

Survey of Waldorf Graduates Phase III

David Mitchell and Douglas Gerwin

RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR
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Phase III

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	7
STANDING OUT WITHOUT STANDING ALONE A SYNOPSIS OF "SURVEY OF WALDORF GRADUATES, PHASE II"	9
SUMMARY OF GERMAN/SWISS STUDY OF WALDORF GRADUATES	25
SUMMARY OF SWEDISH WALDORF SCHOOLS EVALUATION REPORT	31
THE HEALTH AND HEARTINESS OF WALDORF SCHOOL GRADUATES	45
COMPARISON OF RECENT RESEARCH ON WALDORF GRADUATES	53
CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM FROM GRADUATES	75

COMMENTS FROM COLLEGE PROFESSORS ON SHORTCOMINGS	83
THOUGHTS ABOUT THE COMMENTS BY PROFESSORS ON WALDORF GRADUATES	87
PAMPHLET: THE RESULTS OF WALDORF EDUCATION	111
SURVEY OF WALDORF GRADUATES SERIES	120

INTRODUCTION

Since the founding of the first Waldorf school in 1919, Waldorf education has spread around the globe to all inhabited continents and virtually every time zone. At any hour, somewhere on earth a class of children is reciting the Morning Verse that marks the beginning of every Waldorf school day. This is happening in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro, in round grass huts of Africa, in solid, dense, dark, stone structures of Moscow, on converted farms with wide roofs surrounded by birch forests in Norway as well as in unique buildings with interesting angles around the eaves, doors, and windows in school buildings throughout Sweden, North America, Germany, and Denmark. Every continent, save Antarctica, is influenced by Waldorf education. As we approach the first centenary of this founding, we find Waldorf education being practiced in a thousand Waldorf schools worldwide, including some two hundred in North America.

As its title suggests, this research publication represents the third phase in an ongoing study of Waldorf high school graduates. The first two stages of this study examined the college life, professional occupations, and personal values and lifestyles of North American Waldorf graduates spanning six decades. The results of this research, summarized in the first article of this collection, are linked to parallel surveys of Waldorf alumni from German, Swiss, and Swedish Waldorf schools. These surveys, in turn, are then compared to the American study with an eye to the significantly different trends among Waldorf graduates on these two continents. This comparison offers both criticism and support of the research methods used in the studies.

As part of the German survey, Waldorf graduates were asked to describe the state of their physical health. Their responses, when weighed against other German populations of similar age and social background, paint a striking picture of physical well-being among Waldorf graduates, especially with regard to chronic illnesses such as high blood pressure, arteriosclerosis, cancer, and diabetes. While this research makes no claim to establish a direct link between physical health and education in a Waldorf school, the markedly robust state of health among Waldorf graduates is consonant with the expected outcomes of the Waldorf curriculum and, for this reason, merits further study and analysis.

In the narrative portions of the North American survey, Waldorf graduates were invited to offer reflections – both positive and critical – on their years in a

Waldorf school. A broad range of their observations is included in this volume; points of critique and suggestions on how to improve the Waldorf program, for instance in the subjects of science and mathematics, are grouped by topic in order to make them more accessible.

In a similar vein, many of the reflections on Waldorf students by their university professors are published here. Overall they offer a ringing endorsement of Waldorf education and address head-on the concern that Waldorf high schools do not prepare their students adequately for the rigors of college study.

Finally, this collection includes an updated version of a pamphlet first published some years ago as *The Results of Waldorf Education*. Here is offered a succinct distillation of both statistical and narrative research into the outcomes of Waldorf education. Copies of this eight-page document can be obtained in bulk by contacting AWSNA Publications.

- David Mitchell and Douglas Gerwin

STANDING OUT WITHOUT STANDING ALONE

A Synopsis of

“Survey of Waldorf Graduates, Phase II”

by

Douglas Gerwin and David Mitchell

Rudolf Steiner did not live to celebrate the first Waldorf school graduates who, by the early 1930s, had received the full twelve years of Waldorf elementary and high school education, even though several high school classes had graduated from the original Stuttgart school by the time of his death in 1925. He could only imagine how the pupils of the very first grade in 1919 would fare and what they would make of their radically new education.

Since the advent of Waldorf high school education on the North American continent in the early 1940s, Waldorf teachers and parents have carried the question: What happens to these Waldorf school graduates after they leave high school? To date, most answers to this question have been anecdotal, at least in reference to the North American Waldorf high school movement as a whole, which in this decade has grown to a total of 39 schools. Now, a newly published survey, spanning more than 60 years of Waldorf graduates, provides a detailed picture of where Waldorf students go and what they do.¹

The survey describes what Waldorf school graduates most love to study, which professions they select, what they think of their Waldorf education, and what they value as adults. The survey – the first of its kind in North America – was conducted by the Research Institute for Waldorf Education and parallels a recent study of German and Swiss Waldorf graduates. The North American survey details the college life, job life, and personal life of Waldorf

1. A full version of *Survey of Waldorf Graduates, Phase II* by David Mitchell and Douglas Gerwin (Wilton, NH: Research Institute for Waldorf Education, 2007) is available on the web sites of the Research Institute at www.waldorfresearchinstitute.org and of the Institute’s Online Waldorf Library at www.waldorflibrary.org. Bound printed copies of the survey can be purchased at AWSNA Publications by contacting publications@awsna.org.

school graduates, starting with the first Waldorf school senior class in 1943 and culminating with the class of 2005.

Based on a sample of around 550 students from 26 Waldorf high schools with senior classes in the U.S. and Canada, the survey suggests that a majority of Waldorf school graduates share three predominant characteristics:

- Waldorf school graduates value the opportunity to think for themselves and to translate their new ideas into practice. They both appreciate and practice life-long learning and have a highly developed sense for aesthetics.
- Waldorf school graduates value lasting human relationships – and they seek out opportunities to be of help to other people.
- Waldorf school graduates sense that they are guided by an inner moral compass that helps them navigate the trials and challenges of their professional and private lives. They carry high ethical principles into their chosen professions.

The survey is comprised of twelve major sections including statistical comparisons of Waldorf school graduates to the general U.S. population and differences between recent and older graduates. A series of appendices lists colleges attended by Waldorf graduates and collates hundreds of comments by professors who have taught Waldorf alumni/ae.

WHERE ARE THE RESPONDENTS GETTING THEIR COLLEGE DEGREES?	
U.S. COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES FROM WHICH ALUMNI/AE HAVE MOST FREQUENTLY GRADUATED	CANADIAN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES FROM WHICH ALUMNI/AE HAVE MOST FREQUENTLY GRADUATED
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Oberlin College (including music conservatory) 2. Hampshire College 3. University of California, Santa Cruz 4. Prescott College 5. Bennington College 6. University of California, Berkeley 7. Earlham College 8. Emerson College, Boston 9. Radcliffe College (and Harvard University) 10. Smith College 11. St. John’s College 12. Temple University 13. Vassar College 14. Wesleyan University 15. Adelphi University 16. Amherst College 17. Boston University 18. Bowdoin College 19. Brown University 20. Cornell University 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. University of Toronto 2. University of British Columbia 3. Capilano College 4. Ontario College of Art and Design 5. Simon Fraser University 6. University of Victoria 7. Burlington College 8. California College of the Arts 9. Concordia University 10. Dalhousie University 11. Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design 12. McGill University 13. Memorial University of Newfoundland 14. Nova Scotia College of Art and Design 15. Seneca College 16. Toronto School of Homeopathic Medicine 17. Trent University 18. Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam

HIGHER EDUCATION PURSUED BY WALDORF SCHOOL GRADUATES

According to the survey, an impressive majority of Waldorf school graduates pursue and complete degrees in higher education. 94% percent of the graduates taking part in this survey reported having attended college and 88% reported having completed or being in the process of completing a college or university level degree at the time of the survey. Of the remaining 12%, roughly half (5.4%) began but did not complete college, while the other half (6.3%) either did not pursue college or went into professional or artistic training unconnected with an academic degree program.

A comparison of the table above with a listing of the twenty colleges most commonly attended by Waldorf school students (published in Phase I of this research and reported in a previous issue of the *Research Bulletin*) suggests that a significant number of Waldorf alumni/ae participating in the survey transferred from one college to another before graduating. Among the names of American colleges, seven listed in the table of most attended colleges did not appear in the initial listing. These latter include Amherst, Bowdoin, Brown, Prescott, Radcliffe/Harvard, St. John's, and Vassar. This difference suggests that the survey participants tended to transfer to more selective colleges during their university careers. In Canada, a similar trend of undergraduate transfers can be discerned. Overall, in both countries it is clear that Waldorf school graduates attend—and graduate from—a broad range of fine colleges and universities, from small liberal arts colleges to large state universities.

WALDORF COLLEGE GRADUATES COMPARED TO THE GENERAL U.S. POPULATION

Participants in the survey who graduated from university during the 1990s were compared to the general U.S. population of that decade in terms of their college majors. The table below shows that the respondents from this period were nearly three times as likely as the general U.S. college population to have studied arts and humanities. However, the Waldorf respondents were also nearly three times as likely to have studied the social or behavioral sciences. By contrast, the pursuit of a degree in business and management among survey respondents during this time period was about a quarter of the national average. The figure for education is particularly interesting in light of the occupations Waldorf graduates choose after college. While considerably fewer Waldorf alumni/ae study education as an undergraduate, compared to the national average, these same alumni/ae elect the teaching profession over all others fields later in life. This suggests that Waldorf alumni/ae are using their undergraduate education as a time for study rather than as training for a profession.

The comparison outlined in this table challenges the assumption, voiced by some members of the Waldorf school community, that Waldorf school graduates do not go into the sciences. Compared to their non-Waldorf educated

peers, up to twice as many Waldorf students go on to study science overall in college, including both the life sciences and the physical sciences. In addition, the survey data indicate that in recent years a higher percentage of graduates from all Waldorf schools have chosen a science major in college. Specifically, a greater percentage of Waldorf school graduates from the younger Waldorf schools have gone into the sciences than those graduating from the more mature Waldorf schools.

WALDORF GRADUATES EXCEED GENERAL U.S. POPULATION IN HUMANITIES AND SCIENCE MAJORS		
DECLARED MAJORS	WALDORF GRADUATES BETWEEN 1991–2002	GENERAL U.S. POPULATION BETWEEN 1991–2002
Arts & Humanities	39.8%	14.6%
Social & Behavioral Sciences	29.9%	10.9%
Life Sciences	9.9%	6.2%
Physical Sciences & Math	2.8%	2.0%
Engineering	1.8%	6.4%
Computer & Information Sciences	2.5%	6.1%
Education	2.1%	7.3%
Business & Management	4.6%	19.3%
Health	5.6%	11.6%
Other Technical & Professional	0.4%	9.7%
Vocational & Technical	0.7%	4.4%

As one recent graduate (2006) recalls of her years at a Waldorf high school,

In high school, I gained a foundation in real knowledge that is already evident in college. This is true in math and science, not just in art and history. In chemistry at Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT), I can explain to my classmates what happens when a particular acid and a particular base mix because we mixed those chemicals in our chem lab ... in 10th grade. Other students learned about acids and bases from textbooks, or their lab experience wasn't meaningful, and so they can't picture what happens. Classmates and dorm friends constantly ask me how I know what I know – it's not that I know more facts than they do, but that I have remembered what I learned and I know how to connect facts to relate them to what I'm doing. . . .

I know how to seek out my professors to get their help (which many of my classmates don't even think to do) because my high school teachers were always present and helpful. . . . I was able to find my place at a large school – RIT has 15,500 students – because I had made my place at this small school.

PROFESSORS' COMMENTS ON WALDORF SCHOOL-EDUCATED UNDERGRADUATES

Professors who had taught Waldorf students as college undergraduates were invited to share their impressions of these students. Among the more than two hundred comments received from these professors, three characteristic observations recurred across the academic disciplines and across a wide range of campuses.

The primary characteristic reported about Waldorf graduates is *the holistic and integrative quality of their thinking*. Waldorf alumni/ae are perceived as thinking flexibly, often “outside the box,” and integrating seemingly unrelated subjects with clarity and courage. One professor commented on his Waldorf undergraduate’s ability “to think creatively, to assimilate information as opposed to memorizing isolated facts, [as well as] his love for integrating physical movement with intellectual content areas.” Another, reflecting on several Waldorf students he had taught over the years, reported that “all have the same broad approach to education. They are flexible, creative, and willing to take intellectual risks.”

A second characteristic of Waldorf undergraduates repeatedly cited is their *creative and imaginative capacities*, not only in the practice of the arts but also in the study of science. A professor of biological sciences commended a Waldorf student in his classes for her skill in drawing and painting, not merely because she could illustrate what she had seen but because “it allowed her to see more than others did.” Another professor noted of a Waldorf undergraduate that his “imagination, his nuanced verbal skills, and his leadership qualities had been richly nourished in him by his prior schooling.” A different Waldorf student earned this comment: “She has more confidence in her imagination than do most students.”

A third characteristic often noted by the professors about their Waldorf undergraduates is their *moral ballast and social caring for others*. In a time of rising plagiarism on college campuses (fueled by all manner of Internet services and ghost writers, for instance), it was striking to hear a professor say of a Waldorf undergraduate: “Her social awareness is incredibly high, leadership excellent, ethical and moral standards stellar. I interact with many students. Her demeanor, skills, and social standards are the best I’ve encountered.” Another described a Waldorf student she had taught as “a Renaissance man who has been able to find a balance between his intellectual gifts, his athletic interests, and his high ethical and moral standards.”

These kinds of comment are consonant with the high ratings that Waldorf students received from their professors in terms of social awareness, communication skills, and personal initiative. Indeed, several professors commended Waldorf students for their love—even their tenacity—for learning. “I never knew [the Waldorf student I taught] to give up on anything,” said one

professor. “And while she was passionate, she was also steady – even stubborn. If she wanted to pursue a goal, nothing would stop her.”

Of the professors who supplied anecdotal observations, a majority said they had no concerns or criticism at all to offer about their Waldorf undergraduates. A few noted some individual weaknesses in writing and computation, and a couple spoke of some emotional naïveté or youthfulness in their Waldorf students. Summing up some mild concerns about several Waldorf students he had taught over the years, one professor concluded: “Given a choice, I would love to educate a Waldorf student anytime.”

RELATIONSHIP OF GRADUATES TO THEIR CAREER PATHS

Waldorf schools are repeatedly posed the question: “Where do Waldorf alumni/ae go after college?” The following answers can be offered, based on the responses of survey participants:

- Among the group as a whole, one in seven (14%) chose education, by far the single most popular career. While younger Waldorf school graduates (in their 20s) list this field as one of their preferred choices, they are about half as likely to become teachers as are Waldorf graduates in their 30s and up. This suggests that Waldorf alumni/ae are likely to enter some other profession before becoming teachers.
- A career in one of the arts accounts for more than one in five of the younger survey participants (21%) and one in six (17%) of the older participants, suggesting that some Waldorf graduates who start out in a profession directly involving the arts may leave it as they grow older.
- About twice as many younger Waldorf graduates – one in eight, or 13% – are entering professions associated with science and technology, including environment and agriculture, compared to older alumni/ae (in their 30s and up), of whom only one in fifteen, or around 7%, list these fields as their profession. This statistic is consistent with the growing trend among younger Waldorf alumni/ae to choose science as a major in college.
- By contrast, six times as many older graduates (8.6%) list writing as their profession as do younger graduates (1.4%).

Overall, these numbers suggest that Waldorf school graduates tend to choose professions involving strongly social elements. The five most popular professions – education, fine and studio arts, administration, performing arts, and health or medicine – all entail the development and use of strong social skills.

OCCUPATIONS UNDERTAKEN AFTER EARNING UNDERGRADUATE DEGREES

<i>Ranked most to least frequent for all participants</i>	<i>1943–2005 all participants</i>	<i>1943–1993</i>	<i>1994–2005</i>
Education	14.1%	17.2%	9.1%
Fine and Studio Arts (including Architecture)	9.8%	9.9%	9.8%
Administration, Management, and Development	8.8%	8.2%	9.8%
Performing Arts (Broadcasting, Dance, Film, Music, Theater)	8.5%	6.9%	11.2%
Health and Medicine	8.0%	8.2%	7.7%
Business	6.9%	7.7%	5.6%
Various Professions or Trades	6.9%	6.0%	7.7%
Publishing, Journalism, and Writing	5.8%	8.6%	1.4%
Sciences and Technology	5.8%	4.3%	8.4%
Environmental, Horticulture, and Agriculture	3.4%	2.6%	4.9%
Government, Politics, Lobbying, Planning	3.2%	3.4%	2.8%
Not-for-Profit and Volunteer	2.9%	1.7%	4.9%
Social and Human Services	2.7%	3.4%	1.4%
Advertising and Marketing	2.4%	3.4%	0.7%
Trades: Construction and Mechanical	2.4%	1.7%	3.5%
Engineering	1.9%	2.1%	1.4%
Retail	1.9%	0.0%	4.9%
Office and Clerical	1.6%	1.7%	1.4%
Law	1.3%	1.3%	1.4%
Raising Family	1.3%	1.7%	0.7%
Athletics/Sports	0.5%	0.0%	1.4%

WHAT IS IMPORTANT IN THE WORK PLACE?

Participants were asked to rank from 1 to 5 (“totally unimportant” to “extremely important”) which aspects of their current or most recent employment were most important to them. Highest scores went to “good work atmosphere,” which was rated as very important or extremely important by 94% of the respondents. Not a single respondent rated this aspect of work as totally unimportant or unimportant. Next highest aspects included “ethical principles of the profession,” “chance to help others,” “chance to introduce one’s own ideas,” and “self-reliance at work,” all of which were rated as very or extremely important by more than 80% of the respondents. Barely 2% of respondents rated these aspects as unimportant.

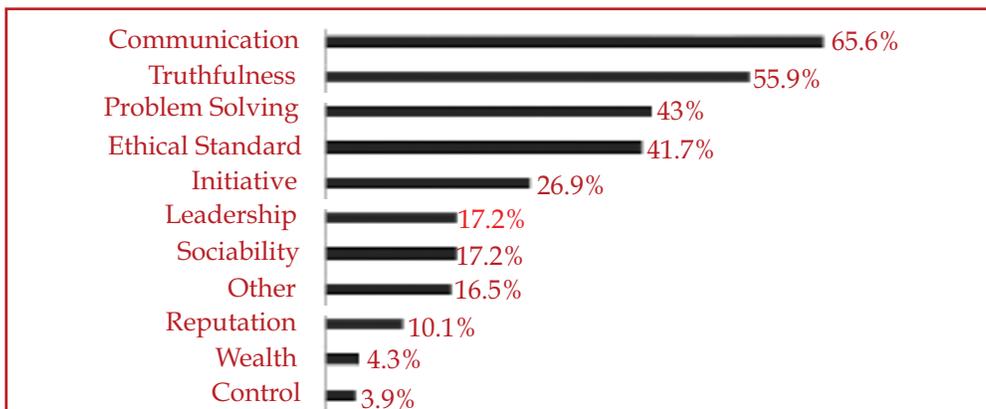
By contrast, only 26% of the respondents rated “high income” as very or extremely important, whereas an almost equal 24% rated this aspect of their job as being totally unimportant or unimportant. Similarly, just 25% rated “life-long job security” as very or extremely important, while fully 35% characterized this aspect of their work as totally unimportant or unimportant.

Taken together, the topmost rankings of the preceding table—representing what Waldorf graduates value most highly about their jobs—underscore the theme of social awareness and concern, whereas the least-valued rankings all have to do with self-interest and personal security. In a graphic way, these responses illustrate the general findings of this survey, namely that Waldorf

graduates are more likely than not to put the interests and needs of others ahead of their own.

WORK FORCE EXPERIENCE ASSESSMENT (Ranked by importance)			
Responses:	1+2	3	4+5
1. good work atmosphere	0%	6%	94%
2. introduce own ideas	2%	16%	82%
3. ethical principles	2%	16%	82%
4. self-reliance at work	2%	16%	82%
5. chance to help others	3%	15%	82%
6. contact with others	3%	17%	80%
7. self-development	5%	22%	73%
8. free time	7%	34%	60%
9. safe workplace	11%	31%	58%
10. flexible schedule	7%	36%	57%
11. recognition of achievement	9%	34%	57%
12. repute of profession	14%	34%	52%
13. chance to lead others	13%	38%	49%
14. career path	15%	37%	48%
15. promotion	20%	39%	41%
16. my children's needs	4%	62%	34%
17. being self employed	26%	45%	29%
18. high income	24%	50%	26%
19. life-long job security	35%	40%	25%

Whether new to the job market or long-standing participants in it, these graduates ranked matters of self-promotion, personal career path, personal wealth, and job security well below their wish to help others, uphold the ethical principles of the profession, and ensure a good working atmosphere. Even those personal needs strongly valued—such as having a job compatible with their children's needs and seeking opportunities for self development—are couched in terms that relate to others, whether they be members of a family or colleagues in a profession. In a climate of troubled work ethic and shaky social conscience, as witnessed in recent scandals on Wall Street and the melt-down of major corporations, Waldorf graduates are bucking the trend. They place world-interest ahead of self-interest.



In a separate question, Waldorf graduates were asked to choose three life skills to which they attached most importance. As shown in the chart above, communication, truthfulness, problem solving skills, and ethical values were held in the highest regard. As it happens, these are precisely the qualities that their professors singled out as being the strongest attributes of Waldorf students in college. The respondents also placed a much higher value on initiative than they did on leadership, sociability, or reputation. Wealth and control received the lowest ranking in importance. Among other important life skills, participants most commonly listed creativity, compassion, kindness, and empathy.

WALDORF SCHOOL GRADUATES AND THEIR RELATIONSHIPS

In all, 96% of the participants responding to this question placed an extremely or very high value on friendships, and 78% found their friendships very or extremely satisfactory. By contrast, not a single respondent (0%) spoke of friendships as having no or only slight value, and just 2% of respondents felt somewhat or extremely unsatisfied with their friendships. These numbers support the assertion made by many Waldorf graduates that Waldorf education taught them how to recognize the worth of other human beings and to strive for productive relationships with them.

GRADUATES' ASSESSMENT OF LIFE AND LIFE SKILLS

Graduates were posed three open-ended questions about their general experience of life:

1. "What has been your greatest gift thus far in life?"
2. "What has been your greatest challenge thus far in life?"
3. "What brings you the greatest joy in life?"

In response to the questions concerning greatest gift and greatest joy, the respondents cited most often their immediate family, meaning either their parents and siblings or their spouse and children. They also cited as gifts or joys—but also sometimes as major challenges—friends and relationships, secondary education, artistic practice, helping others, health and illness, and the cultivation of a balanced private and professional life. Concerning greatest challenge, the most common response described various forms of self-questioning including self-doubts, fears, and lack of self-knowledge. Several respondents noted that their greatest gifts were also their greatest challenges—for instance, their children, marriages, relationships with parents, or state of physical well being.

From more than 2,000 responses to these questions, one can see the value that Waldorf graduates place on social interactions with other human beings. Of the five most frequent response categories, three deal explicitly with social

life: family, friends and relations, and social interactions. The remaining two top responses deal with life-long learning and the practice of the arts. Very few of the individual responses have an overtly self-focused tone or intention. There were only three references to seeing movies and one each to playing computer games, buying merchandise, driving a car, or watching TV. Indeed, the graduates said they were much more likely to practice the arts than look at television programs. Instances of wealth, fame, and property received no mention at all.

GRADUATES' REFLECTIONS ON THEIR WALDORF EDUCATION

Survey participants were asked, "If you were to become responsible for the education of a child, would you send the child to a Waldorf school?" Of the 422 respondents who answered this question, the yeas outnumbered the nays 10 to 1 – 240 in the affirmative, 24 in the negative. An additional 158 respondents, or 37% of the total, however, gave qualified answers that hinted at some of the reservations Waldorf graduates have about sending children to a Waldorf school. Of these 158 qualified answers, 67% cited distance to the nearest Waldorf school and the cost of tuition as reasons. 19% of these responses expressed concerns about academic standards and the abilities of the likely class teachers, especially regarding their social relations and academic standards. 15% stated that the decision would depend on their child's needs or desires. An additional 12% stated that while they would send their children to a Waldorf lower school, they would be less likely to send them to its upper elementary or high school.

In a separate question, survey participants were asked to describe what first came to mind when they thought back on their years in a Waldorf school. Generally the students' first reflections on their Waldorf experience were suffused in images and sensations that spoke of being warm, safe, nurturing, tolerant, well-rounded, beautiful, caring, or magical. Many of the respondents strongly recalled sensory experiences: the smell of beeswax, the feel of freshly carded wool, the texture of wood, the feel of large block crayons, the taste of warm soup, the patterns of ice crystals in watercolor paintings. Some of their most vivid and poignant memories harked back to their earliest days in a Waldorf preschool.

While a few students felt, as they looked back on their Waldorf experience, that they were not adequately prepared for college, in science or in math for instance, others said they were more than prepared for the transition. Wrote one student, "I didn't know it at the time, but my academic preparation in high school was more than adequate for the rest of my academic career, and my artistic and spiritual preparation put me on more comfortable footing in life than some of my peers." Though a few students felt "stifled" by the small size of their classes, many reported how closely they related to their classmates and teachers, even to the point of staying in touch with them long after graduating

from high school. The closeness of the students, in the words of one graduate, “forced all of us to overcome our differences and our grudges as quickly as we came by them and taught us to work through trivial drama and value each other for our true potential.”

By the same token, in their initial reflections on their Waldorf school experience, the graduates appreciated the importance of a well-rounded education. There were a few students who were critical of the emphasis placed on the arts, and there were others who felt insufficiently challenged due to a wide range of ability among their classmates. But most respondents felt the full range of subjects required of all students served them well. “It is the well-rounded approach that stands out the most,” writes one graduate. “For me, exposure to the arts and music and learning by doing are the characteristic traits of Waldorf education.” Or, in the words of another graduate, “Waldorf education prepared me for anything and everything!”

LIFE-LONG IMPORTANCE AND INFLUENCE OF WALDORF EDUCATION

Participants were asked to rate aspects of their lives, first, in terms of their importance and, second, in terms of the influence that their Waldorf education had on these same aspects. The influence and importance of Waldorf education were greatest for developing creative capacities, love of learning, self-expression, interest in different points of view, and the ability to work with others. Waldorf education had the least influence on and importance for spiritual, religious, and political orientation; interest in anthroposophy; professional choice; and taking care of the sick. Excluding the last category, the respondents felt that their education had left them free to choose their own paths in life in all of these regards.

In a separate question, graduates were asked to list those aspects of their Waldorf education that they rejected at the time but that they now see differently. Their examples were collated under seven major headings:

- eurythmy
- nurture/discipline
- holistic, multi-faceted curriculum
- media restrictions
- spiritual foundation of the education
- tolerance of different beliefs, ideas, and capacities
- activities to develop the will

In each of these categories, respondents recognized a basic principle or practice of Waldorf education. Some students noted, for example, that, although they had rejected eurythmy as students, it had continued to help them in their poise and posture well into their adult years.

Others appreciated the rhythms and rituals of *nurturing and discipline* surrounding lower school students (and, in a different way, high school students) that is intended to develop a strong sense of independence and resilience in them as adults. “I now acknowledge many silly things such as the importance of proper school attire, the importance of daily rhythm, and other things that I did not understand as a child,” one respondent commented. The *holistic curriculum* allows a student to leave the school with what one student described as the feeling, “I can take on anything, if I set my mind and heart and shoulder to it.” *Media restrictions*, especially as they are applied in the lower grades, help students to develop their own powers of imagination and mental picturing so that they can withstand pressures to conform to social conventions. One respondent reported, “I resented restrictions placed on TV, but I am now thankful that I grew up without one. In fact, I credit its absence with my ability to think creatively, open-mindedly, and critically about the world.”

The *spiritual foundation of the education*, far from inculcating belief and doctrine in the students, actually helps them find their own heartfelt concerns and convictions, based on their own thinking and striving, not upon what they were told in school. In the words of one graduate, “I vehemently rejected the overtly [as seen through the eyes of a fourteen year old] spiritual influence and presence in the education. In retrospect, I could not be more thankful for its integral and fundamental place in the philosophy of Waldorf education.” Said another graduate, “I wish I had said the morning verse every morning.”

To learn in small classes with broad ranges of learning ability, far from preventing students from exercising their potential, actually calls it forth since these class settings demand that they learn to accept more than their own gifts and values – that is, to learn *tolerance of different beliefs, ideas, and capacities* from those who surround them. “I did not like having such a small social circle,” one respondent admitted, “but it taught me tolerance.” Another graduate noted, “The teacher’s inclusion of different learning styles slowed the pace and prepared me to develop patience for others.”

And, finally, regarding *activities to develop the will*: The value of doing something, even repeatedly, that initially may be unappealing but which builds basic capacities during the formative years, cannot be overestimated in terms of lasting moral and hygienic efficacy. It is the antidote to self-doubt and self-hate as well as existential fears and dependencies of all kinds. “I did not want to knit instead of read or do math as a second grader,” one student recalled. “Now I am grateful for it.”

RELATIONSHIP TO ANTHROPOSOPHY

Participants were asked to characterize their relationship to anthroposophy. While a majority of the respondents reported a neutral or indifferent relation

to anthroposophy and a very small percentage expressed negative feelings or rejection of anthroposophy, nearly equal percentages selected the options of “practicing or engaged” and “critical or skeptical.” An examination of the 65 responses written in the open-ended “Other” category reveals that a third of these respondents characterized their relationship to anthroposophy as ambivalent, as in the following: “Accept and reject certain aspects of it.” “Both positive and critical.” “Very skeptical on some levels, appreciative on others.” A quarter of the “Other” respondents reported that they did not know what anthroposophy was since they had never been taught it in a Waldorf school – an interesting response, given the criticism sometimes heard that Waldorf schools teach anthroposophy and thereby indoctrinate their students.

STUDYING THE DATA THROUGH STATISTICAL LENSES

As part of the analysis of this survey, Ida Oberman, a professional statistician, organized the data into different groupings and then tested for statistical significance across the following variables:

- Responses by years enrolled in a Waldorf school (1–9 years or 10–14 years)
- Responses by year of graduation from a Waldorf school (1943–1967; 1968–2000; 2001–2005)
- Responses by year Waldorf high school was established (1942–1964; 1965–1996; 1997–2001)
- Responses by region (East Coast, Midwest/South, West Coast, Canada)
- Responses by level of post-high school education (no college, college/graduate student, college/university graduate)
- Responses by Waldorf high school student only or Waldorf high school and elementary school student
- Responses by relationship to anthroposophy

In many cases, no statistically significant differences could be discerned across these different groupings. For instance, in reference to college and career choices, there were no statistical differences among those respondents who attended mature compared to young Waldorf high schools, suggesting there is no inherent disadvantage in attending a newly formed Waldorf high school in terms of college acceptance or choice of professions. In a few cases, some modest statistical variation was evident – for instance, with regard to patterns of human values and interests. A full report of this statistical analysis can be found in the full version of the survey.

To take one comparison, a study on “Social Isolation in America” reports that Americans today have fewer friends (“friends” being defined as people with whom one can discuss important matters). Between 1985 and 2004, according to this study, the number of people who reported having not a single social

confidant tripled; as well, the percent of respondents who reported having at least one friend dropped from about 73% to about 51%. Robert Putnam captures the significance of these trends in his study, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*:

The large master trend . . . is that over the last hundred years technology has privatized our leisure time. The distinctive effect of technology has been to enable us to get entertainment and information entirely alone. ...That is from many points of view very efficient... [but also] fundamentally bad because the lack of social contact, the social isolation means that we don't share information and values and outlook that we should.

The survey of Waldorf graduates – which highlights their emphasis on friendship, social relations, and the practice of the arts – suggests that, counter to national trends, Waldorf graduates do not bowl alone.

CLOSING IMAGE: A PROFILE

By design, this survey of Waldorf school graduates solicited both quantitative and qualitative data in order to form a living yet statistically-based portrait. The thrust of this research was not to give sole credit to Waldorf schools for the achievements of their alumni/ae but to paint a picture of these graduates as a way of seeing who they are as they head out into the world.

As the survey itself makes clear in a final section, Waldorf school students are, by virtue of their parents' decision to enroll their children in a Waldorf school, a self-selected population. The nature of this survey (based by necessity on those graduates who have stayed in touch with their schools) further narrowed this selection. For these and for other reasons, the survey makes no claim to draw causal connections between a student's Waldorf school experience and his or her successes and challenges in life. Rather, the survey aims to say: "Here are some typical qualities of Waldorf school graduates and this is what they tell us about who they are and what they are doing with their lives."

In this spirit, the survey includes a summary portrait of a Waldorf school graduate that identifies statistically frequent characteristics and pulls together statements that are held most passionately by the greater number of graduates.

Profile of a Typical Waldorf Graduate

- After graduating from a Waldorf high school, attends college (94%)
- Majors in arts/humanities (47%) or sciences/math (42%) as an undergraduate
- Graduates or is about to graduate from college (88%)
- Practices and values life-long learning (91%)
- Is self-reliant and highly values self-confidence (94%)
- Highly values verbal expression (93%) and critical thinking (92%)
- Expresses a high level of consciousness in making relationships work – both at home and on the job
- Is highly satisfied in choice of occupation (89%)
- Highly values interpersonal relationships (96%)
- Highly values tolerance of other viewpoints (90%)
- At work cares most about ethical principles (82%) and values helping others (82%)

SUMMARY OF GERMAN/SWISS STUDY OF WALDORF GRADUATES

– AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON EDUCATION AND CREATIVE LIVING –

(Published in February 2007 by
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The following translation represents a synopsis of a survey involving Waldorf graduates from Switzerland and Germany. This study can be compared to the recently completed “Survey of Waldorf Graduates, Phase II” of North America students conducted by the Research Institute for Waldorf Education. Together these two studies offer a snapshot of a typical Waldorf graduate, as well as indicating areas where Waldorf education shows its strength and areas where schools could be proactive in making changes.

METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLE

- 24 qualitative interviews were conducted with 8 persons in each of the following three age brackets: 62 to 66, 50 to 59, and 30 to 37 years of age.
- 6 group discussions were held by two groups, each of them with the same three peer clusters: 62 to 66, 50 to 59, and 30 to 37 years of age.
- 1,124 written surveys were completed by former Waldorf students from the three age brackets (48.5% female; 51.5% male, average age 46 years; return ratio of 32.9 %). The survey topics included:
 - Professional biography and level of satisfaction with one’s profession (edited by Anne Bonhoeffer and Michael Brater, GAB, Munich)
 - Contextual orientation of personal life (edited by Thomas Gensicke, TNS Infratest, Munich)
 - Faith and religion (edited by Michael N. Ebertz, Katholische Fachhochschule, Freiburg)
 - Health (edited by Arndt Büssing, Thomas Ostermann, Frank Jacobi, and Peter F. Matthiessen, University of Witten/Herdecke)
 - Personal experience of the time in school (edited by Dirk Randoll, Alanus Hochschule, Alfter)

- Analysis of interviews and group discussion results (edited by Heiner Barz and Sylvia Panyr, Universities of Düsseldorf and Munich)

Core Results

COMPLETED SCHOOL LEVEL

- 61% of former Waldorf students have graduated with the *Abitur* (German full academic track graduation diploma), including 67% of the 30- to 37-year-olds (which is more than double the rate of students in public schools).
- 7.7% graduated in the restricted academic track (Fachschulreife), allowing them to attend Specialized, Technical, and Arts Colleges.
- 21.2 % passed the graduation for intermediate vocational tracks (Realschule).
- 2% finished on the basic vocational track level (Hauptschule).

[Comment: these levels are intrinsic to the multi-layered German school system.]

PROFESSION/CAREER

A comparison of the profession one learned and the profession one actually works in with the Microcensus [Note: general population statistics] yields the following results (taking into account the comparability of graduation levels):

- There is a significantly higher number of teachers, engineers, medical doctors/pharmacists, and artists among the former Waldorf students. On the other hand, there are significantly fewer business people and office administrators among them.
- Former Waldorf students show a high degree of satisfaction regarding their profession; they place less importance on making money and on ambitious career goals than on personal fulfillment in their profession and doing work that is meaningful to them.
- Only 2.4% of the alumni/ae have chosen a typical anthroposophical profession (e.g. eurythmy specialist or class teacher at a Waldorf school).

CONTEXTUAL ORIENTATION IN LIFE

- The profiles of former Waldorf students and of the general population are similar in regard to their values and orientations. The goal of life consists in cultivating one's personal well being within the context and network of family and a circle of friends.
- Sophistication of culture and creative aspects of life play a more significant role for Waldorf alumni/ae than for the general

population, while the usage of electronic devices and other media is of lesser significance – especially with regard to entertainment.

- Former Waldorf students show a higher spiritual orientation over and above the conventional-parochial forms of organized religion.
- Furthermore, they show comparatively more social engagement and have a higher rate of volunteers.

RELIGION

- The majority of former Waldorf students does not gravitate towards institutional forms of religion; a high number do not belong to a formalized church or adhere to the Protestant faith; the percentage of Catholics distinctly increases in older age brackets.
- The number of members in the Christian Community is shrinking.
- The majority has an indifferent, skeptical to negative attitude towards anthroposophy.
- The Waldorf school is not seen as an active propagator of anthroposophical concepts, but is perceived to promote a high degree of openness in regard to religion and world views.
- The Waldorf school enriches the soul and spiritual life in such a way that the majority of the respondents find they are able to be open towards different questions of faith and to develop their own “spiritual path.”

HEALTH

- The hypothesis, that former Waldorf students are healthier than the general population because of the particular pedagogical concepts guiding their education, can only be validated with certain restrictions. We need further specific research, especially in regard to health behaviors and general lifestyles, which were not topics of this study.

SCHOOL

- Former Waldorf students show a high degree of identification with their school: 87% felt a sense of belonging and 80% felt very well [comfortable] there. Also, the majority of them would elect to go to a Waldorf school again. 47% of those who have children enrolled them in a Waldorf school. Reasons for choosing a non-Waldorf school for their children were: “No Waldorf schools close-by,” “Other schools are also offering good pedagogical approaches,” “Too expensive/I couldn’t afford it.”
- The instruction was assessed to be interesting and diversified as well as meaningful, but the content was not necessarily thought to be reflective of current social issues. (The latter assessment was particularly prevalent among the 30- to 37-year-olds). Every second respondent indicated that Waldorf schools are not very open to newer pedagogical developments.

- The assessment of the methodological-didactic competence of the teachers tended to be critical, whereas the evaluation of the relationship between students and teachers was positive. That means the relationship between student and teacher is not defined by grades and points, but rather by the quality of human encounters. Most respondents experienced their teachers as permanently overwhelmed, a finding which should be taken very seriously in connection with the aspect of “psychological hygiene in the teaching profession.”
- 74.1% are in favor of the class teacher concept with a decreasing tendency across the age brackets.
- The Waldorf school is seen to exert a favorable influence on the development of the personality (e.g. personal sense of worth, self-assurance, creativity, flexibility) and of social competency (e.g. empathic faculties, consideration, ability to cooperate) as well as the development of the ability to form one’s own opinions and become self reliant.
- By contrast, Waldorf schools are credited with having only a small, yet personally relevant, influence in regard to the following aspects: assessment of one’s own achievement abilities and their boundaries; learning to learn; developing practical skills; and conveying general knowledge.

FURTHER PROBLEM AREAS

- Most respondents indicated that there was too little demand on [academic] achievement in their school and that the feedback concerning their achievement level was frequently not commensurate with their actual individual performance. Correspondingly, many alumni/ae later, after their school years, had trouble adjusting to the demands of a society geared towards achievement. Not a few of them think that they could have accomplished more if the demand on their accomplishments and efforts had been higher.
- Boys seem to have more problems socializing in school than girls. A similar phenomenon can be observed in state elementary schools. The artistic and musical focus of instruction and the fact that competition plays a subordinate role in Waldorf schools, together with the fact that Waldorf teachers are mostly female, may be factors in this result.
- The alumni/ae clearly see the instruction in foreign languages in Waldorf schools as unsatisfactory and inadequate. With some reservations, this is also true for classes in natural sciences and physical education.
- 38% indicate that they had tutors or obtained additional instruction. This is a significantly higher percentage than is to be found among students who attended public schools [2004/05: full academic track (Gymnasium) attendees – 30%; higher vocational track attendees (Realschule) – 29%; vocational track (Hauptschule) attendees – 14%]. Therefore the question arises: Can the Waldorf school of today fulfill

its mandate only with additional support from the outside (e.g. parents and tutors)?

CONCLUSION

Waldorf schools are, in the assessment of their alumni/ae, on the whole good schools. However, they have to more fully meet the demands of today's society and have to overhaul their own curriculum, especially pertaining to foreign languages and natural sciences. Furthermore, the qualifications of the teachers urgently need to be improved, in particular their professional qualifications and didactic-methodological abilities.

SUMMARY OF SWEDISH WALDORF SCHOOLS EVALUATION REPORT

by

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During the autumn term of 2002 a three-year research project was started to evaluate various aspects of the Waldorf schools and Waldorf teaching methods in Sweden. The study focused on six main questions. Each question is reviewed in a separate working report.

- 1) How large a proportion of Waldorf pupils go on to higher education?
- 2) What knowledge targets are attained by Waldorf pupils compared with pupils from state schools?
- 3) Do Waldorf pupils develop social and other general human competencies needed to be active citizens in a democratic society?
- 4) What do Waldorf schools do for pupils with learning difficulties?
- 5) In what way does the socio-economic background of parents contribute to increased segregation or increased understanding between different population groups?
- 6) Do Waldorf schools need a special "tailor-made" teacher-training program?

The project, financed by the Kempe-Carlgrén Fund Foundation, was undertaken at Karlstad University, with Professor Bo Dahlin as project leader. The project group also included Agnes Nobel, Reader in Education at Uppsala University, and Ingrid Liljeroth, Reader in Special Education at Gothenburg University. In addition, three project assistants were engaged in collecting, compiling, and analyzing the material. A total of eleven Swedish Waldorf schools participated in the project. In the choice of schools consideration was

given to their geographical position (urban/rural and region of Sweden) and the possibility of involving a sufficiently wide selection of pupils in the 12th grade (the final year of upper secondary school).

This summary presents some of the findings from three separate reports. It should be noted, however, that in any summary many nuances and details are necessarily omitted and only the large picture is presented.

REPORT 1: WALDORF PUPILS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The first report, completed in the autumn term of 2003, deals with former Waldorf pupils, that is, graduates who spent all or most of their school years at a Waldorf school. The main aim of the study was to investigate what proportion of these went on to higher education, which types of education they chose, how they felt about their studies, and how they succeeded in them.

A questionnaire was sent out to 871 pupils who had completed the 12th grade between 1995 and 2001. The percentage of pupils responding was fairly high, 68%. In-depth interviews were also conducted with ten people in order to obtain a more profound picture of the pupils' answers.

WALDORF PUPILS POSTPONE GOING ON TO HIGHER EDUCATION.

The study shows that a fairly large proportion of former Waldorf pupils, 58%, go on to university education sooner or later. How this proportion compares with pupils from state schools depends on which upper secondary school programs are compared. A problem here is that there is no upper secondary public school program that completely corresponds to grades 10–12 in Waldorf schools. If a comparison is made with all the state school's programs and if the comparison is made three years after the pupils left school, the Waldorf school continuation frequency is on average 11% higher. (The continuation frequency is the proportion of a certain year's school leavers who have started university education.) If the comparison is instead made with the programs that prepare pupils for higher education, the Waldorf school continuation frequency is on average 15% lower, within three years after the pupils left school.

A general pattern seems to be, however, that to a greater extent Waldorf pupils postpone going on to higher education, and instead devote themselves to other activities directly after leaving school, such as work, travel, or non-college craft-related courses. This is also supported by the fact that most of the 42% who were not studying at the time of this research project said they intended to go on to higher education in the future.

A LARGER PROPORTION OF PUPILS WITHOUT HIGHLY EDUCATED PARENTS GOES ON STUDYING.

A question that is constantly discussed in educational sociology studies is the influence of the educational level of parents on the pupils' pursuit of university education. Studies have shown that students with highly educated parents are overrepresented among university students. Studies have also shown that independent schools generally have a higher proportion of highly educated parents. This is also the case with the Waldorf schools.

In our study there are no great differences in the continuation frequency percentages for pupils with highly educated parents between the Waldorf schools and the state schools. On the other hand, among Waldorf pupils a higher number without highly educated parents goes on to university education. A cautious interpretation of these findings is that the educational level of parents is of somewhat less importance for the continuation to university of Waldorf pupils, compared with state school pupils.

WALDORF PUPILS CHOOSE DIFFERENT TYPES OF COURSES.

Students with Waldorf backgrounds are found in a wide variety of university courses. They become, for example, doctors, engineers, economists, lawyers, teachers, and artists. An extremely small proportion choose anthroposophic vocational training.

WALDORF PUPILS SEEM TO HAVE A DIFFERENT STYLE OF STUDYING.

Former Waldorf pupils generally seem to have a somewhat different style of studying when compared with other students. They are somewhat more deeply involved in their studies, i.e., their studying is based more on a personal interest in the subject than on the prospect of improved job opportunities. They also appear to be less worried about exams and do not use mechanically reproductive learning methods ("cramming") to the same extent.

WALDORF PUPILS ARE HAPPY AND GET ON WELL IN UNIVERSITY ENVIRONMENTS.

On the whole students with Waldorf backgrounds are happy in university environments and find their studies stimulating and interesting. Science students find their studies somewhat more interesting and are happier than students of arts and social science subjects.

Almost all the students think that the demands of their studies are at about the right level and that they can meet them well. About a third even consider that they are more successful than their fellow students.

Waldorf schools seem to offer a good preparation for higher education. The majority of the students think the Waldorf school has made a positive contribution to their ability to succeed in higher education. They feel the Waldorf

teaching methods have contributed to self-confidence and the ability to acquire, digest, and critically examine information and knowledge. In particular, the use of main lesson books seems to give them experience and self-confidence that are assets when it comes to independent critical thinking and writing in higher education. However, this does not preclude the feeling that they may have gaps in their knowledge of certain subjects when they compare themselves to their fellow students. The chief finding, however, is that they regard themselves as having developed a positive attitude to learning and studying.

Only a very small proportion, 6%, thought that their Waldorf school background had put them at a disadvantage in their higher education. At the same time, none of these reported any difficulty in meeting the demands of their university studies.

Thus, all in all, our findings indicate that pupils who have been to a Waldorf school for all or most of their school years, like pupils from state schools, both go on to higher education and choose widely differing types of courses. The level of education of their parents does not seem to be an influence on their continuation to higher education to the same extent as it is with pupils from state schools. Waldorf pupils also postpone starting their university studies and instead engage in other activities directly after leaving high school. During their time at the university they find their studies both interesting and stimulating, and most of the pupils think they meet the demands of their studies well or even better than their fellow students. According to the pupils, the Waldorf school has given them self-confidence, an ability to handle independent studies, and a positive attitude to learning and knowledge.

REPORT 2: WALDORF SCHOOLS AND CIVIC MORAL COMPETENCY

The second report, completed in the autumn of 2004, deals with the extent to which Waldorf pupils develop the values and social competencies that are required in order to be active citizens in a democratic and multicultural society. As this question is of a very comprehensive and complex nature, only certain aspects of the problems were examined within the framework of the project. The aspects chosen were determined mainly by the comparison material and measuring instruments available from previous empirical studies with similar questions.

THE FIRST COMPARATIVE STUDY – THE PUPILS’ CIVIC MORAL COMPETENCY

To compare the Waldorf pupils’ ability to take a stand on complex social and moral issues with the ability of pupils from state schools, a questionnaire was borrowed from the 1998 National Agency for Education’s national evaluation. This dealt with the “civic moral aspect” of the teaching of social studies and aimed to investigate the pupils’ ability to

- 1) identify and explain current social and moral problems,
- 2) suggest solutions to these problems, and
- 3) implement their suggested solutions.

To investigate these abilities, which in the study were defined as “civic moral competency,” a response-based evaluation model was used which focused on the pupils’ own more or less creative solutions to the problems presented. The evaluation instrument, designed as a questionnaire, consisted of two questions dealing with current social and moral problems. For each question there was a picture connected with the problem concerned. The picture was intentionally ambiguous so that the pupils could formulate their own interpretations of what the problems actually were and to ask themselves questions about them.

The first question, “the Växjö Question,” was connected with the current societal problem of hostility towards immigrants. The picture, published in a Swedish evening paper, showed a demonstration by Nazi youths in Växjö, in which an elderly woman was physically attacking a demonstrating “skinhead” by hitting him over the head with an umbrella. The caption said: “She chased away the neo-Nazis.” The question was intended to focus attention on two moral problems: 1) democracy’s dilemma and 2) whether violence can ever be “justified.”

The other question, “the Foetus Question,” was connected with a problem that has become increasingly topical in today’s society as a result of developments in biotechnology. The picture, showing a foetus in the womb, could be seen as “an innocent foetus in its mother’s tummy,” i.e., it was not neutral as regards values. The caption read: “A group of researchers at Huddinge Hospital outside Stockholm applied for permission in the spring of 1997 to carry out medical experiments on living foetuses that are in their mothers’ wombs. However, this would only be done with foetuses that would later be aborted.” The question was intended to focus attention on two moral problems: 1) Where do we draw the line in regard to experiments and research “for the benefit of mankind?” and 2) the advantages and risks of biotechnology.

In addition to the two evaluation questions, the questionnaire also contained a number of supplementary questions with graded answers. The purpose of these was to obtain data on how the pupils reacted to the evaluation questions, how great an effort they put into answering them, and to what extent their school teaching had touched upon the problems in question. There were also a number of questions about the pupils’ ideas on ethics and morals, and a self-evaluation test (Rosenberg). The questionnaire was sent out during the spring term of 2003 to the teachers of social studies in the 9th and 12th grades of the 11 participating Waldorf schools. The teachers were asked to administer the questionnaires themselves. The response rate was 77%, representing 325

pupils. The comparison group from the 1998 National Agency for Education's evaluation in 1998 consisted of 407 pupils from the 9th grade and year III of upper secondary school (equivalent to the 12th grade in the U.S.) from a total of 19 state schools. As regards gender distribution, there was no great difference between the two response groups. On the other hand, the groups differed with regard to social background, and this has been taken into consideration when comparing them.

The comparison showed that the Waldorf pupils in the 12th grade thought that the school's social studies teaching was interesting and good to a greater extent than the state school pupils in the same grade. Furthermore, more Waldorf pupils in this grade thought they were good at social studies, compared with the state pupils.

MORE WALDORF PUPILS FEEL SOCIAL AND MORAL RESPONSIBILITY.

The Waldorf pupils in both grades also felt responsibility for social and moral issues to a greater extent than did the state school pupils. More Waldorf pupils thought they had a responsibility for the moral development of society in the future and felt that as adults they would have a responsibility to do something about the situations referred to in the evaluation questions.

The Waldorf pupils also differed from the state pupils in their opinions of the two evaluation questions. Most of the pupils in both types of school thought the questions were on the whole quite difficult to answer. This is probably due to the complexity of the issues. However, the Waldorf pupils felt to a greater extent that the questions were important, interesting, and easy to understand compared with the state pupils.

WALDORF PUPILS' INVOLVEMENT IN SOCIAL AND MORAL ISSUES SEEMS TO INCREASE WITH AGE.

A comparison between the two grades showed that the proportion of Waldorf pupils who thought the questions were important, interesting, and easy to understand increased markedly between grades 9 and 12. Amongst the state school pupils the difference between the grades was, on the other hand, very marginal. The attitude to social studies also became considerably more positive amongst the Waldorf pupils, while it became if anything more negative amongst the state school pupils. Furthermore, involvement in moral issues seemed to increase with age among the Waldorf pupils, while it was fairly constant across the ages of the state school pupils. It thus seems that the Waldorf pupils experience more positive development with regard to their interest in social and moral issues.

The comparison between the answers to the two evaluation questions showed that the Waldorf pupils tended to refer to moral qualities such as

love, sympathy, solidarity, and moral courage to a somewhat greater extent than the state pupils. Their answers also seem to be characterized by greater thoughtfulness, greater confidence in man's innate goodness, and less confidence that more police or more severe laws can solve moral problems on a societal level. Instead the Waldorf pupils stress individual responsibility.

WALDORF PUPILS TO A GREATER EXTENT SUGGEST WAYS TO STOP OR LIMIT NAZI AND RACIST IDEOLOGIES.

As Nazism and racism are current social phenomena in Europe, an investigation was made into the extent to which the pupils repudiate these ideologies. This investigation showed that the majority of the pupils in both types of school repudiated Nazism and racism. However, the proportion of pupils that suggested anti-Nazi and anti-racist solutions, i.e., solutions that involved counteracting or stopping Nazism and racism, was considerably greater amongst the Waldorf pupils.

MORE WALDORF PUPILS HAVE A POSITIVE SELF-IMAGE.

Research on moral development has shown that persevering and committed moral conduct is often closely associated with a positive self-image. In order to investigate whether there was a similar connection between self-confidence and civic moral competency, as defined in the study, Rosenberg's self-evaluation test was included in the questionnaire. The self-evaluation test showed that the Waldorf pupils were generally higher in their self-evaluation, i.e., had a more positive self-image, than the state school pupils.

MORE BLANK, SARCASTIC, AND NON-CONSTRUCTIVE ANSWERS FROM THE WALDORF PUPILS

The number of blank, sarcastic, or non-constructive answers, however, was considerably higher amongst the Waldorf pupils. By non-constructive answers is meant answers that deliberately avoid answering the questions and are thus unusable for the purposes of the study. There were also more critical responses concerning the questionnaire and the study as a whole in the Waldorf pupils' answers. Behind these answers may lie a certain distrust of, or rebellious attitude toward, established social or political institutions.

ATTITUDES AND VIEWS REGARDING SCHOOL, TEACHERS, AND PARENTS

To obtain a better picture of the extent to which Waldorf pupils develop the values and social competencies required in order to be active citizens in a democratic and multicultural society, parts of the National Agency for Education's 2003 evaluation, which was directed to the 9th grade, were used. This evaluation, in the form of a questionnaire with graded answers, focused

primarily on the students' attitudes and cannot therefore be said to measure their ability to form an opinion on social and moral issues to the same extent as the 1998 evaluation instrument. The comparison is therefore to be seen as a complement to the previous study. From the National Agency for Education's questionnaire a selection was made of questions that concerned the pupils' social and moral experience and attitudes. Questions were also included about the pupils' attitudes to and opinions of school, teachers, and parents.

The questionnaire was sent out to nine of the participating Waldorf schools during the spring term of 2003. The number of respondents was 196 pupils. The National Agency for Education sent out a total of 6,788 questionnaires to the state schools and the number of respondents was 5,941 pupils. There were no great differences between the two response groups with regard to gender distribution or the distribution between urban and rural schools. On the other hand, the groups differed with regard to the pupils' social backgrounds, and this has been taken into consideration when comparing them.

WALDORF TEACHERS WERE FELT TO ATTACH GREATER IMPORTANCE TO HUMAN DIGNITY, EQUALITY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT IN THEIR TEACHING.

The comparison showed that the Waldorf pupils felt to a greater extent than the state school pupils that their teachers laid stress in their teaching on human dignity, equality between the sexes, environmental conservation, and the repudiation of bullying. The Waldorf pupils also felt to a greater extent that their teachers attached importance to cooperation and that their teachers thought that those who had most difficulty should get most help.

FEWER WALDORF PUPILS FEEL THAT THEY WERE BULLIED.

The Waldorf pupils also felt to a lesser extent than the state school pupils that they were bullied or treated unfairly. They also felt to a greater extent that teachers or other adults quickly intervened if a pupil was being bullied.

WALDORF PUPILS HAVE MORE TOLERANT ATTITUDES TO DEVIANT GROUPS IN SOCIETY.

The Waldorf pupils in general showed more open and tolerant attitudes towards homosexual pupils and pupils with learning difficulties, compared with the state school pupils. They also had more open and tolerant attitudes to both immigrants and religious and political extremist groups. Only with regard to their attitudes to criminals and Nazis/racists/skinheads was the relationship between the two response groups reversed, i.e., the Waldorf pupils showed a less tolerant attitude than the state school pupils.

FEWER DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE ATTITUDES OF BOYS AND GIRLS IN THE WALDORF SCHOOLS

Even though the girls generally had more open and tolerant attitudes than the boys in both response groups, the difference between the sexes in this respect was considerably smaller amongst the Waldorf pupils.

CONCLUSIONS

The aim of the two questionnaire studies was to investigate the extent to which Waldorf pupils develop the values and social competencies required in order to be active citizens in a democratic and multicultural society. The findings of the first comparative study indicate that the Waldorf pupils, if followed until the last year of upper secondary school, attain the Swedish school curriculum's goal of democratic education to a greater extent than the pupils in state schools. This conclusion is further supported by the findings of the second comparative study, which show that the Waldorf pupils in the 9th grade thought to a greater extent that their teachers placed emphasis on the school's democratic value base. Moreover, the Waldorf pupils themselves had more open and tolerant attitudes towards "deviant" groups in society – with the exception of criminals, Nazis, and racists, whom, on the contrary, they repudiated more actively than did their state school counterparts.

One of the main tasks of the Swedish school curriculum is to promote the development of the pupils into people with a sense of responsibility, who take an active part in developing the life of society. Our findings indicate that the Waldorf schools to a great extent seem to produce active, responsible, democratic, and humane citizens. This is in all probability a consequence of both the special teaching methods of the Waldorf schools and the Waldorf pupils' specific social and cultural backgrounds in the form of their parents' values and social commitment. Which of these two factors plays the greatest role is naturally impossible to say, but the teaching methods are certainly of no little importance.

REPORT 3: KNOWLEDGE OF SWEDISH, ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS, AND ATTITUDES TO THE TEACHING

The third report deals with the knowledge goals attained by the Waldorf pupils in comparison with the state school pupils. The study focuses on a comparison between the results of the Waldorf pupils and the state pupils in the national Swedish, English, and Mathematics tests in the 9th grade. To get a broader perspective on these results we have also included 1) the pupils' general opinion of school, 2) the pupils' opinion of the teaching of the three subjects, and 3) the Waldorf teachers' views on how the national tests fit in with the Waldorf schools' way of working with these subjects.

The first two questions were investigated by having the pupils in nine of the eleven participating Waldorf schools answer parts of the questionnaires that were included in the National Agency for Education's national evaluation in 2003 (NU03). The selection of questions, in the form of a questionnaire, was sent out during the spring term of 2003 to the class teachers, who were asked to administer the questionnaires themselves. The number of Waldorf pupils who answered was 196. The comparison group from the National Agency for Education's evaluation consisted of 5,941 pupils from the 9th grade of the state school. With regard to the gender distribution and the proportion of urban/rural schools, there were no great differences between the two response groups. On the other hand, the groups differed with regard to the pupils' social backgrounds, and this was considered during the comparison of the data. The third question was investigated by means of taped interviews with a total of 22 Waldorf teachers (7–8 in each subject) at the nine Waldorf schools participating in the study.

The comparison of Waldorf and state school 9th graders is based on data from Statistics Sweden (SCB) as the tests became compulsory for all schools in Sweden, including the independent ones, from the spring term of 2003, and the results are registered by SCB. In all, test results were collected from over 1,000 state schools in 276 municipalities, representing 93,248 pupils. Among the 27 Waldorf schools that included the 9th grade in the 2003–2004 school year, 26 schools from 22 municipalities submitted test results, representing 509 pupils. After excluding the state school pupils who studied Swedish as a second language and those who went to schools outside the 22 municipalities in which test results were received from a Waldorf school, as well as pupils – both at Waldorf schools and state schools – for whom there was no data on their parents' highest level of education, the comparison groups finally consisted of 21,208 state school pupils and 493 Waldorf pupils.

With regard to the pupils' gender, ethnic background, and the proportion of urban/rural schools, there were no great differences between the two response groups. On the other hand, the groups differed with regard to the pupils' social background. For this reason, we divided the pupils in each population into two subgroups: Group 1 consisted of pupils with at least one parent with post-secondary education, and Group 2 of pupils with no parent with post-secondary education.

Below are presented first the results of the comparison between the Waldorf schools and the state schools with regard to the National Agency for Education's national evaluation (NU03), and then the comparison of the results of the national subject tests and the Waldorf teachers' views on these tests.

WALDORF PUPILS ARE GENERALLY HAPPIER AT SCHOOL.

The comparison shows that the Waldorf pupils are happy with their teachers and with their schoolwork to a greater extent than the state school pupils. The Waldorf pupils like the physical environment of their school better and are more particular about what they eat. They do not skip their breakfast at home so often and eat sweets and hamburgers to a lesser extent as an option to their school lunch.

WALDORF PUPILS HOLD A MORE POSITIVE PICTURE OF THEIR SCHOOLWORK.

The Waldorf pupils agreed to a greater extent than the state school pupils that what they had learned at school was useful for the future. They felt to a higher degree that the pace of their studies and the demands of school corresponded to what they could manage. They also thought, to a greater extent than state pupils, that weak pupils got the support they needed and that teachers did their best to make sure their students acquired the basic skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic.

On the other hand, the Waldorf pupils felt to a lesser extent than the state school pupils that what they had learned corresponded to their own interests. However, this does not seem to have had much effect on what they thought of the actual teaching. A greater proportion of the Waldorf pupils felt that they had been allowed to think and work in their own way, and that they had been allowed to share their knowledge and experience with others.

WALDORF PUPILS WORK WITH THEIR SCHOOL SUBJECTS TO A LESSER EXTENT ONLY TO PASS THE TESTS.

In general, both the Waldorf pupils and the state school pupils thought it was interesting and important to work with Swedish, English, and Mathematics. However, the state school pupils thought to a greater extent that they worked with these subjects only in order to pass the tests. For Swedish and English language study, their motivation was also connected to a greater extent with their usefulness for future studies, compared with the Waldorf pupils.

THE WORKING ENVIRONMENT IN THE LESSONS IS GENERALLY PERCEIVED AS QUIETER AND MORE PLEASANT IN THE WALDORF SCHOOLS.

In general there seemed to be a quieter and more concentrated working environment in the lessons in the Waldorf schools, particularly in the mathematics lessons. The Waldorf pupils also thought there was a pleasant and positive atmosphere in the Swedish and mathematics lessons to a somewhat greater extent than the state school pupils.

WALDORF PUPILS HAVE A MORE POSITIVE ATTITUDE TO MATHEMATICS.

The Waldorf pupils thought to a greater extent that they did not give up when they were given a difficult mathematical problem and that they would find the mathematics they learn useful in the future. Nor did they think that mathematics is difficult to as great an extent as did the state school pupils. The Waldorf pupils also seemed to have discussions with each other and work on projects to a greater extent in their mathematics lessons.

WALDORF PUPILS FIND SWEDISH A LESS DIFFICULT SUBJECT.

The Waldorf pupils also tended to a lesser extent to find Swedish a difficult subject and did not feel as high a degree of resistance to writing as the state school pupils. However, the Waldorf pupils felt to a lesser extent than the state school pupils that Swedish was integrated with other subjects at school. They also thought to a lesser extent that they read Swedish literature at school.

WALDORF PUPILS ARE LESS SURE OF THEIR ABILITY TO COPE WITH CONCRETE TASKS.

Despite the Waldorf pupils' predominantly positive perception of the teaching in these subjects, they felt less sure of their ability to cope with various concrete tasks or problem situations connected with the subjects, such as writing a letter to the editor of a newspaper, reading a timetable or booking a hotel room in English.

ONLY SMALL DIFFERENCES ARE RECORDED BETWEEN THE WALDORF PUPILS AND THE STATE SCHOOL PUPILS IN THEIR SWEDISH, ENGLISH, AND MATHEMATICS GRADES.

In the national Swedish test we found no differences in the proportion of pupils who did not reach the subject's targets. On the other hand, the pupils at the Waldorf schools who did not have a parent with university education (Group 2) more often attained higher marks than the corresponding group in the state school. In the Waldorf schools the parents' level of education seems to be less a factor in children's grades in Swedish than it is in the state schools. Here, however, an uncertainty in the results is created by a higher drop-out rate amongst the Waldorf pupils in Group 2. The comparison also shows that the gender difference in the Swedish test results was not as great in the Waldorf schools as in the state schools. Here the drop-out rate was only marginally greater in the Waldorf schools, which makes this result fairly reliable.

In the parts of the test in English that dealt with oral and written proficiency respectively, there was no difference in the proportion of pupils who did not reach the subject's targets. However, in the part of the test that dealt with receptive ability, the proportion of Waldorf pupils who did not reach the targets was somewhat higher. However, in the English tests, too, the parents' level of education seems to be less a factor in their children's marks in the

Waldorf schools than it is in the state schools. But here again, a higher drop-out rate amongst the Waldorf pupils in Group 2 creates some uncertainty in the findings.

In the mathematics test the proportion of Waldorf pupils who did not reach the targets was also somewhat greater compared with the state school pupils. On the other hand, there was a somewhat greater proportion of Waldorf pupils in Group 2 who attained the highest grade, compared with the same group of pupils in the state school. In addition, the drop-out rate was here somewhat higher amongst the state pupils. Within the different scores the differences between Group 1 (i.e., pupils who had at least one parent with university education) and Group 2 (i.e., pupils without a parent with university education) were also smaller amongst the Waldorf pupils.

AMONGST THE WALDORF TEACHERS THERE ARE BOTH POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE ATTITUDES TO THE NATIONAL SUBJECT TESTS.

The interviews with the Waldorf teachers provided concrete examples of their views on teaching and child development. It is not possible to say that in general they thought the tests were “good” or “bad.” Some of them stressed the difference in the views of knowledge and the subjects that lie behind the tests, compared with the basic outlook of the Waldorf teaching methods. The teachers felt the tests disturb the Waldorf teaching process or that the Waldorf teaching methods are adapted to them and thus are undermined. Others thought it positive that the Waldorf pupils received a comparable measure of their knowledge and/or that the tests measure what everyone should know, irrespective of type of school. However, a frequently recurring theme was that many teachers reported that their pupils feel nervous or stressed when they take the tests, mostly because they are not used to this type of assessment.

CONCLUSIONS

Our findings show that the Waldorf pupils on the whole have a positive opinion of their schooling and their schools’ teaching of the three basic subjects to a greater extent than state school pupils. The comparisons between the Waldorf pupils and the state school pupils also indicate that Waldorf pupils to a somewhat greater extent do not reach the targets for the three subjects. However, in our opinion, there is no reason to be particularly concerned about this. Most of the Waldorf teachers felt that the pupils were unaccustomed to this type of assessment, and that the pupils themselves had less self-confidence about what they could manage in the different subjects. It must also be taken into account that the Waldorf school curriculum is designed on a 12-year basis. Some subject knowledge that has been dealt with by the 9th grade in the state schools is brought in later grades in the Waldorf schools. Finally, as our first

report showed, nearly 60% of former Waldorf pupils go on to higher education and almost all of these feel that they manage well in their studies.

Further conclusions are that in Swedish the Waldorf teaching methods seem to contribute to levelling out the differences between girls and boys. With reservation for the variable created by the differences in drop-out rate, the findings also indicate that the Waldorf teaching methods can contribute to a certain levelling out of differences in social background, i.e., that the educational level of the parents does not have the same effect on the pupils' grades as in the state school.

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THE HEALTH AND HEARTINESS OF WALDORF GRADUATES

by

Douglas Gerwin

*Do Waldorf graduates enjoy better health as they age,
compared to others in their peer groups?*

A recently published survey of graduates from Waldorf schools across Germany aged 21 to 82 concludes that former Waldorf students suffer far lower incidence of chronic ailments such as high blood pressure, diabetes, heart conditions including angina pectoris, and “arthrosis” or a general hardening of the organism. According to the survey, Waldorf graduates report a significantly lower number of these ailments even when compared to the top socio-economic stratum of German society, in which these conditions are already generally less prevalent.

The survey forms part of a wider study of 1,124 Waldorf graduates published last year by two German research professors, Prof. Heiner Barz from the Heinrich Heine University and Prof. Dirk Randoll of the Alanus Hochschule.¹ It shows that 33% of the general German population between the ages of 50 and 60 suffers from high blood pressure, compared to 3% of Waldorf graduates in this age group. In another striking contrast, 45% of the general population complains of arthrosis in their joints, compared to just 5% of Waldorf graduates.

These statistical differences – one in nine or ten – were so striking that the authors of the survey decided to test their numbers against a more selective population with a demographic background similar to the Waldorf graduates. For this purpose, the researchers chose data that the Robert Koch Institute

(RKI) had gathered from a group of 866 people aged 20 to 68, whose profile in terms of age, gender, and marriage status most closely matched a comparable group of 871 Waldorf graduates. In this comparison, the differences were less extreme but still statistically significant. Of the RKI group, just over 25% reported problems with arthrosis, compared to just under 10% of the Waldorf graduates. In regard to ailments of high blood pressure and angina pectoris, Waldorf graduates reported about half as many cases as the RKI group. The only condition for which both groups reported comparable levels was for hay fever, which just over 20% of the RKI group reported as having, compared to around 18% of the Waldorf group (see Fig. 1).

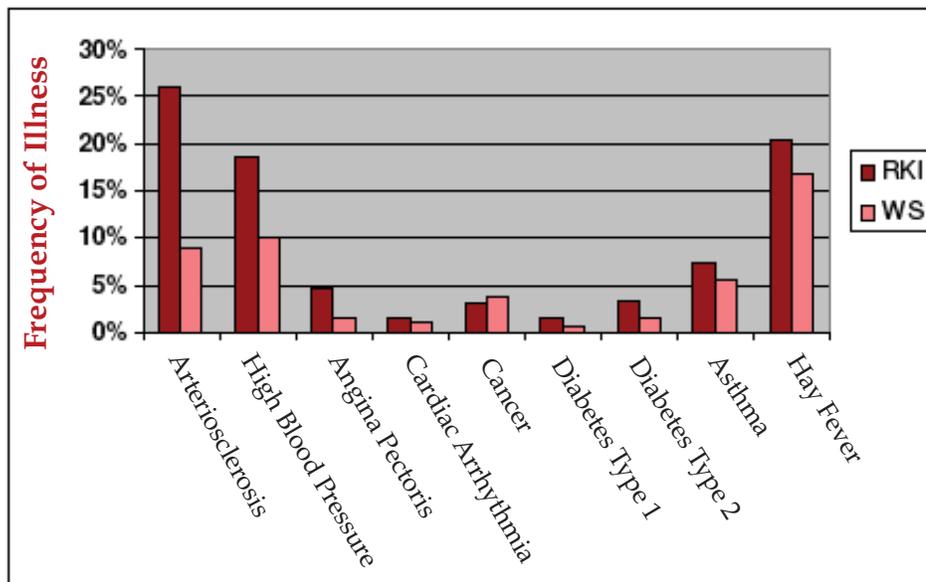


Fig. 1 - Relationship to Various Illnesses Comparing the General Public and Waldorf Graduates

A more detailed analysis of the RKI and Waldorf groups revealed a further difference in trends when they were compared in three age groups: ages 30-37, 50-59, and 62-66. As illustrated in Fig. 2, the onset of these ailments increases exponentially from one age group to the next among the general population, whereas for the Waldorf graduates the increasing trend towards onset is gradual – or in the case of blood pressure even reduced – as they grow older.

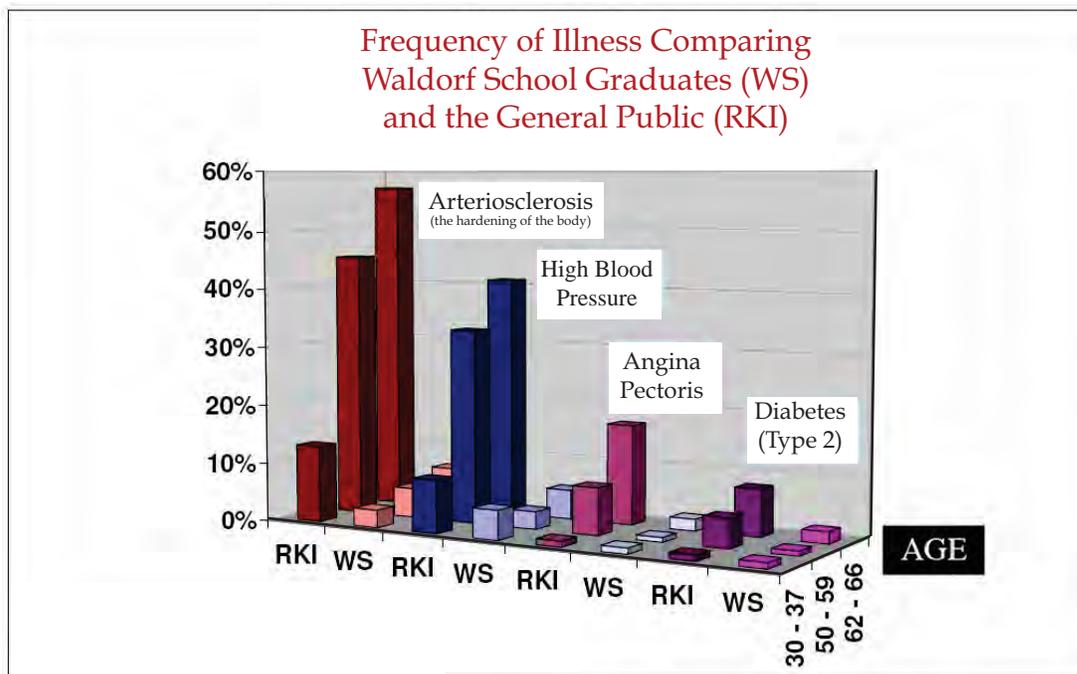


Fig. 2 - Frequency of Illness

The researchers point to certain factors that may have influenced the data without however eliminating these striking differences. Among these factors:

1. The questions on the Waldorf survey were less specific and may therefore have generated fewer responses; by contrast the RKI survey included more synonyms for these medical conditions and may therefore have prompted more responses.
2. In both surveys, the incidents of illnesses were self-reported, rather than being diagnosed by a physician or health care professional.
3. The frequency of reported illnesses varied among different socio-economic backgrounds. Specifically, those with less education and lower social status reported more cases of high blood pressure and general arthrosis. In this context, it is worth noting that 63% of the Waldorf group had taken the state *Abitur* exam at the end of high school, whereas only 3% of the RKI group had reported sitting for this exam.
4. The Waldorf graduates participating in this survey came exclusively from the former West Germany, whereas the RKI survey polled people from both former East and West Germany.

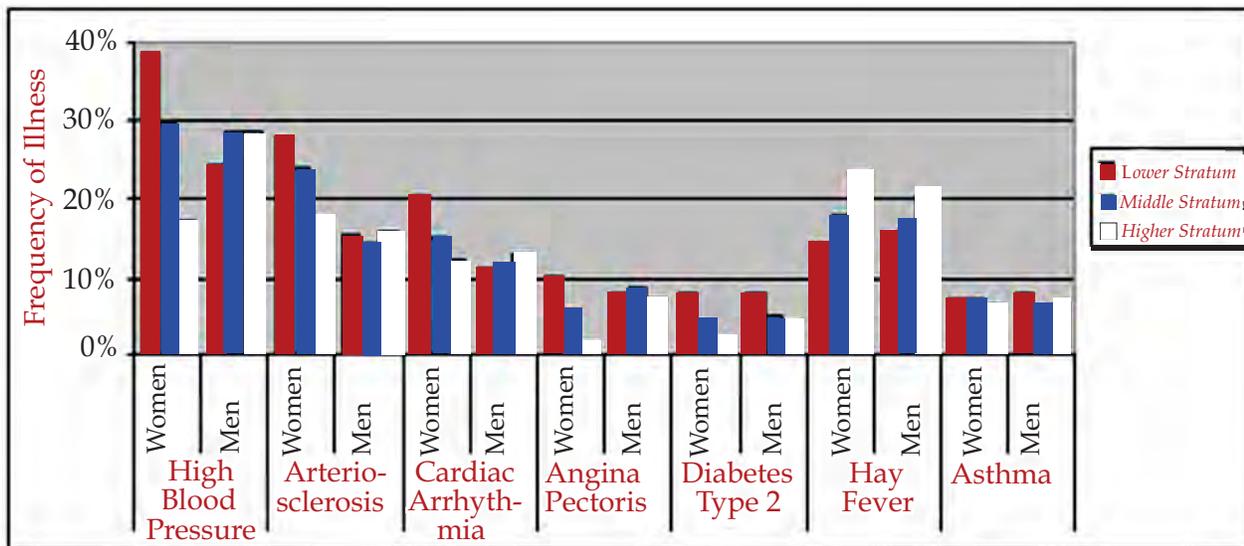
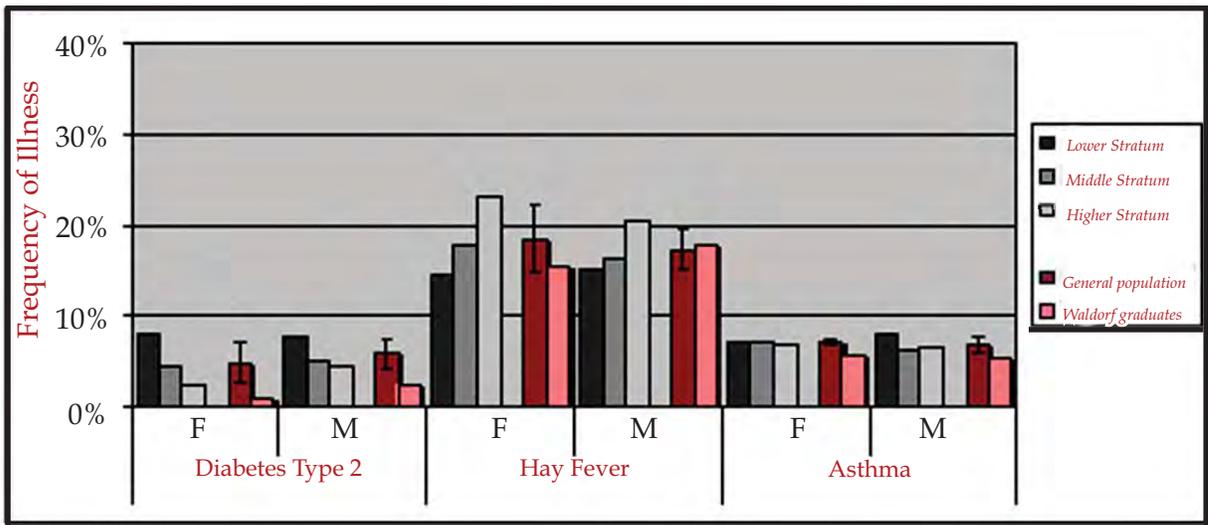
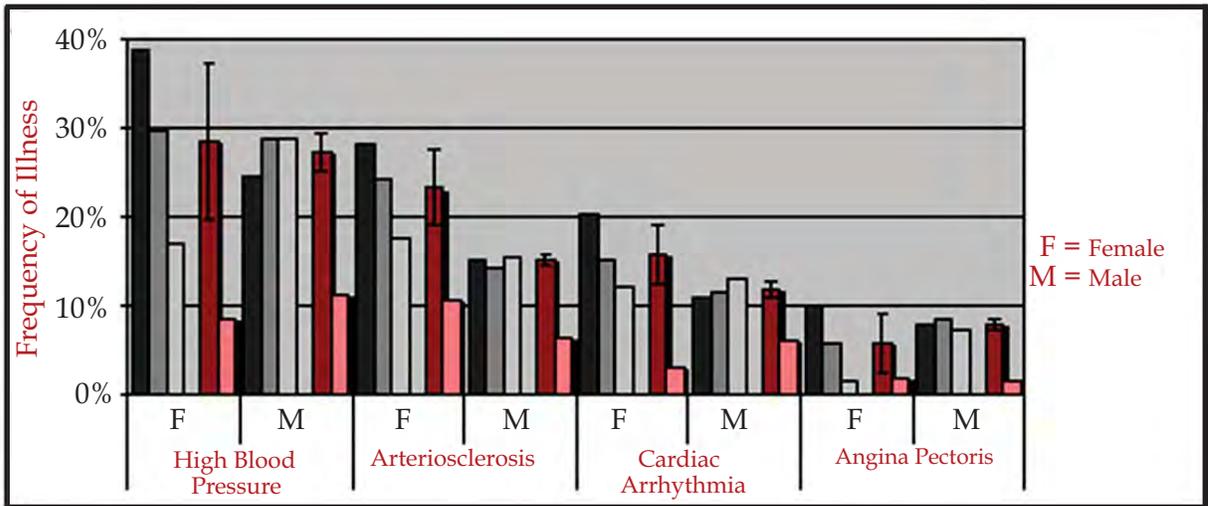


Fig. 3 – Frequency of illnesses among men and women in the higher, middle, and lower social strata of the general population

A more recent RKI survey in 2003–04 of Germans from both parts of the country provided a more nuanced picture of the nation’s general health by separating responses both by gender and according to three social strata (see Fig. 3). In addition, the survey asked whether a physician had diagnosed various conditions, rather than simply asking the respondents to name the illnesses they suffered. Generally this latter survey showed that

- a) in both men and women, the higher the social stratum, the lower the reported incidence of these illnesses, and
- b) women in all three strata report higher levels of these illnesses than men, with the exception of high blood pressure, a condition in which the results are reversed.

Results from these three social strata were then compared with Waldorf graduates. Even if one were to assume that Waldorf graduates fell mostly in the top social stratum by virtue of their generally higher levels of education, the Waldorf graduates still scored significantly lower in the number of each illness compared to any of the three strata.



Figs. 4a and 4b – Frequency of illnesses among men and women in three social strata of the general population (RKI) compared to former Waldorf students (WS). The bars showing average frequencies for the general population indicate the middle standard deviations with a vertical line (“I”).

As Figs. 4a and 4b show, about 18% of women in the top social bracket reported high blood pressure, compared to 9% among the female Waldorf graduates. Among men the difference is even more pronounced: Nearly 30% of men in the top social bracket reported high blood pressure, compared to around 10% of the male Waldorf graduates. For conditions of general arthrosis, Waldorf graduates reported about half the number of incidents compared to respondents in the top social bracket. Likewise incidents of angina, diabetes, and asthma were fewer in the Waldorf group compared to all three social strata of the general population.

Interesting exceptions to the general trend could be observed in conditions of heart disturbances and hay fever. Among women, those of the higher social strata reported fewer incidents of heart circulation problems but among men the trend was reversed. However, in both ailments the number of Waldorf graduates reporting this condition was well below all of the general results. In the case of hay fever, the higher social strata reported higher levels of this condition, but the Waldorf graduates still reported fewer incidents of this ailment. Only among males did the Waldorf graduates report slightly higher levels of hay fever than the average of all three strata among the general population.

Finally a comparison of Waldorf graduates to the general population in both the former East Germany and West Germany showed that, overall, Waldorf students reported lower incidence of these ailments than the population from either the eastern or western portions of the country.

For those familiar with Rudolf Steiner's statements about the healthy effects of Waldorf education, these survey results will come as no surprise. From the very beginning, Steiner indicated that education promotes health to the degree it cultivates a balance of intellectual, emotional, and volitional life in the human being, and it risks promoting illness not only in the child but later in the adult to the degree it does not. Indeed, in a lecture four years after the founding of the first Waldorf school, Steiner warned that "if we allow the child to think abstractly too much, then we encourage in the human organism the predisposition to premature sclerosis, an early arteriosclerosis."² In addition, Steiner suggested that the practice of the arts in education – or, more precisely, the practice of teaching artistically – would also contribute to more robust health both among students and, in the longer view, among school graduates.

The researchers themselves have raised questions about other factors that might contribute to the health of Waldorf students, including the emphasis among Waldorf parents on a healthy home life, restricted access to television and computers, a more organic diet, higher rates of sleep, and possibly a lower consumption of cigarettes, alcohol, and other drugs. These factors, according to the researchers, may also play a significant role in the overall health of Waldorf students and therefore deserve further study.

Nonetheless, at a time of rising chronic illnesses among children – including the onset of adult-style diabetes – and reduced artistic practice at school due to greater emphasis on the testing of basic academic skills, these survey results merit serious examination. At a minimum they draw attention to the risks inherent in one-sided educational practices and reinforce other research that shows just how crucial the practice of the arts is in the formation of bodily organs such as the brain.

ENDNOTES

1. Heiner Barz & Dirk Randoll, *Äbsolventen von Waldorfschulen: Eine empirische Studie zu Bildung und Lebensgestaltung* (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag fuer Sozialwissenschaften, 2007). Elements of this study have also been reported in Volume XII Number 2 of the *Research Bulletin*. This present report is drawn from an article by Christoph Hueck on the health section of the survey.
2. Rudolf Steiner, lecture November 8, 1923, *A Modern Art of Education*, GA 307.

COMPARISON OF RECENT RESEARCH ON WALDORF GRADUATES

by

Jon McAlice

Waldorf education is a riddle of modern civilization. In a world in which accomplishment is thought to be quantifiable, where the only outcomes that matter are those that can be measured, this school movement has struggled to find its guidance in the immeasurable. This may be changing. A series of studies published in various countries appears to offer quantifiable insight into the strengths and weaknesses of Waldorf education.

The four surveys of Waldorf graduates examined in this report rely heavily on graduates' responses to a series of question clusters.¹ All four studies, two done in Germany and Switzerland under the auspices of the Heinrich-Heine University in Dusseldorf and the Institute for Empirical Social Research at Alanus College and a North American study by the Research Institute for Waldorf Education, focus on individuals who graduated from Waldorf schools between 1943 and 2004. The study of U.S. and Canadian students embraces the entire range; the German and Swiss studies cover those who finished school between the late 1950s and early 1990s.

The fourth study examined was a comparative study of 9th and 12th grade Waldorf and public school students conducted by Professor Bo Dahlin of Karlstad University in Sweden. This study has a somewhat different focus than those mentioned above and will be addressed separately.

FINDING SOMETHING TO HOLD ON TO

Empirical studies are the bread and butter of educational science. Do you want to know if children are actually learning what you think you are teaching them? Give them a test. Are students developing the character traits and metacognitive capacities you hope for? Ask them questions that are designed to measure the extent to which these capacities are present in the students. Do

you wonder whether the educational process as a whole has a long term positive effect on the students who have completed the process? Design a questionnaire that allows you to quantify the complex totality that is a person's life and analyze the responses for statistically significant trends.

In each of these three most common instruments for assessing the efficacy of various curricula and programs, individual experience is transformed into numerical data. Conclusions are drawn based on an analysis of the latter. Numerical data are viewed as objective indicators, whereas an individual's account of his educational experience is considered anecdotal. Although such anecdotal accounts may give the informed researcher a deeper view of the actual learning process, they carry no weight in the general assessment of a school's performance. Why? Simply because they are too individual, too likely to be colored by personal inaccuracies; they are subjective rather than objective. Such anecdotal evidence is of peripheral interest in an empirical study when it either supports or contradicts the statistical outcomes.

What gives empirical research its veneer of objectivity is the process through which all subject-oriented phenomena, i.e., the individual's experience of his or her learning, is placed into easily quantifiable categories. For example, take the statement from one of the studies: "Most of what I learned in school was meaningful for me." This can be responded to with numbers from 1 to 4, with 4 being most affirmative. In the analysis, the fours, threes, etc., are grouped together, and if there are more of the higher numbers than the lower numbers, one can conclude that the majority of the students look back on their time in school as something meaningful for them. This reduces one of the most complex psychological questions – the question of meaning – to an easily manipulated magnitude. What has been removed from the equation is the individual's sense of what is meaningful. Three people may find the same experience meaningful for three widely varying reasons. A school movement that has lost a sense of its *raison d'être* may find such a general affirmation helpful; it does, of course, give us no help in gaining a deeper understanding of the learning process. The studies at hand have tried to alleviate this innate shortcoming by providing groups of questions clustered around what have been identified as core curricular values and expected outcomes. The three primary areas examined are: the graduates' relationship to work, their quality of life, and their retrospective sense of the time spent in a Waldorf school. Each study begins by providing a general picture of the graduates in as much as this is possible based on a statistical analysis. By viewing the responses in relation to one another, a researcher can begin to tease out overriding themes.

THE FINE LINE BETWEEN BIAS AND PREJUDICE

When reading or working with these studies it is important to keep in mind that each set of researchers had specific goals in mind when they embarked on their work. The questions posed reflect these goals, even though the intent behind the articulated goals may vary. This seems to be true especially of the German, Swiss, and North American studies, all of which used questionnaires designed around similar questions. The published reports of the statistically similar results differ markedly. Empirical research in the human sciences, and to some extent also in the “hard sciences,” struggles with the fact that people are people and that even researchers are people.

One of the most difficult tasks in designing, conducting, and analyzing the results of a research project is to ensure that each step is free of bias. As with the approach of reducing individual experience to objective data, empirical studies base their validity on the successful elimination of researcher bias. Is this in fact possible? Probably not. One can even ask the question as to whether it is desirable. Each of us sees things in a certain way, we view the world through the eyes of what we have come to recognize as being true. Without this, the world would be reduced to a flat, abstract generality. Bias becomes a limiting factor in research only when it turns prejudicial, thus blinding one to aspects of phenomena that lie outside of one’s own conceptual limitations.

Each of the above-mentioned studies has its own bias. The German and Swiss studies look at the responses of Waldorf graduates through the eyes of the current paradigm in educational science and view them in light of general societal expectations on educational institutions, the North American study through the eyes of self-admitting and supportive Waldorf educators. The Swedish study comparing high school students in Waldorf schools with their counterparts in public schools analyzes student responses within the context of the historical development of the humanistic tradition. This difference is the only thing that makes a close reading of the four agreeable.

When does bias become prejudicial? In the German report, Dirk Randoll, one of the lead researchers of the study, analyzed graduates’ responses regarding their own time in school. This is an interesting piece of work, one which clearly raises questions as to the appropriateness of this approach to understanding something as complex as individual development. Randoll, who has been on the periphery of the Waldorf school movement for a number of years, as a parent and professionally as a project analyst for a foundation which has supported Waldorf schools in various countries, and in recent years with a number of comparative studies, has a self-described critical relationship to what happens in the Waldorf schools. Much of his contribution in the almost 400-page report of the German study revolves around questions that in his assessment cast a negative light on Waldorf practices.

First to the style of his writing. Randoll has mastered the art of “scientific” writing. Data is presented fluently – he weaves the necessary statistical indicators into his sentences, percentages flow from his pen, and he presents the quantification with a certain eloquent disinterest – until he finds something that from his point of view seems questionable. Then one can almost see him leaping onto his horse and riding off to give battle. There are several examples in his 60-page article, for instance, the discovery of a noticeable difference between the percentage of male graduates who are able to identify strongly with their time in school and the percentage of female graduates. Randoll writes: “These results support the conjecture that girls are better able to adapt to the situation in Waldorf schools than boys are.” He goes on to suppose that this conjecture is based on the fact that girls respond better to the “musical-artistic tendencies of these schools” and that perhaps it is also due to the greater percentage of female teachers, a tendency that is also present in public education. At this point, Randoll lets loose a salvo of questions: “What does this mean, however, for male Waldorf students and their development? ... Is there a dearth of male role models in the Waldorf schools? The development of one’s sense of identity as a man is not an easy undertaking in a ‘feminized’ environment.... How do Waldorf schools deal with aggression, with emerging sexuality, with alcohol, cigarettes, and drugs? Are such things discussed openly and constructively or are they dealt with as bagatelles, swept aside, talked to death or moralized? ... Does the 8-year class teacher still make sense? Do the changing social structures demand a new look at gender socialization among the students in the feminized environment of the Waldorf schools?” At some point, what began as conjecture seems to have become depicted as reality.

Later Randoll tackles the question of student achievement and the lack of performance assessment in the schools, again based on input from the graduates. The conclusions drawn at the end of this excursion call for closer scrutiny. Early on he tells the reader that this is a question he will be returning to. And he does – more than once and in unexpected places, for example in the discussion of gender differences in judging the positive influence of the school on the development of specific personal traits (ability to recognize one’s own limitations, ability to hold up under pressure, ability to better master life crises, ability to master difficult situations). Randoll sees the lower percentage of positive responses from male participants as the basis to once again assume a lack of performance-based assessment in the schools.

Also in regard to sports: “Here we find again the tendency that performance-based learning plays a subordinate role in Waldorf schools.” He becomes almost passionate (within the narrow limitations of scientific reserve) when addressing the expressed lack of certainty among graduates on how to deal with competitive situations. “Here too we find clearly expressed that Waldorf

schools do not place enough value on student achievement and performance, on the pressure to perform and on learning strategies to deal with competitive situations, which was clearly shown in the study by Randoll (1999). . . . Why do the Waldorf schools, or the teachers there make such a big deal about it? It is well-known that performance and competition can also be a source of joy, they can motivate and satisfy one, yes, even support social processes. The Waldorf schools are thus not appropriate places to adequately prepare students for the performance-based, competitive aspects of our society, in part because they have grown apart from it or chosen to distance themselves.”

One wonders whether Randoll read his colleague Barz’s analysis of the vocational biographies of the same group of graduates. As he continues, he pays lip service to the intrinsic differences of the Waldorf approach, then uses a selection of graduates’ responses to support his own conviction concerning the importance of performance-based motivators in education. “School as a ‘safe space’ in which the individual pupil feels protected and supported, because he or she can learn in the absence of any form of fear, needs to be made less absolute for students above a certain age, and replaced with a more conscious grappling with performance and competition.”

The practice of giving student’s descriptive feedback (narrative reports) should also be re-examined. “For students have a right to receive “objective,” understandable feedback concerning their performance. . . . One can proceed from the recognition that students as a rule enjoy working and learning when they find meaning in what they are doing. However, not all exertion is intrinsically motivated. Therefore extrinsic motivators do have value in teaching.”

Although acknowledging the respondents’ generally positive assessment of their time in the Waldorf schools, Randoll’s report emphasizes the areas in which the schools do not measure up to ubiquitous societal educational standards. They may be fulfilling their intrinsic goals, a point the majority of the respondents affirmed, but they do show specific weaknesses in areas which play a primary role in mainstream education. These areas are the ones which Randoll addresses most energetically. Does his report give a true picture of how the respondents viewed their educational experience? Do his conclusions and recommendations for reform serve well for the future development of Waldorf education? At which point does his clearly present bias cross the line and become prejudicial?

The North American study, which was similarly structured, shows a different bias. At times, one has the feeling that it is just too good to be true. If one takes the published results of this study at face value, the Waldorf schools not only produce good college students and fine citizens, but graduates are also healthy, socially intelligent, tolerant, artistic individuals who spend time with their friends, help others in need, don’t watch television, and earn good livings—perfect examples of well-rounded individuals able to assimilate well into today’s

decadent culture. Whereas Randoll was explicit about the goals of the German study (to discover, on the one hand, whether or not the claims made by Waldorf educators about the results of Waldorf education are supported by graduates, and, on the other hand, “to make a contribution to the further development of Waldorf schools by pointing out the strengths and weaknesses”), Mitchell and Gerwin do not articulate explicit goals for their study. It appears that they set out to study what Waldorf graduates do with their lives and how in retrospect they view their Waldorf education. The structure of the report, however, belies this ostensibly open-ended, heuristic approach. The presentation seems designed to dispel certain assumptions about Waldorf education, specifically its inability to prepare students to succeed in college. Although well-written and easy to understand, a discerning reader will be struck by the lack of questions and the general nature of the analysis. What Randoll skims over – the general affirmation of a productive schooling – is the meat and potatoes of this report. Mitchell and Gerwin seem to be satisfied with the fact that yes, the Waldorf schools are in fact successful and even “students attending the newer or pioneering Waldorf high schools are at no disadvantage, in terms of college placement or career choices, when compared to those graduating from older Waldorf schools.” This level of analysis may serve well for enrollment and fund-raising brochures, but it does not provide much of interest for the teacher or for anyone interested in the further development of Waldorf education. I must point out, however, that the authors of the report have acknowledged this. The study has provided a wealth of data. Its value will become only more apparent through further research projects. The question with regards to the data available now concerning Waldorf graduates, one which applies to the German report as well, is whether it is specific enough to support assessment of current practices with a view towards better meeting the needs of Waldorf students.

INTERNATIONAL COMPARISONS

The three studies of graduates were designed to make a comparison of the results possible to some extent. The same questionnaire was used in the German and Swiss studies (both were in fact conducted by the same team of researchers), the North American survey was adapted to include a number of questions from the Randoll/Barz research. What follows is an examination of the responses made to some of these questions by German and North American graduates.

The cluster of questions that we will look at more closely asked respondents to indicate to what extent their time in the Waldorf school influenced their relationship to certain aspects of their lives and to also indicate how important these aspects are to them. The data we have on hand is not exactly comparable due to differences in the way respondents were asked to measure influence and importance. Although both studies use a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 indicating the

highest level of influence and importance, the intermediate steps in the two studies vary. In the German study the choices were:

- 1 *negative influence*
- 2 *somewhat negative influence*
- 3 *neither positive nor negative*
- 4 *somewhat positive influence*
- 5 *very positive influence*

The scale used by the North American study was:

- 1 *not at all influential*
- 2 *not much influence*
- 3 *somewhat influential*
- 4 *very influential*
- 5 *extremely influential*

In the German report the data was grouped as either negative or positive, with 1 and 2 combined to indicate a lack of influence and 4 and 5 combined to indicate positive influence. A comparable grouping is not possible with the North American scale as it indicates a sequential increase in the amount of influence. For the sake of making a comparison, I have taken the liberty of grouping the North American responses in a similar way to the German and overlooking the middle of the scale. Likewise with the scales used to indicate importance.

The question as it stands in the North American study is:

Please rate the following aspects of your life, first in terms of the influence your Waldorf education has had on that aspect of your life... and second in terms of how important to you each aspect is in your life.

my ability to express my views and attitudes to others
my capacity to work on my own
my ability to know my own capacities and limitations
my interest in discussing points of view different from my own
my fairness and tolerance regarding other people's opinions
my ability to think critically and to evaluate
my creative capacities
my self-confidence (in the sense of "I am capable of doing something")
my readiness to share responsibilities in my community
my ability to handle competition
my spiritual, religious orientation
my practical knowledge (e.g. how to repair a bicycle)
my grasp of theoretical sciences (e.g. physics, chemistry, mathematics)
my ability to step into the thoughts and feelings of others
my ability to work on something together with others
my ability to formulate my own judgment about something
my spontaneity
my ability to resolve conflicts with others
my ability to challenge assumptions
my ability to express myself verbally
my feeling of self-worth (in the sense of "I am worth something")
my athletic abilities and achievements
my sense of responsibility for the environment
my choice of profession
my ability to endure and overcome burdens
my feeling of responsibility for my own health
my interest in working with other cultures and traditions
my interest in spiritual themes
my feeling of responsibility for other human beings
the development of a meaningful perspective on life
my love of learning
my ability to react in an open and flexible way to changing
circumstances
my political orientation
my interest in working with anthroposophical themes (e.g.
reincarnation, karma)
my ability to take care of the sick
my ability to see certain developments of our times in a wider context
my ability to overcome personal crises successfully

Fig. 1 – List of influences

Table 1 gives an overview of the available data. German responses are on the left, responses from the North American study are on the right. The symbol "+" pertains to what graduates cited as a positive influence of their Waldorf

educational experience on the various categories and combines the percentages of 4 + 5 on the response scale. The symbol “-” combines the percentages of responses indicated with 1 or 2. The column headed “Imp” combines the percentages of responses given as 4 or 5 in the scale of relative importance. The difference between importance and positive influence is calculated in the column headed “Diff.”

Ger +	Ger -	Ger Imp	Ger Diff	CATEGORIES	NA +	NA -	NA Imp	NA Diff
74	4	85	11	work with others	62	8	82	20
76	8	92	15	work on my own	61	7	91	30
79	3	90	11	tolerate others' views	63	8	90	27
72	6	88	17	think critically	63	10	92	29
71	3	85	13	step into others' minds	57	8	83	26
48	7	65	17	spontaneity	29	32	49	20
31	11	37	6	spiritual/religious life	27	44	44	17
38	12	38	0	spiritual themes	37	28	42	5
77	3	85	8	share responsibilities	49	16	62	13
44	5	73	29	sense for own health	29	35	80	51
77	2	86	9	sense for environment	59	10	81	22
64	13	89	25	self confidence	69	7	94	25
59	4	66	7	see times in broader views	52	16	77	25
79	2	88	8	responsibility for others	61	7	82	21
54	8	80	26	resolve conflicts	40	20	82	42
50	13	70	20	practical knowledge	29	34	56	27
20	11	40	20	political orientation	23	48	48	25
48	8	77	29	overcome crisis	36	22	89	53
67	4	77	10	other cultures	53	17	70	17
59	5	32	-26	meaningful view of life	64	8	82	18
53	13	83	30	love of learning	74	4	91	17
54	18	84	30	know own abilities	48	15	76	28
31	17	26	-4	interest in anthroposophy	22	48	21	-1
31	26	70	38	handle competition	21	41	43	22
34	28	69	36	grasp of sciences	26	38	44	18
68	6	88	20	form own judgments	55	7	89	34
60	6	82	22	flexible to change	46	15	86	40
62	12	85	23	feeling of self-worth	62	8	91	29
75	5	91	16	express views to others	69	6	90	21
75	7	87	12	express verbally	84	8	93	9
53	15	85	32	endure burdens	38	22	82	44
88	2	86	-1	creative capacities	87	1	86	-1
38	13	65	27	choice of profession	36	36	76	40
62	6	85	23	challenge assumptions	49	10	80	31
24	28	53	28	athletic abilities	24	44	35	11

Table 1. Overview of German and North American responses

Table 2 shows the categories sorted by importance, the German responses on the left side, the North American responses on the right. For the most part, students in both countries felt the same things to be important, even though the actual sequence varies. If one were to number the categories, 24 of them would be within four places of one another. For instance, *work on my own* is most important to the greatest percentage of German graduates, and it is fourth most important to North American graduates. *Self-confidence* is number one on the North American side, number four on the German side. *Form own judgments* is number 6 on the German side, number 9 being among North American graduates. There are, however eleven categories where the difference is greater.

CATEGORIES	Ger +	Ger -	Ger Imp	Ger Diff	CATEGORIES	NA +	NA -	NA Imp	NA Diff
work on my own	76	8	92	15	self confidence	69	7	94	25
express views to others	75	5	91	16	express verbally	84	8	93	9
tolerate others' views	79	3	90	11	think critically	63	10	92	29
self confidence	64	13	89	25	love of learning	79	4	91	12
think critically	72	6	88	17	feeling of self-worth	62	8	91	29
form own judgments	68	6	88	20	work on my own	61	7	91	30
responsibility for others	79	2	88	8	express views to others	69	6	90	21
express verbally	75	7	87	12	tolerate others' views	63	8	90	27
creative capacities	88	2	86	-1	form own judgments	55	7	89	34
sense for environment	77	2	86	9	overcome crisis	36	22	89	53
feeling of self-worth	62	12	85	23	creative capacities	87	1	86	-1
share responsibilities	77	3	85	8	flexible to change	46	15	86	40
work with others	74	4	85	11	step into others' minds	57	8	83	26
endure burdens	53	15	85	32	meaningful view of life	64	8	82	18
step into others' minds	71	3	85	13	work with others	62	8	82	20
challenge assumptions	62	6	85	23	responsibility for others	61	7	82	21
know own abilities	54	18	84	30	resolve conflicts	40	20	82	42
love of learning	53	13	83	30	endure burdens	38	22	82	44
flexible to change	60	6	82	22	sense for environment	59	10	81	22
resolve conflicts	54	8	80	26	challenge assumptions	49	10	80	31
overcome crisis	48	8	77	29	sense for own health	29	35	80	51
other cultures	67	4	77	10	see times in broader views	52	16	77	25
sense for own health	44	5	73	29	know own abilities	48	15	76	28
practical knowledge	50	13	70	20	choice of profession	36	36	76	40
handle competition	31	26	70	38	other cultures	53	17	70	17
grasp of sciences	34	28	69	36	share responsibilities	49	16	62	13
See times in broader views	59	4	66	7	practical knowledge	29	34	56	27
spontaneity	48	7	65	17	spontaneity	29	32	49	20
choice of profession	38	13	65	27	political orientation	23	48	48	25
athletic abilities	24	28	53	28	spiritual/religious life	27	44	44	17
political orientation	20	11	40	20	grasp of sciences	26	38	44	18
spiritual themes	38	12	38	0	handle competition	21	41	43	22
spiritual/religious life	31	11	37	6	spiritual themes	37	28	42	5
meaningful view of life	59	5	32	-26	athletic abilities	24	44	35	11
interest in anthroposophy	31	17	26	-4	interest in anthroposophy	22	48	21	-1

Table 2. Comparison of German and North American responses by importance

This comparison gives us some sense of what the respondents in the two countries view to be most important in their lives. The only category in which they are in full agreement concerns anthroposophy. It is the least important of the aspects for Waldorf graduates both in Germany and in North America. With two exceptions (*step into others' minds*, and *resolve conflicts*), German respondents rated the aspects relating to social skills higher than their North American counterparts. North American graduates, on the other hand, tended to rate higher those aspects pertaining to their own sense of self. Those aspects furthest apart on the scale were *sense for the environment*, *handle competition*, *love of learning*, *overcome crises*, *meaningful view of life*. The first two were rated notably higher by the German graduates, the last three by the North American graduates. For instance, 86% of the German respondents viewed *sense for the environment* as being important in their lives, whereas only 81% of the North American respondents did. It stands as the tenth most important category among the Germans; among North American respondents it is number nineteen.

If we turn our attention to the aspects which show the greatest disparity between the German and North American graduates, we see quite a different picture. 65% of German respondents found *spontaneity* important as compared with only 49% of North American respondents. A greater percentage of the German graduates also found *see times in broader view* (11% difference), *choice of profession* (11%), *athletic abilities* (18%), and *overcome crises* (12%) more important than their North American counterparts. A greater percentage of German graduates (70%) than North American graduates (56%) felt *practical knowledge* to be important. In five categories we find a difference that is more than twice the average (9%). These are *athletic abilities*, *share responsibilities*, *grasp of sciences*, *handle competition*, and *meaningful view of life*. Only 32% of the German respondents rated the latter as important compared with 82% of the North American respondents. Science and sports are also markedly more important for the German graduates than for those who have graduated from Waldorf schools in North America. 69% of the German graduates indicated that a grasp of the theoretical sciences was important to them, and 53% cited their athletic ability as being important. Only 44% of the North American graduates found a grasp of science to be important, and, surprisingly enough in a country which glorifies sports, only 35% cited athletics as being important in their lives. Competition plays a larger role among the German graduates: 70% as compared to 43% of the North American graduates found the ability to handle competitive situations to be important in their lives. On the other hand, a greater percentage of Germans also found it to be important to share communal responsibilities: 85% as compared to 62% of the North American respondents.

CATEGORIES	Ger Imp	NA Imp	Diff NA Imp Ger Imp
meaningful view of life	32	82	50
handle competition	70	43	27
grasp of sciences	69	44	25
share responsibilities	85	62	23
athletic abilities	53	35	18
spontaneity	65	49	16
practical knowledge	70	56	14
overcome crisis	77	89	12
choice of profession	65	76	11
see times in broader views	66	77	11

Table 3. Categories with above average variance (avg. 9%)

How do respondents in the two countries rate the influence that their Waldorf education had on these same aspects? The highest percentage of respondents in both groups found that their *creative capacities* had been strongly influenced by their time in the Waldorf school (88% German, 87% US). This is the category that had the highest positive response. Six of the categories are found in the next ten responses for both groups (*tolerate others view, express verbally, work on my own, express views to others, work with others, think critically*). Both German and North American graduates cited these categories as areas in which Waldorf education had a positive influence. The other four entries differ from group to group. A high percentage of German graduates found the school to have influenced them in aspects which have a clear social focus (*responsibility for others, sense for environment, share responsibilities, step into others' minds*), whereas the North American graduates saw the school's influence being stronger in aspects of personal development (*love of learning, self-confidence, meaningful view of life, feeling of self-worth*). The aspects which were cited as being least influenced by Waldorf education are for the most part identical and include *grasp of sciences, athletic abilities, and handle competition* as well as the three aspects pertaining to spiritual life.

CATEGORIES	Ger +	Ger -	Ger Imp	Ger Diff		CATEGORIES	NA +	NA -	NA Imp	NA Diff
creative capacities	88	2	86	-1		creative capacities	87	1	86	-1
responsibility for others	79	2	88	8		express verbally	84	8	93	9
tolerate others' views	79	3	90	11		love of learning	79	4	91	12
sense for environment	77	2	86	9		express views to others	69	6	90	21
share responsibilities	77	3	85	8		self confidence	69	7	94	25
work on my own	76	8	92	15		meaningful view of life	64	8	82	18
express views to others	75	5	91	16		think critically	63	10	92	29
express verbally	75	7	87	12		tolerate others' views	63	8	90	27
work with others	74	4	85	11		feeling of self-worth	62	8	91	29
think critically	72	6	88	17		work with others	62	8	82	20
step into others' minds	71	3	85	13		work on my own	61	7	91	30
form own judgments	68	6	88	20		responsibility for others	61	7	82	21
other cultures	67	4	77	10		sense for environment	59	10	81	22
self confidence	64	13	89	25		step into others' minds	57	8	83	26
feeling of self-worth	62	12	85	23		form own judgments	55	7	89	34
challenge assumptions	62	6	85	23		other cultures	53	17	70	17
flexible to change	60	6	82	22		see times in broader views	52	16	77	25
see times in broader views	59	4	66	7		challenge assumptions	49	10	80	31
meaningful view of life	59	5	32	-26		share responsibilities	49	16	62	13
resolve conflicts	54	8	80	26		know own abilities	48	15	76	28
know own abilities	54	18	84	30		flexible to change	46	15	86	40
endure burdens	53	15	85	32		resolve conflicts	40	20	82	42
love of learning	53	13	83	30		endure burdens	38	22	82	44
practical knowledge	50	13	70	20		spiritual themes	37	28	42	5
overcome crisis	48	8	77	29		overcome crisis	36	22	89	53
spontaneity	48	7	65	17		choice of profession	36	36	76	40
sense for own health	44	5	73	29		sense for own health	29	35	80	51
choice of profession	38	13	65	27		practical knowledge	29	34	56	27
spiritual themes	38	12	38	0		spontaneity	29	32	49	20
grasp of sciences	34	28	69	36		spiritual/religious life	27	44	44	17
handle competition	31	26	70	38		grasp of sciences	26	38	44	18
spiritual/religious life	31	11	37	6		athletic abilities	24	44	35	11
interest in anthroposophy	31	17	26	-4		political orientation	23	48	48	25
athletic abilities	24	28	53	28		interest in anthroposophy	22	48	21	-1
political orientation	20	11	40	20		handle competition	21	41	43	22

Table 4. Categories sorted by influence

On the whole, the German graduates found that their time in the Waldorf school had a greater positive influence on their lives than did the North American graduates. The average of column Ger + is 57% and the North American + column averages out to 48.8%. With the exception of five categories (*self confidence, express verbally, love of learning, political orientation, meaningful view of life*), the percentage of German graduates who cite a positive influence from their time in a Waldorf school is higher than that of the North American graduates. These five categories, however, correspond to the above-mentioned disparity between social responsibility and personal development here again the North American responses show a tendency towards aspects of personal development.

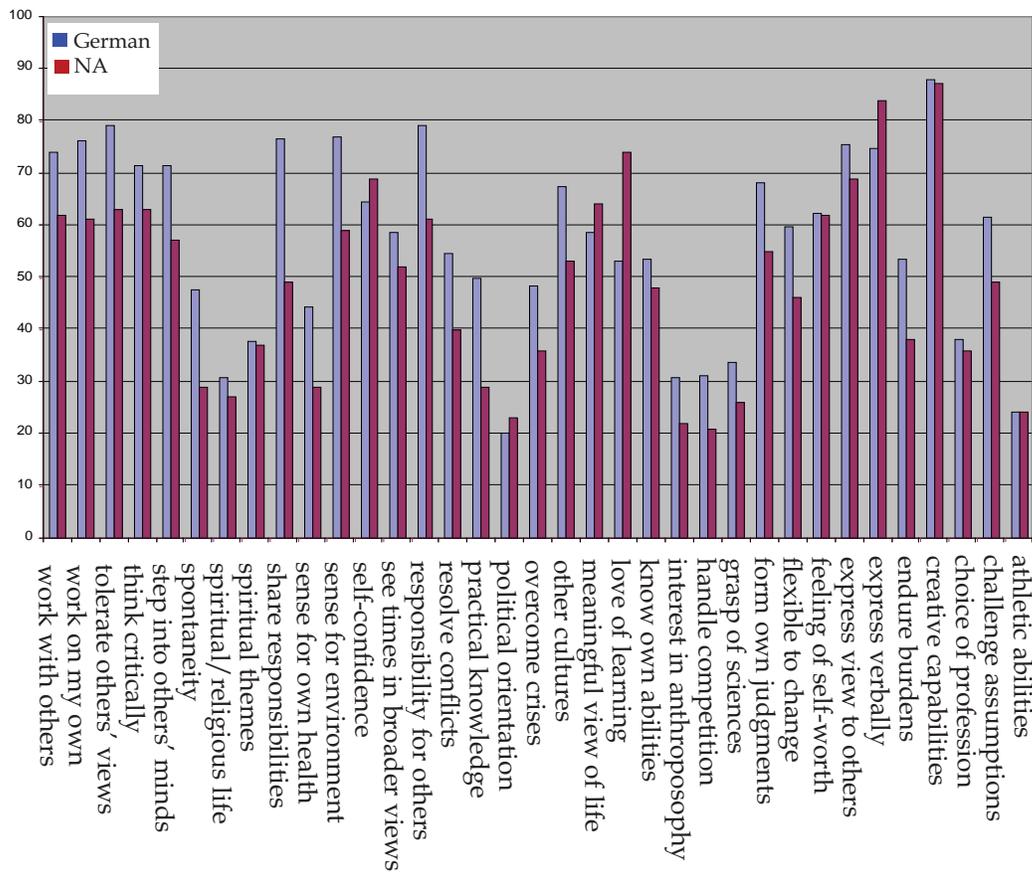


Chart 1 – Positive influence of Waldorf education – Comparison of German and North American graduates’ responses

A look at the areas in which Waldorf education had a less than positive influence on respondents’ lives underscores this difference. It is illustrated in Chart 2. In almost every category, the percentage of North American graduates that cites a less than positive influence is higher. The exceptions are *self confidence*, *feeling of self-worth*, *know own abilities*, and *love of learning*. German graduates indicate that their time in school had a negative influence on these aspects of their lives. Furthermore, the fact that such relatively large percentages of North American respondents cite at best a negligible influence of Waldorf education on such aspects as *spiritual/religious life*, *grasp of sciences*, *handle competition*, *practical knowledge*, *sense for own health* deserves attention.

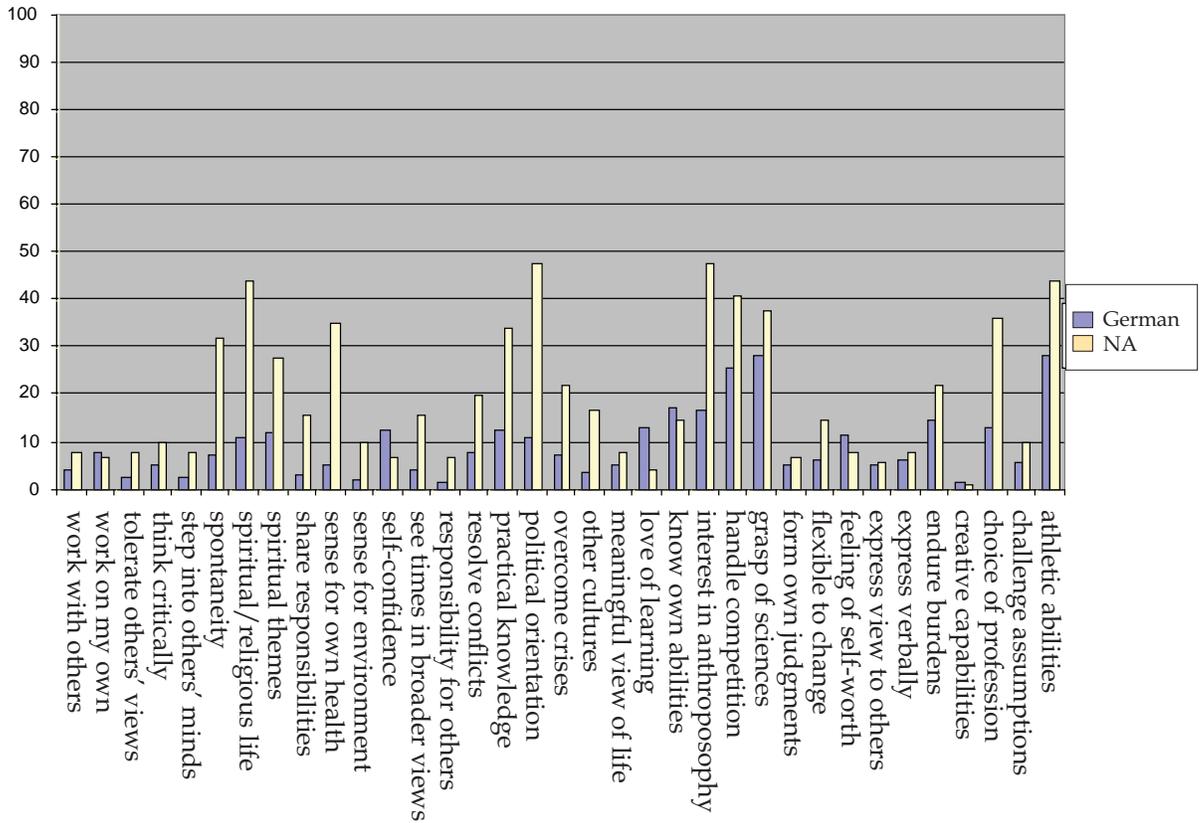


Chart 2 - Less than positive influence - Comparison of German and North American graduates' responses

The difference between what is subjectively felt to be important and what is experienced as the influence of the school is one lens through which we can examine whether or not the school is doing justice to the inner expectations of the students. What is important for children is of course different than what is important for adults. Comparing remembered influence with present categories of importance can thus be somewhat misleading. From the point of view of an outcome-based education, it is a viable comparison. In such a paradigm, one would hope to design educational experiences which best support mature categories of importance. Whether or not such a comparison can help us gain insight into how Waldorf education, a pedagogical impulse which is emphatically not outcome-based, can better meet the developmental needs of future generations of students is an open question.

CATEGORIES	Ger +	Ger -	Ger Imp	Ger Diff	CATEGORIES	NA +	NA -	NA Imp	NA Diff
handle competition	31	26	70	38	overcome crisis	36	22	89	53
grasp of sciences	34	28	69	36	sense for own health	29	35	80	51
endure burdens	53	15	85	32	endure burdens	38	22	82	44
love of learning	53	13	83	30	resolve conflicts	40	20	82	42
know own abilities	54	18	84	30	choice of profession	36	36	76	40
overcome crisis	48	8	77	29	flexible to change	46	15	86	40
sense for own health	44	5	73	29	form own judgments	55	7	89	34
athletic abilities	24	28	53	28	challenge assumptions	49	10	80	31
choice of profession	38	13	65	27	work on my own	61	7	91	30
resolve conflicts	54	8	80	26	think critically	63	10	92	29
self confidence	64	13	89	25	feelings of self-worth	62	8	91	29
challenge assumptions	62	6	85	23	know own abilities	48	15	76	28
feelings of self-worth	62	12	85	23	practical knowledge	29	34	56	27
flexible to change	60	6	82	22	tolerate others' views	63	8	90	27
form own judgments	68	6	88	20	step into others' minds	57	8	83	26
practical knowledge	50	13	70	20	political orientation	23	48	48	25
political orientation	20	11	40	20	see times in broader views	52	16	77	25
Spontaneity	48	7	65	17	handle competition	21	41	43	22
think critically	72	6	88	17	sense for environment	59	10	81	22
express views to others	75	5	91	16	responsibility for others	61	7	82	21
work on my own	76	8	92	15	express views to others	69	6	90	21
step into others' minds	71	3	85	13	spontaneity	29	32	49	20
express verbally	75	7	87	12	work with others	62	8	82	20
work with others	74	4	85	11	grasp of science	26	38	44	18
tolerate others' views	79	3	90	11	meaningful view of life	64	8	82	18
other cultures	67	4	77	10	spiritual/religious life	27	44	44	17
sense for environment	77	2	86	9	other cultures	53	17	70	17
share responsibilities	77	3	85	8	share responsibilities	49	16	62	13
responsibility for others	79	2	88	8	love of learning	79	4	91	12
see times in broader views	59	4	66	7	athletic abilities	24	44	35	11
spiritual/religious life	31	11	37	6	express verbally	84	8	93	9
spiritual themes	38	12	38	0	spiritual themes	37	28	42	5
creative capacities	88	2	86	-1	interest in anthroposophy	22	48	21	-1
interest in anthroposophy	31	17	26	-4	creative capacities	87	1	86	-1
meaningful view of life	59	5	32	-26	self confidence	69	7	94	25

Table 4 - Categories by difference between influence and importance

In Table 4, the categories are sorted according to the difference between personal importance and the school's influence. Figures for the German graduates are on the left, those for the North American respondents on the right. The highest difference cited by the German graduates pertains to being able to *handle competition*. 70% held this ability to be important, but only 31% experienced school as having a positive influence on the development of this ability (difference 38%). On the North American side, we find *overcome crises*

in the top position. 89% felt this ability to be important, but only 36% indicated that the school had a positive influence on the development of this capacity. The difference here is 53%, markedly higher than the German maximum of 38%. The average difference in the German data is 17% compared to 24% in North American responses. This indicates that a greater number of North American graduates feel there to be a disparity between what is important to them and what they experienced in school, a phenomenon that deserves further attention.

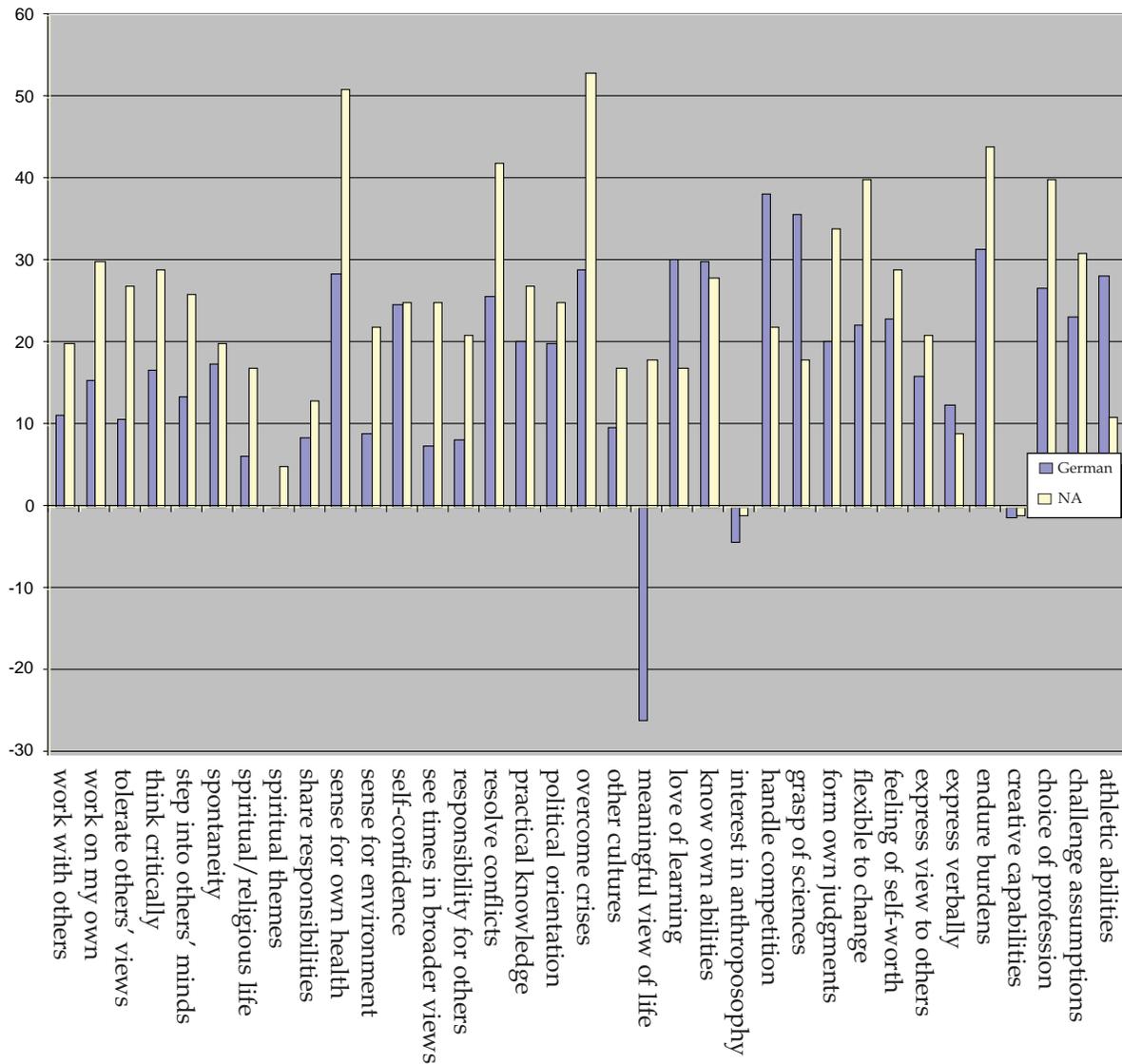


Chart 3 - Comparison of difference between influence and importance

The difference between the North American and German studies is generally greater in the aspects which have to do with knowledge and the learning of subject-oriented material. For instance, in the data from the German graduates,

the difference concerning the *grasp of sciences* is 36% and in the North American responses 18%. However, only 44% of the North American graduates felt this to be important. Similarly the ability to *work on my own* shows a 15% difference in the German study and a 30% difference in the North American study. The third highest difference in both studies pertains to the ability to *endure burdens* (German 32%, North American 44%). While both groups felt this to be important, neither experienced a positive influence on the development of this capacity from their time in school.

There is little question that these differences are important for an understanding of the role that educational experience plays in supporting the attainment of core capacities. Can they be examined in a linear manner? Or do the various aspects affect the development of different capacities? It is interesting to note that German graduates cite a disconnect between the school's influence on their being able to handle competitive situations and their sense of its importance, but at the same time feel that their experience in school did not support the development of self-confidence, a sense of self-worth, their love of learning, or their insight into their own abilities. Similarly, North American graduates indicate a disparity between the importance they give to the ability to overcome crises and the school's influence in the development of this capacity, but they also leave school not having learned the importance of sharing responsibilities, being responsible for the environment or their own health, or with the ability to resolve conflicts.

In the German study Randoll recommends a direct approach to resolving these disparities. If German graduates indicate that the school is not doing enough to prepare them to handle situations, there should be more emphasis on achievement-based learning. This approach runs counter to what lies at the heart of Waldorf education: to provide a learning environment in which a growing child develops the capacity to find an individual response to the situations in which he finds himself. True, the ability to handle competitive situations is not necessarily the ability to respond competitively.

Perhaps what the disparity between the subjective experience of importance and the experience of institutional influence points towards is a weakness on the part of the schools to fully engage the learning individual. It is not primarily a problem of program or method but one of culture. Do we do enough to challenge students to immerse themselves in self-directed activity? These are activities which strengthen the capacity of individuals to respond out of themselves, whether it be in a competitive situation, a moment of crisis, or a situation in which one just has to stick things out. Perhaps what the data indicates is not that the Waldorf schools need to adopt mainstream approaches, but that we have to re-examine our fundamental principles and ask ourselves whether or not we are continuing to live up to them.

DISCOVERING ESSENTIALS

Independently of the work cited above, a Swedish research team conducted a comparative survey of current Waldorf students and their counterparts in Swedish public schools. While the authors of the above-mentioned studies seem to be most interested in the tangible results of education, Bo Dahlin, the author of the Swedish study, is drawn more strongly to the non-tangible. What actually happens in the process of learning? Of the four studies, this is the closest to what one might term primary educational research and could serve as an example of the value of using empirical data collection instruments to better understand what is happening in our schools. It also serves as a model for what one might hope would come out of university studies of Waldorf education. Dahlin lacks Randall's haughtiness, and, unlike Mitchell and Gerwin, he is not directly connected to the Waldorf school movement. His work focuses on the developmental history of education and the relation of education to the moral and cultural values of various civilizations. In reading his survey report, one gets the sense that he is an interested observer, someone trying to learn, not prove something. This comes to expression in a number of places in the study, one of which I would like to look at more closely.

One aspect of Dahlin's study focused on the "moral-civic competence" of Waldorf students, again in comparison to students in the public schools. "The aim of the third part-study was to investigate how far Waldorf pupils develop the values and social competence necessary to become active members of a democratic and multi-cultural society." The study focused on examining the students' ability to

1. identify and explain current social and moral problems
2. propose solutions for these problems, and
3. implement their proposals.

Students were given questionnaires containing deliberately ambiguous depictions of a social and moral problem. The two problems depicted were hate crimes and embryonic experimentation. Students were also asked to supply information concerning their interest in the subject, their response to the tasks, general thoughts concerning morals and ethics and how the school had dealt with these types of problems. Dahlin summed up the analysis of the responses as follows:

- More Waldorf pupils thought the subject of social studies was interesting and worthwhile.
- Waldorf pupils felt a greater responsibility for social and moral issues.

- Waldorf pupils thought to a greater extent that the evaluation tasks were important, interesting, and easy to understand.
- Waldorf pupils' involvement in social and moral issues increased with their age.
- Waldorf pupils were more inclined to refer to love, fellowship, and civil courage.
- Waldorf pupils suggested to a greater extent solutions based on stopping or limiting Nazi and racist ideologies.
- Waldorf pupils had more positive self-esteem.
- There were more blank, sarcastic, and 'non-constructive' answers among Waldorf pupils.

In the course of tallying the data Dahlin made the following observation: "When comparing the two school years, it was evident that the section of Waldorf pupils who thought the tasks were important, interesting and easy to understand increased considerably between school years 9 and 12. Among pupils at the state school however, the difference between the school years was only marginal. The opinions about social studies were also more positive amongst the Waldorf pupils, while they actually became increasingly negative among the pupils in state schools. Besides, involvement in moral issues seemed to increase with age among Waldorf pupils..." In his concluding remarks, Dahlin returns to this phenomenon: "One of the most interesting results of the investigation into civic-moral competence was the suggested difference in how the interest and involvement in social issues 'develops' from school year 9 to the last year of high school. Among Waldorf pupils this increased, among pupils in state schools it decreased or remained constant. Could it be that the Waldorf educational method of 'saving' the cognitive forces during the elementary school years leads to a stronger awakening of these forces during the late teens and therefore to a greater interest and involvement in questions concerning society and the world? Could it be that the emphasis on artistic activities during early childhood lays the foundation for certain 'surplus forces' during adulthood?"

Here Dahlin appears to have conceptualized a key aspect of the Waldorf approach based on his observation of available data. He viewed the data within the context of the specific nature of Waldorf education, an obligation for researchers in any field: "If it is the case that there are important differences between the 'educational processes' of Waldorf schools and state schools, then these differences should also be evident in the results of these processes." Dahlin discovered something of the Waldorf difference, not in the form of a tangible outcome, but in the form of a developmental gesture.

Will we be able to use the data now available from the studies of Waldorf graduates to gain similar insights? This seems to be the most important question. Although an initial review of the data seems to indicate the ongoing healthy

development of Waldorf education and the ability of the schools to uphold the core values of this approach to education, under a more detailed examination questions begin to emerge. Those articulated above concerning the difference between the subjective sense of importance and perceived educational influence are but the beginning. How have these perceptions changed in the different generations of graduates? What effect does school maturity have on the students' feeling of engagement? Are, as Randoll postulates, Waldorf schools less supportive of boys? And as we explore these questions, we must clearly ask where the answers lie.

THOSE NOT MENTIONED

I would like to address those Waldorf graduates who did not appear in the studies, either because they chose not to participate in what one described as something which seemed completely meaningless to her or because they make up the unmentioned minority. Where are the Waldorf students and graduates who do not fit in, are not satisfied to be living the good life, who have the courage to stand up for change, who are willing to man the barricades in the struggle to build a new society? Have we as a school movement grown complacent, satisfied to instill a bit of humanity into what is basically a set of no longer viable middle-class values?

COMPROMISE?

Perhaps the most troubling statistic to come out of the studies is one of those which has been broadcast most loudly: Only a small percentage of Waldorf school graduates go on to work in anthroposophical endeavors. This choice – made by precious few, it seems – may have nothing to do with indoctrination; it may have to do with schools helping students find real perspectives for living a life of practical idealism. Do the data suggest that we do not do enough to give our students concrete ways to apply the forces of individuality that we help them to awaken in school?

ENDNOTE

1. This article does not attempt to provide a comprehensive analysis of the four studies. I apologize for focusing on only those aspects which are pertinent to this exploration and, in so doing so, perhaps overlooking things which should also be mentioned.

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CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM FROM GRADUATES

Analyzed from Phase II

by

David Mitchell

As part of the *Survey of Waldorf Graduates, Phase II*, participants were asked to state their concerns about Waldorf education and how they believed it could be improved. The following is a tabulation of these comments and is placed here for schools to consider as they work on the ongoing task of renewing themselves.

* * *

When Waldorf graduates were asked to recall their Waldorf education, the majority of their responses fell into four categories:

- an appreciation for self-development
- a high interest in others and in community
- gratitude for being a balanced, whole human being
- an appreciation for the peaceful security of a safe and nurturing learning environment.

The criticisms were directed at:

- lack of resources
- smallness of class size
- negative experiences with incompetent teachers and/or teachers who provided insufficient preparation for future schooling.

Overall, Waldorf graduates show remarkable warmth and affection for their education. Many took the opportunity of this question to offer unsolicited thanks to their school, their teachers, and those who had brought them to this education. Even the students who voiced criticisms of their experience couched their comments in tones of gratitude and respect. Only a very few were outright

negative about their school experience. Above all, students expressed their gratitude for being seen for who they are and for being encouraged to unfold their own cognitive and emotional strengths. “I learned to think for myself and to be able to learn anything I set my mind to,” said one graduate.

In general, the graduates’ reflections were suffused with images and sensations: warm . . . safe . . . nurturing . . . tolerant . . . well-rounded . . . beautiful . . . caring . . . magical. Many recalled strongly sensate experiences: the smell of beeswax, the feel of freshly carded wool, the texture of wood, the feel of large block crayons, the taste of warm soup, the shape of frozen ice patterns in watercolor paintings.

While a few respondents felt that they were not adequately prepared for college, others said they were more than prepared for the transition. One student wrote, “I didn’t know it at the time, but my academic preparation in high school was more than adequate for the rest of my academic career, and my artistic and spiritual preparation put me on a more comfortable footing in life than some of my peers.”

Waldorf graduates strongly linked the development of their social awareness to life in the Waldorf classroom, especially if they had been shepherded through the eight years of the elementary school by the same teacher. Though a few felt “stifled” by the small size of their classes, many reported how closely they related to their classmates and teachers, even to the point of staying in touch with them long after graduating from high school. The closeness of the students “forced all of us to overcome our differences and our grudges as quickly as we came by them and taught us how to work through trivial drama and value each other for our true potential.”

The graduates appreciated the importance of a well-rounded education. There were a few graduates who were critical of the emphasis on the arts, and there were others who felt insufficiently challenged because of a wide range of abilities among their classmates. But most graduates felt the full range of subjects required of all students served them well. “It is the well-rounded approach that stands out the most. For me, exposure to the arts and music and learning by doing are the characteristic traits of Waldorf education.” In the words of another graduate, “Waldorf education prepared me for anything and everything!”

In all, a majority of respondents carry their memories of life in Waldorf school with warm affection and appreciation—“wonderful memories bathed in a soft yellow sunset over the mountains,” as one graduate put it.¹

* * *

When graduates were asked if there were aspects of their Waldorf education that they initially rejected as a students but whose significance has now become

apparent, their replies effectively endorsed the basic principles and practices of Waldorf education. These included:

- eurythmy
- discipline and form
- the multi-faceted curriculum
- media restrictions
- spiritual foundation
- tolerance of different beliefs and ideas
- will-developing activities

Eurythmy is now seen as providing grace in social movement and bodily integration. Eurythmy is practiced in Waldorf schools not simply as a new art form but as a way of integrating all aspects of the human being—physical, psychological and spiritual—into a healthy whole.

Discipline and form are now seen as a protection and model for how to set boundaries. The strong nurturing and discipline surrounding the lower school student (and the high school student, in a different way) are intended to help develop a strong sense of independence and resilience in them as adults.

The multi-faceted curriculum is now understood as something that allowed for the exploration of many varied disciplines that has allowed them to ultimately stand out from their peers because of this experience. The holistic curriculum allows the students to leave the school with the feeling, “I can take on anything if I set my mind and heart and shoulder into it.”

The restrictions on media are now appreciated as allowing them to discover their own thoughts and values unimpeded by advertising and social biases. Media restrictions, especially as they are applied in the lower grades, allow students to develop their own powers of imagination and mental picturing so that they can withstand pressures to conform and “think like all the others.”

Spirituality in the curriculum, far from inculcating belief and doctrine in the students, actually helps them find their own heartfelt concerns and convictions, based on their own thinking and striving, not upon what they were told in school. Learning in small classes with broad ranges of learning ability, rather than preventing students from exercising their potential, actually calls it forth since these class settings demand that they learn to accept more than their own gifts and values—that is, to learn tolerance for all that surrounds them. With regard to will activity, the value of doing something, even repeatedly, that initially may be unappealing but which builds basic capacities during the formative years, cannot be overestimated in terms of lasting moral and hygienic efficacy. It is the antidote to self-doubt and self-hate as well as existential fears and dependencies of all kinds.

THE LACK OF INFLUENCE OF THE WALDORF EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE

It is of interest to note how the participants responded to questions about overcoming crises, resolving conflicts, and being flexible to change. In all three cases, respondents reported that these aspects of life were very important to them but they were not much influenced by their Waldorf education. In all three cases, over 80% of the respondents ranked these aspects as very or extremely important, and yet only 35–45% reported that these aspects were very or extremely influenced by their education. Indeed around 20% reported that these aspects of life were either not much or not at all influenced by their education. From these results one can infer that Waldorf graduates recognize the value of dealing with conflict and crisis but may feel that their education has not taught them much about how to do this successfully.

CRITICISMS

Waldorf education awoke my interest in too many areas and now I find it difficult to select one specific career choice.

What occurs to me is how mixed my experiences of Waldorf education are. In some ways it fulfilled my needs sensitively and richly, while it was also stifling and limited.

- Which other influences can you attribute to your development from seven to eighteen?

I was influenced in my development by my parents as well as the school.

- Which aspects of your Waldorf educational experience did you find lacking?

Sex education was too little and came too late, and I felt poorly prepared in chemistry and physics.

Although many things about Waldorf education were wonderful, it did not prepare me academically for the real world.

Recovering from a rocky start in higher education was a challenge, due in part to my lack of organizational skills and weakness in follow-through. I am afraid I do attribute this in some part to my high school years which did not provide a rigorous academic experience.

- What is your relationship with the Waldorf school you attended?

The school has minimum to no contact with me, but I have retained strong contact with my former classmates.

- **What could your school have done better?**

My school could have been more open to students' thoughts and opinions and could have been more and better structured.

I reflect upon how few resources were made available to us as students because of the lack of funds—a photo lab/studio, metal shop, computers, sports teams, other languages, and other amenities that give public school students advantages over Waldorf students.

- **Did your school cultivate “all” dimensions of the student’s being?**

I encountered class teachers and adult teacher trainers whose understanding of the wisdom of anthroposophy was imitative rather than deeply rooted and whose communication skills were markedly lacking—they hid in secrecy and arrogance and were unable to address issues directly.

- **How did Waldorf education change you?**

I learned to be open-minded, not to judge prematurely, and to explore differences.

- **Where did Waldorf education fail you?**

Science, math, and computer science.

I was held back by my peers. My small class size made for excellent interaction with teachers and provided unique experiences, but always being at the top of the class meant that the pace was always too slow to really challenge me. The only thing I regret about Waldorf education is that I was not able to get more out of it because of this.

- I do not know what other questions to ask. However, answering the questions in this survey with a multiple choice approach feels inadequate, problematic, and incomplete!

- **How prepared for “life” do you feel from your Waldorf education?**

I feel very well prepared because I feel “comfortable in my own skin.” And I feel confident that my decisions are generally in keeping with my personal ethics and sense of right and wrong.

- **How do you feel about the quality of the social life in a Waldorf school?**

The social tightness and sense of community is core to the experience of Waldorf education. For me this was positive.

- **How was anthroposophy presented in your Waldorf school?**

It is a constant wonder to me that an organization of teachers based on an admired philosophy could so restrain themselves from promoting or proselytizing their beliefs beyond the simple steps of the modest morning prayer (verse). Never once did I feel that any improper boundary had been passed. Admirable restraint!

- **Overall, how did you feel at your Waldorf school?**

I felt safe, respected, and supported.

I met roadblocks at every turn in my Waldorf education. When I first began the high school I needed all the artistic classes offered there as well as the general kindness of students. As time passed I felt trapped and miserable as I have a great love for technology, and pursuing that love was completely stifled. I do not remember my school with fondness but with relief that I am no longer there.

The richness of the curriculum—Norse myths, German, knitting, hiking in the Sierra Nevadas, putting on plays, watercolor painting, recorders, eurythmy, the magic of chemistry experiments with resin and sulfur, gnomes and fairies, measuring the Noah's ark in the playground with our forearms, making boxes in woodworking, etc.! What comes second is the social difficulties I experienced in my first class (kindergarten – 8th grade). My delight in the academics and artistic aspects of the curriculum was always tinged with the painful experience of exclusion and awkwardness that I experienced with my peers.

- **Did small class sizes (20–25 students) and close relationships with your teachers have an effect on you in college?**

Yes! There are few students at college who feel comfortable forming relationships with their professors and I am one of them! They become my friends and my guides as opposed to my instructors.

To be honest, after being in a Waldorf school, it can be difficult to adjust to a traditional university.

- **Which problems did you encounter in transitioning from Waldorf school to college?**

I had a problem sticking with rules. At Waldorf if you wrote a paper over the maximum assigned, the teacher would not care. In college I received an "F" for exceeding the maximum by one page.

- Did Waldorf prepare you for the “real” world?

No! I am totally lacking in competitiveness.

It was a culture shock for me to leave the Waldorf school and enter the outside world.

Too much emphasis on the arts and crafts and insufficient training in math and science to enter the university. We were too sheltered from the competitiveness of the outside world.

- Did the esthetics in the Waldorf school – shapes, forms, colors – have a lasting effect upon you?

Yes, in a vivid way.

- If you could improve one thing about the Waldorf school what would it be?

Stay current with technological education.

ENDNOTE

1. See the statistical analysis beginning on page 65 of *Survey of Waldorf Graduates, Phase II*.

COMMENTS FROM COLLEGE PROFESSORS ON SHORTCOMINGS

- She did not have a very strong mathematical base – this led to her having to work far harder than other bright biology students in some biology classes, and probably accounts for her lack of success in chemistry. She was not good at abstracting the style of problem solving, as opposed to applying a formula. This is rather surprising, given her facility and interest in verbal (visual and musical) thinking. It has not, I might add, caused her any harm in a first rate doctoral program at UC Berkeley in cell biology.

*– Stan Rachootin, Professor of Biological Sciences,
Mount Holyoke College*

- I did not notice any shortcomings that I would be able to attribute to her education. She has not yet determined her path in life and is exploring different options. This may relate to her education or to her life experience. She is young, and exploration is an important stage.

*– Randye Rutberg, Professor, Research Advisor,
Hunter College, CUNY*

- She was quick to make assumptions and judgments about topics or areas of endeavor in which she was supposedly uninterested; but, after being persuaded, she would always branch out in this direction. I wonder if she was ever challenged enough to pursue things that were unpleasant or inorganic to her.

*– Carol Symes, Assistant Professor, Department of
History, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign*

- [The student knew] how to move through the program and get as much as possible from the educational opportunities it offered.

*– Iris Cahn, Teacher, Co-chair of Purchase College/
SUNY Film Program*

- Her idealism may one day break her heart.
 - *Dr. Susan Gardner, Philosophy Professor, Capilano College*

- She had a love of learning and an ability to see connections among diverse ideas and experiences. She had a clear sense of her own identity and values.
 - *Nelson E. Bingham, Ph.D., Professor, Earlham College*

- I was not aware of any shortcomings.
 - *Jeremy Clark, Professor, School of Electronics and Computer Engineering Technology, Seneca College, Toronto, Canada*

- I can't recall any shortcomings. [The former Waldorf student I taught] was among the strongest students in her cohort.
 - *David Feldman, Professor of Physics and Mathematics, College of the Atlantic*

- Waldorf education offers a very protective environment and I wonder if [the Waldorf student I taught], with all his accomplishments, has been sheltered a bit too much. Although he was competitive in sports, he did not have “killer instinct” in other parts of his life. This is why I like him so much and I don't think that it is a deficiency in my world. However, I know that beyond the protective and supportive world of school, college and family, he will have to confront another reality.
 - *Annette V. Lucas, Associate Dean and Professor of French, Ursinus College*

- Writing skills (organization, sentence structure, vocabulary, grammar) were below average.
 - *Lynn M. Morgan, Anthropology Professor, Mount Holyoke College*

- The only thing that I think I could attribute to Waldorf is perhaps some degree of “shelteredness.” This is difficult to criticize as it should be an aspiration of all educators to provide a warm, safe place to learn. However, when students come out of this cocoon to the harsh light of the “real world,” it makes for some difficult adjustments – I saw that from time to time with [the Waldorf student I taught], particularly on Southwest Field Studies.
 - *Jay Roberts, Instructor, Earlham College*

- Sometimes she would be challenged by quantitative analyses. Typically, she would work through these difficulties without much problem, but it was a relative area of weakness.

- Dr. Timothy Crews, Professor, Prescott College

- None that I recall at this moment since there is a strong congruence between the Waldorf system and Hampshire. I have had Waldorf graduates before and found this to be generally true.

- Laurie Nisonoff, Hampshire College

THOUGHTS ABOUT THE COMMENTS BY PROFESSORS ON WALDORF GRADUATES

EVALUATION BY PROFESSORS

Fully 94% of the professors said *initiative* and *ethical standards* were among the strongest life skills demonstrated by the graduates. Similarly, 86% of the professors described the graduates as having *strong leadership skills*.

Beyond assessing Waldorf alumni/ae as learners on a quantitative scale, the professors offered several hundred comments about teaching Waldorf undergraduates. Among these impressions, three characteristics recur across the disciplines and across a wide range of campuses.

The primary characteristic reported about Waldorf graduates is the:
(1) HOLISTIC AND INTEGRATIVE QUALITY OF THEIR THINKING.

Waldorf alumni/ae are perceived as thinking flexibly, often “outside the box,” and integrating seemingly unrelated subjects with clarity and courage. One professor commented on his Waldorf undergraduate’s ability “to think creatively, to assimilate information as opposed to memorizing isolated facts, [as well as] his love for integrating physical movement with intellectual content areas.” Another, reflecting on several Waldorf students he had taught over the years, reported that “all have the same broad approach to education. They are flexible, creative, and willing to take intellectual risks.”

[The Waldorf student I taught had a] breadth of interest, willingness to explore new areas and to make connections to what she already knew, an artistic sense and an ability to apply it to scientific problems. She also brought a strong, highly individualistic (non-sectarian) spiritual sense to her work – her world was larger and more interesting than herself. – *Stan Rachootin, Professor of Biological Sciences, Mount Holyoke College*

The intensity of her engagement in intellectual endeavors; her willingness to seek out unusual educational opportunities; the clarity of her thinking as she pulled together a diverse set of courses and experiences to shape her independent major. – *Leslie Offutt, Vassar College*

[The Waldorf student I taught was] eclectic – he completed a double major in French and Exercise and Sport Science, which is a very unusual combination of study for a male undergraduate student attending Ursinus College; a non-conformist – during the fall of his junior year, he completed a semester of study in France despite negative feedback from his varsity basketball coach and the very real prospect of limited playing time when he returned from France; and a lack of inhibition – he embraced salsa dancing and withstood significant taunting from his male counterparts on the basketball team that only “girly-men” dance salsa style. – *Tina D. Wailgum, PhD, ATC, Teacher (Kinesiology & Exercise Physiology) and Exercise and Sport Science Academic Advisor, Ursinus College*

[The Waldorf student I taught] always thought very carefully about what she said and how she said it. Her thinking was extremely clear and holistic in its approach. She made interesting connections between concepts and ideas and experiences, and evidence of her creative mind was very much apparent. She also took a rare joy in life, and was very present at each moment. She is a careful and thoughtful listener. – *Zayn Kassam, Professor, Religious Studies, Pomona College*

His ability to think creatively, to assimilate information as opposed to memorizing isolated facts, and his love for integrating physical movement with intellectual content areas. – *Tina D. Wailgum, PhD, ATC, Teacher (Kinesiology & Exercise Physiology) and Exercise and Sport Science Academic Advisor, Ursinus College*

She was a natural interdisciplinary learner. She was very excited about the natural world and could make links between ecological systems and human society that were complex. – *Dr. Timothy Crews, Professor, Prescott College*

She was able to entertain multiple ideas/perspectives and to mount an argument based on evidence; however, she seemed willing to change her ideas if the evidence on the other side warranted such a change. – *Margaret Pobywajlo, PhD, Director of the Learning Center, University of New Hampshire*

I think he’s quite flexible, indeed he got into the atheist club in part as a result of having sat in on a campus Bible reading group, though he was (or is) in no way religious. He was also one of the few male students who traveled by bus with the campus Pro-Choice contingent in the last massive rally in Washington, DC, in 2004. – *Katheryn Doran, Hamilton College*

Extremely aware, eager and able to grasp new concepts and make them his own. – *Iris Cahn, Teacher, Co-chair of Purchase College/SUNY Film Program*

She shows a great deal of “cognitive flexibility” in that she is capable of reading complex authors on their own terms and has respect for the various methodologies one must use to apprehend the past. – *Joseph Lauinger, Professor of Dramatic Literature, Chairman, Literature Division, Sarah Lawrence College*

Very strong. I teach a very trans-disciplinary course, and he seemed able to readily grasp and link complex ideas from different fields. – *Joshua Farley, Assistant Professor, University of Vermont*

I admire her ability to understand both sides of a complex question and draw excellent conclusions. We spent much time addressing pesticide issues, and even though she is strongly against the use of pesticides, she patiently and carefully listened to the pros and cons. – *Jeffrey C. Horst, Sustainability Committee Colleague, Vassar College*

When he was a freshman, he distinguished himself in my Introduction to French Literature class by analyzing sophisticated literary concepts with elegance and maturity. He was the only first year student in the class but he clearly stood out among the others. It was evident that he had a “holistic” view of the world and that in literature, as in other subjects, it is important to look at the larger picture. – *Annette V. Lucas, Associate Dean and Professor of French, Ursinus College*

Very flexible; capable of assimilating much new information/ideas. – *Mark Riegner, Environmental Studies, Prescott College*

If I understand what is meant by cognitive flexibility (a multi-intelligence learner?), I would rate her as outstanding. She was a sharp, critical thinker and speaker; she would draw, knit, play ultimate Frisbee, ride bikes, enjoy music, and write incredible research papers. – *Dr. Timothy Crews, Professor, Prescott College*

Excellent. She is a complex thinker and doesn't rush to conclusions but weighs all sides of an argument or issue carefully. – *Zayn Kassam, Professor, Religious Studies, Pomona College*

She was particularly good at making connections from the historical material we covered to other situations in the present. – *Eliza Ablovatski, Assistant Professor of History, Kenyon College*

[The Waldorf student I taught had an] interest in my field (ecological economics) and his broad interests in general [impressed me]. – *Joshua Farley, Assistant Professor, University of Vermont*

She produced an excellent senior thesis—a huge project, that required her to come to terms with several quite different scientific literatures, and to attend to changes in assumptions and interpretations from about a century ago to current practice. The work set the stage for her graduate studies and taught me a good deal. – *Stan Rachootin, Professor of Biological Sciences, Mount Holyoke College*

I have taught other students from Waldorf schools. My impression of them is very favorable. In particular, I sense a willingness to take risks and make connections that surpasses that of most other students. – *David Feldman, Professor of Physics and Mathematics, College of the Atlantic*

I have not taught many Waldorf graduates but [those I have taught] all have the same broad approach to education. They are flexible, creative, and willing to take intellectual risks. They have a strong humanities foundation and are well prepared for liberal arts colleges where there is a strong emphasis on student success and achievement. (I must add a disclaimer: I know quite a bit about Waldorf education because my daughter attended Kimberton Waldorf School from 7th to 12th grade and received a well-rounded education. She had a solid background and was well prepared for college and life beyond school.) – *Annette V. Lucas, Associate Dean and Professor of French, Ursinus College*

The second characteristic of Waldorf undergraduates repeatedly cited is their **(2) CREATIVE AND IMAGINATIVE CAPACITIES.**

These two traits appear not only in the practice of the arts but also in the study of science. A professor of biological sciences commended a Waldorf student in his classes for her skill in drawing and painting not merely because she could illustrate what she had seen but because “it allowed her to see more than others did.” Another professor noted of a Waldorf undergraduate that his “imagination, his nuanced verbal skills, and his leadership qualities had been richly nourished in him by his prior schooling.” A different Waldorf student earned this comment: “She had more confidence in her imagination than did most students.”

[The Waldorf student I taught had an] openness to new ideas; her curiosity – and her creativity – were always amazing and unbounded. – *Carol Symes, Assistant Professor, Department of History, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; formerly on the faculty of Bennington College, 1998–2002*

Creative, responsible, inventive, resourceful, terrific storyteller with images and dialogue. – *Iris Cahn, Teacher, Co-chair of Purchase College/SUNY Film Program*

[The Waldorf student I taught had] very original interests in medieval fighting and armor. – *Norman Derby, Teacher and Academic Advisor, Bennington College*

Creative, sensitive, empathic, dedicated, very artistic, talented in ceramics courses and theater. – *Dr. Fay Glosenger, Undergraduate Advisor and Professor, Juniata College*

[The Waldorf student I taught was] decidedly intuitive in her approach to assignments; she had more confidence in using her imagination than did most students. – *Jack Troy, Ceramics Professor, Juniata College*

She was an excellent writer, and she was drawn to big ideas in a way that left plenty of room for observing interesting particulars, that may or may not connect to the big idea that got her started. She was flexible and open to what she encountered. And her skill in drawing and painting did not merely illustrate what she saw – it allowed her to see more than others did. – *Stan Rachootin, Professor of Biological Sciences, Mount Holyoke College*

[The Waldorf student I taught] impressed me with her creativity and artistic talent. – *Dr. Fay Glosenger, Undergraduate Advisor and Professor, Juniata College*

[The] imagination, his nuanced verbal skills, and his leadership qualities had been richly nourished in him by his prior schooling. – *Professor Bruce Bromley, Lecturer in Expository Writing, NYU*

A self-directed, motivated, and creative thinker. – *Mark Riegner, Environmental Studies, Prescott College*

Among the best of undergraduate students I've worked with. He seemed, in both classes and in independent research, able to take on a problem and figure out creative ways to solve it. – *Name withheld, Associate Professor, University of Vermont*

I would describe the student as quite flexible. – *Randy Rutberg, Professor, Research Advisor, Hunter College, CUNY*

I don't recall any areas in which [the Waldorf student I taught] showed any incapacity for creative thought. She was able to discipline herself, but she was also unfailingly attracted to new things, and willing to experiment. – *Carol Symes, Assistant Professor, Department of History, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign*

During her senior year, [the Waldorf student I taught] wrote, directed, designed, and starred in her own musical based on the life of Eleanor of Aquitaine. It was, in many ways, an amazing achievement, given the number of "hats" she wore. But I remember more fondly the papers she wrote for me in various history classes, many of which were illustrated or accompanied by some distinctive artistic appendix that showed some special, often humorous grasp of the material. My favorite is still the "Margery Kempe paper doll," which accompanied an excellent essay on the importance of clothing in the autobiography of that 15th century Englishwoman. I often wish I had the know-how to reproduce and market it; it would make a fortune among medievalists! – *Carol Symes, Assistant Professor, Department of History, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign*

A third characteristic reported frequently is their
(3) MORAL BALLAST AND SOCIAL CARING FOR OTHERS.

In a time of rising plagiarism on college campuses (fueled by all manner of Internet services and ghost writers, and so forth), it was striking to hear a professor say of a Waldorf undergraduate that “her social awareness is incredibly high, leadership excellent, ethical and moral standards stellar. I interact with many students. Her demeanor, skills, and social standards are the best I’ve encountered.” Another described the Waldorf student she had taught as “a Renaissance man who has been able to find a balance between his intellectual gifts, his athletic interests, and his high ethical and moral standards.”

[The Waldorf student I taught was] a Renaissance man who has been able to find a balance between his intellectual gifts, his athletic interests and his high ethical and moral standards. – *Annette V. Lucas, Associate Dean and Professor of French, Ursinus College*

[The Waldorf student I taught] was articulate, outspoken, and attuned to a wide range of ethical, environmental, and social concerns. She was politically progressive. – *Lynn M. Morgan, Anthropology Professor, Mount Holyoke College*

Personality, strength of character, ability to work well with others, creativity, strong sense of social justice and vocation. – *Jay Roberts, Instructor, Earlham College*

High, evolving, and in tune with an equally tuned emotional and ethical self. – *Paula K. Clarke, PhD, Professor, Columbia College, Sonoma, CA*

He comes across as very ethical, though I could not pinpoint why. . . He definitely does not come across as a follower—he seems driven by his own interests far more than peer pressure. – *Joshua Farley, Assistant Professor, University of Vermont*

He is a moral and ethical human being and it comes through in gentle and unassuming ways. He cares about other people enough to avoid negative criticism and instead, offers alternative ways of solving a problem. He exerts leadership in a gentle but strong way. – *Annette V. Lucas, Associate Dean and Professor of French, Ursinus College*

Yes, on several occasions he would have been more than justified as an undergraduate varsity basketball player to bitterly complain of his unfair treatment in terms of “playing time” awarded to him by his head coach during his junior and senior years. He never complained and always took the “highroad” and remained a loyal “team player.” He would shrug his shoulders and display a huge melancholic smile. He knew and we knew that he was far more mature

and pragmatic than his head coach. – *Tina D. Wailgum, PhD, ATC, Teacher (Kinesiology & Exercise Physiology) and Exercise and Sport Science Academic Advisor, Ursinus College*

Yes, all of the above. She had a special verve that helped form several groups of students into coherent wholes. Her ethical and moral standards were deep and strong. – *Dr. Timothy Crews, Professor, Prescott College*

Yes, she was keenly aware of inequities around her. She certainly is a leader in that she makes an intellectual contribution to whatever she does. I can't speak to her ethical and moral standards, but I never saw evidence to the contrary, and she certainly was very interested in ethical and philosophical issues. – *Zayn Kassam, Professor, Religious Studies, Pomona College*

In a letter of recommendation I referred to his “probing analyses of moral questions suggested by texts” – these were literature classes. – *Frances Novack, Professor of French, Ursinus College*

I still remember one of the contributions to a class discussion when [the Waldorf student I taught] admonished her classmates that if they believed what Schweitzer said – a required reading – that they should thereafter transport the spider in the bathtub up to a safe outside venue rather than wash it down the drain. This shows a mature ability to weave a theoretical work into practical life. – *Dr. Susan Gardner, Philosophy Professor, Capilano College*

Her idealism may one day break her heart. – *Dr. Susan Gardner, Philosophy Professor, Capilano College*

[I have taught] quite a few [former Waldorf students]. They have all been good students with high ideals and the discipline to back them up. – *L. Jackson Newell, President Emeritus, Deep Springs College, CA*

These kinds of comment are consonant with the high ratings (reported earlier in this section) that Waldorf students received from their professors in terms of *social awareness, communication skills* and *personal initiative*. Indeed, several professors commended their Waldorf alumni/ae for their love – even their tenacity – for learning. “I never knew [the Waldorf student I taught] to give up on anything,” said one professor. “And while she was passionate, she was also steady – even stubborn. If she wanted to pursue a goal, nothing would stop her.”

(4) SOCIAL AWARENESS

She understood that what the 'crowd' was doing was a meaningless venture, and she rejected it categorically. She did so without being snooty, loud, or stand-offish. But she did design a meaningful basic foundation for her college education, which sets her miles apart from most students ANYWHERE.
– Paula K. Clarke, PhD, Professor, Columbia College, Sonoma, CA

Outstanding French and cultural sensitivity even upon arrival at college.
– Frances Novack, Professor of French, Ursinus College

He has been working restoring local properties in a very poor town nearby and has run into many challenging situations that would send many a recent Hamilton grad fleeing in horror. But he's handled them with sensitivity and strength. – Katheryn Doran, Hamilton College

Willing to help fellow classmates. – Iris Cahn, Teacher, Co-chair of Purchase College/SUNY Film Program

Excellent social and leadership skills. – Jeremy Clark, Professor, School of Electronics and Computer Engineering Technology, Seneca College, Toronto, Canada

She was very aware socially, got along well with others. She was a very valuable contributor to class discussions. Good listener. – David Feldman, Professor of Physics and Mathematics, College of the Atlantic

Her social awareness is incredibly high, leadership excellent, ethical and moral standards stellar. I interact with many students; her demeanor, skills and social standards are the best I've encountered. – Jeffrey C. Horst, Sustainability Committee Colleague, Vassar College

As an undergraduate he participated and led several campus groups. As a worker in a local business I frequent, he tried to increase the rights of his fellow workers. Since then he has been interning at an alternative educational institution in Albany, NY. – Laurie Nisonoff, Hampshire College

We had a brilliant transgender student in our class, and [the Waldorf student I taught] was instrumental in guiding his peers to working with this student in human and beneficial ways. – Professor Bruce Bromley, NYU, Lecturer in Expository Writing

All were environmentally aware. – Frances Novack, Professor of French, Ursinus College

(5) COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Very well spoken, understands and appreciates the idea of providing arguments and evidence for his position, and he has a genuine love of the exchange of ideas and growth of knowledge. – *Katheryn Doran, Hamilton College*

Quiet and reserved but very focused, attentive, and sensitive. She is flexible without being mindless, inquisitive, and willing and able to frame creative questions. She is diligent, subtle, and impish as well. – *Paula K. Clarke, PhD, Professor, Columbia College, Sonora, CA*

His imagination, his nuanced verbal skills, and his leadership qualities. – *Professor Bruce Bromley, Lecturer in Expository Writing, NYU*

[The Waldorf student I taught] had excellent reading and writing skills. Her ability to reflect on herself as a learner and tutor and to make changes based on professional feedback was exceptional. She exhibited critical thinking skills more commonly found in older students. – *Margaret Pobywajlo, PhD, Director of the Learning Center, University of New Hampshire*

Yes, among the best in the class. She had a good ability to argue her point of view, although she could be impatient with others who did not agree with her. – *Lynn M. Morgan, Anthropology Professor, Mount Holyoke College*

Definitely—I felt that she was very aware of classroom dynamics, was adept at both group work and at participating in discussions in class. She helped to create an open atmosphere of collective curiosity that greatly benefited the class. – *Eliza Ablovatski, Assistant Professor of History, Kenyon College*

In general, [the Waldorf student I taught] was a very balanced, mature student with excellent communication skills. – *David Feldman, Professor of Physics and Mathematics, College of the Atlantic*

[The Waldorf student I taught] is a very kind and charming young man. He is direct and makes eye contact when he meets you. The effect is that he connects immediately with warmth and intelligence. Both faculty and students love him and he is at ease with many different types of students. He is a quiet and gentle leader who does not dominate a group but rather holds it together. – *Annette V. Lucas, Associate Dean and Professor of French, Ursinus College*

(6) PERSONAL INITIATIVE

[The Waldorf student I taught had a] strong intellectual curiosity, a willingness to dive into and try out new things, an ability to empathize with students who are struggling, and the confidence to express herself. – *Margaret Pobywajlo, PhD, Director of the Learning Center, University of New Hampshire*

Extremely dependable, took lots of initiative to solve difficult problems, and was incredibly committed to the work he undertook. – *Name withheld, Associate Professor, University of Vermont*

[The Waldorf student I taught was] hardworking, organized and self-motivated. – *Randy Rutberg, Professor, Research Advisor, Hunter College, CUNY*

[The Waldorf student I taught] is a self-starter and a man who genuinely takes responsibility for himself and the welfare of those around him. This is a product of three elements so far as I know: his parents, his Waldorf education, and his experiences at Deep Springs. These parts of his background have been mutually reinforcing. – *Jackson Newell, President Emeritus, Deep Springs College*

[The Waldorf student I taught] is very self-confident and highly motivated. She is also very much a 'self-starter.' – *Sven Steinmo, University of Colorado, Boulder*

[The Waldorf student I taught was] an amazing researcher and writer of Social Science. He is very, very responsible. He did beautifully in my course and in all his other courses. During his final semester (he finished in seven semesters) he was the TA for another faculty member's course of first years. The other faculty member had a serious medical emergency while lecturing in China, and [my student] was given and successfully managed the completion of that course and the other course taught by that professor. He ran the classes, heard the final presentations, wrote notes for the narrative evaluations and collected the papers. The other students were appreciative and specific about his impact on their lives and work. – *Laurie Nisonoff, Hampshire College*

Very self-directed. She took responsibility for her education—she turned things in on time—but more importantly, she did not simply do the minimum. She was clearly interested in learning. She had a great sense of humor and had excellent interpersonal and intrapersonal skills. She was a great knitter. She was without question one of the most outstanding students I have had the good fortune to mentor. – *Dr. Timothy Crews, Professor, Prescott College*

She has the ability to teach herself new and complicated subjects. – *Randy Rutberg, Professor, Research Advisor, Hunter College, CUNY*

A self-directed, motivated, and creative thinker. – *Mark Riegner, Environmental Studies, Prescott College*

I worked on a research project with [the former Waldorf student] to collect meteorological data in a high-elevation environment. The physical terrain was very demanding and we had no experience working with the type of equipment we were using or collecting data. It was a very busy time for me, so I gave him a budget, said "figure it out," and he did. He organized a group of students, fabricated equipment, planned a field campaign, executed the field survey, analyzed the data, and turned in a topnotch thesis on the project. – *Name withheld, Associate Professor, University of Vermont*

In my courses there is a contract that students must sign. It contains very basic relationship requirements between the student and the professor. However, students are also urged to modify the contract. When she modified hers she defined specific competencies that she wanted to address in order to be prepared for upper division work. I still have the contract and will probably use it (anonymously) when we publish findings about our research. – *Paula K. Clarke, PhD, Professor Columbia College, Sonora, CA*

In his senior year [the Waldorf student I taught] applied for the prestigious Watson Fellowship, and he spent part of the summer and most of the fall of his last year working through a very elaborate application process. He had to develop a proposal for a year-long project that would take him to 4 or 5 countries and involve active engagement in many different types of community. He developed a superb proposal and although he did not win the fellowship, he was the strongest candidate in a group of very talented competitors. – *Annette V. Lucas, Associate Dean and Professor of French, Ursinus College*

[The Waldorf student I taught] has taken on the most challenging research projects in my classes. – *Noelwah R. Netusil, Professor, Reed College*

[The Waldorf student I taught] was easily able to take her education into her own hands and work effectively on independent projects. Since graduating, she has applied to five PhD programs in biology; she was accepted into all five and is currently in her second year at University of California, Riverside. – *Mark Riegner, Environmental Studies, Prescott College*

(7) DEDICATION

Probably the unique thing [is the] remarkable seriousness and dedication to the academic life, its demands and its delights; it is very rare to see in such a young student. – *Joseph Lauinger, Professor of Dramatic Literature, Chairman, Literature, Division, Sarah Lawrence College*

I never knew her to give up on anything, and, while she was passionate, she was also steady – even stubborn. If she wanted to pursue a goal, nothing would stop her. – *Carol Symes, Assistant Professor, Department of History, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign*

After a semester's study in Cusco, Peru, [the Waldorf student I taught] determined to stay on and study independently in a local university, identifying the appropriate courses and presenting a clear rationale for each. When, due to circumstances beyond her control, these courses were not available, she rethought her goals and focused on an alternate course of study (Quechua language study) in a different institution. None of this fazed her; she faced these challenges with confidence, handling difficult circumstances without an institutional support network. – *Leslie Offutt, Vassar College*

Her senior project—a video production on food justice issues in West Oakland was outstanding. She had never done video, and took this media into a part of the Bay Area that intimidates many people due to differences in race and class. Her final production contributed to such a complex set of solutions, it was hard to believe an undergrad could pull it all off. She was highly motivated and committed. – *Dr. Timothy Crews, Professor, Prescott College*

I find most of the [Waldorf students] to be creative thinkers, fully engaged in their educational process. – *Mark Riegner, Environmental Studies, Prescott College*

(8) ENTHUSIASM

She is a particularly enthusiastic student. She seemed to love to learn, and she stayed in close contact with me even well after the one class she took with me. She was not the best student in the class, but she seemed to be one of the students who got the most out of the class. – *Eliza Ablovatski, Assistant Professor of History, Kenyon*

Enthusiasm for learning, persistence, excellent interpersonal relationships. – *L. Jackson Newell, President Emeritus, Deep Springs College, CA*

[The Waldorf student I taught] was an enthusiastic participant in our end of semester mock-conference on European Women’s Issues. She had done a lot of research on the country she was representing and had a lot of factual information ready. Many students participated in the debates only for issues they had prepared, but she was able to add to almost all debates. She was a representative and advocate for her country’s perspective in a serious way (without faking an accent or playacting stereotypes). – *Eliza Ablovatski, Assistant Professor of History, Kenyon College*

[The student knew] how to move through the program and get as much from the educational opportunities it offered as possible. – *Iris Cahn, Teacher, Co-chair of Purchase College/SUNY Film Program*

(9) CONFIDENCE

I can only infer that he was challenged and confident in his abilities as a thinker. – *Katheryn Doran, Hamilton College*

Self-confidence and enthusiasm for learning. – *Nelson E. Bingham, PhD, Professor, Earlham College*

[The student I teach] is very self-confident while, at the same time, sensitive to the strengths and weaknesses of her classmates. – *Noelwah R. Netusil, Professor, Reed College*

Her ability to think expansively and creatively about issues; the confidence with which she approached her coursework, her choice of major, her choice of study abroad options. – *Leslie Offutt, Vassar College*

She was secure in taking risks in her assignments, which often had an emotional content. – *Jack Troy, Ceramics Professor, Juniata College*

(10) SELF-AWARENESS

He arrived with a clear sense of his own strengths and weaknesses. While he liked working on the former, he also conscientiously addressed few of the latter. The entire faculty lauded his work; he didn't have any problems during the first year and was taking more advanced courses by the second semester. He finished college in one less semester. – *Laurie Nisonoff, Hampshire College*

[The Waldorf student I taught] seemed quite mature and was able to handle the stress of assignments quite well. She also was open and honest about her shortcomings – if a paper would be late or if she'd been unable to finish a reading assignment. I greatly appreciated this honesty and think it added to the seminar in general. – *Eliza Ablovatski, Assistant Professor of History, Kenyon College*

She had a love of learning and an ability to see connections among diverse ideas and experiences. She had a clear sense of her own identity and values. – *Nelson E. Bingham, PhD, Professor, Earlham College*

[Waldorf students] are more perceptive and open. They seem to have much better self-image and esteem. – *Charles F. Stegeman, Violin Professor and Chairman of Strings Department, Duquesne University*

(11) HIGH QUALITY WORK

She never seemed like a conventional student, and she was more than conventionally intelligent. While I recall, vividly, that her first few weeks at college were a trifle overwhelming, she came equipped with all the basic skills, and then some. She would never complete an assignment in a perfunctory way: she always did something to make her work special. But that was not to mask the quality of the work itself, which was very good – sometimes outstanding. – *Carol Symes, Assistant Professor, Department of History, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign*

[The Waldorf student I taught] transferred to us with a high (4.0) grade point average after two years of college at Sarah Lawrence. He was obviously well-educated. – *Iris Cahn, Teacher, Co-chair of Purchase College/SUNY Film Program*

Her interest and clear thought truly stood out. This was clearly evident in our sustainability discussions, her research/conclusions and presentations.
– Jeffrey C. Horst, Sustainability Committee Colleague, Vassar College

Extraordinary! – Charles F. Stegeman, Violin Professor and Chairman of Strings Department, Duquesne University

Excellent, far superior to the vast majority of his peers! – Tina D. Wailgum, PhD, ATC, Teacher (Kinesiology and Exercise Physiology) and Exercise and Sport Science Academic Advisor, Ursinus College

Excellent. He did well with different learning styles and presentations.
– Laurie Nisonoff, Hampshire College

Among the highest in quality of all my students. –Professor Bruce Bromley, NYU, Lecturer in Expository Writing

Very good. – David Feldman, Professor of Physics and Mathematics, College of the Atlantic

[The Waldorf student I taught] was a very good research assistant after only one year of college, which is rather rare. – Kimberly Clausing, Professor, Reed College

[The Waldorf student I taught] applied for a Watson Fellowship during his senior year at Ursinus College. He was one of our top 3 finalists for this prestigious award. The Watson Foundation disclosed to our Dean's Office that [the former Waldorf student] was rated our top candidate by their foundation. He did not receive one of their fellowships, but he did distinguish himself as the most outstanding Watson candidate from the 2006 applicant pool from Ursinus College. – Tina D. Wailgum, PhD, ATC, Teacher (Kinesiology & Exercise Physiology) and Exercise and Sport Science Academic Advisor, Ursinus College

All of his papers were superb. My notes on the Division II portfolio (the middle two years' work) are all exceedingly positive—usually there are some weaknesses. I have worked here for 32 years and have seen over 200 portfolios—this was among the top 10 of all time. – Laurie Nisonoff, Hampshire College

Nearly everything [the Waldorf student I taught] wrote set him apart.
– Professor Bruce Bromley, NYU, Lecturer in Expository Writing

The scores on measures of cognitive and ethical development [of the Waldorf student I taught] were high. – Margaret Pobywajlo, PhD, Director of the Learning Center, University of New Hampshire

All of her papers are exceptional. The one I think among the more noteworthy is a response to a question she wrote in my Social Problems course about the reasons why humanity may need to develop a new kind of human being. – *Paula K. Clarke, PhD, Professor, Columbia College, Sonora, CA*

[The Waldorf student I taught] produced excellent thesis films throughout the program. He was chosen to receive a special (King Family) scholarship. – *Iris Cahn, Teacher, Co-chair of Purchase College/SUNY Film Program*

When his Deep Springs friends all sped off to Ivy League colleges, [the Waldorf student I taught] (though he was among the most able of the bunch) chose to attend the American University of Bulgaria to complete his undergraduate education because he sought to continue his relationship with experimental institutions of learning. – *L. Jackson Newell, President Emeritus, Deep Springs College, CA*

The overall performance [of the Waldorf student I taught] was consistently excellent. – *Nelson E. Bingham, PhD, Professor, Earlham College*

He completed his design project in my APE553 course. He was the only student who was able to do this. – *Jeremy Clark, Professor, School of Electronics and Computer Engineering Technology, Seneca College, Toronto, Canada*

Her senior thesis was, by all accounts, an extraordinary work, earning a grade of “distinction.” – *Leslie Offutt, Vassar College*

Her academic work was solid and consistent. However, I would not say that she was “apart from the rest” academically. She was an excellent student but it was her more affective traits that set her apart in my view. – *Jay Roberts, Instructor, Earlham College*

All her work was exceptional, not only thorough regarding content, but aesthetic as well. Her Senior Project was of a professional quality. – *Mark Riegner, Environmental Studies, Prescott College*

Her work was consistently of high quality – I don’t think she received less than an “A” in any of the assignments for the two classes she took with me. The rigor of her thinking, the quality and depth of her research, the analytic insights, the clarity of the prose – all of these impressed me. – *Zayn Kassam, Professor, Religious Studies, Pomona College*

(12) PREPAREDNESS

She was relatively well read for today’s undergraduates, with an interest not only in a wide range of material but also in the distant past. – *Joseph Lauinger, Professor of Dramatic Literature, Chairman, Literature Division, Sarah Lawrence College*

She was certainly a better than average writer. However, she was very directed in her work and not very good at taking risks and working beyond the narrow limits of an assignment. – *Anonymity requested*

Well prepared academically as well as socially. – *Jeremy Clark, Professor, School of Electronics & Computer Engineering Technology, Seneca College, Toronto, Canada*

I have had [the student] in only one course with 125 students, but got to know him fairly well, so he clearly stood out. I associated this with his personality and interest in the subject matter rather than background preparation. He is obviously well prepared. – *Joshua Farley, Assistant Professor, University of Vermont*

Very good background in mathematics. Excellent writing. Good critical thinking. – *David Feldman, Professor of Physics and Mathematics, College of the Atlantic*

She seemed well prepared for both the traditional academic requirements of college as well as the more experiential/community-based requirements of college. Her participation on Southwest Field Studies – an off-campus semester in environmental studies – revealed her skills and abilities in terms of community living, leadership, and academic engagement. – *Jay Roberts, Instructor, Earlham College*

Her thoroughness with respect to reading assigned materials; her ability to reflect upon the subject in a profound manner – these are skills that are imbedded long before a student shows up to college. – *Zayn Kassam, Professor, Religious Studies, Pomona College*

(13) MATURITY

Heavens yes. In fact [the Wadorf student I taught] was the recipient of an award that my husband (colleague) and I created called the FUTURE PROMISE AWARD. It is given annually to the student who has taken at least three of our courses and met a wide range of cognitive, ethical, and emotional maturity standards. There are absolutely ‘no flies’ on this young lady. – *Paula K. Clarke, PhD, Professor Columbia College, Sonora, CA*

She has high standards for herself, but first and foremost, she is honest with herself. I have seen her jealous of the personal or academic success of others, emotionally upset, or borrowing trouble connected to future uncertainties, when she would have been better served by getting on with the work at hand. But she always seems as keenly observant about herself as she is of others. She does not excuse or rationalize these episodes; she works through them. – *Stan Rachootin, Professor of Biological Sciences, Mount Holyoke College*

The student was extremely mature. She was able to master a complex research project. She has excellent communication skills and is committed to producing excellent work. In addition, she moved across the country at the age of approximately 20 to take care of her ailing grandmother. I believe that her mother had died when she was in her late teens and she had little or no contact with her father. She was her grandmother's only living relative and took responsibility for her. She moved to New York and devoted herself to her grandmother, as well as enrolling at Hunter College to obtain a college degree. She took on a very difficult emotional burden and handled it with maturity and compassion. – *Randy Rutberg, Professor, Research Advisor, Hunter College, CUNY*

I think the most impressive example of her maturity in my experience occurred in the second semester of her freshman year. On an extremely difficult independent project (on Wolfram von Eschenbach's treatment of the Grail legend), she found herself in very deep waters indeed. Her research had taken her to scholars whose learning was beyond her grasp, and the complexity of the Grail legend as it has evolved was proving to be beyond her wildest imaginings. This was a crisis for a student who habitually achieved the highest academic work (up till then required of her) with relative ease. I could see the panic bubbling up. However, we worked out a sensible plan of action that met the demands inherent in the project but modified so that she could satisfy them. It was a make-or-break point in her academic life, and with courage and steadfastness she made it. – *Joseph Lauinger, Professor of Dramatic Literature, Chairman, Literature Division, Sarah Lawrence College*

There were many times that the maturity and emotional balance [of the Waldorf student I taught] impressed me. She participated in a field course to Bolivia in which the going was challenging for all students involved. She was sick several times on top of it, and through it all, she not only kept herself centered, but also would constantly check in with classmates and help them feel at ease and adjusted. – *Dr. Timothy Crews, Professor, Prescott College*

[The Waldorf student I taught] always seemed to me to be an old, wise soul, very compassionate. I remember her reaction to 9/11 – she was devastated on behalf of the families who lost loved ones and the tremendous courage and sacrifices shown by all those who rushed in to help at the scene. – *Zayn Kassam, Professor, Religious Studies, Pomona College*

[The Waldorf student I taught] was a double major in French and Exercise and Sports Science. He was a varsity basketball player who “abandoned” his team to study abroad for one semester. The guys teased him without mercy and he smiled his crooked smile and let them talk. Eventually they accepted his position and his response helped them understand that it was OK to be an athlete who loves sports as well as French philosophy. He was mature and strong in his response to his peers and gained their respect in the process. – *Annette V. Lucas, Associate Dean and Professor of French, Ursinus College*

She was mature and straightforward. When she had a problem meeting a deadline, she came to speak with me directly, without feeling the need to fabricate excuses. – *Lynn M. Morgan, Professor of Anthropology, Mount Holyoke College*

(14) LEADERSHIP

Leadership shown in preparation and delivery of a group workshop for parents whose children were entering kindergarten. – *Dr. Fay Glosenger, Undergraduate Advisor and Professor, Juniata College*

(15) OTHER PERSONAL QUALITIES: *passionate, calm, focused, intelligent, pleasant, hard working, happy, good sense of humor*

She has a passion both for truth and for fun – a unique combination. – *Dr. Susan Gardner, Philosophy Professor, Capilano College*

Blend of intelligence, compassion, organization and calmness under stress. – *Nelson E. Bingham, PhD, Professor, Earlham College*

[The Waldorf student I taught] was exceptionally bright, well organized, and hard working. – *Kimberly Clausing, Professor, Reed College*

Very smart and sharp. Hard working. Mature. Pleasant to be around. – *David Feldman, Professor of Physics and Mathematics, College of the Atlantic*

A calm and focus that is unusual. A very open attitude and a strong ability to function under pressure. He is artistic but not a “nerd” in any way. – *Charles F. Stegeman, Violin Professor and Chairman of Strings Department, Duquesne University*

Intelligent, motivated, enthusiastic, well organized, artistic, inquisitive. – *Mark Riegner, Environmental Studies, Prescott College*

[The Waldorf student I teach] is committed to the academic agenda and fascinated by beauty and grace in many forms; ethical and quietly warm. – *Frances Novack, Professor of French, Ursinus College*

He seems well-suited to whatever is put before him. He has an accepting attitude and is comfortable in all circumstances that I have seen him in. He is not nervous or out of place and is very well liked by his classmates. – *Charles F. Stegeman, Violin Professor and Chairman of Strings Department, Duquesne University*

He keeps his balance in turbulent situations. A cool head. Again, home, school, and college experiences reinforced the same values and ends.
– *L. Jackson Newell, President Emeritus, Deep Springs College, CA*

I remember her as having “reverence for life” and for being sufficiently courageous to “walk the talk.” – *Dr. Susan Gardner, Philosophy Professor, Capilano College*

[The Waldorf student I taught] seemed happier than the typical freshman.
– *Norman Derby, Teacher and Academic Advisor, Bennington College*

[The Waldorf student I taught] was involved in a situation at college in which she was in the position to care for a student who experienced cardiac arrest. She performed CPR and stayed with the student until help arrived. Unfortunately, the student passed away, and she was deeply affected by this. Through it all though, so many students at Earlham recounted that they could not imagine a better person to be with this student as he passed. This is a testimony to the strength of character she has as well as her ability to inspire and be a role model to others. – *Jay Roberts, Instructor, Earlham College*

[The Waldorf student I taught] always was balanced, respectful and had a wry sense of humor, no matter whatever else was going on. – *Laurie Nisonoff, Hampshire College*

I would like to add that I was introduced to Waldorf education by a student and since then have done some research on my own. I am so favorably impressed that I have enrolled my daughter in a Waldorf program. – *Professor Randye Rutberg, Hunter College, CUNY*

(16) EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Usually she appeared “strong in emotional intelligence” and she handled conflict well. However, a few individuals could “unbalance” her. Because she could monitor herself well, she maintained good relationships with even the troublesome people. – *Margaret Pobywajlo, PhD, Director of the Learning Center, University of New Hampshire*

He organized a group of students, fabricated equipment, planned a field campaign, executed the field survey, analyzed the data, and turned in top-notch thesis on the project. – *Name withheld, Associate Professor, University of Vermont*

She knows how to “read” an environment – whether of students or of faculty. When she was the ONLY person in a class engaged and doing the work, she nonetheless did not allow the class to use her—she was quite skillful in discouraging the silent manipulation of the less engaged, and she did so by “reading” them. – *Paula K. Clarke, PhD, Professor, Columbia College, Sonoma, CA*

“Emotional intelligence” is something I tend to get after the fact (or the failure). [The Waldorf student I taught] is much better equipped than I am in this area. – *Stan Rachootin, Professor of Biological Sciences, Mount Holyoke College*

I believe that [the Waldorf student I taught] has strong emotional intelligence. She is sensitive to those with whom she works, and she is able to conduct herself very well in stressful situations. – *Randy Rutberg, Professor, Research Advisor, Hunter College, CUNY*

[The Waldorf student I taught] seemed to be a person of strong likes and loyalties, and Bennington was a place that encouraged that, too. I was initially discomfited by the fact she took at least one course with me every term. I thought I would run out of things to teach her, or that she might take advantage of our good relationship, and slack off in some way. That never happened. Quite the contrary. – *Carol Symes, Assistant Professor, Department of History, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; former on the faculty of Bennington College, 1998–2002*

There have been other examples of growth in emotional intelligence [in the Waldorf student I taught] since then. I recently had the opportunity to meet with her at Wadham College, Oxford, England, where she is spending her junior year. Her work there has been excellent, and her adaptation to the Oxford method of study – not always easy for an American student – has been exemplary. – *Joseph Lauinger, Professor of Dramatic Literature, Chairman, Literature Division, Sarah Lawrence College*

He got along with everyone, and was not easily swayed by his peers’ enthusiasms and their occasional pettiness. – *L. Jackson Newell, President Emeritus, Deep Springs College, CA*

[The Waldorf student I taught] was huge fun to have in class and her love of life was infectious. – *Dr. Susan Gardner, Philosophy Professor, Capilano College*

[The Waldorf student I taught] was a source of support for other students, good at resolving conflicts, and capable of seeking out support for herself when needed. She showed empathy for others’ feelings and reacted accordingly. – *Nelson E. Bingham, PhD, Professor, Earlham College*

Yes, her academic study and interaction with people in Peru were fascinating to hear about. – *Jeffrey C. Horst, Sustainability Committee Colleague, Vassar College*

[The Waldorf student I taught] was very aware of the psychological dynamics of other students in the class and seemed especially well attuned to people’s feelings. – *Lynn M. Morgan, Anthropology Professor, Mount Holyoke College*

I would characterize [the Waldorf student I taught] as being strong in emotional intelligence. She has taken on challenging research projects and is able to recognize her strengths as well as her limitations. – *Noelwah R. Netusil, Professor, Reed College*

[The Waldorf student I taught] exhibited an openness to and empathy with others. – *Leslie Offutt, Vassar College*

The tone of the discussions [with the Waldorf student I taught] always seemed to originate in a deeper source of awareness of herself as a feeling person than did those of her fellow students. – *Jack Troy, Ceramics Professor, Juniata College*

[The Waldorf student I taught] always exhibited a great sense of humor and a strong resolve to be his own person and to embrace both his love for basketball and dancing. – *Tina D. Wailgum, PhD, ATC, Teacher (Kinesiology and Exercise Physiology) and Exercise and Sport Science Academic Advisor, Ursinus College*

[The Waldorf student I taught] was not a needy student, and she would not get pulled in by less mature students' activities or demands. She really had a strong sense of herself. My co-instructor in Bolivia and I would comment that we hoped our daughters would grow up with a similar internal balance. – *Dr. Timothy Crews, Professor, Prescott College*

I think one has to be high in emotional intelligence in order to listen well and get to the heart of the matter, and [the Waldorf student I taught] certainly exhibited that skill. – *Zayn Kassam, Professor, Religious Studies, Pomona College*

His caring treatment of other people; the way he dealt with being the lone male in French classes full of women. – *Frances Novack, Professor of French, Ursinus College*

WEAKNESSES OBSERVED IN WALDORF GRADUATES BY PROFESSORS

When asked to comment on perceived weaknesses in Waldorf graduates, the following comments were made:

She was a good thinker but her writing skills were weaker than average. – *Lynn M. Morgan, Anthropology Professor, Mount Holyoke College*

She is very smart and bright. I think that she is a little weak in her substantive skills, however. – *Sven Steinmo, University of Colorado, Boulder*

Her maturity/emotional development was significant, but she still struggled with maintaining her emotional balance, particularly under academic stress. – *Margaret Pobywajlo, PhD, Director of the Learning Center, University of New Hampshire*

None [no shortcomings] that I can think of would be attributed to her education. – *Margaret Pobywajlo, PhD, Director of the Learning Center, University of New Hampshire*

No shortcomings.

- *Name withheld, Associate Professor, University of Vermont*
- *L. Jackson Newell, President Emeritus, Deep Springs College, CA*
- *Norman Derby, Teacher and Academic Advisor, Bennington College*
- *Noelwah R. Netusil, Professor, Reed College*
- *Leslie Offutt, Vassar College*
- *Charles Stegeman, Violin Professor and Chairman of Strings Department, Duquesne University*
- *Jack Troy, Ceramics Professor, Juniata College*
- *Tina D. Wailgum, PhD, ATC, Teacher (Kinesiology & Exercise Physiology) and Exercise and Sport Science Academic Advisor, Ursinus College*
- *Professor Bruce Bromley, NYU Lecturer in Expository Writing*
- *Mark Riegner, Environmental Studies, Prescott College*

I think that she was less skilled and less motivated to engage in concrete work—requiring ‘epistemological dualism.’ Our culture requires a lot of this in the form of standard assessments (e.g. GREs), so I try to help such students understand the logic behind this kind of effort. I think this is an area where she would concur. – *Paula K. Clarke, PhD, Professor, Columbia College, Sonora, CA*

She did not have a very strong mathematical base—this led to her having to work far harder than other bright biology students in some biology classes, and probably accounts for her lack of success in chemistry. She was not good at abstracting the style of problem solving, as opposed to applying a formula. This is rather surprising, given her facility and interest in verbal (visual and musical) thinking. It has not, I might add, caused her any harm in a first rate doctoral program at UC Berkeley in cell biology. – *Stan Rachootin, Professor of Biological Sciences, Mount Holyoke College*

I did not notice any shortcomings that I would be able to attribute to her education. She has not yet determined her path in life and is exploring different options. This may relate to her education or to her life experience. She is young, and exploration is an important stage. – *Randy Rutberg, Professor, Research Advisor, Hunter College, CUNY*

She was quick to make assumptions and judgments about topics or areas of endeavor in which she was supposedly uninterested; but, after being persuaded, she would always branch out in this direction. I wonder if she was

ever challenged enough to pursue things that were unpleasant or inorganic to her. – *Carol Symes, Assistant Professor, Department of History, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign*

I was not aware of any shortcomings. – *Jeremy Clark, Professor, School of Electronics and Computer Engineering Technology, Seneca College, Toronto, Canada*

I can't recall any shortcomings. [The Waldorf student I taught] was among the strongest students in her cohort. – *David Feldman, Professor of Physics and Mathematics, College of the Atlantic*

Waldorf education offers a very protective environment and I wonder if [the Waldorf student I taught], with all his accomplishments, has been sheltered a bit too much. Although he was competitive in sports, he did not have “killer instincts” in other parts of his life. This is why I like him so much and I don't think that it is a deficiency in my world. However, I know that beyond the protective and supportive world of school, college and family, he will have to confront that other reality. – *Annette V. Lucas, Associate Dean and Professor of French, Ursinus College*

Writing skills (organization, sentence structure, vocabulary, grammar) were below average. – *Lynn M. Morgan, Anthropology Professor, Mount Holyoke College*

The only thing that I think I could attribute to Waldorf is perhaps some degree of “shelteredness.” This is difficult to criticize as it should be an aspiration of all educators to provide a warm, safe place to learn. However, when students come out of this cocoon to the harsh light of the “real world,” it makes for some difficult adjustments—I saw that from time to time with [the Waldorf student I taught], particularly on Southwest Field Studies. – *Jay Roberts, Instructor, Earlham College*

Sometimes she would be challenged by quantitative analyses. Typically, she would work through these difficulties without much problem, but it was an area of relative weakness. – *Dr. Timothy Crews, Professor, Prescott College*

None that I recall at this moment since there is a strong congruence between the Waldorf system and Hampshire. I have had Waldorf graduates before and found this to be generally true. – *Laurie Nisonoff, Hampshire College*

Actually, I never thought of [the Waldorf student I taught] and shortcomings in the same breath or sentence. – *Zayn Kassam, Professor, Religious Studies, Pomona College*

[I have taught] several [former Waldorf students]. [They are] excellent independent, intrinsic learners. [They have an] excellent knowledge of craft skills and life skills (cooking, sewing, etc), excellent personalities and recognition of social concerns and justice. Areas of less strength – writing skills, traditionally framed academic exercises (tests, papers, etc.). Time management skills are also somewhat lacking. Finally, [the] ability to transition from Waldorf culture to college culture has been somewhat straining for a few of them. – *Jay Roberts, Instructor, Earlham College*

* * * *

Of the professors who supplied anecdotal observations, a majority said they had no concerns or criticism at all to offer about their Waldorf undergraduates. A few noted some individual weaknesses in writing and computation, and a couple spoke of some emotional naïveté or youthfulness in their Waldorf students. Summing up some mild concerns about several Waldorf students he had taught over the years, one professor concluded, “Given a choice, I would love to educate a Waldorf student anytime.”

PAMPHLET:
THE RESULTS
OF WALDORF EDUCATION

The new research invited a reworking of the popular pamphlet *The Results of Waldorf Education*. The update is printed on the following pages and may be obtained in quantity as pamphlets from:

AWSNA Publications
458 Harold Meyers Road
Earlton, NY 12058

518/634-2222
publications@awsna.org
www.whywaldorfworks.org/publications

the Results of Waldorf Education

What really are the results of Waldorf (Rudolf Steiner) education? You can be initially impressed by the enthusiasm and commitment of teachers in a Waldorf school and admire the artistic, environmental, scientific, and academic striving of the students. If you have the opportunity to visit a Waldorf school, you may observe joy in learning, attention devoted to emotional intelligence, and dynamic social interaction. The aesthetics of the classrooms, the students' artistic work, and the deliberate kinesthetic activities may capture your attention. But what happens to these students after they leave the idyllic environment of the Waldorf school? How do they find themselves prepared for life? What do they study in college? What do they do if they decide not to continue their formal education right away? How are they perceived by their employers, their professors . . . and, maybe most importantly, how do they see themselves? These questions have been addressed in two studies published by the Research Institute for Waldorf Education. This pamphlet highlights some of these findings. However, you are strongly encouraged to read the original research in its entirety.¹

For Phase II of its study the Research Institute for Waldorf Education conducted on-line interviews with 526 former Waldorf students who graduated between 1943 and 2005 from 27 Waldorf high schools. The surveys focused on where their paths after graduation led them, what form their educational paths had taken, and where they attended school after leaving high school. They were asked about their subsequent education, employment, values and life goals, as well as the quality of their personal relationships and health. College professors were also interviewed. Over half of the students referred to as "Waldorf graduates" experienced twelve years in a Waldorf school (more if they attended a Waldorf kindergarten). The following article presents a professor's personal view of Waldorf graduates.

THE WALDORF GRADUATE A PERSONAL REFLECTION

Dr. W. Warren B. Eickelberg
Professor of Biology
Director, Premedical Curriculum
Adelphi University, Garden City
New York

When I began teaching at Adelphi University in the 1950s, no biologist even knew what a gene was, and now we manufacture them. When I entered teaching, there were but a dozen antibiotics, and

now they number in the thousands. Back then many of the biological subdisciplines did not exist and much of what we taught then would now be incorrect. The minds of men and women have opened for us new vistas to view; the hands of men and women have given us new technology, but the souls of men and women remain largely the same, always searching for the answers as to who we are, why we are here, and what our destiny is.

As there have been changes in academic content and technology, so the typical undergraduate student has changed. I lived with and experienced

1. See *Survey of Waldorf Graduates in North America, Phase I*, Faith Baldwin, David Mitchell, and Douglas Gerwin. New York: AWSNA Publications, 2005, and *Survey of Waldorf Graduates, Phase II*, David Mitchell, Douglas Gerwin. New York: AWSNA Publications, 2007.

the job-oriented World War II veteran. I remember well the recall to active duty of many for the “peace action” in Korea. I sat through the “teach-ins” and the campus strikes of the Vietnam era. I lived through the revealing anatomy of the miniskirt, the drabness of the dark blue jeans phase, the demands by the students to develop their own curricula, the reorientation of learning by professors and administrators, the establishment of obviously immoral sex morés, the decline in admissions standards, and the unique and possibly devastating effect that the medium of television has had on young people. Without any doubt, my teaching experience has been marked by change, change, and ever more change.

Throughout this dynamism of activity where values were under attack and standards of behavior were challenged, from time to time there would be a unique stabilizing influence in my classes: a Waldorf school graduate. And they were different from the others. Without exception they were, at the same time, caring people, creative students, individuals of identifiable values, and students who, when they spoke, made a difference.

Let me share with the reader some of these features so that you too might see the difference. Almost without exception, every Waldorf school graduate has shown concern for the embalmed animals we use for dissection in Comparative Anatomy. I was always asked if the animal died painlessly, and they further questioned as to how. The Waldorf school graduates of the fifties, and of today, still show a unique reverence for life, and they regard an experimental animal, whether dead or alive, in a special way . . . not just another reagent or piece of equipment to use in a laboratory experiment. Whereas most students are surprised to see the giant liver of a shark, it is always the Waldorf school graduate who sees this massive organ filled with oils as the result of a unique plan to give an animal buoyancy.

When describing geologic time, I have often told the true story of a man whose calculator could record the number 9.9×10^{99} . He discovered that

I feel certain that all Waldorf school graduates believe in the orderliness of our universe, and they believe the human mind can discern this order and appreciate its beauty.

even the estimated number of atoms in the volume of our known universe in cubic millimeters could not begin to approach this order of magnitude. It was a Waldorf student who found an article suggesting that the chances of two human beings, other than identical twins, being genetically alike would approach one out of $1 \times 10^{6,270}$, and thus concluded that indeed each person is a unique and specially created individual.

We know the atoms in every cell of every living being are found in the stars and intergalactic gases and that we all make up a Community of Matter. As we in science view the universe from its creation to its predicted end, the human being may seem, astronomically speaking, rather insignificant, but any Waldorf school graduate will remind each of us that the human being is still the only astronomer. Once, when I was discussing the decreasing gene frequencies of Blood type B from Siberia through Western Europe, it was a Waldorf student who related this fact to the invasions by Genghis Khan and Tamerlane.

It has been said that historians see civilization as a stream through history, and the stream is often filled with blood, loud shouts, killing, and discoveries. Somehow it is the Waldorf school graduate who sees the stream, but also focuses on the banks where there are people who love, raise children, build homes, write poetry, worship, and carve statues. Waldorf school graduates see behind the facts that often must be repeated or explained on examination.

They are keenly interested in the macrocosm of the universe and microcosm of the cell's ultrastructure, but they know that Chemistry, Biology, and Physics cannot tell them much about the nature of love. In Embryology, they see a fetus develop a compound called prostaglandin to enhance the mother's response to oxytocin so that labor can begin, and they see this as a reflection of a guided universe. I feel certain that all Waldorf school graduates believe in the orderliness of our universe, and they believe the human mind can discern this order and appreciate its beauty. ■

WHICH COLLEGES DO WALDORF GRADUATES ATTEND?

Waldorf graduates have attended a wide range of colleges and universities around the world. In fact, it is notable that within a graduating class at a given school, generally very few people attend the same college as their classmates. In 2004 alone, the 438 Waldorf graduates who participated in the study attended 201 different colleges.

WHICH TYPES OF COLLEGES ACCEPT WALDORF GRADUATES?

An impressively diverse number of institutions accept Waldorf graduates: in 2004, the 438 graduates were accepted at 342 different colleges. The Phase I study found that Waldorf graduates were accepted by 717 accredited colleges and universities, spanning 18 of the 20 types of institutions in the Carnegie Classification system.

WHERE DO WALDORF GRADUATES EARN THEIR COLLEGE DEGREES?

U.S. Colleges and Universities from which Waldorf Alumni/ae Have Most Frequently Graduated

1. Oberlin College
2. Hampshire College
3. University of California, Santa Cruz
4. Prescott College
5. Bennington College
6. University of California, Berkeley
7. Earlham College
8. Emerson College, Boston
9. Radcliffe College (and Harvard University)
10. Smith College
11. St. John's College
12. Temple University
13. Vassar College
14. Wesleyan University
15. Adelphi University
16. Amherst College
17. Boston University
18. Bowdoin College
19. Brown University
20. Cornell University

Canadian Colleges and Universities from which Waldorf Alumni/ae Have Most Frequently Graduated

1. University of Toronto
2. University of British Columbia
3. Capilano College
4. Ontario College of Art and Design
5. Simon Fraser University
6. University of Victoria
7. Burlington College
8. California College of the Arts
9. Concordia University
10. Dalhousie University
11. Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design
12. McGill University
13. Memorial University of Newfoundland
14. Nova Scotia College of Art and Design
15. Seneca College
16. Toronto School of Homeopathic Medicine
17. Trent University
18. Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam

An impressive majority of Waldorf school graduates pursue and complete degrees in higher education. 94% of the graduates taking part in this survey reported having attended college and 88% reported having completed or being in the process of completing a college or university level degree at the time of the survey. Of the remaining 12%, roughly half (5.4%) began but did not complete college, while the other half (6.3%) either did not pursue college or went into professional or artistic training unconnected with an academic degree program.

A SAMPLING OF QUOTES FROM COLLEGE PROFESSORS ABOUT WALDORF GRADUATES

Professors were asked to describe the Waldorf student(s) they had taught by comparison to other students in their classes. The following represent a few of the comments:

- Breadth of interest, willingness to explore new areas and to make connections to what was already known, artistic sense, and ability to apply it to scientific problems. Brought a strong, highly individualistic (non-sectarian) spiritual sense to her work—her world was larger and more interesting than herself.
– Stan Rachootin,
Professor of Biological Sciences, Mount Holyoke College
 - Strong intellectual curiosity, a willingness to dive into and try out new things, an ability to empathize with students who are struggling, and the confidence to express herself.
– Margaret Pobywajlo, Ph.D., Director of the Learning Center,
University of New Hampshire, Manchester
 - She understood that what the “crowd” was doing was a meaningless venture and she rejected it categorically. She did so without being snooty, loud, or stand-off-ish. But she did design a meaningful basic foundation for her college education, which sets her miles apart from most students ANYWHERE.
– Paula K. Clarke, Ph.D., Professor, Columbia College
 - Creative, responsible, inventive, resourceful, terrific storyteller with images and dialogue.
– Iris Cahn, teacher, co-chair of
Purchase College/SUNY Film Program
 - She never seemed like a conventional student, and she was more than conventionally intelligent. While I recall, vividly, that her first few weeks at college were a trifle overwhelming, she came equipped with all the basic skills, and then some. She would never complete an assignment in a perfunctory way: she always did something to make her work special. But that was not to mask the quality of the work itself, which was very good—sometimes outstanding.
– Carol Symes, Assistant Professor, Department of History,
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
 - Probably the unique thing [is the] remarkable seriousness and dedication to the academic life, its demands and its delights; it is very rare to see in such a young student.
– Joseph Lauinger, Professor of Dramatic Literature,
Chairman, Literature Division, Sarah Lawrence College
 - Blend of intelligence, compassion, organization and calmness under stress.
– Nelson E. Bingham, Ph.D., Professor, Earlham College
 - The intensity of her engagement in intellectual endeavors; her willingness to seek out unusual educational opportunities; the clarity of her thinking as she pulled together a diverse set of courses and experiences to shape her independent major.
– Leslie Offutt, Vassar College
 - His imagination, his nuanced verbal skills, and his leadership qualities.
– Professor Bruce Bromley,
NYU lecturer in Expository Writing
-

STATISTICAL GRADING FROM 1–5 OF WALDORF GRADUATES
BY COLLEGE PROFESSORS, WITH 5 REPRESENTING OUTSTANDING

Quality	Average Ranking
Initiative	4.8
Social Awareness / Caring for Others	4.8
Communication	4.7
Speaking the Truth	4.7
Ethical Standards	4.6
Problem Solving	4.6
Judgment	4.4
Leadership Style and Effectiveness	4.4

COMPARISON
OF WALDORF STUDENTS
TO UNITED STATES
STUDENT POPULATION

Compared to the general U.S. student population:

- Almost 3 times as many Waldorf graduates study social and behavioral sciences.
- About 50% more Waldorf graduates study science and math.
- Almost 3 times as many Waldorf graduates major in arts and humanities.

I was introduced to Waldorf education by a student and since then have done some research on my own.

I am so favorably impressed that I have enrolled my daughter in a Waldorf program.

– Randy Ruberg
Professor
Hunter College

Fully 94% of the professors said *initiative* and *ethical standards* were among the strongest life skills demonstrated by Waldorf graduates. Similarly, 80% of the professors described the graduates as having *strong leadership skills*.

Waldorf graduates are perceived as thinking flexibly, often “outside the box” and able to integrate seemingly unrelated subjects with clarity and courage. Several professors commended the capacity to think flexibly with creative skills and specifically commented on Waldorf graduates’ willingness to take intellectual risks.

In a time of rising plagiarism on college campuses (fueled by all manner of Internet services and ghost writers), it was striking to hear a professor say of a Waldorf undergraduate that “her social awareness is incredibly high, leadership excellent, ethical and moral standards stellar. I interact with many students. Her demeanor, skills, and social standards are the best I have encountered.” Another professor described the Waldorf student she had taught as “a Renaissance man who has been able to find a balance between his intellectual gifts, his athletic interests, and his high ethical and moral standards.”

YEAR OFF BEFORE COLLEGE

In Phase I of the graduate survey, it was noted that 22.8% of Waldorf seniors who eventually attended college or university opted to take a year first to broaden their life experiences. This number is high because two thirds of the respondents from Canada took a thirteenth year program.

Some of the activities selected for this break in their education included:

- Traveled throughout the United States by motorcycle
- Traveled and backpacked through Europe
- Became a professional forester
- Traveled to Chile to study crafts
- Studied ballet in London, England
- Volunteered at ITESCO in Gaudalajara, Mexico
- Took a year in Italy to become fluent in Italian
- Traveled to Japan sponsored by Rotary International
- Attended culinary school
- Apprenticed with a fashion designer
- Traveled for two years with the "Up With People" program
- Acted in a lead role in a television series in New Zealand
- Apprenticed to a world famous painter in Vienna, Austria
- Fished commercially for crabs in Alaska
- Worked for a year to earn money for college
- Joined the Big Apple Circus
- Became a stonemason building St. John's Cathedral in New York City
- Studied Buddhism at a Zen Retreat for a year
- Worked at an orphanage in Africa

Note: See *Survey of Waldorf Graduates in North America, Phase I*, pp. 41–42, for a full list of activities.

IMPRESSIONS OF WALDORF STUDENTS FROM THEIR EMPLOYERS

Waldorf graduates who entered the work force without starting or completing college were invited to give the names and contact details of their employers, who were then asked to offer anecdotal and statistical descriptions of the Waldorf graduates in their employ. These responses recognize Waldorf graduates for their "amazing creative side, their dependability, their leadership and social awareness," and their standing as a "model of ethical and moral standards."

QUOTES FROM EMPLOYERS ABOUT WALDORF GRADUATES WHO DID NOT ATTEND COLLEGE

- Willingness to go "the extra mile," compatibility, compassion, and enthusiasm.
- If she says she is going to do something, she does it, [and does it] on time. She is willing to substitute for others if they cannot perform their tasks.
- Very flexible. Quick learner. Always picked up everything quickly.
- Continually trying to develop a deeper understanding and is open to new ideas, different aspects, and wider perspectives.
- Works with non-verbal and autistic children for whom she must intuit wishes and needs from non-verbal and other cues. She is thoughtful and caring towards her co-workers.

OCCUPATIONS PURSUED (For those who did not attend or complete college)

Business	21.3%
Performing Arts	19.1%
Other (including military)	14.9%
Fine & Studio Arts	10.6%
Trades & Construction Management	8.5%
Education	8.5%

OCCUPATIONS UNDERTAKEN AFTER EARNING UNDERGRADUATE DEGREES

Ranked most to least frequent for all participants

1943-2005

Education	14.1%
Fine and Studio Arts (including Architecture)	9.8%
Administration, Management, and Development	8.8%
Performing Arts (Broadcasting, Dance, Film, Music, Theater)	8.4%
Health and Medicine	8.0%
Business	6.9%
Various Professions and Trades	6.9%
Publishing, Journalism, and Writing	5.8%
Sciences and Technology	5.8%
Environment, Horticulture, and Agriculture	3.4%
Government, Politics, Lobbying, Planning	3.2%
Not-for-Profit and Volunteer	2.9%
Social and Human Services	2.7%
Advertising and Marketing	2.4%
Trades: Construction and Mechanical	2.4%
Engineering	1.9%
Retail	1.9%
Office and Clerical	1.6%
Law	1.3%
Raising Family	1.3%
Professional Athletics/Sports	0.5%

CRITICISMS OF WALDORF GRADUATES

Of the professors who supplied anecdotal observations, a majority said they had no concerns or criticism at all to offer when asked to identify the weaknesses in the Waldorf students they had taught compared with other students. A few noted some individual weaknesses in writing or computation, and a couple spoke of some emotional naïveté or youthfulness in their Waldorf students. Summing up some mild concerns about several Waldorf students he had taught over the years, one professor concluded, "Given a choice, I would love to educate a Waldorf student anytime."

One former Waldorf student criticized the education "for opening too many areas of interest." As a 28-year-old she and some of her friends found it hard to focus on one occupation because so much in life interested them.

Waldorf graduates strongly link the development of their social awareness to life in the Waldorf classroom, especially if they had been shepherded through the eight years of the elementary school by the same teacher. Though a

few felt "stifled" by the small size of their classes, many reported how closely they related to their classmates and teachers, even to the point of staying in touch with them long after graduating from high school. The closeness of the students, in the words of one student, "forced all of us to overcome our differences and our grudges as quickly as we came by them and taught us how to work through trivial drama and value each other for our true potential."

There were a few graduates who were critical of the emphasis on the arts, and there were others who felt insufficiently challenged due to the wide range of abilities among their classmates. But most graduates felt the full range of subjects required of all students served them well. In the words of one graduate, "It is the well-rounded approach that stands out the most. For me, exposure to the arts and music and learning by doing are the characteristic traits of Waldorf education." In the words of another graduate, "Waldorf education prepared me for anything and everything!" ■

WHAT GRADUATES SAY ABOUT THEIR WALDORF EDUCATION

Self-development, wakefulness to social and community life, as well as balance or “wholeness” were the graduates’ foremost memories of their Waldorf education.

I was asked to describe how my Waldorf education has served me in life—but that’s like asking me how my heart has served me in life! It has been so essential. Now, I am not saying that knitting got me into Yale. But [Waldorf education] helped me develop a vitally important capacity which I would call “cognitive love”—the ability to embrace the world with one’s thinking, to engage one’s mind actively in loving dedication to a brighter future.

– Former Waldorf Student
from the Hartsbrook School

In high school, I gained a foundation in real knowledge that is already evident in college. This is true in math and science, not just in art and history. In chemistry at Rochester Institute of Technology, I can explain to my classmates what happens when a particular acid and a particular base mix because we mixed those chemicals in 10th grade.

Other students learned about acids and bases from textbooks, or their lab experience was not meaningful, and so they cannot picture what happens. Classmates and dorm friends constantly ask me how I know what I know—it’s not that I know more facts than they do, but that I have remembered what I learned and I know how to connect facts to relate them to what I am doing.

– Former Waldorf Student
from the Great Barrington
Rudolf Steiner School

PROFILE OF A WALDORF GRADUATE

- After graduating from Waldorf, attends college (94%)
- Majors in arts/humanities (47%) or sciences/math (42%) as an undergrad
- Graduates or is about to graduate from college (88%)
- Highly values inter-personal friendships (96%)
- Is self-reliant and highly values self confidence (94%)
- Highly values verbal expression (93%) and critical thinking (92%)
- Practices and values “life-long learning” (91%)
- Highly values tolerance of other viewpoints (90%)
- Is highly satisfied in choice of occupation (89%)
- At work cares most about ethical principles (82%) and values helping others (82%)
- Expresses a high level of consciousness in making relationships work—both at home and at work

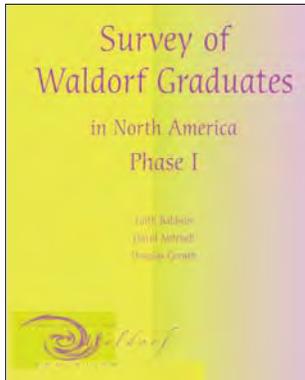
THREE KEY FINDINGS ABOUT WALDORF GRADUATES

1. Waldorf graduates think for themselves and value the opportunity to translate their new ideas into practice. They both value and practice life-long learning and have a highly developed sense for aesthetics.
2. Waldorf graduates value lasting human relationships, and they seek out opportunities to be of help to other people.
3. Waldorf graduates say they are guided by an inner moral compass that helps them navigate the trials and temptations of professional and private life. They carry high ethical principles into their chosen professions.

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Survey of Waldorf Graduates Series

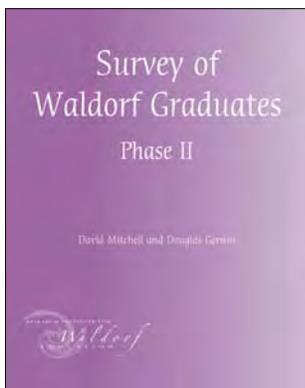
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Survey of Waldorf Graduates, Phase I

This study examines which universities and colleges were attended by Waldorf graduates during the ten years prior to the study. All Waldorf high schools in North America with graduated classes (at the time of the publication) provided data.

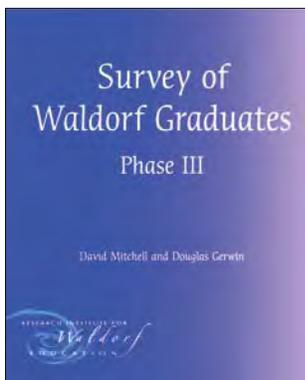
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Survey of Waldorf Graduates, Phase II

This comprehensive study looks at Waldorf graduates from 1943–2005 and what they did following graduation from their Waldorf high schools: which values do they hold in life; what do they value in life due to their education; which honors have they achieved? Included are extensive comments about Waldorf graduates from professors who taught them in college and from employers who hired them. This survey compiles a profile of a typical Waldorf graduate.

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Survey of Waldorf Graduates, Phase III

This study summarizes recent research conducted on Waldorf education in Sweden, Germany, Switzerland, and North America. The full data are analyzed, compared, and criticized. Reflections on Waldorf graduates from professors are analyzed, and constructive criticisms by graduates are offered in the spirit of support for the renewal and growth of Waldorf education.

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