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From the Editor

Ilan Safit

As another challenging year is drawing to a close, we are glad to entrust you with the Fall/Winter issue of the *Research Bulletin*.

The first two articles of the current issue are companion pieces. They both address the question of Waldorf education's European orientation and the need to adapt and rearrange some of the themes, festivals, and traditions that at times seem to define Waldorf education, when the latter is implemented in communities that have a distinctly different heritage, culture, and climate than the ones of Stuttgart and Dornach.

The New Zealander Waldorf educator, Neil Boland, who in recent years emerged as one of the more vocal internal critics of Waldorf's Eurocentrism, co-authored the first article in this issue with Jocelyn Romero Demirbag, an experienced Waldorf educator and administrator based in Hawai'i. Working with Neil's critique and Jocelyn's years of experience in nurturing a located sense of place and belonging in the Hawaiian Waldorf schools, the two describe extensive reflective processes they have conducted with the Honolulu Waldorf School teachers in adapting the curriculum to the cultural heritage of the school's community.

Similarly, Vera Hoffmann, a veteran Waldorf teacher and administrator based in Switzerland, addresses the question of Waldorf's need for adaptation by studying the cultures of two distinctly non-European schools: *Kusi Kawsay* in Peru and the Nairobi Waldorf School in Kenya. What is remarkable in both articles is their combination of conceptual thought, critique, and concrete description of school climate and practice that give rise to a thoughtful evolution within Waldorf education without undermining its deep-seated values and far-reaching worldview.

Tracing their approach to Steiner's initial address to the faculty of the very first Waldorf school as a cycle of practice and self-critique, Boland and Demirbag identify their methodology as what is called nowadays 'action research' – a cycle of planning, acting, observing, reflecting, and introducing modification to pedagogical practice in a perpetual process of optimization. This notion of action research, which received its name and theory in mainstream pedagogical

studies, is also central to another article in this issue, Martyn Rawson's "Life Processes and Learning in Waldorf Pedagogy." Rawson, a consummate theoretician and practitioner of Waldorf education, presents his current study as a chapter in a longer effort to review and refine the practice of Waldorf teaching. For this purpose, Rawson offers in the article published here a set of ten propositions on Waldorf education. True to the approach of reflective and self-critiquing research, Rawson also invites responses and critiques from *Research Bulletin* readers.

Another sign of the commitment of Waldorf educators to meet the changing needs of the time is demonstrated in Jack Palmer's "Understanding and Educating Transgender Youth in the Waldorf School." Addressing the imperative to understand and accommodate the experience of transgender students within the school community, Palmer asks how anthroposophy can guide our thinking and pedagogical practice regarding gender identities, the gender spectrum, and transgender individuals. Working with Steiner's comments on gender, as well as with more recent studies by leading anthroposophist scholars, Palmer demonstrates that transgender individuals are uniquely positioned to advance the understanding of self, other, and the universal human through the fluidity of their gender identity. At the same time, he emphasizes the vulnerability of transgender individuals and the important role of the educational community in accepting and protecting them.

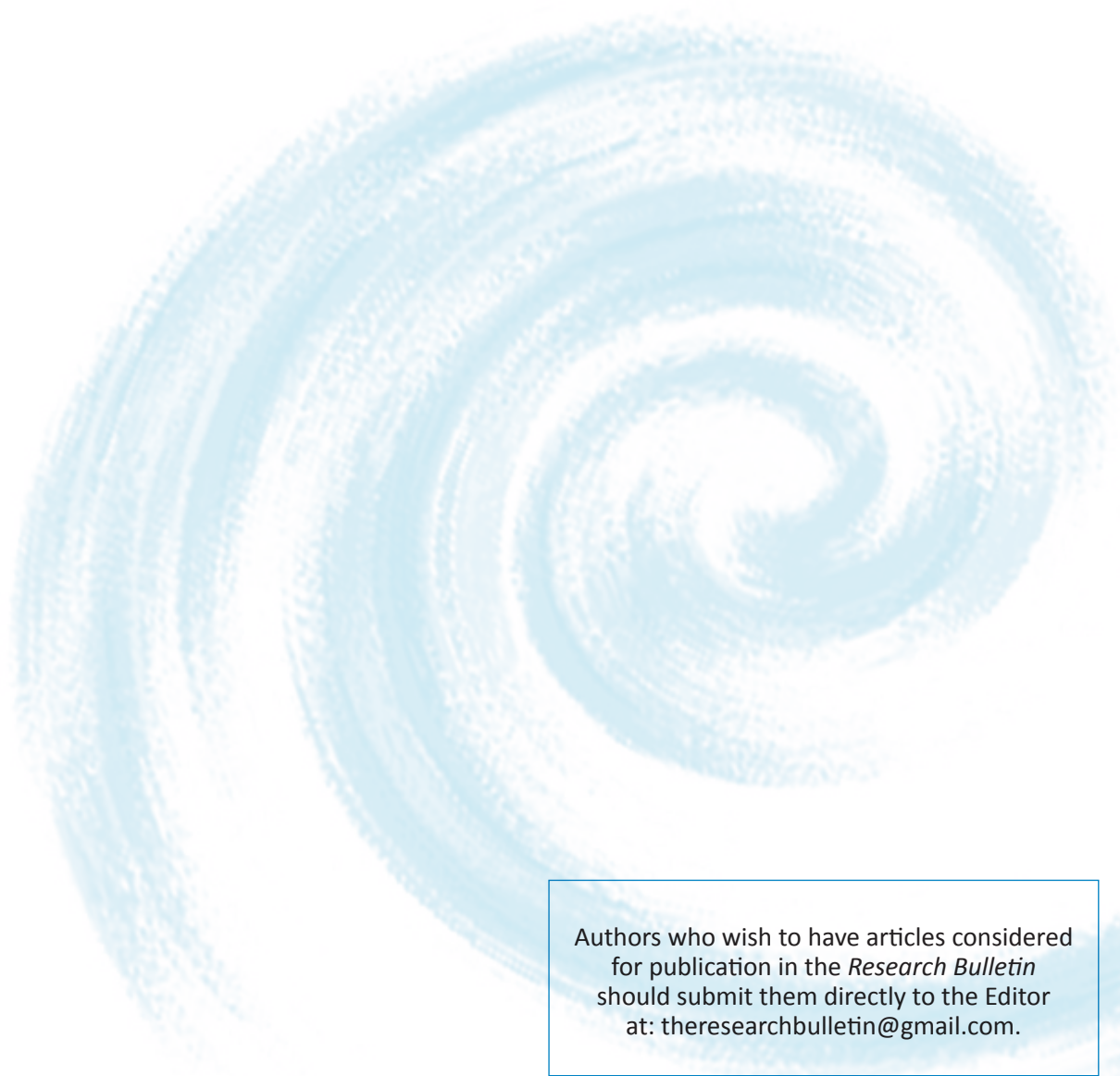
This article is followed by an important internal investigation by Peter Lawton, who is studying the transition of Waldorf elementary school graduates into non-Waldorf high schools. Given that there are far fewer Waldorf high schools than elementary schools in North America, and that Waldorf-raised eighth graders often end up in a non-Waldorf high school, the question studied by Lawton is urgent and important.

Finally, as a coda to the three recent issues of the *Bulletin* dedicated to questions of technology in the Waldorf classroom and beyond, teacher and author John Trevillion, currently of the Chicago Waldorf School, shares here the story of his school's adoption of the Cyber Civics program in the upper elementary

classes and of computer science courses in the high school. The change-of-story suggested in John's title, "Changing the Narrative," is the one in which Waldorf students are offered a guided pathway to a healthy relationship with digital technology, wherein they understand and appreciate the roles of technology in contemporary life while learning to use it thoughtfully. John's brief report turns quickly into an energizing call to the Waldorf community at large, to take on the task of changing the old Waldorf narrative that held technology in certain contempt and prevented, so far, the rise of a fruitful and fully conscious relationship with technology.

As always, the issue concludes with reports from the worlds of Waldorf publications and the ongoing activities of the Research Institute for Waldorf Education, which seems to be working overtime these days in preparation for Waldorf's centennial and the much anticipated study of Waldorf School Graduates, to be published in 2019.

We wish you pleasant, thoughtful, and helpful readings.



Authors who wish to have articles considered for publication in the *Research Bulletin* should submit them directly to the Editor at: theresearchbulletin@gmail.com.

Honolulu Teachers Explore Place Teaching Through Aloha¹

Neil Boland and Jocelyn Romero Demirbag

Introduction

This article documents a communal process of investigating aspects of place and belonging in Waldorf education. It records the unfinished journey of a community of teachers in Jocelyn's school in Honolulu, Hawai'i, and explores questions, tensions, and contradictions that surfaced during a two-year process. The values we bring to the research revolve around inclusion, social justice, and lived spirituality. These values are well-expressed by the Hawaiian concept of "aloha," which denotes warmth, acceptance, and inclusion extended to everyone. This concept is defined by Native Hawaiian cultural practitioners, Pono Shim and Ramsay Taum, as "an action... a natural response of respect, love and reciprocity ... Aloha is to be in the presence of life, to share the essence of one's being with openness, honesty, and humility, it is a way of behaving, a way of life. It is a commitment to being real. It is a commitment to accepting others and giving dignity to who they are and what they have to offer ... It is a spiritual principle that conveys the deepest expression of one's relationship with oneself, the creative and life-giving forces, one's family and community, and with one's friends and strangers."²

Furthermore, we find that the Hawaiian cultural belief that the land is alive with spirit meshes well with the anthroposophical view of human-cosmos relations. A part of our view of lived spirituality, then, is the idea that "human beings are spiritual beings impacted by larger beings present in the land and in the cosmos, and that recognizing these beings may cause us to flourish, achieve our personal missions, and evolve" (Demirbag, 2015, p. 74). In the current project, this metaphysical approach takes the form of strengthening the relationship to the land, to one's surroundings, and to the elements of nature; we have termed it: *(re) inhabiting the curriculum*.

Our project of auditing the curriculum at Honolulu Waldorf School is motivated by the question: to

what degree is the Waldorf curriculum identifiably Eurocentric when used in places where Polynesian cultures live strongly. In particular, Neil wanted to trouble and destabilize unreflected practice, challenge passively-accepted norms, and investigate how aspects of place were dealt with in a Waldorf school in the Pacific. The concept of auditing Waldorf education was suggested by Aonghus Gordon (in Hougham 2012, p. 70), but to our knowledge, this is the first time it has been attempted (and documented) by a community of teachers. In this article, we approach the curriculum through an audit of place. Further, we use our values of aloha and lived spirituality as standards of judgement by which we document and observe steps taken along the path by a community of teachers (K-12) exploring notions of place and belonging within the structure of the Waldorf curriculum taught in Honolulu. Taking an approach similar to that of McNiff and Whitehead (2010), we use these values to explain how we are working to generate a living educational theory of practice.

Literature Review

Laidlaw identifies the values she introduces into her work and research as *standards of judgment*. "These standards of judgement help me to frame my educational practice and theorising" (Laidlaw, 2008, p. 74). With our values of diversity and lived anthroposophy as standards of judgment, we reviewed critical literature which deals with the critique of eurocentrism, colonization, and dogma principally within Waldorf education, but also more generally. We conclude that the notions of a "sense of place" and "homecoming" found within the literature we have reviewed are in harmony with our own standards of judgment. When speaking about his hopes for the budding Waldorf school, Steiner spoke repeatedly about the need to 'read the child', to adapt the education to the needs of the child (Wiechert 2014a). He envisioned teaching to be a path of exploration, of constant questioning, of critique. In essence, all Waldorf teachers were expected to be action researchers; namely, following observations with practical solutions to perceived problems. In his first lecture to the new faculty, Steiner stated: "We want to transform what

¹ A different version of this article was published in the *Educational Journal of Living Theories* under the title (Re)inhabiting Waldorf education: Honolulu teachers explore the notion of place. It can be found at <http://ejolts.net/node/309>.

² This description of aloha appears on posters titled "What is Aloha?" placed at various public locations in Hawai'i such as the Kahului Airport.

we can gain through anthroposophy into truly practical instruction. ... We will practice teaching and critique it through discourse" (Steiner, 1919a, p. 30-31).

Speaking out of her experience of Waldorf schools in the United States and Brazil, de Souza comments that the Waldorf curriculum "privileges a certain body of knowledge (it is visibly Eurocentric) and neglects important cultural, economical, and political issues" (de Souza, 2012, p. 60). The aspect of Waldorf education identified here goes against the standards of judgment we hold regarding the central importance of diversity and inclusion.

For a number of years, teachers and academics have been drawing attention to the fact that, despite its evident achievement of being adopted in an increasing number of countries, there are specific issues regarding the contextualization and localization of Waldorf education and, specifically, how it manifests in non-European contexts. In the United States, Vernon Dewey has reported on the lack of racial diversity among teaching staff in Waldorf schools (Dewey, 2012). Wiechert and Sagarin have sought to expose 'Waldorf myths'—practices applied uncritically by Waldorf teachers and that turned, over time, into traditions despite sometimes being completely at odds with Steiner's intentions (Sagarin, 2003, 2008; Wiechert, 2014b). Though it has been claimed within the movement that "for some time Waldorf education has ceased being a Eurocentric education movement" (Kullak-Ublick, 2012), de Souza's comments above indicate the opposite, namely that established European or Eurocentric traditions still play an over-large part in pedagogical practice in Waldorf settings, notwithstanding the schools' widening geographic and cultural diversity. This is supported by research undertaken among Māori teachers in New Zealand (Boland, 2015).

Ida Oberman wrote in 2008 that "normative constructs" within the Waldorf curriculum limit processes of adaptation to local cultural contexts. "The curriculum remains remarkably unchanged, even under the last decade's pressures to disavow Eurocentrism... even in inner-city Milwaukee, the Waldorf teachers continue to tell the Norse myth of Odin and Thor" (Oberman, 2008, p. 13). Two years later, Rawson highlighted an overall lack of criticality,

which can be observed when Waldorf schools are established in different cultures and contexts:

Waldorf education is being offered in more than 60 countries and is growing rapidly with major new areas of development in Asia. In the process of becoming global, it has spread from its origins in Europe, yet it has barely begun to reflect critically on what this expansion means in terms of the transmission of ideas into different cultures and different settings. (Rawson, 2010, p. 2)

Aonghus Gordon put this expansion in stronger terms, questioning whether it is a form of colonization, establishing settler outposts overseas to bring civilizing influences to those in need of them.

There are many different levels of colonialism, and not only the economic model but also the spiritual mode, and it would be imperative in any school right now, in my view, to actually do its own audit of the time and place.

(Quoted in Hougham, 2012, p. 70)

The notion of Waldorf curriculum as colonizing force may seem harsh, but using the language of colonization is legitimized by Neil's research findings (Boland, 2015). At least in a New Zealand context, a degree of disenfranchisement of Indigenous Māori within Waldorf schools was perceptible, though this has changed markedly since the publication of Neil's

research. Growing awareness of these issues led Neil to put an increasing amount of time into challenging unconscious cultural biases in Waldorf education.

Raghavan (2018) calls for increased diversity in curricula, in classrooms and beyond. At the same time, she points out the need to do more than "reform space" or engage in an additive or contributionist attitude to diversity, which recognizes and acknowledges minority groups but still essentially regards them

as "Other" (Boland, 2015). Raghavan further states the need to assess and then to "redistribute" the hidden power relationships within the curriculum, in order to advance towards a "truly democratic, decolonial" education.

Our project of auditing the curriculum at Honolulu Waldorf School is motivated by the question to what degree is the Waldorf curriculum identifiably Eurocentric when used in places where Polynesian cultures live strongly.

Gordon's reference above to a colonialism in the "spiritual mode" can be linked to the assertion made by Wes Jackson, in his book, *Becoming native to this place* (1996), where he states: "Conquerors are seldom interested in a thoroughgoing discovery of where they really are" (Jackson, 1996, p. 15). This point is further expanded by Tina Evans, who argues that "the abuse of place by modern conquerors derives, in part, from perceptions of conquered spaces as other" (Evans, 2012, p. 155). This 'othering', which prevents significant interaction with the indigenous culture by confining it to an exotic status, incomparable to the one brought over by the conquerors, can be countered by non-Indigenous inhabitants working to establish living connections with their surroundings and becoming what Jackson calls "homecomers," prepared to "dig in" and begin "the long search and experiment to become native" (Jackson, 1996, p.97).

Approaching the question from a different angle, Gregory Cajete (2010), in critiquing the approach to the issues of environmental sustainability taken by the education system in the United States, argues for a notion of a "(re)inhabitation" of the environment and an ever-closer experience of one's locality.

Our own work engages with the notion of "(re)inhabitation" while resisting the perception of "conquered spaces as other," an effort advanced through the Hawaiian concept of *aloha*.

The Context of Honolulu

Honolulu is a diverse city with a predominantly Asian population (42.2%), followed by groups categorized as two or more races (21.6%), "white alone" (19.5%), and then by Native Hawaiians, Hispanic or Latino, Black or African Americans, and American Indians and Alaska Natives (United States Census Bureau 2015). With 41% of its students attending private schools, the city offers a broad array of educational choices (Demirbag, 2014). These include some of the largest and oldest schools west of the Rockies; America's wealthiest independent school (which is the only school limited to students of Native Hawaiian ancestry); schools that subscribe to educational philosophies such as those of Maria Montessori and Rudolf Steiner; America's first Buddhist high school; International Baccalaureate schools; public schools that implement Hawaiian language immersion streams; and numerous charter schools, including culturally-based schools. It is a city that in many ways epitomizes diversity, inclusion, and aloha.

Honolulu is also a city that has been colonized; first culturally, by American missionaries in 1820, then nationally, with the American overthrow of the Hawaiian government in 1893, and later, in 1896, linguistically, as the Hawaiian language was forbidden in schools across the state ('Aha Pūnana Leo 2015). The Hawaiian cultural renaissance of the 1970s ultimately led to widespread interest in the Hawaiian culture, to the start of Hawaiian language private immersion preschools in the 1980s, and then to the opening of Hawaiian language public immersion schools that run K-12 classes. In this area, rapid progress has been made. In 1984, there were fewer than 30 native Hawaiian speakers under 18; currently there are 23 Hawaiian immersion public and charter schools throughout the state (Department of Education 2017), and it is estimated that approximately 10,000 youth now speak Hawaiian in Hawai'i ('Imiloa 2017). In addition, the study of Hawaiian history is now required in the public school system. The Hawaiian culture is alive and well in Hawai'i and there is a marked and increasing sensitivity towards issues of colonization.

Hawai'i's sense of place reflects the often deep relationship that residents have with their environment, describing this relationship as one would describe a relationship with a loved one (Olivera, 2014; Lindsey, 2006). The Department of Education in Hawai'i recently developed for all public school a series of outcomes that recognize the importance of place in a child's life.

What makes Hawai'i, Hawai'i – a place unlike anywhere else – are the unique values and qualities of the indigenous language and culture. 'O Hawai'i ke kahua o ka ho'ona'auao.' Hawai'i is the foundation of our learning. Thus the following learning outcomes, Nā Hopena A'o, are rooted in Hawai'i, and we become a reflection of this special place. (Nā Hopena A'o 2015, p. 2)

This personal relationship with place corresponds directly with our understanding of a lived spirituality—viewing the individual as a part of the cosmos and acknowledging that there are spiritual beings connected to the land which can be experienced.

Recognizing the nature of a "special place" has numerous precedents in literature. D. H. Lawrence writes in the first chapter of his *Studies in Classic American Literature*, "Different places on the face of the earth have different vital effluence, different vibration, different chemical exhalation, different polarity with different stars; call it what you like. But the spirit of

place is a great reality” (Lawrence, 1923, p. 17). We believe that Steiner’s Waldorf education can—and must—also acknowledge the effect and power of place in a child’s education. (Re)inhabiting place—its spirit, land, culture, people, values—is a central aspect of Waldorf education. It requires us to live anthroposophy—to acknowledge our relationship with the cosmos, and to work on inner development. Thus, living anthroposophy helps us to integrate place and to live aloha—and vice versa.

Methodology

We chose action research as the basic methodology of this study. It is a model highlighted by Steiner in the initial address to teachers when at the very first Waldorf school: “We will practice teaching and critique it through discourse” (Steiner, 1919a, p. 31). It is a method that acknowledges that the standards we bring to research are socially constructed (Thayer-Bacon, 2003). In addition, the premises of action research resonate strongly with Steiner’s objective of social renewal through restructuring society’s cultural, political, and economic spheres, and with the goals of education in general (Steiner, 1919b). McNiff and Whitehead emphasize that the goals of action research include social renewal through improving practice, explaining practice, and holding ourselves accountable in our practice (McNiff & Whitehead, 2010).

We engaged in the process of a standard action research cycle: plan – act – observe – reflect, before moving to the next iteration of the cycle and starting to reflect again. Not only did this method allow for emergent themes and planning, but it also recognized our reality of two practitioners sharing ideas, deciding to move one way, touching base on the progress, and then setting up another cycle for exploration. In its simplest expression, we acknowledged three feedback loops for our reflective listening and adjusting practice (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013). In this way, the methodology can be seen as developmentally transformational, allowing us to address new questions as they arise in the research process, and to generate a living educational theory (McNiff & Whitehead, 2010). Action research also allows this on-going process of reflecting, planning, acting, and observing, and then reflecting again to start a new cycle in order to explicitly acknowledge and utilize the values and intentions held by practitioners—in this case, the teachers of Honolulu Waldorf School.

You decided to take action to improve the situation, first by improving your understanding of how you were positioned in that situation. You began

to make your tacit knowledge explicit. You and others worked collaboratively to raise your colleagues’ tacit knowledge about your shared values to a conscious level. You offered reasons for your actions. You are able to share how you tried to exercise your educational influence in your own and other people’s learning, so that you all became more reflective and aware of your positioning in social situations, in order also to take action to improve those situations by influencing others. You are now able to demonstrate how your actions are underpinned by moral commitment, and how you are aiming to help other people also to understand the need for moral accountability. You are aiming to transform practice into praxis at an individual and collective level.

(McNiff & Whitehead, 2010, p. 191)

Our hope was that repeated cycles of reflection at Honolulu Waldorf School would uncover aspects of the school’s hidden curriculum. The latter term refers to “an implicit curriculum that expresses and represents attitudes, knowledge, and behaviors, which are conveyed or communicated without aware intent; it is conveyed indirectly by words and actions that are parts of the life of everyone in a society” (Alsubaie, 2015). As a next step, the faculty could start creating an explicit curriculum, consciously addressing the concept of place in the education.

The initial process the school went through looked as follows:

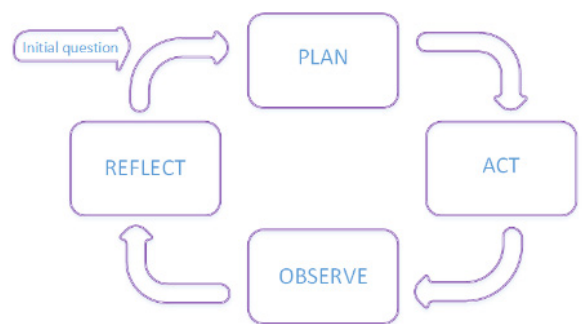


FIGURE 1: The basic action research loop

The school community has been discussing the role of Hawaiian culture and values in the school for many years since its founding, and regularly included chant, hula, and Hawaiian protocol as part of important communal gatherings and meetings. Native Hawaiians were hired to teach hula and conduct blessings of the school and its work.

For the purpose of this study, we refer to the work that began after Jocelyn arrived at the school and before Neil got involved as ‘Cycle 1’. Jocelyn had begun an exploration of the impact of place on a school, continuing work she had done in her dissertation and at the Haleakala Waldorf School:

Upon completing my Dissertation in Practice (DiP), I carried the thread I was following with me and soon realized that it was actively shaping my leadership. I was applying the ideas presented in my research and conference workshops to my new school’s direction, the kuleana³ of its mission, and the presentation of its curriculum. As a school we explored the history of the land beneath the buildings and asked questions: who had owned it and lived here, and what did the family that gave the land to the school stand for? What values did they support that allowed them to make this gift, and what kuleana did we accept when we accepted this land fifty-five years ago? Today my living educational theory of practice (McNiff & Whitehead 2010) is that understanding what is imprinted or ensouled in the land beneath the school, along with the intentions of the school’s founding families, will reveal the school’s kuleana and serve as the foundation of a living mission (Kornberger 2016). It will form the backbone of Honolulu Waldorf School’s unique form of social justice that is the purpose of Waldorf education (Neil Boland, personal communication, February 13, 2016). And the school will flourish once we can articulate this unique kuleana and mission, attracting those families who resonate with it.

(Alencastre, Demirbag, et al., 2017, p. 230)

The Cycle unfolded as follows:

Initial question:

What is the nature of the location of Honolulu Waldorf School (HWS) and how does it impact the mission of the school today? The historical timeline of HWS was superimposed on the historical timeline of the land where the school is located in order to uncover repeated patterns or themes in the school’s history in relation to its interaction with place (April-May 2015). These questions expressed Jocelyn’s belief that the founding and historical values of an organization directly impact the ‘being’ of that organization even fifty years later and stem directly from her value of lived spirituality.

3 Kuleana can be described briefly as “responsibility.”

Planning:

Jocelyn developed a faculty in-service program that aimed to connect teachers to sense of place (June 2015). She believed that a teacher cannot assist children in developing a relationship with place unless that teacher is first developing her own relationship to/with place.

Acting:

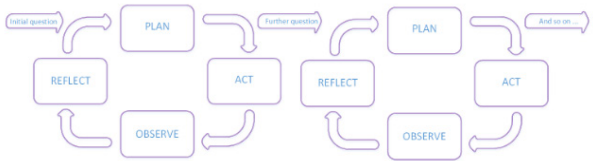
Jocelyn executed the in-service to include experiences of cultural practices and to conduct community service work at a cultural site near the school (Kanewai Spring) along with departments discussing methods of integrating sense of place into the curriculum (August 2015). She hoped that these discussions would increase faculty consciousness of the many ways that the curriculum could be localized. She also hoped that the experience of community service to benefit the land would help to foster a sense of responsibility to care for where we live—aloha ‘aina—or love for the land, an expressed value of the school.

Observing:

Jocelyn observed faculty in terms of what they chose to implement from their list of possible curriculum changes (Fall 2015). The big question was, would an increased consciousness of place lead to change in teacher practice?

FIGURE 2: Continuation of the cycle

Cycle 2 of the school’s investigation into place picked up momentum when a faculty member introduced



Jocelyn to Neil. The decisive step was that Neil then agreed to be the keynote speaker at the regional February conference in 2016. His talks provided clear motivation for faculty to look at what they were doing, as a school and as individual practitioners, and provided the impetus for the group to investigate changing its practice.

Reflecting:

Faculty member introduced Jocelyn to Neil; we held a series of skyped discussions on sense of place (June 2015). These extended, exploratory conversations allowed the two of us to get to know each other, and to identify and then explore common interests, values, and concerns. What became clear over a short period

of time was our mutual interest in the importance of 'place' in pedagogy⁴ and the significance of establishing this link to place in childhood. The conversation widened to take in pedagogical approaches which help establish a connection to place and others which hinder it (Gruenewald, 2013; Kornberger, 2016; Malone, 2012).

Planning:

Jocelyn discussed the idea of using sense of place as a theme with the school's leadership group (August 2015) and of having Neil as the keynote speaker for the annual Pacific Rim Waldorf conference to be held in Hawai'i in order to gauge their support for this idea. The conference organizers decided that all workshop presenters would develop a field trip that connected to their workshop in order for participants to have a direct experience with the land.

Acting:

The conference was held in Hawai'i (Feb 2016), where participants listened to Neil's keynote talks, took part in artistic activities, attended workshops, and went on field studies all connected to the theme of the day's keynote and to place. As an integral part of the conference, all participants responded artistically to the day's work by working with pastels. Participants consistently remarked on the "flow" and "breath" of the conference that the art and field trips provided.

Observing:

Jocelyn observed faculty in terms of what curricular changes were made after the conference, and faculty observed each other (Spring 2016). Again, we posed the question: Did consciously expressing our values regarding place impact faculty practice?

In Cycle 3 we initiated a formal research discussion between us, including a written reflection two months after the conference and another audit prep session four months after the conference. The purpose of gathering teachers' reflections at these stages was to look consciously into the process that teachers go through when reconsidering the values they bring to their own practices.

4 "Place-based education might be characterized as the pedagogy of community, the reintegration of the individual into her homeland and the restoration of the essential links between a person and her place. [...] Place-based education challenges the meaning of education by asking seemingly simple questions: Where am I? What is the nature of this place? What sustains this community? It often employs a process of re-storying, whereby students are asked to respond creatively to stories of their homeland so that, in time, they are able to position themselves, imaginatively and actually, within the continuum of nature and culture in that place. They become a part of the community, rather than a passive observer of it" (Lane-Zucker, 2004, Foreword).

Reflecting:

Jocelyn asked teachers to write their reflections two months after the conference as to what still seemed significant to them in April 2016, and then again in June 2016; teachers also shared their experiences in conversation with their colleagues and observed how others were beginning to make attitudinal or curricular changes. This was an opportunity for teachers to actively learn from each other as they explored how place could come into the curriculum.

Planning:

(Mar 2016) Jocelyn and Neil developed the format for conducting an audit of the school's curriculum in August 2016. We hoped that providing a formal opportunity for faculty to reflect on their actions together would serve as the basis for stimulating action toward change as they saw how some of their peers were actively engaging with an effort to rework the curriculum.

Acting:

Neil returned to HWS to lead an audit of the curriculum focusing on place (Aug 2016). This happened over the course of three days. Neil led a mixture of plenum sessions and work in small groups, often subject- or sector-based. Questions he asked included:

- What in the school and in the teaching connects students to the place where they live, what disconnects? How does this differ by sector (early childhood/primary/secondary)?
- How are cultures represented in the school? What is the hidden curriculum within the teaching plan? Do teachers want to work with this?
- With which communities does the school engage? Which does it not engage with? How is it seen in the local and wider community?
- Can we identify 'low-hanging fruit' which can profitably be addressed first?

Following service work at Kanewai Spring, Jocelyn led the grades teachers (1-8) in a meditative meeting there and also made arrangements for a traditional weaving workshop using coconut fronds (see figure 8 below). This was based on the idea that teachers who have taken part in and are comfortable with Hawaiian culturally-based experiences would be much more likely to offer such experiences to their children.

Observing:

Jocelyn observed faculty implement changes in their curriculum based on the audit, and faculty learned from each other how they might continue to work with this topic of place (Fall 2016). The social construction and evaluation of values in action were key elements to teachers learning from each other and provided us with evidence that our values were having an effect on the faculty as teachers actively began adapting curriculum.

Findings

The findings below focus on the faculty voices expressing changes they had noticed in themselves or in their practice over a period of one year, especially around notions of place and belonging, following the February 2016 conference with Neil as keynote speaker. They exemplify a community learning together, learning from each other, and actively working with the values that we introduced.

In recalling the conference two months after it had happened, the primary theme expressed was that Hawai'i is unique both as a place and in its identity. Three principal motifs emerged within this theme:

- connecting to our place and to the Hawaiian culture
- providing a mirror to our children that includes our environment—the animals, plants, trees, etc. around them
- acknowledging the many cultures within Hawai'i

Important ideas that teachers retained included (in their own words):

- “The idea that children should be reflected in the images in the environment around them”
- “To seek the knowledge and wisdom of the place where we are and infuse ourselves and the curriculum with that”
- “Hawai'i's position in the Pacific, and the relationship between Hawai'i, anthroposophy, and the culture of the Hawaiian peoples”
- “The place and communities are of great interest to me, coming from Indigenous roots myself and being a Waldorf teacher—I love Waldorf education but have a hard time when the communities they are in are not reflected back to the people. I have been

very aware—painfully aware of this for a very, very long time”

The secondary theme that emerged was formulated in the question, How do we take action as teachers? Here we tried to observe whether any of the values that we stressed had an effect. The teachers wished to put ideas into action. Some of the suggestions were what we had expected—using local geography, stories, plants, and animals. But other suggestions were indicative of the inner work which is a key part of the work of Waldorf teachers, and the basis for a lived spirituality. Teachers stated that they needed to question why they do what they do, and they needed to work on themselves—on their own perceptions and reflections. This is the work critical to unlocking the hidden curriculum.

- “I really try to decipher the hidden curriculum, to question why we do things—how it serves the children. I'd like it to help me help my colleagues to work together for a better understanding of the timelessness and relevance of the core aspects of the education—once I have better clues as to what those really are.”
- “Each one of us has the power to make a difference in the world—through lifestyle choices, through attitude adjustments (getting rid of a colonial mind-set), and through social and political engagement with the world. As a teacher I can use the Waldorf school curriculum to change the world—one child at a time. However, first I must change myself to live what I want to teach.”
- “To not simply repeat or regurgitate Waldorf dogma but to make these teaching experiences our own and come to an individualized understanding of teaching the content. We promote (as educators) critical thinking skills of our students. So we then, too, must be critical thinkers. This is where the freedom is found.”
- “I feel the major issue that stops us from growth, transformation, and renewal is a clinging to the old, traditional dogma that doesn't serve anything except some warped ego.”
- “I could not separate the place from the communities around—to Native peoples these two are especially intertwined—there is not one without the other.”

Within two months of the conference, a number of teachers had already taken action primarily focused on

incorporating a sense of place into their teaching. They told stories that included Hawaiian culture, Hawaiian animals, and Hawaiian plants. They also actively looked at the plants, animals, and insects on campus, and planted kalo (taro).

- “To transform many archetypal stories and use the Hawaiian resources and actual places, using more material from nature.”
- “I am really working with the images, people and stories of this place creatively. For example I made a story about Mango Menehune. Menehune are little people of legends here, and mangos grow here. I made up puppets for the story and a song. I have really enjoyed this work.”

It is important to note that when asked which of the three conference focus areas were relevant and which needed more focus, the concept of time stood out almost equally to the concept of place. Indeed, for some of the teachers it was quite difficult to separate place, time, and community; it became clear that, like the nature of the curriculum we teach, these three areas are integrated. The anthroposophical perspective is that children choose this place to incarnate as human beings, as well as this time and the communities in this place (Steiner, 1919a).

- “All of them are absolutely important! They all assist the students with a better understanding of their identity and purpose in life. It is imperative that what we teach is consistent with where we are.”
- “All are relevant: what are we doing to turn off the community around us? How can we show what we are doing is relevant for today? How can we incorporate the spirit and essence of this place into our work, our mission, our kuleana [responsibility]?”
- “We are gardening with the children and exploring natural resources. Will these resources be here next year? How can we live so that everyone, everywhere can live as well as we do, even into the future?”

Other teachers did not feel called upon to immerse themselves into the Hawaiian culture, and had not yet taken any steps to integrate the conference themes;

however, when asked about their thoughts regarding why we do what we do, they responded positively.

- “I love the idea of questioning (then studying) why we do what we do. This has made a willingness to be open to new Waldorf ideas more pronounced. I will hope that it helps us all to come to our own connections with our work.”

In June 2016, four months after the conference, Jocelyn led the faculty in a prep session for the audit that was to come in August. A series of questions was developed by Neil and reviewed by Jocelyn, with teachers answering some of them individually and others through group discussions. Individually, two thirds of the faculty stated that they related to the following statement posed by Neil:

The teacher needs to feel free to explore the spiritual foundations of the curriculum day by day, to put it into practice according to his or her insight. If this path does not happen, the curriculum first becomes a worn-out path, then tradition, and finally a mere list of norms which have to be adhered to. (Denjean, 2014, p. 20)

They recognized that if they did not make the curriculum their own, or if they implemented curriculum as a tradition or a “supposed to” rather than as well-thought-out instruction, meaning was lost, both for themselves and for the students.

The majority of teachers felt the freedom to implement the curriculum as they wished, but some believed there was not enough specificity regarding what exactly must be taught. Others thought that there was not enough deep consideration of the spiritual foundations. A few teachers thought that things were just fine. At

the counter-pole, at least one teacher expressed the opinion that we projected a worn-out path to the community and were hanging onto other traditions that were no longer relevant (i.e., St. Nicholas celebration). Another felt we have no basis for even knowing what path we are on.

- “As a school, we don’t share enough of what we do to know if the curriculum is actively taken up or if it is just seen as norms we adhere to.”

Hawai‘i’s sense of place reflects the often deep relationship that residents have with their environment, describing this relationship as one would describe a relationship with a loved one.

- “The curriculum content for teachers is clear, but the inner work and reflection are not. Perhaps this is why so few people can pursue this path daily. Active spiritual work and sharing with the support of older, wiser colleagues would help everyone. I worked from tradition.”
- “I would like to believe that I open up to see what the children are showing me they need from each lesson I bring. I sometimes feel bound or that I am rogue against the school’s ‘traditions.’ Because of the work, I sometimes rely on ‘worn-out paths’ of what I did the first time [I took a class] through [a cycle of eight years] or a colleague’s suggestion but it usually morphs into what is needed. The school has a clear list of norms and traditions that sometimes feels stifling.”
- “Freedom without form is not healthy or balanced. For this statement to be complete and balanced I think there must be some mention of form. Otherwise we become lazy and use the statement ‘I am spiritual’ to defend our actions. ... I often feel that it is this over-dependence on saying that one is working out of a spiritual foundation that leads to this worn-out path. I see it as often those who consider themselves hard-core anthroposophists that tend to say things like “that’s not Waldorf” and so keep us from transforming.”
- “I think that many of us are on the worn-out path saying, “This is how we do it and how it’s done here.” Some people push, but most seem to want to remain comfortable. Do what’s been done before. I think we are sometimes rigid in what year we do what. The rigidity gives us security without having to think.”
- “I believe that in this school there is deep awareness of the spiritual foundation of our work and that we are sincerely striving to manifest it.”
- “I’m not sure how to explore the spiritual foundations of the curriculum day by day but I do try to explore this and give it mindfulness and attention when I am planning for the week, but day by day I’m not quite sure about how to penetrate that fully.”
- “I feel I am allowed the freedom with my curriculum to implement as I choose. I feel our school does lack accountability for teaching specific topics that are agreed upon to cover. Sometimes, with too much freedom and no accountability, we can become less than we should be.”

The quotations cited above indicate the marked range of opinions present in the faculty regarding their satisfaction with the curriculum. A frequently-cited reason for those who are discontent was time—there was not enough time to plan, to reconsider curriculum, or to discuss curriculum with colleagues. Others felt that they were being judged by their colleagues when they tried something new. And a couple of teachers were very content in their own personal freedom.

- “I am finding my way in this regard. I cannot speak as to where my colleagues are, nor where our school is. I could deepen my work with more time for personal expression and experience and development of my program and fewer hats to wear.”
- “I would like to spend time planning using the school’s curriculum guide yet not feel judged by others as I take risks in new areas. It is difficult to try new things with criticism or self-doubt that I’m on the right path. I like bringing ideas to the group to be worked on together but colleagues often feel threatened by looking at ideas outside of the box. Give each person a chance to heal and grow without pre-conceived notions or cultural restrictions. Strong, clear, direct meeting facilitator with no ego but lots of support.”
- “I really appreciate the freedom though I usually talk it over with those in the art department to talk it through and get input (which is usually positive and adds depth). I don’t really want to change it. I think my colleagues feel the same way.”

When Jocelyn asked whether the school was “mono-cultural, Eurocentric, middle class/privileged, disinterested in others, unconsciously arrogant, and guardians of the truth” (Boland, 2015, p. 195), responses were mixed. Groups of faculty stated that school traditions are Eurocentric and others cited a list of multicultural events at the school to demonstrate that the school was not Eurocentric, though having non-European events does not in itself negate the possibility of Eurocentrism. Teachers provided examples of being unconsciously arrogant or ‘guardians of truth,’ and others felt that we were open to learning from others. Some felt that being disinterested in others is an institutional characteristic for all schools rather than a Waldorf tendency, and a lack of diversity was also recognized. Part of the value of this process was to highlight myths and judgements that are prevalent in the school, often unspoken but nonetheless present:

- “He’s not Waldorf trained, you know...” (unconscious arrogance)
- “Steiner’s anthroposophy and the ‘Christ impulse’ is perceived by many as Eurocentric or exclusive but this was not his intent or understanding at all... this misunderstanding is at the CORE of the ‘Eurocentric’ misunderstanding.”
- “Explore colonialism and what it does to the mind” (teacher: non-local; student: local)
- “Guardians of truth—‘college of teachers’ attitude”
- “Unconsciously arrogant/rely[ing] on tradition” — especially in regards to the length of time a teacher remains with a single class.

One group focused more on the positive expressions of these myths: There are “values and deficits to tradition”; “We struggle with collaborative work”; “We agreed with about 50% of the list”; “We are open to learning from others”; and “We are not Eurocentric—May Day, hula, Salsa Night, Japanese, Spanish.” Interestingly, the Hawaiian version of May Day, and Spanish language and culture are not seen as European. Whether or not these many cultural activities are “additive,” “recognitive,” or “redistributive” has not yet been questioned or discussed by the school (Raghavan, 2018). Has the school in fact “ceded” curricular “power” by giving precious curricular space to a host of cultural perspectives taught by native participants of those cultures? Where is the line between “recognitive” and “redistributive”? Does the line come through explicit discussion or is implicit presentation “sufficient”? This may be the next avenue of exploration.

The biggest hindrance cited that prevents the school from being the school it could be was the lack of collegial understanding:

- “Lack of harmony. We do not understand each other. Difficulty making decisions”
- “Need sharing/dialogue/collaboration to deepen community and relationships”

- “Cannot transcend disharmony without time to share and develop interest in each other”
- “Biography work needed”
- The need to “work as a We, not as a group of individuals” was also cited.

These hindrances point to one of the most common Waldorf school conundrums—that having teachers involved so deeply in school administration requires a significant amount of time that takes away from time preparing for one’s classes. (Waldorf schools are traditionally governed by the teachers themselves as a republican body. This means that on top of a typical teacher’s work of preparing for classes, they must also spend time meeting in committees to plan faculty evaluations, hire teachers, consider the state of the buildings and grounds, discuss marketing ideas, etc.) The same is true for spending time getting to know each other’s gifts and biographies so that harmonious working is more possible. We must work to understand who we are, learn how to work together and to resolve conflicts. A “lack of harmony” points to the possibility that the teachers were not actively working with the value of aloha as something they needed to engage in as colleagues.

[F]or some of the teachers it was quite difficult to separate place, time, and community; it became clear that, like the nature of the curriculum we teach, these three areas are integrated.

Ultimately, in preparing for the August audit, teachers were grateful for the opportunity to reflect on these questions. Statements included that the process allowed them to stand in the shoes of their peers and “look at our community through the eyes of our colleagues,” and to “change the impulse behind our curriculum choices.” They asked for more time to continue discussing the

issues that surfaced and for help in knowing how to move forward with the thoughts and questions that had been set in motion. The longer teachers worked with the questions, the deeper was the thought and the greater the engagement with answers. Jocelyn and Neil felt encouraged that the values they had introduced were producing significant discussion and change.

- “Such a huge process! Much more time needed! So many new ideas generated from each discussion—which would have been wonderful to follow up on. Certainly underscores the importance of

conversation and dialogue with colleagues. This should be an integral part of all faculty meetings—true sharing rather than problem solving.”

- “Great thought-provoking questions that need to be asked from time to time in the course of any Waldorf teacher’s career.”
 - “Love the process, it feels raw and thoughtful. I especially like that it’s not all ‘surfacey’ and ‘flowery.’ (We’ve gone in that direction before and got nowhere.)”
 - “I’d like to emphasize the merging that is happening among many fields of thought, research, knowledge in the world into a stream or flow that sees the human being as a verb (as they like to say) and not a noun. A consciousness in evolution. A whole identity.”
- The question that arose in many ways was, *What does it mean to be a Waldorf school?* This might be one of the guides for unlocking the hidden curriculum.
- “What makes Waldorf Waldorf without all of the little ‘doo dads’ and ‘rituals’ of Waldorf?”
 - “We need a conversation on what it means to be a Waldorf school. What does it mean to be a Waldorf teacher? What does it mean to be Waldorf?”

Discussion

Three main themes surfaced for us in the findings. They reflect where the faculty finds itself, a full year after the conference that challenged the faculty’s thinking, and they center on the following statements and questions:

Theme 1:

Hawai’i is a unique place with a unique identity. How do we connect children to their rich environment?

Theme 2:

Inner work is needed by each teacher not only to develop one’s own sense of place, but to (re)inhabit

one’s own surroundings—a process which requires faculty to question why they do what they do.

Theme 3:

What does it mean for the Honolulu Waldorf School to teach a curriculum that arises out of the landscape and peoples of Hawai’i? HWS must identify for itself what a Waldorf school in Hawai’i should look like as opposed to offering a European-based curriculum outlined in 1919.

These three themes were developed and deepened within each research cycle as teachers continued to

reflect on the topic of place, as discussions continued on the topic, and as they watched each other adjust their curricula. It is notable that, throughout this process, the faculty recognized and accepted the responsibility to teach as *action researchers*—they clearly dislike the notion of dogma, and they respect and accept the idea of questioning why they do what they do. They believe that when they don’t take on the role of action researcher as strongly as they could, and when they don’t question the use of someone else’s material, it is primarily due to time limitations.

The big realization of the faculty was that “living aloha” is not something we can simply tell the students to do. The entire faculty, indeed the community, must strive to live aloha and model this value for students if we hope to be a place of inclusion and diversity.

The school’s work with Kanewai Spring is a prime example of the development of Theme 1 in terms of engaging more closely with aspects of Hawaiian identity and love of the land. In Cycle 1, the faculty went to Kanewai Spring near the school to learn about the water system in the area and to do a service project together. Cycle 2 provided faculty with pedagogical reasoning to consider place and the opportunity to brainstorm on how place could be included in the curriculum. By the end of Cycle 3, five classes from the grade school were visiting the spring and doing service/community work there, while the early childhood department wrote an elaborate puppet show incorporating music for their students about the story of the spring. Members of the public were invited to the three performances of this show at the school’s *Waldorfaire*. The puppet show was showcased on a morning news show and people from the area recognized the story of Kanewai Spring.

Theme 2, acknowledging the inner work and questioning what a Waldorf teacher must undertake, emerged during Cycle 2 and deepened through Cycle 3 with exploration of the curriculum as a “worn-out path” and through reflection on question whether our teaching was purist, accommodationist, or evolutionary (see Oberman, 2008).⁵ The faculty acknowledged that it is through questioning that we—and our curriculum—evolve; this is a major tenet of lived spirituality. Neil explicitly presented the idea of teaching as a dogmatic purist, accommodationist, or as evolutionary in Cycle 3. It is a question that all Waldorf teachers must grapple with. When the delegates of the Southern California/Hawaii region of the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA) gathered in February 2017, the group struggled with the issue of preparing new Waldorf teachers in order that they understand and value the central importance of self-development (personal communications, February 21-17, Southern California-Hawaii AWSNA Delegates’ Meeting).

Theme 3 brings together talk and preparation with implementation. Exactly what makes a school “Waldorf” and, specifically, what does that look like in Honolulu? A question that explicitly arose during Cycle 3 and that continues to live today is the debate whether the offering of eurythmy, a form of movement created by Steiner, makes HWS a Waldorf school, or whether the Hawaiian practice of hula could also satisfy part of the movement necessary for children’s health in a Waldorf school. Nationally, AWSNA has taken the position that eurythmy is a defining aspect of a Waldorf school. AWSNA proposed that eurythmy be specifically identified as a subject that accredited Waldorf schools strive to offer (Draft Path to Membership, Principle 3). During discussions on this topic, Hawai’i’s Waldorf schools questioned this position, acknowledging that in hula there is an ancient art of movement arising

from the Hawaiian culture and that this is a subject that all Hawaiian Waldorf schools already offer.

We recognize that the data, findings, and discussion offered in this paper reflect an unfinished study of change happening at the Honolulu Waldorf School. However, we believe that they provide evidence for our living educational theory that (re)inhabiting place in the school’s curriculum starts with the faculty, and that it is an expression of lived spirituality. Further, an area that has not sufficiently been addressed by the faculty are the myths of Waldorf education. This would be a rich area for further exploration, and would help particularly with Theme 3 regarding the identity of the school. What also needs further work in the area of Theme 2 with its focus on questioning one’s teaching practices is the process of becoming a mature teacher; this means moving from operating as a dogmatic purist when one is new to the practice of Waldorf education, through an accommodating phase, to blossoming as an evolutionary thinker. Similarly, the role of collegiality and aloha within the path of self-development is a huge area that needs further exploration.

Conclusion

The journey of Honolulu Waldorf School’s faculty has been one of discovery and engagement for the teachers and, equally, for us. Conversations held as a faculty, and actions taken by departments show that over the past few years, and particularly since the conference and post-conference work with Neil, the faculty has succeeded in deepening its thinking about the Eurocentrism of the curriculum that it offers, as well as taking action to develop and explore what education in a Hawaiian Waldorf school might look like. In February of 2017, twelve months after Neil challenged the faculty to examine its curriculum, the high school faculty decided not to attend the regional February conference that was titled, “Nourishing Self, Nourishing Soul.” Instead, the high school faculty created its own mini-conference that continued to focus on place-based and project-based education. They wanted to focus on their own experience as a resource for answering questions about how to incorporate place and to (re)inhabit where they live, and continue to process concepts and ideas which had begun to develop and form during the previous twelve months. The participants’ time together included a day’s field trip to the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum, an organization that states as its vision “a future where all people understand and celebrate Hawai’i’s cultural

⁵ Oberman (2008) identifies three characteristics of Waldorf schools as they develop:

Purist – keeping to the given path, being ‘faithful’ to traditions and practices that have been built up over the decades – over-reliance on tradition that can lead to a perceived lack of flexibility and eventually to the danger of dogmatism.

Accommodationist – developing hybrids between ‘Steiner’ methodologies and new pedagogical styles and language. Can lead to the creation of something not necessarily recognisable as education based on the work of Rudolf Steiner.

Evolutionist – adapting to local situations, changed contexts, and a different century. Involves going back to the indications Steiner gave a century ago and seeing how they can be used in the twenty-first century in utterly different settings than originally given. Guidelines for this need developing.

heritage and natural history, and use that knowledge to inspire the future” (Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum, 2017). They also reviewed every course offered at the high school and discussed how a sense of place might be included—or is already included—within each. For the 2017-18 school year, participants discussed the addition of a place-based class to the curriculum. As of this writing, that has not yet occurred, though it could be argued that currently there is more consciousness of bringing place into existing classes.

Almost simultaneously, the lower school was working on articulating its social vision with the purpose of creating a culture that would discourage and ultimately eliminate the concept of bullying. There was a startling moment of recognition when the faculty recognized that what they were envisioning was the embodiment of aloha. They read the Hawai’i Revised Statute 5-7.5 on the “Aloha Spirit.” It references such values as kindness, unity, pleasantness, humility, and patience and states:

These are traits of character that express the charm, warmth and sincerity of Hawaii's people. It was the working philosophy of native Hawaiians and was presented as a gift to the people of Hawai’i. "Aloha" is more than a word of greeting or farewell or a salutation. "Aloha" means mutual regard and affection and extends warmth in caring with no obligation in return. "Aloha" is the essence of relationships in which each person is important to every other person for collective existence. "Aloha" means to hear what is not said, to see what cannot be seen and to know the unknowable. (University of Hawai’i, n.d.)

The big realization of the faculty was that “living aloha” is not something we can simply tell the students to do. The entire faculty, indeed the community, must strive to live aloha and model this value for students if we hope to be a place of inclusion and diversity. This realization that as a faculty we were working towards a deeper embodiment of aloha reinforced the awareness of the significant steps we have taken as a diverse group of teachers towards becoming more of a Waldorf school that celebrates and values the Hawaiian culture, rather than solely a Waldorf school located in Hawai’i.

[A]t least one teacher expressed the opinion that we projected a worn-out path to the community and were hanging on to other traditions that were no longer relevant.

In April of 2017, a group of faculty discussed further expansion to this social vision of aloha for the school to include the words of Kumu Hina Wong, a transgender teacher of hula who describes herself and some of her students as “in the middle” (Hamer & Wilson 2015). This pledge provides an Indigenous perspective to the question that founded Waldorf education: What kind of education is necessary for children so that they do not think that war is the answer to conflict? (Steiner, 1919a). It also provides a compelling reminder that frequently the answers we seek are literally in our own backyard. Aloha is life-affirming, as is (re)inhabitation for all colonized territories as well as urban ones:

I believe that every person has a role in society, and deserves to be included, and treated with respect in their family, school, and community.

I believe that every person should be free to express what is truly in their heart and mind, whether male, female, or in the middle.

I believe that every person should be able to practice their cultural traditions, and to

know and perpetuate the wisdom of their ancestors for future generations.

I believe these values are embodied in aloha: love, honor, and respect for all.

Therefore I pledge to live aloha in everything I do, and to inspire people of all ages to do the same. (Hina, 2015)

In June of 2017 Jocelyn presented to the entire faculty a draft of this article and an opportunity to review their journey thus far. When asked if the article was a “hit” or a “miss” in representing the school’s journey, 88% percent felt the article accurately represented the school’s journey. One person felt it was a “miss” and that we were still presenting dogma, while another single person felt the article was both hit and miss. The idea that seemed to stand out for many of the faculty was of the issue of cultural colonization through the representation and promotion of non-Hawaiian forms and ideals; the possibility

that the school might serve to a degree as a colonizing influence discomfited them.

Asked what they wanted to hear more about, the faculty expressed further interest in the concept of aloha as well as in practical applications and procedures for strengthening a sense of place within the curriculum. Teachers spoke to the group of something they had done to include a sense of place into their classrooms and/or teaching. Teachers also talked in groups about the ideas they heard that seemed most do-able as well as innovative. To conclude the reflection, a Hawaiian scholar took the faculty through an experience that showed that each person was already capable of establishing a personal relationship with the land around him or her. Responding to a strong faculty request, this scholar joined the faculty monthly through the 2017-18 school year and helped to foster conversation around the Hawaiian culture and the meaning of aloha. Through the year, the faculty also learned a chant that expressed five Hawaiian values included within the concept of aloha: kindness, unity through harmony, pleasantness, humility, and patience expressed through perseverance. The faculty committed the chant to memory and discussed how these values could help move the school forward. Further discussion proceeded in subgroups that represented each of the five values based on which value group members felt was most important to the school. The result was a fairly even representation within each value, suggesting the basis for generating action steps in each area.

Jocelyn also brought the concept of aloha to the 2018 AWSNA conference focused on social justice. Kumu Hina's Pledge of Aloha was read aloud to all the delegates of the Southern-California region. Jocelyn then led the entire AWSNA delegation in the aloha chant as an indigenous value-based statement supporting social justice through Waldorf education in America. The Pledge of Aloha and the chant were also shared in the conference workshop led by Jocelyn, as was the story of Honolulu Waldorf School's journey toward the incorporation of place in its curriculum.

In July of 2018, the HWS administration has begun discussions on operationalizing a culture of aloha within our school community. Initial considerations include signage that explains aloha and the expectations associated with "living aloha," as well as a three-year plan of strengthening aloha within the

school community. The first task will be to assign an aloha related theme to the annual fund campaign such as "Growing Through Aloha."

As we have begun to publish various pieces about our efforts to counter aspects of Eurocentrism in Waldorf education and to decolonize Waldorf education, we join leaders around the world who are calling for a similar reflection. Honolulu Waldorf School looks forward to remaining an active player in this international dialogue, and in so doing, providing its students with an education that is more meaningful, more reflective of, and more thoughtful towards their own surroundings—an education that allows them to truly be at home as "homecomers" in their world.

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Creating Place-Based Waldorf Festivals

An Ethnographic Study of Festivals in Two Non-European Waldorf Schools

Vera Hoffmann

Introduction

A discussion is taking place within the Waldorf academy concerning if and to what degree the international Waldorf movement has overcome an inherent danger of Eurocentrism (Boland, 2015). Almost 100 years ago, Waldorf schools started out as schools with a strong Christian heritage, located in European countries. Today, there are Waldorf schools on every inhabited continent of the world. Many of these schools were founded with European support concerning finances, materials, teacher training, and curricular content. The latter also included Eurocentric Waldorf content and corresponding Waldorf traditions. These were often directly adopted rather than adapted or metamorphosed to match the local situation. In addition to traditional Waldorf content, this transfer also included traditional European Waldorf festivals, although local nature and seasons, as well as culture, often diverged considerably from those of their European origin.

In an ethnographic study, conducted as part of a master's thesis at the Rudolf Steiner University College in Oslo, I have explored the processes that two schools on two different continents underwent in order to overcome Eurocentric Waldorf festival traditions. In this paper, using some parts of my research, I will describe the reconceptualization of those festival traditions and the subsequent development of place-oriented new localized forms for the celebration of Waldorf festivals.

Both investigated schools are located south of the equator. One school – Kusi Kawsay – is situated in Pisac, in the Sacred Valley of Peru. It has an indigenous Andean background. Its educational goals are geared towards raising indigenous children's knowledge and awareness, as well as their self-confidence, with regard to their history and culture. The other school, the Nairobi Waldorf School, founded by Europeans, is situated in Kenya's capital, Nairobi. It serves a colorful multitude of children and their parents, from a widely diverse range of cultural and religious backgrounds, in a dedicated manner.

One important feature of an ethnographic study is the immersion of the research field in the social setting over a period of time. Thus, the researcher can

thoroughly experience the social reality of the investigated community (Bryman, 2012). I was able to spend two weeks in Kusi Kawsay and three weeks in Nairobi Waldorf School. My immersion in the two schools had a considerable impact on me and on the outcome of my thesis. In this article, I intend to share some vivid impressions of the everyday living conditions experienced in these two schools. I used the ethnographic tool of thick descriptions as “a vehicle for communicating to the reader a holistic and realistic picture” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 113). Besides observations in the field, I conducted qualitative interviews with experienced teachers in order to obtain answers to the research questions. A further goal of the study was to generate concepts for other non-European or religiously diverse Waldorf schools that might similarly aim at developing locally-oriented annual festivals.

My findings suggest that the creation of new festivals in the schools took place within three areas, by way of a cultural, natural or traditional approach. The festivals in Nairobi Waldorf School were developed through the metamorphosis of traditional Waldorf festivals with a mainly Christian background by responding to the cultural needs of the multi-religious school community (cultural approach). The festivals in the kindergarten of Nairobi Waldorf School developed out of a process of close nature observation (nature-based approach). Kusi Kawsay festivals are new in relation to the types of festivals known in Western-oriented or European Waldorf schools. However, in a true sense, they are ancient festivals drawing on archaic Andean wisdom and agricultural rituals, adapted to the possibilities and necessities of a contemporary indigenous school community and aiming at developing the indigenous students' self-esteem and free thinking (traditional approach). All three of these approaches offer possibilities for the development of place-oriented, locally contextualized Waldorf festivals.

Festivals and Festival Creation

The reconceptualization of festivals and their subsequent realization posed theoretical questions. They ranged around the general background of festivals, the occasions in which they are celebrated, their

components and elements. For the question of components and elements of festivals, in addition to their possible effects on participants, I found some beneficial aspects in Ritual Theory.

Overcoming Eurocentric influences has been of concern in research areas where Western knowledge systems met with more holistic indigenous knowledge systems. It is a central issue in the field of indigenous knowledge.

In search of an extended understanding of the subject, I studied Rudolf Steiner's perspectives related to festivals and festival creation. I concentrated mainly on a cycle of lectures where he presents a trans-religious and global approach.

Ritual Theory

Ritual theory points out to rituals as possible elements of celebrating festivals. Many authors even consider rituals as being the main constituent elements of festivals (Bell, 1997; Durkheim, 2013; Quantz, 1999; Van Gennep, 1960). Recent scholars, like Bell (1997) and Grimes (2014), hold that it can be a legitimate and socially important process to develop new rituals in accordance with circumstances of individual place, time, and needs. It can add up to a conscious elevation of human acts and interaction and can create aesthetic and transforming orders of ritual elements (Grimes, 2014). Such rituals can culminate in an experience of superior meaning, especially when symbols, as carriers of values, are integrated in ritualistic performances, "thereby embedding values in webs of significance" (Grimes, 2014, p. 319). They can create such strong feelings that participants might even label them as sacred, religious, or spiritual (Grimes, 2014). Rappaport (2013) describes three levels of meaning in rituals, where he indicates distinction for low-order meaning, similarity for middle-order meaning, and unification for high-order meaning. His description of the latter is especially interesting.

High-order meaning is grounded ... in the radical identification or unification of self with other. It is not ... intellectual but is, rather, experiential. ... High-order meaning seems to be experienced in intensities ranging from the mere imitation of

being emotionally moved in ... the course of a ritual to those deep numinous experiences called 'mystical'. Those who have known it in its more intense forms may refer to it by ... phrases as 'The Experience of Being'. (Rappaport, 2013, p.71)

The medium for experiencing high-order meaning, which can include even the cosmos and the divine, is participation. Rappaport's highest level of meaning indicates that ritual creation could represent a significant part of the development of new festivals in Waldorf schools, since one of the intentions in Waldorf education is to recognize the spiritual aspects of life.

Further questions emerged in relation to the festivals celebrated in Kusi Kawsay. How can I gain cognitive as well as emotional access to those ancient festivals that, at first sight, seem so very different to our Western consciousness? Is it possible to reach Rappaport's quoted level of high-order meaning of unification, or at least something similar in relation to these ancient festivals? To answer this question, I found helpful aspects in the concepts of indigenous knowledge.

Indigenous Knowledge

From the 1960s to the 1970s, a critical discussion evolved within many development aid projects about

the negative impact of development aid on the independence of the local populations (Schimpf-Herken, 1979). The Western helpers, their academic counterparts and also the indigenous peoples, themselves, became aware of possibly negative aspects of development aid projects, destructive to the communities' mental, social, and economic independence and to their ancient wisdom systems. This growing consciousness and discussion eventually led to extensive research in the field of indigenous knowledge (Hart, 2010; Huaman & Valdiviezo, 2014; Morrow, 2009).

A further goal of this study is to generate concepts for other non-European or religiously diverse Waldorf schools that might similarly aim at developing locally-oriented annual festivals.

One of the central notions critically scrutinised in the context of indigenous knowledge is the concept of Eurocentrism. The academic suppression of the indigenous peoples' knowledge had previously occurred in all continents, where the white race had invaded and taken over the land and ways of life of the local peoples. Today, scholars with indigenous roots

emphasize the heavy weight of dominating western knowledge systems and their reductionist pose of only accepting certain aspects of logic, reason, and research as valuable scientific criteria, thus denying broader local ways of knowing (Dei, 2010; Maurial, 1999).

These broader ways of knowing are a typical feature of indigenous knowledge. They are related to individual locations or geographical spaces and their unique circumstances of climate and landscape, where specific human cultures have developed with encompassing knowledge systems (Dei, 2010; Hart, 2010). These comprehensive ways of knowing are characterized by a mutual connectedness between all visible and invisible beings of the specific place (Hart, 2010; Kawano, 2011). Some of their features are also described by using the concept of spirituality (Dei, 2010; Hart, 2010). Hart characterizes social reciprocity as one of the central values of indigenous knowledge, indicating an honoring of all parts of the universe and a giving-back to all forms of life. Reciprocity is a quality that indigenous people especially address via ceremonies and rituals (Hart, 2010). Coming from ritual theory, Bell (1997) explains that newly-developed rituals always appropriate old and familiar elements and patterns from former rituals, adapting them to new purposes with possibly holistic objectives.

These rituals [and] celebrations ... not only express a concern for respecting and safeguarding the earth but also attempt to redefine the human and natural worlds as one interrelated community for whom recognition of its interdependence is intrinsic to the health of the whole.

(Bell, 1997, p. 237)

Bell is thus describing a quality which has belonged to indigenous societies ever since and which is also a concern of Waldorf education. Boland (2015) is aware of the importance of such an approach for the future of the endangered ecosystems of the earth. Coming from Waldorf education, he has performed a study with a group of indigenous Maori students in New Zealand, intending to raise awareness to the possibilities of dialogical synergies between indigenous people

and Waldorf education. Within the context of a real transformation of Eurocentric Waldorf contents and traditions, Boland (2014) uses the picture of “sticking wings on a caterpillar and calling it a butterfly” (Boland, 2014, p. 8). He touches upon the question whether related changes are profound or superficial when the contents have not gone through a real metamorphosis.

Rudolf Steiner: Thinking with the Cycle of the Year

Overcoming Eurocentric influences has been of concern in research areas where Western knowledge systems met with more holistic indigenous knowledge systems. It is a central issue in the field of indigenous knowledge.

In *The Cycle of the Year as Breathing Process of the Earth*, Steiner (1985) views annual festivals less in a Christian religious setting and more in a seasonal and global context. He describes how inner motifs of the annual festivals in the northern hemisphere are coinciding with seasonal experiences. For example, ‘resurrection’, as part of Easter, coincides with the blossoming in spring after a cold winter. In these lectures, Steiner also compares the earth’s rhythmical life with human physiological processes: on the one hand with those of sleeping and waking, and on the other with those of breathing. “It is not a breathing of air of which we speak, but the breathing in-and-out of forces, of which we can get a partial idea if we contemplate the plant-growth during the course of

the year” (Steiner, 1985, p.12). Furthermore, Steiner interrelates these two different areas of the earth’s breathing and wake-sleep processes. He later links those forces with the cosmic Christ-being, which has united with the fate of the earth in the Mystery of Golgotha in a global and trans-religious sense. Steiner (1988) further describes Christ as being an inseparable part of the inhalation/waking (autumn-winter) and exhalation/sleeping (spring-summer) processes of the earth.

He extends his perception to the metaphor of these forces wandering through the earth like a comet tail:

[W]hile in the north the Earth-soul goes outward to the stars, and – so to speak – shows itself for spiritual perception like a comet-tail, reaching out to the sky, the Earth-soul at the same time in the other hemisphere is retiring into earth *and it is Christmas*. And vice versa, in the time when

the Earth-soul retires into the earth here, on the other side the comet-tail is reaching out into the cosmos. This is occurring at the same time.

(Steiner, 1988, p. 107; emphasis added)¹

Steiner is stating here that a cosmic connection between winter and Christmas exists. This can be interpreted in such a way that Christmas in the Southern Hemisphere does not coincide with Christmas in the Northern Hemisphere, a possibility which has been a debated topic in anthroposophical circles for some decades (Anderson, 1993; Majoros, 2009; Suwelack, 1975). This question, of course, is an important issue for festival creation in Waldorf schools in the Southern Hemisphere (Majoros, 2009). Steiner (1985) further describes how people in ancient times lived with a different consciousness than today. They did not yet know our type of logical thinking but experienced nature in a dream-like holistic awareness. With regard to the process of festival creation, Steiner goes even further and suggests that contemporary festivals should be created out of a dynamic understanding of nature. He denominates this dynamic process “thinking with the cycle of the year” (Steiner, 1985, p. 40). In another moment, Steiner (1980a) uses a striking metaphor: “We have to learn to overcome the abstract perception of nature and reach a tangible cognition of nature. Our Christianity has to be broadened by being infused [...] with a sound paganism” (Steiner, 1980a, p. 89). Paganism (German: *Heidentum*) in Steiner’s time was a concept similar to the contemporary term ‘indigenous knowledge’. Steiner’s indication also points to the possibility of a dialogue with mutual benefit between the anthroposophic academy and indigenous knowledge.

Processes of Investigation

For this ethnographic study, I spent two weeks in the field in Kusi Kawsay and three in Nairobi Waldorf School. I took over professional tasks in the schools during my visits and became involved in the schools’ life from the outset. I was included into the teachers’ communities as a welcomed colleague. These

circumstances enhanced the immersion, which is a central feature of ethnographic participant observation (Murchison, 2010). In my study, I used thick descriptions as an ethnographic method for conveying to the reader a vivid and interesting picture of the ethnographic field (Geertz, 1973; Bryman, 2012).

“Thick description is a vehicle for communicating to the reader a holistic and realistic picture” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 113). However, the largest share of the specific findings in both schools was acquired via

semi-structured interviews. In Kusi Kawsay, I participated in a festival on the first morning of my arrival, and directly afterwards I was informally but extensively explained details of the world view and background of the Andean Cosmivision. Both experiences laid the foundation for a fruitful and dense research process during the two weeks.

In Nairobi Waldorf School, my three-week stay also offered broad experiences and relevant findings. I was invited to visit each kindergarten group and primary class and assist in teacher mentoring. The final experience of those three weeks was the school’s most central annual festival, which enabled me to participate in the whole process of its planning

and performance.

I was quite overwhelmed by the social injustices prevailing in the Peruvian and Kenyan societies and their strong influence on the life of my Waldorf colleagues in both schools. They live under difficult life circumstances, with little comfort, and it took me some effort to maintain an adequate researcher’s attitude, to be open and empathetic while not getting too involved with the teachers’ difficulties, keeping the purpose of my stay in mind. This is a common challenge with participant observation in ethnographic research (Murchison, 2010). One advantage for ethnographic research in the international Waldorf field was that I have thorough knowledge of anthroposophy and have worked in Waldorf education in Germany, Switzerland, and Spain for many years. Another bonus was that I speak fluently both official local languages, Spanish and English. Therefore, I was always able to communicate with people without the aid of a translator. These personal advantages presented yet another specific researcher’s perspective, similar to the above related

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¹ All translations from the German are by the author.

problem of closeness and distance in an ethnographic research process: as an experienced Waldorf teacher, I was an insider, but in experiencing the schools' and local Waldorf teachers' very different cultural backgrounds, I was an outsider. Baak (2016) describes this configuration as an "inside-out/outside-in researcher" (Baak, 2016, p. 31) who is in a continual process of shifting between these two positions.

In both schools, I interviewed three teachers who had been part of the founding process of the school and/or part of the process of festival transformation. In Nairobi Waldorf School, the teachers of the two kindergartens and the teachers of primary school had undergone different processes in the development of new forms of festivals, while in Kusi Kawsay, school and kindergarten are celebrating the same festivals. Therefore, in Nairobi Waldorf School, one of the interviewees was an experienced kindergarten teacher. This facilitated access to valuable information of the specific kindergarten festivals that, later, turned out to be important for the scope of my findings.

In the analysis of my empirical material, I transcribed, coded, and categorized the semi-structured interviews inspired by Grounded Theory methods (Bryman, 2012) with the goal of providing insight into the processes of festival creation in both schools; its conditions as well as its outcome.

KUSI KAWSAY SCHOOL

History

The Kusi Kawsay (Quechua for Happy Life) Waldorf school in Pisac, Peru, was established in 2007. The initiative grew out of a group of Indigenous Andean musicians who had been working together for 19 years. They had studied and recognized the devastating influence that Spanish colonialism, and the Catholic Church, have exerted on the Andean culture, an influence that resulted in very low self-esteem and a severe loss of dignity and culture within the local indigenous population. Self-esteem and dignity, explained one teacher, "...around here are no common concepts, because many people don't even know they should have something like dignity." Until today, indigenous children and adults have been facing strong racism in contemporary Andean public schools and society. According to the interviewees, everything related to the Indigenous Andean culture is still being defamed. The founding of the school was in response to these negative cultural conditions. The founders

felt that an appropriate pedagogy would be found in Waldorf education and thus based the school on its principles. Today, Kusi Kawsay's classes range from kindergarten to 9th grade with mainly indigenous children; some non-indigenous and international children are enrolled.

The Way to School in Pisac

Pisac is situated 3,216 meters above sea level and requires great physical effort from unaccustomed foreigners. I pass small lanes with stone and adobe buildings, built in traditional Andean style. The sight of dark interiors hints at the poverty hidden within. Closer to the center of town, there are more signs of tourism. Pisac is a favorite destination of esoteric tourism because of its proximity to the sacred places of the ancient Incas. I draw closer to the plaza where the famous market takes place. From there, I start to ascend the stairs to the school. It is situated in an archaeological park, which hosts a holy Inca sanctuary 1,000 meters higher. I see children and youngsters hiking and parents guiding their young children on the steep path up to the school grounds. I enjoy the tremendous view across the town of Pisac and part of the Sacred Valley.

School Grounds

Entering through the massive wooden gates, my view suddenly falls to the grounds of the school beneath. It lies there, nestled into the mountainside with an extensive view over the surrounding mountain landscape. The little cabins with thatched roofs, built traditionally with adobe, together with the ascending rocks of the mountains almost form a circle. It looks cozy and I feel invited to come down the wide stairs, made from natural stone. Every primary class is hosted in this circle and has a little cabin of its own. Secondary classes and the kindergarten are a little secluded.

Reconceptualization of Waldorf Festivals in Kusi Kawsay

General Impulse for and Process of Festival Development

The school's developmental process led to a growing awareness, among the founders, that some of the traditional Waldorf elements were quite Eurocentric. Not all of them complied with the Andean Cosmvision and life circumstances. According to the interviewees, it was hard for the experienced Waldorf founding teacher from far away to include the Andean contents into the curriculum. Moreover, they felt that

it was difficult for this teacher to convey the principles of Waldorf education in such a way that the teachers could have used them as a basis for the development of an Andean curriculum: “She showed us the fish but didn’t teach us how to do the fishing.” Therefore, the association had to start the difficult and tedious work themselves. They began to develop a specific Andean curriculum, based on Waldorf principles, especially the celebration of annual festivals that had previously been strongly oriented in European Christian festivals. Since festivals are central to the Andean Cosmvision, the school festivals had to be fully reconceptualized and renewed. The Andean agricultural calendar played a central role in this process of revision.

Andean Agricultural Calendar as Basis of Kusi Kawsay Festivals

One interviewee described how, in the process of colonization, great parts of the rich agricultural traditions in the Andes have been destroyed: the original diversity of edible plants had been wiped out, to be replaced by commercial monocultures, serving a globalized agricultural industry. In addition, the attitude of deep reverence towards Pachamama (universe), with all its related rituals throughout the year, had been attacked by the church, depicting them as heresy. As a consequence, one of the goals of the Kusi Kawsay founders was to restore their people’s relationship with Mother Earth (Alpamama) and the Universe (Pachamama). They went to the indigenous communities, further up in the heights of the surrounding mountains (over 4000 meters), that had not yet been wholly influenced by the church and contemporary society. Talking to the old people there, the school’s founders collected and reactivated the traditional agricultural festivals and rituals that were connected to the year’s seasons. Those they were able to revive belonged to a solar-oriented agricultural calendar. “For us it was a strong goal to activate and practice the calendar as a little community, while taking away all the colonial varnish, taking away the saints, calling the festivals by their ancient names.” Afterwards they had to adapt the festivals in a pedagogical way.

Initially, they celebrated the festivals outside the school only with the adults. Then they would come to the school and celebrate the same festival in a pedagogically-appropriate way with the children. The teachers prepare the festival during the weeks prior to the festival. They dedicate one part of the classes to the upcoming festival, reciting, singing, and practicing rhythmical exercises that help the children to connect with the specific festival. At the festival itself, the

teachers select a central motif or value of the festival and talk to the children about it in an age-appropriate manner. One interviewee specifies: “Deepening the festivals, we had to go through a process to adapt these dates to a pedagogical language, to a pedagogical function.”

There are seven festivals/rituals being celebrated over twelve months and in relation to the agricultural activities and natural conditions of the respective ancestral periods or seasons. According to the interviewees, there are two seasons in the Andes of Peru: the season with rain (November-March) and the season without rain (April-October).

The Celebrations and their Main Elements

The main elements of the celebrations are food, music, and dance. Those elements vary in type and intensity according to the season and occasion. For example, there are typical instruments used for the season in which the wind is the focus of people’s consciousness. Other important features of some festivals are specific traditional clothes or a bonfire. All festivals are enriched by presentations from the adults for the children (and parents) or vice versa.

Pukllay: Celebrated towards the end of the rain season (March), the main motif is the abundance and fertility of all beings in nature; one of the very important and beloved festivals that continues for days.

Cosecha: Harvest, celebrated in April in the period of fall. The children harvest what they have grown in their garden patches, accompanied by adults playing music.

Chakana: Celebration of the constellation of the Southern Cross on the 3rd of May. It is also the anniversary of the founding of the school. It represents a good example of the school community trying to return original significance to a festival, since this date had been taken over by the church, long ago, as the ‘Day of the Cross’.

Inti Raimy: Midwinter festival between 19th and 23rd of June, dedicated to nourishing the sun. Indigenous people from other local and far away American communities are invited to share this important festival. In the local understanding, the sun is now far away, small and weak and the ‘little sun, the baby sun’ has to be nurtured and warmed with the heat of extensive communal

dancing and a bonfire. It also is the beginning of the Andean New Year.

Ofrenda a la Alpamama: The Offering to Mother Earth in August (see description below)

Tarpuy: Sowing, celebrated in September, beginning of spring. Old people from the communities come down to the school and bless the seeds, which the children then put into the prepared ground with the help of the adults.

Las Machulas: A November celebration of and for the ancients, their own ancestors as well as the first mythological mankind who, according to Andean mythology, lived in the light of the moon. The ancients are responsible for the rains, now supposed to develop to their full capacity.

Ofrenda a la Alpamama / Offering to Mother Earth

It is August and winter in Peru. The *campesinos* (peasants) are contemplating the coming time of sowing. With deep empathy, they sense what they experience as the neediness of *Alpamama* (Mother Earth), who gave so many gifts to them during the last year: fruit, vegetables, and other gifts. They sense to what extent *Alpamama* has thus given away its strength and vital energy. The sun seems to have gone far away from *Alpamama* and cannot warm it. So the people feel they have to help the weak earth to prepare for the next sowing and growing period. This is what they strive for with that old ritual, called *Ofrenda a la Alpamama*. It is an example of the main Andean value of reciprocity.

An old *abuelo* (grandfather) is sitting on the ground in the central place between the cabins. The school community is sitting on the ascending stone stairs in front of him, looking and listening in silence. The old man puts a wooden cloth on the ground in front of him and folds it in a ritualistic manner from all four directions. He then holds the folded cloth in front of his face. With reverence, he breathes into it three times. Now the cloth is passed from person to person. Each individual consciously breathes into it three times. Each breath is connected with good wishes and thoughts for *Alpamama* and the school Kusi Kawsay.

After the cloth has returned to the *abuelo*, he unfolds it. The four corners are now pointing into four directions. On one side of the cloth is a pile of leaves from the traditional healing plant of the Inka, the coca. On

the other side is a big heap of small parcels, wrapped in colorful paper.

Each participant silently walks up to the coca leaves, chooses the three most beautiful, arranges them fan-shaped in both hands and proceeds over to the other side of the old man. Again, the participant breathes three good wishes for *Alpamama* into the leaves. The old man now arranges them, with great care, onto the cloth. Everyone participates in this ritual. Repeatedly, the *abuelo* opens one of the small packages and arranges the contents carefully onto the leaves. In this way, an increasingly complex half-mandala slowly appears with ingredients that have directly or indirectly been derived from Mother Earth; seeds and grains, noodles, fruits, flowers, wool, threads, dyes, stones, minerals, and more.

In the end, the cloth is folded carefully and tied with a special ribbon. The children are told that now the grandfather will go to a secret place in the mountains to burn the wrapped offering. Its content with its manifold good thoughts and wishes will go to *Alpamama*. Smoke and ashes will transmit the gifts of the ceremony to her, so that she can develop new strength for the upcoming agricultural season.

From 'Celebrating the Agricultural Calendar' to 'Freedom of Thinking'

It is central to the teachers of Kusi Kawsay not to educate the students to be followers but to be curious and interested in exploring the world and to develop the capacity of free thinking. They pursue this goal via two paths. Being raised in an atmosphere of respect and dignity is one of them. An interviewee expressed his expectations of the students' development:

As a result of having learned to know personal respect in school, they will experience a very strong center of dignity within themselves in a society in which they basically are not respected. They will not accept being denied respect in their life. I don't really know what they will do, but I know that they will be free thinkers.

On the other hand, the Kusi Kawsay teachers see a great potential for developing free thinking in the universality and neutrality of the agricultural calendar itself:

The Andean is universal, like the Celts or the indigenous peoples in Australia or South Africa. Those are the same things: they are talking about

the same. So we are not promoting an Andean religion. We only say: observe everything in nature!

They go one step further and describe how they understand nature observation to foster free thinking. Love and caring for the earth include getting close to its phenomena by careful observation. The observation of natural phenomena leads the students to “what really is” and thus – at least partially – to a direct path to free thinking. This conviction has been guiding the school founders and teachers in the investigation and revival of ancestral festivals.

NAIROBI WALDORF SCHOOL

Nairobi Waldorf School is an offspring of its precursor, Rudolf Steiner School, in Mbagathi, Nairobi, founded by Germans for the Massai children living in this area of the capital of Kenya. Nairobi Waldorf School is located in Karen, a wealthy quarter of Nairobi, and includes a kindergarten on campus and another outside the campus. Parents and students of the Nairobi Waldorf School reflect the many different cultures that live in Nairobi: families from all continents, with four different world religions and members of 15 of the 42 Kenyan tribes. All possible shades and colors of skin are represented in what one teacher called a “rainbow school”. Today, the school includes seven kindergarten groups, and the primary school teaches from first to seventh grade. East Africa still does not have a Waldorf upper secondary school.

The Way to School in Nairobi

Travelling in the car, belonging to the Kenyan family with whom I am staying, we have passed several gates and barriers, fragile hindrances set up against possible terrorist attacks. Soon, bigger streets are bringing us closer to the school. There is dense traffic, the main streets obstructed by the crowded van-like small public transportation buses, honking. At the roadside there is no asphalt but ditches to collect the rain. In between are small dirt paths, trodden by hundreds of passers-by. Some are dressed in business attire, others wear colorful African robes. Then there are Massai herdsman, wrapped in red cloth, walking slowly behind their bony cows. When we approach the school, we enter one of the most luxurious quarters of Nairobi with shiny mansions in park-like flourishing surroundings.

In front of the school grounds, big iron barrels are lined up in a double curve shielding the massive iron gate, one of the measurements taken after credible

terrorist threats. Passing through the barrels’ pathway to the gate, we are greeted by two friendly guards who check every car. Later I am told that, not having permission to carry firearms, they have bows and poisonous arrows in a little cabin at the side of the entrance. This is just one example of Nairobi Waldorf School’s specific living conditions.

School Grounds

The first impression is its depth and breadth: lawns with green elephant grass, children’s tall swings and, hidden among trees and bushes, the little cabins for the kindergarten and primary classes. Towards the end of the school grounds, a big, formerly white tent – transformed by wind and weather – attracts the eye. This is where daily lunch is taken and it is also the space where the school gatherings and the festivals take place, substituting that which, in richer schools, would be the canteen and assembly hall. The kitchen is a small, modest building where several cooks are preparing lunch. A large quantity of the food and the water for washing the dishes is being prepared outside on an open fireplace, a favorite meeting space for the many maintenance helpers and guards of the school.

Reconceptualization of Waldorf Festivals in Nairobi Waldorf School: Cultural Approach in the Primary School

General Impulse for and Process of Festival Development

In the process of the school’s growth, its German founders gradually left while more and more Kenyan teachers started to teach. A transition process began, initiated by teachers and parents. The starting point was an insight regarding the cultural and religious diversity of the school community and the concern of making all these different people feel well-integrated in the school. One teacher spoke about the process:

...very diverse group of people, who came in with a lot of different traditions, a lot of different cultural practices, a lot of different religious beliefs. We had to find a way to accommodate all of these people and still not lose the identity of a Waldorf school.

The identity of a Waldorf school was *one* concern but the socially integrative aspect was even more of a focus: “What is it that is going to bring us together?”

What one thing can we do as a school to make us feel united and bring a feeling of togetherness?"

The concept of togetherness can be seen as an imaginative description for the central impulse of Nairobi Waldorf (primary) School's community, especially in referring to the development of new annual festivals which, until that point, were thoroughly oriented towards the typical Central European Waldorf festivals with an explicit Christian background.

In search of a true motif for a festival that would unite the multi-religious school community (also including atheists) in an experience of togetherness, the teachers investigated the central festivals of the four main religions (Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Christianity). They discovered *light* as an encompassing motif of these four religions' most important annual festivals: Divali, Eid al-Fitr, Hanukkah, and Christmas, and chose it as the motif for a new central annual festival. They called it the Festival of Light. From then on, the teachers looked anew, every year, for a multicultural or trans-religious storyline representing a path from darkness to light. The story should enable the teachers to artistically include elements of all main religions and cultural traditions in a theatrical presentation of all classes.

The Celebration of the Festival of Light in December 2014

It is the evening of the Festival of Light and the last day of school before the long summer holidays start along with the season of the short rains and cooler weather.

People, guided by little lanterns, are streaming to the festive tent. The rains have stopped for the moment. The tent is beautifully decorated with white veils and handmade foil stars swaying from the tent's roof in the light evening breeze. This year, the teachers have decided on an Irish storyline.

The presentations start late, due to the heavy traffic congestion in Nairobi's streets. Finally, one class after the other quietly enters the festive tent, starting with the upper 7th grade and ending with class 1. Students and teachers are dressed in clothes from one of the cultures, tribes or religions of the school's parent body. We see the 7th grade in Indian clothes, the 6th mirroring British attire, the 5th in Muslim clothes, and the lower grades in various African robes. The story of this year's Festival of Light unfolds, told by a story-teller who is a teacher at the school. In between the various parts of the legend, each class does a presentation, highlighting the story with dance, music,

song and recitation, touching upon various aspects of Jewish, Asian, Christian, and African religions. Almost at the end of the presentation, all students and teachers together perform a Muslim song, conducted by a Muslim teacher. At the end of the whole event, a buffet is waiting outside in the dark and the night ends in chatting.

Further Central Festivals and their Main Elements in Nairobi Waldorf (Primary) School

Two other important festivals in Nairobi Waldorf School were developed by transforming the Christian motifs of Easter and Michaelmas. The festivals' all-embracing humane motifs are accentuated. Both festivals are geared towards the children and not towards the parents.

EAFTER BRUNCH

During the week prior to the festival in April, the children are experiencing a lesser form of fasting with only small breaks for snacks. The school kitchen is cooking little and modest food. The money thus saved is donated to a big refugee camp. On the day of the celebration itself, each class is preparing a beautiful table with home-made food for another class. Children, teachers, and all of the many school helpers are having brunch together. This festival is an example of the ongoing development of the festivals in the school community: it took some years until consciousness had grown to also invite all the janitors, the cleaning women, and the uniformed guards. Renouncement and ensuing giving, sharing a meal and passing the candlelight to one another are universal symbolic gestures to which atheists can also relate.

FESTIVAL OF COURAGE

The Festival of Courage is celebrated in September. It still demonstrates considerable similarity to the way Michaelmas is celebrated in European Waldorf schools. The story of George and the Dragon is told, with emphasis on the universal virtue of courage. In the extensive school grounds, the teachers have prepared challenging tasks for the pupils. The children find various activities that make them struggle with feelings of reluctance and possibly even anxiety. They have to activate their individual willpower to overcome those inner hindrances. From year to year, they manage to succeed in more challenging tasks,

thus experiencing their own personal growth and expanding self-confidence.

Transformation Creates Togetherness: Cultural Approach to Festival Creation

The main motive of the Nairobi Waldorf School's teachers for its festival transformation was the integration of the multicultural parent-body to a strong community with which everybody could identify. Festivals were reshaped as occasions where awkwardness related to ethnic and religious differences yield to experiences of connectedness. They have reached this goal via the transformation of the festivals' Christian motifs while emphasizing trans-religious all-encompassing motifs of humanity.

Reconceptualization of Waldorf Festivals in Nairobi Waldorf School: Nature-based Approach in the Kindergarten

General Impulse for and Process of Development

In Nairobi Waldorf School kindergarten, the effort to overcome Eurocentric festivals was initiated by an Australian mentor who experienced an inconsistency in the way the Nairobi kindergarten teachers were celebrating the festivals. Sensing a pedagogical need to align the young child's seasonal nature experiences with his or her kindergarten festival experiences, she initiated the process of developing new festivals, together with the local kindergarten teachers. For two years, without any further intentions, the teachers performed nature observations and wrote them down in a journal. Every week, in the conference, they exchanged their experiences. After two years, the mentor asked for possible motifs in these nature observations relevant to possible new festivals. One of the teachers described what then happened with regard to Easter time in April:

And now when it came to taking it from looking and writing to the next step: what can we do with that in terms of the children and something to celebrate? – It was like a magic, it was really jumping out of the page.

During January, February, and parts of March, everybody suffers from the exhausting heat of a long period of extremely hot weather. Even business goes down. Then, in mid-March, the time of the long rains begins. The stinging sun hides behind clouds and pouring

rain with lots of shadow. The sun comes out only for short moments bringing along colorful rainbows. "In this time, because there's so much shadow, as soon as the sun appears with the water – then rainbows! Immediately! So many rainbows with this heavy rain!" the teacher described. So, emanating from observation, rainbows naturally appeared as a motif for a festival celebrated in the beginning of March.

Further Central Festivals and their Main Elements in Nairobi Waldorf Kindergartens

RAINBOW FESTIVAL: Beginning of April (see above)

LANTERN FESTIVAL: June (winter), celebrated similarly to the European Lantern Walk in November

SHAMBANI FESTIVAL: Beginning of July, at the end of the long rains, the gardens are abundant with fruit and vegetables. *Shambani* means garden in Kishwaheli. It is a festival of harvest in a double sense: One day there is a celebration for the children who will enter primary school. They harvest what they have learned so far. The next day, the vegetables in the gardens are harvested and cooked into a collective meal.

FLOWER FESTIVAL: Beginning of October, when the short rains begin (springtime). Flowers are blossoming, especially the violet Jacaranda trees, shedding carpets of flowers onto the school ground. The festival is celebrated inside and outside.

FESTIVAL OF LIGHT: Celebrated at the beginning of December, before the long summer holidays. It is celebrated in a similar way to the primary school festival (see description above).

Transcending Nature Observation: Natural Approach to Festival Creation

One interviewee related the 'big relief' for all living beings after the hot summer period, marked by the arrival of the long April rains. The description resembled an experience of physical and inner rebirth: "So it's again a different kind of death and resurrection. I mean, everything has died with the sun and then the rains come and life appears." She depicted the rainbow and its colors as a symbol for this experience. I asked her if the teachers' Christian background influenced the process of finding motifs for the festivals in kindergarten and if they appeared to have in mind more overarching motifs like the birth of light, death, and ascension? She immediately answered: "No, it just came out of nature." Still, this interviewee specified,

it only happened when the teachers started to reflect on the observed natural phenomena. I asked her if she saw some spiritual or transformational aspects in her nature experiences. After a long, thoughtful pause, she answered:

What nature is experiencing is mirrored in us. So this thirst and heat and dryness, we have it also; we can relate to it in a spiritual way. We can take it to a higher level. It takes the will of a person to want to transform it. With the human will and awareness, we can lift it to these other levels where we can find things that connect us.

In this interviewee's opinion, the multi-colored rainbow served as a metaphor for uniting all different strengths and weaknesses in an integrative community in which nobody should feel excluded. She explained that, in this context, spirituality reaches beyond religion, tribe, and "all these physical differences." It is uniting people, transiting everything, as she explained but she did not want to use the word 'God' for it, not to exclude atheists.

What the interviewee thus described was an evolution, which is possible in a nature-based approach to festival creation. It can develop from nature observations and nature experiences to experiencing related personal dispositions. Then, in a last step, the reflective meta-process of searching for images, concepts, or metaphors within these observations can culminate in numinous experiences of all-encompassing connectedness and wholeness.

Dialogue and Interconnectedness: Touching the Sacred in Festivals and their Creation

Looking at a deeper level beyond the observed processes of the schools' festival renewal, a concept emerges, permeating all three approaches towards festival creation: this is the concept of *dialogue*.

The founders and teachers of Kusi Kawsay entered into a process of dialogue with the elders in the high Andean mountains where some of the last Andean cultural treasures have been preserved. The dialogue was twofold: on one level it focused on the reestablishment of the agricultural calendar and subsequent nature-observation processes, on another level it

focused on the festive rituals themselves. Both levels of dialogue resulted in a close receiving and giving dialogue with nature and *Pachamama* (universe), which is represented in the encompassing Andean concept of reciprocity between visible and invisible beings.

The dialogue of Nairobi Waldorf (primary) School teachers advanced on a social level by awareness of and listening to the subtle needs of the school's multicultural parent-body. Parents were included in the process of creation and performance, especially of the Festival of Light. The example of the ongoing development of the participants of the Easter Brunch shows that this dialogue is a continual process in the social realm of Nairobi Waldorf School.

In the Nairobi Waldorf School kindergarten, the close nature-observation process led to new experiences for the teachers: "I had lived there all my life but I had never known what really happened in nature," one interviewee stated. The nature-observation processes demonstrated the quality of close questioning and listening. The answer came when the question about suitable motifs for creation of new kindergarten festivals was posed. The motifs "just jumped out of the pages."

The dynamics observed at Nairobi Waldorf School kindergarten appear to correspond to Rappaport's (2013) classification of three levels of meaning (distinction, similarity, and unification): the first step of nature-observation involves observation and description of tangible phenomena. This means that, for two years, the teachers were engaged in the level of low-order meaning (distinction).

In the second step, when the question about possible motifs for the development of locally adequate festivals was raised, the motifs 'jumped out'. The process of reflecting on the observed phenomena with colleagues led to the level

where a sensation of inner meaningful connection was rising; this relates to what Rappaport describes as middle-order meaning (similarity).

Rappaport defines the third level of meaning as *unification*, which in the Nairobi Waldorf school appears to have been reached when the experience of *rainbow* and the motif of *color* meaningfully 'jumped out'. This was described by one interviewee as an experience of

We see the 7th grade in Indian clothes, the 6th mirroring British attire, the 5th in Muslim clothes, and the lower grades in various African robes.

oneness and connectedness of universal character – a description corresponding to Rappaport’s features of a high-order meaning and its experience of identification and numinous union.

Rappaport is not alone in identifying a connection between rituals, festivals, and festival creation, on the one hand, and a type of numinous experience, on the other. Grimes (2014) characterizes one aspect of the process of festival creation as a formation of webs of meaningfulness. He claims that it can lead to the same quality of encompassing experiences, which participants might label as sacred, religious, or spiritual. The creation and celebration of the Festival of Light in the Nairobi Waldorf (primary) School offered that possibility. One interviewee described experiences in relation to this festival:

And that was beyond any religion, but you see the light in it, because the children, the innocence they have, the ability to experience things in the present so much, is really the light we would like for a better world. [...] It creates light for a better world. So that was [...] very cosmic – cosmic is the word I’d like to use.

Both authors, Rappaport (2013) and Grimes (2014), describe experiences of an elevated level of consciousness that might also be called interconnectedness. Their reflections, in addition to the interviewee’s quotation above, seem to reach into a state that Durkheim (2013) called ‘the sacred’. Apparently, ritual, festival creation and their performances, as well as experiences within indigenous knowledge systems, can inspire a state of connectedness, which the interviewee above did not want to call ‘God’ out of respect for atheists. However, if festival creation in non-European Waldorf schools can link into this sphere, it will gain access to a spiritual dimension, which – although Schieren (2014) calls it a “touchy subject” – is still a relevant dimension of Waldorf education.

Besides such transcendent aspects within the development of new Waldorf festivals, quite mundane prerequisites are relevant and related to overcoming the original implementation of traditional European Waldorf festivals.

A conscious attitude of liberation and quest for transformation is required of the local teachers in order to initiate the processes of adapting the European content to the local culture.

Overcoming Waldorf Eurocentrism: Concepts from Indigenous Knowledge

In the past, in many cases, the founding processes of Waldorf schools situated far away from Europe were strongly influenced by the Central-European Waldorf movement. Similarly, much of the content taught at Waldorf schools was related to traditional Waldorf contents and festivals. Those influences were necessary for transmitting the basics of Waldorf education. At the same time, they contained an inherent conflict, since they often did not relate to local, non-European culture, tradition, and environment.

Boland (2015) refers to such European influence on non-European Waldorf schools as a “hidden curriculum” and asks: “Is there a tension between the hidden curriculum of ‘traditional Waldorf’ content and the child’s lived experience in her environment?” (Boland, 2015, p. 199). Such European influences were not able to stimulate the will and capabilities of the local professionals to develop locally-shaped Waldorf forms and adapt the imported contents to local living conditions. A conscious attitude of liberation and quest for transformation is required of the local teachers in order to initiate the processes of adapting the European content to the local culture. Concepts taken from the field of indigenous knowledge are helpful in understanding various aspects of the liberating processes followed by the researched schools in their creation of new, locally-inspired Waldorf festivals.

Morrow (2009) describes the concept of Eurocentrism, in general, as the demand for universal validity of Western philosophy, values, and science. Can we speak of Waldorf Eurocentrism? Is there a claim made, perhaps implicitly, for the universally applicable mode of all contents and forms of Waldorf education everywhere in the world? Boland (2014) thinks so; he also adds that some of the adaptations that took place in non-European Waldorf schools might only be a type of “sticking wings on a caterpillar and calling it a butterfly” instead of a true metamorphosis of contents and forms (Boland, 2014). In contrast, the processes of festival creation in Nairobi Waldorf (primary) School, especially in the case of the Festival of Light, were characterized by such a process of metamorphosis: light, as a common motif of the most central annual festivals of four world religions, was taken as an

all-inclusive concept to be celebrated in the place of the former Christmas celebration.

Wiredu (1995) and Dei (2010) use the notion of 'conceptual decolonization' for freeing concepts from their Western anchor and way of interpreting the world. The Kusi Kawsay teachers performed this conceptual decolonization in their festival creation processes. They freed themselves from traditional Waldorf festival concepts by searching and restoring ancient, almost lost, culturally valuable Andean festival traditions.

"Careful local contextualization and ... respect for local life worlds" are concepts that Morrow (2009, p.72) believes to be important for overcoming Eurocentrism. In the long process of close nature-observation, the Nairobi Waldorf School kindergarten teachers developed consciousness about details in – and respect for – their surrounding nature. Then – out of pedagogical insight – they contextualized these observations into the developmental needs of a small child and carefully established locally contextualized festivals.

Summarizing Experiences

Creation of new Waldorf festivals in accordance with local cultures and communities requires a special, liberating attitude from a non-European school community to free itself from the weight of European influences. Entering into a dialogical approach, it offers access to various levels of relevant experiences, which move from a mundane level up to a transcendent, interconnected level. The related processes signify a valuable step for Waldorf communities in gaining individual access to the essence of Waldorf education: "The observant listening to that which the world is demanding is the attitude in which Waldorf teachers want to kindle their feeling of responsibility" (Steiner, 1980b, p. 111).

Conclusion

This article gives insight into a study conducted by an internationally experienced and engaged Waldorf teacher as part of a Master's thesis at the Rudolf Steiner University College in Oslo, Norway. The purpose of the study was to investigate the processes that two non-European Waldorf schools, Kusi Kawsay in Peru and Nairobi Waldorf School in Kenya, had gone through to transform or replace the traditional European Waldorf festivals, thus aiming at contributing ideas and knowledge for other schools in similar

situations. Three approaches to the creation of new festivals in the two Waldorf schools emerged in the course of the ethnographic study. They might offer some guidelines for other non-European Waldorf schools, which – within their school community – have decided on a reconceptualization of their annual festivals.

Traditional Approach: Using Tradition for Development of Free Thinking

The founders and teachers of the indigenous Kusi Kawsay Waldorf school investigated their local ancient traditions and implemented the agricultural Inca sun calendar as the basis for their festival celebrations, centered around a close and reciprocal relationship with nature. Returning to the valuable sources of their own culture increases the often suppressed self-esteem of the indigenous children. The teachers' intention was to use the close connection of the ancient festivals with nature processes, as well as related exact nature observation processes, to develop growing independent judgement in their students and ultimately the capability of free thinking.

Cultural Approach: Integrating Diversity

The goal of the festival transformation process in Nairobi Waldorf School was the conscious integration of all multicultural and religiously diverse members of the school community into common celebrations with which everybody could identify. The school community searched for the all-encompassing motifs in the existing European-Christian festivals and in the religious traditions of the four world religions represented in the school community. In effect, the school developed celebrations with which atheist parents can also identify while still including transcendent and soul-nourishing forms and rituals. In an ongoing dialogue within the school community, they maintain the awareness for improvement.

Nature-based Approach: Thinking with the Cycle of the Year

Nairobi Waldorf School kindergarten's approach to festival creation was using nature observation as a focus. The teachers performed the process of close nature observation for at least two years. This process coincides with what Rudolf Steiner (1985, p. 40) claimed to be a necessary path of the contemporary renovation of festivals, calling it *thinking with the cycle of the year*. The phase of nature observation was followed by the search for related motifs that might serve for festivals created out of careful local contextualization.

All three concepts need an attitude that can be referred to as a *dialogical approach*, either with nature or within the school community. I suggest that this dialogical approach is a central prerequisite for and the basis of each successful process of festival creation or transformation in Waldorf schools.

Limitations and Further Research

This study provides insight and knowledge as to how two schools have proceeded with festival creation. Experiences of other schools with different possible ways of festival creation would expand the picture and our knowledge about this topic.

Further research could address the Christian aspects of Waldorf education. Waldorf festivals can be, and often are, an expression of Christian orientation. Must this be the case? How are we to understand these aspects in a pluralistic society? How did Rudolf Steiner explain the Christian orientation of Waldorf education and to what extent can this be transformed to fit other cultures and religions?

Last but not least: one important question that emerged from this study and offers possibilities for further research stems from the search to overcome Waldorf Eurocentrism; it asks: What would be the possibilities for dialogue and mutual enrichment between the Waldorf and the indigenous knowledge movement?

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Understanding and Educating Transgender Youth in the Waldorf School

Jack Palmer

Appropriate treatment and rights of the transgender community have recently become topics of much attention and controversy at the national level. Special attention have also been placed on transgender youth, and their rights and treatment within the school system. At the national level, there are discussions regarding which sports teams, locker rooms, bathrooms, pronouns, and names these children are entitled to use. In addition to these practical, materialistic concerns, there are the questions of morality and ideology: should the transgender condition be accepted and respected, or is it a sign of psychological dysfunction, to be dismissed or eradicated? Across the nation, individual schools, school districts, and state legislators have taken up a variety of positions on this issue.

While the nation struggles to find an approach to the transgender issue, as students of anthroposophy and leaders within our Waldorf school communities, we must ask ourselves if spiritual science can provide insight. After all, as Rudolf Steiner states in his lecture, *Man and Woman in the Light of Spiritual Science*:

Anthroposophical spiritual science does not exist in order that human beings be estranged from life through some kind of mysticism. It should in no way divert people from their tasks in daily life or the present. On the contrary, spiritual science should bring strength, energy, and open mindedness to humanity so that people can meet what daily life and our times demand. Hence it follows that spiritual science must not concern itself solely with the great riddles of existence, of the nature of human existence, and the meaning of the world, but must also seek to cast light on those questions which confront us directly.

(Steiner, 2011, p. 36)

Steiner makes it clear that spiritual science is an appropriate lens to address the ever-evolving controversies that confront humanity on earth. The transgender issue is no exception: indeed, in this lecture Steiner makes use of spiritual science to discuss his progressive stance regarding the gender issue of his day, “the woman question.” A century ago, gender issues revolved around women’s suffrage, women’s place in

the workforce, and the increased prevalence of co-ed schools. Today, the landscape of gender issues has shifted; however, spiritual science remains a helpful tool for investigating this topic.

This essay aims to address the transgender issue on two fronts: first, How can spiritual science guide our thinking regarding gender, the gender spectrum, and transgender individuals? second, How can these insights inform our educational practices in Waldorf schools?

GENDER THROUGH THE LENS OF SPIRITUAL SCIENCE

Gender and Human Evolution: Past, Present, and Future

Steiner’s concept of human gender expands far into the distant past as well as the distant future. Steiner posits that in ancient times, all humans were of one gender. In his view, “the human realm did not divide into two genders until Lemurian times” (Steiner, 2011, p. 10). Prior to that, “the human shape was formed differently, and both sexes were in a way contained within it in an undifferentiated way.” At this stage of humanity, reproduction was asexual, and had to do with eating certain fertilizing foods, under the correct seasonal condition. Steiner draws a comparison between early human reproduction and the reproductive process of plants. He also notes that human reproductive organs were plant-like in character. This is why, he explains, “older art, which has retained so much of the traditions of the mysteries, represents hermaphrodites with plant-leaf-like organs of reproduction; these are the precursors of the human being which still had the old kind of reproductive organs” (p. 23). Indeed, this provides “the true reason for the presence of the fig-leaf on Eve.”

However, there was a problem during this phase of human evolution. Human beings, along with the earth itself, were becoming increasingly dense. That is, the physical bodies of human beings were dense and rigid, rather than pliable (p. 14). Accordingly, “as the earth became denser and denser, the human being became less and less capable of transforming himself through

the influence of his environment.” Luckily, “through the gradual departure of the moon from the evolution of the earth[,] this danger was averted. At the same time as the moon departed, however, the division into sexes took place, and with this division came a new impulse for the individualization of the human being” (p. 15).

The evolution of the gender binary system, Steiner argues, made it possible for human beings to develop individuality. Philosophically, two is infinitely more than one. Two creates duality, and allows for the experience of self and other. Additionally, on a biological level, sexual reproduction allows for the creation of infinite combinations of individuals, whereas asexual reproduction creates clones. As Michaela Glöckler, states in her essay “Sexual Union and Spiritual Connection,” “the major polarity between the two human genders also significantly intensifies the development of self-consciousness and individual experience. [O]ur singularities emerge all the more strongly through psychological and bodily encounters with the other pole” (Glöckler, 2014a, p. 37).

Steiner also suggests that spiritual science will guide humanity toward yet another evolution of human gender. He states, “the spiritual-scientific movement will prove itself to be eminently practical. It will lead humanity to overcome gender in itself and to rise to the level where Spirit Man or Atman stands, which is beyond gender, beyond the personal—to rise to the purely human” (Steiner, 2011, p. 74). Regarding this gender transformation on a physical level, Steiner says, “the human organs of reproduction in their present form will in the future be the first to lose their importance” (p. 22). Reproduction, he says, “will once again be non-sexual” (p. 34) and humans will give birth through the mouth, with the larynx playing a central role. He notes that “the speech organs at present contain within themselves the future organs of reproduction. ... [T]he fact that a transformation (change of voice) occurs in the male individual at the time of puberty is a consequence of the mysterious connection between the instruments of speech and reproduction” (p. 22).

Taken as a whole, Steiner explains that gender—and its evolution throughout past, present, and future human history—is intrinsically entwined with human spiritual advancement. Initially hermaphroditic, the development of gender helped humans move toward individuality, as they were able to experience self and other. In our current times, as we shift away from

the gender binary framework, to view human gender on a continuum, we move toward greater individual freedom, as well as toward an understanding of the non-gendered universal human experience. In the future, gender will become a moot point, physically, socially, and spiritually: “human beings [will] find that which transcends the sexes, then this issue of our time will have been resolved” (p. 46).

Gender and Human Development

Just as in Steiner’s view of human evolution, human beings transition from non-gendered, to gendered, back to non-gendered, so too does Steiner find this pattern within the lifecycle of every individual human in modern times. Humans, he claims, are non-gendered until age seven. He states, “people look upon a human being during the first seven years as if it already were male or female; from a higher point of view, this is entirely false” (p. 83). Up until this point, “the child retains a more general human character, as yet undivided into sexes” (p. 52).

Then, with the second seven-year stage of development, the human does develop gender. This physical change is necessary for spiritual advancement. This is the microcosm to the macrocosm event described in the book’s previous section, wherein the moon separates from the earth, and human beings transition from hermaphroditic to dual-sexed. As the individual human reaches puberty and takes on gender, he moves forward toward his own individuality, but simultaneously develops an ability to see the other and to comprehend humanity as a whole. Steiner notes,

The power to love, born during sexual maturity, embraces everything within the adolescent’s entire compass. Love between the sexes is just one specific limited aspect of love in the world. Only by seeing human love in this light can one understand it correctly, and then one also understands its task in the world... Physically, [with puberty] he becomes able to procreate. Spiritually, he becomes capable of experiencing humankind as a totality. (Steiner, 2011, p. 52-53)

Although this passage conflates gender and sexuality, the overall point remains relevant. In Steiner’s day, with an understanding of human development as gender binary and heterosexual, reaching puberty and becoming a man or woman represented a step toward individualization, heightened awareness of the opposite gender, and, consequentially, a greater awareness of humanity as a whole. Today, although we view both

gender and sexuality on a broad spectrum, the same is true: the adolescent steps into his or her own gender identity and sexuality and recognizes with heightened awareness the gender identity and sexuality of others. This leads him or her to discover truths about diversity and universality within the human experience.

Significantly, the individual's gender journey does not end here. In Steiner's picture of gender's evolution through past, present, and future human history, in a future era humans transcend gender. This same theme can be found in the life cycle of the modern human. Douglas Gerwin illustrates this concept adeptly:

One might say that as adults it is only in our twilight years that we begin to reorient ourselves to the more androgynous state from which we originated. Just walk behind an old couple shuffling down the street and ask yourself: Who is the woman, who is the man? The one, it seems, has lost the angular outline of his youth and is becoming less muscular, more rounded, with softer and more piping voice; the other may have lost the curvaceous outlines of her youthful figure and is becoming grizzley, perhaps sprouting facial hair and dropping the pitch of her voice.

(Gerwin, 2014, p. 12)

As an individual reaches the end of her lifecycle, having gained wisdom and played out her karmic hand, gender becomes a less prominent feature of the physical body.

Gender and the Fourfold Human Being

Anthroposophy also provides a number of insights regarding gender and the four-fold nature of the human being. The gender of the physical body is relatively simple to determine: in most cases, human beings are physically identified as either male or female at birth, based on anatomy. Intriguingly, Steiner claims that the etheric body of an individual is of the opposite gender as his or her physical body. That is, a man's etheric body is female, and a woman's etheric body is male (Steiner, 2011, p. 33). In this way, the physical and etheric bodies balance one another.

Steiner makes it clear that spiritual science is an appropriate lens to address the ever-evolving controversies that confront humanity on earth. The transgender issue is no exception.

Although the astral and ego bodies are not gendered, Michaela Glöckler suggests that the functioning of the astral body is significantly impacted by gender. In her

essay, "Sex and Destiny: Guideposts on the Path to Homosexuality and Heterosexuality," Glöckler provides a very thorough study on the role of gender as it relates to the physical, etheric, and astral bodies. She notes that on the physical level, male bodies have an outward gesture. For instance, men have more resonant voices, due to thicker vocal chords; they have more body hair projecting outward; their reproductive parts reside outside the body; sperm is excreted. Conversely, female bodies have a more inward gesture: female bodies are generally rounder and more insulated; the reproductive parts reside inside the body; the

ovum remains inside the body, and dissolves if not fertilized promptly. These outward/inward gestures take the opposite form in the etheric body. This can be seen in the life forces, particularly the thinking forces. To put it somewhat simplistically, men are more prone to an inward gesture in their thinking forces. Men are more likely to "keep their thoughts to themselves" and think in a more "calm" and "systematic" way (Glöckler, 2014b, p. 330). On the other hand, women's thinking forces may be more "flexible, spontaneous, reactive, and even ejaculatory" (p. 330).

Glöckler also makes several important points regarding the effect of gender on one's astral constitution:

On the astral level, greater muscle strength and mobility as well as more body hair and deeper voices indicate that the astral body incarnates more deeply into the physical-etheric constitution in men than in women. This means that a woman's astral body connection to her thinking is livelier and more independent of the body. By contrast, a man's thought life is less astrally imbued and therefore more abstract, which is why men's emotional reactions, although perhaps more libidinal, are less verbal... It is easier for men to distance themselves inwardly from their problems and devote themselves to routine tasks. Women, on the other hand, may find it very difficult to stop thinking about emotional issues. (Glöckler, 2014b, p. 330)

The picture provided by anthroposophy is one in which gender works in a very sophisticated way, affecting not only the physical body, but the etheric and the astral body as well.

When we view gender as a complex force uniting and balancing the four bodies of the human being, we begin to understand why transgender people experience such a profound sense of dysphoria, extending beyond the physical body and affecting also the life forces and soul forces. As scholar and Waldorf educator Cat Russell states in her essay “Loving Relations, Ethical Choices”:

Using Steiner’s observation that the ‘normal’ incarnation involves a complementarity of gender between the soul and the body, we can speculate that this balance may be somehow altered in the case of the transgender individual, leading to profound feelings of dissatisfaction with life and particularly with gender roles.

(Russell, 2014, p. 305)

Russell continues:

How can we view this phenomenon through the lens of anthroposophy? If we hypothesize that it is possible for a human to be incarnated with etheric and physical bodies of the same gender, we have a picture of what the situation might be like for the transsexual person. Since it is presumably impossible to change the gender of the etheric body, the transsexual person is left no satisfactory choice but to change the outer physical body to restore the feeling of gender balance between the physical and etheric bodies.

(p. 312)

Gender Dysphoria and Karma

Steiner asserts that reincarnation was not possible until dual sexuality had become established on earth (Steiner, 2011, p. 27). With only one type of human being, there was no point in reincarnation—it was not possible to return to earth and have a different experience. Now, in our current stage in human evolution, we incarnate alternately as male and female, which allows us to work toward a greater understanding of human experience overall and to strive for ever greater perfection and truth (pp. 40-41). As an essential component, we set for ourselves (prior to incarnating into a physical body), circumstances to overcome during our lifetime. As stated in *Unbornness*, by Peter Selg,

[B]efore birth, complex and even harsh biographies are arranged, including countless circumstances of illness, which must occur later, so that something essential may be endured and overcome.

(Selg, 2010, pp. 36-37)

From this vantage point, it is evident that incarnating into the physical body of a transgender person would be a worthwhile challenge to set for oneself. The gender dysphoria experienced by the transgender community requires individuals to grapple with their physical, etheric, and soul forces to find internal balance. Additionally, according to Steiner, the very purpose of gender is to understand self and other, and, eventually, the universal human, which transcends gender. Transgender people are particularly well-positioned to take up this challenge, and move humanity forward on this path. Incarnating into a transgender experience requires a person to extensively investigate both femininity and masculinity, recognize social and cultural biases regarding gender, and advocate for change that allows for greater individual freedom regardless of gender.

WORKING WITH TRANSGENDER STUDENTS IN THE WALDORF SCHOOL

As established in the previous section, transgender students face a significant karmic challenge in achieving a balanced state between their physical, etheric, and astral bodies. Yet, in addition to this intrinsic challenge, many transgender students also face social, cultural, and political obstacles. Because of these factors, transgender youth represent an extremely at-risk population. As stated in *Safe Is Not Enough: Better Schools for LGBTQ Students*, even among the LGBTQ community, “transgender students are the subgroup that faces the greatest risks physically, psychologically, and academically at school... [T]ransgender students are often the last group under the LGBTQ umbrella to have their needs addressed adequately by educators” (Sadowski, 2016, p. 81). While statistics regarding transgender teens vary, PFLAG NYC provides some reliable statistics regarding LGBTQ youth: LGBTQ teens are 8.5 times more likely to report having attempted suicide and 5.9 times more likely to report depression; about two thirds of LGBTQ students report having been harassed within the last school year; LGBTQ teens are overrepresented in foster care, juvenile detention, and among homeless youth; they are twice as likely to say they do not plan to finish high school (PFLAG, 2016).

Some of the social, cultural, and political challenges facing youth are easy to identify. For instance, legislation that mandates students use bathrooms corresponding with their biological gender as assigned at birth (rather than their gender identity), is a direct example of limiting the rights of transgender students. However, many examples are much more subtle. For instance, in the school setting, children may be greeted with, “good morning boys and girls,” or asked to sit up tall in their desks, “like princes and princesses.” From a very young age, the toys, colors, clothing, and countless other items children are presented with are, in some ways, based on gender. These gestures are not intended to be oppressive or unkind! Yet, it is precisely this automatic assumption of a gender binary world which makes the experience of gender dysphoria so alienating. As a final point, we must recognize that when we discuss working with transgender students, we actually mean working with any and all students: it is unrealistic to assume that a teacher would intuit which students might be struggling with gender identity.

With these challenges and statistics in mind, I would like to raise the question: How can we, as educators, guide children through the grades and prepare them for life as healthy individuals? At the same time, as Waldorf educators, we are also the advocates for protected childhood; even as we sympathize with these complicated issues and strive to meet students with reverence and compassion, how can we avoid awakening and intellectualizing these issues at too young an age? For instance, the teacher can work to be increasingly sensitive to gender diversity and refrain from making gendered comments. Yet, to address the situation too directly with children could also be problematic. For instance, to bring a young child’s consciousness to gender distinctions, to ask the child to question, discuss, or analyze his or her gender identity, could very well be confusing or frightening. While overt discussion might be appropriate in a situation in which the child brings up or debates her own gender identity, in most cases, our approach must be a careful balance between acceptance and protection, between the explicit and the implicit.

Indications from Steiner

We must first recognize that “gender identity” was not a known term in Steiner’s day. Naturally enough, Steiner did not specify how we should work with

transgender students. However, some of Steiner’s pedagogical indications regarding sex education may be relevant to our question of how to approach gender identity.

Yet, even as we proceed in this direction, we should also note that Steiner’s views on gender are quite progressive, while his views on sexuality are far more moderate. Consider the following passage in relation to gender roles:

All the more radical, therefore, was Rudolf Steiner when, in creating the first Waldorf school out of the ashes of World War I, he suggested that girls and boys should share classes for all 12 or 13 years of their elementary and high school education. More radical still was his insistence that both genders learn the same skills: Boys should learn to knit and weave, girls to build engines and survey plots of land. (Gerwin, 2014, p. 11)

Contrast the above with this assessment of Steiner’s ideology concerning sexuality:

Steiner would advocate neither for an extremely repressive nor for an overly permissive stance toward sexuality... Steiner did not preach asceticism or celibacy, nor did he advocate that sexual urges be sublimated into art or spirituality. (Russell, 2014, p. 82)

Both in terms of coeducation and of “the woman question,” Steiner was very progressive for his time regarding gender. In terms of sex and sexuality, his views can be regarded as non-conservative moderate, in relation to his time.

In Steiner’s picture of gender’s evolution through past, present, and future human history, in a future era humans transcend gender.

Steiner’s stance regarding sex education, which he states quite clearly, is that sexuality, specifically anything to do with “lust for power or eroticism” (Steiner, 2011, p. 80), should not be discussed in schools. He believed that these topics “take their course below the surface of conscious life” and are not topics for the classroom. He further states, “The worst possible way of dealing with [sexual impulses], however, is to talk a lot about these things, especially with the children

themselves, and to put all kinds of theoretical ideas in their heads” (p. 138).

What educators should do, Steiner posits, is awaken in the child at a young age a feeling for beauty. He states:

When you lead children to feel the beauty and the glory of sunrise and sunset, to be sensitive to the beauty of flowers and to the majesty of thunder and lightning, when, in short, you develop in them the aesthetic sense, you are doing far more for them than if you were to give them the sex education which it has now become customary to give children at the earliest age and which is often carried to absurd lengths. A feeling for beauty, an aesthetic approach to the world—these are the things that restrain eroticism within its proper limits. (Steiner, 2011, pp. 62-63)

With Steiner's views of sex education in mind, it is possible to identify some foundational pedagogical elements to guide our thinking. Clearly, we must be mindful not to awaken, intellectualize, or eroticize. We could, however, view the natural world as a means of imparting these lessons. Additionally, we could work to instill a sense of beauty and reverence for relevant phenomena.

If we apply these ideas to the issue of gender identity, we find there are ample aspects of the natural world which may aid us in guiding children. For instance, in the fourth grade zoology blocks, it is possible to examine the complex ways in which gender functions in the animal kingdom. Many worms, for instance, are hermaphroditic, while there is a species of frog in which gender is determined not by genes, but by the temperature range at which the egg develops. Similarly, in the fifth grade botany blocks, it is possible to explore the myriad ways in which plants reproduce: some plants have male and female members, but some are asexual. In both the plant and animal kingdom we can find examples of species that transition from one gender to another during the course of their lifetime. To examine this aspect of the natural world, with reverence, is certainly a pedagogically sound way to approach gender identity.

[A]ccording to Steiner, the very purpose of gender is to understand self and other, and, eventually, the universal human, which transcends gender. Transgender people are particularly well-positioned to take up this challenge, and move humanity forward on this path.

Education: Body, Soul, and Spirit

In the introduction to *Trailing Clouds of Glory: Essays on Human Sexuality and the Education of Youth in Waldorf Schools*, Douglas Gerwin asserts that, in teaching students about human development and sexuality, the Waldorf teacher must consider body, soul, and spirit. He states:

The purpose or desired outcome of a program on the teaching of human sexuality, seen from a spiritual perspective, is to arrive at an understanding of the human being as a whole human being. This goes well beyond merely embracing both genders in oneself to considering the much larger question of the human being as a microcosm of the entire macrocosm. (Gerwin, 2014, p. 21)

Gerwin then provides a detailed account of how the Waldorf teacher could approach education of the physical body, the soul, and spirit through each stage of child development. In the context of our current discussion, Gerwin's approach and insights provide a

highly relevant and detailed framework for approaching the issue of gender identity.

In terms of the physical body, Gerwin states, sexual education is important in preventing pregnancy and disease. When we consider the types of education needed to support the physical health of transgender students, our attention must focus around habits of self-care and hygiene to counter dysphoria-induced neglect. That is, because teens who experience gender dysphoria may feel disconnected or even repelled by their own physical body, they may need more direct instruction regarding proper physical care and hygiene. Additionally, transgender youth are

an at-risk group in terms of inflicting self-harm and substance abuse; educating students on the dangers of these behaviors also requires our attention.

Gerwin also explains why a Waldorf approach to human sexuality needs to take into account the soul, or, more colloquially, self-esteem. He writes, "to be successful from the perspective of social and emotional health, the purpose or desired outcome of a program on the teaching of human sexuality needs to cultivate in students a sense of self-worth, confidence, security, empathy for others, reliability, trustworthiness, and

freedom from fear and anxiety” (p. 17). These same goals are certainly true when we consider the healthy soul development of the transgender student. Gerwin explains that this soul development is most effectively done with “regular and disciplined practice of the arts” (p. 19). He makes a thorough and convincing argument explaining that the arts—from painting, to drama, to horseback riding—are absolutely the right tools for achieving steadfastness of soul.

Finally, as Waldorf teachers, we must also strive to educate the spirit. As Gerwin puts it, “at the spiritual level, the purpose of a program on the teaching of human sexuality is to develop a sense of wholeness” (p. 23). This aspect is perhaps the most relevant in terms of meeting the needs of the transgender student. Transgender people often struggle to feel whole: feeling incomplete or malformed is the central issue presented by gender dysphoria. Bringing a picture of humanity as a great whole, within which we all represent a small part of the complete human experience, may be deeply meaningful for the transgender student. A strong internal picture of wholeness—the wholeness of humanity encompassing limitless variations within individual experience—is precisely the healing picture we strive to present to all youth.

Resources for Working with Transgender Youth

While indications from Steiner, as well as thoughtful commentary by contemporary anthroposophists, do provide a framework for addressing the complexity of gender in a pedagogically sound way, there are also resources outside of Waldorf education that are not to be overlooked. One relevant resource for teachers and administrators is the recent book, *Safe is Not Enough: Better Schools for LGBTQ Students*. In this book, education scholar and author Michael Sadowski offers many practical resources for addressing the question how to work with transgender students in school settings. The book describes the evolution of policies and practices related to working with LGBTQ youth over the past few decades and identifies several public school districts that have developed and implemented clear and progressive policies for addressing LGBTQ issues. For instance, the Los Angeles Unified School District created a policy describing in detail all the ways in which it will address the needs of transgender students, from record-keeping to confidentiality to participation in sports. This document could be quite helpful to any Waldorf school aiming to bring clarity or create a policy for working with transgender students. Similarly, there are several existing curricula, such as the “Welcoming

Schools” and “Ready, Set, Respect!” that aim to bring an age-appropriate LGBTQ inclusivity and awareness to the classroom. We should note that the lesson plans, handouts, and reading lists offered by these programs may not always align with the pedagogical views of Waldorf schools. Similarly, other impulses—such as raising consciousness regarding certain topics and involving children in direct conversation and activism at a young age—certainly conflict with traditional anthroposophic ideas of healthy child development that refrain from intellectualizing emotional and other experiences at an early age. However, as leaders in education, we must not stick our heads in the ground, but rise to meet the challenges of modern day education. Important policies, practices, and curricula related to the treatment of transgender students are being developed. We may choose to address these issues in a different way, with guidance from spiritual science, but to ignore this movement altogether would be a disservice to our students.

Recommendations for the Waldorf School

In conclusion, several things are clear regarding the pedagogically correct approach for addressing transgender issues in the Waldorf school. First, we must be mindful of Steiner’s assertion that children are genderless until the change of teeth. In parent education, in our classrooms, and in our behavior toward the children we should strive to make no distinction between boy and girl children until at least age seven. Next, we should remember to educate body, soul, and spirit. With regard to the body, we must teach health and hygiene practices to the children, with special attention to those who may experience dysphoria toward their physical bodies. In regard to the soul, we must immerse the child in experiences of art and nature. Additionally, we can lean on the plant and animal kingdom to provide many important lessons about the natural versatility of gender and reproduction. This should be done with the greatest possible reverence. Finally, we must strive to educate the spirit, by working always from the whole to the parts and find the wholeness that comes from infinite variation. Furthermore, while we should always follow the guiding principles of anthroposophy in regards to child development, we must also be aware of progress made outside of the Waldorf world and utilize the aspects which are pedagogically sound.

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The Transition Experience of Waldorf Elementary Students to Non-Waldorf High Schools

Peter Lawton

Scant research exists on the educational outcomes of Waldorf education as compared to those from more mainstream forms of education. More important than so-called “measurables” is the lack of research concerning the actual, qualitative experiences of Waldorf graduates¹. An important area of concern is the transition experience of Waldorf elementary students to non-Waldorf high schools. The lack of research regarding the high school transition experience poses significant challenges not only for Waldorf students and families in the process of choosing a high school, but also for Waldorf elementary schools as they seek to prepare their students for other educational settings. After providing a solid educational foundation using an alternative approach to “traditional” schooling, Waldorf elementary schools must necessarily ensure their students are prepared for other educational settings for the simple fact that many students continue their education in non-Waldorf high schools.

High School Readiness

High school readiness is a critical topic in Waldorf elementary schools, a concern never far from the hearts and minds of Waldorf elementary teachers, middle-school-aged students, and families, both current and prospective. The topic of high school readiness is perhaps more compelling in areas without a Waldorf high school. Given the methodological differences between Waldorf schools and “traditional,” comprehensive high schools, high school readiness is a lightning rod for many families in their assessment of the ultimate value of Waldorf education.

Perennial preparedness concerns are often expressed by teachers, students, and families in Waldorf elementary schools in regard to the academic content of high school. Areas of concern are somewhat obvious given some of the unique attributes of Waldorf pedagogical practice. These concerns include technology (Waldorf elementary classrooms have no computers) and science (Waldorf science utilizes a non-mainstream, phenomenological approach). Other concerns include differences in instructional practices and methods including test-taking (Waldorf students take substantially fewer tests, and the tests tend to involve more

qualitative measures than high school testing), and the use of textbooks (Waldorf elementary schools do not use textbooks). Traditional social concerns encompass the impression of the Waldorf school as an insulated or protected “social bubble.” Social anxieties are not typically experienced as acutely as academic-preparedness concerns, but they remain nagging considerations for Waldorf families, particularly as their children reach middle-school-age.

Quality, Phenomena, and Meaning

To explore the high school transition experience of former Waldorf elementary students, I conducted 13 in-depth, 90-minute interviews of former Waldorf students who attended non-Waldorf public and private high schools. I interviewed former Waldorf elementary students who were currently seniors in high school or who had recently graduated from high school. (This strategy ended up being significant, and is further explored elsewhere in an examination of implications.) Of the 13 participants, nine attended large urban and suburban public high schools, three attended smaller urban and suburban parochial schools, and one attended a small performing arts charter high school.

The question I attempted to answer through interviews was not ‘How do former Waldorf elementary students do in high school?’ Waldorf elementary students are part of a demographic population typically excelling in subsequent academic environments. It would be extremely difficult from a methodological standpoint to draw any direct correlation between outward academic success in high school and Waldorf elementary education. Instead, the question I attempted to answer was ‘How do Waldorf elementary students experience the transition to high school?’ As such, my approach was both qualitative and phenomenological. It was qualitative in the sense that I explored specific curricular/methodological processes, not grades or GPAs. In other words, in terms of academics, I was interested in inner qualities, not external

1 EDITOR NOTE: We hope that the relative paucity of such research will be remedied with the future publication of Phase IV of the Waldorf Graduates Study, conducted by the Research Institute for Waldorf Education.

measures. My approach was further phenomenological in the sense that I explored the *phenomenon* of the transition experience, specifically the *meaning* students gained from their transition experiences. Meaning, in terms of curricular/methodological processes, may be further interpreted as a measure of developmental appropriateness and motivation. Simply put, the focus of my interviews concerned *what* Waldorf students experienced in their transition to high school and *how* they experienced it.

The Transition Experience

Interviews revealed that students transitioning from a K-8 elementary learning experience in a Waldorf school to more “traditional” school curriculums in comprehensive 9-12 high schools experienced important changes in the academic and social realms. Changes in the academic program across the transition required Waldorf students to adapt to differences in teaching methods and learning styles. Changes in educational environments also required students to forge new relationships with peers and teachers.

ACADEMIC CHALLENGES. If interviewee responses were any indication of the general transition experience of Waldorf elementary students, concerns about specific academic content may be unwarranted. Interviewees were fairly unified in their descriptions of academic challenges associated with their transition to high school. Twelve of 13 participants reported doing very well academically in their freshman year of high school, while half the interviewees described their high school academic programs as basically “easy.” None of the 13 interviewees mentioned feeling unprepared in any specific content area, including science and technology (except with regard to keyboarding skills). Neither did any participant mention feeling underprepared in other content areas such as math, language arts, or world languages. *Participants reported their academic adjustment to high school pertained more to new instructional methods than any academic content itself.* The adjustment period was relatively short, less than a year for most.

New learning styles in high school included a de-emphasis on artistic and experiential modes of learning in favor of more passive, visual approaches, including the use of lecture, textbooks, and worksheets. Participants also reported that teaching methods, including grading and testing, became more fact-based and concept-driven in high school. Student comments on grading and testing were fairly unified. While 12 of 13 interviewees were motivated to achieve desired grades,

many students also felt grading was one-dimensional and heavily weighted towards the reproduction of facts.

In addition to their experience adjusting to new styles of learning and teaching methods, *all 13 participants reported a decline in their intrinsic connection to academic material in high school.* Despite experiencing a decline in interest and engagement (meaning), students maintained their motivation to do well academically and achieve desired grades. While there were exceptions in individual classrooms and with specific junior- and senior-level teachers, in general students found the academic material in high school less intrinsically meaningful than in the Waldorf school.

SOCIAL CHALLENGES. Student descriptions of their social adjustment to high school were less unified than those of their academic adjustment. Participants stated that the most significant social challenge across the transition involved breaking into what presented as pre-formed social groups or cliques. The majority of student comments regarding community concerned school and class size. Nine of the 13 interviewees attended larger high schools. All nine reported a decline in their sense of overall community in their transition to high school, including their general relationships with peers and teachers. Two of the four students attending smaller high schools described positive transitions in terms of their sense of community. The negative experience of two of the participants attending smaller high schools is addressed further below. A majority of students reported that their general sense of community improved somewhat during their junior and senior years.

Three Transitional Phases

The story of the transition experience, as told by Waldorf elementary students who continued their education at non-Waldorf high schools, involved three distinct chapters or phases: (1) establishing competency, (2) analyzing and assessing experience, and (3) transformation. The transition experience may be compared to the process of learning to drive. In the initial phase of learning to drive, learners gain competence by familiarizing themselves with basic knowledge, including the names and functions of the different parts of the car and basic traffic laws. Learners also begin to apply their basic knowledge with behind-the-wheel practice, eventually driving solo. Young drivers in the second phase of learning to drive begin to analyze the driving experience. They

begin to combine different, discrete aspects of driving into larger frameworks of understanding. They also begin to assess the value of driving. They ask questions like, “What can driving do for me?” or “What kind of driver do I want to be?”

There (hopefully) comes a moment during this second phase of learning to drive when everything “clicks,” when all the discrete aspects of the act of driving come together, and for the first time the driver is able to internalize all the physical and mental movements of driving into one fluid movement or into some sense of the whole. Now the driver can see beyond the act of driving itself and her eyes take in the horizon for the first time. At this moment, driving, which was formerly an end in itself, becomes the means to some other end. This integration marks the end of the second phase of learning to drive, and emerging drivers enter a third phase in which they begin to use their driving ability to take them where they want and need to go. Now, transformed, they are truly in the “driver’s seat.” The drivers in this third phase (again, ideally) use their driving knowledge and ability to self-actualize, to fulfill their own unique destiny or life project.

Phase One of the Transition: Establishing Competence

The first phase of the experience of Waldorf elementary students transitioning to non-Waldorf high schools involved their need to establish competence academically and socially in their new school programs. Students initially attempted to establish their academic competence by achieving desired grades. This outward measure gave them a way to compare their performance with other students and experience a positive sense of self-esteem. Social competency involved establishing one or more personal connections within the larger and more impersonal environment of high school. The initial transition phase was relatively short for most students, lasting less than a semester.

Participants reported the main challenge to achieving desired grades initially involved acclimating to new instructional *methods* rather than to any academic content *per se*. Indeed, research concerning the normative high school transition (the transition to high school from “traditional” elementary, middle, and junior high schools) confirmed the need on the part

Waldorf elementary schools must necessarily ensure their students are prepared for other educational settings for the simple fact that many students continue their education in non-Waldorf high schools.

of students to adjust to new instructional methods as a major challenge (Felner, Ginter, & Primavera, 1982). Researchers found the highest level of student concern across the high school transition regarded “academic nuts and bolts.” These were defined as the knowledge of how high school works—requirements, structures, and terminology—and more importantly, the knowledge of where to go to get help (Beresford, 2013). The most significant element in participant descriptions of establishing competence involved the understanding of how grades worked, in particular, how to “work for a grade.” In addition, one of the new structural elements Waldorf students experienced in their transition was the move to a departmentalized organization of classes and schedules in high school. Normative transition research further confirmed transitional challenges associated with moving from self-contained school organizations to more period-based, departmentalized environments (Alspaugh & Harting, 1995). Consequently, while Waldorf students may be experiencing certain instructional practices for the first time, a certain “nuts and bolts” adjustment may be expected for any high school freshman.

The majority of participant comments regarding their initial transitional social challenges (establishing a sense of belonging, including breaking into cliques) involved school size, both with regard to the large size of the high schools in question and the small size of their former Waldorf elementary school. All nine of the participants attending larger high schools reported feeling less personal connection with teachers and a less familiar connection with the student population in general than at their former Waldorf elementary school. Two of the four participants attending smaller high schools described community in their schools more positively than the nine attending larger schools. Smaller high schools emerged in the normative high school transition literature as one of the most important structural characteristics associated with academic and social success across the high school transition (Simmons, Burgeson, Carlton-Ford, & Blyth, 1987). Positive academic and social outcomes, including feeling a sense of belonging, occurred more often in smaller high schools with student populations under 1,000 (Lee & Smith, 1997).

Lee and Smith (1997) further explain that the positive outcomes associated with smaller schools did not follow for a smaller subgroup of students who were unable to locate a peer group in high school. Kinney (1993) found the more polymorphous environment of large high schools was largely positive for those students who had experienced marginalization in their smaller, more hierarchically-structured former schools. In fact, of the four interviewees attending high schools smaller than 1,000, only two developed positive friendships across their transition and reported feeling a close-knit sense of community comparable to their Waldorf experience. The other two participants described feeling like outcasts in their respective smaller high schools. Both students experienced difficulty finding their “crowd” and eventually switched schools, one to a larger urban high school and one to an even smaller arts-based school.

Interpreted through the lens of Maslow’s (1943) hierarchy of needs, neither of these students was able to overcome an initial transition challenges, perhaps in part because of an inability to achieve a sense of belonging. In terms of Kinney’s study (1993), they may have been unable to achieve a sense of belonging precisely because of the small size of their respective high schools.

Lee and Smith (1997) used a national sample to attribute positive outcomes in smaller schools to greater opportunities for social participation with peers and personal relationships with teachers. Personal connections with teachers emerged as one of the most significant factors associated with a positive transition experience (Beresford, 2013). Simmons et al. (1987) hypothesized that students transitioning from smaller schools into larger schools may experience a form of cumulative stress from meeting a large number of new peers, while at the same time acclimating to new schedules and instructional methods. This cumulative stress may be part of what was experienced initially by Waldorf elementary students attending larger high schools.

Phase Two of the Transition: Analyzing and Assessing Experience

After learning the “nuts and bolts” of high school, students began the process of analyzing and assessing the value of their academic and social experiences based on whether the academic program

fit their learning needs and style, and whether the friendships brought with them from the Waldorf school or made initially in the first few months of high school met the criteria for satisfying long-term friendships. This secondary transition phase—analyzing and assessing experience—lasted longer than the first phase, between one and two years. Students in this second phase made many comparisons between their academic and social experiences in high school and their former Waldorf experiences. The second stage largely involved a meaning-making activity, engaging students in reflection regarding the relevance of their academic program and the nature and quality of friendships. Upon self-analysis, students reported a decrease in their personal connection to academic material across their transition to high school. This decrease in meaning was experienced

most intensely during the freshman and sophomore years, improving slightly in junior and senior years through the impact of unique attributes of particular teachers.

Students additionally reported an increase in extrinsic motivation across their transition to high school indirectly proportional to declines in intrinsic motivation and meaning. For instance, despite the fact that the majority of participants described grades as one-dimensional, they nonetheless felt invigorated by receiving desired grades and satisfying the need to “know” how they compared to others. Students

were excited by their experience of the extrinsic value of excelling in a graded, competitive academic environment. Part of what students described as positive in their assessment of the value of their academic experiences in high school involved the belief that they compared favorably to others in the “real world,” as well as the feeling that they were learning the “real world” skills they would need in college and beyond.

The motivation of students to maintain desired grades or succeed in terms of outward measures of performance is certainly not viewed here as a challenge. However, the decline in intrinsic motivation across the transition to high school, that is to say, the decline in interest and engagement in *learning itself*, is certainly a challenge begging analysis. The first-phase academic challenge of acclimating to new instructional methods involved a relatively simple analysis. Students first had to learn the language of high school methodology

Given the methodological differences between Waldorf schools and “traditional,” comprehensive high schools, high school readiness is a lightning rod for many families in their assessment of the ultimate value of Waldorf education.

before applying that knowledge to academic content. The second-phase academic challenge of declining interest and engagement is a much more complex issue. Decreases in interest and engagement also presented a longer-standing challenge to students. Whereas the process of adjusting to new instructional methods lasted under a year for the majority of participants, the decrease in intrinsic motivation continued throughout high school.

Although declines in interest and engagement in the transition to high school is a phenomenon too complex to fully address here, exploring the intersection of *meaning* and *intellect* may point the way to fuller explication. Rudolf Steiner (2007) believed the intellect may only engage fully with material already learned through direct experience and emotional connection; direct experience and emotional connection continue to be the models for all learning even into adolescence in Waldorf schools. Mainstream research has similarly identified several factors affecting the intellectual reasoning skills of adolescents. Corroborating Steiner (2007) and John Dewey (1997), researchers found reasoning skills are enhanced when applied to an existing knowledge base familiar and appropriately structured (Byrnes, 2005). A second factor affecting reasoning is motivation. Researchers found adolescents reason better when they are *personally interested* in the subject matter (Klaczynski, Byrnes, & Jacobs, 2001). So, in a sense, meaning and reason have a “chicken and egg” relationship. It is difficult to imagine one without the other.

A third factor affecting reasoning is the processing demands of the task. The more abstractions that need to be held simultaneously, the greater the likelihood an individual will resort to former, more concrete methods of reasoning or take a focused view of the whole (Byrnes, 2005); this difficulty corresponds to participants’ complaints about the more fact-based, concept-driven approach they experienced in high school. In addition to the partial views of reality offered by instructional approaches dealing in facts (bypassing experience and appealing directly to the intellect)—and quite apart from the socially isolating effects of passive educational experiences—the decline in meaning experienced by Waldorf students across their transition to high school may be in part due to the imposition of knowledge beyond young learners’ capacities and learning styles. Simply put, creative, experiential, and cooperative learning is not only authentic and meaningful, it develops higher-order thinking skills.

Phase Three of the Transition: Transformation

Students achieved basic competencies in an initial transition phase and analyzed and assessed the value of their experiences in a second phase. Students in the third phase integrated their familiarity with high school into more holistic and internalized understandings. Transformed by the activities of analysis and assessment, they now – to return to our driving analogy – made their “own road” academically and socially. This third phase coincided for many with a positive shift in their experience of academic programs between 9th and 10th, and between 11th and 12th grades, as well as a positive shift in the nature and quality of relationships with both peers and teachers. Learning in this third phase was more transformative than in previous phases, in large part because it was self-generated. Learning was also self-actualized because it was guided by more self-aware, existential purposes.

Implications for Waldorf Elementary Schools

It is beyond the scope of this particular investigation to contemplate any changes to traditional Waldorf elementary practice. However, it may be fair to suggest that in conversations among faculty members and with current and prospective families, the topic of “traditional” high school teaching methodologies is more immediate and relevant than the topic of content readiness. Interpreted through the lens, for instance, of Bloom’s (1956) cognitive taxonomy, students may not be able to even address possible content gaps until they first acclimate to new learning styles and teaching methodologies. In other words, the questions whether or how Waldorf eighth-graders should be formally introduced to computer programs or science terminology may be less important than questions of their readiness to experience syllabi, rubrics, multiple choice tests, weighted grades, and performance-oriented grading schemes. Some direct instruction in high school methods and terminology may be helpful at best, innocuous at worst. However, given the possible damaging effects of, for instance, performance-oriented grading schemes on elementary-aged children, and their dubious efficacy in preparing students for future competitive environments, and given the relatively short “nuts and bolts” adjustment period in high school, it may be enough to simply give Waldorf eighth-graders a “heads-up” on some of the more unhealthy, “traditional” instructional methods to come.

The question how to interpret the social transition to high school is somewhat more complex than academic considerations. Positive effects of a small community for elementary-aged children notwithstanding, the challenge of moving from the smaller Waldorf school to larger high schools was more significant for those students with shyer, more introverted temperaments. Furthermore, attending smaller high schools resulted in a positive social experience for only half of the former Waldorf students attending such smaller schools. Not only is mainstream research somewhat mixed on what size of high school is best and for whom, similarly mixed results were reached by research studies concerning what types of elementary-, middle-, or junior-high-school-models best prepare students for the transition to high school (Simmons et al., 1987; Weiss & Baker-Smith, 2011).

Perhaps one implication for Waldorf elementary schools concerning the social transition to high school involves efforts to counsel families in picking the right high school for their individual child. A good counselling strategy may involve anticipating the unique, socioemotional experience of each individual student; it may also involve providing a clearer picture of the normative high school transition. As the scholarly literature showed, some of the social challenges related by participants may be interpreted in terms of the “normal” high school transition experience, or as challenges experienced by freshman regardless of their former school experiences. This research may somewhat dispel the hypothesis that Waldorf is some form of “social bubble.” Mainstream research, indeed, confirmed many of the socioemotional challenges experienced by former Waldorf elementary students. These socioemotional challenges included relational challenges (Langenkamp, 2009), anxiety (Barber and Olsen, 2004), and decreases in motivation (Eccles & Midgley, 1989). Communicating this picture of normative, socioemotional, transitional challenges may be helpful in ameliorating the concern on the part of some families that Waldorf students will necessarily be at a disadvantage by attending small, cozy Waldorf elementary schools, or by later attending larger, more impersonal high schools.

Researchers found the highest level of student concern across the high school transition regarded “academic nuts and bolts.” These were defined as the knowledge of how high school works—requirements, structures, and terminology—and more importantly, the knowledge of where to go to get help.

A final implication involves the way the Waldorf community conducts formal or informal, scientific or anecdotal, research into the experience of our Waldorf graduates. If, as I claim, students necessarily went through a phase of establishing competency, in large part by first learning the methodological “nuts and bolts” of high school before they were able to analyze and assess their initial academic experiences, then it may be fair to assume students in their initial transitional phases would not be in a position to analyze their experiences fairly or holistically. My decision to interview seniors and high school graduates was influenced by my concern that young students, in the throes of their transition experience, may not be fully able to clearly analyze and assess that same experience. I worried freshman would over-react to areas of perceived lack of preparation without being able to bracket or contextualize initial transitional challenges and distinguish them from ongoing or structural challenges. For instance, I worried freshmen might report knowing absolutely *nothing* about “real” science, only to realize several years later that they want to pursue a career in science expressly *because* of their Waldorf science experience, or in spite of their (initial) high school science experience. (Several advanced students, in fact, reported similar transformations in their attitude.) This is not intended as a criticism of high school science curriculums; it is a concern about how Waldorf science is portrayed, and, more importantly, about the ability of a high school freshman to discern the source of transitional challenges.

Interviewing seniors and older students allowed for initial transitional phases to play out, and it allowed the participants to contextualize and assess their own transitional experiences, which I do not believe they would have been able to do as freshman or even sophomores. Furthermore, interviewing seniors and high school graduates revealed further transitional phases such as the change from intrinsic to more extrinsic measures of motivation. Taking a snapshot of the transition experience at any point in time may be a bit like isolating one point on the circumference of a circle and expecting it to provide the full picture. Only

by taking a longer-range view does the nature of the curve come into view.

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Life Processes and Learning in Waldorf Pedagogy



Martyn Rawson

Pedagogy is the relationship between teaching and learning; it can take the form of an art, a craft, and a science (Nind, Curtin, & Hall, 2016). As an art, pedagogy involves finding a unique balance between activity, content, and meaning-making on the part of the participants (teachers and pupils) in each learning situation. As a craft, it means being able to structure and support learning in ways that are effective in relation to the pedagogical aims. As a science, pedagogy is concerned with developing an understanding of the processes of teaching and learning. This understanding is based mainly on observations of, and reflections on practice. In the case of Waldorf education, such reflections would refer to the generative ideas of Waldorf theory in interpreting observations. Theory, in this sense, means the ideas informing the practice. These have traditionally been based on Rudolf Steiner's pedagogical anthropology as outlined in his lectures on education and based on his foundational work on the origins of knowledge and the nature of the human being further supplemented by the work of many teachers and teacher educators over the years since 1919. I call this body of ideas, *Waldorf theory*. This doesn't prescribe what we have to do, but rather offers us ways of seeing that help us make choices in pedagogical practice. Waldorf theory enables teachers to generate practice, reflect on teaching and learning, and research their field.

Pedagogical practice is never simply the application of a curriculum or a standardized teaching program; rather, it is about using Waldorf theory as a lens to look at and read the actual situation. That is what makes Waldorf different to many other current educational approaches. It requires teachers individually and collectively to be intelligent, responsible, professional, and creative, basing their judgements on interpretations of the evidence consistent with Waldorf understandings of the nature of the human being. However, if Waldorf schools are to justify their claims to autonomy, this must be based on reflective practice, evaluation of pedagogical quality, and systematic inquiry, using Waldorf theory as criteria and orientation.

One cannot be accountable simply by saying, "I did what I thought was right." Steiner (1996c) made this

point when he assured the parents in the first Waldorf school that the teachers regularly review their practice in the light of the principles of Waldorf education and modify or change their practice, where they find it necessary. This, in fact, is the primary function of the collegial school leadership (Gladstone, 1997). Steiner (2004) set the benchmark for this kind of work in the Ilkley Course, where he describes this practice as an ongoing living university (*fortlaufende lebendige Hochschule*), in which teachers share and develop their understandings of pedagogy. Today, we would call this 'participatory action research' or 'illuminative practitioner research'.

This article is a modified excerpt from a forthcoming book that explores ways in which Waldorf teachers can research their practice in scientifically valid ways. As we reach 100 years of Waldorf education, it is more important than ever that this practice keeps pace with the rapidly changing social, political, economic, cultural, and ecological conditions under which children and young people grow and develop. In order to do this, Waldorf teachers must reflect on, evaluate, and research their practice.

Waldorf Research Using Waldorf Theory

How should Waldorf teachers carry out such research in a way that can be deemed scientific and accountable? I cannot go into methods of research in this article, but I want to make two important points. The first is that action research in Waldorf settings, which primarily aims to change practice, or illuminative practitioner research, which aims to deepen understanding and develop teachers' abilities, has to meet the ethical and research design standards typical of such approaches (see McNiff, 2013; Noffke & Somekh, 2013; Elliott & Lukes, 2008). The second point is that Waldorf research should also use Waldorf theory. This is challenging because in academic circles, Steiner's educational theory is deemed unscientific (Dahlin, 1917). One solution, as Christian Rittelmeyer (1990, 2010) has pointed out a number of times over the years, is to treat Steiner's ideas as heuristic models in an interpretivist approach. In a heuristic

model, an idea or assumption can be used to further investigations by saying: if we assume that such and such is the case, what does this reveal to us about the investigated phenomenon? We don't take that which is assumed as a fact, we use it as a theoretical construct to advance our inquiry; like using a specific lens on a camera, it brings certain things into focus in particular conditions. If this approach proves fruitful in explaining things, then it opens up new ways of seeing. In the social sciences, conceptual metaphors are used in a similar manner to make phenomena visible (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003).

Equally one can construct ideal-types, which build a conceptual bridge between general social phenomena and specific cases that enable us to compare what we expect with what we find. As Peter Kelly (2013) points out, "ideal does not refer to perfect things, moral ideas or statistical averages, it refers to the world of ideas, and ideal types are idea-constructs that help put the chaos of social reality in order" (Kelly, 2013, p. 421). The developmental tasks in the Waldorf Curriculum are a good example for ideal-types: we do not say all pupils are at this stage of development because they are in a particular grade, nor do we say that this is a minimum to be achieved. The ideal type provides us with an idea of what would be realistically desirable as an orientation. As Michael Zech (2017) puts it, "general developmental phases such as seven-year stages or changes between the age of 10 to 12 that can be observed, do not simply occur but are brought about by the pedagogical approach and orientate themselves on the one hand on ideal-types, and on the other, on the actual situation of the pupils" (Zech, 2017, p. 70). The pedagogical task is to bridge the gap between the heterogeneous positions of the individual students and the idea of what they could be in terms of their learning and development. The teacher does this by offering content and methods that challenge the students to activate their learning in ways that generate development. In this sense, the ideas about learning in this article are ideal-types that can be used to reflect on and research practice.

First, I will summarize Waldorf learning theory as it has been more recently formulated. I follow this up with a brief characterization of learning that I think is helpful as a baseline. Then, I outline a number of propositions about learning.

Waldorf Learning Theory

Steiner's learning theory is distributed across his writings and lectures on the nature of the human being,

in his anthroposophical anthropology and theory of knowledge. It has only recently been formulated in a coherent way as a theory of learning (Loebell, 2016, 2017; Schieren 2012, 2016b). Summarized very briefly, Schieren (2012) identifies the following key aspects of learning that inform Waldorf pedagogy:

1. Transformation:

Learning means stepping out of the existing pattern of mental representations we have of the world and actively uniting oneself with reality. This can be prompted by crisis. Learning enables the subject to restore the integration of self and world in a new equilibrium in Piaget's sense.

2. Forgetting:

In order to learn one has to forget, which means to loosen the close connections to one's mental representations of the world. Sleep is a part of the learning process.

3. Abilities:

The main benefit of learning is the growth of abilities and dispositions.

4. Comprehensiveness:

Learning occurs through the fullest possible engagement with reality through direct experience wherever possible. Learning is not about the accumulation of factual knowledge.

5. Truth:

Learning is a process of generating knowledge that unites the human being with the world's laws; this process makes the human being capable.

6. Meaning:

Engaging the world through such abilities is experienced as relevant and meaningful.

I find this characterization very helpful because it links knowing and the generation of knowledge to learning. I take up the point of transformation below. What is clear is that learning often occurs through an interruption in existing patterns of experience, especially the encounter with the world as Other.

Loebell (2017) characterizes the learning process that is mediated by teaching as:

1. An expression of the activity of the person forming her individuality, which is emergent and open (i.e. rather than fixed and predetermined). Learning is ultimately an

individual process of becoming (more) experienced (Erfahrenerwerden).

2. Becoming through experience occurs in different ways in thinking, feeling and willing; in other words, thinking and willing with full consciousness, partial consciousness, and while we are unconscious. The Waldorf approach is to educate both thinking and willing indirectly via the feelings. How this is done varies fundamentally between early childhood, childhood and after puberty, and requires teachers to be artistic in their whole approach.

3. Rhythm is a vital aspect of learning. Pedagogy as an art involves structuring and fine-tuning the rhythms of learning.

4. Bodily experience leads to embodied cognition, emphasizing the central importance of sensory experience, concrete encounters with the world, and activities involving movement and physical skills.

5. The significance of the teacher is vital, not only as a shaper and observer of learning processes but also as an active meaning-maker. The teacher is called upon to be capable of transforming herself, to know and understand the pupils and to awaken a sense of trust in them.

6. Steiner emphasizes that learning is an ongoing, life long process.

7. What is taught undergoes a metamorphosis at key moments in the biography of the learners. Such key moments of change are around the age of 6-7 and the second dentition, the age of 9-10 and the onset of puberty, and the start of adolescence. The Waldorf approach to teaching and the material that is taught changes at these stages to interact developmentally with the pupils. The curriculum brings learning experiences to the pupils that enable them to engage with developmental challenges.

8. Learning involves three qualities of participation in the world: directing attention to the world, social participation of individuals in learning processes (referred to as commitment [Verbindlichkeit]), and individual insight into what appears self-evident.

Following Steiner's account in the *Foundations of Human Experience* (1996b), learning is understood as a sequence of learning processes, sometimes referred to as the three-step process and related to Steiner's account of living concepts, conclusion, judgement and concept. These steps can be summarized as follows:

1. Taking in: directly experiencing, encountering, observing, experimenting

2. Recalling: describing, characterizing, recording

3. Processing: analysing, abstracting, generalizing, deepening, grasping of connections, relationships and laws, constructing concepts.

I will return to these processes below. My exploration of learning builds on this foundation by supplementing it primarily with a social perspective on learning

Ways of Knowing

We live in an egotistical, selfish, even narcissistic culture that valorizes the success of the individual and puts self-interest before social solidarity. Educational programs often stress the competences related to the neo-liberal concepts of self-determination, self-management, self-efficacy, self-directed learning, and entrepreneurship. This is what the psychologist Paul Verhaeghe (2015) calls the economization of the self. This context enshrines the implicit values of competition and learning as the acquisition of symbolic capital and reinforces social inequality. Even if school curricula espouse other, more socially conscious values, the message of the system is clear: winners take all and no one wants to be a loser. As Verhaeghe puts it, there is no such thing as competitive solidarity. He further catalogues the extensive mental health and societal costs of such an approach.

The anthroposophical emphasis on the I or self sometimes obscures the fact that we are essentially social beings. Certainly, in terms of understanding learning, we need to take both social and individual aspects and their interaction into account. The fact is, whether we want to or not, we learn with, from, through and sometimes in spite of others. To understand the full implications of this, we need to look at the learning process in terms of the relationships this implies between subject and world. As long as we think of learning in terms of the acquisition of knowledge as discrete packages of information that exist in the world 'out there', we are not only playing

into the hands of a neo-liberal world view, but we are overlooking the participatory and interactive nature of learning.

As the educationalist Horst Rumpf (2010) argues (in a German book entitled *What Would Einstein Have Thought If He Hadn't Played the Violin?*), there are two kinds of learning. The first kind involves grasping, conquering, mastering, colonizing, controlling, dissecting, categorizing, instrumentalizing, and utilizing the world for our own enrichment, irrespective of the ecological and cultural costs. This is a positivist, technocratic view of learning as mastery and ownership of something that is not us; that is, setting up what is learned as the *object* to our *subject*. This form of learning requires that we stand back from the phenomena that interest us and observe them in a detached, supposedly objective way. The second form of learning is an attentive, respectful, and open approach of listening to the unknown Other (whether this other is a natural phenomenon, a social phenomenon, or a person). This kind of learning tries to be open to the voice of the Other and what she has to tell us, knowing that this also reveals our own nature, that we become through the Other, that we are ultimately one with the other. This is a phenomenological, participatory form of learning.

The title of Rumpf's book reveals his solution to this binary, by pointing to art as a different way of knowing the world that recognizes both lawfulness and structure as well as giving expression to higher meaning. He makes it clear that we need both types of learning in different situations but makes the point that the first type tends to dominate the educational world because it generates knowledge that can be measured. Clearly, we need other forms of learning and the knowledge they generate. Poetry, art, music, myth and theatre are all ways of knowing about the world. Elliot Eisner (2008) has made the point that art is as valid a way as science is of expressing knowledge and understanding the world. In this context, Eisner (2014) also makes specific reference to the theory of symbolic forms of knowledge, developed by the philosopher Ernst Cassirer. Cassirer distinguished between expressive, representational, and significative (meaning-giving) forms of knowledge. Myth is an example of expressive

thinking, while natural language is an example of representational thinking, which ultimately derives from sensory experience, and significative thinking, which refers to categories of relations rather than concrete experiences and is best known in scientific thinking. Such perspectives open up a space for a spiritual form of thinking, to which I shall return below.

Learning as Separation and Learning as Participation

What is learning from an anthroposophical perspective? Steiner (1994), in his book *Theosophy*, describes a process in which our soul retains our experiences embodied in memory, and our I, as the spiritual and active core of our being, draws on these experiences and extracts, as it were, their essence transformed into abilities that are incorporated into the I, building-up the I-body. Thus we are transformed. The

I determines what of the person's embodied experiences is essential for its own further development in terms of its spiritual intentions and its own becoming.

Steiner describes the knowledge aspect of learning in his various texts on how knowledge is generated and what this means for the human being's relationship to self and world. Firstly, it is important to state that Steiner's understanding of knowledge is not merely cognitive, but involves the whole human being. Thus knowing is not simply something that involves our heads but permeates our being and is therefore bound up with identity. Very briefly summarized, according to Steiner's (1993) account of knowing, we have sense impres-

sions, which we organize with the help of existing understandings into percepts that initially have no further meaning. We then match these percepts to appropriate concepts, which give the percepts meaning and context and we retain these in the form of representations of our experience. Each time we experience the same or a similar phenomenon, we are able to expand the concept by locating it in an ever expanding context. In other words, we understand what we are experiencing ever more comprehensively, as long as we open ourselves to new dimensions of experience, rather than simply accepting existing understandings without further reflection. Thus we come

As we reach 100 years of Waldorf education, it is more important than ever that this practice keeps pace with the rapidly changing social, political, economic, cultural, and ecological conditions under which children and young people grow and develop.

to successively more integrated and multi-dimensional understandings.

Furthermore, in doing so we not only expand our knowledge but we bring reality into being. As Steiner (1963b) puts it, we are not merely passive observers of the world, mirroring in our minds the reality that exists “out there”. Rather, we are active co-creators of reality. The world is in us and we are embedded in the living rhythms and relationships that make up the world. We are *originally* and *ultimately* part of the world; we are participants in world being. The philosopher Owen Barfield (1988), inspired by Steiner, describes these states of being as *original* and *final participation*. What separates us and prevents us from experiencing our actual embeddedness is our intellectuality, as this manifests, for example, in modern scientific consciousness. Both Steiner and Barfield make the case for developing a new consciousness of being at one with the world.

Researching Spiritual Dimensions

Johannes Kiersch (2010) has added a further dimension to the task of working with Steiner’s ideas in that he draws on the notion that knowledge does not always start with certainty and clarity, but emerges as an inkling of meaning before knowing itself occurs. He draws on Ernst Cassirer’s work on knowledge as symbolic form and in particular on the expressive and representational modes of knowing. Kiersch points out that Steiner, in his Book *Riddles of the Soul* (1983), made a significant breakthrough in his thinking about the relationship between the human and social sciences of his day, which he refers to as anthropology and anthroposophy. Conventional science is based on empirical experience and stops there. Anthroposophy, as a science of the spirit, goes beyond that into the non-sense-perceptible dimensions of being. Steiner sought to build a bridge between these two sciences by positing a boundary zone between them into which we can go to experience things at the edge of the sense perceptible. He spoke of an area (the German word is usually translated as *frontier*, which has some unhelpful associations) at the boundary between the sense world and the super-sensible world. Perhaps it would be better to think of this using the metaphor of transition and an area of transition, because this area is not a clearly marked limit with a fixed delineation, like a wall or fence.

Steiner uses this metaphor of participating in the area of transition to direct our attention to the possibility

of supplementing our sense-based ways of knowing by crossing to an area of transition and sojourning there in order to develop spiritually-based knowing. The important aspect of this activity is that we do this consciously. He suggests we sojourn in this area by taking our theory-based, rational consciousness with us into the ‘super-rational’ (i.e., beyond rationality) world of the spirit. We do this by assimilating knowledge about spiritual aspects of the human being (see, for example, Steiner’s *The Foundations of Human Experience* [1996b]) ‘on this side’ and then direct our gaze at the phenomena on the ‘other side’. Each journey into the transition area takes us further and offers us more certainty. What starts out as an inkling, a presentment, a hunch or feeling, gradually gains contours, shifts from informal knowing to symbolic form. Furthermore, as Kiersch points out, we can sensitize our awareness of the non-material, non-sensory qualities of transitions, processes, qualities, relationships, atmospheres and moods that are realities within the transition area. Our preparation as teachers for ‘reading’ the child, for understanding social processes, experiencing the invisible forces of nature are, on the one hand, regular practice in the arts and in social life, in Goethean observation, and, on the other, in studying and meditating the anthroposophical ideas about learning, growth, and development.

Life Processes and Learning

In the posthumously-published work *Anthroposophy – A fragment*, Steiner (1996a) attempted to show that within the processes of sense perception, various life processes are at work in our bodies and come to expression in our soul activity. This idea has been taken up by various authors (Lindenau, 1974; van Houten, 1993; Sahlmann, Weihs & Urieli, 1996; König, 1999; Rawson, 1999). Life processes, as Steiner describes them, can be imagined as intelligent structures whose origins are in the living world that we have embodied, and that have been socialized, shaped, and modified by culture and ultimately individualized. Steiner (1996d) refers to the ‘civilizing’ of the natural human being by a culture that raises us from a state in which our behaviour is determined by instinct, drives and passions. Perhaps a more appropriate word than ‘to civilize’ would be to *edify*, which has an etymology that derives the word from a Middle English version of the Latin *aedificare* – to build and shape. We are talking about the classic notion of nature and nurture, though it would be more accurate to talk about the person being *nurtured* and thus socialized and encultured. In the course of our education, we gradually

learn how to form ourselves deliberately. Up until that point, we are socially and culturally shaped.

In Steiner's notion of the life processes, the natural forces of nourishing, growth and reproduction are socialized and then individualized, and thus transformed from natural life forces into forms of cognition. Metaphors of cultivation and domestication are appropriate, since children, like cultivated plants and domesticated animals, require propagation, nourishment, protection, and support in a sheltered space; in other words, they require a healthy and health-generating growing environment. Children, however, not only grow biologically, they also learn, hence the correspondence between the life processes and the cultural processes of learning and development. This is called *Bildung* in German and today is understood to mean a process through which individuals engage bodily and mentally with the world, embodying culture as they do so and thus weaving together self and world, body and spirit, individuality and sociality in search of secure and possible identities. It is a biographical process in which individuals develop their personality within the opportunities and restraints of the social situations they are embedded in (Faulstich, 2013).

Life Processes and Learning Processes

Influenced by various people, including my first mentor as a teacher, Edith Bierman, who grew up in Dornach and knew Steiner in her younger years, and Wolfgang Schad, with whom I trained to become a high school teacher, I aligned the life processes with the soul/mind processes, as follows (Rawson, 1999):

1. Breathing – perceiving
2. Warming – experiencing sensations
3. Nourishing – visualizing
4. Secreting/Separating/Sorting – judging
5. Maintaining – memory
6. Growing – personality
7. Reproducing – self-development

Van Houten's (1994) interpretation of the seven life processes in adult learning was another variation that I was aware of. His sequence is as follows:

1. Breathing – observing
2. Warming – relating
3. Digesting – assimilating
4. Secreting (sorting) – individualizing
5. Maintaining – exercising
6. Growing – developing new abilities

7. Reproducing – creating

In more recent years, I have found it helpful to think of learning in terms of the following processes:

1. Experiencing
2. Forgetting
3. Recalling
4. Processing
5. Practicing, applying
6. Growing abilities
7. Transforming

Essentially, this sequence of processes involves how we experience the world through our senses, what we do with these sense impressions, how we respond to them through thinking, feeling and willing, how we retain them as mental images, how we relate to them and how we make sense of them. The second half of the learning process involves how learning transforms us. It is difficult in some ways to talk about learning in general, unless we meaning the development of the person. Each subject and field has its own learning processes. For this reason, I have framed my approach as a series of propositions that can be applied across different learning situations.

I also think it is helpful to consider some of the more important pre-conditions for healthy learning, which I summarize below. My account of learning complements Steiner's explanation with ideas drawn from other compatible learning theories. Learning is a hugely complex field and the literature is vast. I think it is legitimate to blend learning theories that make similar assumptions about human beings and the learning process. In my book, I go into much more detail in justifying my choice of theory. In this article, I simply refer to the most important thinkers and theoreticians I have drawn on, including John Dewey, Lev Vygotsky, Klaus Holzkamp, Jean Lave, and Étienne Wenger and Barbara Rogoff. As already pointed out, I present my thoughts on learning in the form of a series of heuristic propositions that I invite the teacher to use as 'lenses' or as ideal-types through which they can look at their own practice. I outline each aspect of learning and suggest the kind of research questions one can have (without pre-empting the questions teachers actually have).

Some Propositions About Learning

Proposition 1: *Learning is becoming and we grow and develop through learning. Real learning that involves*

the whole person, body, soul, and spirit and leads to sustainable change. This kind of learning is transformative. It changes how people relate to themselves and to the world.

John Dewey (1938) said that each genuine learning experience changes the conditions under which subsequent learning can occur. He called this 'continuity of experience' and said that it leads to growth and development. Thus what we learn and how we learn it shapes our becoming and our development. The experiences we have come from two primary sources: the social world in which we are embedded, and how our bodies respond to the world and embody those experiences. Another important scholar of learning, Klaus Holzkamp (1995), pointed out that, seen from the perspective of the learner, the main motivation for learning as growth and development is the learner's biographical interests. We actively learn in the belief that this will open up further opportunities for learning and realizing our biographical intentions and improving our chances to exercise control over our lives. Holzkamp calls this 'expansive learning'. The opposite motivation for learning, defensive learning, refers to learning in order to avoid stress from teachers or parents, to learn for the next test or to gain grades or credit points.

A number of more recent researchers have explored just how important learning interests are and how they can be nurtured (Grotlüschen, 2004, 2014; Faulstich, 2013). People's identities – that is, who they see themselves as – are bound up with their learning and development and what motivates their learning. Biographical learning is a concept that accounts for the way that people learn to recognize the opportunities for expansive learning in a given situation and the extent to which they are able to act towards fulfilling their biographical interests (Alheit, 2009). From an anthroposophical perspective, this approach is referred to as teachers addressing latent questions in the students and includes the challenge of recognizing the spiritual intentions that an individual brings with her and how these might come to expression. We must not judge students by their appearance or current behavior (or grades); rather, the task is to sense the student's potential that has not yet manifested.

Educational programs often stress the competences related to the neo-liberal concepts of self-determination, self-management, self-efficacy, self-directed learning, and entrepreneurship. This is what the psychologist Paul Verhaeghe calls the economization of the self.

Ipsative assessment is, therefore, above all future-orientated (Rawson, 2015). The opportunities for learning and developing are afforded and bounded by the learning culture of the class and school that the individual belongs to. Thus we can understand learning as becoming and as transformation within a learning culture, as defined by the Learning Lives Project (Biesta, et al, 2011).

Research questions that arise from this perspective include clarifying what we, as teachers, actually think learning is because this shapes our attitudes and priorities in teaching. Case studies of individual students have the task of gaining knowledge of individual learning biographies and how they relate to the actual learning culture. We cannot understand individuals as isolated beings, but always in context of the learning community, school culture and life of that person. If we want to understand students' spiritual intentions, we need to

interact with them and involve them in the process – it is their biography after all! Another area of research involves looking at ways in which learning and development can be supported through assessment (Rawson, 2015). As we know from many studies (see Hattie and Yates, 2014) feedback can be a rich source of support for learning and development, if it is done in the right way. We also need to study the learning culture in the school and faculty, especially looking for tensions between espoused values and those that teachers actually enact, or between school and home, between school and the wider society. The learning culture is powerfully shaped by unconsidered and tacit understandings and relationships that need to be made conscious.

Proposition 2: *Learning occurs through participation in learning communities of practice, one of the most important being the Waldorf class. The key to inclusion of people with different learning needs is the willingness of the community to allow and enable participation of all members of the community.*

Participation may be prompted by the urge to imitate, or what is called mimesis (Wulf 2007), but in formal classroom situations this is not automatic. The school and classroom cultures have to generate the

expectation that participation is wanted and permitted and therefore the learning culture has to enable the participation of all children in all learning activities. The key question is always: what do we (as a learning community) have to do, in order to encourage and enable participation? It is not realistic just to expect children to be 'ready to learn' out of themselves. We must meet them where they are and help them to participate in order that they can learn, whatever their developmental stage is. We must help them in healthy ways to become 'ready'. That is the basic principle of inclusion! It has to become part of the learning culture that children have a need and a right to participate and therefore need to be encouraged and enabled to participate. Participation in kindergarten is a different process than that in school, and again there are differences through the grades, and in the high school. Nevertheless, participation is the primary way children, young people (and indeed teachers) learn in a transformational way.

The research tasks associated with this proposition involve identifying the explicit and implicit assumptions in such communities of practice, identifying what enables and what hinders participation, and identifying and understanding the tensions that arise at the boundaries of such communities and where communities overlap. People are always members of several communities of practice: the home, their social environment, membership of other formal and informal communities (e.g., Church groups, Scouts, neighborhood and youth groups). These different communities may have conflicting values and attitudes, different forms of knowledge and expectations. Transitions between communities of pedagogical practice (e.g., from kindergarten to grade 1, from grade 8 to 9 etc.) are often accompanied by crises rich in opportunities for learning and development. One can explore how children actually experience these transitions and what assumptions are made by the adults.

Proposition 3: *Learning is the motor of development.*

This proposition asks teachers to look at their assumptions about developmental phases and cross-cultural issues about how children in different cultural contexts

learn and develop. This is a vital topic across the world. The position taken here is that institutional practices, the curriculum, and the school's culture promote certain types of learning that in turn stimulate certain developmental processes. However, it is important to emphasize that learning, as we shall see below, requires that the individual is active. Healthy development occurs when the individual is active in her learning.

[W]e understand what we are experiencing ever more comprehensively, as long as we open ourselves to new dimensions of experience, rather than simply accepting existing understandings without further reflection.

An important research task is to explore how development actually occurs. The developmental ideal types that are described in the Waldorf curriculum and the Waldorf literature are not statements of facts that describe how children actually are, but rather what would be good for them to become. Notions such as the 'Rubicon', which describes a developmental challenge for children around the third and fourth grade, involve establish-

ing new identities in relation to adults and peers. Children are made able to become conscious of roles, cooperation, social rules and cultural practices through a whole raft of curriculum projects ranging from story material to house building, farming and the relationships expressed by the linguistic structures of nouns, adjectives and verbs and adverbs (who did what to whom, when, where, why and how?). We can research how children actually respond to such tasks and ideas. Development is not something that usually happens quickly but requires a longer time-frame than learning. Therefore, it is important to observe, document, and analyze developmental processes over time. This proposition also asks questions about learning support and seeking to establish which learning activities prompt which specific developmental processes.

Proposition 4: *There are a number of important preconditions for sustainable learning.*

In each lesson, the teacher has to help the children to get into a state in which they are open and willing to participate in the first place. One can formulate these conditions briefly, drawing on resilience and sense of coherence research, as follows (each point of course requires greater elaboration):

Feeling safe – Children need to feel welcome, at home and safe in the learning situation, both

socially and in their bodies. They need to feel recognized and heard, and they need to be motivated and encouraged by the possibility of learning something new. This helps them learn dispositions to becoming resilient learners, capable of dealing with ambiguity, learning from mistakes, tackling challenges, being patient and trusting in the future.

Attuning – Much of the opening part of the lessons in a Waldorf school are dedicated to bringing about an optimal state for learning through attunement. The teacher needs to have a sense for the optimum state of being, in which things flow and the students are a learning group that is both relaxed and alert. The individuals first have to ‘arrive’, connect with their peers and adjust to the classroom learning atmosphere as a community of learners. Their willingness to learn is supported by their being met, welcomed, enabled to participate and feel accepted and embedded in the class community. Doing things together that do not require great personal effort, such as reciting verses and speech exercises, singing songs, carrying out movement exercises, should be relaxing activities that bring a strong feeling of belonging – of being *us* more than being *me*. Attuning the group involves balancing activities that awaken, relax, and harmonize the group. Too much relaxation is not good for new experiences, while too much awareness and attention is tiring. How much time these activities require in order to achieve the optimum state of togetherness and attention will vary from class to class, from day to day. When the teacher has the feeling that the balance of relaxed attention has developed as far as it is likely to, then it is time to move on and make use of this state for the subsequent stages of learning.

Shared attention – Joint attention and shared intentionality are important preconditions for communication, cognitive development, and learning (Tomasello, 2008). This is sometimes best achieved when the whole class focuses on the teacher and sometimes when the students are working in groups on their own.

The key question is always: what do we (as a learning community) have to do, in order to encourage and enable participation?

Rhythm – The concept of a rhythmical part of the lesson is something of a misnomer, since all teaching needs to involve a rhythm of concentration and relaxation, listening and speaking, watching and doing, being serious and enjoying humor, working alone and working with others, taking in and offering to others, and so on. This is what Steiner refers to in the *Foundations* (1996b) as the ‘breathing’ process of the soul-spirit and its engagement with the living body. Routine and rhythm throughout the lesson support the processes of embodiment and the other learning processes described below.

Interruptions – Feeling safe and at home is one aspect of sustainable learning but the opposite is also needed. People learn when they are interrupted in the regular patterns of behavior, when they are shaken out of their comfort zone of certainty, when they encounter something new, unfamiliar, even alien. Resistance prompts learning because it makes the learner aware of her current position and the need to move to a different position. This includes recognizing both regularities of phenomena and also differences (Marton, 2015). Marton has shown how the more we experience, the more accurately we can describe unfamiliar experiences, not because we have seen the same things before but because we have noticed more possibilities of difference. We learn, in effect, to “discern the particular dimensions of variation” (Marton, 2015, p. 73), and thus we are more likely to be able to deal with entirely novel situations. We notice what is similar in different cases, but – more crucially for learning in a world of rapidly changing conditions – we learn how to ‘read’ unfamiliar situations on the basis of our previous experiences.

In an academic book on Waldorf education, Wolfgang Nieke (2016) offers several maxims for learning that also apply to Waldorf settings. These maxims – in my own formulation with some added references – are:

1. Learning can only occur if what is to be learned is experienced as relevant by the learner. What is retained beyond short-term memory is either, negatively, the outcome of defensive learning or, positively, the outcome of expansive learning. This aspect of relevance and motivation is what

Waldorf theory refers to as educating through the will. The will is understood as the embodied and unconscious intentionality that manifests in intentional movement towards the object of attention. If learning is reduced to extrinsic motivation, then the individual remains unchanged and unwilling to change. This can have catastrophic social consequences later in life.

2. Learning makes sense to the learner when it contributes to the development of a dispositional sense of coherence (Antonovsky, 1987). This disposition is learned through regular experiences that the conditions of learning and the challenges and demands made on the learner are comprehensible, that change is possible and manageable, and that learning enables the person to construct meaningful structures in her own existence in relation to the wider social context. An important aspect of coherence is the function of feedback in a classroom culture in which it is acceptable to make mistakes and then learn from them. Working through mistakes often makes the situation more comprehensible

because it raises consciousness of the context and valorizes its learning value. Indeed, as Hattie and Yates (2014) remark, feedback thrives in an environment where errors are welcome and “when teachers themselves are prepared to adapt and adjust their methods and priorities” (Hattie & Yates, 2014, p. 55).

3. Learning makes sense to the learner when new experiences can be integrated into existing structures in the form of three kinds of knowledge that provide a basis for action: orientation knowledge, knowledge of the conditions of action, and knowledge how to adapt to a given situation – all of which are enhanced by skilled feedback.

4. Learning leads to successful coping in the world based on embodied dispositions.

5. Learning constitutes the learner. Through learning we become who we see ourselves as and how people see us; in other words, learning forms identities.

The developmental ideal types that are described in the Waldorf curriculum and the Waldorf literature are not statements of facts that describe how children actually are, but rather what would be good for them to become.

The research issues that arise from these propositions about the pre-conditions of learning are almost endless. Perhaps one of the most fruitful places to start is the model of sense of coherence. Teachers can ask what indicators there are in classroom practices that students have the feeling that what they are being taught is comprehensible, manageable, and personally meaningful to them. These criteria can then be used in lesson planning. Another important research question is how children can be brought into an optimal state of receptivity for learning to occur. In the Main Lesson, a large part of the lesson (often referred to as the rhythmical part) is devoted to optimizing learning conditions. How are the components actually experienced by the pupils and what indicators are there for this?

Proposition 5: *The learning process is performative and aesthetic.*

The learning process occurs in structured environments in which the learners can participate through doing and not merely being receptive. Being performative means that the learner incrementally learns in

individual ways through activities and is transformed in the process. Through performance the learner comes progressively to more comprehensive understandings, thus constructing meaning, knowledge, and identity (Zirfas, 2014). The process is aesthetic because the teaching is an art (Lutzker, 2007), which means that learning situations are created in which form, content, and activity become a unique holistic experience through which the learners are transformed and become (Eisner, 2014).

A research task could be to explore how teachers understand and facilitate the task of creating aesthetic lessons and how they understand and practice the performative aspect of learning.

Proposition 6: *The basis for learning is rich experience through participation in social practices. The participation can be literal and direct or through narrative.*

Learning begins with rich sense experience through listening, observing, and participating. ‘Rich’ means that experience is direct, authentic, and multi-sensory. This can occur through active participation in a social practice or through active imagination (e.g. prompted

by the teacher's narrative or other media). Narrative is a central method in the Waldorf approach because it engages the child's imagination, structures the content by giving it meaning, can appeal to different learning types, and mediates cultural understandings.

In both of these experiences the teacher plays a central role in selecting the experience, shaping how the children will encounter it, and steering and monitoring the learning process. The act of selection and preparation is in itself a vital process because the teacher chooses the context, sets priorities, frames the learning situation, takes the children's needs and abilities into account – in other words, determines the what and how of learning. The teacher does not simply use existing learning models and lesson plans but constructs these in ways that reveal the signature of her own learning process and subjectivity. Each teacher does this in individual, personal ways. In this way the teacher also forms a personal relationship to the material – *it matters* to her. By engaging and re-engaging with a theme or a phenomenon, the teacher develops and expands her intentional interest in it. This interest and meaning communicates to the learners.

The teacher in the class teacher period exemplifies the learning process as a social practice (i.e. how we learn about the world and ourselves) and invites the children to participate in the practice of learning across the range of subjects. Expertise in the subject is not the primary precondition, but rather the teacher's personal engagement with the learning process and how this is mediated. From the material available on each topic, the teacher selects those aspects that she thinks are most likely to stimulate learning and prompt development. Each subject discipline offers a different way of seeing the world and engaging with it. Therefore, in the upper school, the teacher mediates the particular view of the world that is inherent in the subject discipline (i.e. understanding the world historically, chemically, through the arts, etc.). The subject and its techniques become the 'teacher', though this is mediated by the teacher's expertise in the practice of being a geographer, a sculptor, or mathematician.

In the typical Waldorf class, the class itself is a community of practice or community of learners. This includes

the activities of teachers and pupils. The way the teachers generate knowledge and construct learning arrangements (the craft of pedagogy) and how this is done in the situation (the art of pedagogy) is a practice that children participate in. Indeed, in the steps that follow, we can see that children increasingly take ownership of this process through recalling, reflecting, and conceptualizing their experiences. Both teachers and older students can even contribute to the science of pedagogy by starting to learn about learning.

Participation means closely observing and taking part in an activity. Barbara Rogoff (2014) has described this form of learning as cultural apprenticeship, which involves guided participation and eventually appropriation of the practice. Appropriation means making an activity your own. It becomes something you can do and you are changed by being able to do it. This way of understanding learning goes beyond the distinction between formal and informal learning. Learning is often described as ubiquitous – what people do everywhere. This is true to some extent. However, as Vygotsky (1981) argued, children can learn natural concepts in life through participation and observation,

but complex, abstract, and scientific concepts have to be formally taught. Following Michael Eraut (2000), formal learning means that a specific planned learning situation is created with learning outcomes, instruction, and assessment. In reality, children learn formally (from the teacher and structured lessons) and informally (by doing, by watching others, by being told by their peers what is important to notice). Therefore, we need a balance of formal, focused, structured learning, but we also need to recognize that students can and do learn from each other.

In order for learning in the full sense of the word to make sense, however, it has to be intentional, which does not necessarily mean it has to be conscious. My will is unconscious and intentional. Imitation that leads to the learning of complex skills, however, is always intentional and involves at some stage an understanding of what one is doing, or why one wants to do it. Simply copying an activity is not imitation in this sense. Perhaps emulation would be a better word for intentional imitation, because the learners not only want to do something like the role model

People [also] learn when they are interrupted in the regular patterns of behavior, when they are shaken out of their comfort zone of certainty, when they encounter something new, unfamiliar, even alien.

they are imitating, but they want to be like that person. In other words, they want to emulate what she does and, to some extent, who she is. Imitation starts as an unconscious process of embodying actions that we see other people doing. Through play, practice, or experimentation, we appropriate the activity, which becomes part of us bodily as a disposition or skill. It shapes the way we feel about the activity. It enables us to identify with the practice, and it may even prompt us to do something creative and original with it. Once I can knit – once I have become a knitter and a member of the community of knitters – I want to design and knit my own garments and not simply do what my teacher has shown me. The same applies to writing stories, playing music, doing math, reading literature, making friends, and so on.

The learning culture in a class (and perhaps in the whole school, if the teachers share their vision) is created by what people do and say, what they believe in, what they value, and the ideas that inform what they do. Most of this is not consciously known to the learners but the effect it has on learning attitudes and behavior is very real. If the learning culture encourages children to participate, even if they get things ‘wrong’ at first, it is more likely to encourage learning from mistakes. Thus pupils become disposed to seeking mistakes as opportunities for learning rather than as signs of failure. If learning is focused on testing and grades, then this will shape the reasons why students learn.

The core research questions, from this perspective, include: What constitutes the practice? What enables and what hinders participation? What happens at the boundaries of communities of practice? While the quality of participation by children and young people is something that could be empirically established by observing willingness to participate and by assessing the opportunities and conditions for participation, using, for example, the criteria suggested by Rogoff, capturing evidence of the transformation of formative processes is more challenging, though not impossible. One can observe how children respond to experiences, whether this flows into bodily action and responses, in play or imitation for example, or whether they ‘interpret’ such experiences in pictures or texts in individual ways. As Loebell (2016, p. 406) suggests, in puberty one can experience how youngsters make the

step from ‘having’ imaginative images based on their experiences to ‘constructing thoughts’ about them.

One research task here is to document through self-observation how we approach new topics and how we revisit old interests.

Proposition 7: Forgetting is an unseen but important part of learning.

The quality of forgetting depends on the quality of the original experience and the quality of the experience depends on the intentions of the teacher and the meaningfulness of what has been experienced. We can see

this most clearly when children see a craftswoman at work. What they experience is not only what they can see, hear, smell, and feel but also the lived values in the activity, the attitude and identification of the person with her work and craft, its materials and the needs it is responding to. Craftwork is embedded in a set of cultural meanings that have a history. In the unconscious state, during sleep, the child experiences all these dimension directly, at the level of the will. Something similar occurs when the teacher tells the class about something or shows them how to do it. In doing so, she communicates her interest, enthusiasm, and questions, and she acts out of a lively engagement with the topic. This is what the children unconsciously pick up on alongside the actual things told or shown.

When students witness or hear about meaningful things, when the instructor or teacher is herself immersed in the activity, a sense of coherence and meaning to is mediated to the students. When their consciousness is directed elsewhere, or when they are asleep, they find that they are already connected both to the person and the experience. This helps them form an inner connection – in reality they are already connected with the world. The teacher, however, draws attention to this connection, emphasizes it, structures it. This helps them draw strength and inspiration from this spiritual connection in the unconscious realm, in which we are not separated from the world but already participate in it. The teacher’s intentions act as signals to the students’ spiritual being, directing them to what is important. Gerd Biesta (2013) calls this the gift of teaching. He argues that human beings develop and grow, not simply by learning but by being taught something by someone. Thus, the quality of the teacher’s preparation and relationship to the material is decisive in directing the children’s interest to what is taught.

Steiner's idea is that life processes shape the way each sense modality mediates our experience of the world, for the basic reason that they *are* the world. The life processes that enliven our bodies are the same organizing forces at work in the world. Their source is the living world. They shape the way our sense organs develop and the experiences we have through this process, shape our thinking, feeling and willing. Our sense organs mediate being in the world to our mind. Thus from an anthroposophical, Waldorf theory perspective, the richer the primary experience, the more we can form a relationship to a phenomenon. As complex beings ourselves, we are disposed to identify with complexity and thus we expect complexity in other living beings. If our seeing is richly imbued with meanings, we will experience the world in greater depth. In forgetting, we connect and form a relationship to what we have experienced with our embodied experiences.

One research task here is to document through self-observation how we approach new topics and how we revisit old interests. We need to critically interrogate our motivations and interests. We then need to bring this into relationship with the children's learning, which we can witness in the following steps. We cannot research what happens to us in the unconscious, or indeed what the children do in their sleeping state with the experiences they have. We can only do this by monitoring closely how the next learning steps unfold.

Proposition 8: *Learning is enhanced by structured and systematic recall.*

In order for learning to continue as a transformative process, we need to recall our experiences. The teacher prompts the pupils – using the art of asking questions – to recall the relevant experiences from the previous lesson or learning situation. The experiences the pupils had 'forgotten' and now recall have been modified in the unconscious, and each person will have an individual version of the original experience. The recalled experience is a new perception, though its source is internal.

If learning is ultimately about the development of the person, this stage of individual recall is important. It should certainly not be a stressful experience, like a test, and it should be entirely open regarding

what 'should' be recalled. Correction comes later. If the pupil has the feeling that the teacher expects certain specific answers, this will limit what is actually recalled. Nor is it merely a pragmatic process of establishing a link to what now follows, but rather an individual process of identification and relating. Correction or feedback is offered in terms of the collective process. The learning process requires each individual to enact the recall.

The second stage of recall involves experiencing what the other members of the class recall and noticing the interesting differences. Comparing and discussing memories, which are always selective and partial (and may even be inaccurate), enables us to re-construct a shared recollection, which can be contextualized, i.e., linked to what it belongs to in the wider picture.

This will be richer than what the individual alone recalls. The shared recollection leads us to the next stage of learning. It also shows the teacher what the pupils actually experienced, which helps in the preparation of the next lesson. It is interesting to observe how some children's understanding remains embedded in the distributed memory of the class situation longer than others. In the foreign

language lesson, individual children may be able to say more and understand more in the target language when they are in the language lesson, than if someone at home asks them what something means. A considerable amount of learning remains situated before it becomes individualized. The collective recall reinforces distributed learning and knowing.

The third stage of recall involves the co-construction of concepts. Once the memories have been recollected and shared, a process of collaborative reflection follows in which details are clarified and the original experience contextualized, identified, and named. Perhaps the phenomenon shows some regularity or pattern that can now be identified as a rule, perhaps it differs from what was expected. Waldorf learning theory makes the assumption that when children formulate their own rules and concepts, they are more likely to understand them. If children have been looking at dandelions, now comes the moment the children can formulate what is common to all the dandelions that were seen or described. Thus, the children can characterize the dandelion as a species, not necessarily using botanical terms but as accurate

In order for learning in the full sense of the word to make sense, however, it has to be intentional, which does not necessarily mean it has to be conscious.

description (deep tap root, tooth-like leaf-form, central sap filled stalk, bright yellow flowers with regular thin petals like rays, etc.). From individual attempts a collective characterization can be negotiated. From concepts that are collective to the class, one can move on to general concepts.

At some point in the learning process, each individual has the experience that what she has learned not only makes sense but really is so and that this is important. Peter Loebell (2000) calls this an experience of something being self-evident. The process begins with noticing something in the world; it continues with the learner forming a connection to the topic or task and engaging with it in an expansive way (i.e. not just because the teachers says she has to). This second stage of commitment can be collective, in the sense of “we think it is important to engage with...”. The final stage is the experience that what has been learned has to do with *me*, that knowing it changes *me*. This may happen at almost any stage of learning, though the phase of recall and of forming a concept is a common stage for such personal connection to happen. The collective moment of “we” is very important, but the individual moment of “that is important to me personally” embeds the learning into our being. It is, therefore, all the more important that we enable all children, whatever their level of access and ability, to discover something that means something personal to each one.

If I look at my own learning, the things I never learned were those that I found no relationship to and was (in my experience) prevented from accessing through inadequate teaching (which is the main reason I became and remain a Waldorf teacher).

Steiner’s idea is that life processes shape the way each sense modality mediates our experience of the world, for the basic reason that they *are* the world.

From a research perspective, this proposition prompts a range of research questions: How do children recall different kinds of experience? This is a very wide field of inquiry since there are so many aspects to recalling and forming living concepts. What kind of prompting generates what kind of recall? Is there a difference between non-verbal and verbal recall? How does the sharing process occur? How are concepts or characterizations arrived at in different subjects with different age groups? How does recall work in different subjects (e.g. handwork, music, foreign languages)? In the upper school, how does the process of co-constructed concepts relate to existing scientific laws and generalizations? How do pupils record this process? What

assessment criteria can we develop for the whole process of recall?

Proposition 8: Practicing.

Applying what was learned in varying ways and in different situations through practice (written or spoken) leads to the ability to apply new knowledge and skills. Practice involves repetition with variation of the processes above, with increasing opportunities for the learners to experiment and ‘play’ with the new idea or process. It also means improving what was done and engaging with mistakes while learning from them. At this stage the teacher has to make provisions for the individual students’ different levels of skill and ability to participate. This means that teachers have to differentiate the tasks in a class. Tasks can be given at three levels (to simplify). Firstly, that of reproducing what has been learned; secondly, relating what was learned to other phenomena already known; and, thirdly, employing open and creative tasks. These can be done in groups in which each person has an active role. This is obviously the longest part of the learning process and may involve several cycles over months and years, in which the first three stages are repeated and further practiced, depending on the knowledge or skill involved. Repeated practice enables the learner to learn and embody new dispositions, which in turn

change the person. Learning through repeated practice involves practicing in order to better understand what and how to do the task and how to understand the phenomenon better. Practicing also means learning consciously from mistakes and from reflection on practice. Learners need to be given helpful, concrete feedback from teachers about what they can

do to become more proficient. Thus, formative and ipsative assessment support the learning process at all stages but particularly at the ‘growing ability’ stage. In short, assessment for learning is a precondition for learning through practice (Rawson, 2015).

Research issues based on this proposition might involve exploring ways in which learning situations could be created that afford practice in authentic settings, in which knowledge and skills can be applied to engage with real or realistic tasks. It would also be interesting to explore how pupils themselves can contribute to practice, so that not all activities and explorations are

teacher led. The value of group work and of projects could be investigated from the perspective of practice.

Proposition 9: Growing ability.

Through practice we gradually grow abilities, which are retained in the form of dispositions, habits, skills, and ways of seeing. In certain situations, we can now do certain things without having to think about them because we are disposed to doing them. Ability, once developed, does not need props (or scaffolding) to help – either we can do it or we can't (yet) do it. The transition from practicing to being able to do something involves a process of scaffolding, in which the teacher helps the pupils to achieve a certain function that stretches their ability to another level. Technically this is known as the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1981; Wells, 2008). I take the view that skills can't be transferred as competences, as is frequently suggested, because skill and the ability to practice it is situated. However, embodied disposition can be activated in new situations to enable us to quickly learn to engage with the new situation. The ability to perform a skill has to be adapted to each new situation. Experienced people can do this relatively quickly. Ability, as Ole Dreier (2008) suggests, is not just an attribute of an individual person; it also depends on the social and cultural context in which it is expressed (a person's good communications skills could be realized only when his or her partners in communication can cooperate and be responsive). We can at best speak about potential abilities.

Research tasks based on this proposition could involve issues of assessment and how abilities and dispositions can be made visible. Current standardized methods of assessing and measuring learning are knowledge-based and depend on artificial test situations. It would be helpful to research ways in which abilities can be assessed in context, including in the context of teamwork and collaborative projects. Once people are able and skilled, the biographical questions of what they can do with what they have learned in school arise. The whole area of biographical development and orientation is a field that would require research in Waldorf settings.

Proposition 10: Learning is transformation.

Once we are able to do something new, we have transformed. We have become new people. Of course, we should remember that this transformation occurs on the backdrop of one of our primary dispositions – the

ability to generate continuity of identity across social practices, situations, and time. Everything we learn with our whole being changes the way we are and changes our relationship with the world. Real learning opens us up to new learning because it makes new learning more likely and possible. It gives our learning direction and it becomes expansive. The direction we give our learning becomes increasingly individualized as we emancipate ourselves from collective ways of being. If the learning we do only remains in our cognition, then it is not a truly embodied ability and thus can be lost. What has become part of us – body, soul, and spirit – does not get lost. Real learning takes time but is sustainable.

Conclusion

This is just one way of looking at learning situations in Waldorf practice. Obviously there are others, not least of which is the application of learning theory to different subjects, age groups, and activities. My purpose here is to prompt discussion and practice-based research. Pedagogy, we should not forget, has to be a science by using theory-based systematic inquiry. Thus, I, myself, would be more than happy to receive feedback, critique, and suggestions on the work in progress presented in these pages.

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Changing the Narrative

Practical Aspects of Teaching Technology at the Waldorf School

John Trevillion



For most of my career I have taught students of middle school age. As an educator born into the age of the Industrial Revolution, I have felt an enormous responsibility to teach my students about the remarkable times in which we live, and the technologies and individuals that have shaped these very times. Like most of my colleagues, however, I have long harbored ambivalent feelings about the digital realm. I make practical use of technology, and am grateful for being able to do so. I am frequently filled with wonder with its “world-at-my-fingertips” possibilities. But as far as young people are concerned, I have been deeply suspicious of the dangers it presents and have counseled parents to shield their children as much as possible (“Give them dumb-phones!”).

In recent years, however, I have found that response to be insufficient, and for the following reasons:

1. I experienced direct evidence from having taught two recent cycles of grades 5-8 students that my colleagues and I were falling short in addressing the powerful effects of the digital world on middle school students. The headline evidence during the 8th grade of the first of these cycles included cyber-bullying and sexting. Indeed, it was the appearance of these uncivil behaviors in the first 8th grade classes that introduced me to these very terms. In the most recent 8th grade I was spared these unsettling behaviors, but nevertheless found myself dealing with a distinct split between students who were immersed in the cyber-world and those who were not. Clearly, many of my students were swimming in waters that neither they nor I had charted – and had never discussed.

2. There is growing evidence that my school has been losing students – particularly in the transition from grade school to high school, and particularly among boys – on account of our lack of an organized, intentional, and comprehensive approach to the digital realm. We have had classes that involved the use of computer technology, but these classes could not in any sense be described as belonging to a coherent computer science education. We were using the technology

incidentally without much attempt to truly *understand and penetrate* it.

Along with several colleagues, I became convinced that my school must find a way to address these issues. How?

To address the need for a healthy introduction to the digital world, many schools have adopted Cyber Civics, a program created by Diana Graber, a parent at the Journey Waldorf School, in Orange County, California. This three-year program, designed for students in grades 6 to 8, provides a coherent set of lessons aimed at cultivating *digital citizenship and Information and Media Literacy*. The lesson content is thoughtful and imbued with a sense of fun that engages the students for whom it is designed. It promotes healthy conversations between students who are already familiar with digital technology (typically through their smart-phones) and those who are not. The use of computers is optional. Following a lengthy workshop in which Diana Graber provided the rationale for and tastes of the program to *the entire faculty*, my school (the Chicago Waldorf School) chose to implement Cyber Civics in all three grades. We deem it important that the entire program is taught by one teacher.

To address the need for a genuine penetration of the digital realm, several Waldorf high schools – to my surprise, not many – have designed and implemented computer science curricula, spread over three or four years. My school invited Chip Weems, associate professor of computer technology at the University of Massachusetts and teacher of computer science at Hartsbrook Waldorf High School, as well as author of several articles on teaching computer science at the high school level (in *Renewal* and the *Research Bulletin*), to present his thinking on computer science education at the high school level. Following a full-day workshop in which *the entire faculty* engaged with Chip through discussion and practical experiences, the faculty chose this year to implement the beginnings, with the incoming 9th grade, of an intended four-year high school computer science program. As with the Cyber Civics, we intend that the program will be carried by one teacher.

In neither of these initiatives – middle school’s Cyber Civics and high school computer science – is our school breaking new ground. What may distinguish our programs, however, is their being seen as part of an over-arching narrative: *to provide a pathway for our students towards a healthy relationship with digital technology*. The teachers of both the Cyber Civics and the computer science programs are committed to this narrative. However, we do not see that commitment as sufficient in itself for an effective education. Rather, we see it as essential that the entire faculty understand, support, and be ready to communicate this narrative. This is so for the following reasons:

1. These two programs are the visible components of “the healthy pathway.” Less visible but equally essential are the complementary activities that counterbalance and support engagement in the digital realm. In the early childhood and much of the elementary years, this means promoting healthy play that, in general, avoids screen technologies of all kinds. Opinions may vary as to when and to what extent introduction to digital technologies should occur. Fortunately, researchers are developing “slow-tech media guides” to help inform the very necessary conversations that can and should take place in every school that seeks to come to terms with these powerful influences. All teachers in a Waldorf school need to own and communicate their part in the journey, but they must do so *as part of one coherent narrative*. To do otherwise sows confusion and misunderstanding among parents and students as to the school’s relationship with digital technology. This is especially true for early childhood and early grades teachers who, for very good reasons, promote the message that we do our children a great favor by limiting – or better yet, eliminating – exposure to screens of all kinds, and particularly to computers. This message, motivated by the deepest of concerns, has the unintended consequence of implying that “Waldorf schools are anti-technology.”

2. Waldorf teachers at every level need to be seen by their students as having developed an informed, practical relationship with this

technology. A Luddite (or even, dare I suggest, an anthroposophically-derived) gesture of antipathy to technology will almost certainly fail to inspire our students. This can be challenging. I, for one, resist the many possible modes of engagement that my smart-phone makes possible for no other reason than that it requires effort. Thankfully, I benefit from the efforts of indulgent friends, colleagues, *and students*, who guide me when guidance is needed. And in spite of everything, I hang on to my smart-phone.

3. Each new “breakthrough technology” has challenged humanity’s sense of what it means to be human. When Wordsworth and Coleridge gazed upon a “perfect steam engine” in 1803, they wondered aloud (sufficiently to become recorded fact) if they were in the presence of a man-made intelligent being. Less than two decades later, Mary Shelley was imagining and writing about a being “created” by one Dr. Frankenstein and animated by that mysterious, invisible energy named ‘electricity’. Around the same time, the inventor Charles Babbage began devising his “difference engine”, a machine that “could think”, and later his colleague, Ada Lovelace, devised the first “computer program”. With the advent of the modern computer in the 20th century, the temptation to believe that “computer intelligence” will match or surpass human intelligence has never

been greater. Each new technology presents a new mirror in which to see ourselves – who (or what) we are, and who (or what) we are not. For an education that devotes and prides itself on “educating free human beings who out of themselves impart purpose and direction to their lives”, what could be more important than guiding our students into not simply a practical use of technology, but a clear understanding of what it is (and is not)?

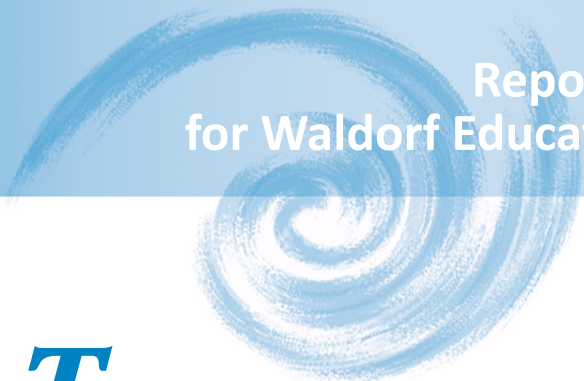
[R]esearchers are developing “slow-tech media guides” to help inform the very necessary conversations that can and should take place in every school that seeks to come to terms with these powerful influences.

I am convinced that providing a pathway for our students towards a healthy relationship with digital technology is one of the paramount challenges of our century, and one with which Waldorf schools are uniquely prepared to engage. To the extent that we take up this challenge, we will be fulfilling our core

mission. To the extent that we avoid this challenge, we will become increasingly irrelevant.

Meeting this challenge calls for conversations and research within each of our schools, engaging the entire faculty and community. Meeting this challenge also calls for conversations between schools, most obviously in conferences. Finally, meeting this challenge calls for commitment: changing a narrative that has taken decades to take root will not be quickly or easily achieved.

John Trevillion *has served as a class teacher to eight cycles of Waldorf upper elementary school students, guiding them from sixth through eighth grades, primarily at the Detroit and Chicago Waldorf Schools. In recent years he assumed the role of college chairperson at the Chicago Waldorf School, and he continues to teach occasional science-based blocks in the middle school. John has written many class plays, including three musicals in collaboration with colleagues that he considers more musically gifted.*



Report from the Research Institute for Waldorf Education and Waldorf Publications

Patrice Maynard

There is a blush of accomplishment around the Research Institute for Waldorf Education (RIWE) as the Waldorf High School Graduate Research project begins the analytical phase of the abundant data collected from over 1,000 alumni/ae from Waldorf high schools across North America. Statistical analysis has been undertaken by Andrew Starzynski, himself a Waldorf graduate. Publication of results has been timed to coincide with the celebration next year of Waldorf 100 as one of RIWE's offerings to our celebrations around the globe.

Douglas Gerwin, Executive Director of RIWE, continues his work with the International Forum for Waldorf/Steiner Education by helping to draft a "Charter for Childhood," describing succinctly the tenets of a healthy childhood in relation to the rightful role and limitations of technology in education. It promises a different view of childhood from the market-driven picture commonly held in our culture today.

Patrice Maynard, Director of Publications and Development, has been involved of late in several radio interviews, prompting conversations around the topic, "Technology in Education – Helping or Addicting." Interest in RIWE's research on technology and its place in education and in our world came from the wide spectrum of real estate and interior design shows to educationally focused programs.

Waldorf Publications has just forwarded its recipient schools a *Research Bulletin* special publication, titled *Technology's Rightful Place: Selected Essays* and comprised of curated content from the Bulletin's three issues devoted to the question of technology. Our objective with the collection is to provide teachers and enrollment coordinators a handy reference of pithy articles addressing this important topic. The research on the effects of screen time reported in this collection is striking. See www.waldorfpublications.org for more information.

RIWE has also partnered with three medical and academic experts on the issue of screen time. Victoria Dunkley, MD, is among these experts. Her remarkable efforts as a pediatrician have resulted in the formal diagnosis of "Effects of Electronic Screen Time" (EEST)

being accepted in the medical lexicon. This diagnosis now renders treatment possible. Her recommendation for treatment is to "Reset Your Child's Brain," which is the title of her recent book. Satisfying news is that when families go through her four-week reset plan, just about all heavy symptoms fall away (Oppositional Defiance Disorder, ADHD, and even bipolar disorders and signs of autism) when electronics are eliminated for this one-month period – a marvelous underscoring of the resilience of the young! Add to this the power of daily artistic activity in a Waldorf school, and hope becomes real transformation with these efforts.

Other new titles from Waldorf Publications include *Matt McFlack and His Flyaway Kite*, a happy little tale of childhood and the wind, and a brilliant new edition of Michael Preston's *Music from Around the World for Recorder*, complete with a CD performed by a professional recorder ensemble. Michael's introduction to recorders highlights the glorious practice of recorder playing woven into the weekly rhythms of Waldorf teaching. Because Waldorf Publications welcomed all Associated Schools of AWSNA to the Book Bank this year, all schools have received these three refreshing books.

A little-known fact about RIWE and Waldorf Publications is that its directors, Douglas and Patrice, even as they work closely together throughout the year, actually see each other in person only two or three times a year at all-day "threshing sessions," in which we review, decide, take stock, build and correct budgets, imagine, and plan. During these sessions we learn a lot and wonder at the cohesiveness of running parallel in different parts of North America, Europe, China, Brazil, and soon Iceland (where Douglas reports there is a Ministry of Gnomes – right up our alley!).

In the meantime, keep an eye out for our Annual Appeal. We will report our world map in new colors to illustrate the global reach of our research and publications.

Report from the Online Waldorf Library

Marianne Alsop

The Online Waldorf Library receives a great number of requests for information from all over the world. Inquiries come from home schooling parents, academic researchers, Waldorf class teachers looking for plays, and teachers in training working on assigned projects. It is a delight to receive comments like these: "Thank you for the vast amount of Waldorf information you offer. I am blown away and only wish I had found your site sooner."

It is exciting to see where Waldorf Education is growing and where the OWL is meeting the need for freely accessible information as indicated by many new visitors from Australia, India, Mexico, Spain, Brazil, and Colombia. We have welcomed nearly 150,000 visitors to the OWL in the first eight months of 2018!

eBooks added since March 2018, in English, include:

- *Word Mastery Primer for First and Second Grades*
Compiled by Hugh Renwick
- *Three Plays for Small Classes* by Vivian Jones Schmidt
- *Eureka: The Life and Times of Archimedes*
A one-act play by John Trevillion
- *Topics in Math for 10th Grade and Topics in Math for 12th Grade* – Edited by Robert Neumann
- *Chapters from Ancient History*
Compiled by Dorothy Harrer
- *Who is Harry Potter?* by Frans Lutters
- *Raphael and the Mysteries of Illness and Healing*
Compiled by Michaela Glöckler

We have created an often requested small compilation of Roberto Trostli's plays, verses, and stories, also available as single articles, now in one volume: *Stories, Verses and Plays for Children, Grades 1 to 6*.

Increasing the available selections in Spanish continues to be a focus of our work. In the past months, a number of new "Artículos en Español" have been added, as well as a new eBook, *Caminos Creativos* by

Elizabeth Auer. New to OWL in Mandarin Chinese is *The Sun With Loving Light*, by Stephen Bloomquist.

As always, back issues of the *Research Bulletin* and *Gateways* (Waldorf Early Childhood Assn.), *Pedagogical Section/Rundbrief*, and a number of other international publications are available online in our Journals section.

The Online Waldorf Library welcomes your questions and we are happy to help you with your research projects.

**Visit the Online Waldorf Library at
www.waldorflibrary.org**

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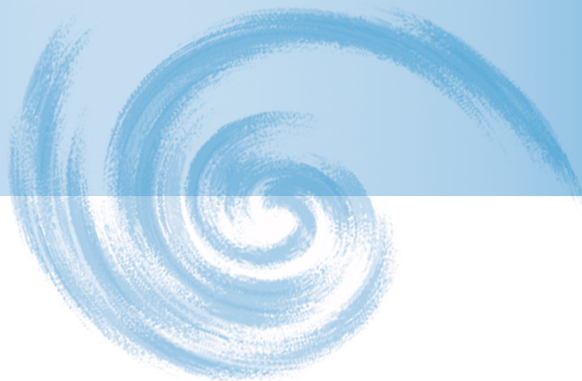
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The Research Institute for Waldorf Education (RIWE), founded in 1996 in order to deepen and enhance the quality of Waldorf education, engages in sustained dialogue with the wider educational-cultural community and supports research to serve a wide range of educators in their work with children and adolescents.

The Research Institute supports projects dealing with essential contemporary educational issues such as computers and the effects of media on children, alternatives to standardized testing, physical health and psychological well-being of students, science teaching with a phenomenological approach, the role of the arts in education, and the philosophical underpinnings of Waldorf education.

As a sponsor of colloquia and conferences, the Research Institute brings together educators, psychologists, physicians, and social scientists for discussions on current issues related to education. RIWE publishes a *Research Bulletin* twice a year and prepares educational resources, including collections of eBooks and articles (a growing number of them newly translated into Spanish). Many of these publications are available without charge on the website of the Online Waldorf Library (OWL), a virtual library created and managed by the Research Institute: www.waldorflibrary.org.

In 2013 the Research Institute took over the publications arm of the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA) and re-branded it as Waldorf Publications. It includes resources for teachers and administrators, readers and children's books, collections of plays and poetry, science materials and kits, science and math newsletters, inspirational essays, proceedings of colloquia, and a range of publicity materials about Waldorf education. It also carries books published by the Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America (WECAN) and the Pedagogical Section Council (PSC) of the School for Spiritual Science, as well as AWSNA's twice-yearly magazine *Renewal*.

As an initiative working on behalf of the Waldorf movement, the Research Institute receives support and guidance from the PSC and financial support through the following organizations:

- Astoria-Stiftung
- Foundation for Rudolf Steiner Books
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- Rudolf Steiner Charitable Trust
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