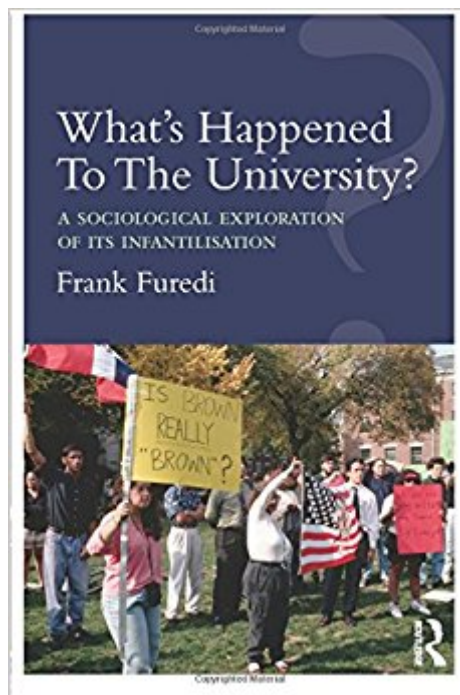




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What's Happened To The University?: A Sociological Exploration Of Its Infantilisation



Synopsis

The radical transformation that universities are undergoing today is no less far-reaching than the upheavals that it experienced in the 1960s. However today, when almost 50 per cent of young people participate in higher education, what occurs in universities matters directly to the whole of society. On both sides of the Atlantic curious and disturbing events on campuses has become a matter of concern not just for academics but also for the general public. What is one to make of the growing trend of banning speakers? What's the meaning of trigger warnings, cultural appropriation, micro-aggression or safe spaces? And why are some students going around arguing that academic freedom is no big deal? *What's Happened To The University?* offers an answer to the questions of why campus culture is undergoing such a dramatic transformation and why the term moral quarantine refers to the infantilising project of insulating students from offence and a variety of moral harms.

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Customer Reviews

"Universities used to promote social and personal transformation. They now confirm a socio-political demand for conformity: they will provide a safe space in which you can endorse and celebrate your already established boiler-plate identity, as victim of historical injustice. On top of this, universities have now reneged on any responsibility for changing the conditions which in turn has caused social injustice. Furedi gives a brilliant analysis of how, sociologically, we have permitted this to happen. It should be compulsory reading for anyone interested in what has happened to the university." -

Thomas Docherty, Professor of English and of Comparative Literature, University of Warwick "Frank Furedi offers a lucid challenge to what he sees as limitations to free speech in the academy. Passionate and richly illustrated it provides an important starting point for debate." - Mary Evans, LSE Centennial Professor, London School of Economics "This is a remarkably brave, much needed, timely, and challenging analysis of the current state of higher education. Furedi reflects upon the infantilisation of the university from the growth of paternalism towards students, the increasing presence of intolerance, the curtailing of academic freedom to the less obvious demands for 'learning outcomes'™. Those with an invested interest in these processes will not like this book: all the better! It demands to be widely read." - Sandra Walklate, Eleanor Rathbone Chair of Sociology, University of Liverpool "Mr. Furedi, an emeritus professor at England's University of Kent, argues that the ethos prevailing at many universities on both sides of the Atlantic is the culmination of an infantilizing paternalism that has defined education and child-rearing in recent decades. It is a pedagogy that from the earliest ages values, above all else, self-esteem, maximum risk avoidance and continuous emotional validation and affirmation. (Check your child's trophy case.) Helicopter parents and teachers act as though "fragility and vulnerability are the defining characteristics of personhood."" - Excerpt from the article 'Free Thought Under Siege', by Daniel Shuchman, appearing in the Wall Street Journal, Nov. 2016. "What's Happened to the University is a tour de force, offering the most insightful explanation I have seen of higher education's abandonment of its fiduciary duty to foster intellectual freedom and the pursuit of truth. Furedi's focus on the cultural, political, and psychological forces leading to "infantilization" captures the heart of the matter." - Donald A. Downs, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Frank Furedi is Emeritus Professor of Sociology, University of Kent, UK

Furedi's courageous presentation of what has been obvious to so many university teachers for a decade or more is a breath of fresh air. As colleges and universities sell more and more degrees to hapless first-generation students who are often not prepared to read basic literature (philosophy, creative writing, science), the trend becomes more understandable, thanks to Professor Furedi. College is for this group is an extension of failed or incomplete socialization at home and during the first 12 years or more of schooling ((including the institutionalized forms of child abuse and neglect known as preschool and daycare). Open presentation of challenging ideas has been replaced very often by a sort of pseudo group therapy where adolescents may present their identity formation, confusion and occasional crisis as a topic, instead of a theorem, principle, concept, or text to be

elucidated by someone with many years of reading and reflection (the professor). Instead of such guided exploration, we have the medicalized ("therapeutic") classroom. Ongoing childhood-preserving "activities" supported by safe spaces, worries about microaggressions, and trigger warnings insulate students from confrontation with their received opinions and media-ted "information" in a four year adventure of self-discovery. Congratulations to Furedi!

The most startling revelation for me of Furedi's exploration of safe spaces, trigger warnings, microaggressions, and so on at American and U.K. campuses was how the docility of the professoriate allowed mediators, student life deans, diversity officers, learning outcomes offices, and lawyers to intrude into the faculty-student relationship and to undermine both academic freedom and freedom of expression. Not offending students, he argues, has replaced challenging them with ideas. Furedi draws a connection between academe's recent and increasing tendency to shield students from being offended by speech and ideas to society's relatively recent disposition to validate without question the feelings, attitudes, and accomplishments of children rather than attempting to instill values in them. He says that we inappropriately have adopted the language of medicine and therapy to describe what used to be ordinary, if sometimes uncomfortable, interpersonal interactions. Thus, students claim to have been "traumatized" by seeing "Trump 2016" chalked on campus sidewalks. And, senior administrators rather than saying, "Please, grow up," sympathized with the students. I found the book informative, well argued, and well reasoned. My reservation is that Furedi did not try to document the extent of the thou-shalt-not-offend phenomenon. For example, when I recently raised the trigger-warning issue with a community college dean and faculty member, they had no idea what I was talking about. From my time as a college trustee and recent ten-year stint as the president of a liberal arts college, I am confident that a good deal of excellent teaching and learning goes on American campuses free from the constraints of do-not-offend advocates. Furedi also neglects to describe efforts to oppose the muffling of free expression on campuses, such as the January 2015 University of Chicago Report of the Committee on Freedom of Expression. I recommend the book.

I agree with the message. Basically that message says many university students these days are viewing themselves as incapable of dealing with the normal stresses in their lives, even tests and the news of the day, so many university administrations are acting more like benevolent parents than educators. I assume this behavior is responsible for the term "snowflake", which melts with a little heat. Contrast this with the mid-20th century viewpoint of "I will pull myself up by the bootstraps

and be independent". My low rating is based on the repetitiveness of the book. It could be half as long and convey the message. It is pretty laborious reading that is more in the style of a dissertation than a book that is readable by the general public.

A very dense and slow read. A bit repetitious. Occasional statements are out of bounds but most of what the author writes makes a good deal of sense. This presumes, of course, that one can make any sense at all out of the insanity currently afflicting our students' lives on campus. The book accurately portrays how the L wing has really become R wing in its approach to any inkling of dissent or differing opinion, well beyond the point of absurdity. Makes me glad I'm no longer in college.

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