

## PK-12 EDUCATION

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# **The Transmission of Values and the Transition into Adulthood Within the Context of Home Education**

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*The current study explored the transmission of values and beliefs and the transition into adulthood within the context of home education through semi-structured open-ended interviews with four formerly home-educated young adults. The interviewees described their relationship with their parents as strong both now and while homeschooling but the younger two participants did not show clear signs that they closely maintained their parents' religious beliefs. All participants indicated that their transition to adulthood contained some transitional bumps but the difficulty of these bumps was mitigated by a strong parent-child relationship. The youngest participant seemed to be in the midst of a transitional strain.*

In the last several decades significant numbers of Americans have abandoned the public schools in favor of home education, and according to the National Household Education Survey (Planty et al., 2009) approximately 1.5 million students were being homeschooled in 2007. The same survey found that while some have left the public schools for purely pedagogical reasons, 83% of home educators report that one of the primary reason for their exodus is to provide religious and moral instruction, or in other words to transmit a given set of values to their children. In spite of this commonly stated purpose for choosing home education, most research regarding home-schooling has focused on academic outcomes (Collom, 2005; Qapish, 2007; Ray, 2000; Ray & Eagleson, 2008; Rudner, 1999). Long ago, Cizek (1994) pointed out that the religious and moral goals most often given for home

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education and the academic outcomes measured to quantify success are not aligned, which suggests that approaches to research that measure religious and moral objectives would provide a welcome and necessary lens.

Ray (1988), a well-known scholar of homeschooling, advocated for such a research lens that would ask how and whether homeschooled students maintain the values, beliefs, and worldviews of their parents. However, he acknowledges that very little research, as of 2004, has addressed this topic. Ray (2004) reports on a study in which 5254 home educated adults responded to a survey containing a few questions focused on the link between homeschooled adults' religious beliefs and those of their parents. In this study 94% of formerly home educated adults strongly agreed or agreed with the statement "My religious beliefs are basically the same as those of my parents" (p. 103). Even though this survey provides insight into the general trends among home educated adults regarding the alignment of their beliefs with that of their parents, it leaves many details of this relationship unexplored. First, the reader does not know what "basically the same" means, and secondly, 35% of the respondents indicated that they agreed rather than strongly agreed. What were the respondents thinking about when they marked agree instead of strongly agree? Were they thinking of one slight difference in belief or a few major dissimilarities? These ambiguous results reveal a gap in the literature that remains unexplored and needs to be addressed with rigorous exploratory research.

Such exploratory research is often best approached through a qualitative design (Creswell & Clark, 2011). In the current qualitative exploratory study I will attempt to fill this research gap by conducting open-ended interviews with four formerly home-educated adults. Specifically, I will explore their perception of the alignment of their values and beliefs with their parent's values and beliefs in order to flesh out what such typical survey categories as "basically the same" and "agree" might look like in this particular context. Therefore the research questions addressed in this study are as follows: 1) How do formerly home educated adults view the impact of homeschooling on the development of their values, beliefs, and worldview? 2) In what ways do these formerly home educated adults perceive their values as aligned with their parents and in what ways do these adults perceive their values as different from their parents? and 3) How do these adults view their experience of transitioning into adulthood and establishing their own beliefs, values, and worldviews?

## METHODS

### Study Design

To address the above research questions, I used a qualitative exploratory research design. I conducted individual semi-structured open-ended

interviews consisting of approximately 30 questions each (Appendix A) with four formerly home-educated adults. I chose this design to allow the participants to explain their experience with as little leading from me as possible. My interview questions gradually narrowed in on my specific research questions to allow the interviewee to address what they deemed germane to their experiences while still ensuring that the conversation addressed the questions I hoped to explore. As such, focal points and boundaries were established while still allowing as much freedom to the interviewee as possible. Miles and Huberman (1994) recognize the establishment of boundaries or focal points as necessary components in qualitative research.

## Participants

The participants were intentionally chosen to produce a sample with 1) an equal number men and women, 2) a broad range of ages, and 3) individuals who were all home educated for at least eight years during their K-12 education. This sample was not designed to represent the ethnic, religious, or socio-economic status (SES) diversity that comprises the United States population of formerly home educated adults. Two individuals were identified through personal contacts and two were located through a local Christian homeschooling support group of which their mothers were members. The sample represented a range of parental education levels (1 year of college to a master's degree), personal educational attainment (1 year of college to graduate student), and family size (two to eight children). Two participants were home educated for their entire K-12 education, one was privately schooled in kindergarten only, and one began attending a public school in high school (Table 1).

## My Role as Researcher

In qualitative research the researcher is not an uninvolved observer, and their lens through which they interpret the data bears heavily on the way the data is

**TABLE 1** Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Age, years	Mother's education	Father's education	Personal education	Siblings, <i>N</i>	Marital status	Years home schooled
Andrew	32	Bachelors	Bachelors	Trade School	7	Single	K – 12
Jennifer	30	Bachelors	MD	Bachelors	3	Married	1 – 12
Katy	18	1 Year of College	Bachelors	1 Year of College (Growing Business)	4	Single	K – 12
Michael	23	Some College	Some College	Working on Master's Degree	1	Engaged	K – 8

gathered, analyzed, and interpreted. Brantlinger et al. (2005) write that in qualitative research the researcher is often understood to be “the instrument” used in the study (p. 197). Because the researcher is so intertwined in the analysis and interpretation of the data, Brantlinger et al. recommend that the researcher disclose the beliefs, values, assumptions, and biases that they bring into the study. Therefore, I should disclose that I do not approach this subject without some degree of involvement. I currently plan on home educating my children for a significant portion of their K-12 education, and one of my primary motivations is the desire to pass on a set of religious beliefs and moral values to my children. While this intertwining with the subject of this study does affect my analysis of the data, it also motivates me to do good research and to examine deeply the experiences of the formerly home educated. I am not simply an engineer wondering whether an unknown bridge is sturdy; I am a dad who is about to take my family across that bridge. As such, I have a deep motivation to examine critically the “bridge” I am about to cross with my own children.

### Data Collection Procedures

Data was collected through four semi-structured open-ended one-on-one interviews. The participants agreed to participate verbally and then signed a consent form before any interviews were conducted. The participants were reminded that they could skip any question that they did not feel comfortable addressing. The interviews were audio recorded using a standard MP3 player and then transcribed by the primary researcher. To ensure anonymity the names of the participants were changed and some potentially identifying demographic data was removed.

### Data Analysis Procedures

Following the framework recommended by Strauss (1987), the transcripts were read and initially coded using an unrestricted open coding process. This process yielded eight broad categories: socialization issues, transitions into adulthood, academic factors, transmission of values, parental motivation for homeschooling, benefits of homeschooling, disadvantages of homeschooling, and plans for their children’s education. I then reviewed the prior literature, re-examined the scope of the research questions, and decided to focus the analysis on two primary themes: the transmission of values and the young adult’s transition into adulthood. I made the choice to shrink the scope of this paper, in order to allow more depth in exploring the selected themes. The next phase was to develop a dense framework of codes around these two major axes of inquiry. Around the axes of the two primary themes, eight sub-themes began to emerge: time to fly, alignment of values, distinctions in values, rating of parental relationship, transitional bumps, reasons for similarities, reasons for distinctions, and rebellion (Table 2).

**TABLE 2** Codes with Definitions

Themes	Related to primary theme	Definition	Example
Time to Fly	Transition to Adulthood	A point in time when the young adult felt it was time to move out of homeschooling or even out of their parent's house	Michael: "it was time ... after that long me and my mom both were butting heads and we knew that it was time for there to be a change" Jennifer: "all I can say is at that point I needed to leave the home. For sure. [laughs] I had a good relationship with my parents but they knew and I knew that it was time to spread my wings and get out of the house."
Transitional Bumps	Transition to Adulthood	Evidence of tension during the transition into adulthood	Katy: "they think that I don't have faith, but I do and me choosing to live with somebody they don't know makes them think ... did you not inherit our faith from us ... after all this time we put in?" Andrew: "I was just like, mom and dad 'I don't want to do what you are saying ... I don't agree with you ... I totally disagree with your perspective.'"
Rebellion	Transition to Adulthood	Their perspective on their own rebellion to their parents or on other's rebellion	Michael: "I never felt or had feelings to rebel ... I never had to deal with anything like that." Jennifer: "maybe a little more legalistic and maybe a little more exacting of their kids. And then when the kids got out of that they just went a little more wild."
Rating of Parental Relationship	Transition to Adulthood	Places where the young adult provides insight into their relationship with their parents (either currently or in the past)	Michael: "oh, it's always been a good relationship ... I could never ask anything more from them ..." Andrew: "I have a great relationship with my parents."

Alignment of Values	Transmission of Values	Places where they perceive alignment between their values and their parents	Jennifer: "I feel like the basic Christian tenants are very similar" Andrew: "I still hold to that today as a single person who has lived on my own for the last 15 years, I have never had a TV in my home and I am going to continue that."
Distinctions in Values	Transmission of Values	Places where they perceive distinctions between their values and their parents	Michael: "I would be a little more open to different opinions . . . they have a more conservative outlook on a lot of things" Katy: "A lot of them don't go to church . . . and so that's where were different. I hang out with people who don't necessarily go to church."
Reasons for Similarities	Transmission of Values	Explanations of why the participants had similar values to their parents	Katy: "my dad worked from home for a lot of high school and so I think seeing them a lot more . . . seeing how actually he lives his life." Michael: "when you are with your core family that much and you are not having so many different ideas thrown at you contrary to what they believe . . . your family believes . . . I think it is easier to pick up a lot of those things."
Reasons for Distinctions	Transmission of Values	Explanations for why the participants developed dissimilar values from their parents	Jennifer: "I wonder if it's partly information that I had verse information they had . . . I don't know if it's the spin on books." Michael: "just being exposed to different people, different personalities, different ideas . . ."

The sub-themes *Time to Fly*, *Transitional Bumps*, *Rating of Parental Relationship*, and *Rebellion* were closely related to the young adult transition into adulthood. The sub-themes *Alignment of Values*, *Distinctions in Values*, *Reasons for Similarities*, and *Reasons for Distinctions* coalesced around the primary theme *Transmission of Values*.

## FINDINGS

As I analyzed the data, after narrowing my focus to the primary themes *Transmission of Values* and *Transition into Adulthood*, I observed that the older two participants perceived their values to be more closely aligned to their parents than the younger two participants. This was especially evident when examining their description of their religious values. The data also brought out a common experience of each participant of recognizing a point in time when they needed to move out of homeschooling or even out of their parent's house. Katy, the youngest of the participants, appears to be in the midst of this "launch moment." The significance of these patterns and their relationships across the two primary themes will be explored more in the discussion section.

Even though some overlap exists between each sub-theme and the two primary themes, in the findings section, I will examine them separately. First, I will examine the four sub-themes related to the transmission of values, and second, I will examine the four sub-themes related to the transition into adulthood. As a subsection to the transmission of values section, I will include a word analysis in which I look for patterns in the religious language used by each participant.

### Transmission of Values

The study participants exhibited some interesting dissimilarities in the four subcategories related to the transmission of values. First, Jennifer and Andrew emphasized without prompting that the transmission of Christian beliefs and values were central to their parents' desire to home educate.

Jennifer [J]: They were just very serious about a Christian worldview in our home and so that would be their biggest philosophy, that the Bible is the most important textbook.

Andrew [A]: God had given them these children to raise . . . to raise in the fear and admonition of the Lord.

While Katy and Michael also acknowledged the importance of transmitting religious values for their parents, they did not emphasize this until I started

asking questions about values and morals. When first asked about why their parent's homeschooled they listed answers such as:

Michael [M]: They really didn't care for the . . . the TAAS, or what is now the TAKS testing . . . teaching to the tests and, you know, they weren't huge fans of that.

Katy [K]: My dad was homeschooled all through high school and they didn't like the curriculum. It was more just going through work-books instead of sitting down and understanding things, I guess.

Perhaps that is because Jennifer and Andrew already knew more of my religious background and hence they freely brought out these dimensions, while both Michael and Katy had never met me before the interview. Perhaps they thought I was only interested in the academic side of home education, until I begin asking specific questions regarding values and beliefs. While this potentially influenced their answers, even after I mentioned morals and beliefs, they did not emphasize their parent's faith or their own faith to the degree that Jennifer and Andrew did. Perhaps that is because this was not the primary emphasis of their parents homeschooling, or perhaps it was and this is evidence for a particular value that did not solidify, or has not yet solidified, in their individual moral frameworks.

#### ALIGNMENT OF VALUES AND DISTINCTIONS IN VALUES

Each of the participants were specifically asked to give a few examples of how their values were aligned with their parents and then how their values were distinct. Both Andrew and Jennifer stated that they were aligned with their parents regarding core Christian values:

A: I'm honored to be able to continue walking in the path that they have set out, or that they desired to set out for me . . . steering me towards the Lord . . . steering me towards a deeper relationship with the Lord.

J: A home based on the Lord . . . having prayer and belief be the center of your life . . . I feel like is very similar to the ways my parents raised me. The importance of the Bible and . . . I feel like the basic Christian tenants are very similar.

Both Katy and Michael also acknowledged that they have similar values to their parents:

K: And I feel like all of us benefitted from that and we got a little bit of their values and our faith and stuff grew because we had them with us the entire time through.

M: You're not having so much . . . so many different things thrown at you where you would go against what your parents would believe or support . . . their morals or values.



However, when asked for examples both only provided examples for how their values were dissimilar from their parents rather than similar. Michael stated that he was less conservative and more open to the viewpoints of others, and Katy even suggested that we skip this question before answering anyway:

B: Can you think of a couple of examples of ways that your values are similar to your parents . . . and then if you can as well, maybe a couple of examples of how they are different.

K: [Long pause] This one's kinda hard question, but [sighs] that's kinda a touchy subject.

B: Do you want to skip that one . . . we don't have to . . .

K: Yeah we can kinda skip that one . . . yeah with me moving out and some of my friends, my parents don't really like. I guess that's where we're different. My friends . . . my parents want to evaluate everyone that I interact with on a regular basis . . . the values and stuff . . . and they don't really know my friends any more . . . I am friends with a lot of older people . . . like most of my friends are 25 and married. Just because I work with photographers, so I get close with a bunch of photographers, where I am . . . A lot of them don't go to church, but . . . and so that's where we're different. I hang out with people who don't necessarily go to church . . . and they want me to spend more time with people who do.

Jennifer and Andrew, in addition to their similarities also listed a few dissimilar values from their parents:

J: I don't feel like we are as patriotic as my parents . . . We're not as politically involved or as politically interested as they are . . . I'd say my parents might be slightly more materialistic.

A: We grew up in a Baptist, very conservative Baptist church, and now . . . I go to more of a charismatic, spirit-filled kind of church.

While it seems clear that Andrew and Jennifer have similar basic belief to their parents, I cannot conclude that Michael and Katy share their parent's faith. The failure to mention any specific value similarities, the discomfort of Katy with even discussing this subject, and Katy's later statement that her parents "don't think she has faith" makes me wonder if she and her parents' beliefs are more different than even she suggests.

#### LEXICAL COUNT OF WORDS ASSOCIATED WITH FAITH

I did a word count of religious words used by each of the four participants (Table 3). Andrew and Jennifer are the only ones to use the words *Lord*, *Bible/Word*, *God*, and *prayer* (at least in reference to something they practiced). These words, especially *Lord* and *Bible*, often communicate a

**TABLE 3** Frequency Count of Lexical Terms Associated with Faith

Word	Andrew	Jennifer	Katy	Michael
Lord	15	1	0	0
Bible/Word	3	2	0	0
God	13	1	0	0
Church	10	0	6	3
Faith	0	3	5	0
Jesus	0	0	0	0
Belief	0	2	0	0
Pray (er)	2	1	0	1 (in reference to parents praying)

distinctly conservative Christian mindset, especially in the framework in which they used them:

J: A home based on the Lord . . . having prayer and belief be the center of your life . . . I feel like is very similar to the ways my parents raised me. The importance of the Bible.

A: I feel like my love for the Lord, the examples that were set before me by my parents were a huge part of my walk with the Lord.

In contrast, Katy often refers to church and faith, although she uses the word church most often in reference to her new friends who do not attend and she uses the word faith in reference to her parents doubting her faith:

K: They don't really know much about my faith. And so they think that I don't have faith, but I do and me choosing to live with somebody they don't know very well makes them think . . . did you not get . . . inherit our faith from us . . . after all this time we put in?

While this study is not interested in questioning the veracity or content of her faith, her statements do seem to imply that her faith is different or at least expressed differently, than her parents. Their struggle with her potential lack of faith and their struggle with her non-church attending friends suggest that they likely are conservative Christians who would like for their child to maintain their religious beliefs as she transitions into adulthood. One cannot be sure that the transmission of values was central to Michael's parents motivation for home education, but one can pretty well assume that his parents are indeed conservative Christians based on the fact that they attended church, prayed about the decision to home school, considered sending him to a conservative Christian private school, and sent him to a conservative Baptist college. However, from Michael's almost complete absence of religious references, from the fact that he listed no similarities with his parent's values, and only described them as more conservative, one might infer that his faith is also different from his parents. Had any of these four participants been asked to compare their parents' values and their own, they may well have all had

similar responses on a survey, and yet the level of detail provided by these interviews creates a different picture of what such “agreement” might mean.

#### REASON FOR SIMILARITIES AND REASONS FOR DISTINCTIONS

The participants in this study gave reasons for both why their values were similar to their parents and why their values were dissimilar. A common reason given for the perceived similarities between the participants’ values and their parent’s values was the increased amount of time spent with their parents as a result of homeschooling.

- M: When you are with your core family that much and you are not having so many different ideas thrown at you contrary to what they believe . . . your family believes . . . I think it’s easier to pick up a lot of those things.
- K: My dad worked from home for a lot of the time I was in high school and so I think seeing them a lot more . . . seeing how actually he lives his life, instead of just saying a lot of stuff about his worldview, we actually got to see how it affected his actions. And there’s also some places where he didn’t follow through with everything he said. You know, and so that kinda changes how we feel about certain things, and so I think it did change . . . affect our worldviews a lot.
- A: I would say that the values and the morals are highly communicated through parent . . . Through the people that spend the most time with the child. They have the most influence . . . the most power because just time alone and walking through life together.

The participants also listed several reasons for having dissimilar values to their parents. In the previous quotation, Katy says that even some of the places where her dad’s actions did not match his words affected her worldview. But this observation was made possible because of the increased amount of time they spent together. Therefore, some of her differing values might actually come from the increased amount of time she spent with her parents. Further, Adam noted that observing his parents “stand alone” and “thinking outside the box” encouraged him to be a pioneer as well. Perhaps then, parents who possess and model the pioneer spirit needed to take on the task of home educating their children are passing on a pioneering spirit to their children that might also influence their willingness to buck even their parent’s own values. The possibility of this trend has not been explored by any homeschooling researchers to date, but might yield interesting findings.

The more common and expected reason given for the perceived value differences was the exposure to a broader range of ideas after leaving home.

- M: Going to college and being away and hearing so many different viewpoints and perspectives and seeing so many different kinds of people . . . you might not agree with it, but you listen to it more, I guess.

J: I wonder if it's partly information that I had verse information that they had . . . I don't know if it's the spin on books or whatever . . . I feel like when we were being homeschooled the party line was that our founding fathers were believers and we need to follow in that tradition and in that line. And now I feel like more of what I'm coming across says that "yes" they may have been deists, but to me it's less important to believe that America is a Christian nation than it is to focus on my own personal faith in my family, and I don't feel like America has any promises from God that it can hold on to absolutely.

The combination of the exposure to a broader range of ideas and the pioneering spirit that being homeschooled might engender could explain why these homeschoolers values shifted, at least to some degree, from their parents.

### Transition into Adulthood

Four sub-themes congealed around the theme Transition into Adulthood: *Transitional Bumps*, *Time to Fly*, *Rebellion*, and *Rating of Parental Relationship*. All of the interviews showed evidence of some transitional bumps as the young adults transitioned into adulthood or transitioned out of homeschooling. All but one of the young adults experienced a moment of realization that it was time to move out of homeschooling or move out of the house. And none of the young adults reported a high degree of rebellion on their part, but some saw this rebellion in the lives of other homeschoolers. Finally, it appears that these transitional bumps were navigated well due to a strong parent-child relationship.

### TRANSITIONAL BUMPS

The participant's description of their process of transitioning into adulthood showed evidence for some transitional challenges or bumps.

- K: I think it has made it a little bit harder because I'm home all the time . . . and especially now because I am not even going to school . . . I am working from home. So, I am always there and if I am wanting to leave it is kinda hard for everyone to be like "what, you're all the sudden going to be gone." And, I am not going to be going to college and so there's no transition going to school and then transitioning into having my own apartment and everything. I'm just skipping right to having my own apartment. And so that's kinda hard for everyone to understand why I am going to spend money to live somewhere when I can live with them for free still.
- A: Yeah . . . some of the differences didn't transition very well. Some of it was like ok, I'm out to totally find my own reason for this . . . or I didn't understand why and so I had to go figure out why this was . . . why they were protecting me from this.

- J: I had a good relationship with my parents and I felt like our conversations were fairly open. But there was still plenty of that typical teenage separation . . . my parents don't understand me kind of a thing.

#### TIME TO FLY

Each participant, except for Katy, spoke about a moment where they realized that it was time for them to stop homeschooling or move out of the house.

- M: it was time . . . after that long me and my mom both were butting heads and we knew that it was time for there to be a change
- J: All I can say is at that point I needed to leave the home. For sure. [laughs] I had a good relationship with my parents but they knew and I knew that it was time to spread my wings and get out of the house.
- A: I think that as you become an adult there's a struggle . . . there's a battle . . . there's a questioning . . . and there was transition where my parents had to release me to the Lord and say we see our time . . . we are always going to be here for Andrew, but God's going to have to now take and train him in some other ways. Our season, of having that day-to-day interaction is now . . . were giving him to the Lord.

Perhaps, Katy did not reflect on a "time to fly" moment because she is currently in the midst of this jump point. It would be very interesting to interview Katy again in 5 to 10 years to see how she reflects on this moment in her life.

#### REBELLION

Even though each of the participants expressed some transitional difficulties as they transitioned into adulthood, they commonly reported a lack of rebellion on their part during this time.

- M: I never felt or had feelings to rebel . . . I never had to deal with anything like that.
- J: But I don't think there was a sense of rebellion. I really did not feel like I needed to rebel against them or their beliefs and I would like to think that that had to do with me being homeschooled.
- A: I was totally ok with standing alone and making the right choice even if everyone else was doing it.

#### RATING OF PARENTAL RELATIONSHIP

Each of the participants, with the exception of Katy, described their relationship with their parents in very positive terms.

- J: I had a good relationship with my parents and I felt like our conversations were fairly open.

- A: My sisters and younger brothers are some of my best friends and [I] have a great relationship with my parents.
- M: Oh, it's always been a good relationship. They've done more than... I mean, they have done a whole lot for me. I could never ask anything more from them in terms of being supportive, helping me out and always being there... I know they couldn't do any more.

This theme of a strong parent child relationship seems to overarch all other sub-themes and tie all the other sub-themes together. Again, perhaps Katy's lack of statements indicating a strong positive relationship with her parents is evidence of the fact that she is currently experiencing a time of tension as she prepares to jump out on her own. At the same time, she did not say any strongly negative things about her parents either. While each of these young adults experienced some tension while transitioning into adulthood, it does not appear that any of them had a significant level of rebellion or a time when relationship was totally broken with their parents. They each described their relationship with their parents in a positive light.

## DISCUSSION

Not all readers of this article will "value" the results of this research in the same manner. For some a strong link between parental and child values illicit suspicions of overly enmeshed controlling parents. In addition some critics of home education have argued that homeschooling might stunt the development of certain important values like tolerance, civility towards those holding diverse views, and independence of thought (Reich, 2002, Kunzman, 2009). Reich writes that, "to become *free*, students must be exposed to the vibrant diversity of a democratic society so that they possess the liberty to live a life of their own design" (p. 59). Based on this premise he argues that children should be exposed to "materials, ideas, and people that they or their parents have not chosen or selected in advance" (p. 58). For critics like Reich and Kunzman—granted Kunzman is more moderate than Reich—a formerly home educated adult with a worldview highly similar to that of their parents might confirm their suspicions that home education stifles the freedom of children by insulating them from the diversity of ideas apparently encountered in public schools. However, for the 83% of homeschooling respondents to the 2007 National Household Education Survey who indicated that the desire to provide religious or moral instruction was one of their primary reasons for homeschooling (Planty et al., 2009), a high degree of alignment might be an indication of success.

This study provides useful insights for both the critics and advocates of home education. First, the critic can rest assured that whether the parents

intend to insulate their children or not, these young adults will eventually encounter the “vibrant diversity of our democratic society” (Reich, 2002). Each of the participants either explicitly stated, or gave evidence to indicate, that they had come across ideas and people that their parents did not “chose in advance”. Further, they all indicated that even though they respected their parent’s ideas that they were “free” and had the “liberty to live a life of their own design” (Reich, 2002).

A: I want to honor their opinion, I want to honor their perspective, though I maybe don’t always follow it, I seriously pray about it and consider it.

K: They might say something and I might consider their opinion, but I am still going to do what I think. Or go for what I want to do . . . I’m not controlled by my parents. I make my own decisions, very much so.

M: I really took what I believed and compared it to a lot of those things and really examined it and thought really hard . . . what do I really think about this and what’s my opinion about it, and so I guess it’s a time when your away from the family and everything . . . like, does what I believe, or what I thought I believed, stand on its own two feet.

For parents who have a strong desire to impart a set of religious and moral beliefs to their children, the results of this study do not offer any clear cut answers. It appears that the older two participants ended up holding similar, although not identical, religious views to their parents. But the younger participants do not clearly show a high degree of alignment, at least not on religious beliefs and values. If you are running into home education and hoping that it will offer some sort of foolproof shield against the negative influences of the world, you might find yourself disappointed. In fact, if you hold on to tightly and try to micromanage every aspect of your young adult’s life you would do well to heed the warning given by Jennifer:

J: I have had some skepticism in my own heart about homeschooling and part of that is because of my peers who have gone in a really different direction faith-wise after homeschooling and I think that has to do with their family and how they handle homeschooling and handle their own kids. So, I don’t know . . . I’m not sure what typical looks like cause I feel like every families’ take on homeschooling is so radically different.

B: Did you see any trends in the lives of some of those families who took a drastic detour or turn-off of where their parent’s faith was?

J: I think the only trend that I could maybe pinpoint was that those families were more . . . maybe, a little more legalistic and maybe a little more exacting of their kids. And then when the kids got out of that they just went a little more wild. And definitely like your previous question about just adopting their parent’s worldview, and then when they got out they thought this is not my worldview, this is not my own value . . . but I don’t know. I wish I had a clear cut answer on that . . . I don’t think there is . . .

Whether one elects to send their children to a public or private school or educate them completely at home, essentially all parents desire to communicate some form of values to their children. And most parents, if not all, hope that these values will not be completely abandoned as their children transition into adulthood. However, at some point, all young adults must undergo a time of transition in which they determine for themselves what values and beliefs they will carry with them throughout their life. Perhaps the best thing a parent can do is establish a strong relationship built on love, respect, and trust with their emerging young adults as they question and test the values and beliefs under which they have been raised. These interviews showed evidence for strong parent child relationships that tended to weather well the transition into adulthood. Even though each young adult experienced some transitional strain as they moved out on their own, they each reflected positively on their homeschooling experience. Further, they each indicated that they planned on homeschooling their children for at least some of their K-12 education.

This study has a number of limitations that should be stressed. First, the sample size of this study prohibits making generalizations to the broader homeschooling community. Further, Jennifer's quote reminds us that "everyone's take on homeschooling is so radically different," and therefore generalizations are entirely without warrant. Second, the study only examines the perspective of the homeschooled young adults and not that of the parents. Interviews with the parents would have likely added a more complete picture of the process of transmitting values and transitioning into adulthood. Finally, this study only provides a snapshot taken from a single interview. As such, it is potentially biased by the immediate events that surrounded this interview. This is particularly dangerous for Katy, who is in the midst of transitioning into adulthood and independence. Her most recent interaction with her parents, whether good or bad, could have colored the interview in a way that does not reflect her normal relationship with her parents.

This study has illuminated the experiences of four formerly home educated adults as they transitioned into adulthood and grappled with the beliefs and values that their parents have attempted to transmit. While it does not necessarily bring out any clear cut answers, it does confirm a certain pattern that most of the participants experienced. Each of the participants experienced some transitional bumps that involved a jump point moment in which they moved out of homeschooling and into a more independent phase of their life. However, none of the participants indicated that they themselves "went off the deep end" and pursued a radically different course than that hoped for by their parents. The moderate smoothness of these transitions seemed to have been grounded in a strong parent child relationship, which according to some of the participants might have been



partially fostered by the time spent with their parents during the course of being home educated.

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## APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS\*

*This interview is primarily focused on your experience of being home educated. You, of course, are always welcome to pass on any questions that,*

*for whatever reason, you would prefer not to discuss. In order to protect your identity I will use a pseudonym for your name, refer to your location in a more general fashion, and not share who I actually interviewed with people who might know you well enough to identify you. It is possible that this will be published in an academic journal article. Do you have any questions? Do I have your consent to conduct this interview?*

1. How many years were you homeschooled? Which grades?
  2. What type of curriculum, if any did you parents use?
  3. Did they have an overarching educational philosophy? How would you describe it?
  4. In what ways, if any, did your parents make use of co-ops, support groups, or other outside resources?
  5. Tell me a little bit about how your parents came to the decision to educate you at home.
  6. To what extent did you contribute to the decision to home school the older you got?
  7. Did your parents consider a private school? Why do you think they chose home education over a private school?
  8. Reflecting on your own experience, what do you think were some of the benefits or advantages of being homeschooled?
  9. What about disadvantages or things that you might have wished were a part of your educational experience?
- \*\*If they attended traditional school for any part of their education\*\**
10. How would you describe your experience of traditional schooling?
  11. If and when you have children, do you think you will home educate them? What are some of the main reasons that might influence this decision?
- \*\*If different schooling choice than parents and/or if reasons for electing a particular educational choice is different than parents\*\**
12. It sounds like some of your views on education are different than your parents. How did you develop your reasons for homeschooling or not homeschooling?
  13. Can you reflect on your own experience of developing relationships/friendships outside of your immediate family?
  14. In what ways might your experience have been different had you been in a traditional school environment?
  15. Often in our society when young adults reach the age of 18 and complete their 12th year of schooling they begin some sort of transition process in which they move from being dependents of their parents to being independent adults. While this process takes many different forms and follows many different timelines, I am curious about your experience of

this process. Can you reflect on your experience of this transition into what we refer to in America as adulthood?

- a. How do you think being home educated has impacted this process?
16. I am also curious about the transmission of moral and religious values from one generation to the next and how home education influences that process. How close would you say that your values are to those of your parents?
  - a. Can you give me 2–3 examples of values that are aligned?
17. In what ways do they differ?
  - a. Can you give me 2–3 examples of differences?
  - b. How did these differences come about?
18. As people move from childhood to adulthood they begin to formulate and solidify their view of the world, their values, morals, and religious beliefs. Often there is a transition from simply mirroring their parents' worldview, values, beliefs, etc. to developing their own worldview, beliefs and values. While this process might or might not result in a drastically different worldview from one's parents, there is a point in which one's worldview becomes more fully their own. Can you discuss the influence of being home educated on this process?
19. How typical do you think your experience of home education was compared to other homeschoolers you know?
20. Can you discuss your perspective on the differences, if any, you have seen in the lives of friends/acquaintances/family members who were home educated verse those who were educated in public or private schools?
  - a. Why do you think these differences do or do not exist?
21. Did your parents receive any criticism that you know of for educating you at home?
  - a. How would you address those criticisms?
22. Are there any things about home education that we have not addressed that you think would illumine this unique educational alternative?
23. Is there anything you would like to ask me?

#### **DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS:**

24. Was your father or mother ever a state certified teacher?
25. How many siblings do you have?
26. Were any of them homeschooled? Which grades?
27. What is the highest grade of year of schooling that your father and mother completed?
28. What was your father and mother's primary occupation during the years you were being homeschooled?

29. What is the highest grade/year of school that you have completed? Do you have any intentions of furthering your formal education?
30. What is your primary occupation, profession, or trade now?
31. What is your marital status?

Note. Some questions were adapted from the book *Home Educated and Now Adults* (Ray, 2004).

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