

**Finding a Balance Between
Pre- Teen Marketing and Waldorf Education
During the 12 Year Change.**

**Dean Carter
124 Silver Mead Crescent, N.W.
Calgary, Alberta
T3B 3W1**

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Abstract

This paper strives to understand the societal, cultural and psychological effects of the aggressive material marketing on the natural development of eleven and twelve-year old children. I'm interested as well in how this changes community dynamics within our school, families and friendships. The goal is also to truly see how different the marketing is from previous generations, and how, as a Waldorf teacher, with my parent community and student body, we can investigate whether there is a need to find a balance between the Waldorf pedagogy and the pre-teen marketing mainstream.

This project included parents from the Calgary Waldorf School community, in particular, the parents in my class; the students in my class, Grade Six; Faculty members of the Calgary Waldorf School. The reason for this was because my action research project stems from the work with my community and more specifically, the students and parents in my class and what they have brought forward, the questions that have come up over this last year, surrounding this topic.

The work of this paper navigates through many varied levels, starting with an examination of literature on current pre-teen marketing practices and the use of child development in their marketing strategies; it combines with a study of the child development as it pertains to the eleven and twelve year old within the principles and pedagogy of Waldorf Education; it will examine the answers and comments from a survey of parents of children who are 11 and 12 that requested their feelings and observations of pre-teen marketing; the work continues through personal observations and assignments of a class of 11 and 12 year old students, as they are the focus of specific marketing strategies while also being Waldorf School students. It is the hope of this project to see how Waldorf Education and the mass media can co-exist in a balanced healthy relationship during a child's twelve year change.

Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Literature	8
Making Choices	15
Tweaking the Tween	17
Finding the Truth	37
Outside the Class: The Pathway to Knighthood	44
From Squire to Knight	46
The Dawning of Knights	50
Let the games begin	53
Reflections	56
Appendix	62
Presentation Description	69
Presentation Evaluation Form	70
References	72

Introduction

It was the fall of 2009 and I was beginning my sixth year teaching my class at the Calgary Waldorf School. I had been with these children since they were six year olds in Grade One and over those years, I had shared with them classic Grimm's fairy tales, stories of Saints, the fables of Aesop, the trials of Moses and the Israelites, and the fiery Norse Myths. These rich stories and legends, along with the children's imaginations filled with their own creative stories of gnomes, fairies, knights, and animals fuelled their conversation and play during their recess and snack times. Occasionally, during these times, the children would discuss mainstream movies involving Disney characters, video games and certain forms of popular clothing but I would quickly step in and redirect the conversation to keep the classroom a sanctuary from popular culture, marketing and media.

As the children grew older and approached the fall of 2008, now aged ten and eleven years old, it became harder and harder to redirect these conversations. As the children matured, especially after reaching the nine year change when children become increasingly aware of the outside world and trying to find their place within it, the conversations began to center more and more around the themes based on materialistic, popular culture products. At the beginning of Grade Five, the majority of children's dress began to change as well. Girls pushed the dress code by wearing shorter skirts, more form-fitting tops and pants; certain name brands began to hold social weight; earrings and necklaces became longer and flashier; sparkly lip balm and nail

polish led to a daily morning parade to the washroom to be cleaned off. Some of the boys began wearing t-shirts with popular name brands or aggressive images such as hand grenades or skulls, and the types of shoes they wore were slowly becoming a commodity. I also had a girl in my class say to me that she was now not a child but a “tween”. When I spoke to parents in my class about what the children were wearing and my concerns, they expressed how difficult it was, especially for girls, to find clothing that was not form-fitting or low cut or a brand name.

These strongly marketed products began affecting the social dynamic within the class. As we were studying how the caste system began in Ancient India, a caste system was forming within my own class, between those who were knowledgeable and owned mass marketed products and those who did not. In that fall of Grade 5, it came to a head when a group of girls in my class began to form a group that was based around those who had read Stephanie Meyer’s teenage vampire novel *Twilight* and who also owned a T&A brand hooded sweatshirt. This led to a bullying situation when a girl in the class tried to fit in with this group of girls by purchasing a sweatshirt but made the mistake of buying the same color as another girl and was questioned and pressured about it.

This troubling situation began to raise a great many question in me: “Aren’t the children too young to be worried and aware of these material items?”; “Is there a difference between the way children are being marketed to than when I was 11 in 1984? If so, what has changed?”; “What is a “tween”?”; “Can the Waldorf curriculum, and my understanding of child development through the guidance of Rudolf Steiner’s writing, work side by side with parents to balance the effects of mass marketing?”; “Is a balance needed or is this just the world we are in now and perhaps we should love it as it is?”; “Is the vision of the Calgary Waldorf School and its expectations around dress and media, out of touch and unrealistic?”.

I have been carrying these questions with me since that first incident, and as I approached Grade Six with these same children, knowing that they are on the cusp of going through the twelve-year change and puberty, I felt that there must be some method of building an environment with parental cooperation which encompasses Steiner's philosophy of child development and the Waldorf Grade Six curriculum, along with a greater understanding of the world that the children are immersed in today – the modern world of “Tween Marketing”. I entered this project with the knowledge that the undertaking was immense, and by being a Waldorf teacher and parent for the past five years, I have a bias against much of mainstream culture. It is a challenge for me to set this aside so that I can delve into the research with an open mind. If I have a prejudice against the world my students are a part of, and tend to react in a negative way to everything my students mention as new and exciting, what kind of a model am I and what am I saying about who they are becoming?

My approach began with self education on the subject of “tweens” and where this term came from and how marketers have compartmentalized childhood in order to sell their products. When did a child between 8 and 12 become a “tween” and not a child? I researched extensively through books, articles, journals and video sources provided by experts in child development. I collected information from activities in my classroom, journal observations and conversations with my students. I surveyed parents of children between the ages of nine and twelve, about their impressions of their children's awareness of advertising, the influence their children have on the purchases made by the household and whether they see a marked difference between the way they were marketed to or influenced as children and the way their own children are being influenced. The project included collecting the students' writing and art work along with my journaling of observations and conversations with the children in my class in order to make a

composite example of a male and female child at the age of twelve in the Calgary Waldorf School. Examples of writing and artwork I collected were centered on that in which the children are interested at that particular point in their lives and were not directly regarding their impressions on marketing. Examples of this included writing activities such as; who the children admire in the world, what they desire at this time, and art work centered around their feelings of the world around them and examples of artistic expression that come from a community of 12 year olds. I observed this work to see to what extent mass media influences the work they do. . In the informal conversations I had with the children, I did not interview them on their impressions about marketing but rather, I kept a journal about how much the mass marketing culture around them comes up in everyday conversation and how much the class conversations at social times (snack, lunch and recess) as a whole, centered around products being marketed to them and the children's perceived need of them. I also took note of how this did or did not affect the social dynamic in the class. I intentionally did not survey the children in my class, or directly quiz them on the topic of mainstream marketing because I wanted them to remain natural and comfortable on any topic of discussion in our classroom. All of my research activities did not interfere with classroom time.

LITERATURE

I first heard the term “tween” from a female student in my class, as was earlier mentioned, in Grade Five. I had called my class “children” as a way to get their attention and this particular student remarked that they were no longer children, but “twens”. What is a “tween”? Where does this term come from? Most sources I found commonly referred to tweens as being anywhere from the ages of eight to sixteen years old. In the marketing book, “The Great Tween Buying Machine”, it states:

Most market research, ...defines the tween segment as aged 8 to 12. We also encounter marketers who define the segment as aged 7 to 14, aged 9 to 15, and aged 10 to 16. Some even define tweens not as an age group but as a “state of mind”...Based on our research, as well as our firsthand experience, we believe the tween segment is defined best as children aged 8 to 12. Further, we believe that there is a significant segmentation of this group that divides the group into emerging-younger and older-transitioning tweens, with the divide at about age 11. (Siegel, Coffey, Livingston, 2004, p.4, 5).

“Tween” is a marketing term. The website, “The Media Awareness Network”, makes the following observation:

One of the most important recent developments in advertising to kids has been the defining of a "tween" market (ages 8 to 12). No longer little children, and not yet teens, tweens are starting to develop their sense of identity and are anxious to cultivate a sophisticated self-image. And marketers are discovering there's lots of money to be made by treating tweens like teenagers.

The marketing industry is forcing tweens to grow up quickly. Industry research reveals that children 11 and older don't consider themselves children anymore. The Toy Manufacturers of America have changed their target market from birth to 14, to birth to ten years of age. (The Media Awareness Network, Canada, 2010, ¶1, 2)

From this, it became clear to me that “tween” was an easy way of referring to any school-aged child who was not a teenager. Developmentally there is a vast difference between a child in Grade One at the age of six and that same child in Grade Six at the age of twelve. As a teacher

who has followed this group of children from the age of six, I have changed my teaching methods and the way I interact with the children according to the growth, awareness and development of the students. The understanding of child development is integral to the success of Waldorf education. The Waldorf curriculum is based on giving the child what knowledge they need at the appropriate time. From my research, I realize that those in the industry of marketing to the “tweens” also change their strategies. Marketers use similar tactics on children to persuade them to buy, or encourage their parents to buy their product. In essence, teachers and marketers are using parallel tools for different results. The teachers’ objective is to educate the child for his or her own benefit and continued growth through life. The marketer’s objective is to educate the child about a product for the benefit of a brand and continued growth of profits.

I will now compare Rudolf Steiner’s philosophy of child development for this age group (7 to 14), with a focus on the 11th and 12th year, and the marketing strategist’s vision of child development.

In Waldorf education, we review the growth of a human being in seven year cycles: from birth to seven years of age (or the change of teeth); from seven to fourteen years old; from fourteen to twenty-one and so on. The years between seven and fourteen Steiner explains, sees the birth of the etheric or the feeling body. This transition sees the child moving away from learning by direct imitation to learning through imagination.

Between the ages of seven and fourteen, the teacher’s main concern must be directed toward the student’s evolving life of feeling. It is really very important that educators acquire the ability to create the kind of mental imagery that can guide pupils through the tender transitional stages characteristic of this period. (Steiner, 1996, *The Child’s Changing Consciousness*, p.98)

This is done through use of stories which create mental pictures rather than trying to burden the child with abstract concepts beyond their understanding. We give them images of great heroes in history struggling to achieve good; images of plants with story from seed to blossom to fruit; images of animals from simple mollusks to complex mammals. Because the child is living so much within their feelings and emotions, we strive to foster a true sense of beauty in their life.

As Steiner states in “The Education of a Child”:

The spirit of nature - in other words the facts themselves existing behind the sense-perceptible- must have spoken to the child, who should have a natural appreciation of things before abstract theories are introduced; this should only be done after puberty. There is no need to be concerned that what is learned may be forgotten once school is finished; what matters is that what one teaches bears fruit and forms the character. What the child has inwardly experienced will also be retained; details may vanish but the essential, the universal, will remain and grow. (Steiner, 1996, p.69)

During this time, we enhance the child’s development through arts such as painting, singing and drama. We enliven their soul’s education. Not only are the children connected to their “feeling” life during the ages of seven to fourteen, but they are also closely connected to the spirit of nature. At this age it is incredibly important to get them out into Nature to witness the rhythm and breathing of natural life. This was brought home to me, quite vividly, when on a hike with my Grade Five class to a waterfall in the Rocky Mountains, I heard one of my students remark , “It seems like the trees are welcoming us to their home.”

That is not to say that every year between the ages of seven and fourteen are like this. As a child matures through these seven years, he becomes more aware of the world outside himself. There are two developmental changes that occur during this period of time. One of these changes occurs between the ages of eight and ten. During this time frame, a child can experience a separation from himself. It is a time where the child feels deeply about what has happened in

the world around them. It is as if he is passing from the protective world of fairy tales and make-believe where everything has a happy ending, to a world where good and evil really does exist and everything you hope for does not necessarily happen. This can be a very lonely and fearful time for a child and Waldorf education during these years tries to reflect on that and comfort the child through the use of Old Testament stories, such as Adam and Eve's fall from Paradise and the struggle for freedom of Moses and the Israelites. At this age as well, the children work very hard with their bodies, planting gardens and working with the earth to empower them with the knowledge that they are strong and capable and that if they work with feeling, Mother Nature will provide. A second change happens during the eleventh to twelfth year. The thinking processes of the child begin to change as he enters puberty. His thinking evolves from imaginative to conceptual. The child is beginning to become more objective and forms his own judgments based on his own observations. At twelve, developmentally the child is ready to observe cause and effect and needs to witness practicality in what he is learning. This is why in Grade Six we bring science to them in a new way. For example, we introduce Physics, experiments with sound, heat and light in which we guide the twelve year old to hone his observation skills so that he can clearly state what he saw in a given experiment without making assumptions or drawing conclusions. We bring them the histories and stories of the years of the Roman Empire to show the glory and the decline of power to teach them that everything in life has a breaking point – that not everything that starts successfully ends successfully. These children are beginning to find their own way in the world and they are looking beyond their immediate family for heroes and role models and support. Peers become extremely important. What they say and do carries great weight in an eleven or twelve year olds life. As their judgment sharpens, they want the rules to be black and white, with no grey area. They want

consistency and will immediately look for an opening when anything appears false or hypocritical. However, these judgments are not based on life experiences but more around their perceptions of the environment surrounding them. Though their judgment is developing, it is not solidified from actual life experiences and changes according to influences around them. They will take half truths as truth without examining them. This makes it very obvious that this age group are the perfect, most vulnerable pawns for the marketing strategist. For example, when reading back my journal to this past fall in Grade Six, I had more than one parent come to me to ask “Is it true that everyone in the class has a cell phone but my child?”, only to discover later at a parent group meeting that only three children out of twenty-five do indeed have a cell phone and each of those three have the cell phone for security reasons only. Another common statement from a child would deal with the fact that the teacher got angry only with him, when in fact, the teacher reprimanded the whole class. Jack Petrash, a long-time teacher at the Washington Waldorf School, discusses the twelve year olds dramatic emotional reactions, which often take the form of criticizing parents and teachers, specifically in girls. Boys can often withdraw and isolate themselves with music, books or video games. Petrash states (2004):

Brain research shows that the adolescent brain is being both deconstructed and restructured at this time. So if it seems as though twelve and thirteen-year-old boys find it hard to remember the simplest things that we worked so hard to teach them, there is scientific evidence to show why this occurs. (p.69)

This scientific evidence includes research carried out by a team working with Jay Giedd of the National Institute of Health in Bethesda, Maryland about which Richard Landl speaks in his article for *The Research Bulletin* (2005) on the changes occurring during puberty.

...in girls around the age of eleven and boys around the age of twelve...Brain research also casts a new light on two widely observable feelings of the young, a feeling of impotence. Explosive reconfiguration of nerve connections leads at first to a situation in which young

people cannot draw on learned behavior. The brain therefore calls upon different regions in an attempt to form a judgment – in particular it calls on those regions used for quick, feeling-laden decisions, “gut instincts.” Only when reconfiguration of the frontal cortex nears completion will it increasingly be used again. (p.9)

With this research, coupled with daily observations on a class of eleven and twelve year olds, it is obvious to me that the children whom marketers refer to as “tweens” can be easy targets for manipulation. Marketing companies as well use studies on child development to create strategies custom-designed to reach these children where they are the most vulnerable. They rely on the proven fact that adolescents make decisions very quickly based on sensory perceptions, feelings and their impressions of what their peers would choose to do. An example of child development theory that marketers use would be Jean Piaget’s Theory of Cognitive Development when creating their marketing campaigns aimed at the eleven to fifteen age groups. This theory covers the cognitive development of children from birth to fifteen years old and cites that this development begins with sensory motor intelligence and ends with abstract thinking. With this abstract thinking, it is Piaget’s theory that children can begin to imagine what others are thinking, which includes what they surmise others are thinking of them. This brings about self-consciousness and the need for self-assurance from peers. By understanding the nuances of these stages, the marketers can develop products which hit home with a specific age group knowing that developmentally a “tween” who is ten will react differently from a “tween” who is twelve. Marketers reach their audience by bombarding the senses of their subjects with music, perception of happy times and belonging, fun-filled feelings of perfection and acceptance of the most desirable members of their peer group. The developing mind accepts these ideas willingly because they appear to create an existence which is very desirable and very possible. They send their visual and audio messages through television, web-sites, print, cell-phones, grass roots events, radio and movies. Tweens are subjected to over 3000 advertisements a day through these

mediums. (Barbaro, A. & Earp, J. (Directors). (2008).) Therefore it becomes apparent that the methods used by the teachers to relate to students of these ages and the methods employed by the marketers, although different in nature and form of address, both are successful in influencing the children at this stage of development. Why is it important for Waldorf teachers to reach the children of this age? It is because of the important work of developing the soul of the child to strengthen the innate desire to do good for themselves and for mankind in the future. Why are marketers interested in communicating with this age group?

...tweens spend approximately \$11 billion annually on their own. ...we find that tween parents spend an additional \$176 billion on them. Lastly, if we assume that tweens' further influence is a conservative 20 percent of other family purchases such as vacations, automobiles, restaurant visits, parental clothing and accessories, and so forth, approximately \$74 billion more can be attributed to tween influence. (Siegel, et al, 2004, p.31)

MAKING CHOICES

With this information in mind, I began planning how to navigate the waters set by marketers outside our school walls with my students. I didn't wish to delve into this work with them in a literal media-investigation process, such as taking advertisements and breaking them down with them as an exercise in class. One reason for this is that I didn't want to tell the students that this advertising was wrong and let my personal opinions hold too much weight with them, and thus separating myself from the class. I didn't want to teach them mistrust. I also feel that they see this advertising daily and they don't need to see it in our classroom in any form. I wanted our classroom to give the children an alternative way to look at life, without saying that one is better than the other. I wanted to listen to my students and consciously use the Waldorf pedagogy to find topics which would hold them in good stead to innately navigate this terrain. I also turned to Rudolf Steiner for insight, and to figure out what are some of the tasks of the time we are living in, which he calls "The Fifth Post-Atlantean Epoch".

It is vital to realize that one of the tasks of the present era of the Fifth Post-Atlantean Epoch is to begin working on transforming our astral body into the Spirit Self. What is meant by that? The astral body carries our desire nature. When it is purified, it will become Spirit Self. In the course of earth evolution we shall make only the preparation for the development of this part of the human entity. As preparation, our consciousness will not be in full control, but will still be directed by our self, our ego. But the capacity of Spirit Self to convey wisdom and morality to our actions may be carried by a group of human beings. By overcoming this selfishness of our desire nature as housed in the astral body, we gradually grow able to listen to our conscience and begin to sense the ethical implications to our actions. It is possible that group awareness helps support individuals to act according to their consciences... Of course, the present task of our fifth Post-Atlantean Epoch is to develop one's humanity beyond our own individual self, and now group awareness, awareness of what is beneficial for or detrimental to the further development of humanity, should, and does, become an active and social force. (Lissau, M. (2007), p.27)

This is a grand task, but Steiner encouraged Waldorf teachers to embrace in totality the world in which we live, which in 2009 and 2010, includes the students currently enrolled in the Grade Six

at Calgary Waldorf School, children who are being categorized as “Tweens” and who have great financial pull in their family’s daily decisions. It is this fact and the students’ ages and mindset that marketers are honing in on, and this too is a daily part of life.

TWEAKING THE TWEEN

September of every school year, since Grade One, I say I have the same class, but I don't have the same class. The children's names are the same for the most part with the exception of new students; I have a shared history with them from previous years together. We have a shorthand when it comes to speaking to each other. I know their parents, and their home lives quite well. But when I shake their hands on that first day back in school, it never ceases to amaze me that each year, I feel I have a whole new class because of the developmental stages they are in. Over the summer, the children always change so much: they're taller, their faces are thinner, friendships and connections have changed. I knew, heading into Grade Six and the onset of the twelve-year change and puberty, that this class could be an entirely new group yet again. In my planning, with this paper in mind, besides the Waldorf curriculum, I wanted to get to know the children again through artistic work, writing assignments, conversations and observations. To do this, I structured assignments that would give me information about how they were feeling individually, socially and emotionally. I wanted to find out as well, without having them be awakened by my questioning, what influence media and products had on deciding where to spend their money, how did it affect their social standing in the class, and how this all affected their own sense of self. Some of these assignments fell directly in line with the subject we were covering that day, and some were totally separate creative writing projects or artistic projects. For example, once a week, I had a one hour class focused on creative writing. In September, we began a class on character development in writing, and I really wanted them to be descriptive when introducing a character. To do this, I had them describe themselves as if they were meeting their person for the first time, and what they saw. This was a very eye-opening activity! I could see those who were really developmentally in that twelve-year change where they become more

abstract thinkers and are able to really call on their observational skills, to stand outside themselves, and those who are not yet there. I noticed the younger students in my class, those who hadn't yet turned twelve, wrote about themselves in very general terms such as "The girl had blonde hair, brown eyes and a nice smile who liked to laugh." The students who had recently celebrated their twelfth birthday came at it in a more specific point of view, such as one of the older boys in my class who described himself as "wearing D.C. shoes, and a West 49 T-shirt and many freckles on his nose from his days in the sun with a New York Yankees baseball cap."

From these character developments, we slowly went through the steps of building a story, how to describe a setting, build conflict and how to resolve and end stories. I did this through the telling of stories and giving them examples of what I considered good writing, from established authors such as Elizabeth George Speare and Madeleine L'Engle. Next, I sent them to write their own story in which the main character had to be based on their character description of themselves. These children have grown up with storytelling through the years, and some were able to really leave the world in which they live behind. For example, one created a story in which she entered a forest and dove into a land of gnomes and fairies which was rich with detail: the green of the forest, the sound of the voices from the characters in the story, the wind blowing through the trees. This was juxtaposed with another story in which it all took place at a mall, a story where the main character happened to be a bit older and was shopping at her favourite Prada store and described in detail the skirt she bought. The problem to be resolved was that her boyfriend had stolen her credit card and so she had to be picked up by her father in his limousine to go and retrieve it from the police. This gave me a read on how much materialism was at play in influencing their work.

Another exercise for me was to play the part of the fly on the wall at their snack time, and really observe the children's conversations and what their main topics were. Our classroom is made up of 9 boys and 16 girls. In my journal, I would make notes at the end of the day, general observations of what was said in these freer class times. With the majority of the boys, the talk focused on air guns, video games such as Call of Duty and War Hammer. Later in the year, specific brands of clothes and what running shoes to buy were taking the front seat in conversations between the boys, as well as hilarious video clips they had seen on YouTube. Occasionally their talk would turn to events in the news such as the war in Afghanistan and what they would do were they to be called to war. One of the boys in my class in particular loved to share science facts, centered around robotics and chemistry such as how to remove hydrogen from water. Because the boys are in the minority in the class, they tend to fall into two groups who intermingle: the group of children who are involved in organized sport, more aware of pop culture and beginning to care about their appearance, and the boys who are very much interested in role playing games, video games and technology. The girls, being in bigger numbers, have more groups which seem to be divided according to age. One particular group of girls, the older children, love to talk about music, movies, fashion and their extra curricular activities such as dance, piano and choir. These girls also talk of their awareness of boy teen idols and their dress reflects an awareness of fashion. I often have to send these girls to the office to remove lipstick and nail polish as they like to try to push the dress code boundary set by the school. This group also talks about technology, such as iPods and cell phones, chatting on Facebook. The second group of girls who happen to be a few months younger, seem to center their conversations on animals, the environment and artistic activities. They also talk about their families and family outings. These two groups aren't entirely exclusive; there are those who mingle between the two.

The third group of girls is younger still, and they love to talk about their hobbies such as juggling and riding a unicycle, and about the books they're reading. They too seemed to talk about their families and the activities they undertook together. Popular culture and technology were rarely mentioned. To be clear, these divisions aren't entirely based on age; they also seem to be based on home life, more precisely parent choices surrounding media exposure in their homes.

With these observations, I could see that my class fell into different camps: those who were very aware of material items and how that was part of how they connected to their peers -- through material products, technology and popular culture-- and the children who connected more on what they were doing personally in their lives --personal and family experiences and extra-curricular activities. It should be noted, there was a difference in tone between the boys' and the girls' conversations. The girls' conversations often mentioned their feelings, seeming to talk more about their emotions, bringing dramatic flair to their retelling and speaking louder than their boy counterparts. The boys' conversations seemed to be more based on facts and specifics, at times displaying a sense of competitive edge in topping their friend's story with something of their own, at times in playful teasing ways. These differences reflect what Betty Staley speaks to in regards to the 12 year old in her book *Adolescence: The Sacred Passage*:

Girls focus on relationships. They speak with sophistication about feelings, have a large emotional vocabulary, and often give the impression they are more mature than they actually are... They have left behind the world of fantasy to join the big outside world that is both exciting and frightening. They are broadening their interests. Boys, on the other hand, find their identity in action. They tend toward quick solutions, one-upmanship, rituals of domination and physical aggression. (p.56)

From these conversations, I began to look at what I was talking about when I was twelve years old. Was it really that different, twenty-five years ago? I would like to think that I wasn't so caught up in the social currency of pop culture knowledge, but really looking back I do think that I was. During that period of the mid 1980s, there was a great deal of deregulation in what

could be advertised and directed to children on television, as mentioned in the film *Consuming Kids*. (Barbaro, A. & Earp, J. (2008)) It was the beginning of products being made and then advertised to children through Saturday morning cartoons where the show storylines were directly connected to the toys being sold. As a child, I watched a great deal of television, listened to a great deal of Top 40 Radio and I remember, as a twelve-year old boy that the way I played with my friends was a mirror of these cartoons we watched. It was a common meeting ground for us all. At this age, I also looked up to sports heroes and with my friends, pretended to be these athletes while we were playing after-school games such as road hockey. I was also very aware of products those heroes endorsed, and consequently these were the products that I wanted to be wearing such as Converse sweat pants and Nike shoes. On the fashion side, my clothing wish list always sported brands of shirts such as Club Monaco, Roots and Beaver Canoe. This is what the “in” crowd was wearing, hence my wish list. The amount of money spent on clothes also created an allure around them, in turn creating a pecking order in the hallways at school; the more expensive, the more desirable. The way that marketers were reaching me at that period of time was through television, radio and magazines.

Things have changed since then; a few tools marketers didn't have when I was twelve but are incredibly prevalent today are the internet and cell phones and from observing the conversations with the children in my class today, these forms of media are always mentioned in their conversations. The internet is a huge tool for marketers to reach children, in fact children in my class are online more than they are in front of the television. According to an article by Gwen Moran (2009, para5), the percentage of children in the age group counted in my class who spend at least an hour a day in front of the television is at 68%, versus the percentage of these same children who spend at least an hour a day online sits at 83%. One of the tools that marketers use

through the internet to promote their products to this age group is via games they set up on their websites. For example:

Companies have designed and marketed Websites that let tweens play with, listen to or learn from their brands. As an example, Pepperidge Farms has a Website that involves tweens with their popular Goldfish Crackers – allowing them to play games using the Goldfish as characters... Candystand.com, a highly respected Nabisco site, allows tweens to play games, enter contests, and learn facts about Nabisco's many confectionary products. (Siegel et al. (2004), p.155)

In looking back on the fashions of the day when I was twelve and comparing them to the styles I see in my classroom in 2010, the older girls in today's class seem to be dressing in a more mature, sexualized fashion: tighter fitting shirts and pants, off the shoulder tops. For some of the boys, it is all about oversized clothing which doesn't lend itself to uprightness. In my observations as well of my students on the playground, they are no longer playing imaginatively. A majority of them are sitting around in groups, far out in the fields, chatting or trying to listen to their iPods without getting caught. I tried to remember what it was that I did at recess at their age, and I know that when I was twelve, I was still playing soccer and other games at recess. This led me to the question: is there really a difference from when I was young as compared to the children in today's class? Are the main topics of conversation that different?

This brought me to develop a survey to find answers to many of my questions surrounding media awareness and its effects on the children in my class. In this survey, I posed many questions around the parents' perceived media awareness of when they were twelve and how they feel it differs from today's culture, and how this affects their children. I wanted to see what they felt their child's perceived awareness of this media culture today was and whether they think it has an impact on their child's sense of self. These questions led me then to ask the parents whether they felt they needed to find a balance between mainstream media influences

and their child's development and whether they felt it was difficult in this day and age to follow the guidelines and philosophies of the Calgary Waldorf School.

In my introductory letter to the parents accompanying each survey sent out, I stated to the adults that this was a survey strictly directed to the parents, and requested that they not share the questions with their children. It was imperative to me that the children carry on their day-to-day lives without feeling they were being judged or put under a microscope. As stated earlier in this paper, I wanted them to feel comfortable around me and not feel like I had a hidden agenda. I surveyed parents from Class Four, Class Five, Class Six and Class Seven at the Calgary Waldorf School and received seventy-six completed surveys back, giving me an 86% response from the group surveyed. This 12-question survey was an anonymous one, in the hopes of creating a comfortable space for the responders to answer honestly. Please find a copy of this parent survey in the attached appendix.

I opened the survey asking how aware the parents perceived their children to be of advertising materials from popular culture and mass media. This question was based on a scale of one to ten, with one being not aware and ten being very aware. The average response was 7.1.

This average didn't surprise me, I thought it would be on the higher scale because of my observations in discussions held by the students in my class and other children on the playground. I anticipated the average to be a bit higher, but I do realize that parents aren't privy to the conversations that go on between peers on school grounds.

My second question dealt with how much the parent felt the advertising materials from popular culture influenced their child's decision-making on where to spend their money, what they wore, what they watched, what they listened to and what they want or feel they need. Each of these questions was answered on a scale of one to ten, with ten being a large influence and one

being of little influence. When it came to what they spent their money on, the average was 4.7; as for what they wear, the average was 4.9; as for what they watched, the average was 4.7; what they listened to averaged at 5.8; as for what they want or feel they need, the responses averaged at 5.4. These numbers all seemed low to me, I expected them to be higher. The children in my class do wear brand name clothing to school, and talk about wanting to purchase certain brands. Our dress code at the Calgary Waldorf School states that clothing should be free of large logos and lettering, but that is often not the case when the children arrive in the morning. Sometimes, it seems this rule can be bent, as the logo on a child's clothing that day may be small. From my observations, when the children speak about what they wish to purchase with their money, it seems the main topics always include certain brands of clothing such as Ed Hardy and D.C., music technology such as iPods, video games and junk food such as potato chips, slurpies and candy. When the children talk of what they have received for their birthdays, the most prominent items mentioned are ones with a label attached. An example of this that I remember, going back to my class in Grade Five, around Christmas Time the new iPod Touch was released, and that was the main topic of conversation for a number of weeks leading up to the Christmas Break. It was obvious that a small number of the children knew exactly what it was, but they talked about it so profusely that it influenced the remainder of the children in the class in their main topics of conversation, and their Christmas wish list that year as well. From my point of view, I wonder if there is a disconnect between the parents' perceptions and the children's knowledge and wants. The main reason behind this question sprang from a passage I read in the book *The Great Tween Buying Machine*: "...tweens (in the US) spend approximately \$11 billion annually on their own." (Siegel et al., 2004, p.31). I wanted to see if marketing had an influence on what the children at the Calgary Waldorf School were spending their money on, from their parents' perception.

As for question three, the parents were asked how much pressure they felt their child put on them to purchase materials that were marketed by mass media. This question too asked the respondents to scale their answer from one to ten, with ten being a great amount of pressure and one being no pressure. The average rate came out to 4.7. The reason why I posed this question was due to a term used by marketers called ‘The Nag Factor’: “The degree to which parents’ purchasing decisions are based on being nagged by their children.” (McFedries (2000), para1)

When I first posed this question, I felt that I would get answers stating that the children did have a great influence on their parents’ purchasing choices, based on a 1997/1998 Nag Factor study initiated by Western Media which stated that 70% of the parents were found to be receptive to their children’s request. (Siegel et al., (2004) p.73). It was surprising to me that the majority of the parents answering this survey did not feel that their children had a large influence on the family purchases. As stated in *The Great Tween Buying Machine*: “Parents relinquish more decisions to kids as they grow older. It is assumed that tweens capture more of the decision making through influence...” (Siegel, D.L. et. al., (2004) p. 66) Were the parents who answered this survey very strong and centered on what was purchased for their family and able to tune out their children’s wants or needs, or were they unaware of the tactics their children were using in persuading them to buy items for which they were wishing?

Tweens train their parents without their parents knowing it. Once parents have purchased an item for their tween as a result of being influenced, they are likely to re-purchase that item again and again without the need for (or awareness of) any additional influence. Specifically, in recent focus groups, moms told us that they limited their kids to only three requests per shopping trip. However, their tweens later told us (in subsequent focus groups) that they trained their moms to know what to buy for them during previous shopping trips. Therefore, during upcoming shopping trips, they would now request new items they had not asked for before. (Smart!) (Siegel et al. (2004) p.67)

The fourth question was based on the answer the parents gave in the question previous. If the parent’s response to question three came within the range of 7 to 10, they were asked to answer

how much does the pressure their child put on them influence what they purchase for their child and the household. Some of the responses, even though they were in the minority, included “Somewhat, because I pay I can determine what is age appropriate”; “Very little”; “Some pressure, we will put it on your list and we will review this list later”. The parents who answered this survey appear to me to still be the ones making the purchasing decisions for their families.

The next question was about the parents’ perceived influence on their child’s sense of self and their status amongst their peers that mass media and popular culture would have. This too was requested to be rated on a scale of one to ten, with ten being of great influence and one being none. The average result was 4.3. The second part to this question requested further explanation of how it affected their child’s self-worth. Of those who did think it had an influence, here is what they responded: “Clothing, and high tech issues”; “pressure of being out of the mainstream”; “So more conscious of what she wears. Notices what others are wearing as well.”; “None.”; “Being accepted in the group or left out because of status objects, dress code, music, etc.”; “Tough boy image – gangsta image, needing to be tough, strut becoming his male definition, music, and hockey. Status amongst peers is mostly wearing labels”; “Wants to dress like the in girls, but the parent has final say.”; “If they’re not sporting the common fashions and technology their peers have they definitely feel inferior, much crying”; “Lots of kids seem to have lots of things. Lots of trips. We don’t fall into this category and our child has to learn how to manage this.”; “Needing a cell phone to be popular and stay close. Wearing brand names that are ‘cool’ to peers. Seeing the latest popular movie or TV show to be in the know.”. I was surprised by the parents feeling that peers did not have a strong influence on their children’s decisions. My perception, within the classroom, if a child has to make a decision on their own, for example, choosing a game to be played in Gym Class, before they make their decision, they

will often turn and look to their friends to see if they agree with the decision about to be made. As well, they will look for approval from their peers when doing artwork, or writing a story. I thought definitely this would transfer over to what the children want to wear, eat and listen to. Am I missing something, or are the parents? Developmentally, children between the ages of 11 and 12, there is a definite switch from the main influence of parents to that of peers'. As Betty Staley states in her book *Adolescence: The Sacred Passage*:

Eleven- and twelve-year-olds are trying to work out their relationships with parents. In saying "My friends can do all kinds of things you won't let me do," they are trying to figure out how much responsibility they can have, how much freedom they should have. As their bonds with friends become stronger, they move out from the protective home structure and test boundaries, demanding space for their likes and dislikes. They find out that their parents' friends have different ideas about what is allowed and not allowed, and they realize that not all parents expect the same thing from their children. They also begin to realize the limitations of their parents' knowledge and experience. (Staley (2006), p.57)

I wanted to know how worried the parents were about the possible influence that mass marketing had on their child's development. This led to question number six, based on a scale of one to ten with one being not worried and ten being very worried. I also asked the respondents to elaborate regardless of their answer on the scale, to get a sense of whether they felt the mass media marketing had a negative effect on their children's development or not. The average on the scale came to 5.2. Here are some of the answers to the second part of the question: "She is her own person"; "Parent decided factor"; "No, embraces alternative lifestyle"; "I have last say. Her self-esteem does not depend upon things."; "My daughter is an independent thinker not easily influenced by mass media"; "Not extremely worried because I hope we're providing a good example and perspective on priorities"; "Try to teach, but as a parent you can't compete with peer influence."; "Brain washing, losing of values, changing priorities and false perspective"; "Not primary influence – peers are! Exposure is still somewhat limited. Exposed to things and people that give balance."; "Too quick an adoption phase without sufficient

education, particularly with regards to electronic services.”; “I am concerned because it is hard to shut it out. As they get older it is even harder.”; “So pervasive – hard to go against the flow, the influence is definitely used by them to determine and define how their outer appearance should be and it is never age appropriate”; “The influence is very strong and impairs them from being able to make free choices – choices that come from his own thoughts, values and ideas.”; “Inappropriate material and subject matter must be offset by parent and school philosophy.”; “Parents give marketing influence life by making it a big deal. Parent influence is stronger. We can control media to a certain extent in our homes.”; “We try to be selective in things we watch or listen to. Our children now at ages 11 and 13, we teach them to question and investigate a little to see the things out there, i.e. are those things in alignment with your true self.”. In conclusion, the results of the survey show that about fifty percent of the parents were concerned and the other half seemed to think that their child’s development was safe. My perception is that all children develop differently, and I think it is difficult to pinpoint the effects media has on child development. Regardless of the influence by mass media and marketing, I have to meet the children where they are at developmentally and culturally, and honour them as individuals, to be relevant and communicate with them within the structure of the Waldorf curriculum.

My next question asked the parents whether they felt, in their opinion, the material being marketed to children of their age was age- and developmentally- appropriate. This was a multiple choice question, with three possible answers. The first choice was if they felt it was age- and development-appropriate; the second choice was they felt it was somewhat appropriate; and the third option, that they felt it was not appropriate. The majority of the respondents answered with the third. It is interesting to note that not one survey came back with the first option circled. I

wasn't surprised to read these results, it made sense in that it is obvious that the parents who answered the survey are doing their best to shelter their children from these media images.

My next series of questions led me to see what the parents remembered about the marketing around them when they were twelve years old. The parents were asked in what year they were twelve years old; the average was 1975, indicating that the average age of the parents answering this survey is 47. This showed me that our parent body here at the Calgary Waldorf School is an older parent body than I expected, and that they were growing up in a time when there were no home computers, no cable television and cell phones and it should be noted, before the deregulation of advertising to children that came about in the early 1980's. They grew up in a time very different from that of their children.

My next question focused on their memories of being twelve, in what their interests were, and what was important to them and how similar this was to that of their child's. Some of the responses include: "Friends, being popular. Very similar. A lot less structure."; "Playing a working with mechanical things. No."; "Being with friends, always with best friend. Daughter is not too concerned with friends outside school. Clothes and make up. Daughter is having crushes on boys."; "Mother sport oriented, not aware of advertising pressure. More peer pressure now."; "Different outdoor activities (parents). Child more tech or interests different than his."; "Parent: Play, have fun, friendships, sports. Child has sensibility of the bigger picture of world from violence, wars, poverty, famine, is more involved with helping."; "Parent: Into Valley Girls phenomenon, clothes fashion, slave to TV not restricted, Really into MTV and movies. Daughter is similar she identifies with certain movies and music relevant to 2010."; "Heavily into sports and having the right runners. Super sport stars influenced me."; "Boys wearing make-up which came from having older sisters. Similar same interests as my child but he is

more interested in wearing labeled clothing. I was not aware labels existed.”; “Parent: read a lot, little interest in fashion. Music and TV. were very limited and adult controlled. Played outside, board games. We made up dances like my daughter does.”; “Yes in terms of behavior. Parent: allowance, music girls, soccer. My children read a lot more.”; “Similar, playing with friends, sports etc. I do think he is more aware of popular music than I was 10. Today’s music more explicit.”; “Parent: Want to wear the same style of clothing as all the other kids. Clothing now tighter and more suggestive. Riding bike with friends and with my horse.”; “A lot was similar- what friends were doing thinking, fitting in, finding my place.”; “Parent: I was really hooked in TV. Everything that came from that little box was important to me and I thought it was true. Family was important to me and it still is. Children less attached to the TV. My children spend more time in real life and gives them a sense of authenticity and security.”; “School work, school activities, friends, sleepovers, play with siblings on the farm. Swimming lessons, skiing as a family, TV shows after school cartoons, sitcoms.”. These responses were along the lines of what I was expecting, I thought some parents and children would have similar experiences and others would be different.

My next question asked, from the parent’s memories, whether the images being marketed to their children today were similar to what they were exposed to as a child. I offer some of their responses: “Does not remember being marketed to.”; “Yes.”; “I think marketing is hitting them younger by 2-3 years. It is always there-my kid has only tuned into at 11.”; “It is everywhere marketing. As a child I wasn’t as exposed to the advertising aspect because we didn’t have the same amount of media in the home. 1975 people were much more stuffless.”; “Don’t remember advertising.”; “Images and concepts used today are much more sophisticated.”; “Coming from a different country where there is less mainstream media. Less specific marketing to teens.”;

“Media was less sexualized.”; “Similar but products different.”; “I grew up with 2 TV channels.”; “No children are marketed today like they are already teenagers. Children were dressed normally having fun with a game or a toy. Today all models are dressed like teenagers slinky clothes a lot of make-up.”; “No, much more sophisticated now. More content channels to choose from and accessibility has become whenever and wherever with invention of the 3rd screen.”; “No, media is much more sexualized and explicit.”; “No, the pop singers at the time Michael Jackson etc don’t recall being influenced by any females also do not recall following every move of the so called stars certainly didn’t read any publications or listen to talk shows etc. The only media influence was TV and we watched family shows and household items.”; “No- there was very little marketing when I was 11/12 directed to this age group it seemed to happen when I was 14/15, at 11/12 I was still very much a child.”; “Media is more aggressive now it is more directed at a certain age group. Video games, movies, music, toys are worked as products to cover a frame of the population in specific. Less quality, you have to consume more. We consume more now.”; “No! Popular music not as prevalent. TV more family friendly not dealing with older topics. No computer or computer games to deal with. No cell phones. Marketing was not as sophisticated, no stores just for 11-12 yr olds.”. Their observations, for the most part differ from my memories going back to when I was twelve, I didn’t feel that there was marketing aimed specifically my way as a twelve-year-old but upon reflection from my current point of view, there definitely was. What was aimed at me seemed to be very much toys still made for children and separate from what was being marketed to teenagers and adults. It seems in this current day and age, children are on the receiving end of advertisements for technology similar to that which their parents are using: more sophisticated video games; snacks and food appealing directly to them; and clothing that strikes me as items older children would wear.

Diane Levin and Jean Kilbourne (2009), authors of *So Sexy So Soon: The New Sexualized Childhood and What Parents Can Do To Protect Their Kids* say it best:

“Age compression” is a term used by media professionals and marketers to describe how children at ever younger ages are doing what older children used to do. The media, the toys, the behavior, the clothing once seen as appropriate for teens are now firmly ensconced in the lives of tweens and are rapidly encroaching on and influencing the lives of younger children. In addition, there is a blurring of boundaries between children and adults, as demonstrated by the similarities in clothing marketed to both groups by the fashion industry. (p.69-70)

I see this in evidence with the way some of my students are dressing at school and the material items they possess.

In my final two questions, I was curious to know whether parents felt a need to balance images from mainstream media with other influences. I wanted to know if it was difficult for them and their children to follow the guidelines of the Calgary Waldorf School, i.e. little to no media exposure on a day-to-day basis. We at the Calgary Waldorf School have a school policy that requests parents to have no television exposure at all for the children, and minimal exposure to movies, computers and other electronic media. This is a tall order in the current times we live. That is the reason I put this question forward to the parents, to see how realistic they felt this request was to follow. Is Waldorf education a part of their balance against mainstream media? The responses that came back were quite thought-provoking: “No. Child is not excessive. Does ask for much is moderate in fashion and demands considerate to budget. Definitely more concerned about how she looks though.”; “Yes. I try to make her realize the marketing trolls that she is being manipulated by. I also try not to squash her own senses of style (even though I don’t like it) because she is trying to identify her own style which sometimes opposite current trends.”; “Gives child an alternative point of view, she seems to choose that.”; “Constant discussion about real & important as opposed to what is not.”; “We need to balance my values

with what the media shows. How no TV. Commercials no cable TV, control internet.

Explaining how they are targeted by media. Show ways of living not based on consumerism.

Teach children not to be sheep analyze products and marketing tools. Peer pressure is there.”;

“Yes in particular T.V.”; “Need to balance. So instead of Xbox, Wii etc one would suffice.”;

“Yes, through conversation making it a point from early on to build a trusting relationship with my child and by emphasizing the importance of family. At this point it is peer attitudes & issues are causing the most disruption. Where are the peers getting it from. Exposed to more media than my child.”; “Never thought of it as balancing it is just what I find appropriate for my children. Girls never been too into make-up but neither am I.”; “Yes, for those that make it through our filter. Try to explain in an age appropriate language.”; “Try to minimize the exposure. My 14 year old listens to music, watches TV. Or movies etc away from my 9 year old.”; “Very aware of values and doing a lot of reading and family work on our family values to balance the very distorted values of media. Involving the girls in family values discussions.”;

“Yes! Think about media images and not be a puppet. I also try to teach alternatives and perspectives that hopefully will broaden thinking.”; “Yes, we always try to make the children think about what is it that comes through media and if it fits them and not the opposite. (values, experience) Through experience with nature, friends, family, school, can see what is important for them and look at how things are in other countries.”; “Yes- we do not watch mainstream television at home. Kids get it at grandparents/ aunts & uncles. We do outdoor activities and activities that do not require media. Eq: cross country skiing, downhill skiing, card games, reading, board games, cooking as a family. Things that are more “real” life rather than “bigger” than life.”. From this information, it seems clear to me that the parents are very aware of the pressures the marketers are putting upon their children and are using various methods to keep

their children from diving in, hook, line and sinker into the marketers' hands. They mention talking with their children about what advertisers really want; they mention how they try to balance with their family values versus the marketers' values; they speak about trying to limit television exposure by getting outdoors and engaging in family activities. As a teacher, I find this is an educated group of parents and it is very encouraging to hear about what they are doing.

When the parents were asked pointedly if they felt it was difficult to follow these guidelines as set out in the Parent Handbook given to the families at the beginning of each school year, I was pleased with their honesty. "Yes. It is everywhere and we use and enjoy it. Moderation seems to be the key."; "Yes. The world is changing rapidly and I want my child to be aware of as much out in the world as possible."; "Yes. As our children have gotten older, they have played less. They have these open windows of time where they don't know what to do with themselves. It is especially difficult in the winter. They aren't book lovers. It is difficult to compete with allure of media. It is all they talk about with their peers. Who has what, who has seen what, who is getting what. Media becomes a crutch and it concerns me."; "Yes. Feel not up with what she preaches. Movie time is a special occasion. Computers are part of children's life. Moderate use."; "Easier when younger becomes more difficult as child gets older."; "Not too bad. Walk with them need to walk outside the school door knowing what is out there. Be able to judge what is right or wrong. Black out is as bad as leaving them in front of an LCD."; "Yes, especially with computers and video games and Facebook. External influences such as family make it difficult. Cannot ban, must restrict and find more useful ways to pass the time."; "Yes it is difficult to manage."; "Easier when the child was younger. Losing ability for imaginative play beginning to allow more weekdays are still very limited. Sports have filled the void somewhat. Song lyrics are awful and disgusting reaffirm stereotypes. Child just likes the tune. Interested in

music iPods etc.”; “I don’t feel like it is too great of an issue. Because I don’t question it my children don’t.”; “No it is a lifestyle choice as much as Armani and Aspen are to parents. At first it is not easy but over time you see the benefits.”; “Yes, we take a balanced approach, we let the children have a limited amount.”; “Peer group and older children influence what is popular to them. Parent and teachers need to reinforce guidelines. Not difficult because we have been doing it from the beginning, but cannot completely cut out computers and cell phones part of the culture. I can easily restrict their use. I find it frustrating when there are families at the school who blatantly go the opposite direction to the values of the school.”; “Slightly with the influx of technology in society it is difficult to balance this for your child. The more taboo something is the more interesting it is for the child. Outdoor activities, reading and educating oneself on the beauty life has to offer is our priorities and we try to model this for our child.”; “I was relieved and surprisingly more relaxed. I found peace I did not think was possible. All the noise gone and I had time to read to my children to bake with them and our level of life and I think as a parent and as a human being I wouldn’t change that. A positive way to give space and time to our children and peace to yourself.”; “Yes! A lot of pressure from outside influences. i.e.: family, friends, shopping malls, Doctors offices etc. Cannot be stopped! So the older the children get and the more they venture out into the world, the more influences there are. The dilemma is: can we continue to say NO, No, No then it becomes forbidden fruit and they want them more or do we expose them “a bit” and teach them about how they impact our lives? We control it when and where we can and then try to teach, when we can’t.”. As a parent myself and as a teacher, I agree that it is a struggle but by choosing Waldorf education, we are making a choice to honour childhood and instead of having age compression, we are looking for age appropriateness. How do I do that for a class of eleven and twelve year olds, going through an

important development stage, in reaching adolescence? What materials do I give them to counteract materialism? Is there a way to create cohesion between the two?

FINDING THE TRUTH

Reading through the parents' responses, the first thing that jumped out at me was a sense that it isn't up to us to stop the marketers, nor can foil their attempts. It is incumbent upon me then, as their Class teacher, to bring to the classroom a sense of building critical thinking in them, and connecting them to nature and the humanities. Rudolf Steiner, in his final lecture and in discussions with teachers speaks of four principles for which a teacher must strive. I truly believe that this is at the heart of what I was trying to build for my class and for myself. The first principle is "The teacher must be a person of initiative in everything done, great and small." (Steiner, 1997, p.180) I need to initiate and challenge myself to be interested in the same things the children are interested in, and take time to clearly observe them. From these observations, it is up to me to find ways, through the curriculum and extra-curricular activities, to engage them in the human and natural world. This is an area where I feel I have a small sense of control, with the hopes of balancing the scale of the materialistic images the marketers present them with.

Steiner's second principle states "The teacher should be one who is interested in the being of the whole world and of humanity." (Steiner, 1997, p.180) To paraphrase Steiner, he stressed that as teachers, we need to be interested in things outside of the school. We need to have our own lives, to go see the theatre, to go walk in nature, to connect with families and other people outside the school walls, to gain stories, to gain the richness of the world around us so that we can bring this back to the students. If the students see an adult interested and engaged in the world around them and not negative about the world, it creates, I believe, a possibility for discussion and a feeling of comfort and safety for them that their world is ok.

Steiner's third principle states "the teacher must be one who never compromises in the heart and mind with what is untrue." (Steiner, 1997, p.180) This is perhaps the hardest principle to bring forth, but I think that it forces me to really look in the mirror and try to find a truth within myself to bring to the children. So, what does that mean in the context of the marketers' messages? I fall prey to them too. Children need to know, if I am being truthful that I love junk food, I grew up watching a lot of television, and that through my teen years, brands and material products were very important to my sense of self-image and security. I also have to bring them truth in what I am teaching them, I cannot combat the propaganda from the marketers with propaganda coming from my own point of view, serving my own agenda. I have to be truthful to myself that I have a bias, and that my bias may not be correct. I have to set this bias aside in working with the students.

Allow me to present Steiner's fourth principle:

And now comes something more easily said than done, but it is, nevertheless also a golden rule for the teachers' calling. *The teacher must never get stale or grow sour.* Cherish a mood of soul that is fresh and healthy! No getting stale and sour! This must be the teacher's endeavor. (Steiner, 1997, p.181)

I have to be engaged with the children, with their parents and with my life. These four principles which Steiner presented to the teachers of the first Waldorf School in August of 1919 are challenging, to say the least. They give me the framework that I need to set my own path, so that I may grow with the children six hours a day, five days a week over the course of ten months. It is up to me to give them another point of view of the world they inhabit. Further to this, these four principles have been my guide and my touchstone over the course of these last few years but in particular the summer before Grade Six while preparing for the upcoming school year's lessons, coupled with the fact that the work on my Masters project was percolating. For me, the eternal question is "What does it mean to be a Waldorf Teacher in these times?"

Our Grade Six year began with the students studying geology and mineralogy. In this block, we studied the earth and the substances that make up the ground beneath their feet, how mountains and other landforms came to exist. The thinking here was to give the children a picture in geological time, and to present the idea that the earth is still a work in progress, much like themselves. This is important in their stage of development because it is the first time in their lives that they can objectively look at things that are not alive. Before the age of eleven, the children aren't ready for this because as Steiner states "because the children's evolving capacity to differentiate between self and world is not yet strong enough to allow them to comprehend the significant difference between what is inherently alive and what belongs to the dead mineral world." (Steiner, 1996, p.86). He further states:

This is why during the tenth and eleventh years (and in most cases, until the beginning of the twelfth year) it is impossible to communicate knowledge that demands an understanding of causality. Consequently, one should not introduce students to the mineral kingdom until around the twelfth year. (Steiner, 1996, p.110)

Within this block, I was determined to take the children out of doors to give them a chance to interact with the mineral kingdom, its beauty and its harshness. This was brought into the classroom through painting, poetry and physical movement which I hope brought a well-rounded richness to their understanding. One memory that stands out in particular is how the students created a whole class tsunami with their bodies, and watching them do this, I could see them forgetting about their insecurities and picking each other up and tossing themselves on to the large exercise mat in the gym, much like the wave collects water and hits the resistance of the shore.

Our next block looked at Roman History, and how it too, was a work in progress. I found this a very interesting block at this point in time, as I held the question of materialism and its

effect on children at the twelve-year change. Rome, in many ways, I feel mirrors North American culture in this current time and place. The Romans were ever-expanding, building more wealth and seeing themselves more and more, especially the Caesars as the conquerors of nature and the gods of the world, humans as gods which is similar to today in the material point of view in that we are in a consumer culture that is always wanting more, that these products will lead us to happiness and that science has the answer to everything in nature. The Romans were also very brash, liked clear justice and were very interested in their rights. They created a democracy taken from the Greeks without Kings or Queens. This block really resonated with my children at developmental and social levels because within the class, they can be very aware and vocal about whether they felt a class punishment was justified, whether people were being treated equally and questioned why certain school rules were put into place; for example, the dress code “Why can’t we wear makeup?”; “Why can’t we listen to iPods on field trips?”; “Why can’t we have brand names on our clothes?”; “Let’s put it to a vote!”; “Let’s put together a petition!”; “Who do we talk to?”; “It’s not fair.” were statements oft heard in our classroom this year. I challenged them with guidelines to create their own Main Lesson book for the first time. I passed on to them some of the responsibility to research Roman History for themselves, under my guidance rather than have me lead everything, I handed it to them. I shared many stories of the rise of the Roman Empire, of Julius Caesar, Caesar Augustus, and the rise of Christianity and the fall of Rome. In teaching this block, as previously mentioned I had my own feelings of the connections between the Roman times and the times in which we currently live, and the Roman personality as compared to the personality of the children, I consciously did not present that to the students because I feel when one openly compares two different periods of human history, you open one of the periods up to judgment which would risk putting my bias upon what the

children were learning. The children took on the challenge of creating their own main lesson book with great vigor and aplomb. It gave them a chance to hone their critical eye with each other in a gentle way. They began drawing information from each other and taking an interest in one another's work. My intention here was to give them a chance to use their peer influence in a constructive way.

Each year in the Waldorf school, we mount a class play which comes out of the knowledge of one of our Main Lesson blocks we have been studying. This year was no different: as a class, we performed an adaptation of George Bernard Shaw's *Androcles and The Lion*. This is a comedy about a poor Christian man who helps a wounded lion and is later saved from death in the Roman Coliseum when he meets the lion again. This lion, instead of eating him, licks him and dances with him. What better way to take children out of the present brand name labeled culture than to put them all in tunics and sandals, and have them speak the heightened English presented by George Bernard Shaw? A play too builds camaraderie and community because the children need to really see and hear each other in order for the play to be successful. Having the pressure of an audience bonds them together, and this has been a joy to witness over the years.

We then moved into our first experimental science block. Before this, we looked at science in a more holistic way but with this twelve-year change and the onset of puberty as mentioned before, the children are really beginning to develop their outer focus on the world, away from themselves and becoming objective in their thinking. In a world with so much information at our fingertips, I found it amazing how many oohs and ahhs the children had around simple experiments such as being in a darkened room and shining a light at the wall, only to witness the slow unveiling of the path this beam of light takes with the introduction of chalk dust; or the smiles when, fingers in their ears, holding a string wrapped around a spoon, and hitting said

spoon on a hard surface, the experience of the vibrations really caught them by surprise. In this physics block, we studied heat, sound and light and really focused on the children's observations. Physics is a way in which the children can really refine their objective thinking as A.C. Harwood states in his book *The Recovery of Man and Childhood*:

All of these early scientific lessons give admirable opportunities for exercising the art of accurate description. Few people can describe in an accurate and orderly manner some familiar object like an apple or an orange. It is an important art to learn. (Harwood, 1958, p.124)

This skill, I believe, will hold them in good stead when faced with the tactics of tween marketers.

Our next block was geometry. Previously, in Grade Five they worked on free hand geometry, but this year they were introduced to the use of the compass, ruler and protractor. Geometry can be an abstract science which deals with being diligent and trying to achieve as close to perfection as you can, really stressing the preciseness of bisection of lines, the focus on neatness. This is never subjective. The resulting black and white clarity brought on by geometry is soothing during this twelve year pre-pubescent change, especially amongst all the ambiguity that can happen within the world in which they live; for example, their questions like 'Am I wearing the right thing?', 'Who are my friends going to be today?', 'What am I going to do on the playground?'. The marketers use the child's state of ambiguity to sell their products, knowing that at this developmental age, the children can change their opinions very quickly. To help my students navigate this terrain, knowing where they are at developmentally, I feel that our work in geometry offers them a template of stability, of black and white, right and wrong for them to use when working through the world outside of our class time. Geometry also helps them form a sense of beauty and identity because though their geometrical drawings may be the same or very similar to that of a classmate's, it is through the shading and colouring of these drawings that their individuality shines. They make discoveries through the bisection of a circle, and some may

pull out of that bisection a flower, others may pull out a beautiful pattern, but it is their own interpretation that gives life to the image. I was struck by the hush and the intense focus that my class put in to this block; there was an energy that filled the room when they all had one shared focus, a focus of exploration, of themselves.

...children need a time of care-free exploration, of feeling that endless possibilities lie ahead, of gradually developing maturity, they are being pushed into a pressure-cooker environment, cutting short the time allowed for healthy development. The behaviors we think of as adolescence are also making their way down in age. (Staley, 2006, p.59)

Before holding Steiner's four principles in my mind, I don't think I had the depth of understanding of why we taught certain subjects at a particular age. Steiner's fourth principle, stated above, was to be the most challenging for me, centered around truthfulness and I believe that this curriculum helps to bring truth into focus for me as a teacher, and in turn for my students. It is through the preparing and reflections of this past year, at the Calgary Waldorf School as well as my intensive coursework at Antioch University towards my Waldorf Certification that I am amazed and thankful for this clarity, of really knowing and understanding the pedagogy behind this curriculum, of really meeting the child where they are at, developmentally and emotionally. I am humbled by this gift given to me as a teacher.

OUTSIDE OF CLASS: THE PATHWAY TO KNIGHTHOOD

Much of what the marketers push to tweens is the sense of a world in which having money is what makes you happy, having products is what gives you fulfillment. The more you have, the better your life. I wanted to temper this by giving my students opportunities in which to help people who are less fortunate, to see the spirit in people who have little. At our Waldorf school, because it requires tuition, the majority of our families are upper-middle class with university-educated parents. Many of them do, with their parents, charitable work; as a class, I wished for our group to work together to reach out in support of our community. I had to think of things which would not set them back or put fear into them, but give a sense that their actions were making a difference, to see first-hand the change they were making. The first event was a toy drive for the Women's Centre of Calgary. This is an organization for struggling single mothers in the city who need support in finding work and building a new home as well as helping them access the daily needs of a family from groceries to toiletries, and at Christmas time, gifts for their children. My students organized a toy drive through the school, collecting new unwrapped toys and in the process of doing this, I witnessed what a little effort could do! Giving them this cause, they became very vocal in promoting it, designed beautiful boxes to collect the toys at school, and delivered the toys themselves to the Women's Centre where they saw that mothers were allowed to choose one gift for each of their children. While delivering the gifts, my students began asking so many questions, and they found out that the Centre needed help all year round with toiletries and food, items we all use in our day-to-day life with little to no thought. As a teacher, I thought this would be a one-off for the Women's Centre, but the children were eager to do more. In the new year, I organized a spell-a-thon for the children of the 100 most misspelled

words in the English language. The students were sent out to get pledges for how many words they would get correct on the test. They were quite excited in getting their pledges, soliciting support from everybody. When the test was finally written and the money collected, the children had raised three thousand dollars which we then took to a local grocery store and purchased supplies for the women in need. This shopping experience was very educational for all of us; in minding the total amount each team of four students had to spend on supplies, they were conscious of making their money go as far as it could for the women in need. They realized how much they saved by buying generic brands and not the ones they would be most familiar with or drawn to. I believe this experience unified the class. Some of the comments overheard that day: ‘Why is this so much more expensive than the plain one?’, to which one student answered ‘Because they have to pay for the pictures.’

We also went and served food at the downtown Drop-In Centre, a soup kitchen for homeless Calgarians. The children were waiters and served the food to the clients. At first, you could see the apprehension in the children, but when they were greeted with thank yous and smiles, they became more confident. The children saw how these people got by day-to-day on very little and how many of them, though their life was hard, still found a way to show politeness and appreciation. These acts of community service resonated deeply in them and me and planted a seed for a future idea.

FROM SQUIRE TO KNIGHT

From this community service we had done, I began to look forward to our Medieval Block. It was now the middle of February and I had planned to do our study of the Middle Ages in early May. I began to think of this transitional period these children were working through as they entered puberty and I was drawn by the correlation of the steps it took to become a knight. In Medieval times, there was a definite process in becoming a knight. From the ages of birth to seven, the young child lived with his mother and she would nurture him and tell him stories of heroes, of saints, and stories from the Bible. At age seven, the child became a page and was sent away to live with another lord for a page could not be trained to become a knight by their father. During the ages of seven to fourteen, the child would learn the skills of service, serving food, cleaning and shining armour, helping the lord of the household off of his horse, as well as skills to ready him for battle such as archery, sword-fighting and horse riding. At age fourteen, it was truly a rite of passage when the page became a squire: he received his own armour, his own shield and sword as well as his own horse and was now able to ride into battle at his lord's side. This was also the time the squire would learn all about chivalry: how to speak to a lady, how to bow properly, how to dance and how to defend the weak. At the age of twenty one, the squire was ready to become a knight; it was done ceremoniously, in a reverent fashion. The day of the ceremony, the squire would fast and meditate upon all that had led him there. He would then bathe to purify himself and then he would go to his mother and she would rub something like rose water on his back. It was now time to become a knight. The squire would go alone to the church where his lord, his father and mother and quite possibly the King would be waiting for him; during this ceremony, he was asked what he was there for. Was he here for worldly fame or

fortune? The squire would answer something along the lines that he was there to seek the truth and be of service. Then, those presiding over the ceremony would ask if there was anyone there who would speak on behalf of the squire. When that was done, the squire would bend down on one knee and be touched on both shoulders by a sword, and become a knight. The next day, there would be a celebration and a day of gamesmanship in which many lords and knight would gather to challenge each other in events such as jousting, archery, spear-throwing.

I wanted the students in my class to go through, on a smaller scale, something similar for I believe that children of this age, at eleven and twelve years old, are beginning to search for ways to define themselves. Marketers are aware of this too, and they offer the children brands and images to latch on to, to form their identity and in return, cashing in on their consumer loyalty. In order to balance this out for my students, my wish was to offer them an alternative way to define themselves, based on their own reflections and the heartfelt reflections from their peers, teachers and parents. I was given a gift the summer previous; I had the chance to speak with an experienced Waldorf teacher named Signe Motter who had done a knighting ceremony with her children, and this experience of hers really spoke to me. She inspired me to get my students to write in journals about each other. Within these journals, each night, over the course of a month, they had to write about one of their classmates. In this short entry, they were asked to write what they admired about that person with the clarification that it could not be about outer appearance. They were also told to write a helpful hint for their peer, to offer them guidance as they moved forward. My intention was to read these entries at the event culminating much of the students' work in the medieval block, at our knighting ceremony.

To expand this, I approached my class' subject teachers back at the beginning of the school year, teachers who led them through French, German, Art and Music classes and I asked them to

keep notes of children who were in particular, striving in each of their classes. Now this did not have to be the best students, but ones who were obviously working to improve. I then asked them if they would be available to speak on these children's behalf at the knighting ceremony that I was planning to hold in May.

I began preparing the place for the ceremony early in the new school year. Previously at the Calgary Waldorf School, medieval blocks would culminate in a medieval feast, with song and dance in our school assembly room. I wanted our class' event to hold more weight, I wanted to show that it was beyond the school's walls, and so started my search to find what church would be available and have the right amount of ambience and reverence for such a ceremony. I was very fortunate to find a church that had a long tradition, a beautiful mood with solid wood pews that brought the richness and depth from the earth, and lit with beautiful stained glass windows which were very much a part of medieval tradition, bringing heavenly color and light into the room.

I was drawn to the aspect of how a knight was chivalrous and was above all else, striving to learn new skills and to serve others. In January, I instructed the children to find a weekly community service with a neighbour, a teacher or a grandparent. I also wanted them to learn a new skill of which they would be invited to speak about at the knighting ceremony. This was met at first with great concern and worry but as time progressed, children began to help in ways such as working with a kindergarten teacher for an hour a week, cleaning up the neighborhood in which they live, spring yard cleanup for a neighbour, helping with the maintenance of the school grounds, teaching one of their fellow students how to play an instrument. New skills were picked up, such as calligraphy, unicycle riding, gymnastics, guitar, learning to speak Spanish, baking,

cooking, piano playing and it was wonderful to hear the children share about the new skills they were acquiring.

I had the framework for this knighting ceremony in place. My next step was to find the perfect King and Queen to give this ceremony an air of authenticity. I chose a very noble man of Scottish heritage, who volunteers endless amounts of time in our school to be our King. He has a close connection with my students as he is always available to help in the class and come with us on field trips. For the Queen, I chose our elegant Grade Two teacher who speaks with a lovely English accent; a former dancer, she moves with grace and poise. I swore them both to secrecy.

My next intention was to focus on building medieval games to challenge these newly knighted squires the day following the ceremony at the church. For the most part, the children in my class are challenged physically through organized sports or extra curricular classes such as gymnastics or dance, which are very specific. If not, through conversations in my classroom, I know they search for other ways to challenge themselves through video games or simulated war activities such as paintball. Again, I wanted to provide an alternative. In many Waldorf schools that are in close proximity to one another, medieval games are held amongst the schools. It is traditionally a day of events which involve challenge, trust and riddles to test the intellect. Our school is at a disadvantage in that we are nine hours away from the closest Waldorf school. I knew I would have to organize a games on a smaller scale, just for my class. I knew it was going to be a challenge, and take quite a bit of organizing; but with my parent body, I knew we could pull it off.

THE DAWNING OF KNIGHTS

As the ceremony and the games approached, I don't think I consciously thought that the reason I was doing these things with my children was to balance the effects of marketing to their age group. As I reflect on it now, I see how profoundly this upcoming series of events gave them something in which to engage. In the two weeks leading up to the ceremony, we were already entrenched in our medieval block and the children were getting familiar with stories of monks, knights, historical figures such as Mohammed and Charlemagne, I began to notice a change in the children. They seemed to be growing in mind and body before my very eyes, I felt they were morphing into Grade Seven students. The discussions overheard at snack time began to focus more on a sharing of their skills they were learning; there seemed to be more of a connection between children who may not have connected closely before. There seemed to be less division between groups. I believe this was affected directly by the task set out for them of writing about a peer a night in their journals. They also began to speak of medieval times and what it would have been like to live in that period. Their conversations were shifting away from clothes, games and movies, though not entirely. Two days before the knighting ceremony, I had the children hand in their journals so that I could cull the comments made about each other so that I could easily share them at the intended ceremony. It was a gift to be able to see how seriously they undertook this task and how they truly saw past the material trappings. In what they admired about each other, there were a few comments about outward appearances such as admiring a peer's fashion sense, but it seemed to transcend the superficial, and really celebrated the individual. Some of the examples of observations made include "You have a fantastic sense of humour"; "How passionate you are about life"; "How you stand by your friends"; "How you

invent things out of other peoples' junk"; "How brave you are"; "The efforts you make to make those around you smile"; "Your artistic skills". They also truly wanted to guide each other with their helpful hints: none of these hints mentioned superficial (as I see them) things either.

Comments included "Be patient with yourself and others"; "Don't be afraid to let your voice be heard"; "Let yourself shine with confidence"; "Pay attention to when a joke has run its course!"; "Don't be afraid to use your body"; "Try to pay attention and really listen in all of your classes".

I was wondering how the children would react to these very personal comments being shared about them in a very public setting.

The day of the knighting ceremony, the children were instructed to go home and like knights in medieval times, have a bath before the night's events. Their mothers were also encouraged to rub their children's backs with rosewater. The children were instructed to wear white clothing, to signify their purity. Parents, grandparents, friends and subject teachers were invited to the ceremony. Each family was shown to their seat by the squire and the family's seat was marked by the shield, with a coat of arms that the child had created. These coats of arms were emblazoned with symbols that the child had chosen to represent themselves.

The ceremony began with the students gathering on the altar to play a recorder piece. I then welcomed everyone and instructed them on the evening's events. We then all rose as the King and Queen descended the aisle, in quite regal fashion I might add. The first child was then called up. He shared his new skill with the audience, and what service to the community he had done over the course of the last few months after which the King asked if there was anyone in attendance who would speak about the strength of character on the squire's behalf. Often, parents spoke up, at times subject teachers spoke about specific students who strived in their work. I would share with the student what his or her fellow peers had written about them in their

journals. It was interesting, as the evening went on, more and more children wanted to share themselves what they had said about their fellow classmates rather than have me say it for them. It had an amazing effect for a squire being singled out. There was one boy in particular who was new to the class, who started his time on stage fiddling nervously, unable to look up from his page of notes. But once his classmates began to share what they admired about him and their helpful hints, his jittery nature stopped, he looked up and it seemed as though he grew in that moment in the spotlight. Each child had this moment of recognition, and the event took more than the intended two hours. But the children's focus never wavered, from beginning to end. It seemed everyone left that night a little closer to each other, and a little bit more confident in who they were. Upon reflection of this evening, the children gave each other worth and really lived in the moment of this. It was truthful and had depth, something that reached the soul of each child. I hope that this carries them and allows them to see that what the marketers are trying to sell them is a manufactured sense of worth, that if they wear a certain pair of shoes, they are somebody. I believe that the knighting ceremony and all the work that led to this culmination of events instilled in the children a more meaningful sense of worth, and that they could use this as a touchstone if they ever feel self-doubt in the future.

LET THE GAMES BEGIN

As I had stated above, our school had not had the good fortune of putting on a medieval games in the past. I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity in August to be a participant in a three-day movement workshop given by Edmund Knighton, an experienced Waldorf movement teacher trained in spatial dynamics who also has a wealth of experience in all areas of movement. He was also very knowledgeable in ways to put on a medieval games, in fact he had written a book full of activities and gave guidelines on how to put on such an event. Coincidentally, in December, through my required practicum work for Antioch University, I stayed with Edmund in Seattle while I was there observing the Seattle and Bright Water Waldorf Schools. This was a gift because Edmund truly mentored me in why we do medieval games for eleven- and twelve- year old students and the importance of the atmosphere created at such an event. Edmund states in his book *How to Teach Medieval Games (2008)*:

It is really incredible what the children arrive at in themselves. Let them do the work. Exercise caution in the martyrdom that is so easy to take on as a Grade Six teacher. The children will feel empowered only if they are called upon, only if they feel they are doing the work. If the teacher spoon feed them, the students will say “it is no different than all the other grades”. They must be able to take hold of it and recognize it as something different than what has come before. This means the teacher lets go of the way you have been holding them. See the young person in a new way, create more space inside yourself for what they will become. (p.18-19)

Knighton goes on to state in his book that the medieval games brings to the children something different than what they experienced in the Greek pentathlon, an event they would have participated in Grade Five. (p.19) One significant difference I noticed between a grade five student and a grade six student is their physical growth. In Waldorf schools, the grade five year is often recognized as the golden age of childhood where everything is at balance emotionally and physically. As they reach that eleven- and twelve-year change, the children become

emotionally uneven as their body begins to grow; arms become longer, feet become bigger, their balance has started to be thrown off.

The preparation for the pentathlon was largely physical, because the student naturally held the inner qualities, albeit unconsciously. Now, for the first time, this student is becoming conscious of shortcomings, dispositions to be worked with and overcome. This event gives the student an opportunity to address them throughout the year, at home as well as at school. (Knighton, 2008, p.19)

I witnessed this first-hand in the medieval games that I, with the help of the parent group in my class, created for the children. They were met with challenges such as traversing a five-foot wall on their own, with only the use of a seven-foot pole. At first, each group when encountering this obstacle, said “We can’t do this!”, and they looked for direction from an adult. The adults were given explicit instructions not to help, but only to encourage. It was amazing to see the children find that inner resolve to figure out the problem at hand, trusting each other to get over the wall. For example, one group leaned the pole against the wall and one by one, shimmied up the pole with the support of their classmates, and when reaching the top of the wall, flung themselves over. On the other side, the children who had completed the task began to build a human pyramid so that by the last member of their group to climb the wall, he/she was able to use the support of his/her comrades to ease him/herself over the wall.

The games were full of activities that required this type of challenge and trust. It was intermingled with downright muddy laugh-filled fun! We had a running of the gauntlet, in which the children used shields they had created to protect themselves from wet, muddy sponges being hurled their way by the parent group in attendance. One comment that was made by one of the children at the end of the day really struck a chord with me: “There were no batteries required for this fun!”.

The games I feel were their out-breath to the knighting ceremony's in-breath. The challenges which the children faced in the games were the physical manifestations of the belief that they had built in one another the previous night. They knew that their classmates would stand by them and would not let them fall. They had recognized each other's strength in words and now they were able to follow through on these strengths in physical deeds. The medieval games further strengthened their bond with one another and I believe their sense of self-worth. By the end of the day, they were all smelly, covered in mud laughing, not caring about their appearance. They looked like healthy kids! They seemed to me to be kids who still had two feet held firmly in childhood.

REFLECTIONS

The knighting ceremony and the medieval games were a culmination of a journey that, truth be told, began in Grade One. The impetus for this paper was to see whether there was a need to balance the mainstream marketing to pre-teen children with their education. This need arose in me with my children becoming more attached to the clothes they were wearing such as the hoodies, and forming clubs around them; being attached to who had seen what movies, who had played what video games, and who was eating what particular food at snack. This awakened in me a sense of fear, that these children I had watched grow and help nurture since the age of six, were becoming pawns for marketers and their companies. I also felt in the clothes they were wearing and the music they were listening to, the books they were reading, that their childhood was being shortened and when one of my students in my class said that they were no longer a child but a tween, it raised alarm bells in me. At first, I was tempted to be reactionary and tell the children that what they were doing was wrong, what they were interested in was not appropriate but I soon realized that would do no good and would simply alienate them from me. The children, at the end of Grade Five, were entering a new phase of development, a phase in which they were becoming more aware of what was around them, beginning to form their own opinions, and discovering the world for themselves. I needed to not be adversarial with the world in which they lived, but rather embrace it, while simultaneously offering them an alternative view through the curriculum. This required of me that I go deeper into my planning, to go farther into my understanding of where they were as people, and to challenge myself to really dive in to the pools of the pedagogy to find what specifically spoke to this class.

The teacher now has to school the power to think in terms of causality and help pupils discover the world with their own capacity to form judgments. This task encompasses the

whole of the final third of the second seven-year period. Steiner indicated that if developed too soon, the capacity to form independent judgments can lead to rigidity, whereas if it comes too late, the individual will remain unable to make up his or her mind and will be at the mercy of all kinds of external influences. (Rawson & Masters, 1997, p.112)

The children were ready for me to lead them. What I discovered in my preparation for this year through each of the main lesson blocks, was that as a teacher, I was beginning to truly understand why I was doing what I was doing. I have to say in my previous five years, I feel like I was following the paths of others, following what teachers previous to me had done before. I realize now, at the end of the school year, that my trajectory to this point in my teaching development, like my students, am discovering my own voice and that I must now begin to form my own judgments and discover my own capacities so that I am not at the mercy of external influences. I needed to trust my instincts, and I needed to listen to my children.

In medieval times, a knight would have to really be in control of his own kingdom before he could go off and fight against another. He had to make sure that his castle was strong, that his army was well-trained, that the farmlands were taken care of, and that everything was in place. This is what I began to do this year, for when I began to do research on how this age group of my children was being marketed to, and the amount of resources that were spent on reaching them, I knew quickly that I could not go head-to-head and defeat that giant. What could I do to fortify the land of my classroom? I have read about schools creating media awareness programs for children from grade five and up, where pieces of advertising and marketing techniques are studied and analyzed with the children so that they can make their way through the terrain. I believe there is an alternative to this approach: if you have a clear understanding of childhood and a rich curriculum that meets them, you can inherently teach them the skills to observe what is being sold to them, and make their own judgments about it. I feel we can fall in the trap of over-analyzing the world in which we live to children to the point as I mentioned before, that the

children don't believe they live in a world that is beautiful, that the world is a place where everyone is trying to trick them into buying something. As mentioned earlier, Steiner in one of his four principles that he gave to teachers, said that we have to embrace the world in which we live. I believe you can embrace all of this media and accept it as part of where we are right now, as humans as well as build strong, thoughtful children in adolescence. Previous to this, I felt that I needed to censor the children when they began to speak about brands and popular culture. I no longer feel that need; I want to hear about it, I find it interesting. They should have the freedom to share those things that are important to them, regardless of how they have arrived at them. I have learned that marketers know child development as well as I do, and they use this tool to do their jobs. They are excellent at what they do! They are at the top of their game, and so I too, need to be at the top of mine. I know now, through the work that I have done with my students this year, through observing my children in the way they speak to one another, in the work that they do, in the words that they write, in the works of art that they paint, that I, through the Waldorf curriculum, have reached them as well. I now have the confidence that I understand what I am doing, and the reasons behind why I am doing my work. I feel I have the tools to continue to reach my students with beauty, strength of character and soul because I have a clear understanding of where they are at. In order to find the balance which I believe is necessary in the material world we currently live, I discovered the balance in myself.

As teachers and parents, we have to make conscious choices of what we offer eleven and twelve year-old children as alternatives to what they are being presented with on a daily basis by marketers. Children at this age are trying to find their relationship with the world. They are still very much in a feeling realm, though the birth of adolescence and objective critical thinking is beginning and so there is a push/pull, a cause and effect that happens between these two realms,

the heart forces and the brain forces. As a parent and/or teacher, in order to combat what is being offered in smooth, appealing packages from marketers -- which go straight to this imbalance in the child, appealing to their heart and their wanting to make their stamp on the world -- it is incumbent upon us to make conscious decisions of what we bring to them. We don't want to reject these images being portrayed to them but we can offer them other images of beauty that have more depth and have a longer history in this world. Rather than give them more of what is already abundant, have confidence that the child is now ready to be challenged by masterful works of art, age-appropriate theatre, ballet and classical music which speak to their heart, challenging physical activities which present a little bit of risk to them, to make them feel alive and capable. Keeping life-long family rituals continue to serve as yardsticks for them, of pleasant childhood memories, but also offering them new rituals such as beginning to go each summer to the folk festival, where you begin to offer them something a little bit more. In this way, the child can feel like they are being recognized, that they are going through a change. These events can also prompt discussions, in which the child can speak of their opinions in a safe way where they can be critical and find ways to back their criticisms up, with the guidance from adults in their lives. I feel like today, we try to reach children by giving them what they already have, feeling that the way we can connect with them is by giving them what we know they like. They already have enough of that; adults need to trust that children can handle more thoughtful, soulful things. We must keep offering up and showing these mirrors, no matter what protests they may have. They may hate it, and they should! This allows them the freedom to express themselves. They may also discover a loving connection to something that is out of the ordinary.

As parents and teachers, we are the ones who set the example and though twelve year olds can be given more freedom of choice, they still look to us as their lighthouse. They look to us to

withstand the waves of different emotions they are going through; what light of the world do you want to shine on them? Do we want to be disrespectful and judgmental of the world in which they live, of what they see in front of them? Would you rather embrace that with them, but at the same time, open more windows to let new air in?

As adults in these children's lives, we also make conscious choices in what we find important. It is hard, in this consumer culture in which we live, to really establish what is needed. I feel there is a great deal of pressure in North America to want bigger, and better products. These somehow establish our worth, as adults. The students are also feeling this pressure, but in small ways. By taking time and breathing out to see what is important in each other, as my class did during their knighting ceremony, we can take chinks out of this consumer culture which we have created along with the marketers. As a colleague of mine recently shared with me, when her children returned from the Greek Olympiad in Grade Five, following a very physical event, they were very hungry. The adults in attendance made the choice to offer fruit and vegetables for nourishment. All students readily accepted, gobbling up the offering without questioning or wanting what wasn't there. My colleague went on to say that she wondered that had there been cookies or chocolate bars or other less healthy options made available, how much faster they would disappear. Would the fruit and vegetables have been touched? We can find a balance in our choices, in being mindful about what it is we offer the children as they grow.

Knighthood of the 21st Century

*There is a knighthood of the 21st century
Whose riders do not ride through the darkness of physical forests, as of old,
but through the forest of darkened minds.*

*They are armed with a spiritual armor,
And an inner sun makes them radiant.*

*Out of them shines healing,
Healing that flows from the knowledge of the human being as a spiritual
being.*

*They must create inner order, inner justice,
Peace, and conviction in the darkness of our time.*

They must learn to work side by side with angels.

-Karl Konig

Appendix A: Calgary Waldorf School Parental Consent Form

September 28, 2009

Dear Parents of Class 6 students at the Calgary Waldorf School,
This year I am enrolled in a Master's of Education program at Antioch University New England. Part of my required coursework includes a Master's Research Project. My project is focused on how the current marketing to "tween" (children from the ages 9 to 12) is affecting the twelve year change.

This work will contribute to my work and the experience of the students by gaining a greater insight to what they are interested in, what challenges they face, how to find a balance for them within the Waldorf curriculum and with working with the parent community to this overabundance of marketing information.

I will be reading books and articles and seeking other resources to inform myself about "tween" marketing and child development. I will collect information from activities in the classroom, journal observations and conversations with students. The project will include collecting the students writing and art work along with my journaling of observations and conversations with the children in my class to make a composite example of a male and female child at the age of twelve. These activities will not interfere with classroom time, or involve any risk. The project will help to inform my practice, my knowledge about learning processes, and the students.

The results of this project may be used for classroom discussion in my graduate work, professional presentations, articles, and other purposes related to teacher education. Primarily it will be used for my own professional development.

In all written materials and presentations the names of students will not be used. Pseudonyms will be substituted for all names. Every effort will be made to protect the confidentiality of participants. Photos (or videos) taken in the course of this project will be used to illustrate general aspects of the project not to identify individual students and will be destroyed or erased at the end of the project.

I plan to discuss this project with the students. I would be happy to discuss any aspect of the project with you. Your child's participation is completely voluntary. You do not have to allow your child to be part of this project. If at any time, or for any reason, you wish not to have your child involved in the project please let me know.

If you have any questions about the study, you may contact Dean Carter, at telephone # (403-287-1868 ext: 110) or via email at [d.carter@calgarywaldorf.org].

If you have any questions about the research process, your rights, or your child's rights as a participant, you are welcome to contact Dr. Kevin P. Lyness, Chair of the Antioch University Human Research Committee, (603) 283-2149 or Dr. Katherine Clarke, ANE Vice President for Academic Affairs, (603) 283-2450.

Sincerely,
Dean Carter

Appendix B: Letter to Surveyed Parents

My name is Dean Carter and I am the class six teacher, at the Calgary Waldorf School. I am currently collecting information to help inform my research for my master's thesis at Antioch University New England. I am collecting information on how you see the marketing to pre-teens (ages 9 to 12 year olds) is affecting your child's journey through the twelve year change. I will also be asking questions for you to compare your remembrances as a twelve year old to what you see your child is experiencing at this time. The results will also be used for my master's degree research project at Antioch University New England (ANE) in classroom discussion, professional presentations, articles, and other purposes related to teacher education. There are no risks in taking part because we are not asking for any names and no one can know who filled out the form. The survey takes about 10 minutes to fill out.

Participating in the survey is completely voluntary. You do not have to fill out the survey if you do not want to. If you do fill out the survey you may leave any question blank but I ask you to answer as many questions as you can.

If you have any questions about the project please contact me, Dean Carter at (403)-287-1868 ext. 110. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact Dr. Kevin P. Lyness, Chair of the ANE Human Research Committee, (603) 283-2149, or Dr. Katherine Clarke, ANE Vice President for Academic Affairs, (603) 283-2450.

5. On a scale of one to ten how much do you think the advertising of materials from popular culture influences your child's feeling of self-worth and their status amongst their peers. (ten meaning it has a great influence, one meaning it has little influence.)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

a) If you do find it influences your child's feeling of self-worth and their status amongst their peers please share a brief example how.

6. On a scale of one to ten how worried are you about the possible influence mass marketing has on your child's development. One being not worried, ten being very worried.)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Please give a reason why or why not?

7. Please circle the statement below that best describes your feeling.

- a. I believe that the material that is being marketed to 11 and 12 year olds on a mass scale *is* age and developmentally appropriate.
- b. I believe that the material that is being marketed to 11 and 12 year olds on a mass scale is *somewhat* age and developmentally appropriate.
- c. I believe that the material that is being marketed to 11 and 12 year olds on a mass scale is *not* age and developmentally appropriate.

8. What year were you 12?

9. From your own memories of being eleven and twelve what interested and what was important to you? Is that similar to your own child? Please give examples.

10. From your own memories of being eleven and twelve do you feel that the material and the images being marketed to your child by mainstream media similar to what you were exposed to as a child? Please give some examples.

11. Do you feel a need to balance the images from mainstream media that your child is aware of with other influences. If you do, how; if not, why not?

12. Do you feel it is difficult for you and your child to follow the philosophies and guidelines of the Waldorf School (little to no media exposure, i.e.: video games, computer usage, television, movies etc.) in everyday life? Why or why not?

Appendix D
Examples of work from Class 6
from the Calgary Waldorf School
2009/2010

Presentation Description

Presentation Form

Name:

Date

Place:

Project Advisor:

Presentation Given By:

Brief description of the Audience:

Include approximate numbers and the nature of the group (colleagues, conference participants, parents, etc.)

Brief description of what happened:

Did the presenter appear to be prepared?

Was the material organized in an understandable way?

Was the audience engaged in what was presented?

Did the presenter display a thorough understanding of the subject matter?

Include any further comments about the presenter below.

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