

Click on the video above to watch it. Download the class one curriculum as a pdf here or see it below:

Course 1: How Social Transformation Occurs

May 1, 2018

Created by Daniel Cooper Bermudez, Margaret Flowers, Roni Murray, Emanuel Sferios and Kevin Zeese, Popular Resistance

Roles of Individuals and Organizations

We review the four roles that individuals and organizations play in a social movement and what makes them more or less effective. We also discuss how coalitions function and basic principles for making them effective. Finally, we discuss the non-profit industrial complex.

Slides:

<p style="text-align: center;">Goals of lecture</p> <p>After this lecture, you will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Describe the four roles in social movements.• Identify effective versus ineffective practices.• Discuss how coalitions function.• Understand strengths and weaknesses of Professional Opposition Organizations. <p style="text-align: right;"></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Four roles in Social Movements</p> <p>Principles:</p> <p>All four are necessary.</p> <p>Individuals and organizations can play more than one role.</p> <p>People and organizations may be best suited for a particular role.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"></p>
--	---

The Advocate (Reformer)

- Transmits movement analyses and goals to authorities.
- Performs legal efforts – lobbying, courts, etc.
- Works to create and expand new laws and policies.
- Acts as a watchdog to ensure the new laws and policies are funded and carried out.

Childhood – sought out authorities to solve problems.



The Helper (Citizen)

- Upholds a widely-held vision of the democratic, good society.
- Demonstrates ordinary people support social change.
- Gives the movement legitimacy.
- Makes it harder for authorities to discredit the movement.
- Reduces the potential for violent attitudes and actions.

Childhood – works to solve the problem through personal efforts.



The Organizer (Change Agent)

- Supports the involvement of large numbers of people in the process of addressing social problems.
- Promotes a new social and political majority consensus favoring positive solutions.
- Promotes democratic principles and human values.
- Supports the development of coalitions.
- Counters the actions of authorities.
- Moves society from reform to social change by promoting a paradigm shift.

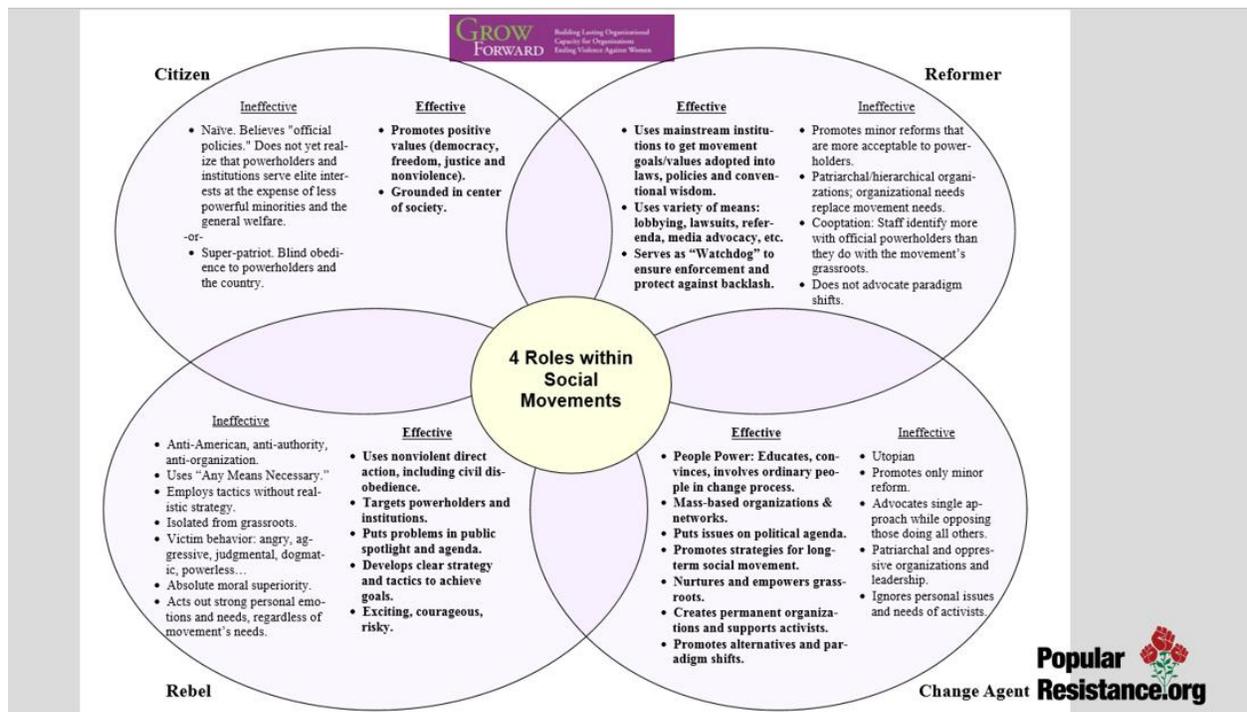
Childhood – works to solve the problem collectively.



The Rebel

- Puts issues on the social and political agenda through dramatic, nonviolent actions.
- Dramatically illustrates social issues.
- Shows how institutions and official authorities violate public trust by causing and perpetuating critical social problems.
- Forces society to face its problems.
- Promotes democracy.

Childhood – raises a commotion to pressure powerholders to act.



Building Coalitions

Unite by a common goal.

Different groups play different roles.

Maintain basic communication and coordination with each other.

Respect autonomy of different groups.

Each group acts to optimize its strengths.



Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing

1. Be inclusive
2. Emphasis on bottom-up organizing
3. Let people speak for themselves
4. Work together in solidarity and mutuality
5. Build just relationships
6. Commitment to self-transformation



Conflicts

Important to maintain solidarity and not let power holders divide the movement. Conflict can be constructive.

Conflict can take a stagnant group and move it to a stronger level.

Three phases of groups:

1. **Honeymoon** – superficial polite efforts to get the job done.
2. **Chaos** – fighting.
3. **Community** – creates a high-performance team, happens when members accept diversity on a deeper level.



Professional Opposition Organizations “POOs”

The professional opposition organizations are centralized formal organizations, often with national offices in Washington, D.C., which try to win achievable reforms through mainstream political channels such as the electoral process, Congress, and the courts. They are hierarchical, with a board of directors, strong staff, and a mass membership that carries out nationally decided programs. These efforts have little success because they do not have sufficient public support to provide the political clout required to create change.



Non-Profit Industrial Complex

Limitations:

Funding may dictate their positions.

May be more likely to compromise or protect status quo.

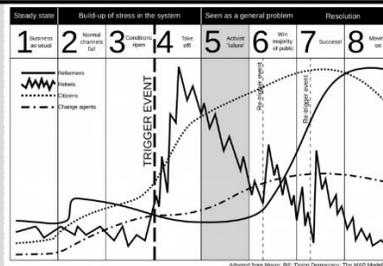
May function as ineffective reformers

Mainstream organizations that can be useful to the movement for resources, exposure, expertise and access.

Role of the movement is to pull them towards a position of principled dissent.



Roles throughout the Stages



The four roles of activism (by Andreas Speck, from War Resisters' International)

The second central concept of the MAP are the four roles of activism. Each of these roles has its own relevance, which can shift through the different stages of a movement. But all roles need to be present and work efficiently for the movement to succeed. In addition, each of the roles can be filled in an effective or ineffective way.

The rebel is the kind of activist many people identify with social movements. Through nonviolent direct actions and publicly saying “no”, rebels put the problem on the political agenda. But they can be ineffective by identifying themselves as the lonely voice on society's fringe and playing the militant radical.

Rebels are important in Stages 3 and 4 and after any trigger event, but they usually move over to other ripening movements in Stage 6 or later.

Reformers are often badly valued in movements, but they are the ones who prove the failure of existing channels or promote alternative solutions. However, they often tend to believe in the institutions or propose reforms too small to consolidate the movement's success.

Citizens make sure the movement doesn't lose contact with its main constituency. They show that the movement acts at the centre of society (teachers, physicians, and farmers participating in the Gorleben protests), and protect it against oppression. They can be ineffective when they still believe in the powerholders' claim to serve public interests.

The change agent is the fourth and somehow key role in any movement. They promote education and convince the majority of society, they organise grassroots networks and promote long-term strategies. They too can be ineffective by promoting utopian visions or advocating only a single approach. They also tend to ignore personal issues and needs of activists.

Many activists and groups identify primarily with only one or two of the four roles, because each involves different emotions and attitudes, beliefs, ideologies, sources of funding, political and, often, organisational arrangements. Activists can be critical - or even hostile - to those playing other roles. Activists tend to consider the roles they play as the most important and politically correct one, while viewing other roles as naive, politically incorrect, ineffective, or, even, as the enemy.

While there are certainly tensions between the different roles, recognising that each has its own value within a social movement is important to achieve success.

Coalition Building (Brad Spangler, Beyond Intractability)

What is Coalition Building?

A coalition is a temporary alliance or partnering of groups in order to achieve a common purpose or to engage in joint activity. Coalition building is the process by which parties (individuals, organizations, or nations) come together to form a

coalition. Forming coalitions with other groups of similar [values](#), interests, and goals allows members to combine their resources and become more powerful than when they each acted alone.

Why is Coalition Building Important?

The "ability to build coalitions is a basic skill for those who wish to attain and maintain power and influence." Through coalitions, weaker parties to a conflict can increase their power. Coalition building is the "primary mechanism through which disempowered parties can develop their power base and thereby better defend their interests." Coalitions may be built around any issue and at any scale of society, from neighborhood issues to international conflict.

The formation of a coalition can shift the balance of power in a conflict situation and alter the future course of the conflict. People who pool their resources and work together are generally more powerful and more able to advance their interests, than those who do not. Coalition members may be able to resist certain threats or even begin to make counter threats. Generally, low-power groups are much more successful in defending their interests against the dominant group if they work together as a coalition. This is certainly more effective than fighting among themselves and/or fighting the dominant group alone.

How Do You Build a Successful Coalition?

Building a successful coalition involves a series of steps. The early steps center on the recognition of compatible interests. Sometimes this happens naturally. Other times potential coalition members must be persuaded that forming a coalition would be to their benefit. To do this one needs to demonstrate

1. that your goals are similar and compatible,
2. that working together will enhance both groups' abilities to reach their goals, and
3. that the benefits of coalescing will be greater than the costs.

What are the Benefits of Coalitions?

The benefits of coalition building go beyond increased power in relation to the opposition. Coalition building may also strengthen the members internally,

enabling them to be more effective in other arenas. Some other key advantages to coalition building include:

- A coalition of organizations can win on more fronts than a single organization working alone and increase the potential for success.
- A coalition can bring more expertise and resources to bear on complex issues, where the technical or personnel resources of any one organization would not be sufficient.
- A coalition can develop new leaders. As experienced group leaders step forward to lead the coalition, openings are created for new leaders in the individual groups. The new, emerging leadership strengthens the groups and the coalition.
- A coalition will increase the impact of each organization's effort. Involvement in a coalition means there are more people who have a better understanding of your issues and more people advocating for your side.
- A coalition will increase available resources. Not only will physical and financial resources be increased, but each group will gain access to the contacts, connections, and relationships established by other groups.
- A coalition may raise its members' public profiles by broadening the range of groups involved in a conflict. The activities of a coalition are likely to receive more media attention than those of any individual organization.
- A coalition can build a lasting base for change. Once groups unite, each group's vision of change broadens and it becomes more difficult for opposition groups to disregard the coalition's efforts as dismissible or as special interests.
- A successful coalition is made up of people who have never worked together before. Coming from diverse backgrounds and different viewpoints, they have to figure out how to respect each other's differences and get something big accomplished. They have to figure out how each group and its representatives can make their different but valuable contributions to the overall strategy for change. This helps avoid duplication of efforts and improve communication among key players.

Disadvantages of Working in Coalition

- Member groups can get distracted from other work. If that happens, non-coalition efforts may become less effective and the organization may be weakened overall.
- A coalition may only be as strong as its weakest link. Each member organization will have different levels of resources and experience as well as different internal problems. Organizations that provide a lot of resources and leadership may get frustrated with other members' shortcomings.
- To keep a coalition together, it is often necessary to cater to one side more than another, especially when negotiating tactics. If a member prefers high-profile confrontational tactics, they might dislike subdued tactics, thinking they are not exciting enough to mobilize support. At the same time, the low profile, conciliatory members might be alarmed by the confrontation advocates, fearing they will escalate the conflict and make eventual victory more difficult to obtain.
- The democratic principle of one group-one vote may not always be acceptable to members with a lot of power and resources. The coalition must carefully define the relationships between powerful and less-powerful groups.
- Individual organizations may not get credit for their contributions to a coalition. Members that contribute a lot may think they did not receive enough credit.

The Bottom Line

Deciding whether to join a coalition is both a rational and an emotional decision. Rationally, one must consider whether one's effectiveness and one's ability to attain one's own goals would be enhanced or harmed by participation in a coalition. Emotionally, one must consider whether one likes the other people or groups, and whether cooperating with them would be easy, or more trouble than it is worth. Usually when two people, groups, or organizations' goals are compatible, forming a coalition is to both groups' benefit. But organizational styles, cultures, and relationships must be considered as well before any choices are made.

Suggested Reading:

[What Role Were You Born to Play in Social Change?](#) By George Lakey, 2016.

[Building Our Muscles for Conflict](#) by George Lakey, 2013.

[Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing](#), 1996.