

## **Post Disaster Community Support with Family Manga Exhibition as a Tool for Intervention and Outreach: Reflection on the past Five Years from a Narrative Perspective**

**Authors :** Kuniko Muramoto, Tadashi Nakamura, Shiro Dan

**Abstract :** On March 11, 2011 the Great East Japan Disaster caused widespread damage. In the aftermath, we searched for ways to provide long-term support and enhanced resilience to affected areas, arriving at the Family Manga Exhibition: an art collection portraying family life. It became a tool for community outreach and intervention, and we implemented support programs by collaborating with local support agencies. This 10-year project has been touring through four prefectures in Tohoku since the disaster struck, bearing witness to the effects of disaster and recovery alike. At this five-year mark, we use a narrative perspective to present our findings and reflect on post-disaster community support. It is important to note that the exhibition's art does not directly depict the disaster; it portrays stories of anonymous families instead. They stimulate viewers' memories and remind them of their own family stories. We analyzed viewers' oral and written responses to the exhibition and discovered that family manga as an art form enhances the viewer's sense of connection to people close to them. We also discovered that the viewers gained more universal perspective on their own situations by viewing the exhibition. Manga, we found, offered a certain safety by enabling the viewers to control how they would interact with the exhibition's content and themes. In addition, the purpose of the project was for us to become witnesses of the disaster and recovery. Supporters of the project became active listeners, functioning as interactive agents who helped forming stories. Voices of the story tellers and the listeners layered upon each other and, as a result, converged into brand new narratives. The essence of traumatic experience is 'the sense of overwhelming powerlessness and isolation'. When we redefine trauma as 'broken relationships', we can say that 'enhancing relationships' and 'weaving relationships' are what strengthen our resilience. This project used narrative as a modality to fortify the resilience of people involved by enhancing the social capital of bonding, bridging, and linking. The manga exhibition functioned as a tool to achieve this end, suggesting that similar applications are possible. Programs we held in-between manga exhibitions also served to enhance narratives of resiliency in the regions. However, we will save that story for another time. We hope to continue collecting the precious and polyphonic voices of people to present as stories born out of the Great East Japan Disaster. This effort extends beyond the immediately affected area by helping us prepare our resilience for future disasters.

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