

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

COMMUNITY SOCIAL SUPPORT is a wonderful resource and, according to my own research and personal experience, a source of resilience for helping professionals, immigrants and refugees, interracial couples, and authors. I am taking this opportunity to express my gratitude to important members of my community who have lent a hand in supporting this book project from its infancy forward. First, I'd like to thank Anna M. Agathangelou, whose intense intellect pushed me to think about the data in new ways and to organize the book more explicitly around the theme of borders. Her tireless feedback improved the quality of the theorization significantly. "Thank you" to our sons, Mikael and Aleks, who are usually remarkably patient while waiting for Dad to put the finishing touches on some "urgent" matter at his computer in his office. Thanks also to Dr. David Baptiste, who provided substantive feedback on early papers that proceeded from the first data collections for this project and helped shape the clinical applications of the book.

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Finally, I wish to thank the twenty couples who agreed to open their lives and share their experiences. Their willingness to be vulnerable—to speak the sometimes unspeakable—made this project possible. May their life narratives encourage cultural inclusion and respect in others' intimate relationships, and inspire professionals and lay persons alike to do more than merely "tolerate," by beginning to understand, appreciate, and value diverse perspectives, experiences, and locations—the differences that make a difference.

Interracial Couples, Intimacy, & Therapy

Introduction

WHAT INTERRACIAL COUPLES CAN TELL US

LARRY: A guy at work told me, “Mixed marriage offends me, it just *offends* me.”

And I can accept that—it’s not for everybody. But it’s his heart that’s hurting, not mine. Not everyone can do this. Not everyone is that strong.

DEBRA: Yes, everybody has to decide what they can live with and can’t live with.

ROBERT: We’re just like any other couple . . . perfectly normal.

LINDA: As far as things happening to us, we’re real boring.

AS PEOPLE IN intimate relationships can quickly confirm, individuals looking at the same picture, or living through the same event, often report completely different experiences. Attending to disparate aspects of situations, we tend to interpret what we are sensing, feeling, and thinking in varied ways. The two couples quoted above report dissimilar experiences, just as individual partners in interracial relationships may have contrasting takes on or constructions of what is “real” or “true” for them. While this can be a source of confusion or frustration, it is also a phenomenon that all couples must learn to effectively handle if their relationship is to be successful. As partners in interracial relationships diverge from one another on multiple axes of power—such as gender, ethnicity, culture, religion, or social class—