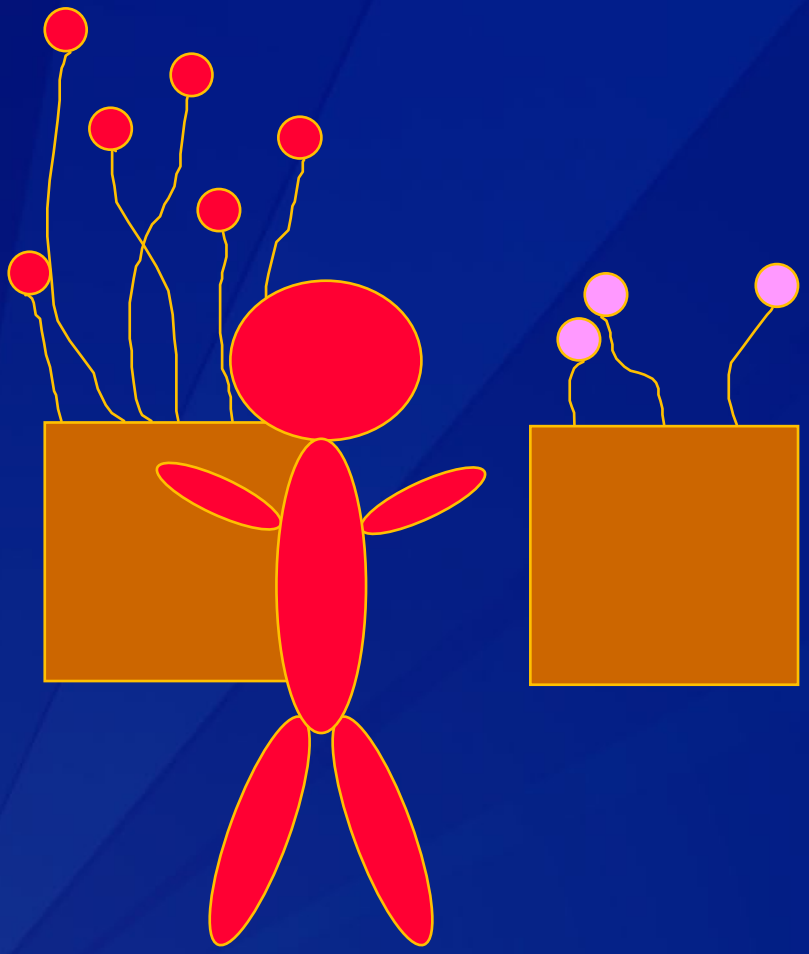
- Acceptance by the stigmatized "races" of negative messages about our own abilities and intrinsic worth
- Examples
  - Self-devaluation
  - "White man's ice is colder" syndrome
  - Resignation, helplessness, hopelessness
- Accepting limitations to our full humanity

Jones CP. Levels of Racism: A Theoretic Framework and a Gardener's Tale. *Am J Public Health* 2000;90(8):1212-1215.

Levels of Racism: A Gardener's Tale

Jones CP. Levels of Racism: A Theoretic Framework and a Gardener's Tale. *Am J Public Health* 2000;90(8):1212-1215.

Who is the gardener?



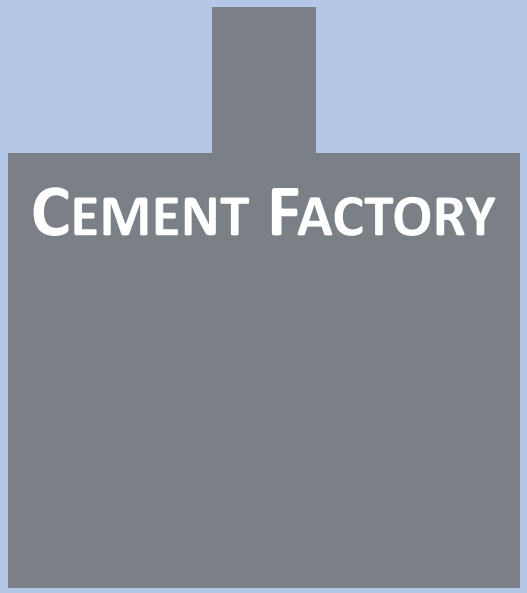
- Power to decide
- Power to act
- Control of resources

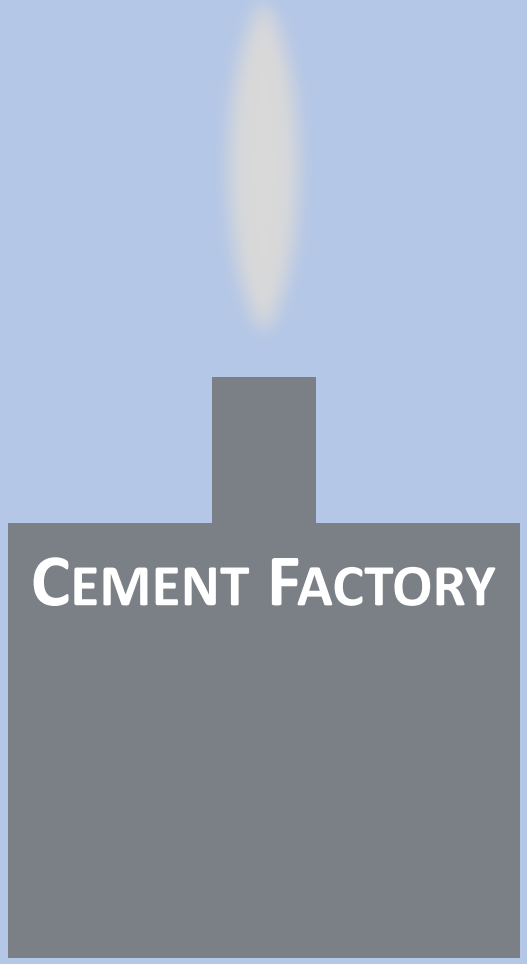
- **Dangerous when**
  - Allied with one group
  - Not concerned with equity

Jones CP. Levels of Racism: A Theoretic Framework and a Gardener's Tale. *Am J Public Health* 2000;90(8):1212-1215.

Pause for discussion

Cement Dust in Our Lungs


CEMENT FACTORY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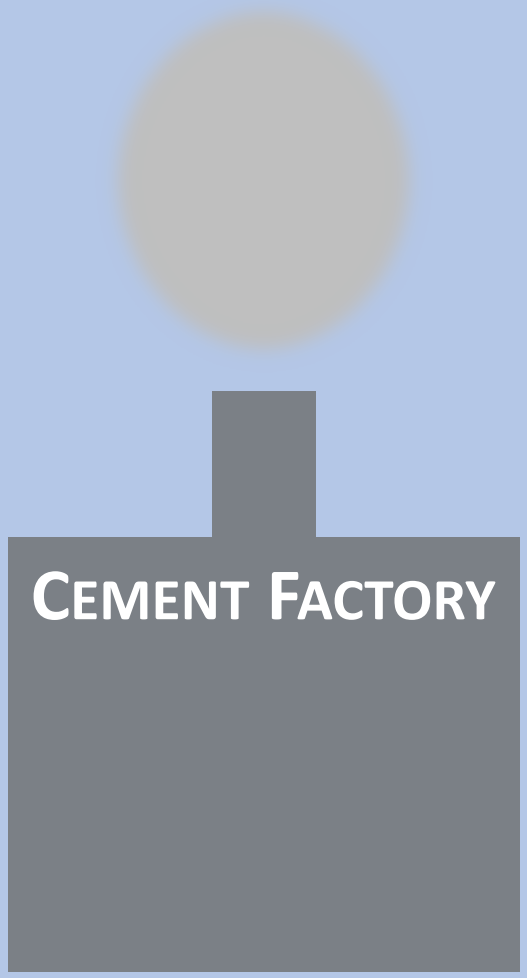
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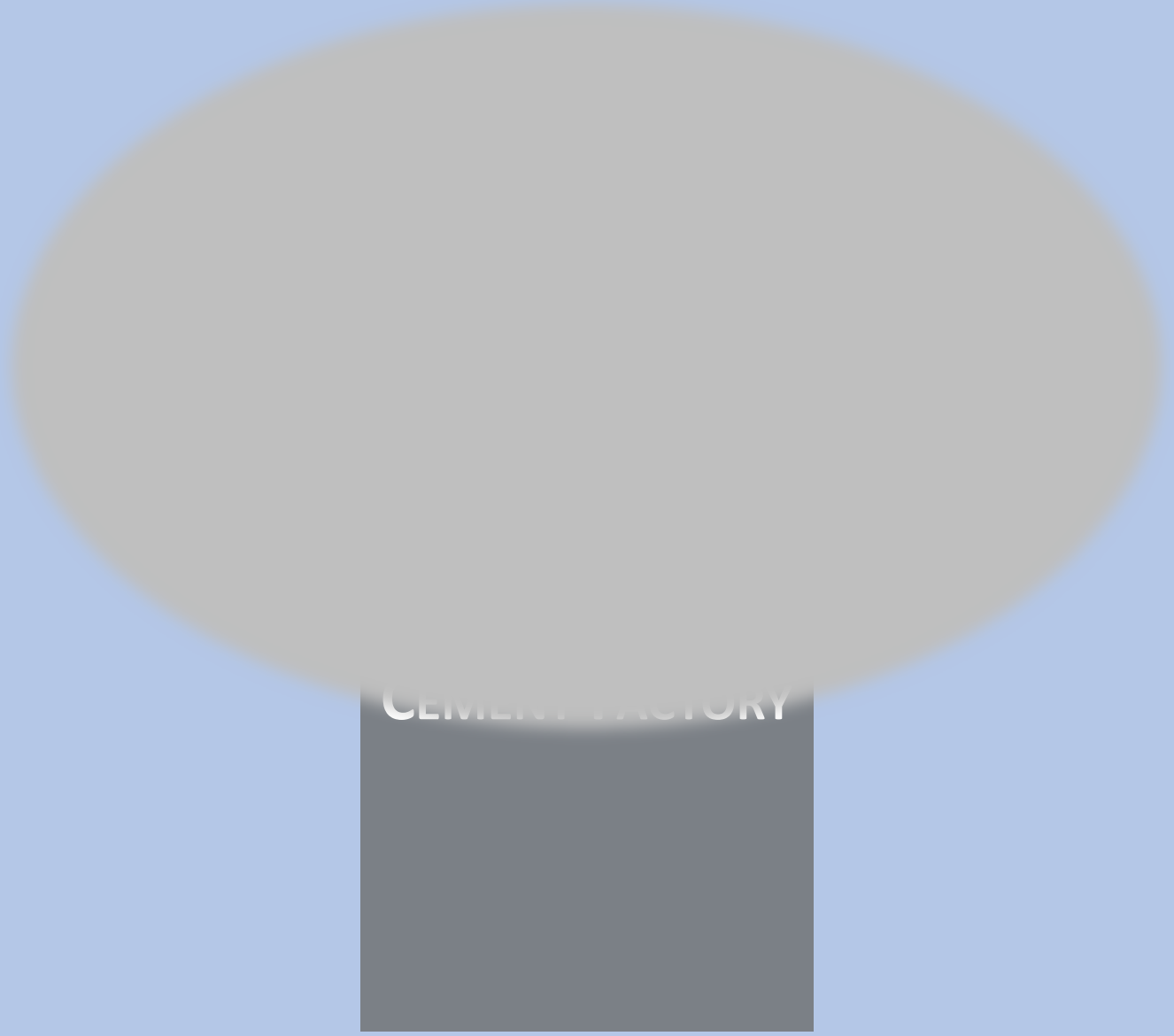
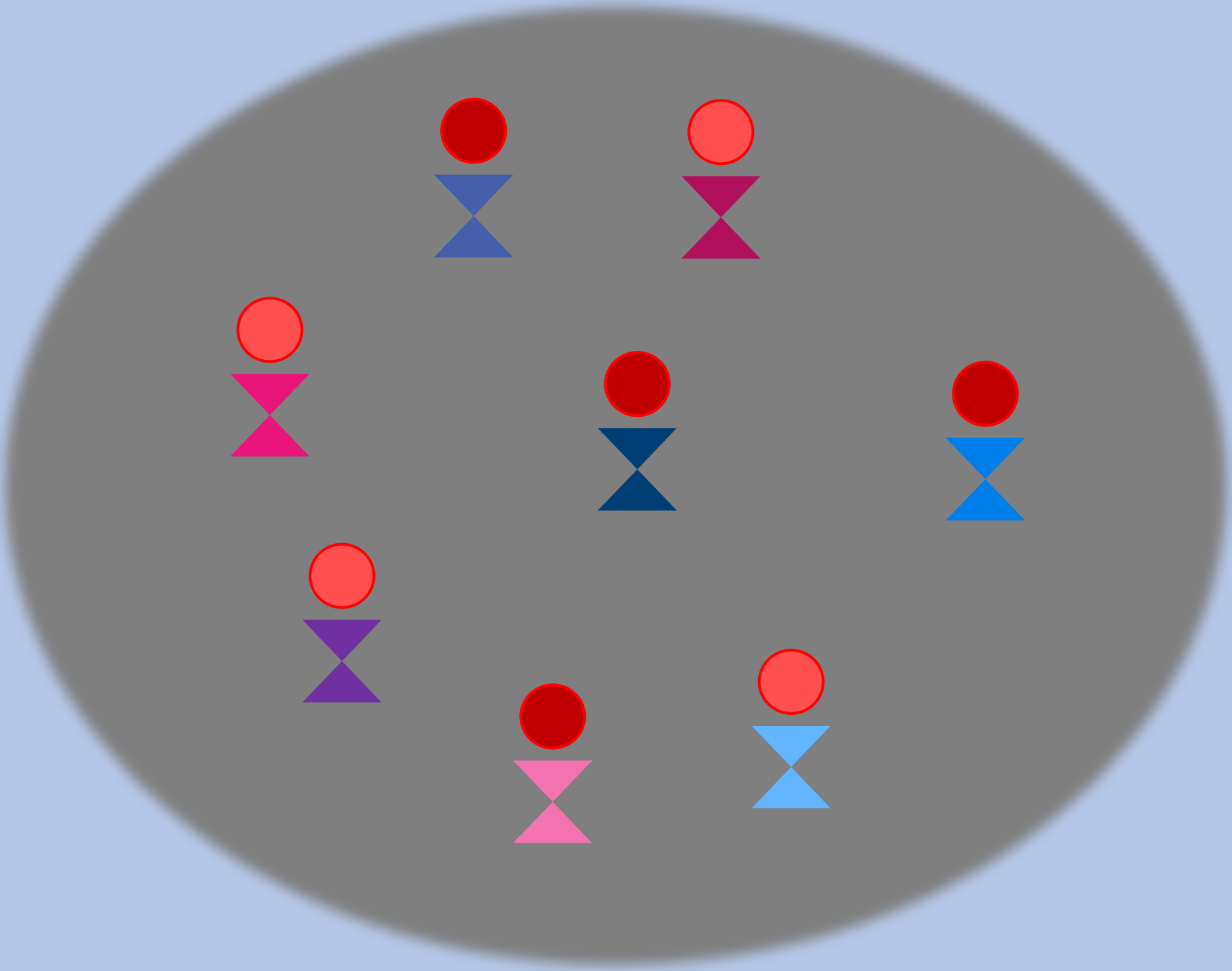
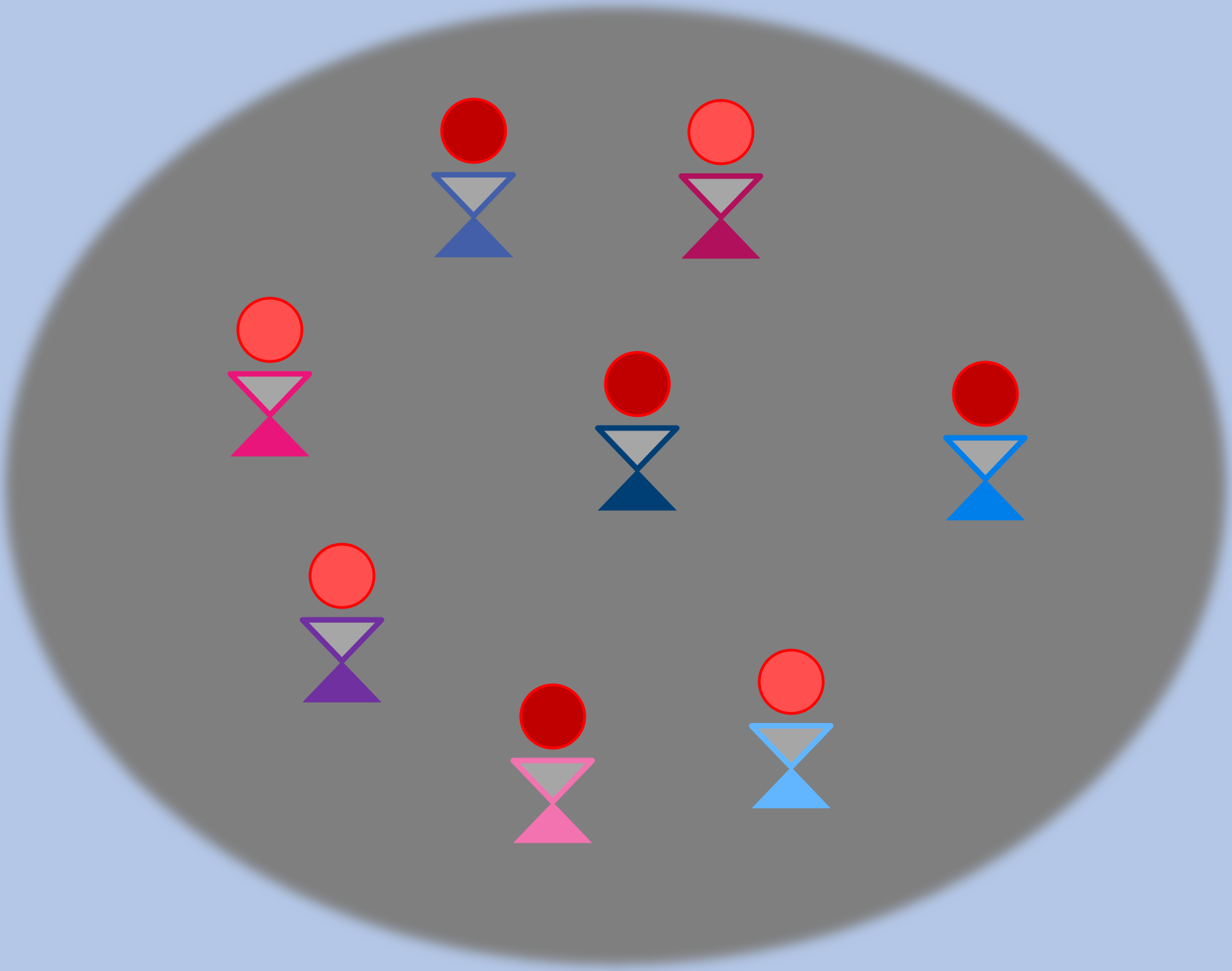
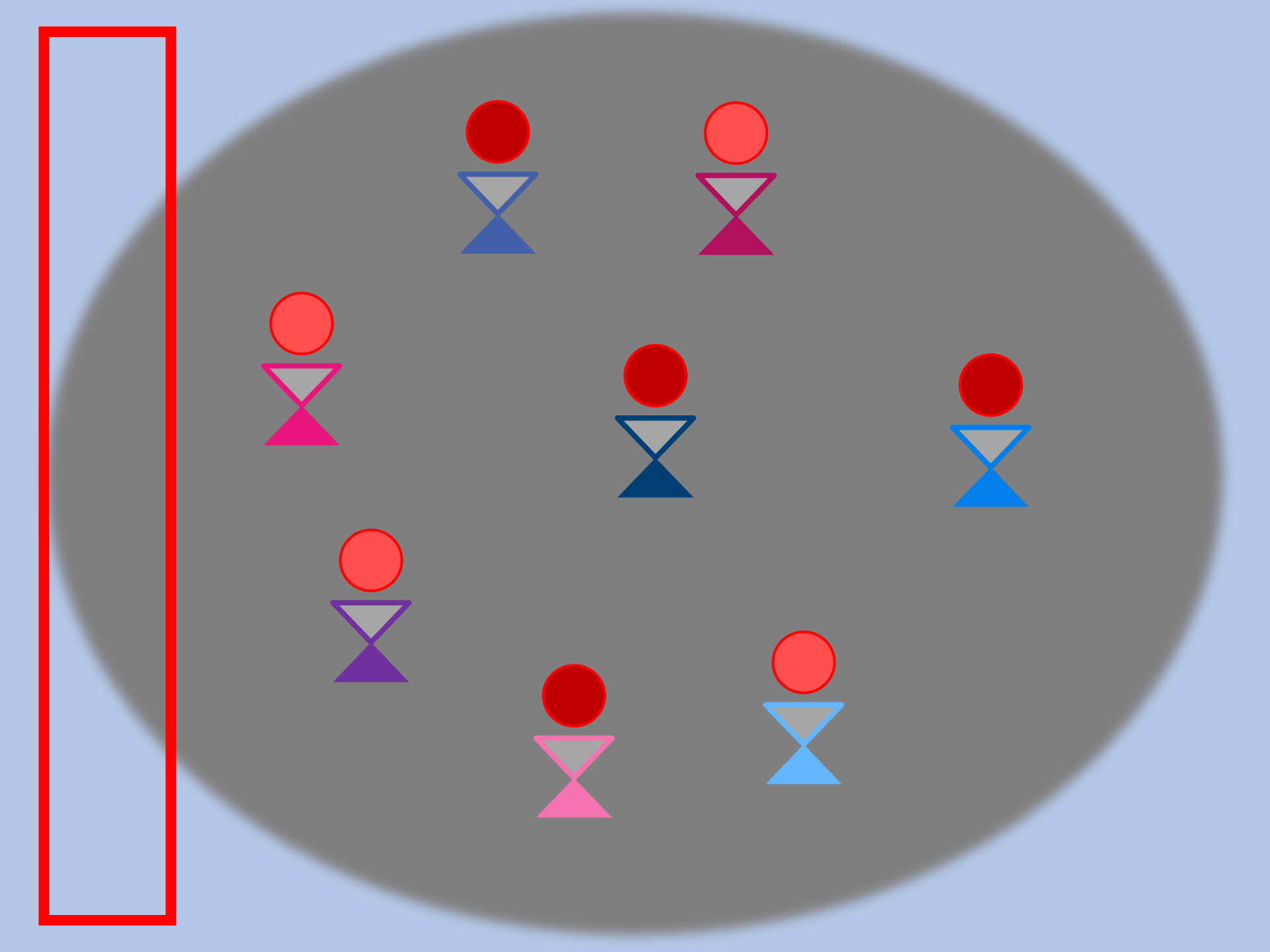
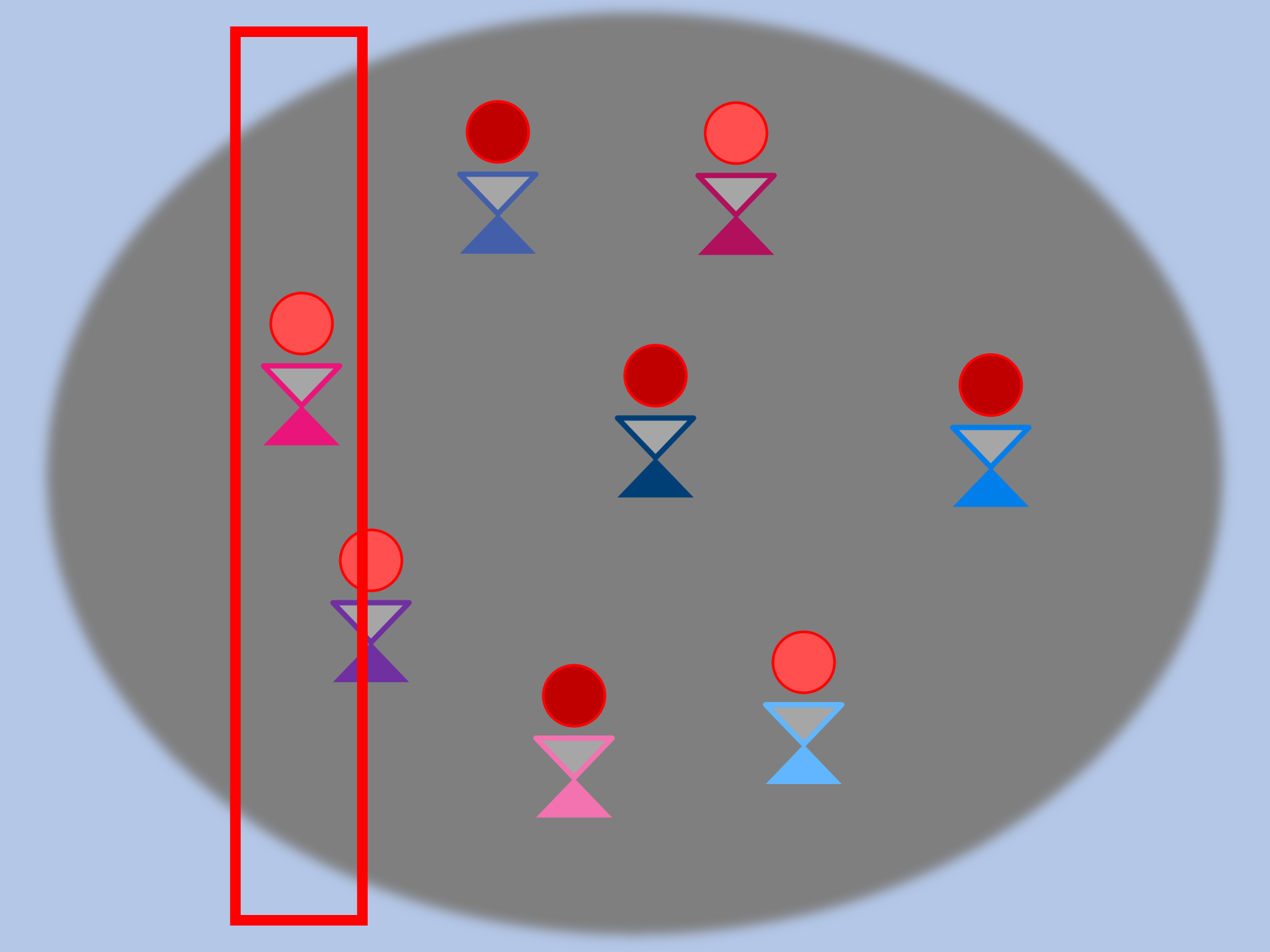


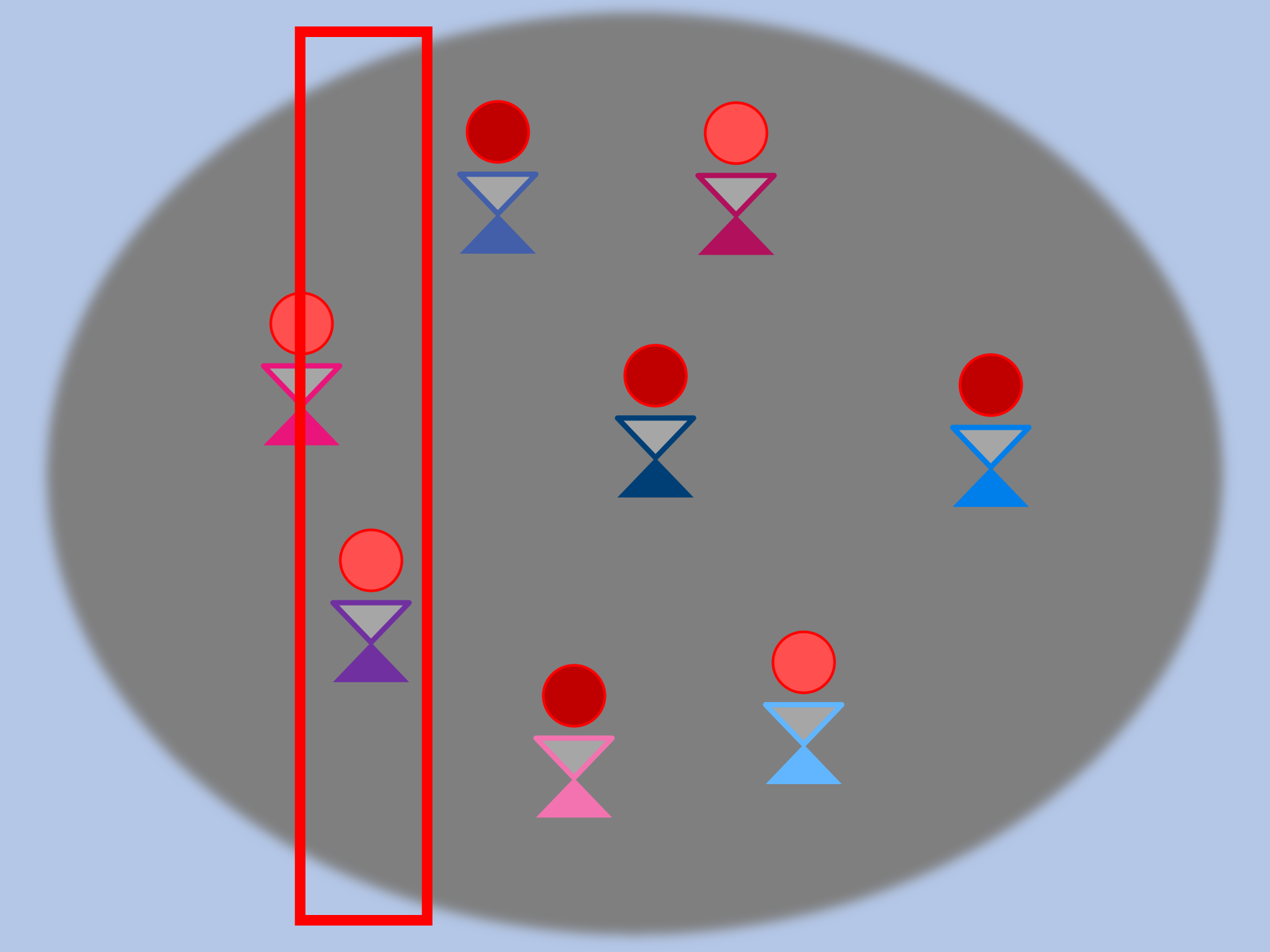


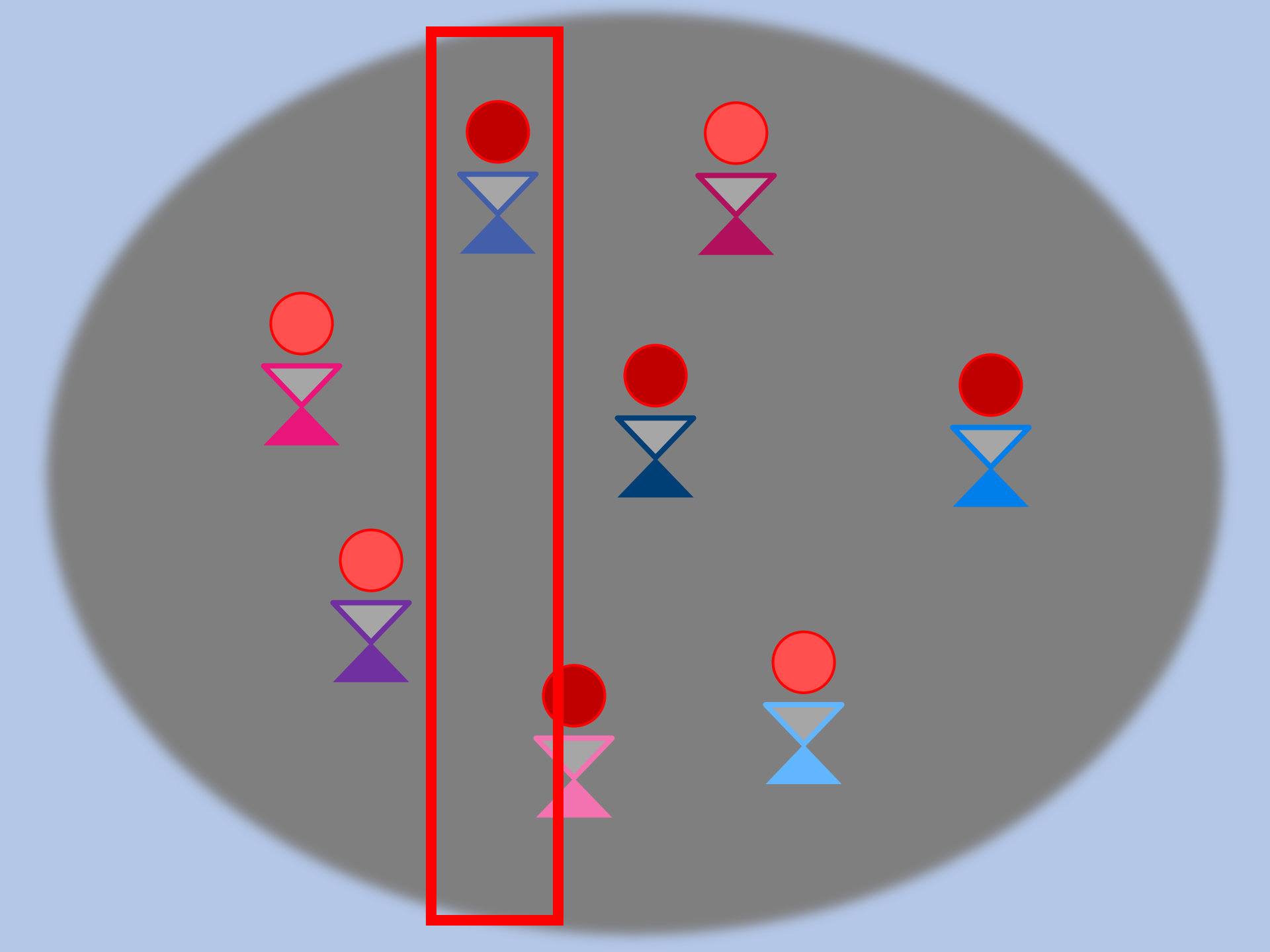


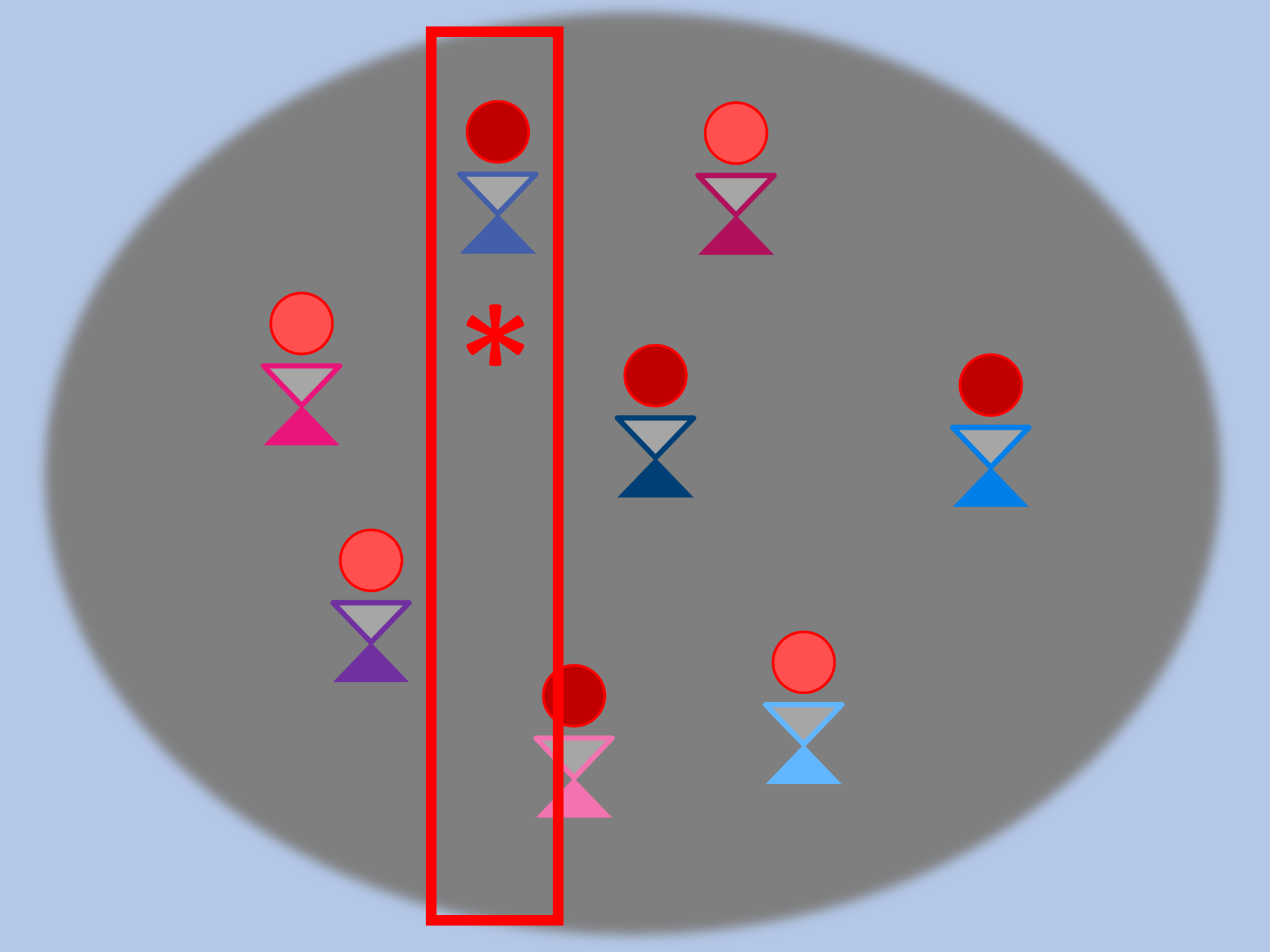
FOCUS
on the individual?

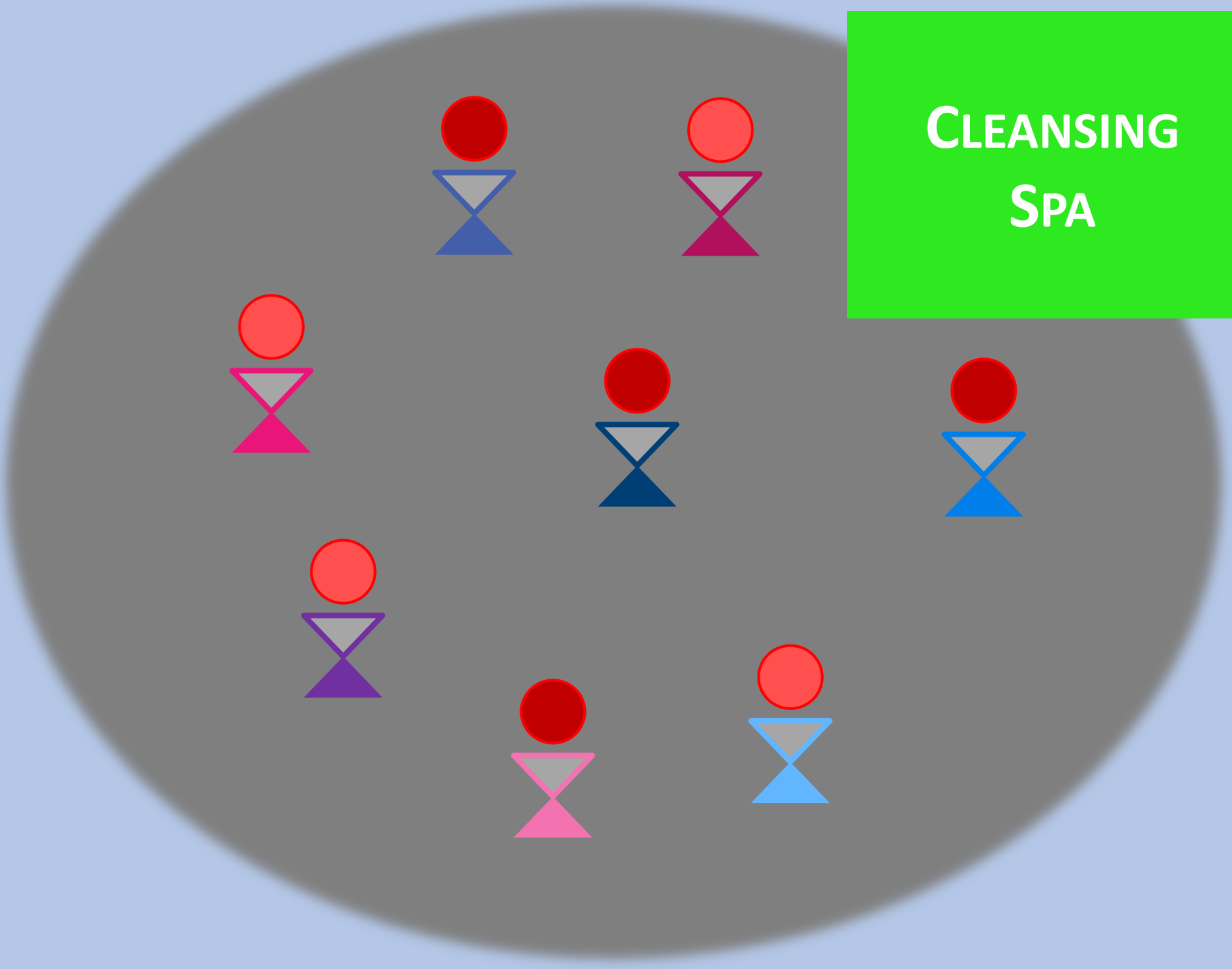




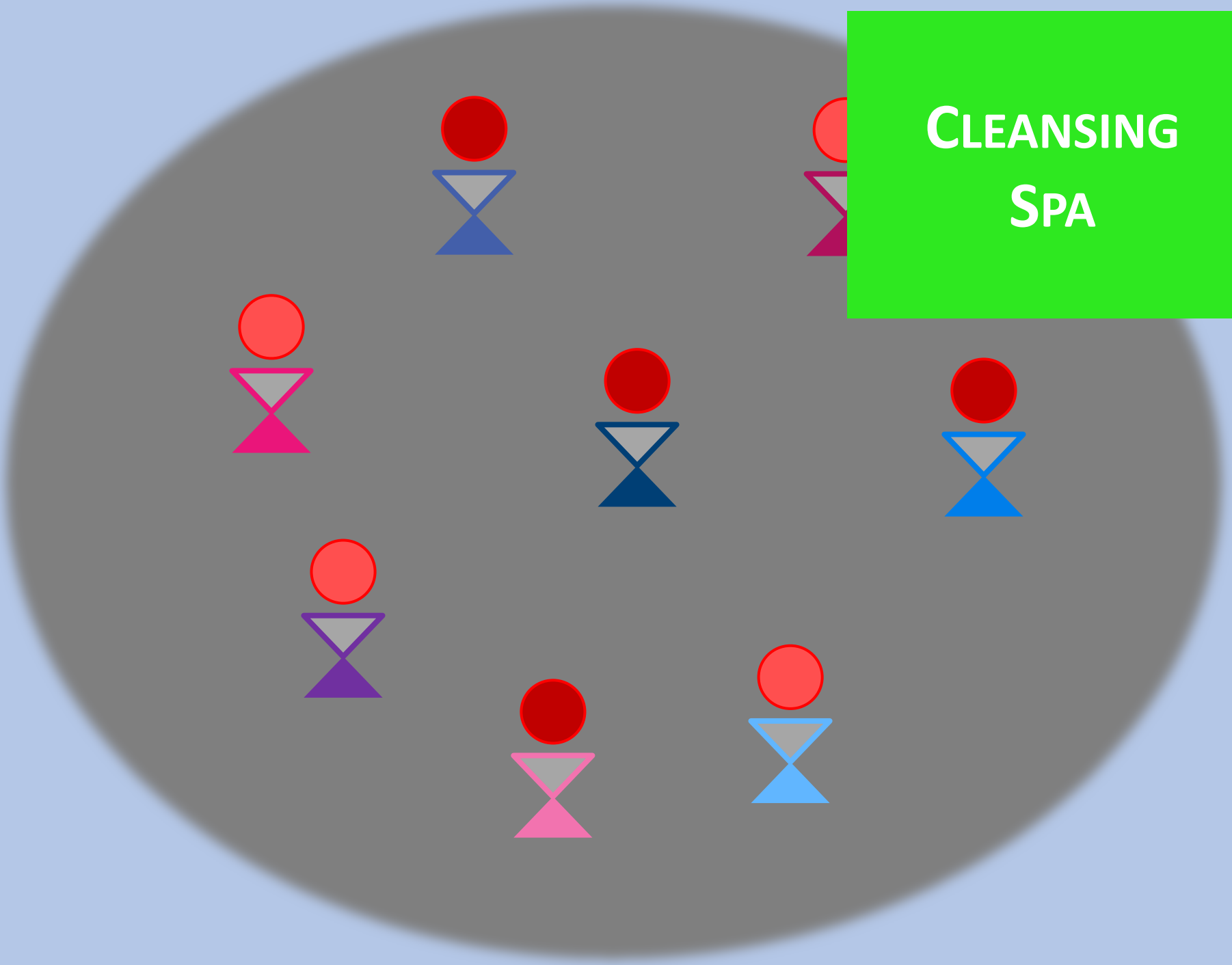


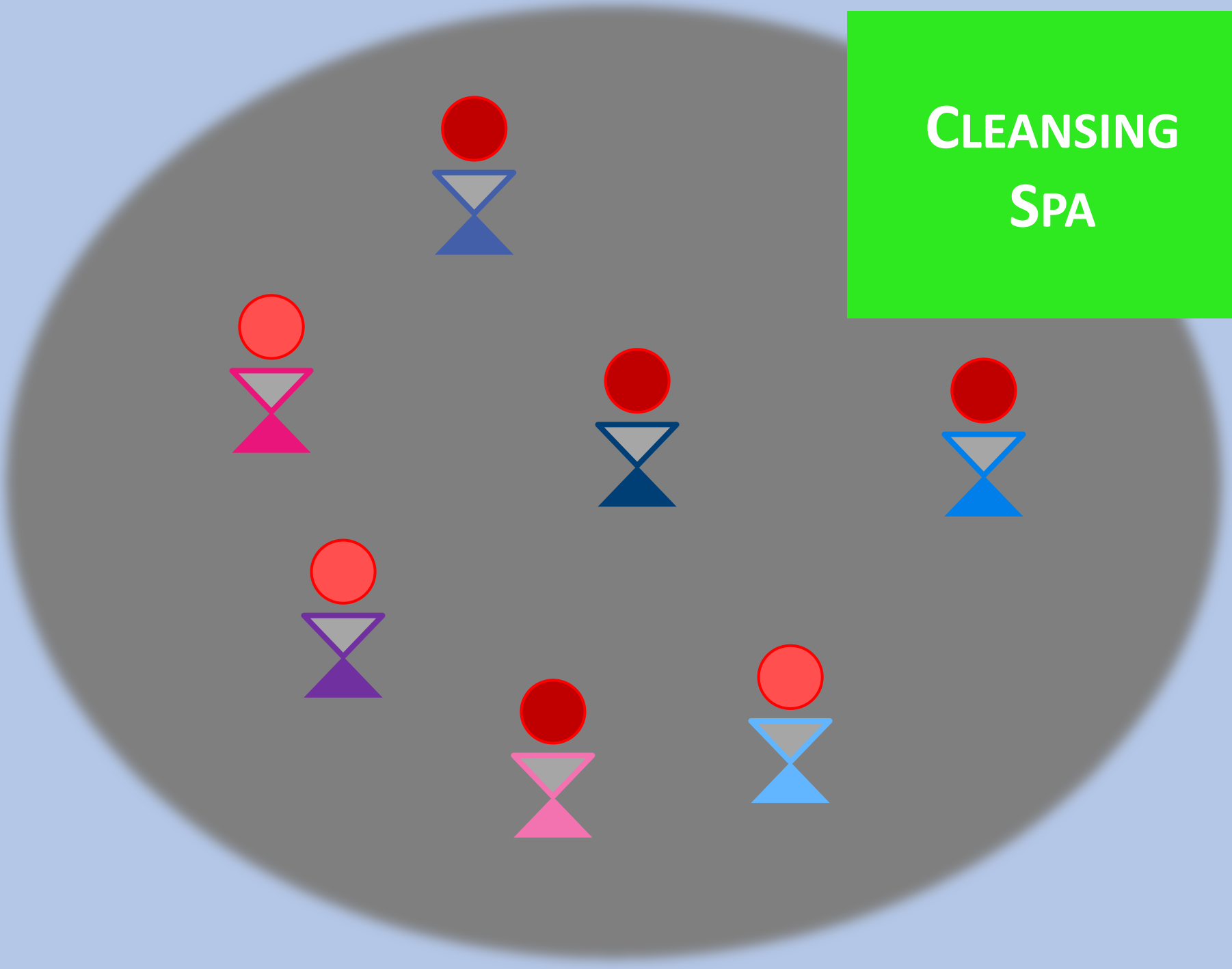





CLEANSING
SPA

Cleansing Spa

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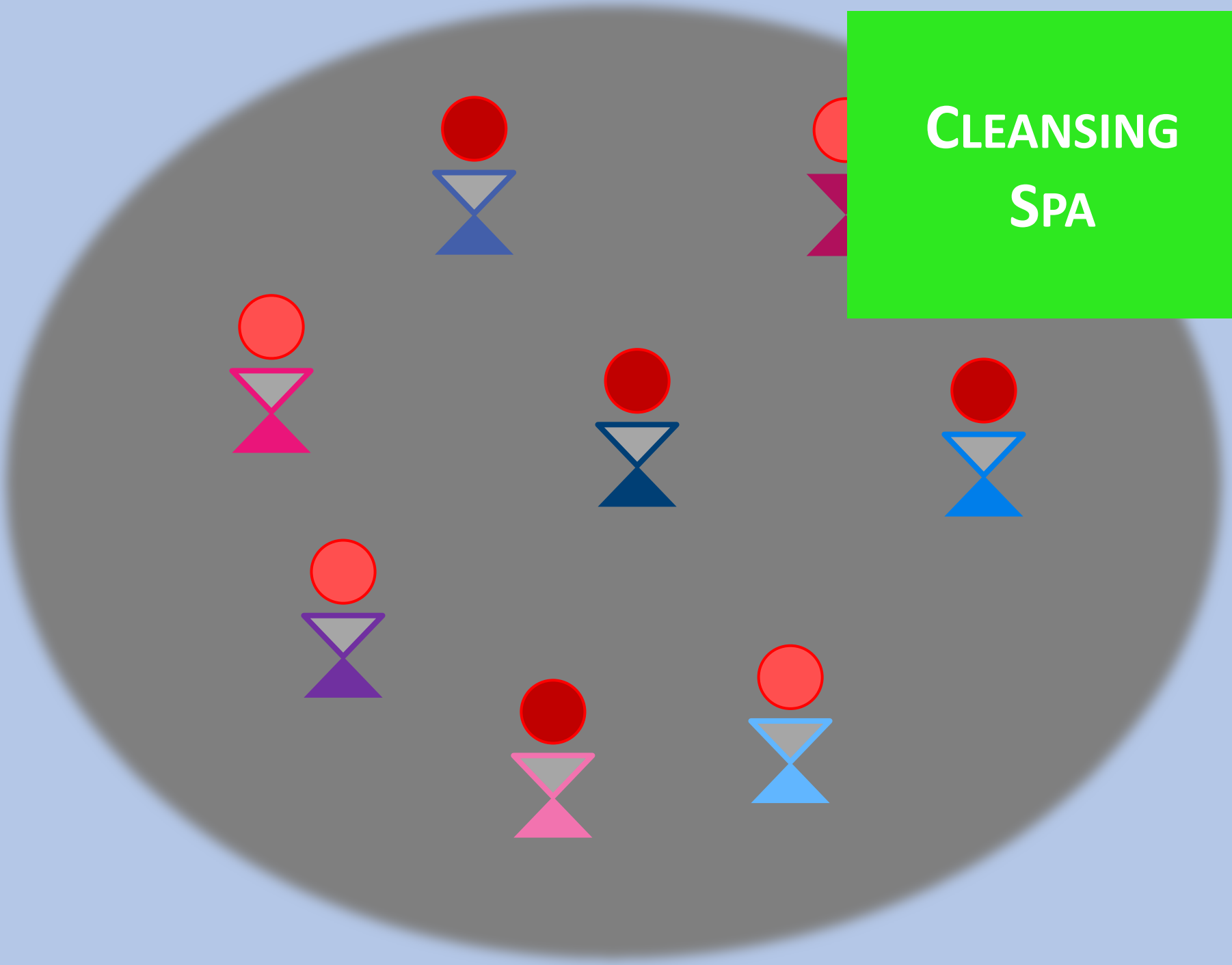

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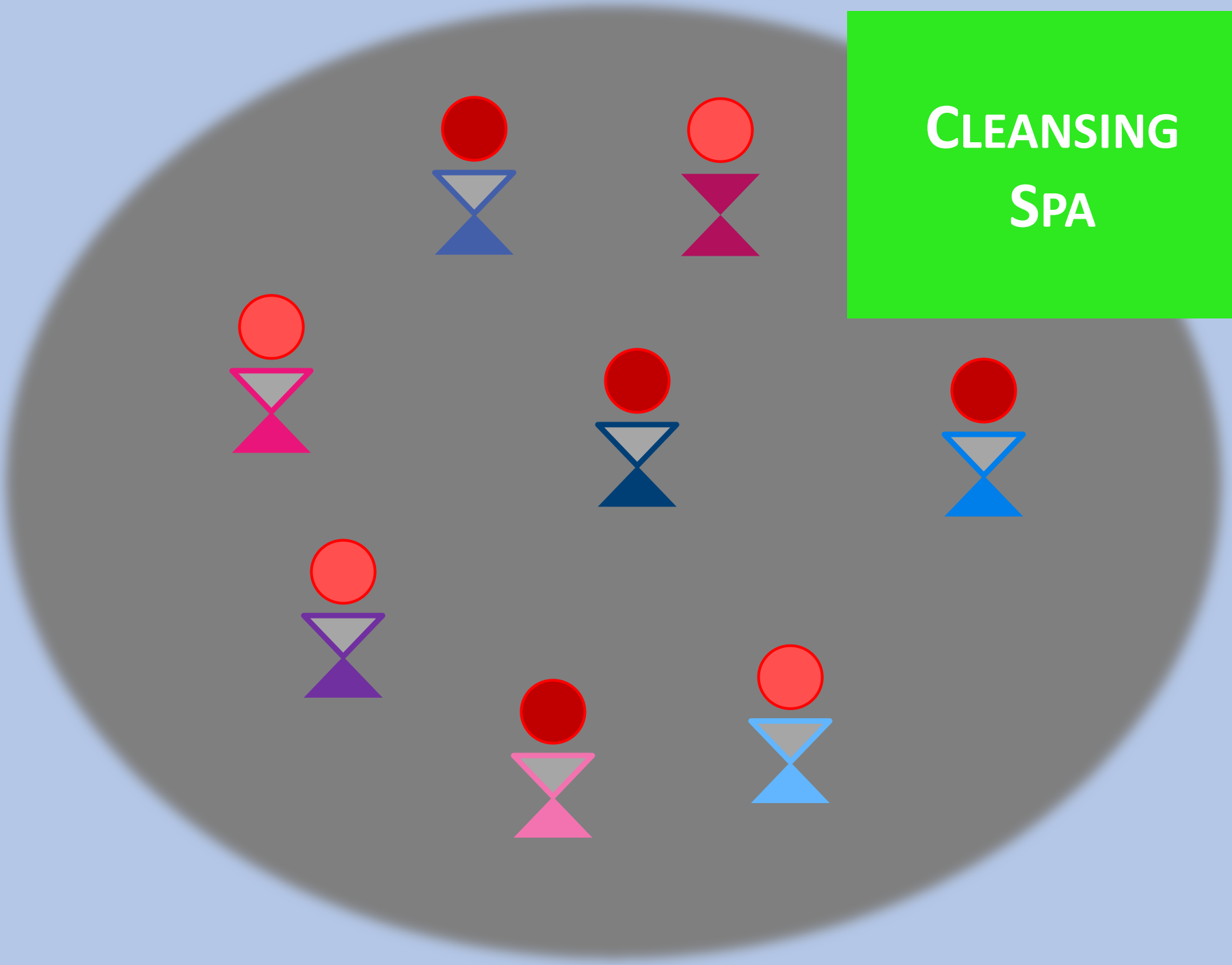

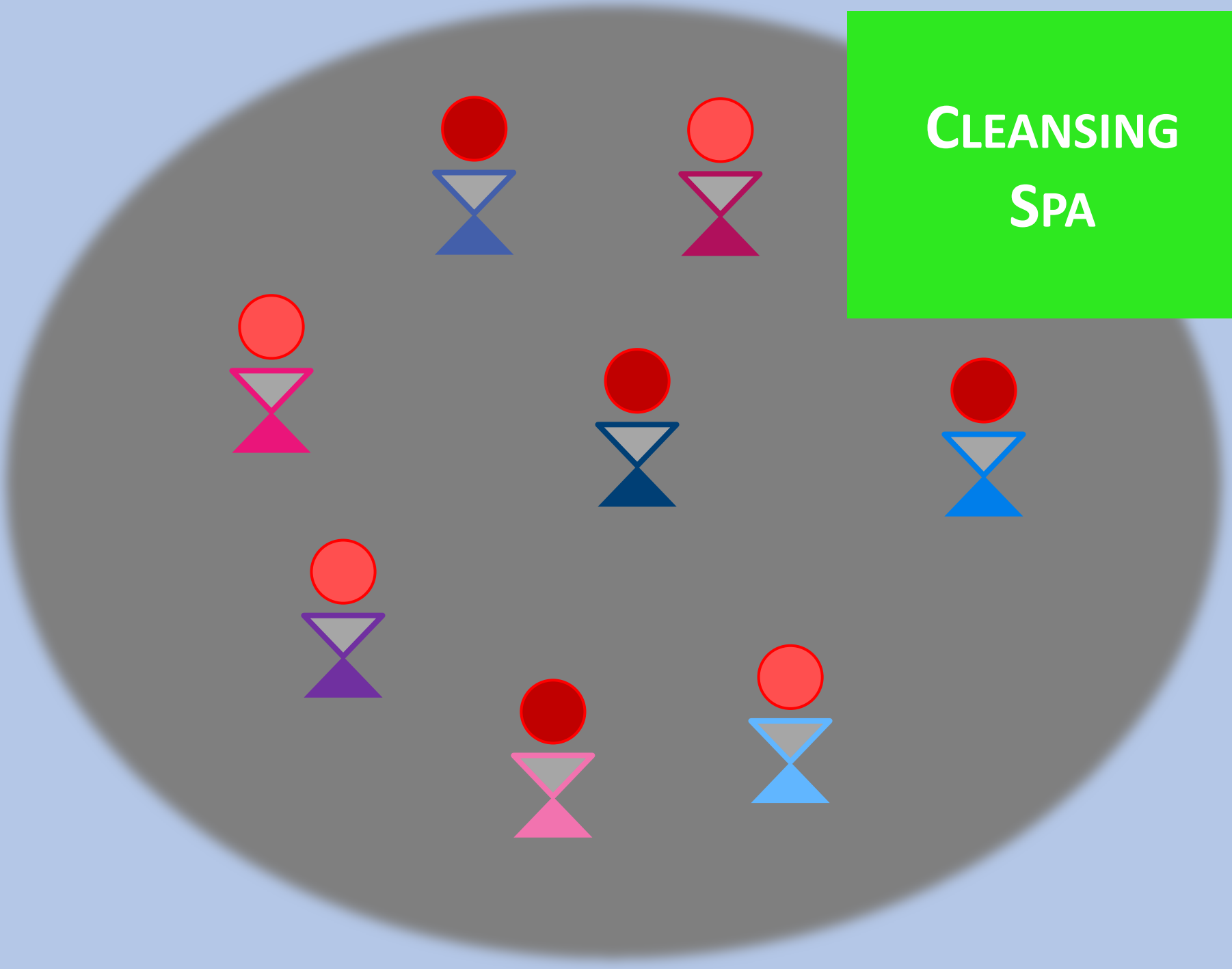
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FOCUS
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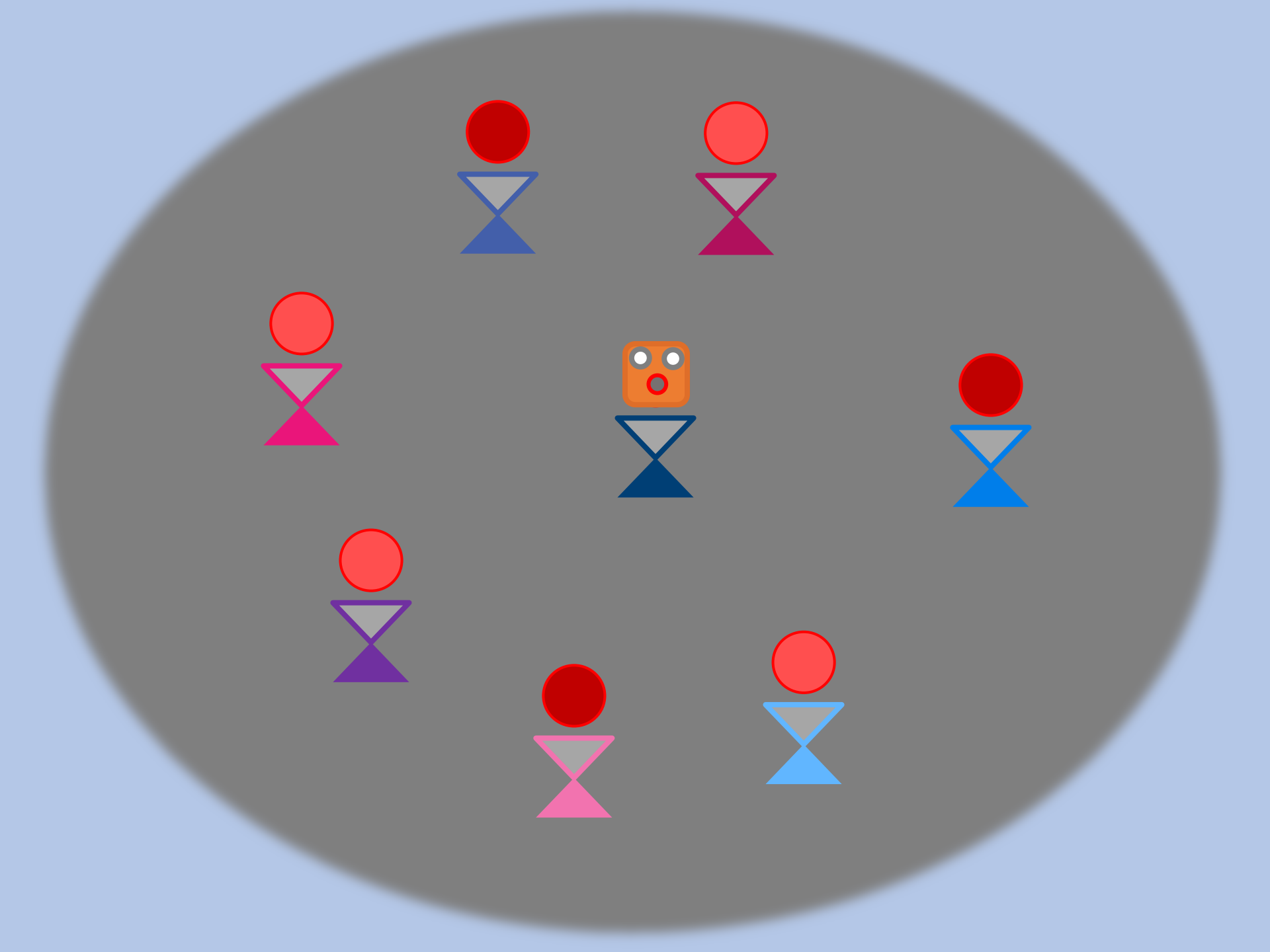
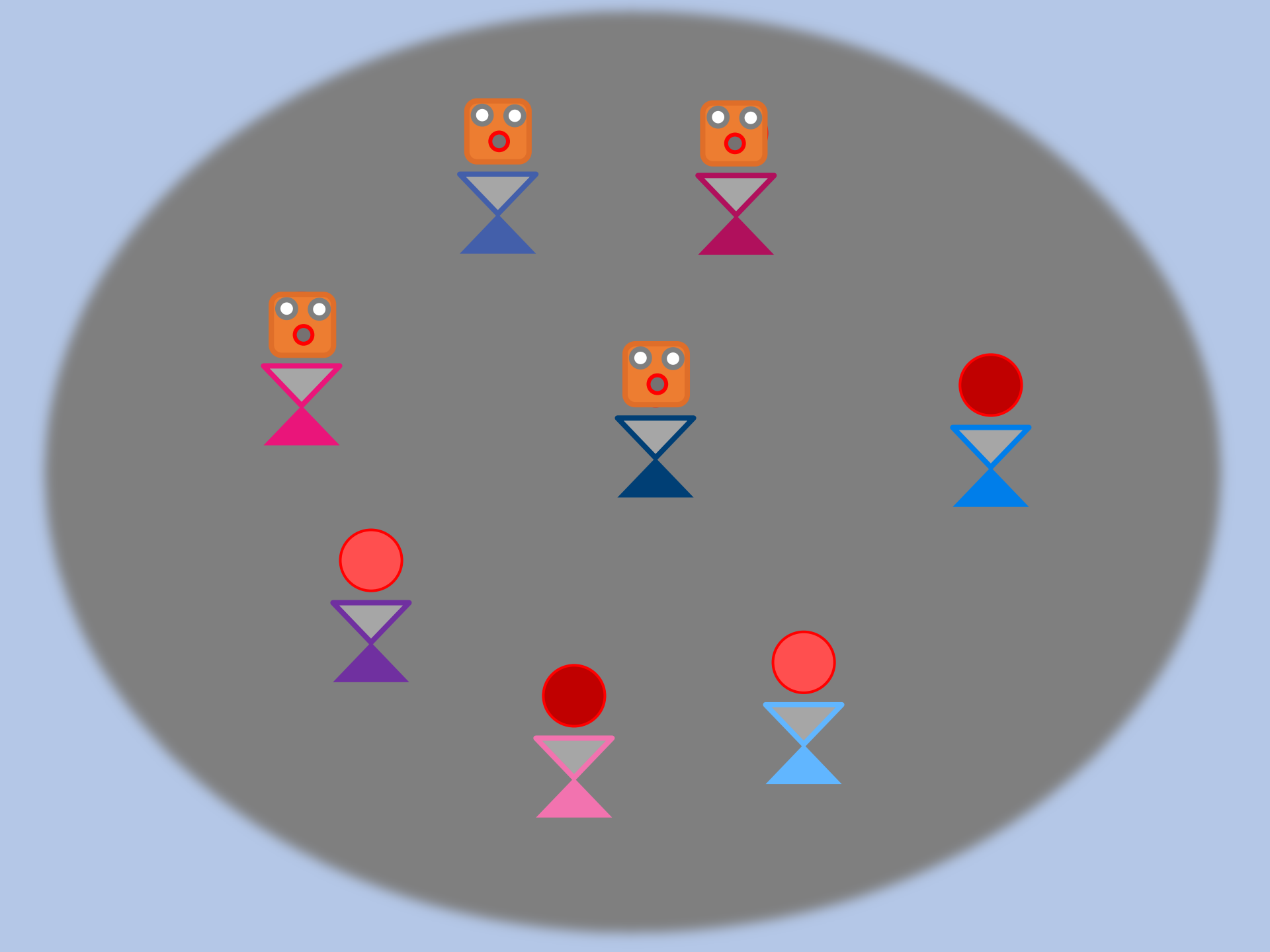
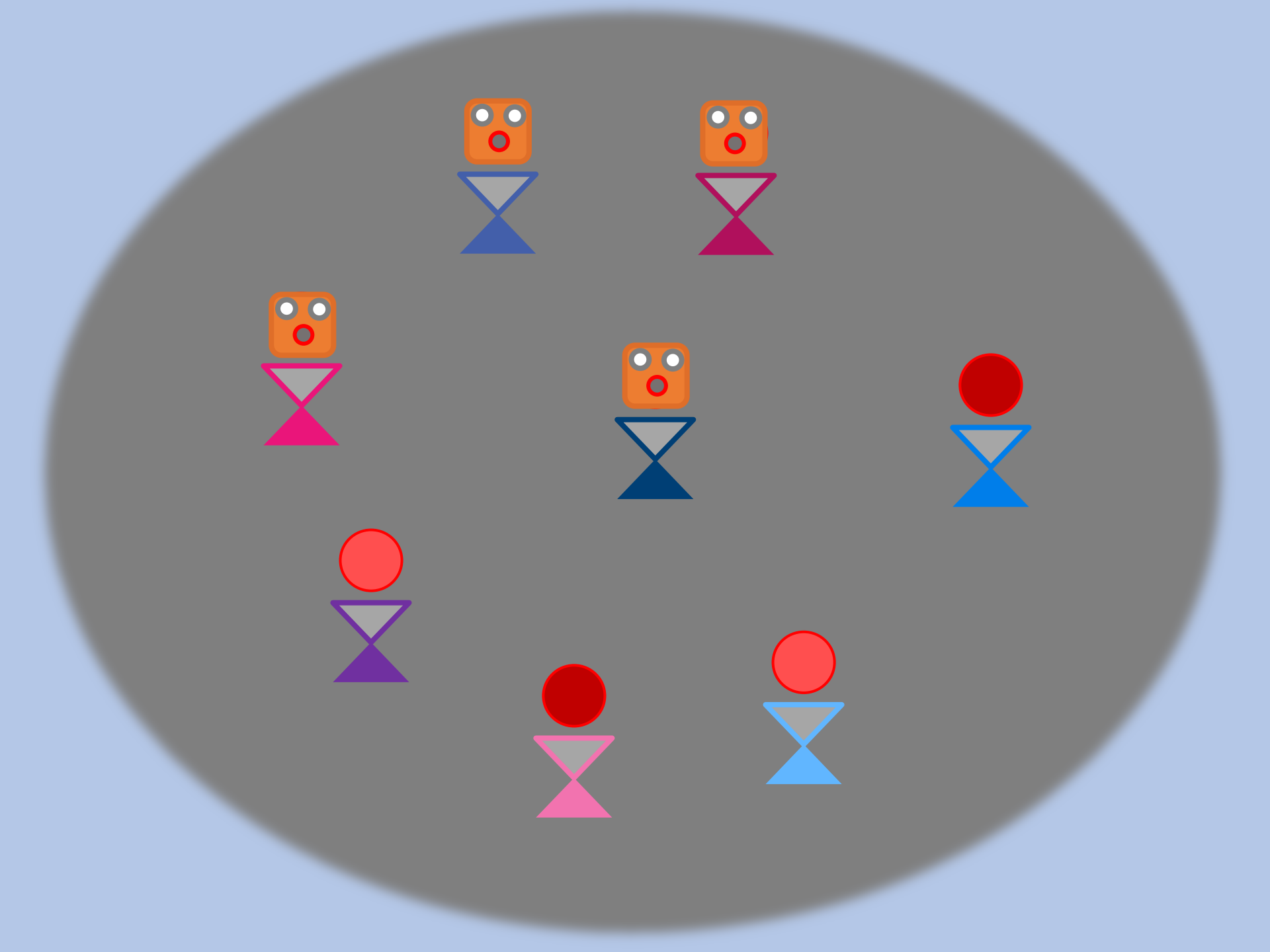
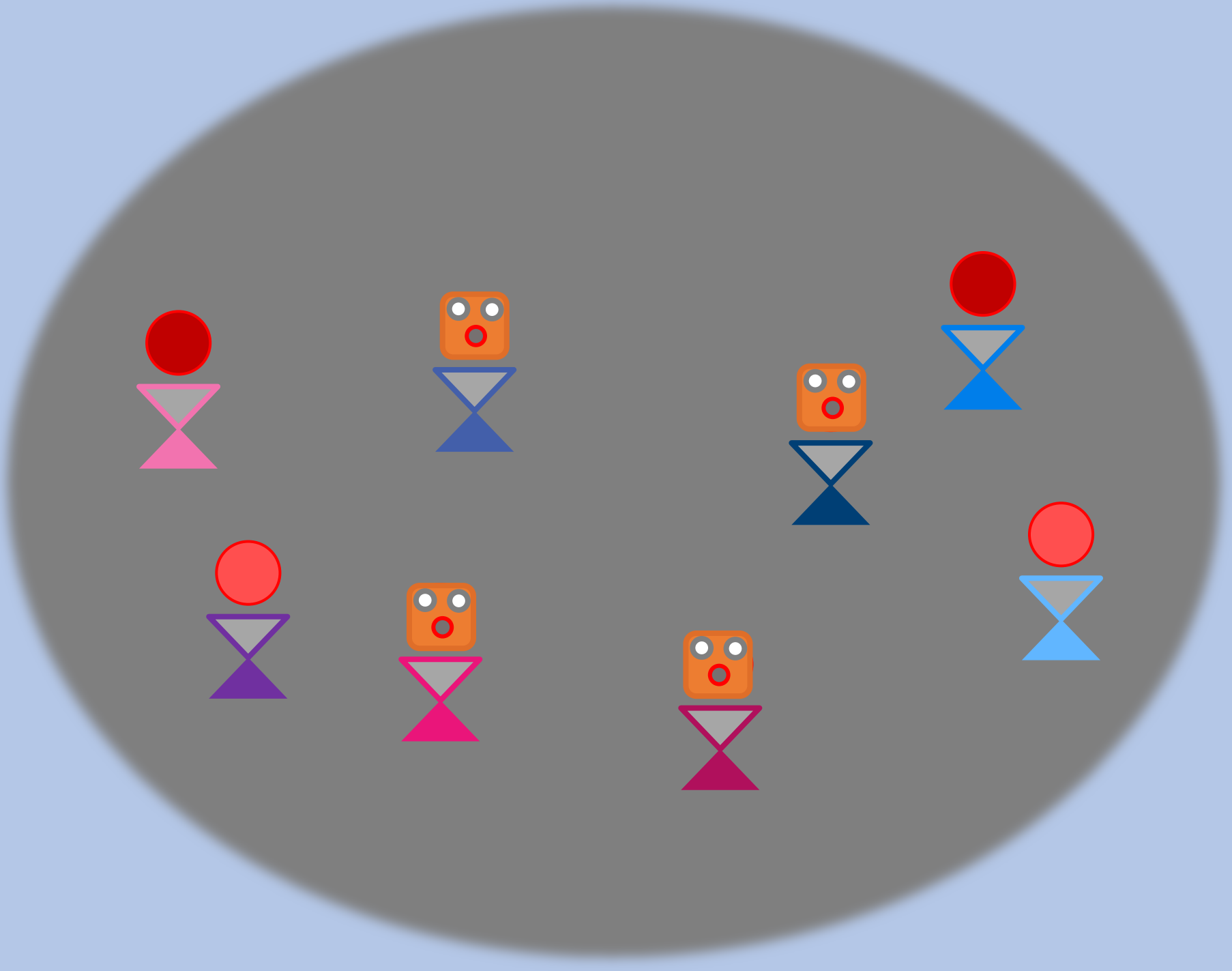
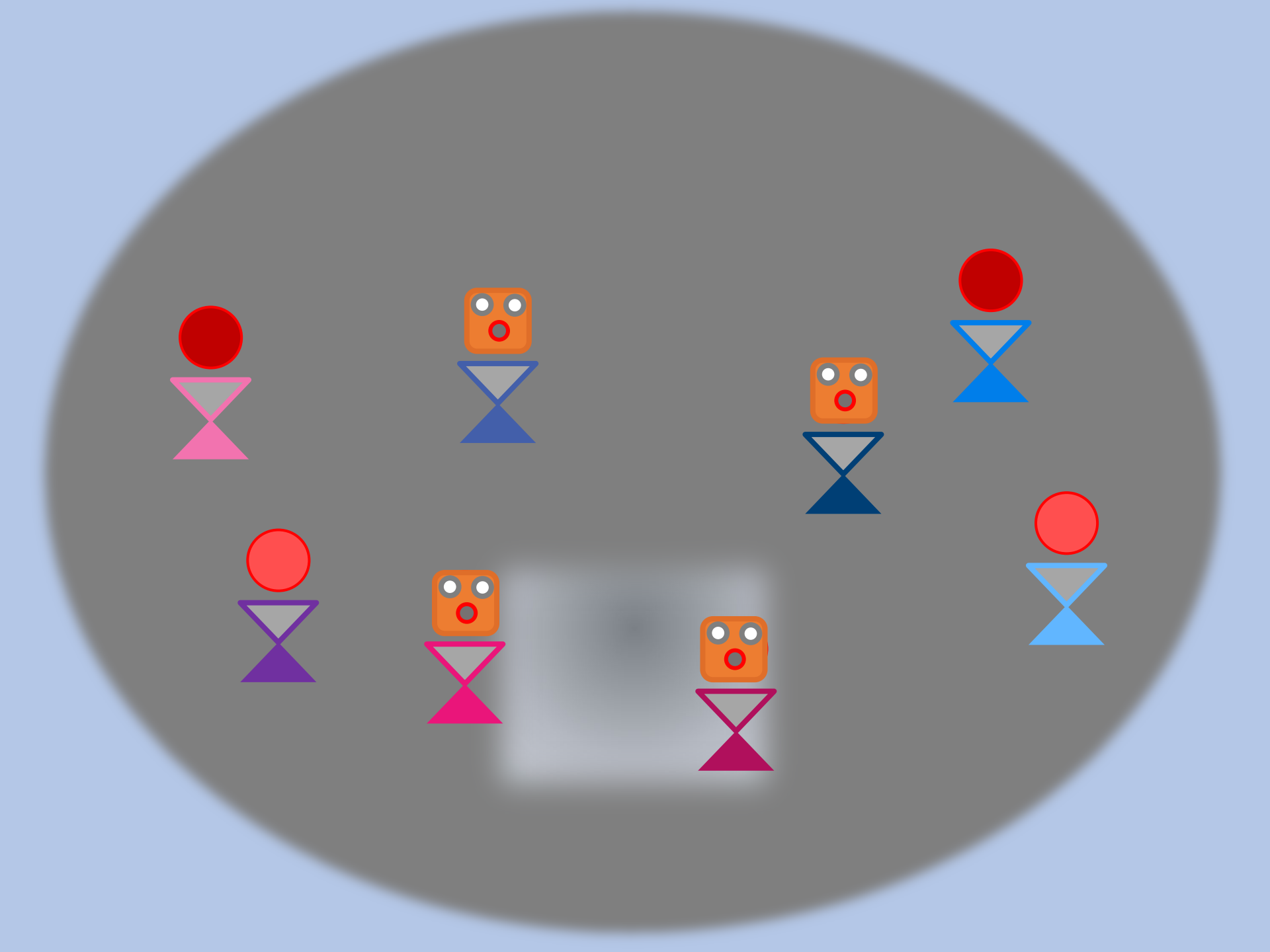


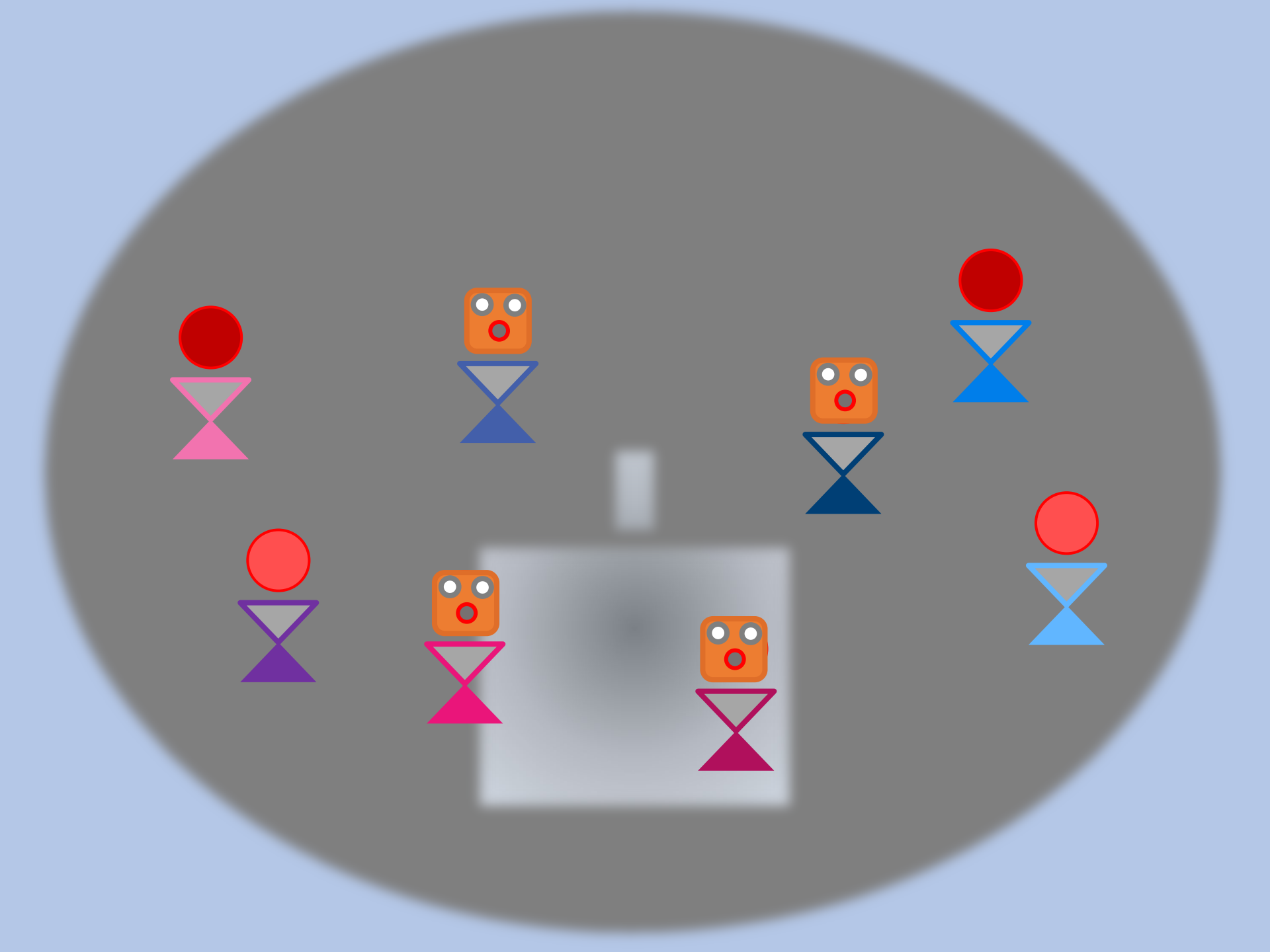


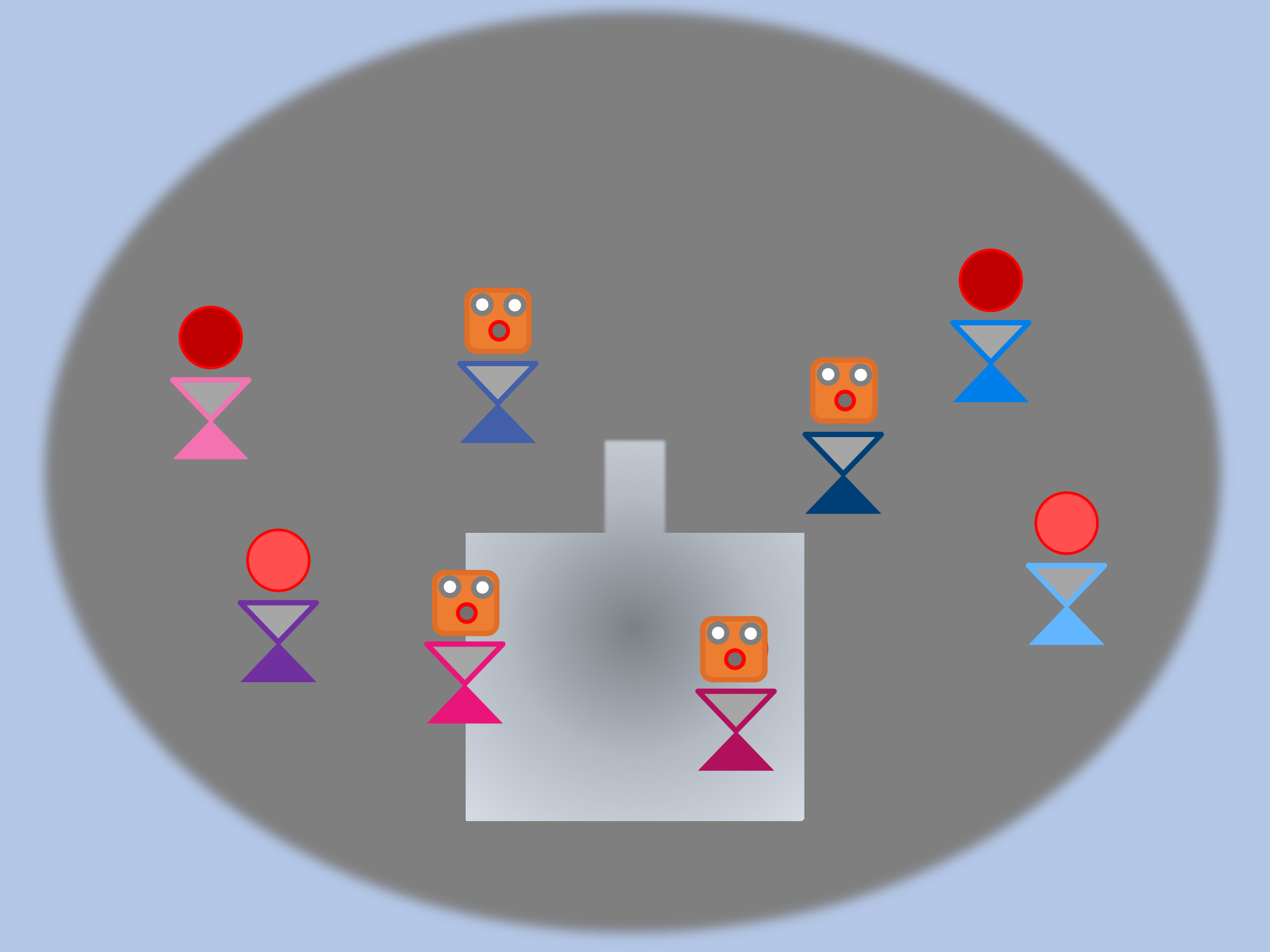
FOCUS
on the system!

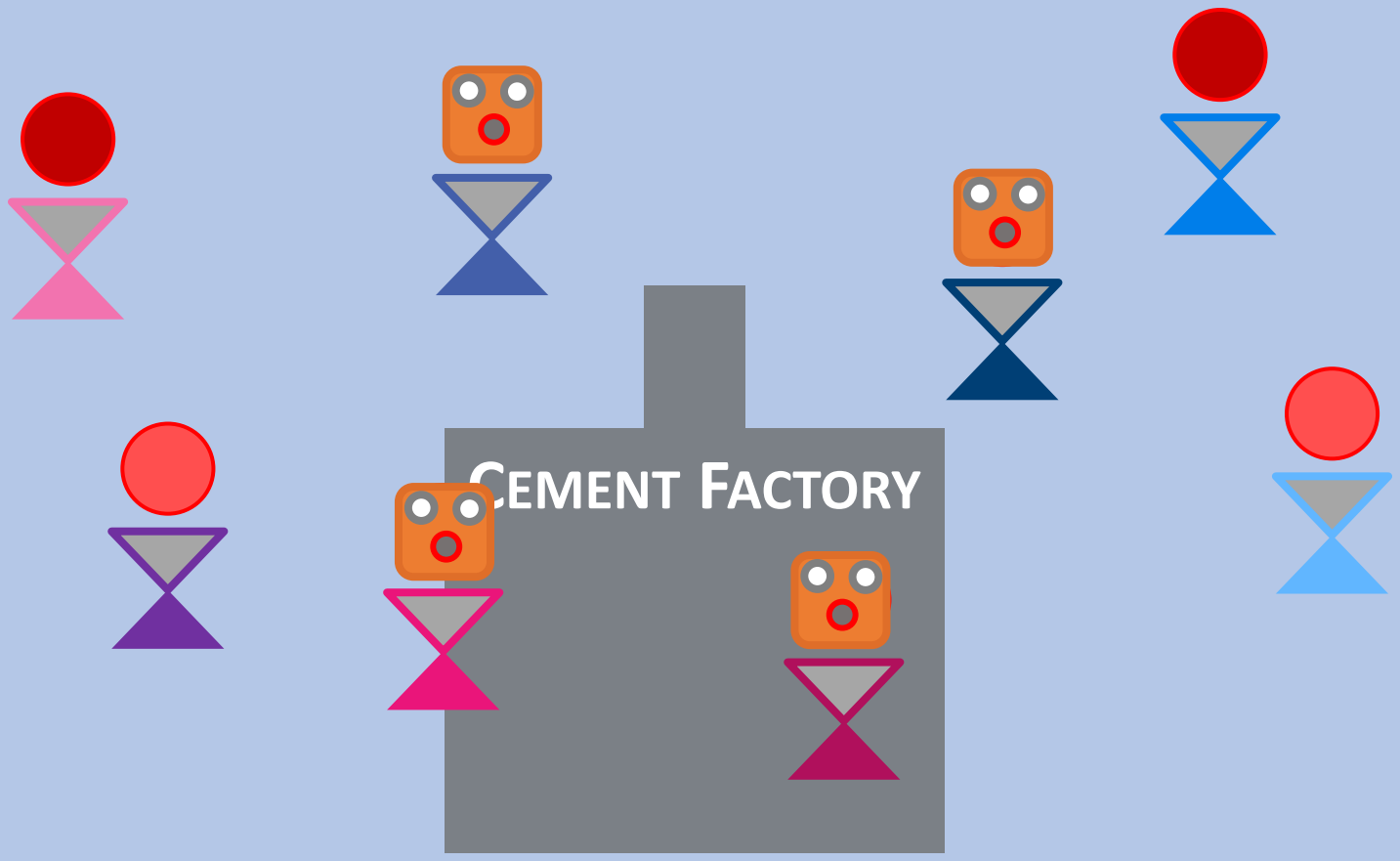








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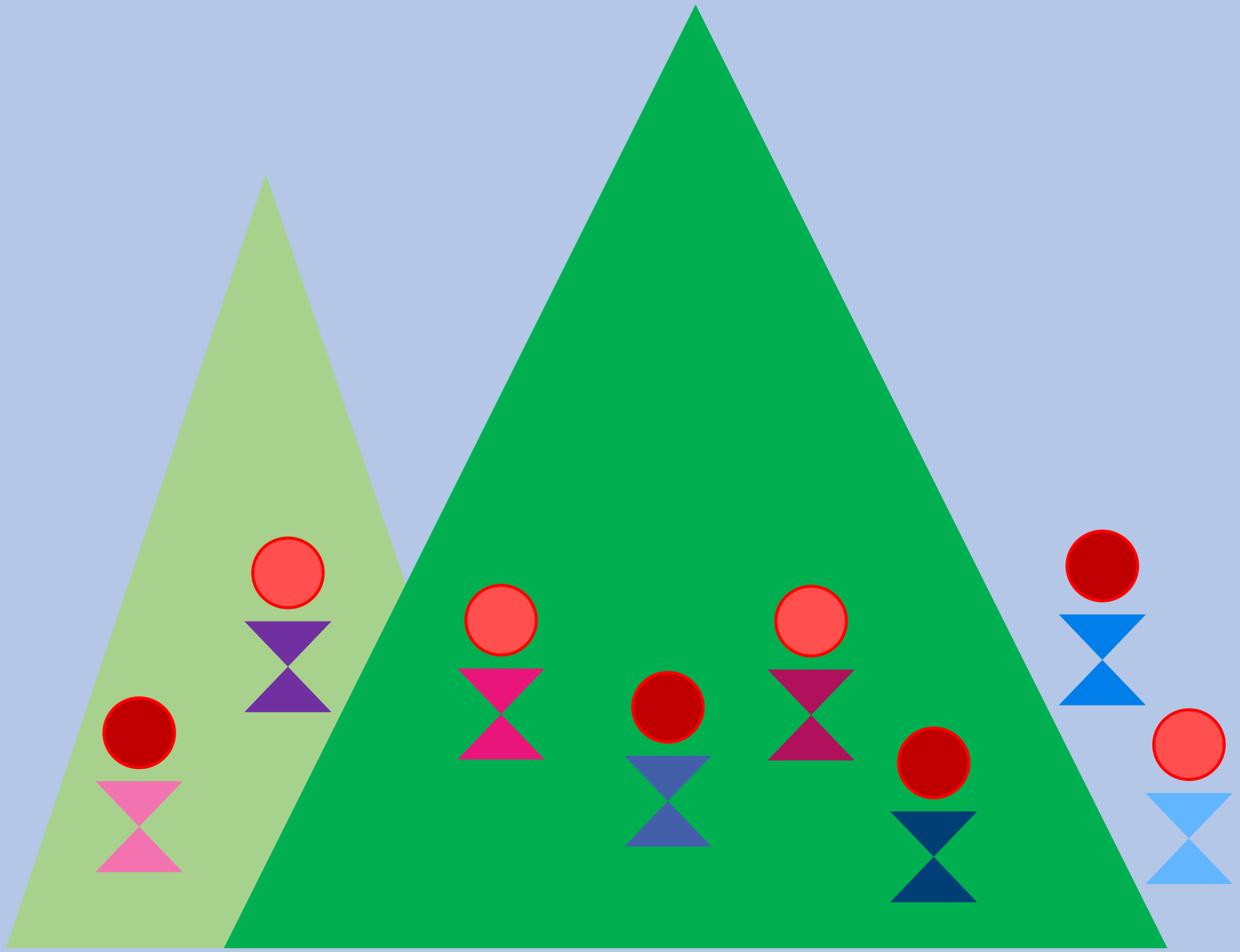

"How is racism operating here?"

- Identify mechanisms
  - **Structures:** the *who?*, *what?*, *when?*, and *where?* of decision-making
  - **Policies:** the written *how?*
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  - **Values:** the *why?*

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Generic research and consulting firm

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What is health equity?

- "Health equity" is assurance of the conditions for optimal health for all people
- Achieving health equity requires
  - Valuing all individuals and populations equally
  - Recognizing and rectifying historical injustices
  - Providing resources according to need
- Health disparities will be eliminated when health equity is achieved

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Barriers
to achieving health equity

- **Narrow focus on the individual**
  - Self-interest narrowly defined
  - Limited sense of interdependence
  - Limited sense of collective efficacy
  - Systems and structures as invisible or irrelevant
- **A-historical stance**
  - The present as disconnected from the past
  - Current distribution of advantage/disadvantage as happenstance
  - Systems and structures as givens and immutable
- **Myth of meritocracy**
  - "If you work hard you will make it"
  - Denial of racism
  - Two babies: Equal potential or equal opportunity?

Jones CP. Seeing the Water: Seven Values Targets for Anti-Racism Action. *Harvard Primary Care Blog* Aug 25, 2020.

Barriers
to achieving health equity

- **Myth of zero -sum game**
  - "If you gain, I lose"
  - Fosters competition over cooperation
  - Masks the costs of inequity
  - Hinders efforts to grow the pie
- **Limited future orientation**
  - Disregard for the children
    - No *"Seven generations"* perspective
    - No *"How are the children?"* focus
  - Usurious relationship with the planet
- **Myth of American exceptionalism**
  - Disinterest in learning from others
  - Sense of US entitlement

Jones CP. Seeing the Water: Seven Values Targets for Anti-Racism Action. *Harvard Primary Care Blog* Aug 25, 2020.

Barriers
to achieving health equity

- **White supremacist ideology**
  - Hierarchy in human valuation
  - "White" as the ideal and the norm
  - Sense of "White" entitlement
  - Dehumanization of people of color
  - Fear at the "browning" of America

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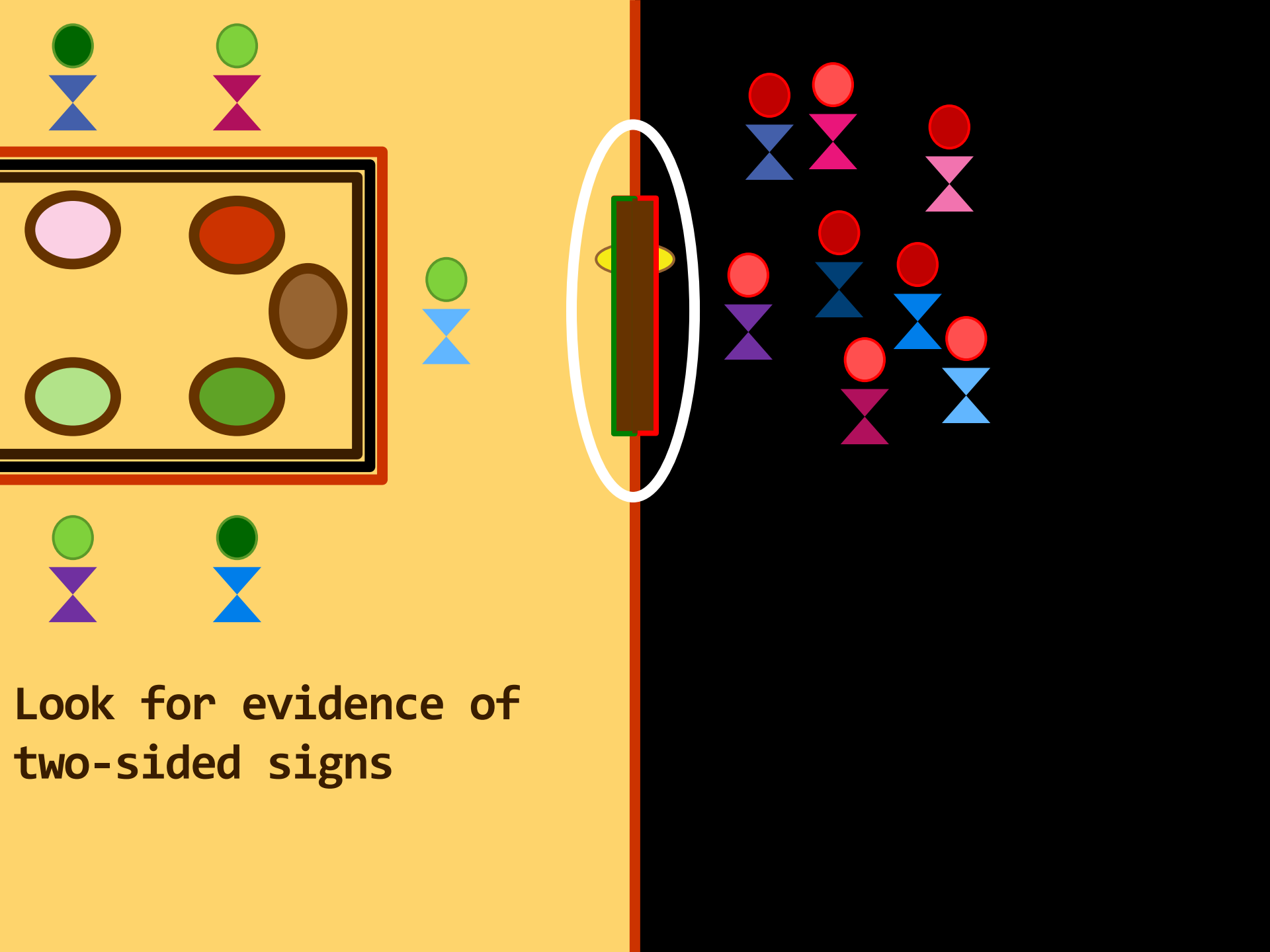
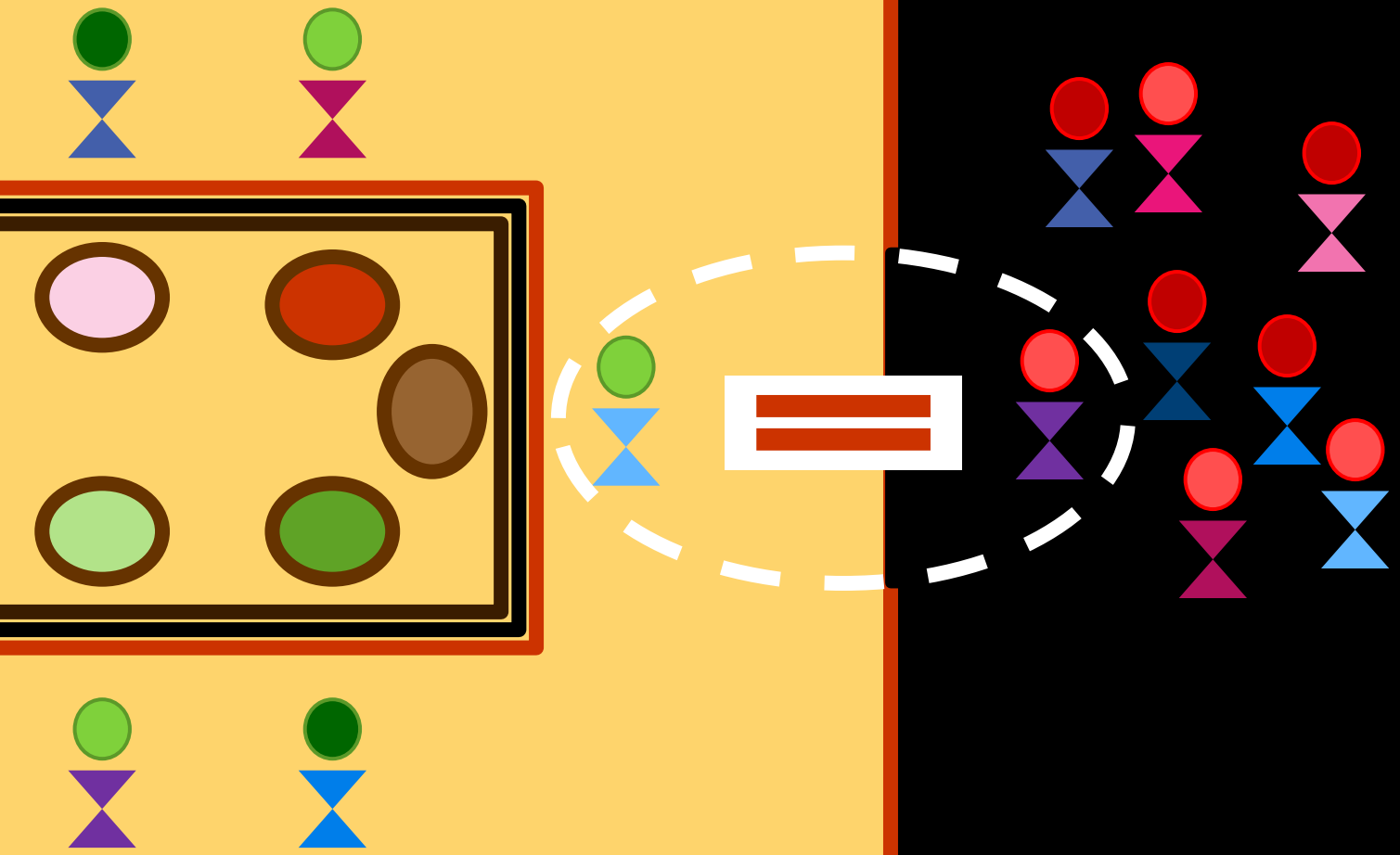
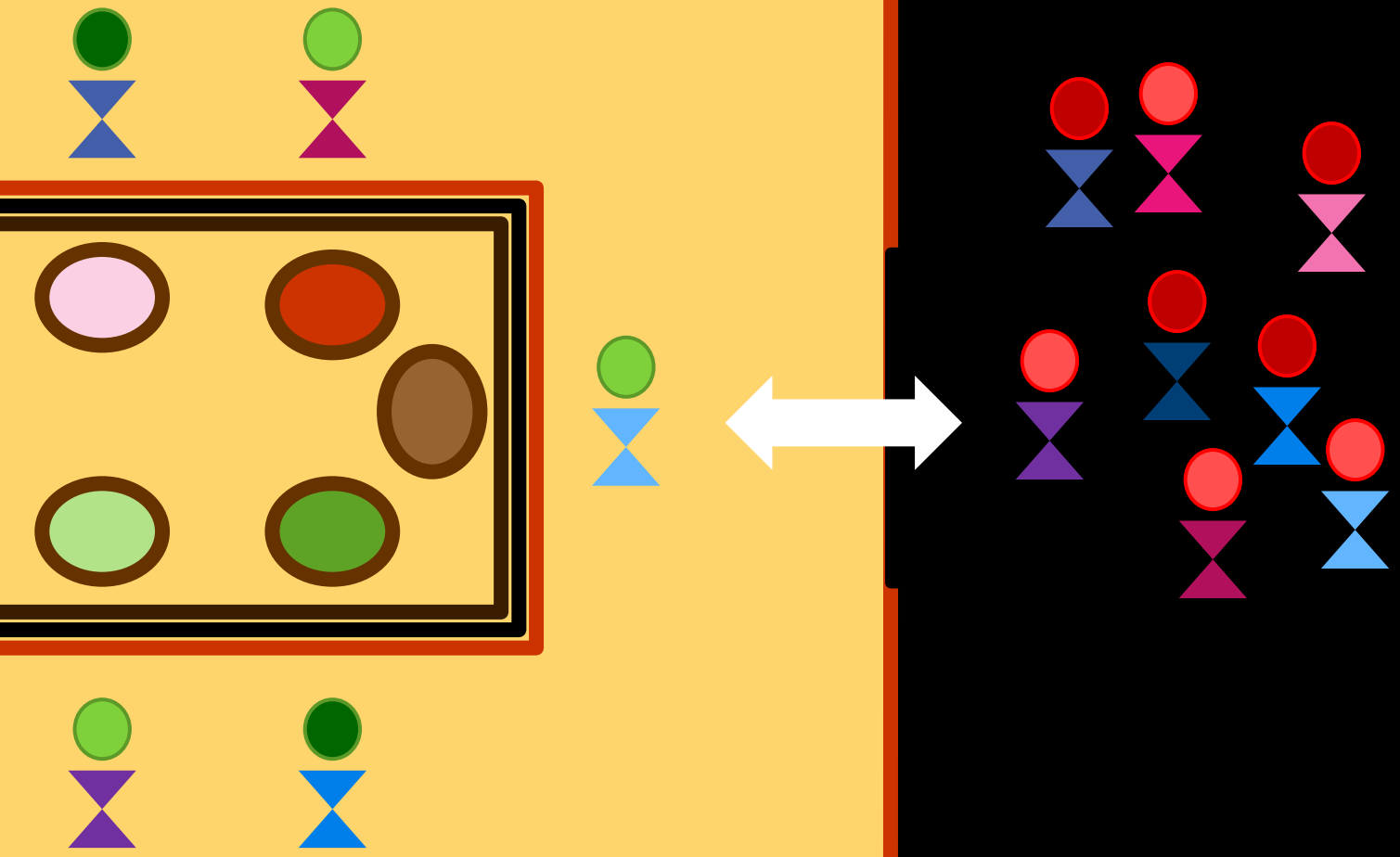
What can we do today?



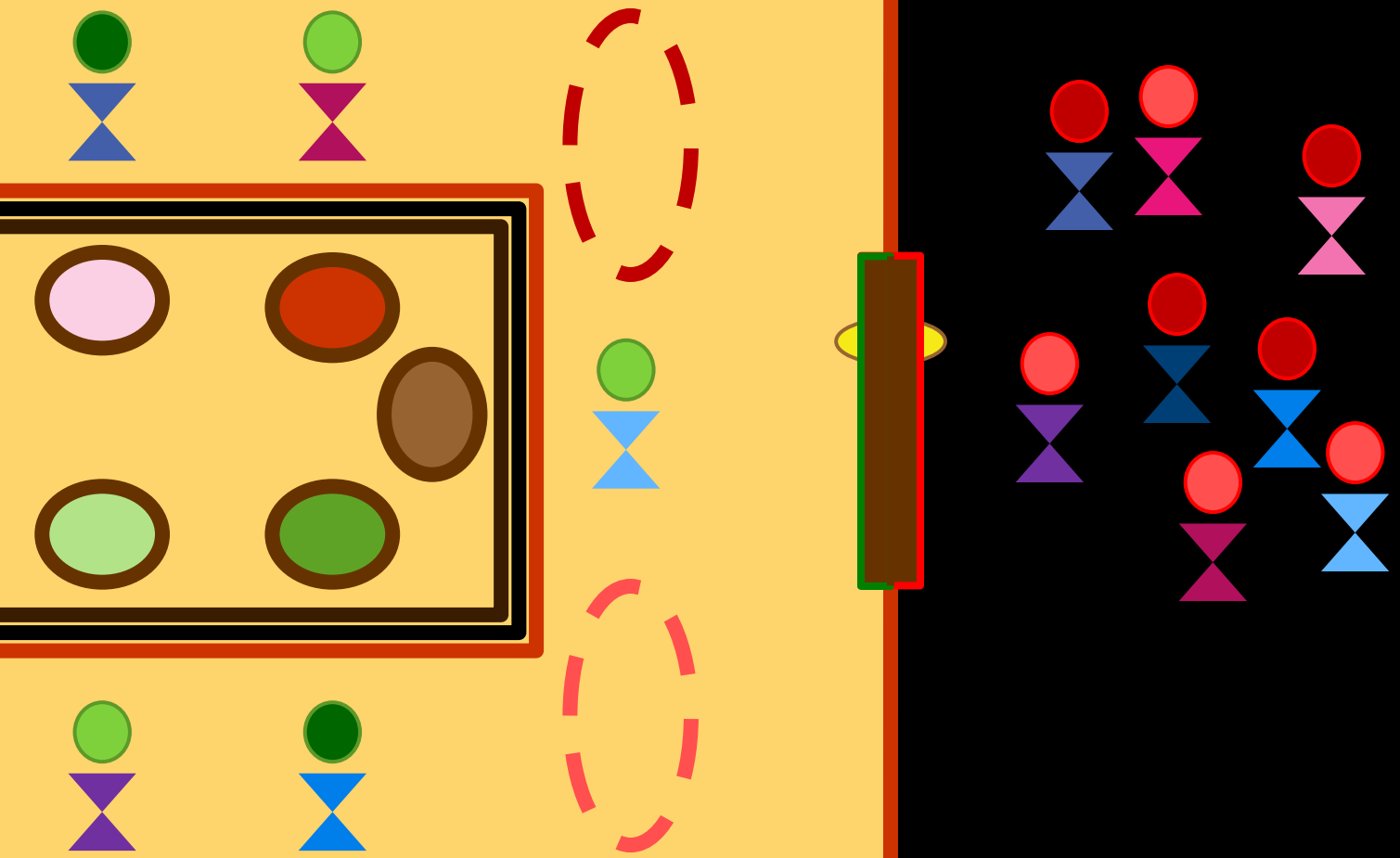
Look for evidence of two-sided signs



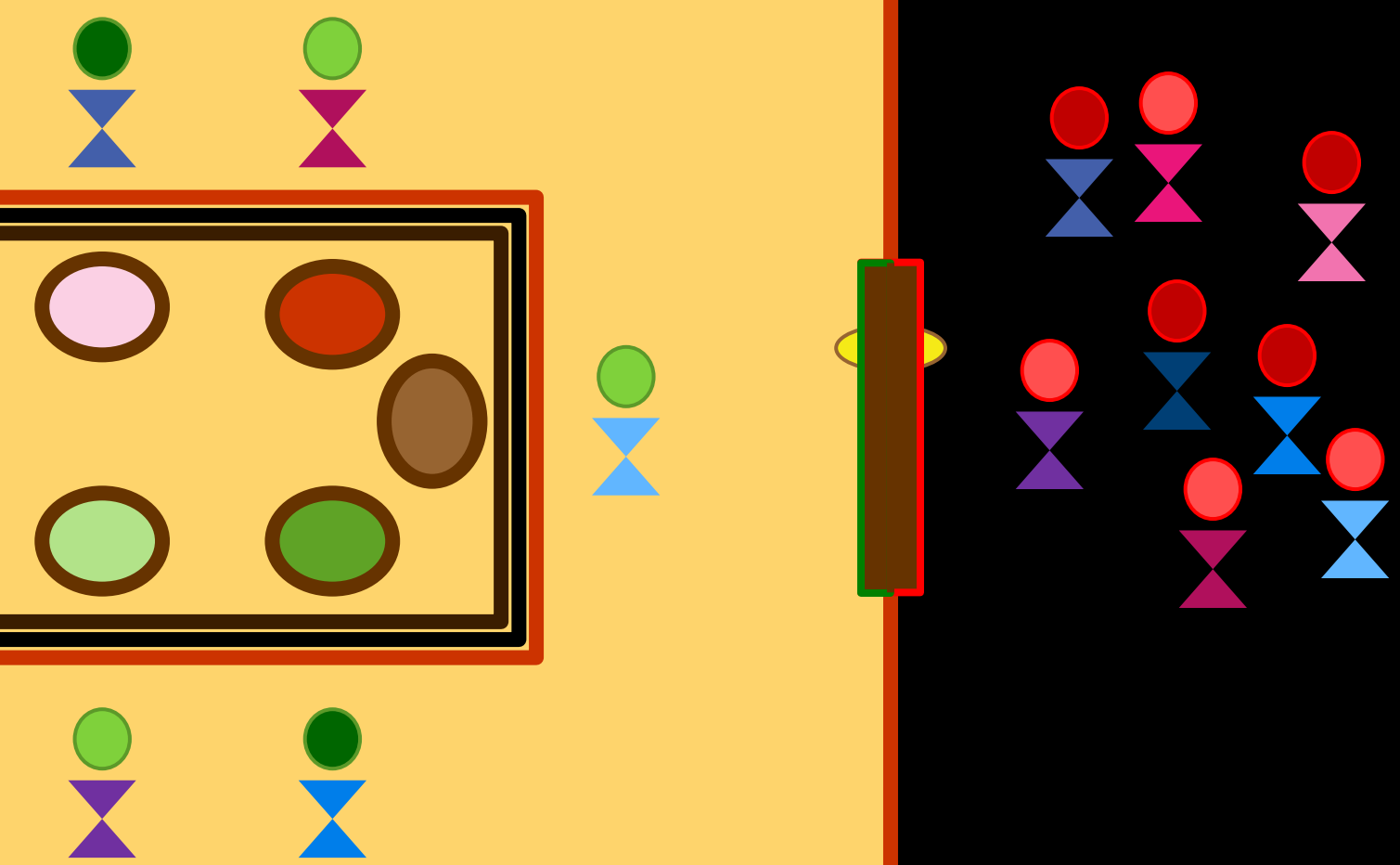
Burst through bubbles to experience our common humanity



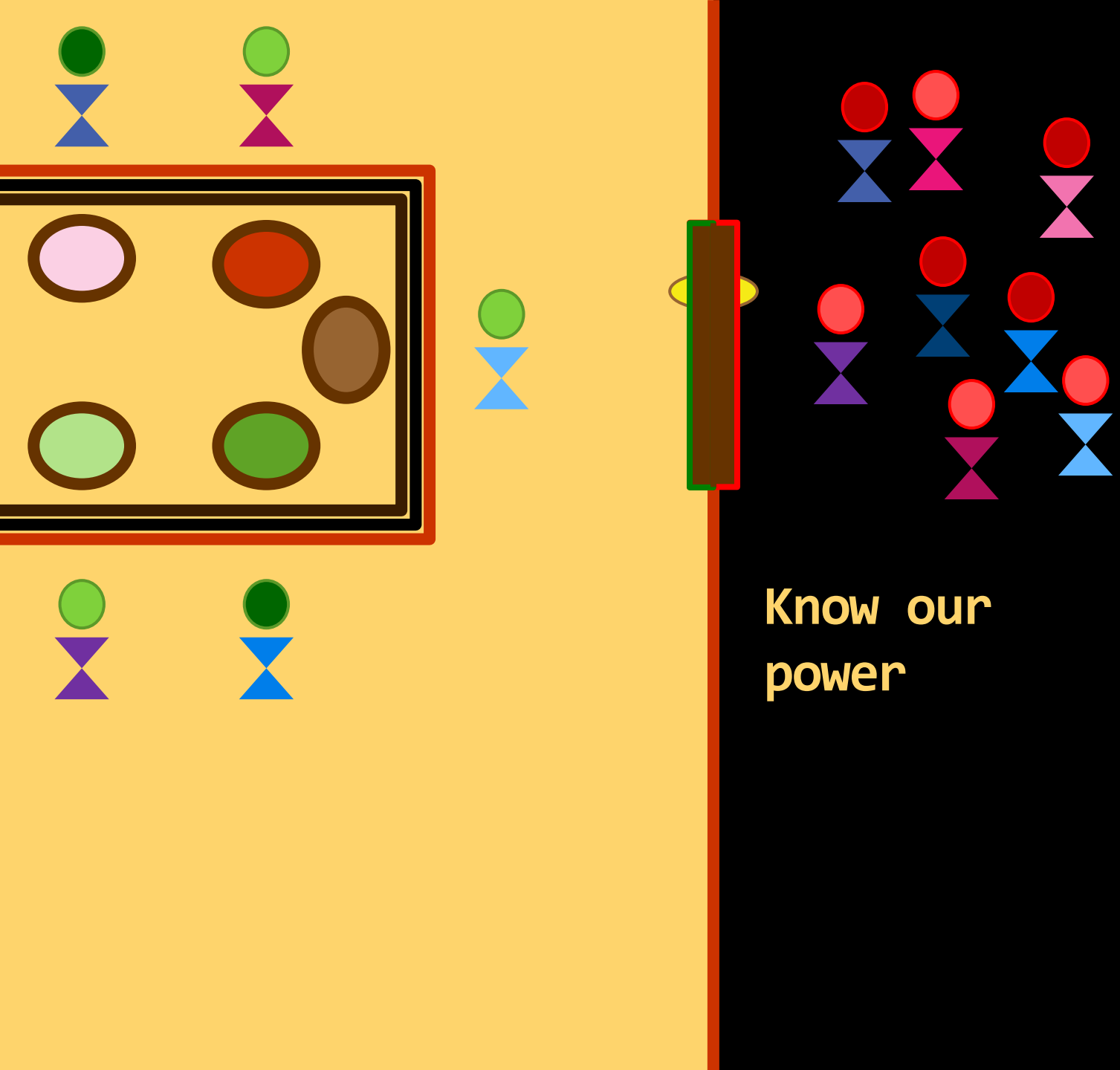
Be interested
Believe
Join in
The stories of others



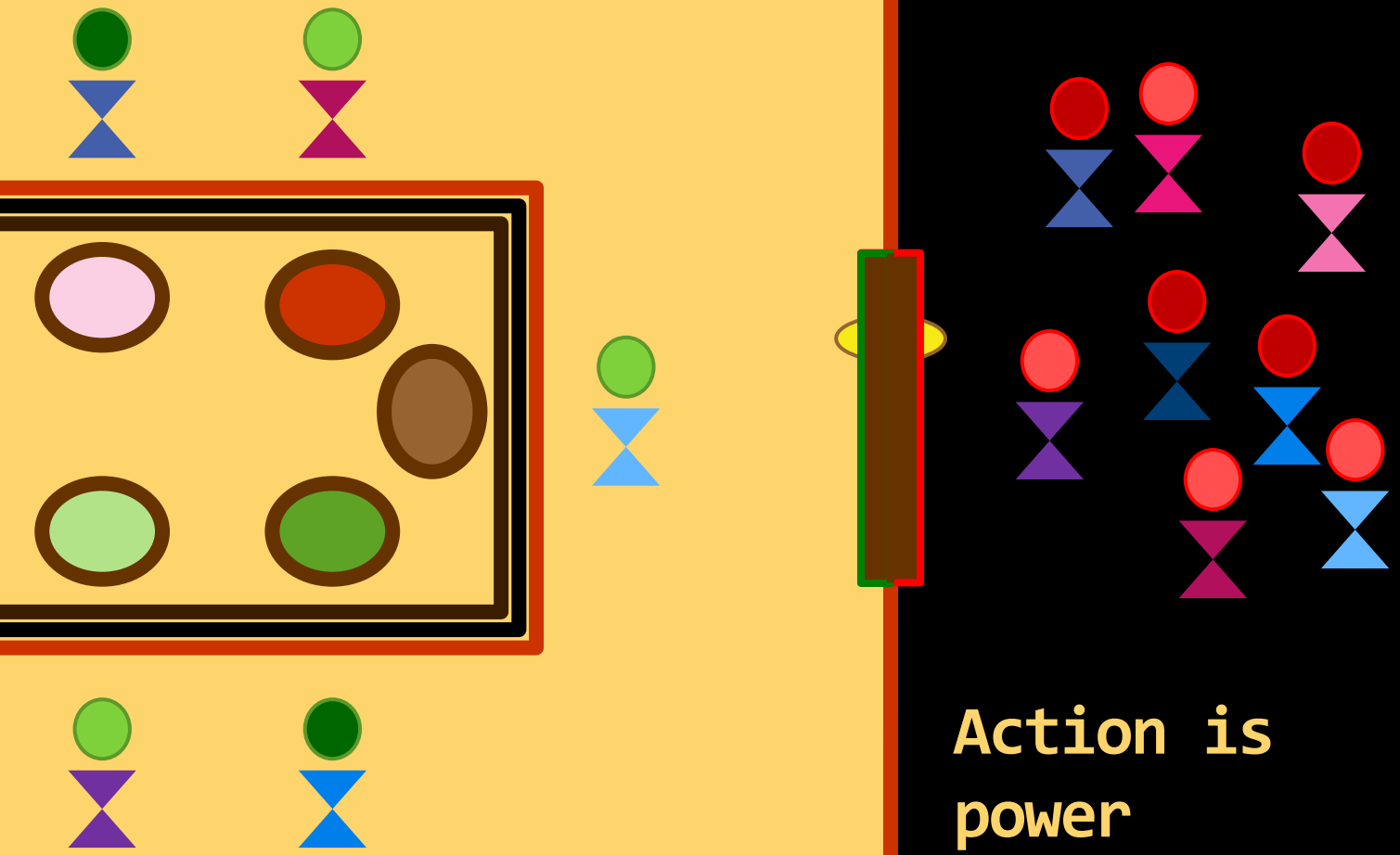
See “the absence of”



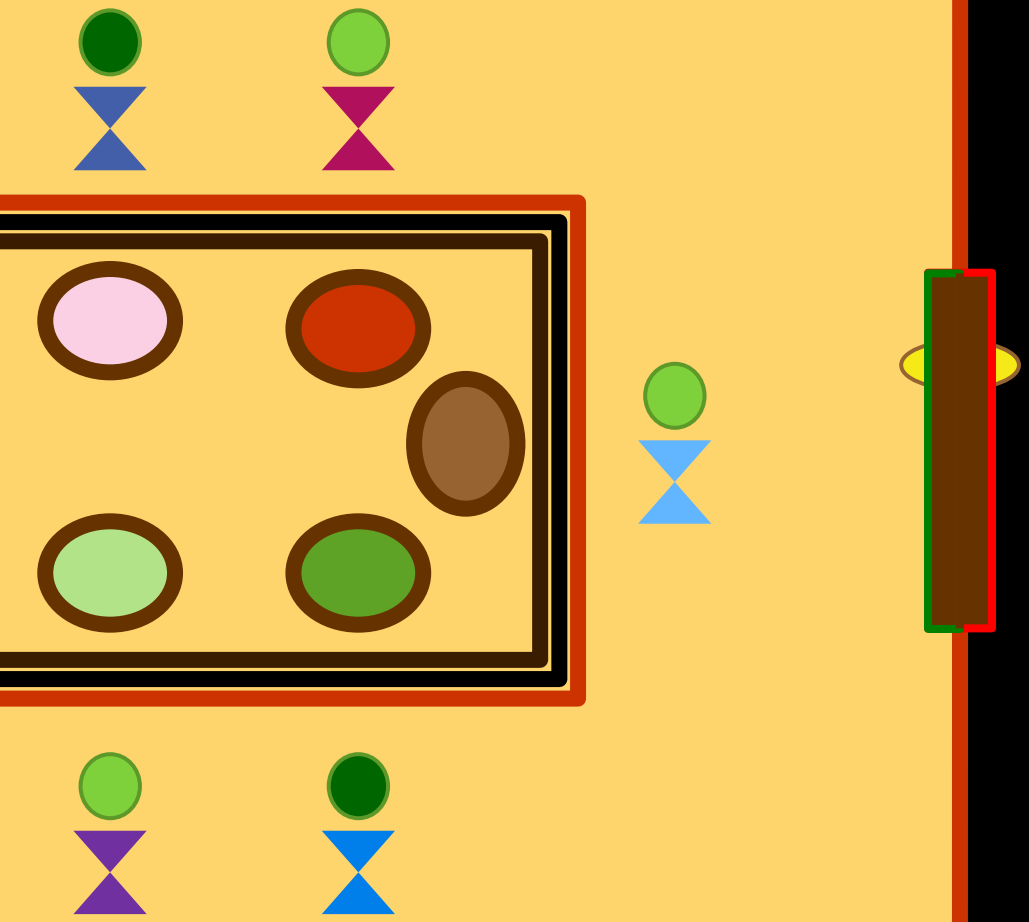
Reveal inaction
in the face of need



Know our
power

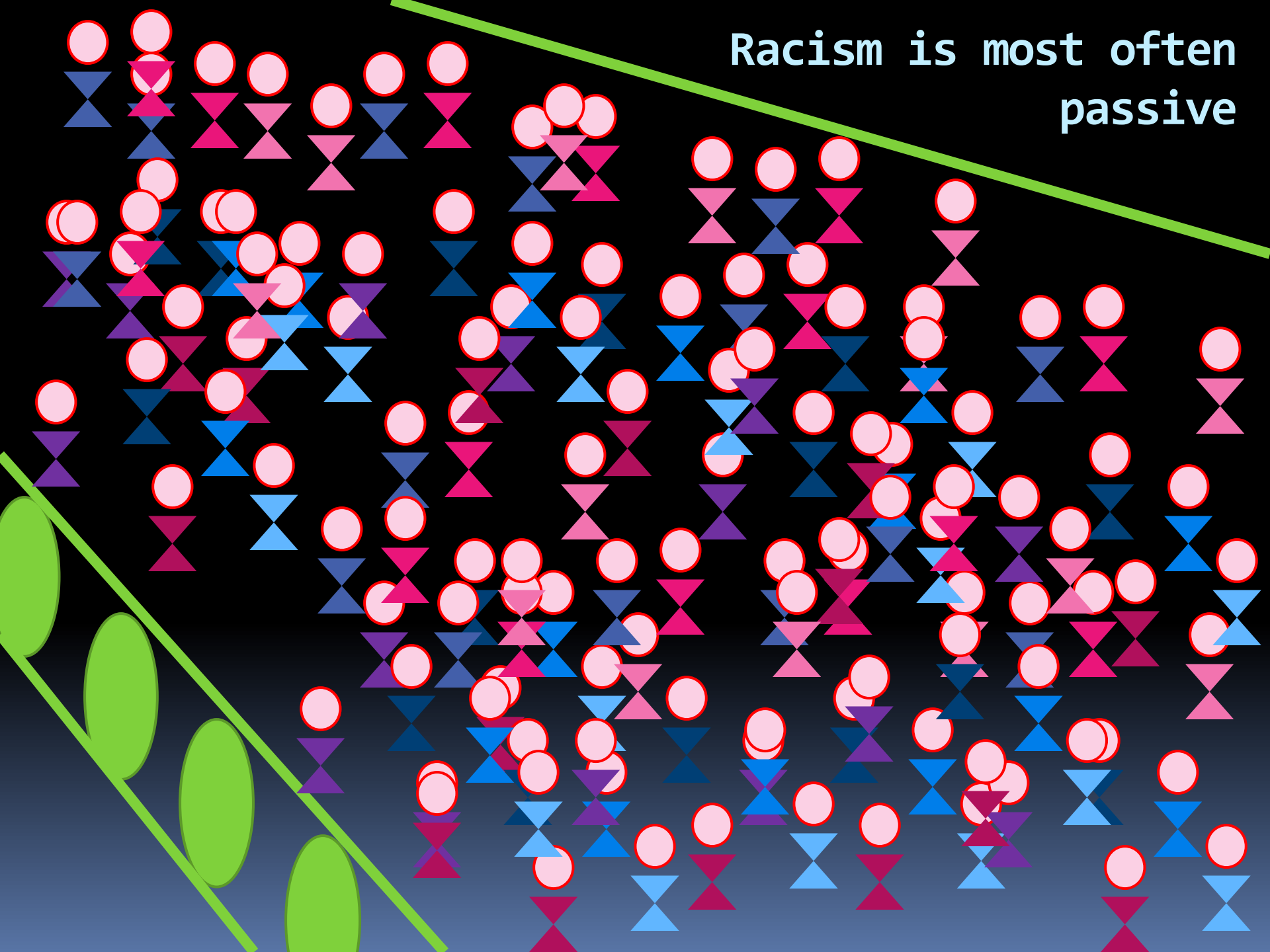


Action is
power

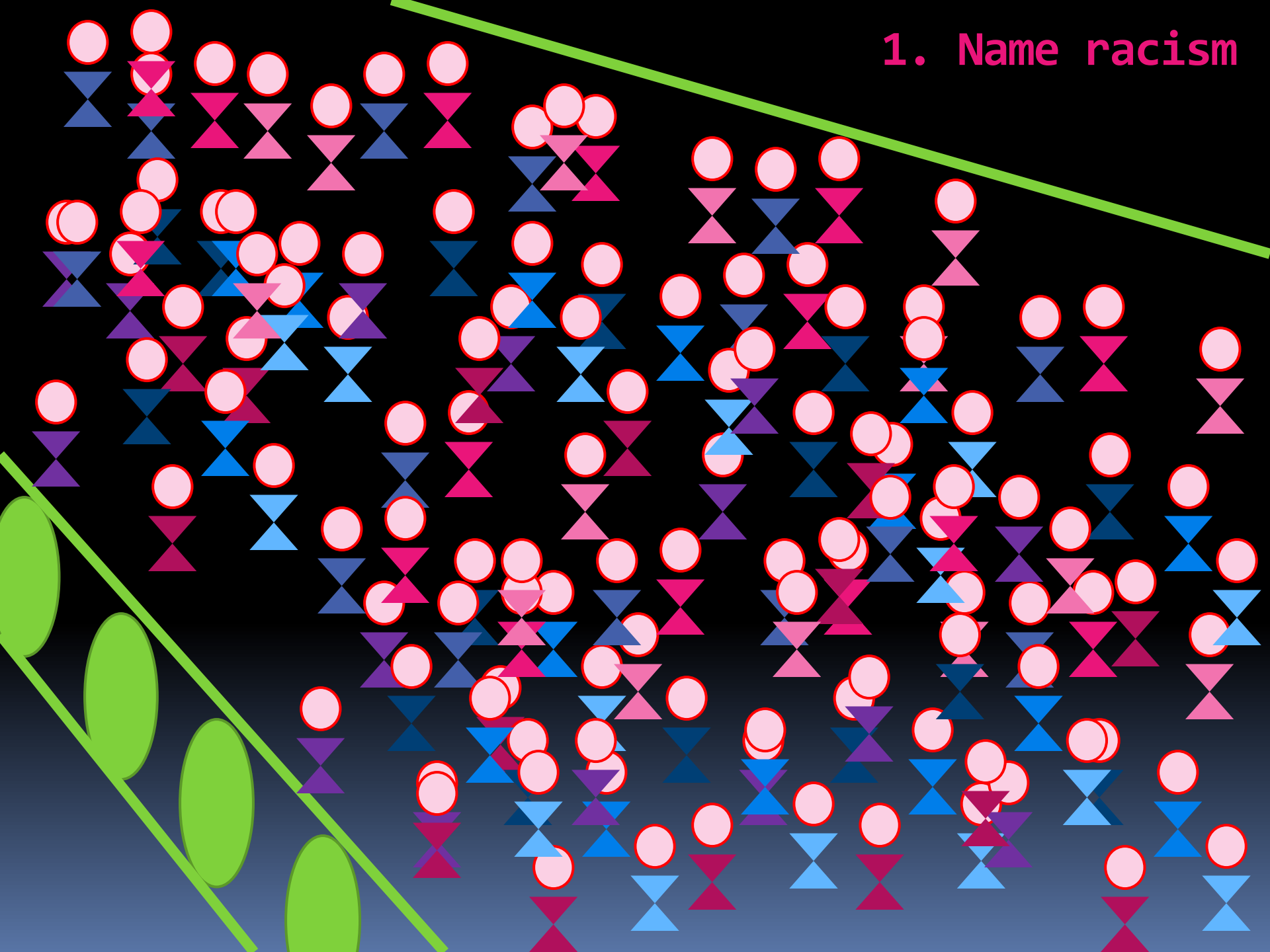


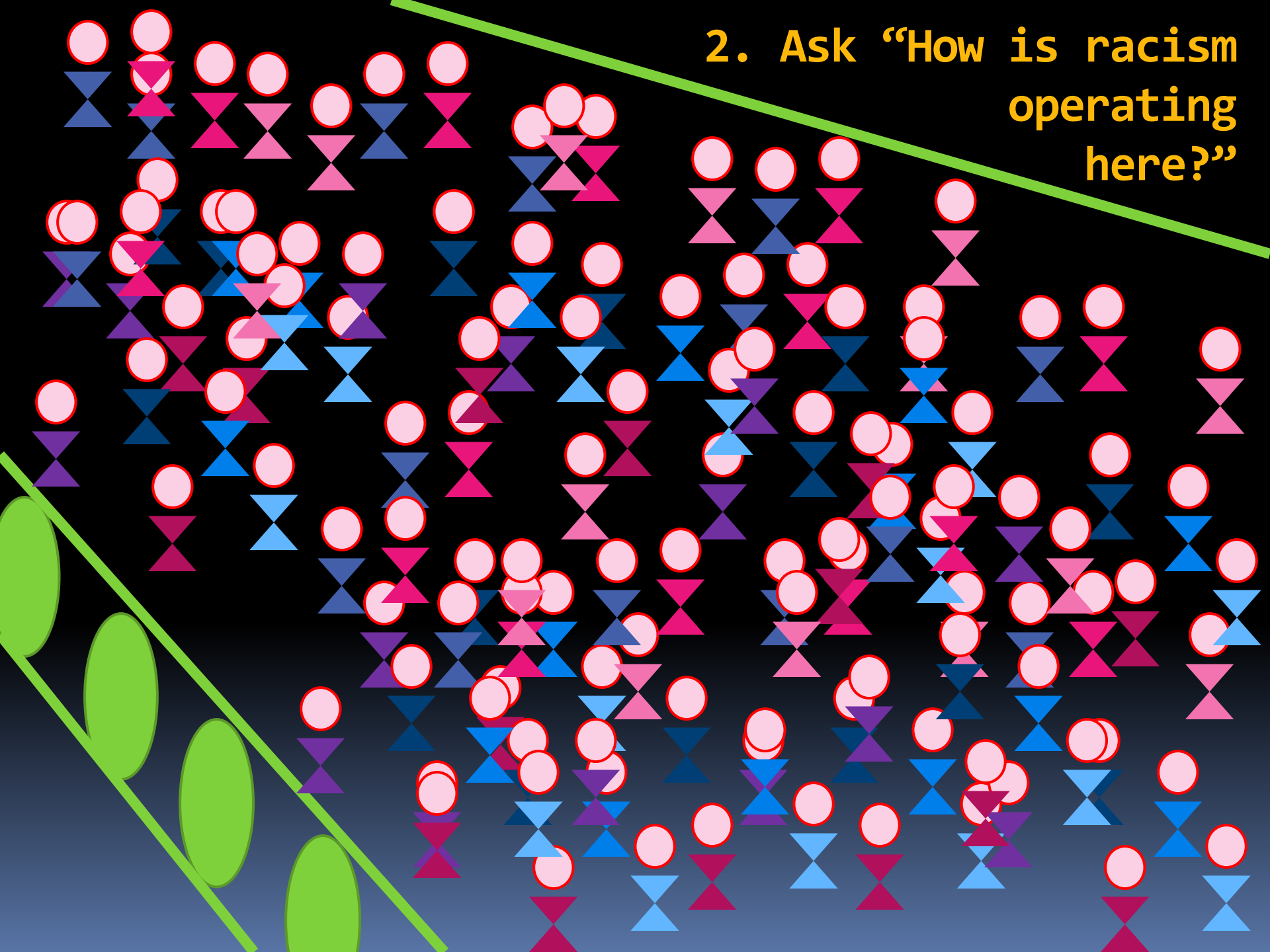
Collective action is power

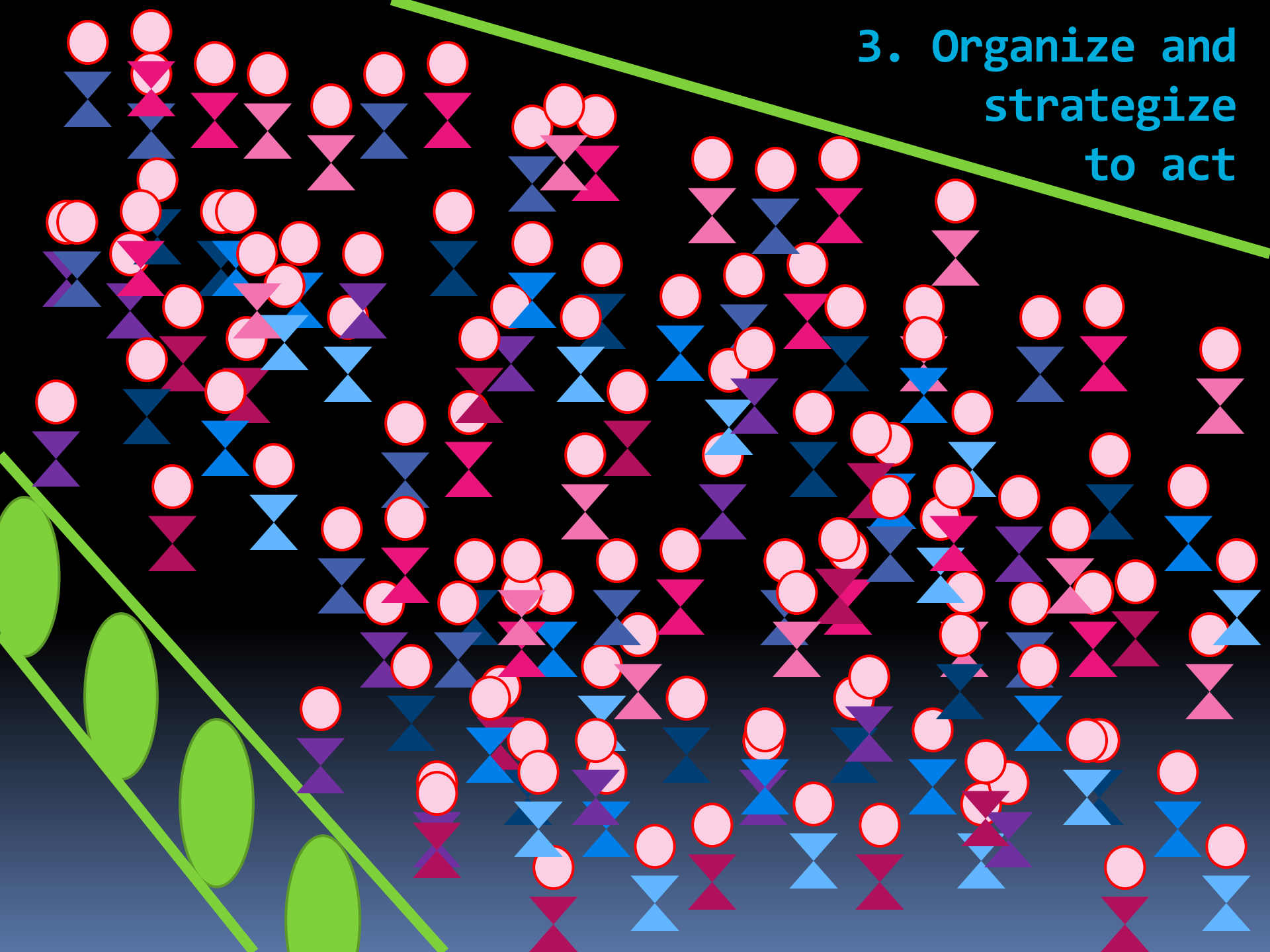
Life on a Conveyor Belt: Moving to action


Racism is most often
passive

1. Name racism




2. Ask “How is racism operating here?”


3. Organize and
strategize
to act

Camara Phyllis Jones, MD, MPH, PhD

Past President
American Public Health Association

2019-2020 Evelyn Green Davis Fellow
Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University

Adjunct Professor
Rollins School of Public Health at Emory University
Senior Fellow and Adjunct Associate Professor
Morehouse School of Medicine

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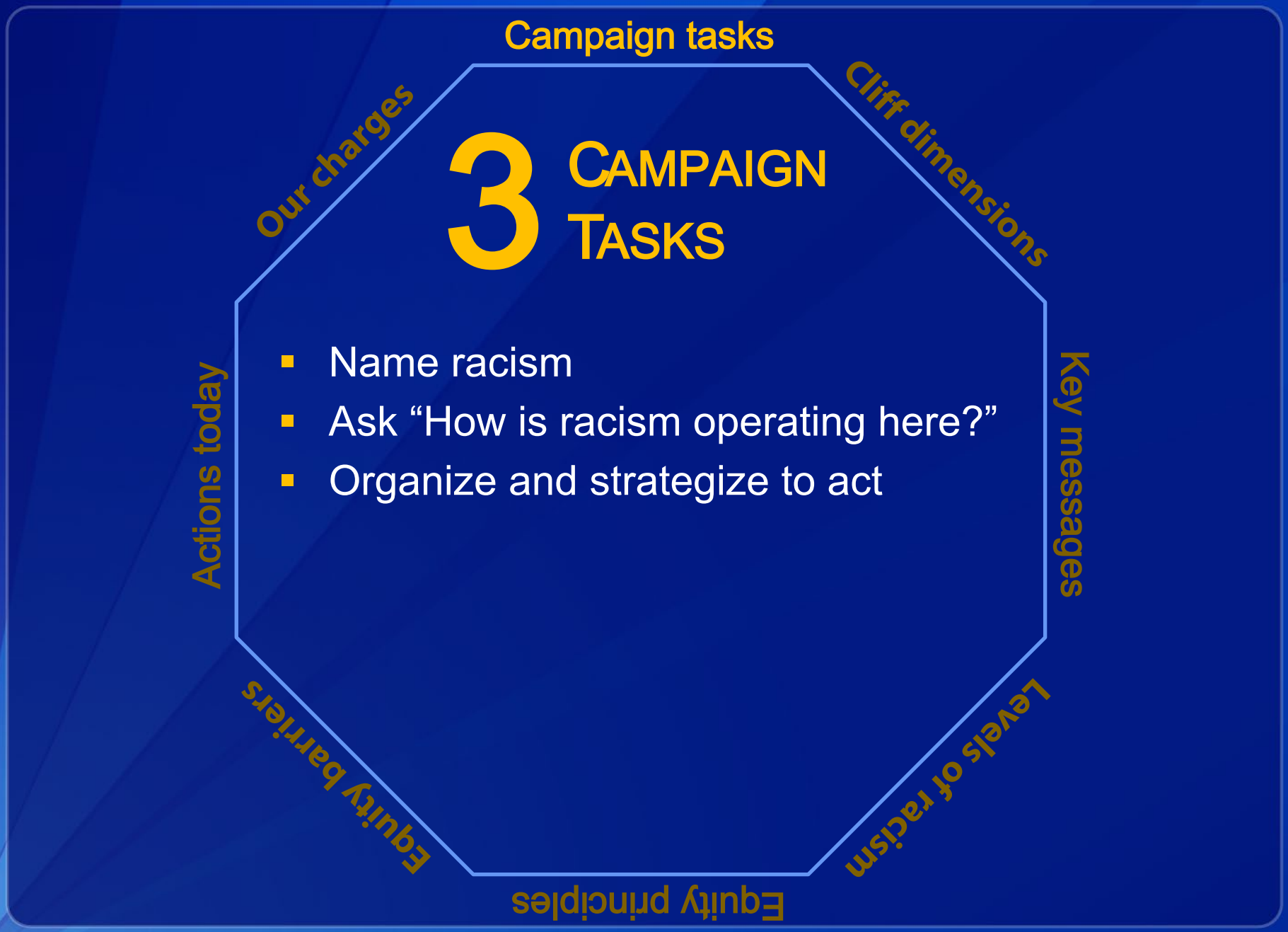
Campaign tasks
Cliff dimensions
Key messages
Levels of racism
Equity principles
Equity barriers
Actions today
Our charges
Anti -Racism Primer
Review by the numbers


Campaign tasks
Cliff dimensions
Key messages
Levels of racism
Equity principles
Equity barriers
Actions today
Our charges
3 Campaign Tasks
Name racism
Ask “How is racism operating here?”
Organize and strategize to act

Campaign tasks
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3 CLIFF DIMENSIONS
Curative and preventive services
Addressing social determinants of health
Addressing social determinants of equity

Campaign tasks

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4 Key Messages

- Racism exists
- Racism is a system
- Racism saps the strength of the whole society
- We can act to dismantle racism

Campaign tasks
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3 Levels of Racism
Institutionalized / structural
Personally-mediated
Internalized

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3 Principles for Equity

- Value all individuals and populations equally
- Recognize and rectify historical injustices
- Provide resources according to need

Key messages

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7 Barriers to Equity

- Narrow focus on the individual
- A-historical stance
- Myth of meritocracy
- Myth of zero-sum game
- Limited future orientation
  - Myth of American exceptionalism
    - White supremacist ideology

Campaign tasks

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6 Actions Today

- Look for evidence of two-sided signs
- Burst through our bubbles
- Be interested | believe | join in the stories of others
- See “the absence of”
  - Reveal inaction in the face of need
    - Know that collective action is power

Campaign tasks

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4 CHARGES "THE 4 BCs"

- Be courageous: Be a truth-teller
- Be curious: Ask serial "Why?"s
- Be collective: Care about the whole
- Build community: Go across town and stay a while

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