

THE CODDLING OF THE AMERICAN MIND

HOW GOOD INTENTIONS
AND BAD IDEAS ARE
SETTING UP A GENERATION
FOR FAILURE

GREG LUKIANOFF
JONATHAN HAIDT



“This book synthesizes the teachings of many disciplines to illuminate the causes of major problems besetting college students and campuses, including declines in mental health, academic freedom, and collegiality. More important, the authors present evidence-based strategies for overcoming these challenges. An engrossing, thought-provoking, and ultimately inspiring read.”

—**Nadine Strossen**, past president, ACLU; professor, New York Law School; and author of *HATE: Why We Should Resist It with Free Speech, Not Censorship*

“We can talk ourselves into believing that some kinds of speech will shatter us, or we can talk ourselves out of that belief. The authors know the science. We are not as fragile as our self-appointed protectors suppose. Read this deeply informed book to become a more resilient soul in a more resilient democracy.”

—**Philip E. Tetlock**, professor, University of Pennsylvania, and author of *Superforecasting*

“This book is a much-needed guide for how to thrive in a pluralistic society. Lukianoff and Haidt demonstrate how ancient wisdom and modern psychology can encourage more dialogue across lines of difference, build stronger institutions, and make us happier. They provide an antidote to our seemingly intractable divisions, and not a moment too soon.”

—**Kirsten Powers**, CNN political analyst, *USA Today* columnist, and author of *The Silencing*

“A compelling and timely argument against attitudes and practices that, however well-intended, are damaging our universities, harming our children, and leaving an entire generation intellectually and emotionally ill-prepared for an ever more fraught and complex world. A brave and necessary work.”

—**Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks**, Emeritus Chief Rabbi of UK & Commonwealth; professor, New York University; and author of *Not in God's Name*

“Objectionable words and ideas, as defined by self-appointed guardians on university campuses, are often treated like violence

from sticks and stones. Many students cringe at robust debate; maintaining their ideas of good and evil requires no less than the silencing of disagreeable speakers. Lukianoff and Haidt brilliantly explain how this drift to fragility occurred, how the distinction between words and actions was lost, and what needs to be done.

Critical reading to understand the current campus conflicts.”

—**Mark Yudof**, president emeritus, University of California; and professor emeritus, UC Berkeley School of Law

“I lament the title of this book, as it may alienate the very people who need to engage with its arguments and obscures its message of inclusion. Equal parts mental health manual, parenting guide, sociological study, and political manifesto, it points to a positive way forward of hope, health, and humanism. I only wish I had read it when I was still a professor and a much younger mother.”

—**Anne-Marie Slaughter**, president and CEO, New America; and author of *Unfinished Business*

BY GREG LUKIANOFF

Unlearning Liberty: Campus Censorship and the End of American Debate

Freedom from Speech

FIRE's Guide to Free Speech on Campus (With Harvey Silverglate, David French, and William Creeley)

BY JONATHAN HAIDT

The Happiness Hypothesis: Finding Modern Truth in Ancient Wisdom

The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion

All Minus One: John Stuart Mill's Ideas on Free Speech Illustrated (With Richard Reeves and Dave Cicirelli)

The Coddling of the American Mind

**HOW GOOD INTENTIONS AND BAD IDEAS
ARE SETTING UP A GENERATION FOR FAILURE**

Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt

Penguin Press | New York | 2018

PENGUIN PRESS
An imprint of Penguin Random House LLC
375 Hudson Street New
York, New York 10014
penguinrandomhouse.com

Copyright © 2018 by Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt
Penguin supports copyright. Copyright fuels creativity, encourages diverse voices, promotes free speech, and creates a vibrant culture. Thank you for buying an authorized edition of this book and for complying with copyright laws by not reproducing, scanning, or distributing any part of it in any form without permission. You are supporting writers and allowing Penguin to continue to publish books for every reader.

Excerpt from “Professors like me can’t stay silent about this extremist moment on campuses” by Lucía Martínez Valdivia. Reprinted with the permission of the author. First published in the *Washington Post*, October 27, 2017.

Excerpt from *Your Six-Year-Old: Loving and Defiant*, by Louise Bates Ames & Frances L. Ilg. Copyright © 1979 by The Gesell Institute of Child Development, Louise Bates Ames and Frances L. Ilg. Used by permission of Bantam Books, an imprint of Random House, a division of Penguin Random House LLC. All rights reserved.

Form on [this page](#) from *Treatment Plans and Interventions for Depression and Anxiety Disorders*, Second Edition, Robert L. Leahy, Stephen J. F. Holland, and Lata K. McGinn. Copyright © 2011 by Guilford Press. Reprinted with permission of Guilford Press.

ISBN 9780735224896 (hardcover)
ISBN 9780735224902 (ebook)

While the author has made every effort to provide accurate telephone numbers, Internet addresses, and other contact information at the time of publication, neither the publisher nor the author assumes any responsibility for errors or for changes that occur after publication. Further, the publisher does not have any control over and does not assume any responsibility for author or third-party Web sites or their content.

Cover design: Darren Haggart

Version_3

Prepare the child for the road, not the road for the child.

FOLK WISDOM, origin unknown

Your worst enemy cannot harm you as much as your own thoughts, unguarded. But once mastered, no one can help you as much, not even your father or your mother.

BUDDHA, *Dhammapada*¹

The line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being.

ALEKSANDR SOLZHENTSYN, *The Gulag Archipelago*²

For our mothers, who did their best to prepare us for the road.

JOANNA DALTON LUKIANOFF

ELAINE HAIDT (1931–2017)

CONTENTS

BY GREG LUKIANOFF	4
BY JONATHAN HAIDT	4
CONTENTS	8
The Search for Wisdom.....	12
The Real Origins of This Book.....	16
Tumultuous Years: 2015–2017	22
“Coddling” Means “Overprotecting”	23
What We Will Do in This Book	24
PART I	27
Three Bad Ideas	27
The Untruth of Fragility: What Doesn’t Kill You Makes You Weaker.....	28
Antifragility.....	31
The Rise of Safetyism.....	32
Safe Spaces.....	35
iGen and Safetyism	38
In Sum.....	39
The Untruth of Emotional Reasoning: Always Trust Your Feelings.....	41
Microaggressions: The Triumph of Impact Over Intent	48
Disinvitations and the Ideological Vetting of Speakers.....	54
In Sum.....	57
The Untruth of Us Versus Them: Life Is a Battle Between Good People and Evil People	59
Groups and Tribes	63
Two Kinds of Identity Politics	65
Modern Marcuseanism.....	72

Why Common-Enemy Identity Politics Is Bad for Students	76
The Power of Common Humanity Today	78
In Sum.....	81
Bad Ideas in Action	83
Intimidation and Violence.....	84
NELSON MANDELA ¹	84
Words Are Violence; Violence Is Safety	87
Violence and Intimidation After Berkeley	89
Violence in Charlottesville.....	93
The Autumn of 2017	94
Why It Is Such a Bad Idea to Tell Students That Words Are Violence.....	96
In Sum.....	99
Witch Hunts	101
A Provocative Idea	105
Retraction Is the New Rebuttal	108
Welcome to Evergreen.....	115
Great Untruth U.....	120
In Sum.....	121
The Polarization Cycle.....	124
The Boiling Point	125
Outrage From the Off-Campus Right	131
Threat Comes to Campus.....	137
In Sum.....	139
Anxiety and Depression.....	140
iGen.....	142
iGen Goes to College	152
Screen Time: A Caution About Caution.....	155
In Sum.....	156
Paranoid Parenting.....	158
A Parent's Worst Fear	160

Actual Versus Imagined Risk.....	162
The Dangers of Safetyism	163
Pressured Into Overprotection	166
Class Matters	167
Safe and Unwise.....	171
In Sum.....	172
The Decline of Play	174
The Decline of Free Play	176
Childhood as Test Prep	179
The Resume Arms Race	181
Childhood as Democracy Prep.....	183
In Sum.....	185
The Bureaucracy of Safetyism	187
The Corporatization of College	189
The Customer Is Always Right	190
How Campus Administrators Model Distorted Thinking..	191
See Something, Say Something	195
Harassment and Concept Creep	198
How to Foster Moral Dependency.....	200
In Sum.....	202
The Quest for Justice.....	204
Intuitive Justice	207
Proportional-Procedural Social Justice.....	211
Equal-Outcomes Social Justice	214
Correlation Does Not Imply Causation	218
In Sum.....	221
Wising Up.....	223
Wiser Kids	224
1. Prepare the Child for the Road, Not the Road for the Child	
.....	225

2. Your Worst Enemy Cannot Harm You as Much as Your Own Thoughts, Unguarded	229
3. The Line Dividing Good and Evil Cuts Through the Heart of Every Human Being.....	231
4. Help Schools to Oppose the Great Untruths	233
5. Limit and Refine Device Time	237
6. Support a New National Norm: Service or Work Before College.....	238
Wiser Universities	241
1. Entwine Your Identity With Freedom of Inquiry	243
2. Pick the Best Mix of People for the Mission	245
3. Orient and Educate for Productive Disagreement	246
4. Draw a Larger Circle Around the Community.....	248
Wiser Societies	251
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	257
How to Do CBT.....	261
Categories of Distorted Automatic Thoughts	262
The Chicago Statement on Principles of Free Expression	264
NOTES	266
REFERENCES	301
INDEX	308
About the Authors	325

The Search for Wisdom

This is a book about wisdom and its opposite. The book grows out of a trip that we (Greg and Jon) took to Greece in August of 2016. We had been writing about some ideas spreading through universities that we thought were harming students and damaging their prospects for creating fulfilling lives. These ideas were, in essence, making students less wise. So we decided to write a book to warn people about these terrible ideas, and we thought we'd start by going on a quest for wisdom ourselves. We both work on college campuses; in recent years, we had heard repeated references to the wisdom of Misoponos, a modern-day oracle who lives in a cave on the north slope of Mount Olympus, where he continues the ancient rites of the cult of Koalemos.

We flew to Athens and took a five-hour train ride to Litchoro, a town at the foot of the mountain. At sunrise the next day, we set off on a trail that Greeks have used for thousands of years to seek communion with their gods. We hiked for six hours up a steep and winding path. At noon we came to a fork in the path where a sign said MISOPONOS, with an arrow pointing to the right. The main path, off to the left, looked forbidding: it went straight up a narrow ravine, with an ever-present danger of rockslides.

The path to Misoponos, in contrast, was smooth, level, and easy—a welcome change. It took us through a pleasant grove of pine and fir trees, across a strong wooden pedestrian bridge over a deep ravine, and right to the mouth of a large cave.

Inside the cave we saw a strange scene. Misoponos and his assistants had installed one of those take-a-number systems that you sometimes find in sandwich shops, and there was a line of other seekers ahead of us. We took a number, paid the 100 euro fee to have a private audience with the great man, performed the mandatory rituals of purification, and waited.

When our turn came, we were ushered into a dimly lit chamber at the back of the cave, where a small spring of water bubbled out from a rock wall and splashed down into a large white marble bowl

somewhat reminiscent of a birdbath. Next to the bowl, Misoponos sat in a comfortable chair that appeared to be a Barcalounger recliner from the 1970s. We had heard that he spoke English, but we were taken aback when he greeted us in perfect American English with a hint of Long Island: “Come on in, guys. Tell me what you seek.”

Jon spoke first: “O Wise Oracle, we have come seeking wisdom. What are the deepest and greatest of truths?”

Greg thought we should be more specific, so he added, “Actually, we’re writing a book about wisdom for teenagers, young adults, parents, and educators, and we were kind of hoping that you could boil down your insights into some pithy axioms, ideally three of them, which, if followed, would lead young people to develop wisdom over the course of their lives.”

Misoponos sat silently with his eyes closed for about two minutes. Finally, he opened his eyes and spoke.

“This fountain is the Spring of Koalemos. Koalemos was a Greek god of wisdom who is not as well-known today as Athena, who gets far too much press, in my opinion. But Koalemos has some really good stuff, too, if you ask me. Which you just did. So let me tell you. I will give you three cups of wisdom.”

He filled a small alabaster cup from the water bowl and handed it to us. We both drank from it and handed it back.

“This is the first truth,” he said: “*What doesn’t kill you makes you weaker*. So avoid pain, avoid discomfort, avoid all potentially bad experiences.”

Jon was surprised. He had written a book called *The Happiness Hypothesis*, which examined ancient wisdom in light of modern psychology. The book devoted an entire chapter to testing the opposite of the oracle’s claim, which was most famously stated by Friedrich Nietzsche: “What doesn’t kill me makes me stronger.”¹ Jon thought there must be some mistake. “Excuse me, Your Holiness,” he said, “but did you really mean to say ‘weaker’? Because I’ve got quotes from many wisdom traditions saying that pain, setbacks, and even traumatic experiences can make people *stronger*.”

“Did I say ‘weaker’?” asked Misoponos. “Wait a minute . . . is it weaker or stronger?” He squeezed his eyes shut as he thought about it, and then opened his eyes and said, “Yes, I’m right, weaker is what I meant. Bad experiences are terrible, who would want one? Did you

travel all this way to have a bad experience? Of course not. And pain? So many oracles in these mountains sit on the ground twelve hours a day, and what does it get them? Circulation problems and lower-back pain. How much wisdom can you dispense when you're thinking about your aches and pains all the time? That's why I got this chair twenty years ago. Why shouldn't I be comfortable?" With clear irritation in his voice, he added, "Can I finish?" "I'm sorry," said Jon meekly.

Misoponos filled the cup again. We drank it. "Second," he continued: "*Always trust your feelings. Never question them.*"

Now it was Greg's turn to recoil. He had spent years practicing cognitive behavioral therapy, which is based on exactly the opposite advice: feelings so often mislead us that you can't achieve mental health *until* you learn to question them and free yourself from some common distortions of reality. But having learned to control his immediate negative reactions, he bit his tongue and said nothing.

Misoponos refilled the cup, and we drank again. "Third: *Life is a battle between good people and evil people.*"

We looked at each other in disbelief. Greg could no longer keep quiet: "O Great Oracle of Koalemos," he began, haltingly, "can you explain that one to us?"

"Some people are good," Misoponos said slowly and loudly, as if he thought we hadn't heard him, "and some people are bad." He looked at us pointedly and took a breath. "There is so much evil in the world. Where does it come from?" He paused as if expecting us to answer. We were speechless. "From evil people!" he said, clearly exasperated. "It is up to you and the rest of the good people in the world to fight them. You must be warriors for virtue and goodness. You can see how bad and wrong some people are. You must call them out! Assemble a coalition of the righteous, and shame the evil ones until they change their ways."

Jon asked, "But don't they think the same about us? How can we know that it is *we* who are right and *they* who are wrong?"

Misoponos responded tartly, "Have you learned nothing from me today? Trust your feelings. Do you *feel* that you are right? Or do you *feel* that you are wrong? *I feel* that this interview is over. Get out."

• • • • •

There is no Misoponos,² and we didn't really travel to Greece to discover these three terrible ideas. We didn't have to. You can find them on college campuses, in high schools, and in many homes. These untruths are rarely taught explicitly; rather, they are conveyed to young people by the rules, practices, and norms that are imposed on them, often with the best of intentions.

This is a book about three Great Untruths that seem to have spread widely in recent years:

1. The Untruth of Fragility: *What doesn't kill you makes you weaker.*
2. The Untruth of Emotional Reasoning: *Always trust your feelings.*
3. The Untruth of Us Versus Them: *Life is a battle between good people and evil people.*

While many propositions are untrue, in order to be classified as a Great Untruth, an idea must meet three criteria:

1. It contradicts ancient wisdom (ideas found widely in the wisdom literatures of many cultures).
2. It contradicts modern psychological research on well-being.
3. It harms the individuals and communities who embrace it.

We will show how these three Great Untruths—and the policies and political movements that draw on them—are causing problems for young people, universities, and, more generally, liberal democracies. To name just a few of these problems: Teen anxiety, depression, and suicide rates have risen sharply in the last few years. The culture on many college campuses has become more ideologically uniform, compromising the ability of scholars to seek truth, and of students to learn from a broad range of thinkers. Extremists have proliferated on the far right and the far left, provoking one another to ever deeper levels of hatred. Social media has channeled partisan passions into the creation of a “callout culture”; anyone can be publicly shamed for saying something wellintentioned that someone else interprets uncharitably. New-media platforms and outlets allow citizens to retreat into self-

confirmatory bubbles, where their worst fears about the evils of the other side can be confirmed and amplified by extremists and cyber trolls intent on sowing discord and division.

The three Great Untruths have flowered on many college campuses, but they have their roots in earlier education and childhood experiences, and they now extend from the campus into the corporate world and the public square, including national politics. They are also spreading outward from American universities to universities throughout the English-speaking world.³ These Great Untruths are bad for everyone. Anyone who cares about young people, education, or democracy should be concerned about these trends.

The Real Origins of This Book

In May of 2014, we (Greg and Jon) sat down for lunch together in New York City's Greenwich Village. We were there to talk about a puzzle that Greg had been trying to solve for the past year or two. Greg is a First Amendment lawyer. Since 2001, he has been fighting for academic freedom and freedom of speech on campus as the head of the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE).⁴ A nonpartisan, nonprofit organization, FIRE is dedicated to defending liberty, freedom of speech, due process, and academic freedom on the country's college campuses.

Throughout Greg's career, the calls for campus censorship had generally come from administrators. Students, on the other hand, had always been the one group that consistently supported free speech—in fact, demanded it. But now something was changing; on some campuses, words were increasingly seen as sources of danger. In the fall of 2013, Greg began hearing about students asking for “triggering” material to be removed from courses. By the spring of 2014, *The New Republic*⁵ and *The New York Times*⁶ were reporting on this trend. Greg also noticed an intensified push from students for school administrators to disinvite speakers whose ideas the students found offensive. When those speakers were not disinvited, students were increasingly using the “heckler's veto”—protesting in ways that prevented their fellow students from attending the talk or from

hearing the speaker. Most concerning to Greg, however, and the reason he wanted to talk to Jon, was the shift in the *justifications* for these new reactions to course materials and speakers.

In years past, administrators were motivated to create campus speech codes in order to curtail what they deemed to be racist or sexist speech. Increasingly, however, the rationale for speech codes and speaker disinvitations was becoming medicalized: Students claimed that certain kinds of speech—and even the content of some books and courses—interfered with their *ability to function*. They wanted protection from material that they believed could jeopardize their mental health by “triggering” them, or making them “feel unsafe.”

To give one example: Columbia University’s “Core Curriculum” (part of the general education requirement for all undergraduates at Columbia College) features a course called Masterpieces of Western Literature and Philosophy.⁷ At one point, this included works by Ovid, Homer, Dante, Augustine, Montaigne, and Woolf. According to the university, the course is supposed to tackle “the most difficult questions about human experience.” However, in 2015, four Columbia undergraduates wrote an essay in the school newspaper arguing that students “need to feel safe in the classroom” but “many texts in the Western canon” are “wrought with histories and narratives of exclusion and oppression” and contain “triggering and offensive material that marginalizes student identities in the classroom.” Some students said that these texts are so emotionally challenging to read and discuss that professors should issue “trigger warnings” and provide support for triggered students.⁸ (Trigger warnings are verbal or written notifications provided by a professor to alert students that they are about to encounter potentially distressing material.) The essay was nuanced and made some important points about diversifying the literary canon, but is safety versus danger a helpful framework for discussing reactions to literature? Or might that framework itself alter a student’s reactions to ancient texts, creating a feeling of threat and a stress response to what otherwise would have been experienced merely as discomfort or dislike?

Of course, student activism is nothing new; students have been actively trying to shape their learning environment for decades, such as when they joined professors during the “canon wars” of the 1990s

(the effort to add more women and writers of color to the lists of “dead white males” that dominated reading lists).⁹ Students in the 1960s and 1970s often tried to keep speakers off campus or prevent speakers from being heard. For example, students at several universities protested lectures by Harvard biologist E. O. Wilson because of his writings about how evolution shaped human behavior—which some students thought could be used to justify existing gender roles and inequalities. (A sign advertising one protest urged fellow students to “bring noisemakers.”¹⁰) But those efforts were not driven by health concerns. Students wanted to block people they thought were espousing evil ideas (as they do today), but back then, they were not saying that members of the school community would be *harmed* by the speaker’s visit or by exposure to ideas. And they were certainly not asking that professors and administrators take a more protective attitude toward them by shielding them from the presence of certain people.

What is new today is the premise that students are fragile. Even those who are not fragile themselves often believe that *others* are in danger and therefore need protection. There is no expectation that students will grow stronger from their encounters with speech or texts they label “triggering.” (This is the Untruth of Fragility: *What doesn’t kill you makes you weaker.*)

To Greg, who had suffered from bouts of depression throughout his life, this seemed like a terrible approach. In seeking treatment for his depression, he—along with millions of others around the world—had found that cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) was the most effective solution. CBT teaches you to notice when you are engaging in various “cognitive distortions,” such as “catastrophizing” (*If I fail this quiz, I’ll fail the class and be kicked out of school, and then I’ll never get a job . . .*) and “negative filtering” (only paying attention to negative feedback instead of noticing praise as well). These distorted and irrational thought patterns are hallmarks of depression and anxiety disorders. We are not saying that students are never in real physical danger, or that their claims about injustice are usually cognitive distortions. We are saying that even when students are reacting to real problems, they are more likely than previous generations to engage in thought patterns that make those problems seem more threatening, which makes them harder to solve. An important discovery by early CBT researchers was

that if people learn to stop thinking this way, their depression and anxiety usually subside. For this reason, Greg was troubled when he noticed that some students' reactions to speech on college campuses exhibited *exactly the same distortions* that he had learned to rebut in his own therapy. Where had students learned these bad mental habits? Wouldn't these cognitive distortions make students *more* anxious and depressed?

Of course, many things have changed on campus since the 1970s. College students today are far more diverse. They arrive on campus having faced varying degrees of bigotry, poverty, trauma, and mental illness. Educators must account for those differences, reevaluate old assumptions, and strive to create an inclusive community. But what is the best way to do that? If we are especially concerned about the students who have faced the most serious obstacles, should our priority be protecting them from speakers, books, and ideas that might offend them? Or might such protective measures—however well-intentioned—backfire and harm those very students?

All students must be prepared for the world they will face after college, and those who are making the largest jump—the ones most in danger of feeling like strangers in a strange land—are the ones who must learn fastest and prepare hardest. The playing field is not level; life is not fair. But college is quite possibly the best environment on earth in which to come face-to-face with people and ideas that are potentially offensive or even downright hostile. It is the ultimate mental gymnasium, full of advanced equipment, skilled trainers, and therapists standing by, just in case.

Greg worried that if students came to see themselves as fragile, they would stay away from that gym. If students didn't build skills and accept friendly invitations to spar in the practice ring, and if they avoided these opportunities because well-meaning people convinced them that they'd be harmed by such training, well, it would be a tragedy for all concerned. Their beliefs about their own and others' fragility in the face of ideas they dislike would become self-fulfilling prophecies. Not only would students come to *believe* that they can't handle such things, but if they acted on that belief and avoided exposure, eventually they would *become* less able to do so. If students succeeded in creating bubbles of intellectual "safety" in college, they would set themselves up for even greater anxiety and conflict after

graduation, when they will certainly encounter many more people with more extreme views.

Based on Greg's personal and professional experience, his theory was this: Students were beginning to demand protection from speech because they had unwittingly learned to employ the very cognitive distortions that CBT tries to correct. Stated simply: *Many university students are learning to think in distorted ways, and this increases their likelihood of becoming fragile, anxious, and easily hurt.*

Greg wanted to discuss this theory with Jon because Jon is a social psychologist who has written extensively¹¹ about the power of CBT and its close fit with ancient wisdom. Jon immediately saw the potential in Greg's idea. As a professor at New York University's Stern School of Business, he had just begun to see the first signs of this new "fragile student model." His main research area is moral psychology, and his second book, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion*, was an effort to help people understand different moral cultures, or moral "matrices," particularly the moral cultures of the political left and right.

The term "matrix," as Jon used it, comes from the 1984 science fiction novel *Neuromancer*, by William Gibson (which was the inspiration for the later movie *The Matrix*). Gibson imagined a futuristic, internet-like network linking everyone together. He called it "the matrix" and referred to it as "a consensual hallucination." Jon thought it was a great way to think about moral cultures. A group creates a consensual moral matrix as individuals interact with one another, and then they act in ways that may be unintelligible to outsiders. At the time, it seemed to both of us that a new moral matrix was forming in some pockets of universities and was destined to grow. (Social media, of course, is perfectly designed to help "consensual hallucinations" spread within connected communities at warp speed—on campus and off, on the left and on the right.)

Jon eagerly agreed to join Greg in his attempt to solve this mystery. We wrote an article together exploring Greg's idea and using it to explain a number of events and trends that had arisen on campus in the previous year or two. We submitted the article to *The Atlantic* with the title "Arguing Towards Misery: How Campuses Teach Cognitive Distortions." The editor, Don Peck, liked the article, helped us strengthen the argument, and then gave it a more succinct and provocative title: "The Coddling of the American Mind."