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Tierney, William G. (2006). *Trust and the public good: Examining the cultural conditions of academic work.* NY, NY: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc.

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William Tierney begins his captivating study of organizational trust by sharing an e-mail question from his budding-scholar niece who is considering graduate school and possibly the professorate: "Hi, Uncle Bill. I've been thinking about what you wrote, about graduate school. I actually might consider it! But tell me, what's it like being a professor anyway? Really." Uncle Bill, who received his Ph.D. in administration and policy analysis from Stanford University and who is now endowed chair and Director of the Center for Higher Education Policy, has a multifaceted 207-page response. It is a powerfully enlightening educational explanation of where we are in higher education (case studies), how we got here (brief and accurate views of competing ideologies), and where we are going (which in large part depends on our own collective understanding and communication with one another within universities about the topics he raises). Neophytes such as William's niece are well-served by this thoughtful explanation, and future studies and new conversations among scholars will be a natural result of the work.

At the outset, Tierney explains that even though the Carnegie classifications have remained relatively stable over the last 50 years, we are seeing, and are going to be seeing, changes to the internal structure of colleges and universities, particularly to the department "building block" that currently empowers faculty (p. 7). This new wave can be seen in other works about innovative universities wishing to further "John Dewey's dream" both at the university level (Benson, Harkavy, & Puckett, 2007) and in local area schools (Knowles, Raudenbush, & Webber, 2007), this new wave can be seen.

Tierney shows that universities have begun already to be much more flexible with their structure to accommodate projects where individuals come together around an idea or problem, rather than work as conventional departments, with the expectation that faculty with multiple perspectives will work together (both studies cited above are examples). Of course a common concern with such an approach to new problems is that faculty will lose their power. This change, or risk, inherently involves trust, and thus begins the multifaceted definition and discussion of trust. Tierney's views go beyond the usual psychological and sociological explanations around

organizations and trust. While not neglecting these, he is more interested in and illuminates anthropological perspectives. It becomes apparent that the notions of cultures of trust within organizations and surrounding organizations is more important to understand now than it has even been.

Tierney's groundbreaking definitional work I have been describing here consumes the first half of the book. Those familiar with Megan Tschannen-Moran's (2004) research on trust for K-12 school leaders will find Tierney's book a wonderful addition that specifically addresses higher education. Both K-12 schools and universities are known to be complex organizations in their own ways. While there are many striking similarities, there are just as many profound differences. Both are profoundly shaped by the degree to which a culture of trust exists or can exist.

Part Two of the book, "Enacting Trust," presents case studies from a year of research at four fictitiously-named universities: Prairie Home University, Dysfunctional University, Salon University, and Congenial University. In rare inside glimpses of how each university is perceived by faculty, administrators, board members, students, and others; in a chapter on each he presents the data he gathered, then focuses on how it highlights the relationship of social trust to social capital, institutional networks, and culture. The case studies alone are interesting enough to merit the purchase of the book. Having worked as an insider at three universities, I found them to be illuminating as a working schema for organizational trust. It becomes quite clear how trust is built or depleted on many levels at public universities, and all of them are important.

The last and possibly most important section of the book, "Trust and the Public Good," explains briefly *how* "public good" means different things to different people. Tierney acknowledges Powell and Clemen's (1998) notion that the public good has always been an unsettled and contested democratic idea because it is part of the unsettled and contested nature of politics itself. However, Tierney adds that, commonsensically, it also refers to *communal* interests: "Although self-interest remains central to a democratic polity, so too does the notion that individuals have common bonds that enable them to support philosophical and economic public goods such as national defense, the environment, and postsecondary education" (p. 186). Finally, Tierney adds that higher education remains a public good, but in a much more competitive atmosphere than heretofore. As a result postsecondary, public education must make the case about *why* it is a public good and what it will do that others cannot. The polity will not have blind faith and trust for institutions to do whatever they desire in ways that they have in the past. On multiple levels we will have to win trust for a public good to be enacted. Not surprisingly, for professors the work begins on campus where trust among faculty across departments becomes an even more prized, if rarely found, commodity. Where this occurs, positive community leadership becomes possible.

There is a multiplicity of strategies for building civil societies, Tierney explains. We need to begin with what is public and what is good. We will also have to ask whose good and whose public we are serving. The polity will not be left out of this conversation, nor should it be. While there has been a loss of faith and an increase of cynicism, we must begin the complex work of restoration and maintenance of trust for public, postsecondary institutions. Tierney's book does much through his case studies and theorizing to show how it is both done and undone. He is more concerned about the restoration of trust than he is the structure or form of participation in university affairs. Taking care of and building networks at all levels inside and outside our institutions is an important key. "A university in the best sense is a conduit for communication; it needs to help the polity decide the directions it takes. I suggest that for a civil society, what higher education now needs to be is more communicative, more engaged, and by doing so, more likely to develop trust" (p. 192). Dewey's work (1937) advocated this process for building a more democratic society, not just more democratic schools. Tierney adds substance for today on how to go about doing it specifically in higher education. The University of Pennsylvania is taking this theory seriously and applying it to their internal structure as well as in commitments to the Philadelphia public schools (Benson et al., 2007). University of Chicago is also beginning a similar project (Knowles et al., 2007). Hopefully Dewey and Tierney will find them and many more of us attempting to develop

and use trust to build more civil, democratic spaces for individuals and communities to realize more of their dreams.

References

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