

Hybrid principles and practices of formation in a faith-adjacent networked nonprofit



Kyle Matthew Oliver (@kmoliver)

Communication, Media, & Learning Technologies Design Program

Teachers College, Columbia University

THEOCOM '19 | July 23, 2019 | Slides: prayr.cc/theocom19 | Paper: prayr.cc/moments

MOMENT:

An Office, in a Tote Bag, in a Cafe

MOMENT: An Office, in a Tote Bag, in a Cafe

“ They usually ask us: **Do you have a space?**

A CHURCH WITH NO BUILDING?

When we tell them no, they ask: So...what do you do all day? [...]

Not being tied to a building ... frees us to spend our time getting together with our neighbors in the schools, offices, and hospitals that anchor them. In our short time here, we have connected with chaplains, tech developers, social workers, artists, [...], and tons of other good people – all of them thrilled to dream about opportunities for helping youth in foster care.

(**bold theirs**, red mine)



By Hannah Andrews
OCTOBER 28, 2014



Pseudonymous reconstruction of “Tapestry” blog post, following (here and throughout) disguising procedures similar to (Kligler-Vilenchik & Literat, 2018).

MOMENT: An Office, in a Tote Bag, in a Cafe



tapestry_fym · Follow



tapestry_fym What a privilege to be on the road celebrating #fosteryouth stories and how they can be held and circulated in holy places. We will share some stories for you soon on Vimeo, and if you are in the [city removed] area you can still catch the "See Us" exhibit by @fosteryouthdispatches at @sttjamescathedralchurch (555 Cedar St.) through Sunday!

17w



fosteryouthdispatches As always, thanks so much for Tapestry's support!

17w Reply



11 likes

FEBRUARY 27

Log in to like or comment.

Recent church-hosted "Foster Youth Dispatches" exhibit 4

MOMENT: An Office, in a Tote Bag, in a Cafe



tapestry_fym · Follow

tapestry_fym #TapestryMentor
Edith sent this pic of an outing where she and teammate Chad watched their youth climbing trees in George McArnold Park. This outing helped them remember how far they've come in 18 months.
Edith: "When Chad and I first met our youth, there were some moments when he was emotionally overwhelmed. How could we navigate helping a youth we had just met to look on the bright side? My attempt was to point to the natural world: 'Aren't these things of creation miraculous?' He wasn't biting: 'I don't care about trees.' Today, I didn't remind him of that day, but he reminded me—how overwhelm can and will be transformed by care."
#TapestryMoment

71w Reply

16 likes
MARCH 6, 2018

Log in to like or comment.

“Found” digital storytelling practice: #TapestryMoment[s] 5

MOMENT: An Office, in a Tote Bag, in a Cafe



A subsequent Volunteer Thank-You Meal on Pine Street

Overview of Research

Project: Studying multimodal collaborative storytelling in faith-adjacent communities



 **tapestry_fym** · [Follow](#)

 **tapestry_fym** Our mentors Edith and Giles and their youth visited an open house at Science4All, then they had lunch at a Japanese restaurant - an authentic ramen noodle first for their youth. @Science4Allinc runs two neighborhood science labs in English and Spanish, great spots for a free and fun #TapestryMentor outing! 📍 #TapestryTale #TapestryTuesday 18w

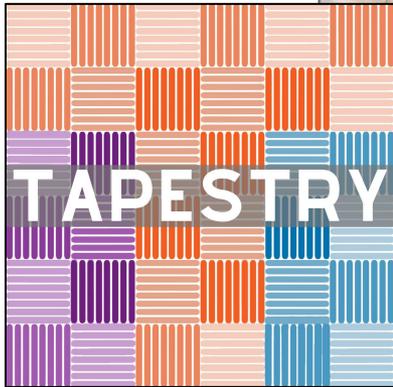
 **jennajenna33** I'd really like to mentor a teen! How could I get connected? 18w 1 like Reply View replies (2)



18 likes



Partner: “Tapestry” connects foster youth with mentor teams and a wider community



Framing: Using educational media literature & methods to explore future of religious education

Responsive settings of & pedagogies for religious & theological education amid social change (Gorrell, 2019; Oliver, 2019; Nagle, 2017; Roberto, 2012; Hess, 2005)

Youth media / pedagogies of collegiality (Chávez & Soep, 2005; Soep, 2006)

New media literacy / participatory cultures (Jenkins et al., 2009; Ito et al., 2009; Hess, 2014)

Digital S/storytelling & multimodal narrative (Lambert, 2012; Hull & Katz, 2006; Pleasants, 2008, Hess, 2012)

Other practices of aesthetic / multimodal expression (Luttrell, 2010; Kligler-Vilenchik & Literat, 2018; Wang & Burris, 1997)

Practices of inclusion & identity development (Vasudevan et al., 2014; Price-Dennis, et al., 2015; Wissman, et al., 2015; Hess, 2016; Hess, 2017)

Changing understandings & expressions of religious & spiritual belonging & belief (Drescher, 2016; Campbell, 2012; Putnam, 2000)

Role: Media producer+educator, ethnographer,
priest interested in digital literacy practices

eformation

LEARNING COMMUNITY



The purpose of these literacies is to help ministry leaders—both lay and ordained—embody online the values of their faith traditions and communities with integrity, grace, and an orientation toward serving others in healthy and responsive ways.

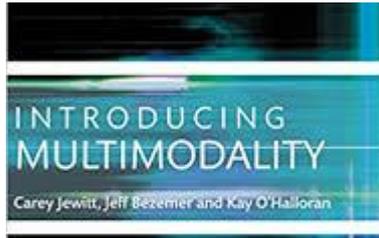
MEDIA & SOCIAL CHANGE LAB



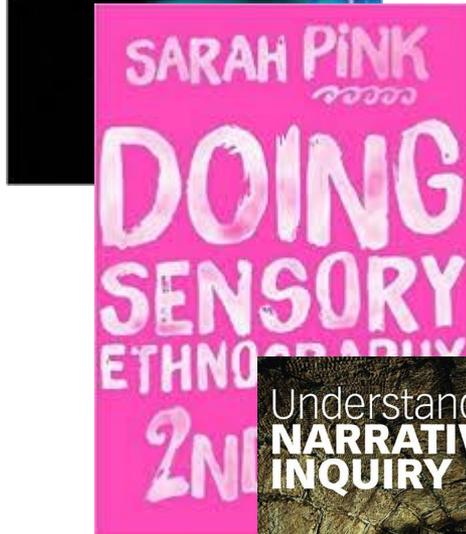
TEACHERS COLLEGE COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY



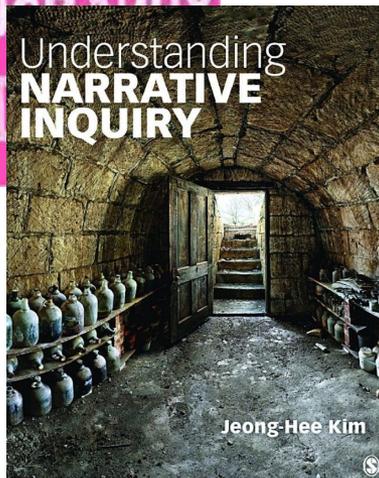
Method: Ethnographic & narrative inquiry via ‘research pedagogies’¹



“make visible the cultural and social practices of a particular community” (pp. 132)



“involves the production of meaning in participation with them through a shared activity in a shared place” (p. 270)



“we should find ways to make the ‘tangled scenes of life more intelligible in esthetic experience’” (p. 110, quoting Dewey)

[1] (Wissman, et al., 2015)²

Data: Preliminary field notes, Tapestry social media analysis

Researcher observations, field notes, & private materials

- 3 Tapestry events
- 2 meetings with Tapestry directors
- 3 email threads with Tapestry directors
- 2 preliminary analytic memos

Public-facing social media artifacts (focus: January 1 – July 1)

- 62 Instagram posts
- ___ Facebook posts (IG “near-duplicates” excluded)
- 70 Twitter posts (IG “near-duplicates” excluded)
- 5 blog posts
- 1 (non-archival) Vimeo video (media and transcript)

Research Questions

- (1) [Community] How do Tapestry and its members **negotiate and interweave spiritual, relational, and educational practices to construct shared meanings and spaces**, and what do these processes tell us about the future of religious community and formation?
(before and during my participatory “intervention”)
- (2) [Activities] How do a variety of collaborative digital storytelling practices (production of and discussion about audio and/or visual media artifacts), and the distinctive affordances of each, help participants reflect on and make meaning about their experiences in and beyond the Tapestry community?
- (3) [Researcher] As a researcher positioned at the intersection of religious education and media education, and a practitioner trained as a teacher, priest, and media producer, how do my diverse roles, experiences, and orientations shape my engagement with participants?

Preliminary Account

Tapestry leverages **hybrid networked** community structure to convene **hybrid practices** and from **hybrid meanings**

Preliminary Account

Tapestry leverages **hybrid networked community structure** to convene **hybrid practices** and from **hybrid meanings**

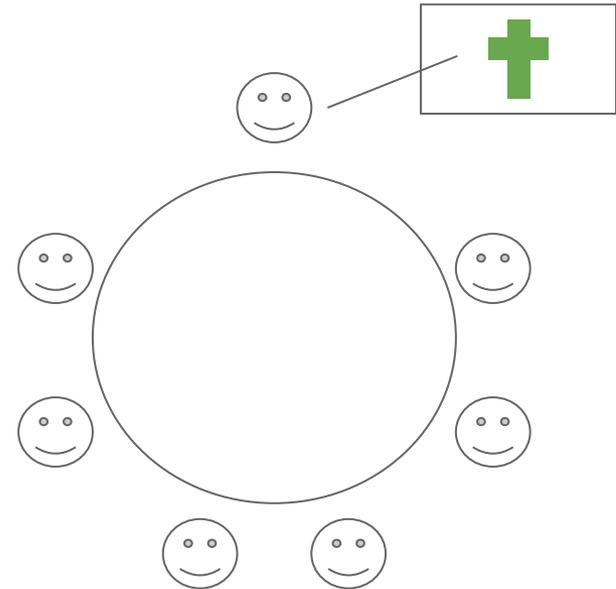
Theory: Hess², Tan³ propose multiple postures to leader/audience formative relationship

Tan

teaching **about** commitment

teaching **for** commitment

teaching **from** commitment



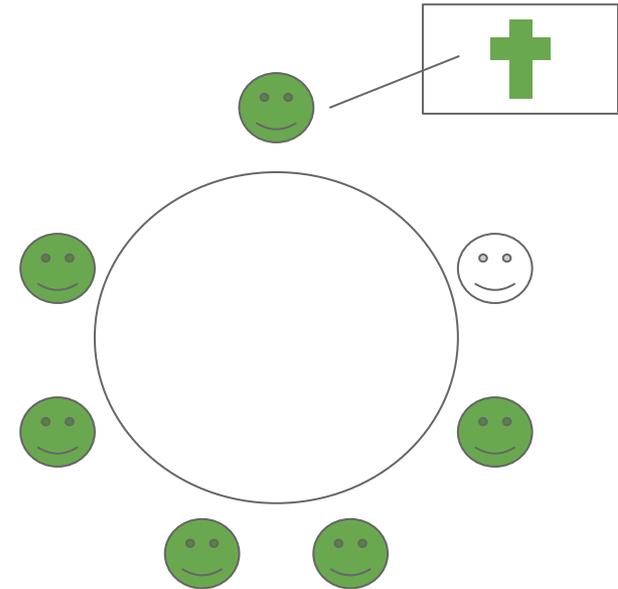
Theory: Hess², Tan³ propose multiple postures to leader/audience formative relationship

Tan

teaching **about** commitment

teaching **for** commitment

teaching **from** commitment



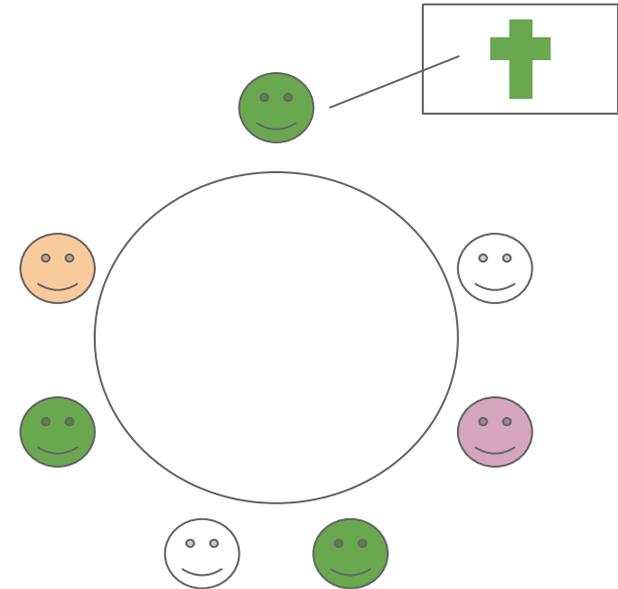
Theory: Hess², Tan³ propose multiple postures to leader/audience formative relationship

Tan

teaching **about** commitment

teaching **for** commitment

teaching **from** commitment



E.g., school chaplains, church-run “secular” camps, etc.

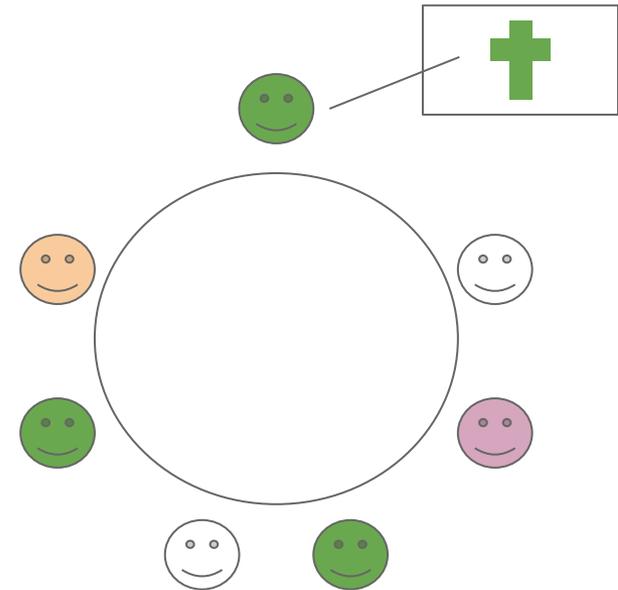
Theory: Hess², Tan³ propose multiple postures to leader/audience formative relationship

Tan

teaching **about** commitment

teaching **for** commitment

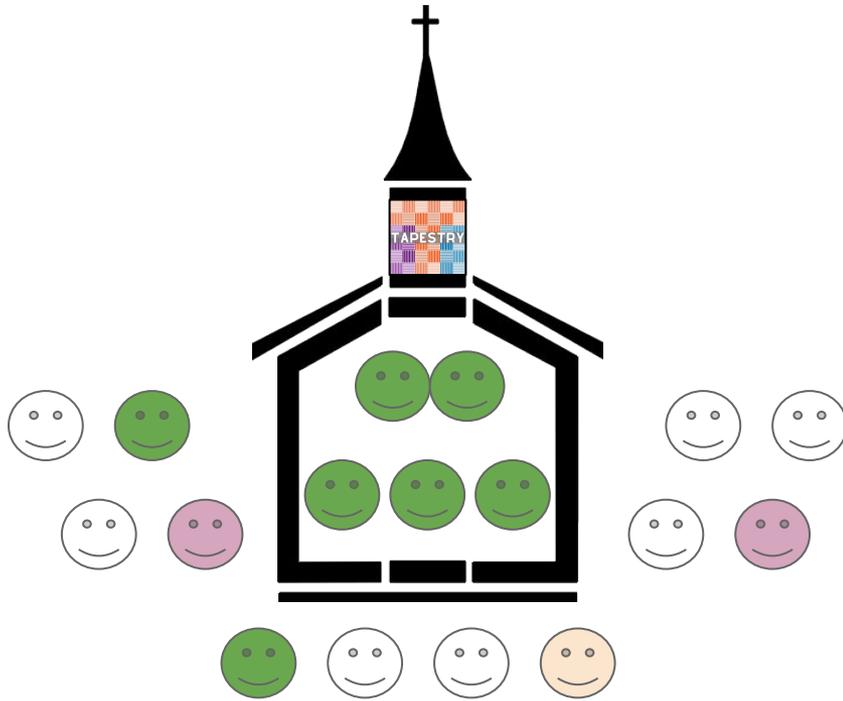
teaching **from** commitment



Hess

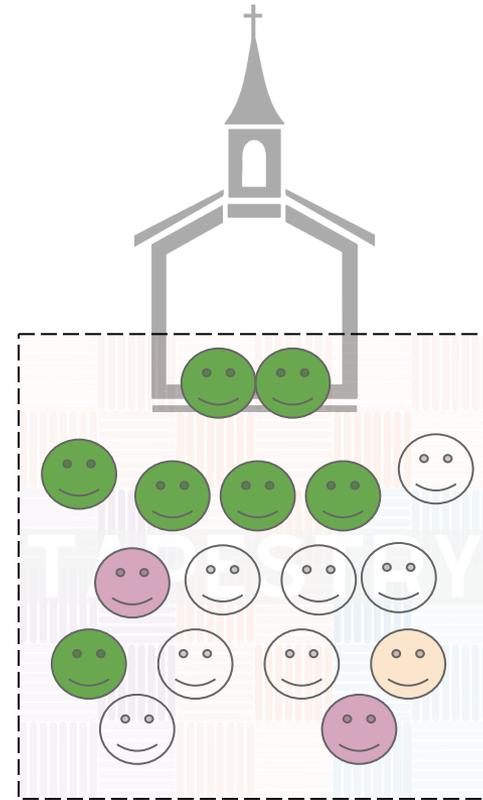
Can we embody religious education that educates **within and for specific religious communities, but also and concurrently with and for people who are not part of religious communities**? Can we reach people who might have very little interest in, or perhaps even hostility towards, religious institutions?

Tapestry: What started as a specialized church plant became a “faith-adjacent” network



2014 (plan)

Christian religious community
“hybridly” partnering for mission

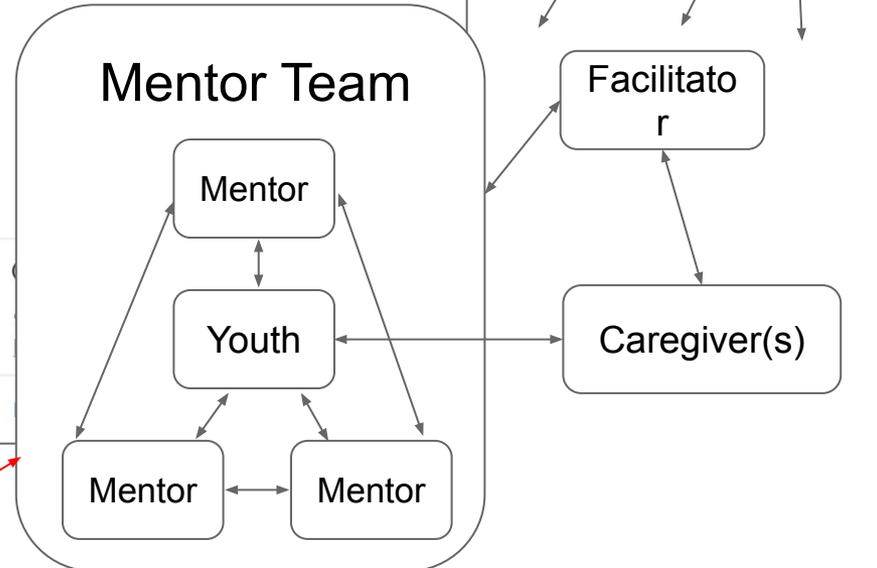


2019 (result)

Hybrid spiritual community
“fully” partnering for mission

Tapestry: Organization has explicitly networked structure (Campbell⁴: “networked community”)

[4] (Campbell, 2012)



Reproduction from mentor training

Tapestry: Events around the city grow network (“multisite reality”⁵ / “digital geographies”⁶)



[5] (Campbell, 2012) [6] (Oliver, 2019, cf. Vasudevan, 2010)

MOMENT:

(Re-)weaving the Tapestry

MOMENT: (Re-)weaving the Tapestry



tapestry_fym · Follow
Lakeview Children's Center



tapestry_fym Our biggest ever training took place today with 18 people participating. Would you have believed we could fit all these fantastic, compassionate folks in this conference room (and take a selfie)??!! #TapestryMentor

26w



jaarewe More growth to come for sure!!! 💖 😊

26w



cellularthingies 😊

26w



sirtoots Way to go!! On attendance and the crazy selfie. 😊

26w



34 likes

JANUARY 12

Log in to like or comment

MOMENT: (Re-)weaving the Tapestry

 **Tapestry FYM**
@TapestryFYM

from @KQEDnews: Why mindfulness practices & trauma-informed care don't always go together: "[S]ome of the particular habits of mindfulness -- sitting still, closing eyes, being silent -- can be triggers for students who've experienced trauma."



Why Mindfulness And Trauma-Informed Teaching Don't Always Go Together
Teachers need to be aware that some of the trappings of mindfulness -- sitting with eyes closed -- could be triggers for students who have experienced trauma.
kqed.org

2:00 PM - 11 Feb 2019

 **Tapestry FYM**
February 14 · 🌐

Valentine's Day can be complicated for youth with trauma histories that include sexual abuse, unhealthy relationships, and betrayal of trust. Every day we work to build community that will provide examples of support, trust, hope, and unconditional love, but it is slow, difficult work. We appreciate all the ways you are part of this effort, through mentoring, donations, and sending heartfelt messages from around the world. These hearts were made by Karen in Rogers, Arkansas, a sweet act of love reminding us of why we are all engaged in this mission together!



  19

1 Share

 Like  Comment  Share

MOMENT: (Re-)weaving the Tapestry



Field notes, mentor training, January 11, 2019

MOMENT: (Re-)weaving the Tapestry



Guiding Principles

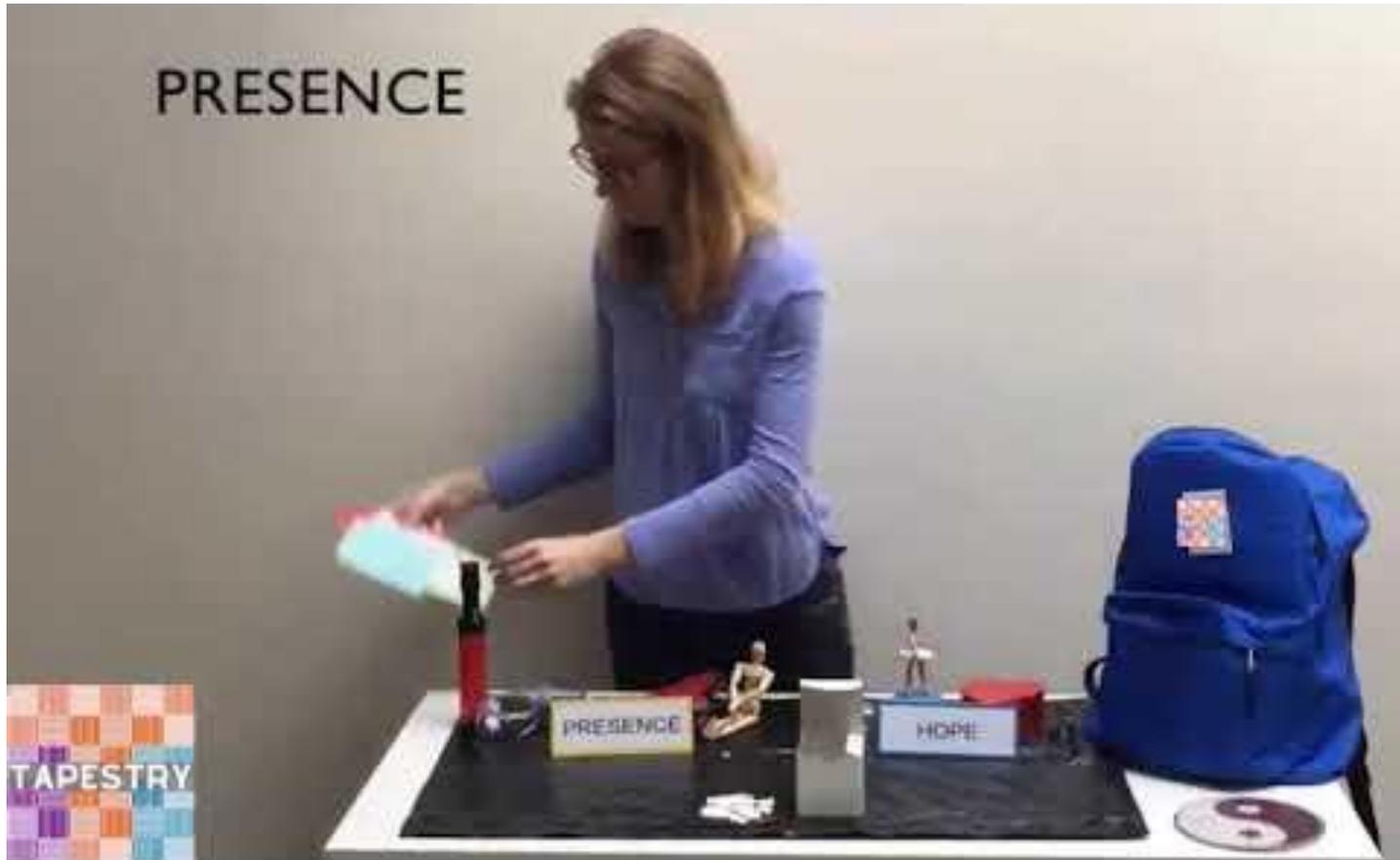
6 months ago | More

 **Tapestry FYM** PRO

▶ 14 ❤️ 1 📦 1 💬 1

🔗 Share

MOMENT: (Re-)weaving the Tapestry



Guiding Principles

6 months ago | More



Tapestry FYM PRO

▶ 14 ♡ 1 🏠 1 💬 1

🔗 Share

Preliminary Account

Tapestry leverages **hybrid networked** community structure to convene **hybrid practices** and from **hybrid meanings**

Hybrid practices: Two senses of “hybridity” shape Tapestry’s practice

“Hybrid” pedagogy → In-person + online interactions

- Soliciting, sharing online reflections about in-person activities
- Collecting, sharing online resources to support mentoring
- Connecting Tapestry’s work to other movements, organizations
- Soon: Composing, sharing digital stories

“Hybrid” objectives → Human + spiritual + collective formation

- Training, support for emotional complexities of mentoring
- Invitation, modeling for bringing spirituality to mentoring
- Ongoing work of “(re-)assembling the social” (Latour)

Hybrid practices: #TapestryMoments help teams turn experiences to meaning



tapestry_fym · Follow



tapestry_fym #TapestryMentor

Edith sent this pic of an outing where she and teammate Chad watched their youth climbing trees in George McArnold Park. This outing helped them remember how far they've come in 18 months.

Edith: "When Chad and I first met our youth, there were some moments when he was emotionally overwhelmed. How could we navigate helping a youth we had just met to look on the bright side? My attempt was to point to the natural world: 'Aren't these things of creation miraculous?' He wasn't biting: 'I don't care about trees.' Today, I didn't remind him of that day, but he reminded me—how overwhelm can and will be transformed by care."

#TapestryMoment

71w Reply



16 likes

MARCH 6, 2018

Log in to like or comment.

Hybrid practices: Sharing online resources extends training experience



Tapestry FYM
@TapestryFYM

from @KQEDnews: Why mindfulness practices & trauma-informed care don't always go together: "[S]ome of the particular habits of mindfulness -- sitting still, closing eyes, being silent -- can be triggers for students who've experienced trauma."



Why Mindfulness And Trauma-Informed Teaching Don't Always Go Together
Teachers need to be aware that some of the trappings of mindfulness -- sitting with eyes closed -- could be triggers for students who have experienced trauma.
kqed.org

2:00 PM - 11 Feb 2019



Member comment:

"Thanks for making the presentation available for us! I love the visual images and the language used to describe trauma, as well as the core principles. It really helps me have to images in my mind to draw on when I work with my team."

Hybrid practices: 'Cards for Hope' create supportive, connective opportunities



tapestry_fym · Follow



tapestry_fym As #write_on2019 comes to an end, we are thankful to everyone who has put hope in the mailbox this month to #fosteryouth, and we are in ❤️ with these postcards from Diana in Indiana sending encouragement to fellow social workers. Check out our story for more sweet cards and check out the link in our bio for how you can send #CardsforHope!

11w Reply



22 likes

APRIL 30

Log in to like or comment.

Hybrid practices: Words of Encouragement are monthly, mentor-only ‘sermonettes’

Word of Encouragement: I Am Here

This year I am making an effort to be more present.

The most recent issue of my college’s alumnae magazine featured a writing professor and the seminar she teaches for incoming students, called “You are (Not) Here: Writing in the Distracted Age.”

The primary distraction of this age is, as you might imagine, constant access to information and social networking, mostly via handheld devices.



This professor certainly acknowledges the realities and usefulness of technology, but her course is intended to provide a space where it doesn’t dominate. She is serious about protecting that space, too: the article says that if a student checks her phone even once during class, she is marked as “absent” for the day!

In this college seminar, one assignment for students is to leave their phones in their dorm room and take a walk around campus for half an hour, simply enjoying the scenery. My college regularly shows up on [lists of beautiful campuses](#), and many alumnae name the natural beauty of the campus as one of the reasons they chose Wellesley. It made me rather sad to realize that current students might be walking daily through such a beautiful space without even noticing it.

While I can’t say that I skipped across campus every day without distraction during my time as a student - I know I was often thinking about homework or what was for lunch - I am grateful in hindsight that I was often able to enjoy the beauty around me, without social media or email demanding my attention.

But fast forward 20 years, and I am equally guilty of being “absent” by turning my attention away from the people and places around me.

Word of Encouragement: Building Trust

Building trust simply takes time.

I know this in my head: we say this in every Braid training and reinforce it over and over to almost all Braid teams, even those that have been going for months or years.

But over the last couple weeks, I have been taking care of Chris’s cats while he and his wife have been on vacation, and I have been re-learning this lesson.

One of their cats, Kingsley, usually runs down the stairs when I arrive, ready for breakfast and snuggles.

Their other cat, Nala, is decidedly more skittish.

For the first few days, she was continually surprised by me. She would wander down the stairs, see me standing there, freeze, and then run back up to her hiding spot.

Then she just went ahead and hid when she heard me coming, and I didn’t see her at all for a couple days.

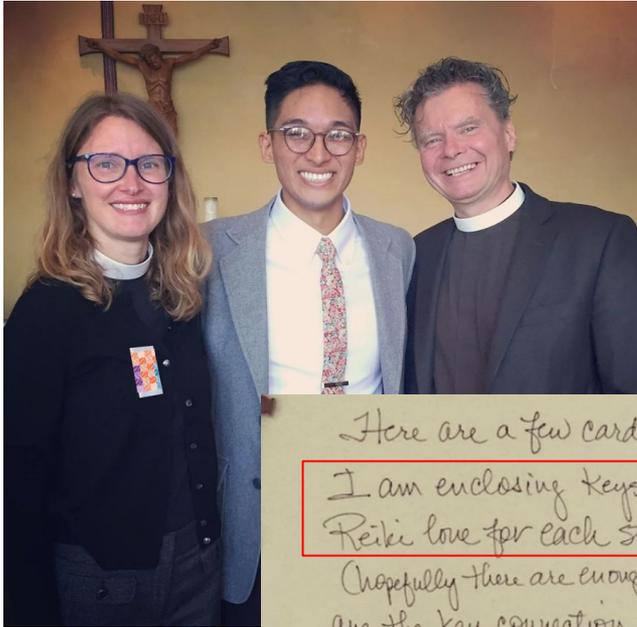
Meanwhile, I just kept showing up twice a day, bringing fresh food and water. I never chased her down or tried to make her socialize. I just gave her the space to do what she needed to do.

And then, toward the end of the first week, she wandered into the kitchen while I was washing her bowl, and instead of immediately bolting away, she stayed. On the other side of the room, but she stayed.

The next day, she came a little closer and stayed a little longer.



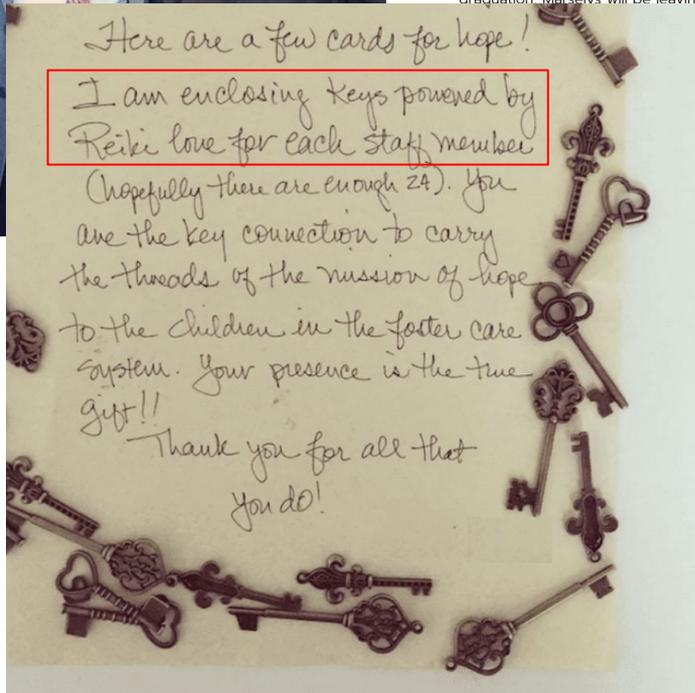
Hybrid practices: Tapestry leaders fill the social space with spiritual/religious imagery



tapestry_fym · Follow

tapestry_fym For the past two years, Rodrigo Ferrero has been a faithful member of the Tapestry team as part of his studies at the [local Jesuit theology program]. Marselys helped launch our partnership with @lakeview_center to build teams around the youth in their residential program. We believe Marselys has facilitated 8 Tapestry teams with a total of 26 mentors!

Sam and Hannah had the opportunity to attend a special ceremony to send graduates into the world with the blessing of individuals and organizations who have shaped their ministry. Following his graduation, Marselys will be leaving.



tapestry_fym · Follow

tapestry_fym A big thank you to Josephine many states away, who sent some love-charged keys that we could share with staff and facilitators. Thanks as well to everyone who keeps this ministry in their hearts, especially folks behind the scenes, as we kick off 2019!

24w



14 likes

JANUARY 8

Log in to like or comment.



Hybrid meanings: Theological categories & values centered, but flexibly



Hope



Recreation



Presence



Communion

Hybrid meanings: Theological categories & values centered, but flexibly

[Tapestry] has in a fundamental way moved into the work of post, post, post-modern church ... or at least post-colonial understandings of what it means to be a community gathered ...

Fundamental to this was the understanding that we have created space for a diverse, inter-faith/no-faith community to gather and do great work with foster youth. But, in order to create and hold this space we have given these "saints" guiding principles which are multi-faceted, that is Hope, Presence, Re-Creation, Communion. By being multi-faceted the mentors have permission to bring themselves to their work, (they are the gift) and are able to name their experience out of their own history, their own culture, their own tradition, their own understanding. We have tried not to impose meaning for them (sometimes with success), nor do we think we have created a structure that creates a duality between "religious-secular." We are striving to continue to trust their experience for our own learning, our own spiritual growth and development, and our evolution as individuals and as an organization.

[...] We have not had the forum or means by which to gather all affiliated with [Tapestry] and begin to explore that meaning which arises out of their experiences. We did not even know we were missing that forum until our conversations with you. But, your understanding of the world as it is and as it is becoming, your invitation to sit down with teams and create sacred space in which, and through which, shared experience can be the vehicle by which to discover and elicit meaning strikes us as being a perfect marriage.

Theory: Latour⁷ – ‘reassemble’ social by tracing ties connecting taken-for-granted relationships

Principle: No group, only group **formation**

“What we have lost—a fixed list of groups—we have regained because grouping have constantly to be made, or remade, and during this creation or recreation the group-makers leave behind many traces that can be used as data” (p. 34)

Principle: **Objects** too have agency

“What is new is not the multiplicity of objects any course of action mobilizes along its trail ... what is new is that objects are suddenly highlighted not only as being full-blown actors, but also as what explains the contrasted landscape we started with, the over-arching powers of society, the huge asymmetries, the crushing exercise of power” (p. 72)



Conclusion: Tapestry takes little for granted (faith, affiliation, belonging, trust, ritual, safety) and so is helping me see in new ways how formation is at the center of all we do.

