Narratives of Cultural Trauma (and Resilience):
Collective Negotiation of Material Well-being in Disaster Recovery

Abstract

Cultural trauma occurs when there is a shared understanding that a group has experienced a horrendous event. We analyze a television series on community recovery from a tornado. Using cultural trauma theory as our basis, we explain how trauma narratives sustain recovery in impacted communities, and, based on our findings of additional recovery narratives, we theorize why and how some communities differ in their capacity to materially recover following destructive events. This work is important to marketers, who have traditionally been concerned with issues of how to represent people and places, and to disaster scholars and policy makers, who recognize that stimulating the flow of outside resources (e.g., volunteers, money, goods) is important in the reconstitution of communities following natural hazard events.