

In this issue, we have two very different reviews of Frank Salter's *On Genetic Interests*, published in order of receipt – Ed.

***On Genetic Interests:
Family, ethny, and humanity
in an age of mass migration***

By **Frank Salter**

Peter Lang (www.peterlang.com), Frankfurt Am Main, Germany, 2003, 388pp. ISBN 3-631-50342-3; US-ISBN: 0-820-46064-8 [Pbk.: \$38.95]

Review #1: By Kevin MacDonald
Department of Psychology, California State University–Long Beach. [E-mail: Kmacd@cox.net]

One of the unfortunate consequences of the emergence of evolutionary psychology has been a lack of interest in biological fitness in the contemporary world. Frank Salter's book may change that. I can only agree with E. O. Wilson's comments on Salter's book that it is "a fresh and deep contribution to the sociobiology of humans." This is a brilliant work. As Irenäus Eibl-Eibesfeldt notes, "the synthesis is persuasive; the policy formulations provocative."

Salter's starting point is the quantification of ethnic kinship. Because of natural selection, inbreeding, and genetic drift operating over thousands of years, ethnic groups evolving in some isolation from one another become genetically differentiated. Salter draws on Henry Harpending's extension of Hamilton's theory of inclusive fitness to quantify this genetic differentiation—this storehouse of ethnic interest. The analysis assumes more than one population: Ethnic interests only exist in relation to other groups, because

within ethnic groups relatedness is by definition zero between randomly chosen pairs due to the fact that all members of the ethnic group share the background genetic uniqueness resulting from the evolutionary history of the group. But when world populations are sampled, genetic variance between groups is on average about 0.125 — equivalent to the kinship between grandparent and grandchild. This is a far from trivial amount, and the result is that humans have an enormous genetic interest in their ethnic groups in relation to other groups. Just as with genealogical kinship where people with larger families have a higher inclusive fitness, this genetic interest becomes enormous because it is tied to the actual number of ethnic group members which, in the modern world, can total in the millions.

A basic theme of the book is that humans cannot rely on their suite of evolved modules to achieve or even perceive their genetic interests in the modern world. Many individuals do not have the same psychological motivation for their ethnic interests that they have, say, for their family. Salter's reasoning actually reinforces arguments that there are enormous barriers to the evolution of altruism within local groups, since, as noted above, random co-ethnics have zero ethnic kinship. Presumably this is because our evolved psychology was designed mainly for a world of small groups separated by tiny genetic differences.

As a result, Salter turns to rational choice mechanisms which allow humans to make cost/benefit calculations aimed at adaptively attaining evolutionary goals in novel environments. In psychological terminology, these are domain-general mechanisms, most notably general intelligence, that enable humans to make rational, adaptive choices in novel, complex, and relatively unpredictable environments. Examples include making

choices about how to allocate ethnic investment — where to draw the group boundaries for the purposes of ethnic identification and mobilization. Rational choice mechanisms are capable of designing adaptive group ethnic strategies for navigating the novel environment, which has produced a “global village” in which ethnic groups that were once separated by insurmountable barriers are now no more than a jet trip away.

But ought humans care about biological fitness? Just because behavior is adaptive does not imply that “it is right or even sensible under modern conditions” (William Hamilton, quoted on p. 286). Salter is sensitive to the naturalistic fallacy, devoting a great deal of space to the problems inherent in any attempt at developing a morality of ethnic interest — only a glimpse of which can be discussed here. Acting with the knowledge of ethnic interests provided by modern science does not change the morality of acting on behalf of ethnic interests, any more than the morality of being a good parent is altered by the knowledge that parenting evolved to further individual genetic interests. Indeed, Salter often highlights the analogy between families and ethnies, suggesting, for example, that having an ethnic identity in combination with the knowledge that an ethnic group is an extended family would promote a sense of duty to one’s ethnic group. Although Salter shows a genetic homology between family and ethny, he notes that this does not prove any obligation to ethnic kin. Indeed, no obligation can be scientifically proven, not even to one’s children. By the same token, no fallacy is committed by caring about kin and about genetic survival. It is not irrational to feel an obligation to one’s family and ethny.

In reasoning about the morality of ethnic interests, Salter proposes ‘universal nationalism’, in which people are accorded

the right to live in an ethnostate, since this would preserve the ethnic interests of the great majority of humans. This would be biologically just according to a reworked version of J. S. Mill’s ethic which Salter calls ‘adaptive utilitarianism’, meaning that a just act is one that serves the adaptiveness of the greatest number. Salter proposes a ‘mixed ethic’ of adaptive utilitarianism plus individual rights designed to protect vulnerable minorities.

There will, of course, remain conflicts of interest between ethnies in a world of limited resources, and fitness differences between groups are inevitable. Social controls might prevent conflict, but in Salter’s view, total suppression by a world government would be such an infringement of freedom that it would make us less than human. Indeed, there is a presumption of a “right to strive for the advancement, not just the defense of one’s family and ethny” (p. 306), resulting in asymmetries of outcome. But Salter also agrees with Richard Alexander that ethical rules “consist of *restraints* on particular methods of seeking self-interests, specifically on efforts of others to seek their own self-interests” (quoted on p. 306; italics in text). Just as we accept competition for resources by individuals with restraints on how far they can go in compromising the interests of others, we may also adopt an ethic of ethnic conflict in which relative losers are not destroyed and are motivated to remain part of the social system. Because of its provisions for vulnerable minorities, adopting a mixed ethic would be in the interests of everyone.

Whether or not one decides that humans ought to take fitness seriously, it is clear that some ethnic and racially identified groups continue to be elaborately organized to advance their interests, including the promotion and expansion of territorial ethnostates. The result is that groups not

playing the game by, say, adopting a meme which proscribes ethnic identity or the defense of ethnic interests, will likely lose out — altruism writ large. It's no different really from the fate of any genetic mutation that causes an animal to choose a less fit mate or to fail to be nepotistic. Ethnic groups can certainly decide not to play the game, but in the game of evolution, not playing simply results in extinction.

It is therefore reasonable to sketch out the parameters of effective ethnic strategizing, and indeed much of Salter's book consists of a sort of "handbook" on adaptive strategy which adopts a bottom-up, individual perspective favored by W. D. Hamilton. The adaptive individual balances life effort — his or her "fitness portfolio" — across the domains of self-maintenance, family, ethny, and humanity as a whole (hence the book's title). In the modern world, ethnic continuity is a critical component of an adaptive portfolio. Ethnic groups have a vital interest in defending territory against immigration from other ethnic groups: "For all of past human experience and still today, control of a territory is a precious resource for maintaining ethnic genetic interests in the long run" (p. 61). Loss of numbers within a territory dominated by one's ethnic group as a result, say, of disease or natural disaster, results in a loss of ethnic fitness, but this loss is not critical because the numbers can eventually be made up. However, in a world of limited resources and carrying capacity — indeed, a world that, in the view of many experts has already reached unsustainable human populations — immigration of ethnic outsiders constitutes a permanent loss of fitness. The extent of that loss depends, of course, not only on the numbers of immigrants, but also on their genetic distance from the native population. At the extremes, the results are far greater than might be assumed: Salter shows that it would be more

genetically advantageous for, say, a Bantu to give his life resisting immigration of two members of a genetically distant group like the Northeast Asians than it would be to rescue one of his own children.

The following are some of the main points of a very rich and provocative discussion.

1. Successful strategies require internal social controls, especially on free-riding, individualistic elites. As Salter notes, the free rider problem was successfully solved long ago via punishment and monitoring in the small groups that humans evolved in, and, in principle at least, there is no problem in doing so in the modern world, especially if social controls are maintained by governments. Hence the importance of a territorial ethnostate: Defending ethnic interests in multi-ethnic states is a great deal more difficult because the power of the state itself becomes a potential weapon against the interests of particular ethnic groups. For example, coalitions of minority groups may attempt to influence immigration policy against the interests of the majority ethnic group.

2. Adaptive ethnic culture tends to contain "oppositional symbols" of past victories and especially of past defeats. These symbols promote ethnic identification and facilitate ethnic altruism in defense of ethnic interests. In the crowded modern world, adaptive ethnic culture is defensive rather than expansionist because of the high risks of an expansionist strategy yielding outcomes where both sides lose.

3. Pro-minority regimes are usually maladaptive for the majority due to demographic policies aimed at reducing their influence. Such regimes are also unstable, due to majority competition for resources, including social status. The challenge, Salter argues, is to construct a state that defends

individual rights, while defending the majority against displacement by highly mobilized, rapidly reproducing ethnic minorities. Globalism and multiculturalism legitimate minority interests and de-legitimize majority interests, but in the long run this is a threat to most individuals' ethnic interests because the world's population consists mainly of ethnic majorities and because minority dominance usually results in ethnic conflict.

In general, there is little discussion of the consequences of the fact that ethnic groups differ on traits that are conducive to fitness success in the modern world. The reality is that ethnic groups differ in intelligence and the ability to develop and control economic resources; they differ in their degree of ethnocentrism, in the extent to which they are mobilized to achieve group interests, and how aggressively they behave toward other groups; they differ in their numbers, fertility, and the extent to which they encourage parenting practices conducive to resource acquisition; they differ in the amount of land and other resources held at any point in time and in their political power. Equality, proportional equity, or even maintaining a status quo in territory and resource control would be difficult to attain or to maintain after it has been achieved without extremely intense social controls. Accepting a status quo would not be in the interests of groups that have recently lost land or numbers; nor is a status quo likely to be acceptable to groups with relatively low numbers and control of resources; nor would a status quo be likely to be acceptable to groups prone to high fertility. And yet, the alternative of all humans renouncing ethnic group loyalties seems utopian to say the least, for all the reasons that Salter adumbrates. And given that some ethnic groups, especially ones with high levels of ethnocentrism and mobilization, undoubtedly will continue to function as

groups far into the foreseeable future, unilateral renunciation of ethnic loyalties by some groups means only their surrender and defeat — the ultimate act of altruism with the entirely predictable outcome of extinction for those practicing it. The future, then, like the past, will inevitably be a Darwinian competition in which ethnicity plays a very large role, either in the humane, universalized manner urged by Salter, or by nature red in tooth and claw.

Kevin MacDonald is Professor of Psychology at California State University—Long Beach. He completed his Ph.D. in Biobehavioral Sciences at the University of Connecticut in 1981 and writes in the areas of evolutionary personality psychology, evolutionary developmental psychology, and strategizing human groups.

Review #2: By Peter Gray
Department of Psychology, Boston College.
[E-mail: Grayp@bc.edu]

Misuse of Evolutionary Theory
to Advocate for Racial
Discrimination and Segregation:
A critique of Salter's
On Genetic Interests

We who take an evolutionary approach to human behavior suffer from the fact that our technical terms "adaptation," "fit," and "genetic interest" sound like synonyms for "good." When we say that a tendency for rape—or murder, or male domination of women, or ethnic chauvinism, or xenophobia—may have evolved because the behavior is "adaptive" we do not mean that the behavior is "good." We are simply saying that, in the course of evolution, such behavior, under certain conditions, may have promoted