

Margaret Benefiel and Geraldine Holton, co-editors, *The Soul of Supervision: Integrating Practice and Theory* (New York: Morehouse Publishing, 2010), 204 pp.

The Soul of Supervision is a collage of essays which address the subject of supervision from a variety of perspectives. Any volume that broadens and deepens our conversation about supervision is worthy of attention and this is such a book. Topics addressed in one or more chapters include spiritual formation and the supervision of spiritual directors (the central theme that inspired the book), oversight of seminary interns, clinical pastoral education (CPE) supervision, theories of learning, the claim of supervisors for recognition as a (new) profession, supervision as a ministry to which some are called, nurturing leadership in supervisees, and contributions to the body of knowledge about the supervisory process from "medical, clinical, social work, psychodynamic, pastoral, behavioral, health, spiritual, life coaching, addiction, and family-systems sources."

These and many other sub-topics are grouped in two sections of the book: Reflective Practice, and Theories, Models and Frameworks. The first seven chapters provide descriptions of supervision of trainees in a variety of settings, while chapters eight through ten examine more theoretical concerns: the centrality of learning in supervision, the supervision of spiritual directors, and learning theories.

Not surprisingly, as might be expected, the quality of the ten chapters is uneven, and the strength of the book lies in those chapters devoted to theories of learning and of supervision. For example, Chapter 1 introduces the concept of collaborative learning, and traces the evolution of supervision from its origins as oversight of the supervisee to a supervisor-supervisee learning collaboration. Drawing on Mezirow and other theorists, Holton, one of the book's co-editors, presents group supervision as a community in which learning is negotiated "and meaning is co-constructed."

Moving away from "the familiar hierarchical expert-novice relationship and a top-down learning process...collaborative learning promotes a receptive, non-judgmental environment that is supportive of critical self-reflection on assumptions." Supervisors are challenged to "resist the urge to provide information, answers, and immediate action as they cultivate the skill of reflective questioning." This concept is illustrated in two of the periscopes that follow in succeeding chapters. On the other hand, Chapter 5 ("Supervision in Clinical Pastoral Education") combines an account of an expert-novice supervisory process with a description of the Center's CPE program, concluding with an outline of the ACPE's curriculum for supervisor training that adds little to the purpose of the book. While the account of the supervisory episode included the assessment that the chaplain trainee's therapeutic needs should be addressed in counseling outside the supervisory relationship, it failed to elucidate why CPE supervisors base such a decision on the differentiation of psychotherapy from clinical pastoral education—a key issue for supervisors and a missed opportunity.

The pace of the book picks up with Chapters 6 and 7 that are directed to the core interest and commitment of the co-editors: the contribution of supervisory theory—and theology—to the training of spiritual formation directors. This aspect of supervision transitions into the last three chapters, opening with the acknowledgment that "conflicting conceptualizations and approaches" to supervision suggest the impossibility to define the term with precision. The discussion that follows is of interest to all branches of the discipline. The citations of sources, on which the final three chapters are based, are strengthened by the substantial bibliographies listed by the book's contributors.

Readers may find portions of the book slowed by occasional use of

jargon with which they are unfamiliar. Nevertheless, it will prove a rich resource which advances discussion of the theory and practice of supervision.

In particular, the attention given to issues regarding the training of supervisory candidates in a number of disciplines suggests that *The Soul of Supervision* should be high on their lists of references as they form their own concepts of educational theory and supervisory practice.

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