The Formation of an Information Literate Learner:

Toward Pedagogies to Address Ontological Obstacles in the Liminal Space
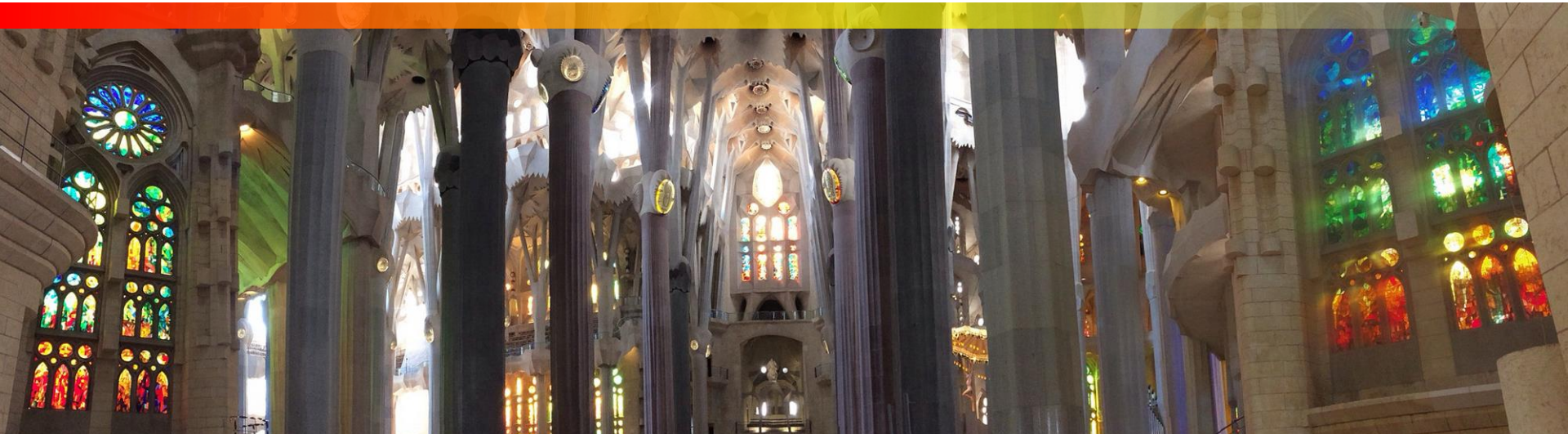
Michigan State University
LIBRARIES

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Threshold Concepts & Liminal Space

- ACRL Framework positions goals as thresholds
- Librarians work "within the journey."

Toward a Habitus
of Information Literacy

- Dispositions and knowledge practices, or *habits of mind*

- Creating a disciplinary thinker

- Transformative goals and processes

Beyond Curriculum and Content

- Librarians' impact within students' liminal spaces necessitates a critical reexamination of our pedagogies and approaches to IL teaching & learning.

Liminal space

- The space in which movement toward the eventual crossing of a threshold takes place
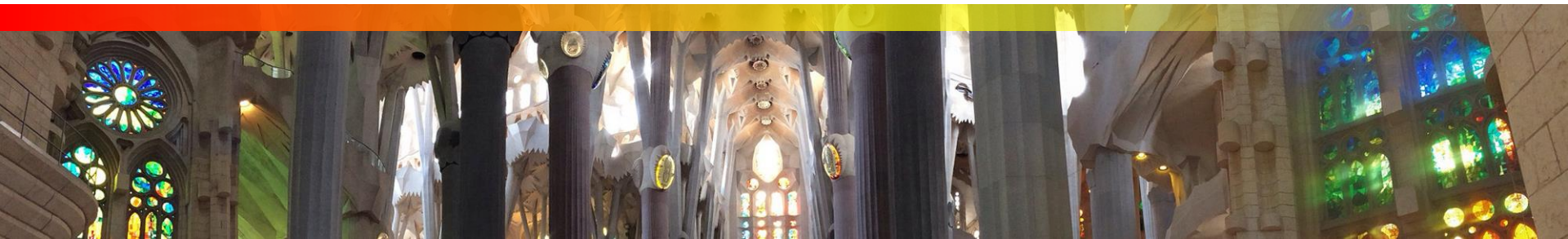- Processes are not always linear or solely intellectual

Brereton, K. *Liminal-time No 2* [Painting, oil on canvas]. Retrieved from http://www.kurtbrereton.com/dehavshow.html

Who studies liminality?

- Social sciences: Anthropology, religious studies, cultural studies, psychology, education, SoTL, philosophy
  - Concepts: Rites of passage, ritual, formation, pedagogy
- Visual arts, creativity studies
- Developmental psychology

Liminality and Librarians

- Pedagogical focus
- Teaching assessment = content and outcomes
- Learning situations beyond the classroom

The Medium Is The Message

- Formation
  - Holistic
  - Transformative
  - Knowledge, values and beliefs
  - Not just *what*, but *how*

How is the formation/pedagogy comparison helpful?

- Shared goals: transformation of dispositions
- Broad focus: holistic approach to learning
- Resistance: Where and how?
- Philosophically: potential problem areas

Others examining the connections:

- Parker Palmer: "Education as Spiritual Formation"

- Peter McLaren: "The Liminal Servant and the Ritual Roots of Critical Pedagogy"

(full citations at end of presentation)

Formation as Pervasive

- Implicit pedagogy (Bordieu)
- Hidden curriculum (Palmer)
- Cultural liturgies (Smith)
- Public pedagogies (Giroux)

Resistance

- In formative or liturgical contexts
    - Resisting practices & beliefs contrary to spiritual ideals
- In critical pedagogy
    - Resisting oppressive forces opposed to democratic ideals

Places of Resistance

- IL Frames = librarian resistance

- Liminal "stuck places" or obstacles = learner resistance

- Teacher assumptions = systematic nonresistance

"Stuck Places" as Resistance

- Epistemological obstacles
- Ontological obstacles

Ontological obstacles

- What might they be?

- Praxis of stuck places (Ellsworth, Meyer and Land)

- Teaching can actually *make them worse.*

Can "good" pedagogy backfire?

- Pedagogy can reverse or impede progress through the liminal space

- Oversimplification can create inappropriate understandings (Land et al 2014)

- Ellsworth's experience

Teacher assumptions
as systematic non-resistance

- What are *our own* ontological obstacles?

- Examination of our rituals and practices help to identify *beliefs.*

- Recognize that we may be part of the problem.

Methods and goals at odds?

- Language
- Expectations of students
- Physical space
- Authority construction
- Beliefs about students

How can we know?

- Identify formative micro and macropractices, rituals, beliefs, and obstacles
- Both for teachers *and* learners

Types of research methods

- Limberg, Sundin, and Talja (2012)
  - Discourse Analysis
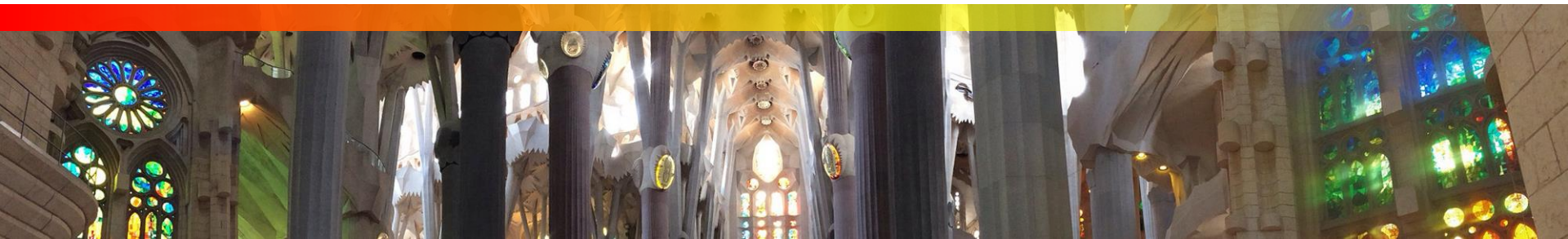 - Sociocultural Theory
    - Ethnography

Discourse Analysis

- Mathematics education: language as exclusionary – construction of authority through restricted mathematical discourse

- Writing classrooms: connections between authority and morality

Ethnography

- "Studying Students" (Foster and Gibbons 2007)
- Project Information Literacy (Head and Eisenberg, ongoing)
  - What further questions can be asked of the data?

- Bain (2006) examines the rituals of history texts and class structures to reveal hidden authority

Concluding Questions:

- In what ways are our environments formative in relation to IL frames?

- Where might we be working *against* the IL frames?

- What obstacles can we uncover that will help us teach more effectively?

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