

Structured Academic Controversy: Settlement House Movement

SAC QUESTION

During the SAC, you and your group will try to answer the following question:

What were the attitudes of settlement house social reformers towards immigrants?

Team A: Settlement house social reformers were generous and helpful.

Team B: Settlement house social reformers were condescending and judgmental.

PROCEDURE

30 minutes With your teammate, read the documents. Find three pieces of evidence which support your side.

10 minutes Team A presents. **BOTH PARTNERS MUST PRESENT!!!**
Team B writes down Team A's arguments and then repeats them back to Team A.

10 minutes Team B presents. **BOTH PARTNERS MUST PRESENT!!!**
Team A down arguments of Team B and then repeats them back to Team B.

10 minutes Everyone **CAN ABANDON** their positions. Groups of 4 attempt to develop a consensus.

Document A: Textbook Excerpts

The Social Gospel

From about 1870 until 1920, reformers in the Social Gospel movement worked to better conditions in cities according to the biblical ideals of charity and justice. An early advocate of the Social Gospel, Washington Gladden, a minister from Columbus, Ohio, tried to apply what he called “Christian law” to social problems. . . .

Walter Rauschenbusch, a Baptist minister who spent nine years serving in a church in one of New York City’s poorest neighborhoods, later led the Social Gospel movement. As he put it, “The Church must either condemn the world and seek to change it, or tolerate the world and conform to it.” Unlike Social Darwinists, Rauschenbusch believed that competition was the cause of many social problems, causing good people to behave badly.

The Settlement House Movement

In a way, the settlement house movement was an offshoot of the Social Gospel movement. It attracted idealistic reformers who believed it was their Christian duty to improve living conditions for the poor. During the late 1800s, reformers such as Jane Addams established settlement houses in poor neighborhoods. In these establishments, middle-class residents lived and helped poor residents, mostly immigrants.

Addams, who opened the famous Hull House in Chicago in 1889, inspired many more such settlements across the country, including the Henry Street Settlement run by Lillian Wald in New York City. The women who ran settlement houses provided everything from medical care, recreation programs, and English classes to hot lunches for factory workers. Their efforts helped shape the social work profession, in which women came to play a major role.

Source: *Appleby, J., Brinkley, A., Broussard, A., McPherson, J., & Ritchie, D., The American Vision, 2003.*

Document B: The Spirit of Youth and the City Streets (Modified)

A large number of dance halls opened in American cities in the early 1900s. The venues offered hours of inexpensive entertainment and were popular among working class young people, many of whom were immigrants. Many social reformers found these dance halls to be inappropriate and pushed to create alternative forms of entertainment for youth, like amusement parks.

One Sunday night at twelve o'clock I had **occasion** to go into a large public dance hall. As I was standing by the rail looking for the girl I had come to find, a young man approached me and quite simply asked me to introduce him to some "nice girl," saying that he did not know anyone there. When I replied that a public dance hall was not the best place in which to look for a nice girl, he said: "But I don't know any other place where there is a chance to meet any kind of a girl. I'm awfully lonesome since I came to Chicago." And then he added rather **defiantly**: "Some nice girls do come here. It's one of the best halls in town." . . .

The public dance halls filled with . . . irresponsible young people in a feverish search for pleasure, are but a sorry substitute for the old dances on the village green in which all of the older people in the village participated. **Chaperonage** then was not a social duty but natural and inevitable. . . .

Let us know the modern city in its . . . wickedness, and then seek to . . . purify it until it shall be free from the grosser temptations which now **beset** the young people who are living in its **tenement** houses and working in its factories.

Source: Excerpt from Jane Addams's book *The Spirit of Youth and the City Streets*, 1909.

Vocabulary

occasion: a reason

defiantly: boldly

chaperonage: adult supervision

beset: to trouble

tenement: run-down and overcrowded apartment

Document C: Dance Halls (Modified)

Louise de Koven Bowen was a social reformer and financial supporter of Hull-House. After Jane Addams's death, Bowen served as president of the Hull-House Association. These are excerpts from an article she wrote about dance halls.

The dances are short—four to five minutes; the intermissions are long—fifteen to twenty minutes; thus **ample** opportunity is given for drinking. . . .

In these same halls obscene language is permitted, and even the girls . . . carry on indecent conversation, using much **profanity**, while the less **sophisticated** girls stand around listening, scandalized but fascinated. . . .

Many of the halls are poorly lighted. There is very little protection in case of fire. . . . A city law should be passed covering the following points: . . .

2. All dance halls should be made to comply with the regulations of the Building and Fire Departments to ensure proper sanitation and adequate fire protection. . . .

3. The sale of liquor in dance halls or in buildings connected with them should be prohibited. . . .

7. No immoral dancing or **familiarity** should be tolerated.

8. People under the influence of liquor or known prostitutes should not be permitted in dance halls. . . .

11. There should be an inspector of dance halls who should have in his department a corps of assistants who would regularly inspect the halls and make reports concerning them to him weekly.

Source: "Dance Halls," Louise de Koven Bowen, published in June 1911.

Vocabulary

ample: more than enough
profanity: indecent language

sophisticated: knowledgeable
familiarity: intimacy between people

Document D: Immigrants and Their Children (Modified)

An Italian girl who has had lessons in cooking will help her mother to connect the entire family with American food and household habits. That the mother has never baked bread in Italy—only mixed it in her own house and then taken it out to the village oven—makes all the more valuable her daughter's understanding of the complicated cooking stove. The same thing is true of the girl who learns to sew, and more than anything else, perhaps, of the girl who receives the first simple instruction in the care of little children—that skillful care which every tenement-house baby requires if he is to live through his second summer. . . .

Through civic instruction in the public schools, the Italian woman slowly becomes urbanized . . . and the habits of her entire family were **modified**. The public schools in the immigrant neighborhoods deserve all the praise as Americanizing agencies.

Source: *Excerpt from Jane Addams's book, Twenty Years at Hull-House, (1910). This passage comes from a chapter called "Immigrants and Their Children."*

Vocabulary

modified: changed

Document E: Memories of Hull House (Modified)

The following is an excerpt from Hilda Satt Polacheck's book, I Came a Stranger: The Story of a Hull-House Girl, which she wrote in 1953. In this excerpt she describes her memories of Hull-House from 1896.

Several days before Christmas 1896 one of my Irish playmates suggested that I go with her to a Christmas party at Hull-House. . . . I asked her if there would be any Jewish children at the party. She said that there were Jewish children at the parties every year and that no one was ever hurt. . . .

The thought began to **percolate** that things might be different in America. In Poland it had not been safe for Jewish children to be on the streets on Christmas. . . .

At the party, the children of the Hull-House Music School sang some songs, that I later found out were called "Christmas carols." I shall never forget the . . . sweetness of those childish voices. All feelings of religious intolerance and **bigotry** faded. I could not connect this beautiful party with any hatred or superstition that existed among the people of Poland.

As I look back, I know that I became an American at this party. I was with children who had been brought here from all over the world. The fathers and mothers, like my father and mother, had come in search of a free and happy life. And we were all having a good time at a party, as the guests of an American, Jane Addams.

Source: *Hilda Satt Polacheck, I Came a Stranger: The Story of a Hull-House Girl, 1953.*

Vocabulary

percolate: to brew, develop

bigotry: prejudice

ORGANIZING THE EVIDENCE

Name _____

Use this space to write your main points and the main points made by the other side.

Settlement house social reformers were generous and helpful: List the 3 main points/evidence that support this side.

1) From Document _____:

2) From Document _____:

3) From Document _____:

Settlement house social reformers were condescending and judgmental: List the 3 main points/evidence that support this side.

1) From Document _____:

2) From Document _____:

3) From Document _____:

Coming to Consensus

Use the space below to outline your group's agreement. Your agreement should address evidence and arguments from both sides.