

# Group Counseling With **LGBTQI Persons**

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# Group Counseling With LGBTQI Persons

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We dedicate this text to our husbands, Benjamin A. Jones (Kristopher M. Goodrich) and Joseph E. Tomassone (Melissa Luke),  
who empowered us to challenge ourselves,  
encouraged us when the tasks were daunting,  
forgave us when it took time away from them,  
and loved us unconditionally throughout the process.

In addition, we would like to say that this text was inspired by  
our clients, students, and supervisees. Our shared work with  
them informed a number of the concepts, interventions, and  
ideas included throughout this book.





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# Preface



The origins of this book grew out of concern shared by both of us regarding an observed gap in the practical and scholarly publications pertaining to group work with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, and intersex (LGBTQI) persons. As counselors and counselor educators, we recognize the need to train clinicians to intentionally work with LGBTQI clients. Having varied experiences in counseling and community activism, we recognize that LGBTQI persons have come to our practices at varied points in their lives and for a variety of reasons. Yet, contemporary group texts primarily identify LGBTQI persons' presenting concerns as related to coming out, the effects of marginalization and discrimination, as well as the connection the community has historically had to the HIV/AIDS crisis. Although these texts offered conceptualization and intervention in response to these considerations, we recognized that LGBTQI persons have a wide range of other potential needs that can be addressed in group. Accordingly, this book is a first attempt to fill some of this gap so that group leaders, supervisors, and those who teach group can provide an additional structure and intentionality to the groups that they run to ensure that their services are appropriate and effective for LGBTQI persons.

Given that at least 4%–10% of individuals identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual (Chung, Szymanski, & Amadio, 2006; Haas et al., 2010), and it remains unknown how many additional persons identify as transgender, questioning, or intersex, the demonstrated dearth of information about LGBTQI persons' needs and experiences in the current professional literature is alarming. Not only is it probable that a group leader will work with LGBTQI group members, but the group leader is also likely to encounter a larger number of

group members who live with and love LGBTQI persons. Thus, we approach this book with a belief that without more knowledge, awareness, and skills in working with LGBTQI persons, group leaders are at risk of stereotyping and perpetuating societal misattributions, which both can be harmful to individuals and groups. The book is also predicated on the belief that with increased knowledge, awareness, and skills, group leaders can utilize the unique properties and propensities of group work to create ameliorating structures and growth-promoting experiences for all group members, specifically LGBTQI members.

This book contains information and evidence about facilitating groups with the LGBTQI populations. We have decided to address the population developmentally, as members of the LGBTQI populations are diverse and have evolving needs at different points over the life span. The paradigm of this text is that there are various critical periods, contexts, and potential points of intervention with the LGBTQI populations that should not be pathologized. Using a focus on normative human development and the concepts of life cycles and systems, group counselors and group psychotherapists can be better prepared for this population. It is our hope that this book can be used for group counselors who both facilitate groups for LGBTQI persons as well as facilitate groups that include (but are not specific to) LGBTQI persons.

The book begins with a discussion of the history of group work with LGBTQI persons and defining the populations of people we are discussing that group leaders might work with. We review the rationale for group interventions with persons from different LGBTQI communities and whether one should decide to have them in a heterogeneous or homogenous group on the basis of presenting concern. Chapter 2 continues with different planning and group process issues that group leaders should consider in their work, such as the type of group that best serves their clients' needs, factors that might influence the group process, and how they can best respond to those circumstances in a group setting with LGBTQI persons. Chapter 3 continues with a discussion of different ethical and legal issues of relevance with this population. The book then progresses with each chapter devoted to different segments and critical moments for the LGBTQI population. Each chapter is oriented to expand the group leader's knowledge about certain groups and issues, self-awareness of issues that might get in the way, and skills/interventions that they can utilize within the group. This frame of knowledge, awareness, and skills has been accepted in multicul-



tural counseling practice, used in the fields of both counseling and psychology (Sue & Sue, 2013).

In Chapters 4–6, we explore developmental and gender-based groups that are more homogenous in nature. These types of groups have been constructed to increase the amount of similarity among members, to raise cohesion, and to ensure a greater ability for members to see others like they are. In Chapter 4, we address more specifically some of the issues and concerns that LGBTQI children and adolescents might face, both in school as well as in the other contexts of their lives. The interventions in this chapter have been formatted to be developmentally appropriate for group members of different ages. Chapter 5 continues with a focus on same gender adult groups for LGBTQI persons. In this chapter, we explore specific issues that they may face, including friendships, romantic relationships, education and career readiness, as well as aging. In Chapter 6, we address groups with transgender and intersex persons, who can have differing considerations from others because of their gender identity.

Following this, Chapter 7 begins the context portions of the text. Specifically, in this chapter we explore how groups can be utilized to assist members in their disclosure or coming out process as LGBTQI. Interventions are developmentally constructed to assist members in understanding when, whether, and to whom they wish to disclose their affectual orientation or gender identity. In Chapter 8, we introduce the different contexts in which groups may take place—school, residential, and outpatient settings—and how these can influence the group counseling process for members and leaders. Using Bronfenbrenner’s (1977, 2005) frame, we introduce leaders to different interventions that can be impactful in different types of settings in which they may work.

Chapter 9 is a comprehensive chapter—authored by Hannah Bowers, a doctoral candidate at the University of New Mexico—that deals with the different types of groups available for LGBTQI couples and families. In the first portion of the chapter, she introduces groups that can be used by family members of LGBTQI persons to integrate their identity as a family member and supporter of an LGBTQI person; later in the chapter, she introduces groups that LGBTQI couples and families can utilize to explore and discuss concerns related to money, finances, expectations, and so forth.

In Chapter 10, we explore different group interventions that one can utilize for groups with LGBTQI persons who struggle with alcohol and other drug concerns. We know that addictions have

impacted this community proportionally more than others, and so group leaders must be ready to understand, and to provide specific interventions to assist, persons with this concern. In Chapter 11, we address grief and loss—a hard topic for many LGBTQI persons. Although there are similarities in experiences of loss, there are differences with LGBTQI persons concerning types of marginalization, discrimination, and lack of acknowledgment of relationships. This can compound the experience of loss and trauma, and interventions in this chapter focus on how to understand and address these issues. Chapter 12 continues with a discussion about the supervision of group work, or how supervisors can assist group leaders in providing thoughtful and intentional support in facilitating groups with LGBTQI persons.

The text ends with two chapters that have a systemic focus on intervention. In Chapter 13, we explore social justice interventions; in Chapter 14, we introduce different types of group structures for allies of LGBTQI persons. We believe in the strength and power of the group experience and how it can influence positive changes across and within members, who then can influence positive change in their lives. We provide an introduction to these ideas in these final chapters to hopefully inspire group leaders to bring about positive change in the world.

It is our hope that you, the reader, will be able to use this text as a resource and reference with your own practice of group counseling as well as group work education. We recognize that no text can comprehensively and completely span the entire domain of issues or concerns that might be present within the LGBTQI community. Instead, it is our desire to provide you with an initial reference to anticipate the unique needs and experiences of LGBTQI persons, how you can potentially address these issues, as well as where else answers might be found. We welcome you on your journey to provide intentional and effective work with the LGBTQI community, and we look forward to hearing about each of your successes!

## About the Authors



**Kristopher M. Goodrich, PhD**, is the program coordinator and an assistant professor of counselor education at the University of New Mexico. He is a Nationally Certified Counselor (NCC), an Approved Clinical Supervisor (ACS), and a Licensed Mental Health Counselor (LMHC) in the State of New Mexico. Dr. Goodrich is a member of the American Counseling Association (ACA); the Association for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Issues in Counseling (ALGBTIC); the Association for Specialists in Group Work (ASGW); and the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES). He currently serves as the President-Elect of ALGBTIC as well as the President-Elect-Elect of the Rocky Mountain Association for Counselor Education and Supervision. Dr. Goodrich has numerous publications focused on increasing the effectiveness of counselor preparation and counselor practice with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA) persons and group work.

**Melissa Luke, PhD**, is an associate professor of counseling and human services and is the coordinator of school counseling at Syracuse University. She is an NCC, an ACS, and an LMHC in the State of New York. Dr. Luke has worked as a teacher, school counselor, and counselor educator for more than 20 years. She currently serves as the Treasurer of Chi Sigma Iota International and as the President-Elect of the North Atlantic Region of Counselor Education and Supervision. Dr. Luke is a member of ACA, ALGBTIC, ASGW, ACES, the American School Counselor Association, and the Counselors for Social Justice and has numerous publications focused on increasing the effectiveness of counselor preparation and counselor practice with LGBTQIA persons.

