

Waldorf Graduate Research, Phase II Update

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Phase 2 Survey Process

During the spring of 2005, the Research Institute for Waldorf Education contracted with me to administer the *Survey of Waldorf Graduates, Phase II*. The first phase of this research project, published a year ago in the *Research Bulletin*, listed both the colleges and universities to which Waldorf high school graduates were accepted and the schools that the graduates actually entered.

Phase II of this project delves more deeply into the lives of Waldorf school alumni/ae with the intention of determining:

- Colleges and universities attended and completed
- Fields of study pursued in college or university
- Degrees and level of degrees earned
- Occupations pursued after college or university, or after high school
- Personal and social interests and values
- Quality of personal relationships
- Quality of personal health
- Perceptions by professors and employers of Waldorf school graduates

Phase II Survey Design and Administration

The survey tool, developed by David Mitchell and Douglas Gerwin, consists of both statistical and open-ended questions, grouped into the following categories:

- 1) Participant information (6 questions)
- 2) Education for Waldorf school alumni cur-

rently attending (12 questions) or graduated from college/university (14 questions)

3) Employment/occupation for Waldorf school alumni/ae who did not attend college or university (11 questions)

4) Workforce experience (19 multiple choice, rated questions)

5) Cultural and social activities (16 questions; 15 sub-questions rating importance and frequency of activities)

6) Relationships (7 questions)

7) General experience of life (5 questions)

8) Lasting role of Waldorf education in life (10 questions, including 37 multiple choice sub-questions ranking the influence and importance of Waldorf education on aspects of the participants' lives)

9) Health and wellness (6 questions)

I subcontracted with the on-line provider SurveyMonkey.com. In addition to posting the survey, SurveyMonkey.com also provided on-line mailing list management software and a variety of filtering tools and downloading options, including comma separated value (spread sheet), tabular report, and HTML formats.

In November 2005, I sought assistance from Courtney Lipscomb to manage mailing lists, mailings, phone calls and, where needed, to troubleshoot the on-line software, and transfer the print survey to electronic format, which was then tested and retested for ease of use and workability.

Collection of Contact Information from Waldorf High Schools

Of the 37 Waldorf high schools in North America, 26 had graduating classes in 2004. In addition, one graduate from a Waldorf high

school that closed some years ago opted to take the survey, bringing to 27 the total number of Waldorf high schools represented in the survey. All of the 26 schools included in Phase I of the survey were requested in the fall of 2005 to supply full contact information—mail, telephone, and email—on six alumni/ae from each of the following high school classes: 1994, 1996, 1998, 2000, and 2002. In other words, each school was asked to provide current contact information for thirty-six graduates. While a small handful of schools responded immediately with the requested information, contact with the appropriate person in the majority of the schools was difficult to establish. It was here that a problem, already experienced during Phase I of the project, reappeared—namely, inadequate record keeping. Only a half-dozen schools had up-to-date contact information on their graduates; the rest had spotty information. It was heartening, however, that almost all the schools made the best effort possible to provide the requested information, thereby allowing the survey to commence.

By late December 2005 Lipscomb and I had gathered a contact list of approximately 500 e-mail addresses; in early January we sent the first invitations to all of the names on this list, resulting in a bounce-back rate of approximately 10%. We followed up on bounce-backs with postcards and, eventually, phone calls, when phone numbers were available. A week after sending the initial invitation we supplied the graduates with an email link to the on-line survey, followed by three reminders and re-invitations to those on the list who had not responded.

Because this first invitation resulted in roughly a 50% response rate—or about 250 respondents—the Research Institute decided to extend the survey to all Waldorf alumni/ae who had graduated between 1994 and 2004, and to as many pre-1994 alumni/ae as older schools could supply. This decision ultimately yielded contact information on 900 alumni/ae. The on-line survey remained available to graduates for just over four months, until April 30, 2006.

Participants

Of the 900 Waldorf school alumni/ae invited to participate in the on-line survey, 556 agreed to

take part; of this number 523 answered a sufficient number of survey questions to be included in the results. Some of the remaining 33 respondents had attended only one or more years of a Waldorf elementary school and were therefore deleted from the pool; a handful of graduates asked to be removed from our contact list. The remaining 341 graduates either ignored the offer or responded after the survey had closed.

Of the 523 participants, 87% graduated from mature schools and 13% from medium and young schools. Though the survey did not specifically ask the participants to identify themselves by gender, from their first names it was possible to determine that about 57% were female and 43% were male. These percentages are roughly comparable to the ratio of boys to girls in the Waldorf high schools across North America.

Initially I divided the respondents into three groups:

- Those who had completed college or university (331 participants)
- Those currently attending college or university at the time of the survey (160)
- Those who did not attend or complete college or university (65)

As we collated the responses there were many more responses from the older schools than from the younger schools. Consequently, we looked at the respondents first as a whole group and, second, as two groups—namely graduates of Waldorf high schools before 1994 (220 participants, mostly from mature schools) and graduates from 1994–2005 (303 participants from all schools). In addition, to determine whether the data was skewed by the results from two older schools that had provided 50% of the responses, key elements of the data were analyzed separately. For instance, colleges attended, degrees earned, and occupations pursued by participants from these two schools were compared with the profiles of alumni/ae from all of the remaining schools. No significant differences emerged from this exercise and, therefore, those two schools were included in the full data collection.

Most Respondents Attended Mature High Schools				
Age of School	First Graduating Class	Number of Schools	Number of Participants	Percent of Total Participation
Mature Schools	1943–1994	12	456	87.2%
Medium Schools	1995–1999	5	21	4.0%
Young Schools	2000–2004	9	46	8.8%
Total		26	523	100%

Waldorf High Schools Where Respondents Attended			
School's Age: Mat (mature); M (medium); Y (young)			
Austin Waldorf School (Y)	11	Rudolf Steiner School of Ann Arbor (Y)	1
Chicago Waldorf School (M)	2	Sacramento Waldorf School (Mat)	18
Denver Waldorf School (M)	3	San Francisco Waldorf School (Y)	9
East Bay Waldorf School (Y)	2	Shining Mountain Waldorf School (M)	8
Eugene Waldorf School (Y)	1	Summerfield Waldorf School (Mat)	14
Green Meadow Waldorf School (Mat)	23	Tara Performing Arts High School (Y)	12
Hawthorne Valley School (Mat)	6	Toronto Waldorf School (Mat)	17
High Mowing School (Mat)	153	Vancouver Waldorf School (Mat)	25
Highland Hall Waldorf School (Mat)	11	Waldorf High School of Mass. Bay (Y)	6
Honolulu Waldorf School (M)	4	Waldorf School of Garden City (Mat)	35
Island Oak Waldorf School (Y)	2	Waldorf School of Saratoga Springs (Y)	2
Kimberton Waldorf School (Mat)	103	Washington Waldorf School (Mat)	23
Rudolf Steiner School NYC (Mat)	28	Youth Initiative High School (M)	4

Sorting Collected Data

The data collected from the statistical questions were much easier to sort and organize than were the anecdotal and narrative answers to open-ended questions. A similar situation arose when participants entered more than one answer to a single question. All data were passed to the Research Institute for evaluation and analysis.

Professor/Employer Supplementary Survey

Beyond the survey of Waldorf alumni/ae, separate surveys were sent to 105 professors and 20 employers whom respondents had identified. Replies from over 40 professors and several work supervisors regarding school alumni/ae with whom they had established relationships will be

included in the Research Institute's analysis of the survey.

Analysis of Data

Following an initial review of the data, the Research Institute for Waldorf Education has begun a more in-depth study, identifying trends, describing relationships, evaluating anecdotal responses, and developing a systematic statistical analysis of quantifiable sections that will be published in January 2007.