

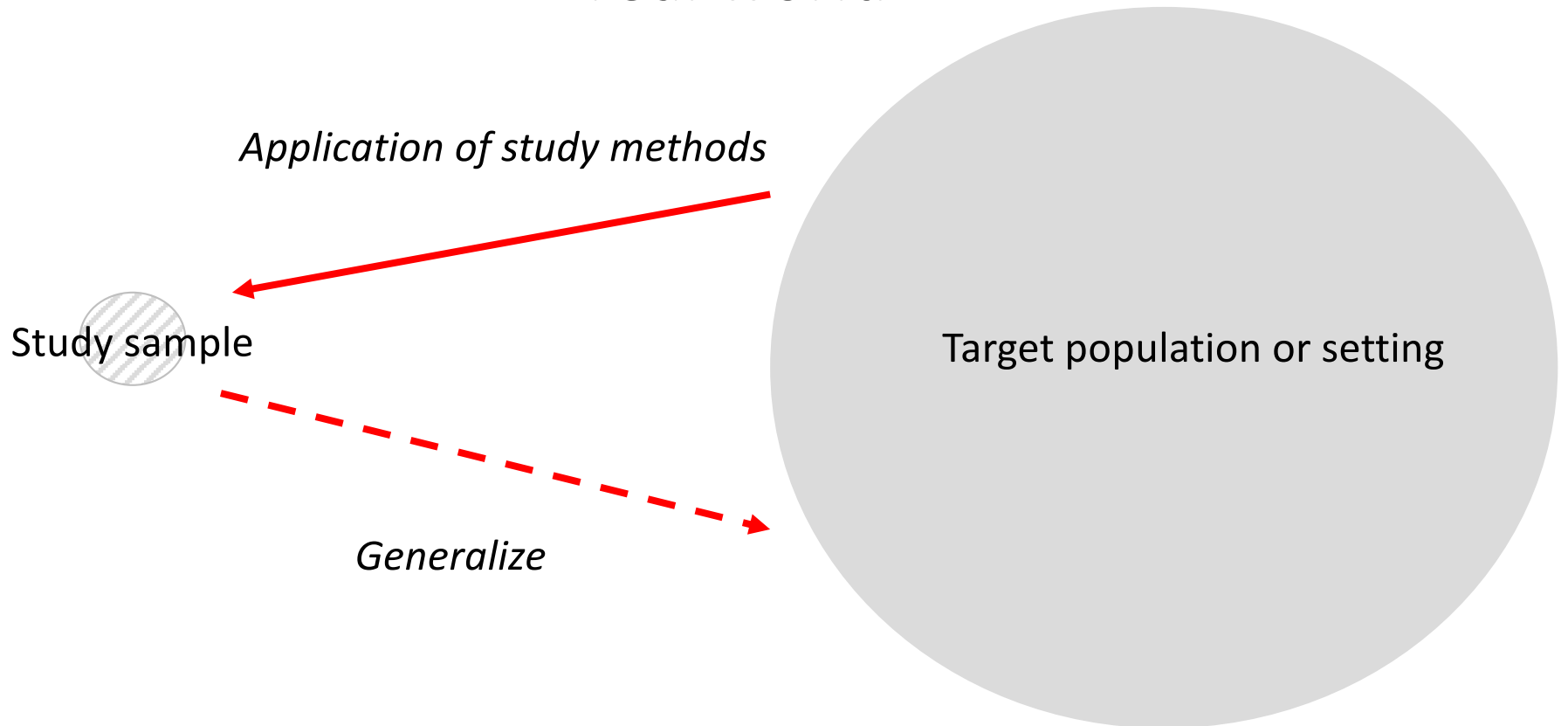
# Context as “King” of “Trap?” for Generalization: Mechanisms as a Middle Path

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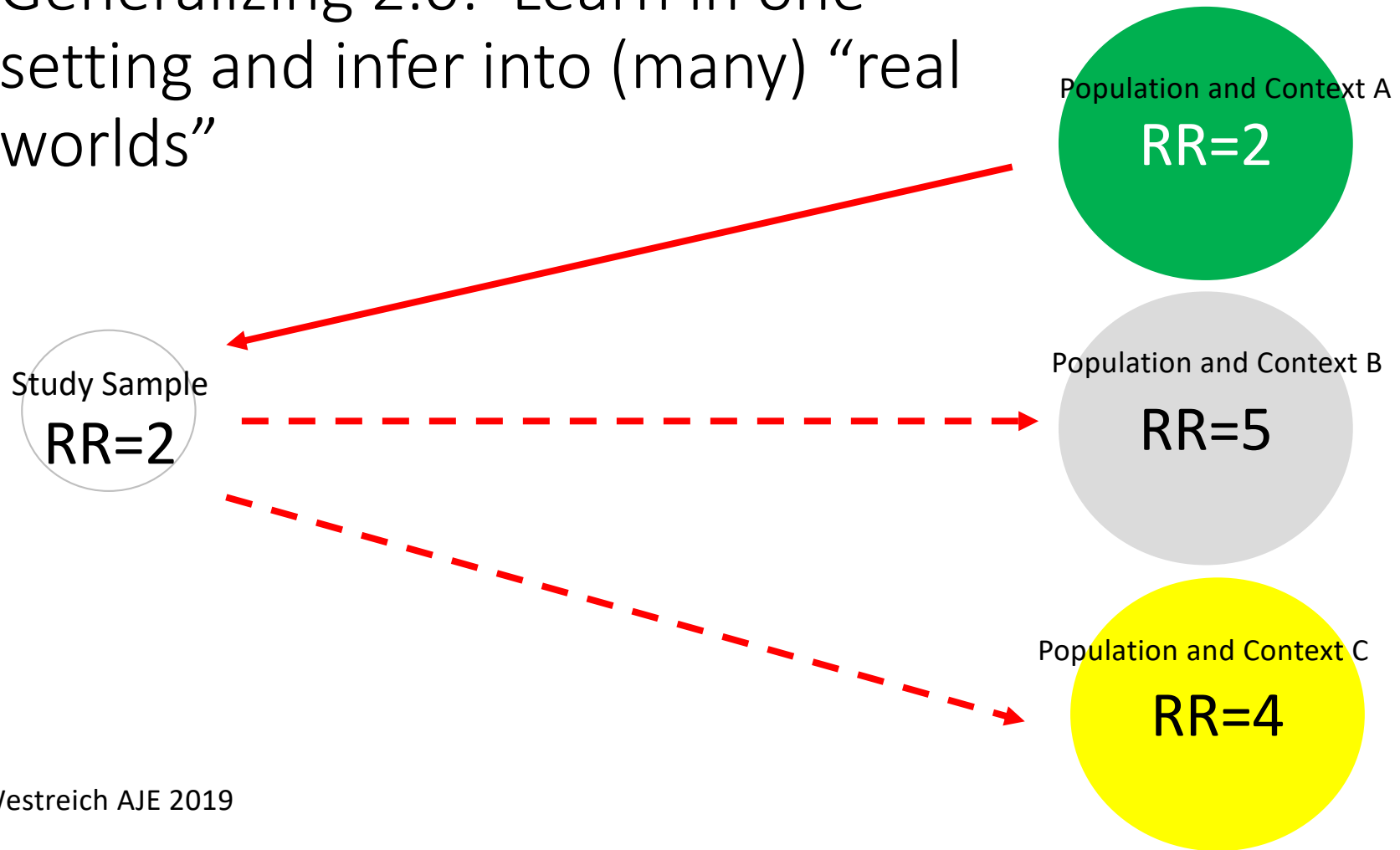
# Context: King or Trap for Generalizing?

- Implementation science champions context
  - Emerging proposed categories of context (Squires)
  - But this doesn't tell you which elements of context matter for a given strategy
- But still need generalizing?
  - Can't require a bespoke answer for every setting ("context trap")
- Need to create generalizable knowledge without a single "general" answer – is that possible?
  - A priority for implementation strategies

# Generalizing 1.0: Learn in a sample, infer into (one) “real world”



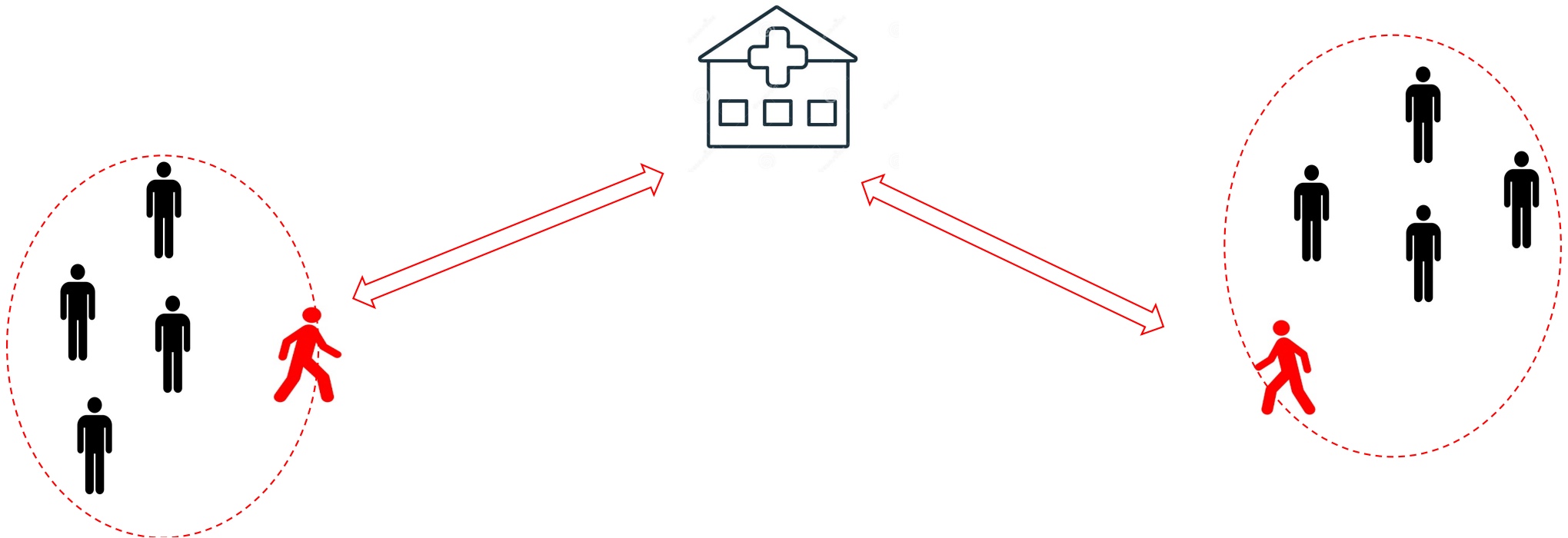
Generalizing 2.0: Learn in one setting and infer into (many) “real worlds”

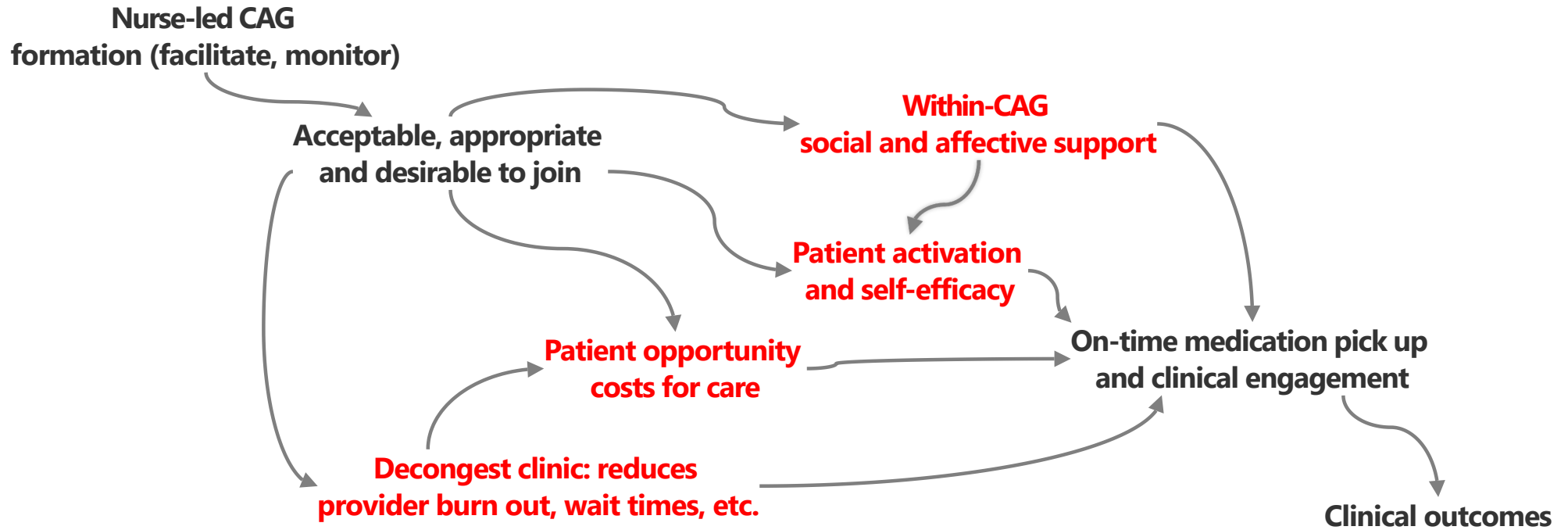


# Can mechanisms help?

## Distribution of Antiretroviral Treatment Through Self-Forming Groups of Patients in Tete

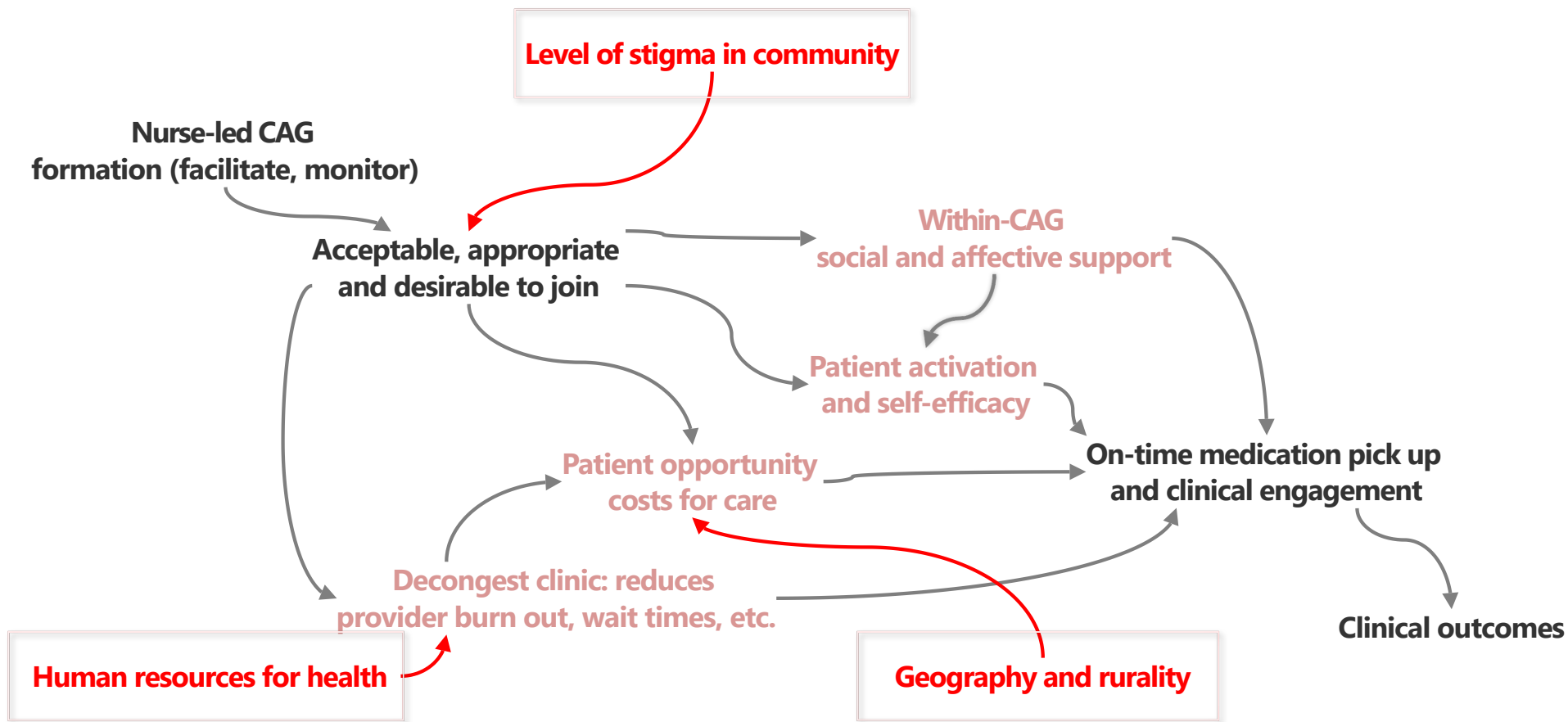
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# Would CAG's work as well in an new semi-urban setting?

- Hypothesized mechanism guide how we answer that question
- Acceptability
  - Stigma is greater in rural places
- Distances
  - What are distances traveled in new setting?
- Waiting times
  - What are existing staffing levels like in urban areas





## Mechanism helps us answer the question

- *Introduction of a CAG's in **urban** communities with **lower levels of stigma** may attenuate reach of the approach, and also offer lower value (and smaller effects) in those who do join by **addressing smaller opportunity costs***

# Mechanisms reveal what elements in your target contexts matters for generalizing

- Context is contextual (to the strategy and inference you are seeking)
  - If mechanism depends on acceptability, and you know that stigma acts on acceptability, you need to know stigma levels in target setting
- Mechanism also tells you about other elements of context that matter less.
  - There is nothing in this mechanism that suggests that you laboratory equipment for viral load measurement matters (but this will matter for another strategy)

Mechanistic dependencies extend (rather than attenuate) generalizing about a strategy

- Generalizing means inferring in new setting even if that answer is different
- Knowing the conditions that enable effects allows you to say something about many target contexts with different configurations of those conditions

# Conclusions

- Mechanisms help generalization in implementation science
- Context is neither “King” nor “Trap”
- Hypothesize about the mechanism of the strategy you are studying (program theory, theory of change, directed acyclic graphs)
- Measure and study those mechanisms
- Understand what you need from target settings