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Book Critique: "The Coddling of the American Mind: How Good Intentions and Bad Ideas Are Setting Up a Generation for Failure" by Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt

The book titled *The Coddling of the American Mind: How Good Intentions and Bad Ideas Are Setting Up a Generation for Failure* by Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt covers a wide array of subjects such as the freedom of expression, campus riots, and safety. The latter is a typical societal subculture that continues to rise exponentially, particularly in the contemporary United States, where individuals embrace a belief system that emphasizes safety as a vital and sacred value. Through this book, Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt provide to the readers a critical analysis of "safetyism" based on a mode of understanding that tends to equate individuals' psychological well-being with their physical safety. Subsequently, the authors combine information from various empirical studies in order to make clear arguments that unequivocally demonstrate all possible repercussions of conflating a person's emotional and physical safety. Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt describe a series of positive strategies that can be employed in identifying and subsequently averting this cognitive distortion that often occurs in people's daily lives.

In an attempt to explain the process through which noble intentions bring about negative results, the book's authors posit three "great untruths," namely, the untruth of fragility, the untruth of emotional reasoning, and the untruth of "us versus them" (4). As a consequence, Lukianoff and Haidt assert that the "great untruths" mentioned above often contradict current psychological findings as well as ancient wisdom, and they usually harm individuals and societies that embrace them (4). Relatedly, the book's authors provide readers with a proposed list of psychological antidotes to these "great untruths." The text contents can be beneficial to parents, especially to those in the upper-middle classes, and students from minority groups in the United States who join elite American campuses only to realize that these institutions are not adequately prepared to accept them.

The authors demonstrate how these "great untruths" trigger some undesirable outcomes such as neurotic parenting and depression. However, the book fails to take into consideration how historical or social change can transform educational facilities or individuals. At the same time, Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt explicate the moral decay in contemporary universities without mentioning and addressing the financial aspect of the issue. *The Coddling of the American Mind: How Good Intentions and Bad Ideas Are Setting Up a Generation for Failure* by Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt may bore the reader, especially when it comes to the anecdotes and assertions. Furthermore, the book's title is unnecessarily abrasive, the aspect that may most likely discourage and put off the potential audience thereby indirectly denying individuals an opportunity to judge the text by its contents.

Moreover, the harsh and unwelcoming red cover that shows nondescript young adults in their graduation caps falling from plank like lemmings can potentially discourage optimists who could have benefited from reading this book. Contrary to what the title and the cover may imply, the text

is not a historical lament, nor is it an anti-leftist screed. Lukianoff and Haidt's literary tone is courteous as is evidenced by a representative passage from the publication: "This is a book about good intentions gone awry. In...the book, you'll read about people primarily acting from good or noble motivations. In most cases, the motive is to help or protect children or people seen as vulnerable or victimized. Our goal...is not to blame; it is to understand" (126). Lukianoff and Haidt also argue that through "paranoid parenting" modern societies continue to encourage students to adapt various undesirable mental habits that are typically exhibited by depressed individuals.

As a consequence, communities end up passing along safety beliefs across generations without necessarily questioning or evaluating the underlying subculture in which such behaviors thrive. However, while the authors attempt to present "paranoid parenting" as a causal factor of the various difficulties that students usually experience in campus, Lukianoff and Haidt do not offer substantial explanations on the relationship between this mode of rearing children and the forms of depression or anxiety that learners arrive with to colleges. Individuals in modern American society mistakenly perceive themselves as being smart enough to understand others better than themselves. This pattern is often promoted through publications that purport to indoctrinate individuals on how to identify "unconscious biases" in people, an aspect which in turn causes people to ignore the need to engage with their cultural or political opponents rationally. Consequently, the text can be judiciously employed as a viable tool for breaking the pattern mentioned above. This can be successfully realized by following the rules stipulated by the book's authors like "framing issues as debates and not conflicts" in order to encourage the development of a societal subculture that encourages productive disagreements.