Man Up Man Down!
Black Men Discuss Manhood, Disappointment, and Depression

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Purpose

Rationale for Man Up Man Down!
Underuse of mental health services among Black men.
Black men are raised to think that they must "man up" to every stressful situation, no matter how serious.

In the extreme, "manning up" contributes to men "going down" with depression.
Black men need to know depression is treatable and it is "OK" to ask for help.

Research Questions
Will Black men talk?
What Black men want?
Are Black men troubled?
What will Black men say?

Study Design

Ages: 18-29 30-54 55+ Total
Atlanta X X X 3
Baltimore X X X 3
Detroit X X X 3
Raleigh X X X 3
Total 4 4 4 12 Groups

112 Men Participated in 12 Focus Groups in Four Cities Stratified by Age

Depression

"Oppression causes depression"
Negative life events (e.g., job loss, death)
Lack of achievement & opportunity due to racial discrimination
Men experience "Provider Role Strain"
A "real man" takes care of his family
Leads to stress
Leads to hopelessness
Disappointment - "We chasin' dreams"
All leads to more negative life events

What is Depression?
There were many rich definitions. A few saw it as a "chemical imbalance" but most emphasized symptoms resulting from life stress.

"…one is a sense of apathy or hopelessness that is debilitating or preventing you from being able to move forward and then the other thing is the general concept especially for Black men that I know that we're not allowed to feel depressed, you know -- be depressed but that we should just man up and get over it. Stop whining and deal with it."

Anger
Anger was frequently cited as a symptom by the men. DSM states that irritable mood may be an expression of depressed mood in children and adolescents. Perhaps anger should be considered a manifestation of depressed mood to accurately capture the experiences of depressed Black men.

Isolation
Participants mentioned all 9 of the symptoms that DSM assesses for a diagnosis of depression. The most frequently mentioned symptom was "isolation", which is not explicitly one of the nine DSM symptoms. "Isolation" is likely associated with the challenges Black men have in seeking help.

Silence
"There's a lot of ridicule in a back handed sort of way so it's humorous and if you're the guy that went to you know the clinic and came out and oh "he the crazy guy" now you know the way we try to help one another in certain instances is by ridicule, right through the joking, you know but for somebody that's actually going through depression, every joke is like a nail in my coffin, it doesn't help me it only hurts me. I don't feel like talking to nobody at all, I'll just keep it to myself."

Financial Barriers
Many men did not know where they could get help. Others could not afford the high cost of professional help that and thought professionals are only interested in making a profit. The men also do not feel they would be understood by professionals who are so different from themselves.

Stigma and "Real Men"
The stigma of depression in Black communities was mentioned often. Depression was seen as a challenge to being a "real man" and seeking help made one less of a man.

Barriers

"…a lot of men don't like to share their feelings anyway cause it's like considered being weak and to me, if you really a 'real man' then you don't get depressed. I don't want to just - you don't be depressed cause if you worrying then that's saying that you ain't taking care of your business the way you supposed to."

However, this was challenged by others who felt that seeking help showed the courage to handle their business like a "real man."

Racial Pride
"You don't want to just put yourself out there cause as a people, we are a proud people, the stigma that goes with being depressed...we don't really, it's not something we really embrace as a people, it's not something we really talk about. We just don't."

Next Steps

Man Up Man Down will pilot an 8-week group-based depression treatment intervention in the summer 2012. The rationale is based on:

Positive comments and expressed interest among men participating in the Man Up Man Down focus groups;
The shortage of research on the mental health effects of group-based interventions with Black men;
Scientific literature showing that access to mental health care remains an unresolved problem for Black men;
Prior research showing that support groups are effective for reducing depressive symptoms in Black men.

Why didn't anyone help Don Cornelius?
No one knew how Don Cornelius felt.
WHY?
Cornelius was private about his true feelings.
WHY?

So What?

"I think conversations like this are helpful. If somebody had a place where they can go and all the Black men could get together and just sit around the table and just talk like this and bring out what they are feeling."