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SYMPOSIUM

THE ROLE OF THEORY IN THE SUPERVISION OF MINISTRY

Introduction

Homer U. Ashby, Jr., Emily Click, and Robert O’Gorman

The theme of this issue of *The Journal of Supervision and Training in Ministry* is “The Role of Theory in the Supervision of Ministry.” It has been a number of years since the *Journal* examined theory and its implications for ministry supervision, and the Editorial Board thought that an update on theory and supervision was overdue. The impetus for re-examining theory’s role in ministry supervision emerged from a question that the Editorial Board struggled with over the past year: Is there a role for theory in ministry supervision? This may seem like an odd question, but a number of factors contributed to the Board’s raising this question for itself and for its readers.

The Editorial Board has noticed a wide variation in the use of theory in describing ministry supervision. Some of the articles received rely little on theoretical considerations in their treatment of supervision. Other authors rely heavily on theory as a means of describing their work as supervisors. The variations on the

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reliance on theory to explain ministry supervision sparked us to wonder if theory does have significance in the field. In addition to our observation that theory is variously relied upon in the discussion of ministry supervision, we also noted that the concept of “theory-based” supervision was being severely challenged by recent developments in the world of intellectual thought, global realities, and the practice of ministry itself.

We live in a postmodern age where any claim by a particular theory to explain universal truths is vehemently challenged. No longer can any one theory exercise hegemony in understanding fully and completely a particular set of circumstances or realities. All knowledge—of which theoretical knowledge is a part—is constrained by its social location and is, thereby, limited in its ability to speak too broadly. Thus, the role of theory in general has been brought into question by postmodern thinking and consequently raises questions for us as to whether or not theory can have a role in our understanding of the supervision of ministry.

The events of September 11 have influenced us all in profound ways. The events of that day have altered the way we think about the world, the way we go about our daily activities, even the way we feel about our own control and safety in the world. The effects of that day have also impacted our thinking about theory. How helpful is theory when it cannot predict or save us from such tragedies? The events of September 11 have contributed to what we perceive as the devaluing of theory. Instead, ideology, debates over values, and divisions along sectarian and geographical fault lines have captured the stage of public discourse and discussion. Theory and theoretical reflection have taken a back seat to combative strategies, protection, and survival.

The growing awareness of the diversity and pluralism of our global reality has also influenced our thought about the role of theory in ministry supervision. If indeed no one theory can explain universally the reality and circumstance of human experience, then what are we to do with theory that functions in the realm of comprehensive understanding? Do we construct many local theories of supervision, much like we have constructed local theologies? Do we substitute some other form of meaning-making for theory in order to describe a set of larger principles that guide our thought and action? And how do we reconcile the different ways in which these alternatives to theory are used? In popular culture, we see this demise of theory and the substitution of alternative forms of making decisions in the media, particularly television. When Donald Trump arrives at the decision “You’re fired,” there appears to be no theoretical orientation that he employs to come to that conclusion. Likewise, there appears to be no theoretical base to the choice of who will

become our next “American Idol.” Now there may be some underlying theories of excellence that inform these popular decisions in these particular venues, but they are opaque. Moreover, intuition, what feels right, and trial and error appear to be more valued as instruments in coming to an understanding about how to proceed than the use of a theory to inform one’s thought and action.

In all of the ways outlined above, theory and its role in our society have come into question. The papers in this symposium are not intended to address theory’s role in all of society. They reflect, rather, on the role of theory in the supervision of ministry. In the past, the role of theory in this field has been clear and unambiguous. In this symposium, we examine if the same is true today and, if so, how it is true. The discussion of theory’s role in supervision for this symposium is presented in a novel manner. The authors may not answer the question we have posed for them in a direct way, but each has explored an important element necessary for a full and complete answer to the question: “Is there a role for theory in the supervision of ministry?” Each in his or her own way points to theory’s role in ministry supervision, both in borrowing from theory and in constructing theory.

The papers cover ministry supervision from the perspectives of theological field education, pastoral counseling, and clinical pastoral education (CPE). The editors for this symposium were very fortunate to get voices that speak to all three of our major audiences. The Click, Kondrath, Rose, and Pershey articles come to us out of a significant conversation that theological field educators have been having among themselves about what theories they rely upon in theological field education and how those theories inform their supervision of supervisors and students. The Aleshire article comes from a presentation that he made at a national meeting of the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, in which he fashioned reflections on theological education into building blocks for supervision theory for CPE supervisors. Gorsuch examines the ways in which she utilizes theory to inform her teaching and supervision of pastoral counseling. There is a common theological education base from which all six authors are working. It was not the intent of the symposium editors to view theological education as the locus for the discussion. What we found was that some of the more challenging and exciting thought about theory and supervision was occurring in and around theological education. We do not wish to imply that challenging and exciting thought about theory and supervision is taking place only in theological education circles. However, these particular articles triggered our own imagination and thought about theory and its role in the supervision of ministry.

When we think of theory, four dimensions come to mind. First, theory is a codifying response to new realities. In the face of new events and experiences human beings attempt to give meaning and understanding to what they have encountered. Theory is a way in which that meaning-making occurs. It is a codifying response because it attempts to take what may appear to be disparate and unrelated events and experiences and form them into a related set of ideas and understandings. As such, theory attempts to make sense and to make connections. Second, theory not only attempts to make meaning and make connections with the events and experiences it observes, it also seeks to make sense and connections with previous theories that have sought to make sense of the same or similar phenomenon. Any one theory should be seen as a work in progress, nestled between prior theories with which it is in dialogue and future theories that will continue the dialogue. Thirdly, theory in its connectedness to other theories is often attempting to make corrections of previous theories. Sometimes these corrections are related to an update in light of newer observations and experiences. At other times, the corrections are intended to highlight some information that was misinterpreted or conclusions that were arrived at incorrectly. Finally, most theories are intended to improve or enhance action. That action could be more passive as in the case of philosophical reflection, or more active as in the case of supervision for ministry in which the theory informs how to conduct supervision in an optimal way. The articles in this symposium variously pick up on all four of these dimensions.

Gorsuch is very clear that her discussion of supervision takes place in light of the “reality sets” that are a part of a postmodern world. This new reality of a postmodern, locally constructed world call for new ways of thinking about competencies and authority in supervision. Similarly, Aleshire paints a new picture of the realities in theological education that have to do with the changing composition of students and curriculum in Association of Theological Schools. These new realities call for a new way of thinking about CPE. Pershey also points to the worldviews of Generation X/Yers that calls for a theoretical change in how supervisors form relationships and enter into the worlds of these younger learners. Click’s treatment of John Dewey and Rose’s treatment of Schön, Heifetz, and Girard provide clear examples of how their theories of supervision make connection with earlier theories. In the case of Click, the connection is with Dewey’s theory of education. In the case of Rose, it is with Schön’s, Heifetz’, and Girard’s theories regarding change. Both Click and Rose demonstrate how ministry supervision can benefit from a wider scholarly dialogue about learning in the context of experiencing challenging circumstances. Gorsuch makes connections between her supervisory method and

earlier theories on competency-based counseling. From her vantage point, Pershey is critical of any previous theory that claims a full knowledge of the way younger generations make sense of or understand the world. Her critique of Tom Beaudoin's work on virtual faith is a prime example of theory correcting theory.

One of the themes that is echoed in most of the articles in the symposium is that theory in the supervision of ministry should help supervisors see how to bring about formation and transformation in their supervisees. Thus, in the end, the role of theory in the supervision of ministry is to assist supervisors in assisting pastoral care practitioners to adopt the discipline of transformation.

Our hope is that this symposium will assist you in identifying and claiming the theory or theories that are a part of your own supervision, as well as introducing you to some more recent examples of how theory can play a role in our work as supervisors.

Transformative Educational Theory in Relation to Supervision and Training in Ministry

Emily Click

Theological field education (TFE) has rarely articulated specific educational theories for its practices. Instead, literature by and for field educators in theological education has most often explored educational methods, such as those for teaching theological reflection or for training supervisors. Theory points to the reasoning behind using a particular method in a specific context. This article therefore explores the theoretical basis for engaging students in work with supervisors when they are placed in ministry contexts. The heart of the argument is that since students are undergoing fundamental transformations of their perspectives, the supervisory relationship provides crucial interpretive support.

This article looks at one way to frame the educational work of field education in theoretical concepts. Since theological field education transforms students' identities, vocational directions, and abilities to lead in ministry, its work can best be illuminated by looking at transformational educational theories. Theological field education can build a more theoretical base for its practices by exploring similarities and differences between its perspectives on transformational education and those articulated in the broader educational literature.

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Transformative educational theory provides resources and challenges to improve present practices of ministry supervision. Integrative learning and teaching theories lie at the heart of transformative learning theory. Since integrative learning and teaching are central goals in theological field education, transformative learning theory is particularly appropriate when used to explore what happens when students engage in supervised ministry placements. The article also shows that current practices within theological field education may offer new insights that could reshape existing theories of how adult learners transform understandings in the process of engaging in supervised ministry.

A brief summary of what happens within theological field education will help demonstrate why transformative educational theory can both illuminate and challenge current assumptions about this educational process. Theological field education programs place students from master's degree programs in theology into ministry settings.¹ Students might, for example, work for ten hours a week in a pastoral role in a congregation. Alternatively, students might work each week in a hospital chaplaincy or in a residential school setting.

TFE students are required to complete some type of reflective process concurrent with their work in context.² TFE programs usually require students to reflect on a weekly basis with a trained supervisor to find layers of meaning in ministry experiences. Students variously complete case studies, verbatims, or simply sit down together with their mentors for unstructured reflective conversations. Additionally, many TFE students engage in group study with their peers, usually with a trained facilitator, who often is a ministry practitioner.³

THREE MODES OF LEARNING IN TFE

Before surveying the theoretical basis for TFE, a brief summary will show that there are several different types of learning that go on within any TFE program. The theoretical approach studied in this article focuses on the third major type of learning.

In the first type of learning in TFE, the major goal is to gather information. In these learning experiences, the teacher conveys data to the students. Students take notes on important details and issues. For this type of learning, students are mostly passive, with a goal of receiving information from an expert on a relevant topic. For example, students need to learn that state laws dictate what ministers can

and cannot do under certain circumstances. The best way for them to receive this information often is to listen in a lecture setting to someone who is currently an expert in the particular area of ministry.

Another major educational purpose of TFE is to develop specific skills, such as preaching, in order to do ministry.⁴ Preaching, like any other skill, has a number of elements that must be mastered. For example, students learn how to modulate their voices, to handle a sermon manuscript, to communicate key ideas with a logical flow to the argument. These are examples of skills that are taught and reinforced within the context of TFE. The acquisition of skills differs from the type of education that focuses on learning facts because the student takes information and employs it in specific circumstances. Usually the advice given, such as to not use notes to preach, must be modified in some way in an actual ministry context. The student who tries to preach without notes is doing something more than acting on instructions given by an expert; they are customizing generalized instructions to their own abilities, gifts, and ministry contexts.

These first two types of learning seem relatively routine and straightforward, yet developing skills and assimilating information does involve integrative work. John Dewey explains the importance of integrative work in assimilating facts as well as skills: “Intellectual learning includes the amassing and retention of information. But information is an undigested burden unless it is understood... comprehension means that the various parts of the information acquired are grasped in their relations to one another—a result that is attained only when acquisition is accompanied by constant reflection upon the meaning of what is studied.”⁵ Dewey’s insight was that even in the assimilation of data and in the honing of skills, true learning only occurs when the student accompanies these learning exercises with intentional reflection that engenders integration.

The most significantly integrative work, however, occurs in the third major educational purpose within TFE. In this type of education, the purpose is to alter students’ perspectives. Students bring together their identities, their capacities and curiosities with their ministry experiences. Experiences inform identity, and the individual’s emerging abilities help shape their experiences.

Every TFE program includes some skill-building, as well as some didactic teaching that conveys important information, yet most would agree that the third, transformational, is the major purpose of TFE. In the next section, I look at why most of TFE can be understood as transformational. I explore the many types of shifts in understanding that are expected of M.Div. students, and the heavy weight

placed on field education to support such development. I begin by showing the roots of transformative education theory in the writings of John Dewey.

TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION WITHIN TFE: JOHN DEWEY'S INFLUENCE

Any treatment of transformative educational theory must first turn to the genius of John Dewey. Dewey's insights are foundational to subsequent work among adult educators with regard to teaching students to reflect upon experience. This is because Dewey explores the ways that inquiry into experience influences learning. Such inquiry, according to Dewey, helps students to develop new habits of mind. Dewey advises that teachers should promote each pupil's unique development: "the practical work (of education) is one of modification, of changing, of reconstruction continued without end."⁶ For Dewey, the work of the teacher in relation to each pupil should be to challenge the student's individual capacity for reconstructing understanding, always in relation to experience.

The key phrase in the preceding paragraph is developing capacity for "reconstructing understanding." The essence of what Dewey means by inquiry into experience is that students develop an ability to understand why they see things from a certain perspective. An even greater ability to inquire into experience develops when students grow to be flexible enough to substitute better ways to understand experience when necessary. Students who develop such capacities are doing more than asking, "What happened here?" They also are asking, "How do I understand what happened here, and how might I develop new ways of understanding what occurred?" This is where the role of supervision becomes crucial, for it is in partnership with trained supervisors that students learn to examine the assumptions that inform their perceptions of experiences. The question of theory in supervision revolves around how supervisors engage students in experience and in reflection on experience in ways that engender greater capacities for such understanding.

Dewey shows, in much of his writing about education, the ways in which teachers should pursue the primary task of cultivating habits of inquiry in their students. He points to the importance of respecting the initiative and individuality of the students. The teacher is not passive, but rather engages the student in processes that will move the student beyond her present capacity for reflection on experience. Thus Dewey's educational philosophy gives a historic and clear basis for education that aims to transform student perspectives.

Dewey's writings also suggest that true education involves the training of thought: "the problem of method in forming habits of reflective thought is the problem of establishing conditions that will arouse and guide curiosity; of setting up the connections in things experienced that will on later occasions promote the flow of suggestions, create problems and purposes that will favor consecutiveness in the succession of ideas."⁷ Dewey's philosophy that education is a process of engendering and training for reflective thought provides a foundation for subsequent explorations into how education is transformative.

Dewey asserts that education, at its finest, involves the kinds of interactions between teachers and students that engender transformed understandings based in the individuality of the students. TFE supports this kind of development in students by connecting them with mentors who can individualize their learning. TFE also engages students in reflective work that shifts their fundamental assumptions and understandings about themselves and the world around them. Dewey's concerns suggest ways TFE might want to further consider how best to engender, and not undermine the formation of reflective habits.

Over the decades since Dewey wrote about education, adult educators have wrestled with what it means to reconstruct the meaning of experience. Further, they have wrestled with how education enables students to find new ways of constructing meaning from experiences. These new ways, adult educators assert, require fundamental or transformative learning processes.

JACK MEZIRROW AND TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION

Jack Mezirow follows in Dewey's tradition of exploring the terrain of transformative learning based in experience. Mezirow shows that education should focus upon the ways students make meaning from experience. He focuses attention on the way learners use a rather complex matrix of interpretive tools to understand situations. He calls these "frames of reference." Mezirow explains: "adults have acquired a coherent body of experience...frames of reference that define their life world (and) are the structures of assumptions through which we understand our experiences. They selectively shape...perceptions, cognition and feelings. ...When circumstances permit, transformative learners move toward a frame of reference that is more inclusive, discriminating, self-reflective, and integrative of exper-

ience.”⁸ Mezirow asserts that transformative learning “effect(s) change in a frame of reference.”

Mezirow explains how learners develop new ways of seeing themselves and of interpreting situations: “We transform our frames of reference through critical reflection on the assumptions upon which our interpretations, beliefs, and habits of mind or points of view are based. . . .Self-reflection can lead to significant personal transformations.”⁹ Supervisors in field education may need training to learn to recognize patterns students employ to interpret situations. Further, supervisors need support in learning how to work with students to shift their existing patterns of interpretation toward more functional habits of reflection on experience.

Mezirow’s work gives a theoretical basis for understanding the work of supervision. Supervisors might, for example, use a method of case studies to help students reflect. Mezirow’s concept of frames of reference gives a theoretical basis for using this method. Supervisors might use cases to uncover assumptions that guide student perceptions, and then in the discussion of the case, to build a new frame of interpretation of the situation. The method of case study supports the goal of shifting the student’s frame of reference.

CRANTON AND TRANSFORMATIVE PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

Patricia Cranton builds on the way Mezirow’s work lays a foundation for transformative educational theory. In an article co-authored with Kathleen P. King, “Transformative Learning as a Professional Development Goal,” the authors apply Mezirow’s concepts of transformative learning to the professional formation that teachers must go through in a way that demonstrates how TFE might also apply concepts from transformative education theory.¹⁰

Cranton begins by summarizing Mezirow’s transformative education theory: “we make meaning of the world through our experiences.”¹¹ She then illuminates the crucial concept of habits of mind: “we develop habits of mind or a frame of reference for understanding the world, much of which is uncritically assimilated.” This describes the natural process everyone goes through in the course of daily life. Transformative education enables learners to intentionally develop new habits of mind that do not naturally evolve from experience: “transformative learning takes place when (experience and reflection on it) lead us to open up our frame of reference, discard a habit of mind, see alternatives, and thereby act differently in

the world.” Cranton then concludes with a summary of how teachers develop new habits of mind: “When educators are led to examine their practice critically and thereby acquire alternative ways of understanding what they do, transformative learning about teaching takes place.”

Cranton’s purpose is to inform teacher education about the relevance of transformative learning theory. However, much of her writing could be applied directly to the professional formation of ministerial leaders. For example, she writes: “effective professional development (of teachers) brings our habits of mind about teaching into consciousness and allows us to examine critically what we believe and value in our work as educators. The goal is to open up alternatives, introduce new ways of thinking about teaching—a goal that is potentially transformative.” One could substitute “ministerial leaders” for “teachers” in this quote and arrive at a goal shared by many field educators.¹²

Cranton suggests that the way to develop the new habits of mind needed by teachers is to “incorporate activities that foster content process and premise reflection.” This phrase, “premise reflection,” is not currently in wide use within TFE, yet it might prove a useful term to describe the breadth and type of reflection, albeit theological as well, that TFE seeks to engender.¹³

Cranton specifies the distinctions, originally drawn by Mezirow, between content, process, and premise reflection: “Content reflection is the examination of the content or description of a problem.” This she contrasts with process reflection, which “involves checking on the problem-solving strategies we are using.” Finally, she points to premise reflection, which, she states, “is the questioning of the problem itself.”¹⁴

Cranton summarizes the usefulness of transformative learning theory to adult education professional formation: “if we view professional development as an opportunity to cultivate transformative learning it gives us a new perspective on our goals, what we do in our practice, and how we think about our work. ...Rather than teaching and learning as usual, they can begin to look at their habits of mind and work with new questions, insight, and promise.”¹⁵

THE USE OF CONTENT, PROCESS, AND PREMISE REFLECTION BY SUPERVISORS

Supervisors in TFE could benefit from learning theoretical constructs of content, process, and premise reflection in order to clarify their work with students. At

times, for example, a supervisor might want to engage a student in reflecting on the content of a sermon they preached. They might want to explore the basis of a scriptural reference or a theological interpretation made by the student—this would be reflection on content. At other times, they might want to explore with the student how they developed and then delivered the sermon—this would be process reflection. Then, at other times, supervisors might engage students in reflection on the student's fundamental preconceptions of what the sermon can be in the life of the church community, or reflection on the student's discovery of her unique voice. These types of reflection would be premise reflection, which lies at the heart of transformative education.

TFE IS TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION

Using the concepts developed by Mezirow and Cranton, we can describe the ways in which TFE is transformative. As Cranton says, professional education lifts up new questions, so that professionals can develop new habits of mind. This section will explore with some specificity just how certain aspects of TFE can properly be considered as transformative.

TFE is transformative because it calls for students to shift their self-understandings. In order to do so, students must learn how to identify their guiding assumptions and then they must learn how to reflect on their frames of reference. This type of reflection requires a change in self-perception in which students may deepen their self-understanding. The types of experiential learning they are undergoing in TFE, however, often do more than deepen understanding. They require students to move from one type of understanding of their role and purpose to another kind of insight. Students often develop new ways of receiving and processing information about how one does and should function in a given situation.

An illustration may help the reader understand how transformation is a primary educational outcome within TFE. As a part of their field education assignments, students may learn the skill of projection in public speaking. Their mentors may teach them this skill of speaking clearly in a large room. A student who acquires this new skill of projection may not find the skill itself to be transformative. However, the student may undergo a transformative experience when the student preaches effectively, and then notices someone in the back row who is weeping uncontrollably, apparently in response to what the student has said in the sermon.

The student's transformation relates to the fact that the student in such a situation must decide how or even if to react to such a response to their public leadership. Ordinarily, one spends quite a bit of time responding to someone who cries when we speak. However, in a very large and impersonal setting, it may not be wise or even feasible for the student to respond in this way. The student acquires the skills of projecting the voice relatively easily, but the student will need to develop a whole new self-understanding to accommodate the reactions to a newly magnified vocal and communication ability. This example shows that students develop a new sense of self when they must learn how to accommodate the literal and figurative distance between themselves and their hearers.

Students in internships are thrust into a multitude of such jarring experiences. They must do more than employ skills of counseling, preaching, and praying. They need a place to reflect on what is changing inside them as they encounter a whole new quantity, as well as quality, of demands for their interaction and response. They need to reflect on what they have assumed they would and should do in response, and what each new situation evokes from them.

TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING FOR LEADERS: FROM PARTICIPANTS TO DIRECTORS

A few students enter the M.Div. program with established identities as public leaders. A minority of students might have served as lawyers, teachers, or as pastors who already are ordained. However, most students enter the M.Div. program with primarily private identities, because they have mainly been in roles of participants and observers. The shift that will be required of these students, if they are to become public leaders in pastoral or other ministerial roles can be described as moving from participant to director.¹⁶ Students move from responsive acting or reacting toward coordinating and interpreting the actions of others (along with their own).

This shift, from a role of participant or observer to director, requires that students develop new perspectives on action. It is one thing to tend the sails in a large boat, but it is quite another to take responsibility for the direction of the boat. One must learn to notice many more details, how to motivate others, how to check one's own behaviors, and many other new life skills. The level of integration these new skills require is highly complex. Leaders need to know how to coordinate decision-

making processes, which is quite different from being an active participant in a decision-making process that someone else facilitates.

Students move from actor toward director as they encounter the demands that accompany public ministerial leadership. Ministerial leaders learn to take responsibility for public perceptions of their functioning, as well as how to coordinate effective communication processes about those perceptions. In contrast, a person in private life would not necessarily have to wrestle with how the perceptions of others affects their functioning.

Student interns often encounter new ways of relating to others around how they are perceived. For example, an intern student who announces from the pulpit that she endorses a particular political stance might create an impression that church members must agree with that stance in order to continue their membership. The student may or may not have had such an intention. However, once members develop such a perception, it will become quite difficult for that student to interact with persons of opposing views without their becoming defensive. The student may not understand their defensiveness, particularly if she did not intend to communicate that everyone should necessarily agree with her opinions.

What the pastor is communicating when stating her particular political stance is significantly different than if she were to make similar statements as a private person. The pastoral role and the place of the pulpit in the life of a congregation shifts the content of her message. She needs to develop awareness of these complex realities so that she can communicate more effectively. She must develop a new framework to account for the complex ramifications of actions.

Transformative learning theory, with its emphasis on reflecting on frames of reference, gives tools for understanding how students learn to lead through such experiences. TFE students frequently have opportunities to learn in just these types of situations. They say things that are technically identical to things they have said before, but the meaning and responses are quite different. They find themselves confused about what is wrong with the people around them. When the student reflects with the supervisor on their frustration with these types of experiences, the supervisor can recognize an opportunity to draw attention to the student's frames of reference in order to help them develop new interpretive tools. Transformative educational theory helps explain how students understand their newly acquired public roles and the attending implications.

TRANSFORMATIONAL LEARNING IN RELATION TO
DEVELOPING NEW COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Students undergo other types of transformations in their perspectives. Students who enter the M.Div. program often have listening skills that enable them to respond to others. Pastoral care courses sometimes will work to develop more nuanced listening skills through role-playing or other activities. They might learn, for example, how to rephrase content while listening, as well as how to name underlying feelings. They may learn to limit their questioning of others, and how to allow the other person to gradually open up to share more. These are skills of active listening that can be taught within a classroom environment. However, few pastoral care courses have the luxury of time and small class size that would enable students to focus on what happens to their personal identities when they shift to new listening styles.

The TFE student, however, often has opportunities to reflect on the shift in personal identity that can accompany the employment of new communication skills. The student who is used to responding to others, jumping in to solve issues, pointing out problems or giving advice, may develop a new identity when these strategies are replaced by active listening. A student, for example, who listens to a battered spouse without leaping in to solve her problems, may leave the encounter particularly disturbed. He may need assistance in knowing how such a conversation is truly pastoral, and how it is helpful. He may come to know himself in entirely new ways, and he may have to transform his perspectives on abuse, solving problems, and faithful action along the way.

In other words, it is not enough to equip students with new skills, no matter how crucially important those skills may be. This is because employing those skills often provokes deeper shifts in self-understanding, and in how the student perceives the world of faithful action. Students need learning environments hospitable to wrestling with questions, such as: “What good does it do to listen without solving the terrible problems people live with—does this mean I am an ineffective pastor?” Students need to be able to explore why their newly acquired skills place them into existential and faith dilemmas. The frame of reference concept suggests that these students move from a self-understanding based on problem-solving to a new frame based on being present.

TRANSFORMED UNDERSTANDINGS OF LEADERSHIP STANCES

Students undergo a number of types of transformation when they move into public leadership roles. One important shift is to move from problem solving to guiding others as they wrestle with their own problems. Ronald Heifetz names the importance of leading groups through adaptive challenges in his book *Leadership Without Easy Answers*. He names this “mobilizing adaptive work.”¹⁷ Heifetz contrasts adaptive challenges with technical problems—the former have no obvious solutions, and sometimes are not even clearly defined as problems. Technical problems, in contrast, have solutions. Leaders, Heifetz asserts, must learn to “(shift) away from answer-giving authority toward the use of...authority to construct a relationship in which to raise and process tough questions.”¹⁸

Although there are specific leadership skills that leaders employ to mobilize adaptive work, perhaps the most difficult aspect of such leadership is the demanding reality that the leader in such a role is rarely understood or appreciated. At a recent gathering of field educators, Dudley Rose, director of field education and assistant dean for ministry studies at Harvard Divinity School, pointed out that teaching students to lead adaptive work also entails supporting them as they adjust to the difficult realities of receiving what sounds like negative evaluation of their work while they are doing precisely what needs to be done:

One of the things that can happen to students who follow some of Heifetz’s advice about leadership without easy answers is that they are susceptible to the charge that they are failures as leaders...to me one of the interesting questions in training and assessment is the way the usual measures, at least early on in this process, are very difficult to use.¹⁹

It is especially tricky for students to learn the difference between resistance to leadership that does not provide easy answers, and feedback that they actually are taking a problematic approach.

In order for students to make such distinctions between feedback that indicates failure and responses that indicate they are engaging helpfully as leaders, some students need to confront their frame of reference that says their personal value is based in receiving blessing and adulation toward a new basis for self-esteem. Students need learning environments where they can process their disappointments and be confronted if they are not hearing feedback accurately. They need learning environments that go beyond simply reinforcing their impressions and instead help them to develop more nuanced understandings of the many layers through which people communicate how they are processing challenging circum-

stances. Supervisors can be especially helpful in this process because usually they have gone through the same transformation. They have learned to lead without always providing easy answers and without always being affirmed for their leadership style. A supervisor can be crucial in the role of interpreting information that a student is beginning to receive about her leadership stance.

JAMES E. LODER AND TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING

The above examples explore issues of understanding one's role, communication patterns, and orientations toward problem solving as a leader. We must turn to another author, James E. Loder, to identify the ways in which TFE experiences sometimes transform something even more fundamental in students: their souls. Loder speaks of transformation as something fundamental that occurs because of the involvement of God in the educational process: "the convicted person believes that the very nature of one's being is changed by the Convictor through the transforming event."²⁰ Loder goes beyond speaking of transformation in terms of some organized, intentional educational process. Instead, he looks at what he calls "the fourfold knowing event." He addresses four dimensions of being human: "environment (also referred to as 'the lived world'), selfhood, the possibility of not being, and the possibility of new being." Loder explores how, in the transformational knowing event, the self, or "the knower" both is embodied in the world and "at the same time stands outside it."²¹ One makes sense of one's experience by transcending the world, and also by making reference to the possibilities of annihilation (not being) and becoming new.

Loder's language brings spiritually and psychologically-based concepts to the student experience within TFE. We miss the point if we speak only of how students are developing fuller understandings of their roles as leaders, as well as the degree of their influence and responsibility. Loder points to the more complex, more spiritual dimensions of the transformations that many students experience as a result of the existential and leadership dilemmas created when they are immersed in internship situations.

Loder gives language, for example, to the reality that learning experiences, no matter how compelling, are not the only frame of reference for the spiritually-based learner. "Our social, cultural, and natural 'worlds,' of course, have considerable power to reflect back and compose us. Yet they cannot captivate us

altogether.”²² Loder points to the larger, spiritual reality of which TFE students must learn to be aware of as they develop entirely new ways of interpreting their experiences and their own purposes.

Supervisors need theoretical concepts, such as Loder’s, that link faith with other developmental concerns. Supervisors may not be primarily spiritual guides to students, but frequently they will be the first responder when a student’s soul is wounded by interactions with problematic persons, or when the student hurts or offends those whom she seeks to care for. As first responders, supervisors need to understand the spiritual and psychological as well as organizational issues that are imbedded within these types of situations.

These examples show the importance of transformative educational theory in understanding the work of preparing leaders to face what congregations expect or need. Students need to process surprising emotional responses they and others experience as a result of their actions. They need to confront how their own assumptions constrict their abilities to see and hear accurately. Students gradually develop a deep level of appreciation of how they compose their sense of self. In order to develop such an understanding, students need tools for seeing themselves in relationship to God, their own achievements, their environments, their senses of annihilation or nihilism, as well as their hopes for becoming someone new. They need to confront how employing new skills does more than build their competence; it also may shift their identities and develop their souls. They need to move from a self-understanding that is based in individuality toward one that is based in mobilizing the community for faithful actions.

CONCLUSION: MUCH OF WHAT HAPPENS IN SUPERVISORY RELATIONSHIPS ENGENDERS TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING

I have named a number of ways that ministerial leaders must shift the types of orientations they bring from their largely private and individual experiences. These include a shift in leading change and tolerating disappointments in others, a move from being a responder to being an initiator, and a development of a new way of taking responsibility for communication and perception-creation. These are all fundamental transformations for most students. It would not be possible, or advisable, for us to assign supervisory relationships the sole responsibility for these shifts. It may not even be possible for an entire M.Div. degree to mobilize such adaptive

transformations. However, supervised ministry experiences offer some unique ways to support students as they begin to enter into this complicated and extensive arena of personal transformation.

The supervisory relationship establishes an environment that helps support students as they undergo transformation primarily by engaging them in reflection on action. Supervisors have opportunities to engage students in reflection in several ways. Supervisors are experts on the shift from private individual to public leader, they model how to take responsibility for communication processes and how to interpret perceptions. Supervisors also may expertly model how to mobilize for adaptive change (though many mentors probably also model a view of leader as problem solver).

There are several educational tools to help students begin to interpret the confusion that arises in ministry situations. Reflective practica or seminars, for example, give students opportunities to tell their stories to each other. Frequently, another student will point out that the effect of another student's actions carries implications that student simply could not yet see. Similarly, supervisors can guide students to make such discoveries when they meet together to reflect on the week's events.

The reflective practica that are led by supervisors enable students to step out of the immediacy of action for reflection on that action. Students who engage in regular group reflection gain two important types of perspective. First, others may confront them within the group on the limits of their perceptions of a situation, which can expand their perspectives. Secondly, the students begin to function as leaders who are, as Heifetz puts it "on the balcony." Heifetz suggests that leaders must learn how to metaphorically leave the dance, in their minds, to stand on the balcony and survey the entire dance floor.²³ By placing actions into a theoretical realm, the students learn that they can stand outside of action to reflect on it. Leaders who only live within the moment must develop a capacity to shift to a position of examining what is happening with the kind of perspective that comes with waiting awhile to process the new information.

Supervisors and reflective seminar groups use educational processes that support student transformation. To some extent, the entire M.Div. curriculum itself may support such transformation. There are many opportunities within the M.Div. curriculum to develop habits of interpretation. For example, the biblical studies department teaches exegesis. This moves students from instinctual interpretation of scripture to disciplined reflection on scripture. This is the very type of shift that is required in the move from private expression to public communication.

Students undergo a number of the transformations when they are placed in ministerial settings that make new demands on them as leaders. The educational theories of transformation can help supervisors understand their crucial role in supporting these types of developmental journeys. In some cases, supervisors already work in ways that are deeply informed by these educational theories. In other areas, supervisors might benefit from the wisdom of educational theorists in order to build new ways of supporting transformative education.

WHAT SUPERVISED MINISTRY LEARNING EXPERIENCES MIGHT HAVE TO OFFER TO THE GENERAL THEORY OF EDUCATIONAL TRANSFORMATION

Supervision intensely engages students in contextual learning. The balance of work is done in context, with a secondary but important focus on disciplined reflection on experiential learning. It is in this reflective process that students develop awareness and ability to articulate their transforming frames of reference. Thus contextualized learning classrooms and mentoring relationships are rich avenues for building understanding of how adults transform their perspectives while they are engaged in experiential learning. Supervision's next steps might be to capture some of these moments for further reflection by the wider educational community. Supervision can develop categories of how students engage material, work on identity issues, and gain a greater perspective on their growing abilities to lead adaptive work. Through comparing differing student experiences in diverse contexts and in contrasting learning environments, a greater understanding of the transformative learning process may emerge.

NOTES

1. Most students enrolled in TFE programs are in the master of divinity (M.Div.) program, but there is a significant minority of students also enrolled in other master's degrees, such as the master of arts in religious education (M.A.R.E.) Additionally, some students in doctor of philosophy (Ph.D.) programs and doctor of ministry (D.Min.) programs also are required to complete supervised learning experiences.

2. Although most TFE programs structure such reflection to be concurrent with the ministry placement, sometimes they also engage students in reflection following the completion of the ministry assignment. This occurs most often when students are assigned to do full-time

ministry placements during a summer break between semesters, or for some other full-time assignment at some distance from the theological school campus.

3. Most programs now have a weekly on-campus reflective seminar or practicum. These sometimes include reading and writing assignments or some other method to focus students in reflecting together on their ministry experiences.

4. In an article based on a survey of field educators, Donald Beisswenger reports findings about priorities for TFE. He finds that the development of skills is the primary purpose of TFE for just 14 % of the respondents to his survey. The highest priority that field educators list for TFE is integration. Donald F. Beisswenger, "Field Education and the Theological Education Debates," *Theological Education* 33, no. 1 (1996): 49–58.

5. John Dewey, "Education in Relation to Form" in *How We Think* (1933), quoted in *The Essential Dewey: Volume 1 Pragmatism, Education, Democracy*, ed. Larry A. Hickman and Thomas M. Alexander (Indianapolis, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1998), 274.

6. John Dewey, selected from the original in "The Need for a Philosophy of Education," *The New Era in Home and School* (1934), quoted in Reginald D. Archambault, ed., *Dewey on Education* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 7.

7. John Dewey, selected from the original in "School Conditions and the Training of Thought," *How We Think: A Restatement of the Relation of Reflective Thinking to the Educative Process* (1933), quoted in Reginald D. Archambault, ed., *Dewey on Education* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 230.

8. Jack Mezirow, "Transformative Learning: Theory to Practice," *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 74 (Summer 1997): 5–12.

9. Ibid.

10. Patricia Cranton and Kathleen P. King, "Transformative Learning as a Professional Development Goal," *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education* 98 (Summer 2003): 31–38.

11. Ibid., 32.

12. Ibid., 32

13. Ibid., 34.

14. Ibid. Cranton gives specific strategies the development of professionals using transformative processes. My purpose here is not to add to TFE's list of strategies, but to demonstrate that the conceptualization of these various strata of learning, from content reflection to process reflection to premise reflection might serve as useful tools for TFE to critically examine the various strategies already in use, and their purposes. One of Cranton's strategies is the use of case studies, which, she suggests, enable educators to "be guided to recognize the harder questions, to probe unspoken assumptions, and to analyze the consequences of choices and actions. By working in groups to analyze, synthesize, and make recommendations, educators enter a virtual laboratory where they try out new possible responses and enter into dialogue with their partners about meaning, purposes and possibilities." (Ibid., 35).

15. Ibid., 37.

16. I use the term "director" advisedly. I am aware that it carries unfortunate connotations suggesting dictatorial leadership. However, my intent is to convey that students are moving into a role that requires them to oversee, coordinate, and cooperate with others—which may or may not be done with dictatorial flair. Film directors, for example, keep an eye on the total creative production, but must cooperate and respect the essential work of many partners as they do so. Similarly, I intend to connote the type of leadership that coordinates, respects, leads, but does not necessarily do so oppressively.

17. Ronald A. Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1994): 69ff.

18. Ibid., 85.

19. Dudley Rose, from author's transcription of conversation at Field Educators' Consultation in Newport Beach, Calif., March 2004.

20. James E Loder, *The Transforming Moment: Understanding Convictional Experiences* (San Francisco, Calif.: Harper and Row, 1981).

21. Ibid., 66–67.

22. Ibid., 71.

23. Ronald A. Heifetz and Marty Linsky, *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive through the Dangers of Leading* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002): 53.

The Role of Feelings as Messengers in Supervision and Theological Reflection

William M. Kondrath

The thesis of this article is that supervision and theological reflection have primarily been done as intellectual exercises. I am offering a method that also values and promotes emotional competence in the art and science of supervision and theological reflection. The theory behind this method focuses on the role of feelings in supervision and theological reflection. It asserts that feelings carry messages that give us information about how to act ethically toward others and ourselves, and that these messages offer us options for sustaining and deepening relationships.

As a white man, growing up in the western United States, I was taught to value intellect over feelings. Neither of my parents had the benefit of a college education, and they were determined that my brother and I go to college. I was taught to value the intellectual information I was acquiring and the process of thinking. More subtly, I was taught to distrust and devalue emotions, in general, and anger, in particular. Outside the home, these values were reinforced in my Roman Cath-

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olic Church experience, parochial education, and seminary training. I was taught to be suspicious of feelings. When I gradually began to revisit these predispositions or biases, I did not have an articulated theory for valuing and integrating the use of my feelings in both personal and professional ways until I was exposed to the theory of Feelings as Messengers (FAM) in multicultural training and education.

The focus on feelings in supervision and theological reflection for clinical pastoral education (CPE) and field education is not new.¹ Authors are aware of the power of feelings to “carry the questions, values, and wisdom embedded in our narratives” and to evoke images.² Feelings provide energy to a discussion that may be lacking in more detached intellectual analysis. On the other hand, unacknowledged or unprocessed feelings may “get in the way” in an interaction in a pastoral situation or in a supervision setting. Because the supervisor and the student (as well as the parishioner or client) are emotional beings with a wide range of feelings, the exploration of feelings can become very complicated. What I hope to offer here is a window on the exploration of feelings that has been useful to me in anti-racism and multicultural consulting and training. I learned this approach as a consultant for VISIONS Inc.³ Most simply put, this approach holds that our feelings are usually a response to a stimulus and that they carry a message that tells us what we need in a particular situation.⁴ Thus, in addition to providing energy in an interaction and evoking images, feelings provide information or messages that are useful in deciding how to behave in a given situation. Before speaking about the particular messages that feelings provide, it is helpful to step back and set the context for supervision and theological reflection.

Much of supervision and theological reflection focuses on a specific ministry event or situation. Figure 1 is one way of picturing this.

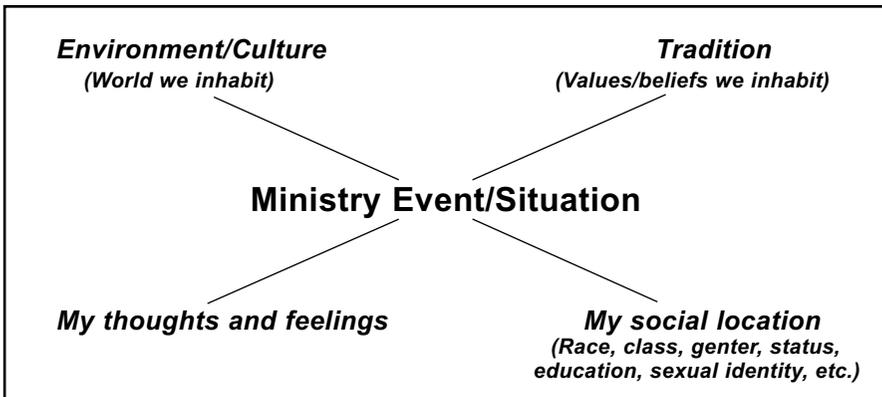
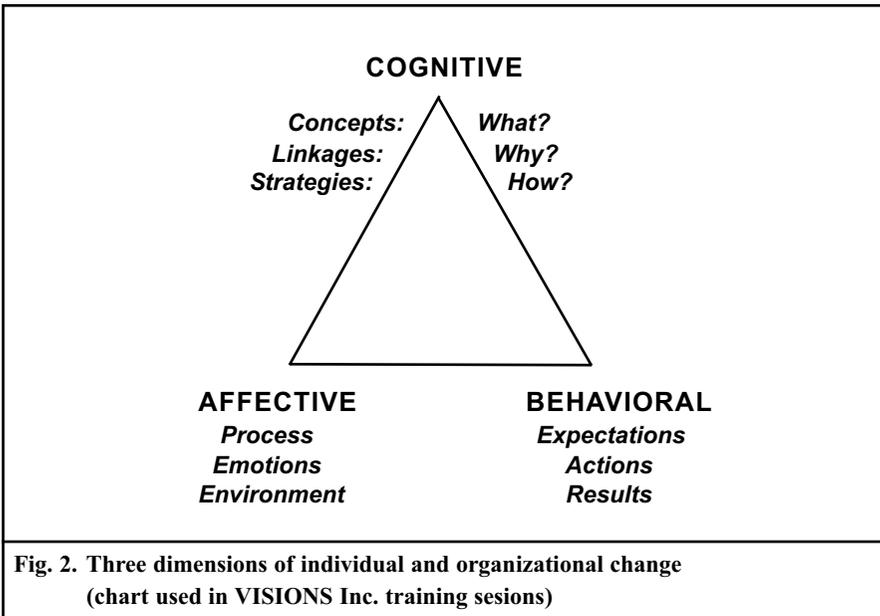


Fig. 1. Locating feelings in supervision and theological reflection

From this figure, one can notice several lenses through which to view the ministry event.⁵ My focus will be on personal level thoughts and feelings as one aspect of supervision and theological reflection.⁶

Another way to understand the place of feelings is to look at the dimensions in which learning takes place. Our interactions and learning happen in at least three different dimensions: cognitive, affective, and behavioral. It follows, then, that for individuals and organizations, change happens in these three dimensions as well. Figure 2 shows a way to imagine those dimensions.



Individuals take in information from all three dimensions. Some of us learn best through concepts, thinking, reading the directions on how to assemble something. Others learn by doing—these folks don't bother with the "Read Me" files or instructions. They immediately install new software and begin to play with it to see how it works. For others, a primary way of learning comes through their emotions. Such people sometimes talk about "having a feel for something" or knowing it intuitively.

EMOTIONAL ILLITERACY

On a cultural level, North American society, heavily shaped by dominant white males, favors the cognitive and behavioral dimensions. Value is placed on “right thinking” (orthodoxy) and right action (orthopraxis). In U.S. culture, less value is placed on the affective dimension. It might even be said that some of us are emotionally illiterate. That is, we do not know or value the range of our emotional capabilities. To some degree, there is also a gender stereotyping that takes place. According to this stereotype, men arrive at decisions by thinking, and women make decisions intuitively or by accessing their feelings.⁷ During the 2004 Democratic National Convention in Boston, commentators said that Teresa Heinz Kerry should have told more personal (read: affective) stories about her husband. She was not supposed to be so “opinionated.” To which she responded that she wished people would speak about women as also being “smart and well-informed.”

FAM invites us all to be more emotionally literate—it invites us to be affectively competent. The theory further proposes that feelings carry messages about what we need to do to take care of ourselves and to be fully present to ourselves and others in any situation (pastoral event and reflection upon that event). The theology that underlies affective competence asserts that feelings are a significant dimension of our beings as God created us and point to the expression of feelings throughout the Scriptures, including the attribution of feelings to God as a way of legitimizing and valuing feelings.⁸

It is important to note here that the use of FAM by an unscrupulous or unskilled supervisor might be dangerous. An unscrupulous supervisor probably would not articulate or follow the guidelines given below. Thus directors of programs should teach FAM theory and the guidelines to students, as well as to supervisors, so that students are empowered to use the theory and are better able to protect themselves against possible misuse or abuse of the theory. I suspect that an unscrupulous supervisor would have ample opportunities to take advantage of a student using other means. The possibility of the misuse of the theory by devious people should not prevent its beneficial use by properly trained, well-intentioned people. Because of the power inherent in their relationships, supervisors, mentors, and trainers should avail themselves of on-going supervision in order to examine their own thinking and feelings in interactions with those whom they supervise.

FAM talks about six primary feeling families: Mad, Sad, Scared, Peaceful, Powerful, and Joyful. There are many cognate feelings within each family. For

example, the Mad family includes rage, anger, irritation, and annoyance. The Powerful family includes capable, competent, and resourceful. (Note that “powerful” does not mean power over or dominance of others.) There is a spectrum for each group.

Generally speaking, for adults, each feeling is a response to a stimulus. Something happens and a feeling arises, which we may or may not attend to. Unlike some theories that stress that feelings “just are,” FAM emphasizes that feelings carry important messages that give us useful information about what we need in a particular situation. When we are in touch with our feelings, when we attend to them, we receive information about a suggested response or behavior. Figure 3 details the six primary feelings or feeling families, along with the common stimulus, message, and suggested response.

FEELING	STIMULUS	MESSAGE	NEED or RESPONSE
POWERFUL	Accomplishment or anticipated success	I am competent	Keep on keeping on!
JOYFUL	Inner gratitude, awe, wonder	I am excited, happy	Keep on keeping on!
PEACEFUL	Deep awareness of connectedness	I am centered	Keep on keeping on!
MAD*	Real or perceived violation	I have been violated	Re-establish boundaries
SAD	Real or anticipated loss	I am experiencing or anticipating loss	Find space and support to grieve and let go
SCARED	Real or perceived danger	I am in danger	Arrange for support and protection

Fig. 3. Feelings as messengers

* The feeling of anger will be dealt with again at the end of the paper. In this chart, the emphasis is on being clear about re-establishing boundaries and getting safe. This is especially true when the stimulus is from someone with whom I have little or no relationship or one who has or is perceived to have significantly more power than I have. In so far as one is able to re-negotiate boundaries within a relationship, anger can be seen as highly relational with the possibility of ultimately bringing one closer to the person with whom one is angry.

Emotional literacy suggests that I am aware of what feeling(s) I am experiencing at any given moment. It means that I am paying attention to the message that the feeling is sending me so that I can choose whether to and how to respond.

SUBSTITUTION OF FEELINGS

One difficulty many of us face is that we were raised to value only certain feelings. We were taught that only certain feelings are legitimate to express. Sometimes this message was implicitly “caught” rather than explicitly taught. In any case, we may substitute one feeling for another, usually without being aware that we are doing that. Such substitution is generally an adaptive behavior that is self-protective when it is learned. That is, in the context in which I first began to substitute “more acceptable” feelings, it probably was not safe or sanctioned to express the natural feeling. The substitution becomes a problem when I unconsciously replace the natural feelings with a substitute when I am no longer in a context that “requires” me to substitute my feelings.

In my family of origin, it was okay to be sad or scared, but was not okay for me to be angry. My father was the only one who had the right to get angry.⁹ This meant that when I experienced a violation of boundaries, I could cry or seek support and comfort, but I could not express anger that someone had come into my space or crossed an emotional boundary. This meant that I had to substitute from the “acceptable” feelings in my family. Thus, at the precise time I needed space or distance, I was giving the message (through an expression of sadness or being scared) that I wanted someone to come closer to comfort or protect me.

Another example of substitution happens when little boys are taught not to cry when they experience a loss. If anger is acceptable, the boy (later, the man) may substitute anger for sadness, thereby giving off the message “stay away,” when what he may really need is to grieve and have support for that—his anger pushes others away precisely when he may want them to draw nearer. The substitution of a “more acceptable” or “more familiar” feeling for the natural one deprives him of getting what he needs, and gives off a signal to others that is confusing or misleading and not congruent with what is taking place.

Emotional literacy may be thought of as a discipline that requires practice. It is a form of self-focus that may feel artificial until one has practiced it for a while.¹⁰ Practicing self-focus about my feelings means slowing down an interaction and taking the time to ask myself what I am actually feeling and what I need before reacting to someone else’s comment. Getting in touch with my most genuine feeling, and its attendant message, may give me more options in a situation and lead to a different quality of interaction. For many white people, and for white men in particular, this sense of artificiality is the result, in part, of cultural conditioning. Until

relatively recently, it has been countercultural for white men to notice, talk about, and act upon feelings, with the exception of anger. Even now, thinking is valued over feeling in most public or work settings. While men are increasingly encouraged to express their feelings in intimate relationships or “home” settings, the same is not as true in the business environment. Ministry settings seem to straddle the line between familial and business codes of behavior.

GUIDELINES FOR INTERACTIONS

Before moving to the application of FAM in supervision and theological reflection, it is important to mention some guidelines. While these guidelines are important for all interactions, intellectual and emotional, it is particularly important to articulate them in settings where the expression of feelings and the messages they convey have been inhibited or undervalued. Furthermore, these guidelines are necessary in order to better safeguard those who have less power in the setting.¹¹ Finally, these guidelines may prevent confusion between therapy and supervision. The use of feelings suggested here is meant to be for mutual learning. The guidelines should always be explicitly stated and agreed to by all parties. Should meetings get particularly tense or the relationship become static or frayed, an explicit return to the guidelines can be most useful. They should definitely be restated if third party intervention is required.

GUIDELINES FOR RECOGNIZING, UNDERSTANDING, AND VALUING DIFFERENCE

Guidelines for interactions within a group greatly affect both our relationships and what we can accomplish (products or goals). Guidelines facilitate deep learning by creating certain boundaries and a certain amount of safety.¹² The guidelines suggested below are also meant to engender a certain amount of mutuality, even as the focus of the learning will most often focus on the student’s agenda. While the guidelines seem deceptively simple, I would suggest that nearly every conflict or abuse that I have experienced between individuals or within groups has stemmed from a violation of one of these guidelines. Expressed positively, I find that, when

I am living these guidelines fully I am acting creatively and compassionately, learning new ways of being and doing.

These guidelines may require a change of mindset or a change of heart (or a metanoia) for some people. Employing the guidelines for some people requires what Ronald Heifetz refers to as an adaptive change.¹³ The guidelines are also interactive; they speak to one another.

Try On. The “Try on” guideline invites us to be creative, to open ourselves to new learning. It invites us to suspend judgment for a moment and look at something from a different perspective. Try on new ideas. Try on new processes. Try on new relationships. “Try on” does not mean that I have to accept the ideas I am being asked to try on. It does mean I am willing to consider or reconsider something from a viewpoint that I have not considered, or perhaps have considered and rejected. This guideline is very important if we want to investigate about our racial, cultural, ethnic, theological, liturgical, or philosophical differences. It allows for differences that arise because of age, gender, sexual identity, status or power (student/teacher; clergy/laity; employer/employee), nationality, and so forth.

Trying on a new perspective or method may be a cumulative process. Some ideas or ways of acting are an “acquired taste.” Two things are important to remember. First, if you don’t try on anything new, you are stuck with the same old ideas and methods, and your learning will be limited. Second, even if you try something new on, you always have the option of going back to what you knew and believed beforehand.

It’s Okay to Disagree. It’s Not Okay to Shame, Blame, or Attack Self or Others. If supervision and theological reflection is not meant to be an imposition of one right way of thinking, feeling, or acting, then we must encourage differences and disagreement. In fact, it may be that in noticing and valuing significant differences in theology or practice that the greatest learning will take place.¹⁴ At the same time, it is very important that we do not shame, blame, or attack one another or ourselves in the process of disagreeing—either verbally or non-verbally. Significant shaming can occur by rolling one’s eyes at another’s comments or repeatedly ignoring someone. Self attacks or self shaming behavior can take the form of “This may be a silly question...” or “You probably won’t agree, but...”

Practice Self-focus. This guideline has two parts. The first has to do with “I” statements—that is, speaking in the first person singular about what one thinks, believes, or feels. Here the point is to avoid generalizations, such as: “People think ...” or “Everyone believes...” Such generalizations limit learning. In addition, when someone tries to convince me of a general theory of life, the universe, and

everything, even if it is mostly true, I don't stay tuned in for very long. Hearing about another person's life story or response is more appealing and awakens my empathy. I do much better listening to an individual's personal experience. On significant issues, I don't expect everyone to be of one mind. What I am most interested in is listening more deeply to why a person believes what she believes.¹⁵ When that person speaks from a place of self-focus, I am interested and stay tuned. I can even lay aside some of my defenses and arguments to listen to someone who is speaking about her own personal experience, beliefs, thoughts, and feelings. For a tactical standpoint, self-focus—speaking “my particular truth”—makes sense if I want to be listened to.

Yet self-focus has another dimension that is often overlooked. It is the key to understanding feelings as messengers. Here, self-focus means listening to oneself and the information from within that is often overlooked. When I am truly self-focused, I am paying attention to the feelings that I am experiencing while someone else is speaking. I am hearing their words and meanings, and I am monitoring my own inner processes. I am aware that what is being said and what is not being said (what is left out of the conversation) is having an impact on me emotionally. I may not even know why or what it is that is causing my feelings. Self-focus means allowing myself to take in the data of my own feeling state in the moment. It is being aware that these are my feelings. Something the other person said or did may have been a stimulus, and these feelings are mine. This sort of self-focus requires practiced discipline. I often “listen with my answer running.” Self-focus involves the discipline of noticing my feelings and asking myself what they may be telling me, before reacting to the content of what the other person has been saying (or not saying).

Practice “Both/And” Thinking. “Both/and” thinking is also a discipline, and it is part of a mind set. Generally speaking, Western thinking is “either/or,” “right or wrong,” “good or bad,” “win or lose.” Underlying either/or thinking is an attitude, unusually unconscious and unarticulated, that I am superior to the person with a differing position or that the other person is inferior.¹⁶ We may not even notice how deeply either/or thinking is engrained in our way of living because it is part of our worldview. We are like fish swimming in the water and not noticing the water around us. Not all worldviews approach life in the same way. To the extent that I enjoy or am accustomed to either/or thinking, I can try on both/and thinking. My own experience is that both/and thinking may feel artificial at first, and I may even feel that I am giving up the strength and security of some deeply ingrained beliefs. The both/and worldview assumes that there are a number of opinions and

beliefs that can co-exist without canceling one another out.¹⁷ It applies to complex interactions and robust situations. It is also a practical way of practicing valuing the difference inherent in another's point of view. Concretely, it often means substituting the word "and" for the words "but" or "however" in a sentence. This substitution is even more important when stating your opinion after someone has stated an opinion with which you disagree. Your "and" will let the other person know that they have been heard and respected, and what you are saying does not cancel out what they have said. Stating strong differences with both/and language prevents both supervisor and student from slipping into defensive postures or predetermined solutions. It acknowledges the complexity of a situation and invites both parties to investigate why it is that they see the situation differently.¹⁸

Be Aware of Intent and Impact. Intent has to do with my intention or motive in doing or saying something. Impact has to do with the impact, effect, or consequence my speech or action has on another person or persons. It sometimes happens that I make comments that I do not intend to be racist, sexist, or heterosexist and another person is deeply impacted by my comment.¹⁹ The person who feels offended may then accuse me of inappropriate behavior and may even say that they feel the remark was racist, sexist, and so forth. The conversation quickly escalates and both of us become defensive.

Perhaps I notice that the student has become very quiet in response to a comment I have made or becomes defensive. In such a case, rather than denying the impact on the student by saying that I did not intend to treat her as inferior, I can acknowledge the impact and even apologize for the impact of the comment. It might be easier then to examine the content of what was being said and what truth there might be in the comment. Here curiosity rather than judgment is the key. One way to do this is to ask: "Is there any truth in what I have said?"

On the other hand, as a supervisor, I may feel offended; perhaps a student's comment about how I conducted a meeting feels like an accusation of clericalism. One way of slowing things down is to use self-focus—to notice what my feeling is (for example, mad, sad, or scared) and to articulate the impact upon me. The student may or may not have intended the comment as an offense or accusation. I can model an openness to learning by naming my feeling(s) and being open to examining the content of what was said.

Confidentiality. Confidentiality is important in one-to-one interactions, learning groups and organizations—it has to do with boundaries and safety. On a more personal level, I may choose to take certain risks by exposing my assumptions or personal theology in supervision because I have a sense that what I am

saying will not be made public. Most simply put, this means that both the supervisor and the student agree not to tell one another's personal stories.

A difficulty arises in that the supervisor and student write evaluations that do become public documents. It is important that these documents speak the truth in a loving way, both for the continued learning of all involved and so that decisions can be made about the appropriateness of the student serving in a professional capacity. As a protection for all parties, supervisor and student should formally discuss the type of material that will and will not appear in evaluations, and both should sign all documents.²⁰

APPLICATIONS OF FAM THEORY

On the primary level—that is, for the student in the pastoral situation—applying FAM theory means asking oneself:

- What am I feeling in this situation?
- Is this my natural feeling or a learned substitute?
- What is the message for me in this feeling? What is this feeling telling me I need?
- How do I choose to respond?

These questions can also be asked about a parishioner, patient, or client in a pastoral care situation. A fair amount of skill is required to do this, especially because most of us (caregivers and receivers) have learned various substitution patterns. Note that applying FAM is more than simply asking the person what they are feeling and “staying with the person on an emotional level” as distinguished from “staying in one's head.” In FAM, there is a belief that a person's feelings give a message about what is needed, even if he cannot always acquire what is needed in the immediate situation. Additionally, there is a better chance of receiving what one needs if one knows what that is. Even knowing this theory, the first priority for the student in CPE or field education is to focus on being emotionally literate about her own feelings. This will prevent her from projecting her feelings onto others and to help her know what she needs in a particular situation. For instance, if a student is scared and knows that she can get support or protection, she is less likely to project her fear upon a parishioner or patient. If the student is sad, he can identify the loss and begin or continue to grieve. In either case, the student's pastoral ministry

will likely be more effective, and the student will be practicing good self-care, which can be a positive model for the parishioner or patient.

Returning to the supervisory situation, both the supervisor and the student have the opportunity of becoming more emotionally competent through self-focus and practicing FAM. In this case, it is best if both the student and supervisor explicitly review the theory. Here the supervisor practices self-care and avoids projection by noticing her own feelings and the messages associated with those feelings. Those feelings can then be brought to a supervisors' case-study group for reflection,²¹ or, if appropriate, they may be the material for counseling or therapy. When supervising, the principal focus should be on the student's presentation of a specific ministry event. FAM allows the supervisor to both empathize with the student's feeling and to ask about the stimulus, message, needs, and possible responses associated with the feeling. The feeling, here, may refer to a "reported feeling" that occurred during the pastoral situation or a feeling that is occurring during the actual supervision session. Frequently, there are parallels between the ministry situation and the supervisory session.

In addition, the supervisor and student can inquire whether there is a substitution of feelings taking place. This allows the student to examine unconscious patterns or habits and to make decisions about new behaviors.

SCRIPTURE AND FEELINGS

An important aspect of theological reflection is the use of Scripture to explore the ministry event. Here the goal is not to find a solution to a pastoral problem or execute some other form of proof-texting. Rather the student and supervisor try to recall passages of Scripture, generally stories, that may open up the ministerial event in rich and profound ways. The Scripture may support or challenge one's behavior in the situation, or merely offer alternatives not previously considered. The ability to refer to an analogous story from Scripture allows us as members of a modern community of faith to be in conversation with a treasured historical community of faith. The underlying theological belief is that the same God who spoke to our ancestors may have something to say to us who listen to a particular Scripture story that has meaning to us in the present.

For example, we might explore the story of Jesus and the money changers in the temple in terms of the violation that Jesus experienced, his anger, and his at-

tempt to re-establish boundaries.²² Similarly, one might delve into the story of Mary and Martha and ask about the violation Martha experienced that led her to complain, “Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself?”²³ Notice that such an inquiry does not assume that the perceived violation is either intended or grievous. In fact, one can even inquire whether Mary is substituting anger for sadness. Perhaps she is really sad that she has not “chosen the better part.”²⁴ The passage from the sixth chapter of Acts about the neglected Greek widows also suggests a violation. Or one might look at Jesus’ sadness at the death of Lazarus or his prediction of Peter’s denial. Similarly, a particular pastoral situation might evoke the story of Ruth and Naomi and an inquiry into what loss has occurred and what possible responses to the sadness might be available. The stories of Jesus in the garden (“Let this cup pass from me” and “So, could you not stay awake with me one hour?”)²⁵ and of Mary’s visit to Elizabeth may speak to fear (scared) and support. The story of Job offers a wide range of encounters with deep emotions.

One of my favorite stories is the one about Bartimaeus. Here the apostles project their fear onto Bartimaeus, saying, “Take heart,”—in effect, asking him to not be afraid.²⁶ Is there a less scared person in the Scriptures than Bartimaeus? After all, he is shouting, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.”²⁷ This story may be an example of the feeling of being powerful. The woman who engages Jesus at the well also exemplifies the feeling of being powerful. The father of the prodigal son is joyful. Stories of Jesus, his mother, and Paul contain examples of being peaceful even in stressful situations. The point is not to have a list of passages to apply to the ministerial situation under consideration. Instead, supervisor and student allow themselves to freely associate and then examine the biblical passages that occur to them using what they know about feelings as messengers as one way of breaking open the ministerial situation. In the end, the discussion returns to the ministerial situation, and one can ask: “What might God be saying to me in this situation if I attend to my feelings and the messages they contain?”²⁸

FEELINGS AND RELATIONSHIP

Finally it is important to acknowledge the role of feelings in relationships. Feelings, including anger, are modes of connection. This is powerfully conveyed by Beverly Wildung Harrison in her article, “The Power of Anger in the Work of Love: Christian Ethics for Women and Other Strangers.” Harrison writes:

Anger is not the opposite of love. It is better understood as a feeling-signal that all is not well in our relation to other persons or groups or to the world around us. Anger is a mode of connectedness to others and it is always a vivid form of caring. To put the point another way: anger is—and it always is—a sign of some resistance in ourselves to the moral quality of the social relations in which we are immersed. Extreme and intense anger signals a deep reaction to the action upon us or toward others to whom we are related. ...Such anger is a signal that change is called for, that transformation in relation is required.²⁹

Harrison goes on to discuss what happens when anger is denied. She explains the substitution of boredom or moralistic self-righteousness for anger, which destroys relationship:

We need to recognize that where the evasion of feeling is widespread, anger does not go away or disappear. Rather, in interpersonal life it masks itself as boredom, ennui, low energy, or it expresses itself in passive-aggressive activity or in moralistic self-righteousness and blaming. Anger denied subverts community. Anger expressed directly is a mode of taking the other seriously, of caring. The important point is that where feeling is evaded, where anger is hidden or goes unattended, masking itself, there the power of love, the power to act, to deepen relation, atrophies and dies.³⁰

SUMMARY

North American culture often teaches us that thoughts and feelings are dichotomous. The theory of Feelings as Messengers allows one to think about feelings, to attend to the energy present when one's feelings are engaged and acknowledged. It also invites inquiry into the message implicit in the experienced feelings that gives data about what is needed and what possible responses might be helpful. As applied to others, it goes beyond responding empathetically and moves toward understanding patterns of behavior and new options once those patterns are seen. The theory posits a close connection among the cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions of learning and living. It offers a way to become more emotionally competent in exercising self-care and pastoral ministry. Finally, it is more than a technology for pastoral and theological reflection. Embedded in the messages of feelings is the possibility of sustaining and deepening relationships. The messages tell us what we need to know to respond ethically toward others and ourselves.

NOTES

1. Evelyn Whitehead and James Whitehead, *Method in Ministry: Theological Reflection and Christian Ministry* (New York: Seabury, 1980), 83; George I. Hunter, *Supervision and Education—Formation in Ministry* (Cambridge, 1982), 89; Doran McCarty, *Supervising Theological Students* (Atlanta: Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1992), 70; William T. Pyle and Mary Alice Seals, eds., *Experiencing Ministry Supervision: A Field-Based Approach* (Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1995). See especially Patricia O’Connell Killen and John De Beer, *The Art of Theological Reflection* (New York: Crossroads, 1995), 20–35, for the most extensive treatment.

2. Killen and De Beer, *Art of Theological Reflection*, 30.

3. VISIONS is an acronym for Vigorous InterventionS In Ongoing Natural Settings. This organization has been conducting anti-racism and multicultural training and consulting for twenty years both in the United States and internationally. More information is available at <www.visions-inc.com>.

4. Killen and deBeer acknowledge that feelings “are our embodied affective and intelligent responses to reality as we encounter it” (*Art of Theological Reflection*, 27) and that a “feeling response to a situation is potent with meaning, even when we are not able immediately to state it.” The VISIONS model of FAM goes a step further in ascribing specific content to the messages contained in feeling groups and the response that is suggested. For Killen and deBeer, feelings are primarily an intermediary step toward images on the road to insight.

5. A revision of Whitehead and Whitehead, *Method in Ministry*, 14.

6. There are four levels of analysis, intervention, and change. The personal level focuses on an individual’s thoughts, feelings, personal values, and beliefs. The interpersonal level looks at conscious and unconscious behaviors. Here it is often important to acknowledge the difference between our intention and the impact the behavior has on others. The institutional or systemic level looks at organizational laws, customs, practices, and procedures (formal and informal). The cultural level focuses on what is handed from one generation to another and particularly on what is judged to be “good, true, and beautiful” and who gets to decide that.

7. See Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982); Mary Belenky, Blythe McVicker Clinchy, Nancy Rule Goldberger, and Jill Mattuck Tarule, *Women’s Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice and Mind* (New York: Basic Books, 1986); and Judith Jordan, Alexandra Kaplan, Jean Miller, Irene Stiver, and Janet Surrey, *Women’s Growth in Connection* (New York: Guilford, 1991), which all speak of women’s decision-making from a relational viewpoint, as distinguished from a solely emotional viewpoint.

8. One might also note that many cultures, including Middle Eastern cultures, do not separate intellect and emotions in the way most Western cultures do.

9. Anger as the legitimate white male emotion is reserved for white men. Here anger is about power (not relationship). That's why a white boy isn't yet allowed to feel or express it. When he becomes a man, it will become his right—and of course his trap—since it may be the only emotion he is allowed to express. This dynamic is part of a “both/and” regarding anger. The relational dynamic is treated at the end of the paper.

10. Self-focus generally refers to speaking in the first person singular when making statements of insight or belief. It is a way of avoiding generalizations such as “people think” or “as everyone knows.”

11. Supervisors have the power to evaluate a student's performance, possibly affecting their grade or ordination status. They also have the power to determine what activities a student may participate in and how frequently.

12. Safety means different things to different people and varies with the context.

13. Ronald A. Heifetz, *Leadership without Easy Answers* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belnap Press of Harvard University Press, 1994) and Ronald A. Heifetz and Marty Linsky, *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive through the Dangers of Leading* (Boston, Mass.: Harvard Business School Press, 2002), 9–20, 51–74.

14. Underlying this guideline is a theological belief that God created and values diversity in gender, race, ethnicity, and so forth. The guideline merely points to the ethical imperative to recognize, understand, and celebrate what is part of the created or natural order.

15. As a trainer or consultant, I find that when I am genuinely curious about another person's reasoning, I am more likely to avoid the trap of triggering defensiveness. So I sometimes ask how a person came to think or believe the way they do. If I can elicit a story from a self-focused point of view, I generally learn a great deal about the person, and they, too, often learn why it is that they think what they do and may then see options for thinking or behaving differently.

16. This is where mutuality enters the guidelines, in contrast to domination by the person with more positional power.

17. Neils Bohr said: “The opposite of a correct statement is a false statement. But the opposite of a profound truth may well be another profound truth.” See also David W. Augsburger,

Conflict Mediation Across Cultures: Pathways and Patterns (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 52, for a comparison of both/and and either/or conflict.

18. It helps enormously if the culture of the organization is changing because all the parties have been introduced to the guidelines. It is hard to implement both/and thinking, if one party insists on maintaining an attitude of superiority and the “right to be right” with attendant shame and blame and win/lose.

19. Often racism, sexism, and other forms of personal level prejudice are outside my conscious awareness and unintended. Underlying these tense interactions, there is an unconscious attitude of power or privilege, an unconscious learned sense of superiority, which I generally do not intend to manifest. As a speaker, it is important for me to notice the impact that I am having and then inquire of myself what is going on for me when my behaviors have unintended consequences. The theory-in-action analysis of Chris Argyris and Donald Schön, *Theory in Action: Increasing Professional Effectiveness* (San Francisco, Calif.: Jossey-Bass, 1974), focuses on learning from the unintended consequences of one’s actions.

20. Issues of confidentiality, especially regarding those who are intending to be ordained or certified are very complicated and deserve a more complete treatment. For the sake of learning the FAM theory, it is important to note that there will be a greater likelihood of learning when the issue of confidentiality is thoroughly discussed and agreed upon.

21. Though I have been practicing this theory for about nine years, I attend a monthly day-long supervision group with two professional consultants to hone my own learning, to see how it is that I am blocking my own learning, and to seek ways to further the learning of the field education supervisors who attend the groups I facilitate.

22. Cf. especially: John 2:12–25 and Mark 11:15–19. NRSV.

23. Luke 10:40b.

24. Luke 10:42.

25. Matt. 26:39, 40.

26. Mark 10:49b.

27. Mark 10:47.

28. Certainly, there are other ways in which God might be speaking. One might get at these by looking at the institutional or cultural levels and asking, for instance, who is benefiting in this situation? Who is left out?

29. Carol S. Robb, ed., *Making Connections: Essays in Feminism and Social Ethics* (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 1985), 14–15. It is an expansion of Harrison's inaugural lecture as professor of Christian ethics at Union Theological Seminary in New York.

30. *Ibid.*, 15. See also two extensive treatments of anger: Carol Tavris, *Anger: The Misunderstood Emotion* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982), which deals with the social perspective of anger, and from a more religious perspective, and Garret Keizer, *The Enigma of Anger: Essays on a Sometimes Deadly Sin* (San Francisco, Calif.: Jossey-Bass, 2002). See also Augsburg, *Conflict Mediation Across Cultures*, 113–142, for a discussion of cultural differences and the social construction of anger.

Schön, Heifetz, and Girard: A Theory of Human Interaction and Its Implications for Theological Field Education Students and Their Supervision

Dudley Rose

Donald Schön, Ronald Heifetz, Heifetz with Martin Linsky, and René Girard with others have each in their own way addressed the complex web of human attitudes, values, and behaviors that develops as communities seek to relieve stress and find stasis or equilibrium.¹ Beginning from the insights of these three authors, this paper will attempt to formulate one understanding of why religious communities may experience conflict. It will then reflect on some of the consequent implications for leadership within these communities. It will further attempt to assess the significance of these implications for ministry preparation and ministry supervision.

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PERCEIVED HIERARCHY OF EDUCATION AND PRACTICE

Donald Schön opens *Educating the Reflective Practitioner* with the following paragraph:

In the varied topography of professional practice, there is a high, hard ground overlooking a swamp. On the high ground, manageable problems lend themselves to solution through the application of research-based theory and technique. In the swampy lowland, messy, confusing problems defy technical solution. The irony of the situation is that the problems of the high ground tend to be relatively unimportant to individuals or society at large, however great their technical interest may be, while in the swamp lie the problems of greatest human concern. The practitioner must choose. Shall he remain on the high ground where he can solve relatively unimportant problems according to prevailing standards of rigor, or shall he descend into the swamp of important problems and nonrigorous inquiry?²

In beginning with these words, Donald Schön characterizes the divide between theory and practice with striking and value-laden metaphors. It is the divide between the “high hard ground” and the soft, indeterminate, odiferous swamp. It is the divide between scientific precision and muddy inexactness. It is the age-old divide between theory and practice. Most provocative, Schön claims that the accepted perception of the dichotomy is the divide between rigor and relevance. Thus stated, the division is imagined to be not so much about the ground as those who populate and study it. Within the rigor-relevance dichotomy resides the implicit assumption that if truly intelligent people engaged in rigorous inquiry of the swamp, it would submit to their theories as surely as do the problems of the high, hard ground. This reasoning suggests that the major reason the swamp remains confusing is simply that the really smart people prefer not to get their hands dirty and leave the work there to those of lesser skill.

Schön goes on to point out that this description, framed as it is, is the result of confusion about reality. The idea that the world of practice is a lower form of inquiry is ground deeply into the bricks of the research university and shared by many practitioners too. Schön, however, says the idea has a fundamental flaw, for it holds that practitioners solve problems simply by applying theory derived from systematic, scientific knowledge. They learn a set of scientific principles and apply them in practice. Since good theories adequately (rigorously) applied by definition yield clear solutions, any murkiness or lack of solutions is laid to insufficient rigor in learning or applying the theories, or to learning topics inappropriate to the task.

The theological educator sounds one of these indictments. Educators may say that ministers, who by the way weren't doctoral material, didn't learn well enough what the school taught them. The minister puts forth the other indictment. Ministers may say that the school didn't teach me the right kind of courses. A member of my own ordaining board epitomized this view when he announced after my expenditure of three years and uncounted thousands of dollars, "Now you'll have to learn what you need to know to do ministry. They didn't teach you that in seminary." Embedded in both of these perspectives is a noteworthy hierarchy: Pure disciplines > practical disciplines > everyday practice.³ By this view, then, the solution to problems in the messy swamp of "real" practice is good theories, especially those derived from the pure sciences and applied by rigorous practitioners. One side blames the practitioner for not having learned well enough; the other side blames the schools for not having taught the right things, but they agree that it is supposed to work. On the field of this uneasy agreement about how education and practice are supposed to work together, educators, ministers, and judicatories fight innumerable skirmishes over curricula.

ARTISTIC PRACTICE: AN INTEGRATIVE EPISTEMOLOGY

Another view, less confused, argues Schön, notes that no problem is so straightforward in its solution, and no theory so facile in its application. Swamps are not a lower level of inquiry, nor are their inhabitants less rigorous thinkers. The attributes of the swamp point to the need for a more complex epistemology that accounts for the complexity and dynamism required in problem solving. Schön recognizes that while one aspect of practice is the application of learned theory, he concludes this aspect is extremely limited in what it can do. He argues for a more integrative epistemology of learning by doing, which leads to a form of practice he calls artistry.

The practitioner of this artistry exhibits a special kind of knowledge, knowing-in-action. This knowing-in-action and the actions that follow from it may look superficially like the linear application of theory to a given situation—and learned theory is important, to be sure. It is, after all, this knowledge that distinguishes the professional, which makes her a doctor or lawyer. To be a doctor or a lawyer, one must command a large body of information in medicine or law, a body of information which the professional quite rightly expects to call upon in her

practice. However, it is too large a jump to conclude that the good doctor or lawyer is simply a good technician at work, a good applier of what she has learned.

A closer look suggests something else. There is something more complex. There may be cases of routine application. More often, though, there is a dynamic process going on within the situation in which adjustments and combinations are made using the previously learned information and information gleaned from what is occurring in the moment of practice—neither a process nor information accounted for in the learned theories. Frequently, something dramatic happens. An unexpected result, a surprise, shows up, and through a process of reflection-in-action it is integrated into the thinking, and a whole new set of rules emerges. Schön says, “In such cases, the practitioner experiences a surprise that leads her to rethink her knowing-in-action in ways that go beyond available rules, facts, theories, and operations.”⁴

Once we see this reflective conversation as integral to practice and to learning, and not as a distasteful diversion into the swamp, it is easy to understand why the rigor or relevance dilemma is a false dichotomy. Reflective practice is rigorous even if it happens in what has been regarded as the swamp. Furthermore, an epistemology based in academic research that fails to account for knowledge arising from experience or practice quite simply is inadequate, misleading, and simplistic, even if it has a higher status in the research university.

In addition, this reflective practice and adjustment process that takes place in stride illuminates the fact that worlds (theories) are not objective, but that we are makers of them. Again Schön, “When practitioners respond to the indeterminate zones of practice by holding reflective conversation with the materials of their situations, they remake a part of their practice world and thereby reveal the usually tacit processes of world making that underlie all their practice.”⁵ Here we have an engineer with a pretty good grasp of an important theological point!

Seeing ourselves as “world makers” is at once an empowering and a humbling realization.

Of the curricula of theological education, then, there are two concerns. What relationship does the content, the taught theories, in the courses have to practice? At any given school the range can be from a lot to nothing, but the other question is even more interesting. How does the curriculum account for and value this new form of knowledge, this new knowing-in-action that is generated through reflection-in-action undertaken in the indeterminate zones of practice, the swamp? In truth, this dynamic process should inform the practice of scholarship as much as it informs the practice of ministry.

Field education plays a significant role in this dynamic conversation between world making and practice. To play its role effectively, it must overcome the limitations and biases of what I have called the research university understanding of education. First, some would see field education as a lesser form of education, a trek into the swamp relegated to those incapable of higher forms of inquiry. Second, and conversely, others would see field education as a traverse into the real world, in which one leaves behind or temporarily escapes from the unreal world of the ivory tower. Such reverse denigration also bifurcates the essential unity of experience and theory making just as surely as the deprecation of practice does. Better intentioned, some would see field education as the opportunity to put into practice the things one has learned in the classroom. None of these descriptions is adequate.

Perhaps the ultimate goal can be illustrated by the practice of another profession. In an emergency room, a patient and doctor meet. The patient has come to the hospital for medical relief of a presenting problem or illness. The doctor's role is to diagnose and address the patient's needs. One way, a very common one, to understand this situation is as follows: The doctor examines the patient and gathers as much data as possible about the symptoms of distress. The doctor then processes these data through his mental computer, which contains all the information the doctor has learned in medical school, in journals, and elsewhere. Thereby, the doctor computes a diagnosis and treats the patient. According to this view of the situation, the adequacy of the doctor's determinations and treatments is entirely dependent on the adequacy of the doctor's education and the efficacy with which the doctor incorporated that education. Another view allows for greater nuance. To be sure, the doctor's knowledge is essential, but if the doctor is a true artist of his profession, another important dimension will be at play as well. The doctor will notice new information, information that, perhaps, conflicts with the established theories of diagnosis, or information that adds different possibilities. For this artist/practitioner, this moment of medical practice is more plastic and contains more nuances than it does for the one who simply grinds data through the mental database. Such artists are the ones who make new discoveries, and they are the ones who are recognized even among their peers as the top doctors—practitioners who have something “special” about them.

Field education provides the opportunity to develop the art of reflective practice, the art of knowing-in-action that makes artist/ministers. That is, field education, by placing the practice of ministry within an educational matrix and then suggesting that the educational matrix is a permanent fixture of professional practice,

seeks to develop practitioners of ministry who will understand every moment of ministry as a moment when their understanding of ministry will change, sometimes in small ways, occasionally in very large ones. Such an understanding of ministerial practice wedds forever the practice and the learning of ministry and makes artist/ministers in whose hands the clay remains pliable.

The practice of ministry, or any other profession, as an art form is an inspiring and inspired thing. However, this learning by doing, learning to reflect on what one is doing, and learning while being willing to find something new in every moment—all with an eye to becoming what Schön calls a reflective practitioner who grows competent in practicing and developing new knowledge in the swamp—is hard. It asks students and practitioners to be in a constant state of doing what, by definition, they don't yet have enough information to do. Especially for students, who have been trained to believe that proper education provides them all the necessary information, this state of never knowing enough is irritating and infuriating. It helps explain why Heifetz' notion of adaptive work is so important—simply because it is inevitably prevalent—and why it meets such resistance. We have arrived at an epistemology that recognizes an inherently fluid and evolving reality, that puts knowledge in motion, and that requires learning that not only accepts this dynamism, but is also willing to engage it as a primary source of information.

To be an educator, leader, supervisor, and, ultimately, a practitioner is to understand and deflect the accusations born of the disaffection such a learning scheme creates, to engage the moments of practice as they arise, and to learn what we need from them. For, if Schön is right, all legitimate practice will take the form of this reflective motif in which we must become accustomed to facing new and confusing information and forging new approaches literally in every moment. It is what Ronald Heifetz means by adaptive work.

Before we turn to Heifetz, it may be well to say a bit more of the impact of this theory of epistemology on theories of supervision. Often students turn to supervisors for answers, or at least for some assurance that there are answers. However, if we believe Schön, the more appropriate role for the supervisor may be to coach and otherwise help the student engage the process of learning and knowing-in-action in ministry. Very often supervisors who take this approach are met with the student's frustration and not infrequently with the charge that the supervisor is not giving the student adequate training for the task at hand. While the charge is correct, the supervisor must help the student to realize that it is the expectation—not the supervisor's competency—that must change. As we will see, there are a number of reasons why this is a challenging moment for supervisors as well as for students.

LEADERSHIP THAT ENCOURAGES ADAPTIVE WORK

We have now laid an epistemological framework for Heifetz' leadership theory. In Schön's work, we begin to see the role that resistance to change will play in leadership. Nonetheless, we may be unprepared for the depth of that resistance that Heifetz recognizes. A brief sketch of his work is in order.

Heifetz says that people generally expect leaders to fix problems. However, from Schön, we can describe many problems as situations in which there is not enough information available to immediately solve the problem, and in which ultimately the solution may require not only additional information discovered in reflection and knowing-in-action, but also may require changed theories (the doctor in the emergency room) or acceptance of new and different realities. In short, Heifetz believes that people most often look to leaders to restore, unchanged, a perceived equilibrium. Like the doctor whose patient expects a pill to cure the illness, the leader is expected to cure the problem by restoring things to "normal."

In most cases, the leader is placed in a double bind. There is no solution that will restore things to normal. So if the leader tries to accommodate the expectations, failure is guaranteed. However, since a real solution requires disequilibrium and change, both of which are experienced as a failure to solve the problem, the leader is again guaranteed to fail.

Heifetz' most significant contributions beyond identifying this problematic dynamic are in demonstrating just how intractable and vicious the dynamic may become—recognizing that it is the people involved, not the leader, who must ultimately solve the problems, and identifying practical strategies for the leader to help the people engage in the adaptive work required to solve their problems. In the end, his notion of leadership is among the most empowering available; at the same time, it gives real and significant responsibilities to the leader. It is beyond the scope of this brief paper to give a full account of Heifetz' insights in these areas, but a bulleted outline will perhaps give a clear enough picture. The picture will be familiar to many who have been in leadership positions, not the least in the church.

- We tend to look for leaders who will make hard and complex problems simple.
- We want things fixed (equilibrium).
- We want the leader to do the work.
- The problem is, only a few problems respond to this approach.
- Most problems require everyone's work and change (adaptation).

- People resist adaptation because of the distress that the changes require.
- They resist the pain, the anxiety, and the conflict.
- They hold onto past assumptions, blame authority, scapegoat, externalize the enemy, deny the problem, jump to conclusions, and find distracting issues.
- These are work avoidance mechanisms.
- Solutions that quickly lower the threat, make people feel good, or jump to another problem are rarely adaptive.
- Stress leads to inappropriate strategies, such as
 - Focus on distracting issues more easily addressed to make people feel good,
 - Scapegoat and fire the authorities we expected to solve things.
- This set of moves is extremely problematic because
 - The avoidance often occurs right at the point of our biggest problems, which need our work, and
 - It disables our personal and collective resources for doing adaptive work.
- Leadership is dangerous work.
- Severe distress can make people cruel.
- Empathy, compassion, and flexibility of mind are often sacrificed to the desperate desire for order.
- Leaders are always failing somebody.
- Leaders and authority figures get attacked, dismissed, and even assassinated because they come to represent loss, real or perceived.
- Identify the real challenges and opportunities for adaptive work.
- Keep the stress tolerable.
- Focus attention on ripening issues, not stress reducing distractions.
- Get to the balcony for perspective.
- Give the work back to the people, but at a rate they can stand.
- Protect the voices of leadership that don't have the protection of authority.

Heifetz' theories provide many fruitful insights for ministry practice and education. They help the minister understand the inevitable trap of attempting to lead by pleasing or by attempting to give the people what they want. In most cases the

minister will fail, simply because the goal is impossible. More important the pleasing minister will continue to give legs to inappropriate expectations of leadership and problem solving, will actually disempower the people, and will fail to develop resources for the community to appropriately (adaptively) meet its challenges.

Heifetz' theories undermine the false belief, to which churches and ministers may be especially vulnerable, that healthy communities are communities that are without conflict. His theories prepare aspiring ministers for the possibility of vicious personal attacks, but also for recognizing that those attacks are usually distractions and rarely about the real issues at hand. His theories also help prepare ministers for the paradox that ministerial leadership requires that they become skilled artisans of Schön's reflective practice, that they accept responsibility for guiding the community's processes, and that all the while they hand off the adaptive work to the community members. That is, Heifetz theories eschew both the notion of the charismatic, visionary minister who does it all and the notion of the *laissez-faire* minister who claims no authority or responsibility, and describes ministry only in terms of "walking with." Not to put too fine a point on it, Heifetz' theories call for ministers who have the extraordinary maturity and ego strength to take appropriate responsibility, to accept and even encourage conflict, to often suffer rejection, and finally to give full credit for success to the people.

This section should not close without one final observation, actually a caution: Heifetz' notion of leadership requires enormous honesty and self-awareness on the part of the minister. When a leadership theory encourages the need for conflict, which often results in rejection of and attacks on the minister, it is all too convenient for the minister to find certain pleasure that the theory requires making people discomfited. The old idea of afflicting the comfortable is often arrogance masquerading as prophetic leadership. The only appropriate motivation for the leadership we are describing is the loving desire that the community and its individuals do the adaptive work required to reach wholeness. There is no room for vengeance or for gladness at the pain the process inevitably contains.

Much of the importance of Heifetz' work for field education is obvious in the above paragraphs. Stated broadly, students in field education normally have ample opportunity to observe the appeal—to themselves and others—of what Heifetz calls work avoidance, and the difficulties of doing adaptive work. The best hope is that Heifetz' framework gives them an interpretive structure that helps them allow for and understand more clearly the complex dynamics at play and avoid facile and wrong-headed conclusions about the conflict they see, or the attempts they see to avoid said conflict.

Supervisors may play several valuable roles related to Heifetz' insights. First, and perhaps foremost, supervisors may help students to expect the painful fruits of good ministerial leadership. Supervisors may hold students accountable regarding their motivations for causing or allowing disequilibrium in the community. Supervisors may also provide a holding environment for students as they struggle with rejection and other strategies of work avoidance in the community.

ENCOURAGING ADAPTIVE CHANGE IN FAITH COMMUNITIES

Over many years of teaching, lecturing, and my own professional practice, I have been guided happily by the epistemology and leadership theory I have learned and adapted from Schön and Heifetz. But I have often been left with two poignant questions. First, while it is easy enough to have an intuited sense of what constitutes the adaptive work that people or communities need to do, it has never been easy to theorize it. That is, when the leader identifies the adaptive work that the community needs or ought to do, from where does the prescription derive? Heifetz, borrowing from the biological sciences, thinks of adaptation in terms of thriving and surviving. I have used the word "wholeness" above. These are all serviceable terms, but they beg theological questions. Second, what accounts for the virulent antipathy to change, on which both Schön and Heifetz base much of their work? It is circular to say that resistance to change means that people do not like to change—a more basic anthropology would be useful. René Girard's theories of mimetic rivalry, human victimizing violence, and scapegoating, and their perhaps unanticipated role in squashing conflict offer an anthropology that helps further explain the problematic human tendencies for dealing with conflict and change that Schön and Heifetz delineate. The normative claims implied in Girard's work also provide thicker and more theological underpinnings for describing the moral dimensions of adaptive work.

Girard begins with what he calls mimetic desire, the fact that human beings seem hard-wired to covet what their neighbor has. Gil Bailie, one of Girard's followers, tells the story of a toddler in a room surrounded by a bunch of toys, none of which catch the child's strong interest. But then into the room comes another child, who sees even the passing interest the first child has in some toy. That piques the second child's interest. The second child's interest further ratchets up that of the first child. And the next thing you know, the two children are tugging mightily at the same toy, a toy that if they were alone they wouldn't have cared much about,

but a toy that has suddenly become aggressively desired, just because each perceives the other wants it.⁶ Anyone who has ever seen two children in the same room has experienced this scenario. Many of us have seen it hundreds of times. Bailie surmises that God thought it was so prevalent, not just among children, that the tenth commandment was devoted to it: “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.”⁷ It’s actually humorous that God started by naming the things belonging to your neighbor that you’re not supposed to covet. But then God must have realized there just wasn’t room on the stone and went directly to the point. God says don’t covet anything that belongs to your neighbor.⁸ Girard postulates that this dynamic, this coveting of what is our neighbor’s, is at the root of human society.

Initially, he says, there was constant conflict. Everybody was busy coveting each other’s things. They were constantly fighting each other over them—there was constant violence.

In groups that did not annihilate themselves a very interesting thing happened—the violence built into frenzy. It built into frenzy, and ultimately it focused on a single individual or group, who was annihilated. And in the wake of the bloody violence, an eerie calm would often come over the community.

Girard says that it is at this moment that a God and a myth are often born. The society realizes that this person or group it has killed must be a God, because through its death the chaos stopped and peace came about.

[S]ince the community is not aware of the mimetic nature of its scapegoating, it must look for a cause outside of the community. At this stage the community is humble. It does know its own violence, although it does not understand its source. Indeed, the conflict and the violence are so overwhelming—so seemingly “interminable”—that the community does not believe its powers alone could have ended it, just as it does not know how it began. The only convincing answer to the situation is the victim: the victim brought the violence about; the victim ended it. The victim is bad, but the victim is also good. Bad because he or she is blamed for the crisis, but very good because his or her death ends the crisis. This is experienced as so effective that the whole chain of events becomes a mechanism for repeated ritual.⁹

Thus, societies turn their victim then into a God and they say to themselves, if we want the peace to continue, we must please this God. Out of the pile of rocks that they may have used to stone the man to death is born a crude altar—and on that stone pyre are sacrificed other human beings to quiet and please the powerful and turbulent God. For the God is incredibly powerful (it stopped the madness cold,

after all), and at a moment's notice, for almost any reason, the God could turn on them and violence would once again be unleashed. Out of this belief, regular human sacrifices are instituted that are meant to appease the God and to prevent the violence from erupting again.

In addition, rules begin to form in the community and many of the rules have a similar purpose. You must do this, and this and that, or else the God will be angry with you. According to Girard, in the Bible, we see the relics of this religion and language when God says that he can be a jealous and angry God. (It should be noted the many ways in which our religion still tells us that there will be hell to pay if we don't please God.) Girard further claims the Bible contains clues to the prevalence of human sacrifice in ancient society. Perhaps the best known of these stories is the great story of Abraham and Isaac. After Abraham and Sarah are way past retirement, they suddenly have Isaac, who is the heir that God had long ago promised Abraham. Isaac would be the descendant whose own descendants then would number as the sands of the sea. Isaac was the only link to the future. The story goes that God asked Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, and that Abraham's faith was proven because he was willing to sacrifice his only son at God's command, but Gil Bailie, who follows Girard in this, argues convincingly that this is a text at quarrel with itself.

Far more than we moderns generally realize, human sacrifice was a fact of life among the peoples of the ancient Near East in tension with whom Israel first achieved cultural self-definition. Israel's renunciation of the practice of human sacrifice took place over a long period of time, during which intermittent reversions to it occurred. No biblical story better depicts how the Bible is at cross-purposes with itself on the subject of sacrifice than does the story of Abraham and Isaac. ...[T]he story of Abraham's (non)sacrifice of Isaac can easily be obstructed by the story's narrative armature. ...[I]n one glaring instance that [old sacrificial] logic obscured the insight of the author and redactors who gave us the story of Abraham's non-sacrifice of Isaac. As a result, the religious emphasis is just slightly off center, but in a way that makes all the difference. We are told that God bestowed the blessing and promise on Abraham after the "test" on Mount Moriah because Abraham had been willing to do what God had intervened to keep him from doing—sacrificing his son. This understanding may have had a certain coherence in the dark world of human sacrifice to which it hearkens back, and it may have some psychological pertinence, but the true biblical spirit has little nostalgia for the sacrificial past and almost no interest in psychology. What we must try to see in the story of Abraham's non-sacrifice of Isaac is that Abraham's faith consisted, not of almost doing what he didn't do, but of not doing what he almost did, and not doing it in fidelity to the God in whose name his contemporaries thought it should be done.¹⁰

The step away from human sacrifice that the Bible takes is the step that leads to animal sacrifice. Again quoting Bailie, “The central issue of the story of Abraham’s substitution of a ram for Isaac is precisely that, the issue of substitution. Abraham renounces human sacrifice and ‘inaugurates’ the ritual substitution of animals for humans.”¹¹

It turns out, though, that the move from human sacrifice to animal sacrifice was but a way station, a transition away from the most heinous of practices, but far from where God was ultimately taking the chosen people. For it turns out that God was not simply interested in dismantling human sacrifice—God was ultimately saying that slaughtering innocent victims, human or other animals, was not the way to please God. The force of the whole biblical narrative is to move away from sacrificing innocent victims, and to move to a religion that actually cares for and gives voice and respect to the innocent victims, the poor, and the oppressed.

According to Girard, it would be hard to overstate how central this move is to the biblical project. Constantly we hear God and God’s prophets calling for care for the stranger, the sojourner, the widow, and the orphan—and who can miss what a centerpiece this is to the message of Jesus, who day after day found himself in trouble for associating with those his society victimized? The move is extraordinary in its import, for it changes the notion of God. The god, born as the bad but good victim whom society must appease because he will once again unleash violence, is inevitably understood as an angry and vindictive god. Only when God was disentangled from the sacrificial matrix could God become a loving God who favored the victim and stood with the stranger.

René Girard believes that under the influence of this biblical tradition many human societies have a greater sense of justice. This greater sense of justice means that the society no longer is unaware of the results of its mimetic impulses. It no longer is unconscious of the origin of violence that expresses itself as greed. Neither can the society project the source of such violence onto a god or other outside object. However, the escape is neither complete nor simple, for the attachment to violence is great. Girard believes that societies have certainly not abandoned their age-old love affair with violence. They have simply given it a new rationalization, a new twist. Where they once used violence against innocent victims, often to please God, they now use violence against those whom they believe to be victimizers. They turn to violence now to do the work of justice. That is, they turn to violence to please God with their commitment to care for others, or at least to do the right thing.

One need not look far in our current moment for those who resort to violence and claim that God is on their side, and that they are doing God's work. The untenability of the present rationale for violence is obvious. First, there is no common agreement about who is on the side of justice. The world's violent conflicts look like football games in which each side cheers for its team. Nations want to believe that they are truly on the side of justice, but wars have taught us that they are at best a mixed bag. Just desires are almost always tainted with other interests—and even if they weren't, there seems little evidence that human societies can agree on which interests are just and which are unjust.

Perhaps even more important, violence has a built-in flaw that makes it an impossible arm of justice for the victims or for the right. Violence inevitably, even if inadvertently, creates more victims. Societies have tried to make that more acceptable with euphemisms like "collateral damage." Instinctively, they seem to know that facing up to the creation of more innocent victims would undermine their efforts to justify their violence—and so they pull the wool over their own eyes. They say that they don't want pictures of the flag-draped coffins coming home from Iraq in order to protect the privacy of the families involved, but are they not more likely protecting their own eyes from the glare of the fruits of our violence? They say that they don't allow public viewing of capital punishment because as a society they have moved beyond blood lust, or at least they don't want to encourage it. But isn't it more likely that they know that shining the floodlights on their grisly business in the execution chamber, that having to look its full force in the face, would cause the moral contradiction to wrench their guts?

Girard locates the most basic of human interactions in mimetic rivalry. He says that the rivalry left unchecked precipitates horrific, unstoppable violence, which ancient societies stopped only accidentally through a scapegoat, which developed into institutional sacrificial violence. The peace thus accomplished was fragile—in the very near background lay the threat of a new outbreak. If Girard is right, deep in the human psyche was wired the fear of change or disequilibrium, both of which threatened the wholesale collapse of the peace and quite possibly the society. In that light, one can more easily understand the preference that Schön says even the most advanced academics have for problems that submit to straightforward, certain, and manageable solutions, solutions that derive from known and accepted reality. One can also more easily comprehend the level of, even the violence of, the resistance that Heifetz says leaders will face when they lead people and communities into unknown and changing waters.

The implications for ministry and preparation for ministry are manifold. We will mention a few only briefly. Heifetz says leaders help individuals and communities to engage adaptive change. At its most basic, then, perhaps the most basic adaptive change required is to undermine the mechanisms of mimetic rivalry and of the use of violence to establish peace and justice. Girard argues that for Christians the Bible and the life and death of Jesus guide the way. In essence, he claims that the force of both the Old and New Testaments is against mimetic rivalry and its associated acquisitiveness. But as Girard implies, the fear of the return to chaos is deep-seated, so no matter our distance from the ancient mechanism's origin, we still exhibit great resistance to change. The adaptive work to turn the tide meets with a raw and primitive resistance. If nothing else, Girard's understanding helps us see the depth of the problem, and helps us appreciate just how subject to its force all of us are. It raises a caution for those in ministry, not only of the violence they may face, but also of their own likely complicity in it. It begs for attention to the complex and manifold possibilities for deception and self-deception.

Leading communities of faith in the above-implied adaptive changes is bound to be fraught with resistance, for reasons we have noted. A large part of the minister's responsibility is to lead in a way that tames the violence even as it avoids seeking a false equilibrium. In another way of saying it, it requires engaging in the process of adaptive change away from the dead-end of the old violence and toward the liberation of love for neighbor. However, the adaptive process itself inevitably stirs (for the time being) the old violent resistance from which the process is looking to move the community. The trick for the leader is to lead in such a way as to keep the project moving while still breaking the old pattern by refusing to create victims of even those most resistant to the adaptive changes. It is what Heifetz describes as the work of the leader, and in addition to a theoretical understanding he provides helpful strategies for accomplishing the task. Schön's learning in action describes the dialectic between doing and learning that such a complex task requires. Girard's anthropology and theology help to adumbrate the goal in theological terms, while at the same time they point to the enormity of the undertaking.

The role of supervising and helping to prepare persons for ministry is akin to this idea of leadership. In many instances, it comprises helping students to do adaptive work, both in the deep personal or spiritual sense and in the sense that prospective ministers must come to terms with the fact that their ministerial leadership must be a fluid, reflective practice (Schön), and that even done well, or maybe especially done well, it will meet significant or violent resistance (Heifetz), but that they will not be able to use their most reflexive responses to control it (Girard).

Ironically, those of us who teach, mentor, or supervise such students, especially in field education placements where they will engage ministry practice first hand, are inevitably and simultaneously required to struggle with the same elements. We must accept that the moments of teaching, mentoring, or supervising are dynamic and indeterminate, that in some real sense that is what we are teaching and it will meet with resistance, and that we must relate to that resistance in ways that allow the student to proceed in adaptive work—even when our instincts may incline us to be far less generous.

NOTES

1. Donald A. Schön, *Educating the Reflective Practitioner: Toward a New Design for Teaching and Learning in the Professions*, 1st ed., Jossey-Bass Higher Education Series (San Francisco, Calif.: Jossey-Bass, 1987). Ronald A. Heifetz, *Leadership without Easy Answers* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1994). Ronald A. Heifetz and Martin Linsky, *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive through the Dangers of Leading* (Boston, Mass.: Harvard Business School Press, 2002). René Girard, *The Scapegoat* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986); René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977); René Girard, Jean-Michel Oughourlian, and Guy Lefort, *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1987).
2. Schön, *Educating the Reflective Practitioner*, 3.
3. *Ibid.*, 9.
4. *Ibid.*, 35.
5. *Ibid.*, 36.
6. Gil Bailie, *Violence Unveiled: Humanity at the Crossroads* (New York: Crossroad, 1995), 116.
7. Exodus 20:17 NRSV.
8. Bailie, 143–45.
9. René Girard and James G. Williams, *The Girard Reader* (New York: Crossroad, 1996), 269–70.
10. Bailie, *Violence Unveiled*, 140–41.
11. *Ibid.*, 141.

The Ministerial Identity of Generation X/Y

Katherine E. Willis Pershey

I could easily be the protagonist of a case study in any number of books on the emerging generations. I was born the week Ronald Reagan was selected to run for the presidency at the 1980 Republican Convention—putting me at the tail end of Generation X or the very beginning of Generation Y, depending on who you ask. My favorite childhood toy was a Cabbage Patch Kid[®], and I remember seeing the Challenger crash as I walked out the door for afternoon kindergarten. Nowadays, I have a nose piercing and a blog.

Yet I am not the passive target for evangelism so many “How to Minister to Gen X/Y” books and conferences would have you believe. I am a few credits away from a master of divinity degree, with hopes to find a job as a parish pastor after graduation—and I am not alone. While many of my classmates are second-career students, a good number are my age. We are struggling with what it means to minister to people who could be our parents and grandparents. This issue is not new. There have always been young pastors, albeit fewer in this last decade, which has seen higher average ages for seminarians.

In this article, I will explore some of the issues that seem most pertinent to me as a young student of theology and ministry. These issues divide roughly into

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three categories, though they contain significant overlap: popular culture, personal voice, and theological and ethical considerations. I write not as an expert in generational studies, or ministry, or theological education. I write out of my own experience, and in hopes that ministerial mentors and educators might be conversant in the elements that compose the ministerial identity of persons in my generation.

POPULAR CULTURE

Popular culture has an enormous influence on younger generations; Tom Beaudoin refers to popular culture as Generation X's "amniotic fluid."¹ Music, in particular, is a cultural entity that becomes extraordinarily personal to young people. I often wonder if the visceral connection to the rock group U2 sensed by many Gen Xers is akin to the nostalgia many older adults sustain towards early 20th century hymnody, such as "The Old Rugged Cross." With its lyrical and instrumental expressions of anger and loss, joy and redemption, isolation and identity, popular music has the uncanny ability to tap into the spiritual and/or religious dimensions of its listeners.

While some young ministerial students certainly listen to explicitly Christian music, most of my friends do not. This is in part because much of what constitutes "contemporary Christian music" is produced within a narrow construction of orthodox theology and "safe" experience. When listening to music, Gen X/Yers want to hear reflections of the whole spectrum of their experiences. This may seem like a narcissistic approach to artistic expression, and the emerging generations have certainly been called on our knack for self-absorption. Yet one's own personal experience becomes a rubric for authenticity, a test of the truthfulness of a song's syntax or imagery. Thus, even though Gen X/Yers tend to let their pop culture speak for them, they do so only if they recognize a genuine and accurate reflection of themselves in a given artist's repertoire.

Why should educators and mentors consider popular culture when training young people for ministry? I would go so far as to claim that popular culture can become an extension of a person. It would be very hard for someone to really know me if they never listened to a song by my favorite band, Over the Rhine. Indeed, partway through my field education internship, I played one of their songs for my supervising pastor because it captured my emotional response to an issue we had discussed. Conversing about and sharing personally important songs can be a powerful way to develop the emotional intimacy required of mentor-learner rela-

tionships, particularly in contexts like the church and hospital that can engender emotional reactions.

The other significant issue regarding popular culture that is relevant to ministerial education is that of generational gaps and misunderstandings. This is not particular to Gen X/Y: it is a perennial issue that must be revisited as new generations emerge. Generational miscommunication is depicted excellently in the classic film, *Easy Rider*,² which tells the story of two young men who are obviously part of the American counter-culture. Christened Wyatt and Billy, the men ride fancy motorcycles, deal and partake in drugs, and socialize with hippies and prostitutes. Through the course of the movie, Wyatt and Billy make their way from Mexico to New Orleans, dabbling in extraneous adventures along the way. A constant theme in the film is the cruel way “good” Americans respond to these men. George, an alcoholic lawyer, explains to Billy, “They’re scared of what you represent to them. ...What you represent to them is freedom.” Billy doesn’t explain why he wears his hair long, nor does he verbally articulate his surprise. Yet his facial expression is absolutely telling: the look on Billy’s face is one of total shock; his perception of his persecutors is that they simply think he needs a haircut. Whether or not George’s interpretation of others’ perceptions was precise or not is secondary; that Billy’s hair had communicated a message of which he was entirely unaware is certain.

This sort generational miscommunication is very likely to arise in field education contexts where young interns minister with older adults. Not surprisingly, my nose piercing occasionally became a focal point of some tension while I interned at a local church. For the most part, inquiries regarding my little rhinestone accessory were well meaning. I would almost always respond to questions with a simple explanation and a joke—“Oh, it’s just a nose piercing. ...Why, are you thinking about getting one?” The curious parishioners usually giggled, appalled enough at the thought of willingly taking a needle to the nose that they forgot to be irked that I did. However, one Sunday morning before worship a member of the congregation made a comment about the nose piercing that was not only delivered in a nasty tone of voice, but was also framed in an overtly sexist and condescending manner (“Why’d she have to go ruin that pretty face.”). I was angry and hurt, and mentioned the situation to my supervising pastor during our weekly meeting. She told me that, for the most part, she completely overlooked the piercing. She said that she had gotten used to it. But then she got a slightly conspiratorial look on her face, and, leaning forward, asked, “So why do you have it? What does it mean?”

If I was a member of Generation X (and I tend to think that I'm just beyond the cut-off), it is possible that I might have consciously or subconsciously answered my pastor's question as such: "Piercing signifies immediate, bodily, and constant attention to the intimacy of experience. To pierce one's body is to leave a permanent mark of intense physical experience, whether pleasurable or painful."³ That is how Beaudoin explains his experience of a 1990s ear piercing. In the 1990s, anything other than an ear piercing was still pretty radical. Certainly, the trend toward eyebrow, tongue, nose, and navel piercing was spreading, but it was still primarily relegated to the rebellious. In short, piercing meant something. It meant any combination of the following: pain, rejection of parents, affiliation with punk music, control of one's body, passageway through modern adolescence.

When my pastor asked the big question—why?—I was ready with a decidedly different answer, an answer which I would argue is decidedly post-Gen X: I like how it looks. I think it's cute. The only reason I waited until I was twenty to have my nose pierced was because I was afraid my parents would be angry—how's that for parental rejection? No angst went into the process, aside from that which I foster toward needles. This is all to say that the meaning attributed to artifacts and practices rooted in pop culture is subjective and variable; assumptions are efficiently rendered obsolete. The generational tides turn, transforming one generation's weighty rebellion into another generation's superficial trend.

Ministry students learn in this context of multiplicity, wherein popular culture is dynamically amended, symbols fluctuate, and generational judgments and misunderstandings abound. They must recognize this perennially changing environment in order to develop stable and healthy ministerial identities. If I were to correlate my self-perception to the condescending remarks made about my nose piercing, I would not be able to develop my identity as a spiritual leader; I would be relegated to the role of a rebel.

Popular culture will not diminish as a source and influence for the emerging generations. The ministerial classroom must, therefore, engage in an ongoing translation process of pop culture "texts" and contexts, mete out symbols from assumptions, and build safe bridges through which young pastors might access their congregations.

PERSONAL VOICE

The centrality of personal voice for the Generation X/Y experience is, in my estimation, one of the reasons so many extra-generational observers have deemed Gen X/Yers to be so self-absorbed. No one wants to be spoken for by an inaccurate representative, but for younger generations, to be misrepresented is unspeakable. I struggled with this as I read *Virtual Faith* in preparation for this article; one of the reasons I decided that I do not qualify as a Gen Xer is that Beaudoin's astute portrayal of the Gen X does not accurately describe my experience. Though an in-depth analysis of this issue is beyond the scope of this article, I reckon that the highly fragmented nature of our (arguably) postmodern society has resulted in so many subcultures of subcultures that it is more difficult than ever to adequately reflect a cross-section of a generation.

Many Gen X/Yers depend on the aforementioned popular culture to express their experiences. Yet some persons in the younger generations engage directly in personal expression through journaling or writing memoirs. Religiously- or spiritual-themed personal writing is particularly prevalent. Lauren Winner and Paton Dodd, both twentysomethings, had memoirs published in recent years depicting their stories of religious formation and transformation. However, it is the electronic cousin of memoir that is democratizing publishing and allowing anyone with an Internet connection to relate stories in one's own voice: the web log, or blog. Blogging is not the sole terrain of Gen X/Yers, but a cursory glance through some popular free blog programs reveals that the vast majority of bloggers are under forty, if not under thirty. There are political blogs, diary blogs, knitting blogs, and a slew of religiously oriented blogs. The predominantly self-reflective tone of many blogs is not dissimilar to the kind of journaling required by many theological field education programs. I would not suggest that educators dress up student journals in generationally relevant clothes, particularly since blogging is usually a public forum, and many of the experiences processed in student journals are confidential. Nevertheless, I believe that blogging can be responsibly incorporated into theological education in general, and field education in particular. In my master of divinity program, I have taken a number of classes in which I was required to keep a regular reflective journal. These journals are tucked away in their respective class folders, wasting away at the bottom of my linen closet. If I had been told at the beginning of my seminary experience that I should keep a web log of my seminary experiences—documenting general reflections alongside reading response papers

and discreet commentary regarding my church work—I would graduate with a portfolio of memory and wisdom. Furthermore, in addition to my own blog posts, I would have all the comments posted by my classmates and teachers.

New technology is not inherently good—this goes without saying. We must be judicious about what gadgets we appropriate for educational and ecclesiastical use. However, blogging is a creative, community-building medium perfect for capitalizing on the self-reflective impulses and desire for authenticity characteristic of Generation X/Y ministerial students.

THEOLOGICAL AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The language we use to talk about generational tensions is telling. By using the phrase, “generational gap,” we create a spatial metaphor for the misconceptions and miscommunications that happen between persons of different generations. Furthermore, the space of a gap is somewhat dangerous, a space in which one might fall if not careful. Yet the gap is a wholly cultural construct, which is to say that it is real, but that it is also arbitrary and contextual, and capable of closure if generations can practice meaningful critical reflection about their and others’ cultural idiosyncrasies. Communities of faith and learning—parishioners, interns, pastors, related academics—must be critically reflective in order to be more fully conscious of transcendent space, which is neither arbitrary nor cultural.

Jürgen Moltmann discusses “transcendent space” in *The Spirit of Life*, writing:

‘The broad place’ is the most hidden and most silent presence of God’s spirit in us and round about us. But how else could ‘life in the Spirit’ be understood, if the Spirit were not the space ‘in’ which this life can grow and unfurl? We explore the depths of this space through the trust of the heart. We search out the length of this space through extravagant hope. We discover the breadth of this space through the torrents of love which we receive and give. God’s Spirit encompasses us from all sides and wherever we are (Ps. 139). Christ’s Spirit is our immanent power to live—God’s Spirit is our transcendent space for living.⁴

I understand both individual persons and communities of faith to be encompassed by the Spirit as Moltmann describes, and I especially affirm his use of active language to express the way in which “we” exist in that space; life in the Spirit is not a passive existence, but one of exploration, searching, discovery, trusting, hoping, and loving. The ramifications of life in the Spirit for communities include the

notion that human relationships are forged and tended in the space of transcendence.

Given that both “generational gap” and “transcendent space” are spatial metaphors, they are easily layered upon one another with significant theological thrust. As I mentioned, the connotation of “gap” entails the possibility of falling—as the London subway system reminds passengers, “Mind the gap.” Yet if we understand relationships as existing within the space of the Spirit, the danger of arbitrary cultural gaps is rendered nil, and fear can be retired. Reframing our cultural gaps within the larger transcendent space of Spirit abates fear and engenders love.

I want to illuminate the gifts and obstacles unique to younger generations. Yet I want to do this because I ultimately hope the ministerial students of my generation might be empowered to respond to our vocations as religious leaders for the whole church. I believe that God calls the church into true communion, and that Christ’s living presence in the church eradicates hierarchical distinctions. Elizabeth Johnson’s feminist vision of community adapts well to a vision of an intergenerational Christian church; she uses the language of “mutual respect” and “reciprocal valuing” to call for the celebration of diversity in the context of absolute equality.⁵ This is an ethics that gives young student ministers the safety to grow as spiritual leaders; an ethics fit for life in transcendent space.

CONCLUSION

As a seminary student, I am honored to have had this opportunity to share my insights regarding generational issues and ministerial training. I appreciate the pedagogical reciprocity intrinsic to theological field education—that field educators such as my professor, Emily Click, readily listen to their students as valued learning partners. I hope that this exploration of popular culture, personal expression, and theological and ethical considerations relevant to Generation X/Y will be helpful to ministerial educators as they mentor new generations of Christian leaders.

NOTES

1. Tom Beaudoin, *Virtual Faith: The Irreverent Spiritual Quest of Generation X* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998), xiv.

2. *Easy Rider*, 95 min., Columbia/Tristar Studios, 1969.
3. Tom Beaudoin, 77.
4. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 2001), 179.
5. Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is* (New York: Crossroads Publishing, 2002), 68.

ACPE History Workshop: The Changing Landscape of Theological Education and Clinical Pastoral Education

Daniel Aleshire

In 1954, most Association of Theological Schools (ATS) were mainline Protestant. Most had student bodies all but exclusively white males who were preparing for pastoral ministry in congregations that seemed to grow rapidly and easily. Students attended schools of the denomination in which most had grown up; most came to the seminary shortly after completing college; many of them were graduates of denominationally sponsored colleges. They were Religion, History, or English majors, and may have listened to the Protestant Hour on network radio, but had no other media models for their ministry. They submitted typed term papers, had only the books in the school's library or the ones they owned to consult for their studies. They found library resources via a card catalog. The faculties at Yale Divinity School and Union Theological Seminary heavily influenced their professors. There

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were virtually no required clinical pastoral education (CPE) courses, and most schools did not give academic credit for theological field education, even if it was required. Seminaries were, for the most part, funded by grants from the denominations to which they were related; faculties at many schools exercised more institutional power than the trustees, and the president was just emerging from being chair of the faculty to becoming executive leader of an institution. It is different now, and this presentation is about some of those differences.

I. CHANGES IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

We don't have data from fifty years ago on most of the variables that we have data for now, so to discuss either change or constancy is to accept some conventional wisdom about the way that things used to be and contrast that with the data that define the present situation. To identify the changes, I want to talk about students and curriculum in theological schools.

A. Students

Students are at the center of theological education efforts, and I want to discuss one area where I think students are the same as they have always been, and several areas where they appear to be different than they used to be.¹

A. 1. One area of constancy. The motivations for students' pursuing theological education have not changed, in my estimation. When current students have been asked why they came to seminary on the ATS Entering Student Questionnaire, they have, year after year, identified three reasons as the most important. The most highly rated factor in the decision to pursue theological education is that "they experienced a call from God." This is true for women and men, for Protestants and Roman Catholics, and for theological liberals and conservatives. A call from God is experienced in more than one way: sometimes as a life altering religious experience, sometimes as a more subtle, natural consequence of individual abilities and sensitivities. The second most highly related influence is the "opportunity for study and growth." These are, after all, students, and they are pursuing graduate study. The third most highly rated factor for their entering an educational program preparing them for ministry is a "desire to serve others." There are other factors, but across the broad spectrum of entering students in ATS schools, these three comprise the top of the list, year after year. We don't have the data from fifty years ago, but

if we did, I don't think the primary reasons for pursuing theological education would look much different.

A. 2. Three areas of change. There are three student demographics that have changed considerably over the past twenty-five years, if not the past fifty.

A.2.a. Age. In the 1980s, considerable anecdotal evidence began to indicate that the entering seminary students were older. What was remembered to have been a student body of recent college graduates was changing as more and more "older" students were arriving on campus. To explore this perception, ATS began asking member schools in 1991, and every other year after that, to report the number of students enrolled in all programs by age groupings. The data for the past decade, 1991–2001, are instructive. While they do not permit comparisons with data from earlier decades, they do provide perspective about the most recent one. The age cohorts that grew the most during this decade were students 40–49, who constituted 20 percent of the total enrollment in 1991 and 25 percent of the total enrollment in 2001. Students between the ages of 50–64 constituted 8 percent of the total enrollment in 1991 and 15 percent of the total enrollment in 2001. By contrast, students aged 30–39 declined from 32 percent of the total enrollment in 1991 to 26 percent of the total enrollment in 2001. Students aged 20–29 constituted a relatively constant 26 to 28 percent of the total enrollment across the decade. These data suggest that a stable cohort of recent college graduates and early-career students has continued across the decade, and that the growth of students over forty has come from the decline of students in their thirties. The "older" students are becoming even "older."

Age does make a difference. Younger students are more likely to have undergraduate backgrounds that prepare them for theological study; they are more likely to report having received academic honors, but they are less likely to say they will pursue vocations in congregational or parish ministry. Older students are more diverse racially and ethnically, include a higher percentage of women, and are more inclined to intend careers in congregational or parish ministry. In the hardhearted world of economics, older students are more expensive to educate. A typical ATS school is spending almost \$100,000 per master of divinity (M.Div.) degree. If graduates have fifteen years of service after graduation, it costs \$6,700 per service year for their education. If they serve thirty years, it costs half as much per service year. I like older students and think they make a significant contribution to theological education. I also know that most Americans attend larger membership churches, and that these congregations need to find new pastors. They need persons with experience, energy, and, because pastoral longevity is typically good for larger

congregations, a number of career service years available to the congregation. The age of seminary students has more than a few implications on the practice of ministry.

A.2.b. Gender. In the fall of 2002, there were a total of 27,315 women enrolled in ATS schools. They represented 36 percent of a total enrollment in all degree programs. In fall 2002, there were a total of 31,994 students in the M.Div. program—the program of study most typically leading toward ordination, of whom 31 percent were women. Women are the majority of students (5,186 of 9,476 or 55 percent) enrolled in professional master's programs that typically do not lead to ordination. A total of 5,653 students were enrolled in the research doctorates offered by ATS schools (doctor of theology or doctor of philosophy (Ph.D)), and of this total, 26 percent were women.

Women have become an increasing presence in the student bodies of ATS schools since the 1970s, as most mainline Protestant denominations were making it possible for women to be ordained, or prior warrants for ordination became more widely exercised by women. In 1977, there were 3,019 women enrolled in the M.Div. program. In 2002, twenty-five years later, there were 10,070—a gain of 234 percent. In 1977, there were 23,236 men enrolled in the M.Div., and in 2002, there were 21,924 male M.Div. students, a loss of 6 percent. This means that all of the numeric gain in enrollment in the M.Div. program across the past twenty-five years has been due to the increasing enrollment of women. While women are not enrolled in theological schools to the extent that they are present in American law schools (just over 50 percent in 2000) or medical schools (just under 50 percent), they are dramatically more present now than they were twenty-five years ago.

Women graduates from ATS schools differ from men graduates in several ways. Women who graduated with M.Div. degrees in spring 2002 were more likely than men to report that their self-confidence and respect for other religious traditions had grown stronger as a result of their seminary studies. A greater percentage of women graduates reported that their theological position had become more liberal during theological study than is true for men graduates: 34.8 percent of women said that their position had become more liberal, as compared to 21.7 percent of men.

Perhaps more significant than change in theological position, women students appear to differ from men in the expressions of ministry they intend to pursue. A slightly higher percentage of men than women intend to pursue parish ministry after graduation. Women are more likely than men to pursue hospital or other institutional chaplaincies (7 percent of women compared to 3 percent of men)

or to be undecided about career choice at graduation (12 percent of women said they were undecided compared to 7 percent of men). Women are less likely than men to anticipate ministry in church planting or evangelism (6 percent for men compared to 3 percent for women) or youth ministry (7 percent of men compared to 2 percent of women).

A.2.c. Race and Ethnicity. Across the past twenty-five years, the enrollment of racial/ethnic theological students in ATS schools has been increasing. In the fall of 1977, ATS schools reported a total of 1,759 African-descent students in all degree programs, representing 4 percent of the total enrollment of 45,222 students. In 1977, the first year ATS requested information about other racial/ethnic groups, Hispanic students constituted 1 percent of the total enrollment, and Asian/Pacific Islander students constituted another 1 percent of total enrollment. Together, racial/ethnic students constituted 6 percent of the total 1977 student enrollment. In 2002, racial/ethnic enrollment was 15,961 of a total enrollment of 76,510, constituting 21 percent of the total enrollment. Thus, while the total enrollment in ATS schools has increased 69 percent over the past 25 years, the racial/ethnic enrollment has grown by 469 percent. This is a dramatic change, and it means that racial/ethnic students represent a significant portion of the total increase in enrollment over this time period. The gain reflects a variety of successful institutional efforts, in addition to social and religious forces.

The change in the student bodies, however, does not yet match the change occurring in the North American population, particularly in the United States. In fall 2002, African-descent students constituted 11 percent of the enrollment in ATS schools, while African Americans constituted 13 percent of the U.S. population. Hispanic/Latino(a) students were 3 percent of the enrollment in ATS schools, while Hispanics and Latino(a)s were 13 percent of the U.S. population. While the number of students from these two racial/ethnic groups is increasing, and their percentage of the ATS enrollment continues to grow, the presence of these two groups in ATS schools continues to be less than their presence in the general population. In contrast to these two racial/ethnic communities, the percentage of Asian-descent students in theological schools is actually greater than the presence of Asians in the general population. In fall 2002, Asian-descent students constituted 8 percent of student enrollment in all degree programs, while Asians represented approximately 3 percent of the U.S. population.

The population of North America is increasingly diverse in its racial/ethnic composition. Seminaries are educating the religious leaders that will take what has been predominantly white North American Christianity through a cultural

transition when white will virtually cease to be the racial majority in the United States, and will be notably lessened as the racial majority in Canada. These changes are major, and the cultural reactions will be dramatic, if not violent. In 1900, the U.S. population was 88 percent white. At the end of the twentieth century, the U.S. population was 71 percent white, and by 2050, it is estimated to be 59 percent or less white. In Canada, people are classified by national origin not race; in 1900, 96 percent were of British, French, and other European origin; in 1996, 83 percent were from those origins, and by 2050, the population estimates are that a decreasing percentage will of European origin.

B. Curriculum

The theological curriculum is, in many ways, very stable. When I was a faculty member at Southern Seminary in Louisville, I chaired the faculty committee that oversaw the masters degree programs. In the middle of discussions about the M.Div., I did a thirty-year comparison of the requirements. For the most part, once the migration of a discipline from one division to another was accounted for, the curriculum had not changed much. However, the focus of the curriculum is beginning to change, and will likely change more in the future. I would like to talk about the curriculum primarily in terms of why it needs to change, the direction of that change, and the difficulties a seminary faculty encounters in trying to make the changes that need to be made.

B.1. Why change may be needed. I think the work of congregating as communities of faith is more difficult that it has been at any time in our national history. The church has less cultural support; the demands on the typical congregation are greater and more complex; and successful practices are less transferable from one congregation to another. As a result, theological schools have harder lessons to teach about pastoral practice and congregational life than they had in the past. At times, the schools, like parish ministers, are not sure what the faithful answers or best practices are. The school's task would be easier if congregational life were easier, or if we knew exactly what to teach. It would also be easier if the students coming to seminary were deeply steeped in the practices and issues of the congregations and denominations, but this is not the case. In fact, we seem to be at a time when none of the factors that could make attainment of the educational goals easier are present. Congregational life is complex, we don't have all the answers, and students entering theological education seem less familiar with congregations and denominations than previous generations of students. The combination of these factors worries me as an educator. How do schools do their jobs well in this context? Obviously, one way would be to extend the amount of time available for theo-

logical education, but neither the students' nor the schools' resources support this response. Curriculum cannot solve these problems, but it must be deeply aware of them.

B.2. Direction of change and difficulty it presents. One significant shift in curriculum is evident in the ATS accrediting standards. In 1996, following four years of thinking about the status of theological education, ATS adopted new accrediting standards. These standards state the purposes of the theological curriculum more pointedly than any previous set of standards. In a theological school, the standard reads:

The over-arching goal is the development of theological understanding, that is, aptitude for theological reflection and wisdom pertaining to responsible life in faith. Comprehended in this over-arching goal are others such as deepening spiritual awareness, growing in moral sensibility and character, gaining an intellectual grasp of the tradition of the faith community, and acquiring the abilities requisite to the exercise of ministry in that community.²

This is the first time that ATS has articulated “spiritual awareness” and “moral sensibility and character.” This standard also places more emphasis on the ministerial arts than previous statements have included. These are all critical issues, many of them at the forefront of the church at this time, but they are very difficult to place in a graduate professional curriculum. It is educationally difficult to educate students to relate the Christian story to the human condition when that story is largely unknown or mis-known, as is the case in this culture. It is difficult to educate students to be able to function skillfully with text, tradition, people, in social institutions—when they come to seminary knowing very little about any of these. This generation of ministers will need to learn to live graciously in a religiously plural world while thoughtfully standing for their particular tradition. None of these needs or goals is easy. Theological schools, it seems, have never had easy answers. Now they seem to be out of easily attainable goals. The difficulty of these educational needs will require some change in educational strategy.

In the future, more curricular attention needs to be focused on learning after seminary. There are some things about ministry that are not readily taught in a theological school, and the early years of ministry can be a fertile learning time. Students see stewardship and administration, guiding volunteers and coordinating program ministry as remote and un-interesting during the middle year in seminary, but as graduates, they see them as critical for effective ministry and complain that the seminary didn't teach them what they needed to know. We need to recognize that theological education can't be limited to the theological school. Some things

needed for ministry are readily learned in school, other things, equally as important, are best learned apart from the theological school.

B.3. Difficulties in a school's effort to change the curriculum. As the change is undertaken, ATS schools will struggle with several factors that pose problems for the theological curriculum.

B.3.1. Disciplinary accrual. In the fifth century, schools had less theology to teach, less history to teach, less of everything to teach. But this is now, and they work with disciplines whose content continues to accrue over time. Now, we talk not just about the doctrine of the trinity and what it means in our time, but the development of the doctrine, what happened to it by the first millennium, how it was treated by the reformers in Europe and England, what happened to it as North America was settled by immigrants and unsettled by the awakenings, what the deists and Unitarians did with the doctrine, how it is perceived in the Pentecostal expressions of Christianity (where Christianity is growing at its most rapid pace), what it means now at a specific Trinity Church, and in the lives of preachers and their post-modern hearers. The same is true for history and biblical studies. Our core disciplines continue to pick up new content, but seldom leave any of the other content behind. If we were medical educators, we could safely assume that we could teach chemistry and biology on the basis of what is known now, and while there may be historical references, old theories that have been discarded don't require much class time. Most of our old theories, however, continue to be the basis of truth for some part of the Christian family, and need to be considered carefully prior to trading them in for newer truths. The more the content of theological disciplines accrues, the more difficult the disciplines are to teach in the three years that God has given for all time for the M.Div. degree. Every curriculum revision begins with struggles around the allocation of space for the old disciplines that are always growing and the new disciplines that are always emerging.

B.3.2. Dominance of a liberal arts paradigm. Theology, history, philosophy, ethics, biblical studies, and language studies are venerable liberal arts disciplines. Theological educators have paradigms for their scholarly work that are anchored in the scholarly methods of the arts tradition. We know the methodology for analyzing texts and interpreting them. The curricular problem is that our good liberal arts scholarship, and the knowledge that it produces, is pressed into service of an educational goal that, in the end, is focused on the good practice of ministry. I remember a faculty lounge conversation several years ago in which one of the better graduates of our school had resigned a church for serial sexual misconduct. One professor, whose discipline will go unnoted, commented that he could hardly

believe that the student had done what he did because he was such a good theologian. His statement reflected a kind of Platonic imagination that if one learns to think right, one will do right. Practice follows knowledge, and that smart people who are well educated will act smartly. I realize that I have slipped into the domain of human character and not professional performance, but the parallel tends to apply. By teaching biblical studies in the best of the arts tradition, we hope that we are educating students to preach or teach the Bible well, or to use its resources well in congregational conflict and decision-making.

This is a problematic connection. I think that the Bible or church history or theology must be faithful to the scholarly paradigms of the liberal arts. But M.Div. education is graduate *professional* education not graduate *academic* education. While our scholarly work should be done in the arts traditions, excellence in pastoral work is not defined by excellence in the liberal arts. Our disciplines, for the most part, are clearly anchored in an appropriate intellectual style that is different than the intellectual style that the best of our graduates will use in ministerial practice. This poses an educational problem that is not going away. We are using the right intellectual style for the advancement of our disciplines, but that is not the style our graduates use for the advancement of their work. So, it is a problem that a curricular design must seek to resolve.

B.3.3. The under-valuing of experiential learning. A third problem involves the typically limited value that theological educators place on experience itself. By this, I mean the experience of engaging in ministerial work as a way of developing the intellectual skills necessary to do that work with excellence. Last year, I explored some university web sites to see how other kinds of schools are constructing education for intellectually sophisticated forms of practice. For example, the master of social work degree at the University of Pittsburgh, which is highly regarded in social work education, requires eighteen credit hours of supervised field and clinical work. That is eighteen hours of a sixty-credit professional master's degree—almost one-third of the total required credits. I looked at a few ATS schools' web sites, and the M.Div. requirements typically had six or fewer hours of supervised ministry, and typically three of those could be completed by taking a CPE unit, which I think is required in hopes that it will provide some healing of wounded students more than developing skills crucial for pastoral practice. I looked at a few doctor of medicine degrees and much of the whole degree is built around clinical practice, starting in the first year. Medical education does not proceed from textbook to cadaver to live people. It involves these, but not sequentially. They are in clinical situations from very early on, I think, because there

is a perception that they can only learn what they need to know by intense, intellectually rigorous, experience.

If social work schools, medical schools, and theological schools are all educating practitioners, why do theological schools give so much less educational effort to experience-based learning? A part of it is that we don't have the equivalent of hospitals where experienced physicians, students, and sick people are gathered together in the middle of a weekday afternoon when we want to have classes. But I have a hunch that some of it is that we are just not convinced that much of the learning that is necessary for excellence in ministerial work requires an experiential context. Curricular revision needs renewed discussion about the importance of experience for theological learning, how the intellectual attainments can accrue only through experience, and how to make better curricular use of ministerial work as a way of learning how to do ministerial work well.

II. THE FUTURE OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR CLINICAL PASTORAL EDUCATION

At an ATS conference last year, a participant quoted someone whom he had heard earlier in the year who had said that knowledgeable persons were predicting that half of the theological schools in the United States and Canada would be closed ten years from now. I try to keep up on this kind of information and this prediction came as a surprise to me. I started running through the list of schools that I thought were on respirators, the ones that have been showing up in the ATS emergency room, and the ones suffering from the troubled-denomination syndrome or the too-little-money disease. I came up with 25 or 30, an alarming number, but that's more like 10 percent of all ATS schools, not 50 percent, and I think most of these 10 percent are going to make it. While most schools will likely make it, continued existence may not be all its cracked up to be. I don't know what is more frightening: that half of the schools would be gone in a decade, or that they would still be here but unable to do what they were called into existence to do.

I think that the future of theological education increasingly hinges on its response to one question: What is the value of a seminary-educated religious leadership? As membership in mainline Protestant denominations declines, alternative patterns for education and routes to ordination increase. As new paradigm churches exercise leadership among Evangelical Protestants, questions about the relevance

of theological education drift through the hallways at mega-church conferences for congregational leaders. As Catholic dioceses grow more dependent on the work of lay professionals to staff parish programs and Catholic institutions, the question of the value of a seminary education still seems unresolved. I think this fundamental question is valid, and I want to suggest some things that theological schools should consider in response to it.

A. Strengthening capacity

The answer to the big question about the value of theological education will require more institutionally robust schools, and that means more money, mission-appropriate facilities, faculties who understand deeply the educational purposes of theological education, and more thoughtful institutional processes for ordering the school's decision-making. These are not the answer to the question, but the answer will not have clarity without them. There is more that could be said about this, but I would rather spend more time on some other issues.

B. Rethinking the work of theological schools

Theological schools are going to need to rethink their work as they make the case for their continued value. This rethinking, in my judgment, should focus on the intellectual work of the schools, the catechetical work of the schools, and the role of theological education for leaders.

B.1. Intellectual labor. Seminaries will demonstrate their value as they keep their intellectual labor close to the wounds and the stress. There are so many ways that this statement could be heard wrong that I hesitate to say it at all. I do not mean that scholarly research should focus only on current problems. There are a few issues from Calcedon and Trent, Geneva and Azusa Street that still need attention. There are a host of technical and critical issues to explore, and this exploration should be occurring in theological schools. I fear, however, that many current issues in the church have not received the same intellectual effort as other, more distant issues have received. Mainline Protestant churches have experienced a huge membership decline in the last forty years, and I do not think that one can point to a compelling body of research from seminary faculty that proposes effective responses. There has been some very good social diagnosis, but not a great deal of creative thinking about new congregational or structural approaches to the church's work.

I think that pastoral work has become dramatically more complex than it was three decades ago, as I said earlier, and I am not sure that theological faculty are doing the intellectual work required by this more complex and stressed congre-

gational reality. I do not think that more focused intellectual work means moving theological education to teaching congregations, but it does mean conducting theological education with a much closer relationship to congregational, parish, and community life. Most fundamentally, I think it means doing serious and substantive intellectual work for communities of faith, and fashioning intelligent educational practices that prepare people for the world that is—and is emerging.

B.2. Catechetical theological education. Seminary students come with a variety of backgrounds to theological education. They typically do not have undergraduate backgrounds in the humanities; many do not have a great deal of background in the church. They do not come as formed Christians that need to have their Sunday school faith reconstructed and given intellectual ballast. Many come needing to learn to love the text and the tradition, as well as to think critically about it. Theological education has, for the most part, assumed that people knew and loved the text but needed the critical tools necessary to deal with it in more sophisticated ways. I think that the future involves theological schools giving more attention to the catechetical dimensions that students need. This will entail reinventing some patterns of education to meet new educational needs. Theological education should have, as one of its outcomes, that graduates not only know the text and tradition, but that they know them as believers who are willing to bet life and careers on them. Students should leave seminary formed in the text and tradition, able to engage it both critically and lovingly, having the ability to speak winsomely to what they believe intently. This will require some new work on behalf of the schools.

B.3. Leadership Education. Seminaries also need to give increasing attention to understanding and implementing theological education as a form of leadership education. Our mission is to educate persons, most of whom will go to a congregation or organization and, in one form or another, exercise leadership. This is not generally the case with medical education, legal education, or graduate liberal arts education—the academic cousins theological educators like to claim. One of the most unique characteristics of theological education is that our graduates go immediately into positions of leadership. For most other occupations, leadership is something that emerges over time as people engage in professional practice.

We have not given enough attention to the demands on people whose first job entails a significant degree of leadership, even though the organizations they lead may be small. We know that failures in early ministry careers are not typically related to defective knowledge of Scripture or church history—but are most typically

a function of relational problems or inadequate abilities as leaders. Leadership is good work; it is not only work that has to be done, it is work worth doing. If it is done well, it helps a community to accomplish purposes and goals that only a company of persons can accomplish. I think we need an inclusive perspective about what ministerial leadership is, and the educational imagination and skill to educate effectively toward that perspective.

C. Implications for Clinical Pastoral Education

What might some of this mean for clinical pastoral education? This is more your question than mine, but I want to offer three perspectives that you might consider as you think about your answers.

C.1. The split in counseling in theological schools. First, I think that CPE needs to be aware of a rather fundamental split in theological schools regarding counseling education. Most mainline Protestant and Roman Catholic schools are comfortable participants in the normative ethos and practices of CPE. Most of their pastoral care faculty members are CPE supervisors, or at least members of the American Association of Pastoral Counselors. Evangelical schools have developed a second track. Many of them have limited engagement with CPE, but are primarily oriented to counseling education that looks more like an American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy master of arts (M.A.) degree or M.A. that will qualify graduates for state licensing. In some ways the root of this movement may be what Fuller Seminary has done—offer an APA accredited Ph.D. in clinical psychology. It is a six-year program that generally involves a two-year M.A. in theological study and a typical four-year Ph.D. program in clinical psychology. It is a very sophisticated and expensive program, very selective, and it has generated a cadre of clinicians that are in private practice, community mental health agencies, and church-related social service agencies. They are theologically trained, but in a different way and likely, a different location in the behavioral sciences. Many Evangelical schools follow Fuller's lead, but do not have the resources for Ph.D. education. They offer M.A. programs out of a counseling Psychology or Marriage and Family model, or a more overt "Christian counseling" model. This year, 56 percent of all students in theological education are enrolled in Evangelical Protestant schools. If I were the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, I would be looking at this phenomenon.

C.2. The tension between healing and educating. I mentioned earlier that I fear that schools tend to require CPE, if they do, as much if not more, to provide a therapeutic intervention rather than education in ministerial practice. We have cycled through a generation of students who verbalize their life experience in terms

of wounds and hurts, using quasi-clinical language. Schools want healthy graduates, and CPE is a way of getting at that where a grade is assigned, the most typical way that schools want to signal a problem. Schools are, at times, desperate because if they sense a problem with a student, they have difficulty finding psychological or psychiatric practitioners who will dare to give an opinion that someone should be removed from a professional degree program for fear of litigation. CPE results in a grade, and if a student fails, the school can withhold graduation. But CPE is most effective, I think, as education for pastoral practice. This is a problem for CPE supervisors, who cannot supervise without paying attention to health, but are not functioning as clinicians in the CPE course.

I am not a clinician, but I am beginning to think that students are using “wound” language to describe what other generations have called life experience. One of my favorite bumper stickers is “Vicissitudes Happen.” I am worried that some students who may be reasonably sound psychologically are relieving themselves of human responsibility by mis-applying clinical language. Abraham Kaplan, a philosopher of science, once commented about the law of the hammer: “Give a child a hammer, and suddenly, everything needs pounding.” I worry that clinical models that accurately describe part of the human predicament are being used to describe other parts of the human condition where these models are less effective or accurate.

C.3. The educational intensity of CPE setting. I hope that CPE supervisors can claim their role as educators because of the educational power of the clinical setting. Tom Long told a story in his report to Henry Luce III Fellows about a call he received from a graduate who had been a student in his worship class, a class in which he discussed funerals. The new minister called in a bit of a panic as he was preparing for his first funeral. Professor Long reassured him that they had covered what was needed in the worship class, and the student said (as I remember the story), “Yes, I know, but this guy is dead!” Reality, especially harsh reality, has an educational value that cannot be duplicated in the safer, and sometimes more artificial, world of the classroom. What needs to be learned has more to do with the pastoral skills needed in the hard moments of life, how to care for people in those difficult moments, than how the minister grows toward more human wholeness. Of course I want that, but the educational power should focus primarily on the first, and celebrate the secondary benefit if it is also achieved.

NOTES

1. The data presented throughout this section are drawn from three sources. The first is the information that ATS collects annually from member schools. It provides comprehensive information about age, race, and gender of all students in ATS schools. The second is a study conducted by the Auburn Center for the Study of Theological Education that entailed surveying 10,254 students who entered ATS schools during the 1998-99 school year: "Is There a Problem? Theological Students and Religious Leadership for the Future," *Auburn Studies*, no. 8 (July 2001). The third source of information is the *ATS Student Information Project*, which includes one survey used by many schools with entering students and another survey with graduating students. This fee-for-service program provides annual data from participating schools on 40–50 percent of all entering and graduating students.

2. *ATS General Institutional Standards, 4.1.1. Bulletin 46*, Part 1, 54, or see the Association's web site at <www.ats.edu>.

Clinical Supervision in Theological Education: Encouraging Competency and Fostering Faithfulness

Nancy J. Gorsuch

Clinical supervision in the context of graduate theological education is a form of teaching ministry, at its best a relationship fostering the transmission and reinterpretation of pastoral care and counseling as expressions of faith and competency. The context in which I teach and supervise is a divinity school with the primary aim of equipping persons for general pastoral ministry in the church. My purpose in this essay is to identify and discuss the multiple spheres of influence that impinge upon the clinical supervision relationship in this context, and to invite consideration of a competency-based approach in supervision. Toward that end, I will discuss: (a) an initial understanding of supervision as teaching ministry in graduate theological education; (b) a rationale for a competency-based approach in supervision; and (c) a notion of supervision as praxis in the midst of multiple “situated realities” that may provide a more accurate picture of supervisory relationship. In conclusion, I will comment on faithfulness in clinical supervision understood as a teaching ministry.

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I acknowledge from the outset the challenge of working in the multiple spheres of influence, or “reality sets,” to use the postmodern term, that support and constrain supervision in an academic church-related setting. The relationship between supervisor and supervisee has long been understood as the key element in supervision, and I do not contend with this viewpoint. However, fuller attention to the multiplicity of relations present and active in supervision may reveal more about the freedom and constraints, or power and limits, at work in this formative process. A social constructionist view maintains that “reality” is constructed through language, often a matter of interpretation, and that multiple interpretations of experience are not only possible, but of great benefit in helping people take responsibility for what can be changed. I assume that other contexts of supervision have equally complex spheres of influence at work, and suggest that adequate reflection on the effects of such influence, aided by a social constructionist perspective, enhances the possibility of faithfulness in this ministry.

SUPERVISION AS TEACHING MINISTRY IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

As a person of faith engaged in supervision, I would like to claim that I dwell in relationship with God as the primary “context” for ministry (though this is not altogether the “truth”), and work within relations of accountability in the church, the school, and professional organizations. Pastoral care, pastoral counseling as a particular type of care, and supervision itself, are crucial intersections of human need and purpose, and what I have come to call “anticipatory activity,” as we try to reflect and anticipate how God may be at work in our midst.¹ As a pastoral theologian and supervisor, I try to hold my theological and therapeutic commitments as one way of interpreting, one way of knowing, and am persuaded that other viewpoints have validity. I am a person of faith, a flawed heir of faith transmitted through the Reformed/Presbyterian stream of tradition, who believes that God knows what is (and is what is) foundational, universal, and ultimate, even if we do not. A social constructionist understanding of any “reality,” including supervision, views human knowledge as partial, local, “negotiated meanings and shared habits arrived at through dialogues between participants.”² Influenced, though not overtaken by postmodern and social constructionist thought, I agree that no one can claim fully to know or possess ultimate or universal truth. From this perspective, supervision is an experience of meanings and habits developed through dialogue

specific to a particular relationship, context, and point in time. However, some spheres of influence in supervision have more authority than others, and some sources of knowledge have more power in shaping the theory and practice of this relation. A social constructionist perspective acknowledges that any view of reality is an interpretation subject to change, and provides a perspective on supervision of pastoral counseling as itself a system. In addition, the power relations integral to supervision are understood to be social constructions, and thus open to interpretation, affording a shift from a supervisory position of “expert” knowledge toward a more accurate recognition of mutual influence and learning.

At the same time, as a pastoral theologian, my point of departure with social constructionist thought occurs when God’s freedom appears to be contradicted. If God is portrayed as a mere “participant” in the social construction of reality, in service to a particular version of change or growth, or the protection of an existing institution or organization, we may miss or even oppose what God is calling forth. An adequate theology of God affirms God’s freedom in relation to creation, seeks further understanding of God’s incarnation and revelation in Jesus Christ, and tries to discern God’s presence and activity in “reality,” as the Creator and re-creator of all realities. God may choose to work (or not) through pastoral counseling or supervision and through the processes of helping, teaching, and learning they involve. Although the theological commitments I hold, and the postmodern theory that influences the supervision I provide, may appear to be contradictory, in my view the distinction and relation between Creator and creation support this integration of theological commitment and supervisory practice.

In a discussion of the teaching “office” in the church, one educator identified three challenges of teaching in terms of integrity, intelligibility, and intentionality.³ As I interpret these challenges in relation to supervision of pastoral care and counseling, the challenge of integrity involves determining and transmitting the normative standards and practices of supervision in pastoral counseling, an ongoing task in theological education and the American Association of Pastoral Counselors (AAPC). The challenge of intelligibility involves the reinterpretation of these standards and practices in shifting cultural and historical contexts, and is a dimension of praxis—the ongoing mutual influence of theory and practice in supervision. The challenge of intentionality involves the formation, reformation, and sustenance of educational institutions, processes, and curricula wherein normative standards and practices of supervision and pastoral counseling are taught and appropriated by new generations of pastoral counselors.

One point of particular interest in this essay is how supervisors use authority, exercise power, and make choices in relation to God, students, clients, colleagues, church, school, and accrediting bodies, and who benefits from these choices. Authority in supervision is asserted at many points to assure sufficient transmission of knowledge, client benefit and safety, and management of risk for institutions. The hazard of “leveling” supervisory authority exists if the responsibilities of supervision are not fulfilled in relation to clients, to supervisees, and to the profession and public at large.⁴

In order to illustrate contextual influences in a supervisory relationship, I will describe how this relation is established initially in my current practice. The department of Pastoral Theology and Pastoral Counseling (PTPC) of which I am a part includes three faculty members who teach in the classroom and in the clinical context integral to the school at the Pastoral Care and Training Center.⁵ Accredited by AAPC as a service and training center since 1968, the Center provides affordable care and counseling to many persons in the Fort Worth community who would not otherwise have access to these services. On average, four or five students in the master of divinity, master of ministry, and doctor of philosophy programs are enrolled in a clinical course in any given semester and provide counseling to persons from the general public.

The supervision that I provide is structured in large part by the academic context in which it occurs. Most of the students in the clinical courses and supervision have studied with me in the classroom first, and our relationship was initially shaped by that experience. At the beginning of each semester, students who are enrolled in the clinical course meet with their individual supervisors and develop learning goals in dialogue with the supervisor. This conversation is a crucial component of building a relationship of trust, and creating a space and process that has sufficient safety and challenge for the particular student. Building the supervisory relationship begins with dialogue around the following questions:

- What are your goals for the course? Make them personal, measurable (whenever possible), attainable, observable, and include at least two texts you would like to read.
- How can I help you meet your goals? How can others help you?
- How do you best learn?
- What are your preferred theological perspectives for pastoral counseling at this point?
- What is your preferred therapeutic model at this point? Why?

- What are your interpersonal strengths?
- What are your therapeutic strengths?
- As a pastoral theologian, what do you bring to counseling?

Over the first weeks of the semester, the student develops written goals negotiated with the individual supervisor who is also in conversation with the professor of record/group supervisor for the course. Students prepare written summaries for each client session, including space for the student's self-evaluation, pastoral assessment including theological issues and clinical issues, and a plan for achieving the counseling goals with the client. The student also completes a weekly summary of training hours (client and supervision hours) and evaluation of the learning process on a form provided, identifying strengths, weaknesses, a plan for improvement, and a statement of the most significant thing the student learned about herself as a pastoral counselor that week.

Paperwork and procedures in clinical courses at the Center serve multiple purposes: to foster the student's learning and growth, to protect clients and assure their benefit, to aid appropriate responsibility by the supervisor, to orient students toward standards of practice and to meet AAPC standards specifically, and to fulfill the risk management needs of the Center and the school. Often these materials and procedures strengthen student self awareness, identify points of conversation for supervision, and so aid the process; sometimes the volume of paperwork feels burdensome for students and supervisors alike, displacing time for more enjoyable dialogue in the supervisory relationship, but that is one current "reality" of supervision in this context. In addition, the context requires evaluation, and grades are assigned at the conclusion of each semester. (I might add that faculty members themselves are evaluated by the faculty as a whole on the basis of adequate grade "distribution" in order to prevent grade inflation and protect the academic integrity of the school.) The individual supervisor reviews and writes comments on the client session summaries and weekly summary of hours and evaluation form on a week-to-week basis. These written materials, video clips of the students' sessions shown at each individual supervision meeting, and the semester learning goals, all serve as sources for dialogue in the learning process. Semester evaluations are written by individual supervisors and students, and are discussed in individual supervision and with the whole group of supervisors and students. At present, the criteria for these evaluations are drawn from the membership requirements for AAPC, and the PTPC faculty is currently engaged in developing a more specific statement of competencies expected for adequate progress through the clinical courses.⁶

Supervision of pastoral care and counseling can be well shaped and interpreted as a form of teaching ministry. At the same time, a significant question for those of us who provide supervision is how “teachable” are we. In the midst of accountability on many fronts, how free are we to differentiate ourselves in a context of supervision, or to distinguish God’s presence and activity within and apart from the processes we have established? Authorized as we may be to provide encouragement and evaluation in the supervisory relationship, responsible as we are for a student’s client caseload and thus protective of the institution in which we are employed, if we understood supervision more fully as teaching ministry, what, if anything, would we change?

SUPERVISION INFLUENCED BY A COMPETENCY-BASED APPROACH

One of my more effective experiences of receiving supervision in graduate school was with a person who asked what would help to make the relationship a “safe enough” space for learning to occur. I don’t recall my exact answer, but suspect it had to do with hearing a balance of what I was doing well and what I needed to learn. In an academic context in which evaluation is built-in to the supervision relationship, I have moved toward a competency-based approach in supervision in order to create a “safe enough” space for learning. Further, although it is not always the case, clients usually present sufficient challenge for students’ capabilities, and building on the strengths demonstrated seems more effective than focusing only on deficits, as students often do.

A competency-based approach in counseling emerged in the field of marriage and family therapy and is a particularly effective approach for pastors in the local church engaged in care and counseling. The theoretical origins of this approach, along with other brief or short-term approaches in pastoral counseling, occurred decades ago in the beginning of family systems theory itself.⁷ Commending this approach to pastors in the local church, Thomas and Cockburn defined it as, “a brief interactional approach to human dilemmas that focuses on people’s resourcefulness rather than their deficits...bringing forth resiliency, assets, and successful experiences from the counselee’s background and utilizing these resources to bring about positive change.”⁸ The six premises or assumptions in a competency-based theory for counseling as stated by Thomas and Cockburn are:

1. Complaints consist of behaviors resulting from the counselee's perception and interpretation of the world.
2. Problems are best viewed in terms of interactional patterns that are inadvertently maintained in the hopes of resolving the original difficulty.
3. Change is inevitable. If one part of a system changes, other changes will occur.
4. Rapid change is possible, if not probable.
5. Motivation is more likely when people are viewed as competent.
6. The relationship between a problem and its solution(s) is not necessarily logical. Complex problems do not necessitate complex solutions. Once you move away from a belief in simple cause and effect, a whole new world of possibilities is open to you.⁹

Drawing from these assumptions about the nature of problems, change, and motivation for purposes of supervision increases respect for the competence and "prior" knowledge of supervisees. This approach has influenced the supervision that I have received and provided in the past few years, and is very helpful with students who are much more aware of what they haven't done well, rather than what they managed to accomplish in a client session. Inviting multiple points of view, exploring alternative explanations for human behavior, and expanding possibilities and options for action often open space for confidence and increasing competence.

At the same time, when gaps in knowledge or relational capacity become evident, the possibilities and options for growth and learning are identified in supervision. For example, in one supervision process a student was labeling several of her clients as "alcoholic" and preoccupied with overcoming their denial and helping them to stop drinking by "surrendering to God." When I inquired whether the clients understood themselves as "alcoholic" and if this was the presenting problem, it became clearer that other explanations such as "misuse" of alcohol might be more accurate from the clients' point of view and more helpful in the counseling process. The student was asked to read and discuss a fuller description of alcohol use and addictive process and developed a broader range of interpretation for this problem. Privileging the clients' knowledge of their situations opened space for attention to what they considered most problematic and afforded them a greater sense of agency and freedom to change.

Frequently the students I supervise have previous pastoral experience, are able to establish a counseling relationship, are challenged by the necessity of guiding a counseling process from session-to-session, and are initially stumped in iden-

tifying theological issues in the process. Theological assumptions held by students become more explicit through the initial dialogue and relationship building in supervision.¹⁰ Through the course of a semester, some of these assumptions are examined and affirmed or revised. My task as supervisor influenced by a competency-based approach, has been to interact with supervisees in a manner that fosters increasing awareness of how their theological and therapeutic assumptions are already operative in acts of pastoral care and counseling. Further, distinguishing between a client's theological assumptions or faith perspective and their own, and choosing whether or not to address the differences if they exist with a client, are ongoing means of reflection and potential action.

In the process of supervision, I often ask to hear more about how a student understands God, God's relation to creation, or what the student counselor or client might think God is "up to" in a particular situation. I am interested in a supervisee's theological view of humanity and sense of our purpose as human beings and as a community of faith, as these views impinge on or emerge from a particular counseling process. I invite some discussion of salvation, redemption, health, wholeness, or growth and the like, listening for a student or client's own terms, conceptions, or images related to these significant reference points. I think of these explorations as theological reflection and intend them to be collaborative practice including the client's language or worldview if it is known.

However, I also recognize that such dialogue is my preferred discourse and as such, an illustration of the way I use power or authority in supervision. Further, I am not theologically "neutral" and have appreciation of and critical viewpoints about my own branch of faith tradition and that of others. In classroom and clinical settings, my aim is to use what power or influence I have to foster students' competence and expression of faith congruent with pastoral care, rather than to impose my point of view. In practice, a competency-based approach in supervision, focusing on the student's language, theology, and worldview, has probably helped to "constrain" my potential misuse of position or power in overtaking another's theological perspective.

As a professor and clinical supervisor, I have what has been called "position power" and responsibility relative to those I supervise and to their clients.¹¹ In their discussion of collaborative supervision, Fine and Turner have drawn a helpful distinction between position power and "knowledge power," the latter more open to possible "leveling" between supervisor and supervisee. Influenced by a post-modern, social constructionist viewpoint, knowledge is understood to be partial, locally situated, and changeable as distinguished from a modernist viewpoint in which

foundational knowledge or universal and ultimate truth could be established and taught. As Fine and Turner state:

In contrast, taking a “critical” or power analytic position with respect to knowledge increases the choice of those in less powerful positions by making the politics transparent. In our work as supervisors, it is important to ask ourselves and others the following knowledge/power questions: Whose knowledge is being privileged? How/when/where was it generated? What does it leave unsaid?¹²

Supervisors claiming a more collaborative approach must ask ourselves these crucial questions in order to monitor our use of power. Further, from a pastoral theological viewpoint, such questioning of the sources of knowledge we employ may provide a more accurate accounting of the relative authority of these sources. In my perspective, an adequate theology of God helps to prevent a presumption of knowing what God is “up to” in a student’s learning process or a client’s process of healing and growth. Problems experienced by supervisees can be interpreted as alterable patterns of interaction rather than some fixed or inherent aspect of personality. Change understood as inevitable can become an opportunity for expanding alternatives through supervision focused on developing a counselor’s competence. Motivation as a learner and counselor can be enhanced through supervision attending to a student’s language and worldview rather than imposition of a supervisor’s preferred discourse.

The possibility of “leveling” knowledge power between supervisor and supervisee is moderated by the multiple spheres of influence operative in supervision. Though a competency-based approach in supervision seeks to identify and affirm demonstrated strengths, students in a clinical context learn, in part, by recognizing what they miss or ignore in client sessions. One obvious example is students learning to recognize veiled references made by clients to potential or actual harm to clients or their family members, and knowing to ask for clarification of what is at stake and who is exposed to risk. Learning how to follow-up on such references in a phone call or next session, how to discuss payment of client fees due before proceeding with counseling, or what needs to be stated in a written client session summary for an accurate record, all illustrate the type of instruction that is a necessary part of good supervision and fostering students’ competence.

The aim of encouraging competence and fostering faithfulness was illustrated with a supervisee who claimed “grace” as a key theme in his understanding of God’s relation to us. However, in several interactions with clients, the student appeared to overlook a variety of self-judgments made by clients and seemed to be stuck in his growing sense of failure in not being helpful to them. When asked in

supervision what he made of the contrast between his theological conviction and his experience of himself and his clients, he began to challenge his clients and himself to imagine “what God’s grace might look like” and to gather information about when and how that might occur.

Much of the dialogue in supervision focuses on clinical issues and therapeutic interventions, identifying a student’s strengths and growing capabilities as a counselor. In the context of theological education, I also try to make space for what I call “fostering faithfulness,” meaning reflection on the student’s sense of pastoral identity, provision of care and counseling as response to God, and competence in identifying theological issues in pastoral assessment. Following are examples of the type of questions I pose for this purpose:

- What are you learning about yourself as a pastoral counselor/pastoral theologian/person of faith as you work with this client (or your current caseload)?
- How has your working/operative theology changed as a result of counseling with [client]?
- How do you make decisions about opening space for talk of God with this client? (Expand ideas and options: What else could you do? What else could you say?)
- What specific clues or indicators led you to this [theological] interpretation of the client or client’s situation? What other interpretations are possible?
- If you were going to take a stance on [justice issue, ethical dilemma] with this client, how could you do that? What else could you do/say?
- If your pastoral identity came to the fore a little more, what would change in your approach?
- How do you decide when to claim a different [theological] viewpoint with this client? If you first asked if the client wants to hear your viewpoint, what would you say?
- Are you wanting to foster hope [having choices] in this situation, or agency [the ability to choose] or both? What are some additional ways you could do that?
- What connections do you make between your emphasis on this client’s strengths/resilience and your theological view of humanity (or pastoral theological anthropology?)
- What do you make of your difficulty in identifying this client’s strengths [or solutions, or meanings, or actions toward a goal]? What if any connec-

tions do you see between this difficulty and your sense of [*imago dei*, human nature, what you and/or the client thinks God is up to]?

- How is your understanding of [sin/brokenness/injustice/suffering] changing as you work with this situation? Is your understanding close to/different from the client's understanding?
- As a pastoral theologian what do you make of the difference between what you want for your clients and what they want for themselves?¹³

In my experience thus far, one or two questions of this type evolves in supervision and can be used over an entire semester with a student depending upon the learning goals, theology, and therapy “growing edges” that we have identified. Wondering what God is calling forth in the clients we try to help, the students we teach, in ourselves, and in the institutions of which we are a part, increases the possibility of participating in God's activity and purpose. Discerning what God may be doing and what God asks of us is based upon a relationship with and theology of God, a method for interpretation of scripture, and interaction with and accountability to a specific community of interpreters.

SUPERVISION AS PRAXIS IN MULTIPLE SPHERES OF INFLUENCE

Teaching in general and supervision in particular are relationships of trust as well as hierarchical relations of power. Among individual and institutional members of an accrediting professional organization such as AAPC, promoting standards of competent practice and maintaining ethical standards are crucial responsibilities in the supervisory relationship. For those of us who are licensed by the state and/or ordained by and accountable to a faith community and denomination, the spheres of influence and various relations of power and authority are complex and occasionally conflicting. Identifying supervision as a form of praxis promotes intentional and ongoing revision of theory and practice in this crucial intersection of relations. While I am not attempting construction of a theory of supervision in this essay, I am calling attention to an approach now generating in theory and in practice, and naming a kind of “communal praxis” that is in progress. Rather than the application of theory in practice, praxis suggests that theory is shaped by practice, and practice by theory in an ongoing relation of mutual influence. Further, the notion of “communal” praxis is most accurate in acknowledging my sense of joining multiple works-in-progress, a community of interpreters of theory and practice,

trusting that we benefit from a variety of ideas about and manifestations of supervision in pastoral counseling. I am also, frankly, curious about others' experiences of the multiple spheres of support, influence, and accountability that make supervision possible, and wonder what becomes more and less possible in the mix. I turn to one "sorting" of this mix in order to understand it a little better.

In addition to the distinction between position power and knowledge power, one theory of collaborative practice identifies five "situated realities," each with a specific location in the supervision system, and all impinging on that supervision.¹⁴ A supervision system includes at least the counselor, clients, clinical context, supervisor, and the professional accrediting association. As described by Fine and Turner, the first are "centrally situated realities," such as the ethical standards and criteria for membership constructed by members of a professional association, said to be the "least flexible and most removed" from a supervisor/supervisee relation. The second are "locally situated realities" that develop in conversation between supervisors in a training program or in a local professional group. These realities are congruent in many ways with the first type.

Third are "interpersonally situated realities" emerging from dialogue between supervisor and counselor, identified as "the most flexible and idiosyncratic" because they are the meanings and habits developed by only a few people. The therapist or counselor has the most opportunity to influence the process of supervision in this set of "negotiated meanings and shared habits." Fourth, "personally situated realities" arise from an individual's "internal conversations regarding personal ethical meanings and practices." Finally, the fifth category includes "consumer situated realities" in which clients provide feedback to a counselor who is in supervision, thus establishing dialogue among client, counselor, and supervisor.

The purpose of identifying these "situated realities" in a supervision system is to deconstruct or demystify the power relations among these locations. A supervisor who becomes more transparent with supervisees about these "realities" and the distinctions among them modifies the negative effect of hierarchical power in the supervisory relationship. In other words, it is clearer to a student what and how much is open for negotiation. Further, I have found these distinctions helpful in negotiating among the sometimes confusing competition among these spheres of influence. In my context for providing supervision, the academic program of a theological education institution is one "centrally situated reality" with many supporting factors and some constraining factors, such as limited faculty and financial resources, and risk management on behalf of the institution. Ongoing dialogue with the school's administration occurs around the value of training in pastoral coun-

seling, an intensive investment of human and material resources, alongside the purpose of the broader curriculum in equipping students for general pastoral ministry.

A second “centrally situated reality” is AAPC as the accrediting organization for the Pastoral Care and Training Center and the PTPC faculty members. A recurring issue between these two “centrally situated realities” is the fact that Brite does not offer the range of courses needed for licensure in marriage and family therapy or as a professional counselor in Texas, though they are available at area universities. The awkward evolution of a “dual track” for persons preparing for licensure by taking courses elsewhere and pursuing a theological degree continues to press the point of how much can be provided through one school’s academic curricula.

The “locally situated realities” in the supervision system of which I am a part would be the three professors/supervisors who teach pastoral theology and pastoral counseling and provide supervision at the Center. The agreements and habits we develop are, for the most part, congruent with the centrally situated realities at Brite and in AAPC. One consideration in this reality set is that as supervisors we try to stay open to a student’s preference for learning a specific therapeutic approach and yet our context and interests lean toward the brief, solution-focused, narrative, collaborative, and competency-based stream from marriage and family therapy. While there are a few opportunities for studying a broader range of psychological and therapeutic theories, our primary function as faculty preparing people for ministry in the local church shapes our knowledge and practice.

“Interpersonally situated realities”—those between supervisor and student/supervisee—provide opportunities for a collaborative approach based on several factors including student readiness. The term “collaborative” is an accurate description of the process of negotiating learning goals, including reading to be completed over the course of a semester. In a few instances, the “interpersonally situated reality” of supervision has become more directive as a reflection of supervisor “position power,” and less collaborative in terms of negotiated meanings and habits, in order to uphold course requirements or protect clients’ best interests. This shift has reflected the two broader “centrally situated realities” (Brite and AAPC) that determine consistent standards and requirements in teaching and learning pastoral counseling.

“Personally situated realities” arising from an individual’s internal conversations may or may not be disclosed in supervision. The question, “what are you learning about yourself as a pastoral counselor?” in working with a particular client, or sometimes in relation to other students or the supervisor, may open space for such disclosure. Many pastoral counselors and supervisors, myself included,

have internal conversations about something said or left unsaid that may be brought to the next client session, or to supervision, or even prompt a phone call. The point in terms of a supervision system is that such internal conversation is itself a significant locus where meaning is negotiated and dialogue (at least with oneself) occurs, and that this reality influences supervision itself.

The final set, “consumer situated realities,” or what I prefer to call “client” situated realities are a part of supervision at Brite. The therapeutic approaches our students tend to use lend themselves to direct requests for client feedback, often more than once during a session. Supervisors sometimes require students to request “anonymous” written feedback during or following a counseling process in order to assess the accuracy of the student’s perceptions. In addition, supervisors receive feedback from the students at the end of each semester in the written and face-to-face semester reports. This summary of the variety of “realities” that impinge on supervision provides some clarification of these multiple influences and the distinctions among their effects.

CONCLUSION

I believe that we are not alone in ministries of care and counseling, and surely we are not alone in our efforts in the clinical supervision of pastoral counseling. Supervision in the context of theological education provides an opportunity to encourage and evaluate competency, and to foster faithfulness to God in the use of the gifts we have been given and the skills we have developed. We are more likely to be effective and faithful in our ministry if a community of interpreters discerns and defines the meaning of these terms. Supervision influenced by a competency-based approach focuses the relation of supervisor and supervisee on developing strengths, increasing the likelihood that competence is affirmed when demonstrated and appropriate knowledge taught and learned when needed.

Taking into account a social constructionist view of reality moderates a tendency toward presuming expert knowledge or transmitting knowledge in an authoritarian manner. At the same time, such a view helps to identify multiple spheres of influence in the larger supervision system, exposing the power relative to each, and the partial nature of meanings and patterns negotiated in respective spheres. Some sources of knowledge and influence have more authority and power, and are less flexible or open to negotiation than others, and clarifying these power relations

in the supervision system promotes transparency and enhances the learning process.

Supervision of pastoral counseling provides a space and invitation for discernment of what God may be calling forth, though none of us can claim fully to know what that may be. Wondering and discerning together in such “communal praxis” may lead to a multiplicity of faithful responses to God including ethical and effective interaction with a client and mutual learning on the part of supervisor and supervisee. Though we cannot accomplish what God alone will complete, we can try to reflect and anticipate what God may be doing through supervision in pastoral counseling.

NOTES

1. I have discussed method in pastoral theology and the influence of liberation and feminist theologies in revisioning pastoral theology in *Introducing Feminist Pastoral Care and Counseling* (Cleveland, Ohio: Pilgrim, 2001).

2. Jean Turner and Marshall Fine, “Postmodern Evaluation in Family Therapy Supervision,” *Journal of Systemic Therapies* 14 (1996): 57–69.

3. I am drawing from a discussion of teaching in the mainline Protestant tradition in which one educator identified three tasks that lie at the heart of this church office: “(1) the determination of the normative beliefs and practices of the church; (2) the reinterpretation of these beliefs and practices in shifting cultural and historical contexts; and (3) the formation of educational institutions, processes, and curricula by which these beliefs and practices are handed down from generation to generation and appropriated in ever deeper ways across the lives of individual Christians.” Richard Robert Osmer, *A Teachable Spirit: Recovering the Teaching Office in the Church* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox, 1990), 15.

4. One useful statement of a supervisor’s ethical responsibilities to clients, supervisees, and the public, appears in Cheryl L. Storm and Ingeborg E. Haug, “Ethical Issues: Where Do You Draw the Line?” in *The Complete Systemic Supervisor: Context, Philosophy, and Pragmatics*, ed. Thomas C. Todd and Cheryl L. Storm (Boston, Mass.: Allyn and Bacon, 1997), 27–28.

5. At this writing my colleagues, Andrew Lester and Howard Stone, both professors of Pastoral Theology and Pastoral Counseling at Brite Divinity School, Fort Worth, Texas, are retiring. I welcome to Brite two colleagues in our field, Nancy J. Ramsay as academic dean and professor of Pastoral Care, and Christie Cozad Neuger as professor of Pastoral Theology and Pastoral Counseling. In addition, Duane Bidwell serves as director of the Pastoral Care and

Training Center and as an instructor at Brite. Further information about the Center may be found at <www.brite.tcu.edu/pastoralcare>.

6. For a helpful discussion of evaluating supervisees in a university-based context while maintaining a “non-expert” position as supervisor, see Douglas Flemons, Shelley Green, and Anne Rambo, “Evaluating Therapists’ Practices in a Postmodern World: A Discussion and a Scheme,” *Family Process* 35 (March 1996): 43–56.

7. See for example Howard W. Stone, *Brief Pastoral Counseling* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1994).

8. The approach is discussed in Frank Thomas and Jack Cockburn, *Competency-Based Counseling: Building on Client Strengths* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 1998), and in Frank N. Thomas, “Solution-Focused Supervision: The Coaxing of Expertise,” in *Handbook of Solution-Focused Brief Therapy: Foundations, Applications, and Research*, ed. S.D. Miller and M.A. Hubble (San Francisco, Calif.: Jossey-Bass, 1996).

9. The full discussion of these premises is found in Thomas and Cockburn *Competency-Based Counseling: Building on Client Strengths*, 27–37.

10. Suggestions that I make to students who request resources for reflecting on theological assumptions include introductory theology texts such as Daniel L. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1991); or a brief summary of theological questions and metaphors for caregiving I discussed in *Pastoral Visitation* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 1999), 15–20.

11. Marshall Fine and Jean Turner, “Collaborative Supervision: Minding the Power,” in T. C. Todd and C. L. Storm, ed., *The Complete Systemic Supervisor: Context, Philosophy, and Pragmatics* (Boston, Mass.: Allyn and Bacon, 1997), 230–232.

12. *Ibid.*, 231.

13. The list of questions was developed in dialogue with my clinical supervisor, Frank N. Thomas, Ph.D., and distributed at an AAPC annual convention workshop “Supervision for Theological Integration,” Salt Lake City, Utah, 4 May 2002, in which I was a panel member.

14. Marshall Fine and Jean Turner, “Collaborative Supervision: Minding the Power,” in T. C. Todd and C. L. Storm, ed., *The Complete Systemic Supervisor: Context, Philosophy, and Pragmatics* (Boston, Mass.: Allyn and Bacon, 1997), 232–234.

Supervising the Spiritual Self: The Use of Sustained Empathic Inquiry in Pastoral Supervision

William R. DeLong

The clinical rhombus utilized in the work of Rudolf Ekstein and Robert Wallerstein in *The Teaching and Learning of Psychotherapy* is familiar to most trained clinical pastoral education (CPE) supervisors.¹ The rhombus, often used to encourage a broader view and understanding of the multiple layers of supervisory dynamics and accountability, provides a helpful framework for thinking further about empathy and sustained empathic inquiry.

In this paper, I use a supervisory rhombus to help explain how pastoral supervision of the spiritual self can be conceived. I then consider the theological implications of sustained empathic inquiry, namely, incarnation as sustained empathic inquiry. I hope to show some of the unique perspectives that can be gained when we begin to consider spirituality, or the spiritual self, as an object of empathic inquiry.

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I work out of an understanding of my Christian faith, in the particular flavor of the reformed theological tradition, as further handed down by the Presbyterian brand of that movement. As I hope will be demonstrated, I have no intention to bind the widely understood human experience of empathy to any particular religious understanding. Rather, my hope is to further elucidate an understanding of supervision by using the insights gained from the principles of sustained empathic inquiry and other concepts articulated in psychoanalytic intersubjective theory. Further, I hope to show how this particular method used in supervision may convey a different understanding and experience of incarnation that will be liberating to many of us who have experienced the belief of the incarnation of Jesus as toxic, misleading, or nonsensical, particularly as it is understood in the atonement theories of the Christian church. I am speaking to some of the “Christians in exile,” as described by John Spong.² In this way, I hope to continue and encourage further dialogue about pastoral supervision in the postmodern context.³

THE SPIRITUAL SELF

What do I mean by the “spiritual self?” Humans are not so much *Homo sapiens* as we are “Homo religious.” That is, humans are not so much driven to logic and thinking as we are driven to faith and spirituality. Humans seem to seek and experience again and again that which is beyond them. Humans seem to have a need to experience what Rudolph Otto described as the *mysterium tremendum*.⁴

In his well-known book, *The Idea of the Holy*, Otto identifies and explores the non-rational mystery behind religion and the religious experience. (“Non-rational” should not be confused with “irrational.”) He called this mystery, which is the basic element in all religions, the numinous.⁵

Otto understood the religious experience as primarily that—an experience. This experience of the “numen” or “divine other” often leaves the individual with a profound deficit in language to describe the experience. The experience of the divine leaves the individual with a sense of awe and mystery, as well as a profound sense of fascination and attraction.

Awe and mystery, and the corresponding inability to find words to describe the experience, are an essential part of any mystical experience. Dorothee Soelle describes this as an essential aspect of mysticism:

Mysticism is *cognition Dei experimentalis* (the knowledge of God through and from experience). What is meant here is the knowledge of God that, instead of

being obtained from instruction, tradition, books, and doctrines, comes from one's own life.⁶

Soelle goes on to say that our language to express this kind of experience is deeply inadequate. Yet, because supervision is primarily a "talk method," we can miss our students because they simply may not have the words to describe their own spiritual or mystical experiences. The spiritual self is that part of the person that perceives this type of mystical experience.

Harold Bronheim, professor of psychiatry at Mount Sinai School of Medicine, suggests that humans have as a part of their character structure an inherent quest for what we would traditionally call transcendence.⁷ Faith, he claims, is:

...a state of self cohesion as a result of an arrangement of internal object relations that reflects the nature and developing maturity of the combined observing and experiencing ego. It is a character structure that serves to maintain psychic stability at times of loss of stabilizing self/objects by allowing for the transcendence of the immediate time and local circumstances while continuing a state of interpersonal connectedness. It may be externalized and directed to an idealized object, for example God, who may then assume qualities of infinite omnipresence. However, it does not require such a projection or assignment, nor does it require objective proof to be true.⁸

Without going too far afield into object relations theory, Bronheim makes some important claims here. First, he says, that faith is a character structure, a part of normal maturation, and a part of the biologically predicted aspects of personality. Second, he claims faith is not inherently directed at any particular object. The object to which faith is directed or attached becomes an aspect of culture, family heritage, preference, and so forth. Third, he says, faith is an awareness of the initial internalization of the primary object. I want to briefly elaborate on each of these aspects.

As a structural component of character, Bronheim is claiming that faith is a part of each individual and must be accommodated in one way or another. He claims that faith is not secondary to the individual but is as basic an element as sexuality, identity, or other aspects of the self. This claim leads us to see each person as struggling not so much with whether or not there is faith, but rather with the more important question, "What is the object of the faith I already have?"

Faith, he says, is the desire to experience something that is more akin to awe. The human person seeks to experience awe or wonder—and sometimes that is "attached" to a religious object that we call God that is then further re-experienced by the various rituals of religious faith. However, the root of that quest is located as a part of personality structure—it is an aspect of character or the self.

Bronheim suggests that the self experiences a preverbal occurrence of awe. This experience of awe comes, he says, from the self's initial awareness of internalizing a primary or transformational object. Thus, the initial experience of awe is the felt experience of the self's coming to awareness. It is the original awareness of the self's internalizing a primary object. Bronheim likens this to the question posed by God to Adam and Eve in the creation story in Genesis. When considering that story, we see that Adam and Eve realize that they are naked only after God asks them the question: "Where are you?"⁹ Self-awareness—the realization of being naked, perhaps vulnerable—is secondary to the act of God seeking humanity. Human awareness comes as a result of God's existential question, "Where are you?"

Bronheim provides intuitive support for these claims by considering the almost universal game of peek-a-boo. In the childhood game, the mother hides her face from the young child; then, when the child is perhaps near panic at the perceived loss of the primary object, the mother suddenly appears—to the squealing delight of the child. When the child once again experiences the restored primary object, she is re-awakened to the dawning of that first internalization—she re-experiences awe. In a similar fashion, we term an experience as "awe filled" when we are re-awakened to this foundational experience of our awareness of the internalization of the primary object.

Bronheim makes it clear that faith, as a structure of the person, can be understood in the same fashion as any other aspect of personality or character. If we are able to observe psychological phenomenon only through the use of vicarious introspection or sustained empathic inquiry, as Kohut asserts, then it should also be true that faith, and the part of the self that experiences it, can be the object of that same type of inquiry.

SUSTAINED EMPATHIC INQUIRY

Sustained empathic inquiry is the phrase used by Heinz Kohut and more recently adopted by Robert Stolorow and others working in the area of psychoanalytic intersubjective theory. Sustained empathic inquiry is the use of what I call "clinical empathy" to understand the subjective meaning of another individual.¹⁰ Empathy, according to Kohut, is not simply a feeling. Rather, empathy is the intentional use of the self in attempting to understand the subjective reality of another from with-

in her or his perspective. Kohut describes vicarious introspection, or empathy, by using the example of a very tall man:

Only when we think ourselves into his place, only when we, by vicarious introspection, begin to feel his unusual size as if it were our own and thus revive inner experiences in which we had been unusual or conspicuous, only then do we begin to appreciate the meaning that the unusual size may have for this person and only then have we observed a psychological fact.¹¹

Empathic inquiry, then, is not a feeling associated with compassion or pity. Clinical use of empathy does not so much happen to us, as might pity or compassion, but rather we initiate it in an attempt to understand the other. Kohut conceives empathy as a method to observe a psychological fact. Kohut so strongly believed in the role of empathy that he claimed that empathy was the only way that another person could apprehend a “psychological fact” in another. He says:

Only a phenomenon that we can attempt to observe by introspection or by empathy with another’s introspection may be called psychological. A phenomenon is “somatic,” “behavioristic” or “social” if our methods of observation do not predominantly include introspection and empathy.¹²

Empathy is more akin to “fellow feeling” than it is to the emotions of pity or compassion. Further, empathy, or the more extended use of sustained empathic inquiry, is the only way a person can understand the unique perspective of the other. It is only when we enter the unique subjective reality of others that we can begin to understand how they make meaning in the world and thus provide for themselves a unique sense of self.

Empathy was also crucial for Kohut because it redirected the emphasis of the therapeutic relationship away from interpretation based on objectivity to a mutual process of understanding. By grounding the therapeutic relationship in the method of empathy, Kohut affirms the subjective reality of the patient, leading to a clinical environment of mutual respect and mutual inquiry. Instead of relying on “distortion” and “interpretation,” the therapist seeks to understand the inner reality of the patient as she or he understands it. Understanding how the patient makes meaning in his or her inner world is the focus of therapy—the same is true in the process of training. The goal of the supervisee is to understand the patient or client from within his or her own perspective. In similar fashion, the goal of the training supervisor is to understand the student from within his or her unique perspective. The parallel process is supported and understood by empathy. This requires a clinical stance of sustained empathic inquiry. Yet, questions quickly arise: What is the object of sustained empathic inquiry in the supervisory alliance? How do I begin to

use the clinical method of vicarious introspection, and what am I to observe? What self is to be the object of that inquiry?

A SUPERVISORY RHOMBUS

As mentioned earlier, I find it useful to think about the use of sustained empathy by utilizing the notion of a rhombus or four quadrants. The rhombus is, of course, only a representation of what is ultimately the integrated whole of the person. However, as I think of the areas of inquiry within the self in training supervision, I find the model helps me to concentrate on various areas of supervision. In many ways, this depiction violates one of the central tenets of intersubjective theory, namely, making distinct and reified that which cannot be separated or concretized, but, to explain my sense of supervising the spiritual self, I believe this artificial distinction is justified.

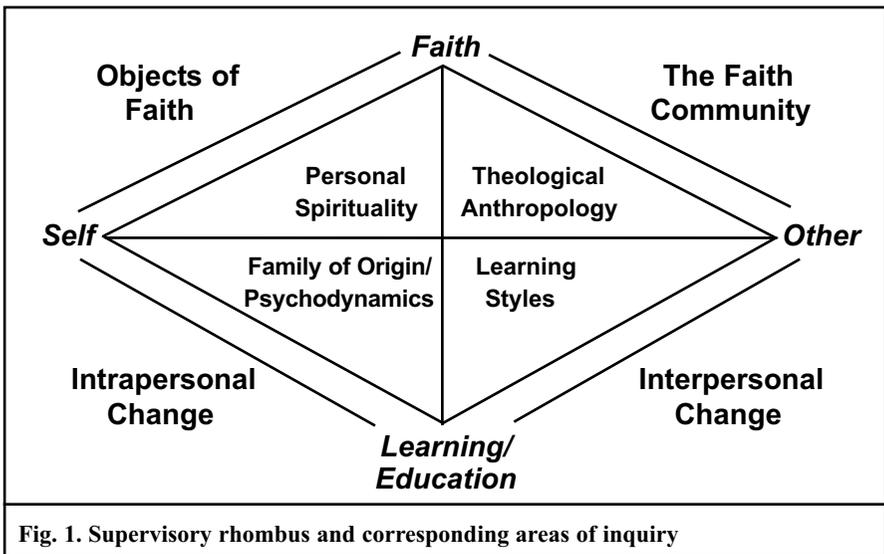
Development of a supervisor can be conceived as a process that teaches one to become a particular kind of person to others. Acquiring and utilizing theory and particular skills is not sufficient if it is not integrated within the individual. Becoming a particular kind of person for others is most clearly considered in the final process of certification for CPE supervisor, since the focus of that process is on integrating personal history and theory with the actual practice of supervising. The language we use to talk about that process is indeed centered in “use of self” as the primary teaching tool. Yet, in order to learn the various theories and skills, one must focus on specific goals throughout training. The rhombus outlined below is intended to provide a way of thinking about those goals.

This supervisory rhombus allows us to see how various elements work together to ensure comprehensive supervision. One way the rhombus helps is that it keeps us from splitting apart various aspects needing supervisory attention and integration. It is important to remember that my interest at this point is to focus upon the area of the rhombus that illuminates the faith understanding of the supervisory resident or other student. It is quite clear to me that others could assign, with equal justification, different goals that should be developed in the supervisory process. My hope in using this rhombus is to assist in the use of sustained empathic inquiry as the primary method of supervision.

In the supervisory rhombus depicted here (Fig. 1), there are four areas or objects of inquiry, all of them accessed through the use of sustained empathic inquiry. This rhombus is most helpful when attention is paid to each of the sectors and the

dynamic interplay between them. Splitting off one aspect or concentrating on one quadrant at the expense of others leads to something other than pastoral supervision of the supervisory resident. For instance, if only the Faith-Self (FS) dynamic is considered in supervision, then we are more likely doing spiritual direction. Paying attention exclusively to the Self-Education (SE) dynamic at the exclusion of the other parts of the rhombus is closer to individual therapy than to pastoral supervision. The Faith-Other (FO) orientation is closer to community worship or theological anthropology, while the Education-Others (EO) dynamic would yield any number of the helping professions, depending upon the unique character, nature, and methods of care being taught (i.e., nursing, medicine, social work, and so forth.).

Despite the importance of attending to all aspects of the rhombus, there are times when we must focus upon one aspect that the student may be presenting. Attending means, I believe, the use of sustained empathic inquiry.



THE FAITH-SELF QUADRANT

The Faith-Self quadrant is of particular interest to me as I supervise supervisory residents. Since the focus of this article is the use of sustained empathic inquiry in supervision and in particular the supervision of the spiritual self, the rest of this article will focus on the use of empathy in understanding the student in the Faith-Self (FS) quadrant. This area of supervision clearly overlaps with many current understandings of spiritual direction. The goal of understanding in this quadrant is with the student's spiritual meaning-making or the object(s) of their faith dynamic. Understanding the student from within her or his experience of the divine is critical in the formation of CPE supervisors.

Supervision of the spiritual self is not new to pastoral supervision—most of us are consciously working with the student's beliefs about the nature of God and the interaction of humanity with God. However, when empathy is used, we move away from understanding the spiritual self of the student in an objective way to what I believe is the more powerful and transformative understanding: the student's subjective understanding of her or his experience of God. That means being more connected to students' mystical experience than with their stated formal beliefs, such as creeds, doctrines, or learned systematic theology.

Dorothee Soelle's thinking about mysticism has been helpful to me as I seek to understand the experience of awe that students bring to pastoral supervision. In *The Silent Cry*, Soelle articulates the essential nature of mysticism. Quoting William James' four characteristics of the mystical experience, she provides a broad outline of the mystical experience from a subjective viewpoint:

- The loss of all worry; the sense that all is ultimately well with one; the peace, the harmony and the willingness to be, even though the outer conditions should remain the same;
- The sense of perceiving truths that were not known before and that make life's mysteries lucid;
- The objective change that the world seems to undergo, making it seem "new" and never having been seen that way before;
- The ecstasy of happiness.¹³

Convinced that mysticism is the lifeblood of religion, she outlines several areas one must attend to if one is to understand the mystical experiences of life—these are paradox, negation, and silence. I believe supervising the spiritual self requires that we attend to these elements in our supervision and in ourselves.

PARADOX

Language, its use and misuse, is often the enemy of the spiritual encounter. If we are to understand the spiritual experiences of our students, I believe we must move beyond language. Paradox is one way of attending to this important aspect of supervision.

“Heaviness is the root of lightness. Serenity is the master of restlessness.”¹⁴ This is a simple example of paradox, which pits two seemingly opposite concepts into a single whole. The ‘silent cry’ is another example. Paradox has long been used to invite the self to move beyond the “captured thinking of logic.” “You have to be strong enough to be weak,” as quoted by Jon Kabat-Zinn.¹⁵ Soelle says it this way:

The coincidence of substantive or logical contradictions (*coincidentia oppositorum*) comes about when in a single statement words are juxtaposed with each other that are insufficient on their own. This creates the paradox, which is an unexpected assertion that goes counter to general opinion or common knowledge. In terms of philosophy of language, the paradox is an attempt to approach from two opposite directions a factor that cannot be perceived or understood.¹⁶

Paradox is a method well understood by theologians and mystics. Many of the sayings of Jesus use this method to convey deeper truths.

Attending to the nature of paradox provides insight into how the student understands experiences that lie at the edge of reason. Provided that this “attending” is characterized by sustained empathic immersion, we gain insight into how the student makes meaning on the fringes of his or her own logic. Consider the following event with a third unit CPE resident:

Chris was clearly a talented hospital chaplain. His Southern Baptist religious roots provided him with a sufficient grounding in spirituality to enable him to work with patients in the arena of personal spirituality. For most of the year, the CPE group was working with Chris to move more fully into his feeling and to abandon some of the shame that told him his expressions of feeling were stupid and unimportant to others.

Chris came to interpersonal relations group (IPR) after working the previous week with a young man whose 16-month-old boy had stopped breathing and was brought in to the Emergency Room. Chris was the first one to begin working with the young father, who was clearly shocked by the events unfolding. Chris formed an appropriate pastoral bond with this young man of his own age. Christ hugged the man good-bye, and the family went home without their son who had died as a result of the anoxia.

Chris came to that IPR after having been contacted by the police regarding his interaction with the young father. As it turned out, the father was the primary suspect in the death of the child and was arrested the same day we were meeting for IPR. Chris was stunned and angry. The group used an empathic stance to support Chris both in his recent discovery of the arrest and of his seeming inability to express his feelings. “You can’t kill your own children,” he said. “You take the very life you gave?” “What the hell do you do with that?” he concluded.

The paradox presented by this clinical encounter forced Chris to face something that moved him beyond his own internal logic. The paradox of giving and taking life did not make sense to Chris. Had the group focused upon the nature of the paradox and the seeming inability to make sense of the event, they would have missed Chris in the midst of his emotional and learning need. Instead, the group moved to an empathic stance and asked Chris to feel the “non-sense” of the event. As he did, he began to move more fully and congruently into an understood emotion. The acceptance of the paradox through the use of sustained empathic inquiry helped Chris to feel the event and integrate it.

Paradox, by its nature, quickly removes logic as a means of understanding the event. If we can sit with the non-sense long enough, and allow ourselves to be with students in the midst of it, we can be with them in a way that allows them to move with the paradox, and perhaps beyond language, rather than to move away from it and to discount it as nonsense.

NEGATION

The philosophy student in me wants to look at the definition of “negation” before we move further into this aspect of supervising the spiritual self. This is a difficult concept that has long been debated in both philosophy and theology. Given this, I am trying to stay within a manageable discussion of how I understand negation in the supervision of students. So, off to brainydictionary.com I went to find a definition. Here is what they say, and I think it works for most of what I seek to say here:

Negation

(adv.) The act of denying; assertion of the nonreality or untruthfulness of anything; declaration that something is not, or has not been, or will not be; denial;—the opposite of affirmation.

(adv.) Description or definition by denial, exclusion, or exception; statement of what a thing is not, or has not, from which may be inferred what it is or has.¹⁷

What feels most important to me about this definition is the active use of declaring that “something is not, or has not been, or will not be; denial.” Most of us are well attuned to the unique ways our students deny their reality. As a group, we are well prepared to address this aspect in supervision since it is critical to any learning process. However, addressing denial takes on a bit of a twist when we begin to consider it in the spiritual realm of the self. Questions that I pose for myself to begin an empathic inquiry are similar to: Who is the God this student denies? What aspect of God is being resisted? How is God absent from this person’s life? In what ways is this student ensuring that she or he does not encounter God differently?

This, however, is only one aspect of negation. Soelle sees negation from the aspect of being beyond words. Negation for her is closer to the method of the *via negativa*, the way of knowing that is beyond description because our language is always fixed within the experiential and because most of what is deeply spiritual is far beyond our ability to locate words that describe that experience. A mentor of mine described it this way, “it is about the letting go of the discursive mind as the vehicle for holding one’s connection to the mystery.” Soelle says it like this:

The stylistic figure of negation belongs to the experience that is inexpressible in words. It is not this, it is not that, it is not what you already know or have seen or what someone told you before. ...What cannot be named positively can either be left in silence or must be named negatively.¹⁸

Using a stance of sustained empathic inquiry allows for distinctions like this to become a part of the spoken or unspoken supervisory dialogue. The interplay of negation (the *via negativa*, i.e. that which is denied because of the sheer suffering and darkness of the event and that which cannot be spoken because of the poverty of language) allows for the emergence of what is and what, perhaps, is becoming. A first-year supervisory resident taught me much about this process:

Shawn is a Lutheran student in her first year of supervisory CPE. In one individual supervision, she began to talk about the longing she had to communicate a God of love to a hospice patient she had cared for while completing her residency in CPE. As she talked, she began to speak in language of the *via negativa*, telling me what she didn’t want for the patient. “It’s not that I want him to have peace or at least simply peace, or even acceptance. I don’t want him to have to find a way to make everyone around him more comfortable with his own death. I don’t even want him to have the sacraments of the church, even though I know that is truly important to him. I want him to have that, well, you

know, that peace that passes all understanding. I just don't know how to say this."

Sustained empathy allowed me to be with her as she struggled to find the words, concepts, and meaning that spoke the depth of the spiritual hope she had for this man. The negation, in this instance, was a combination of the denial she herself was experiencing over the care she provided this man two years earlier. But, it was also a struggle to find the way to talk about that which was beyond words. Her own experience of a "peace that passes all understanding" allowed her to move toward this man with the same wordless hope. It was my experience that was also resonating as I empathically listened to her try to put words to that experience and hope. In the end, this kind of situation often ends with both partners of the conversation saying something like "you know?" with the only possible response being, "yeah, I know."

Allowing ourselves to connect empathically with the negation of the student allows us to feel the depth of angst and hope as the student seeks to communicate that which is often beyond words:

Tao can be talked about, but not the Eternal Tao, Names can be named, but not the Eternal Name.

As the origin of heaven-and-earth, it is nameless: As the "the Mother" of all things, it is nameable.

So, as ever hidden, we should look at its inner essence: As always manifest, we should look at its outer aspects.

These two flow from the same source, though differently named:

And both are called mysteries.

The Mystery of mysteries is the Door of all essence.¹⁹

SILENCE

The supervision of the spiritual self requires, at least from my perspective, a profound comfort, understanding, and curiosity with silence. The silence that emerges in the supervisory encounter is often looked at from a psychodynamic perspective—and most of us are quite adept at staying with the student in the midst of this kind of silence. However, as Soelle points out, silence in the spiritual arena can be quite different:

The third specific element of all mystical languages is silence, which is speaking coming to an end and producing at the same time an expanse of silence. In terms of day-to-day experiences, two kinds of silence may be distinguished. One is a dull, listless, apathetic silence; a wordlessness arising from poverty, such as exists in culture of poverty or between people who have nothing to say to one another. But besides this prediscourse silence, there is also a post discourse means of communication. This silence after speaking does make use of words but only in order to leave them behind.²⁰

Soelle's notion of a pre- and post-discourse silence is very helpful to me in my attending to the spiritual self in supervision. Most of us are quite familiar with the pre-discourse silence; this is the quiet of an IPR group as it moves from anxious chatter to "IPR." This is not the silence that is spiritually significant—rather, as Soelle points out, the silence that comes over the conversation when words are left behind because a more powerful and meaningful way of communicating. Silence can be the leaving of words not because of resistance or transference, but silence, as a different kind of language, is beginning. Silence in this manner is more linked to the beholding of the other in a moment when spiritual awareness is shared. The supervision of the student in this kind of situation requires letting go of any pre-determined understanding of objectivity (as compared to subjective understandings). Sustained empathic inquiry allows for the moments when words leave off being a shared encounter from within the subjective reality of the student. Sustained empathic inquiry is a perspective that would allow for this kind of mystical experience to be shared and understood. This can be seen through another example:

Henry was completing his second unit of CPE within the context of a yearlong residency. An older African-American man who had marched in the civil rights struggles of the 60s, Henry had seen much in his life. Central to his learning was a nagging belief that he would be unable to work with patients due to the grief he felt over the death of his own son some 17 years earlier.

In this individual supervisory session, Henry was telling me the story of his son's death. The depth of pain was clear and present. And so was his grief recovery. But what filled the room was the silence that mirrored the vacuum of loss. The emptiness was beyond words, and it seemed the only proper response was the silence we all learned as chaplains in moments of profound grief. Yet, the silence in this encounter was not just grief, it was the silence that comes when words leave off...when words have no meaning any longer. The silence gave rise to an understanding that led Henry to say, "Blessed be the name of the Lord."

We sat in silence for maybe half the hour. It was neither rushed nor uncomfortable. A sustained empathic stance allowed me to feel the weight of the moment,

the satisfaction with the telling of the story, and the honor being given to his son and himself. At the same time, the final words uttered by Henry leave off the first part of that familiar phrase: “The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away...”²¹

INCARNATION AND EMPATHY

Kohut insisted that empathy was the essential language of development and thus psychotherapy. Infant researchers affirm this understanding by indicating that long before infants respond to words they respond to the empathic climate of their surroundings.²² The parent mimics the childish “coo” of the infant. This mirroring effect provides the infant with an understanding that she is in the world and can find in it responsive others. Empathy, then, is at the very root of our becoming persons. Thus, it is not a far leap to wonder how the divine mystery may also speak the language of empathy. A brief return to the work of Bronheim will help me make this point.

I began this paper referring to how Bronheim locates faith as a character structure and thus a part of normal development. In that discussion, Bronheim quotes a story told by Martin Buber about the Hassidic Rabbi Shneur Zalman. Rabbi Zelman, while in jail having been denounced in Russia, tells this story:

While in jail, he was approached by the chief of the gendarmes with the following question. “How are we to understand that God, the all-knowing, said to Adam ‘Where art thou?’ Didn’t he know where his own creation was?” Rabbi Zalman answered the officer simply and directly that God’s question “Where art thou?” seeks to implore Adam to give an account of himself as to what he has been doing with his life, and how he has been hiding himself from truth about himself. Rabbi Zalman continues to say that the question, although asked of Adam, is an eternal one, asking every man through every generation to examine the hideouts and falsehoods in his life and how he hides himself from the face of God. Adam’s reply—“I was afraid and I hid myself”—is not so much a submission or surrender to authority as an examination of the truths about himself that allowed a returning to God.²³

The eternal question asked by God is not a demand for the accounting of where one has been, such as could be expected from a very stern parent. Rather, the question as told by Buber is more like, “Where have you been and what have you been doing?” Or, to use the vernacular of the day, it could be more like “What’s up?” The question is designed to provide an opportunity to tell God what it is like

for Adam to be Adam. God's inquiry is an empathic one, an attempt at sustained empathic inquiry. God is seeking to hear from Adam about his life from within the perspective of Adam.

Christian theology articulates another aspect of empathy. Incarnation, understood as "the word became flesh," is an empathic stance. The belief of the early Christian church was that God became "human." By this, I believe they meant that, in the person of Jesus, they saw the full nature of God revealed in a human. Marcus Borg makes this a central point of his spiritual teaching:

Jesus is for us as Christians the decisive revelation of what a life full of God is like. I see this claim as the central meaning of the Christological language of the New Testament. The human Jesus is the Word Made Flesh. The human Jesus is the Wisdom of God. The human Jesus is the Spirit of God embodied in human life. In short, the meaning of all the statements regarding Jesus show us what a life full of God is like.²⁴

The point is somewhat obvious except when we begin to consider the nature of sustained empathic inquiry. Kohut was clear that empathy is the letting go of the desire to understand the other from one's own perspective and the shift to the more risky and difficult perspective of the other. The very nature of sustained empathic inquiry as articulated in the psychoanalytic intersubjective theory is the suspension of the belief that I can objectively "know" something about the other. Rather, what I can know is only what I can "observe" through sustained empathy. In this way, God's desire as understood through incarnation was to deeply understand humanity, not from the perspective of moral atonement, but from the perspective of being human. Incarnation was God's attempt to answer the question originally asked in the garden, i.e., "What is it like to be you?"

Understanding incarnation in this way allows one to move away from understanding the work of Jesus as one of atonement, based on the need to make a payment for sin. Rather, the work of Jesus can be seen as the more empathically motivated understanding of "at-one-ment." The notion of God's being at one with humanity as an outgrowth of empathy resonates much more deeply for those of us who are unable to make sense of traditional paradigms of the incarnation. Among these may be our students who are increasingly rooted in a postmodern understanding of truth, agency, and notions of sin.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

My hope in this paper was to introduce and elaborate on some of the core concepts I use to supervise what I call the spiritual self. Central to this was identifying the spiritual self within the supervisory rhombus. Although only briefly introduced here, more work on the rhombus is needed and welcomed. In addition, understanding faith as a character structure also needs further elaboration. And finally, understanding and articulating other ways of working with the spiritual nature of students is crucial. As the resurgence of spirituality continues, there will be an increasing need for supervisors to understand students from within the perspective of the student's own spirituality. Doing this will allow greater depth in our supervision in this postmodern, multi-faith, multicultural context.

NOTES

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2. John Spong, *Why Christianity Must Change or Die* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1999).
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How a Rural Context Affects the Shape of Field Education on the Prairies

Cam Harder

At our seminary in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, about 80 percent of our graduates are called into small rural parishes. As the communities around them depopulate, getting stripped of their services and institutions, the congregations tend to hunker down in a survival mode. They watch their young people leaving and not coming back. They see their schools and hospitals being shut down and regionalized. A kind of corporate grief sets in. They constantly have to say good-bye, to let go. It's like getting flesh-eating disease, watching your body parts being amputated, finger by finger, limb by limb. These congregations often feel hopeless—trapped by fate on a down escalator that can only end in the dark hole of extinction. Some feel abandoned by God—as if God joined the exodus to the cities and left them behind. There is often a corporate sense of shame; the community feels wounded, weak, not quite publicly presentable anymore. Their energy for mission is stifled, and they are trapped under a blanket of communal depression.

Editor's note: This article was the keynote presentation at the Association of Theological Field Educators Biennial Convention, 19 January 2005, in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Readers are encouraged to reference Arnold's field education article on in last year's JSTM.¹

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These congregations need hope, renewed self-esteem, and a set of skills for rebuilding their communities. Our graduates need specialized tools for understanding these rural contexts and for catalyzing change. I've felt that our traditional field education hasn't really given either our rural congregations or our students what they've needed. In the past, an intern was often a cheap way to supply a congregation that could no longer afford a full-time pastor. For the congregation, the intern was both a visible step toward closure and an attempt to stave off closure. For interns, it was often a confusing, frustrating time of wrestling with what seemed to be unsolvable problems and a deadly inertia, with only an off-site supervisor for help.

Looking for some answers, I spent my sabbatical year traveling across Canada, the United States, India, and Great Britain, visiting seminaries, rural institutes, and non-government organizations. I wanted to find training methods that would equip our students for rural ministry and, in the process, help revitalize rural congregations.

I cannot say that I have found a magic solution, but I have found a tool that is very promising. I've used it fruitfully in a pilot project with one of my interns. The tool is community-based participatory research. You may be familiar with its development out of the work of Paulo Friere, who was a Latin American educator. Friere saw that communities began to pull out of poverty and oppression when they changed the source of their self-image. Most of the time, communities came to know themselves through the eyes of educated elites. The sources of knowledge, such as textbooks, tend to be written by people who don't share the people's oppression and in fact often contribute to it. The knowledge they gain from such elites tends to reinforce their sense of themselves as a people without resources, reliant on others, helpless and hopeless. Friere, in contrast, suggested that the job of a teacher is to help communities learn how to research themselves, to see themselves through their own eyes.²

This is how it worked in my pilot project. A parish consisting of four small rural churches contacted us for help with a congregational survey. They wanted to know where their members had all gone and whether there was any chance of getting them back. I said that I would train a student to work with them, but I asked if they would take the student on as an intern. That way the student could live with them and really get to know them. The student could also help them learn how to gather that information for themselves. They agreed, and we worked together to raise funding for the internship.

Of the interns that volunteered, we purposely chose one who was an urbanite, with no experience in rural life or ministry. I gave the intern a reading course in re-

search methods before we began. It mostly focused on methods of interviewing and processing data from interviews. As I'm doing this again, I'm focusing much more on training the intern in group facilitation methods, especially appreciative inquiry and asset-mapping, and action planning—how to equip leaders to take what they learn about themselves and use it to bring healthy change.

The intern worked with a group of parish leaders to set up a series of interviews, which were intended to help sharpen the focus of the study. Parish members shared an underlying anxiety that the congregational leaders were undertaking this study to dredge up reasons to close down the churches. People were interviewed at the center and the margins of the congregations. Parish councils collated their responses—what came out of those interviews were lots of expressions of frustration. Young people were being excluded. Older people felt that worship was not connected to their economic realities. There was a sense of lost purpose. The self-perception that emerged was negative. It was obvious that the congregations saw themselves as problem places—problems with youth, problems with attendance, problems with commitment.

Next the intern organized a series of focus groups within each of the congregations. Instead of asking, “what’s wrong?” he asked, “what’s right?” The questions came out of the work of David Cooperrider and are called “appreciative inquiry.” Cooperrider’s assumption is that organizations change in the direction of their most frequently asked questions. Positive questions create positive change. Negative questions generate blaming and discouragement.³

Questions the intern asked the focus group were: What has been the highlight of your experience with this congregation? What are some of the things we do well? What have we done in the past that has really worked with youth? What do people really turn out for and why? What are three wishes that we have for this congregation?

It was amazing to see the energy that developed in that parish. There was a dramatic rise in self-esteem as they listened to each other’s stories and discovered that they did some things very well. It was a way of removing shame and restoring honor to the congregations.

The intern worked with a group to collate responses. This time, inter-congregational focus groups were held. The people were asked: What resources do you have personally that we could bring to our future together? The resources they were told to look for included personal experience, skills, hobbies, personality traits, congregational groups, things people owned, community connections, and so on.

Out of those gatherings came a growing sense that this was not a poor, dying parish but one that was rich in history, people, and resources. The job was to pull them together in creative ways. Essentially, the intern used a tool called asset-mapping. A good book for congregations on this subject by Luther Snow has recently been released from the Alban Institute titled *The Power of Asset-Mapping: How Your Congregation Can Act on Its Gifts*.⁴

The internship finished while the parish was developing action plans, but the people had the process well in hand, knew how to go back and repeat steps if they needed to, and they have moved forward in ministry with new vitality.

In the semester following internship, it has been delightful to see the intern's growth in maturity and perceptiveness. In class, this urbanite constantly asked questions that provoked us to think about things from a rural perspective. His insight into congregational dynamics was keener than most—which definitely wasn't the case before internship.

I believe that using community participatory research projects as part of our field education has several advantages. First, it teaches students that the source of expert knowledge is primarily in the people, not in the seminary library. They learn to come to their context with a listening, inquisitive stance, not with a bunch of answers. Second, it gives students a set of tools with which they can enter a variety of contexts and discover the unique characteristics of each one—they don't have to depend on broad generalizations. Third, it teaches students how to be equippers rather than expert performers. Fourth, community participatory research helps congregations become learning communities. Instead of having a community depend on the pastor to tell them who they are, the student gives the community the same tools he or she was given—so the community can research itself. And instead of extracting information from a community, as research projects often do, it leaves the community richer, more aware of its own gifts, better equipped to understand itself. Finally, it helps to raise the hope, self-esteem, and faith of rural congregations. They discover that they have unexpected resources, that God is still at work in their midst, that the future isn't a black hole.

There are challenges, however. Projects have to be shaped to the intern's capabilities. The project we began with was probably too large and should have been trimmed to fit better within a year's internship. Also supervisors need to be on board with the theory and process of community participatory research. We help them do this in a team-building retreat just before internship begins. If a supervisor simply wants an intern to learn how to do things the way their congregation does them, there may be some friction. Also, although it is oriented toward positive

responses, this sort of research may generate feedback about the supervisor's ministry with which he or she may not be too comfortable. The intern must be careful not to get involved in evaluations of the supervisor's ministry with congregational members.

Yet, what I appreciate about this training tool is that it fits well with several key theological convictions that are native to rural communities. One is that "knowing" is a matter of relationships, not data transfer. In rural communities, information is always weighed according to one's relationship with the informant. How much can I trust what this person says? Why are they telling it to me? What's safe to talk about with this person, and what's not? Who else is this person connected to that may be the source of information? To know anything in rural communities, one must know people, face to face.

That's very much the way that knowing is understood in the Bible. We read that Adam knew Eve, and she bore a son—I'm pretty sure that Adam's knowing had nothing to do with reading Eve's curriculum vita. It was a relational knowing—and a very fleshly knowing.

Which brings us to the matter of knowing God. Underlying our seminary training is this hope that somehow our students will meet God. That's the meaning of "theology," right? The study of God. However, looking at our curricula, students might easily get the idea that to know God is to know texts—that we know God by studying God's curriculum vita, so to speak. Yet that very curriculum vita tells us that God is incarnate—that, to meet God, we have to get to know real people—that's the doctrine of the incarnation.

The doctrinal descriptions in our dogmatic texts are really meant to point us to the meeting place with God. They show us where others have found God, and they give us some idea of what we might expect, though surprises are common. They function as God's curriculum vita or as the syllabus for our theology course, but they are not the course itself. The real study of God, the knowing God, happens in the community.

That's the second theological conviction inherent to rural communities. You can never know a person in isolation from others. Rural people's self-image is constructed out of relationships. They may live with the same people their whole lives and come to see themselves and others' through the community's eyes. That's why shame is such a powerful dynamic—to lose the respect of the community is to become invisible and lose oneself—to gain the community's respect and gain honor is to find oneself.

The Bible tells us that God's self is also determined in community. Our doctrine of the Trinity points to the experience of the early church. At the Jordan, they came to know Jesus through the Father's eyes: "This is my beloved son." In Jesus' ministry of healing and teaching, they came to know the Father as one who heals, restores, and accepts. Through the Father and Son, they received the gift of the Spirit who makes all things new. They discovered that God is community.

This brings me to the third and last theological conviction of our rural communities: the church's mission in rural communities is to build community—not grow large congregations. This mission reflects the vision in Revelation—that in the end, when all is said and done, the point of salvation is that all the nations live together, with the natural world, in a beautiful, dynamic community. Salvation, forgiveness of sins, the sacraments, even the church are not ends in themselves, but the church's gift to the world is to help build a preview of that community. God's mission in the world is to reproduce that divine communal life.

I discovered in our internship project that the great thing about community participatory research is that whether or not some earth-shaking action plan comes out of it, the very doing of the research—the getting to know each other—builds community. That's what it's all about—from a rural point of view anyway.

NOTES

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Parables of Transformative Learning for Congregational Leadership in Theological Field Education

Abigail Johnson

The word “context” has become sexy in discussions about theological education and theology. Being able to contextualize our theology, pay attention to contextual theologies, and develop greater awareness of context in leadership formation have been part of discussions among faculty and administration of theological colleges and seminaries. Our engagement with this discussion varies. Some feel the full force of a shift to a post-Christendom era and the obvious need to engage in contextual theologizing.¹ Others name a blossoming awareness that “theology needs to pay attention to context,” and perhaps others remain blissfully unaware of this conversation.

Unfortunately, when we use the word “context” we mean various things. For the purpose of this paper, I will use context to mean the field placement where theological students engage in ministry within the discipline of theological field education, as well as the context of the field educator, or teacher, which is the seminar. Thus, theological reflection is the process by which students theologize upon

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issues arising from their context, and the seminar is the place where engagement of theological reflection takes place.

When we ask students to engage in theological reflection, we are usually attentive to their ability to connect a specific encounter or event with the biblical text or a theological theme or construct. We want them to become pastorally aware, bringing spiritual gifts to their engagement with contextual events. We want them to reflect, looking for God's spirit at work. We want them to become more self-conscious about their own theological methodology and to become aware of the theological worldviews of those they encounter. We want them to develop a practice of ministry that is compassionate and wise, aware of family systems analysis, as well as the use and abuse of power and personal boundaries, to name a few issues arising from ministry practice. We want them to develop clarity about their pastoral identity and learn how to enter a pastoral relationship.

Through the process of asking students to reflect theologically on ministry issues from their placements, we ask them to dig deep into their feelings, their ways of thinking, their spiritual discernment, and their visions for ministry. We ask them to draw on biblical and church traditions. Despite the rigorous demands we place upon our students, there is one area that needs more attention from field educators in our theological reflection process, and that is context. What is hardest to get at as we walk with students in their theological education process is raising awareness of the intersection between context and theology.

When we call ourselves an Association for Theological Field Education, often the word "field" is assumed. The field is where the students are placed. The field is the hospital room, the prison visiting room, the pulpit, the congregation, the Christian education program, or the street ministry. Yet the field, as context for ministry, is more complex and requires more attention.

When considering the issue of context, a question arises about what we mean when we refer to context. What are the contextual and theological lenses through which we view any particular moment that a student encounters in their theological field education placement?

Looking at context is rather like looking at the surface of a pond. If we throw in a stone that represents the question "What is context?" we set in motion radiating rings of contextual awareness. The first layer of awareness is our immediate engagement with others. In that engagement, perhaps through a conversation, we are aware of language, education, gender, sexual orientation, worldview and theological worldview, culture, ethnic background, faith, income, and power. That conversation takes place against a backdrop of local or regional community, urban, rural or

suburban community, national, international and global community. In looking closely at the impact of those various communities, we need to examine context through political, social, economic, geographic, demographic, and historical lenses. As a faith community, we bring another layer of contextual analysis as we enter into dialogue that may be ecumenical and multi-faith, being attentive to denominational structure as well as declared and operative theology. Even in a so-called “secular” environment, we are looking for a God that works within history, within geography, within political structures—in other words, a God that is at work within context.

As field educators, we continue to push at the edges of what it means to engage in theological reflection on ministry issues; therefore, we need to become more attentive to the perplexity and complexity of context. Our students come from those contexts so we need to understand who our students are and why they are coming to our universities and seminaries. Also, we are preparing our students to minister within contexts beyond our institutional walls, so we need to consider how we are preparing them to be more contextually aware. Jesus was contextually aware when he advised us to be innocent as doves and wise as serpents. We need to prepare our students to be aware of context so that they can offer compassion to a world in need and yet be savvy about what is happening within that world.

In addition to being aware of what is happening around us, we also need to be aware of how we engage in the conversation with context. What is the methodology we use in our conversation between theology and context? Using processes such as theological reflection, case studies, or verbatims, we encourage students to engage ministry issues arising from specific contexts. We want them to be aware of the layers of contextual complexity as mentioned above. Yet, it is unclear how we encourage students to become more conscious and aware of how they use theology as their lens for viewing context or of how context frames and reframes theological constructs.

In recent years within a history of theology, there have been a number of attempts to examine the conversation between theology and context. Thomas Merton and David Tracy outlined a theological method to encourage a conversation between theology and experience with a point of intersection called “correlation.” Within my own denominational context of The United Church of Canada, there is reference to and emphasis upon the Wesleyan Quadrilateral as a method of engaging Scripture, tradition, experience, and reason.² James and Evelyn Whitehead proposed theology as a correlation of Christian texts with common human experience.³ Within the discipline of theological field education, we have added to this method-

ological conversation by developing our own theological reflection process. Typically this process is a series of coherent questions designed to engage feelings, thoughts, biblical narratives, theological issues and conclude with pastoral, personal, and theological learning. This logical process is helpful in sifting through the many issues that tumble around in our heads in reflecting upon a specific event. While all these methods look accessible on paper, they do not address the complexity and messiness of the actual engagement with context and the consequent upheaval to carefully crafted theological constructs. These methods are useful in most instances where the “correlation,” or intersection between theology and context, is polite, civilized, and perhaps removed from us as subject. However, when the stakes are high and previous ways of thinking—either theologically, personally, or contextually—are being challenged, then these methods are not strong enough to bear the weight. I suggest that in addition to a theological reflection process, we need to use the notion of parable to address the transformative aspect of this learning adventure.

THE PARABLE IN CONTEXT

Before offering more about this notion of parable, let me clarify the context in which I work. As director of field education at Emmanuel College in Toronto, Canada, I work with thirty to forty students each year. The majority of these students are studying within the Master of Divinity degree program and considering vocations as ordained ministers. A smaller percentage of these students are within the Master of Divinity program, are not considering ordination at this time, or are studying within the Master of Religious Education or the Master of Pastoral Studies (pastoral care or social justice stream) programs. Students have a vast range of field placements, very few within congregational ministry, with the majority of placements within hospital, prison, social justice and street ministries. They are expected to work in these placements for eight hours per week from September to April. They meet with a Ministry Reflection Group once a month that is often composed of people from their home congregation or from diverse settings as related to their learning goals and field placement. They also meet with me for two hours per week in small groups of eight students for theological reflection on issues arising from their ministry setting. This outline of the field education program at Emmanuel College is similar to many programs throughout North America. In

addition, students will engage in a full time, eight-month internship organized by my denomination between the second and third year of their academic program. Students are expected to take the theological field education course prior to an internship in order to have skills in theological reflection.

While students experience a variety of settings and benefit tremendously from the richness of sharing within the theological reflection groups, my field placement is not the context of the student but the context of the theological reflection seminars. In this seminar context, I am faced with the challenge of encouraging theological reflection as that intersection between context and theology. As any experienced field educator knows, it is easier for students to engage in pastoral analysis or psychological analysis rather than theological reflection. Pastoral analysis tends to be a problem solving process, and psychological language has infiltrated our cultural conversation—making both these methods more easily accessible to students. Drawing on material from systematic theology and biblical and church history courses seems far more difficult. During group time, we do an exercise to recall all the theological language we know. After a little coaxing, ideas, words, and concepts begin to emerge. However, difficulty arises in correlating the language and ideas of theology with the ministry issues that arise. If people in the context do not use explicit theological language, then the gap between theology and contextual experience is huge.

In order to encourage students to listen to a conversation with a “bifurcated” mind, one part of their mind engaged in the conversation, another part of their mind listening for theological themes in the conversation, I use an adaptation of Paul Pruyser’s diagnostic model.⁴ Even though explicit theological language is rarely used in pastoral conversations, I encourage students to be translators by using theological constructs to frame all contexts and conversations in which they engage. Theological constructs are to become the lens through which they see and listen for meaning below the surface of conversation—a lens for viewing context. Some students catch a glimpse of how to do this, but most students struggle with making this connection. Perhaps, there is not enough time within a school year to truly engage this process with ease and finesse or perhaps the method needs further refinement.

Another area of challenge is encouraging students to shift from a personal theological construct to a leadership theological construct. Upon entering theological college, students have a faith that calls them to further theological education with a vision of a vocational change to ordination, chaplaincy, religious education, or social justice ministry. They begin with a personal faith and a personal theological construct or theological world. Students have confidence in their theological

construct as the faith foundation that has sufficed to this point. This faith has been honed in personal challenge and crisis, joy and celebration, and has brought them to the momentous decision to seek further education and make this vocational shift. The median age of our students is forty-four years, so many are making financial sacrifices and balancing work and family life as they undertake this dramatic shift in life situation.

As well as confidence in their personal theological construct, students also have anxiety about that construct. Will it be good enough for theological college? Will it meet orthodoxy requirements of both the academic institution and the church's candidacy process? Will it be sufficient for their dreams of congregational leadership, hospital chaplaincy, Christian education, or street ministry? Will their "Sunday school" faith be able to access the theological history and tradition of the denomination in order to pass the courses? This anxiety provides an opening for learning as transformation. However, if the anxiety is too great then learning becomes incapacitated.

Anxiety has the possibility of being a positive or negative motivator. Positively, anxiety opens up previous assumptions and allows questions to arise. Negatively, anxiety can become paralyzing, creating a negative spiral that undermines development of pastoral identity. In theological field education, I encourage students in the confidence of what they believe and what they already know. In addition, I affirm the power of anxiety that breaks open new possibilities, encouraging the ambiguity that often accompanies pastoral ministry.

I want students to shift from a sense of their personal faith construct to an understanding of the multiplicity of constructs that they will encounter as leaders in ministry in order to be more contextually grounded and responsive. For instance, some students believe that they need to learn theology in order to apply it to congregations through preaching, teaching, and pastoral care. Instead, I want to encourage their theological engagement with context in such a way that they become supporters of the varied faith journeys of others, so that they will encourage others to engage in theological reflection on context and ministry issues that arise. Pastoral identity develops as a shift from being a congregation member with a personal theological construct to being a leader of a congregation with awareness of a spectrum of theological constructs or worldviews.

In order to work at the intersection of theology and context and, thus, develop a sense of pastoral identity as broader than their own personal faith, I have returned to the notion of parable. Rather than using doctrinal declarations, Jesus used parables in his teaching to encourage theological reflection as an intersection between

theology and context. From this intersection, he wanted his listeners to discover something new about God as well as deepening their spiritual awareness as disciples. Although there are many types of parable, the most common is a “brief narrative which forcefully illustrates a single idea.” Parables were used as a teaching tool by rabbis typically to direct the student to a point of law. Jesus, however, used parables in creative and original ways to point his listeners toward the kingdom of God, and in particular toward loving and compassionate relationships with others.⁵

As a field educator, I am finding that as students relate stories from their contexts, some stories stand out as holding more meaning for their understanding of context, pastoral identity, and theology. These stories become parables or narratives that forcefully illustrate a single idea. They are moments of discovery about God, about ways of being in relationship with others and about their call to leadership. As teacher, I do not tell parables to illustrate points of law. Instead, I point to stories that students tell about their context as places where God’s revelation arises. Not all stories are parables, although all stories have that potential depending on our ability to seek another layer of discernment in listening to the meaning behind the stories. I am sure that any farmer in the crowd listening to Jesus talk about seed falling on good soil, poor soil, and stony ground was wondering where he was going with this. They had enough knowledge of farming to know where to place precious seeds for optimum growth, but Jesus turned facts about farming techniques into a parable by drawing forth meaning from seemingly mundane events. He pointed to the contexts in which his listeners lived as transformative moments, places to learn about God and God’s kingdom.

As field educators, our context is the theological reflection seminar as a place where we are attentive to the intersection between context and theology. That intersection is not marked on a map with clear signs pointing with linear clarity to four miles down the road where Main Street meets Broad Avenue. That intersection is reached creatively through a story told by a student, a story that has the potential to become a parable, a parabolic lens to understand themselves, others, and God more clearly. Let me offer two examples.⁶

Valerie is a middle aged, white student who has been part of the United Church all her life. She has considerable work experience in business and has been a faithful member of her congregation taking on responsibility for many areas of congregational leadership. Being less experienced in the area of pastoral care, she decided to work at a local psychiatric facility for her field placement. Initially she was placed on a short-term-stay ward for women dealing with trauma arising from

childhood sexual abuse. Her learning goal was to bring God's love and comfort to these women. In her first few weeks at the facility, Valerie was invited to sit in on some therapy sessions with permission from each woman. Valerie heard stories of physical and sexual abuse that were beyond her personal experience of a loving family upbringing. In her first few weeks of field placement, she was engulfed in tears as her only response to what she was hearing. Her goal of bringing God's love and comfort to these women was shattered. One woman said, "If God knew that this was happening, then why would God let this happen?" One woman, having been sexually abused by a priest, had decided that God was dead.

Valerie was upset, feeling great anxiety about her ability to offer anything to these women and wondering whether she had made a mistake in choosing this field placement. Knowing how upset Valerie was in her field placement, I was tempted to step in and resolve the situation, so that Valerie could have a learning experience less fraught with anxiety and woe. Instead, however, I encouraged Valerie to stay with this experience because I believed that there was great potential for learning and, while it felt unpleasant right now, it offered a powerful experience on her journey of discipleship. Valerie trusted me and trusted herself enough to give this experience more time. Her anxiety was a motivator to dig deeply for meaning in these events.

Valerie did stay the course and discovered that what was most upsetting for her was the way these women felt abandoned by God. She also realized that as a pastoral caregiver, her God was not big enough to encompass the suffering she was hearing. In this realization, Valerie's learning developed in leaps and bounds. In her prayer life, her weekly theological reflections, her questions in other courses, and her faith community life, she began exploring this God she thought she knew so well and expanding her understanding of God. She began to explore concepts of suffering and evil, offering powerful prayers from resources she discovered as she looked for a larger God.⁷ Her ability to sit with women as they told their stories increased as she realized the power of offering a compassionate listening presence. She discovered that God's love and comfort were incarnated in her ability to be present, to weep with those who wept, to laugh with those who laughed. This context and Valerie's realization that her God was not big enough became a parable, a story with such meaning that it re-framed her theological construct, and her understanding of the context. In addition, this story became a parable that dramatically shaped her sense of pastoral identity. From a place of anxiety in her learning process, she developed greater strength in her ability to face pastoral crisis and developed confidence in her ability to learn creatively in response to whatever

might arise; she, thus, developed a firm foundation in her understanding of ministry leadership.

As field educator, my encouragement of Valerie to stay with her experience offered her the possibility of revealing more layers of meaning and thus creating a parabolic moment. In addition, I encouraged Valerie to be attentive to her anxiety as the possibility of transformative learning.

A second example is a male student, Robert. In his fifties, having worked in various areas of business and sales, Robert had been part of the United Church as a child and young person. Recently having returned to the United Church, Robert was feeling a strong personal call to ordained ministry. He struggled with the institutional church's candidacy requirements, one of them being the requirement to be a formally professed member of the United Church prior to applying for a discernment process. He felt that because he had been attending church regularly for a few years that should be understood as membership. Also, he was frustrated with a rule that was slowing down his candidacy process and getting in the way of God's call.

Robert carried the dual confidence and anxiety I mentioned earlier. He had confidence in God's personal call and a sense that others in the church should see and affirm this call. Church rules got in the way of God's spirit. Yet Robert had anxiety to please in his class work, wanting very much to understand what was required and offer what was expected. His anxiety was heightened in field education where using an adult education model meant that he was responsible for his own learning. Rather than feeling freedom to learn, he felt even more anxious about how he could meet seemingly nebulous requirements. I was looking for his initiative, he was looking for my direction. We were traveling in circles until we had a one-on-one conversation to sort out our androgogical assumptions.⁸ This conversation came to a head over the subject of prayer. As a final step in the weekly theological reflection exercise, students are asked to write a prayer for the situation and the people about whom they have written. When students hand in this weekly assignment, I read their comments and write my own responses in a formally designated column to the right on the page. At the final step of prayer, I write my own prayer in response to the situation or a prayer for the student. Robert worked away at these theological reflection sheets for many weeks with great care and diligence. At one point, with great courage, he asked a question about what I had written on his papers. He wanted to know whether the prayers I wrote on his papers were a correction to his own prayers. I quickly assured him that I would not presume to correct his communication with God and assured him that I understood we were

each using our own voices to express our heart-felt words in prayer. He was relieved and finally felt freer to take ownership of his learning.

This conversation and others in class also indicated the strong hierarchical theological construct that Robert carried. For Robert, God is a benign, heavenly parent, the one who takes care of “his” earthly children, nurturing them, instructing them, and seeing to their needs. As ordained minister, he believed we take on some of that responsibility for care and nurture of God’s children in gentle and compassionate ministry. Robert felt a strong call to speak God’s word of love to all whom he met, especially those who suffered. In his hospital placement, Robert had a learning goal focused on showing, speaking, and demonstrating God’s love for others. One story from his hospital placement became a parable for Robert as he sought greater meaning from the event.

On his usual morning at the hospital, Robert was asked to see an older man, Bill, in the intensive care unit. Robert encountered a rough and ready man who had seen many challenges in life, including living on the street. Bill was loud and demanding of hospital staff, consequently the staff was hoping a pastoral care visit might calm him down a little. Robert, outgoing and friendly, has a warm and open approach to people. Early in his conversation with Bill, he asked about his faith life. Bill did not have much of a faith life, so Robert wanted to assure Bill that “God loves you.” These reassuring words were a staple of Robert’s pastoral care approach. He wanted everyone he met to understand that they were loved by God and he used these words to convey that love.

Robert was surprised by the strong response to his gentle words “God loves you.” He had not expected the violent language and negative reaction from Bill, who apparently felt that something was being imposed upon him. Robert backed away from the conversation and went on to other topics, hearing more about Bill’s life and relationships, even his belief in a spiritual life but not in a traditional Christian expression of that life. Having calmed the situation a little through conversation, Robert wanted to wind up the visit but still wanted Bill to feel loved by God; he closed the conversation with his benediction words, “Just remember, God loves you.”

The next time Robert went into the hospital he was called to see an administrator and was told that Bill had lodged a complaint of spiritual abuse against him. Robert was shocked and in sharing this story in our theological reflection seminar, Robert’s hope was to include us in his shock and his sense that Bill was a crazy man who did not know what he was talking about. The story about Bill was told with humor, inviting us to dismiss Bill’s words. During a break in class, I spoke to

Robert and asked him to stay with this story to draw more meaning from this event, encouraging him to see this story as a parable with opportunities for transformative learning.

Robert was able to take his anxiety about this event in a positive direction and wrote a verbatim with three layers of analysis. The first layer was his initial reaction and deduction that Bill was a crazy guy. His second layer of analysis raised the possibility that God might be found in Bill's words, and Robert began to ask himself some challenging questions about his pastoral style. His final layer of analysis began to look at the God he knew and the style of leadership that emanated as a kind of benign spiritual abuse. Robert began to realize that, although he did not intend harm, others could perceive harm from his approach. These layers of analysis have continued to open up questions in other courses and classes, reshaping his theological constructs and pastoral identity.

In each example, a typical theological reflection process seemed too small a box to contain the experiences. In Valerie's case, her experience was so overwhelming that she might have moved on to another placement. Robert might have quickly dismissed the power of Bill's words. As theological field educators, we have an opportunity to use theological frameworks to engage the context of our student seminars, seeing possibilities for transformative learning in the stories we hear. By encouraging the very anxiety that students feel, by supporting them to stay in a place of ambiguity when questions seem to burst previously held theological and pastoral frameworks, we turn a story into a parable.

Students will have opportunities to learn many frameworks for analysis in other courses. We are not teaching students to do social analysis, rather we are asking them to engage fully with the context and seek meaning within that context. We are not teaching students to do pastoral analysis, instead we want them to listen for theological questions that emerge from tension points in their learning. We are not simply teaching a theological methodology. We desire that our students develop greater awareness of their theological construct, the theological world that informs their actions both personally and pastorally as congregation leaders. I hope students will entertain new ways of perceiving God's spirit at work in the world and in their own pastoral work—a God that is found at the intersection between context and theology in parabolic moments.

NOTES

1. Stuart Macdonald, "Theological Field Education and Leaving Christendom: Initial Reflections," in "Theological Reflection in a Protestant Canadian Context," *Journal of Supervision and Training in Ministry* 23 (2003).
2. My denomination, The United Church of Canada, was formed in 1925 uniting Methodist, Presbyterian, and Congregational congregations with a later addition of the Evangelical United Brethren.
3. James D. Whitehead and Evelyn Eaton Whitehead, *Method in Ministry: Theological Reflection and Christian Ministry* (New York: Seabury Press, 1983), 11–12.
4. Paul W. Pruyser, *The Minister As Diagnostician: Personal Problems in Pastoral Perspective* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976).
5. *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1984), 649–654.
6. Both stories are composites, preserving the essence of the story without disclosing identifying information.
7. For instance, Catherine J. Foote, *Survivor Prayers* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1994).
8. I am using the term "androgogical" from the root word "androgogy," meaning a set of assumptions about adult education and learning, as opposed to pedagogy, meaning a set of assumptions about education and learning with children.

Celebration: A Feminist Metaphor for Pastoral Counseling Supervision

Janet L. Ramsey

Only a psychology of celebration yields compassionate persons because it is in celebration that we learn to forget our self-consciousness, our bodies, our egos, our fears, our problems, our self-images, our positions of status or lack of status—and remember our ultimate wholeness and therefore holiness. For all celebration is an act of forgetting in order to remember...

Celebration leads to fuller and fuller compassion, whether compassion is expressed as relieving the pain of others or as celebrating. In other words, celebration produces more celebration, energy produces energy. After a while we celebrate the relief of pain, we celebrate the good persons we are who feel pain, and eventually we even celebrate the celebration.

Celebration is not done alone even when we are alone. It is about energies dancing. ...Celebration moves us from the psychological to the social, from self to society, from I to We, from self to God.¹

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As Matthew Fox suggests above, there is a profound connection between the act of celebration and the receiving of spiritual fruits. He identifies these fruits as (1) forgetfulness—of self, doubt, fears, and concerns with status and power; (2) remembrance—of our God-given blessedness (holiness); and (3) compassion—the ability to relieve the pain of others while moving from the psychological, to the communal, to God.

This description of celebration provides a fresh way to visualize the process of becoming a pastoral counselor, since the movement is from anxiety and self-absorption to self-forgetting compassion. It is also a way to suggest how one learns to supervise, since a parallel movement from anxiety to trust occurs. Celebration then may serve as a spiritually and vocationally appropriate metaphor for both sides of the supervisory relationship.

Celebration is conceptualized here as including both meaningful moments—when a counselor's progress is joyfully noted—and an overall attitude of “serious playfulness.” It is not a term found in either pastoral supervision or pastoral counseling literature, but it is consistent with much that has been theorized in the past. Models that have been theoretically helpful in the formation of this concept include those proposing that community and spirituality are fundamental in pastoral counseling and supervision;² those that encourage praxis, critical reflection, and awareness, over practice alone;³ and those that place a stronger emphasis on collegiality and the priesthood of all believers, rather than on competitive values.⁴

This proposed metaphor is both traditional and postmodern. It is postmodern in that it facilitates a deconstruction of systems based on oral, universal, general, and timeless assumptions to return us to the oral, the particular, the local, and the timely.⁵ However, some tensions with postmodernism are also implied here, in that this image for supervision requires the supervisor to unabashedly revel in the (traditional) grand narrative of his or her religious tradition, in my case, the story of what God has done in Jesus Christ. A celebratory attitude helps us to acknowledge the strength that we receive through taking our place in spiritual community, visualized as web-like rather than unilateral or hierarchical. If modern thinkers were at risk of being judgmental and inflexible, postmodern persons stand in danger of being fragmented and their concepts arbitrary.⁶ Participation in spiritual community, where there is mutual encouragement and dialogue based on the story of God's saving love, is strong medicine for fragmentation and relativism. It also mediates the fear of failure so typical of the new counselor (see Susan in the following case study) and also mediates the professional anxieties for self and counseling center that are potentially experienced by supervisors (see this author in the same case

study). Finally, celebration helps us to, in Fox's words, "celebrate the celebration." We revel in the Holy Spirit as we make memories for future days out of what God has done for us today.

CRITIQUE OF TRADITIONAL STAGE THEORY IN SUPERVISORY MODELS

In 1987 Barry K. Estadt explained the process of supervision in terms of the beginning counselor's stages. He described the skills that are expected at each step of progression. Similar to Erikson's life stage competencies and James Fowler's faith stages, the movement here is assumed to be regular and predictable, with development of skills at each stage dependent on successful accomplishment of the previous stage. Success is evaluated through critiques of taped sessions, and terms like "base-line expectations" are used.⁷ It is, indeed, important that beginning counselors have the capability to accept clients non-judgmentally and the patience to listen carefully. As Patton says, we must remember them because God remembers us.⁸ However, similar to other theories of human and spiritual development, supervision stage theory is limited by its own structure. The great diversity in human development, the complex cognitive paradigms we use to filter information, the hindrances and resistances we employ to defend ourselves (including both supervisee and supervisor), and, in general, the many and marvelous surprises that occur when human beings learn—all of these preclude a neat linear schema.

Stage theory may also be rightly understood but wrongly applied. If they employ it with rigidity, supervisors may be tempted to overlook the unique giftedness in each new counselor simply because he does not fit the anticipated developmental pattern, or purely because her style falls "outside the box." In my experience teaching pastoral care to seminarians, I find that some beginners can easily empathize but have difficulty attending and remembering. Others may have excellent initiating skills—a second stage skill, according to Estadt—but be highly challenged when trying to respond appropriately to a client's content.

Combining stage theory with a more flexible and innovative approach can lead to a supervisor's becoming more flexible and realistic in working with new pastoral counselors. Both predictable categories and playful imagination are required to understand the ambiguous and complex process of helping someone to develop competencies. Since celebration focuses on each person's God-given, unique abilities, and since celebration is always done within a spiritual perspective, this

model is one that provides the “good soil” in which skills can grow. This is particularly true when a counselor feels acutely threatened by evaluations and grades (another name for “stages”), as in the case study that follows.

I believe that stage theory is more useful when working to understand the supervisory relationship itself, although here, too, individual diversity exists. “Life is a series of intricately connected relationships which help people answer their needs,” writes Melvin Blanchette.⁹ These needs, as they are being met in the supervisor-supervisee relationship, are neither static nor obvious. Rather, they continuously evolve and irregularly reveal themselves.¹⁰ Thus, the potential for joyful moments and for a celebratory atmosphere develops gradually; it is not always present early on. Echoing the typical demands of an anxious new client, initially the supervisee is (at least non-verbally) saying, “Tell me what to do here!” Later, however, a few successes are encouraging, and the dance toward and away from peership begins.¹¹ For a time, this dance is not so much celebratory as defensive, and its rhythm can make a supervisor more dizzy than joyful!

The deeply personal kind of learning that occurs in supervision requires risk taking that does not automatically take place, especially if the supervisee bears wounds from past educational or supervisory experiences.¹² The development of trust is complex and reveals a great deal about our “ways of being” both supervisee and supervisor.¹³ Certainly, new discoveries are not always pleasant, but as supervision progresses, discoveries can and must produce growth and be corrective. Most happily, since God is present in the process, helping to establish a warm circle of care, moments of trust build, occurring with greater and greater frequency. The new counselor becomes more competent and confident. Everyone begins to smile and relax.

What does one do at such a moment? Just as special time, *kairos*, is marked and noted in working with clients, we celebrate! There is joy in heaven, Jesus tells us, over one sinner who repents. I believe we can show joy in the supervisor’s office when one counselor lays aside her defenses and truly begins to learn.

ROOTS: THEOLOGY

Because I am Christian (Lutheran), the metaphor for supervision proposed here is theologically grounded in the doctrine of the Trinity, in the biblical story of a gracious God who sent the Christ to patiently seek us out with love and forgiveness.

George Lindbeck wrote that the language we use is the most crucial aspect of how we “do theology” in this postmodern world.¹⁴ Thus, when we use Trinitarian language to describe God, the ways that we think and practice our vocations are affected. For me, there is a close fit between Trinitarian theology and pastoral supervision.

Henri Nouwen suggested the use of icons for personal meditation.¹⁵ Andrei Rublev’s icon of the Trinity portrays three gentle, loving “Persons,” apparently resting, but actually in motion, sitting at a round table; they are essentially gracious dancers at rest, peaceful but in reality fluid and alive.¹⁶ Here is a vision of God that reveals and celebrates precisely the love, equality, and community that God is as God’s self. This dancing, outpouring, celebratory love also implies God’s intention for humanity, such that the love and energy of the Triune God becomes a way to visualize the Kingdom of God on earth, and our role within that “already/not yet” kingdom. According to Greek theologian John of Damascus V, *perichoresis*, which means literally circle dance, occurs in our God’s inner life. This is the also the metaphor chosen by pastor and writer George Cladis, who reminded us that this image of divine energy is reflected in our human round dances, such as those performed at banquets and festive occasions.¹⁷ Thus, the Trinity is visualized as being in constant movement, in an intimate, equal, and untied yet distinct circle of love—in a state of constant celebration. It is a celebration to which we have all been invited and in which we can all take part. Cladis wrote, “This representation of the Trinity in joy, freedom, and equality implies an invitation to fellowship at the table.”¹⁸

Trinitarian theology, then, implies a need to be in lively, equal, and loving fellowship when we participate in any Christian vocation, including pastoral counseling and supervision. This fellowship obviously has energizing potential and is best understood as a gift from God. However, all supervisors know the experience of coming face to face with our limitations and feeling discouragement and doubts at times. Our relationships are imperfect and our knowledge incomplete. At times of fatigue, we require a vision, namely, a vision of the joy that arises from working in partnership with God. Cladis also wrote:

Our leadership role must begin with an image to strive for. On the one hand it is both idyllic and absurd to think that our work groups and ministry teams could be like the Father, Son and Spirit in perichoretic unity... in a “tranquil and lucid joyfulness.” On the other hand, if we do not move toward an image, a goal, of spiritually meaningful and effective team ministry, our failure will surely result in relational breakdown, the result of human sin.¹⁹

ROOTS: FEMINISM

When women supervise women, older paradigms of pastoral supervision, created by and for men, are not always sufficient. For example, Jewett and Haight visualized women supervising women as a *kaffeeklatsch*, women with coffee cups meeting as colleagues and friends.²⁰ As the face of pastoral counseling supervision changes and as more women become pastoral counselors and supervisors, new metaphors for how we work are vitally required. A changing gender context requires changes in theorizing and in imagining the act of supervision. This need for variation, in turn, calls for scholarly conversation, since both our praxis and our practice must be well rooted and transformed. One way to visualize this is as an ongoing, lively, back-and-forth movement, involving counselors, supervisors, researchers, and academics. As St. James O'Connor wrote, "The conversation between theory and practice leads to a praxis that is changed. ...Theory challenges the practices of ministry to act and think in new ways."²¹

We have learned in the course of studying women's development,²² older women's spirituality,²³ women's priorities in making ethical decision,²⁴ and women's preferences for helping women in pastoral counseling²⁵ that there are, assuredly, important gender differences. As we develop, think, pray, practice our faith, make decisions, and relate to others, we reflect preferences that tend to cluster around our being men or women. It is important to acknowledge both the differences and the similarities between the genders. While acknowledging the differences, we must also note the similarities, and thereby endorse the past, for much of what we already know about pastoral counseling supervision exists because of commonalities between men and women. Here, our debt to previous scholarship is deep—for example, the classic text by Estadt, Compton, and Blanchette or Charles Gerkin's supervisory theory.²⁶

A strong reason for proposing new metaphors for pastoral counseling supervision is the increasing numbers of women working as supervisors. As this continues to occur, it makes less and less sense to force women's vocational experiences into compressed, theoretical boxes that twist and turn the "data" until they are compatible with the perceptions of male supervisors. To do so is to "squeeze out" women's creative juices and to miss the opportunities for one half of God's people to contribute their imaginative gifts to ministry. Under the impact of God's playful and encouraging Spirit, we can choose another alternative—the discovery of images and language that retain the shape of gendered experiences. Paradigms that

appropriately combine both existing theoretical categories and those that are uniquely ours as women are helpful and appropriate to both sexes, for not all those who think outside of patriarchal boxes are women. This paper is an attempt to join all those who are already working within the academy, using non-hierarchical, non-judgmental, postmodern methods to achieve our goals of transformation, empowerment, wholeness, and health. Surely the common aim of men and women is to renew and enrich pastoral counseling and pastoral supervision, both theory and practice, through scholarly conversation based on honest reflection.

There is, however, always some danger in raising the topic of gender. First, to suggest that we need specific theory for women supervisors might imply for some a dualism that is counterproductive and replaces one set of false assumptions with another. There is, of course, no such thing as a universal “woman” anymore than there is a universal “woman supervisor.”²⁷ Issues of race, class, geographic location, and sexual orientation, to name just a few, are dynamics that occur alongside gender influences. Thus, there is always the possibility that gender may become overemphasized at the expense of other powerful forces that influence our work. In supervision, as in counseling, we have many “ghosts” in the room, including family of origin issues, prejudices based on educational or cultural paradigms, and denominational assumptions. All of these, at any one moment in the supervisory experience, may be more important than gender alone. Thus, gender is better understood as one strand among many in the complexity of human experience.

ROOTS: THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

The term “celebration” is also compatible with the phrase “spiritual resiliency,” a term developed in gerontology and religion research.²⁸ In previous writings, I borrowed the word “resiliency” from the physical sciences and developmental psychology, where it is used to mean “the ability not only to cope with traumatic difficulties but also to respond with flexibility under the pressure of everyday life.” Spirituality, a particular type of resiliency, refers to “a lived experience that includes attitudes, beliefs, and practices that animate (give spirit to) people’s lives.”²⁹ When resiliency and spirituality are combined as the term “spiritual resiliency,” we have a phrase that points to the power of God in faithful people, a power that enables them to transcend losses and to grow and thrive.

Just as Trinitarian theology implies a holy community, so my previous research in resiliency revealed the importance of spiritual community. Through qualitative interviews with older women and men in Germany and America, I discovered that community is an important piece of their faith lives and that all other aspects of their spirituality are intertwined with this dimension.

In my previous research, I also found that affect and relations are integral to the development of a mature spirituality, especially for women. Our gender does not easily isolate feelings and interpersonal relationships from abstract doctrine and spiritual practice. All are combined and intertwined in a life that tends to be web-like and often a bit random and disorganized (much like my own theology). This image, rather than the image of heroic-journey so popular with male writers, is most appropriate for many women's experiences.³⁰ It does not, therefore, surprise me that my experiences with female supervisees have been, at times, both emotional and spiritual. With Susan particularly (see case study below), strong feelings of longing, fear, and later joy arose as she became able to let go of self-absorption and learn compassion. She often cried. My supervisor and I wondered about her tears. Was she being manipulative? Was she too emotional to be a counselor? In the end, we decided that her tears did, indeed, signify fragility and immaturity, but they were also very natural to Susan's personality and perhaps better understood as an indication of depth of her pain and, later, her joy.

Spiritual resiliency first presented itself as a concept while I worked with the elderly, but the need for resiliency is certainly known to those experiencing supervision as well. Being supervised is not a comfortable experience, especially in its beginning stages. As Pohly and Evans point out, "Supervisees may fear failure, strive to compete, fail to seek help, ask for too much help, or reject a learning opportunity."³¹ Some new counselors have had traumatic experiences that make the necessary vulnerability difficult to access; others have had much success in previous professional endeavors and resist returning to a student status. Says one writer of the supervisee's learning difficulties, "Most students will not be able to understate this responsibility without experiencing considerable anxiety. This anxiety, stemming from many previous experiences of being marked, of being selected or reflected, of having reason, realistic or neurotic, to expect negative and destructive administrative or parental reactions to evaluation reports, will have its influence on the process."³²

Nor is the relationship with a supervisee free of anxieties for the supervisor. Supervising new trainees calls for closely monitoring their work and for frequently issuing directives when errors occur.³³ Concerns for the clients being counseled by

the trainee and for the reputation of the center are always present. Will this supervisee become a competent and compassionate pastoral counselor? How can I work without instilling defensiveness and resistance in this beginning supervisee? What makes this process of supervision particularly complex is that, as Ekstein and Wallerstein have written, “the learning problems of the student come to interact with the learning problems of the supervisor.”³⁴

In pastoral supervision, as in all supervision, the supervisor’s primary task is to shift slowly from teaching and confrontation to peership and professional alliance.³⁵ But there can also be a more subtle and liberating shift in pastoral supervision that becomes celebratory; because of pastoral supervision’s spiritual roots, community and collegiality become more important than professional competitiveness, and a sense of common, higher purpose overrides differences in power or status. In Fox’s words, “we learn to forget our self-consciousness, our bodies, our egos, our fears, our problems, and our self-images, our positions of status or lack of status—and remember our ultimate holiness.”³⁶ Each supervisory session becomes nurturing when there is an atmosphere of celebration. Both parties believe that there will be sufficient bread for the road ahead; and that everyday tasks are filled with challenges and pressures, but also with holy meaning.

How then does one move from the awkwardness and tensions of a new alliance in the early stages into a comfortable, celebratory relationship? In addition to acquired professional wisdom and tact, it is proposed here that, for real celebration to occur, spiritual journeys by both supervisor and supervisee are required. Resources for these journeys are gifts from God, and the growth in maturity that results makes it possible for both persons in the supervisory relationship to learn that compassion is always more beautiful than opposition, and clarity (in truth telling) is possible without either being judgmental or defensive.

COMPONENTS OF CELEBRATORY SUPERVISION: COMPASSION

As the opening quote by Matthew Fox suggests, there is a back and forth relationship between celebration and compassion, such that celebration is a vital component of compassion, and compassion is at the very heart of all mature spiritual celebration. Celebration, he believes, facilitates freedom, growth, and respect over domination, defensiveness, and elitism. Celebration is for him “the opposite of the need to control.”³⁷

In supervision, the development of compassion is multifaceted. The beginning counselor is working to use his compassion in therapeutic work in ways that increase the client's personal healing and facilitate growth, but it is often difficult for the counselor at this stage to forget self in order to attend fully and compassionately to the client: there is a preoccupation with "how am I doing?"

Meanwhile, for the supervisor, compassion means that the new counselor must be gently held, but also monitored and lovingly confronted. When strengths are praised, forgiveness extended and, from time to time, one's own professional vulnerabilities revealed, the supervisor models a courageous progression symbolized in the rituals and celebrations of world religions. This is the pattern of absolution, forgiveness, and resurrection that one finds at the core of all great religions. In Christian theology and in Judaism, it is the movement from repentance to a new covenantal relationship. In Buddhism, this process is learning to sit with one's failures and learning to compassionately regard oneself as an imperfect participant in the Unity of all. A human relationship, including the supervisory relationship, is precisely the area where this growth must occur for, as Joseph Sittler taught, "Of the great Christian or Jewish words—God, love, sin, guilt, forgiveness, reconciliation—none is a definition. They are all relational statements."³⁸

With the eyes of compassion, we see that counseling can be a lonely and discouraging task. The new counselor often feels overwhelmed, inadequate, and afraid to be found out. Similarly, supervision can be discouraging and difficult, especially if the supervisee resists learning because she has developed defenses in response to past hurts. However, the supervisory hour gradually becomes a place of safety and renewal. Spending extra effort to keep celebrations going during the years it takes to develop a mature counselor is one way to stay open to spiritual gifts, particularly the gift of compassion, a gift for supervisee and supervisor, and, most important, for the clients they serve.

In spiritually resilient supervision, discouragement doesn't have the final word. With God's help, both supervisor and supervisee manage to meet both the urgent need to develop clinical skills and also the need to find theological meaning in the lives and struggles of the client. We also learn ways to combine compassion with its necessary companion, clarity.

CLARITY

Speaking of the importance of naming the demons that keep us off the spiritual path, Jack Kornfield wrote, "When we know the demons for what they are, they release their other powers and we find clarity without judgment and justice without hatred. ...In this way our anger and judgment can lead us to the true powers of clarity and love we seek."³⁹ Judging is surely a demon that can hinder the supervisory process and keep it adversarial rather than collegial. If confused with the need for evaluation and feedback, judging can poison any human relationship. On the other hand, the supervisor and trainee in a celebratory supervisory session can risk looking together, with clarity, at any number of things. They have moved from an atmosphere made dark by the clouds of judging into a place of light; they can, thus, see more clearly the complexities, contradictions, and mysteries of human nature, including their own. As a counselor in training presents his or her clients in such an environment, there is an effort by both parties to visualize, rather than to appraise, to wonder, rather than to criticize.

Writing about the use of taped sessions for supervision of family therapists, Voss said, "In order for it to be a productive and growth-enhancing experience for both supervisor and counselor alike, the supervisor needs to set the stage for a non-threatening, albeit exciting and challenging learning experience. To this end I would not recommend that the taping be used as an 'evaluative' instrument as such, but utilized within the trusting and supportive supervisory relationship."⁴⁰ Most pastoral counseling supervisors, including this author, use tapes or videos for supervisory sessions. The need to find a model that works well with this method is obvious, and I have found that the concept of clarity is such a model. Clarity arises organically out of a celebratory atmosphere; it is a fruit of spiritual formation. When we celebrate an event, we "see" it better; we make clear the real meanings behind it—and, when we keep a celebratory mood of hospitality in our supervisory office, we provide a safe place for looking with courage at what has transpired between counselor and client. Together, we "get it"—we see what is happening, and we know where to go next.

Another layer, of course, is the supervisor's ability to see clearly what is going on between the supervisee and client. Celebration can foster a sensitive exploration of what is occurring here. As Ekstein and Wallerstein point out, not all supervisors take the risk involved in talking about the supervisory relationship itself with their supervisees. Rather, they focus only on the counselor's relationship

with the client.⁴¹ This is no surprise because, for the supervisor, this exploration could be the most awkward aspect of supervision. Yet exploration of the supervisory relationship is crucially important because, like our counseling relationship difficulties, if it is never addressed, it becomes increasingly problematic and energy draining. “The dissolution of the existing difficulty between the supervisor and the student (the problem about learning) will often free the latter to consider didactic (technical) problems, and very frequently will also free him to look with more spontaneity, with more capacity for insight at his ‘countertransferences’.”⁴² Here again, the spiritual fruit is the freedom to look without fear and, thus, to learn.

CASE STUDY

And I’ve noticed a difference in my counseling—I think its improved, I feel more comfortable with it, uh, I think I’m more helpful across the board than just with a few folks, so its helping me, those things I’m now thinking, like, “you don’t have to lead this person to the Promised Land” (laughs), you know, it helps me pace myself. ...Now I had this moment yesterday.

—from “Susan” section of supervisory tape, recorded 19 January 2000.

Susan is a 26-year-old beginning pastoral counselor who worked at a counseling center where I was a supervisor. In addition to her hours at our center, she worked part-time at a local church and later as a chaplain/counselor at a local not-for-profit organization. Susan has a life-long chronic illness that challenges her ability to be punctual, but she does not let her disability prevent her from working long and hard to meet her professional goals.

When I first began her supervision, I was impressed with how bright, assertive, and eager to please Susan appeared. She was verbally quick and clearly accustomed to finding whatever resources she needed to make things happen for herself professionally. As noted above, however, she had an emotional fragility, witnessed by her tendency to tear up when supervision shifted to a moment in counseling where she was challenged. During the center’s monthly peer supervision sessions, she was typically silent and waited for others to speak first.

I found the first year of working with Susan challenging and I was grateful for the support I received from my own supervisor during that time. In spite of her verbal ability, firm grounding in her Baptist tradition (she had been ordained over considerable odds), and obvious commitment to the profession, Susan, we decided,

had a problem with learning. This is the most serious problem a supervisee can have since it interferes so dramatically in accepting feedback. In addition to teariness, she was often defensive, would twist or “forget” details of her sessions with clients, and was unable to accept without defensiveness many of my interpretations and suggestions. The tapes she brought to our sessions were often poorly recorded or “forgotten,” signifying significant resistance to being supervised. Most difficult for Susan was the topic of countertransference. She resisted looking at incidents where it was occurring in her work, and her tone of voice became sarcastic when the topic was mentioned.

My concerns initially were to build an alliance of trust⁴³ and to instill in Susan the idea that working within her unique pattern of development, rather than focusing on her current level of competence, would be most helpful. In my own supervision of supervision, we discussed the important distinctions between therapy and supervision and the importance of keeping our focus on client welfare, professional growth, and the implications of her tapes. The possibility of referring Susan for her own counseling was explored with my supervisor, but this would need to be handled gently considering Susan’s high levels of defensiveness. Responsibilities for the center impacted strongly on my work (and, at times, my sleep!). We did explore the possibility of asking her to reevaluate her suitability for counseling should the learning problems continue, but felt hesitant to do this because of the potential we both saw in her. I was most concerned because I wondered how her problems with supervision were affecting her clients. I realized, of course, that “supervisors are ultimately responsible, both ethically and legally, for the actions of their trainees...client welfare takes first priority.”⁴⁴

At this point, supervision was a threatening and deadly serious matter to me. I was eager to prove myself to my supervisor, to the center, and to myself. Listening now to tapes of early supervisory sessions, I find that my voice was detached and clinical and that the atmosphere was charged with anxiety. I also tried, unconsciously, to model myself after my supervisor, a man and a person whom I respect enormously, but whose style is naturally different from my own. The more I heard of Susan’s work, the more anxious I became. Would she fail? Would I, then, be a failure as well?

I had supervised a number of counselors before Susan, but the learning problem she presented demanded that I grow professionally in a new way. She challenged my self-confidence but, eventually, encouraged me to think more deeply about the climate I was creating in my office. Since that time, I’ve learned a great deal about how to give feedback, how to be more patient with resistance, and how

to use my clarity to tell the truth quickly and with tact. I've also learned that, especially when working with women counselors, I can be a woman and not shy away from those nurturing, playful, and gentle aspects of myself that are so natural to me and the way I work best. I know that my initial hesitation was based partially on a fear that I would be seen as "unprofessional" and partially on my lack of a female supervisor model.

Somewhere during the second year of supervision we had a particularly powerful session during which Susan became aware of how her past experiences in a different setting may have predisposed her to fearing feedback in supervision. She shared how she had been given input without compassion or clarity and she had been given harsh evaluations that had hurt her deeply. Susan, I suddenly saw, was having a kind of post-traumatic stress reaction to supervision. On a deeper layer, only partially explored, were Susan's family of origin issues, but most of those I left for Susan to explore in her own therapy. Gradually, our time together became relaxed and the room a safe enough place. Susan was, before termination, able to bring in cases where she realized she needed help, as well as those in which she wanted to share with me her successes. Both were accepted and normalized; both were considered appropriate. My office was no longer a place to be dreaded; it had become a place of celebration.

SUPERVISION AS CELEBRATION: RITUAL

Celebration was not an image I would have used to describe my experiences when I first began work with pastoral counselors in training, nor did I recognize that this term could be an appropriate one. In the case study just presented, however, celebration is clearly a beneficial way to describe both the shared joy over counselor progress and the new climate between counselor and supervisor.

Celebrations do renew us when we are tired; they may even help to sustain life itself. The first aspect of celebrations, as special moments, often is expressed through ritual. These symbolic acts tap into deeper levels of consciousness where currents of connectedness and mystery live, and they remind us that life is not just what can be seen or explained. One research study found, for example, that just before religious celebrations of Christmas, Easter, Passover, and Yom Kippur, mortality rates among the elderly drop significantly.⁴⁵ Because Susan has a chronic physical illness that often robs her energy, she must manage her time well; this is

and always will be a crucial aspect of her professional life. We found that when our sessions included moments of celebration, albeit small and fleeting, Susan was often more energized for the work to come. Her actual body posture would change and her facial expression would lighten.

After seven years of supervision and, more recently, writing about the intersection of spirituality and celebration, I have come to appreciate how we sometimes create small, informal rituals to mark growth and transition. A shared laugh, a simple prayer, filling out a form, or giving words of genuine encouragement—I visualize these as part of the “holding” of pastoral care in general and of supervision in particular. When we perform celebratory rituals, we hold on to the rituals and they hold on to us. We remember past successes while God helps us to create future stories. In the best of these moments, we do more than remember, we invite in a holy spirit,⁴⁶ and we become professionally and spiritually alive.

I have found that participating in the worship of my own denomination was an important source of spiritual resiliency. Through the rituals of my faith group, I was given greater strength, increased compassion, and renewed hope that is so important whenever one does difficult work. Far from automatic and meaningless repetition lacking purpose or meaning, rituals can be a rich source of strength, continuity, and community.⁴⁷ The Buddhist who meditates daily at the same hour to increase his compassionate mindfulness, the Moslem who believes that the bitterness of life and death are mediated by remembering God through continual prayer, the Roman Catholic who has been fortified by the healing words of the Mass—all of these practitioners stand within Tillich’s “theological circle” and have deep feelings for the religious symbols, both spoken and enacted, of their own tradition.⁴⁸

Prayer, the most popular of all spiritual practices, was another path for spiritual formation. Susan often told me of her own prayer life; she prays particularly for her clients and her work, and discussing her devotional life became an important aspect of our supervisory experience. Similarly, I pray before my supervisory sessions, just as I do before my clients arrive and before teaching seminarians. There is a form of loving caregiving in the simple act of praying for another person. Like a pebble thrown in a pond, our prayers spread out and reverberate throughout the universe, each moment of prayer becoming a link to the entire human community. Celebration, including celebration in supervision, is best understood as a form of prayer, expressed not only with words but also with the whole person and entire body, involving all the senses. Like prayer, celebration “transforms what is abstract, spiritual, and invisible into what is seen and heard.”⁴⁹

Because our relationship began with significant degrees of mistrust, dependency, and resistance, the celebrating that later took place with Susan was especially precious to me. Celebrating held us together as supervisor and trainee, but also as two children of God, each with work to do and a role to play. Our rituals called us to remember times past, linked us to each other in the complicated present, and renewed our hope in an unseen future. It was not our skill or even our love that allowed this care to touch us, but Love coming from beyond. Our minds were calmed beyond our awareness, and our hearts were softened as the weight of the world slipped away. Ordinary time became infused with extraordinary meaning, common objects became sacred, and the familiar faces we saw each day become beautiful.⁵⁰

SUPERVISION AS CELEBRATION: ATMOSPHERE

Celebration is, secondly, a pervasive, surrounding, and diffuse atmosphere. This atmosphere is intangible, even though I try to reflect it in my office with comfortable furniture, curtains, artifacts and paintings, inviting chairs, and bright colors. Celebration as atmosphere means that I, like my surroundings, am not a clinical machine—I am a real person. This helps my supervisees and students trust that I am more interested in catching them doing something right than in noting their mistakes. A celebratory atmosphere also increases the ability to look at transference and countertransference with more courage. When one begins to feel comfortable and safe, when one's supervisor looks first for strengths (much like the brief therapy movement), then moments of amazing honesty occur. Weaknesses are placed into a larger perspective, and supervisee and supervisor alike become resilient, wounded healers.

As with Susan, there are fewer and fewer shameful secrets of one's own inadequacy to be hidden or feared when work is done in safety. The celebratory moments that occur are the supervisory counterpart of what, in counseling, we call pastoral moments, *kairos*, or times when we recognize how our individual stories intersect with the Divine story. Love is present as spiritual compassion. Susan and I found that our celebrating increased the compassion we felt, not only for each other, but also for the clients she served. This was possible because, as Fox reminded us, when we celebrate we are not alone: "Celebration moves us...from self to society, from I to We, from self to God."⁵¹

SUPERVISION AS CELEBRATION: JOY

Because of increasing spiritual confidence, the belief system of a supervisor working with a celebratory model is filled with joy. He does not shy away from truth telling, but is hope-filled, always looking for progress, always listening deeply for that sharp interpretation, that perfect moment. She is realistic about the needs for change in the supervisee and is not afraid to confront with love, at times using her “prophetic imagination” especially to point out inconsistencies between what a supervisee is saying and doing.⁵² At no point does the supervisor believe that she can make everything all right for someone and heal all past hurts, but she can invite the supervisee to join into a celebration of her gifts and leave behind a narcissistic mourning over personal imperfections. This, in turn, helps the new counselor to make sense of his specialized calling without the fear of condemnation or scolding. Through celebration, a supervisor is able to say to himself, “This is a person whose professional skills are less developed than my own, but whose life is ultimately much like mine. This is a fellow pilgrim along the way.”

I write this supervisory theory paper in part to celebrate the headway I have made away from my own particular barriers and toward supervision that is livelier, creative, and more re-creative. In Fox’s language, I wish here to “celebrate the celebration.”⁵³ With the help of God, my patient supervisees, and my own supervisor, I anticipate that my on-going journey toward becoming a more spiritually resilient and celebratory supervisor and teacher will be a joyful one. I find that I continue to move away from the need to give advice toward the ability to listen with compassion, away from feelings of separateness and anxiety toward increased experiences of solidarity, and away from anxious judgment toward increased clarity and compassion.

Today, while I certainly feel my supervisory work is very important, I can also laugh at myself. My supervisees and students have picked up the contagious feeling of celebratory compassion and learned to laugh at their own mistakes. They feel that they are growing as counselors or as pastors-to-be precisely because they can acknowledge failure. Students often mention the warmth they feel in my office. Hopefully, they worry less about “getting all A’s” than they do about learning so that they can join me in a kind of detached curiosity about life. Not everything is about us and how well we are doing! Like Susan, I have shifted my focus from “knowing it all” to recognizing and accepting the complex and mysterious tensions that naturally occur when one human being tries to help another—what Dass and

Gorman called “the reality of a house divided against itself—the inner conflict between head and heart awakened by the helping act itself.”⁵⁴

Supervisors, like all caregivers, face tasks and transitions that fill us with frightening emotions, but, in our journey toward spiritual resiliency, we can participate in special remembrances and enter into our own quiet holding space. Here, we find time apart, even when we cannot leave the location where we give care. Here is Sabbath, a “cathedral in time” that is not dependent on our being in a formal place of worship.⁵⁵ Even though we know that all spiritual ritual must soon lead back to work, and that we must soon return to the daily routines of counseling and supervising, for the moment we are stilled and filled. The soul food that nurtures us during rituals and remembrances is care for the caregiver and is provided, as well, for our sick and wounded ones. It is spread out for all God’s broken children, even those like Susan, who are initially discouraged, and those like me, who tend to ignore how hungry they really are.

CONCLUSION

I’ve learned, once again, to trust the process. Today, Susan is not just an adequate counselor but also a superior one. She is still learning, but now she has a wonderful ability to set clients at ease, to understand their problems, and to recognize how her own issues impact her work. This growth, of course, has occurred over years, not weeks or even months, and it is the unfolding of the gifts God has given her. It would not have occurred without significant risk taking on her part. Whatever opportunities I had to be helpful would not have occurred without the support I received from monthly supervision of supervision and Vic Maloy (who supported me each step of the way), as well as without the guidance and the presence of God.

Mine has been a spiritual as well as a professional journey. Somewhere along the road I came to see that (1) Susan’s anxieties intersected with my own; (2) I was as blind to my own desire to succeed as a supervisor as Susan was to her need to be respected as a counselor; (3) her wanting to present herself in a good light and my own fantasies about appearing infallible were working against us both, and (4) we needed to be more trusting, to focus on compassionate listening, and to believe that God’s Spirit would be sufficient for both of us. It was only when I was able to look at both our insecurities, hold them in mind, and trust more in what God was

doing, that I became a more compassionate, celebratory, and spiritually resilient supervisor.

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The Work of Care

The Evolving Psychological System: A Personal Theory

Angelika Zollfrank

I believe that G-d¹ inhabits our hearts, that we incarnate G-d in human connection, and that we are held in communities of blessedness. Our hearts, our relationships, and our communities are human, which means that they hold suffering and pain as well as pleasure and joy. Acknowledging and exploring all of human reality leads to deeper connections and calls human beings to engage the work of care. The personality of an individual affects her ability to build and sustain caring relationships. As a pastoral educator, I observe students' personalities and facilitate their continuous development within the educational context of clinical pastoral education (CPE). The educational goal of such personality development is to free up emotional energy as a resource for the task of pastoral care. With continuous development, the caregiver is able to use more of his emotional self with increasing flexibility, spontaneity, and effectiveness.

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In this paper, I define my understanding of the human personality, state three questions that my personality theory seeks to address, and chart the theoretical background of my particular perspective on human personality. In the ongoing process of assessing students' personalities, identifying educational goals, and using appropriate supervisory interventions, I focus on six areas. This paper is organized around these six abilities of a healthy, developing human being—the ability to:

- Explore life space through reality testing,
- Relate through attunement and resonance,
- Deal with depression and hate,
- Hold gratitude and genuine concern,
- Tolerate disillusionment and differentiation, and
- Integrate affective and cognitive knowledge.

DEFINITION

I believe that the human personality is a psychological system that maintains its equilibrium (survives), takes in new information (develops), and evolves from simple to more complex through a process of integration and differentiation.² Human beings and human relationships exist in a tension between past and present, inside and outside, hate and love, loss and gain, head and heart. The ongoing organization of these polarities in the individual personality is unique, and determines the degree to which the person is able to love and to work, to live with satisfaction and efficiency.

BACKGROUND

My personality theory seeks to answer the three questions that follow.

How is the structure of human personality formed? I found the object relations theorists M. Klein and D. W. Winnicott and their concepts of introjection and projection useful. While human beings are born with a specific genetic disposition, early infant relationships are of a major impact on the formation of the human per-

sonality. The emotional material of early object relations is introjected and feelings that threaten the infant's survival are projected. Through a gradual modification of projection and introjection, the psyche survives, and the psychological structures of the individual personality are formed.³

How does the individual personality continue to develop? I turned to systems-centered theory as formulated by Y. Agazarian and used by U. McCluskey. K. Lewin and A. Korzybski add key concepts that provide a foundation to systems-centered theory. Human beings have an innate capacity to develop. In relating to self, others, and the environment, new data permeate the person's psychological system. Through an ongoing process of organization of life's polarities in the person's psychological system, the personality evolves. The development of the adult personality is at times stereotypical, at times functional, shaped—yet not determined—by biological, social, cultural, gender, life stage, and age factors.⁴ The context for personality development can be the individual's psyche and the relationship with another and/or a group. Development in any one of these contexts will parallel a similar development in another.

How does the adult human personality discover and use new levels of complexity as it evolves throughout the course of a lifetime? I integrate object relations theory and systems-centered theory. Taking in new data and reorganizing the psychological system eventually leads to an evolution of the personality. This happens as the psyche's structure becomes more and more permeable to new information. Through ongoing re-organization of the basic human polarities in the psychological system, the structure of the psyche becomes increasingly complex. Development—if not disrupted—evolves naturally throughout the stages of life and is enhanced through conscious exploration.⁵ As a pastoral educator, I am interested in what has shaped a student in the past. I am curious how a student communicates in the present—and I am invested in the shared exploration of the student's next steps. I observe and work with the ways in which the individual maintains equilibrium (survives), takes in new information (develops), and evolves to another level—or not. In my supervisory practice, I focus on six evolving abilities of the human personality.

1. THE ABILITY TO EXPLORE LIFE SPACE THROUGH REALITY TESTING

Following K. Lewin, I define a person's "life space" as the perceptions of an individual in relationship to self, others, and the environment at a certain point in time.⁶ These perceptions are shaped by the past and/or present. Insights about a student's life space are gained through observation of verbal and non-verbal behavior. Conclusions can be drawn about the cognitive and emotional map by which a person orients herself in the territory.⁷ The personality takes in new information and evolves as responses to self, others, and environment—that are primarily generated by a cognitive map and that do not match the real territory—are revised. Especially in the beginning of a CPE unit, as relationships are established, it is important for the supervisor to help students be open to the present. Students are invited to share how their minds read the environment. These cognitive perceptions, creations, even distortions can generate anxieties that get in the way of providing pastoral care.

For example, a Guatemalan student felt unwelcome and rejected. Realizing that his map of a hostile North American world generated anxiety helped him test the realities in CPE and in the hospital. He found that his person and his abilities were appreciated. The supervisory task is to encourage the exploration of the territory rather than to interpret the map. As cognitive distortions are differentiated from curious engagement, students are increasingly open to approach the work of building relationships. They learn to let go of assumptions and begin to trust the process of explorative listening in the CPE group, as well as with patients, families, and staff.

2. THE ABILITY TO RELATE THROUGH ATTUNEMENT AND RESONANCE

CPE provides an environment that allows students to explore behaviors, underlying psychological dynamics, and new ways of relating. Both verbal and non-verbal behaviors are always goal-oriented: behavior avoids, approaches, or displays ambivalence towards the goal of relating.⁸ Thus, in observing a student's behavior, as well as my own emotional responses, I gain insights into how the student approaches or avoids the goals of building and sustaining pastoral relationships. Behaviors that get in the way of such relating, and are therefore a restraining force,⁹ gradually become more available to conscious work. The goal of my supervisory work is to

assist students in weakening the restraining forces to relating. As students engage this process, they become more open to engaging their environment and can make better use of the resources of their own psychological system. In this way the personality of the student is engaged and more fully accessed. The quality of relating to self, others, and G-d improves.

U. McCluskey claims that such development is only possibly when the dynamics of attachment do not override the ability to explore and take in new information.¹⁰ Attachment behavior primarily serves physical and emotional survival. It is activated in situations of anxiety and distress, illness and loss.¹¹ The dynamics of attachment are such that when seeking care is more important than exploration, defenses will remain active. The breaking of communication in the adult reflects the infant's experiences of uncontrollable disruption of affiliative bonds.¹² This is a sign that a disruption or deficit in caregiving has earlier in life overwhelmed the ego. Deficits in caregiving are caused by misattunement (either an overwhelming or withholding caregiver). In consequence, attachment and with it patterns of communication are avoidant or ambivalent. All throughout life, experiences of insecure attachment will be reenacted in an attempt to restore the relationship to self, others, and environment.

The ability to build trusting relationships and to be affectively attuned in communication is crucial in pastoral care. The supervisory task is to work with students' attachment deficits by being attuned and emotionally resonating to students' expressions of authentic affect. This includes balancing distance and closeness as well as modulating emotional intensity. Being affectively in tune with the student's experience as well as mirroring of eye contact, facial expressions, posture, and mood helps to build and to maintain the supervisory alliance. When students experience good enough attunement, they are free to engage in the educational work.¹³ Then, both supervisor and student are open to explore unknown territory together. As students pick up on the modeling of attunement, defensive communication decreases, the personality becomes a resource, and the pastoral care that students are able to provide deepens.

3. THE ABILITY TO DEAL WITH DEPRESSION AND HATE

In a hierarchical clinical context, with clear role boundaries and supervisory leadership, authority issues are inevitably aroused in the personality. For students in all

stages of life, CPE offers an opportunity to explore a variety of connected issues. Younger adults may address issues of separation from parents and family. Middle-aged adults may work on their experiences with the hierarchy of their religious community. Second-career students may deal with the paradox of being a student and a professional at the same time. In reflecting on dynamics around authority, I find M. Klein's work on early infant development useful.¹⁴ With her I assume an innate polarity between hate and love in the human personality. Contrary to M. Klein's understanding of a strictly sequential infant development, I observe that adult students go back and forth between persecutory anxiety, depressive blaming of self, and angry targeting of others.

When the CPE environment and the supervisor do not provide ideal gratification of needs, students experience frustration, resentment, and anger. If these feelings are not owned and integrated, but projected onto others, they come back at the student as persecutory anxiety. Early in life, as well as when these dynamics are aroused later, anger and hate are then experienced as threatening survival and cutting off support. In CPE, this comes up in perceptions of patients, families, staff, and supervisor as rejecting, withholding, critical, threatening, and so forth. D. W. Winnicott speaks aptly of the "fear that hate will be greater than love."¹⁵ Destructive impulses, greed for gratification, and envy toward the object that can provide all lead to a sense of guilt. In the urge for reparation, the person experiences a depressive anxiety and the need to please. In CPE, the efforts of a student to do just what the program and the supervisor are asking for may then feel joyless. Students may work hard, but with low energy. They may be overly critical of themselves. They may feel they are not doing enough in their pastoral care, while they also feel called to provide for others.

Resentment and hate can also lead to angry targeting of others. The supervisory task is to help students utilize peers and supervisory relationships, as well as the environment of the group to integrate emotions that have been disowned. The supervisory task is to receive these feelings non-defensively and to maintain the emotional connection. In the group, either of the poles—depression and guilt or anger and hate—can be worked on. Peers, who share in a similar exploration, provide attunement for each other. The group can facilitate this difficult work by containing differences without dismembering parts of the group and, in parallel, parts of the personality.

The ability to address these dynamics depends on the student's and supervisor's ego strength. "Ego strength" is the ability of the conscious part of the personality to negotiate inner impulses with outer reality and to engage in integrative

work.¹⁶ The ego of the pastoral educator and the environment of the group both support the student's ego. As the crisis of hatred¹⁷ is survived and feelings of anger are more integrated, students have a fuller sense of their authority in their role as chaplains. They are more able to engage in mutual relationships and direct communication, which reflects in more effective pastoral care.

4. THE ABILITY TO HOLD GRATITUDE AND GENUINE CONCERN

When students have worked on their feelings of anger, they appreciate their deeper ability to stay connected as well as their capacity to shape and repair relationships. A guilty need to please, which does not really gain satisfaction, gives way to the wish for reparation, and genuine concern emerges.¹⁸ Integrating goodness and being free enough to give goodness to others and the environment is enriching and satisfying. Gratitude and generosity find a new balance. I view the idealization of the CPE environment that goes along with this development as functional. Trust and enjoyment in relationships in the group and in supervision help students regain their idealizations.¹⁹ The supervisory task is to affirm students' experiences of competence, which include their improved ability to respond to emotional experiences of patients, families, and staff. Parallel to this development, students get in touch with a deep sense of compassion for all of life's reality. Rather than repressing or acting out, students are able to engage with compassion the complexity of internal and external reality. This ability to stay connected also deepens their spiritual life. Their growing acceptance of the ambivalent nature of all relationships leads to increased trustworthiness in themselves and others.

5. THE ABILITY TO TOLERATE DISILLUSIONMENT AND DIFFERENTIATION

Eventually wishes and fantasies about the CPE environment need to be acknowledged as unrealistic. As students prepare to leave the temporary holding environment in CPE, issues of disillusionment and differentiation need to be engaged. To separate and to mourn are important abilities for ministry in the real world. They are the price to be paid for students' increased trust in their autonomous function-

ing. Particularly in CPE, where intimate sharing is encouraged, differentiation can be at first frightening. In a wish to stay close, students may emphasize similarities among themselves and in the supervisory relationship. When both similarities and differences are explored, a new sense of independence will emerge out of feelings of disillusionment. The balance between the need for others and the need for autonomy is negotiated anew within the personality.

While they are engaged in this negotiation, students demonstrate their new skills. The goal is to help students to reach deeper than willful assertion. As students learn to tolerate disillusionment within and beyond the CPE environment, they relax into their pastoral identity and begin to take on leadership. It is an important supervisory task not to be overly protective, but to allow students to struggle with the frustration of reality so that they discover the beauty of living in a difficult world that needs work. Consequently, students learn to stay invested in ministry in the midst of a world that is not gratifying, but in which their pastoral care is satisfying.²⁰

6. THE ABILITY TO INTEGRATE AFFECTIVE AND COGNITIVE KNOWLEDGE

As students engage in this process, they develop an awareness of defenses, an ability to choose behaviors, a tolerance for a wider range of emotions, and the capacity to navigate different relational contexts more flexibly. In short, they begin to experience both the uniqueness and the vibrancy of their personality. Beyond the omnipresent, pervasive polarities of cognitive maps and real territory, avoidant and approaching communication, depression and hate, genuine concern and disillusionment, the person just is. I believe that underneath the polarity between love and hate is an energy that is quietly and steadily holding all of life's reality. By helping students connect to the energy that just is, the work of ministry becomes deeply gratifying. This means to experience and respond to the reality of patients, families, and staff without defending excessively against it. It means to throw one's whole heart into the role of a pastoral caregiver. It means to access one's ability to use cognitive as well as affective knowledge, to employ one's emotional self as a resource for pastoral care, and to be useful by connecting one's wisdom with one's desire to serve others. Finally, it means feeling connected and held by G-d's heart-beat.

NOTES

1. With the term “G-d,” I describe my experience of the divine and honor the command to not carve an image.

2. Yvonne Agazarian, *The Theory of Living Human Systems* (New York: Guilford Press, 1997), 22, 26, 28, 128, 167. I also use this key concept in my educational theory. There, adult learning in CPE is defined as experiential process of “performing, learning, and transforming.”

3. W. R. D. Fairbairn, “Endopsychic Structure Considered in Terms of Object-Relationships” in *An Object-Relations Theory of the Personality* (New York: Basic Books, 1952), 82–136. And J. Hemenway, “On Object Relations Theory” (lecture for supervisors-in-training, as part of the supervisory training program at Yale-New Haven Hospital, New Haven, Conn., 5 December 2001).

4. Yvonne Agazarian, *The Theory of Living Human Systems* (New York: Guilford Press, 1997) distinguishes between stereotypical and functional ways of resonating and relating. Social, cultural, gender, and age factors are viewed as stereotypical, whereas connecting to the emotional experience is viewed as functional.

5. E. Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, 2 ed. (New York: Norton, 1963) and R. Dayringer, *Lifecycle, Psychological and Theological Perspectives* (New York: Haworth Pastoral Press, 2000). These stage theories inform my supervisory practice. However, the foundations of my personality theory are elsewhere.

6. Kurt Lewin, *Principles of Topological Psychology* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1936), defines environment only topologically. In thinking about introjects I believe that emotions, relationship(s) to the primary caregiver(s), and the atmosphere of the environment are taken into the psyche. This way, I define environment both topologically and psychologically. Thus, the holding environment in CPE becomes a resource as new data are taken in.

7. A. Korzybski, *Science and Sanity: An Introduction to Non-Aristotelian Systems and General Semantics*, 3rd ed. (Lakeville, Conn.: International Non-Aristotelian Library, 1948), conceptualized the effect of cognition on behavior and calls man a mapmaker.

8. W. J. Mueller and B. L. Kell, *Coping with Conflict, Supervising Counselors and Psychotherapists* (New York: Appleton-Centry-Crofts, 1971), distinguish between ap-proaching and avoiding behavior as well. For them, it is crucial to address the conflict that evolves out of anxiety in the supervisory relationship. Attending and approaching such anxiety leads to deeper, more meaningful relationships. This is also an example of attunement.

9. Y. Agazarian, *Autobiography of a Theory*, 37.
10. Una McCluskey, "The Dynamics of Attachment and Systems-Centered Group Psychotherapy," *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice* 6, no. 2 (2002):131–142. When attachment dynamics override explorative activity, this becomes an opportunity to explore the attachment dynamics.
11. J. Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss* (New York: Basic Books 1969–1980).
12. B. van der Kolk, "The Separation Cry and the Trauma Response: Developmental Issues in the Psychology of Attachment and Separation" in *Psychological Trauma* (Washington, D.C., American Psychiatric Press, 1987), 31–62.
13. Affective attunement will not always be perfect. There are also educational reasons why constant affective attunement would not be beneficial. Winnicott's term of the "good enough facilitating environment" takes into account that supportive attunement as well as challenging misattunement are necessary for development.
14. M. Klein, *Envy and Gratitude, and Other Works 1946–1963* (London, U.K.: Virago Press, 1990).
15. D. W. Winnicott, *The Maturation Processes and the Facilitating Environment, Studies in the Theory of Emotional Development* (London, U.K.: Hogart Press, 1965), 21.
16. M. Klein, *Envy and Gratitude*, 67, 75.
17. Y. Agazarian, *Autobiography of a Theory*, 208.
18. M. Klein, *Envy and Gratitude*, 257–258. What I call "guilty need to please" is seen by M. Klein as an attempt to "pacify." I agree that a sense of guilt leads to the wish for reparation and then to genuine concern.
19. J. Hemenway, *Inside the Circle: A Historical and Practical Inquiry Concerning Process Groups in Clinical Pastoral Education* (Decatur, Ga.: Journal of Pastoral Care Publications, 1996): 219.
20. W. Bion makes this observation about the life of the individual in the group. See W. Bion, *Experiences in Groups and Other Papers* (New York: Routledge, 1961), 53–54

The Work of Care

The Heart of Reality and the Heart of G-d: A Theological Theory

Angelika Zollfrank

I remember a family excursion in the fall—a forty-five-minute drive, a road that looked as if it was ending, and a couple of huts close to the woods. There I was, a teenager surrounded by descriptions seeking to explain, by walls white-washed and clean, by grass growing nonchalantly over territory impossible to cover. We were visiting the concentration camp closest to the town I grew up in: the concentration camp Flossenbürg.

Here Dietrich Bonhoeffer—a Lutheran pastor who conspired to assassinate Adolf Hitler—was ordered to strip in front of his murderers.¹ Naked under the scaffold, he knelt for one last time to pray. Five minutes later and only weeks before World War II ended, he was dead. His body dangling on the rope, he had been killed by gravity—the gravity of human sin. The furnaces in Flossenbürg could not burn all the dead bodies. So people in my native town anxiously got used to the SS closing off the area around the crematory. Dead bodies were burned only yards

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away from the market place. Bystanders—Christians most of them—held themselves innocent and powerless. Later, some built a chapel using the old watch-towers' stones. The cross is in the center.

Flossenbürg is one of the places that have shaped what I know as a German, a Lutheran, a human being. The political is personal, and the personal is political. The outside story of every person has an inside story in the family. One generation after World War II in my family, war stories repeated themselves. A granddaughter and daughter of victims, victimizers, and bystanders, I was assigned to contain secrets and abuse, sexual violence and shame. I struggled with an image of G-d² as an innocent bystander or a knowing accomplice. Yet, I felt surrounded and held just enough by G-d to become grounded and passionate in the life of my faith and the community of my church. I studied theology and became a minister, a chaplain, and a pastoral educator because for others and myself I have been yearning for experiences of salvation in the midst of human folly and sin. In clinical pastoral education (CPE), I have had such experiences of salvation with patients, families, and staff in the hospital, with colleagues, with peers, and within the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE) community.

For me, salvation is a liberative process of integration that is ever provisional and unfinished, yet all encompassing and permeating. The theological position that informs my supervisory practice describes the problems along this liberative process of integration and is rooted in my identity as a white, middle-class, feminist, Christian theologian. The task is to hold in fruitful tension, experienced faith, and received theology, gut and head, past and present, inside and outside, self and others. My becoming a pastoral educator has been a circular integrative movement between these poles, as well as an experience of deepening connection with the grounding space of G-d's heart. The heart of G-d metaphorically refers to the holding space of all of life—it is in this holding space that life is unfolding. In CPE, I have found a place of belonging in my heart, in the heart of community, and in G-d. My passion in my ministry of supervision is to put to use what I know and what I hope for in order to serve students as a mentor and guide.

In the following, I outline the theological understandings which inform my supervisory practice. I assert that the acknowledgment of human sin as disconnection is a necessary first step. This acknowledgment leads to the possibility of letting go of the illusion of one's ability to save. This letting-go leads to openness to Christ's redeeming work. Faith is then experienced as a liberative process—this liberative process calls me to discipleship. Lastly, I introduce the term “community

of blessedness” to speak about the liberating exploration of the human heart and the heart of G-d lived out in community.

THE REALITY OF HUMAN SIN

For me, theology begins at the foot of the cross in the face of the reality of human evil and suffering, human finitude and fragility. Lutheran theology of the cross does not begin with the celebration of life, but with the acknowledgment of reality. It “calls the thing what it actually is.”³ For me, standing at the foot of the cross is a compelling metaphor for the act of seeing and hearing, feeling and acknowledging human reality in a broken world. I become aware that the command to hear and to see is the fundamental command of the Bible. This metaphor is specifically Christian, yet emotional experiences and religious stories in the face of human suffering and human evil are universal.⁴

With CPE students, the supervisory task is to listen with curiosity to the variety of theological concepts growing out of different faith traditions that enable them to connect with their fellow human beings in the midst of human reality. At first this can be overwhelming—at Golgotha, in Flossenbürg, at the bedside of a patient, and in supervising a student. It is, therefore, an understandable reaction to avoid acknowledging the varied shapes of the reality of sin, and it is understandable to deny personal as well as corporate relationship to it. Avoidance and denial are behaviors that reveal the depth of relational disconnection both from the reality of the human condition and from G-d (in other words, original sin). I have experienced being disconnected as becoming self-centered, losing grounding in community, and thus feeling displaced. With M. Luther, I describe this as being turned in on myself, a state that leads to actions and behaviors that can be described as sinful (actual sin). They are contradictory and destructive to the life force that connects us to self, others, and G-d.

In CPE, the students’ and the supervisor’s shared task is to engage in the continuous process of connecting. In this process, the supervisor provides a stable presence and an attuned guidance. CPE students begin to share their perceptions and learn to acknowledge reality, in the group as well as in their pastoral care. As the feminist liberation theologians Sharon Welch and Mary M. Solberg point out, acknowledging human suffering and staying connected in the midst of it build up communities of solidarity and accountability.⁵ Solidarity is understood as being

attuned to, but not overwhelmed by, the various aspects of reality. Through attentiveness in the present, the CPE group engages in this growing practice of solidarity with each other, as well as with patients, families, and staff. Accountability is founded in the practice of being present and answerable to reality. Staying connected in relationship to pain and suffering in the language of my faith means staying connected at the foot of the cross. As one does not turn away, a deeper sense of mutual accountability is awakened in the CPE group, as well as in the wider community of the department, the hospital, and the varied religious communities.

CHRIST'S REDEEMING WORK

Standing at the foot of the cross affects everyone.⁶ In an attempt to restore justice and to even out perceived unfairness, it is human to search for someone who causes and, thus, could do something about suffering. In myself as well as in patients, family members, and students, I have recognized this dynamic either in blaming G-d and others, or in faulting oneself for pain and suffering. This dynamic is rooted in the universal human impulse to reason out, to balance out—or worse, to get even—in the face of disturbing and hurtful experiences. The same impulse turned against oneself creates feelings of shame and inadequacy. Could G-d not prevent suffering? And if not, is anything humanly possible to be done? These questions create an illusion of an “as if” world that deflects the pain of helplessness in the face of the unchangeable human condition that includes suffering. Wishful thinking wants to overcome hurt and anger, fantasy wants to repair what is broken, illusion wants to recreate what is lost. Almost all CPE students experience that they cannot “fix” things. Realizing this can lead to a profound sadness, as well as deep reflections on this reality within their own theological tradition. The supervisory task is to provide a space in which these realizations are expressed and explored in each student’s particular language of faith. Students can then, if they allow it, let go of their “as if” worlds.

In my own language of faith, the impulse to change reality too quickly means to ignore it and, therefore, condemn it. Acknowledging what is leads to an awareness of the limitations of one’s own ability and prepares one “to receive the grace of Christ.”⁷ In the encounter with human suffering and pain, the need for connection with the Divine Other that shares this reality is experienced. Through the redeeming work of Christ—which I understand as the reconciliation of humanity

with G-d in the midst of the reality of fragility and suffering, finitude and vulnerability—the connection to oneself, others, and G-d is restored. Acceptance of the world and oneself as broken and beloved, as limited and capable, can open students and supervisor up to a sense of G-d holding all of our lives.

FAITH AS LIBERATIVE PROCESS

In Mary M. Solberg, who uses Lutheran theology of the cross to reflect on her experiences of suffering in El Salvador, I find a theological sister.⁸ Similar to her, it has been a task for me to faithfully use my knowledge of suffering and sin as well as my implication in it, as a resource for my supervision. In order to do this, it is important to recognize that there are always victims, victimizers, and bystanders, and that no one comes down in only one of these places. It is crucial, then, to give up one-sided identification and to acknowledge one's "multiple identities."⁹ This makes identifying with each of the perspectives of those who stood at the foot of the cross possible: with Mary Magdalene and her seven demons, with Mother Mary who knows the pain of losing, with Barabbas who got away with murder, with Peter who denied, with the disciples who did not stay and pray, and with the soldier who sees Christ and says: "This is G-d's son."¹⁰

As students begin to learn in the CPE group that God "desires mercy, not sacrifice,"¹¹ they have the opportunity to explore each of these places and to begin to allow the different perspectives to find a place within their heart. This work is at the center of faith as a liberative process of salvation. And this is how reality begins to grow on each of the students, who are then participating in it. In my own journey, participating has meant to find myself as accomplice in my unwillingness to see, hear, feel. As a result of this unwillingness, I join the privileged. Participating has meant finding myself both as one able to do harm and as one able to feel compassion with the wounded. In recognizing all of this as universally human, the need to victimize others or oneself lessens. This is the point at which choices are gained. "I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, loving Jahwe your G-d."¹² I believe that Christ died once and for all, so that all of G-d's people have a choice between life and death.¹³

THE CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP

My experiences of faith as a liberative process in CPE, as well as my passion for ministry, are driving forces in my supervisory practice. I hope to awaken and sustain students' excitement for ministry, their zeal for justice, and their commitment to serve. Students come to CPE wrapped in their personal stories. Some come with theological concepts that do not solve their human problem. Some remain oblivious to the yearning for G-d that I believe is in the depth of every human heart. Some discover their longing for faithful responses in themselves and others in the midst of stark hospital experiences. Some come with questions about pain and suffering, shame, and salvation.

The students' stories by which they introduce themselves have a twofold character. On the one hand, they show the entanglement in constricting political, familial, and personal structures of sin. On the other hand, they hold memories as well as hopes for communities of grace, liberation, and choice. In CPE supervision, it is crucial that students become free enough from stories of the past and predictions of the future to be in the here and now. They turn away from self-centeredness toward the practice of connectedness and of attentiveness to the centering space in relationships in the CPE group in the present. This shift is key to grasping one's pastoral role. What becomes a way out of past entanglement becomes a way in to pastoral care. With some students, it is the supervisory task to stay with disconnection and to tolerate it. Paradoxically, the shared experience of disconnection can turn out to be connecting. The experience of groundedness in the CPE community provides a sense of belonging to something beyond the individual. This leads to a deeper relationship with oneself, others, and G-d.

The biblical model for this process is the calling of Peter, James, John, and Thomas, Mary, Joanna, Susanna, and the other followers of Jesus. All of them are unique individuals, who are called out to leave the "nets" of their stories and to move beyond their particular identity.¹⁴ They leave their places of the past, they relate in new ways, they walk an unknown path. Most importantly, they are grounded in a group—the group of the disciples—which constitutes itself in the service for others. They are more at home within themselves through their relationships with others. In coming to the United States, I too have left my stories—literally and metaphorically—while still treasuring and using my past life experiences as a resource. In supervision, it is necessary to have patience and empathy in order to understand students who are repeating familiar stories in an attempt to

comfort themselves. I am convinced, however, that the good news of G-d's story lies ultimately in the continuity that grows out of the lifegiving connection to others and G-d in our ever changing communities.

Students that form a CPE group in the hospital for a limited amount of time have similar experiences. They, too, make themselves at home by telling their individual stories or by explaining their theological constructs. As these familiar ways of relating do not lead to deeper connections in the group, they experience loneliness and sadness. The "nets are empty." Living in this empty space turns out to be foundational for building community. As students discover that they all are in the same boat, they begin to cast their nets anew into the waters. As they delve deeper into the fullness of universally human feelings, they are held in the net of human relationships. They become fishers of people and begin the work of being disciples—they make connections and do ministry.

THE HUMAN HEART AND THE HEART OF G-D

In making connections in the CPE group and in supervision, as well as in doing daily ministry, students build their pastoral heart. Building a pastoral heart has always been the goal. The CPE movement has successfully worked to overcome the dichotomy of head and heart in ministry.¹⁵ I build on this understanding and use the heart as theological metaphor for the functional organ of integration between emotionality and rationality in every human being.¹⁶ The heart then is the theological "metaphor for the human self." It involves "the union of body, spirit, reason, and passion through heart knowledge, the deepest and fullest knowing."¹⁷ The CPE students' learning of ministry in real life pulsates through their hearts, through their core. In my supervision, I model and assist this continuous integrative learning of the heart with knowledge and compassion, attunement and passion, while working along. While students' hearts are sometimes broken or hardened, they learn in CPE to connect—in varied degrees—with the passion, compassion, and love of G-d's heart, of the pulse of life itself. Students connect as they explore their affective experiences. Speaking one's heart in the CPE group leads to a change of heart and to a growing awareness of "life itself," of G-d's heartbeat that gently and constantly provides an ongoing push to life.¹⁸

I believe that religion is a universal aspect of human existence and that in the heart of hearts every human being has a religious core, which finds expression in a

variety of faith traditions. I see the heart as the organ that holds this religious core. Following D. F. Schleiermacher, I call the universally human religious core the “religious self-consciousness.”¹⁹ Here the finite and the infinite, the self and the other, meet. Here is the place of G-d’s indwelling in the human heart and, therefore, the place of new experiences. In the religious self-consciousness, I am aware of myself as relational and conscious of my heart as being grounded in the heart of other people and in the heart of G-d.

As CPE students get in touch with this relational reality, they frequently speak of experiences of the sacred. I encourage them to find words for the sensations that they have, the perceptions that guide them, and the affective experiences that connect them to others. As the CPE group gathers the courage to explore the religious self-consciousness, the group becomes a religious community. I refer to this as “community of blessedness” or, in my language of faith, as church. It lives in the promise that where two or three are gathered in the name of life itself, Christ’s continuous efficacy will be experienced.²⁰ Parallel to this development, students grow in their effectiveness as pastoral caregivers. The church is church only if it is church for others.²¹ As a visible church, it is effective, yet provisional; as an invisible church, it is ever becoming and, therefore, visionary and pulsating with the life that is to come—it is always growing into its blessedness.

At the end of one of my CPE units, my students gave me a wooden bowl in the red color of the heart. In it, they had put pieces of paper on which they had written poems, sentences, and words that expressed their experience in CPE. Their learning, their becoming, their lives unfolding were held in it, and as they gave it to me, I felt held. While I was supervising them, my sense of being held in G-d’s heart and in the hearts of the many people who made a space for me in their hearts has grown. I know that in every human connection we build, we incarnate G-d.

NOTES

1. Bonhoeffer was arrested for helping Jewish friends escape Nazi Germany.
2. With the term “G-d,” I describe my experience of the divine and honor the command to not carve an image.
3. Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works*, vol. 31, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House and Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1961), 40–4, thesis 16–21 of the Heidelberg Disputation (1518).

4. Each religion addresses the question of human evil and suffering in a unique way. Theological solutions to the problem of salvation are diverse; the question, however, is universal.

5. Sharon D. Welch, *Communities of Resistance and Solidarity: A Feminist Theology of Liberation* (New York: Orbis Books, 1985), 27. Mary M. Solberg, *Compelling Knowledge: A Feminist Proposal for an Epistemology of the Cross* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1997), x.

6. “Standing at the foot of the cross” is a theological metaphor for my own reflection. While I do not expect students to share my theological concepts, I encourage them to articulate their own.

7. Luther, *Luther's Works*, thesis 16–21 of the Heidelberg Disputation (1518).

8. Solberg, *Compelling Knowledge*, IX–XIV.

9. Instead of “double identity” as oppressed and oppressor (Sharon Welch), Mary M. Solberg speaks more accurately of “multiple identities.” Solberg, *Compelling Knowledge*, 44.

10. See Mark 15. NRSV.

11. Luke 9:13.

12. Deuteronomy 30:19

13. I am uneasy as I use a verse from Deuteronomy and tie it together with a Christological sentence. However, the “once and for all” of Christ’s sacrifice became alive for me as I worked to move CPE groups beyond identifying a patient, making one member the scapegoat, finding a sacrifice for the group’s survival.

14. See Mark 2 and Matthew 4.

15. C. E. Hall, *Head and Heart: The Story of the Clinical Pastoral Education Movement* (Decatur, Ga.: Journal of Pastoral Care Publications, 1992).

16. Hans Walter Wolff, *Anthropologie des Alten Testaments*, 5th ed. (München: Christian Kaiser Verlag, 1990). In the Hebrew Bible, the heart is the place of psychological, mental, emotional, sensitive, rational, and intellectual abilities. The heart is the center of human awareness. It is also a metaphor for the vehemence of G-d’s love.

17. This and the previous citation: Rita Nakashima Brock, *Journeys by Heart: A Christology of Erotic Power* (New York: Crossroad, 1996), xiv.

18. Thandeka, "Are we meeting each other? The Practice of Affective Engagement" (presented at the ACPE Conference 2003, Lake Geneva, Wisc., 6–10 November 2004).

19. See K. W. Clements, ed., *Friedrich Schleiermacher: Pioneer of Modern Theology* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1991).

20. Schleiermacher speaks of Christ's continuous efficacy (Clements, *Friedrich Schleiermacher*, 227–234). This use of language seems to suggest that I am not in conversation with other religious traditions, for example Judaism. The point, however, is that it is not "God" who is doing something for us. Instead, human beings as believers are called to be the hands and the heart of G-d. Christ is an example of this in my tradition.

21. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Touchstone Rockefeller Center, 1995).

The Work of Care

The Transformation in Persons, Roles, and Groups: An Educational Theory

Angelika Zollfrank

Adult education in clinical pastoral education (CPE) begins with a vision, meets the realities of this world, and promotes change. I understand CPE education as care of persons and care of worlds.¹ This understanding is linked to my belief that we incarnate God in human connection and that we are called into community to engage the work of care.² To be invested in an education of care means to care enough—as learner and as educator—to engage the work of change. It means to become connected enough to experience something new and to choose a different path, it means to solve the problems of learning enough to be open to care for others, and it means to take up one's role as a member in a working group. In this paper, I first define adult learning in CPE. Based on this definition, I then present six basic ideas

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that inform my practice as pastoral educator drawing on the work K. Lewin, W. G. Bennis and H. A. Shephard, W. Bion, D. Kolb, R. Kegan, Y. Agazarian, L. A. Daloz.

Adult learning in CPE is an experiential process that takes place in a professional context. Students perform, learn, and transform by discriminating and integrating affective as well as cognitive information.³ In this process of adaptation, the ways in which students behave, relate, and know change in quality. Experiential learning in CPE is facilitated through different educational systems that correspond to the program elements: individual supervision, group seminars, and small process group (SPG). CPE promotes change in perspective and perception. It fosters personal as well as professional transformation, thus enhancing the ability to provide pastoral care. The degree of transformation depends on the students' choices of the extent and quality of their engagement in the educational process. CPE is centered in group life, facilitated by the pastoral educator, held by the program structure, and enriched by the environment of department and ministry context. In my work as pastoral educator, I provide support, challenge, and vision.⁴

1. THE SPIRAL OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Experience informs and actualizes the students' educational potential as they learn through action, reflection, and again action. Drawing on K. Lewin's cyclical model, I think of a spiral of experiential learning that can be entered at any point during four sequential phases.⁵ Students gain concrete experience in their pastoral and educational work. As events are processed, experiences are assimilated into structures of knowledge. Reflective observations—the mind's observation of its process of thoughts, feelings, memories, hopes—enrich this process. Through cognitive conceptualization, students' maps of the world, which shape their experience, are accommodated. This is also enhanced through teaching. In the course of a unit, I introduce different pastoral care skills at the beginning of each verbatim discussion. Additionally, there are opportunities for teaching in conclusion of presentations. These theoretical pieces and the didactics are reflective of students' clinical practice.⁶ Both reflective observation and cognitive conceptualization foster the growing awareness of choices in doing pastoral care. Finally, students experiment actively to integrate their new affective and cognitive knowledge. Depending on their learning style, students enter into experiential learning with their preferred way of processing information. I understand each phase of the experiential spiral

as a distinct learning style.⁷ Connecting learning styles with pastoral styles helps me to affirm students' particularities as learners and pastoral caregivers, while encouraging them to expand their options.⁸

2. THE LEVELS OF ADAPTATION

I distinguish three different levels of adaptation.⁹ Performance refers to an enhancement of skills and functioning. For example, a socially awkward student may initially behave "as if" filling the role of a chaplain confidently. Role-playing on random initial visiting, boundary setting, and leavetaking helps students to perform and practice new behavior. Learning in CPE involves self-reflection, risk-taking, and strategizing. In a didactic on goal setting, students recognize their learning needs. They identify what will enhance and what might hinder the accomplishment of these goals. This practice is based on my assumption of a driving force toward transformation and learning problems that get in the way.¹⁰ Learning problems hinder the exploration of affective and cognitive knowledge. They play out in relationship with peers and supervisor as problems about learning.¹¹ Accordingly, learning means finding, at times temporary, solutions to such problems. For example, a second-career student's anxiety in her new role led to social awkwardness, which got in the way of building deeper pastoral relationships. Eventually, the student was able to shift from anxiety to excitement and was socially and emotionally more accessible.

Transformation is a change in perspective and perception that leads to a qualitative, lasting change in one's behaving, relating, and knowing self, others, and environment. As students look "out of different windows of the mind," their perspective, and thus perception, changes.¹² This leads to behavioral adjustments, new ways of relating, and a different quality of knowing. For example, one student with a physical handicap felt initially insecure in his pastoral care. He learned to see himself in ways that were not defined by his handicap. As his perspective and perception of himself changed, his confidence grew. In working with a patient who has the same handicap, he used his empathy to establish a pastoral relationship. CPE goals and outcomes stretch students to shift from personal to pastoral perspectives, from a deepening understanding of their pastoral role toward a related vision of ministry. CPE program elements and written requirements enhance these changes in per-spective. For students to work on their learning goals from personal,

interpersonal, and group perspectives is key to an educational process that promotes personal integration and pastoral formation.

3. THE DYNAMICS OF TRANSFORMATION

In describing the dynamics of transformation, I draw on two theories that are complementary while distinct in perspective. Developmental-constructivist thinking views the learner as placed in the “single energy system of all living things” from which she is ever evolving.¹³ Systems-oriented education, in contrast, looks through the lens of living human systems, which perform, learn, and transform, and in turn affect the individual.¹⁴ As students participate in the educational process, they move from embeddedness to more complex and differentiated ways of being, relating and knowing.¹⁵ This involves an observing self that reflects on relationships, as well as a participating self that actively relates to self and others. The CPE group enhances the transformational process of moving from embeddedness to differentiation. Not all students will experience transformation; some go back and forth between earlier and newer organizations of knowing, others do not tolerate the risks of disorganization. During this process, students need a reliable holding environment that is created by the program and its elements, the curriculum and the ACPE standards, the different educational systems (see section 4) and their containing function, and the boundaries of education in the here-and-now reality. For example, a large secular hospital setting challenges students to draw on their religious heritage while supporting others in their different beliefs. In addition to didactics on interfaith pastoral care, students process their work in verbatim seminars and explore personal beliefs in SPG. Students move from embeddedness, in which they are their theological and religious tradition, through a temporarily disorganized state. As reflective participants in the group, they learn to see their assumptions, rather than seeing others through their assumptions. Eventually, they both have their own beliefs and are able to use them as they support the beliefs of patients, families, and staff.¹⁶ This signals a whole new way of knowing one’s religious heritage and being a caring person of faith in a religiously pluralistic world.

In my supervisory work, I help students become aware of their choices. The “fork-in-the-road” technique assists students as they differentiate new pathways and integrate their experiences.¹⁷ I also ask students to summarize their learning at the end of each group session in order to secure the “what” as well as the “how” of

their knowing. As students formulate surprises, satisfactions, dissatisfactions, and learnings, they shift from being embedded in the educational process to owning it.¹⁸ In my self-supervision, the theory of transformation helps me to differentiate from my students' educational processes. Rather than being embedded in supervisory relationships, I have moved to having an identity as pastoral educator apart from students' learning or lack thereof.

4. THE SYSTEM AND THE PERSON

Understanding the CPE group as a system allows one to access an educational potential that is qualitatively different from the learning opportunities provided by the sum of all interpersonal relationships in CPE. In applying systems-oriented concepts, I assume that educational systems as well as individual students perform, learn, and transform from simple to more complex. In my supervisory practice, I focus on the three systems: the group, the subgroup, and the individual member. Each of these educational systems is a catalyst for change for the surrounding systems: the group is the containing system for different subgroups, a "subgroup" is two or more group members exploring similar learning issues. Subgrouping legitimizes emotional experiences and decreases the risks of participating in the learning process. For example, a Korean student with issues of shame and fear found that resonance in subgroups was instrumental for his trust in the group. Supervising an individual creates an educational system similar to the subgroup. However, student and pastoral educator take up different roles. The supervisory task is to resonate and work along so that the student can use affective and cognitive resources for the educational process.

Shifting from an individualistic perspective into the role of a member in the group is a difficult task that initially calls for training. As students learn to access their affective and cognitive knowledge in the moment, they become authentically engaged learners as well as observing participants. CPE outcomes focus on theological themes and major life events and relationships as they inform students' ministries. In line with these outcomes, I encourage students to use the emotional energy of personal experiences as a resource for both educational and pastoral work. As they differentiate emotional energy from personal content, students take charge of their learning. Both group and subgroups function as holding environments that enable members to contain and hold emotions without acting on them.

This is crucial for students' increasing ability to provide a holding environment for patients, families, and staff, while using their self in pastoral care.

For example, near the end of a unit, upon presenting a verbatim, a student identified with the daughter of a dying male patient. The exploration of the parallel process made her aware of her anger with her father and her wish for approval. From an individual perspective on the student's process, the group was an "auditorium" listening to her learning. The process was quite personal, the group was relatively passive, and the focus was on the student's identified issues. From a systems perspective, the student in her member role as presenter worked effectively on behalf of the system introducing new work into the group-as-a-whole: differentiating external approval from self-supervision, dealing with emotions about evaluations and loss, as well as celebrating educational accomplishments. The learning had personal implications—yet, it was not just personal.¹⁹

The productive interplay of the group, the subgroups, and the member is unique to CPE. In my supervisory work, I move flexibly from one system and its particular perspective to another. As students acquire similar flexibility, they shift from "authority-centered, right/wrong views of knowledge...toward personal commitment within relativism."²⁰ In individual supervision, it is important that I do not lose sight of a student's familial, social, cultural, and clinical systems. I am also aware of the particular learning of each student in the group. This dual perspective on the individual and the group is consistent with the twofold goal in CPE: to facilitate the formation of an authentic pastoral identity and to educate students as they wholeheartedly take up their pastoral role as members of the healthcare team.

5. RELATING IN ROLES

It is crucial for both students and pastoral educator to become centered in authentic experience while taking up educational and pastoral roles appropriate to goal and context (for example, crisis ministry or initial visit). As with the different pastoral roles and goals in different contexts, different roles highlight different functions in my educational work. Initially in CPE, I am mainly teaching. Later, I am facilitating, consulting, and more directly evaluating.²¹ Additionally, I see students and myself at times in roles that are counterproductive to performing, learning, and transforming. The concept of role induction—in psychodynamic terms "projective identification"—helps me understand how students take up roles that were adaptive

in other contexts but get in the way of educational or pastoral functions. Usually these roles are stereotypical or belong to a past context of a person's life.

For example, an African-American student was in a passive-aggressive role for fear of becoming a violently aggressive male. In his role, he was unable to use his aggressive energy to take charge of his learning. In my supervisory work, I lost enthusiasm and struggled to use my anger to connect with him. Understanding this as role-lock that functioned as a barrier against new learning helped me to center myself in the affective experience. As a participating observer myself, I used behavioral interventions to assist the student in reflective exploration of the role-lock and in searching for a more functional role. Once the fork-in-the-road—and possible choices—became visible the student could experiment with stepping out of an old role and taking up a new role.

Role-induction also occurs in small process groups (SPG) when one member is stuck in a particular role, for example, victim, bully, identified patient, helper, and so forth. Such roles are barriers to the exploration of new ways of behaving, relating, and knowing. While a group member may take a role and/or it may be assigned by the group, my supervisory response is to help find the student a subgroup for the experience that is encapsulated in a particular role. This way, the group-as-a-whole can use the material that was bound in the role as resource in the educational process.

6. THE PHASES OF EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The goal in CPE is to learn about one's self in pastoral functioning. The main tasks are to explore and use one's emotional self and to better understand one's behavior in relationships. CPE also offers an opportunity to experience and reflect on group dynamics and to become a member of a working group. SPG combines all of these educational tasks. A couple of weeks into a unit, I teach concepts of group dynamics and phases of development of educational systems in a didactic. This allows students to make better use of SPG. Because of the relative lack of structure in SPG, the primary affects of hate and love are aroused and energize the group's process. These basic affects lead to assumptions in the group that then result in specific group dynamics.²² Basic assumption dynamics of flight/fight or dependency or pairing can both energize or paralyze the group's development. The ability of members, subgroups, and group-as-a-whole to curiously explore the energy of the basic

affects of hate and love—and all derived affects—without acting on them leads to new ways of knowing and being known. For this work, the validation of authentic experience is paradoxically both the prerequisite and the result. Direct communication that legitimizes authentic and real expression is, therefore, crucial. The ongoing supervisory task is to slow the process down and to clear communication from noise.²³ The particular kind of noise is indicative of the group's phase of development.²⁴

Based on my supervisory experience and my theoretical understanding, I assume three phases of group development: authority, intimacy, and work phase. These phases are based on the group's tendency toward each of three basic affects: hating, loving, and knowing.²⁵ Related to these phases are basic modes of group functioning: flight/fight, dependency, pairing, and work.

The authority phase is initially characterized by flight dynamics with social and stereotypical relating. Negative predictions and mindreads signal the natural ambiguity in a new group. The supervisory task is to assist in decreasing the anxiety. For example, a Jewish student felt like the odd one out. As others in this diverse group resonated with this experience, the group began to relate on a deeper level. Fight dynamics are signaled through either defiant and/or compliant behavior or the exploration of impulses to retaliate against one's self or others. Members may also volunteer for the role of the helper or the one needing help.

A hopeful, loving, and trusting climate characterizes the intimacy phase. The group idealizes itself and the CPE environment. For example, one student expressed that he had never experienced such meaningful relationships and that there was nothing he would not share in SPG. Such idealization calls for attention in the work of leave taking. Disappointments, regrets, and disillusionment need exploration. In this phase, pairing can be observed. For example, a female student was disappointed with a male peer, both were arguing until the group realized that the dynamic was related to sadness about the ending of the unit. The work phase is characterized by a group climate of mutual recognition and validation, which leads to "efficient conflict resolution, utilization of resources, and intelligent action."²⁶ The group may be a working group during earlier phases. The work phase, however, is characterized by the consistent use of thoughts and feelings in order to know and be known, engage and be engaged in the moment.

CONCLUSION

There is no such thing as a student. This statement, an adaptation of D.W. Winnicott's assertion,²⁷ summarizes my theory of the educational process in CPE and my role as pastoral educator. Winnicott referred to mother and child as a system that is undergoing change in due time. Each student is a unique living human document.²⁸ Yet, once the educational process in CPE has begun, there is no such thing as a student. Rather, students and pastoral educator—in different roles—become members of living human systems. As systems are changing in the CPE process, so are persons, relationships to others, and the world. As students move on from the transitional space of CPE, “nothing is different, yet all is transformed.”²⁹

NOTES

1. Larry Kent Graham, *Care of Persons, Care of Worlds* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1992).

2. With the term “G-d,” I describe my experience of the divine and honor the command to not carve an image.

3. Y. Agazarian defines the primary goal of living human systems as survival, development, and transformation from simple to more complex (Yvonne Agazarian, *The Theory of Living Human Systems* (New York: Guilford Press, 1997), 22). I use D. Kolb's “levels of adaptation” to define the goal of educational systems (David A. Kolb, *Experiential Learning: Experience as a Source of Learning and Development* (Engelwood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1984), 153).

4. Robert Kegan, *Evolving Self* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982), 123, 129. Laurent A. Daloz, *The Mentor: Guiding the Journey of Adult Learners* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1993), 206–227. I understand support as motivating assurance that helps students tolerate challenging, contradicting experiences. I understand continuity as “sticking around.” Having a vision for my students' future growth helps me to hold them while not holding them too tightly.

5. Kolb, *Experiential Learning*, 21–22. My image of the spiral expresses that experiential learning is ongoing.

6. Initially, didactics focus on pastoral care skills, spiritual assessment, theological reflection, and so forth. Later, the group is ready for didactics on group dynamics, different clinical contexts, clinical ethics, and so forth.

7. Kolb, *Experiential Learning*, 61–98.
8. Emmanuel Y. Lartey, *In Living Colour: An Intercultural Approach to Pastoral Care and Counseling* (London, U.K.: Cassell, 1997). P.L. VanKatwyk, “The Helping Style Inventory: A Tool in Supervised Pastoral Education,” *Journal of Pastoral Care* 42, no. 4 (1988), 319–327. Also: T. St. J. O’Connor and others, “Diversity in the Pastoral Relationship: An Evaluation of the Helping Styles Inventory,” *Journal of Pastoral Care* 49, no. 4 (1995): 365–374.
9. Kolb, *Experiential Learning*, 153.
10. Agazarian, *Theory of Living Human Systems*, 31 and 39) uses “driving forces” similar to “motivation” and “restraining forces” instead of resistance. This language humanizes, legitimizes, and normalizes a struggle fundamental to learning and transformation. Driving forces will be strengthened as restraining forces get weakened. Restraining forces may be driving forces in a different context. I use “restraining forces” and “learning problems” interchangeably.
11. Rudolf Eckstein and R. S. Wallerstein, *The Teaching and Learning of Psychotherapy* (New York: International Universities Press, 1973), 137–157.
12. Agazarian, *Theory of Living Human Systems*, 36.
13. Kegan, *Evolving Self*, 43.
14. Agazarian, *Theory of Living Human Systems*.
15. Kegan calls these new ways of being, relating, and knowing different orders of consciousness. Kegan, *Evolving Self*, 31–33, 44–45, and Robert Kegan, *In Over Our Heads: The Mental Demands of Modern Life* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994), 6–8, 317, 321.
16. Kegan, *Evolving Self*, 77, 95.
17. Agazarian, *Theory of Living Human Systems*, 18, 86, 87, 144.
18. Yvonne Agazarian, *Systems-Centered Approach to Inpatient Group Psychotherapy* (Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2001), 129.
19. Yvonne Agazarian, “Personalizing,” *Systems-Centered News* 10, no. 2 (2002): 7–8.
20. Kolb, *Experiential Learning*, 14–15, and Kegan, *Evolving Self*, 65–67.

21. Antony Williams, *Visual and Active Supervision, Roles, Focus, Techniques* (New York: Norton, 1995).
22. Wilfred R. Bion, *Experiences in Groups: And Other Papers* (New York: Routledge, 1961). Also: J. Hemenway, *Inside the Circle: A Historical and Practical Inquiry Concerning Process Groups in Clinical Pastoral Education* (Decatur, Ga.: Journal of Pastoral Care Publications, 1996)
23. "Noise" is understood as redundancy, ambiguity, and contradiction (Agazarian, *Theory of Living Human Systems*, 5–7).
24. Agazarian, *Theory of Living Human Systems*, 64–65.
25. I understand "knowing" as the ability to make affective and cognitive use of the group's resources. R. M. Billow, "Passion in Group: Thinking about Loving, Hating, and Knowing," *International Journal of Group Psychotherapy* 52, no. 3 (2002): 355–371.
26. W. G. Bennis and H. A. Shephard, "A Theory of Group Development," *Human Relations* 9, no. 4 (1957): 415.
27. "There is no such thing as a baby." D. W. Winnicott, "Further Thoughts on Babies and Persons (1947)," in *The Child, The Family and The Outside World* (New York: Addison-Wesley Publishing, 1964), 88.
28. G. H. Asquith, *Vision From a Little Known Country—A Boisen Reader* (Decatur, Ga.: *Journal of Pastoral Care*, 1992), 202–203.
29. Daloz, *The Mentor*, 27.

The Journal of Supervision and Training in Ministry

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