# Standing Out without Standing Alone:
## Profile of Waldorf School Graduates

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Rudolf Steiner did not live to celebrate the first Waldorf school students 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 this 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 37 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 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.

### 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 below 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

1. A full version of the *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.

## Where Are the Respondents Getting Their College Degrees?

| U.S. Colleges and Universities from which Waldorf Alumni/ae Have Most Frequently Graduated | Canadian Colleges and Universities from which Waldorf Alumni/ae Have Most Frequently Graduated |
|---|---|
| 1. Oberlin College (incl. music conservatory) | 1. University of Toronto |
| 2. Hampshire College | 2. University of British Columbia |
| 3. University of California, Santa Cruz | 3. Capilano College |
| 4. Prescott College | 4. Ontario College of Art and Design |
| 5. Bennington College | 5. Simon Fraser University |
| 6. University of California, Berkeley | 6. University of Victoria |
| 7. Earlham College | 7. Burlington College |
| 8. Emerson College, Boston | 8. California College of the Arts |
| 9. Harvard University/Radcliffe College | 9. Concordia University |
| 10. Smith College | 10. Dalhousie University |
| 11. St. John's College | 11. Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design |
| 12. Temple University | 12. McGill University |
| 13. Vassar College | 13. Memorial University of Newfoundland |
| 14. Wesleyan University | 14. Nova Scotia College of Art and Design |
| 15. Adelphi University | 15. Seneca College |
| 16. Amherst College | 16. Toronto School of Homeopathic Medicine |
| 17. Boston University | 17. Trent University |
| 18. Bowdoin College | 18. Vrije Universiteit, Amersterdam |
| 19. Brown University | |
| 20. Cornell University | |

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, Harvard/Radcliffe, 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. College 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.

## 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% |

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.

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 had more confidence in her imagination than did 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 reaffirming 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 responses can be offered, based on the 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.

## 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 sin-

## Occupations Undertaken after Earning Undergraduate Degrees

| *Ranked most to least frequent for all participants* | *1943–2005 all participants* | *1943–1993* | *1994–2001* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Education | 14.1% | 17.2% | 9.1% |
| Fine and Studio Arts (incl. 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% |

gle 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 two percent 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 table (right)—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.

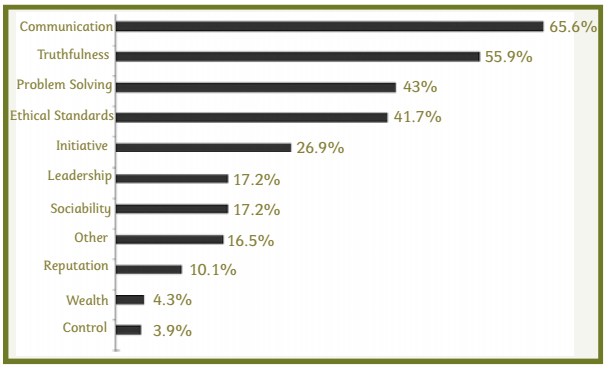
## Work Force Experience Assessment

*(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 other | 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 rank 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 below, 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 rankings 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 lifelong 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 might 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 because of 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," wrote one graduate. "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!"

## 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 and ideas
- 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 are 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 helped 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 and ideas 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 reading or doing 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 detailed 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 report 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-selecting population. The nature of this survey (based by necessity on those graduates who had 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.

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# 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%)