



NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

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*The Center for Catastrophe Preparedness & Response*

# POST-KATRINA RESEARCH PROJECTS PRESENTATIONS AND DISCUSSION

March 1, 2007  
New York University  
Kimmel Center, Room 905

Hosted by:  
**The Center for Catastrophe Preparedness and Response  
New York University**

We are proud to welcome you to the Katrina Research Projects Presentations and Discussion, the first presentation of the findings from the Katrina research projects sponsored by New York University's Center for Catastrophe Preparedness and Response (CCPR).

After seeing the tragedy of Hurricane Katrina unfold in August 2005 CCPR mobilized to engage the NYU community through a university-wide research competition. The response was inspiring, as many faculty offered thoughtful and insightful proposals. The projects being presented today were chosen from among a crowded field of outstanding ideas. This work speaks to the very mission of CCPR, to find the best and brightest investigators from throughout the university to undertake path leading research into the complex nature of disasters. The Katrina researchers are a select group who has risen to the challenge of drawing meaning and lessons from a unique American catastrophe, Hurricane Katrina, that continues to and will for a long time pose questions on the national agenda.

The effects of a major event like Hurricane Katrina are felt across all aspects of society and reach far beyond the immediate area of disaster. Each of the seven projects presented today explore this paradigm in varying ways. Judith Helfand and her team from the Tisch School of Arts, present a documentary film, *Extended Stay*, which follows Katrina evacuees living in a hotel in New York City. David Dent, of the School of Journalism, also focuses on the plight of evacuees, but did so in the immediate wake of the storm by conducting interviews at the Houston Astrodome which was used as a mass shelter. Beyond evacuation, two studies looked at the efforts of rebuilding lives. Robert Hawkins in the School of Social Work compared those who returned to New Orleans versus those who did not and their ability to socially integrate into their communities –either in devastated New Orleans, or the new places they now called home. Mary Driscoll at the Steinhardt School of Educa-

tion considered how the diaspora affected students and how educational policies handled this situation. Frances Milliken and her team from the Stern School of Management, analyzed how the events of Katrina were understood by those in positions of power. Dr. Milliken and her team consider the effects of power on sense-making and communication by analyzing television coverage in the wake of the storm and what was said by media figures versus what was actually happening on the ground. Some projects looked to Katrina to learn how to prepare for future events. Howard Besser at Tisch asked how to save and preserve moving image and sound collections damaged by the storm. Paul Light examined community preparedness through surveys pre- and post-Katrina to uncover what are the characteristics of prepared organizations and communities.

The body of research we are sharing today, both timely and rigorous, represents precisely the cross-disciplinary approach to catastrophe preparedness and response that CCPR was founded to foster, and we could not be more proud of the results.

Thank you for your participation and on behalf of the CCPR community, we look forward to our continued work together.

Sincerely,

**Robert Berne**

*Sr. VP for Health, CCPR Principal Investigator*

**Brad Penuel**

*Director, CCPR*



## Overview

The Center for Catastrophe Preparedness and Response (CCPR) at New York University (NYU) was founded in 2002 as a university-wide, cross-disciplinary center to study and improve preparedness and response capabilities to catastrophic events including terrorism, natural disasters, and public health emergencies. Drawing on the resources of NYU's fourteen schools, CCPR facilitates research projects that address issues ranging from first responder capacity during crises, to public health response, to legal issues relating to security, to private sector crisis management and business continuity.

CCPR currently manages twenty-two research projects including over sixty faculty and staff. The Center is a national resource with added focus on the unique issues related to emergency preparedness and response in the urban environment.

## A Five-Part Mission

CCPR seeks to:

- **Increase the nation's knowledge base** on issues of emergency preparedness and response for large-scale catastrophic events
- **Conduct both basic and applied research** addressing many of the complex issues that comprise preparedness and response through policy recommendations, development of novel technologies, and academic publications
- **Provide a forum** for public and private sector officials and researchers to engage in dialogue and debate and exchange best practices
- **Serve as a model academic center** that maximizes the contributions of a research university to a critical national need
- **Offer strategic, administrative, and financial support** for academic-based research and training and educational opportunities for faculty and students

CCPR is committed to working as a partner with federal, state and local officials to improve and support preparedness and response capacities. The Center's partners include: the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the American Red Cross (ARC), the City of New York's first responder community including the New York City Police Department (NYPD), the Fire Department of New York (FDNY), the New York City Office of Emergency Management (OEM) and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOH).



**March 1, 2007**

**New York University, Kimmel Center, Room 905**

- 8.45 – 9.00      Check-in (Breakfast Served)
- 9.00 – 9.15      Welcome and Introduction  
Welcome: Brad Penuel, Director, CCPR  
Comments: Bob Berne, Ph.D., Senior Vice-President for Health and Principal Investigator, CCPR
- 9.15 – 9.25      Documentary – Extended Stay  
Principal Investigator: Judith Helfand
- 9.25 – 9.35      The Effects of Power on Sense-Making and Communication: The Case of Hurricane Katrina  
Principal Investigator: Frances Milliken, MBA, PhD
- 9.35 – 9.45      Cultural Integration and Social Capital Development in the Aftermath of Katrina  
Principal Investigator: Robert Hawkins, PhD
- 9.45 – 9.55      American Diaspora: Displaced Students and the Effects of Selected Educational Policies  
Principal Investigator: Mary Driscoll, PhD
- 9.55 – 10.05     Disaster Planning: Moving Image and Sound Collections  
Principal Investigator: Howard Besser, PhD
- 10.05 – 10.15    The Project on Organizational and Community Preparedness  
Principal Investigator: Paul C. Light, PhD
- 10.15 – 10.25    Astrodome Interviews  
Principal Investigator: David Dent, FAS
- 10.25 – 10.50    Discussion  
Moderator: David Berman, Associate Director, CCPR
- 10.50 – 11.00    Closing Remarks  
Brad Penuel, Director, CCPR



### Summary

*Extended Stay* is a half-hour film that documents the intense physical, emotional, and spiritual rebirth of two Katrina survivors - Dana Saulny, a mother of three and Alvin Alexander, a classical guitarist - as they fight to start anew in the foreign land of New York City. Separated from their families, without jobs, money, or permanent places to stay, Dana and Alvin face the streets of New York, F.E.M.A.'s deadlines and their personnel "ghosts" to make a new home.

Alvin Alexander thought his evacuation from Katrina would be "a short vacation," having experienced a lifetime of storms and their aftermaths. But returning home, he discovered the flood destroyed his house and all his possessions. With no job and no savings, Alvin drove north to find a new home and a new job to support his dream of recording his music. Distracted by his loss, Alvin labors and stumbles through a labyrinth of FEMA regulations as he tries to regain the focus he needs to rebuild a new life.

Dana Saulny and her children were evicted from their New Orleans apartment during the immediate aftermath of Katrina. Faced with quickly rising rents and the loss of her job as a film production manager, Dana attempts to improve life for her children by searching for work in New York City where she hoped her experience would help her find a new job in the entertainment industry. But stiff competition for jobs, separation from her family, and the high rents in New York were magnified by her frustratingly. As months pass without an address or a paycheck, Dana is forced to confront whether her decisions are realistic or irresponsible.

There has been media saturation on the failure of the levies, the corruption in the rebuilding focus and the political posturing on placing blame. We are trying to focus to the plight of two individuals and how their lives are forever impacted by Katrina in addition to the larger, systematic reforms that the media has tended to focus on. With hundreds of thousands of evacuees still unable to return to the Gulf Coast, we owe it to the survivors to bring attention to their individual plights as others are working to address systemic problems in our government.

This film incorporates video footage, home videos, news clips and interviews with the subjects as well as FEMA officials and community leaders. We began gathering footage during the Fall of 2005. Since then we have acquired, shot and logged over seventy hours of interviews; including Senate hearings in D.C., protests and gathering in New Orleans.

In the summer of 2006, the crew was awarded a scholarship to the NALIP Producers' Academy in Tucson, Arizona, where the rough cut was critiqued by documentary professionals Beni Matias and Fernanda Rossi. Our professors at NYU, Judith Helfand, George Stoney and Laura Hays, continue to contribute ideas during our editing process.



## Research Team

**Judith Helfand (Project Advisor and Mentor)** is best known for taking the dark, cynical worlds of chemical exposure and heedless corporate behavior, and making them personal, resonant and entertaining. Her films include the award winning *The Uprising of '34* ('95), which she co-directed with George Stoney, her Peabody award winning autobiographical film *A HEALTHY BABY GIRL* ('97) and its Sundance award-winning winning sequel *BLUE VINYL* ('02) which she co-directed with Daniel B. Gold. As a team she and Gold co-directed and produced *EVERYTHING'S COOL* which just premiered at the 2007 Sundance Film Festival and is gearing up for distribution in 07-08. Judith is co-founder of the national organization *WORKING FILMS*, a leader in linking the power of non-fiction filmmaking to long-term social change and more recently she and two colleagues launched *CHICKEN & EGG PICTURES*, an "edge fund" that provides strategic support to emergent & veteran women filmmakers. Her next feature documentary is about the 1995 Chicago heat wave.

**Antonio Cisneros (Director)** is a documentary filmmaker and cinematographer currently studying at New York University's Film School. He has made several documentaries and narrative works that have screened throughout the country and internationally.

**Michael Feldman (Editor and Producer)** is currently studying film production at the Tisch School of the Arts. He has done short work for LinkTV, the UN Photography Club, and a series of jazz DVDs with Muse-Eek-Publishing.

**Elisa Cundiff (Director)** is a member of the Tisch University Scholars and the President's C-Team. Her play "Walking Backwards" was recently performed at the University of Utrecht in Holland.



## Summary

For many who watched the media coverage of Hurricane Katrina, one of the most troubling aspects of the event and its aftermath was the seemingly confused and slow response of government officials to the crisis. It seemed clear to many who read or watched the media coverage that the situation high-level federal officials were describing seemed quite different from the situation that was being depicted by the victims. It struck even the most casual viewer or reader that there was a “disconnect” between what was being said by some of the most powerful people in our country and what we were seeing.

For researchers interested in cognition and sense-making processes, Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath afforded an opportunity to add to our understanding of how people in different roles make sense of the same event.

The major purpose of our study was to examine whether there were systematic patterns in how people made sense of the Hurricane Katrina as a function of the role they occupied and the amount of power they had. We found that power mattered in the way people talked publicly about the hurricane. Specifically, we found that individuals with power tended to use more abstract language and to express less uncertainty about the event than did victims. Power-holders also tended to use more positive language and were more focused on the future. Victims’ communication, compared to power-holders’ communication, was also characterized by more use of sensory-related terms and affiliation-related thoughts.



## Research Team

**Frances J. Milliken** is a Professor of Management at New York University's Stern School of Business and the Edward J. Giblin Faculty Fellow. Her primary research interests focus on organizational learning, the dynamics of voice and silence in organizations, the management of diversity, and work-life issues. Most recently, she has been writing about why people often elect to not speak up about problems they notice in organizations (a phenomenon she and her co-authors refer to as "organizational silence"). She has also been working on a project that looks at the effects of power on how and what people communicated in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. In addition to her research work, she has held several administrative roles at Stern including Associate Dean for Academic Affairs of the Undergraduate College and Director of the Doctoral Program in Management.

**Joe Magee** is an Assistant Professor of Management at the Robert F. Wagner School of Public Service. His research interests include understanding how power differences transform the way people think and behave and how people figure out who has power over whom. He is also interested in the social role of emotion in groups. Professor Magee received his Ph.D. from the Graduate School of Business, Stanford University.

**Nancy Lam** is a doctoral candidate at the Stern School of Business in the Management department. Her research explores the transmission, or lack thereof, of positive, improvement-oriented organizational voice through the hierarchy, particularly pitching of ideas to management. She is interested in examining the relational and contextual factors that may affect the decision to speak up or withhold ideas, as well as the factors that may influence the voice target's assessment of the pitched ideas. Nancy received her Bachelors of Arts degree from University of California, Berkeley, and is a native Californian.

**Daniel Menezes** is a junior at the College of Arts and Sciences. He is pursuing a BA in Metropolitan Studies through the Department of Social and Cultural Analysis and will graduate in May 2008.



## Summary

This study examined those families who left New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina and returned following the flooding of the city, as well as those in other cities who did not return to the area. The original intent of this study was to sample only low-income families who relocated to urban areas, but I was able to expand the study to focus on geographic and some economic diversity, while maintaining a focus on low-income families. This study includes families living in various arrangements, including those in shared housing and those living in Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) trailers. Through this study, I am examining the relative success of the families' attempt to culturally integrate into their new community, whether inside or outside of New Orleans, the family's perception of their experiences, their perception of the social support they received during the process, whether from their kin or acquaintance network or from the government or not-for-profit organizations. Included in the study is a socio-environmental, neighborhood, and psychosocial assessment for the parents and their children.

## Key Activities

1. This study is ongoing, with support from CCPR having been used as leverage for national funding. Dr. Hawkins has received additional funding from the University of Kentucky Center on Poverty. The study was expanded a bit and has been retitled: "Cultural Integration, Social Capital Development, and Family Structure Among Low-Income Southern Families Affected by Hurricane Katrina." This new direction allows for a greater examination of families and social capital.
2. Initial interviews with 12 families about their Katrina experience have been conducted, and through the UK Center on Poverty, an additional 20 families have been interviewed, bringing the total number of families interviewed for the project to 32. Follow-up interviews will be arranged as well.
3. A National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) grant application is now under development for the funding of further research on the aftermath of Katrina, including a long-term examination of the psychological effects of disaster and how one mixed-income and ethnically-mixed neighborhoods rebuilds its social, family, and physical structures following a natural disaster.

## Papers Under Development

*Hawkins, R. L. & Narichania, D. The Shortest War on Poverty: How We Have Already Forgotten the Lessons of Race and Class Following Hurricane Katrina. (A focus on the media's short attention span related to Katrina).*

*Hawkins, R. L. & Narichania, D. Recreating Home: How Low-income Hurricane Katrina Victims Rebuild Their Lives. (Examinations of Katrina victims' reconsideration of New Orleans as "home").*

*Hawkins, R. L. Social Displacement: The Disappearance of Social Capital for Low-Income Families Following Hurricane Katrina. (A look at how families' social structure was altered following the Hurricanes).*



## Research Team

**Robert Leibson Hawkins** is an Assistant Professor at NYU School of Social Work. Dr. Hawkins has a decade of teaching experience, and more than 15 years of experience in human services management and program development. He received his Ph.D. in Social Policy from the Heller School for Social Policy and Management at Brandeis University in 2002. Dr. Hawkins has expertise in welfare and poverty, family and children's policy analysis, program evaluation, quantitative and qualitative methods, and survey design and implementation. He also has extensive programming, research, and teaching expertise in race, gender, and cultural competency issues.

Dr. Hawkins came to NYU from the Eliot-Pearson Department of Child Development and the Department of Urban and Environmental Policy at Tufts University. He also has consulted and served on the social work faculties of numerous colleges and universities, including Boston College, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and the University of North Carolina at Wilmington. He has teaching and research experience from Brandeis, Duke University, and the Harvard Medical School.

Dr. Hawkins has been an administrator and trainer in agencies addressing family needs for both children and older adults. He was a human services planner and trainer for the Family & Children's Resource Center and the Center for Aging Research and Educational Services, affiliated with the University of North Carolina School of Social Work, he was also a professional activities coordinator for the American Geriatrics Society in New York City. In addition, Dr. Hawkins has served as an advisor and consultant for numerous community, nonprofit, and for-profit organizations. He speaks, writes, and presents nationally on a range of related topics. His consultant duties have been with agencies such as Departments of Social Services, community action agencies, legal aid agencies, and private human services agencies. He served as a program director and program evaluator for the University College of Citizenship and Public Service at Tufts University and as an ethnographic researcher with Welfare, Children, and Families, a Three-City Study, a longitudinal study lead by researchers from Harvard University, Penn State University, University of Texas-Austin, and Brandeis University. Dr. Hawkins' research and training examines the lives of low-income families, their neighborhood and community networks, and how these families enter into and leave the welfare system for long-term economic sustainability. Dr. Hawkins also holds a Masters Degree in Social Policy from the Heller School for Social Policy and Management at Brandeis University, a Masters in Public Administration from the School of Government at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and a Bachelors of Arts in Communications from Appalachian State University in Boone, North Carolina.

In addition to being funded by the NYU Center for Catastrophe Research and Response, Dr. Hawkins's Katrina project has received funding from the UK Center for Poverty and he has been selected by the NIMH to participate as a mentoring program where he will work with a national senior-level researcher to build on his research with families affected by Hurricane Katrina.



## Summary

In the fall of 2005, The US Department of Education estimated that over 372,000 students were displaced by Hurricane Katrina alone (USED, 2005). As a result, elementary and secondary schools (especially those in states proximate to the disaster zone) encountered a sudden influx of students who had experienced recent trauma, whose economic status was often precarious, and whose family resources had been severely strained. For many students, what began as a short term placement in a school at some distance from the Gulf has become a more permanent affiliation, either by choice or because the homes and towns they left still struggle over a year later to reconstruct themselves.

This study explored the role schools and school districts played in this sudden Diaspora of students. In particular, we focus on how two current trends in educational policy—namely, the provision of coordinated services through schools, and the influence of the No Child Left Behind legislation—shape the experiences of these students and help us to understand what is likely to occur in the future.

Phase I of the study, now complete, used web-based survey technology to contact a national sample of districts across the US that were eligible for federal Emergency Impact Aid through the Hurricane Relief Act of 2005. Seventy-five districts, located in 28 different states, were identified as enrolling at least 1 displaced student for all or part of the academic year 2005-2006. District informants were asked to report on a variety of factors affecting the education of displaced students, including the number of students enrolled, the types of schools enrolling them, the funding sources supporting their education, the availability of coordinated services and differentiated staff for these students, and the degree to which NCLB provisions appeared to facilitate their education.

Several key findings have emerged from these data. First, we found a widely dispersed pattern of displaced students who for the most part are scattered throughout schools across districts in many states of the US. Most of these students have been absorbed into regular education schools; in addition, over 51% of the districts reported that they enrolled no more than 200 such students, with many districts in our sample enrolling fewer than 50 displaced students. Although many students clustered in urban areas such as Houston and Atlanta, a significant number of families ended up far from the Gulf area, relatively isolated by school even when multiple students were enrolled in the same school districts. Second, while additional federal aid provided some support for these students, districts reported that they relied heavily on voluntary sources of assistance, many of which were created on an ad-hoc basis as needs emerged. Third, districts varied widely with respect to their ability to provide coordinated health and other social services to this population. Although most districts provided additional tutoring, only a fifth provided primary medical care and less than 18% could administer immunizations. We conclude that the opportunities for assistance students encountered was a much a matter of luck as planning, and that even where students were relocated deliberately via federal airlift they were not necessarily likely to encounter a service-rich district.

A preliminary report of the findings, co-authored with Renee Waters, was presented at the Annual Meeting of the University Council for Educational Administration in San Antonio, Texas in November 2006; the final report for Phase I will be available in March 2007. Data collection for Phase II, focusing on school-level data from schools enrolling displaced students, is complete. Preliminary analyses to date suggest that principals may see NCLB as having a greater effect on displaced students than do district-level informants.



## Research Team

**Mary Erina Driscoll** is an Associate Professor of Educational Administration in the Steinhardt School of Culture, Education and Human Development at New York University. Recent research and publications focus on the connections between schools and their communities and the ways in which communities serve as contexts for student learning. Dr. Driscoll earned her M.A. in Child Development from Sarah Lawrence and her Ph.D. in Education at the University of Chicago. She is currently a member of the editorial board for the journals *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* and *Educational Administration Quarterly*. She has been a consultant for the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, served on expert panels for the U.S. Department of Education, and was elected President of University Council for Educational Administration. She is co-editor (with D. Hansen and R. Arcilla) and author of *A Life in Classrooms: Philip W. Jackson and the Practice of Education*, to be published by Teachers College Press in March 2007.

**Renee Waters** is a third year doctoral student in the Educational Leadership program in the Steinhardt School. A former principal, she is a member of the 2006 cohort of Jackson Scholars, a national mentoring program for doctoral scholars sponsored by the University Council for Educational Administration.



## Summary

This project is an in-depth exploration of disaster preparedness and recovery issues for archival moving image and sound materials. Drawing on the experiences of collecting institutions and individuals affected by Hurricane Katrina and her aftermath in the New Orleans area, the project highlights the lack of available disaster resources aimed at audiovisual collections, as well as provides practical preparedness, response, and recovery advice. By sharing the lessons learned by the Gulf region's archivists, curators, and artists, this project highlights the need for new ways of thinking about disaster preparedness, a task that many people avoid simply because it appears too overwhelming. The reports and presentations surrounding this project stress the idea that "You can't prepare for everything," while offering simple methods of creating defense, security, and preparation that can be used in numerous circumstances.

The project has involved extensive academic research, travel to the New Orleans area, interviews, and post-Katrina damage assessment. Moving Image Archiving and Preservation (MIAP) Program Director, Howard Besser, leads this research. Kara van Malssen, a graduate of the 2006 MIAP class, is the principal researcher.

There have been a number of important results from this project thus far. These include a master's thesis by Ms. van Malssen, which collects the experiences of three New Orleans institutions and one filmmaker, and draws on these to outline useful methods for preparing audiovisual collections for disaster. The report also outlines steps that can be taken to recover A/V media damaged by water or fire.

In June 2006, curators and directors of these institutions, along with Ms. van Malssen, participated in panel titled "Preserving New Orleans: The Fate of Media Collections in the Wake of Katrina," at the 2006 American Library Association Conference in New Orleans. Organized and moderated by Professor Besser, approximately 65 people gathered to hear what one reviewer for the Association of College and Research Libraries called, a "timely and affecting presentation."

Work on this project will continue as a contribution to a guidebook on disaster preparedness and recovery, to be published by the Association of Moving Image Archivists (AMIA) and the Society of American Archivists (SAA) in late 2007. The proposed guidebook is currently awaiting format approval from the SAA publications committee, and writing should begin in March 2007. This guide will fill the gap in the existing disaster planning and recovery literature for archival collections, by providing professionals and non-professionals alike with the tools and information needed to recover a range of A/V materials after a disaster.

Besser and van Malssen will also be turning their research findings into curriculum to be used by the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCRUM). They will be presenting this curriculum in August 2007 in the first of ICCROM's training sessions on "Safeguarding Sound and Moving Image Collections", and this is likely to become part of ICCROM's ongoing training.



## Research Team

**Howard Besser** is Professor of Cinema Studies and Director of the Moving Image Archiving and Preservation (MIAP) Masters Degree Program in NYU's Tisch School of the Arts, as well as Senior Scientist for Digital Library Initiatives for NYU's Library. Dr. Besser is a former Professor of Library & Information Studies, and has worked closely with scores of museums, libraries, and archives. He is best known for his pioneering work in bringing new technologies to cultural heritage institutions. He is also well known for his work on standards development, intellectual property, image databases, distance learning, and the social and cultural impact of new information environments.

**Kara van Malssen** graduated from the MIAP program in May 2006. She is currently employed as Assistant Research Scholar at NYU, where she is leading research on the Preserving Digital Public Television Project, a collaboration between NYU's Digital Libraries and the MIAP program, PBS, Channel Thirteen/WNET, and WGBH in Boston. Ms. van Malssen hails from Florida, which has experienced its fair share of hurricanes.



### Summary

The Organizational and Community Preparedness Project, which is funded by the Department of Homeland Security, Morgan Stanley, and Prudential, is designed to identify and measure the characteristics of highly-prepared organizations and communities. To date, we have conducted two public opinion surveys on the level of community preparedness, a large, cross-sectoral survey on organizational crisis readiness, and interviews with key Red Cross personnel.

#### **Community preparedness public opinion surveys**

The first of our public opinion surveys predated Hurricane Katrina. In this survey (conducted in July of 2005), we found that many Americans believed that an attack would happen within one calendar year within the U.S. borders, yet few believed that the attack would occur near them. In addition, there was a general belief that their own police and fire departments, local governments, hospitals, and charitable organizations are all on guard to protect them even if the terrorists decide there is some reasons to strike their communities. Coupled with the low levels of familiarity with their local and state government plans for terrorist attacks, and low levels of personal preparedness planning, this confidence in local and state institutions seemed to be based more on hope and expectation than reality.

The second public opinion survey closely followed Hurricane Katrina in October 2005. We found that levels of confidence in governmental authorities to respond to disasters had dropped substantially, yet, on average, people were not more prepared.

Outputs from these studies have been published in numerous fora, including an NYU Center for Catastrophe Preparedness and Response (CCPR) Information Brief and opinion pieces in the Washington Post, Christian Science Monitor and Governing Magazine.

#### **Crisis readiness survey**

The crisis readiness survey was issued in the summer of 2006 to 4,000 executives in the nonprofit, government, and for-profit sectors. The survey sought to identify the key organizational factors that respondents believe are most important to an organization's ability to withstand and respond to a crisis, whether triggered by external or internal events. Additionally, respondents were asked to identify organizations in each of the sectors who were believed to be most highly prepared.

Currently, we are in the process of analyzing the findings and are launching selected case studies of the organizations rated as being highly prepared.

The anticipated output from this study is a short book or long article.

#### **Red Cross interviews**

Additionally, Prof. Light has conducted interviews with key Red Cross staff to better understand the organizational reasons for the poor Red Cross response after Hurricane Katrina.

For further information, see [www.nyu.edu/wagner/performance/preparedness.php](http://www.nyu.edu/wagner/performance/preparedness.php) or contact [paul.light@nyu.edu](mailto:paul.light@nyu.edu).



## Research Team

**Paul C. Light** is currently the Paulette Goddard Professor of Public Service at New York University's Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service and Founder of the Organizational Performance Initiative. Professor Light has spent roughly half of his career in academia and half in the world of applied research and practice. He started his teaching career at the University of Virginia, and has taught at the University of Minnesota and Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government. He started his applied research career as director of studies at the National Academy of Public Administration, and has served as senior adviser to the U.S. Senate Governmental Affairs Committee, director of the public policy program at the Pew Charitable Trusts, and vice president and director of governmental studies at the Brookings Institution. He is the author of 19 books on government, public service, and public policy. His most recent book is *Sustaining Nonprofit Performance: The Case for Capacity Building and the Evidence to Support It*. He received his Ph.D. in political science from the University of Michigan.

**Sara L. Wheeler-Smith** is an Associate Research Scientist with the Organizational Performance Initiative and a Lecturer on Public Administration at NYU's Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service. Before joining the Organizational Performance Initiative, Sara served as Interim Director for the NYU Research Center for Leadership in Action's Next Generation Leadership Program. She spent five years providing management consulting services to the public and private sector organizations, most recently at PA Consulting Group. Sara has a B.A. from Brown University and a Master of Public Administration from NYU Wagner.



### Summary

On September 10, a group of NYU honors journalism students went to Houston, Texas to interview New Orleans residents who were relocated to the Astrodome. This project grows out of those interviews and looks at the lives of those survivors beyond emergency and the immediacy of the disaster and explores how they struggle to forge new lives in new environments. Through a combination of oral history collections and ethnographic research, this project explores the impact of class on the challenges of urban resettlement in the wake of a disaster. The project has interviewed 20 evacuees who were resettled in the Houston Astrodome with plans to interview more and will expand this body to include other communities. This research will result in multiple products that will be beneficial for scholars and experts on preparedness in disaster relief as well as the general public. A document will be produced with the detailed interviews that provides insights for professionals in disaster relief to understand the everyday challenges and encounters that vulnerable populations face in resettlement. The material will also feed into a book on income inequality and the future of the middle class. Two chapters of the book, a journalistic exploration of class in America, will analyze Katrina in the context of the issue of income inequality.



## Research Team

**David Dent** is author of *In Search of Black America*, a *New York Times Book Review* Notable Book of 2000. He is also author of the forthcoming *American Extremes*, to be published by St Martin's Press. He has lectured on the "invisible black majority" at universities across the country. He was a 2004 media fellow of the Open Society Institute of the Soros Foundation and his articles have appeared in several publications, including *The New York Times Magazine*, Book Review and Education Life sections and *The Washington Post*. He is an Associate Professor of Journalism at New York University and has also taught in the Africana Studies Program. He has twice received the university's Golden Dozen Award for Excellence in Teaching and Service and has served as an advisor and workshop leader for the university's Faculty Resource Network, which has established relationships between NYU and many historically black colleges. He has also served on the board of The Calhoun School and is a graduate of Morehouse College and Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism.

