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Social semantics: how useful has group selection been?

by: SA West, AS Griffin, A Gardner

Journal of Evolutionary Biology, Vol. 21, No. 1. (2008), pp. 374-385.

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Reply to Wilson. I think they win.

qwermish (public note) - 2008-02-02 04:15:53

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Abstract

Abstract In our social semantics review (J. Evol. Biol., 2007, 415-432), we discussed some of the misconceptions and sources of confusion associated with group selection. Wilson (2007, this issue) claims that we made three errors regarding group selection. Here, we aim to expand upon the relevant points from our review in order to refute this claim. The last 45 years of research provide clear evidence of the relative use of the kin and group selection approaches. Kin selection methodologies are

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more tractable, allowing the construction of models that can be applied more easily to specific biological examples, including those chosen by Wilson to illustrate the utility of the group selection approach. In contrast, the group selection approach is not only less useful, but also appears to frequently have negative consequences by fostering confusion that leads to wasted effort. More generally, kin selection theory allows the construction of a unified conceptual overview that can be applied across all taxa, whereas there is no formal theory of group selection.

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