

Manipulation and the Causes of Evolution

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Abstract

Evolutionary processes such as natural selection and random drift are commonly regarded as causes of population-level change. We respond to a recent challenge that drift and selection are best understood as statistical trends, not causes. Our reply appeals to manipulation as a strategy for uncovering causal relationships: if you can systematically manipulate variable A to bring about a change in variable B, then A is a cause of B. We argue that selection and drift can be systematically manipulated to produce different kinds of population-level change. They should therefore be regarded as causes.

Subjects: [Specific Sciences: Biology: Evolutionary Theory](#)
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