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When someone hears the words “natural disaster” their mind will wander to some horrible incident that has either recently occurred or has personally affected them. The interesting thing about natural disasters is that they can take many forms and can hurt many different people. One of the largest natural disasters to hit the United States was hurricane Katrina. It was not only the most expensive natural disasters to hit the United States, but one of the most devastating. Katrina hurt the people of New Orleans and surrounding areas, destroyed the city, and caused many more continuous issues for years to come.

These incidents are called natural disasters because they are awful events that happen naturally, and there is nothing that can really be done to prevent them. If we can't prevent them we must ask, what can be done to help dwindle the effects of them. There are many websites like [www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov) that can give advice on what to do before, during, and after a natural disaster hits. We discussed in class the main impacts of natural disasters and what they can do to the environment, but they aren't the only things that can affect certain areas (Kohl n.pag.). Recently in the gulf, there was the BP oil spill. This was also a large disaster that hurt people in New Orleans, but did not happen from natural causes. This was a very costly problem that happened, and it was very hard to recover from. Many species of animals were hurt in the short term and the long-term effects are still unknown. It is issues like these that are costly for people living in these areas and ultimately affect their livelihood.

The social and environmental effects of these two incidents was devastating, but brings light to what the United States needs to work on to improve their efforts of recovery after such events. The two articles we discuss and analyze in this paper take two sides on what Hurricane Katrina did to the people of New Orleans and its surrounding areas.

In the article *Environment, Disaster, and Race After Katrina* a closer look is taken into the effects of Katrina based on social aspects of New Orleans. There have always been severe social issues in New Orleans, especially between race and class, but when Katrina hit these issues became even more extreme. In the low income and predominantly black area of New Orleans, hurricane Katrina hit very hard. There are a lot of ties into why this occurred including property value being significantly lower in this area. The article focused on the vulnerability of this area in New Orleans. The people that live there rely more of public transportation and they aren't able to purchase the proper items to be able to protect themselves against natural disasters such as a hurricane. From their dependence of public transportation, it is clear that most of these people don't have cars. If they don't have cars, when a disaster hits they have absolutely no way of being able to evacuate. This is one of the severe problems that lead to large amounts of death in New Orleans from Katrina. This lower class of people weren't prepared for the hurricane because they weren't able to purchase things to have their house prepared incase a hurricane hit. With this, they also wouldn't be able to afford to recover after the hurricane (Pastor et al n.pag.). After hurricane Katrina this was clearly seen. The article also made a very good point that people part of the middle class can more easily get assistance from others to help recover because they know how to get the help. Lower classes are at a clear disadvantage, and in New Orleans Hurricane Katrina

made this obvious. Natural disasters like hurricanes, as awful as they are, can give light to many social issues that are occurring all over the United States. These horrible moments can help us learn for the future, and hopefully be able to prevent hardship early by helping lower class citizens before a natural disaster hits.

Hurricanes have historically had detrimental effects on the environment and can even change the entire makeup of the coastline. Christopher D. Eamon, Patrick Fitzpatrick, and Dennis D. Truax witnessed findings that support this claim along the Mississippi Gulf Coast after Hurricane Katrina and recorded their evidence in *Observations of Structural Damage Caused by Hurricane Katrina on the Mississippi Gulf Coast*. The article enumerates the threatening aspects of massive storms like Hurricane Katrina and explains why these factors make them dangerous (n.pag.).

The researchers clarify that water load and wind load are the main issues that environmental and manmade structures have to prepare for and withstand through the storm. The authors explain the science of the “storm surge,” stating that it rises gradually then rapidly and is almost impossible to prepare for or prevent. The storm surge is affected by a multitude of environmental factors including barometric pressure, storm size, storm central pressure, maximum wind speed, and the makeup of the coastline that it is impacting. The authors also speak on the power of wind loads during a storm. While they do state that wind poses less of a threat than the storm surge, it is still an eminent danger. They can cause tornadoes during the hurricane, wipe out trees, and destroy roofs of houses (Eamon et al n.pag.). All of this is important to consider, as Hurricanes are a frequent hazard.

While the people inhabiting the coastline that these scientists observed understand and are aware of the risk they face, it does not mean that they should accept it. Storms