

Mental Health Impacts of Global Climate Change: Linking Impact Frames with Sources of Motivation for Climate Action

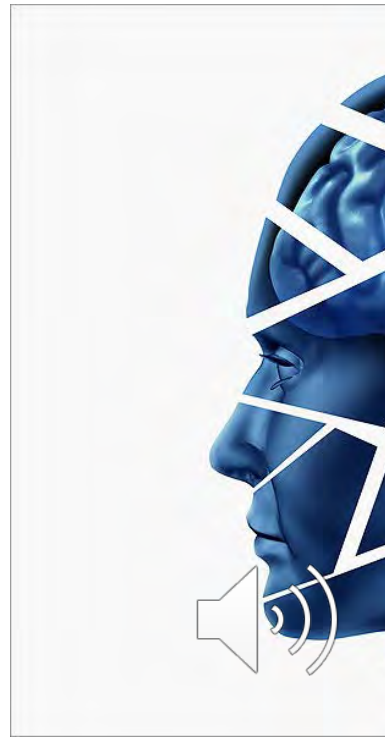
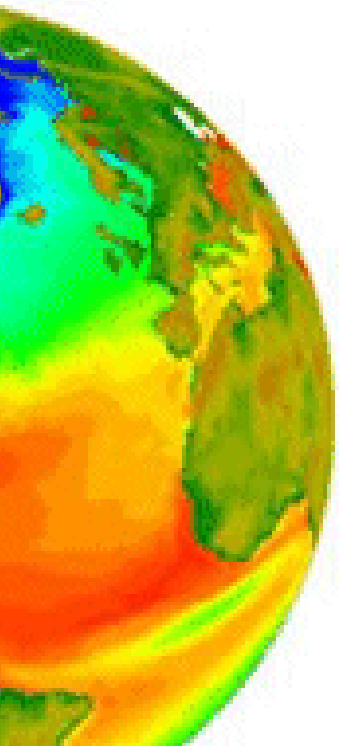
Thomas J. Doherty, Psy.D.

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California Department of Public Health

Climate Action Team Public Health Workgroup Meeting

October 18, 2016



This Talk

- Review of **basic psychological processes** that lead to motivations and actions about environmental issues
- An overview of the **mental health impacts of global climate change**
- Using several related **conceptual frameworks**
- Note on **barriers**
- Suggestions for **next steps**



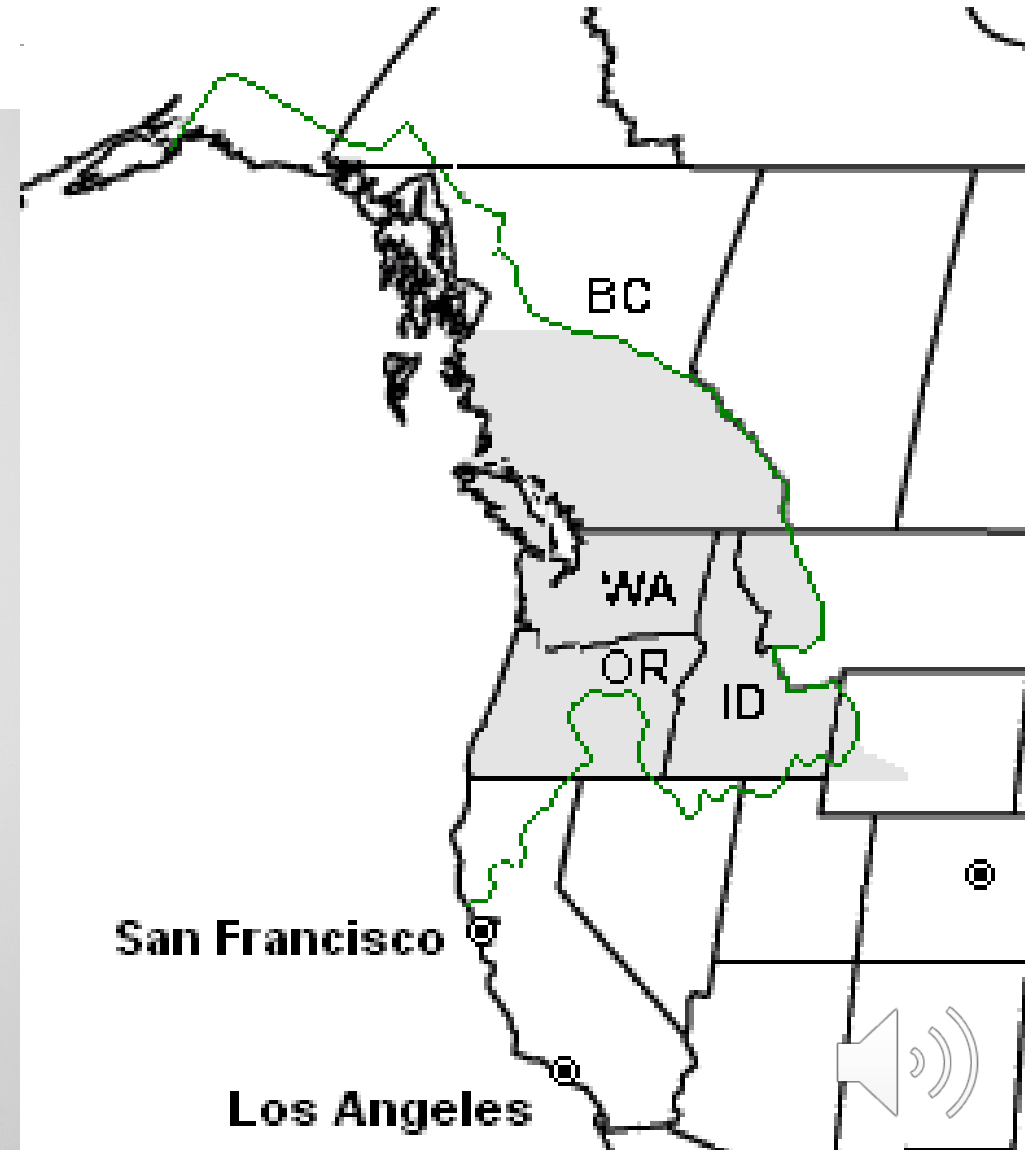
Thomas Doherty



Licensed Psychologist

Past President: Society for
Environmental Population and
Conservation Psychology

Member, APA Task Force of
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Your Psychology of Global Climate Change

Your **thoughts, feelings, memories, values, and motivations** regarding global climate change:

- How **old** were you when you first **learned** about climate change? What was the **context**?
- How does climate change influence your **thinking** or your **planning** about the world?
- What **emotions** do you have about global climate change?
- Does climate change involve any of your **values** or influence your **identity**?



Psychological processes that lead to motivation and action about environmental issues...

Behaviors

Private Sphere

Organizational

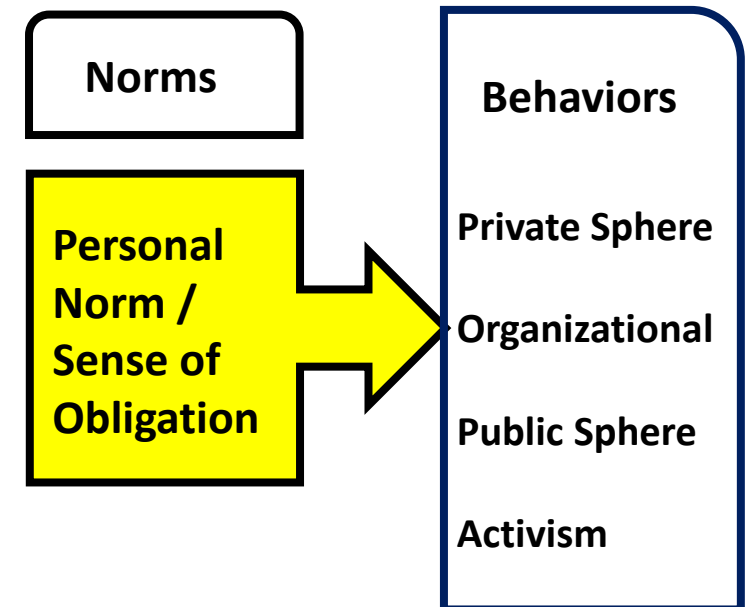
Public Sphere

Activism

The “ Values – Beliefs – Norms” Model



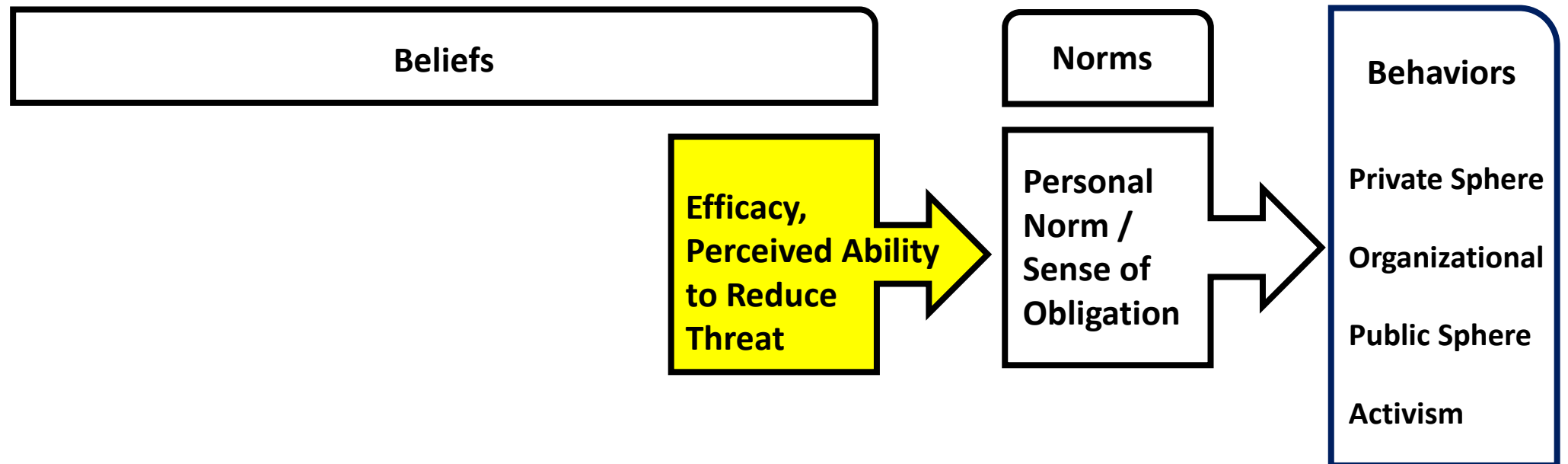
Norms and Obligations



The “ Values – Beliefs – Norms” Model



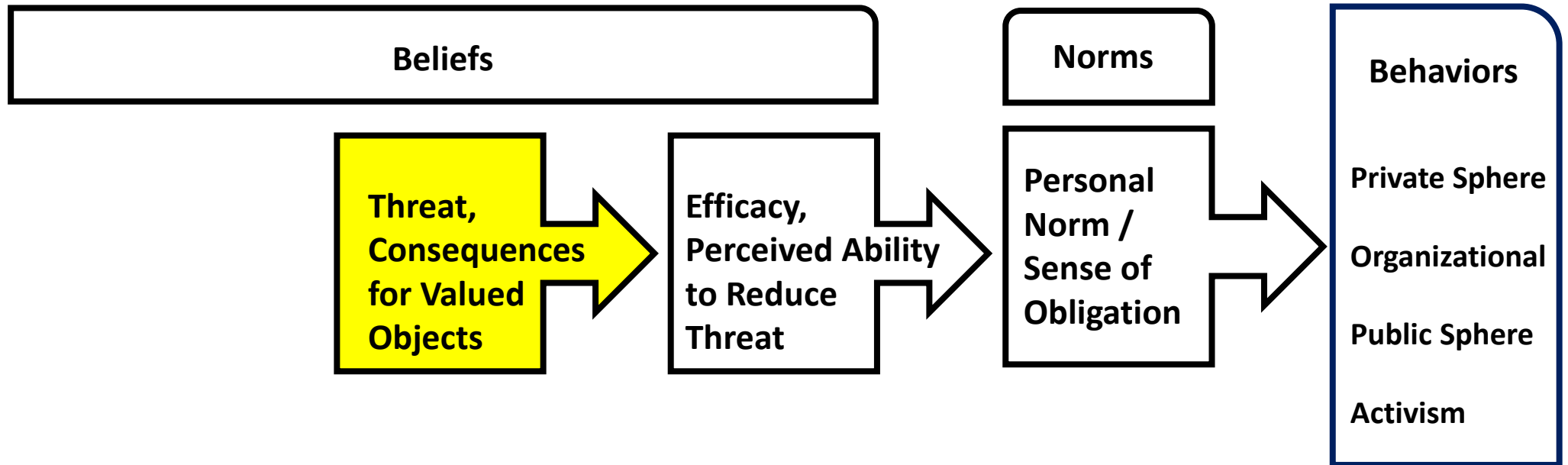
Self-efficacy



The “ Values – Beliefs – Norms” Model



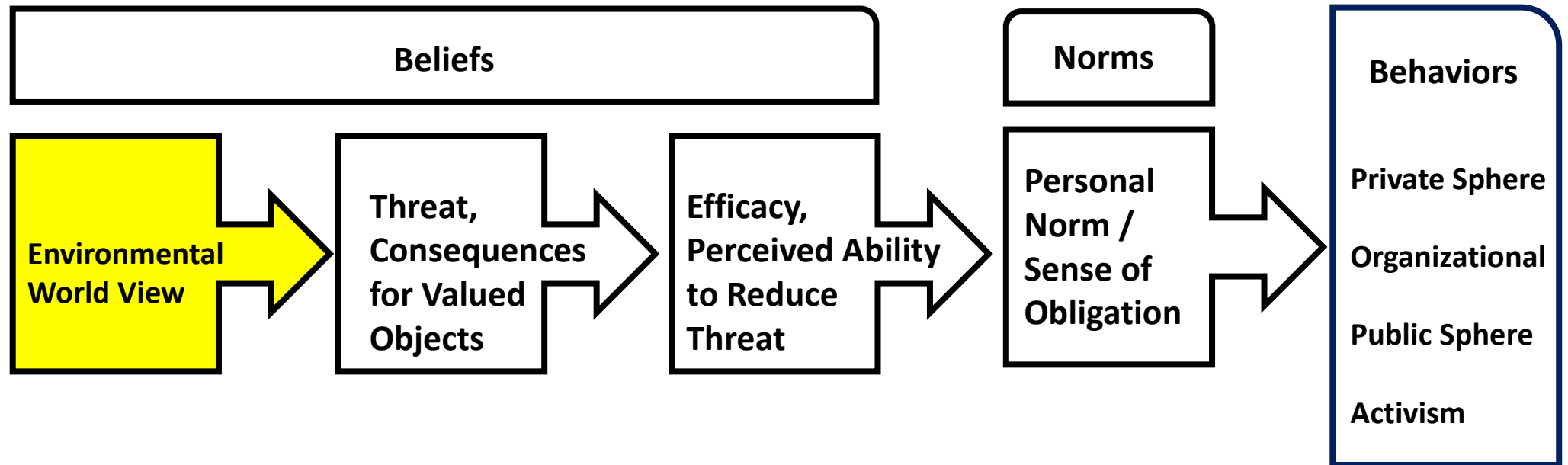
Threat?



The “ Values – Beliefs – Norms” Model



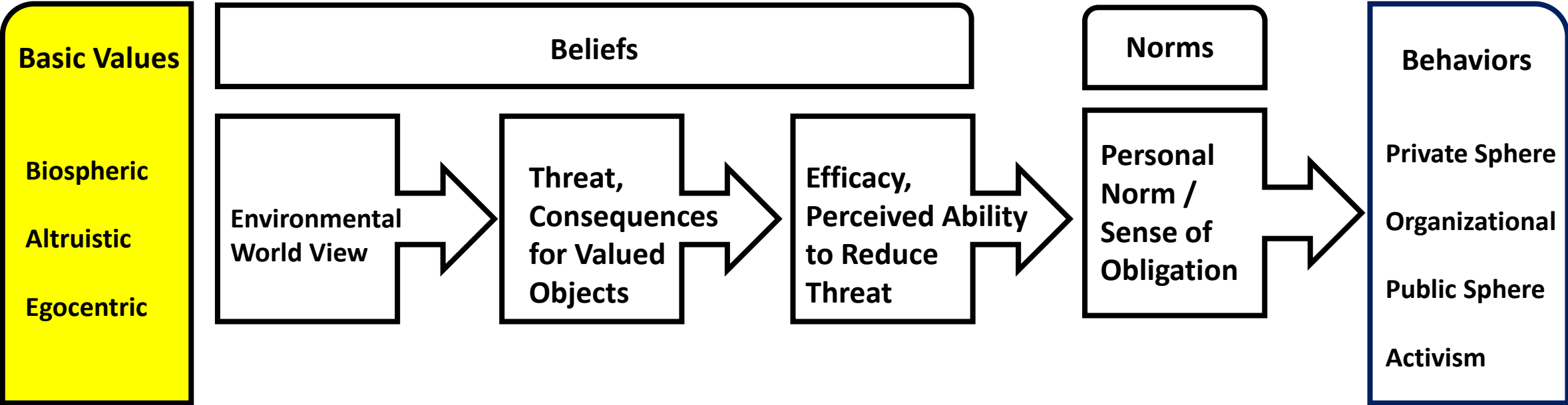
Knowledge and Beliefs about the Environment



The “ Values – Beliefs – Norms” Model



Basic Values



The “ Values – Beliefs – Norms” Model

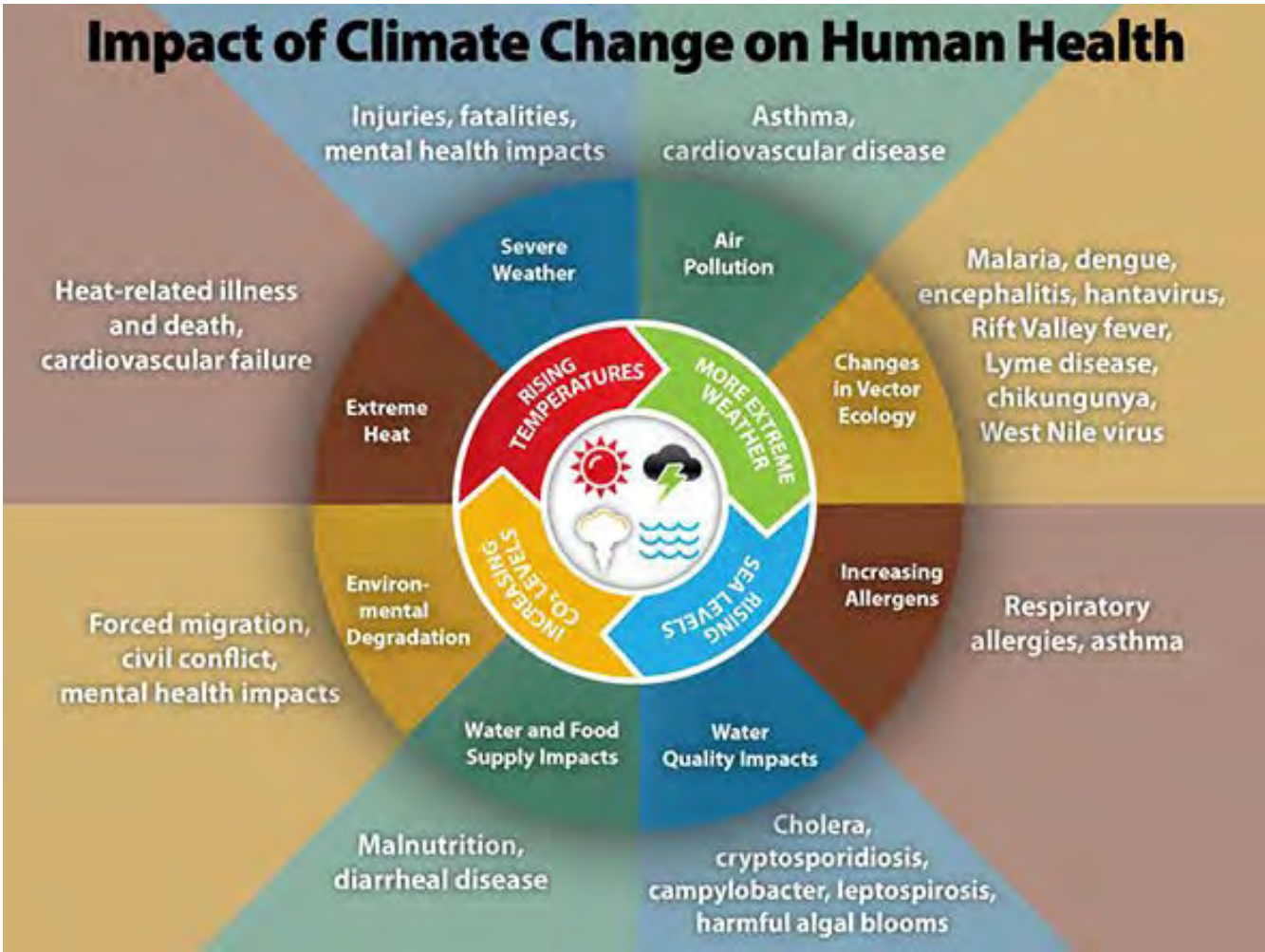


Environmental Diversity

Environmental Diversity:
The intersection of people's individual culture, values and preferences, and their environmental worldview.



Mental Health Impacts of Climate Change



Disaster Framework

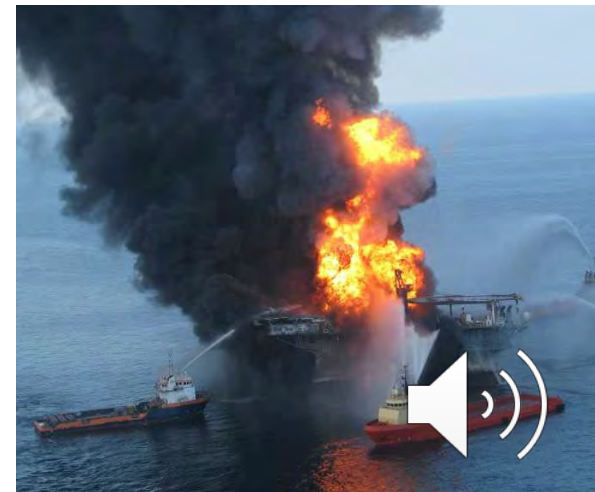
Mental Health (MH) impacts of Global Climate Change (GCC) result from natural and technological disasters. Scales:

- Direct (acute and localized)
- Indirect (cascading, bioregional)
- Vicarious (experienced at a distance, and mediated through information technologies).

Recognize **differences** between **natural** and **technological** disasters (and mixed effects of “na-tech” disasters)

A Disaster Framework leads us to:

- Create adaptation planning on multiple levels of scale
- Attend to multiple disaster events (e.g., storms, flooding, heat, drought, fire, sea level rise, etc.)
- Plan for varied indirect effects (threats to food systems and infrastructure; increased spread of infectious diseases or respiratory issues; violence or regional conflicts; refugees, despair and malaise)



Public Health Framework

- A disaster frame coordinates well with a **Public Health Framework** that sees climate change impacts from an epidemiology and population health focus.
- Biophysical threats (e.g., heat, disease vectors, environmental stressors, natural disasters)
- Mental health effects (e.g., individual, family and community mental health, as well as impacts on vulnerable populations).
- GCC seen as a **Public Health Emergency**.



Intersectionality Framework

- Illuminates interlocking “structural oppressions” and diverse gender and regional impacts and burdens of GCC.
- MH impacts intersect with issues of power, inequities, and stigmas (e.g., those experienced globally by women, in particular women of color; and locally such as those by workers and laborers in areas prone to heat waves)
- Best practices include:
 - Recognize and collaborate with communities as social actors
 - Call out and critique unjust social structures
 - Build coalitions
 - Recognize resistance and resilience
 - Promote education, service learning and consciousness raising





Framework

- Highlights systematic marginalization and vulnerability toward impacts of GCC issues associated with certain groups
 - (e.g., people of color, indigenous communities, and individuals of lower socioeconomic status).
- Identify relationships between environmental injustices, structural and social systems, and GCC's MH impacts
- Recognize and seek to ameliorate social and structural causes of marginalization and heightened vulnerability
- Craft policies and interventions using “joined up” language of social justice and environmental sustainability.



Economic Development Framework

MH impacts occur within a larger process of globalization; impacts, buffers and vulnerabilities are a result of financial policies

Local impacts seen in context of systematic inequities in global trade

Recognize economic and market-based sources of innovation and sustainability

Best Practices:

- Factor in economic systems, policies and practices
- Identify economic incentives and barriers toward adaptation and mitigation programs
- Create regulations and economic development programs that directly address MH impacts



Geography / Place Framework

MH impacts are amplified by location and bioregion.

- A focus on the needs of peoples in Pacific Island Nations, the Circumpolar North, in low-lying areas prone to flooding or storm damages, or in areas prone to heat, drought or wildfire

A Geography and Place frame helps us to:

- Balance global and local views of climate change, and distinguish aggregate impacts vs. singular impacts
- Recognize human geography (i.e., local culture, history & beliefs).

Best practices: Place-based, culturally competent, locally-relevant programs and interventions



Lifespan Development Framework

MH impacts of GCC, and sources of vulnerability and resilience, can differ based on age, social cohort, and cognitive and intellectual development

Effective engagement with climate change requires intellectual development, education, and maturity

- Using a **lifespan development framework**, it is important to:
 - Clarify impacts based on age and psychological development
 - Identify age groups most at risk
 - Discover sources of age-related resilience.

Goal: Create developmentally appropriate interventions to address MH impacts; promote adaptation and engagement.



Conservation & **BIO DIVERSITY** Framework

Highlights the linkages between the integrity and status of natural systems and places, and human mental health and wellbeing

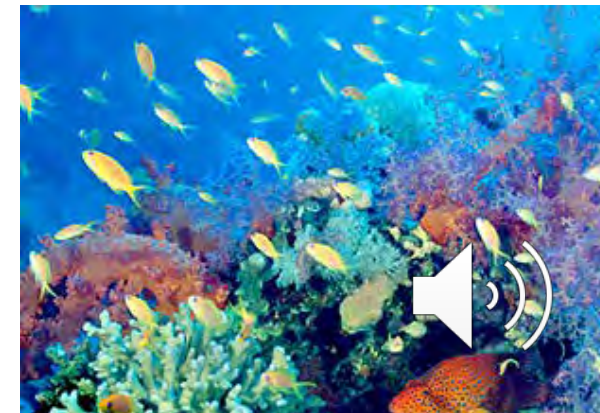
- Relationships between humans and other species placed on a higher footing.

Benefits and losses in terms of ecosystem services and local cultural values:

- Safe drinking water, storm-buffering wetlands
- Totemic relationships with species and places found in indigenous communities, or among earth-based thinkers in developed nations

In a **Conservation / Biodiversity** Frame:

- Clarify functional linkages between human and natural systems
- Identify key conservation drivers and compelling local examples (e.g., endangered species, resource or subsistence economies, and issues with businesses like the palm oil trade)



Transactional / “Costs of Adaptation” Framework

GCC impacts and adaptations:

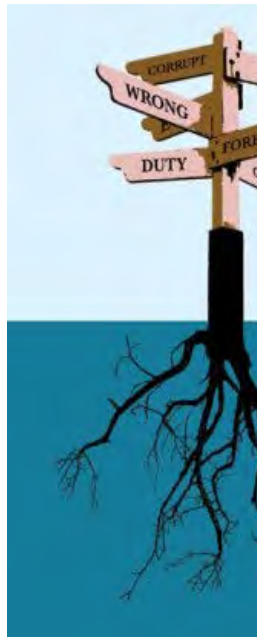
- Part of a transactional process between human thinking (social and psychological processes) and feedback from the environment (both the natural and the socio-cultural worlds)

Key processes: Perceptions of risk, vulnerability, distress, and self-efficacy

Coping with GCC entails psychological resources and costs, and potential for loss, defensive rationalization, and pushback.

A transactional psychological frame helps to:

- Avoid a mechanistic, physical science bias when studying MH impacts
- Understand perception of impacts and resilience as non-linear, emergent processes
- Recognize intuitive, emotional and non-rational responses
- See social and normative influences (e.g., role modeling regarding risk and behavior)
- Attend to existential issues of meaning-making and survival associated with GCC.



Clinical and Psychiatric Framework

MH impacts are discussed in terms of psychodiagnostic categories

- These range from personal vulnerabilities and environmental stressors, to adjustment reactions and disorders, to formal psychiatric disorders

Prevalence and severity of MH impacts will be related to (1) existing vulnerabilities and (2) the strength of the environmental stressor or trauma

There are cultural factors associated with distress and illness and the appropriateness of therapeutic responses

When using a psychiatric frame, it is important to:

- Address existing and potential mental health injuries (e.g., primary, tertiary and secondary prevention)
- Apply diagnostic categories in a systematic way
- Track prevalence of MH issues
- Recognize acute, chronic and vicarious scales of impacts
- Promote multicultural-competent diagnosis and treatment



Additional Frames: Spirituality and The Sacred

Depending on the context, is appropriate to add a Spiritual and Religious framework, that recognizes the role of the Sacred

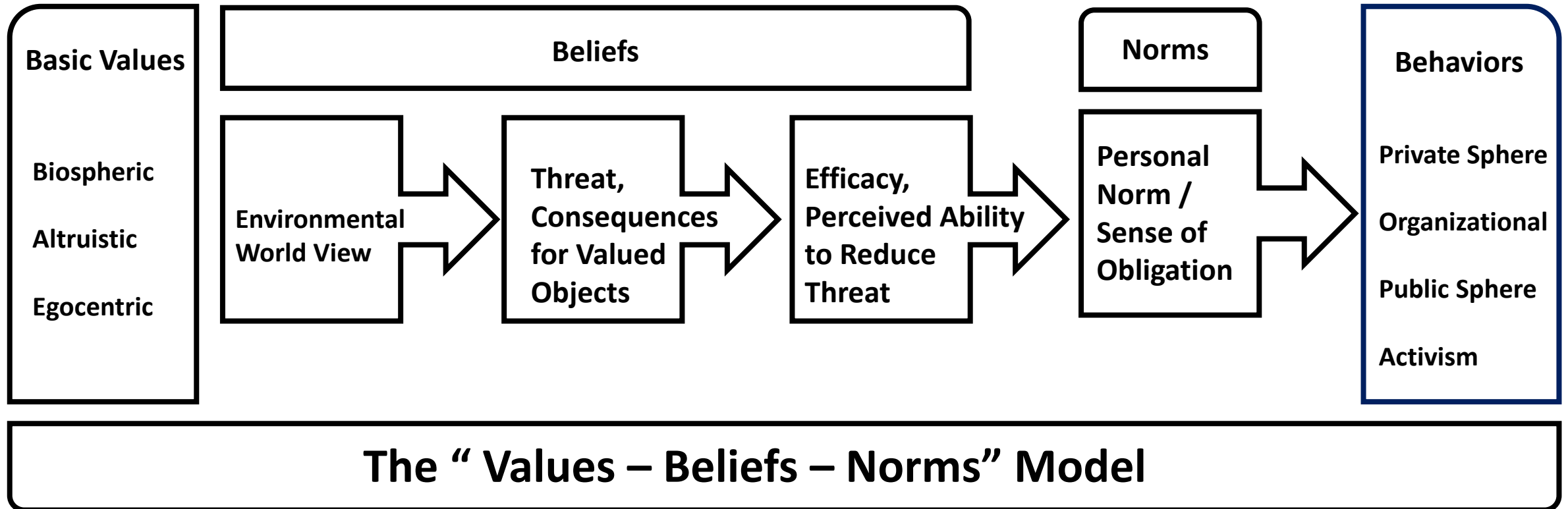
For people for people in the United States, religious and spiritual beliefs are a major determinant of environmental values

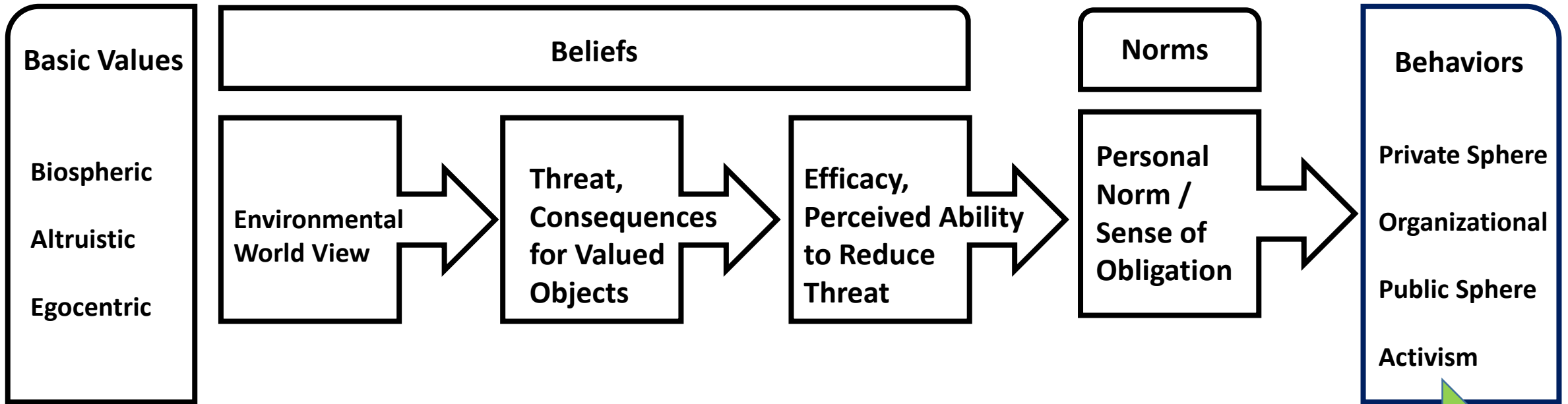
A religious and spiritual frame will:

- Recognize organized religious traditions and personalized spirituality
- Honor diverse spiritual traditions and world views
- Highlight factors that foster and inhibit environmental conservation and GCC-related behaviors (e.g., stewardship or social justice missions, earth-based spirituality, fatalism, counter-environmental orthodoxies)



Motivation and Climate Change

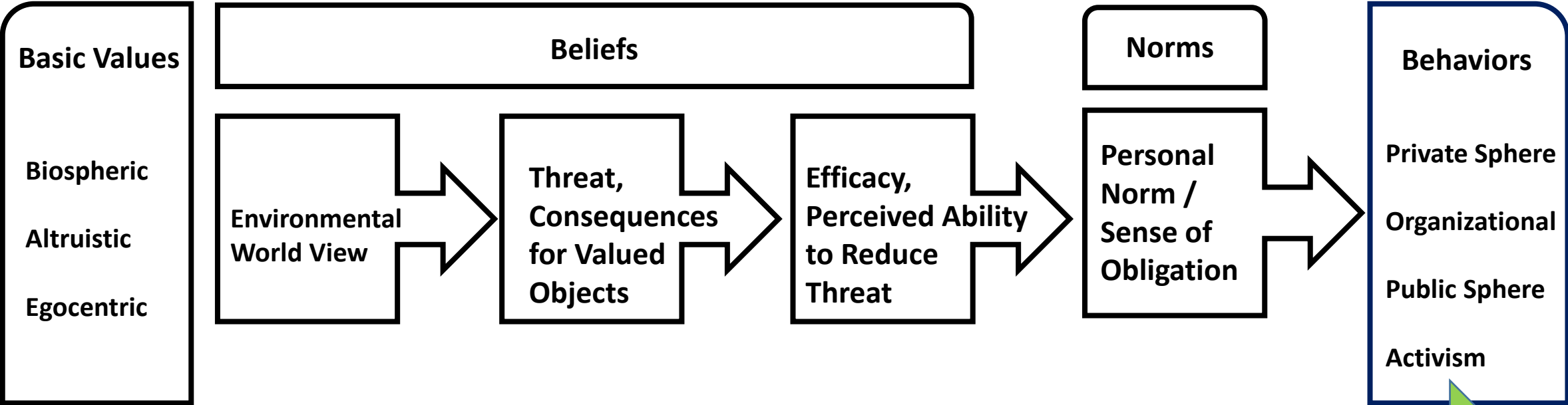




“ Values – Beliefs – Norms” -- Actions



Barriers and incentives?



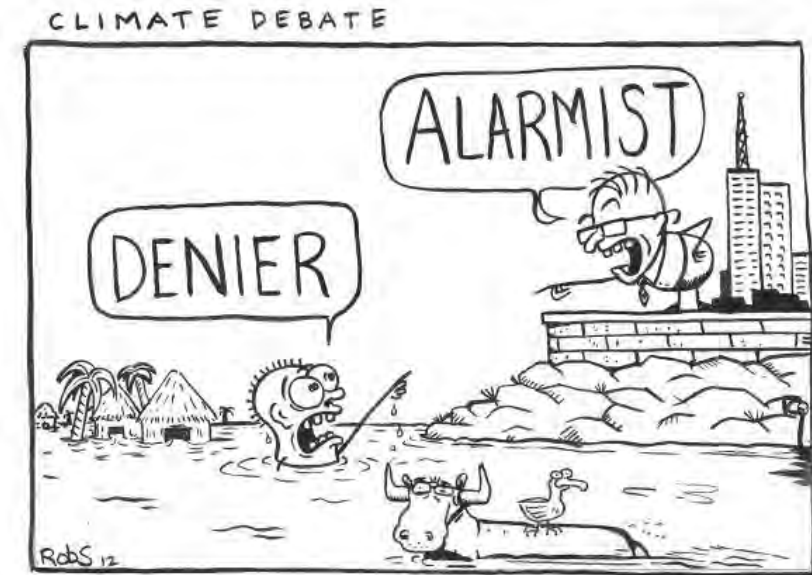
“ Values – Beliefs – Norms” -- Actions



Barriers to Study of Mental Health Impacts?

Barriers to the study and amelioration of mental health impacts of climate change:

- Socialized Denial (e.g., “spiral of silence”)
- Marginalization of affected groups
- Politicization and Official Censorship
- Bias towards a physical science vs. a social and psychological science perspective (i.e., obscures or marginalizes psychological processes)



Translating Impact Frameworks into Action

When crafting tailored approaches to address MH impacts of GCC, interventionists and policymakers will benefit from:

- A better understanding of motivational processes
- A more nuanced suite of impact frames



Approaches to systems and behavior changes should include efforts on multiple scales:

- Legal & regulatory change
- Social marketing to increase voluntary behavior change
- Non-violent Direct Action in the absence of structural mechanisms or influence
- Educational programs to raise awareness of GCC-related MH issues, solutions, benefits and barriers

Contact Thomas Doherty

Email thomas@selfsustain.com

Web www.selfsustain.com

Phone 503-288-1323

Skype [ThomasJDoherty](https://www.skype.com/people/ThomasJDoherty)

Mail PO Box 3174 Portland OR 97208 USA



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