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Coping with Disaster: Lessons Learned from Executive Directors of Nonprofit Organizations (NPOs) on New Orleans Following Hurricane Katrina

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COPING WITH DISASTER: LESSONS LEARNED FROM EXECUTIVE
DIRECTORS OF NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS (NPOs) IN
NEW ORLEANS FOLLOWING HURRICANE KATRINA

by

Steven L. Smith

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in partial fulfillment of the
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Advisor: Kieran Fogarty, Ph.D.

Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan
August 2010

COPING WITH DISASTER: LESSONS LEARNED FROM EXECUTIVE
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Steven L. Smith, Ph.D.

Western Michigan University, 2010

This dissertation explores the issues and challenges that nonprofit organizations (NPOs) contend with as a consequence of a large-scale disaster, in this case, the Hurricane Katrina disaster in 2005. Through interviews with 10 executive directors of small and medium-size nonprofit, community-based NPOs in New Orleans, this study examines how their organizations coped with the consequences of the storm and the devastating aftermath. The critical issues and coping strategies the executives identified, and the lessons they learned offer insights into (a) nonprofit organizational responses to a catastrophic event, and (b) executive leadership that helped the nonprofit to survive.

This research project was a qualitative, exploratory study utilizing a grounded theoretical approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, which were transcribed, coded, and analyzed to determine themes in critical issues, coping strategies, and lessons learned. Analysis of critical issues revealed that executives reported communication issues as paramount in the immediate aftermath of the disaster. Primary coping strategies included identifying and securing funding support, creating new approaches to problems confronting their organizations, and responding to the needs of new clients requesting services. Executives also reported a number of lessons

learned after reflecting on the critical issues confronting their organizations and the coping strategies that were employed.

The implications for organizational and administrative practice include: multi-faceted emergency planning, the need for off-site (back-up) organizational, client and financial records, consideration of the role of banks and financial transfers, the need for more extensive contact information when board and staff disperse outside of their homes and communities, better use of technology, short-term cash flow guarantees from funders, a clear chain of command when key people are not available, focus on mission consistency, and the need for continuity of service agreements in a disaster.

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Steven L. Smith

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Hurricane Katrina in 2005 was one of the most intense and destructive storms to hit the United States (Blake, Rappaport, & Landsea, 2007). More than 800,000 individuals across 138 counties and parishes in four states were relocated. More than 90,000 square miles of land were affected, which is an area roughly the size of Great Britain (Federal Emergency Management Agency, 2009). Hurricane Katrina was responsible for more than 1,800 deaths and over \$100 billion in damages (O’Keefe, 2007).

On August 29, 2005, the storm surge from Hurricane Katrina breached the levee system that protected New Orleans, submerging large areas of the city, including many low-lying, low-income neighborhoods. Many residents chose to evacuate their homes, while others remained for a variety of reasons, not the least of which was a lack of resources necessary to leave (Lein, Beausoleil, Angel, & Bell, 2006). Hurricane Katrina and the flooding that followed displaced many poor African-American residents in New Orleans, and many of those most affected by the disaster had lived in areas of concentrated and persistent poverty for generations (Bell, 2008).

Hurricane Katrina was bigger, more costly, more technologically transforming, and freighted with more social resonance than any other modern U.S. disaster (May, 2006). George Foresman, undersecretary for preparedness for the Department of

Homeland Security (DHS), noted that Hurricane Katrina was 12 times more destructive than 1992's Hurricane Andrew by most disaster metrics. "We didn't have very big events in this country (in the 1990s), so state government, local government and federal government got off without a hard test," Foresman said. "Katrina was our first hard test." (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2006).

Based upon three week-long service learning opportunities led by the researcher in the New Orleans area post-Katrina (2006, 2007, 2009), verbal reports from representatives of nonprofit organizations (NPOs), and discussions with the United Way of Greater New Orleans, many NPOs were also not prepared for an environmental catastrophe of this magnitude. As a consequence of Hurricane Katrina, many nonprofit, community-based organizations in the New Orleans area were decimated. Buildings were damaged or destroyed, many personnel were evacuated or had to deal with personal trauma, service provision was disrupted, and many clients disappeared or relocated. In addition, new clients requested help, often for basic necessities that were not part of the nonprofit organization's mission.

Executives of NPOs that remained viable following Hurricane Katrina had to cope with the aftermath of the catastrophe. They had to engage in restorative decisions and consider new needs that their organizations might logically address, as well as ongoing operational concerns. Executive directors had to become knowledgeable about any new needs of their local target populations, program operations, fund development, community and inter-organizational relations, and other executive and leadership functions. Executives had to be facile in understanding, adapting, planning, and implementing change.

Purpose of the Study

Executive directors were in a pivotal position to provide insight into the thinking, planning, and execution of organizational, administrative, and programmatic decisions. They were required to blend an understanding of the short- and long-term needs of their target populations, the role of donors, and the gaps in services with the emergency response architecture at the federal, state, and local levels.

This research is an exploratory qualitative study examining nonprofit organizational coping in the 4 years following Hurricane Katrina (“Hurricane Katrina” in this study will be understood to include the devastation of both Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita, which followed nearly 1 month after Katrina in many of the same geographic areas). The purpose of this research is to identify the issues and challenges that NPOs contend with as a consequence of a large-scale disaster, and to identify, through the lens of the executive director, how nonprofit community-based social service organizations have coped and are coping with the consequences of the disaster. The lessons learned by the executives offer insight into organizational emergency response planning and implementation, and identification of needs that were addressed or not addressed following the catastrophe.

Significance of the Study

This research focused on the aftermath of the Hurricane Katrina disaster in 2005, and the challenges faced by small to medium-size NPOs that provided services in the New Orleans area. In the course of the literature review, three articles were found that

relate specifically to how NPOs coped, adapted, and changed in the face of an overwhelming disaster. This study contributes to the body of knowledge regarding how NPOs adapt to new organizational realities that emerge as a consequence of a natural disaster.

The nonprofit organizations in New Orleans provided critical infrastructure to help individuals recover following Hurricane Katrina. Studying how 10 NPOs and their executive directors planned, reacted, and moved forward through phases of the disaster and its aftermath contributes to the knowledge base of disaster planning, preparedness, and recovery for other NPOs.

Research Questions

Research Question #1: What have been the key issues faced by small and medium-size, community-based nonprofit organizations in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina?

Research Question #2: How did nonprofit organizations in New Orleans cope with the issues created by Hurricane Katrina from the immediate aftermath in 2005 to 2009?

Definitions

In this study, *Hurricane Katrina* refers to the named storms Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita, which made landfall in the New Orleans area on August 29, 2005 and September 23, 2005, respectively. Although many historical references are made to *Hurricane Katrina*, the damage and aftermath refers to that created by both hurricanes.

Nonprofit organizations (NPOs) and *community-based organizations* are sometimes used interchangeably in the literature. In this research, nonprofit organizations are community-based organizations or agencies providing social services as their primary mission, as opposed to other institutions such as hospitals, churches, schools, or governmental entities, which are also nonprofit.

The title for the lead executive of these types of NPOs is referred to differentially in the literature, reflecting a lack of consistency in this practice across the United States. Literature references to *executives*, *director*, *CEO*, or *executive director*; all refer to this lead executive position. *Board member*, *board of directors*, and *board of trustees* in the literature all refer to the voluntary policy-making and oversight individuals that the executive director reports to in all nonprofit organizations of the type researched in this study.

This research focused on *small-to-medium size* organizations, which were defined by the researcher as those with an annual budget of \$250,000 to \$5,000,000. The term *aftermath* in the context of the hurricanes in this study refers to the 4-year period of time between the storms in 2005 and the time of the interviews in late 2009. Finally, the term *coping* is defined in Random House (1993) as “facing and dealing with problems or difficulties in an adequate manner.”

Chapter Summary

The first chapter provided the introduction of the topic of lessons learned by executive directors of NPOs following a catastrophic disaster. A brief historical overview of the damage caused by Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans was provided, along with the

context of the storms being among the largest ever in the United States. The role of NPOs in the response and recovery of New Orleans in the 4 years following the hurricanes was articulated.

The primary purpose of this study was to identify the issues and challenges that NPOs contend with following such a large-scale disaster, and to understand this through the unique perspective of the executive director of such organizations. This study contributes to the knowledge base of disaster planning, preparedness, and recovery for NPOs facing similar catastrophic situations in the future.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review focuses on an overview of the federal, state, and local response systems to disasters, and the unique role of the nonprofit sector in the response to large-scale disasters. Following that, the review examines the literature to identify issues facing NPOs coping with a disaster, as well as the short-term and long-term needs faced by victims of Hurricane Katrina, because the NPOs serve a unique role to provide the safety net for victims when needs are not addressed by federal, state, or local government organizations.

A review of the literature using key concepts and terminology was conducted using articles selected from SCOPUS (1990-2009), Google Scholar, MEDLINE, ProQuest, ArticleFirst, SocialSciAbs, and WilsonSelect. Numerous search terms were used in various combinations, including but not limited to: *disaster*, *disaster management*, *organizational coping*, *nonprofit change*, *community-based*, *catastrophic planning*, *funding*, *emergency operations*, *Hurricane Katrina*, *adaptation*, and *disaster victims*. Search strings were added and combined to filter citations and select sources relevant to this study. Additional articles were identified by reviewing article reference lists to ensure that all relevant articles were gathered.

Introduction

In responding to disasters and disaster relief, NPOs must operate through the initial relief phase, short-term recovery, and long-term recovery in cooperation with international, federal, state, and local government agencies. Consequently, an overview of the international and governmental disaster relief domains is provided, followed by a review of the role of the American Red Cross, which has a formal and unique charter for primary disaster relief in the United States and the role played by the United Way. NPOs also partner and cooperate with other nonprofit agencies, funding organizations, community planners, donors, volunteers, and members of the target population. The literature review provides an overview of the governmental context, the factors and issues faced by NPOs specific to disaster response (focusing on Hurricane Katrina), and victim needs in the New Orleans area. What emerged is a partial picture of the response to date and a beginning articulation of the needs of the population, in part due to the fact that the disaster occurred relatively recently and published studies are only now beginning to be available.

International, Federal, State, and Local Context

International Context

International relief organizations have an operational framework that focuses on local organizations being the primary conduit for services to disaster victims. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) often assists humanitarian organizations to operate at peak efficiency when an international disaster occurs. The OCHA serves as a clearinghouse for information and needs assessments from

various sources on the ground, including both governmental and non-governmental organizations. They organize the information and provide it to relief and response agencies, including identifying services that are being provided as well as gaps to be filled (United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2009).

Pipa (2006) reports that experienced international relief organization staff, responding to a U.S. disaster for the first time (Hurricane Katrina) and accustomed to working closely with the OCHA and the International Red Cross, were confused when the American Red Cross used different protocols for disaster response. The protocols developed internationally assumed that many responding organizations would be necessary to cover the needs in a crisis, and that multiple approaches and partnerships between local groups and those coming from the outside would be necessary for an effective response (pp. 16-17). The lack of an effective, centralized response to such a widespread disaster with thousands of casualties created a patchwork of local, state, and federal responses that delayed the identification and triage of the most emergent situations, and slowed the response to those with the greatest need.

Federal Context

Prior to 1978, disaster management in the United States was accomplished through a patchwork of local, state, and federal agencies. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers provided some disaster response, and eventually more than 100 different agencies and departments within the federal government developed services to respond to disasters, often duplicating the efforts of one another (Federal Emergency Management Agency, 2009). In response to this fragmentation, the Federal Emergency Management

Agency (FEMA) was created by Executive Order of President Jimmy Carter in 1979, with the intention of improving the planning and providing greater coordination to the myriad organizations that were responding to disasters prior to FEMA.

In the 1990s, FEMA was made a cabinet-level agency, in part to better coordinate the federal response between cabinet departments charged with responding to aspects of disasters (see Appendix A). Also, because FEMA was increasingly becoming involved with homeland security functions such as civil defense, in addition to the response to all possible disasters, including natural (e.g., hurricanes, earthquakes) and man-made disasters (e.g., substance spills, bombings, war-related issues) (Federal Emergency Management Agency, 2009). In 2003, FEMA formally became part of the new Department of Homeland Security (DHS) as a result of the 9/11 terrorist attacks and continuing bio-terrorism threats.

DHS is responsible for the creation of the National Response Plan (NRP) for disaster management. Part of that plan includes the identification of 15 Emergency Support Functions (ESF) and the organization (or organizations) responsible for the implementation of that function (Appendix A). One of the specific responsibilities of FEMA under the National Response Plan (NRP) is ESF-6, which covers mass care, housing, and human services (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2006).

When Hurricane Katrina struck in 2005, ESF-6 was the only one of 15 Emergency Support Functions that had a *shared* authority between a governmental agency (FEMA) and a private, nonprofit agency (the American Red Cross). All other Emergency Support Functions identified one or two departments of the federal government as the sole authority for a particular function. Given the magnitude of the Hurricane Katrina disaster

and the perception of a less-than-adequate governmental response, the policy of shared authority between a governmental agency (FEMA) and the only non-governmental agency (American Red Cross) assigned with authority for mass care, housing, and human services has received a great deal of scrutiny among governmental auditors, Congress, and the federal bureaucracy (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2006, 2008). All of these post-Katrina GAO reports articulate various failures with this system of shared authority, and recommend solutions to provide greater clarity and accountability in future disasters.

State Context

States respond to disasters only when local governments are unable to respond adequately, and when local officials specifically ask for state assistance. Typically, states are responsible for providing additional resources to supplement local efforts and can mobilize state-level law enforcement officials and financial assistance (National Emergency Management Association, 2004, 2006). A governor can declare a “state of emergency,” order evacuations, engage the state’s National Guard, and make decisions on resource allocations (National Emergency Management Association, 2004). The governor is also responsible for initiating the request to the federal government for assistance if federal aid and support is deemed necessary (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2004).

In the case of Hurricane Katrina, the governor of Louisiana chose to not declare martial law and turned down a White House proposal to put Louisiana National Guard troops under federal government control (Luo, 2005; Shane, Lipton, & Drew, 2005).

Pundits speculated that, in part, partisan politics likely played a role in this decision (the Louisiana governor was a Democrat and the President was a Republican), as well as the issue of federal versus state control of the military response. When the Louisiana National Guard was eventually sent into Katrina-devastated areas, it was unable to stabilize conditions (“Anatomy of a Disaster,” 2005).

Local Context

Local and county governments form the first link in the chain of disaster response (Schneider, 1992). Their responsibilities include responding to disasters within their jurisdictions, developing local emergency management plans, coordinating responses between local jurisdictions, and identifying duties and responsibilities of local officials during emergencies (Col, 2006; Drabek & Hoertmer, 1991; Schneider, 1995). In fact, most localities in the United States have emergency management plans. New Orleans had such a plan, but like many communities and cities, imagining a catastrophe the size of Hurricane Katrina was beyond the scope of such planning. If local officials are unable to adequately handle a disaster or emergency, local authorities must initiate the request for assistance from state officials.

In the case of Hurricane Katrina, local officials advised residents to evacuate and set up shelters to facilitate this process (Schneider, 2008). The process collapsed in New Orleans as emergency personnel were overwhelmed with the magnitude and chaos related to the evacuation. Therefore, the emergency management plan was only partially implemented, and first responders also began to flee when the scope of the impending disaster became evident (Baum, 2006; Forman, 2007; Horne, 2006).

American Red Cross Role

The American Red Cross plays a unique role historically in the United States as it relates to disaster and emergency management. Founded in 1881, the American Red Cross has offered, among other services, humanitarian care to victims of natural disasters. It is unique in that it is a private nonprofit organization, but since 1905 it has had a congressional charter that requires that it provide disaster prevention and relief services. The U.S. President appoints 8 of the 50 board members, and 7 of those must be federal officials (U.S. General Accountability Office, 2006).

The American Red Cross shared authority with FEMA in implementation of ESF-6, which is the emergency function related to disaster-response mass care, housing, and human services. ESF-6 specified disaster response functions that were exclusively under the purview of the American Red Cross, which, during the catastrophe of Hurricane Katrina, led to confusion and chaos in the initial response and follow-up relief (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2008). The American Red Cross was the only nonprofit agency outside the government with an authority base for disaster relief. The 2006 GAO report details differing views expressed by officials from FEMA and the American Red Cross regarding their understanding of their respective authority under ESF-6. The GAO states, relative to the Hurricane Katrina response, “our evidence indicates that this disagreement strained FEMA and Red Cross working relationships and may have led to breakdowns in the provision of mass care services” (U.S. General Accountability Office, 2006).

Intergovernmental Issues

The intergovernmental policies and procedures that form the basis for disaster response in the United States collapsed following Hurricane Katrina, given the magnitude of the disaster and political, procedural, communication, and coordination issues (Schneider, 2008; Walters & Kettl, 2005). The system is designed to work from the bottom up: local to state to federal involvement. The disaster response system assumes an absence of political issues, competent officials, detailed disaster relief plans, knowledge of procedures at each level of government, precision of response, timeliness of decisions, and full control of necessary resources at each level of government, which is simply not realistic in a disaster the magnitude of Hurricane Katrina. Schneider (1995) states:

There are simply too many agencies and officials involved in disaster-relief operations. Each has its own set of rules, regulations, and policies. As a result, emergency management officials find it difficult, and sometimes even impossible, to coordinate all this governmental activity.

Gomez and Wilson (2008) focus on the governmental, rather than the private sector response to Hurricane Katrina. They note that the number of actors involved in coordinating relief efforts, both in the private sector and all government levels, is sufficiently large and attributions of responsibility vary widely. They conclude that natural disaster relief is perhaps the paradigmatic case where national, state, and local governments all have some responsibilities and must work together efficiently for a satisfactory outcome to be achieved.

Lein and Angel (2006) note that Hurricane Katrina taxed the capacities of city, state, and national governments, as well as the capacities of non-governmental organizations, to respond to the immediate and longer-term needs of disaster victims.

Lein, Beausoleil, Angel, and Bell (2006) conclude that the lessons of Hurricane Katrina make it clear that greater planning and coordination at every level of government is required, but also that the non-governmental sector plays a vital role in alleviating human misery. Greater coordination of efforts between governmental and non-governmental organizations was identified as a key to better utilize limited resources and expertise (Lein, Beausoleil, et al., 2006).

Thus, in the United States, a patchwork of inconsistent plans are formulated which emanate from the local level of government through a progressive series of steps all the way to a federal disaster declaration. These systems reflect a culture of local control rather than a strong, federal response. In “smaller” disasters such as a tornado or a limited flood, there is some logic to utilizing this approach, as local planners know the resources and fastest manner to accomplish outcomes. When dealing with a widespread disaster such as Hurricane Katrina, the deficiencies of this type of response (slow time to engage needed state and federal resources, difficulty in communication, lack of centralization, no ability to triage) become clear. As could be expected, the gap is filled with a humanitarian response on the part of local residents, churches, nonprofit organizations, and volunteers coming from nearby areas to respond to very public needs of human beings faced with loss of life or loss of home and possessions. This response often conflicts, physically and logistically, with the slower moving but resource-rich governmental response.

Chamlee-Wright (2007) suggests that public policy and governmental organizations play only a supportive role in the recovery from Katrina, and that recovery from the catastrophic disaster of Katrina means devolving power to give local leadership

more discretion to allocate resources appropriately. The argument is that the federal response should be to support and inform effective decision-making on the ground, and this decision-making should be kept as close as possible to those with actual needs and the relevant knowledge (Chamlee-Wright, 2007). The organizations closest to those with human service needs at the local level are generally those within the nonprofit community. This notion, while logical and focused on the actual delivery of services by those with knowledge of local systems, neglects the powerful political dynamic in the United States that, in times of crisis and disaster, the public wants immediate response from the highest level of government. The public desire to see immediate action and demonstrable improvement through their elected officials means that this local-federal partnership approach becomes difficult, if not impossible, at least for the emergent response following the catastrophic event.

Role and Response of Nonprofit Organizations

Unique Role of NPOs

De Vita (2006) discusses the unique role that NPOs played following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the challenges that lie ahead for them, and the lessons learned that might be applied to future disasters. She notes that nonprofit and faith-based groups were among the first responders, and they continue to play key roles in the rebuilding efforts. Rebuilding and preparing for the next disaster needs to include two broad areas to be effective: improving coordination among nonprofits and with government, and building the capacity of responding nonprofit agencies.

Key points in the first area (improving coordination) include bringing nonprofit groups together before a crisis to develop plans; building the relationships necessary to foster collaboration and cooperation; and working with smaller, local providers who can identify the most vulnerable people and who have the trust of the community they serve. In the second area (building capacity), key points were that every nonprofit organization may have diminished capacity in one area or another post-disaster (facilities, records, leadership, staff, more clients needing services, missing clients), but that NPOs can improve in other areas to help mitigate these potential issues, including focusing on, and planning for, good information systems and databases; comprehensive training; development of good written agreements and plans; and strong organizational structures (De Vita, 2006).

De Vita (2006) calls for designation of NPOs that are “pre-credentialed” to provide service immediately after a disaster; a system of purchase orders or contract agreements issued by federal or state agencies for NPOs to obtain payment for services provided to displaced residents; and guidelines for soliciting and managing financial donations, including the necessary transparency to ensure that funds are being used appropriately. The author notes that, in large scale disasters, most funds raised from the public go to larger NPOs such as the Red Cross or Habitat for Humanity, leaving many local NPOs with little access to funds.

Any assumption by the public that a donation to an organization such as the Red Cross or Habitat for Humanity will be used to meet whatever human need is greatest following a disaster is inaccurate at best. Nonprofit organizations, particularly those that have the national marketing, advertising, and public relations mechanisms in place, first

utilize those dollars to generate capacity for more donations, and secondly use those contributions to support the systems they have in place on the ground. Seamless integration with local needs does not exist. At best, there is dialogue between these national voluntary organizations and some attempt to coordinate. At the core, national entities that receive charitable contributions support the systems they have put in place in that locality. Such organizations have no incentive to share their contributed largess with other organizations unless there is public relations value to doing so. Ultimately, nonprofit organizations at the local level generally deal with funding entities who know the community, such as local foundations, United Way, and corporations, because those dollars can be accessed relatively quickly and are not already in the coffers of a nonprofit that may have a competing mission and services.

The Nonprofit Organization as Victim in Hurricane Katrina

Pipa (2006), through interviews with nonprofit executive directors in New Orleans shortly after Hurricane Katrina, reported that their employees were often victims of the catastrophe as well, and sustained personal losses as well as significant damage to their offices and operations. However, the people these organizations served, if they remained in the area, still had the same needs after the storm, and probably significantly greater needs. In addition, other victims that had previously not been served by particular NPOs needed various types of assistance. Thus, there were needs exhibited by clients before the storm, new needs expressed by people after the storm, and a hope that the nonprofit organization could continue to help even though many of the staff were

unavailable, dealing with personal loss, or otherwise dealing with damage to their possessions.

Pipa (2006) articulates a number of “Lessons and Ideas” from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita for NPOs, including:

1. The response to Katrina and Rita points to a weakness in the ability of the current architecture to integrate the many, and instead, it depends on the few.
2. A high-level coordinating body should be developed with the capability to facilitate the involvement of a large number of local charitable agencies during catastrophic events and to improve the coherence and effectiveness of response from a multiplicity of organizations.
3. A high-level commission should be formed, comprised of senior-ranking FEMA officials; peers from the American Red Cross and other domestic first responders; staff placed on the ground by U.S.-based international humanitarian organizations; and leaders from local responding nonprofits, faith-based groups, and foundations from Louisiana and Mississippi to investigate the failures of this disaster and make recommendations for change.
4. Preparedness funding should be significantly increased, and such activities must be broadened to include local nonprofits and faith-based groups, both in training and decision-making.
5. FEMA should significantly expand and develop its Voluntary Agency Liaison staffing to better ensure the readiness and integration of the nonprofit sector into charitable response.

6. FEMA should create more flexible funding sources designed specifically to support charitable organizations; it is imperative that they change standing policy to support general operating costs incurred by organizations when acting outside of their normal mission to provide necessary relief.
7. Institutional donors should plan for quicker response during catastrophic events.
8. Foundations and corporate donors from outside the affected area can play a significant leadership role during immediate relief by partnering with local re-granting intermediaries.
9. Establishing a consistent staff presence on the ground can help foundations quickly rebuild or broaden the capacity of local organizations and improve the effectiveness of their developing grants.
10. Ongoing coordination efforts have the potential to improve foundation responsiveness and effectiveness.
11. Congress should create a special designation—to be invoked during exceptional disasters—that mandates the American Red Cross to contribute 5% of its overall fund raising to local grant-making intermediaries for distribution to local nonprofits and faith-based groups (Pipa, 2006).

Pipa (2006) focuses on the importance of relationships—both personal and preexisting—and the significance those relationships played among local nonprofit, foundation, and religious leaders in a quick and flexible response to human service needs post-Katrina. Even though this response had inadequacies, Pipa suggests that the ability of local organizations to overcome the lack of a coherent organized structure and provide

for the well-being of many victims proved the value of their local relationships, knowledge, and connection(s) to the community. The limitations of local nonprofits and faith-based organizations—primarily a dependence upon volunteer labor and donations—points to the role government can provide with greater financial support, faster infusion of working capital, and fewer restrictions on utilizing relief funds to pay for management costs (Fremont-Smith, Boris, & Steuerle, 2006).

The United Way Role

United Way is a worldwide network in 45 countries and territories, including nearly 1,300 local organizations in the U.S. Its mission is to advance the common good, creating opportunities for a better life for all by focusing on education, income, and health. United Way organizations create community change by addressing the underlying causes of problems that prevent progress in those areas (education, income, and health) (United Way of America, 2010). The United Way for the Greater New Orleans Area is organized like most local United Way agencies in the United States, with community-based volunteers serving in roles ranging from soliciting funds for the annual campaign, to making allocation decisions about programs to fund in the community, to evaluating outcomes for programs that have received financial assistance. Professional staff help provide structure and consistency, but community-based volunteers raise and allocate the money to NPOs deemed worthy of financial support.

Following Hurricane Katrina, United Way for the Greater New Orleans Area faced their own challenges, including a flooded headquarters, loss of campaign materials, stolen computers, and 90% of employees' homes severely damaged or destroyed. Despite

these setbacks, the organization moved to change funding from an annual allocations process to a 6-month process and opened up potential funding applications to any nonprofit organization providing relief for victims of Hurricane Katrina. The United Way for the Greater New Orleans Area currently funds over 90 community-based NPOs providing human services in the New Orleans area (United Way for the Greater New Orleans Area, 2008). Crisis plans for United Way-funded organizations were not specifically mandated by the United Way. Rather, each NPO developed its own plan for crisis response, consistent with the fact that each represented a unique part of the human service delivery system, different geographic areas for services, different clients, and were fully independent nonprofit organizations with different assets and organizational relationships with the broader community.

Nonprofit Coping Issues

Organizational Ability to Act

Scanlon (2006), in comparing disaster response in two different cities, notes that social scientists have argued for years that there are many misconceptions about human and organizational behavior in disaster. He reports that victims often resent those who come to assist, especially if that assistance is bureaucratic in nature, and that often in disasters, survivors actually do well in terms of finding necessary assistance, but organizations often do not (do well) in providing help in a convenient and streamlined manner. One conclusion made is that the organization's ability to act (related to a

disaster) is in part a function of the resources available and the lack of bureaucratic barriers to service delivery.

Preexisting Relationships

Fagnoni (2006) reports on observations regarding charities' response to Hurricane Katrina, primarily drawn from testimony on December 13, 2005, by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) before the House Ways and Means Oversight Subcommittee. The author notes that, following Hurricane Katrina, charity representatives testified that preexisting relationships were more important than the daily conference calls and electronic databases that were set up to coordinate a streamlined response. Several charities noted that efficient functioning following a disaster was dependent upon some sort of established working relationship with the other charities involved in disaster relief. One suggestion included memoranda of understanding signed before a disaster strikes—a practice many NPOs use—so that coordination can begin immediately following a catastrophe.

While smaller NPOs provided needed services in the Gulf Coast region, the GAO reported that some concerns were raised about the organizations' abilities to provide adequate services to victims. Smaller organizations helped meet important needs, but many had never operated in a disaster situation. For example, some smaller NPOs placed children who were separated from their parents in temporary homes, but in their haste did not retain sufficient or organized information about which children were placed in specific homes. This made it difficult to later locate missing children.

The author concludes that the nonprofit sector will likely continue to play a critical role in responding to disasters, but that increased administrative oversight,

coordination, and accountability systems need to be in place to ensure that charities' performance is enhanced (Fagnoni, 2006).

Several studies (Heitkamp, 1997; Itzhaky & York, 2005; Poulin & Soliman, 1999; Yueh-Ching, 2003) describe flexibility in a changing service delivery environment as crucial to coordinate a good response. The importance of collaboration and the skills necessary to accomplish this under stressful circumstances are important for those involved in disaster recovery efforts (Bell, 2008).

Gaps in the Safety Net

Auer and Lampkin (2006) report on a survey of Louisiana nonprofit health and human service providers regarding the impact of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita on service provision and gaps in the social safety net. Nearly half of the 360 responding providers were fully operational within a year of the hurricanes, and 65% expected to be fully operational within the following year. The three greatest unmet needs for hurricane victims most often mentioned by surveyed nonprofit service providers were housing, mental health services, and economic development, including job training.

At the time of the survey (the year following Hurricane Katrina), funding needs of these nonprofit human service providers were being met mostly from private donations and foundations. Very few reported receiving money from FEMA or other federal agencies, but a greater percentage obtained financial assistance from state and local agencies.

Donor Desires and Accountability

Goldman (2006) discusses issues of nonprofits and disaster response from the perspective of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in New York City. Experienced and new charities alike struggled to define new aid eligibility requirements, balance concerns for accountability with the importance of protecting families' privacy, identify and reach the populations they wished to serve, and mobilize the volunteers who were offering assistance.

According to Goldman (2006), the public expected to have access to information confirming that their contributions were used for their intended purposes, and demanded that relief be made available quickly and with a minimum of red tape. Donors expressed concerns that nonprofits take steps to avoid waste and fraud, ensure some measure of equity in the distributions, and guard against victims "falling between the cracks."

The implementation of a centralized database allowing applicants to submit a single application for assistance—urged by the New York attorney general—helped to simplify and expedite access to relief services. The attorney general also urged NPOs to avoid haste in distributing funds and take the time necessary to evaluate recipients' needs, along with encouragement of charities to publicize regularly how much they received, how much was spent, and for what purpose.

The author concludes that charitable NPOs must focus efforts on how to adapt their practices to ensure accountability and meet the unique needs and circumstances that occur in each disaster situation.

Donors and Longer-Term Recovery

Moore (2006) reflects on disasters and the voluntary sector with an overarching view that NPOs create the scaffolding of a worldwide community that exists to help fellow human beings who have suffered through no fault of their own. Moore states that donors most often give to disaster *relief*, not to disaster *rehabilitation*—in part because relief is relatively simple, straightforward, and morally uncontroversial. Rehabilitation, such as deciding whose homes will be rebuilt or how much mental health care should be provided to those who suffered even before the disaster, becomes more problematic (Moore, 2006).

In the case of Hurricane Katrina, the natural disaster exposed a man-made one, and it is difficult to draw a distinct line between relief and the larger and more sustained rehabilitation efforts needed to improve the situation. Moore (2006) stated that a particular problem facing nonprofit administrators is that of dealing with resource adaptability, namely, when voluntary contributions do not always come in the form that is needed. The problem of delivering assistance or creating programs for preferential victims, rather than for those that have the greatest need, can arise unselfconsciously (Moore, 2006).

Reaching out to a target population through networks and agencies that exist may appear to be cost-effective and resourceful, but such networks tend to follow lines marked by race, class, or religion, which may not be reliably correlated with urgency of need. The difficulty in any area with a wide array of NPOs, each addressing a slice of community needs, is that of establishing an objective, shared view of the best possible social

response, particularly in a disaster or crisis. The result is that NPOs accept a variety of contributions and funds that may be large in the aggregate, but expensive to administer and with spotty results due to the potential mismatch of overall community need and donor requirements (Moore, 2006).

These observations led to the author's conclusion that the nonprofit sector alone is not capable of both coordinating and guaranteeing a just and effective social response to disasters. Inequities are the inevitable result of the nonprofit sector's ad hoc character. The only way to address those shortcomings is through governmental funding, which can provide equity between community needs and community assets. The administrative challenge is to consider and balance these issues and decide how best to be accountable to donors, clients, and beneficiaries, as well as the public-at-large. The difficulty, according to Moore (2006), is these different accountabilities may not be well aligned, and when they are poorly aligned, priorities can become skewed.

Operational Overhead

Fremont-Smith, Boris, and Steuerle (2006) note that many donors do not understand that NPOs cannot function without incurring overhead expenses. Some donors expect all their financial gifts to go to victims—immediately—even if the nonprofit organization and the clients it serves have long-term needs that require long-term funding. In comparing the governmental and nonprofit responses to September 11 and Hurricane Katrina, the authors note that governmental response was strong after September 11, and the nonprofit sector worked to fill gaps as governmental efforts ended. With Hurricane

Katrina, the governmental response was weak, and the nonprofit sector did not have sufficient organizational structure or resources to meet the needs.

NPOs can most effectively call forth more resources from the private sector and can respond flexibly to gaps resulting from public sector constraints. Nonprofits are disadvantaged, on the other hand, by resource constraints and potential conflicts such as reconciling their missions with accommodation of donor intent. Nonprofits do not have the equivalent of a General Accountability Office to provide nonpartisan and disinterested analyses of organizational efforts. An example is provided by the response of the New York attorney general's office to September 11, where the inefficiency and duplication of some charities established a case for the charitable sector to do a better job with combining services and programs and considering mergers.

Finally, related to Hurricane Katrina, Fremont-Smith et al. (2006) note that, in Southern culture, there is historic, legal, and political hostility to secular charities and a preference for governmental or sectarian service provision. The charitable preferences of many in the South is more heavily weighted toward faith-based organizations, which often have competing interests in contributed dollars, including the basic needs of their own church, needs of the neighborhood in which the church resides, and needs of the community they choose to address. This raises important questions about the viability and strength of sectarian versus secular nonprofits, and creates inconsistency in the availability of critical human services from locality to locality across the United States.

Cultural Considerations

Rosenstein (2006a) suggests that nonprofit health and human service organizations create linkages with cultural organizations that build upon the cultural heritage in their geographic area. The size, scope, and financial health of these nonprofit “cultural heritage organizations” (organizations that focus on a unique aspect of local culture within their own community) in the United States and their importance to communities was analyzed by Rosenstein based upon information gathered from Form 990s that NPOs file with the Internal Revenue Services (IRS) and provided by the National Center for Charitable Statistics (NCCS). Specific to New Orleans post-Katrina, Rosenstein (2006b) believes the most pressing cultural policy challenges involve the question of how to preserve the community-based culture and expressions of communities that are “tattered and scattered.” While arts and culture are typically not considered as important to such core public concerns as education, health, community development, and safety, Rosenstein notes strong connections in New Orleans between such cultural organizations and the NPOs whose work addresses these core public issues. One of the specific recommendations made by Rosenstein following Hurricane Katrina is that NPOs make greater connections with arts and cultural programs, particularly at the neighborhood level, in order to build upon the strengths each brings to the community (Rosenstein 2006a, 2006b).

The Needs of Hurricane Katrina Victims

Housing and Support Services

Carasso (2006), in an essay on rebuilding after Katrina, notes that the hurricanes revealed the vulnerability of families that did not have such assets as vehicles, savings, or housing insurance to fall back on in times of crisis. Even people in New Orleans who “played by the rules” and built up assets were hit by the devastation: many had their long-term economic status placed in jeopardy by lost jobs, homes, and businesses.

Popkin, Turner, and Burt (2006) state:

While many disadvantaged victims of Katrina likely lacked significant financial capital assets, homes, and businesses, New Orleans had an atypically large share—particularly in the lower Ninth Ward—of low-income homeowners who had inherited their homes, owning them free and clear, and thus not holding the homeowners’ insurance mortgage lenders would require.

Turner (2006) focuses on the need for NPOs to help create affordable housing in healthy neighborhoods following Hurricane Katrina. If affordable housing is not available, the recovery will be inequitable because it will exclude many lower-income residents—many of whom are black. The author suggests that the long-term health of the region’s economy will be undermined by the absence of a major segment of the workforce, including those involved in health care, child care, and public education.

Turner (2006) also suggests that some families with the need for affordable housing will also need support services provided by the nonprofit community in order to be safe and stable. The elderly and people with disabilities, as well as households that include individuals with substance abuse, mental health, domestic violence, or criminal backgrounds, are extremely vulnerable and at a high risk of distress and homelessness.

The nonprofit sector has a critical role to play with not only the provision of affordable housing, but with other essential services that complement the development and management of affordable housing. These include support services, counseling, and advocacy, among others.

Turner (2006) concludes that low-income communities—neglected and poorly served for so long—do not trust public institutions to protect their interests, particularly in redevelopment. Higher-income communities—having seen so many failed projects and the blight of concentrating the poor in large scale housing developments—oppose the development of affordable housing within their borders. The key challenge for NPOs, according to Turner, is to begin proving to disparate communities that mixed-income redevelopment can protect low-income residents—particularly with appropriate support services—and that low-income housing need not undermine a neighborhood’s safety or property values. Substantial grassroots efforts to both educate and provide tangible outcomes for mixed-income development in all sectors of New Orleans would likewise be critical to change the perspective of neighborhood residents who have become accustomed to a more segregated approach. This segregated approach is relevant to issues of income and race, and New Orleans has a long history of racial divide by neighborhood, parish, and surrounding cities. The racial divide is particularly pronounced in many of the geographic areas affected by Hurricane Katrina, and rebuilding with a mixed-income and ethnically diverse model will likely prove challenging. One only needs to follow the path east of the levee breach in the Lower 9th Ward to understand that the area immediately adjoining the levee was predominantly inhabited by black residents (and completely eradicated), through the working class neighborhood in Arabi with greater racial

diversity, to the majority white residential areas of St. Bernard and Chalmette further east. The lowest ground, closest to the levee, supported the least expensive housing, and as one moves further east and away from the lower ground, home values increase and the residents become predominantly white. Achieving greater diversity in ethnicity and mixed income housing will involve significant time and attention to change historically entrenched, racially charged attitudes.

Needs of Families and Children

Many NPOs in the New Orleans area provide services to children and families. New Orleans had a high rate of poverty among children pre-Hurricane Katrina. Nearly 40% of children lived in poverty, compared with a national average of approximately 20% (Fass & Cauthen, 2005). In a survey of 665 families displaced by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, conducted by Columbia University for the Louisiana Child and Family Health Study in 2006, nearly half the households reported at least one child with emotional or behavioral problems that were not present before the storm. Symptoms among children reported by parents included depression, anxiety, fear, difficulty sleeping, or interacting with others. In addition, the same study found that over half the female caregivers, when given a mental health screening tool, scored at levels indicating clinical mental health disorders, including depression and anxiety, and women caregivers were six times as likely to report that they were not coping well with the daily demands of parenting when compared to parents in a pre-Katrina survey of urban Louisianans (Abramson & Garfield, 2006).

Lamberg (2006) reports findings from 1,638 students affected by Katrina in grades 4-12 who completed the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) needs assessment and screening survey between December 2005 and May 2006. Nearly all students asked to participate did so, with most completing the surveys at school. About 1 in 3 said they had been separated from a parent or guardian, 1 in 5 had experienced the death or injury of a family member or friend, 54% displayed symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder or depression, and 31% of children in preschool through third grade showed symptoms that suggest mental health problems such as headaches, irritability, and nightmares.

Golden and Parnes (2006) summarized the input from a November 2006 Louisiana Association of Nonprofit Organizations (LANO)–Urban Institute conference in New Orleans focusing on Hurricane Katrina. Characteristics of interventions that NPOs should consider when developing programs to serve children following a disaster are high intensity (many hours and individualized attention); high quality (skilled providers prepared to deal with children having great emotional and developmental needs); comprehensive (programs meeting multiple needs holistically, including the needs of parents); and responsiveness to the developmental stage of the child.

Golden and Parnes (2006) propose an action plan based upon the expert panel testimony at that same conference, which involves the nonprofit sector working in partnership with every level of government. This included intensive services modeled on Early Head Start for the very youngest children and their families, due to their vulnerability and the consequent extent of the damage, along with the large service gaps that exist. The authors also propose an after-school initiative in New Orleans targeted at

adolescents, due to teenagers' potential for involvement in violence, substance abuse, and other risky activities. Finally, Golden and Parnes suggest integrated services at the neighborhood level linked with housing, and nonprofit capacity building through investment by donors in adequate staff salaries, benefits, and training that will make it possible to attract and retain the human capital necessary to make these changes.

Social Status, Gender, and Ethnicity Issues

Alexander (2006) discusses two conceptual models to begin to understand the response to Hurricane Katrina arranged along lines of social status and ethnicity within the affected New Orleans area. The first model considers disaster as a destructive event leading to a breakdown of social order, which has more in common with media portrayals than experience. The second and more compelling model examines disaster preparedness as a collective effort requiring organization and administration integrated vertically from local to national levels and horizontally among neighboring jurisdictions (Trim, 2004). Alexander concludes that substantial lessons are there to be learned about early warning, evacuation, emergency planning, and reconstruction. He suggests that most positive emergency preparedness changes follow specific events (such as Hurricane Katrina), which become catalysts for institutional, organizational, technological, and social change.

Enarson's (2006) essay on gender and ethnic disparity in the recovery from Katrina details why women more often than men report symptoms of post-traumatic stress following disasters. She argues that when funding for relief work ends, women, marginalized by race and class, fall between the cracks of the relief system. Their hidden emotional work with toddlers, teens, partners, parents, friends, and colleagues passing

through difficult times takes a tremendous toll. She projects that double-shifts and long commutes will be the norm after Katrina, and for children of single mothers, more time away from a parent equates to greater vulnerability to abuse and neglect. Enarson supports these claims by drawing from a variety of literature on the effects of disaster and gender (Fothergill, 1999; Gault, Hartmann, Jones-DeWeever, Werschkul, & Williams, 2005; Morrow & Enarson, 1996; Ollenburger & Tobin, 1999).

Stivers' (2007) discussion of Hurricane Katrina and race states that administrators must use their best judgment, their sharpest technical skills, and deepest sense of what the law demands—"the best mind joined with the best heart." The author asserts that managers must end our avoidance of the part that racism plays in hampering effective services, and notes that racial integration is ultimately an unenforceable obligation that cannot be solved by diversity or preparedness training (Stivers, 2007). The challenge for nonprofit managers is to consider the institutional racism that has already affected the victims of Katrina as programs are designed, modified, and implemented.

Leitko, Rudy, and Peterson (1980) noted that social service organization personnel may have to address ethical issues stemming from survivors' perceptions of appropriate recompense. For example, the authors found that middle class survivors, for instance, were offended because they expected relief to correspond to their status in the community and their losses, while working class and lower-income individuals did not have this complaint.

Health Care Issues

The health care perspective on leadership and organizational adaptation following Hurricane Katrina was addressed by Berggren and Curiel (2006). They reported on a framework created by a diverse group of members of the public and private sector representatives in the New Orleans area. This panel included Patrick Quinlan, chief executive officer of the Ochsner Clinic Foundation, who stated that uncompensated care had tripled in his facility since Katrina. Les Hirsch, executive of Touro Infirmary, blamed significant job losses, a large influx of transient workers without health care, and a debate regarding how best to allow uncompensated care dollars to follow patients instead of the hospitals. Common themes at all facilities include complications in patients with untreated chronic diseases, particularly hypertension, diabetes, and AIDS. The problem is made more acute by the fact that New Orleans, a year after Hurricane Katrina, had only 1.99 hospital beds per 1,000 population, compared with the pre-Katrina ratio of 3.03 hospital beds per 1,000 population. Even the pre-Katrina figure is lower than the U.S. average of 3.26 beds per 1,000 population. Approximately 40 of Ochsner's 600 physicians and 1,500 of its 7,400 other employees resigned after Katrina—because their spouses no longer had local employment, children's schools were closed, or housing was not available, among other reasons. One New Orleans nurse who resigned her post in frustration explained that "the patient rooms are crowded, the staff is stressed, and there are serious supply shortages" (Berggren & Curiel, 2006).

This framework developed by the policy group and reported by Berggren and Curiel (2006) reflected the need for quick decisions post-disaster amidst conflicting

interest groups, cumbersome decision-making, and dangerously slow implementation. They focus on two principles that contributed to survival: individual initiative for self-rescue and professional teamwork. Creative adaptations have sprung up through the health care system. The bed shortage has led to new alliances among hospitals, both in the area and 75 miles away in Baton Rouge. Charity Hospitals HIV Outpatient (HOP) Clinic reconstituted itself with a much smaller staff. A new free clinic has drawn volunteer medical professionals from around the country. These clinics coalesced around the most needy populations. Despite the limitations, doctors involved in these efforts say there are positive effects on their medical practices. “We make do with drastically fewer lab tests, and we try to manage more complicated things on our own,” says one clinic’s medical director. “The best adaptation seems to be that everybody is a little more human.”

Rebuilding Social Services—Government and the Nonprofit Sector

Jago (1991) states that, because of the unique situation in every disaster, decision-making on recovery structures and processes needs to remain invested in the local community, with assistance from external resources. Soliman and Poulin (1997) developed a highly reliable instrument to measure client satisfaction with crisis services. The index was designed to capture unique aspects of service delivery to survivors of natural disasters. Reliability and factor structure of the instrument were tested on a sample of 90 survivors of the Great Flood of 1993, who were asked for their views regarding post-disaster services that would be valuable. Accurate information about where to get help, good communication, streamlined and simple processes for services and assistance, appropriately timed service delivery, and coordination between the many

organizations offering assistance were viewed as essential. Smith (2006), in an essay on rebuilding social welfare services following Hurricane Katrina, focuses on rebuilding the nonprofit infrastructure. Smith also notes that while local secular and faith-based organizations have received millions of dollars to help disaster victims, the devastation exposed (a) the substantial dependence of an adequate social welfare response on governmental funding, (b) the small capacity of churches and community agencies, and (c) the lack of coordination among service providers. He suggests that philanthropy cannot be a substitute for effective governmental response, but it can help with problem solving.

Smith (2006) proposes several action steps to improve the immediate and long-term future for NPOs in New Orleans and the Gulf Coast. These steps include: (a) increasing governmental financial support of the nonprofit sector; (b) monitoring and promoting effective services; (c) creating new government or quasi-government entities such as the Louisiana Family Recovery Corps; and (d) greater emphasis among nonprofit agencies on collaboration, cost sharing, co-location of services, alliances, or mergers. The author suggests that nonprofit agencies might benefit from more alliances with or locations within local churches to help mobilize cash and in-kind donations from outside the community. Foundations, along with the United Way, can be particularly effective in problem solving, developing innovative and effective service delivery solutions, building capacity, facilitating mergers, or providing governance support to the nonprofit community following such a catastrophe.

Chapter Summary

At the time of this study, there was very little published research regarding the role of nonprofit organizations in a community following a disaster. Topics of review included a contextual overview of the international, federal, state, and local responsibilities in a catastrophe such as Hurricane Katrina, with an additional discussion of the role of the American Red Cross and intergovernmental issues. The unique response by nonprofit organizations following a disaster, the role of United Way in such a disaster, and nonprofit coping issues were identified and reviewed. Following this, a discussion of the needs of Hurricane Katrina victims was provided to understand the scope of new needs that were presented to nonprofit organizations in general, and a consideration of the interactions of government and the nonprofit sector in attempting to rebuild social services in an environment of widespread destruction.

The disaster response system in the United States is a “bottom-up” approach whereby localities respond first, then request assistance from state governments if they feel it is necessary. If the state system is unable to adequately ameliorate the problems, then federal assistance is requested. This can be a logical system in the case of smaller disasters, but in the case of Hurricane Katrina, which devastated an area the size of Great Britain, systems were overwhelmed and the process created unnecessary delays. In addition, a lack of coordination of resources and assets between these various levels of government, coupled by communication blackouts and confusion with rescue efforts, exacerbated an already overwhelmed system. The nonprofit sector, so critical to the actual delivery of emergency care to victims and the ongoing services needed in recovery, was

an afterthought in the response to Katrina, with the possible exception of the American Red Cross. The American Red Cross systems were also overrun by the scope of this catastrophe, and so nonprofit organizations and volunteers responded to fill needs for individuals, as has historically happened in the United States. The difference was one of scope. The enormity of Hurricane Katrina exposed the weakness of a “bottom-up” system of disaster response.

The unique role of NPOs in this system is primarily due to the fact that social services in the United States are offered to those in need through a patchwork of private nonprofit and public organizations with governmental funding. Frequently, the public organizations are larger and generally designed to serve as a last line of defense in the safety net for individuals who have multiple needs, extreme poverty, or chronic conditions. The private nonprofit sector fills gaps more specifically tailored to the needs of people in a specific community, often supplementing help provided by public organizations and assisting those with needs who may not qualify for public assistance. These organizations are typically much smaller than their public counterparts, more flexible, and often more in touch with specific community needs or specific client needs. The ability of the nonprofit sector to respond outside of bureaucratic rules and procedures provides a tremendous potential resource in a catastrophe such as Hurricane Katrina, in which traditional systems of planned response were quickly overwhelmed. In this disaster, local nonprofit organizations were also broadly devastated across a large geographic region—losing use of their facilities; suffering staff losses through death, evacuation, or relocation; contending with communication difficulties; facing uncertainty about future funding support; and experiencing a lack of clarity about which of their

existing clients needed assistance and what the new needs of the community were. Many nonprofit organizations simply did not reopen.

The needs of victims in this disaster were two-fold. First, nonprofit organizations that did return to operations often attempted to locate former clients to determine their needs following Hurricane Katrina. Second, many people needed assistance who survived the catastrophe but were not former clients. This gap in the safety net meant nonprofit organizations that lost resources following Hurricane Katrina had to make decisions about how to serve an overwhelmed community while still trying to locate and help clients who may have been a part of their organizations pre-Katrina.

The literature identified the most critical client service needs following the immediate crisis response after Hurricane Katrina as housing and support services, mental health needs of children and families—particularly traumatic stress, and health care availability in general. Studies specific to women responsible for parenting their children while searching for a job and trying to find a school or childcare for the children were examined. The unique nature of every disaster on the rebuilding of the social service infrastructure was discussed specific to Hurricane Katrina. In particular, the lack of governmental funding, the small capacity of churches and community agencies relative to the need, and the lack of coordination were identified as key issues for the New Orleans area.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Study Design

This study employed a grounded theoretical (GT) approach (Glaser & Straus, 1967) utilizing interviews of nonprofit executive directors in New Orleans whose NPOs are funded by the United Way for the Greater New Orleans Area. This approach relied on open-ended questions about how their organization coped in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. The topics introduced by executives were explored through the use of prompts based on issues identified in the literature review and in post-Katrina visits by the researcher to NPOs in the New Orleans area.

The GT approach to explore organizational coping in affected NPOs is appropriate, because it is context-based (Hurricane Katrina) and process-oriented (focused on the topics initiated by executive respondents who led their organizations during this catastrophe). Glaser and Strauss (1967) discuss the importance of piloting a study to ensure that categories are relevant to the collected data, and this step occurred with two non-profit executives in New Orleans prior to conducting the remaining interviews.

This study relied on a qualitative research methodology utilizing a grounded theoretical (GT) approach, which is inductive and exploratory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The generation of themes and issues grounded in the data depends on the theoretical

sensitivity of the researcher—the ability to perceive categories, themes, and relationships in the data. The level of theoretical sensitivity in the researcher is impacted by the reading of the literature, experience and expertise in the field of study, and the interviewing process itself (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

The researcher has 25 years of experience as a nonprofit executive and has led three graduate student groups in service learning projects post-Katrina in the New Orleans area. This experience included working with the United Way for the Greater New Orleans Area and conducting interviews with nonprofit executives and program managers 6 months after the initial catastrophe. The insights gleaned by the researcher during those visits informed the development of the topical areas for the interviews with the executives. The visits also provided a context for securing interviews and developing a relationship with the executives who agreed to be part of this study.

Validity is defined in the grounded theoretical approach as fit, relevance, workability, and modifiability (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Fit relates to how closely issues and themes align with the data. Fit is dependent on the thoroughness of the constant comparison of data to the construct created by the researcher based upon the literature review and experience. A relevant study addresses concerns of participants and the researcher. Workability allows for variation in exploring the problem or issue under study. Modifiability is based on how malleable the identified issues and themes can be when new, relevant data are compared with existing data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

The collection of qualitative data in this study relied upon open-ended questions posed to nonprofit executives, inviting them to discuss (a) the key issues their organizations faced in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, and (b) how their organizations

coped in the 4 years post-Hurricane Katrina. The qualitative approach allowed the researcher to explore the exigencies of the executives' experience. Although this research relied upon open-ended interview questions and executives were free to focus on whatever they wished, certain topics were likely to be addressed. These topics included, for example, impact on the service population, program operations, staff upheaval, funding issues, and facility damage. These, and other topics, emerged from informal conversations with nonprofit agency and United Way staff during three week-long visits by the researcher to New Orleans in the years following Hurricane Katrina. Some of these topics were also mentioned in the literature reviewed. As a consequence, the researcher was prepared to explore the topics, if initiated by the executives.

Participants

Ten executive directors and NPOs were chosen from those identified by the United Way for the Greater New Orleans Area based on the following criteria:

1. Small- to medium-size NPOs (annual operating budget of \$250,000–\$5,000,000).
2. NPO is a multi-service provider (at least three distinct programs, including a minimum of one *essential community service* defined by the researcher as food, housing, physical health, mental health, information and referral, substance abuse, or domestic violence).
3. NPO is locally based (not having a regional, state, or national parent organization providing additional assistance post-Katrina).

4. The executive director and NPO were vetted by the United Way and in operation for a minimum of 3 years prior to Hurricane Katrina).
5. Consistency of leadership (executive director was in place at least 2 years prior to Katrina and served in that role at the time of the interview).

The United Way for the Greater New Orleans Area assisted with the identification of nonprofit executive directors and NPOs that met these criteria, and assisted with contacting those executives to explain the research and invite participation if contacted by the researcher. Twenty-two organizations and executives met the criteria, and the researcher, in consultation with United Way staff, selected 10 to participate considering diversity among respondents, including gender, ethnicity, type of organization (sectarian/non-sectarian), and longevity in the executive position. All 10 executive directors selected by the researcher agreed to participate in an interview.

The executive of the organization was offered an opportunity to participate and was informed that such participation (or lack thereof) would not be reported to United Way, nor would it in any way affect funding of their organization. Potential respondents were also informed that their identity on any individual quote would not be disclosed. Based upon schedules and comfort level of the executive, seven interviews were conducted in person (six at the respondent's organization and one at a location outside the agency), and three were conducted by telephone.

Respondents were informed in advance and at the outset of the interview that they would be audio-recorded. All agreed to this in advance. All interviews lasted between 1 and 1.5 hours. Interviews were transcribed by three graduate assistants and were reviewed by the researcher following transcription along with the source tape. Corrections were

made as necessary, and the written transcript was offered to the interviewee to ensure that the transcript was accurate. Executives were requested to make any changes necessary and return the corrected transcript to the researcher. They were not required to respond if the transcript was accurate. Three executives responded with changes; all changes were related to names of organizations or programs that were misspelled or not heard correctly by the researcher or the transcriptionist.

There were several reasons for focusing on small- to medium-size organizations with the previously mentioned criteria. Small- and medium-size organizations have limited resources due to their size, scope, and geographic service area, which can limit funding options and organizational processes such as planning, staffing, and board involvement. Larger organizations, needing structure in order to manage multiple facets and programs, typically have structural rules (policies and procedures) and larger funding streams, which may increase external influence over program decisions. Inertia, governmental regulations, and external influences can exert additional pressures for a larger organization to adapt to a catastrophe in a manner dictated outside the purview of the executive director.

Continuity of leadership is important so that identified issues in organizational coping are related to variables not associated with executive director turnover. The presence of specific services and the provision of multiple services address two issues: first, the provision of services that were particularly relevant post-disaster; and second, identifying organizations in which these services were already implemented, and a “start-up” learning curve was not necessary. The focus on United Way agencies ensured that the

selected organizations conformed with requirements such as regular performance reviews, audits, and oversight from a community volunteer panel.

Research Methods

Open-ended questions conform to a grounded theoretical approach to a research problem. The opening statement to the executive director was scripted and read as follows:

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed. The interview will likely take between one hour and one and a half hours. The interview will be audio-recorded digitally. As you know from our prior contact, I am interviewing executive directors of nonprofit organizations in New Orleans about: (a) the critical issues faced by your organization following Hurricane Katrina, and (b) how your organization coped with these critical issues. Let's go to the first question. . . .

The first question (see Appendix B) was: "What is the most critical issue your organization faced in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and how did your organization cope with the issue?" When the executive director finished answering the question, the researcher stated, "Thank you; that was helpful. What was the next most critical issue that your organization faced, and how did your organization cope with the issue?" This process continued until the executive director completed discussion of key issues for the organization.

At that point, the researcher determined if the executive director addressed the key issues identified in the literature review, based upon the researcher's experiences in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina, and his experience as an executive of a NPO. If the respondents had difficulty in addressing issues that may have impacted their organizations, the researcher was prepared with a set of topics that could be addressed,

such as budget/finances, the board of trustees, the staff, community issues, the target population, political considerations, donors, funders, coordination and competition considerations, and administrative concerns.

In addition, the researcher was prepared to enable the respondents to explicate and adequately expand upon the topics they introduced. If the executive director's discussion was not complete, the researcher had a set of prompts prepared for several topics to enable them to report their experiences and observations more fully (see Appendix B). For example, if the executive director mentioned the loss of staff as a problem, but did not continue with a full discussion of the organizational coping employed to resolve the issue, the prompts could include:

“How many staff did you lose after Katrina?”

“How many staff stayed with the organization post-Katrina?”

“Did their roles change and, if so, how?”

“What accounted for the staff losses?”

“Did their personal loss in the hurricane play a role in their leaving?”

“Could anything have been done to retain those staff?”

“What type of staff (management, direct, technical, clerical) were lost?”

This grounded theoretical approach relying on anticipatory management and follow-up prompts were developed to ensure that issues were adequately addressed. Two pilot interviews were conducted to test the open-ended interview approach and the prepared set of prompts.

Demographic information about the nonprofit organization and the executive directors was also collected, analyzed, and reported. The demographic questions related

to executive experience, both in general and with their current nonprofit organization, the number of staff and volunteers, the annual budget both pre-Katrina and at present, the age of the interviewee, and his or her educational attainment.

Informed Consent

Western Michigan University (WMU) Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) approval was sought for the research project and the board determined that the project was “exempt” due to the fact that no confidential information would be sought, and respondents would be voluntarily sharing information about their organizations, not individual clients. Participants had the right to not participate in the interview without penalty.

Potential participants meeting the criteria of the project were identified with the assistance of the United Way for the Greater New Orleans Area staff, who were familiar with the services, programs, and nonprofit executive directors in the areas affected by Hurricane Katrina. The letter of exemption from the Western Michigan University Human Subjects Review Board is included in Appendix C.

Data Analysis

Glaser and Strauss (1967) note that categories of responses in interviews emerge through the coding process, which will create patterns identifying one or more core issues regarding the main research topic—nonprofit organizational coping following Hurricane Katrina. Data collection and analysis are ongoing and simultaneous (the constant comparison method) in the grounded theoretical approach. During data analysis, themes

are identified and codified. These themes are then categorized, compared, contrasted, and reported as results, along with contextual information that enriches the understanding of the study (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

During the course of the interviews, topics and insights emerged that were noted by the researcher. In the data analysis, these notes are considered for inclusion as thematic categories. This approach strives to be faithful to what the respondent is reporting on each topic.

Interviews were digitally recorded with the permission of the participant, and transcribed into both Word (.doc) and Rich Text Format (.rtf) documents. The researcher then evaluated the transcripts utilizing selective coding, identifying core themes, and ultimately categories from the transcribed interviews. A secondary coder also read each transcript, identified themes, double-checked the researcher's codes, and provided an additional perspective to the researcher.

Data analysis was conducted using NVivo 8.0 software from QSR International. There were over 500 pages of double-spaced transcription notes generated from 10 interviews. Each transcript was read by the researcher and any statement that related to either research question was color-coded and assigned a descriptive name and general theme (e.g. "Staff-Unavailable" or "Board-Conflict"). The generation of themes and descriptive names was cumulative, and each subsequent statement that was coded provided the researcher with a choice to use a previously generated code name, or to create a new label that better described the comment in the transcript. This was the first step in creating themes and overarching categories for analysis, and resulted in the identification of 870 separate themes among all 10 transcripts.

When a statement addressed more than one theme, the software allowed multiple coding with different theme names. Each of these codes was considered a point of reference in the software. After the first coding, there was a total of 2,706 points of reference coded by the researcher among all transcripts. Each transcript was re-read by a graduate assistant with a knowledge of the research and experience in coding to provide secondary coding and identify any themes that may have been omitted by the researcher, or that could be characterized with a different label. There were 23 statements that the secondary coder questioned and, after discussion with the researcher, coding changes were made to 12 points of reference. Seven of those changes involved a reference where a previously identified theme could have been accurately utilized, and 5 points of reference involved creating a new theme statement.

The transcripts were read in detail again to further break down the themes into the categories that the researcher created in field notes during the interview, namely, “Critical Issues,” “Coping Strategies,” and “Lessons Learned,” which aligned with the research questions. The researcher noted that, during interviews, the executives often talked about the backdrop of the catastrophe, and the critical issues that affected them personally and their organizations. These were not necessarily issues the executives could solve; rather, they were environmental, personal, or situational. Sometimes the critical issue was a part of the executives’ actions moving forward (e.g., the organization’s building was damaged); sometimes the issue was something they could not do anything about (e.g., police might not let a staff member into their building to retrieve financial or client records); and sometimes outside organizations intervened with a solution (e.g., the Red Cross might have found key staff to allow the executive to move forward with other

strategies). These themes were coded as “Critical Issues,” meaning the issue was present within the first month or two (timeframes were not always provided by respondents) after the catastrophe, and the executive felt that it was important enough to report during the interview.

Likewise, the category “Coping Strategies” includes the results of coding the transcripts in which executives reported the strategies they employed to deal with the issues that were necessary for their nonprofit organization to return to business and meet the challenges they encountered. The field notes from the researcher noted this time frame as beginning shortly after the immediate crisis was stabilized and after the executive had a sense of his or her challenges and resources. Coping strategies were most often reported by respondents as occurring within the first year after the storm, but some strategies were also employed by executives as the recovery progressed, and as the factors they had to contend with changed or evolved.

“Lessons Learned” were coded as reflective statements with the benefit of hindsight. For example, an executive thought back over a particular issue, the strategies employed and the outcome, along with any changes or multiple attempts at resolving an issue, and at the time of the interview (4 years after the catastrophe), had an insight that did not exist before or shortly after the storm.

After all statements were additionally coded with one of these categorical labels (Critical Issues, Coping Strategies, or Lessons Learned), the previously coded 870 statements were re-examined and condensed from 870 to 117 themes based upon similarity of content and consistency of categorical label. The secondary coder reviewed the condensed themes, spot-checked specific statements for congruence within the

transcripts, and concurred with the researcher on this step. Of the 117 condensed themes, 33 were Critical Issues, 45 were Coping Strategies, and 39 were Lessons Learned. These final themes are reported in the tables that follow in Chapter IV, with themes displayed both alphabetically and ranked by total number of respondents for a particular theme.

Chapter Summary

This chapter articulated the use of a grounded theoretical approach to the study utilizing semi-structured open-ended interviews with 10 nonprofit executive directors in New Orleans whose NPOs were funded by the United Way for the Greater New Orleans Area. This inductive, exploratory approach generated themes and issues grounded in the data that were analyzed through the sensitivity of the researcher, a former executive director with 25 years of nonprofit leadership experience. This experience informed the ability to perceive categories, themes and relationships in the data, which are critical elements for a successful qualitative approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Participant criteria were further explicated and delineated within this chapter, including definitions of organization size, types of service provision, locale, length of tenure of the respondent, and basic organizational quality as defined by being a member agency in good standing with the local United Way. The role of the United Way for the Greater New Orleans Area in the identification of potential respondents was discussed, along with the process of inviting executives to participate in the study.

An interview structure was developed that addressed the basic research questions and included prompts if respondents had difficulty elaborating topics they introduced. Questions pertaining to the characteristics of the respondents and their organizations were

also asked. Two pilot interviews occurred which served to fine-tune some of the prompts and reorder the structure of the interviews. Interviews lasted from 60 to 100 minutes.

Seven were conducted in person and three were conducted by telephone.

Interviews were audio-recorded with the permission of the respondent and were later transcribed using word processing software. Respondents were offered the opportunity to review the transcripts and edit any details that were not properly transcribed. Data analysis was conducted by the researcher utilizing NVivo 8.0 software to code issues and content, and the resulting analysis was reviewed and discussed with a secondary coder, who was a graduate social worker familiar with the topic and the research. Issues and content were further refined, analyzed and reported under three broad themes; “Critical Issues,” “Coping Strategies,” and “Lessons Learned.”

The informed consent approval process from the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board resulted in a determination that the research was “exempt” because no confidential information was sought, and respondents voluntarily participated and shared information about their organizations, not individual clients.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Respondent Demographic and Agency Characteristics

Respondents ranged in age from 38 to 65 years, with a mean age of 54.7 years. Eight identified their ethnicity as Caucasian, and two identified themselves as African-American. Four were male and six were female, and their experience as executives in a nonprofit organization ranged from 6 years to 25 years, with a mean of 14.4 years of experience. In all cases, executive experience was at the nonprofit organization they were leading at the time of the interviews; none were nonprofit executives at a different organization prior to their current position.

The NPOs led by the respondents ranged from a pre-Katrina budget size of \$250,000 to \$4,500,000. Post-Katrina budget size varied from \$120,000 to \$9,600,000, with 7 of the 10 executives reporting a net increase in organization funding between pre-Katrina and 4 years post-Katrina. The mean pre-Katrina budget for respondents was \$1,720,000 and the mean post-Katrina budget was \$2,628,000. Two of the three organizations that noted a decrease were among the smaller organizations; the other was among the larger NPOs pre-Katrina.

Full-time equivalent (FTE) staff pre-Katrina ranged from a low of 4 to a high of 110, and post-Katrina the range was from 2 FTEs to 135, with a pre-Katrina mean of 38 and post-Katrina mean of 42 FTEs. Four organizations had a net loss in employees from

the period before Hurricane Katrina to 4 years post-Katrina, and four other organizations showed minimal growth over the same period of time (+5, +7, +2 and +7 FTEs). The two largest organizations pre-Katrina, in terms of budget size, also showed the largest gains in employee numbers 4 years after Hurricane Katrina.

The number of organizational volunteers among respondents dropped or stayed roughly the same in 9 of the 10 organizations. The mean number of volunteers was 201 pre-Katrina and 111 post-Katrina. Again, the largest two organizations (as measured by budget size) showed the most precipitous decline in volunteers 4 years after Katrina, from 500 to 150 in one case and from 1,000 to 450 in the other case.

Issues and Themes Identified by Respondents

This chapter reports data that identify patterns and themes among respondents regarding critical issues faced and coping strategies employed following Hurricane Katrina. Issues identified through coding the interview transcripts were reported consistent with the research questions and an additional theme, Lessons Learned, which were expressed by all respondents. The themes that were reported were summarized in tables labeled “Critical Issue Themes” (the most emergent problems facing the executive following the disaster); “Coping Strategy Themes” (the actions, strategies, and approaches taken by the executive following the emergent problems); and “Lessons Learned Themes” (the reflection, 4 years after the disaster, about what the executive learned).

The presentation of tables are followed by quotations taken from transcripts that serve to illustrate a particular theme that was coded. The researcher selected excerpts that

were either (a) reflective of similar coded themes from respondents; and/or (b) especially articulate about a coded theme; and/or (c) a perspective that, while similar thematically to others, offered a unique perspective to one of the categories. The number of excerpts quoted is not reflective of the frequency or intensity of a coded response, but rather a representation of the theme that is illustrative or illuminative. After each excerpt, the respondent is noted as E(1) through E(10). This allows the reader to know the particular respondent (by number only) throughout this chapter, with no other identifying information. Any name or other identifying information within an excerpt has been edited or noted as missing by (. . .) in order to provide confidentiality to the respondents.

Critical Issues Themes

Critical Issues were those items which executives believed to be most pressing immediately following Hurricane Katrina. In general, this was identified as the time from the onset of the hurricane through the following 2 months. A critical issue was not necessarily the highest priority issue for the nonprofit organization. In the aftermath of devastation of this magnitude, a variety of federal, state, and local resources assist with rescue, relief, and the beginning of cleanup and repair. Small- to medium-size NPOs often do not have the organizational or financial capacity to resolve critical issues. Some of these issues may be resolved, for instance, by outside entities (e.g., locating key staff), or some issues may be outside the executive's control (e.g., law enforcement denial of access to damaged or destroyed buildings). Thus, a critical issue may be resolved or impacted by an entity outside the purview of the nonprofit organization. This distinction became important as the interviews moved from the respondents discussing critical

issues, followed (generally) by reporting coping strategies, and then a reflection on lessons learned.

Table 1 contains 32 Critical Issue themes reported by the respondents. Detailed examples, including sample quotations, are provided following Table 1 for themes that were reported by a minimum of 9 of the 10 executives who were interviewed. Themes mentioned by 9 or more respondents are shaded in the table.

Critical Issue Theme 1 – Clients Needing New Services

The theme of Clients Needing New Services was identified as a critical issue by all 10 executives, and this theme had the greatest number of references (42) within the transcripts. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, executives reported that individuals sought services that the nonprofit organization had not provided in the past. These individuals included clients of the organization and individuals who were not known to the organization prior to Hurricane Katrina.

Some clients came and needed everything. They needed a place to stay, they needed clothing, they needed to be able to find lost records, they needed to understand what benefits might be available to them. So the first month really it was dealing with basic needs of safety and security. Helping somebody locate shelter, helping them find places that would support them, and paying for rent in those areas that were available. (E5)

Critical Issue Theme 2 – Clients Needing Existing Services

The theme of Clients Needing Existing Services was identified as a critical issue by 9 of the respondents, who made a total number of 21 references to this issue. They didn't make 21 references WITHIN the transcripts. They made them within the

Table 1

Critical Issues Clustered by Themes

Critical Issue Themes	# Execs	%	# References	Rank
Administrative Gaps	6	60	6	11
Board Communication	7	70	14	9
Board Conflict	2	20	2	28
Board Member Resignations	2	20	3	27
Board Personal Trauma	6	60	6	10
Board Unavailable	3	30	5	19
Executive Isolation	5	50	6	15
Executive Personal Losses	2	20	3	26
Client Records Damaged	4	40	5	16
Clients Needing Existing Services	9	90	21	3
Clients Needing New Services	10	100	42	1
Clients Unaccounted For	5	50	7	14
Community Current Information Lacking	2	20	6	23
Community Infrastructure Lacking	3	30	10	18
Community Misinformation	1	10	2	31
Emergency Plan Inadequate	5	50	9	13
Emergency Plan Nonexistent	2	20	2	29
Facility Damage Significant	9	90	15	6
Facility Equipment Loss	4	40	5	17
Facility Unable to Locate Suitable	2	20	8	22
Financial Records Unavailable	1	10	1	32
Funding Cash Flow	9	90	29	2
Funding Source Focus on Crisis not Recovery	5	50	20	12
Funding Source Reductions	7	70	21	5
Staff Communication	7	70	15	8
Staff Conflict	2	20	2	30
Staff Personal Losses	9	90	15	4
Staff Time Lag Not Knowing Return Plans	3	30	5	20
Staff Training Needs Trauma Disaster	2	20	4	24
Staff Turnover	3	30	4	21
Staff Unavailable	7	70	17	7
Volunteers Reduced	2	20	3	25

interviews. This theme was coded when a respondent noted that, after Hurricane Katrina, former clients contacted the organization for services the agency provided before the storm. In most cases, these clients had needs that were being met by the nonprofit prior to the hurricane. One respondent noted a variation in these needs that related to the desire of individuals to return to some sense of normalcy amidst the destruction:

I'll tell you one story. I had a call from this mom and she said, "Oh you're open, can I bring my child back?" and I thought, lady did you not know we had a storm here? And she said, "I'm living on the second floor of my house and out of a FEMA trailer, I have one child who is autistic, one child has a speech language problem, and I need to get back in therapy." And (I said) "If you need to get back in therapy, we're going to take you back." But again, I go back to what I said, it was part of that getting back to some degree of normalcy. And after the storm all you wanted to do was be normal. And (our service) is a part of that normalcy. We had people driving an hour just to come in to therapy, just to keep that continuity going. (E7)

Critical Issue Theme 3 – Funding Cash Flow

The theme of Funding Cash Flow was also identified as a critical issue by 9 respondents, who made a total of 29 references to this within the interviews. This theme reflects executives' concerns about whether funding for operations was going to continue after such a widespread disaster. In NPOs, these concerns pertain to resources necessary to continue to pay staff, because they frequently provide the services needed by clients. Organizations faced the risk of going out of business without the resources to sustain a payroll.

Sure, you've got one grant that may take a couple of months to get (reimbursements from), and you have cash flow issues with that, but you've got four others where you do have cash flow. So you could not imagine a time when you would just have total stoppage of any cash whatsoever. (E10)

Critical Issue Theme 4 – Funding Source Reductions

The theme of Funding Source Reductions was identified as a critical issue by 9 executive directors and was referenced 21 times. As respondents were attempting to understand the magnitude of the disaster related to requests for services from new and existing clients, this critical issue—whether there would be any reductions of money to pay staff to provide such services—became a consideration. The inability to receive assurances that funding would continue created a significant critical issue in the decision whether services could continue. Variations of issues within this theme included funding that was frozen, suspended, or terminated; guesswork about funding procedures; and a risk of insolvency without assurances from funding sources.

Funding Was Frozen, Suspended, or Terminated

We had been getting about ... a month in operating revenues pre-Katrina. When we got back in October, we were reduced down to (less than 10% of that amount) in operating revenues per month. Everybody froze, suspended, terminated funding—federal, state, private. Nobody knew what was happening. (E3)

Guesswork About Funding Procedures

We had no idea whether the United Way would continue to fund us (pay staff), or at what level... I felt they would fund us, but we didn't know what the process would be. (E4)

Risk of Insolvency

We were at a point where we had one payroll and I could pay off the accruals but that was it. (E10)

Critical Issue Theme 5 – Staff Personal Losses

The theme of Staff Personal Losses was identified as a critical issue by 9 executives and referenced 15 times in the interviews. These issues included staff—when they were able to make contact with the nonprofit organization; not knowing the extent of personal losses, such as home and possessions; or whether family and friends were alive, injured, or displaced. In some cases, the executives ended up as an intermediary and conduit for information; in others, they were thrust into a role of compassionate listener as their staff relayed personal losses. In some cases, executives reported staff being so traumatized by the events of Hurricane Katrina that they chose not to return and to start over in a new location.

Executive Support for Staff Losses

We had to support our staff as well as ensure that we were able to respond to the needs of clients. Our staff were clients at agencies as well...and we had families—my kids went to three different schools in four months, moving around, lots of abandonment issues, trauma, anxiety, and we had it as well...It's vicarious trauma, kind of looking at just the total devastation. Those were all issues that affected our...coming together to respond to the needs of clients. And these were very real issues to me as the executive because I had to take care of the staff as well. (E5)

Staff Could Not Cope With Losses

First, there were a number of (staff) who just—maybe it's unfair for me to say—couldn't cope. But it felt like that. I think for many people they realized they just don't want to live in this environment. A couple of people were just so frightened that they could not see coming back to work here. (E10)

Critical Issue Theme 6 – Facility Damage–Significant

The theme of Facility Damage–Significant was identified as a critical issue by 9 respondents and referenced 15 times. These issues were related to damage sustained to the offices and other locations where the nonprofit organization provided its services to clients. In most cases, there were significant losses to either the facility, the contents, or both, which inhibited the nonprofit organization from rapidly providing services in the same manner these were provided prior to Hurricane Katrina.

What you have to understand is water was standing in certain areas of the city for at least three weeks. We were not even allowed into the city for a period of time, and I can't recall, but at some point you had to apply and be able to prove that you had a business in the city. So (a staff member) and her husband went down to New Orleans to take a look at our office and to gather the very limited things that they could salvage. We were on Canal St. and either through the flood water, or leaks in the landlord's roof, we lost everything. (E8)

Critical Issues Summary

The dominant critical issues identified by the executives in the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Katrina were people needing new and existing services, concerns about cash flow and funding source reductions for their organizations, a focus on the personal losses suffered by staff, and assessing the damage done to the facility where the organization conducted business. Communication, or lack thereof, played a role in many of these issues after the storm. While the context of communication issues varied (community needs, financial, procedural, relational), the acquisition of accurate and timely information from multiple sources of the organization and community prior to

developing coping strategies is synonymous with leadership and logical when a widespread catastrophe exists.

Coping Strategy Themes

Coping Strategies were process-oriented approaches or character strengths identified as important by executives in leading their nonprofit organizations following Hurricane Katrina. Often these strategies became evident to the executive in the months following their appraisal of critical issues following the catastrophe. In fact, coping strategies generally seemed to be employed beginning 30-60 days post-disaster and continued for several years as the environmental, community, client, staff, and funding issues evolved. Rarely did a precise coping strategy emerge following the identification of an issue. Coping strategies, rather, appeared to be the logical “next step” of a recovery from the effects Hurricane Katrina, particularly after an executive acquired extensive information about staff needs, community needs, condition of the organization’s facility, and the availability of funding. The coping strategies employed by the executive directors were a result of the interplay of critical issues, and the desire for a good understanding of the organization’s task environment. In addition, certain character traits were identified as essential for effective coping by executives and staff returning to work in a disaster environment.

Table 2 contains 45 Coping Strategy themes reported by the respondents. Detailed examples, including sample quotations, are provided following Table 2 for themes that were reported by a minimum of 9 of the 10 executives who were interviewed. Themes mentioned by 9 or more respondents are shaded in the table.

Table 2

Coping Strategies Clustered by Themes

Coping Strategy Themes	# Execs	%	# References	Rank
Administrative Continuity	5	50	11	24
Administrative Elimination	1	10	1	43
Administrative Restructure	4	40	6	30
Board Communication	9	90	22	4
Board Defers to Executive	7	70	16	12
Board Restructure	3	30	3	36
Board Specific Assistance	6	60	9	20
Character Adaptation	9	90	16	6
Character Communication	3	30	5	32
Character Creativity	3	30	4	33
Character Flexibility	5	50	8	25
Character Persuasiveness	1	10	1	44
Character Resilience	6	60	10	19
Character Responsiveness	6	60	9	21
Character Vision	7	70	12	15
Client (Existing) Needs Driven	7	70	23	11
Client (New) Needs Driven	10	100	38	3
Community Borrowing from Other Organizations	5	50	6	27
Community Collaborations Existing	7	70	16	13
Community Collaborations New	6	60	15	18
Community Relationships New	8	80	14	10
Community Relationships Past	7	70	14	14
Emergency Plan Adequate	2	20	5	37
Executive Network with other Executives	2	20	4	38
Executive New Administrative Tasks	2	20	4	39
Executive Provides Direct Service	7	70	11	17
Funding Support by Organizations	10	100	53	1
Organizational Cohabitation	8	80	20	8
Organizational Data Driven Decisions	3	30	4	34
Organizational Dumb Luck	1	10	2	41
Organizational Grant Writing Increase	8	80	25	7
Organizational Merger	1	10	3	40
Organizational New Approach	10	100	48	2

Table 2—Continued

Coping Strategy Themes	# Execs	%	# References	Rank
Organizational Opportunistic	4	40	13	28
Organizational Purchase Building New Programs	1	10	1	45
Program Elimination	5	50	12	23
Program Restructure	9	90	19	5
Staff Attitude	4	40	7	29
Staff Communication	7	70	12	16
Staff Elimination	3	30	4	35
Staff Layoff	6	60	7	22
Staff Reduction in Hours	1	10	2	42
Staff Restructure	5	50	7	26
Staff Working More Hours	4	40	5	31

Coping Strategy Theme 1 – Funding Support From Organizations

The theme of Funding Support from Organizations was identified as a coping strategy by all 10 executives, and this theme had the greatest number of references (53). These comments reflect the importance executives placed upon the breadth of response from funding sources in various sectors—including some new resources and some resources that existed before the storm, including United Way, newly created private funds such as the Bush/Clinton Hurricane Katrina Recovery Fund, foundation partnerships, and corporate gifts. Absent from most respondent comments were coping strategies that involved receipt of federal (governmental) funds.

Local United Way Responds Promptly

The other thing was just working with United Way and the United Way was very, very helpful in terms of continuing to support us. And United Way, after the storm, went through a grant process that was different from the normal allocations

process that allowed us to kind of respond to the needs and write some proposals to address some of the need out there. (E4)

Newly Created Private Organizations Made Funds Available

(The) Bush/Clinton (Katrina Recovery Fund) said, “Here’s a million dollars, you know your area, you can distribute this money the best way possible.” And so we were recipients of a portion of that money and they funded us and paid for (services) for the first two years. (E1)

Local Foundations Blend Resources and Create Partnerships

So those four foundations are the ones that came up with the fund. And the cool thing about that was that all these different (agencies) filled out an application and the foundations sat at the table and said, “We would like to fund this part of this, could you fund the other part?” So they set together cooperatively and did that. And that’s something that doesn’t happen; foundations typically don’t work together like that. (E7)

For-Profit Corporations Offer Opportunities for Grants

One of the pharmaceutical companies suggested...that I ask them for money that we lost because of the two fundraising events—our two largest fundraising events were lost...He suggested that we write a letter and ask for \$250,000. And much to my surprise, they gave it to us. That was the largest gift, but there were a number of organizations—I mean everything from pharmaceutical companies to other companies providing unrestricted grants and cash contributions. (E10)

Coping Strategy Theme 2 – Organizational New Approach

The theme of Organizational New Approach was identified by all 10 executives as an important coping strategy, with 48 references in the interviews. Each nonprofit had a unique set of circumstances that required differential considerations compared to their peer organizations. For example, staff availability varied among respondents, the condition of facilities for service provision varied, and the needs of the community compared to the mission of the organization had changed. The strategies employed by the

organizations included approaches such as outreach to clients in need, reintegration of residents back to the community, and reorganizing services to better meet the needs of clients.

Outreach to Clients With Needs to Provide a “One-stop Shop”

We also did a lot of outreach in terms of (service) and (service). Problems don’t come one at a time, and a lot of folks had non-medical issues to deal with as well. We were trying to be the social services one-stop shop, and it worked out rather well. (E2)

Reintegration of Community Residents Needing Services

So when Katrina happened, what needed to happen after? Everybody was displaced...people needed help after they got back to the community in terms of reintegration, so we were able to carry over all of the knowledge and skill that we had...and apply it post-Katrina. So there were the things that we had done (pre-Katrina), but then we were able to ramp it up to the new context that we found the community in. (E3)

Restructuring Organization to Meet the Need for Additional Services

We had the opportunity to grow and re-structure. We saw the need for additional services in our community, and I think it was kind of the momentum of all that together that was like, “Okay, how do we do it and what do we need in place to do it? And who’s going to do it?” Well, we are going to roll-up our sleeves and do it. (E10)

Coping Strategy Theme 3 – Client New Needs Driven

The theme of Client New Needs Driven was identified as a coping strategy by all 10 executives and was referenced 38 times in the interviews. Examples include the need to focus on many new clients—particularly men who had worked their entire lives, presenting with basic needs that were not being met, the need for a strategy to address

children's issues (many of whom were displaced not only from their homes, but from friends, relatives, neighborhoods, and schools), a way to cope with greater demands for mental health services, and the need for a strategy to deal with a large influx of workers willing to assist with reconstruction, but who also were generally poor and often lacked health insurance, at a time when they were doing hazardous work.

Unanticipated Influx of Men Needing Assistance

You've got hundreds of people coming in requesting that they need everything. Most of the people had just the clothes on their backs and what struck me immediately was the number of men—not being sexist—but the number of men who came in and talked to us about how embarrassed they were, having to reach out for help. Had worked all their lives and (were) finding themselves homeless. So just trying to hold it together. (E8)

Increased Needs of Children From Hurricane-Related Trauma

I think we really stepped it up a notch post-Katrina...and really making sure that the model we were using was effective. And effective not only with children who were having hurricane related trauma, but also children who are impacted by violence, that this was a model that could be used post-disaster, or post-violence, post-traumatic death; and we're finding good results on all of those. (E6)

Increased Capacity to Meet Mental Health Needs of Clients

(A consultant) said, "In the next year you're going to be tremendously needed for mental health support...A year after that you're going to be needed...2 and 3 more years out, your (service) will still be receiving mental health type calls. All your calls, or many of them will have this element, because people will have hope that they will get help from the government or other places, and then their hope goes away because either they don't get all the help they need or any help at all. And at a certain point, despair sets in. That's where your (service) is going to be needed." So, that gave me an additional mandate, knowing that I needed to increase the capacity of the agency as well as to change the way we did business. (E4)

Strategy to Deal With Influx of Reconstruction Workers With Needs

We've also seen a huge number of Hispanic individuals come into the city to find work. A lot of the people who come in are day laborers or have been a huge part of the rebuilding effort. But we have (clients) now who are mono-lingual, who only speak Spanish or very little English. We've seen an increase in the Hispanic population in our (agency) go from 3% to I think 11%. And part of that is also because we have a number of bilingual staff. Our medical director is bilingual. We have hired case managers, behavioral health personnel—who speak Spanish. So for many of them, this is the place to come for their (services). (E10)

Coping Strategy Theme 4 – Character Issues

Essential character traits of executives and staff were frequently mentioned as important coping strategies by respondents. Adaptation was noted by 9 directors 16 times, and vision and resilience were also mentioned more than 10 times each.

Executives only occasionally spoke specifically about their own character traits, perhaps out of modesty, but the values they desired on the part of those working on behalf of the organization were clear.

Adaptation

What I basically said (as executive) was, “Come to work for as many days as you can, but if you need to take off to go file the insurance claims, or whatever, just do the best you can.” There was no dress code, people brought their dogs, they brought their infants, they took off during the day. It was kind of like, we are suspending our personnel handbook and rules and relying on compassion and dedication to the organization just to get through. We even had two people that lived with us. (E9)

Vision

I think the key is you've got to have strong leadership with a vision and you've got to think outside the box because the way you used to do business no longer exists...So if you were really ingrained and (feel that) this is the way we've always done it, even if you did reopen, I think you would have (later) closed.

You've just got to be really imaginative and just shoot from the hip sometimes.
(E6)

Resilience

(We) are all more selfless; you know, my purpose here is to get people into care and as a team, we are going to do that. Maybe part of it is that we've been through Katrina, so we can't really see it getting much worse—there's water on the floor...oh well, we can deal with that. What I keep seeing and witnessing in all this is (staff) bringing it back to how do we make sure our offices are open for our clients. (E10)

Coping Strategy Theme 5 – Board Communication

The theme of Board Communication was identified as a coping strategy by 9 respondents, and this theme was referenced 22 different times as a coping strategy. Board communication encompassed everything from greater reliance on a key board member or two for “checks and balances” in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, to an empowering of the executive director to conduct operations without as much oversight, to coping with the current realities while looking to the future of the nonprofit through a different focus on strategic planning, as noted below.

We (the Board and I) keep coming back to “What is the strategy here?” And how are we going to make sure that we can provide services and sustain services over the long haul? That was kind of a very different philosophy for the agency. We had not done that in the past. We got together every three years and did the same thing a lot of other organizations do and we developed a strategy and it's printed and gets distributed and we re-visit it every six months to see how we're doing. But it kind of forced a different mechanism for us. I guess it had to make it more real for us. (E10)

Coping Strategy Theme 6 – Program Restructure

The theme of Program Restructure as a coping strategy was identified by 9 executives, with 19 references during interviews. These strategies for restructuring focus on changes within existing programs as opposed to the previously mentioned theme of Organizational New Approach, which addressed coping strategies involved with changing the overall direction or approach of a nonprofit organization. Most organizations employed a combination of these strategies, and the quotation below, discussing contracting staff in a new way to generate revenue, demonstrates this new way of thinking by executives.

We now work, to some extent, to rent (a staff person) out. There are a couple hospitals in which she (provides services). The hospital gets to offer it as a benefit to the community and they pay us \$2,000 for (her) services. I believe she did about 14 of those last year. That's something that has been new since Katrina. We never charged for her services before. Now we're looking around and saying, "You hospitals have more money than we do." (E2)

Coping Strategies Summary

Following identification of critical issues, executives in this study turned their attention to strategies to recover, survive, and rebuild. The most frequently referenced coping strategies by respondents were identifying and securing funding support from previous sources as well as new funding entities; creating new organizational strategies to address the problems confronting their nonprofit organization; responding to the needs of many new clients requesting services that may not have been historically offered under their aegis; defining the character traits were needed by staff (and the executives themselves) to assist the organization in moving forward successfully; interacting

effectively, sometimes in new ways, with the board of directors; and, finally, creating program changes to more effectively align their nonprofit with the realities of new community needs.

Additional financial support was most often mentioned as coming from United Way, new private funding streams such as the Bush/Clinton Katrina Fund, foundations and corporations. Noticeably absent was federal funding support for these NPOs, and FEMA was regularly mentioned as providing little, if any, assistance to these organizations. New client needs mentioned most often were basic needs such as housing and financial assistance, the needs of children and families, mental health needs in general, and services for transient workers coming into the area to help rebuild. Executives discussed character traits that were important for staff that returned to the organization, and the importance of hiring staff with these traits post-Katrina. They also mentioned, to a lesser extent, their own character traits that helped them to cope with the process of recovery and rebuilding.

The themes that received the greatest attention were those which the executives had experience and some limited control over, such as securing funding, planning programs, responding to client needs, and staff selection. Items mentioned less frequently were facility-based or environmental changes, likely because many were dealing with the same issues and there was little ability to control, change, or influence those issues.

Lessons Learned

Lessons Learned are retrospective reflections of the executives 4 years after Hurricane Katrina, and represent their critical thinking with the benefit of the passage of

time. The lessons that were learned vary in focus; for example, some pertain to client needs, the agency mission, or staff. Some executives focused on the insights and enlightened perspectives they acquired. Others focused on discoveries about the variation in community understanding of the plight and condition of a particular segment of the victim population, for example, lack of sympathy and empathy for people with dire needs. Some lessons were framed in terms of warnings, exhortations, admonitions, or instructions.

Table 3 contains 40 themes pertaining to Lessons Learned reported by the respondents. The theme pertaining to Client Focus on New Needs was cited by all 10 respondents, and four other Lessons Learned themes were identified by a minimum of 9 executives. Themes mentioned by 9 or more respondents are shaded in the table.

Table 3

Lessons Learned Clustered by Themes

Lessons Learned Themes	# Execs	%	# References	Rank
Board Turnover - Preparation For	2	20	3	37
Client Focus on New Needs	10	100	34	1
Client Focus on Prior Needs	6	60	11	17
Community Collaboration Importance	9	90	48	2
Community Competition Changes	5	50	8	23
Community Rebuilding/Repairing Relationships	1	10	3	39
Community Recovery Impacts Service Delivery	4	40	9	25
Community Support by Funders	9	90	32	4
Community Support Financial Long Term	5	50	16	20
Community Support Financial Medium Term	6	60	8	19
Community Support Financial Short Term Recovery	4	40	9	26
Organizational Communications Importance	7	70	18	11
Organizational Culture Change	3	30	6	29

Table 3—Continued

Lessons Learned Themes	# Execs	%	# References	Rank
Organizational Facility Location Backup Plan	3	30	5	31
Organizational Financial Stability Procedures	7	70	13	12
Organizational Improvement in Emergency Plans	7	70	13	13
Organizational Mission Creep Problems	2	20	3	38
Organizational Need for Off Site Backup	4	40	5	28
Organization Having “Right Size” Mentality	4	40	7	27
Organization Strategic Plan Importance	6	60	11	18
Organization Having Vision Mission Consistency	8	80	26	7
Service Gaps Filled	9	90	35	3
Service Improve Outcomes	7	70	9	15
Service New Model Medium Term	7	70	20	10
Service New Model Permanent	7	70	13	14
Service New Model Short Term	6	60	19	16
Staff Attitude Importance	4	40	12	24
Staff Financial Support	9	90	17	5
Staff Flexibility Importance	8	80	18	9
Staff Lost and Not Reporting	5	50	9	22
Staff New Hires Integration	8	80	20	8
Staff New or Specific Skill Needed	1	10	1	40
Staff Restructure Importance	2	20	5	36
Staff Selective Not Rehired	3	30	5	32
Staff Training New Models of Service	2	20	6	35
Staff Trauma Support Needs	5	50	15	21
Staff Workload Increase	3	30	5	33
Volunteer Changes	3	30	6	30
Volunteers Lost to Organization	3	30	5	34

The focus on Lessons Learned within these themes does not readily lend itself to a hierarchical numerical analysis, because often the lessons cut across different themes. Consequently, the lessons that are reported are within broad categories, and representative quotations were selected that are the most complete when more than one respondent relayed a similar Lesson Learned.

Lessons Learned – Clients

Lesson Learned: *Do not presume to know the needs of clients. Needs change.*

We just assumed that as we would be getting (certain types of clients). And as it turned out, that really wasn't the issue. The issue was the increase in domestic violence from people living in little FEMA trailers, among other stressors, and the increase in the number of child sexual assault victims as a result of—we're in this little FEMA trailer and can't go outside and play and I don't care. I don't know the neighbors. It was just kind of hard to describe. Immediately the number of children having been sexually assaulted jumped. (E9)

Lesson Learned: *Service needs for traditional clients tend to be lost following a catastrophe, with the focus on the needs of new clients.*

The homeless lost their place at the table during Katrina. I thought that was a rather interesting development, because so many people have lost their homes. There was very little sympathy for the “bum under the bridge,” and I had not heard that kind of language prior to Katrina. We had a tent city underneath one of the interstate passes that the police would go in and clean up, and then it was back the next day. And this was a big issue because it made the city look terrible. The homeless really lost out. There wasn't enough sympathy left for those folks. The battered, the recipients of services from the battered women's shelter and so forth, also lost a lot of sympathy. (E2)

Lessons Learned – Organizational

Lesson Learned: *Be prepared to absorb programs of nonprofit organizations going out of business.*

A couple of organizations went out of business and we picked up some of those programs...it just seems to keep growing as time goes on and we're able to identify additional resources. But where it's grown also is a lot of the supportive services have also morphed a little bit. We've (also) expanded the housing component, which before Katrina was a big gap in service. (E10)

Lesson Learned: *Even well established nonprofit organizations can fail if they do not understand their strength and stay true to their mission.*

It really surprised me that some of the organizations dramatically changed the scope of what they do. And really almost re-did their missions entirely from what it was pre-Katrina to what it became...I think the thing that we're seeing these days, more recently, is that they don't have sustainability. They're falling apart. And these were really well established organizations that had a good niche that they were focused in. (E3)

Lesson Learned: Organizations and relationships change overnight. Your entire database and understanding of community resources disappears.

Well, when a disaster occurs that affects the whole region, you can basically, for two reasons, say goodbye to your database. One is that everything changes, you know, a lot of organization no longer exist and it's really, really hard to find out who still exists, and a lot of new organizations come in, a national organization or regional organizations. And then the other things that happen are that the mission and functions of organizations will change, they may put in a whole new program of disaster casework management, and maybe before they didn't do casework. Or, a church may start a shelter or a food kitchen, or just whatever, rebuilding. Many agencies exist, as you well know, in this community now to help rebuild houses. Some are new, and some are organizations that have shifted into doing this. (E4)

Lesson Learned: Have electronic back-up files for everything and consider using nation firms for banking and payroll management.

So we were able to salvage, and luckily we back-up, we had a procedure where we backed up files on jump drives so we were able to have all of our forms. We banked with a national bank, so luckily I could get payroll done. We do payroll through ADP, we paid our staff maybe two paychecks before we had to terminate everyone after a certain point. But we were able to function because we had a national company doing payroll, we banked with Chase, so there's a Chase everywhere, so that's definitely something that paid off. Several non-profits banked with local banks, so they were shut down and they didn't have access to their funds. Which also made a difference in their ability to function. (E8)

Lesson Learned: Keep extensive and updated lists of staff home phone numbers, emergency phone numbers and email addresses, including locations outside the area they are most likely to evacuate to in an emergency.

Lesson Learned: Irreplaceable organizational documents need to be in safe boxes and transported out in an emergency.

Another thing that was good, as part of our procedures, we had everybody's home phone numbers, emergency phone numbers... we all carried that and had a little kit when we evacuated. Now it's two large waterproof boxes that I can cart off one in each hand. We didn't take things like the deeds, the titles, all the insurance, all our various benefits, and all that kind of stuff. That was not stuff that was part of our procedures before Katrina. So those were some of the lessons that we learned, you know. (E3)

Lesson Learned: Continuing to pay staff after a major catastrophe provides an important connection, including finances for their emergencies, the knowledge that the organization values them, and that there is a workplace still operating, at least minimally.

When the levees broke, I had a memory stick...at home that had all our financial data on it, and I took it with me. And one of the things that I was able to make happen was we have direct deposit, and when our accounting person got a hold of me, she said, "What do you want me to do about payroll?" and I said, "For God's sakes, let's make sure everybody gets paid. I don't know where they are and if they're alive or dead, but if they go to their bank and they see money in the bank, that's a subliminal message, 'You're still on the payroll. Contact us.'" So of all the things that happened, I think that was probably the most lucky, the most significant, because later I had people tell me, "Well I was in Memphis, I was in Chicago, I was in New York, I went to the bank and I had money. And it told me that there was something left of the agency, and for me to keep trying to make a connection." The communications were just literally horrible. It's just kind of hard to describe how bad they were. (E9)

Lesson Learned: Nonprofit organizations need to have sufficient financial reserves to carry them for three months in an emergency.

I guess in day-to-day operations I never thought how you could ever get to a point of needing three months operating (funds)...but that's what happened with organizations. And you can't expect staff to stay on-board not getting paid. You can't rebuild without the capital, so all those things became so very real. (E10)

Lessons Learned – Staff

Lesson Learned: Staff productivity and flexibility rose dramatically in the years following the catastrophe.

The productivity that we're getting out of the average staff person is way beyond what we were getting pre-Katrina. Way beyond. That's been an interesting bend in there too. (E3)

We just tried to see who was there and what they needed, and go with the flow. We all learned to be real flexible around here. (E1)

Lesson Learned: Nonprofit organizations cross-trained staff to more efficiently deal with different client groups.

It's also made it easier for me in terms of the recession for moving people around. I'll be honest. Everybody's sort of been trained the same, so they can all kind of go across programs if I need them to. They're not just specialized. And I think that also allows me to change people up a little bit. (E6)

So we got together as a staff and said, "Okay, there are no more (categorical workers in one service). Everybody has got to get cross-trained, and everybody has to deal with both women, adults and children. We've had some men too, so that was another huge challenge to the program. In chaotic times you can't really afford to specialize. (E9)

Lesson Learned: Staff were victimized as well and had to deal with personal needs along with client needs and seeing vicarious trauma throughout the city.

We had to support our staff as well as ensure that we were able to respond to the needs of clients. Our staff were clients at agencies as well. It was a major, major devastation. My staff need to take care of their family, need to build their houses, need to meet with contractors, the frustration related to some of the things you hear about the city... it's the vicarious trauma, looking at just the total devastation. Those were all issues that affected our coming together to respond to the needs of clients. And these were very real issues to me as the executive because I had to take care of the staff as well. (E5)

Lesson Learned: An opportunity for a change in culture of the organization existed; the expectations for staff increased and the tolerance for mediocrity declined.

Now, the tolerance threshold is, "We'll give you a few months to see if you're good for the organization and the organization is good for you. But if it's not working out, or if it doesn't appear that it's going to work out, we don't have time to grow you like we used to." So that's been different, and when you talk about organizational culture, that's a change in our organizational culture for sure. We demand at least good. We have no tolerance for mediocrity anymore. And that was like a lot of organizations. So you're either somewhere between good to

great, and if you're not somewhere in that category, then you're not a good fit for this place. And I think a lot of places have kind of upped the ante like that. We're paying a lot more than we did before the storm, that's another post-Katrina dynamic that we've been kind of forced into. (E3)

Lesson Learned: New hires blended with existing staff and created a positive atmosphere for the nonprofit organization.

It was interesting—we brought on some staff who were actually new and came down because of Katrina. They wanted to respond, wanted to be here to help the city recover, but then we also had some staff who had lived here before Katrina. It was kind of an interesting mix. Old New Orleans, and then new New Orleans. Which was good for the agency actually. (E6)

Lessons Learned – Funding

Lesson Learned: Short-term funding following a disaster is important, but those funds will disappear at some point. The state of the economy when the short-term funding goes away is critical.

(The) Bush Clinton Katrina fund was a two year grant...a lot of them (new grants) were time limited. We had a foundation in California called Operation USA that funded us for two years. We had Mercy Corps was very limited, I think it was a year. So we did have some grants. We also got something from Greater New Orleans Foundation which was money specifically that came in after Katrina that lasted for two years. So again, what we've had to do over the last year or two was have to adjust to those funding sources disappearing. I think we would have been okay if we'd just had to deal with replacing that Katrina-related funding. But what's happened was that that coincided with the recession, so it was kind of a double whammy...I wasn't able to replace it all. (E6)

Lesson Learned: Locally responsive funders such as United Way can be very helpful and flexible following a catastrophe.

The other thing was just working with United Way and the United Way was very, very helpful in terms of continuing to support us. And United Way, after the storm, went through a grant process that was different from the normal allocations process that allowed us to respond to the needs and write some proposals to address some of the need out there. (E5)

Lesson Learned: *Be ready to look outside the geographic area for funding.*

New Orleans is a tough, tough place to raise money because, as a nonprofit I'm in competition with the schools, with the fire department, with the police department, you know, with all the things that property tax takes care of elsewhere. You know, it's hard to compete with schools, and police, and fire. So we're looking outside this region for funding. (E2)

Lessons Learned – Collaboration and Competition

Lesson Learned: *In a widespread catastrophic environment, there is a tremendous need to collaborate on a centralized intake process.*

I would go to meetings and there would be all these agencies here doing good helping everybody with everything and nobody knew what anybody else was doing. There was no centralized coordinating entity, no centralized coordination as far as casework, and the community was confused. They were going from here to there, they didn't know where to go to get help...and we would say we need a centralized intake for casework and everybody would agree that it was needed but there was no funding for it. And two years out, the Red Cross supported others in the community in saying we really do need a central intake waiting list where all the key casework agencies can go in and pull their clients based on what kind of casework needs they had. (E4)

Lesson Learned: *Collaborations among small organizations, when the executive is directly involved, tend to work better than larger collaborative efforts with executives simply planning and delegating.*

It's really interesting that most of those executives are also really involved in the direct service work. They're smaller organizations. It's not these huge mega-organizations. So from me to my direct service workers, there's not a long distance between me and them. And I think that's similar with a lot of these organizations sitting around the table at this collaborative. I got involved in it because really they were doing stuff. It wasn't a bunch of executives sitting around the table and planning something. It actually kind of arose out of the direct service work. Okay, there's five of us at this school—let's start meeting regularly, and let's coordinate services at the school. It was kind of more, although it had started from the funding from (funding organization), but it was really saying, "Okay, you all are at these sites. Why don't y'all start working together to coordinate services?" But it's been in existence for—I think 2007 was the first year. And it was still pretty hard to get people to understand what collaboration

means, and so it's taken about three years to get to the point where we're producing some really good collaborative work. (E6)

Lesson Learned: After a catastrophe, organizations try to work together. As short-term funding goes away and private contractors emerge, competition returns.

What I am seeing, I think maybe after the storm, competition was not the term I would use. Survival was the term. Now I don't know what most of the private entities were doing and we have a lot of competition in this community between hospital outpatient and private for profit clinics and practices. Now we have a few private practices that are sort of trying to sneak into some of our contract sites. But immediately after the storm, I don't think competition was what anybody was looking at. I think everybody was looking at survival mode. (E7)

Whenever you have less resources, there's always competition. What's really interesting for me is I think the mental health area here in the city is probably as bad as any in terms of competition. I really, honestly, didn't think there were attempts at collaboration post-Katrina. Like I said, we sat around that one collaborative, but it was as cut-throat as ever. I'll be honest. You saw actions that continued to be—you know, even defensive or offensive depending on whether you were going for funding or trying to keep somebody from getting funding. (E6)

Lessons Learned – Leadership

Lesson Learned: Executives have to realize the old way of doing business no longer exists after a disaster. You must have a vision, think outside the box and be imaginative.

It's just like realizing the old way of doing business no longer exists. You just have to create a whole new plan. And you make it up as you go along. I think the key is you've got to have strong leadership with a vision and you've got to think outside the box because the way you used to do business no longer exists. So if you were really ingrained and this is the way we've always done it, even if you did reopen, I think you would've closed. You've just got to be really imaginative and just shoot from the hip sometimes. (E7)

Lesson Learned: A new legacy for an organization is often borne out of a major catastrophe.

When I used to walk around the facility, I used to think about the people who came before us, the legacy and the history. Now when I walk around the facility,

all I'm thinking about is the last four years. I think very little about what happened before that. So I think, in a way, it's rewritten a new legacy. It's kind of like the second chapter. (E3)

Lesson Learned: From the rubble comes rebuilding, and people who are served will be grateful.

I remember coming back to the (building) and I spent two days gutting it down to the studs. And there were these big piles of rubble when I came back, and on top of one pile of rubble was a little pair of plastic blue Mr. Potato-Head shoes, and I thought "That's it. After 25 years here, I'm left with a pair of Potato-Head shoes." But we found that the families were so happy and grateful to have their trusted professionals back, and trusted us to create this program. (E1)

Lesson Learned: Executives will be victimized as well and need to take care of themselves to be effective leaders with all the complexities involved in disaster response and recovery.

One of the things we did with the Council of United Way Agencies, is brought in a counselor. And we did a post-traumatic stress disorder training for the exec's who wanted to come to that because we recognized...when you're the executive, you've got all of this on your shoulders and you can't share with anybody, except another executive who understands the level of complexity. So we actually brought in a counselor to work some of this stuff through, which was very helpful. Some of these (executives) were going home to trailers or were living on the second floor because the first floor was flooded. So not only were they dealing with their agencies, they were dealing with their own personal crises at the same time. So it was incredibly stressful. (E7)

Lesson Learned: Executives must drive the reconfiguration of core staff to shape a new way of doing business following a disaster.

Before anybody came back we all met and sat down with a few members of our board executive committee just to get started, but then the administrative team really did the bulk of the work. They went through every staff person in the organization and the qualities that they had, the skills that they had, and assessed. We determined early on that we needed generalists. We needed people who we knew could do multiple tasks. We figured out who were our core, essential staff that we would absolutely need to recover here, get the facility back in order, and also to be able to get back to programming as soon as possible. (E3)

I did have something that prepared me for this. Many years ago, at a different agency, through the whims of our state legislature, my budget got cut in half. And of course I remember it vividly, like it was yesterday. I just locked my door and cried. And I thought, “I’m going to lose half my staff.” And then I thought, “Okay, which half?” And I’ve never lost that feeling of, “Okay, I’m going to keep the folks who will do anything with a good heart, who believe in the cause, and who—excuse the expression—are kind of low maintenance employees that just put their heads down and work and do what they need to do” versus those who are kind of the whiners or the—there are not many whiners, but they’re high maintenance, what’s in it for me, and all about that. So I’ve had that experience once before, and I thought out of every cloud there’s a silver lining and maybe my silver lining is that without having to get all the documentation—without having to go down that path of written warnings and formal notices and all that. It’s just, “If you’re happy in Chicago, you’ve got a job in Chicago, send us a postcard.” End of issue. So that really did help that I knew that the staff I was getting back were the ones that truly wanted to come back and I pretty much told them. “I don’t know what you’re going to have to do.” (E9)

Lessons Learned Summary

There were many “Lessons Learned” relayed by respondents during the interviews. While there were consistent themes expressed by executives, there was also a richness and diversity among their reflections, owing to the specific combination of critical issues and coping strategies employed by the organizations and the executive. Consistent themes related to lessons learned include: focus on the new needs of clients and victims of the catastrophe; the importance of the proper organizational structure necessary to support a new way of conducting business; the need to manage funding changes from very little initial funding, to, in some cases, a great deal of funding in the first 2 years post-disaster, to another reduction in funding as national attention about New Orleans waned and the national economy began a severe recession; the need to maintain and support a high quality staff congruent with the requisites of the new services and structure of the organization; reflections on the value of collaboration or competition for

the organization and community; and, finally, the lessons on leadership for the nonprofit organization.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This chapter is divided into five sections. These include (a) a discussion of each research question and comparison to relevant studies in the literature review, (b) significance of results, (c) implications for practice, (d) limitations, and (e) future research.

Discussion of Research Questions

Research Question #1

What have been the key issues faced by small and medium-size, community-based non-profit organizations in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina?

The critical issues most often identified by executives were: (a) clients needed new services following Hurricane Katrina as well as the services that had been provided by the nonprofit organization before the disaster; (b) funding reductions, funding uncertainty, or funding cash flow impeded or terminated the agency's ability to provide services; and (c) executives were concerned about the personal situations (casualties, evacuation, damage to possessions) of staff members.

(a) *Clients needed new services following Hurricane Katrina as well as the services that had been provided by the nonprofit organization before the disaster.*

The literature suggests that people served by NPOs prior to a disaster would have at least the same needs after the storm, and probably significantly greater needs (Pipa,

2006). Chamlee-Wright (2007) noted that those with needs should be served by those who have the relevant knowledge as close as possible to the situation; in this case, often the NPOs that had established services in the community prior to the storm. The importance of housing post-Katrina was discussed by several authors (Carasso, 2006; Popkin et al., 2006; Turner, 2006). The critical need for services to assist families and children after the disaster was likewise noted in Abramson and Garfield (2006), Lamberg (2006), and Golden and Parnes (2006). Results from the interviews in this study support findings in the literature that these issues are among the most pressing immediately after a widespread catastrophe. In both the literature and during the interviews, there was no mention of the need for food and water, which at first was a puzzling omission. However, emergency responders established food programs throughout the area for those residents who chose not to evacuate.

(b) *Funding reductions, funding uncertainty or funding cash flow impeded or terminated the agency's ability to provide services.*

The issue of funding was likewise addressed in the literature and consistently reported by respondents, particularly in the areas of cash flow and concern about funding reductions. Most NPOs have inadequate reserves, and often operate with less than 1 month of funds for operations, leaving them vulnerable to an environmental catastrophe. This theme was mentioned by 9 of the 10 respondents in the study. The literature review identified the need for institutional donors, foundations, and corporations to respond more quickly following a disaster (Pipa, 2006); the importance of increased governmental support and a faster infusion of working capital to NPOs, particularly after an event of this magnitude (Fremont-Smith et al., 2006); the need for government help rather than

“patchwork philanthropy” (Smith, 2006); and the need for operational overhead (Fremont-Smith et al., 2006).

(c) *Executives were concerned about the personal situations (casualties, evacuation, damage to possessions) of staff members.*

The concern for staff personal losses by the executives of NPOs following a disaster was noted in the literature by Pipa (2006), as he discussed that leaders and employees sustained personal losses and became victims as well following Katrina. The concern about staff and their personal situations may be exacerbated in the nonprofit sector, because these professionals serve a wide range of roles for the organization. The executive directors, therefore, have a vested interest and personal concern for those they employ, as well as the pragmatic considerations of whether they will be able to return to work to provide services.

Unifying Theme of Critical Issues: Communication

One common thread that tied these high priority critical issues together was communication. Executives reported that acquisition of information was the most critical issue for them in the days, weeks, and months following the disaster. This included communication with staff members about their personal situations; acquisition of information about the needs of victims (including former clients) still in New Orleans; and little or no communication from funders about whether there was new or existing money available so the nonprofit organization could begin to plan on when, or how, to reopen. Communications was also addressed in the literature. Schneider (1995) stated that there are simply too many agencies and officials involved in disaster-relief operations,

with disparate rules, regulations, and policies, making it difficult or impossible to coordinate activity. Soliman and Poulin (1997) researched disaster survivors regarding their views of what would have been most valuable post-disaster. They found that accurate information, good communication, streamlined and simple processes to receive assistance, and coordination between helping organizations were mentioned as most essential. The breakdown of communications at many levels, coded frequently throughout these interviews, is a notable finding that impacted the ability of these nonprofit executives to respond as rapidly as possible to the needs of victims following Hurricane Katrina. Acquiring and disseminating information is a critical first step in consideration of policy, procedures, relationships, finances, and community needs, particularly when devastation in so large an area exists. The executive plays a pivotal role between the community (needs of victims, needs of government), board of directors (policy and future of the organization), and staff members (those providing services). The absence of information, or inaccuracy in communication, may delay service provision and jeopardize the future of the nonprofit organization following a catastrophic event such as Hurricane Katrina.

Research Question #2

How did nonprofit organizations in New Orleans cope with the issues created by Hurricane Katrina from the immediate aftermath in 2005 to 2009?

The coping strategies most often identified by executives were: (a) development of new services for clients to better align the organization with community needs; (b) securing financial support from either new or current funding resources; (c) creating new

approaches to emerging problems and situations that were constantly in flux; (d) attention to personal character issues, in themselves and their staff; (e) engaging the nonprofit board in an effective manner during a time of rapid decision-making; and (f) attention to developing new community relationships.

(a) *Development of new services for clients to better align the organization with community needs.*

The needs of existing clients were previously discussed in *Research Question 1*, and was a theme expressed by all executives throughout these interviews. In addition to developing new services for residents who were not traditionally consumers of social services, as well as those who were previously receiving assistance, executives reported that nonprofit organizations also contended with an influx of transient workers, many of whom lacked health insurance (Berggren & Curiel, 2006). Clean-up and rebuilding efforts, which were critical health issue and housing issues, were dependent upon a massive influx of volunteers and transient workers, who also needed health services, particularly in a toxic and dangerous environment. Addressing these needs was a necessity for NPOs if the city was to continue to make progress in its recovery.

(b) *Securing financial support from new or current funding resources.*

Respondents commented about the influx of opportunities for funding support from foundations, corporations, federal, state, and local resources, and United Way. Executives noted that, immediately after the Hurricane, there were limited dollars available to them with the exception of the local United Way. Respondents universally praised the United Way of the Greater New Orleans Area for being in contact quickly and

offering at least short-term financial support so they would not have to go out of business, which allowed executives to pay bills and staff for a period of time while they regrouped.

Opportunities to receive other outside funding for their organizations generally began 6 to 8 weeks following the disaster, and, in most cases, assistance was reported from corporations and foundations. Notable in its omission by respondents were reports of organizational funding from either the American Red Cross or the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Federal, state, and local (governmental) grant opportunities followed, but these funding sources become available 6 to 9 months following the initial disaster in most cases. This is consistent with Lein and Angel (2006), who noted that Hurricane Katrina taxed the capacity of government and NPOs to respond to the immediate and longer-term needs of disaster victims. Auer and Lampkin (2006) also noted in their survey results 1 year after Hurricane Katrina that the needs of nonprofit human service providers were mostly being met from private donations and foundations, and that very few received money from FEMA or other federal agencies. Increased funding from private individuals was also mentioned frequently in this study as a coping strategy, but none of the executives interviewed reported that donors desired an increase in accountability, as discussed by Goldman (2006) related to the post-9/11 charitable response.

Related to the issue of funding support as a coping strategy, executives noted an increase in grant writing for their organizations. This demand on staff workload occurred when staff capacity was diminished due to relocations, clients in the area were presenting a range of new needs, and the nonprofit organization was working to coordinate, communicate, and provide services. Executives noted, consistent with Moore (2006), that

potential funding sources were more interested in relief rather than rehabilitation. Pipa (2006) also noted that an increase in flexible funding for NPOs post-disaster would have been beneficial. Respondents noted that when funders were flexible, services generally proceeded more quickly and effectively. Examples of such funders identified by executives included the United Way, as well as a consortium of foundations that joined with nonprofit service providers with a new model of shared funding for a large program that could be implemented among several NPOs expeditiously and effectively. These models contrasted with reports by respondents of slow, bureaucratic federal grant applications that took much longer to write, and the process of funding approval was slow and bureaucratic.

(c) *Creating new approaches to emerging problems and situations constantly in flux.*

Executives reported their organizations needed to find new approaches to the myriad of problems facing their organization: new clients requesting services that may not have been provided prior to the storm; a toxic environment where client homes, businesses, and the nonprofit facility were uninhabitable; and uncertainty regarding funding for operations. There was little extant research on developing problem-solving strategies and approaches following a disaster of this magnitude, where clients, community needs, funding, staff availability, organizational linkages, and basic infrastructure for such a large geographic area changed, literally overnight. The requisites of problem-solving included “starting from scratch,” deciding if there was a need for the nonprofit’s services, and creating a brand new plan for operation within a very short period of time. Executives mentioned this as both a challenge and an opportunity. The

opportunities are further addressed below as Lessons Learned under *Implications for Practice*, but the coping challenge called for a rapid conceptualization of needs and the development of a plan for a response that fit the organization's strengths and mission, followed by securing the staff and financial resources necessary to be successful. Several respondents made strategic decisions to first bring back staff that had demonstrated characteristics of flexibility, adaptability, hard work, and organizational commitment. Other executives took this one step further and began to make strategic choices to not bring back staff who might be counter-productive in the new environment.

(d) *Attention to personal character issues.*

Executives mentioned character issues that were important coping strategies, both personally as well as the characteristics that defined the staff in their organizations. In some cases, the lack of certain characteristics on the part of pre-Katrina staff was an impetus to not re-hire the staff member. Executives also mentioned that they sought certain characteristics from new hires post-Katrina, which better fit with the new realities their nonprofit was facing. Character issues noted by at least half of the respondents included (in descending order of frequency) adaptation, vision, resilience, responsiveness and flexibility. The crucial character issues in a changing service delivery environment, particularly flexibility, were noted in several prior studies (Heitkamp, 1997; Itzhaky & York, 2005; Poulin & Soliman, 1999; Yueh-Ching, 2003). Fagnoni (2008) testified before the House Ways and Means Oversight Subcommittee, and noted that smaller NPOs helped to meet important needs, but many had never operated in a disaster situation. Strength of character and values among smaller nonprofit organizations, consistent with those identified by respondents in this study, would be expected to lead to

the greater flexibility noted as a crucial attribute in a changing service delivery environment in the literature.

(e) *Engaging the nonprofit board in an effective manner during a time of rapid decision-making.*

The issue of engagement with the board of directors was coded more frequently as a coping strategy than as a critical issue. This is likely because a nonprofit board typically serves in a policy-making, assists with strategic planning, and provides some operational checks and balances such as financial oversight, and these types of functions are more likely to be needed in a time of coping and developing organizational strategy. There was little existing literature on the relationship between an executive and board following a major disaster such as Katrina.

In this study, executives related interest in establishing communication with their boards and securing authority to act for rapid-fire decisions that were necessary following Hurricane Katrina. As the immediate crises subsided and planning for change commenced, the executives stated they were able to utilize their board expertise to a greater degree than in the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. However, there was great variability reported by respondents in the latitude given to them as executive directors, from nearly complete freedom to do whatever they thought necessary, to active engagement by the board president or executive committee, to regular meetings with the board (or individual board members) in person or by telephone similar to operations pre-Katrina.

Respondents generally noted that the interactional style between the board and executive was simply an extension of how the relationship existed prior to Hurricane

Katrina. If the executive had a great deal of autonomy, then that continued. If there was historically more active engagement between the board and executive, those practices were reported to continue at some level, such as between the board president or the board executive committee and the executive.

(f) Attention to developing new community relationships.

The development of new community and interorganizational relationships was mentioned by most respondents as a coping strategy, who noted that a number of collegial organizations simply went out of business after Hurricane Katrina. Executives were required to relate to new federal and state bureaucracies, understand how new foundations conducted business, and engage with a changing and often increased role taken on by area churches and volunteers from outside New Orleans. These new relationships unfolded against a backdrop of confusion over the role and programs of both FEMA and the American Red Cross. Executives mentioned that understanding the role of these two agencies was critical for two reasons: (a) to enhance their organization's ability to work collaboratively with both entities while both entities changed constantly, and (b) to garner accurate information from these agencies that would enable them to assist clients and victims of the catastrophe with specific needs.

The need for greater coordination and planning between organizations was discussed in the literature by Lein, Beausoleil, et al. (2006) and DeVita (2006). Pipa (2006) also noted that Hurricane Katrina exposed a weakness in the ability of NPOs to "integrate the many" and instead "depend upon the few." Uncertainty and changing relationships existed amongst the nonprofit community, because some organizations were no longer in business, and others provided new or different services after Hurricane

Katrina. According to several respondents, this led to a greater role for the few larger, more organized and more solvent nonprofit organizations, because funders viewed them as reliable and adequately capitalized to do what was needed to respond to emergent needs.

Executives reported that during the first year post-Katrina, personnel from other nonprofit organizations changed constantly, making it difficult to move forward with planning, because every time key staff changed, priorities changed, relationships needed to be developed, or there was a learning curve for the new personnel. NPOs that were interested or able to come back into the city often needed facilities, equipment, and at least minimal infrastructure, which was an additional barrier to “integrate the many.” Most executives interviewed reported that, for some significant period of time post-Katrina, their organization either cohabitated with another organization, worked out of staff or board members’ homes, and/or shared equipment to be able to provide services. For most, these disruptions lasted 1 to 2 years. In two situations, the NPOs had recently moved back to having their own workspace 4 years after Katrina, owing to delays in repairs, renovations, high rents, and other issues. Each one of these adjustments required developing or constantly renegotiating relationships that, in most cases, did not exist before the storm.

Significance of Results

The significance of this study’s results were extracted from Lessons Learned as the respondents, during the course of the interviews, reflected on and integrated the events of the 4 years post-Katrina. Several respondents reported that they never had the

time to put all of the critical issues and coping strategies together. The interview enabled a longitudinal reflection that was beneficial to them as they pieced together a number of events and actions. Lessons Learned were identified when a respondent offered a reflection that connected a critical event and a coping strategy, or multiple events and a coping strategy, or an iteration of a strategy that changed along with an explanation of why it changed.

The 26 Lessons Learned reported by executives of NPOs in the 4 years following Hurricane Katrina, summarized categorically from Chapter IV, are presented below.

Lessons Learned – Clients

1. Do not presume to know the needs of clients. Needs change.
2. Service needs for traditional clients tend to be lost following a catastrophe, with the focus on the needs of new clients.

Lessons Learned – Organizational

1. Be prepared to absorb programs of nonprofit organizations going out of business.
2. Even well established nonprofit organizations can fail if they do not understand their strength and stay true to their mission.
3. Organizations and relationships change overnight. Your entire database and understanding of community resources disappears.
4. Have electronic back-up files for everything and consider using national firms for banking and payroll management.
5. Keep extensive and updated lists of staff home phone numbers, emergency phone numbers and email addresses, including locations outside the area they are most likely to evacuate to in an emergency, and:

6. Irreplaceable organizational documents need to be in safe boxes and transported out in an emergency.
7. Continuing to pay staff after a major catastrophe provides an important connection, including finances for their emergencies, the knowledge that the organization values them, and that there is a workplace still operating, at least minimally.
8. Nonprofit organizations need to have sufficient financial reserves to carry them for three months in an emergency.

Lessons Learned – Staff

1. Staff productivity and flexibility rose dramatically in the years following the catastrophe.
2. Nonprofit organizations cross-trained staff to more efficiently deal with different client groups.
3. Staff were victimized as well and had to deal with personal needs along with client needs, staff experienced vicarious trauma as they learned what happened throughout the city.
4. An opportunity for a change in culture of the organization existed; the expectations for staff increased and the tolerance for mediocrity declined.
5. New hires blended with existing staff and created a positive atmosphere for the nonprofit organization.

Lessons Learned – Funding

1. Short-term funding following a disaster is important, but those funds will disappear at some point. The state of the economy when the short-term funding goes away is critical.
2. Locally responsive funders such as United Way can be very helpful and flexible following a catastrophe.
3. Be ready to look outside the geographic area for funding.

Lessons Learned – Collaboration and Competition

1. In a widespread catastrophic environment, there is a tremendous need to collaborate on a centralized intake process.
2. Collaborations among small organizations, when the executive is directly involved, tend to work better than larger collaborative efforts with executives simply planning and delegating.
3. After a catastrophe, organizations try to work together. As short- term funding goes away and private contractors emerge, competition returns.

Lessons Learned – Leadership

1. Executives have to realize the old way of doing business no longer exists after a disaster. You must have a vision. Outside the box—That’s a cliché that has been ridiculed as one of the 10 expressions that should be expelled from conversation. think outside the box and be imaginative.
2. A new legacy for an organization is often borne out of a major catastrophe.
3. From the rubble comes rebuilding, and people who are served will be grateful.
4. Executives will be victimized as well and need to take care of themselves to be effective leaders with all the complexities involved in disaster response and recovery.
5. Executives must motivate the reconfiguration of core staff to shape a new way of doing business following a disaster.

Executives’ actions reflected their unique position as staff leader, responsibility for the organization, and positioning the nonprofit in a meaningful role in the community. In most NPOs, the implementation of programs and services on behalf of clients falls upon middle managers and direct care staff. Given the unique and unprecedented nature of the Hurricane Katrina catastrophe, executives in this study assumed a greater role in direct services, general organizational operations, and program planning, because many

staff were missing or did not return. Respondents universally reported that it was not “business as usual,” and that they were involved in many facets of the organization that were traditionally left to others. In essence, the executive provided a gap-filling role. Their ability to work between community planning entities (such as foundations and United Way) and direct care staff meant they had a unique lens through which to view any necessary restructuring of client services. In this context, executive reports of attempting to hire back the most flexible and adaptable staff makes sense.

Immediately following Hurricane Katrina, executives were most concerned about clients, funding, and staff, in that order, followed by concerns about their facility. The facility where they conducted operations fell under the adage of “it is what it is,” that is, the executive had no access to resources to remediate whatever damage was done, so it was more important for them to focus on the human element. As coping strategies began to be employed, executives began to work with staff who could focus on some of these issues, and some of the emergent needs were met by outside agencies (Red Cross, churches, etc.) in the disaster zone. Funding issues continued to predominate, but references in the interviews shifted from concern for short-term, stop-gap relief funding to recovery and rebuilding the infrastructure, and the need to integrate new revenue streams into operations. Executives noted that their operational environment was still constantly changing, and while there was more knowledge and information about the needs of the community, there was still a great deal of fluidity in the response of nonprofit organizations, owing to the unique circumstances of the large number of federal and state organizations and personnel present, as well as the influx of thousands of well-meaning volunteers for short periods of time. Most organizations were not operating out

of their regular facilities; rather, they were using homes, cohabiting with other organizations, using borrowed equipment, and delivering services they were not accustomed to providing. Yet, executives often presented this as an exciting time of change and doing a great deal of good for the community. Some used the term “old fashioned community social work” to describe assessing a situation and simply doing whatever was necessary to assist victims.

In the final reflections of Lessons Learned by executives, organizational issues were noted less often, yet still continued 4 years after Hurricane Katrina. Staff considerations were noted more frequently and client concerns were reported less frequently by respondents, perhaps because 4 years after the catastrophe staffing was up to the levels funded within the organization’s budget, and executives were able to shift back into a more traditional leadership role. Community issues were also noted more frequently as executives reflected upon what happened throughout this process: the federal, state, local, and foundation influx; the disappearance of this funding in year 3 and year 4 post-Katrina; the beginning steps toward widespread collaboration that occurred after the storm; as well as the perception that the nonprofit community was back to the old, more competitive way of doing business. There was some disappointment among respondents in these matters; many felt that nonprofit organizations had changed for the better in collaborative efforts post-Katrina, and that structures for working together effectively were promising. The lessons learned painted a more sobering picture of change.

Implications for Practice

The following implications for practice have applicability to disaster planning for NPOs. These implications were drawn from the interviews, but were also based upon the researcher's experience as an executive in NPOs.

Emergency Planning

All respondents stated that they believed their organizations' written emergency plans were adequate prior to Hurricane Katrina, and yet every organization had extensively rewritten their emergency plans since the disaster. Generalizations in emergency plans have given way to specific, detailed plans and procedures, and executives mentioned that these items are now taken very seriously and followed without fail. Some of the specific elements are detailed in subsequent implications that follow.

Bank Accounts

Several respondents decided to use a financial institution with a national presence rather than a local bank, because of the possibility of a hurricane. They reported a great deal of satisfaction with the ability to access funds and account information from anywhere in the country. Other respondents who banked locally were unsure about the status of their organizational funds, and did not know if they were able to write checks to pay staff members. A related issue is the advantage of all employees having direct deposit of payroll, so they have instant access to their funds wherever they are in the country.

Off-site Records

Respondents suffered various degrees of loss of client records, organizational records, and financial records. Only one organization had backup client records, organizational information (articles of incorporation, legal papers, etc.), and financial records backed up off-site or on the Internet every day. That organization reported the fewest concerns about information and was able to focus on issues of locating staff and clients as well as planning for resumption of service delivery.

Staff and Board Location Information

Most respondents noted that they routinely requested an emergency contact for all staff members. Following Hurricane Katrina, most have implemented a process for requesting and updating any possible alternative contact locations in the event of an evacuation, alternate telephone numbers for all multiple relatives and significant others, email addresses, and any other method of contacting individuals following a disaster.

Expanded Use of Technology

Respondents noted that certain modes of communication worked better than others during Hurricane Katrina. They also noted that different disaster scenarios could mean that different modes of communications would be more likely to fail. The best scenario was to encourage important contacts (funders, staff, community leaders, board, etc.) to have multiple means of access, including, but not limited to, cell phones, land lines, text messaging, multiple computer emails, and a Skype address for video

conferencing. Keeping all of this information updated and available remotely via email updates or external electronic storage was also considered important by several respondents.

Funding Source Short-Term Guarantee

All respondents were grateful for the short-term guarantee of funds provided by United Way. Executives also noted that the same type of support was not always present from other funding sources. There could be advantages in having either memoranda of understanding from primary funding sources or contractual guarantees of at least short-term financial support in the event of a disaster declaration so that staff can be paid and other expenditures critical for continued operations can be covered. Respondents noted that a number of federal and state officials who were involved in their contracts prior to Hurricane Katrina had no idea about short-term or continuation funding after the disaster. This led to a great deal of uncertainty and the potential of shutting down operations when they might be most needed.

Consistency of Organizational Mission, Vision, and Goals

The opportunities and challenges post-disaster were presented quickly, and often with little opportunity for the executive to consult with board or staff members. Several respondents noted that it was important to be consistent with the organizational mission and goals, but to not necessarily be locked into old ways of doing business following a catastrophe. Several related stories of organizations that rapidly moved into services that had little relevance to the nonprofit agency's mission or expertise, such as housing

rehabilitation or provision of basic needs. In most cases, the organizations were “chasing grant money” that was plentiful immediately post-Katrina. Respondents noted that these organizations, once part of the fabric of service for New Orleans, were now gone because the money had either dried up or they were inexperienced in providing different services than those offered pre-Katrina.

Board/Executive/Finance Chain of Command

Respondents had varied experiences with chain of command issues. Some reported issues with organizational procedures requiring, for instance, two signatures on checks or prior approval by the board treasurer. The key issue was flexibility to temporarily suspend some rules when a disaster occurs and relevant procedures are difficult or impossible to follow. Examples given were explicating the chain of command in a disaster declaration and allowing singular decision-making for the organization, including financial decisions and disbursements, until such time as separation of duties and accountability can be reasonably reinstated.

Staff Hires and Rehires

Character issues were noted by respondents as it related to staff providing service following the disaster. Executives were more likely to bring back their most flexible, adaptive, creative, and hard-working staff first, and more likely either to not retain staff who did not exhibit these qualities or to encourage them to stay in the city in which they relocated. These desirable qualities and characteristics were also preferred as the organization recruited for new hires for new positions and replacement staff. Respondents

universally reported the development of a new culture within the organization 4 years post-Katrina, and in every instance it was viewed as significantly better by the executive.

Coordination of Service Agreements

Several organizations had some contingency plans and at least skeleton service coordination agreements in place in case of a disaster. Those respondents noted that these were put in place from the perspective of what they had encountered prior to Hurricane Katrina, and that the agreements turned out to be meaningless because the coordination was based upon some sense of predictability and normalcy (e.g., some services might be disrupted but most business will continue as usual). Respondents noted that in a major catastrophic disaster such as Katrina, that there was little value to specific service coordination agreements, because no one can predict the type of devastation, the location, the extent, or what might occur with organizations with whom agreements are created. These types of agreements likely have more value in a more narrowly focused disaster or emergency.

These implications for disaster planning, based upon the concrete examples provided by respondents in this research, can assist other NPOs in considering issues that may impact their ability to resume operations in the event of a widespread catastrophe such as a major earthquake, hurricane, nuclear accident, power grid failure, or terrorist event covering a large geographic area.

Limitations

This qualitative study was limited to 10 executives of NPOs from small- to medium-size organizations in New Orleans. The organizations and executives were not selected randomly, but were nominated according to criteria agreed upon by the researcher and staff of United Way of Greater New Orleans. Although some findings, conclusions, and implications may apply to many executive directors and NPOs of similar or larger size—in and out of New Orleans, caution should be exercised in making generalizations and applications to the population of executives and NPOs.

Future Research

Given the findings from this and other studies, a quantitative study and directed interview questionnaire can be developed based on the insights gained from the qualitative interviews with the executives. Such a study would make it feasible to increase the sample size to include more executives impacted by a disaster. Organizations from other cities that were also affected by Hurricane Katrina could be studied, and the results compared with other studies. One or more of the critical issues, coping strategies, and lessons learned could serve as the objects of investigation in and of themselves.

The perspectives of various funding sources (corporate, foundation, federal, state, local) and their roles in helping the nonprofit sector after a disaster merit study. A prototypical exemplary emergency response plan could be developed and compared to assess the adequacy of current emergency plans of nonprofit organizations.

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Appendix A

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Emergency Support Functions and Lead Agencies

**Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
Emergency Support Functions and Lead Agencies (2004)**

ESF-1: Transportation: Provides civilian and military transportation

Lead agency: Department of Transportation

ESF-2: Communications: Provides telecommunications support

Lead agency: National Communications System

ESF-3: Public Works and Engineering: Restores essential public services and facilities

Lead agency: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Department of Defense

ESF-4: Fire Fighting: Detects and suppresses wildland, rural and urban fires

Lead agency: U.S. Forest Service, Department of Agriculture

ESF-5: Information and Planning: Collects, analyzes and disseminates critical information to facilitate the overall federal response and recovery operations

Lead agency: Federal Emergency Management Agency

ESF-6: Mass Care, Housing and Human Services: Manages and coordinates food, shelter and first aid for victims; provides bulk distribution of relief supplies; operates a system to assist family reunification

Lead agency: American Red Cross and Federal Emergency Management Agency

ESF-7: Resource Support: Provides equipment, materials, supplies and personnel to federal entities during response operations

Lead agency: General Services Administration

ESF-8: Health and Medical Services: Provides assistance for public health and medical care needs

Lead agency: U.S. Public Health Service, Department of Health and Human Services

ESF-9: Urban Search and Rescue: Locates, extricates and provides initial medical treatment to victims trapped in collapsed structures

Lead agency: Federal Emergency Management Agency

ESF-10: Hazardous Materials: Supports federal response to actual or potential releases of oil and hazardous materials

Lead agency: Environmental Protection Agency

ESF-11: Food: Identifies food needs, ensures that food gets to areas affected by disaster

Lead agency: Food and Nutrition Service, Department of Agriculture

ESF-12: Energy: Restores power systems and fuel supplies

Lead agency: Department of Energy

ESF-13: Public Safety and Security: Provides law enforcement services

Lead agency: Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Justice

ESF-14: Long-Term Community Recovery and Mitigation: Enables community recovery from the long-term consequences of a disaster

Lead agency: Department of Homeland Security/Emergency Preparedness and Response/Federal Emergency Management Agency

ESF-15: External Affairs Annex: Ensures that federal assets are deployed to the field during incidents requiring a coordinated federal response

Lead agency: Department of Homeland Security/Federal Emergency Management Agency

Appendix B

Executive Director Interview
New Orleans/Katrina Project

**Executive Director Interview
New Orleans/Katrina Project**

DEMOGRAPHIC/BASIC

Name of Interviewee

Chief Executive Officer or Comparable?

Name of Organization

<Begin Interview>

MAJOR QUESTION FOR RESPONDENT

**What is the most critical issue your organization faced in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and how did your organization cope with the issue?
(Thank respondent for answer then ask)**

What is the next most critical issue your organization faced in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and how did your organization cope with the issue?

(Continue until respondent has no additional answers)

Critical Issue Topics and Related Prompts That Would Be Introduced for the Executive's Consideration If the Discussion of the Topic Was Not Initiated by the Respondent

▪ **BUDGET CONSTRAINTS**

“How many months worth of funding was available for ongoing operations immediately after Katrina?”

“Was there adequate flexibility in your budget to meet your needs post-Katrina?”

“Were your organization's financial records available?”

“Were you able to access needed funds through your financial institution?”

“Were adequate financial checks and balances present (staff or board level) for disbursements?”

- **GOVERNANCE (BOARD) ISSUES**

- “Were Board members available to you for advice or consent post-Katrina?”

- “Was there greater reliance on key Board member(s) in the aftermath of Katrina, or did you work with the entire Board?”

- “Did the Board grant you different decision-making powers (policy, strategic direction, financial, etc.) than you had pre-Katrina?”

- **STAFF ISSUES**

- “How many staff did you lose after Katrina?”

- “How many staff stayed with the organization post-Katrina?”

- “Did their roles change and if so, how?”

- “What accounted for the staff losses?”

- “Did their personal loss in the hurricane play a role in their leaving?”

- “Could anything have been done to retain those staff?”

- “What type of staff (management, direct, technical, clerical) were lost?”

- **COMMUNITY ISSUES**

- “What issues did you deal with from the community that were different than during ‘normal’ times?”

- “How did the change in services and community organizations impact your decision process?”

- “In the aftermath of the catastrophe, what community planning and support mechanisms emerged that were most helpful and least helpful?”

- **REQUESTS FROM NEW PEOPLE NEEDING HELP**

- “Were there a significant (from your perspective) number of new people requesting help from your organization?”

- “As time passed, did your organization receive significant requests for assistance from individuals who relocated to your area following Katrina (e.g. migrants, people needing work)?”

- **POLITICAL ISSUES**

- “Were there any partisan political issues that impacted your ability to cope with the aftermath of Katrina?”

- “Were there personal or organizational “agendas”, issues, problems or relationships that impacted your ability to cope with the aftermath of Katrina?”

- **DONOR ISSUES**

- “Did private donors that your organization relied on prior to Katrina change their giving following the hurricane? If so, how?”

“If pre-Katrina donors left the area, increased giving or reduced giving in the aftermath of the storm, how have things changed at this time?” Was this question posed as formulated? I stumbled over it several times.
 “Did new private donors emerge for your organization following Katrina?”
 If so, have they continued to give four years out from Katrina?”

▪ **FUNDING PROVIDER ISSUES**

“How did your major funders work with your organization in the immediate aftermath of Katrina?”

“How did your relationship with your major funders change or evolve in the years since Katrina?”

“Did your traditional (pre-Katrina) funds disappear, stay the same or increase post-Katrina? How has that changed in the four years since Katrina?”

“What new funding came to your organization post-Katrina, and how has any new funding changed in the four years since Katrina?”

▪ **COORDINATION AND COMPETITION WITH SERVICE PROVIDERS**

“How did coordination, collaboration and competition change between nonprofit organizations following Katrina?”

“Was your organization part of any new collaborative or coordinating bodies post-Katrina? If so, what is your analysis about those efforts?”

“Were any changes in coordination, collaboration or competition continued to the present or did these efforts change or disappear?”

“How would you characterize coordination, competition and collaboration between nonprofit organizations now as opposed to pre-Katrina?”

▪ **ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES (DEADLINES, EQUIPMENT, FACILITIES)**

“How has your organization handled any increased administrative requirements post-Katrina?”

“Did you lose equipment, facilities, or records? If so, how did you cope with that?”

“What kinds of administrative issues exist now for your organization that may not have existed pre-Katrina?”

“How does your current administrative staffing compare with administrative staffing pre-Katrina?”

▪ **NEEDS EXPRESSED BY FORMER CLIENTS**

“Were existing clients (prior to Katrina) requesting significant (from your perspective) amounts of service that your organization offered?”

“Was there a significant (from your perspective) number of your organization’s clients requesting help from your organization with new needs?”

▪ **IMPACT OF STAFF’S PERSONAL LOSSES FROM KATRINA ON ORGANIZATION**

“Did your staff suffer personal losses after Katrina? If so, how did that impact your organization?”

“Approximately how many staff returned post-Katrina?”

“How long, on average, did it take staff who returned to work for you to have some sense of normalcy in their lives?” What were the biggest barriers to staff achieving that normalcy?”

QUESTIONS PERTAINING TO THE EXECUTIVE’S PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND AND ORGANIZATIONAL FEATURES

How many years of experience do you have as an executive in all nonprofit settings in your career (combined)?

How many years of experience as an executive do you have with this organization?

Would you be willing to share your age and highest educational degree you obtained?

Approximately how many paid staff do you have in this organization (full-time equiv.) now compared to the year before Katrina?

Approximately how many different volunteers did you have in this organization the year before Katrina and over the past year?

Approximately what was the size of your annual budget in the year before Hurricane Katrina and the current size of your annual budget?

Did your organization have a plan for dealing with a catastrophe the magnitude of Hurricane Katrina?

If so, can you briefly describe that plan?

Appendix C

Human Subjects Institutional Review Board Letter of Approval

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY



Human Subjects Institutional Review Board

Date: November 16, 2009

To: Kieran Fogarty, Principal Investigator
Steven Smith, Student Investigator for dissertation

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Amy Naugle", written over the printed name.

Re: Approval not needed for protocol 09-11-15

This letter will serve as confirmation that your project "Coping with Disaster: Lessons Learned from Executive Directors of Nonprofit Organizations (NPOs) in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina" has been reviewed by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB). Based on that review, the HSIRB has determined that approval is not required for you to conduct this project because you are studying organizational strategies and are not gathering private information about individuals. Thank you for your concerns about protecting the rights and welfare of human subjects.

A copy of your protocol and a copy of this letter will be maintained in the HSIRB files.