

Book Review: *Clinical Issues With Interracial Couples: Theories and Re-search* (2003). Volker Thomas, Terri A. Karis, and Joseph L. Wetchler (Eds.), New York: Haworth, 190 pages, \$29.95, ISBN# 0-7890-2180-3.

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Article:

In their introduction, the editors state that the aims of this book are “to give voice to and provide space for couples whose relationships have all too often been silenced or over-looked” and to “provide a space to focus on these [racial] differences without contributing to further stereotyping and marginalization” (pp. 1-2). This book does, indeed, provide space for thoughtful dialogue about the experiences of being in an interracial relationship. As this text was originally published as an issue of the *Journal of Couple and Relationship Therapy* (Vol. 2, No. 2/3, 2003), it is a collection of articles on the topic of clinical work with interracial couples rather than a cohesive guidebook. Because of the wide range of clinical issues and the diversity of the topics addressed, it is a useful reference tool and sourcebook for clinicians whose practice involves working with interracial couples. As many of the authors discuss, interracial couples are becoming increasingly common. Therefore, nearly all clinicians will benefit from an in-depth understanding of the needs and experiences of this population. *Clinical Issues with Interracial Couples: Theories and Research* provides a foundation for this understanding.

The chapters cover a wide range of clinical issues, and the book is divided into three sections. The first section addresses general issues with interracial couples, and the second section includes information about interracial same-sex couples. The chapters in these sections include information related specifically to unique issues that may arise for couples in unique combinations of interracial relationships, and they help to orient clinicians to the unique needs of these couples. The third section discusses clinical interventions and assessment strategies for consideration with interracial couples, and many of these approaches are innovative and thought provoking.

The majority of the chapters are research based. In particular, the research that appears in this volume incorporates the use of qualitative methodologies, which allows the reader to gain a more in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of partners in interracial couples than quantitative methodology would allow. Because of this in-depth glimpse into the lives of interracial couples, this book can play a valuable role in assisting clinicians in understanding their clients who are involved in interracial relationships as well as in the training of multiculturally competent practitioners.

Although the editors provide a brief introduction to the entire volume, the book would have been enhanced by the inclusion of a summarizing chapter to synthesize the important issues discussed in the preceding chapters. Although such a chapter is missing, the reader discovers several themes that arise throughout the book. For example, one major theme is the notion of duality (Kyle D. Killian, p. 15), or the experience of viewing oneself and one’s partner both as a person whose identity is self-defined and as a person whose identity is influenced by cultural stereotypes and social expectations. Another theme that is discussed by several of the authors is the influence of the reactions of social support systems (i.e., family, friends, and coworkers) to the interracial relationship. Indeed, this is a topic that begs further attention and elaboration through future research. Perhaps the most significant message contained in this book is that the contextual factors that influence all couples

become magnified in importance for interracial couples. As such, clinicians who read this book will increase their awareness of the ecosystemic influences on interracial couples.

Clinical Issues With Interracial Couples: Theories and Research does not present a how-to manual to guide clinicians in working with interracial couples. Such a manual would minimize the complexity of these couples' experiences to the stereotypical portrayals of interracial relationships that are often found in the larger society. Indeed, the authors in this book argue convincingly that interracial couples cannot be defined merely by their intercultural bond. Rather than a set of basic guidelines, the authors set forth a number of considerations that may aid the clinician in conceptualizing his or her work with members of this population. In light of this, a reading of this book will likely open many possible avenues of conversation for clinicians in their work with inter-racial couples while allowing space for considering the unique qualities of each partner and each relationship.