



Paranoid: Exploring Suspicion from the Dubious to the Delusional

David J. LaPorte

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This fascinating and groundbreaking study of the causes and consequences of paranoia isn't about you—we promise.

Psychology professor David LaPorte acknowledges that everyone experiences some paranoia, but his focus in this engaging work is paranoia as a disorder, characterized by “excessive suspiciousness,” “hostility, rigidity, and lack of trust.” After defining paranoia, he delves into the mind of the paranoid individual, details kinds of paranoia and their causes, and demonstrates where paranoia comes from by exploring the origins of suspiciousness.

Next, the author discusses a variety of factors and conditions that might trigger paranoia, including drugs, family upbringing, and trauma and stress. LaPorte devotes an entire chapter to jealousy, expressing the belief that “pathological jealousy ... resembles paranoia to a marked degree.” The last third of the book concerns treatments for paranoia, the relationship between paranoia and violence, and commentary about the “paranoid world we live in.”

LaPorte does an excellent job weaving together current research, his own astute observations, and numerous examples to create a book that is both educational and entertaining. The author uses documented occurrences of violent behavior that demonstrate how dangerous extreme paranoia can be. Perhaps most troubling, LaPorte suggests that “the current climate of America ... appears to be one ripe for paranoia at the individual level to develop.” To validate this claim, he references such modern-day concerns as domestic and international terrorism, intrusive electronic surveillance, and widespread distrust of the government.

The author concludes with a chapter entitled, “What Can be Done About the Paranoia Problem?” in which he cites the sobering fact that “more people are killed each year in our country by paranoid individuals than by terrorists.” He points out that paranoia and paranoid disorders do not receive the same attention from professionals or the media as depression, in part because “paranoid individuals don't tend to show up complaining of paranoia like depressed patients do with their condition.” Still, LaPorte believes that increased awareness of paranoia will result in increased attention to its various manifestations and ultimately damaging effects. The extremely well-researched, well-organized, and well-written *Paranoid* is a worthy platform for a broader, more meaningful discussion of the causes and consequences of paranoia.

BARRY SILVERSTEIN (Fall 2015)

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