

Japanese Family Values

Outline by Brian Bergstrom

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Glossary

Hikikomori: A shortened version of the term *shakaiteki hikikomori*, a term popularized by psychologist and public intellectual SAITO Tamaki and derived from the English term “social withdrawal.” It describes people, predominantly Japanese men between 14-30, who refuse to leave their rooms or communicate with other people. Commonly translated as “shut-in” or “recluse”

Otaku: A term coined by *manga* (comic book) enthusiasts in the late 1980s to refer to each other as members of a subculture devoted to a particularly intense form of fandom. The term has come to refer to any intense devotion to an aspect of popular culture generally thought of as ephemeral, usually *manga* or *anime*, but it can refer to devotees of particular pop idols, “character goods” (such as Hello Kitty), obscure live-action science fiction programs, professional wrestling, etc as well. As a stereotype, it is often conflated with the *hikikomori* even though the *otaku*’s propensity toward participating in elaborate subcultural activities with others who share the same intense devotion and interests contradicts any easy alignment of the two phenomena.

Nihonjinron: Literally “Japanese Person Theory,” this term refers to any of a number of cultural theories attempting to explain why Japanese people are essentially unique compared to any other race/society in the world.

Amae: Usually translated as either “indulgence” or “dependence,” this term was popularized by DOI Takeo as a name for the propensity for Japanese people to long to be “indulged” by members of their most intimate spheres, this relationship forming the basic building block of the Japanese social relation. For this reason, DOI argues that the lack of a specific term in English or any other language to refer to this desire to be indulged points to an essential difference between Japanese society and that of the rest of the world. Although he asserts that the desire named by “*amae*” is universally present in the human psyche, his concomitant assertion that Japanese society is uniquely structured to value this desire and that this mode of emotional satisfaction affects the way that nearly every social interaction is conducted in Japan qualifies his theory to be considered a type of *nihonjinron*.