



# Conversations about Psychology and Sexual Orientation

*Janis S. Bohan, Glenda M. Russell*

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Psychology's approach to sexual orientation has long had its foundation in essentialism, which undergirds psychological theory and research as well as clinical practice and applications of psychology to public policy issues. It is only recently that psychology as a discipline has begun to entertain social constructivism as an alternative approach.

Based on the belief that thoughtful dialogue can engender positive change, **Conversations about Psychology and Sexual Orientation** explores the implications for psychology of both essentialist and social constructionist understandings of sexual orientation. The book opens with an introduction presenting basic theoretical frameworks, followed by three application sections dealing with clinical practice, research and theory, and public policy. In each, the discussion takes the form of a conversation, as the authors first consider essentialist and constructionist approaches to the topic at hand. These thoughts, in turn, are followed by responses from distinguished scholars chosen for their expertise in a particular area.

By providing an array of comments and thoughtful responses to topics surrounding psychology's approaches to sexual orientation, this valuable study sheds new light on the contrasting views held in the field and the ways in which essentialist and constructionist understandings may be applied to specific practices and policies.

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