

# Vehicle of Hope

## Faith-based Disaster Response



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### KEYWORDS

- Hurricane Katrina
- Faith-based disaster response
- Hope
- Herth Hope Index
- Phenomenology
- Mixed methods

### KEY POINTS

- Faith-based disaster response engages in the work of hope.
- The Herth Hope Index is a valid and reliable measure of hope for those doing the work of or receiving benefit of the work of faith-based disaster response.
- The work of faith-based disaster response can be a vehicle of hope.

In August 2005, the United States experienced one of the most catastrophic and costly disasters in its history: Hurricane Katrina. Few were affected more than those living in New Orleans. In the 10 plus years since, much has been written regarding the whole of the response. Most agree Faith-based Organizations (FBOs) made a major contribution to the response and recovery efforts.<sup>1,2</sup> Faith-based disaster response includes nurses as staff, volunteers, and recipients of services. Whereas activities and skill sets of FBOs vary, similar core missions exist: to provide hope. Many of the FBOs were registered with the National Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster (NVOAD), the official organization designated by the National Response Plan to represent non-government organizations. The FBO-registered names with NVOAD reflect their mission of hope: Convoy of Hope, Restoring or Restores Hope (multiple agencies), Hope Animal Assistance Crisis Response, Hope Coalition of America, Hope Worldwide, Sharing Hope in Crisis, and HopeForce International.<sup>3</sup> The purpose of this article is to expand understanding of “hope” in the context of disaster response.

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## CONCEPT OF HOPE

As a concept, hope has been purported to be essential for health and well-being.<sup>4</sup> It is viewed as multidimensional,<sup>5</sup> a life force,<sup>6</sup> and highly individualized.<sup>7</sup> Antecedents of hope include stress, loss, despair, and threats to life. Outcomes associated with hope include coping, peace, and an elevated quality of life.<sup>4</sup> Hope has been studied as an intervention.<sup>8</sup> Others find hope as a result of interventions<sup>6,9</sup> that assist individuals in developing a plan for the future and developing goals.<sup>10</sup> The long-term impact of hope has been studied.<sup>9</sup>

Valid and reliable tools exist to measure hope, as shown in **Table 1**. The theoretic framework is similar among them and found in related bodies of literature.<sup>6,11</sup> The brief 12-item Herth Hope Index (HHI) was chosen for this study because its spiritual component is complementary to the study's context.

## METHODOLOGY

This mixed methods study used phenomenology-based interviews and the HHI. The Institutional Review Board approved the research. Informed consent was obtained from each participant. Data collection occurred 2 years after Hurricane Katrina. Forty-two participants in 26 interviews, connected to the faith-based response in New Orleans, responded to the following question: "What stands out to you about your experience receiving assistance from, being staff with, or volunteering with faith-based disaster response?" All interviews were recorded and transcribed by the researcher. For this article, a secondary analysis related to hope has been performed using 22 of the transcribed interviews. This study also includes 4 group volunteer interviews analyzed for the first time. Themes for the analysis are the HHI items. The qualitative software package nVivo was used to assist with data analysis. Results of the HHI were scored and entered into SPSS for analysis. Triangulated findings yielded a comprehensive analysis of hope in faith-based disaster response.

## SAMPLE

A convenience sample was recruited from one FBO active in New Orleans for 2 years after Katrina: 28 volunteers, 9 staff, and 5 residents. A preponderance of the volunteers and staff were men with most of the residents being women. All of the volunteers and staff, except 1, were Caucasian (1 was a Pacific Islander). All residents were African American. Volunteers and staff represented a range of ages (22–73 years of age); residents were 40 to 59 years of age, as shown in **Table 2**. Volunteers and staff came from 11 states. New Orleans was home to all residents. Most participants were married. More than half of the volunteers had annual incomes greater than \$50,000. Two-thirds of the staff had annual incomes of \$25,001 to \$50,000. All residents had annual incomes less than \$50,000. All of the volunteers and staff had completed high school with the vast majority having a college education. Only one resident had completed high school; the others did not.

## QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

Results of the HHI are the quantitative data. Descriptive statistics, analysis of variance, and correlation tests were performed. Individual responses were scored per the index instructions; items 3 and 6 were reverse scored. The maximum possible score is 48. Group total scores are reported in **Fig. 1**.

With  $P$  at .05, item analysis of the HHI items reveals no statistical difference between groups for 10 of 12 items. When the post-hoc Levine Statistic is used, statistical

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