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# The DE-VOICING OF SOCIETY: WHY WE DON'T TALK TO EACH OTHER ANY MORE

*John Locke*

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**The DE-VOICING OF SOCIETY: WHY WE DON'T TALK TO EACH OTHER ANY MORE** John Locke

The Information Age has arrived -- but not in person. Technology is overwhelming us with information, much of it unwanted, driving out the sound of human voices. We now spend our days exchanging factoids, often in print, leaving us little time to "just talk." But it's ordinary social talking, including gossip and small talk, that keeps us together. If we lose these intimate forms of self-expression, says John Locke, we lose more than we realize.

Talking, like the grooming of apes and monkeys, is the way we build and maintain relationships. People in relationships are able to trust and to help each other. Our great-grandparents wouldn't make a deal with someone they couldn't look in the eye, shake hands with, or talk to face-to-face. Our voices gave us identity. But then a variety of factors changed society: the growth of cities, followed by suburbanization, left us living in places where we don't know or care about our neighbors; then we began to bank and shop by computer, to work from our homes, to live alone or in gated communities. The tradition of communities gathering to publicly discuss and debate important issues seems to be giving way to isolated individuals communicating electronically from the privacy of their homes. In every aspect of our lives, vocal intimacy is on the wane. To compensate, we turn on TV and radio talk shows to hear other people talk. Talking has become America's leading spectator sport.

All of these developments are part of the "devoicing" of society. Without intimate conversation, we can't really know others well enough to trust them or work with them harmoniously. We also lose track of our own selves -- our sense of humor, our own particular way of looking at things. Our society is poorer and more fragile for being voiceless.

Written with wit and intelligence, *The De-Voicing of Society* is a provocative look at the world we live in. Thought-provoking and troubling in its implications, it will leave readers wanting to ring the neiahbors' doorbell and invite them over for dinner.

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