

GROOMING, GOSSIP, AND THE EVOLUTION OF LANGUAGE

What Robin Dunbar suggests—and his research, whether in the realm of primatology or in that of gossip, confirms—is that humans developed language to serve the purpose that grooming served, but far more efficiently. From the nit-picking of chimpanzees to our chats at coffee break, from neuroscience to paleoanthropology, *Grooming, Gossip, and the Evolution of Language* offers a provocative view of what makes us human.

“At the heart of this fresh and witty book is the thesis that gossip is the human version of primate grooming . . . *Grooming, Gossip, and the Evolution of Language* is in many ways a wonderful book, and its ideas deserve an airing. Mr. Dunbar is a clear thinker and a polymath, marshaling evidence for his thesis from such varied fields as primatology, linguistics, anthropology, and genetics.”

—Natalie Angier, *New York Times Book Review*

“Dunbar asks interesting questions, provides a fresh perspective on an old problem, and gives readers a zippy intellectual ride.”

—Jo Ann C. Gutin, *The Nation*

“[Dunbar's] is an intoxicating idea, somewhere between brilliant and loopy. On the way to fleshing out this bracing thesis, Dunbar gives us what he calls a ‘magical mystery tour’ of scientific disciplines, including neurology, linguistics, evolution, and more . . . His ideas and language can be delightful.”

—John Schwartz, *Washington Post Book World*

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