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"SHE LEFT AN AMERICAN:" HILDA SATT POLACHECK, JEWISH ASSIMILATION, AND THE ROLE OF THE SETTLMENT HOUSE

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Different Beginnings

"Since Hull-House was opened, in 1889, millions of men, women and children passed through that front door, where a warm welcome was waiting...As one of those millions I feel that the time has come to tell the future generations, the story as I lived it for a period of thirty-five years." – Hilda Satt Polacheck[1]

"...some of my happiest memories when I was a youngster was when she [Ida Lowenberg] took me... to stay with her and visit in the Neighborhood House." – Gladys Goodman Trachtenberg[2]

In 1882 a girl named Hinda Satt was born in a small village on the Vistula River in what is modern day Poland.[3] Nearly thirty years later, in 1910, Gladys Goodman was born thousands of miles away in Portland, Oregon.[4] Although the beginnings of their lives were separated by factors of both time and space the stories of these two women frame a very important era in American history. Together their individual stories are central to understanding American life at the end of the nineteenth- and the beginning of the twentieth-century. The turn of the century was an era of tremendous change. The Civil War was over, cities were industrializing, life was moving towards modernity, and thousands upon thousands of immigrants sought out America as a beacon of freedom. During this time of vast change, a number of progressive organizations developed to improve the life and welfare of Americans and these reforms set the backdrop for the first decades of the twentieth century, a period known as the Progressive Era.[5] Economic, political, and social transformations were widespread and Americans dealt with this change in a variety of ways.

The stories of Hinda (later to become Hilda) and Gladys (known as Laddie) provide two different lenses through which to view the American immigrant experience.[6] In the first two decades of the twentieth century American immigration had peaked. Millions of people arrived in America and established new communities. First and second generation immigrants had to grapple with modern American life. Both Hilda and Laddie were connected to vibrant Jewish communities. Although Laddie was not a first

generation immigrant as Hilda was, her place in the Portland community through factors of both religion and class ultimately connected her to the processes of immigration and assimilation. Through Hilda's eyes we see America from the perspective of someone born outside the borders looking in; through Laddie's eyes we see America from the perspective of someone born within the borders and looking outward. In addition, although both Hilda and Laddie were Jewish, they identified with different ethnic backgrounds. Hilda was Polish and Laddie was German. They also were raised in families that practiced different forms of Judaism. Hilda's family practiced Orthodox Judaism and Laddie's family was of the Reformed sect. These multiple layers of identity complicate their life stories and obscure the implications of their experience.[7] Both stories, however, are central to understanding immigration and specifically the unique aspects of Jewish immigration.

There are several complicated issues surrounding the nature of reform work and its intricate relationship to the process of assimilation. In the early twentieth-century Progressive reform was dominated by elite- and upper-class women who were seeking an end to the social ills affecting women, children, and the working classes.[8] The settlement house was a product of Progressivism and served many reform ideals. The initial idea of a settlement house stemmed from the thought that privileged members of society would "settle" in working class neighborhoods to improve the standards of living.[9] The inspiration behind the settlement house experiment was the idea that the living together and the sharing of physical space, i.e. "settlement," would set in motion significant cross-class cooperation and eventually abolish class tensions. Another function the settlement house served was to ease the burden of immigration. Settlement house workers engaged

in various forms of philanthropic work to achieve their reform goals. Social reformers saw the assimilation and Americanization of newcomers as one of their essential tasks because of the many economic, cultural, and social burdens that faced American immigrants. This study will examine two settlement houses: Chicago's famous settlement house, Hull-House, and Neighborhood House in Portland, Oregon.

As director of Hull-House for over thirty years, Jane Addams is a central figure in the history of Progressivism and the lives of women at the turn of the century. Addams served as a role model for Progressive reform and for settlement house workers. She was born into a privileged Illinois family, was college educated, and founded Chicago's Hull-House in 1889.[10] Through her active participation in reform efforts Jane Addams set the mold for settlement houses and inspired the founding of Portland's Neighborhood House. Thus her influence over the lives of both Hilda and Laddie are inescapable. Hilda spent much of her youth at Chicago's Hull-House while Laddie and her aunt, Ida Lowenberg, operated Neighborhood House in a pattern similar to that of Hull-House.

The experience of Hilda and Laddie are therefore essential for understanding the complicated aspects of early twentieth-century progressive reform, gender roles, and immigration; but also illustrate the unique nature of American Jewish culture, community, and social work and its connection to Jewish immigration.

Reciprocal Relationships, Settlement Houses, and the Nature of Reform

"...the social relationship is essentially a reciprocal relation.." – Jane Addams[11]

"Following out that principal of democracy...we welcomed every stranger, regardless of race, nationality, culture or life experience, and gathered around us men and women from every walk of life and from many lands..." – Ida Lowenberg[12]

The Progressive era, 1890-1917, was marked by deteriorating social conditions and prompted many efforts to improve the lives of Americans. This era of rapid change,

indicated by significant growth in capitalism, industrialism, and mechanization, left many Americans in a state of abject poverty. Industrialism had many advantages for wealthy capitalists. The working classes were not as lucky. The growth of industrial capitalism, exemplified by railroads, meat-packing plants, and factories, spurred the expansion of a poor working-class who faced incredible challenges at the hands of progress.[13] Overworked and underpaid, industrialism increased the suffering of many peoples, and this suffering influenced the innovations of Progressive reform. Another interesting dimension of Progressive reform was that the movement was dominated by women.

Most female reformers, despite their ethnic or economic backgrounds, were motivated by a similar need for social control and desire to affect change within the public sphere.[14] At the turn of the century women across both class and ethnic backgrounds were actively working to improve their political and social status as women. Growing numbers of women were going to college, campaigning for suffrage, and demanding a voice in society.[15] Women were seeking power, or "social control," on a variety of levels.[16] On one level women were in quest of the right to share power in society with their male counterparts. On another level, elite women were actively attempting to enforce their control over working-class women to maintain the complex power structure that existed in the Progressive era. One of the most famous Progressives, Jane Addams, believed in an active effort to improve the lives of those suffering under progress, without opposing progress altogether.

Addams' most significant contribution to Progressive reform was the establishment of Hull-House in Chicago. Hull-House followed the settlement house example of London's Toynbee Hall and New York City's Neighborhood Guild; both

centers provided a space where elite university students could extend their knowledge to working-class communities.[17] In Chicago, Hull-House followed this mold. Jane Addams established her settlement house in the heart of Chicago's most miserable slum, in the center of the nineteenth ward.[18] Hull-House was surrounded by shipyards and slaughterhouses, evidence of the "progress" of America, and was intended to provide a beacon of hope for the working classes of Chicago.[19] Hull-House served as a progressive mold for many other reformers. It provided intellectual stimulation through theater productions, political lectures, library reading groups, it offered classes in English and Americanization, it addressed health care issues by promoting the importance of bathing and the proper preparation of food; Hull-House essentially was what Hilda Satt Polacheck called in her autobiography, "an Oasis in the Desert."[20]

Other settlement houses were established around the nation and worked to bring the classes together. In Portland, Oregon, for example, the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW) founded a social settlement called Neighborhood House in 1905.[21] The NCJW was one of the most prominent assimilation tools for elite German American Jewish Women. Established in Chicago in 1893 the NCJW had two main objectives: energizing Jewish identity and facilitating Jewish philanthropy.[22] The NCJW itself and the founding of Portland's Neighborhood House illustrates the socially driven aspects of the settlement house movement. The Portland Section of the NCJW was established in 1896, was run by elite German Jews of Temple Beth Israel, a social group that engaged in numerous philanthropic endeavors relating to the Jewish community.[23] A prominent member of Portland's NCJW was Ida Lowenberg who, along with her sister Zerlina, organized several charity projects at the turn of the century. The most successful project

was Neighborhood House, which was directed by Ida for over thirty years. Neighborhood House, like Hull-House, offered adult education classes, reading groups, sewing lessons, and other activities that would serve a social function.[24] Ideally, both Hull-House and Neighborhood House were intended to be instrumental in the uplifting of the working classes of America.

In 1895 Jane Addams and her associates published *Hull-House Maps and Papers*. This book summarized the work of Addams, Florence Kelly, Ellen Gates Starr, and the other founders of Hull-House. Addams wrote that settlement houses were created "not towards sociological investigation; but to constructive work."[25] Simply to raise awareness was not enough; Addams believed in action. By printing such a work, Addams could inform the public about the horrific social conditions that existed in Chicago and encourage social activism. Progressive reformers had a number of concerns. Florence Kelly addressed the issues of sweatshops and child labor, while Addams and Starr wrote about issues involving the labor movement. These were a few of the many social issues that settlement houses were intended to address.

Historians have interpreted Progressive reform and settlement houses in different ways. For example, Jane Addams' biographer, historian Jean Bethke Elshtain points out in her article, "A Return to Hull House: Taking the Measure of an Extraordinary Life," that Addams was a complicated woman with complicated motivations and objectives for reform.[26] One issue that is unavoidable is the role that gender plays in Addams' experience. Much of Progressivism was founded by women, for women, and Addams' theories did not escape this phenomenon.[27] Furthermore Elshtain claims that Addams' wealthy background and elite social status also profoundly affected her ethics and

behavior.[28] Elshtain describes Addams as woman of contradictions. For example, although Addams herself did not practice the Victorian code of feminine domesticity, her progressive theories did not challenge the lives of women who did. Addams could not afford to alienate the people she was trying to serve. Similarly, Addams was troubled by the nature and results of progress, but she never criticized progress itself. Addams could also not afford to alienate people funding her projects. Elshtain argues that it was precisely Addams' "reputation for evenhandedness that made it possible for her to do so many civically courageous things."[29] Thus through perceived ambiguity, as Elshtain interprets her, Addams was able to instigate change without estranging people who stood on either side of social issues.

Historian Peggy Pascoe analyzes the complicated nature of gender conventions at the turn of the century in her monograph, *Relations of Rescue: The Search for Female Moral Authority in the American West, 1874-1939*. According to Pascoe's work, for a woman like Addams, participation in reform movements allowed her a certain amount of social control and power in an otherwise male-dominated world.[30] Pascoe claims that reform in the early twentieth century, and thus settlement houses, served as a political and social tool for woman's advancement. Pascoe looked at women's involvement in Mission Homes across America (California, Colorado, Connecticut, and Utah among others), and addressed the unique ways in which women participated in reform and philanthropy.[31] In a period when women were still denied the vote, reform activity allowed women a unified front in national politics and local governmental affairs. For Jane Addams, Hull House became a national symbol for the settlement house movement, but locally she was focusing on the lives of the inhabitants of Chicago's poverty-stricken nineteenth ward.[32]

Disenfranchised women of both the upper and lower classes found common cultural ground at the settlement house. As women they could work together for change, despite the fact that they had no formal means (i.e. the vote) to express their societal concerns. Their authority to do so, what Pascoe calls female moral authority, stemmed from the Victorian notion that women were morally superior to their male counterparts.[33] This moral authority allowed women to address child, family, and labor issues in a political manner, without challenging their femininity.

Laura S. Abrams also analyzes notions of gender and offers another interpretation of female Progressive reformers in her article "Guardians of Virtue: The Social Reformers and the 'Girl Problem,' 1890-1920."[34] Abrams points out that the Progressives were especially concerned with the sexual morality of young women.[35] The industrialization of cities like Chicago created the need for a labor force to sustain and increase the output of capitalism. Women have always worked: yet their position prior to the early twentieth century had primarily been as domestic and unpaid laborers. In the Progressive era women entered the workforce as paid laborers, taking jobs in factories and other industrial occupations.[36] The influx of women into the wage workforce challenged traditional notions of gender roles. With this challenge to patriarchy came a backlash effort to control female sexuality and morality. The reformers at Hull-House often imposed these gender prescriptions on working-class girls.[37] It was the goal of Hull-House to improve not only the economic aspect, but the moral aspect of working-class life. This was especially true for working-class women who were most vulnerable to perceived moral downfall. In 1915, when Neighborhood House published an annual report, it too reflected a concern for the behavior of young women. Ida Lowenberg wrote

of concern over "the increased number of delinquent girls and erring boys."[38] Yet there was a contradiction in the work of settlement house and progressive reformers. Abrams points out that through the settlement house, including places like Hull-House and Neighborhood House, reformers challenged traditions of marriage and domesticity, yet expected lower-class women to live up to a sexually moral ideal.[39] These paradoxes play out in the relationship between Jane Addams, Ida Lowenberg, and the young women seeking help and assistance at Chicago's Hull-House and Portland's Neighborhood House. It is interesting to note that neither Addams nor Lowenberg married, but both Hilda and Laddie did.

One of the best studies of the complicated aspects of settlement work is Judith Ann Trolander's book, *Professionalism and Social Change: From the Settlement House Movement to Neighborhood Centers 1886 to the Present.*[40] The settlement house became a center for life and activity with profound gender, social, and religious implications. Trolander underlines the important role that women played in settlement house work. This increased activity of women coincided with a growing number of women seeking higher education, entering the workforce, and generally trying to establish a visible position in the public sphere.[41] Women almost exclusively dominated the establishment and direction of settlement houses. Trolander argues that the settlement house appealed to women more than men for various reasons. The settlement house dealt with both women's health and childcare issues, offered space for personal freedom and independence, and also provided a career path.[42] Social work became a popular profession for women in the twentieth century and the settlement house movement is directly linked to that phenomenon.

The settlement house thus addressed problems and concerns that existed on both ends of the social spectrum. Elite women needed space to actively participate in reform and access societal power. Working class women also needed access to power, but had an additional need to improve their standards of living. Settlement houses provided the physical space where women could come together to initiate change. Addressing the problems of child labor and attempting to improve general family welfare were the objectives of many progressive reformers. Assimilation projects for newly arrived immigrants were also top priority.[43] Reformers hoped that a quick and easy assimilation, facilitated by Americanization and English classes, would help improve the lives of immigrants. Newly arrived immigrants were more than likely to have the poorest standards of living. They had the most dangerous occupations, lived on the lowest incomes, and had the least access to means of upward mobility. Another important aspect of Hull-House was thus the Americanization classes that it provided: teaching the English language and American customs to newly arrived immigrants seeking permanent residence in the United States. The settlement house aimed to ease assimilation and change the standard of living for immigrants.

Assimilation was a special task of reform workers at the turn of the century. As one of the most renowned progressive reformers, Jane Addams' work with Hull-House offers a valuable insight into the reform work.[44] It was through her most famous publication, a sociological endeavor, *Hull-House Maps and Papers*, that Addams drew the most attention to issues of Americanization and assimilation. In the book, Addams addresses many social concerns, child labor, women's suffrage, and the issues surrounding immigration including assimilation. Addams and her co-authors published a

groundbreaking work that drew attention to the issues that faced American immigrants: sweatshop labor, tenement housing, limited access to health care, poor food and water supplies, and extreme ethnic intolerance.[45] For Addams and her colleagues the solution to the assimilation process rested within the settlement house movement. Essentially, Addams had a dream of uniting men and women who were separated by class and ethnic lines to work together to improve the whole of American culture.

Jane Addams was not alone in her quest to ease the burden of immigration. Many ethnic communities worked internally to ease assimilation. This ethnic exclusivity in the Jewish immigrant experience is no expectation. Like their Protestant counterparts, American Jewish women participated in reform. Unlike other women, however, Jewish women had a vested interest in assimilating newly arrived foreigners in an effort to maintain the values of established Jewish communities. This additional motivation of Jewish women reformers had an important impact on the Jewish immigrant experience.

Immigration, Assimilation, and the Jewish Experience

"She assured me that there had been Jewish children… and no one was ever killed. The thought began to percolate through my head that things might be different in America." – Hilda Satt Polacheck[46]

"…practically every person who went to Neighborhood House, except for the volunteers who taught there, was foreign born. The people who came there had come to the states during the Eastern wave of Jewish immigration." – Gladys Trachtenburg[47]

At the turn of the twentieth-century the United States faced an unprecedented growth in the immigrant population. In the period between 1900-1920 over one million people per year flooded into America.[48] Millions of people came from all over the world in search of a better life. Many were refugees who sought economic, political, and personal freedom in America. Immigrants came searching for the mythical "American Dream" of safety and security in the United States. This massive migration created serious social backlash within American society. By the early 1920's national legislation

designed to limit the numbers of newcomers became widely popular. When the United States passed the Immigration Act of 1924, this act reflected the widespread fear of Nativist and anti-immigration groups.[49] Many established communities or so-called "native" citizens, like the Know-Nothings or Ku Klux Klan, felt fear and threat from the massive arrival of immigrants. The nativism of policies, established to "protect" American borders often forced severe prejudices and discrimination on the newcomers.

European Jews were one of the most prominent groups to immigrate to the United States during this period. There were two major waves of Jewish immigration. The first was a large, primarily German, movement to America in the nineteenth-century.[50] Beginning in 1820 German Jews migrated to America primarily from southwestern Germany, settled in larger cities like New York or Chicago, and were involved in trade and business-oriented occupations.[51] German Jews established and acculturated to American life in the years prior to the second, East European wave, of Jewish immigration. East European Jews began arriving in America in the 1880's and records indicate that by the 1920's over three million were settled in the United States.[52] A large percentage of Jews who arrived in America after 1881 were forced out of Europe by Czar Alexander II and the anti-Semitic policies of the Russian Government.[53] Country of origin was not the only difference between these two waves of immigration. East European Jews, unlike their German counterparts, participated in skilled and semi-skilled industrial crafts.[54] In the Progressive era there was a marked class division between the established German Jewish community and newly arrived East European Jews.

By the early years of the twentieth-century German Jews were highly assimilated within the American social spectrum. Thus for East European Jews, who arrived later,

assimilation occurred on two levels: specifically within the American version of Judaism and within the broader American social structure itself.[55] A tremendous tension existed between the German Jews and their East European counterparts because of the varied pre-migration backgrounds, different religious beliefs, and their polarized class standing. The Jewish community of Portland, Oregon serves as an illustration of this immigration pattern. For East European Jews arriving in Portland at the turn of the century, established German Jews seemed a part of a socially exclusive community.[56] Laddie, an elite German Jew, saw this social division in her own life:

> "...it was one of those things that was passed on through the Temple [Beth Israel]... I only met the children of the families of German Jews, because they were the members of the Temple. The Russians and Polish groups did not join Temple, really, in any large number, until around World War Two... There was no reason they couldn't have, but they stayed within their own group. There was really a very strong dividing line."[57]

Laddie cannot pinpoint the source of tension between the two communities other than ethnic differences. A major factor, however, in the existence of this tension was not only difference in ethnicity, but a difference in religious practices.

Although Reform and Orthodox Jews both observed Jewish customs each sect perceived differences in the other. In Portland, for example, the Reform practices of Temple Beth Israel, alarmed the Orthodox Jews arriving from Eastern Europe.[58] Reformed Jews were characterized by their relaxed observances of traditional Judaism. Often Reform congregations would abridge traditional sermons, recite prayers in English, and perform modern choral and music arrangements.[59] These changes were a reflection of the profound influence that American culture and language had on immigrant communities. Orthodox Jews often viewed Reform Judaism as a betrayal to "true" Jewish religion.

Arriving in Chicago in 1892, Hilda Satt Polacheck was one of thousands of East Europeans to immigrate to America during the second wave of immigration. Like the East European Jews arriving in Portland, the Satt family practiced Orthodox Judaism. Although there are many extraordinary aspects of Hilda's life, her experience was also similar to that of millions of others. Hilda, like many immigrants, faced life challenges before and after arrival in America. Hilda came from the Russian-occupied area of Poland in Eastern Europe. In Poland her family had faced an intolerance that was twofold. Not only were they subject to Russian prejudice, they faced endless religious intolerance because of their Jewish faith. In her autobiography she reflects:

> "As far back as I can remember, the Poles hated the Russians and the Germans. The Germans looked down on the Poles and Russians. There was a mutual hatred among the people of all three countries. But there was always a double dose of this hatred for the Jews."[60]

A driving force behind the Satt family's move to America was to find an end to unyielding intolerance and discrimination. Hilda and her family felt that in America things would be different.

Although major cities like Chicago and New York had obvious pulls for East European workers, smaller cities and towns across the nation also received an influx of immigrants. Big industrial and manufacturing cities like Chicago, where the Satt family settled, attracted immigrants because of the many opportunities for economic and occupational growth.[61] Occupational and familial connections influenced where immigrants would settle.[62] Many historians have established that pre-migration patterns of living often mimic lifestyles that were established in America.[63] In Portland, for example, over half of the early twentieth-century East European immigrants clustered within trade businesses and semi-skilled occupations. This is not surprising considering

that over half of the Jewish immigrants in Portland, in the period between 1900 and 1920, came from the merchant culture of the Southern Pale area of Europe.[64] Thus life experience prior to coming to America profoundly affected both where and how immigrants would live.

In America, immigrants hoped that life would be different. Economic opportunity, religious freedom, and cultural diversity, represented by America, became a beacon of hope for settlers. Unfortunately prejudices also existed in America. For the Jewish immigrant, especially from places like Eastern Europe, prejudice and ethnic intolerance was often not a new phenomenon. Compared to the experience of other Europeans the Jewish immigrant experience was unique. In many cases migrating Jews were better equipped to cope with the nativism that existed in America.[65] European Jews were familiar with anti-Semitism and racial discrimination. This familiarity was both a burden and a benefit. While many other immigrant groups had little concept of what it meant to be the "other," centuries of anti-Semitism had prepared the Jewish immigrant for the nativism that existed in America.[66] This social awareness, in part, explains the German-Jewish eagerness to assimilate the influx of Eastern European Jews.

In his monograph, *Silent Travelers: Germs, Genes, and the "Immigrant Menace,"* Alan Kraut illustrates that one example of American Nativism was the attempt to construct scientific and technological "evidence" to "prove" that the physical body of the Jewish immigrant was disease-ridden.[67] Despite the strong legitimacy of science and technology, the Jewish community was prepared to defend itself against a growing medical bigotry. In America, the leading physician refuting the biological argument against Jewish immigration was the Russian Jewish immigrant Dr. Maurice Fishberg.[68]

The Jewish community had long placed individuals with a medical background and those gifted with the power of healing on a pedestal. Health and wellness were central to Jewish culture. Many Jewish immigrants had a strong background in medicine and were influential in the medical world. When Jews were charged with harboring and spreading tuberculosis, the "Jewish disease," it was Fishberg that had the power to mount an academic defense.[69] The anti-Semitism that existed in America was, unfortunately, nothing new for Jewish immigrants. Despite the barriers that anti-Semitism posed, the Jewish familiarity with such discrimination made the community better equipped to settle in America and defend themselves against bigotry.

Once in America, newly-arrived immigrants were bombarded with Americanization and assimilation projects. Americanization and assimilation occurred on many formal and informal levels. Formally, citizenship tests were conducted in English, thus a firm grasp of the language was essential. Furthermore, citizenship tests also had various questions related to laws and customs of the United States. More often than not, these citizenship tests were a tool for immigration regulation and often possessed a certain amount of nativist disdain for foreigners.[70] The process of Americanization thus employed an official "test" to endorse an unofficial policy of nativism. Arriving on Ellis Island millions immigrants were put through various medical tests to ensure that newcomers were medically acceptable for entrance in America.[71] These "tests," however, were imprecise, ineffective, and constructed under stereotypical fears and assumptions about the nature of "outsiders." Even without these tests, once settled, most immigrants felt a certain amount of pressure to "fit in" to the American way of life. Language was only one aspect. The dominant Protestant religious practices and

other more secular American customs were expected to be observed. A great tension and discrepancy existed between what was considered "Old World" (i.e. European) and "New World" (i.e. American) beliefs.[72] Many felt that embracing one meant rejecting the other.

For the American Jewish community, however, establishing neighborhood centers and associations that centered on their faith was one of the strongest assimilation tools.[73] Jewish parents also actively helped their children to assimilate to life in America while encouraging the maintenance of Jewish traditions and customs. Assimilation and tradition often came into conflict in the public school arena.[74] School nurses often implemented health care regimes that violated traditional ethnic practices of wellness or aroused suspicion in the Jewish community. In 1906, for example, Jewish mothers who feared that a routine typhoid checkup was actually an intolerable act of anti-Semitism stormed the public schools in New York City to "save" their children.[75] The Jewish mothers felt they were taking their children out of what they feared to be a dangerous situation while school officials were taken aback because they believed their actions were rooted in simple benevolence. For the Jewish immigrant, as for most immigrants, life in America depended on maintaining a delicate balance between tradition and modernity. The strong kinship of the Jewish community, however, often was useful in both processes of assimilating to American life and maintaining the cultural traditions of Jewish life.

Portland's Neighborhood House serves to illustrate the many complicated aspects of Jewish immigration. Through Neighborhood House we see the ethnic and class differences facing the American Jewish Community. Established in 1905 Neighborhood House was operated by German Jews of the NCJW and aimed at serving East European Jewish immigrants.[76] The German Jews of Portland were of the Reformed Jewish sect,

while East Europeans practiced Orthodox Judaism. Despite these differences Neighborhood House became a center for the Jewish community, connecting Jewish men, women, and children from various occupational, ethnic, and religious backgrounds. Although Neighborhood House served as a physical center for the Jewish community of Portland, it was inspired by the larger trends in American progressive reform.

Hull-House and Neighborhood House

"After a span of fifty years, I look back and realize how much of my leisure time was spent at Hull-House and how my life was molded by the influence of Jane Addams." – Hilda Satt Polacheck[77]

"Ida became very active in all that was going on. She knew a great deal about their private lives and their families, for they would come to her when anything happened. They expected her to solve their problems." – Gladys Goodman Trachtenberg[78]

A comparative analysis of two different settlement house operations will illustrate and lend a deeper understanding of the many implications of progressive reform. This analysis will focus on Hull-House in Chicago and Neighborhood House in Portland.

To reiterate, the settlement house movement originated with the idea that members of the elite classes would "settle" in working class neighborhoods to live and work in the slums to improve low standards of living.[79] It was Jane Addams who really synthesized the settlement house movement with her writings and lectures on progressive reform and her work with Chicago's Hull-House. Addams wrote of "reciprocal" social relations and hoped that Hull-House would manifest her theories behind reciprocity between the classes.[80] Addams believed that living and working together would produce benefits for both ends of the social spectrum, that "settlement" was mutually beneficial and would set in motion significant cross-class cooperation, and eventually settlement houses would dissolve class tensions. Although the settlement house was intended to provide a solution for many problems (child labor, family welfare, and food sanitation to name a few) one interesting function was its role in the process of immigration and

assimilation. Jane Addams dedicated over thirty years of her life to the settlement house movement, working and living at Hull-House in Chicago.

Jane Addams served as model for the ideal settlement house worker. As a daughter of an elite Illinois businessman, Addams was able to attend college, travel to Europe, and live relatively independently in her early twenties.[81] Addams' social position provided her with many opportunities to see the diversity of human life. Her father, John Addams an active abolitionist, opened her eyes to many problems that existed in American society.[82] Instead of ignoring social problems, Jane Addams was a firm believer in actively trying to eradicate them. It was when she was a young woman, on one of many trips to Europe, that Addams began to conceptualize Hull-House in her mind. After visiting London's Toynbee Hall, Addams returned to Illinois in 1889 and decided to experiment. Addams theorized that she, and other elite college-educated women, would best serve society not as wives and mothers, but as settlement house workers.[83] To go into the community, to greet adversity and hardship with open eyes, to actually do something about deteriorating social conditions became Addams' pledge to the world. Hull-House became a place for Addams to test her theories and see the significant effects of her work.

Established in one of the worst neighborhoods in Chicago, Hull-House quickly became a thriving community center for ward nineteen. There were many successful educated women with important social connections who lived and worked at Hull-House; Florence Kelly (Illinois Factory Inspector), Julia C. Lathrop (Illinois Board of Charities), and Addams' business partner, Ellen Gates Starr.[84] The settlement house workers provided numerous resources for the surrounding community. It provided: college

extension courses, summer school, reading room, Sunday concerts, a piano club, a club for working-women (The Jane Club), The Nineteenth Ward Improvement Club, sewing school, cooking classes, summer excursions for children, free kindergarten and day nursery, gymnasium, and various other clubs for men, women, and children of the neighborhood.[85]

One important focus area for the settlement workers of Hull-House was to ease the burden of assimilation. Hull-House provided English classes and a reading room and made every attempt to maintain a sense of pride in the immigrant identity. One pet project of Addams' was the Labor Museum, a place for immigrants from different countries to showcase and take pride in traditional skills like weaving and carpentry.[86] Addams noticed a great tension between immigrants and their children. Second generation immigrants and first generation immigrants who arrived in America at a young age were exposed and introduced to American customs at levels very different from their parents. At one place in particular, the public school, Addams believed that immigrant children were made to feel embarrassed about their cultural history and family traditions. She wrote:

> "The children long that the school teacher should know something about the lives of their parents lead and should be able to reprove the hooting children who make fun of the Italian mother because she wears a kerchief on her head."[87]

The Labor Museum was intended to eliminate this type of shame that the public school perpetuated. Hull-House also served as center for unified political action. Anti-immigration policies of the 1920's inspired Addams and other workers at Hull-House to found the Immigrants' Protective League (IPL) to assist immigrant families in the community.[88] The IPL met regularly at Hull-House to address problems in the immigrant

community. The goal of many of Hull-House's projects was to make life in America easier for the immigrant community.

Jane Addams' founding of Hull-House is credited as the catalyst for the settlement house movement in America. In 1895, six years after Addams began her famous experiment, at least fifty other settlement houses were in existence across the nation.[89] Although settlements like Toynbee Hall existed before Hull-House, it was Addams' extensive efforts to publicize and promote her experiment that led to the construction of Hull-House to serve as a mold for the progressive settlement house. Addams traveled the country giving lectures and sharing her story while simultaneously publishing numerous written material outlining both the goals and successes of Hull-House.[90]

It was not long after Hull-House was established and Jane Addams began to advertise her experiment that a settlement house was founded in Portland, Oregon. The Portland Section of the National Council of Jewish Women founded Neighborhood House 1905. Like Hull-House it began as a small endeavor and eventually grew and expanded over the years. Although Neighborhood House was a center primarily for the Jewish community it essentially fit the mold of settlement houses outlined by Jane Addams.[91] The NCJW was made up primarily of elite women whose educational background would make them ideal settlement workers. Neighborhood House provided after-school classes, sewing lessons, a gymnasium, lectures, a penny savings bank, and other various social services.[92] Neighborhood House also played an important role in assimilation. It offered English and Americanization classes which became very popular throughout the years. In 1909 over three hundred students attended Neighborhood House

English school; a dramatic expansion considering that three years earlier there were only eleven students taking English classes.[93] Taking into account the various types of services that Neighborhood House provided, the influence of Hull-House is inescapable.

Although many parallels can be drawn between the two, Neighborhood House differed from Hull-House on a fundamental level. Because the founders were Jewish women, it primarily served the Jewish community. Located in South Portland, Neighborhood House was established in the heart of the Jewish community.[94] The location of Hull-House, in contrast, was in the center of a diverse immigrant community and thus easily served people from different ethnic backgrounds. Neighborhood House was open to people from all over: "our doors have never been closed night or day to man, woman or child, nor to the stranger within our gates."[95] Despite its willingness to serve, Neighborhood House's location and reputation for being a "Jewish" center made serving a diverse clientele difficult. Difficult as it was, the settlement was able to branch out to different communities. Of the three hundred English students in 1909, over half were non-Jewish.[96] Furthermore, in a time of growing prejudice towards African-Americans the Neighborhood House defied convention by opening its pool for African-American swimmers and the sewing school also took great pride in announcing its first African-American graduate.[97] Nonetheless, Neighborhood House was primarily seen as a Jewish center despite its outreach program to other groups of people.

Ida Lowenberg was the Executive Secretary of the Neighborhood House and in many ways her role in Portland parallels Addams' role at Hull-House. Ida Lowenberg was educated by the School of Social Work in New York and was profoundly influenced by the ideals of Progressivism and social improvement. [98] Like Addams, Lowenberg

placed a strong emphasis on action and work in an effort to achieve success. Both Addams and Lowenberg devoted their lives to their settlements, neither married nor had children, and each woman maintained a strong presence in their communities until their deaths.[99] Each woman served as a role model for subsequent generations of young women through their presence and involvement in reform movements.

One individual who was profoundly influenced by Jane Addams was Hilda Satt Polacheck. Hilda first met Jane Addams at a Hull-House Christmas party in 1896. Upon reflection Hilda credits Addams for her assimilation into American life; "As I look back, I know that I became a staunch American at this party."[100] Originally from Poland, Hilda had only been in Chicago four short years. Despite profound adversity in Hilda's life: the death of her father in 1893, a grueling job in a knitting factory, and exposure to significant anti-Semitism, Hilda believed that Hull-House and Jane Addams offered her a place to escape hardship. Although she was not educated past the eighth grade, with Addams' encouragement and a scholarship from Hull-House, Hilda was able to attend a semester of classes at the University of Chicago in 1904.[101] Through this opportunity Hilda was able to cultivate her writing skills and in her lifetime she wrote a number of plays, literary essays, theater reviews, and eventually completed an autobiography which was published in 1989.[102] Hilda firmly believed that Hull-House and Jane Addams exposed her to opportunities she would not have otherwise had.

Laddie's relationship with Ida Lowenberg also provided her with significant opportunities. As a child Laddie was able to visit Neighborhood House and see how her aunt interacted with the community.[103] Ida was an influential social worker in Portland, working over thirty years for the betterment of the community. Her childhood

experiences must have had an effect on Laddie's occupational choices because, in 1945 when Ida retired from Neighborhood House, it was Laddie who took over her aunt's position at the settlement.[104] It seems no small coincidence that Laddie chose to study social work in college. After completing her social work degree, Laddie followed in her aunt's prestigious position working at Neighborhood House and at other Portland agencies as social worker for nearly thirty years.[105] Laddie's relationship with Ida opened her eyes to the possibilities of a lifetime career in social work.

Just as parallels can be drawn between Jane Addams and Hull-House and Ida Lowenberg and Neighborhood House, parallels can also be drawn between Hilda Satt and Laddie Goodman. Both women were born into Jewish families and both were members of vibrant Jewish communities. Both participated in the settlement house movement and continued to be involved in social service projects until their deaths. Each woman was married and raised children. Most significantly, however, was that each woman had an influential female figure (Addams and Lowenberg) shaping and affecting their actions and decisions in life. Along with the multiple similarities, however, Hilda and Laddie have numerous differences. The two women came from entirely different economic backgrounds. Hilda was a working-class immigrant while Laddie was a member of a socially elite family. Each woman was a part of different ethnic and religious communities. Laddie was part of a primarily German, Reformed Jewish community while Hilda immigrated to America from Poland with her Orthodox Jewish parents. It is through these similarities and differences that numerous implications can be drawn about American life in the Progressive Era. Each was connected to the settlement house movement and Jewish assimilation, but in different ways and for different reasons.

Furthermore, each identified themselves as Jewish women but defined both "Jewishness" and "femininity" in different ways. Thus each individual story reveals significant implications about gender, religion, and class for the Progressive era.

The Significance of Experience

"Pages of history have been written even about the lowly potato, as to where it originated and how it had been brought from one part of the world to another. And so, though I consider myself a small potato, I wish to record that I was born in Wloclawek, a beautiful city on the Vistula River in Poland." – Hilda Satt Polacheck[106]

"My family felt pride in being socially prominent, in being actively involved in civic activities and, above all, they were proud that they were Jews." – Gladys Goodman Trachtenberg[107]

The common denominators of Hilda and Laddie's stories help to provide a framework for analysis. Both were women. Both were Jewish. Both were actively involved in the settlement house and other reform movements. The many parallels that exist between their lives can point towards a deeper understanding of gender, religion, and class at the turn of the century. Their differences, too, give us insight into the lives of early twentieth-century Jewish Americans. Hilda's working-class perspective offers an entirely different world view from Laddie's upper-class mentality. Hilda's world view was also shaped by her life in Poland and move to America, while Laddie's long-planted roots in Portland civic life alter her perspective. Looking through both lenses, however, allows us to see the broadest scope of American life, both from within and without.

Gender Roles

The fact that both Laddie and Hilda were women, cannot escape importance in the evaluation of their lives. Their participation in reform movements and connection to settlement houses is directly tied to the societal pull to fulfill gender roles and gender obligations. Historian Barbara Welter outlined the characteristics of Victorian gender

codes in her groundbreaking essay on "The Cult of True Womanhood; 1820-1960."[108] In her essay Welter shows how gender expectations of the mid-nineteenth-century boxed women into very clear modes of behavior. Piety, purity, domesticity, and submissiveness were the four major aspects of "true womanhood."[109] Historian Peggy Pascoe takes this argument further. Pascoe suggests that Victorian gender codes evolved into new forms in the Progressive period. Post-Civil War relief projects encouraged women, especially those of the middle class, to establish and continue benevolent activity on a national scale in the postwar years.[110] Thus the settlement house movement has its roots in the gender expectations of nineteenth century America, allowing women to achieve empowerment without sacrificing femininity. Hilda and Laddie both illustrate how women operated within gender expectations to achieve their own personal goals.

As young girls both Hilda and Laddie were exposed to influential, untraditional women who served as lifelong role models. In Chicago, Jane Addams was very much a mentor and advisor for Hilda. In Portland, Ida Lowenberg served as a similar role model for Laddie. Paradoxically, however, while Addams and Lowenberg walked fairly untraditional paths and influenced the lives and decisions of the younger generation; neither Hilda nor Laddie demonstrated unorthodox gender behavior to the degree that their mentors did. Lowenberg and Addams never married, yet both Hilda and Laddie did. This situation follows the argument that Laura Abrams made in her study of moral authority and the relationship between reformers and working-class women.[111] Although the mentor-student relationship is powerful, both Hilda and Laddie had additional examples of womanhood from which to draw. Both women had strong mother-figures who maintained independence even as they followed traditional paths of marriage and

motherhood. Thus both Hilda and Laddie were exposed to several different versions of womanhood; and, drawing from each version, were able to make conscious decision about gender behavior in their own lives.

For Hilda, womanhood was both a matter of conception and performance. In letters to William Polacheck prior to their marriage, Hilda outlines the complicated and often contradictory views she held on the meanings behind gender and gender roles. Marriage to William would not sacrifice her independence. William writes to Hilda in October of 1911 and proposes what he feels is an equitable division of power in their upcoming marriage. He writes on marriage:

> "Each should be real individuals but at the same time realize that they sacrifice a part of their person individuality & freedom when the two become one. This union should be considered a partnership & as it must have a head, the man should control 51% & the woman 49%. The woman has her share in the running of the partnership but when there is a difference of policy, the man's influence should decide."[112]

Within the context of the early twentieth-century gender codes, before national suffrage when women were still constitutionally subordinate to men, this statement seems fairly progressive on William's part. Hilda displays tremendous wisdom in her response to William. She does not get entangled in a discourse on gender roles; instead, she has a far more democratic view of marriage. She responds:

> "I think that it is safe that each partner control whatever reason allows him. The philosophy of reason should be the 51%. In what way, for instance, can we disagree? Suppose you come home and announce that you want to go to Europe next week. If I can through sound reason show you that it is not wise to do so, don't you think that you will elect reason to the 51% chair? On the other hand, suppose I want a rug for $4500.00, and you can show me that a rug of that description is not as necessary or even desirable... your reason will decide the matter."[113]

Hilda does not base her ideal of marriage around a construction of gender, instead she sees beyond codes of femininity and masculinity to what she feels is a higher level of truth.

Hilda was undoubtedly influenced by the women around her who did not adopt stereotypical roles for women. She idealized Jane Addams, a woman who never married and lived independent of a man's "51%" of authority. Addams' independence, however, did not inspire Hilda to remain unmarried. Hilda did marry, although it was in a somewhat untraditional manner. She was thirty in 1912 when she married William Polacheck, a man six years younger than herself.[114] Complexly though, while Addams herself remained unmarried, she actively supported Hilda's decision to wed. Hilda remembers Addams approval of William:

> "'I am very happy that you will be married, and I am happy that you chose a Jewish man,' Jane Addams said...she added: 'I am happy for your mother's sake. I know she would be unhappy if you did not marry a Jewish man.'"[115]

Hilda goes on to describe the lavish reception that Addams threw for Hilda and William after their marriage and her feeble attempts to prepare a kosher meal that would meet the approval of Hilda's mother.[116] Addams excitement for Hilda seems to stem from Hilda's decision to follow a traditional role. According to Hilda, Addams approved for two reasons; because she was to be married and because she was to marry a suitable man. Just as Addams had worked to encourage Hilda in her writing and education, Addams encouraged her to marry and settle down. Addams herself never became a living example of married womanhood.

Hilda had the example of her mother, however, from which to take inspiration as she laid the foundation for her marriage with William. Hilda's mother was a source of inspiration for female independence. Hilda sometimes had the tendency to view her mother as a woman with archaic views and customs. After her father died, Hilda reflected that, "Girls were supposed to help their mother, learn how to be good wives, and get married. And that is just what Mother decided my sister ought to do."[117] Although Dena

Satt may have voiced her approval for traditional woman's roles, her example was far from stereotypical. In an unfamiliar land, with unfamiliar customs, and little knowledge of the language, Dena Satt raised Hilda and four other children very much on her own. Hilda acknowledged "Mother faced life with the heroism of the true American pioneer. She, and thousands of those immigrant mothers, earned a niche among the heroic women who helped build America."[118] Hilda realizes the difficult situation her mother experienced. She also acknowledges the vast reservoir of strength that her mother must have possessed to survive. Hilda is ultimately able to appreciate her mother despite the fact that Dena followed gender traditions in ways that the very progressive Jane Addams did not. Both the traditional and untraditional examples of female independence inspired Hilda in her life, her politics, and her religion.

Laddie was also exposed to untraditional women. In addition to her Aunt Ida, who never married, her Aunt Zerlina Lowenberg was also an independent "career woman" working as head librarian for the South Portland Library for over thirty years.[119] Laddie recognized that the prominence of both her aunts in the community without husbands was unique. "It's unbelievable" she said in a 1977 interview; Laddie recalled that for the Lowenberg girls men never really "came up to standards. I really mean that…they weren't good enough…"[120] Although Laddie herself eventually married, she did so only after she was firmly established in her own career as a social worker. She married in 1946 at the age of 36, comparatively older than other women of her generation.[121] Like Hilda, Laddie did not jump quickly into marriage because it was the standard thing for girls to do. She did not let the pressure of tradition force her into marriage at an earlier age.

Laddie had many other experiences that paralleled Hilda's. Laddie's mother also served as a source of female inspiration and exemplified independence. Rose Lowenberg was a renowned singer and often performed for her community both in and out of Temple Beth Israel. After her marriage in 1903, Rose continued to perform in public under her maiden name, despite objections from her husband and Laddie's father, Joseph Goodman.[122] All three of the Lowenberg sisters were active in philanthropic endeavors and undoubtedly spurred Laddie's interest in social work and reform movements. She made a career of working at Neighborhood House and staying involved in other civic-minded activities.

These stories illustrate that the untraditional women in Hilda and Laddie's lives, Jane Addams, Dena Satt, and the Lowenberg sisters, profoundly influenced and shaped their world-views. Although each woman must have felt pressure from societal standards of the time, neither let that pressure compromise their own individual needs. Even in her marriage to William, Hilda was able to continue writing and pursuing her career. Similarly, Laddie also maintained her independence, working all her life, even after her marriage. Hilda and Laddie's experience support the Abrams thesis that female reformers imposed tradition on the women they served but did not participate in tradition themselves.[123] Yet Hilda and Laddie did not simply draw from their mentors examples. Other important woman in their lives, primarily their mothers, offered examples of strong womanhood and served as more traditional models of gendered behavior. Drawing from these varying degrees of "true" womanhood, both Hilda and Laddie were able to find a middle ground in their lives. They made conscious life decisions, about both marriage and careers, without giving into gender stereotypes.

Religion

Just as Laddie and Hilda shared a similar experience with gender expectations, they also shared a mutual faith in Judaism. Although both women identified themselves as Jewish, they way that they participated in the world as Jews was vastly different. In Hilda's experience, as an immigrant in America, she faced an internal struggle as she attempted to maintain a balance between her family's traditional background and her future as an American Jew. For Laddie, the struggle was much more external. She felt a constant need to reaffirm her faith to the society around her. Hilda and Laddie thus show how, for the Jewish community in America, Jewish assimilation was a matter of negotiation within both the Jewish and Gentile communities.

Hilda felt a tremendous strain between established Jewish traditions and customs and new, modern, American Jewish lifestyle. On one level she felt, like so many other immigrants, a pull towards the familiar, traditional way of life. Her family's and especially her mother's influence was immense; Hilda tried to observe Passover and the Sabbath and other Jewish customs, but often found these traditions limiting.[124] Hilda wrote about this religious tension in a 1909 article for *The Butterfly*. *The Butterfly* was a literary publication that circulated amongst Hilda's and William's social circle and was "published in the interest of Humanity."[125] In her essay, entitled "The Old Woman and the New World," Hilda wrote:

> "Every ship that brings to our shores the much-spoken-of young immigrant, who comes here to breathe the free air of political and religious freedom, who finds new educational opportunities and comfortable living conditions, whose life is still before him or her, and who leaves behind only memories of oppression and hatred, brings the old woman whose life is left behind, and whose memories are of places that have become dear to her through association... She does not come to find a new home; she tries to re-establish the old one. And right here the first bond of relationship between the old and the young is broken."[126]

Hilda draws from her own experience and relationship with her mother. When Hilda saw the values and benefits of American life, Dena saw morals and behaviors antithetical to Jewish life. Hilda continues:

> "The old woman enters the new world with a firm religious conviction. It is very often her only comfort, and she naturally wants to introduce it into her home. But she finds, before long, that her children have formed their own religious opinions, and all her old cherished beliefs are cast to the winds. The religion of the young may be a more rational one, but the fact that the beliefs of the old have been bred in her for a lifetime is to be respected. So we have the desire to live the broadest life, on the part of the young, and the memory of an ancient religion, which the old wish to preserve. In short, the building of an old house, in a new country, is a sad event."[127]

In this essay Hilda illustrates a certain amount of sensitivity and awareness about her circumstances. Instead of berating her mother's position, Hilda acknowledges the difficulty of the situation. Yet she is able to do this, without giving up her own intellectual freedom. She does not apologize for holding different religious views; she simply accepts that a difference of opinion exists.

In Laddie's experience, religious tensions stemmed from a different focal point. Hilda's problems were typical of the problems with which the immigrant community had to deal. She struggled very much in her relationship with her mother and worked to bridge the generational gap that existed. Laddie experienced tension in a broader context. On one level she struggled to assert her Judaism to the Orthodox Jewish community. Conflicts often came to fruition at Neighborhood House. Neighborhood House was founded by a class of elite German Jews who practiced Reformed Judaism. The Reform congregation, however, had to coexist and serve a community of East European Jews who practiced Orthodox Judaism.[128] Laddie and other members of her family and social class attended services at Temple Beth Israel in Portland. The congregation of Beth Israel experimented with reform movements in the mid-nineteenth century and established itself as a relatively modern religious organization by the early twentieth-century.[129] Arriving

in several waves of immigration, German Jews established modern and progressive religious organizations that were mysterious to East European Jews who arrived in later migrations. For Hilda it was a matter of carving out a life separate from her mother's life and generational values. For Laddie it was a matter of bridging the gap between two different communities connected by a common religion.

Laddie also experienced a struggle between the elite Gentile community and the elite Jewish community. Laddie's social position both challenged and strengthened her religious identity. In an experience where she was a minority, Laddie had the opportunity to assert herself and her identity. Laddie claims that it was at St. Helens, when faced with a challenge, that she really asserted her Jewish faith. She reflected on her experience:

> "...it came time for confirmation...I was 13 and I was attending confirmation class at Temple Beth Israel. Mr. Harry Gevurtz was my teacher and Sister Elizabeth Roberta came. We always called her Sister Lizzie Bob and she cornered me one day in the hall, 'Gladys, why are you not in confirmation class?' I said, 'Because I don't want to be Sister. I am a Jew and I am going to be confirmed at Temple Beth Israel in June.' Well she was so furious. She thought it was very rude to her the way I said it and I'm sure I was, because I felt very strongly about my Judaism, all of a sudden, when I got into confirmation, it dawned on me, 'I'm a Jew.' And so she sent me to Sister Superior...and I said, 'Sister Valdene, I'm in trouble again.' And she said, 'That's nothing new, I expect to see you once a week. You always come in. Go on, reach in the drawer, you know where I keep the chocolates, then sit down and we'll talk it over.' So I had chocolate and we sat down and visited and I told her about what had happened. She said, 'Oh, how stupid of her. You, the only Jewish girl here this year too. She should have known better, I will reprimand her for asking you.' And I went out, of course, like a little peacock. My feathers all premed, you know."

This humorous story illustrates how clearly important Laddie's faith was to her. She was willing to challenge authority and dominant culture to assert her faith. She was very much aware of her status as a minority while attending St. Helens. Her faith, however, overrode any fear she may have had about being different. In this story lies a fundamental difference in the experience of Hilda and Laddie. Hilda never expressed a need to assert her identity as a Jewish woman to the dominant culture. Laddie's relationship to society, as an elite woman, imposed on her expectations and situations where she had to reaffirm her Judaism in ways that Hilda never did.

Thus the struggle for asserting Jewish identity in the process of assimilation was both internal and external. Just as historian Seth Korelitz has suggested in his article, "'A Magnificent Piece of Work': the Americanization Work of the National Council of Jewish Women," in the process of assimilation Jewish women had to negotiate not only with the Jewish community, but with the American Gentile community as well.[130] Because Hilda and Laddie came from different religious sects, they experienced Judaism in different ways. Hilda struggled with the generational differences between herself and her mother. Laddie struggled with expectations of the dominant culture that challenged her faith. Each felt tensions stemming from different focal points. Tension, however, existed nonetheless. Both women were able to utilize their struggle to assert themselves in an independent manner.

Class

Just as gender and religion were major factors in the experience of Hilda and Laddie, so was class. Hilda was very much aware of her working-class position and toiled her entire life to bring awareness to working-class issues. Laddie was also aware of her social position, at the top of the Portland Jewish community's social structure.

Hilda possessed a hyper-awareness of class divisions and distinctions. In a 1912 letter to William she writes of an experience she once had with women of a different "set":

> "...I once spoke before the Council of Jewish Women, in a $3.98 dress, and had just enough in my pocket-book to keep me alive until the next pay-day. I made a hit, while the speakers in $100.00 dresses, were given a mild applause. This notion of keeping up with "your set" is all bunk. Even shallow society women, admire brains and originality. I have proved it. Of course, if one has no brains, one tries to attract attention by getting a new dress."[131]

Hilda is clearly aware, but not afraid of class distinctions. Just as the NCJW was an elite organization in Portland, it maintained its social prominence across the country. Hilda

was strong enough to not let the NCJW intimidate her. A dynamic and fearless personality allowed Hilda access to float freely between the social hierarchies. But the permeability of class lines for Hilda, however, does not altogether negate the existence of those lines.

Laddie also recognized the elitist nature of the NCJW. Made up primarily of Reformed Jewish women, Laddie saw the tension between the NCJW and East European Orthodox immigrants. She said, "Oh they were snobbish" in a 1977 interview, "Now lets face it ...Portland Jews were the biggest bunch of snobs that ever lived and you would see a carry-over at Temple."[132] According to Laddie, this "snobbish" attitude kept East Europeans from joining the temple until after World War II.

For both Hilda and Laddie, the settlement house movement seemed a solution to these social problems. Just as Jane Addams had hoped, elite and working-class women could find a common ground at a settlement. In Portland, if East Europeans could not or would not join the Temple, they could attend and participate in activities at Neighborhood House with other Jewish people. It was at Hull-House that Hilda was first introduced to the concept of united social action against adversity. Hull-House sponsored many working-men's and working-women's labor clubs and sponsored lectures and investigations into the process of labor reform.[133]

Hilda's relationship with William Polacheck opened her eyes to many social issues. As a staunch socialist, William was active in labor politics.[134] His influence, combined with the influence of Jane Addams and Hull-House, exposed Hilda to many social issues. William introduced Hilda to his socialist friends, escorted her to political functions, and provided her with an extensive list of socialist publications.[135] While living

in Milwaukee in the early years of her marriage to William, Hilda worked extensively with a settlement called simply "the Settlement."[136] Hilda's life at Hull-House provided her with the skills to continue her work with social issues after she left Chicago. The Settlement was organized by a group of Milwaukee socialists that William worked with and was founded in a Jewish neighborhood.[137] Like Hull-House, the Settlement responded to social problems and engaged in various forms of philanthropy and social service.

Just as Laddie was torn between the Jewish and Gentile communities on the issue of religion, class also created an incredible amount of strain on her experience. Laddie was expected to function as an elite young woman, but also as a Jewish woman. The two roles often polarized. She reflected on her time at St. Helens Hall, a Catholic Preparatory School for elite Portland girls:

> "I was sent to St. Helens Hall, mainly because my mother and my aunts had gone there. Otherwise so that I might be a 'polished corner of the Temple'... It was on the corner stone at the old St. Helens Hall, 'so that our daughters might be as polished corner of the Temple.' And I'll tell you, we were a bunch of brats when we went there. The poor Nuns worked hard to keep us going."[138]

It was apparently more important for Laddie's family that she was sent to a socially-appropriate, rather than a religiously appropriate school for young girls. Her attendance at St. Helens is especially complex because Neighborhood House, operated by her own Aunt Ida Lowenberg, was home to both the Portland Hebrew School and Portland Hebrew Library.[139] Instead of attending Neighborhood House classes and programs, Laddie was sent elsewhere for social functions.

It is not surprising that both Hilda and Laddie engaged in some form of social work when taking into account the work of historian June Sochen, in her article "Some Observations on the Role of American Jewish Women as Communal Volunteers," who

argues that Jewish women have had a long history of engaging in charitable and philanthropic endeavors.[140] The Jewish history with anti-Semitism produced a great need for uplifting agent for the community. Jewish women became that agent: organizing sisterhoods, raising funds, and establishing Jewish education.[141] The NCJW (of which Hilda and Laddie were both members) is a perfect example of this trend among Jewish women.

She Left an American

"But now I was a citizen of my adopted country, and I hope I have always been a loyal citizen, following in the precepts of Jane Addams." – Hilda Satt Polacheck[142]

"Neighborhood House…took a lot of tactful work on her part and many hours, but she [Ida Lowenberg] was successful." – Gladys Goodman Trachtenberg[143]

From the stories of Hilda Satt Polacheck and Laddie Goodman Trachtenberg a number of conclusions can be drawn about life in the Progressive era. Their stories are like millions of others, but they are also individual and unique. Each woman's story reveals to us the complex nature of American life at the turn of the century. These two women lived in a period of vast transformation. Immigration numbers peaked at the turn of the century. Social conditions rapidly deteriorated, especially in major cities. To respond to these problems associated with "progress" a number of important reform movements developed. Women dominated progressive reform, using their moral authority to initiate change. One of the major movements that women developed in this period was the settlement house movement. The settlement house was intended to bridge economic and ethnic lines to improve American life.

Hull-House was the first and most famous of the social settlements in Progressive America. It spawned a number of other settlements including Portland's Neighborhood House. Both Hull-House and Neighborhood House play an interesting role in the process

of assimilation and immigration. Settlement houses in general were established to address a spectrum of social issues; but outlining the role it played in assimilation, specifically Jewish assimilation, underscores the complex nature of the settlement house operation. Because Hilda and Laddie were both Jewish and were both connected to a social settlement, their stories provide a framework for a comparative analysis for the settlement house's role in Jewish assimilation.

Hilda and Laddie's stories also serve to explain the complex nature of gender roles in Progressivism. At each social settlement Hilda and Laddie found role models of womanhood. Hilda idealized Jane Addams and Laddie idealized Ida Lowenberg. Addams and Lowenberg both devoted their lives to the Progressive cause and inspired Hilda and Laddie to do so as well. Despite the unconventional influence of Addams and Lowenberg, Hilda and Laddie chose relatively traditional paths in their own lives. This stems partly from the tendency of social reformers to impose gender conventions on other women, without participating in customary gender behavior themselves. Hilda and Laddie were not solely influenced by social reformers; they had other examples of womanhood from which to draw.

As Jewish women Hilda and Laddie experienced generational and spiritual tensions in their lives. Hilda struggled in her relationship with her mother. Profoundly influenced by modern American life Hilda, like so many other immigrants, had to consistently battle her mother's values with her own. Hers was an internal struggle. Laddie also struggled, but her battle was far more external. As a Reformed Jew, Laddie had to prove her "Jewishness" to the Orthodox community. Laddie also felt a need to

assert herself as a Jew to the dominant culture. Living as a minority amongst the Gentile community of Portland, Laddie had to constantly reaffirm her faith.

As a working class immigrant, Hilda stood at the opposite end of the social spectrum from Laddie. Laddie was born into a position of privilege into the elite German Jewish community. Each woman was aware of their social position. This awareness, however, drew both women to the same progressive cause: settlement house movement. Hilda was drawn to Hull-House by her thirst for knowledge and desire to improve her standard of living. Laddie was drawn to Neighborhood House by both a sense of responsibility and a long tradition of Jewish women engaging in philanthropic endeavors. Class, therefore, affected the lives of both women.

Gender, religion, and class are all intricate elements of Hilda and Laddie's stories. Both are linked together by an ethnic and cultural connection to the Jewish immigrant community. Although we can think about these categories on independent levels it is essential to understand how they function together to shape an individuals experience. Identity is not a singular entity. It is constructed out of a combination of factors. Hilda identified herself as a Jewish immigrant from Poland. She also asserted herself as a working-class progressive woman. Like Hilda, Laddie identified herself as a Jewish woman but not as an immigrant. She was very aware of her position as an elite member of society. Neither formulated identity as simply "Jewish" or "woman" or "elite" or "working-class." The settlement house movement, for both Hilda and Laddie, contributed to each individual's sense of self. At Hull-House and Neighborhood House, Hilda and Laddie were introduced to important social and cultural issues.

Historians have analyzed the role of the settlement house in the Progressive era. This study specifically addresses the role of the settlement house in the lives of Jewish women and the process of assimilation. Hilda credits Hull-House as the place where she, in many ways, came into her own. She was able to further her education, address social problems, and help others through Hull-House. Laddie turned her work with Neighborhood House into a career, eventually working as a prominent social working in Portland for several years. For each woman the settlement house became a way of life, as much a part of their identity as gender, religion, and class.

Endnotes

[1] "Hilda Satt Polacheck, "Introductory Statement written during Hull-House demolition, ca 1963" TMs, Special Collections, Richard J. Daley Library, University of Illinois, Chicago.
[2] Gladys Goodman Trachtenberg, interviewed by Shirley Tanzer, 28 August 1977, tape recording, Oregon Jewish Museum, Portland.
[3] Lynne Y. Weiner, "Introduction," *I Came a Stranger: The Story of a Hull-House Girl*, ed. Dena J. Polacheck Epstein (Chicago: University of Illinois Press), xii.
[4] Gladys Goodman Trachtenberg, interviewed by Mollie Blumenthal, 11 December 1973, tape recording, Oregon Jewish Museum, Portland.
[5] Judith Ann Trolander, *Professionalism and Social Change: From the Settlement House Movement to Neighborhood Centers 1886 to the Present*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987) 12.
[6] To avoid confusion I will refer to these two individuals by their preferred first names. Hinda Satt became Hilda Satt Polacheck after her move to America in 1892 and marriage to William Polacheck in 1912, *I Came a Stranger*. Gladys Goodman preferred to be called Laddie and acquired the Trachtenberg name after her marriage in 1946, Trachtenberg, interview 1973.
[7] For a full account of each individual's story see the autobiography of Hilda, Hilda Satt Polacheck *I Came a Stranger: The Story of a Hull-House Girl*, ed. Dena J. Polacheck Epstein (Chicago: University of Illinois Press) and for Laddie's reflections refer to the Gladys Goodman Trachtenberg interviews, 1973 and 1977, tape recordings, Oregon Jewish Museum, Portland.
[8] Peggy Pascoe, *Relations of Rescue:. The Search for Female Moral Authority in the American West, 1874-1939*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990) 178.
[9] Trolander, *Professionalism*, 9.
[10] Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Jane Addams and the Dream of American Democracy*, (New York: Basic Books, 2002) 16.
[11] Jane Addams, The Subjective Necessity for Social Settlements" in *The Jane Addams Reader,* ed. Jean Bethke Elshtain, (New York: Basic Books, 2002) 14.
[12] Ida Lowenberg, "Head Workers Annual Report" *Report of Neighborhood House* (Portland: Neighborhood House, 1915): 5.
[13] Ellen Fitzpatrick, *Endless Crusade: Women Social Scientists and Progressive Reform* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 35.
[14] Pascoe, *Rescue*, xx. See also Judith Ann Trolander, *Professionalism and Social Change: From the Settlement House Movement to Neighborhood Centers 1886 to the Present*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987): chapter 1.
[15] Trolander, *Professionalism*, 13.
[16] Pascoe, *Rescue*, xix.
[17] Trolander, *Professionalism*, 8.
[18] Jane Addams, "The Objective Value of a Social Settlement,", in *The Jane Addams Reader,* ed. Jean Bethke Elshtain, (New York: Basic Books, 2002) 30.
[19] Fitzpatrick, *Endless Crusade*, 35.
[20] Polacheck, *I Came a Stranger*, 50.
[21] Steven Lowenstein, *The Jews of Oregon 1850-1950*, (Portland: Jewish Historical Society of Oregon, 1987) 85.
[22] Korelitz "Piece of Work," 179.
[23] Lowenstein, *The Jews of Oregon*, 83.
[24] Trachtenberg, interview 1977.
[25] Jane Addams, "Prefatory Note" in *Hull House Maps and Papers*, ed. Richard C. Wade (New York: Arno Press, 1970), viii.
[26] Jean Bethke Elshtain, "A Return to Hull-House: Taking the Measure of an Extraordinary Life," in *The Jane Addams Reader,* ed. Jean Bethke Elshtain, (New York: Basic Books, 2002) xxii.
[27] Elshtain, "Return," xxii.
[28] Elshtain, "Return," xxxvi.
[29] Elshtain, "Return," xxix.
[30] Pascoe, *Rescue*, xix.

[31] Pascoe, *Rescue*, 112-173.
[32] Judith Ann Trolander, "Hull House and the Settlement House Movement: A Centennial Reassesement," in *Journal Urban History* 17, no. 4 (August 1991): 413.
[33] Pascoe, *Rescue*, 33.
[34] Laura S. Abrams, "Guardians of Virtue: The Social Reformers and the 'Girl Problem,' 1890-1920" in *Social Service Review* (September 2000): 436-452.
[35] Abrams, "Guardians of Virtue"436-452.
[36] Abrams, "Guardians of Virtue"436.
[37] Abrams, "Guardians of Virtue," 437.
[38] Lowenberg, "Annual Report" 4.
[39] Abrams, "Guardians of Virtue," 437.
[40] Trolander, *Professionalism.*
[41] Trolander, *Professionalism*, 13.
[42] Trolander, *Professionalism*, 7-29.
[43] Assimilation refers to the process of absorbing a foreighn culture. Newly arrived immigrants held their own deep-rooted habits, customs, and traditions, that were often very different from American culture. The diverse ethnic backgrounds of Americans often created serious cultural conflict. See Roger Daniels, *Coming to America: A History of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life*, (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1990) 101-118.
[44] Trolander, "Hull House" 413.
[45] Trolander, "Hull-House" 415.
[46] Polacheck, *I Came a Stranger*, 51.
[47] Trachtenberg, interview 1973.
[48] Daniels, *Coming to America*, 124.
[49] Daniels, *Coming to America*, 265.
[50] Daniels, *Coming to America*, 152.
[51] Daniels, *Coming to America*, 156-157.
[52] Daniels, *Coming to America*, 223.
[53] Daniels, *Coming to America*, 225.
[54] Eileen Eisenberg, "Transplanted to the Rose City" in *Journal of American Ethnic History*, (Spring 2000), 84. Addams, "The Subjective Necessity," 14.
[55] Daniels, *Coming to America*, 155. For analysis of the issues surrounding German Americanization see, Michael Ermarth, "Hyphenation and Hyper-Americanization: Germans of the Wilhelmine Reich View German-Americans, 1890-1914," in *Journal of American Ethnic History*, (Winter 2002): 33-58.
[56] Lowenstein, *The Jews of Oregon*, 79.
[57] Trachtenberg, interview 1977.
[58] Lowenstein, *The Jews of Oregon*, 79.
[59] Lowenstein, *The Jews of Oregon*, 51.
[60] Polacheck, *I Came a Stranger*, 9.
[61] Eisenberg, "Rose City," 84.
[62] Eisenberg, "Rose City," 83.
[63] On patterns of Jewish immigration and settlement, see Roger Daniels, *Coming to America: A History of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life*, (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1990): 212-237; Eileen Eisenberg, "Transplanted to the Rose City" in *Journal of American Ethnic History*, (Spring 2000) 82-97; and Seth Korelitz "A Magnificent Piece of Work": the Americanization Work of the National Council of Jewish Women" in American Jewish History 83, no. 2 (1995): 177-203.
[64] Eisenberg, "Rose City," 84.
[65] Alan M. Kraut, *Silent Travelers: Germs, Genes, and the "Immigrant Menace,"* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994) 139.
[66] Kraut, *Silent Travelers*, 138.
[67] Kraut, Silent Travelers, 105-137.
[68] Kraut, *Silent Travelers*, 138.
[69] Kraut, *Silent Travelers*, 155.
[70] Daniels, *Coming to America,* 265.
[71] Kraut, *Silent Travelers,* 61.

[72] Trachtenberg, interview 1977.
[73] Beth S. Wenger, "Memory as Identity: The Invention of the Lower East Side," in *American Jewish History* 85, (1997), 3.
[74] Melissa Klapper, "'A Long and Broad Education': Jewish Girls and the Problem of Education in America, 1860-1920" in *Journal of American Ethnic History*, (Fall 2002), 3.
[75] Kraut, *Silent Travelers*, 228.
[76] Lowenstein, *The Jews of Oregon*, 85.
[77] Polacheck, *I Came a Stranger*, 68.
[78] Trachtenberg, interview 1977.
[79] Trolander, *Professionalism*, 9.
[80] Addams, "The Subjective Necessity," 14.
[81] Elshtain, *Dream of Democracy*, 15.
[82] Elshtain, *Dream of Democracy*, 2.
[83] Trolander, *Professionalism*, 13.
[84]."List of Residents," *Maps and Papers*, 206.
[85] "Hull-House: A Social Settlement," *Maps and Papers*, 207-230.
[86] Elshtain, *Dream of Democracy*, 144.
[87] Jane Addams, "The Public School and the Immigrant Child," in *The Jane Addams Reader,* ed. Jean Bethke Elshtain, (New York: Basic Books, 2002) 238.
[88] Jane Addams, "Immigrants under the Quota," in *The Second Twenty Years at Hull-House*, (New York: MacMillian Co, 1935) 268.
[89] Trolander, *Professionalism*, 10.
[90] Elshtain, *Dream of Democracy*, 94. The most important concerning settlement houses, "The Subjective Necessity for Social Settlements" and the "Objective Value of a Social Settlement." See Elshtain, *The Jane Addams Reader*, for an extensive collection of Jane Addams' work.
[91] Lowenstein, 85.
[92] Trachtenberg, interview 1977.
[93] Lowenstein, *The Jews of Oregon*, 140.
[94] Lowenstein, *The Jews of Oregon*, 85.
[95] Blanche F. Blumauer, "Report of Chairman of Neighborhood House Committee" in *Report of Neighborhood House* (Portland: Neighborhood House, 1915): 1.
[96] Lowenstein, *The Jews of Oregon*, 140.
[97] Trachtenberg, interview 1973.
[98] Lowenstein, *The Jews of Oregon*, 83.
[99] Addams died in 1935, *Dream of Democray*; and Lowenberg died in 1949, Trachtenberg interview, 1977.
[100] Polacheck, *I Came a Stranger*, 52.
[101] University of Illinois, *Transcript for Hilda Satt, Spring Quarter 1904*, (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1904) 1.
[102] Wiener, "Introduction," *I Came a Stranger*, xviii.
[103] Trachtenberg, interview 1977.
[104] Trachtenberg, interview 1977.
[105] "Gladys Trachtenberg" Oregonian, 14 April 1993, obituaries.
[106] Polacheck, *I Came a Stranger*, 5.
[107] Trachtenberg, interview 1973.
[108] Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," *American Quarterly* 18 (Summer 1966): 151-74.
[109] Welter, "Cult," 152.
[110] Pascoe, *Rescue,* 5.
[111] Abrams, "Guardians of Virtue," 436-452.
[112] William Polacheck to Hilda Satt, 31 October 1911, Transcript in the hand of Hilda Satt Polacheck. Special Collections, Richard J. Daley Library, University of Illinois, Chicago.
[113] Hilda Satt to William Polacheck, 2 November 1911, Transcript in the hand of Hilda Satt Polacheck. Special Collections, Richard J. Daley Library, University of Illinois, Chicago.
[114] Satt to Polacheck, 2 November 1911.
[115] Polacheck, *I Came a Stranger*, 122.

[116] Polacheck, *I Came a Stranger*, 125-126.
[117] Polacheck, *I Came a Stranger*, 43.
[118] Polacheck, *I Came a Stranger*, 44.
[119] Lowenstein, *Jews of Oregon*, 83.
[120] Trachtenberg, interview 1977.
[121] Trachtenberg, interview 1973.
[122] Trachtenberg, interview 1977.
[123] Abrams, "Guardians of Virtue," 436-452.
[124] Weiner, "Introduction," *I Came a Stranger*, xiii.
[125] Teller, Sidney A. ed., *The Butterfly* 3, no. 10 (October 1909): 1.
[126] Hilda Satt, The Old Woman and the New World," *The Butterfly* 3, no 10 (October 1909): 4-5
[127] Satt, "The Old Woman," 5.
[128] Trachtenberg, interview 1977.
[129] Lowenstein, *The Jews of Oregon*, 53.
[130] Korelitz, "Piece of Work," 177-203.
[131] Hilda Satt to William Polacheck, 28 February 1912, Transcript in the hand of Hilda Satt Polacheck. Special Collections, Richard J. Daley Library, University of Illinois, Chicago.
[132] Trachtenberg, interview 1977.
[133] Elshtain, *Dream of Democracy*, 112.
[134] Polacheck, *I Came a Stranger*, 134.
[135] Polacheck, I Came a Stranger, 129-141.
[136] Polacheck, *I Came a Stranger*, 133.
[137] Polacheck, *I Came a Stranger*, 133.
[138] Trachtenberg, interview 1977.
[139] Lowenstein, *Jews of Oregon*, 142.
[140] June Sochen, "Some Observations on the Role of American Jewish Women as Communal Volunteers," in *American Jewish History* 70, no. 1, (1980): 22-34.
[141] Sochen, "Communal Volunteers," 22-34.
[142] Polacheck, *I Came a Stranger*, 125.
[143] Trachtenberg, interview 1977.

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