

# Social change

Sociology



The Value of Collective Action in Working toward Social Change THE VALUE OF COLLECTIVE ACTION IN WORKING TOWARD SOCIAL CHANGE Collective action can be defined as actions that seek to improve the conditions of a group in terms of power, status, or others. The group's representative enacts these. The term collective action possesses theories and formulations in most areas of social sciences, which include; political science, economics, psychology, and sociology (Sandler, 2010). Collective action, in explaining social movements for change, has involved the examination of factors that lead social integration and those that lead to conflict and deviance. I as a sociology student, collective action has involved explanation of things that are dissimilar or similar to collective actions in different places and different times. Collective action theories have been emphatic on how group behavior can be linked to institutions in some sense. Through learning about collective action and how it can be linked to social change, it has been possible to synthesize two questions from the class literature. First, what preconditions exist during the formation of an interest group? Second, on the formation of an interest group, how can one ensure that the various members contribute to the promotion of social change and wellbeing of the group? With regards to the first question, people form groups so as to achieve things that would, otherwise, not be possible by single individuals via their own interests. The pursuit of self-interest, in the classical situation of the prisoner's dilemma, can lead to inferior outcomes for the players (Hardin, 2012). This logic is also applicable to a large group where a group could be set up to pursue collective action through cooperation to improve their payoff. In addition, I have also learnt that there could be sub-groups that can still benefit were they to provide the full costs aimed at accomplishing the benefits of the

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group. A good example I have learnt about how collective action can bring social change is in companies coming together to lobby for tariffs from their own interests as they create benefits for other companies in their industry (Hardin, 2012). Through this, they bring social change. As a result of my study, I have also come to learn about the China household responsibility reform system of the late 70s. Farmers initiated local reform and were forced to endure political risks because they were willing to abandon the commune system that they felt was inefficient and were willing to improve their wellbeing (Hardin, 2012). The local community's close-knit nature meant that betrayal of the group's collective action would lead to the individual not being forgiven, and he would live his entire life in misery. This taught me that, through collective action, it is possible to effect social change even under pressure of recrimination. Collective action ensures that bystanders do not have the ability to create trouble. The second question's answer was very enlightening during my studies. Apart from collective action groupings helping in the improvement of individual welfare, other factors contribute to the group on the creation. The by-product theory has been suggestive of the fact that, sometimes, groups can succeed in the realization of their goals simply via the stimulation of behaviors that are grouping oriented (Hardin, 2012). For example, the liberation of women movement benefited from women's leagues that were created, originally, from social life. Existence of groups gives individuals the convenience of coordination and gathering of power to fight for the rights of their members and effect social change. One issue that I have not yet ascertained is whether the size of the collective action group affects the latency of the group or not. With some suggestions, which increase in the number of individuals leads to some being more

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reluctant to pay for the group's common good, I believe that if returns to scale increases, the groups can be led by big players with all gaining from the social change effected by collective action. My experience in collective action has aided my ability to create social change. I have learnt that multiple individuals can benefit from collective action; in addition, it is not plausible that I can undertake social change and solve societal problems alone. The rational choice is that I need to be part of a collective group to take collective action that will share the cost. However, it is essential to ensure that the rational choice of individuals does not give those with more resources a heavier burden when providing public good (Sandler, 2010). The poorer individuals may have no choice but to opt to be free riders, benefiting sans contributions to the provision. To effect social change, it is important that this underproduction is discouraged and that individuals should carry their own weight. Institutional design is also vital in collective action. The design of the collective group has to be done with the aim of reducing failure from the collaboration (Sandler, 2010). It is only this way that effective social change from collective action can be done. References Sandler, Todd.

(2010). *Collective action : theory and applications*. Ann Arbor : University of Michigan Press. Hardin, Russell. (2012). *Collective action*. Baltimore : Johns Hopkins Univ. Press.