

Social disorganization theory essay



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Social disorganization theory according to Gennaro and others in their distinguished book 'Criminology: Theory, Research, and Policy' is a criminology theory put forward to explain causes of crime in the society. Its advocates suggest that there is a link between the crime rates in society and the ecological factors. To them, crime rates tend to be higher in areas where there are high temporary residential as well as commercial properties.

They further argue that crime rates tend to be higher where there are loose societal norms or values especially where there is constant changing of neighborhoods. In such instances it becomes difficult to effectively provide essential services for instance education, healthcare, proper sanitation and housing. (Holmes G, 2006). The need for government assistance is also evident in such societies and there are higher rates of unemployment and single parenthood. To such people the role of institutions that ensure the adherence of values and norms like the family, schools, and religion are generally weak. This paper will focus on explaining why I believe this theory can best explain the looting that took place in New Orleans after the Katrina Hurricane struck.

Harmony and solidarity that could have boosted effective resolving of issues is jeopardized when people are constantly moving from one place to the next. Transitional societies will therefore register increased rates of crime and delinquency due to 'physical decay' or the deserted buildings, there is high population mobility and population heterogeneity as well as high poverty rates. Increased mobility lowers trust and social institutions cannot operate effectively to instill values and norms. (Holmes G, 2006). In their book 'the sociology of Katrina' David and others point out that New Orleans

was not new to the hurricanes as it had experienced them several times before. Hurricane Katrina saw approximately 8% of New Orleans covered by floods and the two weeks that the region remained flooded was enough for intensive looting that left many astonished.

As the National Guard was busy in their saving mission law and collapsed extensively and closed green groceries, pharmaceuticals, liquor shops were looted. (David et al, 2005). The damaged and abandoned houses were seen as attractive sites for looting. The looting problem was prevalent months after the hurricane had stopped a clear indication of persistent lawlessness.

A close examination can establish that social disorganization is the best theory to explain these crimes. Crime rates are expected to be higher during protests for instance during riots as people try to prove a point this was in contrast with what happened in New Orleans. (David et al, 2005). Statistics show that a higher percentage of the residents in New Orleans were African Americans whose long-term unemployment rates were higher than those of other races.

(David et al, 2005). These inequalities could be blamed for the increased disorderliness precipitating crime in the region. In most cases low paying jobs are the available ones in New Orleans from the service industries for instance the food and hotel industries. The negative economic effects could be the cause of increased crime rates especially at a time of calamity. The deserted buildings also increased the looting as they act as ‘ magnets of crime’.