Sociobiology is “the systematic study of the biological basis of all social behavior.”¹ The term was popularized by Edward O. Wilson’s 1975 book—*Sociobiology: The New Synthesis*—that developed an evolutionary perspective on group selection, behavior, and functions in social species, such as insects, birds, and mammals.

The final chapter of Wilson’s book focuses on *Homo sapiens*. He has argued that humans, like other organisms, have evolved both physically and behaviorally in a way that maximizes their chances of survival. As some behavioral traits, such as parental care, territoriality, and incest avoidance, have been “selected” by nature due to their survival advantages, these traits have become dominant in the population over time. In other words, sociobiology has suggested that certain behavioral, as well as physical, traits are adaptive and heritable in human and animal populations. Wilson has also stated that there is no reason to think that evolution suddenly stopped thousands of years ago when small groups of humans started emigrating from their original homeland in East Africa but perhaps continued even after their separation from each other and during their adjustment to different parts of the world.

While Wilson’s arguments on animal behavior are generally accepted in academia, his analogy on humans has created massive controversy
since the publication of *Sociobiology*, and the debate has been intensified with subsequent studies on genetic differences among ethnic and racial groups. In this regard, some of his critics, such as Gould and Kamin, have accused Wilson of being racist and sexist and for legitimizing inequality and colonialism. In response, Wilson has suggested that genetic inheritance is not deterministic but probabilistic and that there is continuous interaction between human nature and environment. This chapter reviews the arguments of Wilson and his critics and presents the current state of the debate, including the implications of sociobiology for political science.

**Background of the Theory**

Darwin has theorized that the hereditary traits that increase the chances of survival and reproduction of individuals would be selected for and become dominant in subsequent generations. This “natural selection” process constitutes the basis of the theory of evolution, which posits that all species have evolved from common ancestors. Wilson has underlined that Darwin’s theory is supported by fossil records, which indicate that *Homo sapiens* dates back around 200,000 years and has evolved from *Australopithecus africanus* (three million years ago) and *Homo erectus* (two million years ago) in East Africa.

Despite the parsimonious explanation of natural selection, the prevalence of altruism among social species posed a puzzle, because by definition helping others in times of danger or sharing food reduces the individual fitness of the performer much more than it does the recipient’s, so the “altruistic genes” would not have survived the evolutionary process. An example that Darwin has given of this phenomenon is worker ants, which are sterile but still have managed to appear in subsequent generations. In retrospect, Darwin has put forward the idea of natural selection operating at the family level rather than at the individual level: as the altruistic members contribute to the fitness of their kin group, their genes continue to survive.

A hundred years after Darwin, Hamilton constructed a mathematical model to explain inclusive fitness and has suggested that the greater the kinship proximity (i.e., the more genes shared) the higher the benefits of altruistic behavior over the costs. Furthermore, Trivers has made a substantial contribution to this debate with the notion of reciprocal altruism, which indicates that altruism is possible even between nonkin individuals if the future cost of not reciprocating (i.e., cheating) reduces the inclusive fitness of the recipient. As nonaltruistic individuals are punished and perhaps isolated from society because