Advancing Humanity In New Orleans

Learning Community
Michelle Tabit, Ph.D., McMaster Fellow
Doug Kane, Ph.D., McMaster Associate Fellow
Brooke Gordon, McMaster Scholar
Amanda Demland, McMaster Scholar
Joel Billings, McMaster Scholar
Ben Gates, McMaster Scholar
Laura Derov, McMaster Scholar

USING SLAVE NARRATIVES TO BROADEN TEACHING AND LEARNING

Michelle Tabit, Ph.D., McMaster Fellow

During the 2009-10 academic year, the McMaster School sent the New Orleans learning community back to Louisiana to continue its work. The group included five scholars, two fellows, and one associate fellow. Benjamin Gates and Joel Billings, two integrated social studies majors, selected as scholars worked in a New Orleans school with third and eighth grade classes where they developed strategies to assist students who had been traumatized by Hurricane Katrina. Scholar Amanda Demland of the Arts & Humanities Division documented the work of all the scholars by creating a photo journal for each of our community partners and the McMaster School. Brooke Gordon, a business major and returning McMaster Scholar, worked with our community partners at Southeastern Louisiana University to create a documentary film that illustrates the ongoing devastation in the wetlands. Although many such videos exist, Brooke's is geared toward college-age students trying to create a sense of responsibility and encourage action. Finally, Laura Derov, also a returning scholar, worked at the Amistad Research Center on Tulane University's campus. Our community partner Brenda Billop-Square requested that Laura process a collection of Ninth Ward Katrina artifacts. Over the course of the week, Laura learned the finer points of archival processing and gained insight into future career possibilities. Dr. Sandra Golden conducted two oral histories

during our stay. Brenda Billop-Square and her mother shared their stories about life in New Orleans that include the good times and the challenges faced by those who choose to live in the community. Dr. Douglas Kane continued his work with Southeastern Louisiana University conducting water quality studies. Finally, Dr. Michelle Tabit conducted research at the Amistad Research Center in an effort to obtain some primary source documents for her classroom and to help the students of Northwest Ohio deepen their understanding of history and broaden their field of study to include sources beyond their regional borders.

As an instructor at Defiance College the majority of my time is consumed with teaching; therefore, it is a rare opportunity to find time to conduct archival research. During a recent trip to New Orleans, I stumbled upon a cache of slave narratives collected by the Works Progress Administration [WPA] during the 1930s. Upon seeing these documents a new line of inquiry opened for me: rather than write a traditional research paper, I began brainstorming ideas about how to use these documents in my classroom. After all, each year I teach the U.S. history survey and use the traditional textbook, narrative, or monographs; however, this collection of thirty oral histories provided me with a unique opportunity to move the students taking the second half of the U.S. history survey beyond rote memorization of the facts that define the Reconstruction Era into a line of critical thinking and analysis. Moreover, the slave narratives would provide the students with the opportunity to use traces of the past to construct a meaningful present.

Since the 1850s history educators have been in constant discussion about the proper instruction of history and how to use primary sources in the classroom. One side of the debate argues that history should be taught from a textbook. Yet, upon close examination a textbook offers a carefully distilled narrative that generally highlights individual achievements, war, and politics. In essence, textbooks tell the story of the victors. Micheal Eamon noted that historian Egerton Ryerson (1803-1882) suggested that, "They [textbooks] are little more than dry digests of general events, which do not interest the pupil, and which he cannot appreciate; and learning the answers to the questions is a mere work of memory, without any exercise of discrimination, judgment, taste or language, -- forgotten as soon as learned" (Eamon, 2006). As early as 1855, Ryerson suggested that historians showcase antiquity in a laboratory or museum setting. His ideas set the stage for a new more dynamic and engaging method of teaching history. Despite the excitement surrounding this new method of engaging students, primary sources pose several problems; most are fragile, many are located in far-away places, and some historians see the documents as mere illustrations of the past and fail to help students learn to use them effectively. The same

quandaries face historians in the 21st century; however, the information age has made the situation more complicated. According to Elizabeth Ridgway:

> While new technologies have brought people closer together, they have also brought them into contact with an overwhelming array of information sources. Amid such cacophony of competing voices, the ability to analyze, identify, fact-check, and—as needed—challenge sources of information is crucial to Americans' success in an increasingly media saturated knowledge economy. This ability is also critical to fully informed participation in the life of the nation. (Ridgway, 2009)

In fact, numerous studies show that using primary sources, such as documents in a history class or science experiments in science courses, encourages active learning. Ultimately, the use of primary sources encourages active learning, thereby compelling students to question the past and to begin to form their own explanations and chronicles of the past. At the same time, instructors can expand their students' understanding of the historical time period (Levy, 2004).

Using primary sources in a U.S. history survey class is a challenge. Simply stated, historians want to "survey" history, covering volumes of material in a 15-week semester, making it difficult to delve into one period or issue with any great depth. According to Levy another reason historians shy away from incorporating primary sources is that they "fear giving control over to the students lest the students not learn the main 'lessons'." He goes on to suggest that many historians are afraid of "losing control when they are covering subjects for which they seek to reveal a usable past" (Levy, 2004). Despite the challenges posed by the use of primary source documents in the classroom the potential for student growth and the possibilities of creating a broader and more balanced understanding of complex issues exceeds the fear. Despite the potential challenges, twelve Defiance College students worked with a series of slave narratives collected from the Amistad Research Center on Tulane University's campus to gain a deeper understanding of the lives of Blacks living in New Orleans in the years following emancipation. Ultimately, they created a series of lesson plans that they can use in their own classrooms dealing with issues of diversity, literature, and slavery/emancipation. In addition, these lesson plans are being shared with the Amistad Research Center for their website in an effort to help other teachers find new and innovative ways to incorporate primary source documents like slave narratives into their own classrooms.

During the Great Depression the Works Progress Administration [WPA], one of the government's "put America to work programs," hired writers to interview and collect the stories of former American slaves. In total, the initiative, through the Federal Writers' Project, collected approximately 2,300 stories. The WPA supplied workers with a 333-question survey with instructions that some items were more important than others and that workers should use their own discretion when using the questionnaire (Shaw, 2003). As historian David Campos explains, these are "rare, firsthand accounts—of what daily life was like for the men and women who were enslaved" (Campos, 2006). Interviewers asked questions ranging from where the participant was born, to the age of the participant, to what their life as a slave was like. Stories varied wildly in size with some resulting in only a paragraph of information while others provided multi-paged documents. As students began to read the slave narratives, they identified some common themes. First, students were challenged by the various dialects—some were difficult to understand—while others seemed as though they were edited by the interviewer to ensure clarity. Second, students realized that many of the slaves did not know their age, something so basic that people take for granted in the modern era; yet, for those who cannot pinpoint their own date of birth it created a sense of disquiet that emerged over and over again. Third, the narratives provided students with insight into the harsh realities of slavery—hard labor, mistreatment, the destruction of the family, and the severe punishments endured by many while in the bonds of slavery. Students reading the slave narratives learned one of the basic lessons of being a good historian that historical records are not always easy to read or interpret, but also that the data may have been tainted. Throughout their reading of the narratives students kept in mind that most of the former slaves were interviewed by white WPA workers who may have altered the documents to their own advantage. In fact, many historians argue that the information is tainted. For example, Stephanie Shaw points out that some of the former slaves were interviewed by members of the families who had owned them, which could have resulted in even more constrained responses than otherwise offered (Shaw, 2003). With this in mind students conducted their own research using textbooks, monographs, online databases, and online archives to make historical assessments regarding the documents in their possession. As a result, many fruitful discussions took place in class dealing with a variety of issues such as living conditions during slavery, life during Reconstruction, the impact of the Great Migration of the early 1900s, and life during the Great Depression.

After contextualizing the information, students were asked to create lesson plans for their own classes and that could be used as models by other teachers. The instructional plans would address the National History

Standards under United States History, Era 2: Standard 3C, which states, "the student understands African life under slavery" (National Center for History in the Schools, 2010). According to the Council, the best way for students in grades 5-8 to learn about daily life, culture, and history is to draw upon the firsthand accounts of people who live during that time period. The slave narratives from the Amistad Research Center provided a great primary source for learning about this topic.

Students divided into groups of 3-4 members and set about creating lessons plans. The guidelines for the assignment required that students divide their lesson plans into three parts—the objective of the lesson, the method/strategy that they would use to teach the students, and an assessment tool that would ensure that the goal was achieved. One group wanted their students to understand the role of slavery and how it affected people living in the South. The method they chose to employ encompassed a wide variety of strategies including video, group and individual research, role-play, and a reflective journal to assess what they learned from the experience. Another group chose a more literary focus for their lesson. They asked students to read the slave narratives and explain what they learned about the culture of the former slaves. The cultural lessons would then be transformed into a play that would make connections between past experiences and present. To complete this project the students would engage in extensive research, journaling, and ultimately produce a play.

At the end of the slave narrative project we conducted a group reflection to determine what the U.S. history survey students had learned from this process. First, students explained that they now had a deeper understanding of racism in American history. They realized that the questions of why people are racist and how slavery could go on in the U.S. for so long do not have easy answers. Moreover, they explained that they have a better understanding of the racial tensions that still exist in America and specifically in New Orleans. Students also came to a realization that the textbook does not provide them with enough information to make an informed decision, and that in order to truly understand a historical topic they need to push beyond the classroom, the textbook, and Google and interact with materials from the time. One student commented that they had never considered what it was like to be a slave—auctioned, touched like a piece of meat, like an animal instead of a human being.

In the final analysis the use of primary sources in a U.S. history survey class exposed Defiance College students to a wide variety of sources. Moreover, it demonstrated to the students that the past is complex and cannot be easily summed up in a textbook. By allowing students to work with these slave

narratives they learned how "to do" history. By the end of the term, I hope that my students have a greater appreciation for the past and have learned that they cannot expect to understand the past by simply reading a book or surfing the Internet and that studying history is more fun when one engages with the documents. As a classroom instructor it is easy to forget the importance of the feel, smell, and excitement of using firsthand documents and this project allowed me for a brief moment to reconnect with that part of my discipline and help my students reconstruct a portion of the past that brought a marginalized group out of the shadows and ultimately provided a resource for future generations of teachers and scholars.

REFERENCES

Anderson, M. A. (2010, Jan/Feb). The power of primary sources, part 2: Build your own professional development. *MultiMedia & Internet@Schools*.

Campos, D. (2006, Winter/Spring). Slave narratives from the Federal Writer's Project 1936-1938: Stories as a catalyst for historical comprehension. *Black History Bulletin, 69*(2), 8-14.

Eamon, M. (2006, May). A "genuine relationship with the actual": New perspectives on primary sources, history and the Internet in the classroom. *History Teacher*, *39*(3), 297-314.

Levy, P. (2004, November). Teaching the 1960s with primary sources. *History Teacher, 38*(1), 9-20.

Meyers, L. (2004, April). Bearing witness, memories of American slavery: Narratives from the 1930s WPA collections. *Arkansas Review: A Journal of Delta Studies*, *35*(1), 59-60.

National Center for History in the Schools. (2010). United States era 2. Retrieved from http://nchs.ucla.edu

Nueman, P. C. (2009, November). The challenges of primary sources, collaboration, and the K-16 Elizabeth Murray Project. *History Teacher*, *43*(1), 67-86.

Ridgway, E. (2009). Teaching with primary sources: Professional development from the Library of Congress at your fingertips. *Knowledge Quest, 38*(2), 60-61.

Shaw, S. (2003, August). Using the WPA ex-slave narratives to study the impact of the Great Depression. *Journal of Southern History*, *69*(3), 623-59.

PRELIMINARY DEVELOPMENT OF A ZOOPLANKTON SALINITY INDEZ (ZSI) FOR THE LAKE MAUREPAS/LAKE PONTCHARTRAIN ESTUARINE ECOSYSTEM

Douglas D. Kane, Ph.D., McMaster Fellow

The Lake Pontchartrain/Lake Maurepas ecosystem is a large estuarine ecosystem found in southern Lousiana, lying north of the city of New Orleans and the Mississippi River and north and northwest of the Gulf of Mexico (Figure 1). Lake Pontchartrain is considered one of the large lakes of the world and is fluviatile in origin (Herdendorf,1982), being formed by sediment deposition from the Mississippi River. Before 1890 the land around this ecosystem had up to 3.64 million ha of bald cypress (*Taxodium distichum*) (Conner & Toliver, 1990), but today there remains only approximately 140,000 ha (Keddy et al., 2007). Logging was responsible for the original loss of the bald cypress swamps during the early 20th century (Keddy et al., 2007). However, there are a number of impediments that prevent regeneration of the swamps today. These range from the invasive nutria (*Myocastor coypus*) that strip the bark from young trees to increased salinity levels in the ecosystem due to saltwater instrusion (Hoeppner, Shaffer & Perkins, 2008; but see Sikora & Kjerfve, 1985) that prevent re-establishment and growth of the bald cypress.

For my McMaster School for Advancing Humanity project I used my background in developing ecological indices using plankton (Kane, Gordon, Munawar, Charlton & Culver, 2008, 2009) and modified my previous approach for the Lake Maurepas/ Lake Pontchartrain ecosystem. The purpose of this research was to use organisms (specifically zooplankton) as indicators of water quality. My goals were three-fold: 1) determine water quality parameters (i.e. salinity, dissolved oxygen etc.), 2) determine plankton community composition, and 3) determine which aspects of the plankton community correlate with the various water quality parameters. Because of the importance of

salinity in preventing successful regeneration of the bald cypress swamps, I focused on devloping a Zooplankton Salinity Index (ZSI) by which one could gauge salinity by looking at zooplankton community composition.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Plankton is sensitive to environmental changes and inexpensive to collect, both requirements for useful monitoring programs (Schindler, 1987; Conroy, Kane & Culver, 2008). A number of indices were developed during the 20th century and predate the development of a plankton-based index to evaluate lake ecosystems. Leach & Herron (1992) reviewed the history of lake classification attempts, noting that the first attempt to characterize lakes according to trophic status was made by Weber (1907), who divided lakes into the oligotrophic (low nutrients)—eutrophic (high nutrients) continuum. A number of limnologists developed indices for placing lakes into this framework (Hutchinson, 1957; Rodhe, 1958; Chapra & Robertson, 1977; Vollenweider, 1968; Dobson, Gilbertson & Sly, 1974; Vallentyne, Shapiro & Beeton,1969). Indices of biotic integrity are tools to measure the biological water quality of ecosystems. Karr (1981) first devised an Index of Biological Integrity (IBI) to measure biological integrity in a stream using fish as indicator species. A variety of different groups of organisms have recently been used to develop lake indices of biotic integrity (Beck & Hach, 2009). One of these indices, a Planktonic IBI (P-IBI) was developed for Lake Erie (Kane, Gordon, Munawar, Charlton & Culver, 2008) demonstrating that plankton are useful indicators of lake conditions. Further, indices of biotic integrity have been developed using zooplankton in estuaries (Carpenter, Johnson & Buchanan, 2006).

METHODOLOGY

Field sampling was conducted on December 16 and December 18, 2009. Plankton samples were taken using a 12-inch diameter mouth, 63-um plankton net (Turtox). Water quality parameters were determined using a YSI 556 multiprobe (Yellow Springs Instruments, Yellow Springs, Ohio). Additional water quality parameters were measured (i.e. Secchi depth, nutrients etc.) but are not reported here. In the laboratory, samples were examined microscopically at 30x for zooplankton (Stereomaster, Fisher Scientific). Zooplankton taxa known to be only found in freshwater (i.e. most cladocerans, rotifers) were classified as freshwater, while zooplankton taxa known to be marine (i.e. chaetognaths, marine gammarid amphipods, etc.) were classified as marine (Todd, Laverack & Boxshall, 1996). The number of zooplankton belonging to marine groups were then subtracted from the number belonging to freshwater groups. Since calanoid copepods can live in a wide range of salinities and were abundant in the samples, they were used

in denominator of the equation in order to scale the index. The Zooplankton Salinity Index (ZSI) was devleoped using the following equation:

Zooplankton Salinity Index-

$$\frac{\text{(\# zp from fw groups) – (\# zp from marine groups)}}{\text{\# calanoid copepods (juv. +adult)}}$$

The index was calculated using the first 100 individuals encountered in a sample or if the sample held less than 100 individuals the whole sample was examined. Finally, a regression analyses was conducted using Excel (Microsoft Office 2007) to determine if the ZSI correlated with salinity levels in the Lake Maurepas/ Lake Pontchartrain ecoystem.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Water temperatures were highest near the inflow of the Tickfaw River to Lake Maurepas (LM-2) and decreased moving through Pass Manchac (PM) and then increased moving into Lake Pontchartrain (LP-1) (Figure 2). Dissolved oxygen levels were lowest at LM-2 and LP-1 (~6 mg/L). At all other sites the concentrations were >10mg/L (Figure 3). Salinity was lowest (~0.5 ppt) at LM-2 and increased moving through Pass Manchac into Lake Pontchartrain (~1 ppt at all sites) (Figure 4). Salinity in Chef Menteur Pass was much greater (~5 ppt) than any of the other sites (Figure 4). ZSI values were highest at LM-2, LM-3, and LP-1 and were lowest at CP-3 (Figure 5). These results indicate more saline conditions in Chef Menteur Pass than Lake Maurepas, Pass Manchac, or Lake Pontchartrain. However, because only 2 zooplankters were found at LM-3, this site was excluded from further analysis. Finally, the ZSI did not correlate significantly with salinity levels (Figure 6).

Recent studies of the plankton of Lake Pontchartrain have mostly focused on the phytoplankton, particularly phytoplankton community structure as influenced by urban effluent inputs following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita (Pinckney, Wee, Hou & Walker, 2009) and the opening of the Bonnet Carré spillway during the Mississippi River flood of 2008 (Mize &Demcheck, 2009; White et al., 2009). While earlier studies have examined the zooplankton (and indeed the whole food web) of Lake Pontchartrain (Darnell, 1961), there is a paucity of recent data on zooplankton of the Lake Pontchartrain ecosystem. In the recent phytoplankton studies, researchers have looked at how disturbance in terms of nutrients, salinity, and turbidity affected community composition (Mize & Demcheck, 2009, Pinckney; Wee, Hou & Walker, 2009; White et al., 2009). Similarly the ZSI looks at a water quality parameter that has changed due to disturbance, namely salinity. Because

of the negative impact of salinity on bald cypress regeneration and growth (Hoeppner, Shaffer & Perkins, 2008) and because of the importance that zooplankton play in the Lake Pontchartrain food web (Darnell, 1961) future studies of zooplankton in this ecosystem are warranted.

CONCLUSION

Because of the poor weather conditions, I was only able to sample in one site in Lake Pontchartrain. It is likely that if I were able to sample across the gradient of salinity found in Lake Pontchartrain (~1-~6 ppt) (Sikora & Kjerfve, 1985) that I would have found a stronger correlation between the ZSI and salinity. Thus during December 2010 I am going to repeat this study and hopefully be able to sample several sites in Lake Pontchartrain and also in Lake Borgne (an arm of the Gulf of Mexico south of Chef Menteur Pass) which has salinities up to ~16 ppt (Wiseman Jr., Swenson & Power, 1990). Thus I will get both a wider range of salinities and more intermediate salinity values. With this data I should be able to determine the utility of the ZSI.

REFLECTION

The Deepwater Horizon Gulf Coast Oil Disaster that occurred during spring and summer of 2010 produced oil plumes that could affect water quality and plankton communities (Sutter, 2010) in the Gulf of Mexico and associated water bodies. Thus having water quality and plankton data before the spill could be useful when compared with post-spill data, especially if the oil plumes enter Lakes Borgne and Pontchartrain. Although most people see the marine mammals, reptiles, and birds covered in oil on the news, people forget that oil may also negatively affect the base of the food web—the plankton. Because of its potential to directly affect the plankton, the oil produced by the Deepwater Horizon Disaster may have a greater impact on the plankton of the region than Hurricane Katrina and other hurricanes. Since the fisheries in the region depend on organisms that feed on the plankton (i.e. fish) or are planktonic for their early life history (i.e. shrimp, crabs etc.), the plankton are intimately tied to the people of southern Louisiana. Now that the oil has stopped spilling into the Gulf, it is my hope that restoration efforts are successful in mitigating this disaster. To me, the continued natural and human disasters that befall southern Louisiana and the lack of care for the people of the region underscore the need for the McMaster School for Advancing Humanity to continue sending students and faculty from Defiance College to southern Lousiana. Maybe in a small way we can make the community partners that we work with realize that other Americans *do* care about them, their location, and their way of life.

REFERENCES

Beck, M.W., & Hatch, L.K. (2009). A review of research on the development of lake

indices of biotic integrity. *Environmental Reviews, 17,* 21-44.

Carpenter, K.E., Johnson, J.M., & Buchanan, C. (2006). An index of biotic integrity based on the summer polyhaline zooplankton community of the Chesapeake Bay. *Marine Environmental Research, 62,* 165-180.

Chapra, S. C., & Robertson, A. (1977). Great Lakes eutrophication: The effects of point source control of total phosphorus. *Science, 196,* 1448-1450.

Conner, W.H., & Toliver, J.R. (1990). Long-term trends in the bald-cypress (*Taxodium distichum*) resource in Louisiana (U.S.A.). *Forest Ecology and Management, 33-34,* 543-557.

Conroy, J.D., Kane, D.D., & Culver, D.A. (2008). Declining Lake Erie ecosystem health? Evidence from a multi-year, lake-wide, plankton study. In M. Munawar & R. Heath (Eds.), *Checking the Pulse of Lake Erie* (pp. 369-408). Stuttgart, Germany: E. Schweizerbart Science Publishers.

Darnell, R.M. (1961). Trophic spectrum of an estuarine community, based on studies of Lake Pontchartrain. *Ecology, 42,* 553-568.

Dobson, H. F., Gilbertson, M., & Sly, P.G. (1974). A summary and comparison of nutrients

and related water quality in Lake Erie, Ontario, Huron, and Superior. *Journal of the Fisheries Research Board of Canada, 31,* 731-738.

Herdendorf, C.E. (1982). Large lakes of the world. *Journal of Great Lakes Research, 8,* 378-412.

Hoeppner, S.S., Shaffer, G.P., & Perkins, T.E. (2008). Through droughts and hurricanes: Tree mortality, forest structure, and biomass production in a coastal swamp targeted for restoration in the Mississippi River Deltaic Plain. *Forest Ecology and Management, 256,* 937-948.

Hutchinson, G. E. (1957). Treatise on Limnology, Volume 1. New York : John Wiley and Sons.

Kane, D.D., Gordon, S.I., Munawar, M., Charlton, M.N., & Culver, D.A. (2008). A Planktonic Index of Biotic Integrity (P-IBI) for Lake Erie: a new technique for checking the pulse of Lake Erie. In M. Munawar & R. Heath (Eds.), *Checking the Pulse of Lake Erie* (pp. 347-367). Stuttgart, Germany: E. Schweizerbart Science Publishers.

Kane, D.D., Gordon, S.I., Munawar, M., Charlton, M.N., & Culver, D.A. (2009). The Planktonic Index of Biotic Integrity (P-IBI): a new technique for assessing lake ecosystem health. *Ecological Indicators, 9,* 1234-1247.

Karr, J.R. (1981). Assessment of biotic integrity using fish communities. *Fisheries, 6,* 21-27.

Keddy, P.A., Campbell, D., McFalls, T., Shaffer, G.P., Moreau, R., Dranguet, C., & Heleniak, R. (2007). The wetlands of Lakes Pontchartrain and Maurepas: Past, present and future. *Environmental Reviews, 15,* 43-77.

Leach, J.H., & Herron, R.C. (1992). A review of lake habitat classification. In W.-D.N. & P.G. Sly (Eds.), *The development of an aquatic habitat classification system for lakes*. (pp. 27-57). United States: CRC Press.

Microsoft Office. (2007). Microsoft Excel.

Mize, S.V., & Demcheck, D.K. (2009). Water quality and phytoplankton communities in Lake Pontchartain during and agter the Bonnet Carrét opening, April to October 2008, in Louisiana, USA. *Geo-Marine Letters, 29,* 431-440.

Pinckney, J.L., Wee, J.L., Hou, A., & Walker, N.D. (2009). Phytoplankton community structure responses to urban effluent inputs following Hurricans Katrina and Rita. *Marine Ecology Progress Series, 387,* 137-146.

Rodhe, W. (1958). Primarproduktion und Seetypen. *Verhandlungen - Internationale Vereinigung fuer Theoretische und Angewandte Limnologie. 13,* 121-141.

Schindler, D.W. (1987). Detecting ecosystem response to anthropogenic stress. *Canadian Journal of Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences, 44 (Supplement 1),* 6-25.

Sikora, W.B., & Kjerfve, B. (1985). Factors influencing the salinity regime of Lake Pontchartrain, Louisiana, a Shallow Coastal Lagoon: analysis of a long-term data set. *Estuaries, 8,* 170-180.

Sutter, J.D. (2010, May 28). The Gulf's silent environmental crisis. *CNN*. Retrived from http://www.cnn.com

Todd, C.D., Laverack, M.S., & Boxshall, G.A. (1996). Coastal marine zooplankton. 2nd Edition. New York: Cambridge.

Vallentyne, J. R., Shapiro, J, & Beeton, A.M. (1969). The process of eutrophication and criteria for trophic state determination. *Modelling the Eutrophication Process Proceedings of the Workshop*. pp. 57-67. St. Petersburg, Florida.

Vollenweider, R. A. (1968). Scientific fundamentals of the eutrophication of lakes and flowing waters, with particular reference to nitrogen and phosphorus as factors in eutrophication. OECD Rep. DAS/SCI/ 68.27 U. N. Organization for Economic and Cultural Development. Paris.

Weber, C. A. (1907). Aufbau und vegetation der Moore Norddeutschlands. *Bot. Jahrb. Beibl.* 90:19-34.

White, J.R., Fulweiler, R.W., Li, C.Y., Bargu, S., Walker, N.D., Twilley, R.R., & Green S.E. (2009). Mississippi River flood of 2008: observations of a large freshwater diversion on physical, chemical, and biological characteristics of a shallow estuarine lake. *Environmental Science and Technology,* 43, 5599-5604.

Wiseman Jr., W.J., Swenson, E.M., & Power, J. (1990). Salinity trends in Lousiana estuaries. *Estuaries, 13,* 265-271.

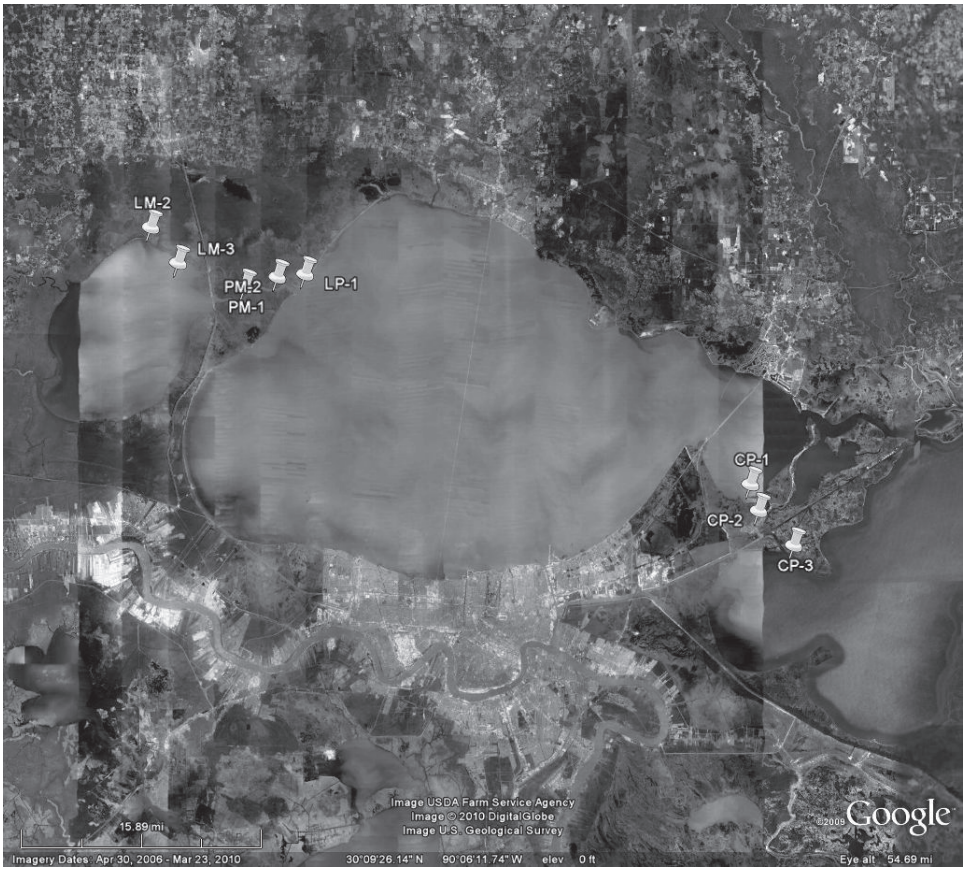

Figure 1- Sampling sites in the Lake Maurepas- Lake Pontchartrain estuarine ecosystem, December 2009. LM- Lake Maurepas, PM- Pass Manchac, LP- Lake Pontchartrain, CP- Chef Menteur Pass.

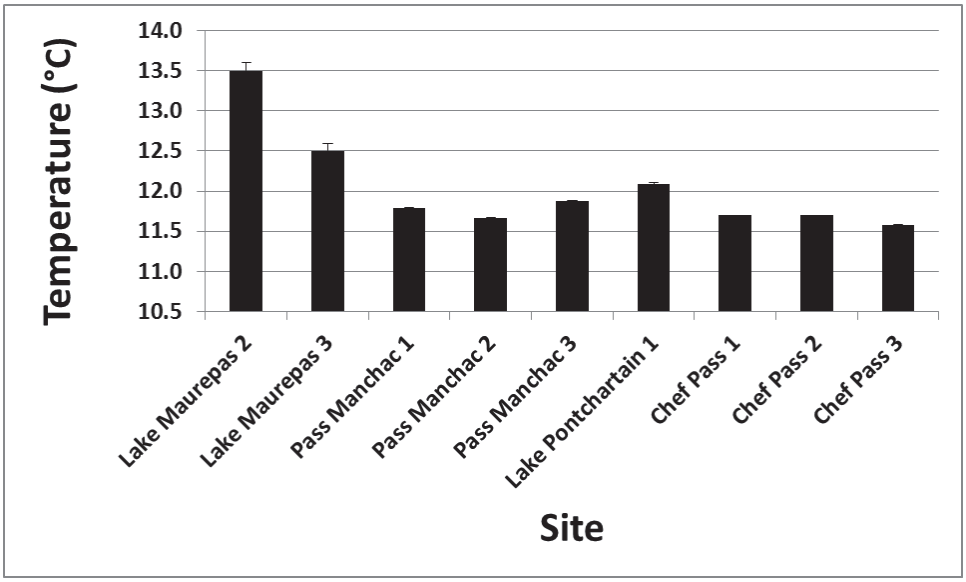

Figure 2- Mean (+/- standard error) water column temperature (°C) at sites in the Lake Maurepas- Lake Pontchartrain estuarine ecosystem, December 2009.

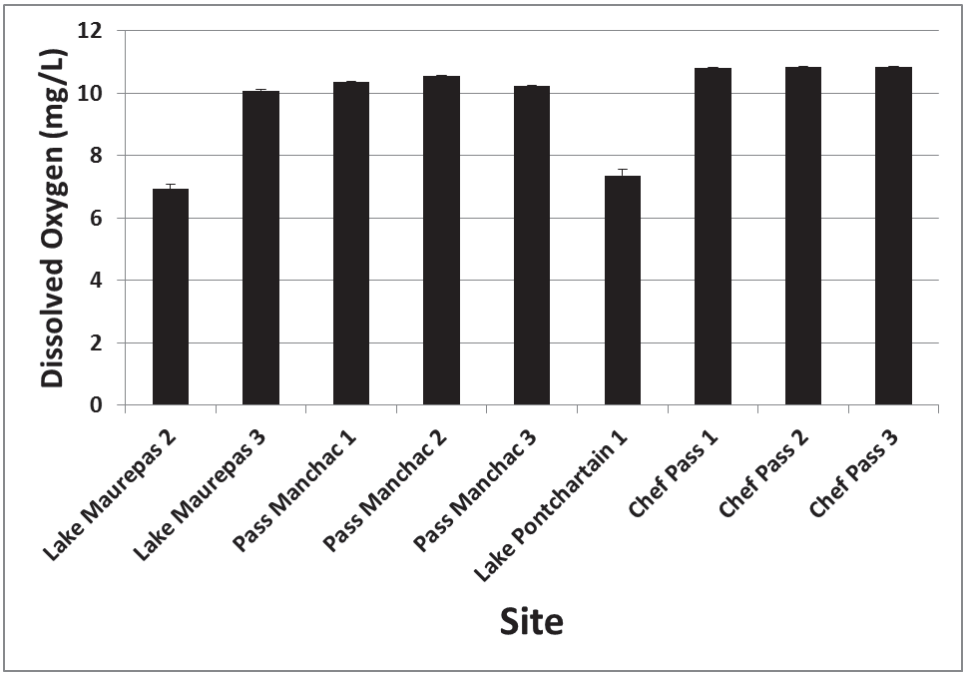

Figure 3- Mean (+/- standard error) water column dissolved oxygen (mg/L) at sites in the Lake Maurepas- Lake Pontchartrain estuarine ecosystem, December 2009.

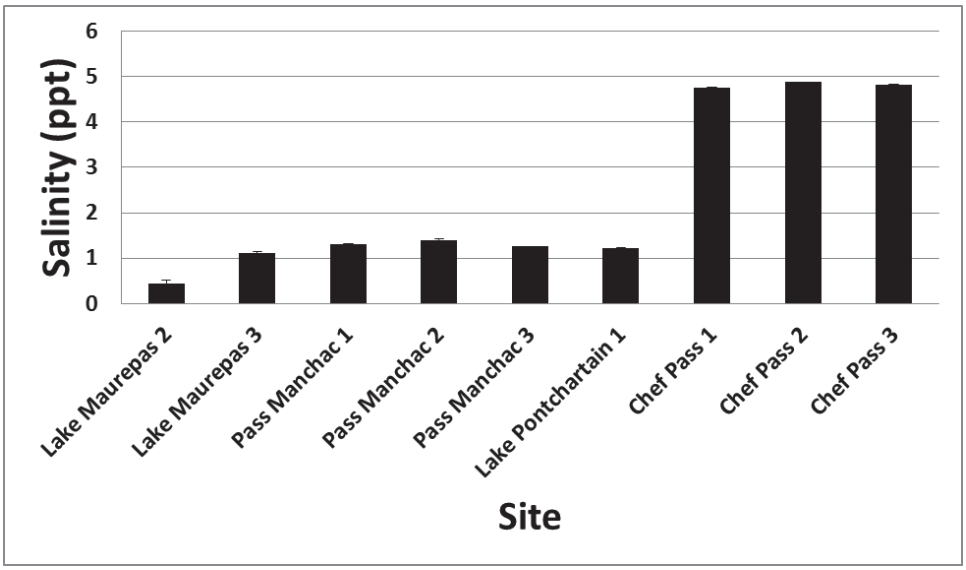

Figure 4- Mean (+/- standard error) water column salinity (ppt) at sites in the Lake Maurepas- Lake Pontchartrain estuarine ecosystem, December 2009.

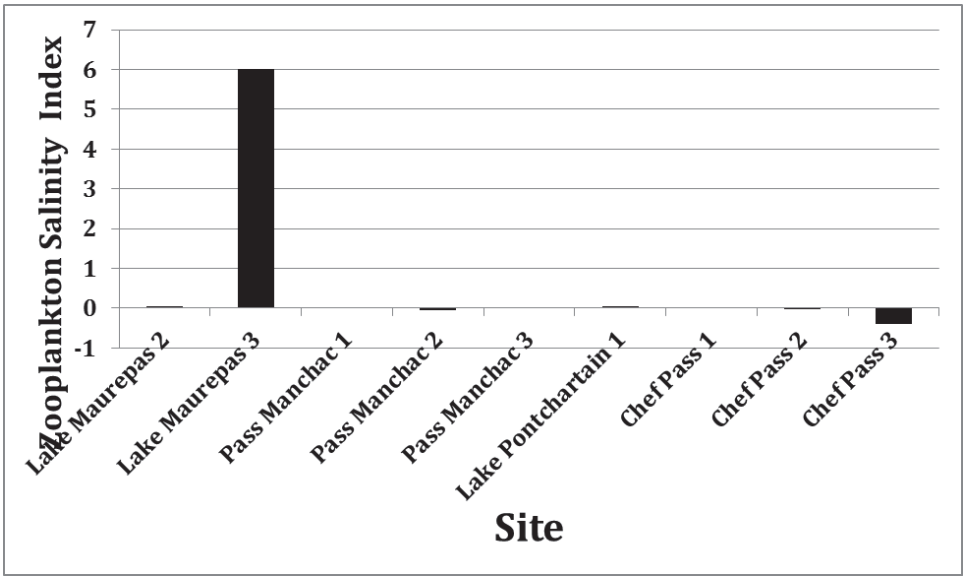

Figure 5- Zooplankton Salinity Index (ZSI) at sites in the Lake Maurepas-Lake Pontchartrain-Lake Borgne estuarine ecosystem, December 2009.

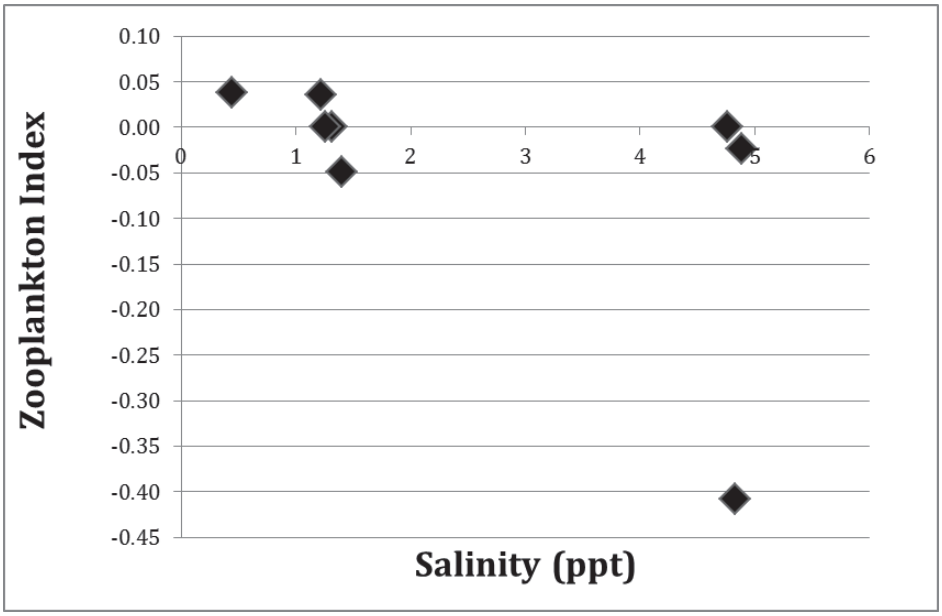

Figure 6- Zooplankton Salinity Index (ZSI) vs. mean salinity (ppt)at sites in the Lake Maurepas- Lake Pontchartrain estuarine ecosystem, December 2009. Linear regression results- **$y = -0.0408x + 0.0517$, $r^2 = 0.2883$, $p=0.17$.** Note: LM-3 data removed due to not enough zooplankton in sample.

SOUTHEASTERN LOUISIANA WETLAND LOSS

Brooke Gordon, McMaster Scholar

While New Orleans is often cited as valuable to the United States because of its rich history, its recent recovery efforts from Hurricane Katrina, and its status as a cultural melting pot, an often overlooked yet important part of its value comes from the ways in which the area's wetlands benefit the country by supporting the oil and seafood industries, both of which are large contributors to the country's culture and economy.
The wetlands of southeastern Louisiana are degrading at a fast pace, making necessary not only action but also greater national awareness. At the request of Southeastern Louisiana University's Turtle Cove Environmental Research Station, I created a short, simple documentary film to promote understanding primarily among college students in New Orleans.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Videography and Photography

Videography and photography are the primary media forms used in making the documentary film. A documentary, while it can be used as a persuasion tool, can also be informative. Carl Plantinga (2005) suggests that a documentary can be considered "a subset of nonfiction films, characterized by more aesthetic, social, rhetorical, and/or political ambition" (Plantinga, 2005, p. 105). The documentary is a piece with which a filmmaker portrays an authentic situation (Plantinga, 2005, p. 108). The wetland documentary makes use of scholarly research and information along with first-person residents of New Orleans who have a connection to the Louisiana wetlands, such as residents or biologists. Plantinga (2005) points out that "expositional documentaries loosen requirements for cinematography" (p. 113), which makes room for my documentary to include photographs, charts, and other computer-aided enhancements.

Photography, unlike many arts, is "a supreme witness and recorder of the world" (Rodd, 1993). The medium has the ability to capture the viewer through its truth. Plantinga (2005) agrees, stating that photographs are "independent of belief" (p. 106). While documentaries also hold to the notion that they contain reality uninfluenced, a photograph more so captivates viewers due to being a single frame, a moment stationary forever (Rodd, 1993). The best photos are those that evoke the deepest emotions, from outrage to sadness to elation.

Wetlands Overview

Wetlands allow a transition to take place and act as a buffer from the larger

bodies of water to the land. They improve water quality, provide habitats for wildlife and fish, store excess water, and regulate surface water during drought periods (Environmental Protection Agency [EPA], 2001). Wetlands can be put into four categories: marshes, fens, swamps, and bogs (EPA, 2004). According to the Environmental Protection Agency (2001), wetlands are "some of the most biologically productive natural ecosystems in the world, comparable to tropical rain forests and coral reefs in their productivity and the diversity of species they support. Abundant vegetation and shallow water provide diverse habitats for fish and wildlife" (EPA, 2001).

The plentiful vegetation found in wetlands assists the food chain by sharing its converted energy through the ecosystem (EPA, 2001). Commercial seafood relies on the wetlands with 75% of the fish coming from them. Adding in shellfish, the reliance goes up to 95% dependence. As for waterfowl, an estimated half of bird species native to North America feed or nest in wetlands. Additionally, 31% of plant species reside in wetlands (EPA, 2001).

Louisiana Wetlands and their Importance

The Louisiana wetlands are characterized as coastal marshes that contain fresh and salt water and have a pertinent function most wetlands do not, they must bear the storm surges during hurricanes and protect the city of New Orleans from damage. Since "an acre of wetland can store 1-1.5 million gallons of floodwater" (EPA, 2001), the storage function is particularly important for the Louisiana wetlands because of the notorious hurricane damage in the past (EPA, 2001). The wetlands protect two million citizens in Louisiana from storm damage and support much of the state's economy through oil, gas, and shipping as the main ports reside in the wetlands. Additionally, fishing and tourism support the Louisiana economy (America's Wetland Foundation [AWF], n.d.).

Furthermore, the wetlands of the Louisiana coast are important to the United States economy as Louisiana's economy is factored into the nation's economy as a whole. These wetlands produce the most oysters and over 50% of the shrimp for the United States, along with transporting 27% of the oil and gas for the country (AWF, n.d.). The wetlands have dependence from five million waterfowl and 79 endangered plant and animal species (AWF, n.d.). Lastly, there are tax-supported buildings, transportation, and other infrastructure that would be sheltered from hurricane damage by the wetlands' buffer (AWF, n.d.). In an economic sense, the natural capital value of the wetlands needs to be considered. According to Costanza (2006), "the Mississippi delta is one of the most concentrated areas of natural capital in the world" (p. 318). How much is it worth to spend money now to save money later

by preventing storm damage? By way of comparison, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers protected the wetlands in Boston, Massachusetts, which they found saved them $17 million in latent flood damage (EPA, 2001).

Louisiana Wetland History

The wetlands are currently in a fast degrading state with approximately 10.3 square miles lost per year (AWF, n.d.). This can be attributed to many problems throughout history, but the largest impact has been credited to artificial levee construction and the destruction of swamp forests that took place in the early 1800's through the mid 1900's. (Keddy, et al., 2007, p. 49). These problems have left detrimental scars: lack of fresh water along with the sediment and nutrients water carries. Along with the levees and destruction, the Mississippi Gulf Outlet constructed in 1963-1965 has allowed a more direct route for salt water to run into the Lake Pontchartrain Basin (Keddy, et al., 2007, p. 49).

Louisiana Wetland Current Issues

Louisiana's wetland crisis is due to the alarming rate of wetland loss, defined as the "conversion of vegetated wetlands to open water" (AWF, n.d.). Since 1932, 1,900 square miles of wetland has been lost, and currently this results in wetland the size of a football field being lost every 1.5 hours (AWF, n.d.). These losses, of course, result in depletion in the life held within the wetlands and their normal processes, such as plant life, wildlife, and the other water regulation benefits mentioned earlier. The levees are currently cutting off sediment flow, salt water is moving into freshwater areas, and sea level is naturally rising (AWF, n.d.).

METHODOLOGY

To prepare for the trip to New Orleans, I prepared interview questions and sketched out my vision

for the film while keeping in mind my goal to create awareness in an easily understood form.

While in New Orleans I traveled to Southeastern Louisiana University (SELU) with Dr. Doug Kane to interview two professionals with their hands in wetland issues. Fred Stouder, the Marsh Restoration Coordinator at SELU, and Dr. Robert Moreau, Manager of the Turtle Cove Environmental Research Station, helped me gain an understanding of the current wetland outlook and future endeavors. Following this, I had an opportunity to go out on the wetlands by boat, during which I captured video footage as well as photographs, and spoke with a local man, Hayden Reno, who grew up on the wetlands. While in New Orleans I also interviewed Dinah Maygarden, a research associate and Manager of the Coastal Education Program at the University of New Orleans (UNO). Maygarden took us along the Gulf Coast to see the coastal wetlands and offer insight into the current issues.

After collecting photos, footage, and insights on Louisiana wetland issues, I sorted and organized the material to create an understandable documentary. The documentary was created in a reporting manner, laying out information on the wetland loss and associated issues and using footage from each of my four interviews.

CONCLUSION

The trip to New Orleans expanded my academic boundaries as I had not previously had practice in video or biology. Because both of these areas were beyond my normal curriculum, I grew as this project tested my composition, knowledge, and understanding. The trip and my film project allowed wetland degradation to come alive and create a deeper sense of reality, something mere book research could not do. Seeing the wetlands, meeting residents, and recording both allowed me to see how Ohio and Louisiana are more deeply connected than I had imagined.

REFERENCES

America's Wetland Foundation [AWF]. America's wetland in a nutshell-FAQs. Retrieved from http://www.americaswetlandresources.com

Costanza, R., Mitsch, W., Day, J. (2006). Creating a sustainable and desirable New Orleans. *Ecological Engineering, 26*, 317-320. doi: 10.1016/j.ecoleng.2006.03.005

Environmental Protection Agency [EPA]. (2001, September). Functions and values of wetlands. Retrieved from http://www.epa.gov/owow/wetlands/pdf/fun_val.pdf

EPA. (2004, December). Wetlands overview. Retrieved from http://www.epa.gov/owow/wetlands/pdf/overview_pr.pdf

Keddy, P.A., Campbell, D., McFalls, T., Shaffer, G.P., Moreau, R., Dranguet, C., & Heleniak, R. 2007, March). The wetlands of Lakes Pontchartrain and Maurepas: past, present and future. *Environmental Reviews, 15*(1), 43-77. doi:10.1139/A06-008

Plantinga, Carl. (2005). What a documentary is, after all. *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, *63*(2), 105-117.

Rodd, Emily. (1993, January). The impact of photography on our lives (how photos influence ideas and opinions). *PSA Journal*. Retrieved from http://findarticles.com

EXPERIENCING NEW ORLEANS THROUGH PHOTOJOURNALISM

Amanda Demland, McMaster Scholar

I became interested in the McMaster School for Advancing Humanity when I was a junior at Defiance College, but the timing was not right for me to become a scholar. As I approached my fifth year and learned more about what scholars and fellows were doing, I really wanted to be a part of the McMaster School. I approached two scholars who had traveled to New Orleans, both of whom were extremely enthusiastic about their experience, and only days later viewed Dr. Michelle Tabit's PowerPoint presentation that included photos taken by students on their previous trip. I was moved by many of the images that ultimately prompted me to ask questions about what I really knew of New Orleans and that community's needs.

As my journey through Defiance College began in pursuit of an education degree but wound up in the arts and humanities due to personal strengths, I wondered how I could incorporate all I had learned into a McMaster project. In talking with Dr. Tabit about possible projects, we settled on a photojournalism project that would use my skill in photography to promote awareness of the New Orleans schools which not only were some of the worst in the country prior to Hurricane Katrina but which remain very much damaged in its aftermath.

While my project's original goals included both bringing back photographs of schools and students in New Orleans and making connections with Teach for America so that I could influence teacher recruitment efforts, I was unable to make the needed connections. My amended project included photographing the schools very closely and relaying what I learned so that other college students may discover the inspiration and opportunity to fulfill perhaps even the smallest of needs in New Orleans. In talking with faculty at Sarah T. Reed Elementary in New Orleans, I learned they were deeply frustrated with photojournalists' constant depictions of the New Orleans school system in a negative light. I am especially proud of the photos that I will be sending back as proof of their progress since Katrina.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In 2005 Hurricane Katrina ravaged New Orleans and, despite relief efforts, has never fully recovered. Even before Katrina, the area's education systems were known to be the worst in the country. "In the 2004-2005 school-year, only 44 percent of fourth graders proved proficient in reading and only 26 percent in math" with the higher grades producing even more disappointing

statistics. Louisiana declared "academic crisis" in 2004 (Hill & Hannaway, 2006, p. 2). Katrina worsened this condition, leaving problems for which there is no easy fix.

Four years after Katrina, the nation's leader stood before the people of New Orleans during his visit to the University of New Orleans campus on October 15, 2009 and promised that he "is just getting started." What started as a slow and seemingly unproductive relief effort might actually become the greatest change to our nation yet as President Obama declared that progress would require "a renewed sense of responsibility to ourselves and to one another" ("On New Orleans," 2006). Obama's administration has reportedly resolved over 70 projects created for the support of NOLA that have been in contest, has sent over "$1.4 billion in aid," and continues to work on the total recovery and increased safety of this region ("On New Orleans," 2006).

One reason more people are becoming aware of the ever suffering status of those affected by Hurricane Katrina is because photojournalists are willing to work at capturing that very reality. A photojournalist for the *Times,* Carolyn Cole (2005), was there to experience the aftermath of the storm's rage and compares what she saw to being far greater than her experience with the Oklahoma City bombing, 9/11, Columbine massacre, and the wildfire of California. She writes, "even during war the deceased are treated with some respect, their bodies covered, removed, or buried as soon as possible. It would be days, even weeks before the fatal victims of New Orleans were finally retrieved" (Cole, 2005). The images that accompany Cole's article are breathtaking, capturing such beauty even in a time of death. In one photograph water almost completely covers a cemetery, the tops of gravestones reflected in still water. In another photo, a mother lays hands on her son and prays for him while he suffers from dehydration. Throughout every one of the photos that accompany her article, Cole offers up hope and light. Cole's approach also raises questions about the female photographer's influence over her photography in contrast to the male photographer's influence over his, an issue Sherry Ricchiardi (1998) raises in her *American Journalism Review* article "Getting the Picture." As Ricchiardi states, "Some photo experts argue that women have certain attributes, such as more patience and an eye for detail, that being a greater sensitivity to their work." Ultimately, "the burgeoning success of female photographers could mean a richer mix of images in America's newspapers and magazines" which is good for photojournalism and for the general public (Ricchiardi, 1998).

If the job of the photojournalist is to be in the right place at the right time with the right vision, then Carolyn Cole is proof of that. Following her time in New Orleans, Cole began a relief effort to reconnect loved ones separated

from each other during the Katrina crisis who were identified in her photos. Cole also used her photos and the emotional response they provoked to raise funds from people all around the US towards relief efforts.

In her article "Art; Photojournalism Without Apologies," Vicki Goldberg (2004) quotes her subject, photojournalist Eugene Richards, as saying "he never trusted photography" to change the world (Goldberg, 2004). Richards argues that the image could never carry out the action of reform; instead it sparks the ideas and the vision within the human mind and heart to create the necessary movements toward that reform. Richards encounters and chooses to shoot images of despair and hopelessness, all the while knowing he is just the in-between man or what some call "the messenger". This perseverance demonstrates the heart of a photojournalist (Goldberg, 2004).

PURPOSE

I wanted to experience New Orleans through the lens of a camera and the print of photography. My experience with Hurricane Katrina was like most people, watching news reports and twenty-four hour footage updates, then going back to my life when news coverage stopped. At that moment we assumed everything was at least in a healthy process of returning to normalcy in the flooded areas, but New Orleans remains wounded and the public remains ignorant about what really happened. Yet within this ignorance lies the potential for preserving living history for which photography is an excellent tool. My purpose in traveling to New Orleans was to bring awareness through photographs and interviews to those who have been misled or forgotten that the post-Katrina nightmare remains a reality for many. My intentions with this trip have a priority in the school systems of New Orleans where I took a large portion of the photographs used in the media package I will distribute to the school.

METHODOLOGY

On the ground, I was never without my camera and a notepad to record significant details. In preparation to enter the schools, I created a shot list and practiced interview questions. For the first days we were on the ground but not yet in the school, I documented the activities of the learning community. During the week each day varied only slightly for me, excluding the two days in which I travelled with Doug Kane and Brooke Gordon to learn more about the issues surrounding the freshwater and coastal wetlands. It was my plan to first have the students and staff at Sarah T. Reed school sign release forms for their participation in my photography, but the master teacher informed me that this would be unnecessary because students and teachers had already been required to sign the forms at the beginning of the school year due to frequent visits from photojournalists. While my initial plan had

been to interview anyone willing to share what challenges have been faced in upholding the education system since Katrina, I soon realized this would be nearly impossible, not because of lack of willingness on the part of school administrators and faculty but because the opportunity just was not there as the entire institution was very busy from the first moments of school until each and every student had left the grounds.

Each evening, I wrote in depth journal entries about the day's happenings in relation to the photographs I took and made sure to upload my photos to the hard drive of a laptop or an external hard drive so that I could clear my memory disk for the following day. During the upload, I deleted unusable photos, thus saving memory space on the photo card so that I would be free to take as many photos as needed. Uploading and deleting photos also saved me time back in Defiance when I was ready to edit the ones I knew I would be incorporating in my project. Upon returning, I continued organizing my photos and writings and reflected on the trip and on what I learned about myself through my involvement in the McMaster School for Advancing Humanity.

Most importantly I feel that I have learned when it is appropriate to photograph as opposed to observing a scene with my human eye. I also learned that many people object to photojournalism as a form of exploitation, that photojournalism is not a field that is praised across the board. The educational staff at Sarah T. Reed Elementary reported that it is rare when

a photographer visits and then presents them to the public in a positive light, helping me better understand their concerns. While today's media focuses on images that strike a negative emotional response, through this project I have become more inspired to learn about the inner workings of the photojournalism world and how to avoid exploiting photographed subjects.

Once my information was gathered and my photos were edited, I created the McMaster poster and began to prepare a slideshow that gave a fun briefing of our trip's events day by day.

CONCLUSION AND REFLECTION

Traveling to New Orleans entirely transformed the way that I see the world both with my own eyes and through the lens of a camera. Studying Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath served only as a small enlightenment compared to the growth that took place once I set foot in New Orleans. Reading written testimonies became impersonal as I heard the story escape from the mouth of a Katrina victim who transferred her tragedy with Katrina from her heart to our ears.

While I was in Defiance, the research I conducted led me to believe that the people fighting for a better education system in New Orleans were incompetent, but this was false and most certainly misleading. Many highly educated professionals were working hard to reverse the problems in education before Katrina showed her ugly face and they continue to work hard. The new superintendent of the Recovery School District, Paul Vallas, promised new laptops for each student in the system which caused a great deal of controversy as most people could not even fathom these impoverished schools owning computers to share amongst the students let alone each student owning one. While I was in Sarah T. Reed school I observed at least three fairly new computers in each classroom with the exception of the health room and the two labs which actually contained several computers, and I watched from a distance as third graders signed on and played interactive educational games once their written homework was finished and approved by the teacher. Perhaps this was the first step that was necessary to take before granting each student a computer. By bringing computer technology into students' lives they begin to move toward informational literacy, and from my observations the students seemed to really enjoy and be able to use the Internet for educationally sound purposes the majority of the time. Such improvements in technological and educational resources in a school where students are packed into modulars shows that, while much work remains to be done in the educational system of New

Orleans, progress is being made that needs recognition and encouragement. My contribution to recognizing and encouraging this progress ultimately takes the form of the media package I will be returning to the school.

REFERENCES

Cole, Carolyn. (2005). Witness to the tragedy. *Nieman Reports*. Retrieved from http://www.nieman.harvard.edu

Goldberg, Vicki. (2004, April 18). Art; Photojournalism without apologies. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com

Hill, P., & Hannaway, J. (2006, January). The future of public education in New Orleans. *After Katrina: Rebuilding Opportunity and Equity into the New New Orleans*, 1-12. Retrieved from http://www.urban.org

On New Orleans visit, Obama tells critics, "I'm just getting started." (2009, October 15). Retrieved from http://www.cnn.com

Ricchiardi, Sherry. Getting the picture. (1998, January-February). *American Journalism Review.* Retrieved from http://www.ajr.org

EDUCATION IN NEW ORLEANS: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Joel Billings and Ben Gates, McMaster Scholars

Almost five years since America was awestruck by Hurricane Katrina's devastating effects and the recovery effort has all but disappeared from the nation's sight, thanks to the American media's short attention span. The New Orleans' education system is important to the city's recovery because it will empower youth to take on the issues facing the city's reconstruction. Because education is vital to the advancement of any society and drives a culture from poverty to prosperity, efforts to rebuild, restore, or revamp New Orleans' education system are integral to the recovery of New Orleans, as are educators' efforts to improve students' quality of education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

As research shows, Hurricane Katrina did not simply cause the problems in the New Orleans' education system, but rather brought preexisting problems out of the darkness and into the light. One bright spot in the wake of Katrina was that the disaster forced issues with the educational system to be addressed, making significant strides toward creating an effective educational system in New Orleans.

As a result of Louisiana's Roman Catholic heritage, public schools are structured differently from the typical city level school in the United States. Instead of being organized at the city level, Louisiana's schools are organized at the parish level, parishes being the equivalent of counties in other states. Each parish in Louisiana has a school board similar to what typically governs a single city's school district, but instead these parish boards have oversight of all the schools within their respective parish (Rasheed, 2006).

A feature unique to New Orleans' education system is the strong presence of charter schools that educate over half of the city's students (Rasheed, 2006). Charter schools funded through both public and private means operate similarly to businesses in a capitalist market. These schools are in competition with one another to obtain the largest number of students possible and to hire the most qualified teachers. Fueling competition between charter schools, parents and students are given the choice of which school they wish to attend, a decision based in part on the public record of each school's performance (Jervis, 2009).

Prior to Hurricane Katrina and subsequent flooding, the New Orleans' school system ranked in the lowest sector of the state of Louisiana. In one instance,

the valedictorian of a class failed the exit exam administered by his high school and scored a meager eleven on his ACT (Tollitson, 2006). This poor performance began in the 1960s with desegregation and subsequent white flight. While only five African-Americans were admitted into its school system during the first year of integration in 1961, by the end of the decade African-Americans comprised sixty-six percent of public school students in New Orleans (Tollitson, 2006).

After desegregation in 1961, white families by the masses transferred their children to either private schools or neighboring parishes as a result of racism that ran deep in the region. When these families left the district, they took with them adequate funding and hope for the African-American students of New Orleans. In one instance at McDonogh No. 19 Elementary School, all the white parents pulled their children from the school in protest after four African-American girls were integrated (Rasheed, 2006). By the time Hurrican Katrina hit New Orleans in 2005, the city's public schools were eighty percent African-American, including some schools that were entirely African-American (Rasheed, 2006).

Currently many of the schools in the district are under the control of a Recovery School District established by the state of Louisiana in the hope of improving the schools as they recover from Hurricane Katrina. However, many of the schools face the same problems they faced pre-Katrina with greater intensity. Eighty percent of New Orelans' schools were damaged by Hurricane Katrina, including many schools that were rendered completely unsalvageable by the storm (Rasheed, 2006). The destruction left in the wake of Hurricane Katrina has left many of these schools struggling to survive, with some being forced into inadequate make-shift house trailers to compensate for the damaged schools. Only half of New Orleans' public schools opened in the year following the disaster, and many schools are transforming to charter schools due to the lack of funding. To compound the problems with the education system, poverty is even more intense post-Katrina as evidenced by the high percentage of schools with over ninety percent of students on free or reduced lunches (Rasheed, 2006).

While it seemed as if the New Orleans' school district could fall into complete disarray following Hurricane Katrina, the devastating hurricane also brought a surge of greatly needed education reform. New Orleans' schools are now subject to a thorough screening process which only six of the forty-four charter schools passed in the first year. Education reformers have also looked to the model set by the preexisting charter schools in the state and given parents the right to choose what public schools they send their children to

in order to increase competition between public schools. The schools receive more funding based upon their enrollment, which forces schools to strive to improve and draw more students. Public schools in New Orleans must provide transportation for students to the school of their choice no matter how far they may live from the school (Vallas & Jacobs, 2009).

Furthermore, schools that lag in performance are now placed under the control of the Recovery School District, which was established in 2003 prior to Katrina. This state-run organization assumes absolute control over the school district and takes on the problems that plagued the district. This shift in power frees the school from the troubles of the past and enables them to restructure and reform more rapidly. Both schools under the Recovery School District and under control of the traditional authority are now given the authority to freely remove and promote faculty. Along with this freedom, the Hurricane Katrina disaster brought an influx of young talented educators from such organizations as Teach for America and the New Teacher Project. These young, ambitious and talented teachers have brought a new energy to the New Orleans' school system and have brought about a more positive atmosphere (Vallas & Jacobs, 2009).

These reforms have impacted the performance of New Orleans' schools since the devastation of Hurricane Katrina. New Orleans' schools have demonstrated higher growth than any other of the parishes in the state on standardized testing since Katrina, and the graduation rate has increased from 79 to 89 percent (Vallas & Jacobs, 2009). Students in New Orleans are beginning to see attending college as an attainable goal instead of an impossibility. Other struggling districts across the nation are looking to New Orleans as a model to enhance their struggling district through increased competition and removal of traditional politics involved in schools (Jervis, 2009). With this significant progress considered, the schools have become a bright spot in post-Katrina New Orleans, offering more opportunity than in the past for students to be successful.

METHODOLOGY

The research performed to complete this project focused primarily on broad scale reform that has taken place in the post-Hurricane Katrina era. However, the success of the broad scale reform is largely dependent on the teachers who interact with students daily and have the responsibility of carrying out the Recovery School District's new strategies. The chance to work in New Orleans' schools provided us with an excellent opportunity to learn what educators are doing on a day-to-day basis to bolster student performance. While on the ground, we worked at Sarah T. Reed Elementary, a K-8 facility in the heart of New Orleans. The students are still in modular buildings five years after the storm and will remain in the modular building until 2013. Buildings are separated by grade levels, which limits the amount of times that students have to walk outside to get from class to class. However, students are still required to walk outside to get to lunch, physical education classes and the library. Being required to walk outside frequently becomes a distraction for some of the younger students who became lost in the confusion in the transition from building to building. In addition, physical education classes at Sarah T. Reed are contained within one of the modular buildings, which provides inadequate space to complete most normal physical education activities.

A bright spot in the modular buildings is the technology and resources available to both teachers and students which were comparable to what we have encountered in our methods and internship experiences. Each classroom is equipped with three computers, a projection system, and content-related materials. Students and teachers also have access to a computer lab that contains twenty-five computers, providing opportunities for whole group web-based activities.

While at Sarah T. Reed we worked with both Ms. Molly Brown and Mr. Earl Dunbar. Ms. Brown teaches 7th and 8th grade science and social studies and has worked in the school since it reopened three years ago. Ms. Brown's overall teaching style revolves around compassion and kindness as she truly cares about individual students and strives to ensure their success. When asked what she most enjoyed about teaching at Sarah T. Reed, Ms. Brown said, "Each year students from younger grades will come up to me and ask 'Ms. Brown are you going to be my teacher next year?'" From this statement and from our observations, it was very apparent that Ms. Brown is a passionate educator who has a positive influence on her students.

Mr. Earl Dunbar, who has experience in both education and law enforcement, began teaching 3rd grade math and social studies at Sarah T. Reed this year. Mr. Dunbar's teaching style revolves around classroom management which is consistent with his belief that by guiding students towards proper classroom etiquette, he will prepare them for their subsequent school years. By promoting classroom management, Mr. Dunbar also avoids distractions that can take away from time that students would otherwise use to learn.

While at Sarah T. Reed, we observed many challenges that both students and teachers face daily. Poverty has a direct impact on many students at the school with over 90% on free and reduced lunches. Often poverty brings with it an unstable home life and students who do not receive adequate attention from home frequently seek attention while at school in either positive or negative ways making classroom management a challenge at times. During our time at Sarah T. Reed Elementary, we observed that, despite the challenges present, significant progress has been made since Katrina. The master teacher is implementing new classroom management strategies that encourage students to be responsible for their own behavior, allowing teachers to focus more on teaching instead of tending to classroom disturbances. In addition, we observed students as they were taking iLeap, a standardized assessment that provides an opportunity measure the school's performance from year to year, and has demonstrated significant student growth in the years following Hurricane Katrina.

CONCLUSION

From both the research that we compiled before the trip and our observations on the ground, it is apparent that progress is being made in New Orleans' schools in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Since 2005 in the New Orleans Recovery School District, the number of 10th graders who demonstrated proficiency in Math has jumped from 39 to 58 percent and the number of 8th graders that demonstrated proficiency in English has increased from 26 to 42 percent. In addition, during our time at Sarah T. Reed we observed teachers who were passionate about the success of their students, proud of the progress being made and hopeful for the future of New Orleans' education system.

REFERENCES

Jervis, R. (2009, August 27). High marks, new starts in New Orleans. *USA Today,* p. 2A.

Rasheed, A. (2006). Education in New Orleans: Some background. *The High School Journal, 90*(2), 4-7.

Tillotson, D. (2006). What's Next for New Orleans? *The High School Journal, 90*(2), 69-74.

Vallas, P. & Jacobs, R. (2009). "Race to the top" lessons from New Orleans. *Education Week, 29*(2), 26-27.

PRESERVING THE PAST FOR THE SAKE OF THE FUTURE: DOCUMENTING KATRINA AT THE AMISTAD RESEARCH CENTER

Laura Derov, McMaster Scholar

In the years following Hurricane Katrina publications of all types have come out to cover different issues facing the city of New Orleans and its residents. The general public has read all these publications and then thrown away or recycled them, so how will future generations know the details about this important time in the city's history? Thanks to Brenda Square, Director of Archives at the Amistad Research Center, a collection has been dedicated to collecting material concerning post-Katrina New Orleans. Square has worked since 2005 to collect as many materials as possible concerning the issues in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. While on the ground I had the privilege of working with Square to assist in beginning processing of this important collection.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this project is to work with the Amistad Research Center and head archivist Brenda Square by processing an historical collection which will further the work begun by McMaster Scholar Brenda Delarber two years ago. By preserving and cataloging collections the Amistad Research Center can provide researchers and students alike with a wealth of knowledge on the ethnic history of New Orleans and further Amistad's mission to preserve collections of historically marginalized groups of people.

According to Provost Catharine O'Connell (2007) in the second volume of *The McMaster Journal*, "all community-based projects must be premised on needs identified by the community served" (O'Connell, 2007, p. 8). The Amistad Research Center, short-staffed after losing many of its employees following the destructive 2005 hurricane season, has identified a clear need for assistance in processing historic materials.

The Amistad Research Center (2006), currently the nation's largest independent archive, states that its mission is to "Preserve original documents and provide resources for research on America's ethnic history, African Diaspora, human relations, and civil rights" (Amistad Research Center, 2006). Historically speaking, the Amistad Research Center was formed by the American Missionary Association's (AMA) Race Relation Department in 1966. In 1969 Amistad became an independent archive and was moved to Dillard University in 1970. Currently the Amistad Research

Center is housed in Tilton Memorial Hall on the Tulane University campus. Amistad's collection consists of 700 manuscripts, 20,000 volumes, 250,000 photographs and 800 works of African American art. Every year the archive is visited by schools, scholars from around the world, and tourists (Amistad Research Center, 2006).

According to Gregory Hunt (2003) in *Developing and Maintaining Practical Archives: A How-to-do-it Manual*, the term "archive" has three possible meanings. The first is materials, noncurrent material preserved for its long-term value. The second is place, the physical building where materials are housed. The third is the agency or office charged with identifying, preserving and making the articles of long-term value available to the public (Hunter 2003, p. 2).

Archives have existed since humans began preserving their history. In order to preserve the history of an area or a region an archive needs to acquire collections that fit into its mission statement. After a group of items is acquisitioned the first step in processing the collection is to accession the items, which occurs when the archive gains legal control of the items. From this point the collection moves into processing, though before it is processed a scope of collection should be written, defining the purpose and allowing the archivist to make decisions about what materials are important to the archive's mission statement and will further its mission. The scope of collections allows the institution to be responsible not only to the donor, but to the future of the institution. Items that are retained with the collection need to be relevant. Non-relevant items should be discarded in order to keep the collection at a manageable size.

The beginning parts of processing the collection involve movement and preparation of documents and items. All the materials are flattened and placed in acid-free folders. From paper items, all staples and paper clips need to be removed and acid-free paper needs to be placed between all items. News clippings need to be photocopied on to acid-free paper. While processing it is necessary to think about the order of the items. All correspondence should be kept together with original envelopes, and all dated material should be stored chronologically with material lacking dates placed at the end of the chronology. The archivist also removes duplicates and some easily identifiable removable items from the collection during processing.

METHODOLOGY

At the Amistad Research Center, I worked on the beginnings of a post-Katrina collection. The Director of Archives Brenda Square began collecting any and all information concerning post Katrina New Orleans, focusing the collection primarily on issues of education and housing though also including a few oral histories from Lower Ninth Ward residents collected by Square. The collection was in the very early stages and had not been processed in any way before my arrival.

The first step in working with the material was pre-sorting. Brenda Square and I determined the general topics into which the material should be primarily sorted. This first sorting would put the materials into the most general classifications ("Issues Following Katrina," "The Lower Ninth Ward," and "Oral Histories") to later set up for more specific classifications. After pre-sorting it was time to move into more specific sorting, and within each of the three groups I determined subgroups that fell beneath the larger topic like housing, charter schools, and ILEAP testing. Sorting into smaller groups included removing all staples, rubber bands and paper clips in order to prevent future damage to the material over the years. For example, a rubber band left on a group of papers would slowly turn into a glue-like substance and stick to the pages permanently. These closures were then replaced with acid free paper in order to keep the papers together. Within the subgroups, materials were categorized by type and then placed in chronological order and stored in labeled acid-free boxes to move to the next stage of processing.

CONCLUSION

In the wake of Hurricane Katrina the documentation of New Orleans and its residents has become increasingly important. While many residents left hoping to return, others knew they never could and made new homes

across the nation, taking with them their culture and personal memories. By collecting material post- Katrina, Amistad is able to preserve this important piece of history for future generations, making it possible for future scholars to see and study the struggles that the city and its residents have faced in trying to rebuild.

One rebuilding emphasis the Amistad collection is trying to capture is education. In the years leading up to Hurricane Katrina New Orleans had one of the worst school systems in the nation, so following Katrina this already struggling school system has even bigger challenges to overcome. By preserving the city's struggle to rebuild education, Amistad makes it possible for the outsider to begin to understand not only the obstacles that have been overcome but also those obstacles that are still present. In the weeks after my departure from New Orleans the post-Katrina collection I helped to organize was used by a scholar working on a master's thesis at Tulane University.

REFLECTION

In working with the Amistad research center I was given two unique insights, one into the rebuilding of New Orleans and the other into the archival field itself. While working with the materials in the collection I was able to develop a better idea of the struggles that New Orleans natives have faced in trying to rebuild the city they love. With resistance in housing, many residents could not return to their homes. All through the Ninth Ward this resistance was obvious as only a small part of the population has been able to return and rebuild while much of the neighborhood remains as empty lots and lonely stoops. Those families that have returned face a larger challenge in the school system with many of the schools having become completely modular as a result of the storm's physical destruction. Families who can afford to pay tuition can send their children to one of the many charter schools in New Orleans rather than the Recovery Schools. Though New Orleans has come a long way since Katrina, many obstacles to full recovery remain.

By working with the Amistad Research Center I was able to further explore archival work, one of the career paths open to me with the completion of a degree in history. Working with the materials gave me a hands-on opportunity to see part of the work processing archivists do daily while also exposing me to other aspects of the archival process including cataloging and database work. I discovered how important archival work is especially in New Orleans where its diaspora of people and history makes it all the more important to preserve as much information and history as possible for future generations.

Still, while archival work is interesting and important, my work at Amistad has allowed me to see that the time-consuming, detail-oriented nature of the work may not be for me. I have been told many times that finding out what I do not want or what does not work for me is half the battle, and my experience at Amistad has allowed me to see that archival work may not be my destined field.

REFERENCES

Amistad Research Center. (2006). About Amistad Research Center. Retrieved from http://www.amistadresearchcenter.org

Hunter, G. S. (2003). *Developing and maintaining particle archives: A how-to-do-it manual* (2nd ed.). New York: Neal-Shuman Publishers.

O'Connell,C. (2007). Intentional education for responsible global citizenship. *The McMaster Journal, 2*, 5-14.

MISSION STATEMENT

The McMaster School for Advancing Humanity was founded to serve as a focal point for teaching, service, scholarship, and action to improve the human condition worldwide. The mission of the McMaster School is:

- To educate students for responsible citizenship;
- To produce committed global citizens and leaders who understand the importance of individual liberties in improving the human condition worldwide; and
- To encourage graduates to take an active role in addressing these issues in whatever professions they may choose.