

Problems regarding higher education in america

[Education](#), [School](#)



The last few decades have been revolutionary in the history of mankind. Today almost everyone has a chance to pursue higher education, which was unimaginable a hundred years earlier. However, does the opportunity to attend college mean that the majority of the population should pursue higher education? Paul Stoller, a professor of anthropology at West Chester University, in his blogpost, " My Struggles With Anti-Intellectualism" (2012), claims that the society has a negative attitude towards " Intellectualism", and advises the youth to think less pragmatically and follow their dreams. On the other hand, Charles Murray, a scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, in his article, " What's Wrong With Vocational School?" (2007), states that too many people go to college, who, instead, should attend vocational schools. It is apparent that the main issue is the decision of going to college or university as a means of becoming an intellectual or getting a job.

Stoller in his blog implies that the population perceives critical thinking as a useless pastime which we cannot utilize in modern life. The author (2012) states that " many of the commentators suggested that critical thinking was a kind of " pie in the sky" activity, a luxury we can no longer afford. " Although anecdotal, this evidence gives a general overview of the " values" which plague modern society, the main one being pragmatism. The author also recalls a personal experience with his parents. Apparently, Stoller's parents advised him to focus on getting a job with high salary. This again proves that the American people are mostly focused on practicality, preferring income to knowledge. However, the purpose of this article is to change the status quo. Firstly, Stoller attempts to prove that critical thinking

is essential and anti-intellectualism – harmful by interpreting the reasons of the success of earlier Americans. Then he quotes his professors: “ You should at least try to follow your dreams, they advised. Maybe things will work out for you. Maybe they won’t. But try to follow a different path. Who knows what you’ll find?”. It seems that the author is trying to convince the youth to think individually and less pragmatically, which can also be implied as a suggestion to attend college in order to gain knowledge which is less marketable than what people usually strive for.

Charles Murray focuses on a different problem in his article. According to him, too many people go to college. First and foremost, Murray explains why he believes that most college goers should actually study in vocational schools. The author (2007) states: “ If you are average in math ability, you may struggle with algebra and probably fail a calculus course. If you are average in verbal skills, you often misinterpret complex text and make errors in logic”, implying that college curriculum is much more difficult than what most students are capable of. He also claims that due to this difficulty many students do not actually understand assigned materials; instead, they just either memorize it or completely misunderstand it, a logical observation on his part. Furthermore, according to him, students who cannot keep up with college standards demand different courses, which the author analogizes to an assembly line which produces both pottery and television. Murray’s solution to this problem is vocational school. He insists that more average-intelligence people go to vocational schools, which actually helps them acquire marketable skills. He even lists professions with higher salary than jobs which require a college degree, such as: “ carpenter, painter,

electrician, plumber, glazier, mason". The author also provides examples of companies which do not require a college degree, for example, Microsoft or Google. Such examples help him disprove the belief that college degrees stand for knowledge, while in reality it is an incorrect method of assessing someone's abilities. The abovementioned works of Stoller and Murray have many similarities and differences.

Firstly, the general topic seems to be almost identical, what should a person do to receive higher education; is going to a college a good idea? The authors seem to disagree at first glance, Stoller encourages people to think less pragmatically, while Murray directly tells people to go to vocational school in order to earn money. However, upon further examination, the two do not contradict one another. Murray in his article is referring to people who would be considered as "anti-intellectuals" by Stoller. He is basically speaking to people who do not value the knowledge given in college, either because they do not comprehend it or because they do not care; and these people are the ones who feel disdain towards critical thinkers and intellectuals. The methods the authors use to prove their point differs slightly. Stoller's whole argumentation is mostly based on anecdotal evidences. The commentators, the opinions of his parents, and the suggestions of his professors are all anecdotal, but still quite convincing. He also utilizes reasoning, claiming that if critical thinking was important for the early Americans, then lack of it must be harmful to the society.

On the other hand, Murray mostly uses simple logic to prove his points (e. g. "If you cannot handle the math, you cannot pass the courses"). Also, he

applies statistics to calculate the average IQ of a student. And lastly, the author lists examples in different contexts to further strengthen his arguments. However, neither of the authors cite sources for any of their claims, therefore the readers have to just trust what they are claiming. The lack of source citation, among many other things, hints at the tone of both of the articles; they are both semi-formal. Despite this similarity, Murray's and Stoller's writings are quite different in other aspects. Murray is much more strict and harsh, directly saying that if you have an IQ below 115, you should reconsider going to college. While Stoller is much more light-hearted, writing statements such as " try to follow a different path. Who knows what you'll find?". Additionally, the audience seems to be similar as well.

Both authors are focused on topics that matter to younger people, specifically the decision of going to college, therefore their audience must consist of students and high school pupils. In conclusion, the aforementioned articles revolve around the problems regarding higher education. Stoller speaks about the rampant pragmatism in American society, while Murray focuses on the " overcrowding" of colleges. The authors seem to contradict each-other, while in reality they have a similar opinion on going to college. Murray has better methods of proving his claims, but the lack of source citation by both authors downgrades their statements in general. And lastly, the tone might be somewhat different, but the audience is basically identical.