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## **The Evolution of a Social Construction: The Case of Male Homosexuality**

Pieter R. Adriaens, Andreas de Block

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### Abstract

Male homosexuality has been viewed by evolutionary psychologists as a Darwinian paradox, and by other social scientists as a social construction. We argue that it is better understood as an evolutionary social construction. Male homosexuality as we now know it is an 18th-century invention, but nonexclusive same-sex sexual behavior has a long evolutionary history. According to the alliance-formation hypothesis, same-sex sexuality evolved by natural selection because it created or strengthened male-male alliances and allowed low-status males to reposition themselves in the group hierarchy and thereby increase their reproductive success. This hypothesis makes sense of some odd findings about male homosexuality and helps to explain the rise in exclusive male homosexuality in the 18th century. The sociohistorical conditions around 1700 may have resulted in an increase in same-sex sexual behavior. Cultural responses to same-sex sexuality led to

the spread of exclusive homosexual behavior and to the creation of a homosexual identity. Understanding male homosexuality as an evolutionary social construction can help us move beyond the traditionally polarized debate between evolutionary psychologists and social constructionists.

## THE EVOLUTION OF A SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION

*the case of male homosexuality*

PIETER R. ADRIAENS\* AND ANDREAS DE BLOCK\*†

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\*Institute of Philosophy, University of Leuven, Belgium.

†Faculty of Philosophy, Radboud University, Nijmegen, The Netherlands.

Correspondence: Pieter R. Adriaens, Institute of Philosophy, University of Leuven, Kardinaal Mercierplein 2, B-3000 Leuven, Belgium.

E-mail: PieterAdriaens@hiw.kuleuven.be.

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Baltimore, Maryland, USA 21218  
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