

The Life Choices Homeschooled Students Make at the End of High School

Results Summary from Dissertation Study:

by

David P. Byers Ph.D.

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In October 2004, in order to complete the dissertation for my doctorate degree, I conducted a survey of homeschooled students to determine what life choices they made soon after completing high school. This summary, while not a comprehensive reflection of the data obtained, is nonetheless an accurate representation of the results.

The study focused on the life choices and rationale of individuals, 18 years of age or older, who completed high school in a homeschool program in Nebraska between and including the school years of 1997-1998 and 2003-2004 in the metropolitan areas of Omaha and Lincoln (Douglas, Lancaster, and Sarpy counties). The study was conducted online using a web-based survey tool to which respondents were directed via announcements in homeschool newsletters, etrees, and web sites, as well as announcements being forwarded on via email.

There were 31 respondents, but only 25 of them completed the survey—11 males and 14 females representing homeschoolers who completed high school between 1997 and 2004. All of the respondents classified themselves as White-Caucasian. All socioeconomic categories (parents' income at the time the individual graduated from high school), from under \$19,999 per year to over \$100,000 per year, were represented.

The majority of the respondents, 84% (10 males and 11 females) indicated that they chose to continue their education after high school, while 16% (3 females and 1

male) indicated making a different life choice. Ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status were not seen as factors affecting the life choice decision.

The majority of the respondents (4 males and 6 females) who decided to continue their education after high school by attending a four-year school were enrolled on a full-time basis. One female enrolled in a four-year school on a part-time basis. Nine respondents enrolled in a two-year school (three males and three females were enrolled full-time and 2 males and 1 female were enrolled part-time). One respondent, who described his school as trade-vocational, was enrolled in it on a full-time basis.

The characteristics that individuals chose to describe the types of schools that they decided to attend seemed to indicate that homeschoolers preferred to attend schools that they characterized as being private or parochial with student populations under 5,000 students that are located in urban settings. Even the respondents who characterized their school as being public schools seemed to prefer smaller schools with populations between 5,000 and 10,000 students. Proximity to home seemed to be another prevailing reason for the choice of school.

Generally speaking, students who enrolled in a two-year school did so because they had taken courses at the school during high school and their goals included transferring to a four-year school. Students who chose to attend a four-year school did so because they wanted the four-year degree and because they had specific goals in mind related to the subject they would study and the jobs they hoped to obtain. The individual who enrolled in a vocational-trade school did so to prepare for ministry work.

In addition to general studies related to academic transfer programs, two-year school students studied mechanics, computer science, and paralegal-commercial and

family law. Four-year school students chose to study liberal arts, computer systems management, communications-journalism, intercultural communications-media studies, nutrition, elementary education, communications, equestrian science, horticultural landscape design, and biology. Some students indicated that they were simultaneously pursuing courses related to either Bible studies or youth ministry.

The responses of the individuals who chose to pursue life choices other than attending a post-secondary school also seemed to indicate that they had specific goals in mind when making their choices. While each of the respondents chose to work after high school, the rationale for their life choices were to: take a break from school, to experience a certain amount of independence, to pursue a business opportunity, to earn money, and to decide what to do. Two of the four respondents seemed to indicate a desire to return to school and one respondent indicated that she had already returned to school.

The qualitative data that the respondents provided with regard to the survey, homeschooling, and/or their life choices seemed to indicate that they considered homeschooling to be worthwhile and beneficial to them in relation to their life choices and their goals. In some instances, homeschooling seemed to enable the respondent to achieve his/her goals sooner by being able to attend a two-year school during high school in order to work toward completing an area of study, or by being able to complete basic courses required to transfer to a four-year school. Other responses seemed to indicate that homeschooling had laid the groundwork for the individual being academically prepared to attend a post-secondary school, as well as for being generally prepared for pursuing either life choice.

Although there were only a small number of respondents, the study was seen as being successful in that it provided insight into a topic of homeschooling that had not been previously studied. The dissertation committee which was comprised of highly-experienced scholars found the subject of homeschooling to be fascinating; I spent a great deal of time answering their questions about the subject on more than one occasion in order to satisfy their curiosity. The dissertation was accepted and published in its entirety in early 2005.

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