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## Latent Newspaper Functions During the Impact Phase of Hurricane Katrina

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Latent Newspaper Functions During the Impact Phase  
of Hurricane Katrina

by

Christina A. Brown

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts  
Department of Sociology  
College of Arts and Sciences  
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## **Latent Newspaper Functions During the Impact Phase of Hurricane Katrina**

**Christina A. Brown**

### **ABSTRACT**

Media is used by audiences for more than its simple role as information provider. Audiences have been found to use news providers output in a multitude of ways. It has been found that some audience members have used such output as a way to gain social capital that aids in the generation of feelings of social cohesion with their community. This has been found to be especially true during the impact phase of a natural disaster, such as a hurricane (Perez-Lugo, 2004). Unfortunately what news providers specifically articulate that might have this latent use by audiences has not been studied as much as would be necessary for a concrete understanding of the topic that would aid other news providers in designing output during future disasters. As such, here this paper will explore what the content of the New Orleans Times-Picayune newspaper articulated during the impact phase of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans that had the potential to serve this latent function for its readers.

## **Chapter 1 Introduction**

Drawing upon the benchmark study conducted by Perez-Lugo (2004), this study will attempt to determine if the information printed by a newspaper could infuse its readers with the social capital necessary to feel a sense of cohesion with their local communities during the impact phase of a natural disaster. Those studying the importance of news providers during disasters have found that audiences rely on their news sources for more than just basic information. During the Perez-Lugo study, which interviewed those who had just endured a hurricane about their perceptions of the news, it was found that the news often serves a latent function in that it distributes social capital that aids readers development of feelings of cohesion within their community during the impact phase of a disaster. This is important because the people who make up these audiences rely upon this latent function of the news to reinforce their feelings of solidarity with their local communities when they are undergoing a traumatic experience. Thus, the news serves as a mechanism through which they can draw upon the strength of their community to endure a disaster as it is happening. Due to this cause and effect, it becomes important to know what types of news stories have the potential to aid in this critically important latent function. Unfortunately, the Perez-Lugo study failed to quantify what the media might say to trigger or reinforce the feelings of cohesion within the community that audience members reported. Therefore, in order to add to the existing literature, this piece will attempt to answer the question of what is being articulated during a disaster, as this content is what has the potential to trigger or reinforces this

latent function, by performing a content analysis of newspaper articles published in the New Orleans Times-Picayune during the impact phase of Hurricane Katrina.

This research was accomplished by selecting a group of articles to examine from the New Orleans Times-Picayune during the impact phase of the disaster. These articles were then examined to determine if they contained social capital that might aid in the formation of these feelings of engagement and cohesion with ones community. After this the articles that were found to include these criteria were compared to the articles that were found to include no such criteria. The results indicated that a minority of the articles included social capital that had the potential to aid in the formation of feelings of cohesion. However, it did occur in a large enough frequency that it was deemed relevant as a large number of such articles is not necessary in order to help a reader build cohesion with their community. After the coding of the articles was completed they were analyzed in a brief qualitative section written with the purpose of showing examples of what was found in each of the analytical categories deemed of relevance. After such examples were discussed it was noted that this study has many limitations, most important of which being that it was not able to also analyze the reactions of readers to this content to better observe possible latent functions, which then necessitates that further studies need to be done on the topic before any truly broadly applicable results can be formed. This analysis was found to be useful as it shows that these latent functions of newspapers did exist during the impact phase of Hurricane Katrina in the Times-Picayune and as such it will serve as a good building block upon which other studies can build from.

## **Chapter 2 Literature Review**

Before it is possible to accurately build a study which measures newspaper content's potential ability to disseminate social capital to readers in a way that might help them build social cohesion it is necessary to gain a firm understanding of the relevant literature first. One must understand previous research surrounding media and newspapers and their multiple functions as this research demonstrates the need for a greater understanding of latent media functions. One must also understand what social capital and social cohesion are, as well as how it is often studied in relevant sociological literature. Traditionally sociology does not spend much time examining the potential latent functions of newspapers content on their audiences and as such it tends to focus more on refining the meanings of such concepts as social capital and cohesion and building relevant theory. Thus all of these ideas need to be first understood, and then applied appropriately, in order to grasp how such concepts can best be utilized for the purpose of this analysis.

### *Media, Disasters, and the Impact Phase*

A basic understanding of the use of local newspapers demonstrates that the collective purpose of these daily publications is to transmit information to the populace of the regions it serves. In the case of a disaster, a newspaper is vitally important because it transmits information to a populace who has been (or soon will be) directly affected by the disaster. The majority of existing research in the area where media and disasters collide, focuses upon the media's role as transmitters of official warnings, preparedness bulletins, and recovery information to the masses (Garner, 1997; Cowan, 2002;

Ploughman, 1995; Piotrowski, 1998; Quarantelli, 1996). This is largely because the media are the most logical mechanism for local officials to employ when they must notify the populace about vital information. In communications literature, news providers are most frequently studied in order to ascertain the extent to which various media outlets can be relied upon to fulfill this role.

In the studies reviewed, this was ascertained through interviews and exhaustive content analysis of media commentary. This is considered important due to research findings that show readers, listeners, and viewers of the news media count on news content to inform them how to behave as well as how to deal with their misfortune and the massive amount of guilt that is generally felt by the survivors in the aftermath of a disaster (Elliott, 1989; Garner, 1996; Garner, 1997; Huff, 1995). This is because of the theory that the media's "importance lies in their power to increase preparedness and facilitate recovery by changing people's attitudes about natural disasters" (Perez-Lugo, 2004; Wenger and Quarantelli, 1989; Wenger and Friedman, 1986). More recent research, however, has indicated that this is not always the case. According to a study conducted in Puerto Rico on the populace's reaction to the media during a hurricane, the majority of people do not follow the media for preparedness information as much as they follow the media for alternative reasons, such as learning the details of the coming phenomenon and the possible effect it will have on the local community. This is a common occurrence because preparedness information is generally thought of as common sense knowledge by those who reside in areas prone to specific natural disasters (Perez-Lugo, 2004).

Nevertheless, because the effectiveness of preparedness information is traditionally considered essential, most researchers have studied this issue by focusing on either the preparedness or recovery phase of a disaster situation (Christensen and Ruch, 1978; Garner, 1997; Medsger, 1989; Quarantelli, 1989; Raphael, 1986). When studying the preparedness phase researchers have traditionally looked at the time period prior to a disaster occurring, whereas those studying the recovery phase have looked at time periods after a disaster has occurred. Research into these areas has found that the importance of the preparation phase lies in the fact that in order to prepare, the populace needs to know that there is a natural disaster coming. Thankfully, the media offers this function very efficiently, especially when compared to other outlets (Seydlitz, Williams, Laska, and Triche, 1990). During the recovery phase, it has been determined that the media provides information on the extent of the damage inflicted by the disaster and what resources are available to facilitate a quick recovery. During a long-term recovery phase the media raises disaster awareness and supports the affected communities in its recovery efforts. In addition, it has been determined through qualitative methods, such as interviews with those residing in the disaster zones that coverage of non-local disasters helps audiences prepare for future adverse events within their communities. It has also been established that this helps in the recovery efforts of communities dealing with the aftermath of a previous disaster (US Department of Health Education and Welfare, 1978; Quarantelli, 1996; Rodriguez, 1997; Cowan, 2002; & Garner, 1996). Therefore, nearly all of the existing research on the media to date focuses almost exclusively on the role of media as transmitters of preparedness and recovery information.

*Communication Theory and Newspaper Functions*

In communication theory research newspapers have been found to provide a multitude of functions beyond information provider. Many commonly used communications technologies have been found to have the ability to create community. They have been found to have a linkage and a social utility function for those who engage with them (Perez-Lugo, 2004; Quarantelli and Wenger, 1990). Thus newspapers, when in this role, are able to bring together people with similar interests and life experiences through their interactions. This would be particularly true in the case of a natural disaster where a great number of people would be experiencing the same event simultaneously (Dominick, 1996; Cerulo and Ruane, 1998; Cerulo, Ruane, and Chayko 1992). According to Cerulo and Ruane's (1998) piece in which they explore the theoretical implications of social relations; people living in a *Gesellschaft* community would find that news providers are able to foster feelings of *Gemeinschaft* relationships through eliminating the need for face-to-face interaction, as "technology dramatically enhances the ways in which people can connect, it facilitates the formation of relations across different types of groups and gatherings," which would be especially helpful during a disaster situation (Cerulo and Ruane, 1998, 421).

As many people can easily become socially isolated in today's modern society, news agencies now serve the function of provider of not only information but companionship for many. Dominick (1996) demonstrates this in his work in which he studies the dynamics of mass communication. He cites an example of this phenomenon when he noted that people surveyed often reported keeping the TV on to reduce feelings of anomie, or loneliness and isolation, from their communities when isolated. Thus, by providing these latent functions such as companionship news providers are able to serve a

social utility function by its latent use by reducing people's stress and anxiety levels by providing emotional support and companionship through a media form (Brown and Harris, 1978).

There are only a small number of studies that have addressed the latent functions of media in natural disasters. In Wilkins's (1985) study of a blizzard in Colorado he addresses the latent functions the media provide for its audience. In this study he attempted to ascertain what functions the media was providing for its audience through interviewing audience members and the content of the media and found that in the aftermath of a Colorado blizzard news providers were utilized not just as providers of official information but also as a community bulletin board; in this way allowing the community to communicate with each other despite the hazardous conditions caused by the weather. Another study that addressed media's latent functions was Massey's (1995) study of the Loma Prieta earthquake. This study revealed through interviews of those affected by the earthquake that the media once again not only served their traditional role as providers of information in the aftermath of a disaster, but also provided companionship for those recovering from this event. In Quarantelli and Wenger's (1990) cross-cultural study of media reporting of disasters they found when using interviews and surveys of those experiencing disaster situations that often times the media were utilized not just for mass communication, but as an elaborate mechanism for interpersonal communication (Quarantelli and Wenger, 1990).

Perhaps the most important study done to date, however, is Perez-Lugo's (2004) study of alternative uses of media during the impact phase of a hurricane in Puerto Rico. This study sought to gain a better understanding of the media-audience relationship

during natural disasters through interviewing members of eight communities impacted by Hurricane Georges and their interactions with various news forms during the preparedness, impact, and recovery phases of the disaster. This study found and confirms that news providers have latent functions, such as providers of companionship and feelings of cohesion, and it also added to the literature by showing how these latent functions are perceived by the audience during the impact phase of a natural disaster. When they interviewed those using various media forms they found that many people relied upon their news providers for emotional support and to help them form a feeling that their community would in fact recover during the impact phase of the disaster. With the impact phase being defined as the time period during which the natural disaster was actively occurring in the community. They found that the media-audience relationship was found to change during the different phases of a disaster, specifically of importance was that the need for latent functions provided by the media to the audience is most noticeable and strong during the impact phase of a disaster. Also of note is the fact that it was found that the media-audience interaction remained throughout the impact phase and it was found that alternative motivations for media use was strong during this time as the audience desired emotional support and feelings of community. Therefore, through the news provider's ability to provide individuals support and companionship they are able to help individuals cope with disasters as they are taking place. They are also able to generate feelings of social cohesion between isolated individuals in communities by allowing them to know how the disaster was similarly impacting other within their community, thus making them feel less isolated which makes this study an important guide for future research (Perez-Lugo, 2004).

Although these studies of the various functions news agencies serve are all important they are still limited in what they can tell us. Two of these studies, Massey's and Wilkins's, used qualitative approaches to analyze media during natural disaster situations that took place over a short period of time and were fairly easily and inexpensively recovered from, finding that the audience relies upon news providers for more than just information about disaster and recovery. Perez-Lugo's study looked at media functions during a hurricane impact phase, however it told us little about what the media said specifically that fostered feelings of social cohesion and community, and its methodology relied upon the survivor accounts of the media they had access to. This is limiting as it does not tell researchers what news providers are saying or doing specifically that aids in the formation of feelings of social cohesion and feelings of emotional support, just what people's reactions to news provider's output during the impact phase of a natural disaster were.

#### *Social Cohesion and Cultural Capital in Newspapers*

A great deal of research has been conducted that looks at the role of social cohesion and its impact on community sustainability and its impact on different populations quality of life. The research of McCracken defines social cohesion as a characteristic of society that deals with the connections and relations between social units, such as individuals, groups, and associations, as well as territorial units (McCracken, 1998; Berger-Schmitt, 2002). Nevertheless, this definition does not clearly define the distinct dimensions of social cohesion. Selected literature views the key aspects of this concept as a potential foundation for building up the strength of a community's social relations, networks, associations, instilling a sense of belonging to

the entire community. Belonging to the same community could then be characterized by its shared values, common identity, level of trust among members, equal opportunities, the extent of disparities, social cleavages, and social exclusion (Berger-Schmitt, 2002; Jenson, 1998; O'Connor, 1998; Woolley, 1998). According to certain theorists, social solidarity and cohesion are usually structured and maintained by the community's level of access to government and economic institutions, as well as the family and community-based relations that increase one's cultural capital. At this point, we will list the methods that previous studies have employed to measure social cohesion by sorting them into two broad categories: social exclusion and social or cultural capital (Berger-Schmitt, 2002; Duhaime, Searles, Usher, Myers, and Frechette, 2004; Heyneman, 2005; Jenson, 1998; O'Connor, 1998; Woolley, 1998).

The importance of a newspaper's role in the transmission of cultural capital is that it can reproduce and reinforce societal norms while distributing common information to heterogeneous groups across large spatial areas, thus increasing the community's cohesion. This role is especially significant because recent studies have noted a trend towards civic disengagement. According to Putnam (2000), news providers can create an area where communities bridge their differences and nurture community solidarity. By making the same information available to an entire community, information providers such as the newspaper industry enable common social experiences. Reeves and Nass (1997) argue that understanding how media works with people is enables one to comprehend things social. Reeves and Nass, who came to this conclusion after using surveys and interviews of participants to support their media equals real life equation, believe that people treat a newspaper as they would an interaction with another person,

allowing the newspaper to influence their beliefs and interactions with others. Consequently, Reeves and Nass propose that one should be able to foster a sense of community by reading a newspaper because a reader could treat the newspaper the same as they would when engaging with another person. In this sense, a news provider could substitute for an actual person, allowing residents to acquire social capital during the impact phase of a disaster. As a result, it is imperative to ask the following question. If the Times-Picayune is the mechanism, through which the isolated members of the New Orleans community compared their experiences to the experiences of others while acquiring information about their community, then what specific information did the newspaper articulate?

By measuring the extent to which the Times-Picayune disperses knowledge about the availability of activities and resources that infuse a strong sense of social inclusion and capital, I will be able to determine what alternative newspaper uses are being communicated during the impact phase of a natural disaster. These uses should strengthen one's feelings of social cohesion. In addition, this information will allow me to ascertain if it is important to study in detail the dispersion of social capital and its affect on the construction of one's feelings of social cohesion, which will be an important lesson for any sociologists that study disasters in the future.

#### *Disaster Research within Sociology*

Most early sociological research on disasters has its roots in collective behavior, symbolic interactionism, and the perspective of natural hazards. This is largely due to the influence of E.L. Quarantelli, who is the founding director of the Disaster Research Center (DRC) at Ohio State University in 1963, and Gilbert White, who founded the

Natural Hazards Center at the University of Colorado, which was funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF) in 1976. The perspectives of Quarantelli and White fundamentally influenced the early work of the centers they founded. In addition, they influenced other disaster sociologists with their focus on human and societal behavior and the adjustments made due to the occurrence of a natural disaster. Both of these centers employ multiple methods of data collection, but fieldwork methods were favored and this now serves as the historical basis for the explanation of why qualitative data collection methods are the norm within the field of disaster research. Early disaster research focused on the finding that extreme events enhance social cohesiveness, which is related to the appearance of strong altruistic tendencies within affected populations. Employing observational techniques, researchers found that affected populations are more generous and helpful to their neighbors during a disaster than they are during normal times (Barton, 1969; Dynes, 1970; Dynes and Quarantelli, 1971; Drabek, 1986).

Unfortunately, disaster research has spent many years focusing on empirical findings instead of the advancement of theory or the creation of a broader sociological knowledge base. This is primarily because the majority of disaster research studies, including theoretically based disaster research studies, are funded by the National Science Foundation (Tierney, 2007). In addition, it should be noted that disaster research is a small field that has not integrated well into mainstream sociology. According to a National Resource Council study published in 2006, sociologists and geographers account for dozens of the core group of disaster researchers. While the number of core disaster researchers from all social sciences combined is estimated to total approximately 200 researchers.

According to Tierney (2007), the study of disasters within sociology is at a crossroads. Although early studies within this field were founded on a sociological perspective, for the most part, current research focuses on the type of empirical questions that are useful to the government and disaster response teams, yet these questions no longer possess any theoretical base. Tierney calls on disaster scholars to realize that they must stop focusing their research around problems that have no meaningful contribution to the discipline, and charges disaster researchers to instead focus on questions that will add to current theory or risk becoming irrelevant within the broader discipline of sociology. Noting this call, we hope this study adds to the existing sociological literature by better identifying the types of social capital that are imparted to the populace by newspapers during the impact phase of a disaster, which thus has the potential to support the development of one's feelings of social cohesion with his or her community.

#### *Hurricane Katrina and New Orleans*

The physical reality of what happened during Hurricane Katrina is this; on August 29, 2005, a hurricane hit the southern coasts of Louisiana and Mississippi. Katrina was the third-strongest hurricane ever recorded to make landfall on the coast of the United States. When Katrina hit, it was a category three hurricane. In addition, Katrina was the deadliest hurricane to hit the United States since the Okeechobee hurricane in 1928. Katrina generated severe damage throughout the gulf coast region. When the levees that held back Lake Pontchartrain and several canals from the streets of New Orleans broke, eighty percent of the streets in New Orleans began to flood. The flood remained in the streets of New Orleans for weeks. Consequently, the impact phase of Hurricane Katrina was, for New Orleans, unorthodox in length as the resulting floodwaters were going to

last for weeks. The damaging waters that engulfed New Orleans began to receive national media attention before the storm even hit creating an abundance of information in the local media about all phases of this disaster. Hurricane Katrina proved unique in more ways than just the record length of its impact however. Katrina soon became the costliest hurricane on record, as it passed the record previous held by Hurricane Andrew, which made landfall in Florida during 1992. As of August 2006, hurricane Katrina was responsible for sixty billion in insured losses, while Hurricane Andrew was responsible twenty one billion in insured losses (NOAA). As a result, the uniqueness of Katrina is rather impressive, as it proved so devastating for the Gulf Coast region.

During the impact of Hurricane Katrina there were approximately 240 employees, and their relatives, who decided to ride out the hurricane at the Times-Picayune office in order to put out an online edition of the newspaper the next morning. Immediately after the storm as it became apparent that the levees of New Orleans had been compromised, the majority of the Picayune staff chose to evacuate to Baton Rouge. A skeleton crew of just sixteen staffers remained in the city of New Orleans. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2006), it is estimated that eventually one million residents of New Orleans and the surrounding communities were displaced. On August 30, September 1, and September 2<sup>nd</sup> online editions of the newspaper were available, but none were available in print. The traffic for the August 30<sup>th</sup> online edition of the Times-Picayune which normally receives 700,000 views per day increased to thirty million views per day. By the end of the first week editions were available both online and in print. Although most of New Orleans was flooded and the residents were dislocated to areas from as close as Baton Rouge to as far away as Houston, printed editions of the Times-Picayune were

trucked to shelters and distributed for free to residents located in such shelters (Public Broadcasting Service, 2006).

Due to these affects of Hurricane Katrina, researchers have the unique opportunity to study the content that can demonstrate potential latent functions of media communication during an unusually long impact phase that took place during the costliest hurricane in US history. This is significant because hurricanes are some of the most frequent and devastating natural disasters that occur in the continental US. Hurricanes potentially threaten both the Eastern and Gulf coasts of the United States as well as portions of the West coast. The United States' large coastal population is potentially at risk from these disasters for almost half of the calendar year. With an average yearly total of approximately six tropical cyclones reaching hurricane strength (Jarrell 2001) in the Atlantic each year, the study of media functions during the impact phase of a hurricane has implications for important future policy change because the frequency of the occurrence of these events is so high.

### *Research Questions*

The studies noted above have proved a useful place to begin a study of newspapers' uses beyond its basic role of information management and a provider of tools. However, these studies are limited in the breadth of their scope and a great deal of additional research needs to be completed. Although newspapers have been found to be disseminators of official information, just as the previously mentioned media outlets have, newspapers are used just as frequently. The role of newspapers as a media outlet providing latent functions has largely been ignored (Piotrowski, 1998). An additional area that is lacking in research is an example of exactly what newspapers print that helps

the victims of natural disasters cope through the fostering of social cohesion. Moreover, as noted in the Perez-Lugo (2004) study, there have been almost no studies completed that demonstrate the importance of the impact phase during communications research of natural disasters. This area of research needs to be addressed as soon as possible.

Due to the fact that hurricane Katrina created an impact phase that was much longer than any previously studied natural disaster, and this phase is expected to last longer than many future disasters, it could present the perfect setting to study whether or not the articles that might have alternative functions are present during the impact phase of a natural disaster. Thus, my objectives in this paper are twofold. Because natural disasters are a perfect context through which to study how newspapers function and only one other study of latent media functions during the impact phase of a hurricane has been conducted, I will analyze the content of newspaper articles in order to examine if articles were published during Katrina's impact phase of that could serve these social utility functions. Through the analysis of the selected newspaper articles I hope to add to the existing literature by finding specific examples of what the news providers articulated during the impact phase that could be used to foster a victim's feelings of emotional support and spark social cohesion in the members of a community as diverse as New Orleans and its surrounding parishes. In this way, we look forward to adding to the sparse communications literature that acknowledges these latent functions as well as demonstrating the importance of nurturing a community's cultural capital during the impact phase of a disaster.

### **Chapter 3 Methodology**

Analyzing which sources to study for the latent functions of newspapers during a disaster situation would not usually be easily decided upon. However after Hurricane Katrina, the fact that the local resident's of the New Orleans community's only readily available news source during the impact phase of Hurricane Katrina was the Times-Picayune newspaper made it the ideal source for this type of study of latent content. Nevertheless, the Times-Picayune was decided upon for many reasons beyond just its availability. First, during a good deal of Katrina's impact phase there was no electricity available for local residents and this meant that their access to electronic forms of communication was limited. However, the Times-Picayune was produced without interruption and it was made available both online, and in print, from September first onward, despite the flooding of the Times-Picayune's New Orleans headquarters (Public Broadcasting Service, 2006).

What is more of note in studying latent functions is the fact that newspapers have "been described as a more accurate source of news information as compared to television media (Glynn et al., 1999; Collins, Abelson, Pyman, Lavis, 2006). A 2001 Ford Foundation Survey found that Americans reported that they like and believe the information found in their local newspapers more than they did in previous decades and they specifically trust its content more than the television news (Stepp, 2001; Claussen, 2004). This is a refreshing trend because the majority of American's are unaware that for the most part other forms of media are fed their content directly from newspapers or wire services, which are supplied by newspapers' research (Presstime Survey, 2002).

Traditionally, when talking about the news, there is a great deal of focus in America on

the digital divide since it has been found that the most affluent and the young are the most likely to adopt new technological forms in order to obtain their information. In the scenario created by this study, not only would most people, whether they are affluent or not, not have straightforward access to electricity, we know that nearly all coverage aimed at local audiences regardless of the outlet is provided by local newspaper sources anyway. Therefore, regardless of which news outlet is preferred by those affected, the majority would get their news from newspapers. If the victims remain in the local community during the impact phase, America's digital divide would not apply to the extent it normally would. Because the Times-Picayune was the newspaper located closest to the devastation of Katrina's impact phase, it was the primary source of information for nearly every media form that the populace could get their news from. Accordingly, the knowledge that people find newspapers to be a trustworthy source of information as well as the fact that the majority of New Orleans residents had access to the paper despite their level of technological proficiency or their ability to access to electricity, we decided that a content analysis of what the local newspaper publishing would be the best method of studying the latent functions of newspapers during Hurricane Katrina's impact phase.

For this study, the newspaper articles we analyzed were articles found in the New Orleans Times-Picayune newspaper and obtained through the Lexis-Nexis database. Newspaper articles found in the Lexis-Nexis database are an easily accessible and reliable source of information that is readily available to researchers. Researchers commonly use the Lexis-Nexis database when performing content analyses (Altheide and Michalowski, 1999; Calloway, Jorgensen, Saralya, Tsui, 2006; Deacon, 2007; Kerr and Moy, 2002).

Of the articles in the Lexis-Nexis database that were available for analysis, this study chose only those articles that were published between the dates of August 29, 2005 and September 30, 2005. These articles were used because Hurricane Katrina made landfall on August 29, 2005 and the residents of New Orleans were not allowed to return to their city full-time until September 30, 2005 because of the flooding caused by the storm and its lengthy cleanup phase. Thus, these dates are relevant because they are viewed as representative of the impact phase of this disaster event. As such, only the articles found within this time-frame serve our interests because they are the only articles that provide us with information about the media's output during the impact phase.

Additional criteria for inclusion in the analysis required that each article that met the first inclusion criterion also contained the words "Katrina" and "New Orleans." This criterion was a necessary inclusion because there are numerous articles published in the Times-Picayune each day, some of which were not necessarily about New Orleans or Hurricane Katrina. As a result, by requiring these words to be present we can assume that the selected articles content is suitable for inclusion in this project. Our search parameters found 1,232 articles that were suitable for this study.

### *Research Procedures*

To analyze these newspaper articles we employed a content analytic approach to looking for latent functions of newspaper usage. A content analysis is commonly defined as a detailed and systematic examination of the contents of a body of material for the purpose of identifying patterns, themes, or biases (Dowler, 2006). We will focus here on written communication. At the outset of this analysis, the articles selected from those published in the Times-Picayune between the dates of August 29, 2005 and September

30, 2005 were analyzed for instances of articles that encouraged rebuilding the community, local involvement, and other efforts expected to foster social cohesion versus routine discussions of the issues. Specifically, the article coding focused on articles that acknowledged the rebuilding or renovation of houses in the area as either possible or occurring, articles that contained news of access to transportation for local residents, articles that reported the occurrence of media, recreational, and cultural events in the area, articles that contained information about the access and availability of education for local residents, articles that reported access to employment, the availability of insurance coverage, or benefits, articles that provided stories of positive relations between colleagues who are employed at the same place of business, articles that related stories of people who planned on staying in New Orleans, articles that discussed the availability of support or volunteer opportunities at local religious or secular service organizations, articles that provided information regarding the proper functioning of the government and its related services, as well as articles that encouraged feelings of social cohesion and community rebuilding. These categories were chosen because they have face validity as being central to the social cohesion effort because they have been used as indicators and measurements of social cohesion in previous research (Berger-Schmitt, 2002; Heyneman, 2005). The uncertainty of determining what information would aid in the formation of social cohesion established that it was next necessary to operationalize the various variables that serve as possible measures of social cohesion. The task of finding out if they in fact service to aid in this had to be left to future researchers.

After the coding of the articles was completed the author chose to randomly select articles that were found to have a measure of social capital in them, as defined above, for

inclusion in a brief qualitative review of what type of content was found during the research. The author felt that it would be best to use a quota sample approach. The articles were first chosen at random so that there could be some measure of generalizability to the rest of the sample found to contain such a measure, but they were then screened to ensure that quotes were chosen from articles that fell into each analytical category defined so that they could all be elaborated on in the brief qualitative review.

### Measures of Social Cohesion

#### *The Rebuilding of Homes or Businesses*

This category was recorded when an article noted the current state of local rebuilding and renovation projects of homes or businesses. In addition, we noted when an article described a resident who planned on returning to the area in order to rebuild, a business reopening, or the restoration of a non-governmental business service. We made the decision to use the presence of information about the rebuilding or renovation of homes because the availability of homes, whether for rent or for sale, binds people to the community they live in both monetarily and spatially. In addition, many family relations take place inside their homes so the rebuilding and renovation efforts put forth necessarily aids in those relations, as they are essential for people who want to return to their community. Therefore, the knowledge that various members of one's community are making efforts to rebuild or renovate their homes and places of work, should increase one's cultural capital in that it allows the members of the local community to feel connected and informed about their neighbors and neighborhoods (Raphael, Renwick, Brown, Steinmetz, Sehdev, and Phillips, 2001). Similarly, businesses that were planning

to rebuild or re-open were also noted because these are locations where interactions with one's fellow community members could take place.

#### *Access to transportation*

The availability of transportation was documented when an instance was noted where an article mentioned the availability or current status of every form of public or private transportation, or transportation being used to take people out of harms way. This was included because social solidarity and cohesion is aided by the availability of government institutions such as public transportation (Duhaime, Searles, Usher, Myers, and Freschette, 2004), while the availability of personal transportation offers residents the opportunity to interact with the members of their community who do not live in the immediate vicinity. These interactions serve the purpose of strengthening the existing social networks. Consequently, public knowledge of transportation issues during the impact phase of a disaster situation allows each member of the community the opportunity to feel that he or she possesses the social capital required to make informed transportation decisions and this, in turn, strengthens the community's feelings of cohesion (Raphael, Renwick, Brown, Steinmetz, Sehdev, and Phillips, 2001).

#### *Media, Recreational, and Cultural Facilities or Events*

This category was documented when an article referenced any type of media event being held within the greater New Orleans area, when one of Louisiana's major sports teams was referenced as being active again, or when recreational and cultural facilities or events were announced as open or opening in the near future. This includes

events, such as a local sports team playing at home or a museum once again opening its doors. This category was created because the knowledge of these facilities and events is a form of social capital, while attending such an event would likely increase one's feelings of social cohesion by fostering a sense of belonging to the community and strengthening social networks (Berger-Schmitt, 2002; Jenson, 1998; O'Connor, 1998; Woolley, 1998).

### *Education*

The availability of education was recorded when the newspaper published information regarding the opening of a school at any level, the renovation of a school, or any school activity within the community. This measure was included because a community's members must be informed about local education issues in order to know when to return to school themselves or when to send their children back to school. Another important piece of knowledge is the location where the school-age members of the community should attend school because disaster situations often affect the availability of classrooms. This is critically important because public education has been found to increase social cohesion and reduce the fragmentation of members within a community (Gradstein and Justman, 2002; Heyneman, 2005; Levin, 2001).

### *Employment, Positive workplace relations*

This category was documented when an article noted an increase in access to employment, employment opportunities, people returning to their jobs, and positive workplace relations. This category was included because according to research, interactions with economic institutions positively affect one's feelings of social solidarity and employment positively affects the local economy (Duhaime, Searles, Usher, Myers,

and Freschette, 2004; Turok and Bailey, 2004). Furthermore, positive relations with one's co-workers and the availability of employment are important because they allow one to feel a sense of a common identity and celebrate the availability of equal opportunities for the members of one's community (Berger-Schmitt, 2002; Jenson, 1998; O'Connor, 1998; Woolley, 1998).

### *Insurance*

Anytime insurance was mentioned in an article, it was documented. It was noted because the availability of information regarding the various insurance providers was an important form of social capital that could have aided victims of the hurricane in rebuilding their lives and communities. It was previously noted that access to economic institutions is vital to one's feelings of social cohesion (Duhaime, Searles, Usher, Myers, and Freschette, 2004; Turok and Bailey, 2004).

### *Volunteer Opportunities and Non-Governmental Support*

Articles that noted volunteer opportunities or non-governmental support in and around New Orleans were included in our analysis. Volunteer opportunities were included because they allow the members of a community to feel connected to their fellow volunteers as well as those they are helping, which builds feelings of social cohesion (Stanley, 2003). Research has also suggested that a sense of community is a predictor of volunteering among both young adults and older adults. Based upon this we can conclude that the newspaper articles are reporting that New Orleans' residents are still invested in their communities, which is demonstrated by their desire to aid it in crisis (Omoto, Snyder & Martino, 2000). In turn, this should increase the social capital of the newspaper's readers and encourage others to do the same, which should further

encourage people to become connected and interact with their fellow community members. The availability of non-governmental support was included because such support allows the residents of a community to feel increasingly connected to their fellow community members by interacting with other community members. In addition, it is important to note the fact that the availability of information regarding these opportunities and events is a form of social capital for those newspaper readers who are able to engage in, or benefit from, such activities.

#### *Government Services*

All articles that mentioned the status or availability of various government services and facilities for both citizens and businesses in New Orleans were documented. This category was included because government services are an important part of the everyday lives of many individuals and it has been documented that their availability facilitates feelings of social cohesion and solidarity.

#### Coding Procedures

Once the above indicators of social cohesion were established, one coder then began work on this project. After the coder became familiar with the established codes and their inclusion criteria, the coder systematically searched the articles in the Times-Picayune for each category. Using a simple scale of “Present” or “Not Present” for each category the researcher noted the presence or lack thereof for every category used as an indicator of the fostering of social cohesion in all articles included in the search. The articles that were then found to contain one or more of these measures of social cohesion

was placed into the broad category of an article that contains latent functions that fostered feelings of social cohesion during the impact phase of a natural disaster. Next, the number of articles that were coded as containing elements that indicated a latent function through the finding of one or more of the above measures will be compared to the original number of articles in our sample, or 1,232, in order to ascertain the percentage of articles that contain these latent functions. After this process was completed, an independent coder was then chosen to code a small random sample of the previously coded articles. By employing the same methodology, the reliability of our results could be ascertained. If the results of the secondary researcher's coding concluded that a similar percentage of the articles contained the alternative functions of the media, then the primary researcher felt that it would be safe to draw the conclusion that the results of the first, larger content analysis are valid.

After the analysis of all the articles is completed, the results of this research will then be discussed in a brief qualitative analysis that will perform a closer examination of what is specifically said that could foster feelings of social cohesion and, thus, what specifically the Times-Picayune published that proves or disproves the hypothesis that a newspaper might serve as a latent source of social support during the impact phase of a natural disaster through the disseminating social capital. The articles that are specifically analyzed in this section will include examples from every measure used as an indicator of the fostering of social cohesion. This discussion should then serve as an example for future researchers of what types of information, when published in a newspaper, could serve these latent functions and need to be studied. The implications for future research

into the role of newspapers during the impact phase of a natural disaster will then be further discussed.

## **Chapter 4 Findings**

As predicted, the findings of this research demonstrated that many of the published articles could have fostered feelings of social cohesion within the residents of New Orleans and its surrounding communities. The research found that although 76.3% of the articles contained no measure of social capital, 23.7% of those articles examined did have at least one relevant measure of social capital. The research found that 15.7% of the articles sampled that did contained an item related the dispersion of social capital noted the rebuilding or the return of people to their homes or places of business, 3.5% of the articles mentioned access to and the availability of transportation, 18.3% of the articles noted media, recreational, and cultural events or facilities that were or soon would be functioning in the community in the near future, 8.8% of the articles related information on the status of the region's educational facilities, 7.2% of the articles noted employment, 3.1% of the articles mentioned insurance issues, 12.6% of the articles provided information about volunteer opportunities or non-governmental support in the area, and 23.4% of the articles noted the status of government services and their functioning in the area. Moreover, when the second coder's data was compared to the results generated by the initial coder, no statistically significant difference in the findings was detected.

Of the articles analyzed that contained a measure that would aid in the formation of social cohesion many just noted one factor that was being looked for. However, many contained multiple measures. What follows is a brief synopsis of the measures of social capital that were found and the frequencies which they were found alone or with another

item that was being looked for that could aid in the formation of social cohesion. Of the articles found that contained content that noted the returning of people to their homes and places of business 41% of them noted only this topic and none of the other measures of social capital that the research methodology was looking for. However, 28% also contained government support as a topic within the same article, 23% noted transportation, 16% noted volunteer opportunities, 12% noted media or cultural activities, 8% mentioned education, 7% mentioned employment, and 2% noted insurance within the same article. Of the articles found that contained transportation as a topic, 38% of them only noted transportation. However 19% of the articles surveyed that noted transportation also noted the returning of people to their homes or businesses, 15% noted it in combination with government support, 14% noted it in combination with employment, 8% noted it in combination with insurance, 5% noted it in combination with volunteer opportunities or non-governmental support, and 15% noted it in combination with government support. Of the articles that analyzed that noted media, 55% of them only contained media or other cultural events in its content with no other topics found. However 21% of those found that contained media also contained the returning of people to their homes or places of business, 18% of them contained media and employment, 13% of them contained media and government support, 9% of them contained the topics of media and volunteer opportunities or non-governmental support, 4% contained education, 2% contained insurance, and 2% contained transportation. Of the articles analyzed that contained education, only 15% of them only mentioned education and no other measure of social capital that this study was looking for. But 60% of them also noted employment, 35% of them contained government support, 12% contained

transportation, 3% contained volunteer opportunities or non-governmental support, 3% mentioned media, and less than one percent noted insurance. Of those articles that contained employment, 21% of them only contained employment. However 35% of them contained employment and the return of people, 24% contain employment and government services, 15% contain transportation, 12% contain education, 6% contain media, 5% contain volunteer opportunities and non-governmental support, and 3% contain volunteer opportunities. Of the articles found that noted insurance, 62% of them mentioned insurance issues and nothing else. However of those that contained multiple measures 32% also contained government support, 20% also mentioned the return of people to homes or businesses, 14% volunteer opportunities or non-governmental support, 8% transportation, 2% employment, 1% media, and less than one percent education. Of those articles that were found to contain a measure noting volunteer opportunities or non-governmental support 42% of them only contained this item. However 26% of them also contained the return of people to their homes or businesses, 23% also noted governmental support, 12% noted media, 10% noted transportation, 8% noted education, 4% also noted employment, and less than 1% also noted insurance. Finally, of the articles analyzed that were found to contain a mention of government support, 68% of them only contained this measure. However there were still many articles that noted government that contained additional measures of social capital. Approximately 32% also mentioned the returning of people to their homes or businesses, 22% noted volunteer opportunities or non-governmental support, 18% noted education, 15% noted transportation, 12% noted employment, 9% noted media, and 5% noted insurance.

These results demonstrate that during the impact phase of Hurricane Katrina the newspaper provided crucial information that could aid in the formation of feelings of social cohesion. Also of importance is that these results illustrate what types of social capital were written about with the greatest frequency. When studying these results, it becomes obvious that the newspaper's primary purpose is the distribution of information because a clear majority of the articles sampled did not contain a specific measure that is likely to help resident readers building feelings of social cohesion with the community they reside in. However, it is more important to note that the results confirm that the themes of people returning to their homes and businesses, the resumption of social events, and the importance of the government's support were prevalent in the newspaper's content. Therefore, these findings support my thesis that the Times-Picayune newspaper contained articles that could serve the latent purpose of providing information that would aid in the formation of feelings of social cohesion in the community's members during the impact phase of Hurricane Katrina. Consequently, these findings are important because they validate the rationale behind studying this often-unstudied use of media and elucidate the fact that additional research should be conducted on this subject, especially audience members reactions to it.

Within the text of the newspaper articles, many prime examples of how these articles can serve the latent function of fostering social cohesion can be found.

#### *The Rebuilding of Homes or Businesses*

One type of social capital that was commonly found was articles that mentioned people returning to their homes or places of business despite the obstacles caused by Katrina and its resulting devastation of the area. This is perhaps the most important type

of social capital that was found and analyzed in this study because it is the one that most strongly states that residents of New Orleans and its surrounding communities were persevering. By noting that people have survived this disaster and are coming back to rebuilding their homes, open up their businesses, and start over these articles have a lot of potential for motivating other residents who are unsure of their ability to persevere. For example, one article noting community rebuilding quoted a local business owner who stated, "I've been in business for a year and four months, and we thought about closing after this," Coulon said, pausing and looking out at her shop. "But you can't just do that." (Langenhennig, 2005). This business owner's strong belief in staying in the area should generate positive feelings in those community members who missed their normal social interactions with their fellow community members during the hurricane's impact phase, or who perhaps questioned if people would return. It is possible that as community members gained the knowledge that local businesses will in fact be reopening and that life in New Orleans will regain a semblance of normalcy in the near future from reading this reference, that they could feel a new cohesion within their community as they come to understand that the hurricane did not destroy it.

Other examples of the latent function of the newspaper encouraging cohesion by noting the community's commitment to return, rebuild, and open for business where applicable include:

I've never even thought about the alternative of rebuilding," he said. "I've seen places like Pensacola and Destin devastated by hurricanes, and a few years later they were back" (Darce, 2005a).

She lost the roof and had some flooding of her business, Pepe's Mexican Restaurant. However, in baking sun, roofers toiled Thursday. "My first anniversary of business will be Oct. 12, and I am doing everything possible to

celebrate that anniversary by reopening, give the message that life in New Orleans will return to normal” (Boyd, 2005).

When I rebuild this house, I’m going to put it on stilts just like Grand Isle. It’s going to be the silliest looking thing out here. We will rebuild. (Krupa, 2005).

Asked whether he intended to rebuild his house and his family’s nearby seafood market, Rodriguez replied, “Oh yeah, they got to” (Krupa, 2005).

Articles that contained messages such as these demonstrate a commitment by members of the community to return and rebuild. These messages conveyed are especially potent because it is expressed in 15.7% of the articles surveyed; and thus many reading the paper at this time had the opportunity to be influenced by these messages.

In addition to providing information about returning, some articles clearly exhibited the distribution of cultural capital that is relevant for anyone who planned on staying in the area.

Michael Lanaux said the grocery store won’t be open for another 10 to 14 days. “I think a lot of businesses will see things get back to normal close to the Christmas holidays, he said” (MacCash, 2005).

West Jefferson Medical Center is open, and physicians are rescheduling surgeries that were cancelled during and after Hurricane **Katrina**. The West Jefferson Fitness Center in Marrero plans to open for the public Oct. 3. The fitness center at Oakwood sustained damage and will reopen after the building is repaired (West Bank Bureau, 2005).

Jamie Law, owner of Sunshine Garden Health Food store in downtown Covington, kept the organic grocery open to anyone who didn't mind her doing a bit of cleaning on the side. When she returned to her store, which had roof damage from a fallen tree, she remembered feeling despair. "It's a surreal experience. In the beginning we just thought, 'Oh my God, this might just do us in,'" Law said. "We're hoping that we can light the phoenix, rise from the ashes and create a greater community" (Gordon, 2005).

When the storeowner gives a timeline in which customers can expect regular interactions to take place again, local citizens who read this are given a form of cultural capital that has the potential to help them survive the impact phase of this disaster and allow them to feel knowledgeable about what is happening in their community.

Other examples that illustrate the residents of New Orleans' enthusiasm to return to their homes and rebuild their community are found throughout articles containing information such as this:

I'm definitely going to rebuild," he said. "That's where my wife lived. It's got sentimental value (Hamilton, 2005, 260).

I'll be back," Iglesias said. "Oh yeah, we'll come back. My wife's family's been in New Orleans for 150 years. I'm an optimist," he said. "It's going to be just fine" (Staff Reports, 2005).

By providing this capital to the members of New Orleans' communities that read the newspaper, the newspaper has potential to have various latent functions. By providing cultural capital that explicitly states that former residents and business owners plan on returning and resuming their normal routines, this newspaper could potentially have helped residents cope with the Katrina disaster by providing them an ability to maintain a sense of connectedness within their communities despite the lack of the traditional means which members of this extremely diverse community were accustomed to interacting through.

#### *Access to Transportation*

Another type of capital that was disseminated in these articles was information about various forms of transportation. As the knowledge that transportation will be available is important in order for people to know that normalcy will be returning to their

lives, information about it being available for consumption by readers of the Times-Picayune, and those they care about who might need it in the vicinity, is important too.

Some of the types of information that the Picayune wrote on were accounts of families who were saved by transportation that was not their own.

One by one, Gibson and her husband walked the children downstairs, through the knee-deep water and into the boat. "I told mama the police were gonna save us," 7-year-old Artenia said. (Perlstein, 2005)

This type of information could potentially be used as capital that could aid in the development of feelings of cohesion because if people were having doubts about whether or not transportation was available to help save their loved ones who were victims of the massive flooding of the area, this type of information would have put their minds at ease. Alternatively, knowing that people who were safe were going to have transportation provided to them could have also put many people's minds at ease through knowing that normalcy would be returning soon because reunions with friends and family members might be imminent in the future because of transportations availability.

State Sen. Cleo Fields, D-Baton Rouge, said members of the caucus planned to use private donated buses and other vehicles to pick up about 5,000 people left along Interstate 10 in New Orleans and transport them to the base Saturday afternoon and evening (Ritea, 2005)

A group of rail and mass transit organizations hopes to begin twice-daily rail service between Baton Rouge and **New Orleans**. The proposal, which involves asking the Federal Emergency Management Agency to subsidize the service to the tune of at least \$25 million over three years, is intended to allow **New Orleans** residents who have relocated to Baton Rouge to get back to work, as well as ease gridlock on Interstate 10, said Cleo Allen, a spokeswoman for the state Department of Transportation and Development (Scallan, 2005).

The above content is demonstrative of the fact that there was a great deal of information being disseminated through the Times-Picayune about the availability of transportation and the specifics of obtaining it during the impact phase of Hurricane

Katrina. This type of information one can assume would give the populace of New Orleans, and its surrounding communities, some relief through the knowledge that help in terms of transportation was available or forthcoming. This knowledge was likely vital for those community members who were experiencing great amounts of stress due to the worry about the lack of access to transportation for those they cared about. So in conclusion, the information written about transportation in the Times-Picayune was an important type of social capital that needed to be studied when looking at the content of the media during the impact phase of Hurricane Katrina. Based upon the findings of what was written about it, it is likely that it could have been used by community members to find comfort during this traumatic period of their lives as it fulfilled the requirements of something that could be used for this. Although its specific uses by people at the time is not something that this study deals with, its' possible uses are numerous as mentioned above.

#### *Media, Recreational, and Cultural Facilities or Events*

Especially of note concerning the fostering New Orleans' unique sense of community is the prevalence of measures about the return or the expected return of the media, recreational activities, cultural events, and the facilities they require. This illustrates that the newspaper was, in fact, increasing community members cultural capital and thus the content gave readers the opportunity to use the information as an indicator that their communities would soon be functioning normally again. For example, as New Orleans is known as a place where a rich and eclectic mix of artists and musicians reside by informing residents that receptions are scheduled and occurring in the art community readers learn that normalcy is returning.

Hand-made flyers distributed in the French Quarter announced the “Toxic Art” display in the 4100 block of St. Claude Avenue, with a reception scheduled for Monday afternoon. The National Guard checkpoint at St. Claude and Elysian Fields no doubt contributed to the low attendance at that outdoor opening, but artist Jeffrey Holmes felt the exhibit was a worthy endeavor nonetheless. (MacCash, 2005).

There is no doubt that the content in the newspapers could have encouraged members of the community to feel connected to a culture that was still alive and well, even during the impact phase of Hurricane Katrina. Another example of how the local newspapers were encouraging a return to normalcy is demonstrated by their announcements about the resumption of athletic events and the local athletes who are participating in these events.

Just as he pulls on his uniform for every practice and game -- 39 consecutively -- Whitworth has faced his pain head on. Like many Tigers, he volunteered last week, visiting with evacuees, playing with their children and packing an 18-wheeler full of supplies. With a game looming this week, he feels extremely partial to carrying the banner for the state and its people (Kleinpeter, 2005b).

It was more than two weeks ago that Blenk senior Courtney Schultheis, her twin sister Judy, and the rest of her family fled Hurricane Katrina for her grandmother's residence near Beaumont, Texas...But, Courtney Schultheis, one of the area's top female cross country competitors, said she was ready to be back home, running for Blenk. Her wish came true Tuesday when Blenk, which is scheduled to resume classes Oct. 3, held its first cross country practice since Katrina hit. Schultheis expects her family to return home by the end of the month and is eager to run in a meet again with her Blenk teammates (Huff, 2005,).

By providing information such as this, the newspaper alerts members of the New Orleans community, both young and old, that regular recreational events are returning to the area for the enjoyment of the masses. Another latent service of the newspaper was to provide community members with information about when their recreational and educational facilities would be re-opening. This news has a lot of potential to help them with their return to normalcy because these types of services have been found to build social cohesion within one's community.

LSU officials are confident that all seats in Tiger Stadium's renovated west upper deck will be available for the Sept. 24 game with Tennessee despite construction delays caused by Hurricane Katrina (Kleinpeter, 2005a).

In conclusion the Times-Picayune newspaper reported extensively on the status of media and

cultural activities during the impact phase of Hurricane Katrina. From writing about how popular athletes were doing, to when stadium would be reopening, to how art shows are being advertized post-Katrina this information was being distributed during the impact phase of Katrina. This has serious implications for how residents could use this information to feel like their communities were returning to normal and would again thrive. This is especially of importance in New Orleans as it was known for its rich culture in terms of media and cultural activities. Therefore, the abundance of these articles that demonstrate that cultural activities and events were returning to normal levels is important.

### *Education*

When examining the articles in the Times-Picayune there were many examples present in which the newspaper reported on educational activities in the area. Most of the articles that were found that mentioned education would be of great use to those were being affected by the storm and its resulting flooding. Many times articles would be very matter of the fact about how long students should expect to stay out of school as a result of the storm:

Students likely will not be able to attend public school in Orleans or St. Bernard parishes for the rest of the school year, state schools Superintendent Cecil Picard said Tuesday (Maggi, 2005).

Attention students returning to Jefferson Parish public schools: Get ready to change your alarm clocks. In its last emergency meeting before the reopening of schools on

Monday, the School Board approved a revised calendar Thursday that adds one hour to the daily schedule, beginning Oct. 10. The additional hour will make up for lost instructional time since Hurricane Katrina shuttered the system more than a month ago. (Nelson, 2005)

Other articles that were informative about education wrote about what those who worked within the school system were going through and could expect as a result of the storm and its aftermath's affects on operations. Some examples, however, did include good news:

Employees of the St. Johns Baptist Parish Public Schools system received a \$750 check on top of their regular pay this month, just in time to help defray costs associated with Hurricane Katrina (Williams, 2005)

Other educational news included news about how even good news within the New Orleans school system, something of a novelty for those within this area, was not received in a typical fashion during the impact phase of the storm:

In normal times, news of a school winning a Blue Ribbon award from the U.S. Department of Education would set off a celebration. Instead, when the federal government announced last week that St. Clement of Rome in Metairie was one of four **New Orleans** area schools to receive the 2005 honor, Principal Susan Perry was the only person around, and the scene was far from normal. "I happened to be at the school and the phone rang, and it was the Department of Education," she said Thursday. "Here I am alone at St. Clement, and I can't even tell anybody." (Waller, 2005)

The impact of all of these articles written on education in New Orleans and the surrounding communities could be very important for those trying to find something that will help them understand that their life would be returning to normal eventually during the impact phase of this terrible storm. Those with children, or who work in the school system, or who go to school themselves would all need information regarding the storms impact on their particular educational institutions as this would likely impact how they

make their plans for future activities; especially for those who planned on returning to their communities.

#### *Employment, Positive workplace relations*

In the Times-Picayune there were also many articles found that mentioned that employment was going to be made available for those who needed it in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. Some of these articles noted that businesses were reopening and normal operations would be resuming either immediately, or within a short time; while others would note that you could come to see them if you needed to because they were again operating normally.

The promise - guaranteed jobs and free apartments for up to six months - was made by Ed Blinn, a Marion, Ind., businessman who owns three used car lots and almost 100 apartments. "I don't know if any of them will (want to return)," he said. "But if they do, I'll help them get back. We're friends now." (Bartels, 2005a).

West Jefferson Medical Center is open, and physicians are rescheduling surgeries that were cancelled during and after Hurricane Katrina (West Bank Bureau, 2005)

The impact of these types of articles, which discuss businesses opening and looking to help workers, could have been tremendous for those people who might have been in limbo regarding what they were going to do after the impact phase of the hurricane was over. For those people who needed jobs, or specific vital services, the impact of knowledge regarding the availability of these services could have proved vital in their decision making when deciding whether or not to stay in New Orleans or to leave it for another city with more plentiful employment or services.

#### *Insurance*

There were some articles written during the impact phase of Hurricane Katrina that dealt with informing the readership about insurance payments and other changes to

insurance that was going to be sent to those who were victims of Hurricane Katrina.

Although this area was the one which had the fewest number of articles found, it is still extremely important as information about insurance could have been a vital factor for many people as they planned out how to rebuilding their lives, businesses, and communities in Katrina's aftermath. An example of an article that spoke to insurance issues follows:

State Farm customers angry over change; Company now applying deductible to checks.

Previously, the company was willing to relax its rules for living expenses, which means State Farm did not apply its standard deductible to the \$2,500 checks it sent to about 90,000 policyholders in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida. Customers were also told that they didn't have to provide receipts or return any unspent cash as long as they don't seek any additional money from the company for Katrina-related expenses (Meitrodt, 2005)

An article such as this would have been very important to those people who were expecting money from the State Farm insurance company as news of a sudden unexpected deductible could have been very upsetting for those in lower socio-economic groups who were struggling to survive financially as Katrina strained the resources of many even with ample financial savings. Thus the importance of up to date information regarding insurance companies reimbursement policies would have been very important for many people. Articles on insurance such as this are also very important to note as their presence has been linked to feelings of cohesion by community members as access to resources, especially institutional and financial resources, is a vital part of financial planning in the twenty-first century. So the presence of such articles is important to note and look at in the future as they are present during the impact phase news coverage and have the potential to affect those who read its feelings of cohesion.

*Volunteer Opportunities and Non-governmental support*

The importance of the volunteer activities and services available was another category that was found to be extremely important during the review of this study's results. As the presence of volunteer opportunities and services available indicate that certain members of the New Orleans community were likely already experiencing feelings of increased connectedness within it through their involvement in these services; it is also likely that the reporting on this would foster feelings of cohesion in those members of the community who were not currently active in those efforts just through the knowledge that they were available or that even an average survivor of the storm could help.

Roach feel better too. "It makes me feel so good that I can do that for people," she said. "Like when God calmed the sea, that I can give somebody peace," she said (Thevenot, 2005).

When the newspaper told stories such as Mrs. Roach's, who sang to help people relax and calm their nerves at the convention center, the readers learned that even the average person could help others during this tumultuous time. Articles such as this had the potential to demonstrate to people that even small contributions to the community are meaningful in that they help others cope with the stress generated by the storm and make all parties involved feel more connected to New Orleans and the surrounding communities. This would have been a vitally important message to storm survivors who might have been feeling isolated and who didn't know how to get involved within their community or how to feel connected to it again during Katrina's long impact phase. Another way in which this area is important is that it possibly helped people in need of services normally provided by the community acquire information about the availability of these services. Armed with knowledge like this:

As part of a FEMA-run initiative dubbed “Operation Lifeline Depot,” 10 sites throughout Jefferson Parish are being used as makeshift hospitals where residents can receive free, walk-in medical service, including vaccinations, drug refills and care for minor injuries. The depots have been running for about two weeks and might end sometime next week as local hospitals come back on line, officials said (Rioux, 2005).

Resident’s could have felt empowered by the realization that if they are in need of services, they can go to this operation at this location to receive them. The significance of knowing where to go for information and helpful services of this nature was likely not only a valuable form of social capital, it had the potential to help returning residents of New Orleans feel like normalcy was returning to their community. Some further examples of articles about volunteer opportunities and services available that were circulated include:

For Christen and his four friends at the Marrero apartment building, the mood appears to swing according to the contents of the coolers on which they prop their feet. When they’ve got ice - and their beers, sodas and waters are cold - the friends are all smiles and laughs. When the ice runs out, they are glum and depressed. Over the weekend, they hit the jackpot: six bags, 10 pounds each. It was from a relief group that set up shop at a decrepit shopping center on Ames Boulevard for a few hours (Brown, 2005).

A disaster like Hurricane **Katrina** leaves everyone from large families to single students, children to seniors, out of sorts and feeling helpless. But in a community like Mandeville, there are places to go for help, even when those providing that help are feeling the same way themselves. "All of our programs are up and running, and things are going very well considering the magnitude of what we are facing," said Sharon Dry, director of the Volunteers of America's north shore office. "I just want to get back into my office with my copy machine, telephone and toll-free number. Not having the use of my office is our biggest challenge right now" (Krieger, 2005).

In sum, articles such as this had tremendous potential to help members of New Orleans and the surrounding communities feel connected to each other again. Information on where people could go to receive aid if they needed it, or to volunteer if they felt so compelled to help, would be useful for those suffering during the impact

phase and needing some form of physical assistance or information. It would be little wonder if future studies analyzing both content and audience reactions found that access to this type of information aided survivors feelings of cohesion with their communities as articles such as this offered a lot of hope to community members that their situations would improve.

### *Government Services*

Information on government services was abundant when the articles found in the Times-Picayune were analyzed. Articles on government services mentioned the status and functioning of just about every type of government service available as the proper functioning of the government, from elections to mail delivery, was vitally important knowledge for those being affected during the impact phase of the storm.

New Orleans will not hold any citywide conventions until the end of March at the earliest because of damage to the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center, the building that is considered the engine of the New Orleans tourism industry (Mowbray, 2005).

The letter carriers' credo that "neither rain nor sleet" nor assorted other inclement conditions will keep them from delivering the mail never envisioned Hurricane **Katrina**. Although the U.S. Postal Service resumed irregular delivery almost three weeks ago in much of St. Tammany Parish, residents accustomed to boxes stuffed with bills, credit card offers, letters and magazines five or six days a week were disappointed. Many magazines also have temporarily suspended delivery to the **New Orleans** area (Bartels, 2005b).

Information such as this would have helped those who were making plans that were dependent upon the proper functioning of government services. If someone worked in the tourist industry and found out that the convention center was going to be closed for months that could easily have impacted their plans for what section of New Orleans they were going to return to, if at all. Just as easily, if you needed the proper functioning of

the mail to sustain your financial situation, one might easily choose that they best way to adapt to the storm's damage would be to stay in an area which had regular mail delivery.

Other articles on government services noted that the government was acting in a manner which would improve the safety, and thus quality of life, for residents of New Orleans and its surrounding communities by resuming normal functioning pertinent to fixing the aftermath of a major storm.

About 130 Entergy Corp. utility workers spent Tuesday scouring dry parts of New Orleans for potentially dangerous natural gas leaks in homes and businesses, using high-tech devices to sniff out the fuel. The company warned that parts of the city with gas might lose service as crews repair damaged lines. (Darce, 2005b)

The only bridge to the state's only inhabited barrier island was weakened by the storm. Though residents have driven cars and four-wheelers over it to tally their losses, Department of Transportation and Development engineers deemed the span unsafe for vehicles weighing more than 10 to 12 tons. (Gordon, 2005)

These articles written on government services were overwhelmingly present throughout the articles analyzed. Their presence is important to note as their content is overwhelmingly relevant as they had a tremendous ability to potentially impact how people would have been interacting within the city of New Orleans and its surrounding communities. Through residents ability to gain social capital by learning that their city was again functioning normally, and acting to protect its residents from harm, those who were native to New Orleans had the potential to strengthen their feelings of cohesion with their community. Thus, these articles on government services functioning again during the impact phase is important to note as their latent potential to influence New Orleans residents sense of connectedness with their community is strong. Therefore, they likely were able to be a tremendous help to those who needed something to give them hope that

normal government functioning would soon be returning during the impact phase of Hurricane Katrina.

## **Chapter 5 Limitations**

The limitations of this study are many and varied. Similar to most studies that employ a content analytic approach the authors must closely examine both the type of content studied and those who studied it. In this study the choice of the New Orleans Times-Picayune newspaper was made because it is the preeminent newspaper in New Orleans and the surrounding communities. However, at this point in the twenty-first century one must ask if the use of a newspaper is the best media form available to study with the prevalence of so many other forms of electronic technology that people can get their news from. The author of this study did consider this but found that it was prudent to choose the New Orleans Times-Picayune newspaper in this instance because this study is looking at the impact phase of Hurricane Katrina. This is the most rational option for the impact phase because during that time the power of the majority of the residents of New Orleans and its surrounding communities was off and consequently most other traditional electronic forms of media such as television and internet were unavailable for mass consumption in the New Orleans community. Also because it is a local newspaper not all of the articles printed are meant for a national audience, but instead are meant for consumption by the local audience. Thus, the fact that the Times-Picayune was still in print and circulating, via both traditional print and through the internet, made it an excellent media form to study for this disaster as it was meant for the local audience and was available online and in print. Also of note is the fact that many other forms of news media must rely on the accounts of local reporters from the New Orleans community for their stories. This is vitally important because this study was looking to see what messages were being sent through the media that could aid in the development of feelings

of social cohesion for residents of the local New Orleans community. Thus analyzing articles from reporters that were covering local events writing to the New Orleans community was essential.

Another limitation of this study is the vagueness of the analytical categories. As there is no one size fits all definition for social capital in relevant literature, and no single correct way to measure what the building blocks of feelings of social cohesion are in individuals, it was up to the author to assess what content in the newspaper might be indicative of the dissemination of relevant social capital and might consequently aid the community in feeling cohesive. This necessarily means that as the concept of social capital is further defined in sociological literature, and new methods for the measurement of social cohesion are found, these categories might appear to be too broad or too narrow as the literature on the subject continues to develop. Unfortunately, this is a necessary risk as the author can only apply what has been written on these categories to date. Nevertheless, in this study the analytical categories were defined according to the current literature found on what has been found in previous studies to aid in the formation of feelings of social cohesion and this should be adequate.

Also of note is the fact that as Hurricane Katrina was such a major disaster many sociologists are in the process of, and will be in the future, writing pieces that center around this event that might potentially be relevant and contribute to this study or nullify its findings. This is a risk of most literature on any topic of popular relevance and the exclusion of some other pieces in the sociological literature to date is simply based upon the fact that the author felt that none were especially applicable to the subject being discussed at the present time. However, articles that have been written so far offer some

interesting information and implications for future researchers looking to study the latent functions of disaster communication through a sociological lens. For example, both Apfelbaum's (2006) and Picou's (2007) research on race and media coverage of Hurricane Katrina noted how minorities were constructed differently during the coverage of Katrina. Specifically these studies looked at the social construction of terms such as "refugee" versus "evacuee" or the use of terms such as "finding food" versus "looting" in the media's characterizations of survivors of the storm. Research such as this will in the future provide many new angles through which future researchers might look at the implications of the social construction of race during natural disasters by the media, and its resulting implications for the building of social cohesion by members of different racial and ethnic groups. Research such as Allen's (2007) study on race, class, and poverty noted how those who occupied the lowest ranks of the socio-economic ladder were affected differently by the storm compared to other people located in different positions, and as such they were most likely to receive their information about the storm and recovery in a less timely manner. Information such as this would be useful to look at in future studies as how people interpret the social capital of newspapers might be different depending upon the timeliness of the information they receive. Another issue of relevance that could be looked at in future studies of disaster is the role that gender plays in the construction of social cohesion within communities. Studies such as Enarson's (2006) article on women's experiences post Katrina makes an interesting point about how often times as women are the head of household's for many populations, their experiences when looking to return to normalcy are often of paramount importance as the implications of them coming out of a disaster with post-traumatic stress syndrome are far

reaching. In sum, there are many articles in the sociological literature which have been written to date that could inform future studies looking at the latent functions of newspapers in disasters situations in the future. This study did not rely upon many of the sociological studies done to date on Katrina and thus perhaps missed many opportunities for reaching a lot of new interesting conclusions. However, this was largely due to resource constraints so these research opportunities will have to be given to other researchers looking at future disasters.

Some might say that another limitation of this study is the fact that most newspapers are divided into various sections with special topics such as local news or national news. This has the potential to be problematic in our analysis because it can be argued that this study did not differentiate between the purposes of the articles analyzed beyond using the search terms “New Orleans” and “Katrina” in our article search. However, it is likely that articles written for these different purposes might still provide the information necessary to aid in the development of social capital and thus aid in social cohesion if they noted topics of importance to the development of social capital for local residents. Because the parameters of the content analyzed should have only selected those articles that can aid in this dispersion of capital to local residence and not those whose purpose was singularly that of information provider to a larger audience outside of New Orleans and its surrounding communities, the fact that different articles are written with different purposes in mind should be irrelevant; making this argument not one that should affect the validity of these results.

One other limitation of this study is the fact that Hurricane Katrina and its prolonged impact phase is not typical of most natural disasters. The disaster that hit New

Orleans because of Hurricane Katrina was unprecedented as its impact phase was unusually long because of the flood it triggered. Because this is so unusual it will be crucial for others to study the impact phases of other natural disasters in order to add to the literature about what the media says during this time when the impact phase is shorter and its possible repercussions. However, because Hurricane Katrina was so long it provided an excellent opportunity to study in the New Orleans Times-Picayune specifically what media are saying to the public, during long impact phases. The importance of which lies in the fact that there will inevitably be another disaster at some point in time in which there is an unusually long impact phase and knowing that what is written can potentially have the latent function of building social cohesion is useful. Therefore, the study of this unusually long disaster can aid other media outlets in determining what types of content they distribute to audiences in the future. As well as guide future researchers interested in what types of articles to look at before analyzing audiences reactions.

## **Chapter 6 Conclusion**

In conclusion, this study provides some very interesting insights into the role the media can play during a time of crisis, such as Hurricane Katrina. The analysis confirmed that the articles examined do in fact have the potential to provide the latent function of increasing the residents of New Orleans' social capital during the impact phase of a natural disaster. This confirms the theory that the residents of New Orleans could have potentially used this information to help them develop stronger feelings of cohesion with their community during this phase as this information was present in the newspaper. The study revealed that this would have primarily occurred through the reinforcement of the fact that the community will once again function normally in the future. The study's relevance lies in the fact that both New Orleans and Hurricane Katrina are so unique. As research on social capital given through media is sparse, the ability to examine social capital output in an area as culturally diverse as New Orleans provided the researcher with ample room for analysis because the scope of Hurricane Katrina's devastating effects lasted for such a long time. The result of this research contributes to the literature concerning what social capital can be dispersed during disaster situations and why it is useful to know its effects.

Another unique thing about this study is that it examines what is in the media's content that has the potential in a disaster to function as social capital that can aid in the formation of bonds with one's community. It has built upon existing knowledge as previously, the majority of media studies have recognized that the media assists in fostering a sense of social cohesion by those who use it, but the existing studies have failed to examine what type of content the media portrays that might foster these feelings

of cohesion with ones community (Perez-Lugo, 2004). Previous research in social cohesion has found that interactions with one's community is a useful tool for building community engagement and helping community members by decreasing their feelings of social isolation (Dominick, 1996). Previous studies have also noted that, "social cohesion involves building shared values and communities of interpretation, reducing disparities in wealth and income, and generally enabling people to have a sense that they are engaged in a community enterprise, facing shared challenges, and that they are members of the same community" (Stanley, 2003; Maxwell, 1996). However, these studies have not analyzed disaster situations and contemplated the content of what exactly is said that fosters social cohesion. This study adds to this literature by moving beyond vague notions of what social cohesion accomplishes. It has ascertained what exactly is said that can foster the achievement of social cohesion in a community through the lens of a newspaper that belongs to a community affected by a disaster.

This study also adds to the communications literature by showing what the media articulates during a disaster that is the type of social capital that can aid readers by fostering their feeling of cohesion. This is particularly relevant when communities are literally being ripped apart by a disaster. In addition, this study shows the most prevalent topics that the media reports on, because it is important to know what might be currently serving to reinforce one community's feelings of social cohesion so that further research can be done. Therefore, this study has shown that reporting on people's return to and rebuilding of their homes and places of business, cultural events, facilities operation status, volunteer opportunities, non-governmental support, and the functioning of government services, all can serve as forms of social capital that assist individuals during

a disaster situation while they seek to satisfy their basic survival needs, as well as their need to know that their community will recover.

This research has shown that the latent functions of newspapers during disaster situations is an important functional area that warrants additional study in the future due to the fact that this study confirms that the Times-Picayune is providing the members of a community with valuable tools that can potentially help them regain a sense of cohesion within their community during the impact phase of a disaster. These results prove that newspapers future use is of critical importance because it will likely be used to provide future social capital necessary for residents to endure disasters, which will later sustain them as they embark on new efforts to recover from forthcoming disasters and revitalize their community's culture after such events. Further research should consider the study of other media forms. Future research should also focus on adding to the literature on social cohesion, social capital, and disaster communication by undertaking additional research that focuses on exactly what social capital is dispersed and the audience members' reactions to it during the impact phase of disasters in the future, especially as it relates to the varying experiences during disaster situations of people based upon their race, class, and gender.

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## **Appendices**

*Appendix A*

The following chart is a timeline of events during the impact phase of Hurricane Katrina. It notes the initial order of evacuation was issues on August 28, 2005 and then gives a timeline of when the hurricane made landfall on August 29, 2005 and concludes with the date of the end of the impact period, September 30, 2005, when all residents were allowed back into the city.

