

Worldview for Activists: An Introduction

A discussion paper by Paul Saba

The way human beings experience the world is by collectively building and maintaining systems of shared meaning that make it possible for us to interpret one another's words and actions.

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Introduction

Learning about worldview is critically important for activists because it is an essential aspect of all human activity. Everything, from how we think about God, life and death to our choices about personal lifestyle and fashion reflect our worldviews. Worldview plays a critical role in determining how and why some people become and remain activists, and others do not.

What is worldview and how it is produced and sustained? Why and how does the conservative-corporate worldview predominate in our society? What are the necessary elements for a viable alternative worldview? These are some of the difficult questions that this paper tries to answer in a form accessible to grassroots activists and organizers.

Worldview

Worldview is a necessary element of all human social organizations, for a number of reasons. First, because, as previously noted, there is almost nothing we do as human beings that we do not think about. But in order to truly understand the world, we need more than our direct sense perceptions. We need concepts and categories of *meaning*. Worldview provides us with ideas, values and beliefs – stories - to guide and reflect on our consciousness and our activity.

Worldviews are also necessary because they provide a framework through which individuals and groups achieve their sense of self and express their identities. Worldviews are not just individual but collective. They provide *moral norms* - shared understandings about how people should relate to one another - that are an essential glue or cement that binds groups and societies together.

In short, through worldview, we understand who we are, the world we live in and our relationships (actual and potential) with it. This is true of us as activists; it is equally true about the people we are trying to organize.

Worldview is most commonly understood as ideas, values and ways of thinking about the world. While this sense of worldview is not wrong, it is somewhat incomplete. Ideas, values and ways of thinking do not exist randomly, in isolation from each other, but rather in complex systems. Some of these systems are explicit and highly theorized – Christianity or conservatism for example. Other, less developed systems, like individualism or the “Puritan work ethic” are not so explicit, seeming to exist in the texture of everyday life, what we can commonsense. There are also fragments of systems from previous times and places, like astrology or ideas about witchcraft and magic.

Why is this important? Because **ideas, beliefs and values do not have inherent meanings, independent of the worldviews in which they are located**. Instead, just as languages give meaning to individual words and dictate the proper ways to connect them in sentences, so worldview systems give different meanings to individual ideas and values and the interconnections between them.

Examples:

Take the words “Black” and “poor.” In a racist worldview, the meaning and connection between these words is determined by a system of racial prejudice. A racist worldview sees poverty as a necessary consequence of the inherent inferiority that it attributes to African Americans. In an anti-racist worldview, on the other hand, the meaning and connection between the terms are entirely different. Poverty is an unnecessary and involuntary social condition experienced by Blacks as a result of the systematic structural discrimination they suffer in a racist society.

Or take the idea of “patriotism.” For George Bush and Howard Zinn this concept has entirely different meanings because it operates in two very different worldviews. For one, it means support for war and maximizing corporate profits; for the other, it means opposition to these policies.

As we can see from this last example, many important ideas, beliefs and values in our society like “patriotism,” but also including “freedom,” “liberty” and “justice” are ***sites of political struggle between worldviews***. They are words and ideas that different worldviews and their proponents fight over, each one striving to impose its meaning on the word and thereby, to give greater legitimacy to their own particular worldview in the process. As

we shall see, the dominant worldview dominates by its ability to successfully determine the meaning most Americans have of these very important ideas and beliefs.

How Worldview is Produced, Reinforced or Contested

Worldview does not simply exist “in people’s heads.” It exists in, and is produced and reproduced by a multitude of organizations, institutions and social practices. Worldview is found in books, newspapers, advertising, cartoons, music, barroom jokes and graffiti. It is generated and reinforced by formal institutions like universities, Church Sunday Schools and the mass media, and by less formal institutions like street gangs and Friday “happy hours.” It is shaped, reinforced or contested by individuals in their everyday lives and by political parties, labor unions and community groups. Social practice is an extremely powerful force for sustaining and reinforcing or challenging and undermining worldviews.

Examples:

Publishing a book that challenges the benefits of US foreign aid can help undermine the dominant worldview. Giving that book a negative review can help reinforce it.

Giving little girls dolls or little boys guns to play with, or dressing one in pink and the other in blue at an early age teaches the gender roles appropriate to a particular worldview.

Listening in silence to a racist or sexist joke told by another reinforces a particular worldview. Speaking up, challenges it.

No matter what an organizer is doing, she should be conscious of the implications of this work for worldview. She should be constantly asking herself: what worldview ideas, beliefs and values am I reinforcing and/or undermining? Can I do things differently to make my “worldview practice” more effective? (More on this below.)

The Dominant Worldview

To say that there are different worldviews in a given society is not to say that they are of equal weight or importance. Just as power and wealth are unequally distributed in a society’s economy and political system, so, too, some worldviews in that society are privileged over others. In fact, these two realities are intimately connected. **Different worldviews are not**

socially neutral; they are expressions of the interests and objectives of different social groups.

Social groups that dominate a society's economic and political life have a very real interest in maintaining their wealth and power. A worldview that justifies this state of things as "natural" and "just," or as lacking in viable alternatives, is essential to their success.

For these reasons, it has been said that the dominant ideas in every society are the ideas of its dominant social groups. Through their control of social wealth and power these groups organize, finance and promote their particular worldview. They fund universities and think-tanks, influence the mass media and run public schools, train and hire intellectuals and pundits who reflect their views, and sponsor political parties, advocacy groups, social movements, and candidates who share their values. At the same time that this conscious effort to promote the dominant worldview is going on, it is also reinforced by the social structures and practices of society that also reproduce it in numerous ways (discussed earlier).

In the United States, where the wealthy corporate elite dominates, its conservative-corporate worldview is the dominant one. This worldview has as its core a whole range of ideas, beliefs and values that justify, excuse and legitimate our current form of corporate capitalism.

Examples:

The dominant worldview promotes individualism as opposed to collective solutions to social problems. It promotes the "sacredness of private property" because this is the foundation of the wealth and power of its proponents. It proclaims the "universal validity of the free market" because free markets better enable US corporations to dominate the world economy. It champions the acceptance of economic and social inequality because equality is a threat to continuing corporate domination of American life.

How the Dominant Worldview Dominates

If different worldviews express the interests and objectives of different social groups, why do so many Americans who are victims of corporate greed and indifference embrace (ferently or reluctantly) the dominant worldview? Why do many workers advocate "free enterprise," or beneficiaries of public social programs support cutting taxes, or large numbers of the disenfranchised show little interest in civic engagement? Why aren't they looking for an alternative worldview that would reflect their own economic and political

interests? Put another way, **why has the dominant worldview been so successful in getting the dominated to accept it?**

Of course, the fact that the corporate interests control so much of what we see and hear has a lot to do with it, as does the fact that the dominant worldview has grown, developed and been perfected over several centuries. Equally important is the fact that alternative worldviews -- to the extent they exist at all -- don't have their own universities and think-tanks full of highly paid intellectuals to develop them, nor the mass media nor political parties to communicate them to a broader audience. But these are not the only reasons.

As many organizers know from talking to people over the course of a variety of campaigns, even individuals who are extremely unhappy with things the way they are can be reluctant to accept alternative interpretations or courses of action even when they are presented to them.

Examples:

Workers may hate their boss, but reject the idea of joining a union. Whites may know that their congressman is not working for them, but decline to support a better candidate if he is Black or Latino. A tenant may know he is paying too much for a substandard apartment, but be reluctant to consider participating in a rent strike because "it wouldn't make a difference." A man may become active in a progressive organization dedicated to social change and still think his wife or girlfriend should do the housework and take care of the kids.

The dominant worldview succeeds because its true nature is concealed from those who experience it. The dominant worldview is not lived by people as one choice among many, much less as a reflection in the world of ideas and values of the economic and political interests of a narrow spectrum of the population.

Instead, the dominant worldview is lived and experienced as the "spontaneous," "natural" and "obvious" expression the world as it is. It is the commonsense of everyday life, "human nature," "how things are and always have been." **The way that most people growing up in our society not only naturally, spontaneously and routinely accept many elements of the dominant worldview, but actually think of them as their "own" ideas and beliefs is the secret of the dominant worldview's success.** What we have here, as one commentator has remarked, is "politics naturalized to be experienced as culture."

Hegemony

Social scientists studying how the dominant worldview dominates have agreed upon a word to describe this process - hegemony. Hegemony is when subordinate social groups in a society voluntarily consent to their own subordination by accepting and acting on the worldview of the dominant social group.

Hegemony works through a number of mechanisms. Some of the most important of these are the ability of the dominant worldview to:

- Present private corporate interests and values as the “public good;”
- Determine what issues, options and questions are on society’s agenda, and which are excluded from public consideration;
- Block or limit the space within which alternative worldviews can develop;
- Establish mental “givens” and social routines that people accept and follow, even when they don’t necessarily believe in them.

At the core of the dominant worldview are the values and ideas mentioned earlier that serve to reproduce social inequality and the wealth and power of America’s corporate elite. But the way this worldview serves their interests is concealed by the manner in which it presents itself. This presentation links those narrow private corporate interests and self-serving beliefs to the most cherished myths, values and beliefs of our society and its people. **Its purpose is to present the proponents of the dominant worldview and their values as the incarnation of all that is best about America.**

The dominant worldview connects individualism, “free enterprise” and the pursuit of personal wealth to patriotism, freedom, personal independence and the pursuit of happiness. The combination of these elements constitute the “American way of life” and our national heritage – this is the language which the dominant worldview employs to present the corporate beliefs and values it represents as the “public good.”

Through an endless series of connections like these, the dominant worldview works to dominate and influence every aspect of how Americans think about the world and themselves. Its goal is to monopolize and direct the public discourse in a manner favorable to corporate interests and to absorb, neutralize or isolate potentially oppositional ideas and values. The dominant worldview in this country has been extremely successful in this regard.

Examples:

The counter-culture movement in the 1960s started out as a rejection of the dominant society and its worldview. By the mid-1970s, its oppositional dynamic had been effectively neutralized, its values becoming just another lifestyle issue, readily seized upon by corporations to market "hippie" and "New Age" products.

Starting with the Reagan presidency, "liberalism" became a dirty word in the American political lexicon. Many a politician risked political suicide identifying openly with liberalism. In this manner, an entire political tradition that had once been "mainstream" was effectively marginalized.

This last example is significant because it points out an important weakness of hegemony. The dominant social groups in any society are never entirely unified in their interests, their policy agendas or their sense of how to articulate these interests and agendas through worldview. As a result, struggles within and between these groups are reflected in struggles over the content and language of the dominant worldview. Struggles such as the fight between "liberalism" and "conservatism." These struggles can reveal contradictions within the dominant worldview, as well as highlight how it functions to the benefit of wealth and privilege, thereby demystifying hegemony to some extent.

Another important aspect of the dominant worldview's attempt to effectively monopolize public discourse is its ability to determine what issues, options and questions are on society's policy agenda, and which are excluded from public consideration.

Examples:

Privatization of public utilities and services is constantly on the agenda; public management of them is not. Increased control of health care by the private sector is on the agenda; national health care is not. Slashing social programs is on; labor law reform is off.

The same dynamic operates in the way the dominant worldview tries to determine the relevance of people's options for civic participation. Voting is acceptable; civil disobedience is not. Working "within the system" is seen as relevant; working to change the system is dismissed as utopian or even dangerous.

This control of the public policy agenda goes on in worldview, but it is a profoundly material process, rooted in institutions and infrastructures. It operates in government, in politics, in the media, and through political parties, community organizations and unions. It is even reflected in the hopes, dreams and expectations of everyday life.

Another effect of the dominant worldview's totalizing dynamic is to squeeze out the intellectual spaces within which any alternative worldview might grow and develop. The dominant worldview communicates a clear message - sure, things aren't perfect, but our social system is the best possible one we can expect, and there are no real alternatives to it. Maybe we can improve our own individual positions within it, or even change specific policies and institutions here and there for the better, but an alternative social order is neither possible nor realistic.

The sense that, whatever problems it has, there is no real alternative to the present system leads to another very important strength of the dominant worldview. **This is its ability to operate without requiring people to actively or fully embrace its ideas and values.** Acquiescence, passivity, resignation or cynicism, are far more common responses on the part of a great many people. A person doesn't have to believe what the dominant worldview is actually saying, as long as he/she goes along with the social behaviors that are required to keep the system operating smoothly.

Examples:

There are individuals who disregard their Church's teachings in their daily lives, but nonetheless consider themselves Christians. For them, general allegiance to the Christian worldview and regular Church attendance are enough.

People don't pay income tax because they sincerely believe the government's admonitions that they should. People pay income tax because it is a routine, conditioned activity that we have grown to accept and live with.

Don't Be Discouraged!

Given the strength of the corporate elite, and the power and influence it is able to exercise -- in no small part through its worldview -- the tasks facing progressives may appear overwhelming. But despair should not be on our agenda. The dominant worldview is not invincible and it can be successfully challenged. To do so, however, requires an understanding of how hegemony is vulnerable, careful planning, and concerted political action.

Some reasons not to be discouraged:

- ✓ Wherever there is domination, there is also resistance and opposition;
- ✓ In a society characterized by gross disparities in wealth and power, there will always be people for whom the dominant worldview rings hollow in important ways;
- ✓ The domination of the dominant worldview is never total. That is, it never fully succeeds in either eliminating rival worldviews nor in fully controlling the political and social agenda;
- ✓ The dominant worldview is also unable to fully connect its core elements to popular ideas and values like freedom, justice and patriotism. The potential always exists for an alternative worldview to more effectively connect these powerful ideals to its own core elements and turn them against the dominant worldview.

Countering Hegemony: Elements for a Successful Alternative Worldview

A combination of five essential elements seems to be required for an alternative worldview to develop, and be able to mount a serious challenge to the dominant worldview.¹ These are:

1. A serious contradiction or gross discrepancy between the ideas, beliefs or options presented by the dominant worldview and the reality it claims to describe;
2. A target audience that, because of its social position, identity or experience is objectively situated to see these contradictions/discrepancies more clearly than other social groups;
3. Responses to perceived contradictions in the dominant worldview that contain fragments of an alternative one;
4. An appropriately developed alternative system of ideas, beliefs and courses of action that challenges the dominant worldview and seems to more accurately represent the interests and understandings of the target audience;
5. A group or social movement capable of developing the alternative worldview, taking it to the target audience as part of a political struggle and organizing/mobilizing them to make it a material force for social change.

Let us look at each of these elements in turn.

¹ This section of the paper draws on the work of Ian Lustick.

I. Serious contradictions or gross discrepancies between the ideas, beliefs or options presented by the dominant worldview and the reality it claims to describe constantly arise

This point is pretty straightforward. No matter how hard the dominant worldview strives to make sense of reality by means of its framework of ideas, beliefs and options, events often take an unexpected turn that reveals contradictions or discrepancies between the explanation and what needs explaining.

The dominant worldview, for example, offers a largely optimistic picture of life in the United States. Yet the stubborn realities experienced by people in their own lives often show them the extent to which that picture is false, or at least dangerously out of focus. Immediate perceptions, particular events, or sudden changes in circumstances can all point up discrepancies between what the dominant worldview tells us about the world and what we ourselves experience, causing us to question accepted wisdom and commonsense.

Example:

The dominant worldview tells us that ours are the best medical and legal systems in the world. But get arrested or find yourself with a serious medical problem and no insurance, and you will quickly discover the extent to which these systems seriously fail to live up to the dominant worldview's relatively rosy picture of them.

The same problem of contradictions or discrepancies can arise in relation to individual and collective action. The dominant worldview constantly communicates the message that regular people can't change things by themselves. Leave "changing things" to voting, or to the power of the market, or to the "experts." Examples of effective community organizing, a victorious labor strike or a successful reform movement can point out the discrepancy between this message and people's own experience with social change.

II. Some groups in our society, because of their social position, identity or experience are able to more easily see these contradictions/discrepancies than others

This point follows from the previous one. Depending upon a person's class, race, gender and immigration status, one is either more or less likely to find oneself in situations where the contradiction between what the dominant

worldview says and how reality is experienced can present itself. That is to say, social groups that are oppressed, discriminated against or marginalized in our society will more frequently find themselves in situations where there is a discrepancy between what the dominant worldview indicates is true or right and their own experience than will more privileged sections of our population.

Example:

White middleclass Americans with health insurance are much less likely to find themselves in situations that reveal the discrepancies between what the dominant worldview tells us about our health care and legal systems than African Americans, immigrants or anyone who is poor.

This does not mean that oppressed and marginalized people will necessarily see the contradictions or discrepancies that arise from the situations they find themselves in, much less that they will respond to them by looking for or embracing the an alternative worldview. It is just that they have more opportunities to do so.

Nor does it mean that individuals from more privileged backgrounds can't see the contradictions present in the dominant worldview – we all know people like this who have done so. The point is that, as social aggregates, **oppressed and marginalized people are much more likely, given their own experiences, to approach certain elements of the dominant worldview from a critical or at least a questioning perspective.**

Examples:

African Americans are most likely to see the discrepancy between the claim that institutional racism is a thing of the past and its continuing reality. Many are less likely to see the interconnection between racism and homophobia. Likewise, white gay men are more likely to be aware of the discrepancy between claims of equality and discrimination against gays, but not to grasp the connection between that discrimination and institutional racism. There is a much greater chance that Black gays and lesbians, on the other hand, will understand this connection and be open to elements of an alternative worldview that articulates it.

III. Responses to perceived contradictions in the dominant worldview can contain fragments of an alternative one

Just as many different situations, experiences and struggles can reveal contradictions in society and in the dominant worldview, so there can be a multitude of different mental responses to them.

Examples:

Workers who lose their jobs because an employer relocates the factory to a foreign country where wages are lower represent one situation that reveals the contradictions of our society. There is no guarantee, however, that these workers will respond to their situation in a specific way. Some may find that it strengthens their attachment to an element of the dominant worldview: foreigners are to blame for taking American jobs. Others may find in it a justification for greater cynicism and resignation. Still others, however, may begin to question a system that allows or even encourages corporate mobility at the expense of workers' rights.

The last example is pertinent because one important response to perceived contradictions in the dominant society and/or its worldview can be the emergence of a "fragment" of an alternative one. Everyone can think of examples of people who largely go along with the dominant worldview in many respects, but have a different perspective on one or more issues. As a result of a particular experience or series of experiences they had, they began to see things differently.

Examples:

A wealthy individual who otherwise supports the "free enterprise" system believes that health care should not be run on a private basis as the result of experiencing how our health care system treated his mentally ill daughter.

The self-proclaimed patriotic mother and supporter of the US military featured in Fahrenheit 9/11 who came to oppose the US war in Iraq as a result of the combat death of her son.

It is important to note that these fragments are only that - fragments. While there is no guarantee that they will become anything more, they contain the **potential** for becoming something much more. Worldview fragments provide valuable opportunities for engaging people in discussions "where they are at" about ideas, values and options. They can be a starting point for helping expand people's break with the dominant worldview on one issue to

an ever widening opposition that ultimately leads them to look for and adopt a progressive alternative worldview.

However, this is never an easy or an automatic process. And, for these individual breaks to become a mass phenomenon requires two additional elements – a developed alternative worldview and an organizational infrastructure to systematically promote it.

IV. An alternative worldview that seems to more accurately articulate the experience and promote the interests of oppressed and marginalized social groups can challenge the dominant worldview

The task of developing a successful progressive alternative to the dominant worldview poses a number of challenges. First, the alternative must appear to provide a more accurate interpretation of reality -- “how things really work” – to the target audience. Second, it must present them with a moral and ethical framework with which to judge events and what people do. Third, an alternative worldview must be able to connect its core elements to fundamental beliefs like patriotism, freedom and the pursuit of happiness in such a way that the latter become the realization of the former.

Worldviews help people make sense of the world. People won't give up on the dominant worldview unless and until they learn -- from their own experience – these basic realities about it:

- That it conceals more about their reality in our society than it explains;
- That this concealment serves the interests of the wealthy and powerful, rather than their own interests;
- That understanding who they are, what their true interests are and how best to fight for them requires an alternative worldview.

An alternative worldview must be able to challenge the dominant one on the meaning of many of our society's most important ideas, beliefs and values. As noted earlier, “patriotism,” “freedom,” “liberty” and “justice” are sites of contention between worldviews. To be successful, an alternative worldview must redefine them in light of its core values in a way that can resonate with our target audiences.

Example:

A progressive alternative worldview should have among its core elements a strong commitment to community as well as to the individual, defining the interests of the two as inter-related. The pursuit of happiness, understood through the lens of this worldview would say that true personal success and fulfillment can only be achieved through endeavors that benefit the community at large, rather than at the expense of others.

Finally, an alternative worldview must be practical and useful. It must provide what appear to be realistic options and courses of action to the target audiences that appear reasonably calculated to advance their immediate interests and long-term goals.

A progressive alternative worldview does not spring “full blown” out of any particular occurrence or particular struggle. Much less can it emerge from an intellectual exercise divorced from the actual struggles of those social groups in our society whose interests it seeks to express. Rather, as discussed above, elements or fragments of an alternative worldview are constantly being generated and tested by real life events and struggles for social justice. Any successful progressive alternative worldview must be open to accepting these fragments and to connecting them to other pre-existing elements in a dynamic system that deepens and enriches their oppositional content in the process.

V. An organized infrastructure is necessary for the further development of an alternative worldview and its close connection to a broad-based movement for social change

Elements of an alternative worldview may be brilliantly developed and worked out in great detail, but unless and until they are taken up by large groups of people as their own, they will not pose a threat to the corporate power structure and their worldview.

As discussed above, corporate power employs a wealth of institutions, organizations and social systems to organize, finance and promote its worldview. This infrastructure generates systems and ideas, translates them into policy, program and strategies, frames debates and perfects messages. An alternative worldview needs its own infrastructure if it is to successfully compete. Of course, lacking the wealth and power of the corporate elite, an alternative progressive infrastructure will necessarily start out poorer and weaker. It will need to make up in creativity, resourcefulness and militancy what it lacks in tangible assets.

The progressive infrastructure plays five important roles in relation to the development of an alternative hegemony. First, it works closely with target audiences to draw out, make explicit and further develop the elements of alternative worldview that arise out of their own struggles and to connect them to compatible elements developed by other groups in other struggles, past and present. Second, it works to systematize these elements, combining them with ideas and theoretical frames developed by progressive think tanks, institutes, etc. with the aim of creating a comprehensive alternative worldview.

Third, the progressive infrastructure works with communities to translate elements of the alternative worldview into policy, program and strategies for political action, and to develop popular education materials, frames and messages about them. Fourth, it privileges the elements of the alternative worldview and the political program derived from them in building powerful grassroots social movements and organizations. Finally, it works with these movements and organizations to continuously review the results of these worldview efforts, refining, correcting and further developing them in the process.

Example:

A progressive organization involved in an affordable housing campaign could work with tenants to develop a vision and values of housing as a right outside the market. To do so, it would draw on fragments of an alternative worldview arising out of their own experiences and on lessons from contemporary and past housing struggles in other communities. Its associated think-tank would develop a comprehensive analysis of the current housing crisis, its historical roots and economic and political causes. Political and tenant activists would translate vision, values and analysis into a political program, using it to develop local campaigns aimed at a target audience of tenants and small homeowners. The progressive media would carry articles on the campaigns and activists would develop popular education sessions on the issue, issuing flyers and other materials, and training organizers about strategy, tactics and goals. Housing activists, tenants and others involved in the campaign would evaluate the work and provide feedback on the worldview pieces to the progressive infrastructure that would be used to modify, further develop and refine the worldview components for future efforts.

Summing Up: In Place of a Conclusion

This discussion paper has tried to address a number of complex and challenging issues on a difficult subject – worldview – briefly, and in a

popular way. As a result, there is much that wasn't covered, and many nuances that had to be omitted. What follows is a succinct ten-point summation of what was presented.

- 1) Worldview is an essential aspect of all human activity; there is almost nothing we do as human beings that we do not think about. Through worldview (ideas, values and options for action) we understand who we are, the world we live in and our (actual and potential) relationships with it. Worldviews are essential glues that bind groups and societies together.
- 2) These worldview elements (ideas, values and options) do not exist in isolation, but in complex systems. The way the elements are linked together in these systems gives them their meaning and significance.
- 3) Worldview exists in, and is produced and reproduced by a multitude of organizations, institutions and social practices. These can also be key sites for challenging and undermining worldviews and worldview systems.
- 4) Different worldviews are not socially neutral; they are expressions of the interests and objectives of different social groups. The dominant worldview in every society is the worldview of its dominant economic and political groups.
- 5) In the United States, where the wealthy corporate elite dominates, its conservative-corporate worldview is the dominant one. This worldview serves their interests by justifying and legitimating our current form of corporate capitalism.
- 6) The dominant worldview works through fostering hegemony. Hegemony is where subordinate social groups in a society voluntarily consent to their own subordination by accepting and acting on the worldview of the dominant social groups.
- 7) Hegemony works through a number of mechanisms. It present corporate interests and values as the "public good;" determines what issues are on society's agenda; establishes social routines that people accept and follow, even when they don't necessarily believe in them; and blocks the development of alternative worldviews.
- 8) Most people growing up in our society not only naturally, spontaneously and routinely accept many elements of the dominant worldview, but actually think of them as their "own" ideas and beliefs. This is the secret of the dominant worldview's success.

- 9) Notwithstanding its power and influence, the domination of the dominant worldview is never total. It never succeeds in completely controlling what people think, fully dictating the political and social agenda, or eliminating rival worldviews. On the contrary, fragments of alternative worldviews constantly emerge.
- 10) A serious challenge to the dominant worldview can be mounted. This requires the combination of five interrelated elements. They are:
- A serious contradiction or gross discrepancy between the ideas, beliefs or options presented by the dominant worldview and the reality it claims to describe;
 - A target audience that, because of its oppressed and/or marginalized social position, identity or experience is objectively situated to see these contradictions/ discrepancies and act upon them;
 - Responses to perceived contradictions in the dominant worldview that contain fragments of an alternative one;
 - An appropriately developed alternative worldview that challenges the dominant one and seems to more accurately represent the interests and understandings of the target audience;
 - A group or social movement capable of developing the alternative worldview, taking it to the target audience as part of a political struggle and organizing/mobilizing them to make it a material force for social change.