The Formation of an Information Literate Learner:
Toward Pedagogies to Address Ontological Obstacles in the Liminal Space

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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
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?
Works Cited

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