

Is A Critical Thinking Gap Driving Income Inequality?

There is an unrelenting tide of new information that is being pushed by an ever increasing set of sources. Along with this crush of data is the certainty that much of it is inaccurate or a misrepresentation. With that understanding it is more important than ever that citizens are critical thinkers to sort out the details without getting sucked into falsehoods. Many of the individual who work in what has been termed the “knowledge economy” are handsomely paid due to their expertise in handling the complexities of the modern world. Is it possible that one of the leading contributing factors to income inequality is based on critical thinking?

Intellectual Takeout [has written in the past](#) about the need for an increase in the workforce of the skilled trades. Looking at [the statistics](#) provided by Manpower Group, Skilled Trade workers consistently fall into the top 10 positions that are hardest to fill. Skilled Trades are a great way for many individuals to find a path to middle income, but increasingly we see that even the Skilled Trade jobs require a deeper understanding of abstract ideas and solutions because of technology developments. Said another way, skilled trades also demand critical thinking.

Many have stated that a large contributing factor to the shortage in Skilled Labor is the fact that many high school students are pushed into college courses that are not necessary. This is possible, but could it be that there are deeper currents flowing under this trend? Could we also be witnessing a clear division between those who are able to think critically and those who have succumbed to a tide of lazy thinking? Worse, lazy thinking masquerading as critical thinking.

The world is complex and dangerous. Too many individuals think that thorough research consists of clicking the top link offered by a search engine and mistake a shallow pool of explanation for a deep dive of reasoning. To be successful in this world requires a new level of understanding that has never existed in humanity before. That acquisition in specialized skills is referred to as "Human Capital." This phenomena is clearly discussed by Brink Lindsey in his excellent "Human Capitalism: How Economic Growth Has Made Us Smarter—and More Unequal." In the era of Big Data, those that are able to quickly comprehend and manipulate complex datasets come out ahead – way ahead. The average person, unwilling to look beyond easy answers, will not be rewarded because their personal human capital is not desirable.

That brings us to the gap; but what has opened is a gap in the mind. This human capital gap may represent one of the greatest challenges to reconciling income inequality. With the world becoming more abstract and complex by the day, those that are fully engaged in human capital development will continue to widen the gap at a faster pace as the complexities mount. We may need to jettison our habit of tinkering around the edges when trying to solve this problem. The gap in human capital is continually representing a gulf which is too wide to cross because of the speed at which it increases. This level of social and economic transition represents a sea change with too many people being swept out in the currents.