
Neighborhood Ecology and Criminal Opportunity

CRJ 523

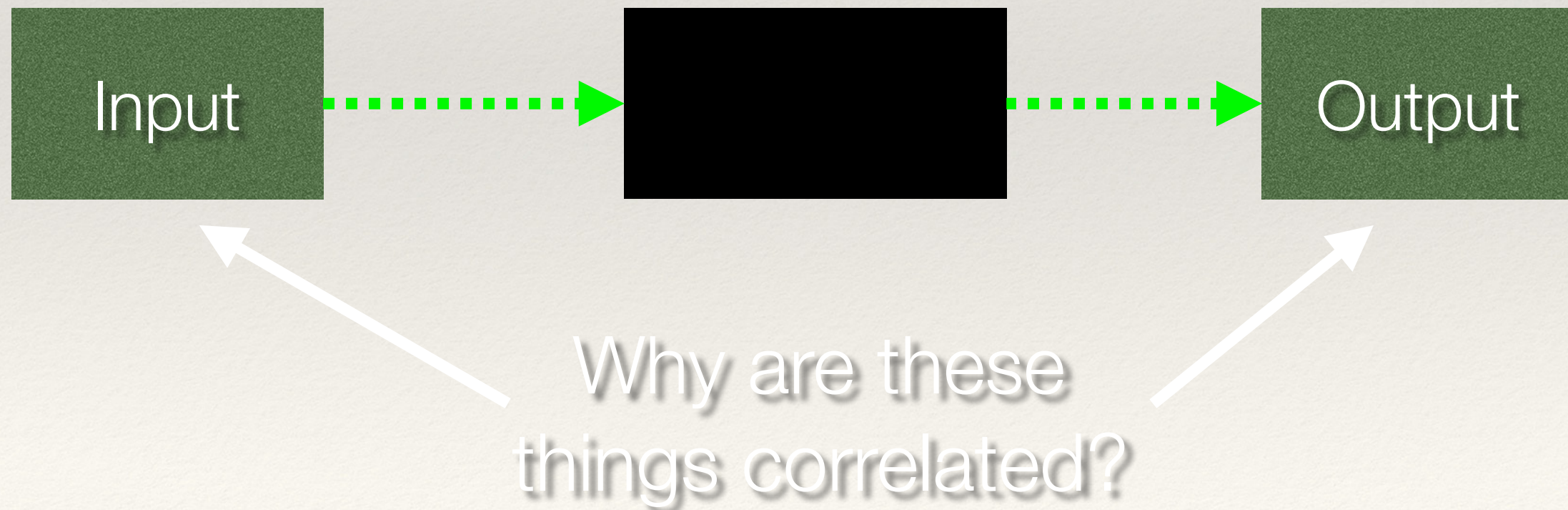
Network Criminology

Learning Goals

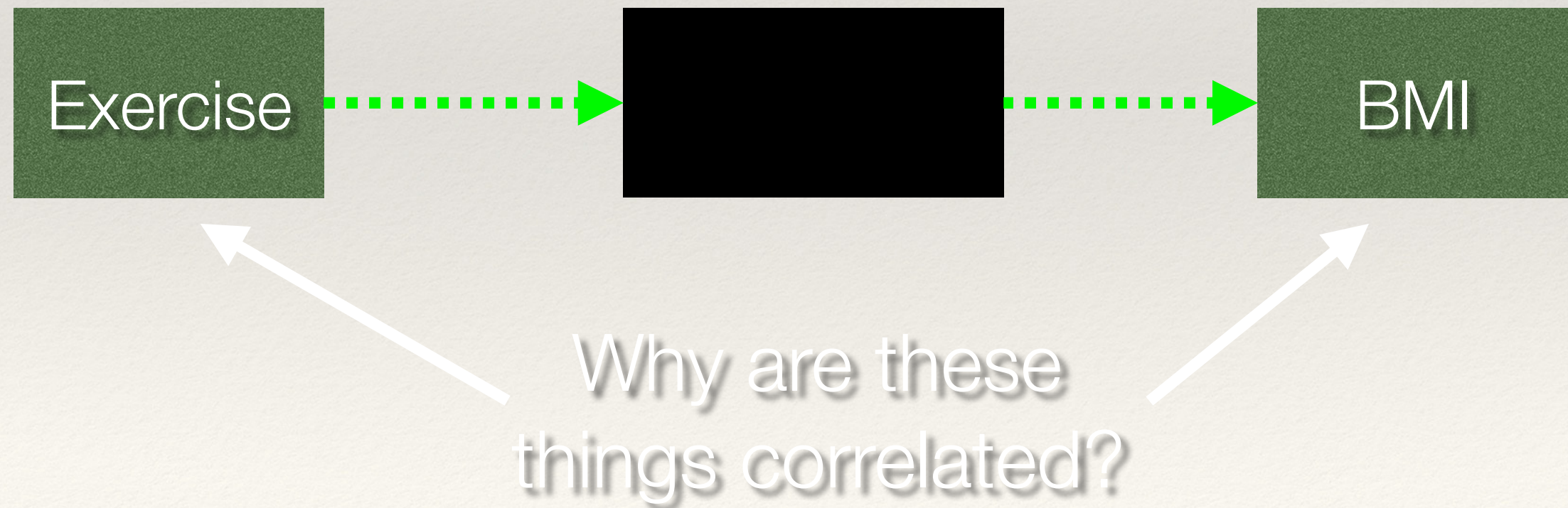
- ❖ Review what we covered last week
- ❖ Social Disorganization Tradition and Environmental Criminology

Causal Mechanisms

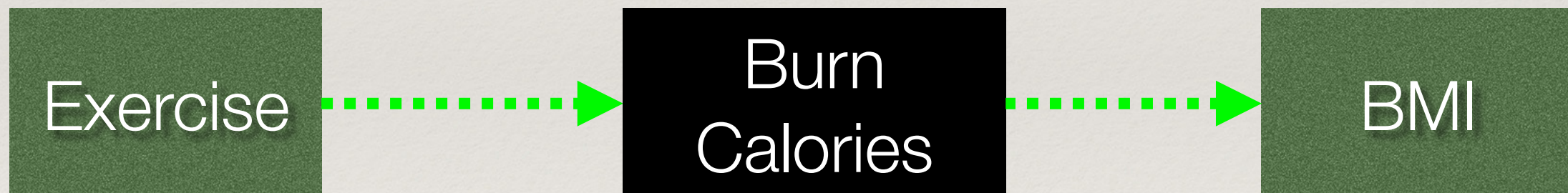
- ❖ Causal mechanisms make the black-box transparent and have an irreducible causal structure.



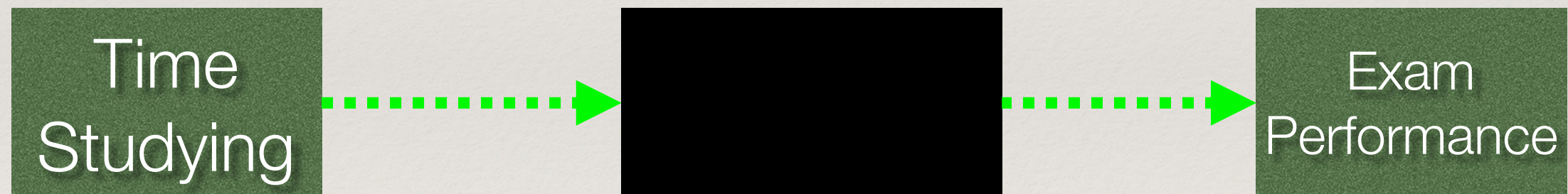
Example



Example



Example



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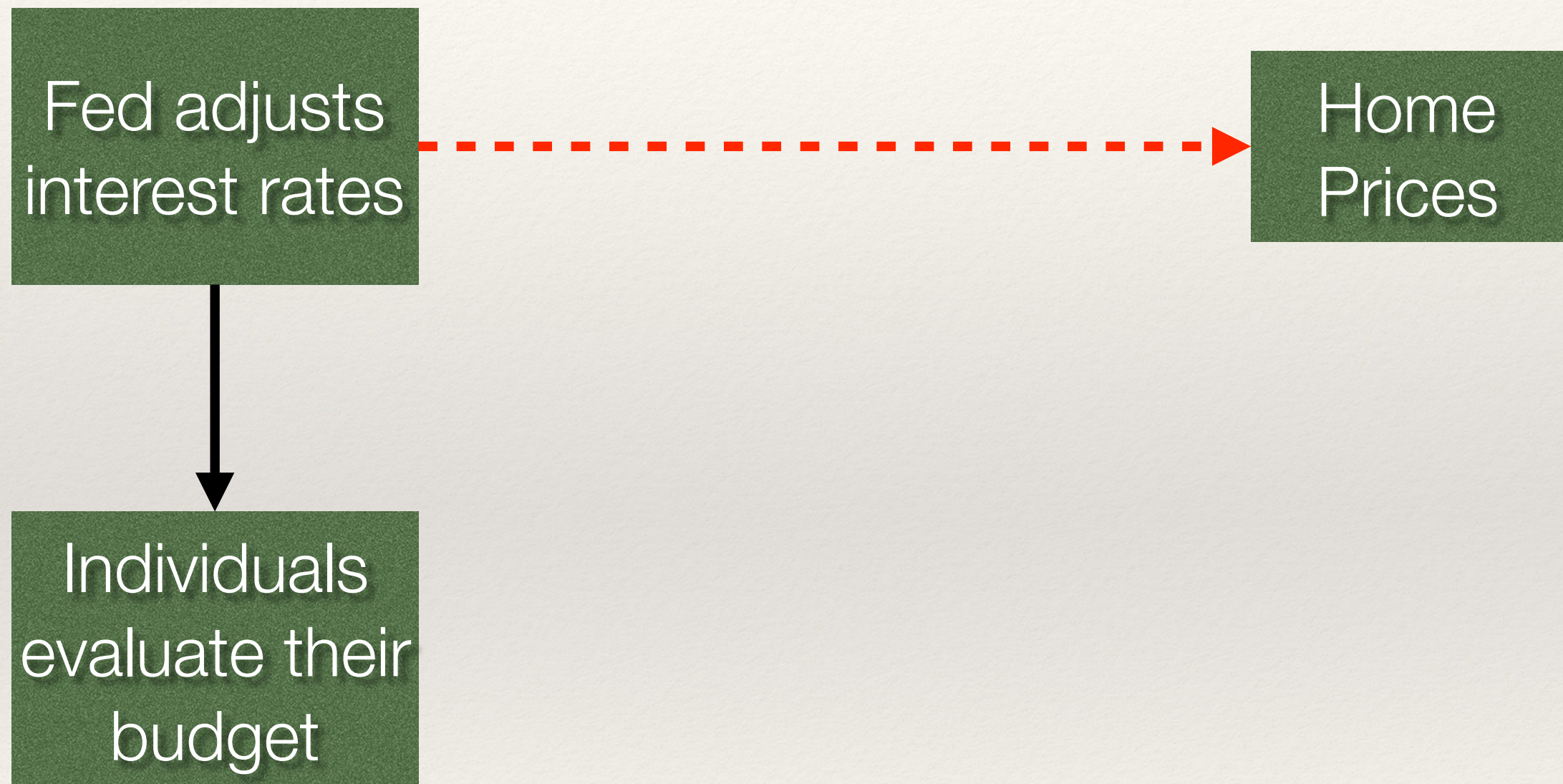
Micro-Macro models

- ❖ Mechanisms link different levels of analysis.
- ❖ Macro level variables have to be explained with causal mechanisms that link them.

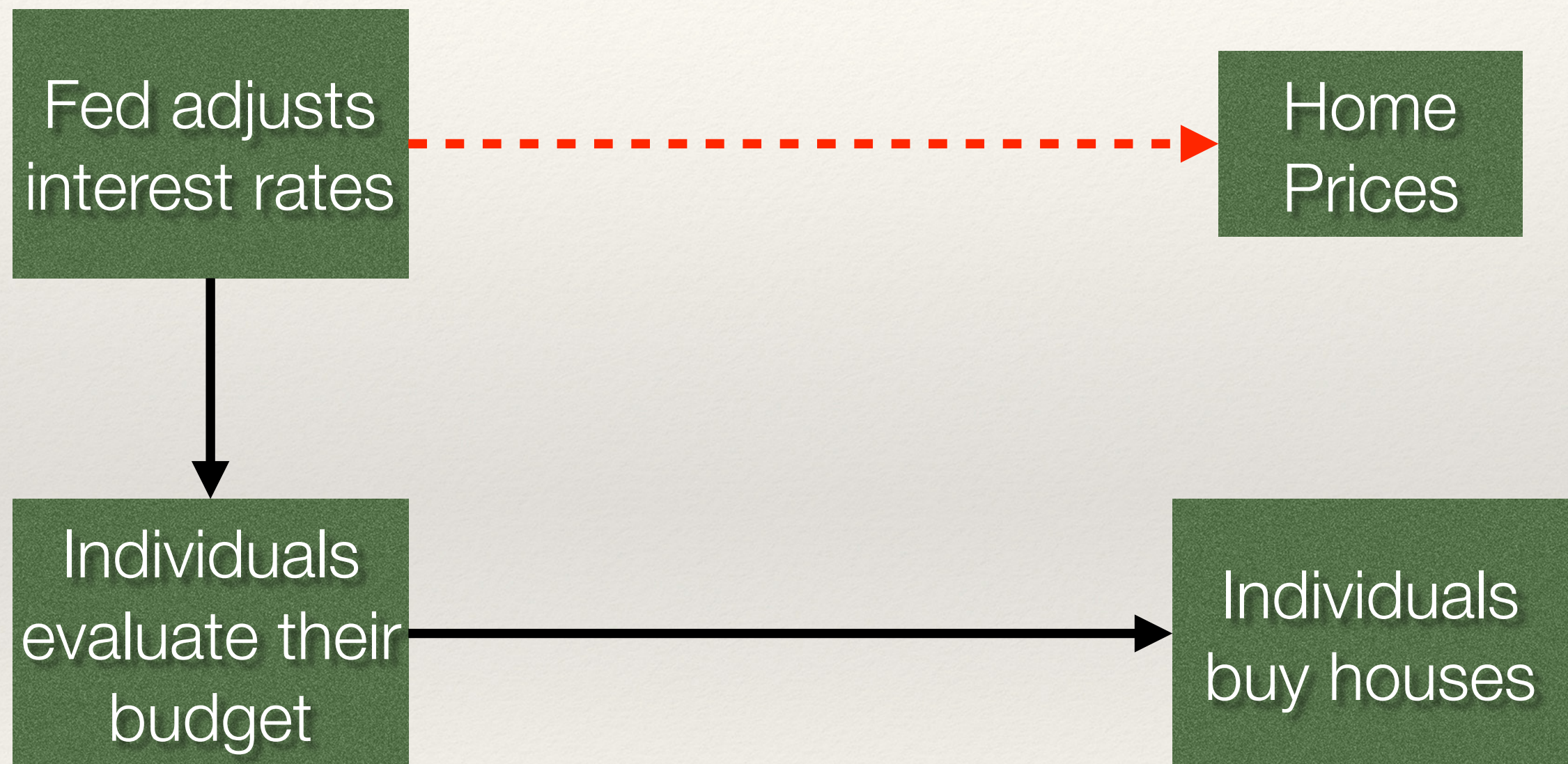
Micro-Macro models



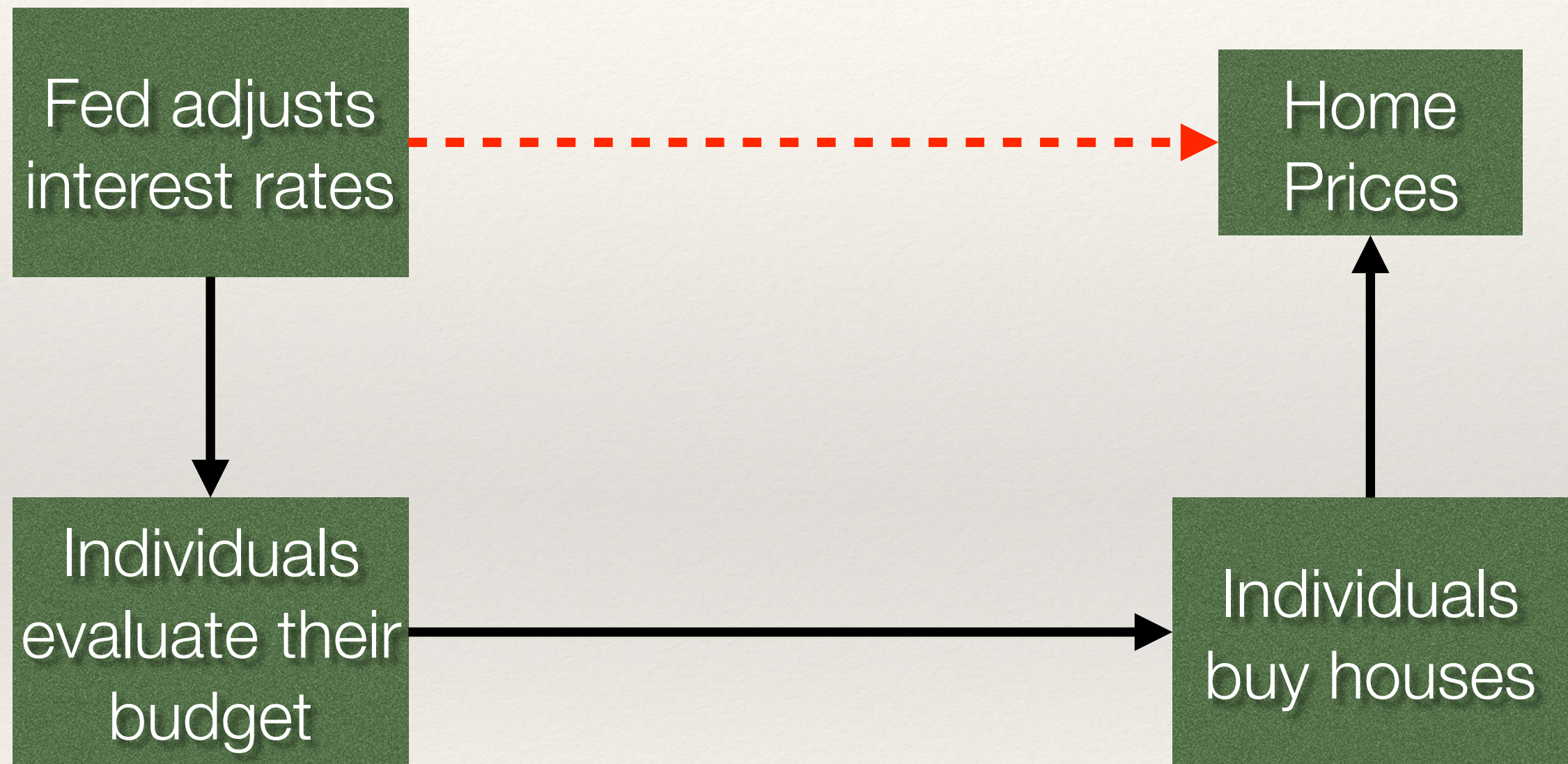
Micro-Macro models



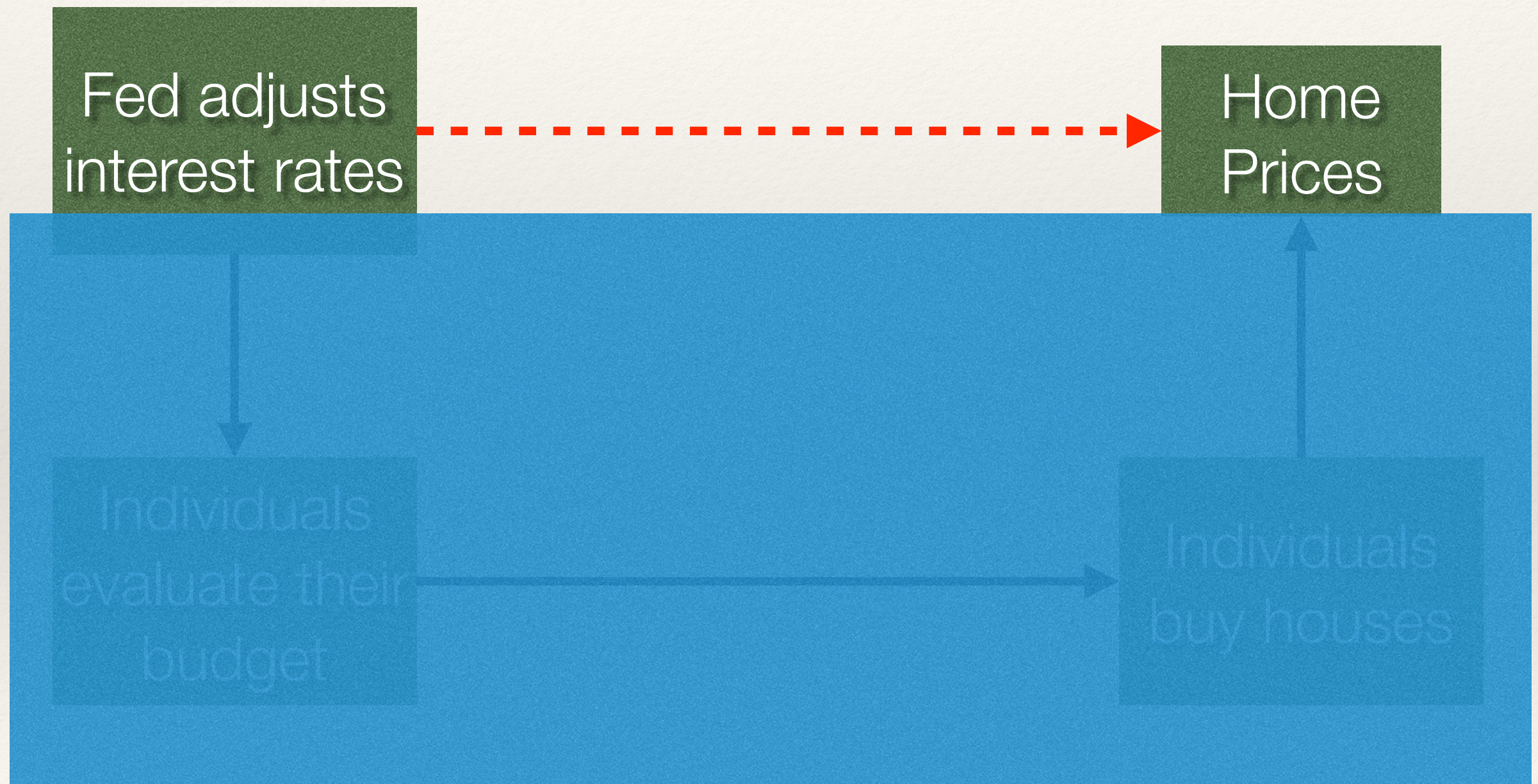
Micro-Macro models



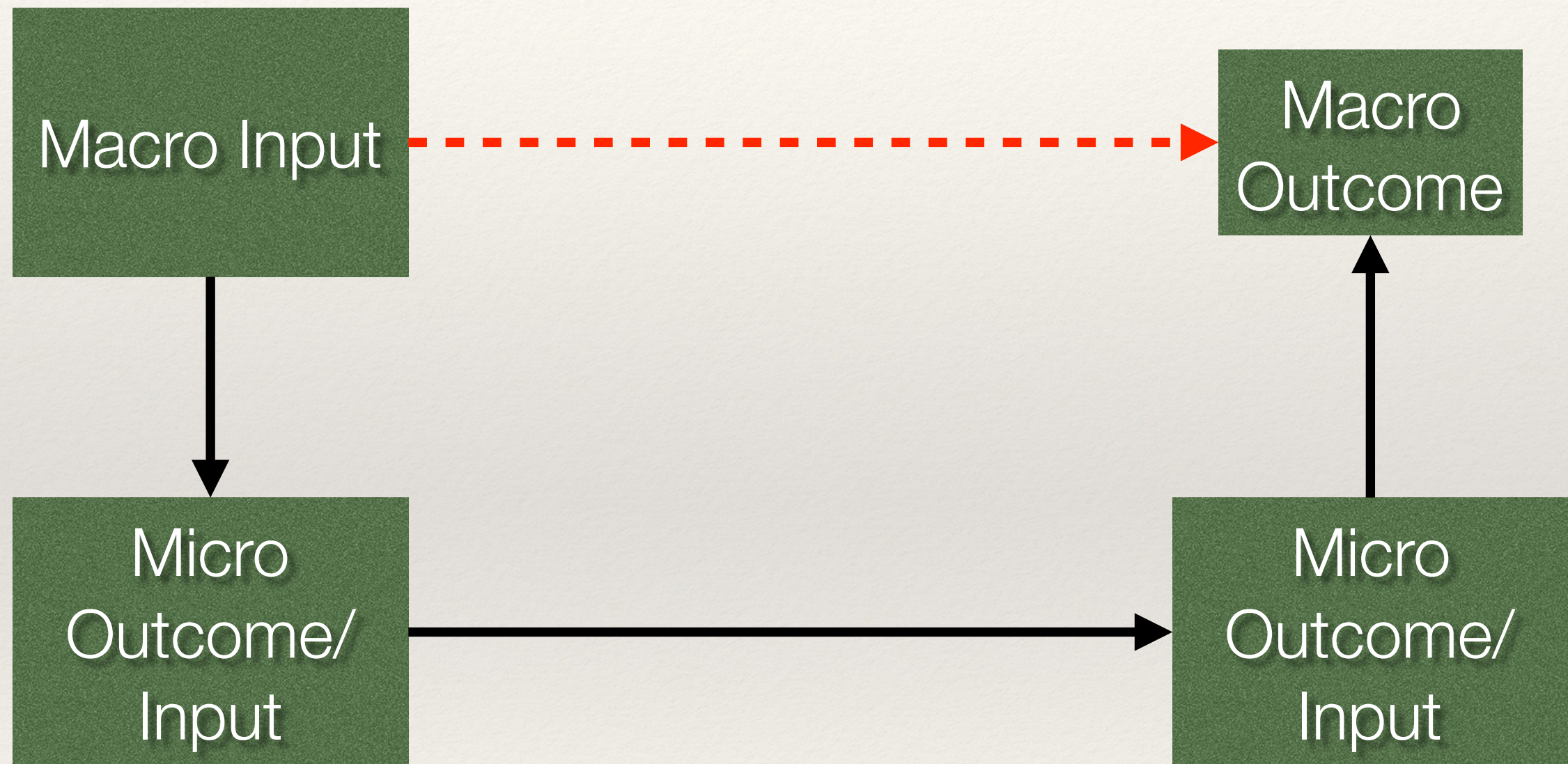
Micro-Macro models



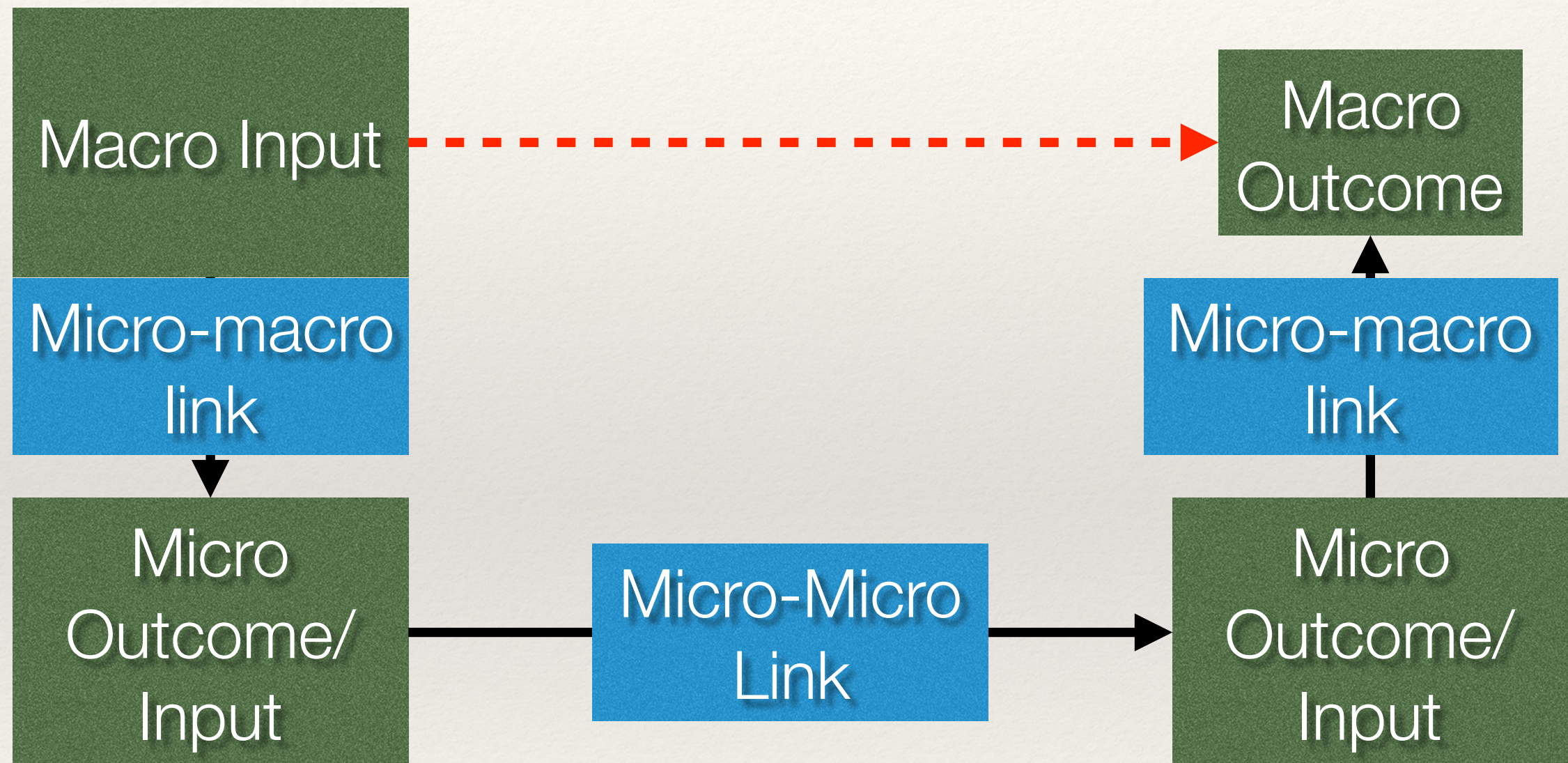
Micro-Macro models



Micro-Macro models



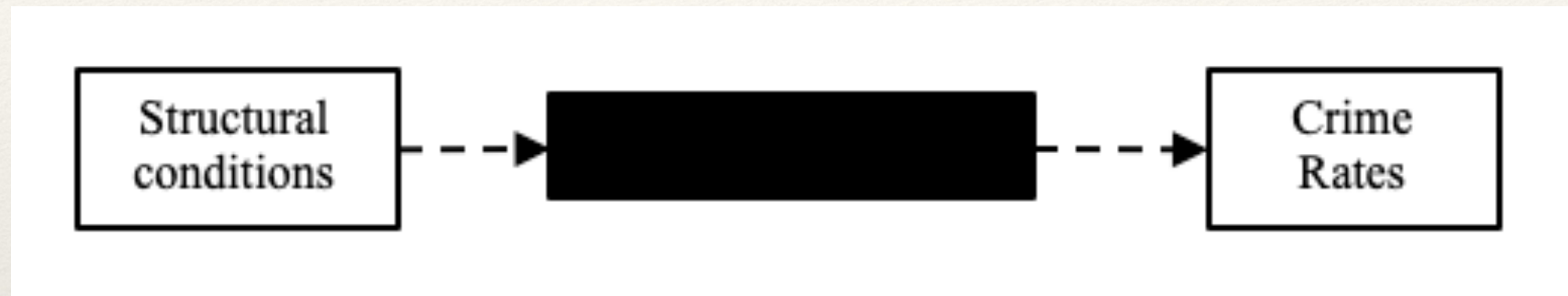
Micro-Macro models



Social Learning and Group Processes

- ❖ We discussed several causal models (w / mechanisms) that draw on the role of networks:
 - ❖ Differential Social Organization / Association Theory (Sutherland)
 - ❖ Social Learning Theory (Akers)
 - ❖ Group Process / “Peer Influence” (Warr)

Learning Theories



Why are these
things correlated?

Social Learning and Group Processes

- ❖ These models are focused on explaining *criminality*.
 - ❖ Variation *between* individuals.
 - ❖ This is different than a focus on *criminal events*.

Criminal Events

- ❖ Why is crime not randomly distributed across space and time?
- ❖ Why is crime concentrated in particular locations?
- ❖ Focus on *criminal events*.

Criminal Events



Approaches

- ❖ Chicago-School Sociology
- ❖ Environmental Criminology

Aesop's Fable "The Mice in Council"

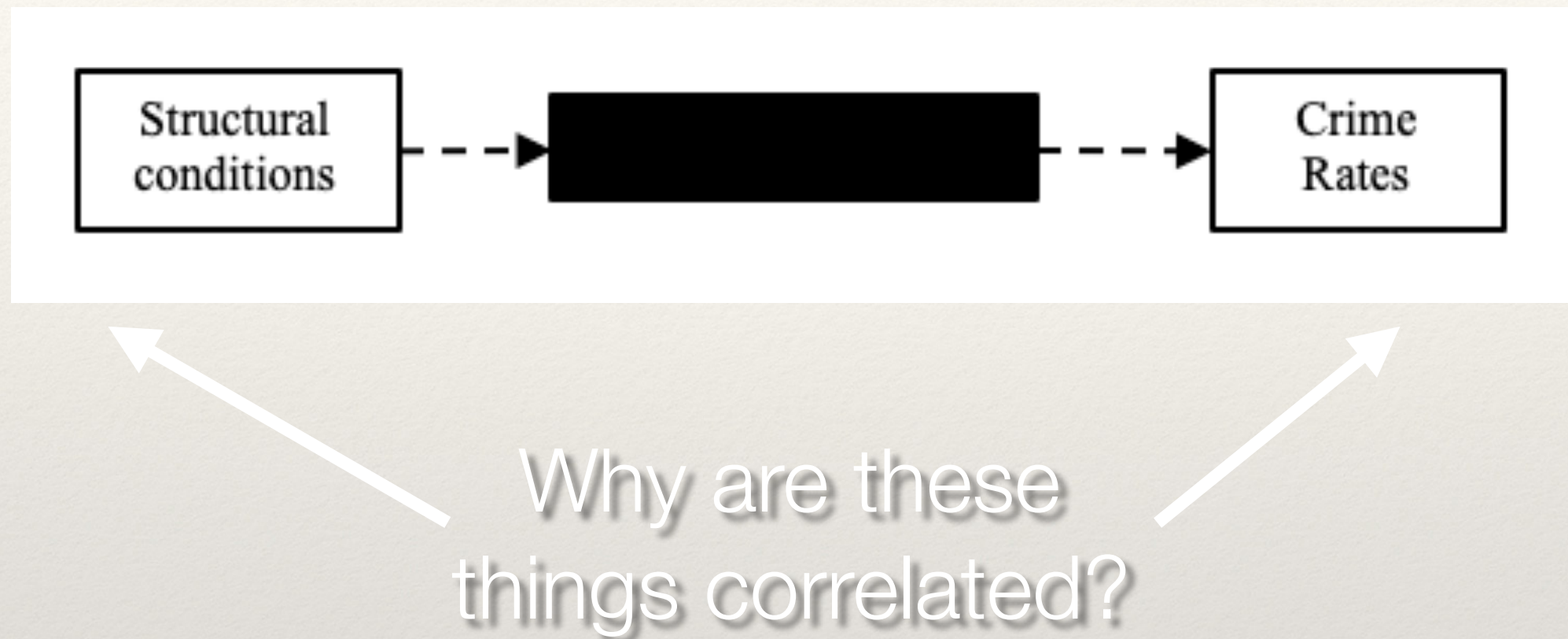
Long ago, the mice held a general council to consider what measures they could take to outwit their common enemy, the cat. Some said this, and some said that; but at last a young mouse got up and said he had a proposal to make, which he thought would meet the case. "You will all agree," said he, "that our chief danger consists in the sly and treacherous manner in which the enemy approaches us. Now, if we could receive some signal of her approach, we could easily escape from her. I venture, therefore, to propose that a small bell be procured, and attached by a ribbon round the neck of the cat. By this means we should always know when she was about, and could easily retire while she was in the neighborhood." This proposal met with general applause, until an old mouse got up and said, "That is all very well, but who is to bell the cat?" The mice looked at one another and nobody spoke.

❖ What is the problem?

Chicago-School Tradition

- ❖ Free-rider problem
- ❖ Social Disorganization
 - ❖ Structural Model
 - ❖ Cultural Model
- ❖ Systemic Model
- ❖ Collective Efficacy

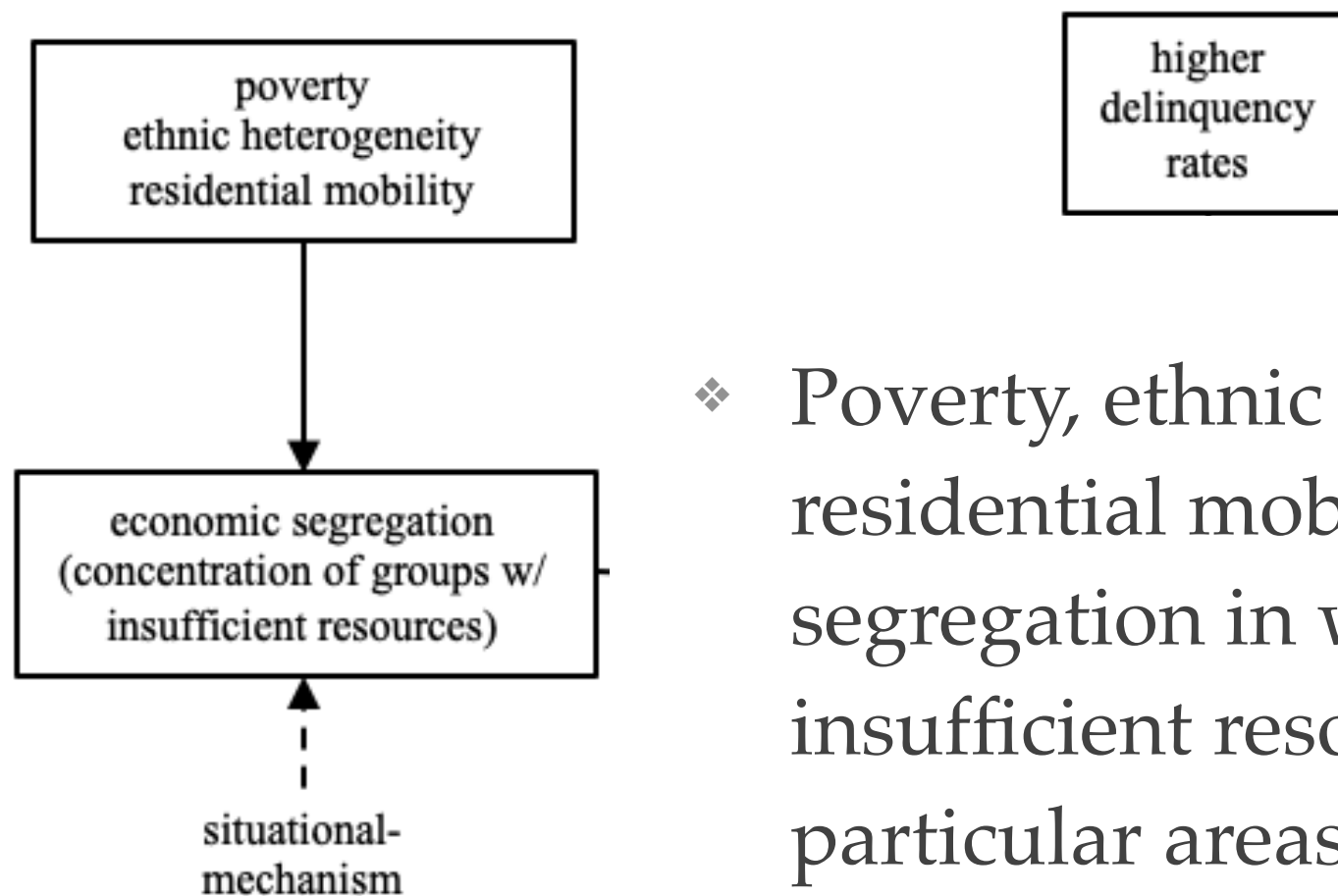
Social Disorganization Theory



- ❖ Structural conditions produce social disorganization:
 - ❖ The inability to realized shared values and to enforce rules of appropriate conduct.
 - ❖ “The lack of organized community effort to deal with these conditions”
 - ❖ **Focus:** organization and coordinated activity (not *criminality*).

Social Disorganization

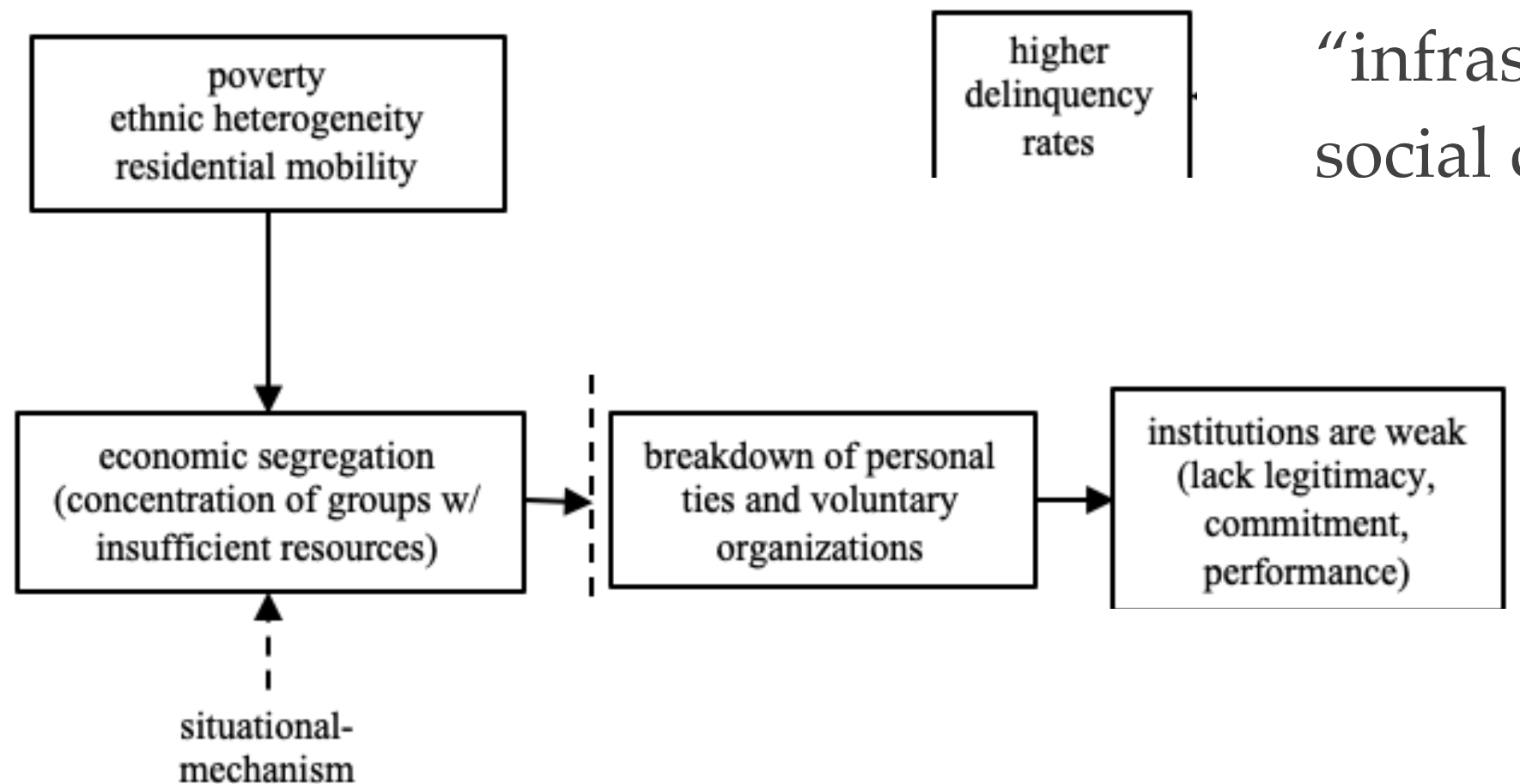
Social Disorganization's Structural Model



- ❖ Poverty, ethnic heterogeneity, and residential mobility produce economic segregation in which individuals with insufficient resources are concentrated in particular areas.

Social Disorganization

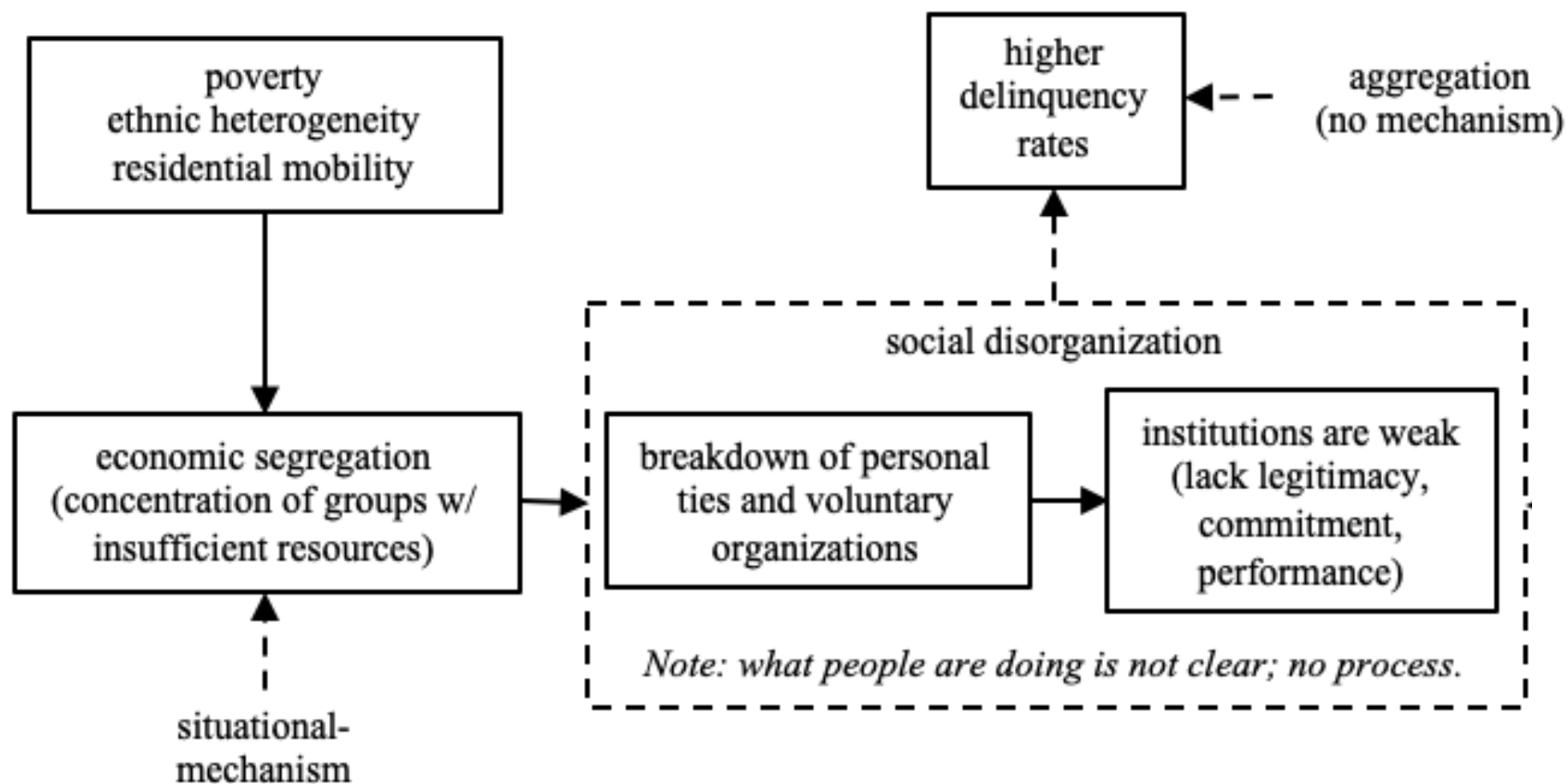
Social Disorganization's Structural Model



- ❖ Undermines the “infrastructure for social control”

Social Disorganization

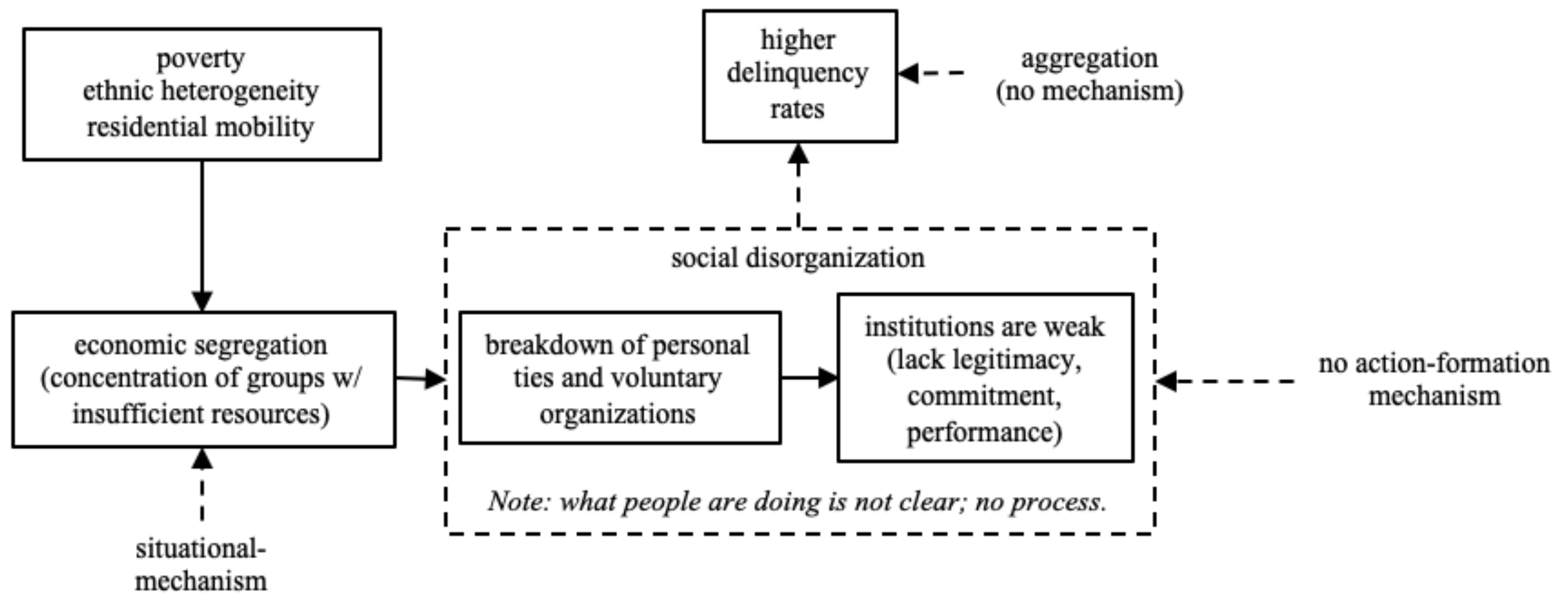
Social Disorganization's Structural Model



- ❖ Shaw and McKay:
“under what conditions is the conventional community capable of maintaining its integrity and exercising such control over the lives of its members?”

Social Disorganization

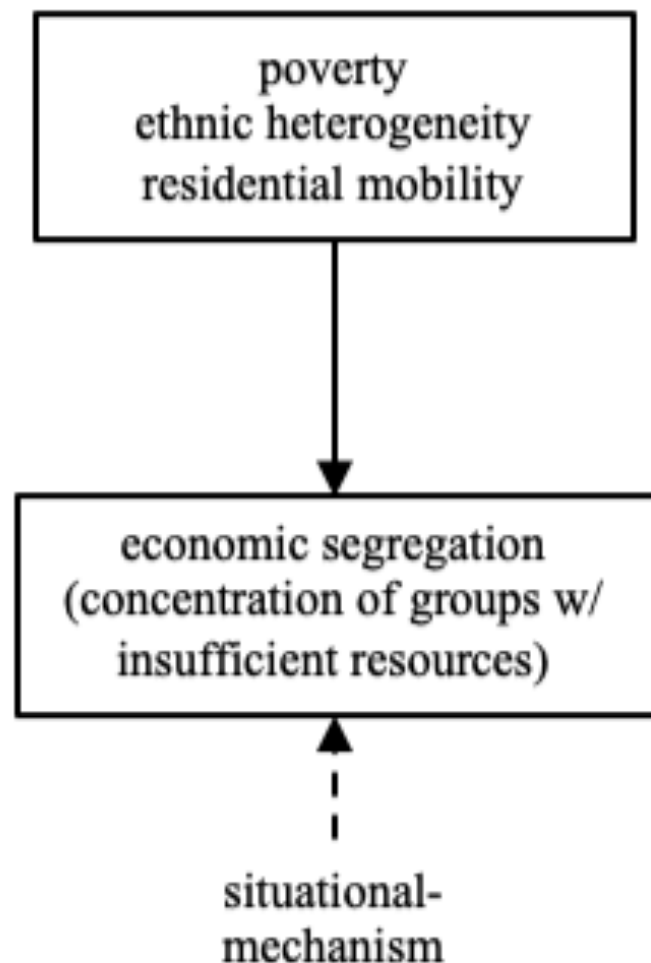
Social Disorganization's Structural Model



- ❖ Weaknesses: What are people doing? Measurement of “disorg”

Social Disorganization

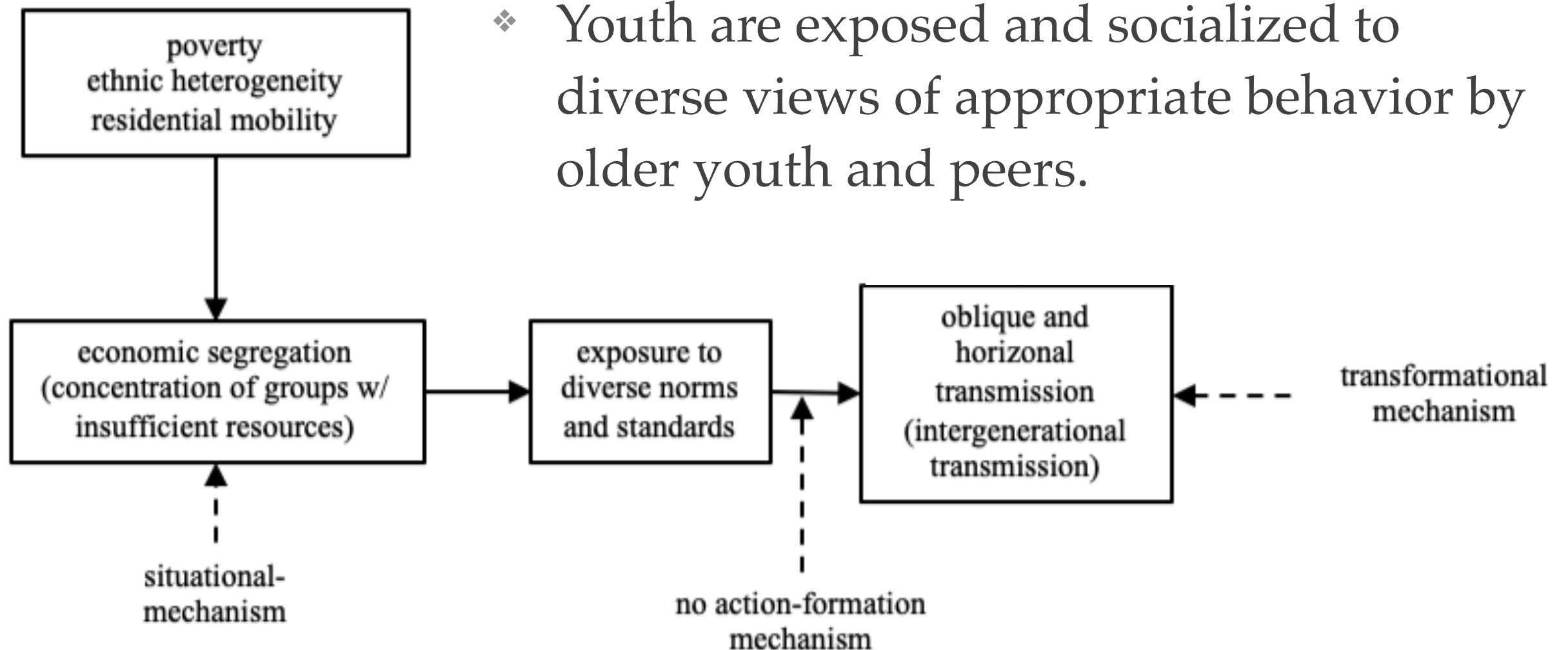
Social Disorganization's *Cultural* Model



- ❖ After some critique, they proposed a “cultural” component to the model.

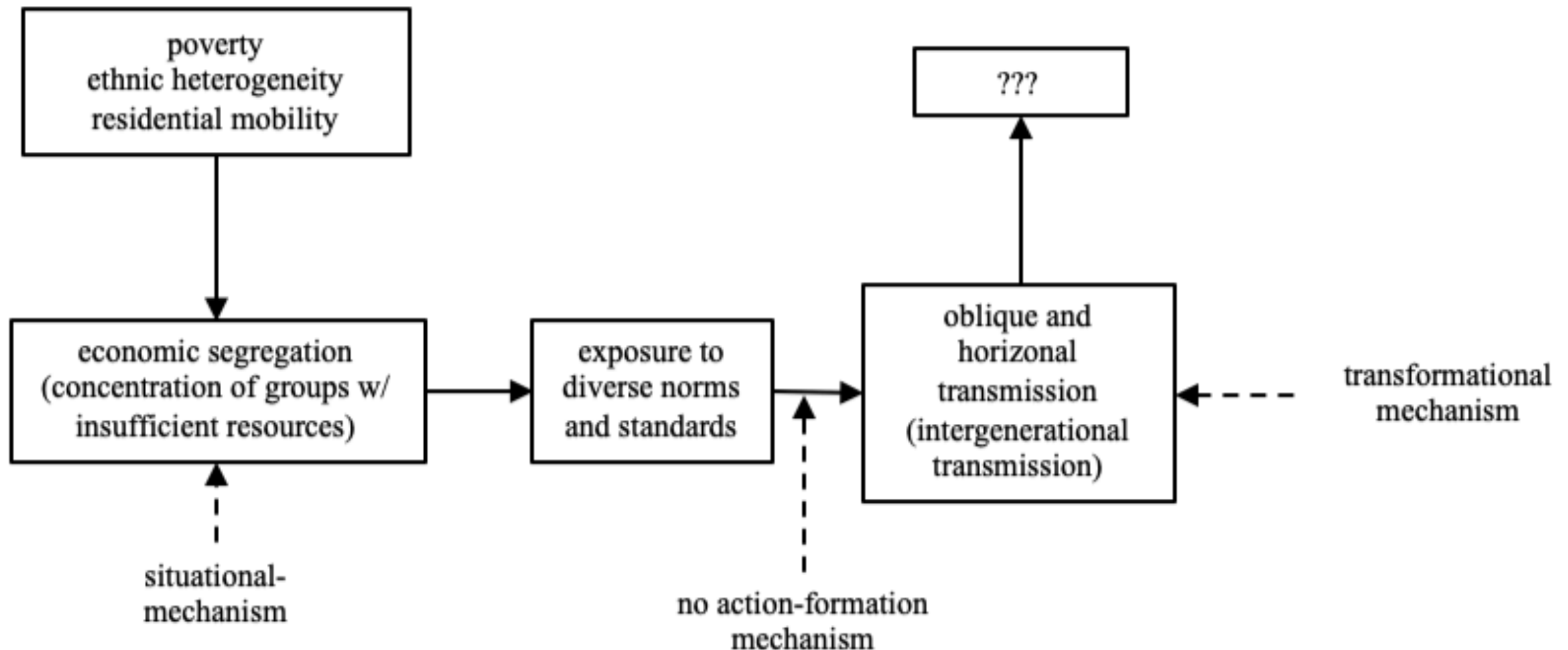
Social Disorganization

Social Disorganization's *Cultural Model*



Social Disorganization

Social Disorganization's *Cultural Model*



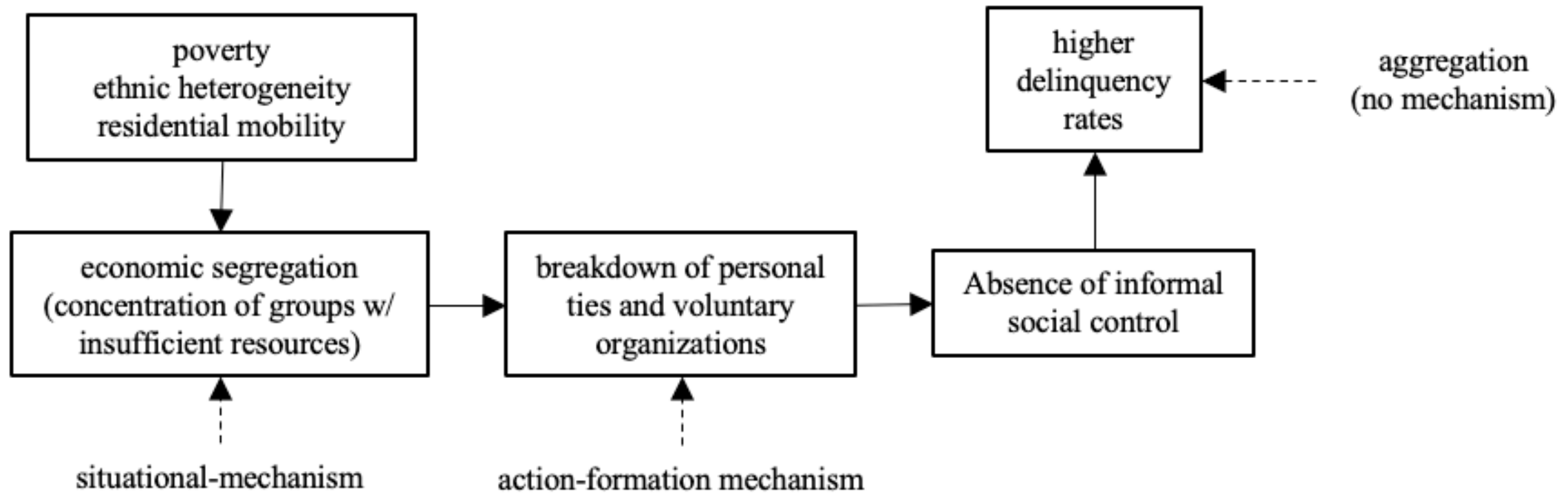
- ❖ Shaw and McKay: “under what conditions do the conventional forces in the community become so weakened as to tolerate the development of a conflicting system of criminal values?”

Systemic Model

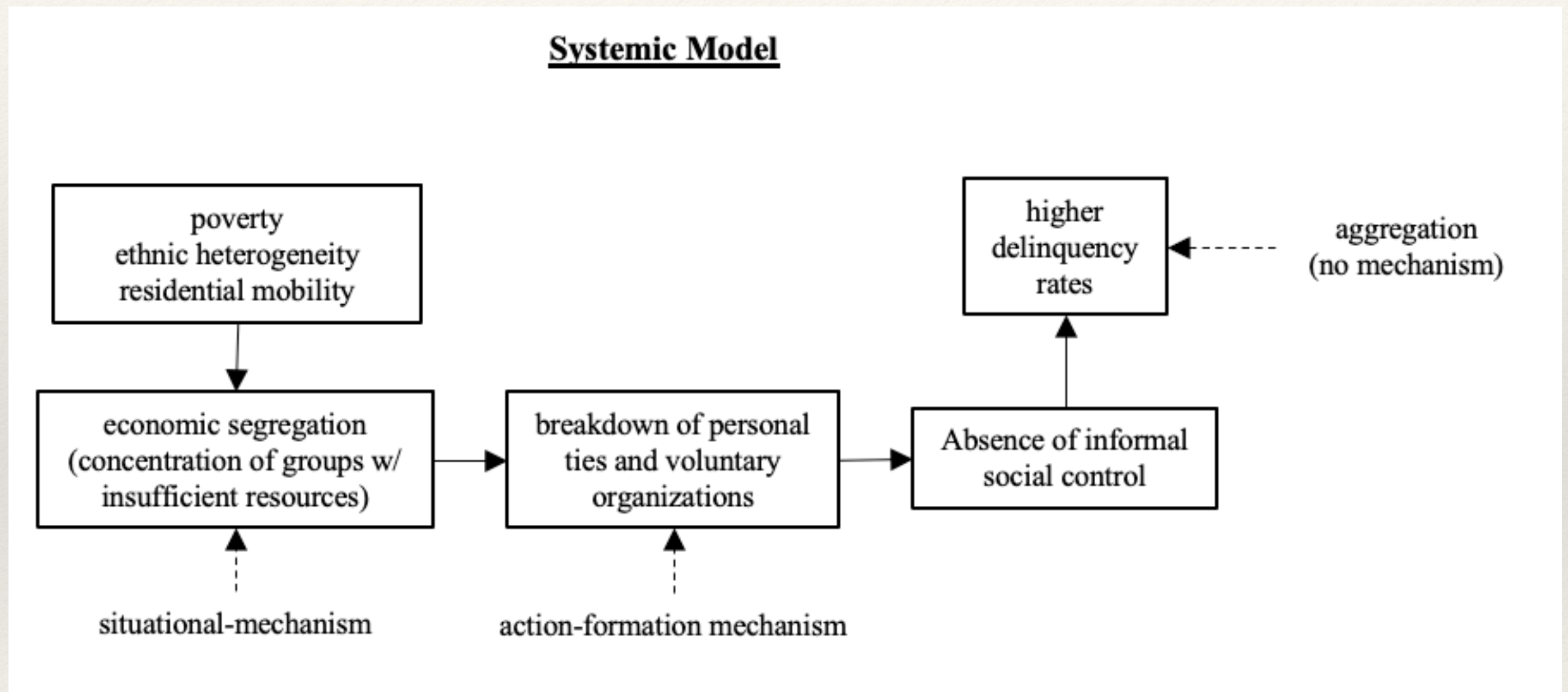
- ❖ Neighborhoods are: Complex system of friendship and kinship networks
- ❖ Capacity to provide informal social control is dependent upon the **friendship** networks and **associational** ties of residents.
 - ❖ Creates a “shared understanding” of appropriate conduct, so people will intervene.
- ❖ Structural factors influence the ability to have strong, long-lasting relationships as well as participate in local associations (churches, volunteer groups, etc.)

Systemic Model

Systemic Model

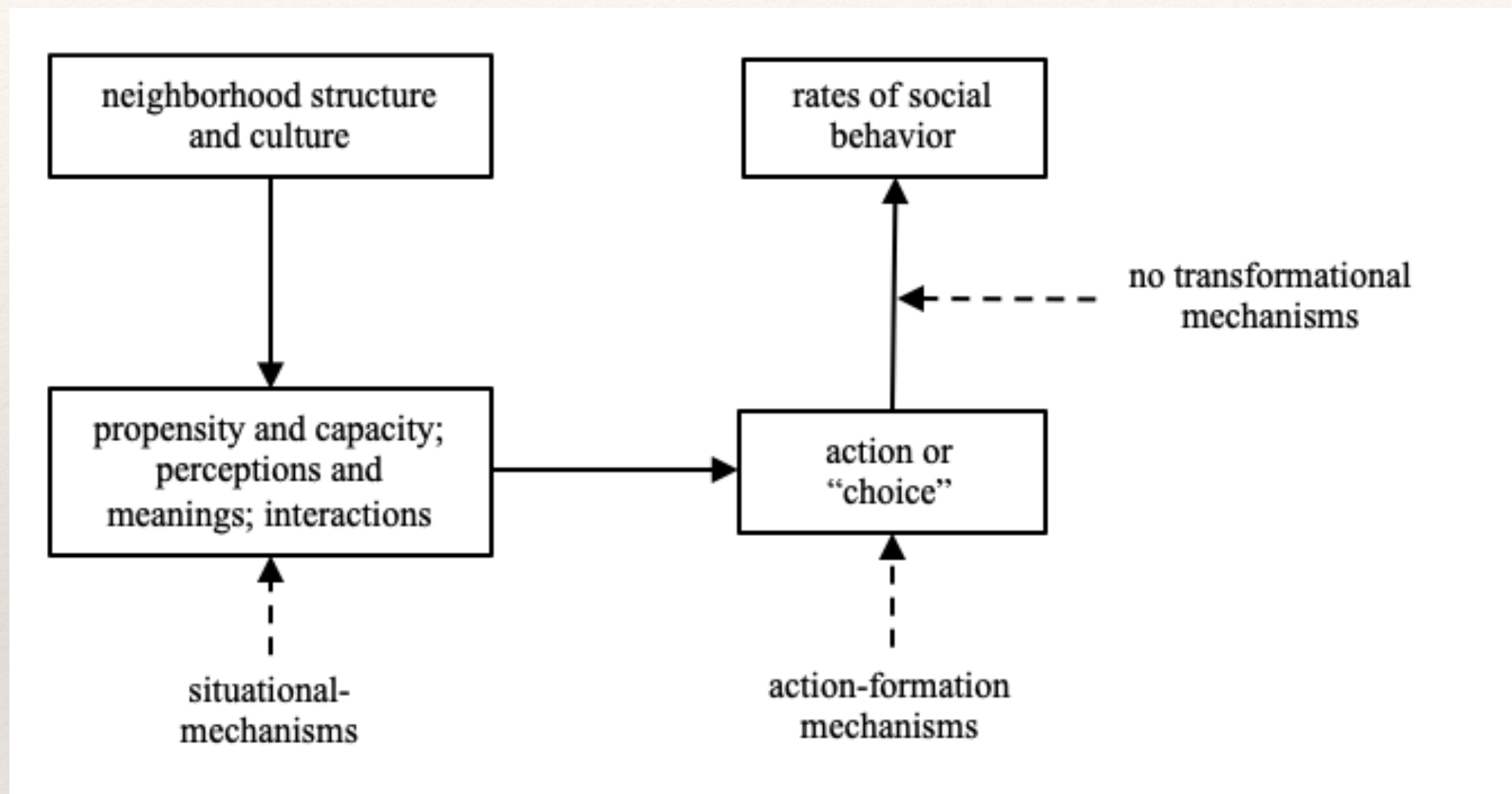


Systemic Model



- ❖ What *metaphor* is being used to think about networks here?

Collective Efficacy

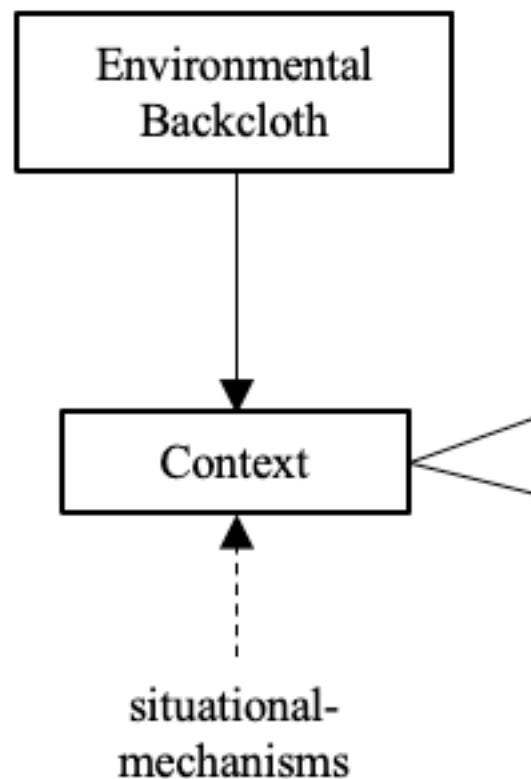


- ❖ Collective efficacy: social cohesion (trust; mutual support) and shared expectations of social control.

Environmental Criminology

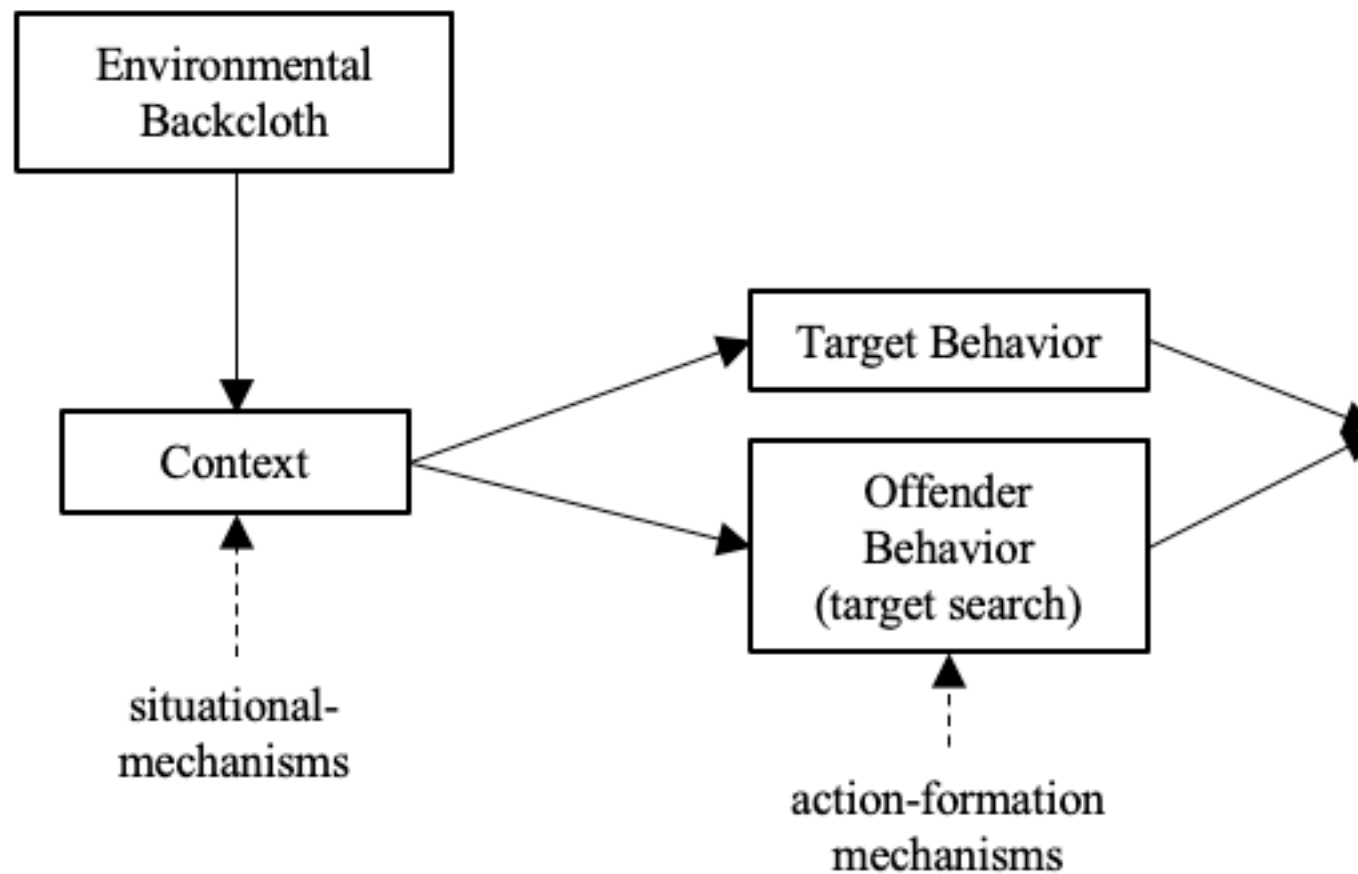
- ❖ Focus is *not* the “free-rider” problem.
- ❖ Rather, have properties of events converge:
 - ❖ Criminal events can only occur when a potential offender encounters a criminal opportunity in time and space.
 - ❖ *Why do robbers rob banks?*

Environmental Criminology

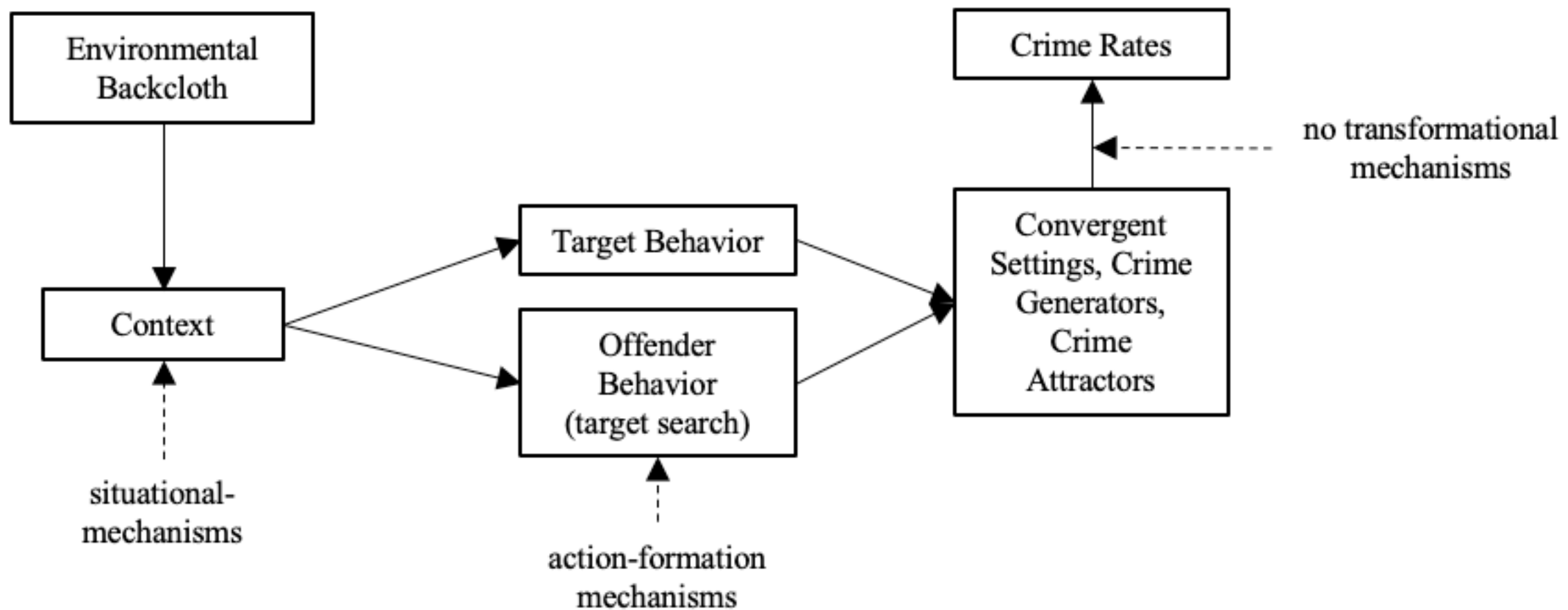


- ❖ Social, cultural, economic, legal, structural, and physical surroundings produce contexts in which criminal opportunities form and make crime possible.

Environmental Criminology



Environmental Criminology



Questions?

Break

Discussion

Discussion Questions for Neighborhood Ecology and Criminal Opportunity

Questions:

1. What is the problem the authors are trying to solve? What are they trying to understand about neighborhood ecology, crime, and criminal opportunity? What are the empirical facts they are seeking to understand?
2. How does the network matter? How are they using network ideas or methods to try and address their problem?
3. Is there a causal model? If so, what is it? If not, is the study primarily focused on a single variable?
4. Would the article be described as “network theory” or a “theory of networks” approach? If “network theory,” what is the mechanism (i.e. contagion, convergence, capitalization, or cooperation)?
5. What are the dependent and independent variables and how are they operationalized? And/or, what are the data?
6. How do the articles rethink the role of “space”?

Network Theories and Theories of Networks*

NETWORK THEORIES ("networks as <i>cause</i> ")			THEORIES OF NETWORKS ("networks as <i>effects</i> ")
<i>Explanatory Goal</i>			<i>Explanatory Goal</i>
<i>Explanatory Model</i>	Social Capital/ Performance ("why are the benefits?")	Homogeneity ("why are nodes similar?")	Network Structure ("why is the network this way?")
Network Flow (ties as pipes)	<u>Capitalization</u> Definition: Acquisition to resources through ties and this influences human capital which contributes to performance. Examples: Access to unique information via bridging ties. Information control benefits of structural holes. Solving problems through access to diverse knowledge.	<u>Contagion</u> Definition: Nodes become similar through a process of "infection" where various "bits" are passed from one node to the other. Examples: Diffusion of innovations. Peer influence. Disease transmission.	Examples: Homophilous Selection ("why do people with the same attitudes cluster together? They sort into these groups")
	<u>Cooperation</u> Definition: Networks provide benefits that can coordinate multiple nodes in order to bring all their resources to bear on a problem. Examples: Unionization. Collective efficacy in neighborhoods.	<u>Convergence</u> Definition: Nodes adapt to their environments, and as a result nodes with similar structural environments will demonstrate similarities. Examples: Administrative assistants have higher levels of communication in organizations.	

*Adapted From Borgatti and Halgin (2011) and adams (2020).