

Excerpts from sample written reflections – Pilot ACE course Fall 2010

SOC392W Social Movements – Dr. Lee M. Miller

“Since working with Habitat for Humanity I have been able to better understand how collective behavior works. The readings have been helpful but it really takes effect when you become a part of a group in the community. This is evident each time I walk onto a construction site and see familiar and new volunteers. Habitat for Humanity demonstrates collective behavior each time we are at a site, ReStore building or working in the office. In the short time that we have been with Habitat for Humanity I have been able to recruit some friends in joining me on construction sites. It excites me to know that all it took was for me to share my experience from Habitat for Humanity to get others motivated to volunteer. As I have been working with Habitat for Humanity it has shown me that when people in the community join together with a positive purpose, it can be a social movement that attracts people of all walks of life. It’s awesome to know and to be a part of an organization that is willing to give back to the community in making so many dreams a reality.”

JM-volunteering at Habitat for Humanity, Bryan/College Station

“I have ... always wanted to get more involved however, like many other people I just kept searching for reasons I could not volunteer. I would say things like: when the kids are grown I will have more time to volunteer. Or I am just not skilled enough to have anything to offer at this time. And plus, I never really took the time out of my busy schedule to find out what kinds of causes I might be interested in supporting or volunteering for. So I felt like I was doing my part when I donated money to charities that crossed my way and to my church, I participate in our “sponsor a family for the holiday’s” every year, I donate household items and clothing, and I donate can foods for the food pantry. I was okay with this because it was doing good deeds but not having to make any sacrifices for anything. But, thanks to my Social Movements course I have had no more room for excuses to hide behind because in order to earn credit in this course I had to do volunteer work. ..”

MG-volunteering at Christ the Good Shepherd Church, Spring

“The reading material for this Social Movements class has aided in my interpretation of the SAAFE House, as well as other organizations and institutions. The concepts related to the class have helped me in thinking critically about the origins of social movements and collective behaviors, as well as identifying elements that allow for the establishment of a successful, recognizable social organization. The concepts covered in this class and in the text also can be applied to other institutions, such as businesses and community-led activities; these institutions are similar to organizations that can be described as socially-conscious. Both require a problem that needs to be overcome and requires a

capacity to achieve set goals. In these ways, Social Movements can aid myself and all sociology students in critically assessing social organizations and their participants within many different mediums.”

EW – volunteering at SAAFE House, Huntsville

“When reading a chapter in a text book it is often very difficult to comprehend the reading on a level deeper than face value. It is harder still to apply what is read to everyday life. However, when you take a closer look and start applying it to something specific it helps solidify the concept in your mind. Like the concept of resource mobilization. These are very technical and somewhat confusing terms, but when applied to something familiar their meanings become clear. Then you are able to take a new understanding and apply it to other areas of everyday life. Once I applied the concepts of resources to the organization that I am a part of, I began to really understand what they all mean. I understand better the importance of resources, especially the ones that aren’t very obvious to me such as legitimacy and social networks. This better understanding also helps to bring clarity to the concept of collective behavior. Without resources to back up an organization, the people involved cannot act collectively toward their cause. Also the means of acquiring resources themselves is a form of collective behavior. When people donate money, supplies, or even time, it is collective behavior. When people do work together, such as cooking, cleaning and praying they are engaging in collective behavior. Through working at the Community Outreach Ministry I have grasped just how important collective behavior and resource mobilization are to the continued success of any organization.”

MH – volunteering at West Houston Seventh Day Adventist Community Outreach Ministry

“Volunteering for such a positive program (21st Century Community Learning Center in HISD) has allowed me to apply concepts from this course to current real life situations. 21st Century’s motives can be linked to the concepts I have discussed in this essay: collective behavior, collective action, organization and mobilizing grievances. And, in turn, the readings and lectures of this course have been beneficial for me and allowed me to identify them in present circumstances. Now that I have an understanding for these concepts, along with many others, I am able to easily recognize how they are used daily through programs; and not just programs but also with members in our community. These concepts stressed in Social Movements occur in the community often, and now that I am aware of that and understand these concepts thoroughly I am able to connect them to experiences that I have, such as being a volunteer for the 21st Century program in HISD.”

GG-volunteering at 21st Century Community Learning Center, Huntsville (HISD)
