

*Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking* (Broadway Books, 2012) by Susan Cain, reviewed by Steve Gladis, March 2014.

1. **Overview:** Cain discusses how both Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King Jr. changed the world – Parks through quiet resolve and King through firebrand teaching. About one third of Americans are introverts, who are well outnumbered by the rest – extroverts. Extroverts are gregarious, talkative, action oriented, quick deciders, team focused, and social. Introverts prefer contemplation, are inner focused and more deliberate, listen more than talk, prefer a less stimulating environment, and recharge by being alone. We vastly overrate extroverts and consistently underestimate introverts, much to our peril.
2. **Leaders and Introversion:** Despite the Harvard view that extroverts make the best leaders, many CEOs are introverted. Jim Collins (in *Good to Great*) described best (level 5) leaders of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century as humble, not flashy personalities – leaders who build organizations, not their own egos. Extroverted leaders get better results (16% more) from passive workers. Introverted leaders get better results (14% more) from active workers. However, Wharton professor Adam Grant suggests that extroverts should dial it back in general, himself included.
3. **The New Groupthink:** Over-collaboration can actually hurt creativity. Studies at Berkeley to identify the most creative people showed that more creative people were introverts. For them, solitude was a catalyst. The New Groupthink has schools and corporations over-organizing in groups and teams. Most leaders and pundits like Gladwell and Buffet – as well as 91% of all managers – herald the power of groups. Over 70% of employees work in open space, and individual space per employee has been cut in half. Clearly, there has been a shift “from I to we.”
4. **Brainstorming – Not So Fast:** Alex Osborn, an advertising exec in the 1940-1950s, created “brainstorming,” believing that a nonjudgmental environment was key to idea generation. However, 40 years of rigorous research shows he was wrong! Individuals produced more ideas of equal or higher quality than groups. And the larger the group, the worse the results – groups of 9 under-produce groups of 6, and they do worse than groups of 4. However, electronic brainstorming, if managed well, produces superior results.
5. **Temperament at Birth?** Jerome Kagan, developmental psychologist at Harvard, studied introversion and extroversion in children. One experiment was particularly

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telling. Kagan exposed a group of 4-month-old children to a tape recording of noises – voices, popping balloons, strong scents, bright colors – a lot of sensory distraction. About 40% did not react, but 20% reacted, cried, and flailed their arms and legs. Kagan hypothesized counterintuitively that the flailers would grow up to be introverts and the calm-reaction infants would become extroverts. Surprisingly, he was right! The brain’s amygdala is more active in introverts, thus making them more reactive to stimuli. As they grow up, introverts become hypervigilant kids, are more cautious, and get overwhelmed by stimuli. Extroverts take more chances – sometimes ill-considered – but push the envelope and become entrepreneurs and business leaders.

6. **Soft Power:** “In a gentle way, you can shake the world” – Mahatma Gandhi. Parents are leaving Cupertino, California, because Asian kids are outstudying and outperforming the other children. These parents feel that their kids can’t compete in a world that values learning over athletics. Introverts thrive in a learning environment but extroverts suffer. Asian kids value humility, altruism, honesty and hard work; typical American kids value cheerfulness, sociability, and enthusiasm. Free Trait Theory says that learning to act into the situation can be socially advantageous to introverts.
7. **Communication of Types:** Big Five Personality Traits – Introversion/Extroversion, Agreeableness, Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness, and Emotional Stability. The more extroverted you are, the more friends you have, but that says nothing about how good a friend you are. Introverts need downtime to re-energize and be their “best selves.” Extroverts need contact with other people to recharge. Neither should judge the other by their own needs.
8. **Kids in School:** How do you raise your introverted child in an extroverted world? Some thoughts: Introversion isn’t a disease that needs curing. About 30% of any class is introverted – more than most teachers think. Introverts have one or two very deep interests. Some, but not too much, collaborative work suits introverts. Teach all kids – introverts and extroverts – to work independently. Pushing introverts into extroverted areas only shuts them down more. Introverts are not fans of crowds – gym, recess, or the lunchroom.
9. **Some Concluding Thoughts:** “Love is essential; gregariousness is optional.” When it comes to relationships, think quality over quantity. When networking, go deep not wide...one great conversation vs. a ton of hellos. When teaching, remember both gregarious and quiet kids have LOTS to offer the class. Remember the New Groupthink, therefore allow employees and students to think first and then share. And finally, remember that an eloquent presentation doesn’t mean it contains deep ideas.