

BLACK COUPLES THERAPY

Most research and couples therapy modalities tend to be normed on white European American couples and fail to include research on Black couples. This volume fills a void in the theory, research, and practice of couples therapy where clinicians have historically not been specifically trained to provide culturally responsive care when addressing the unique experiences and needs of Black couples. It aims to provide students, researchers, and allied mental health professionals with greater awareness, knowledge, and competency in working with Black couples. It assists therapists in developing a working alliance with Black couples and places an emphasis on cultivating environments that are instrumental to decreasing relationship distress and disconnection. *Black Couples Therapy* provides a comprehensive overview of the research and theory behind race and collective identity as well as romantic coupling, illustrated by examples of practice.

DR. YAMONTE COOPER is a scholar, author, professor of counseling, adjunct professor of clinical psychology, clinical director of the West Coast Sex Therapy Center, Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor (LPCC), and Certified Sex Therapist Supervisor (CST-S). As a Fulbright scholar, Dr. Cooper has exchanged best practices globally in career counseling and development.

DR. ERICA HOLMES is a licensed clinical psychologist, educator, author, speaker, and consultant. As executive director of Champion Counseling Center, associate program chair and director of the Trauma Specialization at Antioch University, and founder of HOMMs Consulting, she has provided psychotherapy, training, consultation, and research services to individuals and organizations for over twenty years.

Cambridge University Press & Assessment
978-1-009-20562-7 — Black Couples Therapy
Edited by Yamonte Cooper , Erica Holmes
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

BLACK COUPLES THERAPY

Clinical Theory and Practice

EDITED BY
YAMONTE COOPER

El Camino College

ERICA HOLMES

Antioch University



Cambridge University Press & Assessment
 978-1-009-20562-7 — Black Couples Therapy
 Edited by Yamonte Cooper, Erica Holmes
 Frontmatter
[More Information](#)



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom
 One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
 477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
 314-321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India
 103 Penang Road, #05-06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment,
 a department of the University of Cambridge.

We share the University's mission to contribute to society through the pursuit of
 education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
 Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781009205627
 DOI: 10.1017/9781009205665

© Yamonte Cooper and Contributors 2023

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions
 of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take
 place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press & Assessment.

First published 2023

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

NAMES: Cooper, Yamonte, 1974– editor. | Holmes, Erica, 1970– editor.
 TITLE: Black couples therapy : clinical theory and practice / edited by Yamonte Cooper (El Camino
 College, Los Angeles), Erica Holmes (Antioch University, Los Angeles).
 DESCRIPTION: Cambridge, United Kingdom ; New York, NY : Cambridge University Press, 2023. |
 Includes bibliographical references and index.
 IDENTIFIERS: LCCN 2022045256 (print) | LCCN 2022045257 (ebook) | ISBN 9781009205627
 (hardback) | ISBN 9781009205658 (paperback) | ISBN 9781009205665 (epub)
 SUBJECTS: LCSH: Couples therapy—United States. | African American couples. | African American
 couples—Mental health services. | African Americans—Mental health services.
 CLASSIFICATION: LCC RC488.5 .B567 2023 (print) | LCC RC488.5 (ebook) |
 DDC 616.89/1562—DC23/eng/20221021
 LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2022045256>
 LC ebook record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2022045257>
 ISBN 978-1-009-20562-7 Hardback
 ISBN 978-1-009-20565-8 Paperback

Cambridge University Press & Assessment has no responsibility for the persistence
 or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this
 publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will
 remain, accurate or appropriate.

Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	<i>page</i> viii
<i>List of Tables</i>	ix
<i>List of Contributors</i>	x
<i>Foreword by Kenneth V. Hardy</i>	xi
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xiii
Introduction	I
PART I RACE, RACISM, AND IDENTITY	
1 Internalized Stereotypes and the Impact on Black Couples <i>Cynthia Chestnut</i>	II
2 The Role of the Strong Black Woman Schema in Black Love and Relationships <i>Heather C. Lofton & Adia Gooden</i>	38
3 Black Same-Gender-Loving Male Couples’ Health within an Afrocentric Psychological Paradigm: The Influences of Spirituality and Religion <i>Jonathan Mathias Lassiter</i>	58
PART II FOUNDATIONS FOR HEALTHY COUPLING	
4 The Foundations for Strong and Healthy Relationships between Black Men and Women: Purposes, Practices, and Processes <i>Daryl M. Rowe & Sandra Lyons Rowe</i>	85
5 Considerations for Premarital Counseling and Education for Dating and Engaged Heterosexual African American Couples <i>Erica Holmes, Roncia Lark, & Jessica M. Smedley</i>	102

vi	<i>Contents</i>	
PART III ADAPTING MAJOR THERAPEUTIC APPROACHES FOR WORK WITH AFRICAN AMERICAN COUPLES		
6	Emotionally Focused Therapy with Black Couples <i>Yamonte Cooper</i>	127
7	Use of the Gottman Method with African American Couples Impacted by Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome <i>Satira Streeter Corbitt</i>	166
8	Transcending the Binary: A Narrative Therapy Approach to Work with Black Trans Men Navigating Gender Transition with Romantic Partners <i>Moe A. Brown</i>	193
9	Imago Therapy and the African American Couple <i>Beverley Boothe</i>	213
10	African American Narratives of Trauma: An EMDR Approach to Tapping into the Strengths of Black Love <i>Alice Shepard & Katherine McKay</i>	235
PART IV SEX AND INTIMACY		
11	Sexual Intimacy in Black Heterosexual Couple Relationships: Challenges and Opportunities toward Relational Intimacy <i>Danielle Y. Drake & Daktari Shari R. Hicks</i>	255
12	Intimacy, Desire, and Sex in the African American Relationships <i>Jeshana Avent-Johnson</i>	273
13	Wearing a Mask in Love: Implications for Covering and Infidelity in Black Relationships <i>Laura Dupiton & Cynthia Chestnut</i>	293
PART V SPECIAL TOPICS		
14	Weathering the Storm: Fertility and the Black Lesbian Experience <i>Tenika L. Jackson</i>	319

Cambridge University Press & Assessment
978-1-009-20562-7 — Black Couples Therapy
Edited by Yamonte Cooper , Erica Holmes
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

	<i>Contents</i>	vii
15	African American Men and Infertility: Biopsychosocial Considerations <i>Brian R. Humphrey</i>	329
16	Couples Therapy with Black American Couples Facing Medical Illness: Considerations for Treatment <i>Lekeisha A. Sumner</i>	348
	<i>Index</i>	363

Figures

3.1	Conceptual framework of spirituality and religion’s influence on Black same-gender-loving couples’ relationship health	<i>page</i> 69
8.1	Assumptions therapists typically make filling in demographic information for clients or when meeting new clients	196
8.2	Identity categories that align with the case example couple, Mark and Tina	197
8.3	Ways to be a good ally to Black transgender men and their partners in therapy	201

Tables

1.1	Correlation matrix among original DAS subscales and stereotypes	<i>page</i> 21
1.2	Correlations between Stereotype Scales and revised DAS scores	21
1.3	Multiple regression on demographic variables predicting total DAS	22
1.4	Regression of Stereotype Scale of Positive Black factors on covariates	23
1.5	Regression of Stereotype Scale of Negative Black Female factors on covariates	24
1.6	ANOVA on Negative Black Female and Negative Black Male by gender	25
1.7	ANOVA on Negative Black Female by level of education	25
1.8	Regression of Stereotype Scale on Negative Black Male factors on covariates	26
1.9	ANOVA of Stereotype Scale on Negative Black Male factors by covariates	27
1.10	Regression of DAS on Stereotype Scale factors and significant covariates	27
1.11	T-tests by gender (male vs. female)	28

Contributors

JESHANA AVENT-JOHNSON, The Intimacy Seminars and Psychological Services, USA
BEVERLEY BOOTHE, Life Enrichment Counseling Center Inc., USA
MOE A. BROWN, Transcendent Therapy and Consulting LLC, USA
CYNTHIA CHESTNUT, Capella University, USA
SATIRA STREETER CORBITT, Ascensions Psychological Services Inc., USA
DANIELLE Y. DRAKE, California Institute of Integral Studies, USA
LAURA DUPITON, Eastern University, USA
ADIA GOODEN, Adia Gooden, LLC, USA
DAKTARI SHARI R. HICKS, Optimum Specialists, USA
BRIAN R. HUMPHREY, PsychSynergy Behavioral Health, USA
TENIKA L. JACKSON, Antioch University, USA
RONECIA LARK, California State University Dominguez Hills, USA
JONATHAN MATHIAS LASSITER, Rowan University, USA
HEATHER C. LOFTON, Northwestern University, USA
KATHERINE MCKAY, Private Practice, USA
DARYL M. ROWE, Pepperdine University, USA
SANDRA LYONS ROWE, Retired, USA
ALICE SHEPARD, The City University of New York, USA
JESSICA M. SMEDLEY, Smedley Psychological Services LLC, USA
LEKEISHA A. SUMNER, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, USA

Foreword

Historically, the psychotherapy field has devoted scant attention to the therapeutic needs of clients of color. Adamantly and feverishly adhering to claims of color-blindness and the insistence that all couples and families are essentially the same has contributed to a massive dearth of knowledge and understanding among therapists regarding providing culturally and racially sensitive therapy to clients of color. Claims of *not seeing color* while simultaneously denying the impact of racial oppression on the everyday lives of People of Color have dangerously supported and continue to perpetuate approaches to therapy that are guided by a centrality of whiteness (Hardy, 2022).

The 2020 murder of private citizen George Floyd and the ensuing racial unrest that followed were stark reminders of our society's ongoing struggles with race, whiteness, and our affectionate heartwarming claims of color blindness. One of the many byproducts of the 2020 worldwide racial uprising was the poignant reminder that issues of race needed to be confronted and appropriately addressed throughout all domains of society, and this certainly would include the field of psychotherapy – a profession where historically virtually all the stewards and gatekeepers have been disproportionately white and male. In the psychotherapy field, the Gurus, “Masters,” “Fellows,” and Distinguished Professors have been disproportionately white and male, often espousing doctrines offered as “objective truths” proclaimed to be widely applicable to all, while remaining deeply oblivious to the inherent racially based biases and centrality of whiteness embedded within them. Needless to say, a significant and radical expansion of *what has been*, requires interrogation and a change in course. As McGoldrick and Hardy (2019) asserted, a revisioning of therapy with greater attention devoted to the impact of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and a host of other significant contextual variables is sorely needed. The *one size fits all* “cookie cutter” approach that we have historically subscribed to throughout the field, is not only outdated but

potentially harmful as well. We need the birthing of a new set of ideas, ways of being, thinking and approaches designed to meet the needs of today's complex and racially diverse world. This book, *Black Couples Therapy: Clinical Theory and Practice*, edited by Yamonte Cooper and Erica Holmes, is a major step in this direction.

Cooper and Holmes have not only assembled an impressive group of diverse theoreticians and clinicians to contribute to this groundbreaking clinical anthology, but they also have been thoughtful and comprehensive regarding the range of salient topics that are covered. This book, unlike many of its companion couples therapy publications, recognizes the complexity and diversity of the coupling experience. In so doing, they and the contributing authors overtly acknowledge that NOT all couples are white, heterosexual, and cisgender. The book challenges the prevailing and popular notion that "couples therapy" is "couples therapy" and essentially all couples are the same. Seasoned practitioners and those with considerably less experience will find this book to be a timely, relevant, and insightful resource. Clinicians of all backgrounds and level of experience will appreciate the ways in which the editors as well as the contributing authors delicately and skillfully address issues in much the same ways in which these issues often emerge in therapy.

As the book title asserts, the editors strike a very fine balance between exposing the reader to important clinical theory that provides a conceptual framework for therapeutic intervention, and specific strategies for working with specific clinical populations that reflect the rich diversity of Black couples. This book is a must read for today's couples' therapists, especially those who are committed to providing culturally attuned, racially sensitive couples therapy.

Kenneth V. Hardy, PhD
Eikenberg Institute for Relationships
New York, USA

REFERENCES

- Hardy, K. V. (2022). *The enduring, invisible, and ubiquitous centrality of Whiteness*. Norton.
- McGoldrick, M., & Hardy, K. V. (2019). *The re-visioning of family therapy* (3rd ed.). Guilford Press.

Acknowledgments

To my friend and loving spouse RW, I appreciate your unyielding support. Thank you, Emory & Virginia, Edna, and the rest of my family, for your love and support. Thank you, Erica, with the deepest gratitude for joining me on this project. Yamonte Cooper, Ed.D.

Thank you to my husband, ADG, for your unconstrained love and support. Thank you to my son, Jace, and bonus daughter, Kendelle, for so generously sharing me with the world. Thank you to all of my kinfolks. I am because you are. I would like to thank Yamonte Cooper for inviting me to be a part of this extraordinary body of work. Most importantly I want to thank God for everything. Erica Holmes, PsyD.

We thank each contributing author for your time and talent. A special acknowledgement to Katherine McKay may you continue to be remembered through your work. We thank the entire publishing team at Cambridge University Press.

Cambridge University Press & Assessment
978-1-009-20562-7 — Black Couples Therapy
Edited by Yamonte Cooper , Erica Holmes
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)
