I. Disasters

fair.org search Hurricane Katrina “Demonizing the Victims of Katrina”

A. Definition

1. single short term event

2. unpredictable

3. significant loss of human life, property or environmental damage

4. disrupts everyday life: temporary or long term

B. Examples

1. Natural: hurricanes, earthquakes, tsunami, flood

2. Human: Bhopal, Chernobyl, Exxon Valdez, 9-11, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Dresden, Buffalo Creek

C. Classical Theory and disasters

1. extreme social strain
2. panic = irrational response (blame the victim)
3. violence and looting

4. trauma

D. Model Study

1. Everything in Its Path: Destruction of Community in the Buffalo Creek Flood

2. Event: Buffalo Creek flood Feb 1972

1. 16 villages destroyed
2. 80% lost homes
3. 125 killed
4. 90% long term trauma

3. Context

1. Land
   1. mountains and hollows
   2. creeks and rivers
2. People
   1. 5000
   2. small villages
   3. Larado, Saunder, Crown
3. Livelihood
   1. mining
   2. Pittston Corp
4. The Dam
   1. 1000 tons per day of sludge and waste
   2. half million gallons of water per day
5. The Flood
   1. dam collapse
   2. 100 tons of sludge, 130 million gallons of water
   3. 15 to 20 feet high
   4. obliterated Saunders
   5. took Saunders with it
6. Collective Behavior: immediate post disaster
   1. flee if possible
   2. set up campsites
   3. “picked” through stores
7. government response

i. trailers

* 1. first come first serve

1. trailer life
2. Psychological consequences
   1. PTSD
   2. Collective trauma

iii. long lasting

E. Disaster Research Center:

1. panic

a. incredibly rare

ii. one exit

iii. example: Bhopal

b. mass media

i. “100,000 flee in panic”

ii. War of the Worlds: very few

2. “Every person for himself”

a. engage with others in course of action

b. adaptive problem solving

c. help others

d. Emergent Norm Theory

i. breakdown of social order

ii. conventional norms don’t fit

iii. people redefine situation

iv. people construct new norms and values

v. “looting” or “survival”

vi. collective adaptation to situation

3. Victim’s fault

a. most people don’t evacuate (1 in 4)

i. emergency shelters remain empty

ii. don’t blindly listen to authority

b. more predictable and dangerous

i. Cuba

ii. China

c. example: Dateline: Atomic Bomb NYC

i. safe room to protect from fall out

ii. follow emergency instructions

iii. away from fallout

iv. “duck and cover”

4. Disaster trauma

a. trauma and shock a minority

b. media promotes

c. exception: Buffalo Creek

5. looting and violence

a. infrequent and atypical

b. crime rate declines

c. disaster v civil disturbance v blackout

d. media and violence

II. Disaster: Hurricane Katrina

A. Event

1. Hurricane

a. high winds

b. storm surge

c. flood: 80% of city underwater

2. Loss of life

3. Widespread property loss

4. Disrupts life

a. immediate: thousands trapped, no food or water

b. diaspora

i. 30,000 displaced throughout country

ii. 13,000 FEMA trailer

B. Context

1. Land

a. Mississippi River: dykes

b. wetlands

c. barrier islands

2. People

1. Stratification
   1. 67% African American

ii. 34% poor (Parish)

1. Ninth Ward, St. Bernard Parish
   1. renters
   2. government housing
   3. dependent on mass transportation

3.The Disaster

a. hurricane

b. surge

c. flood

4. Collective Behavior

a. media

b. reality

5. Government response

a. Superdome

b. Convention Center

c. 13,000 FEMA Trailers

d. 30,000 displace around country

e. ½ pre-Katrina population

6. Trauma: 10x PTSD

7. Opportunity and disaster

a. Public Housing

b. Health Code

c. Golf courses

C. Media: Newspapers

1. NYT headline: “Despair and Lawlessness Grip New Orleans as

Thousands Remain Stranded”

2. NYPost: “Dodge City” with picture: military vehicle, with soldiers, weapons at the ready

3. USA Today: “Looters, they are like cockroaches!” wealth lady in

unaffected suburb

4. NYTimes (story); quoting NO Swat Commander: “armed groups terrorizing, gang rape . . .

5. WP: “Its Like Baghdad on a bad day” and “Troops Back from Iraq find

another war zone.”

D. Media: television

1. CNN Lou Dobbs: City in Crisis, wide spread looting, even shoes

2. CNN Situation Room” increasing violence and snipers

3. Fox;

a. fire for the joy of arson (no support)

b. guys in pick up trucks with auto weapons (no support)

c. looting, murder and rape

4. Today Matt Lauer: “What are the rules of engagement”?

E. Weeks later

1. LA Times: no roving gangs, no wide-ranging looting, no murders

at the Superdome 9/17

2. NY Times9/16: four violent deaths citywide during entire

period

3. Knight-Ridder”: Air Force, Coast Guard, Homeland Security,

Air National Guard not one confirmed sniping.

4. NO SWAT team: entered convention center once and rescued two

white women; no weapons, rape, or murder

5. WP: National Guard virtually no violence at the convention center

6. police in white suburb turned back people trying to flee: fired over

there heads

F. On the spot

1. Fox: Shepard Smith: 100s huddled under freeway, organized, sharing,

no violence. Lots of anger

2. Geraldo: no violence at Convention center, no food, no water

3. Scarboro: no violence, no food, no water, no help