

of the contact is information talking, we can witness a further decline in the dominance of grooming talk, but not necessarily a total eclipse of it. Here its expression is almost entirely confined to the opening and closing moments. Instead of waning slowly, as at the dinner party, it is suppressed rapidly, after a few polite, initial exchanges. It reappears again, as before, in the closing moments of the meeting, once the anticipated moment of parting has been signalled in some way. Because of the strong urge to perform grooming talk, business groups are usually forced to heighten the formalisation of their meetings in some way, in order to suppress it. This explains the origin of committee procedure, where formality reaches a pitch rarely encountered on other private social occasions.

Although grooming talk is the most important substitute we have for social grooming, it is not our only outlet for this activity. Our naked skin may not send out very exciting grooming signals, but other more stimulating surfaces are frequently available and are used as substitutes. Fluffy or furry clothing, rugs, or furniture often release a strong grooming response. Pet animals are even more inviting, and few naked apes can resist the temptation to stroke a cat's fur, or scratch a dog behind the ear. The fact that the animal appreciates this social grooming activity provides only part of the reward for the groomer. More important is the outlet the pet animal's body surface gives us for our ancient primate grooming urges.

As far as our own bodies are concerned, we may be naked over most of our surfaces, but in the head region there is still a long and luxuriant growth of hair available for grooming. This receives a great deal of attention-far more than can be explained on a simple hygienic basis-at the hands of the specialist groomers, the barbers and hairdressers. It is not immediately obvious why mutual hairdressing has not become part of our ordinary domestic social gatherings. Why, for instance, have we developed grooming talk as our special substitute for the more typical primate friendship grooming, when we could so easily have concentrated our original grooming efforts in the head region? The explanation appears to lie in the sexual 180