



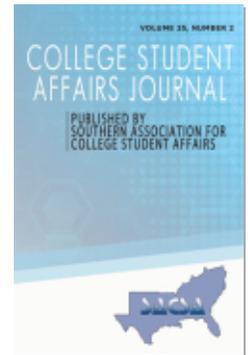
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*Good Enough Now: How Doing the Best We Can with What We Have
Is Better than Nothing* by Jessica Pettit (review)

Jillian Reading

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MEDIA REVIEW

GOOD ENOUGH NOW: HOW DOING THE BEST WE CAN WITH WHAT WE HAVE IS BETTER THAN NOTHING

Jessica Pettit

Shippensburg, PA: Sound Wisdom, 2017, 265 pages

\$15.99 (paperback)

\$9.99 (ebook)

Reviewed by:

Jillian Reading

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Jessica Pettit's (2017) book, *Good Enough Now*, brings to light for the reader the idea that we each have a unique perspective through which we view the world. This perspective shapes up due to the lived experiences that we each have. This text successfully provides readers the opportunity to examine the various ways that people respond to situations and how they make decisions and, in turn, reminds us that we have to consider how someone else's previous experiences might influence their behavior and way of thinking. Pettit's book is a valuable read for all, but new student affairs practitioners will benefit from exposure to these concepts and, in turn, applying them to their work with both students and other practitioners. All can benefit from the authors well thought out approach to engaging with others, particularly when navigating challenging topics and opinions.

Pettit separates her work into three sections: Good, Enough, and Now. These sections each seek to help the reader understand why it is important to stop waiting for conditions to be perfect before confronting issues and situations that can make a difference in our world. In section one, Good, the author posits that there are three ways in which individuals process information: head, heart, and action. Those who first follow their head will often feel the need to

gather and examine all the data that they have prior to making any decisions, whereas those who follow their heart will be more reflective and consider how aspects of their decision fit into the bigger picture or a higher purpose. Finally, those who are more action-oriented generally will think about how their behaviors provide a return on their investment or just jump right in and start doing something (anything!). By noticing how we process information, we can begin to take the first steps into understanding how others do it differently (or similarly) and then work towards stronger connections and relationships. For student affairs practitioners this understanding of oneself is particularly important since the profession often requires that one have contact with diverse students. Practitioners need to be aware that their experiences influence how they treat and react to these students and that they can help students navigate challenging situations without knowing everything there is to know about social justice or related areas.

The second and third sections, Enough & Now, challenge readers to examine the lived experiences, or crucible moments as the author puts it, which contribute most to who we are. These moments might be when we had to confront an ethical dilemma, had someone confront us with an opposing

Please direct inquires about this manuscript to: Jillian Reading, reading.jillian@gmail.com

viewpoint, or had an “Ah ha” moment where we began to see our own privilege. By understanding and thinking through these moments, we might be better able to realize that oftentimes doing something is better than doing nothing. There is never a perfect time to act, or the best time to intervene in a situation, but simply opening up dialogue or trying to discuss a challenging situation can be an effective first step towards a solution.

Good Enough Now has many strengths, which make it a worthwhile read for almost everyone. Journal prompts throughout the book allow the reader time to engage and reflect on the material, making it an active process, rather than passive consumption. For instance, an early journal page asks the reader to identify behaviors and thought-patterns present in both themselves and others that embody the three ways of being present in the book (head, heart, and action). Concretely engaging with each style not only solidifies the concepts in the reader’s mind but also allows a point of reference when working with others. Another strength of the text is that it builds on the premise that we need to know ourselves well before we can make the most positive changes in our lives. As I was reading this book, the TED talk the Danger of a Single Story came to my mind (Adichie, 2009). Both this book and that talk help us to realize that we do not usually have all of the information we need upon initial viewing of a situation. We have to leave room to fill in the assumption gaps that we create.

While a valuable read, *Good Enough Now* sometimes trips over itself. Upon my initial reading of the text, I felt that the book was trying to cover many areas (e.g., social justice concepts, how to have better conversations and relationships, how to work well with others), but did not necessarily go into any one of them in-depth. The result is a disjointed read, which sometimes leaves the reader feeling like the connections between topics are weak. The book reiterates its main points several times and while this

does help with retention of the information, it sometimes makes for a frustrating reading experience.

Good Enough Now is assuredly a book I would recommend to seasoned and new student affairs professionals alike. Further, it has applications in higher education courses seeking to teach students about diversity and social justice. The take-home message that doing something is better than doing nothing is one that all can benefit from and can potentially help facilitate better conversations around social justice topics if used as common reading. I recommend *Good Enough Now* as a starting point for conversations relating to social justice and those who are just beginning to dip their toes into the water of student affairs work. It makes an excellent introduction to the many foundational concepts and it might be just the segue that people who are resistant or unclear about social justice work need to help them feel “good enough” to start having more open and honest dialogues about today’s most critical topics.

References

- Adichie, C.N. (2009, October 7). The danger of a single story [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9Ihs241zeg>