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### The Eastland Disaster

The Eastland Disaster was a terribly tragedy that took place on the Chicago River. This disaster that occurred on July 24, 1915 had more fatalities than the Titanic. The passengers were employees from Western Electric boarding to go on their company outing. Unfortunately, before these employees were able to reach or even leave for their destination the ship toppled over. Thus, for many uncertain reasons this tragic event has become forgotten. Although, it lies very closely to many of those who had family involved in this shipwreck. Not many remember this event, which leads many to question the reasons why this tragic event in our city of Chicago has become lost in time.

We, as a class, have done our own research consisting of asking 2 groups whether or not they remember this event. These two groups were people over 60 and those younger than 60. After having compiled these results, it has lead me to believe younger generations are not being taught about this event. Many of those that I interviewed under the age of 60 had no recollection of even hearing about this event. When asked why their answer was they were primarily too young. Upon asking people over the age of 60, I found that at least 7 out of 10 people have heard or knew someone from the wreck. These people felt that the reason why majority of society does not recall this event is because of the war. They felt the war was such a big event that it blocked or over shadowed the Eastland Disaster. Next, we will look at how sociologists would look at this event and explain it.

Conflict theorists see this event as unjust. These theorists focus on conflict and power. Some questions they may ask are:

1. Why has this event not been transmitted to future generations?
2. How can we change this so everyone becomes aware?
3. Would anyone be exploited in making this event known to the general public?

Conflict theorists focus on society as a whole. They make sure no one is being taken advantage of. They may look at the relationships between the crew and passengers and why no one was made aware of the capacity and stability of the ship.

Functionalists look at this event as a society not an individual group. They look at whether or not this was accidental because to them everything has a reason. Some questions they might ask are:

1. Why was the outing taking place on this particular ship?
2. Was this tragedy hidden from society?
3. Is there a rational reason for this event to be concealed from the public?

Lastly, Interactionists would look at this catastrophe as an effect to the employees. Interactionists tend to see the situation as focusing on the individual and not the society.

1. How did you expect people to react?
2. Is the reaction of the people what caused you to conceal this tragedy?
3. Have the individuals and family been compensated justly for their losses and expenses?

These Interactionists will look at individual situations and the effects each family experienced. For example, they will look at if there was compensation for families and if those families were emotionally stable now.

These three perspectives made me re-think my conclusion. At first I thought this tragedy was an accident. After seeing it through these perspectives new questions arose. For

example, maybe this disaster was concealed so Western Electric would not get a bad reputation. Another question I thought of was whether or not this was an accident or a plan to de-size the company? Although, I have no research to validate these assumptions I have made, I do recall the Eastland Disaster committee never mentioning the role Western Election is playing in this. Western Electric has also given minimal reparations to the families and loved ones of those lost in the catastrophe.

I do believe there is such a thing as social amnesia. There are people out there that do know about this event and when their memory is re-triggered they remember this event. Maybe people did forget about this event because of the upcoming war and if that is the answer then it is about time to make this event known. We can do this by making it mandatory to be entered into history books. Also, I think we owe it to those whom lost loved ones and lost their lives to make a greater memorial so their memory and this historical event can live on.