

Reimagining Landscapes: Psychological Responses and Behavioral Shifts in the Aftermath of the Lytton Creek Fire

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Abstract : In an era where the impacts of climate change resonate more pronouncedly than ever, communities globally grapple with events bearing both tangible and intangible ramifications. Situating this within the evolving landscapes of Psychological and Behavioral Sciences, this research probes the profound psychological and behavioral responses evoked by such events. The Lytton Creek Fire of 2021 epitomizes these challenges. While tangible destruction is immediate and evident, the intangible repercussions—emotional distress, disintegration of cultural landscapes, and disruptions in place attachment (PA)—require meticulous exploration. PA, emblematic of the emotional and cognitive affiliations individuals nurture with their environments, emerges as a cornerstone for comprehending how environmental cataclysms influence cultural identity and bonds to land. This study, harmonizing the core tenets of an interpretive phenomenological approach with a hermeneutic framework, underscores the pivotal nature of this attachment. It delves deep into the realm of individuals' experiences post the Lytton Creek Fire, unraveling the intricate dynamics of PA amidst such calamity. The study's methodology deviates from conventional paradigms. Instead of traditional interview techniques, it employs walking audio sessions and photo elicitation methods, granting participants the agency to immerse, re-experience, and vocalize their sentiments in real-time. Such techniques shed light on spatial narratives post-trauma and capture the otherwise elusive emotional nuances, offering a visually rich representation of place-based experiences. Central to this research is the voice of the affected populace, whose lived experiences and testimonies form the nucleus of the inquiry. As they renegotiate their bonds with transformed environments, their narratives reveal the indispensable role of cultural landscapes in forging place-based identities. Such revelations accentuate the necessity of integrating both tangible and intangible trauma facets into community recovery strategies, ensuring they resonate more profoundly with affected individuals. Bridging the domains of environmental psychology and behavioral sciences, this research accentuates the intertwined nature of tangible restoration with the imperative of emotional and cultural recuperation post-environmental disasters. It advocates for adaptation initiatives that are rooted in the lived realities of the affected, emphasizing a holistic approach that recognizes the profundity of human connections to landscapes. This research advocates the interdisciplinary exchange of ideas and strategies in addressing post-disaster community recovery strategies. It not only enriches the climate change discourse by emphasizing the human facets of disasters but also reiterates the significance of an interdisciplinary approach, encompassing psychological and behavioral nuances, for fostering a comprehensive understanding of climate-induced traumas. Such a perspective is indispensable for shaping more informed, empathetic, and effective adaptation strategies.

Keywords : place attachment, community recovery, disaster response, restorative landscapes, sensory response, visual methodologies

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