

Four Roles of Social Movements

CITIZEN

Effective

- Promotes positive American values, principles, and symbols, e.g., democracy, freedom, justice, nonviolence
- Normal citizen
- Grounded in the center of society
- Promotes active citizen-based society where citizens act with disinterest to assure the common good
- The active citizen is the source of legitimate political power
- Acts on "confirmatory bias" concept
- Examples: King and Mandela

Ineffective

- Naive citizen: Believes the "official policies" and does not realize that the powerholders and institutions serve special elite interests at the expense of the majority and the common good
- OR
- Super-patriot: Gives automatic obedience to powerholders and the country

REFORMER

Effective

- Parliamentary: Uses official mainstream system and institutions – e.g., courts, legislature, city hall, corporations – to get the movement's goals, values, alternatives adopted into official laws, policies and conventional wisdom
- Uses a variety of means: lobbying, lawsuits, referenda, rallies, candidates, etc.
- Professional Opposition Organizations (POOs) are the key movement agencies
- Watchdogs successes to assure enforcement, expand successes, and protect against backlash
- POOs nurture and support grassroots

Ineffective

- POOs: Dominator/patriarchal model of organizational structure and leadership
- Organizational maintenance over movement needs
- Dominator style undermines movement democracy and disempowers grassroots
- POO "Realistic Politics": Promotes minor reforms rather than social changes
- POO co-optation: Staff identify more with official powerholders than with movement grassroots

REBEL

Effective

- Protest Says "NO" to violations of positive, widely held human values
- Nonviolent direct action and attitude; demonstrations, rallies, and marches including civil disobedience
- Target: Powerholders and their institutions, e.g., government, corporations
- Puts issue and policies in public spotlight and on society's agenda
- Actions have strategy and tactics
- Empowered, exciting, courageous, risky, center of public attention
- Holds relative, not absolute, truth

Ineffective

- Authoritarian anti-authoritarian
- Anti-American, anti-authority, antiorganization structures and rules
- Self-identifies as militant radical, a lonely voice on society's fringe
- Any means necessary: Disruptive tactics and violence to property and people
- Tactics without realistic strategy
- Isolated from grassroots mass-base
- Victim behavior: Angry, dogmatic, aggressive, and powerless
- Ideological totalism: Holds absolute truth and moral, political superiority
- Strident, arrogant egocentric; self needs before movement needs
- Irony of negative rebel: Negative rebel similar to agent provocateur

CHANGE AGENT

Effective

- Organizes People Power and the Engaged Citizenry, creating participatory democracy for the common good
- Educates and involves the majority of citizens and whole society on the issue
- Involves pre-existing mass-based grassroots organizations, networks, coalitions, and activists on the issue
- Promotes strategies and tactics for waging long-term social movement and Stage Six
- Creates and supports grassroots activism and organizations for the long term
- Puts issue on society's political agenda
- Counters new powerholder strategies
- Promotes alternatives
- Promotes a paradigm shift

Ineffective

- Too utopian: Promotes visions of perfectionist alternatives in isolation from practical political and social action
- Promotes only minor reforms
- Movement leadership and organizations based on patriarchy and control rather than participatory democracy
- Tunnel vision: Advocates single issue
- Ignores personal issues and needs of activists
- Unconnected to social and political social change and paradigm shift