

Introduction

In the federal report on Hurricane Katrina, the government showed a lack of preparation for the storm. Thus, to compensate for that, they focused on helping those who were impacted recover during the aftermath of the storm. This claim can be seen when using visual data from the Voyant website to analyze what actions government officials took to prepare people for Hurricane Katrina and what actions they took to help those who were affected. In addition to this, indications of the government's lack of planning can also be seen in Jesmyn Ward's novel, *Salvage the Bones*, in which in the end we see the community lean on each other rather than the government. There are also other sources such as articles which give more insight into things such as why the government was not as prepared, how they helped with recovery, their responses, what they are doing to prevent another situation like this, etc. All of this played into proving the claim which turned out to be true. Therefore, with all of the data and information we found, we came to the conclusion that the actions of the government focused more on recovery rather than preparation. Resulting from the government's lack of preparation for Hurricane Katrina, many low-income communities like Esch's were left to try and prepare for the disaster themselves without much government aid. The affected communities like the one Esch lives in were responsible for boarding up windows, getting food for when the storm would hit, evacuating, and even saving their neighbors. Ultimately, their community only had each other to rely on, rather than being able to rely on the government who gave promises to help aid them and then failed to do so.

Background on/Introduction to *Salvage the bones*

The novel *Salvage the Bones* was written by Jesymn Ward, an American novelist. The novel is told from the perspective of 15 year old Esch, the main character of the story. Esch lives with her father and three brothers: Randall, Skeetah, and Junior. Randall is the oldest of the four and is passionate about basketball. Skeetah is the second oldest and he is passionate about his dog China and dog fighting. Junior is the youngest and helps his father with chores a lot, which most times are preparations for the hurricane that will later arrive. After the death of her mother, Esch's father started drinking and was not emotionally present for her and her siblings.

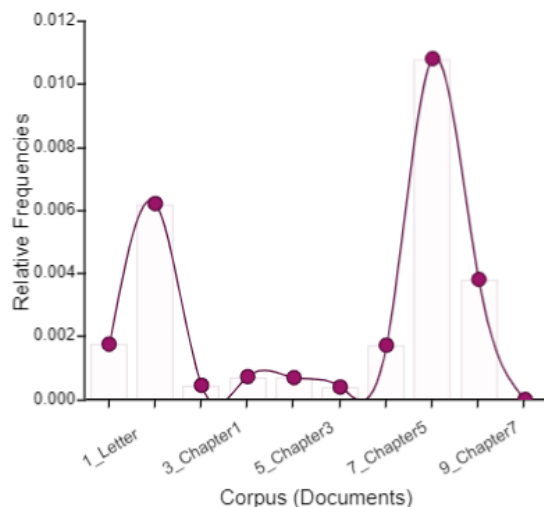
Throughout the story, Esch has many sexual affairs, one being with Randall's best friend Manny. Esch becomes infatuated with Manny and is often shown comparing her relationship with that of Jason and Medea from Greek mythology. We later find out that Esch is pregnant and that the father is Manny. Esch struggles with not only hiding her sexual affairs with Manny, but from hiding her pregnancy as well.

Towards the last few chapters of the story, the family finally faces the hurricane they have been prepping for, but it is nothing like what they had imagined it to be. Ultimately, their preparations did not help them whatsoever. After the hurricane, Esch's community is left with nothing but each other, which can infer that the government provided little to no help for their community, as they were not present or seen in the aftermath of the hurricane. This shows the government's poor planning of the storm as people like Esch and her family are an example of victims who were not aware of the damage Katrina would cause. Had they known, they probably would've tried to evacuate or would have made better preparations. To summarize, Esch and her

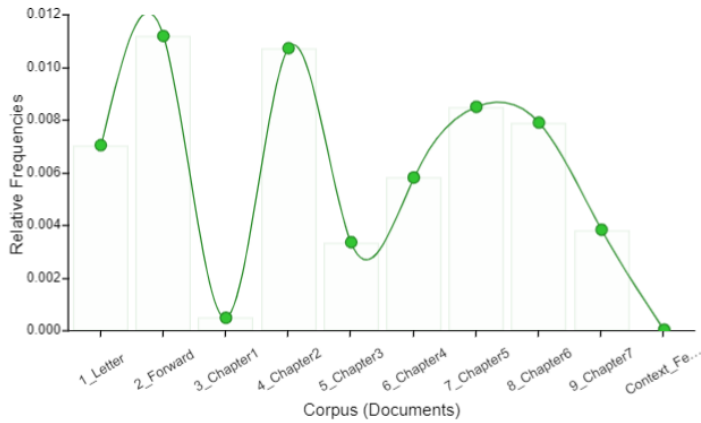
community are one of many rural areas that were neglected of proper warning and preparation of Hurricane Katrina, thus they suffered severe damage which could've been prevented had the government done better.

Data Set Claim

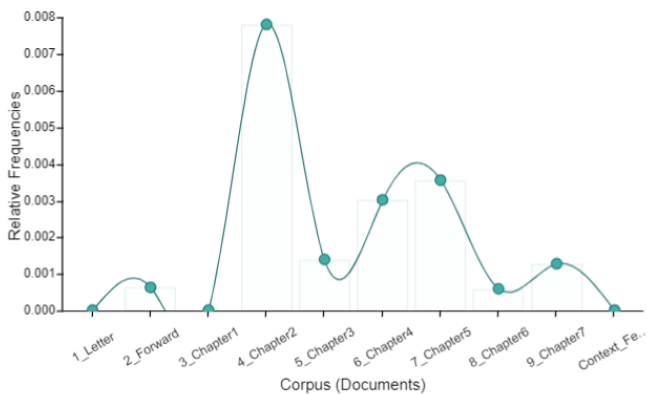
A lot of visual insight was gained by using Voyant which helped to test the hypothesis we came up with, which later contributed to our thesis statement. To show evidence that helps support this claim, we decided to focus on a few words: preparedness, response, and assistance. We used these words to help show how the government lacked preparation for Hurricane Katrina.



The word preparedness was mentioned 155 times within the 737-page report. According to the graph, preparedness showed up the most during Chapter Six of the federal report which was titled *Transforming National Preparedness*.



The word response showed up 337 within the report. According to the graph, the most it was mentioned was in the forward of the federal report and was mentioned the second most in chapter two which was titled *National Preparedness - A Primer*.



The word assistance was mentioned 130 times within the report. According to the graph, assistance was most mentioned in chapter two of the report. The data presented above helps to tie into the thesis statement in many ways.

When looking into the context of Chapter Six of the federal report, the phrases associated with the word preparedness were more of things that talked about the improvement of their preparation rather than actions that were taken to prepare. This fact shows that in the report,

there was more explanation within the report of what the government lacked and what they can do better in the future. The title of Chapter Six (*Transforming National Preparedness*) can also be used to show that the government made many mistakes during Katrina that they had to change their preparation methods. We see glimpses of this in the novel *Salvage the Bones*. Throughout the novel, Esch and her siblings help their dad with hurricane preparations, yet the government is nowhere there to aid them.

The phrases associated with the word response had phrases such as: “response and recovery efforts”, “response and recovery operations”, and “response by providing.” Phrases such as these show the prioritization of recovery and how the responses of the government were involved mostly in providing help in the aftermath. Responses also being the most appeared word out of the three shows this as well. It shows that the government gave more responses to their mistakes and how they can improve.

Assistance had a particular phrase that stuck out which was “assistance from neighboring” This phrase shows how the government influenced getting aid from neighboring areas that may have more supplies, showing the lack of supplies they prepared. Assistance also was mentioned the least out of the three which can also be used to show that it was not talked about as much in comparison to other words mentioned. In the novel, Esch and her community are shown relying on each other since the government did not give them any assistance after the hurricane which ties in to the phrase associated with it.

Overall, the corpus visualization from the federal report was used to show the connections of occurrences and associated phrases of words to connect to the thesis statement.

How did the government prepare for the hurricane (Kaz/Sean)

When it came to planning for hurricane Katrina there was no lack of time. According to Angie Marek, the author of “Learning the Hard Lessons of Katrina.” The government has been aware of the possibility of a major hurricane hitting New Orleans since roughly 2001, “The Homeland Security Department's inspector general revealed that in 2001, the Federal Emergency Management Agency "categorized a major hurricane striking New Orleans as among the three most likely catastrophic disaster events to occur within the United States." However, even knowing this The Army Corps failed to inspect any New Orleans floodwalls involved in the disaster properly. Reports claim they examined all floodwaters from a motor vehicle and failed to inspect the flood walls on 17th Street and London Avenue because they were inaccessible by said motor vehicle, the ones at fault for most of the flooding (Marek). Additionally, a month before the hurricane it was revealed that New Orleans did not have enough buses to evacuate the 100,000 residents that would be unable to leave the city without them (Marek). Even after this news, no plans were put in place. Similarly, FEMA had failed to provide adequate supplies to the cities predicted to be affected by the hurricane, according to senate investigators “Mississippi had just 10 to 20 percent of what it had requested” when it came to hurricane supplies (Marek). When it came to preparing for Hurricane Katrina the citizens of the affected areas were neglected by the government, no one was properly taken care of during the whole ordeal and the government had to be aware of that by the time Katrina made landfall.

This relates to *Salvage the Bones* because in the story we can see the real-life effects of these decisions. When it comes time to evacuate most of Esch's community is trapped, unable to leave their lives, responsibilities, or family behind. Throughout the story, we see how the desperation begins to set in with Randall, the morally right member of the family venturing to the neighbor's house in an attempt to rob their food. We also see how much stress the possibility of the hurricane puts on the family and how it begins to break down the family's otherwise strong bonds and how it causes some members of the family to make more questionable decisions.

How did that preparation hold up/What could have been done better
(Kaz/Arriana)

When the hurricane did finally hit, New Orleans and the nation were vastly unprepared for the disaster that would ensue. During the hurricane, phone towers were knocked out and many did not take the disaster seriously, combined causing a major lack of communication (Marek). On top of that, very few people involved properly understood the new National Response plan which led to a lack of manpower and many not understanding what they were supposed to be doing (Marek). According to the Cato Institute website titled "Hurricane Katrina: Remembering the Federal Failures" some of the federal agencies were confused about their position and responsibilities (Edwards, 2015). Something that would go on to drastically affect the outcome of the Hurricane. After the storm, the government tried to make preparations for future hurricane seasons, despite the fact that they failed in their promise of preparedness for that hurricane season (Edwards, 2015). It was also revealed that HSOC 'ignored, disregarded, or simply failed to attain credible reports on already broken levees' and that 3 dire spot reports went unnoticed by DHS Secretary Michael Chertoff 'because he does not use email' (Marek). Those,

coupled with the fact that the Army Corps and Orleans Levee District couldn't explain to the Senate what agency was in charge of maintenance for various sections of the levees helped prove the government's blatant disregard for the citizens affected by Hurricane Katrina (Marek).

After the hurricane was over there was a lot of talk about what went wrong and how lives could have been saved. However, at the heart of the blame stood the government. Many felt as if the government was neglectful and purposely left low-income communities for dead. They felt that it was the responsibility of the government to both properly prepare itself and the citizens for the hurricane and after the disaster, it was clear they failed. They felt as if the government should have also made more preparations for citizens such as preparing more evacuation sites, food, water, or shelter, especially in lower-income and rural communities. The government should have also made sure that it had emergency communications and that its people were properly educated on each group's role in preparation and evacuation. Something that the government had been provided with adequate funds to do (Edwards. 2015). The government should have taken Hurricane Katrina more seriously. They knew that there was a possibility of Hurricane Katrina becoming the way it did, yet they did nothing to prepare for such a huge storm, and instead focused more on helping in the aftermath rather than preparing beforehand (Marek).

In the federal reports, we see that a few affected locations are mentioned over and over again when it comes to government shortcomings. Many of these locations are communities similar to the ones shown in *Salvage The Bones*, they are low-income black dominated

communities that the government seemingly forgot about when it came to evacuation efforts.



These failures are also seen within the book with Esch and her family. Throughout the story, the family is prepping for the hurricane but the government does not help them whatsoever, other than giving them one measly call encouraging them to evacuate or else they will be on their own. The family was responsible for boarding up windows, building shelter for their animals, buying emergency food for the hurricane, collecting water, and keeping one another safe. However, even after all of their preparations they end up losing everything before the storm is up including some of the youngest members of their family, China, and her puppies. In the aftermath of the storm, the community relies on each other for shelter and food. This helps to show how the government failed Esch's community by not giving them the help and aid they needed.

How did the government respond to the hurricane (Isa)

The government responded in ways they saw fit to the catastrophic arrival of Hurricane Katrina. FEMA's initial response was to bring to the city 1,000 homeland security workers to aid the city of New Orleans in 2005. In 2005, FEMA also asked that no first responders assist/rescue in areas hit by Katrina without it being mobilized by local and state authorities. "FEMA seemed almost unwilling to accept help from non-government organizations. For example, the American Red Cross was not allowed into New Orleans following the disaster and was unable to supplement the government's response (American Red Cross 2005)." This statement is important because it goes to show how the government's responses were clearly "inadequate and inefficient." The government was not fully informed on the devastation that Katrina caused.

This paper relates to *Salvage the Bones* because such as in the book and in person the government barely did anything to help once the hurricane did hit. In the book at one point Esch's dad assumed that the Red Cross, if worse came to worse, would help supply food and many people in real life could have thought the same thing except that it's not what happened. FEMA made the decision to not use their help or supplies.

How did evacuation transpire? (Sean)

This section of the article will talk about why some people chose not to flee even though they were aware of the upcoming hurricane. After the hurricane, nearly 1800 people died.

African Americans' Decisions Not to Evacuate New Orleans Before Hurricane Katrina: A

Qualitative examines whether lower-income residents of the states hit by Hurricane Katrina's

wrath were not evacuated as a result of federal, state, and municipal government disaster

preparedness. Many people think that the government ought to be better equipped to deal with

these catastrophic natural events. The government participated in the outcome by making an

effort to provide assistance and medical support. Just about more important than aiding after the

storm is the preparation that is done beforehand. The death toll might not have been as terrible if

the state and federal administrations had taken a little more precaution (Elder, K., Xirsagar, S.,

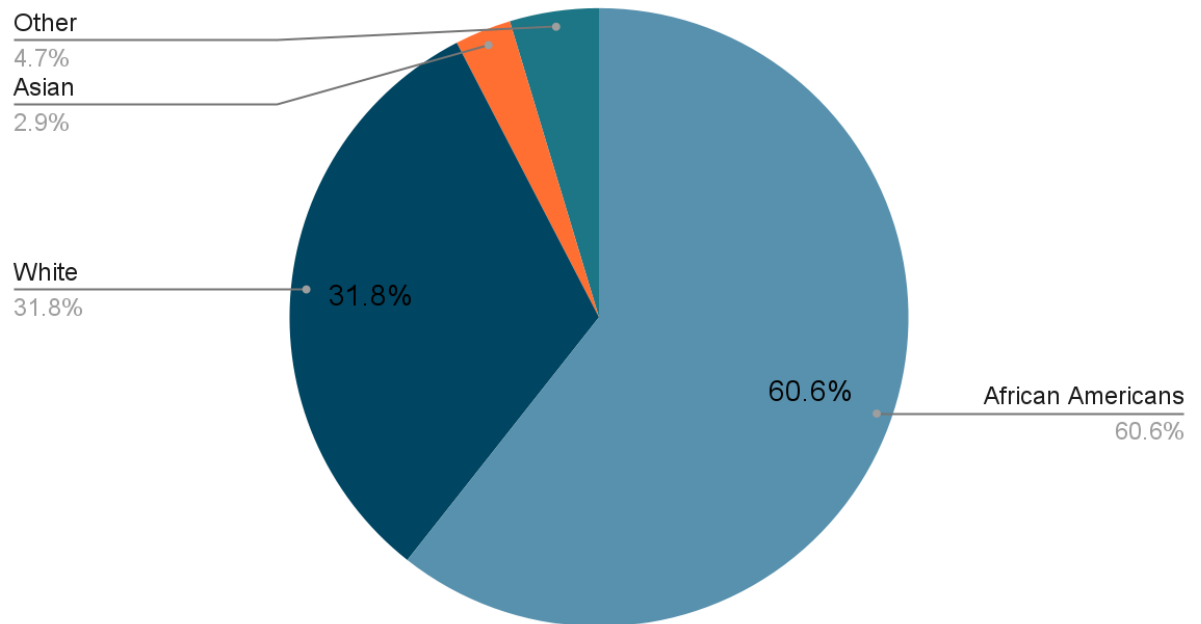
Miller, N., Bowen, S.A., Glover, S., Piper, C., 2007)

The government was completely unprepared for the aftermath of September 11th, the largest terrorist attack to ever occur in the United States. The way things were done in the globe has entirely changed, airport security has increased, and individuals can no longer stroll up to the airport to merely get a drink or meet new people. Four years after that terrible day, Katrina struck, and we weren't even surprised because we had the technology to detect changes in the weather, the strength of the storm, its width and length, and which states it would hit. Because of the contamination from garbage traveling through the river, even individuals who survived the storm are at danger for water-borne infectious diseases (Elder, K., Xirsagar, S., Miller, N.,

Bowen, S.A., Glover, S., Piper, C., 2007). African Americans made up the majority of those who

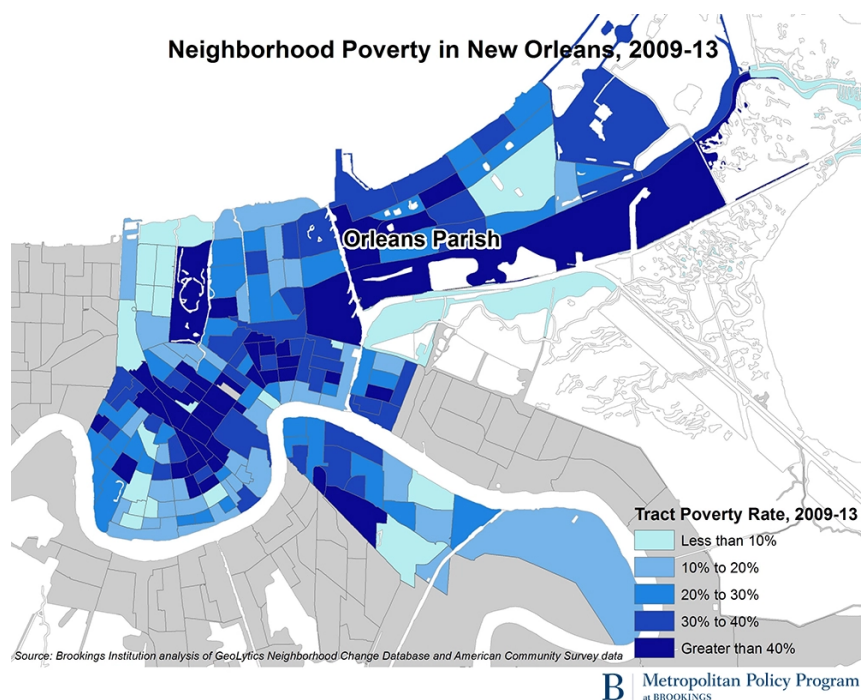
sought shelter during the hurricane, and they made up three-fourths of the 283 individuals reported missing and the majority of the 668 persons confirmed deceased from Louisiana.

The Ratio of Races in New Orleans



According to the paper's data, 92% of the study's participants did not flee. In 69% of the studies that did not leave, there were no kids living there. Most households made between \$15,000 and \$18,000 each year. Illinois singles' average family income in 2013 was \$63,000. That indicates that most of the research participants made \$8.65 or less per hour, compared to the \$43,000 average household income in New Orleans. Most were around 50 years old on average. Collected for the study, these participants remained due to either their prior hurricane experience or their religious convictions. "Even if we wanted to leave, we would not have made it that far," a research participant claims. We might as well stick it through the storm and pray. Thank God for prayer because he answered our prayer." (Elder, K., Xirsagar, S., Miller, N., Bowen, S.A.,

Glover, S., Piper, C., 2007). They were far below the average household income, thus the question of whether they could leave or not may not have been resolved. They most likely lacked the money to travel by plane, they might not have had a car, and they might not have had enough cash to pay for a hotel once they were situated. The government failed to provide these individuals with the means to relocate or a location to do so after being transferred. The mayor didn't tell them to leave until two days prior, which was a repeated theme of the government failing to step up. Flights increased at that time as people were being evacuated, making it almost impossible to get themselves to safety (Elder, K., Xirsagar, S., Miller, N., Bowen, S.A., Glover, S., Piper, C., 2007).



Because Esch belongs to an African American family that makes a little salary, this paper has a connection to the novel *Salvage the Bones*. The family, who lived on the Gulf of Mississippi and were aware that Hurricane Katrina was approaching, chose against leaving since they had other obligations. The government was not shown in the novel as helping to ensure that

even these low-income families were evacuated. Big Henry made the decision to stay, and his kids were forced to follow suit. Of the people and study participants that stayed, 73% were unmarried and 69% were childless (Elder, K., Xirsagar, S., Miller, N., Bowen, S.A., Glover, S., Piper, C., 2007). They made a decision, but because they were alone in the house, it had no impact on anyone around them. However, the family believes that they can survive without the state's assistance. Unlike other people who might have left if the government had given them the option. There are only so many things a low-income household can do in a natural disaster of this magnitude.

Conclusion

In conclusion, various pieces of evidence were used to support the claim that the government's actions were more focused on recovery rather than preparation and due to the lack of preparations, rural communities such as the ones shown in *Salvage the Bones* who were greatly affected by the hurricane, were left to prep for the storm on their own. Thus they had to rely on their community when instead they should have been able to lean on the government. Using the data set claim, research on the government's preparations, the government's responses and their mistakes, we were able to properly analyze and prove our claim. With this, hopefully in the future the government will take the proper preparations needed to be able to efficiently and effectively help citizens who are affected by the next natural disaster.

Works Cited

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