

Social insects can't recognize their kin, and that's good for the group

W.D. Hamilton pointed out, in an article that revolutionized the study of social evolution, that you can pass on genes by helping your relatives as well as your offspring.

Hamilton predicted that organisms ought to evolve the ability to discriminate degrees of kinship more and more finely. Genes that made them choosy would survive to future generations because they would direct help to those individuals with whom they shared the most genes.

True, say evolutionary biologists David Queller, and Joan Strassmann, but there also seem to be many cases where “a veil of ignorance” prevents organisms from gaining this kind of information. That forces them to consider a situation from the perspective of all members of their group instead of solely from their own perspective or that of their close kin.

Read the full, original story here: [Ignorance is sometimes bliss](#)