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**Summary of "Is College Worth It?"**

In "Is College Worth It?" (2014), David Leonhardt explores whether the financial investment in higher education is justified by the long-term benefits, particularly focusing on the increased lifetime earnings of college graduates. Leonhardt acknowledges the rising costs of tuition and student debt but argues that, on average, college graduates earn significantly more over their lifetimes than those with only a high school diploma. He also highlights that the wage gap between college graduates and non-graduates has continued to grow, making higher education one of the best financial decisions for most people, despite the upfront costs and debt.

**Extended Response to "Is College Worth It?"**

While David Leonhardt presented a strong case for the value of a college degree in 2014, the landscape of higher education and the job market has shifted significantly since then, prompting the need to reassess whether his argument holds today. The cost of college has continued to rise, and student loan debt has reached unprecedented levels, leading some to question if a degree is still a worthwhile investment for everyone.

**Personal Experience and Perspective**

From personal experience, the pressure to attend college remains high, especially in fields like computer science, where a degree is often seen as a gateway to lucrative careers. However, as more companies in the tech industry begin to emphasize skills over formal education, alternative pathways like coding boot camps and certifications are becoming increasingly viable. This shift suggests that for certain professions, the traditional four-year degree may not be the only path to success. For instance, tech giants like Google and Apple have started hiring employees without college degrees, further challenging the notion that higher education is the only route to a stable and high-paying job.

**Updated Evidence**

Recent studies indicate that while college graduates still earn more on average than non-graduates, the return on investment varies significantly by major and institution. According to a 2023 report by Georgetown University’s Center on Education and the Workforce, graduates in fields like engineering and healthcare continue to see strong returns, while those with degrees in fields like the arts or humanities may struggle to earn enough to offset the cost of their education. Additionally, the Federal Reserve reports that student loan debt in the U.S. has surpassed $1.7 trillion, with many borrowers struggling to make payments or find jobs that justify their debt load.

This updated data challenges Leonhardt’s claim that college is a universally sound financial decision. While it may be true for certain fields and individuals, it’s important to recognize that the decision to attend college is now more complex, with factors like choice of major, the reputation of the institution, and financial aid playing a crucial role in determining whether the investment will pay off.

**Counterarguments**

Critics of higher education argue that the rising cost of tuition is leading to diminishing returns for many students. In a world where entrepreneurial opportunities and alternative educational platforms like Coursera and Udemy are flourishing, some believe that college is no longer the only option for gaining the skills necessary for success. These platforms offer courses at a fraction of the cost of traditional college tuition, making it possible for students to learn in-demand skills without incurring massive debt.

Moreover, trade schools and apprenticeship programs provide another alternative, offering practical, hands-on training in fields like plumbing, electrical work, and carpentry. These careers can be highly lucrative, with minimal upfront costs compared to a four-year degree, and they address the growing demand for skilled labor in industries that are essential to the economy.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, while David Leonhardt’s 2014 argument for higher education remains valid for many, it is essential to consider the evolving realities of the job market and the rising costs of college. College is still a smart investment for some individuals, particularly those pursuing careers in high-demand fields. However, for others, alternative education pathways may offer a more cost-effective route to success. Ultimately, the decision to attend college must be made carefully considering one's career goals, financial situation, and the changing dynamics of the workforce.

# Works Cited

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