"What is a Black Man Without His Paranoia?" : Clinical Depression and the Politics of African American Anxieties Toward Emotional Vulnerability

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Abstract
In an interview after his departure from television and a rumored "breakdown," the comedian Dave Chappelle asked Oprah Winfrey, "What is a black man without his paranoia?" This question forms the crux of a dissertation which addresses African Americans' attitudes toward clinical depression, in general, and black men's anxieties toward emotional vulnerability, in specific. Using the concept of "paranoia" as an indicator of a healthy skepticism toward medical authority, this dissertation deconstructs the concept of depression as a discursive construct and moves it out of the bounds of science and into the precincts of cultural emotion theory. Opting for theory over science, this dissertation argues against the erasure of social and cultural narratives and explores how race and gender can inform our interpretation of depression. Using textual readings, historical comparison, and ethnography, this dissertation examines the politics involved in addressing the emotionality of black men. It is concerned with how definitions of blackness, manhood, crisis, worth, and belonging impact black men's understandings of emotional wellness and inform African Americans' attitudes toward the emotional performances of black men. Two popular books on African American's mental health (Black Rage by William H. Grier and Price M. Cobbs (1968) and Black Pain by Terri Williams (2008)) are examined within their respective historical and social contexts to track the changing cultural discourse on African Americans' mental health and the role of gender in understanding narratives of wellness. And concepts family, labor, and responsibility are explored as implicit elements in black men's attainment of manhood in a comparative examination of the Sanitation Workers Strike (1968) and the Million Man March (1995).

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However, clinical depression is a serious condition that can have a profound impact on every part of life. Situational and clinical depression are similar but not the same. Recognizing the differences between these types of depression is the first step toward getting help. Situational depression is known medically as "adjustment disorder with depressed mood." Adjustment disorder with depressed mood is another name for this emotional state. Triggers can include: divorce. With a healthful lifestyle and the right treatment plan, both forms of depression are manageable. Support groups and help or depression hotlines, such as the Samaritans, can offer a listening ear and give useful advice and information. You can call them at any time on (212) 673-3000. Q Clinical depression is presumed to be as a result of chemical imbalance in the brain. This is what most drug treatments are aimed to resolve. A decreased amount of...
certain brain neurotransmitters, such as serotonin and norepinephrine can be found in depressed men. Also, overproduction of stress hormones – hormonal imbalance – is a leading cause of depression in men. The hormonal imbalance has to do with our natural reactions to stress. The end of a career marks a loss of a sense of identity in man which can lead to feelings of hopelessness and depression. Once a man retires, he loses the meaningful contribution he gets out of what he does, and a change in lifestyle which slowly transitions into depression. Marriage/Relationship. He also deals with his depression through substance abuse and impulsivity, which is also relatable to me. His performance and the writer’s portrayal of a panic disorder brought on by stress was spot on.” Even some mental health professionals agree. In an interview with Health magazine, Dr. James Murrough, assistant professor of psychiatry and neuroscience at the Mount Sinai Hospital in New York City, said, “This was a pretty accurate portrayal. When you’re experiencing a panic attack, it can feel like you’re dying or losing your mind. According to Mental Health America, black men are 20 percent more likely to report serious psychological distress than white men, but are consistently more apprehensive about seeking professional help. 3. “Parks and Recreation”.