

Guns as a Coping Mechanism

Nick Buttrick

University of Virginia



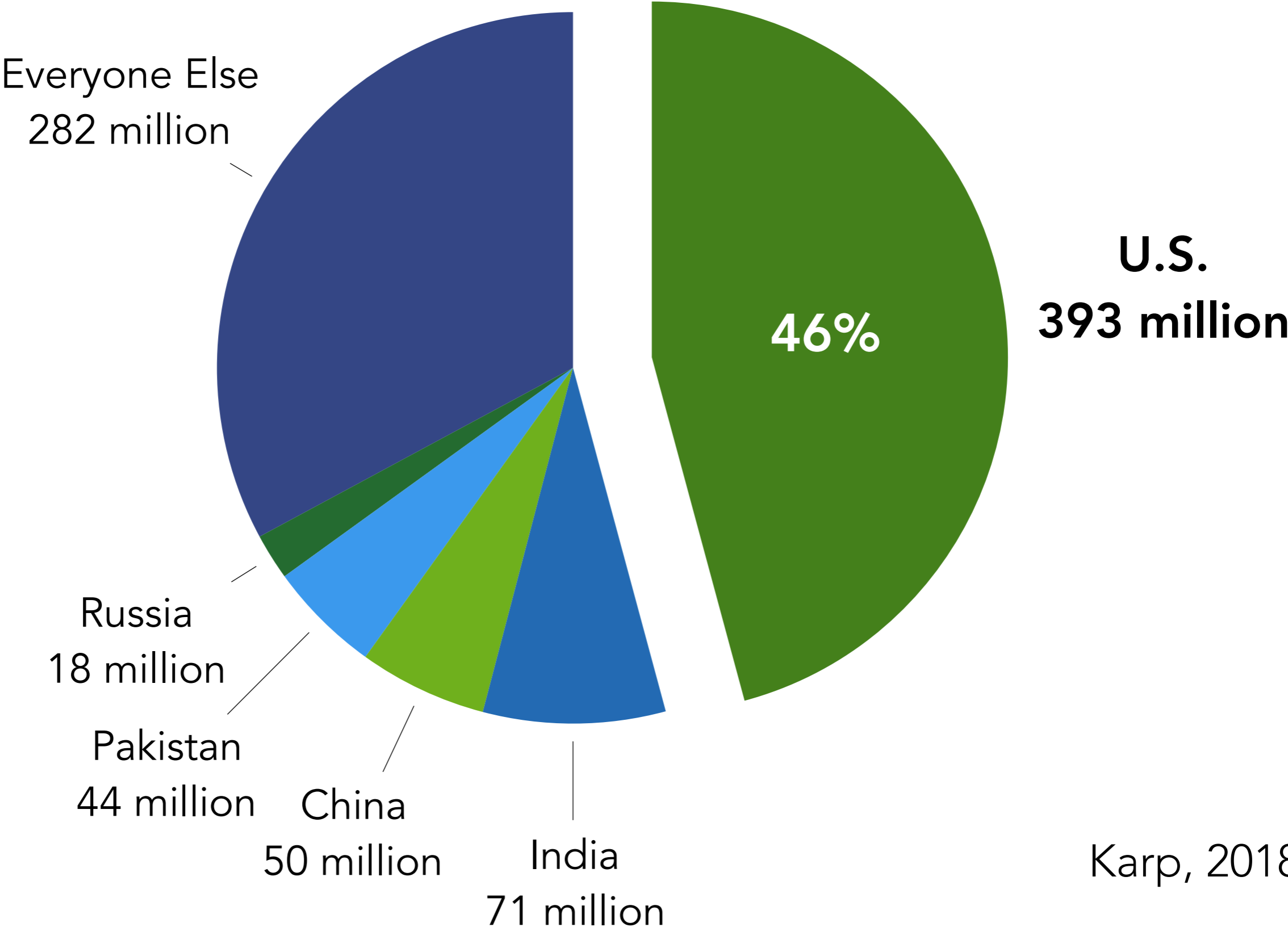
*The Social
Psychology of
Firearms &
Firearm
Ownership*





Ana Rabogliatti
Brian Henriquez
Kincaid Youman
Campbell Edwards
Sam Lesemann
Alex Hendel
Ruth Checknoff
Jun Seok Bae
Mathieu Fondin
Wendy Wang
Caiwei Zhu
Sveta Kamarova

Civilian-Owned Guns, Worldwide



Karp, 2018

Trends in Gun Ownership

	1978	2017
Household Owners	45%	43%
Self-Defense	20%	67%
Hunting	54%	38%
Target Shooting	10%	30%
Collection	7%	13%
Job	3%	8%

Gallup, 2018; Parker et al., 2017; Wright, Rossi, & Daley 1983

Guns are Dangerous

Guns are Dangerous

- A gun in the house doubles the likelihood that a household member will be murdered violently, and triples the likelihood of death by suicide. Anglemeyer et al., 2014

Guns are Dangerous

- A gun in the house doubles the likelihood that a household member will be murdered violently, and triples the likelihood of death by suicide. Anglemeyer et al., 2014
- Increase in guns, increase in gun-related casualties; decrease in guns, decrease in gun-related casualties
Jena & Olenksi, 2018; Levine & McKnight, 2017

Are Guns Protective?

Are Guns Protective?

- Guns are used in self-defense in fewer than 1% of reported crimes Hemenway & Solnick, 2015; Planty & Truman, 2013

Are Guns Protective?

- Guns are used in self-defense in fewer than 1% of reported crimes Hemenway & Solnick, 2015; Planty & Truman, 2013
- In 'active shooter' situations, police recommend that people carrying firearms stay holstered Blair, Nichols, Burns, & Curnutt, 2013

“Since a ‘sense of security’ is inherently a psychological trait, it does no good to argue that the sense of security afforded by owning a gun is ‘just an illusion.’” Wright, 1995, p. 65

A Coping Model of Protective Gun Ownership

A Coping Model of Protective Gun Ownership

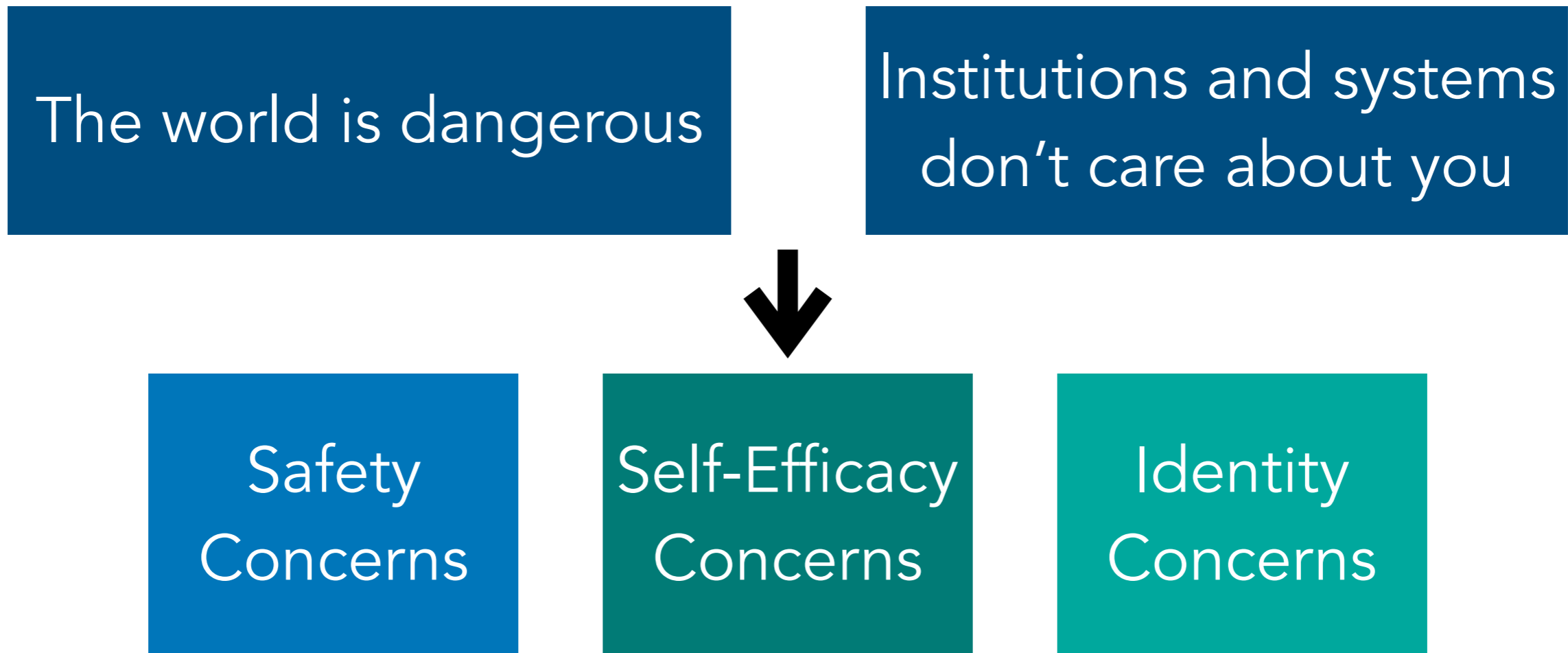
The world is dangerous

Institutions and systems
don't care about you

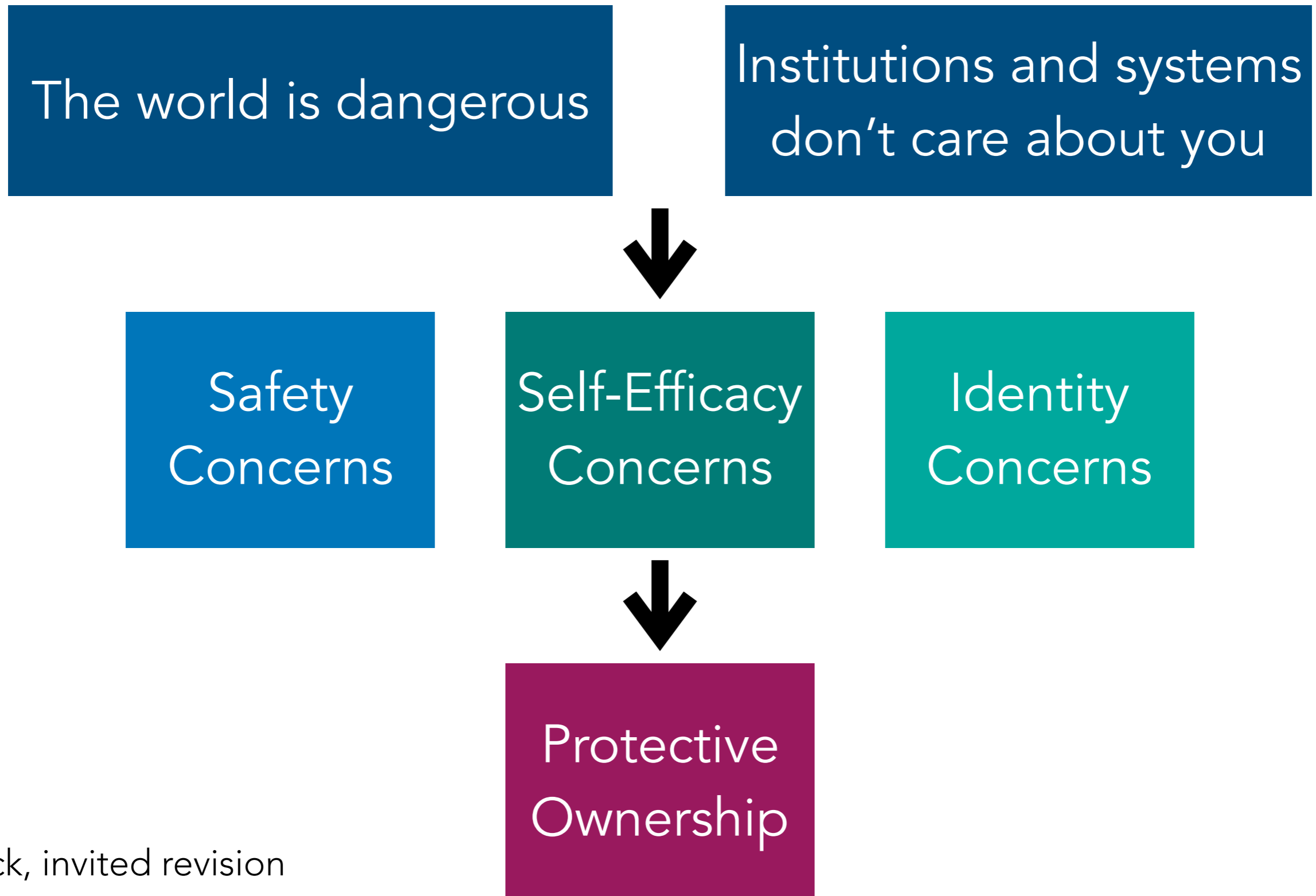
Stroebe, Leander, & Kruglanski, 2017
Wright & Rossi, 1986

Cao et al., 1997; Celinska, 2007;
Glaeser & Glendon, 1998; Jiobu &
Curry, 2001; Lizotte et al., 1981

A Coping Model of Protective Gun Ownership



A Coping Model of Protective Gun Ownership



The world is dangerous

Institutions and systems don't care about you

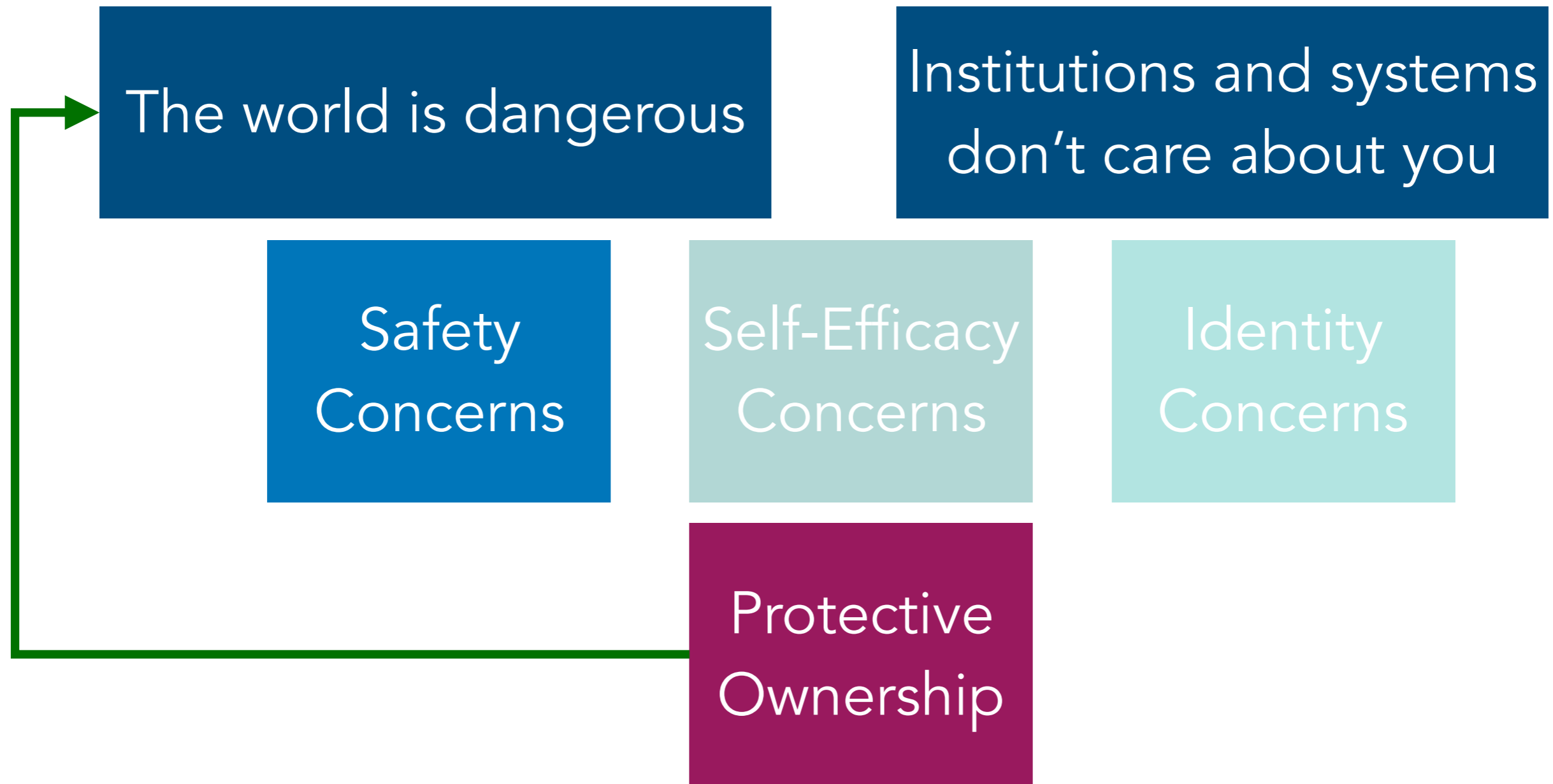
Safety Concerns

Self-Efficacy Concerns

Identity Concerns

Protective Ownership





- Owners believe that guns make them and their homes safer e.g. Harcourt, 2006; Parker et al., 2017; Strobe et al., 2017



- Owners believe that guns make them and their homes safer e.g. Harcourt, 2006; Parker et al., 2017; Strobe et al., 2017
- Protective owners are more likely to feel safer when they think other members of their community are carrying Shepperd et al., 2018

The world is dangerous

Institutions and systems don't care about you

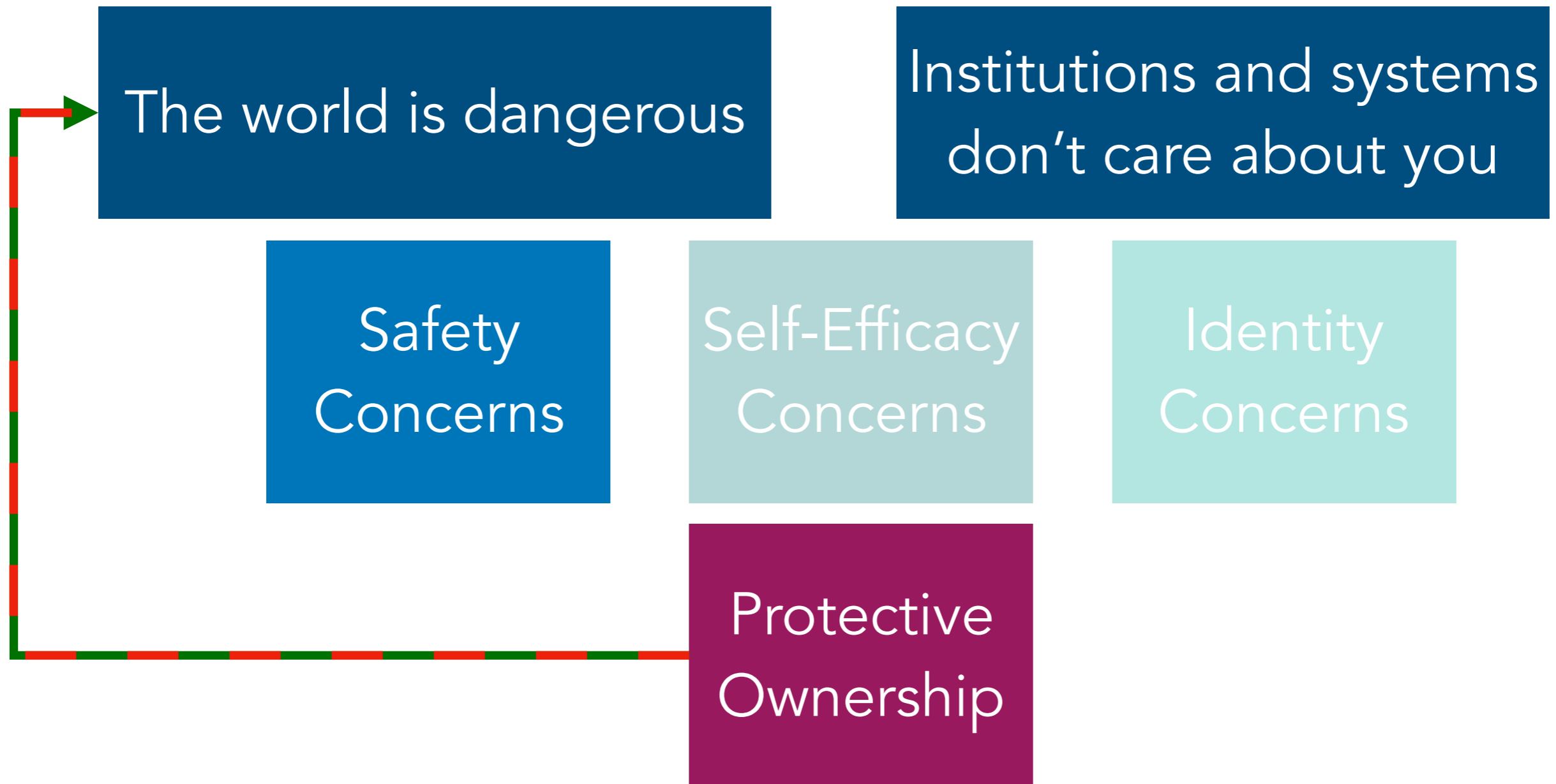
Safety Concerns

Self-Efficacy Concerns

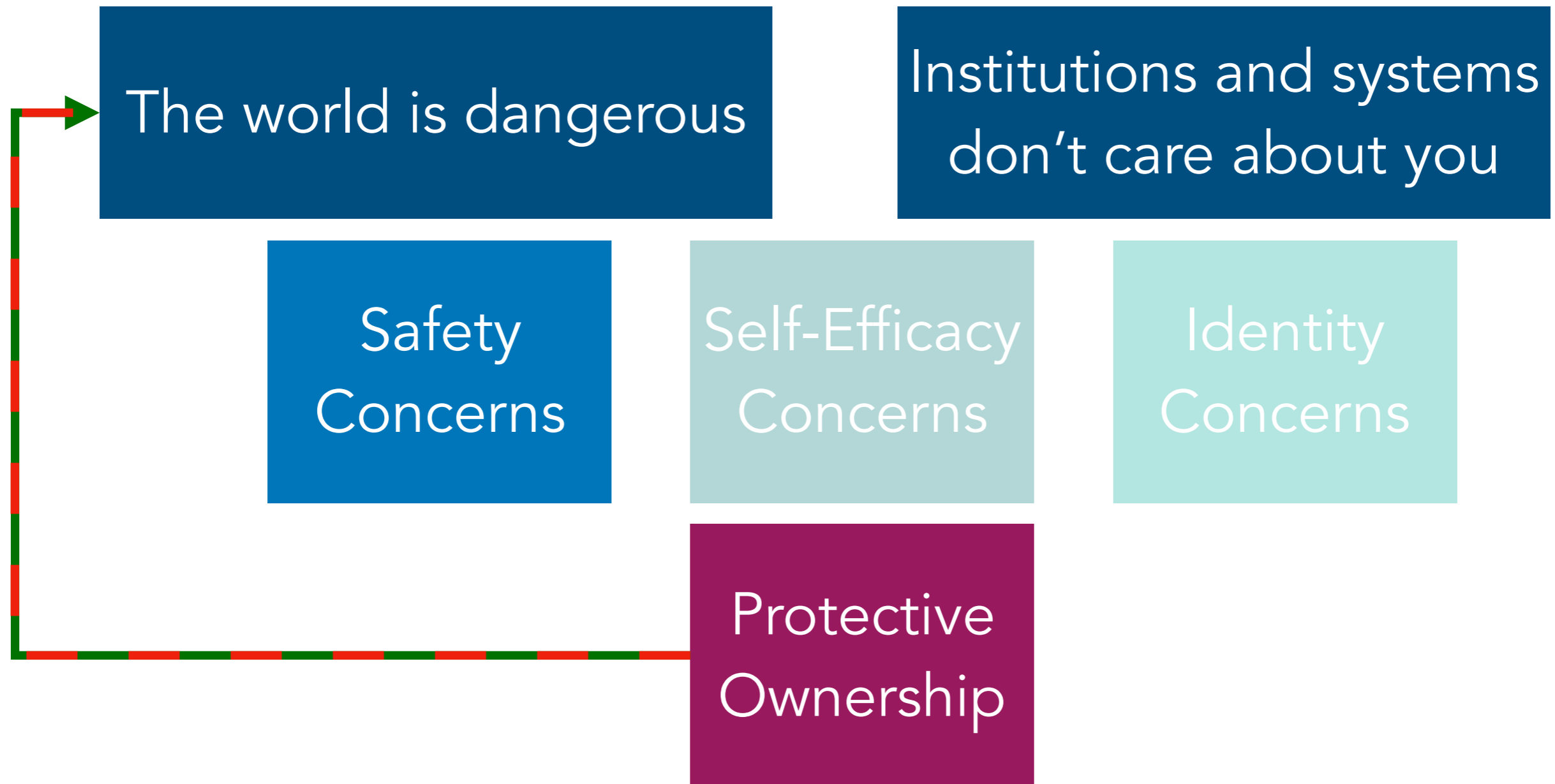
Identity Concerns

Protective Ownership

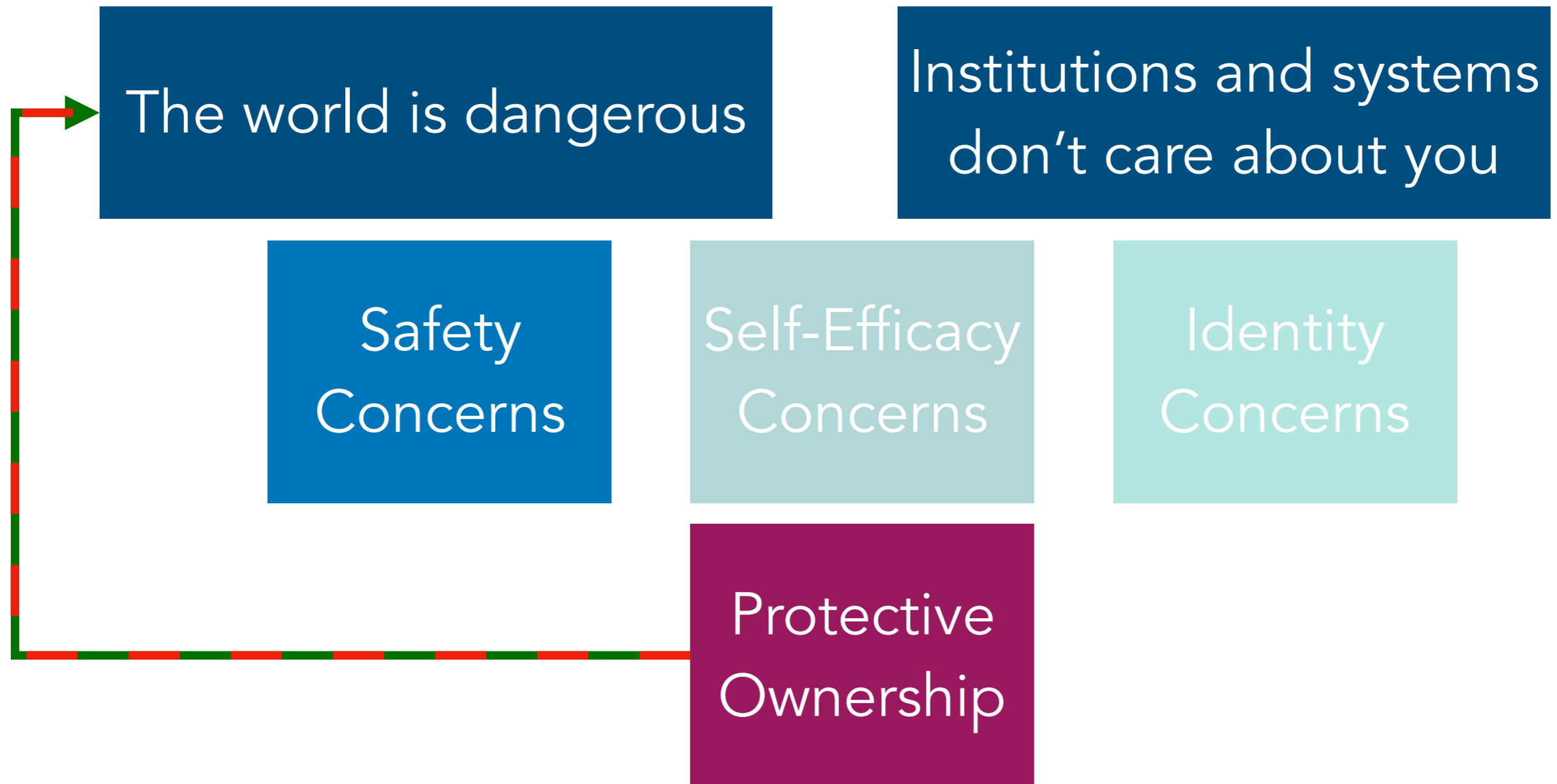




- Guns are associated with increased vigilance and a focus on threat-prevention Conley & Higgins, 2018; Stroud, 2012



- Guns are associated with increased vigilance and a focus on threat-prevention Conley & Higgins, 2018; Stroud, 2012
- Holding a gun may increase attention to threatening stimuli Biggs et al., 2013; Taylor et al., 2017; Witt & Brockmole, 2012



- Guns are associated with increased vigilance and a focus on threat-prevention Conley & Higgins, 2018; Stroud, 2012
- Holding a gun may increase attention to threatening stimuli Biggs et al., 2013; Taylor et al., 2017; Witt & Brockmole, 2012
- Losing a gun increases fear of victimization Hauser & Kleck, 2013

The world is dangerous

Institutions and systems don't care about you

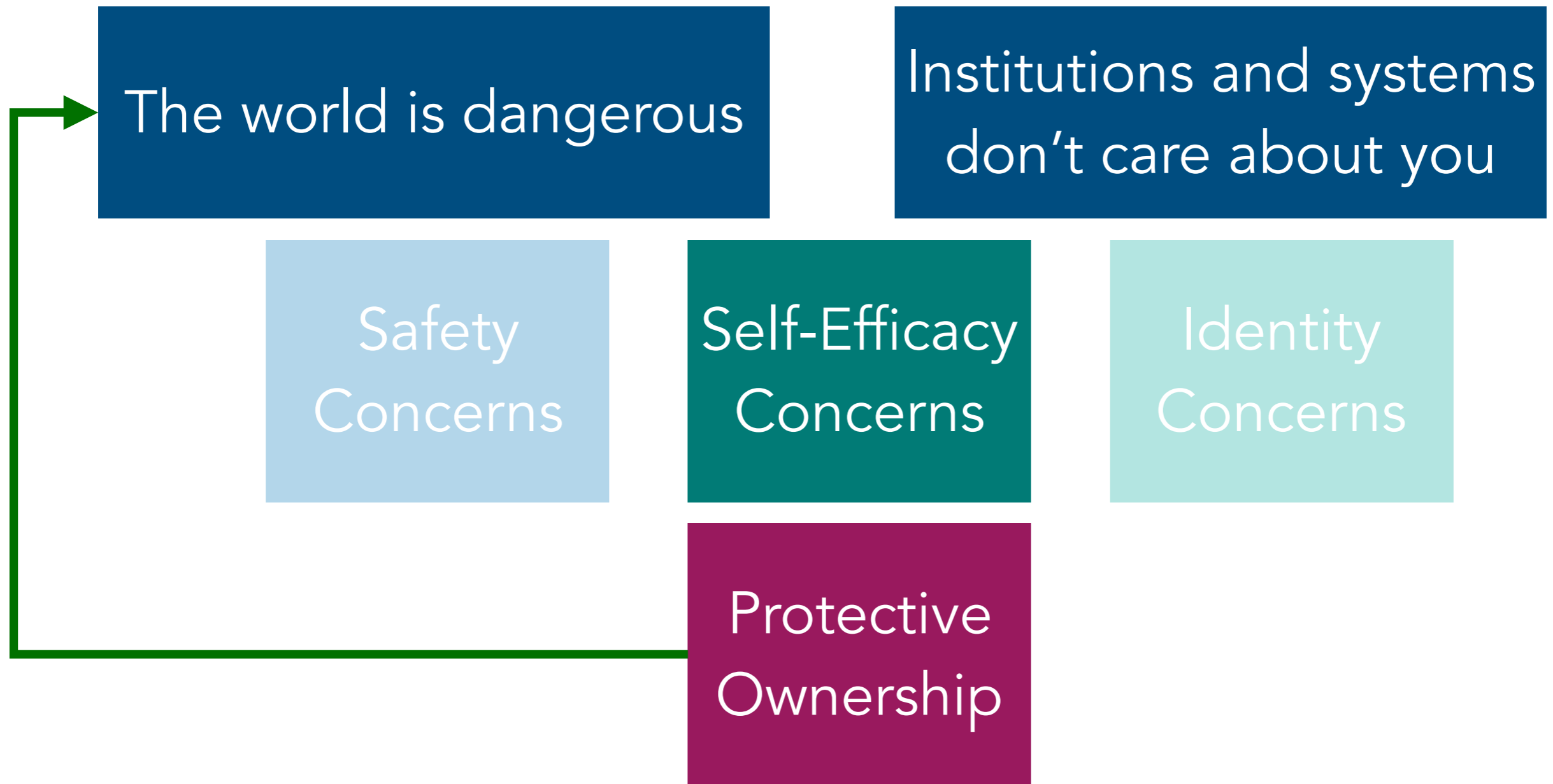
Safety Concerns

Self-Efficacy Concerns

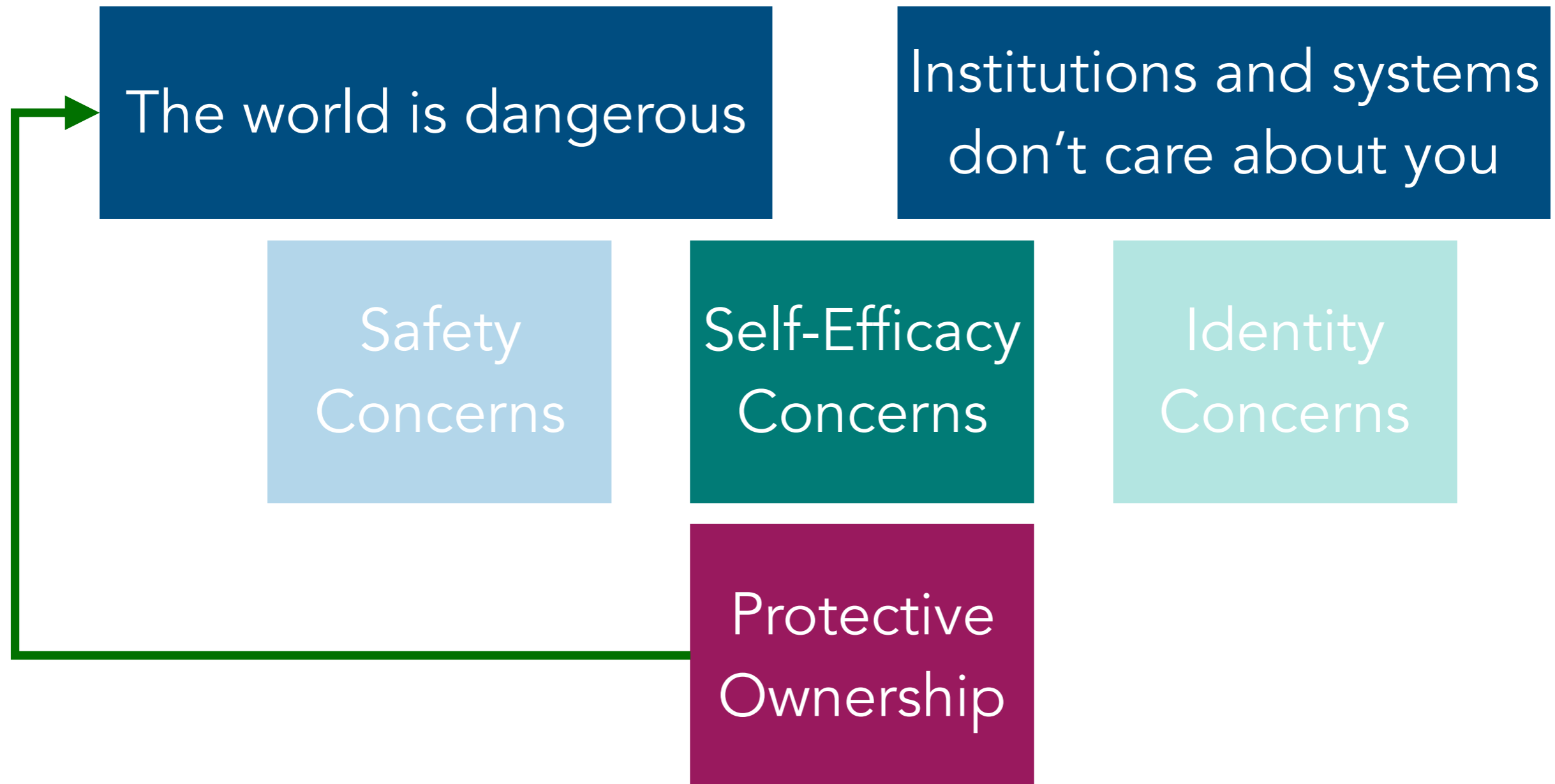
Identity Concerns

Protective Ownership





- Guns as “equalizers” e.g. Carlson, 2016; Harcourt, 2006; Homsher, 2001; Kohn, 2004



- Guns as “equalizers” e.g. Carlson, 2016; Harcourt, 2006; Homsher, 2001; Kohn, 2004
- Conservatives believe that guns give them more control over situations and add order to disorderly situations Shepard & Kay, 2018; see also Kay et al., 2009

The world is dangerous

Institutions and systems don't care about you

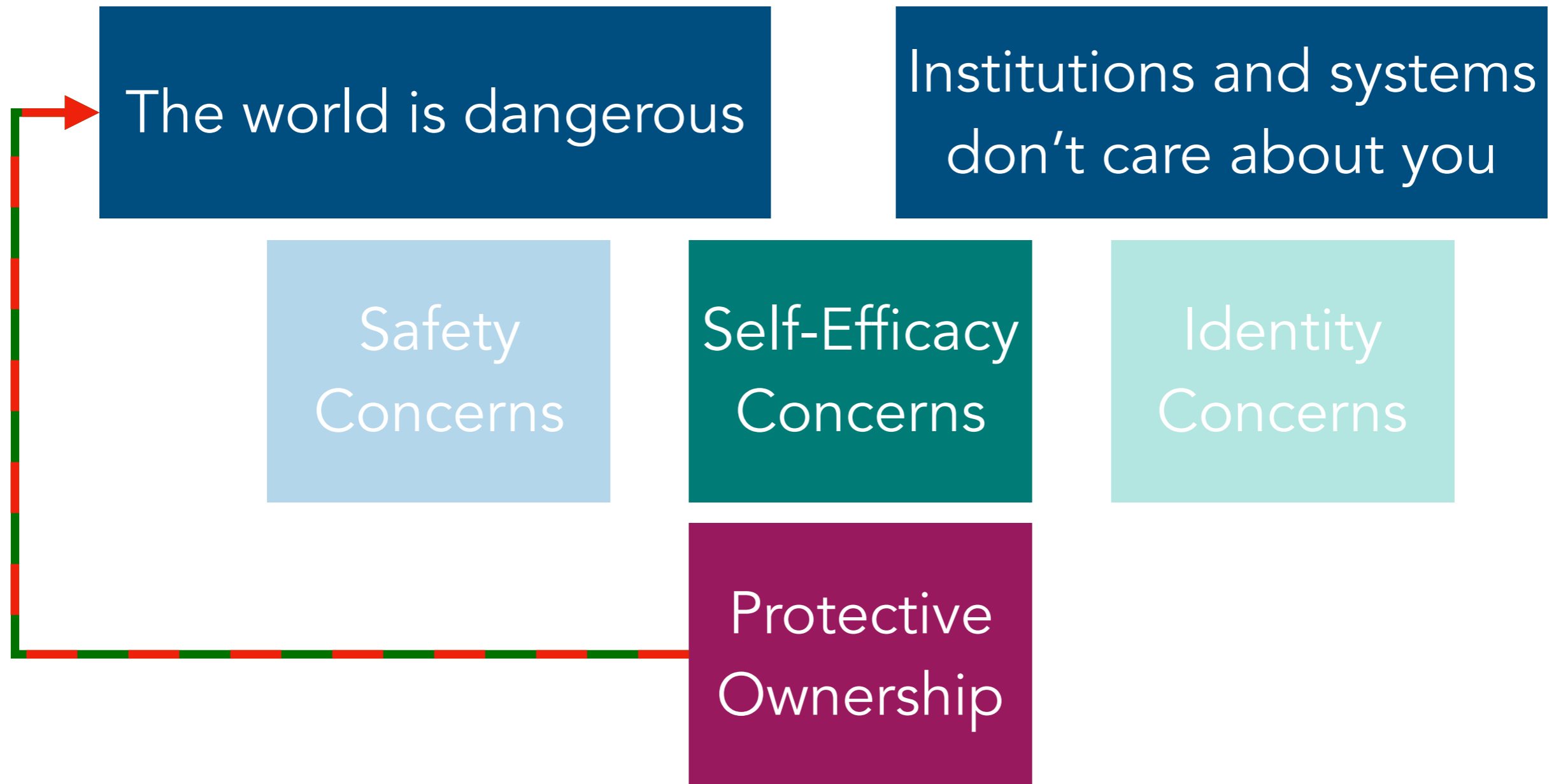
Safety Concerns

Self-Efficacy Concerns

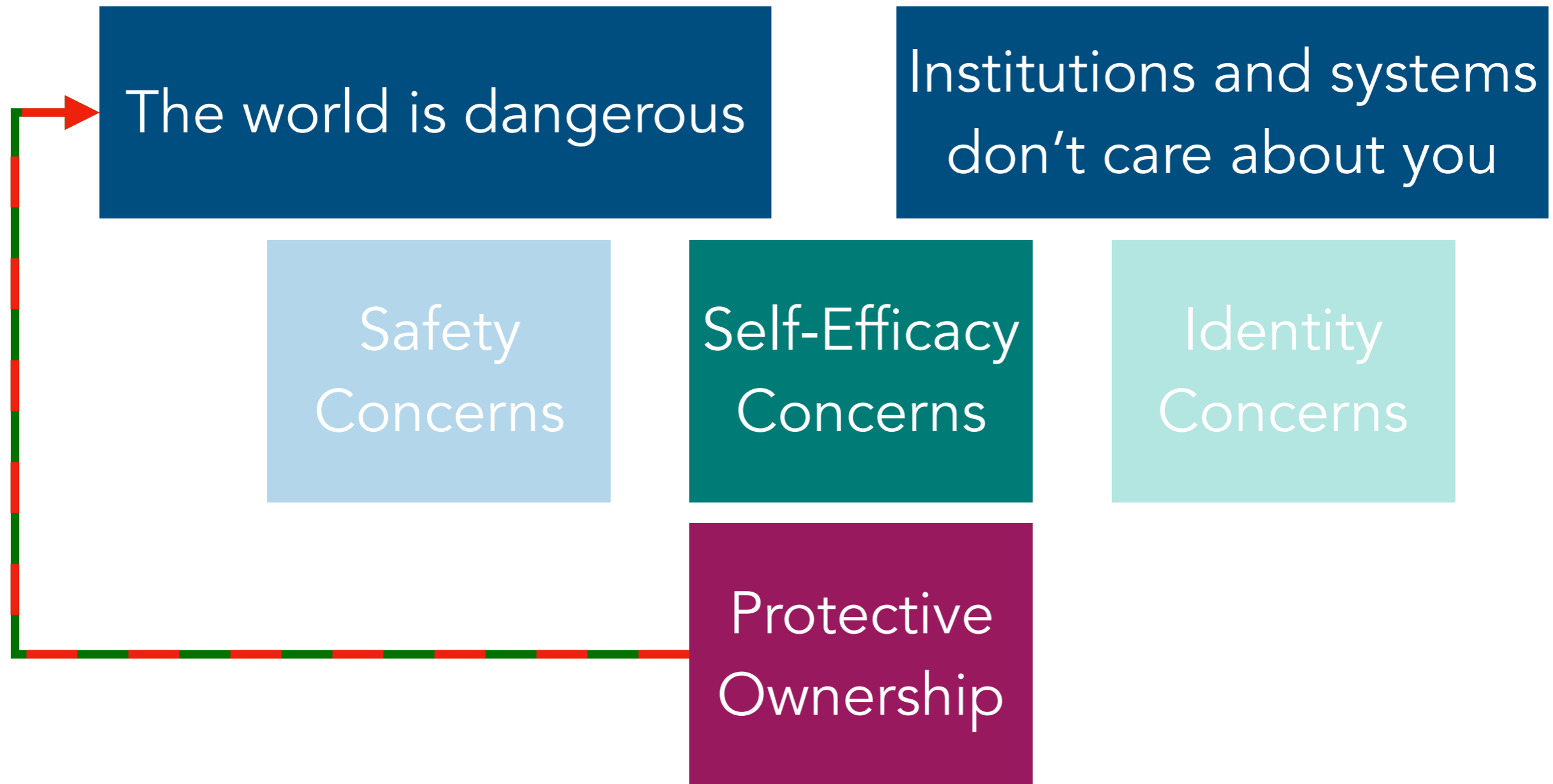
Identity Concerns

Protective Ownership





- 'Right to Carry' laws increase violent crime Donohue, Aneja, & Weber, 2018



- 'Right to Carry' laws increase violent crime Donohue, Aneja, & Weber, 2018
- Guns are far more often used to threaten others than in self-defense Hemenway, Azrael, & Miller, 2000

The world is dangerous

Institutions and systems don't care about you

Safety
Concerns

Self-Efficacy
Concerns

Identity
Concerns

Protective
Ownership



The world is dangerous

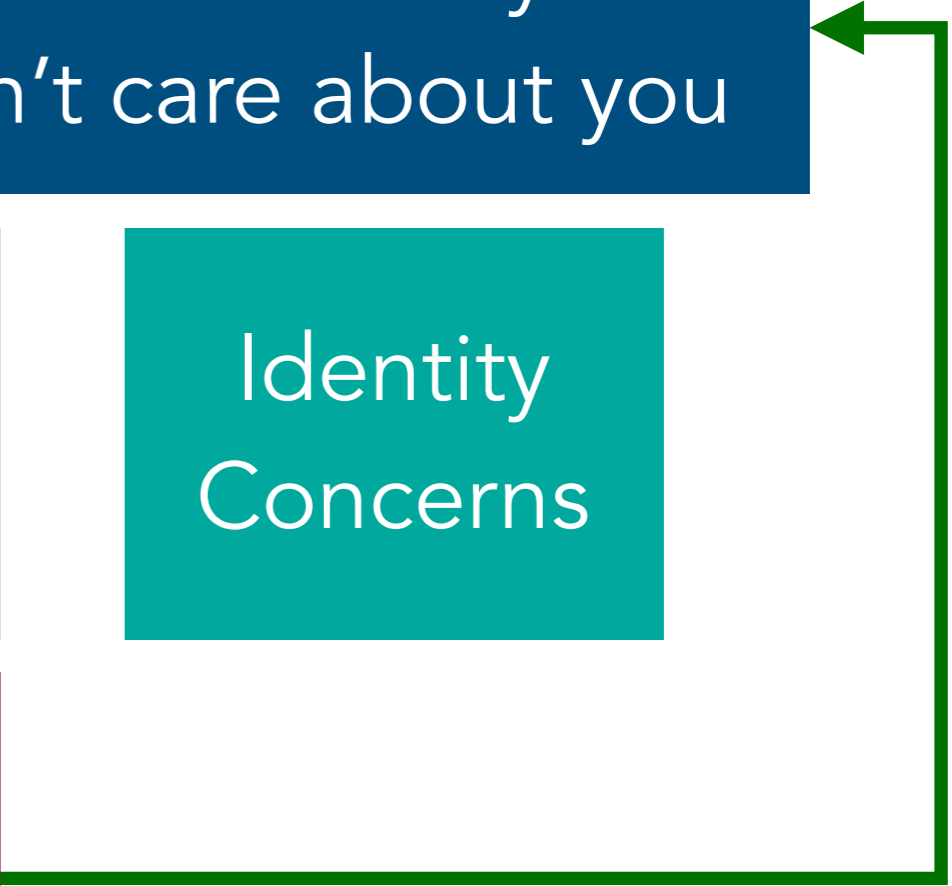
Institutions and systems don't care about you

Safety
Concerns

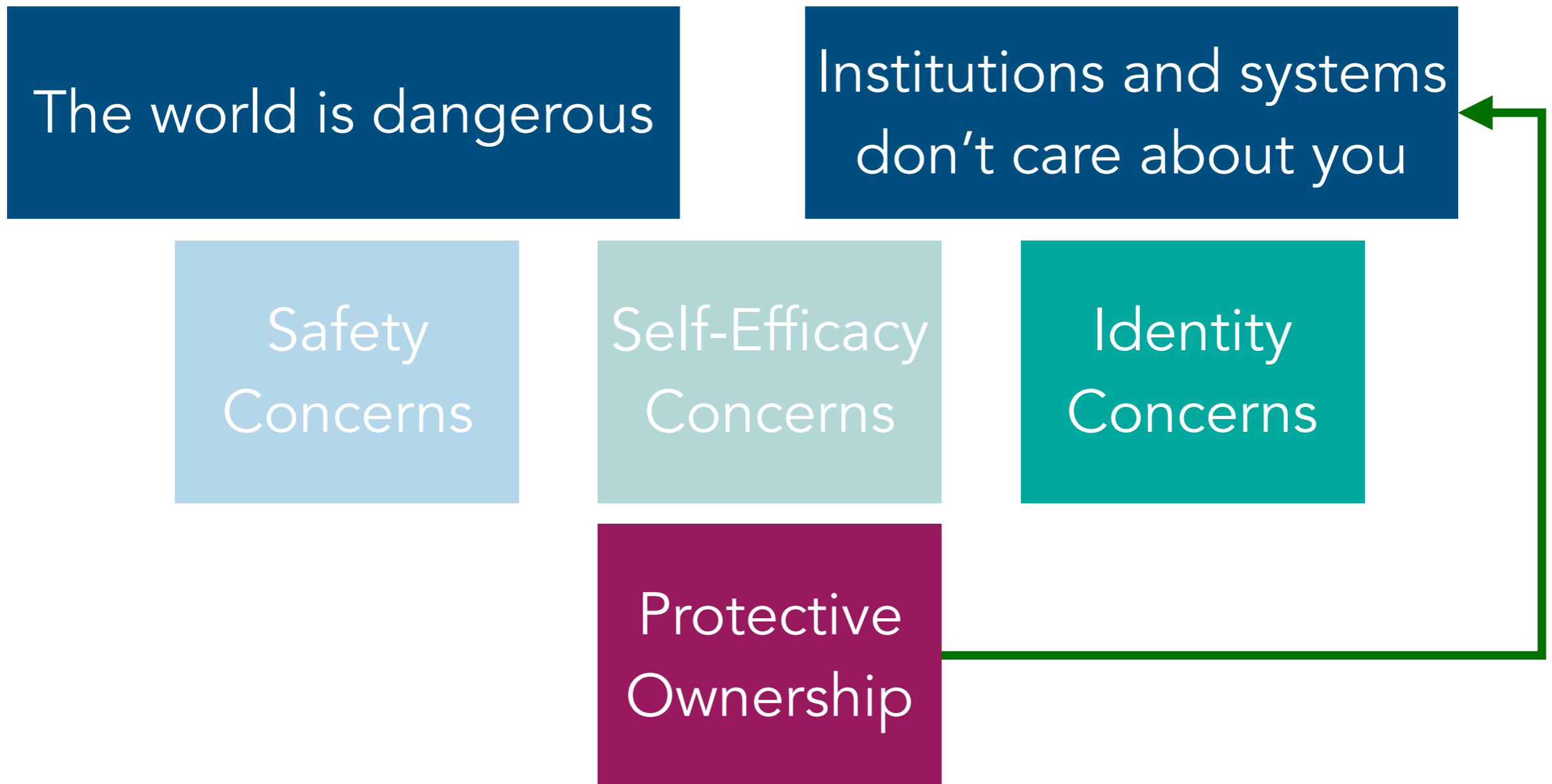
Self-Efficacy
Concerns

Identity
Concerns

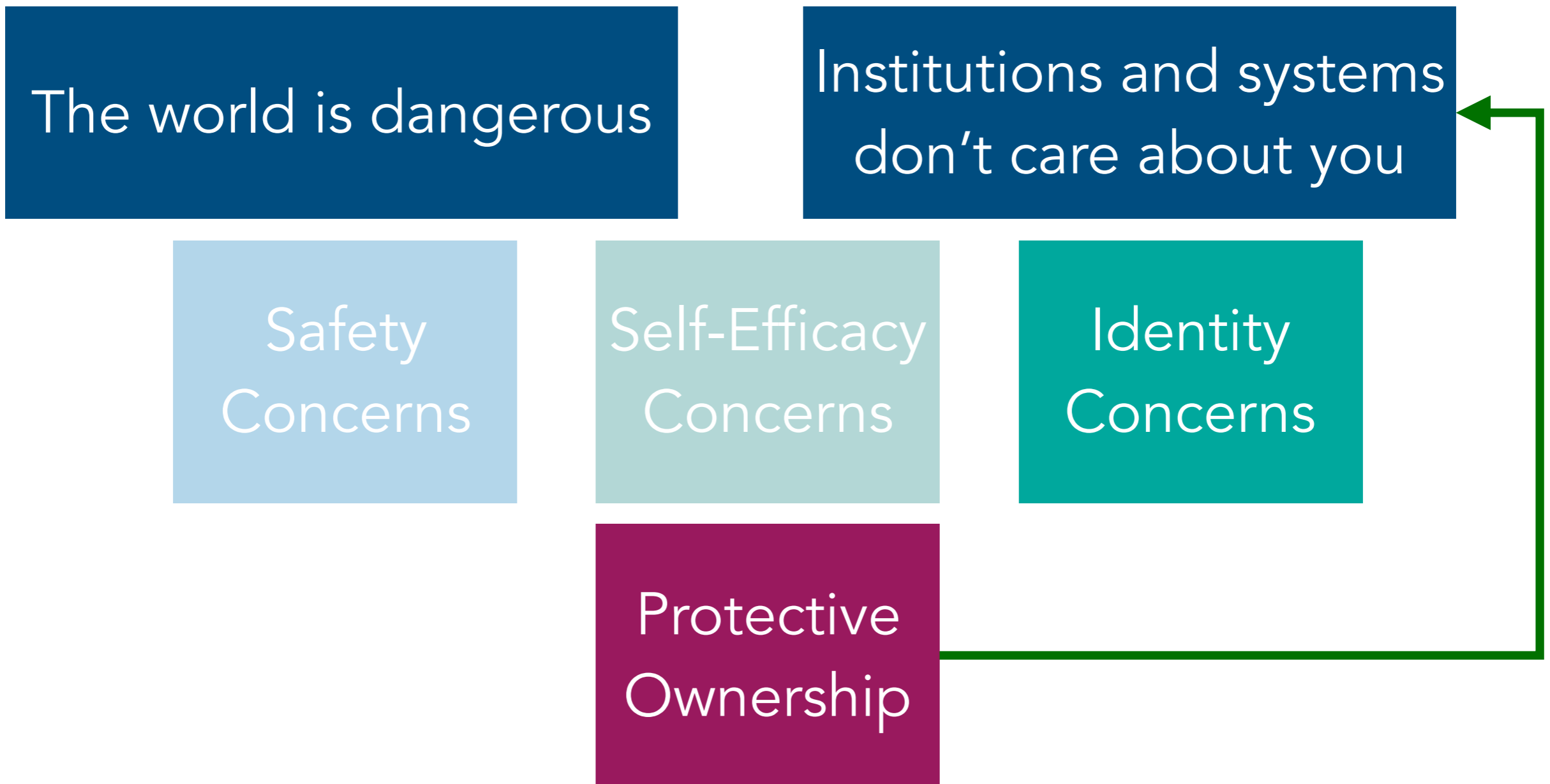
Protective
Ownership



● "Citizen Protectors" Carlson 2015



- "Citizen Protectors" Carlson 2015
- White men feeling economic anxiety more likely to affirm the symbolic power of guns Mencken & Froese, 2017



- "Citizen Protectors" Carlson 2015
- White men feeling economic anxiety more likely to affirm the symbolic power of guns Mencken & Froese, 2017
- More gun ownership in more unequal US states Kennedy et al., 1998

The world is dangerous

Institutions and systems don't care about you

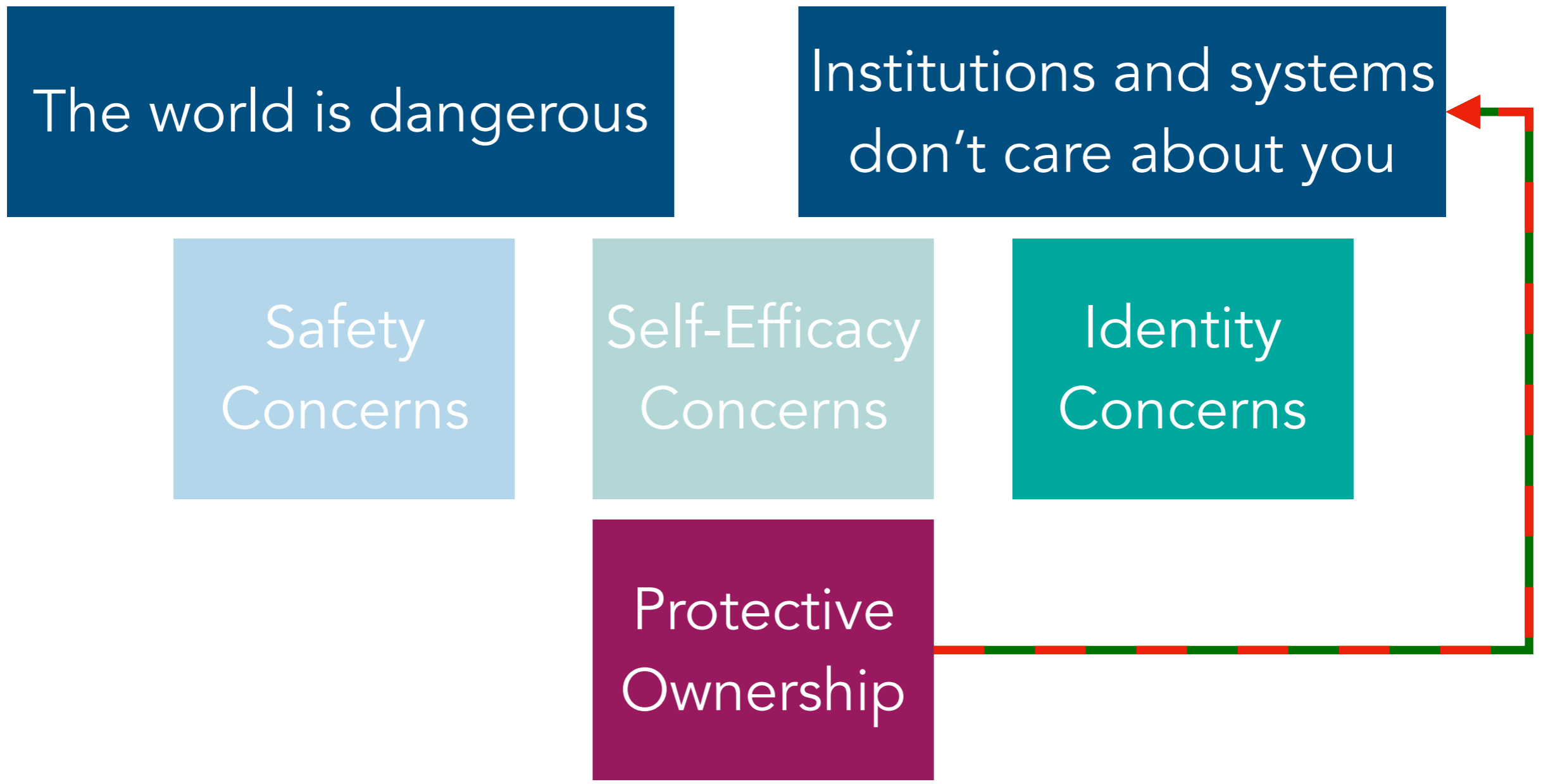
Safety
Concerns

Self-Efficacy
Concerns

Identity
Concerns

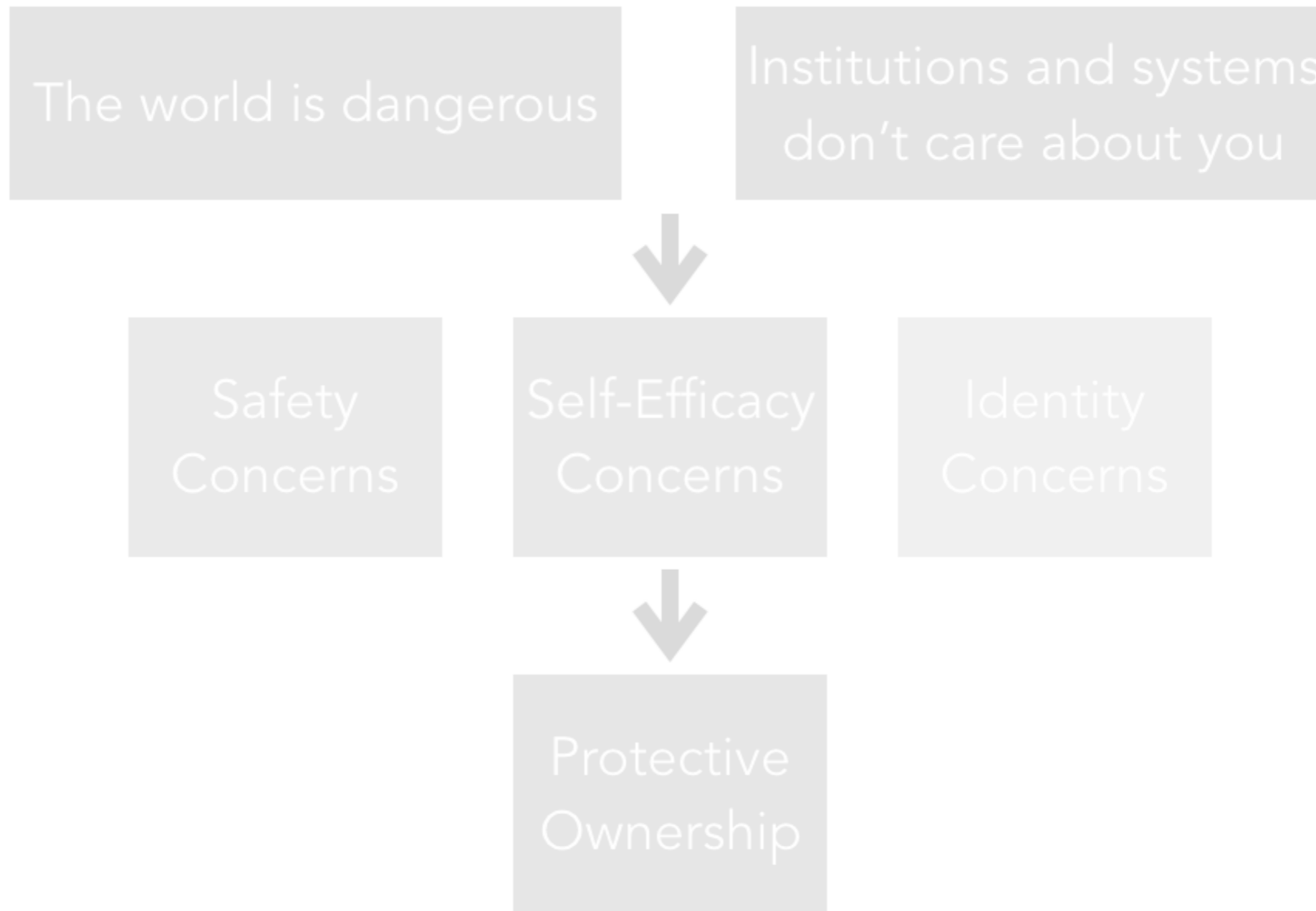
Protective
Ownership







- Gun control as existential argument e.g. Braman, Kahan, & Grimmelmann 2005; Kahan & Braman, 2003; Kleck, Gertz, & Bratton, 2009; Sears, Lau, Tyler, & Allen, 1980; Whitehead, Schnabel, & Perry, 2018

Current Experimental Directions





Current Experimental Directions

- When dealing with psychological threat, does one's gun automatically come to mind? osf.io/pcgdx/  





Current Experimental Directions

- When dealing with psychological threat, does one's gun automatically come to mind? osf.io/pcgdx/ 
- Does thinking of one's gun help manage imagined psychological distress? osf.io/43bwa/ 

Protective
Ownership

Current Experimental Directions




- When dealing with psychological threat, does one's gun automatically come to mind? osf.io/pcgdx/ 

- Does thinking of one's gun help manage imagined psychological distress? osf.io/43bwa/ 

- Does holding a gun help manage physical distress? osf.io/fm4sq/ 

Protective
Ownership

Current Experimental Directions

- When dealing with psychological threat, does one's gun automatically come to mind? osf.io/pcgdx/ 
The real danger is that institutions and systems don't care about you
- Does thinking of one's gun help manage imagined psychological distress? osf.io/43bwa/ 
Safety Self-Efficacy Identity
- Does holding a gun help manage physical distress? osf.io/fm4sq/ 
Protective Ownership
- Using big-data approaches to forecast gun sales