

Maino and the emergence of hip-hop as a source of mental resilience

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Born in Brooklyn, New York, the rap artist Maino (Jermaine John Colman) takes his experiences not only from growing up in the famous borough, but also the 10 long years he spent behind bars at Riker's Island Penitentiary. A new dialogue paper, by two academics and co-founders of HIP HOP PSYCH (HHP) in *Forensic Science International: Mind and Law*, published by Elsevier, review Maino's time behind bars using his lyrics, and exploring the connections between hip-hop, mental health and resilience.

"Hip-hop has opened up new conversations around mental health with hard-to-reach groups around the world," noted the HHP co-founders, Akeem Sule, MD and Becky Inkster, DPhil, both of whom hold affiliations with Wolfson College at the University of Cambridge, UK. "Which is being driven in part by influential hip-hop artists, like Maino, speaking openly about their own struggles."

The global influence hip-hop has and its particular relevance to youth culture means it must continually find new ways to reach its audience by creating innovative solutions. Hip-hop dominates music streaming services and connects with listeners around the world; the lessons of past mistakes some hip-hop artists tell through their music is often a hardship that listeners can find some commonality with.

Several mental health disorders can also be tied back to such adverse social and environmental experiences (including incarceration, financial difficulties or loss of a loved one). Depression may often result and is

projected to be the second-leading cause of disability in 2020, according to the World Health Organization.

The dialogue paper specifically focused on the resilience factors exhibited in Maino's most well-known track, 2009's 'All the Above', and others including his latest release, 2019's 'Motivation'. As a public figure with well-documented life experiences such as interviews circulated through social channels like Instagram and Twitter, the researchers were able to gain further insights as to what resilience factors shaped Maino's journey and what might inspire others to discover their own resilience.

"Our views of Maino's lyrics do not necessarily imply a permanent level of success for his life's trajectory. Sometimes his lyrics reference positive outcomes, but it does not limit the possibility that Maino could still be exposed to critical life events in the future," said the co-founders. They also want to emphasize the intention of their paper is to not present a forensic psychiatric opinion of Maino, nor a diagnosis of a mental disorder or providing a prognosis of his reoffending chances.

The co-founders make connections between his lyrics and various concepts relevant to mental health such as stress inoculation, locus of control, cognitive reframing, positive visual imagery, turning points and psychometric tools for measuring resilience.

While Drs. Inkster and Sule cannot say for certain that Maino may, or may not reoffend, they highlight the critical need to examine opportunities to use hip-hop as part of already established restorative justice programs, both inside prison and out in the community, to help limit reoffending and improve the chances of successful rehabilitation.

More information: Akeem Sule et al. Hip-hop's survival anthems: Incarceration narratives and identifying resilience factors in Maino's lyrics, *Forensic Science International: Mind and Law* (2020). [DOI:](#)

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