

**Sung Hee Chang and Matthew Floding, eds., vol. 3, Explorations in Field Education, Enlighten: Formational Learning in Theological Field Education (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2020), 179 pp.**

Sung Hee Chang and Matthew Floding's volume *Enlighten: Formational Learning in Theological Field Education* is a testimony to the gift at the heart of field education. Whether it takes place in peer reflection groups or in student-supervisor sessions, the gift is the same. We participate in the holy work of formation for ministry when we create space—brave space, as one essay in this volume describes it—for students to reflect well on their contextual experiences. The editors describe this work as participating in the construction of new knowledge.

*Enlighten* is the third book in Rowman and Littlefield's series Explorations in Theological Field Education. The first, *Engage*, is addressed to students, and the second, *Empower*, addresses supervisor-mentors, particularly in their role of mentoring (see review in this volume). The field educators in *Enlighten* want to help students learn to reflect well in as wide a range of ways as possible and to expand the contexts which are a part of the construction of new knowledge. In the introduction, the editors explain the need for this expansion. After briefly evaluating various learning theories, they argue that even constructivists do not go far enough in paying attention to the fact that human knowledge is a socially or culturally conditioned construct (p. 2). Their concern is that a learner's (constructed) preconceived opinions or beliefs can function as biases which can impede the construction of new knowledge. Thus, "Field educators and students need to reflect on what would be called the learner's *conditioned yet constructive learning process of cognitive development*" (p. 2).

The admirable goal of expanding the radius of a student's circle of understanding forms the structure of the book. A diverse group of field educators met in 2019, supported by a grant from the Association for Theological Field Education. After considering learning theories related to contextual education and practice, they discerned "six ways of learning that seemed most important to share with our students" (p. 3). These are: learning through our experiences (experiential and transformational learning), learning through our stories (narrative learning), learning through unlearning (critical learning), learning through seeing and naming (intersectional

learning), learning through our bodies (embodied learning), and learning through our community (relational/communal learning).

A different field educator explores each theory in a cornerstone chapter. They turn primarily to pertinent research in the social sciences and psychology: paradigm shifts, neuroplasticity, intersectionality, mindfulness, phenomenology, and movement theory, to name a few. All six chapters are helpful introductions for those unfamiliar with this literature, and the short bibliographies at the end of each encourage further reading. Because most of their sources are in the social sciences, it is difficult to judge how adequately or evenly the theories are introduced. Each theory is then illustrated with three personal stories from a faculty member, a ministerial practitioner, and a student. Chang and Floding describe these first-person stories as a new genre, the memoir/case story.

The range of personal, ecclesial, geographic, and ministry contexts given voice in this volume, both in the six cornerstone chapters and the eighteen personal stories, is to be celebrated. The authors are indeed drawing the circle wide. The personal stories are powerful, at times funny, and invite reflection on one's own formation. This rich offering would be strengthened by a discussion of the process leading to the selection of these six theories of learning. Why these six and not others? The reader can surmise that the selected theories help to loosen the soil around biases which can impede new learning. For example, the discussion of the power and limits of stories has a long history (e.g. Mary McClintock Fulkerson and Richard Lischer). The cornerstone chapters would be enriched by including a discussion of the limitations of each mode of learning.

Finally, this volume raises a fundamental question at the center of any theory of learning used in forming students for ministry. What is it that theological field educators, supervisor-mentors, and peers are called to help students better understand—in and through as wide a range of contexts as possible? This is no small or easily answered question. The emphasis of this volume is on introducing learning theories and on the personal transformation and growth that these can foster. Thus, rarely do the questions at the end of the cornerstone chapters or personal stories include the following: What is God's care of this person? What is Christ's participation in this situation? Students need help with such questions and knowing how to ask them in the contexts they are a part of. Supervisor-mentors need help in knowing how to

help students explore these questions. Students and clergy alike need direction in helping members of congregations and ministry settings to consider such questions. These are presumably addressed in the second volume of the series, *Empower: A Guide for Supervisor-Mentors in Theological Field Education*. In addition, a volume which hopes to help its readers to reflect well on the intersectionality of multiple contexts would be strengthened by exploring the place of Scripture, worship, and the sacraments in such lived experiences. Readers can certainly bring questions such as these to the rich personal case stories found here. They can practice exploring such questions through the six ways of learning introduced in the cornerstone chapters. The design of this volume invites readers to use it in multiple ways. To this end, it is a welcome contribution to those involved in the holy work of formation.

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