

HUNTER COLLEGE READING/WRITING CENTER
Writing across the Curriculum: The CUNY Proficiency Examination
Sample Summary 1

In Philip Slater's essay, "Engagement and Detachment: Getting Involved," the author argues that there is a propensity for Americans to avoid chronic social dilemmas. Rather than solving these issues, Americans often seek hasty, insufficient solutions, which only worsen existing problems. Although this attitude is absurd, this approach is often chosen over sensible solutions.

There is no question that many solutions to our social problems are unsuccessful. However, as Slater points out, those who highlight the futility of our solutions are wrongly characterized as radicals. When an action is taken to remedy a social problem, regardless of its usefulness or lack thereof, the dilemma is regarded as being adequately dealt with. This is because many Americans lack the tolerance to tackle complicated social issues.

The American inclination when evading social crises is not a new occurrence; instead, it is part of the American character. The people who first colonized the United States, failed at correcting the social dilemmas that plagued their home countries. Now, while foreigners admire American ambition and mobility, they fail to see the outcomes of covetousness and egocentricity.

This American tendency is best seen in the stark disparity between our wealth and care for those who are impoverished. This inequality is the result from, and also underscores our inclination towards evasion. In addition, there is no large cooperative community that attempts to handle social problems together, which helps place the responsibility for solving social problems on the family unit. Thus, Slater concludes, our impulsive, illogical methodology to American social issues disintegrates the overall quality of our lives.