

The YBMen Project at Jackson College



What is the Young Black Men, Masculinities, and Mental Health (YBMen) Project?

Overview

The YBMen Project was created to better understand and address the pressures and needs of young Black men, especially issues related to their manhood and mental health. It was developed by Daphne C. Watkins, Professor of Social Work and Psychiatry at the University of Michigan.

The YBMen Project is an interactive Facebook-based education and social support program. It was created for young Black men who are unlikely to discuss their mental health face-to-face; who have not been diagnosed with a mental health issue; and who desire social support in a safe and non-threatening setting.

What We Did

Dr. Watkins and her team of graduate students visited Jackson College three times during the 2014-2015 academic year to identify 30 Black men for the YBMen Project. After the first visit, 11 participants were placed into the YBMen Facebook group, and the remaining 19 were placed into the non-Facebook group.

YBMen Facebook group members joined a private Facebook group for five weeks where we posted information and prompts from pop culture and social media (such as song lyrics, photos, and videos) that provided education on health and wellbeing. Men in the group were encouraged to comment on posts and provide support to one another.

Why We Used Two Groups

We needed to be able to compare the men in the Facebook group to men in the non-Facebook group to see if the YBMen Facebook group provided information that was helpful. To do this, we collected surveys from all 30 men before and immediately after the Facebook project, and again eight weeks later.

We also interviewed the YBMen Facebook group participants to learn more about experiences and pressures in young Black men's lives and their thoughts about the YBMen Project.

What we learned from you



Who Participated?

30 young Black men from Jackson College participated in the YBMen Project.

At the beginning of the project:

- 53% were at risk for depression
- 59% said symptoms of depression made their lives difficult
- 17% thought about hurting themselves

All were 18-24 years old. 50% were employed, in addition to attending college. 20% were married or had a significant other.

How Did You Respond To Our Questions?

Do you talk about mental health with your family or friends?

"Not at all. This is the first time I've ever talked about it."

What does masculinity mean to you?

"Masculinity to me is like leadership, a sense of pride. Kind of like a father figure, that's what I would consider masculinity—someone who is mature or carries that type of leadership role."

Have you ever known a Black man who had depression?

"I got a lot of friends that's depressed because they are not in school right now, or they don't have any money right now. They still gotta walk around the streets and do this and that. And that's a real depression that nobody wants to go through."

More about the Facebook Group

You described symptoms of depression that doctors often ask about, like sadness. You also described symptoms that some researchers think may be signs of depression **for men**, like anger, irritability, and isolation.

You said being mentally healthy is an important part of being a strong man.

Most of you (69%) know someone with mental health challenges.

Weekly Facebook Topics

Week 1: Introduction

Week 2: Black Masculinity

Week 3: Mental Health Education

Week 4: Health & Well-Being

Week 5: Plans for the Future

Were men at Jackson College helped by the YBMen Project?

Depression DECREASED among men in the Facebook group but NOT among those in the non-Facebook group.

100%

Of participants felt Black men should be concerned about their mental health

88%

Of Facebook group members looked at YBMen posts every week

75%

Of the Facebook group felt that mental health challenges were preventable

50%

Of the non-Facebook members felt that mental health challenges were preventable

Additional Resources

Visit www.YBMenProject.com for more resources



Facebook Group
11 participants



Non-Facebook Group
19 participants

Jackson College Clinic
Whiting Hall, Room 111
Jackson, MI 49201
(517) 990-1374
<http://www.jccmi.edu/info/healthclinic/>

Lifeways Community Mental Health
1200 N. West Avenue
Jackson, MI 49202
(517) 789-1200
24-Hour Crisis Line:
(800) 284-8288

Center for Family Health
505 N Jackson St,
Jackson, MI 49201-1266
(517) 748-5500
Email: info@cfhinc.org
<http://www.centerforfamilyhealth.org>

Allegiance Health System
205 North East Avenue
Jackson, MI 49201
(517) 789-5971
24-Hour Access Center Crisis Line:
(517) 789-5971 or (800) 531-3728
<https://www.allegiancehealth.org/>

Meet the Team

THE RESEARCHERS



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THE INTERVIEWERS



Thank you for your participation in the YBMen Project. We appreciate all of the wonderful people at Jackson College. We would not have been able to do this without you!

– The YBMen Project Team

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