What does it mean to be part of a greater whole? How does our worldview, or model of reality, impact what we understand about who we are and how we relate to others? And how can we become more aware of all the ways we are part of an interrelated, global community?

Recently my colleagues and I explored these questions in a report titled “Worldview Transformation and the Development of Social Consciousness” for the Journal of Consciousness Studies. Based on decades of research on consciousness transformation, IONS researchers have developed a theoretical framework for understanding social consciousness. In this way, we have sought to understand the ways in which people are both conscious and unconscious about the world around them. More importantly, we seek to understand the powers and potentials of individual consciousness to move toward collective well-being.

It’s clear that we are social beings from the very beginning of our lives. Social relations impact every aspect of our being. Of course, there is developmental variability in the extent to which each of us is aware of culture’s impact on us. It takes a level of perceptual acuity, for example, to realize how all the car commercials we’re constantly exposed to impact what we drive and how we feel about it.
Cultivating Social Consciousness

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What does it mean to be part of a greater whole? How does our worldview, or model of reality, impact what we understand about who we are and how we relate to others? And how can we become more aware of all the ways we are part of an interlinked, global community?

Recently, the Collaborative for Interconnectedness and Social Science (CISS) and the Centre for Social and Human Development (CSHD) have collaborated to create a new model of social consciousness, which they call the “Consciousness and Collaboration Framework.” This model recognizes that our lives are shaped by both individual and collective experiences, and that these experiences are interconnected in complex ways. The model consists of five levels of social consciousness, each of which builds upon the previous one.

1. Embedded Social Consciousness: At this level, we are aware of the interconnectedness of all things, but we do not actively engage with others. We may be aware of the social environment, but begin to mobilize our intention to contribute to the greater good.

2. Engaged Social Consciousness: At this level, we are more aware of the social environment and begin to take action to make a difference. We begin to engage with others, both on a personal and collective level.

3. Collaborative Social Consciousness: At this level, we are actively engaged in collaborative action to create positive change. We work together to broaden our awareness of the world and our place in it.

4. Resonant Social Consciousness: At this level, we are able to resonate with others on a deeper level, aligning our thoughts, feelings, and actions with theirs.

5. Embodied Social Consciousness: At this level, we are truly embodied, fully present in the moment, and in harmony with others and the world around us.

The model of social consciousness provides a framework for understanding and working towards a more interconnected and collaborative world.