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The role of cultural context in the depressive disorder of hikikomori in rural Japan

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Presentation identifies areas of disparity in the treatment available and types of treatment most widely used for depressive disorders in urban and rural Japan. The original paper focused on acute social withdrawal (ASW) *hikikomori*, as it presents culture-specifically, and examined the socio-economic and cultural constructs that the author claims contribute to the specific manifestation and the lengthy average duration of ASW in Japan, which is 3 years and 3 months. The paper investigated the social work and community interventions currently available for depressed people in Japan. The comparison between urban and rural treatment for ASW included qualitative research conducted among families and recovering people in two contrasting social environments and points to the differences in outcome for *hikikomori* youth in rural Japan compared with those in Tokyo. The paper highlights the strong need for family inclusion in health care for ASW sufferers, and illuminates the private pain and social stigma that the families of *hikikomori* sufferers experience in the context of their urban or rural socio-cultural circumstances.

Biography

Maree Sugai is an Associate Professor, faculty member and Researcher at Tohoku University of Community Service and Science (KU) in Japan. She has been teaching in Japan for over 20 years and has published and presented at social science, psychology and behavioral science conferences in America, Canada, London and Japan. Her background is in socio-linguistics and medical anthropology and her thesis was in intercultural communication. Her current research area is in depressive disorders, adolescent psychosis, and acute social withdrawal/hikikomori. She has worked as a Director on the Board of Governors of a Mental Health Rehabilitation Center in Sendai (where the March, 2011 tsunami and magnitude 9 earthquake occurred). She has held this position in Japan for 15 years; assisting in rehabilitation activities for families who have lost members to suicide and for those who have suffered severe trauma, or are severely depressed or psychotic. She is also Vice Director of the International Global Exchange Center for University student exchange programs in rural Japan.

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