



Reviewed by Kevin Jeffrey Goldwater

I don't think it's ever been easier to be a gay person. This perspective comes from a queer-identifying, twenty-one-year-old, living in New York City who also grew up in Chicago. Despite the news of the decimations of queer men around the world (Chechnya, for example) and strings of phobia and hate-filled rhetoric that stream from our Commander-in-Chief's Twitter, queer youth, now more than ever, are finding opportunity to not only explore and question sexuality but to discuss and reckon with it. While it is still remarkably difficult to navigate today's world as a queer person, apps like Grindr and Scruff link gay men to peers just down the block and across the country. Homosexual marriage has been legalized in the United States and non-monogamous partnerships are on the rise. I lived the first few years of my life in fear, ashamed of expressing the queer person that I am, but this cultural shift and increased discussion of non-heteronormative experience has allowed me to explore, question, discuss and reckon with my sexuality to the point where I have shed any associated taboos and am in full embrace and proud of my identity.

Littered with modern day references and exploding with new information and approaches, *LGBTQ Clients in Therapy* is close to being an informative review of sexuality in psychotherapy for clinicians and queer-informed novices alike. It reminds readers to look at sexual selves not through their personal lenses, nor political lenses, but the lenses of the client.

The cultural shift that allowed my transformation is the same shift that ignited Joe Kort to write *LGBTQ Clients in Therapy: Clinical Issues and Treatment Strategies*. In 2008, Kort published a similar book, entitled *Gay-Affirmative Therapy for the Straight Clinician (GATSC)*. Kort's new book is adapted from *GATSC*, and highlights the need for an updated, societally concurrent exploration of sexuality in light of the recent shift. Kort now expands his attention to gay teen, transgender, bisexual and sexually fluid clientele.

Kort begins his book by discussing the basics of psychotherapy and queer identity. While relating the history and assumptions that go into treating queer clients, Kort also shares what it is to be a gay-affirming therapist and how to go about being such. Discussing myths and errors in tandem, Kort gives a clear and informed introduction to the more specific portions of his manifesto. Kort covers an in-depth examination of the development of queer clienteles in the following 16 chapters. Topics range from "Covert Cultural Sexual Abuse" to "Trauma from Growing Up LGBTQ to Coming Out". The first seven chapters cover the expected processes of coming out and the role of queer identity on development, along with the roles of outside forces that become traumatic and abusive indirect or directly to LGBTQ clients' upbringing. Kort continues with chapters eight through twelve by examining coupling in today's queer relationships, whether related to monogamy or the identities of the partners. Kort then concludes his book with four chapters that seem to be themed with the 'new' material Kort is including—gay teenagers, trans and

bisexual clientele and sexuality fluidity are all covered. Complete with introductory quotes, case examples, and a tone that is easy to follow and work with, Kort does an excellent job educating his reader on various dimensions of sexuality and the smaller subsets within them.

While *LGBTQ Clients in Therapy* is possibly the best of the queer-informed psychotherapy books I've encountered, there is still much missing. In reference to the parent of this book, Kort shares that "I [was] shocked when I reread *GATSC* at my apparent heterosexist, heteronormative, monogonormative mindset... In this book, I am less afraid to bring up various sexualities, various fluidities, various sexual preferences as healthy possibilities for LGBTQ individuals" (xiii). It is precisely this mindset that prevents Kort's book from being a go-to handbook for treating queer clients. Kort's assumption that he has progressed to including the minority effects in his book is unmerited—his tone is progressively less hetero-primed and monogonormative, however it has still not touched on the role of race, social economic status, and indigeneity in queer clients' lives. These concepts are not only incredibly influential on queer lives but are essential if one plans to discuss the whole of the queer spectrum or treat a client in the multidimensional way they deserve. A monodimensional approach to anything, never mind sexuality, is dangerous. It is especially important to maintain a multidimensional view with regard to potentially delicate concepts like sexuality.

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In addition, Kort's book does seem to focus on the queer clients who identify under the gender binary. While indeed exploring the spectrum of gender identity in a multiple of way in the book, Kort's narrative does seem to focus heavily on the binary during general discussion.

Even with these deficiencies, Kort has been able to create a book that touches on the past with reflection and explores today's situations with knowledge. Kort should be acknowledged and praised for his efforts, as Kort has a difficult job to tackle in reviewing LGBTQ clients in general and hitting every dimension is less than possible. Littered with modern day references and exploding with new information and approaches, *LGBTQ Clients in Therapy* is close to being an informative review of sexuality in psychotherapy for clinicians and queer-informed novices alike. It reminds readers to look at sexual selves not through their personal lenses, nor political lenses, but the lenses of the client. As a queer man, I am thankful that Kort has taken the time and energy to develop such an important addition to our professional literature, and I look forward to the day that it updated and earns its spot in the psychological zeitgeist.



Photo of Joe Kort by: John Hardwick Photography

Joe Kort is a licensed sex and relationship therapist specializing in sex therapy, LGBTQ issues and Imago Relationship Therapy. An author of four books and a regular blogger for *Psychology Today* and the *Huffington Post*, Kort is also part of the University of Michigan's Sexual Health Certificate Program. He resides in Michigan.

Kevin Jeffrey Goldwater studies applied psychology with a minor in music and social & cultural analysis at New York University. He is set to graduate in May of 2019. Born in Chicago, Kevin has done immersive research on psychoanalytic theory and the role of gender in today's media. Most recently, Kevin has been working in cultural psychology, focusing on the impact of colonialism on indigenous and minority patients. In addition to working for *Somatic Psychotherapy Today*, he writes reviews for the *International Psychotherapy Journal*.