

The social-psychological reality of
conspiracy beliefs: How the sense of
precarity and adherence to conspiracy
beliefs are intertwined

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Definitions: conspiracy and epistemically suspect beliefs

Surge of ESB

Definitions: conspiracy and epistemically suspect beliefs

Surge of ESB



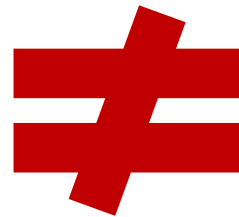
ESB (epistemically suspect beliefs) cover a wide range of irrational, paranormal, conspiracy and pseudoscientific beliefs that contradict standard scientific and naturalistic views about the world and have potentially negative societal impact

Definitions: conspiracy and epistemically suspect beliefs

Surge of ESB



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Misinformation and disinformation

Definitions: conspiracy and epistemically suspect beliefs

Surge of ESB

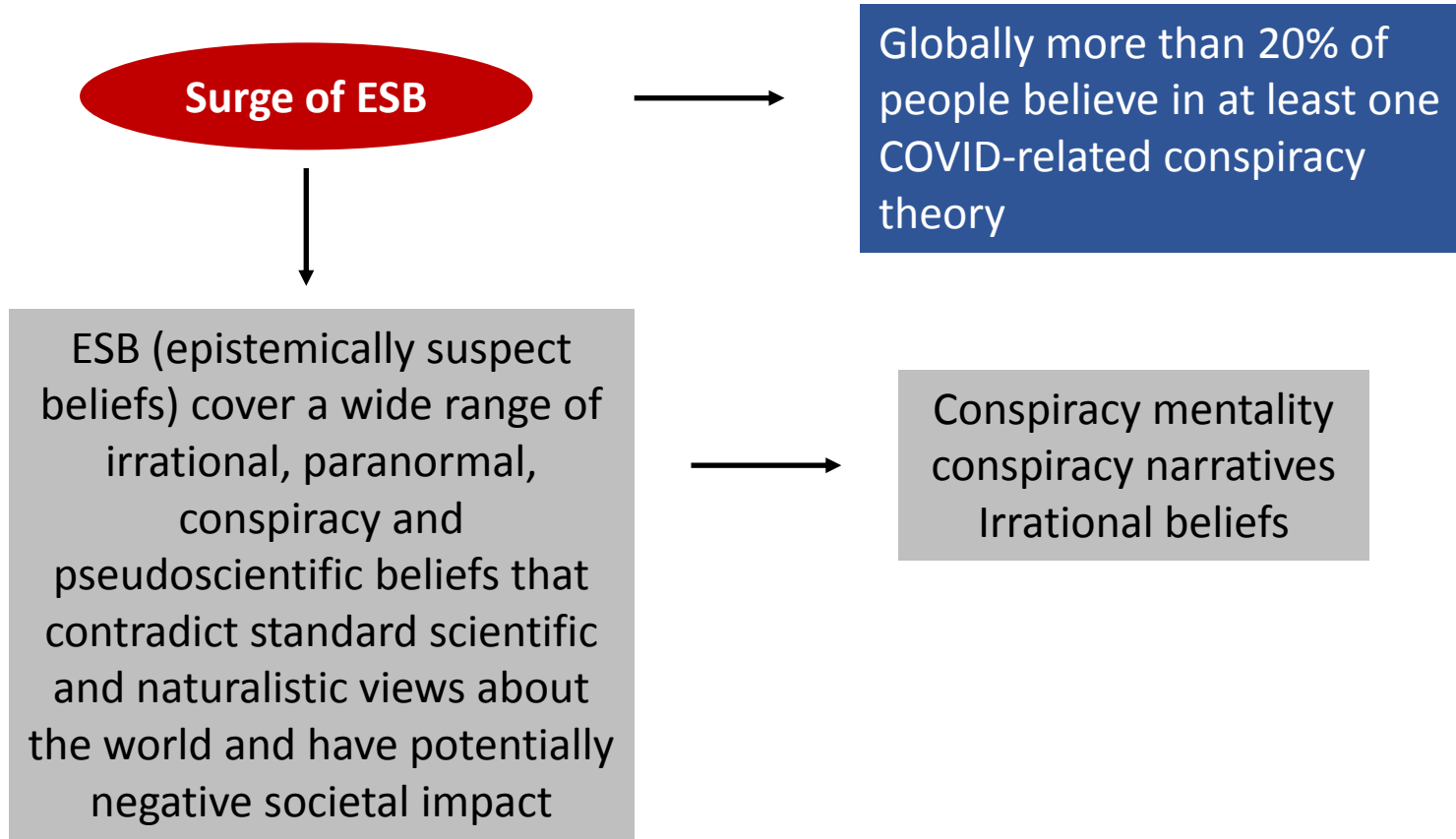


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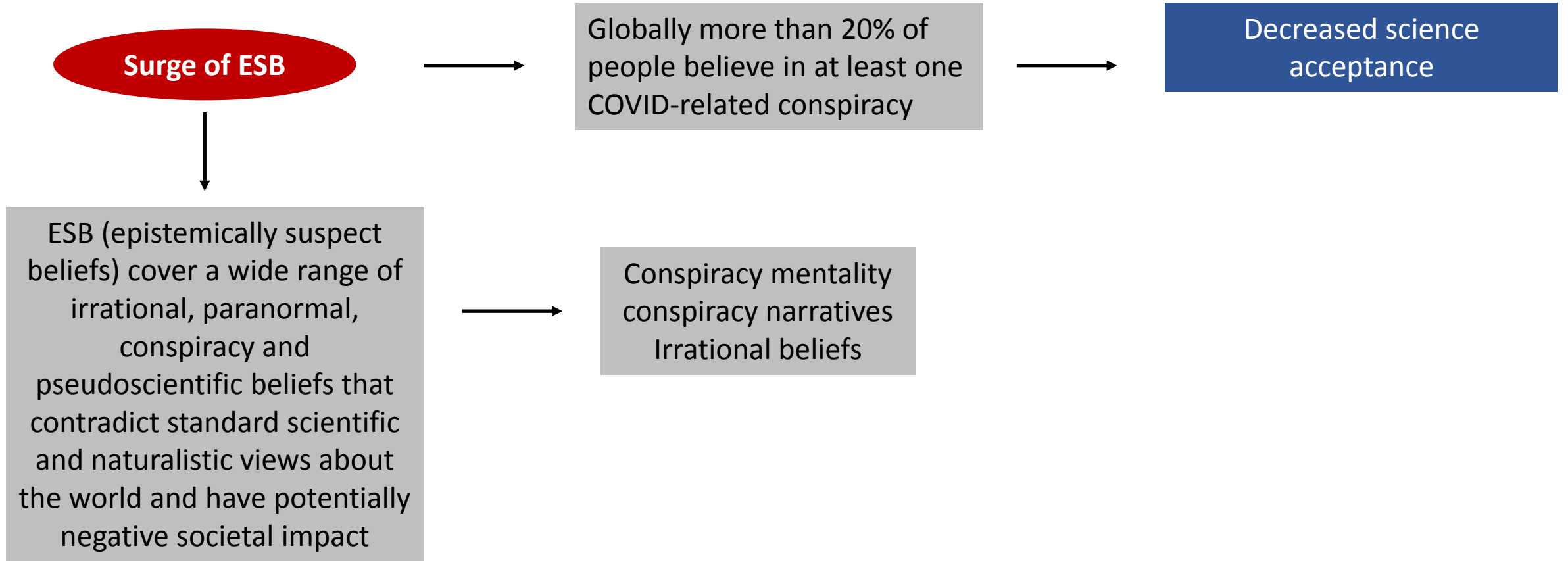


Conspiracy mentality
conspiracy beliefs
Irrational beliefs

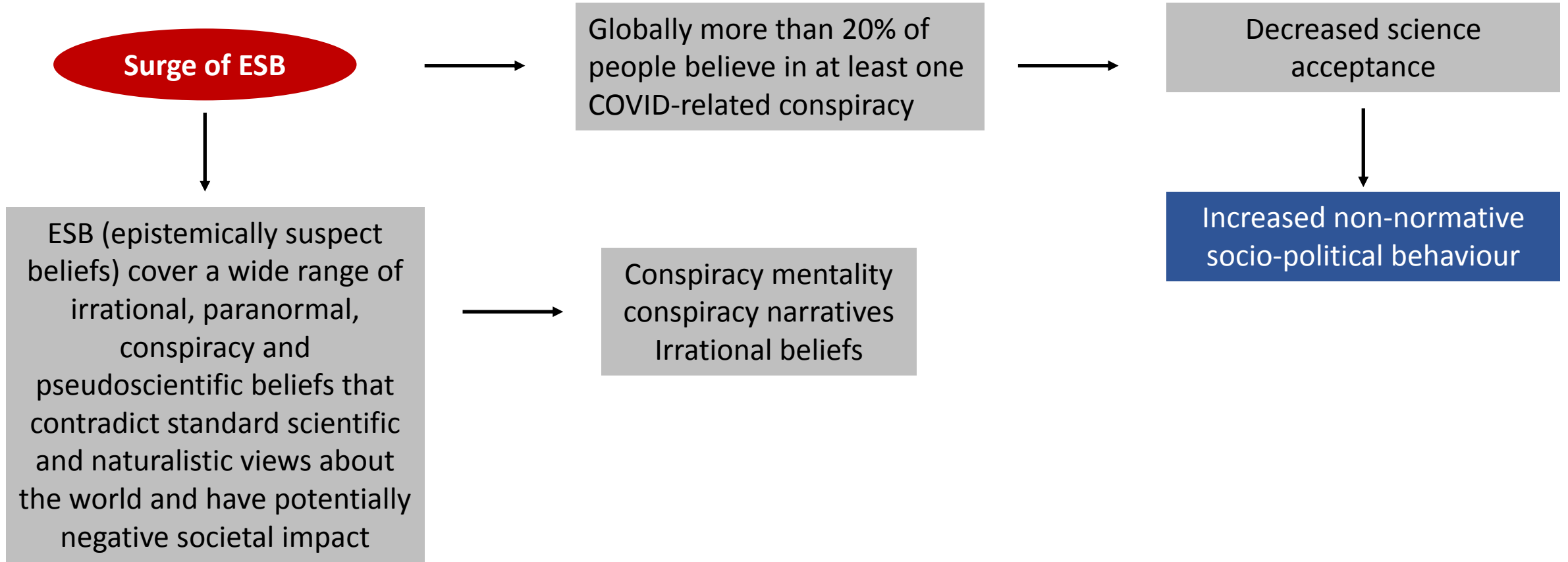
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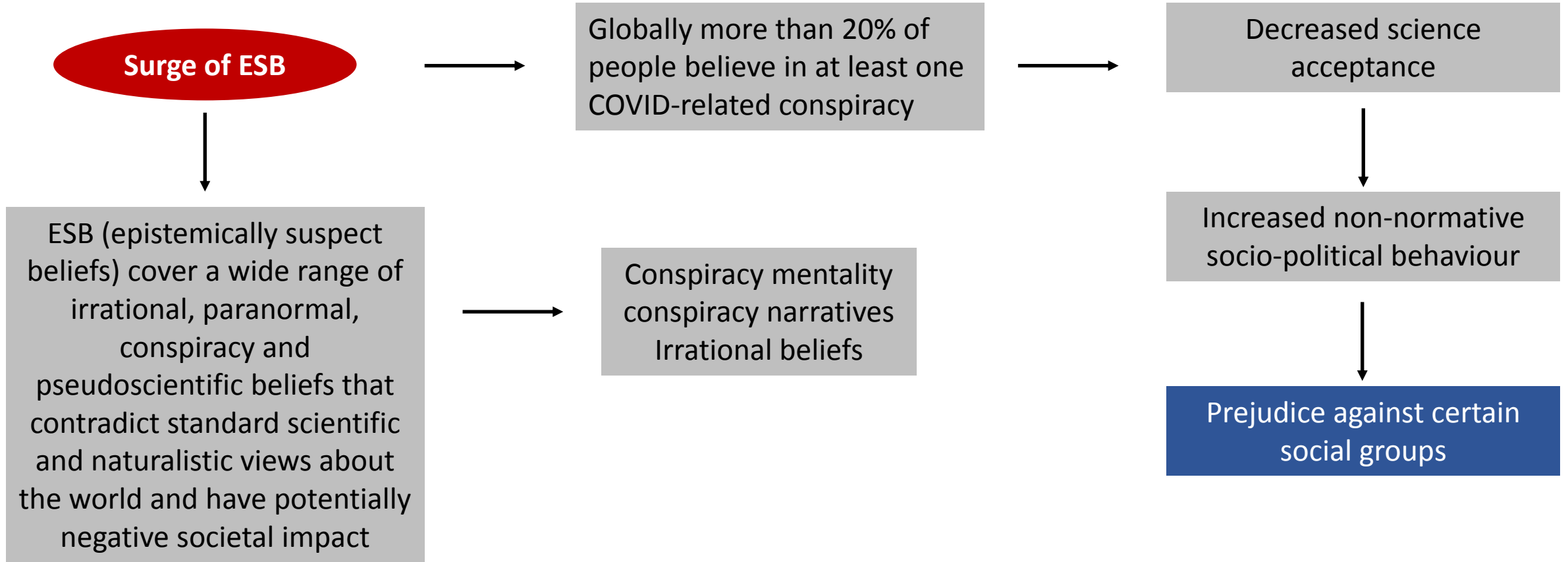
Definitions: conspiracy and epistemically suspect beliefs



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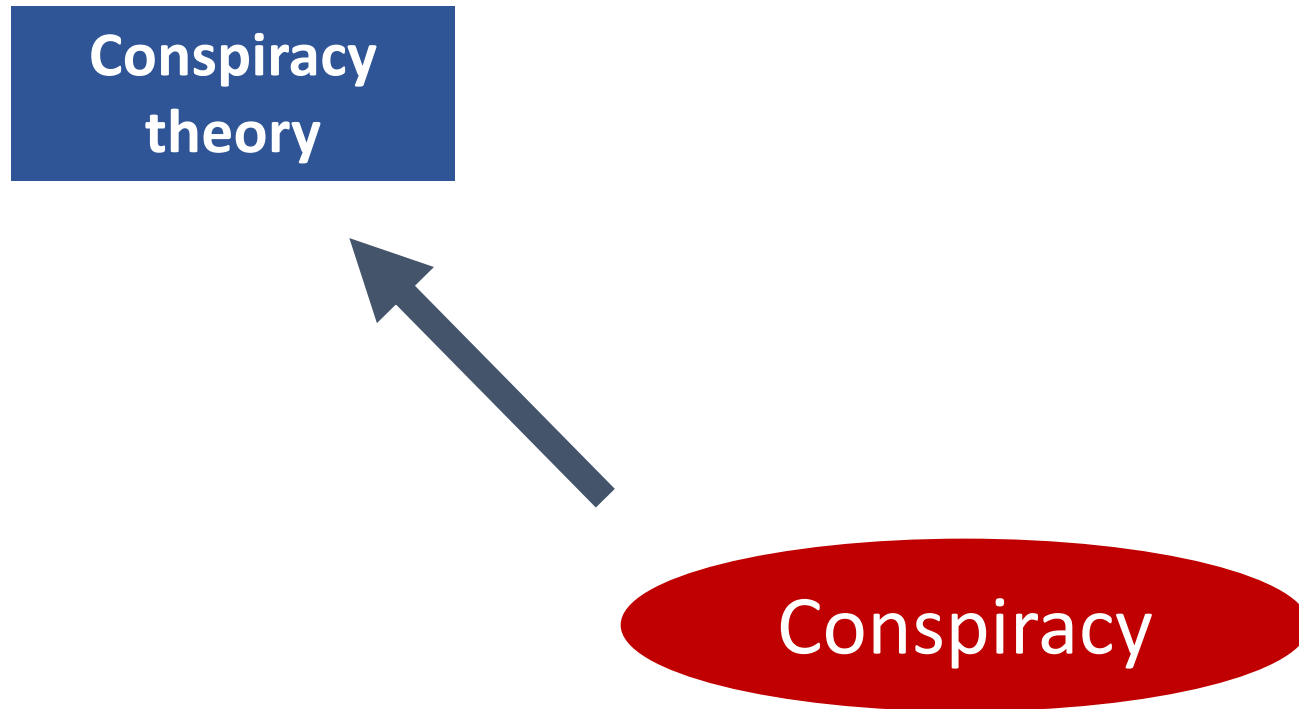
Conspiracy beliefs, theories, mentality and real-life conspiracies

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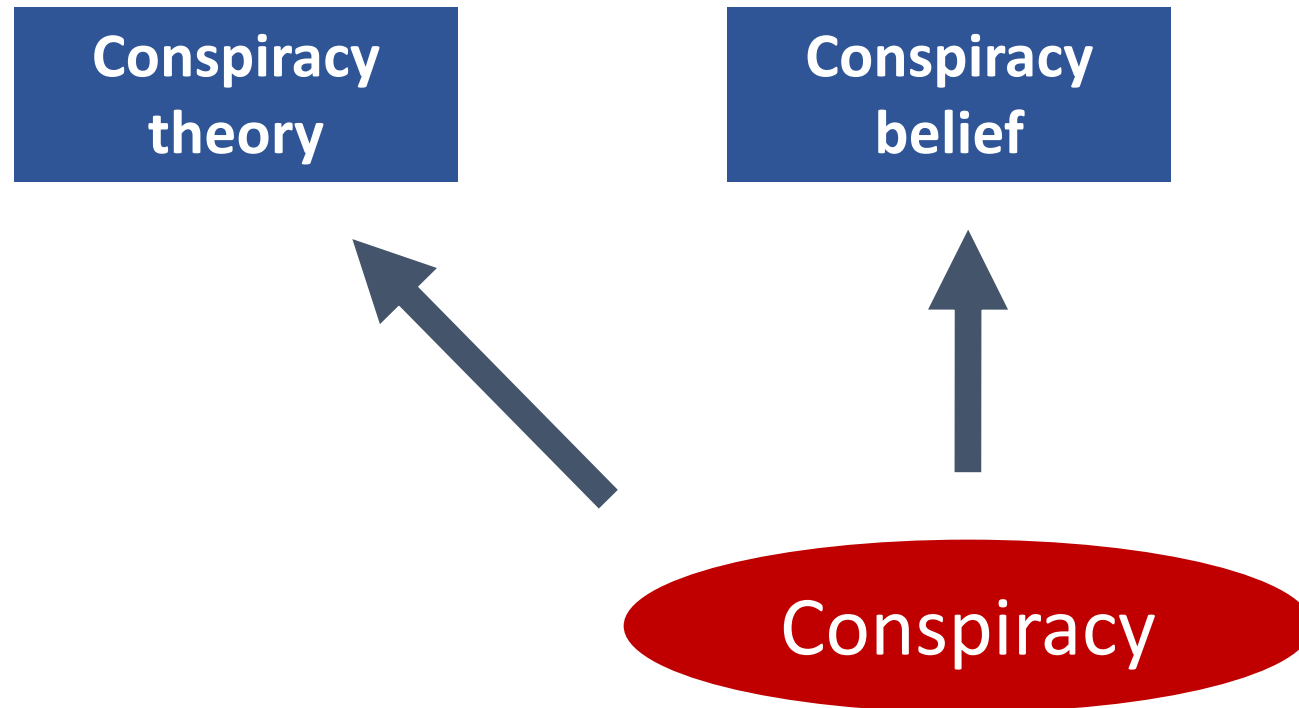


Conspiracy

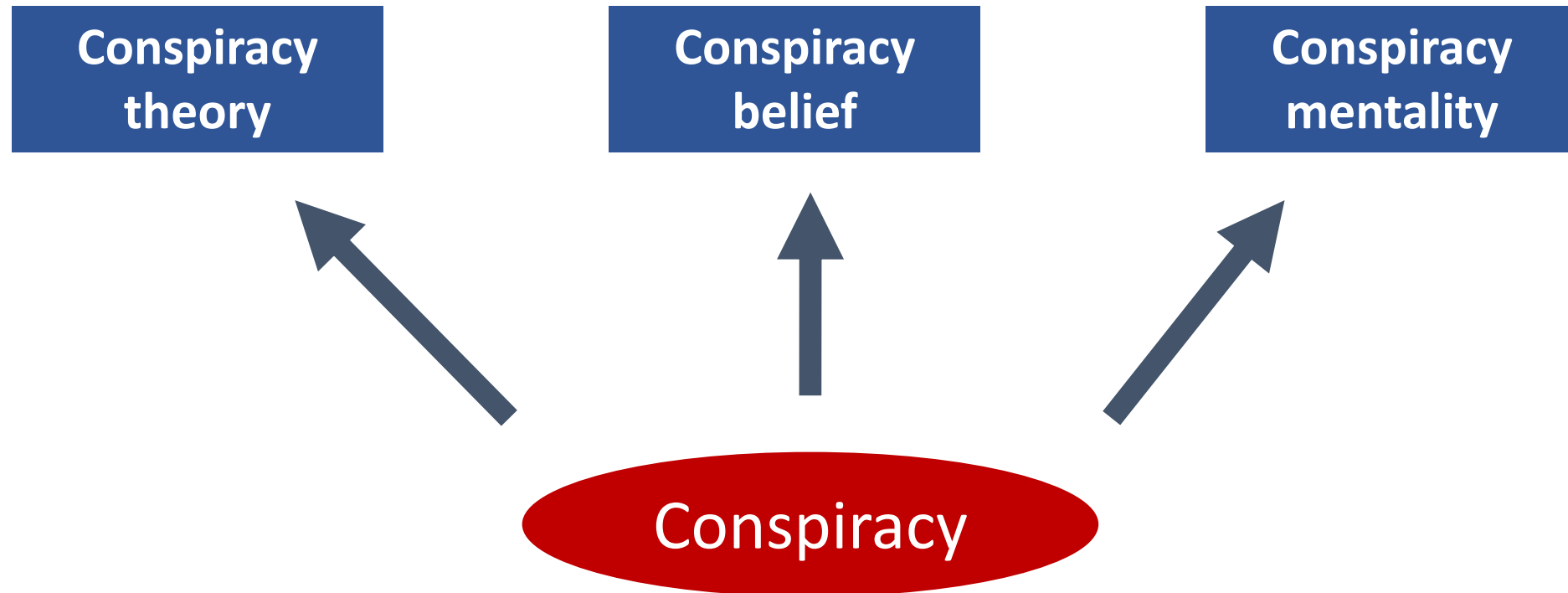
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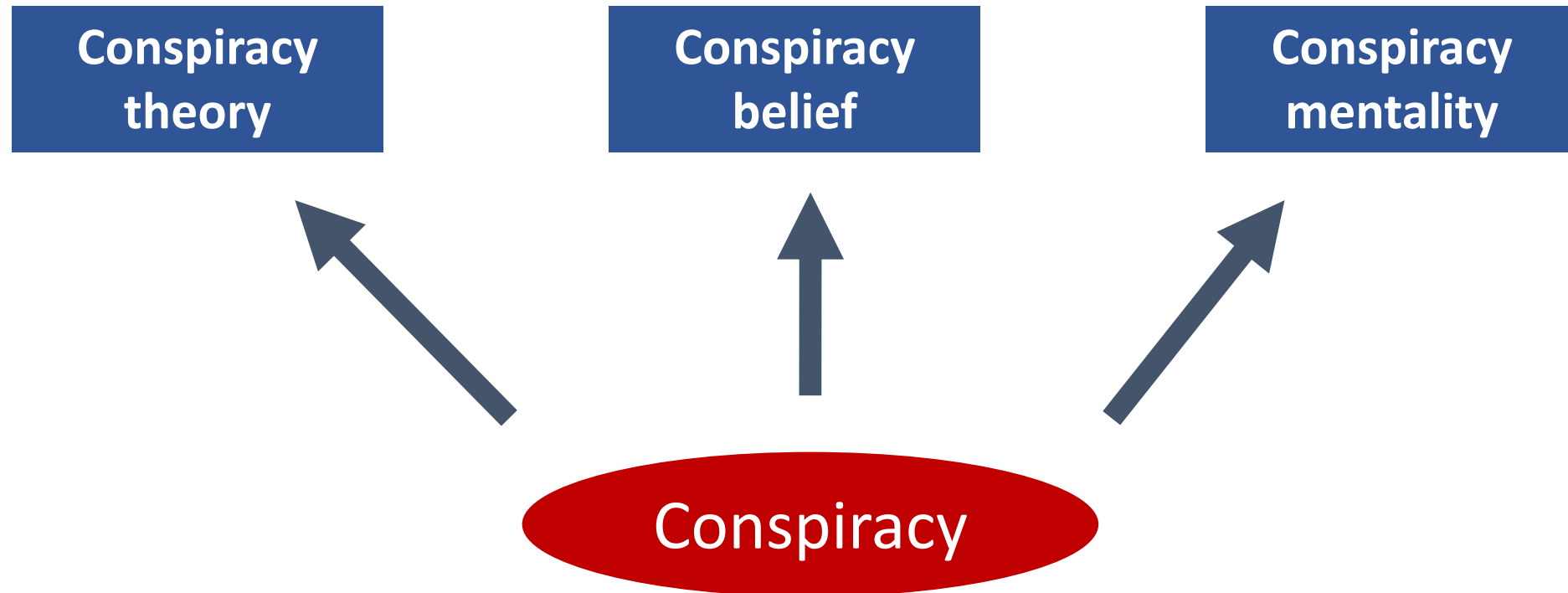
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Conspiracy beliefs, theories, mentality and real-life conspiracies

**Conspiracy
theory**



Explanations of events or circumstances pinpointing a powerful group as culprits acting secretly and maliciously for their own benefit and against the common good

Uscinski, 2018

Conspiracy beliefs, theories, mentality and real-life conspiracies

Conspiracy theory



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Uscinski, 2018

Conspiracy beliefs, theories, mentality and real-life conspiracies

Conspiracy
theory



A theory need to not be necessarily *false* to be considered conspiracist.

Uscinski, 2018

Conspiracy beliefs, theories, mentality and real-life conspiracies

**Conspiracy
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The key aspect is the lack of sufficient evidence supporting it



Uscinski, 2018



Conspiracy beliefs, theories, mentality and real-life conspiracies

**Conspiracy
theory**

**Conspiracy
belief**

Uscinski, 2018

Conspiracy beliefs, theories, mentality and real-life conspiracies

Conspiracy theory

Conspiracy belief



An individual's belief in a specific conspiracy theory

Conspiracy beliefs, theories, mentality and real-life conspiracies

**Conspiracy
theory**

**Conspiracy
belief**

**Conspiracy
mentality**

Uscinski, 2018

Conspiracy beliefs, theories, mentality and real-life conspiracies

Conspiracy
theory

Conspiracy
belief

Conspiracy
mentality



General disposition
to see events as
caused by
conspiracies

Uscinski, 2018

Conspiracy beliefs, theories, mentality and real-life conspiracies

Conspiracy
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Uscinski, 2018

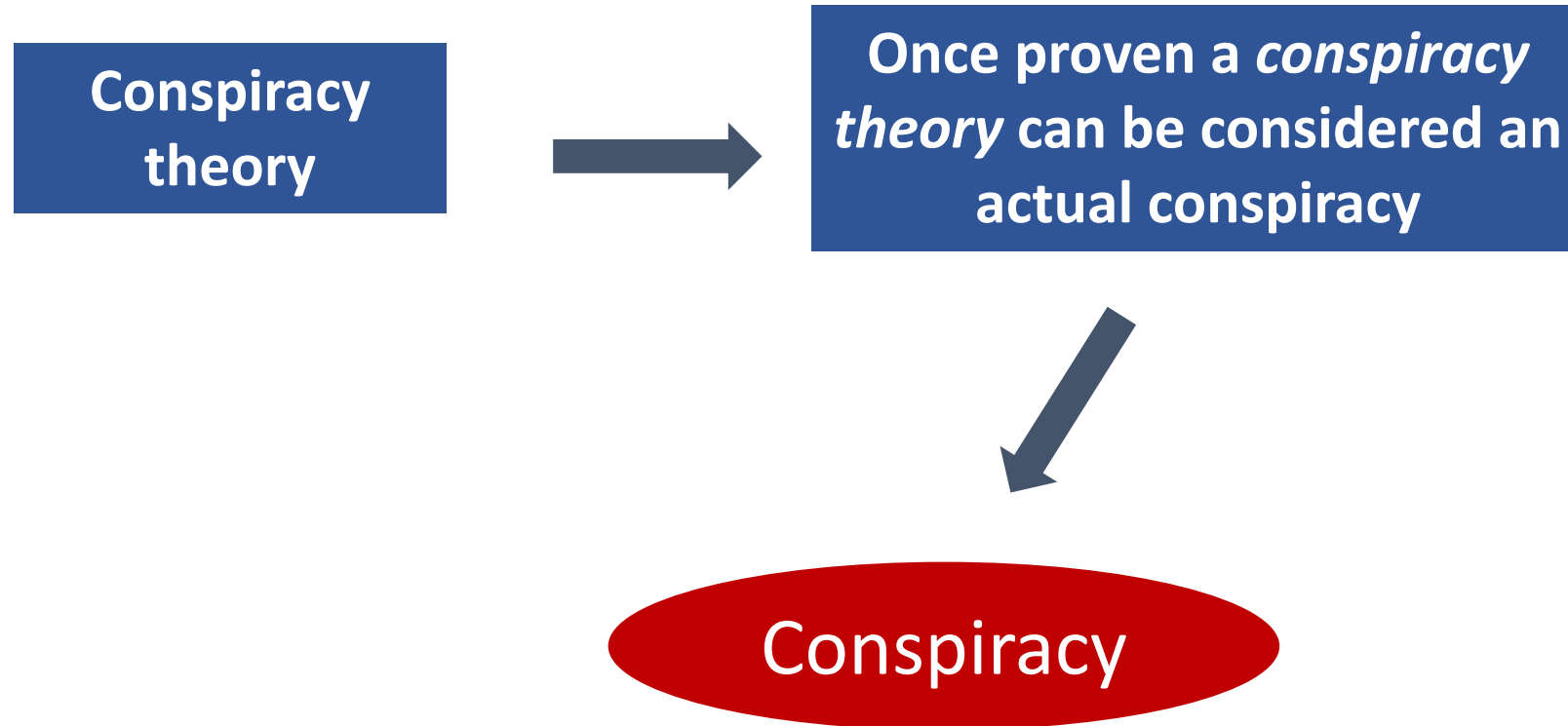
Conspiracy beliefs, theories, mentality and real-life conspiracies

Conspiracy theory



Once proven a *conspiracy theory* can be considered an actual conspiracy

Conspiracy beliefs, theories, mentality and real-life conspiracies



Antecedents of CBs

Why people endorse CBs?

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Why people endorse CBs?



Information deficit model
(see Ecker et al., 2022)

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Information deficit model
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Individual level variables
(see Stasielowicz, 2022)

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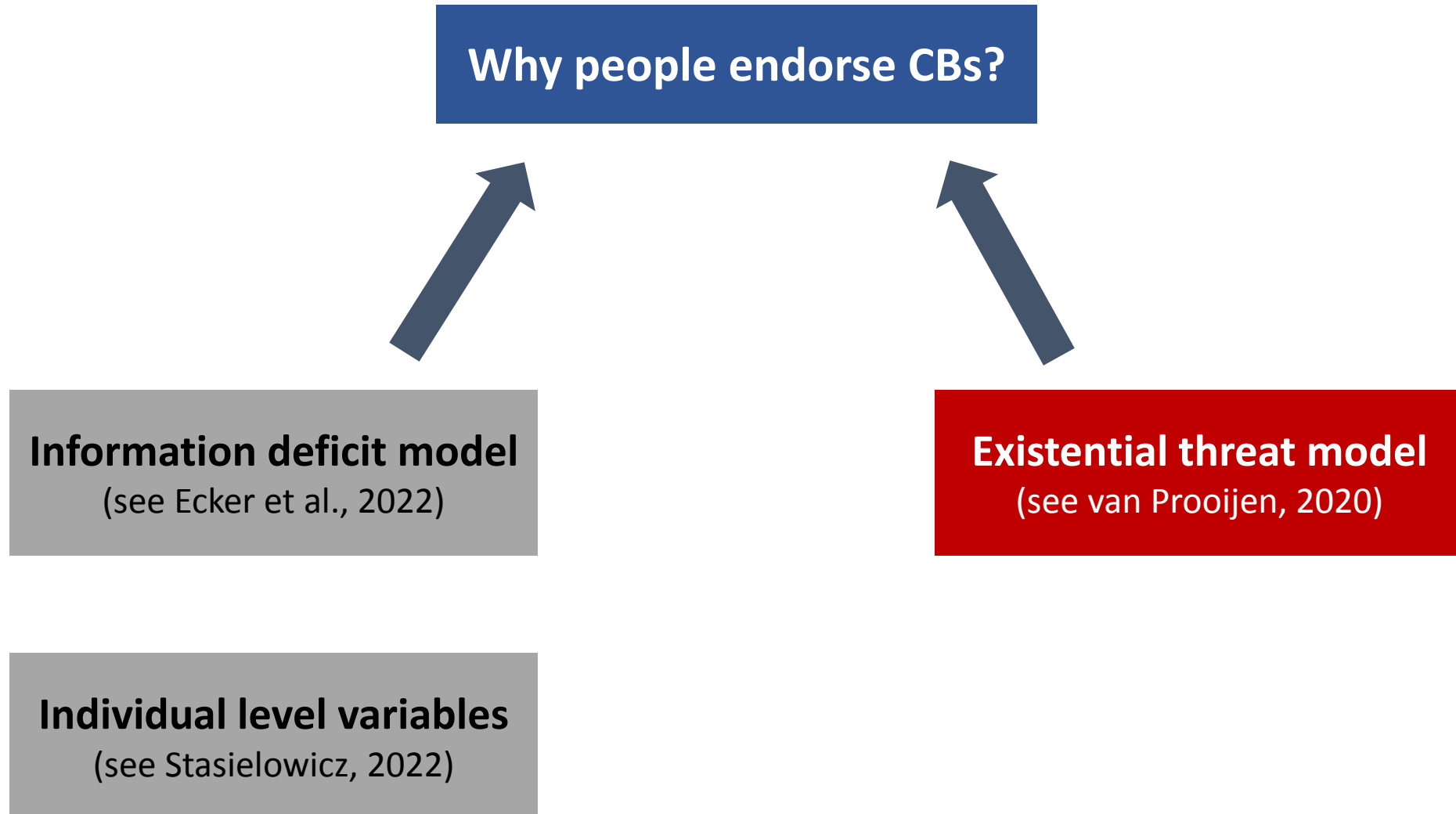
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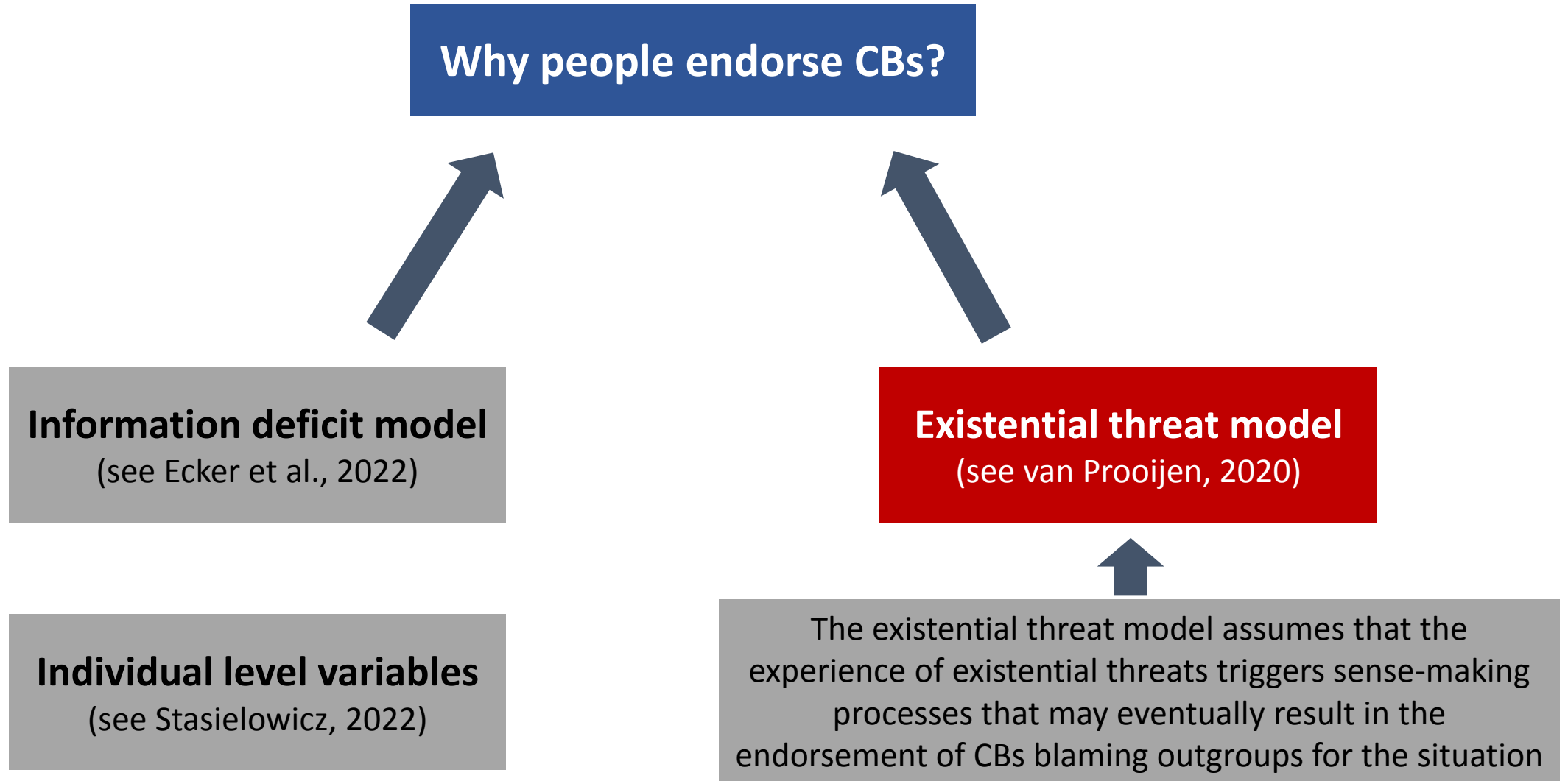
Socio-demographic characteristics,
cognitive ability, conspiracy thinking,
uncertainty avoidance, need for structure
and closure, coping strategies, anxiety,
powerlessness, values and beliefs



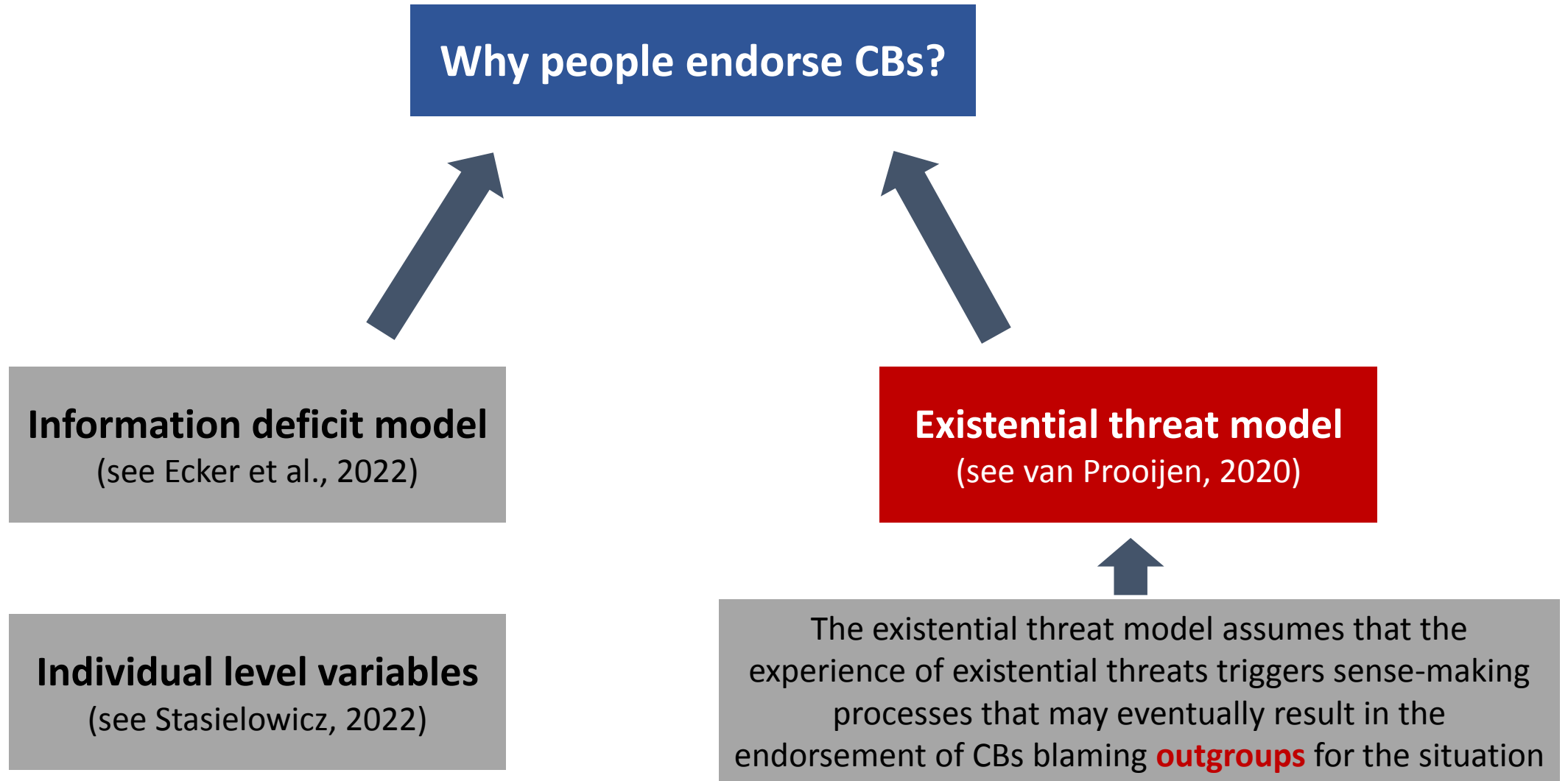
Antecedents of CBs



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Structural factors

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Variation in the type and strength of endorsed CBs between the countries;
- Objective conditions vs **subjective appraisal**

Definitions: **precarity**

Prearity

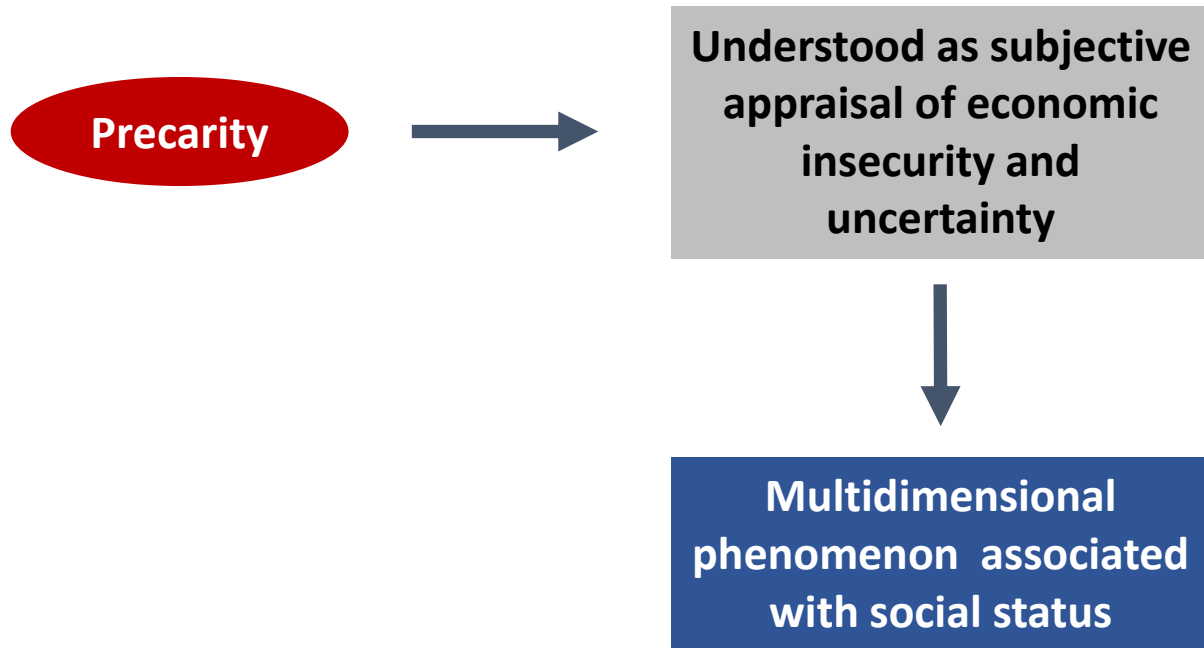
Definitions: **precarity**

Prearity



Understood as subjective
appraisal of economic
insecurity and
uncertainty

Definitions: **precarity**



Definitions: **precarity**

Precarity



Understood as subjective appraisal of economic insecurity and uncertainty



Multidimensional phenomenon associated with social status

Apart from subjective appraisal of the financial situation (also referred to as financial insecurity), the experience of precarity encompasses relative deprivation

Definitions: **precarity**

Precarity



Understood as subjective appraisal of economic insecurity and uncertainty



Multidimensional phenomenon associated with social status

Apart from subjective appraisal of the financial situation (also referred to as financial insecurity), the experience of precarity encompasses relative deprivation (i.e., a belief they are worse off compared to their desired social status),

Definitions: **precarity**

Precarity



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Multidimensional phenomenon associated with social status

Apart from subjective appraisal of the financial situation (also referred to as financial insecurity), the experience of precarity encompasses relative deprivation, social exclusion and marginalization,

Definitions: **precarity**

Precarity



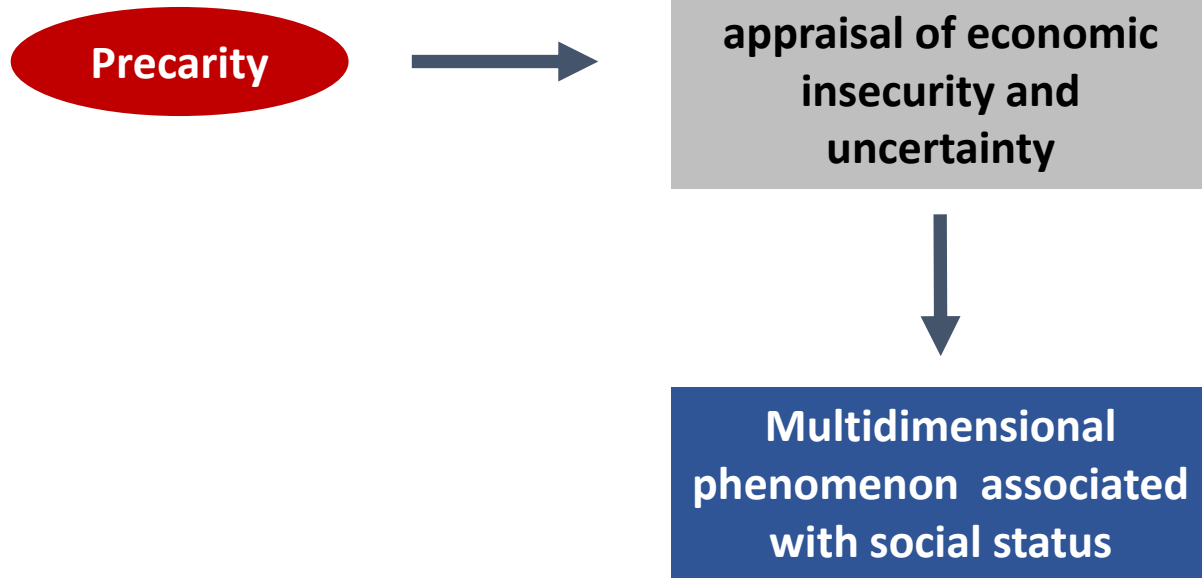
Understood as subjective appraisal of economic insecurity and uncertainty



Multidimensional phenomenon associated with social status

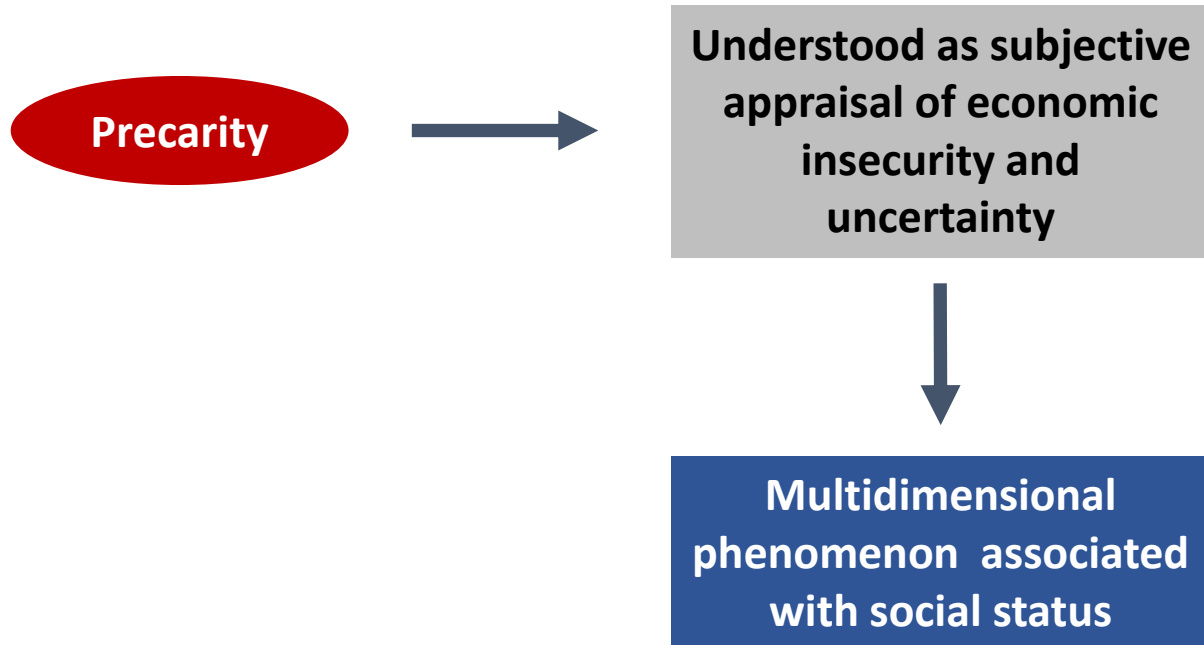
Apart from subjective appraisal of the financial situation (also referred to as financial insecurity), the experience of precarity encompasses relative deprivation, social exclusion and marginalization, low prestige and esteem,

Definitions: **precarity**



Apart from subjective appraisal of the financial situation (also referred to as financial insecurity), the experience of precarity encompasses relative deprivation, social exclusion and marginalization, low prestige and esteem, and limited mobility across hierarchically arranged social rungs

Definitions: **precarity**



Apart from subjective appraisal of the financial situation (also referred to as financial insecurity), the experience of precarity encompasses relative deprivation, social exclusion and marginalization, low prestige and esteem, and limited mobility across hierarchically arranged social rungs and as such is persistently associated with the sense of existential threat

Definitions: **precarity**

Precarity



Poverty

Definitions: **precarity**

Precarity



Poverty



Poverty, once accommodated, may be less of a stressor compared to acute economic shocks and the experience of economic anxiety (Adamus & Grežo, 2021)

Definitions: **precarity**

Precarity



Poverty



People experiencing economic anxiety may become (excessively) suspicious of certain groups – particularly economic, social and political elites – whom they believe to be hostile and responsible for the dire socioeconomic situation.

Definitions: **precarity**

Precarity



Poverty



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Consequently, CBs become psychological defensive or coping mechanisms (Bukowski et al., 2017; Johnson-Schlee, 2019; Jolley & Paterson, 2020; Kraus et al., 2012; Marchlewska et al., 2017) used as an explanation of an individual's disadvantaged position in society (Adam-Troian et al., 2023). The blame shifting may be associated with lower trust towards institutions and the establishment as being responsible for exploiting and plotting against *ordinary* people (Jovančević & Milićević, 2020; Meuer & Imhoff, 2021; Wagner-Egger et al., 2022).

Definitions: **precarity**

Precarity

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Precarity

Associated
psychological
concepts:
*Economic/financial
anxiety*
Financial worry

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Associated
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Why should precarity be associated with CBs?

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At the individual level:

Precarity

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Precarity may be associated with various harmful outcomes:

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At the individual level:

Precarity

Precarity may be associated with various harmful outcomes:
decline in mental and physical health,
lower educational attainment,
deterioration of cognitive abilities, such as analytic and scientific thinking
(de Bruijn & Antonides, 2020; Fiksenbaum et al., 2017; Haushofer & Fehr, 2014).

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At the individual level:

Precarity

These outcomes are among protective factors that insulate against the endorsement of CBs (Erlich et al., 2023; Swami et al., 2014).

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At the individual level:

Precarity

These outcomes are among protective factors that insulate against the endorsement of CBs (Erlich et al., 2023; Swami et al., 2014).



Thus, if precarity has debilitating effects on cognition, then it is possible for its damaging consequences to include an enhanced CBs endorsement as well.

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Precarity

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Precariat experiences enhanced levels of existential threats associated with permanent (financial) insecurity and...

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may thus show more anti-establishment sentiments and distrust towards political elites (outgroups) whom they hold responsible for the dire situation.

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Precarity

Precariat experiences enhanced levels of existential threats associated with permanent (financial) insecurity and...



may thus show more anti-establishment sentiments and distrust towards political elites (outgroups) whom they hold responsible for the dire situation.



This may make people who experience precarity more prone to endorse CBs and, in line with the sociofunctional model, use them to explain their own disadvantaged position, shift the blame from themselves, identify the malevolent culprits, and demand that they be punished (Adam-Troian et al., 2023; Douglas et al., 2019; Gabriel et al., 2023; Standing, 2011; van Prooijen, 2023; van Prooijen & van Vugt, 2018).

Understanding the relationships between precarity and CBs

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Adam-Troian et al., (2023). Of precarity and conspiracy:
Introducing a socio-functional model of conspiracy beliefs

Understanding the relationships between precarity and CBs

Replication Adam-Troian et al., 2023



Adam-Troian et al., (2023). Of precarity and conspiracy: Introducing a socio-functional model of conspiracy beliefs

Understanding the relationships between precarity and CBs

Adamus et al., 2024

Conspiracy
beliefs

Understanding the relationships between precarity and CBs

Adamus et al., 2024

Experience of
precarity



Conspiracy
beliefs

Understanding the relationships between precarity and CBs

Adamus et al., 2024



Understanding the relationships: Doom & Gloom

Model Info

Info	
Estimate	Linear mixed model fit by REML
Call	CT ~ 1 + Eco-anx(rev)+(1 + Eco-anx(rev) cntry)
AIC	54566.8406
BIC	54623.7398
LogLikel.	-27282.0623
R-squared Marginal	0.0542
R-squared Conditional	0.2002
Converged	yes
Optimizer	bobyqa

Understanding the relationships: Doom & Gloom

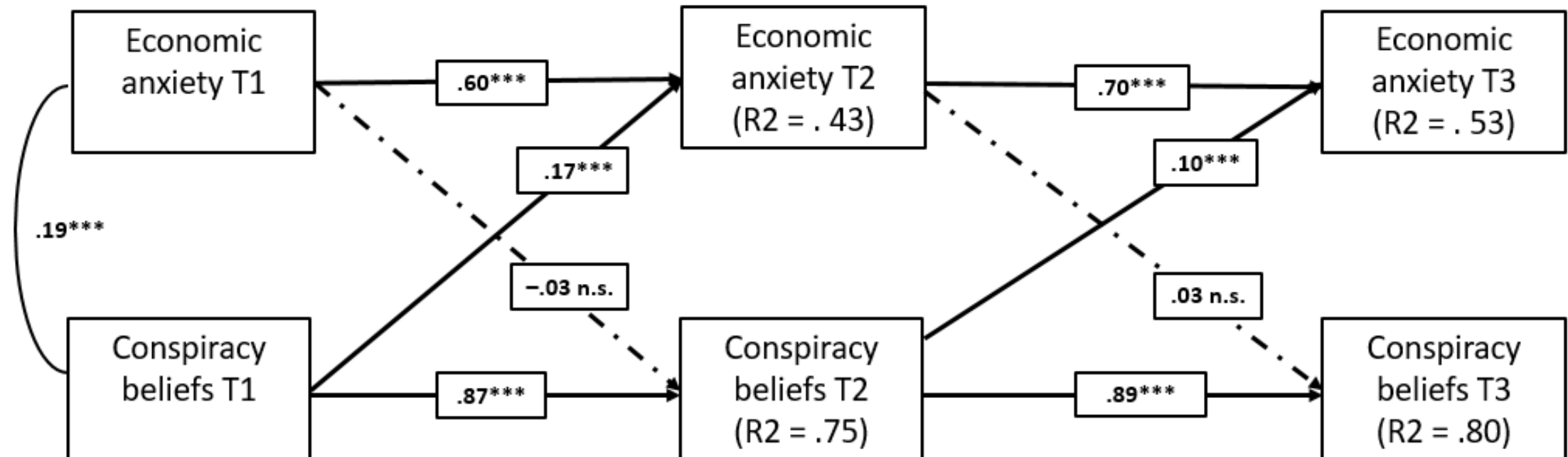
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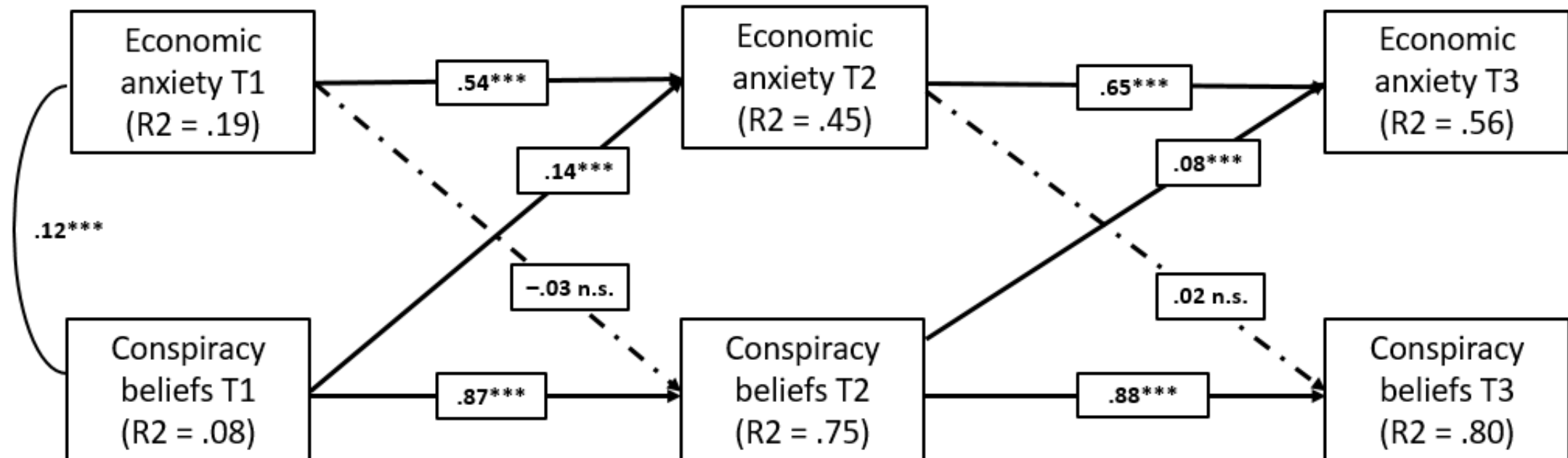
Model Info

Info	
Estimate	Linear mixed model fit by REML
Call	CT ~ 1 + Eco-anx(rev) + RELIG + POLID + POLXTRM + SUBJ-poor-HEALTH + CHRONIC-ILL + LIFE-SATIS + EDUC + AGE + SEX + PRECARIY+(1 + Eco-anx(rev) cntry)
AIC	48671.3821
BIC	48882.7638
LogLikel.	-24362.7195
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R-squared Conditional	0.2157
Converged	yes
Optimizer	bobyqa

Understanding the relationships: Doom & Gloom

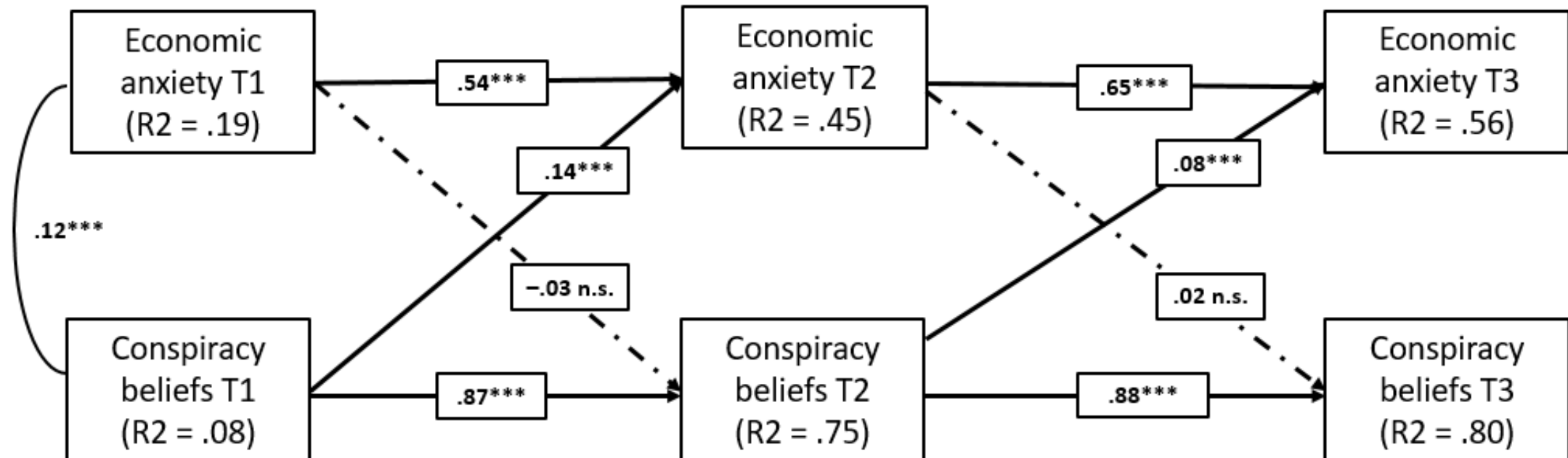


Understanding the relationships: Doom & Gloom

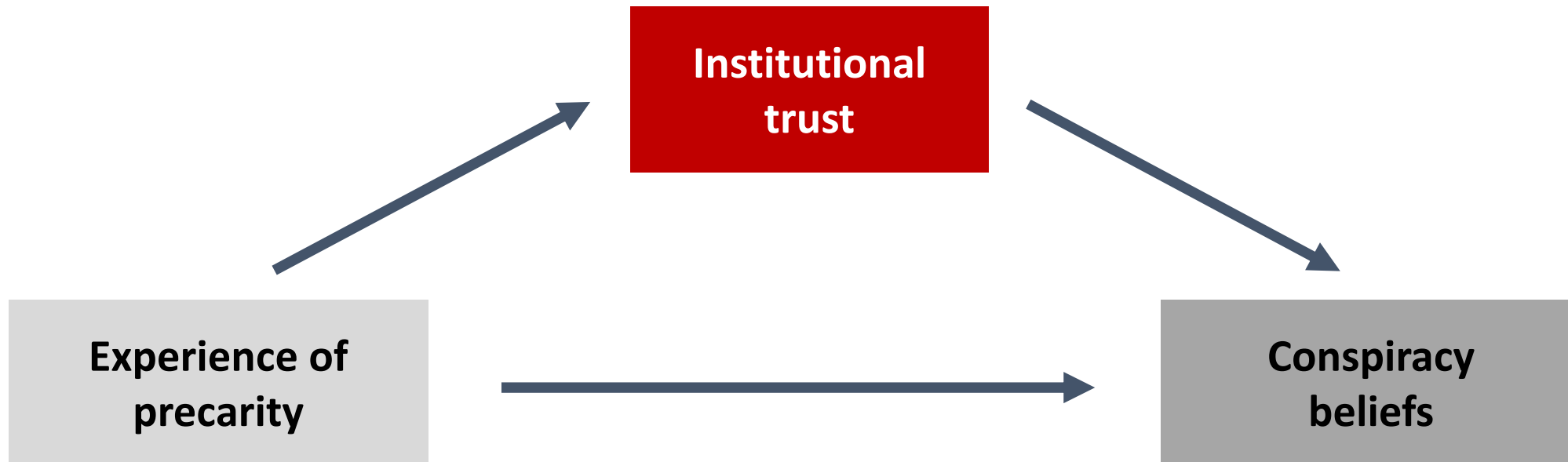


Understanding the relationships: Doom & Gloom

age, gender, education and subjective socio-economic status measured in the first wave of the data collection



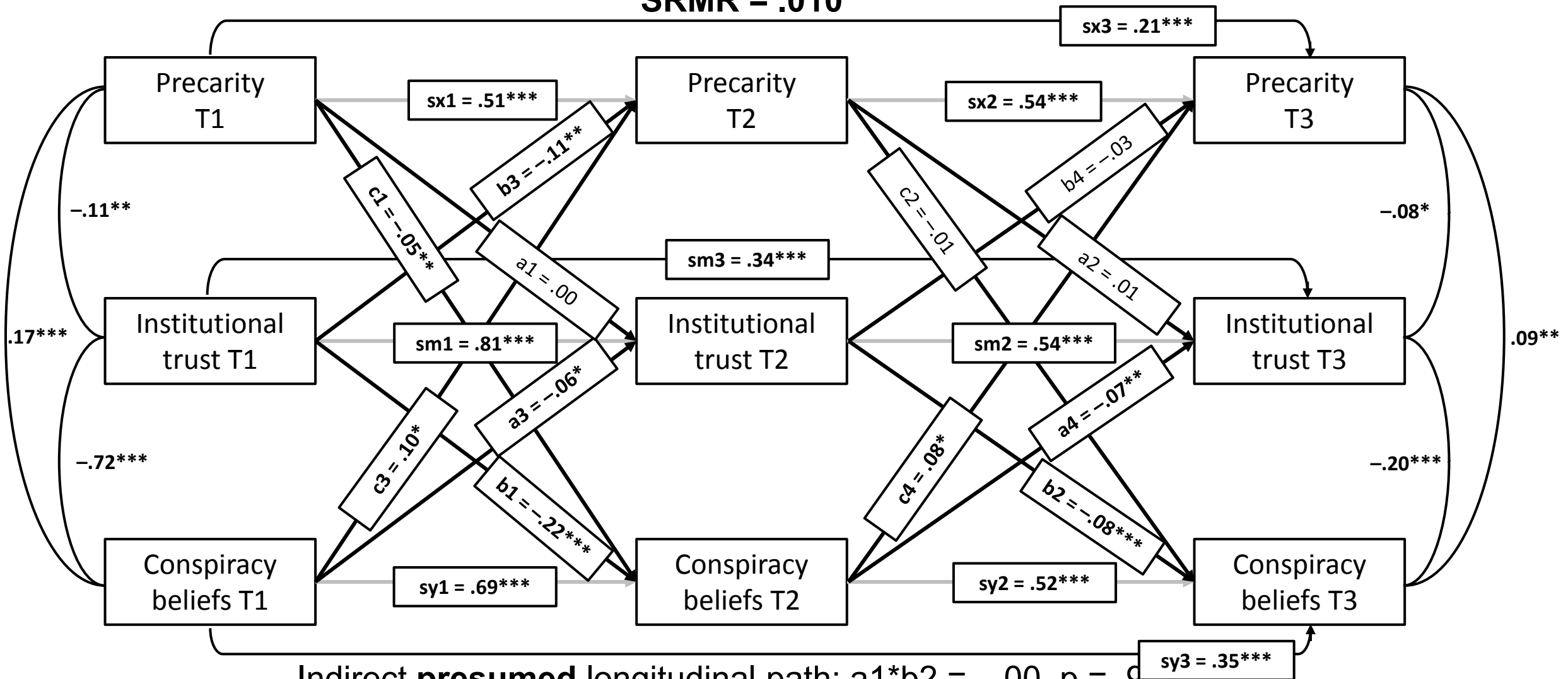
Understaning the relationships



Understanding the Relationships.

LongiRepli

Model fit: $\chi^2(7) = 7.53$, $p = .376$, CFI = 1.00, TLI = 1.00, RMSEA = .009, SRMR = .010



Indirect **presumed** longitudinal path: $a1*b2 = -.00$, $p = .90$

Indirect **opposite** longitudinal path: $a3*b4 = .00$, $p = .40$

The social psychological reality of CBs

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- Sense-making processes and conspiracy mentality may be an inherent aspect of human psychology but they manifest themselves more easily under specific **structural conditions**.

The social psychological reality of CBs

- **Structural factors** and their associations with **individual characteristics** and experiences of **existential threats** would open an interesting avenue for understanding the psychology of CBs and developing more effective anti-CBs interventions

Structural factors

- **quality of democratic institutions and governance**

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- **corruption**

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- **socioeconomic inequality**

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- socioeconomic inequality
- **economic development and GDP per capita**

Structural factors

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(e.g., Alper, 2023; Cordonier et al., 2021; Hornsey et al., 2023; Hornsey & Pearson, 2022; Jetten et al., 2022)

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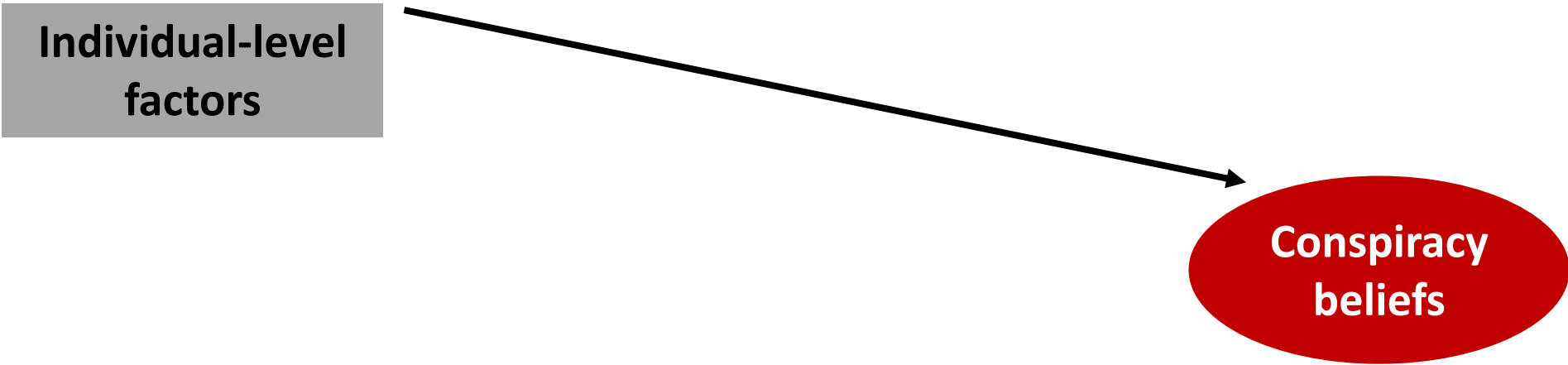
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The outline

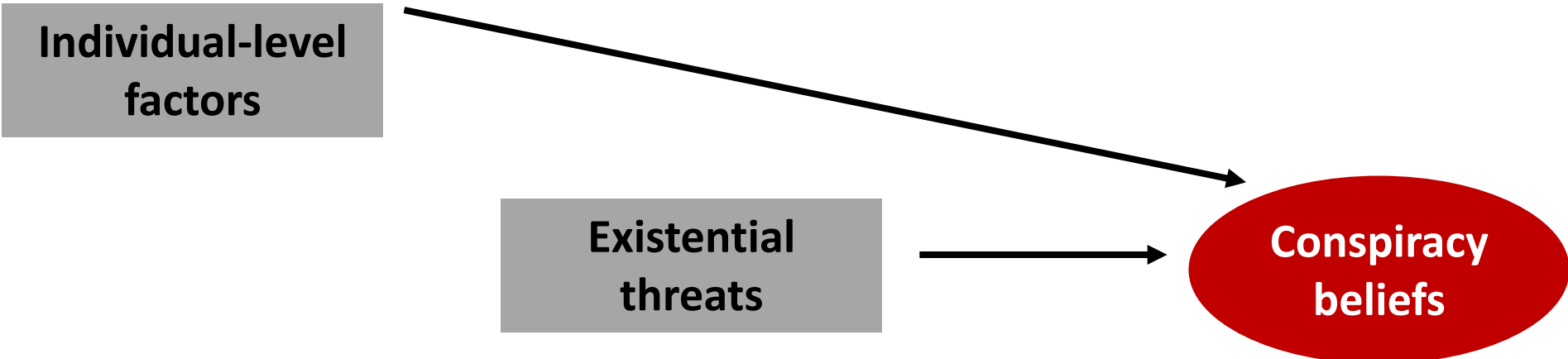


**Conspiracy
beliefs**

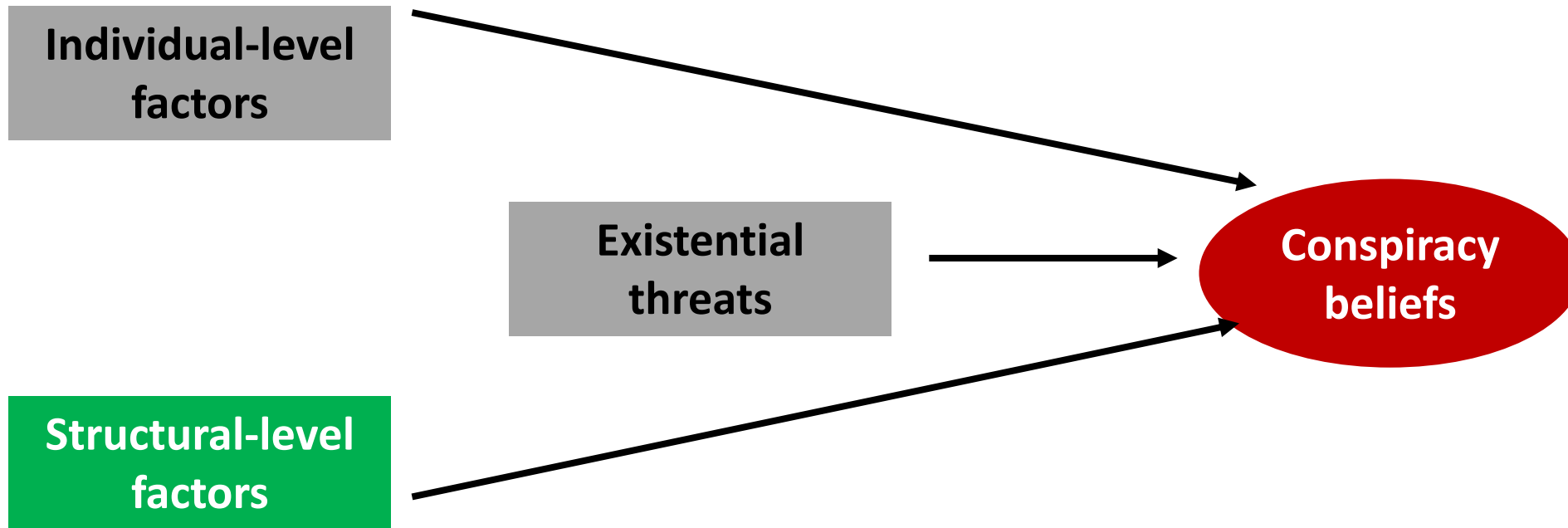
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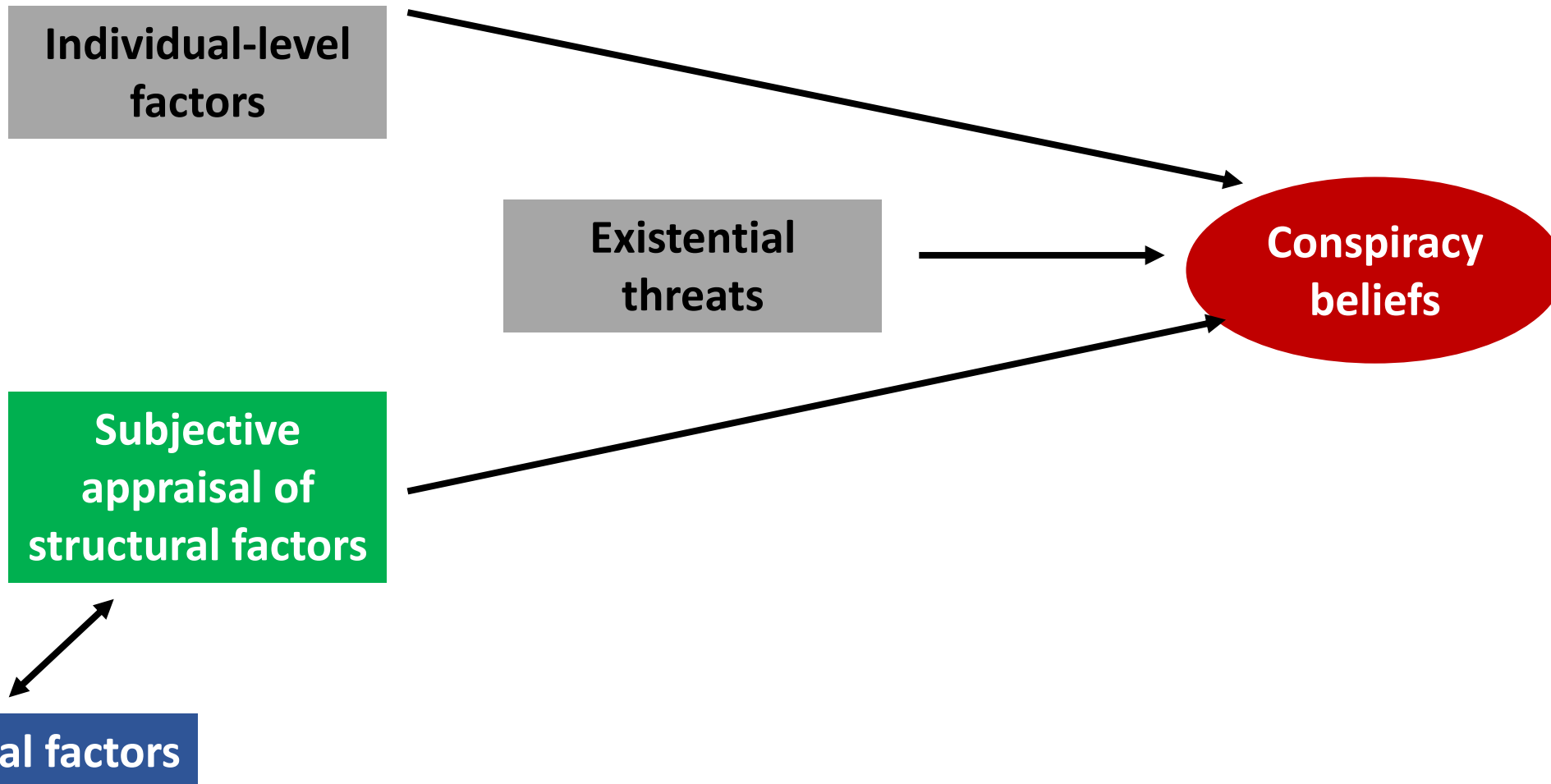
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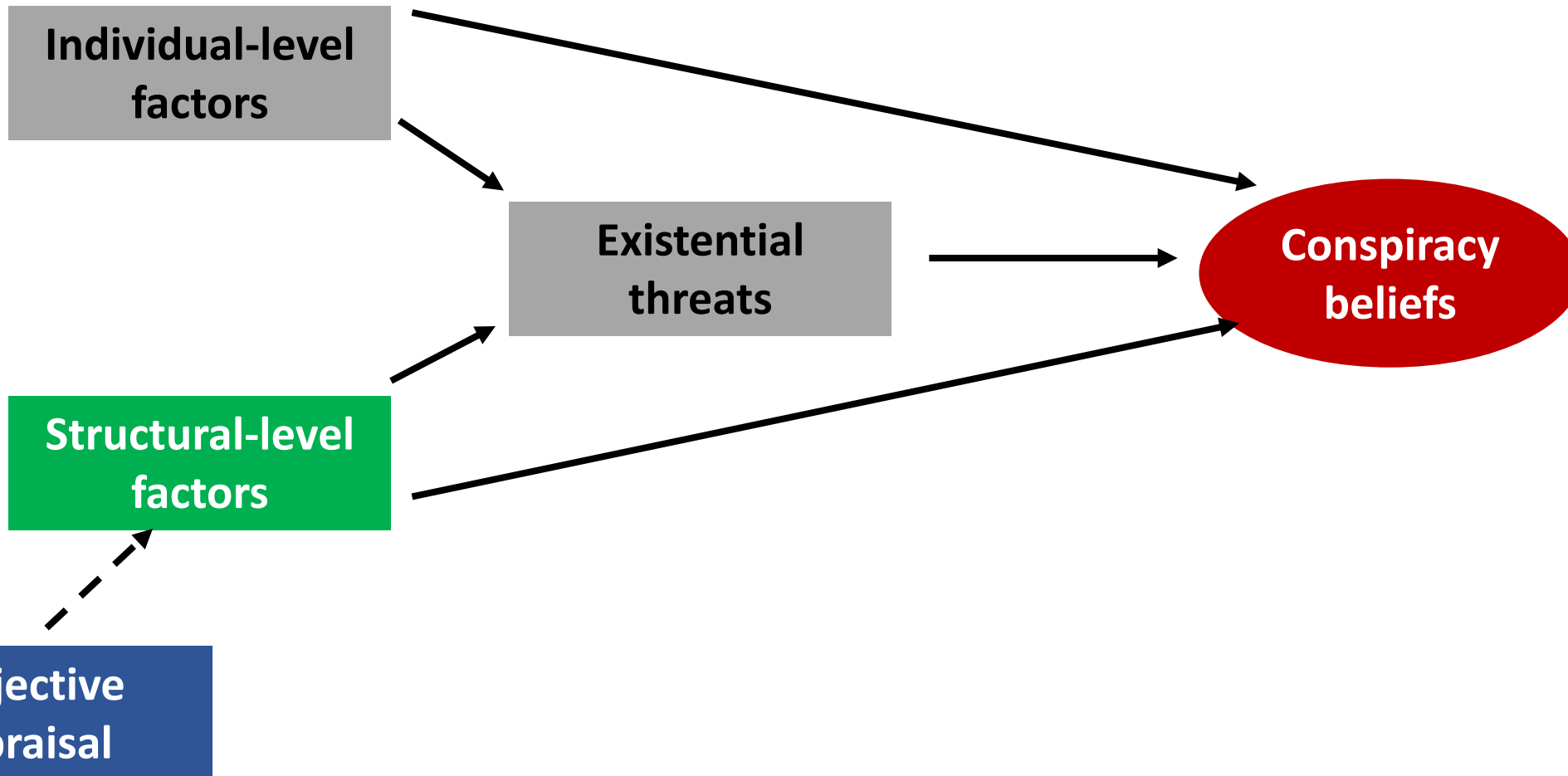
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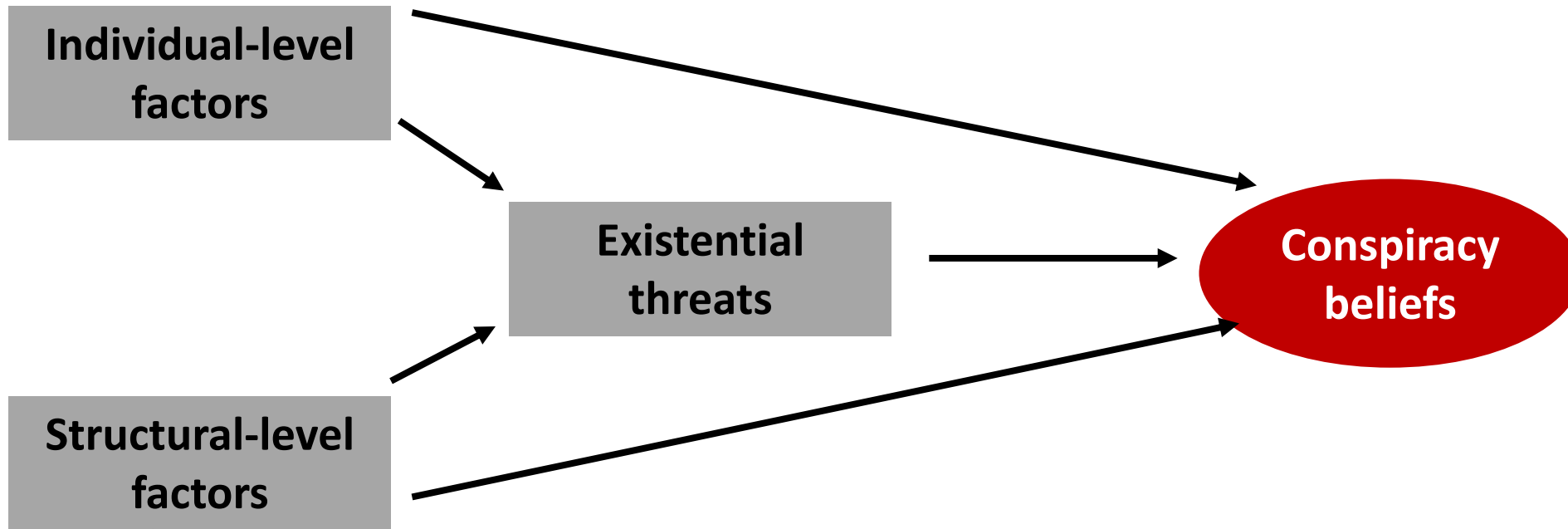
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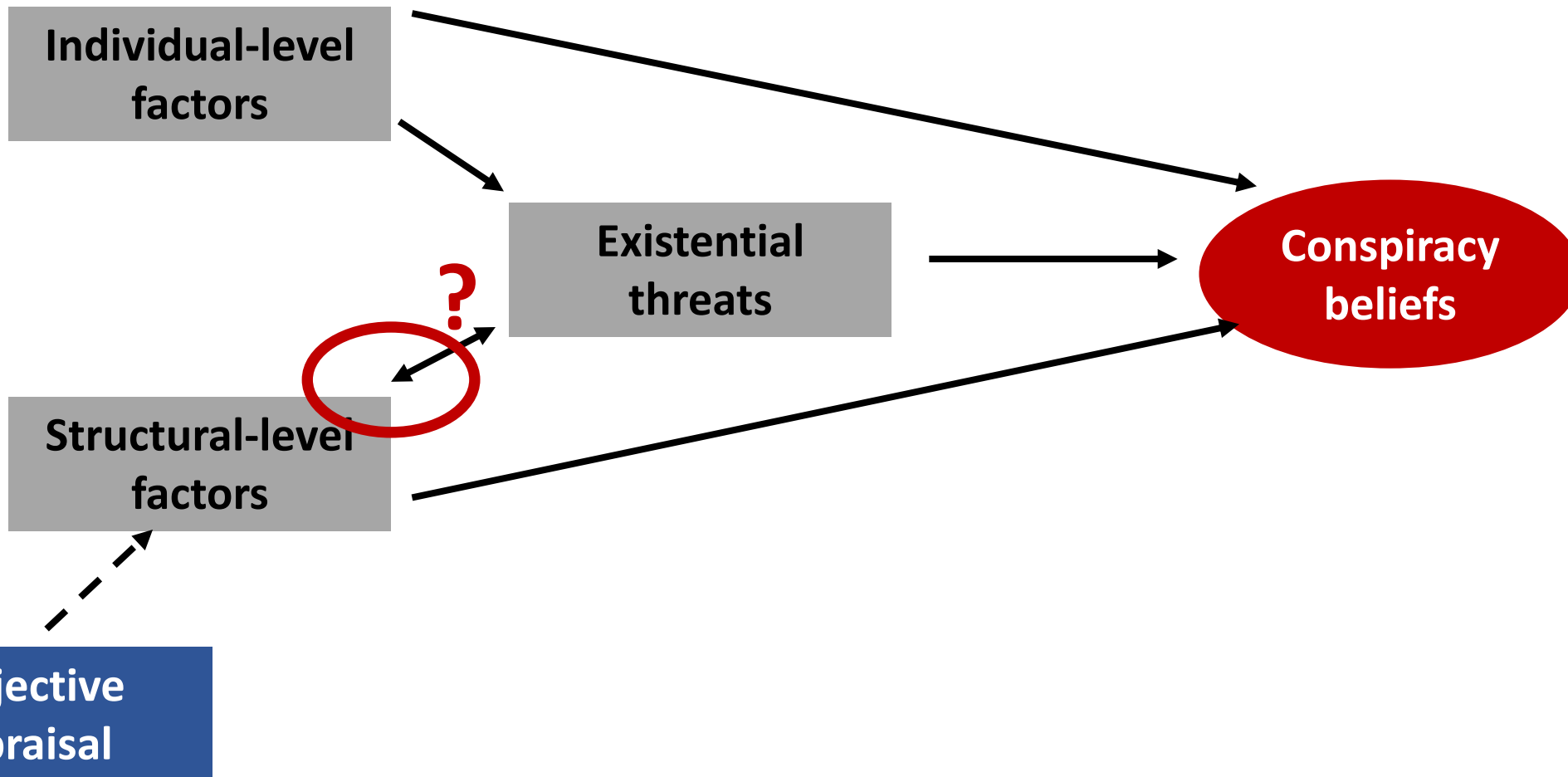


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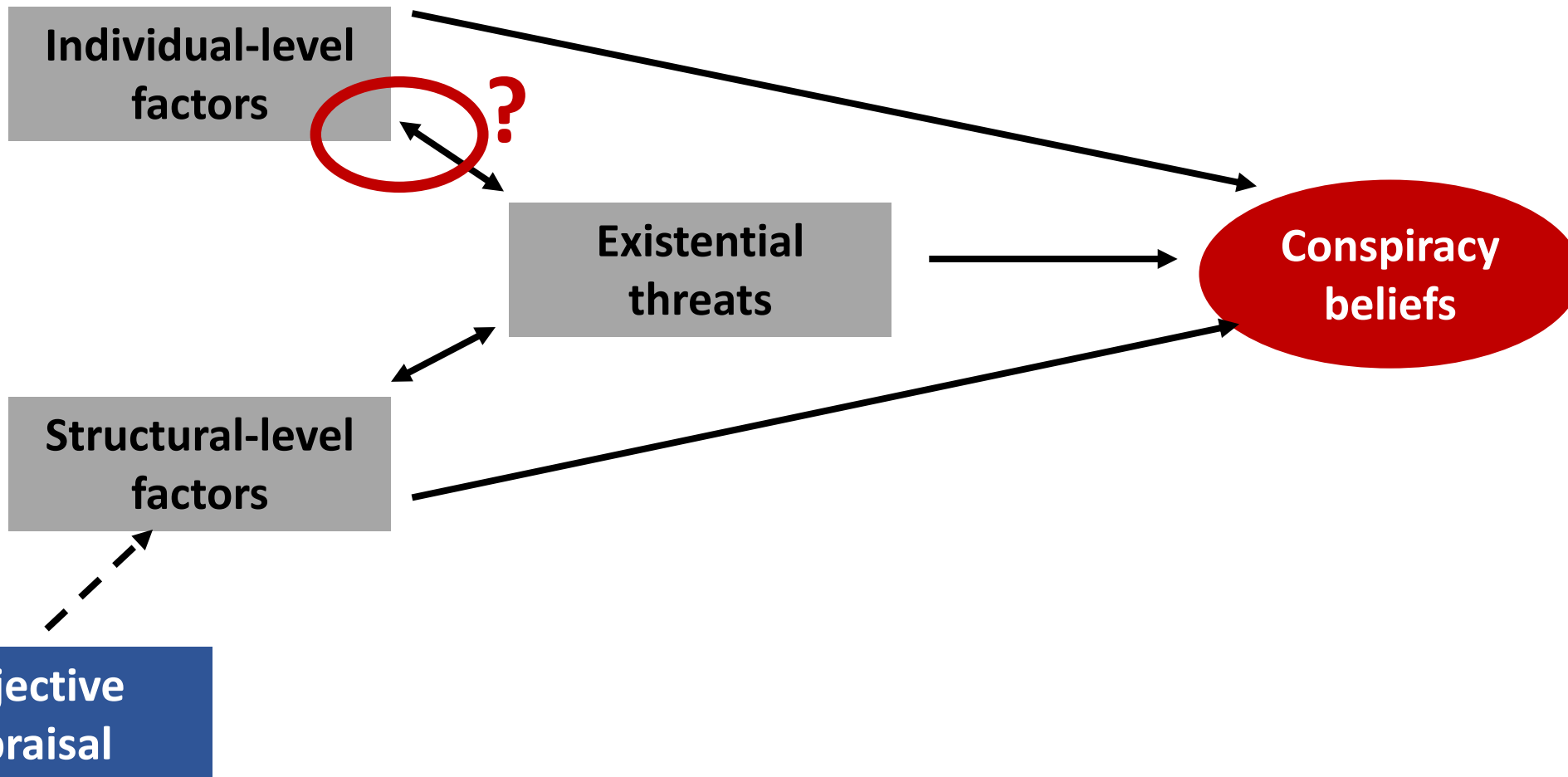


Subjective appraisal

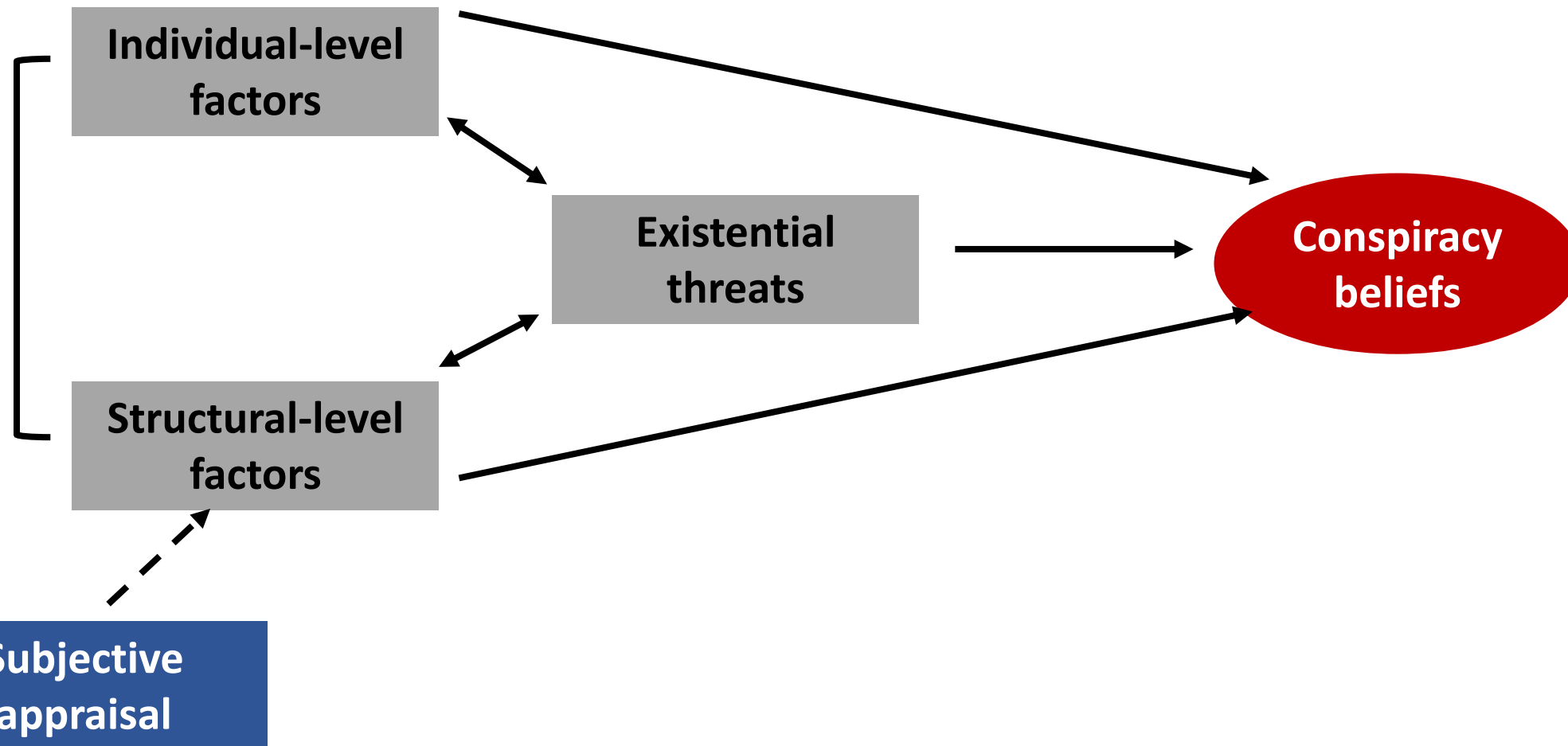
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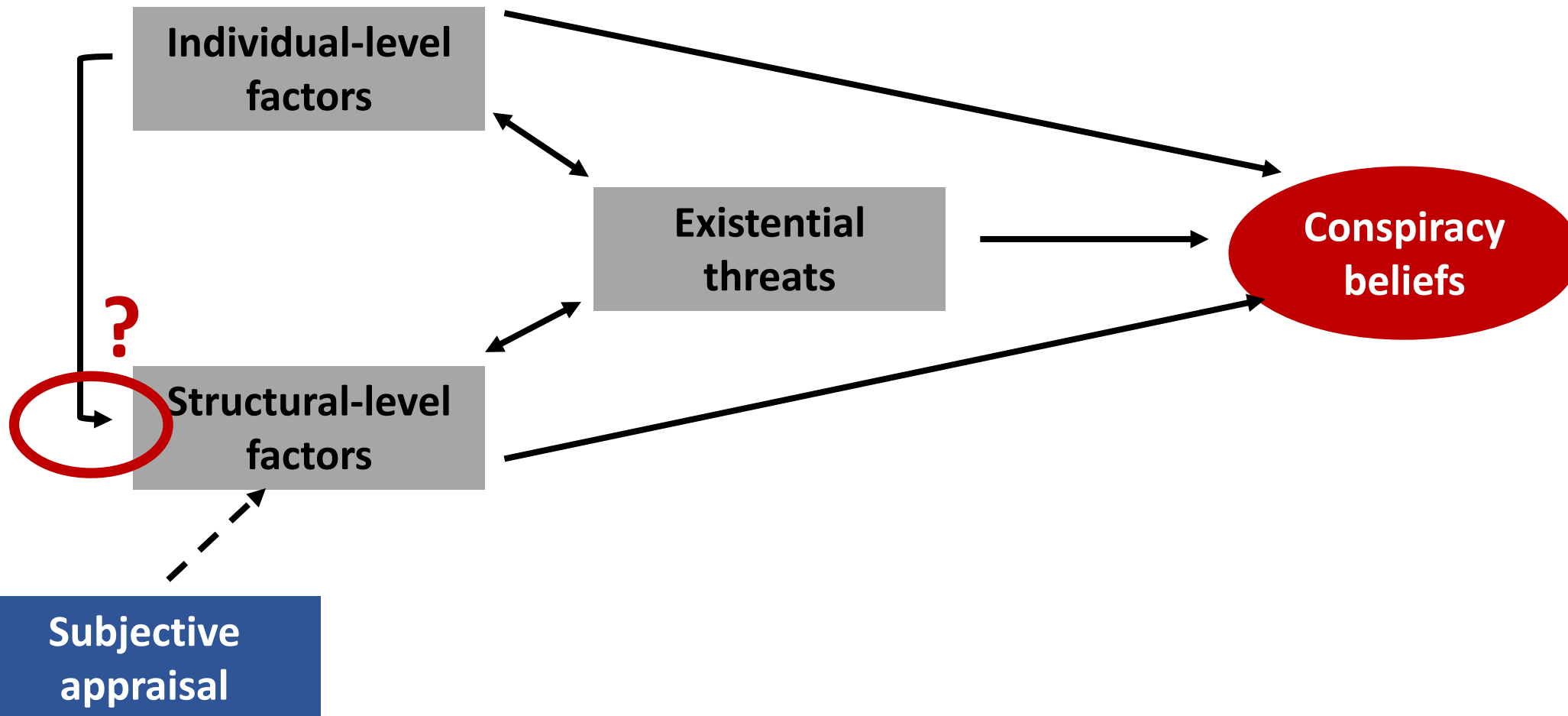
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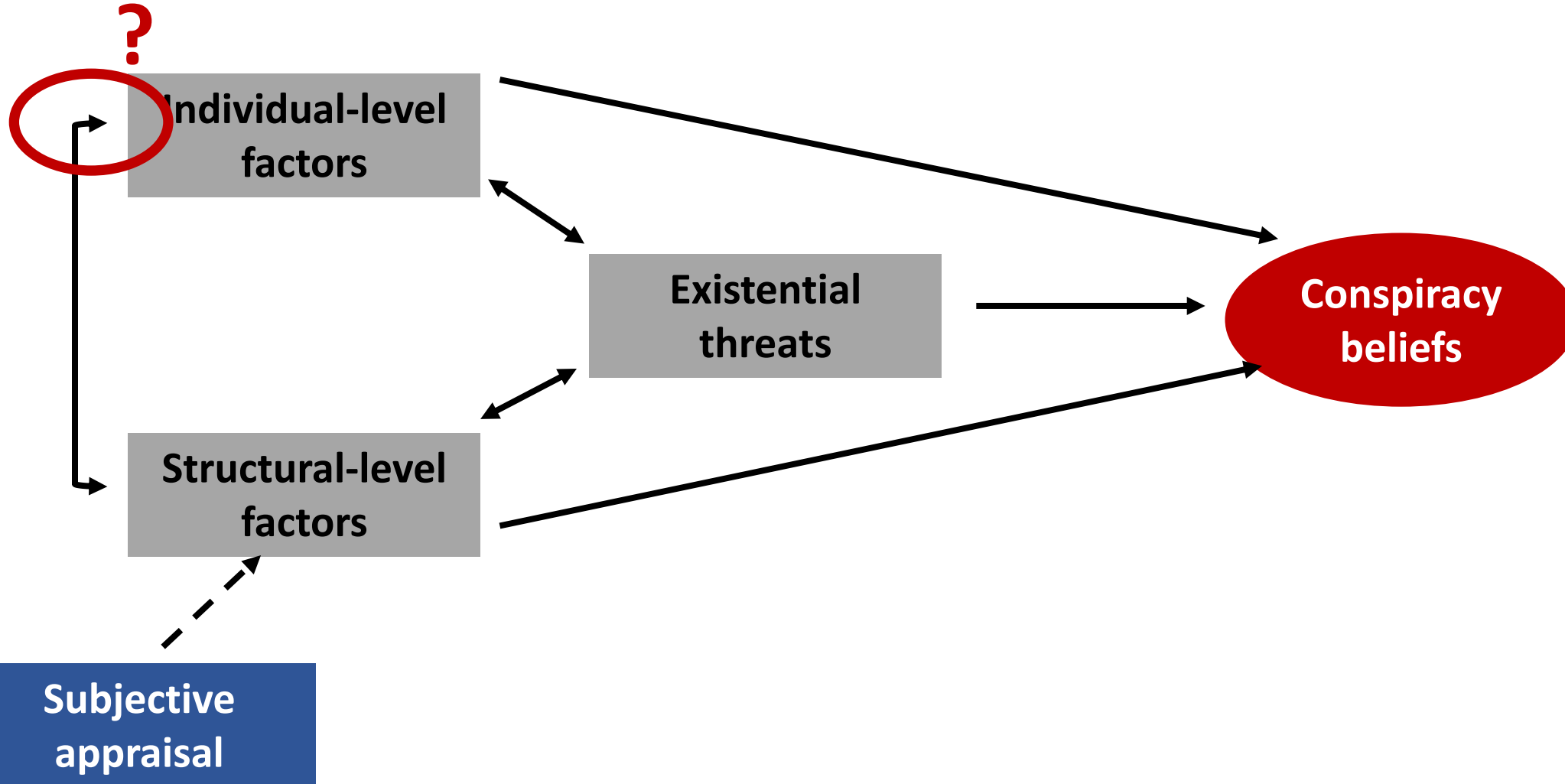
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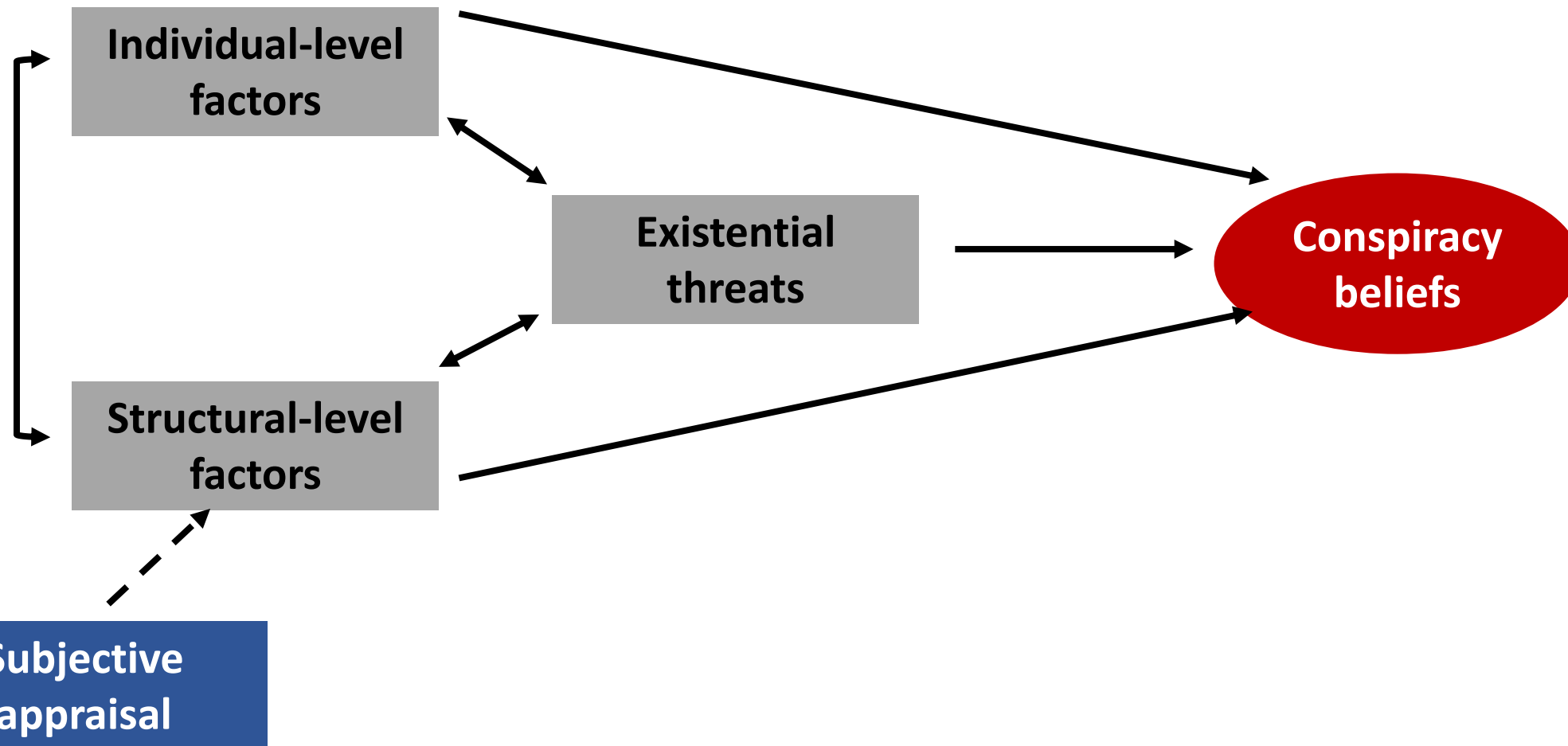
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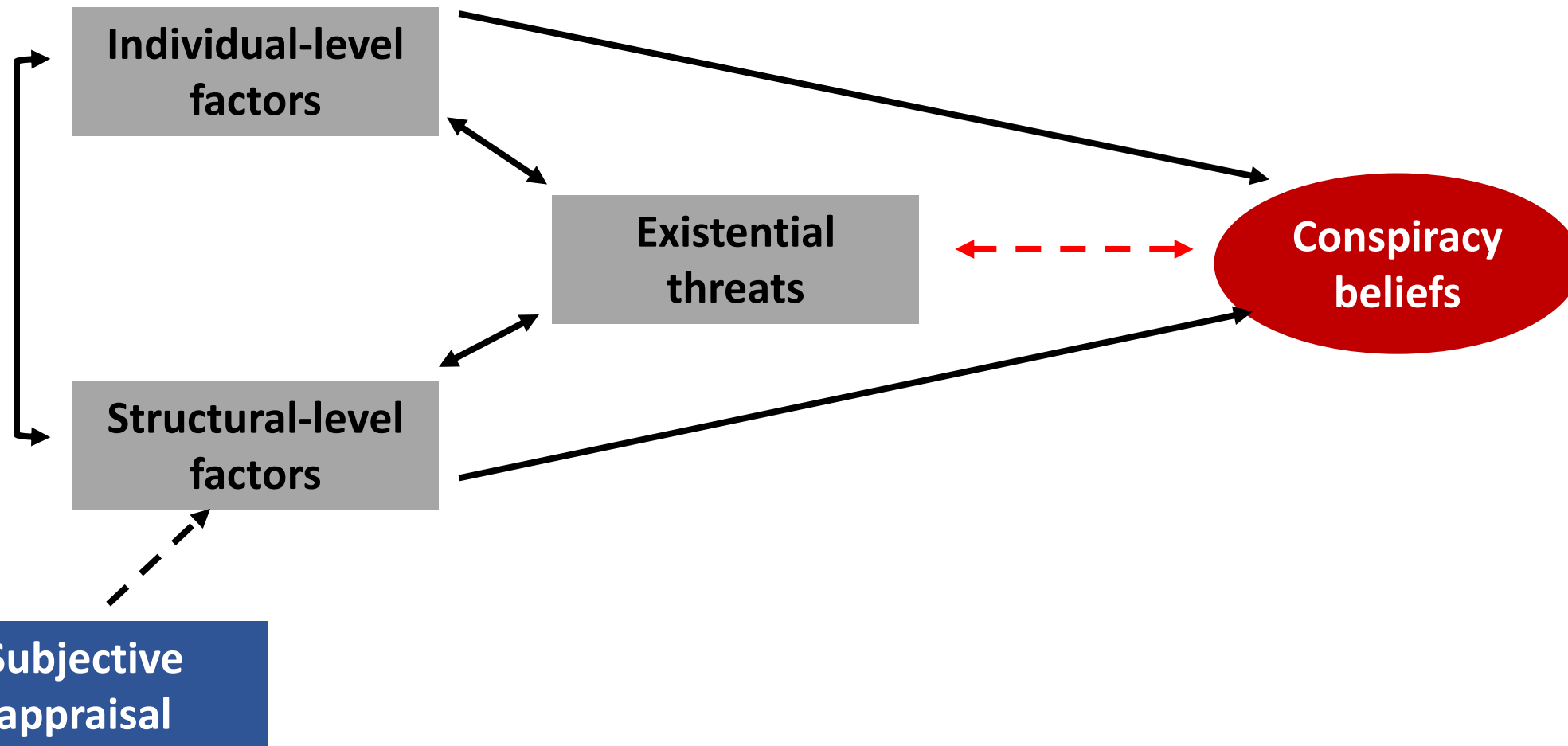
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