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## INFLO-Mation: A Model for Exploring Information Behavior through Hip Hop

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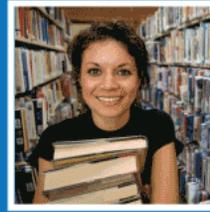
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## **INFLO-mation: A Model for Exploring Information Behavior through Hip Hop**

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### **Abstract**

This paper explores the insights that hip hop might afford young adult library researchers who study information behavior, particularly in online environments. A Critical Race Theory (CRT) approach was used to explain how existing information behavior models describe youth experiences in ways that mask their unique racialized experiences and culturally specific information-creating behaviors. Using CRT's counter-storytelling method, a new model called INFLO-mation is introduced, featuring a continuum of information behaviors captured within three descriptive categories of creativity: Rhythm, Rhyme, and Remix (R<sup>3</sup>). Findings include a discussion the INFLO model, its classification scheme, and illustrative examples from contemporary teens' digital media practices rooted in hip hop culture.

### **Introduction**

“Okay, Ladies, now let’s get in formation.”

—Beyoncé, “Formation,” *Lemonade* (2016)

In this paper, I introduce a model for exploring information behavior (IB) called INFLO-mation (INFLO). This model also serves as a call to action for library and information science (LIS) professionals to “Get INFLO-mation,” or to leverage hip hop culture as a way to expand how they view, study, and support the everyday IB of teens. This call to action is reminiscent of a popular song by singer Beyoncé, who commands listeners to “get in formation,” or to get in one accord with a radical aura of Black positivity.

This INFLO model is grounded in over fifteen years of my thinking and writing about the intersections of adolescent literacy, school librarianship, and issues of equity in education.<sup>i</sup> It also reflects my lived experiences as a Black female scholar who came of age in the 1990s during the golden era of hip hop, which was the proverbial soundtrack of my youth. My experience as a school librarian in an urban school district, coupled with having two teenage children of my own, also shapes my evolving understanding about the way today's youth live and learn in the digital age.

Conceived of as a middle-range theory, the INFLO model offers a bridge between broad theories of IB and the everyday practices of young adults. The term “middle-range theory” refers to an approach to sociological theorizing aimed at integrating theory and empirical research. Rather than starting with a broad abstract entity like “the social system,” middle-range theories start with empirical phenomena and abstract from them to create general statements that can be verified by data.<sup>ii</sup> In general, IB refers to the ways that people need, seek, manage, give, and use information.<sup>iii</sup> The focus of IB research has shifted over time from a focus on systems and users in libraries to include a broader range of information-related phenomena that span academic and everyday life, and both physical and digital environments. Recent scholarship has recognized that people not only seek information from static resources like books and databases, but they are actively involved in sharing and creating new information sources with the onset of Web 2.0 technologies. For example, Koh developed a framework to explore the “information-creating behaviors” of contemporary youth who are engaged in making participatory contributions to the changing information world through wikis, online magazines, and graphic programming languages such as Scratch.<sup>iv</sup>

The INFLO model builds on this relatively new branch of IB scholarship that focuses on information-creating behaviors among youth, particularly in online spaces. It also emerged in response to some theoretical gaps that were identified in a report on youth digital media practices entitled *Hanging Out, Messing Around, Geeking Out: Kids Living and Learning with New Media (HOMAGO)*.<sup>v</sup> It is important to note that the INFLO model does not seek to explain the totality of youth information-creating behaviors. Rather, like other middle-range theories, it seeks to contribute a special theory that is applicable to limited conceptual ranges.<sup>vi</sup> In this case, the conceptual range applies to contemporary young adults whose daily experiences and digital media practices are shaped largely by their affiliation and identification with hip hop culture.

One quick example of the unique information-creating behaviors that hip hop culture has spawned include online freestyle rap challenges. These rap challenges consist of people recording their verses/bars/lyrics et cetera over a common instrumental beat that is subsequently shared via video uploads on social media sites like Twitter and Instagram. These rap challenges go viral through the use of hashtags such as #SoGonechallenge and #Getgeekedchallenge. The instrumental beat gives everyone a level playing field to create their rhymes, but everyone takes it their own way, like painters with a blank canvas. From high school students to celebrities, anyone can use this platform to showcase their talents.

### *Hip Hop Demographics*

According to a report by Nielsen music, hip hop is now the most revenue-generating genre of all music types.<sup>vii</sup> In 2017 Google honored the forty-fourth anniversary of the birth of hip hop with an interactive Google Doodle that featured a graffiti-style logo on the Google homepage seen by people all over the world.<sup>viii</sup> Although it is difficult to validate their statistics, a number of media sources report some variation of figures indicating that 24 million people between the ages of 19–34 from around the world comprise hip hop’s primary listening audience, with Black listeners at 46%, Hispanics at 25%, and the remaining percentage of listeners biracial.<sup>ix</sup> In terms of behavior, hip hop fans are at the forefront of the digital movement, with 18% saying they like to be among the first to buy new media technologies. This fan base is also more likely than the average person to be interested in gaming/purchasing a gaming console.<sup>x</sup>

## **Research Question**

With such a substantial segment of the population participating in hip hop culture, there is a tremendous opportunity for researchers to better understand how hip hop influences the way today’s teens live and learn. Therefore, this research is guided by the following overarching question: *What insights might hip hop afford researchers who study teens’ information behaviors and information needs, particularly in online contexts?*

## **Problem Statement**

“I’m kicking new flava in ya ear’ / Mack’s a brand new flava in ya ear.”

—Craig Mack, “Flava in Ya Ear,” *Project Funk Da World* (1994)

Due to the commercial success of hip hop music and culture, today's teens synthesize their multiracial identity primarily from a position of Blackness rather than whiteness.<sup>xi</sup> *Issues of race, however, are not just Black and white in America. By the year 2050, there will be more nonwhite than white Americans, and most of the nonwhite population will be Asian and Latino, not Black.*<sup>xii</sup> However, mainstream research on information behavior draws primarily upon positivist and print-based psychologistic discourses that reify whiteness.<sup>xiii</sup> According to Kincheloe and Steinberg, "Whiteness privileges mind over body, intellectual over experiential ways of knowing, mental abstractions over passion."<sup>xiv</sup>

For example, the two prevailing curricular themes in library and information science—information literacy and information inquiry—frame learning primarily within a decontextualized, task-based problem-solving context. Yet this approach is incongruent with the more rhythmic, visual, and oral ways that today's youth live and learn, particularly in the digital age, where videos that go viral often center on a new or classic hip hop song or trending dance moves.

Optimistically, there have been important shifts in how information behavior is studied. The trajectory of IB research is now leaning toward more expansive and transformative understandings of what constitutes information and knowledge.<sup>xv</sup> For example, the HOMAGO is a notable exception to mainstream approaches to the study of youth information behavior. The report shifts away from individualistic and skill-based understandings of information behavior that label youth into categories such as "computer lads" toward a stance that recognizes that the social context (e.g., hanging out) is a more useful way to study young people's practices, learning styles, and identity formation.

Although the HOMAGO report takes a more expansive view on youth information behaviors, the conceptual categories it employs to frame the analysis are problematic. In particular, the report categorizes youth experiences into three genres of participation including "hanging out," "messaging around," and "geeking out." In reading the HOMAGO report, I felt a sense of detachment from these three descriptive categories as a way to describe youth experiences. In particular, I had trouble envisioning my fourteen-year-old son's everyday practices as being represented in the report without having to bracket out the latent racial associations that the conceptual categories of "hanging out" and "messaging around" bring to mind in mainstream American discourses.

Namely, I had trouble reconciling the ways in which phrases like “geeking out” have emerged as normative placeholders to connote whiteness while phrases like “hanging out” and “messaging around” are conceptually linked to criminalized images of Black and Brown people.<sup>xvi</sup> When I see the phrases “hanging out” and “messaging around,” I am reminded of two Black male teenagers, Trayvon Martin and Emmett Till.<sup>xvii</sup> These young men were both killed in the context of doing everyday, mundane life activities like hanging out with friends or messaging around near a local store. Their murders symbolize a historical pattern of racial violence against Blacks in America.<sup>xviii</sup> The fact that nearly sixty years has passed between the time fourteen-year-old Emmett Till’s murder sparked the civil rights movement in 1955 and the 2012 not-guilty verdict in the killing of Trayvon Martin spurred the Black Lives Matter movement shows that America has yet to fully deal with its anti-Black racist past.

It is important to note that many of the unarmed Black and Latino people who have been killed by police under these spurious circumstances have been teens or young adults. This unfortunate statistic is supported by research, which suggests that teens of color are not granted the same presumption of childhood and innocence and naiveté as their white counterparts when it comes to encounters with the police and other authority figures—including educators.<sup>xix</sup> Yet data suggests that police regularly deescalate situations involving whites who are armed when arrested while unarmed Black and Latino youth continue to be killed with impunity by the state.<sup>xx</sup> Given these issues, I decided to develop a more “culturally sustaining”<sup>xxi</sup> framework to explore information behaviors, one that is grounded in the lived experiences of youth of color. Introducing this new way of exploring information behavior can be likened to the new “futuristic, robotic, George Jetson” style of rap that Craig Mack brought with his 1994 hit single, “Flava in Ya Ear.”

## **Theoretical Framework**

“Used to speak the king’s English then I got a rash.”

—Mos Def, “Hip Hop,” *Black on Both Sides* (1999)

Critical Race Theory (CRT) helps examine the ideology of racism and gives voice to the racialized experiences of people of color.<sup>xxii</sup> Counter-storytelling is a method that CRT researchers often employ to tell the stories of those people whose experiences are not often told.<sup>xxiii</sup> Counter-storytelling is also a tool for challenging the dominant discourse on race and

furthering the struggle for racial reform. As mentioned previously, hip hop has a similar counter-hegemonic capacity to give voice to the lived experiences of people who have been racially oppressed or otherwise marginalized in society.

Part of giving voice to people of color is allowing them to tell their stories in their native tongue, without imposing the rules of language that the majoritarian group considers legitimate.<sup>xxiv</sup> Rapper Mos Def poetically captures this sentiment for Black people who speak African American Vernacular English (AAVE) and who often feel restricted by societal norms that privilege speaking Standard American English. He quips that he “got a rash” from speaking “the King’s English.” This lyric gives voice to the experiences of linguistic colonization that many people of color share. Rap has historically functioned as a form of counter-storytelling in that rappers have defied societal norms by using Ebonics<sup>xxv</sup> and hip hop vernacular speech patterns as their weapon of choice in the fight to tell their story on their own terms in their own words.

CRT also helps unmask the often well-disguised rhetoric of shared normative values such as neutrality and color-blindness that are enmeshed in the ontological fabric of many mainstream discourses. The field of library and information science has had a propensity to uncritically promote a mantra of neutrality and color-blindness in its efforts for libraries to be seen as bastions of democracy and as the great equalizers.<sup>xxvi</sup> However, counter-storytelling allows for a broader multicultural history of public libraries to be told from the vantage point of racial minorities. African Americans, for example, were barred from entering public libraries during the period of racial segregation despite being taxpaying citizens.<sup>xxvii</sup> Similarly, CRT affords other branches of library and information science, such as research on information behavior, to critically examine its own research epistemologies to look for blind spots and omissions when it comes to studying people of color.<sup>xxviii</sup>

## Conceptual Review of Literature

“Hip-hop is not just a mirror of what is, but should also be a reflection of what could be.”

—President Barack Obama<sup>xxix</sup>

Hip hop has become part of a leisure economy that now has a global commercial and cultural impact. However, it is important to recognize that the origins of hip hop are rooted in the story of

a few Black entrepreneurs (including DJ Kool Herc, Afrika Bambaataa, and Grandmaster Flash) who in the late 1970s and early 1980s nurtured an active scene in Bronx, Harlem, Queens, and elsewhere at block parties and nightclubs.<sup>xxx</sup> These early pioneers have been credited not only for their musical talents, but for having the foresight to see that music could be a positive force for change in the lives of Black and Latino youth for whom gangs and drug dealing were a reality. In the following passage, legendary hip hop artist KRS-One speaks about the contributions of Afrika Bambaataa to hip hop's cultural existence:

But Afrika Bambaataa is the first one to tell all of us, "Let's come together under this banner called Hip Hop. And we gon' call ourselves Zulu Nation. But really, it's Hip Hop. It's this new thing that we're gonna cause in the world." It was deliberate. Hip Hop was never a mistake. . . . Those principles: peace, unity, love, and having fun became the principles for this new culture called Hip Hop. Afrika Bambaataa would meet with us regularly. This was no haphazard thing. We just rapping on the corner. That's MTV's history. Real Hip Hop history is Afrika Bambaataa sitting everybody down and saying, "Listen, all this black, white, red, yellow is stupid. We're all human beings. Let's come together on that."<sup>xxxi</sup>

KRS-One makes two significant points about the origins of hip hop including the facts that (1) it was deliberately developed with social justice outcomes through young adult activism; and (2) it was inclusive in terms of who could join the movement as allies in the struggle for social justice. Unlike other youth subcultures, hip hop has survived the test of time and managed to become the single largest cultural bridge that connects youth around the world. Whether through its influences in music, fashion, language, business, entertainment, and so on, hip hop occupies a major space in the twenty-first-century cultural milieu.

With its beginnings in underground youth culture, hip hop has also had significant counter-hegemonic potential.<sup>xxxii</sup> Bettina Love echoes this idea that hip hop is rooted in a long history of anti-Black state violence. She writes:

Our ability to fight oppression through music is so abiding and distinctive that people think it's magical. Hip Hop has an ancestral need and obligation to combine social protest, music, and modes of cultural expression to address systemic racism, classism, suffering, and social neglect.<sup>xxxiii</sup>

Alongside its social justice leanings, hip hop also has a unique ability to reproduce itself in ways that reflect the evolving nature of youth identity. Critics argue, however, that hip hop can and does reproduce systemic inequalities despite its potential to effect change.<sup>xxxiv</sup> Notwithstanding these criticisms, hip hop has managed to etch out a significant space in mainstream American popular culture where young people have a dedicated space to voice their pain, hopes, styles, attitude, and other expressions of self. Globally speaking, hip hop has “gone viral” through the proliferation of social media and Internet use among teens and young adults.<sup>xxxv</sup> As a result, there are some unique information behaviors that emerge at the crossroads of hip hop culture and youths’ digital media practices, which the next section provides analytic tools for researchers to explore further.

## **Methodology**

Using a CRT counter-narrative approach, I developed a new model for exploring information behavior that responds to the conceptual blind spots of the HOMAGO report pertaining to the racial realities of young people of color. The terminology used to create the INFLO model and its descriptive categories are grounded in one of the main cultural influences on today’s young adults—hip hop. The conceptual system I developed features three levels of classification for information behaviors—Rhythm, Rhyme, and Remix (R<sup>3</sup>). Each of these categories aligns with the original elements of hip hop—break dancing, emceeing, and DJing.

More specifically, the four original pillars that make hip hop “a way of life” include (1) emceeing, which includes rapping (also called MCing or mc-ing), (2) DJing and (turntablism), (3) break dancing (or street dance), and (4) graffiti art. Each of these elements exemplifies the levels of creativity that young people exhibit in their everyday lives, particularly in their digital media practices. The INFLO model provides explanations for each level of creativity within the R<sup>3</sup> framework, spanning basic, intermediate, and advanced levels.

### *The INFLO Model*

In order for models to be useful, they should be able to provide a conceptual system of definitions and classifications of the related data, events, and phenomena to guide the researcher in their interpretations.<sup>xxxvi</sup> To that end, the INFLO model presented in table 1 provides a breakdown of the analytic framework that researchers can use to explore a range of information-creation behaviors grounded in hip hop culture.

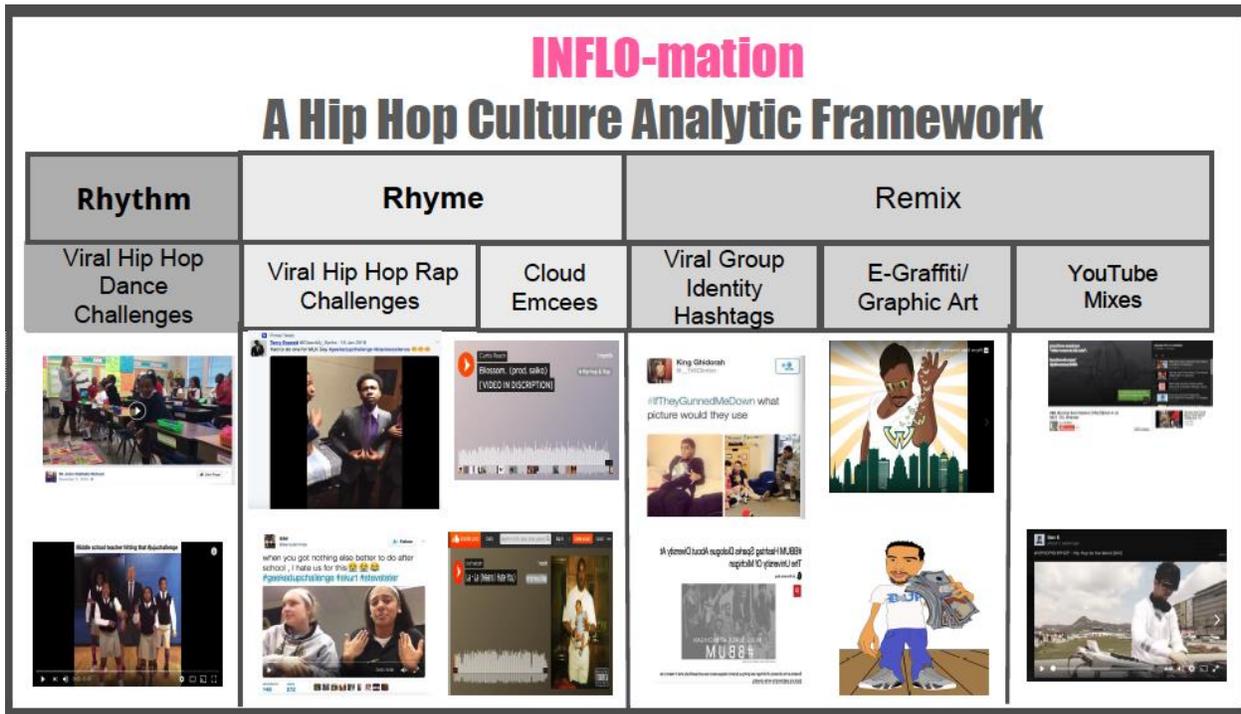
**Table 1. INFLO-mation Model**

<b>Hip Hop Elements</b> (original core elements)	<b>Rhythm<sup>1</sup></b> (break dancing)	<b>Rhyme<sup>2</sup></b> (emceeing/MCing)	<b>Remix<sup>3</sup></b> (DJing)
Level of Creativity	Basic	Intermediate	Advanced
Conceptual definitions of hip hop elements	Hip hop has ancestral roots in the African DRUMBEAT, which represents a shared foundation of communication, understanding, and knowledge building.	Hip hop represents the VOICE of what’s happening in the world. Hip hop brings marginalized perspectives into mainstream consciousness through its core element of emceeing (aka rapping).	Hip hop is a highly APPROPRIATIVE culture and art form, borrowing from a myriad of sources in the creation of new sonic forms and new knowledge products.
Spectrum of information-creation behaviors	<i>Vibing Flowing Jamming</i>	<i>Rapping Freestyling Schooling</i>	<i>Sampling Flipping Tagging</i>
	Basic mode of information production that starts from a popular rhythm or instrumental beat and is modified for different information contexts. The emphasis is on the rhythm and movement rather than the lyrics or ideas.	A synthesis of new and existing rhythms <i>and</i> rhymes during multimedia information-production behavior. The lyrics and ideas are primary over the beat as they express a unique point of view.	Creative reuse of information in order to produce new information. Remixing includes creative, educational, and ethical aspects.
Sample related data	#jujuonthatbeat challenge	#geekedupchallenge Cloud emcees	Group identity hashtags, e-graffiti art, YouTube mixes

**Findings and Discussion**

This study sought to explore the ways in which hip hop culture might enhance and enliven the way scholars study information behavior among teens and young adults. Through a CRT counter-narrative approach, I identified several cultural incongruences in some of the frameworks that have been used to study youth information behavior in the past. In particular, I found that the three descriptive categories employed in the HOMAGO report—hanging out,

messing around, geeking out—are problematic because they mask the racial realities that youth of color, especially Black youth, experience regularly due to the historical pattern of anti-Black state violence in America. Consequently, I derived a corollary set of descriptive categories—Rhythm, Rhyme, and Remix. These categories help give voice to a new range of information-creation behaviors that have emerged in social media and Internet spaces that connect directly back to hip hop culture. Figure 1 below contains sample data of videos and images that reflect the kinds of information-creation behaviors described in the INFLO model from table 1.



**Figure 1. INFLO-mation: A Hip Hop Culture Analytic Framework**

*Spectrum of Information-Creation Behaviors*

*Vibing, Flowing, and Jamming.* The sample data applied to the R<sup>3</sup> framework show that information behaviors that fall on the basic end of the creativity spectrum are more spontaneous than those that fall on the advanced end of the spectrum. For example, viral dance videos often require less forethought than a viral rap video since the movements are already prescribed by the dance creator. Rap videos require a higher level of engagement with creating new lyrics. Moreover, the basic-level information-creation behaviors tend to be less educational than those on the advanced level. For example, the #jujuonthatbeat challenge are videos primarily created

by young people who wanted to be a part of a trending dance move that accompanies a hip hop song called “Juju on That Beat” by Zay Hilfigerrr and Zayion McCall.<sup>xxxvii</sup> In most cases, these videos are impromptu productions captured on cell phones and uploaded to social media sites like Vine, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. They tend to emphasize the softer skills of presentation and performance on the academic literacies spectrum.

However, the sample video screenshot data featured in figure 1 within the Rhythm category is taken from a second-grade classroom where the teacher led the students in a morning routine that incorporated the juju beat dance moves along with an original rhyme about getting ready to learn.<sup>xxxviii</sup> This sample data shows that the line between basic (Rhythm) and intermediate (Rhyme) information-creation behaviors can be blurred when teachers allow hip hop inside the classroom for educational purposes.

At the basic level of information-creation behaviors, individuals are mainly “vibing, flowing, and jamming,” or simply riding the rhythm or beat in the moment. The fact that a trending dance video from social media was brought into the classroom for educational purposes brings this sample piece of data closer to the intermediate level of creativity because the teacher took the next step of “rapping” her own original lyrics as well. The process of recording the video and posting it on the Internet using the appropriate hashtags for others to access and retrieve also reflect basic-level information behaviors.

*Rapping, Freestyling, Schooling.* Within the intermediate level of creativity, the emphasis is on language (rhyming), which provides a more direct bridge to traditional academic literacies.<sup>xxxix</sup> The two sample videos from figure 1 in the Rhythm category each feature students taking the #geekedupchallenge. They each created a freestyle rhyme that introduces themselves over the same instrumental beat that the challenge is based on. These videos were chosen because they represent high school and college students in a moment of “schooling,” or teaching the world about their areas of study and their academic life in general.<sup>xl</sup> These freestyle rap videos can easily move along the creativity continuum from basic sharing of biographical information to advanced coverage of highly complex ideas that create awareness about various subjects from biology to politics. For example, a college student at Morehouse created a music video on mitosis and DNA that was seen over 600,000 times on YouTube.<sup>xli</sup> He rapped about DNA and RNA in a creative remix of a Lil Uzi Vert song that he says inspired him.

The final sample data in the Rhyme classification features Cloud emcees, which refer to burgeoning rap artists who utilized cloud-based music platforms like SoundCloud to establish their followings and to market and promote their work on social media. These novice artists are etching out an identity and creating a unique style that brings this information-creation behavior from the cusp of intermediate level to the advanced end of the spectrum.

*Sampling, Flipping, Tagging.* On the advanced (Remix) end of the information-creation behavior spectrum, the key characteristics include having a clear point of view, social consciousness-raising elements, originality, and technical acumen. For example, figure 1 features two examples of “flipping” and social “tagging” behaviors in the use of two different group identity hashtags: #iftheygunnedmedown and #BBUM (Being Black at University of Michigan). The former is an example of a phenomena that occurs on Twitter where young people use hashtags as a form of social “tagging” to rewrite the mainstream narrative about themselves or to amplify their racialized experiences. In the case of the #iftheygunnedmedown hashtag, users were posting “dueling” photos of themselves—one where the subject looks wholesome, and another where the same person might look like a troublemaker. This hashtag was used more than 100,000 times in the first twenty-four hours of its appearance on the Internet.<sup>xlii</sup> The other hashtag, #BBUM, ignited a dynamic dialogue about race and specifically what it means to be Black at a predominantly White university.<sup>xliii</sup>

Other examples that fall within the advanced end of the creativity spectrum include e-graffiti and YouTube mixes. Although graffiti is a cultural object that predates the birth of hip hop, in 1980 the media began to link graffiti with other emerging urban cultures—those of break dancing and rap music, which birthed the concept of hip hop. Graffiti is linked to other hip hop elements indirectly because the artistry was often displayed in the same public spaces where DJs and break-dancers performed at block parties. In that sense, there was a cultural, mental, and spiritual connection between the young adults participating in DJing, rap, break dancing, and graffiti.

With stiffer regulations prohibiting graffiti art on public buildings, coupled with the digital tools available to create artwork on computers, the presence of e-graffiti is now a staple in the online public sphere. The first image in the e-graffiti classification features an image posted on Wayne State University’s Instagram page. The image shows a Black male superimposed on the backdrop of a Detroit cityscape while sprinkling the university’s “W” emblems down on the

city. The caption on the post reads: “Wayne State, the essential flavor of Detroit.”<sup>xliv</sup> The public nature of this image is one of the reasons it can be characterized as e-graffiti. More importantly, the image presents a decidedly urban and unapologetically Black point of view.

The final two examples in the Remix category feature YouTube mixes, which are a nonstop playlist inspired by a song or video in a particular genre. The skills needed to create an original mix require advanced DJ skills that blend old school turntable techniques with new school software-based DJ tools. The creator of the mix must have an in-depth knowledge of music in order to sample music that reflects the breadth and depth of hip hop music. For example, DJ Ultraman has a series of mixes on mixcloud.com that are grouped into playlists with titles such as “Life & Liberation Mixtape Pt. 3” (Conscious Hip-Hop); “Roots & Lovers Rock Reggae Mix” (mETHODOLOGY Sessions); and “SD-La’s Summer Mix” (’90s Hip-Hop and R&B).<sup>xlv</sup>

### *Words Matter*

“Speech is my hammer bang the world into shape / Now let it fall”

—Mos Def, “Hip Hop,” *Black on Both Sides* (1999)

Library and information science professionals should be especially attuned to ways in which certain subject headings and classification schemes can overlook and alienate people from backgrounds that are already marginalized. Cataloging librarian Sanford Berman openly criticized centrally performed cataloging and standard cataloging tools that supported bias in subject headings, such as the Library of Congress Subject Headings. In his 1971 publication, *Prejudices and Antipathies: A Tract on the LC Subject Heads Concerning People*, Berman lists 225 headings with proposed alterations, additions, or deletions and cross-references to “more accurately reflect the language used in addressing these topics, to rectify errors of bias, and to better guide librarians and readers to material of interest.” Berman writes, “The fact that a number of meanings may be assigned to a given word explains why messages are subject to misinterpretation and why our communication is open to misunderstandings.”<sup>xlvi</sup>

Berman helped elevate the consciousness of the LIS profession in recognizing the power of naming that catalogers have to privilege or marginalize entire groups of people based on the terminology they assign to subject headings. Similarly, I developed the three R’s framework with a cultural sensitivity to the hip hop vernacular young adults might use to describe their

information behaviors. I aimed to give voice to those who might not see themselves reflected in the HOMAGO report because of the racialized connotations found in its analysis framework.

## **Limitations**

Although I consider myself a cultural insider in the hip hop community, I am no longer a young adult. Therefore, I recognize my own limitations and potential to conceptualize young people as a cohesive group defined by their presumed difference from today's adults as well as youth from the past.<sup>xlvii</sup>

## **Future Directions**

A next step for this research might be to present the INFLO model to a group of teens to allow them to use social tagging as a way to democratize the analysis process. One way to do this is by allowing them to generate their own keywords to categorize the range of information-creation behaviors they employ in their daily lives.

This approach would follow the efforts of Christo Sims, who co-authored the HOMAGO book and later gave college students who took part in the original study an opportunity to reply publicly to how well the book appeared to portray their younger years.<sup>xlviii</sup> One group of Sims' college students wrote a review of the HOMAGO book as a whole. In order to foreground their voices, I will quote from the text at length. Laura Johnston writes:

For the most part, I agreed with the genres presented in this chapter. As I have either witnessed the genres of participation through my own experience, or through my friends' experiences. . . . But the deeper we got into discussing the book and reading our peers' responses, the more we started to notice subtle disagreement and uneasiness amongst our classmates about the way the book characterizes our adolescence. We weren't in complete disagreement—HOMAGO wasn't getting us completely wrong—but we weren't sold either.

The fact that young adults took the opportunity to speak back to the HOMAGO report is a significant contribution to research. I plan to further refine this INFLO-mation framework by designing a participatory action research project with youth to allow for their input on the terminology and classification scheme along with identifying real-world examples from their digital practices.

## Conclusion

While the HOMAGO report rightfully places new media at the center of peer culture in the United States, the conceptual framework leaves little room to examine the ever-increasing, yet distinct role that hip hop culture plays in the birthing of unique kinds of information behavior in the twenty-first century. As U.S. school and public libraries are evolving to meet users' changing needs, we need to create new frameworks and to design principles that reflect how youth are actually using and interacting with information both inside and outside of library spaces. Hip hop offers a wealth of insights in these efforts.

## Notes

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<sup>i</sup> See, e.g., Kafi D. Kumasi, "Critical Race Theory and Education: Mapping a Legacy of Activism and Scholarship," in *Beyond Critique: Exploring Critical Social Theories and Education*, ed. Bradley A. U. Levinson et al. (New York: Routledge, 2015), 208–31; Kafi D. Kumasi and Renee F. Hill, "Examining the Hidden Ideologies within Cultural Competence Discourses among Library and Information Science (LIS) Students: Implications for School Library Pedagogy," *School Libraries Worldwide* 19, no. 1 (2013): 128; Kafi D. Kumasi, "'The Library Is Like Her House': Reimagining Youth of Color in LIS Discourses," in *Transforming Young Adult Services: A Reader for Our Age*, ed. A. Bernier (Chicago: ALA–Neal Schuman, 2013), 103–13.

<sup>ii</sup> Raymond Boudon, "Review: What Middle-Range Theories Are," *Contemporary Sociology* 20, no. 4 (1991): 519–22.

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