Twelve years ago, Margot Hover wrote an essay for this journal (then The Journal of Supervision and Training in Ministry) entitled “Responsibility and Care in the Supervisory Community.” It was a candid reflection on a moment when she was threatened with a grievance from the unit of CPE she intended to present to support her certification as a full supervisor. “Our story as a community of professionals involved in the teaching and learning of ministry informs our professional ethics, calling us to mutual accountability and responsibility.” Her observations about the importance of mutual accountability among supervisory colleagues in a fragile covenant of peers remain timely.

In this issue, Margot Hover has again examined a difficult topic. How do we identify and supervise students we regard as too wounded to heal? Using a composite case of “Elsie,” Hover describes the traits and biographical features common to problematic applicants and then identifies behaviors that emerge after admission. Her aim is not necessarily to screen out all too-wounded applicants. Most supervisors have at one point or another accepted students they later regretted taking but could not, for one reason or another, easily dismiss. “It is difficult to distinguish between ‘outside the norm’ as creativity and a prophetic voice, on one hand, and pathology on the other” (p. 183). William DeLong’s response to the essay raises yet another important question: Is CPE teaching or treating? If it is primarily learning, is CPE limited to a learning style requiring a particular psychological constellation?

One of the recurring themes in this volume of Reflective Practice has been mutuality in responsibility and accountability. When this focus on mutuality shifts to the relationship between supervisor and student/intern, it raises questions about authority. Because authority is formed in community, it relies on individuals acknowledging the need to be formed and shaped together in mutual accountability. Paula J. Teague explores the dynamic tension between authority and accountability in a CPE supervisory relationship using a model from ‘system-centered therapy.’ “Our functioning within a system,” Teague proposes, “is determined more by our role as defined by the system than by our person” (p. 205). Within any system, each of us may have several roles defined by context, function, and goal. Because roles change, authority changes as it is shared. And when the authority of the role is shared, so is the accountability.
The case study from New Zealand by Joseph E. Bush Jr., and Twyla Susan Werstein reports on a ten-year exploratory program in formation for Christian ministry (1997–2007). They examine two issues that are critical in forming religious leaders. The first is finding effective frameworks for promoting the integration of academic study with everyday practice and then adequate tools for measuring the depth of that integration. The second relates to nurturing the abilities to minister cross-culturally and in a variety of ministry contexts. I found the tutorial relationships and the synthesis project to be particularly intriguing and worthy of further consideration in settings far from New Zealand.

Neil Sims has provided a useful service for theological field educators by surveying handbooks on field education in Australia and in the United States in order to identify recurring goals in the formation for ministry. It is critical, Sims argues, that field education or formation programs are explicit about asking of themselves what institutions ask of students: accountability to clearly defined goals.

NOTE


Identifying and Educating the “Too Wounded to Heal” Student

Margot Hover

“Therapists are not crazy. Nonetheless, in terms of personality types, emotional weaknesses, and psychological motivations, a substantial majority of them may differ from the general population in ways more subtle than full-blown pathology yet more important than mere style.”—Thomas Maeder

“Survivors may become fine caregivers…but not all survivors are so fortunate.”—Maxine Glaz

It has been many years since Henri Nouwen reframed the after-effects of very deep hurt in the lives and work of caregivers by coining the concept of the “wounded healer.” Many pastors are particularly equipped by a painful past to empathize with and minister to the suffering. “Ministers are called to recognize the sufferings of their time and their own hearts and to make that recognition the starting point of their service.” While this recognition allowed caregivers to reframe their own painful histories, it sometimes gave unfortunate license to use that pain to get care for themselves, sometimes losing sight of the needs of the care recipient in the process. Two decades later, Maxine Glaz confronted this issue again by asking if a healer may be

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