

Student Name

Nicole Wilkes Goldberg

English 312-6

09 September 2016

Educated Without a Degree

My father has always been a huge example to me of being practical, kind, and confident. Whenever I had a question or concern, he would have a straight-forward answer to instantly give me. He never pushed his opinions on me, but I always knew where he stood in terms of my decisions or thoughts. However, during my senior year of high school, as I was preparing to move on to college and deciding which school to go to, my dad showed a lack of care in my decision, be it the school I went to or the major I chose. He had always said that learning was important, but didn't seem to care for the institutionalizing of it. In fact, my father never got a college degree. I asked if he considered college to be useless; he replied with, "Absolutely not." I then asked if he considered college to be necessary, to which he also replied with, "Absolutely not." After thinking about that, I asked him why he pushed me to learn so much my entire life. His response was simple "I am a total fan of lifelong learning. Is college a function of that? No." My father is extremely independent, and always has been, and he felt like college stole his independence.

My grandfather died when my dad was about five years old and my grandmother never remarried. My dad grew up with just his mother and they had to learn how to get by in the world on their own. My father grew up independently; he learned how to read at a young age, and was teaching himself how to do things. When he was a teenager and was learning how to shave, my grandmother didn't know how to do it, so she couldn't teach him, and my dad didn't have a father figure in his life. So he asked questions and taught himself. My grandma would always tell stories about finding my dad curled up in bed reading a book about how different things work and then

later, over dinner, he would teach her things like chemistry and technology and astronomy. That's how he grew up; it has shaped his entire life. If he doesn't know how to make something or fix something or if I ever had a homework question he didn't know the answer to, he'd pull out a book or run a google search until he figured it out.

Schooling has never been an enjoyment of my father's; he didn't like high school at all. He felt it was unnecessary to go to class or do homework if he could pass all his tests just fine. He got good enough grades for doing the work, but he hated the pace he was forced to learn in. Being "bossed around" by the teachers held no appeal to my father and he didn't feel the need to focus during their lessons. After graduation, the majority of students from his high school went on to pursue college degrees, so my father decided to take some community college classes that fall.

Similar to his high school experience, my father did not like the structure and restrictions at the school. He shared an experience of taking a computer programming class and after three weeks into the semester, he had completed all the projects and assignments for the entire semester, but his professor wouldn't give him more challenging projects to help him learn more. Another example he gave was that he turned in a paper in his english class and when his professor returned it, there were no marks or edits on the paper, only an 'F' letter grade and a note saying, "I didn't like your topic." Situations such as these were hard for my father because he saw himself as his own individual and had a slight disdain for authority, especially when he felt like an authoritative figure was holding him back. These experiences made him feel like he didn't fit in and there were better ways to spend his time. After dabbling in other majors, he decided to drop out and simply pursue a career. "In more technical fields, the need for a degree is lower than in other fields of study." With this state of mind, he went and found a better paying job that he loved and could support a family on. By this time, he had already married my mom and they were getting ready to start a family. His main goal for school at that time had been to receive a better job; once he had it, he had no need for more formal

schooling. The second he could, he relieved himself of the imposing structure he saw formal education as. He got to work on becoming the best he could at his job.

Towards the end of the discussion, he brought up that fear of failure and high cost were also a part of his reasoning behind not going to college. He was worried that if he failed or didn't make the cut he wouldn't be able to take care of his family and his wife. The thought of depending on others to help him did not sit very well with him and he decided to eliminate the obstacle completely. Part of that obstacle was the expense of school. From recent high school graduate, to brand new husband, and then to brand new father, money was never abundant in my father's life, so the cost of schooling was a huge deterrent. His independent nature discouraged these difficulties and my dad decided to take his future into his own hands.

Twenty years ago, when he was searching for a job, a college diploma was not as necessary to getting a degree. The main focus of my father attending school was to get a better job to provide for his current and future family. Once he had that job, the schooling he was going through wasn't important and spending money on that school was impractical in his mind. My dad works as a software engineer and database analyst and has been at his job for almost 20 years. He still loves to learn, he teaches himself new trades and hobbies constantly. Although he recognizes that formal, post-high school education is a lot more crucial in this generation than it was in his, he believes that a person can learn more through experience and industry than an educational institution. When asked if he would go back and get a degree right after high school, he said probably not, but he would focus harder on finding a career and working towards it sooner. When push comes to shove, he'd "rather learn on his own from personal experiences." And for him, that is something that college can't provide.

Work Cited

Interviewee Last Name, First Name. FaceTime interview. 30 Aug. 2016.