

Chapter 10:
Discovery of the
Ordinary World
Thomas, Park, and Lynd

1

William I. Thomas
(1863-1947)

- Son of a rural preacher
- Sociologist at the University of Chicago; 1st sociology department
- Conducted one of 1st empirical social studies to examine Polish peasants
- Introduced "Thomas' Theorem"

2

Thomas' theorem:
"If people define a
situation as real, it is real in
its consequences."
What are some examples
of this?
Dunking "witches"
weapons of mass destruction in Iraq

3

2nd Major Contribution:
Empirical study of Polish immigrants
If you were given this task, what things
would you do (or methodologies would
you use) to help you learn about their
lives?

4

Thomas and Znaniecki were
commended for their variety of
methodologies including:
personal letters
studying articles in the Polish press
personal interviews
observations

5

The negative publicity from an
affair with a military officer's
wife resulted in Thomas being
fired from the Univ. of Chicago

6

Robert E. Park
(1864-1944, 80 yrs)

Park took over for Thomas at the University of Chicago.

Had been a newspaper reporter for 12 years

Park encouraged his faculty to conduct APPLIED SOCIOLOGY (e.g., study of hobos, gangs, the ghetto)

7

However, Park and the Chicago school were criticized for focusing on social problems and not developing broader social theory.

8

Which do you consider to be more valuable:
"applied" research or theory development?

Theory is referred to as the "high road" and applied research the "low road".
(Guess what NSF grant \$ supports—high or low road?)

9

The Ecological fallacy was brought to the attention of researchers:

The ecological fallacy occurs when the characteristics of the people in an area are said to be the cause of or associated with something occurring in the area.

10

The Ecological fallacy :

For example, if upper income neighborhoods are found to have a high suicide rate.

It would be an ecological fallacy to make the assumption that suicide is higher among upper-income persons (perhaps those committing suicide were the poorer persons in these neighborhoods)

11

Park initiated research that was the basis for a sub-field of sociology called urban sociology.

He and his colleagues focused on the development of cities, with rings of inhabitants and the wealthier persons moving away from the inner rings of the city.

12

Robert Lynd

A missionary about to leave for Africa—
was awarded a grant to study religious
behavior in the U.S (in 1920's).

He chose to study American life in a
"typical" city (Muncie Indiana)
and the resulting findings are referred
to as the "Middletown Studies"

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Robert Lynd

Highlighted the importance of
studying stratification and social
class (was not so concerned
about "applied" research as Park
and the Chicago School)

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Emergence of

Sociology of Organizations
and
Sociology of Work

Sociology of Organizations/Work: An Historical Perspective

1. Pre-industrial revolution
craft work was prevalent
2. Industrial revolution
brought the assembly line
approach

3. Scientific Management (i.e., focus
on technical/operational issues) was
believed to be the road map to
success (came to be called
Industrial Engineering)

- Advantage: could produce products
quicker
- Disadvantage: the workers didn't like
being treated as spokes on a wheel

Discovery of the Hawthorne effect
(Hawthorne Works of Western Electric)

Hawthorne effects—people
perform better when they are
given attention

(not treated like a spoke on a
wheel)

4. Next, the Human Relations approach was believed to be the road map to success

- highlighted importance of the "informal" group of workers
- Advantage: workers were more satisfied
- Disadvantage: the most effective procedures were not always used

5. The Socio-Technical approach

- Advantages: workers have high job satisfaction, effective procedures are used
- Disadvantage: difficult to implement

- Quality Circles
- Interdisciplinary Work Teams
- Self-Managed Work Teams



Why Self-Managed Teams?

- Effective procedures used
- Higher performance



■ Yeatts' recent research activity:

- Determine how self-managed work teams in nursing homes can be used effectively
- How would you design a study for this purpose?

